(Reviews) Iotsald von Saint-claude, Vita des Abtes Odilo von Cluny/Studien zu Iotsalds Vita des Abtes Odilo von Cluny

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Iotsald von Saint-Claude, Vita des Abtes Odilo von Cluny by Iotsald von Saint-Claude; Johannes Staub: Studien zu Iotsalds Vita des Abtes Odilo von Cluny by Johannes Staub

Review by: Frederick S. Paxton

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Reviews

1932 study, The Luttrell Psalter, has served as a springboard for articles and books by Lucy Freeman Sandler, Janet Backhouse, and Michael Camille. The Murthy Hours should provide a similarly rich foundation for scholars of the twenty-first century.

ANNE RUDLOFF STANTON, University of Missouri


The two volumes under review make a major contribution to Cluniac and eleventh-century studies. Based on all known manuscripts, Johannes Staub’s edition of Iotsald of Saint-Claude’s life of Odilo of Cluny restores the full extent of the original. Iotsald, a former student and intimate associate of Odilo, may have begun writing in the direct aftermath of the latter’s death on January 1, 1049. He finished sometime before July 1051/52, the death date of Odilo’s nephew Bishop Stephen of Le Puy, to whom the text is addressed. Staub’s edition includes two chapters and marginalia added in certain manuscript traditions and three associated texts, the most important of which is an eyewitness account of Odilo’s death at Souvigny and the first miracles at his grave, which Iotsald used. Another, a different version of the well-known story of the hermit who praises Odilo’s care for the dead (book 2.15), which passed from Peter Damian’s abbreviation of Iotsald into The Golden Legend and other high-medieval compendia, deserves further study. According to this hermit, God granted a request from Odilo that the dead be spared infernal torment on Mondays and Tuesdays, reflecting perhaps a distorted echo of the Truce of God, which, partly under Odilo’s direction, banned warfare on Thursdays through Sundays. Staub’s detailed manuscript descriptions reveal the many ways Iotsald’s text lived on at Cluny and also at places like Saint-Arnoul de Crépy, whence come three of the seven medieval witnesses (Moissac, La-Trinité de Fécamp, and Trier), even after Peter Damian’s abbreviation had become the more-or-less official Cluniac version.

The studies in the companion volume reveal the literary complexities of the text, a mix of biography, hagiography, and poetic lament. After the Bible, Iotsald drew heavily on Jerome’s letters, Ambrose’s De officiis and funeral orations, and Sulpicius Severus, but also on Virgil’s Aeneid. He framed a prose life and two books on miracles (before and after Odilo’s death) with a prologue and a poetic dialogue in imitation of Paschiasius Radbertus’s Ecloga to the life of Adalhard of Corbie. He also constructed a double inner frame around the biographical first book (to which he refers at various times as an epitaphium, sermo, libellus, and vita) using prose and poetic laments, an account of Odilo’s ancestry, and visions of him at his death. Not surprisingly, this material was circulating alone by the end of the eleventh century (Manuscript F, from Fécamp). Was that Iotsald’s intent? The poetic laments that end the whole work include a planctus of 140 hexameter lines, the core of which is modeled on the Song of Songs; two short poems in distichs; and the Ritmus, composed of 28 4-line stanzas that combine great emotional power with the spare elegance of hymnody. Staub likens the overall structure to a cathedral complex rather than a frame narrative, but whatever the proper analogy, Iotsald’s text is essential to any understanding of life, death, and memory at Cluny, and his edition is certain to be definitive.

The introduction to the edition could have been expanded to encompass some of the
material in the companion volume, in particular the discussion of the additions to Manuscripts C and M and the marginalia (pp. 74–82). Publishing the rest in an article would have obviated the need for two separate volumes and a lot of flipping back and forth. The main volume is flawlessly edited, exhibiting only minor typographical errors (pp. 5, line 10; 272, n. 4; 290, line 11). Such minor errors also occur in the companion volume (pp. 7, n. 29, and 56, n. 8), but there are real problems with its tables: on page 29 the prologue is included within the Epitaphium but on page 18 it is not; on page 30 chapters 21–22 instead of 23–24 are identified as present only in the long version; and the table on page 73, which would be more helpful if it identified lots of manuscripts by sigla, gets only a minor reference in the text. The phrase per eddomadam queried in Studien, p. 58, n. 12, was surely meant to be per hebdomadam: that is, through the week (octave) of Odilo’s feast day.

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Karl Bosl called the years between 1050 and 1150 “the century of the Augustinian canons.” The role of canons in religious and church reform movements of the high Middle Ages has drawn considerable attention as the Augustinians represented a spiritual ideal between that of monastic withdrawal and the social concerns of the mendicant orders. The nature of Augustinian piety and programs has been at issue in efforts to understand the distinction between secular and regular canons, or between the ordo antiquus and the ordo novus. German scholars, notably Johannes Vincke, Odilo Engels, Johannes Joseph Bauer, and Ursula Vones-Liebenstein, have described the expansion of the vita canonica in the Iberian Peninsula, especially in Catalonia. Nikolas Jaspert builds on that impressive tradition, but he is most interested in the social history of the canons, in particular their contributions to the expansion of Barcelona. His detailed and well-argued book explores the urban context and activities of two Augustinian foundations, and he also adds substantially to our understanding of the medieval history of Barcelona. This city, despite its importance and the extraordinary wealth of surviving source material, has not received the attention it deserves from historians both within and outside of Spain.

The Augustinian movement did not establish a uniform or centralized set of institutions, and so it is not surprising that the two Barcelona collegiate chapters treated in this study, Santa Anna and Santa Eulàlia del Camp, differed in their purposes, endowments, and organization. Both were founded around the middle of the twelfth century in circumstances that reflect the assertion of new commercial elites and the power of the count of Barcelona (de facto king of Aragon). Santa Eulàlia, situated outside the eastern city wall, was from the start under episcopal supervision and formed an association for the cure of souls and the care of the sick. Santa Anna’s foundation charter does not survive, but the church, located just within the northern walled boundary, was part of the Order of the Holy Sepulcher, one of the three early crusade orders, along with the better-known Hospitallers and Templars, and so part of a network whose headquarters was in Jerusalem. Its spiritual orientation was ceremonial and liturgical, less focused on service to the destitute than Santa Eulàlia. Santa Anna’s primary community function was as a prized burial site in keeping with its association with the Holy Sepulcher. Its patrons were initially from the comital circle and the lesser nobility from everywhere in Catalonia while Santa Eulàlia benefited...