Crusade Texts in Translation

ON WARFARE AND THE THREEFOLD PATH OF THE JERUSALEM PILGRIMAGE

A TRANSLATION OF RALPH NIGER'S *DE RE MILITARI ET TRIPLICI VIA PEREGRINATIONIS IEROSOLIMITANE*

John D. Cotts

ROUTLEDGE

On Warfare and the Threefold Path of the Jerusalem Pilgrimage

This volume will provide the first English translation of Ralph Niger's critical reflection on military pilgrimage, written in the late 1180s in response to the calling of the Third Crusade. Long known to scholars as early and highly idiosyncratic critique of crusading, *On Warfare and the Threefold Path of the Jerusalem Pilgrimage* provides a sustained reflection on penance, the meaning of Jerusalem, and the challenges of military expeditions to the Levant. After the fall of Jerusalem in 1187, Ralph resisted the calls to crusade and instead exhorted Christians to look inward and build Jerusalem in their hearts. Throughout the four books of the work, Ralph looks to scripture for precedents for crusading and finds none. However, by ranging widely over examples of Old Testament violence and considering the Heavenly and Earthly Jerusalem together, *On Warfare* offers a unique perspective on how the Bible informed contemporary views of the Crusades. Methodically examining pilgrimage through the lens of scripture, Ralph surveys the entire semantic field of crusading, and concludes that Christian knights could do more good by staying home than by going on a military adventure to the Holy Land.

John D. Cotts (PhD Berkeley, 2000) is a professor of history and the Chair of the Division of Social Sciences at Whitman College (USA). A cultural and intellectual historian of twelfth-century England and France, he has published two books: *The Clerical Dilemma: Peter of Blois and Literate Culture in the Twelfth Century* (2009), and *Europe's Long Twelfth Century: Oder, Anxiety and Adaptation 1095–1229* (2013).

Crusade Texts in Translation

The crusading movement, which originated in the 11th century and lasted beyond the 16th, bequeathed to its future historians a legacy of sources which are unrivalled in their range and variety. These sources document in fascinating detail the motivations and viewpoints, military efforts and spiritual lives, of the participants in the crusades. They also narrate the internal histories of the states and societies which crusaders established or supported in the many regions where they fought. Some of these sources have been translated in the past but the vast majority have been available only in their original language. The goal of this series is to provide a wide-ranging corpus of texts, most of them translated for the first time, which will illuminate the history of the crusades and the crusader-states from every angle, including that of their principal adversaries, the Muslim powers of the Middle East.

Titles in the series include

Baybars' Successors
David Cook

The Conquest of the Holy Land by Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn
Keagan Brewer and James H. Kane

The Chronicle of Arnold of Lübeck
Graham Loud

The *Chanson des Chétifs* and *Chanson de Jérusalem*
Carol Sweetenham

The Old French Chronicle of Morea
Anne Van Arsdall and Helen Moody

On Warfare and the Threefold Path of the Jerusalem Pilgrimage
A Translation of Ralph Niger's *De re militari et triplici via peregrinationis Ierosolimitane*
John D. Cotts

On Warfare and the Threefold Path of the Jerusalem Pilgrimage

A Translation of Ralph Niger's *De re militari et triplici via peregrinationis Ierosolimitane*

John D. Cotts

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group
LONDON AND NEW YORK

First published 2023
by Routledge
4 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN

and by Routledge
605 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10158

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business

British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
Names: Radulfus, Niger, approximately 1140– | Cotts, John D., translator, editor.
Title: On warfare and the threefold path of the Jerusalem pilgrimage : a translation of Ralph Niger's De Re Militari et Triplici via Ierosolimitane peregrinationis / John D. Cotts. Other titles: De re militari et triplici via peregrinationis Ierosolimitane. English | Translation of Ralph Niger's De Re Militari et Triplici via Ierosolimitane peregrinationis
Description: Abingdon, Oxon ; New York, NY : Routledge, 2023. | Series: Crusade texts in translation | Includes bibliographical references and index. |
Identifiers: LCCN 2022035795 (print) | LCCN 2022035796 (ebook) | ISBN 9780367254520 (hardback) | ISBN 9781032234977 (paperback) | ISBN 9780429287893 (ebook)
Subjects: LCSH: Crusades—Third, 1189–1192. | Bible—Criticism, interpretation, etc.—History—Middle Ages, 600–1500. | Pilgrims and pilgrimages.
Classification: LCC D163 .R3413 2023 (print) | LCC D163 (ebook) | DDC 940.1/82—dc23/eng/20220809
LC record available at https://lccn.loc.gov/2022035795
LC ebook record available at https://lccn.loc.gov/2022035796

ISBN: 978-0-367-25452-0 (hbk)
ISBN: 978-1-032-23497-7 (pbk)
ISBN: 978-0-429-28789-3 (ebk)

DOI: 10.4324/9780429287893

Typeset in Times New Roman
by codeMantra

For Afton, Mary Caroline, and Dad

Contents

Acknowledgements

In 2014, the International Medieval Congress at Leeds featured a series of sessions on "The Uses of the Bible in Crusades Sources." At one of the panels (I do not recall which one), an audience member (I do not recall who) remarked that to study the crusades properly, 'we all need to be exegetes.' At many times while preparing this translation, I became concerned about how far away from crusading Ralph Niger seemed to wander in his exegetical forays into spiritual pilgrimage, and I worried acutely that readers would be disappointed as they pored over Ralph's meticulous analysis of every part of the tabernacle and the Ark of the Covenant. In those moments, I would return to this comment to remind myself that, in a very real way, Ralph provides the very intellectual DNA of the crusades (as the clergy understood them). Whoever he was, then, I thank him profusely.

Fortunately, although I was not able to share ideas as easily and frequently as I would have liked because of the disruptions that COVID-19 visited upon the scholarly community, I do know the identities of many people who helped out in the last several years as well as they were able while I worked on the project. Nicolas Morton initially suggested that *De re militari et triplici via Ierosolimitane* was ripe for translation, while Philippe Buc, both in personal correspondence and in his published work, helped convince me of the text's importance. For very specific comments on this translation, I am grateful to Katherine Allen Smith and Winston Black. Others who have given me insights in one way or another, or simply opportunities to discuss the intellectual history of the crusades (or in some cases, Ralph Niger himself), include Anne Duggan, Matthew Gabriele, Elizabeth Lapina, Mia Münster-Swendsen, Nicholas Paul, Jason Roche, Jay Rubenstein, Kristin Skottki, and Susanna Throop. Long ago, Grover Zinn first introduced me to twelfth-century mystical interpretations of scripture, and his work continues to help me to understand the thought-worlds of authors like Ralph Niger.

Thanks to the world pandemic, I finished much of this book in a basement office, which was only possible because of the work of Jen Pope and the Interlibrary Loan staff at Whitman College's Penrose Library, and because Bill North had earlier lent me his microfilms of Ralph Niger's

biblical commentaries (Ben Murphy of the Pacific Northwest Archive at Whitman also kindly allowed me to use its microfilm reader). Prior to 2020, some early work for this project was completed in the British Library, the Institute of Historical Research, and the Warburg Institute, all in London. As always, I thank the staff of each of these institutions. Special thanks go to Claire Arrand at Lincoln Cathedral Library for granting access to (and the ability to photograph) several manuscripts of Ralph's works.

Since I did so much of the work for this project at home while juggling Zoom teaching and home-schooling during the lockdown, I must especially thank my personal 'pod'. My wife Afton Truscott supported this work while dealing with her considerably more pressing responsibilities as a night-shift ICU nurse during all the various 'surges' of the pandemic. I hope that this is not inappropriate venue in which to call her my hero. Finally, my daughter Mary Caroline Cotts amazed me with her resilience and I thank her for the endless stream of drawings of rainbows, unicorns, and dragons she made for my home office wall.

Abbreviations and short titles in the notes

CCCM	*Corpus Christianorum Continutatio Mediaevalis.*
Codex	Bruce W. Frier, ed., *The Codex of Justinian*: *A New Annotated Translation with Parallel Latin and Greek Text*, 3 vols., Cambridge, 2016.
Decretum	*Decretum Magistri Gratiani*, in *Corpus Iuris Canonici*, ed. Emil Friedberg (1879), vol. 1.
Digest	*The Digest of Justinian*, ed. Alan Watson (Philadelphia, 1998), 4 vols.
Schmugge, DRM	*Radulfus Niger—De Re Militari et Triplici Via Peregrinationis Ierosolimitane (1187/88)*, ed. Ludwig Schmugge, Beitrage zur Geschichte und Quellenkunde des Mittelalters 6 (Berlin, 1977).
Institutes	*Justinian's Institutes*, trans. Peter Birks and Grant McLeod (Ithaca, NY, 1987).
PL	J.-P. Migne, ed., *Patrologiae Latinae Cursus Compeltus.*

Introduction

In the fall of 1187, the newly elected Pope Gregory VIII had to confront a political, military, and spiritual catastrophe. The Muslim general Saladin had destroyed the army of the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem on 4 July at the Battle of Hattin and then accepted the surrender of the city of Jerusalem itself on 2 October. Gregory channeled his grief into the papal bull *Audita tremendi*, which described the series of calamities emotionally but succinctly: the 'Saracens' had captured the king, slaughtered bishops and knights alike, and, perhaps worst of all, had seized the relic of the True Cross. Finding a biblical precedent for current events, he quoted Psalm 73: *O God, the gentiles have invaded your inheritance, they have sullied your holy temple, they have laid waste Jerusalem*.[1] History was repeating itself, with Saladin reprising Nebuchadnezzar's role as the destroyer of the Holy City. This time, Christians had lost Jerusalem because of their own sins, and so Gregory explained that the only proper response was penance, followed by an expedition to recover it from Muslim control.[2]

Other intellectuals of the Latin West, drawing on their theological and legal educations in the twelfth-century schools, elaborated on Gregory's message in a series of emotional appeals for princes and knights to embark on what they described as a 'pilgrimage', and which would take the form of the military adventure that scholars now call the Third Crusade. Tasked with 'preaching the cross', that is, encouraging Christians to sew the cross to their clothing to identify themselves as pilgrims on the path to Jerusalem, Cardinal Henry of Albano gave sermons in Germany, while Baldwin, archbishop of Canterbury, journeyed to Wales. While attending the papal court

1 Psalms 78:1. Here and in the translation, the Latin Vulgate's numbering is used for the Psalms. For a good recent translation of the bull, see 'Pope Gregory VIII, *Audita tremendi*, October 29, 1187', in *Crusade and Christendomz: Annotated Documents in Translation from Innocent III to the Fall of Acre, 1187–1291*, ed. Jessalynn Bird, Edward Peters, and James M. Powell (Philadelphia, 2013), 4–9.

2 For an important recent assessment of *Audita tremendi*, see Thomas W. Smith, '*Audita tremendi* and the Call for the Third Crusade Reconsidered, 1187–1188', *Viator* 49. (2018): 63–101.

DOI: 10.4324/9780429287893-1

in Ferrara on business for the same Baldwin, the French cleric Peter of Blois began writing a series of tracts lamenting that the princes and knights were too slow to respond. Nearly all of these crusade propagandists started by largely replicating Gregory VIII's list of disasters in the Holy Land, and then made emotional calls for a pilgrimage that would cleanse not only the pilgrim's soul but Christendom as a whole.[3]

At almost exactly the same time, but perhaps a bit later, a relatively obscure English scholar named Ralph Niger agreed that the fall of Jerusalem was a catastrophe that required a penitential response, but came to radically different conclusions in the work translated here, *On Warfare and the Threefold Path of the Jerusalem Pilgrimage* (Latin: *De re militari et triplici via peregrinationis Ierosolimitane*). Yes, the king was captured, the bishops and knights slaughtered, and the True Cross was seized. Yes, the sins of Christendom were to blame for the crisis, and penitential pilgrimages were necessary to resolve it. In contrast to his fellow clerics, however, Ralph argued that 'these pilgrimages can be undertaken privately at home, just as well as openly and in public'.[4] A military expedition was not necessary for true penance, and could be both physically and spiritually dangerous. In any case, Christian knights should probably not embark. Throughout the four books of *On Warfare*, Ralph builds a powerful case that traveling to Palestine to kill Muslims would do little solve to the problems of individual Christian souls, or of the Latin West in general.

Apparently, Ralph's message did not resonate. Few scribes seem to have copied *On Warfare*, as it survives in only two manuscripts. The library of Lincoln Cathedral has one of them, along with five other codices that include Ralph's commentaries on several books of the Bible, a guide to the meaning of Hebrew names in scripture, and a series of liturgies for the Virgin Mary complete with musical notation. Nineteenth-century scholars edited and published a universal chronicle found in the *On Warfare* manuscript, along with a shorter chronicle from a different manuscript tradition.[5] They mostly ignored the rest of Ralph's writings, and historians who bothered to think

3 For good summaries of this period of crusade preaching, see Penny J. Cole, *The Preaching of the Crusades to the Holy Land, 1095–1270* (Cambridge, MA, 1991), 62–179; and Jay Rubenstein, *Nebuchadnezzar's Dream: The Crusades, Apocalyptic Prophecy, and the End of History* (Oxford, 2019), 167–80. For the texts themselves, see Henry of Albano, *De peregi-nante civitate Dei*, *PL* 204, 251–402, esp. 351–61; Gerald of Wales, *Itinerarium Kambriae et Descriptio Kambriae*, ed. James F. Dimock, Rolls Series 21.6 (London, 1868), trans. Lewis Thorpe, *The Journey through Wales and the Description of Wales* (London, 1978); Peter of Blois, *Conquestio de dilatione vie Ierosolimitane*, in *Petri Blesensis Tractatus Duo*, ed. R. B. C Huygens, *CCCM* 194 (Turnhout, 2002), 75–95.

4 See Ralph's prologue, below.

5 *Radulfi Nigri Chronica: The Chronicles of Ralph Niger*, ed. Robert Anstruther (London, 1851); *Radulfi Nigri Chronica universali*, ed. R. Pauli and F. Liebermann, Monumenta Germaniae Historica Scriptores 27 (Hannover, 1885).

about him, with a few exceptions, considered Ralph to be little more than a minor English chronicler until the 1940s.

During that decade, the Canadian scholar George Flahiff wrote two important articles that introduced Ralph's life and works but also praised his 'consistently critical attitude toward the Third Crusade.' Indeed, Flahiff portrayed Ralph as a lonely but poignant voice of dissent amidst a wave of crusading enthusiasm:

> At a moment when cardinals like Henry of Albano, archbishops like Baldwin of Canterbury and innumerable clerics at all levels were preaching in favor of the crusade, it is strange indeed to catch this one clerical voice raised to argue against it. The traditional *Deus vult* ['God wills it,' the rallying cry of crusaders since 1095] must have been on many Christian lips as Niger dared for the first time to cut across it and proclaim: *Deus non vult*.[6]

Although the phrase '*Deus non vult*' appears nowhere in *On Warfare*, Flahiff found Ralph's discomfort with the crusading both unmistakable and critical for understanding twelfth-century attitudes toward penance and violence. Appointed archbishop of Winnipeg in 1961 (and elevated to cardinal in 1969), Flahiff became a conciliar father of the Second Vatican Council (1962–65), where he called for the assembled clerics to embrace ecumenism, because the 'history of salvation which begins in Israel and reaches its peak in Jesus Christ, still continues today in the pilgrim Church.'[7] In Ralph Niger, he may well have found a medieval source for some of the values of Vatican II.

Through these careful and erudite works, Flahiff brought this previously under-studied cleric to the attention of crusades historians. Ralph Niger has figured prominently in discussions of the criticism of crusading ever since, especially after 1977, when Ludwig Schmugge published a fine, scholarly edition of the Latin text of *On Warfare*. While most scholars have continued to acknowledge Ralph as a relatively rare critic of the crusading movement, they have also cautioned that he was clearly not a pacifist (since he supported violence against heretics), that elements of his work are quite clearly derived from mainstream theology and contemporary social criticism, and that much of *On Warfare* seems to have little or no direct relationship to

6 George F. Flahiff, '*Deus non vult*: A Critic of the Third Crusade', *Mediaeval Studies* 9 (1947): 162–88, here at 178. The other piece is Flahiff, 'Ralph Niger: An Introduction to His Life and Works', *Mediaeval Studies* 2 (1940): 104–26.

7 George Flahiff, 'Man's Disorder and God's Design', in *Council Speeches of Vatican II*, ed. Hans Küng, Yves Congar, and Daniel O'Hanlon (Glen Rock, NJ, 1964), 185–87, here at 186. On Flahiff's life and thought, see P. Wallace Platt, *Gentle Eminence: A Life of Cardinal Flahiff* (Montreal, 1999).

crusading.[8] Ralph, moreover, was not uniformly hostile to crusading in his other writings. He acknowledged and lamented the calamitous failure of the Second Crusade, but he did not judge the Third Crusade harshly in his chronicles. He even praised the often reviled Reynald of Châtillon, whom many blamed for provoking Saladin's attacks on the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem, as a hero and martyr (just as crusade propagandist Peter of Blois did).[9]

The present translation is informed by the conviction that Ralph's critique of crusading deserves to be taken seriously, and that, despite its digressions, *On Warfare* offers a unique survey of the semantic field within which medieval intellectuals understood military pilgrimage and holy war. He brings together contemporary currents in exegesis from the schools of Paris and elsewhere, as well as canon and civil law, and demonstrates a typical twelfth-century knack for finding myriad spiritual meanings in scripture and everyday objects alike, bringing what has been rightly termed the 'symbolist mentality' to bear on warfare.[10] Even when his symbolic readings of scripture and warfare alike seem far removed from the concerns of the crusade, they offer insights into the diffusion of the exegetical ideas of the schools (and are often quite conceptually fascinating in their own right). Ralph explores military pilgrimage from historical, sacramental, legal, and exegetical perspectives—that is, in all the ways that a school-trained cleric was supposed to think about them—and concludes that it was both dangerous and unnecessary. Before returning to the problem of what Ralph truly thought about the Third Crusade, and military pilgrimage in general, this introduction will summarize what is known of Ralph's life, and provide a synopsis of the text.

Ralph Niger's life and career

Like most twelfth-century writers other than Abelard, Ralph Niger wrote little about his own background, and scholars have been able to trace only the most general outlines of his life and career. Scattered references in his extant works, along with a few mentions of his name in epistolary, chronicle, and documentary sources, together have given them frustratingly little to work with. The generally accepted estimate of his birth date as *circa* 1140 depends almost entirely on his having earned the title of 'master' (Latin *magister*)

8 For Ralph's reputation as a 'crusade critic', see below.

9 *Radulfus Niger—Chronica: Eine englische Weltchronik des 12. Jahrhunderts*, ed. Hanna Krause (Frankfurt am Main, 1985), 288–93 (hereafter, *Chronica*); Peter of Blois, *Passio Raginaldi Principis Antiochie*, in *Petri Blesensis Tractatus Duo*, 31–73.

10 See M.-D. Chenu, 'The Symbolist Mentality', in *Nature, Man, and Society in the Twelfth Century*, trans. Jerome Taylor and Lester K. Little (repr. Toronto, 1997), 99–145.

by 1166, when John of Salisbury addressed him as such in a letter.[11] Later university ordinances required that masters be 20 years of age, and John portrays Ralph as well established in ecclesiastical and scholastic circles by the 1160s, which makes it likely that he was in his mid-twenties or older at that time.[12] Frédérique Lachaud has pointed out that Ralph, in one of his biblical commentaries, referred to 'the times of my father' as witnessing the reigns of the emperors Henry IV (d. 1106) and Henry V (d. 1125), which could suggest an earlier date for Ralph's birth.[13] Marco Meschini takes Ralph's later claims to have witnessed 'sieges and tournaments' as evidence that Ralph had a military career before becoming a secular cleric, which would mean Ralph was a bit older when he became a master. This, in turn, would mean that he could have been born considerably earlier. Since Ralph could well have witnessed military exploits as a clerical observer, however, this must remain conjectural.[14]

In his exegetical *Remediarius in Ezram*, Ralph refers to the Venerable Bede, whose example he followed as an exegete and historian, as 'my fellow Englishman' (*coanglicus meus*), and this, combined with his continual interest in English political affairs and his return to England around 1189, establishes his English origins with reasonable certainty.[15] As for the rest of his early life, it is probable that, like many of his countrymen at the time, he traveled to the continent for his education. When he appeared in the historical records as a 'master' in 1166 he had necessarily studied in at least one of the main continental schools, most likely Paris. In the prologue to his *Moralia Regum* ('Moral Commentary on Kings'), he claims that 'I have had as my examples the venerable John of Salisbury, bishop of Chartres, and my master Gerard of Pucelle.' Both John (*c.* 1115–80) and Gerard (*c.* 1117–84) taught at Paris in the 1160s, with the later moving to Cologne in 1166, and both seem to have been in close contact with Ralph in the late 1160s. Mia Munster-Swensen has argued, on the basis of Ralph's German connections, that Cologne could have been the primary site of his

11 *The Letters of John of Salisbury. Vol. II: The Later Letters (1163–1180)*, ed. W. J. Millor and C. N. L. Brooke (Oxford, 1979), 198–205 (letter 181).

12 On customs regarding the ages of students and masters at Paris, see Ian P. Wei, *Intellectual Culture in Medieval Paris: Theologians and the University, c.1100–1330* (Cambridge, 2012), esp. 93–96.

13 Frédérique Lachaud, 'Ralph Niger and the Books of Kings', *Anglo Norman Studies*, 40 (2018), 135–46, here at 126. The reference to his father is found in Ralphs *Moralia Regum*, Lincoln Cathedral Library MS 25, fols. 166vb–167ra.

14 Marco Meschini, 'Penser le croisade après le chute de Jérusalem (1187). Le *De re militari et triplici via peregrinationis Ierosolimitane* de Radulgus Niger', in *Les Projets de croisade. Géostrategie et diplomatie européenne du XIVe au XVVIIe siècle*, ed. Jacques Paviot (Toulouse, 2014), 31–59, here at 56. The reference is to Ralph's prologue, below.

15 For *coanglicus meus*, see *In Paralipomenon*, Lincoln Cathedral Chapter Library, MS 27, fol. 3ra.

education.[16] Poitiers also was home to an important school at the time, and (as noted below), Ralph had ties to that city, so it is not impossible that he studied there.[17] Although the precise itinerary or content of Ralph's studies in France or Germany cannot be reconstructed, his extant writings indicate that he studied theology as well as both canon and civil law, and *On Warfare* shows that he had internalized much of the vocabulary of the early scholastic world.[18]

Whatever the details of his subsequent career (which are mostly unknown), Ralph continually presented himself as a theologian interpreting the political world around him. 'The mysteries of scripture', he later wrote, 'seem to me to the echo in the things which I heard and saw in the courts of kings and prelates.'[19] By 1165, he was apparently important enough to introduce one such prelate, Conrad of Wittelsbach, archbishop-elect of Mainz, to Thomas Becket, the exiled archbishop of Canterbury, during the latter's conflict with King Henry II of England. Becket's close friend John of Salisbury wrote two extant letters to Ralph, one in 1166 and the other in 1168. In the first letter, John advises Ralph on how to negotiate with Henry's ally Richard of Ilchester, archdeacon of Poitiers, and weighs the dangers and rewards of Ralph going 'to court' (*ad curiam*). This could mean that Ralph had ties to Henry's entourage through Richard. John's letters urge him to fight for the Church's interest in the circle of earthly power, imploring him to 'act like Lot in Sodom, Joseph in Pharaoh's hall, Hushai in the conferences and counsel of Absalom, Obadiah in Ahab's following and Jezebel's household, or Daniel in Babylon.'[20] Eventually, Ralph would emerge as a devoted admirer of Becket and fierce critic of Henry. Later correspondence suggests that Ralph had established relationships with some of the leading ecclesiastical figures of the period, most of whom are known to have spent time in the schools of Paris.[21]

By the late 1160s, then, Ralph had emerged from the schools and into some kind of curial service with Richard of Ilchester, and perhaps with

16 Mia Münster-Swendsen, 'How to Stop a War with a Theologico-Legal Treatise: The Intellectual Strategies of Sigebert of Gembloux and Ralph Niger', in *Liber Amicorum Ditlev Tamm: Law, History Culture*, ed. Per Andersen, Pia Letto-Vanamo, Kjell Åke Modéer, and Helle Vogt (Copenhagen, 2011), 199–216, here at 205–06.

17 Lachaud, 'Ralph Niger and the Book of Kings', 127.

18 On the lack of a clear distinction between these branches of study, see Atria A. Larson, 'The Reception of Gratian's *Tractatus de penitentia* and the Relationship between Canon Law and Theology in the Second Half of the Twelfth Century', *Journal of Religious History*, 37 (2014), 457–73.

19 'ea que in curiis regum et prelatorum audieram et vidieram consonare mihi videntur': *Moralia Regum* I, Lincoln Cathedral Library MS 25, fol. 2va.

20 *The Letters of John of Salisbury*, ii, 205.

21 On Ralph's activities during the Becket controversy, see Ludwig Schmugge, 'Thomas Becket und König Heinrich II. in der Sicht des Radulfus Niger', *Deutsches Archiv für Erforschung des Mittelalters*, 32 (1976), 572–57.

Henry II himself, since Ralph later regretted that he 'had attended on [Becket's] persecutor to no good purpose while serving at court.'[22] At some point, Ralph entered the court of Henry's son and heir, Henry 'the Young King' (1153–83), who was in near constant rebellion against his father during the last decade of his life. Ralph was at Limoges in 1173, when the two Henrys fell out and the younger one defected to an alliance with the king of France.[23] Later, Ralph wrote glowingly of the young heir Henry, referring to him as 'the most beautiful of the men of our age, vigorous in arms and distinguished in the gifts of youth' (the elder king, in contrast, was variously 'the Ahab of our time' or 'the king under whom the blessed martyr Thomas suffered').[24] Gervase of Tilbury fondly recalled Ralph's time in the Young King's entourage in his *Otia imperialia*, referring to him as 'that learned man of our time, Master Ralph Niger, a fellow courtier of mine in the service of my lord the Young King', before quoting some lines he claims that Ralph included in a lost (and otherwise unattested) verse commentary on Aristotle's *Topica* and *Elenchi*.[25]

The younger Henry died in 1183, and by this time Ralph was probably working on his exegetical books and no longer traveling in the courts of secular princes. He frequently related his exegesis to contemporary political events, and this provides some internal evidence indicating that he wrote a great deal of his voluminous exegetical writings in the 1180s. At this time, he may well have worked as a master, perhaps teaching somewhere in France. Paris would have been a likely location given his connections, but no evidence conclusively places him there. Around 1182, he wrote to Conrad of Wittelsbach, now Archbishop of Salzburg, to ask that his writings (presumably one or more of his biblical commentaries) be shared with the cardinals at Rome and, if possible, approved by the pope.[26] However he earned an income, Ralph was almost certainly engaged as a busy scholar with contacts in high places. Perhaps because of his support for Becket's party or his service in the rebellious Young King's court, he had run afoul of Henry II, and he likely could not have returned to England had he wanted to do so. An anonymous continuator of one of his chronicles wrote (somewhat apologetically) that Ralph had

> been denounced and driven into exile by the aforementioned prince [Henry II]. On account of the injustice of this expulsion, he wrote, more

22 *Moralia Regum* II, Lincoln Cathedral Library MS 26, fol. 100vb.

23 *Moralia Regum* II, fol. 77rb.

24 *Moralia Regum* I, fol. 167ra.

25 Gervase of Tilbury, *Otia Imperialia*, ed. and trans. S. E. Banks and J. W. Binns (Oxford, 2002), 186. On Ralph's service with the Young King, Matthew Strickland, *Henry the Young King 1155–1183* (New Haven, 2016), 12, 147, 156, 241–46, 324.

26 Edited in Martin Preiss, *Die politische Tätigkeit und Stellung der Cisterciensier im Schisma von 1159-177* (Berlin, 1934), 261.

> harshly than was fitting about such a great and most serene king, and with a stinging pen.[27]

No records suggest where he lived, but a few prominent French ecclesiastics took an interest in his theological writings, and this suggests that did much of his writing (and one suspects, teaching) in France.

In the prologue to *On Warfare*, Ralph asked William 'of the White Hands', a cardinal and the archbishop of Rheims, to seek out apostolic approval for his writings—not only *On Warfare* but also 'certain others which I have completed on the books of Moses'—by having them 'examined by wiser men before they are brought to the public by myself or anyone else.' He specified that in the past Bishop Maurice of Paris had been recruited to emend his works, but that the bishop was both too advanced in years and too unfamiliar with canon law to help him at that point. Then, on February 7, 1191, Pope Clement III commissioned the archbishop of Sens, Guy of Noyers, to have several volumes of Ralph Niger's theology examined for orthodoxy by suitable men of his province. After Clement's death the following month, someone in Rome copied the charge *verbatim* and re-issued it in the name of the next pope, Celestine III. An additional notice, which later would be copied into the flyleaf of the *Moralia Regum* manuscript along with the two papal letters, indicates that Guy received the commentaries on Kings, Chronicles, Ezra-Nehemiah, and Numbers. Another set of volumes was sent to the aforementioned Archbishop William at Rheims (who had previously served as archbishop of Sens).[28] The province of Sens included several of the era's most important centers of learning, including Paris, Chartres, and Orleans; that two successive archbishops of Sens were chosen to examine the works could indicate that Ralph wrote them somewhere within its boundaries during the 1180s.[29]

Like many exiled English clerics, Ralph probably intended to return to England when circumstances allowed. Henry II died on June 6, 1189, and before long Ralph had entered the circle of Bishop Hugh of Lincoln, for whom he witnessed a charter for St Andrews, Northampton sometime before the end of March 1190.[30] Hugh of Avalon (*c.* 1130–1200) presided over one of England's great cathedral schools at Lincoln, and luminaries like Walter Map, Gerald of Wales, and William de Montibus held benefices there.[31] Hugh was in France in late 1189, and it is tempting to speculate

27 *Radulfi Nigri Chronica*, ed. Anstruther, 169.

28 These letters are printed in W. Holtzamann, *Papsturkunden in England*, vol.2 (Berlin, 1935), 453–55.

29 See Flahiff, 'Ralph Niger: An Introduction', 110.

30 *English Episcopal Acta IV: Lincoln 1186–1206*, ed. David M. Smith (London, 1986), 88.

31 On Lincoln as an intellectual center, see Frans van Liere, 'The Study of Canon Law and the Eclipse of the Lincoln Schools. 1175–1225', in *History of Universities* 18, ed. Mordechai Feingold (Oxford, 2003), 1–13.

that Ralph accompanied him back to Lincoln.[32] Since he witnessed the St Andrews charter along with three other 'masters' who were canons of the cathedral, it has been assumed that Ralph too held a prebend there, but it is not clear which benefice he held. Court records from 1194 list him as the plaintiff in a legal case whose record referred to him as a canon, but the toponym for the canonry is illegible in the manuscript.[33] In the late 1190s, a man named Ralph served as the *succentor* (sub-chanter) of Lincoln Cathedral. Ralph Niger composed music around the same time, and it is possible that he indeed served in this capacity (but this, again, is a highly speculative claim).[34] His longer chronicle discusses events well into the 1190s, and two court records mention him during the same decade: one describes a case about two men who robbed Ralph Niger's servant in 1194–95, and another involves a lawsuit that Ralph brought against King John relating to the property connected to his Lincoln canonry.[35] A final bit of evidence, however, suggests that he died by 1199. In that year King John gifted what is described as Ralph's old house in London to a man named Roger Crispus, and after this he disappears from our written sources.[36]

Ralph Niger's extant writings

Whatever position he occupied there in the 1190s, the members of the cathedral chapter at Lincoln took care to preserve his writings, which he helpfully listed near the end of his universal chronicle:

> Ralph Niger wrote seven digests on the Heptateuch. He also wrote *Moralia Regum*, and epitomes of the Old Testament on Chronicles and Ezra. He also wrote a book *On Warfare and the Threefold Route of the Jerusalem Pilgrimage,* a book on the four feasts of the Virgin Mary, along with a book on the interpretation of Hebrew names. He also wrote this chronicle.[37]

This list corresponds neatly to the writings preserved at Lincoln:

32 See Hugh's itinerary in *English Episcopal Acta IV*, 209.

33 *Fasti Ecclesiae Anglicanae 1066–1300 III: Lincoln*, ed. John Le Neve and Diana Greenway (London, 1977), 136.

34 *The Registrum Antiquissimum of the Cathedral Church of Lincoln*, vol. IV, ed. Kathleen Major, Publications of the Lincoln Record Society 41 (Hereford, 1950), 72–73; Schmugge, *DRM*, 10.

35 *Three Rolls of the King's Court n the Reign of King Richard the First: A. D. 1194–1195*, ed. F. W. Maitland, Publications of the Pipe Roll Society 14 (London, 1891), 88; *Rotuli Curiae Regis*, I (London, 1835), 87. Both cited in Flahiff, 'Ralph Niger: An Introduction', 113.

36 *Rotuli Chartarum in Turri londinensi asservati*, ed. T. D. Hardy (London, 1837), 22, also cited in Flahiff, 'Ralph Niger: An Introduction', 113.

37 *Chronica*, 287. I follow Schumgge, *DRM*, 11–13 and Flahiff, 'Ralph Niger: An Introduction', 116–23, in organizing this survey of Ralph's works according to the passage from the chronicle.