

The Old French Johannes Translation Of The Pseudo-Turpin Chronicle: A Critical Edition

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CHURCH HISTORY

scholars who have produced this edition, commentary, and translation have made an important contribution to medieval studies.

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The Old French Johannes Translation of the Pseudo-Turpin Chronicle: A Critical Edition and Supplement. By RONALD N. WALPOLE. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976. 2 vols. xxii + 238 pp., viii + 531 pp. \$15.00, \$28.50.

Western medieval Christendom's greatest hero was Charlemagne, a truly all-European figure. A measure of the accuracy of this statement is found in the unusual role Charles the Great had in the folklore of medieval Europe. Professor Ronald N. Walpole of the University of California, Berkeley, provides in the two volumes under review a superb study of one of the major facets of the Charlemagne legend. The *Pseudo-Turpin Chronicle* claimed to provide a true account of the Emperor's activities in Spain, first by recounting again the famous story recorded in the *Chanson de Roland* of the encounter between Moslems and Franks at Roncevaux and the final victory of the Franks at Saragossa, and second by adding an entirely fabricated account of a much longer crusade in Spain by Charles.

In his succinct "Introduction," Walpole makes clear the relationship between the *Pseudo-Turpin Chronicle* and the original Carolingian legend; he notes that the *Chronicle* was a mid-twelfth century product designed to support growing French nationalism and to support also "the crusade in Spain and the pilgrimage to Compostella" (p. xiv). It was the work of a cleric whose literary and historical inventiveness enjoyed a remarkable success, a fact attested to by its acceptance as truth for nearly three centuries and its wide distribution in Latin and vernacular translations. It is one of the latter which Walpole presents in a study of exquisite scholarship.

Walpole notes that "Johannes's translation is one of the very earliest examples of French prose." It is important, too, because it brings us close to "the language of the mediaeval French people talking among themselves" (p. xxi). In a chapter on "Johannes as Translator" (pp. 97-122), he places the work of Johannes and the *Pseudo-Turpin* with their social and religious contexts. The translator as an individual emerges through Walpole's imaginative yet rigorous analysis of the text produced by Johannes. It is the kind of historical reconstruction that can be done only by one so intimately familiar with all of the relevant texts. In this chapter one sees Walpole fulfilling the objective he mentions in his introductory remarks, namely that the reconstituting of the past is only possible when

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