

3-1-1986

Review of Gerald of Wales (Giraldus Cambrensis),
the Life of Hugh of Avalon, Bishop of Lincoln,
1186-1200, by R.M. Loomis

Joseph F. Kelly

John Carroll University, kelly@jcu.edu

Follow this and additional works at: http://collected.jcu.edu/theo_rels-facpub

 Part of the [Religion Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Kelly, Joseph F., "Review of Gerald of Wales (Giraldus Cambrensis), the Life of Hugh of Avalon, Bishop of Lincoln, 1186-1200, by R.M. Loomis" (1986). *Theology & Religious Studies*. 6.
http://collected.jcu.edu/theo_rels-facpub/6

This Book Review is brought to you for free and open access by Carroll Collected. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theology & Religious Studies by an authorized administrator of Carroll Collected. For more information, please contact connell@jcu.edu.

access to leaders at royal and papal courts and in scholarly circles. His major works have earned him a reputation as a political theoretician and an interpreter of the intellectual controversies of his day. His personal contacts made him a source of information on the quarrels between Becket and Henry II and between the Holy Roman Empire and the papacy. He had few opportunities to affect the course of history but many to observe the behavior of those who did.

The World of John of Salisbury brings together current opinion on long-standing controversies about John, but it offers no revisionistic interpretation of his work. Jan Van Laarhoven's chapter on John's discussion of tyrannicide may force changes in some political science survey courses. Pierre Riché's description of John's education is a good introduction to the intellectual ferment of the twelfth century. The "humanism" of the period is put in perspective by comments on John's classical scholarship by Janet Martin, Rodney Thomson, and Klaus Guth—and by Avrom Saltman's reminder of the importance of biblical references in John's essays and letters. Other chapters place John in clearer political contexts, point out specific influences on his thought, and trace manuscripts with which he had some connection. There is a greater coherence to the volume than one often finds in collections of conference papers.

Behrend College
Pennsylvania State University
 Erie, Pennsylvania

A. DANIEL FRANKFORTER

Gerald of Wales (Giraldus Cambrensis): The Life of St. Hugh of Avalon, Bishop of Lincoln, 1186–1200. Edited and translated by RICHARD M. LOOMIS. Garland Library of Medieval Literature Series A, 31. New York: Garland Publishing, 1985. lxviii + 132 pp. \$41.00.

This volume offers a Latin edition, without critical apparatus, and an English translation of Gerald of Wales's *vita* of Hugh of Avalon, bishop of Lincoln during the reigns of Henry II, Richard I, and John I. Loomis also provides a long introduction. I cannot say whether it is to Loomis's credit or not that the introduction makes better reading than the text.

Gerald of Wales (ca. 1147–1223) was an important personage in the Anglo-Norman church and a famous writer. Loomis's introduction gives a good picture of him and of his literary style, which is not at its best in this work. Gerald emerges from the introduction as a vital, engaging man.

In the *vita* Hugh becomes one more medieval saint, one who apparently led a truly saintly life but whose fame rested on posthumous thaumaturgy. The *vita* is a major source for Hugh's life and career because of its early date—less than twenty years after its subject's death—but otherwise it has little biographical merit. There is a marvelous, less-than-saintly (and thus rather

human) anecdote of Hugh's using the sacramental blow at confirmation to strike an old man who had insulted him (1.3.16; pp. 14-17), and there are several good glimpses into the religious life of the medieval peasant.

Loomis has overlooked a few references, for example, to Mark 3:25-26 in the story of a cure (2.5.77; pp. 50-51) and to the Celtic hagiographical tradition (1.1.9; pp. 10-11).

John Carroll University
Cleveland, Ohio

JOSEPH F. T. KELLY

The Papacy and the Levant (1204-1571). Volume 3, *The Sixteenth Century to the Reign of Julius III*. Volume 4, *The Sixteenth Century from Julius III to Pius V*. By KENNETH M. SETTON. *Memoirs of the American Philosophical Society* 161. Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1984. x + 564 and viii + 615 pp. \$45.00 each.

The publication of these two volumes brings to a splendid conclusion one of the great historical enterprises of the decade: the delineation of the twists and turns of papal policy towards the Levant at the close of the Middle Ages and the beginning of the modern period. Setton's survey began with the Latin Empire of Constantinople. It concludes with the naval action at Lepanto, while casting a few glances towards the future. To describe this accomplishment as herculean is accurate, and yet even this heroic epithet misses the mark. Setton's work is a monument not only to the industry of a lifetime but to the concerns of a humanist historian. For all his detail, at once powerful and almost overwhelming, Setton never forgets the individual, the person who is at the centre of the web of events and movements we call history.

Since the middle point of this history is the papacy, we would expect individual popes to emerge clearly from the assembly of facts. And they do—no easy task given the convolutions of papal history. There are two dimensions: the papal relationship to the Near East in general and the Turks in particular on the one hand; and on the other, the papacy and its myriad connections with the principal Italian powers and thence to the major national groupings of Western Europe. It is the description of the point-counterpoint, the interaction between these two planes of historical development which is the strongest element in the work. It is not enough to understand Venetian ambitions and anxieties vis-à-vis the Levant and the Turks. It is imperative to see how all these concerns related to the concerns of other states as well as papal eastern policy in all its ramifications. Seen in these perspectives, the papal task of mobilizing Christian Europe against the Turks is shown for what it is: a necessary task, an impossible task, all the more because everything was changing and no one was to blame.

To describe and analyze the papal role in turning back the Turkish menace requires a deftness which is far beyond mere intellectual cleverness. It