

Andrea Giraudo

Università degli Studi di Siena

THE MEDIEVAL WALDENSIAN SERMONS

Ancient Waldensian literature represents an outstanding source for the study of medieval Waldensian movement, as it is a rare, direct testimony of a dissident medieval religious current. The extant literary production is written in a late eastern variety of medieval Occitan; it includes, almost exclusively, doctrinal and edifying texts, such as biblical translations, poems, treatises and sermons. The latter constitute a collection of about two hundred texts that are still unpublished despite being one of the main sources for the reconstruction and study of medieval Waldensian preaching. An edition of such an important *corpus* is now the aim of a project established at the beginning of the millennium in Turin (Italy) thanks to the publishing house Claudiana, the Waldensian Studies Society and the financial commitment of the Waldensian Church. The research group is led by Luciana Borghi Cedrini (Professor of Romance Philology at the University of Turin) and the project is officially supported by the Waldensian Faculty of Theology of Rome. Since 2013, it has been coordinated by me and it is expected to be active at least until 2018.

Waldensian literature is preserved in around twenty small-sized miscellaneous manuscripts, eleven of which contain sermons. The whole *corpus* was probably composed in the Occitan valleys of the Cottian Alps (near Turin) between late fifteenth and early sixteenth century, but the texts do not necessarily date back to that period; on the contrary, some of them are possibly older and they probably convey different phases of thought.¹

The Waldensian *corpus* was gathered for the most part at the beginning of the seventeenth century in its very same production area by Jean-Paul Perrin, who based his *Histoire des Vaudois* on those manuscripts.² Soon after, the *corpus* was

¹ See BORGHİ CEDRINI, “L’antica lingua valdese,” 225–226.

² PERRIN, *Histoire*.

dispersed among several European libraries.³ Today, Waldensian manuscripts are kept in Cambridge, University Library (4 mss. containing sermons); Carpentras, Bibliothèque Inguimbertaine; Dijon, Bibliothèque municipale (1 ms. containing sermons); Dublin, Trinity College Library (4 mss. containing sermons); Genève, Bibliothèque de Genève (2 mss. containing sermons); Grenoble, Bibliothèque municipale; Zurich, Stadtsbibliothek.

After their scattering, the Waldensian manuscripts fell into oblivion, primarily because of their language, which was rather difficult to understand. The manuscripts were, therefore, considered to be either Spanish or French or even Catalan.⁴ Only at the end of the XIX century did the first studies and descriptions of Waldensian language appear, thanks to fathers of Romance Philology like François Raynouard, Friedrich Diez and others.⁵ In the meantime, manuscripts progressively came to light and some texts started to be studied and published, for instance the poem *La nobla leyçon* (“The noble lesson”) and the Waldensian New Testament of Zurich.⁶

In the early 1970s, as scholarly debate about the Waldensian language carried on, the theory according to which Waldensian texts had been written in an eastern variety of the Occitan *scripta* (that is, the written form of an ancient language), was finally accepted, but the issues about its genesis and peculiarities remained unresolved.⁷ Still, from the point of view of the texts themselves, few things had changed since the beginning of the century, with critical editions having been produced only of poems.⁸ Beginning in the middle of the 1970s, however, exploration of the Waldensian *corpus* saw a boost thanks to some new, but isolated, investigations.⁹ The need to conduct a systematic exploration of the *corpus* fostered, therefore, the birth of the series *Antichi Testi Valdesi* (“Old Waldensian Texts”) published by Claudiana. According to the publishing

³ See BORGHI CEDRINI, “L’antica lingua valdese,” 226–227; BENEDETTI, *Il «santo bottino»*.

⁴ See BORGHI CEDRINI, “L’antica lingua valdese,” 227–228.

⁵ See RAYNOUARD, *Choix des poésies*, 2: CXL–CCLI; RAYNOUARD, *Lexique*; DIEZ, *Grammatik*, 1: 77; GRÜZMACHER, “Die waldensische”; FOERSTER, “La noble leçon”; BARTH, “Laut- und Formenlehre.”

⁶ The poem was included in RAYNOUARD, *Choix des poésies*, 2: 73–102; excerpts from the other six Waldensian poems are in RAYNOUARD, *Choix des poésies*, 2: 103–133. For the New Testament see SALVIONI, “Il Nuovo Testamento.”

⁷ See BORGHI CEDRINI, “L’antica lingua valdese,” 229–230; see NÜESCH, *Altwaldensische Bibelübersetzung*, 2: 152–160 for a complete review of the various definitions proposed for Waldensian *scripta* until 1978.

⁸ See DE STEFANO, *La Noble Leçon* (the edition is republished in PAPINI, *La nobile lezione*); CHAYTOR, *Six Vaudois Poems*.

⁹ VINAY, *Le confessioni*; BORGHI CEDRINI, *Appunti*; BORGHI CEDRINI, *Appunti. Parte II*; BALMAS – DAL CORSO, *I manoscritti*; JOLLIOT-BRENON, “Les manuscrits”; NÜESCH, *Altwaldensische Bibelübersetzung*; RAUGEI, *Bestiario*.

plan, each volume of the series should have been devoted to a single manuscript, despite the inevitable repetitions of those texts which are contained in different manuscripts. In spite of the good initial intentions, however, the series was interrupted in 1984, after two volumes,¹⁰ for two main reasons: firstly, because the editorial criteria did not meet the needs of either the specialists or the general public (no translation, no comparison between copies of the same texts, no search for non-biblical sources, bare glossaries); secondly, because a work of this proportion needed a considerable financial commitment and much more time to be carried out properly.

In the early years of the 21st century, knowledge of Waldensian literature was therefore not much more advanced than it was in the 1970s. Despite some renewed (but once again isolated) efforts,¹¹ the most important questions were still unanswered. This affected several research fields. Firstly, the number of manuscripts that could be called “Waldensian” (that is, containing Waldensian texts) was still unclear. As a result, the very amount of the texts and their distribution among the various genres was unclear as well; the case of the sermons, as we will see, was particularly complex. Secondly, a comprehensive description and study of the Waldensian language and *scripta* would have been possible only if all — or at least the majority of — the texts had been explored.¹² Ironically, since the language wasn’t well known, scholars were reluctant to study the texts; but, because the latter remained unpublished, it wasn’t possible to deepen one’s knowledge of the language. Thirdly, as a consequence of this *impasse*, studies of medieval Waldensian doctrine, preaching and the general cultural landscape had to rely on few texts, often available only in imprecise and out-of-date editions.

The most striking example of confusion was probably represented by the sermons. Over the years, contrasting counts have been presented.¹³ Because almost none of them existed in printed editions,¹⁴ scholars tended either to include every text designated as *sermon* by the manuscripts (or catalogues), without considering that some of them could be *duplicata*; or, on the contrary, they tended to consider as *duplicata* some texts which are actually different sermons dealing with the same topic. Moreover, the frequent absence of any “genre” indication

¹⁰ DEGAN CHECCHINI, *Il Vergier*; DAL CORSO – BORGHI CEDRINI, *Vertuz*.

¹¹ Among others see BRENON, “The Waldensian Books”; CORNAGLIOTTI, “Sprache der Waldenser. Il valdese.” See BORGHI CEDRINI, “L’antica lingua valdese,” 232–234 for further bibliography.

¹² For the most recent analysis of the Waldensian *scripta*, see BORGHI CEDRINI, “Ancora sulla «questione».”

¹³ See VIGNA SURIA, “L’edizione,” 213–214.

¹⁴ Three sermons are published in BRENON, “Judici.”

by the manuscripts and the thin line between sermon and treatise led to errors in categorisation.

At the end of the first decade of this millennium, the time was ripe to restart the thorough exploration of the *corpus*. As a result, the nucleus of the present research group was established and a new series of publications was planned, with the aim of carrying out the critical edition (with Italian translation, source research and notes) of groups of homogeneous texts, starting with sermons.

The preliminary census of the texts that could be defined as “sermons” was the first aim of a PhD dissertation discussed in 2009.¹⁵ Silvia Vigna Suria ascertained that the Waldensian sermons numbered 204 overall: among these 136 proved to be attested in a single copy and 26 in more than one copy (so that we have 162 different texts).¹⁶ Despite being far more precise than previous attempts, this count isn’t conclusive even now; as a matter of fact, as the edition procedures go on, we must correct some details. For example, a sermon about the Three Wise Men (ms. Dublin, Trinity College Library, 267, ff. 156r–161v), which Vigna Suria deems to be an independent text, has proved to be a modified version of another sermon upon the same topic, which is already attested in two copies (mss. Dublin, Trinity College Library, 260 and 263, ff. 353v–356v and 62r–64r respectively). Furthermore, some sermons seem to be juxtapositions of two or more different texts (sometimes with internal pericopes), so that one cannot be sure whether they are single texts or should be considered as separate items. The second goal of that preliminary census was to establish a hypothetical Waldensian liturgical calendar. That could be reconstructed according to the Waldensian lectionaries (preserved in mss. Cambridge, University Library, Dd.XV.30, ff. 23v–38v and Grenoble, Bibliothèque municipale, 43, ff. 306v–309v) and to the Waldensian homiliary (preserved in ms. Dublin, Trinity College Library, 267, ff. 56r–357v); this is a collection of lectures and sermons from the First Sunday of Advent to the Fifth Sunday after Pentecost. In this case also, deeper studies could allow us to make some changes to Vigna Suria’s classification.¹⁷ For example, by considering pericopes drawn from synoptic Gospels, it is not unlikely that some relationships would be found between calendar and out-of-calendar sermons. Moreover, some out-of-calendar sermons could be correlated to calendar texts dealing with similar subjects. Also, one cannot exclude the possibility that some out-of-calendar sermons may form a small collection of texts around the same topic.

¹⁵ VIGNA SURIA, “Censimento.”

¹⁶ See VIGNA SURIA, “L’edizione,” 215–217.

¹⁷ See VIGNA SURIA, “L’edizione,” 217–223.

Making such an important collection of texts available to scholars is our main purpose, but the project aims also to investigate carefully the questions posed by the manuscripts as a whole and by the sources of the sermons.

So far, even if their main features are broadly known, the manuscripts have been studied only partially. Above all, a comprehensive and detailed description of the two main reserves of Cambridge and Dublin is still missing.¹⁸

In 2013, a first study devoted to ms. Dublin, Trinity College Library, 263 was published and set the framework for future in-depth analyses and comparisons with other manuscripts.¹⁹ Since the beginning of the project, a particular attention has been paid to ms. Dublin, Trinity College Library, 267, which contains the Waldensian homiliary and therefore constitutes the guideline for our work. Careful analyses of its structure reveal a great complexity. The most challenging issue is represented by those sermons which, although they can be inserted in the liturgical calendar because of their pericopes, are nevertheless not included physically in the homiliary but rather in other sections of the manuscript. Another interesting point is that ms. 267 seems to share old shelf marks with ms. Dublin, Trinity College Library, 262, as one can infer from a comparative chart compiled by Manuscripts and Archives Research Library staff. What is more, a (tentative) summary overview of seventeenth century catalogues has produced no evidence of an existing, autonomous manuscript one may identify with ms. 267. However, there is well-documented evidence that the very presence of Waldensian manuscripts in Dublin is strictly connected with archbishop James Ussher's activity and library, which was finally donated to Trinity College by Charles II in 1661.²⁰ As a consequence, those accounts obviously need to be expanded.

While we are well informed about the seventeenth century scattering of the manuscripts and (although at different level of detail) about the geographic areas where they were collected,²¹ there is still much to investigate about their genesis and manufacturing. One issue above all takes on great importance, that is: whether they can be considered as professional *scriptoria* products or not. If they can, then one could try to identify production centers and reflect upon what that means. For example, did the Waldensians turn to well-known *scriptoria* for those manuscripts? Or were there Waldensian *scriptoria* and professional copyists? If so, where did they learn? If the manuscripts turn out instead to be professional manufactures, one might think of the Waldensian preachers (*barba*)

¹⁸ Genève fund is described in BALMAS – DAL CORSO, *I manoscritti*. See ESPOSITO, "Sur quelques manuscrits," 131–154 for some notes upon some Dublin manuscripts.

¹⁹ BO, "Il manoscritto 263."

²⁰ See BENEDETTI, *Il «santo bottino»*, 43–59.

²¹ See BO, "I manoscritti."

themselves as copyists. In this case, however, one would have to explain why all the manuscripts look so similar.

The palaeographic and codicological features as a whole constitute another important topic that demands in-depth consideration. At first glance, one might think that each of the three main reserves shows peculiar features. The Cambridge manuscripts, for example, are very small, both in general (100 x 70 mm average) and compared to Dublin and Geneva's, which are not themselves large (150 x 100 and 130 x 90 mm average). Moreover, their paleographic traits, in some cases, seem to set them apart from the Dublin and Geneva manuscripts. On the other hand, the latter are rich in grotesques but seem to be messy as compared to Dublin's. Isolated manuscripts have been neglected even more, except for Carpentras's.²² That gap needs to be filled by looking for possible links and similarities with manuscripts contained in the main depositories. As only extensive and in-depth analyses can yield significant results, and given that the manuscripts are dispersed throughout Europe, we have established relationships with the libraries involved in order to achieve digitization of as many sources as possible.

In regard to the sources, we found many quotations from patristic literature, which we expected. Apart from this, the relationships between many Waldensian texts and Catholic and Hussite works is a long-standing acquisition,²³ but nothing like that has ever been stated for the sermons, given the lack of interest in those texts. In 2012, I discovered that some of them were vernacular translations of sermons by the Dominican Jacobus de Varagine. Since then, Jacobus's homiletic work has been an essential term of comparison; an initial summary of the research (with data related to 2013) was published in 2015.²⁴ Obviously, the survey of translations is still far from being complete. Today we can enumerate around thirty proven translations: most of them are *ad verbum*, while some should be considered paraphrases rather than proper translations. The sermons of Jacobus that are involved in the translation process belong to his *Sermones de tempore* and *quadregesimales*; moreover, Waldensian sermons represent the only medieval vernacular translation of Jacobus's sermons discovered so far, to our knowledge.

Thanks to this discovery, new hypotheses about the genesis of the Waldensian sermons and about medieval Waldensian cultural landscape are now possible. First of all, we can set a *terminus post quem* in dating at least those sermons that have been proven to be translations. Moreover, with a such notable and growing *corpus* of correspondences at our disposal, we will be able to carry on

²² See NÜESCH, *Altwaldensische Bibelübersetzung*, 1: XII–XXV.

²³ See GONNET – MOLNAR, *Les vaudois*, 341–365; CEGNA, “«Alcunas Spozicions».”

²⁴ GIRAUDO, “Volgarizzamenti valdesi.”

research on the relationships between Latin and vernacular in the development of Waldensian *scripta*.²⁵ The linguistic criterion will possibly prove useful in determining the differences between *sermo praeuius* (or *en amont*), *sermo exceptus* (or *en aval*) and — perhaps — *sermo literarius* (or *en état de perfection*),²⁶ starting with those translations that are preserved in longer, more complex versions on one side, and shorter, easier-to-understand versions on the other.

Of course, such a discovery prompts many questions. For example, for now we are not able to say whether Waldensians translated directly from Jacobus's works or not, since we cannot exclude the existence of some kind of textual intermediary. Whatever the issue of that question, another challenge will be in determining from which redaction of Jacobus's sermons the Waldensians executed their translations. The perception of authoriality is another interesting point, since we have not found any mention of Jacobus's name so far.

In addition to Jacobus's sermons, some other translations are coming to light, some complete and some not. A sermon on Mt 2:3 (ms. Dublin, Trinity College Library, 267, ff. 161v–167v) seems to translate scattered passages that may come from Thomas Aquinas's *Catena aurea*. Another text, on Tit 3:4 (ms. Dublin, Trinity College Library, 267, ff. 129v–131r), is a complete translation of a Middle Latin text *de nativitate Domini*, whose authorship is still disputed between Hildebertus Cenomanensis, Wernerus S. Blasii and Geoffroy Babion.²⁷ A text²⁸ attributed to Hugh of Saint Victor, seems to be the source of half a sermon on Jn 2:1 (ms. Dublin, Trinity College Library, 267, ff. 208r–216r). A long part of the pseudo-Augustinian *Ad fratres in eremo commorantes*, LXII²⁹ is translated in a sermon on Proverbs 1:7 (ms. Cambridge, University Library, Dd.XV.31, ff. 14r–24v). In this case, the name of the (believed) author is declared. Another author, whose name is usually declared, is Haymo Autissiodorensis, whose *In Divi Pauli Epistolas Expositio*³⁰ constitutes the source of a growing number of sermons. As one can easily see, all those discoveries are waiting for systematization; moreover, much has yet to be done as regards quotations from *Glossae* or the use of *distinctiones*.

As shown, Waldensian homiletic literature lies at the crossroads of various and complementary disciplines. It has great importance from the point of view of philology, literature and linguistics. This remains our starting point and *forma*

²⁵ See RAUGEI, *Bestiario*, 61–156; MARINONI, *La versione*, 60–74; FUMAGALLI, “Il frammento,” 108–118.

²⁶ See KIENZLE, “Introduction,” 169–173; KIENZLE, “Conclusion,” 974–978.

²⁷ PL 171, 390C–394A; PL 157, 788D–794D. See RIFFERO, “Prove di edizione,” 34–40.

²⁸ PL 175, 751A–754C (*Allegoriae in Novum Testamentum libros novem complectentes. Allegoriae in Evangelia et Epistolas Pauli. Liber primus. De mysteriis Evangelii Sancti Joannis*, I–II).

²⁹ PL 40, 1345–1347.

³⁰ PL 117, 359A–938B.

mentis: improvements in knowledge of Waldensian grammar, lexicon and *scripta* are expected, as well as a deeper understanding of the medieval Waldensian “library” and cultural climate. The study of this literature may also yield results in other areas of interest, such as Sermon Studies in their broadest sense; the History of Preaching; the Theology and History of Doctrine; Paleography and Codicology; the History of Heresy and of Christianity; the History of Sources and their re-use; and so on. Thus it is clear that only an interdisciplinary collaboration can bring about significant and valuable results in this field.

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THE MEDIEVAL WALDENSIAN SERMONS

S U M M A R Y

The paper presents the ongoing project of editing and publishing medieval Waldensian sermons, which is a corpus of nearly 200 texts written in an eastern variety of medieval Occitan. The texts are preserved in manuscripts dating to the late fifteenth through early sixteenth centuries. The first part of this paper provides information about the corpus and its history, including a brief summary of academic work on these texts since the end of the nineteenth century. The second part deals with some important aspects of the current project. Besides editing and publishing the texts, the project aims to investigate in detail other questions posed by the manuscripts (such as their genesis, manufacture, palaeographic and codicological features, and so on) and to identify the sources used in the sermons. In this regard, Iacobus de Varagine’s *Sermones* deserves particular attention.

KEYWORDS: Sermons, vernacular, Waldensian, translations, Occitan, Iacobus de Varagine, religious dissidence

SŁOWA KLUCZE: kazania, język ojczysty, waldensi, przekłady, dialekt prowansalski, Jakub de Voragine, odmiennosc religijna