

Preface

This intermediate Latin reader is designed to strengthen students' reading skills through an accessible and entertaining text. The content of the legend of Barlaam and Josaphat is conducive to developing students' narrative imagination and their awareness of textual transmission and cross-cultural translation. Thus, this reader addresses the Communication, the Cultures, the Connections, the Comparisons, and the Communities goal of the World-Readiness Standards for Learning Languages.¹

The reader is intended for students who have taken a full year of elementary Latin, or an intensive course covering the basics of Latin grammar, and who have acquired some experience in reading Classical Latin prose through an author like Caesar. However, the extensive vocabulary and commentary make it possible to enjoy the legend of Barlaam and Josaphat immediately after the successful completion of an elementary Latin course.

The vocabulary and commentary also make this reader suitable for independent study and home-school settings. Motivated learners can look up unfamiliar terms in the two grammars that the commentary refers to throughout and can consult the explanations of Late Latin features at the end of the book.

The text included in this reader is Jacobus de Voragine's abridged Latin version of the legend of Saints Barlaam and Josaphat. The Latin of Jacobus, a 13th-century compiler, offers excellent opportunities for the systematic learning of the peculiarities of Late and Medieval Latin. Typically, one has to read many texts and take a survey course to encounter the elements of Late Latin that distinguish it from Classical Latin. This text, however, conveniently contains most of these elements and is thus a suitable introduction to the subject.²

1. Available from the American Council for the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) website. The application of the World Readiness Standards for Learning Languages to the Classical Languages is called *Standards for Classical Language Learning*, available from the American Classical League.

2. The problem of how best to teach Medieval Latin in a systematic way was discussed in the

The high quality of Jacobus's Latin makes it appropriate for training readers of Classical Latin as well, for it contains most features found in the best Classical authors. Thus, the legend can offer valuable experience with the language before students proceed to more complex texts. With its occasional periodic sentences, rich stylistic devices, and authentic Classical word order, it can serve as superb preparation and training for the reading and deeper appreciation of Cicero and complex rhetorical prose in general. Since the story is engaging and requires minimal introduction, readers can focus on learning the intricacies of the language, most of them common to both Classical and Late/Medieval Latin.³

Both high school and college teachers who want to illustrate the global significance of Latin can incorporate into their curricula the legend of Barlaam and Josaphat, which is now gaining broader readership and appreciation due to the recent scholarship about its adventurous history.⁴ Since many of the fables included in the legend are the common heritage of many cultures and religions, I hope that the very nature of this textbook and the content of its readings will make Latin an attractive subject to students of more diverse backgrounds and will highlight the important role of Latin in the development of humanity's global self-consciousness.

The legend unifies a collection of colorful fables that demonstrate the vigorous East-West contacts in the premodern period. It probes the deepest questions about the meaning of human life lived with full awareness of its transitory nature. It juxtaposes the two extreme responses to this transience, namely the life of self-mortification and the life of self-gratification. While it endorses the life of renunciation and asceticism, it also gives voice to many commonly shared ethical principles and philosophical truths, vividly conveyed through its parables, fables, and anecdotes. Some of these are: the lasting value of charity, compassion, and kindness to all, especially to those of lower social status; the joys of gratitude, honesty, friendship; the value of critical thinking for detecting falsehoods, fake stories, and deceptive appearances; the wisdom to discern that not all that glitters is gold; the insight that what is impermanent and unreal creates a desire for what is permanent and real.

Explicitly associated with India, the legend of Barlaam and Josaphat enjoyed tremendous popularity and passed through translations into Persian, Arabic, Georgian, Greek, Latin, and, from Latin, into all western European languages. From Arabic, an adapted Hebrew version was made.⁵ From Greek,

1970s and 1980s. For the problem itself, see Lanham (1975). Later, in response to Clark (1979), Lanham (1980) addressed the need for a single text that illustrates most features of Postclassical Latin.

3. The problems with the terms "Late Latin" (discussed by Adams (2011) 257–58) and with "Medieval Latin" (discussed by Dinkova-Brunn (2011) 284–85) are known to me, but I chose them as practical placeholders for the purposes of this reader.

4. Lopez and McCracken (2014).

5. Smith (1981) 10.

it was translated into Church Slavonic, Armenian, and Christian Arabic. There are sixty versions of the legend in the major languages of Europe, the Christian East, and Africa.⁶

The legend took on new emphases and meanings as cultural, geographical, and political contexts shifted. It illustrates how each generation and culture enriches the received traditions from the past. It does not teach a religious truth specific to any one religious tradition. Instead, it demonstrates the irresistible power of storytelling itself and shows how stories addressing existential human concerns and aspirations circulate among different cultures and religions.⁷

Of the eleven Latin versions of the legend of Saints Barlaam and Josaphat, I chose the 13th-century version in Jacobus de Voragine's hagiographical collection, *The Golden Legend* (*Legenda Aurea*) because of its brevity and the accessible quality of its Latin. Intermediate Latin students can read this 5,000-word long text in about eight to ten weeks.

Ways to Use This Intermediate Reader

I envision the following ways of using this text:

1. High school or college students who wish to acquire extensive reading experience with an intermediate level original Latin text will read through the narrative sequentially in eight to ten weeks. The text contains an abundance of grammatical features and rhetorical devices commonly found in Classical authors, but the engaging storyline will contribute to a faster reading pace and will provide opportunities for developing students' narrative imagination.
2. Students taking intermediate courses with multiple authors can read selections from this text either as prepared or as sight-reading practice. The redundancies in the grammatical commentary and vocabulary are designed to accommodate these users.
3. Students who want to learn how to read Medieval Latin manuscripts will focus on the version of the text with the original orthography printed in front. By starting with this text, they will practice detecting words spelled differently from their equivalents in Classical Latin. After identifying the words with Medieval Latin orthography, they can compare their findings with the commentary version of the text where all words are spelled according to Classical Latin norms. Thus, the normalized version will serve as a key. With consistent practice, such students can gradually gain valuable experience reading Medieval Latin as it appears in the manuscripts.

6. Almond (1987) 391.

7. Cf. Lopez and McCracken (2014) 13.