Foreword

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The present book, *Knights, Lords, and Ladies: In Search of Aristocrats in the Paris Region, 1180–1220*, was Professor John Baldwin's last. The distinguished Johns Hopkins University historian completed a full draft of the manuscript, which he had submitted to the University of Pennsylvania Press before his death. The readers whom the Press solicited were enthusiastic about the manuscript. Although they had suggestions for final revisions, as readers always have, they were in agreement that the manuscript was excellently argued, important substantively, clearly written, and, for all these reasons, worthy of publication. Unfortunately, Baldwin passed away before he could engage with their suggestions. Everyone concerned in the production of this volume, however, believes that even without his response to the readers' reports and what might have been his own potential recommendations for additional revisions, the manuscript was a powerful and learned exemplar of scholarship and representative of the interests and thrust of the entire corpus of Baldwin's impressive work. Careful copyediting and the verification of references and statistics rather than stylistic or organizational changes have thus guided the transition from the manuscript to the book. In its current state, the study must be very close to the volume that John Baldwin intended it to be.

Knights, Lords, and Ladies, as I have already implied, appears at the end of a series of Baldwin's scholarly interventions in the course of a very long and productive career. Indeed, even without its publication, scholars would consider his contribution to medieval studies profound. Only forty-one when his two-volume *Masters, Princes, and Merchants: The Social Views of Peter the Chanter and His Circle* appeared in 1970, Baldwin provided scholars in the first volume of that work precise and supremely intelligent reconstructions of some of the leading moral issues discussed by scholars in Catholic Europe in the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries. In doing so, he demonstrated his impressive paleographic skills and his wide-ranging command of scholastic philosophy, theology, and canon law. The second volume made numerous excerpts of the texts

that were at the center of his study available to subsequent scholars and indicated where they might find many more.

All reviewers recognized the importance of the volumes, and the criticisms, such as there were, tended to fall under two headings. First, because he had recovered Master Peter the Chanter's circle of colleagues and so enthusiastically made them known in ways in which many of them had not been known before, Baldwin, it was alleged, sometimes overestimated the master's and his students'—but especially the master's—influence and originality. But what scholar who has the good fortune to pore over a fascinating and largely unknown body of texts or group of persons and shows the cohesive bonds among them for basically the first time does not occasionally imagine their impact on a historical era as somewhat greater than it might have been. Even if the originality of the views emanating from Peter and his circle is often hard to prove and at times contestable, Baldwin's assessment has, in the main, stood the test of time very well indeed.

The second body of criticisms was, loosely speaking, “formal.” Why, it was wondered, did Baldwin proceed in his first volume thematically, since doing so made getting a sense of the development of the views of any single member of Master Peter's circle difficult? Why had he set the texts apart in a separate volume? Why did he not insist on footnotes instead of endnotes, which he had also relegated to the second volume? Finally, reviewers' perennial default lament, when they have little else to criticize: why did his work cost so much? In fact, \$22.50, the purchase price, does not sound like a lot even in 1970 dollars, particularly since Baldwin's study consisted of two volumes, while one-volume scholarly books were regularly selling at the time for \$10.00 or \$12.50.

Masters, Princes, and Merchants was not John Baldwin's first major study. That distinction goes to *Medieval Theories of the Just Price: Romanists, Canonists, and Theologians in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries*, which appeared as one of the “Transactions” volumes of the American Philosophical Society in 1959. This work demonstrated Baldwin's remarkable knowledge of juristic thought and its connections with theology and in particular revealed his interest in the morality of commerce as understood by a variety of medieval commentators. When he published *Masters, Princes, and Merchants* a decade later, it came as no surprise that he devoted a substantial section of his commentary in volume 1 and of the excerpted texts in volume 2 to commerce and most especially to the problem of usury and its reckoning as a serious sin in medieval theology. Meanwhile, he continued to publish detailed technical studies on scholasticism and university culture in the late twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the discursive medium and the venue respectively for so many of the discussions he analyzed in his early works.

Undoubtedly, because Paris loomed large in all his projects up to and including *Masters, Princes, and Merchants* and because Paris was the royal city of France par excellence in his preferred period of study, John Baldwin soon turned his considerable talents to excavating the history of the monarchy and the city. He did so in a series of brilliant studies and editions that earned him the deep respect and lasting gratitude of French medievalists. His 1986 book *The Government of Philip Augustus: Foundations of French Royal Power in the Middle Ages* appeared in French translation only a few years later in 1991. Like *Masters, Princes, and Merchants*, its elaborate apparatus follows the study per se—and there are no footnotes, just endnotes, often full of tantalizing material and hints for new directions of inquiry.

Baldwin's collaborative work on editing original documents from the period of Philip II Augustus's reign is already apparent in *The Government of Philip Augustus*, but it culminated in the publication of the magisterial *Les Registres de Philippe Auguste* in 1992. More popular, but undergirded by this firsthand familiarity with the documentary records, was *Paris, 1200*, which he published in 2006 and had written primarily for a French audience. Almost immediately, however, it came out in English translation for an American scholarly public eager to read in its own language what Baldwin said about the great city on the river Seine on the eve of its medieval demographic surge. The French expressed their admiration of Baldwin and his work by his election to the vaunted Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres and making him a Chevalier de la Légion d'Honneur and a Chevalier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres.

John Baldwin's work has always interested me and my graduate students, in particular what he wrote on French administration and the difficulties of reconstructing the kingdom's administrative development because of the destruction of fiscal records in the great fire at the Chambre des Comptes on the night of 26/27 October 1737. It is not possible to summarize his marvelous insights and general conclusions in this area in a few lines, but his major findings and claims are the following. The reign of Philip II Augustus, 1179/80–1223, saw a revolution in the administration and record keeping of the French kingdom. The impulse for this revolution was the continuing struggle with the Plantagenets. Possessing a kingly title, even an ideologically charged one, as Philip II did, was insufficient in and of itself to command the resources needed to hold the country's own against its rivals, let alone turn the tables on them. The hard work that made Philip II a great king was more mundane. He needed to exploit every opportunity to increase his direct influence, and this meant trying to get control over and access to resources in wide swaths of territory that were held either tenuously or tentatively by aristocratic lineages. Circumstances that made this possible might be, among others, the minority of an heir over whom Philip II

could exercise guardianship or the suppression of a rebellion that permitted his men to oversee the defeated rebel's lands.

Another opportunity offered itself in the crusade. Philip II used his preparations as an opportunity to improve the operation of government by streamlining administrative offices and clarifying chains of command and administrative procedures in anticipation of his absence in the eastern Mediterranean. These measures were strengthened in the "decisive decade" following the king's brief expedition to the Holy Land, and in doing so Philip drew on the talents of the lesser nobility, especially the knights, who as a result of their service owed their increased prestige and a considerable portion of their income to him. Effectively he created a financially dependent and deeply loyal administration, whose employment allowed him largely to bypass the high aristocracy. He was not always on good terms with the church, in whatever way the word "church" is defined (the papacy, the French bishops, clerical zealots who wanted to confound the alleged heretics and their supporters in Languedoc, and so on). Yet despite very significant tensions with churchmen over his governmental policies and irregular personal life, he managed to keep his conflicts with the church from undermining his efforts to increase the power and reach of the crown.

Philip II found himself aided by the incompetency of King John of England. Of that, there can be no doubt. As long as Richard I the Lionheart lived, the Plantagenets were more than a match for the Capetians, despite all the French king's efforts. It was John's loss of Normandy in 1204 and of other territories north of the Loire soon afterward that cemented the accomplishments of France's decisive decade. The conquest stimulated an ideological revolution in France, with clear roots in the past, of course, but more pronounced from the latter part of Philip II Augustus's reign and forward into the thirteenth century: proud and challenging claims to the special sacrality of the French crown and dynasty. Nonetheless, according to John Baldwin, it would be difficult even to imagine the success Philip II enjoyed in his claims to authority and in the execution of governance in France after his conquest of Normandy in the absence of the accomplishments made during the decisive decade. In this scenario, the victories against the Plantagenets and their allies in 1214 at Bouvines and Roche-au-Moine simply sealed the king's achievement, or as John Baldwin liked to say to me and no doubt to others, "it was because of Philip Augustus that France could have a Saint Louis."

Meanwhile, Baldwin continued to produce gemlike articles on subjects on which he was already a recognized authority. At the same time, some of his newer work appeared to veer away from the history of scholastic culture and the French government. In fact, *The Language of Sex: Five Voices from Northern France Around 1200*, which appeared in 1996, and *Aristocratic Life in Medieval France*:

The Romances of Jean Renart and Gerbert de Montreuil, 1190–1230, published in 2000, had more in common with what we now know was his overall project than simply an overlap in the period covered. To scholastic culture and government, Baldwin was adding the aristocracy as one of his principal interests. In doing so, he needed to probe the moral sentiments and ethical dilemmas of the upper class and their public expression and representation. In addition, he had to determine how aristocratic culture differed from that of other social (and professional) groups, preeminently the clergy. In particular, he had to justify using fiction (romances, fabliaux, and the like) and performative practices such as tournaments to recover aristocratic culture. His goal—and the present book is the fulfillment of it—was nothing less than a comprehensive portrait of life in the heartland of the territory that Baldwin had studied his entire scholarly life, the Île-de-France. He succeeded masterfully in painting this portrait by bringing together evidence from chronicles, charters, fiscal documentation, archaeological reports, and belletristic sources, including poems and songs. The result is a multi-dimensional description and explication of the relations of kings, governmental administrators, aristocratic lineages, churchmen, and to some extent burghers in the precisely defined period of Philip II Augustus's reign, the era, as it is so often said, when France was “made.”

I have said that the description offered in this book is multidimensional, but, as Baldwin had to admit and explicitly remarks, it is not a genuinely comprehensive description. The amount of space in the work devoted to the political, social, and economic interactions—indeed, interdependency—of the bourgeoisie and the aristocracy in the Île-de-France is quite limited. Moreover, there are no peasants to speak of in Baldwin's story; yet he knew the story would be far richer with their presence. No one, I think, can rationally doubt that John Baldwin had the intellectual capacity to expand the book to cover these other areas, but mastering the large number of studies of regional economies that meticulously detail the bourgeois economy and seigneurs' relations with their rustic dependents would also have taken a great deal of time, perhaps too much. He would have needed to devote another five or ten years to doing his own specialized studies to fill in gaps, as he had done in writing on scholasticism, government, and the aristocratic ethos; and he may have thought this was an unachievable undertaking at this stage in his career. Therefore, he gestured to the major standard studies but did not go further, committing himself instead to bringing together without further delay the results of the in-depth research he had already accomplished. He also intended and to all appearances succeeded in imposing on his analysis a statistical rigor that really is quite amazing. *Knights, Lords, and Ladies: In Search of Aristocrats in the Paris Region, 1180–1220* is the culmination of John Baldwin's career as a scholar—and it is a magnificent accomplishment,

ranking with *Masters, Princes, and Merchants* and *The Government of Philip Augustus* and likely to have a similar enduring legacy.

One can anticipate criticisms, of course. They are by now old hat. Some readers will continue to wish for thematic integration in a chronological narrative. However, Baldwin was profoundly committed to thematic analysis. Moreover, he appears to have felt that limiting his study to Philip II Augustus's reign was not only defensible on substantive grounds but, given the span of only forty years, doing so implicitly undermined the potential criticism that his argument would be hard to reconfigure in the reader's mind as a chronological story of development. He was also determined to maintain the strict separation between the technical matter—presented in the appendixes at the end of the book—and the history he was writing with the help of this technical matter. This determination on his part will also call to mind the organization of *Masters, Princes, and Merchants* and *The Government of Philip Augustus*. As to price, it is no longer an issue. *Knights, Lords, and Ladies* is a monument to a great historian. As such, it is priceless.