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**Reinterpreting the Jerusalem Massacre of
1099 in the Context of the Other Massacres
of the First Crusade**

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Introduction

On 15 July 1099, the First Crusaders stormed the walls of Jerusalem, slaughtering a substantial number of its Muslim (and Jewish) inhabitants. The anonymous lay author of the *Gesta Francorum*, whose eyewitness account was written possibly as early as 1099/1100, related: ‘...our men entered the city, chasing the Saracens and killing them up to Solomon’s Temple [al-Aqsa Mosque], where they took refuge and fought hard...so that all the temple was streaming with blood’.¹ A second eyewitness, the cleric Raymond of Aguilers, provides a more sensational account, stating that ‘...piles of heads, hands and feet were to be seen in the streets of the city...’, whilst in Solomon’s Temple; ‘...men rode in blood up to their knees and bridle reins’.²

Other early chronicles of the First Crusade, all by non-eyewitness churchmen, are in general agreement with this blood-soaked narrative. Fulcher of Chartres claimed that in Solomon’s Temple ‘ten thousand were beheaded...if you had been there, your feet would have been stained up to the ankles with the blood of the slain’.³ The chronicles of three Benedictine monks, Guibert of Nogent, Robert of Rheims and Baldric of Bourgueil also emphasise the unparalleled violence and scale of the killing.⁴ Other retrospective accounts, such as the *Gesta Tancredi*, a panegyric by the chaplain Ralph of Caen about his overlord Tancred of Hauteville, follow a similar line: ‘ [in Solomon’s Temple] The sword tore up ribs, and necks, and cut through groins, backs and stomachs...The gore was so great that waves stained the *penates*’.⁵

These lurid descriptions of the massacre at Jerusalem have been echoed by virtually all later historians of the First Crusade, both popular and specialist, many of whom have assumed — uncritically relying on the ecclesiastical chroniclers — that the massacre was determined by religious fanaticism. However, historians have entirely overlooked the same chroniclers’

¹ *Gesta Francorum et aliorum Hierosolimitanorum*, ed. R. Hill (London, 1962), (hereafter *GF*), 91.

² Raymond of Aguilers, *Historia Francorum Qui Ceperunt Iheruslaem*, in A.C. Krey, *The First Crusade: The Accounts of Eye-Witnesses and Participants* (Princeton, 1921), (hereafter *RA*), 261.

³ Fulcher of Chartres, *Historia Hierosolymitana*, tr. M.E. McGinty (London, 1941), (hereafter *FC*), 69.

⁴ Guibert of Nogent, *Gesta Dei per Francos*, tr. R. Levine (Woodbridge, 1997), (hereafter *GN*), 130-2; Robert of Rheims, *Historia Iherosolimitana*, tr. C. Sweetenham (Aldershot, 2005), (hereafter *RR*), 200-201; Baldric of Bourgueil, *Historia Ierosolimitana*, ed. S. Biddlecombe (Woodbridge, 2014), (hereafter *BB*), 110-12.

⁵ Ralph of Caen, *Gesta Tancredi*, trs. B.S. and D.S. Bachrach (Aldershot, 2010), (hereafter *RC*), 148.

accounts of the massacres at Antioch (June 1098), Albara (October 1098) and Ma'arrat al-Nu'man (December 1098) which infer that crusader massacres were secularly motivated. The aim of this thesis therefore is two-fold: to explore a previously unconsidered aspect of the First Crusade by assessing the motivations of the crusaders in relation to the massacres that predated Jerusalem, whilst simultaneously challenging the existing historical consensus which has so confidently attributed the slaughter at Jerusalem to religious fanaticism.

In November 1095, at the Council of Clermont, Pope Urban II preached an 'armed pilgrimage', urging Western Christians to aid their brothers in the East against Muslim tyranny, whilst simultaneously striving to liberate Jerusalem and the tomb of Christ within the Holy Sepulchre.⁶ Urban birthed the concept of 'penitential warfare', whereby laymen fighting in the service of God were granted indulgences for their sins.⁷ In the months that followed, the response across Europe was overwhelming; most historians estimate that somewhere between 5,000-10,000 knights and 25,000-50,000 of their retinue took the cross.⁸ The author of the *Gesta Francorum*, an Italian Norman knight in the service of Bohemond of Taranto, encapsulates the piety that moved so many: '...there was a great stirring of heart throughout all the Frankish lands, so that if any man...really wanted to follow God and faithfully to bear the cross after him, he could make no delay in taking the road to the Holy Sepulchre...'.⁹

Although many other motives have been alleged, including, most convincingly, the desire for land and material gain, Jonathan Riley-Smith has persuasively argued that, with the emergence of the Christian Liberation movement in Latin America in the 1960s, historians previously 'blinded' by 'their abhorrence of ideological violence' were forced to confront the reality 'that there were sincere and devout contemporaries holding ideological positions very similar to those maintained by the medieval apologists they were studying'.¹⁰ However, it cannot be assumed that the piety that underpinned the First Crusade necessarily translated into religious fanaticism: an excessive and irrational devotion to God and Christianity, when

⁶ J. and L. Riley-Smith, *The Crusades: Idea and Reality, 1095-1274* (London, 1981), 10-11.

⁷ J. Riley-Smith, *The Crusades: A History* (London, 2005), 19.

⁸ See J. France, 'Patronage and the appeal of the First Crusade', in J. Phillips (ed.), *The First Crusade: Origins and Impacts* (Manchester, 1997), 6; T. Asbridge, *The Crusades: The War for the Holy Land* (London, 2012), 42.

⁹ *GF*, 1.

¹⁰ J. Riley-Smith, (ed.), *The Oxford History of the Crusades* (Oxford, 1999), 8.

applied to the massacre at Jerusalem. This essay will seek to challenge, what, it will argue, is a fundamental misconception, contending that the conventions of siege warfare and secular vengeance determined the massacres of the First Crusade and co-existed with religious belief without contradiction.

There are a number of methodological issues to be addressed in relation to the sources of the First Crusade. Five of the eight contemporary or near contemporary histories studied here relied for some or all of their information on the author of the *Gesta Francorum*,¹¹ who offers (along with the few surviving letters of two other lay combatants, Stephen of Blois and Anselm of Ribemont) the most reliable insight into the mentalities of the crusader army, albeit from an elite perspective. The ecclesiastical authors of three retrospective chronicles, Guibert of Nogent, Robert of Rheims and Baldric of Bourgueil — all members of the Benedictine order who lived in relatively close geographical proximity to one another in Northern France, and constructed their accounts within a close time frame between 1106 and 1109¹² — acknowledge that they re-wrote the *Gesta Francorum*, which surfaced in France in 1106.¹³ Given the manner in which they altered the text, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that their re-writing formed part of a ‘deliberate attempt’ to construct an ‘official’ and more theologically refined account of the First Crusade than that provided by the earlier chronicle’s lay author.¹⁴ Two clerics who went on the First Crusade, Raymond of Aguilers, chaplain to Raymond IV of Toulouse and Fulcher of Chartres, chaplain to Baldwin of Boulogne (who was not present at Jerusalem), also had access to, and at times utilised, the *Gesta Francorum* to write their histories (both pre-1105).¹⁵

The fact that these early ecclesiastical sources drew on the *Gesta Francorum* should not however be seen as detrimental to this essay. Indeed, this dissertation will highlight the inconsistencies of monastic chroniclers, who infer that the massacres that predated Jerusalem were secularly motivated, but then alter the *Gesta Francorum’s* account of the

¹¹ See S.B. Edgington, ‘The First Crusade: reviewing the evidence’, in J. Phillips (ed.), *The First Crusade: Origins and Impacts* (Manchester, 1997), 55-77; C. Tyerman, *The Debate on the Crusades* (Manchester, 2011), 7-12.

¹² Sweetenham, RR, 14.

¹³ GN, Preface, 24-5; RR, Sermo apologeticus, 75; BB, Prologue, 4.

¹⁴ Sweetenham, RR, 14.

¹⁵ Edgington, ‘First Crusade’, 56-7.

Jerusalem massacre by portraying the slaughter there as driven by religion. The religious bias of the chroniclers is therefore a strength rather than a weakness in this context, as it will directly support this essay's overall thesis. Two other histories of the First Crusade will also be examined in a critical manner. Albert of Aachen, a monk from the Rhineland, wrote independently of the other chroniclers from 1102-5 and obtained his information from returned crusaders.¹⁶ Ralph of Caen, whose account was composed at Jerusalem from 1112-18, claimed that much of his information derived from former Italian Norman combatants.¹⁷ Whilst most of the Arab chronicles relating to the First Crusade lie outside the parameters of this essay, the only contemporary chronicle, by Ibn al-Qalanisi, will be drawn upon.

A comprehensive overview of the historiography relating to the Jerusalem massacre is provided by Benjamin Kedar's 'longitudinal' study, which offers a detailed critique of contemporary and subsequent discussions of the slaughter.¹⁸ Although Kedar has acutely observed that the scale of the massacre has almost certainly been exaggerated by contemporary chroniclers and modern historians alike,¹⁹ the factors that drove the crusaders are only briefly explored.²⁰ Kedar's approach is indicative of the wider historiography. While most other modern historians describe the massacre at Jerusalem in detail, their accounts focus on the brutality of the slaughter, and the reasons behind it are rarely examined. When the motives of the crusaders are touched upon, most historians assume uncritically that the massacre was religiously driven.

Such attitudes are summarised and reflected in Zoë Oldenbourg's confident assertion in the 1960s that the crusaders were possessed by 'a religious frenzy amounting to madness', a view she asserted was held unanimously by other historians.²¹ Oldenbourg's approach, and even her claim that the Franks '...saw themselves transformed into destroying angels falling on the

¹⁶ Albert of Aachen, *Historia Ierosolimitana* ed. and tr. S.B. Edgington (Oxford, 2007), (hereafter AA); see also S.B. Edgington, 'Albert of Aachen Reappraised', in A.V. Murray (ed.), *From Clermont to Jerusalem: Crusades and Crusader Societies, 1095-1500* (Turnhout, 1998), 55-67.

¹⁷ RC, 19-20.

¹⁸ B.Z. Kedar, 'The Jerusalem Massacre of July 1099 in the Western Historiography of the Crusades', in *Crusades* 3 (2004), 15-75.

¹⁹ Ibn al-Arabi, a Muslim living in Egypt in 1099 puts the figures of dead at 3,000 out of a population of 20-30,000, 73-4.

²⁰ Kedar, 'Jerusalem Massacre', see pages 54,56, 66-8, 70, 72.

²¹ Z. Oldenbourg, *The Crusades*, tr. A. Carter (London, 1966) 141, 137.

children of the devil',²² has been replicated by the religious historian Karen Armstrong, who portrayed the Franks in a similarly apocalyptic light: 'This killing was not just an ordinary battle of conquest; the Crusaders had fallen upon the Muslims of Jerusalem and slain them like the avenging angels of the Apocalypse'.²³ Whilst Jill Claster recently offered a more sober assessment, she too believes that religious fanaticism played a decisive role, arguing that the crusaders were determined to seek revenge for the perceived sacrilegious defilement by Muslims of the most venerable site of Christianity.²⁴

Even leading scholars of the Crusades have uncritically followed the early religious chroniclers, Steven Runciman stating in the early 1950s that the massacre served as the '...bloodthirsty proof of Christian fanaticism...',²⁵ while Thomas Asbridge recently asserted similarly that religious fervour was an important factor in driving the crusaders: 'the...unassailable truth of Jerusalem's conquest is that they were...empowered by heartfelt piety and the authentic belief that they were doing God's work...'.²⁶ Others including Hans Mayer, and more recently Jonathan Phillips, have argued that whilst the sufferings the crusaders endured on their three-year expedition contributed to a desire for revenge, their '...uncompromising religious fervour...' remained an important factor in their determination to 'purge it [Jerusalem] of unbelievers'.²⁷

A handful of historians, however, have taken a different approach, with both Robert Payne and Alan Murray interpreting the massacre as a pre-meditated policy of ethnic cleansing. Payne, assigning quasi-religious motives to the crusaders, claimed the killing 'was the result of settled policy, Jerusalem was to become a Christian city again', but offered no analysis of contemporary sources to validate this viewpoint.²⁸ Murray, by contrast, adopted a political outlook, asserting that the Franks deliberately massacred the inhabitants of Jerusalem and

²² Oldenbourg, *Crusades*, 138.

²³ Armstrong, *Holy War* (London, 1988), 120.

²⁴ J.N. Claster, *Sacred Violence: The European Crusades to the Middle East, 1095-1396* (Toronto, 2009), 87-9.

²⁵ S. Runciman, *A History of the Crusades: Vol. I. The First Crusade and the Foundation of the Kingdom of Jerusalem* (Cambridge, 1962), 287.

²⁶ Asbridge, *Crusades*, 102.

²⁷ J. Phillips, *Holy Warriors: A Modern History of the Crusades* (London, 2010), 25; see also J. Phillips, *The Crusades, 1095-1197* (New York, 2013), 25; H.E. Mayer, *The Crusades*, 2nd ed. (Oxford, 1988), 56.

²⁸ R. Payne, *The Crusades: A History* (London, 1994), 102.

other major Muslim cities in order to safeguard their new territorial acquisitions.²⁹ However, Murray's contention is undermined by his uncritical adoption of Albert of Aachen's entirely uncorroborated claim that the massacre lasted three full days; his postulation that a policy of deliberate extermination was implemented by the crusading leaders on the second day (after an initial frenzy) does not therefore stand up to scrutiny.³⁰

Perhaps the most convincing explanation of events has been offered by John France, the foremost military historian of the First Crusade, who argued in the 1990s that the massacre was carried out, not because of religious fanaticism, but in accordance with the established rules of medieval siege warfare, widely understood in both East and West.³¹ Crucially, however, France did not analyse contemporary chroniclers to justify his contention, instead listing precedents such as the Turkish sack of Melitene in 1057, and the 'harrying of the north', the latter hardly the most suitable comparison with siege warfare.³² In a study of Muslims in the Levant, Kedar pointed to other crusading massacres in addition to Jerusalem, at Ma'arrat al-Nu'man (1098), Haifa (1100) and Caesarea (1101) to reinforce the idea that violent retribution was usually only exacted on the inhabitants of cities that resisted and were eventually taken by storm.³³ However, like France, Kedar failed to examine the sources of the First Crusade to substantiate this assertion, an omission that Chapter One of this essay seeks to address.

With the possible exception of Kedar's skeletal examination, leading scholars of the Crusades have, critically, failed to consider the massacre at Jerusalem in the context of three other massacres of the First Crusade at Antioch, Ma'arrat and Albara. Whilst Jean Richard noted in the late 1990s that many Muslims were killed at Ma'arrat, he overlooked the other massacres predating Jerusalem.³⁴ More recently, Christopher Tyerman mentions 'slaughtering' at Antioch, but there is no reference to the massacres at Ma'arrat or Albara in a text which

²⁹ A.V. Murray, 'The Demographics of Urban Space in Crusade-Period Jerusalem, 1099-1187', in A. Classen (ed.), *Urban Space in the Middle Ages and the Early Modern Age* (Berlin, 2009), 205-224.

³⁰ Murray, 'Urban Space', 211-14.

³¹ J. France, *Victory in the East: A Military History of the First Crusade* (Cambridge, 1994), 355-6.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ B.Z. Kedar 'The Subjected Muslims of the Frankish Levant' in J.M. Powell (ed.), *Muslims Under Latin Rule* (Princeton, 1990), 143-147.

³⁴ J. Richard, *The Crusades*, c. 1071-c.1291, tr. J. Birrell (Cambridge, 1999), 62, 66.

allocates almost three pages to Jerusalem.³⁵ Other historians including Aziz Atiya, Peter Holt, Mayer and Riley-Smith also fail to place the Jerusalem massacre in the context of comparable events.³⁶

It is hard to avoid the conclusion that historians have attached considerably greater weight to the Jerusalem massacre because of the city's central position in the Christian faith. Even when historians such as Phillips, Runciman and Claster have included other massacres in their accounts, tellingly, they only offer assessments of crusader motivations in relation to Jerusalem.³⁷ Whilst the accounts of Amin Maalouf, whose reconstruction of the massacres utilised Arabic sources, and Jay Rubenstein, who analysed the cannibalism of deceased Muslims at the siege of Ma'arrat, offer detailed accounts of crusader violence, neither analysed the motivations behind the massacres themselves.³⁸

Given these substantial gaps in the existing literature, Chapter One of this essay will present an original evidential argument, contending that the massacres of the First Crusade were primarily determined by the conventions of siege warfare and secular vengeance. Chapter Two will then assess the motivations of early religious chroniclers, arguing that they deliberately presented the massacre within a theological framework, a portrayal which has had significant repercussions for historical understandings of the slaughter.

³⁵ C. Tyerman, *God's War: A New History of the Crusades* (London, 2007), 143, 157-9.

³⁶ A.S. Atiya, *Crusade, Commerce and Culture* (London, 1962), 61-2; P.M. Holt, *The Age of the Crusades: The Near East from the Eleventh Century to 1517* (London, 1986), 22; Mayer, *Crusades*, 56; J. Riley-Smith, *The Crusades: A History*, 43.

³⁷ Phillips, *Crusades*, 23, 25; Runciman, *Crusades*, 234-5, 257, 260, 286-7; Claster, *Sacred Violence*, 75, 81 87-9.

³⁸ A. Maalouf, *The Crusades Through Arab Eyes* (London, 2006), 40, 49-51; J. Rubenstein, 'Cannibals and Crusaders', *French Historical Studies* 31 (2008), 525-552.

Chapter 1: The Conventions of Siege Warfare and Secular Vengeance

At the culmination of the siege of Nicaea on 19 June 1097, the city's inhabitants were fortunate to escape with their lives, the *Gesta Francorum* relating that they were spared only because they managed to negotiate a secret deal with Alexius Comnenus, the Byzantine Emperor, as the crusaders prepared to take the city by storm:

Then the Turks...sent a message to the emperor saying that they would surrender the city to him if he would let them go free with their wives and children and all their goods. The emperor, who was a fool as well as a knave, told them to go away unhurt and without fear...³⁹

Clearly then, in the eyes of a lay combatant, the crusaders had been denied the opportunity to exact revenge on the Nicaeans, whose refusal to surrender had forced them to endure an arduous siege: 'We besieged this city for seven weeks and three days, and many of our men suffered martyrdom there...'.⁴⁰ The author of the *Gesta* was clearly devout, taking the significant step of leaving the service of his feudal overlord to complete the 'pilgrimage' to Jerusalem,⁴¹ and his unwavering faith in God is frequently conveyed in his account.⁴² However, his evident frustration at the outcome of the siege is couched in secular, not religious terms, and, given that the army consisted mostly of fellow laymen, we might expect such an expression to be representative of crusader opinion.

Such frustrated anger can be understood by examining the conventions of medieval siege warfare. Bradbury, in a viewpoint also subscribed to by France, Hillenbrand and Madden, has argued that the storming of any city in the medieval era, '...gave the attackers complete control over the lives and fate of the defeated, almost any atrocity was given the cloak of legality...No mercy need be given, and none could be expected'.⁴³ Bradbury further states that

³⁹ *GF*, 16-17.

⁴⁰ *GF*, 17.

⁴¹ Hill, *GF*, XV.

⁴² See for instance *GF*, 28, 41, 69.

⁴³ J. Bradbury, *The Medieval Siege* (Woodbridge, 1992), 317; France, *Victory in the East*, 355-6; C. Hillenbrand, *The Crusades: Islamic Perspectives* (Edinburgh, 1999), 59; T.F. Madden, 'Rivers of Blood: An Analysis of One Aspect of the Crusader Conquest of Jerusalem', *Revista Chilena de Estudios Medievales* 1 (2012), 28.

these conventions 'crossed boundaries of race and religion'.⁴⁴ This contention is substantiated by examining other early medieval precedents across countries and religious divides. In 1087, for example, William the Conqueror slaughtered the citizens of Mantes as punishment for their resistance,⁴⁵ whilst in 1144, when Frankish-controlled Edessa was stormed by the Muslim atabeg Zengi, a brutal massacre occurred.⁴⁶ Such practice was not just common in Western Christendom and the Muslim East; the Mongols massacred the citizens of Riajan (1237), Vlad (1238) and Kiev (1240), after each city refused to surrender.⁴⁷ The reasons for such merciless treatment were two-fold; as retribution for the hardships and fatalities that resistance had caused the besiegers, and to act as a warning to other cities in order to avoid prolonged sieges which could stall the progress of a military campaign.

Significantly, the population of Nicaea — a city that had formed part of the Byzantine Empire as recently as 1081 — largely consisted of Greek and Armenian Christians under Muslim overlordship, a fact that the crusaders must surely have been aware of given that a contingent of Byzantines accompanied them.⁴⁸ It would seem likely, then, that, but for Alexius's intervention, much of the population would have been slaughtered, despite the preponderance of Christians; an indication that, at Nicaea, the crusaders were poised to heed the conventions of medieval warfare rather than being influenced by religious considerations. Indeed, two of the Benedictine chroniclers confirm that the Nicaeans were liable to punishment on account of their resistance. According to Guibert of Nogent, 'The tyrant [Alexius] graciously favoured their request, and not only granted it without punishing them, but...brought them to Constantinople',⁴⁹ while Robert of Rheims states that the citizens would have been massacred had the city fallen to a crusader offensive: 'The captives, reprieved from slaughter, are sent alive...to Constantinople'.⁵⁰ Clearly then, both monks — despite their religious standpoints which led them, as is argued in Chapter Two, to re-write the *Gesta Francorum's* account of the Jerusalem massacre — acknowledged here that the crusaders desired to exact retribution for Nicaea's resistance, and, in doing so, seem fully aware of the

⁴⁴ Bradbury, *Medieval Siege*, 297.

⁴⁵ France, *Victory in the East*, 355.

⁴⁶ Bradbury, *Medieval Siege*, 318.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Riley-Smith, *The Crusades: A History*, 35.

⁴⁹ GN, 65.

⁵⁰ RR, 106.

customs of siege warfare that normalised such vengeance. This idea finds further confirmation in the account of Albert of Aachen, who wrote that ‘...they [the Nicaeans] made entreaties concerning the safety of life and limb, asking that they be spared by the Christian army...’.⁵¹ Given that Albert was largely reliant on the testimony of lay combatants,⁵² his statement arguably provides a reliable indicator of crusader mentality at Nicaea.

The conventions of siege warfare also seem to have determined the massacre at Ma’arrat al-Nu‘man, besieged for two weeks in December 1098 by a force under the command of Raymond IV of Toulouse and Bohemond of Taranto. The author of the *Gesta Francorum* commented that when the city fell ‘they [the crusaders] killed everyone, man or women, whom they met...’.⁵³ Importantly, the Damascene chronicler Ibn al-Qalanisi — who also recorded a substantial massacre — noted that before the slaughter

messengers had repeatedly come to them [the Muslim citizens] from the Franks with proposals for a settlement by negotiation and the surrender of the city, promising in return security for their lives and property...but dissension among the citizens...prevented acceptance of these terms.⁵⁴

It would seem probable then — if we accept the testimony of Ibn al-Qalanisi, whose knowledge of specific details of the siege suggests that he talked to Muslim survivors⁵⁵ — that the crusaders were willing to negotiate a non-violent conclusion, hardly suggesting they were motivated by religious fanaticism with slaughter as the only possible outcome.

Similar reasons seem to have determined the fate of the Muslim inhabitants of Albara, sacked in October 1098 by an army of Provençals, again commanded by Count Raymond IV of Toulouse. Raymond’s chaplain, Raymond of Aguilers, observed that ‘the Count...took by storm the city of Barra and he killed there many thousands of Saracens...But he permitted those to go away free who, for fear of death gave themselves up to him while they were being

⁵¹ AA, 125.

⁵² Edgington, ‘Albert of Aachen Reappraised’, 56.

⁵³ GF, 80.

⁵⁴ Ibn al-Qalanisi, *The Damascus Chronicle of the Crusades*, tr. H.A.R Gibb (London, 1932), 47

⁵⁵ Ibn states that his information was ‘transcribed from the mouths of trustworthy persons’, 10.

besieged'.⁵⁶ While Raymond may have wished to emphasise the magnanimity of his overlord, it is far more plausible, given that he did not minimise the account of the 'many thousands' slaughtered, that his observation ratifies the idea that the Muslims of Albara were treated in accordance with the conventions of medieval warfare.

Raymond of Aguilers also observed that the psychological effect of the massacres greatly facilitated the crusaders' advance to Jerusalem: '...the cities of the Saracens were so beset with fear...that if our Franks had ridden forth then we believe there would not have been a city, even to Jerusalem, which would have thrown a stone at them'.⁵⁷ Such a comment seems entirely consistent with the crusader policy of exacting retribution on cities that refused to surrender, not only as punishment, but also to serve as a warning to other cities contemplating resistance. Even if Raymond may have exaggerated the Muslims' fear of the Frankish advance, his statement was clearly broadly correct, given that, after the massacres at Ma'arrat and Albara, the crusaders encountered almost no resistance in their approach towards Jerusalem: the *Gesta Francorum* states that when the Franks reached Rafaniya, and later Ramla, the Muslim citizens had fled in fear of their lives.⁵⁸

At two other Palestinian towns, Maraclea and Artah, the Muslim populations surrendered without a fight and were spared the fate that had befallen those that resisted. The author of the *Gesta* noted that at Maraclea, '...the amir who governed it made a treaty with our men, admitted them to the city, and put up our banner',⁵⁹ whilst Ralph of Caen gave a similar account for the peaceful surrender of Artah.⁶⁰ It also seems highly likely that the method of takeover determined the very different fates of the inhabitants of two further cities, captured after Jerusalem's fall. As Ibn al-Qalanisi observed '...in this year [1100] the Franks captured...Arsuf by capitulation, and they drove its inhabitants out of it. At the end of Rajab [May] they captured Qaisariya [Caesarea] by assault...killed its population, and plundered everything'.⁶¹

⁵⁶ RA, 203.

⁵⁷ RA, 198.

⁵⁸ GF, 82, 87.

⁵⁹ GF, 84.

⁶⁰ RC, 112-113.

⁶¹ Ibn al-Qalanisi, *Damascus Chronicle*, 51.

The massacre at Antioch: secular vengeance, crusader comradeship and privations

If the secular conventions of siege warfare loomed large in chroniclers' accounts of the climax to the sieges at Nicaea, Ma'arrat, Albara and other cities, further secular reasons come to prominence when examining contemporary accounts at Antioch. Here, on 3 June 1098, after a protracted siege lasting nearly eight months, there was a substantial slaughter of the inhabitants once the walls were breached, the *Gesta Francorum* observing: 'All the streets of the city on every side were full of corpses, so that no-one could endure to be there because of the stench...'.⁶² Whilst the chronicler offered no direct explanation for the motivation behind the killings, a comment regarding the deaths of a substantial number of his companions during a skirmish outside Antioch on 6 March 1098 indicates the importance the crusaders attached to bonds of comradeship: '...we, angry at the loss of our comrades, called on the Name of Christ...and went all together to fight the Turks, whom we attacked with one heart and one mind'.⁶³ Whilst the author and his fellow crusaders clearly considered it essential to invoke divine assistance, the desire to avenge their fallen comrades appears to have taken precedence over any form of religious intolerance.

Further confirmation of this idea can be found in the letters of two noblemen concerning this same skirmish. Stephen of Blois, one of the leaders of the Crusade, wrote to his wife Adela that, after suffering heavy losses, '...our men were so incensed against the Turks that they were ready to die for Christ and so joined battle to avenge the pain of their brothers',⁶⁴ while Anselm of Ribemont noted: '[the defeat]...grieved all our men who...bemoaned the shame they felt on losing a thousand of their comrades that day, and so they formed up in battle-order and defeated the Turks...'.⁶⁵ Such statements clearly show that there was no contradiction between devout religious belief and a desire for secular vengeance; the use of standard religious observances do not place the combatants in the grip of religious fanaticism. Furthermore, if this was the attitude of laymen during the siege, it is likely to have been at the forefront of crusaders' minds when the city's walls were finally breached three months

⁶² *GF*, 48.

⁶³ *GF*, 40.

⁶⁴ Stephen, Count of Blois, to his wife, Adela (29 March, 1098). Outside Antioch. In *Letters from the East, Crusaders, Pilgrims and Settlers in the 12th–13th Centuries*, trs. M. Barber and K. Bate (Farnham, 2013), 24.

⁶⁵ Anselm of Ribemont to Manasses, Archbishop of Reims (July, 1098). Antioch. In *Letters from the East*, 28.

later. Although no monastic chronicler makes comparable comments about Antioch, Albert of Aachen, when describing an earlier skirmish at Nicaea, noted that ‘...the people of the living God...feeling enraged by the massacre of their comrades, assaulted the tower...’.⁶⁶ Given the very different causes advanced by religious commentators for the massacre at Jerusalem, it is surely telling that Albert, relying for his information on former participants, specifically references the crusaders’ powerful desire to avenge their companions.

The cohesive nature of the crusader army offers a compelling context for testimony concerning the wish by crusaders to exact revenge on Muslim opponents for their fallen ‘brothers’. As Throop has recently shown, despite its diverse nationalities and languages, the army evidently developed meaningful bonds of fraternity, with crusaders referring to each other as ‘amici’ and ‘fratres’, whilst the frequent use of the term ‘auxilium’, denoting military obligations to overlords and family members, also demonstrates a unified group mentality.⁶⁷ The crusaders’ belief in themselves as a Christian brotherhood was summed up by Fulcher of Chartres, who accompanied the main army as far as Antioch: ‘Who ever heard of such a mixture of languages in one army...there were French, Frisians,...Bavarians, Normans, English, Italians,...Iberians, Greeks, and Armenians? But we who were diverse in languages, nevertheless seemed to be brothers in the love of God...’.⁶⁸

A further powerful secular reason behind the massacre at Antioch can be found in the privations the crusaders’ endured. Matthew of Edessa, who, as a contemporary Armenian Christian, was well placed to give an indication of the high fatalities incurred in the crusader camp during the winter of 1097-8, noted: ‘because of the scarcity of food, mortality and affliction fell upon the Frankish army to such an extent that one out of five perished’.⁶⁹ The *Gesta Francorum* corroborates Matthew’s claim, noting that in January 1098 there was a ‘terrible famine’ among the besiegers and ‘...many of our people died there’.⁷⁰ Such an arduous siege was clearly at odds with the earlier optimism of the crusaders on leaving Nicaea, when Stephen of Blois wrote excitedly to his wife: ‘I tell you, my love, that five weeks

⁶⁶ AA,115.

⁶⁷ S.A. Throop, *Crusading as an Act of Vengeance*, 1095-1216 (Farnham, 2011), 57-8.

⁶⁸ FC, 38.

⁶⁹ Matthew of Edessa, quoted in Asbridge, *Crusades*, 68.

⁷⁰ GF, 33.

after leaving Nicaea we will reach Jerusalem if Antioch does not hold us up...'.⁷¹ It is significant that Guibert of Nogent, despite his religious standpoint, explicitly states that such crusader hardships determined the massacre at Antioch: 'As they recalled the sufferings they had endured during the siege, they thought that the blows that they were giving could not match the starvations, more bitter than death, that they had suffered'.⁷² Given that the *Gesta Francorum*, his principle source, did not advance a reason for the massacre, Guibert was presumably forced to draw here on the testimonies of 'those who were present on the expedition', which, as he made clear in his preface, he used to supplement the *Gesta's* narrative.⁷³ His account of the massacre at Antioch can probably therefore be regarded as a reliable indicator of crusader mentality, which seems to have been motivated by secular not religious vengeance.

Further compelling evidence to corroborate the non-religious motives behind the massacre can be found in Guibert's statement that Antioch's substantial Christian community was slaughtered alongside the Muslims when the walls were finally breached:

The same punishment inflicted upon the hordes of pagans was justly meted out to the treacherous Armenians and Syrians, who with the aid of the Turks, had eagerly pursued the destruction of our men, and our men were, in turn, unwilling to spare them painful punishment'.⁷⁴

Interestingly, Guibert claims that the crusaders would have spared many among the Christian community 'had they known how to make a distinction between the native pagans and those of our own faith', a claim echoed by Albert of Aachen.⁷⁵ However this clearly conflicts with his statement claiming that the slaughter of native Christians was justified given their collaboration with their Turkish overlords (collaborations specifically confirmed by the author of the *Gesta Francorum* who observed that the Armenians and Syrians shot arrows at the

⁷¹ Stephen, Count of Blois, to his wife, Adela (June, 1097). Near Nicaea. In *Letters from the East*, 17.

⁷² GN, 93.

⁷³ GN, Preface, 25.

⁷⁴ GN, 93.

⁷⁵ GN, 93; AA, 284-5.

crusaders from the city's walls).⁷⁶ Such a contradiction can most likely be explained as an attempt to reconcile the sinfulness (in Guibert's eyes) of the crusaders killing fellow Christians, and historical precedents suggest that Guibert's claim is even less convincing. In 1209, for example, during the Albigensian Crusade, when the city of Beziers was stormed after sustained resistance, all the inhabitants — Orthodox Catholics as well as Cathar heretics — were massacred as punishment for refusing to surrender.⁷⁷ On balance, it seems unlikely that the crusaders would have spared the native Christians, even if they had been aware of their religion, thus supporting this essay's contention that the massacre at Antioch was determined by secular vengeance. This idea is further borne out by the treatment of the Antiochenes who managed to escape to the relative safety of the citadel and later surrendered following the defeat of a Muslim relief army led by Kerbogha of Mosul on 28 June 1098. The *Gesta Francorum* states that this garrison was allowed to depart '...safe and uninjured...',⁷⁸ in return for their submission, an outcome that seems altogether consistent with the customs of siege warfare in relation to negotiated surrender.⁷⁹

The massacres that predated Jerusalem therefore appear to have been determined by a combination of secular factors, including the widely understood conventions of siege warfare, the close-bonding prevalent in the Frankish army which translated itself into a desire to avenge fallen comrades, and the privations endured by crusaders. Bearing this in mind, it would appear inherently unlikely that the massacre at Jerusalem alone was carried out primarily due to religious fanaticism. Although one might cite the centrality of Jerusalem within the Christian faith, it is important to remember that Antioch, too, was regarded by contemporaries as an important centre of Christianity.⁸⁰

⁷⁶ *GF*, 41.

⁷⁷ Bradbury, *Medieval Siege*, 319.

⁷⁸ *GF*, 71.

⁷⁹ Kedar, 'Frankish Levant', 145-6.

⁸⁰ *GF*, 27; *GN*, 74; *RR*, 119-20.

Chapter Two: Reinterpreting the Jerusalem Massacre of 1099

The *Gesta Francorum*

Chapter Two of this dissertation contends that the massacre at Jerusalem has been deliberately portrayed by ecclesiastical commentators as exclusively motivated by religion and that secondary historians have uncritically accepted their inferences. Housley has recently commented that ‘...the crusaders...crudely exulted in what they had done’, whilst Claster concurs, claiming ‘...the crusaders were in no doubt of the suitability of what they had done, no doubt at all that God would rejoice with them...’.⁸¹ The lay author of the *Gesta Francorum* however did not exult or revel in the massacre at Jerusalem.⁸² Instead, it is described in the ‘dispassionate’ tones of a soldier used to the brutal realities of medieval siege warfare and his account portrays no sense of the glee widespread in the religious chroniclers’ narratives.⁸³ The one text that should be considered, above all, as the most reliable reflection of crusader opinion has been largely overlooked by later historians.

This is not to say that religious fervour played no part in the massacre. The *Gesta Francorum* gives an indication of the crusaders’ piety by observing that, two days before the city’s capture, the entire army undertook a penitential procession around the walls of Jerusalem, and, following the massacre, joyfully paid their respects at the tomb of Christ.⁸⁴ Given the city’s undoubted importance as a religious icon, it is therefore likely that the massacre involved some element of religious fervour. But certainly the persistent claims by ecclesiastical chroniclers that the Franks were overwhelmingly motivated by religious vengeance is not expressed, at any stage, by the sole secular eyewitness chronicler of the First Crusade.

Although the victims at Jerusalem were exclusively Muslim and Jewish, this cannot be used to support the case of those historians who have asserted that religious fanaticism was the primary cause of the massacre, given that the entire Christian population of the city had in

⁸¹ N. Housley, *Contesting the Crusades* (Malden, 2006), 46; Claster, *Sacred Violence*, 87.

⁸² *GF*, 91-2.

⁸³ P.J. Cole, ‘The Theme of Religious Pollution in Crusade Documents, 1095-1188’, in M. Shatzmiller (ed.), *Crusaders and Muslims in Twelfth-Century Syria* (Leiden, 1993), 93.

⁸⁴ *GF*, 90, 92.

fact been expelled by the Fatimid commander, Iftikhar al-Dawla, prior to the crusaders' arrival.⁸⁵ If we take into account the threatened massacre of the predominantly Christian population of Nicaea, and the slaughter of native Christians at Antioch, it seems probable that had Jerusalem's Christian population remained in the city, it too would have suffered a similar fate. Significantly, the author of the *Gesta Francorum* and Raymond of Aguilers observed that the Muslims garrisoning the Tower of David were allowed to depart unhindered to Ascalon in exchange for their surrender to Raymond of Toulouse, an outcome that suggests religious fervour and the conventions of siege warfare went hand in hand during the massacre.⁸⁶

Re-framing the *Gesta Francorum's* account: the Benedictines

It is arguable that the *Gesta Francorum's* focus on comradeship as a motive for revenge when recounting the skirmish on 6 March outside Antioch has been replaced in the Benedictines' accounts of the Jerusalem massacre by a more urgent religious emphasis. Robert of Rheims, for instance, claims that when the crusaders stormed the city, Godfrey of Bouillon, one of the leaders of the First Crusade, was '...desperate to make the enemy pay for the blood of the servants of God which had been spilt...'.⁸⁷ Robert clearly asserts that Godfrey yearned for vengeance, not because those slain were his 'comrades',⁸⁸ but because they were fellow 'servants of God'. Similarly, Baldric of Bourgueil remoulds the fraternal bonds prevalent in the crusader army, implying the Franks were motivated primarily by religious vengeance at Jerusalem: 'I say to fathers and sons and brothers and nephews: for if some stranger struck one of your own, would you not avenge your blood [relation]? How much more should you avenge your God, your father, your brother, whom you see blamed, proscribed, crucified...'.⁸⁹ In their attempts to re-frame crusader comradeship in more explicitly religious terms, arguably, both monks are inadvertently demonstrating that the secular vengeance referred to by the *Gesta Francorum* at Antioch was also prevalent in the crusaders' mind-sets at Jerusalem.

⁸⁵ Richard, *Crusades*, 66; Murray, 'Urban Space', 209.

⁸⁶ *GF*, 92; *RA*, 261

⁸⁷ *RR*, 200.

⁸⁸ See footnote 59.

⁸⁹ Baldric of Bourgueil, quoted in Throop, *Crusading as an Act of Vengeance*, 51.

A different, albeit related, motive for the massacre is alleged by Guibert of Nogent, who, in contrast to Robert and Baldric, claims that the Franks enacted God's will by killing the city's inhabitants in revenge, not for crusader fatalities, but for centuries of suffering endured by Christian pilgrims: '...God repaid them who had inflicted such pain and death upon the pilgrims — who had suffered for such a long time in that land — by exacting a retribution equal to their hideous crimes'.⁹⁰ Whilst Kedar has interpreted Guibert's use of the word 'pilgrims' as a direct reference to the crusaders themselves, it seems far more likely that Guibert was in fact referring here to the alleged maltreatment of Christian pilgrims by Muslims.⁹¹ Not only does he claim that the pilgrims had suffered over lengthy periods of time, but he further states that '...no one except God himself can calculate how much suffering...all of those who sought the Holy Places endured at the hands of the arrogant Gentiles', a comment that seems to directly refer to travellers' experiences when visiting the Holy Land.⁹²

Whilst Christian pilgrims had been persecuted by the Fatimid caliph Al-Hakim from 1009-1017, after this period successive waves of pilgrims seem to have been relatively unhindered, judging by the large numbers who undertook the journey right up to the eve of the First Crusade.⁹³ In 1026, for example, 700 Norman pilgrims travelled to Jerusalem, a number dwarfed by a joint French and German expedition in 1064 that possibly contained as many as 7,000-12,000 pilgrims.⁹⁴ It would appear then, that Guibert's claims of routine oppression do not stand up to scrutiny, whilst it is also clear that he altered the *Gesta Francorum's* account by inferring that the crusaders were motivated by religious vengeance at Jerusalem.

In attempting to justify the massacre at Jerusalem, the Benedictine chroniclers also offer what was perhaps, in their eyes, the most significant motive for its occurrence, explicitly linking it to what they considered the righteous eradication of Muslim 'pollution' of the Holy Places.⁹⁵ Robert of Rheims, for instance, claims that '...the Frankish people...with the help of Divine Grace cleansed it of the filth of the Gentiles by which Jerusalem had been soiled for

⁹⁰ GN, 132.

⁹¹ Kedar, 'Jerusalem Massacre', 25.

⁹² GN, 132.

⁹³ See J. Riley-Smith, *The First Crusaders, 1095-1131* (Cambridge, 1997), 25-31.

⁹⁴ Riley-Smith, *First Crusaders*, 29, 31.

⁹⁵ See Cole, 'Religious Pollution', 94-100.

some 40 [400] years',⁹⁶ whilst Baldric of Bourgueil equally emphasises that the Muslims, owing to their sacrilegious and idolatrous pollution of the Holy Places, deserved to be 'eliminated'.⁹⁷ Importantly, this idea of eradicating Muslim pollution is included in both monks' accounts of Pope Urban II's speech at Clermont.⁹⁸ However, it is significant that Fulcher of Chartres, who, unlike the Benedictine chroniclers is a known eyewitness at Clermont, makes no mention of pollution in his account of Urban's speech.⁹⁹ It therefore seems probable that not only did Robert and Baldric depart from the *Gesta Francorum's* account by introducing religious justifications for the massacre at Jerusalem, they also implicitly linked the objectives of the First Crusade to the need to eradicate and cleanse the Muslim 'pollution' of the city.

'The contagion of the heathen': a critical analysis of other religious chroniclers

The determination of the crusaders to 'cleanse' Jerusalem is also alluded to by other early religious chroniclers. Although he omitted Muslim pollution in his account of Urban's speech at Clermont, at Jerusalem, Fulcher of Chartres stated that the city was 'Cleansed from the contagion of the heathen...so long contaminated by their superstition, it was restored to its former rank by those believing and trusting in Him'.¹⁰⁰ Evidently, for churchmen like Fulcher, such violence was 'essential for the restoration of the properly Christian character of Jerusalem'.¹⁰¹ However, Fulcher's account cannot be taken as a reliable indicator of crusader mentality at Jerusalem as he had left the main army to accompany Baldwin of Boulogne to Edessa in early 1098 and consequently was forced to borrow material from the *Gesta Francorum* and other chronicles to supplement his narrative.¹⁰² If Fulcher did indeed draw on the lay author's account of the massacre at Jerusalem, it is clear that he substantially altered it.

⁹⁶ RR, 203.

⁹⁷ Cole, *Religious Pollution*, 96.

⁹⁸ RR, 80; Baldric of Dol, Urban II's Call for a Crusade, in S.J. Allen and E. Amt (eds.) *The Crusades: A Reader* (Peterborough, 2003), 43.

⁹⁹ Fulcher of Chartres, Urban II's Call for a Crusade, *The Crusades: A Reader*, 39-40.

¹⁰⁰ FC, 70.

¹⁰¹ Cole, 'Religious Pollution', 91.

¹⁰² Edgington, 'First Crusade', 56-7.

Like the Benedictine chroniclers, Raymond of Aguilers also portrayed the massacre as fitting punishment for the purported Muslim desecrations of the Holy Places: ‘...it was a just and splendid judgement of God, that this place should be filled with the blood of the unbelievers, since it had suffered so long from their blasphemies...’.¹⁰³ This is in sharp contrast to Raymond’s discussion of the massacre at Antioch, where, as well as making no attempt to justify the killings on religious grounds, he even portrayed an element of sympathy for the Muslim victims: ‘...we cannot say how many Turks and Saracens then perished; it is, furthermore cruel to explain by what diverse and various deaths they died’.¹⁰⁴ Although Raymond was an eyewitness at Jerusalem, he also drew on the *Gesta Francorum*, and it is surely significant that in his decision to set the massacre at Jerusalem alone within a religious framework, he departs so markedly from the *Gesta*’s much more straightforward account.

The churchman Ralph of Caen, writing retrospectively, was equally determined to assign a religious context to the killing. However, instead of seeing the massacre as motivated by Muslim ‘pollution’, Ralph utilised a startlingly graphic image of the Crucifixion to account for, and justify, the crusaders’ actions, implying that the Franks inflicted on the ‘infidels’ similar bodily punishment to Christ’s¹⁰⁵: ‘Behold, holy anger, holy sword, holy destruction...Shedder of innocent blood...you who have torn apart Christ completely in his limbs, receive now the limbs that Christ’s supporters return to you’.¹⁰⁶ Although Ralph claims that his history relies on testimony taken from Tancred, Bohemond and their Italian Norman followers, countrymen of the author of the *Gesta Francorum*, the *Gesta*’s account includes no such religious symbolism, demonstrating once more that the attempt made by ecclesiastical commentators to frame the massacre at Jerusalem in solely religious terms is at odds with what we know from the scant surviving evidence about the mentality of the lay crusader force.¹⁰⁷

Only one religious chronicler of the First Crusade, Albert of Aachen, deviates from the general narrative, claiming that although, in the centuries prior to the First Crusade, the Muslims drove ‘Catholic worshippers’ out of many ‘chapels in the Holy City’, they did respect

¹⁰³ RA, 261.

¹⁰⁴ RA, 155.

¹⁰⁵ Throop, *Crusading as an Act of Vengeance*, 57.

¹⁰⁶ RC, 145-6

¹⁰⁷ RC, 19-20

Jerusalem's most important Christian sites: '...the Turks venerated them [Solomon's Temple and the Holy Sepulchre] with complete piety and kept them both inviolate...'.¹⁰⁸ This more measured account is important since Albert's chronicle is independent of all the other sources of the First Crusade.¹⁰⁹ However, Albert also claims — in a detail not mentioned by the *Gesta Francorum* — that '...to arouse the Christians' anger, they [the Muslim defenders] fixed crosses in mockery and abuse, upon which they either spat, or did not shrink from urinating [on]...'.¹¹⁰ Thus, whilst he does not attempt to justify the massacre, calling it 'excessive cruelty' and a 'pitiable slaughter', Albert hints that the crusaders had sufficient motives to exact vengeance for insults to the Christian faith.¹¹¹

The uncritical adoption by modern historians of the religious chroniclers' accounts

The relentless portrayal by the religious chroniclers of the massacre at Jerusalem as religiously motivated, and hence implicitly justified, has arguably had significant implications for the analysis of the massacre undertaken by modern commentators. As outlined in the Introduction, many historians appear to have accepted at face value these chroniclers' claims that the crusaders were primarily motivated by religious fanaticism. Indeed, in some cases modern historians have even replicated the inflammatory religious language of the chroniclers themselves, with Armstrong uncritically assuming that the crusading army believed Muslims '...were polluting this Holy City and had to be eliminated like vermin...'.¹¹²

In particular, the religious chroniclers' lurid descriptions of bloodshed enable further conclusions to be drawn concerning the extent to which their portrayals of the massacre have swayed subsequent historical opinion. Raymond of Aguilers, for example, claimed that '...in the Temple and porch of Solomon, men rode in blood up to their knees and bridle reins'.¹¹³ Runciman, who unequivocally attributed the slaughter to religious fanaticism, clearly adopts Raymond's claim, commenting that when Raymond visited the Temple '...he had to pick his way through corpses and blood that reached up to his knees'.¹¹⁴ More recent historians have

¹⁰⁸ AA, 435.

¹⁰⁹ See footnote 16.

¹¹⁰ AA, 415.

¹¹¹ AA, 437, 445

¹¹² Armstrong, *Holy War*, 120.

¹¹³ RA, 261.

¹¹⁴ Runciman, *Crusades*, 287.

been similarly uncritical. Goldschmidt envisages 'human blood flowing knee-deep in the streets of Jerusalem', whilst Payne comments that 'Jerusalem was being drowned in blood'.¹¹⁵ Even Asbridge has asserted that the killing '...left the city awash with blood...'.¹¹⁶

Raymond of Aguilers's words should not, however, be seen as a literal indication of the scale of the massacre as Runciman and others have concluded. Indeed, Raymond's description of blood rising to the bridle reins of the crusaders' horses derives directly, in the original Latin, from *Revelation* 14:20; '...the blood flowed from the wine press, as high as a horse's bridle...'.¹¹⁷ Clearly then, by drawing parallels between a biblical judgement and the massacre in 1099, Raymond (and by extension other religious chroniclers) wanted to portray the slaughter as a 'righteous purification of the city', rather than offering 'simply a stark reporting of facts'.¹¹⁸ If many historians have unquestioningly accepted the language of the religious chroniclers, it is arguably only a small step to being swayed by their constant inferences that the crusaders — acting in a manner that they believed God considered just— massacred a large proportion of the city's inhabitants owing to their all-consuming religious fanaticism.

Kedar has maintained that, even if we discard Raymond's testimony, the other chroniclers who claim the blood reached ankle level should not be discounted.¹¹⁹ However, Madden, in a pioneering study undertaken to accurately assess the number of dead by measuring the approximate dimensions of the al-Aqsa Mosque, has calculated that only the deaths of 34,880 people could have brought the volume of blood up to ankle level.¹²⁰ Yet Ibn al-Arabi, who certainly had no reason to play down the massacre's severity estimates that around 3,000 people were killed. Some historians who have not benefited from Madden's recent study have seized on the figures given by religious chroniclers such as Fulcher of Chartres (10,000) to set the Jerusalem massacre apart as an extermination instigated by fanatical belief.¹²¹ Whilst large numbers were certainly killed at Jerusalem, this essay has attempted to show

¹¹⁵ A. Goldschmidt, *A Concise History of the Middle East* (Boulder, 1991), 88-9; Payne, *Crusades*, 102.

¹¹⁶ Asbridge, *Crusades*, 102.

¹¹⁷ Madden, 'Rivers of Blood', 33-4.

¹¹⁸ Madden, 'Rivers of Blood', 34.

¹¹⁹ Kedar, 'Jerusalem Massacre', 65.

¹²⁰ Madden, 'Rivers of Blood', 26-37.

¹²¹ Oldenbourg, *Crusades*, 140; Armstrong, *Holy War*, 120.

that the massacre, although perhaps representing the extreme of the continuum, was not exceptional in medieval siege warfare.

Conclusion

In his *Sermo apologeticus*, Robert of Rheims stated that 'A certain abbot called Bernard...showed me a history [the *Gesta Francorum*] which set out this material. However he was not happy with it...because...it did not make the best of the sequence of wonderful events it contained...'.¹²² This comment strongly suggests that churchmen in the West considered the lay author's interpretation of the First Crusade an inadequate representation of the religious ideals that underpinned crusading ideology, and consequently deliberately set out to re-write it: for medieval monastic chroniclers, 'history was the manifestation of God's will on earth'.¹²³ Guibert' of Nogent's re-working of the secular title of the *Gesta Francorum* into one with a more central religious inference, *Gesta Dei per Francos*, further underlines this contention. The Franks it is implied, act not of their own 'agency', but through 'divine will'.¹²⁴

These alterations have arguably had dramatic repercussions for our understanding of the Jerusalem massacre today. As discussed above, the author of the *Gesta*, the sole secular eyewitness of the massacre, although a devout man who attributed several crusader victories to divine intervention,¹²⁵ does not — as the religious chroniclers did without exception — portray the slaughter as religiously motivated, divinely orchestrated, or religiously justified. Cole explains this omission by suggesting that the author may not have possessed the theological capabilities to express the concept that the crusaders sought to purify the Holy Places in God's name.¹²⁶ However, massacres were not exceptional events in siege warfare; the author himself took part in several on the road to Jerusalem. His lack of comment on this particular aspect of the siege therefore suggests that the Jerusalem massacre, like the

¹²² RR, *Sermo apologeticus*, 75.

¹²³ A. Gransden, *Historical Writing in England, c.550 to c.1307* (London, 1974), 154.

¹²⁴ Biddlecombe, BB, X.

¹²⁵ See for instance *GF*, 96, Battle of Ascalon (August, 1099).

¹²⁶ Cole, 'Religious Pollution', 92.

slaughters that predated it, remained primarily rooted in secular rather than religious motives.

Tellingly, the religious chroniclers, many of whom implicitly — and even occasionally explicitly — account for the massacres at cities such as Antioch and Albara in secular terms, have gone to considerable lengths to portray the killing at Jerusalem alone as religiously motivated and justified. Given this fundamental inconsistency, we can conclude with some degree of confidence that the crusaders were primarily driven by secular motives at Jerusalem. However, whilst a strong case can be made to support such a hypothesis, the lack of a strong body of evidence written by lay participants of the First Crusade means that caution must be deployed to prevent wide-sweeping claims that cannot be firmly proven. Whilst the *Gesta Francorum*, and the letters of Stephen of Blois and Anselm of Ribemont (neither of whom were present at Jerusalem), certainly offer an indication into the mentalities of the Frankish force, the opinions and statements of three men cannot be taken as representative of the crusading army, especially given that all three hailed from the mid-upper echelons of feudal society. Whilst a portion of the army certainly contained men of similar rank and status, a larger section consisted of men of humbler origins, whose opinions remain unrecoverable. At least for the purposes of this study, therefore, the early medieval historian is forced to accept the unwelcome reality that the majority of sources pertaining to the First Crusade were written from the relative comfort of the abbeys and monasteries of the clerical elite.

We can decry with more certainty, however, statements by secondary historians which have actively impeded a clear understanding of the Jerusalem massacre. Oldenbourg, for example, claims that ‘the massacre perpetrated by the Crusaders in Jerusalem has long been reckoned among the greatest crimes in history’.¹²⁷ As we have seen, any medieval city that refused to surrender and was taken by storm was liable to severe punishment; in a sense, then, the inhabitants who fell victim to the crusaders’ swords, were not innocent according to medieval sensibilities. As Richard Fletcher surely rightly observed, ‘rebuking the past from the different moral standpoint of the present does not advance historical understanding’, and by uncritically accepting the statements of religious chroniclers, Oldenbourg and many other

¹²⁷ Oldenbourg, *Crusades*, 137.

secondary historians have arguably guaranteed the Jerusalem massacre a central place in crusading history.¹²⁸ The irony is not lost on this writer that this was precisely what the religious chroniclers themselves desired; certainly Raymond of Aguilers' claim that the day of 15 July 1099 '...will be famous in all future ages...' has been proved right, even if it has not come to resemble the 'justification of all Christianity' that he himself envisaged.¹²⁹

¹²⁸ R. Fletcher, *The Cross and the Crescent* (London, 2003), 85.

¹²⁹ RA, 261.

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