6-2006

Vengeance and the Crusades

Susanna A. Throop
Ursinus College, sthroop@ursinus.edu

Crusades

Volume 5, 2006

Published by ASHGATE *for the Society for the Study of the Crusades and the Latin East*

Offprint from Crusades Vol. 5 (2006).

Vengeance and the Crusades

Susanna Throop

University of New Hampshire at Manchester

In 1935 Carl Erdmann's *Die Entstehung des Kreuzzugsgedankens* was published, sparking a re-examination of the developments of 1095 and 1096, and, eventually, of the motivations and justifications lying behind subsequent military expeditions as well.[1] But, despite this scholarly activity, the idea of crusading as vengeance has never been fully and comprehensively explored.[2]

There is nonetheless a view commonly held by historians regarding the idea of vengeance and the expedition known as the First Crusade. According to the accepted viewpoint articulated by Jonathan Riley-Smith, the relationship between vengeance and crusading at the time of the First Crusade was located predominantly in the minds of the laity. The desire for vengeance manifested itself at the beginning of the First Crusade in the attacks perpetrated by the crusaders on European Jews, but subsequently this desire dissipated; by the end of the crusade, all that remained were "residual feelings."[3] According to this model, the idea of crusading as vengeance faded into oblivion in the later part of the twelfth century, confined to anomalous medieval writers who were behind the times ideologically; as Erdmann himself concluded, the idea of vengeful crusading in the twelfth century was surely nothing more than "an obvious improvisation suggestive of how immature the idea of crusade still was."[4]

In fact, the textual evidence points to entirely different conclusions. This article demonstrates that the popularity of the idea of crusading as vengeance was not limited to the laity, and, instead of fading away after 1099, the ideology grew more widespread as the twelfth century progressed. The primary aim here is to present the evidence alongside preliminary analysis, reserving further, more detailed interpretation for future publications.

There are several methodological issues facing research such as this, some of which must be discussed here. Faced with the questions of which terms in Latin and Old French should be examined, and whether it is appropriate to group them together and at the same time exclude other terms, the field of research has been limited as much as possible by focusing on the Latin root-words *vindicta* and *ultio*,

---

[1] Carl Erdmann, *Die Entstehung des Kreuzzugsgedankens*; *The Origin of the Idea of Crusade*, trans. Marshall W. Baldwin and Walter Goffart (Princeton, 1977).

[2] For brief treatments of the subject see: Paul Rousset, *Les origines et les caractères de la première croisade* (Neuchâtel, 1945); Jonathan S. C. Riley-Smith, *The First Crusade and the Idea of Crusading* (London, 1986); Jean Flori, *Croisade and chevalerie* (Brussels, 1998).

[3] Riley-Smith, *The First Crusade and the Idea of Crusading*, p. 55.

[4] Erdmann, *Origin of the Idea of Crusade*, p. 113.

and the Old French *venjance*. For the purpose of discussion these terms have been translated into the modern English *vengeance*. There is reason to believe that *vindicta*, *ultio*, and *venjance* were understood as roughly equivalent terms in the Middle Ages: Hebrew words such as *nâqam* in the Old Testament were translated into either *vindicta* or *ultio* in the Latin Vulgate, and *vindicta* was translated into the Old French *venjance*, as in the case of the Latin poem *Vindicta Salvatoris* and its Old French version, *La Venjance de Nostre Seigneur*. It is also reasonable to translate the medieval terms into the modern English word *vengeance* for similar reasons, although the choice of the specific term *vengeance* is primarily based on linguistic similarity, and by no means implies that the medieval and modern words all signify precisely the same concept.

For the sake of clarity this research is restricted to the medieval terms *vindicta*, *ultio*, and *venjance*, despite the abundance of similar nouns like *retributio* in the sources. Medieval writers gave *retributio* both positive (reward) and negative (punishment) connotations, making it semantically distinct from, though undoubtedly related to, *vindicta* and *ultio*.[5] This present analysis has not labelled events in the sources as "vengeful" or "acts of vengeance," relying instead on the commentary of medieval contemporaries. When the word *vengeance* is used here to translate or discuss a medieval text, it is because *vindicta*, *ultio*, or *venjance* was used by the medieval author. Moreover, a distinction is drawn between the concept of a crusade in its entirety as one act of vengeance, and the frequent descriptions of individual battles or skirmishes as acts of vengeance for previous raids or ambushes. It is the former alone that has been considered evidence for the idea of crusading as vengeance.

Histories and chronicles have formed the backbone of this research. This is because of both their value, and the fact that any new interpretation intended to address a common assumption must by its nature look at the material that is commonly examined. This study has also utilized letters and literature in order to illustrate contemporary crusading culture in western Europe. Because the goal is cultural illustration rather than the establishment of points of fact regarding actual crusading events, the sources have been separated by date of composition, rather than by the date of the events described within the texts. In a few cases the date of composition has been difficult to establish, and those texts are discussed in the appropriate subsection below.

[5] For example Gratian, *Decretum* C.23 q.3 c.1, in *Corpus iuris canonici*, ed. E. Friedberg, 2 vols (Leipzig, 1879–81), 1:896 (*Quot sunt differentiae retributionis*).

1095–1137

For the period from 1095 to 1137 this paper will examine three different kinds of sources: letters, eyewitness accounts of the First Crusade, and narrative accounts written by non-participants. Only two letters of the First Crusade, out of the twenty-three compiled by Hagenmeyer, contained a reference to crusading as vengeance. The first was the letter from the lay leaders of the expedition to Urban II, written in September 1098 from Antioch, in which the leaders claimed "we the *Hierosolymitani* of Jesus Christ have avenged the injury of the highest God."[6] Subsequently, in 1100 Paschal II wrote concerning the First Crusade to the consuls in Pisa "when the Christian people gathered an army in the name of God … they most strenuously avenged the earthly Jerusalem from the tyranny and yoke of the barbarians."[7] While the letter from the lay leaders of the First Crusade simply stated that they had avenged an unspecified injury done to God, the letter from Paschal II made it clear that it was the seizure of Jerusalem by the Muslims that had been avenged. These two letters show the presence of the idea of crusading as vengeance on the cusp between the eleventh and twelfth centuries, but this evidence is mitigated by the fact that the vast majority of the letters made no connection between the First Crusade and vengeance.

Another source that argues for the presence of the idea of crusading as vengeance at the end of the eleventh century is the so-called "encyclical of Sergius IV." This document has been the object of fierce scrutiny and debate for more than a century now; some historians have argued for its authenticity, whilst others have argued for a dating in the late eleventh or early twelfth century.[8] One scholar has even concluded that the "encyclical" must date from the late twelfth century, due to its apparent ideological link with the papal propaganda of Innocent III.[9] In all likelihood, Schaller's argument relied overmuch on incorporating the "encyclical" within an earlier tradition of pious pilgrimage and underplaying links between the "encyclical" and the ideology of Urban II.[10] To date, Gieszytor's arguments have been the most in-depth and convincing, drawing upon a wealth of material and textual evidence to conclude that the "encyclical" most likely dates from the late eleventh or early twelfth century. His argument for dating it to Urban II's visit to

[6] Heinrich Hagenmeyer, ed., *Epistulæ et chartæ ad historiam primi belli sacri spectantes* (Innsbruck, 1901), p. 164. All translations in this article are my own.

[7] Hagenmeyer, *Epistulæ*, p. 180.

[8] The former most recently Hans-Martin Schaller, "Zur Kreuzzugsenzyklika Papst Sergius IV," in Hubert Mordek, ed., *Papsttum, Kirche und Recht im Mittelalter: Festschrift für Horst Fuhrmann zum 65. Geburtsag* (Tübingen, 1991), pp. 135–54. Argued previously by Carl Erdmann and Paul Kehr. The latter most recently Aleksander Gieysztor, "The genesis of the crusades: the encyclical of Sergius IV (1009–1012)," *Medievalia et humanistica* 5 (1948), 3–23, and 6 (1948), 3–34. Argued previously by Julius von Pflugk-Harttung and Paul Riant.

[9] Ursula Schwerin, *Die Aufrufe der Päpste zur Befreiung des Heiligen Landes von den Anfängen bis zum Ausgang Innocenz III* (Berlin, 1937), p. 301.

[10] Schaller, "Zur Kreuzzugsenzklika Papst Sergius IV," pp. 148–49.

the Abbey of Moissac in 1095 is much less convincing, but that does not alter the validity of his argument for the more general dating of the document to the late eleventh century.

The "encyclical," which was never widely distributed, called upon Christians in western Europe to take back Jerusalem in the wake of the destruction of the Holy Sepulchre by the Caliph al-Hakim in 1009. The text described the proposed expedition as an act of vengeance: "we are going into the area of Syria, so that we might avenge the Redeemer and his tomb."[11] Furthermore, the "encyclical" presented the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 C.E. by Titus and Vespasian as an early analogue of the proposed expedition: "just as it was in the days of Titus and Vespasian, who avenged the death of the Son of God."[12] These examples from the "encyclical" suggest that vengeance was owed for the death of Christ. Clearly, the "encyclical of Sergius IV," taken together with the two First Crusade letters already discussed, demonstrates that the idea of crusading as vengeance was in existence in the late eleventh century, albeit to a limited degree. The "encyclical" also signals the existence of the legend of the destruction of Jerusalem that would become the text known as *La Venjance de Nostre Seigneur* by the end of the twelfth century.[13]

The remaining sources for the period were written slightly later than the letters, in the early twelfth century. Among these sources, the eyewitness accounts were written by people who, as far as can be determined, actually participated in the events they described. It seems reasonable to think that the eyewitnesses were more likely to reflect accurately the atmosphere on the First Crusade than those who were never there. The atmosphere on the 1096 expedition itself is an important issue that must be addressed if possible, since the accepted view posits that the desire for vengeance evaporated shortly after the taking of Jerusalem in 1099.

Five Latin eyewitness accounts are under discussion: the *Gesta Francorum*, Fulcher of Chartres' *Historia Iherosolymitana*, Peter Tudebode's *Historia de Hierosolymitano Itinere*, Ekkehard of Aura's *Hierosolymita*, and the *Liber* of Raymond of Aguilers.[14] In the first four texts, there were almost no references to vengeance of any kind, and absolutely no reference to the idea of crusading as vengeance.[15]

[11] Ibid., p. 151.

[12] Ibid.

[13] For an excellent overview of the evolution of this legend from the account of Josephus to the dramatizations of the later Middle Ages, see Stephen K. Wright, *The Vengeance of Our Lord: medieval dramatizations of the destruction of Jerusalem* (Toronto, 1989), pp. 1–29.

[14] *Gesta Francorum et aliorum Hierosolimitanorum*, ed. Rosalind Hill (Oxford 1962); Fulcher of Chartres, *Historia Iherosolymitana*, ed. Heinrich Hagenmeyer (Heidelberg, 1913); Peter Tudebode, *Historia de Hierosolymitano Itinere*, ed. John H. Hill and Laurita L. Hill, Documents relatifs à l'histoire des croisades 12 (Paris, 1977); Ekkehard of Aura, *Hierosolymitana*, *RHC Oc* 5 (Paris 1895); Raymond of Aguilers, *Liber*, ed. John H. Hill and Laurita L. Hill, Documents relatifs à l'histoire des croisades 9 (Paris, 1969).

[15] The *Gesta Francorum* did depict those killed at Nicæa as martyrs who ascended to heaven saying "Lord, avenge our blood, which was shed for you" (*GF*, p. 17). However, it is not clear from the text that in calling for God to avenge them, the dead Christians were requesting a crusade *per se*; it was not unusual to call for God to avenge injury and wrongdoing.

In the fifth account, that of Raymond of Aguilers, the idea of crusading as vengeance surfaced twice. According to the text, the English went on the First Crusade "having heard the name of the Lord of vengeance on those who unworthily occupied the land of Jesus Christ's birth and of his apostles."[16] The taking of Jerusalem was summarily described: "the sons of apostles avenged the city and the fatherland for God and the fathers."[17] Like Paschal II in his letter of 1100, Raymond suggested that vengeance was owed for the Islamic occupation of Jerusalem.

The account of Raymond of Aguilers confirms that the idea of crusading as vengeance was in existence at the time of the First Crusade. In fact, the idea of holy war as vengeance for God dates back well before 1095, making it likely that the understanding of the First Crusade as vengeance may have been an adaptation of a previous trend, and not an entirely new ideology specific to the crusades.[18] But the main point is that, despite the existence of the idea of crusading as vengeance, understanding of the ideology at the time of the First Crusade does not seem to have been as widespread as previous historians have thought. Not only did the majority of letters and eyewitness accounts omit the idea, but even the one eyewitness account that did discuss crusading as vengeance also contained passages that seem to suggest vengeance was an inappropriate activity for crusaders: Raymond of Aguilers ostentatiously noted two occasions when the crusaders showed restraint, rather than otherwise, claiming that their minds were fixed on the journey ahead of them rather than on the desire for vengeance.[19] The letters and eyewitness accounts simply do not reveal the inflamed lust for vengeance that supposedly pervaded the crusading armies at the end of the eleventh century.

It could be argued that the evidence appears this way because the idea of crusading as vengeance circulated among the lower ranks of the crusaders, and thus found little outlet in written texts, especially those written by members of the Church. However, what evidence is available suggests otherwise. As shown above, the lay leaders of the crusade, who were hardly humble rabble, as well as Pope Paschal II, gave credence to the idea of crusading as vengeance. Raymond of Aguilers likewise referred to crusading as vengeance, while at the same time other members of the Church such as Ekkehard of Aura and Fulcher of Chartres ignored it. The evidence in this case simply does not allow for the ideological separation of the laity and the professed religious, or of those of low and high rank.

The eyewitness accounts of the First Crusade did not emphasize crusading as vengeance, but six narratives written by non-participants did: these are the accounts

[16] Raymond of Aguilers, *Liber*, p. 134.

[17] Ibid., p. 151.

[18] Flori, *Croisade and chevalerie*, p. 189.

[19] Raymond of Aguilers, *Liber*, p. 38.

of Albert of Aachen, Baldric of Bourgueil, Guibert of Nogent, Orderic Vitalis, Ralph of Caen, and Robert of Rheims.[20]

In Albert of Aachen's account, when Peter the Hermit first witnessed the Islamic occupation of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem "he called on God himself to be the avenger of the injuries he had seen" and then proceeded to Rome to urge the First Crusade.[21] Orderic Vitalis wrote that "with the permission of divine judgment the detestable Saracens crossed the borders of the Christians, invaded the holy places, killed the Christian inhabitants, and polluted the holy things with their filth, but after a long time they rightly suffered deserved vengeance at the hands of the northern peoples."[22] According to Robert of Rheims, Urban II at Clermont asked his audience "therefore to whom will this work of vengeance, this work of recovery, fall, if not to us?"[23] In response to Urban's appeal, according to Orderic Vitalis, all Christendom prepared for the expedition to the East: "valuable estates were sold for little and arms were taken up with which divine vengeance would be exercised."[24] In general, these writers called for Christians to enact divine vengeance both for the Islamic occupation of Jerusalem and the purported sufferings of Christians at the hands of the Muslims.

Robert of Rheims commemorated the fall of Antioch with a little verse inserted in the narrative:

> Divine vengeance thus wished to avenge itself
> on the dog-like people, and thus it was pleased.[25]

In this passage, the crusaders were acting out the will of God by taking vengeance on the Muslims for an unspecified injury. Similarly, Orderic Vitalis recounted that Baldwin I rallied his men at Jaffa, saying "let us arm ourselves manfully to take vengeance for God."[26] Although the injury was unspecified, to contemporaries it clearly demanded vengeance.

Yet another slightly different tone appeared in a sermon preached before the walls of Jerusalem were scaled, according to Baldric of Bourgueil: "I say to fathers and sons and brothers and nephews: for if some outsider struck one of your own, would you not avenge your blood? How much more ought you to avenge your God, your father, your brother, whom you see blamed, outlawed, crucified; whom you

[20] Albert of Aachen, *Liber Christianae expeditionis*, *RHC Oc* 4 (Paris, 1879); Baldric of Bourgueil, *Historia Jerosolimitana*, *RHC Oc* 4 (Paris, 1879); Guibert of Nogent, *Dei Gesta per Francos*, ed. Robert B. C. Huygens, CCCM 127A (Turnhout, 1996); Orderic Vitalis, *Historia Æcclesiastica*, ed. Marjorie Chibnall, 6 vols. (Oxford, 1969–80); Ralph of Caen, *Gesta Tancredi in expeditione Hierosolymitana*, *RHC Oc* 3 (Paris, 1866); Robert of Rheims, *Historia Iherosolimitana*, *RHC Oc* 3 (Paris, 1866).

[21] Albert of Aachen, *Liber*, p. 272.

[22] Orderic Vitalis, *Historia*, vol. 5 p. 4.

[23] Robert of Rheims, *Historia*, p. 728; internal reference to Psalm 67.22.

[24] Orderic Vitalis, *Historia*, vol. 5 p. 16.

[25] Robert of Rheims, *Historia*, p. 805.

[26] Orderic Vitalis, *Historia*, vol. 5 p. 348.

hear clamoring and desolate and begging for aid."[27] In this example of rhetoric, the crusaders were to avenge Christ himself, their father and brother, who (it was suggested) was suffering the Passion at that very moment in time and crying out for assistance. Crusaders were urged to view their relationship with God in terms of family, and thereby to follow the customs of vengeance they were familiar with.[28] Moreover, at the same time, the passage plays upon the powerful image of the suffering Christ calling for help.

The application of biblical texts to the First Crusade led to yet another "injury" committed by the Muslims. Guibert of Nogent applied Zechariah 12.6 to the First Crusade, explaining that "therefore *they devoured all the people to the right and to the left in a circle* [means that] while over here the elect, whom the right hand signifies, are incorporated into the piety of Christianity, over there the reprobate, who are known to pertain to the left, are devastated with deserved vengeance of slaughter."[29] For Guibert, vengeance was deserved by the Muslims not for one specific action but rather because they were "reprobate."

It is in the twelfth-century histories of the First Crusade written by non-participants, both monastic and otherwise, that the idea of crusade as vengeance was most visible. That said, these writers did not confine themselves to one theme. Much of the rhetoric concerning martyrdom and the imitation of Christ thrived in these accounts. The important point is that these writers emphasized vengeance more than the Latin eyewitnesses did. Indeed, however limited their treatment of vengeance, it was greater than that of the eyewitness accounts, making it extremely unlikely that the idea of crusading as vengeance peaked before 1100 and then slowly faded away.

Although there were only a small number of examples of the idea of crusading as vengeance from this period, nevertheless it is notable that writers played upon a wide variety of subcategories of the idea of crusading as vengeance: vengeance for an unspecified injury to God and Christianity, vengeance for the Islamic occupation of the Holy Land and treatment of the Christians living there, and vengeance for the sufferings and/or death of Christ. Moreover, in the writing of Guibert of Nogent, there was a hint that the Muslims deserved vengeance simply because of who, or what, they were.

[27] Baldric of Bourgueil, *Historia*, p. 101; internal reference to Isaiah 63.3.

[28] For more on the medieval understanding of family, see David Herlihy, "Family," *American Historical Review* 96 (1991), 1–16. For more on the medieval relationship between vengeance and social ties, see Daniel L. Smail, 'Hatred as a Social Institution in Late-medieval Society,' *Speculum* 76:1 (2001), 90–126 and Paul R. Hyams, *Rancor and Reconciliation in Medieval England* (Ithaca, NY, 2003).

[29] GN, p. 304.

1138–1175

The mid-twelfth century sources, those dating roughly from 1138–75, revealed an interesting pattern of evidence. First, in some texts the vocabulary of vengeance was applied to crusading. Second, the moral value of vengeance in general was presented in a more universal and unambiguously positive fashion. But third, and crucially, the ideology did *not* appear in a number of key crusading texts from the period.

Peter the Venerable stressed that the First Crusaders had taken vengeance for the Islamic occupation. In a letter to Louis VII of France in 1146, Peter directly compared the First Crusade to Old Testament wars when "by the command of God they exterminated the profane people with warlike strength, and avenged the land for God and themselves."[30]

The Byzantine emperor Manuel I, writing to Eugenius III in 1146 about the Second Crusade, stated that he knew that the Franks were coming "in order to avenge the holy churches, and because Edessa [was] held by the impious enemies of God." Manuel I emphasized both the general need to take vengeance for injuries done to the Church in the East and also the more specific need to take vengeance for the fall of Edessa.

The anonymous author of the *Gesta Stephani* wrote regarding the Second Crusade that:

> Therefore when the disgraceful news of such an intolerable expulsion had been made known to the pious ears of the mother Church, the kingdoms were agitated, the powers of the world were shaken, the whole world joined together manfully to avenge the shame of this universal injury. And especially the strong youths of all England, all marked with the strength of a manly heart and a constant mind, came together for this most particular [act of] vengeance.[31]

Just before this passage, the injuries that demanded vengeance were explicitly listed: the Muslims were "hostile to [the Christian] religion," they had seized Christian cities (including Jerusalem), killed some Christians and taken others hostage, and "what is a crime to say, they sought to abolish the temple, destroy the holy places, and delete the name of Christ."[32]

But other writers of historical accounts were much less clear about why vengeance was required in the East. For example, Bernard of Clairvaux, although he also utilized the vocabulary of vengeance, was less specific when he wrote to "the universal faithful" about the Second Crusade in March 1147, reminding them

[30] Peter the Venerable, *The Letters of Peter the Venerable*, ed. Giles Constable, 2 vols. (Cambridge, MA, 1967), 1:327.

[31] *Gesta Stephani Regis Anglorum*, ed. Kenneth R. Potter (Oxford, 1976), p. 192.

[32] Ibid., p. 192.

that during the First Crusade "God elevated the spirit of kings and princes to take vengeance on the nations and eradicate the enemies of the Christian name from the land."[33] From Bernard's perspective, the First Crusaders had taken vengeance by eliminating non-Christians from the Holy Land. An annalist claimed that the Second Crusade was "to avenge the injury done to the Christian religion on the pagans."[34]

When it came to describing the arm of the Second Crusade that attacked Lisbon, the generality was marked. There was a sermon by Peter, bishop of Oporto, described in the *De expugnatione Lyxbonensi* in which crusading was referred to as "divine vengeance," "vengeance for the blood of [the Church's] sons," "vengeance taken upon the nations," and "deeds of vengeance."[35] By the end of the narrative, the author stated that the taking of Lisbon was "divine justice … vengeance upon the evildoers."[36] Aside from one apparent reference to Christian deaths, no specific injury was singled out; rather, the vocabulary of vengeance hinged upon the perception of the Muslims as "evildoers."

The Old French crusading song *Chevalier, mult estes guariz*, composed between December 1145 and June 1147, remarked that the Christian knights "went to serve [God] in his need … in order to provide God with vengeance."[37] By interpreting the need for vengeance in terms of men fulfilling their lord's need to take vengeance, in effect the song eliminated the need for more specific justification: if the lord needed vengeance, vengeance must be sought. This kind of attitude may have underlined other unspecific references to vengeance, though it is impossible to say that with any certainty unless the textual evidence itself confirms it.

Similarly, the Occitan troubadour Marcabru wrote circa 1146–47 that "since the son of God summons you to avenge him on the lineage of Pharaoh, you indeed ought to be joyful."[38] In another poem Marcabru was somewhat more specific, writing that vengeance was owed for injuries done to God throughout the world: "the Lord who knows all that is, and all that will be, and that was, has promised us crowns and the name of emperor … as long as we take vengeance for the wrongs they do to God, both here and there towards Damascus."[39] Wrong had been done, and vengeance was owed.

In the texts outlined above, crusading was described as an act of vengeance. In addition, it was discussed with less ambiguity. Many of the crusading texts written in the early twelfth century explicitly referred to occasions when the crusaders did

[33] Bernard of Clairvaux, '*Epistolae*', ed. Jean Leclercq and Henri M. Rochais, *S. Bernardi Opera*, 8 vols. (Rome, 1955–77), 8:432.

[34] *Gesta Abbatum Lobbiensium*, MGH Scriptores 21 (Hanover, 1869).

[35] *De expugnatione Lyxbonensi*, ed. and trans. C. W. David (New York, 1936), pp. 76, 78 and 80.

[36] Ibid., p. 182.

[37] *Les chansons de croisade*, ed. Joseph Bédier (Paris, 1909), p. 10.

[38] *Marcabru: A critical edition*, ed. Simon Gaunt, Ruth Harvey, and Linda Paterson (Cambridge, 2000), p. 310.

[39] Ibid., p. 438.

not seek out vengeance. Raymond of Aguilers noted that when the crusaders were attacked at Scutari and Durazzo, they deliberately did not retaliate.[40]

There were no references to such self-conscious passivity or acts of non-violent mercy in the texts examined for the period 1138–75. In Odo of Deuil's *De profectione Ludovici VII in orientem*, he repeatedly described the crusaders taking vengeance upon those attacking them (namely, Greeks and Muslims). Unlike Raymond of Aguilers' First Crusaders, the French leaders of the Second Crusade were depicted leaving Adalia "mourning that they were not able to avenge their injuries."[41] They had however been able to take further action during a previous ambush: "all [the crusaders] unanimously ran against them, and those whom they could, they killed, in consequence of their own who had died, and avenging their own injuries."[42] The crusading texts from the mid-twelfth century do not endorse the righteous affirmation of pacific behaviour.

Of course, most of the time the vocabulary of vengeance was presented as an understood social commonplace, with little commentary of any sort offered by the authors. But when vengeance *qua* vengeance was commented on in the mid-twelfth century, it was discussed as a good thing. As Bernard of Clairvaux wrote to the Knights Templar, "a Christian glories in the death of a pagan, since Christ is glorified; in the death of a Christian, the generosity of the King is revealed, since the knight is led forth, about to be rewarded. Moreover a just man rejoices over [the former], since he sees vengeance [done]."[43]

That said, there were a number of key sources for crusading during the period from 1138 to 1175 that did not include the idea of crusading as vengeance. Eugenius III, Hadrian IV, Alexander III, and Suger of St. Denis did not refer to the ideology in their letters, even in the well-known papal bull *Quantum praedecessores*.[44]

Some narrative accounts avoided the ideology as well. Caffaro of Genoa did not utilize the idea of crusading as vengeance at all, even steering clear of language that accompanied the vocabulary of vengeance in other sources.[45] Henry of Huntingdon omitted the specific vocabulary of vengeance in his account of the First and Second Crusades.[46] Instead, he described the taking of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem in 1099 thus: "therefore assaulting the city and climbing its walls with ladders, the sons of God took the city, and killed many rebels (*rebellantes*) in the temple of the Lord,

[40] Raymond of Aguilers, *Liber*, p. 38.

[41] Odo of Deuil, *De profectione Ludovici VII in orientem*, ed. and trans. Virginia G. Berry (New York, 1948), p. 110.

[42] Ibid., p. 126.

[43] Bernard of Clairvaux, *Liber ad milites templi de laude novae militiae*, ed. Jean Leclercq and Henri M. Rochais, *S. Bernardi Opera*, 3:217.

[44] Eugenius III, *Epistolae*, RHGF 15 (Paris, 1878); Eugenius III, *Opera*, PL 180 (Paris, 1855); Alexander III, *Epistolae*, PL 200 (Paris, 1858); Hadrian IV, *Epistolae*, PL 188 (Paris, 1855).

[45] Caffaro of Genoa, *De liberatione civitatum Orientis*, ed. Luigi T. Belgrano, *Annali Genovesi di Caffaro e de'suoi continuatori* I (Rome, 1901).

[46] Henry of Huntingdon, *Historia Anglorum*, ed. Thomas Arnold, RS 74 (London, 1879), pp. 225–30 and 279.

and cleansed the holy city of the unclean peoples."[47] Henry noted that the capture of Edessa led to the Second Crusade, but did not use the vocabulary of vengeance; the Christians simply went "to fight the pagans who had taken the city of Edessa."[48] Vincent of Prague was likewise matter-of-fact about the Second Crusade and did not use the vocabulary of vengeance: "no small [number] of Christians were moved to defend Jerusalem against the king of Babylon."[49]

The *Annales Herbipolenses* described the beginning of the Second Crusade in 1147 with vitriolic language aimed at those who promoted the crusade rather than at its target: "for some pseudo-prophets, sons of Belial, witnesses [*testes*] to the Antichrist, who seduced Christians with inane words, compelled all kinds of men with vain sayings to go against the Saracens to liberate Jerusalem."[50] The fierce disapproval in the text may have been the result of the notorious failure of the Second Crusade, and certainly many writers of historical accounts of the Second Crusade focused on its disastrous outcome rather than the motives that drove people to take part. Otto of Freising also talked of vengeance taken on the Christians rather than through their actions.[51] Perhaps the absence of the ideology was because of this focus on outcome (thus failure) rather than on motivation and justification.

But even when these writers did devote a line or two to the reasons for the crusading, they did not use the vocabulary of vengeance. For example, Helmold of Bosau recorded that Bernard of Clairvaux "exhorted princes and certain people of the faithful to march to Jerusalem to seize the barbarous nations of the east and subject them to Christian laws."[52] Odo of Deuil depicted the bishop of Langres exciting people at Bourges at Christmas 1145, "warning all of the depopulation and oppression of the Christians and the insolence of the pagans, that with their king they would fight with Christian reverence for the King of all."[53] Otto of Freising described the First Crusaders without the vocabulary of vengeance: "confident in the strength of the cross, with Godfrey as their leader, a journey to fight against the enemies of the cross in the East was announced."[54] These writers hit upon familiar themes: the centrality of Jerusalem, the need to conquer Islamic territory, the ill-treatment of Christians by the Muslims, the desire to fight against the enemies of the cross. But these themes were not discussed with the vocabulary of vengeance.

[47] Ibid., p. 229.

[48] Ibid., p. 279.

[49] Vincent of Prague, *Annales*, MGH Scriptores 17 (Hanover, 1861), p. 662.

[50] *Annales Herbipolenses*, MGH Scriptores 16 (Hanover, 1859), p. 3.

[51] Otto of Freising, *De gestis Friderici seu rectius Cronica*, ed. Franz-Josef Schmale (Darmstadt, 1965), p. 220.

[52] Helmold of Bosau, *Chronica Slavorum*, ed. Heinz Stoob (Berlin, 1963), p. 216.

[53] Odo of Deuil, *De profectione Ludovici VII in orientem*, p. 6.

[54] Otto of Freising, *Chronica sive Historia de Duabus Civitatibus*, ed. Walther Lammers (Darmstadt, 1961), p. 502.

Sources dating from approximately 1176–1203

The examination of fifteen narrative crusading accounts composed between 1176 and 1204 (ten in Latin and five in Old French), and of the poetry and the papal letters for the period, has revealed that no fewer than fourteen texts referred to a crusade as an act of vengeance, and eight of the fifteen did so repeatedly. The extremely high proportion of texts referring to the ideology in the last third of the century demonstrates that the idea of crusading as an act of vengeance was presented even more frequently in later twelfth-century crusading texts than in texts from either the early or mid-twelfth century. Furthermore, the concept served as a primary source of rhetoric for some writers, such as Innocent III.

Many passages focused on the need to avenge the Islamic occupation and Christian deaths in the East. William of Tyre wrote that the preaching of the Second Crusade involved the cry for vengeance for the injuries done to eastern Christians:

> There were those who disseminated their words near and far among the people and the nations and solicited provinces idle and dissolute from a long peace to avenge such injuries. Lord Eugenius III ... directed the powerful men in deed and sermon to diverse parts of the West, who announced the intolerable hardships of their Eastern brothers to the princes and the people and that they ought to rouse themselves to go to avenge the injuries of fraternal blood.[55]

Similarly, the account of Ambroise described the response to the Third Crusade thus:

> Neither the old nor the young
> wished to hide his heart;
> they showed the weight on them,
> and their need to take vengeance
> for the shame done
> against God who had not deserved
> that his land had been destroyed,
> where his people were so harried
> that they did not know what to do.[56]

For Ambroise, as for so many, the injuries deserving of vengeance were the Islamic occupation and the treatment of Christians in the East, injuries which had shamed God and obligated the Christians in the West to act. The *Gesta Regis Henrici Secundi* recorded a letter from Henry II to Aimeric the patriarch of Antioch in 1188, in which Henry wrote "now however the Lord ... has thus excited the sleepy

[55] WT 16.18, pp. 739–40.

[56] Ambroise, *Estoire de la guerre sainte*, ed. Marianne Ailes and Malcolm Barber, *The History of the Holy War: Ambroise's Estoire de la Guerre Sainte*, 2 vols. (Woodbridge, 2003), 1:2. See also 1:112.

Christians to His service, so that everyone who is of the Lord, girds himself with his sword, and judges a man blessed and faithful who leaves his father and mother and all things in order to avenge the injuries of the Holy Land for Christ."[57] The *Itinerarium peregrinorum* remarked that Joscius, archbishop of Tyre, was partly responsible for getting news from the East to the West: "announcing that the inheritance of Christ was occupied by the gentiles to all the faithful, some he moved to tears, while others he inflamed to vengeance."[58] In *Plorans ploravit Ecclesia*, written in 1198, Innocent III hoped that God "would arm sons to avenge the paternal injuries, and brothers to avenge the fraternal wounds."[59] In his 1198 letter *Si ad actus*, Innocent III promised the count of Forcalquier indulgence for his sins "if he would personally take vengeance for the injury of the Crucified One, seizing the journey as befits such a prince, and praiseworthily persisting in the defence of the eastern land."[60]

Other passages focused directly on the injuries done to Christ, God and the cross. The *Itinerarium peregrinorum* described the crusaders as "avengers of the injury of the cross."[61] Peter of Blois, in his *De Hierosolymitana peregrinatione*, called for vengeance for Christ's blood: "the blood of Naboth clamored, the blood of Abel clamored from the earth for vengeance, and found an avenger. The blood of Christ clamors for aid, and does not find any to help."[62] The comparison drawn between Christ, Abel, and Naboth suggests that Peter of Blois was not writing about the metaphysical blood of Christ, but rather the actual blood of Christ spilt at the crucifixion. The *Gesta Henrici Secundi* described attacks against southern French heretics as an act of vengeance for Christ's injuries in three separate passages, noting "behold ... it was clear to the Christian princes, that they should avenge the injuries of Christ."[63] The 1187 lament of Berter of Orleans, calling for vengeance for oppressed Christianity, was cited in the *Gesta Henrici Secundi* and the (other) chronicle of Roger of Howden:

> Against which the prophet wrote,
> that from Zion the Law would march away,
> did the Law perish there?
> Shall it not have an avenger?
> Where Christ drank
> The chalice of the Passion.

[57] *Gesta regis Henrici Secundi*, ed. William Stubbs, RS 49 (London, 1867), p. 39; see also Roger of Howden, *Chronica*, ed. William Stubbs, RS 51 (London, 1868), p. 343.

[58] *Itinerarium peregrinorum et gesta regis Ricardi*, ed. William Stubbs, RS 38 (London, 1864), p. 32.

[59] Innocent III, *Plorans ploravit Ecclesia*, ed. Othmar Hageneder and Anton Haidacher, *Die Register Innocenz' III* 1 (Graz, 1964), p. 431.

[60] Innocent III, *Si ad actus*, ed. Othmar Hageneder and Anton Haidacher, *Die Register Innocenz' III* 1 (Graz, 1964), p. 611.

[61] *Itinerarium peregrinorum*, p. 59.

[62] Peter of Blois, *De Hierosolymitana peregrinatione*, PL 207, col. 1063.

[63] *Gesta regis Henrici Secundi*, p. 220; see also pp. 199 and 228.

The hater of the cross oppresses the cross
from which oppressed faith mourns,
who does not rage in vengeance?
As much as he values his faith,
he will save the cross,
he whom the cross redeemed.[64]

According to Roger of Howden, in October 1191 Richard I of England wrote to Garnier of Rochefort, abbot of Clairvaux, that "the friends of the cross of Christ ... flew forward to avenge the injuries of the Holy Cross."[65] Similarly, he reported that in 1191 Pope Celestine III wrote that Richard "armed himself to avenge the injury of the Redeemer."[66] In 1201, again according to Roger of Howden, the Master of the Hospital in Jerusalem wrote "if we were to have the good aid of the Christians, with the favourable grace of heaven, we would think to rightly avenge the injuries of Christ and the Christians."[67] Richard of Devizes ironically noted of Richard I that "the devotion of that man was such, so suddenly, so swiftly and so hastily he ran, nay flew, to avenge the injuries of Christ."[68] The *Itinerarium peregrinorum* noted that Richard count of Poitou took the cross "in order to avenge the injury of the cross."[69] Gerald of Wales noted that Peter, bishop of St. David's, also took the cross to avenge an unspecified injury done to God: "I will go to avenge the injury of the highest father."[70] Celestine III wrote to the archbishop of Canterbury in 1195, "[the people of God] girded on themselves the material sword to attack the persecutors of the faith, so that they might avenge the injury of the cross with swift vengeance."[71] In his letter *Quanta sit circa*, Innocent III expanded on Matthew 16.24, writing "he who wishes to come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me, having taken on the sign of the cross to avenge the injury of Jesus Christ."[72] In the 1198 letter *Post miserabile*, he wrote "the apostolic seat cries out, as though a trumpet lifting up its voice, desiring to excite the Christian people to the warlike battle of Christ and to avenge the injury of the Crucified One" and "but now our princes ... while one seeks to avenge his own injuries on another, there are none so moved by the injury of the Crucified One."[73] In *Justus et misericors*, written in 1201, he noted that "we rejoice in the Lord, because He, Who gave cause for penitence,

[64] Ibid., p. 27; see also Roger of Howden, *Chronica*, pp. 330–31.
[65] Roger of Howden, *Chronica*, p. 130.
[66] Ibid., p. 151.
[67] Ibid., p. 187.
[68] Richard of Devizes, *Cronicon de tempore regis Richardi Primi*, ed. and trans. John T. Appleby (London, 1963), p. 4.
[69] *Itinerarium peregrinorum*, p. 32.
[70] Gerald of Wales, *Itinerarium Kambriæ*, ed. James F. Dimock, RS 21.6 (London, 1868), pp. 14–15.
[71] Celestine III, *Misericors et miserator*, PL 206, col. 1108.
[72] Innocent III, *Quanta sit circa*, ed. Othmar Hageneder and Anton Haidacher, *Die Register Innocenz' III* 1 (Graz, 1964), p. 22.
[73] Innocent III, *Post miserabile*, ed. Othmar Hageneder and Anton Haidacher, *Die Register Innocenz' III* 1 (Graz, 1964), pp. 499 and 500.

has bestowed the state of penitence within many, and mercifully has inspired them, that, taking up the sign of the cross, they wish to avenge the injury of Jesus Christ."[74] In 1203 Innocent further wrote "we beget this letter with tears ... advocating the word of the Lord, and exhorting Christian friends by name to avenge the injury of Jesus Christ."[75]

Other passages gave less specific reasons for vengeance. Rigord attributed the following speech to Philip Augustus of France after he took the cross in 1190: "we however, with the counsel of God, will take vengeance."[76] Gervase of Canterbury recorded that, in a 1177 letter to the Cistercian chapter, the count of Toulouse wrote: "I ... will gird on my sword, and I confess that I am constituted in this thing the avenger of the anger of God and the minister of God."[77] Roger of Howden recorded another song sung on the journey to Jerusalem in 1190:

Therefore the God of the Hebrews lifted up
the Christian princes, and their strength,
to avenge the blood of the saints,
to aid the sons of those dead.[78]

As well as the papal letters, vernacular literature from the late twelfth century also highlighted both specific injuries, such as the Islamic occupation, and more general injuries done to Christ and the cross.[79] The Islamic occupation of the Holy Land was a crucial factor for vengeance. After the fall of Jerusalem, the *Chanson de Jérusalem* noted that:

They had fought a great tourney to avenge God,
they had taken and conquered a very rich land[80]

[74] Innocent III, *Justus ad misericors*, RS 51.4, ed. William Stubbs (London, 1871), p. 165; also in *Die Register Innocenz' III* 4.
[75] Innocent III, *Cum in manu*, ed. Othmar Hageneder and Anton Haidacher, *Die Register Innocenz' III* 6 (Graz, 1997), pp. 163–64.
[76] Rigord, *Gesta Philippi Augusti*, ed. Henri-François Delaborde, in *Oeuvres de Rigord et de Guillaume le Breton* 1 (Paris, 1882), p. 102.
[77] Gervase of Canterbury, *Chronica*, ed. William Stubbs, RS 73.1 (London, 1879), p. 270; internal reference to Romans 13:4.
[78] Roger of Howden, *Chronica*, pp. 37–38.
[79] Like the "encyclical of Sergius IV," the Old French epics known collectively as the *Crusade Cycle* have been debated for many years, as scholars have tried to pinpoint dates of origin for various poems and parts of poems. To date, Robert Cook has offered the most logical and straightforward approach to the first three poems of the *Crusade Cycle*. (Robert F.Cook, *"Chanson d'Antioche," chanson de geste: le cycle de la croisade est-il epique?* (Amsterdam, 1980)). Following Cook, I argue that speculation on earlier origins of the poems is simply that: speculation. The earliest extant texts of these works date from the very late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries, and as such those texts are creatures of that era, despite the correct assumption that related oral compositions surely predated the written epics. For a different viewpoint, arguing against Cook, see Susan B. Edgington, "The First Crusade: Reviewing the Evidence," in *The First Crusade: Origins and Impact*, ed. Jonathan Phillips (Manchester, 1997), pp. 55–77.
[80] *La Chanson de Jérusalem*, ed. Nigel R. Thorp, The Old French Crusade Cycle 6 (Tuscaloosa, 1992), p. 146.

and in the text Bishop Arnulf commented:

> We came into Syria to take vengeance
> on those who held and governed it vilely.[81]

Also in the *Chanson d'Antioche*, the crusaders were depicted as those who went "to avenge the condition [of the Holy Sepulchre]," to "take vengeance on the lineage of the Antichrist," and to "avenge God on his enemies."[82]

More often, the first poems of the Old French Crusade Cycle called for vengeance for injuries done to God, specifically the crucifixion itself. The *Chanson de Jérusalem* described the First Crusaders as "those who had come to avenge God," "to avenge the Lord," "who crossed the sea to avenge … Lord Jesus," and those who asked God to "allow us to take vengeance on all [his] enemies."[83] Even more specifically, *Jérusalem* claimed that the crusaders "had passed over the sea to avenge his [Christ's] body."[84] The *Chanson d'Antioche* described the crusaders as

> The noble barons who love God and hold him dear,
> [who] went overseas to avenge his body.[85]

The same poem also directly linked the crucifixion, the prophecy of the destruction of Jerusalem, the subsequent defeat of the Jewish rebels by Titus and Vespasian in 70 C.E., and the First Crusade, just as the "encyclical of Sergius IV" had previously done. In laisse 8, the *Chanson d'Antioche* narrated the dialogue between Jesus and the two robbers during the crucifixion. In the poem, the robber on the right said to Jesus:

> Now it would be well if it happened that you are avenged
> on these slavish Jews by whom you have been wounded.[86]

Whereupon Jesus prophesied vengeance and the destruction of Jerusalem:

> Friend … the people are not yet born
> who will come to avenge me with sharp lances,
> and will come to kill the faithless pagans
> who have always refused my commandments.[87]

[81] Ibid., p. 149.
[82] *La Chanson d'Antioche*, ed. Suzanne Duparc-Quioc, Documents relatifs à l'histoire des croisades 11 (Paris, 1977), pp. 22, 23 and 36; *La Chanson d'Antioche*, ed. Jan A. Nelson, The Old French Crusade Cycle 4 (Tuscaloosa, 2003), pp. 50, 51 and 58–59.
[83] *La Chanson de Jérusalem*, pp. 39, 58, 65 and 125.
[84] Ibid., p. 90.
[85] *La Chanson d'Antioche*, ed. Duparc-Quioc, p. 20; *La Chanson d'Antioche*, ed. Nelson, p. 49.
[86] *La Chanson d'Antioche*, ed. Duparc-Quioc, p. 26; *La Chanson d'Antioche*, ed. Nelson, p. 53.
[87] *La Chanson d'Antioche*, ed. Duparc-Quioc, p. 26; *La Chanson d'Antioche*, ed. Nelson, p. 53.

Finally, the robber on the left mocked the credulous robber on the right, who retorted:

> Over the sea a new people will come
> to take vengeance for the death of their father …
> the Franks will have all the land through deliverance.[88]

The narrator then described the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus and Vespasian, which was labelled vengeance.[89] These passages from the *Chanson d'Antioche* drew a parallel between the Jews, responsible (in the poem) for the crucifixion of Christ, and the Muslims; both groups were subject to the vengeance of the Christians for the injuries they had purportedly done to God.

The *Chanson d'Antioche* continued to assert that the First Crusade itself was vengeance for the crucifixion. The crusaders were "they who came to avenge God on the servile slaves who wounded him and his holy name"[90] and "to avenge the wound that God suffered on the cross to save his kingdom."[91] When the crusaders despaired inside the besieged Antioch, Adhémar, bishop of Le Puy, reminded them:

> You have all well heard the commandments from God,
> and we have the [holy] lance, that we know truly,
> by which he [Christ] suffered for us death and torment,
> when the criminal Jews cruelly killed him.
> We are all his sons, and we will take vengeance.[92]

In the poem Christ himself validated this categorization of the crusade as vengeance for the crucifixion, speaking to Anselm of Ribemont in a vision. Anselm later passed the message on to Godfrey of Bouillon:

> The time has come that God named …
> and his sons will avenge him for his redeeming death.[93]

Although writers in the late twelfth century did still sometimes explicitly call for vengeance for the Islamic occupation of the Holy Land and Christian deaths, much more frequently vengeance was owed for "the injuries of Christ" or "the injury of the cross," phrases that could have been, and most likely were, interpreted in a variety of ways. For example, Innocent III repeatedly called for vengeance for the injuries of Christ, the "Crucified One," leaving it open to interpretation whether

[88] *La Chanson d'Antioche*, ed. Duparc-Quioc, p. 27; *La Chanson d'Antioche*, ed. Nelson, p. 54.
[89] *La Chanson d'Antioche*, ed. Duparc-Quioc, pp. 29 and 223; *La Chanson d'Antioche*, ed. Nelson, pp. 54–55.
[90] *La Chanson d'Antioche*, ed. Duparc-Quioc, p. 53.
[91] Ibid., p. 68.
[92] Ibid., p. 363; *La Chanson d'Antioche*, ed. Nelson, p. 289.
[93] *La Chanson d'Antioche*, ed. Duparc-Quioc, p. 481; *La Chanson d'Antioche*, ed. Nelson, p. 387 (Appendix 8).

he meant the injuries done to the metaphysical body of Christ, that is the Church and Christians, or the physical injuries done to the human body of Christ during the crucifixion. Occasionally texts, like the *Chanson d'Antioche*, narrowed down the interpretive options by making it clear that the First Crusade was vengeance for the crucifixion of Christ.

Conclusion

Evidence for the broad idea of crusading as vengeance can be subdivided in a number of ways. Often the texts emphasized the need to avenge the Islamic occupation of the Holy Land and the deaths of Christians in the East. But sometimes, apparently with more frequency as the century wore on, vengeance was simply owed for unspecified injuries done to God, Christ, the "Crucified One," or the cross. These vaguer exhortations to take vengeance were sometimes presented side by side with more specific motivations, such as vengeance for the Islamic occupation of the Holy Land, and both the vague and the specific calls for vengeance appeared both in texts written by the highest Church authorities (namely Innocent III) and in vernacular works such as the Old French Crusade Cycle.

By the end of the twelfth century the concept of crusading as vengeance was widespread. Epic poetry, general chronicles, papal bulls, and crusading narratives all referred to the idea at length. However, it is less immediately evident why the idea of crusading as vengeance waxed and waned as it did in the twelfth century. The cultural factors that may have affected the ideology, such as developments in theology and canon law, anti-Jewish attitudes, devotion to the crucifixion, and customary vengeance practices, will need to be evaluated alongside specific historical factors such as the failure of the Second Crusade and the impact of papal personalities in order to shed light on the development of the ideology. And how did the ideology of crusading as vengeance fare in the thirteenth century? These questions will be addressed in future publications by this author and, hopefully, others.

At the moment it seems reasonable to conclude that, rather than fading away after the taking of Jerusalem in 1099, the idea of crusading as vengeance grew in significance as the twelfth century progressed; and undoubtedly it was propagated as ardently by educated members of the Church such as Bernard of Clairvaux and Innocent III as it was by the redactors of vernacular literature.