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The Uses of the Bible in Crusader Sources

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Nicholas Morton

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Reviewer: Stephen J. Spencer

The Uses of the Bible in Crusader Sources makes an important and timely intervention in the field of crusader studies. As the title suggests, the volume aims not only to advance our understanding of crusade ideology, by analysing its biblical foundations and relationship with contemporary exegetical interpretations, but also to contribute to wider scholarship on the assimilation of scriptural imagery in medieval texts. The editors' introduction provides a useful backdrop to the essays that follow and highlights a series of caveats that will undoubtedly be beneficial for the uninitiated reader, such as the unstable nature of the Bible's content, the rarity of single-volume bibles before the 13th century, and the modes of transmission through which people became acquainted with biblical stories. The book's overarching themes are outlined, as are the various connections between the contributions, although one could quibble over the brevity of the historiographical overview; a more detailed summary of previous scholarship, especially that by Paul Alphandéry and Paul Rousset, would have given a clearer indication of how the present collection both extends from these works and strikes out in new directions.

The 19 essays are logically arranged into five parts, the first of which explores the theme of violence. It begins with, for this reviewer, one of the highlights of the volume: Katherine Allen Smith's study of the parallels drawn by six 12th-century chroniclers between the 1099 sack of Jerusalem and the biblical story of Christ's cleansing of the Temple. This analogy was often used to justify the violent sack (and sometimes the entire crusade), but the chroniclers were not simply 'borrowing' from scriptural texts; instead, they were tapping into a pre-existing exegetical tradition which led them to interpret the events of July 1099 as a second cleansing and to consider the crusaders' Muslim opponents as agents of pollution, conceptually linked with the Jews through discourses of avarice and idolatry. In the next chapter, Uri Shachar explores how the conquest of Jerusalem encroached upon the ways in which Christian and Jewish authors conceived of sacred space and, in turn, formulated polemical interpretations and memories of the pogroms against the Rhineland Jews in 1096. After a stimulating discussion of the devotional-liturgical shifts manifested by Jerusalem's fall, with post-conquest commemorations in the West resulting in a reconceptualization of sacred geographies, Shachar contends that the perceived sacred nature of the space on which the massacres took place, deemed sacred 'by virtue of a typological proximity to Jerusalem' (p. 52), enabled Christian commentators to justify the violence perpetrated there. A surprisingly similar approach was adopted by

Jewish writers, who suggested that the cities of the Rhineland were figurations of Jerusalem, thus legitimising the use of violence (and self-violence). Essentially, both sets of writers accused their opponents of failing to comprehend the symbolic meaning of space. In chapter three, we return to the First Crusaders' sack of Jerusalem, with Luigi Russo's examination of how three early chroniclers used the Bible to understand the sack and legitimise crusader brutality. The *Gesta Francorum's* account of the slaughter at the al-Aqsa mosque, which is dominated by blood imagery, is juxtaposed with the 'much more sober' (p. 67) account by Peter Tudebode, yet neither, Russo concludes, relied on the Bible to interpret this event. In contrast, Raymond of Aguilers famously drew upon Revelation 14.20, which Russo suggests was a deliberate ploy to add new meaning to a passage the author had lifted from a letter of September 1099, although it is worth remembering that Raymond's involvement in the composition of that letter has long been suspected. This chapter is considerably shorter than most of the others, and one wonders how later writers developed this scene in terms of biblical content and parallelism. Some may also take issue with Russo's attempt to simultaneously prove that the three chroniclers 'almost certainly drew upon a lost text that would have served as a common source for their narration' (p. 66), since belief in a phantom parent text continues to divide scholarly opinion. Part one ends with Sini Kangas' essay on the links between the story of the Holy Innocents and the depiction of children in crusade texts. Adopting a similar approach to Allen Smith, Kangas uses a range of sources to trace the development of medieval attitudes towards this story, highlighting the emergence of two strands of thought; the second of which – that children were innocent, vulnerable, and pure – found expression in crusade sources. Particularly interesting is Kangas' conclusion that authors included child martyrs to communicate cruelty, unrestrained violence, and sin, for this suggests that the slaughter of children was an important exception to the idea that killing was meritorious in holy war.

Part two focuses on chronicles of the First Crusade. Thomas Lecaque provides a much-needed reassessment of Raymond of Aguilers' background and *Liber*, arguing that Raymond's knowledge of the Bible and apocalyptic texts held in the cathedral library of Le Puy conditioned his vision of the crusade, and that this encourages us to reject the notion, espoused by John and Laurita Hill, that the author was 'a simple churchman'. Central to Lecaque's reconstruction of Raymond's worldview is the survival of a two-volume Carolingian Bible at Le Puy and a late tenth- or early 11th-century library catalogue. The catalogue's 48 entries, in conjunction with the rare addition of verses from IV Esdras to the Le Puy Bible, likely primed Raymond for eschatological narrative and explain several passages in the *Liber*. Lecaque demonstrates the value of considering an author's region of origin and cultural baggage, and questions the perceived gap between eyewitness accounts, like Raymond's, and the theologically-mature non-participant narratives created in northern France. One of these, Robert the Monk's *Historia Iherosolimitana*, is the subject of Carol Sweetenham's essay, which sheds new light on the scriptural foundations of Robert's theology of the First Crusade, to which Jerusalem was central. The crusaders, and especially the Franks, were presented as fulfilling God's plan for the liberation of Jerusalem, which would afford Christians access to the city's holy sites and enable *imitatio Christi*. Sweetenham identifies a shift in Robert's use of biblical language – from the prophecies of the Old Testament, to the events related in the New Testament, and finally to the impending apocalypse of Revelation – which underpins his crusade theology and casts the expedition as a continuum of the Bible. Equally valuable is T. J. H. McCarthy's comparison of biblical references in the crusade sections of Frutolf of Michelsberg's chronicle and two later continuations (the 1106 Continuation and the *Hierosolimita*, traditionally attributed to Ekkehard of Aura). At first glance, the paucity of connections Frutolf established between Scripture and crusading contrasts sharply with the two continuations, yet McCarthy reveals a significantly more complex picture: Frutolf and the 1106 Continuation share much in common regarding their use of biblical allusions, particularly in their treatment of the People's Crusade; and the *Hierosolimita's* author relied on his knowledge of Patristic texts to theologically defend crusading. The chapter chimes well with those by Lecaque and Sweetenham in terms of the importance of considering textual and intellectual context and the challenges of distinguishing conscious scriptural citation from natural assimilation.

The contributions in part three are united by a common interest in papal documents and crusade 'propaganda'. Miriam Rita Tessera first demonstrates that the biblical quotations and themes utilised in

papal crusade letters developed substantially over the 12th century, often in response to new challenges in the East. For instance, Tessera highlights the role of prominent members of Paschal II's curia – 'who shared the same kind of biblical interpretation' (p. 189) – in the creation of the pope's crusading letters and their theological content. Likewise, interesting points are raised in relation to *Quantum praedecessores*, with Eugenius III credited with extending the Maccabean warrior-martyr model (previously applied to the Templars) to crusading, and Gregory VIII's *Audita tremendi*, which contained a large number of biblical quotations to explain the disaster at Hattin in 1187. Thomas W. Smith's examination of the *arengae* (preambles) of Gregory IX's calls to crusade follows naturally from Tessera's piece. Smith persuasively argues that Gregory's *arengae*, which are transcribed anew (with biblical references) in an appendix, were mostly carefully crafted products, with specific biblical quotations incorporated to justify the launching of a crusade and to inspire recruitment. Furthermore, Smith's comparison of *arengae* pertaining to different crusading theatres exposes several recurring biblical themes, such as Rachel's lamentation, which are suggestive of a relatively coherent crusade theology under Gregory IX, thus adding further credence to the 'pluralist' school of thought within crusade studies. Some *arengae* are markedly different, however, and Smith posits convincing explanations for their divergence, such as the hasty composition of *Ut Israellem veteris* (1235) and the derivative nature of *Ne terras vaste* (1236). Bernard of Clairvaux's crusade-related writings are the subject of Kristin Skottki's chapter, which again links biblical exegesis with the legitimation of crusader violence, but also shows how modern sociological theory can inform our understanding of Bernard's theology of violence. Working through Bernard's tract on the Templars and his letters pertaining to the Second Crusade, Skottki addresses four main points: the use of 'pagans' to describe the crusaders' adversaries, a concept with which lay audiences could relate; Bernard's theology of space, with the attainment of the heavenly Jerusalem pitched as a key objective for *milites Christi*; his emphasis on Christian brotherhood, which was primarily directed towards the western laity, rather than Christians in the East; and the biblical and exegetical foundations of Bernard's writings, although it is not always clear which texts shaped his crusade theology. In another of the volume's standout pieces, John D. Cotts compares the late 12th-century writings of Peter of Blois and Ralph Niger, arguing that their competing perspectives in relation to the planned Third Crusade reflect, among other considerations (such as Peter's presence in the papal court in 1187), the contradictory possibilities offered by contemporary exegesis. Ultimately, the Bible offered Peter a platform from which to justify penitential violence, whereas for Ralph it provided a more traditional narrative for individual salvation. After considering the place of Palestine in the Old and New Testaments and the authors' divergent interpretations of the relationship between the Two Dispensations, Cotts turns to their contrasting use of military imagery from the New Testament, such as the two swords of Luke 22.38. While Peter employed this verse in relation to the Holy Land, as part of his call for princes to depart on crusade, Ralph used it in the context of ecclesiastical and personal reform in Western Europe. Cotts then considers the impact of emerging eschatological ideas, especially in Peter of Blois' crusade-related works; for example, the 14 references to Revelation in the latter's *Passio Reginaldi* effectively placed Reynald of Châtillon's death, Jerusalem, and the forthcoming expedition in an apocalyptic context.

The essays in part four are all concerned with the works of James of Vitry, bishop of Acre (1216–27). Focusing on his *ad status* sermons, Lydia M. Walker draws attention to the prominence of apocalyptic thought in James' vision of the intertwined goals of crusade and reform, and his use of biblical prophecy to inspire audiences to act. Walker's chapter dovetails particularly well with that by Jan Vandeburie, which is also concerned with eschatological rhetoric, this time in James' *Historia Orientalis*. This text serves as a case-study for the development of apocalyptic thought after the Fourth Lateran Council, with Vandeburie demonstrating that James' ideas were influenced by Innocent III's rhetoric and apocalyptic texts like those by Joachim of Fiore. Sandwiched between these two studies of James' apocalypticism is Jessalynn Bird's investigation of how the Bible (and its interpretation) impacted upon the course and representation of the Fifth Crusade, primarily in the works of James of Vitry and Oliver of Paderborn. Bird illustrates how ecclesiastics within the crusader army used the Bible and exegesis to both justify key strategic decisions, including the choice of Egypt as a viable target and the assault on Mount Tabor, and explain setbacks, such as the rout of the army on the feast of the Decollation of Saint John the Baptist. On this basis, she calls for the letters and chronicles pertaining to the Fifth Crusade to be re-examined in light of the biblical and

exegetical traditions which shaped the interpretations of their authors.

Part five, the broadest thematic section, turns to the crusading movement and the crusader states. Torben Njersgaard Nielsen examines the ways in which Scripture was employed in Henry of Livonia's *Chronicon Livoniae* and Peter of Dusburg's *Chronica terre Prussie*, two works which, though composed a century apart, both adopted a providential framework when describing crusading activity in the Baltic region. According to Nielsen, Henry purposefully utilised biblical language to present Livonia as an integral part of the history of redemption, and to exalt the role of the Livonian Church in converting the Baltic pagans. In contrast to Henry's work, in which biblical quotations are dispersed throughout, most biblical references feature in the prologue, preface, and the first two books of Peter of Dusburg's chronicle. Allusions to the Old and New Testaments, Nielsen argues, allowed Peter to depict the Teutonic Order as being prefigured in the Bible, especially by the Maccabees. In the next chapter, Nicholas Morton charts the evolution of Ezekiel 13.5, from a verse of castigation in the Bible to an epithet of praise akin to *milites Christi* by the 13th century, and then examines its appropriation by crusade commentators. In persuasive fashion, Morton reveals how this verse was popularised during the tenth and 11th centuries in the context of the ecclesiastical struggle against secular power, before being applied to campaigns against external enemies (but not the First Crusade). Thereafter, it was used to describe the military orders and the defenders of the Latin East, and was finally extended to campaigns in other crusading theatres, such as Iberia and the Baltic. This is followed by Julian Yolles' analysis of the application of Maccabean imagery in two poems created in the Latin kingdom of Jerusalem, one by Achard of Arrouaise, the first prior of the *Templum Domini* after the 1099 conquest of Jerusalem, and another by his successor, Geoffrey. Achard's poem was both a plea to King Baldwin I and a foundational document for the institution of the *Templum Domini*; and the nexus he established between it and the Maccabees (primarily the warriors, rather than the martyrs) allowed Geoffrey to make the same connection when warning the kingdom's secular and ecclesiastical powers of the dangers of simony. Next, Adam M. Bishop scrutinises the incorporation of biblical rhetoric into the assizes of the kingdom of Jerusalem, although he makes the astute point that their authors and compilers were not always borrowing directly from the Bible itself, but rather from Roman and canon law. The analysis is structured around three uses of the Bible in the kingdom's legal system: as a source for defining notions of law and justice; occasionally, as a source for specific laws; and, most importantly, as a physical object for swearing oaths before the court. Finally, Iris Shagrir considers the inclusion and representation of the biblical Holy Women believed to have visited Christ's tomb in liturgical and visual sources created in 12th-century Jerusalem. In this, Shagrir looks to provide a window onto the Latins' changing self-perception, by arguing that the abundance of references to the Holy Women in the Latin liturgy of Jerusalem is suggestive of a close association with those women, and perhaps also of a desire to ensure continuity with Greek Orthodox traditions, so as to imbue the Latins' new liturgy with an aura of authenticity.

The Uses of the Bible in Crusader Sources bears testimony to the fundamental importance of biblical precedents and parallels for those who preached and wrote about the crusades, and adds substantially to our understanding of the sources and the intellectual *milieu* of their authors. The production quality is generally fine, with the exception that this reviewer's copy was bound incorrectly (by the outside edge), resulting in the unusual experience of reading the book from the back cover to the front, from the right page to the left. Hopefully this was an anomaly in the print run, for there are several refreshing features to this book. The contributors have been given the space to fully develop their analyses and arguments, resulting in a generally high standard of essays. In many collections of this nature, the contributions can appear somewhat disparate and only tangentially related. Not so here: the essays in each thematic part mesh together well, and all the component parts come together to form a coherent whole. This is, in part, a consequence of numerous recurring themes, including the use of biblical imagery in the justification of violence, the need to consider an author's background and regional identity, the value of charting change over time, and the balance between deliberate and organic biblical citation. The other danger, of course, is that such a large number of contributors, broadly investigating the same macro-idea, might result in repetition, but the diversity of approaches, periods, and source types prevents this from being the case. The editors also appear conscious of the need to provide a springboard for future research in this area; thus, several potential avenues of enquiry

are outlined in the introduction, most of the essays which focus on individual sources are appended by a table of biblical citations/allusions, and all other biblical references are collated in a useful index. In short, anyone interested in the ideology and spirituality of crusading, and the construction of crusade sources, would benefit enormously from reading this book, which looks set to become a standard reference work. One hopes that Brill's high price-point does not deter too many potential readers.

The editors are pleased to accept this review without any further comment.

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