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WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN CRUSADES FROM THE ELEVENTH TO THIRTEENTH CENTURIES

A thesis presented in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
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For My Parents

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ABSTRACT

This thesis studies the involvement of women in the four great armed pilgrimages, the crusades of 1096-1204. A crusade was a pilgrimage, an act of penance for the sins of its participants, as well as being a holy war. Women were entitled to join pilgrimages because it was an act they had enjoyed for centuries. When, therefore, the armed pilgrimage was preached by Urban II in 1095, women too were permitted to journey although it was not anticipated at first by the papacy that they would. The presence of women in ritually pure camps and on the battlefields was objected to. The biblical beliefs of chroniclers and moralists of the period held that the presence of women on these campaigns compromised their purpose. This thesis will examine in primary sources the beliefs of the moralists and writers of the crusades, and the responses to the presence of women on campaigns.

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INTRODUCTION:

WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN CRUSADES FROM THE ELEVENTH TO THIRTEENTH CENTURIES

This thesis will examine the participation of women in the crusades from the eleventh to thirteenth centuries. The crusades were simultaneously pilgrimages, rituals of purification in that the participant was purged of sin and defilement in journeying, and military campaigns. Furthermore, these expeditions were collective attempts to establish a godly order, a new Jerusalem. Women were entitled to join pilgrimages - a rite they had enjoyed for centuries - hence to go on a crusade, although it was not anticipated at first that they would. Their presence, however, in camps of a holy war and on the battlefields was objected to, and not only by male crusaders. Religious ideologies in the Bible and in the writings of the chroniclers and moralists of the period held that the presence of women on these campaigns compromised their purpose. I will examine in primary sources those beliefs held up by moralists and writers of the crusades, and the responses to the presence of women on campaigns.

The literature on the presence and involvement of women in the crusades is limited, although James A. Brundage's article on 'Prostitution, Miscegenation and Sexual Purity in the First Crusade' was extremely useful as was B. Hamilton's paper on 'Women in the Crusader States: the Queens of Jerusalem, 1100-1190'.¹ Megan McLaughlin's article on 'The Woman Warrior' and Helen Solterer's essay on 'Figures of Female Militancy' were also of great interest and

¹ James A. Brundage, 'Prostitution, Miscegenation and Sexual Purity in the First Crusade', in P.W. Edbury (ed.) *Crusade and Settlement*, Cardiff: University College Cardiff Press, 1985, and B. Hamilton, 'Women in the Crusader States: The Queens of Jerusalem, 1100-1190', in D. Baker (ed.) *Medieval Women*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1978.

value.² Two recent works, Helen Nicholson's 'Women on the Third Crusade' and Jonathan Riley-Smith's *The First Crusaders* arrived too late for use in this thesis.³

This thesis will be divided into four chapters of which the first will study woman and the sacred in the era of the crusades. Leading on from this, chapter two will discuss woman as a pilgrim, and chapter three will focus on woman in camps and on the battlefields. The final chapter looks at woman and crusade. The actual narrative accounts of women and the expeditions are examined mainly in chapter four. While the chapters concerning woman as a pilgrim, woman in camps and on the battlefield, and woman on crusade deal mainly with events, the first chapter concentrates on the condition(s) of woman in these events. These four chapters have not been chosen randomly, but have strong parallels with the Bible, particularly the Old Testament.

In Exodus, Moses had taken the children of Israel out of Egypt and away from their enslavement to the promised land. This journey was seen as a pilgrimage during which the presence of God was strongly felt. Because His presence made the Israelite camp so sacred, it had to be kept pure, and this was done by sending the bewitching and defiling influence of women (and other pollutants) outside the camp. In times of war, the children of Israel believed they were the army of God, which had to defend the faith against pagan enemies, such as the Philistines and Amorites. This is very similar to the notion the crusaders had of themselves, that is, theirs was a holy war. The crusades were journeys to a sacred goal (Jerusalem); journeys which were holy and therefore should not be impure or polluted; journeys which would result in, so the crusaders believed, the regaining of the Holy Land for God's chosen by fighting and overcoming the Infidel and establishing the Kingdom of God.

² Megan McLaughlin, 'The Woman Warrior: Gender, Warfare and Society in Medieval Europe', *Women's Studies*, 17, (1990), pp.193-209. Helen Solterer, 'Figures of Female Militancy in Medieval France', *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 16, (1991), pp.522-49.

³ Helen Nicholson, 'Women on the Third Crusade', *Journal of Medieval History*, 23, 4, (1997) and Jonathan Riley-Smith, *The First Crusaders, 1095-1131*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997

Women were largely not featured on these journeys in the writings of the chroniclers or historians,⁴ unless to blame them for failures at sieges or battles.

Woman and the sacred in the era of the crusades will be examined in chapter one. This chapter will analyse four different concepts used in the Bible and by medieval man to depict woman and to keep her under male control. The first of these ideas looks at the depiction of woman as a weak and inferior being. This is directly related to the Book of Genesis in which Eve, the lesser creation, was seduced by Satan to eat of the forbidden fruit. Eve then led man to fall from grace. Because of such a sin, Adam and Eve were banished from Eden, and the female descendants of Eve were, thereafter, to remain under the guidance and control of their male counterparts, for fear they would fall into evil and sin. Another view held in the Bible was of the powerful and dangerous woman. Such a woman caused havoc and even death as seen in the example of Dalila in the Book of Judges.⁵ She was able to seduce and deceive Samson; later allowing him to fall into the hands of his enemies, the Philistines. The third view held in the Bible was of woman as a pollutant of sacred sites, rites and rituals. A woman could contaminate such places and rituals because she menstruated, had sexual relations, or gave birth. Because of her condition, a woman had to be placed outside the camp until she was purified.⁶ The final concept examines woman as a harlot. Throughout the many different books of the Testaments, there is a strong emphasis on women who were deemed as 'loose' or portrayed as prostitutes. Such women were to be avoided at all costs by men if they wished to achieve salvation. These views of women prevailed into the early Church and the Church of the Middle Ages, and were prevalent in the crusades as the various chronicles illustrate.

In chapter two I will examine woman as a pilgrim. Women journeyed to the sacred sites of Christendom just as men did. These sacred sites were places

⁴ Although not all, as we see with Ambroise in chapter four. See *The Crusade of Richard the Lion-Heart*, trans. Merton Jerome Hubert, notes and documentary by John L. La Monte, New York: Columbia University Press, 1941.

⁵ Judges XVI.

⁶ Leviticus XII, XV.

where God's love or power had been manifest, such as in Jerusalem, the place of sacrifice, centre of God's transcended order and the base of immortality. Many pilgrims wished to get as close to God as they could to mystically join with the events or miracles related with these sacred sites or to re-enact the events. This chapter will study whether a woman was welcome on these journeys or at the sacred sites. It will be subdivided into two sections:

The first of these sections will investigate early pilgrimage so as to get an idea of the history of pilgrimage leading up to the crusading period. It will look at why and where people journeyed over the centuries, the differing forms of pilgrimage, opposition to pilgrimage, and how this ancient practice gave rise to the crusading movement in the eleventh century. The second section will focus on why women went on pilgrimage and how this may have differed from the male reasons for going. It will look at women's roles in pilgrimage and whether these changed over the centuries, especially in the crusades, coupled with the male attitude towards women and pilgrimage. In this, chapter two will centre on the writings of men, of whom the majority believed women should be excluded from pilgrimage as they were impure or a danger for other male pilgrims. This section will therefore determine whether women were welcome on the journey of pilgrimage or at the sacred sites and investigate the contradiction which arises between women as legitimate pilgrims and their unacceptability as impure women on a pilgrimage/crusade.

The third chapter will concentrate on woman in camps and on the battlefields. This will explore the notion of warfare as interpreted in the Old and New Testaments. The place of women in war and in the camps of warriors will be examined to determine whether their presence was acknowledged, and if so, whether women were accepted on the battlefield.

The fourth and final chapter will examine woman and crusade by following through contemporary accounts of the first four crusades. Although women were entitled to join pilgrimages and therefore allowed to go on crusade

because they had been active in pilgrimage for centuries, and it was a practice denied to no one, their presence on the battlefield and in the camps provoked a negative response from most crusaders and clergymen. They believed a woman could contaminate sacred and religious places because she menstruated, or seduced and infected men with lust and sin.⁷ The presence of women (and especially 'loose' women) on crusade shocked some chroniclers, who lamented that harlots and other dishonest and sinful types infested the crusading armies and infected the soldiers with their vices. The anonymous *Gesta Francorum* stated that in a vision of Stephen at Antioch, Christ had said: '... you [crusaders] are satisfying your filthy lusts both with Christian and loose pagan women, so that a stench rises up to Heaven.'⁸ This was a grave sin as the crusade was a holy expedition and the presence of these women on it compromised its purpose. With regards to war it was believed women were not capable of fighting, or it was deemed unseemly and unwomanly for them to fight.⁹ However, some had a more positive response to those accompanying crusaders. Ambroise, for example, believed women were capable in battle and in coping with pain and suffering.¹⁰ Women were also praised for the aid they provided during and after battles such as at the successful battle of Dorylaeum.¹¹ But not all shared in these beliefs, especially if failures occurred. Women were treated as the cause of such failures as their presence hindered the expedition. This chapter will examine the contradictory nature of chroniclers when writing of women who accompanied the crusaders. Coupled with the chapter on 'Woman and the Sacred in the Era of the Crusades', this chapter will look at why the blame for failure fell heavily on those women present.

This thesis will study the role of women in the crusades and will examine why women went on crusade, and what their reasoning or justification was for their presence in camps and on the battlefields. It will also try and resolve how

⁷ Leviticus XV, 19; Judges XVI, 1-20.

⁸ *Gesta Francorum et Aliorum Hierosolimitanorum*, (ed.) and trans. Rosalind Hill, London: Nelson, 1962, p.58.

⁹ Anna Comnena, *The Alexiad of Anna Comnena*, trans. E.R.A. Sewter, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1969, Book IV.

¹⁰ Ambroise, p.152 and p.162.

¹¹ *Gesta Francorum*, p.19.

much the Old Testament models shaped the recording of crusade history and therefore how much such chronicles can be relied on at all for accounts of 'what happened'.

CHAPTER ONE:

WOMAN AND THE SACRED IN THE ERA OF THE CRUSADES

'The Fornication of a woman shall be known by the haughtiness of her eyes, and by her eyelids.'

(Ecclesiasticus XXVI, 12)

Throughout the Old and New Testaments of the Bible, four different concepts were used to define woman, to keep her submissive, and under the control of man. These concepts looked at woman as a weak being, woman as dangerous, woman as pollutant, and woman as a harlot. Such constructions depicting women in the Bible influenced the early Church as well as the medieval Church at the time of the crusades. Because of the Church's influence over society as a whole, it is of importance that this thesis investigates the construction of women in the Bible.

THE WEAK

In the Book of Genesis we read how God created the first man and woman in Paradise. Man was created from the 'slime of the earth' in the image and glory of God, and woman, from the rib of man, to be his helper.¹ Because woman was a lesser creation, she was weaker, and it was because of her inferiority and weakness that mankind fell from grace. She was tempted by Satan to eat of the forbidden fruit because, as Satan argued, 'your eyes shall be opened: and you shall be as Gods, knowing good and evil.'² Satan appealed to

¹ Genesis II, 7, 18-23.

² Genesis III, 5.

woman's senses to which she succumbed to the smell and taste of the fruit. He chose not to tempt Adam because he was of higher intellect and stronger build and could overcome evil. Thus Eve was chosen and the two fell from grace and were banished from the garden as a result of Eve's inability to resist temptation.

The blame for the banishment fell largely on woman because of her weakness, and this view of the inferior sex was prevalent throughout the Bible, in early Christian society, and the middle ages. Women were 'daughters of Eve', and by emphasising their vulnerability, men were able to keep women subjugated and without any real power in decision making, as God had stated: '... thou shalt be under thy husband's power, and he shall have dominion over thee.'³ This was enforced for fear she would disrupt the natural order of things or be tempted into evil. And as the biblical writers proved throughout the Testaments, woman, if given a chance, committed much sin.

THE DANGEROUS

The example of Eve as well as other 'bad' women throughout the Old Testament was proof enough to many that women were weak, easily tempted to do and cause evil, and had to be controlled and placed under the authority of men. Women in power or of influence caused much distress.⁴ Devastation and death were the consequences of a powerful and dangerous woman, as is said in Ecclesiasticus, when the woman gains influence over a man:

'Give not the power of thy soul to a woman, lest she enter upon thy strength, and thou be confounded. Look not upon a woman that hath a mind for many lest thou fall into her snares ... Give not thy soul to harlots in any point: lest thou destroy thyself and thy inheritance.'⁵

³ Genesis III, 16.

⁴ For example, Jezebel in III Kings, IV Kings, and Apocalypse II. Jezebel was the ruthless wife of King Achab. Together they committed much evil and murdered many, as well as leading Israel to worship Baal. See IV Kings, IX, 34-7 and Apocalypse II, 20-3.

⁵ Ecclesiasticus IX, 2-6.

Such examples of women in power or of influence over men are numerous throughout the Bible. In the Book of Judges for example, we read of how Samson, a Nazarite,⁶ fell in love with a woman named Dalila. In punishment for his lust, the Almighty delivered him up, by her means, into the hands of his enemies, the Philistines.⁷ It is to be noted that throughout Samson's stormy career, the chief source of all his difficulties was his weakness towards women, something which all men were to take note of and refrain from.

These views were hammered into people by the holy writers, prophets and priests of the Bible. These holy men taught that women had been the cause of all evil and were constantly on the look-out for men who could be easily swayed and corrupted. Because of this threat a man had to be on his guard, to be strong and resist all temptation and evil. The man must also have dominance over the woman and if this did not occur, if he succumbed to her charms and beauty, all was lost. God would allow her to capture him because he had sinned in being seduced and dominated by her: 'And I have found a woman more bitter than death, who is the hunter's snare, and her heart is a net, and her hands are bands. He that pleaseth God shall escape from her: but he that is a sinner, shall be caught by her.'⁸

The Old Testament illustrated that women could inflict men with much pain and suffering. However, when turning to the New Testament we find that this grim portrayal of women as lethal traps has been modified to a certain extent. While women were still to be subservient and allowed no real power, such as in Church affairs, there were not so many damning examples of them as the instruments of the Devil. This change could be as a result of the importance assigned to the Virgin Mary.⁹ Her role in the New Testament was considerable

⁶ Nazarite: literally 'dedicated, consecrated to Yahweh'. Generally Nazarites showed their devotion by abstaining from strong drink and letting their hair grow. See Numbers VI.

⁷ Judges XVI, 1-21.

⁸ Ecclesiastes VII, 27.

⁹ '[I]t is true that in the Old Testament the Scriptures have much that is evil to say about women, and this because of the first temptress, Eve, and her imitators; yet afterwards in the New Testament we find a change of name, as from Eva to Ave (as Saint Jerome says), and the whole sin of Eve taken away by the benediction of Mary.' See Heinrich Kramer and Jokobus Sprenger, (ed.) and trans. *Malleus maleficarum*, London: Montague Sommers, 1928, p.44.,

as she was chosen by God to 'bring forth a son'¹⁰ who would be the saviour of the world. This son therefore was to be unlike any other man, and what made him of greater significance than other men was the fact that he was the 'Son of the Most High';¹¹ the Son of God.

Because the Son of God was so holy and pure, the woman who would give birth to him also needed to be virtuous, chaste and without sin. Because Mary was all of these things, she was chosen by God, who sent the angel Gabriel to prepare her for the part she would play. When Gabriel visited Mary she was troubled by his vision and salutation as he told her that she would conceive a son. Mary asked how this could be, 'because [she knew] not man?';¹² and Gabriel answered her saying, 'The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the most High shall overshadow thee. And therefore also the holy which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.'¹³ By stating that she 'knew not man', Mary was implying that she was a virgin and intended to remain one. By renouncing her sexuality, Mary had rejected most of the things that defined her gender - lustfulness, the role as temptress, and the openness that was the physical definition of her sexuality.¹⁴ Her intention to remain a virgin placed Mary above other women. This position was further elevated because she was chosen by God (as a result of her purity) to give birth to his son. The imputation to Mary of perpetual virginity was a way to remove her from the general stock of women, allowing them to be regarded in the traditional way as weak, dangerous and impure beings. Although we can see a shift from the Old Testament's representation of debased women to the important role assigned to Mary in the New Testament, the old view still existed to point out how far above other women Mary was, women who would never be able to reach such a position because of their impurities.

in Charles T. Wood, 'The Doctor's Dilemma: Sin, Salvation, and the Menstrual Cycle in Medieval Thought', *Speculum*, 56, 4, (1981), p.717.

¹⁰ Luke I, 31.

¹¹ Luke I, 32.

¹² Luke I, 34.

¹³ Luke I, 35.

¹⁴ Joyce E. Salisbury, *Church Fathers, Independent Virgins*, London: Verso, 1991, p.27.

THE POLLUTANT

‘For us sacred things and places are to be protected from defilement.
Holiness and impurity are at opposite poles’¹⁵

This statement from Mary Douglas’ *Purity and Danger*, expresses what was believed according to Scripture, especially in the second and third books of the Old Testament. In Exodus, Moses took the children of Israel out of Egypt and away from their enslavement and hardship, to the land God had promised them. This journey was seen as a pilgrimage by the ancient Israelites during which the presence of God was strongly felt. By sending them a pillar of cloud by day and a column of fire by night, He marked out their path and revealed His saving presence for them to maintain their morale. Because the presence of God made the camp so sacred, it had to be kept pure, and this was done by sending the seductive and polluting influence of women (and other pollutants) outside the camp. A woman was viewed as a pollutant because:

‘... at the return of the month [she] hath her issue of blood, [and] shall be separated seven days. Everyone that toucheth her, shall be unclean until the evening. And everything that she sleepeth on, or that she sitteth on in the days of her separation, shall be defiled.’¹⁶

This uncleanness grew further still if she had sex with a man in the time of her flowers, or if her ‘issue of blood’ resumed out of the ordinary time or did not cease to flow after the monthly courses:

‘The woman that hath an issue of blood many days out of her ordinary time, or that ceaseth not to flow after the monthly courses, as long as she is subject to this disease, shall be unclean, in the same manner as if she were in her flowers. Every bed on which she sleepeth, and every vessel on which she sitteth, shall be defiled.’¹⁷

¹⁵ Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo*, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1970, p.7. The ‘us’ in this quote probably refers to all people, from whatever period in time, as the need to keep sacred places pure is common to all throughout history.

¹⁶ Leviticus XV, 19-21.

¹⁷ Leviticus XV, 25-6.

And with regards to sex during menstruation: 'If a man copulateth with her in the time of her flowers, he shall be unclean seven days: and every bed on which he shall sleep shall be defiled.'¹⁸

Further on in Leviticus a harsh punishment is laid down for those who disobey this law and have sex during menstruation: 'If any man lie with a woman in her flowers, and uncover her nakedness, and she open the fountain of her blood, both shall be destroyed out of the midst of their people.'¹⁹

It would appear from what is said in Leviticus that only the woman would be sent out of the encampment for serious offences,²⁰ not the man, because she was viewed as the instigator of such acts and had defiled the camp in which God was present. The sacred camp had to be kept pure, which meant physical perfection was required of things presented in the temple and of persons approaching it. Therefore it was said women must be purified after childbirth, that lepers should be separated and ritually cleansed before being allowed to approach the temple (once cured), and that all bodily discharges were defiling and disqualified a person from approaching the temple.²¹ This concern was largely aimed at the woman because she menstruated.

However, menstruation was not the sole reason for depicting the woman as impure. Because she also copulated with men, resulting in the female and male emission of bodily fluids, she made herself and her partner unclean: 'The woman with whom he copulateth, shall be washed with water, and shall be

¹⁸ Leviticus XV, 24. He was unclean for seven days, but not separated from camp.

¹⁹ Leviticus XX, 18.

²⁰ See Leviticus X11, 2, 5 - purification of women after childbirth (they were separated); while in Leviticus XV, 2-17, the man who has the 'issue of seed' remained unclean until the evening in most cases, or if he had been healed of this 'disease', 'he shall number seven days after his cleansing, and having washed his clothes, and all his body in living water, he shall be clean.', Leviticus XV, 13. In Leviticus XV, 19, because a woman menstruated, she was to be separated seven days. A man appears to only have been sent out of camp if he had leprosy, Leviticus XIII, 1-46 (in Numbers V, 2-3, however, it states that men and women who have had an issue of seed, are defiled by the dead or who are lepers shall be cast out). Verse 33 of Leviticus XV reinforces the view that only women would be sent out of camp. However, if a serious crime was committed by a man or woman, they would be killed, Leviticus XX.

²¹ Douglas, p.51.

unclean until the evening.’²² Her weakness and sin was in being unclean, of which she must take heed, as the voice of God states in Leviticus:

‘You shall teach therefore the children of Israel to take heed of uncleanness, that they may not die in their filth, when they shall have defiled my tabernacle that is among them. This is the law of him that hath the issue of seed, and that is defiled by copulation. And of the woman that is separated in her monthly times or that hath a continual issue of blood, and of the man that sleepeth with her.’²³

Those who did not heed these rules were to be punished. Punishment for such offences included sending the woman out of the camp for seven days in which she was to be purified. Whoever touched her or anything that she had touched was to be washed with water and remain unclean till the evening, although those who had intercourse with her would remain unclean for seven days (and those who had sex with her in the time of her flowers would be destroyed). At the end of seven days and on the eighth day:

‘... she shall offer for herself to the priest, two turtles, or two young pigeons, at the door of the tabernacle of testimony: And he shall offer one for sin, and the other for a holocaust, and he shall pray for her before the Lord, and for the issue of her uncleanness.’²⁴

The woman was not during menstruation, bleeding out of her ‘ordinary time’, or after intercourse, to make offerings at the door of the tabernacle or pray before the Almighty because she was unclean and was not worthy. The priest would therefore do this on her behalf. The priest was allowed to approach and pray before God because he was a man and a priest, created in the image and glory of God. The woman however, was created from the rib of man, she was ‘the glory of the man’,²⁵ and was thus inferior.

²² Leviticus XV, 18.

²³ Leviticus XV, 31-33.

²⁴ Leviticus XV, 29-30.

²⁵ I Corinthians XI, 7.

THE HARLOT

Throughout the Bible several examples of 'women in whoredom' are evident. Such women were engaged in promiscuous sexual intercourse for payment, and as Saint Jerome later said of the prostitute in the early fifth century, 'A whore is one who is available for the lusts of many men.'²⁶ Payment for indecent and lustful acts incurred dishonour, defilement and certain Hell for these women, so Scripture taught. Harlots were, understandably therefore, portrayed as dangerous, evil and never in the right. Because sex in general was regarded as an evil, the early fathers believed it irreconcilable with religion, and as it was a polluting act, those who indulged in it defiled themselves. The harlot who committed such acts for payment therefore, was believed doubly impure:

'A polluting person is always in the wrong. [S]he has developed some wrong condition or simply crossed some line which should not have been crossed and this displacement unleashes danger for someone.'²⁷

This danger could be the corruption, and possible destruction of mankind.²⁸ Because of such dangers a man had to be wary of this type of woman and restrain his desires.

The Bible taught that the prostitute and other undesirable females were the lowest of all women; to have contact with such women was a very base act. These women were vile, conniving and unsuited to any other task. They and their offspring were not even worthy of approaching the Church²⁹ of God to make gifts or to participate in solemn religious observances:

²⁶ Saint Jerome, *Epist.* 64.7 in James A. Brundage, 'Prostitution in the Medieval Canon Law', in James A. Brundage and Vern L. Bullough (eds), *Sexual Practices and the Medieval Church*, New York: Prometheus Books, 1982, p.150., and see Jeffrey Richards, *Sex, Dissidence and Damnation. Minority Groups in the Middle Ages*, London: Routledge, 1990, p.118.

²⁷ Douglas, p.112.

²⁸ Ecclesiasticus IX, 2-6.

²⁹ 'Church' translated here means assembly or congregation of Israel.

‘A mamzer, that is to say, one born of a prostitute, shall not enter into the Church of the Lord, until the tenth generation.’³⁰

Prostitutes (and their offspring) were ostracised because of the ritual impurity they incurred through illicit contacts. The sordid business in which they indulged befouled the body while it sullied the soul; it slammed shut the gates of God’s kingdom and turned men and women away from their maker.

This is precisely what the Magdalene story in the New Testament counters. Mary Magdalene was a prostitute. Upon hearing of Christ and the miracles He performed, she decided to see him and hear his teachings, thereby rejecting her old ways and becoming a Christian.³¹ Because of this she received the grace of God and seven devils were cast out of her as a result of her reform; Mary was washed clean of her sins.

Similar to the saving of Mary Magdalene, a Gospel passage also reports Jesus as saying that repentant prostitutes and publicans would enter heaven before the religiously scrupulous Pharisees.³² Jesus may have been using the prostitute as a symbol for all sinners,³³ and if they were genuinely repentant they were as worthy of divine mercy as scrupulous observers of the niceties of the law. Perhaps Jesus reasoned that the degraded nature of the harlot’s calling predisposed her to receive the gift of salvation.

What we can see in these examples is that although Scripture taught people that prostitutes were defiled because of their profession, if they reformed, prostitutes had as much chance of entering Heaven as any one else. Later, in the early Christian Church and the Church of the Middle Ages, the reform of prostitutes as demonstrated in the Bible was praised and supported, and legends of reformed prostitutes began to spring up. One popular legend of the Middle

³⁰ Deuteronomy XXIII, 2. ‘Mamzer’ is the Hebrew word of uncertain meaning rendered by Jerome as ‘one born of a prostitute’. The mamzer was not to have the privilege of an Israelite or be capable of any place or office among the people of God.

³¹ Luke VIII, 2.

³² Matthew XXI, 31-2.

³³ Symbolic of the greater importance of the inner spirit.

Ages was that of Saint Mary the Egyptian, a prostitute who was purified by a visit to the Holy Land. On the feast of the Invention of the Cross, Mary attempted to enter the basilica of the Holy Sepulchre along with other pilgrims, but a force kept her from passing through the door. Mary then realised she alone was unworthy of entry, and guided by the Virgin Mary, she walked to the point in the Jordan where Christ had been baptised and swam across to live the life of a recluse.³⁴ Saint Mary the Egyptian had purified herself by reliving the baptism of Christ. The sins of her past had been obliterated and her spiritual life begun afresh.³⁵ This could be thought of as a form of 'counter-construction'. Women such as Mary Magdalene and Mary the Egyptian who acknowledged Christ, ceased to be harlots and became something else (saints), even when in practice they had been prostitutes. Because both prostitutes had been genuinely repentant, they were worthy of divine mercy and were saved.³⁶

Those who did not repent and continued to indulge in prostitution were not saved. Men and women were both viewed as at fault in these polluting acts; however condemnation fell more heavily on the prostitute, and with justification so the holy Fathers believed. She had after all lured the man with flattery, charm, and her beauty back to her bed and for a price:

‘And behold a woman meeteth him in harlot’s attire prepared to deceive souls; talkative and wandering, not bearing to be quiet, not able to abide still at home, now abroad, now in the streets, now lying in wait near the corners. And catching the young man, she kisseth him, and with an impudent face, flattereth, saying: I vowed victims for prosperity, this day I have paid my vows. Therefore I am come out to meet thee, desirous to see thee, and I have found thee.... I have perfumed my bed with myrrh, aloes

³⁴ Jonathan Sumption, *Pilgrimage. An Image of Medieval Religion*, London: Faber & Faber, 1975, pp.128-29. See Jean Leclercq, *Monks on Marriage: A Twelfth Century View*, New York: Seabury Press, 1982, p.46., and Salisbury, p.68., for similar accounts of Mary the Egyptian and also see Brundage, *Law, Sex, and Christian Society in Medieval Europe*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987, pp.210-12., regarding the reform of prostitutes.

³⁵ This process of regeneration medieval pilgrims tried to repeat by bathing in large numbers in the Jordan.

³⁶ Salisbury in *Church Fathers, Independent Virgins*, p.69., believes that a woman who had once been a prostitute, retained that stigma for the rest of her life, even if she had ceased all professional activity. Even if her past was not forgotten by people and some continued to harass her, this could be seen as part of her punishment on earth. If she reformed and was genuinely repentant, she would reach Heaven upon her death.

and cinnamon. Come, let us be inebriated with the breasts, and let us enjoy the desired embraces ... For my husband is not at home ... She entangled him with many words, and drew him away with the flattery of her lips. Immediately he followeth her as an ox led to be a victim ... not knowing that he is drawn like a fool to bonds, till the arrow pierce his liver ...'.³⁷

Prostitutes and women of loose morals were a threat to a person's reputation and status, especially to that of a man. If the prostitute for example, was related to a priest, his reputation, position in society or holiness could suffer a real blow. A priest had to be ritually pure to approach the sanctuary, and a 'harlot' daughter would contaminate him as she was of his blood, he of hers. This justified delivering a harsh punishment for the prostitute as stated in Leviticus:

'If the daughter of a priest be taken in whoredom, and dishonour the name of her father, she shall be burnt with fire.'³⁸

The prostitute had defiled herself, her father and his position, as well as the family name; to rectify or purify this situation she was to die by fire. Only through her death could some respectability be brought back into the family. Similarly in Deuteronomy it was written:

'They shall cast her out of the doors of her father's house, and the men of the city shall stone her to death, and she shall die because she hath done a wicked thing in Israel, to play the whore in her father's house: and thou shalt take away the evil out of the midst of thee.'³⁹

The ritual purity required of the priest can also be linked to the purificatory pilgrimage and the ritually pure military camps. The journey to sacred sites required pilgrims to remain pure in body and soul as seen in the Books of Exodus and Leviticus, and in the pilgrimage-crusade, as God was journeying with the pilgrims. His sacred presence meant that all pollutants were to remain outside the camp until they were cleansed of all impurities. In this way we can see similarities with the priest who, because of his position, needed to be ritually pure when approaching the sanctuary. The military camp was also regarded in

³⁷ Proverbs VII, 10-23.

³⁸ Leviticus XXI, 9.

³⁹ Deuteronomy XXII, 21.

the same way as the Temple in that both were to be kept from defilement because God travelled with the army and protected it. If the warriors wanted to achieve victory, they had to remain pure before battle. This also meant that those who could defile God's army were removed so the warriors could get the blessing of God before battle which would aid and protect them when they fought.

What has been illustrated so far in these examples is that Scripture taught such contacts and relations with real prostitutes and shameless women were immoral and dangerous for a person's standing in society, especially those with a ritual function in it as priest or king:

‘And King Solomon loved many strange women besides the daughter of Pharaoh, and women of Moab, and of Ammon, and of Edom, and of Sidion, and of the Hethites ... And to these was Solomon joined with a most ardent love. And he had seven hundred wives as queens, and three hundred concubines: and the women turned away his heart. And when he was now old, his heart was turned away by women to follow strange gods: and his heart was not perfect with the Lord his God ...’⁴⁰

These women were dangerous because of their sexuality and because of their overwhelming numbers. They were also dangerous because they were foreign, and therefore forbidden to by God; so many women could easily entice, corrupt and turn a man away from his religion to theirs, or rather into darkness, which they did.

When we examine pilgrimage to the East and the pilgrimage-crusade, we can see how relevant this is as foreign women were deemed disruptive and capable of turning men from their religion. Gregory of Nyssa, as we have already noted, believed pilgrimage a real danger and threat to a person's morality because ‘... the inns and hostelries and cities of the East present many examples of licence and indifference to vice ...’.⁴¹ Writers of the crusades also saw problems

⁴⁰ III Kings XI, 1-4.

⁴¹ Gregory of Nyssa, *Select Writings and Letters. Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, On Pilgrimages*, vol V, Oxford: Parker, 1893, p.382.

occurring with crusaders and their relations with Muslim or even Byzantine women. Crusaders certainly found sexual access to Muslim women fairly easy, and as early as 1098, at the siege of Antioch, Peter Tudebode also reported that Kerbogha held out intermarriage with Muslim women as a lure to attract deserters from the crusading army.⁴² However, the majority of writers and moralists believed that the sexual and lustful nature of women was the main cause for the downfall of men. The nationality of a woman was not really of concern, but her sexuality which could be disruptive and defiling.⁴³

On the other hand, the Bible (and the early Church) believed that if a man was young and unimportant, sexual relations in general, were not such a concern because young men were often involved in such relations,⁴⁴ and so long as he steered clear of a woman of high class or position it warranted little comment. The Bible therefore held an ambiguous attitude toward prostitutes and immodest women. Harlots were despised because they were dishonourable and lustful, but if prostitution vanished, sexual passion and desire would prompt men to turn their lustful attentions to respectable and virtuous women, and all would be polluted with lust and sin. Thus, prostitution was viewed as a necessary evil, a view which prevailed into the early Church and beyond.

Further analysis reveals a shift from the condemnation of the prostitute to those who were viewed as behaving as badly as prostitutes. But even this is not as straight-forward as it sounds. Other women were included who did not behave in any promiscuous fashion, but were understood to be desirable,

⁴² Peter Tudebode, *Historia de Hierosolymitano itinere*, trans. J.H. and L.L. Hill, Paris, 1977, p.109. In the fifteenth century, the Dominican Felix Fabri of Ulm reported on an article, instructing pilgrims journeying to the East: 'Let the pilgrims beware of gazing upon any woman whom they may meet, because all Saracens are exceedingly jealous, and the pilgrim may in ignorance run himself into danger through the fury of some jealous husband.' See Felix Fabri of Ulm in F.E. Peters, *Jerusalem*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985, 'Instructions to Pilgrims: Tenth and Eleventh Articles', p.429.

⁴³ Fulcher of Chartres, *The First Crusade: The Chronicle of Fulcher of Chartres and Other Source Materials*, (ed.) and trans. Edward M. Peters, Philadelphia: Pennsylvania University, 1971, Book I, xv, p.54., and Albert of Aachen, 'Historia Hierosolymitana', p.365., in Brundage, 'Prostitution, Miscegenation ...', p.59.

⁴⁴ For example, see Leviticus XV, 18-23; Deuteronomy XXI, 10-14 and XXII, 23-30; Judges XVI, 1, 4-19; Samuel II (II Kings) XI, 1-27, for the actions of the young, and also see III Kings XI, 1-4 for the actions of Solomon.

seductive or of temptation for men because of their conversation which 'burneth as fire' and because of their beauty:

'Turn away thy face from a woman dressed up, and gaze not upon another's beauty. For many have perished by the beauty of a woman, and hereby lust is enkindled as a fire. Every woman that is a harlot, shall be trodden upon as dung in the way. Many by admiring the beauty of another man's wife, have become reprobate, for her conversation burneth as fire. Sit not at all with another man's wife, nor repose upon the bed with her: And strive not with her over wine, lest thy heart decline towards her, and by thy blood thou fall into destruction.'⁴⁵

Those women who were dressed up, of beauty or liked conversation were also viewed in the same light as harlots because they used these attributes to ensnare men and destroy them. The third sentence confirms this although it may seem out of place, but it was written to illustrate this fact: that every woman who was a harlot should be eradicated first before she inflicts harm on others.

Underlined throughout the Bible is the idea that the majority of women indulged in fornication and yielded to it more easily because of their mental and physical weakness. After all, the sexuality of a woman differed from that of a man, and this lesser creation made the woman more susceptible to sexual temptation and in being influenced by the Devil. This does not mean that all women were practising prostitutes and/or adulterers as some writers would have us believe, but that the same quintessential corruption which blossomed wantonly in the real harlot lay as seed in all women, that is, all women were harlots by nature.⁴⁶

Just as women were tempted and influenced by the Devil to commit illicit acts, men, no matter from what station in life, were inclined to take up with such women (or women in general), whether they were seduced, tempted or went looking for them. Men could not help themselves or more to the point,

⁴⁵ Ecclesiasticus IX, 8-13.

⁴⁶ Also '[t]he prostitute could represent Everywoman more easily than, for example, the murderer could represent Everyman.' See Ruth Mazo Karras, 'Holy Harlots: Prostitute Saints in Medieval Legend', *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, I, 1, (July 1990), p.6.

did not want to. They had sexual desires and would act on them. The problem with such acts was that they were frowned upon because they were polluting and sinful, and men were made to feel guilty as a result of this. It was wrong to feel any kind of emotional or sexual attraction for a woman. These feelings and acts could not be reconciled with biblical beliefs and the belief of man's own salvation.⁴⁷ Sex in general was hard to reconcile with the highest ideals of Christian life. Thus, the blame for such wrong actions had to fall on someone, and in the Bible this blame was placed on Eve because of her sin in Eden, and because thereafter, she was a pollutant. Contempt for and mistrust of women were also good arguments for keeping them subjugated and restrained from further evil as we see urged in the above examples. Sin would be the consequence if this did not occur.

These views prevailed into the First Crusade and with the considerable number of women on the crusade, helped to shape the way women were seen as detrimental to the expedition and its outcome, especially when failures occurred. For example, at the first siege of Antioch on 21 October 1097, the crusaders began to blame their difficulties and misfortunes upon the iniquitous practices prevalent in the camp which involved prostitutes and other immoral women fornicating with men:

‘They [had] rioted in unrestrained lust, knew not the meaning of temperance, were given over to fornication, adultery and nameless debaucheries as soon as they arrived.’⁴⁸

Similarly, when we turn to the Fourth Crusade in the thirteenth century, these same kinds of women were seen to cause problems for Christians who attacked Constantinople. As a result, the clergy ordered all evil women to be removed

⁴⁷ Men were also constructed, although perhaps in groups separated by function more than women were: *Oratores* - Priests and monks were to be abstinent at all times. *Bellatores* - Bellicose warriors and virile progenitors of their bloodlines. Like Solomon they would take women from anywhere (came with the job). *Laboratores* - workers. See Georges Duby, *The Three Orders: Feudal Society Imagined*, trans. A. Goldhammer, Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1980.

⁴⁸ ‘Historia et gesta ducis Gotfridi’, p.406, in James A. Brundage, ‘Prostitution, Miscegenation ...’, p.58.

from the camp.⁴⁹ After Constantinople had been taken, the Greek historian Nicetas wrote:

‘Nay more, a certain harlot, a sharer in the guilt, a minister of their furies, a servant of the demons, a worker of incantations and poisonings, insulting Christ, sat in the patriarch’s seat, singing an obscene song and dancing frequently.’⁵⁰

This is perhaps a characterisation of the Franks in general by Nicetas, a Greek writer of the crusades. It is a characterisation of the Franks in terms of ‘harlot’; not women in general constructed as a harlot, but an entire people, both male and female. The harlot was used to symbolise the obscene and evil manner of the Franks. She who sat on the throne was a ‘sharer in the guilt’, a ‘minister of their furies’ and therefore illustrated the barbaric acts performed by the crusaders.

For the Greeks this ‘harlot’ may also have been the harlot of the Apocalypse, of which Saint John spoke. The harlot of Apocalypse XVII was pagan, persecuting Rome, but for the Greeks it could be interpreted as being the barbaric and uncivilised West. The Greeks had for centuries believed they were far more civilised and religious at heart than the brutish Franks, who were viewed as uneducated and uncouth. The beginning of the crusades in the eleventh century seemed to prove this and also seemed to illustrate the threat that Byzantium now faced from the West.⁵¹

In Apocalypse XVII, John was spoken to by one of seven angels who said: ‘Come, I will shew thee the condemnation of the great harlot, who sitteth upon many waters, with whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication; and

⁴⁹ Robert of Clari, *La Conquete de Constantinople*, (ed.) P. Lauer, Paris, 1974, pp.71-2., in Ronald C. Finucane, *Soldiers of the Faith: Crusaders and Muslims at War*, New York: St Martin’s Press, 1983, pp.180-1.

⁵⁰ Nicetas, *Alexii Ducae Imperium*, iii-iv, hist. grec., I, p.397., in *Translations and Reprints from the Original Sources of European History*, Philadelphia: Pennsylvania University Press, 1907, Vol. III, No. I, p.15. See also Ibn al-Athir in A. Maalouf, *The Crusades through Arab Eyes*, London: Ali Saqi Books, 1984, p.222 for a similar report.

⁵¹ See Anna Comnena’s *Alexiad*, for a view of the western world by Greeks.

they who inhabit the earth, have been made drunk with the wine of her whoredom.⁵² John then beheld a woman sitting upon a scarlet beast

‘full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns. And the woman was clothed round about with purple and scarlet, and gilt with gold, and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand, full of the abomination and filthiness of her fornication. And on her forehead a name was written: A mystery; Babylon the great, the mother of the fornications, and the abominations of the earth. And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus ...’⁵³

The harlot of Apocalypse XVII is strikingly similar to the harlot portrayed by Nicetas after the sack of Constantinople. Both characterisations are linked in that the harlots rejoice over the deaths of Christians, both holy men and women consecrated to God, and that both incite and ‘fornicate’ with those who brought this about.

By using the harlot to represent the Franks, there was no better way to denounce them. More importantly, as this construction by Nicetas shows, the crusaders were viewed as behaving as badly as those who they themselves deplored and criticised, the harlots. The crusaders had become what they feared and constructed women as being - destructive, pollutant,⁵⁴ and worse still, rejecting Christ. No greater sin could perhaps be seen than the sin of destroying another Christian city and its inhabitants because of the sins of lust, corruption and the desire for power and wealth. Such great sins would certainly lie uneasily with many, and Europe was shocked in general by the atrocities which the crusaders on the Fourth Crusade committed, atrocities which would not easily be removed from people’s memories.

To conclude, the concepts of woman as weak, dangerous, pollutant and as a harlot were continually used and reinforced throughout the Bible to denounce woman and to keep her subjugated by man. Such views persisted into the early

⁵² Apocalypse XVII, 1-2.

⁵³ Apocalypse XVII, 3-6.

⁵⁴ They had defiled the patriarch’s throne and Byzantium’s holy church.

Christian Church and the Church of the Middle Ages, especially in the pilgrimage/crusading era as is illustrated at Antioch in 1097 and Constantinople in 1202-1204. Examples of women journeying with their men on crusade were not uncommon because of the long history and tradition of pilgrimage which allowed all people to journey. Women were constructed in these journeys, and it is these journeys of pilgrimage which will now be examined.

CHAPTER TWO:

WOMAN AS A PILGRIM

'... you shall gird your reins, and you shall have shoes on your feet, holding staves in your hands, and you shall eat in haste: for it is the Phase (that is the Passage) of the Lord.'

(Exodus XII, 11)

PILGRIMAGE

'Pilgrimage is born of desire and belief. The desire is for solution to problems of all kinds that arise within the human situation. The belief is that somewhere beyond the known world there exists a power that can make right the difficulties that appear so insoluble and intractable here and now. All one must do is journey.'¹

This statement from Morinis sums up adequately what pilgrimage was to the medieval man and woman. It was a journey to a distant, sacred goal, such as to the Holy Land; a journey 'both outwards, to new, strange and dangerous places, and inwards, to spiritual improvement, whether through increased self-knowledge or through the braving of physical dangers.'² Pilgrimage could also encompass penance for past sins and the search for physical benefits through the medium of a god or saint(s), either in the form of the resolution of mundane problems or the cure of a physical ailment.³ Thus, at one end of the spectrum, the pilgrim may pursue spiritual ecstasy in seeking out the place where the founder of his/her miracle once lived and taught. And at the other end, the pilgrim may look for a miracle that offers purely physical benefits.

¹ Alan Morinis, (ed.), *Sacred Journeys: The Anthropology of Pilgrimage*, New York: Greenwood Press, 1992, p.1.

² Richard Barber, *Pilgrimages*, Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1991, p.1.

³ *ibid.*

This section of Chapter Two will examine the history of early pilgrimage leading up to the crusading period. It will look at why and where people journeyed, different forms of pilgrimage, opposition to pilgrimage, why pilgrimaging increased in the eleventh century, and how this practice gave rise to the crusades.

Early Pilgrimage History

The theory and practice of pilgrimage is a very old and deeply religious one; Finucane has described it as 'one of civilised man's oldest habits'.⁴ Pilgrimage to Jerusalem in particular was an ancient act, one which the Scriptures detailed from the Old Testament to the Gospels in the New Testament. In the Book of Kings for example, after Jerusalem had fallen to the besieging Jewish army under King David, it became the focal point of Israel, the promised land, a kingdom fired by nationalist religion. David built a temple there to house the Ark of the Covenant, the ancient shrine carried with the twelve tribes during their search for the promised land. This Temple (and the Ark inside it) was a symbol of nationhood as well as worship. The absence of an idol intensified the sense of God's real presence, and all believers went regularly to pay homage to him in accordance with the command of Moses in the Book of Exodus: 'Three times in the year all thy males shall appear in the sight of the Almighty Lord the God of Israel.'⁵ This was both an ancient ceremony, a journey to the local temple, and a new concept, that there could be a holy place without a physical presence in the form of a statue.⁶

In the New Testament, when Christ was twelve years old, he went with his parents on the 'usual' pilgrimage to Jerusalem,⁷ itself to become a city of Christian pilgrimage by the third century. Jesus was later described as being

⁴ Ronald C. Finucane, *Miracles and Pilgrims. Popular Belief in Medieval England*, London: Dent, 1977, p.39.

⁵ Exodus XXXIV, 23.

⁶ Barber, p.8.

⁷ Luke II, 41-2.

homeless in this world, one who has no place to lay his head.⁸ Saint Paul also exhorted his Corinthian congregation to conduct themselves in this life as pilgrims travelling to God,⁹ and in another place he stated that Christians should comport themselves as pilgrims and strangers on earth.¹⁰ Therefore, in the earliest Christian writings, the idea of pilgrimage emerges for the first time as a central religious ideal. The condition of despised pilgrims was held up as a model for Christians to emulate.

Hundreds of years before the great age of Christian pilgrimage in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, many journeyed to the Holy Land to view the places of Christ's earthly life where he had lived, preached, and died, and to re-experience his miracles:

'No other sentiment draws men to Jerusalem than the desire to see and touch the places where Christ was physically present, and to be able to say from our very own experience "we have gone into his tabernacle and adored in the very places where his feet have stood" [Psalm CXXXI, 7]'.¹¹

Sumption also states that:

'By re-enacting in their own lives the sufferings of Christ they felt that they were performing an act of personal redemption just as Christ, by His death, had made possible the salvation of all men.'¹²

Jerusalem had been the physical home not only of Christ, but also of most of his ardent followers, and the destruction of the city in 70 AD was a great blow to the Christians.¹³ However, increasing numbers of gentiles among the followers of Christ were able to approach the Holy City when access was

⁸ Matthew VIII, 20; Luke IX, 58.

⁹ II Corinthians V, 6-8.

¹⁰ Hebrews XI, 13. The terms 'peregrinus' and 'peregrinatio' used in the vulgate Old Testament mean 'stranger', 'alien', or 'traveller', but without the later connotation of a traveller who journeyed to a sacred place expressly for religious purposes.

¹¹ Paulinus of Nola, *Epistolae*, (ed.) W. Von Hartel, *Corpus scriptorum ecclesiasticorum latinorum*, XLIX. 14. XXXI. 4, Vienna, 1894, pp.402-3, 271-2., in Sumption, p.89. The exact wording in the Vulgate Bible for Psalm CXXXI, 7 is: 'We will go into his tabernacle: we will adore in the place where his feet stood.'

¹² Sumption, p.93.

¹³ Barber, p.14.

forbidden to Jews. Brundage says, that as early as the second century, there was some pilgrimage traffic to Jerusalem, and in the third century there is definite written reference to such pilgrimage by two Christian bishops, Firmilian and Alexander.¹⁴ Other Fathers of the Church such as Clement and Origen from Alexandria, seem to have gone to Palestine to study ancient texts and to research details of the New Testament; and there was a notable library at Jerusalem founded in 212 AD by Alexander Flavin, which survived into the fourth century.¹⁵ Thus, a number of scholars came as historical rather than spiritual pilgrims, seeking to shed light on the factual side of the Scriptures.¹⁶ Despite the increasing hostility of Roman authorities towards Christianity in the late third century, pilgrimage had become an accepted tradition.

Under the Emperor Constantine, the state took a less harsh view of Christianity and the number of pilgrims began to increase. Constantine provided Rome with its first great Christian buildings, notably a five-apsed basilica on the site of Saint Peter's tomb.¹⁷ In 326 AD, the Emperor's mother, Helena travelled to Palestine to uncover Calvary and to find the relics of the Passion.¹⁸ She was later said to have returned with the True Cross. The Emperor endorsed her discovery by building there a church - the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. Constantine had therefore begun the construction in Palestine of one of four magnificent buildings which would become awe-inspiring pilgrim attractions. These commemorated the four events connected with Christ: his pre-incarnation appearance to Abraham at the terebinth of Mamre, the Nativity at Bethlehem, his death and resurrection on Golgotha, and the Ascension on the

¹⁴ James A. Brundage, *Medieval Canon Law and the Crusader*, Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1969, p.4.

¹⁵ Barber, p.14.

¹⁶ Joan E. Taylor, *Christians and the Holy Places. The Myth of Jewish-Christian Origins*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993, p.310. At the end of the second century, Melito of Sardis wrote that he had visited the East and arrived at 'the place where messages of the Bible were preached and done'. Eusebius, *Historia Ecclesiastica* (ed.) E. Schwartz, *Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten (drei) Jahrhunderte*, Leipzig and Berlin, (1897-), 9. 1-3: *Eusebius Werke*, iv. 26. 14., in Joan E. Taylor, p.310.

¹⁷ Barber, p.49.

¹⁸ Steven Runciman, *A History of the Crusades*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1951-54, p.39.

Mount of Olives.¹⁹ At once, as Runciman states, a stream of pilgrims began to flow to the scene of Helena's labours.²⁰ Pilgrims who thronged to the places Helena had travelled spoke of the revelations, visions and miracles which occurred at these sites. Thus, as the crowds increased so did the stories, and the impact of Jerusalem on pilgrims became spiritual rather than visual.

Written accounts of the routes to the Holy Land were in circulation before the end of the fourth century,²¹ and at the turn of the fifth century, Saint Jerome (347-419 AD) had travelled to Palestine and settled at Bethlehem, accompanied by a group of high-minded, noble Roman ladies.²²

The fifth and sixth centuries show large numbers of pilgrims continuing to make the journey to the Holy Land, and by the seventh century, the journey to Rome²³ was so common a practice it was considered customary for Frankish nobles. However, the seventh century did see a diminution in the number of pilgrims²⁴ and a change in the character of pilgrimages.²⁵ Whereas pilgrimages of earlier centuries had been almost purely devotional in character, from the seventh century on, they were increasingly prescribed as part of penance enjoined upon confessed sinners.²⁶ This change was apparently the result of the growing influence of the Irish Church in Britain and on the Continent. The Irish

¹⁹ Helena took an active part in identifying the 'right places' for these edifices. She chose the sites in Bethlehem and on the Mount of Olives, while Eutropia, the Emperor's mother-in-law, chose Mamre/Terebinthus as a fitting place for a church. See Joan E. Taylor, pp.306-7.

²⁰ Runciman, *A History of the Crusades*, p.39. Helena was recognised and praised, not Eutropia.

²¹ The pilgrim of Bordeaux was the earliest of all pilgrims who described a visit to the Holy Land in any detail in 333 AD. Eric J. Leed states that the Bordeaux pilgrim recorded distances, stages, and stopping places of his route from Bordeaux to Jerusalem. See Eric J. Leed, *The Mind of the Traveller*, New York: Basic Books, 1991, and *Pilgrim of Bordeaux, Itinerium Burdigalense in Itineraria et Alia*, ed. P. Geyer and O. Cuntz, Turnholt, 1965.

²² Brundage, *Medieval Canon Law and the Crusader*, p.4.

²³ Rome is the site where Saints Peter and Paul had preached and were martyred for their faith.

²⁴ The lessening in number of pilgrims was probably a result of the barbarian migrations. Also, after 638 AD, Jerusalem was a Muslim city and Christians, although tolerated, were treated as second class citizens who were only free to practice their cult inside their churches. When this too was taken away from them by Muslims, many were outraged and wanted the Holy City placed in Christian hands.

²⁵ Brundage, *Medieval Canon Law and the Crusader*, p.7.

²⁶ *ibid.*

confessors imposed penances which varied with the gravity of the sin, in accordance with a penitential 'tariff' of which several were already in circulation by the end of the sixth century.²⁷ Appropriate penances ranged from short fasts to perpetual exile. The exilic pilgrimage was derived from the idea based upon several scriptural verses that Christians were 'exiles' in the world. Alienation was stressed, with the view that on earth we have no true homeland, therefore to go on pilgrimage and refuse to settle down was to go where God may take you. The Irish monks of the sixth and seventh centuries embraced this idea, taking nothing with them and leading a hermit's life; wandering with food and resources being provided for them by God. Pilgrimage was therefore favoured by the Irish as a spiritual exercise, and it was thought especially appropriate as a penance for the more serious transgressions, such as murder or sacrilege. The harshness of the punishment suffered by penitential pilgrims matched the heinousness of their crimes. And it was this form of pilgrimage which most gave rise to the crusades in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. By then there were numerous pilgrimage shrines in Europe, notably that of Saint James (Santiago) of Compostella in Northern Spain. Thus, as Finucane states: 'Pilgrimage accelerated with the pace of life until it was [an] ingrained tradition by the twelfth century.'²⁸

Why People Journeyed

Pilgrims of the Middle Ages travelled to shrines and sacred places for a variety of reasons. They did so as an act of thanksgiving or penance, to solicit supernatural aid, or merely as an act of devotion. Idinopulus believes that if:

'we examine carefully the actual patterns of travel to pilgrimage sites on the part of Jews, Christians, and Muslims through the 3,000 years of Holy Land history, we will find such a mixture of piety and power, of the spiritual and the political, the religious and the secular that the dichotomies simply break down and we

²⁷ Sumption, pp.98-9.

²⁸ Finucane, *Miracles and Pilgrims*, p.39.

find ourselves at a loss to identify the purely religious phenomenon or category of pilgrimage'.²⁹

Bowman believes that research into pilgrim motives and expectations is fraught with difficulty. The voices of the great mass of pilgrims have been silenced by time, and those few we do hear in the pages of the four hundred and ninety-six texts still extant from 333 AD to 1500 AD, are in a large part, those of the political and clerical elite, which cannot be seen as representative. He further suggests that the various images of Jerusalem and the holy places proffered by these pilgrimage narratives communicated the central values of the powerful elite to a wider audience, and in so doing, helped to constitute a lexicon adopted by popular imagination.³⁰ Although Bowman is correct in stating this, the information can still be used to give us some idea of why people journeyed. The most common underlying motive for pilgrimage was probably a pious desire to honour the saint or god, although piety is never simple and seldom entirely unselfish. People journeyed to show opposition to kings by honouring their slain enemies; to have a sight-seeing holiday; to collect free alms and food from monasteries and wealthier travellers - even to rob them; to ask some special favour from saints such as for business success, a male heir, or for overall protection from the dangers and evils of the world. Many also went to the shrines to be cured of physical or mental afflictions.³¹ Miraculous cures attracted large numbers of pilgrims to the sacred centers.³² Some involved the reported intervention of a deity or saint; others occurred by the mere presence of an ill person in the sacred precincts of a pilgrimage site. The range of cures attributed to divine intervention was extensive, from the cure of syphilis, leprosy, asthma, arthritis, and fevers, to mental conditions.³³ Sexual adventure or freedom may have lured some to travel too, but many other wanderers took

²⁹ Thomas A. Idinopulus, 'Sacred Space and Profane Power: Victor Turner and the Perspective of Holy Land Pilgrimage' in Bryan F. Le Beau, Menachem Mor, (eds), *Pilgrims and Travellers to the Holy Land*, Omaha, Neb.: Creighton University Press, 1996, p.10.

³⁰ Bowman, p.150.

³¹ Finucane, *Miracles and Pilgrims*, p.40.

³² Most pilgrims probably looked upon shrines as sources of help (*auxilium*) in the present life and as yet another bit of security against the final day (*Dies Irae*) when the world would end.

³³ Miraculous cures may also have involved forms of social healing, for example, the healing of family solidarity. See James J. Preston, 'Spiritual Magnetism: An Organising Principle for the Study of Pilgrimage', in Alan Morinis, p.33.

to the high roads of Europe out of simple curiosity, a longing to get away from an undesirable situation at home, or from the prying eyes of neighbours.

Linked to pilgrimaging and its increase, was the hope of victory over death, which never disappeared and became compounded in Europe with fear and guilt. There were a number of reasons for this 'guilt' culture. The great monastic influence of the tenth and eleventh centuries stressed the importance of overcoming sin and that the material world and everything in it, whether touched, seen or enjoyed, led people to sin. The morbid obsession with the burden of guilt required a solution which was found in pilgrimage. Coupled with this was the search for indulgences³⁴ offered by popes and local prelates to those who visited specified shrines.

In orthodox Latin doctrine, the indulgence came at the end of a process of remission of sins. First the penitent sinner must confess and receive absolution so that the guilt of sin is remitted, then, instead of eternal punishment, suffer only the temporal penalties due to that sin.³⁵ In return for 'indulgence-earning works' the Church may then grant him remission of all or part of the penalty due to sin.

'The indulgence would affect both the canonical punishment imposed by the Church -the penitential punishment- and the temporary punishment imposed by God, since the Church could offer God a substitute penance from the "Treasury of Merits" - an inexhaustible reservoir of merits accumulated by Christ and added to by the saints...' ³⁶

From the eleventh century, the quest for indulgences became an important motive for going on pilgrimage (and later, crusade³⁷). This can be discerned in the more notable pilgrimages of the period. Robert the Pious, King of France

³⁴ Remission of the temporal punishment for past sins.

³⁵ These penalties may take place in this world or the next, including in Purgatory.

³⁶ Hans Eberhard Mayer, *The Crusades*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993, pp.23-24.

³⁷ When Urban II launched the crusades, he declared that anyone who took up the cross would receive full remission of sins. See Jonathan Riley-Smith, *The Crusades: A Short History*, London: Atholone Press, pp.9-10.

journeyed to nine shrines shortly before his death in 1031, in a hope to 'evade the awful sentence of the day of judgement'.³⁸ Fulk Nerra, count of Anjou (987-1040³⁹), also went on pilgrimage journeying to Jerusalem at least three and possibly four times to repent his crimes.⁴⁰ An overwhelming majority of medieval pilgrims expected to have their sins expunged from their souls as if by magic, and the austere warnings of the preacher of *Veneranda Dies* that this would not occur, fell on deaf ears.⁴¹

The numbers and size of pilgrimage bands increased, with the humble as well as the mighty performing distant pilgrimages to expiate crimes that weighed on their consciences. This was at least in part because of the encouragement given by the monks of Cluny through exhortation, and through the building of hostels along the major pilgrim routes. Whereas in the past, pilgrims had usually been members of the Church hierarchy or devout individuals, secular princes now undertook the journey to the East. The sister-in-law of Emperor Otto I went in 970, and there were numerous counts, such as Count Fulk just referred to, and lesser lords who led groups of pilgrims.⁴²

Another reason for an increase in the number of pilgrimages by the late eleventh century is said to have been fear of the approaching Judgement Day,

³⁸ Helgaud, *Vita Robert Regis*, XXX, *Recueil des historiens des Gaules et de la France*, (ed.) M. Bouquet, Paris, 1738-1904, x, 114-15., in *Sumption*, p.101.

³⁹ Christopher Brooke, *Europe in the Central Middle Ages, 962-1154*, London: Longman Group Ltd., 1975, p.77.

⁴⁰ According to Radulph Glaber, the 'fear of Gehenna' entered into him in 1000 AD on account of his slaughter of the Bretons at the Battle of Conquereuil, and the murder of his wife can only have added to his feelings of guilt. First journey to the Holy Land occurred about three years after this. On his last, accomplished at a great age in 1038-40, Fulk dragged himself on his knees by a halter to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, while two servants followed behind flogging him. Radulph Glaber, *Historiae*, (ed.) M. Prou, Paris, 1886, II, 4, p.32., in *Sumption*, p.101.

⁴¹ In the first book of the *Liber Sancti Jacobi*, is this remarkable sermon known from the opening words as *Veneranda Dies*. It was intended to be read to pilgrims on the vigil of 30 December; one of the two feasts of Saint James: 'The way of Saint James is fine but narrow, as narrow as the path of salvation itself. The path is the shunning of vice, the mortification of the flesh, and the increasing of virtue.' See *Veneranda Dies: Liber S. Jacobi*, I, 17, pp.141-76., in *Sumption*, pp.124-5. The preacher's purpose was to deny that pilgrims to Saint James would automatically be saved as if the apostle had waved a magic wand over them, 'for a wand', he told them, 'is an external, material thing, whereas sin is an internal, spiritual evil.'

⁴² Barber, pp.22-3.

where Christ was expected to come as judge or where the Anti-Christ would rule for 1000 years.⁴³ Fears were linked with political events, chaos and disorder, for in the affairs of men were certain portents of the Last Day. Famine, earthquakes and natural disasters would occur, followed by the dissolution of all political power. Mass pilgrimages occurred such as the 1033 French pilgrimage and the 1064 German pilgrimage.⁴⁴ Some saw this journey as the 'climax' of a man's religious life and his final journey.⁴⁵ Once reaching this goal he could remain until death, which was near with the coming of the millennium.

Sumption believes however, that the reasons for this upsurge are far from clear. Introspection and guilt, he says, were not inventions of the eleventh century, and the condition of Western Europe at the millennium was not, on its own, enough to account for the phenomenon. There was, however, one aspect of contemporary religious life by which it could hardly fail to have been influenced. This period witnessed changes in the role of the sacrament of penance. Two centuries earlier, Carolingian reformers had taken exception to the penitential practices of the Irish as they believed they failed to bring the penitent back to the straight and narrow path. Rabanus Maurus had insisted that penances should be performed under the direct supervision of the confessor who had imposed them, and that the penitent should not be absolved until this had been completed.⁴⁶ From the end of the tenth century, however, penitents were usually absolved of their sins and reconciled with the church immediately after confession. Against this background, as Sumption continues, 'the unprecedented number of monastic foundations and the extraordinary popularity of pilgrimages and the crusades which mark out the eleventh century, become intelligible.'⁴⁷

⁴³ There were a variety of possibilities of what was feared, although these two mentioned above were probably the most common.

⁴⁴ See E. Joranson, 'The Great German Pilgrimage of 1064-65' in L.J. Paetow (ed.), *The Crusades and Other Historical Essays, Presented to Dana C. Munro*, New York: F.S. Crofts, 1928, Bernard Hamilton, 'The Impact of Crusader Jerusalem on Western Europe', *The Catholic Historical Review*, vol. LXXX, (1994), p.696., and Sumption, pp.134-5.

⁴⁵ Mayer, p.13.

⁴⁶ Sumption, p.100.

⁴⁷ *ibid.*, pp.100-101.

The Risk Involved and its Attraction

The risks in journeying to remote locations were clearly evident in Christian pilgrimages to sacred sites in Europe and the Holy Land. In 1106, the Bishop of Ardpatrik in Ireland was struck by lightning and killed on a dangerous three and a half mile climb to the summit of Croagh Patrick. Seven years later, on the eve of Saint Patrick's festival, thirty people were hit by a thunderbolt while fasting and praying at the summit.⁴⁸ What is ironic about these events is that they attracted, rather than repelled pilgrims, due to the widespread belief that dying while on pilgrimage was auspicious.

Sometimes obstacles were created deliberately for pilgrims to endure. Individuals were expected to demonstrate acts of contrition for sins or purify themselves through elaborate devotions, including self-flagellation, and crawling on their knees during a specific phase of the journey.⁴⁹ After murdering a Roman senator in breach of his safe conduct, Emperor Otto III was advised by Saint Romuald to walk barefoot to Monte Gargano.⁵⁰ Robert, Duke of Normandy, under strong suspicion of having murdered his brother, travelled barefoot to Jerusalem in 1035 because of his 'fear of God'.⁵¹ And Henry II went as a pilgrim to Canterbury in penance for the death of Thomas Becket (1170); 'he was scourged as was Jesus after his condemnation by Pilate [Mark, XV, 15].'⁵² If the journey meant there would be certain obstacles or sufferings to undertake such as the attack of bandits or thieves, sickness or hardship of travel, and lack of resources, so much the better as suffering for one's sins was like Christ who had suffered for ours.

⁴⁸ James J. Preston, p.36.

⁴⁹ Exhausted pilgrims could faint, have convulsions or enter into delirium trances.

⁵⁰ Sumption, p.99.

⁵¹ Odericus Vitalis, *The Ecclesiastical History*, (ed.) M. Chibnall, Oxford, 1969-73, III, ii, p.10.

⁵² J.G. Davies, *Pilgrimage: Yesterday and Today: Why? Where? How?*, London: SCM Press, 1988, p.191.

Those for and against Pilgrimage

Not everyone was in support of pilgrimages to the Holy Land. Saint Augustine considered pilgrimages to be irrelevant and even dangerous.⁵³ When pilgrimages were made in the fourth century, some had questioned their religious value. People argued that to visit places where Christ had lived was a powerful stimulus to devotion, but sterner moralists, such as Saint Jerome, warned against the frivolities of pilgrimage:

‘It is not praiseworthy to have been to Jerusalem, but it is praiseworthy to have lived the good life in the new Jerusalem.’⁵⁴

However this view was not always accepted as it was thought spiritually valuable for people of the new Jerusalem to go to the old Jerusalem.

Gregory of Nyssa (335-94 AD) was another who held unfavourable views on pilgrimage. He had warned against people journeying to sacred sites, although he had, like Jerome, travelled to these very same places. In a letter written to three ladies of his congregation, Gregory recorded his impression of what he had seen.⁵⁵ He saw the New Testament sites as symbols of the salvation that lay in Christ, analogous to Christian life as a whole. To follow Christ anywhere was to be born with him in Bethlehem, to be crucified with him on Golgotha, to roll away the stone from the tomb of mortal life, and to rise with him to the life immortal. Gregory rejoices that he can see in the Christian conduct of his correspondents precisely such spiritual signs of the holy places which he himself had witnessed. However, the physical remains of what had occurred in the holy places to Christ and to his followers were only important to Gregory as an indication of that inner spirituality which should be the possession of Christians everywhere.

⁵³ In Runciman, *A History of the Crusades*, pp.39-40.

⁵⁴ Saint Jerome, *Epistola ad Paulinum*, (ed.) Isidor Hilberg, *Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum*, (Vienna, 1866-), LIV, Ep., LVIII, p.529. in Hamilton, pp.695-6.

⁵⁵ Gregory of Nyssa, *Epistulae*, 3. 1-2., (ed.) G. Pasquali, Leiden, 1959, in E.D. Hunt, *Holy Land Pilgrimage in the Later Roman Empire AD 312-460*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984, p.88.

Gregory was strongly against pilgrimage; a journey which in itself, he believed could sway people to commit evil and vile acts:

‘... those who are perfect would do best not to be eager in practising it ... it is so far from being worth an earnest pursuit, that it actually requires the greatest caution to prevent him who has devoted himself to God from being penetrated by any of its hurtful influences.’⁵⁶

These hurtful influences, Gregory goes on to note, occur when men and women meet and mix, when they should really be living lives apart:

‘... modesty is preserved in societies that live distinct and separate, so that there should be no meeting and mixing up of persons of opposite sex; men are not to rush to keep the rules of modesty in the company of women, nor women to do so in the company of men. But the necessities of a journey are continually apt to reduce this scrupulousness to a very different observance of such rules.’⁵⁷

Gregory believed that when men and women journeyed on pilgrimage, morality and modesty was sure to disappear as each sex had more to do with the other, and in fact depended more on the other.

In reading these condemnations of pilgrimage, it does seem surprising that Gregory himself had journeyed, and, if the letters written to his parishioners are any indication, enjoyed visiting the sacred sites. He does try to rationalise his pilgrimage, however, although whether this was successful, or whether he believed in himself that it was, is debatable:

‘But I know that many will retort to all that I have said, they will say, “Why did you not lay down this rule for yourself as well? If there is no gain for the godly pilgrim in return for having been there, for what reason did you undergo the toil of so long a journey?” ... By the necessities of that office⁵⁸ in which I have been placed by the Dispenser of my life to live, it was my duty,

⁵⁶ Gregory of Nyssa, p.382.

⁵⁷ *ibid.*

⁵⁸ Gregory was the bishop of Nyssa, 371-.

for the purpose of the correction which the Holy Council had resolved upon, to visit the places where the Church in Arabia is, ... I had promised that I would confer also with the Heads of the Holy Jerusalem Churches, because matters with them were in confusion, and needed an arbiter ...'.⁵⁹

Despite the fact that pilgrimage never won universal approval, the popularity of Jerusalem pilgrimage continued, as we have seen, to increase through the eleventh and twelfth centuries. The journey had become easier after 975 with the conversion of Geza, Duke of Hungary to Christianity, and the opening of an overland route through Byzantium and Asia Minor. Now pilgrimage could be made through Christian territory. Problems still persisted however, as the infidel was seen to be barring the way of Christians to the Holy Land; this was unacceptable. In 1009, the Caliph al-Hakim ordered the destruction of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, and four years later declared that all Churches were to be demolished in Jerusalem.⁶⁰ When the hold of Byzantium and the caliphs of Egypt on the East was challenged by the Seldjuk Turks, the journey to the East became harder still. After the defeat of the Byzantine army at Manzikert in 1071, Jerusalem was seized by a local Seldjuk commander; it was recaptured in 1076 by Egyptian forces, and lost again in the same year.⁶¹ The land route from Byzantium to Jerusalem was now dangerous in the extreme, with no central authority and a host of petty lords who saw pilgrims as a source of taxes. The journey to the Holy Land had become very difficult, and although this may not have generated the crusade, it was certainly one of several factors from which the crusading idea originated.⁶² In 1095, the Byzantine Emperor, Alexius Comnenus sent envoys to Europe to seek reinforcements. Their appeal was heard at the Church council in Piacenza and emphasised the hardships of native Christians and pilgrims alike in Palestine. This inspired Pope Urban II to preach an armed pilgrimage, the First Crusade.

⁵⁹ Gregory of Nyssa, p.383.

⁶⁰ Hamilton, pp.696-7.

⁶¹ Barber, p.24.

⁶² It was employed in Urban II's address at Clermont as argument in justifying the use of military offensives against Islam.

This pilgrimage/crusade owed its appeal in part to the fact that a generation had grown up who had not travelled to Jerusalem and wanted to. The main aims of the armed pilgrimage were to liberate the Church of God in Jerusalem as it was now unacceptable and unbearable that Muslims should control the holy city; to cleanse the world of evil and sin for Christ's second coming; and to defend Constantinople and thus heal the rift which had opened in the eleventh century between East and West. This was to be a repentant act of faith for the moral reform and renewal of Christendom, and therefore all were called on to take up the cross and journey to the Holy Land, restoring it to Christian hands.

This holy war preached by Urban differed from earlier wars against the enemies of Christendom as it was waged by the pope's command and was wrapped up in the ideas of the Peace of God, Holy War, and pilgrimage. Urban II referred to it as 'this holy pilgrimage';⁶³ it was to be a means of fulfilling the apostle's advice to present themselves as living sacrifices acceptable to God.⁶⁴ Salvation was promised to a world obsessed with its own salvation:

'If any man sets out to free the Church of God at Jerusalem out of pure devotion and not for love or gain, the journey shall be accounted a complete penance on his part.'⁶⁵

There is little doubt therefore, that the penitential form of pilgrimage was an important constituent to the First Crusade. In the Chronicle of Monte Cassino, it is emphasised:

'... this enterprise was undertaken in Gaul at the behest of certain penitent princes because they could not perform a worthy penance for their innumerable offences in their own land ... they pledged themselves to make a journey beyond the seas, as a penance and for the remission of their sins, to wrest the Holy Sepulchre from the Saracens.'⁶⁶

⁶³ Robert the Monk, 'Urban II's Speech', Urban 5-8, trans. Dana C. Munro, in Edward Peters (ed.) *The First Crusade: The Chronicle of Fulcher of Chartres ...*

⁶⁴ Romans XII, 1.

⁶⁵ In I.S. Robinson, *The Papacy, 1073-1198: Continuity and Innovation*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990, p.327.

⁶⁶ *ibid.*, p.328.

This shows us that the First Crusade originated as a penitential pilgrimage for the warrior nobility. Pilgrimage was a familiar institution and Urban used it as a vehicle for holy war. It put the soldiers under Church authority because pilgrims, through their vows, became like temporary clerics, subject to ecclesiastical discipline. This gave them a place in the Christian order of things (Christian knighthood), and in one move absolved them of the guilt of their bloodletting: because they were penitents, the blood they shed purified rather than polluted them. To the Church the volunteer soldier was a penitent who had vowed to make a journey to a sacred shrine. Thus, he could expect to have the spiritual reward of a pilgrim, as well as the legal privileges (protection of person and property). The crusaders could not break their vow and expect to be saved, therefore once the vow was taken, they had to go through with it. This vow was enforced, and in parts of Europe, failure to keep this oath was punished by secular and ecclesiastical courts.

These first crusaders saw themselves as pilgrims (*peregrini*), but towards the end of the twelfth century, they were designated as '*cruce signati*'.⁶⁷ As crusaders they associated themselves with the knighthood of Christ, the way of the cross, and spiritual warfare. They had the same hopes of spiritual rebirth and performed the same rites as pilgrims - elaborate liturgies, penitential processions, and fasting. As well as this, crusaders had the same legal privileges and expected the same respect from their fellowmen.

The first crusaders who marched to the East were joined by a large number of unarmed pilgrims (men, women, young and old, from all walks of life) in response to the preaching of Peter the Hermit and other *prophetae*. Peter's followers believed he was leading them to the paradise of a new Jerusalem, rather than what the city actually was. These unarmed pilgrims travelled in the conviction that God would reward their piety by delivering Jerusalem into their hands without bloodshed. Their holiness alone would conquer the infidel, and

⁶⁷ Davies, p.17.

when Jerusalem was lost, it was believed it was because the crusaders had become sinful.

As the pilgrims journeyed with the warriors to Jerusalem, they appeared to transform into warriors the closer they got to reaching the Holy Land. This was apparent in Asia Minor when the pilgrims went on the offensive attacking Greeks and Turks alike, until a Turkish army slaughtered them at Civetot.⁶⁸ Because of such violence and un-Christian like acts by the crusaders, they received much criticism as the motives of the pilgrims/crusaders were questionable. This was no better illustrated than in the greediness for land and riches and the massive slaughtering of all in Jerusalem in which the blood was said to run ankle deep.⁶⁹ However, underlying these crusades was a very important stimulus, religion, and the crusaders were convinced that as fighters of the faith, it was necessary to commit such acts if Jerusalem was to be saved and secured by them.

To conclude, the influence of pilgrimage on the development of crusade was extremely important; the crusade was viewed as an extension of what had occurred in Europe for hundreds of years. The only difference in the eleventh and twelfth century was that the idea of Muslims ruling and controlling the Holy Land in which Christ had lived and died had become unacceptable and unbearable. This prompted Christendom to act, which it did in trying to eradicate the infidel from Jerusalem by violence. This movement was the crusades, and without the influence of the old practice of pilgrimage, it may never have eventuated.

⁶⁸ Barber, p.25.

⁶⁹ Fulcher of Chartres, XXVII, p.77.

'Give no issue to thy water, no, not a little: nor to a wicked woman liberty to gad abroad. If she walk not at thy hand, she will confound thee in the sight of thy enemies.'

(Ecclesiasticus XXV, 34-5)

WHY WOMEN JOURNEYED

Women journeyed on pilgrimage for the same reasons as outlined in the first section of this chapter. There were, however, additional reasons particular to women for journeying and this section will explore these reasons, beginning with the celebrated pilgrimage of Saint Helena in the fourth century to the pilgrimages of women in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, with the merging of pilgrimage and crusade.

Joan Taylor has said in her book *Christians and the Holy Places*, that women are not known to have visited Palestine prior to the fourth century, and that the Christians who journeyed to Palestine for learned investigations were predominantly men.⁷⁰ The first mention of a woman pilgrim described the arrival of Helena, Constantine's mother, to Palestine sometime after 325 AD.⁷¹ Accompanying Helena was Eutropia, Constantine's mother-in-law, but she has received little or no mention in history, apart from having chosen the site of Mamre/Terebinthus as a fitting place for a Church. Legend made Helena the most renowned pilgrim because she discovered the True Cross, the most revered relic in all Christendom. Many years later, much encouraged by the example of Helena, it became fashionable among those who had sufficient means for such a venture, to travel to the land where Christ had lived and died in order to visit the holy sites.

⁷⁰ Joan E. Taylor, p.313.

⁷¹ Hunt, *Holy Land Pilgrimage in the Later Roman Empire*, p.29.

Women such as Helena, did play a major part in pilgrimage, but that was seldom reflected in the record because women in general were marginalised in the sources. The literature on this subject largely concentrates on the male pilgrim, his point of view on the journey and how he arrives at his destination. The place of women in pilgrimage is usually degraded and minimal, which as Julie Smith argues, 'creates difficulties for women who undertake any form of journeying and also creates a problem of self-definition...'⁷² Eric Leed has said that: 'Historically, men have travelled, women have not, or have travelled under the aegis of men.'⁷³ However, this is not strictly the case, as we can discern from the writings of female pilgrims in the fourth and eighth centuries. In these two periods, we find that women journeyed as freely and as frequently as they could to the Christian pilgrimage sites of Jerusalem and Rome, although, more likely than not under the protection and safeguard of male soldiers who journeyed with them.⁷⁴ Many pilgrims journeyed to these holy places,⁷⁵ hoping to envision biblical events or to re-experience them, and to visit the monasteries and hermitages of holy men and women. The idea of 'sacred journeying for the women of the late fourth and early eighth centuries was no doubt daunting but unquestionably achievable and permissible ...'⁷⁶

The letters from these two periods written by women pilgrims, relate to the pilgrimage sites of the Holy Land and to Rome. In the fourth century letters, the women pilgrims mention places in the Holy Land to which pilgrims had access. They travelled extensively and restlessly about the holy sites. The eighth century letters focus only on Rome. In both cases the journey was

⁷² Julie-Ann Smith, 'Sacred Journeying: Victor Turner's Theory of Liminality, Women's Correspondence and Pilgrimage, Fourth and Eighth Centuries', presented at 31st International Congress on Medieval Studies, University of Western Michigan, Kalamazoo, 9-12 May, 1996, p.2.

⁷³ Eric Leed, p.113.

⁷⁴ The fourth and eighth centuries were periods of reasonable stability, which made pilgrimage feasible.

⁷⁵ Pilgrims were large in numbers and hostels were provided under the control of Roman administration, as well as soldiers who were to protect pilgrims and other travellers in unsafe areas. We know that the numbers were large because of the writings of Bede and Boniface. See W. J. Moore, *The Saxon Pilgrims to Rome and the Schola Saxonum*, Diss: Fribourg, 1937, pp.54-65.

⁷⁶ Smith, p.1.

fraught with danger and the possibility (for these pilgrims) of not returning home.

The fourth century pilgrims known to us from their writings were Egeria,⁷⁷ a Spanish nun/canoness (possibly of noble origin) who travelled to the Holy Land in 381-4,⁷⁸ and who corresponded with her sisters about the sites and holy people she had visited, and Paula and her associates.⁷⁹ Paula, a noble Roman widow and her daughter, Eustochium, journeyed to the Holy Land at the end of the fourth century/beginning of the fifth, where they jointly established a religious community with Saint Jerome in Bethlehem.⁸⁰ The two letters relating to their time and activities in the Holy Land provide us, as Smith says, with 'the greater part of what we know of the lives of these women pilgrims in Jerusalem and Bethlehem and how they viewed the nature of their pilgrimage.'⁸¹

Egeria's account of her visit to the Holy Land is long and very detailed with descriptions of places, events and liturgical practices.⁸² She was the only member of her community (in Galicia) to be making the journey,⁸³ and her purpose for journeying was religious. Her writings are inspired by her curiosity and interest in the holy places as physical witnesses of biblical accounts and are written to give her sisters some share in what she has seen and experienced. Egeria made no reference to her travelling companions, although we do know that she travelled with others because of phrases like 'we all dismounted' and 'we were shown'.⁸⁴ That she made no reference to others may be deliberate on her part: the focus of the reader should be on holy places visited and what holy men said, not on those who journeyed. The holy men, as Egeria once noted explicitly, talked only of holy things and those that she met were presented like

⁷⁷ See John Wilkinson, trans. *Egeria's Travels*, London: SPCK, 1971

⁷⁸ Peter Dronke, *Women Writers of the Middle Ages: A Critical Study of Texts from Perpetua to Marguerite Porete*, Cambridge, 1984, pp.19-21.

⁷⁹ See *Saint Jerome: Select Letters*, trans. F.A. Wright, London: William Heinemann Ltd., reprint. 1954

⁸⁰ Brundage, *Medieval Canon Law and the Crusader*, p.6.

⁸¹ Smith, p.7.

⁸² Dronke, p.19. See *Egeria's Travels*, pp.54-88.

⁸³ Smith, p.6.

⁸⁴ Dronke, pp.20-1., and see *Egeria's Travels*, pp.97-8.

images of saints. They were gracious, generous and kind, willing to do anything for her and her travel companions. One of her letters is filled with enthusiastic gratitude to the devoted bands of monks who escorted them to places such as Sinai.⁸⁵ There was never a mishap, and Dronke says that eventually, one begins to long for one.⁸⁶ He believes that not every monk or bishop could have been as gracious, or told accurate stories. But what Egeria wanted to send to her sisters was not a report truthful in the everyday sense, but a paradigm of perfection. However, Egeria was widely read and her knowledge of the Scriptures was extensive. Attention was paid to her by these monks, bishops and holy men and women because she was of importance;⁸⁷ perhaps with this knowledge of who and what Egeria was, these holy men and bishops would not have tried to fool her or be discourteous to her. This demonstrates how education (and perhaps nobility) could command a respect which overcame the lower status attached to gender. Egeria remained in the East, travelling restlessly about the sacred sites in Palestine, and was unsure of ever returning to her sisters. She travelled from Mount Sinai, back to Jerusalem and then on to Constantinople where no doubt she found many more sacred sites and relics of importance. Her pilgrimage became a permanent state of journeying as she was driven by a desire (and curiosity) to visit any holy site she heard about.

The two patrician women from Rome, Paula and her daughter, Eustochium, journeyed to the Holy Land in the fourth century, where they joined up with their mentor, Saint Jerome. Together they travelled around the holy places of Palestine and later established a religious community with Jerome in Bethlehem. Two letters relate to their time and activities in Palestine and provide us with much information about the lives of those women pilgrims in Jerusalem and Bethlehem, and how they viewed the nature of their pilgrimage.⁸⁸ They visited these sacred sites as pilgrims but remained there permanently. These women did not return to their homes to relate their experiences to those who had never

⁸⁵ *Egeria's Travels*, pp.97-8.

⁸⁶ Dronke, p.21.

⁸⁷ Smith, p.6.

⁸⁸ *ibid.*, p.7.

journeyed. They journeyed to the Holy Land where they adapted and changed to their new conditions. Paula encouraged another woman, Marcella, to join them in the Holy Land, stating that she herself would journey with Marcella to the sacred sites should she come there. The other letter relating to this pilgrimage of Paula and Eustochium in the Holy Land was written by the two women to Marcella in Rome. After Paula's death, her daughter remained in Bethlehem as leader of the monastic community she had helped her mother and Jerome to establish.

These women were not pilgrims in the ordinary sense of the word, because they did not journey to a sacred site and then return to their homes. They instead lived out their lives in the Holy Land, separated from their homes and families in Rome. Many Roman women did make the journey to Palestine and then return to Rome,⁸⁹ but Paula and Eustochium chose not to go back; they desired to live in communities established for the very purpose of allowing pilgrims to live at the sacred sites.

The eighth century was also a time of much pilgrimage activity, as can be ascertained from the correspondence associated with Saint Boniface and the Anglo-Saxon women,⁹⁰ the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* and from the writings of Bede.⁹¹ Pilgrims in the eighth century journeyed to Rome, to see the sites where Saints Peter and Paul had preached and died, and to visit the other holy and sacred sites of the early martyrs of Christendom at the Catacombs.⁹² Bede refers in the *De Temporal Ratione* to the popularity of pilgrimages to Rome in about 716 AD, and this is repeated in the *Ecclesiastical History* in reference to the pilgrimage of King Ine in 727:

⁸⁹ Such as the Roman lady Fabiola, who arrived in Jerusalem (after Paula and Eustochium) and later departed from Bethlehem in 395.

⁹⁰ Ephraim Emerton, trans. *The Letters of Saint Boniface*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1940

⁹¹ See W. J. Moore, *The Saxon Pilgrims; The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, trans. G.N. Garmonsway, London: Dent, 1960; and Bede, *The Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, (eds) Bertram Colgrave and R.A.B. Mynors, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969

⁹² Barber, pp.48-9. *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* refers to pilgrimages to Rome made by Kings, Queens and Bishops.

‘At this time many Englishmen, nobles and commons, layfolk and clergy, men and women, were eager to do the same thing [pilgrimage to Rome].’⁹³

The pilgrimaging of women is also referred to in contemporary letters of women.⁹⁴ The early eighth century was remarkable for the correspondence associated with Saint Boniface, who was thought of primarily as the ‘Apostle to the Germans’.⁹⁵ Some of the letters were written by women planning to make pilgrimage, and others are from Boniface concerning such pilgrimages. There are also women mentioned in the letters who actually made the journey to Rome and remained there, while others returned to their homes. The main correspondents with Boniface include Eangyth, Ecgburg, Eadburg (Bugge), and AEIfflaed.⁹⁶

Eangyth was an abbess of an unknown or unnamed community who was experiencing difficult times. Her community consisted of both monks and nuns for in her letter to Boniface she tells him of her troubles and conflicts with the monks. The community had also fallen into disfavour with the ruler as Eangyth relates to Boniface the hostility of the king towards them.⁹⁷ She wished to be relieved of the burdens and dealings of her office, and wrote to Boniface regarding her longing to give up her abbacy and journey with her daughter, Eadburg, to Rome.⁹⁸ It is interesting to note in this letter from Eangyth to Boniface her awareness of the disapproval of ‘some’ towards her and Bugge’s intention to journey:

‘We are aware that there are many who disapprove of this ambition and disparage this form of devotion. They support

⁹³ Bede, *The Ecclesiastical History*, vol. V, 7., and see Moore, p.54.

⁹⁴ Not only in letters - we know that Charlemagne’s wife, Hildegard, journeyed with Charlemagne and their children to Rome in 780-1. See ‘Annals of the Kingdom of the Franks’, *Charlemagne: Translated Sources*, trans. P.D. King, Kendal, Cumbria: P.D. King, 1987, pp.80-1., and pp.115.

⁹⁵ *The Letters of Saint Boniface*, introduction, p.5. Boniface had made pilgrimages to Rome in the eighth century to gain its support in the organisation and concentration of all Germanic Christendom under the leadership of the papacy.

⁹⁶ See *The English Correspondence of Saint Boniface*, trans. and (ed.) E. Kylie, NY Cooper Sq., 1966, and *The Letters of Saint Boniface*.

⁹⁷ *The English Correspondence*, Letter 14.

⁹⁸ *ibid.*, Letter 14.

their opinion by the argument that the canons of councils prescribe that everyone shall remain where he has been placed; and where he has taken his vows, there he shall fulfil them before God.⁹⁹

But Eangyth still asked for Boniface's prayers and advice. It is not known whether Eangyth ever made her journey to Rome or returned to England if she did. This motive, to leave an unsatisfactory situation was however also active among later pilgrims, especially in the crusading era. Women were like men in this respect in that both journeyed away from Europe to try their fortunes in the East or to live a life devoted to Christ.

Eadburg was the most prolific writer to correspond with Boniface in the eighth century,¹⁰⁰ although only a few of their letters remain. The two friends provided each other with gifts, advice and spiritual comfort. In 738, Boniface wrote to Eadburg concerning her desire to journey to Rome. Smith says that he was surprised to hear that Eadburg felt she could find no greater peace in Rome than she had found since giving up her abbacy and living in retirement in her own monastery.¹⁰¹ However, Boniface believed it was her decision whether she decided to journey or not - he would not deny nor oppose her wish. But he did advise her not to proceed until the holy city was no longer under Saracen attack, which she did. Thus, we read that:

'The Abbess Bugge, the daughter of King Centwine and friend and faithful correspondent of Boniface, was also in Rome in 738. We learn from a letter of King Aethelbert II of Kent that Bugge visited all the "loca sacritissima orationis videlicet obtentu" in Boniface's company and then returned to Britain to her own monastery.'¹⁰²

Ecgburg, another correspondent with Boniface, wrote to him bewailing the fact that many of her kin, for example, her sister Wethburga, and friends had gone to either Rome or the missions, leaving her behind feeling alone and

⁹⁹ *The Letters of Saint Boniface*, p.39.

¹⁰⁰ Smith, p.10.

¹⁰¹ *ibid.*

¹⁰² *Monumenta Germaniae Historica: Epistolae Selectae*, ed. M. Tangl, Berlin, 1955, no. 105, in Moore, p.68.

inadequate. Ecgburg considered Boniface and pilgrims like her sister as those who would occupy a more distinguished place in heaven than herself. She considered pilgrimage a far superior state to her own monastic life but did not plan to make a pilgrimage herself, although in a letter to him in 716-18, it is unclear why this was so.¹⁰³

AEIfflaed, was the Abbess of Whitby. She wrote briefly in 713 to another Abbess, Adela of Pfalz, requesting accommodation and protection for an Abbess, who was making the journey to Rome. Such letters or requests may not have been uncommon, and Smith believes that the tone of the letter suggests that AEIfflaed was probably used to making such requests.¹⁰⁴

The information gained from these letters of Egeria, Paula and the Anglo-Saxon nuns show how these women conceived of the idea of pilgrimage. There were no miraculous stories in their travels whether to Rome or Jerusalem, nor did Egeria, Paula and her associates witness or receive any evidence of miracles when it came to the most important relic of all - the True Cross. Miraculous stories are clearly visible when examining the general history of pilgrimage to Jerusalem. People believed that pieces of tombs, oil from lamps burned before the tombs and dust from the ground around them could bring good fortune or a miraculous cure, especially if it came from the Holy Sepulchre.¹⁰⁵ However, none of the correspondence from these women indicate that they journeyed in the hope of being healed from illness or physical ailment or believed in any miraculous stories or events occurring there. Paula and her associates remained in the Holy Land to study the Scriptures and to live a holy life. These women moved away or alienated themselves from family, friends and the life they once led much as if they had entered into a monastic life. The Anglo-Saxon women travelled to Rome to venerate the sacred sites where Saints Peter and Paul had

¹⁰³ *The English Correspondence*, Letter 13. Ecgburg may have been prevented from going or this may have been her own choice, but we will not know for sure as she does not explain her reason for not going.

¹⁰⁴ Smith, p.10., and see *The English Correspondence*, Letter 8.

¹⁰⁵ See Finucane, *Miracles and Pilgrims*, Alan Morinis, *Sacred Journeys*, Jonathan Sumption, *Pilgrimage* and B. Ward, *Miracles and the Medieval Mind: Theory, Record and Event, 1000-1215*, London: Scholar Press, 1981, for information on pilgrimage and miracles.

preached and were martyred, and to view and pray at the Catacombs where the early Christian martyrs were buried. They also went to work in the mission fields, and therefore were isolated from friends and family.

These women:

‘... saw themselves as part of a culture of pilgrimage, or lamented not being a part of it. They longed to undertake sacred journeying. Their pilgrimages were undertaken for personal reasons ... but also were part of the process of alienation from community and visitation of sacred site which was a widely practised social phenomenon ... When the women reached the holy places they found fellowships of others who had chosen to remain ...’¹⁰⁶

Women Pilgrims in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries

As has already been noted in the section on the general history of pilgrimage, the eleventh and twelfth centuries were periods of great journeying, and the appeal of pilgrimage was evident to all. Constable believes that the appeal of pilgrimage to women was also well known.¹⁰⁷ However very little documentation exists about its effect on women or on why they journeyed. The picture we have of women pilgrims is limited, vague or generalised. Women pilgrims were not usually singled out unless they were of distinction or from the upper levels of society, as Egeria, Paula and the Anglo-Saxon nuns were in the earlier periods. This is also the case with Gudrid, the widow of Thorstein Eiriksson, son of Eric the Red.¹⁰⁸ She was a prominent figure from Greenland who later travelled to Rome (after the death of her husband) as a pilgrim in the eleventh century, and upon returning to her homeland became a nun.¹⁰⁹ The

¹⁰⁶ Smith, p.13.

¹⁰⁷ G. Constable, *Monks, Hermits and Crusaders in Medieval Europe*, Aldershot: Variorum, 1988, p.77.

¹⁰⁸ She was also the widow of Karlsefni, although her first husband, the son of Eric the Red, is better known.

¹⁰⁹ *The Vinland Sagas: The Norse Discovery of America*, trans. Magnus Magnusson and Hermann Palsson, Harmondsworth: Penguin Books Ltd., 1965, p.71., and see F. Donald Logan, *The Vikings in History*, London: Hutchinson and Co, Ltd., 1983, p.90.

Russian princess, Euphrosine also journeyed to Jerusalem in 1173 with the desire of dying there.¹¹⁰ She was unable to go to the river Jordan (where Christ was baptised), but one of her companions brought her some water in a bottle, 'which she received with joy and gratitude, drinking it and spreading it over her body to wash away the sins of the past.'¹¹¹ A desire to die in Jerusalem was expressed by many pilgrims of the eleventh and twelfth centuries who believed that the end of the world was imminent, and who also believed that the Holy Places would cleanse them of their past sins.

There were as many different and complex reasons for women to journey as there were for men: from the desire to visit and pray at the sacred sites of the Holy Land or sacred shrines in Europe, to a wish to break from tedious monotony and escape from village life. If medieval people on the whole found this to be true, how much truer might it be for the medieval women, who as Utterback says, lived 'severely circumscribed lives.'¹¹² Women would journey with their menfolk and families to the East for spiritual rewards, for the hope of a better life, the cure of physical and mental sickness, and because they hoped to cleanse themselves of all transgressions. In this, their reasoning for going was not unlike the male reasoning, and it is very hard to probe into source materials and uncover any truly female reasons for their journeying. This is because, as mentioned earlier, women were not singled out as pilgrims journeying to the Holy Places unless they were of importance or nobility; rather they were (and are) grouped under the general heading of people journeying to a sacred site. The eleventh and twelfth century sources are particularly quiet about women pilgrims travelling to the east and this is in marked contrast to the earlier fourth and eighth centuries where women pilgrims were more prominent. One possible reason for this silence could be because as the pilgrimage act increased in the eleventh and twelfth centuries and eventually became compounded in the crusades, women were no longer seen as just pilgrims, but as something more

¹¹⁰ *Pelerinage en Palestine de l'abbesse Euphrosine, princesse de Polotsk* (1173), (ed.) B. De Khitrowo., *Revue de l'orient latin*, Paris, 1895, p.34. in Sumption, pp.129-130.

¹¹¹ *ibid.*, p.129.

¹¹² Kristine T. Utterback, 'The Vision becomes Reality: Medieval Women Pilgrims to the Holy Land' in Bryan F. Le Beau, Menachem Mor (eds), p.159.

troublesome and disturbing to male pilgrims or crusaders and moralists. This is not to say that women pilgrims previously were viewed as being acceptable by all because they were not, and some moralists strongly opposed women pilgrims journeying at all as they were in danger of being corrupted, physically hurt or killed, and more importantly to the male, women were dangerous and could easily corrupt and destroy the morals of other male pilgrims. Women now, however, were wanting to journey on crusade, a holy war which many saw linked to the holy wars of the Old Testament in which God would only aid his warriors if they abstained from all sexual activity, and all contacts with women. Although this was a pilgrimage, the nature of it had changed and with it the idea that women could journey along with their men; this had now come under suspicion. This section will now examine the history of opposition to women journeying and how this opposition was used in the time of the crusades to try prevent women from travelling.

Opposition to Women Pilgrims

The journey to a sacred site has a long history and women in most cases would journey whenever they could. The letters of the fourth and eighth centuries are a great source of knowledge about women's pilgrimage in these periods. However, there were restrictions on them for such movement due to their sex and 'frailty'. The moral or physical dangers of wandering/journeying about the countryside or overseas was well recognised in these periods. It was believed that women were especially prone to dangers of force because they were the weaker sex and could not defend themselves. The male viewpoint also deemed that women were unable to 'keep their virtue',¹¹³ nor wanted to. Such views concerning women pilgrims and pilgrimage in general had a long history. Stern moralists such as Gregory of Nyssa and Anthony the Hermit warned against the frivolities of pilgrimage which could easily degenerate into the love

¹¹³ Finucane, *Miracles and Pilgrims*, p.40., and *The English Correspondence*, Letter 62.

of travel for its own sake,¹¹⁴ or because of the freedom it offered for sexual adventure and revelry.¹¹⁵ Gregory of Nyssa warned women to be especially careful if they so desired to journey (although in his opinion it was a terrible idea):

‘... it is impossible for a woman to accomplish so long a journey without a conductor; on account of her natural weakness she has to be put upon her horse and to be lifted down again; she has to be supported in difficult situations. Whichever we suppose, that she has an acquaintance to do this yeoman’s service, or a hired attendant to perform it, either way the proceeding cannot escape being reprehensible ... she fails to keep the law of correct conduct ...’¹¹⁶

From this extract by Gregory it should be noted how the physical and moral ‘weakness’ of a woman merge together. A woman could not journey by herself or with other women as she was susceptible to dangers and evils because of her ‘natural weakness’, whether because she would be harmed by whatever danger could occur or because she may be influenced by someone or something evil, thus failing to keep the ‘law of correct conduct’:

‘... and as the inns and hostelries and cities of the East present many examples of licence and indifference to vice, how will it be possible for one passing through such smoke to escape without smarting eyes? Where the ear and the eye is defiled, and the heart too, by receiving all those foulnesses through eye and ear, how will it be possible to thread without infection such seats of contagion?’¹¹⁷

Therefore, when the pilgrim comes into contact with such corruption and vileness, this ‘infection’ will be brought back to harm others. Gregory believes that if people stayed in their distinct, separate communities (males in one area, females in another), morality and modesty would be saved. By journeying away from this perfect situation in society and by mixing with the other sex during pilgrimage and in the Holy Land, modesty and morality are lost.

¹¹⁴ Barber, p.15.

¹¹⁵ Finucane, *Miracles and Pilgrims*, p.40.

¹¹⁶ Gregory of Nyssa, pp.382-83.

¹¹⁷ *ibid.*

Saint Jerome had also sought to dissuade his correspondents from journeying, appealing instead to the condition of man's soul, which should be open to the Spirit. Location was immaterial; in all it was the irrelevance of place for Christian devotion which was to be stressed: a man must carry his cross everywhere, and be risen with Christ everyday; no reward came from the wooden relics nor from the sight of the actual tomb. And yet Jerome himself journeyed to the Holy Land in the fourth century accompanied as we have seen, by a group of Roman noble ladies. This may seem contradictory on his part, but Jerome also wrote of the value of visiting the Holy Land, which, if undertaken with the right attitude, such as for the study of the holy Scriptures and to live a holy life, could be rewarding in this life and the life hereafter. These were the reasons why Paula, Eustochium, and a number of other Roman women journeyed to Palestine as Jerome himself noted with regards to Paula's fervour, devotion and spiritual awareness at the holy places.

It was perhaps because of Jerome's position on pilgrimage, that it should be carried out with the 'right attitude', that he, in a letter to Furia detailing the importance of choosing one's company, objected to a 'scandalous' woman pilgrim who journeyed to the East with all the pomp, style, indiscriminate company and elaborate dinners befitting the bride of 'Nero or Sardanapallus'.¹¹⁸ Such a scandal must, if it was to have any significance as a lesson for Furia, have involved some lady of note. However, this woman's identity is not known and the absence of detail is, as E.D. Hunt says, tantalising.¹¹⁹ Jerome objected to all pilgrims who journeyed with all the comforts and luxuries of home, as it was frivolous and not what pilgrimage was all about. If people were to journey they should take very little with them, allow for God to provide them with food and resources, and be as strangers on the earth with no true homeland, as it said in the Scriptures. To Jerome however, this woman pilgrim went against all that pilgrimage entailed, and worse still, she attracted far too much attention by her

¹¹⁸ *Saint Jerome: Select Letters*, Letter 54.

¹¹⁹ E.D. Hunt, 'Saint Silvia of Aquitaine: The Role of a Theodosian Pilgrim in the Society of East and West', *Journal of Theological Studies*, 23, (1972), p.359. Hunt does believe that the woman could have been Saint Silvia of Aquitaine who was journeying to the East at that time.

elaborate and flamboyant style. Such a woman would endanger other pilgrims by attracting them away from the path of holiness to indulgence in food, wine and immorality.

We also hear of similar ideas later in the eighth century. The popularity of pilgrimages to Rome from Britain received stimulus from the widespread interest in missionary work which was energised by the labours of Boniface in Germany:

‘The year 738, in which Boniface made his third pilgrimage to Rome, was a memorable one in the history of Anglo-Saxon pilgrimages ... already in this year there was a considerable group of Anglo-Saxons living in Rome, as well as Franks, Bavarians and other peoples. When Boniface arrived in Rome in that year with a considerable group of fellow-pilgrims, he was surrounded by his own countrymen and by pilgrims of other nations ... Boniface took this opportunity to enlist recruits for his missionary labours.’¹²⁰

Amongst these Anglo-Saxons living in Rome and journeying there were women pilgrims who Boniface probably associated with. It was not until a later period however, that the pilgrimages of women from Britain caused Boniface to protest because it was said the Roman pilgrimage became so prevalent in Britain, especially among women (and nuns in particular), that the practice resulted in abuses. In a letter to Cuthbert, Archbishop of Canterbury he stated:

‘Wherefore, I do not conceal from your love that all the servants of God, who either in the study of the Scriptures or in the fear of God are here most approved, feel that it would be for the welfare and the fair name and pure character of your Church, and would serve to conceal the disgrace, if your synod and rulers were to forbid to matrons and veiled women the journey to Rome, and the frequent halts which they make on the way thither and on the return. For the most part they perish, few remaining pure. There are few cities in Lombardy or in France or in Gaul, in which there is not an adulteress or a harlot of English race: which is a scandal and disgrace to your whole Church.’¹²¹

¹²⁰ Moore, p.65.

¹²¹ *The English Correspondence*, Letter 62.

This does seem a strange comment for Boniface to make considering that he had previously been in favour of their journeying and had often met up with these women pilgrims and travelled with them on their way to Rome. Moore believes that Boniface, whose devotedness to the Apostolic See was unbounded, was forced to deplore the 'misuse of the religious pilgrimage by many women pilgrims,'¹²² although this explanation does not really enlighten us. I do not think however, that this was the sole reason for Boniface's change in view regarding women pilgrims. A possible link can be made of the disapproval of pilgrimage to the Carolingian reforms of the Frankish Church. As Wallace-Hadrill states, the Frankish Church was required to 'put its house in order',¹²³ and in March 789 at Aachen, Charlemagne issued the first of his capitularies affecting the Church. It was comprised of eighty-two articles and a prologue in which he informed the bishops that he was sending special representatives (his *missi*) to assist them in remedying abuses. From that point on the *missi* were to be the most effective channel between the royal will and the bishops. This capitulary was known as the *Admonitio Generalis*.¹²⁴ Its first sixty articles are a resume of material from the *Dionysio-Hadriana*, a collection of canons made by Dionysius Exiguus in the early sixth century,¹²⁵ concerning mainly the functions of the bishops and the behaviour of the clergy. The remaining canons pin-point the immediate needs in the light of these canons.

One aspect of the Carolingian reforms was the attempt to impose Benedictine monasticism and its stability. This meant that monks should live in monasteries serving under a rule and an abbot. The undesirable movement of the priests and religious from one diocese to another was not approved of, as Saint Benedict noted,¹²⁶ because it was politically destabilising; thus, wandering

¹²² Moore, p.69.

¹²³ J.M. Wallace-Hadrill, *The Frankish Church*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985, pp.258-59.

¹²⁴ Rosamond McKitterick, *The Frankish Church and the Carolingian Reforms, 789-895*, London: Royal Historical Society, 1977, p.1.

¹²⁵ Wallace-Hadrill, p.259.

¹²⁶ Saint Benedict, *The Rule of Saint Benedict*, in Latin and English, trans. and (ed.) Justin McCann, London: Burns Oates, 1952, Chapter One, The Kinds of Monks. 'The fourth kind of monks are those called Gyrovagues. These spend their whole lives wandering from province to province, staying three days in one monastery and four in another, ever roaming

was to be clamped down on in Francia. Such wandering was not only done by the male clergy, but also by nuns and abbesses, and these women were tied by the reforms even more vigorously to their prescribed duties.¹²⁷ Although this wandering was condemned in Francia it still continued to be popular in England. Boniface, an English missionary in Germany, was involved in the reforms of the Church and therefore strove to have pilgrimages of the English (through Francia) checked; this involved the increasing number of women pilgrims to the Continent and beyond which explains why in his letter to Cuthbert, he proposed that their pilgrimage should be forbidden.

Pilgrimage nevertheless continued, as can be seen in the example of Queen Hildegard. She journeyed with Charlemagne and her children to Rome in 780-81,¹²⁸ for the purpose of prayer, and for the fulfilment (for Charlemagne) of his vows. Gudrid, as we already noted, was another woman pilgrim who journeyed from Greenland to Rome in the eleventh century, also for religious purposes. In the eleventh century, pilgrimages increased significantly through fear of the millennium, as is illustrated in the great German pilgrimage of 1064-5.¹²⁹ But as Joranson says:

‘... the recorded pilgrimages to Jerusalem during the eleventh century are so numerous as to give the impression that by this time the pious journey, if it was not generally regarded as a religious necessity, at least had become a highly popular custom among the faithful.’¹³⁰

With the increase in eleventh century pilgrimage came the preaching of an armed pilgrimage by Urban II in 1095. In recording this crusade, the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* stated that there ‘was a very great stir throughout all this nation [England], and in many other nations too, because of Urban who was

and never stable, given up to their own wills and the allurements of gluttony, and worse in all respects than the Sarabaites.’

¹²⁷ Wallace-Hadrill, p.262.

¹²⁸ ‘Annals of the Kingdom of the Franks’, *Charlemagne: Translated Sources*, pp.80-1, 115.

¹²⁹ See Joranson for an account of this pilgrimage which contains many original chronicles in it.

¹³⁰ Joranson, p.11.

called Pope ... A countless number of people with their wives and children set out wishing to fight against the heathen.¹³¹ Urban referred to it as 'this holy pilgrimage'¹³², and it was this idea, that it was a pilgrimage which would earn remission of sins, which attracted large numbers of the non-combatants, such as had always gone on pilgrimages:

'Although [Urban] found the inclusion of non-combatants implicit in his crusade conception, and his appeal took their participation for granted, he took pains, nevertheless to limit their number and supervise their selection. The pope laid down the rule that all persons were to consult their local clergy before going on crusade. In addition, he emphasised the need for fighting men, and for men wealthy enough to bear the cost of the journey, and discouraged the participation of the aged and sick. But he permitted women to go, if properly escorted...'

As Robert the Monk said:

'... we do not command or advise that the old or feeble, or those unfit for bearing arms, undertake this journey; nor ought women to set out at all, without their husbands, brothers, or legal guardians. For such are more of a hindrance than aid; more of a burden than advantage.'¹³³

The crusader should in general be a layman, a physically fit and active one, who could afford to equip and support himself during the expedition. Although there were large numbers of armed pilgrims to the East, many women and children journeyed along with them. These women who participated in the crusade were from differing backgrounds and occupations: rich and poor, young and old, wives, sisters and daughters, nuns, aristocrats, servants and prostitutes. Their reasons for journeying were as different as they were.

¹³¹ *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, p.232.

¹³² Robert the Monk, 'Urban II's Speech', in Edward Peters, and see J.G. Davies, p.17.

¹³³ Walter Porges, 'The Clergy, the Poor and the Non-Combatants on the First Crusade', in James A. Brundage, *The Crusades: Motives and Achievements*, Lexington, Mass: D.C. Heath, 1964, p.43. Robert the Monk recorded Urban II's speech (in the way he thought he would have spoken or believed he had spoken). See *Translations and Reprints from the Original Sources of European History*, Philadelphia: Pennsylvania University Press, 1901, Vol. I, pp.7-8.

Not all promoters of the crusade were happy with this situation. The main fear seems to have been that the presence of these women would compromise the moral standing of the army. This seemed to be spelled out to moralists and the clergy when defeats occurred:

‘During the first crusade the clergy continually reminded the host of the connection between human sinfulness and a defeat; setbacks were attributed to God’s anger at men’s fornication and adultery and at times of crisis women were expelled from camp.’¹³⁴

Women were likely to be blamed for the failure of an expedition and for any immorality in the camp. Their presence on the expedition might ‘prove to be the snare of the Devil’. Ralph Niger, a twelfth century English scholar who expressed unreserved disapproval of women crusaders, cited the example of the Midianite woman who caused God’s people to sin.¹³⁵ After the sufferings caused by the sieges of Antioch, where women were blamed for the defeats which occurred, the leaders of the army reiterated that all non-combatants should remain at home.

To conclude, although there was opposition to women journeying to holy places from the fourth century to the eleventh and twelfth, they still continued to travel in large numbers. Significant women pilgrims appear to be singled out, while information on the ordinary woman pilgrim who travelled to the East is limited. Nobility and education played some part in this, as noted in the study of fourth and eighth century pilgrims. Egeria for instance was of importance and wealth, otherwise she would probably not have been afforded such attention, nor would she have been able to partake in such a great expedition which went from her home to Mount Sinai, then on to Jerusalem and finally, to Constantinople. The costs and risks involved would have been too great unless she was of influence and fortune. And like Egeria, the Roman women of the

¹³⁴ Elizabeth Siberry, *Criticism of Crusading*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985, p.45.

¹³⁵ Ralph Niger, *De re militari et triplici peregrinationis Ierosolimitane*, (ed.), L. Schugge, Berlin, 1977, 227., in Siberry, pp.45-6., and Numbers XXV, 6-11. Ralph probably wrote at the time of the second crusade, Siberry, pp.1-2.

fourth century were also from a noble background and probably well educated, as Jerome praised them for their learning and language skills.¹³⁶ The same can be said of women pilgrims in the eighth and eleventh centuries who were noble, learned and quite outstanding figures. If, however, ordinary women were talked of, such as those who travelled with Peter the Hermit in the beginning of the First Crusade, they were usually grouped together with the unarmed, or subject to rather generalised comments, as having 'an exceptionally good chance to amass a fortune plying "the oldest profession" among the large numbers of lusty men ...'.¹³⁷ It must be stressed that no religious or saintly women were written of at all in this period because it was believed no such women journeyed to the East, or rather that was what male writers wished to depict in their writings.

The place of women in the pilgrimage/crusade was in some doubt by the eleventh and twelfth centuries. In addition to the grounds for opposition just discussed, there were quite different ones coming to bear when the pilgrimage became a vehicle for holy war: the place of women on the battlefield. This will be the subject of the next two chapters, woman in camps and on the battlefields, and woman and crusade.

¹³⁶ Smith, p.8.

¹³⁷ Marty Williams and Anne Echols, *Between Pit and Pedestal: Women in the Middle Ages*, New York: Markus Weiner Pub., 1993, p.113.

CHAPTER THREE:

WOMAN IN CAMPS AND ON THE BATTLEFIELD

‘Strengthen me, O Lord God of Israel, and in this hour look on the works of my hands, that as thou hast promised, thou mayst raise up Jerusalem thy city: and that I may bring to pass that which I have purposed, having a belief that it might be done by thee.’

(Judith XIII, 7)

This chapter will concentrate on warfare as depicted in the Old and New Testaments. In this it will examine the role and participation of women in war camps and on the battlefield, particularly in the Old Testament which focuses on the Israelite armies of God. With regards to war in the New Testament, we find that it was treated with ambivalence by the gospel writers, and conflicting views of God as the author of victory and God of peace prevailed into the middle ages, especially in the era of the crusades.

In the Old Testament the people of Israel were portrayed as a national and religious unit; the kingdom of God on this earth. God had told the Israelites that he would protect them and aid them in battle, but only if they adhered to his rules and teachings. When Moses had come down from Sinai, he brought these laws and instructions for the construction of a portable temple (the famous tabernacle), for Yahweh which would be carried within the camp. The children of Israel were directed to fabricate curtains for the tabernacle and manufacture an Ark of the Testimony of the Covenant which was to carry the Tables of the Law and commemorate the agreement made between Yahweh and the Israelites: that God would aid and protect them and make them a great nation, and in return they and their descendants would serve and obey the Almighty, and fight for their faith.

The culture of the Israelites was of greatest intensity when they prayed and when they fought. The army could not win without a blessing, and to keep this blessing in the camp they had to be specially holy.¹ The camp was to be kept from defilement, like the Temple, therefore all bodily discharges disqualified a man from entering the camp just as they would disqualify a worshipper from approaching the altar. A warrior who had an issue of the body in the night should keep outside the camp all day and only return after sunset and having been washed. Natural functions producing bodily waste were to be performed outside the camp.² Women too, were regarded as polluting vessels and were to be excluded from the camp in times of battle,³ particularly if they were with child, near to giving birth, or if they menstruated. Women in these conditions were polluting because of the resulting bodily emission of fluids. However, such cases would be highly specific and predictable, after all, not all women would be menstruating, giving birth or with child at one time.

Women were also excluded because they could so easily infect men with lust and sin. If this seduction resulted in sex between a man and a woman, it was regarded as polluting due to the issue of bodily fluids in the sacred camp.⁴ Such acts swayed men from their duty to God, and so caused God to abandon them. This reasoning would be a blanket prohibition on the presence of any woman in the camp.⁵ It was an easy excuse to fall back on especially if failures occurred, and what other explanation could be given except women, as a result of their carnal and sinful nature, had caused men to sin and neglect their duty to God? Traditional views of women as pollutants in the camp of God were used to reinforce this reasoning, thereby excluding them from the camp until the danger had passed.

¹ The warrior of God needed to be cleansed physically and spiritually before battle. Such acts involved prayer and meditation, fasting and making offerings to God, and abstinence from sex.

² Deuteronomy XXIII, 10-14.

³ This was not the only time women were removed, but in times of war, all women were to be excluded so as not to tempt men, or to anger God because they defiled His camp.

⁴ Leviticus XV, 2-3, 18. If a man defiled himself through an illicit relationship with a woman, the Almighty would not only punish the warrior but the entire camp, because through this man's actions he had defiled all. Numbers XXV, 1-6.

⁵ Some women would be constrained by marriage or by dedication.

However, despite all that was said and done, the Israelites were not always faithful to God. They grumbled when they saw hardship and wished they had remained in bondage in Egypt. Several times they slipped into bad ways such as when they were in Settim: 'And Israel at that time abode in Settim, and the people committed fornication with the daughters of Moab, who called them to their sacrifices. And they ate of them, and adored their gods.'⁶ The Israelites were punished for their sins and disobedience in the plains of Moab, where Moses bid his last farewells to them.⁷ This location and the duration of the journey serve to emphasise the seriousness that was attached to the wrongs attributed to the Israelites. They, having been condemned for their rebellion against God, wandered through the region for forty years. The Israelites begged for forgiveness and swore to mend their ways, especially when it came to warfare. They had sworn to fight their way into Canaan as a battle for the Lord, and had fought against the Amorites out of good faith. Despite their catastrophic rout as a result of God refusing to aid them, the Israelites attacked Kadesh and again tasted bitter defeat.

In the portrayal of the Israelite warriors we find no reference to female warriors as such, because war was believed to be the activity of males through which their manhood was demonstrated.⁸ The closest reference to a female warrior is in the Book of Judith. This book takes its name from the illustrious woman, Judith, 'by whose virtue and fortitude, and armed with prayer, the children of Israel were preserved from the destruction threatened them by Holofernes and his great army.'⁹

Nabuchodonosor, king of the Assyrians, had sent his general Holofernes to the west with his great army so that his enemies would submit to him or be

⁶ Numbers XXV 1-18, XXXI, 1-54; Deuteronomy IX, 5-29 for accounts of how the Israelites were inclined to be seduced or easily manipulated by foreign tribes and their women.

⁷ East of the River Jordan and eleven days journey from Mount Sinai.

⁸ As such, Scripture portrayed the Israelite warrior as strong, masculine, and devoted to God.

⁹ Judith, Introduction to this chapter. See *The Holy Bible. Translated from the Latin Vulgate*, London: R & T Washbourne, Ltd., 1899.

wiped from existence. One of his enemies were the Israelites, who prepared to resist him in Bethulia and prayed for God's mercy and aid. In their city was Judith, a wealthy, beautiful widow, who had made herself a private chamber in the upper part of her house, in which she lived in seclusion with her maids.¹⁰ She did not wear extravagant clothing nor eat luxuriously but 'wore haircloth upon her loins and fasted all the days of her life, except the Sabbaths, and new moons, and the feasts of the house of Israel.'¹¹ Because she was so holy and virtuous, she was greatly renowned by all and upon hearing that Ozias, one of the rulers of the Israelites, had promised to deliver the city of Bethulia after the fifth day to Holofernes,¹² she summoned the ancients Chabri and Charmi to her. She rebuked them saying: '[y]ou have set a time for the mercy of the Lord, and you have appointed him a day, according to your pleasure. But forasmuch as the Lord is patient, let us beg his pardon.'¹³ After the ancients and Judith had prayed for some time for Israel, she prepared herself for travel and later set out with a maidservant for Holofernes' camp where she hoped to outwit him by using her womanly charms, beauty and wisdom. This she did through prayer, and God's aid strengthened her to slay Holofernes:

'... she went to the pillar that was at his bed's head, and loosed his sword that hung tied upon it. And when she had drawn it out, she took him by the hair of his head, and said: Strengthen me, O Lord God, at this hour. And she struck twice upon his neck, and cut off his head, and took off his canopy from the pillars, and rolled away his headless body.'¹⁴

This act by one woman empowered by God ended the war between Holofernes' army and the Israelites. This may appear unusual considering the traditional portrayal of women as beings physically and intellectually too weak to fight; however Judith was endowed by God with manlike qualities, and although she still retained feminine attributes such as her beauty and clothing, these were used in part to overcome the enemy. But placing a female as the military

¹⁰ Judith VIII, 4-5.

¹¹ Judith VIII, 6.

¹² The Israelites believed that if God had not delivered them from Holofernes after five days, they were doomed and would submit to the enemy.

¹³ Judith VIII, 13-14.

¹⁴ Judith XIII, 8-10.

heroine does seem a little odd when we compare this story with others in the Bible. Women were generally not portrayed as heroines, but as villains, throughout the Old and New Testaments.¹⁵ However, because Judith was a woman God had blessed and bestowed with male strength, Testament writers would consider it appropriate to praise her because she was an instrument of God's will.

In the New Testament, war was treated with ambivalence. If Saint Paul spoke in the standard Old Testament fashion of the Lord as the author of victory, he also spoke of Him as a God of peace.¹⁶ Even more emphatic in the new dispensation than in the old, was an aversion to violence: '[H]e that shall kill by the sword, must be killed by the sword.'¹⁷ Still more pointedly, Jesus was represented in Saint Matthew's Gospel as repudiating the approval given in the Old Testament to strong armed resistance to aggressors.¹⁸ The Mosaic law had accepted resistance and retaliation as appropriate responses to attack, but the Gospels rejected this conduct and proposed instead the ethic of non-resistance. 'The Christian, it might seem, was obliged not to repay evil with evil, violence with violence; rather he was expected to overcome evil with good, to counter force with love.'¹⁹

In evidence obtained from Tertullian²⁰ and other early writers, it is clear that numerous Christians served in the ranks of the Roman army and that pacificism was by no means a universally accepted stance in early Christian communities. Like the Israelite armies of God, the rituals of the Roman army were more overtly religious than anything known in modern times. As Tertullian said, 'The

¹⁵ See for instance, Genesis III, 1-6; Numbers XXV, 1-8; Judges XIV, 15-18, XVI, 1-20; II Kings XI, 2-27; III Kings XI, 1-9; Ecclesiasticus IX, 2-6; Apocalypse XVII.

¹⁶ Matthew X, 34; I Thessalonians V, 8, 23; Ephesians VI, 11-17.

¹⁷ Matthew XXVI, 52: 'for all that take the sword shall perish with the sword.' See Genesis IX, 6; Apocalypse XIII, 10.

¹⁸ Matthew V, 39, 43-4.

¹⁹ James A. Brundage, 'Holy War and the Medieval Lawyers', in T.P. Murphy, (ed.) *The Holy War*, Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1976, p.101.

²⁰ In his *Apology*, written in 197 AD, Tertullian claimed that Christians had infiltrated everywhere, including the army. See Frances Young, 'The Early Church Military Service, War and Peace', *Theology*, 92, (1989), p.498.

religion of the Romans is totally of the camp; it worships the standards; it swears by the standards; it elevates the standards above the gods.²¹ It was believed that Rome was great because of the favour of the gods, and a failure to honour state gods resulted in instability, war, rebellion, and unrest. The blame for such crises fell on Christians because they would not sacrifice and worship the gods.²²

The Roman camp was similar in many respects to the camp of the Israelites in that it was a sacred area with its own taboos. The Emperor the army served was regarded as divine, and a host of abstract deities - *Honos* (honour), *Virtus* (courage), *Pietas* (reverence), and *Disciplina*, were also worshipped with the usual religious paraphernalia.²³ The religion of the army was uniform throughout the Empire, and a liturgical calendar of military religious festivals was kept all over the Empire. There was a standard camp layout, with the commander's quarters, including the shrine containing the standards, at the centre, and all ceremonies were focused on this. The enlisted soldier had to make a *sacramentum*, an oath of loyalty, and the breaking of that oath was treated as sacrilege, quite literally - divine punishment was to be expected.

The beliefs and rituals of the Roman army parallels that of the army of Israel. In both, it was believed that in failing to honour one's God(s), a man could bring about the destruction of his people. For instance, if an Israelite was seduced by a woman from a pagan society, and took up that society's rituals and ceremonies, this was considered sacrilegious, and as the examples from the Old Testament have shown, God abandoned his people several times until they were willing to depart from evil. For if one man was seduced and committed sin in God's camp, it seemed likely that others would follow. And not only that, but the sins committed by men in God's camp were defiling.²⁴ Similarly in the

²¹ Tertullian in Young, p.497. No reference.

²² Joan E. Taylor, p.297. Despite differences, Christians continued to serve in the army after Constantine came into power, when Christianity became the religion of the Empire. The Roman army became the army of Christendom, committed not just to the defence of the Christian Empire, but also to putting down Jews and heretics as the enemies of Christ.

²³ Young, p.497.

²⁴ Numbers XXV, 1-18, XXXI, 1-54.

Roman army, while it was accepted that soldiers would have relations with foreign, pagan women, they were to retain their identities as soldiers from the Roman army, who believed in their gods and worshipped them.

However, when we examine the notion of women in the camps and in war, we find that the Israelite women may have fought or at least supported their warriors in battle as is suggested in the Old Testament. But it is difficult to know whether the Roman army allowed women to journey with them in the camps or in fact gave them freedom to fight as no evidence exists to show them as participating in war.²⁵

What is of significance in comparing the two armies is how both worshipped sacred shrines in the camp: the Israelite shrine contained the Tables of the Law which Moses brought down from Sinai, which they were to learn from and respect. A portable temple constructed for God was also worshipped within the camp, the famous tabernacle.²⁶ Failure to pay homage to the Almighty or to respect his laws, could incur much pain and suffering for the Israelites, sometimes even resulting in death.²⁷ The shrine of the Roman army contained the standards; the Eagle symbolised Jupiter. A failure to recognise its symbolic value, it was believed, could result in much suffering for the army and if it was lost in battle, the legion would be disbanded.²⁸

The similarities between Roman and Christian beliefs continued into the New Testament, where military metaphors were deeply ingrained in the Christian consciousness. A number of key passages in the New Testament encouraged this. In baptism, the convert transferred his allegiance from the world, the flesh and the devil, to Christ, Lord of Heaven and Earth. Baptism was a *sacramentum*, that is, a military oath of loyalty. The Scriptures portrayed a war-like Christ, acting for a war-like God, and the martyrs, later monks and

²⁵ See Carolyn Larrington, *Women and Writing in Medieval Europe: A Sourcebook*, London: Routledge, 1995

²⁶ Exodus XXV, 8-40.

²⁷ Exodus XXXII, 1-35; Numbers XI, 1-34, XII, 1-15, XIV, 1-45.

²⁸ Young, p.497.

ascetics, were his troops. Conflict in heaven, as Young states, was mirrored by conflict on earth. It was inevitable in the present evil age that peace on earth would only come when peace was achieved in heaven. Young further writes that as this 'belief system meant Christianity had its own holy war tradition, [w]hat was conceived originally as spiritual warfare paved the way for the crusading church of the Middle Ages.'²⁹

When we compare the Old and New Testament views of women to the beliefs of the European middle ages, the similarities are striking.³⁰ Because women were believed incapable of many activities as a result of their physical and mental fragility,³¹ it was assumed their participation in battle was to be limited or non-existent. Women were regarded as inferior to men, their motives were suspect, their sin emphasised (as they were daughters of Eve), and their female functions disparaged. G. Rattray Taylor has argued that the sexual obsessions of the early Christian Church bore with especial hardness on woman, and that medieval man regarded woman at best as a 'necessary evil, a natural temptation, a desirable calamity, a domestic peril, a deadly fascination, and a painted ill.'³² These were excellent reasons to bar women from the battlefield.

Warfare was perceived as a masculine activity; in fact it was generally viewed as the 'quintessential masculine activity, through which "manhood" was demonstrated.'³³ Descriptions of warfare in medieval texts had references to gender, references which equated fighting ability with virility. Throughout the middle ages therefore, the man who failed in warfare was considered almost by definition 'effeminate' and became subject to ridicule as this was the worst state for a man to be recognised in. Furthermore, 'womanly' behaviour was considered unholy behaviour, as man was sinking to a level far below him which

²⁹ *ibid.*, p.495.

³⁰ The Roman influence on medieval society was also important with regards to women. See Vern L. Bullough, 'Medieval Medical and Scientific Views of Women', *Viator*, 4 (1973), pp.486-7.

³¹ See 'Medieval Medical and Scientific Views of Women', pp.485-501., and Alcuin Blamires (ed.) *Women Defamed and Women Defended: An Anthology of Medieval Texts*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992.

³² G. Rattray Taylor, *Sex in History*, New York, 1954, pp.64-5.

³³ Megan McLaughlin, p.194.

God could punish him for. This could perhaps explain why in the period prior to the crusades, few women were recorded as being women warriors because, on the one hand, they were a risk and on the other, if good fighting women did exist, they outshone male warriors in their abilities and in being different.³⁴

Holy warfare was especially 'male' oriented because this act brought him closer to God. A woman had no place in this relationship because of her polluting qualities and because she was evil; she was the Devil's trap which could ensnare and corrupt many men from their duties in war and to God. Thus, because of their dangerous capabilities, women were believed a risk in warfare as they disrupted the relationship God had with his warriors thereby causing havoc and disillusionment.

Megan McLaughlin believes however, that little comment is made before the eleventh century because women warriors and their behaviour was not then considered unusual nor was it thought particularly exciting or extraordinary, and therefore there was no need to elaborate on it.³⁵ Philippe Contamine also has a similar argument, although he furthers it by stating that the participation of armed ladies was fairly normal given the fact that many feudal customs gave women a formal right to succession.³⁶ This could be true, although it does seem a little dubious considering the history of negative thinking towards women as beings too weak and inadequate to achieve much in the world except in raising children and satisfying their menfolk in housewifery.³⁷ It may be reasonable to assume therefore that warrior women were not written of in this period because men did not want to praise them or allow too much attention to be drawn to females who were against the norm. The history of anti-women feeling would not allow for such writings nor support them.

³⁴ Viking and Celtic women went to war with their menfolk and were well known for their abilities in battle, especially their frightening appearances and screaming which opposing warriors found alarming and unnerving.

³⁵ Megan McLaughlin, p.194.

³⁶ Philippe Contamine, *War in the Middle Ages*, trans. Michael Jones, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1984, p.241.

³⁷ Ephesians V, 22-24, 33; I Timothy II, 15.

From the late eleventh century on however, 'confrontation with behaviour considered unusual for women began to elicit strong reactions, in which assumptions about gender were fully expressed.'³⁸ One Eastern source for example in the twelfth century, Anna Comnena, wrote of the unnatural and unwomanly way Gaita, a noblewoman,³⁹ accompanied her husband Robert Guiscard on campaigns, attired in warrior dress. Anna further stated how Gaita, like another Pallas or second Athena, charged after some deserters, threatening them with a spear in hand to return to the field of battle, or to suffer the consequences.⁴⁰ Anna certainly saw this as something quite vulgar and undesirable for a woman to do, although on the other hand she resented and admired Gaita for being able to go to war, like a man, with freedom and without restrictions, something quite unheard of in the Byzantine Empire. In the *History of the Danes*, written by Saxo Grammaticus in 1200, the military activities of women were also documented with astonishment:

'There were once women in Denmark who dressed themselves to look like men and spent almost every minute cultivating soldiers' skills; they did not want the sinews of their valour to lose tautness and be infected by self-indulgence. Loathing a dainty style of living, they would harden body and mind with toil and endurance, rejecting the fickle pliancy of girls and compelling their womanish spirits to act with virile ruthlessness. They courted military celebrity so earnestly that you would have guessed they had unsexed themselves ...'⁴¹

These examples show how deviance from 'normal' gender behaviour became more visible in literature than previously. There was an effort to clarify and define social roles which threw into sharp relief all behaviour that did not coincide with the norm, including that of Jews, heretics and gay men, as well as women warriors.⁴²

³⁸ Megan McLaughlin, p.195.

³⁹ Her husband, Robert Guiscard, was Duke of Apulia and Calabria.

⁴⁰ *Alexiad*, I, xiv-xv, and IV, vi. Gaita was credited with rallying her husband's men at the siege of Durazzo in 1081.

⁴¹ Saxo Grammaticus, *The History of the Danes*, (ed.) Hilda Ellis Davidson, trans. Peter Fisher, II vols., Cambridge: Brewer, 1979, vol. I, p.212.

⁴² One such role clarified and defined was that of the knights or 'arm bearers', as a hereditary social as well as professional group. The same process which demarcated the knight from the priest, also helped separate the knight from the lady. See Georges Duby, *The Knight, The*

McLaughlin believes that as the contrast between normal feminine behaviour and military activity was more fully expressed, warfare came to be seen not just as unusual, but as unnatural for females. A woman who became a warrior would be forced to 'de-sex' herself, to abandon her womanly nature and act with 'virile ruthlessness'. Most of the women warriors discussed by chroniclers were recorded in this way, that is, with hostility. Writers also referred to similar anomalies in classical literature or in the Bible. However, other chroniclers may have viewed this 'de-sexing' of women with approval, because by elevating themselves to be more manly and by taking on the appearance of men, women were more acceptable before God. This line of argument can also be seen with regard to women saints. In the history of the Church, it has been noted how women were unable to reach positions of power or holiness because they were considered evil and because of their polluting nature; a condition which defiled sacred sites, rites and rituals.⁴³ Furthermore, women were, in the words of Saint Paul to:

'... keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted them to speak, but to be subject, as also the law saith. But if they would learn anything, let them ask their husbands at home. For it is a shame for a woman to speak in the church.'⁴⁴

Because of such beliefs, the participation or role of women in the Church was limited. Many women, hoping to achieve holiness and favour in God's eyes, took on the attributes of their male counterparts. They needed to transcend their inherently flawed female natures to win salvation, in a way which men, made in the image of God did not. Tertullian (c. 160-225) made clear that the judgement of God fell particularly on the female sex: 'You are the gateway of the devil; you are the one who unseals the curse of that tree, and you are the first one to turn your back on the divine law.'⁴⁵ Throughout the medieval

Lady and the Priest: The Making of Modern Marriage in Medieval France, London: Allen Lane, 1984, for further discussion on these different roles.

⁴³ See Leviticus for examples of woman's polluting nature, the rites and ceremonies carried out by priests to cleanse her and those she defiled, as well as the laws which were in place to protect the Israelites from such pollution.

⁴⁴ I Corinthians XIV, 34-5. See also I Timothy II, 9-15.

⁴⁵ Blamires, p.51. No reference.

period therefore, women tried to reach heaven by making different choices, such as the choice to become more man-like and so more acceptable on earth and in heaven. In the early Celtic Church, following the Eastern practices of desert mystics, women sometimes withdrew from everyday society to live apart in meditation. These women fasted extensively throughout the year dressed in men's apparel,⁴⁶ some would lose a lot of weight which in turn allowed them to lose their female identities in that they no longer looked like women or functioned as women, that is, they did not menstruate. Because of these factors and because they took such poor care of themselves, women became 'men', elevated before God and praised by men on earth as saints.⁴⁷ Saint Jerome wrote that

'as long as woman is for birth and children, she is different from man as body is from soul. But if she wishes to serve Christ more than the world, then she will cease to be a woman and will be called man.'⁴⁸

A similar idea was expressed by Ambrose:

'She who does not believe is a woman and should be designated by the name of her bodily sex, whereas she who believes progresses to complete manhood, to the measure of adulthood of Christ. She then does without worldly name, gender of body, youthful seductiveness, and garrulousness of old age.'⁴⁹

For later women, the eremitic life also had many attractions: one did not have to pass the stringent entry criteria of the convent, rather the recluse could simply take up residence in a cave or hut, secluded from the community and relying on her reputation for sanctity for enough alms to live on.⁵⁰ However in practice,

⁴⁶ This was believed a good idea not only because a woman tried to become like a man, but also because she would not have unwanted and unsavoury attention.

⁴⁷ A prime example here is of Mary Magdalene. She was portrayed in Scripture and in religious writings of the middle ages, as a beautiful, seductive harlot before she reformed. When Mary did reform, she fasted, wore sackcloth, took poor care of herself thereby losing her womanly features and beauty, and inevitably became manly in appearance. This was all done to seek repentance for past sins and to elevate herself before God.

⁴⁸ Jerome, *Commentariorum in Epistolam ad Ephesios libri III*, in *Patrologiae cursus completus. Series Latina*, comp. J.P. Migne, 1844-64, 26.533., in Bullough, 'Medieval Medical and Scientific ...', p.499.

⁴⁹ Ambrose, *Expositio Evangelii secundum Lucam* in *Patrologiae cursus completus Series Latina*, 15.1844, in Bullough, 'Medieval Medical and Scientific ...', p.499.

⁵⁰ Larrington, p.118.

life as a female hermit was simply too dangerous for the custom to prevail for long, as women recluses needed a support network for food and security.

These examples of manly women show how vital it was for them to achieve sanctity; something they could strive for even in battle as many women did in the crusades. As the crusades were holy wars fought for God, to fight or rather to die for Him was considered extremely praiseworthy; this was an act which would grant the crusader 'eternal reward' in Heaven. Thus, it would appear in a few of the crusading records that women too also strove for these Heavenly rewards and became active military participants in the expedition. Such participation by so many women in warfare seemed to ask for some sort of explanation and could no longer be accepted without further comment as had been done in earlier centuries. These women seemed contrary to nature and therefore chroniclers and writers recorded their participation on the battlefield. Some did this without much comment, perhaps hoping that their readers would not be drawn too much to one or two lines on women fighters and then neglect reading about the heroics of warrior men. However most chroniclers still remained silent on the subject of warrior women and wrote nothing at all.

Evidence for women's involvement in military action is largely anecdotal, but we are left with the impression that they were more common in the middle ages than in the classical world and early modern Europe.⁵¹ When a woman is said to have been present on the battlefield, to have worn armour or to have carried herself bravely, it seems reasonable to assume that she was an active participant in war.⁵² While it is not known for certain how many female participants there were on crusade,⁵³ we have to assume that it was a considerable number

⁵¹ Megan McLaughlin, p.196.

⁵² William of Tyre, *Historia*, trans. E.A. Babcock and A.C. Krey, New York: Morningside Heights, 1943, Vol I, p.361. An active military participant could include those who fought, provided food, water and ammunition, supported the warriors, and even journeyed with them. As was established in the previous chapter on pilgrimage, those who journeyed with the armies as pilgrims to the Holy Land changed in identity the closer they got to Jerusalem. They transformed into warriors, which could also be said of the women pilgrims.

⁵³ In fact, as Porges states (p.43.), no information exists to give even a rough estimate of the actual numbers of those on the expeditions. The chroniclers estimate the size of the army in very round numbers, scarcely honouring any but the lords and fighting men. From Fulcher of

because of references to wives, domestics and other types of women who accompanied the crusading armies.⁵⁴ Included in this group, were warrior women although little reference is made to their fighting prowess, perhaps as Porges suggests, because only the fighting men and significant lords were recorded by the chroniclers when failures or successes occurred.⁵⁵ Despite this, women fighters were included in the writings of some chroniclers, and this fact illustrates that they were more common in the middle ages than is thought. This raises the question of why, therefore, more is not made of the presence of these women on the battlefields by chroniclers and contemporary historians. One possible reason is that because women were seen to dress in warrior garb, and to take on the attributes of men and fight, chroniclers and writers were disgusted and shocked because it was viewed as going against the norm, as being outrageous and bizarre behaviour, and therefore they chose not to make too much of it so as not to draw people (or rather women) to this behaviour or encourage it. They were able to reinforce their disapproval by stating that cross-dressing was forbidden as it stated in Scripture: 'A woman [should] not be clothed with man's apparel ... for [s]he that doeth these things is abominable before God'.⁵⁶ And as McLaughlin says:

'... those who undertake a role not usually assigned to their gender group often elicit strong reactions from the rest of society; such reactions provide us with a great deal of information not only about the definition and theoretical limits of acceptable behaviour, but also about the conditions under which deviation from such behaviour will be tolerated.'⁵⁷

With what we know about how medieval women in general, women as pilgrims, and women as participants in armed expeditions were regarded, the

Chartres we may be able to gain some information. He writes of the situation at Nicaea that: 'Then the many armies there were united into one, which those who were skilled in reckoning estimated at six hundred thousand full-armed with corselets and helmets, not counting the unarmed, that is, the clerics, monks, women, and little children.' See Fulcher of Chartres, Book I, X, p.43.

⁵⁴ *Gesta Francorum*, p.19., Peter Tudebode, p.52., and Baldric of Dol, 'Historia Jerosolimitana', p.107., in Brundage, 'Prostitution, Miscegenation, ...' p.58. See also Porges, p.42.

⁵⁵ Porges, p.43.

⁵⁶ Deuteronomy XXII, 5.

⁵⁷ Megan McLaughlin, pp.193-4.

next chapter will explore what the sources tell us about the part played by women on the four great armed pilgrimages, the crusades of 1096-1204.

CHAPTER FOUR:

WOMAN AND CRUSADE

'If thou go out to war against thy enemies, and see horsemen and chariots, and the numbers of the enemy's army greater than thine, thou shalt not fear them: because the Lord thy God is with thee'

(Deuteronomy XX, 1)

William of Tyre wrote of the siege and capture of Jerusalem in 1099 that:

'There was not one person in that great throng, whether aged or sick or even very young, who did not fervently and zealously long for battle. Even women, regardless of sex and natural weakness, dared to assume arms and fought manfully far beyond their strength.'¹

William of Tyre was one of the few chroniclers to write of women who took part in battle. Other writers such as Nicetas Choanites, Ambroise, and 'Imad ad-Din also wrote of 'warrior women' in the crusades who displayed manlike qualities in war. The fourth and final chapter will therefore focus on women in the camps of the crusaders and on the battlefields. This will examine the traditional, biblical portrayal of the woman as physically and intellectually too weak to fight on the battlefield and will also explore the notion that war was a defining attribute of the male, therefore women were to be barred from it, unless they took on man-like qualities. Women were also barred from fighting (and at times, from the camps) because they were believed sexually dangerous as they could distract fighting men. Their presence was thought to hinder the expedition as they compromised the moral standing of the army, and because as impure beings women defiled God's camp, thus causing him to abandon his warriors. Others believed however, that women were capable on the battlefield,

¹ William of Tyre, I, p.361.

and in coping with pain and suffering.² This chapter will examine the contradictory nature of chroniclers when writing of women who accompanied crusaders.

The preaching of the First Crusade by Urban II caused a great number of people to respond to his call and join the armed pilgrimage. As the sources relate, many of those who responded to Urban's sermon were women of many kinds and from many backgrounds, who travelled to the Holy Land. W. Porges writes that there were women of good virtue, a few being noblewomen, more or less suitably escorted. Baldwin of Lorraine and Raymond of Toulouse for example, had their wives with them, and so did a few knights. Porges believes however, that the religious were represented among the women by a single nun of doubtful morality, while the rest of the women were probably campfollowers and harlots, of which there was plenty of evidence.³ Guibert of Nogent and Ekkehard of Aura for example, only wrote of harlots, loose women and dishonest types who seduced and corrupted the crusaders.⁴ And William of Tyre recorded that the 'light women of ill repute' were expelled from the camp at the first siege of Antioch, in October 1097, so that they would not defile the crusaders.⁵ Porges is reading the chroniclers' constructions of 'women as harlots' at face value.⁶ He believes only the nobility were considered pure and moral while the rest of the women were far from it. Porges view is probably a result of reading numerous chronicles which only talk of women as prostitutes or whores, and rarely of any other type of women. After all, most chroniclers accompanying the crusaders were monks who believed that in holy war men were required to refrain from sex and all its evils. This could only be achieved by avoiding all women on campaigns.

² Ambroise, p.152 and p.162.

³ W. Porges, p.50.

⁴ Guibert of Nogent, 'Gesta Dei', p.142., and Ekkehard of Aura, 'Hierosolymita', 19., in Brundage, 'Prostitution, Miscegenation, ...', p.58.

⁵ William of Tyre, I, Book IV, p.220., and see Fulcher of Chartres, Book I, XV, p.54.

⁶ Ronald Finucane also does this and has a similar argument. He believes some of the women who accompanied the crusaders were wives of ordinary pilgrim warriors or independent but respectable women. The 'usual crowd of whores and hangers-on' were also to be found near army camps. See Finucane's *Soldiers of the Faith*, p.175.

That women were viewed in this way is confirmed in the chronicles of Fulcher of Chartres,⁷ the anonymous *Gesta Francorum*,⁸ Ekkehard of Aura,⁹ and Guibert of Nogent.¹⁰ Some accounts do differentiate between women and prostitutes, but most refer to crowds of prostitutes overwhelming the armies of crusaders and plaguing the expedition.¹¹ It is interesting to note that not many 'good' women are written of in the crusades,¹² except for those who aided men when they fought, bringing them food and water, comforting them, and exhorting them to fight harder.¹³ Religious women (nuns) are scarcely mentioned, and this was probably to reinforce the view that no good women were evident on the expedition, only those, as Porges says, of doubtful morality. We see this no better than in Albert of Aachen's account of a nun from the convent of Saint Mary at Trier. She had been captured by Muslims at the time of the destruction of Peter the Hermit's army, but later set free and returned to the Christians: 'She claimed she had been captured and taken away from Peter's defeated army, and she complained bitterly that she had been taken in vile and detestable union by a certain Turk and others with scarcely a pause...'.¹⁴

The nun appealed to a Henry of Castle Ascha, asking him to come to the aid of her purification:

'He recognised her at once and was affected by her misfortune, and he employed diligence and every argument of pity with Duke Godfrey, until advice for repentance was given to her by Lord Adhemar, the venerable bishop. At last when advice about such an unchaste act had been received from the priest, she was granted forgiveness for her unlawful liaison with the Turk, and her repentance was made less burdensome, because she had endured this hideous defilement by wicked and villainous men under duress and unwillingly.'

⁷ Fulcher of Chartres, Book I, XV, p.54.

⁸ *Gesta Francorum*, p.58.

⁹ Ekkehard of Aura, in August C. Krey, *The First Crusade: The Accounts of Eye-witnesses and Participants*, Gloucester, MA: Princeton University Press, 1958, p.40.

¹⁰ Guibert of Nogent, 'Gesta Dei', pp.57-60.

¹¹ In particular, at Nicaea and Antioch, so chroniclers claimed.

¹² For many chroniclers, in particular the monks, any woman outside the confines of her parish was probably considered a prostitute, especially when failures occurred.

¹³ *Gesta Francorum*, p.19.

Not long after this, the nun was invited again to the 'unlawful and unchaste union' by a messenger of the same Turk who had violated her. As Albert wrote: '... he had promised to give her rewards which had so possessed her imagination At length this most wretched woman ... deceived by flattery and vain hope ... rushed back to her unlawful bridegroom and her false marriage...' ¹⁴

For chroniclers, such stories helped to reinforce the view that all women should be excluded from the crusade. Women were deemed defiling and disruptive because they lured men into licentious and evil acts, thereby causing God to desert them. This was a view which would prevail throughout the crusades, although it was never really enforced as women continued to journey with crusaders. However, the clergy and leaders of the crusades did manage to expel women from the camps at critical points on the expedition such as at Nicaea in the First Crusade.

On 6 May 1097, Godfrey of Bouillon, one of the leaders of the crusade, and the Normans arrived outside Nicaea, the capital of the Seldjuk Sultan, Kilij Arslan and the first objective for the crusaders.¹⁵ The capture of the city was essential before the crusade could advance down to the East. Nicaea was built in a good strategic position on the shore of a lake and was defended by over two hundred towers. It took a further four weeks before the whole army had assembled, but the serious business of the siege had begun as early as 14 May. As Fulcher of Chartres relates, the crusading armies were then united into one, '... estimated at six hundred thousand strong for war. Of these, there were one hundred thousand full-armed with corselets and helmets, not counting the unarmed, that is, the clerics, monks, women, and little children.'¹⁶ Such a statement suggests that a large part of the 'army' was made up of those considered to be non-combatants or poor. If this was the condition of the army

¹⁴ Albert of Aachen, pp.327-28., in Elizabeth Hallam, (ed.) *Chronicles of the Crusades: Eye-witness Accounts of the Wars between Christianity and Islam*, London: Weidenfeld, 1989, p.73.

¹⁵ Mayer, p.46. Inside the city was the Seldjuk treasure and Kilij Arslan's family.

¹⁶ Fulcher of Chartres, Book I, X, p.43.

at Nicaea, it was not to remain so for long. Battles and skirmishes along the journey, chronic illness, and extreme weather conditions, took its toll on participants, who were unused to such situations. To make matters worse, monetary funds were often exhausted not long after entering eastern lands, and many had to either rely on the good will of others, obtain resources scavenged from the countryside, or return home, if they had the strength to.

Upon arrival, Odericus Vitalis reported that the crusaders were initially defensive about the purity of their conduct:

‘Splendid as was their array in arms, they were still more distinguished by the lustre of their virtues. They went forth to battle pure in their conduct, strong in limb, and stout in heart. Carefully watching for the good of their souls, they refrained from all fleshly lusts and forbidden indulgences.... The bishops preached daily against incontinence, and whoredom and debauchery were scouted out of the camp.’¹⁷

In this Baldric of Dol noted with satisfaction, the closing down of all the brothels in their camp. Although some crusaders had women living with them during the siege, Baldric added that these were either married couples or simply servants.¹⁸ Baldric does establish the difference here between a prostitute and other women in the camp such as wives or servants. He does not group them under the same heading of harlot as some chroniclers did, but noted that there were those women who did not partake in illicit acts, but were married or not the occasion for sin, such as the servants. Baldric believed that the other women removed from the camp were destructive beings because of their sexual attraction and control over the warriors.

It appeared that the removal of women was pleasing to God, as they did have some success here against the Turks. The Sultan had been away fighting the Danishmends in the East, and by the time he realised the danger of the siege, it was too late. Kilij Arslan was unable to enter his own city and he met the

¹⁷ Odericus Vitalis, *The Ecclesiastical History of England and Normandy*, Vol. III, trans. Thomas Forester, London: Henry G. Bohn, 1854-56, pp.95-6.

¹⁸ Baldric of Dol, p.28., in Brundage, ‘Prostitution, Miscegenation, ...’, p.58.

crusaders in pitched battle on 21 May and was defeated.¹⁹ However, it was still impossible for the crusaders to take the city and after five weeks of besieging Nicaea,²⁰ the Turks 'parleyed with the Emperor through mediators, and slyly returned the city to him, when already it had been greatly encompassed by force and cleverness.'²¹

From Nicaea the crusaders headed south-west on 26 June, towards Dorylaeum, marching in two sections. The first under Bohemond's command, consisted of the Normans of Southern Italy and Northern France, along with the Flemings and a Byzantine contingent under Tacitus. The second group was under the command of Raymond of St Gilles and was made up of Provençals and Lorrainers with the troops of Hugh of Vermandois.²² On 29 June the leading section came into contact with the army of Kilij Arslan. Fulcher of Chartres wrote that this encounter was a result of their sins; God had punished the crusaders by sending the Turks to do battle against them:

'It was evident that this had befallen us because of our sins. For dissipation had polluted certain ones, and avarice or some other iniquity had corrupted others. There was a vast cry smiting the heavens, of men and women and little children, and also of the heathens who rushed in upon us.... Then we confessed that we were culprits and sinners, humbly begging mercy from God.'²³

In confessing their sins and begging for mercy, the priestly orders stepped in to pray on behalf of the crusaders for aid against the enemy:

'The Bishop of Puy, our Protector, and four other bishops were there. There were many priests present clothed in white vestments, who besought the Lord most humbly to overthrow the strength of our enemy and pour gifts of His mercy on us. They sang weeping; they wept singing.'²⁴

¹⁹ Riley-Smith, *The Crusades: A Short History*, p.26.

²⁰ From May 14 to June 18, 1097.

²¹ Fulcher of Chartres, Book I, X, p.44.

²² Riley-Smith, *The Crusades: A Short History*, p.27.

²³ Fulcher of Chartres, Book I, XI, pp.46-7.

²⁴ *ibid.*, p.47.

The supplication of the crusaders, wrote Fulcher, pleased the Lord who 'little by little restored vigour to us, and more and more weakened the Turks.'²⁵

William of Tyre wrote that before the troops could advance into battle, 'all the infirm and the aged men and women, a helpless throng, were placed with the baggage in a neighbouring thicket of reeds.'²⁶ Then, as the anonymous *Gesta Francorum* recounts, 'the Turks came upon us from all sides, skirmishing, throwing darts and javelins and shooting arrows from an astonishing range. Although we had no chance of withstanding them or of taking the weight of the charge of so many foes we went forward as one man.'²⁷ The women in this battle braved enemy fire to bring water to the men in the fighting lines, an act for which the *Gesta* gives them special commendation: 'The women in our camp were a great help to us that day, for they brought up water for the fighting men to drink, and gallantly encouraged those who were fighting and defending them.'²⁸ The battle was decided when the Turks were surprised by the arrival of the second section under Godfrey of Bouillon and Raymond of Toulouse. The sultan fled along with his army and the crusaders' success in this battle opened the way to Anatolia.²⁹ The battle at Dorylaeum on 1 July 1097 was a great victory for the crusaders and boosted morale considerably. It became obvious that to obtain victory the crusaders had to remain pure in body and mind before God.

However, William of Tyre, in relating this battle to his readers, does not write of the women as encouraging their men to fight, but rather, he records their participation in battle. This battle was a decisive victory for the crusaders, although it came at a high cost, as William relates: 'Four thousand of our common people and those of the lowest rank, both men and women, fell in that battle ...'³⁰ It was assumed after the emergency was over that surviving women

²⁵ *ibid.*, Book I, XII, p.47.

²⁶ William of Tyre, I, p.170.

²⁷ *Gesta Francorum*, p.19.

²⁸ *ibid.*

²⁹ Mayer, p.47.

³⁰ William of Tyre, I, p.173. Peter Tudebode however, describes the scene at Dorylaeum a little differently. He does not acknowledge women fighting during the battle, but rather

warriors would return to their ordinary family occupations, once again resuming feminine, womanly roles. This was also believed the case when women defended castles, homes and even cities.³¹ Whether women engaged in military activities habitually or over long periods of time, fighting for their own purposes and on the same basis as their male counterparts may not be known with certainty, although it does appear that some women did fight for extended periods of time when protecting property and family if husbands were absent.

Women in emergency situations such as at Dorylaeum, may have been accepted on the battlefield because they had 'de-sexed' themselves and become as men. Helen Solterer believes women were:

'... render[ed] apparent replicas of their male cohorts. The result of these various strategies of de-sexing them is to blur, if not eliminate all trace of their sexual identity. The women [were] deemed proper warriors insofar as they display[ed] no ostensible sign of their bodies.'³²

Because they had become like men, disguised as men in armour, they were not regarded as obstructing the male warriors or harming the battle. If however, women were shown to be as 'women', attractive and enticing men from their objectives on the battlefield, they would disrupt the expedition. This was the main fear and argument of crusaders and clergymen towards women journeying on crusade, and Cardinal Hostiensis writing in the twelfth century, strengthened this argument by stating that 'whores' should not be able to take the cross because they 'would surely be followed by many men ...' and the motivation of their followers 'was not likely to be a spiritual one.'³³ In this Hostiensis was

praises them for the aid they provided: 'Although we had no hope of resisting them or of bearing the pressure of such a superior force, yet we persevered steadfastly there with unanimity. The women who accompanied us assisted our forces greatly on that day by bringing water to the warriors and at all times bravely shouting encouraging comment to those who fought and defended them.' Peter Tudebode, p.34.

³¹ *Alexiad*, XII, viii; Mayer, p.135.: Queen Sibylla defended Jerusalem in 1187; Mayer, pp.92-3.: The Fall of Edessa, Second Crusade; 'Imad ad-Din, 18-29, The Fall of Tiberias, Third Crusade.

³² Helen Solterer, p.541.

³³ Hostiensis, *Summa aurea*, lib. 3 tit. De voto et voti redemptione, no. 11., in James A. Brundage, 'Prostitution in the Medieval Canon Law' in Vern L. Bullough and James A. Brundage (eds) *Sexual Practices and the Medieval Church*, New York: Prometheus Books, 1982, pp.155-56.

probably using the term 'whore' to encompass all females on crusade, as all women were viewed as leading men astray on the journey and at times of battle.

Such concerns were expressed at every major battle or siege along the route to Jerusalem. After the crusaders' success at Dorylaeum, the army travelled through south-east Anatolia, marching to Philomelium and then along the foot of the Taurus mountains as far as Iconium, where they rested for one week.³⁴ From there they went on to Tyana. Such a journey must have caused considerable strain on all because they had to endure the heat of summer and a shortage of food and water, as the Turks had devastated the countryside far and wide. Coupled with this, the army was involved in clashes with other forces such as at Heraclea, where they fought through combined armies of the Danishmends and the emir of Cappadocia. From Tyana, the main army decided to follow the road which took them north-east to Caesarea, and then turned south-east to cross the Anti-Taurus on its way to Marash.³⁵

At the end of September, the army entered Caesarea and then marched over the Anti-Taurus. By mid-October, they had reached Marash, where they were welcomed by the Armenian Christians, and where the crusaders rested for a few days. On 20 October they fought their way across the Iron Bridge over the Orontes, and on 21 October arrived before the walls of Antioch.³⁶ This was the key to North Syria and therefore they decided to besiege it,³⁷ although this was not such a wise idea as the city was surrounded by huge walls and four hundred towers built by Justinian.³⁸ 'When our princes had seen the great difficulty of overcoming it, they swore mutually by oath to work together in siege until, with God favouring, they would capture it either by force or by ruse.'³⁹ However, this was no easy task as William of Tyre relates: 'Although the Christian forces who could wield the sword were said to number three hundred thousand besides

³⁴ In mid-August, 1097.

³⁵ Mayer, pp.47-8.

³⁶ Riley-Smith, *The Crusades: A Short History*, p.28.

³⁷ The siege lasted from 21 October 1097 to 3 June 1098.

³⁸ Mayer, p.50.

³⁹ Fulcher of Chartres, Book I, XV, p.53.

women and children, yet it was impossible for the camp to surround the town completely.⁴⁰ What added to the difficulty of the situation was the famine in the army which, as William continues, grew daily. ‘The elders and others of wide experience perceived that these troubles arose from the sins of the people, and that it was the Lord who, justly provoked to anger, was visiting this chastisement upon His stiff-necked children.’⁴¹

It was because of such suffering as a result of the lewd practices of the army, that the clergy led the crusaders in processions, prayers, and almsgiving and encouraged them to seek God’s forgiveness by means of a three-day fast:

‘By the authoritative mandate of the bishop of Puy ... and by the other pontiffs beloved of God, with the full concurrence and demand of the lay princes and the whole army, it was therefore decreed that a fast of three days be held, that, by scourging the body, they might strengthen their souls for more effective prayer.’⁴²

And, as Fulcher of Chartres stated: ‘After holding council, they [members of the army] drove out the women from the army, both married and unmarried, lest they, stained by the defilement of dissipation, displease the Lord’.⁴³

Like the children of Israel, the clergy and crusaders believed women to be impure and sinful because they menstruated, seduced and corrupted the warriors, and therefore polluted the camp and its followers. This would anger God, who in turn would allow the army to be defeated by the Muslims as they had turned away from goodness and purity to satisfy their lusts. Therefore, all women no matter of what marital status, class or position were removed until after the siege.

It is interesting that Fulcher stated all women, ‘both married and unmarried’ were driven out of the camp, while William of Tyre stated that ‘... they

⁴⁰ William of Tyre, I, p.206.

⁴¹ *ibid.*, I, p.220., and see *Gesta Francorum*, p.34.

⁴² William of Tyre, I, p.220.

⁴³ Fulcher of Chartres, Book I, XV, p.54.

determined in like manner to put away from the camp all the light women of ill repute. Adultery and fornication of every description was forbidden under penalty of death, and an interdict was also placed on all revelling and intoxication.⁴⁴

It was the 'women of ill repute' category, which included prostitutes and other doubtful characters, who were removed from the camp not, according to William, all women in the camp. Likewise, Ibn al-Athir also told of the prostitutes who were removed from the camp at Antioch:

'The sounds of their prayers reached into the city itself, as they gathered together to plead for divine mercy, believing themselves victims of celestial punishment. It was reported that they had decided to expel all prostitutes from their camp in an effort to placate the wrath of the Almighty; they also closed down the taverns and banned dice games.'⁴⁵

This discrepancy in the sources raises an interesting point. In reading Fulcher, one gets the impression that all women were in his mind corruptive and displeasing before the Almighty. These women had no place in such a holy setting and their uncleanness seeped through the camp infecting all men present. Whether they were married or not does not concern Fulcher, the fact that they were women who could hinder the outcome of the expedition was what worried him. It is of further interest in this discussion that Fulcher noted that these 'women then found places to live in the neighbouring camps',⁴⁶ perhaps to satisfy their lusts or those of their customers, or to act as companions for the men in these camps.

William of Tyre and Ibn al-Athir both state that prostitutes or the 'light women' were removed because of the trade they were involved in and because it was unholy and thought to 'placate the wrath of the Almighty'. No mention is made of any other type of woman being removed which tends to show that

⁴⁴ William of Tyre, I, p.220.

⁴⁵ Ibn al-Athir in Amin Maalouf, p.24.

⁴⁶ Fulcher of Chartres, Book I, XV, p.54.

Fulcher was generalising or constructing all women under the heading of 'harlot'.

Despite the fact that the crusaders were able to gain victory and enter the city, they soon sought out women. They were severely criticised for these acts of fornication and adultery, and it was believed that their undisciplined behaviour was responsible for the siege laid on them by Kerbogha at Antioch: 'Seeing the army [of besieging Turks], the Franks were more desolate than ever, because punishment for their sins was doubled. For when they had entered the city, many of them had sought out unlawful women without delay'.⁴⁷

This situation was intensified by the pitiful conditions inside Antioch. Food and supplies were very low and under the pressure of hunger, morale in the army sank rapidly and desertions remained high. Their sufferings at Antioch were viewed as a result of further divine punishment as they had gone against God, taken up with 'unlawful' women, and defiled themselves 'by the sordidness of riotous living'.⁴⁸ When all seemed lost, a certain priest came forward to the leaders Raymond of Toulouse and Adhemar of Le Puy, to inform them of a vision.⁴⁹ In this vision, the priest claimed that he had seen Saint Peter, the Virgin Mary and Christ. Christ had said:

'I have given you great help, and I will help you hereafter. I granted you the city of Nicaea, and victory in all your battles, and I have led you hither and suffered with you in all the troubles which you have endured in the siege of Antioch. Behold, I gave you timely help and put you safe and sound into the city of Antioch, but you are satisfying your filthy lusts both with Christians and with loose pagan women, so that a great stench goes up to Heaven.'⁵⁰

To rectify this situation, Christ told the priest that the army was to pray and repent for five days and within this time, He would send them aid.

⁴⁷ *ibid.*, Book I, XVIII, p.59.

⁴⁸ *ibid.*, Book I, XV, p.54., and see Siberry, p.102.

⁴⁹ This priest was named Stephen.

⁵⁰ *Gesta Francorum*, p.58.

Another visionary, Peter Bartholomew, informed Count Raymond that Saint Andrew had appeared to him and revealed the position of the Holy Lance (with which a Roman centurion had pierced Christ's side) in the cathedral of Saint Peter.⁵¹ Diggings in the cathedral began several days later and a lance was actually found there. As Fulcher stated: 'Upon hearing this, all the people, rejoicing, glorified God for it, and for almost a hundred days it was held in great veneration by all.'⁵² Such a find boosted the morale of the army considerably, and all were united in their determination to break the blockade and destroy Kerbogha and his army. The battle took place on 28 June and resulted in success for the crusaders: 'fear having been let loose from heaven against them [Turks], as if the whole world had fallen, all of them took to unrestrained flight, and the Franks chased them with all their might.'⁵³

After this victory, Bruno of Lucca returning from Antioch to his native city, carried the warning that women and paupers were no longer wanted on crusade.⁵⁴ But this warning came too late, so Porges writes, as the army now had a full complement not only of women and the poor, but of incompetents and undesirables of all kinds:

'The preaching of the clergy against misconduct in general, and adultery in particular, was directed toward a very important end: to reconcile the soldiers to their Creator; to preserve the sense of righteousness which gave confidence to the Christian army ... to keep up its fighting spirit.'⁵⁵

This is a perfect example of 'woman' as constructed by Bruno of Lucca (and Porges). She was powerless, incompetent, but dangerous to the Christian army.

The events of the First Crusade illustrate how the clergy and warriors believed that if they did not remain chaste and pure before battle, God would

⁵¹ *ibid.*, pp.59-60.

⁵² Fulcher of Chartres, Book I, XVIII, pp.58-9.

⁵³ *ibid.*, Book I, XXIII, p.63.

⁵⁴ Bruno of Lucca in Porges, p.51. No reference.

⁵⁵ Porges, p.51.

endeavour to ensure the Turks achieved victory. Only by repenting and begging forgiveness, as well as removing the cause of their sins (women), could the army hope to be victorious. Although women stood up well to the never ending misadventures of the campaigns, some even fighting at the battles or sieges, the bishops and leaders learned from 'bitter experience that the army was better off without them.'⁵⁶ Such concerns and beliefs flowed into the Second Crusade of 1145-49.

On Christmas Eve 1144, after a siege of four weeks, Zengi, ruler of Mosul and Aleppo, broke into Edessa. This news caused a considerable stir in Europe, although it did not move men to journey on crusade immediately. In fact, a papal crusading bull was not to be issued until 1 March 1146.⁵⁷ Louis VII took the cross in that year⁵⁸ and Eleanor his wife also knelt before Bernard of Clairvaux and offered her thousands of vassals from Poitou and Aquitaine.⁵⁹

Prior to Louis' departure on crusade, he had gone under elaborate monastic preparations at Paris and St. Denis; virtually becoming a monk before departure. As Odo of Deuil, Louis' chaplain, wrote:

'Upon setting out, he did a praiseworthy thing, which few, perhaps no one of his lofty rank, could imitate; for, first having visited some monks in Paris, he went outside the gates to the leper colony. There I myself saw him enter, with only two companions, and shut out the rest of his great retinue for a long time.'⁶⁰

By entering the leper colony, Louis had crossed a threshold into the realm of the living dead; it was a place at one and the same time a metaphor for sinfulness (bodily corruption and sexual sin) and a place of penance for sin. When Louis later arrived at St. Denis

⁵⁶ Porges, p.51.

⁵⁷ Mayer, p.94.

⁵⁸ Odo of Deuil, *The Journey of Louis VII to the East*, (ed.) Virginia Gingerick Berry, New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1948, Book I, p.7.

⁵⁹ Amy Kelly, *Eleanor of Aquitaine and the Four Kings*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, p.34.

⁶⁰ Odo of Deuil, Book I, p.17.

'he found the pope and the abbot and the monks of the church gathered together. Then he prostrated himself more humbly on the ground; he venerated his patron saint ... Then, when the banner had been taken from above the altar, after he had received the pilgrim's wallet and a blessing from the pope, he withdrew from the crowd to the monk's dormitory.'⁶¹

This prostration before the monks can be seen as a sort of replication of the monastic profession (how monks became monks). Both these rituals embody a rebirth of the spirit, rituals in which purity was achieved. Because of such preparations, the presence of Eleanor on the expedition with Louis seems even more remarkable. It is probable that Louis did not want Eleanor to go, but she was extremely wealthy and able to muster more soldiers for the succour of Jerusalem than her lord, and the revenues of her duchy were indispensable. It has also been suggested that her journey was a chance to renew contact with her uncle, Raymond of Poitiers, now Prince of Antioch, a patron of letters and still quite young.⁶² Whatever the reason, Eleanor was able to travel with the crusading armies, accompanied by several noble ladies such as Sybille, Countess of Flanders, Mammie of Rous, Florine of Bourgogne, Torqueri of Bouillon, Faydide of Toulouse, and by many of her own countrymen, making the journey more pleasant and more comfortable for the Queen. The presence of so many ladies was frowned on by many at the time although nothing was done to prevent them from going. And with regards to war Kelly says:

'... no one appears to have asked publicly what these female warriors were to inflict upon the Saracens. The historians do not well explain why hordes of women took the cross.'⁶³

The crusade itself started at Regensburg in May 1147. The French set out from Metz a few weeks later.⁶⁴ After a disastrous experience crossing Anatolia,

⁶¹ *ibid.*, Book I, pp.17-18.

⁶² D.D.R. Owen, *Eleanor of Aquitaine: Queen and Legend*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1993, p.23.

⁶³ Amy Kelly, p.34. Emerias of *Alteias*, a rich noblewoman, is also known from a charter in 1098 to have taken the cross and asked her bishop for his blessing before departing. He suggested it would be better for her to establish a hospice to care for the poor. Emerias agreed to this commutation of her vow, but it is noteworthy that she had little difficulty in making it in the first place, and was only dissuaded from doing so by the bishop. See J. Vaissete, C. Devic and A. Molinier, *Histoire generale de Languedoc*, 5, col. 757., 1872-1904, in Jonathan Riley-Smith, *The First Crusade and the Idea of Crusading*, London: Athlone Press, 1987, p.35.

⁶⁴ Mayer, p.100.

the leaders of the crusade, Louis VII of France and Conrad III of Germany, met at Acre to discuss their plans for the crusade. In negotiations with Baldwin III in Jerusalem, it was finally decided that Damascus should be attacked, although as Mayer believes this was a plan as 'ridiculous in execution as in conception.'⁶⁵ On 24 July 1148, the crusaders encamped outside the orchards (which would guarantee timber, water and food supplies) on the west side of the city. They advanced on the city which had sent pleas for help to Nur ad-Din. Driving the Muslims back from the Barada river banks, the Christians occupied a good position from which to launch an attack. Despite this, the two leaders were persuaded to move their army south-east, because they were told the orchards were adding to the difficulties of the siege.⁶⁶ They shifted their army on the 27 July to an exposed hot site with little or no food and water.⁶⁷ They were trapped as a result, and a prolonged stay being out of the question, they therefore had no choice but to withdraw.

With the Second Crusade ending so dismally, many searched for an answer or rather a scapegoat, to explain its failure. This answer was to be found in Eleanor of Aquitaine and her 'ladies'. Eleanor's entourage to the Holy Land was, on the whole, distinctly secular and she appears to have kept en-route, so Kelly believes, to her role as Penthesilea, the Amazon Queen, with her warriors.⁶⁸ The Greek historian Nicetas remarked:

'there were in the army women dressed as men mounted on horses and armed with lance and battle axe. They kept a martial mien, bold as Amazons. At the head of these was one in particular, richly dressed, that went by the name of the "lady of the golden boot". The elegance of her bearing and the freedom of her movements recalled the celebrated leader of the Amazons.'⁶⁹

⁶⁵ *ibid.*, p.103.

⁶⁶ *ibid.*

⁶⁷ Riley-Smith, *The Crusades: A Short History*, p.102.

⁶⁸ Eleanor did not actually fight although it is interesting that she was portrayed as doing so.

⁶⁹ Nicetas Choanites, *Histoire de* in Joseph Michaud, *Bibliothèque des croisades*, III, 404, Paris, 1829, in Amy Kelly, pp.38-9. See also J. Verdon, 'Les sources de l'histoire de la femme en Occident aux Xe-XIIe siècles', *Cahiers de civilisation médiévale*, 20, (1977), 229 in Contamine, p.241.

It is intriguing to find Eleanor viewed by some writers as an 'Amazon' rather than as a woman warrior with man-like qualities. The Amazon implies that she was still identified as a woman, feminine and attractive, wearing what looked elegant (or arousing) and pleasing to the eye. However, Eleanor was also portrayed as a fighter in that she was both armed, mounted and ready for battle; masculine and feminine attributes are combined in this description. This portrayal differs from other women warriors depicted by some writers, who were viewed as being more like men than women, which was acceptable on the battlefield. To have an Amazon on the battlefield, who still obtained the attributes (and failings) of a woman, was looked upon with disfavour. Such a woman was objected to because she was a distraction and disrupted her menfolk on the battlefield, and not only that, she polluted the holy war with her defiling and corrupting presence. The annalist of Wurzburg commented that it had been at least indiscreet to give women the cross; but Vincent of Prague went further and stated that the presence of women on the expedition resulted in immorality in the camp.⁷⁰

In looking at the Second Crusade and Eleanor's involvement in it, we must firstly establish what is known of her alleged affair with Raymond. The King and Queen of France, on journeying to the East on crusade, arrived in Antioch in March 1148, because the army was in need of reorganisation. Louis and Eleanor were guests there of Prince Raymond of Antioch, Eleanor's uncle. Upon their arrival, Raymond played the generous host, motivated by what William of Tyre calls his desire to enlist Louis and his army in his ambitious land wars.⁷¹ John of Salisbury also observed that '... the attentions paid by the prince to the queen, and his constant, indeed almost continuous, conversation with her, aroused the king's suspicions.'⁷² Raymond and Eleanor were more alike than Louis and Eleanor, which could explain why they spent so much time together,

⁷⁰ *Annales Herbipolenses*, in *Monumenta Germaniae Historica Scriptores*, xvi, 3, and Vincent of Prague, in *Monumenta Germaniae Historica Scriptores*, xvii, 663, in Siberry, p.45.

⁷¹ William of Tyre, II, p.197.

⁷² John of Salisbury, *Historia Pontificalis: Memoirs of the Papal Court*, trans. Marjorie Chibnall, London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1965, p.52.

conversing in their native dialect.⁷³ Eleanor may also have been Raymond's link to Louis in the hope that Louis would aid him in his wars. Louis however, could not commit himself to Raymond's strategies and was suspicious and distrustful of the closeness of his wife and Raymond. He therefore refused altogether to help Raymond who was most displeased as was Eleanor, who, it was claimed, refused to accompany him any further to the Holy Land, wanting instead to remain in Antioch with Raymond.⁷⁴ Louis insisted that she come, and he was met with her stinging retort that their relationship was totally illicit because of the blood ties linking them.⁷⁵ The King's counsellors, particularly Thierry Galeran, convinced Louis to take a firm stand and force Eleanor to accompany the royal host. The midnight exit of Louis from Antioch with his captive Queen, William of Tyre observed, was 'by no means suitable to the dignity of the foremost king of Christendom, nor comparable to his entrance a few weeks before.'⁷⁶ The custody of Eleanor made it apparent, so Kelly believes, that something dreadful had occurred in Antioch to warrant such proceedings.⁷⁷ Only some shocking misbehaviour on Eleanor's part, she continues to write, seemed adequate to account for these actions.

It is interesting to note when we turn to Odo of Deuil, the principal writer of the Second Crusade, that he does not mention Eleanor as leaving on crusade. In fact we do not read of her presence on the expedition until Book III, upon their entering Byzantine territory. This does seem unusual as Eleanor was one of the most widely talked about and influential women in Europe. What appears to be even stranger, is that Odo's work cuts off at Antioch and we hear no more of the crusade or its outcome. This was probably because of the events which were said to have occurred at Antioch, and because the crusade was such a miserable failure. As Odo was right there with the King and Queen it would probably have not been in his favour to write of the defeats, gossip and evil

⁷³ Amy Kelly, p.56.

⁷⁴ William of Tyre, II, pp.180-81., John of Salisbury, p.53.

⁷⁵ Elizabeth A.R. Brown, 'Eleanor of Aquitaine: Parent, Queen and Duchess', in William W. Kibler, *Eleanor of Aquitaine: Patron and Politician*, Austin: University of Texas Press, 1976, p.14.

⁷⁶ William of Tyre, II, p.180.

⁷⁷ Kelly, p.62.

committed on the expedition. Eleanor was widely blamed for the sinfulness of the Second Crusade because of her supposed relationship with Raymond of Antioch, her uncle. But this story merely reflected wider criticism. Chambers remarks on her presence and of other ladies on crusade that:

‘Eleanor’s presence on the crusade would probably have been disturbing enough in itself, but to make matters worse, other ladies decided to follow their husbands, or their husbands decided to take them. This multitude of women not only made the army unchaste, as William of Newburgh complains,⁷⁸ but it also impeded its progress, and above all made discipline practically impossible.’⁷⁹

This ‘multitude of women’ was believed to defile the army because they could lead men into temptation, and because they were impure. The women who accompanied Eleanor were ladies of nobility.⁸⁰ Neither William of Newburgh nor the writer who quotes from him (Chambers), allow Eleanor or her ladies to escape criticism.⁸¹ The fact that they are of nobility does not seem to excuse them from being accused of making the army unchaste, or of impeding its progress and discipline, which implies that it is as women that they cause problems, not specific kinds of women. Much of what is known of Eleanor on the Second Crusade derives from stories which possibly preserved Louis VII and other leaders from blame for the disasters which occurred. William of Tyre charged the Queen with indiscretions and with conduct, both in Antioch and later, unworthy of her royal dignity and disregardful of her marriage bond.⁸² John of Salisbury accused her of too great a familiarity with the Prince of Antioch.⁸³ Richard of Devizes, chronicler of the Third Crusade, also described Eleanor in great detail who went in the Third Crusade as far as

⁷⁸ William of Newburgh, *Historia rerum anglicarum*, in Richard Howlett, *Chronicles of the Reigns of Stephen, Henry II, and Richard I*, Rolls Series, London 1884-89, I, pp.92-3.

⁷⁹ Frank McMinn Chambers, ‘Some Legends Concerning Eleanor of Aquitaine’, *Speculum*, 16, (1941), p.459.

⁸⁰ Amy Kelly, p.34.

⁸¹ William of Newburgh, pp.92-3, and Chambers, p.459.

⁸² William of Tyre, Vol. II, pp.180-1.

⁸³ John of Salisbury, p.52.

Pisa,⁸⁴ accompanying Richard's soon to be bride. Richard concluded: 'Many knew, what I wish that none of us had known. The same queen, in the time of her former husband, went to Jerusalem. Let none of us speak more thereof; I also know well. Be silent.'⁸⁵

This is an intriguing comment because we automatically wonder what did occur and why Richard of Devizes cannot divulge this information to us, as it had occurred so many years before. This was probably a result of his loyalty to the King of England and his mother, although many other English writers do not appear to have spared her. William of Newburgh blamed the defeat in the Holy Land on Louis' passion. He had set a bad example by taking Eleanor with him on what was supposed to be a holy pilgrimage.⁸⁶ The army should have remained chaste and without any woman; crusaders, like any other warriors who wanted to win battles, needed to be continent. However, because of the Queen (and her female followers), a modern Eve, temptress and deceiver, lust and fornication entered the camp; for William of Newburgh, she was an adulteress.⁸⁷ Eleanor behaved 'not like a queen but like a whore.'⁸⁸ That was all Helinand of Froimont thought it necessary to say on the subject. This is an interesting statement from Helinand because it shows that not even her class or position as Queen could protect her from the condemnation of her supposed actions on crusade nor the much talked about affair with her uncle.

The result of whatever occurred in Antioch was that a variety of stories arose, speculating on the actions and behaviour of Eleanor and her uncle, and which aimed to preserve Louis from all blame.⁸⁹ It was at Antioch that Eleanor

⁸⁴ Richard of Devizes, *Chronicles of the Crusades, being contemporary narratives of the Crusade of Richard the Lion Heart, by Richard of Devizes and Geoffrey de Vinsauf*, London: Henry G. Bohn, 1848, p.20.

⁸⁵ *ibid.*

⁸⁶ William of Newburgh, pp.101-2., in Duby, *The Knight, The Lady and The Priest*, pp.195-6.

⁸⁷ William of Newburgh, p.125., in Duby, *The Knight, The Lady and The Priest*, p.196.

⁸⁸ Helinand of Froimont, *Patrologie Latine*, 212, 1057-1058, in Duby, *The Knight, The Lady and The Priest*, p.196. Helinand believed Eleanor had behaved 'like a whore' throughout her life; after her scheming on the Second Crusade and leading up to her marriage to Henry II.

⁸⁹ Whether or not there was in any of these stories an element of fact, they became, in spite of efforts to stifle them, a stock in trade, revived from time to time, of scandalmongers and balladeers and pursued Eleanor till the end of her days, and beyond into history.

required a bad reputation, and many believe this was because of her close relationship with Raymond.⁹⁰ There does not appear to be any real evidence that Eleanor did behave 'as a whore'. In reading Helinand of Froimont, William of Tyre and William of Newburgh, they claim that she was a 'modern Eve', 'temptress' and 'adulteress'. However, these men when writing of Eleanor, used her presence to explain failure, therefore her very presence became wanton behaviour because all women are harlots, even Queens. The disasters of the Second Crusade seemed to point out to chroniclers that women in general (of whatever standing), should not be allowed to journey.

However, Ambroise in writing *The Crusade of Richard the Lion-heart*, believed women were not always such a hindrance on crusade, but could be quite capable in battle and in coping with pain and suffering. Prior to the start of the Third Crusade, Ambroise described the Christian fleet commanded by Marquis Conrad of Montferrat arriving at Tyre in 1187,⁹¹ and defeating the Saracen fleet. In this sea fight the women who journeyed with the fleet also appear to have fought:

'Ye would have witnessed dames and wives
Who bore within their hands great knives,
And, seizing Turks by hair and Tress,
Inflicted on them sore distress
And then cut off their heads and bore
Them back in triumph to the shore'.⁹²

These acts by 'dames and wives' are quite grotesque in description, and in fact we do not read of women behaving so barbarically in any other source. Perhaps Ambroise wished to show his readers how brutally and manfully women warriors could fight and defeat Saracens; reinforcing the view that the Infidel

⁹⁰ William of Tyre and John of Salisbury plus other chroniclers certainly believed this, as did later contemporary historians. See Regine Pernoud, *Eleanor of Aquitaine*, trans. Peter Wiles, London: Wm. Collins Sons and Co., Ltd., 1967, William W. Kibler, *Eleanor of Aquitaine: Patron and Politician*, Austin: University of Texas Press, 1976, D.D.R. Owen, *Eleanor of Aquitaine: Queen and Legend*.

⁹¹ Mayer, p.141.

⁹² Ambroise, p.152. Ibn al-Athir makes no mention of these women fighting so savagely: Ibn al-Athir in Francesco Gabrielli, (ed.) *Arab Historians of the Crusades*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1969, part II, chapter 3, p.179.

could be overthrown even by women. Ambroise may also have been trying to illustrate to his readers how decisive the victory over the enemy at Tyre was, which in turn heralded the coming of the Third Crusade.

Coupled with this triumph was the news of the catastrophe at Hattin and the fall of Jerusalem which reached the West in 1187. Pope Urban III was said to have died of shock on 20 October, upon hearing of this news.⁹³ His successor, Gregory VIII, although he was pope for no more than two months, gave decisive momentum to the preaching of the crusade. His encyclical, *Audita tremendi*, was issued on 29 October 1187,⁹⁴ just ten days after Urban's death and is one of the most moving documents of crusading history. However, although Richard I (then count of Poitou) took the cross in November 1187 and Henry II and Philip Augustus followed his example at Gisors in January 1188,⁹⁵ no one ventured out on crusade until 1189/90.

Frederick Barbarossa, the last monarch to take the cross (March 1188), but the first to journey (11 May 1189), took the overland route to the East due to the shortage of ships.⁹⁶ He had tried to prevent all non-combatants from accompanying his army, and the absence of women (in so far as it was so) was consequent on the broader ban. Although it looked as if success would be his in the crusade, it soon ended on June 10 1190, when he drowned in the River Saleph.⁹⁷

Philip and Richard did not assemble at Vezelay, the appointed place of muster, to begin their journey to the East until 4 July 1190. Both kings then left Vezelay deciding to go by sea to the East and at Lyons they separated. Philip marched to Genoa where he had made arrangements with the Genoese for transport and provisions. Richard marched down the Rhone to Marseilles, where he awaited the English fleet of about a hundred supply ships and twenty

⁹³ Riley-Smith, *The Crusades: A Short History*, p.109.

⁹⁴ Mayer, p.139.

⁹⁵ Siberry, p.52.

⁹⁶ Mayer, p.140.

⁹⁷ *ibid.*, pp.140-41.

men-of-war. In September, the two fleets met at Messina and wintered there.⁹⁸ As well as there being large numbers of warriors on these ships, women too appear to have filled them. 'Imad ad-Din al-Isfahani, in what has been described as 'baroque pornography',⁹⁹ wrote in great detail of the 'three hundred lovely Frankish women' who 'assembled from beyond the sea and offer[ed] themselves for sin.'¹⁰⁰ They were, according to 'Imad:

'... all licentious harlots, proud and scornful, who took and gave, foul-fleshed and sinful ... appearing proudly in public, ardent and inflamed, tinted and painted, desirable and appetising, exquisite and graceful, who ripped open and patched up, lacerated and mended, erred and ogled, urged and seduced, consoled and solicited, seductive and languid, desired and desiring, amused and amusing, versatile and cunning, like tipsy adolescents, making love and selling themselves for gold, bold and ardent, loving and passionate ... with nasal voices and fleshy thighs, blue-eyed and grey-eyed, broken-down little fools.'¹⁰¹

These women, 'Imad also believed were 'expatriates come to help expatriates, ready to cheer the fallen and sustained to turn to give support and assistance.'¹⁰² Such constructions of women as harlots appeared right from the start of the Third Crusade, as chroniclers write that it was plagued by the shameful activity of its followers.

The kings did not arrive at Acre until the following summer. Philip reached Acre on 20 April and Richard on 8 June.¹⁰³ They found the city blockaded and pressed the siege more vigorously with the help of the big French siege machines. Women had a big part to play in helping their men in this siege and Ambroise wrote at great length of an heroic woman at the trenches there:

'And many women bore their share,
Taking delight the load to bear.
One woman took especial joy
In labouring at this employ.

⁹⁸ *ibid.*, p.145.

⁹⁹ Gabrielli, p.204, n. 2.

¹⁰⁰ 'Imad ad-Din al-Isfahani in Gabrielli, p.204.

¹⁰¹ *ibid.*, p.204.

¹⁰² *ibid.*, p.204.

¹⁰³ Riley-Smith, *The Crusades: A Short History*, p.114.

An archer Saracen inside
 The wall saw this dame occupied
 To set her fardel down, and when
 She sought to rise again
 He shot at her a shaft, which found
 Its mark, and she fell to the ground ...
 Her husband came at once, and then
 She to the dames and worthy men
 A final solemn prayer did make
 That for God and for their soul's sake
 Her body should be used to fill
 The moat where she with such good will
 had laboured. For she would not lend
 Her corse to any other end.¹⁰⁴

Such praise for a woman in any of the crusades is rarely documented and to have such a lengthy one as this is quite unusual. But Ambroise in general was quite fair in his comments on women, especially those who tried hard to support the expedition and were willing to do much to help achieve victory for it.¹⁰⁵ Baha' ad-Din also wrote of an heroic woman archer in the last attack of Acre who caused much suffering for the Muslims:

'[An] observant old soldier who penetrated the trenchers that day told me that on the other side of the parapet was a woman dressed in green mantle, who shot at us with a wooden bow and wounded many Muslims before she was overcome and killed. Her bow was taken and carried to the Sultan, who was clearly impressed by the story.'¹⁰⁶

Although this warrior is a woman from the west, Baha' ad-Din seems impressed that she was so lethal in wounding and killing many Muslim warriors, as in fact was Saladin, who retained her bow.

However, not all women on the Third Crusade were written of in such a favourable light. At Acre, the Archbishop's chaplain wrote to the convent of Canterbury saying: 'The army is given over to shameful activity. It is with sorrow and sighs that I tell you that it indulges in idleness and vice rather than in

¹⁰⁴ Ambroise, pp.162-63.

¹⁰⁵ Apart from the accounts of women and crusaders after the siege at Acre, in Jaffa and at Tyre. At these places it appears he blamed the crusaders as much as he did the women. See Ambroise: p.233., pp.277-78., and p.323.

¹⁰⁶ Baha' ad-Din, 229-39 in Gabrielli, part II, chapter 5, p.218.

virtue. The Lord is not in the camp: there is none that doeth good ...'¹⁰⁷ And after the capture of Acre in 1191 by the crusaders,¹⁰⁸ the army enjoyed sexual relations with women who had been with them from the start of the crusade:

‘The people were too much given up to sloth and luxury, for the city was filled with pleasures ... the choicest wines and fairest damsels, and the men became dissolute by indulging in them; so that the city was defiled by the luxury of the sons of folly and the gluttony of its inhabitants, who made wiser faces blush at their shamelessness ...’¹⁰⁹

As a consequence of their actions and to avoid the wrath of God for such behaviour, when the army moved on it was decreed that the ‘loose women’ should stay behind in Acre. This was because of the nature of the march from Acre to Jaffa; it was a very tightly organised manoeuvre.¹¹⁰ If the crusaders wanted to regain Jerusalem they would first need to use Jaffa as the port nearest to Jerusalem as a base. Only certain females were allowed to continue with the crusaders, such as the washerwomen: ‘... in order to blot out this contamination, it was ordained by the council that no woman should quit the city or go with the army, except the washerwomen, on foot, who would not be a burden to them, nor an occasion for sin.’¹¹¹

And:

‘Because the women all refrained
From going; in Acre they remained,
Save for the good old dames who toiled,
And dames who washed the linen soiled

¹⁰⁷ Peter W. Edbury, *The Conquest of Jerusalem and the Third Crusade: Sources in Translation*, Brookfield, Vt.: Scolar Press, 1996, Part II, Selected Sources, 6C, p.171.

¹⁰⁸ Ronald C. Finucane, *Soldiers of the Faith*, p.180. It was captured on 12 July, 1191.

¹⁰⁹ This text is not now regarded as being authored by Geoffrey de Vinsauf (in *Chronicles of the Crusades, being Contemporary narratives of the Crusade of Richard the Lion heart*, Book IV, chapter IX, p.225). In 1873, M. Gaston Paris discovered it to be a prose translation from the Norman French into Medieval Latin of an ‘octosyllabic poem attributed to Ambroise, a Norman trouvère who went with Richard to the Third Crusade.’ The original work is known as the *Carmen Ambrosii* and the prose translation as the *Itinerarium Peregrinorum et Gesta Regis Ricardi*. See Kenneth Fenwick, (ed.) *The Third Crusade: An Eyewitness Account of the Campaigns of Richard Coeur-de-Lion in Cyprus and the Holy Land*, London: Folio Society, 1958, pp.16-17.

¹¹⁰ John Gillingham, ‘Richard I and the Science of War in the Middle Ages’, in John Gillingham and J.C. Holt, (eds), *War and Government in the Middle Ages*, Cambridge: Boydell Press, 1984, pp.88-9., and Mayer, p.147. The army trudged south to Jaffa on 22 August 1191.

¹¹¹ Cited in Geoffrey de Vinsauf, p.225., although probably from the account of Ambroise.

And laved the heads of pilgrims - these
Were good as apes for picking fleas'.¹¹²

It is difficult to understand why it was that washerwomen were exempt from being placed under the same category as other women, that is, women who were dangerous seducers and pollutants. Perhaps it has to do with class and status, that washerwomen were viewed as untouchable because they were from such a low background, and it would be a very low man who would try to seduce them, although in several cases they did not seem to mind having sex with prostitutes, who, in the Bible were deemed the lowest of all women.¹¹³ Ambroise also mentions these women as 'old dames' which could explain why they were not an occasion for sin, but then further states other 'dames who washed the linen soiled'. And surely they could not all have been unpleasant to the eye. This is definitely hard to understand, although perhaps the last line of this quote from Ambroise may shed some light on these women. Why he would say they were as good as apes suggests that he saw them as from a very low, degraded class, although the tasks they did were much needed and valued. Linked with this we could also conclude that washerwomen were acceptable not just because they were useful, but because they were 'clean' by profession.

On 7 September at Arsulf (north of Jaffa), Saladin tried to break the Christians in one decisive battle. But Richard I was Saladin's superior in battle; he stuck firmly to his order of battle, and the much feared English archers caused the Muslims great harm until the massed English cavalry charged and the Muslims had no option but to admit defeat. While resting there after it was fortified, the 'whores of Acre' began to reappear.¹¹⁴

'Therein the host [Christians] took up abode.
And there each day made more inroad
Amongst them vice and wickedness

¹¹² Ambroise, p.233.

¹¹³ Leviticus XXI, 9, 13-14; Deuteronomy XXIII, 2; III Kings XI, 1-4; Proverbs VI, 24; Ecclesiasticus IX, 8-13; Apocalypse XVII.

¹¹⁴ Finucane, *Soldiers of the Faith*, p.180. After being excluded from the camps for some time, these women probably followed the crusaders to Jaffa, perhaps with other camp followers. But these 'whores' could also have been other women already at Jaffa who were labelled as such.

And evil and lasciviousness.
 Back to the host the women came
 And plied the trade of lust a shame ...
 How wrongfully did those behave
 Who unto evil - doing gave
 Themselves, and lost the precious price
 Of pilgrimage through their own vice.¹¹⁵

This 'evil and lasciviousness' and the women who caused it continued into Tyre and seemed never to leave the crusade;¹¹⁶ as Ambroise wrote of the 'Fleshspots or French of Tyre':

'Those who were present there assured
 Us that they danced through the late hours
 Of night, their heads bedecked with flowers
 Entwined in garland and in crown;
 Beside wine casks they sat them down
 And drank until matins had rung;
 Then downward made their way among
 The harlots, swearing great oaths, breaking
 Gates and portals down, and making
 Loud cry of foolish words and strife -
 Such was forsooth, their way of life.'¹¹⁷

The armies of the Third Crusade therefore appeared to have had many problems with harlots, the morality of its warriors and sin, or so the expedition's writers believed and tried to convey to their readers. The situation shocked and alarmed clerical chroniclers who warned crusaders of the punishment that God would inflict them if they did not mend their ways. The leaders of the crusade tried time and again to expel 'whores' from the camp, so wrote the chroniclers, but they succeeded only occasionally, and only at times when their forces were in peril. As soon as a crisis ended, loose women reappeared and took up their trade with the soldiery once more. It is interesting that if women were hindering the crusade and causing so much havoc as was constantly been claimed, more was not then done to exclude them from crusade.

¹¹⁵ Ambroise, pp.277-78.

¹¹⁶ See Ambroise for further descriptions on this p.323., and Geoffrey de Vinsauf, Book IV, chapter XXVI, p.248., and Book VI, chapter XX, p.271.

¹¹⁷ Ambroise, p.323.

The disruptive nature of women in the camps of the crusaders was also prevalent in the Fourth Crusade of 1202-1204. This crusade was summoned by Innocent III in August 1198, not long after he had ascended the papal throne. The aim of the expedition was to land in Egypt, through which it was believed the Holy Land could be recovered more easily from the Muslims than by direct assault.¹¹⁸

However, this crusade differed greatly from any previously in that it changed drastically and became a fight against Christians in Constantinople. Despite this difference, one similarity can be seen in the expedition. This was the problem the clergy had with women in the camp. Women, they believed, behaved as 'whores' and diverted warriors from their duty to God and the campaign. It became such a problem, that prior to the final assault on Constantinople, the clergy ordered all the 'evil women' to be rounded up, put onboard a ship and sent far away from the army.¹¹⁹ Such women defiled the holy camp and seduced the warriors from their duty to God and his cause. As the women were now removed, the crusaders could concern themselves in the final assault on Constantinople, with pillaging and plundering the city unmercifully for three days, slaughtering hundreds of its inhabitants, and in effect, destroying 'one of the glorious centers of ancient Christendom.'¹²⁰

When examining Muslim accounts on the crusades, it is interesting to discover that they record much more detail and provide much more space on these women than western writers.¹²¹ 'Imad ad-din al-Isfahani for example, wrote of a warrior queen and other women who fought in the crusades at great length:

'She was a queen in her own land,¹²² and arrived accompanied by 500 knights with their horses and money, pages and valets,

¹¹⁸ D.E. Queller, *The Fourth Crusade*, Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1978, p.13.

¹¹⁹ Robert of Clari, pp.71-2., and Finucane, *Soldiers of the Faith*, p.181.

¹²⁰ R.H. Schmandt, 'The Fourth Crusade and the Just-War Theory', *Catholic Historical Review*, 61, (1975), p.220.

¹²¹ Ambroise perhaps being the exception to this rule.

¹²² The identity of this Queen is not disclosed to the reader. We do know that Eleanor accompanied the future Queen of England, Richard's fiancée, as far as Pisa in the Third

she paying all their expenses and treating them generously out of her wealth. They rode out when she rode out, charged when she charged, flung themselves into the fray at her side, their ranks unwavering as long as she stood firm.

Among the Franks there were indeed women who rode into battle with cuirasses and helmets, dressed in men's clothes; who rode out into the thick of the fray and acted like brave men although they were but tender women, maintaining that all this was an act of piety, thinking to gain heavenly rewards by it and making it their way of life.¹²³

This information we do not obtain from the western chronicles. In fact, some chroniclers do not even portray women as fighting at battles, but rather that they helped carry water to the crusaders and gave them moral support, as the anonymous author of the *Gesta Francorum* wrote regarding the battle of Dorylaeum:

'The women in our camp were a great help to us that day, for they brought up water for the fighting men to drink and gallantly encouraged those who were fighting and defending them'.¹²⁴

Muslim writers however, record these women as among the crusader infantry, fighting side by side with the male warriors:

'On the day of battle more than one women rode out with them like a knight and showed (masculine) endurance in spite of the weakness (of her sex); clothed only in a coat of mail they were not recognised as women until they had been stripped of their arms'.¹²⁵

Clearly there were differing accounts amongst the chroniclers on women who fought, those who supplied their menfolk with water and moral encouragement, and those who said nothing at all. It would appear from what can be ascertained in Muslim accounts that they saw these warrior women as

Crusade, but she did not fight - she returned to England, and Berengaria, the soon to be wife of Richard I is not known to have participated in battle. No other source mentions this Queen.

¹²³ 'Imad ad-Din al-Isfahani, 'Frankish Women of Peace and War', 228-30, in Gabrielli, pp.206-7.

¹²⁴ *Gesta Francorum* p.19.

¹²⁵ 'Imad ad-Din al-Isfahani, p.207.

quite extraordinary, as incredibly strong fighters and something which would not have been common in their own country.¹²⁶

In the crusading history of 1096-1204, the vast majority of notices concerning women in the records deal with the sexual temptations they posed for male crusaders and the lamentable frequency with which men yielded. 'The crusaders' proclivity to sexual sin became an oft-repeated refrain in the narrative accounts,'¹²⁷ and the chroniclers blamed every reversal that the crusaders suffered on the sexual excesses of men, but occasioned by women. Thus, an obvious tactic to avert defeat was to purify the army by expelling the prostitutes and in most cases, all women from the camp before a major engagement.¹²⁸ While Raymond d' Aguilers considered that God's wrath was not provoked when married men had sexual relations with their wives, others feared any activity at all might enrage him because they had polluted his camp and the holy expedition in which they participated.¹²⁹ Driving out women from the camps for only a short period of time did not seem long enough for chroniclers because no sooner had they re-entered the camp, than women made themselves available for men. Thus, the majority of women were depicted as lowly, debauched characters, out to satisfy their lusts and that of the men. The chroniclers do not appear to have mentioned the purely religious or chaste women who accompanied crusaders, although there were at times of crisis women mentioned who were helpful to the army in supplying water or stones as ammunition.¹³⁰ The absence of Magdalens on crusade, as the chroniclers show, perhaps reflects not their absence from the expedition, but that they did not serve the role which the 'harlot' had to in explaining the failure for the crusaders, of the business of Christ.

¹²⁶ Only a few accounts of Muslim warrior women are found.

¹²⁷ Brundage, 'Prostitution, Miscegenation and Sexual Purity ...', p.58.

¹²⁸ This included unattached women. See Baldric of Dol, p.66., in Brundage, 'Prostitution, Miscegenation and Sexual Purity ...', p.59.

¹²⁹ Raymond d' Aguilers, *Le 'Liber' de Raymond d'Aguilers*, (eds) J.H. Hill and L.L. Hill, Paris, 1969, p.97.

¹³⁰ See *Gesta Francorum* and Fulcher of Chartres for these accounts.

It could be argued that the clergy could not really expect warriors to refrain from sex because this was something which occurred in all warrior camps. However, the crusade was a religious expedition, 'undertaken for the sake of the souls of the participants as well as to free Jerusalem.'¹³¹ The preaching of the clergy against misconduct was directed toward an important end: to reconcile the warriors to their Creator; to preserve the sense of righteousness which gave confidence to the Christian army, and in this way, to keep up its fighting spirit.

To conclude therefore, depending on which chronicle is read the woman warrior could be excused because she was fighting for a sacred cause and for the glory of God. Women were allowed to fight if they had taken on the appearance of a man, although this 'de-sexing' was not always approved of. If a woman rode out to battle, as Eleanor of Aquitaine was said to have as an Amazon, many moralists would be outraged as she was seen as a woman, and a disruptive one at that. Women were also excused and allowed to fight because of the simple fact that there were not nearly enough male warriors on the expedition. Riley-Smith has said for instance, that outside Nicaea, in June 1097, the army of the first crusade may have numbered more than 40,000 persons, of whom only 4,500 were nobles or knights.¹³² This could explain in part why little or nothing is said in the chronicles about women on the battlefield, because while their help may have been valued, it remained true that contemporaries saw them as polluting the pilgrimage, the camps and the battleground. They expressed this by ejecting women from the camp when things went wrong, as Fulcher of Chartres stated regarding the siege of Antioch:

'Then having taken counsel, they cast out the women from the army, married an unmarried, lest perchance, befouled by the mire of riotous living, they might displease God.'¹³³

¹³¹ Porges, p.51.

¹³² Jonathan Riley-Smith, *The Atlas of the Crusades*, New York: Facts on File, 1991, p.22.

¹³³ Fulcher of Chartres, Book XV, p.54.

The place of women journeying on pilgrimage/crusade was in some doubt in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. This was because of both the history of discouragement and the fact that this was a fighting pilgrimage, which raised other questions, such as the role of women in the battlefields and in the camps. These questions occupied the thoughts of many crusaders and clergy. This was a holy war, fought on behalf of God for the recapture of the sacred city of Jerusalem from the Infidel and the establishment of the 'right order'. As the Scriptures had pointed out, the crusaders were not unlike the Israelites because they too wished to achieve victory for God and their faith. However, as several examples demonstrated in the Old Testament, women were constantly viewed as the enemy within because they polluted the camp of God, disrupted and seduced his followers (warriors) and allowed for the heathen to overrun the Israelites; allowing the enemy to reign victorious. If the crusaders wished to be granted victory in this life and in the next, they would have to heed the warnings of the Scriptures, and expel women from the camps in times of preparation and prayer for battle. The fact that victory was not always achieved, played on the crusaders minds as they believed they had failed and angered God, who in turn had deserted them. Women were viewed as the cause of this evil. They were denounced as evil harlots who corrupted men and drew them towards damnation. Most women were rarely excluded from such a construct. The general view of women as disruptive beings was an excuse continually used throughout the history of the crusades to explain defeat and ease the consciences of the warriors (and moralists).

CONCLUSION:

‘To the Crusaders ... their failures were inexplicable. They were fighting for the cause of the Almighty; and if faith and logic were correct, that cause should have triumphed.’¹

The crusading cause rarely triumphed however, in the period of 1096-1204. The numerous failures which occurred in all these crusading expeditions spelled out to its participants that there ‘were evil forces about which thwarted God’s work.’² Such evil forces were believed to come in the form of the fairer sex who symbolised temptation, defilement and danger for warriors. All disasters which the crusaders suffered occurred while women were present with them in the camps, and as this thesis has discussed, such concepts were not new in warfare. In the Old Testament, for instance, I examined how the children of Israel believed they were the army of God which needed to defend their religion against pagan tribes. The crusading armies of the middle ages believed too that theirs was a holy war which aimed to liberate Jerusalem from the Infidel and defend the faith. Because these wars were fought for God, the crusader camps needed to remain undefiled. This meant that all those who were deemed ‘pollutant’ or ‘defiling’ were placed outside the camp, especially on the eve of battles, when the warriors needed to remain pure and chaste in the camp, and pray before God and ask for his blessing and aid against the Infidel. Success in war required a warrior to be whole in body and spirit, having confessed his sins and ritually cleansed his body of defilement through fasting, sexual abstinence, and sometimes scourging. He had to be whole-hearted in the task ahead of him. During the First Crusade, as we have seen, a pattern of ceremonies seems to have developed to try to ensure this in Nicaea in May 1097, Dorylaeum in July 1097, and Antioch in 1097-98. When victories occurred for the crusaders, as various chroniclers pointed out, prostitutes and those portrayed as of doubtful

¹ Steven Runciman, ‘The Crusades: A Moral Failure’, in James A. Brundage, *The Crusades: Motives and Achievements*, p.79.

² *ibid.*

morality, entered the picture again to help the crusaders celebrate their victory. Similar occurrences are related to us in the Old Testament when the children of Israel fought in battle. Several times after battle the Israelites sank into debauchery, licentiousness and even turned their backs on God who had protected and aided them in battle, choosing instead to adore other gods.³ Because of their rebellion against God, and because they had defiled themselves in his presence, God punished them for their wickedness and refused to aid them. Like the Israelites, the crusaders also committed acts of lust, fornication and sin. Because of such acts, the bishops, clergy and moralists believed the crusaders had sinned before God and on his holy expedition, they were therefore punished for their sins.

The large numbers of women, both pilgrims and the inhabitants of the localities in which the crusaders were encamped, not to mention the prostitutes and other hangers-on, were seen to create problems for any expedition, both because the laws of pilgrimage demanded abstinence from sexual acts, and because the women were viewed as defiling and impeding the crusade. As Riley-Smith has said: 'Sufferings, privation and misfortunes were the salutary penalties, the rods of God, imposed to purify the crusaders and to punish them when they disobeyed his wishes or lapsed into sin.'⁴

Fulcher of Chartres, commenting on the disastrous period of 1097/98, in which the crusaders were besieging Antioch under much pain and poverty (as a result of their sins) wrote: 'So like gold thrice proved and purified sevenfold by fire, long predestined by God, I believe, and weighed by such a great calamity, they were cleansed of their sins.'⁵

Propagandists were able to explain satisfactorily the defeats of crusaders by developing a theme found in the Old Testament and in the writings of Saint Augustine and his Christian successors, according to which defeat in a holy

³ Numbers XXV, 1-2.

⁴ Riley-Smith, *The First Crusade and the Idea of Crusading*, p.113.

⁵ Fulcher of Chartres, Book I, XVI, p.55.

cause was a punishment, a humiliation imposed by God on man for sin. Defeats, especially those suffered in a holy enterprise, were God's judgements, 'the sanctions of an infinitely just judge on those frail instruments of his whom he had deputed to carry out the tasks he had allotted, but on whom he would not spare the rod.'⁶

This was to have a long history in crusading thought. The first crusaders themselves had interpreted their troubles and difficulties as salutary punishments (a theme taken up by later commentaries), to whom failures were attributed above all to the crusaders' own sins. They were viewed as chastisements, as a means not only of punishing them, but also of keeping a rein on them and guiding them back onto the right path. Baldric of Bourgueil believed that God chastised them because of their insolence and pride in their many victories, and Odericus Vitalis concluded that:

'In the same way we read in Holy Scripture that the children of Israel were frequently afflicted and defeated in war by the Philistines and the Edomites and Midianites and other neighbouring peoples, to force them to run back again to God and to persevere in keeping his commandments.'⁷

Throughout this thesis I have examined the idea of woman as weak, dangerous, pollutant, and as a harlot, beginning with early beliefs and ideas, especially those as expounded in the Bible, to the writings of chroniclers in the crusades. One question which has arisen from this discussion is how, if women were considered to be polluting and harmful, did they come to travel on crusade, in such large numbers and continue to do so throughout the crusades, despite the protests and condemnations of the clergy and moralists? It was because a crusade was a pilgrimage as well as an act of penance for the sins of its participants,⁸

⁶ Riley-Smith, *The First Crusade and the Idea of Crusading*, p.133.

⁷ Odericus Vitalis, V, p.132.

⁸ Brundage, 'Prostitution, Miscegenation ...', p.57.

‘a holy war authorised by the pope, who proclaimed it in the name of God or Christ Proposed, like all justifiable Christian violence, as a defensive reaction to injury or aggression or as an attempt to recover Christian territories lost to the infidels, it answered to the needs of the whole Church or of all Christendom ... rather than to those of a particular nation or region.’⁹

Thus, it embodied three different elements, that of pilgrimage, rituals of purification and military campaigns. The theory and practice of pilgrimage was a very old and deeply religious one and its traces were evident in Exodus and Leviticus and from beyond the Bible. Pilgrimage was seen as a practice denied to no person, no matter what sex, background or class. This included women, although some believed it wiser for them to remain at home as a result of their impure and sinful ways, and in the danger of their mixing with the opposite sex.¹⁰ This belief was justified and confirmed by the Bible. Women were seen as polluting the journey and the sacred sites whilst perverting and corrupting those present. Therefore, although women could go on pilgrimage, it was widely believed that they should not do so because they were harmful and debased. This belief was carried on into the crusade. Because it was an expedition fought for God and for Christendom, the journey, military camps, and battlefields needed to be expunged of all evil, sinful and defiling objects, namely women. If this was not done, God would punish the army just as he had punished the Israelite armies centuries earlier.

Several parallels therefore, can be seen between the Old Testament, that is, the Books of Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus and others, and the crusading periods. In both, pollution was viewed as causing great harm to the people, the sacred encampments and sites, and in war. This pollution was believed to be a result of the declining morality of men and women, but in particular blame was placed upon the women, the inferior sex. Several reasons were used to explain this such as women having their ‘issue of blood’, seducing and infecting men with lust and sin, copulating with men, especially in the ‘time of their flowers’, and

⁹ J.S.C. and L. Riley-Smith, *The Crusades: Idea and Reality, 1095-1274*, London: Edward Arnold, 1981, p.1.

¹⁰ See Gregory of Nyssa.

most of all, because it was the weakness of woman that resulted in the expulsion of man from Paradise: 'From the woman came the beginning of sin, and by her we all die.'¹¹ These explanations were used whenever an army was defeated or whenever conditions became unbearable, as women were present in all these events and the blame was easily shifted to them.

But not all writers believed women to be so offensive or destructive, as Ambroise pointed out in the Third Crusade. Women, he believed, were quite capable in war and in sharing the crusaders' hardships and perils. And the anonymous *Gesta Francorum* wrote approvingly of women who braved enemy fire to bring water to the crusaders in the battle of Dorylaeum. But such acts were soon forgotten if failures occurred, as the presence of any woman in the camps or on the battlefield was believed to anger the Almighty.

In examining the crusades, I believe the Old Testament models shaped the recording of crusading history to a considerable extent. Such an influence may be believed to obscure the writing of events which occurred, as is illustrated in the four expeditions I have studied, particularly when failures occurred. God was angry with his warriors and therefore punished them because of their sins. However, Runciman believes that '... it was not so much wickedness as stupidity that ruined the Holy Wars.... No one amongst the Crusaders would admit that their real crimes were a wilful and narrow ignorance and an irresponsible lack of foresight.'¹² As this would and could not be admitted, and the crusader vision of a pure world became fundamentally unattainable, the crusades contained within itself the need for someone to blame for failure - women.

The rather negative portrayal of women which has accumulated in the course of this study is not necessarily a reflection of their place in all aspects of medieval society. In the domestic and industrial-urban economy, for example,

¹¹ Ecclesiasticus XXV, 33.

¹² Runciman, 'The Crusades: A Moral Failure', p.80.

they were expanding their roles and their importance throughout these same centuries as David Herlihy has illustrated in *Opera Muliebria: Women and Work in Medieval Europe*.¹³ This thesis however, has examined women in a very particular, very peculiar context: the crusades. The place of women in war has not evolved into some 'normalcy', but is as contentious now as it was then.

¹³ David Herlihy, *Opera Muliebria: Women and Work in Medieval Europe*, New York: McGraw-Hill Publishing Company, 1990.

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