

Stephen of Blois: Sensitive New-Age Crusader or Victim of History?*

JOHN H. PRYOR

According to conventional historiography, Pope Urban II, after the Council of Clermont, called on 27 November 1095 for an expedition to recover Jerusalem from the Muslims, commonly known today as the First Crusade.¹ Armies gathered and left the West during the spring and summer of 1096. Some reached Constantinople late in 1096 but most arrived in the spring of 1097. They crossed into Asia Minor in May 1097 and reached Antioch in late October, eventually taking the city on 3 June 1098. The final march on Jerusalem was long delayed but the Crusaders at last reached the Holy City on 7 June 1099 and stormed it successfully on 15 July.

No matter what one may think about the 'political correctness' of the Crusade today, no one can deny that it was an extraordinary undertaking. Somehow, some 70,000–80,000 people, of both sexes and of all ages and occupations, financed (often inadequately) and undertook the overland journey to Jerusalem. Perhaps 20,000 survived the march of three years and reached their objective. The faith that both sustained them through the hardships and horrors of the Crusade, and also drove them to inflict equal horrors on others is something to wonder at and to try to comprehend.

Many have tried to understand the mentality of the Crusaders and the human experience of the First Crusade but they have had little to work with because of the dearth of personal sources that survive from it.² Largely because of this, most Crusading scholarship is written in terms of generalities and principles. Very rarely are we privileged to catch a glimpse of the actions and thoughts

* *Associate Professor John H. Pryor teaches Medieval History at the University of Sydney.*

of a real human being. However, one exception to this was one of the second-rank leaders of the Crusade: Count Stephen of Blois, Chartres, Meaux, and Châteaudun.³ One of the most important authors of the primary chronicles of the Crusade, Fulcher of Chartres, who wrote the first redaction of the early parts of his chronicle between 1100 and 1102, was with Stephen's army as far as Antioch and had a good deal to say about him.⁴ Also, there are extant versions of two letters from Stephen to his wife Adela, the only surviving personal letters of any First Crusader to his family.⁵ The important parts of these letters relevant to the present context are translated in the Appendix. Stephen's personal testimony to his own participation in the Crusade and to his emotions is unique.

Moreover, Stephen is an especially interesting Crusader because he left the armies at Antioch on 2 June 1098 (the day before the city was taken) and returned home, an act which ever since has seen him characterised as a coward and a deserter.⁶ In 1100, after the news of the conquest of Jerusalem reached the West and a new Crusade was launched, Stephen left for the East again, where he met a martyr's death in 1102. He was a man who can be shown to have been a typical human being, with strengths and weaknesses. Furthermore, there is a compelling case to be addressed that he has been unjustly vilified by History.

Stephen Henry, the eldest son of Count Thibaut of Champagne by his first wife, was born between 1045 and 1048. Sometime between 1080 and 1084 he married Adela, a daughter of William the Conqueror, who was herself born between 1067 and 1069. Why Stephen did not marry until so late in life is unknown but at the time of their marriage he must already have been in his mid to late thirties while Adela was probably still in her mid teens.⁷ On the one hand, it is important to appreciate that Adela had been born after William had become King of England in 1066 and that she was thus a king's daughter, a *porphyrogenita*, not just the daughter of someone who later became a king. The difference was important. Adela was named for her maternal grandmother,

Adela of France, daughter of Robert II the Pious (996–1031), thus emphasising her royal descent on both sides. For Stephen the marriage was extremely advantageous both for him personally and for his house of Champagne/Blois/Chartres in its internecine struggles with the Capetian royal house and the Counts of Anjou. Their children might hope to wear a crown, as indeed their second son, Stephen, eventually would. On the other hand, although Adela was the daughter of a king, her lineage could not compare in antiquity to that of Stephen. He could trace his back to Herbert II of Vermandois, who had married Adela, a daughter of King Robert I of France, and who was himself directly descended from Charlemagne, even if by an illegitimate line. Moreover, Stephen's house of Champagne was the most powerful noble family in Northern France. William the Bastard would not have been unhappy with this marriage.

Was Stephen infatuated with Adela, and she with her handsome older husband? No matter what they thought about his other qualities, the chroniclers of the Crusade invariably praised his personal charm, nobility, and *savoir faire*, as well as his skill at arms and his bravery. It is true that the contexts in which they attributed these qualities to him raise questions about their motives in doing so and therefore about the qualities themselves.⁸ Qualities of this kind were also attributed to various of the other leaders by different chroniclers in particular circumstances and there is no reason to believe that they were intended to be specifically accurate, but were, to some degree at least, just the rhetorical flourish of medieval historians. Nevertheless, there is sufficient consistency between the various reports in the attribution of these qualities to Stephen to lead to the conclusion that they reflected some reality. One is left with the impression that he really was something of a handsome and suave man of the world.

Abbot Baudry of Bourgueil (c.1046–1130), poet, chronicler of the Crusade, and later archbishop of Dol, said that Adela was a beauty who was faithful to her husband and loved by him. In a famous poem addressed to her, which appears to have penned during an absence of Stephen, he wrote:

Hanc morum probitas, hanc castum pectus honestat,
Hanc nobilis soboles ornat amorque viri.

Sunt tamen et multi quos commendare puellis
Et decus et probitas et sua forma queat,

Hanc qui temptassent. Sed quid temptasse juvaret?
Servat pacta sui non violanda tori.

Hanc decor insolitus et inaequiparanda venustas
Commendantque simul gratia colloquii.
Sed quis tam duram silicem mollire valeret?
Inspiciunt sine re, sed juvat inspicere.

Praemia magna putant dum spe pascuntur inani,
Irritantque suos hanc inhiando oculos.
Nec mirum, quoniam species sua tanta refulget
Debeat ut cunctis praefore virginibus

[Probity of character, [and] a chaste heart, ennoble her,
A noble progeny and the love of [her] husband ornaments her.
There are, however, many [men], whom both their honour
and probity, and handsomeness can recommend to young wives,
Who would have put her to the test. But what would it benefit [them]
to have tested [her]?
She preserves her inviolable covenant of marriage.
Unusual beauty and unequalled charm compliment her
together with gracefulness of conversation.
But who would be able to soften such a hard stone?
They gaze on [her] without possession [of her], but it pleases
[them] to gaze on [her].
They imagine great rewards while they feed on vain hope
And they inflame their eyes by gaping at her.
Not to wonder, because her splendour glitters
So much that she ought to be the first of all young women.}†

An anonymous encomiastic poem addressed to her also referred
to her beauty:

Femina nulla potest reperiri tempore nostro,
Cui data commoda sint tantaque totque simul.
Si genus inquiriris, soror est et filia regis;

Si uitae meritum, relligiosa satis;
Si maiestatem, ducis et mater et uxor;
Si rerum summam, res sibi multa domi.

Res amplas fortuna dedit, natura decorem,
Sed neque res fastus, nec decor opprobrium.

[No woman can be found in our times,
To whom so great and so many advantages have been given all
together.
If you ask her birth, she is the sister and daughter of a king;
If the merit of [her] life, [she is] very pious;
If [her] greatness, she is the mother and wife of a duke;
If the sum of [her] possessions, much property has she at home.
Fortune gave [her] great possessions, Nature [gave her] beauty,
But possessions did not [give her] arrogance, nor beauty
scandal.]¹⁰

Whether or not Adela was a beauty, she obviously had qualities which made Stephen very quickly take serious notice of her. From the beginning of their marriage she became with him a virtual co-ruler of their domains, which was very unusual at the time, and she was much praised for her abilities as a feudal ruler.¹¹ Abbot Guibert of Nogent (1053–c.1121), who was not noted for his appreciation of the female sex, described her as prudent, generous, bountiful and wealthy. The Anglo-Norman chronicler Orderic Vitalis (c.1075–1143) called her ‘honourable’. Bishop Ivo of Chartres (1040–1115) referred to her *honestas* (respectability), even in the course of a dispute. Hildebert of Lavardin (c.1056–1133), the bishop of Le Mans, was extravagant in his praise of everything about her. She was the glory of her sex.¹² Such praises of a powerful woman are obviously not all to be taken literally. They were part of the conventional *topos* of *encomia* for prominent women and were probably influenced

by what Adela herself let it be known that she wanted to hear.¹³ Nevertheless, collectively it amounted to very high praise indeed from many quarters for Adela's qualities and talents. There is too much consistency in the various vignettes of her for the common themes to be ignored. There can be little doubt that she was a very unusual woman. She was clearly attractive and personable and also intelligent and educated. She was wealthy in her own right and was energetic and capable. After Stephen's death, she ruled as regent for her sons and as head of his entire extended family until her retirement to the Cluniac nunnery of Marcigny in 1120. In a frequently violent world Adela more than held her own among the ruthless men who were her fellow feudal lords.

The evidence, circumstantial though it is, suggests that the marriage of Stephen and Adela may have been a real love match, or at least may have developed into one. It does not necessarily prove emotional intimacy, but the fact that Adela and Stephen had at least six and possibly eight children between their marriage and his departure on the Crusade in 1096 does suggest 'a degree of sexual compatibility', in LoPrete's words.¹⁴ When making his preparations to leave on the Crusade, Stephen certainly had Adela on his mind because, in donating a wood to the abbey of Marmoutier, he said that he did so '... that God, at the intercession of St Martin and his monks, may pardon me for whatever I have failed him in, and lead me out and back on the said journey safe and sound to my homeland, and take care of my oft-mentioned wife Adela and our children ...'.¹⁵ Although it is true that such *arengae* in monastic charters, explanations of the motives of the donors, were written by the monks of the monasteries in question, rather than by the donors, nevertheless the themes expressed here reverberated throughout Stephen's Crusade: a safe return to his homeland and concern for his wife and children. Moreover, in this case the text emphasised that the donation was made at Stephen's request, not just with his consent and at his suggestion. It is very tempting to regard the sentiments expressed here as a true reflection of Stephen's own thoughts, particularly the last clause.

Another point is that when Stephen was killed in the Holy Land

in 1102, Adela was still only around 35 years old. Yet there was apparently never any question of her remarrying, even though she was probably the most desirable heiress north of the Loire. Is it not tempting to see her life after Stephen's death as one of faithfulness to his memory and to their children? After Stephen's death, she described herself in an *arenga* of one of her own charters as 'the dearest wife of the Count Palatine, Stephen'.¹⁶ Note that the charter did not say 'wife of the dearest Count Palatine, Stephen', but rather attributed the sentiment to him. There was no reason for her to have had such an expression included in one of her charters unless she believed it and it was well known to have been true.

Stephen succeeded to his father's counties of Chartres, Blois, Meaux, and Châteaudun in 1089 and as such he became one of the most important barons of the Kingdom of France. According to Guibert of Nogent, he had extensive lands and was very powerful.¹⁷

Very little is known about his life before the Crusade, but he appears to have been a conventionally pious man, like most of the other leaders of the Crusade. Despite some dispute with bishop Ivo of Chartres, he was apparently generous to the Church; however, this was only normal for a man of his status. (In fact the reputations of various Crusader leaders for piety or lack of it in modern scholarship are quite misleading. Godfrey of Bouillon's reputation for piety was a creation of his own legend. Because he became the first ruler of the new Crusader state in Jerusalem, *ipso facto* a deep religiosity became attributed to him. But in fact the sources which we have for him before the Crusade show a man who was frequently in conflict with the Church, even fighting with Emperor Henry IV against Papal forces in Italy. Bohemond of Taranto, on the other hand, has acquired a reputation for lack of any religiosity, largely because he stayed in Antioch after its capture and became its first Prince rather than marching on with the other armies to Jerusalem. But the sources for his life before the Crusade show a man who was unusually generous to the Church, had close relations with Pope Urban II, and even attended several Church Reform Councils.)¹⁸

In some of the modern historiography Stephen has been represented as a reluctant Crusader who was driven to join the expedition by Adela.¹⁹ However, there is no evidence for this. Such accusations are founded on a spurious reading-back of motives from Stephen's leaving the Crusade at Antioch. On the contrary, Riley-Smith has recently characterised Stephen as an enthusiast for the Crusade who was followed on it by the entire ruling class of the Chartrain.²⁰ This is much more likely to have been closer to the truth. Although there is no reason to assume that Stephen was any more than conventionally pious, there is also no reason to doubt that he, like other Crusaders, sincerely undertook the expedition as a penitential pilgrimage for the remission of his sins. Canon Three, the Crusading canon, of the Council of Clermont, read: 'Whoever for devotion alone, not for gain of an honour [i.e., an estate] or money, sets out for Jerusalem to liberate the Church of God, may have this journey reckoned to him for all penance'.²¹ The letters and reported preaching of Pope Urban II after the council were unequivocal that this is what the proposed expedition was to be.²² Concerns about penance and remission of sins lay at the very heart of the spirituality of Latin Christians in the late eleventh century.²³

Before leaving, Stephen had to raise the funds necessary to sustain him through the expedition. The major sources of finance which the nobility are known to have utilised for this purpose were the pledging or sale of property or serfs to the Church or other feudal lords, renunciation of property claims for cash, and loans against the usufruct of property and feudal rights.²⁴ However, it is significant that there is no evidence in the surviving sources for either Stephen or Adela raising funds for his expedition by selling or pledging lands or rights in this way.

Stephen took the Cross in 1096 under unknown circumstances and joined up with his brother-in-law, Robert Curthose, Duke of Normandy, and Count Robert of Flanders. His forces were estimated by Stephen Runciman at 2,000–2,400 men, of whom 250–300 were knights.²⁵ But this is a sheer guess. Albert of Aachen, about whom virtually nothing is known other than that he was probably a canon of Aix-la-Chapelle (Aachen), but who

penned the relevant first books of his *Jerusalemite History* around 1102 or shortly thereafter,²⁶ wrote that when Stephen left the siege of Antioch, he was accompanied by 4,000 men of his own following, or *comitatus*.²⁷ However, Stephen's own letters reveal that not all of his vassals accompanied him to the East and it is unlikely that all of those who left with him from Antioch were from the following which had set out with him. Men changed camps frequently during the course of the Crusade. Some of his own vassals may well have stayed on and joined other leaders.²⁸

Fulcher of Chartres described the departure of the Crusader armies in the following terms:

Oh what grief there was! What sighs, what weeping, what lamentation among friends when husband left his wife so dear to him, and also his children, possessions however great, father and mother, brothers and other relatives. ...

Then husband set for wife the time of returning, that if life should be as [his] companion, he would return home to her, God permitting. He commended her to the Lord, offering a kiss to her, and promising to her weeping that he would return. She, however, fearing that she would never see him again, could not stand but fell senseless to the ground, mourning for her companion whom she was losing in this life as if already dead. He, however, as if having no compassion, although he had, nor feeling for the tears of his wife nor the grief of any of his friends, yet secretly suffering, departed constant with firm courage.²⁹

In Hagenmeyer's definitive edition of Fulcher, the first sentence of the second paragraph above reads, 'tunc coniunx coniugi terminum ponebat revertendi, quod si vita comes fuerit, adnuente Deo, ad eam repatriabit', that is, as translated above. However, for 'quod si vita comes fuerit, adnuente Deo, ad eam ...', six manuscripts belonging to the first redaction of the chronicle have 'quod si vixerit, infra tres annos ad eam ...'. This would change the translation to: 'Then husband set for wife the time of returning, that if he lived, he would return home to her within three years ...'. Hagenmeyer hypothesised that Fulcher included the precise term of three years in the first redaction of his chronicle on the basis of personal knowledge of what some Crusaders had done but glossed it over in later redactions because he knew that most

of them had not set a specific term.³⁰ Although Fulcher was presumably describing the departure of the armies in general terms, it is tempting to associate this setting of a term of three years with what he knew of Stephen of Blois, as Brundage appears to have done.³¹ Fulcher did not commence writing even this early part of his chronicle until sometime between 1100 and 1102 and therefore he knew at least the first part of the story of Stephen before he began writing.

Stephen and his two fellow leaders marched south across the Alps into Italy, where they met the Pope at Lucca and had an interview with him and received his blessing. They then went to Rome, where they prostrated themselves and prayed in the Basilica of St. Peter. Then, because it was already late in the year, Stephen and Robert of Normandy wintered with Norman friends in Calabria.³² They crossed from Brindisi to Durazzo in Albania at Easter 1097, and then followed the ancient Via Egnatia to Constantinople.

Stephen spent about two weeks (from c.14–28 May, 1097) in Constantinople. From there he sent Adela a letter, which has since been lost. However, his next letter, which does survive, said that he was repeating some at least of what he wrote in the first. He then crossed the Bosphoros and marched to Nicaea (Iznik, Turkey) to join the other Crusader forces already there, arriving on 3 June.

He wrote his first surviving letter to Adela from Nicaea around 24 June 1097. In it he said that the emperor, Alexios I Komnenos, had received him like a son, that there was no duke or count in the army in whom Alexios had placed more trust or who he had more favoured, that the emperor had asked that Stephen send one of their sons to Constantinople and had promised to pay him a great honour, and that there was no man alive whose munificence could compare to that of the emperor. Even Adela's father, William the Conqueror, could not compare to him: 'In our times, as it seems to us, there was no prince so magnificent in his whole integrity of character. Your father, my beloved, gave many and great things, but [compared] to him he was almost nothing.'

This letter appears at first reading to show that Stephen was a rather naive and perhaps credulous man who had been taken in by

Alexios's diplomacy. One might think that there was little probability that Stephen had been given any special treatment because he was simply not important enough to warrant it. Alexios had entertained all the leaders in a style designed to impress them and persuade them to swear oaths to him which would oblige them to hand over to the Empire any territories they conquered which had belonged to it prior to the Turkish assault of the 1070s. He had given them generous gifts.³³ His own part of the bargain was to supply them with guides, transportation, access to provisions, and to join them on the march with his own army. His failure to fulfil this last part of his agreement would have fateful consequences and Stephen of Blois would play a crucial part in Alexios's actions. However, there is also a possibility that Stephen's claim to some sort of special relationship with the emperor Alexios was not just empty bragging. As we shall see, his actions after he left the siege of Antioch and his reception in Constantinople during his 'second' Crusade of 1100–1102 suggest that this may have been the case.

There is also a strong probability that Stephen was trying to impress his wife in this letter. As we have seen, Adela had been born the royal daughter of William the Conqueror and had grown into a formidable woman who had been unusually closely associated with Stephen in the governance of their domains before the Crusade. Stephen's letters appear to show a man who was deferential to, and intimate with, his wife. It is not too much to suggest that he genuinely loved her, perhaps even adored her, and missed her sorely.

This first letter from Nicaea ended prophetically: 'I tell you, my beloved, that from the oft-mentioned Nicaea we will reach Jerusalem in five weeks, unless Antioch should thwart us. Farewell!'. In fact it would be another two years before the Crusaders stood before Jerusalem and when they did Stephen would not be with them.

We may pass over the following months because there is nothing much to report about Stephen, although both Fulcher of Chartres and Baudry of Bourgueil (Baldric of Dol) reported that he acquitted himself well at the battle of Dorylaeum (near

Eskishehir, Turkey) against the Turks on 1 July 1097.³⁴ However, Stephen was not singled out in any particular way by Fulcher or Baudry, even though, as we have seen, the latter was closely associated with Adela of Blois. He was merely included among lists of leaders, all of whom fought well.

Stephen encamped with most of the other leaders before Antioch on 20 October, 1097. At some time before the armies reached Antioch, possibly as early as when they were at Nicaea, he was singled out for a special role. In his second letter to Adela, written at Antioch on 29 March 1098, he wrote that:

Moreover, all our princes, with the common counsel of the whole army, have made me, even though I did not wish it, their lord [*dominus*] and overseer [*provisor*] and 'helmsman' [*gubernator*] of all their actions, up to the present time.

This is confirmed by references to him by the primary chroniclers, for example by Albert of Aachen, as the: '... head [*caput*] and first [*primus*] in the council [*consilio*] in the whole army'. He was referred to by the anonymous author of the *Gesta Francorum*, who is presumed to have been a knight in the army of Bohemond of Taranto and who was very hostile to Stephen, as the 'commander' [*ductor*] and by Raymond of Aguilers, the chaplain of Count Raymond of St Gilles, as the 'leader' [*dictator*] of the armies, the same word used by Guibert of Nogent.³⁵

This did not mean that he was the 'field marshal' of the armies, even if the terminology of his letter to Adela was sufficiently vague to leave open this interpretation. The vagueness may also suggest, again, that he was trying to impress Adela. In fact, at Antioch, that role was assumed by Bohemond of Taranto. It did mean that he was given the role of chairman of the council of leaders. The word *provisor* might also imply that he was in charge of the provisioning of the army, the quartermaster, if one likes; however, there is no evidence that he ever exercised such a function. It is also difficult to imagine Adela being impressed by Stephen's bragging about such a function, so why would he do so? It is more probable that he, or rather his chaplain Alexander, simply used the word in apposition to *dominus* and *gubernator*, meaning something like 'overseer' of all affairs.

What personal qualities equipped Stephen for this role it is difficult to know, although the chroniclers' reports of his personal charm and *savoir faire* in councils might help to explain it. The tone in which he described his election to this role in his second letter to Adela indicates that he was much flattered by being chosen for it, just as he had been flattered by Alexios's attentions at Constantinople. It tends to reinforce the impression of him as a not particularly astute individual who was very anxious for peer approval. But the other leaders would not have chosen him had he been incompetent. Obviously he had some diplomatic skills because the various leaders did not always agree and by the time that they reached Antioch the rivalry between Bohemond of Taranto and Raymond of St Gilles, Count of Toulouse, was already causing considerable strife. Perhaps Stephen was good at 'conflict resolution'. Chairing the council meetings must have called for keen negotiating skills.

The letter of 29 March 1098 also has another very curious statement: 'May you know for certain, my beloved, that I now have double the gold, silver and many other riches which, when I left you, your beloved self had assigned to me'. This is puzzling because by then the Crusaders had been encamped before Antioch for six months. They had run out of supplies, many had starved to death during the winter, and prices for food had reached exorbitant levels. In fact Stephen explicitly said later in the letter that:

Consequently, for fighting against these enemies of God and us, we have so far endured many hardships and innumerable evils by God's grace. Many also have already consumed everything of theirs in this very holy suffering. Very many of our Franks, indeed, would have suffered a temporal death from starvation, if the clemency of God and our money had not relieved them.

Many Crusaders deserted the armies because of the desperate situation. Both Peter the Hermit and William the Carpenter, Viscount of Melun, were pursued by Tancred and dragged back to the camp for punishment by Bohemond of Taranto.

So how had Stephen managed to double his wealth?³⁶ It is true that he had been given rich gifts by Alexios Komnenos but it is hard to believe that these would have so munificent as to have

doubled his wealth almost a year later. Or, was he merely trying to impress or reassure his wife once again? The clause 'which ... your beloved self had assigned to me' is clear evidence that Adela bankrolled Stephen's expedition, at least in part. The nature of the surviving sources, which are hopelessly skewed in favour of ecclesiastical cartularies, has probably distorted our picture of how the funds for the Crusade were raised. It is quite probable that a good deal of the finance for the Crusade came from the jewellery and other portable wealth of the women of noble families, one of the few sources of easily convertible wealth available to the nobility at the time. Since jewellery would not have been disposed of for cash to the Church, such transactions predictably do not appear in the surviving ecclesiastical cartularies. As we saw above, Guibert of Nogent and some of her other encomiasts said that Adela was a very wealthy woman in her own right and Stephen himself was also wealthy. They apparently managed to raise sufficient liquid capital from their revenues, savings, or accumulated treasure. Of what Adela's dowry had consisted is not known, but LoPrete has postulated that it was 'Anglo-Norman cash' and she has pointed out that Adela's dower lands included an 'immense tract of forest land between Blois, Châteaudun, and Vendôme'.³⁷ Stephen referred to Adela's 'gold, silver, and many other riches (*aliasque divitias multas*)', which she had assigned to him. What else could 'many other riches' be but jewellery, or possibly plate? Given Adela's great reputation as a manager and ruler, in the decade or more since her marriage she may well have turned her dowry and dower into a fortune that was capable of at least partially funding Stephen's Crusade. Was Stephen concerned that Adela should not think that her money had been lost?

It may be significant that in this letter Stephen's chaplain Alexander used the verb *attribuere* for Adela's action in funding his expedition. He did not use the obvious verb *dare* to say that she had 'given' him the money, but rather that she had 'assigned' it to him. *Attribuere* could be used in a general sense of bestowing or giving, but in Roman Law it could also be used in the sense of assigning something to another person so as to create an obligation of debt on the part of the receiver. Although the penetration of

Roman Law into the lands north of the Loire was only in its infancy at the end of the eleventh century, it is perhaps not too extreme to suggest that the careful use of the word *attribuere* may have reflected the fact that Adela expected her money back. Stephen may well have been in debt to her.

According to one interpretation, Stephen's devotion to the cause had supposedly begun to waver by the time of this second letter. The letter was dictated to his chaplain, Alexander, and then Stephen added this personal note:

Few, in truth, dearest, are the words which I write to you about much, and since I do not have the strength to express to you what things are on my mind, dearest, I enjoin you to conduct yourself honourably, and to manage your lands especially well, and to handle your children and vassals properly, as it becomes you, because as soon as I can, you will certainly gaze upon me. Farewell!

On the one hand, in the light of subsequent events, this may be read as indicating that he was already planning to leave by the end of March. Had he set a date for his return when he left, as Fulcher of Chartres said those departing did, and had that date now passed? Had he grossly underestimated how long the march to Jerusalem might take, as his first letter from Nicaea suggests? Had he expected to reach Jerusalem in the summer of 1097 and to return in the spring of 1098? Or, on the other hand, was Stephen just thinking wishfully? Whatever the case, we seem to see a man suffering from homesickness and separation from his wife, and longing to return as soon as possible. When they had left the West, none of the Crusaders could have envisaged how long the expedition would take. By the spring of 1098 Stephen and the others had been away from home for almost two years. Was it really unreasonable for any of them to begin to doubt whether they wanted to go, or were emotionally capable of going, further?

By May 1098 news had reached the armies that a great relief force under the atabeg Kerbogah, the Seljuq governor of Mosul, was on its way to Antioch. This was the major relief force sent by the Seljuq sultan in Baghdad. It was far more powerful than two earlier relief expeditions led by Duqāq of Damascus and Rīdwan of Aleppo, both of which had been defeated. But Kerbogah made

a fatal miscalculation. The city of Edessa (Urfa, Turkey) to the north-east of Antioch had been conquered by Baldwin of Boulogne on 10 March 1098 and Kerbogah was afraid to by-pass the city because of the threat to his rear which its garrison would pose. In fact the garrison was too small to pose any such threat but Kerbogah did not know this. In the event, he besieged the city unsuccessfully for three weeks, c.7–31 May.³⁸ Had he pressed on past Edessa the Crusaders would have been caught outside the walls of Antioch between Kerbogah's forces and the still-powerful garrison of the city. Stephen said in his second letter that by that time, 29 March, there were only 700 knights who still had horses and could fight.³⁹ Almost certainly they would have had to have fought a battle on two fronts and would have been destroyed.

But the three-week delay gave them time and, as is well known, Bohemond of Taranto found a way into the city on the night of the 2/3 June by entering into negotiations with a disaffected Armenian tower commander by the name of Fīrūz, who then allowed Bohemond's forces to scale the walls to his tower and to open the gates. Kerbogah's forces began to stream onto the plain outside the city just two days later, on 4 June, and by 7 June they were fully encamped around the city. The Crusaders now held the town but they were besieged from without and still had not taken the citadel. Antioch lay on the northern slopes of Mount Silpius, Ziyaret Daghī, between it and the river Orontes. The citadel was right at the summit of the mountain.

Stephen had remained with the armies until 2 June. Fulcher of Chartres said explicitly that he left to return home to France by sea on the day before the capture of Antioch on the night of the 2/3 June, that is, during the day of 2 June.⁴⁰ He was not alone. Albert of Aachen said that 4,000 men left with him and that they encamped at Alexandretta (Iskenderun, Turkey), some 25 miles north of Antioch across the Amanus range.⁴¹

This is all very curious. In fact, the entire traditional story defies all logic. There are too many questions to which there are no answers for it to have possibly been entirely true. Of all the chroniclers, the one who was closest to Stephen, Fulcher of Chartres, gave no reason for his departure. Albert of Aachen said

that he claimed to be very ill and this reason was also given both by the anonymous author of the *Gesta Francorum* and by Peter Tudebode, although both the latter said that the illness was merely pretended. Raymond of Aguilers said that he fled because of the talk of the forthcoming battle with Kerbogah.⁴² All the later rhetorical re-writers of the history of the Crusade attributed his action either to cowardice or to poverty or said simply that he was ill or that he pretended to be ill. Baudry of Bourgueil, perhaps because he was close to Adela, altered the hostile interpretation of feigned illness given by the anonymous author, whom he was generally following, to one of genuine illness and convalescence.⁴³

However, there is no independent evidence that Stephen was ill; he had shown already that he was no coward, and the claim of poverty flies in the face of his second letter to Adela.⁴⁴ Moreover, how could either poverty or illness have been a motive for 'deserting' on the very day before the planned night-time escalade of the walls?

As chair of the council of leaders Stephen must have been party to Bohemond's secret plan with Firuz to let the Crusaders into the city that night, assuming that Bohemond had in fact revealed it to all the other leaders.⁴⁵ Concerning the betrayal of the city, most modern historians have followed the anonymous author of the *Gesta Francorum*, according to whom Bohemond proposed to the other leaders that anyone who could get into the city should have it after its capture. The others demurred at first but eventually agreed in council to the proposal when the approach of Kerbogah made their situation desperate. So they must have known or guessed that Bohemond had something in mind, if not necessarily the specifics of his plan. Firuz sent his son as a hostage to Bohemond on the night of 1/2 June and Godfrey of Bouillon, Robert of Flanders, Raymond of St Gilles, and Adhemar of Le Puy were then brought into the plan.⁴⁶

According to the anonymous author's scenario it is just possible that Stephen of Blois could have left the camp before Bohemond revealed the details of his master plan to anyone else, although it is difficult to believe that he did not realise that something was afoot. The other chroniclers had varying versions of a somewhat

different scenario but all are so imprecise in their chronology that conclusions are difficult to draw. Raymond of Aguilers had the shortest version. According to him, the council sent Bohemond, Godfrey, and Robert of Flanders to test the offer made by Fīrūz, who had confided in the princes, some manuscripts say through Bohemond but others do not. Fulcher of Chartres' version differed in the first and second redactions of his chronicle. In both redactions the agreement was made with 'our men' and Fīrūz gave his son as a hostage to Bohemond. In the second redaction it was added 'to whom this plan had been first proposed and whom he had first influenced'. The first redaction did not have these clauses. In other words the first redaction said that the proposal was made to 'our men' in general and Bohemond had no special role beyond receiving Fīrūz's son as a hostage. Albert of Aachen simply said that the plan was Bohemond's and that he revealed it to Godfrey, Robert of Flanders, and Raymond of St Gilles, who agreed that Bohemond should have the city if the plan succeeded. Albert did not say when the plan was revealed.⁴⁷

None of the chroniclers knew the inside story of what had gone on. They had to piece together the most plausible story as it appeared to them from their part of the camps or as it was related to them later by those who had been in the camps. This is reflected in the widely different versions of the story given by them. According to the anonymous author, Fīrūz advised that a feint away from the city into Muslim territory be launched on the evening of the 2 June to lull the defenders into a false sense of security, that it was undertaken by a 'great force', and that under cover of dark, the knights returned by the plain and the foot soldiers by the mountain to take up positions opposite Fīrūz's tower. Fulcher of Chartres made no mention of this feint, but he was with Baldwin of Boulogne in Edessa at the time. Raymond of Aguilers also made no mention of it, but he was with Raymond of St Gilles. Albert of Aachen, on the other hand, whose informant(s) were with Godfrey of Bouillon, wrote that the feint was Bohemond's idea, that it was undertaken by Godfrey and Robert of Flanders with 700 knights as a pretended interception of Kerbogah's forces, and that they attacked a gate near the citadel

some distance from where Bohemond's men escalated the walls to Fīrūz's tower.⁴⁸

The weight of the evidence suggests that although the negotiations with Fīrūz were opened by Bohemond, at least some of the other leaders, and perhaps the whole council, were let into the plan at least as early as the night of 1/2 June. It is difficult to believe that knowledge of it would have been deliberately withheld from the council's own chairman by those in the know. Perhaps the specifics of which tower was to be escalated, and how, may have been withheld, but surely not the knowledge of the fact that an attempt at escalade was to be made. In order to lull the defenders of the city into a false sense of security that night, part of the army under Godfrey of Bouillon and Robert of Flanders was sent away at sunset, as though going off to intercept Kerbogah's army. Preparations for this feint would have taken some time and the fact that it was to be made could hardly have been unknown to Stephen as he made his own preparations. Under cover of dark the contingent turned back and joined Bohemond's forces for the assault on the south-east section of the walls. The other contingents of the armies, the forces of Raymond of St Gilles, Hugh of Vermandois, and Robert of Normandy, apparently stayed in the camp to maintain a semblance of normality.

We are asked to believe that Stephen 'deserted' the camp openly and with 4,000 fellow Crusaders, without opposition from the other leaders, on the very day before the plan to take the city by stealth during the night was to be put into effect, a plan about which he must have had some knowledge. He did not skulk away by night with a few followers but rather led with him 4,000 precious men and no doubt at least some even more precious horses. Moreover, he did not leave for the West. He merely removed to Alexandretta. Although all of the chroniclers have varying tones of disapproval or censure in their own accounts of his actions, none actually say that he was blamed by the other leaders at the time or that any attempt was made to stop him.⁴⁹ Yet the earlier 'deserters', at a much less critical juncture of the siege, had been hauled back by the scruffs of their necks by Tancred and berated by Bohemond. Surely we are forced to

conclude that Stephen must have left with the acquiescence of the other leaders.

Why would Stephen have left on the very eve of the action which he must have known could finally take the city? One possibility is that he waited until he thought that his roles and functions had been fulfilled honourably. Only when a plan to take Antioch had been put in place did he leave. Brundage has suggested that the departure was 'a matter of policy', of a plan hinted at two months before in the second letter to Adela, and that 'having once made up his mind to leave, [he] awaited an opportunity to withdraw from the Crusade as gracefully as possible'.⁵⁰ If so, this 'policy' cannot have been a secret one. The failure of the other leaders to attempt to stop him, the preparations that his 4,000 companions would have had to have made, the very curious timing to the day before the nocturnal escalation of the walls, and the fact that other Crusaders do not appear to have stigmatised him nor ostracised him as a deserter later, all suggest that what was done was done by agreement or with understanding. Was it the case that the other leaders knew that he had promised Adela to return within a specified term? Were the contents of his second letter well known?

Or was Stephen's withdrawal in fact part of the plan to take Antioch? Did Bohemond and the others take advantage of his known desire to return home to add to the creation of a false sense of security amongst the Turks watching from the walls of Antioch by suggesting that the army was breaking up? Was his pretended illness exactly that? Or was he actually temporarily ill and did he and the others use that to effect? The Turks would have known perfectly well whose flags were retreating into the distance and, if Stephen's desire to return home had been known for months, it is inconceivable that they would not have learned about it. Many prisoners had been taken on both sides during the long siege. Was his departure intended to complement the feint later in the day by Godfrey and Robert of Flanders and was the plan that he would return with his forces if Antioch was taken? The anonymous author of the *Gesta Francorum* said that after the capture of the city the Crusaders expected daily that Stephen would come to their aid, and this story was repeated by Baudry of Bourgueil.⁵¹

So, apparently, he was expected to return. Why would that have been so if he really had 'deserted'?

In fact Stephen did return, or at least he tried to. He was prevented from doing so by the almost immediate arrival of Kerbogah's forces from 4 June. He stayed at Alexandretta from around 3 June until some time after the encampment of Kerbogah outside the city on 4–7 June and before his defeat on 28 June. Then he came back to reconnoitre the situation at Antioch from a nearby mountain. If he really had been ill, he had made a speedy recovery! However, according to the anonymous author, when Stephen saw the innumerable tents of Kerbogah's army, he fled out of fear.⁵² Why would he have returned like this if his intention had always been to 'desert'? If the story of the reconnoitring was true, and it was subsequently repeated by most of the chroniclers, then his actions are comprehensible. He left the army on 2 June and went to Alexandretta. He stayed there until sometime after 4–7 June, indicating that he had some purpose in doing so. When news of Kerbogah's arrival reached Alexandretta, Stephen came back to see for himself, presumably through the pass in the Amanus range known as the Syrian Gates (Belen Pass), and he then spied out the lie of the land from some peak on the eastern slopes of the Amanus, which come down to 4–5 kilometres from the Orontes river opposite Antioch. Only then did he conclude that any attempt to return would be futile, and really decide to leave. His decision was comprehensible. Kerbogah's army was extremely large and Stephen might well have thought that his few troops could have made no difference. Moreover, immediately upon his arrival, Kerbogah forced the commander of the citadel to turn over the command to his own men. Stephen would have known what Kerbogah's flags flying over the citadel meant. The Crusaders were trapped in the town between Kerbogah's forces on both sides and in fact were forced to build hastily a make-shift wall across the town below the citadel to prevent the garrison attacking them. Those inside Antioch were unable to give Stephen any assistance. How could he reasonably have hoped to fight his way through Kerbogah's forces into the city with his mere 4,000 men? If his withdrawal had been part of the ruse to take the city,

his forces probably included sick and injured from the armies in any case. He could not stay at Alexandretta, which was only a small and not heavily fortified port, because there he would have been hopelessly exposed to Kerbogah's forces. Once having decided not to return to Antioch, Stephen had no choice but to leave for the West or for Byzantium. He could not wait to see what the outcome of the impending battle might be because, if Kerbogah proved victorious, his speedy Turkish cavalry would be at Alexandretta in a matter of hours. Stephen would have needed time to evacuate his forces by sea. He had to make use of the ships when they were available.

Both Guibert of Nogent and Baudry of Bourgueil understood. Guibert said that when Stephen judged that there was nothing anyone could do for those enclosed within the walls and that they were doomed, he made a decision to save himself 'to fight another day' (lit. 'for a more opportune time') and thought that in doing so he would be doing nothing deserving of disgrace. Guibert could not possibly have known that this was the case but the story certainly rings true as the kind of explanation of Stephen's conduct which may well have been current in the West after his return. Guibert judged his act *indecent*, 'unbecoming' but fully redeemed by his later martyrdom.⁵³ Interestingly, in spite of his connections with Adela, Baudry of Bourgueil, while giving the same explanation of Stephen's conduct and also judging him fully redeemed by his eventual martyrdom, could find no excuse for him in the first instance and said that he ought to have sent one of his men into the city secretly and that it would have been better for him to have died with his brothers than to have survived by flight.⁵⁴ Guibert's explanation, that he saved himself for a more opportune time, almost suggests that Stephen always intended to come back on Crusade again and that this became well known in the West after his return.

None of the chroniclers was intimate in the councils of the leaders, either at the time or later. If the re-interpretation of Stephen's 'desertion' suggested here is correct, they could have had no way of knowing that it was all part of a plan. They could not have known the real reason for his 'pretended' illness because

that would obviously have had to have been kept a close secret among those leaders in the know. When he failed to return from Alexandretta as expected, did he become a 'victim of History'? Writing later, without benefit of knowledge of the inner secrets of the council of leaders, the chroniclers could do nothing else but interpret Stephen's story from external appearances. That some scenario such as this was in fact the case is suggested by the second part of his story.

Stephen left for France or Constantinople by sea. Beyond that, all is speculation. Once again, the various chroniclers agree only in broad outline. The only facts known for certain are that Alexios Komnenos was on his way to join the Crusaders to fulfil his part of the agreement made with them, that he was encamped at Philomēlion, and that somehow Stephen made his way there to meet him. On the one hand, according to the anonymous author, later followed by Baudry of Bourgueil, Stephen alone went to meet Alexios. He also reported the real 'desertion' from Antioch by night on 10/11 June, by ropes let down from the walls, of other Crusaders including William of Grandmesnil, Bohemond of Taranto's brother-in-law, but he simply said that William and the others went to St Symeon and made no mention of any meeting-up between Stephen and William. On the other hand, Albert of Aachen reported that Stephen made port at an unnamed island or port somewhere along the south coast of Asia Minor, perhaps Tarsus, and then related that he joined up with William and went to meet Alexios at Philomēlion together with him. Anna Komnena also later reported that both Stephen and William landed at Tarsus and then went to meet Alexios at Philomēlion.⁵⁵

We can approach the question here from two directions. On the one hand, irrespective of whether the 'secret scenario' was in fact the case, Stephen's 'desertion' was of a totally different kind from that of the real desertion of William of Grandmesnil and his companions. He did not desert by night, secretly, and with only a few fellow absconders. So why would he have associated himself with the likes of William? The story simply doesn't make sense.

On the other hand, if Stephen really was a coward and deserter, why would he have gone to intercept the emperor? Why would Alexios have received him if he was? He was not a man to stomach deserters. Moreover, it was not just a matter of landing and taking a nice pony ride to meet the emperor. Philomēlion was over 300 miles from Tarsus through Armenian- and Muslim-controlled territory across the wild Taurus Mountains and through the treacherous pass known as the Cilician Gates (Külek Boghazi). In the summer of 1097 the Crusaders had lost many of their companions along the roads from Philomēlion through Iconium (Konya), and Heraclea (Ereghli), to near Tyana (now deserted), from where the road to the Cilician gates branched off. It is hard to believe that any Crusader would have willingly set out on that road again in reverse, especially in mid summer. Stephen must have had a very good reason to go to see the emperor, and it is difficult to believe that this reason could have been that he hoped to redeem himself by deceiving him. Alexios was not a man who was easy to deceive and Stephen himself had already revealed in his first letter to Adela that he had the highest regard for him. Would he really have attempted to do a con-job on the emperor? We are compelled to the conclusion that Stephen was acting in good faith in what he thought were his own and Alexios's best interests, that he knew there had been nothing dishonourable in his conduct, and that the emperor accepted his explanations.

At Philomēlion, according to the various chroniclers, Stephen informed Alexios that the Crusaders had taken Antioch except for the citadel, but that, when he had left, the city had been under siege by Kerbogah, and that in his own estimation the Crusaders must by then have all been killed. According to the *Gesta Francorum*, Stephen spoke to him in private and said:

You should know in truth that Antioch has been captured, but that the citadel was not taken, and all our men were besieged by a heavy force, and, as I think, by now they have been killed by the Turks. Turn about backwards, therefore, as fast as you can, lest they find you and these men who you lead with you.⁵⁶

The emphasis on Stephen speaking to Alexios in private was repeated by Baudry of Bourgueil but what Baudry's point was

seems obscure since both he and the anonymous author then said that Alexios consulted about the matter with those with him, including Bohemond's half brother Guy and other Franks accompanying the army. He reported that Alexios referred to Stephen as a 'faithless count fleeing dishonourably' (*infelix comes turpiter fugiens*) and that Guy berated Stephen as a 'most worthless man' (*nequissimus*), as an 'inexperienced grey-beard of a knight' (*semicanus imprudens miles*), and as a 'miserable' (*infelix*) and 'wretched' (*miser*) man. However, this was all just part of the anonymous author's rhetorical construction of Bohemond and the others being abandoned to their fate. It was no doubt why he made no mention of William of Grandmesnil being with Stephen at Philomēlion. He could hardly have created such a character assassination of Bohemond's brother-in-law. And, no matter what one might have said about Stephen, he was certainly not an 'inexperienced grey-beard of a knight'. Neither Albert of Aachen nor Anna Komnena reported any criticism at Philomēlion of Stephen's conduct.⁵⁷

This meeting between Alexios and Stephen had fateful consequences. For Alexios did turn back, fearing to press on into hostile territory without the Crusader armies to help him. As a consequence Bohemond and most of the other leaders repudiated their oaths of fealty to him and thereafter rejected Byzantine claims to suzerainty over the states they established.

On 28 June 1098, Bohemond of Taranto led the remaining forces of the Crusade out of Antioch. In a brilliant feat of generalship on his part, and no doubt of desperate gallantry on that of the Crusaders, they defeated and slaughtered the vastly superior forces of Kerbogah. The garrison of the citadel then surrendered and Bohemond eventually seized possession of all Antioch. The Crusade was saved and the way to Jerusalem now lay open. From that time on, Stephen's life could never be the same again.

He returned to Constantinople with Alexios and then made his way back to the West by ways unknown. When the news of the defeat of Kerbogah reached Stephen and where he was at the time are unknown. Could he have returned to Antioch or had he already reached the West? Interestingly, there is no contemporary

evidence to suggest that, when Alexios finally learned of the Crusader victory at Antioch, he was in any way displeased with Stephen, even though he must have been horrified when he realised what it meant for him.⁵⁸ Again this tends to suggest that his contemporaries at least comprehended his actions and did not blame him unduly for them. We shall see that there is further evidence to support this assertion.

Nevertheless, Stephen's reception at home in the West may not have been warm in some quarters. Already at Antioch, Patriarch Symeon of Jerusalem, Adhemar of Le Puy, and the bishops in the army had sent encyclical letters to the West urging that those who had failed to fulfil their Crusading vows should be excommunicated.⁵⁹ According to Orderic Vitalis, who did not write this part of his chronicle until around 1135, Urban II had pronounced an anathema on all who had taken the Cross but who had not completed the journey to Jerusalem. This may have referred to 'deserters' who had returned home, to those who had failed to set out at all, or to both.⁶⁰ But in fact there is no contemporary evidence that Urban did this at all. Orderic's source, Baudry of Bourgueil, did not mention it and neither did any other Crusade chronicler. Nor is there any Papal document extant which mentions it. Moreover, in a letter addressed to Stephen sometime during the period after his return and before his second leaving and chastising him for failure to enforce the Peace of God, Ivo of Chartres showed no hostility to Stephen. He addressed him as a 'great and powerful man' whom he was willing to serve in other matters.⁶¹ Had Stephen been excommunicated, it is hard to imagine Ivo writing to him like this or failing to mention it.

Not until December 1099, after the news of the capture of Jerusalem on 15 July 1099 had reached the West,⁶² is there hard evidence for the excommunication of deserters. Urban's successor, Paschal II (elected 13/14 August 1099), did so then as part of his call for a new Crusade, especially singling out those who had left the siege of Antioch as a result of 'faint-hearted and uncertain faith'.⁶³ Orderic probably confused Paschal II with Urban II. The news of the capture of Jerusalem and the excommunications must have rocked Stephen's foundations. He took the Cross again

as soon as the call for a new Crusade was made. A more opportune time had arrived.

Orderic Vitalis referred twice to Stephen's return to the East. On the first occasion he merely said that in response to this decree of Urban II (or Paschal II), Stephen was bound by his obligations in many ways and groaned but prepared himself for pilgrimage once again. On the second occasion, he reported that Stephen had been reproached by almost everyone for leaving the siege of Antioch and that Adela had frequently impressed upon him, amidst the blandishments of a loving marriage, the need to join a new expedition. As Orderic put it, she said:

Far be it from you, my lord, that you should deserve to suffer the reproaches of such men for long. Recall the famous get-up-and-go of your youth and take up the arms of the praiseworthy armies for the salvation of many thousands, so that thence a huge rejoicing may be raised by Christians in the whole world, and by the pagans terror and the public overthrow of their wicked law.⁶⁴

The words were Orderic's, of course, not Adela's. Moreover, Orderic is the only source for this. Baudry of Bourgueil did not record it and none of the Crusade chroniclers who reported Stephen's second departure commented on his motives or even mentioned Adela. Although it is more than possible that Adela would have felt keenly the slight to Stephen's honour that his failure to fulfil his vows represented, especially given the climactic and unexpected final success of the Crusade, it is nevertheless highly probable that Orderic invented the entire story of Adela's nagging.

We should not discount a religious motive for Stephen's completion of his Crusade. He went again in order to fulfil his penitential pilgrimage, which could not be completed until he had prayed in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. Orderic Vitalis almost certainly had it right when he wrote that Stephen was 'bound by his obligations'. Count Hugh of Vermandois, the brother of the King of France, also took the Cross again at this time. Hugh had also been on the Crusade but had been sent back to Constantinople after the capture of Antioch with messages from the leaders to Alexios. Therefore, even though there was no

question of his having deserted, he also had not fulfilled his pilgrimage and he took the Cross again in order to do so. So also did Stephen's chaplain Alexander, and Ivo of Grandmesnil, who had deserted from Antioch with his brother William and Hugh of Toucy. Of others who returned to the East in 1101, Miles of Bray, viscount of Troyes, and the brothers Simon and William of Poissy, it is not known whether they had left the Crusade en route or had reached Jerusalem.⁶⁵

The details of Stephen's second attempt are not well known. If he wrote any letters to Adela, they do not survive. What is very clear is that his role in the new Crusade shows that his reputation had apparently not been damaged irredeemably by his departure from Antioch. When the news got out that he had taken the Cross again, many Crusaders readily joined him, including Count Stephen of Burgundy, Hugh Bardolf II lord of Broyes, Miles of Bray and his brother Count Guy of Rochefort, Count Baldwin of Grandpré, Dodo the lord of Clermont-en-Argonne, Walbert the castellan of Laon, Reinhold viscount of *Firmamentum*, and bishops Hugh of Soissons, William of Paris, and Engelrand of Laon.⁶⁶ Clearly Stephen had not become a social leper and he was clearly not under anathema since the ecclesiastics associated with him.

In the spring of 1101 at Constantinople the French Crusaders joined a larger Lombard force and Raymond of St Gilles, who had spent the winter in Constantinople, was accepted as overall leader of the armies, probably at the behest of Alexios Komnenos.⁶⁷ According to Albert of Aachen it was Stephen of Blois who proposed that they follow the route of the Crusaders of 1097 across Asia Minor, which seems to indicate that he was still well regarded as a leader and warrior and was listened to in council. But, there is no evidence that he was elected joint leader of the expedition with Raymond, as has been claimed.

The Crusade was a disaster because, against the sage advice of Stephen and Raymond, the Lombard contingent insisted on a futile march to the East to try to rescue Bohemond of Taranto from captivity in NeoCaesarea (Niksar, Turkey).⁶⁸ During the four-day battle of Mersivan near Ankara in early August 1101 the Crusaders were routed and forced to retreat. Most of the army

was lost in a chaotic flight; however, Stephen showed his mettle in battle, distinguishing himself by rallying his men and by rescuing Raymond of St Gilles who had been surrounded by a Turkish force on a hill-top. Raymond fought his way out to the Black Sea coast at Bafra, and Stephen to Sinope, from where they found their way to Constantinople.⁶⁹

In March 1102, Stephen and other survivors of the Crusade went by sea to Antioch, then south by land to Tortosa, which he and those with him stormed and captured. They then moved south to Beirut, where they met King Baldwin I of Jerusalem. On Palm Sunday, 30 March 1102, Stephen Count of Blois finally fulfilled his Crusading vows by worshipping in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.⁷⁰ Then, no doubt believing that he had finally discharged his obligations to God, he set out for home by sea together with most of the surviving Crusaders of 1101. But God had another fate in store for him. His ship was driven back to Jaffa by contrary winds. There Baldwin I begged Stephen and the other Crusaders to join him in repelling a new invasion led by Sharaf al-Ma'ali, son of the wāzir of Egypt.⁷¹

Stephen did join the King. According to an anonymous chronicle completed between 1105 and 1109 and known as *The deeds of the Franks conquering Jerusalem*, which was an abbreviation of Fulcher of Chartres but which also had some expansions of Fulcher's work containing unique information, Stephen advised Baldwin against the precipitous attack on the Egyptians which would lead to their undoing. The king had responded indignantly that even if Stephen and his fellows were in France, he would not hold back from attacking the Egyptians. Stephen then actually borrowed horses and arms so that he could join the king. Fulcher of Chartres also said that Stephen and his companions borrowed horses, but not arms.⁷² Obviously, Stephen and the others would have disposed of their horses before they left for home by sea, but it is surprising that Stephen would have disposed of his arms as well. Knights did not normally dispose of their arms. They were the most valuable of all their possessions, always treasured. Had Stephen had enough of war? Had he decided to retire?

The Franks were annihilated by the Egyptians at the battle of

Ramleh on 17–18 May 1102. Stephen was either killed in battle or executed by the Egyptians after having been taken prisoner. The various sources are unclear and in conflict.⁷³ Most probably he was executed at Ascalon on 19 May by being shot to death with arrows.⁷⁴

Adela donated various properties to the Church for Stephen's and her own soul,⁷⁵ and in 1120, when her sons were fully grown, she entered the convent of Marcigny and lived out her days as a nun.

In reflection, why did Stephen go on the Crusade and why did he 'desert'?

In our own economically-driven and largely unreligious age it has become fashionable for historians to attribute to the Crusaders a range of secular motives: a hope of gaining wealth through booty, a desire for power through the establishment of lordships in the East, and a spirit of adventure and wanderlust as epitomised by the wanderings of Norman and French 'knights errant' in the century before the Crusade. But in Stephen's case such motives make no sense.

First, he was already a very wealthy and powerful man. Second, when he had completed his pilgrimage in 1102, he did not stay on to try to carve out a new lordship for himself in the East. In 1102, when the Crusader states were still in their infancy and much territory remained unconquered, it would not have been difficult for him to have done so, as others were in fact doing. His presence would have been welcomed by Baldwin I of Jerusalem. However, Stephen obviously wanted to return home and he tried to do so. It was only because of bad luck, and the weather—the 'Fortune of God' as it was most appropriately known in the nautical terminology of the medieval Mediterranean—that Adela was deprived of his companionship for the rest of their days. Third, Stephen's letters suggest that he was a 'home-body' if anything, rather than someone driven by a desire for adventure. Fourth, in his first letter to Adela Stephen referred to his journey as a *peregrinatio*—pilgrimage. In both letters he continually referred

to 'the grace of God', 'the whole army of God', 'the Lord God assisting', 'the chosen army of Christ', 'this very holy suffering', 'us, his faithful', etc. One might argue that Stephen or his chaplain Alexander was just using conventional language and that he had no real religious and penitential motive for going on the Crusade. But Stephen's letters use this type of language much more than do those written from Antioch by the castellan Anselm II of Ribemont to his lord, Manasses II, Archbishop of Rheims.⁷⁶ One also has to take into account Fulcher of Chartres' testimony that he and the others in his army, presumably including Stephen, prostrated themselves in prayer when in St Peter's in Rome. In fact, it is incumbent upon anyone who does not believe that the motive of Stephen and all of the other Crusaders was to make a penitential pilgrimage for the remission of their sins to prove their case. There is no evidence that Stephen was unusually pious, but he has to be credited with at least the conventional piety of the age and all that that meant amongst the nobility of the Latin West in the late eleventh century.

It might be argued that Stephen may have been influenced by 'peer pressure'. We have seen that he seems to have been particularly sensitive to what others thought of him. But although many of the nobility from between the Loire and the Seine took the Cross in 1096, they followed Stephen, not he them. None of Stephen's immediate 'peers', Count Fulk IV of Anjou, Count Hugh of Champagne, Count William VII of Poitou, and Duke Alain IV of Brittany went on the Crusade. It has been overlooked in the historiography of the Crusade that Stephen assumed the leadership of the contingents of the Western vassals of the Crown of France, just as Hugh of Vermandois assumed that of those of the Royal Domain, and Godfrey of Bouillon that of those of the Western Roman Empire. When he left on Crusade for the second time, others joined him, not he them. Stephen was a leader, not a follower. Any argument that his resolve failed him before Antioch simply because he had taken the Cross because of peer pressure makes no sense.

Was it the case that Stephen left on 2 June 1098 because he could no longer stand his separation from his family and home?

We have been indoctrinated by modern scholarship to believe that medieval men loved neither their wives nor their children and used both solely for purposes of dynastic aggrandisement. Even if, for the sake of argument, we accept that this was true in general, in the case of Stephen of Blois all the evidence seems to point to the conclusion that he was at least one man who was unusual in this respect and that he risked everything in order to be re-united with his family. The evidence for a close emotional relationship between him, Adela, and their children is overwhelming. His continual use in his letters of phrases such as 'sweetest friend', 'dearest', 'beloved self', 'I took pains', 'my beloved', 'his most sweet and amiable wife', 'his dear children', with reference to Adela and his family suggests a deep attachment to his family and home. We cannot simply dismiss these phrases as nothing more than conventional terms of address. If Stephen had wanted to, he could merely have reported his actions and the progress of the Crusade to Adela in much more matter of fact and businesslike words. In the end, can Stephen be summarised as a 'Sensitive, New-Age, Crusader'?

Surviving personal letters like Stephen's are extremely rare from his age. Most of those that do survive were written according to formal rules of composition derived from classical grammar and rhetoric. Personal emotions are rarely revealed in them. Stephen's expressions of longing for his home and family are not paralleled in any other letters written by feudal lords of his age known to me. Since no other comparable letters from other Crusaders survive, we cannot know whether others also shared his feelings. But why should we not assume that many in fact did so? What else explains why so many returned home as soon as they could after the capture of Jerusalem and the completion of their pilgrimage?

Or was the mystery of Stephen deeper than this? If the argument presented above, namely, that all of the circumstances of his leaving the armies on 2 June are completely inexplicable, is accepted, then Stephen was a 'Victim of History'. He left with the approval of the other leaders as part of the ruse that day to lull the garrison into a false sense of security preparatory to the attempt

to escalate the walls that night. He may have been genuinely ill, or his illness may have been feigned with the connivance of them all. The arrival of Kerbogah's forces in such huge numbers prevented his planned return. At that point he resignedly left for the West, intending to come back to the East again in the future, but his sense of obligation to the Emperor Alexios made him go to Philomēlion to warn him about what he considered must have happened. None of the chroniclers had any way of knowing more than the superficiality of all this and that was what they reported. Stephen thus became a 'Victim of History'.

Back in the West, in the climate of religious euphoria generated by the capture of Jerusalem, it would have made no difference whatsoever why Stephen had actually left Antioch. He had to return to the Holy Land both to discharge his religious obligations and to meet society's expectations of him. He may indeed have groaned inwardly at the prospect. Who would not have, who knew as he did what lay ahead? But he probably had always intended to do so in any case.

Perhaps Stephen was both 'Sensitive New-Age Crusader' and also 'Victim of History'. The reason why it was he of all the leaders who left Antioch that day may have been because it was well known to everyone that he had wanted to return home for a long time. The garrison of Antioch would also have known this perfectly well and the sight of Stephen's banners receding into the distance would have confirmed its impression of the besieging armies breaking up and thus have contributed towards lulling it into a false sense of security.

In the end, we will never know for certain what impelled Stephen to his fateful course of action on 2 June 1098 but, whatever it was, it was certainly not because he was either a coward or a 'deserter'.

Appendix

Extracts from the Letters of Stephen of Blois

I. Nicaea, c. 24 June, 1097

Stephanus comes Adelae comitissae, dulcissimae amicae, uxori suae. quicquid mens sua melius aut benignius excogitare potest.

Notum sit dilectioni tuae, Romaniam me cum omni honore omnique corporea sospitate iter beatum tenere. uitae meae ac peregrinationis seriem a Constantinopoli litteratorie tibi mandare curavi, sed ne legato illi aliquod infortunium contigerit, tibi has rescribo litteras.

Ad urbem Constantinopolim cum ingenti gaudio, Dei gratia, perueni. imperator uero digne et honeste et quasi filium suum me diligentissime suscepit et amplissimis ac pretiosissimis donis ditauit. et in toto Dei exercitu et nostro non est dux neque comes neque aliqua potens persona, cui magis credat uel faueat quam mihi. uere, mi dilecta, eius imperialis dignitas persaepe

Count Stephen [sends] to Countess Adela, sweetest friend, his wife, the better and more pleasant [wishes] that his mind can imagine.

Be it known to your beloved self, that I am holding to the blessed journey to Romania splendidly with every honour and in all bodily health. I took pains to send to you in letter form from Constantinople about my life and pilgrimage in sequence, but lest something unfortunate may have happened to that messenger, I re-write this letter to you.

I arrived at the city of Constantinople, by the grace of God, with great joy. The Emperor, indeed, received me most lovingly, fittingly, and honourably as if [I was] his son, and enriched me with very great and most precious gifts. And in the whole army of God and us, there is no duke nor count nor any other important person whom he trusts or favours more than

monuit et monet, ut unum ex filiis nostris ei commendemus. ipse uero tantum tamque praeclarum honorem se ei attributurum promisit, quod nostro minime inuidebit.

in ueritate tibi dico, hodie talis uiuens homo non est sub caelo. ipse enim omnes principes nostros largissime ditat, milites cunctos donis releuat, pauperes omnes dapibus recreat.

prope Nicaeam ciuitatem est castrum, nomine Ciuitot, iuxta quod maris currit brachium, per quod naues propriae pii imperatoris die noctuque usque Constantinopolim currunt, quae inde pauperum cibos ad castrum ferunt, qui eis innumeris cottidie distribuuntur. nostris quoque temporibus, ut nobis uidetur, non fuit princeps uniuersa morum honestate adeo praeclarus, pater, mi dilecta, tuus multa et magna dedit, sed ad hunc paene nihil fuit.

haec parua de eo tibi scribere dilexi, ut paululum quis esset cognosceres.

me. Truly, my beloved, his imperial dignity advised, and [still] advises, very often that we should entrust one of our sons to him. He himself, indeed, promised that he will bestow on him an honour [an estate] of such size and so splendid, that he will not envy us in the slightest.

In truth, I say to you, that there is no man living under heaven today like him. For he enriches all our princes most munificently. He assuages all the knights with gifts. He fattens all the poor with feasts.

Near the city of Nicaea there is a fortress by the name of Civitot, next to which runs a branch of the sea, through which the personal ships of the pious emperor run to Constantinople by day and night, which then bring to the camp of the poor provisions, which are daily distributed to countless numbers of them. In our times, as it seems to us, there was no prince so magnificent in his whole integrity of character. Your father, my beloved, gave many and great things, but [compared] to him he was almost nothing.

I have taken pains to write these few words about him to you, so that you may know a

post dies uero X, per quos me
secum uenerabilissime habuit,
ab eo quasi a patre discessi. ipse
uero mihi naues praecepit
praeparari, per quas tranquillum
maris brachium, quod eandem
circumdat urbem, citissime
transiui.

...
in marina quadam insula sua
prope nos secessit: ad quem
omnes principes nostri praeter
me et comitem S. Aegidii
cucurrerunt, ut cum eo de tanta
uictoria congratularentur, quos
omnes nimio, ut debuit, adfectu
recepit. et quia ne casu
superueniret ciuitati et exercitui
nostro inimicissima Turcorum
turba, me remansisse ad urbem
audiuit, gauisus est ualde: altius
uero atque laetius, quod tunc
remansi, ipse recepit quasi
[quam si?] aureum montem ei
dedissem.⁷⁷

...
dico tibi, mi dilecta, quia de
saepedicta Nicaea usque
Hierusalem V septimanas

little of who he is.

In fact, after ten days, in
which he kept me with him in
the greatest esteem, I parted
from him as if from a father.
Indeed, he ordered ships to be
prepared for me, by means of
which I crossed very quickly
the calm branch of the sea
which surrounds the same
city.

...
He [the Emperor] retired to
a certain island of his in the
sea near us, to which all of
our princes except me and the
Count of St Gilles hastened
so that they might
congratulate him on such a
victory [the taking of Nicaea].
All of whom exceedingly, as
he ought, he received with
love. And since he heard that
I had remained in the city lest
by chance the most hostile
crowd of Turks should
overwhelm the city and our
army, he rejoiced very much:
even more highly and
joyfully, than if I had given
him a mountain of gold, did
he receive [the fact] that I
remained behind at that time.

...
I tell you, my beloved, that
from the oft-mentioned
Nicaea we will reach

perueniemus, nisi Antiochia
obstiterit nobis. uale.

Jerusalem in five weeks, unless
Antioch should thwart us.
Farewell!

II. Antioch, March 29, 1098

Stephanus comes Adelaе,
dulcissimae atque
amabilissimae coniugi,
carissimisque filiis suis atque
cunctis fidelibus suis tam
maioribus quam minoribus
totius salutis gratiam et
benedictionem.

Credas certissime, carissima,
quod nuntius iste, quem
dilectioni tuae misi, sanum me
atque incolumem atque omni
prosperitate magnificatum Dei
gratia dimisit ante Antiochiam.
et iam ibi cum omni electo
Christi exercitu sedem Domini
Iesu cum magna eius uirtute per
XXIII continuas septimanas
tenueramus. scias pro certo, mi
dilecta, quod aurum et argentum
aliasque diuitias multas duplo
nunc habeo quam tunc, quando
a te discessi, mihi dilectio tua
attribuisset. nam cuncti
principes nostri communi
consilio totius exercitus me
dominum suum atque omnium
actuum suorum prouisorem
atque gubernatorem, etiam me
nolente, usque ad tempus

Count Stephen to Adela, his
sweetest and most lovable wife,
to his dear children, and to all his
vassals both greater and lesser,
greetings and the blessing of all
good health.

You may be very sure,
dearest, that that messenger who
I have sent to your beloved self,
left me before Antioch safe and
sound and exalted in all
prosperity by the grace of God.
And, we had already maintained
the siege of the Lord Jesus there
with his great power, together
with all the chosen army of
Christ, for 23 weeks in a row.⁷⁸
May you know for certain, my
beloved, that I now have double
the gold, silver and many other
riches which, when I left you,
your beloved self had assigned to
me. Moreover, all our princes,
with the common counsel of the
whole army, have made me,
even though I did not wish it,
their lord and overseer and
'helmsman' of all their actions,

constituerunt.

satis audisti, quia post captam
Nicaeam ciuitatem non
modicam pugnam cum perfidis
Turcis habuimus et eos,
Domino Deo subueniente,
deuicimus primum.

...

ad principalem praedictam
urbem Antiochiam cum magno
gaudio nos properantes, eam
obsedimus et cum Turcis
saepissime ibi plurimas
conflictiones habuimus et in
ueritate septies cum ciuibus
Antiochenis et cum innumeris
aduentantibus ad subueniendum
sibi auxiliis, quibus obuiam
occurrimus,

...

pro his igitur inimicis Dei et
nostris oppugnandis multos
labores et innumera mala Dei
gratia hucusque sustinuimus.
multi etiam iam sua omnia hac
in sanctissima passione
consumpserunt. plurimi uero de
nostris Francigenis temporalem
mortem fame subissent, nisi Dei
clementia et nostra pecunia eis
subuenisset. per totam uero
hiemem ante saepedictam
Antiochiam ciuitatem frigora
pernimia ac pluuiarum
immoderatas abundantias pro

up to the present time.

You have heard enough,⁷⁹
about how after the capture of
the city of Nicaea we had a
great battle with the
treacherous Turks and, with
the Lord God assisting, we
defeated them for the first
time.

...

Hastening with great joy to
the aforesaid capital city of
Antioch, we besieged it and
there we very often had many
conflicts with the Turks, and in
truth seven times with the
citizens of Antioch and with
innumerable allies coming to
its assistance, who we went to
meet,

...

Consequently, for fighting
against these enemies of God
and us, we have so far endured
many hardships and
innumerable evils by God's
grace. Many also have already
consumed everything of theirs
in this very holy suffering.
Very many of our Franks,
indeed, would have suffered a
temporal death from
starvation, if the clemency of
God and our money had not
relieved them. In truth,
throughout the whole winter

Christo Domino perpassi
sumus.

cum uero Caspianus,
Antiochiae admiraldus, ...
misit in Arabiam ... hi V
admiraldi cum XII milibus
electorum militum Turcorum
ad subueniendum Antiochenis
subito uenerunt. nos uero ...
per III leugas cum DCC
militibus in quendam
planitiem ad Pontem Ferreum
eis occurrimus: Deus autem
pugnauit pro nobis suis
fidelibus contra eos: nam ea
die uirtute Dei eos pugnando
deuicimus et de ipsis sine
numero, Deo semper pro nobis
proeliante, interfecimus.

Dum uero capelianus meus
Alexander sequenti die
Paschae cum summa
festinatione has litteras
scriberet, pars nostrorum
Turcos insidiantium uictricem
pugnam cum eis, Domino
praeunte, habuerunt et
fecerunt et de ipsis LX milites
occiderunt, quorum cuncta
capita exercitum attulerunt.

Pauca certe sunt, carissima,
quae tibi de multis scribo, et
quia tibi exprimere non ualeo

before the oft-mentioned city of
Antioch we endured for the
Lord Christ excessive cold and
profusion beyond measure of
rain.

Indeed, when Yaghi Siyan,
the emir of Antioch ... sent to
Arabia ... These five emirs with
12,000 elite Turkish soldiers
suddenly came to the assistance
of the Antiochenes. However,
we ... met them at three leagues'
distance with 700 knights on a
certain plain near the 'Iron
Bridge'. God, moreover, fought
for us, his faithful, against them.
For on that day, fighting with
the power of God, we defeated
them and killed them without
number, with God always
fighting for us.

Furthermore, while my
chaplain Alexander was writing
this letter with the utmost haste
on the day after Easter, a part of
our men, ambushing the Turks,
planned and executed a
successful engagement with
them, with the Lord leading the
way, and they killed sixty of
their 'knights', all of whose
heads they brought back to the
army.

Few, in truth, dearest, are the
words which I write to you
about much, and since I do not

<p>quae sunt animo meo, carissima, mando, ut bene agas et terrae tuae egregie disponas et natos tuos et homines tuos honeste, ut decet te, tractes, quia quam citius potero me certe uidebis. uale.</p>	<p>have the strength to express to you what things are on my mind, dearest, I enjoin you to conduct yourself honourably, and to manage your lands especially well, and to handle your children and vassals properly, as it becomes you, because as soon as I can, you will certainly gaze upon me. Farewell!</p>
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Notes

- 1 This has been the conventional view since the role of Peter the Hermit was attacked by Hagenmeyer in the nineteenth century. Although more and more historians today have increasing doubts about the respective roles assigned to Peter and Urban the issue does not concern us here. I would like to thank my colleagues John O. Ward and Dexter Hoyos, and also Professors Giles Constable and Jonathon Riley-Smith, for their comments on a preliminary draft of this paper. They will recognise where I am indebted to them for various suggestions.
- 2 See in particular J. Riley-Smith, *The First Crusade and the idea of Crusading*, London, 1986; and *The First Crusaders, 1095–1131*, Cambridge, 1997; P. Alphandéry and A. Dupront, *La Chrétienté et l'idée de Croisade*, Paris, 1995.
- 3 The only existing major study of Stephen of Blois is J. A. Brundage, 'An errant Crusader: Stephen of Blois', *Traditio* 16 (1960): 380–95.
- 4 The surviving manuscripts of Fulcher's *Historia Hierosolymitana* fall into two groups. The first represents the first redaction of the chronicle between 1100 and 1102. The second represents later revisions and additions to the chronicle made between then and 1127. See Fulcher of Chartres, *Fulcheri Carnotensis Historia Hierosolymitana (1095–1127)*, ed. H. Hagenmeyer, Heidelberg, 1913, pp.92–104. There is a loose English translation of the whole chronicle in *Fulcher of Chartres, A history of the expedition to Jerusalem 1095–1127*, trans. F. R. Ryan, New York, 1973. All translations here are by the present author.
- 5 There were originally at least three letters, and probably four. See below n.79. The best edition is that of H. Hagenmeyer, *Epistulae et chartae*

- ad historiam Primi Belli Sacri spectantes*, Innsbruck, 1901, letters IV (pp.138–40) and X (pp.149–52). All of the manuscripts were later transcriptions. Moreover, Stephen did not write the originals himself. He dictated them to his chaplain Alexander, who wrote the Latin texts. However, it is quite probable that Stephen read Latin and it is certain that Adela did. See K. A. LoPrete, ‘Adela of Blois as mother and countess’, in J. C. Parsons and B. Wheeler, eds, *Medieval Mothering*, New York, 1996, pp.313–33, here pp.315–16. That Stephen may have known Latin is suggested by the personal postscript added to the second letter after the Count’s chaplain, Alexander, had finished it. It is not possible to know whether this was in Stephen’s own hand in the original letter; however, the words certainly read as though they were his own, rather than ones dictated to his chaplain. There is no diplomatic or other reason to doubt the genuineness of the letters. There is nothing in the protocols, eschatocols, forms of address, etc. to suggest that the letters were later fabrications. Dr Constant Mews informs me that the style of the letters is that of the rhyming prose typical of a conventional education of the time; such as was, for example, used by Heloise.
- 6 Hugh of Vermandois has also sometimes been considered to have ‘deserted’ because, although he was sent back to Constantinople by the other leaders ‘with despatches’ after the battle with Kerbogah outside Antioch, he went back to France rather than returning to the armies. His experience certainly had something in common with that of Stephen of Blois and he also returned to the East in 1101, together with Stephen.
- 7 See K. A. LoPrete, ‘The Anglo-Norman Card of Adela of Blois’, *Albion* 22 (1990): 569–89.
- 8 For example, Guibert of Nogent, ed. R. B. C. Huygens, *Historia quae inscribitur Dei gesta per Francos* (Corpus Christianorum. Continuatio mediaevalis, CXXVIII), Turnhout, 1996, II.15, p.132: ‘Of him [Stephen], while he was engaged here [in this affair], there was such distinguished nobility, a very pleasing appearance, and indeed a generally well balanced maturity of counsels, in the business of cavalry affairs he was prominent with such great agility, that all of that holy army made him its leader and master when it set forth in battle against the Turks.’ (‘Cuius dum hic ageret admodum excellens liberalitas fuit, grata satis personalitas, consiliorum vero undecumque librata maturitas; in rerum equestrium industria tanta mobilitate preminuit, ut eum tota illa sancta militia, cum in procinctu contra Turcos existeret, dictatorem sibi ac magistrum effecerit.’). Guibert’s purpose was to explain why it was that Stephen could later be chosen for a position of leadership in the Crusade and, by implication, to contrast his character to his later behaviour. Fulcher of Chartres said that Stephen was ‘very noble and mighty in arms’ (‘nobilissimus et armis validus’), but his purpose was

to make an enigmatic contrast to the inexplicable nature of his departure from the Crusade at Antioch. See Fulcher of Chartres, *Historia Hierosolymitana*, I.xvi.7, p.228: 'Tunc Stephanus, comes Blesensis, ab obsidione discessit et per mare in Franciam repatriavit. unde doluimus omnes, quia vir erat nobilissimus et armis validus.' It is noteworthy that most of the manuscripts of the first recension, but none of those of the second recension, have 'quoniam vir erat probissimus et valde nobilis' ('most honourable and very noble') in place of 'quia vir erat nobilissimus et armis validus'. It seems that Fulcher added the reference to his being 'mighty in arms' after Stephen had returned to the East and redeemed his reputation. Ralph of Caen included a description of Stephen among a long list of the leaders of the Crusade at Nicaea, to whom he attributed various qualities. Of Stephen he wrote that: '... of whom, if [his] good-humour had cast lustre on his liberality, if his ardour on his boldness, as much as they should have, he would have lacked nothing by comparison to the Duke [Godfrey of Bouillon], nothing to the most vigorous of knights.' ('... cujus si largitatem hilaritas, si audaciam fervor, quanti debuerant, illustrassent, nihil ei deerat ad ducem, nihil ad strenuissimum militum.'). See Ralph of Caen, *Gesta Tancredi in expeditione Hierosolymitana*, (Recueil des historiens des Croisades. Historiens occidentaux, III, 587–716), Paris, 1866, ch.XV, p.616.

- 9 P. Abrahams, ed., *Les oeuvres poétiques de Baudri de Bourgueil (1046–1130)*, Paris, 1926, poem CXCVI, ll.61–65.
- 10 André Boutemy, 'Deux pièces inédites du manuscrit 749 de Douai', *Latomus* 2 (1938): 123–30, 126–7, ll.7–14.
- 11 Stephen's charters between 1085 and his departure for the Crusade in 1096 almost invariably involved Adela in a co-joint role with him. See K. A. LoPrete, 'The Anglo-Norman Card', p.578; and 'Adela of Blois and Ivo of Chartres: piety, politics, and the peace in the diocese of Chartres', *Anglo-Norman studies XIV: proceedings of the Battle conference 1991*, Woodbridge, 1992, pp.131–52, here p.313.
- 12 Guibert of Nogent, *Dei gesta per Francos*, II.15, p.132: 'To whom [Stephen] was joined a wife the most acute of women, ... if we were to wish to praise whose prudence, generosity, bounty, and wealth, I fear that we would cast a cloud on a splendid man from the womanly glory which she merited in her widowhood.' ('Huic sagacissima feminarum uxor accesserat, ... cuius prudentiam, munificentiam, dapsilitatem, opulentiamque si laudare velimus, vereor ne viro magnifico nubem ex feminea, quam et in viduitate meruit, laude feramus.'). See also Orderic Vitalis, *The ecclesiastical history of Orderic Vitalis*, ed. and trans. M. Chibnall, Oxford, 1969–72, XI.5, vol.6, p.42; Ivo of Chartres, *Divi Ivonis epistolae*, ep.136, in J.-P. Migne, *Patrologia Latina*, vol.162, Paris, 1893, col.145; Hildebert of Lavardin, *Ven. Hildeberti epistolae*, ep.I.3, in

- J.-P. Migne, *Patrologia Latina*, vol.171, coll.144–45. There is a translation of the letter of Hildebert of Lavardin in G. A. Bond, *The Loving Subject: desire, eloquence, and power in Romanesque France*, Philadelphia, 1995, Appendix, V, pp.202–05. Other encomia of Adela are also translated in Bond, pp.131–36. On Adela's relations with Ivo of Chartres see LoPrete, 'Adela of Blois and Ivo of Chartres'.
- 13 Bond has subjected the corpus of panegyric addressed to Adela to a sometimes controversial deconstruction process. However, he does make forcefully the obvious point that as a literary patron Adela herself influenced the agenda of the panegyric. See Bond, ch.5, pp.129–57.
- 14 LoPrete, 'Adela of Blois as mother and countess', p.317.
- 15 E. Mabile, ed., *Cartulaire de Marmoutier pour le Dunois*, Châteaudun, 1874, no.92, pp.79–82: '... non solum assensu ejus et ammonitione, sed etiam prece, pro animabus quoque parentum et antecessorum filiorumque, sed et successorum nostrorum, et ut Deus interventu beati Martini et monachorum ejus indulgeret mihi, quicquid in se deliqueram et in patrem meum sanumque me et incolumem duceret et reduceret per iter memoratum, atque Adela sepredictam conjugem meam liberosque nostros custodiret, quandam partem cujusdam alodii nostri, id est bosci, qui Silva Lonnia dicitur ...'. I am indebted to Professor Jonathon Riley-Smith for providing me with references to the charters of Stephen of Blois which he compiled in the course of his prosopographical research into the Crusaders of the First Crusade.
- 16 Mabile, no.77, p.69: 'Ego Adela Blesensium comitissa et Willelmi gloriosi regis Anglorum filia Stephanique palatini comitis quondam uxor karissima.'
- 17 Orderic Vitalis, *The ecclesiastical history*, V.11, vol.III, p.116. Guibert of Nogent, *Dei gesta per Francos*, II.15, p.131: 'After this [man] [Hugh of Vermandois] Count Stephen set out, a man endowed with such authority that rumour reports that he had the power of lordship of as many castles as the year consists of the estate of days.' ('Post hunc comes Stephanus vir tanta potentia preditus extitit, ut fama testetur tot eum pollere dominio castellorum, quot annus constat honore dierum.'). Guibert appears here to have indulged in a linguistic conceit, using the word *honor* in its medieval Latin sense of an estate/benefice/property to qualify *dierum* and in contradistinction to *dominio castellorum*, 'lordship of castles'.
- 18 On Godfrey of Bouillon see J. C. Andressohn, *The ancestry and life of Godfrey of Bouillon*, Bloomington, 1947. On Bohemond of Taranto, see R. B. Yewdale, *Bohemond I, Prince of Antioch*, Princeton, 1924.
- 19 S. Runciman, *A History of the Crusades. Vol.I: the First Crusade and the foundation of the Kingdom of Jerusalem*, Harmondsworth, 1965, p.165; J. H. & L. L. Hill, trans., *Raymond d'Aguilers: Historia Francorum qui*

- ceperunt Iherusalem*, Philadelphia, 1968, p.59, n.1.
- 20 Riley-Smith, *The First Crusaders*, p.88.
- 21 See R. Somerville, *The Councils of Urban II. Volume I: decreta Claromontensia*, Amsterdam, 1972, p.74: 'Quicumque pro sola devotione, non pro honoris vel pecunie adeptione, ad liberandam ecclesiam Dei Hierusalem profectus fuerit, iter illud pro omni penitentia ei reputetur.' *Honor* in the canon is invariably translated in modern histories as 'honour' in the sense of 'respect, glory, reputation, etc.'. But in fact the word is used elsewhere in other canons of the council in the sense of an ecclesiastical benefice and should certainly be understood here in the sense in which the Latin word was used in the Languedoc at the time; i.e., as a feudal property or estate. In any case, it makes much more sense in this context in apposition to *pecunia*, money, as 'an honour' than as 'honour'. My colleague, John Ward, translated *honor* as 'fief' in his article 'Some principles of rhetorical historiography in the twelfth century', in E. Breisach, ed., *Classical rhetoric and medieval historiography*, Kalamazoo, 1985, pp.103–65, here p.124. He was undoubtedly correct to associate the word with real estate rather than a cultural quality. 'Fief' is, however, perhaps a little too specific a term in this context. I prefer 'estate' or 'property'.
- 22 See the letters of Urban II about the Crusade written after Clermont translated in L. and J. Riley-Smith, *The Crusades: idea and reality, 1095–1274*, London, 1981, pp.37–40. The sources for Urban's preaching after Clermont are detailed in R. Crozet, 'Le voyage d'Urban II et ses négociations avec le clergé de France (1095–1096)', *Revue historique* 179 (1937): 271–310.
- 23 See H. E. J. Cowdrey, 'The spiritual concerns of the eleventh century', in his *The Cluniacs and the Gregorian Reform*, Oxford, 1970, pp.121–28.
- 24 See F. A. Cazel, jr., 'Financing the Crusades', in K. M. Setton, ed., *A history of the Crusades. Vol. VI: The impact of the Crusades on Europe*, Madison, 1989, pp.116–49; Riley-Smith, *The First Crusaders*, esp. pp.109–39.
- 25 Runciman, vol.I, pp.337, 339. Runciman suggests that Stephen may have had 250–300 knights and that the normal ratio of foot to horse in the baronial armies was seven to one.
- 26 S. B. Edgington, *The Historia Iherosolimitana of Albert of Aachen: a critical edition*, Ph.D. thesis, University of London, 1991, pp.7–10.
- 27 Albert of Aachen, *Historia Hierosolymitana* (Recueil des historiens des Croisades. Historiens Occidentaux, IV), Paris, 1879, IV.xiii, p.398.
- 28 For example, the knight Fulcher of Chartres (not the chronicler but another person with the same name), who was presumably a vassal of Stephen's as Count of Chartres, was reported to have been the first to

- scale the walls of Antioch on the night after Stephen had left. See Raymond of Aguilers, *Historia Francorum qui ceperunt Iherusalem* (Recueil des historiens des Croisades. Historiens Occidentaux, III), Paris, 1866, IX, p.251; Ralph of Caen, *Gesta Tancredi*, ch.LXVI, pp.654–55.
- 29 See Fulcher of Chartres, *Historia Hierosolymitana*, I.vi.11–13, pp.162–63.
- 30 See Fulcher of Chartres, *Historia Hierosolymitana*, I.vi.11–13, p.163, n.40.
- 31 See Brundage, p.382. Brundage says simply that ‘the husband promised to be back within three years ...’, without drawing attention to the variant readings of the manuscripts of the first and second redactions. He associates the statement with Stephen of Blois by implication rather than explicitly.
- 32 Robert of Flanders braved the crossing of the Adriatic in late November or early December.
- 33 Fulcher of Chartres, *Historia Hierosolymitana*, I.ix.3, p.179; Anna Komnena, *Alexiade: règne de l’Empereur Alexis I Comnène (1081–1118)*, trans. B. Leib, Paris, 1943, X.xi.8, vol.2, p.234.
- 34 Fulcher of Chartres, *Historia Hierosolymitana*, I.xi.10; Baldric of Dol, *Historia Jerosolimitana* (Recueil des historiens des Croisades. Historiens Occidentaux, IV), II.ii–iii, pp.34–35. Baudry’s account was later taken over by Orderic Vitalis in *The ecclesiastical history*, IX.8, vol.V, pp.60–63. Orderic has no independent value.
- 35 Albert of Aachen, *Historia Hierosolymitana*, II.xxiii, p.316. See also the anonymous author, *Gesta Francorum et aliorum Hierosolymitanorum*, ed. R. Hill, London, 1962, IX.xxvii, p.63; Raymond of Aguilers, *Historia Francorum*, XI, p.258.
- 36 Jonathon Riley-Smith has suggested that he was referring to the army’s ‘common fund’, to which he now had access as ‘commander in chief’ of the army, resting on a reading of ‘nam’ in its sense of ‘for’, explaining a previous statement. See *The First Crusaders*, p.110. However, in my opinion, this would have been a fraudulent claim since he was making a comparison to Adela’s wealth, which had been assigned to him personally. The ‘common fund’ was not his own property and Adela would have seen through such a claim. I prefer to read ‘nam’ here in its transitional sense, introducing a secondary subject, with a meaning of something like ‘moreover’. However, the point is debatable and we have corresponded about it. Against my interpretation, which Riley-Smith had previously considered, it should be pointed out that in the late eleventh century the distinction between ‘private’ and ‘public’ possession of wealth by rulers was poorly developed, if it existed at all. The implication to be drawn from this is that Stephen might have referred to the common fund as his own. I add that the use of ‘nam’ in its sense of explaining a previous

- comment was far more common in classical Latin than in its transitional sense. The use of it in the latter sense would mean that Stephen's chaplain Alexander's knowledge of classical Latin would have had to have been very good.
- 37 LoPrete, 'The Anglo-Norman Card', pp.575, 578.
 - 38 John France has argued persuasively that Kerbogah also halted at Edessa to enable the contingents of allied leaders to rendezvous with him. See J. France, *Victory in the East: a military history of the First Crusade*, Cambridge, 1994, pp.260–61.
 - 39 The limits of the figure are confirmed by other sources. Bohemond of Taranto won the Battle of the Lake against Ridwan of Aleppo on 9 February with only 700 knights. By the time of the capture of the city on 3 June there were only 200 horses left.
 - 40 Fulcher of Chartres, *Historia Hierosolymitana*, I.xvi.7, p.228. No other source dated the departure as precisely as this but almost all of them indicated that it was very shortly before the capture of the city.
 - 41 Albert of Aachen, *Historia Hierosolymitana*, IV.xiii, p.398.
 - 42 The anonymous author, *Gesta Francorum*, IX.xxvii, p.63; Raymond of Aguilers, *Historia Francorum*, XI, p.258; Peter Tudebode, *Historia de Hierosolymitano itinere* (Recueil des historiens des Croisades. Historiens Occidentaux, III), Paris, 1866, XI, p.74. Tudebode's *Historia* was merely a re-working of the anonymous author's *Gesta Francorum*.
 - 43 Baldric of Dol, *Historia Jerosolimitana*, II.xix, p.55.
 - 44 It was Ralph of Caen, who came out to Antioch in 1108 and who wrote his *Gesta Tancredi* after 1113, who said that Stephen left because of poverty. See ch.LVIII, p.649: '... ob remedium egestatis, ...'. Ralph was confused about all this. He placed Stephen's departure much earlier in the siege, at the same time as Robert of Normandy had gone off to Laodicea during the winter of 1097–98, and also said that Stephen went to Tarsus rather than Alexandretta. Little credence can be placed in his account; although, Stephen may well have landed at Tarsus after leaving Alexandretta.
 - 45 Ralph of Caen later wrote explicitly that Tancred had not been let into the plan, which is rather surprising, given that he was Bohemond's closest confidant. He was, however, very junior among the leaders at this stage. See Ralph of Caen, *Gesta Tancredi*, ch.LXX, p.657. This was contradicted by Baudry of Bourgueil, who said that Tancred had been party to the plan from the very beginning. See Baldric of Dol, *Historia Jerosolimitana*, II.xix p.55.
 - 46 The anonymous author, *Gesta Francorum*, VIII.xx, pp.44–46.
 - 47 Raymond of Aguilers, *Historia Francorum*, IX, p.251; Fulcher of Chartres, *Historia Hierosolymitana*, I.xvii.4–5, pp.232; Albert of Aachen, *Historia Hierosolymitana*, IV.xv, p.399.

- 48 The anonymous author, *Gesta Francorum*, VIII.xx, pp.45–46; Albert of Aachen, *Historia Hierosolymitana*, IV.xv–xxi, pp.399–403.
- 49 Blame by the other leaders was only introduced later by William of Tyre. See William of Tyre, *Chronicon*, ed. R. B. C. Huygens, Turnhout, 1986, V.x, pp.284–85.
- 50 Brundage, p.388.
- 51 Anonymous author, *Gesta Francorum*, IX.xxvii, p.63; Baldric of Dol, *Historia Jerosolimitana*, III.xii, p.71.
- 52 Anonymous author, *Gesta Francorum*, IX.xxvii, p.63.
- 53 Guibert of Nogent, *Dei gesta per Francos*, V.xxv, p.228: ‘... non dubitat, si sibi interim provideat nichil infamia dignum se facere putat, dum se oportuniori tempori servat.’
- 54 Baldric of Dol, *Historia Jerosolimitana*, III.xii, p.71.
- 55 Fulcher of Chartres said that he left for France (*Historia Hierosolymitana*, I.xvi.7, p.228). The other chroniclers merely reported his departure and the meeting at Philomēlion. Albert of Aachen was the first to introduce the story of his having made port somewhere where he heard about Alexios’s advance. He said that it was: ‘in certain islands of the realm of the Greeks’. See *Historia Hierosolymitana*, IV.xl, p.417. Anna Komnena reported that he came by way of Tarsus (*Alexiade*, XI.vi.1, vol.III, p.27).
- 56 Anonymous author, *Gesta Francorum*, IX.27, p.63. Cf. Baldric of Dol, *Historia Jerosolimitana*, III.xii, pp.71–72.
- 57 And Anna at least would have had good reason to do so. She could have made very good use in her own construction of the history of a criticism of Stephen’s conduct to excuse her father from the accusation later levied against him by Bohemond and others of breaking his own agreement with the Crusaders to come with his armies to join the Crusade, an agreement which had probably been made under oath.
- 58 The passage in the Bibliothèque Nationale Ms. 5513 of the *Historia Jerosolimitana* of Baudry of Bourgueil which said that Stephen had left for Italy by sea, that the news of Kerbogah’s defeat was brought to Constantinople fourteen days later by sea, that Alexios was incensed, and that he ordered that Stephen be pursued, captured, and brought back, is a later twelfth-century interpolation. See Baldric of Dol, *Historia Jerosolimitana*, préface, p.xiii and III.xx, p.80. The story is quite improbable. Stephen had to return to Alexandretta sometime after 7 June, take ship, reach somewhere like Tarsus, and march to Philomēlion some 300 miles inland across the Taurus Mountains. The meeting then had to take place and Alexios had to retreat with his army another 300 miles back across Asia Minor to Constantinople. Kerbogah was defeated on 28 June, so the message supposedly reached Constantinople around 11 July. That all of this could have taken place in such a short period of time is almost inconceivable. Moreover, the ship bearing the news is said to

- have reached Constantinople from Syria in eleven days. This would have been impossible. The ship would have had to have averaged over 3 knots continuously, day and night, along a rocky and islet-strewn coast against the prevailing winds of summer and against the currents in the Dardanelles. Medieval ships were not capable of such speeds in such conditions. The ship would have been hard pressed to have made the same voyage in reverse in that time.
- 59 See Hagenmeyer, *Epistulae*, letters VI (pp.141–42) and IX (pp.146–49).
- 60 Orderic Vitalis, *The ecclesiastical history*, X.12, vol.V, p.268.
- 61 Ivo of Chartres, *Divi Ivonis epistolae*, ep.86, col.107.
- 62 The news was carried back in the form of various encyclical letters. It was known to Pope Paschal II in Rome by December 1099 and to archbishop Manasses of Rheims by the end of the month. See Hagenmeyer, *Epistulae*, XIX and XX, pp.174–76; P. Riant, 'Inventaire critique des lettres historiques de croisades', *Archives de l'Orient Latin* 1 (1881): 1–224, esp. nos CXLVI and CXLVII, pp.205–207.
- 63 Hagenmeyer, *Epistulae*, XIX, p.175: '... fide pusillanimi et ambigua ...'.
- 64 Orderic Vitalis, *The ecclesiastical history*, X.20, vol.V, p.324: 'Absit a te domine mi: ut tantorum diu digneris hominum opprobria perpeti. Famosam strenuitatem iuventutis tuae recale, et arma laudabilis militiae ad multorum salutem milium arripe, ut inde Christicolis ingens in toto orbe oriatur exultatio, ethnicisque formido suaeque scelerosae legis publica deiectio.' Cf. X.12, vol.V, p.268: 'Multimodis itaque constrictus angariis Stephanus Blesensis comes ingemuit, seseque denuo ad peregrinandum preparavit ...'.
- 65 See Riley-Smith, *The First Crusaders*, pp.148, 197–226 and the sources cited therein.
- 66 Albert of Aachen, *Historia Hierosolymitana*, VIII.vi, p.563; Guibert of Nogent, *Dei gesta per Francos*, VII.24, pp.313–14.
- 67 Albert of Aachen, *Historia Hierosolymitana*, VII.vii, p.563; Guibert of Nogent, *Dei gesta per Francos*, VII.24, p.314; Anna Komnena, *Alexiade*, XI.viii.2, vol.III, pp.36–37.
- 68 Bohemond had been captured near Melitene (Malatya, Turkey) by the Dānishmendid emir Amīr Ghāzī Gümüshtigin in 1100 and taken off to captivity in Niksar.
- 69 Albert of Aachen, *Historia Hierosolymitana*, VIII.xiii–xxiv, pp.564–74.
- 70 Albert of Aachen, *Historia Hierosolymitana*, VIII.xli–xlv, pp.582–84; Fulcher of Chartres, *Historia Hierosolymitana*, II.xvii.1–xviii.1, pp.433–36.
- 71 Fulcher of Chartres, *Historia Hierosolymitana*, II.xviii.3, p.437.
- 72 Anonymous, *Gesta Francorum Iherusalem expugnantium* (Recueil des historiens des Croisades. Historiens Occidentaux. Vol.III, 487–543), ch.LVII, p.533; Fulcher of Chartres, *Historia Hierosolymitana*,

- II.xviii.3–4, pp.437–48.
- 73 Albert of Aachen, *Historia Hierosolymitana*, IX.vi, p.594; Fulcher of Chartres, *Historia Hierosolymitana*, II.xix.4, p.433; Guibert of Nogent, *Dei gesta per Francos*, VII.24, p.316; Orderic Vitalis, *The ecclesiastical history*, X.22, vol.V, pp.342–51.
- 74 The necrology of the cathedral of Notre Dame of Chartres dated his death to 19 May. See A. Molinier, et al., eds, *Obituaires de la province de Sens*, 4 vols, Paris, 1902–23, vol.II, p.13: ‘Eodem die, obiit Stephanus, palatinus comes, in defensione Jerosolimitane ecclesie, qui libertatem episcopalibus domibus contulit, et pro cuius anima Adela nobilis comitissa, concessit canonicis Beate Marie vicariam quam eis Gaufridus Brito vendidit, et alia multa bona fecit. [1102].’
- 75 See Mabille, nos.76 (pp.67–68) and 77 (pp.68–71); B. E. C. Guérard, ed., *Cartulaire de l’abbaye de Saint-Père de Chartres*, 2 vols, Paris, 1840, lib.I, no.57, vol.II, pp.309–10; no.78, pp.323–24; lib.II, no.14, pp.411–12.
- 76 Hagenmeyer, *Epistulae*, VIII, pp.144–46; XV, pp.156–60.
- 77 I read ‘quasi’ as a scribal error for ‘quam si’. For ‘...: altius uero atque laetius, quod tunc remansi, ipse recepit quasi aureum montem ei dedissem.’, some manuscripts have ‘...: altius uero atque leuius, quod tunc remansi, ipse recepit quasi aureum montem praedis factis.’, which would change the translation to ‘...: even more highly and with more pleasure, than if [it was] a mountain of gold from the spoils taken, did he receive [the fact] that I remained behind all the time.’
- 78 The letter was written on Easter Monday, 1098, i.e., 29 March. Twenty three weeks before that would have been 19 October. The armies are known to have arrived at Antioch around 20 October.
- 79 ‘*Satis audisti*’ may indicate that there was originally another letter from Stephen to Adela which described the battle of Doryleum.