

# GUIBERT OF NOGENT

## The Development of Rhetoric from Anti-Judaism to Anti-Semitism

Elyse Sulkey

In a famous monastery, the abbot sent a monk, raised in the faith since his childhood, to lodge in a cell attached to the church. While living in this cell, the monk fell sick and was attended by a Jew who knew medicine. As the pair became friends, the monk, curious about black magic, demanded initiation into the practice by the Jew whom he was convinced knew something about it. The Jew agreed to the monk's demands and arranged a meeting between the monk and his master, the Devil. When the day came, the monk stood before the Devil and asked to be initiated into his teaching. The Devil replied that the monk must renege his baptismal vows and offer a sacrifice before he would consider him for initiation. When the monk asked what the Devil wanted as a sacrifice, the Devil replied, "You will make me a libation of your sperm. When you have poured it out to me, you will taste it first, as it behooves the one

offering the sacrifice."<sup>1</sup>

Despite what the reader may be inclined to think, this strange story is not a passage from a poorly written erotic novel. Instead, it was taken from the memoirs of one of the most studied clerics of the twelfth century, Guibert of Nogent. Guibert was born in 1060 on the day before Easter at Clermont-en-Beauvais.<sup>2</sup> He was the youngest son of Evard, a warrior of King Henry of France, and his wife, a highly pious woman.<sup>3</sup> They were a noble and influential family in their locality, but they were not wealthy or highly placed.<sup>4</sup> Evard died shortly after

1. This anecdote was taken from: Guibert, Abbot of Nogent-sous-Coucy. *A Monk's Confession: The Memoirs of Guibert of Nogent*, trans. Paul J. Archambault (University Park, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1996), 89-90.

2. Jay Rubenstein, *Guibert of Nogent: Portrait of a Medieval Mind*. (New York: Routledge, 2002), 17.

3. Ibid.

4. John Benton, "The Personality of Guibert of Nogent." *Psychoanalytic Review*, 57.4 (1970), 567.



Guibert's birth,<sup>5</sup> leaving Guibert at the fringes of an already small patronage network.<sup>6</sup> His mother never remarried; instead she focused her efforts on providing an education for Guibert and securing a private tutor for him.<sup>7</sup> According to Guibert, his tutor agreed to teach him because of a dream in which an old man led the young Guibert to his bedside.<sup>8</sup> Eventually, Guibert entered the Church of Saint-Germer for monastic training despite his mother's insistence that he was not yet ready. By 1104, Guibert had obtained an appointment as the abbot of Nogent.<sup>9</sup> For a while, Guibert struggled to be accepted as a monk and was determined to prove that he was elected abbot on "merit alone."<sup>10</sup> During his time at Nogent, Guibert began to funnel his intellectual efforts into his writing – writings that occurred during a turbulent time

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5. In "Guibert of Nogent and the Subject of History" Heather Blurton argued that Guibert developed a fascination and obsession with sexual mutilation, money, and fear of death due to his father's early death and Guibert's subsequent rearing by a strict and pious mother and tutor. Blurton's argument is similar to that of John Benton's earlier article "The Personality of Guibert of Nogent," in which Benton discusses the possibility that Guibert suffered from an Oedipus complex that influenced his views of the world. It is worth noting that both Benton and Blurton postulated that psychological damage from Guibert of Nogent's early years may account for his hatred of the "other" and the fantastical charges he brought against them.

6. Rubenstein, *Portrait of a Medieval Mind*, 17-18.

7. Benton, "The Personality of Guibert of Nogent," 567.

8. Rubenstein, *Portrait of a Medieval Mind*, 18.

9. Benton, "The Personality of Guibert of Nogent," 574.

10. Blurton, "Guibert of Nogent and the Subject of History," 115.

of Christian-Jewish relations, a fact that is reflected in Guibert's attitudes toward Jews throughout his life's work.

Guibert of Nogent wrote *Gesta Dei per Francos*, or *The Deeds of God through the Franks*, between 1106 and 1109. It was a revision of an earlier anonymous chronicle titled *Gesta Francorum*. Though his chronicle of the First Crusade was not well known in his own time, Guibert of Nogent is today one of the best known chroniclers of the crusades, perhaps due to his autobiography *Monodiae*, or *Memoirs*, which is popularly referred to as *A Monk's Confession*. Guibert wrote his memoirs around 1115, which was quickly followed by his treatise against relic cults, *On the Relics of Saints*, in 1119. In these later works, Guibert accused Jews of using black magic; he was one of the first anti-Semitic writers to do so.<sup>11</sup>

In this paper, I argue that the previous anti-Judaic clerical sentiments of Guibert in *The Deeds of God through the Franks* developed into anti-Semitic rhetoric in his later works. This development will be traced chronologically through three prominent works of Guibert of Nogent: *The Deeds of God through the Franks*, *A Monk's Confession: The Memoirs of Guibert of Nogent*, and *On the Relics of Saints*.<sup>12</sup>

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11. Benton, "The Personality of Guibert of Nogent," 566.

12. Another work of importance for this topic is Guibert's 1111 *On Jews and Judaizers*. In *Guibert of Nogent: Portrait of a Medieval Mind*, Jay Rubenstein describes the arguments of other scholars that Guibert's tract against the Jews was a turning point in Christian-Jewish relations because it was the first tract to belittle and dehumanize Jews rather than treat them as respected theological colleagues. However,

This paper also discusses how the historical background of increasingly poor Christian-Jewish relations and the violence of the First Crusade fueled the development of Guibert's anti-Semitic rhetoric in the twelfth century.

## Historiography

Though Guibert of Nogent was not well known to his contemporaries, modern scholarship is fascinated by the abbot who deemed himself important enough to write a memoir before memoirs became a common literary convention. In fact, there have been several attempts to untangle the mind of Guibert of Nogent and discover the reasons behind not only his self-importance but also the fantastical stories he depicts when discussing sinners, heretics, and Jews.

In 1970, John F. Benton wrote "The Personality of Guibert of Nogent." This article, published in *The Psychoanalytic Review*, focused on Guibert's formative years and argued that the death of Guibert's father eight months after his birth and Guibert's subsequent isolated childhood, reared by an extremely pious mother and strict tutor, led to the development of an Oedipus complex. Benton postulated that this complex fueled Guibert's hatred of sin and warped the way in which Guibert perceived sinners.<sup>13</sup>

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*On Jews and Judaizers* was not included in this paper because an English translation could not be located.

13. Benton, "The Personality of Guibert of Nogent," 563-586.

In 1997, Steven Kruger published an article in the journal *New Literary History* entitled "Medieval Christian (Dis)Identifications: Muslims and Jews in Guibert of Nogent." Though Kruger steered away from the psychoanalytic nature of Benton's previous article, he noted that Guibert translated his fears about Jews into actions that he could depict as "monstrous" and "animal." However, Kruger spent the majority of his article discussing the rich history of biblical exegesis that came before the writings of Guibert and how this tradition influenced Guibert's own depiction of Jews and Muslims.<sup>14</sup> A large part of Kruger's article also focused on the idea that the proximity of Jewish communities to Christian writers like Guibert increased their fears of corruption and conversion, leading Christian writers to treat the Jews more harshly in their works than the Muslims who did not pose the same threat of proximity. Thus Kruger's article sought to explore the religious issues that drove Guibert's works instead of the personal issues that John Benton had focused on nearly thirty years prior.<sup>15</sup>

Despite Steven Kruger's departure from psychoanalytical explanations of Guibert's attitudes, historians did not completely turn a blind eye to the role of the mind in Guibert's

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14. Exegesis refers to the critical interpretation and explanation of a text, typically scripture.

15. Steven F. Kruger, "Medieval Christian (Dis)Identifications: Muslims and Jews in Guibert of Nogent." *New Literary History*, 28.2 (1997), 185-203.

works. In 2002, Jay Rubenstein released his book *Guibert of Nogent: Portrait of a Medieval Mind*. Instead of attributing Guibert's attitudes to early psychological damage, Rubenstein traced the development of Guibert's theological ideas throughout several of his early and later writings. Most notably, Rubenstein traced the development of Guibert's thoughts on morality and how these thoughts impacted his impression of the "other" in comparison to Christianity. A main point of his discussion focused on Guibert's thoughts about Jews and how those thoughts were reflected in medieval Christian-Jewish relations. He argued that in Guibert's earlier works Guibert sensed no rivalry or threat from Jews, but his III tract *On Jews and Judaizers* marked a turning point in Christian-Jewish relations with its portrayal of non-rational Jews.<sup>16</sup>

Shortly after the release of *Guibert of Nogent: Portrait of a Medieval Mind*, Heather Blurton published a 2003 article "Guibert of Nogent and the Subject of History" in *Exemplaria: A Journal of Theory in Medieval and Renaissance Studies*. Blurton's article returned to the psychoanalytic methods employed by Benton's "The Personality of Guibert of Nogent," using Benton's article to build her own case that Guibert of Nogent's obsession with sexual mutilation, death, and sex drove many of his ideas about morality

and the "other."<sup>17</sup>

Then in 2009, Elizabeth Lapina published an article in *The Journal of Medieval History* entitled "Anti-Jewish Rhetoric in Guibert of Nogent's *Dei gesta per Francos*." In it, Lapina argued that Guibert of Nogent used the tradition of biblical exegesis to imbue his version of the *Gesta Francorum* with anti-Judaic rhetoric through comparisons of the weaknesses of the Maccabees and the strengths of the Christian crusaders.<sup>18</sup> This paper will expand on Lapina's work by arguing that the previous anti-Judaic clerical sentiments of Guibert in *The Deeds of God through the Franks* developed into anti-Semitic rhetoric in his later works: *A Monk's Confession: The Memoirs of Guibert of Nogent*, and *On the Relics of Saints*.

## Christian-Jewish Relations: A Background

In the late eleventh century, Christian-Jewish relations took a violent turn that began a fluctuation between two competing anti-Jewish attitudes.<sup>19</sup> Anti-Judaism upheld the stance of the Church and though it considered Judaism evil, it did not find the Jewish people to be innately evil or wish for their destruction. Anti-Judaism also

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17. Heather F. Blurton, "Guibert of Nogent and the Subject of History," *Exemplaria: A Journal of Theory in Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, 15.1 (2003), 111-131.

18. Elizabeth Lapina, "Anti-Jewish rhetoric in Guibert of Nogent's *Dei gesta per Francos*," *Journal of Medieval History*, 35 (2009), 239-253.

19. Bat-Sheva Albert, "Christians and Jews," in *The Cambridge History of Christianity*, ed. Thomas Noble et al. (Cambridge University Press: 2015), 160.

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16. Rubenstein. *Portrait of a Medieval Mind*.

supported the civil Jewry laws of the Middle Ages. The foundation of civil law was the Theodosian Code, which held that Jews were part of a group of heretics, but were free to practice their religion.<sup>20</sup> The Code also opposed forced baptism and protected existing synagogues.<sup>21</sup> In theory, the Theodosian Code proved to be a balancing act between repression and toleration by the state.

While the Theodosian Code set important precedents for the treatment of Jews in Christendom, medieval Church and civil laws regarding Jews pulled heavily on the theory of Augustinian witness. Saint Augustine believed that God allowed the Jews to survive and live amongst Christians because they were “witnesses” to the glory of Christ.<sup>22</sup> To Augustine, the Jew’s served to authenticate the scriptures by demonstrating to enemies of the Church that biblical testimonies were not forged.<sup>23</sup> Most importantly, Jews proved the truth of Christian scripture since “in not comprehending the truth they offer additional testimony to the truth, since they do not understand those books by which it was foretold that they would not understand.”<sup>24</sup> In Augustine’s eyes, the rejection of Christ by

the Jews as foretold by scripture proved the truth of Christianity.

In addition, Augustine believed if the Jews had not put Christ to death that independence and Jerusalem would still be theirs.<sup>25</sup> By putting Christ to death, the Jews became a defeated people living amongst the new chosen people of God.<sup>26</sup> Thus, Jews living in Christendom served as “witnesses” to remind Christians of the truth of their faith. In the early Middle Ages, “Augustinian witness” was adapted and reinterpreted but it was still widely held that Jews should be allowed to live and worship within Christendom, albeit with certain restrictions, to continue to serve as witnesses to the truth of Christ.<sup>27</sup>

Despite the protections laid out by the Theodosian Code and the idea of Augustinian Witness in the Middle Ages, Gavin Langmuir summed up the Christian rejection of these protections in his book *History, Religion, and Antisemitism* when he explained the nature of anti-Judaic thought in the First Crusade:

*If they hated Jews because of doubts about the value of their own identity and killed Jews to stifle those doubts, they were nonetheless correct in thinking that Jews did not believe in Christ and mocked those who believed in “the hanged one.” Moreover, [they] did not project on Jews any characteristics Jews did not have, such as*

20. Mark R. Cohen, *Under Crescent and Cross: The Jews in the Middle Ages* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 32-33.

21. *Ibid.*, 36.

22. *Ibid.*, 37.

23. Jeremy Cohen, *Living Letters of the Law: Ideas of the Jew in Medieval Christianity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 29.

24. *Ibid.*

25. J. Cohen, *Living Letters of the Law*, 32.

26. *Ibid.*, 32-33.

27. *Ibid.*, 67-71.

*horns. They killed Jews because they were Jews, because Jews were people in the midst of Christendom who stubbornly rejected the nonrational beliefs of Christianity and persisted in adhering to their Judaic religion to the point of martyrdom.*<sup>28</sup>

Thus, anti-Judaism was dedicated to the repression and persecution of a religion, not the repression or demonization of a people. Ambivalence towards the Jewish faith also partially fueled anti-Judaic beliefs.<sup>29</sup>

In an attempt to protect his Jewish subjects from the growing unrest, the German emperor Henry IV confirmed in 1090 the previously granted rights to the Jewish community in Speyer: the reservation of a walled quarter, a plot to bury their dead, and permission from their provost to arbitrate disputes between or against themselves.<sup>30</sup> Henry also gave the Jews of Speyer freedom of commerce in the city, the right to employ Christian servants, and the right to defend and fortify their quarter. These laws contrasted with the laws of the Church that forbade Jews from having Christian servants.<sup>31</sup>

Though the separation of the Jews in their quarter was for their protection, it made them a more visible target during riots. In addition to this heightened

visibility, economic competition, church reforms, and the First Crusade fueled anti-Jewish sentiments among the Christian populace.<sup>32</sup> Crusaders who lacked the funds to make it to the East often turned their attention to the “Christ-killers” at home.<sup>33</sup> The increasing popularity of anti-Semitic sentiments, like the idea of the “Christ-killer,” led to the 1096 massacres along the Rhine. During the summer months, Count Emicho of Leiningen led his followers down the Rhine to the cities of Speyer, Worms, Mainz, Trier, and Cologne.<sup>34</sup> Though some bishops tried to protect the Jews, Emicho’s men massacred most of the Jewish population before moving on to Hungary where the army was later crushed.<sup>35</sup> There are also varying reports of forced conversion during the attacks. While some crusading armies left the European Jewish populations alone, the varying reactions of the crusading armies to Jewish communities show that the upholding of the Church’s policy of toleration depended on who was in command.<sup>36</sup> Such massacres were not repeated after the summer of 1096, but the century that followed saw a rise in violent persecutions and extortions.<sup>37</sup>

In contrast with Anti-Judaism, the development of an Anti-Semitism went beyond

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28. Gavin Langmuir, *History, Religion, and Antisemitism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 293.

29. Anna Sapir Abulafia, *Christian-Jewish Relations 1000-1300: Jews in the Service of Medieval Christendom* (Great Britain: Pearson Education Limited, 2011), 145.

30. Albert, “Christians and Jews,” 168.

31. *Ibid.*

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32. *Ibid.*, 169.

33. Thomas Madden, *The Concise History of the Crusades* (New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 2014), 18.

34. *Ibid.*

35. *Ibid.*, 18-19.

36. Abulafia, *Christian-Jewish Relations*, 140.

37. Albert, “Christians and Jews,” 169.

the previous treatment by the Church to include hostile and repressive attitudes towards Jews as an innately evil people.<sup>38</sup> Before the rise in anti-Semitic violence in the eleventh century, literature against the Jews was fairly rare in Latin Christendom.<sup>39</sup> Literature that did exist focused on Old Testament exegesis that involved Jewish opposition to and denial of Jesus and their ultimate responsibility for the Crucifixion.<sup>40</sup> However, after the mid eleventh century a rise in *Contra Judaeos* included development of irrational sentiments about the place of Jews in Christendom.<sup>41</sup> *Contra Judaeos* further tarnished the image of the Jew in the mind of Christians through their repeated exegesis of the Old Testament and the “sins of the Jews,” as well as accusations of deicide. The widening circulation of these works increased the antipathy of clerical readers toward the Jewish populations around them and made them more accepting of anti-Jewish measures.<sup>42</sup>

In the aftermath of the First Crusade, Henry IV allowed Jews forcibly converted during the 1096 massacres to return to the religion of their fathers in 1097.<sup>43</sup> Pope Calixtus II (1119-24) also issued a bull of protection, but even canon lawyers had shifted towards harshness against the Jews.<sup>44</sup>

Clearly there was an attempt to reverse some of the harm done by the First Crusade to the Jewish populations of Germany, but lasting damage to the image of the Jew existed in the minds of Christendom. Though the attacks against the Jews during the First Crusade did not occur in Southern France, there were recorded instances of anti-Jewish violence in northern cities.<sup>45</sup> This difference would later play a role in Guibert’s exposure to the Crusades.

In the twelfth century, previous Christian-Jewish tensions worsened as Renaissance Christians suppressed their rationality in order to make their faith conform to Renaissance ideals. This irrationality worsened attitudes against the Jews as they denied the beliefs in Christ about which the Christians had their doubts.<sup>46</sup> Irrational accusations such as ritual murder became the roots of growing anti-Semitic feelings.<sup>47</sup> These accusations were quickly embellished with fantasies and became tied to the Jewish faith.<sup>48</sup> Images like these, of Jewish hostility toward Christians, were at the center of negative Christian perceptions of Jews.<sup>49</sup> Even theologians began to believe that Jews and Christians had a differing capacity for

38. *Ibid.*, 160.

39. *Ibid.*, 169.

40. Robert Chazan, *The Jews of Medieval Western Christendom, 1000-1500* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 67.

41. Albert, “Christians and Jews,” 169-170.

42. *Ibid.*, 170.

43. Abulafia, *Christian-Jewish Relations*, 143.

44. Cohen, *Under Crescent and Cross*, 37-40.

45. Abulafia, *Christian-Jewish Relations*, 140.

46. Anna Sapir Abulafia, “Twelfth-Century Renaissance Theology and the Jews,” in *From Witness to Witchcraft: Jews and Judaism in Medieval Christian Thought*, ed. Jeremy Cohen (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 1996) 128-129.

47. *Ibid.*, 129.

48. Chazan, *The Jews of Medieval Western Christendom*, 214.

49. *Ibid.*, 67.

reason.<sup>50</sup> It was during this turbulent time of Christian-Jewish relations that Guibert of Nogent lived and wrote, so it is of no surprise that his attitudes toward Jews shifted throughout his life's work.

## Guibert of Nogent and His Works

By examining the differences in Guibert's rhetoric about Jews and Judaizers in *The Deeds of God through the Franks*, *A Monk's Confession: The Memoirs of Guibert of Nogent*, and *On the Relics of Saints* chronologically, this section will show that Guibert's language shifted over time from anti-Judaic rhetoric focusing on the shortcomings of Judaism to anti-Semitic rhetoric focusing on the evils of Jews as a people.<sup>51</sup> For the purposes of this paper, anti-Judaism will refer to the point of view that regards the Jewish religion and its doctrine as evil and the Jews as a people who have been conditioned for evil because of their practice of Judaism.<sup>52</sup> Anti-Semitism will refer to the attempt to give justification for Jew hatred outside of theological differences by depicting the Jews as an inherently evil and inferior group whose religion is

an ideological expression of their innate evil.<sup>53</sup>

During the twelfth century, authors began to reach back into the Old Testament to find biblical precedents for the crusaders, which eventually led to the use of the Maccabees as "proto-crusaders."<sup>54</sup> The Maccabees were a Jewish rebel force active in the mid-second century BCE who fought to reassert Judaism in Judea against the influence of Hellenism and the Seleucid Empire.<sup>55</sup> The Maccabees made an apt comparison for crusaders because they used forced conversion and conquest to meet their aims, much like the crusaders.<sup>56</sup> In his early works, Guibert followed traditional models of exegetical debate about the Old Testament.<sup>57</sup> From the beginning of *The Deeds of God through the Franks*, Guibert set out to ensure that his audience understood that Jews, even the Maccabees, are lesser than their Christian counterparts. In the introduction he stated that he wrote his chronicle of the First Crusade because "[he] thought, if [he] may dare to say this, that it deserved being told with greater dignity than all the histories of Jewish warfare, if God would

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50. Abulafia, "Twelfth-Century Renaissance Theology and the Jews," 131.

51. Hyam Maccoby published an excellent article detailing the differences between anti-Judaism and anti-Semitism in *European Judaism: A Journal for the New Europe*. It is entitled "Anti-Judaism and Anti-Semitism" and can be found in volume eighteen issue two of the 1985 journal.

52. Maccoby, Hyam. "Anti-Judaism and Anti-Semitism." *European Judaism: A Journal for the New Europe* 18.2 (1985), 27-30.

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53. *Ibid.*, 27.

54. Lapina, "Anti-Jewish rhetoric in Guibert of Nogent's *Dei gesta per Francos*," 241.

55. Simon Hornblower, Antony Spawforth, and Esther Eidinow, ed., "Maccabees" in *The Oxford Companion to Classical Civilization 2<sup>nd</sup> edition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

56. Nicholas De Lange, ed., *The Illustrated History of the Jewish People* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1997), 28-32.

57. Rubenstein, *Portrait of a Medieval Mind*, 116.

grant someone the ability to do this.”<sup>58</sup> Guibert thus makes it clear that despite their accomplishments, one of his goals in writing *The Deeds of God through the Franks* was to elevate Christian crusaders above the well-known Jewish warriors. He does this throughout *The Deeds of God through the Franks* by demonstrating Jewish theological shortcomings, a technique often employed in anti-Judaic writing.

Later, Guibert further emphasized the higher status of the crusaders in comparison to the Maccabees. He retold the sermon of Pope Urban II in Clermont declaring that the pope had said, “If the Maccabees once deserved the highest praise for piety because they fought for their rituals and their temple, then you too, O soldiers of Christ, deserve such praise, for taking up arms to defend the freedom of your country.”<sup>59</sup> The pope continued on to tell the crusaders they were fighting the Antichrist. In this instance, a comparison was being drawn that the Maccabees fought for their own sake, while the crusaders fought for God as well as the protection of their country.<sup>60</sup> This comparison elevated the crusaders for their righteous, spiritual cause while putting the Maccabees in a realm of corporeal selfishness.

Guibert continued this critique of the Maccabees when he related the “despicable vanity of the Jewish people.”<sup>61</sup> Though Guibert excused Jewish fathers now celebrated by the Church, such as David, Joshua, and Samuel, he accused the Jews of being a “wretched” people who served God only to fill their own bellies.<sup>62</sup> Guibert then declared that these “idolaters” were given their victories, while the Christian crusaders were sacrificing to achieve theirs.<sup>63</sup> While Guibert seemed to emphasize the disadvantages the crusaders faced, he later said “if celestial help appeared long ago to the Maccabees fighting for circumcision and the meat of swine, how much more did those who poured out their blood for Christ, purifying the churches and propagating the faith, deserve such help.”<sup>64</sup> Guibert used these passages not only to demonstrate to his readers the weakness of the Maccabees, who needed worldly comforts and divine help in order to succeed, but to assure his readers that the crusaders would be victorious because of their greater sacrifice and true devotion to God. Later in *The Deeds of God through the Franks*, Guibert reminded us of his previous point by stating that neither Ezra nor Judas Maccabeus suffered as much as the crusaders for their victories.<sup>65</sup> This passage also served to illustrate how the

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58. Guibert of Nogent, *The Deeds of God through the Franks: a translation of Guibert de Nogent's Gesta Dei per Francos*. Trans. Robert Levine (Woodbridge, Suffolk, UK: Boydell Press, 1997), 25.

59. *Ibid.*, 43.

60. Lapina, “Anti-Jewish Rhetoric in Guibert of Nogent’s *Dei gesta per Francos*,” 247.

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61. Guibert, *The Deeds of God through the Franks*, 107.

62. *Ibid.*

63. *Ibid.*

64. *Ibid.*, 110.

65. *Ibid.*, 135.

crusaders did not just possess purer motive and devotion than the Maccabees, but actually surpassed the accomplishments of their greatest warriors.<sup>66</sup>

The differences between the Maccabees and the crusaders were frequently brought to light in Guibert's chronicle. In yet another passage, Guibert claimed that modern men underwent greater suffering than the Jews of old.<sup>67</sup> He elaborated by stating that the Jews had their families for company and full bellies to fight on while angels led their way into battle.<sup>68</sup> He juxtaposed the comforts of the Maccabees with the hardship of the crusaders saying, "today's men are the ones whom he [God] more truly saves, because he truly receives as his children those whose bodies he has allowed to be slain, and whom he punishes in the temporal world."<sup>69</sup> Elizabeth Lapina argued that this juxtaposition was an implication that the crusaders avoided temptations of the flesh due to circumstances and their own conscious decision, while the Maccabees continued to give into these temptations by bringing along their families.<sup>70</sup> More literally, Guibert's claims were another example of the hardships that the crusaders faced. When juxtaposed with the relative comfort of the Maccabees, these hardships were meant to construe the Jewish warriors as weak,

66. Lapina, "Anti-Jewish Rhetoric in Guibert of Nogent's *Dei gesta per Francos*," 247.

67. Guibert, *The Deeds of God through the Franks*, 143.

68. *Ibid.*

69. *Ibid.*

70. Lapina, "Anti-Jewish Rhetoric in Guibert of Nogent's *Dei gesta per Francos*," 250.

unable to put their lives fully in the hands of God, while the crusaders came across as devout Christians willing to sacrifice everything for God and their cause.

The last major instance in which Guibert seeks to raise the crusaders above the memory of the Maccabees occurs a few pages later. Guibert writes:

*If someone cites the sons of Israel and the miracles of God performed for them, I shall offer something more miraculous: an open sea filled with Gentiles; a cloud of divine fear rising from a column among them; I shall point to the light of divine hope offered to those whom Christ inspired, himself a column of uprightness and strength, those who were comforted by the food of the word of God only, like divine manna, when they had no earthly hope. Those men spurned the heavenly food that they were offered, and looked back in their minds and with their voices to the Egypt they had left behind, but our men never looked back, but instead eagerly embraced whatever poverty and suffering came upon them.<sup>71</sup>*

In this passage, Guibert paralleled the miracles performed for the Jews, like the parting of the Red Sea, with the actions of the crusaders and the conditions they faced, like a sea of soldiers. While the Jews were provided with an abundance of miracles, Guibert claims that they still looked back to the oppression God

71. Guibert, *The Deeds of God through the Franks*, 145.

had freed them from because of the comforts Egypt offered. In contrast, the crusaders never complained about the conditions they endured, but charged ahead to complete their godly mission. This passage shows that Guibert not only argued that the occurrence of miracles was not an important indication of divine favor to the Maccabees, but also underscored the differences in the carnal devotion of the Maccabees and the spiritual devotion of the Christian crusaders.<sup>72</sup>

Throughout *The Deeds of God through the Franks*, Guibert made frequent parallels between the Jewish warriors, the Maccabees, and the Christian crusaders of the First Crusade. With allusions to the miracles performed for the Maccabees juxtaposed with the hardships and suffering of the crusaders, Guibert attempted to steer the reader away from the idea of the Maccabees as equals of the Crusaders and instead tried to convey a type of Christian superiority by making the Maccabees inferior “proto-Crusaders.” The Maccabees were depicted as needy, unable to succeed without God’s help yet unable to fully dedicate themselves to God. In contrast, Guibert goes into great detail about the hardships the crusaders faced and pointedly talked about the lack of miracles performed for the crusaders. However, Guibert decried the idea that God favored the Jews through his miracles. Instead these hardships were proof that the Christians crusaders were more devout than

72. Lapina, “Anti-Jewish Rhetoric in Guibert of Nogent’s *Dei gesta per Francos*,” 251.

their Jewish predecessors as they were willing to fight for God without any reward and with great personal sacrifice.

The presentation of Christians as superior through critical examinations of the Old Testament was typical of exegesis in the twelfth century. Guibert’s argument concerning the superiority of Christian crusaders over the Maccabees in *The Deeds of God through the Franks* was largely based on theological differences. The Maccabees were depicted as selfish warriors with weak faith in order to highlight the devoutness of the crusaders. However, Guibert did not suggest that the Maccabees were agents of the Devil, possessors of black magic, or sexual deviants, nor did he depict them as Christ-killers or murderers of Christians. In *The Deeds of God through the Franks*, Guibert’s language was anti-Judaic because it focused on what he saw as the theological shortcomings of the Jews. In contrast, in his later works Guibert’s language began to focus on the evils of the Jews as a people and not on the shortcomings of Judaism as a faith.

When Guibert wrote his memoirs, or *Monodiae*, in 1115 he was certainly proficient in weaving a tale about Jews engaging in black magic on behalf of the devil. In fact, Guibert’s memoirs spoke more about other figures and their sins than himself.<sup>73</sup> After the first book, Guibert spent most of the memoir reflecting on the sins of various clerics, Christians, and Jews.

73. Blurton, “Guibert of Nogent and the Subject of History,” 116-120.

The first mention of a Jew in the second book of *Monodiae* was rather mild. It recounted a great storm that hit a monastery while the monks were walking to the high altar to sing the litanies.<sup>74</sup> Lightning struck the altar, blinding a priest and sending two young boys flying across the room.<sup>75</sup> It is interesting that Guibert chooses this story to describe one of the altar boys as “a converted Jew, but... deeply devout.”<sup>76</sup> Though Jews only entered Guibert’s social world after they converted,<sup>77</sup> he still felt that he needed to not only mention that they were once Jewish, but that they were devoted to the Christian faith. This suggests that Guibert still did not trust even converted Jews.

Guibert goes on to an anecdote, previously employed in the introduction of this paper, designed to illustrate the corrupting influence of Christian friendships with Jews. Guibert introduced his story by saying: “For demons admit no one to their evil doings except those whom they have first stripped of the honor of their baptism through some terrible sacrilege.”<sup>78</sup> He then told the tale of a monk who befriended a Jewish doctor after he fell ill.<sup>79</sup> The monk’s fascination with

black magic led him to convince the Jew to arrange a meeting between himself and the Devil.<sup>80</sup> In exchange for his teachings, the Devil demanded that the monk renege his baptismal vows and make a libation of his own sperm.<sup>81</sup> At this demand, Guibert exclaimed “What a crime! What a shameful act! And it was being demanded of a priest! This is what your enemy of old does, O Lord, to blaspheme and dishonor your priesthood and your sacred host!”<sup>82</sup>

Loss of bodily integrity, represented here by the monk’s drinking of his own sperm, is common amongst Christians who associated with Jews in *Monodiae*.<sup>83</sup> This passage focused on the seduction of the Christian priest by the Devil’s agent, the Jew.<sup>84</sup> However, the monk’s transgressions were facilitated by intimacy with a Jew, leading him into a compromised spiritual position. Yet ultimately it was the monk who polluted his body in a sexual parody of the Christian mass.<sup>85</sup> This passage illustrated Guibert’s fears about Jewish proximity facilitating Christian sin and threatening the integrity of the Christian body.<sup>86</sup>

It is interesting to note that in one of Guibert’s earlier works, *Moralia*, he described three stages that led to committing sin.<sup>87</sup>

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74. Guibert, Abbot of Nogent-sous-Coucy. *A Monk's Confession: The Memoirs of Guibert of Nogent*. Trans. Paul J. Archambault (University Park, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1996), 83.

75. *Ibid.*

76. *Ibid.*

77. Kruger, “Medieval Christian (Dis) Identifications,” 192.

78. Guibert, *A Monk's Confession*, 89.

79. *Ibid.*

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80. *Ibid.*

81. *Ibid.*

82. *Ibid.*, 90.

83. Kruger, “Medieval Christian (Dis) Identifications, 188.

84. *Ibid.*

85. *Ibid.*, 189.

86. *Ibid.*

87. Rubenstein, *Portrait of a Medieval Mind*, 44-47.

“Affection” tempted Will before captivating it through beauty and pleasure, leading Will to accept Affection’s earlier suggestions of sin.<sup>88</sup> Reason must then agree to follow Will and Affection into sin.<sup>89</sup> In this case, it appeared that Affection was the Jewish doctor whom the monk befriended. However, the monk’s own Will and Reason must agree to follow the Jew to sin, so Guibert cannot lay blame for the priest’s fall solely on the Jew, but did frame the Jew as a seducer and Devil’s agent. This was a common trope in Guibert’s memoirs that enabled him to construct a perceived Jewish threat to Christian selfhood.<sup>90</sup> By doing so, Guibert was able to reconcile his previously held views on morality with his anti-Semitic views of Jews as an evil people.

The introduction of this passage also revealed Guibert’s views of Jews as inhuman monsters by indirectly comparing Jews to demons;<sup>91</sup> the introduction of the tale attributed the stripping of baptismal vows to the work of demons, while the Jewish doctor facilitated the stripping of the priest’s baptismal vows in the anecdote itself. Despite this negative outlook, Guibert did make exceptions to his presentation of Jews as vile corrupters when he remarked on converts in monasteries.

Guibert’s passage about one boy’s conversion was the only

88. Ibid.

89. Ibid.

90. Kruger, “Medieval Christian (Dis) Identifications”, 194.

91. On Guibert’s views of Jews as inhuman monsters, see Steven Kruger’s “Medieval Christian (Dis)Identifications”, 189.

written account of the violence against the Jews in northern France.<sup>92</sup> Guibert described the boy’s rescue:

*At the time when talk of a crusade to Jerusalem began to reverberate throughout the Latin world for the first time he was rescued from his superstition in the following manner. At Rouen one day, some men who had taken the cross with the intention of leaving for the crusade began complaining among themselves. “Here we are,” they said, “going off to attack God’s enemies in the East, having to travel tremendous distances, when there are Jews right here before our very eyes. No race is more hostile to God than they are. Our project is insane!” Having said this they armed themselves, rounded up some Jews in a church – whether by force or by ruse I don’t know – and led them out to put them to the sword regardless of age or sex. Those who agreed to submit to the Christian way of life could, however, escape the impending slaughter. It was during this massacre that a nobleman saw a little boy, took pity on him, whisked him away, and took him to his own mother.<sup>93</sup>*

The inclusion of the violence against the Jews of Rouen in Guibert’s memoirs showed that Guibert was not only involved with the theological aspects of anti-Judaism and anti-Semitism, but was aware of the physical and violent aspects of anti-Jewish movements in the eleventh

92. Abulafia. *Christian-Jewish Relations*, 141.

93. Guibert, *A Monk’s Confession*, 111.

century. Guibert referenced the claims of many crusaders, that asserted they could not go East without first dealing with enemies of Christ in Christendom.<sup>94</sup> He also detailed the forced conversion of the Jews of Rouen. While the boy in this passage remained Christian, records show that the Jews of Rouen later paid William Rufus to obtain his permission to return to Judaism after their forced conversion in 1096.<sup>95</sup>

The boy's 'forced' conversion in this passage was slightly complicated. The noblewoman, whom the boy had been brought to, asked if he would like to be placed under Christian law.<sup>96</sup> He does not say no, but Guibert stated that the boy thought he would be murdered, as he had just seen other Jews being murdered, if he refused.<sup>97</sup> While the boy's protectors did not physically threaten him to convert, nor does it appear that they intended to psychologically threaten or pressure him, asking him about conversion directly after he had been rescued from the slaughter led to his conversion out of fear. Despite the attitudes of the Church against forced conversion, Guibert related that the baptism was blessed, claiming that a drop of candle wax falling into the baptismal font formed a perfect cross.<sup>98</sup>

After the baptism, the boy was renamed Guillaume, after the nobleman who rescued

him.<sup>99</sup> Guillaume showed great academic promise, but the elder Guillaume feared that the boy's Jewish relatives would force him to readopt Judaism, so he brought him to the monastery of Fly.<sup>100</sup> Once there, the younger Guillaume became immersed in Christianity and he "[drew] considerable respect from people for mastering his former nature and for resisting all attempts to disrupt his new way of life."<sup>101</sup> Guibert went on to describe how Guillaume's faith grew through his education, at one point relating that he sent Guillaume a copy of his tract against the Jews.<sup>102</sup> Apparently, Guillaume loved the tract and began to write his own, defending the Christian faith through reason.<sup>103</sup> Guibert ends this passage by stating, "The appearance of the cross at his baptism, then, was not a chance event but was divinely willed. It was a sign of the faith that would develop in this man of Jewish stock, a rare event in our time."<sup>104</sup>

Guibert did not approach Guillaume in the same way that he approached most Jews in *Monodiae*. In fact, in the majority of Guibert's works, Jews were depicted as inarticulate, mean spirited, and lacking all reason.<sup>105</sup> However, Guibert did not treat the boy with suspicion, imply the use of dark magic, or associate him with sin and the Devil. It seems Guibert held Guillaume in

99. Ibid.

100. Ibid.

101. Ibid.

102. Ibid., 113.

103. Ibid.

104. Ibid.

105. Rubenstein, *Portrait of a Medieval Mind*, 120.

94. See earlier discussion of the Crusaders and anti-Semitic pogroms on page 7.

95. Abulafia. *Christian-Jewish Relations*, 141.

96. Guibert, *A Monk's Confession*, 112.

97. Ibid.

98. Ibid.

high regard, as a rational scholar, sending him his own writings as an educational tool. It was in this passage that Guibert came closest to the descriptions of other Christian authors of the time – the Jew as an intelligent and sympathetic figure.<sup>106</sup> Guillaume’s acceptance and reverence for Guibert’s tract against the Jews seemed to seal Guibert’s high opinion of Guillaume leading him to exclaim that the wax cross at Guillaume’s baptism was divinely willed. Though Guibert accepted Guillaume as a devout Christian, at points even seeming proud of the development of Guillaume’s faith, he casually reminded the reader of the typically stubborn and sinful Jew by pointing out the rarity of such a successful conversion.

In contrast to Guibert’s respectful treatment of Guillaume was his dedicated attack on Jean, Count of Soissons. Guibert described Jean as a wicked character who inherited such traits from his father and grandfather.<sup>107</sup> He also spent a considerable amount of time detailing the dealings of Jean’s mother with a local Jew.<sup>108</sup> Jean’s mother poisoned her brother with the help of a Jew in order to obtain his county.<sup>109</sup> The Jew was subsequently burned at the stake, while Jean’s mother suffered a stroke during which her tongue was nearly cut off; after she recovered she “lived like a pig” and disdained that dealing with God.<sup>110</sup> She remained that way

until her death, at which time Jean supposedly told Guibert that he would not spend a great deal of money on his mother: “Why should I lavish money on her when she was unwilling to do so for the salvation of her own soul?”<sup>111</sup>

Jean’s rejection of familial duties was only the beginning of his transgressions. Guibert stated that Jean regarded the beliefs of the Jews so highly that he would utter blasphemies against the Savior, something the Jews themselves never dared to do. Guibert described Jean’s words as “evil” and claimed that even the Jews thought he was insane because he approved of Judaism but practiced Christianity. Jean supposedly argued with a cleric about the rise of Christ from the dead; when the cleric asked why he kept a vigil on Easter even if he believed the resurrection was a fable, Jean replied that he enjoyed watching the beautiful women who also kept a vigil.<sup>112</sup>

Perhaps most offensive to Guibert was Jean’s affair and the blasphemies that arose from it. Jean’s affair with a “wrinkled old hag” often occurred in the house of a Jew; in order to get rid of his wife to stay with his mistress, Jean once attempted to frame his wife for adultery by having another man get in bed with her.<sup>113</sup> Guibert described Jean’s inability to control his lust, which eventually led to a deadly disease.<sup>114</sup> Jean asked the cleric, with whom he had previously

106. Ibid.

107. Guibert, *A Monk’s Confession*, 193.

108. Ibid.

109. Ibid.

110. Ibid.

111. Ibid., 194.

112. Ibid.

113. Ibid.

114. Ibid., 195.

argued about the death of Christ, to examine him; the cleric tried to talk to Jean about his sins but the count cried out “Do you think I’m going to hand out my money to some ass-licking priests? No, I tell you, not a penny. I have learned from many people far cleverer than you that all women should be in common and that this is a sin of no consequence.”<sup>115</sup> After this point, the count went insane and eventually died, while devils claimed his soul.<sup>116</sup>

Guibert’s treatment of Jean, Count of Soissons shows that he found the lapse of Christian faith worse than a Jew’s disbelief.<sup>117</sup> Jean received Guibert’s fullest treatment on the betrayal of Christianity.<sup>118</sup> Jean’s “Judaizing” led him to debase his Christian body through the sexual crime of adultery. At the very least, even if associating with Jews had not disintegrated Jean’s morals, a Jew facilitated his affair by allowing Jean to use his house to meet with the “hag.” By giving in to Jewish influence, Jean represented Guibert’s fears about the potential for Christian wrongdoing due to the proximity to Jews, again returning to the power of the Jew as the Devil’s seducer.<sup>119</sup>

The mention of Jean’s mother and her dealings with Jews also served to highlight the potential for Jewish contact to debase the Christian body. The countess’ deal with a Jew eventually led to a stroke that nearly cost her tongue

115. Ibid.

116. Ibid.

117. Cohen, *Living Letters of the Law*, 193.

118. Kruger, “Medieval Christian (Dis) Identifications,” 189.

119. Ibid., 192.

and sent her into madness. Likewise, Jean’s affair facilitated by a Jew, in combination with his approval of Judaism drove him mad before the Devil claimed his soul.

Guibert clearly disdained Count Jean and made every effort to depict Jean as a sinful, shameless, heretic and Judaizer. However, though Guibert does mention that Jean threatened to convert to Judaism, Jean remained a Christian until his death.<sup>120</sup>

Guibert’s earlier account of the conversion of Guillaume showed that despite the inherently evil nature of Jews, Guibert still felt that some Jews could be saved, yet even the most debased Christians would never convert to Judaism. In Guibert’s world, while the conversion of Jews would strengthen Christianity, the conversion of Christians would destabilize Christian identity and disrupt the sense of the Christian as a moral and rational counter to the irrational and immoral Jew.<sup>121</sup>

Across *Monodiae*, Guibert expressed his fears about Christian-Jewish proximity through several anti-Semitic ideas. The most common was the debasement of the Christian body through Jewish proximity. Early in *Monodiae* befriending a Jewish doctor led a monk to debase his body by drinking his own sperm. Later, association with Jews led Jean, Count of Soissons, and his mother into madness that ended in their deaths. There was also an element of the animal and

120. Rubenstein, *Portrait of a Medieval Mind*, 115.

121. Kruger, “Medieval Christian (Dis) Identifications,” 188-193.

inhuman in Guibert's Christian-Jewish relationships. The monk who dealt with the Devil to learn black magic later use this magic to turn his nun lover into a dog; the introduction to the story of the monk also compared Jews and demons.<sup>122</sup> Jean's mother lived out the rest of her life following her stroke "living like a pig." When Jean's own demise came about, he has to be restrained from kicking and scratching at himself like an animal.<sup>123</sup> These animalistic and inhuman features further added to the sense of degradation that was caused by Jewish proximity. Though less common in *Monodiae*, it was important to note that Guibert does accuse the Jewish doctor of knowing black magic. This was a fanciful claim unfounded in any theological differences between Christianity and Judaism and the monk's sole reason behind his conviction that his doctor knows black magic was that the doctor is a Jew. The claim was not only anti-Semitic, but Guibert was the first known writer to use the accusation of Jewish black magic.<sup>124</sup>

*On the Relics of Saints* quickly followed Guibert's memoirs in 1119. Though the focus of *On the Relics of Saints* centered on Guibert's thoughts about the popularity of relics and relic cults, there was a brief glimpse of Guibert's developing anti-Semitic attitudes. While discussing the nature of the body of Christ during mass and how the figurative body of Christ differs

from the physical relics of saints, Guibert drew this comparison:

*If a Jew undergoes baptism with a mind bent on financial gain, as so often happens, surely he does not attain remission for his sins? The Holy Spirit, who has the power to sanctify baptism, cannot indulge even the least sin of someone who falsely and malevolently engages with such purity.*<sup>125</sup>

Looking back at *Monodiae* and Guibert's description of the "rarity" of Guillaume's deep faith after conversion, as well as his insistence of the devotion of the young convert struck by lightning, it is not surprising that Guibert believed that it was common for Jews to convert under false pretenses.<sup>126</sup> Due to growing professional restrictions for both Christians and Jews, medieval Jews were pushed into usury professions.<sup>127</sup> This push fueled the anti-Semitic stereotype of the greedy Jew that can be seen in the previous excerpt when Guibert attributed false conversions to a Jew's efforts for financial gain.<sup>128</sup>

## Conclusions

Modern scholarship is fascinated with Guibert of Nogent, a fascination that has led to articles and books by scholars

125. Guibert, Abbot of Nogent-sous-Coucy, *On the Relics of Saints*. Trans. Joseph McAlhany and Jay Rubenstein (New York: Penguin Books, 2011), 230.

126. For a discussion of Guillaume, see page 20. For a discussion of the young convert, see page 16.

127. Cohen, *Living Letters of the Law*, 224.

128. *Ibid.*, 225.

122. Guibert, *A Monk's Confession*, 90.

123. *Ibid.*, 195.

124. Benton, "The Personality of Guibert of Nogent," 566.

such as John Benton, Heather Blurton, Steven Kruger, Elizabeth Lapina, and Jay Rubenstein. Many attempts have been made to unravel the mind of Guibert and unearth the roots and extents of his beliefs. A large focus of these attempts centers on Guibert's attitudes regarding Jews. This paper builds off of Elizabeth Lapina's argument in "Anti-Jewish rhetoric in Guibert of Nogent's *Dei gesta per Francos*" by examining rhetoric in *The Deeds of God through the Franks* in combination with Guibert's memoirs, *Monodiae*, and his tract against relic cults, *On the Relics of Saints*, to trace the development of Guibert of Nogent's anti-Semitic attitudes.

In *The Deeds of God through the Franks*, Guibert largely adheres to the tradition of Old Testament biblical exegesis. Focusing on the Maccabees as "proto-crusaders," Guibert describes their spiritual weakness and corporeal selfishness to emphasize the superiority of Christian crusaders over the Jewish warriors of old. Though Guibert actively seeks to promote Christian superiority, his rhetoric focuses on the theological shortcomings of Judaism and the perceived shortcomings of those who practice it. He does not attribute any sins or wrongdoings to an evil inherent among the Jewish people.

Guibert's language in *Monodiae* shows a shift in his perceptions. While Guibert still believes that Judaism is inferior to Christianity, his rhetoric shows that he now attributes Jewish sins to an evil inherent in the

Jewish people. He accuses Jews of knowing black magic, of creating parallels between themselves and the animalistic and inhuman, and of frequently connecting the debasement of a Christian body with friendliness with Jews. While Guibert does mention two converted Jews and their devotion to the faith, he emphasizes the rarity of such an event.

A few years after *Monodiae*, Guibert wrote *On the Relics of Saints*. In this tract, one of the few mentions of Jews accuses them of falsely converting in hopes of monetary gain. Guibert gives no evidence for this accusation, seeming to rely on the inherent truth of the statement with his reader. This accusation aligns with wider anti-Semitic stereotypes of the greedy Jew that arose in the Middle Ages.

All of Guibert's charges against Jews in *Monodiae* and *On the Relics of Saints* show a detachment from the earlier anti-Judaic rhetoric of *The Deeds of God through the Franks*. Rather than focusing on theological shortcomings, Guibert turns to fanciful charges of black magic, inhuman characteristics, physical Christian debasement, dealings with the Devil and stereotypes of greed. Any evidence outside of the accused being a Jew does not back these charges. However, Guibert does relate two successful conversion stories.

Guibert's rhetoric clearly shifts from anti-Judaic to anti-Semitic in his later works, but he is not yet as fanatical as anti-Semitic writers in later years, such as Thomas of Monmouth.<sup>129</sup> The

<sup>129</sup>. Thomas of Monmouth is the author

shift in Guibert's rhetoric from his early anti-Judaic works to his later anti-Semitic works makes sense in the context of Guibert's life; he lived and wrote in the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> centuries, a turbulent time for Christian-Jewish relations. Thus, Guibert's shift in rhetoric is not solely a reflection of Guibert's personal beliefs, but a larger reflection of his world.

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of *The Life and Miracles of Saint William of Norwich*. Written around 1150, it recounts the 1140 murder of a young boy, William of Norwich, supposedly at the hands of local Jews who traditionally crucified Christian children near Easter in order to mock Christ. It is considered to be the first appearance of the anti-Semitic charge of blood libel.

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### **ABOUT THE AUTHOR:**

Elyse Sulkey is a graduating senior at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Her research interests include exploring aspects of medieval European culture such as art, literature, and rhetoric.