Encountering Islam on the First Crusade

The First Crusade (1095–1099) has often been characterised as a head-to-head confrontation between the forces of Christianity and Islam. For many, it is the campaign that created a lasting rupture between these two faiths. Nevertheless, is such a characterisation borne out by the sources? Engagingly written and supported by a wealth of evidence, *Encountering Islam on the First Crusade* offers a major re-interpretation of the crusaders’ attitudes towards the Arabic and Turkic peoples they encountered on their journey to Jerusalem. Nicholas Morton considers how they interpreted the new peoples, civilisations, and landscapes they encountered, sights for which their former lives in Western Christendom had provided little preparation. Morton offers a varied picture of cross-cultural relations, depicting the Near East as an arena in which multiple protagonists were pitted against each other. Some were fighting for supremacy, others for their religion, many simply for survival.

Nicholas Morton is a lecturer in History at Nottingham Trent University. He is the author of many works on the crusades and the military orders including *The Medieval Military Orders* and *The Teutonic Knights in the Holy Land, 1190–1291*. 
There are, I know, those who prefer not to go beyond the impression, however accidental, which an old work makes on a mind that brings to it a purely modern sensibility and modern conceptions; just as there are travellers who carry their resolute Englishry with them all over the continent, mix only with other English tourists, enjoy all they see for its ‘quaintness’, and have no wish to realise what those ways of life, those churches, those vineyards, mean to the natives. They have their reward. I have no quarrel with people who approach the past in that spirit. I hope they will pick none with me. But I was writing for the other sort.

C.S. Lewis

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I started to chew over this topic about five years ago when pieces of evidence started to come to my attention which simply didn’t fit the current interpretations of Christian attitudes towards Islam at the time of the First Crusade. Since that time I have had many conversations on this topic and shared ideas with a wide range of colleagues working on this area, whose thoughts and criticisms have been absolutely foundational to the creation of this book. To all of you may I offer my heartfelt thanks.

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To my family, this book comes with my deepest love and thanks.
Note on Translations

In this work I have translated many passages from their original languages into modern English. Nevertheless, where a good quality translation already exists, I have tended – not always – to use the existing translation rather than creating a new one. There seems little reason to replicate work.