The View of the Crusades from Rome and Damascus: The Geo-Strategic and Historical Perspectives of Pope Urban II and 'Alī ibn Ṭāhir al-Sulamī

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Abstract
For an integral understanding of the Crusades, this study evaluates the Crusades both "from within" and "from without," by examining the views of two contemporaries of the Crusades: Pope Urban II, the so-called founding father of crusading, and 'Alī ibn Ṭāhir al-Sulamī, a Muslim jurist from Damascus. The crusading pope and the Muslim faqih guide us to a proper comprehension of the Crusades by refusing to judge the entire movement on the basis of the most recent expression of crusading activity, and they allow us to view the Crusades from Rome and Damascus during the formative period of their development.

Keywords
Crusades, Mediterranean Region — Strategic aspects, Geschichtstheologie, Mission to Muslims, Islamic Eschatology

The issue of what contemporaries understood by crusading, and above all the sense they made of their crusading past, has as yet received little attention.

— Norman Housley

A New Approach to the Crusades

This study attempts to interpret the crusading enterprise in its own terms, according to the goals and ideals that the movement set for itself. It also

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attempts to interpret the Crusades in terms of what has been said about them by their principal adversaries. The Crusades will be examined both “from within” and “from without” in an attempt to provide a sympathetic reconstruction of what contemporaries understood by crusading. A “sympathetic reconstruction” does not imply approval or endorsement, appreciation or psychic identification. Rather, it is a type of interpretive explanation that endeavors to understand the Crusades as they were understood by the people who had a direct part in them or who had direct knowledge of them. We have chosen Pope Urban II (r. 1088-1099), the so-called founding father of crusading, to present a view of the Crusades “from within,” and ʿAli ibn Ṭahir al-Sulami (1039-1107), a Muslim jurist from Damascus, to offer a view of the Crusades “from without.” By selecting these two contemporaries as our guides, we will be able to view the Crusades from Rome (Fig. 1) and Damascus (Fig. 2) during the formative period of their development.

To evaluate the crusading enterprise in its own terms, according to its own goals and ideals, is not an exceptionally difficult task. Reliable evidence for determining these goals and ideals is readily available, but modern scholars have yet to make sense of the Crusade movement as indicated by its own internal rationale — the fundamental underlying reasons that contemporaries used to explain or justify its existence. This has prompted Norman Housley to observe that “the issue of what contemporaries understood by crusading, and above all the sense they made of their crusading past, has as yet received little attention.” The manner in which contemporaries thought about the Crusades

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Urban II (1088-1099) and the ‘Theory and Ideology of the Crusade.” This paper, now expanded and under the title “From Crusading Facts to Crusading Theory: Pope Urban II’s Conceptualization of the Crusades,” is under consideration by an academic journal. I am indebted to Noha Mhama Akkari for reading and commenting on my translations of portions of al-Sulami’s Kitāb al-Jihād and for providing an Arabic translation of the paper for those attending the Damascus conference. I would also like to thank Donald J. Kagay for assistance in translating the 1095 Clermont crusading decrees and Pope Urban II’s 1098 letter to Bishop Peter of Huesca. Thanks are also due to Osman Latiff for suggesting that I explore the apocalyptic vision of al-Sulami, to Elizabeth Lapina for answering all of my questions regarding the Cluniac chapel of Berzé-la-Ville in Burgundy, and to Jean Flori for alerting me to his publications on the topic of Muslim conversion.

Norman Housley, Contesting the Crusades (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2006), 166. Scholars that have done the sort of empirical research necessary to discover what contemporaries understood by crusading include Robert I. Burns, who began his study of the Valencian Crusade (1225-1280) when hardly any Spanish scholars thought of it as a Crusade; José Goñi Gaztamábio, who put the Spanish Crusades on a solid documentary basis; Lawrence J. McCrank, who refused to set overly discrete boundaries for the Tarragona Crusade (1089-1177) and instead conceptualized it in the context of “restoration and reconquest”; John Gilchrist, who warned against “drawing too sharp a distinction between holy wars and crusades”; and Alfons Becker.
and articulated their understanding of them has too often been ignored because of a general tendency to prop up the popular notion of the Crusades as a movement created by Pope Urban in 1095. The 1095 Crusade hypothesis reduces the evidence gathering ability of historians to those sources that may be construed as supporting this theory. In addition, information from these sources may still be ignored, misinterpreted, or misrepresented because this evidence does not fit the 1095 theory. This theory takes as its centerpiece and foundation the second canon of the Council of Clermont (1095), the most authoritative piece of direct evidence for the so-called “First” Crusade. But even this key text, which is barely two lines long, continues to be misread and misrepresented by scholars eager to promote the cherished notion that the Crusades began in 1095.3

In order to understand the Crusades in their true historical reality, we must take into consideration the manner in which contemporaries of the Crusades thought about and expressed what was happening “in [their] time” (nostris temporibus).4 Most books on the Crusades start off with a definition of

who explored Pope Urban II’s conception of crusading based on the direct evidence. See the bibliography below for studies by these scholars.


4 La documentacion pontificia hasta Inocencio III (965-1216), ed. Demetrio Mansilla Reoyo, Monumenta Hispaniae vaticana, Registros, vol. 1 (Rome: Instituto Español de estudios
“crusade,” either implied or made explicit, and proceed to read into the events of history an interpretation of crusading that complies with a fixed and predetermined understanding. A type of “Whig” history is created whereby history


is written backwards. Either a highly contingent expression in which the Crusades manifested themselves is used as evidence of what the Crusades were, or the present theoretical consensus of those working in the field of Crusade history is taken as authoritative, and the past is reconstituted in accordance with that consensus. Some scholars consider “the special status of Jerusalem and the Holy Places” as the factor that turned Christian Holy War into Crusade and look upon Crusades as wars that were “aimed at acquiring or preserving Christian dominion over the Sepulchre of Our Lord in Jerusalem.” While this works well for the Jerusalem Crusade, it fails to take into account the pluralistic and protean character of the Crusade enterprise and its capacity to respond to shifting social, economic, political, and military circumstances, as well as to domestic and international political and strategic developments. Other scholars consider all expeditions benefiting from the ecclesiastical apparatus equated with Urban’s Jerusalem Crusade — papal authorization, indulgence, vow, Cross, and Crusader privileges — as true Crusades. While this

6 Flori, La croix, 50.
8 Riley-Smith, What Were the Crusades? 4th ed., 5, emphasizes the importance of the indulgence, vow, Cross, and privileges, along with papal authorization, in his definition of “crusade,” while omitting any mention of the purpose or intent behind crusading. Norman Housley identifies “the key elements of crusading” as the “vow, cross, and indulgence,” and maintains that “the assumption of the cross with the intention of engaging in penitential combat, in response to a cause that was defined as holy by the pope and preached by the Church,” is “the essential attribute of crusading,” not an accidental attribute of crusading. Norman Housley, Religious Warfare in Europe, 1400-1536 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 12; idem, Contesting the Crusades, 20.
works well for Crusades that made use of such an elaborate institutional apparatus, it creates problems when we seek to understand the early period of the Crusades when such an apparatus was either non-existent or was in the process of development.9

Modern theories of the Crusades take their bearing from the Jerusalem Crusade launched by Pope Urban II in 1095. All Crusades are measured and gauged against the attributes of this Crusade.10 The equation of crusading with the Jerusalem Crusade, so that crusading is endowed by the Jerusalem Crusade with certain characteristics that only this Crusade possesses, has led to patent absurdities. For example, it presupposes the existence of crusading institutions before the existence of crusading itself which alone constitutes the possibility of establishing crusading institutions,11 and it requires that all Crusade essentials be present from the start, with only trivial modifications added later. Thus, from the beginning, the leaders and organizers of the Crusades were popes, and the institutions of the indulgence, the vow, the Cross, and Crusader privileges were all in place.12 The local environment can modify the original form of the Crusades to give varieties of crusading — the Crusades in Spain, the Baltic, the Balkans, etc. — but these local varieties are seen as trivial and unimportant modifications of the original form of crusading embodied in the so-called “First” Crusade. Crusading was created functionally complete from the beginning. It did not develop by historical processes but was “invented by Pope Urban II in 1095.”13 As a result, Crusades do not have the ability to operate outside the creator’s design. They endlessly reproduce the same basic

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12 Riley-Smith, What Were the Crusades? 4th ed., 5: “To contemporaries … a crusade was an expedition authorized by the pope on Christ’s behalf, the leading participants in which took vows and consequently wore crosses and enjoyed the privileges of protection at home and the indulgence, which, when the campaign was not destined for the East, was equated with that granted to crusaders to the Holy Land.”

form, by either having a Jerusalem focus and an ecclesiastical apparatus matching the one attached to Urban's Jerusalem Crusade, or by having this ecclesiastical apparatus alone. Efforts to explain the Crusades have never ventured very far from the concept of Pope Urban's original design being endlessly replicated over the centuries.14

The Crusades, it seems, only come to be recognized when they loom up like mighty sequoias in the forest. Certainly the Crusade of Urban II “to aid the Church in Asia” (Asiane ecclesie)15 was the most remarkable sequoia in a forest of Crusades, but the crusading enterprise, mirroring the development of the sequoia, did not start off as an already formalized and papally-regulated historical phenomenon.16 If the Crusades emulate the life cycle of the sequoia, then we should be able to find a measure of variability in crusading at any one time and a large number of changes to crusading through time. And just as we see the early period of the sequoia’s development as part of an organic unity, we should also come to see the early period of the Crusades as part of a definite historical unity. Like the mighty sequoias, the Crusades grew from small beginnings, and these beginnings importantly set the stage for further developments to come.17

14 For an account of attempts to break away from the concept of Pope Urban’s original design being endlessly replicated over the centuries, see Chevedden, “Crusade from the First,” 192-99.
15 Urban II to the counts of Besalú, Ampurias, Roussillon, and Cerdanya and their knights, ca. July 1096; see note 41 below.
17 Hegel points out that the development of a plant at the different stages of its life is vital for the plant as a whole, and that no single stage can epitomize the plant’s entire history. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, Sämtliche Werke, vol. 2, Phänomenologie des Geistes, ed. Hermann Glockner (Stuttgart: F. Frommann, 1927), 12; trans. Arnold V. Miller as Phenomenology of Spirit (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), 2. What attention has been given to the so-called “pre-Crusades,” “proto-Crusades,” “prototypes of Crusades,” “premature Crusades,” “quasi-Crusades,” “demi-Crusades,” “near Crusades,” “ersatz Crusades,” “Crusades avant la lettre,” and “Crusades before the Crusades,” signals no interest in the early period of the Crusades. The “pre-Crusades” ultimately give no real clues about the early stages of the Crusades because they lack the very element (or elements) needed to produce a Crusade. According to the conventional view, “pre-Crusades” are degenerate offshoots from the main trunk of Crusade evolution and the only way for them to become Crusades is by being reattached to the main trunk — something that can only happen after 1095. The Spanish Crusades are commonly understood in this way. When the
Defining the Crusades by their Purpose

The Crusades were not static, nor were they unchangeable or unvarying in their properties. Rather, the Crusades were dynamic and adaptive to changing circumstances, and their properties were historically and socially constructed. The properties so often associated with crusading — a Jerusalem orientation or the ecclesiastical apparatus associated with the Jerusalem Crusade — were not the properties by which the Crusades first came to be known. Jerusalem was not the stem from which all branches of crusading grew, and the panoply of institutional mechanisms created to promote crusading was not the fixed essence of the Crusades. No “association of war with pilgrimage” or “association of war and penance” was needed to jump-start the Crusades. No ideal of a moral and religious imitatio Christi was required to generate crusading. Nor did “the idea of crusade,” after “[reaching] a high point of evolution in the 1060s,” go into remission and experience “an interruption of several decades”


before being brought back to life by Pope Urban in 1095.  

Still less did crusading remain in some embryonic, inchoate, and undeveloped state until it took form “in the minds of the crusaders as they suffered in Asia.”  

“The military operations conducted at and around Antioch in 1097-9” were the result of crusading, not the point at which a so-called “armed pilgrimage was transformed into something new that we now call crusading.”

The Crusades first came to be known and defined through the properties that stemmed from the essential nature or purpose of crusading: the very acts of reconquest (reconquista) and restoration (restauratio). These properties indicate that the Crusades were valued because of their intrinsic importance and did not derive their value principally from a purpose external to the activity of crusading itself. The crusading decree, which was promulgated by Pope

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20 These are the surprising conclusions of Erdmann. Erdmann, Entstehung, 102, 103, 121-23, 124-27, 140-41, 152, 199, 210, 267-70, 272, 292-96, 308-9, 319, 325; trans. Baldwin and Goffart, 112, 114, 133-40, 155-56, 168, 216, 228, 287-90, 293, 314-19, 333-34, 348, 354; Paul E. Chevedden, “The Islamic Interpretation of the Crusade: A New (Old) Paradigm for Understanding the Crusades,” Der Islam 83, no. 1 (June 2006): 90-136, at 126-29. Erdmann argues that Crusades, or campaigns “conducted entirely as a crusade” or having a “crusading character,” were underway long before 1095. Although “the crusading idea had attained great force in the 1060s,” this did not immediately clear the way for crusading in the true sense, which for Erdmann requires “the unification of holy war with pilgrimage.” Rather, the Crusades went through a Dark Age, a time of cruz(s)ata interrupta, before genuine crusading was born in 1095.


22 Housley, Fighting for the Cross, 5.

23 Others disagree; cf. Erdmann, Entstehung, 306-7; trans. Baldwin and Goffart, 331-32, who assumes that a kind of conceptual block stood in the way of the development of crusading. Only when this block was removed by something external to the activity of crusading itself — the “electrifying appeal” of “an armed pilgrimage” — did crusading go forward. Part of the reason why the problem of crusading origins has proved so resistant to resolution is the relentless search for a deus ex machina, an external force or agent that suddenly appears to precipitate crusading. See, for example, Riley-Smith, First Crusaders, 40-78, where this deus ex machina is an external contrivance created by the Council of Clermont, an indulgenced grant to Crusaders offering them “the remission of all their sins” in return for engaging in “a military enterprise,” which provides crusading with its defining characteristic: its penitential properties. See also Flori, La croix, 31, 188, where the defining characteristic of crusading is “the supreme sacralization” of the enterprise, and “a primary driving force behind the sacralization of the Crusade” is the Crusade indulgence, the same deus ex machina employed by Riley-Smith. Instead of approaching the Crusades as events that might have been produced by historical processes, scholars have invoked deus ex machina to explain the Crusades.
Urban at the Council of Clermont in 1095 and recorded by, or on behalf of, Bishop Lambert of Arras (d. 1115), articulates the essential nature or purpose of the Eastern Crusade as a “march” to Jerusalem “to liberate the Church of God”:

Whoever sets out for Jerusalem to liberate the Church of God (ad liberandam ecclesiam Dei) for the sake of devotion alone, not for the acquisition of honor or money, let that march (iter) be imputed to him [as satisfaction] for all penance.24

Here, the essence or nature of the Crusade is not strictly defined in terms of its Marschziel, as an iter Hierosolymitanum. Although there is mention of the Marschziel, or destination of the enterprise, the Marschziel is not important simply for its own sake but primarily for the sake of some other desired goal: the liberation of the “Church of God.”25 The essence or nature of the Crusade is not strictly defined in terms of its overall objective either. The war’s objective, or Kriegsziel, is best expressed as a campaign ad liberationem Orientalium ecclesiarum,26 or as an expeditio... ad Jerusalem et alias Asie ecclesias a Sarracenorum potestate eruendas.27 What is articulated here is the essence or nature of the Crusade in a formulation that suits the requirements of the Crusade indulgence. To ensure that all Christian warriors participating in the

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24 The Councils of Urban II, vol. 1, Decreta claromontensia, ed. Robert Somerville, Annuarium historiarum conciliorum, Supp. 1 (Amsterdam: Adolf M. Hakkert, 1972), 74: “Quicumque pro sola devotione, non pro honoris vel pecunie adeptione, ad liberandam ecclesiam Hierusalem profectus fuerit, iter illud pro omni penitentia ei reputetur.” This canon is often referred to as Canon 2 because it is the second of thirty-two canons recorded in the account of the legislation of the Council of Clermont made by, or on behalf of, Bishop Lambert of Arras. On the meaning of this text, see Chevedden, “Goal of the Eastern Crusade”; “Crusade Indulgence.” I thank Prof. Donald J. Kagay for assistance in translating Canon 2.

25 Just as Franklin D. Roosevelt’s 1943 “race for Berlin” did not seek merely to reach Hitler’s capital but to liberate all of Nazi-occupied Europe, including Berlin, Urban’s 1095 “march to Jerusalem” did not seek merely to reach Jerusalem but to liberate the Eastern Church in its entirety, including Jerusalem. See Chevedden, “Goal of the Eastern Crusade,” 76-79.

26 Urban II to all the faithful in Flanders, December 1095; Heinrich Hagenmeyer, Epistulae et chartae ad historiam primi belli sacri spectantes: Die Kreuzzugbriefe aus den Jahren 1088-1100 (Innsbruck: Wagner'sche universitäts-buchhandlung, 1901), 136: “Cui calamitati pio contuitu condolentes Gallicanas partes uisitauimus eiusque terrae principes et subditos ad liberationem Orientalium ecclesiarum ex magna parte sollicitauimus et huismodi proecinctum pro remissione omnium peccatorum suorum in Aruernensi concilio celebriter eis iniunximus.”

27 Decreta claromontensia, ed. Somerville, 124: “Tunc etiam expeditio facta est, et constituta est equitum et peditum ad Jerusalem et alias Asie ecclesias a Sarracenorum potestate eruendas.” I thank Prof. Donald J. Kagay for assistance in translating this text. On Erdmann’s distinction between the Kampf- or Kriegsziel of the Crusade and the Marschziel of the Crusade, and the misunderstanding these terms have evoked, see Chevedden, “Goal of the Eastern Crusade,” 76-79.
Crusade would be eligible for the spiritual benefits attached to the enterprise, regardless of whether they might or might not reach Jerusalem, or even if the Marschziel of the Crusade was ever realized, the council fathers attached the Crusade indulgence to whatever part of the Crusade’s objectives could be completed by the participants. They did so by using an existing expression — “to liberate the Church of God” — to denote any and all works done to bring about a shift from Islamic to Christian rule (translatio regni) in the region targeted by the Crusade in the Christian East.

The crusading decree places the greatest importance on achieving the political purpose of the Crusade, not on achieving the incentive for the Crusade. It subordinates the incentive for the Crusade — the Crusade indulgence — to the political ends of the Crusade by restricting this incentive only to those that set out for Jerusalem “to liberate the Church of God.” Naturally, the incentive had to be in harmony with, or regarded as a means to, the ultimate end of the Crusade. This could only be done by regulating, or restricting, the incentive in such a way that it would serve, and not defeat, the ultimate end of the Crusade. When non-combatants, such as monks, began thinking of the Jerusalem Crusade in terms other than its intended purpose, Urban was quick to

28 Others disagree; cf. Riley-Smith, Crusades, Christianity, and Islam, 9, 33, on Crusades as “penitential war pilgrimages,” which were “primarily about benefiting [the individual Crusader], since he was engaged in an act of self-sanctification,” and “only secondarily about service in arms to God or the benefitting of the church or Christianity.” See also Riley-Smith, First Crusaders, 75; idem, “Introduction,” in First Crusade: Origins and Impact, 1; idem, “Rethinking the Crusades,” 20; idem, “Islam and the Crusades in History and Imagination,” 167; idem, Crusades: A History, 2nd ed., xxx-xxx, 8; idem, “Christians of the Middle East under the Franks: I. Motives for the Crusades: A European Perspective,” in Christianity: A History in the Middle East, ed. Habib Badr et al. (Beirut: Middle East Council of Churches, Studies & Research Program, 2005), 548-58, at 555; idem, What Were the Crusades? 4th ed., 58.

29 Others disagree; cf. Gary Dickson, “Encounters in Medieval Revivalism: Monks, Friars, and Popular Enthusiasts,” Church History 68, no. 2 (June 1999): 265-93, at 278-79; idem, “Revivalism as a Medieval Religious Genre,” Journal of Ecclesiastical History 51, no. 3 (July 2000): 473-96, at 493-94; Riley-Smith, First Crusaders, 20; idem, Crusades: A History, 2nd ed., 19; idem, Crusades, Christianity, and Islam, 2. Dickson maintains that quicumque of Quicumque pro sola devotione of Canon 2 points to an “all-inclusiveness” in the Crusade indulgence, such that “the religious benefits ... were to be made available to every believer.” He concludes that “Crusade revivalism was thus populist from its inception, despite contemporary and subsequent efforts to limit participation in the crusading host.” Riley-Smith presupposes that Crusades were pilgrimages. From this assumption follows a whole complex of beliefs about the Crusades, including the idea that “crusades had to be open to all, even psychopaths,” and because of this, “there were no means available for screening recruits for suitability [for military service in the Crusades].” Both Dickson and Riley-Smith see the Crusade indulgence as a means of defeating, not serving, the ultimate end of the Crusade. Quicumque cannot signify “all-inclusiveness” or an “open to all” invitation because the indefinite relative clause, quicumque pro sola devotione, non pro honoris vel pecuniae aedipzione, ad liberandum ecclesiam Dei Hierusalem profectus fuerit, refers to...
disabuse them of this notion, telling them that the Crusade was for “soldiers who are setting out for Jerusalem with the good intention of liberating the community of Christians … for we are spurring soldiers to undertake this expedition, because they are the ones who can repel the savagery of the Saracens by their arms and restore the Christian Churches to their former freedom.”30 The performance of the work of the Crusade indulgence in the way that the Church had established that work to be done was an essential part of the indulgence. If one had no intention to gain the indulgence by performing the work for which the indulgence was granted, or was incapable of performing this work, one could not receive the indulgence.

“To Liberate the Church of God”

The task “to liberate the Church of God” stood for the grand ideal of the papal reformers of the eleventh century. They gave the highest moral and political value to freedom (libertas). Within Christian Europe, “the freedom of the Church” (libertas ecclesiae) meant the complete freedom of the Church from imperial, royal, and feudal domination.31 In the realms of Christendom that had been conquered by Islam and subjected to Islamic rule, “the freedom of the Church” meant the return of Christian rule and the “[restoration of] the former position of the Holy Church” (antiquum ecclesie sancte statum… reparavit).32 Hence, the purpose of the Crusades, as initially envisioned, was the realization of “the freedom of the Church” in the realms of conquered

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30 Urban II to the monks of Vallombrosa, 7 October 1096; Papsturkunden für Kirchen im Heiligen Lande, ed. Rudolf Hiestand, Abhandlungen der Akademie der Wissenschaften in Göttingen, Philologisch-Historische Klasse, 3rd ser., vol. 136, Vorarbeiten zum oriens pontificius, vol. 3 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1985), 88-89, no. 2: “Audiuimus quosdam uestrum cum militibus, qui Ierusalem liberandae christianitatis gratia tendunt, uelle proficisci. Recta quidem oblatio, sed non recta diuisio; nos enim ad hanc expeditionem militum animos instigauimus, qui armis suis Saracenorum uestrum cum militibus, qui Ierusalem liberandae christianitatis gratia tendunt, uelle proficisci. Recta quidem oblatio, sed non recta diuisio; nos enim ad hanc expeditionem militum animos instigauimus, qui armis suis Saracenorum feritatem declinare et christianorum ecclesias pos- sint libertati pristinae restituere.”


Christendom. Islamic domination was regarded as a tyranny that should be overturned because it attacks the most basic rights of Christians: the right to autonomy, the power to create one's own laws and act according to them, and the right to self-determination, the capacity to control one's destiny free of external compulsion. The reform popes of the eleventh century (particularly Nicholas II, Alexander II, Gregory VII, Victor III, and Urban II) prescribed action to reverse centuries of Islamic occupation of Christian territory and promoted a program of Christian reconquest and restoration to accomplish this task.

The formula ad liberandam ecclesiam Dei may have been first adopted at the Council of Clermont in 1095 to express the aim of crusading, but the de facto use of this principle in conjunction with campaigns of reconquest and restoration occurred much earlier. By the time Pope Urban ascended the papal throne in 1088, a passionate concern “to liberate the Church of God” had already taken hold in the Latin West, and expeditions to achieve this purpose had already been carried out in Sicily, Spain, and North Africa. Long before the idea of Crusade was formalized in a conventional idiom and a set formula, it was being realized in practice. The grammar of political action arose prior to the grammar of conceptual formulations and theoretical understandings. As John Headley reminds us, “res (the substance) long precedes verbum (the term itself).” Pope Urban knew what it meant “to liberate the Church of God” because he had witnessed successive enterprises that had been undertaken with this purpose in mind: the Norman conquest of Sicily, Castilian advances southward, marked by the conquest of Toledo in 1085, and Catalan initiatives, spearheaded by attacks on Tortosa and efforts to rebuild Tarragona. Moreover, Urban did not segment the various theaters of war in which Christian warriors fought “to liberate the Church of God” into discrete compartments but instead placed the struggle with Islam within a broad strategic framework and never failed “to view the Mediterranean as a single geostrategic unit.”

33 Chevedden, “Crusade from the First.”
34 O’Callaghan, Reconquest and Crusade, 23-33, 48-49.
The Geo-Strategic Perspective of Pope Urban

Pope Urban’s coordinated strategic vision is most evident in 1096, when, in the wake of the Clermont crusading summons, “a vast number of people from Italy and all of Gaul and Germany began to make for Jerusalem against the pagans (i.e., the Muslims), so that they might liberate the Christians.” The astonishing response to Pope Urban’s call to march to Jerusalem threatened “[to pull] the whole [crusading] enterprise in this one direction,” that is, toward Jerusalem, to the detriment of other crusading fronts. Urban quickly saw that the Jerusalem campaign had the potential to relegate Spain to the bottom of Christendom’s crusading priorities, thereby endangering Christendom by putting at risk the Churches in Spain “suffering from the incursions of the Saracens.” He knew that if the Jerusalem Crusade became the sole way of defining what a Crusade was, then a Crusade would have value only insofar as it was undertaken “to liberate the Churches of the East” (ad liberationem Orientalium ecclesiarum). He did not want to neglect the western Mediterranean while prosecuting a Crusade in the eastern Mediterranean, so he devised a two-front Mediterranean strategy that pursued an ongoing Western Crusade in Spain and an Eastern Crusade headed for Jerusalem. He saw the two Crusades as part of the same common enterprise, and he made every effort to promote the Spanish Crusade at a time when everyone’s attention and energies were focused on the Jerusalem Crusade, admonishing those in Spain with “plans to go to Asia” to stay in Spain and “help with continuous efforts the neighboring Churches suffering from the incursions of the Saracens.”


Urban not only took it upon himself to establish strategic priorities for and coordination of crusading initiatives, but he also sought to provide a theoretical basis for the Crusades. When he viewed what was happening "in [his] time" (nostris temporibus), the events spoken of in the Book of Daniel — about how God changes the times and the seasons and uses His power to depose kings and set up kings — at once became meaningful to him. Western Christendom had finally gained the strategic momentum in the war with Islam and had shifted to the offensive, leading to the overthrow of Islamic rule and the reestablishment of Christian rule in the Mediterranean. The regime change (translatio regni) prophesied by the prophet Daniel was no longer something remote and unfamiliar to him; the transfer from Muslim rule to Christian rule in regions of the Mediterranean was now happening "in [his] time." He therefore adopted the biblical expression translatio regni (Dan. 2:21) to describe these changes and explained the Crusades in terms of a triadic schema of development, according to which the crusading enterprise consisted of three movements: the Sicilian Crusade, the Spanish Crusades, and the Eastern Crusade. Furthermore, he sought to fit the Crusades into a general schema of Christian history, but he wanted this schema to do far more than explain crusading. He wanted this schema to explain the whole of Christian history from apostolic times until the present in order to establish exactly what set off the crusading era from all earlier ages.

**Crusading as Part of God's Plan for Salvation History**

Urban's schema divides Christian history into four major epochs: (1) the epoch of Christian antiquity; (2) the epoch of Islamic ascendancy; (3) the epoch of Christian reconquest; and (4) the epoch of Christian restoration. The first epoch witnessed the growth and progress of early Christianity as it
grew from a small and obscure sect to become the universal religion of a world empire and a truly world religion. The second epoch saw the triumphant expansion of the power of Islam and the subjugation of more than half of Christendom. Christians, declares Urban, were destined to undergo defeat and disaster, not because God was “worthy of blame,” but because God had seen fit “to punish the sins of His people.” The power of Islam was the instrument of God’s anger. In the words of the Psalmist, “He punished their transgression with the rod and their iniquity with scourges” (Ps. 88:33). The triumph of Islam, however, eventually brought its own nemesis: “God, the ruler of all things, who by His wisdom and fortitude, transfers rule when He wishes and changes the times” (Dan. 2:21), ushered in a *translatio regni*, a shift from Islamic to Christian rule, and freed His people from “the servitude of the pagans” (i.e., the Muslims) by the victorious power of Christian princes, thus inaugurating the third and fourth epochs of Christian history — that of reconquest and restoration. These last two epochs cover the period of the Crusades in which reconquest and restoration are the dominant themes.
Pope Urban believed that “in our time, God has alleviated the suffering of the Christian people and has deigned to exalt the faith.” “In our day,” he tells Bishop Peter of Huesca,

He has conquered (debelluit) the Turks in Asia and the Moors in Europe with Christian forces, and He has restored (restituit) once famous cities to the practice of His religion by an even more immanent divine grace. Among these, He has released (liberatam) the cathedral city of Huesca from the tyranny of the Saracens by the vigorous effort of our beloved son, King Peter of Aragon, and has reestablished (reformauit) His Catholic Church.46

The pope saw in history the manifestation of the divine purpose, not only for his own time and age, but also for all the ages of Christian history. The pope regarded his own time as one in which God sought the cooperation of Christian warriors, such as Peter I of Aragon and Navarre (r. 1094-1104), to carry out His plan of Christian reconquest and restoration throughout the Mediterranean.

Urban realized that he too had a part to play in God’s plan as God’s willing “cooperator”: “Therefore, we, with the help of God, wish to be fellow-laborers (cooperatores) [with Him] in this restoration (restitutionis).”47 In this restoration effort, which the pope advanced in the central, western, and eastern Mediterranean through campaigns of reconquista and restauratio, Urban held out the promise of a return of “the Holy Church” to “the former position” (antiquum statum) that it once had before the coming of Islam, “in accordance with God’s will and gracious purpose.”48 The reestablishment of “the former position” of the Church does not appear to have been an end in itself. Rather, the pope looked upon it as a means to a greater and more important goal: the

46 Urban II to Bishop Peter of Huesca, 11 May 1098; Durán Gudiol, La Iglesia de Aragón, 193, no. 20: “... nostris potissimum temporibus Christiani populi pressuras releuare fidem exaltare dignatus est. Nostris siquidem diebus in Asia Turcos in Europa Mauros christianorum uribus debelluit et urbes quondam famosas religionis sue cultui gratia propensiore restituit, inter quas Oscam quoque pontificis cathedra urbem sarracenorum tirannide liberatam karissimi filii nostri Petri Aragonensis regis instantia katholice Ecclesie sue reformauit”; Becker, Urban II, 2:348-439. I thank Prof. Donald J. Kagay for assistance in translating this text.


continuation of the mission of the Church to “make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Matt. 28:19).

The two goals — reestablishment of “the former position” of the Church and resumption of the mission of the Church — coexisted in Urban’s mind, but he realized that these goals could only be achieved in succession: achieving the first goal was a condition for achieving the second goal. And both of these goals were predicated on the success of the great task of the reconquest of the lost lands of Christendom from the power of Islam. The Crusade of reconquest was to lead to the Crusade of regenerating the Church; and the Crusade of rebuilding the Church was to lead to the Crusade of missionary evangelization. If Pope Urban gave his full attention only sporadically to the apostolic mission of the Church, it was not because he did not consider this goal important, but rather because the tasks of reconquest and restoration absorbed his energies. First reconquest, then restoration, then evangelization.

Crusade and Mission

Pope Urban was profoundly conscious of the universal mission of the Church to proclaim and to spread the Kingdom of God and of the function of the Crusades in this undertaking. The crusading movement would provide an unprecedented opportunity for the Church to realize its long-standing goal of “proclaim[ing] the Gospel to all creation” (Mark 16:15). The Islamic conquest movements of the seventh and eighth centuries had erected a barrier against the spread of Christianity in Asia, in Africa, and in the Mediterranean. Now that this barrier was coming down as a result of the reconquest of ancient sees and ecclesiastical provinces, the Church would be able to resume its world mission. This was an opportunity that Urban did not want to miss.49

49 Others disagree; cf. John H. Van Engen, “Conclusion: Christendom, c. 1100,” in Early Medieval Christianities, c. 600-c. 1100, ed. Thomas F. X. Noble et al., The Cambridge History of Christianity, vol. 3 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 625-43, on conversion and Church reform being polar to one another, with “reform supplanting conversion” during the era of Church reform. “From the mid-eleventh century,” Van Engen claims, “reform came to serve as the signal historical marker in the western imagination, the conversionary moment now relegated mostly to a storied past.” In the post-millennial European world, a “broad shift from conversion to reform” took place, as “reformers, papal or Cistercian or Franciscan, aimed to put the kingdom of Christ in order here and now by re-forming christened society itself, its very laws and institutions and practices,” leading to a situation in which “reform preempted conversion” and “the Eucharist came to replace baptism as paradigmatic.” Contra Van Engen, the conversionary movement and the reform movement, both at once, rose to higher levels of intensity from the mid-eleventh century onward.
During the first year of his pontificate in 1088, Urban took action both to restore the Church to its “former position” and to fulfill its world mission to spread the Kingdom of God. He restored the see of newly reconquered Toledo to ecclesiastical primacy within Spain and directed its incumbent Archbishop Bernard de Sauvetot to undertake a program of conversion: “With warm affection we exhort you, reverend brother, that you live worthy of so high and honored a pontificate, taking care always not to give offense to Christians or to Muslims; strive by word and example, God helping, to convert the infidels [i.e., the Muslims] to the faith.”\(^{50}\) This conversion program had been preceded by one supported by Pope Gregory VII (r. 1073-1085) in 1074 that placed among its accomplishments an attempt to convert the ruler of Zaragoza Āḥmad I al-Muqtadir (441-475/1049-1082).\(^{51}\)

Benjamin Kedar sees this conversionary effort as a counterpart “on the intellectual plane” of the Latin military counteroffensive against Islam in the Mediterranean.\(^{52}\) He finds evidence of the new missionary approach of the Church to Islam in the preaching of “Christ Jesus” in Syria by Richard, the abbot of St. Vanne, in 1026-1027, and in the evangelization efforts of Gregory VII in Sicily and North Africa.\(^{53}\) To this evidence we can now add the prescription by ecclesiastical power of the propagation of the faith as a requirement for obtaining a Crusade indulgence. In 1076, when Pope Gregory granted a Crusade indulgence to Count Roger d’Hauteville (1031-1101) and


\(^{52}\) Kedar, Crusade and Mission, 54-56.

\(^{53}\) Ibid., 49-57.
to “his knights, who [were] about to fight with him against the pagans (i.e., the Muslims) [in Sicily],” he required that Roger and his knights receive the Sacrament of Penance and that Roger specifically “keep himself from capital offences and... seek to spread the worship of the Christian name among the pagans” (i.e., the Muslims). The condition requiring Count Roger to propagate the faith among the Muslims clearly links the crusading enterprise with the apostolic mission of the Church.

Yet Kedar strongly denies that Christian missionizing among the Muslims sprang from the crusading enterprise. Rather, it arose from a growing emphasis within the Latin West on preaching to fellow Christians, which eventually found an external outlet by the “mid-twelfth century” in the form of “preaching to the Muslims.” Kedar draws a distinctive line between Crusade and Mission, which requires him to introduce an external social condition — “preaching to the Christians” — to account for a “relationship between crusade and mission.” He posits an extended lag time between the onset of crusading activities and “the evolution of Saracen conversion into a crusading goal,” so that the supposed founding father of the Crusade movement, Pope Urban II, cannot be credited with associating Muslim conversion with the Crusades. The possibility that Urban did not link the two is supported in his mind by the fact that not one of the contemporary reports of Urban’s Clermont address of 1095 “mentions Saracen conversion as an express objective.” “Nor is Saracen conversion mentioned or alluded to in Urban’s extant letters from the years 1095 to 1099 in which he refers to the crusade.” In addition, “none of the extant papal summons to later crusading expeditions, which call...”

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55 Kedar, Crusade and Mission, 67, 133-34.

56 Ibid., ix, 134.

57 Ibid., 67.
for the defense or recovery of Jerusalem and the Crusading Kingdom, presents Saracen conversion as a goal of the crusade.\textsuperscript{58}

The question that Kedar addresses is not whether Urban considered the Crusade of reconquest, the Crusade of rebuilding the Church, and the Crusade of evangelization to be inextricably linked and mutually related, but "to what extent was Muslim conversion furthered by the easternmost prong of the Catholic European counteroffensive, the crusade?"\textsuperscript{59} Kedar equates the emergence of conversion as a crusading goal with the actual progress of Muslim conversion in the East. In doing so, he turns away from the question of when Muslim conversion first manifested itself as a crusading objective and focuses on the extent to which "missionary efforts aimed at Muslims"\textsuperscript{60} actually achieved success. The vital prerequisite for the emergence of conversion as a crusading goal is some kind of correspondence or connection between Crusade and Mission; for if Crusade and Mission are completely distinct from one another, they will not be able to interact or correspond with one another. Kedar postulates such a sharp dichotomy between Crusade and Mission that any correspondence between the two can only come about through the intervention of developments outside of crusading. A serious problem with Kedar's Crusade-Mission duality is that it ignores the underlying logic behind Urban's vision of reestablishing the Church in the first place: to realize the mission of the Church. The reestablishment of the Church was not pursued for its own sake, but for the end that it serves.


\textsuperscript{59} Kedar, \textit{Crusade and Mission}, 57.

\textsuperscript{60} Ibid., x.
The Eleventh-Century Dream of Conversion

Any Christian war that aims at the reestablishment of the Church is likely to be concerned with the apostolic mission of the Church, either residually or fundamentally, because the mission of the Church is integral to the Church. But the Crusade of evangelization can move to the fore only after the Crusade of reconquest and the Crusade of rebuilding the Church have made sufficient headway. In other words, the priority of the elements that make up the Crusades — reconquest, restoration, and evangelization — shifts and yields place depending on what stage of development crusading has reached. Kedar sees evidence for "a systematic missionary effort among the Muslims" by the year 1150,61 which seems to depend upon a new priority ordering of crusading elements, but he sees no separation between "a systematic missionary effort among the Muslims" and the articulation of evangelization as a crusading goal. That is to say, he perceives no distinction between the realm of action and the realm of desire, or the desideratum. The presentation of an intended objective, however, usually long precedes its realization, or even effective efforts aimed at its realization.

Pope Urban was very conscious of the Crusades as playing a part in fulfilling the ultimate mission of the Church — to "make disciples of all nations" (Matt. 28:19).62 One of his principal concerns was to demonstrate the continuity of crusading with the history of the Church and God's plan for salvation. The Crusade of reconquest was to serve as handmaiden to the Crusade of rebuilding the Church; and the Crusade of regenerating the Church was to serve as handmaiden to the Crusade of evangelization. In Urban's mind, reconquest, restoration, and evangelization are not three separate acts; rather, they are three aspects of the same process of crusading. As aspects of crusading, reconquest, restoration, and evangelization are no longer divided into their own distinct worlds but are treated as different forms of activity of one and the same thing — crusading. This establishes the basis for an interchange between Crusade and Mission. If Crusade and Mission are both manifestations of crusading reality, they not only interact with one another, but each is an expression

61 Ibid., 4, 67.
62 Others disagree. Reflecting the views of Riley-Smith, Christopher MacEvitt contends that the Crusade was "not... concerned with the salvation of others, but only about the salvation of the warrior himself. The infidel represented a path to salvation, not a focus of concern for the crusader." See Riley-Smith, First Crusaders, 75; idem, Crusades: A History, 2nd ed., xxx-xxxi; idem, Crusades, Christianity, and Islam, 33; idem, What Were the Crusades? 4th ed., 58; Christopher MacEvitt, The Crusades and the Christian World of the East: Rough Tolerance (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), 18.
of the other, with Mission being the fullest realization and development of Crusade. This implies that Mission is not extrinsic to Crusade but the realization and development of its nature. There is evidence of this in 1088, when, in the wake of the conquest of Toledo, Pope Urban charged the new archbishop of the city to endeavor “to convert the infidels to the faith.” Earlier, Pope Gregory VII had promoted the conversion of Muslims both in Spain and in Sicily as a crusading objective and linked the Crusade indulgence to the propagation of the faith. These examples seem to confirm a place for Muslim conversion among the aims of the Crusades.

Why Urban’s concern for the mission of the Church should not figure prominently in his few extant letters dealing with the Jerusalem Crusade is perhaps best explained by an understandable focus on the military aspects of the crusading enterprise. From the time he issued his crusading appeal at Clermont in 1095 until he died in Rome on 29 July 1099, two weeks after the Crusader conquest of Jerusalem, Urban was preoccupied with military matters related to crusading and with efforts to weld and hold together the Latin-Byzantine coalition so vital to the war effort. News of Jerusalem’s capture on 15 July 1099 never reached him, so he never had the opportunity to shift his energies to a task other than the Crusade of battle. Conversion in the eastern Mediterranean would not be spoken of as a crusading objective until 1102, after the Crusade of reconquest and the Crusade of rebuilding the Church had achieved initial success. A similar sequence of events happened in Sicily and Spain: conversion emerged as a crusading goal only after crusading itself had attained some durability as a political force. While direct evidence is not to be found for Urban’s concern for missionary activity in the East, there is direct evidence of Urban’s promotion of Muslim conversion in Spain. Since Urban’s crusading plans envisaged extending to the eastern Mediterranean an enterprise that had begun in Sicily and Spain, it is likely that his eastern plan envisaged a Crusade of evangelization, similar to that which had been initiated in Sicily and Spain.

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63 Claude Cahen’s statement that “the plan [of Pope Urban] envisaged extending to Palestine what had been begun in Sicily and Spain” does not acknowledge the crusading status of any pre-1095 wars and limits the goal of the Jerusalem Crusade to “the liberation of the Holy Places” or “the recovery of the Holy Land,” even while it ascribes a geo-strategic, Mediterranean-wide perspective to Urban II. Claude Cahen, “An Introduction to the First Crusade,” Past and Present 6 (November 1954): 6-30, at 25. Erdmann disagrees with Cahen and argues that Pope Urban “had something rather more comprehensive in mind than a mere ‘crusade’ [as conventionally defined]” as a war for “the liberation of the Holy Places” or “the conquest of Syria,” which entailed having “to go as far as Jerusalem, not [only] in order to conquer this particular city but, more generally, in order to fight the Moslems wherever they were and liberate the Eastern Christians.” Erdmann, Entstehung, 363-64, 375; trans. Baldwin and Goffart, 355-57, 368.
Indirect evidence also establishes the probability that the pope saw the mission of the Church as the ultimate goal of the easternmost thrust of the Crusades. While this evidence may not be decisive or final, it does make it more likely that Urban considered the Crusade of evangelization as being a natural prolongation of the Crusade of reconquest and the Crusade of rebuilding the Church. This evidence comes from two very prominent Churchmen of the day with whom Urban had strong ties: Archbishop Anselm of Canterbury (ca. 1033-1109) and Abbot Hugh (1024-1109) of the great monastery of Cluny in Burgundy.\textsuperscript{64} The pope shared his views of the Crusades with these individuals, and their reactions to the Crusades may in some measure reflect Urban’s own opinions.\textsuperscript{65} Using language that strongly echoes Urban’s own views of the Jerusalem Crusade, Archbishop Anselm wrote to Baldwin I in 1102 after he had been crowned the first king of Jerusalem (r. 1100-1118) and praised God for having raised Baldwin to the dignity of king in that country in which our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, having initiated the beginnings of Christianity, has reestablished (\textit{novam plantavit}) His Church, which, because of the sins of men, had been, by the judgment of God, long oppressed by the infidels (i.e., the Muslims) there; but which, by His mercy, has in our time been so wonderfully raised to life again (\textit{resuscitavit}), so that it might be spread from there throughout the whole world.\textsuperscript{66}


\textsuperscript{65} Cowdrey, “Pope Urban II’s Preaching,” 184, makes the same presumption, suggesting that the manner in which Anselm presented the Jerusalem Crusade “is likely to have been determined by Urban’s own intentions.”

\textsuperscript{66} Anselm, “Epistolae,” 4:142, ep. 235 (ca. spring 1102): “Benedictus deus in donis suis et sanctus in omnibus operibus suis [Ps. 144:17], qui vos ad regis dignitatem sua gratia in illa terra exaltavit, in qua ipse dominus noster Iesus Christus, per se ipsum principium Christianitatis seminans, ecclesiam suam, ut inde per totum orbe propagaretur, novam plantavit, quam propter peccata hominum judicio dei ab infidelibus diu ibidem oppressam, sua misericordia nostri temporibus mirabiliter resuscitavit.” H. E. J. Cowdrey discusses Anselm’s letters related to crusading but passes over his letter to King Baldwin in his “Urban II’s Preaching,” 183-85. In his “Cluny and the First Crusade,” 307-8, Cowdrey takes up this letter, which, he contends, “shows gratification with the military outcome of the First Crusade.” James A. Brundage examines Anselm’s letter to King Baldwin but maintains that Anselm “completely ignores the crusade” in this letter. Brundage supposes that “[Anselm] largely ignored the crusade and found little to commend in crusading endeavors.” He also states: “While both [Anselm and Ivo of Chartres] stopped short of overt criticism of the crusade, their hesitations, reservations, and omissions make it clear that they were at least skeptical about, if not openly hostile to the holy war.” James A. Brundage, “St. Anselm, Ivo of Chartres and the Ideology of the First Crusade,” in \textit{Les mutations socio-culturelles au tournant des XIe-XIIe siècles: études anselmienues. IVe session}, Colloques...
Here, all of the stages of Urban's schema of Christian history find expression except reconquest, which is subsumed under the concept of rebuilding the Church. In addition, Anselm attaches a final stage not included in Urban’s schema: the resumption of the mission of the Church. His version of Urban’s schema may be summarized as follows: (1) “the beginnings of Christianity” in Palestine initiated by “our Lord Jesus Christ Himself,” then (2) “oppress[ion] by the infidels there” of the Church “because of the sins of men,” then (3) reestablishment of the Church there, and finally (4) the “spread [of the Church] from there throughout the whole world.”

Anselm saw the Crusade movement as contributing to Christ’s mission “that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in His name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem” (Luke 24:47). The prospect that the Gospel could now “in our time” be spread to every corner of the earth seemed at long last a real possibility. Thanks to the Crusade of reconquest and the Crusade of rebuilding the Church, conditions now seemed ripe for the Church to proceed ahead with its universal mission. Abbot Hugh of Cluny was no less encouraged by the new opportunities presented by the Crusades for the evangelization of the world. In 1087, he instructed the newly-elected Cluniac archbishop Bernard of Toledo to “preach the word of God fearlessly and constantly to those who hitherto, owing to our sins, have not shown due honor to
their Creator” and to “dispense faithfully the word of God by arguing, beseeching, rebuking in all patience and learning to the learned and the unlearned, to Christian and unbelievers.” What “will prevail more than all preaching to arouse and convert the infidels,” Hugh tells him, is exemplary behavior and good works.67 Suddenly and with great force the vita apostolica (“the apostolic way of life”), which had been associated with the common life of the first apostles and generally identified with the monastic ideal, was now linked with the propagation of the faith. Hugh was at the forefront of the “evangelical awakening” at its infancy during the second half of the eleventh century and adopted the theme of dilatatio fidei as the basis for the program of mural paintings in his chapel at Berzé-la-Ville in Burgundy (Figs. 3-12).68

The Crusade of Evangelization and the Mural Paintings of Berzé-la-Ville

The paintings in the priory chapel of Berzé-la-Ville are an emphatic endorsement of missionary activity both in the East and in the West, now made possible because of the Crusades.69 The central scene of the mural program is a

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69 The priory chapel of Berzé-la-Ville has attracted a great deal of attention among those with training in Art History. See Wilhelm Koehler, “Byzantine Art in the West,” Dumbarton Oaks...
dramatic depiction of the *traditio legis* ("handing down of the Law") and the *traditio clavium* ("handing over of the Keys") in the conch of the apse of the priory chapel (Fig. 5). Here, Christ, the ultimate Lawgiver, hands down the New Law to the apostles and their successors and hands over the Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven to St. Peter (Matt. 16:18-19). With His left hand, Christ tenders an unfurled scroll to Peter, who takes hold of it while maintaining a firm grip on the Keys to the Kingdom of Heaven (Fig. 6). Inscribed on the scroll are the words: "Behold! 'I confer on you, just as my Father has conferred on me, a kingdom'" (Luke 22:29). Peter is not the only one to receive the Law from Christ. Paul holds an open scroll inscribed with the words: "For to me, living is Christ and dying is gain" (Phil. 1:21) (Fig. 7). The first text entrusts the Church with the responsibility for the care and governance of all
mankind. The second text announces that the New Law consists essentially of "having been raised with Christ" (Col. 3:1) "so that we too might walk in newness of life" (Rom. 6:4), with the assurance that "when Christ who is your life is revealed, then you also will be revealed with him in glory" (Col. 3:4), and calls to mind Paul's imprisonment during which time he "helped to spread the gospel," so that "most of the brothers and sisters, having been made confident in the Lord by my imprisonment, dare to speak the word with greater boldness and without fear" (Phil. 1:12-14). Some apostles shown in the foreground — Matthew and Philip, on the left (Fig. 7), and James, on the right (Fig. 6) — hold a rolled scroll in their hands, indicating that the apostles as a group have also received the nova lex Christi and are ready for their missions. The teaching of this law is entrusted not only to the apostles but also to their successors — deacons, priests, and bishops — who are represented in the conch of the apse by two deacon-saints, Vincent and Lawrence, on Christ's right (Fig. 7), and two unidentified bishop-saints, on Christ's left (Fig. 6).

Below the conch, five arches stretch across the curvature of the semicircular apse. The three central arches are pierced with windows, while the outer arches, on the north and the south, are filled with masonry and decorated with murals. The mural on the north side depicts St. Blaise in prison and St. Blaise being beheaded (Fig. 8), while the mural on the south side portrays St. Vincent being tortured on a gridiron (Fig. 9). In the spandrels between the arches are six half-figure female saints, bedecked and bejeweled like Byzantine empresses. Inscriptions identify three of them: Laurentia, a virgin-martyr of Ancona, Italy; Agatha, a virgin-martyr of Sicily; and Consorce (d. ca. 578), a virgin venerated at Cluny, daughter of St. Eucherius of Lyons and foundress of a convent endowed by King Chlothar I of the Franks (r. 511-561) in gratitude for healing his daughter (Figs. 9 and 11). The dual appearance of St. Vincent in the apse at Berze suggests that his presence is highly significant. St. Vincent had been deacon at the Church of Zaragoza before being "crowned with martyrdom hard by the city of

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73 Lapina, "Mural Paintings of Berzé-la-Ville," 325, supposes the phylactery in the hand of St. Paul to contain the text of Rom. 8:10, not Phil. 1:21, and deduces that it is incorporated into the program of Berzé as "an implicit critique of 'crusader ideology' and a promotion of monastic values" to "highlight the separation, often ignored by crusaders, between the realms of the physical and the spiritual."
74 Favreau et al., Corpus des inscriptions, 72.
Valencia" around the year 304. St. Lawrence, who is paired with him in the conch of the apse (Figs. 5 and 7), was a native of Valencia who became treasurer and deacon of the Church at Rome under Pope Sixtus II (r. 257-258) and was martyred on a gridiron. These two Valencian saints represent the Church of Valencia, and, in a wider sense, the Church of Spain, symbolized by St. Vincent, Spain's protomartyr. Valencia had been in Christian hands from 1094 to 1102 under the Cid and his wife Jimena, and the prominence given at Berzé to the two leading saints of Valencia was another way of appropriating the lost lands of Christendom and making a claim for the return of these lands to Christian sovereignty. Moreover, Christians believed that through the intercession of St. Vincent these territories would be restored to Christendom.

When James I "the Conqueror," king of Arago-Catalonia (r. 1213-1276), conquered Mediterranean Spain from Islam during the years 1225 to 1276 and made himself the new Cid by winning Valencia in 1238, he gave due credit to St. Vincent: "It is Our conviction that the lord Jesus Christ subjected the city and whole kingdom of Valencia to Us, and snatched it from the power and hands of the pagans (i.e., the Muslims), because of the special prayers of St. Vincent." King James did even more to honor St. Vincent for his role in the conquest of Valencia; he "built and developed the hospital-monastery of St. Vincent [in Barcelona] as a kind of national shrine." St. Vincent’s presence at Berzé served to stir the religio-patriotic feelings of the Christians of the region to undertake "the great task of the reconquest of the Mediterranean from the power of Islam." His presence conjured up the Christian past of Valencia.

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Spain, and his hoped-for intercession became the ground of inspiration and
motivation to return Spain to its Christian roots.

Juxtaposing St. Vincent on the wall of the apse is St. Blaise (Fig. 8). Like
St. Vincent, his presence served to assert a claim of return to native Christian
roots, but here the claim is made, not to lands in the former realms of Western
Christendom, but to lands in the realms of Eastern Christendom that had
been conquered by the Saljuq Turks. St. Blaise was a prominent Eastern
saint, bishop of Sebastia in Armenia, who was martyred during the reign of
the Emperor Licinius (r. 308-324) in the early fourth century. Greek and Latin
bishops in the army of the Jerusalem Crusade regarded their military enter-
prise as being under the special protection of St. Blaise, as well as under that
of the warrior-saints George, Theodore and Demetrius. The mural of
St. Blaise at Berze shows the high regard in which this saint and his interces-
sory powers were held in Burgundy to aid efforts “to liberate the Churches of
the East” (ad liberationem Orientalium ecclesiarum).

But the mural of St. Blaise also addresses itself to the apostolic mission of
the Church by calling to mind the episode in the saint’s life when, at the
request of a poor widow, he talked a wolf into releasing a pig that belonged to
her. Indeed, the mural dwells on this story by showing the widow returning
the kindness of the saint by visiting him in jail, prior to his execution, and
presenting him with the fully-cooked head and hams of the very pig that the
saint had miraculously saved. Her words to the saint, which are inscribed on
the mural, remind the viewer that even the wolf is ripe for rational dialogue
and persuasion: “Take the pig that you have rescued from a wolf’s jaws” (Fig. 10). The wolf,” as Elizabeth Lapina has shown, “was a popular meta-
phor of an enemy of true faith” and appears in Cluniac literature as a symbol
of the Muslim enemy. Blaise, who enters into dialogue with the wolf, affirms
a missionary ideal of winning over the immemorial and hated enemy through
discussion and argument. Here, the missionary ideal is not set in opposition

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79 Other disagree; cf. Koehler, “Byzantine Art in the West,” 64, who maintains that St. Blaise’s
presence at Berzé “needs no explanation” other than the fact that he was “the local patron of the
village.” Palazzo, “L'iconographie des fresques de Berzé-la-Ville,” 178-79, explains St. Blaise’s
presence at Berzé by pointing to the spread of the saint’s cult throughout the Maçonnais and
beyond. “Besides,” he adds, “St. Blaise was revered as the patron of farmers.”
80 Symeon, patriarch of Jerusalem, and other bishops, to the Churches in the West, January
1098, outside Antioch; Hagenmeyer, Die Kreuzzugsbriefe, 69, 147, 271-72; James B. MacGregor,
“Negotiating Knightly Piety: The Cult of the Warrior-Saints in the West, ca. 1070-ca. 1200,”
Church History 73, no. 2 (June 2004): 317-45, at 322-23.
81 Favreau et al., Corpus des inscriptions, 73; Lapina, “Mural Paintings of Berzé-la-Ville,” 317.
82 Lapina, “Mural Paintings of Berzé-la-Ville,” 317.
to the martial phase of the Crusades. Rather, the martial triumph of the Crusades is seen as a prerequisite for a campaign of conversion.83

The unity of the Christian world and the mission of evangelization are explicitly depicted in the dado beneath the windows of the apse. Here, nine half-figure male saints, representing a veritable mappa mundi of the Church,84 make their appearance; from left to right, these saints are: Abdon and Sennen, two Kurdish martyrs who died at Rome around 303 during the persecution of Diocletian; Dorotheus and Gorgonius, two of Diocletian's most trusted personal servants who were martyred at Nicomedia (modern Izmit in northwestern Turkey) in 304; Sebastian, an officer in the Roman army who was martyred at Rome around 288; Serenus, a native of Greece who was martyred in Pannonia in the early fourth century; a second Sebastian; and, finally, Denys and Quentin, two of the first evangelizers of northern Gaul who were martyred for their faith (Figs. 4 and 12).85 The saints depicted in the murals, both male and female, symbolize the various mission fields, or “churches,” throughout the world where the Gospel was proclaimed or peoples to whom the Gospel was brought. But these paintings do more than celebrate the past glories of Christian evangelization; they look forward to, and proclaim, a new evangelization. It is especially noteworthy that at the time the murals were painted in the early twelfth century many of the mission fields or peoples represented by the saints at Berzé were in regions that, “because of the sins of men, had been, by the judgment of God, long oppressed by the infidels (i.e., the Muslims)”: the former realms of Sasanian Persia, most of Anatolia, Sicily, and the greater part of Iberia. The boldness revealed in the program of wall paintings at Berzé consists in the setting aside of the immediate details of the actual situation of Christendom vis-à-vis Islam in the Mediterranean world in order to envision a new Asia and a new Mediterranean arising as a result of the triumphant outcome

83 Lapina, “Mural Paintings of Berzé-la-Ville,” 319-20, regards the Berzé murals as endorsing “a way of dealing with the Muslims, which would be alternative, or at least complementary, to fighting them,” and argues that it was Hugh of Cluny’s desire “that a verbal confrontation with the Muslim should accompany, if not replace, the military one.” Hugh, however, saw no polarity between the Crusade of the sword and the Crusade of evangelization, but instead envisioned these two phases of the crusading enterprise as supporting and complementing one another.
84 Ibid., 316.
85 Favreau et al., Corpus des inscriptions, 73. SS. Abdon and Sennen are linked to the Abbey of St. Mary in Arles-sur-Tech, Languedoc-Roussillon, in the eastern Pyrenees (France), where a sealed sarcophagus containing relics of these saints produces hundreds of liters of water every year. See Anthony Fitzherbert, A Coffin of Clear Water (Ilfracombe, UK: Stockwell, 1989); Daniel Beyens et al., “Water Production in an Ancient Sarcophagus at Arles-sur-Tech (France),” Atmospheric Research 57 (2001): 201-212. I thank John H. A. McHugo for bringing the sarcophagus at Arles-sur-Tech to my attention.
of the Crusades: an Asia and a Mediterranean once more thrown open to Christianity.

At the end of the eleventh century, when the Christian counteroffensive against Islam was at its height, hope for Islam’s conversion was at the same moment being strongly asserted. The popular religious thought of the day was passionately concerned with converting Muslims. This finds its literary expression in the first heroic epic poetry of Europe, the *chansons de geste*, which speak of Muslims converting both en masse and individually. Pope Urban was no bystander to these currents of thought but an active promoter of the “evangelical awakening.” As Urban saw it, the Crusade of reconquest was to give way to the Crusade of rebuilding the Church, and the Crusade of regenerating the Church was to give way to the Church’s mission to spread the Gospel.

The Crusade of reconquest reawakened in the Church a dormant desire to fulfill Christ’s command to proclaim the Gospel and communicate Christian teachings all over the world so that God’s work of salvation might be completed (Matt. 28:18-20; Mark 16:15; Luke 24:45-49; John 20:21; Acts 1:8; 1 Cor. 9:16; Gal. 2:7-9; 2 Tim. 4:2). As a new “mission” mentality grew within the Church, it gave to the Crusade movement a millennial frame of reference and an eschatological stimulus. The battlefield would ultimately lead to the baptismal font, and the baptismal font “to the consummation of the world” (Matt. 28:19-20).

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Baptizet sunt asez plus de .C. milie
Veir chrestien, ne mais sul la reine.
En France dulce iert menee caitive:
Ço voelt li reis par amur convertisset.
[More than a hundred thousand are baptized
True Christians, but not the queen:
The king wants her to convert for love.]


88 Robert I. Burns, “The Missionary Syndrome: Crusader and Pacific Northwest Religious Expansionism,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 30, no. 2, (April 1988): 271-85, at 283, identifies “the great centuries of missionary expansionism” as “the thirteenth, the sixteenth, and the nineteenth” and maintains that “all of these bear the thirteenth-century stamp.” The central part played by the missionary expansionism of the thirteenth century should not obscure
Al-Sulami’s View of Crusading: A Three-headed Hydra

If Pope Urban viewed the Mediterranean as a geographic and strategic whole and looked upon the Crusades as ushering in a new aeon, the same was also true of Muslim scholars. Just six years after the Crusader conquest of Jerusalem in 1099, a legal scholar and preacher at the Great Mosque of Damascus (Fig. 2), ‘Ali ibn Tahir al-Sulami (d. 500/1107),89 expounded his account of the crusading movement in his book Kitâb al-jihäd (“The Book on Holy War”).90 Surprisingly, he does not begin with the Jerusalem Crusade, as do so many modern accounts of the Crusades. Instead, the Jerusalem Crusade is

the fact that the dream of missionary expansionism began with the “evangelical awakening” of the eleventh century.


90 ‘Ali ibn Tahir al-Sulami, “Kitâb al-jihäd,” in Arba‘at kutub fi l-jihäd min ‘asr al-burâb al-salibiyya, ed. Suhayl Zakkár (Damascus: al-Takwín, 2007), 41-182. The term jihäd is derived from the root j-h-d, meaning “effort” or “struggle.” No bellicose meaning was attached to this root in pre-Islamic Arabia. It was during the career of the Prophet Muhammad that this root began a diachronistic semantic change from ‘struggle’ or ‘striving’ to “warfare against the infidels,” while still retaining its earlier meanings. Ella Landau-Tasseron, “Jihäd” in Encyclopaedia of the Qur’an, ed. Jane Dammen McAuliffe, 6 vols. (Leiden: Brill, 2001-2005), 3:35-43. The new meaning was communicated more by praxis than by the preaching of concepts or the dissemination of dogma, as warfare became a way for Muslims to prove their faith, strive after virtue, and attain divine reward (Q. 2:191, 216; 4:77, 95; 9:81-86). Long before Muslim intellectuals sought to rationalize and account for divinely sanctioned warfare, jihäd was deeply rooted in practice — the practice of Muhammad and that of his successors. The gathering and ordering of the exempla of jihäd by Muslim intellectuals indicates a genuine effort to come to terms with Muslim praxis in order to explain jihäd in relation to the Qur’an and the Sunna. It also reveals a disposition to advance and promote jihäd, as well as to channel and harness it.
presented as the final conclusion of a long development that started in Sicily with the Norman conquest (1060-1091), proceeded on to Spain, and finally reached Syria. Just like Pope Urban, al-Sulami examines the facts of history for their own sake, and from these facts he derives a conceptualization of the Crusades. In three successive movements of conquest, al-Sulami explains how the crusading enterprise unfolded:

A host [of Franks] swooped down upon the island of Sicily at a time of division and dissention among its people, and likewise they took possession of town after town in Islamic Spain (al-Andalus). When reports mutually confirmed the condition of this country [Syria] — namely, the disagreements of its lords, the oppressive demands of its leading men, together with its disorder and disarray — they acted upon their decision to set out for it [Syria], and Jerusalem was the chief object of their desires. When they arrived in Syria, they saw divided sovereignties, conflicting opinions, and contending views, combined with hidden enmity, so that their ambitions expanded accordingly and extended to whatever their power could command. They [the Franks] continued zealously in the Holy War against the Muslims (jihād al-muslimin), while the Muslims were not inclined to wage war against them and did not join forces to fight them — with each [Muslim power] expecting the other one to take up their fight [for them] — until they [the Franks] made themselves rulers of lands beyond their wildest dreams and subjected the inhabitants to destruction and degradation far beyond what they had intended.

— Here, al-Sulami identifies the Crusade as the Latin Christian equivalent of the Islamic jihād. He uses a binomial expression — jihād al-muslimin (“Holy War against the Muslims”) — to describe the Crusade. A generic political phenomenon, jihād, is the genus to which the Crusade belongs, indicating that the Crusade is linked to other forms of this same genus. The species name, al-muslimin, defines the Crusade specifically, designating it as being separate from other forms of jihād. Al-Sulami also uses binomial labels to describe the two differentiated natures of Islamic Holy War: jihād anfusikum (“struggle against yourselves”) and jihād a'dī'ikum (“Holy War against your enemies”). Crusading does not arouse incomprehension or bewilderment in al-Sulami. He assumes that Latin Christian society is the mirror image of his own society, in the same way that the anonymous author of the Chanson de Roland portrays the Muslims as the mirror image of the Christians. If the Muslims engage in jihād, there is every reason to believe that the Christians do as well. For al-Sulami, the Other is not a mirror for the self, the Other is the self. By using the term jihād to refer to the Crusade, al-Sulami does not indicate that “what the crusaders were doing was, in some way, legitimate,” as Niall Christie thinks, nor does he suggest that “religion was the crusaders’ dominant motive,” as Jonathan Phillips contends. Rather, he denotes that the Crusade was considered by its proponents to be divinely sanctioned. See Christie, “Religious Campaign or War of Conquest?” 67; Phillips, Holy Warriors, 31; Chevedden, “Islamic Interpretation of the Crusade,” 94.

Like Pope Urban, al-Sulaml views the military thrusts by the Latin West in Sicily, Spain, and Syria, not as self-contained discrete campaigns, but as "three different fronts ... in which the same fight between Christianity and Islam was being waged." Like Pope Urban, al-Sulaml views the military thrusts by the Latin West in Sicily, Spain, and Syria, not as self-contained discrete campaigns, but as "three different fronts ... in which the same fight between Christianity and Islam was being waged." This fight, al-Sulaml says, progressed in three stages that occurred in sequence. In the first stage, the Normans descended upon the island of Sicily. In the second stage, "town after town" in Islamic Spain fell to Christian forces. And in the third stage, the Crusaders conquered Jerusalem. The fight that Urban describes as being against "the Turks in Asia and the Moors in Europe," al-Sulaml sees as a fight for the control of the Mediterranean against the alarming growth of Christian power in Sicily, Spain, and Syria. They both see the crusading enterprise as Mediterranean-wide in scope, and they both point to the Norman conquest of Sicily as the onset of the Crusades.

The Crusades and the Meaning of History

The points of agreement between Urban and al-Sulaml are at one and the same time the points of their disagreement. Urban and al-Sulaml agree on how the Crusades began and developed. They both see the actions of foreign conquerors as the instruments of divine vengeance against the sins of the faithful — the means by which God responds to sins and prevents the increase of evil. They both accept history as a continuous manifestation of God's providence, and they see God's power manifesting itself in Sicily, in Spain, and in Syria. For Urban, these events prove that Christians have now turned back to God because God's anger against His people — expressed in the power of

"Religious Campaign or War of Conquest?" 64; idem, "Jerusalem in the Kitab Al-Jihad," 212; idem, "Motivating Listeners in the Kitab al-Jihad," 7.

"Religious Campaign or War of Conquest?" 64; idem, "Jerusalem in the Kitab Al-Jihad," 212; idem, "Motivating Listeners in the Kitab al-Jihad," 7.


94 Others disagree. Christie, "Motivating Listeners in the Kitab al-Jihad," 7, for example, claims that "no one in Europe" linked "the Christian expansions [in Sicily, Spain, and the eastern Mediterranean] together" and that al-Sulami did so, not to describe what was really happening, but to present the Jerusalem Crusade "as part of a grander scheme of conquest" than it actually was. "By presenting the crusades as more systematic and opportunistic than they actually were," argues Christie, "al-Sulami increased the magnitude of the threat, with the intention of effectively frightening his listeners into action." Al-Sulami acted much like George W. Bush did before the war in Iraq, hyping the threat so that his war would find approval. As Christie sees it, al-Sulami claims that the sky is falling in order to rally support for jihād.

95 Conversely, Urban sees the Christian reconquest directed against Islam as fulfilling God's design, while al-Sulami sees the Muslim conquest of Christian territory as embodying God's will.
Islam — has yielded to the destruction of “God’s enemies” — the Muslims — in Sicily, Spain, and the eastern Mediterranean. For al-Sulami, these events prove that Muslims have neglected their duty to engage in Holy War (jihād) and perform “the obligatory requirements [of their faith]”:

The discontinuation [of jihād], coupled with the disregard by Muslims of the obligatory requirements [of their faith], as well as the annulling of its prohibitions, has had the inevitable result that God has shattered their unity, “created dissension in their ranks,”96 “cast enmity and hatred” (Q. 5:64) among them [the Muslims],97 and incited their enemies to seize their territories, thus allowing their enemies to recover from them whatever they desire.98

The fundamental problem faced by al-Sulami was how to rehabilitate Islam in the face of repeated defeats. He identifies the crisis as a religious and a moral problem that can be remedied by moral reform. If the terrible losses being inflicted on Islam are due to the discontinuation of jihād and the disregard of religious obligations, Islamic society can be set right and the losses reversed by inculcating the duties of jihād and the religious obligations of Islam. Al-Sulami, however, needs some way to inculcate these duties and obligations into the lives of Muslims. This will be accomplished by pious and virtuous sovereigns (salātin; sing, sultān) who will live in accordance with God’s rules and will facilitate the observance of the faith on the part of their “companions, followers,


97 Sivan, Zakkār, Hillenbrand, Christie, and Gerish neglect to note that al-Sulamī here is adopting Q. 5:64 to his own purposes. Sivan, “La genèse de la contre-croisade,” 207, 215; Sulamī, “Jihād,” 45; Hillenbrand, Crusades, 72; Christie, “Religious Campaign or War of Conquest?” 64-65; Christie and Gerish, “Parallel Preaching,” 145. Al-Sulamī takes a verse from the Qur’ān that deals with how God has anathematized the Jews for having declared God’s hand to be fettered — “and We [God] have cast between them [the Jews] enmity and hatred, till the Day of Resurrection” (wa-alqaynä baynahum al-‘adāwata wa-l-baghda a ilä yawm al-qiyāma) — and applies it to the Muslims: “[God has] cast enmity and hatred among them [the Muslims]” (wa-alqā l-‘adāwata wa-l-baghda a baynahum). Here and elsewhere, the translations from the Qur’ān are taken from Arthur J. Arberry, trans., The Koran Interpreted, 2 vols. (London: Allen & Unwin, 1955).

and subjects." Al-Sulamī sees no need to win over the masses (al-`āmma) to his reform program because he expects the populace to follow their rulers, reconciled now to God and committed to the revival of Islam. With a virtuous sovereign at the helm of state and a Muslim populous restored to the correct practice of their religion, the road to recovery is only a matter of skillful diplomacy: gaining political support among Muslim rulers throughout Syria, the Jazirah (Upper Mesopotamia), Egypt, and adjacent regions for a jihād against the Crusaders. Such diplomacy, al-Sulamī warns, must be timed just right. When fear of the Crusaders outweighs "old hatreds and hidden resentments," then the sovereign must act to consolidate a coalition of Muslim powers against the Christian threat. Al-Sulamī sketches out his scenario for Islamic resurgence as follows:

If [the sovereign] duly considers and investigates this severe calamity (al-nāzila), taking into consideration our remarks regarding the restoration of communion between himself and His Creator in religious matters and faithfulness to His will, and brings back to Him all of his companions, followers, and subjects who have deviated from the truth, he must then apply himself zealously to his relations with the sovereigns of this region — Syria, the Jazirah, and Egypt — and the rest of the lands that border it and are near to it when fear [of the Franks] is more widespread in all of these regions than old hatreds and hidden resentments, and there is aversion to mutual envy and rivalries.59

Al-Sulamī’s Tripartite Plan for the Revival of Islam

Military action is essential to al-Sulamī’s plan, but military success is predicated on religious reform and political action.100 Since al-Sulamī believes that the evil that has befallen the Muslims is due to their failure to perform “the obligatory requirements [of their faith]” and their neglect of jihād, he advocates the renewal of Islam among its adherents as a precondition for waging successful Holy War:

59 Sulamī, “Jihād,” 67; Sivan, “La genèse de la contre-croisade,” 213. Sivan and Hillenbrand give a different meaning to this passage by translating the conjunction idhā as “because” (car) and “for,” instead of “when.” Sivan, “La genèse de la contre-croisade,” 220; Hillenbrand, Crusades, 73. Here, al-Sulamī offers an optimistic outlook for the prospect of Muslim unity. When "old hatreds and hidden resentments" seem to offer little hope that Muslims will ever overcome "mutual envy and rivalries" and join together against the Crusaders, al-Sulamī is confident that the Crusaders will provide the impetus to make Muslim unity possible. “Fear [of the Franks]” will enable the Muslims to rise above their long-standing rivalries and mutual distrust and enoble and empower them to take concerted action against the Crusaders.

100 Sivan, “La genèse de la contre-croisade,” 201-2; Elisséeff, “Reaction of the Syrian Muslims,” 164.
Engage in the struggle against your selves (jihâd anfusikum) before engaging in the Holy War against your enemies (jihâd a'dâ ikâm); for, if the [inner] selves (al-nufûs) are a more formidable enemy for you than are your [external] enemies, then restrain them from being disobedient to their Creator, glorious is He, and you will succeed in your expectations of victory over them (the Franks).\(^1\)

Set things right between you and your Creator, and He will set right for you what is corrupt in your own condition and set things right between you.\(^2\) Steadfastly avoid sins against God, glorious is He, and follow up your renunciation [of evil works] with good works that you will resume doing. “Perchance your Lord will destroy your enemy, and will make you successors in the land,” that you may see “how you shall do” (Q. 7:129).\(^3\) Consider what God, glorious is He, had

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\(^1\) The jihâd anfusikum, or jihâd al-nafi, is the “struggle against the self,” or the “struggle against the devil” (jihâd al-shaytân), also referred to as the “greater jihâd” (al-jihâd al-akbar).


\(^3\) Phillips, Holy Warriors, 32, also puts forward this interpretation. Yet what al-Sulami is recommending here is that the “struggle against your selves” go before the “Holy War against your enemies,” not that the “jihâd of yourselves” be given precedence over the “jihâd of your enemies,” such as the Crusader “Holy War against the Muslims” (jihâd al-muslimin). Christie compounds this error by translating fî-in al-nafûs a'dâ lakûm minhum as “for if yourselves are among your enemies.” Christie’s earlier effort at translating this passage substitutes “jihâd against your enemies” for “jihâd of your enemies.” Christie, “Religious Campaign or War of Conquest?” 69. See also Sivan, “La genèse de la contre-croisade,” 211, 219.

\(^4\) Phillips, Holy Warriors, 32, understands this passage to say: “Make right what is between you and your Creator, and what is wrong with your [current] state of being will be made right for you.”

\(^5\) This is a rewording of the second part of Q. 7:129: “Perchance your Lord will destroy your enemy, and will make you successors in the land, so that He may behold how you shall do.” These are the words that the Qur’ân puts into the mouth of Moses in response to the charge directed against him by his people, “we have been hurt before thou camest to us, and after thou
ordered your Prophet, God bless him and grant him salvation, and his Companions to do before engaging in Holy War (jihād). They took upon themselves the seriousness of the pious deed, and the endeavor proved to be a faultless rendering of the statement of God: “O men, bow you down and prostrate yourselves, and serve your Lord, and do good; haply so you shall prosper” (Q. 22:77). Then He adds: “and struggle for God as is His due (wa-jähidū fi Allāh ḥaqqa jihādih) [...] He named you Muslims aforetime” (Q. 22:78).

Critical to the success of the jihād al-anfus and the jihād al-āˈdāʾ is a virtuous sovereign who will promote the faith and religious practices of Islam, as well as spearhead the Holy War. Achieving unity of effort on the part of the Muslims in Syria, the Jazlrah, Egypt, and adjacent regions is the next goal. Al-Sulami realizes that jihād had better not depend crucially on pious intentions or on sentiments of pan-Muslim solidarity. The Muslims in Syria, the Jazlrah, Egypt, and adjacent regions will not join together in jihād out of pious reasons, nor will they do so out of Muslim solidarity. But they will join together in jihād out of fear of the Crusaders. Even so, a united political front alone will not in
itself guarantee success. All of society must contribute to the jihād, and the undertaking will require much more effort than was expended on the jihād conquests of the seventh and eighth centuries directed against Eastern and Western Christendom:

It is the duty of everyone — subjects, peasants, and all the rest of the people — to support and assist [the sovereigns] all that they can, by the labor of their hands and faculties, and to take on every burden and hardship in targeting this body [of Franks]. [Even] the one from among them who does a little bit will do his part to render the task of attaining the material support (al-nafaqā)\textsuperscript{105} [required for the jihād] an easy one. In their Holy War (jihād), they will have to make twice the effort of those that carried out the military expeditions (al-ghazw) to their lands [i.e., the realms of Western Christendom] and the Byzantine Empire (al-Rūm) in order to drive them (the Franks) out of [Muslim territory] and obliterate all traces of them.\textsuperscript{106}

Despite the enormity of the task facing the Muslims, al-Sulaml is optimistic. He can see that the Crusaders, despite their initial successes, are fully stretched in terms of manpower and supplies and that the Muslims can easily reinforce their armies while the Crusaders cannot. The Muslims are in an excellent position to deliver an annihilating counterattack, if only they adhere to al-Sulami's two-nature scheme of Holy War:

When the duties of fighting against the enemy are combined with [performing] the many requirements [of the faith], the plenitude of deeds [required of the Muslims] will seem like a small amount, and the most perilous of ventures will be boldly embarked upon, such as the defense of the coastal regions and aid to its inhabitants who are under siege there. Because they are presently diverting the attention of the enemy away from this country (i.e., the Syrian hinterland) and the lands that border it, and away from Egypt and adjacent regions, there is no hope for a quick victory by them (the Franks), since authoritative information confirms their weak position, their lack of cavalry and equipment, and the distance from their [bases of] manpower (anṣārihim; lit. "their helpers") and support.\textsuperscript{107} These circumstances, which we have recounted, do not find their like

\textsuperscript{105} Paul L. Heck, "Taxation," in McAuliffe, Encyclopaedia of the Qur’ān, 5:192-200.

\textsuperscript{106} Sulami, "Jihād," 68. Sivan, "La genèse de la contre-croisade," 221, understands this passage to say: "Il est du devoir de tous, soldats, sujets (citadins?), paysans et tous les autres de faire tout ce qui est en leur pouvoir pour aider [les souverains] et de supporter dans la guerre contre ces troupe tout fardeau et toute peine; celui dont les moyens sont réduits peut se contenter d'une contribution minime. [Il leur faut] faire dans ce gihād plusieurs fois autant et davantage que les Musulmans n'avaient fait par le passé dans le gihād agressif, afin de chasser [les Francs] du pays [musulman] et d'éffacer leurs traces."

\textsuperscript{107} Christie and Gerish, "Parallel Preaching," 144, understand this passage to say: "There were associated with the duties of fighting hard against the enemy many requirements that make light [the burden] of the great number of deeds [involved] and defy with them the greatness of the
in this day and age, and indeed their like will probably not be seen again before earthly time (al-dahr) expires, so it is necessary to seize the opportunity quickly.108

The Apocalyptic Vision of al-Sulami

The need for the Muslims to act quickly is only partially explained by al-Sulami’s keen strategic sense. Al-Sulami can see that the power of the Crusader advance will soon be diminished due to acute logistical difficulties and manpower shortages. Now is the time for the Muslims to gain the advantage.109 The strategic argument for an immediate Muslim counterattack is compelling enough, but al-Sulami can see an even more compelling reason to launch a speedy assault against an overextended and vulnerable enemy. The Crusader incursion, he argues, is an event of providential magnitude. Just as Jeremiah had seen the divine purpose behind the rise of the Babylonian Empire and Pope Urban had come to recognize the divine purpose behind the Islamic conquest movements, al-Sulami sees the divine purpose behind the victorious power of the Latin West. The three-headed hydra of the Crusade movement is just as much a part of God’s plan as the Islamic conquests of the seventh and eighth centuries. The war with the Christian West, al-Sulami concludes, will act as a stimulus to self-renovation within the Islamic world. This war will ultimately serve God’s plan for salvation history by returning Muslims to the regular practice of jihād. By participating in a purified and spiritualized jihād, the kind that al-Sulami recommends, the Muslims will be able to bring present realities into harmony with the events of the eschaton, the End of Days, or End Times, before Final Judgment.

The reform of Islam and the return to jihād will lead to the ultimate triumph of the umma Muhammadiyya over all of Christendom, an event reserved for the End Times. The Crusader conquest of Jerusalem will lead to the Muslim reconquest of the city; the reconquest of Jerusalem will lead to the conquest of Constantinople, and afterwards to the subjugation of Rome. Al-Sulami is not feeding his heart on fantasies, but on Islamic eschatological expectations.110

terrors [that must be faced]. Among them is the defense of the country of the coast and support of its peoples [who are] besieged and fighting with great efforts because they now are keeping the enemy distracted from these countries, what is near them, Egypt and its environs.”


109 Asbridge, Crusades, 115-62, vividly describes the perilous early years of the Crusader states in Outremer.

110 On the Islamic dream of the conquest of Eastern and Western Christendom, which focused on the capture of Constantinople and Rome, see Marius Canard, “Les expéditions arabes contre Constantinople dans l’histoire et la legend,” Journal asiatique 208 (1926): 61-121; André
Here, he holds out the prospect that those who heed his words and “make strenuous efforts” in the *jihād* against the Crusaders might conceivably be the ones who will conquer Constantinople:

> We have heard a *hadith* going back to the Prophet saying that the Christians (*al-Rūm*)


111 The term *al-Rūm* was used in Arabic sources to refer to the Romans, the Byzantines, Christians of all types, and, on occasion, to the ancient Greeks, as well as to the Saljuqs of Rūm (473-707/1081-1307). The *hadith* cited by al-Sulamī uses this term to designate the Byzantines. By applying this apocalyptic *hadith* to the events of his day — the Crusader conquest of Jerusalem and hopes for its reconquest — al-Sulamī clearly intends *al-Rūm* to denote the Crusaders. Accordingly, it is translated here as “Christians.” Sivan, “La genèse de la contre-croisade,” 218, translates *al-Rūm* as “Byzantines,” as does Christie, “Religious Campaign or War of Conquest?” 65; idem, “Jerusalem in the *Kitab al-Jihād*,” 217; idem, “Motivating Listeners in the *Kitab al-Jihād*.” 9. This subverts al-Sulamī’s intention to apply a prophecy about the Byzantines to the Crusaders. Christie offers several explanations to account for al-Sulamī’s redirection of this prophecy: (1) al-Sulamī, like “contemporary Muslim writers [who] often confused or conflated the Byzantines and the Europeans,” sees “the prophecy as being applicable [to the Crusaders]”; (2) “al-Sulamī’s listeners” confused “[the Byzantines] with the crusaders or viewed both groups as a single entity”; and (3) al-Sulamī’s “deep knowledge” of the Crusaders suggests that “his apparent ignorance of the difference between Franks and Byzantines” is not due to “the Muslims frequently mix[ing] up the Byzantines and the Franks” but to his “deliberate confusion” of Byzantines with Franks, which allows him “the opportunity to apply prophecies about the Byzantines to the Franks in order to use traditions about the former to influence their audiences’ attitudes toward the latter.” Christie, “Motivating Listeners in the *Kitab al-Jihād*,” 10; idem, “Religious Campaign or War of Conquest?” 65-66; idem, “Jerusalem in the *Kitab Al-Jihād*,” 217-18. It is not necessary to predicate ignorance on the part of “al-Sulamī’s listeners” or on the part of al-Sulamī, and, if there is a “deliberate confusion” involved, both al-Sulamī and his audience freely and knowingly take part in it. The multiple meanings of *al-Rūm* allow al-Sulamī and his audience to equivocate between the meaning of this term as “the Byzantines” or “the Byzantine Empire” and its meaning as “Christians,” just as medieval Christians used the equivocation of the word “church” to marry three different meanings of the term: “a holy place surrounded by walls and covered above, where Christians assemble to hear the service, and pray to God to pardon their sins,” “the entire body of true Christians who are to be found in the whole world,” and “all the prelates and clergy of any one place who are devoted to the service of God in the
of time and that the Muslims will unite against them, drive them out of this city, and kill them all, except for a few among them. Then, they will pursue the surviving remnant all the way to Constantinople, and they will lay siege to the city and conquer it. This [hadith] is reliably established, as it is reported by the aforementioned 'Abd Allâh b. Amr [b. al-ʿĀs al-Sahmi, d. 65/685]. It was said that if this [hadith] sheds light upon that [i.e., who will conquer Constantinople], then the Holy Warriors of this community (al-mujähidin li-hädhihi l-taifâ), [who will] triumph over them [the Christians] and successfully drive them out of Jerusalem and other parts of this country, are the ones who will [also] conquer Constantinople, just as is mentioned in the ḥadîth in which the isnâd is not stated, by the grace of God, how excellent is His help! Therefore, make strenuous efforts — May God have mercy on you — in this Holy War (fa-ījâhû... fi hädhä l-jihâd). Perhaps you will be the ones who will have the privilege of this great conquest, having been set aside for this particular purpose.

Al-Sulami turns the very sign of Crusader triumph — the conquest of Jerusalem — into a sign that all Christendom is about to come to an end. The End Time is not that far away, he suggests, if only Muslims would “seize the opportunity quickly.”

The Influence of al-Sulami

It is impossible to know the direct effects of al-Sulami’s Kitâb al-jihâd. Because al-Sulami’s pious hortatory harangues produced no immediate results, Carole Hillenbrand concludes that “al-Sulami’s words proclaimed in the mosque from the minbar and preserved in his Book of Holy War do not seem to have had a widespread effect on his fellow Muslims at large, nor did they strike a


'Abd al-Hayy ibn Ahmad Ibn al-'Imâd, Shadharât al-dhâhab fi akhkhâr man dhâhab, ed. 'Abd al-Qâdîr Arnâ'ût and Mahmûd Arnâ'ût, 10 vols. (Damascus: Där Ibn Kathîr, 1986), 1:260, 290. Christie, “Jerusalem in the Kitâb Al-Jihâd,” 217, understands this passage to say: “This is confirmation, according to what was said in the ḥadîth... mentioned before...”

Christie, “Motivating Listeners in the Kitâb al-Jihâd,” 9, understands this passage to say: “If this situation is occurring during that time, and if those who fight the jihâd are from this conquering group [the group who will fight until the Day of Judgement], among them are those who will succeed in driving them out of Jerusalem and other parts of this country. They are the ones who will conquer Constantinople...” In another attempt to translate this passage, Christie substitutes “who will succeed in driving the Rum out of Jerusalem” for “who will succeed in driving them out of Jerusalem,” and deletes his editorial additions in brackets. Christie, “Jerusalem in the Kitâb Al-Jihâd,” 217.

chord with Muslim rulers and commanders at the time of maximum Crusader expansionism in the early twelfth century.”115 Those who look for intellectual-theological causation behind the course of Islamic jihađ may be disappointed that al-Sulamī’s words bore no immediate fruit, or they may credit his statements with remarkable prophetic vision, seeing in his treatise “the broad outline of what actually happened subsequently, in the long process we often call the Counter-Crusade.”116 Yet the connection between al-Sulamī’s words and the course of the Muslim counter-Crusade is not as simple as the intellectual-theological causation theorists make it out to be.

At the time of al-Sulamī’s call for jihađ, the whole situation in the Islamic world was fragmented. But the fragments were in constant ferment and evolution. This evolution assumed new scope when ‘Imād al-Dīn Zengī (r. 521-541/1127-1146), “an opportunistic and ruthless military commander,”117 rose up to create an autonomous emirate within the western realms of the fractured Saljuq Empire by defeating his principal Muslim rivals. Al-Sulamī might have preferred a better standard-bearer of jihađ than Zengī, but the counter-Crusade would not have gone forward without him. His capture of Crusader Edessa in 539/1144 greatly widened the political horizon of the Zengid state and led directly to the fabled careers of such standard-bearers of jihađ as Zengī’s son, Nūr al-Dīn (r. 541-569/1146-1174), and Nūr al-Dīn’s lieutenant, Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn (Salādīn) (r. 564-589/1169-1193). Fear of the Franks did not occasion a united Muslim front in Syria and northern Mesopotamia against the Crusader states, as al-Sulamī suggested it might, but the consolidation of political power in Zengī’s hands eventually led the way to jihađ and efforts to “obliterate all traces of [the Franks].”

Al-Sulamī’s words do not appear to have been forgotten, even though they were not immediately acted upon. His description of the Crusades as the first, second, and third movements of a Latin Christian offensive against Islam had a deep influence on Muslim historiography. Ibn al-Athīr (555-630/1160-1233) adopted and embellished this conception of the Crusades in his widely influential world history, al-Kāmil fi l-tarikh, which Franz Rosenthal calls “the high point of Muslim annalistic historiography.”118 Ibn al-Athīr’s tripartite

116 Bonner, Jihad, 140.
117 Hillenbrand, Crusades, 112.
account of the Crusades is related — directly or indirectly — to al-Sulami’s version of events. While Niall Christie thinks it unlikely that al-Sulami directly influenced Ibn al-Athir, Matti Moosa suggests that Ibn al-Athir “may have read al-Sulami’s treatise.”119

What makes the connection between al-Sulami and Ibn al-Athir so convincing is the fact that Ibn al-Athir is not likely to have come up with a three-part view of the Crusades on his own. Annalistic historians, such as Ibn al-Athir, rarely explore the meaning of events that are separated over a wide expanse of time and space. In the ancient and medieval tradition of annalistic history, “historical facts [are] viewed as immediately given and their meaning as immediately recognizable,” so that “the historical fact is self-evident and the eyewitness the best historian,” making it sufficient for the chronicler “merely to continue, in a straight line, the work of his predecessors,” with the end result being “a continuous, unbroken chain of one historical narrative.”120 Ibn al-Athir hardly ever deviates from this tradition, but he does so in the case of the Crusades.121 This breach of tradition is best explained by the habit of annalistic historians to present accounts of events gleaned from eyewitnesses, or at least contemporaries, to the events that they describe.

Ibn al-Athir, in fact, offers not one but two accounts of the emergence of the Crusades. The first is an embroidered version of al-Sulami’s account. The second is a tale of Fatimid intrigue that has the Shi’i rulers of Egypt calling upon the Franks to intervene in Syria to offset the might of the Saljuq state (al-dawla al-Saljüqiyya).122 To the second account, he appends the statement, “God is the Most-knowing” (Allâhu a’lam), a well-known qualifying expression used in Arabic to signify that “the author is unsure of the authenticity of his or her source.”123 The first account of the Crusades, which owes its basic structure to al-Sulami, found a distinguished place in the Islamic historiographical tradition, as well as in the Syriac historical heritage. When the Jacobite historian Gregory Abu l-Faraj Bar Hebraeus (1226-1286) incorporated

this account into his *Tâ’irîk Mukhtâsar al-duwal*, al-Sulami’s trichotomous division of the Crusades became part of the main historiographical tradition of the Middle East. Ibn al-Athîr’s second account of the Crusades has a genuine basis in fact but not in the simplified form that he presents it.124 Regardless of what Ibn al-Athîr may have thought, al-Sulami’s threefold division of the Crusades is not incompatible with, or mutually exclusive of, a Crusader-Fatimid anti-Saljuq alliance.

If al-Sulami influenced the historiographical tradition of the Middle East, is he also likely to have influenced the Muslim response to the Crusaders, the actual movement of *jihâd*, or what is often referred to as the counter-Crusade? When we consider “the gradual forming of an alliance under Zangî, Nur al-Dîn and Şâlîh al-Dîn, between the urban merchant class on the one hand, and on the other, those professional military elements [of society],”126 and the impact of this alliance on the course of the counter-Crusade, it is difficult not to credit al-Sulami with a role in this development. The urban merchant class, joined by artisans, teachers, and religious scholars, were the guardians of Islamic culture and traditions. The religious scholars in particular were the custodians of the Qur’an and the teachings of the Prophet, and these religious authorities nurtured the powerful spirit that was to drive the counter-Crusade forward, the spirit of *jihâd*.127 Al-Sulami’s *Kitâb al-jihâd* was the first of many new works devoted to Holy War, designed to rally support behind a common effort to defeat the Crusaders.128 Al-Sulami and others emerged to provide Islamic society with the spiritual and emotional impetus needed to undertake the great task of dislodging the Crusaders from the Dâr al-Islâm.


125 Abu-Munshar, “Fâtimids, Crusaders.”


127 Daniella Talmon-Heller analyzes the mechanisms used by religious scholars to promote *jihâd* in Syria during the period 1146 to 1260 and assesses the impact this had on the elites (al-khâṣṣa) and masses (al-‘îmmat) within society. Daniella Talmon-Heller, *Islamic Piety in Medieval Syria: Mosques, Cemeteries and Sermons under the Zangâdîs and Ayyûbîdîs* (1146-1260), Jerusalem Studies in Religion and Culture, vol. 7 (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 87-148, 213-24, 243-51.

The Strategic Thinking of Pope Urban and al-Sulami

Although both Pope Urban and al-Sulami viewed the Mediterranean as a geographic and strategic whole, only Urban had to deal directly with a battlefield on two fronts, at both ends of the Mediterranean. This situation forced him to contend with the problems of a two-front war and to establish goals and devise a strategy for achieving them. He determined that success in this two-front war required that there be simultaneous military offensives at both ends of the Mediterranean. Many scholars, unaware of the historical and strategic context of the Crusades, have confused Urban’s strategy of offense with a war of aggression.129 Our understanding of Urban requires a long-term perspective, not unlike the perspective found in Urban’s letters, and an appreciation of the single political vision that structured his thinking about the Crusades: a vision of a Christian world restored to the unity that had marked it prior to the Islamic conquest movements. The pursuit of this vision accounts for the urge to regard the Mediterranean as a unified theater of operations, one that encompasses Sicily, Spain, and the Middle East.

Unlike Urban, al-Sulami was never faced directly with the challenge of translating a strategic vision into a strategic plan of action. Although he clearly sees the advances by the Latin West in Sicily, Spain, and Syria as a new contest for the control of the Mediterranean, he does not develop a Mediterranean strategy to deal with this problem in its totality. His plan of action is strictly local — limited to “this region” (ḥādhihi al-bilād), namely “Syria, the Jazirah, Egypt, and the rest of the lands that border it and are near to it.” He understands the magnitude of the threat posed by the growing might of Western Christendom and the vulnerabilities of Islam to this threat, but he is in no position to effect political action.

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Al-Sulami's Dream of Conquest and the Course of Islamic jihād

In the eastern Mediterranean, al-Sulami's dream of a resurgent Islam took on strength by the middle of the twelfth century and reached fulfillment in 1291 when Acre, the last of the Latin holdings in Palestine, fell to Mamluk forces. In the western Mediterranean, a Christian dream of reconquest and restoration was realized, as the Normans conquered Islamic Sicily between the years 1060 and 1091, and as the Crusader kings of Castile-León and of Aragon-Catalonia conquered the heartlands of Spanish Islam (al-Andalus) during the thirteenth century. But the great rollback of the Islamic world and the reconquest of the Mediterranean from the power of Islam that was expected by Pope Urban in the eleventh century, and still anticipated by many well into the thirteenth century, did not happen.

Instead, an Islamic conquest movement that was no less remarkable than the earlier Arab conquests of the seventh and eighth centuries got underway. The Ottoman jihād conquests against Christendom met with far greater success than did the Crusades of the Latin West against Islam. The Ottomans completely destroyed the Byzantine Empire and the Christian kingdoms of Serbia and Bulgaria. They transformed the second Rome — Constantinople — into their capital and occupied vast territories in southeast Europe for centuries. In 1658, the Ottomans invaded Hungary. In 1672, they marched into Poland. By 1678, they had defeated the Russian Empire and invaded the Ukraine. In 1683, the Ottomans besieged Habsburg Vienna for the second time. The limited successes of the Crusades must be weighed against the extraordinary successes of the Islamic jihād conquests and their remarkable degree of permanence. Yet the Crusades, far from being "the most signal and most durable monument of human folly that has yet appeared in any age or nation,"130 reaped enormous strategic dividends for the Latin West. They played a decisive role in the great struggle of Western Civilization to survive by curbing the militant advance of Islam. By the turn of the eighteenth century, the Islamic threat to Europe was finally contained. With the 1699 Treaty of Karlowitz and the 1718 Treaty of Passarowitz, a new phase in relations between Western Europe and the Islamic world began in which a major Islamic state, the Ottoman Empire, entered the realm of inter-European political struggles.131


Seeing the Crusades as Contemporaries Saw Them

In the pendulum of war between Cross and Crescent, triumph fosters its own illusions. The early experience of Islam had the effect that worldly success was always expected and was seen as something intrinsic to the faith. Western Christendom had been shattered and shaken by the Islamic conquests, leaving Muslims to expect that the Latin West would never react, readjust, and rebound from repeated defeats. When it did, the reaction was both incredulity and outrage, as al-Sulami clearly expresses. So too, when Western Christendom was flush with triumph and saw Islam reeling and on the defensive, it too put aside all thoughts that Muslim society would react, readjust, and rebound from repeated defeats.

If Muslims and Christians shared illusions, they also shared a common perspective on the Mediterranean, viewing it as a geographic and strategic whole. This perspective allowed them to see the Crusades, not as “the brief and localized outbursts which tend to monopolize the term,”\(^\text{132}\) but as a Mediterranean-wide movement that unfolded in three stages: Sicily, Spain, and Syria. A crusading pope and a Muslim jurist would give vastly different meanings to these events, yet they would be in full agreement about where and when the Crusades began and how they developed. The crusading pontiff would tie the Crusades to the restoration of the Church and the resumption of the evangelical mission of the Church, while the Muslim lawyer would link the Crusades to the eschaton, the End of Days before Final Judgment. Because the pope and the lawyer regarded history as unfolding according to a divine plan, they saw the Crusades as part of this plan. An important by-product of accepting that God directs history was the adoption of a genuinely historical approach to the Crusades: the presentation of events as they really happened, not as they might have happened or could have happened or should have happened.

Seeing the Crusades as Pope Urban II and ’Ali ibn Tähir al-Sulami saw them will not be an easy task. According to Hilaire Belloc, “the most difficult thing in the world in connection with history, and the rarest of achievement, is the seeing of events as contemporaries saw them, instead of seeing them through the distorting medium of our later knowledge.”\(^\text{133}\) The distorting medium of later knowledge has produced the conventional view that the Crusades began in 1095.\(^\text{134}\) Numerous histories of the Crusades have been written from this


\(^{134}\) Because of the distorting medium of later knowledge, Erdmann contends that “the sources written after 1100, and especially after 1105, can be used only with extreme caution in reconstructing the history of how the crusade began.” Erdmann, *Entstehung*, 366; trans. Baldwin and
What is lacking is the awareness that Urban and al-Sulami both bring to an understanding of the Crusades. Urban and al-Sulami guide us to a proper comprehension of the Crusades by refusing to judge the entire movement on the basis of the most recent expression of crusading activity. They both see the latest crusading venture in the Mediterranean as part of a multi-pronged movement. They trace the origins of this movement back to the Norman conquest of Sicily, and they link together the various strands of this movement so that it is possible to see the Norman actions in Sicily, the Castilian and Catalan advances in Iberia, and the expedition to Jerusalem as forming a single enterprise.

This interpretation of the Crusades provides a needed counterpoint to a modern tendency, manifested in the works of John Cowdrey, Jonathan Riley-

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Goffart, 359. Whalen, *Domination of God*, 51, also warns of the problem of retrospective history in "First" Crusade narrative accounts.

Smith, Christopher Tyerman, Marcus Bull, Norman Housley, and others, to affirm an absolute causal dependence of the political aspects of crusading on the spiritual components of crusading, and to identify the spiritual characteristics of crusading with crusading itself. The flaw in this “devotional” or “religious” interpretation of crusading does not consist in the view that the political aspects of crusading are conditioned by its spiritual or penitential elements, but in the assertion that the political facets of crusading causally depend on the spiritual components, and in the false identification of the spiritual features of crusading with crusading itself. Scholars have been asking themselves, “What devotional religious climate or religious innovation caused the emergence of the Crusades?” when they should have been asking, “What ongoing conflict intensified to the point where it received the highest and most expansive religious warrant, was rewarded with a growing array of religious benefits and secular privileges, and was validated by a historical-theological schema?” This is not merely a matter of emphasis in relating the

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political realm to the religious realm: it suggests that the prolonged struggle between Islam and Christianity in the Mediterranean world, rather than the religion of the Latin West, is the central issue and must be the real focus of inquiry. And it makes the Christian religion one of the many forces of crusading, rather than the root cause or reason for the Crusades.

Scholars have been lured into believing that because spiritual motivation explains some crusading phenomena, it is supposed to explain all crusading phenomena. As a consequence, the material, social, economic, and political aspects of crusading are reduced to secondary importance. Yet the material, social, economic, and political realities of crusading refuse to take a back seat to the religious features of crusading. A genuinely scholarly understanding of the Crusades must reject all simplifications of crusading reality that play down or obscure essential elements, such as political factors, socio-economic conditions, and material interests. Crusading can no more be reduced to its extrinsic religious elements than religion can be reduced to psychology, sociology, economics, or a system of ethics. Each has an autonomous and independent character. Riley-Smith and others who aim to incorporate crusading into the domain of religious life are unwilling to admit that crusading has an autonomous character. Crusading, however, is not a mere function of its extraneous religious components. It has its own end and purpose that transcends its religious framework, and it can be studied as an autonomous activity.

Both Urban and al-Sulami recognize crusading as an autonomous activity that manifests itself in specific deeds and events. Modern assumptions and biases cloud our view of these deeds and events, but no magic key is required to unlock the door to understanding the Crusades. The door is open and a fairly broad range of sources exists to chart the emergence and the development of crusading. To have some idea of what the Crusades were, we would do well to begin with “what contemporaries understood by crusading” and to consider what Pope Urban II and 'Ali ibn Ṭāhir al-Sulami have to say about crusading.

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Figure 1. Giovanni Paolo Pannini (1691/92-1765), View of Rome from the northwest, 1749. Center, the Castel Sant’Angelo. Right, the Vatican with Saint Peter’s Basilica. Oil on canvas. Charlottenburg Castle, Stiftung Preussische Schlösser & Gärten Berlin-Brandenburg, Berlin, Germany. Bildarchiv Preussischer Kulturbesitz / Art Resource, NY.

Figure 2. Anonymous Venetian, The Reception of the Venetian Ambassadors in Damascus, showing the Great Mosque of Damascus in the distance (left of center), 1511. Oil on canvas; 46 1/2 × 80 in. (118 × 203 cm). Musée du Louvre, Paris; Réunion des Musées Nationaux / Art Resource, NY.
Figure 3. The priory chapel of Berzé-la-Ville (Saône-et-Loire), France. Copyright Académie de Mâcon.
Figure 4. The priory chapel of Berzé-la-Ville; General view of the wall paintings decorating the apse. Photo courtesy of Hirmer Verlag, Munich.
Figure 5. The *traditio legis et clavum* in the conch of the apse of the priory chapel of Berzé-la-Ville, showing the Hand of God above Christ, who is seated on a throne in an oval mandorla and flanked by twelve apostles. Also included in the scene are SS. Vincent and Lawrence (*left*) and two unidentified bishop-saints (*right*). Photo courtesy of Hirmer Verlag, Munich.
Figure 6. The *traditio legis et clavum* in the conch of the apse of the priory chapel of Berzé-la-Ville, showing St. Peter, at the head of a group six apostles, receiving the open scroll of the Law from Christ with cloaked hands, as he holds the Keys to the Kingdom of Heaven. Next to Peter, *in the foreground*, stand John and James. *Below left*, two unidentified bishop-saints. Photo courtesy of Hirmer Verlag, Munich.
Figure 7. The *traditio legis* in the conch of the apse of the priory chapel of Berzé-la-Ville, showing St. Paul, at the head of a group six apostles, acclaiming Christ with his right hand, as do others in the group, while he holds in his veiled left hand the open scroll of the Law received from Christ. Next to Paul, *in the foreground*, stand Philip and Matthew. *Below right*, SS. Vincent and Lawrence. Photo courtesy of Hirmer Verlag, Munich.
Figure 8. The mural on the north side of the apse of the priory chapel of Berzé-la-Ville, showing St. Blaise in prison (top) and St. Blaise being beheaded (bottom). Photo courtesy of Hirmer Verlag, Munich.
Figure 9. The mural on the south side of the apse of the priory chapel of Berzé-la-Ville, showing St. Vincent being tortured on a gridiron. Above left, St. Agatha; above right, St. Consorce. Photo courtesy of Hirmer Verlag, Munich.
Figure 10. The mural on the north side of the apse of the priory chapel of Berzé-la-Ville, showing St. Blaise in prison receiving from a poor widow the fully-cooked head and hams of her pig that the saint had previously rescued from the jaws of a wolf. Photo courtesy of Hirmer Verlag, Munich.
Figure 11. St. Consorce (Lat. Consortia) on the south corner spandrel of the apse of the priory chapel of Berzé-la-Ville. Copyright Académie de Mâcon.
Figure 12. The priory chapel of Berzé-la-Ville; General view of the mural paintings decorating the apse. Copyright Académie de Mâcon.