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Crusading as Philosophical Construct: Thoughts and Actions of Pope Urban II, St. Bernard, and Peter the Venerable

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Abstract

The First Crusade was a penitential Holy War to aid the Byzantine Empire and to liberate Jerusalem from the perceived threat of Muslim occupation. The Second Crusade was also a penitential war, but this time it was to support the territory reclaimed by the First Crusade. Many scholars believe that these were the only relevant goals of these crusades. My focus in this paper is to contextualize the many possible goals for the early crusades, and to understand the necessary and complex rationalization of ecclesiastical leadership. This research is intended to contribute to the development of a more nuanced understanding of the crusades, which in turn may support more productive ways to understand the continuing conflict between Western Civilization and Islam.

Introduction

The crusades have been one of the most enduring events of world history in the eyes of the public, as well as in the halls of academia. The romance of the concept of crusading; heading off to unknown hardship and violence on a mission from God, which will secure redemption and an eternity in heaven, and perhaps more importantly avoid an eternity of agony in hell, is unavoidably powerful. The actions of the crusades laid the foundation for a philosophy of colonization and civilizational misunderstanding that swept the world for centuries. Christopher Tyerman makes the point that “The European dash for empire happily recruited the crusades as exemplars...crusading became reconciled with prevailing politico-historical fashions.”¹

After the September 11, 2001 attacks in the United States, then president George W. Bush recklessly remarked that “you’re either with us or against us in the fight against terror.”²

¹ Christopher Tyerman, *The Debate on the Crusades* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011). P. 4-5.

² Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (London: Simon and Schuster, 1996), p. 9.

When Bush “vowed to ‘rid the world of evil-doers,’ cautioning that ‘this crusade, this war on terrorism, is going to take a while,’” he did the terrorists a great favor by giving their leadership the perfect platform upon which to validate their movements.³

Unfortunately, the meaning of the word “*crusade*” is largely misunderstood. As a word associated with the military actions directed by the church, it was not even in existence until nearly one hundred years after the First Crusade. For the Muslim world, the delay was even longer: “It was not until the mid-nineteenth century that the terms *harb al-salib* (the war of the cross) and *al-salibiyyun* (crusaders) entered the Arabic lexicon.”⁴ Akil Awan explains that this occurred as a result of the expansionist, colonialist, undertakings of Europeans who were again conflicting with the Turks.⁵

There are no church records that report the speeches of the Council of Clermont where Pope Urban II called for the First Crusade. Surprisingly, there are also no official records of his travels during the several months before and after the Clermont meeting, although it is possible to reconstruct some of the details through his letters, limited as they are. Lean Ni Chleirigh writes, “Only three letters of the Pope exist linked to the Crusade.”⁶ James Brundage points out that, “we have no record of Urban’s thoughts during the spring and summer of 1095.”⁷ For Bernard of Clairvaux and Peter the Venerable, the challenge of a lack of primary documents is less of an issue. There is a papal bull detailing the call for the Second Crusade.

It is my hope that this research will, in some small way, contribute to the ongoing effort to build understanding of the origins of the continuing conflict between Western Civilization and Islam, and in doing so, support the comprehensive endeavours of the interdisciplinary academic community to ultimately promote positive progress toward a more peaceful and productive global community that will benefit from an enhanced appreciation for and respect of cultural differences.

³ Akil Awan, and Mike Horswell eds, *The Crusades in the Modern World: Engaging the Crusades, Volume Two* (London: Routledge, 2020), p. 10.

⁴ Awan, p.6.

⁵ Awan p.6.

⁶ Lean Ni Chleirigh, ‘Peregrinatio, Nova: The First Crusade as a Pilgrimage in Contemporary Latin Narratives’, in *Writing the Early Crusades; Text Transmission and Memory* ed. by Marcus Bull and Damien Kempf (Woodbridge, Boydell Press, 2014), p.64.

⁷ James A. Brundage, *The Crusades: A Documentary Survey* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1962), p. 16.

Defining Crusade

When defining crusading as an institution, it is usual to begin with several assumptions, although there are likely to be exceptions that should be noted. For our purposes, the crusades will be actions that officially began with Urban II and the First Crusade in 1095.

There were crusades earlier than this, but St. Bernard and Peter the Venerable had important differences of opinion about what the crusades should be trying to achieve, and how. Historian Paul Chevedden writes that “Modern theories of the Crusades take their bearing from the Jerusalem Crusade launched by Pope Urban II in 1095.”⁸

This assumption provides the context for his definition of crusading: “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.”⁹ But what did those who participated in the Crusades believe at the time? Again we can cite Chevedden who argues that, “The wars were not the product of discrete individuals preoccupied with saving their individual souls but of an entire society coming together in the latter half of the eleventh century to fulfill a common purpose: liberating Christian people and lands from Islamic domination.”¹⁰

Jonathan Riley-Smith disagrees and argues that “the crusades were an individual thing, secondarily about service in arms to God or benefitting the church or Christianity. It was about self-sanctification.”¹¹ Chevedden feels that Riley-Smith’s stance as a Crusade Creationist enabled him to “view[s] the content of crusading analytically, as something that exists independently and can be considered on its own without a context.”¹²

Using this argument the Crusade Creationist “ensures that there is no historical continuity between the situation at the time immediately preceding 1095 and the situation following it; in an instant, crusading appears in an already advanced state.”¹³ These theorists “believe that Crusades were governed by a single set of common characteristics attributable to Urban...Some scholars list five core characteristics—usually comprising papal authorization, indulgence, vow, Cross, and Crusader privileges—while others allow for fewer.”¹⁴

⁸ Paul A. Chevedden, ‘The View of the Crusades from Rome and Damascus: The Geo-Strategic and Historical Perspectives of Pope Urban II and ‘Alī ibn Tāhir al-Sulamī’, *Oriens*, 39 (2011), p. 262.

⁹ Chevedden, *The View*, p. 262.

¹⁰ Paul A. Chevedden, ‘Crusade Creationism “versus” Pope Urban II’s Conceptualization of the Crusades’, *The Historian*, 75 (2013), p. 26.

¹¹ *Ibid*, p. 25.

¹² *Ibid*, p. 29.

¹³ *Ibid*, p.3.

¹⁴ *Ibid*, p. 5.

Carl Erdmann and John Gilchrest argue that crusading had been around well before 1095, and that it was mostly focused on the war against heretics.¹⁵

Chevedden further explains Erdmann's argument that "the root cause of the Crusades is the historical appearance of the unification of holy war with pilgrimage, something that Urban first brought about; the failure of the Crusade enterprise to emerge at an earlier date...is due to the absence of the unification of holy war with pilgrimage."¹⁶

One of the more challenging aspects of crusading was the justification of military force to be wielded on behalf of the cause of Christianity. Clearly this presented a moral dilemma for church leaders, but Malcom Barber writes in the introduction of Bernard of Clairvaux's *In Praise of the New Knighthood*, that, "[Pope] Gregory, above all, was responsible for the creation of the idea of the *milites Christi* who could fight material battles on behalf of a holy cause."¹⁷ This argument supports those who would suggest that crusading extended back before Urban, at least in its planning stages.

Unification of Holy War and Pilgrimage

A lively area of debate in crusade scholarship is whether or not they were pilgrimages. Lean Ni Chleirigh argues that the evidence for crusades sharing characteristics with pilgrimages does not exist until the late twelfth century.¹⁸ She goes on to explain that it is a result of the crusade chronicles, many of which use the term *peregrini* for the crusaders, that the idea that those who travelled to the Holy Land to liberate the eastern Christians, and Jerusalem, were militarized pilgrims has become a common notion.¹⁹ Erdmann disagrees, saying that "the root cause of the Crusades is the historical appearance of the unification of holy war with pilgrimage, something that Urban first brought about."²⁰ A clear example of how the pilgrimage idea was present in the Second Crusade was when King Louis, upon arrival in Jerusalem, stopped all progress for his expedition in order to worship at the holy shrines. Only after praying did he take steps to plan the deployment of his military forces.²¹

Historical Context

What were Urban II's goals for the First Crusade, and the reactions of St. Bernard and Peter the Venerable to Urban's strategy and implementation?

¹⁵ Ibid, p. 14.

¹⁶ Ibid, p. 14.

¹⁷ St. Bernard of Clairvaux, *In Praise of the New Knighthood*, trans. By M. Conrad Greenia (Trappist, Kentucky: Cistercian Publications, 1977), p.23.

¹⁸ Chleirigh, p.64.

¹⁹ Ibid, p. 73.

²⁰ Ibid, p. 64.

²¹ Brundage, p. 115.

Christopher Tyer writes of the papacy: “The oldest institution in western Europe in the eleventh century, self-consciously tracing an uninterrupted history back a thousand years...the absence of effective imperial power in Italy had propelled the papacy into a position of temporal authority over the city of Rome and, in theory at least, parts of the central peninsula.”²² Based on this analysis of the historical context of Urban’s papacy, the papacy itself had to be an astute participant in the politics of Europe to the greatest extent possible to ensure the survival of the church.

Europe After the Fall of Rome

Christianity was well established throughout the Roman Empire by the time of its demise in the west in 476 C.E., and the Church was able to maintain jurisdiction over the administration of spiritual leadership in Europe during the centuries that would pass until the development of strong governments with centralized secular leadership. Roman support of Christianity was not without a cost. The foundational philosophies of the teachings of the Gospels are fundamentally different from those of the Roman Empire. Tyer writes that the papacy was the oldest institution in western Europe in the eleventh century and was “propelled into a position of temporal authority over the city of Rome and, in theory at least, parts of the central peninsula.”²³ Howe explains that “Western leaders attempting to rebuild Europe were systematically incorporating Roman elements into their material, legal, and spiritual culture.”²⁴ The Roman notion of a ‘just war,’ a military action that could be legally permissible, was included in the writings of early Christian leaders such as St. Augustine.

Proto-Europe

The most significant historical figure in Europe after the fall of the western Roman Empire and involved in the advent of the crusades was Charles the Great of France. Charlemagne was “crowned the new Roman emperor in the west, inaugurating the Holy Roman Empire, which survived until 1806 when abolished by Napoleon.”²⁵ Charlemagne promised to provide the military might needed for the papacy to assert authority. Unfortunately, shortly after Charlemagne’s death the political power of the Holy Roman Empire was depleted. It was not until 962 that King Otto of Germany resumed the role of Holy Roman Emperor, once again providing a military apparatus to support the popes.²⁶ In spite of the commitments of the kings of proto-Europe, most kings actually held very little power. Matthew Innes writes, “local church leadership would typically be princes who would not stand to inherit the family fortune.

²² Christopher Tyerman, *God’s War* (London: Penguin, 2006), p. 4.

²³ Tyerman, *God*, p.4.

²⁴ John Howe, *Before the Gregorian Reform: The Latin Church at the Turn of the First Millennium* (Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 2016), p. 276.

²⁵ Tyerman, *God*, p.5.

²⁶ *Ibid*, p. 5.

They [churches and monasteries] were institutions embedded in the localities with which both local and central leaders brokered relationships in the pursuit of political power.”²⁷

By the tenth century, reform movements were well underway on the continent and would follow soon after in England. “Scholars have marveled at the apparent spontaneity of the monastic revival that swept through Europe in the 10th and 11th c.”²⁸ It was this move to reform both the monastic houses and the papacy that would lead to the First Crusade. For Urban, Bernard and Peter the Venerable, “The reforming popes asserted not just the independence of the church, ...but the autonomous primacy of the see of St. Peter.”²⁹

Context in the Christian east – Byzantium

Sharing a border with the Islamic Civilization had been relatively peaceful for hundreds of years. However, in the 11th century, the Turks entered the Muslim diaspora and things quickly became more urgent for the Eastern empire. Tyer writes, “In the mid-1050s, Turkish tribes led by the Seljuk family had invaded the Near East, becoming then effective rulers in Baghdad. In 1071, the Seljuks invaded Anatolia, defeating and capturing the Byzantine emperor, Romanus IV Diogenes, at the battle of Manzikert.”³⁰ Shortly after the Battle of Manzikert, the Byzantine emperor Dukas reached out to Pope Gregory VII for military support. Gregory attempted to launch what would likely have been considered by future historians to be the First Crusade in 1074, but he failed in his effort. Across the Byzantine Empire territories were lost during the reign of Dukas, but his successor Alexius I was able to reclaim most, but not all. The remaining losses were the impetus for Alexius to reach out to Urban for assistance in 1095.³¹ It was this call from Alexius that led directly to the launching of the First Crusade.

Context of the Muslims

The Islamic Civilization and the western Christian world could not have been farther apart at the time of the First Crusade. The eastern Christian church actually had a mostly peaceful relationship with the Muslims, including in the Holy Land. Churches were present and active, and Christians, as well as Jews and others, lived a secure life within Islamic lands, as long as the jizya, or religious freedom tax, was paid. The Muslim world was in the midst of the “Golden Age” of Islam.

²⁷ M. Innes, *State and Society in the Early Middle Ages: The Middle Rhine Valley, 400–1000* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 254.

²⁸ Howe, p.78.

²⁹ Tyerman, *God*, p.47.

³⁰ Tyerman, *God*, p.11.

³¹ Tyerman, *God*, p. 12.

Scholars debate the exact dates, but it certainly lasted from the inception of the Islamic Civilization in 632 until 1258. Islam had preserved and further developed the wisdom of the Greeks, kept safe by the Persians since the time of Alexander, for over 600 years, all to the eventual, and somewhat ironic, benefit of the West. With a stable, and well-educated civilization for several hundred years, the Muslim world had developed into something very different from the West. Cobb writes, “Its cities were crowded with Muslims, Jews, and Christians of various kinds.”³² City centers in Europe were far inferior to those of the Islamic counterparts, “Rome, Milan, Cologne could probably boast populations of only around 30-40,000. In 1100, Paris and London were home to perhaps 20,000. Baghdad at its peak in the late 9th c, may have held 800,000...Cairo 400,000, Cordoba 100,000.”³³

The Goals of Pope Urban II for the First Crusade

“*Deus lo volt.*”^{34,35}

One popular topic of debate is whether the First Crusade was a crusade at all, or a pilgrimage. Since we have already discussed that the word ‘crusade’ was not invented until late in the 12th century, we can agree that this could not have been Urban’s plan. Christopher Tyerman argues that “Urban called for a penitential holy war, rather than as many have maintained, specifically an armed pilgrimage.”³⁶ If that was the case then what was the overall goal of the campaign? From Urban’s preaching, H.E.J. Cowdrey deduced that “Urban at all times seems to have preached Jerusalem as the goal of the Crusade, and to have looked upon it as standing at the heart and center of the Eastern Churches which he desired to free from pagan domination.”³⁷ Chevedden expands this notion and suggests that there were multiple goals: “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.”³⁸ Lean Ni Chleirigh agrees with this theory, and adds that, “Crusading is not to be understood statically but dynamically.”³⁹

³² Paul M Cobb, *The Race for Paradise: An Islamic History of the Crusades* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), p.22.

³³ *ibid.*, p. 21.

³⁴ N.S. Gill, ‘*Deus lo volt* or *deus vult*? Meaning and Correct Spelling’ *ThoughtCo*, [thoughtco.com/correct-latin-for-deus-lo-volt-119454](https://www.thoughtco.com/correct-latin-for-deus-lo-volt-119454).

³⁵ Gill reports that historian Edward Gibbon argues that the correct Latin for this term is *Deus Vult*, but that the saying was corrupted by the less literate as they adopted the saying for use in battle. Gill says that the earliest appearance of the phrase was in the *Gesta Francorum*, and Robert the Monk reports that when Urban finished his speech declaring the First Crusade at Clermont that the chant or “It is the will of God” rang out.

³⁶ Tyerman, *God*, p. 72.

³⁷ H.E.J Cowdrey, ‘Pope Urban II’s Preaching of the First Crusade’, *History*, 55 (1970), p. 188.

³⁸ Chevedden, *View*, p. 274.

³⁹ Chleirigh, p. 40.

William of Malmesbury, one of the earliest and best known 12th century historians, proposed a less spiritual plan that was actually “a deal between Urban II and Bohemund of Taranto designed to use the ensuing commotion to secure Rome for one and a Balkan principality for the other.”⁴⁰

Modern scholarly research of primary sources such as crusader chronicles suggests a variety of goals for Urban. Robert the Monk recorded two, “the liberation of the Eastern Christians from Turkish domination...and the need to free Jerusalem.”⁴¹ Robert’s work was the most widely reproduced of the crusade chronicles with over 100 surviving manuscripts. Sweetenham explains that Robert’s most significant addition to the *Gesta Francorum* “is his account of the Council of Clermont.”⁴² Peters tell us that: “The *Gesta Francorum et aliorum Hierosolymitanorum*, or *Gesta*, or *GF*, was written by an anonymous crusader who followed Bohemond...He was not present at Clermont and must have reconstructed the sermon from the accounts of others that he heard...probably written 1100-1101...no later than 1103.”⁴³ The most important role the *Gesta Francorum* would play was as a foundation for several other slightly more detailed chronicles. In fact, “the *GF* says little about Pope Urban’s preaching of the Crusade.”⁴⁴ Peters also mentions Fulcher of Chartres, a chronicler who he says “was present at the Council of Clermont in 1095... his ability to organize a maze of complex experiences and motives, make his chronicle perhaps the most readable.”⁴⁵ Fulcher, like Robert, was a Benedictine Monk. Both considered the *Gesta* to be badly organized and written in inferior Latin. Sweetenham writes, “the *GF* was criticized by contemporaries...its style was seen as crude and unsophisticated.”⁴⁶ Thankfully, they both made alterations that included more about Urban’s goals. Urban’s letters are another source that sheds light on a period that is somewhat lacking in documentation.

By comparing a variety of secondary and primary sources, a general understanding of Urban’s strategy begins to emerge. He was primarily engaged in the liberation of the church, but this was achieved in several ways. First, he was focused on freedom from secular control in Europe, which to some extent was achieved by unifying Europeans to join in the fight against the Saracens, under his call to arms. Second, he desired to regain control of the eastern church. Third, he saw the goal of liberating Jerusalem as necessary for the success of the overall campaign. Lastly, on a grander scale, Urban wanted to reclaim much of the territory that was formerly in the hands of Christian rulers but had been lost to the Islamic Civilization over the past several hundred years.

⁴⁰ Tyererman, Debate, p. 11.

⁴¹ Carol Sweetenham, trans., *Robert the Monk’s History of the First Crusade: Historia Iherosolimitana* (London, Routledge, 2005), p. 9

⁴² Sweetenham, p. 42.

⁴³ Edward Peters, *The First Crusade: The Chronicle of Fulcher of Chartres and Other Source Materials* (Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1971), p. 25.

⁴⁴ Sweetenham, p. 23.

⁴⁵ Peters, p. 47.

⁴⁶ Sweetenham, p. 4.

This included lands in Spain, Northern Africa, Sicily, and elsewhere. Not all these goals were stated in Clermont, but a conglomeration of primary and secondary documents do appear to support this notion.

Freedom from Secular Interference in Europe

“The reforming popes asserted not just the independence of the church, ...but the autonomous primacy of the see of St. Peter.”⁴⁷

Kings in Europe had little power at the time of the First Crusade. Local lords were constantly at war with each other, and their personal churches and monasteries, which were accumulating great wealth thanks to generous parishioners, were constantly being raided and destroyed by neighboring lords. In Fulcher’s chronicle he reports that Urban’s speech mentioned these quarrelsome nobles, “Let those, he said, who are accustomed to wage private war wastefully even against Believers, go forth against the infidels.”⁴⁸ It was hoped that as a residual benefit that civil peace would lead to more effective papal control of the local clergy, and definitely more security for the institution of the Church. Gregory VII saw an opportunity after a revolt in 1076 in Germany. He tried to force Henry IV to change the state-church relationship, ultimately using the excommunication of the German emperor to impress upon him, and the German faithful, the dominant position of the Church. This strategy failed for Gregory, leading to the invasion of Rome by Henry in 1084 and the installation of an anti-pope. “Only after he [Urban II] had launched the First Crusade in 1095 was he able to move back to Rome.”⁴⁹ Here Urban achieved the longstanding goal, “for nearly a century the papacy had encouraged efforts to promote civil peace in Europe.”⁵⁰

Freedom for, and control over, the Eastern Church

Chevedden writes that, “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.”⁵¹ This supports the argument that the freedom the Church was pursuing was from more than just secular oversight.

In March of 1095, several months before the Council of Clermont, Urban made the case for intervention in the Byzantine empire.

⁴⁷ Tyerman, *God*, p. 47.

⁴⁸ Peters, p. 53.

⁴⁹ Tyerman, *God*, p. 8.

⁵⁰ Brundage, p. 16.

⁵¹ Chevedden, *View*, p. 269.

At this point, “Rome was held by the anti-pope Clement III, while pope Urban II was presiding over an ecclesiastical council at Piacenza.”⁵² The chronicler Fulcher reported that “the interior regions of Romania, where the Turks rules over the Christians, had been attacked...The Turks, a race of Persians...occupying more and more of the lands of the Christians...have killed and captured them...laid waste to God’s kingdom.”⁵³ H.E.J. Cowdrey makes a different argument, based on a letter written nearly a year after Clermont, “Urban's letter to the Bolognese, written from Pavia on 19 September 1096, contains no such reference to the liberation of all the Eastern Churches, ‘some of you have formed a desire to journey to Jerusalem...Know that we remit the whole penance due for their sins to all who set out, not from greed of this world’s goods, but simply for the salvation of their souls and for the liberation of the church’.”⁵⁴ This single letter does not provide evidence that Urban was *not* interested in the eastern church. It only indicates his support for making the journey to Jerusalem. Urban would have understood that by coming to the aid of the eastern church his power in Rome would be increased. But based on this letter it would appear that Urban had more in mind than just the liberation of the eastern church.

Freedom from Islamic Oppression

Most modern scholars agree that the lives of Christians living in Muslim lands just before the First Crusade were secure and peaceful. In spite of this, given the significance of the Holy Land there was always an underlying feeling that it belonged to Christianity. Muslim influence inside Europe was limited to the southern tip of Italy and Spain, but there were some examples of success for Muslim raiders deeper into the continent. For Urban, an attack on the monastery in Cluny, less than a century before he joined, was likely an event with which he was familiar:

Islamic pirate bases in southern France...about 10 miles from St. Tropez. Andalusian pirates landed there in 889...dominated the central valley of the Rhone. For nearly a century no one could evict them...in 921 travelers were “killed by stones in the defiles of the Alps by the Saracens”; in 923 English pilgrims were “slaughtered in the Alps by the Saracens”; in 929 the Saracens blocked the Alpine paths and turned back many who wished to travel to Rome”; in 936 “the Saracens raided Alemannia and, as they were returning, they killed many who were travelling to Rome”...in 972 they went too far when they captured and held for ransom Abbot Maiolus of Cluny (965-994).⁵⁵

⁵² Brundage, p. 15.

⁵³ Peters, p. 53.

⁵⁴ Cowdrey, p. 187.

⁵⁵ Howe, p. 27.

Chevedden writes that, “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.”⁵⁶ This suggests that the freedom that the Church was pursuing was more than just liberation from secular oversight in France and Germany. The idea of freedom for the reforming popes included, to the extent that it would be achievable, to reclaim territory lost to Islam around the entire Mediterranean.

In 1009 the Caliph in Cairo, al-Hakim, led a military expedition to Jerusalem which was responsible for widespread violence against Christians, and the destruction of holy sites in the city. This event was so significant that the pope at the time, Sergius IV, issued “the so-called ‘Encyclical of Pope Sergius IV’”. This document purports to be Sergius's summons to the Christians of North Italy and elsewhere to respond to the destruction of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre at Jerusalem in 1009 by the mad Fatimid Caliph Hakim.”⁵⁷ A. Gieysztor argues that the al-Hakim events were “fabricated as propaganda for the First Crusade at the Cluniac monastery of Moissac, near Toulouse; it originated in connection with Urban's stay there in May 1096, ‘to create a respectable precedent.’”⁵⁸ Either way, Urban would have known that he could use such a story to increase interest in the liberation of the Holy Land.

Chronicler Robert reported that at Clermont, Urban had made the situation in Jerusalem clear: “Disturbing news has emerged from Jerusalem and the city of Constantinople...that the race of Persians, a foreign people and a people rejected by God...has invaded the lands of those Christians, depopulated them by slaughter.”⁵⁹ “Jerusalem...begs and craves to be free, and prays endlessly for you to come to her aid.”⁶⁰

Jerusalem

Urban would have been aware of the many battles for territory between Christians and Muslims from Spain to the Levant, but he also understood that crusading was dynamic. This dynamic nature required an evolving recruiting message, based at least partly on evolving public opinion, as well as a strategic decision by Urban that the liberation of the church from secular influence would be a starting point for various other goals. Cowdrey agrees that, “Jerusalem and its liberation were central to Urban's plan for the Crusade from its very inception.”⁶¹

⁵⁶ Chevedden, View, p. 269.

⁵⁷ Cowdrey, p. 185.

⁵⁸ *ibid.*, p. 185.

⁵⁹ Sweetenham, p. 79.

⁶⁰ Sweetenham, p. 81.

⁶¹ Cowdrey, p. 187.

Here Cowdrey is referring to one out of thirty-two canons of Urban, “If any man sets out from pure devotion, not for reputation or monetary gain, to liberate the Church of God at Jerusalem, his journey shall be reckoned in place of all penance.”⁶²

Other Crusades

As important as Jerusalem was, Urban made it clear that those who were fighting in other regions, especially Spain, should continue their work.⁶³ Urban followed his predecessors by using the Augustinian justification for wars in the name of God. These were “just” wars, fought for territory that was rightly Christian, but had been taken by Muslim invaders. In a letter to aristocrats in Spain, who were successfully waging war against the shrinking Muslim stronghold there, Urban objected to warriors leaving campaigns that are underway to “aid the churches in Asia and to liberate their brothers from the tyranny of the Saracens [because] it is no feat of valor to liberate Christians from Saracens in one place [i.e., in Asia], only to deliver Christians to Saracen tyranny and oppressions in another place [i.e., in Spain].”⁶⁴

Tyer argues that the idea of a Christian reconquest, or Reconquista, was largely propaganda and that Christian raids into Muslim held lands were financially motivated.⁶⁵ In the case of Spain, Riley-Smith points out a distinction between the notion of a crusade and a reconquest, but “Urban would never have accepted such exclusive options, because for him the fight against Islam in Spain and the fight against Islam in the eastern Mediterranean were two sides of the same enterprise to liberate territories formerly in Christian hands.”⁶⁶

Justification for Christian Violence

Although there were crusade style actions that preceded him, “Gregory, above all, was responsible for the creation of the idea of the *milites Christi* who could fight material battles on behalf of a holy cause.”⁶⁷ Urban’s predecessor would have “emphasized that enemies must be included in our love for all men and he quoted St. Augustine to the effect that it is more virtuous to love enemies than friends.”⁶⁸ Lean Ni Chleirigh writes: “It is likely that they [crusaders] are reflecting a widely held view that the expedition launched by Urban II in Nov 1095 was a new kind of pilgrimage, in which arms could be employed to regain the Holy Places for Christianity.”⁶⁹

⁶² *ibid.*, p. 188.

⁶³ Chevedden, *View*, p. 270.

⁶⁴ Chleirigh, p. 37.

⁶⁵ Tyerman, *God*, p. 13.

⁶⁶ Chleirigh, p. 41.

⁶⁷ Clairvaux, *Praise*, p. 23.

⁶⁸ Jonathan Riley-Smith, ‘Crusading as an Act of Love’, *History*, 65 (1980), p. 187

⁶⁹ Chleirigh, p. 74.

So, while Urban and other popes used St. Augustine's Roman interpretation of the "just" war, it seems that the participants considered the expedition to be a pilgrimage, which in turn supported their own justification for fighting. Of course, as we have mentioned, Urban made it clear that this was a penitential war, so that was likely more significant for the crusaders understanding of their role and justification.

When examining Urban's letters over the years between Clermont and his death in 1099, Tyerman sees Urban's goals clearly:

penitential warfare to rescue Jerusalem and the eastern churches from Islam; the liberation of the eastern church after centuries of bondage...the prospect of the remission of all sins; the obligation to revenge the loss of the Christ's Holy Land as a debt of honour; realization of papal leadership of Christendom; transformation of a sinful military aristocracy into a godly order.⁷⁰

Chevedden argues that "The Crusade of reconquest was to serve as handmaiden to the Crusade rebuilding the Church, and the Crusade of regenerating the Church was to serve as handmaiden to the Crusade of evangelization."⁷¹ Here we see another example of Urban's understanding of the dynamism of the crusading concept.

Chleirigh agrees and writes: "Crusading is not a finished, ready-made product, but rather a dynamic process that progressively determines itself. Its permanence lies in its capacity to bring forth new and distinctive forms of crusading."⁷²

It is sometimes difficult to see Urban's goals as anything other than military in the Holy Land, partly because of the tremendous success of the First Crusade, but more so because he died exactly two weeks after the recapture of Jerusalem. Urban never would have known that his crusade was a success as news would not have reached him that quickly.⁷³

Urban was able to achieve significant progress toward total papal authority. He had planned to stop or at least reduce secular violence against church properties, and to establish papal spiritual and political leadership of the Christian world using the call from Alexios as justification for his call to action. Success in the First Crusade was to include the elimination of secular involvement in the church in Europe and the consolidation of the eastern church with that of Rome, all under the jurisdiction and authority of the Holy See.

⁷⁰ Tyerman, *God*, p. 71.

⁷¹ Chevedden, *View*, p. 278.

⁷² Chleirigh, p. 35.

⁷³ Chevedden, *View*, p. 279.

Although the eastern church has maintained its independence to this day, many of Urban's goals were realized as a result of the miraculous success of the First Crusade.

St. Bernard of Clairvaux

Bernard could read his audience. He was known as the most talented orator of his time. After only three years as a monk, in 1115, he was sent to start a new monastic house in Clairvaux and to serve as abbot. He was twenty-five at the time. By 1153 his Citeaux monastery was responsible for 70 daughter houses, which in turn would start 94 more.⁷⁴ The papal schism of 1130 saw Bernard's talents in action: "Bernard's passionate endorsement of Innocent II was a major factor in the French decision to recognize him and reject the claims of his rival Anacletus II."⁷⁵ While he was continually expanding the monastic mission of Citeaux, he led the fight to displace an anti-pope, established the Knights Templar, and was the main promoter of the Second Crusade. But he was not without friends.

Peter the Venerable

Peter the Venerable was elected abbot of the monastic community at Cluny in 1124 at the age of twenty-eight.⁷⁶ In contrast to his famous friend Bernard, Peter was more of a traditional monk, working in silence and spending most of his life at his monastery tending to the needs of his monks. Peter and Bernard argued for decades about the merit of their respective monastic communities. Although he spent nearly his entire life within the walls of his monastery at Cluny, Peter is probably most well-known for his work on the translation of the Koran, part of a project that originated with a trip to Spain in 1142. Before this effort there had been no scholarly examination of Islam by the Church, and what little understanding there was of the Muslim world in Europe was ill-informed. Later in his life Peter would revisit his work and offer his own analysis in the hope that his reasoning would be enough to convince Muslims to convert to Christianity without the need for violence.

The importance of these two Benedictine monks, particularly Bernard, in the context of the crusades cannot be overstated. They both had an impact on their era, Bernard far more than Peter, but close analysis of both of their philosophies adds much to our understanding of the crusades. In spite of the failure of the Second Crusade, championed by both Bernard and Peter, these two ecclesiastical scholars are remembered as important forces in the successful development of the church.

⁷⁴ Bernard of Clairvaux, *Five Books on Consideration: Advice to a Pope*, trans. by John D. Anderson and Elizabeth T. Kennan, (Athens, Ohio, Cistercian Publications, 2004), p. 4.

⁷⁵ *ibid*, p. 5.

⁷⁶ James Kritzeck, *Peter the Venerable and Islam* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964), p. 3.

Both acknowledged the loss as the starting point for new thinking, and both used this platform to further their own visions for the crusades and Christianity. Significantly, it appears that both of these men modified their positions on the use of violence after the Second Crusade.

As both Bernard and Peter were dedicated ecclesiastical leaders of large and influential monastic communities, their support of papal doctrine would have been provided without hesitation. “Complete rejection of crusading, like overt pacificism, was rare. The Cistercians, one of the more austere of the new closed monastic orders, were in the forefront of crusade preaching between the 1140s and 1220s.”⁷⁷

Unlike in the First Crusade, there was a papal bull issued by Pope Eugenius III in 1146 that declared the intention of the church to initiate a Second Crusade to rush aid to the fallen city of Edessa. Once this bull was issued Bernard and Peter would have committed themselves to the cause.

Recruiting for the Second Crusade

Constable writes that: “The most important element in this bull from the viewpoint of crusading theory was its concept of the indulgence, of which the transcendental implications were here fully developed...a clearer idea of the indulgence than Urban.”⁷⁸ Eugenius clarified both the goal, Edessa, and the concept of the indulgence. With an established Christian kingdom in the Levant that had come under attack, a papal bull, and a public that was well versed in the success of the First Crusade, there was a system within which Bernard built excitement. For Peter, the needs of the church outside of already Christian lands was different. He was focused on defeating heresies and protecting European Christians from corruption by heretics.

Peter as Abbot

When Peter was elected Abbot in 1122 the community at Cluny was in the unusual position of financial duress.⁷⁹ His predecessor had been accused of impropriety and excommunicated twice, and a grant from King Henry V of Germany was needed to buy back valuable liturgical garments that were being held as collateral.⁸⁰ Some scholars believe that finances necessitated Peter’s trip to Spain in 1142.⁸¹

⁷⁷ Tyerman, *Debate*, p. 21.

⁷⁸ Giles Constable, ‘The Second Crusade as Seen by Contemporaries’, *Traditio*, 9 (1953), p. 249.

⁷⁹ Kritzek, p. 3.

⁸⁰ Scott G. Bruce, *Cluny and the Muslims of La Garde-Freinet: Hagiography and the Problem of Islam in Medieval Europe* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2015), p. 87

⁸¹ *ibid*, p. 70.

Kritzek writes: “the emperor’s grandfather, Alfonso VI, had pledged to Cluny an annual census donation of 2,000 metcales. Once a major source of income for the abbey, the donation was now far in arrears.”⁸²

Others believe that this financial pressure was the cause of his approach to the Jews: “Historians have placed the motives for Peter’s anti-Jewish writings squarely in the context of a serious and ever deepening financial crisis that afflicted Cluny in the early 12th century.”⁸³ Peter’s writings on Jews were actually representative of his main focus in life—to root out heresy of all kinds to enable ecclesiastical scholars to refute it, thereby strengthening the teachings of the Church. This goal was closely tied to his ability to excel at his role as Abbot, which required him to provide for the needs of his monks. Peter, like Urban and Bernard, was an exegete. He wished nothing more than to quietly analyse and write about the heresies that threatened the faithful.

Peter and the Jews

Bruce writes that “Jews...amassed their fortunes through the purchase and sale of precious ornaments stolen from Christian churches.”⁸⁴ A combination of financial pressure with the belief that Jews were guilty of profiteering off of the bad fortune of ecclesiastical institutions surely contributed to his 1144 essay, *Against the Long-Standing Stubbornness of the Jews*. He added chapters to this work in 1147 “that stand out in bold relief to the earlier chapters both in the novelty of their content and in the hostility of their tone.”⁸⁵ He argues that “the Talmud is a ‘monstrous beast’ *portuentsiosa bestia*, that lulls its readers into a bestial stupidity, stripping them of human reason and debasing their intellect until they are nothing more than cattle.”⁸⁶

It seems likely, according to Bruce, that “the tenacity of Judaism within Europe and the success of Islam throughout the rest of the world, greatly concerned Peter.”⁸⁷ Peter’s feelings at the time were clear when he asked: “what good is it to pursue the enemies of the Christian faith in far and distant lands if the Jews, vile blasphemers and far worse than the Saracens, not far from us but right in our midst, blaspheme, abuse, and trample on Christ and the Christian sacraments?”⁸⁸

He likely inflated his rhetoric in 1147 as a result of the failed Second Crusade, and his desire to redirect the efforts of western Christianity away from the Levant and back to their own communities.

⁸² Kritzek, p. 11.

⁸³ Bruce, p. 87.

⁸⁴ Bruce, p. 88.

⁸⁵ Bruce, p. 89.

⁸⁶ *ibid*, p. 90.

⁸⁷ *ibid*, p. 81.

⁸⁸ *ibid*, p.91.

This idea was the opposite of Urban's stated goals for the First Crusade. In fact, the horrors of the many European pogroms over the centuries were initiated during the prelude to the First Crusade. Urban spoke out against the killing of the Jews, as did Bernard. Peter did not.

Peter's Muslim Project

The result of Peter's trip to Spain was a positive infusion of financial assistance from the king, but more importantly, the translation of the Koran into Latin, for the first time. This project revealed the difference in how Peter contemplated Islam and Judaism. Because the Jewish population was interwoven with the Christian world in Europe, Peter saw their teachings, and lifestyle, as a direct threat to Christianity at all times. Regardless of their status as people of the book, Peter believed that the faithful were constantly under direct and indirect attack from the heresies of the Jews. This inspired his aggressive rhetoric against the Jewish people and allowed for a more subtle approach to the distant and unknown Muslims: "the abbot hoped that Muslim readers would come to realize that the Koran was not a divinely inspired text and Mohammed was not a prophet in the tradition of the Old Testament prophets."

Crusading Justification and Goals

Pope Eugenius, like Urban, did not lead or even go on the crusade he called. As with Urban, the work of promotion was left to the local church leaders who would be best suited to make appeals directly to the worshippers they knew so well. Constable writes that: "It is probably, in fact, that Cistercian monks were forbidden by the General Chapter to join the crusade."⁸⁹ In no way did his monastic limitations interfere with Bernard's role as the most important and successful crusade promoter of all time.

Well before the papal bull of Eugenius, Bernard wrote in 1130: "it would not be fitting to kill the pagans if by some other means they could be restrained from extremely harassing and oppressing the faithful. Now, however, it is better that they be killed than to let them remain a rod of sinners over the fate of the just."⁹⁰ At this point Bernard was not even considering the idea of conversion, but perhaps as a result of the pressure of the papal schism he was moved to justify extreme violence to protect Christianity. It is also possible that he believed that he had just created the ultimate solution to the moral problem of violence in the name of God. Approval was issued for the Knights Templar in 1128 at the Council of Troyes.⁹¹

⁸⁹ Constable, p. 268.

⁹⁰ Kedar, Benjamin Z., *Crusade and Mission: European Approaches Toward the Muslims* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1984), p. 60.

⁹¹ Bernard of Clairvaux, *The Letters of St. Bernard of Clairvaux*, trans. by Bruno Scott James (Phoenix Mill: Sutton Publishing Limited, 1953), p. 55.

In his book, *In Praise of the New Knighthood*, he writes: “The knight of Christ, I say, may strike with confidence...he is God’s minister...if he kills an evil doer he is not a man-killer, but, if I may so put it, an evil-killer.”⁹²

Bernard, as Urban, used Augustinian reasoning to justify the violence of the crusades. In chapter three of *In Praise of the New Knighthood*, Bernard writes: “If it is never legitimate for a Christian to strike with the sword, why then did the Saviour’s precursor bid soldiers be content with their pay, and not rather ban military service to them?”⁹³

By the time of the Second Crusade, Bernard’s message had not softened in regard to the use of violence. Epistle 363 instructs the fighters to “utterly annihilate or surely convert” the enemy.⁹⁴ Earlier, in 1146, Kedar writes that Bernard “alludes to Saracen conversion as a merely hypothetical possibility...if the Saracens were subjugated to Christian rule as the Jews are, but at the present the Saracens attack the Christians and therefore must be repulsed.”⁹⁵ Conversion, we shall see, will become a more desirable goal, particularly after the failure of the military campaigns of the Second Crusade. Kedar continues: “Peter seems to have entertained little hope that a written refutation of Islam would bring about their conversion. Indeed, in a letter urging Bernard to undertake such a refutation, Peter voices the opinion that such a work will be of no use to ‘those lost ones,’ namely the Saracens, but may be helpful to weak Christians who are apt to be seduced by evil.”⁹⁶

Here we see an argument that supports Peter’s desire to protect vulnerable Christians over the idea of converting the “others.” This argument is not directly in opposition to Urban’s mission, but it is a different path that, given the power, Peter would have the energies of the crusades take. At the same time, however, Kedar writes that: “In a letter written to King Louis VII...Peter states that although he is unable personally to accompany the expedition...he expresses the hope that King Louis will destroy the Saracens.”⁹⁷ So the question of Peter’s pacifism is answered. But Kedar defends Peter writing: “the espousal of Saracen conversion was Peter’s basic attitude...Peter ‘was willing to allow for the manias of his friends’ hoping that Saracen conversion would become the crusader’s main objective.”⁹⁸

The church’s defense of violence is explained quickly and efficiently in the writings of St. Augustine, St. Jerome, John the Baptist and various other passages throughout the bible.

⁹² Clairvaux, *Praise*, p. 39.

⁹³ *ibid*, p. 40.

⁹⁴ Kedar, p. 70.

⁹⁵ Kedar, p. 60.

⁹⁶ *ibid*, p. 102.

⁹⁷ *ibid*, p. 100.

⁹⁸ *ibid*, p. 100.

But there never was a solution as ambitious, and elegant, as Bernard's Knights Templar. In 1119, shortly after the official recognition of the Knights Hospitaller in 1113, Hugh of Payns, together with Godfrey, St. Omer and a group of knights requested to provide Hospitaller style support to arriving travelers.⁹⁹ Several leaders from the Kingdom of Jerusalem reached out to Rome for recognition as another military monastery. When this request reached Bernard he replied with *In Praise of the New Knighthood*, which he wrote in 1128.¹⁰⁰ His goal for the Templars was to have a monastic community, like the Cistercians, that would be pure of intention and therefore able to kill any perceived enemy of Christianity without sin: "Holy martyrs. Directly opposed to them are is the 'worldly warrior' who, in contrast to the double protection of the Templar, runs a double risk:" if he dies himself, he suffers physical death; while if he kills another, he dies a spiritual death. The key is 'right intention'."¹⁰¹

Here is a clear example of one major difference between Bernard and Urban. While Urban was depending on civil unity to provide peace for the church in Europe, and as a result enhanced papal authority, Bernard directly attacked those who were funding local churches, the aristocracy, accusing them of a variety of sins, and of having the wrong intentions even in their crusading activities. Urban's 'worldly warriors' were those who would become the leaders of the Holy Land.

A band of holy warriors was not an original idea. The Knights Templar were based on the precedent of the Hospitallers, who had a proven record of aiding pilgrims in their journey with housing, food, medical aid and armed protection, but there was a significant difference between the two: "The Templars, unlike the Hospitallers, were a direct product of the Crusades."¹⁰² Malcom Barber agrees: "The Templars are the actual and literary successors of Robert the Monk's crusaders; in Bernard's words, they are 'the picked troops of God'."¹⁰³ Awan writes: "In *Liber as milites temple de laude novae militiae*...Bernard of Clairvaux effectively blended together the previously separate professions of monk and knight."¹⁰⁴

It was critical to Bernard, however, that the Templars, and importance of the Holy Land, be kept in the proper perspective, " '[they] needed always to remember that ultimately the temporal glory of Jerusalem should not eclipse its heavenly counterpart, for the one is the figure of the other. In the literal fulfilment of this liberation of Jerusalem, one should not be blind to the spiritual meaning of the texts'."¹⁰⁵ There were to be difficult times for the Templars in the future, however, due to their rapid success.

⁹⁹ Clairvaux, Praise, p.10.

¹⁰⁰ Clairvaux, Praise, p.9.

¹⁰¹ Clairvaux, Pride, p. 14.

¹⁰² Jotischky, p. 85.

¹⁰³ Clairvaux, Praise, p. 21.

¹⁰⁴ Awan, p. 34.

¹⁰⁵ Clairvaux, Praise, p. 23.

Jotischky explains that the Templars, as well as the Hospitallers had gained such independence by 1154 that the local clergy, and even William of Tyre, felt compelled to complain directly to the 3rd Lateran Council in 1179.¹⁰⁶ The Templars would only last until the early 14th century, victims of their own incredible financial success.

Pilgrimage

Although the Second Crusade had a more organized and professional feeling, there was still a strong connection to pilgrimage. As the Latin word for crusade had not yet been introduced, it was natural for warriors heading to the Holy Land to consider their journey a pilgrimage.

This perception was supported by the writings of the crusade chroniclers from the First and Second Crusades. “Those gathered at the great Council of Vezelay, in 1146, an anonymous chronicler says, ‘received from Bernard the sign of pilgrimage, as is the custom, that is, the cross’.”¹⁰⁷ Perhaps the most important Second Crusade chronicler, “Odo of Deuil...says that at Paris Eugene granted his ‘blessing and license of pilgrimage.’”¹⁰⁸

King Louis made it clear that pilgrimage was the foundation of his strategy when upon arrival at Jaffa he delayed military campaigning for nearly three months because: “As a Crusader he had sworn when he took the cross to visit the shrines of Jerusalem.”¹⁰⁹ Bernard had a strong opinion about pilgrimage to the Holy Land that was counter to popular opinion: “‘The object of monks is to seek not the earthly but the heavenly Jerusalem: and this not by proceeding with (their) feet but by progressing with [their] affections’.”¹¹⁰ Bernard based his opinion of pilgrimage on the teachings of St. Jerome, who said, “‘it is praiseworthy not to have been in Jerusalem but to have lived well for Jerusalem’.”¹¹¹ This is an example of how Bernard’s view of crusading differed from Urban’s.

Looking back to the success of the First Crusade, the less successful campaigns stood out clearly, indicating that a consistently professional approach was needed. For the Second Crusade, Bernard toured for months, but his main accomplishment was to convince the kings of France and the Holy Roman Empire to commit to personally lead the mission. Unfortunately, this new approach resulted in a less coordinated effort, mostly as a result of individual egos.

¹⁰⁶ Jotischky, P. 87.

¹⁰⁷ Constable, p. 239.

¹⁰⁸ *ibid*, p. 263.

¹⁰⁹ Brundage, p. 114.

¹¹⁰ Constable, p. 270.

¹¹¹ *ibid*, p. 270.

The subsequent failure inspired major changes to the rules of crusading, from Urban's now seemingly random appeal to lesser nobles, to a more professionally staffed military mission, and even the invention of a word to describe the action.

Liberation versus Maintenance

Urban enabled the First Crusade to expand from assistance to the Eastern Church to liberation of Jerusalem, but the reality is that Jerusalem was fine. It was pressure from the people of Europe, and limited direct involvement with the build-up or execution of the First Crusade by the Church, that led to this result. Some scholars point out that the unorganized and mostly unprofessional military campaign in 1096 only could have succeeded as a result of divine intervention. None of the Muslim soldiers would have known to expect such an attack. Even the pope was being updated several weeks after events. It was clear to Eugenius, and maybe even more to Bernard, that this approach would not work a second time. "The Second Crusade, in fact, was destined to be the last Crusade in which the armies were accompanied by large groups of pilgrims and other non-combatants. Henceforth, the Crusades were to become more strictly military expeditions, whose objectives were limited, military ones."¹¹²

After the Second Crusade: Bernard and the Templars

After the First Crusade, Urban was sadly not alive to witness the success. After the Second Crusade, Bernard was the primary target for criticism because he had been such an omnipresent promoter. William of Tyre later wrote that: "The fiasco at Damascus gave rise to great bitterness. The attitude of the West toward the Crusade and toward those who had played a prominent part in it was hostile and suspicious."¹¹³ Jotischky writes that the "Templars reputation suffered from their involvement in the failed siege of Damascus in 1148."¹¹⁴ Bernard's nephew, a Templar knight, wrote to him criticizing the European military leaders: "They accomplished no good in the land of the Lord and in their own lands, to which they hastened back; they are doing unbelievable evil."¹¹⁵ Bernard did not let the Templars take the blame, and they would continue to expand until their demise in the early 14th century.

Bernard continued to preach that the Holy War was a gift from God to serve as the path of redemption for secular men. This argument would have required extraordinary faith, and skill, to actually use in public after such a rousing defeat in a war that he had previously endorsed as having been called by God. In his *Apologia*, as might be expected, he did not hide from accountability, "I prefer that the murmuring of men be against us rather than against God, if a choice must be made.

¹¹² Brundage, p. 124.

¹¹³ *ibid*, p. 115.

¹¹⁴ Jotischky p. 88.

¹¹⁵ Clairvaux, Letters, p. 479.

What an honour for me if he deigns to use me for a shield. Willingly I draw to myself then scurrilous tongues of detractors and the poisoned darts of blasphemers so that they do not reach him.”¹¹⁶

Urban’s Goal for the First Crusade

Modern scholarship identifies freedom for the Church from secular meddling as the primary goal of the First Crusade, with the liberation of Jerusalem as a secondary goal, for Urban. We have seen that the call from Alexios was the initial motivation for Urban’s call to arms. Even that motivation was not original as Dukas had done the same with Gregory VII in 1074. The idea of establishing papal authority was not new either.

Europe was evolving into its current form. The cultural stability could have begun to create a sense of belonging to a particular place, making those from other places the hated outsiders. When Urban announced the notion of a penitential war, he successfully united Europeans against a common enemy. This served Urban’s needs and consolidated leadership of the western Christian world under the papacy. Unlike Bernard, Urban and Eugenius made it clear that the power to call the crusades was from the papacy, not from God. It was papal authority that acted as God’s voice on earth. Once established, this would give the papacy power over kings and comprehensive freedom from secular involvement in church leadership.

Crusading was also evolving. The announcement almost seems to have been an afterthought, brought up nearly at the end of a week-long meeting of church leaders at the Council of Clermont. As far as we know Urban did little to promote the crusade, but soon found it necessary to denounce unorganized civilian expeditions that were not only terrible failures, but also included the proto pogroms that would continue to plague European Jews until the time of the Nazis.

Europeans were ready for a violent confrontation, and the unifying mission to save Jerusalem, which as far as we know was not even mentioned at Clermont, was part of the dynamic nature of crusading. Urban’s genius was that he was able to use this wave of popular support for Christianity to establish independence for the papacy.

Bernard and Peter

Bernard and Peter made their impression on crusading with both the benefit and burden of hindsight.

¹¹⁶ Clairvaux, Five, p. 51.

After the success of the First Crusade, in spite of the fact that it was fought by secular knights whom Bernard despised for their sinfulness and their vanity, it would have been difficult to argue against additional military action in the Levant when it was necessary. Popular opinion was significantly bolstered by the crusade chronicles which told of the fabulous victory over the Muslims.

Economic pressures continued to inspire hostility toward the European Jewish population, which was a constant reminder of the presence of infidels not only in the Holy Land but also at home in Europe. Jewish financial success and cultural unity created a negative impression amongst the mostly Christian Europeans, and they continued to search for an outlet for their frustrations. When Edessa fell in 1142, it was as if their prayers had been answered. Bernard found himself drafted by the pope to lead the recruiting drive for the Second Crusade.

This was a role he enthusiastically adopted. It suited his personality and his talents as the greatest orator in Europe. The continuing struggle for papal authority also encouraged his efforts. As the hero of the 1130 papal schism, Bernard knew that the power of the papacy was still at risk and that another unifying military victory like the First Crusade would likely bring an end to opportunities to install another anti-pope. After his enthusiasm came the blame for a failed campaign, but he was able to introduce the Templars, making substantial changes to crusading that continued after his death. The Second Crusade was the last of the armed pilgrimages. The Third Crusade was a professionally run military operation, in spite of the horrible result.

Unlike Urban, Bernard's disgust with the nobility of Europe led him to wish they had been excluded from the penitential war. Their behaviour was not worthy of redemption; they continued with their sinful ways. He was able to pressure the kings of France and Germany to lead their knights, which might have given him some hope that the lesser nobles would be kept under control. While he supported church doctrine that sanctioned violence based on St. Augustine's integration of Roman law into the church, he also believed that this action was best accomplished by knights who were already pure of heart.

The Knights Templar were modeled on Bernard's Cistercian house, and were strict observers of the Rule of St. Benedict. In the introduction of *In Praise of the New Knighthood*, Barber provides an example of the longevity of the controversy surrounding the concept of the warrior-monk: "For many the fundamental incompatibility of the cloister and the sword remained integral to their perception of the world...criticism which, ultimately, would resurface at the vital time of the templar's trial in the early 14th c."¹¹⁷

¹¹⁷ Clairvaux, Praise, p. 27.

Perhaps the clearest difference from Urban was Bernard's declaration that fewer Christians and no monks should go on pilgrimage to the Holy Land, even without a crusade. He believed that the journey itself was both a waste of money, which could be better used by the church, and an opportunity to encourage vanity. On arrival home pilgrims were often regarded as if they were saints. This was detestable behaviour according to Bernard. He taught that the spiritual journey of redemption must be experienced from within, whether or not one had been on pilgrimage. Urban was very straightforward about the penance offered by the crusade, although, once again, this was not his invention. He also would have found it politically necessary to have been a strong supporter of the popular pilgrimage experience, as so many of his crusaders were actually on pilgrimage while participating in the First Crusade.

Peter was more of an instigator than an actor. His monastic community, and his fear of those who would threaten Christianity, were both domestic challenges. The trip to Spain, however, was an example of his ability to take full advantage of an opportunity. On his trip to secure the needed finances for the monastery at Cluny he became aware of the success that knights in Castile, Leon and Aragon were having in their many battles with the receding Muslim presence. Able to use his relationship with the king to find the right working partners, he commissioned the translation project of the Koran for the benefit of the Church.

He wanted to study the enemy, but it was never Peter's intention to fight them, even with a refutation of the teachings of the Koran: "Unlike his forays against heretics and Jews, the abbot of Cluny never intended to write a treatise against Muslim beliefs at all but hoped that one of his contemporaries would do so."¹¹⁸

Bernard would have been Peter's champion in this effort, but he never delivered a refutation, so Peter chose to do it himself after Bernard's death. Bruce writes: "Peter did write a polemical tract against Islam in the final year of his life, his pastoral appeal to a Muslim audience was not the first impulse of a tolerant man. Rather, it was a matter of last recourse in the bitter aftermath of the Second Crusade."¹¹⁹

Ultimately it was Peter's hope that a sufficient refutation would be so powerful that it would convert Muslims. Conversion was not only on Peter's mind. Kedar writes that: "By 1147 Saracen conversion had become a major objective of the Oriental crusade...seventy years later, at the time of the Fifth Crusade, Saracen conversion is reported to have been presented as the primary goal on the battlefield itself."¹²⁰

¹¹⁸ Bruce, p. 74.

¹¹⁹ *ibid*, p. 74.

¹²⁰ Kedar, p. 71-72.

Even Bernard had come over to the conversion argument: “In 1152, toward the end of his life, Bernard came to espouse rather forcefully the peaceful conversion of the Gentiles...he deplors the absence of missionary work among the Gentiles and emphatically calls on pope Eugene III to send preachers to them. ‘Are we waiting for faith to descend on them?... Who came to believe through chance? How are they to believe without being preached to?’”¹²¹

Peter even went so far as to criticize the crusades by saying: “‘I approach you not, as our men often do, with arms, but with words; not with force but with reason; not with hatred but in love.’ Thus, Peter forcefully emphasizes the difference between peaceful persuasion, the approach he adopts in his tractate, and the usual Catholic recourse to violence.”¹²²

Perhaps it was these exact words that relegated Peter to the relatively obscure folder of historical figures in the church. Bruce writes: “The power of politics kept Peter from sainthood because he failed to maintain the popular hardline of violence - his direct appeals to Muslims had set him apart from his contemporaries in the minds of modern historians as a tolerant and reasonable voice in the age of the first crusades.”¹²³ It seems that in the end, the impression of Peter being a man of peace was true, but only in the end.

¹²¹ *ibid*, p. 61.

¹²² *ibid*, p. 99.

¹²³ Bruce, p. 72.

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