

*ENGLISH HISTORIOGRAPHY OF THE CRUSADES; AN ASSESSMENT
OF INTERPRETATIONS OF CRUSADE TO THE EAST : ITS SPONSORS
AND ITS PARTICIPANTS, BY ENGLISH-SPEAKING HISTORIANS
FROM 1639 TO 1972.*

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I N T R O D U C T I O N

The practical requirements which underlie every historical judgment give to all history the character of 'contemporary history' because, however remote in time events there recounted may seem to be, the history in reality refers to present needs and present situations wherein these events vibrate.¹

In these words, Croce asserted that each historian as the product of his own society evaluates the human past according to the assumptions and preoccupations of that society. This assertion about the nature of historical writing, in positing an interaction between the historian's "present" and the past, underlines the uniqueness of an historical account without precluding the influence of common concerns and interests. Indeed, the bees in the historian's bonnet may be buzzing about his own special interests, but, to extend the metaphor of E.H. Carr,² they are usually in tune with the more general concerns of the hive.

This thesis examines English accounts of crusade to the East, of its sponsors and participants, in order to delineate their interpretations and to attempt to explain them in the light of the assumptions and attitudes of the society in which they were written or of the methods employed. In examining works of individual historians, this study is concerned more with general trends and interests than with

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1. B. Croce, *History as the Story of Liberty*, S. Sprigge (trans.), George Allen and Unwin Ltd, London, 1949, p. 19.
 2. E.H. Carr, *What is History? The George Macaulay Trevelyan Lectures delivered at the University of Cambridge, January-March 1961*, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1968, p. 23.

the quintessential qualities that distinguish each. In the period under discussion, 1639 to 1972, "English" applies to British and American historians or to those writers who have spent part of their careers either in Britain or in the United States of America, and whose contributions are in English.

The nature of the material has influenced the division of this thesis into two parts. The first section deals chronologically with narrative accounts of British and American writers. That four of the five chapters are concerned with British historians indicates the predominance of a literary tradition in British historiography of the crusades and the comparative lack of American narrative accounts.

The later nineteenth century marks the beginning of new trends in the study and writing of history which had more impact upon American historians of the crusades than their British counterparts. As a reflection of these changes, the second section of this study examines accounts of specialised aspects of crusade according to their similarity in subject matter, in approach or in method.

Greater unity would have resulted if the discussion were concerned only with this century, but the earlier accounts are an essential background and basis for the analysis of later works. Apart from reflecting the assumptions and attitudes of the times in which they were written, they highlight the differences between

the British and American traditions; they show the continuity of the narrative approach in British historical writing; they indicate the extent to which an anti-Roman motif has recurred in British accounts of crusade and they establish a chronological framework that has influenced subsequent works.

The inclusion of these studies written before the end of the nineteenth century, and the nature of the subject itself have necessitated some selection of material. The history of the crusades involves France, Germany, England and the papacy in the West, and the Byzantine Empire, Cyprus, Armenia, Syria, Palestine and Egypt in the East. Writers on these subjects during the crusading period usually include some analysis of the movement which is, however, secondary to their main interests. During this century, there has been a tremendous proliferation of articles on aspects of crusade which are sufficient in themselves for a separate, specialised study. As this thesis does not intend to be an exhaustive study of every historian who ever wrote in English on the subject, but seeks to consider general trends and interpretations, only major published works have been included; that is, those narrative works in which crusade is the focus of the study, or monographs in book form on specialised aspects of the movement.

Historians generally accept that Urban II's speech at Clermont in 1095 marks the beginning of the crusades. Four contemporary reports of Urban's speech survive but as they were written at

different times after the event they describe,³ the precise nature of Urban's appeal remains conjectural.⁴ After Clermont, Urban in a letter to the Flemings maintained that

we journeyed in France and in large measure stirred up the rulers and subjects of that land to seek the liberation of the Eastern Churches.⁵

In a letter to the Bolognese he indicated:

We have heard that some of you have formed a desire to journey to Jerusalem ... know that we remit the whole penance due for their sins.⁶

In considering the proposed expedition, Urban unites the idea of war fought for the Church with that of pilgrimage and proclaims an increased spiritual reward.

By that time, holy war and pilgrimage were common practices, but Urban achieved a synthesis of the two. Holy war derived its justification from St Augustine's doctrine of a *bellum justum*:

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3. These are those by Fulcher of Chartres, written after 1100, by Robert the Monk, about 1101 to 1102, by Baldric of Dol, after 1107, and by Guibert of Nogent, about 1108. See Fulcher of Chartres, *A History of the Expedition to Jerusalem, 1095-1127*, F.R. Ryan (trans.), H.S. Fink (ed.), The University of Tennessee Press, Knoxville, 1969, Introduction, p. 20, and D.C. Munro, "The Speech of Pope Urban II at Clermont, 1095", *The American Historical Review*, Vol. XI, 1906, pp. 231-232.
 4. Munro attempts a reconstruction of Urban's speech from the contemporary sources. *ibid.*, p. 187. H.E.J. Cowdrey, "Pope Urban II's Preaching of the First Crusade", *History, The Journal of the Historical Association*, Vol. LV, 1970, pp. 177-181, deals with conflicting interpretations, especially those of French and German historians.
 5. quoted *ibid.*, p. 186.
 6. quoted *ibid.*, p. 187.

war fought to defend or to recover a rightful possession.⁷ The papacy supported and encouraged the reconquista in Spain which became the main centre of Latin-Christian resistance to the Moslems.⁸ During the eleventh century, the front was extended when Robert Guiscard obtained papal approval for his attack upon Moslem Sicily,⁹ while Gregory VII proposed in 1074 that Latin Christendom should assist in the defence of the Byzantine Empire.¹⁰ By the time of Urban's appeal at Clermont, the practice of holy war was not only well-established, but it had become regarded as meritorious.¹¹

When Urban II specified Jerusalem as the goal of the proposed expedition, he drew upon the institution of pilgrimage: a journey to a sacred place for religious motives which include venerating the sacred place, seeking divine aid or performing a penitential act.¹² Jerusalem, as the scene of Christ's passion and death,

7. J.A. Brundage, *Medieval Canon Law and the Crusader*, The University of Wisconsin Press, Madison, 1969, pp. 21-23.

8. *ibid.*, p. 24.

9. H.E. Mayer, *The Crusades*, John Gillingham (trans.), Oxford University Press, London, 1972, p. 19.

10. Gregory VII, 1 March 1074, *The Correspondence of Gregory VII, Selected Letters from the Registrum*, E. Emerton (trans.), W.W. Norton and Co., Inc., New York, 1969, p. 25. This plan proved abortive as Gregory VII became embroiled in the Investiture Conflict but it indicates an intention to extend holy war to the East.

11. Brundage *op.cit.*, pp. 24-25. In 1063, Alexander II granted remission of penance and of sins to those who participated in the reconquista.

12. *The New Catholic Encyclopaedia*, Catholic University of America Press, Washington, 1967, 15 vols, Vol. XI, p. 362. Penance is the outward expression of repentance by the performance of some good work or of a task to expiate the guilt of sin.

became regarded as the most sacred goal of pilgrimage and pilgrimage to the Holy Land reached a peak in the eleventh century.¹³ As the popularity of pilgrimage increased, the Church sought to protect the pilgrim's property during his absence and his person during his journey.¹⁴ The pilgrim who was unarmed,¹⁵ assumed distinctive dress with the pilgrim's scrip and staff,¹⁶ and received spiritual rewards.¹⁷

Crusade was pilgrimage but armed pilgrimage for the capture or protection of its goal, Jerusalem. The crusader received the pilgrim's staff and scrip¹⁸ with the nature of his special activity indicated by the sign of the cross.¹⁹ Contemporaries in applying the term, *peregrinatus*, both to the crusader and to the pilgrim and in describing crusade as *iter in terram sanctam* or *peregrinatio* indicate that they did not distinguish clearly between the

13. Brundage *op.cit.*, p. 9.

14. *ibid.*, pp. 12-15.

15. Mayer *op.cit.*, p. 14. See also, E. Joranson, "The Great German Pilgrimage of 1064-1065", *The Crusades and other Historical Essays Presented to D.C. Munro by his Former Students*, L.J. Paetow (ed.), F.S. Crofts and Co., Inc., New York, 1928, pp. 22-25. When these pilgrims were attacked, as they were unarmed, they defended themselves by using stones and the weapons thrown by or taken from the attacking Arabs.

16. *New Catholic Encyclopaedia op.cit.*, p. 367.

17. Brundage *op.cit.*, p. 8.

18. Joinville, who accompanied Louis VII on crusade in 1248, mentions receiving "my pilgrim's staff and wallet" from the Abbot of Cheminon. Joinville and Villehardouin, *Chronicles of the Crusades*, M.R.B. Shaw (trans.), Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1967, Joinville, *Life of St. Louis*, Chapter iii, p. 195.

19. Fulcher of Chartres *op.cit.*, Book I, Chapter iv, p. 68, speaks, for example, of the "crosses ... on the shoulders of their cloaks ... by command of Urban II once they had taken the oath to go".

two institutions.²⁰ A crusader took a vow similar to that of the pilgrim, was accorded the same protection and privileges, but received greater spiritual benefits.

At Clermont, the Council in initiating the First Crusade decreed:

Whosoever from devotion alone, and not for the purpose of gaining honours and wealth, shall set out for the liberation of the Church of God at Jerusalem, that journey will be reckoned in place of all penance.²¹

This decree granted absolution; that is, the remission of all canonical punishment, the sincere performance of which relieved the guilt of the penitent,²² but the distinction between remitting the guilt of sin and remitting the punishment due to sin was not always clear;²³ Urban II used both *remissio poenitentiae* and *remissio peccatorum* in referring to crusading benefits²⁴ but the development of indulgences was based upon a distinction between the two ideas. An indulgence is the remission of the temporal punishment of sin after the forgiveness of sin in the sacrament of penance.²⁵ Their use preceded the formulation of the "Treasury

20. Mayer *op.cit.*, p. 15.

21. *The New Catholic Encyclopaedia op.cit.*, Vol. VII, p. 483.

22. B. Poschmann, *Penance and the Anointing of the Sick*, F. Courtney (trans.), Burns and Oates, London, 1964, p. 2.

23. *ibid.*, p. 158.

24. Mayer *op.cit.*, pp. 35-36.

25. Brundage *op.cit.*, p. 145.

of Merits" by Hugh of St Cher in the 1230's according to which the Church offered a sufficient substitute penance from a reservoir of merit accumulated by Christ and added to by the saints.²⁶ Crusade was a sufficiently meritorious good work to receive remission of the guilt of sin and of the punishment due to sin.²⁷

The papacy subsequently extended the sign of the cross and crusading privileges and benefits to participants in expeditions within Europe.²⁸ The majority of English historians, however, limit their discussion to crusade to the East and to the Latin Kingdom which disappeared from Syria and Palestine with the loss of Acre, the last significant Christian possession, in 1291. In more recent times, scholars have been involved in a debate about the terminal date for crusade, but they are generally agreed that 1291 denotes a significant change. As English historians usually conclude their accounts with this date, the material has determined the emphasis upon the period before 1291, but this discussion does not ignore completely this question.

26. Poschmann *op.cit.*, pp. 223-224.

27. Brundage *op.cit.*, p. 149.

28. *ibid.*, pp. 154-155.