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Title page is Double-spaced.

The title summarizes the main point of the paper with style.

Killing for Fun and Profit?

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The Crusades. They are without a doubt one of the most controversial events in Christian history. The very word *Crusade* is loaded with meaning, mostly negative. Until recently, in the Christian West it was synonymous with massive evangelistic efforts by Protestant preachers, but has fallen out of favour in recent years because of its negative connotations.

In more recent times, the Crusades have been described as (at worst) genocidal; the one-sided mass killing where the perpetrators – in this case Crusaders – intended to wipe out the victim group even though the latter had no such plans (Chalk & Johnassohn, 1990, p. 23). At best, the popular image of the Crusades is a very cynical one, often highlighting the political nature of the entire undertaking. As one popular author writes:

Paraphrase citation, punctuation **after** citation.

The Crusades had done some pretty vile things. But that was a classic case of someone giving a religious title for a war that was really about economics and simple ambition. A nobleman just didn't want to appear to be fighting for money – and with God on your side, there was nothing you couldn't do. Swing the sword, and whatever neck you severed was okay. The Bishop said so. (Clancy, 2003, p. 180)

Block quotation. 40 or more words, no double quotation marks, punctuation **before** citation.

But is this really a fair assessment? Granted, atrocities were committed to be sure, and eventually the Crusading movement would stray far from its original purposes,¹ but that does not mean that they were always intended to do so. After all, not all Crusades had the same objectives as the first (Latourette, 1983, p. 317).

What follows is an attempt to discover what exactly those original purposes were. It is

¹ This was especially true of the fourth Crusade when the crusading army sacked the city of Zara, a Christian town ruled by a Crusader (Emeric of Hungary) at the request of the Venetian Doge (Jones & Eriera, 1995, pp. 201-203)!

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neither a justification for the entire Crusading movement nor an expose of it, but rather an exploration of the thinking behind the first Crusade. After examining the facts, it will become clear that many who embarked upon the first Crusade did so for primarily religious reasons, and that the background behind the initial march to Palestine was rooted in the theological thinking of the time. This is not to say that there were no political reasons for liberating the Holy Land, but they cannot be separated from what was a primarily religious goal.

To arrive at this conclusion, some key areas will be examined. These include the state of society in eleventh century Europe, including the relationship between Christianity and Islam and reasons for the Crusade, the medieval concept of penance and redemption and the general theological thinking of the time, and then concluding with some implications that the Crusades had on further theological thought.

Society in the Eleventh Century

To begin with, it is impossible to have a proper understanding of the first Crusade without looking at the social conditions that existed when it took place. Muslims and Christians had a long history of conflict prior to the first Crusade, so much so that the Crusade was seen by some as the last of three campaigns to turn back the Muslim advance in to Christian territory (Latourette, 1983, p. 311).²

However, poor relations between the two faiths reached a high water mark in the advances of the Seljuq Turks. In 1070 they took possession of Jerusalem and began inflicting hardships on Christian pilgrims partly because they were afraid that the Christians would prefer their former rulers – the Fatimid (Shi'ite) Dynasty of Egypt (Cox, 2008, p. 276;

² The other two were the Iberian Peninsula and the retaking of Sicily. For some helpful background on the Muslim perspective, see Riley-Smith (1987, p. 1).

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Paraphrase citation from more than one source.

Alternate way to cite sources. The author, date, and page number are still given.

Crawford, 2012, p. 23). This history is important, as Berlirer (1966) writes:

It can thus be affirmed that in 1088, at the time of the accession of Urban II, the idea of the holy war for all Christians against the Muslims was, so to speak, floating in the air... If one misunderstands the value of this past, it is impossible to explain the origin of the Crusades. (p. 29)

Besides the relationship between Muslims and Christians, it is also important to take into consideration the social situation that existed in Europe at the time, particularly for the peasants, most of whom made up the bulk of the Crusading army, but many would also rally behind Peter the Hermit and embark on what became known as the People's Crusade (which will be dealt with later). Politically, Western Europe was in a state of upheaval, due in part to the Investiture Struggle that was causing conflict between the Church and the nobility (Charanis, 1954, p. 98),³ but also because of constant fighting between the various nobles themselves, largely as a result of the prevailing culture. After ceremonially entering into knighthood, the only duty acknowledged by a knight was fighting - presumably in defending the populace from invaders - but because invaders were in short supply, this usually meant fighting everyone within sword's reach (Howarth, 1991, p. 23). As for the poorer classes, for many, three forces ordered life: the need for food, obligations to local landowners, and the need to save their souls (Howarth, 1991, p. 22). It was because of this that many nobles and peasants alike were hopelessly mired in poverty and servitude and longed for freedom. The call to go and fight in a foreign land was their opportunity (Gonzalez, 1984, p. 293). Because of the general current of theological thought at the time, further reasons for the Crusade would become evident and the peasantry would have their chance at freedom.

Essential to any understanding behind Urban II sermon at the Council of Clermont in

³ For a helpful and succinct account of this, see Gonzalez (1984, pp. 286-291).

November of 1095⁴ and the launching of the first Crusade is a basic knowledge of theological and religious thought of the time.

The beginning of the eleventh century was a time of religious awakening across Europe (Prawer, 1972, p. 17). To begin with, there was a strong reform movement that had its beginnings at the French monastery of Cluny. Gregory VII, Urban's predecessor, had a strong desire to unite the Eastern and Western Empires under the unifying sway of Rome, and as such had planned to aid them against the advancing Seljuqs (Latourette, 1983, p. 317). This idea was realised when Urban, himself exposed to the reform movement at Cluny as a monk and then Prior there (Riley-Smith, 1987, p. 3) called for the first Crusade. "When Pope Urban II preached the First Crusade at Clermont, he did not have in mind a purely military expedition" (Porges, 1966, p. 42). Indeed, the Crusades were not, as many are quick to assume, originally conceived of as a good way to spread Christianity or for regaining the populations lost to Islam when the Turks invaded (Latourette, 1983, p. 317).⁵

There were two main reasons for this. One of them was that the city Jerusalem held a special place in the hearts of reformers like Urban, which will be addressed shortly. The other was his strong desire to realise his predecessor's dream of healing the relationship between the Eastern and Western branches of the church that had been shattered in the schism of 1054 (Gonzalez, 1984, p. 293).

⁴ For an excellent summary of this speech see Munro (1966, pp. 7-11). For a full account see Charanis (1954, pp. 102-114). Different eyewitnesses give many versions here, but an official full version of what exactly Urban II said does not exist.

⁵ He goes on to say that Urban declared three objectives for the first Crusade – the rescue of the Holy Places in Palestine, the defense of Christians in the East against the Muslims, and stopping the tide of Muslim conquest.

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Theological Thought in the Eleventh Century

Besides the influence of the reform movement, for many in Europe before the millennium, Christianity had been largely a religion based on guilt – in AD 1000 many expected that Christ would come again at any moment to take vengeance on a sinful world (Howarth, 1991, pp. 22-23). This failed to happen, but as Jones and Eleria (1995) explain, “Europe had been swept by a growing sense of millenarianism. It was being said that a huge body of Christian pilgrims assembling in Jerusalem would hasten the return of the Messiah” (28).

Besides this, the general populace considered society at the time sinful, and “many of the laity were becoming profoundly anxious about a sinfulness from which they felt they could never escape” (Riley-Smith, 1991, p. 24). It is also of vital importance to realise that at this time, the modern Christian concept of personal devotion was impossible – even if people could afford the books, most were illiterate – piety was a public, rather than a private practice (Riley-Smith, 1991, p. 24). Because of this, making pilgrimage to various holy sites became very important, with those sites located in the Holy Land earning the pilgrim a greater pardon, most likely because the journey was long and hard and thus counting as a greater act of penance. Indeed, the whole idea of making a pilgrimage to Palestine was not a new one – Emperor Constantine gave rise to it as a way of making one’s conversion to Christianity manifestly evident (Bradford, 2008). Mass pilgrimages were common, and their importance cannot be overstated.

However, trouble began “when the Seljuq Turks seized Jerusalem from their fellow Muslims [the Fatimids] and sometimes denied Christians access to Christianity’s most holy places. This prevented medieval Christians from practicing a deeply meaningful act of devotion and an aid to

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Material added to the quote by the paper writer is placed in brackets.

salvation” (Shelley, 2009, pp. 18-19).⁶ This was significant because “extreme veneration for Jerusalem and its sacred sites was fostered by the whole system of Latin Christianity, and especially by its encouragement of pilgrimages” (Stevenson, 1968, p. 269). Jerusalem was associated particularly with absolution from sins and was a place some went to die, because as the focus of God’s interventions in this world it was considered to be closer to heaven than other places (Riley-Smith, 1991, p. 25). It was perhaps for these reasons that reformers, when they thought of the East, naturally thought of Jerusalem – “in this respect, the first Crusade hardly required a [reason for war]: the inner momentum of the reform movement would probably have led to it sooner or later” (Riley-Smith, 1987, p. 6).

So, it was a strong desire to free the various pilgrimage destinations in the Holy Land that became a major force behind the First Crusade. After all, they were a major aid to personal salvation, and the way to them was blocked. Urban realised this, and as part of his call to Crusade he did something none had ever done before. For the first time in history, not just partial, but rather complete remission of sins was offered to all those who died in the Crusades (Marshall, 2010, para. 19). For the masses of the poor especially, this indulgence was a powerful motivating force. Now, not only did the poor have an escape from the misery of serfdom, but they also had a way of salvation open to them. Joshua Prawer (1972) captures this sense of dual motivation excellently in his statement: “No doubt many a peasant loading his family on his wagon thought not only about the salvation of his soul or the liberation of the Saviour’s sepulchre, but also of his own liberation from serfdom and bondage” (p. 17). After Urban’s sermon, “the enthusiasm was so great that masses of peasants, aroused by the preaching of Peter

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⁶ For an excellent and much more exhaustive treatment of pilgrimages, see Bradford (1974, pp. 9-16) and Runciman (1992, pp. 13-22). Runciman’s work is seen as one of the definitive works on the Crusades.

the Hermit and Walter the Penniless, started to march through Germany, Hungary, and the Balkans in 1096 to Palestine” (Cairns, 2010). Peter’s call to leave immediately rather than wait for the official start date that was still several months away⁷ was well received by those in the lower classes (Howarth, 1991, p. 29). The emphasis on the importance of the pilgrimage here and as alluded to earlier must not be taken lightly, as it was of supreme importance to the individual, and it highly influenced their opinion of what the Crusades were all about.

Rather than an army, the masses of peasants who followed Peter were more like a mob, and they committed many atrocities on the way to Constantinople and Palestine, because for them, “the crusade against the Turk was interpreted not less explicitly against the descendants of those who had crucified the redeemer” (Cox, 2008, p. 279). It was known as the People’s Crusade, and it was an utter failure. Many of them were massacred before they even entered the Holy Land, and those who survived were mostly sold as slaves. However, even though the People’s Crusade was a total disaster, it does provide some insight as to why people went Crusading, and is a good indicator of the theological thought of the people at that time. This sense of spiritual fervour was no less real for members of the nobility, for they too signed up in droves to embark on the Crusade, in part because “the call to Crusade...suddenly became a call for a collective act of penance, a penance for the needs and woes of a generation” (Prawer, 1972, p. 18).

And yet in spite of this spiritual fervour and desire for salvation, the question must be raised as to why people thought that force was necessary to achieve these things. Was it acceptable for the church to take up arms in defence of her cause in spite of Christ’s instruction to “turn them the other cheek also” (Matt. 5:39, NIV)? The answer to this question also has its

When citing a Bible translation for the first time, include its abbreviated form in the citation. As long as all other citations are from the same version, it will not need to be included again unless a different version is cited.

⁷ Urban gave the call in November 1095, but the official start date was not until August of 1096.

roots in the theological thinking of the day. One of the principal ideals that drove the Crusade was the defence of Christians, and “Christians at the time believed that violence, if used rightly, was a proper means of defending [other] Christians” (Shelley, 2009, p. 17). The theological reasoning for this came in large part from Augustine’s theory of the Just War,⁸ which had three basic criterion: it was made by the state, its purpose was to vindicate justice, and it respected non-combatants. “For Augustine, a just war’s purpose was to achieve peace” (Shelley, 2009, p. 17). In the Christian mind at the time, these criteria were met, and the Crusade was very much a Holy War.⁹ Although the church called for Crusade, the actual fighting was done by European heads of state and their armies, with the just purpose of liberating the sacred pilgrimage sites so that the faithful could once more have free access to them. At Clermont Urban also renewed the Truce of God, which was an attempt to limit military bloodshed, as under it knights were forbidden to feud from Wednesday evening to Monday morning as well as on Holy days (Marshall, 2010, para. 2).¹⁰ The Pope also tried to limit participation in the Crusade. Monks were forbidden to go and he wanted to limit the number of priests to as few as possible (Riley-Smith, 1987, pp. 7-8).

Another reason people fought in the Crusade was that this Holy War was also looked on as a war of prevention, as there was a justified fear of invasion (T. Fuller, Personal Communication, 19 October 2011). The Turks were advancing rapidly, and the Byzantine Empire was not as strong as it once was. It must have seemed to them that Muslim armies would

⁸ Obviously, this is a subject that is far more complex and detailed than can be dealt with here, and for this reason only the briefest of summaries is given.

⁹ Compare with Cox (2008, p. 297), where he tells of a procession of clergy singing hymns preceded by laity as they circled the walls of Jerusalem while the Saracens threw dirt on their Crucifixes.

¹⁰ As history demonstrates, this provision did not last long on the battlefield.

Personal communication citation. These DO NOT appear on the reference list.

not stop at the Holy Land, but would keep on marching into Western Europe as well.

The Further Effects of the Crusades

So what did all of this accomplish? To be sure there were many who fought for spiritual reasons. That can be seen by even a hasty examination of everyday life and the theological thinking that was common in Europe at the time. But what were the results of this massive undertaking to liberate the shrines and sacred sites so vital to the faith of Latin Christians? The Holy Land was liberated and the pilgrims were safe again, but the standard had been established in popular Christian thinking: it was now acceptable to fight large-scale wars in the name of God. Many more Crusades would be called to defend against Muslim counterattacks and attempts to regain lost territories. Although they were called Crusades, their underlying motivation was quite different from that of the first in that they were primarily (or even solely) political, rather than spiritual, and ultimately led to the weakening of the Papacy (Chalk & Johnassohn, 1990, p. 116).

Another result of the First Crusade was that a major shift in theological thinking occurred. For the first time in Christian history, orders of warrior monks were established. The Knights Templar to defend pilgrims visiting Jerusalem from attacks by Saracens or bandits, and the Hospitallers who provided shelter and medical care to those thousands who arrived sick and exhausted (Chalk & Jonassohn, 1990, p. 134). It was now acceptable to be in full time service to God while at the same time being a professional soldier, and war became a religious calling as many of them, like the Teutonic Knights, also emerged in the twelfth century as storm troopers for further Crusades (Seward, 2000, p. 3).

Ultimately, as a result of the Crusading movement that began, for better or worse, with Urban's sermon at Clermont, Christian thinking on the nature of missions changed. In the West

there arose a conviction that a better way than the Crusades should be found for dealing with Muslims, and the traditional view that Christendom was locked in a state of perpetual war with the armies of Islam would change (Latourette, 1983, p. 319). A desire for peaceful conversion arose, and theologians like Thomas Aquinas and Roger Bacon would assert that Muslims should be converted and not attacked (Latourette, 1983, p. 319).

It is unfair and unbalanced to look at all Crusades in the same negative light. To be sure, some fought in the First Crusade for reasons that were more political than spiritual, as later Crusades would make clear. However, that describes only a small portion of those who fought. The majority of those who fought in 1096 had theological reasons for doing so. The social situation in Europe at the time, the concepts of penance and redemption as well as the important role that pilgrimage played in one's personal salvation, demonstrate that most of the people who participated had a strong religious motivation for doing so. As Riley-Smith (1987) points out: "The majority of commentators then and a minority of historians now have maintained that the chief motivation was a genuine idealism" (p. 11). While it is true that atrocities were committed and many negative things took place, Shelley (2009) reminds people that "...if we fail to see the Crusaders' spiritual ideals, we misperceive the spirit of the times" (p. 17). Ignoring historical facts about the less-than-sacred motives that some Crusaders had is unwise, as is the idea that these were the only motives that drove the masses to war.

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