

Crusades to the east



What Made People Set Out On Crusades To The East Between 1095 And 1204?

The Crusades were an attempt by Christians to recapture lands taken by Muslims. The roles of Popes Urban II, Eugenius II and Gregory VIII were trigger factors in influencing people to fight. Peter the Hermit was also seen as an important figure due to his charismatic speeches. Religious rewards of salvation and pilgrimage to the Holy Land made people believe that they would receive spiritual benefit. Many poor people also wished to acquire land and wealth to help improve their lives. At the latter stages, there was a reaction to Muslim leaders Al-Din-Zengi and Saladin, who fought to recapture the Holy Land from the Christians.

People went on crusades to the East was because of the role of Pope Urban II. According to Phillips, Pope Urban II's speech willed people to free the city of Jerusalem from the clasp of the Muslims. Robert the Monk wrote ' following Urban's speech, there were screams of ' God wills it!' The exclamation mark reveals the support which Pope Urban II had and it suggests that people would be doing God's duty by participating in the crusade. Balderic of Dol reveals that Urban II stated, ' our Christian brothers are scourged, oppressed, and injured in Jerusalem.' These adjectives may have inspired many people to fight as it were their fellow Christians who were suffering, and thus it is was their duty to please God and fight. This suggests that many people went on crusade to fight in the name of God and help fellow Christians. A different view is given by Mayer, who believes that the motive was to liberate the eastern churches. This view is valid because, in Pope Urban's letters to the Flemings the main motive is to free the eastern churches and Jerusalem is not mentioned. Mayer suggests that in order to

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increase support for the crusades Pope Urban may have stirred up the notion of holy war, but his personal aim was to liberate the Eastern Church. This may be a valid view as the only way the Eastern Church would be liberated would be if the Muslims were defeated, and for this Pope Urban II needed support. This suggests that Pope Urban II was only using people to help liberate the Eastern Church.

Pilgrimage is another reason why people went on crusades. Gregory VII used 'soldiers of Christ' to fight against people against Christianity in Italy, and thus it is not surprise that Pope Urban II's speech was a success, as Western Europeans had already experienced being armed pilgrims. However, the author of the *Gesta Francorum* described Crusaders who had fought in Jerusalem as 'unarmed.' This suggests that people went on crusades, not to only fight but to also see the places where many people believed Christ had been present. This is disputed by Riley-Smith who believed that people did not wish to fight for God, but to rid themselves of sin so they may attain salvation. For example, Christians believed, 'those who join the army, will receive eternal rewards when they die.' These 'eternal rewards' infers to salvation and renouncing the cycle of births and deaths. Christians believed wearing the cross was a sign of redemption and what he believed distinguished Christians from Muslims. Thus, the more likely view for why people went on the crusades was probably to attain salvation, as people believed God would be pleased and reward them accordingly.

The Cult of Saints is a reason why people went on crusades. Phillips suggests that saints were an important part of people's lives and a role model for many people. In the *Gesta Francorum*, the author talks about how saint's

relics were 'treasured and cared for, and placed in caskets'. The adjectives, 'treasured, placed and cared' suggests that saint's relics were valued by many people who brought back items connected with the life of saints from the Holy Land. According to the *Gesta Francorum*, knights during the First Crusade stated, 'Today.... you will all gain much booty.' This 'booty' may have been holy relics associated with saints and indeed many knights went out to capture the Holy Sepulchre. This is because relics were physical evidence of the divine and people believed they would bless a family and this is why people went on crusade. Thus, Phillip's view is valid.

The role of Peter the Hermit can be debated. Godsell suggests that he knew the will of God and wished to spread it. Indeed, Peter himself claimed he saw 'visions and dreams.' It is claimed that he had visions at the Sepulchre of Christ in Jerusalem. It is also said that he had a letter from God, telling the Christians to drive the Muslims from the east, and copies of this letter were distributed. This suggests that many people would have believed Peter as it was a message from God which they had to obey. However, Mayer debates that this was a 'hoax' and gives him little credit for making people go on crusade. Although it may have been a hoax to perhaps increase his fame, it is in fact likely that he did make people go on crusade so Mayer's view can be questioned. One person at the time wrote he had a 'magnetic personality.' This is because he spoke with eloquence and charisma and was able to make people believe that they were doing a duty for God. Moreover, thousands of people followed Peter the Hermit and went on crusade, which proves that he was a key reason why many people set out on crusades to

the east. Russell also question Mayer's argument who claims, ' he kindled the enthusiastic ardour with which himself was animated.'

The need to acquire land and wealth was another reason. Phillips reveals that the Franks wished to expand their settlement into Levant. Indeed, there were people who wished to acquire new properties and to increase their financial privileges. Also, people living in the Low Countries were experiencing famine and overcrowding, so Phillips view is correct. However, a more likely view for expansion into Levant may have been to increase the empires economic involvement with other society by opening new trade routes. Another interpretation for taking part in the crusade can also be offered. Baldwin II, after the Battle of Ramla, stated, ' If you survive...you will shine in glory...if you wish to flee.....remember France is a long distance away.' The phrase ' shine in glory' suggests that if the French forces won, they may be welcomed back into France, however those who ' flee' will not be able to make it France safely as the journey is long. Thus it could be interpreted as a warning for the long journey, or it could be an encouragement for the Franks to fight and take the land for themselves.

It wasn't only the Franks who wished to acquire land and wealth on their crusade. According to Fulcher of Chartre, at Jerusalem Christians following the battle took ' much gold and silver...from the temple of the Lord.' The noun ' much' suggests that people wished to go on crusade to become wealthier. The fact that they were stolen from ' the lord' suggests that the crusade was not just a Holy War for many people, but also an attempt to gather riches. This view is shared by Riley-Smith who believes that the primary aim was not to please God but to gather many riches and land to

improve people's lives. For example, when the Sultan of Persia Curubura reached Antioch he demanded that he was given the town, 'hand me over the town immediately.' The word 'immediately' reveals Curbura's need for land for the Persians, whose majority were poor villagers. Thus, land and wealth were important for people who went on crusade.

The defeat at Edessa and Pope Eugenius II's Quantum Praedecessors is another reason why the crusades occurred. According to Nicholson, the capture of Edessa showed Imad-Al-din-Zengi to be a 'ruthless leader.' Indeed, money from the churches was looted and children and women were also murdered. As Fulcher of Chartres stated, 'Women and children were not spared.' The negative 'not spared' shows that Nicholson's view about Zengi is valid and that he would not spare anything, even 'women and children' who were not involved in the fighting. Pope Eugenius II's speech was a reaction to this. He declared that nobles should 'fight the infidels who have spilled our father's blood.' This strong image of blood being spilled, suggests that the pope was outraged by the Muslims attempts at taking over land. Phillips points out the reaction to this speech, was widespread, with many songs and poems written. One such song was called the Trouvere song, which stated, 'Edessa is taken.... the Christians are sorely afflicted...the churches are burnt and abandoned.' The adjective 'sorely' reveals the emotive motive of the song which, together with the fact that churches were 'burnt and abandoned' helped to recruit many soldiers for the second crusade. Thus, the fall of Edessa and the Quantum Praedecessors are important.

People set out on crusades to react to Saladin's attempts to retake land from the Christians during the third crusade. The historian Ibn Al -Athir believes that the Battle of Hattin and the fall of Jerusalem were a trigger factors for western reaction to the Muslims. Before the Battle of Hattin, Saladin had stated, ' My feeling is that we should confront all the enemy's forces with the forces of Islam.' This is significant because it reveals the determination of Saladin to regain the holy land for the Arabs. Indeed, this determination can be seen with the murder of Raynald of Chatillion at Hattin and at Jerusalem Christian Churches were converted into Mosques. Thus, Ibn Al -Athir has a valid view as it triggered a reaction from Pope Gregory VIII. Phillips believes that the Audita tremendi is more important than the siege of Hattin and Jerusalem as it was stirring and charismatic. For example, the Pope stated, ' we have been confounded with great horror.....and great sorrow.' The repetition of the word ' great' emphasises the anger at people he calls ' the heathens'. The words ' horror and sorrow' reveal a picture of death and suffering for the Christians. There was a response of this plea, from William of Sicily who sent a fleet of fifty gallies to Tripoli. Another result of the Pope's preaching was that the populace's anger was exacerbated by poems and crusading songs. Artists painted pictures which depicted Christians being murdered by the Muslims at Jerusalem. Thus, the more likely reason was due to Pope Gregory VIII speech because with him being the Vicar Christi, people believed he was the representative of Christ on earth and would have listened to him.

Christians went on crusade for a reason which was emphasised by Pope Urban II: helping the fellow Christian. However, Pope Urban II may have used

many Christians in order to help liberate the eastern churches. Peter the hermit's Charismatic speeches made people set out on crusade. The need for Salvation and the Cult of Saints were also significant. However, there were also motives to have more land and wealth which made people steal money and the Franks wished to expand their empire. The success of Zengi in Edessa made Christians even more determined to fight the Muslims. Following the Christians successes, Saladin wanted to defeat the Christians in the Holy Land during the third crusade. This brought a reaction from Pope Gregory VIII who willed people to defeat the Muslim Forces.

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