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The Crusades and Islam

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Abstract

Although crusading was not solely responsible for the deterioration of relations between Christianity and Islam in the central Middle Ages, it made a substantial and distinctive contribution toward it. The military needs of the crusader states placed the papacy in a situation of normative antagonism toward the Islamic powers of the Middle East. And while the primary motor of crusading was devotional and individual, the need to arouse people to take the Cross, as well as the creation of an “image of the enemy,” shaped a dominant picture of Islam, its founder, and adherents that was inaccurate, stereotypical, and lacking in humanity. The twin processes of soul searching and information gathering that were stimulated by repeated defeat in the East had little effect on the negativity of this picture, because their purpose was not to mend relations between the faiths, but to revitalize the Christian cause in order to achieve the recovery of Jerusalem. After the fall of the crusader states in 1291, the image of the enemy was transferred to the northern Turks; although it became much more complex and rounded, it retained a function that was overwhelmingly Euro-centric.

Keywords

Christianity, Islam, Crusades, Holy Land, Saracens, Turks

At the close of the thirteenth century, following two centuries of crusades against the Muslims, two events may be taken as representative of their impact on relations between Christianity and Islam.¹ The first was the Mamluk capture of the port of Acre on 18 May 1291. This was accompanied by the killing of thousands of soldiers and civilians and by the dispatch into slavery of those who survived the massacre and were unable to

¹ I am grateful to the students who took the 2005 Crayenborgh Course in the History Department at Leiden University and to colleagues in the Medieval Research Centre at the University of Leicester for their comments on this paper.

escape.² The second was the destruction in 1300 of Muslim Lucera, the town in southern Italy where the Staufen and Angevin rulers of the kingdom of Sicily had for about seventy years permitted large numbers of Muslims to live in peace. In addition to economic motives, Charles II of Anjou was led to wipe out this thriving community, about twenty thousand strong, by the desire to please Pope Boniface VIII by conducting an ersatz crusade: he came from a family noted for its crusading commitments and exercised a dynastic claim to be king of Jerusalem.³ In much the same way that Heinrich Himmler, in 1943, hoped to be able to present Adolf Hitler on his birthday with a Warsaw that was *Judenrein*, Charles gave Boniface VIII, in the papal year of Jubilee, a vassal kingdom that was purged of the practice of Islam. At each end of the Mediterranean, large numbers of Christians and Muslims thus experienced death, dispossession, the breakup of their families, and a life of slavery because of their religious faith.

I start with the fall of Acre and the destruction of the colony at Lucera not just because I think it is important to remind ourselves of this subject's tragic human context but also because there is no point in disguising the fact that the effect of the crusades on Christian-Muslim relations was profoundly destructive. Recent research and writing have emphasized just how negative that effect was on both sides of the religious divide. I will take the Muslim perspective first. The main lesson that we learn from Carole Hillenbrand's recent study of the Islamic sources on the crusades is that the view that Muslims held of their Western opponents throughout the period of what one might term "classical" crusading (1095-1291) was characterized by generalized stereotyping, abuse, and contempt. Even the so-called memoirs of the Arab nobleman Usāmah ibn Munqidh, so often held up in the past as showing how easily the ice of religious antagonism melted in the sun of human contact and friendship, are viewed by Hillenbrand in a much less optimistic light; Usāmah's underlying viewpoint, she emphasizes, was no different from that of his peers. It is true that there existed a small group, composed of both settlers and crusaders, who attracted the respect, even the admiration, of the Muslims, especially King Baldwin II, Richard Cœur de Lion, Emperor Frederick II, and King Louis IX. And Muslim chroniclers could display admiration for the

² Steven Runciman, *A History of the Crusades*, 3 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1951-54), 3:417-20.

³ Julie Taylor, *Muslims in Medieval Italy: The Colony at Lucera* (Lanham, Md.: Lexington Books, 2003), 173-209.

courage, endurance, and faith of ordinary crusaders. But these were rare flashes of appreciation, and they were vastly outnumbered by assessments that were inherently hostile. Just as important was the fact that they were “closed,” in that occasional insights about the similarities between the two faiths, on such issues as pilgrimage and holy war, were simply not pursued.⁴

What is more remarkable than the negativity of the contemporary Muslim response is the fact that this response established the pattern for nearly all subsequent Islamic assessments of the crusading period. The crusades were depicted as the first major example of a belligerent Christian intrusion into the Islamic heartland, the *dar al-Islam*, and later encounters between Islamic countries and European imperialism were configured in parallel terms. The *jihad* that was waged in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries for the recovery of Islam’s lost holy places was both successful and glorious and it formed the obvious precedent for the several *jihads* preached in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries with the goal of expelling imperialist occupiers. We have become familiar in recent years with this representation of Islam as the victim of “Western” aggression in the constant assertions by al-Qa’ida and Usama bin Laden that U.S. policy in the Middle East is “crusading” and that opposition to it is a continuation of former *jihads* that were conducted in the name of the faith. It has been well said that it is futile for Western commentators to respond to such a perspective by pointing out the numerous differences between the contemporary global scene and the age of the crusades: what is at issue is the mindset of an Islamic group that perceives continuities in terms of what the Muslim world is experiencing at the hands of non-Muslims.⁵

Much the same applies to recent scholarship on the Christian side of the divide. Until quite recently, there was general agreement amongst historians on two issues that together had the effect of fracturing the uncompromising nature of the “crusading” stance. One was that raw antagonism based on religious difference did not long survive the experience of settlement in the East and that to a large degree the Franks who stayed in Palestine and Syria “merged” both with their physical environment and with the indigenous inhabitants. The famed “tolerance” that William of Tyre

⁴ Hillenbrand, *The Crusades: Islamic Perspectives* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999), esp. 257-327.

⁵ Jonathan Riley-Smith, “Islam and the Crusades in History and Imagination, 8 November 1898-11 September 2001,” *Crusades*, 2 (2003): 151-67. On the *jihad*, see Richard Bonney, *Jihād: From Qur’ān to bin Lāden* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004).

displayed toward Islam and its rulers was viewed as a typical, albeit remarkably eloquent, example of a general tendency.⁶ This led to friction when fresh waves of crusaders arrived, as the crusaders expected to encounter a scenario of “total war” between the two faiths. This consensus has been challenged; for example, Jonathan Riley-Smith has described the defense of the Holy Land as a form of Christian holy war that existed alongside crusading.⁷ The picture remains unclear—for example, in terms of the extent to which “laws of war” were followed in fighting between Christians and Muslims.⁸ But while it is true that the outlook of settlers (the derided *poulains*) was different from that of the visiting crusaders, it is much less apparent that terms like “tolerance” can justifiably be applied to the way the settlers handled their affairs. For pragmatic reasons, they constantly adopted *modi vivendi* with the Muslims, but their underlying worldview was not dissimilar to that of their crusading co-religionists; indeed, it is arguable that they became more wedded to an ideology of religious antagonism the more their survival came to depend on military assistance from the West. As for the truism that trade and crusade stood in opposition to one another, this, as often as not, falls down on close inspection. It is striking that two of the most fervent supporters of a crusade to recover the Holy Land in the late Middle Ages, Marino Sanudo Torsello in the early fourteenth century and Emmanuele Piloti in the early fifteenth century, not only were citizens of Venice, a city that is often supposed to have rejected crusading, but also derived their expert insights into the enemy’s situation from their own trading experience.⁹

⁶ Rainer Christoph Schwinges, “William of Tyre, the Muslim Enemy, and the Problem of Tolerance,” in *Tolerance and Intolerance: Social Conflict in the Age of the Crusades* [hereafter *TISCAC*], ed. M. Gervers and J. M. Powell (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2001), 124-32, 173-6, based on his *Kreuzzugsideologie und Toleranz: Studien zu Wilhelm von Tyrus*, Monographien zur Geschichte des Mittelalters, no. 15 (Stuttgart: A. Hiersemann, 1977). Cf. Peter W. Edbury and John G. Rowe, *William of Tyre: Historian of the Latin East*, Cambridge Studies in Medieval Life and Thought, 4th ser., no. 8 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988): 151-66.

⁷ Riley-Smith, “Peace Never Established: The Case of the Kingdom of Jerusalem,” *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 5th ser., no. 28 (1978): 87-102.

⁸ Yvonne Friedman, *Encounter between Enemies: Captivity and Ransom in the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem*, Cultures, Beliefs and Traditions: Medieval and Early Modern Peoples, no. 10 (Leiden: Brill, 2002); Yaacov Lev, “Prisoners of War during the Fatimid-Ayyubid Wars with the Crusaders,” in *TISCAC*, 11-27, 139-45.

⁹ Christopher J. Tyerman, “Marino Sanudo Torsello and the lost crusade: Lobbying in the fourteenth century,” *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 5th ser., no. 32 (1982):

The second issue on which a consensus formerly existed was that crusading and conversion were contradictory and that the latter gradually superseded the former. The gist of this viewpoint was that the golden age of crusading belonged to the eleventh and twelfth centuries; once the strategic outlook for the Latin East had gone into decline, after the limited successes of the Third Crusade and the diversion of the Fourth, a combination of disillusionment with the military solution and the new ideals of the mendicants ushered in a period when Christians placed their hopes in converting the Muslims.¹⁰ But it is now apparent that crusaders and missionaries were rarely competitors, but often partners, in the dual process of winning or defending the Holy Land and of defeating Islam.¹¹ The thirteenth century has come to be seen as an age in which conversion very largely failed as a response to Islam—hardly surprising, given the fact that the Franciscan missionary effort was fueled as much by the search for martyrdom as by the hope to convert, while the Dominicans adhered to a counterproductive strategy of systematically denigrating the faith of the people to whom they preached.¹² At the same time, crusading continued to be promoted in spite of repeated failure, severe organizational problems, and the difficulty that preachers increasingly experienced in arousing the faithful. The supposed antagonism between exponents of crusading and leading mendicants has been revealed to be hollow.¹³ It is true that in the thirteenth century there was more investigation into the nature of Islam as an opponent and that this generated a relatively sophisticated debate about the most appropriate means to combat it, but the result was far from being an either/or one. The reassessment of Ramon Llull, as a figure who advocated both a crusading and an evangelical approach to the Muslims, has played a large part in this change of thinking.¹⁴

57-73; *Traité d'Emmanuel Piloti sur le Passage en Terre Sainte (1420)*, ed. Pierre-Herman Dopp, Publications de l'Université Lovanium de Léopoldville (Louvain: Éditions E. Nauwelaerts, 1958).

¹⁰ Franco Cardini, "La crociata nel Duecento: L'Avatāra di un ideale," *Archivio storico italiano*, 135 (1977): 101-39.

¹¹ Benjamin Z. Kedar, *Crusade and Mission: European Approaches toward the Muslims* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1984).

¹² John V. Tolan, *Saracens: Islam in the Medieval European Imagination* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 214-55.

¹³ Christoph T. Maier, *Preaching the Crusades: Mendicant Friars and the Cross in the Thirteenth Century*, Cambridge Studies in Medieval Life and Thought, 4th ser., no. 28 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

¹⁴ Kedar, *Crusade and Mission*, 189-99; Tolan, *Saracens*, 256-74.

Christianity and Islam were already in conflict in 1095 in Spain and Sicily, not to speak of the Byzantine East, so it would be wrong to place too much blame on the crusades for the way relations between the two faiths deteriorated.¹⁵ Nor is it methodologically sound to point to isolated instances of a more positive approach, such as Pope Gregory VII's extraordinarily friendly letter to an-Nasir, the Muslim emir of Mauretania, in 1076, as evidence that things could have gone differently.¹⁶ After all, Gregory himself had attempted to launch a holy war against the Turks in 1074.¹⁷ Nonetheless, it is hard to exaggerate the impact of the First Crusade. Not only was it traumatizing and totally unexpected for the Muslim population of Syria and Palestine, but the need to defend the lands that were conquered by the first crusaders had the effect of cutting off alternative Christian approaches to Islam as well. The rulers of the states established in the Levant failed both to persuade their European co-religionists to cross the sea in large numbers to settle and to develop the positive relationship with Byzantium that would have created a united Christian front against the Muslims. In the face of the Islamic counterattack that slowly built up over the course of the twelfth century, these rulers fell back on a stream of appeals to the West, and above all to the papal *curia*. The popes were effectively boxed in, forced to place the Church's relationship with the Islamic authorities of the entire Middle East, from Anatolia to the Nile delta, in a framework of normative hostility. The long-drawn-out negotiations between Richard I and Saladin in 1191 demonstrate that no compromise was possible regarding the guardianship of the holy places. As Ibn Shaddad had Saladin bleakly remark to the king of England, "Jerusalem is to us as it is to you. It is even more important for us, since it is the site of our Prophet's nocturnal journey and the place where the people will assem-

¹⁵ This has been most fully studied in the context of the *précroisades*, campaigns that seemed to prefigure the First Crusade. See most recently Jean Flori, *La Guerre sainte: La formation de l'idée de croisade dans l'Occident chrétien* (Paris: Aubier, 2001).

¹⁶ See *The Register of Pope Gregory VII, 1073-1085: An English Translation*, ed. and trans. H. E. J. Cowdrey (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 204-5; H. E. J. Cowdrey, *Pope Gregory VII, 1073-1085* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 493-4. These works recognize the highly unusual nature of the letter. See also Norman Daniel, *The Arabs and Mediaeval Europe*, 2nd ed. (London: Longman, 1979), 254-5.

¹⁷ Cowdrey, "Pope Gregory VII's 'Crusading' Plans of 1074," in *Outremer: Studies in the History of the Crusading Kingdom of Jerusalem Presented to Joshua Prawer*, ed. B. Z. Kedar, H. E. Mayer, and R. C. Smail (Jerusalem: Yad Izhak Ben-Zvi Institute, 1982), 27-40.

ble on the Day of Judgement. Do not imagine therefore that we can waver in this regard.”¹⁸ In such circumstances, rapprochements between the two faiths, like the one that lay behind Pope Gregory VII’s 1076 letter, failed to recur. Norman Daniel puts it thus: “Once the Muslims were denominated the enemies of God, further seeking for common ground was useless.”¹⁹ The political showmanship of Emperor Frederick II in 1229 should not be allowed to disguise this fact. Moreover, thanks to the ability of crusading to acclimatize itself to the Western Mediterranean, Christian relations with Islam there, above all in Iberia, were also affected and adherents of the two faiths became more hostile to each other than they had previously been.²⁰

What is remarkable is that such damage was done to interfaith relations by a movement that was not inherently anti-Islamic in character. By this I mean not that a good deal of crusading was directed against individuals and groups that were non-Islamic (undeniable though that is),²¹ but that the First Crusade, and to some extent all the expeditions up to 1291, were essential Euro-centric ventures. That is to say, they were characterized far less by their opposition to Islam as a religion than by their expression of trends whose roots lay deep within Catholic society. These trends related to anxiety, devotion, and identity. It has become accepted that individuals in the late eleventh-century West experienced extraordinary concern, verging on alarm, about their chances of salvation and that this concern lay behind their response to Pope Urban II’s call in 1095 to win remission of all their sins by liberating Jerusalem. In addition, religious feelings in western Europe had become focused on sacred space and things as well as associated concepts, like the ability of the holy to be polluted and enslaved and the mediatory role of saints on behalf of the living, acting through their relics. This was one of the most distinctive features of eleventh-century religion, and it forms the only possible explanation for the fact that Catholics now found intolerable a Muslim possession of the holy places that had been in existence for more than four hundred years. And it is apparent that Urban was able to meet this concern and mobilize these feelings, because both were couched within a strong sense of belonging to a group (*nostri*, as

¹⁸ Hillenbrand, *The Crusades*, 192.

¹⁹ Daniel, *The Arabs and Mediaeval Europe*, 255.

²⁰ Joseph F. O’Callaghan, *Reconquest and Crusade in Medieval Spain*, Middle Ages Series (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003).

²¹ See Riley-Smith, *The Crusades: A History*, 2nd ed. (London: continuum, 2005).

the chroniclers of the First Crusade constantly expressed it) which made up a religious community called *Christianitas*, identified by loyalty toward the Catholic Church and what it represented.²²

This cluster of trends shared a common feature: the relative marginalization of the enemy. Of course, it is true that somebody must be guilty of polluting the holy places and that the concept of *Christianitas* implied people who were located outside it.²³ Some of the monastic chroniclers of the early twelfth century who wrote about the First Crusade adopted a recognizably historical perspective of the rise of Islam, and William of Malmesbury even went so far as to depict the expedition as a belated response to that rise by a religion that had been driven out of two continents.²⁴ But this was a learned and retrospective (not to say quirky) viewpoint, and few actual crusaders seem to have shared it; even identifying their enemy, forming an *imago inimici* or *Feindbild*, was not for them a significant preoccupation. They were happy to live with imprecision and contradictions. The very terms used of the enemy, "Saracens" or "Agarenes," were misleading, since they confused ethnic origins with religious belief. Both terms related to the supposed descent of the Arabs from Ishmael, Abraham's illegitimate son by Hagar, Sarah's handmaid.²⁵ The anonymous author of the *Gesta Francorum*, one of the narrative accounts of the First Crusade, cheerfully assembled lists of the enemy that conflated the scriptural, classical, and historical worlds: "There were three hundred and sixty thousand Turks, Persians, Paulicians, Saracens and Agulani, with other pagans, not counting the Arabs, for God alone knows how many there were of them." And later: "So Karbuqa collected an immense force

²² For these trends and the First Crusade, see Riley-Smith, *The First Crusade and the Idea of Crusading* (London: Athlone Press, 1986); Marcus Bull, *Knightly Piety and the Lay Response to the First Crusade: The Limousin and Gascony, c. 970-c. 1130* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993); and Riley-Smith, *The First Crusaders, 1095-1131* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

²³ Tomaz Mastnak, *Crusading Peace: Christendom, the Muslim World, and Western Political Order* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2002), 117, puts it well: "An essential moment in the articulation of the self-awareness of the Christian commonwealth was the construction of the Muslim enemy."

²⁴ William of Malmesbury, *Gesta regum Anglorum*, ed. and tr. R. A. B. Mynors, R. M. Thomson, and M. Winterbottom, 2 vols., Oxford Medieval Texts (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 1:600-3. See also Rod Thomson, "William of Malmesbury, Historian of Crusade," *Reading Medieval Studies*, 23 (1997): 121-34.

²⁵ There is a good discussion in Daniel, *The Arabs and Mediaeval Europe*, 53-4.

of pagans—Turks, Arabs, Saracens, Paulicians, Azymites, Kurds, Persians, Agulani and many other people who could not be counted.”²⁶ If there was a logic to the way these names were set out, it is not evident. This was not simply the non-Christian but the “oriental” East: an exotic mosaic made up of different peoples, numerous, diverse, and tumultuous.

Islam as a genuine religion scarcely features in crusading sources, and in no respect is this clearer than in the constant Christian stigmatization of Muslims as idolatrous polytheists. This misunderstanding was both remarkable and persistent. As late as 1418, almost three centuries after Robert Ketton’s translation of the Qur’an into Latin, a bull issued by Pope Martin V still referred to Muslims as idolaters.²⁷ Engaging with such a willful miscomprehension lies at the heart of explaining the negative relations between the two faiths. The best explanation I know of is that it was rooted in the Christians’ association of Islam with the paganism that was confronted by the early Church; this was by far the easiest model to apply to Islam, so it was adhered to in blatant disregard of the evidence to the contrary. It is certainly true that in terms of the triumphalism that was integral to early crusading, acknowledging Muslim monotheism would have muddied the waters by disturbing the image of the “wicked other,” which was the primary purpose of the *imago inimici*: as John Tolan puts it, “the idolatrous other is an essential foil for Christian virtue.”²⁸ Christianity versus paganism, with Jerusalem as the battlefield, is nowhere better summed up than in Raymond of Aguilers’s verdict on the city’s capture by the crusaders in 1099: “This day ended all paganism; it confirmed Christianity, and restored faith.”²⁹ Svetlana Loutchitskaja has recently emphasized the extent to which early crusading sources set up an imposing range of good/evil opposites: *devotio/perfidia*, *milites Christi/inimici Christi*, and *fideles/infideles* or *increduli*. Arguably Saracen polytheism fit this pattern in two ways, both

²⁶ *Gesta Francorum et aliorum Hierosolimitanorum*, ed. and trans. R. Hill, Oxford Medieval Texts (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), 20, 49.

²⁷ Norman Housley, *Religious Warfare in Europe, 1400-1536* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 182; cf. Tolan, *Saracens*, 319-20 n. 96, on the same charge leveled at the Council of Vienne in 1311-12.

²⁸ Tolan, *Saracens*, 129, 104-34 generally.

²⁹ Quoted by Penny Cole, “‘O God, the Heathen have come into your Inheritance’ (Ps. 78.1): The theme of religious pollution in crusade documents, 1095-1188,” in *Crusaders and Muslims in Twelfth-Century Syria*, ed. M. Schatzmiller, Medieval Mediterranean, no. 1 (Leiden: Brill, 1993): 94.

by acting as the “other” to Christian monotheism and by providing a wicked “other” for the cult of the saints.³⁰

Clinging to such misapprehensions in the face of reality was not as hard as it might appear. During the First Crusade and those that followed, the conduct of the war brought most crusaders into close contact with Muslims, but it was perfectly possible to fight and indeed negotiate with them without becoming familiar with their beliefs. Indeed, there was a strong, though probably mistaken, strain of anxiety that to engage in discussion with the wily pagans might lead the innocent into apostasy; it was on these grounds that St. Louis told his biographer John of Joinville that the appropriate way for a layman to defend the Christian faith was not with debate, but the sword.³¹ And the call to take the Cross remained focused on the core features that had been evident in 1095: the need felt by individuals to express penitence for their sins through *imitatio Christi*; the attraction of Jerusalem and the fear that the holy places would once again fall out of Christian hands; and the idea of *Christianitas*, which was increasingly associated with papal authority to remit sins. In the preaching of crusades in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries it is these features—and above all the first two, the Cross and the Tomb—that dominate the evidential landscape.

This is not to say that perceptions of Islam were merely incidental to the exponents and participants of crusading. It is certainly true that, as Norman Daniel engagingly puts it, “the crusaders of 1096 did not go to the east with accounts of the Prophet tucked into their chain mail”;³² but they and their successors were bound to fashion views about the Muslims, even if they came to these views via routes that remained largely self-referential. An *imago inimici* did form part of the crusading message; indeed, as Marcus Bull has recently shown, study of the miracle stories that circulated before 1095 reveals that a potent image of the “Saracens” existed before the First Crusade and could therefore be used as a foundation by Pope Urban II and other crusade preachers. It was rooted mainly in the Iberian experience and depicted Muslims as violent, greedy, and cruel people who captured, enslaved, and tortured Christians: “treacherous, cruel and perverse, they

³⁰ Loutchitskaja, “L’Image des musulmans dans les chroniques des croisades,” *Le Moyen Age*, 105 (1999): 717-35, esp. 718-22.

³¹ Joinville, *Vie de Saint Louis*, ed. and trans. J. Monfrin (Paris: Garnier, 1995), 26-9.

³² Daniel, *The Arabs and Mediaeval Europe*, 251.

resemble animals and lust after filthy gain.”³³ The transmission of ideas that is implicit in this instance points to one aspect of crusading ideology that needs to be stressed—that it was diverse and varying in tone and to a degree in content according to the group being examined. Canon lawyers had a different perspective from popes, popes from preachers, and preachers from those who took the Cross. Having said that, all these groups subscribed to a set of core beliefs about Islam that comprised three main tenets: a military perspective that centered on the threat posed by able and ambitious Islamic rulers, a religious characterization of the rival faith and its exponents, and an attempt to situate Islam in terms of Christian eschatology.

Consideration of the threat posed by Islam was the primary concern of those canon lawyers, and to a lesser extent theologians, who considered the crusade. It is instructive to begin with them because their treatments make up the most restrained and objective views of the enemy. Here, if anywhere, we view the Church’s intellectual elite treating the relationship between Islam and crusading in the abstract, without direct reference to the need to arouse the faithful to arms. One of their main preoccupations was to consider whether crusading was a just war, and they had no doubt that the defense of the Holy Land fell into this category on two grounds. The first was religious, due to its consecration by the Savior’s blood; this established Palestine as the common heritage of all Christians and made it wholly inappropriate that Islam should be practiced there. The second was legal—the supposed continuity that existed between the Roman Empire and the Christian Church. The image of Islam that appeared in these texts was therefore that of the assailant, the unjust occupier of lands that unquestionably belonged to the Christians. When the decretalists in the thirteenth century considered the situation outside the Holy Land, they were divided in their opinions. Hard-liners, led by Hostiensis, argued that the pope exercised universal *imperium* because of his role as Christ’s vicar and could therefore direct crusaders to attack any *infideles*, including Muslims; moderates, led by Pope Innocent IV, denied this, asserting that *infideles* had the natural right to own land and could be lawfully attacked only in specific circumstances. Such circumstances included refusing to allow

³³ Bull, “Views of Muslims and of Jerusalem in Miracle Stories, c. 1000-c. 1200: Reflections on the Study of First Crusaders’ Motivations,” in *The Experience of Crusading*, ed. M. Bull and N. Housley, vol. 1: *Western Approaches* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 36.

missionary preaching, so this was far from being a “soft” approach, but it is worth emphasizing that canon lawyers and theologians as a group never accepted the idea that crusaders held *carte blanche* to attack and occupy Muslim lands. This applied even to Aquinas, who was dismissive of Islam but followed the line of the moderates on the issue of war against *infideles*. While there is no sign of “outreach” to the Muslims in these texts, neither is there evidence that those who wrote them allowed their strong belief in natural law to be overridden by emotion.³⁴

Moving from study to court, specifically the papal *curia*, we find a predictable change in tone. After the First Crusade, the circumstances in which popes turned their attention to the Holy Land were almost always those of crisis. A crusading response would be needed in response either to a catastrophe or to an Islamic military buildup. Popes were well aware that their bulls would form the basis for the preaching of the Cross, and some such as Innocent III were themselves famed for their ability as preachers. So although there was invariably an undercurrent of theological and legal ideas and perspectives,³⁵ it was accompanied by a deeper, more emphatic, and cruder *imago inimici*. The “Saracens” who feature in accounts of Pope Urban II’s sermon at Clermont³⁶ and thereafter repeatedly recur in papal bulls relating to crusades are above all aggressors, “the incorrigible and militant enemy of the Christian religion.”³⁷ By definition they were the enemies of Christ’s Cross and faith, destroyers of churches and relics, torturers, killers and enslavers of Christians, and of course mockers of Christian sluggishness and pusillanimity.³⁸ Take Robert of Reims’s account of the Clermont sermon, a classic atrocity passage:

³⁴ See James Muldoon, *Popes, Lawyers, and Infidels: The Church and the Non-Christian World, 1250-1550* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1979), 3-71; and Frederick H. Russell, *The Just War in the Middle Ages*, Cambridge Studies in Medieval Life and Thought, 3rd ser., no. 8 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), esp. 199-212. Note Russell, *The Just War in the Middle Ages*, 285-6, which shows Aquinas leaning toward Hostiensis’s position in cases when Christians were living under infidel rule.

³⁵ See, for example, Riley-Smith, “Crusading as an Act of Love,” *History*, 65 (1980): 177-92.

³⁶ For many reasons, reconstructions of the Clermont sermon of 1095 cannot be equated with the series of papal bulls; the latter should be seen as starting with the issue of *Quantum praedecessores* by Pope Eugenius III in 1145.

³⁷ Cole, “O God, the Heathen have come into your Inheritance,” 85-6.

³⁸ See, for example, *The Crusades: Idea and Reality, 1095-1274* [hereafter *CIR*], ed. and trans. Louise Riley-Smith and Jonathan Riley-Smith (London: Edward Arnold, 1981), 40-53, 57-8, 63-7, 118-24; *Documents on the Later Crusades, 1274-1580*, ed. and trans.

They cut open the navels of those whom they choose to torment with a loathsome death, tear out their most vital organs and tie them to a stake, drag them around and flog them, before killing them as they lie prone on the ground with all their entrails out. They tie some to posts and shoot at them with arrows; they order others to bare their necks and they attack them with drawn swords, trying to see whether they can cut off their heads with a single stroke.³⁹

In the generally more dispassionate bulls that were issued from the Second Crusade onward, the emphasis was still on threat. If attention was given to the political and strategic situation in the Levant, this formed no more than the circumstantial context for an ideology that presupposed implacable hostility and ill intent on the part of the Muslims. Thus, in the wake of the disaster at Hattin in 1187, Pope Gregory VIII gave a description of the battle and continued that “every sensible man can surmise the details which we have left out, from the very magnitude of the peril, with those savage barbarians thirsting after Christian blood and using all their force to profane the Holy Places and banish the worship of God from the land.”⁴⁰ And in *Quia maior* (1213), Innocent III wrote: “The same perfidious Saracens have recently built a fortified stronghold to confound the Christian name on Mount Thabor, where Christ revealed to his disciples a vision of his future glory; by means of this fortress they think they will easily occupy the city of Acre, which is very near them, and then invade the rest of that land without any obstructive resistance, since it is almost entirely devoid of forces or supplies.”⁴¹

In their religious characterization of Islam, crusading sources were unadventurous and eclectic. Ideologically unable to engage with the monotheism that lay at the heart of Islam, the supporters and preachers of crusading focused their attention on that religion’s origins as a massive trick perpetrated by the arch-heresiarch Muhammad by appealing to the worst instincts of human nature. Muslims were heretics,⁴² apostates, and pagans, but above all they were hedonists, deceived by a clever and cynical magician. As Innocent III put it in *Quia maior*, “the false prophet Muhammad... seduced many men from the truth by worldly enticements and the

Norman Housley (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1996), 16-20; and Cole, “O God, the Heathen have come into your Inheritance.”

³⁹ *CIR*, 43.

⁴⁰ *CIR*, 64-5.

⁴¹ *CIR*, 120-1.

⁴² See Daniel, *The Arabs and Mediaeval Europe*, 251.

pleasures of the flesh.”⁴³ Awareness of the enemy’s reserves of manpower fused with an obsession with Muslim concupiscence to cause Guibert of Nogent to represent Karbuqa exhorting his co-religionists to “give yourselves up to pleasures. . . . [E]at the finest foods; lie with multitudes of wives and concubines to propagate the race, so that the increasing numbers of sons may oppose the Christians, whose number now grows.”⁴⁴ The abuse that was heaped on Muhammad reached extraordinary levels of vitriol. For example, we find the learned and eminent Dominican Humbert of Romans writing of Muhammad in *De predicacione crucis* (ca. 1266) that “although one might read many other iniquitous things about his life, nevertheless these two alone ought to satisfy every human heart, that the man, and after his death his image should be pelted with excrement.”⁴⁵

Eschatologically, the role of Islam was that of a primary agent of Anti-christ in the struggle between good and evil. If the crusaders were God’s agents—*Dei gesta per Francos*—then their opponents must be the opposite—*Satani gesta per Sarracenos*. This idea was a prominent feature of crusade ideas from the start; it explained both the unrelenting antagonism of the Muslims and their addiction to carnal pursuits.⁴⁶ It also surely contributed to the process of dehumanization that occurred at certain times during crusading; for instance, the pollution of the holy places called for cleansing, and this entailed not simply the expulsion of the perpetrators but their massacre as well. It was “a just and splendid judgment of God,” as Raymond of Aguilers expressed it, “that this place should be filled with the blood of the unbelievers, since it had suffered so long from their blasphemies.”⁴⁷ Or as St. Bernard put it in 1146, the crusaders had “purged with the swords of piety the place and the house of heavenly purity from

⁴³ *CIR*, 120.

⁴⁴ Guibert de Nogent, *The Deeds of God through the Franks: A Translation of Guibert de Nogent’s Gesta Dei per Francos*, trans. Robert Levine (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1997), 96.

⁴⁵ Cole, “Humbert of Romans and the Crusade,” in *The Experience of Crusading*, 1:167.

⁴⁶ Riley-Smith, *The First Crusade and the Idea of Crusading*, 35.

⁴⁷ *The First Crusade: The Accounts of Eye-Witnesses and Participants*, ed. and trans. August C. Krey, reprint (Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1958), 261. David Hay, “Gender Bias and Religious Intolerance in Accounts of the ‘Massacres’ of the First Crusade,” in *TISCAC*, 3-10, 135-9, offers a dissenting voice on both the extent and character of the massacre. For a full survey of the massacre’s historiography, see Kedar, “The Jerusalem Massacre of July 1099 in the Western Historiography of the Crusades,” *Crusades*, 3 (2004): 15-75.

the filth of the impious.”⁴⁸ From the late twelfth century onward, this eschatological viewpoint acquired added urgency as events in the East were given a more precise reading in terms of sacred history. The so-called Children’s Crusade (crusade of the *pueri*) in 1212 above all was driven by a perception of the struggle in the Holy Land that was overtly eschatological in character.⁴⁹ But in the following year, Pope Innocent III was no less explicit when he launched the Fifth Crusade with the bull *Quia maior*: “Although [Muhammad’s] treachery has prevailed up to the present day, we nevertheless put our trust in the Lord who has already given us a sign that good is to come, that the end of this beast is approaching, whose number, according to the Revelation of St John, will end in 666 years, of which already nearly 600 have passed.”⁵⁰ This brief eschatological reference gathered momentum during the crusade itself, when the discovery of texts foretelling the downfall of Islam coincided with rumors of the Mongol attacks in the East, appearing to prove that the pope had been correct in his assessment.⁵¹

So far I have been addressing the period 1095 to 1291 as a single span of time. It is now useful to consider turning points. In his classic and highly readable lectures on Western views of Islam during the Middle Ages, Sir Richard Southern puts the case for two turning points: first, a movement from ignorance, abuse, and stereotype toward enlightenment and optimism in the thirteenth century; and second, a less dramatic movement from informed optimism toward isolated but revealing pockets of detailed knowledge and appreciation in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries.⁵² It is true that Southern is considering a broader picture than the crusades, including the impact made by the transmission of Arabic philosophy in the thirteenth century. Nonetheless, I think his characterization of the thirteenth century is misguided, making of it “a century of reason and hope” on the basis of a relatively small sample of texts and an overestimation of the expectation that conversion (be it of Muslims, Mongols, or both) would solve the problems of an embattled *Christianitas*.

⁴⁸ Quoted by Cole, “O God, the Heathen have come into your Inheritance,” 103.

⁴⁹ Gary Dickson, “La Genèse de la Croisade des enfants (1212),” *Bibliothèque de l’École des chartes*, 153 (1995): 53-102.

⁵⁰ *CIR*, 120.

⁵¹ James M. Powell, *Anatomy of a Crusade, 1213-1221*, Middle Ages Series (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1986), esp. 178-9; Tolan, *Saracens*, 199-203.

⁵² Southern, *Western Views of Islam in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1962).

I place my first turning point at the end of the twelfth century, with the disaster at Hattin in 1187 and the relative failure of the Third Crusade. The history of the Latin East and of crusading there was littered with defeats and setbacks, but from this point onward it was impossible not to appreciate how faltering the Christian hold on the Holy Land was; this gave added impetus to the tendency toward introspection and debate. This tendency was given an added momentum by the arrival of the Mongols in the early thirteenth century. In crusading terms, the increasing volume of information that was collected about Islam, and indeed about the entire non-Christian world, was motivated less by an objective interest in such matters than by the desire to learn what the *infideles* were doing right and by implication why *Christianitas* was failing. This was true, above all, of the large number of “recovery treatises” that were written in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries.⁵³ The essential worldview had not changed—Christianity must triumph and “paganism” must perish—but it was now placed within a process of incessant oscillation between triumphalism and anxiety. This oscillation persisted for centuries, arguably right up to the battle of Lepanto in 1571; at its heart lay the conviction that both penitence and reform formed essential preliminaries to a successful crusade. The clearest expression of this was the embedding of the needs of the Holy Land and crusade within the liturgy of the Office and Mass, a feature of the late Middle Ages that, until the recent study by Amnon Linder, was almost entirely neglected.⁵⁴ The key point is that while a sound knowledge of the enemy was now seen as a *sine qua non* for military success, the perspective for information gathering was as Euro-centric as ever.

My second turning point is the fifteenth century, with the formulation of a new *Feindbild*, the *imago Turci*, in the context of the Church’s attempt to revive the crusade as Catholic Europe’s principal military mechanism for holding back the advancing Ottoman Turks.⁵⁵ The image of the Turk and the earlier image of the Saracen had many similarities, unsurprisingly

⁵³ Antony Leopold, *How to Recover the Holy Land: The Crusade Proposals of the Late Thirteenth and Early Fourteenth Centuries* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000).

⁵⁴ Linder, *Raising Arms: Liturgy in the Struggle to Liberate Jerusalem in the Late Middle Ages*, *Cultural Encounters in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages*, no. 2 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2003).

⁵⁵ See, above all, Carl Göllner, *Turcica*, 3 vols. (Bucharest: Editura Academiei Republicii Socialiste România, 1961-78). For publications since, see Gérard Poumarède, *Pour en finir avec la Croisade: Mythes et réalités de la lutte contre les Turcs aux XVI^e et XVII^e siècles* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 2004), 7-79.

since both encapsulated the need to create a foe that was both dangerous (hence could not be ignored) and capable of defeat (hence should not inspire despair). But there were also two major differences. The first sprang from the fact that strategically the tables had been turned: the earlier Christian plunge into the heartland of the *dar al-Islam* had been replaced by an apparently inexorable Islamic advance into European lands, territory that had always been Christian. As we saw, the justification of crusading to the Holy Land by canonists and theologians in terms of scripture and history was somewhat tortuous. This was now replaced by a representation of crusade as just war that was both at heart more straightforward and emotive—the defense of home and family—and also much more elaborate—the protection of a whole cluster of European values, social structures, and achievements against a fundamentally alien as well as hostile force. The Turk was vilified not just as the enemy of the faith but also as the barbarian at the gate.

This represented a major shift in European perceptions of Islam. In earlier crusading texts, the term “barbarian” had been used to signify difference rather than any antipathy toward culture; Europeans were generally aware of the riches of Arabic civilization. But it now carried connotations of hostility toward civilized values and in particular learning: the sultan would not only convert St. Peter’s into a stable for his horses, but he would also burn the adjacent libraries and galleries. The turning point was the sack of Constantinople in 1453, when so much Byzantine art and learning had been lost. This theme had not made an appearance in the “classical period” of crusading, when the emphasis was exclusively on the loss of churches and relics; it was the offspring of humanism and the Renaissance. But the sense of superiority that underpinned it meant that Muslims in the western and southern Mediterranean lands were soon being tarred with the same brush.⁵⁶ It was also a theme of great significance for the future, because it formed the bridge by which a cluster of crusading ideas and attitudes succeeded in shaping the thinking of Europeans at the very point when they embarked on overseas discovery and conquest.⁵⁷

The second new feature of the *imago Turci* was that it contained a distinctive racial element. Despite the ethnic origin of the term itself, the earlier denigration of the “Saracen” was based on religious identity; conversion

⁵⁶ Nancy Bisaha, *Creating East and West: Renaissance Humanists and the Ottoman Turks* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 78, 172.

⁵⁷ Bisaha, *Creating East and West*, 182–3.

would end the conflict. The Turk was an enemy of the faith, but he was also a barbarian; this quality was perceived as genetic, its roots residing in the Turks' origins as steppe dwellers, the Scythians.⁵⁸ An emphasis on genetic coding was a feature of the late Middle Ages: it lay behind the Spanish suspicion of the converted Moors and Jews (Moriscos and *conversos*) that culminated in their expulsion in the sixteenth century. Through the constant rounds of planning and associated speechmaking for a crusade against the Ottomans, this biological determinism made its way into crusading ideas, as pro-crusade lobbyists tried every means they could to awaken their generally apathetic co-religionists to the extent and urgency of the Turkish threat: these people were the hereditary enemies of the Christians. At the same time, information gathering about the Turkish foe continued to gather pace, including much interest in his admirable qualities, the intention (as ever) being to make Christians reform their lives and societies and organize a more effective military response to the Ottoman danger.⁵⁹ Overall, there can be little doubt that the *imago Turci* was at once more rounded and more complex than the earlier image of the "Saracen." It had evolved from the relatively inchoate and blurred image that sufficed at the time of the Holy Land crusade to one that held center stage in the minds of those contemporaries who favored a crusade; indeed, it provided an ideological model so powerful that it was transplanted to a whole group of antagonisms that were situated in the interior of the Christian world.⁶⁰ But this is not to say that it was much more accurate or less prone to stereotyping than the image it replaced: after all, the purpose, as before, was not to educate contemporaries, but to arouse them to take up arms.

I should like to sum up with three points. First, as I stated at the beginning, there is no denying the overall negative impact of crusading. To some extent, this results from the particular lens through which I have been considering Christian-Islamic relations: the picture would be less gloomy if I had included other ways in which Islam was regarded, such as imaginative literature.⁶¹ But the negativity raises issues about the character of

⁵⁸ Margaret Meserve, "Medieval Sources for Renaissance Theories on the Origins of the Ottoman Turks," in *Europa und die Türken in der Renaissance*, ed. B. Guthmüller and W. Kühlmann (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 2000), 409-36.

⁵⁹ Bisaha, *Creating East and West*, 180.

⁶⁰ Housley, *Religious Warfare in Europe*, 131-59.

⁶¹ For a balanced view, see the essays in *Western Views of Islam in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, ed. M. Frassetto and D. R. Blanks (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2000).

medieval Catholic thinking in relation to “outsiders” that were considered by R. I. Moore in his influential 1987 study, *The Formation of a Persecuting Society*. Moore argued that between the millennium and the mid-thirteenth century, the social hierarchy of Catholic Europe, led by its clerical elite, formulated a package of ideas, images, and repressive methods that singled out and bore down heavily on certain “out-groups,” heretics, Jews, and lepers. It should be noted that Muslims did not form one of the groups that Moore selected for analysis, presumably because they were an “external” rather than an “internal” threat.⁶² Similar treatment, however, was meted out to Jews and Muslims subject to Christian rule in the legislation passed at the Fourth Lateran Council (1215).⁶³ In a specifically crusading context, recent research has indicated that prominent churchmen in both the late twelfth and the thirteenth centuries regarded Jews, heretics, and Muslims in a similar light; the analogies between Moore’s study and the images that we have been examining are both telling and numerous.⁶⁴ It is always hazardous to single out one development within a pattern as complex as this one, but it is hard to believe that the inclusion of the Muslims within this ideological framework would have happened without the preaching of the Cross. It was surely the formation of the *imago inimici* that caused contemporaries, ranging from the Church’s intelligentsia to the laity, to create and disseminate a repertoire of hostile representations of the Muslims in ways that paralleled what was happening in the cases of heretics, Jews, and lepers. The Muslims of Lucera, and later the Iberian Moriscos and *conversos*, duly paid the price.

My second conclusion is that it is deceptively easy to place an unduly positive interpretation on signs of interaction. In the field of crusading at least, it repeatedly becomes apparent that those Catholic Europeans who engaged with Islam, intellectually or in terms of their personal experience, did so from a resolutely Euro-centric viewpoint and they formed judgments that were overall hostile. To take a single, late example, the Cretan

⁶² Moore, *The Formation of a Persecuting Society: Power and Deviance in Western Europe, 950-1250* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1987), 94, has a single, passing reference to Muslims in relation to pederasty.

⁶³ See Tolan, *Saracens*, 195-8.

⁶⁴ See Tolan, *Saracens*, 135-69. This also emerged strongly in the Cambridge Ph.D. theses of Cassandra Chideock, “Henry of Marcy, Heresy and the Crusade, 1177-89” (2001), and Rebecca Rist, “The Development of the Idea of ‘Internal’ Crusade, 1198-1245” (2004).

merchant and crusading enthusiast Emmanuele Piloti spent some twenty-two years trading in Mamluk Egypt in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries. Piloti talked about religion with his Muslim friends, and he knew enough to be aware of Islamic veneration for the Virgin and of Jesus's Islamic status as a prophet. But he was also content to peddle well-worn and abusive tales about Muhammad and to condemn Islam as a faith fit only for beasts, devoid of any spiritual content. All that was needed, Piloti concluded, to bring down this religious house of cards was a well-staged debate between Islamic and Christian theologians; the representatives of Islam would be so clearly outclassed that mass conversions would follow.⁶⁵

This brings me to my third conclusion: notwithstanding the painfully shallow optimism of men like Piloti and the Dominican William of Tripoli, the reality of conversions between Christianity and Islam was different. Either they were individual and occasional, as in the Latin East, or they occurred over a long period of time within the political context of major transfers of territory between the two faiths, as in Iberia (from Islam to Christianity) and the Balkans (vice versa). It followed that the only alternative to armed conflict between the two faiths was the disengagement which slowly took place in the course of the seventeenth century, as the Ottoman advance into Europe finally ground to a halt. And even then, as I pointed out at the start, the damage that was inflicted by the crusades enjoyed a sort of afterlife in the shape of Islamic perceptions of and armed reactions against European conquest and occupation. It is ironic that this came about mainly because of an ill-timed surge of crusading rhetoric amongst the Europeans.⁶⁶ Those historians of the crusades who have studied their impact on European societies have detected much that was constructive, especially in terms of the heavy organizational demands that they made and the advances that these stimulated in economic and governmental terms. But it is impossible to come to similarly positive conclusions about their impact on interfaith relations—and it has to be said that this applies not just to Muslims but also to Jews and Orthodox Christians.⁶⁷

⁶⁵ *Traité d'Emmanuel Piloti*, 32, 38-42, 45, 48, 51, 54, 85, 112-16, 131, 163, 187-8, 236.

⁶⁶ Riley-Smith, "Islam and the Crusades in History," esp. 160-1.

⁶⁷ See my *Contesting the Crusades* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), chap. 7.