

# OCR HISTORY A



Toby and Mike Wells

ory A:  
s and the Crusader States 1073–1192 is endorsed  
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European and World History Enquiries: The First Crusade  
Crusader States 1073–1130 and

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## amCafé

Relax, refresh, result!

and prepare

**Hot tips**

**Tom**  
I was pushing myself or  
as I was a little  
(do of AS-level. I didn't  
and I was totally  
was expected to do by  
a research homework  
a lot minute and  
is, but when I came to  
the mess that my notes  
is half-finished bits and  
I advice would be to  
another who's taking the  
re prepared to make the  
to do on their own.

**Rhiannon**  
The best piece of advice I'd  
of the start of the year? Easy - get a folder and get  
organised! The notes come really thick and fast and you  
need to collect them together properly. Just  
sticking them in your bag or starting a new page of  
your notes every lesson won't do. They end up  
looking like a scrap and they're useless for revision. I  
wish I'd checked my notes over more outside of  
lessons and maybe rewritten some of them to make  
them clearer while the topic was still fresh in my mind.

**Mark**  
The internet is a great resource but watch out for  
misleading websites. You have to ask yourself who is  
putting this information onto the web and why - so  
that you can avoid sites that are obviously biased. I  
used what looked like great websites, but I found out  
that some of them were written by amateurs who  
knew even less than me! Also, watch out for how  
long the information has been there - it could be  
stuff that's out of date.

**Samita**  
I printed loads of stuff off the internet to put in my file.  
Just one problem - I didn't actually read any of it!  
Using the internet was really just a way of avoiding  
looking proper notes. Cutting and pasting stuff into a  
word document made me feel I was working  
through the research, but I ended up blissing most of  
it and starting again when I revised.

**Janie**  
I usually used a textbook to make my notes from.  
The trouble was, I wasn't really working how to do  
research. It took a bit of effort to go into the library  
and find out what was there - not just the books but  
magazine articles and online information - but it  
was worth it because that's what you'll have to do if  
you go to university. Things aren't always packaged  
for you.

**Jeff**  
I'm a morning person. I know that I can get up and  
start work straight away for a few hours then my  
interest starts flagging. At night I'm too tired or  
distracted to work for very long. So I plan my study  
around how I am - essays and big tasks in the  
morning, finishing off and small bits of right.

**Asif**  
Break everything down into small bits if you find it  
hard to get started. You aren't writing an essay,  
you're writing one paragraph. Get that done.  
Congratulations yourself then write another paragraph!  
Keep taking short breaks - get up and walk about -  
and have a hot drink when you've finished to  
motivate yourself to get through the work.

**Sofia**  
I found it hard to settle down to study - there was  
always something more interesting that I could be  
doing. My teacher suggested using a sheet to get me  
started. Now what I do is make myself a cuppa when  
I want to start working. As the kettle is boiling I start  
thinking about what I need to do, so if it's an essay, I  
start thinking about what I'm going to write. By the  
time the drink's ready I've already started work and I  
can sit down and put pen to paper.

**Ali**  
I wrote on what a source was  
and off and I'd end up  
re some bit without getting  
the full story. I use a ruler and  
I've source then move it  
to on. That way, I only  
I can stop after every  
to myself what I have  
use a highlighter as  
everything! So I tend to  
in the margin or on a

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ISBN 978-0435-312-69-5



9 780435 312695



OCR

HISTORY A

AS

The Crusades and the Crusader States 1073–1192

# OCR HISTORY A

## AS

# The Crusades and the Crusader States 1073–1192

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Toby Purser



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Text © Toby Purser

First published 2010

14

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3

#### British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN 978-0435312695

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Edited by Jane Anson

Designed by Pearson

Typeset by Saxon Graphics Ltd, Derby

Original Illustrations by Saxon Graphics Ltd, Derby

Cover design by Bigtop Design Ltd

Cover photo © Heritage Image Partnership/E&E Image Library

Printed in Malaysia (CTP-PPSB)

#### Acknowledgements

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## Timeline of the Crusades

1071	— Seljuk Turks defeat the Byzantine army at the Battle of Manzikert.
March 1095	— Envoys from the Byzantine Emperor Alexius Comnenus ask Pope Urban II for military aid.
27 November 1095	— Pope Urban II launches the First Crusade at the Council of Clermont.
15 July 1099	— Crusaders capture Jerusalem.
December 1144	— Edessa falls to Zengi of Aleppo.
1 December 1145	— Pope Eugenius III issues the <i>Quantum praedecessores</i> crusade appeal, launching the Second Crusade.
May–June 1147	— Crusader armies from France, Flanders and Germany depart for the Second Crusade.
October 1147	— German army defeated in Asia Minor.
June 1148	— Council of Palmarea decides to attack Damascus; the siege fails, ending the Second Crusade.
4 July 1187	— Battle of Hattin; Christian army wiped out by Saladin, King Guy captured.
October 1187	— Fall of Jerusalem; Third Crusade launched by the pope.
7 September 1191	— Battle of Arsuf; Richard I defeats Saladin.
October 1191	— First march on Jerusalem turns back.
June 1192	— Second march on Jerusalem fails.
5 August 1192	— Battle of Jaffa; Richard I defeats Saladin.
September 1192	— Truce arranged; Richard leaves in October, ending the Third Crusade.



Figure 1.1 The Christian world in about AD 1050.

# What were the boundaries of medieval Europe on the eve of the First Crusade?

## Key Questions:

In this chapter you will learn:

- How important the Christian Church was in medieval Europe
- How the Muslim world had expanded
- What the Holy Roman and Byzantine Empires consisted of
- How the papacy had developed in the eleventh century

## Introduction

Europe in the late eleventh century has traditionally been seen as a backward and deeply conservative peasant society, governed by established hierarchies (levels of authority) who frequently ruled by violence. Schools and universities were few, and healthcare, social care, roads and public buildings were practically non-existent. Parts of northern Europe were overpopulated. The Mediterranean borders with Spain and Asia Minor (Turkey) were inhabited by Muslim communities who had been at deadly odds with the Christian world since the seventh century. By contrast with the Christian West, the Muslim world of Spain, North Africa and the Middle East was a world of libraries, universities, urban planning and advanced understanding of classical medicine and literature that had been lost to the West since the fall of the Roman Empire in the fifth century.

The political kingdoms of England, France and the Germanic principalities owed spiritual allegiance to the head of the Catholic Church in Rome: the pope. Traditionally, the popes had been a highly influential but peaceful force in Europe. During the eleventh century, however, the papacy began to develop into a more politically active and aggressive power. The Greek Church was headed by the patriarch in Byzantium, also known as Constantinople (modern Istanbul). The Greek Church was also Christian, but followed a different set of beliefs from those of the Catholic Church. When the threats from Muslim incursions into Turkey became serious, the Byzantine emperor approached Pope Urban II in Rome in 1095 to seek help in combating the Muslims, and so it was the papacy in Rome that was ready to take the lead in Europe.

## Boundaries of the mind: mortality and mentalities

Average life expectancy in Europe in the late eleventh century was around 30 years, the infant mortality rate was 50 per cent and chances of surviving childhood were poor. Diet was basic, malnutrition was common, and starvation was all too frequent in times of bad harvests. From age thirteen until they reached menopause in their late thirties, girls and women could expect repeated pregnancies, each one fraught with danger from blood loss, shock and infection. Boys and girls were likely to suffer deadly infection well into their teens, and the best most boys could expect was a working life of backbreaking toil on a minimal diet. The damp, cold climate of northern Europe did nothing to lessen the misery of sharing a small, dark house made of mud, wattle and thatch with the family's livestock and the extended family. The working day was determined by the hours of daylight and most of these were spent farming the land owned by the local lord.

Contemporaries saw society as being organised into three levels, or 'orders': those who fought, those who prayed and those who worked, a system ordained by God and decided by one's birth. This structure of society, with the king at the top and the peasants at the bottom, was a simplification made by contemporaries. Medieval society actually consisted of a variety of farmers, smallholders in the countryside and merchants in the towns and cities. The many skilled workers, tradesmen and craftsmen, along with the growing class of literate officials and academics in the new schools and universities, meant that medieval society was far more complex.

Historians have traditionally called the social system the 'feudal system', from the Latin *feudum*, or 'fief', meaning a grant of land. It developed in response to the terror of the **Viking** raids into France and England during the period 790–1020. Kings could **enfeoff**, or grant warlords land in return for their military support against the invaders; local warlords in turn granted parts of this land to soldiers (**knights**) who were fed by the peasants who worked the land. A sophisticated code of honour and a network of allegiances grew out of this, with the knights passing the land to their heirs in a **hereditary** system. In theory, the peasants were protected by the knights, but in practice they endured warfare, rape and pillage. Many crusaders took their knights with them in 1095 and organised the kingdom of Jerusalem according to feudal loyalties.

Recently, historians have revised this view as a false construct created by contemporaries and repeated by historians. The feudal sources concerned with legal transactions over property – based upon the fiefs of land – do not necessarily give a rounded view of society as a whole. There was no real system, rather a multitude of customs and practices developed at different times and in different places.

### Source A

#### A description of an oath of to the Count of Flanders, 1127.

*First ... the Count asked if he was willing to become completely his man, and the other replied, 'I am willing' and with clasped hands, surrounded by the hands of the Count, they were bound together by a kiss. Secondly, he who had done homage gave his fealty to the representative of the Count in these words, 'I promise on my faith that I will in future be faithful to Count William, and will observe my homage to him completely against all persons in good faith and without deceit.' Thirdly, he took his oath to this upon the relics of the saints.*

From Galbert de Bruges, *Chronicle of the Death of Charles the Good*.

### Source B

#### The German Emperor Henry IV confirmed a grant of the tolls to the monastery of St Simeon at Coblenz (1104). The right to collect tolls could be granted in the same way as the right to hold a fief.

*Bakers of that place, whoever they be, or wherever they be, who sell bread there will give one loaf to the toll-gatherer every Sunday, or one obole every fourteen days.*

*Also, the tax of shoemakers coming from elsewhere will be given to them from Lady Day up to Martinmas. But for this they will give the toll-gatherer and eight monks a good banquet. But the toll-gatherer will give them six sets of wine, and a cheese which can be carried in one hand.*

### enfeoff

The act of granting land from the king or a nobleman to a knight was called enfeoffment. The land granted by this act was commonly known as a fief.

### knights

The class of warriors who held land from the king and the Church.

### hereditary

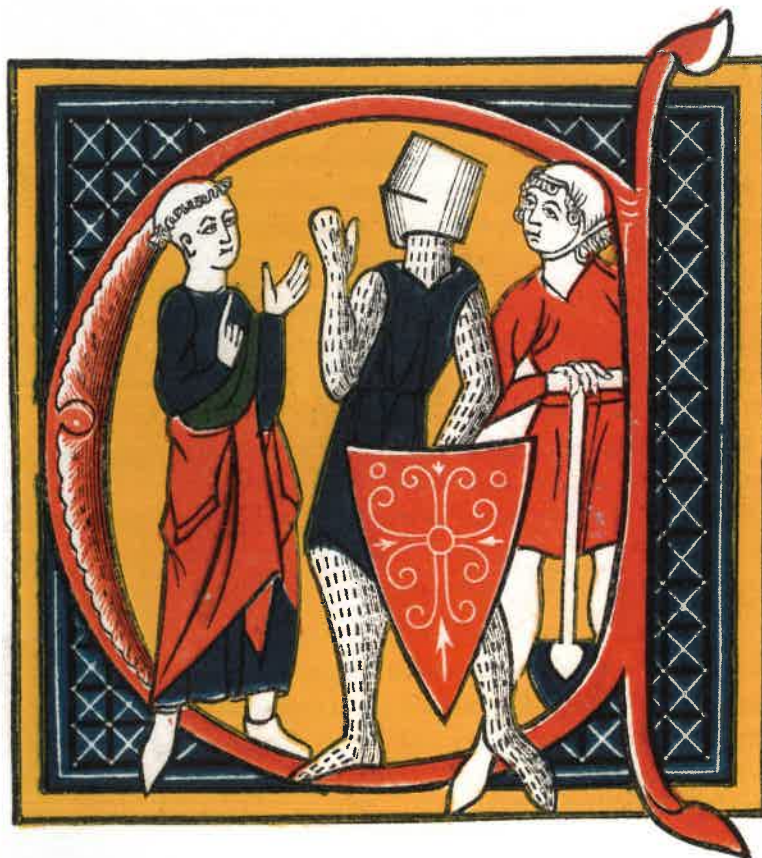
Titles and land were inherited in the Middle Ages. A man could acquire land by marriage, but it was rare to marry an heiress without being of the same social status and level of wealth. Inter-marriage preserved the elite class of landowners and passed on land from father to son by inheritance. If a man died without sons, then his nephews, brothers or cousins inherited.

## ACTIVITY

### Period studies

Study Sources A and B.

- 1 Explain in your own words what is happening in Source A. Why does this fit the classic view of the feudal system?
- 2 Why does Source B present an alternative view of the simple feudal society of the three orders? What does it tell you about the economy?



**Figure 1.2** The three orders of medieval society: from left to right, the cleric, the knight and the peasant.

For a person born into the peasantry, there was no way out. The harshness of the daily grind was punctuated by the Christian calendar of saints' days and feasts, which lightened the peasants' load somewhat. God and the Church were omnipresent (all-knowing and all-seeing) in the life of medieval people. People believed that their every action, word and thought would be judged. The great glimmer of hope was getting to heaven after death. This offered the promise of everlasting happiness and equality, and freedom from the miseries of the earthly life. There were several ways of achieving this promise, including regular attendance at church to worship and to **confess** one's sins to the priest. However, going on a pilgrimage was the best way to cleanse one's soul of sin and pave the way to enter heaven. It was this factor that gave Pope Urban's summons to arms in 1095 the greatest appeal.

### What was the papacy?

After the collapse of the Roman Empire in the late fifth century, Rome became the centre of the Christian Church, with its own bishop, or pope (*papa* – 'father'). Roman Christianity established and promoted its brand across western Europe in the sixth and seventh centuries. It wiped out **paganism** and forced the Celtic Christians in Ireland, Wales and Scotland to obey the pope in Rome. The popes increasingly looked towards England and France for military support and in 800 it was the pope who crowned Charlemagne the first Emperor of the Romans, ruling the area that is modern France and western Germany (see page 10). The relationship between popes, kings and emperors was mutually beneficial: rulers were able to claim that their authority came from God and in return they gave the popes military protection from danger.

### ACTIVITIES

- 1 How important was the Church for ordinary people in medieval times? Explain in a paragraph, describing its impact on their daily lives and their beliefs.
- 2 Create a spider diagram to illustrate the complete networks between the lords, ordinary people and rulers of eleventh-century society.

## Physical boundaries: Europe and the Mediterranean

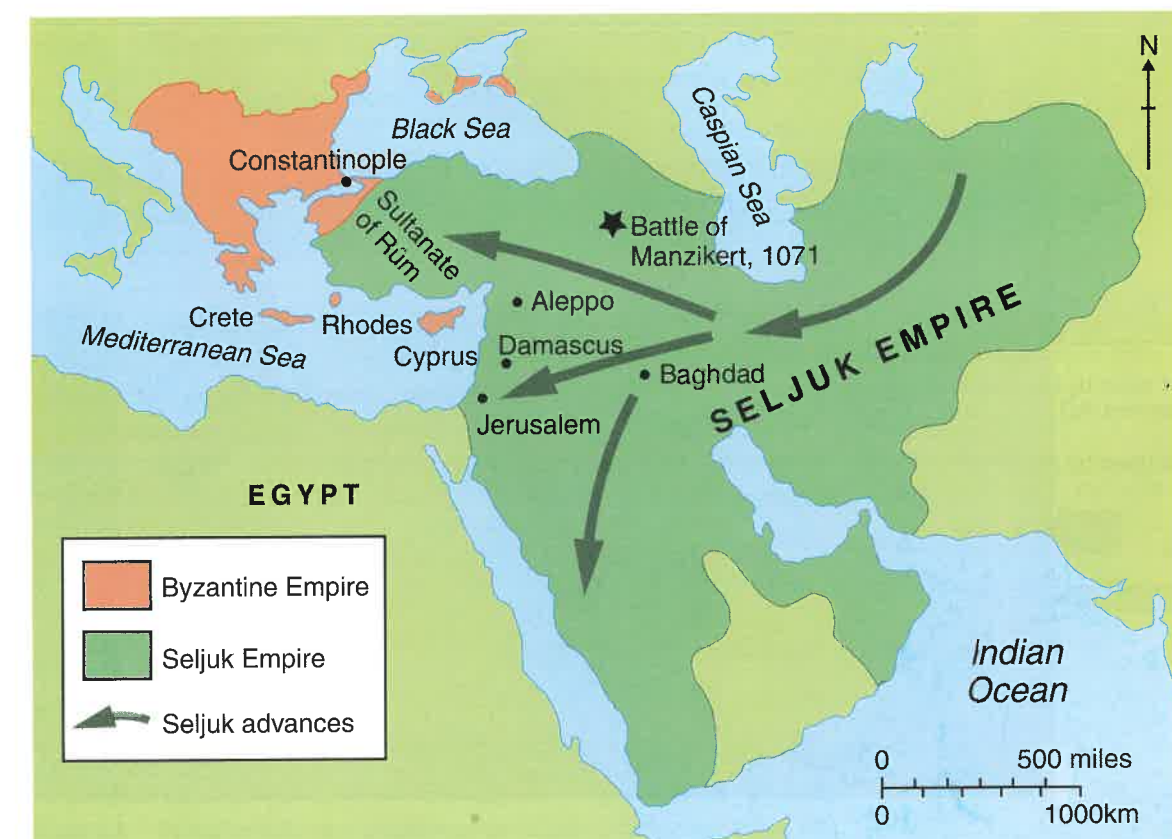
### What was the Muslim world?

In the last quarter of the eleventh century, Christian Europe was bordered by Muslim states from southern Spain in the west, across the whole of North Africa, through Palestine to Asia Minor (modern Turkey) in the east. The main powers in Europe were France, the Holy Roman Empire and the Christian Byzantine Empire (see below), which consisted of modern Greece and the Balkans with its capital at Constantinople. The Mediterranean Sea was the barrier between the two world religions, Christianity and Islam. Founded by the prophet **Muhammad**, the Islamic religion had exploded onto the world in the late seventh century, advancing across the Christian principalities of North Africa, through Spain and into southern France, where it had been halted in the eighth century and pushed back into Spain.

### BIOGRAPHY

#### Muhammad the Prophet

A merchant from Mecca who by the time of his death in 632 had united the Arabian peninsula under the new Islamic religion. During the two centuries that followed, his successors, the **caliphs**, conquered Syria, Egypt, the Persian Empire (modern Iraq, Iran and Afghanistan), northern Africa and most of Spain.



**Figure 1.3** The Byzantine and Seljuk Empires in AD 1095.

It was in the east, however, where the Christian and Muslim worlds remained at flashpoint. In 1071 the Byzantine Empire suffered a major defeat at the hands of the **Seljuk Turks** at the **Battle of Manzikert** in Asia Minor. It was the increasing advances of the Seljuk Turks which prompted the Byzantine emperor to seek help from western Europe, appealing specifically to the Christian leader, the pope, who called for a holy war, or crusade, in 1095. It was this appeal that was to light a fire that raged between the Christian and Muslim worlds for the following five hundred years and that later became known as the crusades.

### Seljuk Turks

The Seljuks (or Seljuqs) had migrated from the eastern steppes of Turkestan in the tenth century. They had assimilated with Persian Islamic culture and religion under their first great leader, Seljuk. They were Sunni Muslims and extended their power right across the eastern Islamic world. Seljuk's grandson, Alp Arslan, defeated and captured the Byzantine Emperor Romanos IV. His son was Malik Shah, who consolidated his father's victories over the Byzantines in Anatolia.



Figure 1.4 The Muslim world in about 1050.

### Battle of Manzikert

The Battle of Manzikert was fought between the Byzantine forces and the Muslims, led by Alp Arslan, in August 1071 near Manzikert (modern Malazgirt in eastern Turkey). It resulted in one of the most decisive defeats of the Byzantine Empire and the capture of the Byzantine Emperor Romanos IV. The battle broke Byzantine resistance and prepared the way for the expansion of Turkish settlement in Anatolia.

### What was the Byzantine Empire?

The Byzantine Empire grew out of the old eastern Roman Empire from the fifth century AD, gradually becoming Greek in culture. The Empire was the principal barrier to the Islamic armies that were advancing from the east, but by the later eleventh century it was dangerously weakened. The religion was Orthodox Christianity and was headed by the patriarch in Constantinople. The eastern church grew apart from the Roman western church and in 1054 the two split completely in the Great Schism. Attempts were made to heal the divide, and Urban's crusade of 1095 may have been a part of that effort, but the two Christian churches have remained separate.

The capital of the Byzantine Empire was Constantinople, named after the Roman Emperor Constantine who built it in the early fourth century. It rivalled Rome, becoming a city of fabulous palaces and streets, and controlling the trade routes between Asia and Europe and the Black Sea and the Mediterranean. By 1095 Constantinople was the frontier between the Islamic and Christian worlds, but it was not until 1453 that it was captured and established as the Ottoman Turks' capital, renamed Istanbul. Its city walls, dating from the time of Constantine, survive today.



Figure 1.5 The walls of the ancient Byzantine capital of Constantinople, now Istanbul.

### caliph

A Muslim religious and political leader. The caliphs were Muhammad's successors.

### ACTIVITY

Using the map on page 7 and your own knowledge, draw up a table of the Christian and the Muslim countries that had emerged by 1095.

## What was the Holy Roman Empire?

After the collapse of the Roman Empire in the fifth century, Europe splintered into dozens of small states. However, by the late eighth century the kingdom of the Franks emerged as the most powerful, and in 800 their king, Charlemagne (Charles the Great) was crowned Emperor of the Romans by Pope Leo III. Charlemagne's empire covered the area that is modern France, Germany, Hungary and northern Italy. In 840 this empire was divided up and in 961 the German King Otto I was crowned emperor by the pope. German kings held the title 'Emperor of the Romans', which later became 'Holy Roman Emperor', for the next ten centuries. The Emperor of the Romans remained the premier royal leader of Europe, although the popes often had stronger links with the kings of France.



Figure 1.6 The empire of Charlemagne, the first Holy Roman Emperor, in AD 800.

## How had the papacy changed in the period 1073–95?

The appeal from the Byzantine Emperor Alexius Comnenus to Pope Urban II in 1095 had a massive impact. This was partly because for several decades the papacy had been undergoing reform that amounted to an intellectual and political revolution in the Christian leadership of Europe. The reforming ideas began in the monasteries, particularly at **Cluny** in France. The reformers aimed to impose a more consistent interpretation of **St Benedict's Rule** and a more uniform commitment to discipline, prayer and study. Cluny had a huge influence on church thinking. Popes now wanted to see a clearer division between the sacred and the worldly in matters such as **clerical marriage**, and **church abuses** needed to be reformed. But more than this, popes such as Leo IX (1049–54) and Gregory VII (1075–85) wanted to impose their authority on kings and emperors in matters

such as the **appointment of bishops**, and to assert the Church's role as a world political power. It was **Pope Urban II** (1088–99) however, who saw the appeal from Byzantium as an opportunity not only to assert papal authority over western Europe, but also to extend the power and influence of the Roman Church into the east.

### appointment of bishops

A major source of discord between the Church and monarchs was the appointment of bishops, because bishops were so wealthy and powerful. Kings always wanted to appoint their own bishops, choosing men who would agree with royal policy. However, the pope in Rome saw it as his choice and could therefore appoint bishops who were loyal to Rome.

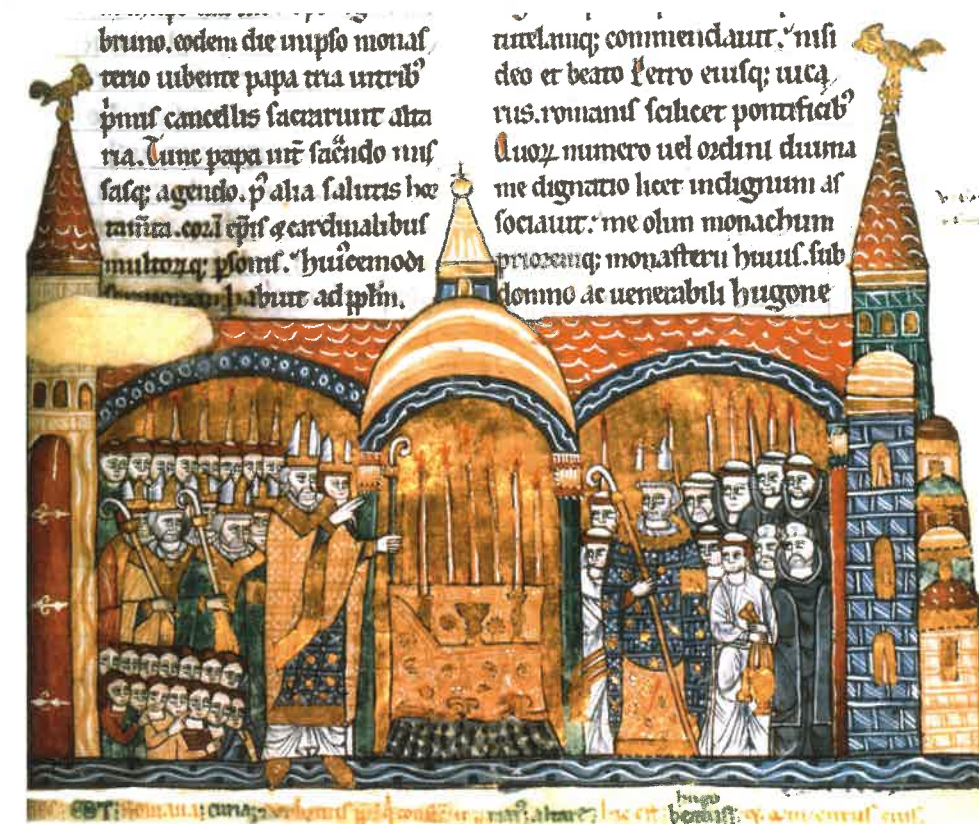


Figure 1.7 Pope Urban II consecrating the abbey church at Cluny, from a twelfth-century manuscript. The largest church in Europe throughout the Middle Ages, Cluny was almost totally destroyed in 1793, during the French Revolution.

### BIOGRAPHY Pope Urban II

Urban (pope 1088–99) was a powerful reformer. He came from a noble family in Burgundy, France. The first Cluniac monk to become pope, he was chosen by cardinals opposing Emperor Henry IV. He launched the First Crusade in 1095, but died before learning of the crusaders' capture of Jerusalem in July 1099.

### Cluny

In 910 Count William I of Aquitaine founded the Abbey of Cluny in Burgundy, France. Within a hundred years the abbey was at the centre of a vast network of monasteries across Europe with close connections to the papacy. The monastic network was hugely influential both in the church and in politics, and produced many bishops, abbots and some popes, including Urban II. The Cluniac establishment was at the centre of the papal reforms during the later eleventh century.

### St Benedict's Rule

St Benedict, founder of the monastery of Monte Cassino in Italy, wrote a rule in the sixth century (530–60) setting out the tenets of humility, silence and obedience for the monastic life. By the ninth century the Rule of St Benedict had become the standard rule by which monasteries were run, and the Benedictine order was the most influential at the time of the First Crusade.

### ACTIVITY

Answer the following questions in a short paragraph, listing at least five points.

- 1 Why was the monastery of Cluny so important in the reforms of the eleventh century?
- 2 What were the church abuses that needed reforming?
- 3 Why was the appointment of bishops such an issue?

### Why was the Investiture Contest so significant?

In 1075, soon after he was elected pope, Pope Gregory VII declared that his authority was superior to that of all earthly rulers. This was a departure from the usual papal stance of purely spiritual superiority, when popes did not interfere with politics or military matters. Not surprisingly, this did not go down at all well with the political rulers of the day. Gregory clashed with the German Emperor Henry IV, causing civil war in Germany and exile for Gregory, in what was known as the Investiture Contest. The initial spark of this discord was the appointment of the Archbishop of Milan. Henry IV persuaded the German bishops to declare Pope Gregory deposed, and had an alternative pope installed. However, the German princes rebelled against Henry and in a dramatic scene, the Emperor had to travel through the Alps of northern Italy to the fortress town of Canossa, where he begged forgiveness from Gregory, standing for four days in public humility in the winter weather. Gregory granted Henry forgiveness and the event was greatly symbolic, since it at last placed the papacy at the heart of politics and put the developing ambitions of the reforming popes to the forefront.

### Conclusion

The pre-conditions that prepared the ground for the First Crusade were established in the following ways:

- The Islamic world was fragmented into a number of small factions that were often at war with one another.

- From the fifth to the eleventh centuries, the Roman Empire was broken down into the feudal kingdoms of western Europe, based on a warrior society.
- The papacy, for so many centuries politically and militarily weak, now found a new voice in reforms that demanded actual, as well as spiritual, power.
- The struggling Byzantine Empire now needed to turn to the West for help against its Muslim neighbours.
- The power of the Cluniac monastic network and Pope Gregory VII's triumph over Emperor Henry IV at Canossa created a situation where the papacy was able to take the lead, which it did in 1095.
- Living conditions in medieval Europe were so miserable, and the teachings of the Catholic Church were so dominant in the minds of medieval people, that the call to the crusade in 1095 would appeal to many thousands of people.

### Review questions

Answer the following questions in two to three paragraphs, or in the form of a list.

- 1 How did the papal reforms make an impact on the political leaders of Europe?
- 2 Was medieval society prepared for a holy war?

### ACTIVITY

In groups, discuss the following question.

Does Henry IV's surrender at Canossa demonstrate more of Henry's weaknesses as emperor or Gregory's strengths as pope?

# Why was the First Crusade launched?

## Key Questions:

In this chapter you will learn:

- Why Pope Urban II turned Emperor Alexius' appeal for help into a papal crusade
- How the pilgrimage became an armed pilgrimage with spiritual rewards
- Why the concept of holy war was important

You will also develop the following skills:

- Assessing the language and tone of documents with reference to religious hatred and incitement to violence as a form of propaganda
- Understanding the nature of 'holy' and 'just' war
- Comparing sources and their limitations
- Understanding causation, a major historical concept
- Making a judgement on the papal motives for calling the crusade in 1095

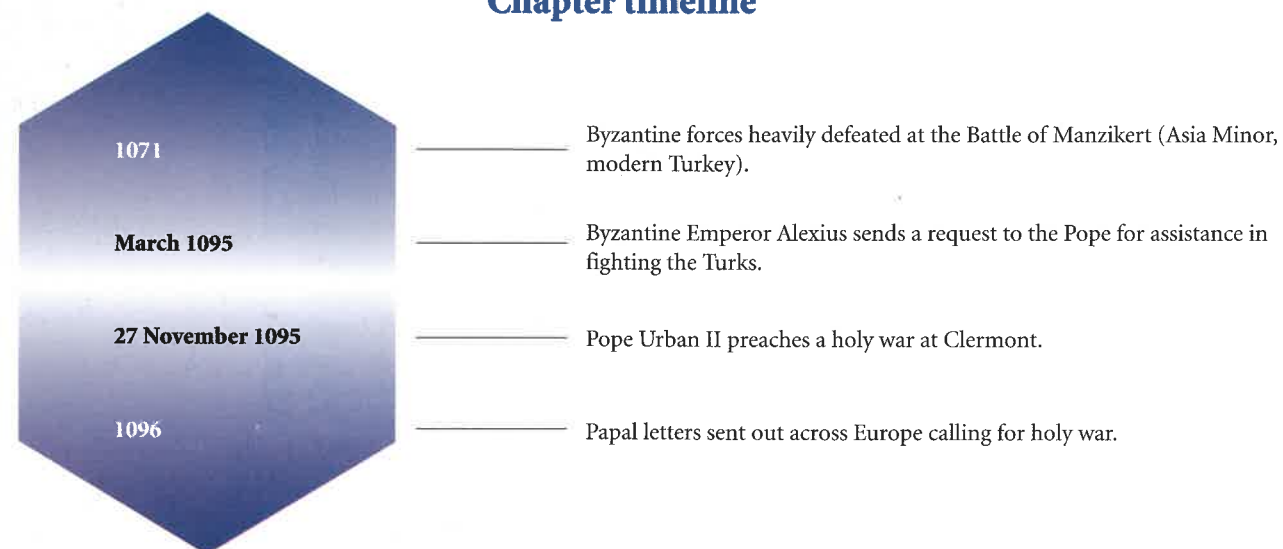
## Holy Land

The region that included Jerusalem – the Holy City where Jesus was crucified – and the towns of Bethlehem and Nazareth, plus the areas of Jordan and Galilee. All were held in high esteem by the Christian West.

## Introduction

At Clermont in France on 27 November 1095, Pope Urban II preached a holy war against the 'heathens' and 'unbelievers' in the Middle East who were apparently responsible for the destruction of the Christian churches, especially the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, site of the crucifixion. The response across western Europe was unprecedented; tens of thousands of people from all classes set out to liberate the **Holy Land** in a movement that was to become known as the crusades.

## Chapter timeline



The motives of the Pope were complex. He had received a request from the Byzantine Emperor Alexius I in Constantinople for help in fighting the Turks, but Urban had little

intention of sending an army to help the Emperor. Urban's reasons for launching the crusade included the following, which were designed to increase the power of the papacy:

- The Investiture Contest (see page 12) had damaged the reputation of the papacy. Rome had been sacked by Norman troops in 1085 and Holy Roman Emperor Henry IV had installed an alternative pope, Clement III, to do his bidding.
- Rather than helping the Byzantine Empire, Urban wanted a Christian army to reconquer the Holy Land for Rome, and to extend Roman influence into the eastern Mediterranean.
- By launching a general invasion of the East, he would be seen to be the greatest leader in Europe, above princes and emperors.
- The papacy would now increase its political status in Europe, building on the reforms of previous popes and exploiting Pope Gregory's victory over Emperor Henry IV at Canossa in 1076.
- Urban's appeal for a crusade specifically targeted the nobility of France and northern Europe. This would divert the violence of the warring European kingdoms and principalities and create peace within Europe.
- The nobles themselves had a variety of motives. These were chiefly spiritual, but desire for material gain and the acquisition of land were also important. Urban carefully orchestrated a propaganda campaign to whip up war-fever and appeal to the spiritual desire and fighting spirit of the nobles.

Urban deliberately drew on the established Christian tradition of the pilgrimage, but he also added the philosophy of the 'holy war', which justified the killing of other human beings. This thinking in western Christian theology was not new, but when it was combined with the political reforms of the papacy in the decades before the Council of Clermont, and Pope Gregory's victory over Emperor Henry IV at Canossa, and now the pilgrimage, it became explosive material indeed.

## KEY ISSUES

- What help did Emperor Alexius request in 1095?
- What did Pope Urban II preach at Clermont in 1095?
- What were Urban II's aims in launching the First Crusade?
- How significant was the pilgrimage to Jerusalem?
- What was the 'holy war'?



**Figure 2.1** The Byzantine Emperor Alexius Comnenus, whose appeal to Pope Urban II in 1095 triggered the First Crusade.

### What help did Emperor Alexius request in 1095?

In March 1095 Pope Urban held a council at Piacenza, Italy, to deal with matters of Church reforms. At the council, envoys sent from the Byzantine Emperor Alexius requested aid to help him fight off the Seljuk Turks who were ravaging Asia Minor, the borders of the Byzantine Empire. Alexius' request deliberately exaggerated the threat from the Muslims. It also mentioned Jerusalem, since he knew that any mention of the Holy City would be sure to attract the attention of the Christian West.

### How threatened was the Byzantine Empire in 1095?

The Byzantines had been defeated in 1071 by Sultan Alp Arslan at the Battle of Manzikert in eastern Anatolia (modern Turkey). Under Sultan Malik Shah (1077–92) the Byzantines had been driven out of the eastern regions of Anatolia, and the Turks were now encroaching further west, towards the Byzantine capital of Constantinople itself. The death of Malik Shah and Emperor Alexius' treaty with Kilij Arslan in 1092 gave the Byzantine Empire much-needed breathing space. Alexius was hiring more and more soldiers from western and northern Europe. Norman warriors, the descendants of those Vikings who had settled in northern France, were the favoured mercenaries of the eleventh century. By 1095 therefore, the threat to the Byzantine Empire, although serious, was not necessarily as catastrophic as Alexius depicted it at the Council at Piacenza.

### Were relations between Rome and Byzantium improving?

Alexius' request for help in 1095 also came in the context of improving relations with the papacy in the West. Urban II made efforts to communicate more effectively with Alexius, releasing him in 1089 from the excommunication under which Pope Gregory had placed him. Alexius responded positively and friendly relations were established.

### What did Pope Urban II preach at Clermont in 1095?

In November 1095, Pope Urban II held a council at Clermont, France. The topics discussed consisted mainly of church matters such as corruption, appointments, and the adultery of the King of France. However, on the last day of the Council of Clermont, 27 November, Urban made an extraordinary speech. In the fields outside the town, he addressed thousands of people, telling them of the slaughter and oppression of Christians in the East by the Muslims. He told them how churches had been attacked and damaged and how the rich and

#### Source

**A** There are four accounts of Urban's speech at Clermont. None of them is unquestionably reliable, as they were all written several years after the event and they differ from one another. However, they do agree on the supposed atrocities committed by the Muslims and on the urgent need for assistance from the West. This extract is taken from Robert of Rheims' account of Urban's speech (written before 1108):

... a foreign race, a race absolutely alien to God ... has invaded the land of the Christians, has reduced the people with sword, **rapine** and flame and has carried off some as captives to its own land, has cut down others by pitiable murder and has ... completely **razed** the churches of God to the ground...

the poor in the West could now help their brothers and end civil war in their own countries by going to the Holy Land. The response was massive; his speech was interrupted by shouts of 'God wills it!' and hundreds pushed forward to take the cross, cutting up garments in the shape of crosses and attaching them to their shoulders in imitation of Christ.

#### ACTIVITY

##### Enquiries

- 1 What does Source A mean by 'a race absolutely alien to God'?
- 2 According to Source A, what language does Urban use to stir people's emotions into fighting for the Holy Land?

### What were Urban II's aims in launching the First Crusade?

#### Planning and papal propaganda

Although the popular response to Urban's speech was undoubtedly spontaneous, its preaching had been extremely well planned. The request from Alexius in March served as a useful tool and Urban exaggerated the horrors in the East just as Alexius had done in order to get the response he wanted. The speech at Clermont was a calculated attempt by Urban, a Cluniac reformer, to assert papal power and authority not only over western European leaders and people, but to assert the influence of Rome onto the Byzantine and Muslim East. At Clermont, **Bishop Adhemar of Le Puy**, who was to become the leader of the crusade, stepped forward to take the cross first; he knew exactly what Urban was going to say. The powerful Count of Toulouse, Raymond of St Gilles, sent messengers declaring his willingness to join the crusade on 1 December; again, he knew what Urban was planning before the speech. In the new year of 1096, Urban toured northern France to seek recruits, writing letters requesting support. His preaching coincided with saints' days and important festivals to guarantee a high turn-out.

#### BIOGRAPHY

##### Bishop Adhemar of Le Puy

The spiritual leader of the First Crusade, Adhemar was papal legate, which meant that he had full powers of the pope in the pope's absence. He died from disease after the capture of Antioch in 1098. After this, the leadership of the crusade passed into secular hands. Successive popes attempted to regain control of the crusading movement after this, but without success.

#### Source

**B** From Urban's speech at Clermont in 1095, reported by Baldric of Bourgueil (written 1108):

Christian blood, which has been redeemed by the blood of Christ, is spilled and Christian flesh, flesh of Christ's flesh, is delivered up to execrable abuses and appalling servitude...

### ACTIVITY

#### Enquiries

- 1 What is in the language and the tone of Source B that would stir up religious hatred?
- 2 Compare Sources A and B as evidence for Pope Urban's propaganda campaign to encourage support for the crusade.

### Comparing sources

- Read each source and make a list of points where they agree and disagree.
- Consider which source tells you more about Urban's propaganda.
- Look at the author and the date of the source: is it contemporary and what is the writer's point of view? (i.e. is it a papal source or someone else?)
- Make a judgement about which source is more useful regarding Urban's propaganda.

### ACTIVITY

#### Period Studies: class discussion

Was the appeal for the crusade spontaneous or planned by Pope Urban?

Divide into two groups, each taking a viewpoint. Find evidence from the sources and your own knowledge to support your argument and prepare a short class presentation of 400 words.

## How significant was the pilgrimage to Jerusalem?

To medieval Christians, Jerusalem was the centre of the world: it was a site sanctified by the crucifixion, the main focus of the Christian religion. It was familiar to people through psalms, songs and **relics**, and they were taught that it would be the place of the Last Judgement for all Christians.

As well as exaggerating the horrors in the East, Urban carefully manipulated his appeal towards the recapture of Jerusalem. This turned out to be the greatest way of getting recruits. When Emperor Alexius mentioned the Holy City in his request for help, he had been fully aware that this would increase its appeal in the West, though his plan was simply to regain Byzantine territory in Asia Minor. Urban probably made no mention of Jerusalem in his speech at Clermont – the original speech talked of the restoration of the 'eastern churches' – but so great was the popular pressure that by 1096 Jerusalem had become the main goal. Very quickly then, either at or soon after Urban's speech, the aim of the crusade was Jerusalem, not, as Emperor Alexius had thought, to send a few thousand soldiers to Constantinople to help him regain land in Asia Minor.

By turning the objective towards Jerusalem, Urban was drawing upon a deep well of Christian belief: the pilgrimage. Completing a pilgrimage, to Rome, Santiago de Compostela (Spain) or Jerusalem, would grant the pilgrim remission of **penance**.

relic

a religious object such as the bones or clothes of a saint, or even part of the cross on which Jesus was crucified (the 'True Cross'). Touching or kissing a relic was believed to cure illness and cleanse sins. Holy relics were stored in ornate boxes known as reliquaries. If an oath was sworn over one of these it made the oath even more binding.



Figure 2.2 Jerusalem, the Holy City, is important to Christians, Jews and Muslims.

Jerusalem was a magical place in the medieval Christian mind, the very pinnacle of Christian devotion. It was the place of the crucifixion of Christ. No other relics or holy sites – even Rome – could compete. The heavenly city had gates of sapphire, walls bright with precious stones – or so the Bible said. For most people, there was little distinction between the real city and the city of eternal bliss. It was for many heaven on earth – literally.

### Sources

**C** From Pope Urban's speech at Clermont in 1095, reported by Baldric of Bourgueil (written in 1108):

*It ought to be a beautiful ideal for you to die for Christ in that city where Christ died for you [Jerusalem], but if it should happen that you should die here, you may be sure that it will be as if you had died on the way, provided, that is, Christ finds you in his company of knights...*

**D** From Jonathan Phillips, *The Crusades, 1095–1197*:

*The holy city was such a potent image that the pope could not have used it as a decoy solely to help the Greeks and to facilitate a union with the Orthodox Church. It was the ideas of liberating the Christians of the Levant [the Middle East] and the city of Jerusalem that stirred the hearts and minds of those who planned the expedition and those who took the cross. Furthermore, by intending to recapture Christ's patrimony the crusade had a just cause, which ... was a prerequisite for the justification of Christian violence.*

Phillips, J. (2002). *The Crusades, 1095–1197*. Harlow: Longman

### penance

It was believed that after death, entry to heaven was only granted to those whose souls were the purest. Purity was gained through acts of penance such as prayer, devotion to good works, and pilgrimages. All these increased a person's chances of getting to heaven.

**ACTIVITY****Enquiries**

- 1 Why does Source C say that if, when you die, 'Christ finds you in his company of knights' it will be the same as if you died on the way to Jerusalem? How would this encourage people to join the crusade?
- 2 Compare Sources C and D as evidence for the significance of Jerusalem as the crusade's destination.

**Who went on the pilgrimage?**

People had been going on pilgrimages to Jerusalem for centuries before Urban's speech at Clermont, ever since the year 333, when a pilgrim from Bordeaux reached Palestine. Christian pilgrimages to Jerusalem reached a peak in 1033, the millennium of Jesus' crucifixion. Jerusalem had become part of the Islamic world in the seventh century; it was a holy city to Islam because it was the site of Muhammad's ascension to heaven, but Christian pilgrims were allowed entry. Monasteries and hospices were built throughout Europe along the pilgrims' route. Pilgrimage was a way of doing penance for sins; it was dangerous and difficult, but the stream of pilgrims was continuous. Men of violence such as Fulk Nerra ('the Black'), Count of Anjou and Robert 'the Devil', Duke of Normandy, suddenly found themselves filled with remorse and guilt at the horrors of their violent lives, and set off to travel thousands of miles to Jerusalem. Fulk returned home to France, where he founded an abbey, but Robert died on the way back, leaving a seven-year-old son, who later became known as William the Conqueror, to become duke of Normandy.

**Case study: the pilgrimage of Swegn Godwinsson (1051/2)**

Swegn was the eldest son of Earl Godwin of Wessex, the most powerful man in England after the King, Edward the Confessor. Swegn had a notorious violent streak and after abducting a nun from Leominster and keeping her as a sex slave, he was banished from the royal court. After some years he returned, but very soon murdered his cousin Beorn. After this, the King declared him *nothing*, outcast and outlaw. Swegn clearly had a conscience, because he chose to go to Jerusalem on the pilgrimage to atone for his sins and died on the journey. He was not a pleasant character, but even he saw the pilgrimage as a path to redemption.

**Why was the pilgrimage becoming more difficult?**

The pilgrimage was seen as the climax to the Christian life on earth. However, by the middle of the eleventh century the journey to Jerusalem was becoming increasingly difficult now that much of Asia Minor and all of Palestine were part of the Muslim world. In 1009 the church of the Holy Sepulchre had been destroyed, and when Bishop Gunther of Bamberg led a party of 7000 pilgrims to Jerusalem in 1064 they were attacked by Muslims and had to defend themselves for several days. It was felt in the West that the time had come for new measures to protect and defend Christian pilgrims and the holy churches.



**Figure 2.3** The Mappa Mundi ('map of the world') dating from the later thirteenth century, shows Jerusalem at the centre of the world, reflecting the medieval world view.

## Sources

**E** Guibert of Nogent, writing before 1108, gives an account of Urban's speech at Clermont:

*If you consider that you ought to take great pains to make a pilgrimage to the graves of the apostles or to the shrines of any other saints, what expense of spirit can you refuse in order to rescue, and make a pilgrimage to, the cross, the blood, the Sepulchre? Now we are proposing that you should fight wars which contain the glorious reward of martyrdom, in which you can gain the title of present and eternal glory.*

**F** A letter from Pope Urban II to French counts and their knights (1096–99):

*No one must doubt that if he dies on this expedition for the love of God and his brothers his sins will surely be forgiven and he will gain a share of eternal life through the most compassionate mercy of our God.*

## ACTIVITY

## Enquiries

- 1 What does Source E mean by 'the graves of the apostles'?
- 2 According to Source E, what was Urban offering to the pilgrims if they went to Jerusalem?
- 3 Compare Sources E and F as evidence for the rewards granted on the pilgrimage to Jerusalem. (See page 66 for guidance on comparing sources.)

## What was the 'holy war'?

At Clermont, Pope Urban preached a holy war against the infidel (unbeliever). The idea of the holy war was not new. It had its roots in the 'just war' theory based on the defence or right to recover a rightful possession, a doctrine proposed by **St Augustine** 700 years earlier.

## BIOGRAPHY

## St Augustine of Hippo (354–430)

Born in North Africa, Augustine was a philosopher and theologian of profound importance in the history of western Christianity. He developed the view that the Church was a City of God, distinct from the City of Man. This view shaped medieval thinking for a thousand years.

Augustine's writings included works on original sin and just war. Just war, he proposed, required the authority of the state, it must occur for good and just purposes rather than self-gain, and love must remain a central theme even in the midst of violence. The Augustinian order of monks named themselves after Augustine, using a Rule based on his writings.

More recently than St Augustine, popes had begun to use the idea of holy war on several occasions:

- In the ninth century, Popes Leo IV and John VIII promised eternal life to Christians who fell in battle against the Arabs or the Vikings. This was a war against the heathen, an imperial duty to recover land and property that were rightfully theirs.
- In 1053, Pope Leo IX gathered an army to fight the Normans of Sicily who were attacking papal lands. Leo offered his German troops exemption from punishment for their crimes and remission of penance (it didn't help much – he was defeated and captured).
- In 1075, Pope Gregory VII had gathered a group of knights known as the *milites sancti Petri* (the knights of St Peter), to enforce papal policy. He also encouraged the Christians in Spain in their fight against the Muslims (the *reconquista*). Gregory had also had plans to lead an expedition to the Holy Land in 1074.
- More controversially, in 1066 Pope Alexander II gave his blessing to the Norman Conquest of England by sending a papal banner to Duke William of Normandy prior to his invasion. William argued that the English King Harold was a perjurer and usurper and that the English Church needed reform; the papal support was a huge morale booster and encouraged many thousands to join William's invading army.

## The 'reconquista' (reconquest)

After the Muslims had been forced back into central Spain from France in the early eighth century, Christians had fought to recover all of Spain and Portugal. In 1085 a major advance had been achieved with the capture of the Muslim-held city of Toledo by King Alfonso VI of Leon-Castile. Progress was slow. Lisbon was captured in 1147, but it was not until the 1490s that the reconquest of Spain and Portugal was completed.

## How radical a concept was the 'armed pilgrimage'?

At the Council of Clermont in November 1095, Pope Urban combined the long-established tradition of the pilgrimage to Jerusalem with the appeal for military aid from Emperor Alexius. The result was an innovative and radical combination of the pilgrimage and the military campaign to defend the Holy Land, perhaps the natural conclusion of the Cluniac reforms. From this combination arose the idea of the warrior pilgrim. Before 1095, pilgrims had been peaceful travellers on a journey of penitential prayer and salvation, but the crusaders carried weapons. The crusade was to be an armed pilgrimage, an idea formed out of centuries of pilgrimage. Indeed, medieval people had no word for 'crusade'; they simply called it the *peregrination* – pilgrimage – or the *iter in terram sanctam* ('journey into the Holy Land').

This was a radical concept. Both holy war and pilgrimage were well established, but Urban combined the two for the first time with great effect.

## Source

**G** From *The Crusades*, by H.E. Mayer:

*The crusader carried weapons. A crusade was a pilgrimage but an armed pilgrimage which was granted special privileges by the Church and which was held to be specially meritorious. The crusade was the logical extension of the pilgrimage.*

Mayer, H. E. (1988). *The Crusades*. New York: Oxford University Press.

**ACTIVITY****Enquiries**

What does Source G mean by saying that the crusade was the 'logical extension of the pilgrimage'?

**What was the Peace of God movement?**

At Clermont, Pope Urban had had another reason for creating a holy war and sending many thousands of knights to fight in the Holy Land. The Church was determined to reverse what it perceived as the breakdown of society in many parts of western Europe. The papacy had made repeated attempts to make peace. Several accounts of Urban's speech at Clermont mention in detail the violence committed by Christians against fellow Christians. It was felt that Christians should stop fighting one another and unite against the infidel. The papacy had attempted to end the violence before 1095 in what was called the Peace of God movement, which reflected the growing papal intervention in political life. The Peace of God movement began around 1000 and attempted to stop the violence in several ways:

- Local nobility started making agreements not to attack churches, unarmed persons and clergymen.
- By 1040, fighting was forbidden on certain days of the week.
- 'Assemblies of peace' met to swear oaths to keep the peace, and 'leagues of peace' composed of clergymen and noblemen enforced those promises.
- At the heart of this was the monastery of Cluny, which was drawing the Church ever closer to the secular world, directing and channelling the forces of violence.
- For Pope Urban, a Cluniac monk, it seemed logical to take this idea one step further and send the violence out of Europe and into the Muslim Middle East.

**Sources**

**H** From Guibert of Nogent, describing Pope Urban's speech at Clermont in 1095 and how he criticised the civil wars between Christian warriors (written before 1108):

*Until now you have fought unjust wars; you have often savagely brandished your spears at each other in mutual carnage only out of greed and pride, for which you deserve eternal destruction and the certain ruin of damnation! Now we are proposing that you should fight wars which contain the glorious reward of martyrdom, in which you can gain the title of present and eternal glory.*

**I** Pope Urban's speech at Clermont in 1095, from an account by Baldric of Bourgeuil (1108):

*You have strapped on the belt of knighthood and strut around with pride in your eye. You butcher your brothers and create factions among yourselves. This, which scatters the sheepfold of the Redeemer, is not the knighthood of Christ ... if you want to take counsel for your souls you must either cast off as quickly as possible the belt of this sort of knighthood or go forward boldly as knights of Christ, hurrying swiftly to defend the Eastern Church.*

**ACTIVITY****Enquiries**

- 1 What does Source H mean by 'unjust wars'?
- 2 How does Urban attempt to put an end to the violence between Christian knights, according to Source H?
- 3 Compare Sources H and I as evidence for Pope Urban's appeal to the knights to fight in a holy war.

**Conclusion**

The First Crusade grew directly out of the papal reforms of the mid-eleventh century and acknowledged the deeply-rooted warrior cult in western Europe. The tradition of the pilgrimage was long-established and so was the concept of holy war. Pope Urban II launched the First Crusade for the following reasons:

- A Cluniac reformer himself, Pope Urban looked back to the reforming popes Leo IX and Gregory VII. He seized the moment to capitalise on the perceived weakness of the Byzantine Empire and turn its appeal for aid to Rome's advantage.
- He knew the power of the pilgrimage and the potency of Jerusalem in the minds of the people, but he carefully targeted his appeal at recruiting members of the European nobility to go on the mission to recapture the Holy Land for the Church of Rome.
- As a nobleman, he knew that the appeal would arouse the enthusiasm of the warrior knights of France and Germany.
- As a man of God, he saw this as an opportunity to heal the evils of civil war in Europe and deflect the violence onto the Muslims in the east.

**Review questions****Period Studies**

- 1 Discuss in groups the extent to which Emperor Alexius's appeal for help gave Pope Urban an excuse to launch his own particular crusade.
- 2 Draw up a list of reasons to explain why the city of Jerusalem was so significant to the crusaders.
- 3 Explain how the 'armed pilgrimage' differed from previous holy wars.

**Enquiries**

- 4 Use your own knowledge to assess how far Sources A–H support the interpretation that Urban targeted the knights of Europe when he launched the First Crusade.

**ACTIVITY****Period Studies**

In groups, discuss the following question.

Were Pope Urban's aims mainly political or religious? Consider the following:

- The background of the Cluniac reforms and the papal ambitions to lead Europe
- The importance of the pilgrimage and the theory of holy war
- The feudal warlords and violence within Europe at this time.

# Why did so many people join the First Crusade?

## Key Questions:

In this chapter you will learn:

- Why thousands of peasants and soldiers joined the First Crusade
- How the People's Crusade abused the appeal and was destroyed
- Why relations between the West and Byzantium were poor

You will also develop the following skills:

- Assessing the language and tone of documents
- Comparing sources and their limitations
- Understanding how the call to holy war affected society
- Applying your knowledge of feudal society to the documents
- Making a judgement on the motives of the first crusaders

## Introduction

Pope Urban's carefully orchestrated propaganda campaign launched at Clermont used highly emotive language and whipped up war-fever. This resulted in a massive wave of recruits for the new holy war, either as armed pilgrims – the new knights of Christ – or as ordinary pilgrims, unarmed and on foot, men and women of all ages. Across Europe, some 60,000 people answered the call to defend the churches in the East and restore the Holy Sepulchre to Christian hands. This was a unique mass movement of spiritual passion that was never repeated. This mass of peasants, women, old men and children as well as the knights was more than Urban wanted for his objective to create a new kingdom of Jerusalem – and it was certainly more than Emperor Alexius of Constantinople had envisaged when he sent his letter requesting military aid in Asia Minor.

The reasons for such a mass of people leaving their homes and families were varied:

- People of all classes were motivated by religious fervour and by penitence for past sins. They also hoped for spiritual reward – Urban had promised that all who participated in the crusade would be exempt from earthly penance.
- Political reasons were important to the leaders, as representatives of the pope in the Holy Land. The papacy was increasing its political power, and it was good to be seen as its ally.
- Territory was important to some of the knights and princes who had nothing in Europe; others were attracted by the prospect of booty and plunder.

## Sources

**A** From the *Deeds of the Franks* [French] (anonymous, 1100):

*And when this speech had already begun to be noised abroad, little by little, through all the regions and countries of Gaul [France], the Franks, upon hearing such reports, forthwith caused crosses to be sewed on their right shoulders, saying that they followed with one accord the footsteps of Christ, by which they had been redeemed from the hand of hell.*

**B** From Albert of Aachen, writing around 1120:

*Bishops, abbots, clerics and monks set out; next, most noble laymen, and princes of the different kingdoms; then, all the common people, the chaste as well as the sinful, adulterers, murderers, thieves, perjurers and robbers; indeed, every class of the Christian profession, nay, also women and those influenced by the spirit of penance – all joyfully entered upon this expedition ...*

## ACTIVITY

### Enquiries

- 1 Why did people sew crosses on their right shoulders, according to Source A?
- 2 How does Albert of Aachen set out the social orders of medieval people in Source B? Where does he place women?
- 3 What do Sources A and B tell us about the response to Urban's call to arms?
- 4 Compare Sources A and B as evidence for the popular appeal of the crusade. Remember to look at the dates when they were written, and who wrote them. Compare the content to see where they agree and where they differ.

## Who joined the First Crusade?

Pope Urban specifically targeted the knights of France for the armed pilgrimage. His vision was of soldiers of Christ, recruited and led by the Church for the holy war, extending the boundaries of Christendom. Urban was from the nobility and he understood the aristocratic world very well; his call would appeal to the codes of honour and loyalty amongst the knightly classes. He also knew that the crusade needed professional military men, and not unarmed pilgrims, to defeat the Muslims in battle.

## The problem of inheritance

Urban promised that those who went on the crusade would keep possession of any lands they conquered. The traditional view is that this especially appealed to the younger sons of noble families, because of the system of **primogeniture**. Northern Europe was experiencing rising population and constant food shortages. Younger sons of the nobility were a problem to society: they possessed no estates that would occupy their time and produce an income, and as nobles, they did not expect to work for a living. Something had to be found for them to do, and the crusade of 1095 was a solution.

## KEY ISSUES

- Who joined the First Crusade?
- Who were the leaders of the First Crusade?
- Who went on the 'People's Crusade'?
- What was the response of Emperor Alexius to the main crusade?

## primogeniture

In northern France, only the eldest son inherited the family lands. Other sons got nothing. They could go into the Church, marry an heiress or join a nobleman's household as a soldier. In this way, the family estate remained intact, rather than being divided amongst many brothers. A woman could only inherit her father's property if there were no male heirs, including cousins, which was rare.

### The Norman Conquest of England

The Norman Conquest of England in 1066 had demonstrated that a wholesale redistribution of land ownership from one class of people – the Anglo-Saxon ‘thegns’ (landowners) – to another – the Norman knights – could be achieved in twenty years. William the Conqueror had gained approval for his invasion of England from Pope Alexander, which gave the invasion a sense of holy war. Certainly, some of the leaders of the First Crusade personified this desire for land and plunder. Notable examples were Robert, Duke of Normandy (son of William the Conqueror) and the Normans from southern Italy, Bohemond of Taranto and his nephew Tancred, one of eleven brothers – a classic example of younger sons of the nobility striving for a living.



**Figure 3.1** This scene from the Battle of Hastings (1066) in the Bayeux Tapestry (made around 1075) shows exactly how the knights of the First Crusade would have looked in battle. They wore helmets and mail coats (hauberks), and carried swords, lances and shields.

### The Normans in Italy and Greece

At the same time they were conquering England, Norman warriors were also engaged in warfare on the fringes of the Byzantine Empire. In 1071 they captured Bari in southern Italy, the last Byzantine stronghold, under the leadership of Robert Guiscard, before going on to attack the Greek mainland itself. Alexius had to request help from the Venetians, which promoted long-lasting Venetian commercial interests in the eastern Mediterranean. Robert Guiscard's eldest son was Bohemond, the most feared Norman warrior. He was besieging Amalfi when he took the cross, clearly seeing the crusade as an opportunity to extend his territory. The Normans went on to carve out a kingdom in southern Italy and Sicily by 1100.

### How far were land- and fortune-hunting a reality?

Urban's appeal to the nobles was made in the knowledge that when a feudal lord took the cross, his armed followers – who could amount to several hundred, depending on the status of the lord – had no choice but to go with him. The traditional historians' view was that land-hunger and plunder were what motivated men to go on the crusade, but the lord had to provide them all with arms and armour and supplies for the journey, which was a ruinously expensive business. The cost of chain mail, armour, horses and weapons amounted to several years' income for most knights. To ease the financial burden, the expense was usually shared by the family networks of fathers, sons, brothers, uncles and cousins. An example of an entire family unit taking the cross was the Monthéry family, who included the father, son, brother-in-law, and five nephews, one of whom went on to become King Baldwin II of Jerusalem.

As well as the huge financial cost, there was the potential danger to a crusader's home, lands and family during the crusade. The Church promised to protect a crusader's property in his absence, but in fact lands were seized, and property and family attacked. Wives and daughters were especially vulnerable in a society where women were seen as possessions and marriage was a means of acquiring property. News of the death of a crusader left his widow unprotected, and abduction was not uncommon.

The pilgrimage to Jerusalem would be far more arduous and dangerous than people expected. However, the crusaders did not see themselves as settlers, and most intended to return home once their job was done. The promise of land was an incentive to some, but it was the spiritual reward (see page 19 for information about penance), the **remission of sins** and the prospect of going to heaven (outlined in Chapter 2) that would propel tens of thousands of people across Europe and into the East over the next three years.

#### remission of sins

In Christianity, a priest's formal pronouncement of forgiveness of the sins of a person who has expressed repentance. For the crusaders, the act of taking the cross and going on the crusade was an expression of repentance.

#### ACTIVITY

##### Enquiries

Use your own knowledge to assess how far the sources on page 30 support the interpretation that crusaders were motivated by a place in heaven.

#### ACTIVITY

##### Period Studies

How important a reason was material gain (land, plunder and wealth) to the crusaders?

## Sources

**C** This charter (agreement) between brothers Odo and Bernard with the Abbey of Cluny illustrates the dangers of the crusade and also the threat to their property during their absence.

*We, Bernard and Odo, brothers, for the remission of our sins, setting out with all the others on the journey to Jerusalem, have made over for 100 solidi [gold coins] to Artald, deacon of London, a manor known as Busart ... We are making this arrangement on the condition that if, in the course of the pilgrimage that we are undertaking, because we are mortal and may be taken by death, the manor, in its entirety, may remain under the control of St Peter and the monastery of Cluny. ... If, however, another lays claim to this gift, not only is it protected from that which is sought, but may he suffer every curse and perpetual excommunication from God and the holy apostles for his sins ...*

Charter from the Abbey of Cluny, 1096 (translated by J. Phillips)

**D** This charter shows not only Duke Odo's motivation for going on the crusade, but also his awareness of the possibility that he may not return and his preparations for death.

*We wish it to be known to those present and to those of future generations that Duke Odo of Burgundy, fired by divine zeal and love of Christianity, wishes to go to Jerusalem with all the others of the Christians, but before setting out, it should be clearly known that if, at the end of his journey, his strength does not enable him to return with the multitude, then after his death, whenever it is known, he has granted to God and to St Mary the village of Marcenay, to be held in hereditary possession.*

Charter from the Abbey of Molesme, c.1100 (translated by J. Phillips)

**E** Anna Comnena was the daughter of Emperor Alexius. She was deeply suspicious of the crusaders generally, convinced that their motives were greed and a desire to capture Constantinople.

*Others of the Latins [crusaders], such as Bohemund and men of like mind, who had long cherished a desire for the Roman Empire [Byzantium], and wished to win it for themselves, found a pretext in Peter's preaching, as I have said, deceived the more single-minded, caused this great upheaval and were selling their own estates under the pretence that they were marching against the Turks to redeem the Holy Sepulchre.*

Anna Comnena's *Alexiad* (Book 10), written around 1100

**F** From H.E. Mayer, *The Crusades*:

*Naturally not all crusaders were moved by piety. In the Middle Ages too there were sceptics and the motives for going on crusade were many, various and tangled, often social and economic in character. But the offer of indulgence must have had an irresistible attraction for those who did not doubt the Church's teaching, who believed in the reality of the penalties due to sin ... such believers must have made a up a great part of those who went on the First Crusade.*

Mayer, H.E. (1988). *The Crusades*. New York: Oxford University Press.

## Who were the leaders of the First Crusade?

Urban addressed his appeal to the senior nobility of western Europe, specifically to those in France and Flanders. No king was asked to lead the crusade because this was a papal expedition. The political leaders in northern Europe were not united in the face of a common religious foe. The Holy Roman Emperor Henry IV, although he had submitted to Pope Gregory at Canossa in 1076, was still excommunicated and was not invited on the crusade. Urban did not invite King Philip I of France along to the party either, because

## BIOGRAPHIES

### Godfrey of Bouillon

Godfrey was a member of one of the most ancient and senior families of Europe, descended from Charlemagne. He was offered the throne of Jerusalem in 1099 but refused, becoming instead 'Advocate of the Holy Sepulchre'. He died in 1100, a year later.

### Baldwin of Boulogne

A tall man and a great warrior, Baldwin was the brother of Godfrey of Bouillon. He founded the county of Edessa on the way to Jerusalem in 1098, and became king of Jerusalem on his brother's death in 1100. He extended the boundaries of the kingdom into the Transjordan and captured several cities on the coast.

### Count Hugh of France

Brother of King Philip I of France, Hugh was shipwrecked on the way to Constantinople. He was rescued by the Byzantine imperial troops and kept under house-arrest until he agreed to swear the oath to the emperor. Hugh died at Tarsus in 1101 whilst campaigning against the Turks.

### Duke Robert of Normandy

Eldest son of William the Conqueror, Robert inherited Normandy but his younger brother William became king of England. Robert was nicknamed 'curt-hose' (short-legs) and never lived up to his father's legendary status. He proved to be a successful crusader, but on his return to Normandy in 1100 he went to war against his brother Henry, who had seized the throne of England. Robert was captured by Henry in 1106 and imprisoned until his death in 1134.

### Robert of Flanders

A leading nobleman who was with the crusade all the way to Jerusalem and returned with honour to Europe in 1100.

### Stephen of Blois

Son-in-law of William the Conqueror by his marriage to William's daughter Adèle, Stephen proved to be weak. He deserted the crusade at Antioch but was sent back by his formidable wife, only to be killed in a battle in 1102. His son Stephen was king of England from 1135 to 1154.

### Raymond of Toulouse (later known as Raymond of Tripoli)

Raymond was a senior leader of the military crusade and a close associate of Pope Urban. He intended never to return to France and established the county of Tripoli in the north of the kingdom after the capture of Jerusalem. He died in 1105.

### Bohemond of Taranto

The most feared and famed warrior of the crusade. Bohemond was a Norman from southern Italy who had already been at war with the Byzantine Empire in the 1080s. Tall, with a broad chest and strong arms, he terrified Constantinople. In 1098 he set up the principality of Antioch, not bothering to complete the pilgrimage to Jerusalem. He was at war with the Greeks again in 1108 and died in southern Italy in 1111.

Philip had been excommunicated in 1094 for throwing his wife out of the family home. The king of England, William II, was busily consolidating his father's conquest and was very little inclined towards Church reforms (quite the opposite: he was homosexual, which was a grave sin in the eyes of the Church, and frequently left church appointments open so as to get extra income). Such division did not bode well for the Christian world as a whole. However, it actually suited Urban's purposes because it enabled him to set himself above the nobles of Europe without fear of a royal or imperial rival.

The men whom Urban invited to join the crusade included some of the greatest nobles of northern Europe, such as **Godfrey of Bouillon**, Duke of Lorraine; his brother Count **Baldwin of Boulogne**; **Count Hugh**, brother of the King of France; **Duke Robert of Normandy** (son of William the Conqueror); Count **Robert of Flanders**; Count **Stephen of Blois**; Count **Raymond of Toulouse** and the Norman-Sicilian **Bohemond of Taranto**.

### Who went on the 'People's Crusade'?

Although Urban's appeal was specifically addressed to the nobility of Europe, the reality of the crusade was different. Of the 60,000 people who set out on the crusade in 1096, only 6000 (10 per cent) or so were knights. After Urban's speech at Clermont, preachers went out all across Europe and began to preach that those who took up the Cross would have all their sins remitted for eternity. This was rather more than Urban had actually offered, which was that earthly penance rather than total penance after death would be remitted. Urban tried to limit the appeal of the crusade to the south-west, central and northern areas of France, whilst persuading those in the south-east to remain behind to defend Christendom. (It would be unwise for all the leaders to depart, leaving no one to repel possible counter-attacks from the Muslim world.) The preachers spread the message far and wide, sometimes taking over the agenda entirely. The best-known of these was Peter the Hermit, a Frenchman who preached in northern France and into the German territories with great success.

#### Source

**G** **Guibert of Nogent, History of Jerusalem, 1108:**

*The common people became followers of a certain Peter the Hermit. Unless I am mistaken, he came from Amiens in France, and had led the life of a hermit. He travelled through cities and towns to preach, and was surrounded by such crowds of people, given such gifts, and so acclaimed for his holiness, that I remember no one ever having been held in such honour. Whatever he did or said was regarded as divine.*

These preachers also introduced **anti-Semitic** elements into their appeals. When the non-combatant crusaders set off earlier than the official departure date of August 1096, they were poorly provisioned. As a result, they pillaged lands on their way through Germany, often attacking wealthy Jewish communities who of course were non-Christian and thus were seen as 'infidels' on a par with the Muslims occupying Jerusalem. One of these crusading groups massacred the Jews of Speyer, Mainz, Trier and Cologne, twisting the Pope's call to kill the infidel to mean killing the Jews, and of course then seizing the wealth

of their victims. Many thousands of Jews were either slaughtered or committed suicide to avoid forced conversion in the towns of Worms, Mainz and Prague. This was not part of Pope Urban's aim at all; Jews were supposed to be under the protection of the Church, which forbade forced conversion.

#### Sources

**H** **The Chronicle of Solomon bar Simon, c.1140, describes the attacks on the Jews in Worms (Germany) in 1096–97:**

*They attacked the community of Worms. Those who remained in their homes were set upon by the steppe-wolves who pillaged men, women and infants, children and old people. They pulled down the stairways and destroyed the houses, looting and plundering; and they took the Torah scroll, trampled it in the mud, and tore and burned it. The enemy devoured the children of Israel with open maw.*

**I** **Albert of Aix (12th century) writing of the Jews in Mainz, Germany:**

*The Jews of this city, knowing of the slaughter of their brethren, and that they themselves could not escape the hands of so many, fled in hope of safety to Bishop Rothard. They put an infinite treasure in his guard and trust, having much faith in his protection, because he was Bishop of the city. Then that excellent Bishop cautiously set aside the incredible amount of money received from them. He placed the Jews in the very spacious hall of his own house, that they might remain safe and sound in a very secure and strong place.*

#### ACTIVITY

##### Enquiries

- 1 Read Source H. What does the author mean by the 'steppe-wolves'?
- 2 Why did they trample the Torah scroll into the mud?
- 3 Compare Sources H and I as evidence for the attacks on the Jews. Where do they agree or differ in their authorship and content?

### What happened to the People's Crusade?

The main problem was feeding the thousands of unauthorised pilgrims as they rampaged through Germany and Hungary on their way to Constantinople. Many thousands of Christians were also killed as they rioted over food shortages. The People's Crusade, as it has become known, was transported to Asia Minor by the Byzantine Emperor Alexius in August 1096 – no doubt he was keen to send them on their way as quickly as possible. In October the remaining pilgrims were wiped out near Nicaea (modern Iznik). Peter the Hermit survived and returned to Constantinople to await the official, military crusade.

#### anti-Semitic

Showing hostility or prejudice towards Jews (Semites). Attacks, or pogroms, fired hatred towards the Jews of central Europe which raged on and off for hundreds of years, reaching a dreadful climax in the Holocaust in the twentieth century.

## Sources

**J** Anna Comnena, describes the massacre of the People's Crusade:

... when the mention of plunder and riches was heard, they straightway set out in tumult on the road which leads to Nicaea, forgetful of their military training and of observing discipline in going out to battle. For the Latins [westerners] are not only most fond of riches, as we said above, but when they give themselves to raiding any region for plunder, are also no longer obedient to reason, or any other check. Accordingly, since they were neither keeping order nor forming into lines, they fell into the ambush of the Turks around Draco and were wretchedly cut to pieces. Indeed, so great a multitude of Gauls [French] and Normans were cut down by the Ishmaelite sword that when the dead bodies of the killed, which were lying all about in the place, were brought together, they made a very great mound, or hill, or lookout place, lofty as a mountain ...

Anna Comnena, *The Alexiad*, Book 10

**K** Raymond of Aguilers, writing around 1100, was in the Provençal army of Raymond of Toulouse, and was an eyewitness:

We recognised, then, that the Emperor had betrayed Peter the Hermit, who had long before come to Constantinople with a great multitude. For he compelled him, ignorant of the locality and of all military matters, to cross the Strait with his men and exposed them to the Turks. Moreover, when the Turks from Nicaea saw that unwarlike multitude, they cut them down without effort and delay to the number of sixty thousand.

## ACTIVITY

## Enquiries

- 1 Why, according to Anna Comnena in Source J, did the People's Crusade set out for Nicaea?
- 2 Compare sources J and K as evidence for the failure of the People's Crusade.

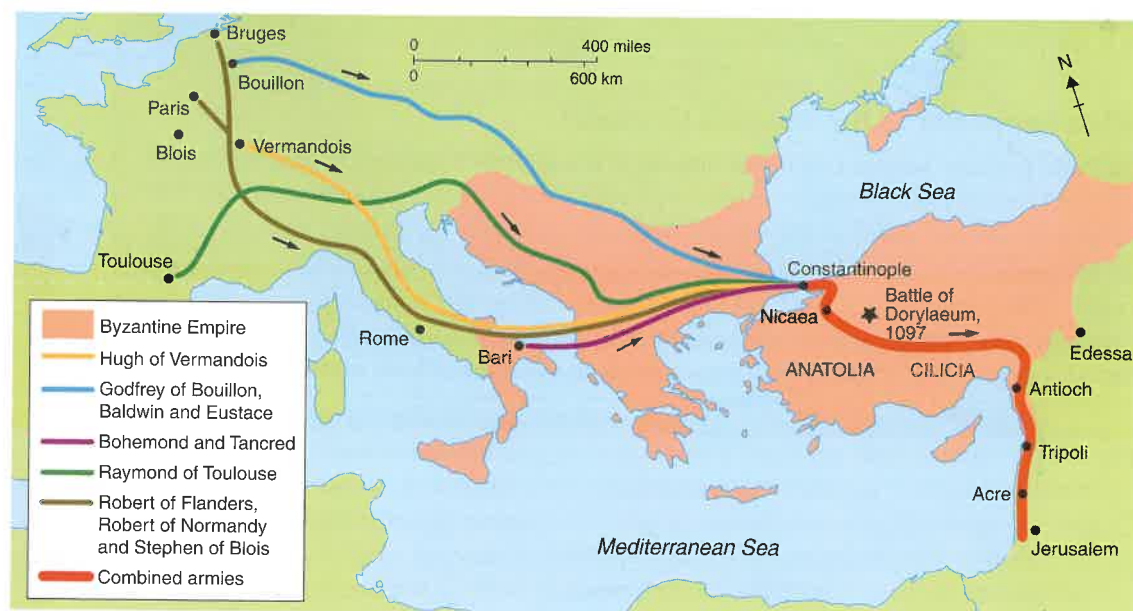


Figure 3.2 The routes taken by the first crusaders, 1096–99.

## What was the response of Emperor Alexius to the main crusade?

The crusaders moved across Europe in regional contingents, with the intention of assembling at Constantinople. When he learnt of the thousands of people on their way to Constantinople, Emperor Alexius was not exactly overjoyed, especially since most of them were peasants in need of food. This was not what he had asked Pope Urban to send him.

The arrival of the People's Crusade was not an encouraging prospect, and the news that the deadly enemy of Byzantium, Bohemond of Taranto, was one of its leaders, filled the Greeks with apprehension. Bohemond had, after all, spent many years at war with the Greeks. Alexius had only asked Pope Urban to send a few thousand knights to join the Byzantine forces in the combat zone of Asia Minor. He had expected things to follow the usual pattern: he would pay them and they would retain their individual leaders and national identity, as had happened often in the past.

## What were the cultural differences of the crusader army?

The armies of the great western European nobles arrived at Constantinople in late 1096 to early 1097. They were barely friendly towards one another, let alone the Byzantines. They had been recruited by, and remained with, their local and regional feudal lords. Differences in the dozens of languages and dialects across France, Flanders and Germany led to tensions and even though the papal legate, Adhemar of Le Puy, was technically the overall leader, it was virtually impossible for him to handle all the internal disputes.

Emperor Alexius was understandably concerned that this rabble would turn on his own great city, and he treated the tens of thousands of crusaders as potentially dangerous from the very beginning. It was, in a sense, an invasion by barbarians from the West. The crude, illiterate warriors from the damp, muddy hovels and basic stone fortresses of western Europe were overawed by the glittering spires and palaces of the Greek capital, and there was a real fear within the imperial city that the western barbarians would attack Constantinople. Alexius immediately posted coastguards to intercept lone ships straying away from the western fleet and suspended delivery of food supplies whenever the crusaders' behaviour grew violent. This only increased tension between East and West, and made the crusaders more likely to attack the city.

## Source

**L** Procopius, writing AD 490–560, describes the great church of Hagia Sophia in Constantinople, which was built by Emperor Justinian in 537:

[The Church] is distinguished by indescribable beauty, excelling both in its size, and in the harmony of its measures, having no part excessive and none deficient; being more magnificent than ordinary buildings, and much more elegant than those which are not of so just a proportion. The church is

singularly full of light and sunshine; you would declare that the place is not lighted by the sun from without, but that the rays are produced within itself, such an abundance of light is poured into this church. ... Moreover it is impossible accurately to describe the gold, and silver, and gems, presented by the Emperor Justinian, but by the description of one part, I leave the rest to be inferred. That part of the church which is especially sacred, and where the priests alone are allowed to enter, which is called the Sanctuary, contains forty thousand pounds' weight of silver.

## ACTIVITY

## Enquiries

Read Source L. What impression does it give of Byzantine wealth? How would this compare with what the crusaders were accustomed to in western Europe?

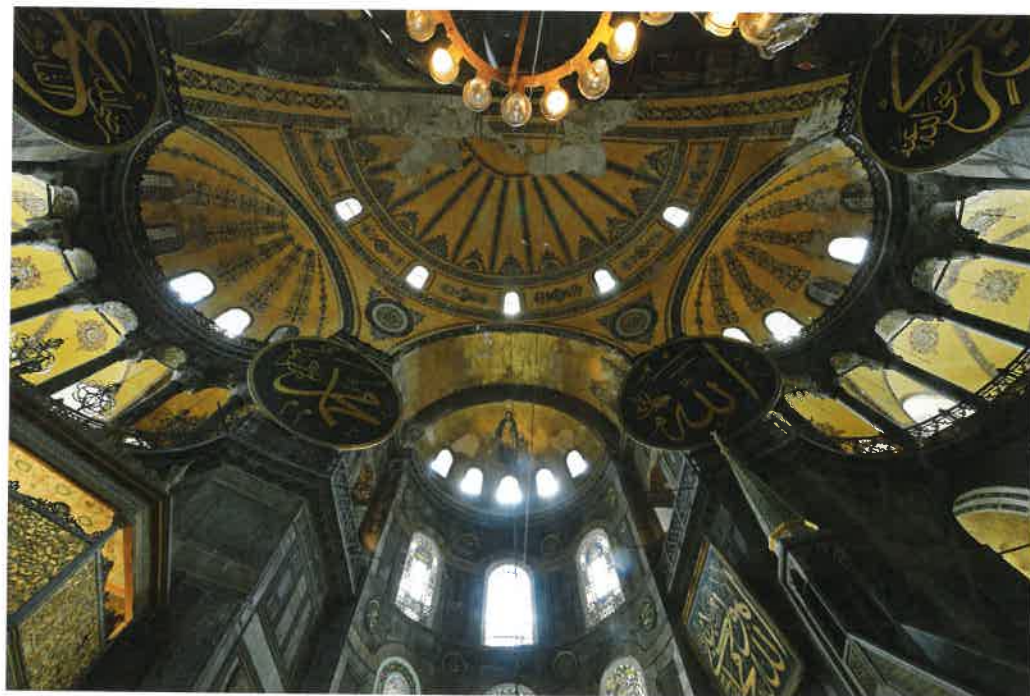


Figure 3.3 Hagia Sophia, Istanbul (formerly Constantinople).

### Did the crusaders swear an oath of loyalty to Emperor Alexius?

Alexius had no formal alliance with Pope Urban II. Adhemar, the papal legate, did not have the authority to impose a widespread uniform front on the many factions of baronial groups that made up the crusading army. Instead, Alexius decided to appeal to the western code of feudal honour and make the leaders his **vassals**. This would conform to their feudal customs of overlords and warrior loyalty, and would make them subject to his overall leadership. Count Hugh, brother of the King of France, agreed to this, probably because he was under virtual house-arrest after his disastrous shipwreck. Others were not so keen to swear the oath. When Duke Godfrey refused, Alexius limited the supplies to Godfrey's army, but he had to resume normal supplies when Godfrey's troops threatened violence. After several skirmishes on the outskirts of the city, Godfrey submitted. He knelt before Alexius and took the oath, promising to hand over any towns they captured to Alexius. Alexius announced that he was adopting Godfrey as his son, giving him gifts and paying his army.

Bohemond took the oath immediately, but he had his own agenda, according to Anna Comnena, the Emperor's historian daughter. Bohemond asked to be appointed *domestikos*, or commander, of the Byzantine army in the East: this would have made him leader of the

crusade. Bohemond was already planning ahead and thinking about carving out his own principality in the East, after his failed raids on the Greek coast in previous decades.

## Source

M

## From Anna Comnena's account

*The Emperor invited some of the Counts with Godfrey in order to advise them to suggest to Godfrey to take the oath; and as time was wasted owing to the long-winded talkativeness of the Latins, a false rumour reached the others that the Counts had been thrown into prison by the Emperor. Immediately numerous regiments moved on Byzantium, and to begin with they demolished the palace near the so-called Silver Lake. They also made an attack on the walls of Byzantium, not with siege-engines indeed, as they had none, but trusting to their numbers they actually had the impudence to try to set fire to the gate below the palace which is close to the chapel built long ago by one of the Emperors to the memory of Nicolas, the greatest saint in the hierarchy.*

Anna Comnena, *The Alexiad* (Book 10), written around 1100

Count Raymond of Toulouse refused to swear the oath. He was the vassal of the King of France and was on the pilgrimage to serve the Lord, not an earthly prince. He was technically correct: feudal law did not allow someone to be the vassal of more than one lord. However, like all the others, Raymond was dependent on the Emperor for food and supplies. He agreed not to become Alexius' vassal, but swore not to attack the body or honour of his lord. Alexius was less generous to Raymond than to the others. Count Robert of Flanders, Duke Robert of Normandy and Count Stephen of Blois all swore to become vassals of Alexius, and were given treasures.

As far as Alexius was concerned, the crusaders had sworn to fight for him and to return to his empire the lands he had lost. These extended way beyond Asia Minor, to Syria, Palestine, Egypt and Mesopotamia. They also included Jerusalem, and the crusaders' oaths meant that if they freed the Holy Sepulchre from the Islamic world, then they would have to return it to the Byzantine emperor. As far as the evidence suggests, this was not the intention of Pope Urban II. The dealings between Alexius and the crusade leaders illustrate the distrust between East and West, and if this had been solved by the oath-takings, it was only a temporary pause in the deterioration of East–West relations.

## Source

N

## From Anna Comnena's account

*When the Franks had all come together and had taken an oath to the emperor, there was one count who had the boldness to sit down upon the throne. The emperor, well knowing the pride of the Latins, kept silent, but Baldwin approached the Frankish count and taking him by the hand said, 'You ought not to sit there; that is an honour which the emperor permits to no one. Now that you are in this country, why do you not observe its customs?'*

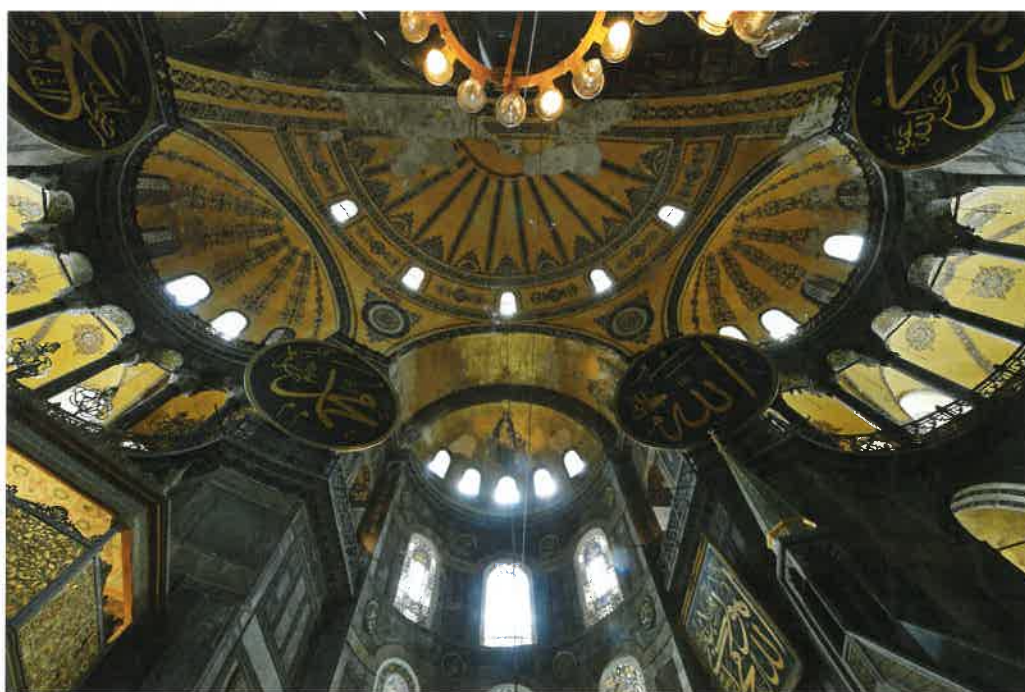
Anna Comnena, *The Alexiad* (Book 10), written around 1100

## vassal

A vassal was subject to an overlord within the feudal structure that governed medieval society. He could be a landless peasant owing allegiance and farm-labouring duties to the local lord of the manor, or he could be a mighty prince swearing allegiance to an emperor to whom he owed military service. The greater the vassal, the more knights he usually provided to his lord.

**ACTIVITY****Enquiries**

Read Source L. What impression does it give of Byzantine wealth? How would this compare with what the crusaders were accustomed to in western Europe?



**Figure 3.3** Hagia Sophia, Istanbul (formerly Constantinople).

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**ACTIVITY****Period Studies**

Why was there such distrust between the western crusaders and the Byzantines? To what extent were the motives of the crusaders misinterpreted by the Byzantines?

**ACTIVITY****Enquiries**

- 1 How does Source M demonstrate the level of distrust between the Latins and the Greeks in 1096?
- 2 Read Source N. What does it tell you of the attitudes of at least this one crusader towards the Byzantines?

**Conclusion**

The overarching motive for the crusaders was the promise of spiritual reward, not adventure or plunder. That said, the different social classes had different intentions in fulfilling their vows. The mass of peasant-pilgrims wanted to get to Jerusalem, but many of them were diverted into attacking the Jews of Europe and many others died at Nicaea when the People's Crusade fizzled out. The nobles and princes of Europe were unavoidably bound up in the politics of the Byzantine Empire and were distrusted by the Greeks, a fact illustrated by the confusion over swearing the oath to Alexius. Many of the knights of western Europe undoubtedly hoped to gain land and riches after the example of the Norman conquests of England, southern Italy and Sicily, all in the name of God.

Whatever their varying motives, once the crusaders continued on from Constantinople into the hostile badlands of Muslim-held Asia Minor, the only thing that came to matter to them was simple: survival.

**Review questions****Enquiries**

- 1 Make notes on the distrust between the crusaders and the Byzantines. How serious was this distrust? Could it have endangered the crusade?
- 2 Is it fair to say that the First Crusade was already tainted with greed by the time it arrived at Constantinople and that the purity of Urban's message at Clermont had been cynically abused?

Draw up a table of arguments for and against, then make a judgement and write it up into a paragraph.

**Period Studies**

- 3 Write an essay to answer the question: 'To what extent do you think the nobility of the First Crusade were motivated by religious passion or by hope of political and economic gain?'

**Key Questions:**

In this chapter you will learn:

- Why the Muslim world was unprepared for the invasion
- How medieval battles and sieges were conducted
- Why religious belief made military victories possible
- How to compare and contrast sources, depending on their origins and purpose

You will also develop the following skills:

- Assessing the language and tone of documents
- Comparing sources and their limitations
- Applying your knowledge of medieval warfare to the sources
- Making a judgement on the reasons why the First Crusade was so successful

**Introduction**

In the summer of 1097 the military crusade finally moved on from Constantinople. It took the 60,000 pilgrims two long years to pass through Anatolia (Turkey) before finally arriving at Jerusalem in July 1099. Two-thirds of the crusaders died on the way. Relations with the Byzantine Emperor Alexius grew worse, then broke down completely, because the crusaders' aim was not to support his war against the Turks but rather to capture Jerusalem. Relations between the crusaders deteriorated, with some of the leaders deserting or following their own agenda.

That said, the First Crusade was a resounding success for the following reasons:

- Weakness in the Islamic world allowed the crusader armies to gain victories in gradual stages.
- Early military support from the Byzantines.
- The crusaders were exploiting the Muslim tribal divisions and forming alliances as they progressed towards Jerusalem.
- The unprecedented religious zeal that Pope Urban had summoned at Clermont swept the crusaders through deserts, sieges and diseases to achieve the impossible.
- When they finally captured Jerusalem, the crusaders embarked on a wholesale slaughter of the inhabitants – Christians, Jews and Muslims.

Urban, however, died before the capture of Jerusalem, and his legate and leader of the crusade, Adhemar, had died on the journey. The crusade was no longer in the hands of the papacy and Emperor Alexius gained nothing. Never again was such passionate spiritualism seen on such a scale in Europe, and never again was a crusade so overwhelmingly successful.