



## The Genesis of the Crusades: The Springs of Western Ideas of Holy War

Our subject in this volume is how men thought about war in the medieval and early modern periods, and how their thinking has contributed to contemporary outlooks upon warfare and violence. A convenient starting point for our deliberations is a comment upon changes in the Western estimate of warfare over the centuries, which William Stubbs made in the third volume of his *Constitutional History of England*, originally published in 1878. "The kings of the middle ages," he wrote, "went to war for rights, not for interests, still less for ideas."<sup>1</sup> For rights . . . for interests . . . for ideas. Implicit in those three phrases is a downhill progression from bad to worse in the pretexts upon which wars have been waged; and Stubbs was not without a remarkably prophetic concern that, with the French Revolution, the Europe he studied and lived in might not have embarked upon its final stage. He made his comment with King Henry V of England in mind. Henry went to war for rights. He had, or at least he professed to have, a rightful claim to the crown of France, which he was denied; his warfare was, therefore, the continuation of a judicial process by other means. If he gloried in war as the highest and noblest work of kings, his aggressive designs were, nevertheless, subject to a measure of legal justification. Such legal justification itself implied principles

that, however imperfectly kings themselves may have attended to them, reinforced the doctrines of limited warfare that, at least since the early twelfth century, canonists and schoolmen had been seeking to formulate.

We move on from the fifteenth century to the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. By then, kings such as Louis XIV and Frederick II fought for interests—like the Spanish Succession, or control of Silesia. That was a rather worse sort of warfare, Stubbs thought, than warfare for rights. No cloak of justice now hid naked selfishness. Kings advanced excuses, rather than legal justifications, for their aggressions. And yet, warfare for interests was still not too bad: it remained limited; few people were killed, and those were mostly soldiers. As regards thought about war, the centuries of warfare for interests consolidated and continued the doctrines of limited war that had gained increasing currency in the Middle Ages.

With the French Revolutionary period, however, there moved toward the center of the picture a far more destructive and fearful warfare—warfare for ideas. Stubbs was not confident that what he saw as having been the formative and stabilizing principles of European history—dynasty, nationalities, and freedom, all of them having deep roots in the Christian tradition—were in his day any longer secure.<sup>2</sup> In particular, the principle of nationalities, in its current form, had been “mostly unlucky in its prophet” (that is, Napoleon I); and Stubbs was also alarmed by “the first attempts at a propaganda of liberty, and the first attempts at a propaganda of nationality” in the French Revolution. He seems to have been anxious lest such unlimited warfare for ideas as had ominously marked the Revolutionary epoch and had been resurgent under Napoleon III, might become the order of the day.<sup>3</sup>

There were grounds for such anxiety, quite apart from those that we, with our experience of the total wars of the present century, can recognize with the benefit of hindsight. For Europe inherited from the Middle Ages another tradition about warfare, besides that of limited war. The eleventh and following centuries had witnessed the vast upsurges of the Crusades, in whose inception Stubbs had rightly seen a “war of idea.” In the name of God the participants

sought to extirpate those whom they saw as aliens, both inside and outside Christian society. "Scarcely a single movement now visible in the current of modern affairs," wrote Stubbs, again, "but can be traced back with some distinctness to its origin in the early middle ages."<sup>4</sup> The Crusades were such a point of origin; they were effectively the starting point of a view of total warfare that stands in contrast to limited hostilities for rights or interests. They left an indelible mark upon the Western consciousness, which goes far to justify Stubbs's half-articulated fear lest warfare for ideas—secularized, now, but waged with quasi-religious fervor—might again become prevalent.<sup>5</sup>

My concern today is with this last kind of warfare—total, ideological warfare, and the springs of its compulsion upon men. I shall try to set out what seem to me to emerge from modern scholarly inquiry as the reasons why, in the late eleventh century, men came, in the Crusade, to wage it so extensively against what seemed alien to them, and why what they then did has shaped Western ideas so profoundly. I shall then try to suggest some lessons that might today be drawn from the rise and decline of crusading ideas, and from the alternative tradition of limited warfare, which is also a medieval legacy.

When we study the First Crusade, preached at Clermont in 1095 by Pope Urban II, we are fortunate in having, in the Chronicle known as the *Gesta Francorum*, an anonymous account of it, composed by a fighting knight while it was still taking place. He was a highly sophisticated and articulate man—a skilled, professional warrior with a developed sense of feudal loyalty and social obligation. The opening words of the *Gesta* set forth the origin of the Crusade in these words:

When that time had already come, of which the Lord Jesus warns his faithful people every day, especially in the Gospel where he says, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me," there was a great stirring of heart throughout all the Frankish lands, so that if any man, with all his heart and all his mind, really wanted to follow God and faithfully to bear the cross after him, he could make no delay in taking the road to the Holy Sepulchre as quickly as possible.<sup>6</sup>

Besides the strongly religious motivation, you will notice that the knight did not focus attention upon events in the East as having been decisive for the "great stirring of heart" that led to the Crusade. We can, I think, put on one side as not of key importance a whole group of factors that historians once thought were critical—I mean factors arising in the Muslim or Byzantine East. The anonymous knight fought with and for high ideals: to suffer for the Name of Christ and to set free the road to the Holy Sepulchre.<sup>7</sup> But he had little real knowledge of his Muslim enemies or of what was going on in their lands: he just thought of them as heathens, who denied the faith of Christ and holy Christendom for which he had taken arms. In the mid-1090s not much was happening in the East to concentrate his mind. If there was some atrocity propaganda in the air, Western piety was not being affronted by serious Muslim attacks upon Christians. Nor, so far as we can see, did Eastern Christians themselves particularly wish to be liberated from the Muslim yoke. Such events as the burning of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in 1009 by the mad Caliph Hakim were few and far between, and there was no major recent outrage that stirred men to the heart. Islam was by and large a tolerant religion; while subject Christians kept themselves duly humble and paid their taxes, they were not badly off. Nor was it unduly hard for Christians from the West to make their pilgrimages to Jerusalem and the other Holy Places. Pilgrims, after all, are profitable and best not deterred. The Muslims did well from their tolls, from their lodging, and from providing them with supplies. So they let them journey.

Again, in the circumstances of 1095, the Byzantine emperor, Alexius Comnenus, wanted anything but the vast and unmanageable crusading hordes that were soon to come his way. The threat of the Seldjuk Turks, so deadly when they routed the Byzantines at Manzikert in 1071, had receded by 1092, with the death of the last great sultan, Malik Shah. Thereafter, Alexius could do with—indeed he actively sought—a limited supply of mercenaries who would make his diplomacy more credible. Crusaders by the thousands, under independent command, spoiling for war, and whom he could not control, were not what the circumstances of Byzantium in 1095 called for.

Nor was frustrated trade with the East really a factor in causing the Crusade. Up to 1095, the Amalfitans—the most active in the East of the Italian merchants—traded much as they wished. During the First Crusade, the Genoese, the Pisans, and the Venetians were cautious about joining in until they saw that there was money to be made. It was not a desire for trade that stimulated the Crusade, but vice versa.

All things considered, historians would, I think, now be pretty generally agreed that the First Crusade, the “great stirring of heart” in the West, was not, at root, caused by any pull of events in the East. On the contrary, knights like the author of the *Gesta* were impelled to go by constraints and shifts within Western society itself—its social classes, its institutions, and its ideas. I shall discuss four of these constraints and shifts, taking first what I think was perhaps the least important of them in bringing about the Crusade.

First, there was the rise in the population of western Europe during the eleventh century, combined with progressively more sophisticated standards of law and order. This combination tended to produce a surplus population whose aristocracy had every incentive to seek new, external outlets for its martial ardor and its desire for land. Conditions of landownership and inheritance were especially important. They were commonly not based on anything like primogeniture, or impartible descent from father to eldest son. Especially in southern France, there was often some kind of shared possession, such as the so-called *fraternitia*, or *frêrêche*, by which inheritance passed to all brothers in common, or to a more extended family circle. Some brothers could be accommodated on the family land. But younger brothers were under pressure, and they also had an interest, to seek their sustenance elsewhere—in a monastery, perhaps, or in holy orders; but, if these choices were not attractive to them, in some lay outlet compatible with their birth.

Rising standards of public order tended to restrict such outlets near home. In France, the post-Carolingian breakdown of authority, and the gravest manifestations of feudal anarchy, seem to have reached their nadir in the generation following the year 1000.

Thereafter, such expedients as the Peace and the Truce of God—by which the Church, first by itself and then with the collaboration of lay authorities, gave its peace to certain classes of society and to certain seasons of the year—curbed opportunities of brigandage and of the fortunes of the sword. Peace-breakers were stigmatized as aliens within society, to be persecuted by a kind of “war upon war” having strong religious sanctions. By 1054, at the Council of Narbonne, it was even asserted that “no Christian should kill another Christian, for whoever kills another Christian undoubtedly sheds the blood of Christ.”<sup>8</sup>

As such limitations upon domestic warfare increased, the surplus male offspring of the military classes came under pressure to seek new outlets for their martial and predatory energies at a distance from the places of their birth.

Contemporaries were not unaware that such pressures made men ready to be stirred by the summons to the Crusade. Yet I believe that their power, though considerable, can easily be exaggerated. The internal colonization of Europe could, and did, provide for much of the rising population. So did the increasing use of mercenary knights and the expansion of aristocratic households. Above all, we should mark how few Crusaders settled permanently in Outremer. The initial military establishment of the Kingdom of Jerusalem after 1100 seems to have been only some 300 knights and 1,200 footsoldiers. In the long run, the kingdom suffered from the endemic weakness that, although men came in plenty from the West to conquer the Holy Land, there were never enough who would stay to colonize it effectively. Pressure of population in the West was evidently not serious enough to displace sufficient men who would take up the land available in the East. Demographic or economic factors go only a small way toward explaining the popularity in the eleventh century of the holy war and of the Crusade.

More important—and this is my second factor—was the rise of the knights in social status, and the enhanced sophistication that attended this rise. South Italian Norman though he was, the author of the *Gesta Francorum* typified where many knights of the West had got to by about 1100. He was decidedly a *gentleman*—a man

of substance and standing, who rode on horseback and fought with expensive weapons and equipment. He was proud of his knighthood, and he had a strong professional ethic, based upon loyalty to his feudal lord, Bohemond—*bellipotens Boamundus*. Yet he was not blindly loyal. He approved of Bohemond when, in real or politic deference to the law of the land, he did not plunder townships in the Byzantine Balkans. But he parted company at Antioch, when Bohemond turned aside from the Crusade to establish a principality for himself. And there is no mistaking the genuinely religious conviction of our knight, as expressed, for example, in the passage that I earlier cited. Knights had not always been as highly motivated, as sophisticated, as professional, as “gentlemanly,” as he. Not long since, they had often been little better than predatory toughs, without *esprit de corps* as a social group. *Knecht* in German still means servant: that indicates the level of many eleventh-century knights before, as the century went on, the elite of their class rose in the world by acquiring land and gentility, and by entering more honorable service and companionship.

This rise in the knights’ standing followed changes in military technique—the development of castles, for instance, and the growth of fighting on horseback—which enhanced the standing and prestige of those who fought. But for our purpose today, it is important that the Church—the clergy—also had much to do with the upgrading and dignification of knighthood. The clergy had little choice but to assist the process. In the Carolingian heyday of strong kingship, emperors and kings had seen to the security of the Christian people and defended them from their foes. “Look favorably, O God,” the Carolingian clergy had prayed, “upon the Roman empire, that the peoples [that is, its enemies] who trust in their own fierceness may be restrained by the right hand of your power.” When the Roman empire—as upheld by emperors and kings—became but a shadow, the defense of the Christian people necessarily tended to devolve upon the knights. To perform their new role, they must be raised from their low estate and given something of the dignity of kings. So, from about 950, we find formulas for the liturgical blessing of the banners under which

knights fought. Where the clergy once prayed for kings, they now prayed for knights, as in this *Oratio super militantes*:

Bless, O Lord, your servants who bend their heads before you. Pour on them your stablishing grace. In the warfare in which they are to be tested, preserve them in health and good fortune. Wherever and whyevery they ask for your help, be speedily present to protect and defend them.<sup>9</sup>

In the eleventh century, we also find formulas for the blessing of swords and weapons. There emerged a religious ceremony of knightly investiture; in France after 1070, the dubbing of knights appears widely in the sources. As kings were crowned, so knights were invested. Knighthood now was, or could be, a vocation. The Church was in direct touch with the profession of arms, without the king as an intermediary. The warfare of knights was securing a new sanction and a new prestige. It was becoming holy war.

Since the knights were becoming so important, the clergy were also concerned to effect what German historians, in a good but untranslatable word, call their *Versittlichung*—that is, the raising of their social, ethical, and religious outlook through the determination of the objectives and limits of their warfare. They supplied them with an ideology. Hence the importance of such a work as Abbot Odo of Cluny's *Life of Gerald of Aurillac*, a paradigm Christian knight who drew the sword only in defense of the poor and of righteousness. Hence, too, the Peace and the Truce of God, the "war upon war" that churchmen tried to sponsor. Churchmen sanctioned warfare, but within strict limits and with a minimum of violence. (According to his panegyrist, Gerald of Aurillac, to avoid bloodshed, fought only with the *flat* of his sword!<sup>10</sup>) Peace should be the quality of the Christian society itself. Yet fighting was the knights' way of life, and the Church was blessing their weapons. It was difficult to accomplish the *Versittlichung* of the knights, or to enable them to fulfill their social and professional role, within Christian society. If domestic peace were to be secured, it was requisite to find outlets for knightly war outside it. So, in the eleventh century, the Church encouraged knights to take part in the Reconquest in Spain by holy wars against the Muslims there. The



ethics of the *Chanson de Roland* took shape in French chivalric society. The knights had come of age. Enhanced in social status, with a novel religious sanction for their carrying of arms, and habituated to the assigning of Christian objectives for their warfare, they were being well prepared to experience a "great stirring of heart" when the call came to the Eastern Crusade.

By thus insisting upon the Church's patronage of the military classes, I have already begun to touch upon a third *sine qua non* of the Crusade within the Western world. It was a radical change in Christian thought and practice in relation to the waging of war, so that warfare for ends of which the Church approved might be proclaimed as without reservation right and meritorious. To the very eve of the First Crusade, it is astonishing how ambiguous Western Christians were in their attitude toward warfare. The clergy were blessing swords and—understandably enough in the circumstances of the time—were praying ever more earnestly for the knights' success in warfare. They were, in effect, sanctioning "holy war." And, over the centuries, one can point to various "holy wars": like the upholding of the Peace and the Truce of God, or the Spanish campaigns, which we have noticed; or like the forays against the Muslims of the Mediterranean to whose participants the ninth-century popes Leo IV and John VIII held out a martyr's crown; or tenth-century Ottonian wars against the Magyars; or Pope Leo IX's ill-starred campaign of 1053 against the Normans of South Italy, which we have not noticed; and others.

Yet right into the second half of the eleventh century, and therefore on the very eve of the First Crusade, the Christian West was also teaching that killing or wounding in warfare, however legitimate the cause, was gravely sinful and merited severe penance. From this point of view, warfare was far from having the Church's blessing and approval: it stood under its condemnation. Far from being a legitimate service in the name of Christ, the profession of arms was not really fitting for a Christian man. This ambiguity of attitude—this "double-think," as it must seem to us—on the Church's part, is nowhere better illustrated than by the Battle of Hastings in 1066. The Norman host fought under a papal

banner, in what was deemed to be a just cause, at the command of the legitimate prince. And yet, soon after Hastings, the Norman bishops, with a papal legate at their elbow, imposed penances upon the warriors for their transgressions upon the field of battle: for killing a man, a year's penance; for wounding, forty days; and so forth. This was fully in line with the principal canon-law collection of the early eleventh century, the *Decretum* of Burchard of Worms.<sup>11</sup>

If we turn from practice to ideas, it was also in line with the dominant official view of Western Christianity during its first eleven centuries. For the West had never given a full and unqualified blessing to the waging of war, not even of "just war," or war waged with a greater or lesser degree of ecclesiastical backing. True, St. Augustine of Hippo, though only in a few brief passages, had, for the first time in Christian history, put forward a theory of the "just war."<sup>12</sup> He had also come to approve of the coercion of the Donatists as stiff-necked resisters of Catholic authority, setting all too much emphasis upon Christ's words in a parable, *Compelle intrare*, "Compel them to come in"; as developed by Pope Gregory I, this justification for warfare became very influential in the Middle Ages. Moreover, the conversion of the Franks and other Germanic peoples had long since begun to incorporate war in the popular substructure of Christian thought, including thought about kingship. Christianity did not extinguish Germanic warrior ideals, so it had to accommodate what it could not destroy. For example, a feature of the post-Carolingian period was the growing cult of the Archangel Michael. Scholars have rightly seen in it the Christian substitute for Woden, and it is no surprise that Michael had no more ardent devotees than the recently converted Normans. His sanctuary at Monte Gargano, in the Abruzzi, where he had appeared in battle late in the fifth century, became a favorite center of Norman pilgrimage. His cult was calculated to foster a warrior ethic within Christianity. He was captain of the hosts of heaven: if God accepted the military service of angels, why should he not also accept the military service of men?<sup>13</sup> But this was a "grass-roots" reaction, rather than (with a few exceptions in Carolingian times)

the official view of responsible spokesmen. Far into the eleventh century, not only canonists like Burchard of Worms but also the ablest and most reform-minded propagandists at the papal court set their faces against the acceptance of war. They found no place (if they knew of it) for Saint Augustine's teaching about a "just war," and they had reservations about coercion. "In no circumstances," insisted Cardinal Peter Damiani, "is it licit to take up arms in defence of the faith of the universal church; still less should men rage in battle for its earthly and transitory goods."<sup>14</sup> Even the fiery Cardinal Humbert deprecated the persecution of heretics by force of arms; he argued that Christians who took the sword against them themselves became hardened in ways of violence and rapine.<sup>15</sup>

Until those who spoke officially for Christianity took a different view, anything like a Crusade—as a war promoted and blessed by the Church, and which won only benefits for those who fought—was unthinkable. The change of mind that occurred in the late eleventh century was largely owing to one man, who, as Hildebrand, was archdeacon of Rome from 1059 to 1073, and who, as Gregory VII, was pope from 1073 to 1085. (It was he who was behind the giving of a papal banner in 1066 to William of Normandy.) Historians have often stressed the epoch-making character of his work. Caspar called him "the great innovator who stands alone."<sup>16</sup> Tellenbach has written that "Gregory stands at the greatest—from the spiritual point of view perhaps the only—turning-point in the history of Catholic Christendom; . . . the world was drawn into the church, and leading spirits of the new age made it their aim to establish the 'right order' in [a] united Christian world."<sup>17</sup> No aspect of this change of front in the so-called Gregorian Reform is more significant than the transformation of the Church's official attitude to warfare, so that, from being inherently sinful, it was, or at least might be, meritorious to engage in it, and so to promote "right order" in human society by force of arms.

Let me illustrate in two ways the change that Gregory brought about. First, he very often used in his letters the phrase *militia Christi*—the warfare of Christ. That, to be sure, was a traditional phrase. It harked back to Saint Paul's words about a Christian

warfare that was not against flesh and blood, and for which the Christian must be shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace. Later generations had, accordingly, thought of the *militia Christi* as the *spiritual* combat of the martyr and the monk; it stood in the sharpest antithesis to the (wrongful) warfare of earthly arms—to *militia secularis*. Gregory took the critical step of proclaiming that earthly warfare could, after all, be an authentic part of the *militia Christi*. During his struggle with Henry IV of Germany, he called, in an altogether novel way, upon the knights of all lands to dedicate their swords to the service of Christ and of Saint Peter, and to realize their Christian vocation by so doing. Second, and consistent with this, Gregory's reign saw the proclaiming of a new kind of soldier-saint. There had been soldier-saints before, like, for example, Saint Maurice, Saint Sebastian, Saint George, or Saint Martin. But if you read their legends, you will notice that, by and large, they had gained recognition as saints *despite* being soldiers. Saint Maurice, for example, was a member of the Theban legion in Gaul, who, according to the widely read legends about him, disobeyed military orders—there are different versions—either to offer heathen sacrifices, or to punish Christians. Saint Martin even sought discharge from the Roman army, declaring, "I am Christ's soldier; I am not allowed to fight."<sup>18</sup> Gregory began to recognize among his contemporaries soldier-saints who were saints *because* they were soldiers; like Erlembald of Milan, the fierce Patavine leader who perished in 1075 during the savage communal violence that he had provoked. In Gregory's eyes, he was a true *miles Christi*—a soldier of Christ; in 1078 he made it clear that he regarded him as virtually a saint.<sup>19</sup>

It was only after Gregory had so drastically revised the official attitude of the West to warfare, and after his ideas had been disseminated by such publicists as Bishop Anselm II of Lucca—only, therefore, at the very end of the eleventh century—that the preaching of a Crusade became feasible. Only then could a man like the author of the *Gesta Francorum* have heard and answered a papal summons to go eastward, traveling with words from the Gospel upon his lips, and fortified by the assurance that, far from

being sinful, his warfare would avail for the remission of sins and the winning of salvation.

The factors that we have so far noticed as contributing toward the Crusade have all concerned the knights, and the secular and religious status of their warfare. Fourth, I turn to something rather different, which historians are increasingly judging to have been of cardinal importance for understanding how the First Crusade came about. It is the state of the Church's penitential discipline at the end of the eleventh century.

No reader of eleventh-century sources, especially those relating to the Crusade, can fail to be struck by men's insistent preoccupation to secure the remission of sins—*remissio peccatorum*. Now, one might well ask whether this has not always been a key matter of Christian concern. Does not the Creed say, "I acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins (*in remissionem peccatorum*)"? Indeed. But there are historical junctures when a particular matter of Christian dogma or concern, like justification in the Lutheran Reformation or personal conversion in the teachings of John Wesley, strikes home to men with exceptional force. When the First Crusade was being prepared, it seems to have been so with the remission of sins.

One reason for this was that the penitential system of the West was in disorder and confusion. During the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, this would be put right. As a result, an instructed Christian would know pretty clearly how the remission of sins was available to him. If he fell into mortal sin, say by homicide, he would suppose that he had incurred both guilt and punishment. He must confess his sin to a priest and be absolved; that would take away his guilt and free him from eternal punishment. Left with a burden of temporal punishment both in this life and after death (that is, in purgatory), he could, by availing himself of the indulgences that the Church now offered, draw upon the boundless mercy of God and the merits of the saints to lighten this, as well. In the eleventh century, all was not so clear and simple. Penance was still being imposed under an older system that had its heyday in Carolingian times. It knew little of the clear-cut and reassuring

distinctions of the later order—between guilt and punishment, eternal and temporal punishment, penance and indulgence. Originally, the Christian had done a penance that, once performed, restored him as he had been before he had sinned. There were already grounds for anxiety in this: could a man be *sure* that his penance was equal to his sin? Before long, penances were being commuted for money: still more urgently, was not more than money needed for the remission of sins? And, by the eleventh century, penitents were often restored to communion before—not, as originally, after—they completed their penance. There was now certainly much left to be done before they could be fully assured that their sins were remitted. For one reason or another, they increasingly took thought for what they might do over and above the penitential system.

For members of the upper classes, there were two courses of action in particular, either or both of which they felt pressed to consider. Best of all, a man could become a monk, and so give himself to a life that was altogether one of penance. As a less effective variant on this course, which was therefore more fraught with anxiety, he could found or endow a monastery; then, his goods and the monks' prayers these goods endowed would avail for the remission of sins at the Day of Judgement. The alternative course of action was to go on pilgrimage. The popularity of pilgrimage to places like Monte Gargano, Compostela, Rome, and Jerusalem, shows how widely the feudal classes sought by this means to gain the remission of their sins. Like the monk, the pilgrim gave up his knightly status and activities; for it was demanded of a pilgrim that he travel unarmed. He carried only his purse and his staff, so that he abandoned himself to the mercy and protection of God. But unlike the monk's, the pilgrim's change of status was only temporary. Once back from Monte Gargano or wherever it was, he reverted to his secular way of life. If many became monks, more became pilgrims. We need only recall Count Fulk Nerra of Anjou with his three journeys to Jerusalem, or Duke Robert the Devil of Normandy, to remember how the most ruthless of men were wont, in moods of penitence, to seek relief of their sins through pilgrim-

age. The build-up of pilgrimages, like the vast amount of monastic conversion, foundation, and endowment, shows how insistent the desire for the remission of sins became.

When the call to the Crusade was made, it fulfilled this desire more acceptably than anything that had gone before. The choices hitherto available of becoming a monk or a pilgrim required a fighting man to abandon altogether, whether for good or only for a time, his chosen way of life. He had to "drop out" of knightly activities. But now, following the change made by Gregory VII in the Church's attitude toward warfare, the Crusade offered the knight the remission of sins *in and through* the exercise of his martial skills. "If any man," ran the crusading canon of Clermont, "sets out from pure devotion . . . to liberate the church of God at Jerusalem, his journey shall be reckoned to him in place of all penance."<sup>20</sup> At Clermont in 1095, the Crusade emerged, quite suddenly and with the maximum of dramatic appeal, as the knight's own way of gaining remission of sins by waging the warfare that was his life, in the service of Christ and in vindication of Christ's name against the Muslims. The point was well taken by a chronicler of the First Crusade, Guibert of Nogent:

In our own time, God has instituted a holy manner of warfare, so that knights and the common people who, after the ancient manner of paganism, were aforetime immersed in internecine slaughter, have found a new way of winning salvation. They no longer need, as they did formerly, entirely to abandon the world by entering a monastery or by some other like commitment. They can obtain God's grace in their accustomed manner and dress, and by their accustomed way of life.<sup>21</sup>

No wonder that knights flocked to the Crusade in their hundreds, or that its ideals could soon find expression in Saint Bernard's "praise of the new warfare"—his *De laude novae militiae*; when, as the final stage of the development, monks and knights were fused together in that hitherto unthinkable form of Christian society, the military religious order of the Templars:

Advance in confidence, you knights, and boldly drive out the enemies of the cross of Christ; be sure that neither death nor life can separate you from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus. . . . How famously do

such victors return from battle! How blessed are such martyrs when they die in battle! . . . For if they are blessed who die in the Lord, how much more are they blessed who die for the Lord?<sup>22</sup>

This was a far cry, indeed, from the reluctance to sanction warfare by Cardinals Peter Damiani and Humbert less than a hundred years before. A Christian warfare for ideas had now indelibly registered itself in the consciousness of the Catholic West, and had done so because of the internal changes in that consciousness, which we have considered.

To summarize, then: I have identified four factors that, as recent inquiry suggests, so shaped Western society that it was not only ready to rally to the Crusade, but also was subject to those pressures within itself that (rather than external causes) were principally responsible for bringing the Crusade into being. They were: pressure of population and growth of internal order; the increasing social and religious sophistication of the knightly class; a radical change in the official Christian ethic of war; and the strains and stresses set up within society by the Church's penitential system. Severally and together, they reached their full potency at the end of the eleventh century, and only then. Thus, the last decade of the century could witness the critical step in beginning the Crusades. But what, exactly, was this critical step? What was it that enabled these pressures to break forth and so produced the Crusade?

The Swabian chronicler Bernold had no doubt. "The lord pope," he wrote, "was the prime author of that expedition";<sup>23</sup> the critical step was his preaching. Bernold was probably right. Pope Urban II was the very man to bring to a head the developments we have examined. As Odo de Lagery, he sprang from a noble family in Champagne, and thus understood, from within, the aspirations, ethics, and institutions of French military society. As prior of the great Burgundian monastery of Cluny, he could appreciate men's quest for the remission of sins and their readiness to undertake penitential exercises in order to secure it. As cardinal-bishop of Ostia under Gregory VII, he knew that pope's work at first hand, and he declared himself the inheritor of its essential aims.<sup>24</sup> I cannot myself doubt that, since Urban was such a man, the Crusade



became what he intended it to become, and that his preaching was critical in shaping it.

The eleventh century had, of course, seen some actual or planned campaigns that in some ways anticipated the First Crusade; but these serve only to emphasize the novelty of Urban's initiative. Apart from the Norman Conquest of England, French knights had crossed the Pyrenees to take part in the Christian Reconquest. To one campaign, Pope Alexander II had attached a promise of spiritual benefits not unlike those associated with the First Crusade. Such holy wars against the infidel undoubtedly prepared the way for the Crusade. Yet, when compared with it, they were on a smaller scale; there was nothing equivalent to the Crusader's vow; and they wholly lacked the characteristics of pilgrimage that (as I shall suggest in a minute) were of the essence of the Crusade as Urban preached it.

Gregory VII, too, had in 1074 tried to organize a kind of Crusade to the East, which looks still more like the First Crusade. He proposed himself to lead a military expedition, primarily to help Byzantium against the Turks. He hoped thereby to reconcile the Roman and the Byzantine churches, and also the Armenians who had been dissident from Rome since the fifth century. He hoped, as well, that his host might worship at the Holy Sepulchre. As protector of the Roman Church while he was away, he proposed to leave Henry IV of Germany, who for the moment seemed to be obedient because of his preoccupation with the Saxon rising. Gregory planned to travel in the company of pious ladies—the Empress Mother Agnes and Countess Beatrice of Tuscany. Not surprisingly, the knights of western Europe made no response to so bizarre a summons. Its unrealistic conception illustrates the weakness of all Gregory's plans to enlist knights in the *militia Christi*, as a warfare with the sword waged directly for papal ends. Strong as were the tendencies that favored a Crusade, they could not be straightly harnessed, as Gregory hoped, to the hierarchical ends of the papacy. Far from preparing the way for the Crusade of 1095, Gregory went far to alienate the military classes by adopting too direct and hierarchical an approach.

Urban II was more understanding and diplomatic. Whereas Gregory imposed his own view of obedience to the vicar of Saint Peter, Urban played upon the constraint that men felt to perform works that would bring remission of sins. Whereas Gregory asserted his own political and military leadership, Urban saw that his expedition must be commanded by the natural leaders of French chivalry—men like Raymond of Saint-Gilles, count of Toulouse. Gregory worked across the grain of lay society; Urban worked with it.

Our problem in determining just how he provoked the “great stirring of the heart” is difficult, because we have no authentic record of what he said and little evidence of what he may have said. Historians are not agreed as to the probabilities. But our evidence strongly suggests that, from the start, the Crusaders thought that they were taking part in a *peregrinatio*, or pilgrimage, and, less certainly, that they were going to Jerusalem to worship, and to free the churches of the East from Jerusalem to Constantinople. The author of the *Gesta Francorum*, for instance, regarded his companions as *peregrini*. (For up to the thirteenth century, neither Latin nor the vernacular languages had words for “crusade” or “crusader.”) But Urban’s Crusade was quite unlike earlier *peregrinationes*. In the past, the many who had become pilgrims could expect spiritual benefits only if they went *unarmed*. The First Crusade was an *armed* pilgrimage. Its members looked for remission of sins because they went not only to pray but also to fight. It seems likely that Urban’s critical step was to announce his expedition as, in effect, a pilgrimage whose members could claim spiritual benefits although they went armed—or, rather, *because* they went armed. He thereby linked together two things that hitherto had been incompatible—pilgrimage and holy war. A pilgrimage to Jerusalem, with appropriate spiritual benefits, provided a framework into which a holy war against the Muslims was now fitted.

Whatever the precise content of Urban’s preaching, it struck the right note. Its spark lit the fire that the deeper trends within western Europe during the previous decades had been preparing. For those

experiencing the pressure of population and the constraints of public order, it offered an overseas expedition with new lands to conquer or new booty to win. To knights with an enhanced social standing and a new religious sanction, it presented a worthy opportunity for a fight. Since Gregory VII had dispelled qualms about the licitness of warfare even in a Christian cause, it provided a call to arms that promised spiritual benefits. Those who felt the need for the remission of sins could now find it in and through the activities of their own order of society; they need not abandon them for the cloister or an unarmed pilgrimage. Seldom in human history has one man's initiative satisfied so many and such various aspirations. When Urban spoke at Clermont, it was indeed true, in Gibbon's words, that "a nerve was touched of exquisite feeling; and the sensation vibrated to the heart of Europe."<sup>25</sup>

As we look back across nine hundred years to the age of Gregory VII and Urban II, we cannot fail to recognize it as one of the most powerfully formative periods in our common culture, outlook, and institutions. It saw the reversal of a thousand years of Christian tradition, when the Gregorian papacy accepted warfare without reservation as a meritorious activity, and the profession of arms as a Christian vocation so long as it was directed toward the extirpation of what is alien to Christianity both inside and outside Christian society. It is because of this reversal that the Crusade could mold Western ideas so profoundly, and modern views about war could take shape. The Crusade itself, as a kind of war aimed at propagating one set of ideas and habits of life, the Christian, as against another set, such as the Muslim, has exercised an especial influence in this century. Did not Eisenhower describe his part in the Second World War in terms of a "Crusade in Europe"?

Yet the real lessons to be drawn from the Crusade are deeper and more complex. I revert to Stubbs's dictum with which I began: "The kings of the middle ages went to war for rights, not for interests, still less for ideas." As the words "still less for ideas" remind us, long before the Middle Ages were over, such total warfare as the Crusades, fought for ideas, tended to give place to limited warfare for rights or interests, which has itself yielded only

in quite recent times to renewed warfare for ideas. It seems fair to suggest that, however deeply warfare for ideas may have penetrated the Western consciousness and shaped Western attitudes, it tends, when it becomes a danger, to be so as the result of such sets of domestic circumstances as provoked the Crusades. The Crusades began at a time of uncertainty and unsettlement in the institutions and ideas of a society undergoing rapid change, which prompted a search for alien elements within and outside it to serve as targets of ideological and physical aggression. (We may recall how the People's Crusade of 1096, which I have left outside the scope of this paper, directed itself not only against the Muslims in the East but also, in the first major outbreak of the anti-Semitism that found its high-water mark in Nazi Germany, against the Jews of the Rhineland.) Men seem in all ages to engage in the aggressive warfare of ideas less for external gains than to relieve the internal tensions and problems of their own society.

Such reflections are calculated to make us sceptical of the credentials of warfare for ideas. With our experience of twentieth-century ideological war, few of us, perhaps, would dissent from the verdict that stands at the end of Runciman's *History of the Crusades*:

The triumphs of the Crusade were the triumphs of faith. But faith without wisdom is a dangerous thing. By the inexorable laws of history the whole world pays for the crimes and follies of each of its citizens. In the long sequence of interaction and fusion between Orient and Occident out of which our civilization has grown, the Crusades were a tragic and destructive episode. The historian as he gazes back across the centuries at their gallant story must find his admiration overcast by sorrow at the witness that it bears to the limitations of human nature. There was so much courage and so little honour, so much devotion and so little understanding. High ideals were besmirched by cruelty and greed, enterprise and endurance by a blind and narrow self-righteousness; and the Holy War itself was nothing more than a long act of intolerance in the name of God, which is the sin against the Holy Spirit.<sup>26</sup>

That is a severe judgement, but I think it is a just one. A conclusion that we may well draw from the study of the Crusades is that

societies, like individuals, should strive for the self-knowledge that lays bare and relieves the internal pressures that generate wars of ideas and "holy wars," and so render them powerless to issue in aggression, whether psychological or physical.

Are we, then, committed to an antiwar ideology? We should probably hesitate. Counterideologies often tend toward the very evils that they profess to oppose. And, given the limitations of human nature, it is hard to envisage an order of things in which force, exercised under due authority, is not called for as the sanction of justice, both within and among states. Perhaps we would do well to look again at the view of war that emerged during the centuries when (as Stubbs reminds us) wars were, on the whole, not total but were limited to the pursuit of rights and interests. This view itself looked back behind the Crusades to the teaching of Saint Augustine about the "just war," which spokesmen in the eleventh century ignored. It was discussed by the canonists and schoolmen of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, but more fully worked out in early modern times, notably by Spanish Dominicans like Vitoria and De Soto, and Jesuits like Suarez and Molina. "It is the acme of barbarity," wrote Vitoria, "to look for and take pleasure in reasons for killing and destroying men whom God has created and for whom Christ died."<sup>27</sup> As against wars of ideas that arise from the internal strains of individuals and societies, this view sanctions only limited wars that can be shown to arise from the facts of a given situation. Wars may be fought only for causes and reasons that are clearly defined and just, and at the command of a legitimate ruler. There must be no other feasible means of gaining the objectives that are envisaged, and the ruler must be under an overwhelming obligation to secure them. The damage that may be foreseen must not be disproportionate to the attainable objectives, and a ruler may apply only the minimum force that is necessary to gain them.

I do not suggest that this historical tradition about war can simply be adopted by our generation without further thought or modification. But it indicates a historical approach to the problem of war, which deserves to be considered as an alternative both to the holy war tradition and to radically antiwar ideologies. I venture the

opinion that the conscious adopting of such an approach, and the general recognition of its validity, are among the conditions of survival for liberal and democratic societies, and for mankind.

Bibliographical Note. Modern discussion of the origin of the Crusades centers upon Carl Erdmann, *Die Entstehung des Kreuzzugsgedankens*, Forschungen zur Kirchen- und Geistesgeschichte 6 (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1935). This work has found no translator, and no apology is needed for drawing heavily upon its argument in this paper. The second chapter of H. E. Mayer, *The Crusades*, trans. J. Gillingham (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972) is also fundamental. See, too, E. O. Blake, "The Formation of the 'Crusade Idea,'" *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 21 (1970): 11-31. For the status of eleventh-century knights see P. van Luyn, "Les milites dans la France du XI<sup>e</sup> siècle," *Le Moyen Âge* 77 (1971): 5-51, 194-238. Gregory VII's attitude toward war is examined by I. S. Robinson, "Gregory VII and the Soldiers of Christ," *History* 58 (1973): 169-92. Urban II's preaching at Clermont is discussed by Dana C. Munro, "The Speech of Pope Urban II at Clermont, 1095," *American Historical Review* 11 (1906): 231-42, and H. E. J. Cowdrey, "Pope Urban II's Preaching of the First Crusade," *History* 55 (1970): 177-88. For the Peace and Truce of God in relation to the Crusade, see Cowdrey, "The Peace and the Truce of God in the Eleventh Century," *Past and Present*, no. 46 (February 1970), pp. 42-67. Saint Augustine's attitude toward coercion is discussed by Peter Brown, *Religion and Society in the Age of St. Augustine* (London: Faber & Faber, 1972), especially pp. 260-78, 301-31; and medieval developments are reviewed in Helmut Beumann, ed., *Heidenmission und Kreuzzugsgedanke in der deutschen Ostpolitik des Mittelalters*, Wege der Forschung 7 (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1963), especially the papers by Beumann and Hans-Dietrich Kahl. There are useful references to the canonists and schoolmen in Gaines Post, *Studies in Medieval Legal Thought: Public Law and the State, 1100-1322* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964). Joshua Prawer, *The World of the Crusaders* (London and Jerusalem: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1972), pp. 147-52, includes comments on the vitality of crusading ideas into the fifteenth century. For the Spanish Dominicans and Jesuits, see Bernice Hamilton, *Political Thought in Sixteenth-Century Spain* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963), especially pp. 135-57, 169-70; and for the whole development, G. Combès, *La Doctrine politique de Saint Augustin* (Paris: Les Petits-fils de Plon et Nourrit, 1927), pp. 417-26.

I am grateful to the Cambridge University Press for allowing me to quote the concluding paragraph of Sir Steven Runciman's *History of the Crusades*. I also thank Dr. Henry Mayr-Harting, who read and commented upon a draft of this paper; I owe a number of valuable points to him, and he has improved it in many ways.

1. William Stubbs, *The Constitutional History of England*, Clarendon Press Series, 5th ed., 3 vols. (Oxford, 1891-1903), 3:75.

2. See Stubbs's "Inaugural" of 1867, as Regius Professor of Modern History at Oxford, in his *Seventeen Lectures on the Study of Medieval and Modern History* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1887), p. 17.

3. Stubbs developed his views in two lectures delivered in 1880, "On the Characteristic Differences between Medieval and Modern History," printed in his *Seventeen Lectures*, pp. 238-76; see especially pp. 272-73.

4. Stubbs, *The Constitutional History of England*, 3:75.

5. Stubbs, however, regarded the Crusades with too great approval for him fully to establish the connection. For his judgment of them, see especially *Seventeen Lectures*, pp. 180–81, 253–54.

6. *Gesta Francorum et aliorum Hierosolymitanorum: The Deeds of the Franks and other Pilgrims to Jerusalem*, ed. and trans. Rosalind Hill, Medieval Classics (London and New York: T. Nelson, 1962), p. 1.

7. *Ibid.*, p. 62.

8. Canon 1, Joannes Dominicus Mansi, *Sacrorum conciliorum nova et amplissima collectio*, vol. 19 (Venice: Anthony Zatta, 1774), column 827.

9. On liturgical prayers see Erdmann, *Die Entstehung*, pp. 24–26, 40, 72–78, 326–35. For those cited, see pp. 25 n. 71 and 327–28.

10. The Latin text of the *Life of Gerald of Aurillac* is in J. -P. Migne, ed., *Patrologiae cursus completus . . . series Latina*, 221 vols. (Paris: J. -P. Migne, 1844–64), 133: 639–704 (hereafter cited as *PL*); there is an English translation in *St. Odo of Cluny*, ed. and trans. Gerard Sitwell (London and New York: Sheed and Ward, 1958), pp. 90–180. For Gerald's manner of fighting see *PL*, 133:646–47; for English translation see *St. Odo*, ed. Sitwell, p. 100.

11. See H. E. J. Cowdrey, "Bishop Ermenfrid of Sion and the Norman Penitential Ordinance following the Battle of Hastings," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 20 (1969): 225–42.

12. See especially his *Quaestiones in Heptateuchum* 6.10, ed. I. Fraipont and Donatien de Bruyne, *Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina* 33 (Turnhout: Brépols, 1958), pp. 318–19 and *De civitate Dei* 1.21, ed. B. Dombart and A. Kolb, *Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina* 47 (Turnhout: Brépols, 1955), p. 23.

13. For the new emphasis that was placed upon the militant aspects of Saint Michael in Carolingian and Ottonian times, see J. J. G. Alexander, *Norman Illumination at Mont St. Michel, 996–1100* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972), pp. 85–100.

14. *Ep.* 4.9 (*PL*, 144:316). Peter's idea of the proper, i.e., spiritual, warfare of a Christian is well illustrated by his *Vita sancti Romualdi*, cap. 7 (*PL*, 144:962). For a severe judgment upon a smith who took to making weapons of war, see *Opusculum* 43, cap. 3 (*PL*, 145:681–82).

15. *Adversus simoniacos* 2.18, ed. F. Thaner, *Monumenta Germaniae Historica* (hereafter *MGH*): *Libelli de lite*, 3 vols. (Hanover: Hahn, 1891–97), 1:159–60.

16. E. Caspar, "Gregor VII. in seinen Briefen," *Historische Zeitschrift* 130 (1924): 30.

17. Gerd Tellenbach, *Church, State and Christian Society at the Time of the Investiture Contest*, trans. R. F. Bennett, *Studies in Mediaeval History*, no. 3 (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1940), p. 164.

18. For Saint Maurice, see especially the *Passio Acaunensium martyrum*, ed. Bruno Krusch, *MGH: Scriptores rerum Merovingicarum*, 7 vols. (1885–1920), 3:32–39; for Saint Martin, see Sulpicius Severus, *Vita Sancti Martini*, cap. 4, ed. C. Halm, *Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum*, vol. 1 (Vienna: G. Geroldi, 1866), p. 114.

19. Berthold, *Annales*, a. 1077, ed. George H. Pertz, *MGH Scriptores*, 32 vols. (Hanover: Hahn, 1826–1934), 5:305–6. Gregory's change of view was to some extent anticipated in the Ottonian Empire, when, for example, Saint Maurice, a soldier-saint from a long-distant past, began to be venerated as an active patron of tenth-century warfare and politics. See especially Albert Brackmann, "Die politische Bedeutung der Mauritius-Verehrung im frühen Mittelalter," *Gesammelte Aufsätze*, 2nd ed. (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1967), pp. 211–41, and Helmut Beumann, "Das Kaiser-tum Ottos des Grossen: ein Rückblick nach tausend Jahren," *Wissenschaft vom Mittel-*

ter (Cologne and Vienna: Böhlau, 1972), pp. 411–58, especially pp. 435–43. Other saints of Christian antiquity came to be similarly regarded, but no *contemporary* warrior was venerated as a saint.

20. *The Councils of Urban II*, ed. Robert Somerville, *Annuaire historiarum conciliorum, Supplementum*, vol. 1 (Amsterdam: Hakker, 1972– ), vol. 1, *Decreta Claromontensia*, p. 74.

21. *Historia quae dicitur Gesta Dei per Francos*, cap. 1, in *Recueil des historiens des Croisades: Historiens occidentaux*, 5 vols. (Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1844–95), 4:124.

22. *De laude novae militiae*, cap. 1. (*PL*, 182:922).

23. *Chronicon*, a. 1096 (*MGH: Scriptores*, 5:464).

24. *Ep.* 1 (*PL*, 151:283–84).

25. Edward Gibbon, *A History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, ed. J. B. Bury, 7 vols. (London: Methuen, 1909–14), 6:268.

26. Sir Steven Runciman, *A History of the Crusades*, 3 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1951–54), 3:480.

27. Cited by Hamilton, *Political Thought*, p. 157.