

LESSON #13 -

TRIUMPHS AND DEFEATS OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH

Medieval Church #4, The Crusades

Introduction

Palestine fell under the control of Islam at the onset of the seventh century. European Christendom was slow to realize the significance of this fact—Palestine was far away and connections were not close or direct. By the 11th century, however, this began to change. Christians in increasing numbers began making pilgrimages to the Holy Sepulcher as a meritorious act to be set to their accounts in a counter-balance to their sins. In addition the widespread belief that the end of the world was to happen at the end of the millennium, also fueled desire to visit the Holy Land. The Muslims at first favored and protected the pilgrims but as their numbers increased, their attitude changed (the Seljuk Turks took over) and they began to molest them. Also European Christians came to believe that it was a disgrace that the Christian holy places should continue under “infidel” rule and began thinking they should return them to Christian control. There was also the subtle motive among the popes to get the warring nobles and knights occupied somewhere else than in Europe.

I. Holy War Concept and the Crusades

A. Penitential Warfare

1. Early Christian attitudes—many saw themselves as soldiers of emperor Jesus with a duty to harm no one. Others served in the military seeing no difference between the army and the police power of the state.
2. Under Constantine—Christians’ participation in the military was expected. The church refused communion to objectors.
3. Eusebius suggested war was directed against demonic forces which he identified with divisiveness within the empire and barbarian invasions.
4. Augustine developed the concept of the “Just War” but admitted it involved an element of sin for which one must do penance.
5. Charles Martel thought of his war against the Muslims as a war of self-defense.
6. Charlemagne thought he could undertake “missionary warfare” but the idea that war was sin continued beyond the Carolingian period.
7. In the 11th c. it was still regarded as a grave sin to kill a man in battle waged for secular ends. Even William the Conqueror’s battle of Hastings in 1066 required penance for the deaths inflicted.
8. By the mid 13th c. the “just war” theory gave the wars of almost all responsible secular rulers the benefit of the doubt (unless against the interests of the papacy)

B. Roots of Christian Participation

1. Charlemagne and his successors had claimed the right of warfare for the emperor alone.
2. Then it was accepted that the anointed kings could undertake just war as well as the emperor. Increasingly this included feudal local nobles.
3. The 10th c. warrior, his arms, his banners, were liturgically blessed by the church. The code of chivalry taught that a knight’s sword was a hallowed

sword to be used in the conduct of justice. The knight and his arms became a symbol of Christian peace.

4. Warlike instincts were limited by the Cluniac reforms (no fighting Wednesday night till Monday) and only narrow spheres were given church approbation.

C. Just War Theory

1. Yet, contrary to intent, the Peace of God movement contributed to the idea that the shedding of blood in battle was more than justified and could even be saving in the service of God when directed against pagans and heretics.
2. The hallowed sword could now be used to protect churches and the oppressed.
3. This blessing of the sword was a decline from the view that killing was wrong and demanded penance. The dubbing of a knight was given a religious character. Chivalry became the Christian form of the military life.

D. Influence of Islam

Acceptance of the ideal of “holy war” may have been partly influenced by the advocacy of this concept by Islam. Just as Muslim warriors were promised life in paradise so crusaders were afforded the privilege of forgiveness from punishment of sins.

E. Papal Influence

1. Churchmen came to accept warfare in certain circumstances as something that could be engaged in on God’s authority.
2. Theologians interpreted Augustine’s views of a just war to mean soldiers fighting a war authorized by the pope.
 - a. Gregory VII—used military forces
 - b. Urban II—the church as such could engage in warfare. The crusade was not only a just war, it was a holy war. One now fought not simply as a Christian but because he was a Christian.

F. Pilgrimages

1. The reasons for pilgrimage
 - a. Some went as a penance imposed by a confessor
 - b. Some as an act of devotion (fulfill a vow?)
 - c. Some in old age in order to die there
2. The arming of pilgrims
 - a. At first forbidden
 - b. Then for self-defense
 - c. Finally for offense against the Muslims
 - d. Crusades combined pilgrimage with military expedition

G. Union of Eastern and Western Churches

The pope saw military aid given to the Byzantine Empire against the Muslims as a basis for renewing good relations and the restoration of communion with the Eastern Church.

II. Papal Preaching

A. Pilgrimages Made Difficult

1. Muslim atrocities inflamed the West (caliph Al-Hakim leveled the shrine of the Holy Sepulcher; sought to convert Christians and Jews)

2. Harassment of pilgrims to Jerusalem led Byzantine emperor Alexius I Comnenus (1081-1118 A.D.) to request aid from the West.
- B. Pope Urban II's Motivation
- Urban was a product of the monastery of Cluny and a supporter of Gregory VII. He followed Gregory's example of working for the union of East and West. He thought the crusade would impress the Eastern Church with the religious vitality and charity of the West. The outcome was quite the reverse.
- C. Spiritual Promises
- Urban's promise of remission of the church's penalty for sin customarily granted to pilgrims was extended by crusade preachers to a remission of all penalties for sin that God would inflict both in this life and in the next. This was an important step in the development of indulgences.
1. An indulgence was the remission of the temporal punishments (whether inflicted on earth or in purgatory) for sin. The *guilt* of sin (eternal punishment) was forgiven by absolution when the sinner responded with contrition and confession. *Satisfaction*, however, (temporal punishment) still had to be made for sins.
 2. To obtain an indulgence some good work was prescribed. Earlier these could be given for contributions to church buildings; now they become extended to include the campaign to retake the Holy Land (the rigors satisfying the requirements for temporal punishment for sins).
- D. Concept of "Holy War"
- Holy War became a new way of gaining forgiveness of sins, an alternative to entering the monastic life. The promise of remission of the punishment due to sin gave a religious character to the whole crusading enterprise.
- E. Motives for "Crusading"
1. Improvement of one's fortunes by plunder
 2. Love of adventure
 3. Enrichment in land and advancement in social standing
 4. Religious motives—hatred of the Turks; devotion to Christ; these are not mutually exclusive.
- Crusading was a dangerous, demanding and expensive enterprise!

III. The Crusades 1095-1291 A.D.

A. The First Crusade (1095-1099 A.D.)

1. Peter the Hermit—aided by Walter the Penniless, he went about organizing the first expedition against the Muslims. Peter, having gathered an undisciplined horde (mostly discontented peasants) put himself at its head as they pillaged their way across Europe. Peter, due to unfitness, relinquished his lead and his followers were cut down by the Turks in Bulgaria.
2. Main Effort 1096 A.D.
 - a. Leaders
 1. Godfrey of Bouillon, duke of Lorraine—the moral hero of the crusade; not its ablest general but single-minded and unselfish in devotion to its aims.
 2. Baldwin of Boulogne, brother of Godfrey

3. Adhemar of LePuy, bishop, principal religious advisor
4. Raymond of Toulouse
5. Behemond, a Norman from Taranto in south Italy.

b. The Campaign

1. The leaders were required upon reaching Constantinople to give an oath of allegiance to the Emperor Alexius.
2. The Turks were defeated at Nicaea, then Dorylaeum in 1097; Antioch fell in 1098; and then Jerusalem, the goal of the crusade, fell in 1099, accomplished with much bloodshed (cut off heads; those shot with arrows fell from the towers; wounded tortured by casting them into flames; necessary to pick one's way over the bodies of men and horses; at Solomon's temple men rode in blood up to their knees and bridle reins—an eyewitness account).
3. Godfrey was made king, Protector of the Holy Sepulcher. He died in July, 1100, and was succeeded by his abler brother, who had established a Latin county in Edessa, and now took the title of King Baldwin I (1100-1118 A.D.).
4. They built castles to defend their holdings and organized several orders of knights to protect the holy places.

c. New Orders of Knights Established

1. The Hospitalers (or Order of St. John the Baptist)—this order had already existed in Palestine for 50 years. Its purpose was to entertain and protect pilgrims. It was reorganized as a military order on the pattern of the Knights Templar.
2. The Templars—founded in 1118, so called from the location of their house by the side of the temple in Jerusalem.
3. The Teutonic Knights—a German order founded by citizens of Bremen and Luebeck (1190) as a hospital.

These orders, recruited from the ranks of the bold and adventurous, were destined to see a new aspect of the spirit of chivalry. These orders shared a common view of warfare as a temporary act of devotion—a fusion of 2 meanings of the “militia of Christ,” monks and crusaders. The old monastic ideal of fighting the demons merged with a literal military goal.

B. The Second Crusade—the Latin kingdom in Palestine facing possible overthrow by the Muslims, led to Bernard of Clairvaux's preaching tour through Europe to secure a second crusade (1147 A.D.). Louis VII of France and Conrad III of Germany led a vast host against the Muslims but dissensions and treachery made the attempt a disastrous failure.

C. The Third Crusade—Saladdin, king of the Saracens, once again recovered possession of the Holy Sepulcher. News of this in Europe led to another attempt to conquer Palestine. This time it was the 3 most prominent potentates of Christendom who took up the challenge—Richard the Lionhearted of England; Philip Augustus of France; and Frederick Barbarossa of the empire. But jealousies and quarrels prevailed between them. Moreover, they were faced by a man of genius, Saladin, from whom they succeeded in securing only freedom for

Christians from taxation and from molestation in visiting the holy city. They then dispersed.

- D. The Fourth Crusade—organized in 1204, it was diverted by Doge of Venice into an attack on the Byzantine Empire. Constantinople was taken by the crusaders and a Latin empire founded lasting nearly half a century.
- E. The Fifth Crusade—Frederick II led this attempted crusade in 1229 A.D. His promise to lead kept being postponed. Then having sailed he returned after 3 days on the ground of an epidemic in his fleet. The pope excommunicated him. When he again led the crusade, this excommunication hampered him so that he was satisfied to secure by negotiations the cession of Bethlehem and Nazareth and a 10 year's truce. He returned to Europe.
- F. The Sixth and Seventh Crusades—in 1249 Louis IX of France attempted a 6th crusade against Egypt as a way of approach to the Holy Land. He was taken prisoner and purchased his freedom from the Mamelukes for 800,000 byzantines. This same Louis IX led the 7th crusade. This time he made Tunis his point of attack. But pestilence broke out in his camp and carried off half his army. He himself died in this campaign and with his death the crusading zeal also.

IV. Results of the Crusades

A. Hope of Theological Reunion with the East

While the fighting of the First Crusade was going on, there were efforts at theological reconciliation with the Greek church. With the support of Anselm of Canterbury, the council discussed the points of difference: (1) the *filioque* addition to the Nicene Creed; (2) differences in the liturgy of the eucharist. This council could have been the capstone to the First Crusade but according to the view of the eastern empire, the crusaders had gotten out of hand.

B. Results of the Crusades

1. Alienation of the Greeks—the independent actions by the crusaders were not the kind of help Alexius wanted.
2. Alienation of the Muslims—the 200 year history of the Crusades permanently poisoned Muslim-Christian relations and ended the spirit of tolerance for Christians living under Muslim rule.
3. The Welcome by the Armenians and Maronites—on the other hand, the Christian minorities who had suffered from both Byzantine and Muslim rule, welcomed the crusades.
4. Calamity for the Copts—they were suspected of Western sympathies by Muslim rulers and treated as schismatics by the Latins.
5. The Weakening of the Byzantine empire—it hastened its fall.
6. Disaster for the Jews—they suffered with the Muslims; also in Europe crusading fever led to anti-Semitic pogroms by the general populace.
7. Fostered a Greater Sense of Unity in Western Europe—mingling of various peoples, common Latin culture, allegiance to single pope in Rome, common religio-military enterprise, led to an awareness of European unity.
8. Increased Prestige of the Papacy—religious sensibilities stirred as seen in the 12th and 13th centuries' new religious movements.

9. Stimulation of an Intellectual Revival in Europe—crusaders brought back new knowledge and experiences as a result of contact with Muslim civilization (Spain & Sicily). Led to the 12th century renaissance in Europe—a revitalization in theology etc.; intellectual activity in the development of Scholasticism.
10. A Spirit of Commerce and Communication Stimulated—the general stagnation of Europe was broken up.