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Richard Lionheart: bad king, bad crusader?

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Abstract

This paper analyzes the impact of King Richard Lionheart of England during his tenure as leader of the Third Crusade. It examines crusade policy and the significance of Richard's decisions to deviate from it. The lack of control which both the Church and normative crusading precedents had over him becomes apparent. Richard's failure to take Jerusalem leads to the conclusion that his self-centred, puerile interests in personal adventures destroyed the chance for success of the Third Crusade, and thus prolonged warfare. Most wars have some sort of peace as the ultimate goal. The Third Crusade is no exception, but Richard subverted the goal of peace by turning away from a siege of Jerusalem and toward various other adventures, for example, attacks on Egyptian holdings, border skirmishes, the conquest of Cyprus from the Byzantines. Still, the Lionheart's legend persists from his day to our own to extol chivalrous virtues and courageous action. This paper presents the other side of the coin in the hope of approaching a more balanced, accurate portrayal of Richard's crusade leadership and of the ends of crusade ideology which he undermined. © 1997 Elsevier Science Ltd. All rights reserved

In June 1192, King Richard led a crusade advance toward Jerusalem. Moving quickly, the army crossed the inland hills without incident. Saracen troops could not contest the advance. The crusaders felt high in anticipation as they fortified a camp at Beit Nuba, only hours from the Holy City. Suspense heightened as the poet Ambroise, who was there, related in verse:¹

There were adventures and alarms

And mishaps, frays, and feats of arms

Ambroise told how a squad of Muslims was spying on crusader movements from a nearby mountain-top. The king and a small group of crusaders, including the poet

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¹Ambroise, *The crusade of Richard Lion-Heart*, trans. M. J. Hubert and J. L. La Monte (New York, 1976), 367; lines 9831–2.

Ambroise,² scaled the height and secured the area. King Richard himself pursued the Muslims down the valley, then suddenly found himself just outside Jerusalem. Stunned, he stopped and gazed at the city.³ A century later, Joinville⁴ would use this scene as a spur for later crusaders, having Richard hide his head under his tunic and say that one who could not take the city should not be allowed to look upon it.

This scene presents more questions than answers. It would be fruitless to wonder about Richard's regrets, if he had any, concerning his failure to take the city and nearly as fruitless to multiply anecdotes of his personal exploits. However, to inquire into the nature of his crusading leadership can be useful. It leads to even more interesting and significant questions. What was the goal of this crusade? Did Richard pursue that goal? With what results? And finally, while the destruction resulting from crusades is well-known, to what extent was crusade warfare limited by its own goals and propaganda?

The legend surrounding King Richard stands as a paradigm for medieval knighthood at its shining best, a king courageous in battle and courteous in victory. Yet some historians, like William Stubbs, have found qualities in Richard which were at odds with this view. Stubbs' description of the Lionheart is worth quoting: 'A bad son, a bad husband, a selfish ruler, and a vicious man'.⁵ Richardson and Sayles have revised Stubbs by arguing that Richard was a noble knight and a grand ruler, who, however, had 'no conception of the relation of financial means to political ends'.⁶ Steven Runciman has combined the two interpretations. He described Richard as 'a bad son, a bad husband and a bad king, but a gallant and splendid soldier'.⁷ Prestwich has taken the revision further, not only claiming wise political leadership for Richard, but also arguing for his careful money management.⁸ Recent works by John Gillingham and Antony Bridge rehabilitate the historical portrayal of Richard at length.⁹ Jonathan Riley-Smith has held back from the trend of lionizing Richard, depicting him as one of the 'finest crusade' commanders who, however, was 'vain...devious and self-centred'.¹⁰

Seeing this spectrum of interpretations, James Brundage wrote, 'The great problem of interpreting Richard's career, of course, is the question of what standards one should apply to his history'.¹¹ The inquiry here flows strictly from the crusade context: the standards that will be applied to Richard stem from crusaders themselves, from officials

²Ambroise, *The Crusade*, 368, lines 9843-4.

³Ambroise, *The Crusade*, 368; lines 9864. Also, *Itinerarium Regis Ricardi* in: *Chronicles and memorials of the reign of Richard I*, ed. W. Stubbs, 2 vols (Rolls Series, 1864), vol. 1, 369. *The annals of Roger de Hoveden*, trans. H. T. Riley, 2 vols (London, 1853), vol. 2, 267.

⁴Joinville, 'Life of St Louis', in: *Chronicles of the crusades*, trans. M. R. B. Shaw (New York, 1963), 183, 304-5.

⁵Introduction to the *Itinerarium*, xvii.

⁶H. G. Richardson and G. O. Sayles, *Governance of mediaeval England* (Edinburgh, 1963), 328-90.

⁷S. Runciman, *History of the Crusades*, 3 vols (New York, 1952), vol. 3, 75. Recently Runciman has become a bit more critical of Richard as a soldier. Cf. 'Richard, Coeur-de-Lion', *History Today*, 41 (July, 1991), 50-6.

⁸J. O. Prestwich, 'Richard Coeur de Lion: Rex Bellicosus', in: *Richard Coeur de Lion in history and myth*, ed. J. L. Nelson (London, 1992), 1-16.

⁹A. Bridge, *Richard the Lionheart* (London, 1989). J. Gillingham, *Richard the Lionheart* (New York, 1978) and J. Gillingham, 'The art of kingship: Richard I, 1189-99', *History Today*, 35 (April, 1985), 17-23.

¹⁰J. Riley-Smith, *The crusades. A short history* (London, 1987), 113.

¹¹J. A. Brundage, *Richard Lion Heart* (New York, 1974), 263.

who orchestrated the war, and from normative crusading prototypes in Richard's past which were applied to him in his own day. The point is to examine the evidence concerning Richard as leader of the Third Crusade and to analyze the significance of his failure to take Jerusalem. This inquiry will lead, with an ironic twist, to the issue of peace as an intended goal of crusade warfare, and how the Lionheart consistently subverted that goal.

What exactly were the goals of the Third Crusade? In 1187, Pope Gregory VIII called the Third Crusade and stated its main goal as recovering the Holy City and its environs from Saladin.¹² For example, Pope Gregory's model for the crusaders to follow was that of the Maccabees who succeeded in, as the pope noted, 'liberating' the people and the Holy Places in and around Jerusalem. The Maccabees then established a century-long stability for those inhabitants. Peter of Blois, a prolific propagandist of the Third Crusade fresh from the court of Pope Gregory VIII, wrote a popular treatise entitled *De Hierosolymitana peregrinatione acceleranda*. Not only does the title emphasize Jerusalem, but the city and its holy places are targeted specifically in this tract nearly fifty times. Peter criticized the crusaders for being slow about, as he put it, 'freeing that land from its grievous persecutions', but if the crusaders ever did follow through in their commitment to re-take Jerusalem, then the ultimate object of the crusade would be achieved: 'perpetual peace in the land'.¹³ Peter of Blois had written another crusade tract addressed to Richard's father, King Henry II, which not only spelled out the goal of freeing Jerusalem, but noted the foremost shrines of the city, the Holy Sepulchre and the Temple.¹⁴ Another prominent preacher of the Third Crusade and close advisor of Pope Gregory, Cardinal Henry of Albano, not only specified Jerusalem as the goal, but following the standard medieval exegesis of the Pharaohs' captivity of the Hebrews, the cardinal equated Egypt to carnal sin as opposed to the life and beauty represented by Jerusalem.¹⁵ Ralph Niger's treatise on the Third Crusade consistently places Jerusalem at the centre of pilgrimage, crusade and their mystical interpretations. In spiritual terms, Ralph labelled the city 'the vision of peace', while Egypt again represented carnal sin.¹⁶ Therefore, pope and propagandists clearly pointed to one prime object of the Third Crusade, the recovery of Jerusalem, which would, then, result in peace for Christians in the area.

It will help to survey the events of the Third Crusade. Its immediate cause stemmed from Saladin's stupendous victory at the Battle of Hattin in 1187 followed by his conquest of Jerusalem. The first European leader to act was King William II of Sicily who sent much-needed supplies to the Latin survivors early in 1188. These survivors first concentrated on defending the few cities that had withstood Saladin's onslaught,

¹²*The crusades: idea and reality 1095-1274*, eds L. and J. Riley-Smith (London, 1981), 64-7; *Patrologia Latina* [hereafter *PL*], 202.1539-42, and in other letters sent by Pope Gregory, e.g. *PL*, 202.1539, 1561.

¹³*PL*, 207.1069: *Pacem in terra perpetuam*. Until a critical edition of Peter of Blois' *Conquestio* appears, manuscript evidence should be used to corroborate the Migne version. The text from the *Conquestio* has been checked with Oxford, Bodleian Library, *Lat. MS misc. F14*, and British Library, *Royal MS 8.F.XVII*.

¹⁴*Dialogus inter Regem Henricum Secundum et Abbatem Bonaevallis*, ed. R. B. C. Huygens, *Revue Bénédictine*, 68 (1958), 112. Also in *PL*, 207.988.

¹⁵Henry of Albano, *Tractatus de peregrinante civitate Dei*, *PL*, 204.366-7.

¹⁶Radulfus Niger, *De Re Militari et Triplici via Peregrinationis Ierosolimitane*, ed. L. Schmutge (Berlin, 1977), 93.

then opened the first major offensive of the Third Crusade as they attempted to recover the port city of Acre in the summer of 1189. The Emperor Frederick Barbarossa departed Europe in 1189 with, as Riley-Smith wrote, 'one of the largest crusading armies, if not the largest, ever to take the field'.¹⁷ However, Frederick died *en route*. A portion of the German army pushed on to assist at the siege of Acre.

King Richard Lionheart was already well behind these others when he finally set out for the Holy Land in 1190. Still, he diverted his crusade army for a year to conquer Sicily from political opponents, then Cyprus from Byzantines, during which time the deadly siege of Acre continued to put the crusaders there in desperate need of the armies Richard was using elsewhere. Certainly the king could have pushed straight on to the Holy Land, just as Archbishop Baldwin's English group did while Richard remained in Sicily. Baldwin, a preacher of the crusade and the archbishop of Canterbury who had crowned Richard at Westminster, wrote in October of 1190 that although the crusaders' condition was perilous outside Acre, he hoped for and expected Richard's arrival any day.¹⁸ Still waiting for the king, Baldwin died at that undermanned siege of Acre, as did the English administrator Ranulf Glanville along with a great many others. The diversions in Sicily and Cyprus were not included in the directives of the pope nor did the leaders at Acre expect Richard to delay so long. On the contrary, Peter of Blois' *De Hierosolymitana peregrinatione acceleranda* called explicitly for a speedy arrival in the Holy Land. Richard the warrior enjoyed magnificent successes in his Mediterranean island ventures, but Richard the crusade leader had seriously strayed from the intent of the crusade.

After Richard had taken Cyprus in 1191, he joined King Philip of France who was already at the siege of Acre. With the English army finally present, Acre fell in a mere five weeks, after two years of the crusade army's decimation in trying to recover it. Richard's presence made a significant difference with foes as well as with friends: he immediately alienated the German crusaders over the loot and, insulted, they departed. Their revenge would come after the crusade when they captured and held Richard for a king's ransom. Philip of France, also having become hostile to Richard,¹⁹ quit the crusade only weeks after Acre fell. If only Richard could have been this successful at removing Saladin's allies! Shortly afterward, the Lionheart defeated Saladin at the Battle of Arsuf, occupied Jaffa, and then led various assaults into Egyptian territory. He also marched his troops toward Jerusalem in 1191 and again in 1192 but retreated both times. It was the second of these marches that produced the image of Richard using his tunic to shield himself from the sight of Jerusalem. Soon afterwards, Richard signed a truce then departed from the East in 1192.

Taking Jaffa in September, 1191, was the high water mark of Richard's crusade. On the one hand, the king was in complete command and Jaffa defended the nearest port which could supply a siege of Jerusalem. On the other hand, as Geoffrey Hindley observed, the Muslims at this point 'were totally demoralised,' for Richard had shown

¹⁷J. Riley-Smith, *The crusades. A short history*, 111.

¹⁸*Epistolae Cantuariensis*, in: *Chronicles and memorials of the reign of Richard I*, vol. 2, 328–9.

¹⁹*Chronique d'Ernoul et de Bernard le Trésorier*, ed. M. L. de Mas Latrie (Paris, 1876), 277, note 9.

his strength in siege warfare at Acre as well as his ability in the open field at Arsuf²⁰: who or what could withstand the Lionheart?

Crusade leaders met to decide the next step. Divisions appeared between Richard, who wanted to rebuild Ascalon (a castle some thirty miles to the south which guarded the road to Egypt) and those who wanted to march on Jerusalem, some forty miles due east.²¹ Ambroise wrote that the army insisted instead on Jaffa being rebuilt²²:

Because the shortest road doth wend

Thence to their pilgrimage's end.

Ambroise's argument referred to the fact that Ascalon was miles in the wrong direction. Occupying Ascalon could be justified as a means to weaken Saladin and to guard supply lines during a siege of Jerusalem, but it was Richard's primary aim to raid Egyptian territory,²³ not to secure Jerusalem. According to the *Itinerarium Regis Ricardi*, it was the 'acclamation of the multitude' which caused Richard to give up his Egyptian adventure,²⁴ but only for the moment. In time he would force his will on the army to take Ascalon, then move even further toward Egypt. As the crusade propagandists Ralph Niger and Henry of Albano had pointed out, Egypt was not the object of the Third Crusade. Richard was setting a dangerous precedent of turning crusade armies toward targets far removed from Jerusalem.

During the restoration of Jaffa, Richard enjoyed a number of adventurous skirmishes in the area. For example, once the king personally went foraging, but too far afield with too small a squad.²⁵ Saracens surrounded the group and began to attack. The Lionheart valiantly held off the closing circle of Saracens, but time was running out. From over a hill, one crusader came upon the situation and sized it up. He impersonated Richard in order to lead the attackers to himself, thus making it possible for the king to fight free. Like Richard's foray within view of Jerusalem, such incidents provided rich fuel for chivalrous tales but contributed little toward the goal of the crusade. The king risked himself often in such encounters and, in doing so, risked the entire crusade. Ambroise brought out precisely this point in a long passage which cautioned against such bravado saying that a number of 'worthy men' insisted that the king cease these personal combats because his death might well mean their own.²⁶ Richard ignored the advice.

Pushing Saladin into retreat the following November, Richard moved the army east to

²⁰G. Hindley, *Saladin* (London, 1976), 172.

²¹*Itinerarium*, 283-4. Ambroise, 276-7, lines 6999-7018.

²²Ambroise, 277; lines 7023-4.

²³Richard's plan to invade Egypt was in place by October 1191: cf. the evidence noted in Gillingham, *Richard the Lionheart*, 300-1.

²⁴*Itinerarium*, 284: *His vero pertinaciter Franci contradixerunt, allegantes ipsam Joppen potius restaurandam, et labore commodiore reparandam, quippe quod ad breviorum peregrinationem in Jerusalem commodius potuisset opus consummari. Quid multa? ad horum consilium consequendum multitudinis invaluit acclamatio.*

²⁵Ambroise, 280-2. *Itinerarium*, 286.

²⁶Ambroise, 283; lines 7147-76.

Ramleh, about half the distance to Jerusalem. There the army remained, neither advancing nor retreating in the winter rains, merely getting itself and its supplies soaked. As the *Itinerarium Regis Ricardi* put it, 'For six weeks we were really not in pleasurable times, but a good end would have made up for the hard beginning'.²⁷ That good end, completing the crusade in Jerusalem, had become a distinct possibility. During November and December, Saladin had to disband his fatigued troops, keeping only a tentative hold on Jerusalem. As Hindley has indicated, Saladin's 'small winter army could not hope to match Richard in the field'.²⁸ The crusade army moved to Beit Nuba, twelve miles from Jerusalem. The weather worsened. The rains rusted armour and the winds tore tent stakes out of the ground. Still, the *Itinerarium Regis Ricardi* recorded the one hope which sustained the troops, that 'neither enemy nor obstacle would stop them from consummating the crusade'.²⁹

However, the Templars, Hospitallers and some local barons argued against a siege because of Saladin's threat to their supply lines and because of the fear that there would not be enough troops to garrison Jerusalem once it was captured. Instead, they insisted that Richard continue his adventures and border skirmishing. The method they proposed was that the army should not consummate the crusade, '*non consummaretur peregrinatio*'.³⁰ Such advice, coming from an ordinary crusader, would have been seen as treasonous to the cause. From those warlords, it was astonishing, rather like marriage without consummation, it contradicted the intent of the deed. Richard followed the advice of avoiding Jerusalem which fell right in with his pattern of activity. Having wasted the army's supplies during the past month of winter camping near Jerusalem, he ordered a full retreat and a future advance on Ascalon. By failing to march the last few miles to Jerusalem, he turned his back on the goal set by Pope Gregory VIII. Furthermore, by remaining longer in the Holy Land, he violated two criteria of 'just war' theory: he was admitting that he had no reasonable prospect of success of achieving the goal, and yet he persisted in carrying on wanton violence against people and property in the area.

Perhaps the Templars and the other warlords wanted to keep the army intact, as Hans Mayer has suggested,³¹ in order to gain more land for the Latin Kingdom and thus provide aid to the inhabitants. Ascalon was once part of the Latin Kingdom. Pope Gregory did target the Holy City and its environs. Still, this secondary goal of conquering territory needed to give way to the primary goal of recovering Jerusalem at some point, if not at all points. The warlords' decision to keep the crusade away from Jerusalem was also contradictory to the intent of individual crusaders: when they heard of the retreat, great grief overcame them. Ambroise wrote that except for some of the leaders, all others suffered 'such heartache and such wretchedness, such bitterness and

²⁷*Itinerarium*, 299: *circiter sex septimanas, verum non in deliciis, sed dura principia dulci fine quandoque remunerantur.*

²⁸Hindley, *Saladin*, 175.

²⁹*Itinerarium*, 305: *nullis nec hostili occursione retardandi obstaculis... consummaturos peregrinationem.* Cf. also Ambroise, 299–300, lines 7670–2.

³⁰*Itinerarium*, 306; cf. similarly *Itinerarium*, 308 and Ambroise, 300–1.

³¹H. E. Mayer, *The crusades*, trans. J. Gillingham (New York, 1988), 149–50.

misery'.³² The decision to retreat disappointed the whole army, not just the French, or the non-locals. Both Ambroise and the 'Itinerarium Regis Ricardi', sources that generally make Richard into a hero, concluded this segment with a reprimand, that if the crusaders had only known the weak condition of Saladin and his defences, they could have taken the city with very little effort.³³

Internal strife soon reappeared. Richard reunited the French, English and other components of the army in Ascalon to rebuild the fortress,³⁴ but then he ceased to support the French. Even when they begged for a loan, Richard denied them. Yet at that time he was collecting a great deal of produce from the locals,³⁵ and Saladin himself had sent him 24,000 dinars that winter in ransom payments.³⁶ As Peter Edbury and Christopher Tyerman have noted, Richard's war chest was in excellent shape.³⁷ Was Richard trying to save funds, or was he acting out one more chivalrous duel with the French? The answer emerged when Richard required the leading French noble, the Duke of Burgundy, to repay a large loan immediately. The Duke was furious and withdrew to Acre. Richard then sent orders to refuse admittance of all French into Acre.³⁸ While the Duke certainly contributed to this friction, King Richard should have been above it, or at least he should not have been instigating it as he had done previously when he alienated the German crusaders.

Saladin expected Richard to be on the attack and summoned Muslim commanders and troops to re-group by the month of May, which was the prime campaigning season.³⁹ Richard disappointed this expectation. He had received news about a rebellion in his kingdom involving King Philip and Prince John. In order to protect his European holdings, he decided to abandon the crusade. However, soon the news about the revolt became mixed, sometimes reporting threats to the king's position, sometimes reporting that problems were solved.⁴⁰ Given this reprieve, Richard moved the army even further away from Jerusalem. In mid-May he besieged the fortress of Darun, which was on the main route to Egypt, about twenty miles south of Ascalon. Not waiting for the troops led by Henry of Champagne and the Duke of Burgundy, Richard began the siege. A number of problems faced the crusaders at Darun, one of which was not having enough troops to encircle the large fortification. Furthermore, Darun had seventeen powerful towers, a wide moat and large stone outcroppings which contributed to the castle's defences. Richard's stone-casters and sappers went to work and within only a couple of days breached the walls. Inside they found loot, supplies, and forty Christian prisoners.⁴¹

³²Ambroise, 303, lines 7790-1.

³³Ambroise, 303-4. *Itinerarium*, 309.

³⁴See D. Pringle, 'King Richard I and the walls of Ascalon', *Palestine Exploration Quarterly*, 116 (1984), 138, on the enormous amount of work and time which the crusaders spent on rebuilding Ascalon.

³⁵*The annals of Roger de Hoveden*, vol. 2, 266.

³⁶Ambroise, 313, note 38.

³⁷P. W. Edbury, *The Kingdom of Cyprus and the crusades 1191-1374* (Cambridge, 1991), 8 and note 18; C. Tyerman, *England and the crusades 1095-1588* (Chicago, 1988), 77-83. Cf. also J. Riley-Smith, *The crusades. A short history*, 113.

³⁸*Itinerarium*, 326.

³⁹Ambroise, 307, lines 7935-40, 320-1.

⁴⁰*Itinerarium*, 351.

⁴¹*Itinerarium*, 353-6.

Richard's group proved very effective at siegecraft. A week later the crusade army captured two large caravans. They seized about 1000 sheep from one. The army was prepared and fit, and its royal commander showed he was very capable of acting without delay.

During the final week of May, 1192, Richard left the army which was rebuilding Darun. He carried on more of his famous exploits outside of Ascalon. At this point, the contrast between Richard and the crusaders could not be more plain. Richard continued his chivalrous adventures. The troops finished the work at Darun, then planned a march on Jerusalem. As the *Itinerarium Regis Ricardi* has it, in Richard's absence the various dukes, counts and other leaders, French, Norman, English, Picts and others, *unanimiter*, chose the march. Stressing the absence of the king and the concord of all others, the 'one voice' of army and leaders, rich and poor alike set out for Jerusalem even if the king resisted.⁴²

Along the way, the crusaders were harassed by stinging flies, the only enemy they would meet on this march outside of the Lionheart. They passed the test of the flies. All hoped to make it to Jerusalem, except, as the *Itinerarium Regis Ricardi* noted, King Richard.⁴³ It took a Poitevin sermon to change Richard's mind. As Ambroise recorded it, the sermon hit him where it hurt: 'Sire, they speak of you in blame'.⁴⁴ Richard vowed to stay on the crusade until the following Easter.⁴⁵ As it turned out, he left earlier than that, breaking even this crusade vow.

In June, of 1192, the army marched back to Beit Nuba and regained the camp of the previous winter, twelve miles from Jerusalem, without hinderance. The march took only five days. Ambroise dwelled on the unity within the army and the overall *esprit de corps* as nobles lent horses to those in need and themselves walked behind their own mounts. Then occurred Richard's chase which brought him before the walls of Jerusalem. Why was he not getting down to the business of a siege, especially considering the lack of Muslim resistance? The immediate reason, or stall-tactic, was that as soon as Richard had reached Beit Nuba, he sent Henry of Champagne back to Acre to gather a few recalcitrant troops.⁴⁶ As Ambroise put it:⁴⁷

During a whole month's time or more

We had to stay in that same place.

Since each crusader carried one month's supplies, these weeks were crucial.⁴⁸ What Richard had accomplished in sending Henry away was to divide the previously united

⁴²*Itinerarium*, 359–60; Ambroise, 357; Hoveden, 267.

⁴³*Itinerarium*, 361.

⁴⁴Ambroise, 360, lines 9587–8.

⁴⁵Ambroise, 363, lines 9712–4.

⁴⁶*Itinerarium*, 369. Ambroise, 367, lines 9817–25.

⁴⁷Ambroise, 367, lines 9822–3.

⁴⁸Ambroise, 364, lines 9741–4.

leadership, spend valuable supplies on nothing, take some of the motivation out of a very inspired army, and to the degree that Henry was successful at bringing back deserters, that much would he dilute the army's unified spirit. Furthermore, in Henry's absence, Richard resisted the army's desire to begin the siege. Only upon Henry's return would he even debate the move. Meanwhile Saladin had to deal with an exhausted Muslim army and grumbling allies who publicly argued against continuing the war, all of which weakened his position in Jerusalem.⁴⁹ The Third Crusade could not have had an enemy more devastating than the foot-dragging Lionheart.

During this inactivity, remnants of the True Cross were presented to the army by local Christians.⁵⁰ The Cross itself had been captured by Saladin in 1187, and its importance to the crusade has often been underestimated by modern historians. For example, William Stubbs surprised himself when, on comparing the various chronicles concerning the Battle of Hattin, he found that, 'The loss of Jerusalem seems to have been a less shock generally than the capture of the True Cross'.⁵¹ Whether or not we attach such importance to the Cross, the crusaders certainly did.

The presence of these pieces of the True Cross greatly energized the camp. The crusaders and some of the leaders demanded a march to Jerusalem.⁵² Richard, the military orders and some of the local nobles countered the move again because, they said, of vulnerable supply lines, because most of the wells around Jerusalem had been blocked up or poisoned, and because of the difficulty of not having enough troops to encircle the city or to hold it once it was taken. If King Richard's intent was to keep the army safe, then it disagreed with the army's goal of securing Jerusalem. The final decision was skewed by Richard who insisted that twenty representatives, chosen by him, should vote on the issue. Only five voters represented the army and the French leaders. Of the others, five were Templars, five Hospitallers, and five were locals who supported the King.⁵³ Not surprisingly, they chose Egypt as the target. Gerrymandering is an old art! Still, the French refused to abide by this decision and insisted on marching to Jerusalem. Richard would not lead them, but to save face, he offered to become a soldier in their army, knowing full well that French nobles could not effectively command the large English contingent, especially with this English king in its ranks. The people criticized and cursed, but began the retreat on account of Richard's opposition. Saladin had his greatest ally in the Lionheart.

At this time, the crusaders captured a large caravan from Egypt, defeating both the Egyptian army of about 2000 guarding it and 500 picked relief troops sent by Saladin from Jerusalem. Now the city's defence was desperate because Saladin had lost so many choice troops and supplies, and because the crusade army now had an ample amount of

⁴⁹Behadin, in: *Arab historians of the crusades*, trans. F. Gabrieli (Berkeley, 1984), 236. Stubbs, introduction to the *Itinerarium*, CXXXVI.

⁵⁰*Itinerarium*, 376-8.

⁵¹W. Stubbs, *Historical introductions to the Rolls series*, ed. A. Hassall (London, 1902), 349, note 3.

⁵²*Itinerarium*, 378-9. Ambrose, 376-8, lines 10,140-54.

⁵³*Itinerarium*, 381-2.

⁵⁴*Itinerarium*, 390-1.

supplies, adding not only a great deal of food, gold and spices but also thousands of horses and camels.⁵⁴ The army: ⁵⁵

Began once more to make lament,

For there was great desire in them

To lay siege to Jerusalem.

Once again Richard reiterated the reasons for opposing the siege: water scarcity, lack of manpower and vulnerable supply lines. He forced the crusaders to retreat all the way to the Mediterranean. After more skirmishing along the coast, King Richard signed a truce and soon departed for Europe.

What really was the Muslim situation? Throughout the period of Richard's crusade, Saladin wrestled with dissension in his ranks as well as outright revolts.⁵⁶ Muslim troops had been in the field a long time. During that crucial month of May, 1192, Saladin's eldest son withdrew his services until the Sultan could smooth over dissensions in the Muslim court. Worse than this, Saladin's nephew and battle commander, Taqi al-Din Umar, deserted Jerusalem and began his own conquests north of Baghdad.⁵⁷ In an interesting speculation, Lyons and Jackson argued that if Richard had besieged Jerusalem, Saladin's position was so weak that the Sultan would have had to leave the city. With the coast and the Egyptian road in crusader hands, Saladin 'could find the Hattin position reversed and his own army cut off without supplies'.⁵⁸ While Richard had kept up unusually close communications with the Muslim camp, it is uncertain how much he knew of such weaknesses in his enemy. What he surely must have recognized, as Ehrenkreutz put it, was the 'shocking failure of Muslim resistance' during 1191-2.⁵⁹ Every time Richard put the crusaders into action, whether siege, march, skirmish or open battle, the Muslims lost or retreated.

The Sultan also found his leading emirs frightened and ready to run both times the crusaders had camped at Beit Nuba. As Hamilton Gibb wrote, Saracen troops 'were turning to mutiny'.⁶⁰ The emirs insisted that Saladin leave the city and command an army outside, 'as had happened at Acre'.⁶¹ The Muslim historian Behadin, who was with Saladin in Jerusalem, wrote that these emirs were simply trying to save their own skins, for with Saladin out of the city, they were free to flee. The previous situation at Acre is exactly what the Saracens expected again, that is, they knew that a crusade leader so close to Jerusalem should bring his army even to a difficult siege. Furthermore, Saladin

⁵⁵ Ambroise, 391, lines 10,597-600. *Itinerarium*, 393.

⁵⁶ A. Ehrenkreutz, *Saladin* (New York, 1972), 213-20. Cf. also note 47.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 218.

⁵⁸ M. Lyons and D. E. P. Jackson, *Saladin: the politics of the Holy War* (Cambridge, 1982), 352.

⁵⁹ Ehrenkreutz, *Saladin*, 217.

⁶⁰ H. Gibb, *The life of Saladin* (Oxford, 1973), 74.

⁶¹ *Arab historians of the crusades*, 91.

understood that it was his personal leadership alone that kept his army united. As Saladin himself said, 'As soon as I am gone, the Muslims will be destroyed', and Behadin lamented, 'These were his words, and it happened just as he said'.⁶² A few months after the crusaders had departed, Saladin died on 4 March 1193. The Muslim political world fragmented. If Richard had stayed until Easter as he had vowed, he could have strolled into Jerusalem. Such a victory might well have preempted the tragic Fourth Crusade. As it turned out, one crusade after another shattered the peace in the generation after 1192 because Richard continued to bury his head under his tunic.

The point is not that Richard could have taken Jerusalem (crusaders then and modern historians like Kate Norgate⁶³ have noted this), but rather that any good crusade leader should have done what the army expected, what the pope and crusade preachers expected, and what Saladin expected: make the attempt to enter the city. The entire premise of the Third Crusade, to secure the Holy Places, had been stated consistently by those who called the crusade. However, Richard had taken a large army that had once decided *unanimiter* to fulfil that goal, and he had divided it, delayed it, opposed it, and finally pried it out of the East, diverting it not once but twice from the goal. Richard's decisions extended crusade warfare not only for the added time he remained in the Holy Land, but his lack of results forced a number of other crusades into the field. In other words, a dedicated siege of Jerusalem would probably have won the city and ended the war then and there, particularly when assuming Saladin's death before the next campaign season, which actually did occur. Decisive action might well have resulted in, as Peter of Blois had written, 'peace in the land' for some time to come. This would have made unnecessary the crusades of the next decades, that is, Emperor Henry VI's crusade (which was fatal to him), the Fourth Crusade (which was fatal to Byzantium), and the Fifth Crusade (which was fatal to the inhabitants of Damietta as well as to a great many crusaders).⁶⁴

After the second retreat from Jerusalem, it had become clear to contemporaries that Richard was a failure as a crusader leader. The French took to singing insulting songs about him, to which the king replied in kind. Beyond national rivalries, a more subtle criticism of the crusade emerged as Ambroise, the king's own poet, held up the crusading models of Charlemagne who beat the Saxons, and Roland who followed his obligation to his dying breath.⁶⁵ Concerning the Third Crusaders' intent to begin the siege, Ambroise took Roland's message to heart.⁶⁶

They asked no more to live, indeed,

If once Jerusalem were freed.

⁶² *Arab historians of the crusades*, 234.

⁶³ K. Norgate, *Richard the Lion Heart* (New York, 1924), 205–7, 244.

⁶⁴ J. M. Powell, *Anatomy of a crusade* (Philadelphia, 1984), 169–71, on the high mortality rates of clerics and combatants on the Fifth Crusade.

⁶⁵ Ambroise, 324–5 where Charlemagne and Roland are used as models which the Third Crusaders failed to live up to, and 422 where Roland's prowess is equated to that of Richard.

⁶⁶ Ambroise, 392, lines 10,637–39.

Richard's poet found him equal to Roland in terms of prowess, but less than Roland in terms of commitment.⁶⁷

In what is a striking and revealing censure, Ambroise and the English author of the *Itinerarium Regis Ricardi* applied the First Crusade as a normative model to Richard's crusade. Both cited the siege of Antioch where the first crusaders had little hope of success, and had even less after they won the city since a large Muslim relief force in turn besieged them. Yet Godfrey and the others won because they continued to try, unlike Richard.⁶⁸ When the first crusaders faced various difficulties, holy relics like the lance activated them. The Third Crusade found pieces of the True Cross which did motivate the army, but without results because of the king's resistance. When Raymond and Godfrey found that the First Crusade had become bogged down in Antioch, they were able to move a portion of the troops forward without wasting time looking for deserters. These crusaders had options other than a march on Jerusalem. For example, Baldwin's group remained in Edessa, Bohemond's group stayed in Antioch and some like Stephen of Blois simply went home. When Godfrey and his group besieged Jerusalem they, like the Third Crusaders, found the wells blocked up, that they lacked manpower to encircle the city, their supply lines alternated between vulnerable and non-existent, and that a large Muslim relief force was on the way. Still they carried the crusade to its goal. The Muslim relieving force did arrive after part of the First Crusade had departed, yet Godfrey found the manpower to overcome the threat; and even afterward, there were enough men to garrison Jerusalem and to keep it politically stable. These events were well known to the Third Crusaders and as the *Itinerarium Regis Ricardi* put it, Godfrey and the First Crusaders gained victory because, quoting the biblical book of *Wisdom*, they were worthy to receive the wages they worked for.⁶⁹ The application to Richard needs no explanation.

In Richard of Devizes' history of the Third Crusade, it is only through falsehoods that he made the Lionheart look like a good crusader for his English audience.⁷⁰ According to Devizes' counter-factual history, Richard Lionheart was held back from besieging Jerusalem by none other than the French.⁷¹ It was the bishops and the king's household who signed 'a most hateful and unwanted truce' which kept Richard from the goal of Jerusalem, a truce which was signed while the king lay sick in bed and unaware. Yet the king's honour forced him to keep that truce!⁷² This sort of myth-making undeniably supports the legend of Richard's crusade, as portrayed in Walter Scott's *Talisman*, but the genuine history of Richard's crusade leadership tells a very different story.

Were Richard's decisions to retreat from Jerusalem a gem of military wisdom because

⁶⁷While Ambroise could not openly criticize his king, commander and patron, especially considering Richard's terrible temper, it appears that his poem is something less than an 'epic glorification of Richard' as some have described it, for example, J. Finlayson, 'Richard, *Coer de Lyon*: romance, history or something in between?' *Studies in Philology*, 87 (1990), 176.

⁶⁸*Itinerarium*, 396. Ambroise, 324-5.

⁶⁹*Itinerarium*, 396.

⁷⁰Richard of Devizes, *The chronicle of Richard of Devizes of the time of King Richard the First*, ed. J. T. Appleby (London, 1963), Introduction, xvii.

⁷¹Richard of Devizes, *Chronicle*, 78.

⁷²Richard of Devizes, *Chronicle*, 79.

of the problems before him? Was a cautious policy, especially in the light of Hattin, the best policy for defending the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem? Perhaps so. Many modern historians have accepted this premise. Part of the current thinking behind favoring this cautious policy seems to be an understandable affection for peace, or at least the idea that limited warfare is less harmful than an all-out move to take and hold Jerusalem. However the Third Crusade was not called for defence, for there was precious little left to defend. According to the crusade propagandists and the majority of those who participated under Richard, the prime object of the Third Crusade was to secure Jerusalem, not to restore a rump kingdom. Furthermore, the long and desperate siege of Acre illustrates that crusading participants before Richard's arrival were anything but cautious. For example, the Templar Grand Master, Gerard de Ridefort, had favoured the vigorous (and disastrous) policy at Hattin. Perhaps he should have known better but later he actively committed himself and his troops to the siege of Acre under King Guy of Lusignan. In one battle Gerard faced Taqi al-Din, Saladin's nephew who later deserted and so hurt the Sultan's strength. Taqi al-Din disrupted the Templar line, resulting in Gerard's capture and execution. The telling example of Guy of Lusignan reveals that Hattin did not instill a cautious policy in him either, even after Gerard's death. At the Battle of Hattin, King Guy had been captured by Saladin along with Reginald of Chatillon who has become noted for his very active policy against Saladin.⁷³ Right in front of the captured and bound Guy of Lusignan, Saladin himself executed Reginald. The Sultan later released Guy but only after Guy solemnly vowed to stop fighting. If anyone should have been persuaded to a cautious policy, King Guy was the candidate. However, after Saladin released him, Guy began and continued that very risky siege of Acre to its successful conclusion.

The historical aftermath of this crusade shows that caution led to more, and more widespread, crusade violence. Peace might have been attained with the re-taking of Jerusalem; but the reality was that, without control of Jerusalem, more wars followed in quick succession in the name of re-taking the Holy City. Richard not only failed to attempt to take the city, but in his constant military ventures away from Jerusalem, he repudiated the premise of the crusade. Therefore, one conclusion presents itself: as a crusade leader, Richard was a dismal failure. The only mitigation that presents itself results from his secondary successes at Acre, Jaffa and Cyprus. Modern historians may find favor with the cautious policy, but the interests of peace were not served by it in this instance.

The papal conception of Richard's leadership supports this conclusion. Pope Celestine's letter of criticism of the Third Crusade, inserted into Howden's English chronicle, makes this clear. The pope noted that the crusaders 'were unable to effect much' because, while some remained faithful to the crusade, others did not follow prescribed crusade activity. Instead, they made their own 'arrogant' decisions and did 'other things'.⁷⁴ What exactly was prescribed crusade activity for Celestine? Beside the usual exhortation to personal religious ideals, the pope specified the goal of the crusade then as

⁷³In defence of Reginald and his vigorous crusade policies, see B. Hamilton, 'The elephant of Christ, Reynald of Châtillon', in *Studies in Church history*, ed. D. Baker (Oxford, 1978), 97-108.

⁷⁴*The annals of Roger de Hoveden*, vol. 2, 283; PL, 206.971.

well as in the future as 'liberating' and 'cleansing the Holy City and the Sepulchre'.⁷⁵ It should be reiterated that the evidence cited here is not drawn from hostile witnesses, such as French songs or chronicles which criticized an English king: Ambroise, Howden, Celestine and the *Itinerarium Regis Ricardi* were sources generally friendly to the King of England. However, Howden, as Brundage has noted, was a disenchanting friend, disillusioned by a king who had promised so much and delivered so little. Howden had company.

Modern historians have interpreted Richard's decisions against besieging Jerusalem as 'remarkably cool judgment',⁷⁶ explaining that if he had begun the siege, the army would have been trapped between the city's garrison and a relief force outside the city. Faced with the 'realities of the situation', the king made the 'inevitable decision' to retreat.⁷⁷ The argument presented in this paper may seem opposed to the humanitarian impulses of these historians who portray Richard as caring so much about the army's safety that he sacrificed an attempt on Jerusalem. However, the line of thought pursued here does not endorse a crusading enthusiasm which would have increasingly bloodied the face of civilized life. Actually, the opposite is true. The well-defined goal of the Third Crusade, recovering Jerusalem, and the persistence to pursue it, and only it, would have reduced Richard's widespread warfare and have resulted in the hoped-for peace. Following that goal would also have limited crusade action to Jerusalem and its environs. Instead, crusaders attacked political enemies on Sicily, overturned Byzantine rule on Cyprus, and violated Egyptian holdings. It is important to note that Richard's failure to occupy Jerusalem is pivotal in the subsequent fracturing of the crusade movement, as the following generation saw the emergence of the political crusades in Sicily, the Fourth Crusade against Byzantium and the Fifth Crusade against Egypt, entire operations for which Richard had set clear precedents. Also, Joinville cited Richard twice as a model crusader, trying to keep enthusiasm alive during and after St Louis' crusades which were aimed at Egypt.⁷⁸ After Louis, the entire crusade movement withered. There is not enough evidence here to conclude that Richard's actions directly caused either these divergent crusades or the ultimate withering of the crusade movement, but had Richard succeeded in securing Jerusalem instead of setting precedents for crusade warfare away from the city, then many of the reasons to pursue these later crusades would not have existed.

The implication here is that Richard Lionheart, as a bad crusader who avoided the main goal of the Third Crusade, prolonged and increased warfare. Richard transgressed the limits of the crusade which were articulated in his day, and he should be judged accordingly. He was no hero, but a man who merely wanted to fight hand-to-hand forever. Upon return to his own kingdom, he continued such skirmishes which resulted in his death in 1199. Yet from his day to our own, writers and legends have lionized him.

⁷⁵*The annals of Roger de Hoveden*, vol. 2, 283, 285; *PL*, 206.971, 972.

⁷⁶J. O. Prestwich, 'Richard Coeur de Lion', 15; in full agreement A. Bridge, *Richard the Lionheart*, 201-3, and B. B. Broughton, *The legends of King Richard I Coeur de Lion* (Paris, 1966), 29-33.

⁷⁷J. Gillingham, *Richard the Lionheart*, 199; with the same conclusion, S. Painter, 'The Third Crusade: Richard the Lionhearted and Philip Augustus', in: *A history of the Crusades*, ed. K. Setton, 6 vols (New York, 1969), vol. 2, 45-85.

⁷⁸Joinville, 'Life of St Louis', in: *Chronicles of the crusades*, (York), 183, 304-5.

Why? It seems that this lionizing tells us much more about those writers and their audiences than about Richard. It is also worth underlining the obvious in this inquiry: while crusade goals and propaganda should have restricted Richard's warfare to the re-taking of Jerusalem, they failed to control or to direct the army. The religious authority may have been competent to start the crusade and to define the goals of the hostilities, but it could not enforce them. Pope Celestine could only criticize after the fact, as did Gerald of Wales who ended his account of preaching the crusade by describing the crusaders at the siege of Acre as in 'despair' because they had been 'deserted by their leaders' and 'were worn out by waiting so long for supplies' while Richard remained in Sicily.⁷⁹ A few years after Richard's misuse of crusade forces, the Byzantine Empire would feel the full weight of such misdirection during the Fourth Crusade. Pope Innocent III had called the Fourth Crusade to recover Jerusalem, and however powerful historians portray this pontiff, he tried but failed to steer the crusade to the Holy Land once its leaders chose other targets.⁸⁰ In line with the earlier example of Richard's crusade leadership, we can see just how little control the Church actually had over crusade activity when the secular leadership deviated from set goals. Whatever conclusion one may come to concerning the morality of the crusades, it is necessary to distinguish between the limited goals set by the Church, and the actual hostilities carried on by secular leaders.

It is ironic that the brave Lionheart hid under his tunic rather than approach Jerusalem and finish the crusade: if he had occupied the city, that courageous act might well have resulted in the hoped-for peace. In a final twist, if the Templars and other warlords of 1191 could go against the grain by arguing against consummating the crusade, then historians today can study peace as a legitimate issue even in full-blown crusade ideology⁸¹ without hiding behind the tunic of cautious, limited policies.

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⁷⁹Gerald of Wales, 'The journey through Wales', in: *Chronicles of the crusades*, York), 208.

⁸⁰Various letters of Innocent tried to re-direct the mutinous Fourth Crusaders to the Holy Land: see *PL*, 214.1100, 1179; and *Christian society and the crusades 1198-1229*, ed. E. Peters (Philadelphia, 1971), 22-4. Cf. also D. E. Queller, *The Fourth Crusade* (Philadelphia, 1977), 55-6, 68-9, 80 and following.

⁸¹This is not the first attempt to apply crusade studies to the goal of peace. However, it is worth calling attention to such attempts: Cf. *The Holy War*, ed. T. P. Murphy (Ohio, 1976); and J. M. Powell, *Anatomy of a crusade*.