

# The Islamic View and the Christian View of the Crusades: A New Synthesis

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## Abstract

Conventional wisdom maintains that the Islamic world and western Christendom held two very different views of the crusades. The image of warfare between Islam and Christendom has promoted the idea that the combative instincts aroused by this conflict somehow produced discordant views of the crusades. Yet the direct evidence from Islamic and Christian sources indicates otherwise. The self-view of the crusades presented by contemporary Muslim authors and the self-view of the crusades presented by crusading popes are not in opposition to each other but are in agreement with each other. Both interpretations place the onset of the crusades ahead of their accepted historical debut in 1095. Both interpretations point to the Norman conquest of Islamic Sicily (1060–91) as the start of the crusades. And both interpretations contend that by the end of the eleventh century the crusading enterprise was Mediterranean-wide in its scope. The Islamic view of the crusades is in fact the enantiomorph (mirror-image) of the Christian view of the crusades. This article makes a radical departure from contemporary scholarship on the early crusading enterprise because it is based on the direct evidence from Islamic and Christian sources. The direct evidence offers a way out of the impasse into which crusade history has fallen, and any attempt at determining the origin and nature of crusading without the support of the direct evidence is doomed to failure.

Since 11 September 2001 the crusades have hit the headlines. Shortly after the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, President George Bush used the term ‘crusade’ to describe his new war on terrorism.<sup>1</sup> Al-Qā’idah has been using the term for more than a decade, most notably in ‘The World Islamic Front Statement of *Jihād*

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<sup>1</sup> The White House: President George W. Bush, ‘Remarks by the President upon Arrival: The South Lawn, September 16, 2001’, Office of the Press Secretary, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/09/20010916-2.html> (accessed 16 March 2007): ‘This crusade, this war on terrorism is going to take a while’.

against Jews and Crusaders' of 22 February 1998 that speaks of 'the brutal Crusader occupation of the [Arabian] Peninsula' and 'Crusader armies spreading in it like locusts, eating its riches and wiping out its plantations'.<sup>2</sup> Usāmah bin Lādin and his deputy Ayman al-Zawāhirī have repeatedly referred to the crusades in their taped messages. To judge from their rhetoric, the Muslim world has harboured a sense of grievance against the west that goes all the way back to the crusades. But what exactly were the crusades, and how have Muslims in the past understood them?

Modern scholars have ignored how Muslims in the past have understood the crusades. Those who study the crusades cannot credit what medieval Muslim authors say about crusading, particularly regarding the origins, purpose and scope of the enterprise. Simply put, the modern researcher cannot accept what the Islamic evidence is telling him about crusading. The modern researcher is so sure that the prevailing theory of the crusades is the correct one that he cannot bring himself to adopt the self-understanding that Muslims had of the crusades. As a result, modern scholarship, whether in the west or in the Muslim world, passes over the Islamic interpretation of the crusades as irrelevant.<sup>3</sup>

The framework of analysis that guides current understandings of how crusading emerged and developed cannot accommodate the historical vision of the crusades put forward by Muslim authors who had direct knowledge of crusading. Modern scholars in the west,<sup>4</sup> as well as in the

<sup>2</sup> 'Naṣṣ bayān al-jabḥah al-islāmīyah al-ʿālamīyah li-jihād al-yahūd wa-al-ṣālibīyīn', *al-Quds al-ʿArabī*, 23 Feb. 1998, 3; trans. Peter L. Bergen, *The Osama bin Laden I Know: An Oral History of al Qaeda's Leader* (New York, 2006), pp. 195–6.

<sup>3</sup> Carole Hillenbrand's recent study, *The Crusades: Islamic Perspectives* (Edinburgh, 1999) [hereafter Hillenbrand, *Islamic Perspectives*], fails to recognize the Islamic view of the crusades because the assumption that forms her starting point is that crusading began in 1095 with Pope Urban II's call to 'rescue Jerusalem and the other Churches of Asia from the power of the Saracens'.

<sup>4</sup> Recent general studies on the crusades all adhere to the 'Big Bang' theory of the crusades: Jonathan Riley-Smith, *The Crusades: A Short History* (New Haven, Conn., 1987) [hereafter Riley-Smith, *Crusades*]; Hans Eberhard Mayer, *Geschichte der Kreuzzüge* (Stuttgart, 1965); trans. John Gillingham as *The Crusades* (2nd edn., New York, 1988) [hereafter Mayer, *Crusades*]; *The Oxford Illustrated History of the Crusades*, ed. Jonathan Riley-Smith (Oxford, 1995); idem, *The Oxford History of the Crusades* (New York, 2000); Bernard Hamilton, *The Crusades* (Stroud, 1998); Thomas F. Madden, *A Concise History of the Crusades* (Lanham, Md., 1999); idem, *The New Concise History of the Crusades* (Lanham, Md., 2005); Jean Richard, *Histoire des croisades* (Paris, 1996); trans. Jean Birrell as *The Crusades, c.1071–c.1291* (Cambridge, 1999); Jonathan P. Phillips, *The Crusades, 1095–1197* (Harlow, 2002); Norman Housley, *The Crusaders, The Crusades* (Stroud, 2003) [hereafter Housley, *Crusaders*]; *The Crusades: The Illustrated History*, ed. Thomas F. Madden (Ann Arbor, Mich., 2004); Thomas S. Asbridge, *The First Crusade: A New History* (Oxford, 2004) [hereafter Asbridge, *First Crusade*]; Christopher Tyerman, *Fighting for Christendom: Holy War and the Crusades* (Oxford, 2004); idem, *The Crusades: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford, 2005); idem, *God's War: A New History of the Crusades* (2006) [hereafter Tyerman, *God's War*]; Helen Nicholson, *The Crusades* (Westport, Conn., 2004); Andrew Jotischky, *Crusading and the Crusader States* (Harlow, 2004); Nikolas Jaspert, *Die Kreuzzüge* (Darmstadt, 2003); trans. Phyllis G. Jestice as *The Crusades* (2006) [hereafter Jaspert, *Crusades*].

Islamic world,<sup>5</sup> accept what can be called the ‘Big Bang’ theory of the crusades. According to this theory, a mass movement, sparked by Pope Urban II’s famous appeal at Clermont in 1095, brought the crusades into being. All at once crusading and crusading institutions burst forth with sudden violence, and the Muslim east found itself the object of a full-scale invasion emanating from the Latin west that involved tens of thousands of combatants. Advocates of the ‘Big Bang’ theory are unwilling to concede that crusading developed in a piecemeal fashion and progressed by fits and starts. Instead, they rely on an implicit syllogism that runs something like this:

*Major premise:* The crusades began in 1095, because that is the date agreed upon by scholarly authorities.

*Minor premise:* The earliest evidence for crusading dates from the year 1095.

*Ergo:* The crusading enterprise as a political force and as a set of ideas and institutions (e.g. the ecclesiastical apparatus of indulgence, vow and cross) emerged in 1095.<sup>6</sup>

Despite the fact that a number of prominent scholars have found the minor premise to be mistaken, the ‘Big Bang’ theory of the crusades has

<sup>5</sup> Instead of deriving an interpretation of crusading that is found in Islamic historical sources, Arab historians present a view of the crusades formulated by western scholars. See, for example, Sayyid ‘Alī al-Harīrī, *Kitāb al-akhbār al-sanīyah fī al-ḥurūb al-ṣalībīyah* (Cairo, 1899); Rafīq al-Tamīmī, *al-Ḥurūb al-ṣalībīyah: aḥdath wa-aṣāḥih mā kutiba bi-al-lughah al-‘Arabīyah fī al-ḥurūb al-ṣalībīyah, wa-fīhi waṣf daḡīq lil-waqā’i al-kurbā wa-tarājīm wāfiyah li-ashhar al-quwwād min muslimīn wa-ṣalībīyīn* (Jerusalem, 1945); Muḥammad Sayyid al-Kīlānī, *al-Ḥurūb al-ṣalībīyah wa-atharuhā fī al-adab al-‘arabī fī Miṣr wa-al-Shām* (Cairo, 1949); Hāmid Ghunaym Abū Sa’īd, *al-Jabhah al-Islāmīyah fī ‘aṣr al-ḥurūb al-ṣalībīyah* (3 vols., Cairo, 1971–3); Sa’īd ‘Abd al-Fattāḥ ‘Ashūr, *al-Ḥarakah al-ṣalībīyah: Ṣafḥah mushriqah fī ta’rīkh al-jihād al-‘arabī fī al-‘uṣūr al-wuṣṭā* (2nd edn., 2 vols., Cairo, 1971); idem, *al-Ḥarakah al-ṣalībīyah: Ṣafḥah mushriqah fī ta’rīkh al-jihād al-islāmī fī al-‘uṣūr al-wuṣṭā* (4th edn., Cairo, 1986); Fāyid Ḥammād Muḥammad ‘Ashūr, *al-Jihād al-islāmī qidda al-ṣalībīyīn fī al-‘aṣr al-‘ayyūbī* (Cairo, 1983); idem, *al-Jihād al-islāmī qidda al-ṣalībīyīn wa-al-mughūl fī al-‘aṣr al-mamlūkī* (Tripoli, Lebanon, 1995); Muḥammad al-‘Arūsī al-Maṭwī, *al-Ḥurūb al-ṣalībīyah fī al-mashriq wa-al-maghrib* (Beirut, 1982); Suhayl Zakkār, *al-Ḥurūb al-ṣalībīyah: al-ḥamlātān al-ūlā wa-al-thānīyah ḥasb riwāyāt shuhūd ‘ayān, kutibat aṣlan bi-al-ighrīqīyah, wa-al-sīrīyānīyah, wa-al-‘arabīyah wa-al-lātīnīyah* (2 vols., Damascus, 1984); Muḥammad Mu’nis Aḥmad ‘Awād, *al-Ḥurūb al-ṣalībīyah: al-‘alāqāt bayna al-sharq wa-al-gharb fī al-qarnayn 12–13 M. l 6–7 H.* (al-Haram, Egypt, 1999–2000); As‘ad Maḥmūd Ḥawmad, *Ta’rīkh al-jihād li-ṭard al-ghuzāh al-ṣalībīyīn* (2 vols., Damascus, 2002).

<sup>6</sup> For a discussion of the ‘Big Bang’ theory of the crusades, see Paul E. Chevedden, ‘The Islamic Interpretation of the Crusade: A New (Old) Paradigm for Understanding the Crusades’, *Der Islam*, lxxxiii (2006), 90–136 at 108 [hereafter Chevedden, ‘Islamic Interpretation’]; idem, ‘Canon 2 of the Council of Clermont (1095) and the Crusade Indulgence’, *Annuaire Historiae Conciliorum*, xxxvii (2005), 253–322 at 254–7, 273, 320 [hereafter Chevedden, ‘Crusade Indulgence’].

proved remarkably durable.<sup>7</sup> Crusade historians have been successful at promoting this paradigm and converting historians to this time-honoured theory, but they have not achieved their success by providing conclusive proof that the ‘Big Bang’ theory is historically accurate or by proving that alternative theories are not possible. Medieval Muslim authors proposed an alternative theory of the origin of the crusades that modern historians have ignored.

## I

Six years after the crusader conquest of Jerusalem in 1099, a legal scholar and preacher at the Great Mosque of Damascus, ‘Alī ibn Ṭāhir al-Sulamī (1039–1106), presented an account of the crusading movement in his book *Kitāb al-jihād* (‘The Book of Holy War’). His interpretation of the crusades came to enjoy canonical status in the Islamic historiographical tradition and was eventually incorporated in the main historiographical tradition of the Middle East.

Al-Sulamī was able to see the crusading movement in its full range. He does not confine crusading to a brief and localized conflict that centred on the Holy Land or the eastern Mediterranean. Instead, al-Sulamī presents the crusades as a Christian *jihād* against Islam that had three main fronts: Sicily, Spain and Syria. This ‘holy war’ began with the Norman conquest of Islamic Sicily (1060–91), then spread to Islamic Spain, and, by the end of the eleventh century, had advanced on Syria:

A host [of Franks] swooped down upon the island of Sicily at a time of division and dissension, and likewise they took possession of town after town in Islamic Spain [al-Andalus]. When reports mutually confirmed the condition of this country [Syria] – namely, the disagreements of its lords, the discord of its leading men, coupled with its disorder and disarray – they acted upon their decision to set out for it [Syria] and Jerusalem was the chief object of their desires . . . They [the Franks] continued zealously

<sup>7</sup> Evidence that the most important crusading institution, the crusade indulgence, first appeared more than three decades ahead of the accepted historical schedule for the crusades has been acknowledged by leading scholars for many years. See Nikolaus Paulus, *Geschichte des Ablasses im Mittelalter vom Ursprung bis zur Mitte des 14. Jahrhunderts* (3 vols., Paderborn, 1922–3; repr. Darmstadt, 2000), i, 134; Carl Erdmann, *Die Entstehung des Kreuzzugsgedankens* (Stuttgart, 1935; repr. Darmstadt, 1980) [hereafter Erdmann, *Kreuzzugsgedanke*], p. 125; trans. Marshall W. Baldwin and Walter Goffart as *The Origin of the Idea of Crusade*, foreword and additional notes by Marshall W. Baldwin (Princeton, NJ, 1977), pp. 138–9; Augustin Fliche, *La réforme grégorienne et la reconquête chrétienne (1057–1123)* (Paris, 1950), p. 52; José Goñi Gaztambide, *Historia de la bula de la cruzada en España* (Vitoria, 1958) [hereafter Goñi Gaztambide, *Historia*], pp. 50–1; Mayer, *Crusades*, p. 26; Joseph F. O’Callaghan, *Reconquest and Crusade in Medieval Spain* (Philadelphia, 2003) [hereafter O’Callaghan, *Reconquest*], pp. 24–7; Chevedden, ‘Crusade Indulgence’, 278–86. Although the existence of the crusade indulgence for Sicily and Spain from as early as 1063 is the clearest *a posteriori* proof of the existence of crusading prior to 1095, crusade scholars for the most part have been unwilling to re-examine the hypothesis that 1095 was ground zero of the crusades.

in the holy war (*jihād*) against the Muslims . . . until they made themselves rulers of lands beyond their wildest dreams.<sup>8</sup>

This depiction of a Mediterranean-wide struggle that started in the western Mediterranean basin and finally encompassed the eastern Mediterranean basin was the prevailing view presented in Islamic historical writing of that general war between Islam and Christendom that became known as the crusades. Ibn al-Athīr (1160–1233) elevated this interpretation of the crusades to canonical status in Arabic historiography in his monumental work *al-Kāmil fī al-taʾrīkh* ('The Consummate History'). His account reads:

The first appearance of the power of the Franks and the extension of their rule – namely, attacks directed against Islamic territory and the conquest of some of these lands – occurred in 478/1085, when they took Toledo and other cities in Islamic Spain [al-Andalus], as previously mentioned.

Then in 484/1091 they attacked and conquered the island of Sicily,<sup>9</sup> as I have also described; from there they extended their reach as far as the coast of North Africa, where they captured some places. The conquests [in North Africa] were won back, but they took possession of other lands, as you will see.

In 490/1097 they attacked Syria, and this is how it all came about: Baldwin, their king,<sup>10</sup> a relative of Roger the Frank,<sup>11</sup> who had conquered Sicily, after having amassed a sizable force, sent a message to Roger saying: 'I have assembled a large army and am now on my way to you, and

<sup>8</sup> 'Alī ibn Ṭāhir al-Sulamī, *Kitāb al-jihād*, in Emmanuel Sivan, 'La genèse de la contre-croisade: un traité damasquin de début de XII<sup>e</sup> siècle', *Journal asiatique*, ccliv (1966), 197–224 at 207 (Arabic text), 215 (French trans.) [hereafter al-Sulamī, *Kitāb al-jihād*]; Chevedden, 'Islamic Interpretation', 94; Peter Malcolm Holt, *The Age of the Crusades: The Near East from the Eleventh Century to 1517* (1986) [hereafter Holt, *Age of the Crusades*], p. 27; Hillenbrand, *Islamic Perspectives*, pp. 32, 69, 71–4, 105–9, 165.

<sup>9</sup> Ibn al-Athīr correctly notes that the conquest was completed in the year 1091, but it began some thirty years earlier in 1060 (Graham A. Loud, *The Age of Robert Guiscard: Southern Italy and the Norman Conquest* (Harlow, 2000), pp. 148, 149, 172).

<sup>10</sup> Presumably this is Baldwin of Bouillon. If so, Ibn al-Athīr incorrectly identifies him as a king and relative of Count Roger I of Sicily. Baldwin of Bouillon was the brother of Godfrey of Bouillon, the first king of Jerusalem (1099–1100). He succeeded his brother on the throne (1100–18), but at the time of the 'First' Crusade he was neither a king nor a leader of crusader forces. Peter Malcolm Holt's suggestion for why 'Baldwin' was designated by Ibn al-Athīr as the leader of the 'First' Crusade has merit: 'Since [Baldwin of Bouillon] was followed in due course by four other Baldwins, the name may have seemed almost like a regal or dynastic title to the Arabic chronicler' (Peter Malcolm Holt, *The Crusader States and their Neighbours, 1098–1291* (Harlow, 2004) [hereafter Holt, *Crusader States*], p. 19).

<sup>11</sup> Roger I, Count of Sicily (d. 1101), was the youngest son of Tancred de Hauteville. He was largely responsible for the Norman conquest of Sicily, although Tancred's fourth son, Robert Guiscard, the Norman Duke of Apulia and Calabria (1059–85), played an important role in conquering the north-eastern part of the island (1061–2) and the city of Palermo (1072). See Graham A. Loud, 'Kingdom of Sicily', in *The Crusades: An Encyclopedia*, ed. Alan V. Murray (4 vols., Santa Barbara, Calif., 2005), iv. 1104–7.

from your land I shall conquer North Africa and thereby become your neighbour.<sup>12</sup>

Roger gathered his companions and consulted them about this matter . . . [After considering the plan carefully] he summoned Baldwin's messenger and said to him: 'If you want to make holy war (*jihād*) against the Muslims, it would be better for you to conquer Jerusalem and deliver it from their hands and thereby win great glory. As for North Africa, I am bound to its people by oaths and treaties.' So the Franks made their preparations and set out to attack Syria.<sup>13</sup>

Ibn al-Athīr enumerates the main events of the crusading enterprise during the eleventh century as follows. In 1085, the Franks invaded Islamic Spain and occupied Toledo and other parts of the country. In 1091, they conquered Sicily, and then extended their power to North Africa. Finally, in 1097, they advanced on Syria. He views the crusades as belonging to the same world that produced the conquest of Sicily, the Castilian incursion into al-Andalus, and Latin attempts to dominate North Africa. His description of the crusades was highly influential. Al-Nuwayrī (1279–1332?) drew upon it in the early fourteenth century in his colossal *Nihāyat al-arab fī funūn al-adab* ('The Ultimate Aim in Letters and Literature'), and Abū al-Faraj Gregorius Bar Hebraeus (1226–86) incorporated it into the Syriac historical tradition.<sup>14</sup>

Both the Syriac and Arabic chronicles of Bar Hebraeus show the influence of the Islamic interpretation of the crusades. In his great Syriac chronicle, Bar Hebraeus fuses two variant interpretations of crusading:

<sup>12</sup> Ibn al-Athīr wrongly attributes the plan of a coordinated attack on North Africa to Baldwin of Bouillon. This attack, in which Roger refused to take part, was carried out in 1087 by the Pisans and Genoese, who, together with forces from Rome and Amalfi, launched an amphibious assault on al-Mahdiyyah, the capital of Zīrid Ifrīqiyah, and its suburb Zawīlah. See Geoffrey Malaterra, *De rebus gestis Rogerii Calabriae et Siciliae comitis et Roberti Guiscardi Ducis fratris eius*, ed. Ernesto Pontieri (Bologna, 1927–8) [hereafter Malaterra, *De rebus gestis*], pp. 86–7 (IV.3); trans. Kenneth Baxter Wolf as *The Deeds of Count Roger of Calabria and Sicily and of his Brother Duke Robert Guiscard* (Ann Arbor, Mich., 2005), p. 179; Berthold, Abbot of Zwiefalten, and Bernold of Constance, *Bertholds und Bernolds Chroniken [Bertholdi et Bernoldi chronica]*, ed. Ian S. Robinson, trans. Helga Robinson-Hammerstein (Darmstadt, 2002), p. 360; Abū Muḥammad 'Abd Allāh ibn Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Tijānī, *Rihlat al-Tijānī* (Tripoli, Libya; Tunis, 1981), pp. 331–2; H. E. J. Cowdrey, 'The Mahdia Campaign of 1087', *English Historical Review*, xcii (1977), 1–29; Max Seidel, 'Dombau, Kreuzzugsseite und Expansionspolitik: Zur Ikonographie der Pisaner Kathedralbauten', *Frühmittelalterliche Studien*, xi (1977), 340–69; Chevedden, 'Crusade Indulgence', 294–5.

<sup>13</sup> 'Izz al-Dīn Abū al-Ḥasan 'Alī ibn Muḥammad Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil fī al-tārīkh*, ed. Carl J. Tornberg (13 vols., Beirut, 1965–7) [hereafter Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*], x, 272–3; Chevedden, 'Islamic Interpretation', 96–8; Hillenbrand, *Islamic Perspectives*, p. 52; Hubert Houben, *Roger II of Sicily: A Ruler between East and West* (Cambridge, 2002) [hereafter Houben, *Roger II of Sicily*], pp. 17–18; Holt, *Crusader States*, pp. 18–19. An English translation of this passage was first published in *Storici Arabi delle Crociate*, trans. from the Arabic sources by Francesco Gabrieli (Turin, 1957); trans. E. J. Costello as *Arab Historians of the Crusades* (1969), pp. 3–4. Now see Donald S. Richards (trans.), *The Chronicle of Ibn al-Athīr for the Crusading Period from al-Kāmil fī'l-tārīkh*, pt. 1, *The Years 491–541/1097–1146: The Coming of the Franks and the Muslim Response* (Aldershot, 2006), p. 13.

<sup>14</sup> Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-arab fī funūn al-adab*, vol. 28, ed. Muḥammad Muḥammad Amīn and Muḥammad Ḥilmī Muḥammad Aḥmad (Cairo, 1992), p. 248; Chevedden, 'Islamic Interpretation', 99–100; Hillenbrand, *Islamic Perspectives*, p. 54.

one taken directly from Michael the Syrian (1126–99) that links hardships suffered by Latin pilgrims in the east to a Latin military expedition to the east, and the other derived from an Arabic historiographical tradition that connects the ‘First’ Crusade (1095–1102) to a general Christian offensive against Islam that began in the western Mediterranean. He ends up with a hybrid account: attempts by the Latin west to curb the oppression suffered by Christian pilgrims in the east led to a Latin offensive that began in Spain. Or, conversely, a Latin military resurgence in the western Mediterranean was generated by concerns about Christians in the eastern Mediterranean.<sup>15</sup> When Bar Hebraeus wrote the Arabic counterpart to his Syriac history, *Taʾrīkh mukhtaṣar al-duwal* (‘A Short History of the Dynasties’), he thrust aside Michael the Syrian’s account of the crusades and adopted the Islamic interpretation of the crusades from Ibn al-Athīr’s history.<sup>16</sup>

Islamic sources define the crusades as a Frankish holy war (*jihād*) against Islam that began in the western Mediterranean basin and finally enveloped the whole Mediterranean world. These sources implicitly recognize that events in Sicily, Spain, and Syria share a common character. The Norman war in Sicily, the Catalan and Castilian advances southward into al-Andalus, and the ‘First’ Crusade were part of the same general phenomenon: a Mediterranean-wide surge of the Latin west against Islamic powers.

## II

How has modern scholarship regarded the Islamic interpretation of the crusades? To begin with, the Islamic view of the crusades has not been recognized for what it is: a historically accurate description of crusading – at least in broad general outline – that can be corroborated by papal documents. Modern scholars exhibit an ambivalent attitude towards the Islamic sources for the crusades. They extract certain details from these sources regarding crusading and esteem these details as ‘extraordinarily far-sighted and illuminating’, abounding in ‘penetrating insights’ and offering ‘a wider view of historical processes’, while they fail to discern the incisive vision provided by these sources into the nature and character

<sup>15</sup> Abū al-Faraj Gregorius Bar Hebraeus, *The Chronography of Gregory Abū'l Faraj*, i: *English Translation*, trans. Ernest A. Wallis Budge (1932), p. 234; Chevedden, ‘Islamic Interpretation’, 100–2; Herman Teule, ‘The Crusaders in Barhebraeus’ Syriac and Arabic Chronicles’, in *East and West in the Crusader States: Context, Contacts, Confrontations: Acta of the Congress held at Hernen Castle in May 1993*, ed. Krijnie Ciggaar, Adelbert Davids, and Herman Teule (Leuven, 1996) [hereafter Teule, ‘Barhebraeus’], pp. 39–49; Matti Moosa, ‘The Crusades: An Eastern Perspective, with Emphasis on Syriac Sources’, *Muslim World*, xciii (2003), 249–89.

<sup>16</sup> Abū al-Faraj Gregorius Bar Hebraeus, *Taʾrīkh mukhtaṣar al-duwal*, ed. Aṭūn Ṣāliḥānī (Beirut, 1890), p. 341. Herman Teule wrongly states that Bar Hebraeus’s account of the ‘First’ Crusade in the *Mukhtaṣar* includes ‘the story of the long detour via Spain’ and that this tale is ‘not mentioned in the *Chronicon Syriacum*’. On the contrary, the Spanish ‘detour’ is found only in the *Chronicon Syriacum*; the *Mukhtaṣar* makes no mention of it (Teule, ‘Barhebraeus’, pp. 45, 47).

of the crusades. Here is the paradox. Islamic sources are praised for their 'penetrating insights', but they are not valued as being a source of sound information about crusading. Scholars cannot help praising Muslim authors for their perceptive powers, but, on the other hand, they are not about to recommend that their 'extraordinarily far-sighted and illuminating' views be adopted as the basis for a new understanding of the crusades. In so far as crusading is viewed as the outcome of Urban's call for the 'First' Crusade, medieval Muslim thinkers cannot be credited with having provided an explanation of crusading that is objectively true.<sup>17</sup>

It is time that Islamic sources for the crusades are taken seriously. It is not generally recognized that medieval Muslim scholars enjoyed a distinct advantage over modern scholars when it came to interpreting the crusades: they did not come to the subject with a preconceived idea about what crusading ought to be. Undeterred by the accidents of crusading, such as the ecclesiastical apparatus of indulgence, vow and cross, Muslim authors focused on the essence of crusading: a general movement against Islam by the Latin west. According to Islamic sources, this movement had its origins in the western Mediterranean, not the eastern Mediterranean.

<sup>17</sup> Hillenbrand, *Islamic Perspectives*, p. 71 ('extraordinarily far-sighted and illuminating'), p. 73 ('penetrating insights'); 'Izz al-Dīn Abū al-Ḥasan 'Alī ibn Muḥammad Ibn al-Athīr, *The Annals of the Saljuq Turks: Selections from al-Kāmil fī'l-ta'rikh of 'Izz al-Dīn Ibn al-Athīr*, trans. Donald S. Richards (2002), p. 5 ('a wider view of historical processes'). For other assessments of the Islamic view of the crusades, see Francesco Gabrieli, 'The Arabic Historiography of the Crusades', in *Historians of the Middle East*, ed. Bernard Lewis and Peter Malcolm Holt (1962), pp. 98–107; Emmanuel Sivan, *L'Islam et la Croisade: Idéologie et propagande dans les réactions musulmanes aux Croisades* (Paris, 1968), pp. 23–37; Franz Rosenthal, *A History of Muslim Historiography* (2nd rev. edn., Leiden, 1968), pp. 146–7; Wadī' Z. Haddad, 'The Crusaders through Muslim Eyes', *Muslim World*, lxxiii (1983), 234–52; Holt, *Age of the Crusades*, p. 27; idem, *Crusader States*, p. 17; Hadia Dajani-Shakeel, 'Some Medieval Accounts of Salah al-Din's Recovery of Jerusalem (*Al-Quds*)', in *Studia Palaestina: Studies in Honour of Constantine K. Zurayk*, ed. Hisham Nashabe (Beirut, 1988), pp. 83–113 at 102–3; idem, 'A Reassessment of Some Medieval and Modern Perceptions of the Counter-Crusade', in *The Jihād and Its Times*, ed. Hadia Dajani-Shakeel and Ronald A. Messier (Ann Arbor, Mich., 1991), pp. 41–70 at 42–55; Nikita Elisséeff, 'The Reaction of the Syrian Muslims after the Foundation of the First Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem', in *Crusaders and Muslims in Twelfth-Century Syria*, ed. Maya Shatzmiller (Leiden, 1993), pp. 162–72; Robert Irwin, 'Islam and the Crusades, 1096–1699', in *The Oxford Illustrated History of the Crusades*, ed. Jonathan Riley-Smith (Oxford, 1995), pp. 217–59 at 225–6; Carole Hillenbrand, 'The First Crusade: The Muslim Perspective', in *The First Crusade: Origins and Impact*, ed. Jonathan Phillips (Manchester; New York, 1997), pp. 130–41; Bernard Lewis, *The Muslim Discovery of Europe* (New York, 2001), pp. 22–5; idem, 'Reflections on Islamic Historiography', in *From Babel to Dragomans: Interpreting the Middle East*, ed. Bernard Lewis (Oxford, 2004), pp. 405–13 at 410–11; Niall Christie and Deborah Gerish, 'Parallel Preachings: Urban II and al-Sulamī', *Al-Masāq: Islam and the Medieval Mediterranean*, xv (2003), 139–48; Niall Christie, 'Religious Campaign or War of Conquest? Muslim Views of the Motives of the First Crusade', in *Noble Ideals and Bloody Realities: Warfare in the Middle Ages*, ed. Niall Christie and Maya Yazigi (Leiden, 2006) [hereafter Christie, 'Religious Campaign or War of Conquest?'], pp. 57–72; idem, 'Motivating Listeners in the *Kitab al-Jihad* of 'Alī ibn Tahir al-Sulamī (d. 1106)', *Crusades*, vi (2007), 1–14; Axel Havemann, 'Heiliger Kampf und Heiliger Krieg: Die Kreuzzüge aus muslimischer Perspektive', in *Vom Schisma zu den Kreuzzügen: 1054–1204*, ed. Peter Bruns and Georg Gresser (Paderborn, 2006), pp. 155–77; Houben, *Roger II of Sicily*, p. 17; Alex Metcalfe, *Muslims and Christians in Norman Sicily: Arabic Speakers and the End of Islam* (New York, 2003), p. 9 n. 33; Helen J. Nicholson, 'Muslim Reactions to the Crusades', in *Palgrave Advances in the Crusades*, ed. Helen J. Nicholson (Houndmills, 2005), pp. 269–88; Tyerman, *God's War*, pp. 125, 272, 650; Jaspert, *Crusades*, p. 75; Chevedden, 'Islamic Interpretation', 102–6.



These same sources indicate that the crusades emerged as the outgrowth of an ongoing conflict; they were not the start of something new. Muslim authors also recorded the understanding that medieval Christians had of their own actions. They designated the crusades a *jihād*, or holy war, indicating that Muslims understood that Christians regarded crusading as being sanctioned by God and inspired by a common Christian cause. What is more, Muslim authors accurately recorded the patriotic sentiment that inspired crusading: a desire to recover lands that had ‘originally belonged to the Christians’ but had been conquered by Islam and subjected to Islamic rule. In an encounter with the Mozarab count Sisnando Davidiz, who served under both Fernando I, king of León-Castile (1016–18?–1065), and his son Alfonso VI (1065–1109), ‘Abd Allāh ibn Buluggīn, the last Zirid ruler of Granada (r. 1073–90), recalls what the Christian *wazīr* told him ‘face to face’: ‘Al-Andalus originally belonged to the Christians. Then they were defeated by the Arabs and driven to the most inhospitable region, Galicia. Now that they are strong and capable, the Christians desire to recover what they have lost by force.’<sup>18</sup> Ibn ‘Idhārī’s fourteenth-century chronicle records the remarks made by Fernando I to an embassy from Toledo soon after his accession to the throne. His words sound the same theme as the statement of Count Sisnando Davidiz:

We seek only our own lands which you conquered from us in times past at the beginning of your history. Now you have dwelled in them for the time allotted to you and we have become victorious over you as a result of your own wickedness. So go to your own side of the straits (of Gibraltar) and leave our lands to us, for no good will come to you from dwelling here with us after today. For we shall not hold back from you until God decides between us.<sup>19</sup>

Despite their many shortcomings in understanding an alien tradition of divinely justified engagement in war, Muslim scholars were able to perceive the general nature and the scope of the crusading enterprise.

By linking the crusades to *jihād*, Muslim authors drew attention to the interrelationship of *jihād* and crusading and the reciprocal bond between them.<sup>20</sup> This linkage is a reminder that history often follows a course of alternate action and reaction. *Jihād* and crusade are fatally linked to

<sup>18</sup> ‘Abd Allāh ibn Buluggīn al-Zirī, *Kitāb al-Tibyān lil-amīr ‘Abd Allāh ibn Buluggīn ākhir umarā’ Banī Zirī bi-Gharnāṭah*, ed. Amīn Tawfīq al-Tībī (Rabat, 1995), p. 100; trans. Amin T. Tibi as *The Tibyān: Memoirs of ‘Abd Allāh ibn Buluggīn, Last Zirid Amīr of Granada* (Leiden, 1986), p. 90.

<sup>19</sup> Abū al-Abbās Aḥmad b. Muḥammad Ibn ‘Idhārī al-Marrākushī, *al-Bayān al-mughrib fī akhbār al-Andalus wa-al-Maghrib*, ed. Évariste Lévi-Provençal (Paris, 1930), p. 282; trans. David Wasserstein, *The Rise and Fall of the Party-Kings: Politics and Society in Islamic Spain, 1002–1086* (Princeton, NJ, 1985), p. 250.

<sup>20</sup> Al-Sulamī, *Kitāb al-jihād*, p. 207; Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, x. 273. Niall Christie claims that al-Sulamī was the ‘only one who recognize[d] that the Franks were fighting their own version of the *jihad*’, while he declares with equal certitude that ‘Ibn al-Athīr acknowledges that the Franks were fighting a *jihad* against the Muslims’ (Christie, ‘Religious Campaign or War of Conquest?’, pp. 66, 68, 69, 71). Both al-Sulamī and Ibn al-Athīr refer to the Crusade as a *jihād*.

each other as action is linked to reaction. There can be no crusade without *jihād*, and no crusade without counter-crusade, or *jihād*, making for an historical continuum that is reciprocal and mutually dependent. Without heed to this intricate and complex interplay, there is no explaining the tangled relations between Islam and Christendom.

Crusade as the mimesis of *jihād* also provides a needed reminder that the crusading movement did not enter a static, timeless and peaceful Mediterranean world. Many Muslims today forget to consider why western Christendom acted as it did. They fail to consider that it was Muslim aggression that provoked a response on the part of Christendom. They have conveniently erased from their minds the memory of the Islamic *jihād* conquests.<sup>21</sup> Standing reality on its head, many Muslims choose to see the crusader onslaught as a unique phenomenon and as an egregious crime committed by the west against Islam. The father of modern Islamist fundamentalism, Sayyid Qutb (1906–66), offers a reworking of the crusades that has had widespread impact on Muslim perceptions of the crusading enterprise. In his view, the crusades were a form of imperialism, and Islam has suffered from the ‘savage hostility’ of the ‘crusader spirit’ from the eleventh century until today.<sup>22</sup>

For the west, the Islamic interpretation of the crusades offers a unique opportunity to consider the point of view of the ‘Other’. What if the crusades first passed from Sicily to Spain, and then from the western Mediterranean to the eastern Mediterranean? It just may be that Islamic sources are able to throw into proper relief the truly creative steps that constitute the onset of the crusades. The Islamic interpretation of the crusades by its very existence serves to cast doubt upon the traditional assumption that crusading began with Pope Urban II’s summons at Clermont in 1095. Surprisingly, this assumption has never had the weight of the evidence in its favour. Nor has it had the support of the so-called founding father of crusading, Pope Urban II (1088–99).

<sup>21</sup> The impact of the Islamic *jihād* conquests on Christendom receives a thorough study in Jean Flori, *L’Islam et la fin des temps: l’interprétation prophétique des invasions musulmanes dans la chrétienté médiévale* (Paris, 2007).

<sup>22</sup> Sayyid Qutb, *al-‘Adālah al-ijtimā‘īyah fī al-Islām* (Beirut, 1975), pp. 187, 196–7, 249–55; trans. William E. Shepard, *Sayyid Qutb and Islamic Activism: A Translation and Critical Analysis of ‘Social Justice in Islam’* (Leiden, 1996), pp. 207, 216, 282–8. For studies of modern Muslim perceptions of the crusades, see Emmanuel Sivan, ‘Modern Arab Historiography of the Crusades’, in *Interpretations of Islam: Past and Present*, ed. Emmanuel Sivan (Princeton, NJ, 1985), pp. 3–43; Hillenbrand, *Islamic Perspectives*, pp. 4–5; Jonathan Riley-Smith, ‘Islam and the Crusades in History and Imagination, 8 November 1898–11 September 2001’, *Crusades*, ii (2003), 151–67; Edward Peters, ‘The Firanj Are Coming’, *Orbis: A Journal of World Affairs*, xlviii (Winter, 2004), 3–17; Umej Bhatia, ‘The War on Terrorism: A Crusade?’, *IDSS Commentaries* 22 (2004), Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies (IDSS), Nanyang Technological University, Singapore, 16 June 2004, <http://se2.isn.ch:80/serviceengine/FileContent?serviceID=PublishingHouse&fileid=1F77AE66-2A43-C2F6-BAFD-33669A57ACFC&lng=en> (accessed 12 April 2007); Adam Knobler, ‘Holy Wars, Empires, and the Portability of the Past: The Modern Uses of Medieval Crusades’, *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, xlviii (2006), 293–325.

## III

It is well known that Pope Urban did not consider the ‘First’ Crusade to be a new creation or the first enterprise of its kind. Urban adopted, adapted and applied the apparatus related to crusading in the western Mediterranean – the crusade indulgence and the crusading vow – to the struggle against Islam in the eastern Mediterranean and carried out a plan originally put forward by his predecessor, Pope Gregory VII (1073–85).<sup>23</sup> In the words of noted Islamic scholar Claude Cahen, ‘the plan envisaged extending to Palestine what had been begun in Sicily and Spain’.<sup>24</sup>

At the Council of Clermont in November 1095, Pope Urban presented the ‘First’ Crusade as ‘an expedition of knights and foot-soldiers’ that was designed ‘to rescue Jerusalem and the other Churches of Asia from the power of the Saracens’.<sup>25</sup> In 1096, as the crusade was getting underway, he described the undertaking as an expedition of ‘knights who are making for Jerusalem with the good intention of liberating Christendom’ so that ‘they might be able to restrain the savagery of the Saracens by their arms and restore the Christian Churches to their former freedom’.<sup>26</sup> He made it quite clear, however, that the campaign ‘to aid the Churches in Asia and to liberate their brothers from the tyranny of the Saracens’ was part of a wider movement ‘to liberate Christians from Saracens’ throughout the Mediterranean, ‘for it is no feat of valour to liberate Christians from Saracens in one place [i.e. in Asia] only to deliver Christians

<sup>23</sup> On the pre-1095 crusade indulgence and the pre-1095 crusading vow, see Chevedden, ‘Crusade Indulgence’, 254, 273, 278–302. Urban’s biographer in the *Liber pontificalis* claims that Urban’s Jerusalem Crusade carried out an idea originally put forward by Pope Gregory VII. See *Liber pontificalis*, ed. Louis Duchesne and Cyrille Vogel (3 vols., Paris, 1886–1957), ii, 293; trans. Ian S. Robinson, *The Papacy, 1073–1198: Continuity and Innovation* (Cambridge, 1990), p. 325.

<sup>24</sup> Claude Cahen, ‘An Introduction to the First Crusade’, *Past and Present*, vi (Nov. 1954), 6–30 at 25. On the connection between the Norman war in Sicily, the Catalan and Castilian advances southward into al-Andalus, and Urban’s Eastern Crusade, see Alfons Becker, *Papst Urban II (1088–1099)* (2 vols., Stuttgart, 1964–88) [hereafter Becker, *Urban II*], i, 229–30; ii, 333–76. Others disagree; cf. Norman Housley, *Contesting the Crusades* (Oxford, 2006), pp. 27, 103–4, 158.

<sup>25</sup> Robert Somerville (ed.), *The Councils of Urban II, i: Decreta claromontensia* (Amsterdam, 1972), p. 124. The quotation is from Canon 9 of the Cencius-Baluze version of the decrees of the Council of Clermont (1095) that survives in a manuscript in the monastery of St. Sauveur near Montpellier ‘written in the twelfth century either in southern France or northern Spain’ (ibid., 119). For an analysis of the Clermont decrees pertaining to the so-called ‘First’ Crusade, see Paul E. Chevedden, ‘Canon 2 of the Council of Clermont (1095) and the Goal of the Eastern Crusade: “To liberate Jerusalem” or “To liberate the Church of God”?’ , *Annuario Historiae Conciliorum*, xxxvii (2005), 57–108.

<sup>26</sup> Urban II to the monks of Vallombrosa, 7 Oct. 1096; *Papsturkunden für Kirchen im Heiligen Lande: Vorarbeiten zum oriens pontificius, III*, ed. Rudolf Hiestand (Göttingen, 1985) [hereafter Hiestand, *Papsturkunden*], pp. 88–9, no. 2; trans. Janus Möller Jensen, ‘*Peregrinatio sive expeditio*: Why the First Crusade was not a Pilgrimage’, *Al-Masāq: Islam and the Medieval Mediterranean*, xv (2003), 119–37 at 121. See also Erdmann, *Kreuzzugsgedanke*, p. 310; Eng. trans., p. 336; Louise Riley-Smith and Jonathan Riley-Smith, *The Crusades: Idea and Reality, 1095–1274* (1981) [hereafter Riley-Smith and Riley-Smith, *Crusades: Idea and Reality*], p. 39; Edward Peters, ed., *The First Crusade: The Chronicle of Fulcher of Chartres and Other Source Materials* (2nd edn., Philadelphia, 1998) [hereafter Peters, *First Crusade*], pp. 44–5.

to Saracen tyranny and oppression in another place [i.e. in Spain]'.<sup>27</sup> Urban portrayed crusading as a Mediterranean-wide struggle against Islam that was directed against 'the Turks in Asia and the Moors in Europe' for the purpose of 'restor[ing] to Christian worship cities that were once celebrated'.<sup>28</sup> This broader view of the crusades did not originate overnight but rather grew into existence as the crusading enterprise expanded its horizons. From its beginnings in Sicily and Spain, crusading advanced by stages until it encompassed the Mediterranean world.<sup>29</sup>

Urban traced the wider movement 'to liberate Christians from Saracens' back to the Norman conquest of Islamic Sicily. In his letter of 10 October 1098 to Bishop Gerland of Agrigento (Sicily), he begins by making a reference to the passage from the book of Daniel about how God changes the times and the seasons and uses his power to depose kings and set up kings (2:21). The pope tells the bishop that this process has begun again 'in our time' (*nostris temporibus*) with the Norman conquest of Sicily. It is to this event that the bishop must look if he is to understand 'the changing times' and 'the overturning of kingdoms' spoken of in Dan. 2:21:

By the arrangement of Almighty God, times change, kingdoms exchange fates. Hence, have we never read of nations that were once of great repute being diminished and laid low and of lowly and weak nations being exalted? This is because in certain regions of Christian name the savageness of pagans took control. In some of these, the honour of Christian power once more treads underfoot the tyranny of the pagans, just as in our time, by the mercy of divine favour, the most glorious princes Duke Robert and Count Roger, through their courage, have won out over all the violence of the Saracens in the island of Sicily and have restored the

<sup>27</sup> Urban II to the counts Bernat of Besalú, Hugo of Ampurias, Guislabert of Roussillon, and Guillem of Cerdanya and their knights, c. July 1096; Paul F. Kehr, *Papsturkunden in Spanien: Vorarbeiten zur Hispania Pontificia*, i: *Katalanien*, pt. 2: *Urkunden und Regesten* (Berlin, 1926), pp. 287–8, no. 23; trans. based on O'Callaghan, *Reconquest*, p. 33, with additions and amendments made by author. See also Erdmann, *Kreuzzugsgedanke*, pp. 294–5; Eng. trans., p. 317; Riley-Smith and Riley-Smith, *Crusades: Idea and Reality*, p. 40; Peters, *First Crusade*, pp. 45–6; Goñi Gaztambide, *Historia*, pp. 60–1; Norman Housley, 'Jerusalem and the Development of the Crusade Idea, 1099–1128', in *The Horns of Hattin*, ed. Benjamin Z. Kedar (Jerusalem; London, 1992), pp. 27–40 at 32–3; Lawrence J. McCrank, 'Restoration and Reconquest in Medieval Catalonia: The Church and Principality of Tarragona, 971–1177' (PhD dissertation, University of Virginia, 1974) [hereafter McCrank, 'Tarragona'], pp. 264, 284–5 n. 51.

<sup>28</sup> Urban II to Bishop Pedro of Huesca, 11 May 1098; Antonio Durán Gudiol, *La Iglesia de Aragón durante los reinados de Sancho Ramírez y Pedro I (1062?–1104)* (Rome, 1962), p. 193, no. 20; Erdmann, *Kreuzzugsgedanke*, p. 296; Eng. trans., p. 319.

<sup>29</sup> Jonathan Riley-Smith observes that 'Urban regarded the new crusade to the East as part of a wider movement of Christian liberation and did not distinguish it from the Spanish Reconquest', but he maintains that crusading in its broader outlines was the creation of Urban and did not stem from crusading campaigns in Sicily, Spain and North Africa prior to 1095. See Riley-Smith and Riley-Smith, *Crusades: Idea and Reality*, p. 2; Jonathan Riley-Smith, *The First Crusade and the Idea of Crusading* (Philadelphia, 1986), p. 20; idem, *The Crusades: A History* (2nd edn., New Haven, Conn., 2005), p. 8.

ancient status of the Holy Church in accordance with God's will and gracious purpose.<sup>30</sup>

Why did Urban mention the Norman conquest of Sicily? Why did he specifically single out Duke Robert Guiscard and his younger brother Count Roger, 'the most glorious princes', by whose efforts 'the honour of Christian power once more treads underfoot the tyranny of the pagans' through their victory 'over all the violence of the Saracens in the island of Sicily', which has led to the restoration of 'the ancient status of the Holy Church in accordance with God's will and gracious purpose'? Urban might more appropriately have mentioned the Council of Clermont (1095) or his Jerusalem Crusade as the turning point that ushered in 'the changing times'. Surely, 'the changing times' began with the 'First' Crusade! Conceivably, Urban could have selected any number of events as the starting point of the momentous historical changes that he was witnessing in his own time. He might, for example, have selected his own crusade to restore the archbishopric of Tarragona in Spain (launched in 1089) or the Castilian conquest of Toledo in May 1085. Or, he might even have chosen the great turning point of the 'First' Crusade in June 1098, the conquest of Antioch and the defeat of the relieving force of Kerbogha, the *atabeg* of Mosul, in a pitched battle on the outskirts of the city.

Alternatively, Urban might not have mentioned any event at all. He could just as well have come up with an idea that was responsible for 'the changing times', such as 'war-pilgrimage', the supposed union of the idea of holy war and the idea of pilgrimage that many believe generated crusading. According to Carl Erdmann, Pope Urban called a halt to the old holy war that was raging in the Mediterranean and in its place he established the new dogma of the two-natured holy war, the crusade, the war that was fully war and fully pilgrimage.<sup>31</sup> Clearly, Urban ought to

<sup>30</sup> Urban II to Bishop Gerland of Agrigento (d. 1101), 10 Oct. 1098; *Le più antiche carte dell' Archivio capitolare di Agrigento (1092–1282)*, ed. Paolo Collura (Palermo, 1961), pp. 21–4, no. 5; Becker, *Urban II*, ii. 349–51; Ingrid Heike Ringel, 'Ipse transfert regna et mutat tempora: Bemerkungen zur Herkunft von Dan. 2,21 bei Urban II.', in *Deus Qui Mutat Tempora: Menschen und Institutionen im Wandel des Mittelalters. Festschrift für Alfons Becker zu seinem fünfundsechzigsten Geburtstag*, ed. Ernst-Dieter Hehl, Hubertus Seibert and Franz Staab (Sigmaringen, 1987) [hereafter Ringel, 'Ipse transfert regna et mutat tempora'], pp. 137–56 at 138. I thank Prof. Donald J. Kagay of Albany State University for translating this letter. For a parallel text, see Urban II's letter to Bishop Roger of Syracuse, 23 Nov. 1093; JL 5497, PL 151: 370C–371A (under the date 17 Nov. 1093); Becker, *Urban II*, ii. 343–4.

<sup>31</sup> Erdmann, *Kreuzzugsgedanke*, pp. vii, 319; Eng. trans., pp. xxxiii, 348. Many crusade historians have adopted the 'war-pilgrimage' paradigm. See, for example, Riley-Smith, *Crusades*, p. 10; idem, *The First Crusaders, 1095–1131* (Cambridge, 1997), pp. 20, 39, 52, 66, 67, 74, 77, 189; Mayer, *Crusades*, pp. 12, 14, 19, 28–30, 36; Marcus G. Bull, *Knightly Piety and the Lay Response to the First Crusade: The Limousin and Gascony, c.970–c.1130* (Oxford, 1993), pp. 10, 112; Housley, *Crusaders*, p. 14; Jean Flori, 'Réforme, reconquête, croisade (l'idée de reconquête dans la correspondance pontificale d'Alexandre II à Urbain II)', in *Croisade et chevalerie: XI<sup>e</sup>–XII<sup>e</sup> siècles*, ed. Jean Flori (Brussels, 1998), pp. 51–80 at 51–2, 79–80; idem, *La Guerre sainte: La formation de l'idée de croisade dans l'Occident chrétien* (Paris, 2001), pp. 316–18; idem, 'Pour une redéfinition de la croisade', *Cahiers de civilisation médiévale*, xlvii (2004), 329–50; Asbridge, *First Crusade*, pp. 37–8. For a critique of this paradigm, see Chevedden, 'Islamic Interpretation', 122–36; idem, 'Crusade Indulgence', 255–6, 273, 322.

have said 'war-pilgrimage', and disregarded the Norman conquest of Sicily! But he did refer to the Norman conquest of Sicily. This was a turning point for the Christian world in Urban's eyes. It marked the close of an old epoch and the beginning of a new epoch. The old epoch had seen the greater part of Christendom (*Christianitas*) subjected to Islamic domination; the new epoch was ushering into form a restoration of the community of Christian peoples brought about by a movement of reconquest initiated by Christian princes 'chosen by God'.

Urban, however, was not content with a two-epoch theory. His biblically based concept of *translatio regni* ('transfer of power') consisted of four epochs and ranged over the whole of Christian history. Urban looked back to a time when Christianity had prospered in the Mediterranean world, when it was the universal religion of a world empire and had spread throughout the known world. This high point came to a crashing end with the Islamic conquests of the seventh and eighth centuries. The first *translatio* brought Christian communities in the Mediterranean world under Islamic subjection. The second *translatio* brought their liberation. Yet the crusades were not simply a war for independence, for freedom from Islamic domination. A military victory over Islam was but a prerequisite to the main objective of the crusades: rebuilding the Church. The 'Church' (*ecclesia*) to be rebuilt was certainly the Church of 'brick-and-mortar', as well as the Church of 'prelates and priors', but mostly it was the religious community itself, the 'assembly or congregation of the faithful' (*convocatio sive congregatio fidelium*).<sup>32</sup>

The military aspect of the crusades was fundamental to the enterprise, but it was not the most important aim of the undertaking. The whole object of the enterprise was to rebuild a 'fallen' Church in order to establish a permanent foundation for freedom. Hence, the third *translatio* was a restoration of 'the ancient status of the Holy Church' (*antiquum ecclesie sancte statum . . . reparavit*). This entailed far more than the regeneration of an ecclesiastical organization; it included repopulation and resettlement, as well as political and economic reconstruction. In short, the rebuilding of an entire society.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>32</sup> Roger E. Reynolds, 'A Florilegium on the Ecclesiastical Grades in Clm 19414: Testimony to Ninth-Century Clerical Instruction', *Harvard Theological Review*, lxiii (1970), 235–59 at 256. On the Church as the *congregatio fidelium christianorum in una fide spe et caritate, in domo Dei cohabitantium*, see *Libelli de lite imperatorum et pontificum saeculis XI et XII conscripti*, ed. Ernst Dümmler and Ernst Sackur, vol. iii (Hanover, 1897), p. 663.

<sup>33</sup> On Urban's biblically based concept of *translatio regni* ('transfer of power') and his fourfold schema of Christian history, see Becker, *Urban II*, ii, 341–62, 369–74; idem, 'Urbain II et l'Orient', in *Il Concilio di Bari del 1098: Atti del Convegno Storico Internazionale e celebrazioni del IX Centenario del Concilio*, ed. Salvatore Palese and Giancarlo Locatelli (Bari, 1999) [hereafter Becker, 'Urbain II et l'Orient'], pp. 123–44 at 135–6; Ringel, '*Ipse transfert regna et mutat tempora*', pp. 137–56. The classic study of the 'crusade of reconquest' and the 'crusade of regenerating the Church', explored at length in its Valencian context, is Robert I. Burns, *The Crusader Kingdom of Valencia: Reconstruction on a Thirteenth-Century Frontier* (2 vols., Cambridge, Mass., 1967).

## IV

Out of the books of the Old Testament, Urban had fashioned an explanation of ‘the tyranny of the Saracens’ as divine punishment for the sins of Christians. He adopted and applied the Old Testament sin–punishment–restoration cycle to Christian history, and he believed that this cycle was on the verge of completion. For Urban, the central fact of his time was the ‘Deeds of God through the Christians’ (*Gesta Dei per Christianos*) effecting the recovery of the lost lands of Christendom and the restoration of the Church.<sup>34</sup>

Whether in Spain or in the eastern Mediterranean, Urban’s avowed purpose was to be a ‘fellow-labourer’ with God in the restoration of the Church by wresting from Muslim control former Christian territory and by recovering ancient sees and ecclesiastical provinces.<sup>35</sup> On 1 July 1089, when Urban launched his first crusade in Spain, a campaign to rebuild Tarragona, he directed the leading counts of Catalonia ‘to use all of [their] armed might and material wealth for the restoration of this Church’ and to carry out this task ‘in penitence and for the remission of [their] sins’.<sup>36</sup> Urban’s objectives in the eastern Mediterranean were similar. Almost immediately after the start of the Jerusalem Crusade, Urban wrote to his supporters in Flanders and described how he had ‘visited Gaul and urged most fervently the lords and subjects of that land to liberate the Eastern Churches’. At the Council of Clermont, he reports, ‘we imposed on them the obligation to undertake such a military enterprise for the remission of all their sins’, following the example of what he had done in Spain.<sup>37</sup> When Urban died at the end of July 1099, shortly after the crusader conquest of Jerusalem, his successor, Pope Paschal II (1099–1118), continued the crusade and declared, less than a year after the capture of the Holy City, that the Eastern Church was now ‘to a large extent restored to the glory of its ancient liberty’ and appealed for prayers that God might finish what had been begun.<sup>38</sup>

<sup>34</sup> Becker, *Urban II*, ii, 318, 349.

<sup>35</sup> Using the ‘royal we’ (*pluralis majestatis*), Urban proclaims himself *cooperatores* (‘fellow-labourers’) with God in the restoration of the Church in his letter of 1 July 1091 to Berenguer de Lluça (d. 1099), bishop of Ausona-Vic, bestowing on him the title *archiepiscopus Tarraconensis*; *La documentación pontificia hasta Inocencio III (965–1216)*, ed. Demetrio Mansilla Reoyo (Rome, 1955) [hereafter Mansilla, *Doc. Pont.*], pp. 50–1, no. 32; Becker, *Urban II*, ii, 341–2.

<sup>36</sup> Urban II to the Catalan counts Berenguer Ramon II, Ermengol IV of Urgell and Bernard II of Besalú, 1 July 1089; Mansilla, *Doc. Pont.*, pp. 46–7, no. 29; Erdmann, *Kreuzzugsgedanke*, pp. 292–3; Eng. trans., p. 315; McCrank, ‘Tarragona’, pp. 185–8; O’Callaghan, *Reconquest*, pp. 31–2; Chevedden, ‘Crusade Indulgence’, 295–6.

<sup>37</sup> Urban II to all the faithful in Flanders, December 1095; *Epistulae et chartae ad historiam primi belli sacri spectantes: Die Kreuzzugsbriefe aus den Jahren 1088–1100*, ed. Heinrich Hagenmeyer (Innsbruck, 1901) [hereafter Hagenmeyer, *Kreuzzugsbriefe*], p. 136, no. 2; trans. Riley-Smith and Riley-Smith, *Crusades: Idea and Reality*, p. 38; Peters, *First Crusade*, p. 42.

<sup>38</sup> Paschal II to ‘all triumphant Christian soldiers in Asia’ (*omni populo militiae christianae in Asia triumphantis*), 28 April 1100; Hiestand, *Papsturkunden*, pp. 90–2, no. 4; Erdmann, *Kreuzzugsgedanke*, p. 373; Eng. trans., pp. 366–7. See also Paschal II’s letter to the bishops of Gaul, December 1099; Hagenmeyer, *Kreuzzugsbriefe*, p. 175, no. 20; trans. Peters, *First Crusade*, p. 297. The letters of Urban and Paschal and the Clermont crusading decrees all attest to the scope and final objective of the ‘First’ Crusade, an objective still in the process of completion nine months after the conquest of Jerusalem.

Urban envisaged a broad advance against Islam, in the west as well as in the east, that pursued the same goal – the restoration of Churches (i.e. bishoprics) – and received the same spiritual reward – the crusade indulgence offering the remission of sins.<sup>39</sup> Urban articulates this vision in May 1098 when referring to the recovery of Huesca by Aragón (1096) and the victories in the east at Nicaea and Dorylaeum (1097): ‘In our days God has eased the sufferings of the Christian peoples and allowed the faith to triumph. By means of the Christian forces He has conquered the Turks in Asia and the Moors in Europe, and restored to Christian worship cities that were once celebrated.’<sup>40</sup> Urban adopted a comprehensive approach to the war against Islam and took up the fight in both the western and the eastern Mediterranean. The war in the west and the war in the east were one in Urban’s thinking, representing different campaigns in the same overarching enterprise, and he persistently resisted all attempts to divert attention from the Spanish theatre of war at a time when the Eastern Crusade had captured everyone’s interest.<sup>41</sup>

Urban saw the conflict with Islam as being fought along three major fronts – Sicily, Spain and the eastern Mediterranean – and the successes that he witnessed he considered to be the beginning of a new epoch of history. He selected as the starting point of the new era the Norman conquest of Sicily, and in doing so he formulated a theory of the crusades that corresponded to reality as it was and as contemporaries experienced it. He did not rewrite the past to suit his own political or ideological agenda nor did he fit the events of his day into a preconceived theoretical framework. Instead, he established a conceptual link between his theory of *translatio regni* and the exploit of *translatio regni* as it was experienced by contemporaries and expressed by contemporary historians. Contemporaries of the Norman conquest of Sicily experienced this event as a crusade, and the Norman historians who wrote of it depicted it as a crusade. These historians, according to Erdmann, ‘represent the Sicilian undertaking as a crusade from the first’ and provide ample evidence for determining the crusading objectives of the Normans. In Erdmann’s words, these objectives were ‘that the Christians inhabiting the island should cease to live in servitude, that Christianity should govern there, and that Christian observance should be restored to fitting

<sup>39</sup> Becker, ‘Urbain II et l’Orient’, 135–6.

<sup>40</sup> See n. 28 above and text.

<sup>41</sup> See n. 27 above and text; Erdmann, *Kreuzzugsgedanke*, pp. 294–6; Eng. trans., pp. 316–19; O’Callaghan, *Reconquest*, pp. 32–5. The two-front Mediterranean strategy of the war with Islam was established by Urban and his immediate successor, Pope Paschal II, and was subsequently taken up as papal policy. See *Historia compostellana*, ed. Emma Falque Rey (Turnhout, 1988), pp. 25–6, 77–88 (Bk. 1, chs. 9, 38–9); Giles Constable, ‘The Second Crusade as Seen by Contemporaries’, *Traditio*, ix (1953), 213–79; Robert I. Burns, ‘The Many Crusades of Valencia’s Conquest (1225–1280): A Historiographical Labyrinth’, in *On the Social Origins of Medieval Institutions: Essays in Honor of Joseph F. O’Callaghan*, ed. Donald J. Kagay and Theresa M. Vann (Leiden, 1998), pp. 167–77.



splendour'.<sup>42</sup> Pope Urban formulated the objectives of Duke Robert and Count Roger in much the same way: victory 'over all the violence of the Saracens in the island of Sicily' and the restoration of 'the ancient status of the Holy Church in accordance with God's will and gracious purpose'. Urban's own stated objectives for his Jerusalem Crusade were no different: 'to restrain the savagery of the Saracens . . . and restore the Christian Churches to their former freedom'.<sup>43</sup>

The principle of *translatio regni*, which formed the framework of Urban's crusading ideology, was revolutionary in its implications. It went back to a time when Christendom had encircled the Mediterranean. It promised a return to an 'early period', a *pristinus status*, that had existed before the rise of Islam, and it claimed grounding in a divine plan that was inexorably being carried out 'in accordance with God's will and gracious purpose'. Urban expressed his firm conviction that the events of his day were facilitating a return to a time when Christians had been in possession of rights and liberties of which conquest and tyranny had deprived them. The supremacy of Islam had been endured for centuries, but now the tables had turned owing to the outpouring of God's mercy and grace. A dramatic reversal of Islamic domination had begun in the central, western and eastern Mediterranean. 'Led by the princes chosen by God', the Christian people (*populus christianus*) had embarked on a movement of reconquest that sought to restore, reorganize and assimilate Christian territory that had been lost to Islamic holy war.<sup>44</sup>

In Urban's mind, the Norman war in Sicily assumed the status of a new beginning, and the event itself became a decisive turning point in the history of Christendom because it ushered in a new age. The Norman conquest of Sicily achieved the breakthrough that led to the restoration of 'the ancient status of the Holy Church' that Urban could see in his own day. For Urban, the new beginning of history did not start with the Jerusalem Crusade. His 'March on Jerusalem' was the end-product of a process already underway, not a new beginning. The 'First' Crusade did not create a new beginning. Rather, it put into effect in the eastern Mediterranean a movement of reconquest that was already underway in the western Mediterranean. The 'First' Crusade should not be seen as something new but as the developed form of a type of enterprise that

<sup>42</sup> Erdmann, *Kreuzzugsgedanke*, pp. 121–2; Eng. trans., pp. 133–4. Erdmann bases his views on the accounts of the chroniclers of the Norman conquest of Sicily: Amatus of Montecassino, Geoffrey Malaterra and William of Apulia. See Amatus of Montecassino, *Storia de' Normanni di Amato di Montecassino volgarizzata in antico francese*, ed. Vincenzo de Bartholomaeis (Rome, 1935), pp. 229 (V.7), 231 (V.9), 232–3 (V.10), 234 (V.12), 237 (V.18), 241–2 (V.23), 276–7 (VI.14), 282–3 (VI.19–20), 321 (VII.27); trans. Prescott N. Dunbar as *The History of the Normans*, rev. Graham A. Loud (Woodbridge, Suffolk; Rochester, NY, 2004), pp. 136–9, 141, 156, 158, 179; Malaterra, *De rebus gestis*, pp. 29 (II.1), 30–1 (II.4–7), 42–5 (II.33), 53 (II.45), 68 (III.19), 77 (III.32), 85–6 (IV.2), 88–90 (IV.7); Eng. trans., pp. 85–6, 87–9, 107–11, 125, 149, 163, 177–8, 182–4; William of Apulia, *La geste de Robert Guiscard*, ed. Marguerite Mathieu (Palermo, 1961), pp. 174 (III.194–203), 179–80 (III.286–95), 182 (III.332–6).

<sup>43</sup> See n. 26 above and text.

<sup>44</sup> Becker, *Urban II*, ii. 354.

had already become widespread in the western Mediterranean. It was the Norman conquest of Sicily that created the new beginning of history, and it by rights should be regarded as the first stage of 'the changing times', or, simply, the First Crusade.

Al-Sulamī also experienced 'the changing times', and he too traced the beginning of the new age back to the Norman conquest of Sicily. He saw the crusades as a Mediterranean-wide surge of the Latin west against Islam that began in Sicily, spread to Spain and ultimately targeted his own country, Syria. There is a remarkable uniformity between the contemporary Christian interpretation of the crusades and the contemporary Islamic interpretation of the crusades. Both interpretations point to the Norman war in Sicily as the decisive breakthrough that ushered in a new epoch for Christians and Muslims in the Mediterranean world. Both interpretations place the onset of the crusades ahead of their accepted historical debut in 1095. And both interpretations contend that by the end of the eleventh century the crusading enterprise was Mediterranean-wide in scope.

For Christians, the new beginning of history brought with it the prospect of recovering from Islam the lost lands of Christendom. For Muslims, the new beginning of history brought with it a growing sense of dread. War after war now engulfed Islam: in Sicily, in Spain, in Syria. The Christian view of the crusades and the Muslim view of the crusades are not contradictory to one another, but in fact are complementary to one another, and both interpretations are essential to an understanding of crusading.

## V

To be historical in the widest sense requires that attention be paid to both the Christian view of the crusades and the Islamic view of the crusades. This will not be an easy task. Modern scholars in the west and in the Islamic world have found it difficult to credit what the medieval evidence says about crusading and to adopt the self-understanding that medieval peoples had of the crusades. The traditional criticism of the western orientalist has always been that they go to Islamic sources, not seeking to discover anything new or original in them, but merely to verify their own knowledge.<sup>45</sup> This is certainly true regarding western scholarship of the crusades. But such criticism can also be levelled at Arabic scholarship. Arabic scholarship of the crusades has not gone to Arabic sources seeking to discover anything new or original in them but merely to verify a western interpretation of the crusades. Contemporary Arabic scholarship on the crusades mimics western scholarship on the

<sup>45</sup> Abdūlhak Adnan-Adivar, 'Introduction', in *İslâm Ansiklopedisi: İslâm âlemi tarih, coğrafya, etnografya ve biyografya lûgati* (13 vols. in 15, Ankara, 1945–88), i p. iii; trans. Howard A. Reed and Niyazi Berkes, 'A Turkish Account of Orientalism: A Translation of the Introduction to the Turkish Edition of the Encyclopedia of Islam', *Muslim World*, xliii (1953), 260–82 at 264.

crusades. Western ideas of the crusades that mesh with current political views in the Arab world are welcomed, while historical accounts by Muslim authors who had direct knowledge of the crusades are ignored. Thus, self-interpretation is achieved, not through a direct understanding of the 'self', but by relying on the west's understanding of the 'self'.

The image of the past is certainly a factor in the outlook of contemporary Muslims towards the west. When this image is formed by western historical writing and is reflective of western views, as is the case with the crusades, historical consciousness becomes a borrowed consciousness, no longer a product of one's own society or one's own past. So long as history is borrowed, modern Muslim self-interpretation will consist of the thoughts of others. Self-identity in the Muslim world should be built upon the self-views presented in Islamic sources and should not serve a master narrative of Arab nationalism or Islamic fundamentalism. When self-understanding is held to consist in the 'Other's' understanding of the 'self', self-identity is sacrificed, and historiographical self-analysis becomes inseparable from historiographical self-alienation. The road to modern Muslim self-identity is to be found in Islamic history. Once the image of the crusades begins to reflect Muslim historical writing on the crusades, the foundations will have been laid for an informed understanding of the Islamic past.

Islamic historiography offers Muslims a way by which they can understand their own history. Islamic historiography also offers western scholars a way by which they can understand their own history. Once the *a priori* presumption against the possibility of discovering anything new or original in Islamic sources for the crusades is abandoned, the irreconcilable conflict between the views expressed by western scholars on the crusades and those expressed by medieval Muslim scholars on the crusades will come to an end. Contrary to the prevailing view in the west and in the Islamic world, there is something new and original to be discovered in the Islamic sources for the crusades, and what is more, these sources can be corroborated by papal documents. In other words, the self-view of the crusades presented by contemporary Muslim authors and the self-view of the crusades presented by crusading popes are not in opposition to each other but in agreement with each other.

Although the west has much to learn (and unlearn) about crusading, the Muslim world has a very great deal to learn (and unlearn) about crusading as well. Islamic sources can be the starting point for both the west and the Muslim world to gain a new and deeper understanding of the crusades. The Islamo-Christian view of the crusades challenges the widely accepted hypothesis that crusading emerged in 1095. Direct evidence from Latin and Arabic sources indicates that the development and diversification of crusading occurred well before 1095. The pivotal event that set crusading in motion was the Norman-papal plan to retake Sicily. It was from the Norman war in Sicily that western Christendom began the great movement to undo the Islamic occupation of Christian territories and restore the freedom of the Church (*libertas ecclesiae*). By

the time of the so-called 'First' Crusade, the diversification of crusading activity to include Islamic Spain was well underway, and the deeds of the crusaders in Sicily and Spain became the model for future crusading activity.<sup>46</sup> When Pope Urban delivered his sermon at Clermont calling on Christian warriors to march on Jerusalem to liberate the Eastern Church, he gave impetus to the further diversification of crusading by extending the crusades to the eastern Mediterranean. The Islamo-Christian view of the crusades opens a door to a better understanding of the evolutionary history of the crusades and invites scholars to re-examine their assumptions about the crusades.

<sup>46</sup> O'Callaghan declares that 'there seems no significant difference . . . between [Pope Alexander II's] concession to "the knights destined to set out for Spain" [in 1063 to capture Barbastro] and later bulls of crusade to the Holy Land'. He adds: 'Indeed, concession of that benefit by Alexander II in 1063 and by Urban II in 1089–91 [for Tarragona] antedated the First Crusade by some years and must be taken into account when discussing the origin of the crusading movement. Whether the military actions in Spain following the issuance of these papal bulls constituted a crusade, a pre-crusade, or an anticipation of the crusade will likely be disputed for many years. Nevertheless, there seems to be no significant difference in the benefits offered by both popes [i.e. Alexander II and Urban II] and by the early twelfth-century bulls of crusade' (O'Callaghan, *Reconquest*, pp. 26, 48). Others disagree and contend that crusading and crusading institutions arrived in the Iberian Peninsula after 1095; cf. Carl Erdmann, 'Der Kreuzzugsgedanke in Portugal', *Historische Zeitschrift*, cxli (1929), 23–53; Richard A. Fletcher, 'Reconquest and Crusade in Spain c.1050–1150', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 5th ser., xxxvii (1987), 31–47; John France, *Crusades and the Expansion of Catholic Christendom, 1000–1714* (2005), pp. 28–31.

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