

The Ennobling Oath

A Pilgrim's Reflection on the Historiography of the Knights Templar

Seminar#2: The Call of the Crusades: why we still believe but are unable to explain why.

Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me.

Matthew 16:24

- A. Thought experiments: Interest in the crusades today is deeply influenced by the politics and mores of the present
1. What would America look like today if it were the Crusaders (Catholics) rather than Puritans (Protestants) on the Mayflower?
 2. Is there a connection between the narrative of America's mission as a "City on the Hill" and the notion of the Crusades' mission of "Holy War"?

"The habit of separating religion and politics is now so routine in the West that it is difficult for us to appreciate how thoroughly the two co-inhered in the past. It was never simply a question of the state "using "religion: the two were indivisible. Disassociating them would have seemed like trying to extract the gin from the cocktail."

Karen Armstrong, *Fields of Blood: Religion and the History of Violence*

B. Crusade Historiography: **1095-1599**

1. A defensive war; Muslims perceived as an existential threat
2. History of the Crusade was understood as a branch of theology—influence of the Abbey of Cluny
3. The concept of the separation of church and state from Westphalia (1648) to Philadelphia (1787)
4. Interpretation is influenced by the times of the interpreter (historian, chronicler, story teller, etc)

"This royal city, however, situated at the center of the earth, is now held captive by the enemies of Christ and is subjected, by those who do not know God, to the worship the heathen. She seeks, therefore, and desires to be liberated and ceases not to implore you to come to her aid. From you especially she asks succor, because as we have already said, God has conferred upon you above all other nations great glory in arms. Accordingly, undertake this journey eagerly for the remission of your sins, with the assurance of the reward of imperishable glory in the kingdom of heaven..."

Medieval Sourcebook, Internet Medieval Source Book; Urban II: Speech at Clermont 1095

C. Crusade Historiography: **1600—1799**

1. The idea of the Crusades moved increasingly from the "present" to the "past"
2. But also a "past" that was colored by confessional and/or rationalist historians
3. Renaissance, Reformation, Counter-Reformation, Age of Reason, Age of Enlightenment

"The triumphs of the Crusades were the triumphs of faith [but]...Faith without wisdom is a dangerous thing...There was so much courage and so little honor, so much devotion and so little understanding. High ideals were besmirched by cruelty and greed, enterprise and endurance by a blind and narrow self-righteousness; and the Holy War itself was nothing more than a long act of intolerance in the name of God, which is the sin against the Holy Spirit."

Steven Runciman, *A History of the Crusades*

D. Crusade Historiography **1800—1950:**

1. Crusades values re-emerge but the religious calling is secularized: honor, chivalry, duty, pure, noble
2. Age of Romanticism; Victorian Age—historians and storytellers recount the "best of the Crusades"
3. Sir Walter Scott (15 August 1771 – 21 September 1832); Thomas Rowley (1721–1796)

E. Crusade Historiography: **1950—Present**

1. Top historians today: Jonathan Riley Smith, Jonathan Phillips, Christopher Tyerman, Giles Constable