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THE VENETIAN CRUSADE OF 1122-1124

On 8 August 1122 a large fleet left Venice for the East. The Venetians, who had taken the cross¹, paused to attack Byzantine Corfu in retaliation for an attempt by the Emperor John Comnenus to reduce their privileges, but they abandoned the siege of the city there on learning that King Baldwin II of Jerusalem had been captured by the Muslim prince Belek of Kharput. The coast of Palestine was reached in May 1123. An Egyptian fleet was destroyed off Ascalon, Christmas was spent in Jerusalem and Bethlehem, Tyre was besieged on 15 February 1124 and fell on 7 July. The Venetians were rewarded with a third of Tyre and its territory and with important commercial privileges, which had probably been promised them already by Baldwin of Jerusalem as inducements to crusade². They returned home by way of the Aegean, sacking Greek islands and territory as they went. Their pillaging brought the Greek government to heel and in August 1126 John Comnenus confirmed and extended their privileges³. The story of their crusade is well-known and I do not intend to spend much more time on it. Instead, I want to consider the background to it and its wider implications.

¹ *Historia Ducum Veneticorum*, in MGH SS 14:73; *Chronicon Altinate* ed. A. Rossi, in *Archivio storico italiano* 8 (1845), 153; MARTIN DA CANAL, *Les Estoires de Venise. Cronaca veneziana in lingua francese dalle origini al 1275*, ed. A. Limentani (Florence, 1972), pp. 30, 32; ANDREA DANDOLO, *Chronica*, in RIS NS 12, 1:232. See also Fulcher of Chartres, *Historia Hierosolymitana*, ed. H. Hagenmeyer (Heidelberg, 1913), p. 657.

² William of Tyre, *Historia rerum in partibus transmarinis gestarum*, in RHC Oc. 1:551.

³ F. THIRIET, *La Romanie vénitienne au moyen âge* (Paris, 1959), p. 41; S. RUNCIMAN, *A History of the Crusades*, 3 vols. (Cambridge, 1951-54), 2:166-71.

The chain of events that led to the crusade began with the disaster that befell the Latin Christians in northern Syria on 28 June 1119 at the Battle of the Field of Blood, where Prince Roger of Antioch was killed. Baldwin of Jerusalem hurried North to take charge of the principality, and he and the Patriarch of Antioch must have agreed to appeal to the West for help. This subject was certainly discussed on 23 January 1120, at the Council of Nablus, at which the king, the patriarch of Jerusalem and the secular and ecclesiastical leaders of the kingdom were present⁴. Baldwin then sent embassies with letters to Pope Calixtus II and Domenico Michiel, the Doge of Venice. The king's embassy to Venice was joined there by *nuntii* sent by the pope, who brought a letter calling on the Venetians "to hasten, instructed by faith, to help the faithful of Christ." The letters from Jerusalem and Rome were solemnly read to the doge and leading citizens of Venice, who then took the cross. On hearing of their response to his appeal, the pope sent them a *vexillum sancti Petri*, the papal banner traditionally presented to those fighting in wars with papal approval⁵.

It would be good to be able to establish the date of the arrival of the embassies from the East and the exchanges between the pope and Venice. Clues may be provided in Calixtus's correspondence. On 6 July 1121 three letters were sent in his name to Jerusalem. Two of them concerned the Holy Sepulchre, confirming the privileges of the canons and ruling on the status of the *cantor* and *succentor*, who had to live in the commu-

⁴ CERBANUS CERBANI, *Translatio mirifici martyris Isidori a Chio insula in civitatem Venetam*, in RHC Oc. 5:322; H. E. MAYER, « The Concordat of Nablus, » *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 33 (1982), 532.

⁵ CERBANUS CERBANI, pp. 322-3; *Historia Ducum Veneticorum*, p. 73; *Chronicon Altinate*, p. 153; MARTIN DA CANAL, pp. 30, 32; ANDREA DANDOLO, p. 232; ORDERIC VITALIS, *Historia aecclesiastica*, ed. M. Chibnall (Oxford, 1969-79), 6:128. See also *Annales Venetici breves*, in MHG SS 14:71. For *vexilla sancti Petri* see C. Erdmann, *The Origin of the Idea of Crusade*, trans. M. W. Baldwin and W. Goffart (Princeton, 1977), pp. 182-200.

nity⁶. The third, addressed to the king, clergy and people, confirmed the election of Patriarch Warmund, in response to letters and "legates" sent to the pope informing him of it; the Latins in the East were told that Bishop Peter of Porto had been commissioned to bring Warmund the *pallium*⁷. Warmund had probably been elected in the autumn of 1118⁸. It is unlikely that he and the king would have waited for over a year, until after the Council of Nablus, before informing the pope. On the other hand, Calixtus had only been made pope in February 1119; the news would not have reached the East until the spring and may have required the commissioning of a new embassy, which might have been delayed in the turmoil that followed the catastrophe of the Field of Blood. So we might assume the departure of an embassy to Rome in the spring of 1120 carrying both the formal announcement of Warmund's election and an appeal for help. The pope's initial exchanges with Venice could have taken place in the autumn of that year. By July 1121 plans were well enough advanced for the crusade to be on Calixtus's mind; his letter on the patriarchate seems to contain a veiled reference to it, since he wrote of the Roman Church which

is working on your behalf every day both beyond the Alps and this side of them (*in ultramontanis et citramontanis partibus*).

A fourth letter from Calixtus's correspondence appears to confirm that the pope was in touch with Venice about the crusade at this time. On 24 July he recognized a religious foundation made by a Venetian cleric. This had been notified to him by Peter of Porto, who had obviously been in Venice⁹. Since Peter

⁶ CALIXTUS II, *Bullaire*, ed. U. Robert, 1 (Paris, 1891), 362-3, 365-6.

⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 364-5.

⁸ R. HIESTAND, « Chronologisches zur Geschichte des Königreiches Jerusalem um 1130, » *Deutsches Archiv* 26 (1970), 228-9.

⁹ CALIXTUS II, *Bullaire*, 1:366.

had been commissioned to take Warmund's *pallium* to Jerusalem, he had presumably gone to Venice on his way to the East. Perhaps he also took the *vexillum sancti Petri* for the doge; perhaps he had been appointed crusade legate.

This, of course, is supposition. But it is clear that, since Pope Calixtus addressed a formal crusade letter to Venice, the general view that there were no appeals to crusade in the East issued by the popes between Paschal II and Eugenius III is erroneous. And the question arises whether Calixtus's appeal was sent only to the Venetians. There is, in fact, evidence that he aimed at a larger audience. First, the crusade was discussed at the First Lateran Council, which met between 18 March and 6 April 1123. The council, perhaps at its session on 27 March, approved a decree granting the indulgence and the protection of the Church to

those who go to Jerusalem and offer powerful aid to the defence of the Christian people and to the vanquishing of the tyranny of the infidels;

it peremptorily ordered those who had taken the cross "either for the expedition to Jerusalem or for that to Spain" — a point to which I will return — and had "taken their crosses off" to put them back on their clothes and depart before Easter 1124 under threat of excommunication and interdict¹⁰. The wording of this decree, and that of a letter probably associated with it in which Calixtus wrote of "the remission of sins that we conceded to the defenders of the eastern Church,"¹¹ suggest that the pope's appeal had not been confined to Venice.

Secondly, although I know of no other letters from him concerning the crusade to the East, there is some evidence for

¹⁰ Conc. Lateran. I § 10, in *Conciliarum oecumenicorum decreta*, ed. J. Alberigo, P.-P. Joannou, C. Leonardi and P. Prodi (Freiburg im Breisgau, 1962), pp. 167-8. See K. J. Hefele and H. Leclercq, *Histoire des conciles d'après les documents originaux*, (Paris 1907-52) 5:630-44.

¹¹ CALIXTUS II, *Bullaire*, 2:266-7.

other crusaders to Palestine besides the Venetians. Fulcher of Chartres, who was present in the East, wrote of the Venetian ships carrying "armed men, both Venetians and pilgrims (*peregrini*) attached to them." Heinrich Hagenmeyer, Fulcher's editor, thought this was a reference to pilgrims, perhaps Germans, who had sailed with the Venetian fleet, but *peregrini* was, of course, a word that could be used of crusaders and I am inclined to believe that that is what these were¹², since there is evidence for men in eastern Europe, Germany and France taking the cross at this time. An abortive crusade of Bohemians under Count Dlugomil and Bishop Henry of Olmütz departed in March 1123; most had returned to Bohemia by the end of the year without, apparently, ever reaching the Holy Land¹³. They were followed by two leaders called Hermann and Lutebor, who left for Jerusalem on 12 February 1124¹⁴. In 1123 Meingot, the son of the *camerarius* of the archbishop of Mainz, made the church of Mainz his heir on his departure for Jerusalem¹⁵. An eclipse of the moon at the beginning of February 1124 so terrified the future Conrad III of Germany that he took the cross, vowing "to go to Jerusalem to fight for Christ." Many apparently agreed to go with him¹⁶; perhaps Count Dedo of Wettin, who went to the East about this time and brought back with him a relic of the True Cross for the monastery of Lauterberg, was among them¹⁷. A group of French charters ap-

¹² Fulcher of Chartres, p. 657 and note 7. See also the reference to the "Christiani nominis milites qui militiae Christianae ibidem [Jerusalem] studuerant," who offered Charles of Flanders the crown of Jerusalem in 1123. Galbert of Bruges, *Passio Karoli comitis*, in MGH SS 12:564.

¹³ Cosmas of Prague, *Chronica Boemorum*, in MGH SS 9:125; R. RÖHRICHT, *Die Deutschen im Heiligen Lande* (Innsbruck, 1894), p. 25.

¹⁴ Cosmas of Prague, p. 127.

¹⁵ *Codex diplomaticus Nassoicus*, ed. W. Sauer, 1 (Wiesbaden, 1885), 99-100.

¹⁶ Ekkehard of Aura, *Chronicon*, in MGH SS 6:262.

¹⁷ *Chronicon Montis Sereni*, in MGH SS 23-139; *Genealogia Wettinensis*, in MGH SS 23:228.

pear to refer to other crusaders leaving for the East, although they cannot all be dated exactly; nor in them is it always easy to distinguish crusaders from pilgrims. The cartularies of the cathedral and the abbey of Saint-Aubin in Angers contain the names of three of them: Robert of Buzençais, Matthew Giraud and Walter of Pouillé, the last of whom definitely took the cross¹⁸. A response in western France would explain the interest in the crusade which was taken by the author of the chronicle of Saint-Maixent¹⁹. Not far away, a knight called Rospano *Ruffus*, who had decided to go to Jerusalem, made a mortgage agreement for two years with the abbey of Trinity of Vendôme on 18 October 1123²⁰. To the south-east a man called Bernard *de Rippa* had become a *confrater* of the community of Sauxillanges on 24 July 1123, formally handing over to the monks a *mansus* that his cousin Stephen, who had gone to Jerusalem and had died, had left them. Bernard agreed to be bound not to enter another religious house nor to go to Jerusalem without the monks' permission, which suggests that there was some crusading enthusiasm in the area at the time to which the monks did not want Bernard to succumb²¹.

Thirdly, slight evidence for the participation of a Genoese squadron is perhaps provided by two very corrupt and late versions of a *Translatio beati Johannis Baptistae ad Genuam*. Both purport to refer to events on the First Crusade, although in them mention is made of an attack on the city of Antioch by

¹⁸ *Cartulaire noir de la cathédrale d'Angers*, ed. C. Urseau (Paris, 1908), pp. 259, 271; *Cartulaire de l'abbaye de Saint-Aubin d'Angers*, ed. B. de Broussillon, 1 (Paris, 1903), 144-5 (although there is no guarantee that this man was not joining the Second Crusade).

¹⁹ *La Chronique de Saint-Maixent*, ed. J. Verdon (Paris, 1979), p. 194.

²⁰ *Cartulaire de l'abbaye cardinale de la Trinité de Vendôme*, ed. C. Metais, 2 (Paris, 1894), 223-30.

²¹ *Cartulaire de Sauxillanges*, ed. H. Doniol, *Mémoires de l'Académie des sciences, belles-lettres et arts de Clermont-Ferrand*, NS, 3 (1861), 1072-3.

Muslims and an appeal to the West by a king of Jerusalem. In response, apparently, the Genoese sent a fleet to the East. As it returned from a victorious campaign, relics of St. John the Baptist were discovered at Myra and brought to Genoa during a vacancy in the archdiocese. In the course of an exhaustive discussion the editor of these texts, Mas Latrie, suggested that either of two later vacancies — 1120-23 or c. 1129 — was preferable to that of 1097-99, but he added

we recognize that the weak point in our hypothesis is that neither in the years around 1120-23 nor c. 1129 do the Genoese Annals describe any Genoese expedition to the East²².

This is still a weak point, but perhaps rather less weak than it was.

At any rate it looks as though the Venetian crusade contained crusaders from France, Bohemia and Germany, and perhaps from elsewhere in Italy, and that suggests that there were other papal letters, perhaps even a proper encyclical, pre-dating *Quantum praedecessores* by twenty-four years. And there is another element as well, which underlines the similarity to the Second Crusade. I have already referred to the fact that the First Lateran Council castigated not only those bound for Jerusalem who had not fulfilled their vows, but also those who had taken the cross for an expedition in Spain. With regard to the latter theatre of war there survives a letter from Pope Calixtus addressed to "all bishops, kings, counts, princes and other faithful of God." It was written in the Lateran on 2 April of an unspecified year, but its wording is so close to that of the crusade decree of the council, in conjunction with which it must have been issued, that it must be dated to 2 April 1123.

²² James of Voragine, *Legenda translationis beatissimi Johannis Baptistae Genuam*, and Nicholas of Porta, *Historia translationis reliquiarum b. Johannis Baptistae ad civitatem Janue*, in RHC Oc. 5: xxxvii-xliv, 229-47.

In it the pope drew attention to the dangers threatening the Spanish church and appealed for crusaders "as though God, on whose behalf we act, were exhorting you through us." Those who took part were granted, as we have seen, the same remission of sins as those conceded to the crusaders to the East. The pope echoed the decree of the Lateran Council by threatening with excommunication "those who have put the sign of the cross on their clothes for this purpose" and "have not made an effort to fulfil their vows between this Easter and the next." He appointed as his legate St. Oleguer, archbishop of Tarragona²³. No one could deny that this was a true crusade encyclical. It was meant for a wide distribution. It contained the *narratio*, *exhortatio* and *privilegia* noted by the exegetists of later encyclicals. It made reference to divine authority for the war. It granted an indulgence; and incidentally mentioned one Calixtus had already granted to crusaders in the East. It appointed a legate, St. Oleguer, who, in fact, seems to have been given a general legation to Spain at the Lateran Council²⁴. It was, of course, only one in a series of letters concerning the Spanish Reconquest and it followed a major crusade proclamation by Pope Gelasius II in 1118, which had resulted in the Franco-Spanish conquest of Saragossa, but it cannot have been even the first of Calixtus's appeals for a Spanish crusade, since it attempted to enforce the fulfilment of the vows of those who had already taken the cross. Perhaps Calixtus had sent out an encyclical at the same time as his appeal to Venice. It is, moreover, likely that there were at least two versions of this letter. The Spanish provinces of Braga and Mérida had in the past been given a special legate in Archbishop Diego Gelmírez of Compostela and had been exempted from the authority of the legation to all Spain of Archbishop Bernard of Toledo²⁵.

²³ Calixtus II, *Bullaire*, 2:266-7.

²⁴ *Altera Beati Olegarii Vita*, ed. H. Florez, *España sagrada* 29 (2nd ed., Madrid, 1859), p. 498.

²⁵ Calixtus II, *Bullaire*, 1:218-9, 375-7.

On 6 March 1123 Diego's special legation had been confirmed²⁶. He presided over a council held at Compostela on 18 January 1125 at which he issued his own stirring summons to crusade.

Just as the knights of Christ and the faithful sons of Holy Church opened the way to Jerusalem with much labour and spilling of blood, so we should become knights of Christ and, after defeating his wicked enemies the Muslims, open the way to the same Sepulchre of the Lord through Spain, which is shorter and much less laborious.

The crusaders were to be absolved from all sins committed "from the baptismal font until today." The indulgence, granted through the merits of SS. Peter, Paul and James, was extended to those who sent aid as well as to those who took part. The crusaders' lands were to be protected in their absence²⁷. This very precocious document suggests that Diego shared the crusade legation with Oleguer and no doubt in some letters from the pope his name was to be found in place of Oleguer's. But in the end León contributed little. It was Alfonso I of Aragon who led a major raid into southern Spain in the winter of 1125-6²⁸.

So between c. 1120 and 1126 there was a crusade marked by papal letters to Venice, and perhaps to Christendom at large, in favour of the East, and certainly by a general encyclical in favour of Spain. The papal appeals were reinforced by a conciliar decree. There was some response to them in Bohemia, Germany, France and perhaps Genoa as well as in Venice and Spain and they resulted in campaigns in Palestine in 1123-24 and Spain in 1125-26. I need hardly point out how closely the

²⁶ Ibid., 2:120, 229-30.

²⁷ *Historia Compostellana*, ed. H. Florez, *España sagrada* 20 (2nd ed., Madrid, 1791), pp. 427-30.

²⁸ See D.W. Lomax, *The Reconquest of Spain* (London, 1978), pp. 84-5.

pattern of crisis in the East, embassy to the West and papal response foreshadows the circumstances surrounding papal appeals in 1145, 1157, 1165, 1169, 1181 and 1187²⁹. And while Calixtus II followed Urban II and Paschal II in granting crusade indulgences to warriors in Spain, he was much more the precursor of Eugenius III, the proclaimer of the Second Crusade. The approach of Urban and Paschal had been negative in the sense that they did not want the crusade in the East to draw Spanish resources from the peninsula. Calixtus and Eugenius were more positive in their preaching of a war on two fronts³⁰. This obviously makes Calixtus's actions in 1120-3 very important. But one curiosity needs explanation. His crusade aroused almost no interest from those contemporaries who were not directly involved in it and it has been, let us face it, almost completely forgotten. Outside the Latin East, very few contemporaries made reference even to the capture of Tyre; and those who did commented on it very briefly³¹. Some accounts of the First Lateran Council included the text of the crusade decree, but none expanded on it and no writer treated the crusade as an important aspect of the council's work. The biographers of Calixtus II did not refer to his preaching of the crusade; neither did the *vitae* of St. Oleguer³².

This silence may be surprising, but it is explicable. First, we must banish from our minds models provided by the highly organized, elaborately financed, formally justified crusades of

²⁹ See R. C. Smail, «Latin Syria and the West, 1149-1187,» *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society Ser. 5*. 19 (1969), 1-20.

³⁰ For Eugenius see G. Constable, «The Second Crusade as Seen by Contemporaries,» *Traditio* 9 (1953), 213-79.

³¹ Anselm of Gembloux, *Continuatio Sigeberti*, in MGH SS 6:379; *Annales Veterocellenses*, in MGH SS 16:42; *Chronique de Saint-Maixent*, p. 194; Orderic Vitalis 6:128; *Regni Iherosolymitani brevis historia*, ed. L. T. Belgrano in *Annali Genovesi di Caffaro e de' suoi continuatori*, 1 (Rome, 1890), 130.

³² *Vitae S. Olegarii*, ed. H. Florez, *España sagrada*, 29:472-99.

the thirteenth century, when the movement reached maturity and the height of its popularity. In the first half of the twelfth century it was still informal and undeveloped. Papal bulls and privileges, legations and the rest were significant, but they did not have the significance accorded to them later, as the confused *ad hoc* way the Second Crusade was to be initiated shows. Striking evidence of the embryonic stage crusading was in, is provided by an event that took place less than four years after the fall of Tyre. On 13 January 1128 the cardinal-legate Matthew of Albano presided over a council at Troyes at which he, the archbishops of Rheims and Sens, ten bishops and eight abbots, including St. Bernard of Clairvaux, recognized the Templars as brothers of a true religious order³³, an act which threatened to cut the ground from under the feet of crusade propagandists, because one of the most potent attractions of crusading had been that violence on Christ's behalf was something that only laymen could properly undertake. In accepting as valid the vocation of religious who were committed to the use of force, the Council of Troyes threatened to undermine the laity's perception of its own special function on behalf of the Church. In the end, the recognition of the Templars did not have any drastic effects on lay participation in the crusading movement — although it may have helped to change the nature of that participation — but at the very least the decision of the fathers at the Council of Troyes showed muddled thinking. Secondly, we must not forget that the silence of contemporaries of Calixtus's crusade was actually typical of the twelfth century. Of the calls to crusade I have listed above, only those of 1145 and 1187 aroused much comment, that of 1145 because St. Bernard and the kings of France and Germany came to be involved and that of 1187 because there had been a real catastrophe in the East and Jerusalem had been lost. The fact is that the popularity of crusading increased when there were disasters. Crusading to the East

³³ See M.-L. Bulst-Thiele, *Sacrae Domus Militiae Templi Hierosolymitani Magistri* (Göttingen, 1974), p. 22.

between 1099 and 1187 was not very satisfactory, nor, apart from the Second Crusade, very appealing, because there was not much for crusades to do. Large armies needed important goals, which is why crusading was so popular after 1187. Calixtus's crusade passed almost unnoticed because conditions were not right for it.