

Analyzing Primary Sources -- The European Crusades

Question

Were the Crusades caused primarily by religious devotion or by the desire for political and economic gain?

Document 1

...."Although, O sons of God, you have promised more firmly than ever to keep the peace among yourselves and to preserve the rights of the church, there remains still an important work for you to do. Freshly quickened by the divine correction, you must apply the strength of your righteousness to another matter which concerns you as well as God. For your brethren {brothers} who live in the east are in urgent need of your help, and you must hasten to give them the aid which has often been promised them. For, as the most of you have heard, the Turks and Arabs have attacked them and have conquered the territory of Romania [the Greek empire] as far west as the shore of the Mediterranean and the Hellespont, which is called the Arm of St. George. They have occupied more and more of the lands of those Christians, and have overcome them in seven battles. They have killed and captured many, and have destroyed the churches and devastated the empire. If you permit them to continue thus for awhile with impurity {not pure}, the faithful of God will be much more widely attacked by them. On this account I, or rather the Lord, beseech you as Christ's heralds to publish this everywhere and to persuade all people of whatever rank, foot-soldiers and knights, poor and rich, to carry aid promptly to those Christians and to destroy that vile {disgusting} race from the lands of our friends... Moreover, Christ commands it."

All who die by the way, whether by land or by sea, or in battle against the pagans, shall have immediate remission {forgiveness} of sins. This I grant them through the power of God with which I am invested. O what a disgrace if such a despised and base race, which worships demons, should conquer a people which has the faith of omnipotent {all-powerful} God and is made glorious with the name of Christ!....

SOURCE: Pope Urban II, 1095.

Q-1a → Why does Pope Urban II want Christians to go to the Middle East to fight?

Q-1b → What reward does he give to those who respond to his appeal?

Document 2

“[After Urban had aroused the spirits of all by the promise of forgiveness to those who undertook the expedition with single-hearted devotion,] toward one hundred thousand men were appointed to the immediate service of God from Aquitaine and Normandy, England, Scotland, Ireland, Brittany, Galicia, Gascony, France, Flanders, Lorraine, and from other Christian peoples, whose names I no longer retain. It was truly an army of “crusaders,” for they bore the sign of the cross on their garments as a reminder that they should mortify {severely discipline} the flesh, and in the hope that they would in this way triumph over the enemies of the cross of Christ, as it had once come to pass in the case of the great Constantine. Thus, through the marvelous and unexampled working of divine dispensation {release}, all these members of Christ, so different in speech, origin, and nationality, were suddenly brought together as one body through their love of Christ.”

SOURCE: Ekkehard's Hierosolymita, a history, 1099.

Q-2a → According to Ekkehard, what was the response all over Europe to the speech by Pope Urban II?

Q-2b → Why was this event rare?

Document 3

Consider, I pray, and reflect how in our time God has transferred the West into the East, For we who were Occidentals now have been made Orientals. He who was a Roman or a Frank is now a Galilaeen, or an inhabitant of Palestine. One who was a citizen of Rheims or of Chartres now has been made a citizen of Tyre or of Antioch. We have already forgotten the places of our birth; already they have become unknown to many of us, or, at least, are unmentioned. Some already possess here homes and servants which they have received through inheritance. Some have taken wives not merely of their own people, but Syrians, or Armenians, or even Saracens who have received the grace of baptism....Our parents and relatives from day to day come to join us, abandoning, even though reluctantly, all that they possess. For those who were poor there, here God makes rich. Those who had few coins, here possess countless besants {an ornament} ; and those who had not had a villa, here, by the gift of God, already possess a city. Therefore why should one who has found the East so favorable return to the West? God does not wish those to suffer want who, carrying their crosses, have vowed to follow Him, nay even unto the end....

SOURCE: Chronicles of Fulk of Chartres, late 11c.

Q-3a → What are the financial benefits of fighting as a Crusader?

Q-3b → According to Fulk of Chartres, what is happening to those Europeans who come to fight in the Middle East?

Document 4

“If God blesses us by enabling us to drive His enemies out of Jerusalem, how fortunate and happy we would be! For Jerusalem has been controlled by the enemy for ninety-one years, during which time God has received nothing from us here in the way of adoration. At the same time, the zeal {devotion} of the Muslim rulers to deliver it languished {weakened}. Time passed, and so did many indifferent generations, while the Franks succeeded in rooting themselves strongly there. Now God has reserved the merit of its recovery for one house, the house of the sons of Ayyub [Saladin’s family], in order to unite all hearts in appreciation of its members.”

SOURCE: The Islamic leader Saladin’s speech urging his people to retake Jerusalem, 1187.

Q-4a → What reasons did Saladin give for retaking Jerusalem?

Q-4b → What arguments does he use to inspire his listeners?

Document 5

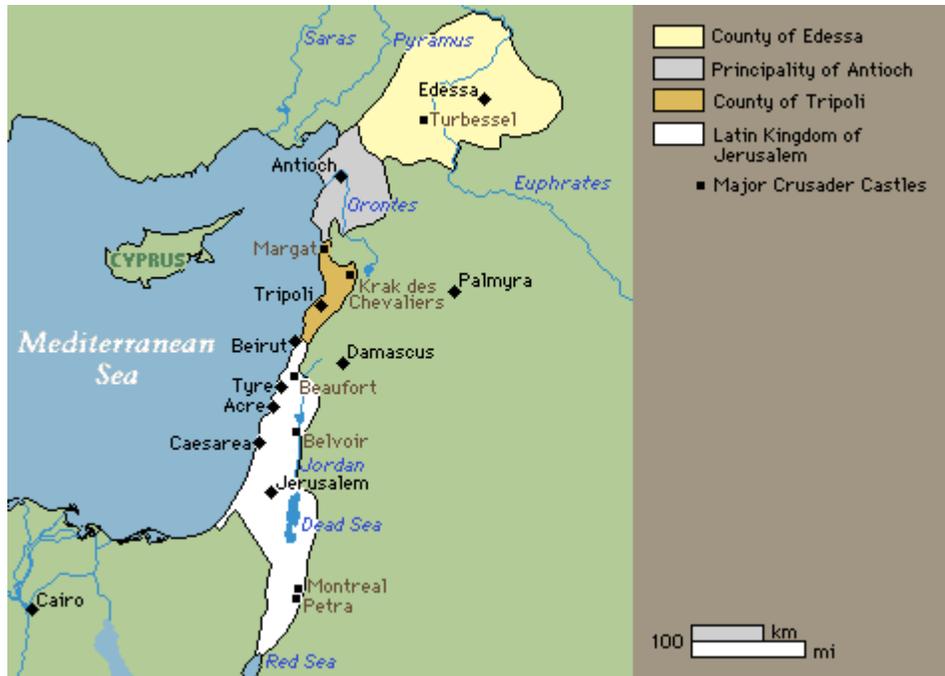
....“At this time arrogant people, a people of strange speech, a nation bitter and impetuous {impulsive} Frenchmen and Germans, set out for the Holy City, which had been desecrated {a violation of sacredness} by barbaric nations, there to seek their house of idolatry {worship of idols} and banish {expel} the Ishmaelites {Muslims} and other denizens {inhabitants} of the land...Their ranks swelled until the number of men, women, and children exceeded a locust horde {large nomadic group} covering the earth;...Now it came to pass that as they passed through the towns where Jews dwelled, they said to one another: ‘Look now, we are going a long way to seek out the profane {vulgar} shrine and to avenge ourselves on the Ismaelites; when here, in our midst, are the Jews—they whose forefathers murdered and crucified him for no reason. Let us first avenge ourselves on them and exterminate them from among the nations so that the name of Israel will no longer be remembered, or let them adopt our faith and acknowledge the offspring of promiscuity {casual sex}.’”

SOURCE: The Jewish chronicler, Solomon bar Samson, 1096.

Q-5a → What did the Crusaders do to the Jews they encountered on their way to the Holy Land?

Q-5b → What was their reason for doing what they did?

Document 6



SOURCE: Map of Palestine and the eastern Mediterranean coast, early 12c.

Q-6 → What motivation for the Crusades is illustrated by this map?

Document 7



Fortress of the Knights Hospitallers [Catholic military/religious order], Syria, mid-12c

To Hugh, Knight Of Christ and Master of Christ's Militia: Bernard, in name only, Abbot of Clairvaux, wishes that he might fight the good fight...This is, I say, a new kind of knighthood and one unknown to the ages gone by. It ceaselessly wages a twofold war both against flesh and blood and against a spiritual army of evil in the heavens. When someone strongly resists a foe in the flesh, relying solely on the strength of the flesh, I would hardly remark it, since this is common enough. And when war is waged by spiritual strength against vices or demons, this, too, is nothing remarkable, praiseworthy as it is, for the world is full of monks. But when the one sees a man powerfully girding {carrying} himself with both swords and nobly marking his belt, who would not consider it worthy of all wonder, the more so since it has been hitherto unknown? He is truly a fearless knight and secure on every side, for his soul is protected by the armor of faith just as his body is protected by armor of steel. He is thus doubly armed and need fear neither demons nor men....

SOURCE: Excerpt from "In Praise of the New Knighthood," by St. Bernard of Clairvaux, speaking of the Knights Templar religious/military order, early 12c.

Q-7 → What role did the religious orders like the Knights Hospitallers and the Knights Templars play during the Crusades?
