Urban II's Call to Crusade

Overview

In 1095 Pope Urban II traveled northwest from Piacenza, in northern Italy, to preside over a church council at Clermont, in the Auvergne—the first time a pope had visited France in nearly fifty years. At the end of the council, on November 27, he preached a sermon to a large audience. He called on the faithful to aid the Christians of the East against the Turks and to liberate Jerusalem from Turkish rule. To those who took up the challenge, he offered a spiritual reward: forgiveness of all the sins they had committed to date. Although Urban's words would transform the course of world history, no official record of what he said is extant. Historians have to rely instead on later accounts, all of which were written after 1099, when the campaign he inspired resulted in the conquest of Jerusalem.

Context

Before traveling to France, Pope Urban II had held a church council at Piacenza in northern Italy in March 1095. There he received envoys from the Byzantine emperor Alexius I, who asked for military support against the Seljuk Turks on his eastern border. The Seljuk threat to Byzantium would provide the rationale for Urban's call to crusade.

The Seljuks were a powerful new force in the Near East. They had their roots north of the Oxus River (modern-day Amu Dar'ya), in what is now Uzbekistan. After converting to Sunni Islam in the tenth century, they embarked on a series of conquests that brought Iran, Iraq, and northern Syria under their control by the 1050s. Seljuk success came at the expense of the traditional ruling dynasty of the Islamic world—the Sunni Abbasid caliphs of Baghdad. When the Seljuks occupied Baghdad in 1055, they allowed the Abbasid caliph to carry on as a figurehead of Sunni orthodoxy but took real power into their own hands. Soon the Seljuks were making inroads westward, into Anatolia. Here they found the richest provinces of Byzantium, the eastern part of the Roman Empire that had survived the collapse of Roman political power in the West. In 1071 the Seljuks defeated the Byzantines at Manzikert (now Malazgirt). In the aftermath, the Seljuks occupied much of Anatolia, establishing their capital at Nicaea (present-day Iznik), less than sixty miles from Constantinople (called Istanbul today).

The Christian response to the Seljuks was slow in coming for several reasons. First, the Seljuks had turned away from Constantinople. They headed east again and by 1079 occupied southern Syria and Palestine. In addition, the Byzantines chose to confront more urgent threats elsewhere. It was only after a powerful new emperor, Alexius I Comnenus, had stabilized the situation to the west and the north that Byzantine attention shifted to the eastern border. Mainly, though, authorities in Christian Europe were simply not prepared to respond. Alexius had actually requested papal help against “pagan” incursions before Piacenza; a few years earlier he had solicited support against the Pechenegs on the Balkan frontier. Urban denied that request but would respond differently in 1095, because his situation had changed since the early days of his pontificate.

Alexius's initial appeals for military aid had reached a pope in exile. Odo of Châtillon had been elected pope and had taken the name Urban II in 1088 at Terracina, south of Rome. No pope had lived in Rome since 1084, when Urban's predecessor and patron, Gregory VII, had been driven from the city by the German emperor Henry IV. The conflict between pope and emperor was over the Reform Movement—a radical effort to remake the church and Christian society—which the papacy had been leading since the mid-eleventh century. The slogans of the reformers were liberation and purification. Powerful secular rulers, such as Henry IV, were long accustomed to appointing bishops and abbots in their realms. By ending secular control over ecclesiastical appointments, the reformers hoped to free the church from the corrupting influence of worldly affairs. A purified clergy would then transform the fallen secular world into a genuinely Christian republic under papal leadership.

Urban II was a product of two centers of reform: the abbey of Cluny, where he rose to the office of prior, and the College of Cardinals around Gregory VII, where he served as cardinal-bishop of Ostia from around 1080. Urban spent the early years of his pontificate in southern Italy, pursuing reformist causes. By careful diplomacy he regained Rome in 1093, and two years later he presided over the first interna-
in response to Alexius's envoys, he urged many men to swear oaths to come to the emperor's aid against the Turks. What Alexius expected from the pope was a small force of mercenaries. Urban's plan was much grander, however, and it was bound up with the aims of the Reform Movement. The campaign was to be a war of liberation, not of church offices from lay control but of Christian peoples and churches in the East. Urban's advocacy of violence to achieve this goal was consistent with reformist ideology. Gregory VII had recruited soldiers, whom he called "knights of Saint Peter," for the war with Henry IV. Urban II would recruit soldiers for a new campaign of liberation in the East. Such a project would demonstrate papal leadership over Christian Europe. It might even repair relations with the Byzantines, who had taken offense at the vigorous claims of the early reformist popes to spiritual primacy over their own Greek Orthodox Church.

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The reformers wanted to purify as well as to liberate. The war in the East would be a vehicle of purification on two levels. For the individual volunteer, it would be a penitential exercise that would earn remission of sins. For Western Christian society as a whole, it would provide an outlet for the violence that had been an endemic feature of European life for two centuries. When Muslims, Magyars, and Vikings invaded Europe in the late ninth and early tenth centuries, central structures of authority broke down, and local warriors came to power. The violence of this warrior elite posed practical and moral problems for church leaders. Their first response had been to try to suppress it by imposing the Peace and Truce of God. At assemblies of churchmen and local people, a formal ban would be placed on waging war against vulnerable members of society and at certain times of year. The bans proved ineffective, however, and often led to more violence as local churches sought to impose their restrictions by force. When Urban came to Clermont, he began by enjoining the Peace and Truce of God upon the faithful. He then opened up a channel through which the pent-up violence of the knights could pour out of Europe: He preached the way of the cross to Jerusalem.

The four main versions of Pope Urban's sermon are found in histories of the First Crusade written by churchmen within a decade of the expedition. Fulcher of Chartres was a cleric who may have been present at Clermont. He took the cross in response to Urban's preaching and joined the forces of Stephen of Blois when they departed for the East in October 1096. By October 1097 he had become chaplain to another powerful crusader, Baldwin of Boulogne; Fulcher retained that position after Baldwin became king of Jerusalem in 1100. In Jerusalem, Fulcher composed his history of the First Crusade, the Historia Hierosolimitana, completing the first version around 1106. At the beginning of his Historia Hierosolimitana, Robert of Reims (called Robert the Monk in the document) indi-
cates that he was present at the Council of Clermont. He is sometimes identified with an abbot of the Benedictine abbey of Saint Rémi of Reims who, though esteemed as a scholar, was expelled from his high office for administrative blunders in 1097 and eventually retired to the priory of Senlac, dying around 1122. Other scholars identify him instead with a simple monk of Saint Rémi. His history of the First Crusade is best dated to 1107.

Baldric of Dol was also present at Clermont. He was a learned monk who became abbot of the Benedictine abbey of Bourges in 1099. There he wrote verse in imitation of the poets of ancient Rome. In 1107 he was appointed archbishop of Dol in Brittany. He wrote his Historia Jerusalemitana in 1108.

Guibert of Nogent did not attend the Council of Clermont. He was from a noble family in northern France and entered the Benedictine abbey of Saint Germer-de-Fly as a youth. In 1104 he became abbot of Nogent-sous-Coucy. He was a prolific author, most famous today for his autobiography, De vita sua. He composed his history of the First Crusade, Gesta Dei per Francos (The Deeds of God Performed through the Franks), between 1104 and 1108, with final corrections completed in 1111.

Explanation and Analysis of the Document

It is natural to wonder how close the four authors come to what Urban said at Clermont. They are excellent sources in some respects. At least two and probably three of them (Robert, Baldric, and likely Fulcher) attended the Council of Clermont. The fourth, Guibert of Nogent, had access to eyewitness accounts. Despite being well positioned to record Urban’s words, the authors present different versions of the sermon. While Guibert of Nogent, for example, has Urban describe the Crusade as a prelude to the Last Judgment, the others do not. We might expect eyewitness accounts to agree more closely, but even here there are variations. Urban speaks at length about Jerusalem in Robert’s and Baldric’s versions but says nothing about it in Fulcher’s. Such differences among equally well-placed eyewitnesses make it impossible to declare one version more authentic than any other. Moreover, all of the versions are colored by each author’s version of his own story. While Guibert of Nogent’s version, for example, has Urban begin by appealing to the audience to help their Christian brothers living in the East. Medieval Europeans were comfortable with the idea of fighting for family members. In a world where governments were small and provided minimal law enforcement, family members looked to one another for protection. When a person was killed or injured, members of the injured party’s family were obliged to exact vengeance from the offender or the offender’s family. By having Urban speak of brotherhood, Fulcher brings this sense of obligation to the war against the Turks. It would be family feud writ large, a vendetta waged in the name of fraternal defense.

While couching Urban’s appeal in the familiar language of feud and vengeance, Fulcher gives a new dimension to the idea of fighting for family. His concept of brotherhood transcends any particular fraternal bond—it is the tie that binds all Christian men to one another. In Fulcher’s eyes, warfare within this Christian fraternity was illicit. It was wasteful, private war against supposed rivals who were actually, in Fulcher’s expanded conception, Christian “brothers and relations.” Christian men must turn away from internecine strife and fight the real enemy: the Turks whose conquests posed a threat to Christians everywhere. The cause of this new kind of war was so righteous that God himself commanded it and would grant remission of sins to those who died fighting it.

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Robert of Reims

In Robert’s version Urban directly addresses those who would fight on the campaign. Speaking to knights, he makes sure to highlight the material rewards of participation. He would fight on the campaign. Speaking to knights, he makes sure to highlight the material rewards of participation.
Pewter pilgrim badge of Saint George standing over a dragon and driving a spear into its mouth. The cult of Saint George was popular in England from 1098, when he is said to have appeared in the sky during the Battle of Antioch in the First Crusade. (© Museum of London)
compares Jerusalem, the land that “flows with milk and honey,” to a homeland that is too small for its population and that lacks food, natural resources, and wealth. Urban’s main focus, though, as Robert presents it, is on another set of worldly concerns for the warriors of eleventh-century Europe: honor, reputation, and pride in family and ethnicity. Urban begins by praising the Franks—the traditional name given to the tribes who settled in modern-day France during the later days of the Roman Empire, established successor states when the empire collapsed, converted to Catholic Christianity, and rose to new heights of power under the Merovingian and Carolingian dynasties. For Robert the Franks were a new chosen people, beloved of God for their devotion to the Roman church and blessed with all the martial virtues. They had a proud tradition of fighting for the faith, exemplified by the campaigns of Charlemagne and his son Louis the Pious in the eighth and ninth centuries. Urban’s reference to these famous Frankish leaders does more than conjure up a heroic past. It invokes an alliance between the papacy and the Franks that dated back to the eighth century, when the papacy had recognized the legitimacy of the new rulers of the Frankish kingdom, the Carolingians, and they in return had conquered the central Italian lands that the popes would rule as independent sovereigns until the unification of Italy in 1870. The Crusade would offer a fresh opportunity for the Franks to come to the aid of the church. In Robert’s version of the sermon, ethnic pride has replaced fraternal solidarity as the driving force behind the campaign.

To live up to their heroic past, the Franks must confront an enemy whose images would seem to mock their status as stanch defenders of the faith. Briefly mentioned in Fulcher, here the Turks are denounced at length. Scholars now agree that these characterizations are far from accurate. The Seljuk Turks are denounced at length. Scholars now agree that these characterizations are far from accurate. The Seljuk leaders do more than conjure up a heroic past. It involves an alliance between the papacy and the Franks that dated back to the eighth century, when the papacy had recognized the legitimacy of the new rulers of the Frankish kingdom, the Carolingians, and they in return had conquered the central Italian lands that the popes would rule as independent sovereigns until the unification of Italy in 1870. The Crusade would offer a fresh opportunity for the Franks to come to the aid of the church. In Robert’s version of the sermon, ethnic pride has replaced fraternal solidarity as the driving force behind the campaign.

In Baldric’s day the most influential Christian thinker on the use of force was Augustine of Hippo (354–430), an African bishop and a scholar in the last days of the Roman Empire. For Augustine a war was just if it met three conditions: just cause, such as fighting to defend oneself or to avenge an injury; legitimate authority, such as fighting at the command of a public authority (a Roman emperor, for example); and right intention, such as fighting for a loving, altruistic purpose. Augustine saw nothing good in violence. It was usually sinful and usually to be avoided, but it could be condoned under these limited conditions. Baldric uses Augustine’s categories to make a more radical claim for Christian violence: The war that Urban proclaimed would not merely be blameless; it would be positive- ly holy. The Crusade would be righteous because it would be fought for a just cause: the defense of Eastern Christians and the recovery of formerly Christian lands. The legitimate authority is Christ himself. He is the “Commander” and “our Leader”; the crusaders would be “His army.” Those who joined him would fight with the right intention of helping their Christian brothers in the East. Baldric calls the Crusade “the only warfare that is righteous, for it is charity to risk your life for your brothers.”

Urban was at the heart of this new kind of holy war. Urban declares that Christians should be ashamed at allowing the Turks to possess the city and to pollute its holiest sites. Medieval maps located Jerusalem at the center of the world. The city was a growing source of concern to Europeans in the eleventh century. It was by far the most prestigious destination for pilgrims because of its remote location, its central role in the Last Judgment, and its links to Christ’s life, Passion, and Resurrection. By the 1060s European pilgrims were traveling there in enormous bands, sometimes reaching into the thousands. In an age that revered saints and their remains, the whole city could be described as a relic. Urban urges the Crusade in order to restore this holiest of cities to Christian control.

In the Old Testament, God promises the Holy Land to the Holy Land. Urban urges his audience to try to imagine this as a model for the new Crusade. Just as the Israelites had conquered the Holy Land by force of arms, so must the crusaders conquer it again, but now with Jesus as their leader. Just as the Israelites had fought the peoples of Canaan—Baldric specifically mentions the Amalekites, a perennial Israelite foe, and the Jebusites, who controlled Jerusalem until King David conquered it—so must the crusaders fight the Turks. The force of Baldric’s analogy is clear. Like the Israelites of old, the crusaders were part of God’s plan for humankind; their providential role would be to restore the Holy Land to (Catholic) Christianity. In this way Baldric uses Christian providential history to make sense of the seemingly miraculous success of the First Crusade.

- Guibert of Nogent

Of all the versions of Urban’s speech, Guibert’s least resembles an actual sermon that a pope might have delivered at Clermont on November 27, 1095. It is less an emotional appeal to fight the Turks than a learned attempt to define the Crusade in a theologically satisfying way. The
title he gives his history of the First Crusade—The Deeds of God Performed through the Franks—sums up the message he has Urban deliver. The Crusade is God’s work, and the crusaders are instruments of divine will. Like Baldric, Guibert dips into the Christian past to make his point. This time it is the Maccabees who show the way. Judah the Maccabee was the leader of a Jewish revolt against the Seleucid king Antiochus IV, who had outlawed Jewish religious rites in 167 BCE. After twenty-five years of war, the Maccabees liberated the Jews from Seleucid rule and rededicated their temple in Jerusalem. The crusaders, of course, lived under a new dispensation. Medieval theologians held that Christians had supplanted the Jews as God’s chosen people. As a result, the Jewish homeland for which the Maccabees fought is now, as Urban declares to the “Christian soldiers” in his audience, “your country.”

In trying to understand the Crusade as a manifestation of God’s will, Guibert looks to the future as well as the past. Urban argues that the end of the world is near and that the Antichrist will soon appear. As the name suggests, the Antichrist’s appointed role is to fight against Christians. He is supposed to take up residence on the Mount of Olives and from there launch attacks that will destroy the Christians of Egypt, Africa, and Ethiopia. For the prophecy to come true, Christians had to be living in these countries. The crusaders, then, would conquer this vast region just in time for the Antichrist to come along and destroy them. Some commentators have wondered whether promoting the Crusade as a way of winning death at the hands of the Antichrist would have been an effective recruitment technique. By assigning the crusaders this glorious but ultimately doomed role, Guibert underscores his theological concerns.

**Audience**

The four authors envision slightly different audiences for Urban’s call to the Crusade. For Fulcher the audience is
Urban II’s Call to Crusade

mainly clerical, for Robert and Guibert it is military, and for Baldric it is a mixture of the two, with each group having a distinct role to play in the coming campaign. Other evidence suggests that Urban addressed a large, primarily clerical audience at Clermont. Attending the council were at least thirteen archbishops, eighty-two bishops, and numerous abbots and other clergy. After speaking at Clermont, Urban went on a long preaching tour, spreading the message of the Crusade through much of France while avoiding areas controlled directly by King Philip I, who had been excommunicated at Clermont for adultery. Urban preached the cross at Limoges in December 1095, at Le Mans in February 1096, and at Nîmes in July 1096. He did not return to Italy until August 1096. By then crusaders were marching to the East.

Impact

Urban’s message at Clermont was revolutionary. By offering a spiritual reward to wage war, he was declaring that violence could be righteous and even a form of penance—a way of redressing sin akin to prayer or fasting. Urban’s promotion of sacred violence marked a turning point in Christian thinking about the legitimate use of force. It certainly provoked a massive response. The first wave of crusaders set out in spring 1096. Sometimes called the People’s Crusade, it consisted of some trained troops but many more poor and ill-prepared men and women under the leadership of popular preachers, such as Peter the Hermit. A second wave of crusaders departed for the East in late summer 1096. Dominat-
If the sermon itself was influential, so too were the ways in which it was recorded. The themes that Urban is made to address in the four main versions—renouncing unjust wars at home for righteous ones abroad, aiding Christian brethren in the East, and fighting out of love of God and neighbor—would appear repeatedly in later Crusade propaganda. The sermons also shaped contemporary understandings of the origins of the crusading movement. Especially influential was the idea—expressed briefly by Fulcher and developed more fully by the three French Benedictines—that the Crusade was a miraculous demonstration of God's will on earth. This notion was crucial to the emergence of a full-fledged ideology of Christian holy war.

Further Reading

■ Articles

■ Books

Questions for Further Study

1. The ostensible reason for Urban’s call to the Crusade was to liberate the holy city of Jerusalem. Did Urban have other motives? If so, what were those motives?

2. In what particular ways did Urban appeal to knights and the nobility to join the Crusade? What promises did Urban hold out to the crusaders? What rhetorical devices did he use, at least according to some of the records of his sermon?

3. The records of Urban’s sermon differ in several important ways. What are these differences? Explain the extent to which different listeners were, in effect, hearing different sermons. Further, explain how the various witnesses might have skewed their record of the pope’s speech for particular motives.

4. Why do you think so many people responded to the pope’s call for military action in a faraway land? What impulses did Urban seem to have tapped into?

5. It is said that Urban’s call to the Crusade fundamentally transformed the relationships between Christians, Muslims, and even Jews and that the effects of this transformation are still being felt in the modern world. Do you believe that this is an accurate assessment? Do you believe that it is fair to essentially blame modern problems on thousand-year-old events? Explain.


**Web Sites**


http://digicoll.library.wisc.edu/History/subcollections/HistCrusadesAbout.html.

—Michael Lower
Urban II’s Call to the Crusade according to Fulcher of Chartres

Most beloved brethren: Urged by necessity, I, Urban, by the permission of God chief bishop and prelate over the whole world, have come into these parts as an ambassador with a divine admonition to you, the servants of God. I hoped to find you as faithful and as zealous in the service of God as I had supposed you to be. But if there is in you any deformity or crookedness contrary to God’s law, with divine help I will do my best to remove it. For God has put you as stewards over his family to minister to it. Happy indeed will you be if he finds you faithful in your stewardship. You are called shepherds; see that you do not act as hirelings. But be true shepherds, with your crooks always in your hands. Do not go to sleep, but guard on all sides the flock committed to you. For if through your carelessness or negligence a wolf carries away one of your sheep, you will surely lose the reward laid up for you with God. And after you have been bitterly scourged with remorse for your faults, you will be fiercely overwhelmed in hell, the abode of death. For according to the gospel you are the salt of the earth. But if you fall short in your duty, how, it may be asked, can it be salted? O how great the need of salting! It is indeed necessary for you to correct with the salt of wisdom this foolish people which is so devoted to the pleasures of this world, lest the Lord, when He may wish to speak to them, find them putrefied by their sins, unsealed and stinking. For if He shall find worms, that is, sins, in them, because you have been negligent in your duty, He will command them as worthless to be thrown into the abyss of unclean things. And because you cannot restore to Him His great loss, He will surely condemn you and drive you from His loving presence. But the man who applies this salt should be prudent, provident, modest, learned, peaceable, watchful, pious, just, equitable, and pure. For how can the ignorant teach others? How can the licentious make others modest? How can the impure make others pure? If anyone hates peace, how can he make others peaceable? Or if anyone has soiled his hands with baseness, how can he cleanse the impurities of another? We read also that if the blind lead the blind, both will fall into the ditch. But first correct yourselves, in order that, free from blame, you may be able to correct those who are subject to you. If you wish to be the friends of God, gladly do the things which you know will please Him. You must especially let all matters that pertain to the church be controlled by the law of the church. And be careful that simony does not take root among you, lest both those who buy and those who sell [church offices] be beaten with the scourges of the Lord through narrow streets and driven into the place of destruction and confusion. Keep the church and the clergy in all its grades entirely free from the secular power. See that the tithes that belong to God are faithfully paid from all the produce of the land; let them not be sold or withheld. If anyone seizes a bishop or let him be treated as an outlaw. If anyone seizes or robs monks, or clergymen, or nuns, or their servants, or pilgrims, or merchants, let him be anathema [that is, cursed]. Let robbers and incendiaries and all their accomplices be expelled from the church and anathematized. If a man who does not give a part of his goods as alms is punished with the damnation of hell, how should he be punished who robs another of his goods? For thus it happened to the rich man in the gospel; for he was not punished because he had stolen the goods of another, but because he had not used well the things which were his.

You have seen for a long time the great disorder in the world caused by these crimes. It is so bad in some of your provinces, I am told, and you are so weak in the administration of justice, that one can hardly go along the road by day or night without being attacked by robbers; and whether at home or abroad, one is in danger of being despoiled either by force or fraud. Therefore it is necessary to reenact the truce, as it is commonly called, which was proclaimed a long time ago by our holy fathers. I exhort and demand that you, each, try hard to have the truce kept in your diocese. And if anyone shall be led by his cupidity or arrogance to break this truce, by the authority of God and with the sanction of this council he shall be anathematized.

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. Fresh-
ly 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 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 impunity, 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 race from the lands of our friends. I say this to those who are present, it is meant also for those who are absent. 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 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 God and is made glorious with the name of Christ! With what reproaches will they say this to those who are present, it is meant also for those who are absent. Moreover, Christ commands it.

Let your minds be stirred to bravery by the deeds of your forefathers, and by the efficiency and greatness of Karl the Great, and of Ludwig his son, and of the other kings who have destroyed Turkish kingdoms, and have conquered the territory of Romania. You should be moved especially by the holy grave of our Lord and Saviour which is now held by unclean peoples, and by the holy places which are treated with dishonor and irreverently besmirched with their uncleanness.

Or race of the Franks. O people who live beyond the mountains [that is, reckoned from Rome], O people loved and chosen of God, as is clear from your many deeds, distinguished over all other nations by the situation of your land, your catholic faith, and your regard for the holy church, we have a special message and exhortation for you. For we wish you to know what a grave matter has brought us to your country. The sad news has come from Jerusalem and Constantinople that the people of Persia, an accursed and foreign race, enemies of God, “a generation that set not their heart aright, and whose spirit was not steadfast with God,” have invaded the lands of those Christians and devastated them with the sword, rapine, and fire. Some of the Christians they have carried away as slaves, others they have put to death. The churches they have either destroyed or turned into mosques. They desecrate and overthrow the altars. They circumcise the Christians and pour the blood from the circumcision on the altars or in the hopitral fonts. Some they kill in a horrible way by cutting open the abdomen, taking out a part of the entrails and tying them to a stake; they then beat them and compel them to walk until all their entrails are drawn out and they fall to the ground. Some they use as targets for their arrows. They compel some to stretch out their necks and then they try to see whether they can cut off their heads with one stroke of the sword. It is better to say nothing of their horrible treatment of the women. They have taken from the Greek empire a tract of land so large that it takes more than two months to walk through it. Whose duty is it to avenge this and recover that land, if not yours? For to you more than to other nations the Lord has given the military spirit, courage, agile bodies, and the bravery to strike down those who resist you. Let your minds be stirred to bravery by the deeds of your forefathers, and by the efficiency and greatness of Karl the Great, and of Ludwig his son, and of the other kings who have destroyed Turkish kingdoms, and established Christianity in their lands. You should be moved especially by the holy grave of our Lord and Saviour which is now held by unclean peoples, and by the holy places which are treated with dishonor and irreverently besmirched with their uncleanness.

O bravest of knights, descendants of uncounted ancestors, do not be weaker than they, but remember their courage. If you are kept back by your love for your children, relatives, and wives, remember what
Urban II's Call to the Crusade according to Baldric of Dol

We have heard, most beloved brethren, and you have heard what we cannot recount without deep sorrow—how, with great hurt and dire sufferings, our Christian brothers, members in Christ, are scourged, oppressed, and injured in Jerusalem, in Antioch, and in the other cities of the East. Your one blood-brothers, your companions, your associates (for you are sons of the same Christ and the same Church) are either subjected in their inherited homes to other masters, or are driven from them, or they come as beggars among us; or, which is far worse, they are flogged or are driven from them, or they come as beggars among us; or, which is far worse, they are flogged or are driven from them, or they are subjected in their inherited homes to other masters,

Baldric of Dol

We have heard, most beloved brethren, and you have heard what we cannot recount without deep sorrow—how, with great hurt and dire sufferings, our Christian brothers, members in Christ, are scourged, oppressed, and injured in Jerusalem, in Antioch, and in the other cities of the East. Your own blood-brothers, your companions, your associates (for you are sons of the same Christ and the same Church) are either subjected in their inherited homes to other masters, or are driven from them, or they come as beggars among us; or, which is far worse, they are flogged or are driven from them, or they are subjected in their inherited homes to other masters, or lands for your name’s sake, shall receive a hundredfold and shall inherit everlasting life.” Let no possessions keep you back, no solicitude for your property. Your land is shut in on all sides by the sea and mountains, and is too thickly populated. There is not much wealth here, and the soil scarcely yields enough to support you. On this account you kill and devour each other, and carry on war and mutually destroy each other. Let your hatred and quarrels cease, your civil wars come to an end, and all your dissensions stop. Set out on the road to the holy sepulchre, take the land from that wicked people, and make it your own. That land which, as the Scripture says, is flowing with milk and honey, God gave to the children of Israel. Jerusalem is the best of all lands, more fruitful than all others, as it were a second Paradise of delights. This land our Saviour made illustrious by his birth, beautiful with his life, and sacred with his suffering; he redeemed it with his death and glorified it with his tomb. This royal city is now held captive by her enemies, and made pagan by those who know not God. God asks and longs to be liberated and does not cease to beg you to come to her aid. She asks and longs to be liberated and does not cease to beg you to come to her aid. She asks aid especially from you because, as I have said, God has given more of the military spirit to you than to other nations. Set out on this journey and you will obtain the remission of your sins and be sure of the incorruptible glory of the kingdom of heaven.

Urban II's Call to the Crusade according to Baldric of Dol

We have heard, most beloved brethren, and you have heard what we cannot recount without deep sorrow—how, with great hurt and dire sufferings, our Christian brothers, members in Christ, are scourged, oppressed, and injured in Jerusalem, in Antioch, and in the other cities of the East. Your own blood-brothers, your companions, your associates (for you are sons of the same Christ and the same Church) are either subjected in their inherited homes to other masters, or are driven from them, or they come as beggars among us; or, which is far worse, they are flogged and exiled as slaves for sale in their own land. Christian blood, redeemed by the blood of Christ, has been shed, and Christian flesh, akin to the flesh of Christ, has been subjected to unspeakable degradation and servitude. Everywhere in those cities there is sorrow, everywhere misery, everywhere groaning (I say it with a sigh). The churches in which divine mysteries were celebrated in olden times are now, to our sorrow, used as stables for the animals of these people! Holy men do not possess those cities; nay, base and baseless Turks hold sway over our brothers. The blessed Peter first presided as Bishop at Antioch; behold, in his own church the Gentiles have established their superstitions, and the Christian religion, which they ought rather to cherish, they have basely shut out from the hall dedicated to God! The estates given for the support of the saints and the patrimony of nobles set aside for the sustenance of the poor are subject to pagan tyranny, while cruel masters abuse their own blood-brothers, members in Christ, are scourged, reproach upon us who have so much deserved it! Whose heart is so stony, brethren, that it is not touched by so great a miracle? Believe me, that man is bestial and senseless whose heart such divine manifest grace does not move to faith! And yet the
Urban II's Call to Crusade

Gentiles see this in common with the Christians and are not turned from their ways! They are, indeed, afraid, but they are not converted to the faith; nor is it to be wondered at, for a blindness of mind rules over them. With what afflictions they wronged you who have returned and are now present, you yourselves know too well, you who there sacrificed your substance and your blood for God.

This, beloved brethren, we shall say, that we may have you as witness of our words. More suffering of our brethren and devastation of churches remains than we can speak of one by one, for we are oppressed by tears and groans, sighs and sobs. We weep and wail, brethren, alas, like the Psalmist, in our inmost heart! We are wretched and unhappy, and in us is that prophecy fulfilled: "God, the nations are come into thine inheritance; thy holy temple have they defiled; they have laid Jerusalem in heaps; the dead bodies of thy servants have been given to be food for the birds of the heaven, the flesh of thy saints unto the beasts of the earth. Their blood have they shed like water round about Jerusalem, and there was none to bury them." Woe unto us, brethren! We who have already become a reproach to our neighbors, a scoffing, and derision to them round about us, let us at least with tears condole and have compassion upon our brothers! We who are become the scorn of all peoples, and worse than all, let us bewail the most monstrous devastation of the Holy Land! This land we have deservedly called holy in which there is not even a foot-step that the body or spirit of the Saviour did not render glorious and blessed; which embraced the holy presence of the mother of God, and the meetings of the apostles, and drank up the blood of the martyrs shed there. How blessed are the stones which crowned you, Stephen, the first martyr! How happy, O, John the Baptist, the first who lacked neither might nor wealth with which to reward you. Short is the way, little the labor, ye who there sacrificed your substance and your blood for God.

Through the Lord, O my brethren, let us also one by one, and return victorious to your own; or empurpled with the badge of knighthood, are arrogant about with the badge of knighthood, are arrogant and vainglorious. For such a Commander you ought to fight, for Him in truth. The possessions of the enemy, too, win more execrable than the Jebusites, who are in this land, and may you deem it a beautiful thing to die for Christ in that city in which He died for us. But if it befall you to die this side of it, be sure that to have died on the way is of equal value, if Christ shall find you victorious than did the sons of Jacob of old—struggling, whether at the first or eleventh hour. You should shudder, brethren, you should shudder at raising a violent hand against Christians; it is less wicked to shudder, brethren, you should shudder at raising a violent hand against Christians; it is less wicked to shudder, brethren, you should shudder at raising a violent hand against Christians; it is less wicked to shudder, brethren, you should shudder at raising a violent hand against Christians; it is less wicked to shudder, brethren, you should shudder at raising a violent hand against Christians; it is less wicked to shudder, brethren, you should shudder at raising a violent hand against Christians; it is less wicked to shudder, brethren, you should shudder at raising a violent hand against Christians; it is less wicked to shudder, brethren, you should shudder at raising a violent hand against Christians; it is less wicked to shudder, brethren, you should shudder at raising a violent hand against Christians; it is less wicked to shudder, brethren, you should shudder at raising a violent hand against Christians; it is less wicked to shudder, brethren, you should shudder at raising a violent hand against Christians; it is less wicked to shudder, brethren, you should shudder at raising a violent hand against Christians; it is less wicked to shudder, brethren, you should shudder at raising a violent hand against Christians; it is less wicked to shudder, brethren, you should shudder at raising a violent hand against Christians; it is less wicked to shudder, brethren, you should shudder at raising a violent hand against Christians; it is less wicked to...
the alluring charms of your wives entice you from going; nor let the trials that are to be borne so deter you that you remain here.

You, brothers and fellow bishops; you, fellow priests and sharers with us in Christ, make this same announcement through the churches committed to you, and with your whole soul vigorously preach the journey to Jerusalem. When they have confessed the disgrace of their sins, do you, secure in Christ, grant them speedy pardon. Moreover, you who are to go shall have us praying for you; we shall have you fighting for God's people. It is our duty to pray, yours to fight against the Amalekites. With Moses, we shall extend unwavering hands in prayer to Heaven, while you go forth and brandish the sword, like dauntless warriors, against Amalek.

Urban II's Call to the Crusade according to Guibert of Nogent

If among the churches scattered about over the whole world some, because of persons or location, deserve reverence above others (for persons, I say, since greater privileges are accorded to apostolic sees; for places, indeed, since the same dignity which is accorded to persons is also shown to regal cities, such as Constantinople), we owe most to that church from which we received the grace of redemption and the inheritance and the holy temple of God before ever the Lord walked about in it, or was revealed, what sanctity, what reverence has it not acquired since God in His majesty was there clothed in the flesh, nourished, grew up, and in bodily form there walked about, or was carried about; and, to compress in fitting brevity all that might be told in a long series of words, since there the blood of the Son of God, more holy than heaven and earth, was poured forth, and His body, its quivering members dead, rested in the tomb. What veneration do we think it deserves? If, when the Lord was asleep were raised, and coming forth out of the tombs after His resurrection, they entered into the holy city and appeared unto many; and by the prophet Isaiah when he says, “It shall be His glorious sepulchre,” then, surely, with this sanctity placed upon it by God the Sancifier Himself, no evil that may befal it can destroy it, and in the same way glory is indissolubly fixed to His Sepulchre. Most beloved brethren, if you reverence the source of that holiness and glory, if you cherish these shrines which are the marks of His footprints on earth, if you seek (the way), God leading you, God fighting in your behalf, you should strive with your utmost efforts to cleanse the Holy City and the glory of the Sepulchre, now polluted by the concourse of the Gentiles, as much as is in their power.

If in olden times the Maccabees attained to the highest praise of party because they fought for the ceremonies and the Temple, it is also justly granted you, Christian soldiers, to defend the liberty of your country by armed endeavor. If you, likewise, consider that the abode of the holy apostles and any other saints should be striven for with such effort, why do you refuse to rescue the Cross, the Blood, the Tomb? Why do you refuse to visit them, to spend the price of your lives in rescuing them? You have thus far waged unjust wars, at one time and another; you have branched mad weapons to your mutual destruction, for no other reason than covetousness and pride, as a result of which you have deserved eternal death and sure damnation. We now hold out to you wars which contain the glorious reward of martyrdom, which will retain that title of praise now and forever.

Let us suppose, for the moment, that Christ was not dead and buried, and had never lived any length of time in Jerusalem. Surely, if all this were lacking, this fact alone ought still to arouse you to go to the aid of the land and city—the fact that “Out of Zion shall go forth the law and the word of Jehovah.” If all that there is of Christian preaching has flowed from the fountain of Jerusalem, its streams, whithersoever spread out over the whole world, encircle the hearts of the Catholic multitude, that they may consider wisely what they owe such a well-watered fountain. If rivers return to the place whence they have issued only to flow forth again, according to the saying of Solomon, it ought to seem glorious to you to be able to apply a new cleansing to this place, whence it is certain that you received the cleansing of baptism and the witness of your faith.

And you ought, furthermore, to consider with the utmost deliberation, if by your labors, God working through you, it should occur that the Mother of
churches should flourish anew to the worship of
Christianity, whether, perchance, He may not wish
other regions of the East to be restored to the faith
against the approaching time of the Antichrist. For it
is clear that Antichrist is to do battle not with the
Jews, not with the Gentiles; but, according to the
eytymology of his name, He will attack Christians.
And if Antichrist finds there no Christians (just as at
present when scarcely any dwell there), no one will
be there to oppose him, or whom he may rightly over-
come. According to Daniel and Jerome, the inter-
preter of Daniel, he is to fix his tents on the Mount
of Olives; and it is certain, for the apostle teaches it,
that he will sit at Jerusalem in the Temple of the
Lord, as though he were God. And according to the
same prophet, he will first kill three kings of Egypt,
Africa, and Ethiopia, without doubt for their Chris-
tian faith. This, indeed, could not at all be done
unless Christianity was established where now is
paganism. If, therefore, you are zealous in the prac-
tice of holy battles, in order that, just as you have
received the seed of knowledge of God from
Jerusalem, you may in the same way restore the bor-
rowed grace, so that through you the Catholic name
may be advanced to oppose the perfidy of the
Antichrist and the Antichristians—then, who can not
conjecture that God, who has exceeded the hope of
all, will consume, in the abundance of your courage
and through you as the spark, such a thicket of
paganism as to include within His law Egypt, Africa,
and Ethiopia, which have withdrawn from the com-
munion of our belief? And the man of sin, the son of
perdition, will find some to oppose him. Behold, the
Gospel cries out, “Jerusalem shall be trodden down
by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles be ful-
filled.” “Times of the Gentiles” can be understood in
two ways: Either that they have ruled over the Chris-
tians at their pleasure, and have gladly frequented
the pilgrimage across the sea! Even if they were more
wealthy, consider what taxes, what violence they
underwent, since they were forced to make payments
and tributes almost every mile, to purchase release at
every gate of the city, at the entrance of the church-
es and temples, at every side-journey from place to
place; also, if any accusation whatsoever were made
against them, they were compelled to purchase their
release; but if they refused to pay money, the prefects
of the Gentiles, according to their custom, urged
them fiercely with blows. What shall we say of those
who took up the journey without anything more than
trust in their barren poverty, since they seemed to
have nothing except their bodies to lose? They not
only demanded money of them, which is not an
unendurable punishment, but also examined the cal-
louses of their heels, cutting them open and folding
the skin back, lest, perchance, they had sewed some-
thing there. Their unspeakable cruelty was carried
on even to the point of giving them scannemony to
drink until they vomited, or even burst their bowels,
because they thought the wretches had swallowed
gold or silver; or, horrible to say, they cut their bow-

according to the apostle there must be a withdrawal
from the faith), it is first necessary, according to the
prophecy, that the Christian sway be renewed in
those regions, either through you, or others, whom it
shall please God to send before the coming of
Antichrist, so that the head of all evil, who is to occu-
pire there the throne of the kingdom, shall find some
support of the faith to fight against him.

Consider, therefore, that the Almighty has provid-
ed you, perhaps, for this purpose, that through you
He may restore Jerusalem from such desolation.
Ponder, I beg you, how full of joy and delight our
hearts will be when we shall see the Holy City
restored with your little help, and the prophet’s, say
divine, words fulfilled in our times. Let your memory
be moved by what the Lord Himself says to the
Church: “I will bring thy seed from the East and gath-
er thee from the West.” God has already brought our
seed from the East, since in a double way that region
of the East has given the first beginnings of the
Church to us. But from the West He will also gather
it, provided He repairs the wrongs of Jerusalem
through those who have begun the witness of the
final faith, that is the people of the West. With God’s
assistance, we think this can be done through you.

If neither the words of the Scriptures arouse you,
nor our admonitions penetrate your minds, at least
let the great suffering of those who desired to go to
the holy places stir you up. Think of those who made
the pilgrimage across the sea! Even if they were more
wealthy, consider what taxes, what violence they
underwent, since they were forced to make payments
and tributes almost every mile, to purchase release at
every gate of the city, at the entrance of the church-
es and temples, at every side-journey from place to
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Urban II’s Call to Crusade
els open with a sword and, spreading out the folds of the intestines, with frightful mutilation disclosed whatever nature held there in secret. Remember, I pray, the thousands who have perished vile deaths, and strive for the holy places from which the beginnings of your faith have come. Before you engage in His battles, believe without question that Christ will be your standard-bearer and inseparable fore-runner.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Glossary</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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<tr>
<td>Amalekites</td>
<td>a nomadic tribe who attacked the Hebrews in the desert during the flight from Egypt</td>
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<tr>
<td>blessed Peter</td>
<td>the apostle Peter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“a generation that set not their heart aright, ...”</td>
<td>as in Psalms 78:9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gentiles</td>
<td>in this context, persons neither Christian nor Jewish</td>
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<tr>
<td>God pays with the same shilling,...</td>
<td>an allusion to a parable of Jesus (Matthew 20:1–16)</td>
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<tr>
<td>“God, the nations are come...”</td>
<td>Psalm 79:1–3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jebusites</td>
<td>Canaanite tribe conquered by King David, who renamed their city Jerusalem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jerome</td>
<td>the prophet Jeremiah, an exponent of the prophet Daniel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karl the Great</td>
<td>Charlemagne</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lord Himself says to the Church</td>
<td>through the prophet Isaiah, the source of the following quotation (Isaiah 43:5)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ludwig</td>
<td>Louis I</td>
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<tr>
<td>Maccabees</td>
<td>the family of Jewish warriors who resisted the authority over their people of the kings of Syria in the second century BCE</td>
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<td>“Out of Zion shall go forth...”</td>
<td>Prophecy in Isaiah 2:3</td>
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<td>rich man in the gospel</td>
<td>as in a parable of Jesus (Luke 16:19–31)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sabaoth</td>
<td>in this context, the Lord’s armed hosts</td>
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<tr>
<td>…there must be a withdrawal from the faith</td>
<td>Guibert’s interpretation of II Thessalonians 2:11–12</td>
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"Out of Zion shall go forth..." from Isaiah 2:3 was a prophecy that spoke of a Messianic leader who would come from Jerusalem and lead the people back to their homeland. The reference to the rich man in the gospel is a parable of Jesus, which illustrates the contrast between the wealthy and the poor. The term Sabaoth, in this context, refers to the Lord’s armed hosts, a testament to the power and authority of the Messiah, who was also known as the Messiah or Jesus. The reference to a withdrawal from the faith is a direct appeal to the faithful to remain steadfast in their beliefs and to continue to strive for the holy places where their faith originated.