A Synopsis of the Crusades in Today's World

Posted on March 26, 2018

View this essay online:
https://academic-master.com/a-synopsis-of-the-crusades-in-todays-world/

Crusades were a series of European expeditions to Palestine and adjacent territories. The attitude to this phenomenon is now ambiguous—from the pulsating anal pains of Muslims to the pink snot of remorse among tolerant Europeans—and all this is abundantly flavored with satisfying burdens among historians and masters. The essence of the myth about the holy wars, they say, was the unjustified aggression of knights against cultured and enlightened Arabs. In such a sorrowful issue as the Crusades, finding the true reasons and premises is hardly easier than finding a virgin in a brothel. However, if you reject theories of conspirators, religious fanatics, and Nazis, you can sort things out.

Religious Expansion and the External Threat to Europe

Most often, people talk about the external reason: the Arabs, inspired by the sermons of Muhammad, since the 7th century led such a powerful expansion that it threatened not only Byzantium but also France, with which, during its greatest successes, the Arab Caliphate had a common border over the Pyrenees (in Spain, Arabs would remain until the middle of the XV century). This forced everyone to act: the RCC feared losing its flock and a serious source of funding; kings could lose their lands; the ladies of the world were disheartened by the very thought of fate in the harem and polygamy; and the gray mass was afraid that they were about to be conquered and forced to pay a tax for the right to profess Christianity, or even be circumcised altogether (Ibn al-Athir, 201-205).

Economic Pressure and the Mediterranean

But the external threat to Christian Europe in the form of an alien religion and worldview was far from everything. The Arabs controlled Cyprus, Crete, and Sicily, along with the entire Mediterranean Sea from the 8th to the 12th centuries, preventing Europeans from navigating and stalling the economy of the former Roman lands, thus hampering the development of the entire Christian world. But there were also internal reasons for the campaigns…

Religious Promises and Internal Motives

From now on, all who go there will, in the case of their death, receive forgiveness of sins. The land

you inhabit has become too small for your multitude; wealth is not plentiful and hardly gives bread to those who cultivate it. From here comes the fact that you are devouring and biting each other. Let those who used to be robbers fight today against their brothers and fellow tribesmen. The angel from the engraving by Doré tells the Crusaders: “Our cause is right, the enemy will be defeated, and the victory will be ours!”

Pope Urban II and the Call to Jerusalem

The indignant Pope of Rome, having collected heaps of nobility and simple cattle in the year of the Lord 1095, delivered a fiery speech about the need for help for fellow Christians, though they were Orthodox. Having added to this that the infidels were completely insolent and prevented Christians from visiting holy Jerusalem, and that it would be nice to get rid of the pagans too, the pontiff received a stormy ovation (Hunt, 201-205).

The speech of Urban II turned out to be so incendiary and had such success that all those present immediately swore to win the Holy Land and carry the Word of God to the unfaithful, and not to steal and kill with impunity, as one might think. They sewed red crosses on their clothes as a token of their vow. Thus, in fact, they became the Crusaders.

In the Middle Ages, Europe was very devout, and the subject of all kinds of indulgences was highly valued. Therefore, there were so many people wishing to get to Paradise for free while also robbing and raping infidels along the way that priests were able for several centuries to recruit armies of thieves and whores for righteous deeds, of course (Hunt).

The People’s Crusade and Anti-Jewish Violence

The first attempt came out, as usual, lumpy. To begin with, after the feast of the Assumption of the Virgin, the Christian army descended on the Jews of the Rhine towns (Trier, Speyer, and Worms). The massacre was so cruel that the Jews preferred to kill their children and themselves so as not to fall into the hands of the Crusaders. Although the Rhine was not on the way to Jerusalem, the violence was carried out in the towns of Mainz, Cologne, and Bamberg no less diligently. Strictly speaking, it is this case that is considered the first mass anti-Semitic action in Europe. Moving east along the southern German and Austrian lands (Bavaria, Carinthia), the Crusaders at the same time killed the “infidels”—that is, all who seemed to them non-Christians (Hunt, 201-205).

Looting, Defeat, and the Collapse of the Campaign

Unlike the Germans, the Czechs did not endure looting: Prince Bretislav I defeated Count Emicho of Leiningen. However, after revenge for a fellow in Christ, the pious Gottschalk ruined the south of the Czech Republic and Hungary. Provisions for all were not enough, so violence on religious grounds

grew into open robbery of the local population; robbers and monastic monsters were actively pouring into the ranks of the “crusaders.” Although the army numbered 50-60 thousand, only 30 thousand reached Asia Minor, after which the Seljuk Turks defeated them.

Works Cited

Hunt, Lynn, et al. 2013. *The Making of the West: Peoples and Cultures: A Concise History. Boston*: Bedford/St. Martin’s.

Ibn al-Athir. 2012. “A Muslim Perspective.” *In Sources of Making of the West: Peoples and Cultures*, Vol. 1, edited by Katherine J. Lualdi, 201-205. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin’s.