

THE CHRISTIAN RECONQUEST OF THE HOLY LAND

MARTÍN ALVIRA
UNIVERSIDAD COMPLUTENSE DE MADRID
SPAIN

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ABSTRACT

The importance of Jerusalem and the Holy Land to Western medieval Christians, the cradle and homeland of their religion, being well known, this work proposes to examine sources from the time of the Crusades (papal documents, sermons and preaching, chronicles and histories), searching them for the idea of Christian reconquest of the Holy Land and, if possible, use of the word “reconquest” as a literal reflection of a desire to reconquer the Christian territories of the East from the Muslims.

KEYWORDS

Crusades, Reconquest, Crusade ideology, Crusade sources, Historiography.

CAPITALIA VERBA

Cruciatae, Restauratio Hispanica, Ideologia Cruciarum, Fontes Cruciarum, Historiographia.

1. 'If I forget you, Jerusalem, may my right hand wither!'

This old psalm, so often recited (136:5), is among the quotes of the French preacher and historian James of Vitry (d. 1240) in a sermon addressed to the Crusaders poised to participate in the Fifth Crusade (1217 -1221). The man who would later be Bishop of Acre reminded them that “those who are true sons consider their father’s fatherland their own fatherland and are drawn by love to see the city where the Lord has worked our salvation¹.” It is well known that the Holy Places’ identification as *umbilicus terre*, also mentioned by Vitry,² was reflected iconographically on Early Medieval European world maps (see Illustration 1).

In addition to regarding it as the center of the world, the cradle and homeland of their religion, the Christians were conscious of and remembered Palestine and Egypt’s Roman past. The West commemorated the recovery of Jerusalem and the venerated relic of the True Cross by Emperor Heraclius after its loss to the Sassanid Persians.³ In fact, when they went to the Middle East and dominated the Holy Land, the Westerners envisioned the *basileus* of Constantinople as “the first the Crusaders.”⁴ This explains why Heraclius’s feat, even turned into a popular novel, was considered by Archbishop William of Tyre, in his well-known *Ierosolimitan History* (c. 1184), a precedent of the Crusades.⁵ Indeed, the 7th-century Byzantine emperor would end up appearing in the title of the work’s French translation: *Estoire de Eracles, empereur, et la conqueste de la terre d’Outremer*.⁶

Concern with the situation in Jerusalem and the Holy Places was real in the West as early as Charlemagne’s time. As the 11th century approached, it seemed to swell, fueled by news such as that of the destruction of the Holy Sepulcher, in 1009.⁷

1. James of Vitry. *Sermo I (ad cruce signatos)*, ed. and trans. Christoph T. Maier. *Crusade Propaganda and Ideology. Model Sermons for the Preaching of the Cross*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000: 82-99, specially 88 (doc. No. 8). Unless otherwise specified, the translations are our own.

2. *Brevis Ordinacio de Predicacione Sancte Crucis*, ed. and trans. Christoph T. Maier. “*Brevis Ordinacio de Predicacione Sancte Crucis*: Edition, Translation and Commentary”. *Crusades*, 18 (2019): 25-65, specially 44; James of Vitry. *Historia Orientalis*, ed. and trans. Jean Donnadieu. Turnhout: Brepols, 2008: chapter 55.

3. Tongeren, Louis van. *Exaltation of the Cross. Toward the Origins of the Feast of the Cross and the Meaning of the Cross in Early Medieval Liturgy*. Leuven: Peeters, 2000: 41-77.

4. Runciman, Steven. *Historia de las Cruzadas*. Madrid: Alianza, 2008: 26-27.

5. William of Tyre. *Historia Ierosolimitana*, ed. Robert B.C. Huygens, *Willelmus Tyrensis archiepiscopus, “Chronicon”*, 2 v. Turnhout: Brepols, 1986: II, book I, chapter 1-2. The novel is *Eracle*, from the trouvère Gautier d’Arras (c. 1154).

6. *Recueil des Historiens des Croisades. Historiens Occidentaux*, 5 vols. Paris: Imprimerie Royale/Nationale, 1844-1895: II (1859), 1-481. On the myth of Heraclius as a Crusader, see: Sommerlechner, Andrea. “Kaiser Herakleios und die Rückkehr des heiligen Kreuzes nach Jerusalem”. *Römische Historische Mitteilungen*, 45 (2003): 319-360; Serrano, Joaquín. “El emperador Heraclio (610-641) entre la historia y la leyenda: un estado de la cuestión”. *Intus-Legere Historia*, 12/1 (2018): 87-113.

7. Pratsch, Thomas. *Konflikt und Bewältigung: die Zerstörung der Grabeskirche zu Jerusalem im Jahre 1009*. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2011.



Several well-known texts allow us to trace back the desire to recover the Holy Land for Christendom to long before the start of the First Crusade.⁸

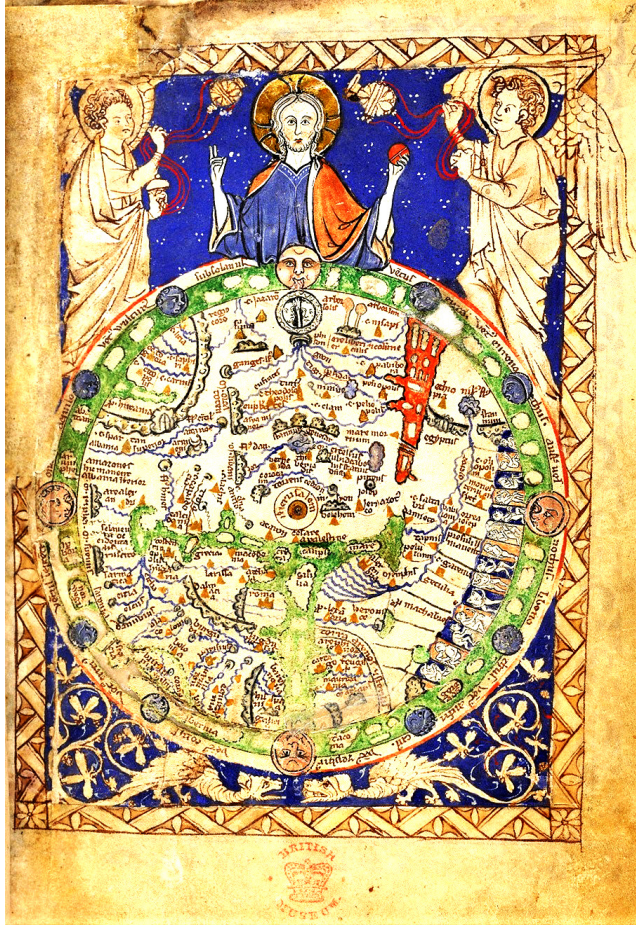


ILLUSTRATION 1. JERUSALEM AS THE NAVAL OF THE WORLD. PSALTER (“THE MAP SALTER”), ENGLAND, C. 1265. BRITISH LIBRARY, ADD MS 28681, F. 9R. © THE BRITISH LIBRARY.

8. Flori, Jean. *Guerra santa, yihad, cruzada. Violencia y religión en el cristianismo y el Islam*. Granada: Universidad de Granada-Universitat de València, 2004: 264-269 (docs. No. 26-28); Flori, Jean. *Prêcher la croisade XI^e-XIII^e. Communication et propagande*. Paris: Perrin, 2012: 41-50.



2. Freeing Jerusalem

Although some specialists have characterized the First Crusade as, above all, a great penitential pilgrimage, others have articulated strong arguments contending that it should also be understood as part of a general movement to reconquer formerly Christian territories on the Iberian Peninsula and in southern Italy. In the case of the Holy Land, its “reconquest”, in a salvific war, would make possible the rescuing of the suffering Eastern churches, revenge for Christ’s wicked mistreatment, and the liberation of His heritage.⁹

Examining the language in the sources, the letters of Pope Urban II mention the liberation of the Eastern Churches, of the Church as a whole, and of Christendom, as well as the restoration of freedom to Christians.¹⁰ A letter from the Crusaders in 1098 alludes to the liberation of the “Sepulcher of the Lord.”¹¹ The chroniclers who narrated the famous sermon of the Council of Clermont speak of helping the Christians by expelling the Saracens “from the lands inhabited by our brothers”¹²; rescuing (*auferte*) “that land (...) given by God into the possession of the children of Israel”¹³; expelling (*expugnaturi*) “the pagans who had occupied (*occupaverant*) the city [of Jerusalem] and all the Christian territory up to Constantinople”¹⁴; and reestablishing (*fiat*) Christianity “where now is paganism.”¹⁵

9. Flori, Jean. “Réforme, reconquête, croisade. L’idée de reconquête dans la correspondance pontificale d’Alexandre II à Urbain II”. *Cahiers de civilisation médiévale*, 40 (1997): 317-335; Flori, Jean. *Guerra santa...: 239-250*; Asbridge, Thomas S. *The First Crusade: A New History*. London: Free Press, 2005: 2, 33, 85; Tyerman, Christopher. *Las guerras de Dios. Una nueva historia de las Cruzadas*. Barcelona: Crítica, 2007: 79, 84-99; Flori, Jean. *Prêcher...: 57-97*, specially 61; Ayala, Carlos de. “Guerra santa peninsular y cruzada de Ultramar. Diferencias y similitudes”, *Reconquista y guerra santa en la España medieval. Ayer y hoy*, Carlos de Ayala, José Santiago Palacios, eds. Madrid: La Ergástula, 2021: 111-132, specially 112.

10. Letter from Urban II to the Flemish (12.1095), *Epistulae et chartae ad historiam primi belli sacri spectantes. Die Kreuzzugsbriefe aus den Jahren 1088-1100*, ed. Heinrich Hagenmeyer. Innsbruck: Verlag der Wagner’schen Universitäts-Buchhandlung, 1901: 136-137 (doc. No. 2: *liberationem*); Letter from Urban II to those in Bologna (19.09.1096), *Epistulae...: 137-138* (doc. No. 3: *liberatione*); Letter from Urban II to the monks of Vallombrosa (Cremona, 7.10.1096), ed. Wilhelm Wiederhold, “Papsturkunden in Florenz”, *Nachrichten von der Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen. Philologisch-Historische Klasse*, 3 (1901): 306-325 (doc. No. 6: *liberande... christianorum possint libertati pristinae restituere*). On the pope, see: Becker, Alfons. *Papst Urban II. (1088-1099)*, 3 v. Stuttgart: A. Hiersemann, 1964-2012.

11. Letter from Bohemond of Antioch, Raymond IV, Godfrey the Bearded, Robert I, Duke of Normandy, Robert II, Count of Flanders, and Eustace III, Count of Boulogne, to Pope Urban II (Antioch, 11.09.1098), *Epistulae...: 161-165*, specially 164-165 (doc. No. 16: *Sepulcrum Domini liberum*); *Letters from the East. Crusaders, Pilgrims and Settlers in the 12th-13th Centuries*, trans. Malcolm Barber, Keith Bate. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2013: 30-33 (doc. No. 8).

12. Fulcher of Chartres. *Historia Hierosolymitana*, ed. Heinrich Hagenmeyer. Heidelberg: C. Winters, 1913: book I, chapter 3.

13. Robert the Monk. “Historia Iherosolimitana », *Recueil des Historiens des Croisades... III* (1866), 721-882, book I, chapter 1.

14. *Fragmentum Historiae Andegavensis*, eds. Louis Halphen, René Poupardin. *Chroniques des comtes d’Anjou et des seigneurs d’Amboise*. Paris: A. Picard, 1913: 232-238, specially 238.

15. Guibert of Nogent. *Historia quae dicitur Gesta Dei per Francos*, ed. Robert B.C. Huygens. Turnhout: Brepols, 1996: book II, chapter 4.



That this *théologie de la libération* (Jean Flori) was shared in the West and taken to the East seems clear when we find it in sources hostile to the Crusaders. The Byzantine princess Anna Comnena, in her famous *Alexiada*, quotes Peter the Hermit as speaking of a desire “to deliver Jerusalem from the hand of the Hagarenes”, and states that it was Westerners’ intention “to redeem the Holy Sepulcher”, aspiring to “the liberation of Jerusalem.”¹⁶ While it is true that the word “reconquest” does not appear, per se, in these Latin and Greek accounts from the 11th century, there is no doubt that the terms used allude to this concept.

3. Rescuing Christ’s Heritage

The fall of the county of Edessa to the Muslims (1144) triggered the launch of a second great Crusade expedition. Pope Eugene III evokes, in his encyclical endorsing the effort, “how greatly our predecessors the Roman pontiffs have worked for the liberation of the Eastern Church.” He later recalls Urban II’s triumph in mustering a great army of crusaders who, “by divine aid, freed from the filth of the pagans that city in which it was Our Savior’s will to suffer for us and where he left us his glorious Sepulcher as a memorial of his passion”. Assuming the reconquest of the Holy Land as a thing of the past, the pope now encouraged the crusaders “to defend the Oriental Church -freed from their tyranny by so great an outpouring of the blood of your fathers”¹⁷.

The renowned Abbot of Cluny Peter the Venerable expressed the sense of dispossession felt in the West in a letter written circa 1146 to the Abbot Bernard of Clairvaux: *Quem non moveat, ne forte terra illa sancta, a iuice impiorum tantis Patrum laboribus, both Christicolorum sanguine, non multum temporis eruta, rursus impiis et blasphemis subdatur?*¹⁸ And Saint Bernard himself, who personally preached in favor of the Second Crusade, encouraged the German Crusaders by reminding them that the Holy Land was that of God, in which he had lived and worked his miracles (*terram suam. Suam, in qua visus est*).¹⁹

After the failure of the expedition, mounting Islamic pressure in the second half of the 12th century resulted in appeals for help, featuring the argument of the need for liberation. The letter from the Patriarch of Jerusalem Amalric of Nesle to the prelates, princes and churches of the West (1165-1166) encouraged

16. Anna Comnena. *La Alexiada*, trans. Emilio Díaz. Barcelona: Ático de los Libros, 2016: book 5.5 and 6.7, and book XIII, chapter 12.1; Flori, Jean. “Réforme”...: 331.

17. *pro liberatione...* (...) *ab eorum tyrannide liberatam*, Eugene III, “Quantum predaecessores” (1.12.1145), *Patrologiae Latinae*, ed. Jacques Paul Migne, 221voldt. Paris: Garnier-J.P. Migne, 1844-1865: CLXXX (1855), 1.064-1.066, specially 1.064-1.065.

18. *Patrologiae Latinae...* CLXXX (1855), 1.064-1.066, specially 1.064-1.065. *Patrologiae Latinae...* CLXXX (1855), 189 (1854), book VI, ep. 18, col. 425-426, specially 425.

19. Otto of Freising. “Gesta Friderici Imperatoris”, *Monumenta Germaniae Historia. Scriptores*, ed. G.H. Pertz *et alii*, 32 v. Hannover: Weidman, 1826-1934: XX (1868), book I, chapter 43; and Flori, Jean. *Prêcher...*: 105-127.



them “to free (*liberandam*) your mother before the evil servants come to threaten her destruction.”²⁰ Shortly thereafter, in 1169, Pope Alexander III endeavored unsuccessfully to organize a new Crusade to prevent the disappearance of Christian worship in the Holy Land, reporting that, despite pressure from the Saracens, some courageous Christians had “returned (*revocarunt*) the land to the faith of Christ.”²¹

Shortly before the situation of Outremer definitively worsened, the aforementioned William of Tyre finished composing his *History* (c. 1184), a work of particular importance because it was penned by a Frankish prelate born in Jerusalem, a descendant of the Crusaders who had conquered it in 1099. He does not use the words “reconquest” or “reconquer” either, or even *recuperare* or *restaurare*. The idea, however, is still present in his thought, detectable in the use of verbs such as *vindicare*, *liberare* and *restituere*. After recalling the history of the Emperor Heraclius, the archbishop states that Jerusalem, in retribution for the Christians’ sins, “was subjected to the domination of the infidels, [and] suffered the yoke of unjust servitude for 490 years”, a numerical quantification of the past that we know well from the documents of Hispanic ecclesiastical restorations.²² The conquests of the battered cities of Antioch and Jerusalem by Western Christians were a “restitution of the old Christian freedom” and a “liberation.”²³ As in Hispanic cities, the bishops and clergy had their former dignity restored in the churches of the East,²⁴ while in William of Tyre the coherence of this discourse is accentuated by his introduction of pontifical letters employing the same language.²⁵ The conquests

20. *Cartulaire général de l'Ordre des Hospitaliers de Saint-Jean de Jérusalem 1100-1310*, ed. Joseph Delaville Le Roulx, 4 v. Paris: E. Leroux, 1894-1906: I (1894), 279-280 (doc. No. 404); *Letters...*: 68-69 (doc. No. 34).

21. *Patrologiae Latinae...* CC (1855), col. 599-601, specially 599-600; and Flori, Jean. *Prêcher...*: 140-144.

22. *Sic igitur civitate Deo amabili et sacrosancta, peccatis nostris exigentibus, infidelium subjecta hostium ditioni, jugum indebitae servitutis continuus passa est laboribus per annos quadringentos nonaginta*, William of Tyre. *Historia...*: book I, chapter 3.

23. William of Tyre. *Historia...*: Prologue (*liberationem*), book I, chapter 6 (*ante urbis liberationem annis LI*), chapter 24 (*Antiochena urbe devicta et Christianae restituta fidei et pristinae libertati*), book VI, chapter 13 (*ab urbis liberatione*), chapter 14 (*urbem sanctam, et gloriosum ejus sepulcrum Christianae fidei et pristinae restituerent libertati*), book VIII, chapter 13 (*aut urbem Christianae restituere libertati*), chapter 24 (*praedicta Deo amabilis civitas, et fidei Christianae et pristinae est restituta libertati*), book IX, chapter 1 (*Sancta igitur civitate per Domini superabundantem gratiam Christiano populo restituta*), chapter 10 (*fidei restituta*), chapter 18 (*urbis liberationem*), book XI, chapter 2 (*urbe sancta restituta libertati*), chapter 12 (*a spurcitia praedicta liberavit*), book XIV, chapter 11 (*post urbis liberationem*), chapter 14 (*urbe Tyrensi per Domini misericordiam liberata*), chapter 24 (*antequam Antiochia... Christianae libertati restitutae sunt*), book XVII, chapter 7 (*ut cultui restitueretur Christiano*), chapter 20 (*sancta civitas, antequam a Christianis liberaretur, dicitur fuisse haereditas*), book XVIII, chapter 3 (*urbe Ascalonitana divino favore Christianis restituta*), chapter 5 (*postquam civitas restituta est fidei Christianae*), book XXI, chapter 5 (*regnum orientale Christi servitio restitutum est*).

24. William of Tyre. *Historia...*: book VI, chapter 23 (*in pristinum decorem reformare basilicas, et in eis clerum restituere... in eis clerum restitueretur et pristina reformaretur dignitas... per urbes finitimas, quae cathedralem consueverant habere dignitatem, constituentes episcopos*).

25. Letter of Paschal II to Ghibbelin, Patriarch of Jerusalem (1111): *Asianarum siquidem ecclesiarum fines antiquis Fuerunt definitionibus distributi; quas distributiones, diversarum diversae fidei gentium confuditirruptio. Gratias autem Deo, quod nostris temporibus, et Antiochiae et Hierosolymae civitates cum suburbanis suis et adjacentibus provinciis, in Christianorum principum redactae sunt potestate. (...) Turcorum seu Sarracenorum jugo libera in Christianorum manu abundantius exaltetur* (William of Tyre. *Historia...*: book XI, chapter 28); Letter from Paschal II to Bernard, Patriarch of Antioch (8.08.1112): *Gratias autem Deo quod temporibus*



after the “liberation” of the holy city in 1099 follow the same interpretative pattern (*Capta est... civitas, et nomini restituta Christiano*).²⁶

4. Recovering Jerusalem

The fall of Jerusalem to Saladin (1187) meant a historical and rhetorical return to the situation prior to the First Crusade. The letters then sent by the patriarchs of Jerusalem and Antioch to the princes of the West and to King Henry II of England clamored for the Holy Places’ liberation.²⁷ Theologian Alain de Lille emphasized these sites’ significance to Christian heritage, exhorting the Crusaders to *liberate terram nostre hereditatis Christi hereditatem, Virginis dotem*.²⁸

The loss of most of Outremer explains the more frequent references in these years to the notion of “recovery”. Patriarch Heraclius had already promised spiritual benefits to Westerners who would contribute *ad recuperandam terram Ierosolimitanam, in qua dominus noster Iesus Christus salutem nostram operatus est*.²⁹ The Genoese, alarmed by the news from the East, wrote to Pope Urban III, informing him of the need to “recover the holy places and that most holy land, on which the feet of the Lord walked, where the sites of our redemption and of the sacraments of the Christian faith radiate.”³⁰ “Recovery” was also the term used by Pope Gregory VIII in the bull proclaiming the Third Crusade, which begins by quoting Psalm 79: 1-2 to dramatically describe the invasion of God’s heritage and the desecration of his temple.³¹

The Third Crusade had that clear objective. After two years of siege, the kings of France and England *recuperaverunt* the city of Saint Jean d’Acre, in the words of the Cistercian Alberic of Trois-Fontaines.³² Closer to the actual events, King Richard the Lionheart expressed it literally when reporting on the military operations in early

nostris Christianorum principatum in Antiochena civitate restituit (William of Tyre. *Historia...*: book XI, chapter 28); Letter from Pope Innocent II to Patriarch William of Jerusalem (1138): *cum Romana Ecclesia pro liberatione orientalis Ecclesiae tantopere laboraverit* (book XIV, chapter 11).

26. Referring to the conquest of Tyre in 1124, William of Tyre. *Historia...*: book XIII, chapter 11.

27. Jaspert, Nikolas. “Zwei unbekannte Hilfsersuchen des Patriarchen Eraclius vor dem Fall Jerusalems (1187)”. *Deutsches Archiv für Erforschung des Mittelalters*, 60 (2004): 483-516, specially 515 (doc. No. 2); and Flori, Jean. *Prêcher...*: 146-152; Roger de Hoveden. *Chronica*, ed. William Stubbs, 4 v. London: Longman, 1868-1871: II (1869), 340-342, specially 341.

28. Alain de Lille, *Sermo de cruce Domini* (14.09.1189), ed. Marie Thérèse Alverny. *Alain de Lille: textes inédits*. Paris: J. Vrin, 1965: 281; and Flori, Jean. *Prêcher...*: 171-173.

29. Jaspert, Nikolas. “Zwei”...: 508-511, specially 509 (doc. No. 1).

30. *ad recuperanda sancta sanctorum, et ad recuperandam terram illam beatissimam ubi steterunt pedes Domini, ubi radiant officinae redemptionis nostrae et Christianae fidei sacramenta, cor in humerum date, Gesta Regis Henrici Secundi Benedicti Abbatis*, ed. William Stubbs, 2 v. London: Longman, 1867: II, 11-13, specially 12.

31. *laborantes ad recuperationem terrae illius, Patrologiae Latinae...* CCCI (1855), col. 1.539-1.542, specially 1.539 and 1.541; and Flori, Jean. *Prêcher...*: 153-178.

32. Alberic of Trois-Fontaines. “Chronicon”, *Monumenta Germaniae Historia. Scriptores (in folio)*, ed. Georg Heinrich Pertz, Hannover: Impensis Bibliopolii Avlici, 1874: XXIII, 631-950, specially 910.



October 1191: *infra viginti dies post Natale Domini speramus recuperare sanctam civitatem Jerusalem, et sepulcrum Domini*. In another letter of the same date, he reminded the Abbot of Clairvaux of the misfortune that occurred when “the King of Heaven had lost His land where His feet had stood”, informing him that “the inheritance of the Lord is already partly recovered (*recuperata*)”, and that he hoped to be able to, shortly, “serve of Him by restoring (*recuperabitur*) His inheritance to Himself”.³³ Years later it would be said that King Richard, after learning that he was near Jerusalem, took off his cloak and, in tears, before his troops, implored: “Dear Lord God, I beg you not to let me see your holy city, since I cannot deliver it (*delivrer*) from the hands of your enemies!”³⁴ At the end of the Third Crusade, which proved a failure, the Master of the Hospital had to acknowledge that “since the loss of the land the inheritance of Christ cannot easily be regained (*recuperari*)”.³⁵

5. Reconquering Jerusalem

The sensations at the end of the 12th century were of sadness and regret over the loss of the Holy Places. The humiliation suffered by a Christ expelled from his land is evident in the texts of the popes Celestine III and Innocent III, the promoter of the failed Fourth Crusade (1199-1204).³⁶ It is the type of language that we also see in the Crusade sermon of the Cistercian Abbot Martin of Pairis (1201), one of the preachers of and participants in the expedition that ended in Constantinople:

*Expulsus est Christus de loco sancto suo, de sede sua, dejectus est de illa civitate quam ipse sibi proprio sanguine dedicavit. Proh dolor! (...) Terra Sancta, quam Christus suis calcavit vestigiis, in qua infirmos curavit, caecos illuminavit, leprosos mundavit, mortuos suscitavit; terra, inquam, illa, in manu impiorum dara est. Subverse sunt ecclesiae, pollutum sanctuarium, regni sedes et dignitas translata est ad gentes. (...) Vobis hodie causam Christi committo, vobis ipsum, ut ita loquar, in manus trado, ut eum in haereditatem suam, de qua crudeliter ejectus est, restituere studeatis*³⁷.

This is the context in which the expression “reconquer Jerusalem” first appears. It is not Latin, but rather in French, the vernacular from which it, possibly, passed into other languages. We find it in one of the main accounts of the Fourth Crusade, penned

33. Roger of Hoveden. *Chronica...* III, 129-130, specially 130, and 130-133, specially 132 and 133; *Letters...* 91 (doc. No. 51); Peter Edbury. *The Conquest of Jerusalem and the Third Crusade. Sources in Translation*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 1998: 179-181 (doc. No. 7c).

34. John of Joinville. *Vie de saint Louis*, ed. and French transl. Jacques Monfrin. Paris: Classiques Garnier, 1995: § 556. See *below*.

35. Letter to the preceptor of the Hospital in Outremer (04.1193), *Cartulaire...* I, 597-598, specially 598 (doc. No. 945); *Letters...* 93 (doc. No. 53).

36. Flori, Jean. *Prêcher...* 179-191.

37. Gunther of Pairis. “Hystoria Constantinopolitana”, *Patrologiae Latinae...* CCXII (1865), col. 223-256, specially 227 (doc. No. 3); and Flori, Jean. *Prêcher...* 196-200.



by the crusader and chronicler Geoffrey of Villehardouin, from Champagne. With the organization of the campaign in full swing, the emissaries of the French counts (the author himself was on behalf of Theobald III of Champagne) requested help from the Doge of Venice with these words: “*Sire, nous sommes a toi venuz de par les barons de France qui ont pris le signe de la croiz pour la mort Jhesuchrist venchier et pour Jherusalem reconquerre, Dieux le veult souffrir.*”³⁸ One might suppose that the verb “reconquer” appeared in written sources after the loss of Jerusalem in 1187 to express the idea that Christians wanted to re-conquer something they had already conquered in the 11th century. This is a possibility. The other is that its appearance at the beginning of the 13th century was a result of the evolution of vernacular languages - in this case, French - and the maturation of historical literature in Romance; the vernacular word could have existed, as such, long before, and the idea of reconquest, in either of the cases, may have already been expressed through the Latin formulas that we have been citing.³⁹

In these years of the early 13th century the reconquest of the Holy Land was approached using feudal arguments and historical reasons. Christ was a king who had lost his kingdom, and Christians, as his vassals, had to, in the words of Pope Innocent III, “regain his land for him.”⁴⁰ In the bull *Quia maior* (April 1213), the starting point of the Fifth Crusade and an essential document in the institutional evolution of the crusade, the Pope invoked a justification that is directly related to the concept of reconquest: *Et quidem omnes pene Saracenorum provincias usque post tempora beati Gregorii Christiani populi possederunt; sed ex tunc quidam perditionis filius, Machometus pseudopropheta, surrexit, qui per secular illecebras et voluptates carnales multos a veritate seduxit...*⁴¹ The former domination of later Muslim lands justified the historical rights of Christians.

We should not overlook the popular perspective of the Crusade movement, manifested during these years in the “Children’s Crusade” (1212), whose participants mobilized, according to testimonies from the time, out of the same desire to “go to

38. Geoffrey of Villehardouin. *Conquête de Constantinople par les François*, ed. and French transl. Jean Dufournet. Paris: Flammarion, 2004, § 18.

39. We find the verb (*reconquist, reconquisent*) in the *Chronique de Ernoul* (late 12th century) applied to the conquests of the king of Jerusalem Amalric I in Egypt in 1167, and to the recovery of Christian lands by Western and Byzantine powers that had previously lost them (ed. Louis de Mas-Latrie, *Chronique d’Ernoul et de Bernard le Trésorier*. Paris: Société de l’histoire de France, 1871: 24, 330, 393 and 467).

40. *Die Register Innocenz’ III. Band 11: Pontifikatsjahr, 1208/1209. Texte und Indices*, ed. Othmar Hageneder, Andrea Sommerlechner, Christoph Egger, Rainer Murauder, Reinhard Selinger and Herwig Weigl. Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2010: 296-299 (doc. No. 180/185: 10.12.1208); and Flori, Jean. *Prêcher...*: 204-206.

41. Innocent III, “*Quia maior*” (04.1213), *Patrologiae Latinae...* CCXVI (1855), 817-822, specially 818; Bird, Jessalyn, Peters, Edward, and Powell, James M. eds. *Crusade and Christendom: Annotated Documents in Translation from Innocent III to the Fall of Acre, 1187-1291*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013: 108-109.



Jerusalem to liberate the tomb of Christ.”⁴² The same ideology was articulated in the first words (*Ad liberandam*) of Canon 71 of the Fourth Lateran Council (1215).⁴³

6. Take Back Egypt Too

As of the 13th century, we have more sermons from among those delivered in the great crusade preaching campaigns, providing us with more detailed knowledge of the arguments used by these preachers to encourage the Crusaders. In those of the Fifth Crusade (1213-1221) specialists have detected a shift in the Crusade argument: the idea of “territorial” liberation of the Holy Land as Christians’ rightful heritage, then in the hands of foreign infidels, gives way to a greater internalization of the movement tending to emphasize the heavenly Jerusalem and the Crusader’s individual salvation.⁴⁴

Even so, both in the narrative sources and in the sermons themselves, the reasons seen since the end of the 11th century continue to be repeated. In a sermon *ad cruce signatos* (c. 1217), the theology teacher John of Abbeville, future cardinal and legate, recalled the shame of Christians, since “our inheritance belongs to foreigners, our home to strangers (...) Our inheritance is the land of promise, our home is the place where Christ suffered and was buried.”⁴⁵ At the same time another important preacher and future cardinal, the aforementioned James of Vitry, hoped for *auxilium sancto et fidelium peregrinorum adventum oportunum ad succursum Terre Sancte, ut hereditas Domini ab impiis liberetur et in partibus orientalibus Ecclesia Dei reparetur (...) et christiani nostri qui in partibus Orientis sub paganorum dominio comprimuntur, liberentur*.⁴⁶

A new development during these years of the early 13th century was the incorporation of Egypt into the military and historical landscape of the Christian reconquest of the Holy Land. The King of Jerusalem, Amalric I, had already attempted to take over the country of the Nile. In the context of the Third Crusade,

42. Flori, Jean. *Prêcher...*: 208-229, specially 218. We find the same idea (*promissionis terra de paganorum manibus per eos debebat in proximo liberari*) in the popular *Pastoureaux* (Shepherds’ Crusade) in 1251, Giovanni Colonna. “Mare Historiarum”, *Recueil des Historiens des Gaules et de la France*, ed. M. Bouquet, 24 v. Paris: Imprimerie Royale/Impériale/Nationale, 1840-1904: XXIII (1894), 106-124, specially 123-124; Jackson, Peter. *The Seventh Crusade, 1244-1254: Sources and Documents*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2009: 183-184 (doc. No. 86).

43. Flori, Jean. *Prêcher...*: 232-244; Bird, Jessalyn, Peters, Edward, and Powell, James M. eds. *Crusade...*: 124-129.

44. Powell, James M. *Anatomy of a Crusade, 1213-1221*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1986: 51-63. With a more general approach: Bird, Jessalyn. “Preaching and Crusading Memory”, Megan Cassidy-Welch, ed. *Remembering the Crusades and Crusading*. London: Routledge, 2017: 13-33.

45. Cole, Penny J. *The Preaching of the Crusades to the Holy Land, 1095-1270*. Cambridge: Medieval Academy of America, 1991: 222-226; and Flori, Jean. *Prêcher...*: 261-265.

46. James of Vitry, *Epistolae*, ed. Robert B.C. Huygens and French transl. Gaston Duchet-Suchaux, *Lettres de la Cinquième Croisade*. Brepols, 1998: 40-73, specially 56 and 58 (doc. No. II: 1216-1217); also his *Sermon I-II (ad cruce signatos)*, ed. and transl. Maier. *Crusade...*: 82-99 and 100-127. See Bird, Jessalyn. “James of Vitry’s Sermons to Pilgrims”. *Essays in Medieval Studies*, 25 (2008): 81-113.



King Richard also deemed its conquest necessary.⁴⁷ It was during this time when the intellectual Peter of Blois hoped not to die without seeing “the Promised Land freed from the oppression of the infidels, before seeing his Christ reign over the land of Egypt and dominate the entire Earth.”⁴⁸ A few years later Pope Innocent III aspired to liberate “the Churches of Alexandria and Jerusalem, which are held captive by the yoke of the king of Egypt and serve the Pharaoh.”⁴⁹ In fact, during the Fifth Crusade (1217-1221) the Christians conquered Damietta, whose mosque was purified and converted into a church through rituals that we know all about on the Iberian Peninsula.⁵⁰

The most significant aspect of this Egyptian strategy of the Crusade - the conquest of Egypt, it was believed, would force the fall of the Holy Land - is its invocation, once again, of the Biblical and Christian past of the country of the Nile to justify its reconquest. William of Tyre, at the end of the 12th century, had already pointed to the preaching of Saint Mark, the graves of the holy fathers Athanasius and Cyril, and Alexandria's status as the second patriarchate of Christendom.⁵¹ In the midst of the crusade, James of Vitry noted that the Virgin Mary and the Child Jesus had resided there, and that it was the homeland of Saint Jeremiah and many other holy fathers:

Est autem terra Egypti in multis privilegiata, in qua Dominus noster Iesu Christus cum beata Maria matre sua aliquo tempore commoratus est. Vnde in eodem loco, in quo beata Virgo ex itinere fessa dicitur requievisse, constructa est ecclesia, quam habent Sarraceni in magno honore. In eadem vero terra multi fuerunt sancti patres, plusquam mundi partibus; unde adhuc in eadem terra plures sunt Christiani quam Sarraceni, qui tamen armorum usum non habent, sed terras excolunt et sub servitute paganorum detinentur. Vltius autem versus Orientem usque in finem mundi ubique sunt christiane; unde, si per misericordiam Dei

47. Murray, Alan V. “The Place of Egypt in the Military Strategy of the Crusades, 1099-1221”, E.J. Mylod, Guy Perry, Thomas W. Smith and Jan Vandeburie, eds. *The Fifth Crusade in Context: The Crusading Movement in the Early Thirteenth Century*. London: Routledge, 2017: 117-134.

48. *Terra promissionis ab oppressione infidelium liberata... (...)* *Jesum meum regnantem in terra Aegypti dominari Jacob et finium terrae*, Peter of Blois, “Exhortatio” (1188), *Patrologiae Latinae...* CCVII (1855), 529-534, specially 534 (*liberata*); and Flori, Jean. *Prêcher...*: 162-166.

49. *Liberet duas eius sorores, Alexandrinam videlicet et Ier[oso]limitanam ecclesias, que captive tenentur sub iugo regis Egip̄ti et invite serviunt Pharaoni* (21.05.1205), *Die Register Innocenz' III. 7. Band: 7. Pontifikatsjahr, 1204/1205. Texte und Indices*, ed. Othmar Hageneder, Andrea Sommerlechner, Herwig Weigl, Christoph Egger and Rainer Muraauer. Vienna: Verlag der Osterreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1997: 354-359 (doc. No. 203).

50. John of Tulbia. *De domino Iohanne, rege Ierusalem*, ed. Reinhold Röhrich, *Quinti belli sacri scriptores minores*. Geneva: J.G. Fick, 1879 (Publications de la Société de l'Orient latin. Série historique, II): 119-140, specially 139-140; also in Oliver of Paderborn. *Historia Damiatina*, ed. Hermann Hoogeweg, *Die Schriften des Kölner Domscholasters, späteren Bischofs von Paderborn und Kardinalbischofs von S. Sabina Oliverus*. Tübingen: Litterarischen Verein in Stuttgart, 1894 (Bibliothek des Literarischen Vereins in Stuttgart, 202): 161-282 (chapter 39); Bird, Jessalyn, Peters, Edward, and Powell, James M. eds. *Crusade...*: 158-225.

51. *beati Marci, Principis apostolorum spiritualis filii, divinitus ad eandem ecclesiam missi, illustrata praedicatione et verbo; et sanctorum Patrum Athanasii et Cyrilli praelatione, et tumulis decorata, secundum inter patriarchas locum obtinens; Aegypti, Lybiae, Pentapolis et multarum provinciarum reverenda metrópolis*, William of Tyre. *Historia...*: book XIX, chapter 26.



*terram illam optinere possemus, christianam religionem ab Occidente usque ad Orientem continuaremus*⁵².

There are similar arguments and descriptions of sacred Egypt found in the works of the German scholastic, preacher, historian and, later, bishop, Oliver of Paderborn, composed in 1217-1222.⁵³ Both intellectuals' writings included a traditional feature: the application of the history of Salvation, the Bible, and Christianity to the events of their own time.⁵⁴ The French preacher would do this quite systematically in his famous *Historia Orientalis* (1216-c. 1223), sometimes called *Liber de redemptione Terrae Sanctae*, a popular and widely circulated work in its time, also in Spanish.⁵⁵ In it he insists on the central role of Jerusalem and, starting with William of Tyre, the "490 years" of Muslim oppression, and its liberation by the Crusaders.⁵⁶ Then he associates each place conquered in the Holy Land with its sacred past or with a sacred figure (Caesarea Palaestinae with Saint Paul, Nazareth, Bethlehem, Beirut and Capernaum with Christ, Edessa with Thaddeus, Tyre with Origen, Tortosa with Saint Peter and the Virgin).⁵⁷ He also introduces an itinerary of spiritual geography partially inspired by the description of the Archdeacon of Nazareth Rorgo Fretellus (12th century),

52. James of Vitry. *Epistolae...*: 88-107, specially 90 and 92 (doc. No. IV: 22.09.1218).

53. Oliver of Paderborn. *Historia de ortu Jerusalem et eius variis eventibus*, ed. Hermann Hoogeweg, *Die Schriften des Kölner Domscholasters, späteren Bischofs von Paderborn und Kardinalbischofs von S. Sabina Oliverus*. Tübingen: Litterarischen Verein in Stuttgart, 1894 (Bibliothek des Literarischen Vereins in Stuttgart, 202): 27-79 (chapter 80-89); Oliver of Paderborn. *Historia Damiatina...*: chapter 31-34 and 60; Oliver of Paderborn. *Historia regum Terre Sancte*, ed. Hermann Hoogeweg, *Die Schriften des Kölner Domscholasters, späteren Bischofs von Paderborn und Kardinalbischofs von S. Sabina Oliverus*. Tübingen: Litterarischen Verein in Stuttgart, 1894 (Bibliothek des Literarischen Vereins in Stuttgart, 202): 83-158, specially 83 and chapter 54 and 57.

54. Bird, Jessalyn. "Oliver of Paderborn", David Thomas and Alex Mallett, eds. *Christian-Muslim Relations. A Bibliographical History. Volume 4 (1200-1250)*. Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2012: 212-229, specially 213 and 217-218.

55. James of Vitry. *Historia...*: 7-95. On this author and his work, see Donnadieu, Jean. *Jacques de Vitry (1175/1180-1240). Entre l'Orient et l'Occident: L'évêque aux trois visages*. Turnhout: Brepols, 2014.

56. James of Vitry. *Historia...*: chapter 14 (*Peccatis igitur exigentibus, christiani in civitate sancta et in partibus adiacentibus commemorantes per quadragintos nonaginta annos iugum durissimum infidelium et crudelium perpessi sunt dominorum*), chapter 16 (*pro liberatione Terre sancte... ad Terre sancte liberationem*), chapter 20 (*iusto Dei iudicio, trucidantes, tanto tempore ab impiis occupatam, divino freti auxilio, recuperaverunt civitatem Christi et Christianorum hereditatem a perfidis liberantes... pro liberatione civitatis*), chapter 22 (*Terram sanctam de manibus impiorum tam feliciter quam fortiter eruentes*), chapter 30 (*Et ut generaliter et breviter de multis pauca tangamus, quatuor principatus egregios a perfida gente paganorum longo tempore detentos, opitulante Domino, Christi Ecclesie subiecerunt*) and chapter 34 (*Regnum autem Hierosolymorum cum summo labore et multa sanguinis effusione Christo acquisierunt et recuperaverunt in integrum... viri triumphatores et amici Dei... Christi fidei eliminatores inimicos et a Terra sancta propellants*).

57. James of Vitry. *Historia...*: chapter 22 (Caesarea Palaestinae), chapter 27 (Berite or Beirut), chapter 31 (Edessa), chapter 32 (Antioch), chapter 42 (Capernaum), chapter 43 (Tyre), chapter 44 (Tartus), chapter 54 (Nazareth), chapter 55 (*Est autem Hierusalem civitas civitatum, sancta sanctorum, domina gentium, princeps provinciarum, speciali prerogativa "civitas Regis Magni" dicta et quasi in centro mundi, in medio terre sita ut ad eam confluerent omnes gentes, possessio patriarcharum, alumna prophetarum, doctrix apostolorum, salutis nostre cunabula, Domini patria, mater fidei, sicut Roma mater est fidelium, a Deo preelecta et sanctificata, in qua steterunt pedes eius, ab angelis honorata et ab omni natione que sub celo est frequentata*), chapter 61 (Holy Sepulcher, Calvary, Mount Sion) and chapter 62 (*Templum Domini, Temple of Salomon and the Mount of the Olives*).



also a source of the *Descriptio Terre Sancte* (1219) by Oliver de Paderborn⁵⁸. Liberation, recovery, redemption and restitution are terms used repeatedly by James of Vitry, with the sense of recovery that we have already seen in previous authors.⁵⁹

Oliver of Cologne went a little further in his *History of Ortu Jerusalem*, viewing the history of the Holy Land as a series of shifts, from the original Judeo-Christian dominion, to that of the Roman emperors and, from these, to the Frankish and German emperors, whose time it was.⁶⁰ The idea was not new: in an apocryphal letter of defiance addressed to Sultan Saladin before the Third Crusade, Emperor Frederick Barbarossa presented himself as a protector of the Holy Land on behalf of the Eternal King, noting that Armenia and other regions were subject to his authority.⁶¹

The German scholastic expressed this historical justification for the Christian reconquest even more clearly in the letter he sent to the Ayyubid sultan of Egypt al-Kamil in September 1221 to explain the reasons for the Crusaders: The Holy Land had been possessed by Christians long before the appearance of Muhammad (*Terram promissionis possederunt Christiani longissimo tempore priusquam Mahumeth surgeret ad regimen*); it was the land of the servants of Christ since the expulsion of the Jews by the Roman emperors (*Hanc terram constat esse servorum Christi. Judei, quoniam heredem vinee presumpserunt occidere, per Romanos imperatores Titum et Vespasianum expulsi sunt*); they kept it for a long time (*bona fide et iusto titulo summo pretore, huius rei anctore, possederunt eam Christiani multis temporibus*) before it was lost to the Persians and Saracens; in more recent times Saladin and his successors, relatives of the sultan, had expelled the Christians from their possessions; since the Muslims prohibited the

58. Rorgo Fretellus of Nazareth. *De locis sanctis Terre Jerusalem*, ed. Petrus Cornelis Boeren, *Rorgo Fretellus de Nazareth et sa description de la Terre Sainte: histoire et édition du texte*. Amsterdam-New York: North-Holland, 1980; James of Vitry. *Historia...*: chapter 52-63; Oliver of Paderborn. *Descriptio Terre Sancte*, ed. Hermann Hoogeweg, *Die Schriften des Kölner Domscholasters, späteren Bischofs von Paderborn und Kardinalbischofs von S. Sabina Oliverus*. Tübingen: Litterarischen Verein in Stuttgart, 1894: 3-24.

59. James of Vitry. *Historia...*: chapter 64 (*civitatem redemptionis nostre... ab impiorum dominio liberaret et eam cultui restitueret christiano...*), chapter 83 (*recuperationis et liberationis Terre sancte...*), chapter 95 (*per quem Deus operatus est salutem et liberationem Terre sancte*), chapter 99 (*Terram sanctam tanto Christianorum sanguine liberatam... ad Terre sancte liberationem invitations*) and chapter 101 (*totam terram nostram nobis libenter reddidisset*).

60. Oliver of Paderborn. *Historia of ortu Jerusalem...*: chapter 123 (*Constantinus Constantii filius fide Christi percepta regnavit. Annis xxx. Mensibus vi. Cuius mater Helena Jherosolimam reparatam ab Helio Adriano regnumque Judee populavit habitatoribus Grecis... Eraclius annis xxxi. Hic Cosdroe rege Persarum occiso crucem Dominicam cum triumpho et gloria reportavit in Jherusalem. Nec multo tempore post fervente heresi Machometina, que durat heu! usque in presentem diem, capta est a Sarracenis civitas sancta et fere quadringentis viginti annis ab eis detenta est*), chapter 124 (*Deinde translatum est imperium ad Francos. Pippinus regnavit...*) and chapter 125 (*Imperium transfertur ad Theutonicos. Henricus rex Saxonicus primus regnavit... item Henricus v. annis xxx. Huius tempore anno videlicet gracie millesimo nonagesimo vi^o. Godefridus dux cum multitudine signatorum Jherosolimam profectus civitatem sanctam a Sarracenis multo tempore detentam expugnavit, sicut in sequenti libro plenius ostenditur*).

61. *Nunc vero quia terram Sanctam prophanasti, cui eterni Regis imperamus imperio, in preside Judee, Samarie, Palestinorum in tanti sceleris presumptuosam et plectibilem audaciam debita animadversione decerere imperialis officii sollicitudeo nos admonet. Quamobrem nisi occupatam terram et omnia restituas (...) Numquid etiam scire dissimulas Armeniam, et innumerabiles alias terras nostre distione subjectas ?, Itinerarium peregrinorum et Gesta Regis Ricardi*, ed. William Stubbs. London: Longmans, 1864: 1-450, book I, chapter 18.



free preaching of the doctrine of Christ in Egypt and “all laws and all rights allow force to be repelled by force”, Christian princes were entitled to regain their rights through war, in the defense of Christendom:

Si gens tua doctrinam Christi et predicatorum eius publice admitteret, Ecclesia Dei gladium verbi Dei libenter ei mitteret et ad consortium fidei catholice gaudens invitaret. Sed quoniam aliud remedium non invenit contra potentiam Sarracenorum, lex catholicorum principum gladio materiali ad defensionem Christianitatis et iuris sui recuperationem licenter utitur. Nam vim vi repellere omnes leges et omnia iura permittunt⁶².

The reminder of the Holy Land’s Roman, imperial past and this forceful defense of the historical rights of Christians must have inspired the diplomatic operation promoted by Emperor Frederick II in 1228. What is traditionally known as the Sixth Crusade culminated in February 1229 with an agreement whereby Sultan al-Kamil handed over Jerusalem and the Holy Places to the Christians. According to the master of the Teutonic Order, the protagonist of the treaty, the emperor managed to “restore” the holy city to Christendom.⁶³ This was also recognized by Pope Gregory IX in a 1234 encyclical in which he once again exhorted the “heirs of God” to aid and liberate the threatened Holy Land.⁶⁴

7. Reconquering Egypt

In 1244 what Frederick II had achieved was undone. Jerusalem was sacked by bands of Khwarezmians from Central Asia and, a few months later they, together with the Ayyubis of Egypt, crushed the Franks of Outremer and their Muslim allies at the Battle of La Forbie. “All the land of Christendom” (of the East) had once again fallen into the hands of the enemies of the Cross, lamented the Patriarch of Jerusalem, Robert of Nantes, in a letter to the prelates of France and England.⁶⁵

62. Oliver of Paderborn. *Epistola salutaris regi Babilonis ab auctore huius operis conscripta*, ed. Hermann Hoogeweg, *Die Schriften...*: 296-307, specially 299-300, 302-303, 304 and 305; and Bird, Jessalyn. “Oliver”...: 218-220.

63. *Et dum de restitutione Terre Sancte tractaretur... quod Soldanus restituit domino imperatori et christianis civitatem sanctam Jerusalem cum suis tenimentis*, Letter from Hermann von Salza to Pope Gregory IX (7-18.03.1229), *Historia Diplomatica Frederici Secundi*, ed. Jean Louis Alphonse Huillard-Breholles. Paris: Plon, 1852: I-1, 90-93, specially 91-92; *Letters...*: 125-127 (doc. No. 62); and Flori, Jean. *Prêcher...*: 290-296.

64. *civitas eadem preter templum Domini fuerit restituta... (...) heredes Dei... (...) liberare valeat in momento*, Gregory IX, *Rachel suum videns* (09.1234), ed. Lucien Auvray, *Les registres de Grégoire IX*, 4 v. Paris: A. Fontemoing, 1896-1955: I (1896), col. 1.180-1.183, specially 1.181 and 1.182 (doc. No. 2200); Bird, Jessalyn, Peters, Edward, and Powell, James M. eds. *Crusade...*: 270-276; and Flori, Jean. *Prêcher...*: 296-305.

65. *tota terra christianitatis gladiis acquisita sit privata suffragio et defensorum sufficientia destituta*, Matthew Paris. *Chronica Majora*, ed. Henry R. Luard, 7 v. London: Longman, 1872-1883; IV (1877), 337-344, specially 343.



Preparations began for the Seventh Crusade (1248-1254), led by the King of France, Louis IX, and in which the Egyptian strategy would be applied again. Preachers like the Franciscan Gilbert of Tournai again reminded the Crusaders that “the Lord is afflicted by the loss of his patrimony” and that the war they were going to wage was just, “because [*it is fought*] against the enemies of the faith, the usurpers of our patrimony.”⁶⁶ In one of his sermons, the scholastic theologian, preacher, cardinal, and papal legate Eudes of Châteauroux compared the Crusaders “to those ancient nobles who left the kingdom of France and conquered Antioch and the land of Jerusalem,” and he trusted that the new would manage to “liberate other lands from the yoke of the Saracens and restore them to the Christian people and their worship⁶⁷.”

Although the ultimate goal of the crusade was to recapture the Holy Land, from a privileged witness, the Seneschal of Champagne, John of Joinville, we know that the intention of Saint Louis was, literally, to *reconquerre la terre de Egypte*.⁶⁸ The verb reappears in French and in the mouth of a lay crusader from Champagne. As in the case of Villehardouin, one might doubt whether this referred to the recovery of the formerly Christian land, or the land that Westerners had taken in the Fifth Crusade. The facts and texts from the mid-thirteenth century point, again, to the first interpretation. After landing in the Nile Delta, the French crusaders took the city of Damietta, “which God by miracle, in his compassion and mercy, restored (*randi*) to Christendom”, in the words of Louis IX’s chamberlain.⁶⁹ The text of the endowment of the cathedral, a former mosque, speaks of an Egypt “liberated from the hands of the infidels” and suggests the idea of a stable and permanent Christian domination. Like their predecessors, the crusaders of the King of France knew that Egypt had been under Roman-Christian rule and that a significant Christian population lived there. The Muslims themselves were convinced of the conquering intentions of

66. *Bellum nunc iustum est, quia contra inimicos fidei, usurpatores nostri patrimonii, pro causa Dei, et fidei et nostre salutis res est*, Gilbert of Tournai, *Sermo I*, ed. and. transl. Maier. *Crusade...*: 176-191 (doc. No. 18, 17, 12); and Flori, Jean. *Prêcher...*: 307-352, specially 328-334.

67. *prout confidimus de Dei misericordia, terra sancta euacuabitur a perfidis Sarracenis. Speramus etiam quod hec milicia inualescet, terras alias liberando a iugo Sarracenorum et restituendo populo et cultui christiano*, ed. Alexis Charansonnet, *L’université, l’Église et l’État dans les sermons du cardinal Eudes de Châteauroux* (1190?-1273), Thèse de doctorat en Histoire, dir. Nicole Bériou, Université Lumière Lyon 2, 2001: 685-688 (*Sermo 10-1*: c. 15.06-31.08.1248); and Flori, Jean. *Prêcher...*: 307-345. We find the same ideas in a letter from the Master of the Temple (1249): *dominus rex Dei gratia proponit directore gressus versus Alexandriam vel Babilonem; pro deliberandis fratribus nostris et pluribus aliis qui sunt in captivitate detenti, et pro tota terra reddenda cultui Christiano*, Matthew Paris. *Chronica...*: VI, *Additamenta*, 162 (doc. No. 82); Jackson, Peter. *The Seventh...*: 91 (doc. No. 60); and in Joinville: *conquerre the Terre sainte et de delivrer Jherusalem de la main aus Sarrazins* (§ 133).

68. Joinville, chapter 8.

69. Letter from John Sarrazin (23.06.1249), « Continuation ‘Rothelin’ of William of Tyre”, *Recueil des Historiens des Croisades...* II (1859), 485-639 (chapter 43); transl. Janet Shirley. *Crusader Syria in the Thirteenth Century: The “Rothelin” Continuation of the “History” of William of Tyre with part of the “Eracles” or “Acre” text*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999: 11-120 (chapter 43).



their enemies.⁷⁰ Moreover, had he been accepted as their ruler, something that the Mamluks came to consider, Saint Louis himself would have been willing.⁷¹

The military disaster and the captivity of the King of France in the Seventh Crusade led a Knight Hospitaller to cry out to heaven: *O Deus (...) nonne venerunt fideles Tui ut hostes Tuos repellerent in natalem terram et propriam Tuam liberandam ab eisdem, vestigia pedum Tuorum ibidem adoraturi?*⁷² The papal legacy, in addition to denouncing the Saracens as illegitimate occupants of the Christian heritage, lamented that so many nobles and knights had died while waging “a just war trying to recover a land that the impious Saracens had taken from the Christians.”⁷³ Saint Louis spent several years in the Holy Land shoring up the battered positions of Outremer. He had the opportunity to make a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, but they advised him not to do so: “because if he, the greatest Christian king, were to make his pilgrimage without delivering (*delivrer*) the city from the enemies of God, all the other kings and all the other pilgrims who came after him would think it was acceptable to make their pilgrimage just as the king of France has done, and would be unconcerned about the deliverance (*delivrance*) of Jerusalem.”⁷⁴

8. God Does Not Wish It

Louis IX would perish in 1270, on the Eighth Crusade. Although the campaign took place in Tunisia, far away from the Holy Places, the mobilization used the same religious and historical arguments that had fueled the ideal of the Crusades since their inception: the Holy Land had been invaded by *ille ribaldus Machometus* more than 600 years ago because of the sins of Christians, Jesus Christ had been expelled from his inheritance, and it was the duty of the crusaders, as their faithful and vassals, to recover it.⁷⁵

The new failure and the impossible reconquest of the Holy Land spawned despair. The Italian Franciscan Salimbene di Adam expressed it crudely around 1276 with

70. References in Joinville, Spanish transl. Martín Alvira, Cáceres: University of Extremadura, 2021: Introduction. The largest presence of Christians in James of Vitry. *Epistolae...*: 90 and 92 (doc. No. IV: 22.09.1218).

71. Joinville § 366.

72. Matthew Paris. *Chronica...*: VI, Additamenta, 191-197, specially 194 (doc. No. 95); Jackson, Peter. *The Seventh...*: 99-103 (doc. No. 67).

73. *terras alias liberando a iugo Sarracenorum et restituendo populo et cultui christiano*, ed. Alexis Charansonnet, *L'université...*: 685-688 (Sermo 10-1: c. 15.06-31.08.1248); *Predicti nobiles iustum bellum agebant, intendentes recuperare terram quam impii Sarraceni abstulerant Christianis*, ed. Alexis Charansonnet, *L'université...*: 699-705 (Sermo 14-2: 8.02.1251).

74. Joinville, § 557.

75. In the words of Humbert of Romans, Master General of the Dominicans, *De predicatione sancte Crucis* (c. 1266), Flori, Jean. *Prêcher...*: 353-380, specially 371-372 and 375; also in *Opusculum tripartitum* (c. 1272-1274), Bird, Jessalyn, Peters, Edward, and Powell, James M. eds. *Crusade...*: 455-465.



these words: *Non videtur etiam voluntis esse divine quod sepulcrum recuperetur, quia multi hoc attempting volentes in vanum reperti sunt laborasse.*⁷⁶

The final years of the 13th and early 14th centuries saw the development of ambitious and detailed plans for the conquest of the former Outremer, but changing general circumstances and the decline of the spirit of the Crusades hampered their implementation.⁷⁷

9. Conclusion

The word “reconquest” does not appear, per se, in the sources from the 11th-13th centuries, but we do find several Latin terms, and the French verb “reconquer”, that clearly allude to this concept. In fact, today’s specialists speak, without hesitation, of the Crusades as an enterprise for the Christian reconquest of the Holy Land.⁷⁸

The readiness with which the “reconquest” of the Holy Land is spoken of contrasts sharply with the heated debated surrounding the *Reconquista* in Spain. Since the expression “the Crusades” (and the Spanish *Reconquista*) appeared long after the Middle Ages,⁷⁹ what we call “Crusades” could have been given the historiographical name “Reconquest of the Holy Land”. And such a name would not have been unfitting, since the Western Christians of the Central Middle Ages, as we have seen from a selection of sources, were convinced that they had the obligation and the right to liberate, restore, recover and, literally, “reconquer” the city of Jerusalem and a set of Holy Places in the East that, by Divine will, and for historical reasons, they simply considered theirs.

76. Salimbene of Adam. *Chronicle*, ed. Giuseppe Scalia, 2 v. Bari: Laterza, 1966: II, 721; and Flori, Jean. *L'Islam et la fin des temps. L'interprétation prophétique des invasions musulmanes dans la chrétienté médiévale*. Paris: Seuil, 2007: 383-386, specially 384.

77. See, drawing on the previous bibliography, García Espada, Antonio. “La recuperación y el olvido. La cruzada más allá de la Tierra Santa”. *Revista de Historia Jerónimo Zurita*, 84 (2009): 233-246.

78. See note 9.

79. In the work of the French recollect Pierre Archange de Clairmont, entitled *Le transport du Mont-Calvaire de Hiérusalem en France, par la piété d'un catholique Dauphinois*. Lyon: J. Didier, 1638: 102 (*les batailles du Seigneur et de son Eglise qui are commonly qualified du tiltre de crisades ou de guerres saintes*) and 225 (*Croizades*); Lock, Peter. *The Routledge Companion to the Crusades*. London: Routledge, 2013 [2006]: 289.

