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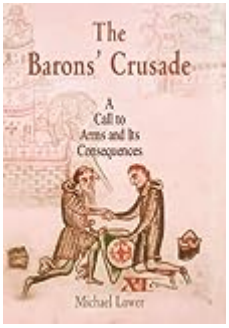

Michael Lower. *The Barons Crusade: A Call to Arms and Its Consequences.* Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005. 272 pp. $49.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8122-3873-0.

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Published on H-War (October, 2006)

Regional Responses to Crusade Appeals

Michael Lower's work on the Europe of the mid-thirteenth century is an excellent contribution to the exponentially growing genre of crusade studies. It focuses on the relatively under-examined events of 1234 to 1241, when Pope Gregory IX began to explore the possible ways in which his authority might be used to direct and transform the crusading ambitions of pious Christians all over Europe in the service of papal political and religious policy. Lower questions the nature and level of responses to the initial appeals for help for the Latin east, and their redirection by Gregory for assistance to the failing Latin empire of Constantinople, and to so-called political crusades in Italy. The reactions of noble crusaders in Hungary, Brittany, Champagne and England are examined for distinctive differentiating factors. In addition, the side effects of crusading appeals on the non-Christian populations of these areas are also addressed.

This is a wide-ranging work, showing a good deal of intensive research. The sources are carefully handled, and the overall trajectory of the argument is often convincing. It is a modified version of a thesis written in Cambridge under the direction of Jonathon Riley Smith and shows the painstaking and thorough investigation to be expected of such a background.

The book's value lies firstly in its detailed examination in chapter 1 of the means used by the papacy to make crusade appeals impact meaningfully on the whole Latin European population through compulsory attendance at sermons, the payment of crusade taxes, and massed redemption of vows, and of the differing regional responses to these demands. These carefully structured measures to ensure that the whole of Latin Christendom was aware of and as far as possible involved in the Pope's crusading plans certainly merit the close attention they are given here, and mark an important development in the institutionalization of the crusade movement. Lower's work here moves on from an assessment of recruitment purely through the surviving texts of sermons, to look at the way in which those ideas were actually brought to the consciousness of the ordinary parishioner.

Perhaps the centerpiece of the work is its focus on Pope Gregory's efforts to direct and control crusading efforts by means of a radical interpretation of the Innocentian principals of redemption and commutation estab-

lished in 1215. Usually used to grant individual requests for permission to alter the terms of a vow, Gregory seems to have decided to use these powers instead to command that vows be altered according to his strategic needs, with the threat of ecclesiastical and financial penalties held over the heads of those who did not comply. This was a remarkable development in papal ambitions to use crusading fervor as a direct political tool, and struck a blow at the nature of the vow itself as a voluntary contract between the individual and God. This development has not been extensively discussed elsewhere. As such, it merits further attention than is provided here and is possibly the aspect which this reviewer would most like to have seen substantially expanded. In particular, theological opposition to the process could have been discussed in much greater detail.

In addition to the at least partly familiar activities of the English and French Barons, we are introduced to the much lesser-explored responses of Breton and Hungarian lords to these crusade appeals, and in an even more intriguing excursus, to the anti-Jewish riots which took place in Brittany at the same time as the crusade recruitment. This is an important addition to our understanding of the phenomenon of persecution which crossed Europe in the thirteenth century, and this particular outbreak has been far too little studied.

On the whole, Lower has produced an extremely valuable work, which deserves the attention of medieval historians and promises great things to come from its author. However, it is no crime, and even a virtue, for a historian, like a comedian, to leave the audience wanting more, and this book certainly raises as many questions as it answers. It will send readers questing for further details, for more background, for other comparisons and a deeper exploration of the source material. Criticisms are added here in the spirit of academic debate, not at all to undermine the praise which this work deserves.

Lower clearly situates his analysis within what has become over the last twenty-five years the mainstream of crusade historiography, and which is usually described as a pluralist approach. It is however also a papalist, centralist, theologically defined approach. It is relativist in its avoidance of any hint of critical distance between the author and the writers under examination. The author betrays a casual acceptance and use of, and therefore an implied agreement with, rhetoric of the medieval church. This can be seen in the un-remarked use of expressions such as "enemies of the faith" (p. 2).

Lower further remarks that Thibaud of Champagne "strove to redirect the *sinful* profits of money-lending to a *pious* cause" (my emphasis) in a clear case of over-identification with the subject (p. 105). Lower does not interrogate these value judgments, but accepts them uncritically, and by doing so, commits the same kind of "universalization" he so criticizes in others. In addition, he shows a tendency to ignore the existence of Christians other than those of the Latin rite, except (and sometimes even including) where specifically under discussion–carelessly eliding "Latin" with "Christian" in a way reminiscent of the medieval texts themselves. Lower casually describes the Pope as "head of Christendom" in a paragraph discussing the reasons for directing crusading efforts against Greek Christians (p. 4).

The introduction sets up an opposition between Lower's own findings and the model of "common Christian endeavour" which he ascribes to Colin Morris and others–though this is to misrepresent Morris's views.[1] Morris here was talking about reactions and responses to the first crusade, and its possible impact on Western Europe, which he saw as wide and pervasive, but he did not generalize from this to "Christendom United." Lower displays some odd naivetes, which may be rather the fault of over-cautious editing to produce a shortish text–for example, "the thirteenth century had seen the expansion of Christian targets beyond the Holy land" (p. 4), apparently ignoring the wide range of non-Levantine targets for crusade rhetoric and activity in the first century of its development.[2] Lower also makes the untenable assumption that strategic alliances between western crusade leaders and Muslim city/state rulers in the East were peculiar to this expedition and therefore particularly worthy of comment. He describes as "curious" (p. 60), the papal rationalization of aid to the Latin Empire of Constantinople, framed in terms of its potential to help the Kingdom of Acre and recovery of Jerusalem. But, this seems to ignore the long-standing tradition of such justifications which go back at least to the events of 1204, and which themselves echo criticism of the previous regime in Constantinople for lack of such assistance. Lower in fact acknowledges this tradition later, but this understanding is not integrated into the analysis as a whole.

On p. 115, following a brief discussion of Thibaud of Champagne's writings, Lower expresses surprise at the different treatment of Jews (expropriation) and heretics (execution) in Champagne under the pressure of crusade rhetoric. However, this distinction was widespread, standard and generally regarded as proper conduct in any responsible ruler, and has been widely analyzed.[3] He even discusses Gregory's protection of "Roman" Jews liv-

ing in France, describing their treatment as "ambivalent," and is apparently surprised at this expression of political proprietorship, which does not in fact imply any element of compassion, or even toleration on the part of the "owner" (p. 119). The massacres of Jews in Brittany which Lower describes, by contrast, were carried out not as judicial expropriation, but as extra-legal riots, neither papally nor comitally organized or sponsored, and should not be seen as contradicting that official distinction.

Perhaps most irritatingly, to this reviewer at least, Lower repeats the too often repeated mistake of ascribing to Robert of Rheims the statement that Urban II prohibited women from taking the cross in his sermon at Clermont in 1095 (p. 13). In fact, what Robert reported–cited here in the translation by Carol Sweetenham, was that "neither should a woman set out under any circumstances *without her husband, brother, or other legitimate guarantor*" (my emphasis).[4] This is an interesting stipulation, but should not be thus simplistically misread. (Contrary to the implication in Sweetenham's accompanying note, the text included in her appendix of the letter from the Patriarch of Jerusalem to those in the west simply says, "Let only men come and women be left behind"–this is not "a similar stipulation" to the one recorded by Robert, but is almost diametrically opposite.) Many historians have made this mistake, but its apparent triviality hides a basic misunderstanding of the nature of the crusade in its twelfth-century incarnation, as a collection of voluntary vow takers, "pilgrims-in-arms," whose relationship to God was not subject to dictate by the pope or other human authority. Given the enormous significance of the attempted shift in the balance of authority towards the Pope which is central to Lower's argument, such a mistake assumes a greater importance.

Lower is particularly concerned to demonstrate the various ways that pragmatic or ideological responses to Gregory's crusade appeals impacted on non-Christian (non-Latin) populations. In analyzing the reactions of his various regional groups Lower takes issue not only with traditional crusade historiography, but also with those such as R. I. Moore and David Nirenberg, whom he accuses of seeing in medieval culture an "undifferentiated" approach to racial or religious "others," lumping all non-Christians (by which Lower seems to mean non-Latins) into one category of "otherness." This is to oversimplify inaccurately their ideas in order to inflate his own argument–neither has suggested the existence of a "Christendom-wide programme of persecution," though such prejudices certainly could be used strategically. Persecution was not Christendom-wide, but was widespread; not programmatic, but a commonplace and culturally understandable phenomenon, showing significant regional similarities as well as differences. It certainly could act as a "stabilising force," as Lower, contrary to his own argument, admits was the case in the expulsion of Jews from Brittany. By overgeneralizing the discussions of Moore and Nirenberg, and over-particularizing the areas of his study, Lower suggests much greater differences than seem to be justified by the substance of the evidence.

Massacres of Jews in Brittany and of Heretics in Champagne affected different groups of victims, but were clearly motivated and explained by similar, closely related needs. Such persecutions, of Jews and heretics, were widespread, and were often stimulated by similar and related goads–such as crusade preaching, with its focus on vengeance. They emanated too from a climate of hostility to the financial imperatives of an increasingly market-oriented economy in a culture whose values had yet to catch up with rapid economic change, and from a growing concern for cultural hegemony and unanimity among religious and secular rulers, who utilized and even incited intolerance against those perceived as deliberate outsiders. Outbreaks could provide outlets for popular piety and religious fervor, and for communal acts of violence against scapegoats which cemented bonds between participants at the expense of victims. They were not "exceptional." Evidence from the York massacre of 1190 makes it clear that this was both a riot and an unofficial *captio*–possibly the same mixed motives applied in Brittany, making more of a connection between the latter and the experience of Jews in Champagne than is allowed by Lower.

Lower's work perhaps suffers from an overemphasis on specificity and difference at the expense of seeing connections and similarities. In particular, his claim that the varied responses he has unearthed to the crusade appeals of Pope Gregory defy prevalent explanations of "piety" as a determining characteristic is wide of the mark–piety is as subject to regional, social, and temporal variation as any other religious or cultural phenomenon, and needs a more nuanced analysis before it can be dismissed (p. 181) . Indeed, the independence of mind which he claims for his subjects in refusing the orders of the papacy can also be attributed to "piety," albeit of a less orthodox or papally acceptable kind.

The argument is in fact unnecessary given that his examination of the specific regional circumstances he has unearthed are sufficiently interesting in themselves, and

do not actually contradict either Moore or Nirenberg's work.

Another important aspect of Lower's work is to demonstrate just how difficult it is to reliably ascribe motivation to any individual in this period with any degree of confidence. His avowed intention is to attempt to determine the motives of those who either complied with or resisted papal interventions in their crusade plans. However, he does not sufficiently distinguish between the apparently pragmatic reasons which can be ascribed retrospectively through a functionalist analysis of apparent advantage and disadvantage, and the ideological or cultural reasons which actually appear in texts emerging from the times and places under study. Emphasis on papal letters and other centrally disseminated documents can be informative, but, especially in the case of Hungary, there is not enough attention paid to the specifics of that country's inter-cultural relations, as have been widely examined by Nora Berend.[5] Whilst Lower credits Berend's work, he does not make sufficient use of it to gain a more nuanced understanding of Hungarian attitudes to non-Latins in this period.

Despite its claimed focus on responses to papal commands, in fact Lower's work takes most of its evidence from papal correspondence. Closer examination of the rhetoric produced within Hungary and elsewhere, might have helped to explain their responses in other than functionalist terms. Much of the chapter on Champagne is similarly papally oriented, and although the extensive literary output of the count Thibaud is mentioned, it is not extensively used to contribute to an explanation of his motivations. Once again, the apparently pragmatic is accepted as the standard of explanation. In addition, in discussing the nature of the crusade as a specifically penitential war, Lower reiterates mainstream theological views, rather than investigating works emanating directly from the courts of Champagne.

In his chapter on Brittany, more substantive information appears to be available about the many crusaders who insisted on fulfilling their vows in Jerusalem. Given that this evidence appears to demonstrate how many nobles and lesser men were willing to risk papal obloquy and possible excommunication, and to spend their own money to fulfill their vows to Jerusalem, the pragmatic functionalist explanation is surely insufficient to account for their motives. A deeper, cultural understanding is required. I would like to have seen more discussion of these cases, of the nature of this and related evidence, and its implications for our understanding of the vexed issue of motivation in the context of the religious culture of the region.

Lower's functionalist approach assumes firstly that the sources allow us to estimate advantage and disadvantage for all of his players and even more problematically, that those players understood their potential advantages in terms familiar to us today, and acted clearly on such clear vision. This is not compatible with an understanding that humanity is as likely to be contradictory, self-destructive, altruistic, or simply confused, as it is to act consistently with an eye to the main chance.

In conclusion, I would like to emphasize how valuable is this contribution to the history of the crusade movement–bringing a highly worthwhile regional comparative approach to the subject. It traces new narratives and raises many fascinating new questions. It will draw the attention of other medievalists to these important points of debate, and will generate more research and further arguments. The best any historian can expect is to be read and criticized–and these criticisms are directed in a friendly spirit towards an excellent piece of research and a most enjoyable read. It will be in my library and on my teaching bibliographies for many years to come.

Notes

[1]. C. Morris, *The Papal Monarchy* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1991) p. 152.

[2]. Susan Edgington, "Albert of Aachen, St Bernard and the Second Crusade and the Lisbon Letter–A Translation," in *The Second Crusade: Scope and Consequences*, ed. Jonathan Phillips, Martin Hoch and Giles Contable (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001); Norman Housely, "Crusades against Christians: Their Origins and Early development, c. 1000-1216," in *Crusade and Settlement*, ed. Peter W. Edbury (Cardiff: University College Cardiff Press, 1985), pp. 17-36; R. A. Fletcher, "Reconquest and Crusade in Spain, c. 150-1150," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, Fifth Series, 37, (1987): 31-47.

[3]. David Nirenberg, *Communities of violence: Persecution of Minorities in the Middle Ages* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1996); R.I. Moore, *The Formation of a Persecuting Society: Power and Deviance in Western Europe, 950-1250* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1987); Anna Sapir Abulafia, *Christians and Jews in the Twelfth Century Renaissance* (New York and London: Routledge, 1995).

[4]. *Robert the Monk's History of the First Crusade: Historia Iherosolimitana*, translated by Carol Sweetenham (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), Book 1, chapter 2, p. 81.

[5]. Nora Berend, *At the Gates of Christendom* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

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Citation: Sarah Lambert. Review of Lower, Michael, *The Barons Crusade: A Call to Arms and Its Consequences.* H-War, H-Net Reviews. October, 2006.

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