

with the work at Tarragona in order to obtain *remissio peccatorum* (remission of sins). He argued that since the knights of other lands had unanimously decided to help the Church in Asia and to free their brothers from the Saracen yoke, it was only right that they in their turn should help the Church in Catalonia against the attacks of the Saracens there. The pope then offered to all who fell in the defence of Tarragona the same indulgence that he had granted to the crusaders. It is true that in this letter we hear only of a reward for those who were killed, but Tarragona could not be rebuilt by candidates for martyrdom alone. The majority of those who were willing to fight wanted to obtain an indulgence and return home alive. It was this majority that Urban had to persuade to go to Tarragona. So clearly those who came through the defence of Tarragona must have been granted the same indulgence as those who survived a crusade. If this were not so it would have been irresponsible to prevent Spaniards from going on crusade to Jerusalem. Urban's attitude to the rebuilding of Tarragona had not changed. In 1089 he had seen it as the equivalent of a pilgrimage; later as the equivalent of a crusade. The fact that for one and the same task he at first promised a pilgrim's reward and then a crusader's indulgence tells us a good deal about his way of thinking. For him the crusade was an extension of the pilgrimage.

Erdmann approached these facts in a rather different way. He believed that the idea of a christian and knightly holy war was in the forefront of Urban's mind and that the pilgrimage was merely incidental. The reverse seems more likely to be true and to fit better into the logic of things. It is easy to arm a pilgrimage and pursue entirely new ends while preserving the old forms, but it is difficult to force a warrior into the peaceful form of the pilgrimage, no matter how holy the cause for which he fights. As Erdmann saw, from the Church's point of view the decisive event at Clermont was not the indulgence but the militarization of the pilgrimage—and the ecclesiastical approval given to this process. The crusader was a kind of superior pilgrim, a pilgrim with the honour of bearing arms. He stood one step higher than the peaceful pilgrim but the difference between them was only one of degree. This is how contemporaries looked at it. The crusader's sword was blessed, but so were his staff and his scrip—the traditional attributes of the pilgrim. A hundred years later Frederick Barbarossa and the kings of France and England received the staff and scrip before they set out on crusade. It is true, as Erdmann pointed out, that on crusade the expression 'soldier of Christ' came to mean 'crusader' while the word 'pilgrim' dropped into the background. This observation undoubtedly played a considerable part in Erdmann's thesis that the pilgrimage was a minor factor in the origins of the crusade. But here so much depends on what kind of source material is used. Erdmann relied on chronicles and crusaders' letters. The chronicles are, however, poor evidence. Most of them were written after the capture of Jerusalem by

churchmen who were working on the development of a doctrine of the crusade. But even in the anonymous chronicle known as *Gesta Francorum* we find the expression *Christi milites peregrini*, 'pilgrim knights of Christ'. More valuable testimony, however, is provided by the charters of men who borrowed money from the Church in order to cover their crusading expenses. When they say anything about the purpose of the crusades, it is in phrases taken almost entirely from the world of the pilgrim. Only rarely does the idea of fighting the heathen appear. The unknown author of the *Gesta Francorum* wrote of the people of Macedonia: 'They did not believe that we were pilgrims but thought that we had come to devastate their land and kill them.' It was in the crusading army itself that the conceptual change from armed pilgrim to soldier for the faith took place. But in 1096 when the march began it seemed—apart from its eschatological aspects—to belong entirely to the traditional world of the pilgrimage to Jerusalem.

This is how Urban II must have seen it. The two Tarragona appeals show clearly that his idea of the crusade was based on the pilgrimage. It was in this way that the wars in Spain contributed to the origins of the crusades. Not that Spain had seen any striking success of the kind that might have been likely to persuade Urban to apply more widely the combination of pilgrimage and war against the heathen. Despite the papal promise of a spiritual reward and the financial contribution made by the count of Barcelona, the Tarragona appeal of 1089 achieved little. This lack of success indeed only serves to show that a pilgrimage was more attractive than the war in Spain. But what had failed in Spain might work if the combination of war against the heathen with the idea of a reward were transferred to the Christian East, the main goal of pilgrims. It is clear that the idea of making a pilgrimage there was far more potent than the idea of fighting the heathens in Spain. This is demonstrated by the fact that the pope could not even persuade the count of Barcelona to stay in Spain though as the local lord he was more involved than anyone in the rebuilding of Tarragona. He died in 1096 in the Holy Land. A watchful observer can hardly have failed to see that the pilgrimage motif would be of great help in organizing a military expedition to the East.

Although Erdmann drew attention to the Tarragona appeals he also explicitly denied that Urban II had any interest in the idea of pilgrimage except as crusade propaganda. But in fact the pope's few crusade letters tell us nothing about his attitude to pilgrimages. Neither does his speech at Clermont; in none of the versions is there even a passing reference to pilgrimages though practically every possible motive, religious, economic, and social, is touched upon somewhere. This is all the more remarkable since at Clermont Urban must have used the arguments which he judged would have the greatest effect on his audience. Yet, if we can believe the chroniclers who unanimously omit any reference to the subject, the pilgrimage was not one of these arguments—and this despite the fact that

Urban had already closely concerned himself with the problems of the pilgrimage when dealing with the Spanish campaigns. For him then it cannot have been a propaganda device. But it was one of the basic roots of his concept of the crusade. Later on indeed the idea of arming the pilgrim was permanently taken over by the crusade propagandists when it had become obvious just how effective an idea it was. The false crusading encyclical of Sergius IV which was fabricated at this time is clear proof of this.

Even more important in the eyes of the general public was the indulgence, especially once it had been linked with the enormously popular pilgrimage idea. Basically there was nothing new about the 'indulgence' of Clermont. What the council decreed was, of course, a judicial act, but it was something thoroughly traditional—not a plenary indulgence in the modern sense. It laid down, in precise and unambiguous words, that whoever took the cross for reasons of religion alone, would be freed from all penances imposed by the Church. * Exactly this is repeated in Urban's letter of September 1066 to Bologna. I cannot agree with the view generally accepted until twenty years ago that this was a plenary indulgence since nowhere does the council even hint that its decree would have a transcendental effect. If granted nothing more than a redemption or absolution i.e. the remission of the canonical penances by means of a kind of redemption, that is to say by going on crusade, a penitential task which was the equivalent of a full remission. It is impossible to see how this can somehow be regarded as less of an absolution than the remission of sins granted in 1079 by Gregory VII to the English. This is formulated very much more, indeed almost precisely, in the terms of an indulgence. Yet, despite the difficulties, theologians regard this as an absolution. The fact is that interpretation of the Clermont decree has been too much influenced by what developed later, and too little by the actual text. So far as I know, Poschmann has been the only one to realize this when he writes that at first indulgences were plenary only in the sense that they meant the remission of the entire penance (*remissio inunctae poenitentiae*); they did not yet mean the full remission of all the temporal penalties due to sin in the next world. But against this interpretation there is the existence of the customary formula *remissio peccatorum* which, although it does not appear in the council's decree, had always been used to mean the remission of temporal penalties including those of the next world. It really is impossible to see why an expression more precise than *remissio peccatorum* could not have been found if no more than the *remissio poenitentiae* was intended. The formula itself does date back to the time when the single process of

* *Quicumque pro sola devotione, non pro honoris vel pecuniae adeptione, ad liberandam ecclesiam Dei Ierosalem profectus fuerit, iter illud pro omni poenitentia reputetur.*

canonical satisfaction redeemed simultaneously both guilt and punishment. But it was not used in papal letters until the second half of the eleventh century and it inevitably became more and more ambiguous as the distinction between guilt and punishment was developed. Poschmann's argument becomes circular when he tries to solve the problem by making the unproven assertion that at that time *remissio peccatorum* meant only the remission of penance. There is, however, no need to see in this argument an attempt to refute earlier Protestant polemic against indulgences, some of it in a very coarse style, which had tended to concentrate heavily on the *remissio peccatorum* formula. Poschmann is simply trying to reconcile what is, for him, irreconcilable—the Council's decree and the customary papal formula. But in fact they are irreconcilable only in the context of a preconceived and until the 1960s generally accepted opinion: that the Council of Clermont proclaimed a genuine plenary indulgence.

At Clermont words were chosen with precision and all that was actually offered was the full remission of the earthly penances imposed by the Church. Preachers then went out and preached something else, the *remissio peccatorum* which literally means the remission of sins and in theology refers to the remission of the temporal penalties due to sin, though not until the time of Huguccio (d. 1210) was this definition clearly established. Popular crusading propaganda at once went unhesitatingly far beyond the more limited formula used at the Council. None of the contemporary chroniclers reproduce the official doctrine in their descriptions of the Council. Orderic Vitalis was one of the very few people to mention the remission of penance and, even in his view, the remission of the penalties due to sin—never in fact referred to at Clermont—was more important. Erdmann misses the heart of the matter when he says that in the eyes of the world it was a meaningless distinction and that here we see the effect of the popular belief that to go on a crusade was to obtain forgiveness of sins. But, in fact, the men who tell us about the remission of the penalties due to sin were trained in theology and well able to make the distinction. Yet none of them utters a word of criticism or explanation. Clearly the Clermont decree had been pushed into the background by the crusade propagandists. It looks very much indeed as though the preachers explained the distinction—and then pointed out the advantages of the remission of the penalties due to sin (or perhaps simply the remission of sins, cf. pp. 33f.) which was now supposed to have been granted at the Council. From now on the dominant note in the crusade publicity was the idea of a reward—and moreover a special reward which could be obtained only by taking the cross. Although there is very little evidence for the First Crusade, here at any rate we are entitled to draw on what we know of the later crusades.

Up to a point the extended meaning given to the Clermont decree can be described as a misunderstanding. More was promised than could, according to the strict doctrine of the Church, be given. But it must be remembered that the preachers were working, so to speak, in a vacuum. It would have been no use them looking for guidance from the official teaching of the Church or from theological literature because at that date there was still no theory of indulgences. For this reason there is no force in the assertion made by early Protestant critics of the system of indulgences, that the popes had here created for themselves a superbly manipulated 'instrument for the production of unconditional devotion' (T. Briger, 1901). It is true that in the thirteenth century the crusading indulgence was used for political purposes; none the less it was not a papal invention. Yet there is no way of explaining the success of the crusade propaganda in 1095-6 except as a consequence of this extension of meaning to include a transcendental effect, for, after all, the substitute—the crusade—was in many cases harder than the penance it replaced. It seems likely then that the full crusading indulgence was produced neither by the pope nor by the official Church; rather it was 'manufactured' by preachers who expanded on the Clermont decree. In other words it emerged in response to the needs of the people and the requirements of the crusade. This much seems clear from the biting criticism to which the indulgence became subjected from c.1130. Peter Abelard was the first in the field. In his fierce attack he pointed out that the Church had always held firm to the theory of equivalent penance (indeed if this had been given up the development of the doctrine of the Treasury of Merits would have been pointless). But in an indulgence there could be no equivalence—not, at any rate, until men had learned of the existence of the Treasury of Merits. In Abelard's day the bishops who dispensed indulgences relied upon their power of the keys (John 20: 23), but the French theologian was entirely within the bounds of traditional learning when he dismissed this as insufficient (Poschmann). Until the Treasury of Merits had been defined, the Church was, strictly speaking, in no position to remit the temporal penalties due to sin because it was unable to preserve the equivalence of the penance. Yet it is indisputable that indulgences were dispensed. It seems clear that a practice which originated outside Rome had been brought within the Church, and only later was the theory of it all worked out. Public pressure in its favour meant that the practice could not be eradicated, but it was not easy to justify and there is an air of helplessness about the attempts to do so made by twelfth-century theologians. Even Peter Cantor (d. 1197), writing after indulgences had been dispensed and discussed for a hundred years, and the first theologian to try to see something of positive value in the indulgence, still looked upon it essentially in terms of the long-familiar redemption. Nor have modern theologians tried, even hypothetically, to work out a flawless justification for the system of indulgences which would

have held good even at a time when the Treasury of Merits was still unknown. They cannot do it—even only hypothetically—without being forced either to label the Treasury of Merits as not absolutely necessary or to explain it as the (still unrecognized) basis of the Church's official intercession for the remission by God of the temporal penalties due to sin.

It seems then that right at the start of the crusading movement control had slipped out of the hands of the curia. We have already seen how men disregarded papal schemes and chose Jerusalem as their own goal; and we shall see how the pope's plans for organizing the campaign were, in part, overtaken by events. Something similar had happened in the case of the indulgence. Urban's expressions of opinion on this subject are ambiguous. In the letter to the Flemings written at the end of 1095 he himself spoke of *remissio peccatorum*, i.e. remission of the penalties due to sin. But in his letter to the Bolognese he used the more limited formula of the remission of penance. The letter to Vallombrosa does not mention the indulgence at all. Of course the first letter was intended to recruit crusaders, while the second and third were meant to prevent ecclesiastics from going. At all events the curia did not hinder the popular interpretation of the Clermont decree. Indeed in later years it became necessary for popes to make this interpretation their own. This development begins with Eugenius III who, on his own admission, looked back to the chronicle accounts, not to Urban's privileges, when he proclaimed an indulgence at the start of the Second Crusade. Not surprisingly this brought the *remissio peccatorum* into prominence.

Some popes like Gregory VIII tried to put the clock back. They avoided the highly ambiguous expression *remissio peccatorum* and only offered a remission of penance, as the Council of Clermont had done. But the process had gone too far to be halted now and in the crusade decree of the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215 it reached its conclusion. From then on this decree formed the basis of the papal theory of the crusades. To all men who, in person and at their own expense, went on a crusade it promised full forgiveness of all those sins which, with a contrite heart, they had truly confessed. The confusion was now complete, for this seems to have meant a full remission of the sins themselves, a complete discharge obtained through the Church by means of an extra-sacramental work of penance. It cannot possibly be referring only to the penalties due to sin for only sins can be confessed, not penalties. This is where the doctrine formulated by Huguccio and finalized by Aquinas came in. According to this doctrine there were two senses in which sins could be forgiven. Firstly the guilt, through confession, and secondly the punishment. But how could the preachers of the crusade have explained this? They were 'fishers of men'—as one of them referring to Matthew 4: 19, called himself—and they hoped to make a good catch from an audience which consisted largely of illiterates. It was not the place for subtle and still not definitively accepted

distinctions. It was not the time to be more papal than the pope who, after all, had said remission of sins even though he may have meant no more than the remission of the penalties due to sin. In any event there is no evidence that the preachers tried to give special emphasis to the narrower concept. On the contrary when Abbot Martin of Paris preached the Fourth Crusade at Basle at the beginning of the thirteenth century the concluding words of his sermon were as follows: 'But if you ask, what more certain reward from God may you hope for in return for such efforts, then I promise categorically that each of you who takes the cross and confesses truly will be entirely cleansed of all his sins.' What listener, if he were not trained in theology, could have heard this and not believed that he was meant to look forward to a complete remission of sins, both the guilt and the punishment?

Favoured by the extended interpretation of the Clermont decree, the reward motif, along with some other themes, played an important propaganda role throughout the whole period of the crusades. None of the preachers felt able to do without it. They used clearly drawn images and had no hesitation in calling a spade a spade. The believer was offered a spiritual bargain and he would have been a fool to refuse. Particularly effective was the picture of the 'shrewd businessman' which was first drawn in a propaganda letter written by St. Bernard of Clairvaux, in which the transcendental effect of the indulgence was most strongly emphasized. O mighty soldier, O man of war, you now have a cause for which you can fight without endangering your soul; a cause in which to win is glorious and for which to die is but gain. Or are you a shrewd businessman, a man quick to see the profits of this world? If you are, I can offer you a splendid bargain. Do not miss this opportunity. Take the sign of the cross. At once you will have indulgence for all the sins which you confess with a contrite heart. It does not cost you much to buy and if you wear it with humility you will find that it is worth the kingdom of heaven.

It could hardly have been said more clearly than this and it could not have failed to make an impact. The same metaphor reappears in an early twelfth-century poem in the collection known as the *Carmina Burana*:

The clever merchant will be there
Who wants to purchase life . . .
The last will be first
And the first last
The summing is different
But the payment (*remuneratio*) the same
For to all workers (i.e. crusaders)
The penny of life will be given.

A French crusading song of the same period runs:

I have heard it said by way of advice
That it costs gold to clinch a good deal.

The man is thoughtless
Who sees the good and takes the bad.
Do you know what God has promised them
Who will take the Cross?
By God! He has promised to reward them well
Paradise for evermore.
He who knows how to make a profit
Is a fool if he waits till tomorrow.

In these lines not only can we hear the voice of the persuader; we can also sense the mood of the persuaded. Towards the end of the century the Provençal poet Aimeric de Belonoi wrote:

For the march means hope
For possessions and joy and thanks
And for diligence and honour
And for deliverance from sin.

At about the same time Heinrich von Rugge, referring to the crusade, wrote:

All my thoughts are fixed on a better reward.

From the early thirteenth century there have survived the crusade sermons of James of Vitry. In one of them he tells a story which does not have to be true but which must have been possible otherwise he would not have used it. It illustrates the frame of mind of his audience. A wife kept her husband indoors so that he would not be able to listen to the preaching of a crusade. But through a window he managed to hear what was said. As soon as he learned that by taking the cross a man could regain as much remission as otherwise would require fasting and wearing a penitential belt for sixty years and that he would most certainly escape purgatory and hell, he immediately jumped clean through the window in order to take the cross himself.

It would, of course, be wrong to assert that the crusade propagandists avoided a more spiritual approach and worked only in such blatantly commercial terms. Nevertheless a great deal was done by such methods; we should remember that it was an age which witnessed a tremendous boom in long-distance trade. St. Bernard, though he used the vocabulary of merchants, did, of course, also say very different things (see pp. 96f.), but he too did not want to renounce this effective propaganda theme.

It is perhaps better to put aside the question of whether or not the Church gave the impression that a complete remission of sin, both guilt and punishment, was possible through the indulgence and therefore through a procedure outside the Church's sacrament of penance. It is certainly possible that sometimes contemporaries did so interpret the Church's ambiguous terminology. But in any case the difference between

remission of penance and remission of the temporal punishment due to sin, a difference which existed in the Church's traditional doctrine of indulgences, was of itself quite enough to explain the success of Clermont. There had been nothing new about being able to obtain remission of penance by going to fight the heathen. But that the penalties due to sin could be remitted simply as a result of taking the cross—as the crusade propagandists suggested—this was an unheard of innovation. Previously both the reconciliation granted at the start of the penance and the redeeming commutation had affected only the penances and had had no transcendental effect upon the penalties due to sin. It was indeed hoped that absolution would have such an effect, but it could certainly not be guaranteed. The indulgence on the other hand awaited before God in a certain and in a quantitatively measurable fashion so that both the temporal penalties due to sin and the earthly penances were remitted and, in the case of a plenary indulgence, fully cancelled. Only Alexander II had promised as much as this for the war against the heathen and his promise, being addressed only to a small group, had met with little response. It was when linked with the universally popular idea of pilgrimage to Jerusalem that the explosive force of a new way of penance was revealed. Ekkehard of Aura spoke of 'a new way of penance' now being opened up. Here lies the secret of the astonishing success of Urban's summons, a success which astonished the Church as much as anyone else. Imagine a knight in the south of France, living with his kinsmen in the socially and economically unsatisfactory institution of the *févêche*. His feuds and the 'upper class' form of highway robbery which often enough went with them, were prohibited by the Peace of God. Suddenly he was offered the chance of going on a pilgrimage—in any event the wish of many men. This pilgrimage was supervised by the Church; it was moreover an armed pilgrimage during which he could fulfil his knightly function by taking part in battle. There would be opportunities for winning plunder. Above all there was the entirely new offer of a full remission of all the temporal penalties due to sin, especially of those to be suffered in purgatory. The absolution given in the sacrament of penance took from him the guilt; taking the cross meant the cancellation of all the punishment even before he set out to perform the task imposed. Not to accept such an offer, not—at the very least—to take it seriously, would indeed have been mad. The 'shrewd businessman' seized his chance. And who did not want to be numbered among the shrewd?

Taking the cross in these circumstances was, of course, an act of faith just as much as an act of naive trust in the promises made by Church publicists. Naturally not all crusaders were moved by piety. In the Middle Ages too there were sceptics and the motives for going on crusade were many, various, and tangled, often social and economic in character. But the offer of indulgence must have had an irresistible attraction for those

who did not doubt the Church's teaching, who believed in the reality of the penalties due to sin, or at least accepted the possibility of their existence. Such believers must have made up a great part of those who went on the First Crusade—whatever proportion of the total population of Europe they may have been. And, of course, the crusaders of 1095 could not have guessed that the offer which they were accepting was in reality much more limited than the one promised them by the 'fishers of men'.