

Remembering Urban II, The Father of the Crusades

ROLANDO V. DE LA ROSA, O.P.

Saeculo XI, fervente luctuosissimo dissidio ecclesiam inter ac imperium, non minori fortitudine quam ceteri pontifices, qui per id temporis Romanam obtinuerunt Sedem, enituit Urbanus II. . .¹

Thus began the beatification decree of Leo XIII confirming the cult of Pope Urban II *sancto ac beato nuncupato*, on July 12, 1881, almost eight hundred years after Urban's death. One wonders why it took such a long time before the Church recognized officially the greatness of this Pope who had proven in more ways than one what it meant to be a man of the Church in the real sense of the word.

Perhaps, one of the reasons for this late recognition was the fact that the image of Urban II was either dwarfed by the towering personality of Gregory VII, his predecessor, or lost in the rancorous episodes of a movement that he is said to have begun: the Crusades.

The purpose, then, of this paper is to present the picture of Urban II in such a way that his real worth is appreciated. To do this, I shall proceed in the three steps:

1. To situate him in time and space, a brief description of the world and the times in which he lived shall be made;

2. To discover Urban II's real portrait, some features of his personality shall be deduced from his meager biography; and finally,

¹ "Confirmationis Cultus ab Immemorabili Tempore Urbano Papae II, Sancto ac Beato Nuncupato" in *Acta Sanctae Sedis*, 14, (1881), 217-236, p. 217.

3. To appreciate what he did for the Church, his response to the challenges of his times shall be examined.

Pope Urban II: His World and His Times

He was born Odo² de Lagery³ in Chatillon-sur-Marne, around 1042.⁴ That year, according to some historians, still fell within what was called *saeculum obscurum*,⁵ a designation for the period 880-1046, i.e., from the end of the Carolingian Empire to the beginning of the Gregorian Reform.

During that period, the papacy declined gradually to an ordinary local bishopric and became the object of the political struggles of the rich, tyrannical nobility of Rome, like the Crescentians, the Tusculans, and the Spoletans.⁶

Otto the Great (936-973) saved the papacy,⁷ but only temporarily, from those Roman nobilities. During his reign, the papacy gained once more the respectability it had lost through unworthy Popes. Adopting the Carolingian theocratic concept of empire, Otto strengthened his position in the West by creating in the bishops reliable support

² *Patrologia Latina*, CLII (henceforth *PL*), c. 9: "Nemo est qui ambigat Urbanum papam, hujus nominis secundum, ante pontificatum Odonem, seu ut alii scribere solent, Oddonem, sive Ottonem, aut Othonem, appellatum...."

³ *PL*, c. 11: "At refragatur huic sententiae Albericus, qui licet Urbanum ex oppido Castellionis super Marnam natum fuisse ut ceteri, scripserit, asseverat tamen, ex Hugone et Guidone auctoribus quos laudat, eum fuisse filium domini de Lageri."

PL, c. 10: "Certe eum natum Gallum ex oppido Castellionis, quod est super Marnam fluviolum in archiepiscopatu Remensi...."

⁴ A. BECKER, *Papst Urban II* (1088-1099), as summarized by the same author in Urban II in *The New Encyclopedia Britannica*, Vol. 18, 15th ed., Chicago, 1980, pp. 1044-1045. Becker says that Urban was probably born in 1035, not 1042 as many historians assert.

⁵ A. FRAZEN, *A History of the Church*, revised by J.P. DOLAN, Montreal, 1968, p. 161.

⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 162-163. See also J. ALZOG, *Manual of Universal Church History*, Vol. II, Dublin, 1874, pp. 211-215.

⁷ A. FRANZEN, *op. cit.*, pp. 163-168.

for royal central power, thereby laying the foundation for the spiritual princely powers of the medieval feudal Church. Otto's Church policy however, carried within itself the seed of future complications: within the Church itself (simony, regalia, nicolaitism), and in its relation with the State (investiture struggle).

At the time of Odo's birth, the manifestations of the effect of Otto's theocratic empire were widespread. The buying and selling of sacred offices was big business. Bishops were involved in double alliance because of regalia. Married priests were the rule of the day. (Even some Popes were said to have flirted around with their royal robes on!). This decline of morals on the part of the clerics was worsened by the economic destitution of much of the population. From 970 to 1040, forty-eight famine years were counted.⁸ People, many of whom were illiterate, became easy prey to milleniaristic movements that promised them relief from their misery. Also, imperially-supported schisms began to wreck the fabric of unity in the Church.

In the East, the dispute which began with the iconoclastic controversy in 726 and the Byzantine indignation at the Norman invasion of southern Italy, eventually led to the so-called Great Easter Schism of 1054.⁹ This west-east great divide was further aggravated by the regional or provincial schisms within the western Church, where kings, barons, dukes, and other nobles would encourage revolt against Rome, leading to the election of invalid bishops or even anti-popes.

From all appearances, the Church seemed doomed, and together with it, the empire. Add to the internal troubles the external threat of invasion by the pagans and moslems from the north, from the west, and from the south, and we have the complete picture: christendom hemmed in by hostile and foreign races, ready to swoop down on it at any moment; and christendom being torn from within by its political and religious crisis.

But, as the dictum goes, *Ecclesia semper reformanda*. The Church has in herself the principle of self-renewal. Three movements,

⁸ W. WALKER, *A History of the Church*, New York, 1945, p. 238.

⁹ F. X. FUNK, *A Manual of Church History*, edited by W.H. KENT, London, 1914, pp. 304-305. See also A. FRANZEN, *op. cit.*, pp. 185-187.

complementing each other, arose to liberate the Church from where it had fallen: (a) the Cluniac Reform; (b) the Gregorian Reform; (c) the lay people's spiritual resurgence.

The Cluniac Reform

The monastery at Cluny was founded by William of Aquitaine in Burgundy (908-910) and it served as a counterweight to the secularization of the Church during the Ottonian period. Its reforms were inspired by three aims:

- religious autonomy;
- intense orthodox spirituality; and
- revival of the monastic ideals founded on the apostolic community.

The first aim was directed against the State and ecclesiastical intervention in the internal affairs of the monastery. Cluny wished to be centrally-directed, and hoped to demolish the adverse feudal structures to which monastic life had been bound to. The second aim put in relief the importance of spirituality even in public life. The Cluniacs had realized that too much emphasis on the political factor in the life of the Church was a reversal of the correct order. The third aim could be termed as "going back to the sources." Cluny was later to be a place where apostolic life, in all its primitive simplicity, poverty, contemplation, and study, was present.

The Cluniac movement did not remain a purely monastic phenomenon but soon affected the whole Church. Recent researches show that the Cluniacs, although filled with a contemplative spirit, preserved a certain openness to the world. The monks pursued scientific studies, were interested in political developments, and maintained contacts with emperors and kings. In itself, however, the Cluniac reform was solely for the religious and monastic renewal; but in its effects, it can be said to have historically paved the way for future reform movements, like the Gregorian reform.

The Gregorian Movement

Pope Gregory had been a monk himself. The watchword of Gregory's reform movement was "*libertas ecclesiae*." Unlike Cluny,

Gregory did not only desire the autonomy of the Church within the State. He wanted to secure its *independence* and to put it in the same level as the State, and in most matters even *over* the State. Gregory also adopted the spiritual orientation of the Cluniac reform, but he directed it not to the monastics but to the clerics. Gregory's program called for the sanctification of the secular clergy and emphasized the dignity of the sacramental priesthood and its position in the Church. Apostolic poverty, celibacy, obedience to the spiritual leadership, hierarchical Church consciousness, theological training, and an irreproachable personal life were to compromise the attributes of the reformed clergy. Gregory's uncompromising stance in the implementation of his reform led him to the investiture struggle with Henry IV.

People's Movements

Neglected though they were by the clergy, the laymen's spiritual awakening came side by side with the monastic renewal. This can only be explained as the work of the Spirit who continually works in the Church in the most unexpected ways. The medieval feudal Church was wealthy and powerful, and in almost everywhere, the bishoprics were in the hands of the nobility. The clergy was almost always associated with feudal lords. But soon a confident citizenry was developing in the expanding cities which no longer wished to be guided solely by their spiritual leaders. No doubt, the increasing number of penance-preachers, hermits, evangelicals, and wandering penitents contributed to the laymen's conviction that spiritual guidance need not always come from the institutional Church, and that authentic christian life can flourish even outside the sanctions of the visible religious authorities. Many laymen thus turned towards the Bible, and started to introduce new forms of living together as a community while remaining laymen in the canonical sense of the terms. Later, some movements led to the formations of the Beghines, the Humiliati, the Waldensians, the Cathari.¹⁰

Surely, the question is whether the Church could properly channel the movements to its own benefit, or to allow these to drift into heresy. As history showed, the Church, at one point, allowed the

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 206-212.

second to happen and then when it realized that proper channeling of such movements were needed, it resorted to one historically regrettable means: the Inquisition.

These three reform movements saved Christendom from dwindling hopelessly to extinction. When Odo de Lagery was born, the Church was on her way to a glorious age, and Odo would be called upon to play a crucial role to effect the transition.

A Reconstructed Portrait of Urban II

Born in the twilight of the dark ages, Urban grew up in the dawn of the high middle ages. Certain elements in the personality of Urban should be known in order to lead us to an understanding of his motives and actions.

*Urban was of the Nobility.*¹¹

His parents were said to be prominent people in the locality and certainly, Urban was given the kind of upbringing proper to noblemen. His suave manner of dealing with people, friends and foes alike, certainly derived from his noble origin. Indeed, his papacy is described by many as tempered by the soft furnishings of autocratic judiciousness and lofty detachment; of smoothness, flexibility, coolness, and adjustability.

He was an impressive man, tall, with a handsome, bearded face, courteously mannered and persuasive in his speech. If he lacked the fire and singleness of purpose of Gregory VII, he excelled him in breadth of vision and in the handling of men. Nor

¹¹ PL, c. 10: "Consentit Albericus in chronico, et haec communior est auctorum, potissimum recentiorum, sententia: unde cum ex nobili familia Urbanum prodierit omnes consentiant, visum est nonnullis rem omnino certam esse ac exploratam hunc pontificem e nobili Castellionensium in Campagna Gallica dominorum familia oriundum fuisse...."

PL, c. 11: "Id certe innuit Ordericus Vitalis libro VII Historiae Ecclesiasticae ubi....Odo, inquit, natione Gallus, nobilitate et mansuetudine clarus, civis, Remensis, etc." For a description of the manifestations in Urban of his noble upbringing, see W. ULLMAN, *A Short History of the Papacy in the Middle Ages*, London, 1972, p. 165.

was he proud nor obstinate as Gregory; but he was not weak. He could have been stern and relentless, but he preferred to be gentle; he preferred to avoid controversy that might arouse bitterness and strife."¹²

Many of the achievements of Urban were obtained not through a threatening insistence on reform but through his velvety diplomatic skill. In the beginning of his papacy, secular princes were already wary of anathemas and threats of excommunication. Urban, therefore, resorted to conciliatory tactics but without sacrificing the principles of reform. It was only when the Pope's position was secure that Urban started to vigorously implement the Gregorian reform. Thus, Philip I, Conrad, the son of Henry IV, and others, became eventually supporters of the papacy. Also, Urban avoided direct provocation but waited for the opportune time to confront his enemies. Thus he was able to get back the papal throne from the anti-pope with the least turbulence. Likewise, he had brought about a reversal of the Greek policy in the west by acting as middleman between the Greeks and the Normans who were Urban's allies.

*Urban was a Frontiers-man.*¹³

Urban's birthplace was near the border of France and West Germany. These frontier countries had long been besieged by the Slavs in East Germany and the Normans in Normandy. Certainly, people in such countries where invasion from the outside was always imminent had to continually be on the defensive. Indeed, the military tradition was not alien to Urban. At the same time, the possibility of crossing frontiers in order to look for better place to live in was also something which Urban must have known. The effect of these two tendencies is visible in Urban's papacy. He was known to be the wandering Pope, and if one looks at his journeys and itineraries, one might conclude that his papacy was exercised perpetually on horseback. He was always on the go, travelling from one place to the other.

¹² S. RUNCIMAN, *A History of the Crusades*, Vol. I, *The First Crusade*, 3rd ed., Cambridge, 1953, p. 101.

¹³ For the Geographical indications of the times, see J. BRUNDAGE, *The Crusades, A Documentary Survey*, Wisconsin, 1976, p. 1.

From the time of his election up to 1094, he was virtually a stranger to Rome, not being able to enter it because of the presence of the anti-pope and his supporters. But it is characteristic of a frontiers-man to consider difficulties not as limitations to activity but invitations to creativity. So, Urban, chased out of his own See, saw in his fugitive papacy the chance to make his presence felt in different places by his numerous consecrations, synods, visitations, councils, and the like.

*Urban was a profoundly Spiritual man.*¹⁴

Urban was a product of Cluny. He had imbibed the contemplative spirit of Cluny and this certainly helped him to pursue his apostolic goals in the face of great risks and difficulties. Only a true spiritual man can read through the motives and capacities of others. Urban certainly had this gift. This is why he was able to marshall men of great office and dignity to work for his cause. As one historian wrote,

His pontificate began without great promise, but developed into one of the most important in medieval history, in which for the first time a Pope stood forward as the personal leader of Christendom.¹⁵

Another historian has the same praise of Urban:

Not until the Frenchman Odo de Lagery became Pope, on March 12, 1088, did the Church have a leader capable of saving the papacy from the crisis into which Gregory VII precipitated it.¹⁶

*Urban was a learned canonist.*¹⁷

Gregory's reform movement which was aimed at "*libertas ecclesiae*" demanded among other things the free ecclesiastical right of

¹⁴ For the spiritual formation of Urban see *PL*, c. 12-15, 17-19.

¹⁵ D. KNOWLES & D. OBOLENSKY, *The Christian Centuries*, Vol. II, *The Middle Ages*, 2nd ed., London, 1972, p. 180.

¹⁶ K. SETTON, *A History of the Crusades*, Vol. I, *The First Hundred Years*, Wisconsin, 1969, p. 225.

¹⁷ Urban as a learned canonist is described by W. ULLMANN, *op. cit.*, pp. 164-165.

election and unhindered exercise of the Church's positive rights. But since valid criteria in this field of law did not yet exist, it became the task of the movement to devise and implement them. It would fall on Urban to do this. By introducing the mental operation of a *distinction*, Urban clarified many gray areas in the field of Canon Law, especially regarding the relationship of the State and the Church. In its fully developed state, the method suggested by Urban became the dialectical method of inquiry which would flourish in scholasticism.¹⁸

*Urban maintained a true monastic humility.*¹⁹

Perhaps, this was the reason why many considered Urban as a very dull personality. He was never self-aggrandizing. The moment he was elected Pope, he immediately called himself: *Gregory's pedisequus*,²⁰ a title which later blurred rather than clarified the image of Urban. The title made him appear like walking in the shadow of Gregory. But Urban certainly had a place of his own in history. In fact, Urban synthesized in himself all those existing movements in such a way that he became the embodiment of religious autonomy, spirituality, and apostolicity, which were the hallmarks of the Cluniac, Gregorian, and People's Movement, respectively. It is precisely in this synthesis that the greatness of Urban lies because it is through this that he reveals the depth of his understanding of the "signs of the times" and the breadth of his horizon as an inborn frontiers-man steeped in faith and prayer. It is also in this synthesis that the crusades fit, as a means to an end.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 164. See also D. KNOWLES & D. OBOLENSKY, *op. cit.*, p. 179, for a description of Urban's tactful papal policies.

¹⁹ A clear sign of Urban's humility is the very harmonious synthesis of all those seemingly opposite traits which he possessed. The pride of the nobility was tempered by his deep spirituality; and the reckless daring of the frontiers-man was toned down to reasonableness by his intelligence. Never was Urban described by any biographer as obstinate and proud. See W. ULMANN, *op. cit.*, p. 165, who says: "It was in fact Urban II that the papacy began to reach the position for which Gregory had striven. In a number of ways, his pontificate accomplished and brought to a conclusion what his predecessor had begun. The intellectual and moral leadership of Europe passed into the hands of the papacy."

²⁰ This epithet was taken from his letter to the universal Church immediately after his consecration as Pope. See J. ALZOG, *Manual of Universal Church History*, Vol. II, Dublin, 1874, pp. 211-215.

Urban's Synthesis of the Challenges of His Times and His Response

What was Urban's synthesis of this times? Before answering this question we have to ask: Was Urban II the kind of man with a synthesizing view of reality? One indicator is how he saw his Cluniac experience, his work in the Church before he became Pope, and the situation of Christendom. Let us take these one by one.

Cluniac Synthesis of Active and Contemplative Life

As already mentioned earlier, Cluniac monks were a different breed of monks. They were decidedly spiritual, yet their contemplative life did not necessarily preclude apostolicity. Their concept of the *vita apostolica* contained not only their understanding of how the apostles *lived*, but what they *did*. In Cluny, therefore, the insistence on the monastic elements of the religious life: community, silence, prayer, poverty, obedience, chastity, was coupled by a demand for a high degree of awareness in world affairs and the willingness to participate in these in a way that was *proper* to the monks.²¹

This Cluniac synthesis of St. Bruno, the founder of the Carthusian Order, who, after a brilliant career in Rheims, withdrew to a life of solitude and penance. He emerged again publicly as the adviser of Urban himself. As a student, Urban must have been intrigued by the way contemplative life had attracted St. Bruno. He might have been even mystified by the latter's example of renunciation in favor of solitude. Thus, we see the same pattern happening in Urban's life. After becoming Canon, and later Archdeacon of Rheims (the most important metropolis in France), after being actively initiated to the Church ministry and administration, Urban suddenly withdrew into the monastery of Cluny. Here, he became a full-fledged monk and was later elected Prior, a position that certainly required a high degree of spirituality and understanding of human weakness. It must have been in Cluny that Urban learned to synthesize contemplation and action. It must have been here that he realized that the active life that

²¹ A. FRANZEN, *op. cit.*, p. 176, quoting the works of G. Tellenbach and K. Hallinger.

he had lived earlier needed not be in conflict with contemplative life. Thus, when he was appointed Cardinal Bishop of Ostia (the seaport of Rome), he left behind the silence of the monastery, knowing that the real silence and prayer could also be encountered even amidst the pressure of one's apostolic activity.

Within the Church: Synthesis of Divine and Human

As Cardinal Bishop, Urban also made a lot of travels in several places in the western Church by virtue of his position as papal legate. As Gregory's strongest supporter and advocate of the reform program, Urban saw the actual situation of the Church in Europe. He saw how numerous bishops and clergymen feathered their own nests by the power of the purse. He witnessed the rivalry and petty wars among the princes and the nobility; he saw the bitter effect of the eastern schism to the unity of the Church. In short, Urban saw a Church divided by seemingly irreconcilable human elements. But again, Urban's synthetic view came to the fore. He knew that there will always be the human element at work in the Church. And yet, there is also God's grace, helping man to overcome his weaknesses. Thus, what is weak must be strengthened; what is strong must be brought to perfection. This convinced him of the need for continuing reform: *Ecclesia semper reformanda*. He wrote:

"Duae enim ab ecclesiae sanctae primordiis vitae e jus filiis sunt institutae, una, qua infirmorum debilitas retinetur; altera, qua fortiorum virtus beata perficitur."²²

Within the World: War and Survival

Urban learned another thing in Cluny. Cluny's monasteries lay along the way to Compostela and were veritable sources of information and propaganda for the reconquest of Spain. By encouraging pilgrimages to Compostela, the Cluniacs were said to have done much to give the struggle for reconquest the character of a holy war.²³

²² PL, c. 536.

²³ K. SETTON, *op. cit.*, p. 232.

And indeed, it was not hard for Cluny to do this. Christians in the west were collectively aware that if ever western christendom still existed that day, it was because of the violence of the physical struggle, the intense physical effort by which Europe was saved from the attacks of the Mohammedans and the Scandinavians in the 8th, 9th and 10th centuries.²⁴ During the time of Urban, western Europe was still reeling from the continued assault of Islamic forces. The *reconquistas*, therefore, typifying the contest between Christians and Moslems, were understood not as mere imperialistic or expansionistic enterprises, but as grim battles for survival. It was perhaps this all-pervading fear of extinction and desire for survival that gave rise to an almost unbending code of knighthood and chivalry, and moulded many medieval institutions according to military necessities, so that christendom would henceforth have about it the quality of a soldier.

It was then at Cluny that Urban II realized that in his time war was a necessity to be waged if only christendom was to survive. Here we could trace his preoccupation with the Spanish *reconquistas* immediately after his accession to the papal throne. In 1086, barely two years before he was elected Pope, Urban heard of the defeat of Alfonso at Zallaea.²⁵ In 1089, he assured all who would participate in the rebuilding of the frontier post of Tarragona that by so doing they would secure the same help towards salvation as from a pilgrimage to Jerusalem or other holy places.²⁶

Urban's Synthetic Response: Reform and Crusades

At this point, the answer to the question posed above is obvious. Thanks to his Cluniac background and apostolic exposure, it became clear for Urban that what the times called forth could be summed up in two things: reforms and survival. Gregory VI had already pushed for the renewal of the Church with his insistence on the Gregorian reform. Urban II would now put forth his own answer to the challenge of the times with his synthetic approach: *ad intra*, the continual implemen-

²⁴ H. BELLOC, *Europe and the Faith*, London, 1921, p. 231.

²⁵ K. SETTON, *op. cit.*, p. 232.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 233.

tation of the Gregorian reform; and *ad extra*, the Crusades which would also indirectly enhance the first. These two were merely means to an end. The goal of Urban, as can be gleaned from his later actions as Pope, was *unity*. This was an improvement to Gregory's unilateral *libertas Ecclesiae*, for Urban did not only wish the independence of the Church, but the unity of the whole christendom. If ever christendom was to be renewed and survive, it must survive as one: unity between east and west, unity between the warring kingdoms of the west, unity of *Sacerdos* and *Imperium*. In the mind of Urban, the ultimate goal was unity... but with the Pope as its principle and driving force.

How did he go about doing this? Let us examine the aspects of his synthetic response:

(a) *Reforms*

Immediately after his accession, Urban II wrote to all the world: "We propose to tread faithfully in the footsteps of Gregory VII, our predecessor of glorious memory...."²⁷

It was from here that Urban's epithet, *Gregory's pedisequus*, was derived. He also added:

All that he rejected, I reject, what he condemned, I condemn, what he loved, I embrace, what he considered as Catholic, I confirm and approve.²⁸

Urban took seriously his word. In all of the nine important councils that he called and presided,²⁹ the main task was that of reform. In his journeys around Europe, which were numerous,³⁰ he was unceasing in his call for simoniacs and nicolaitans to mend their

²⁷ See note 20 above.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ The more important councils convened by Urban were: Melfi (September 10, 1089); Benevento (March 28, 1091); Troye (March 11, 1093); Piacenza (March 1-7, 1095); Clermont (November 18-28, 1095); Nîmes (July 6, 1096); Lateran (January 7, 1097); Bari (October 3, 1098); St. Peter (April 24-30, 1099). Dates and places were taken from the chronology of the life of Urban II in L PAULOT, *Urban II, Un Pape Français*, Paris, 1903, pp. xxxi-xxxiv.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

ways and restore the good name of the priesthood to which they were consecrated. He corrected, often through persuasion, but he did also resort to sanctions. He spared no one, although with kings and important prelates, his approach was conciliatory. But this was because he was realistic enough to see that as Pope with only five German bishops, the choleric Norman army, and a woman (Countess Mathilda) as supporters, he would do more harm than good if he started pushing his weight around.³¹

It was to Urban's credit that reform ideas of the clergy, the papacy, and the christian society as a whole, were defined more accurately. Many of Urban's legal decisions were later adopted to the Church's legal code of the middle ages.³² Likewise, he achieved a high degree of centralization of authority of the Church with the development of the roman curia. The term "*curia romana*" first appeared in a bull written by Urban in 1089.³³

Urban's reform movement carried with it concern for the laymen. Thus, when groups of laymen, sickened by the sight of too much bloodshed, fled from the angry strife of the world and lived in a community while retaining their secular state, Urban approved of their quasi-religious state as "laudable and worthy of encouragement and as having as its exemplar and sanctions in the manner of life of the early christians."³⁴

This is a clear indication that Urban considered positively the poverty movements and spiritual awakening of laymen during those times. In fact, he would see in these signs of the times a clear confirmation of the two-fold means of reform and the Crusade. Pru-

³¹ K. SETTON, *op. cit.*, p. 225. For example: Philip I of France who had taken the wife of one of his vassals was not excommunicated until October 16, 1094; William II of England repeatedly appropriated ecclesiastical revenues and kept the See of Canterbury vacant from 1089-1093 when Anselm of Canterbury was finally named; Alfonso of Castille did not observe the investiture decrees — all these were overlooked because Urban supported the spanish Reconquest, and had to react prudently to the English monarch whose bishops were not sympathetic with Urban.

³² A. BECKER, *op. cit.*, in *The New Encyclopedia Britannica*, Vol. 18, 15th ed., Chicago, 1980, pp. 1044-1045.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 1044.

³⁴ J. ALZOG, *op. cit.*, p. 369, where he quotes Bernold of Constance.

dently, he integrated the spiritual fervor and enthusiasm which these movements generated into the reform and crusading movements.

(b) *The Crusades*

After seven years in the papacy; after long and tiresome journeys punctuated by vigorous implementation of the reform program through synods, preachings, and letters; and after various strategic moves,³⁵ Urban saw that there was still much to be done. And so, at the Council of Piacenza, in 1095, when the ambassadors of Alexius came to ask for help against the Turks who were threatening to invade Constantinople, Urban knew at once that he had in his hand another potent means to the problems which he wanted to eradicate. The Crusades, and how it would go about, began to develop in the mind of Urban until he saw the time opportune for its proclamation at the Council of Clermont, on November 27, 1095.³⁶

In the mind of Urban, the Crusades would be means to achieve or to foster two things at least:

1. *East-West Unity*: Urban knew of the intention of Gregory VII to aid the Eastern empire against the Turks.³⁷ This intention, however, was not realized into action because of the investiture struggle between Gregory VII and the Emperor Henry VI. But Urban was careful to stress, as his sermon showed in the launching of the Crusades, that this expedition was not primarily an *aid* to the East in their war against the Turks; it was rather aimed at *liberating* the Holy Land from the Moslems. This was the Crusades' main objective. And Urban was also aware that to the liberation of the Holy Land was

³⁵ K. SETTON, *op. cit.*, p. 226.

³⁶ As regards the launching of the Crusades and the many controversial questions raised by historians, see K. SETTON, *op. cit.*, pp. 220-221, where he cites an extensive bibliography dealing with the said controversies. Also, see *PL* for the following elements: Precedents of the Crusades (c. 74), Proclamation of the Crusades (c. 180-181), Urban's responsibility of the Crusades (c. 182), Difficulty in ascertaining the real speech delivered by Urban from the different versions (c. 181), The question of remission of sins (c. 182), Sanctions for those who will not go (c. 183), and Apology for the Crusades (c. 184).

³⁷ K. SETTON, *op. cit.*, p. 222.

joined another motive, that is, the establishment of a Roman primatial rights at Constantinople in order to end the schism. As Gregory VII himself would put it:

....to drive out the infidel from Asia minor, and then to hold a council at Constantinople, where the Christians of the East would resolve their quarrels in grateful humility and acknowledge the supremacy of Rome.³⁸

Urban knew that the Crusades could in fact be used to effect East-West unity: the Eastern Church being incorporated once more to Rome, with the Pope as the supreme head of the united Church.

2. *Unity in the West:* For Urban, the Crusades would be a good complement to the Reform movement. When he knew, as he travelled through Europe, that his exhortations for peace and unity remained unheeded by many who were bent on a professional life of plunder; and when he realized that it was almost impossible to tame the warlords with their romantic code of militarism, he decided to turn them against a common foe.³⁹ Thus, foreign war was substituted for private warfare. By this means, Urban seemed to have made a very timely reminder to the western christians that if they desire for survival, and if they had to resort to war to fulfill such a desire, the war must be directed not against themselves, but against a greater threat: the Mohammedans. In his supposed sermon at Clermont, he was said to have remarked:

Let those who have been accustomed to make private warfare against the faithful carry on to a successful conclusion a war against infidels... Let those who for a long time have been robbers now become soldiers for Christ. Let those who once fought brothers and relatives now fight against barbarians as they ought.⁴⁰

To the Crusades, Urban also channeled the spiritual zeal generated by the laity's poverty movements and almost universal spiritual awakening. Many western christians, intent on assuring their salva-

³⁸ S. RUNCIMAN, *op. cit.*, p. 97.

³⁹ F. LITTEL, *Atlas History of Christianity*, 2nd ed., New York, 1978, p. 38.

⁴⁰ K. SETTON, *op. cit.*, p. 222.

tion had been going on pilgrimages to holy places. As mentioned earlier, this belief was encouraged and bolstered by the Cluniacs. With the advent of the moorish invasion, and with the Fatimites controlling Egypt and Palestine, the pilgrimages were almost rendered impossible.⁴¹ It was, therefore, understandable that many christians in the west, unable to make their pilgrimage had to harbor a certain sense of guilt and frustration. It was their salvation that was at stake. Some of these joined the *reconquista* in Spain, as a way of avenging themselves against the moors; others started to live a quasi-religious life in hope of remission for their sins.

Urban's idea of the Crusades, then, came as an invitation and a challenge. It was an invitation to make the pilgrimage with all the blessings of the Church, and a challenge to fight for it. What more appealing proposition could one make to people who were in fact longing to perform such tasks? Their ideals of knighthood fusing with their desire for holiness! The people responded to the call. In fact, the response, as reported by contemporary historians, was overwhelming. But one should not conclude too easily that such a popular enthusiasm, ubiquitous and intense, was mechanically produced to the order of one Pope. The people's response, as well as the invitation and challenge of Urban, had been conditioned by a long historical trend (some of the elements of this trend have been mentioned above) that made the Crusades appear not only important but even necessary. As one modern historian analyzed it:

Although it seems to have taken contemporaries by surprise, the Crusades was so quickly accepted that it is clear that the public was ready for it. Quite simply, the author of the *Gesta* says that the Crusades came when the time was at hand for all to take up crosses and follow Christ. The modern way of putting it is that the Crusades were preceded by a long trend of thought which conditioned minds to the idea of a holy war.⁴²

But regardless of the historical or psychological deductions over the response of the people to Urban's call, what is of importance in this study is Urban's view of all those events. For Urban, the Crusade was a means to an end, and so its success must be gauged not by how the

⁴¹ F. X. FUNK, *op. cit.*, p. 371.

⁴² K. SETTON, *op. cit.*, p. 222.

people reacted to it, but by how it helped to achieve his goal of unity. And indeed, as many historians would agree, the Crusades, inspite of the notorious excesses of many crusaders, helped in many ways not only to unify western Europe but to expand the horizon of western christians. If before the Crusades they had the all-pervasive fear of being hemmed in from all sides, they later discovered that the world was not only western Europe, that civilization was not only western civilization. If previous to the Crusades they had an almost desperate feeling that the Church was doomed and that therefore they had to save her, they later realized that there was no need to save the Church because no force on earth could destroy her. As regards West-East unity, however, the Crusades only proved to be a failure. The Crusades created a wider gap between the East and the West because of the consequent plunderings inflicted on the East by the crusaders.

Urban died on July 29, 1099, before news of the success of the first Crusade could reach him. But, contrary to the mistaken belief that Urban had spent the rest of his life encouraging everybody to join the Crusades, as though he had nothing else in mind but that, one would be surprised at the fact that among the numerous letter that he wrote during his papacy, only two were directed precisely for the Crusades,⁴³ and in all his journeys after Clermont, he preached the Crusades only four times.⁴⁴

Urban could have easily become the glamorous crusading Pope, leading his army in battle array, as Gregory once dreamt.⁴⁵ But Urban chose to remain where he was most needed and to perform the work which he had vowed himself: the thankless job of exhorting, correcting, encouraging those who were weak, perfecting those who were strong. Urban was realistic enough as to know where he could be most effective. As Pope, he had but one goal: the unity of Christendom, and

⁴³ H. HAGENMEYER, *Epistulae et Chartae ad historiam primi belli sacri spectantes: Die Kreuzzugsbriefe aus den Jahren 1088-1100*, Innsbruck, 1901, pp. 136-138.

⁴⁴ In Limoges, Angers, Tours, Nîmes. See L. PAULOT, *op. cit.*, pp. xxxiii-xxxvi. Also K. SETTON, *op. cit.*, pp. 250-252.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 224: "Naively, he even asked Henry IV to protect the Roman Church during his absence."

he had two means: the *Reform*, to assure the internal life of Christendom; and the *Crusades*, to assure its survival.

He might not have achieved during his lifetime the goal he was aspiring for. But what was important was that he tried to achieve this through the synthesis of the means available to him. If only for this, Urban already had set his mark in history. As one of his epitaphs goes:

*...quare amplissimo studio esse laetandum, quod ejus sanctissimi viri precibus sublato pestifero schismate ulceris inveterati fomentum, et sub obtentu unius valentissimi domini veram pacis et redintegrationis unionem ecclesi acceperit.*⁴⁶ □

⁴⁶ PL, c. 261.