

Runciman, Sir Steven, *The First Crusade*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980. Pp. 240.

This book, by one of Britain's leading Byzantinists, is an abridgement of the appropriate section of the author's three-volume *History of the Crusades*, and covers the first years of the first Crusade from the west in the years following 1095, the year of the Council of Clermont which initiated the movement. The book is divided into fourteen chapters from the "Reign of Antichrist" to the "Triumph of the Cross" with epilogue and index.

The author begins with an introductory account of the different ways the East and West developed politically and religiously since the time of the Roman Empire, and how it was that in the seventh century the Persians attacked and conquered Syria and Palestine while the Byzantine Empire was weakened by internal troubles. It is pointed out that the first Crusade was really that of Emperor Heraclius who at this time (622-629) reconquered the territories lost to the Persians, marching out as a Christian Emperor against the infidel. However, the local Christians of Syria and Egypt felt they fared better under the infidel than under the Emperor, who taxed them highly. Thus they welcomed the Arab invasion a few years later, and continued to survive in reasonable comfort for several centuries under the usually fairly lenient Arab yoke. Many Christians however drifted over to Islam to enjoy its greater privileges. During this time of moderate tranquillity, more and more pilgrims from the West came to the Holy Land. The author at this point spends a chapter on the origin and development of pilgrimage from the West, which had grown greater through the centuries. However, pilgrims relied on the benevolence both of Byzantium for their passage, and of the Moslems for their stay in the Holy Land. But this moderate tranquillity was about to be disturbed once again. A new force phantastical and fierce was rising in the East threatening the much troubled fortunes of the Byzantine Empire. The new force was that of the Turks.

Earlier the Byzantine Emperor Constantin Ducas had reduced his army, fearing a revolt, at just the time it was needed to combat the rising Turks. As a result, the Empire lost the battle of Manzikert in 1071 which opened much of the empire's territory to the Turks. According to Sir Steven "The battle of Manzikert was the worst disaster to befall Byzantium; and it was the indirect cause of the Crusades". By 1095, the Emperor Alexius Comnenus was ready to take action against the Turks, but he lacked troops. When Pope Urban II held his first great council in 1095, Alexius sent representatives who appealed for help from the West to defend Christendom against the infidel. The western hierarchs were impressed, and Urban began to plan a great Holy War: he called a Council late in 1095 at Clermont and announced that the Christians of the West should aid their brethren in the East, as well as free the Holy Places from the infidel and restore a passage for pilgrims.

Thus began the first Crusade. The Pope's appeal was particularly attractive to the West, for it would provide opportunity not only to fight, but to fight with a feeling that it was for God. Moreover, in the squabbles of the period, a Crusade would provide the opportunity for the lesser knights and barons to establish themselves in their own lands, and for all there would be booty. The spiritual aspect of fighting for Christianity played a large part in many people's decisions to go on the Crusade.

The Crusade was not well organised. No leader was chosen, and several independent armies went out. The first was really an unorganised people's movement, which ran into trouble because it left earlier and the Empire was taken unaware when it arrived. The armies followed on by various routes and at various times towards Constantinople. The Empire made

provision for their passage, and did all it could despite their great numbers (it coped remarkably well, in fact, in the circumstances, for the emperor expected small groups of mercenaries, not potentially dangerous armies). There were many incidents of raiding and sacking caused by the lack of discipline of the westerners.

Having gathered at Constantinople, the Crusade proceeded across Asia Minor down to Antioch, conquering territories on the way (for example the strikingly successful campaign of Baldwin in Edessa). Antioch was captured with difficulty, and a quarrel broke out between Bohemond and Raymond, the two main leaders, as to its possession. In the end, Raymond left, as leader of the Crusade, and came down to Jerusalem. Here the Crusaders faced grave difficulties, for the Moslems had poisoned the wells, and the city was particularly difficult to besiege. However, enormous siege engines and scaling ladders were made and the Crusaders paired into the city, massacring every inhabitant but for a handful of leaders who bargained for their lives.

Considering the disorganisation, it is remarkable that the Crusade was so successful, for there was no coordination of the movement except the little provided by the Emperor, and the common purpose of the Crusaders. Not only does the author draw a clear distinction between the order of the Empire and the westerners' lack of it, but he also stresses the great gulf between them in matters of culture. Far from emerging as the noble heroes of romances, the westerners appear more as a barbarian invasion, each greedy for what he could get for himself, caring nothing about the oath to the Emperor to restore reconquered land, cruel in the greatest degree, slaughtering not only Moslems but also Christians, and always preferring force. We can do nothing but admire the Empire for coping with them as well as it did.

The importance of the Byzantine Empire in the Crusades is in fact often forgotten, but the present author goes into some detail over its position, its relationships to the West and the different attitudes of both, and of course its place in aiding the Crusade, which could never have succeeded without the cooperation of the Empire.

Besides making clear the position of the Empire in the whole Crusade movement, the author writes in such a way as to make clear the particular role of each participant in the often complex intrigues and politics of the Crusade, so that we are given a lucid and readable account possible for anyone to follow; this clarity is backed up and given an extra dimension by the many illustrations that adorn the book on almost every page. Indeed, the book makes an excellent introduction to the subject of the Crusades.

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Nicolas Cheetham, *Mediaeval Greece*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1981. Pp. x + 341. 2 maps. Cloth.

Sir Nicolas Cheetham, a member of the British Diplomatic Service in Greece for many years, has produced a book intended to fill a vacuum: "My excuse for embarking on the present study of the age when Greece was ruled by princes from the West is primarily that no work of this kind has been published in English since Rodd's *The Princes of Achaia and the Chronicles of Morea* (1907) and William Miller's admirable but minutely detailed *The Latins in the Levant* (1908)". Since those two books an enormous amount of scholarship on the feudal age has been produced but little of it that is accessible to the general reader. Sir Nicolas's