**Origins/ Causes of the Crusades**

1095 – Byzant Emp Alexius I Comnenus appealed to Pope Urban II for Western Christian military aid V Seljuk Turks… Nov 1095 @ **Synod (Council) Clermont** Urban preached “holy war” V Muslim powers, but Pope had own agenda…what Alexius requested & what the Byzantines actually got were V different!

***Crusading movement*** – result of convergence of *many factors…*

1. Church regeneration in the W, esp ***Cluniac*** movement – renewed religious zeal.
2. Consolidation of Papal power, + intensifying internal *religiosity.*
3. Fragmentation of Arab power in M East – empire increasingly diverse/ feuding…Sunnite/ Shi’ite…+ familial/ dynastic power plays…divergent peoples/ cultures under Arab rule etc
4. Pressure from “Asiatic horse peoples” – Turkic (Alp Arslan, Sultanate of Rum, but also Mongols…)
5. Climate changes (*Medieval Warming*) – arid areas + problem harvests + increasing popul, esp W Europe – “land hunger”…quest for foodstuffs, + “loot”!
6. Europeans hungry for grtr control over/ access to E trades/ goods – M East on X roads of key trade routes, “Silk Road” etc
7. Norman expansionism/ empire building… imperialism?
8. Genuine fears of “Christendom” re expansionist Turkish power – some did believe there was a clear & present danger, & wanted a defensive war against the threat.

**NB –** complex/ mixed motives underpinning Crusades explained v clearly by *Prof HE Mayer* – ***(1965/ 1988 2nd ed) The Crusades*** (Oxf Uni Press) – ch 2 (worth reading!)

Urban’s call 26/11/1095 @ Clermont trad seen as start of the Crusades, but it did not come from an underlying nowhere… there had been numerous long-term harbingers of such a movement, and Urban’s clarion call was simply an immediate (opportunistic?!) response to the appeal from the Byzantine Empire for mil help.

**Turghil Beg (Seljuk ldr)** declared Caliph, Baghdad, 1055 – son **Alp Arslan** v menacing…took Jerusalem (al-Quds) from tolerant Arabs…increasing probs for Christian pilgrims visiting Holy Places.

Seljuks then ousted Fatimid Caliphs from Egypt.

**1071 Battle of Manzikert:** Turks inflicted crushing defeat on Byzantine Army (containing many “Frankish”/ Norman mercenaries): potent/ mobile, v disciplined & well led Turkish cavalry literally ran rings around the poorly led, divided Byzantines whose commanders committed the cardinal military sin of splitting their forces.

This defeat of the hitherto almost invincible Byzantine Army sent shock waves thro' the Christian world – East & West.

Estab of Turkish **Sultanate of Rum, Iconium, Asia Minor** – massive strategic threat to Constantinople/ Byzantine Empire. West horrified/ fearful…who next?!

1074 – Pope Gregory VII planned an expedition to E to help Christians:

* Envisaged a W Army of knights led by himself – ”Dux et Pontifex”
* Wanted to liberate the Holy Sepulchre
* Drive out Turks – not all Muslims…just the Seljuks
* Reunify the W & E churches…under, of course, Papal ldrshp!

Never happened, but the seeds of an idea were planted…

1095 – when Alexius’ legates arrived @ Piacenza (a Synod was in session there) to ask the Pope Urban II to aid fellow Christians, it was (in the opinion of many) too good an opportunity for the Pope to pass over…

18-26th Nov Urban held Council (Synod) @ Clermont – preached sermon invoking ldrs of Christendom to join a “crusade” (symbol = cross)…password = “Jerusalem”. Great fervour/ intensity…Papal Indulgence for all who died following “The Cross”… de facto sanctification of a range of worldly and spiritual motives.

Without doubt, there was genuine religious zeal/ commitment…

2 intellectual currents merged in Urban’s sermon, which gave huge impetus to those hearing this call to arms:

1. Concept of “pilgrimage” to The Holy Land – unarmed pilgrimages had increased grty duing C11th, but were now meeting resistance/ hostility from Seljuks. Urban’s call tapped into resentment about this.
2. Concept of “Holy War” – for some time, many in “Christendom” had felt threatened by “heathens”, “pagans”, “infidels” on their borders – Seljuks a manifestation of this paranoia. It is notable that many did not simply want to retake Jerusalem, but desired a war V Islam and “the Wends” – ie Slavs East of R Danube, most of whom had, in fact, been Christian since the C9th!

To many W Christians, a “Holy War” V Islam was now necessary, and justified.

**Of course….** This has been/ is much debated/ contested by historians today.

Important to **engage with** this debate… read!

**Key point –** origins/ cause of Crusades were multiple… long & short term… complex…interconnected.

***There are no simple, clear-cut answers!***

**Opinions**

**Interpretations**

**Religious, Political, and Cultural perspectives…**

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