

The Children's Crusade of 1212

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*The touching story of innocent children setting out to recover the Holy Sepulchre but suffering a tragic fate was becoming a popular legend within half a century of the actual expedition. Linguistic and social analysis, however, suggests that the crusaders of 1212 were not children, but rather were poor persons on the margins of rural society who were thoroughly imbued with the ideals of the cult of apostolic poverty. They believed that after the failure of the armed crusades, God had judged the powers of this world unworthy to rescue the holy places, and had instead made the poor a divine elect to accomplish this task.**

The chroniclers and annalists of western Christendom could note many important events for the year 1212. The troops of King Alfonso of Castile won a splendid victory over the Saracens in July of that year. In the autumn, the young King Frederick II came to Germany to settle matters with his rival, Otto of Brunswick. The tension between the kings of England and France became exacerbated, and in southern France the Albigensian Crusade dragged on endlessly. Along with these events, we encounter the potpourri of famines, droughts, floods, miracles and other local news which is standard fare in medieval chroniclers.

But particular attention was given to a phenomenon which seemed to transcend the normal order, a *commocio puerorum*, a sort of crusading movement which contemporary authors found difficult to categorize: "a miraculous affair, indeed more than miraculous, for nothing of the sort had ever been heard of in the world" (*Chron. Reg. IIa*:190). Some chroniclers even speak of this crusade to the exclusion of all other events in 1212. What actually happened is difficult to ascertain, for the information in contemporary sources is extremely fragmentary, and no author actually participated in the crusade from beginning to end. The movement began in the environs of Cologne, whence mobs of people began moving south up the Rhine, saying that God had ordered them to liberate Jerusalem. In France, crowds collected around the person of a young shepherd, who claimed that he had seen Christ in the guise of a poor pilgrim. Little is known of the result. The German expedition crossed the Alps into Italy, but there split up. Only legends have survived about the French movement.

But the event continued to concern people, for even forty or fifty years later Vincent of Beauvais, Roger Bacon, Thomas of Cantimpré, Matthew Paris and many others mention the expedition in their works. Only in these later writers do we find a more continuous narrative compiled from this fragmentary information implying a children's crusade. With great candor and even greater imagination they revised the older accounts and described how children throughout France and Germany joined a young prophet and went off to the Holy Land under his leadership; how singing and praying, but suffering great privation, they crossed the Alps to the Mediterranean,



where in their childlike innocence they waited for God to divide the sea and allow them to cross; and how finally, when the eagerly awaited miracle had proven a cruel deception, they fell into the hands of charlatans who loaded them into boats and sold them on the slave markets of northern Africa. This is the picture of the Children's Crusade with which we have become familiar, for it has become so incorporated into literature that even in this century it has inspired such writers as Martinus Nijhoff and Bertold Brecht. But it is also a pageant which makes the historian uneasy. He asks whether there really was a crusade, whether the participants were in fact little children, and where legend becomes entwined with fact.

Although the literary echoes of the Children's Crusade have been considerable, little scientific spadework has been done. There has been a grand total of eight significant publications. Four are concerned primarily with a critique of the sources and with reconstructing the narrative of the crusade itself. The earliest were by the Frenchman de Janssens and Röhrich, the famous German historian of the crusades (de Janssens 1891; Röhrich 1876). Between them they provided a fairly complete review of the available sources, but neither adopted a critical attitude toward his material. Both failed to notice that the later sources clearly show a legend in formation. The best source discussion to date is by the American medievalist Munro, who identified the legendary element in the later narratives, particularly that of Alberic of Troisfontaines, and gave a very sober and convincing

account of the Crusade (Munro 1913–4). J. E. Hansbery claimed to have corrected Munro's work, but he based his main argument on the notoriously unreliable stories of Richer of Sênonès, who wrote after 1264.¹ A fault common to these two historians is their limitation to the sources and to reconstructing events; no serious attempt is made to explain the Children's Crusade itself. We get only some casual observations on the religious sensitivity of medieval men and the tragedy of the Fourth Crusade. The German psychiatrist Hecker did give an original interpretation of the Children's Crusade (Hecker 1865) as an expression of the diseased religious emotionalism of the middle ages. But his book makes clear that Hecker, a nineteenth-century rationalist, considered every kind of religious emotion fundamentally pathological.

P. Alphanéry published his ideas about the Children's Crusade in an article of 1916, but revised and supplemented this in his posthumously published book, which will be my basic point of departure (Alphanéry and Dupront 1959:115–48). Alphanéry considered the Crusade the expression of a medieval cult of the child, which was connected with the veneration of the Innocents and was actually a kind of sacrificial rite in which the Innocents willingly gave themselves up for the good of all Christendom (Alphanéry and Dupront 1959:141). But he treated the sources indiscriminately, basing his most extreme conclusions on the least trustworthy narratives.²

The most recent article on the Children's Crusade is by Giovanni Miccoli (1961), who was the first to note that contemporary

Figure 1. The Children's Crusade in the vision of Gustave Doré. From J. Michaud, *Geschiedenis der kruistochten '88 Hertogenbosch*, 1879), which was illustrated by Doré.

sources did not portray the participants as children. He agreed with Alphandéry that veneration of innocent children was important, and concluded by comparing the Children's Crusade with the movement associated with the child saint Nicholas of Trani at the end of the eleventh century. Although Delalande's book on the Children's Crusade (1962) is without independent merit. Werner's review of it in the *Deutsche Literaturzeitung* developed Miccoli's conclusions and described the Crusade as a social movement in religious guise.³

The standard general works on the crusades naturally devote some attention to the Children's Crusade. Norman Zacour confines himself essentially to a critique of Munro's conclusions. He throws little light on the causes of the expedition, comparing the movement to the disturbances centering around Eudes de l'Etoile and to the Pastoureaux of 1251. He deals briefly with the psychological instability of men of that time and concludes that the Children's Crusade "remains one of a series of social explosions, through which medieval men and women – and children too, wonderfully sympathetic to the agitation of their elders – found release" (Zacour 1962:342). Sir Steven Runciman gives a singularly fantastic version of the Crusade. Although he cites Munro's article in his notes, his narrative is so wild that even the unsophisticated reader might wonder if he had really understood it (Runciman 1971c:139–44).

Following Alphandéry, H. E. Mayer called attention to the connection between the Crusade and the reverence of the Innocents, but also saw a cause in the contemporary concept that children were the particular chosen people of God because they were the poorest. In this he recognizes the influence

of the cult of apostolic poverty, concluding that "the Children's Crusade marked both the triumph and the failure of the ideal of poverty" (Mayer 1972:204). Adolf Waas, who considered the entire crusading movement a manifestation of chivalric piety, saw the Children's Crusade as a protest against the glorification of the holy war (Waas 1956a:253–7). In addition to the treatments in these standard works on the crusades, the Children's Crusade is also mentioned parenthetically in Norman Cohn's study of medieval chiliasm. Cohn places it in the tradition of mass crusades and considers the expedition a chiliasmic movement in which the poor tried to escape the hopeless misery of their daily lives (Cohn 1971:89–90).

Miccoli's claim that the participants on the Children's Crusade were not children obviously undermined all the other interpretations, save perhaps that of Cohn. But I do not think that even Miccoli carried his theory to its logical conclusions, for later in his article he fell back into the old explanatory framework. Before we try to resolve this problem, we should consider the sources of the Children's Crusade and the actual course of events.

The sources of the Children's Crusade

There are relatively few sources, and their information is fragmentary. Some fifty accounts are known to us, ranging in length from a line to half a page. The shortest is in the chronicle of the Norman abbey of Lyre: *Anno 1212: Fecerunt pueri processiones* (*Chron. Lir.*:1434). A number of references are in verse, such as Herman of Altaich: *Anno millesimo ducenteno duodeno/Ad mare stultorum*

tendebat iter Puerorum (Herr.. Ann.:386). Munro concluded from this that the Children's Crusade quickly became a subject of popular literature (Munro 1913-4:516). The sources can be divided into three categories based on chronology of composition: strictly contemporary sources written by roughly 1220, treatments composed between 1220 and 1250 by chroniclers who had personal knowledge of the crusade but wrote their experiences only much later, and sources written after 1250 by authors who definitely obtained their information second or third hand.

We begin with the contemporary sources. The *Chronica Regia Coloniensis Continuatio IIa* (190-1; Wattenbach 1894:445) contains a long and generally neutral description of the Children's Crusade by a contemporary author from Cologne. He erroneously dated it 1213, but he did this with other events whose date is indisputably 1212, such as the death of Archbishop Johannes von Trier and the accession of his successor, Dietrich von Wied.⁴ The *Chronica Regia Coloniensis Continuatio IIIa* (*Chron. reg. IIIa*:234) also gives a complete description of the expedition. Its author was probably a monk of St Pantaleon's Abbey in Cologne, who compiled his chronicle in 1216-7 (*Chron. reg. IIIa*:xvii-xviii; Wattenbach 1894:446). In the contemporary annals of the Swabian monasteries of Ellwangen, Neresheim and Zwiefalten, the Children's Crusade is noted in a few succinct lines (*Ann. Ellw.*:20; *Ann. Ner.*:23; *Ann Zwif.*:56, MGH SS 10:15-6, 53). The fact that three Swabian abbeys which were independent of one another recorded completely different accounts of the Children's Crusade is indeed extraordinary; it could be an indication of the route which the crusaders took to Italy. The

reference in a fourth Swabian source, the Chronicle of Ellwangen, is a copy of that in the Annals of Ellwangen (*Chron. Ellw.*:37; MGH SS 10:17). The contemporary annals of the abbey of Schäftlarn on the Isar near Munich gave a reasonably full account of the expedition; they are important and comparatively reliable for the history of the early thirteenth century (*Ann. Schef.*:338; Wattenbach 1894:375-6). The annals of the Alpine abbey of Admont are among the most important of the Austrian annal group (*Ann. Adm.*:592; Lhotsky 1963:195). The author of these annals is the only one to report that Nicholas, leader of the German expedition, later participated in the Fifth Crusade and was at the siege of Damietta.

The Salzburg annals were written by a contemporary author who was particularly well-informed about Italian affairs (*Ann. Sal.*:780; Lhotsky 1963:197). He says that the pope sent two cardinals to the north with orders to stop the expedition, which they did at Treviso in northern Italy. The report of the Children's Crusade in the chronicle of the priest Magnus was taken from these annals (*Chron. Mag.*:526; Lhotsky 1963:228).

The *Annales Placentini Guelfi* were written about 1220 by Johannes Codagnellus, a citizen of Piacenza (*Ann. Plac.*:xiii, 42). He almost certainly witnessed the procession of the crusaders through Piacenza, which he says occurred on 20 August 1212. The *Annales Ianuenses* were the official municipal chronicle of Genoa, which various authors continued until roughly 1300. The clerk Ogerius Panis wrote them between 1196 and 1220, and probably made his contributions annually (*Ann. Ian.*:4, 131). He must have observed the arrival of the crusaders in Genoa, which he dates 25 August 1212. The chronicler Sicardus of Cremona lived from

roughly 1160 to 1215 and was bishop of Cremona from 1185 (*Sic. Cron.*:180–1, 5^off., 22–59). His account of the Children's Crusade can thus be no more than three years after the fact.

The report of the Children's Crusade in the chronicles of Salimbene de Adam and of Alberto Milioli, a notary of Reggio nell' Emilia, is exactly the same except on a few minor points (*Sal. Cron.*:30, xx–xxi; *Alb. Cron.*:657). The earlier version is that in Salimbene's chronicle, although he only began writing after 1282. Milioli copied large segments from his chronicle, including the account of the Children's Crusade. Holder-Egger emphasizes that Salimbene, in writing the sections of his chronicle dealing with the early thirteenth century, used a now lost chronicle of Sicardus of Cremona and a contemporary continuation of it.⁵ He thinks that this continuation, which includes the account of the Children's Crusade, was the work of Sicardus' secretary, Petrus de Crotta (Holder-Egger 1904:241).

Annals were also written by Renier (1157–1230), a monk in the abbey of St Jacques of Liège (*Ann. Rein.*:665; Balau 1902–3:426–8). His work, written in a sober, clear, and balanced style, is a continuation of the annals of Lambertus Parvus; he probably added his notes year by year and his annals are highly regarded as a source for the history of the early thirteenth century. The annals of the Premonstratensian abbey of Floreffe on the Sambre were written, continued and revised by several contemporary hands, but the account of the Children's Crusade in this source is very summary (*Ann. Flor.*:626; Balau 1902–3:261–2). The *Chronicon universale anonymi Laudunensis* was written in Laon, in northern France, and is

extremely accurate and important. The narrative breaks off suddenly in 1219, probably when the author died (*Chron. Laud.*:70–1; MGH SS 26:442–3). This chronicle contains a very detailed account of the Children's Crusade in France and includes many details found in no other source.

The *Annales Gemmeticenses* were kept by the cellarer of the abbey of Jumièges for the period 1200–13. The report of the Children's Crusade in these annals is very short and almost exactly the same as that of the Chronicle of Savigny. If the author in fact stopped writing in 1213, it is hardly possible that he could have based his account of the Children's Crusade on a copy of the Savigny chronicle, and we may therefore assume that these annals contain the original version.⁶ The account of the Children's Crusade in two other French chronicles, *Auctarium Mortui Maris* and *Annalium Rothomagensium Continuatio*, is identical but very detailed. Which one is the original is uncertain (*Auct. Mort.*:467; *Ann. Roth.*:501; see Delisle 1898:194–8, 203).

We must now consider sources written between 1220 and 1250. The fourth continuator of the *Gesta Treverorum* probably compiled his chronicle just after 1242 (398–9, 369), but his account shows that he must either have been an eyewitness of the Children's Crusade or that he repeated the account of someone else who had seen it. He tells us that Nicholas, the leader of the expedition, carried a badge "like a cross, in the form of a tau, which was to be a sign of his sanctity and miraculous power; but it was not easy to tell what metal it was made of". This makes it clear that the author must have seen the man.

The chronicle of the abbey of Ebersheim-münster near Sélestat in Alsace has a section

on the Children's Crusade, written after 1234 and perhaps after 1237 (*Chron. Eb.*:450; Bloch 1909:142, 145). The author's style is matter-of-fact; he seems to have been a sober observer of contemporary affairs, and his treatment of the Children's Crusade reflects this. He expresses his obvious uncertainty about the motivations of the expedition with the simple words "I really don't know what brought it about".

The *Annales Marbacenses* (vii, 82–3) are for various reasons extremely important for our knowledge of the Children's Crusade. The narrative is very detailed and written in an extremely polished and flowing Latin. The author's pronouncedly inimical attitude toward the crusade is striking, for he begins his account by speaking of *nugatoria quedam expeditio*, a certain foolish undertaking. There has been vigorous debate about the time and place of origin of these annals, for only one manuscript has survived and only internal criticism is possible. Bloch, who prepared the most recent critical edition, thought that the annals were composed in three parts: the annals of a canon of Strasbourg between 631 and 1200, a chronicle from Hohenburg between 631 and 1212, and a continuation by an author from the abbey of Neuburg, who revised the entire work and continued it through 1238. This last, who wrote the account of the Children's Crusade, probably composed his segment only after 1240 (*Ann. Marb.*:viii–xiv). Haller thought that the annals 631–1200 were the work of the provost Friedrich von St Thomas of Strasbourg, that they were continued in the abbey of Marbach in southern Alsace until 1238, and were finally supplemented in Neuburg after 1244.⁷ He maintained that the story of the Children's Crusade was written in Marbach after 1230.

He based his opinion principally on a stylistic comparison, for the Marbach annals show a complete mastery of Latin, cosmopolitan sensitivities and a rather sympathetic tone. On the whole, Haller's interpretation seems the surest, particularly since he based it on a comparative examination of stylistic usages, a method which has the best chance of accuracy when only one manuscript survives.

Albert, abbot of the Premonstratensian abbey of Stade near Hamburg between 1232 and 1240, gives a rather full account of the Children's Crusade. Since he was probably born between 1180 and 1200, he could have heard reports of the Children's Crusade. He wrote his annals between 1232 and 1240 and continued them up to 1256. He died in 1256 or 1264 (*Ann. Alb.*:355; Fiehn 1931:549–50, 536–47). He includes the remarkable report that when the pope heard of the Children's Crusade, he is supposed to have sighed *Hii pueri nobis inproperant, quod ad recuperationem terrae sanctae eis currentibus nos dormimus*, "these children are reproaching us, for they are hastening to recover the Holy Land while we slumber". It is highly unlikely that the pope said this, for the papal registers for these years do not mention the Children's Crusade (Röscher 1969:138).

The chronicle of William, abbot of Andres near Dunkirk from 1207 to 1234, is noted for its accuracy (*Wil. Chron.*:754). William probably only wrote his chronicle after 1226, but he seems to have been careful to note important events which occurred earlier (MGH SS 24:684–5, 687–8). His narrative is the only one, aside from that of Alberic of Troisfontaines, in which French 'children' are also said to have gone to the Mediterranean.

The narrative of the Children's Crusade

by Alberic of Troisfontaines is the most complete and detailed which has survived, and it provides the starting point for a romantic interpretation. Unfortunately, it is peculiarly difficult to date, for it is not a uniform whole. Most of it was written by a monk from the Cistercian abbey of Troisfontaines near Châlons-sur-Marne, whose name according to tradition was Alberic (*Chron. Alb.*:803, 640). He began writing in 1232. This chronicle later came into the possession of the abbey of Neufmouëtier near Huy, and there was supplemented by one of the monks. This so-called 'interpolator of Huy', probably wrote after 1252, but before 1295. Scheffer-Boichorst, who edited the chronicle, felt that the additions of the interpolator were minimal. He added nothing to the original chronicle beyond reports from the immediate neighbourhood, such as flooding along the Meuse (*Chron. Alb.*:641-8). Toubert thinks that the entire account of the Children's Crusade was the work of this interpolator, but gives no proof of this (Toubert 1965-6:66; Alphandéry and Duprønt 1959:117). Munro too thought Alberic's stirring tale fabulous, for he could find confirmation in no French chronicle written south of the Loire of Alberic's statement that French 'children' went to the Mediterranean (Munro 1913-14:520). We should probably close the case provisionally and give Alberic's account the benefit of the doubt.

The continuation of the chronicle of Roger of Hoveden containing the account of the Children's Crusade was probably written around 1227 in the abbey of Barnwell, and was later included in a compilation of Walter of Coventry (*Mem. Walt.* 1873:vii-ix, 205). The author gives a very short notice in which he mentions only the French ex-

pedition. Another English source, the chronicle of Matthew Paris, is one of the most famous historical works of the thirteenth century. Matthew was dependent upon the St Albans chronicle of Roger of Wendover until 1235, but he wrote the account of the Children's Crusade himself, probably after 1236 (*Matt. Paris Chron. maj.* 1874:xliv, xxviii n. 3, 558). His version leaves an impression of unreliability, for it is embellished with various details which betray more a lively imagination than a precise knowledge of the facts.

Finally, we must deal with sources written after about 1250. The Annals of Speyer were compiled in that city only about the end of the thirteenth century (*Ann. Spir.*:80, 84). Although the account of the Children's Crusade is only a few lines long, it is cited in most articles about the crusade, for it is the only German source which gives an exact date, namely for the procession through Speier on 25 July 1212 (de Janssens 1891:22; Munro 1913-4:522; Hansbery 1938-9:35; Zacour 1962:333). Miccoli thought that the fact that the author knew a definite date permits us to conclude that he had access to contemporary records, and this seems quite probable (Miccoli 1961:415 n. 32).

Several Alsatian annals have a few brief lines about the Children's Crusade; apparently the memory of the event remained alive in this area for some time. The annals of Marmoutier, the continuation of Argenteuil and the chronicle of Metz were written about 1250 (*Ann. Maur.*:104, 107; *Cont. Arg.*:341, 14; *Chron. Mett.*:520, 490). The *Annales Ellenhardi* were written after 1290 in Strasbourg (*Ann. Ell.*:97-8, 101), while my only source for the existence of the *Chronicon Dominicanorum* is the reference in de Janssens' account.⁸ The chronicle of the

priest Frische Closener was completed in Strasbourg in 1362 and is the only account of the Children's Crusade in the vernacular (*Frit. Chron.*:5, 101).

The later German sources also mention the Children's Crusade in entries of only a few lines. Herman of Altaich (about 1200–75) probably wrote his annals between 1251 and 1260 (*Herm. Ann.*:358, 386), and the sections on the Children's Crusade in the Augsburg chronicle were copied thence (*Ann. Aug.*:431). In the *Flores temporum*, written by a Swabian Franciscan between 1292 and 1294, there are two entries of two lines apiece on the Children's Crusade (226–7, 240). The *Annales Thuringici breves* (40–1) have been preserved in a fourteenth-century codex, but they were probably written in the thirteenth. The *Chronica minor* of Erfurt was written by a local Minorite and first appeared in 1261–2, then was reedited in 1265–6 (*Chron. Erph.*:496, 646). Under the title *Chronicon excerptum*, Pistorius published a fifteenth-century copy of this chronicle, but it was later lost (*Chron. exc.*:1056–1115; *Chron. Erph.*:503–4).

Two identical verse accounts were added to Viennese annals around 1270 (*Cont. Vin.*:726; *Auct. Vin.*:723; Lhotsky 1963:193–4). Heinric von Heimsburg, who was a prelate at Gmünd after 1270, wrote a single line about the Children's Crusade about that time (*Hein. Ann.*:714; Lhotsky 1963:184). A somewhat longer note is in the *Chronicon Leobicense*, which was probably written in Vienna in 1347–8 as redaction D of the *Liber certarum historiarum* of Johan von Viktrings (*Chron. Leob.*:802; Lhotsky 1963:303). Closely related to the chronicle of Leoben is the *Chronicon Austriacum anonymi* (*Chron. Austriac.*:231; Lhotsky 1963:202). The amount of both contemporary and later

material on the Children's Crusade written in Austria is indeed striking. The *Chronicon rhythmicum Austriacum* contains a full and remarkable account of the Children's Crusade, written in stately verses. Alphandéry mistakenly used this narrative to illustrate the intellectual background of the crusade (Alphandéry and Dupront 1959:125, 140); actually, it was only written around 1270 by a monk of Klosterneuburg near Vienna (*Chron. Aust.*:356; Möser-Mersky 1965:38). But it remains an interesting curiosity.

The Dominican Jacob da Voragine, author of the famous *Legenda aurea*, also compiled a chronicle of Genoa, probably in the years 1292–8 when he was bishop there (*Jac. Chron.*:col. 45; Höfer and Rahner 1960:cols. 849–50). Although it was composed long after the event, its style is sober, and we may assume that Jacob had perused earlier sources for the Children's Crusade. The annals of St Médard, which were composed at Soissons in the mid-thirteenth century (*Ann. Succ.*:518, 521), contain the strange allegation that frogs, birds and fish were hastening to the Holy Land before the Children's Crusade and that big packs of dogs surrounded a castle in Champagne and fought to the death. Alphandéry used this tale to attribute a ritualistic character to the Children's Crusade, but he completely neglected the date when the source was composed.⁹ Richer, a monk of the abbey of Sénones, described the vicissitudes of his monastery after 1254 (*Rich. Gest.*:301, 251; Wattenbach 1894:399). His verbose account of the Children's Crusade had more the character of a meditative reflection than of an objective report. He applies among other things the words of Lamentations 4:4, "The little ones were asking for bread, but there

was none to break it for them", to the children. There is also a short two-line verse on the Children's Crusade in a manuscript source.¹⁰

Roger Bacon mentions the Children's Crusade in the general framework of a treatise on astrology in his *Opus majus*, written about 1266 (*Rog. Bac. Opus majus*:401; Höfner and Rahner 1963:col. 1356). In it he discusses the mysterious concept *fascinatio*, a kind of attractive power which some persons can exercise on others for good or ill. For Bacon, only *fascinatio* can explain the mass movement of 'children' to the Holy Land.

Vincent of Beauvais probably wrote his *Speculum historiale*, a subdivision of his quadripartite *Summa*, after 1256 (*Vinc. Spec.* 1624:1238; Höfner and Rahner 1965:col. 798). His explanation of the Children's Crusade is fantastic: the Old Man of the Mountain, leader of the Assassins, held two clerks prisoner, and would only release them if French children were substituted for them. Thus there was an effort to lure the children to Palestine with false promises. Thomas of Cantimpré wrote his *Bonum universale de apibus* in Louvain, probably between 1256 and 1261 (*Thom. Cant.* 1627:140; Höfner and Rahner 1965:col. 139). His treatment of the Children's Crusade is short and soberly written, and makes no attempt to explain the phenomenon.

The chronicle of Lanercost was written by a Franciscan in northern England at the end of the thirteenth century, probably during the reign of Edward I (*Chron. Lan.*:14, v-vi, xii-xiii), but his narrative of the Children's Crusade simply copies that of Vincent of Beauvais. The chronicle of Jean le Long, abbot of St Bertin's, Saint-Omer, from 1366 to 1383, was written long after the Children's Crusade (*Joh. Chron.*:828, 736-8). His

work remained unfinished at his death in 1383, breaking off suddenly in 1294. He made ample use of the chronicle of William of Andres in his treatment of the Children's Crusade. The *Fasciculus temporum* of the Carthusian monk Werner Rolewinck (1425-1502) was published in Cologne in 1470 (*Wer. Rol.*:555; Höfner and Rahner 1963:col. 1368). His reference to the Children's Crusade is very short, and it is uncertain which sources he consulted.

The *Magnum chronicon belgium* was written in Neuss after 1498 by a canon of Windesheim (*Mag. chron. Belg.*:240-1; Boeren 1951:1). His version of the Children's Crusade is taken from that of Alberic of Troisfontaines, save that he omits a line which is very obscure in the original and was probably not understood by the copyist.¹¹ The author of the *Magnum chronicon* did not borrow directly from Alberic, for his chronicle is a copy of the so-called *Florarium temporum* up to 1466 (Boeren 1951:1), and the chronicle of Alberic was the most important source used by the latter for the history of the early thirteenth century (Boeren 1951:23).

We have to decide which of these annals and chronicles are of historical value. The first and last categories present few problems: the contemporary sources are extremely useful, while those written after 1250 must be handled with caution. Although they cannot be used to answer essential questions, they can show how the tradition of the crusade lived on in a given region. The only exception is the *Annales Spirenses*, for we have good reason to assume that this narrative of the Children's Crusade derives from a contemporary source.

There are more problems in dealing with the middle category, the sources written between 1220 and 1250. Some have detailed

accounts, and thus may be important; but they lose the dry precision of the contemporary versions and are clearly 'second generation' sources, so that they must be used carefully. How far the writers in this group might be from the events is apparent from Matthew Paris' version, which seems totally without foundation. Thus in dealing with this category we must use a second criterion in addition to time of composition: distance from the events. In this light, the chronicle of Matthew Paris, the *Memoriale* of Walter of Coventry, and the annals of Albert von Stade cease to be useful, for they were written in places which were far from the original theatre of events. At the other extreme is the author of the *Gesta Treverorum*, whose narrative suggests that he must have been an eyewitness of the Children's Crusade. The *Chronicon Ebersheimense* and the *Annales Marbacenses* also come from areas through which the crusaders of 1212 passed. These three chronicles will thus be used in the ensuing investigation. The chronicles of Alberic of Troisfontaines and William of Andres remain. Since we do not even know when Alberic's version was written, it is useless to evaluate it by the criterion of place, and we must therefore reserve judgement; William of Andres assumes a kind of mean position between England and Alsace, and his history will thus be used with the greatest caution.

In short, of the fifty-one sources for the Children's Crusade, not including copies, twenty-one which seem reasonably reliable will constitute the basis for our investigation.

What actually happened?

In this section, I shall sketch briefly the

course of the Children's Crusade and treat some of the problems involved in reconstructing the events.

Virtually all contemporary sources date the crusade in 1212. The only exceptions are one of the Cologne chroniclers, who says 1213, but he also places other events of 1212 in 1213 (*Chron. Reg. IIa*:191), and the annals of Neresheim, which report the crusade under 1211.¹² The author of the *Gesta Treverorum* gives a more definite proof of the date by reporting that the Children's Crusade occurred a few months before Dietrich von Wied was chosen archbishop of Trier.¹³ It is known from other sources that he was elected on 24 November 1212 (Eubel 1898:522). The date 1212 is thus virtually certain.

We begin with the German crusade. Between Easter and Whitsuntide (25 March–13 May) 1212, a mass crusading movement arose throughout Germany and France. Thousands of *pueri* suddenly abandoned their herds and ploughs and began heading south toward Jerusalem. There is no evidence that anyone urged this action on them, and indeed they were contravening the advice of their parents, kindred and friends. When they were asked who had urged them to such a daring undertaking, while only a few years past a great army led by several kings and countless dukes had vainly attempted to liberate Jerusalem, they answered only that they were obeying God's will and that they would do all that He required of them (*Chron. Reg. IIa*:191). Reinier of Liège says that they intended to cross the sea and reconquer the Holy Sepulchre, since kings and princes had been unable to do so (*Ann. Rein.*:665). But it is clear that the movement was not confined to idealists. The chronicler of St Pantaleon's in Cologne claims that a number of male-

volent people went along who tried to rob the crusaders of the gifts they received en route. One such miscreant was taken and hanged in Cologne (*Chron. Reg. IIIa*:234).

Several sources identify a certain Nicholas as leader of the movement. Johannes Codagnellus relates that Nicholas had a vision in which an angel told him that he and his followers were to liberate the Holy Sepulchre from the heathen Saracens.¹⁴ Nicholas claimed that God would support them, just as He had once sustained the Israelites. He would divide the sea so that they could cross to the Holy Land without wetting their feet.¹⁵ The chronicler of Trier, who had evidently seen Nicholas, says that he wore a badge which looked like a cross and had the form of a tau, a sign of his sanctity and miraculous power, but it was impossible to detect the metal of which it was made.¹⁶ Three chroniclers say that Nicholas came from the vicinity of Cologne (*Gest. Trev.*:399; *Ann. Adm.*:592; *Chron. Eb.*:450), but he is named in neither of the two Cologne chronicles, in the first of which emphasis is placed on the fact that the movement began without exhortation or preaching (*Chron. Reg. IIa*:191). This discrepancy can be explained if we assume that the movement originated near Cologne, and that Nicholas was not the first inspirational force but was accepted later as leader. If this was the case, Nicholas would not be mentioned in the Cologne chronicles, but the south German and Austrian authors would have thought that he came from Cologne, for they would have assumed that the leader came from where the movement originated.

The Crusaders probably moved south along the Rhine from Cologne. Whether they detoured to Trier cannot be ascertained from the *Gesta Treverorum*, for its author may

have seen the crowds he described elsewhere; perhaps several groups started south simultaneously. If this was the case, Nicholas may have been the leader of the group which visited Trier; he was not from Trier in any case, for the Trier chronicler thought that he came from Cologne. On 25 July 1212 the crusaders moved through Speyer and from there headed for Alsace, where their arrival evidently made a great impression if the extraordinary number of annals and chronicles mentioning them, even into the fourteenth century is any indication (*Chron. Eb.*:450; *Ann. Marb.*:82-3; *Ann. Maur.*:107; *Cont. Arg.*:341; *Chron. Mett.*:520; *Ann. Ell.*:101; *Chron. Col.*:22; *Frit. Chron.*:101).

The journey must have been exhausting. The chronicler of St Pantaleon's reports that many participants died of heat, hunger and thirst, even before they crossed the Alps (*Chron. Reg. IIIa*:234). Renier of Liège provides corroboration with the statement that the first half of July was extraordinarily hot that year (*Ann. Rein.*:665). The trip was obviously too hard for some, and they turned around at Mainz and went home.¹⁷ The crusaders were greeted enthusiastically everywhere and were given food and drink by people who believed that their undertaking was divinely inspired. But the Marbach annalist gives a biting judgement of these credulous people:

Et sicut ad tales novitates sepe et de facili credula turba sumus, multi quidem arbitrati sunt hec non de levitate mentis, sed per divinam inspirationem fieri et ex quadam pietate, unde et subveniebant eis in expensis victum et necessaria ministrantes (*Ann. Marb.*:82).

It is hard to determine the route followed by the crusaders from Alsace to Italy. The chroniclers say only that they crossed the Alps and arrived in Piacenza on 20 August

(*Ann. Plac.*:426). The shortest route to this part of Italy was then over the Great St Bernard Pass or over Chur and the Septimer, a route which is no longer in use.¹⁸ No source mentioning the Children's Crusade has survived from the Swiss Alpine region.

Against this view, there are contemporary notices of the crusade from the three Swabian abbeys of Ellwangen, Neresheim and Zwiefalten (*Ann. Elw.*:20; *Ann. Ner.*:23; *Ann. Zwif.*:56), from Schäftlarn Abbey south of Munich (*Ann. Schef.*:338), and from Salzburg and Admont in Austria (*Ann. Sal.*:780; *Ann. Adm.*:592). It thus seems that the 'children' did not pass through the Swiss Alps into Italy, but rather followed an eastern route through Swabia and Bavaria, through Austria and then over the Brenner into Lombardy.¹⁹ The south German accounts were written not long after 1212, so that it is highly improbable that the writers could have used older written sources. They must have obtained their information from stories which were circulating, a fact suggesting that the immediate neighbourhood of these abbeys was visited by the Children's Crusade. Indeed, an entire tradition of Children's Crusade stories developed in Austria (*Chron. Mag.*:526; *Cont. Vin.*:726; *Auct. Vin.*:723; *Hein. Ann.*:714; *Chron. Leob.*:802; *Chron. Aust.*:356).

This could also explain the interest of Bishop Sicardus in the Children's Crusade, for Cremona is on the route from the Brenner toward Piacenza and Genoa.²⁰ Part of the company may have gone to Venice rather than Genoa and never proceeded beyond Treviso (*Ann. Sal.*:780). One argument against this theory could be that the route is too long to be accomplished in such a short time. If we assume that the crusaders

left Speyer on 25 July and arrive in Genoa on 25 August (*Ann. Spir.*:84, *Ann. Ian.*:131), they covered about thirty-five kilometres per day.²¹ This is not extraordinary, for journeys of forty to forty-five kilometres in a day were quite usual. While big armies moved much more slowly, covering at most twenty to thirty kilometres per day (Lugwig 1897:179–89), a group of pilgrims who would be travelling without weapons and excess baggage and had no official duties, might well have moved more rapidly. Thirty-five kilometers per day is thus quite within the realm of possibility, although absolutely not if the pilgrims were in fact children. That the crusaders were moving very speedily toward Genoa is confirmed by Johannes Codagnellus, who says that they passed through Piacenza on Monday 20 August in haste to go overseas (*Ann. Plac.*:426). On Saturday, 25 August, they reached Genoa; in just over five days they thus travelled roughly 150 kilometres, an average of thirty-five kilometres per day, in part over mountainous, difficult terrain.

Ogerius Panis, the city annalist of Genoa, reports that reliable estimates had some seven thousand men, women and children pouring into Genoa on that Saturday, all carrying crosses, pilgrim staffs and travel bags.²² Many left the next day, probably deeply disappointed, certainly so if they had trusted Nicholas' words that God would hasten to aid them and would transport them with dry feet to the Holy Land; others remained behind in Genoa.²³

The pilgrim camp evidently split up after the debacle in Genoa. Some seem to have gone to Marseilles (*Chron. Reg. IIa*:191), while others managed to get to Rome (*Chron. Reg. IIa*:191; *Ann. Marb.*:82). There, the Marbach annalist records with sardonic

satisfaction, they finally realized how silly they had been, but no one save children and the elderly could get a dispensation from the crusading vow (*Ann. Marb.*:82). The *Gesta Treverorum* claims that a large group turned up in Brindisi, where the bishop forbade them to embark, for he suspected that Nicholas' father had sold them all to the heathen.²⁴ Still another group seems actually to have boarded boats, but they were seized by pirates who sold them to the Saracens (*Chron. Eb.*:450). All authors agree on one point: of the many thousands who went to Italy, very few returned. The Marbach annalist describes the tragic conclusion: "thus deceived and confused, they began to return; and those who had earlier been wont to traverse the lands in hordes and throngs, always singing of the heavens, now returned one at a time, silently, barefoot and hungry, fools in everyone's eyes, for a number of girls had lost the flower of their virginity" (*Ann. Marb.*:82-3). The sources disagree about Nicholas' fate. According to the *Gesta Treverorum*, he perished in Brindisi and his father subsequently committed suicide in Cologne (*Gest. Trev.*:399); another author reports that he took the cross again in 1217 and for two years fought courageously at Akris and the siege of Damietta (*Ann. Adm.*:592).

France also knew a mass movement in 1212 involving thousands of persons. Information is very scanty, but it seems that the French Children's Crusade caused much less shock and sensation than did its German counterpart. The anonymous of Laon reports that in June 1212 a shepherd boy named Stephen appeared in the village of Cloies, near Vendôme, claiming that the Lord had appeared to him in the guise of a poor pilgrim and had asked him for bread.

He had then given him a letter for the king of France.²⁵ Hordes of people came to him from all parts of France, until there were finally 30,000. This crowd headed for Saint-Denis, where Stephen performed many miracles. Other miracle workers who were venerated by the people and followed by multitudes hastened to join Stephen and



Figure 2. Christ in the guise of a poor pilgrim. Homilies of St André du Cateau (French, late eleventh century). Cambrai, Bibliothèque municipale, MS. 258, f. 11.

accept him as their leader. But when the king, after consulting the masters of Paris, ordered them to return home, they obeyed immediately. Many considered this event a sign of the great things which God intended for the world (*Chron. Laud.*:70-1).

The annals of St Peter's Abbey at Jumièges record that a movement proceeded from Vendôme which evoked a considerable response throughout France, but the name of Stephen is not mentioned. No one could hold the masses in check, but hunger finally forced them to return home.²⁶ The Rouen annals report that processions were held in several French cities with flags, candles, crosses and censers. Songs were chanted in the vernacular during these processions, including *Domine Deus, exalta Christianitatem et redde nobis veram crucem*, as rendered into Latin by the annalist. These processions were a forerunner of the great crusade preaching which was undertaken throughout France under papal auspices in the following year (*Ann. Roth.*:501).

None of these contemporary sources says or even hints that the French movement developed in an attempt to go to the Holy Land to free Jerusalem. All that can be concluded is that processions were held in various French towns and that a journey was made to Paris or Saint-Denis under the leadership of the shepherd Stephen. Some authors do use expressions which suggest a connection with the Children's Crusade, such as the text of the song or the fact that the processions were thought to have foretold the forthcoming preaching of the crusade in 1213, but there is no hint that anything like the German Crusade happened here. Only in later sources do we get the impression that there had been a kind of crusade in France. The first suggestion of

this is in the work of William of Andres, who says that children swarmed together in every city and village and began hastening toward the Mediterranean. When asked where they were going, they replied "To God".²⁷

The most detailed source for the French crusade is Alberic of Troisfontaines, whose account has become the classic source for the Children's Crusade. He created the notion, which would never be eradicated, that there had been a French Children's Crusade. The first part of his narrative agrees with the material from the earlier sources. The movement began around Vendôme, whence the hordes went toward Paris, where their numbers mounted to about 30,000. Then the original part of Alberic's story begins. From Paris the crusaders are alleged to have gone to Marseilles, where two merchants, Hugo Ferreus and Guilielmus Porcus, offered to take them to the Holy Land without charge, for the love of God. Seven ships were outfitted for the purpose. During the crossing two of the boats were shipwrecked in a storm off the island of Saint-Pierre and all passengers perished. Pope Gregory IX later had a memorial chapel built on this island, where the remains of the children lay. The other five boats went on to northern Africa, where all the children were sold to Moslem princes and merchants on the slave market. The caliph bought four hundred; all of these 'children' were in orders and eighty were priests, but they were treated well. Others had a less enviable fate. Eighteen children somehow turned up in Baghdad, where they refused to convert to Islam and became martyrs for their faith. The ecclesiastic who escaped and brought the news back to Europe had become a slave of the caliph. The two who had betrayed the children did

not escape their punishment. They were caught while hatching a plot against the emperor Frederick II with Mirabellus, the Saracen prince of Sicily, and hanged (*Chron. Alb.*:893). Munro rejected this entire story as pure invention. He doubted that four hundred clergy had participated on the Crusade, and it seemed highly improbable to him that the Moslems would have threatened to kill the children to convert them (Munro 1913-4:520). Zacour tried to verify parts of Alberic's story. He identified the two villains of the piece, Ferreus and Porcus, by claiming that Alberic had merely mistaken identities. He probably confused Guilielmus Porcus, an admiral of Frederick II who fell from favour in 1221, with a certain Guillaume de Posquières, a citizen of Marseilles who is known to have been associated with Hugo Ferreus in 1190.²⁸

Munro's most important reservation about Alberic remains: that no chronicle written south of the Loire mentions the Children's Crusade (Munro 1913-4:520). His objection finds support in the fact that no other contemporary chronicle from northern France mentions an expedition to the Mediterranean. On the other hand one German author thought that a group of German crusaders arrived at Marseilles (*Chron. Reg. IIa*:191), and another chronicle relates that a number of crusaders were loaded on ships and were sold on the slave markets in Africa (*Chron. Eb.*:450). Although the details remain uncertain, the major points of Alberic's story may thus very well be true. It is not inconceivable that a number of crusaders were brought from Marseilles to northern Africa and were sold on the slave markets there. But they were Germans, not Frenchmen. Alberic mixed the stories of the processions in northern France and of the German crusaders in

Marseilles and made a single narrative of them (Zacour 1962:337).

The fact that all later French sources, beginning with William of Andres, thought that something like a crusade also occurred in France in 1212 suggests that the two phases of the Children's Crusade became confused very quickly and were considered different manifestations of the same movement.²⁹ Is this viewpoint a distortion, or did the two movements actually spring from the same source of inspiration? It is indisputable that the German movement began as an attempt to reach the Holy Land and liberate Jerusalem; all the sources confirm this. But this was never true of the French situation, and it is thus difficult to know whether Stephen's followers originally had this in mind. Contemporary French sources do suggest a clear connection with the crusade. The emotional outburst was much stronger in Germany than in France. Yet several German chronicles lumped the French and German movements together (*Chron. Reg. IIa*:191; *Chron. Reg. IIIa*:234; *Chron. Eb.*:450; *Ann. Marb.*:82).

We know that the turmoil in Germany began between Easter and Whitsuntide in 1212, while Stephen preached in France only in June of that year. This raises the suspicion that the original inspiration for the crusade was in the Rhineland, where the fires burned so brightly that the hordes did in fact start out for the Holy Land. The movement reached France only at a later stage, when the primary emotion was past, so that the enthusiasm cooled near Paris and the participants let themselves be sent home on the king's orders. This could explain the differences between the Children's Crusade in France and Germany, and also the fact that the French sources suggest a connection with the crusade while the German chroni-

icles make no distinction between the movements.³⁰ In the following sections, therefore, the two crusades will be considered divisions of a single great mass movement.

The 'children'

The Children's Crusade is among the few historical occurrences having the dubious distinction of being abnormally famous. It has an obvious appeal to the imagination: little children imbued with great ideals set out barefoot and amid great dangers cross the Alps to Italy, where a tragic end awaits them. Historians too have let themselves be carried away by this drama. However critically they may approach the sources and events, they make the *a priori* assumption that little children trotted off on crusade in 1212. Miccoli was the first to dispute this idea. He thought it impossible to conclude from contemporary sources that the participants on the Children's Crusade were in fact small children, noting that various terms were used to indicate the participants. He questioned whether *puer*, the most commonly used word, could without further ado be translated 'child' or 'boy' (Miccoli 1961:430). If the participants on the Children's Crusade were not even children, a second question immediately arises, as to their actual social origin.

Most chronicles refer to the participants on the Children's Crusade as *pueri*, and it would be superfluous to enumerate all instances here. I shall deal only with annals and chronicles in which the concept *puer* is more precisely explained or in which some other word is also used for the crusaders.

Both Cologne chronicles speak of *multa milia puerorum a 6 annis et supra usque ad*

virilem etatem, and pueri diverse etatis et conditionis...Quorum exemplo multitudo iuvenum et mulierum cruce se signantes, cum eis ire disponunt (*Chron. Reg. IIa*:191; *Chron. Reg. IIIa*:234). The Ebersheim chronicle describes the participants as *pueri et puelle* and *servulorum et ancillarum et virginum infinitus numerus* (*Chron. Eb.*:450). The Marbach annalist writes of *pueri et puelle, non solum minores sed etiam adulti; nupte cum virginibus* (*Ann. Marb.*:82). The same words are used in the Austrian sources: the annalist of Admont calls the Children's Crusade an *expeditio puerorum utriusque sexus...et preterea virorum et mulierum provectorum* (*Ann. Adm.*:592). The historian of St Rupert's in Salzburg never speaks of *pueri*, but of *plurima hominum utriusque sexus et etatis multitudo* (*Ann. Sal.*:780).

Sicardus of Cremona calls the participants *pauperes* (*Sic. Cron.*:181), while Johannes Codagnellus describes the horde which followed Nicholas through Piacenza as a crowd *Theotonicorum puerorum et infantium lactantium, mulierum et puellarum*: (*Ann. Plac.*:426). Ogerius Panis saw the appearance in Genoa of *multitudo peregrinorum...ultra septum milia...inter homines et feminas et pueros et puellas* (*Ann. Ian.*:131).

Reinier of Liège thought that the participants consisted primarily of *pastores* (*Ann. Rein.*:665), as did the anonymous of Laon, who describes how Stephen brought the French movement into being *cum cœvis suis pastoribus* (*Chron. Laud.*:70). In the Jumièges annals only *pueri* is used, but in the annals of Rouen the words *cum aliquibus adulescentulis et senibus* are added to it (*Ann. Gemm.*:510; *Ann. Roth.*:501). Only the descriptions of William of Andres and Alberic of Troisfontaines diverge strongly from this pattern, referring to the crusaders with such terms as *parvuli* or *infantes* (*Wil. Chron.*:754; *Chron. Alb.*:893), unambiguous words which can

only mean minors (Hofmeister 1926:300, 305).

The first conclusion which can be drawn from these sources is that even if *pueri* did mean only children in the modern sense, they were not the only persons involved in the crusade of 1212, for adults also participated. But were *pueri* in fact children? Doubts arise first in considering the description of the Marbach annalist; clearly there were not only minor, but also adult and married 'children'. The question is whether the chroniclers had a particular age group in mind when they used the word *pueri*.

Medieval scholars divided life on earth into four or six phases. *Pueritia* was the second, after *infantia*, and lasted from age seven to fourteen. *Iuventus* then followed until age 28 (Hofmeister 1926:289–90). But *iuventus* often is simply not used, and *pueritia* was extended up to age 28 (Hofmeister 1926:296). It is thus impossible to determine the age of a *puer* exactly.³¹ Ariès thinks that the term *puer* connoted a certain social standing, and was used particularly for those who were in a relationship of dependence or servility; manservants and other dependents were thus generally called *pueri* (Ariès 1973:14–15). Georges Duby thinks that this expression was applied primarily in the countryside to labourers and wage-earners, but particularly to younger sons who were excluded from the family inheritance and thus had to earn their living elsewhere (Duby 1966:30; Duby 1972:209). *Puer* thus indicated less a particular age than a social situation. The fact that the participants on the Children's Crusade were called *pueri* in most sources thus may not mean that they were children. Ducauge defines the word *puer* as *homo famulus cujuslibet aetatis, subditus*.

There are few other suggestions in the sources about the age of the participants. Some chroniclers do indicate age, such as the Cologne author, who says that the crusaders ranged in age from six to adulthood (*Chron. Reg. IIa*:191), or Salimbene de Adam, who thought that the leaders of the Crusade were about twelve years old (*Sal. Cron.*:30). The statement that none of the 'children' was older than twelve is made only in two very late sources (*Mem. Walt.* 1873:205; *Chron. Leob.*:802).

Another hint seems to be in a story told by Alberic of Troisfontaines and the Marbach annals. Both relate that a little group of crusaders finally arrived in Rome after long wanderings, and sought release from their crusading vow from the pope. Alberic says that the pope denied their request and ordered them to proceed on crusade when they were grown up.³² The Marbach annalist thinks that the pope excused only the children who had not yet reached the age of discretion and the elderly, presumably because they could be of no assistance in the fighting in the Holy Land.

Contemporary canonists, such as Gratian and Roland Bandinelli, placed the age at which one could swear a binding oath at fourteen for males and twelve for females (Brundage 1969:43, 47, 49, 73–4). The same rule held for a crusading vow. It thus seems clear from his choice of words that Alberic assumed that the participants on the Children's Crusade were minors who could not yet make such a vow. But according to the Marbach annalist, who was probably very close to the Crusade, at most a small part of the participants were younger than twelve or fourteen. The rest were older, and in some cases advanced in years. This opinion is confirmed by the report that many girls were

violated and became pregnant on the return to Germany.⁵³ For this they must have been thirteen or fourteen at the very least. This reference thus makes even less likely the assumption that the crusade of 1212 was exclusively an action of little children, particularly in view of the uncertainty over whether Alberic's word can be trusted. At most some children went along.

Finally, the defenders of the traditional interpretation of the Children's Crusade may note that several sources say that many went along without the permission of their parents (*Chron. Reg. IIa*:191; *Chron. Eb.*:450; *Ann. Marb.*:82; *Ann. Rein.*:665; *Wil. Chron.*:754). But even in these sources there is not a single expression which suggests small children. Only William of Andres describes the crusaders as *parvuli* (*Wil. Chron.*:754). It thus seems much more probable that the chroniclers meant here the group of younger sons who were not going to inherit, but who often remained at home to help out. As indicated, they were often called *pueri* (Duby 1966:30).

We thus cannot conclude that the crusade of 1212 was really a 'children's' crusade. The word *puer*, gratuitously translated 'child' by most scholars, seems to denote a social situation rather than an age. Moreover, the sources mention participants other than *pueri*, such as *mulieres*, *homines* and *pauperes*. Even the fact that the parents of many tried to stop them can be explained by the social background of the participants. From the story of the attempt to gain dispensation from the pope we may conclude no more than that some children went along.

Only two chroniclers, Alberic of Troisfontaines and William of Andres, support the view that children went on crusade in

1212 by describing the participants as *parvuli* or *infantes*. In Alberic's case this emerges in his story of the group that got to Rome. The curious version of the Children's Crusade in Alberic's chronicle can be explained readily if we assume that this story was not written by Alberic himself, but was part of the supplementary material by the 'interpolator of Huy', who probably wrote between 1252 and 1295. This also explains why the story in Alberic's chronicle corresponds more to the detailed and fantastic views of Vincent of Beauvais and Richer of S enones than to the sober and precise description in sources which were close to the event. It is not completely clear why William of Andres assumed a minority view; perhaps it was because Andres was far from the regions in which the Children's Crusade occurred.

The conclusion that the Crusade of 1212 was no children's crusade also means that the interpretations of Alphand ery, Waas and to a lesser extent Mayer are no longer tenable, for they seek an explanation for the non-existent. Only Mayer's view continues to provide some perspective, in that in the last analysis he places the Children's Crusade in the framework of the poverty movement (Mayer 1972:185, 204). Even Miccoli did not take his sensational discovery to its logical conclusion. He thought that the leaders of the Crusade, Nicholas and Stephen, were children, although both are called *puer* or *pastor* in the sources;³⁴ and he finally reached the same conclusion as Alphand ery, that the foundation of the Children's Crusade lay in the idea of contemporary popular piety of the child as the elect, together with the veneration paid to innocent children (Miccoli 1961:434-6). But if the participants were not children, the Crusade is immediately placed in a completely different context.

Evidently, an investigation of the origins and social background of the participants would be a first step in the right direction.

The works of Ariès and Duby, who ascertained that *puer* is more a social than a psychological concept, form our point of departure. Ariès finds that the term is used primarily for people in relationships of dependence, such as farm hands (Ariès 1973:14–5), while Duby has placed it in a more specific context. He sees the beginning of an entirely new class of people, a kind of rural proletariat called *pueri* or *pastores*, who were the victims of the economic revolution of the twelfth century. The group consisted primarily of younger sons of peasant families, who could not share in the paternal inheritance if it were not to be fractionalized, and who therefore could not marry. Thus they had to support themselves as day labourers, farm workers and cottars possessing no land and making ends meet by keeping herds of animals. They lived on the margin of society, often in great need, and formed a turbulent element in the rural population (Duby 1966:30–2; Duby 1972:207–10). These new poor were no longer, in contrast to earlier periods, considered the chosen of God by the clergy, but rather rejected as dangerous riffraff. Many ecclesiastics were also fearful of the numerous heretical sects which were mushrooming around 1200 and whose rigid anticlericalism and false doctrine began to endanger the seamless web of Christendom (Duby 1966:30). The fact that practically all sources call the participants in the Children's Crusade *pueri* and *pastores* suggest that they belonged to this social group. The Cologne chronicle and the Marbach annals say that the crusaders abandoned their ploughs and cattle to go to the Holy Land

(*Chron. Reg. IIa*:191; *Ann. Marb.*:82), while the Ebersheim chronicler notes that many servants went along (*Chron. Eb.*:450). These sources show the Children's Crusade originating and finding its main support in the countryside. Nor do the Cologne, Trier, Salzburg, Liège and Laon chroniclers give the impression that there was much agitation in their cities; except for the somewhat more precise anonymous of Laon, they make vague references to people coming from all parts of Germany and France, but they never say that people from their towns joined them to go south or to Paris (*Chron. Reg. IIa*:191; *Chron. Reg. III*:234; *Ann. Sal.*:780; *Ann. Rein.*:665; *Chron. Laud.*:70–1).

All the sources also demonstrate clearly that the crowds going south must have been very poor. Sicardus and Salimbene speak of *pauperes* without further qualification (*Sic. Cron.*:181; *Sal. Cron.*:30). Other authors relate that they were supported all along the way by alms from people who believed in their mission and lauded their courage (*Chron. Reg. IIIa*:234; *Gest. Trev.*:399; *Ann. Marb.*:82). But when they returned home after the failure of their expedition, they received no more alms, and many perished of hunger (*Chron. Reg. IIIa*:234; *Ann. Schef.*:338; *Ann. Gemm.*:510). The *Gesta Treverorum* puts it this way: *Plurimi etiam puerorum perierunt, nam qui eunibus copiose ministraverunt, redeuntibus nichil dederunt* (*Gest. Trev.*:399). The crusaders thus had to live on the generosity of the faithful.

The hostility of many authors, who as far as we know were all clergy, toward the Children's Crusade is also very striking. The Marbach annalist was particularly spiteful. He began his story with a sharp condemnation: "at that same time a certain disgraceful expedition was made, consisting

of boys and stupid men taking the cross with no discretion whatsoever" (*Ann. Marb.*:82). But other authors too were convinced that the movement was born of a satanic chimera, or at least was not divinely inspired (*Ann. Adm.*:592; *Ann. Sal.*:780; *Ann. Rein.*:665; *Gest. Trev.*:399). They were convinced that the Crusade was a potentially dangerous movement, a view diametrically opposed to the idyllic picture of innocent children. Their fear was premature, for there is no evidence in the sources that the crusaders did violence to church property or molested clerks. Everything thus suggests that Duby's description of a new group of rural poor fits the participants in the Children's Crusade, who belonged to the humbler levels of the rural population and suffered particularly from the social and economic changes of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.

The great increase in population after 950, the revival of trade and the increased monetary circulation had radical consequences for the countryside.³⁵ The manorial structure was too rigid to accommodate the augmented population. Many people either had to leave and go to newly cleared areas, flee to the cities, or become free labourers. But the press of population became so strong and the possibilities of escape so minimal during the thirteenth century that a serious problem of overpopulation developed. Large groups of unemployed, transient seasonal labourers and beggars came to be a normal sight in many areas.

The resuscitation of the market economy and the increased use of money had even more serious effects on social relationships. Many products which had been produced earlier on the domains themselves could now be bought, and new products also

appeared. To get money, the farmers began to increase their yields, so that they could sell their surplus. Landlords began to lease large parts of their demesnes and to transform personal services and ploughing duties into substantial annual rents. Relationships between lords and peasants thus were assuming a much more material character, and the farmers were gradually being degraded into mere objects of exploitation. It is true that in the long run inflation made the annual customary rents purely symbolic payments; the abbey of Saint-Denis was receiving only one per-cent of its income in 1300 from this source but this only meant that the rents were replaced by other forms of taxation, for example the *taille* (Duby 1968:232-59). The poor farmers were particularly severely affected, for their tax burden was virtually insupportable.

Furthermore, the poor peasants could no longer rely on group solidarity among themselves. The distinction between rich and poor farmers had been unimportant before; both had to do piece work and plough service, both used the village commons and enjoyed the same degree of protection from their lords. There was little competition, for each produced primarily for his own needs. But the distinction became extremely significant in the twelfth century, when it became profitable to grow a surplus for market. The wealthier farmers could invest more in better equipment, ploughs and draught animals, and thus improve their yields. The money economy promoted the resourcefulness of the individual and competition, which victimized the poorer and less successful (Duby 1972:208) The poor farmers had to borrow money to invest in their tenements and to pay their taxes to the lord. All too often they

were thus victimized by usurers, so that many were forced sooner or later to sell their land and become wage-earners working for their lord or the more successful peasants. This development was furthered by the revival of direct demesne exploitation in the thirteenth century (Duby 1968:277-8), particularly in the thickly populated parts of Europe, northern France, the southern Netherlands and the Rhineland.

By 1300 the original unity of the peasant population was a thing of the past. The money economy and exchange operations had greatly furthered the process of social differentiation. A small group of newly rich farmers stood at the apex of peasant society, the 'labourers' who had been clever enough to profit from the possibilities which the commercialization of agriculture had offered them; le Goff compared them to the Russian kulaks (1972:314). Below them, a mass proletariat of petty cottars, 'children', wage-earners and the unemployed had developed, people living from hand to mouth and dependent on the whims of their landlords and the prosperous peasants (Bader 1962:281-4; Duby 1968:276-8; Fossic 1970:204, 241-5; Lütge 1952:82, 101-3; Slicher van Bath 1960:152). Although this differentiation was only consummated around 1300, it had been developing with escalating rapidity since 1180 (Duby 1968:178, 273ff.), so that a large number of poor proletarians were almost certainly wandering about in the densely populated sections of Europe, the very regions where the Children's Crusade arose, by the beginning of the thirteenth century.

The masses probably saw in this movement an escape from the dreary misery of their daily lives. They had little to lose, for any change could hardly have been for the

worse. The social evolution which we have sketched here thus contains an important motive for the Children's Crusade, but not the only one. The middle ages witnessed many outbursts of dissatisfaction and uprisings of despair among the poor which did not end in a long march to the Holy Land. Spiritual motives and ideals also played a role, moving the poor to such an extent that they abandoned everything to plunge into an adventure which was at best uncertain and at worst totally absurd.

The 'Crusade'

We must now consider the position of the Children's Crusade in the larger crusading movement. Much has been written about the crusades, but no one has yet been able to decide exactly what a crusade was. Some define it as a holy war of Christian chivalry against Islam, but they forget that all classes of the population were involved, not just the knights. Any definition of the crusade is unsatisfactory if it does not include the hordes who streamed toward Jerusalem in the wake of Peter the Hermit, Emicho of Leiningen and so many others. Other scholars approach the crusade strictly from the standpoint of church law and define it as any crusading expedition summoned by the pope. But this would include the Albigensian Crusade and the unsavoury papal expedition against the Hohenstaufen, although they had little to do with the original purpose of the movement.

Mayer defines a crusade as a war organized by the pope in which all participants made a pledge, receiving in exchange an indulgence and temporal privileges; the purpose was the conquest or defence of

Christian rule over the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem. The liberation of Jerusalem is the central aspect for Mayer, for it distinguishes the crusades from similar expeditions which occurred before 1096 and after 1291 (Mayer 1972:281–6). The great merit of this definition is that it clearly indicates the purpose of the crusade, and it excludes all ‘crusades’ against the Albigensians and Frederick II and all expeditions against the Ottoman Turks in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. But Mayer limits the crusade too much by defining it only as a war organized by the popes. He loses sight of the powerful effort which western Christendom made for two entire centuries to free Jerusalem; this represents a fire which did not blaze just when the pope commanded, but which smouldered constantly beneath the surface and might suddenly burst into flames at the most unexpected times and places. The popular crusades which formed part of this effort are strictly speaking excluded by Mayer’s definition, unless he thinks that Urban II and his successors were summoning the entire population of western Europe to liberate Jerusalem.³⁶

I shall consider as crusades all expeditions, armed or unarmed, whose participants took a vow and intended to liberate Jerusalem and the other holy places from Moslem rule or to defend them for Christendom. Since this definition does not exclude the possibility that the liberation was to be the beginning of the last days, it can include undertakings of an eschatological character.

The thousands who went to Italy in 1212 intended to reconquer Jerusalem, which had been in Saracen hands since 1187, for the Christians. The sources make this plain: they give more positive information about the

purpose of the affair than about its other aspects. The Cologne chronicler says that the crusaders abandoned everything and started off for Jerusalem (*Chron. Reg. Ila*:191). He compared their expedition to the Fourth Crusade, obviously seeing no distinction in principle between the two. The chronicler of St Pantaleon’s at Cologne says that the participants declared that they were hastening to Jerusalem on divine orders with help for the Holy Land (*Chron. Reg. IIIa*:234). From Trier we are told that they were going “to recover the Holy Land” (*Gest. Trev.*:399). Statements of the same purport can also be found in the annals of Schäftlarn, Neresheim and Piacenza, and in the chronicles of Sicardus of Cremona and Salimbene de Adam (*Ann. Schef.*:338; *Ann. Ner.*:23; *Sic. Cron.*:181; *Sal. Cron.*:30). Renier of Liège describes their purpose very explicitly: “they intended to cross the sea and recover the Holy Sepulchre, which nobles and kings had not done” (*Ann. Rein.*:665). The chronicle of Rouen is somewhat vaguer, mentioning that during their wanderings they sang a song in the vernacular calling on God to exalt Christianity and save the true cross for them (*Ann. Roth.*:501).

The purpose of the expedition is stated less baldly in the other sources, but it is mentioned. Several call the Children’s Crusade *peregrinacio* or *expeditio* (*Ann. Elw.*:20; *Ann. Adm.*:592; *Ann. Sal.*:780; *Ann. Ian.*:131; *Ann. Marb.*:82; *Ann. Spir.*:84). Both expressions were quite commonly used to indicate the crusade to Jerusalem; Latin had no equivalent of the modern word ‘crusade’. *Peregrinacio* indeed calls to mind the fact that the crusade was the quintessential pilgrimage, during which the faithful not only visited the Holy Sepulchre and did penance for their sins, but simultaneously

liberated it from the sacrilegious hands of the infidels. For this reason Mayer calls the crusade an armed pilgrimage.³⁷

Other sources note that the participants of 1212 bore the sign of the cross (*Chron. Reg. IIa*:191; *Chron. Eb.*:450; *Ann. Marb.*:82); that is, before setting out for Jerusalem they fastened a red cross on their shoulders as a symbol of their status as the elect (Mayer 1972:41). The Floreffe annals speak of a "multitude...heading overseas" (*Ann. Flor.*: 626), a term suggesting the Old French *Oulremer*, meaning Palestine. The French sources do not mention an expedition to Jerusalem (*Chron. Laud.*:70-1; *Ann. Gemm.*:510; *Ann. Roth.*:501; *Chron. Lir.*: 1434), but the French *processiones* were probably only a last aftermath of the Children's Crusade. Contemporaries indubitably considered the Children's Crusade a genuine crusade. The poor of 1212 were inspired by the same ideals as Godfrey of Bouillon, Frederick Barbarossa and Louis IX: they wanted to liberate Jerusalem and reconquer the Holy Land for the Christians. Their means were less than orthodox to be sure, for they had neither money nor weapons and little chance of success, but their expedition may still be called a crusade.

A distinction should be made between two kinds of crusade: those of the knights and those of the people. The knights took arms to go to the defence of the rights, or supposed rights, of the Church in the Holy Land. The crusade was a holy war for them, sanctified by the Church, endowed with plenary indulgences and other spiritual privileges. There was considerable material gain for some in the form of fiefs or high positions in the newly conquered areas. But for the common people who went to

Palestine, the crusade was much less a holy war in the service of the Church. Their hopes and anticipations were directed at Jerusalem itself, the city where Christ died and had risen, but above all the city where He would return at the end of time for the Last Judgement. Their thoughts went particularly to the New Jerusalem, "coming down out of heaven from God" (Revelations 21:10). The liberation of Jerusalem would be the onset of the last age, the fulfillment of God's promises, emancipation from all the poverty and misery which oppressed mankind. The New Jerusalem would be "the dwelling of God with men. He will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself will be with them; he will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain any more, for the former things have passed away" (Revelations 21:3-4). Numerous sagas and legends had developed about the last days, including those of the 'last emperor' and the 'thousand-year realm'. All the stories emphasize that when the time was ripe, Jerusalem would become the centre of mighty events (Konrad 1965:535-40; Lamirande 1974:953-4; Alphandéry and Dupront 1954:22-3; Cohn 1971:64-5). The earthly Jerusalem was a symbol of the heavenly city, and the two were not sharply distinguished by the simpler believers.

The masses who assembled for the popular crusades did not usually follow the leadership of a military commander or a legate appointed by the appropriate temporal or ecclesiastical authorities. Rather, they followed charismatic leaders who were able to entice them and keep them under their sway by their rhetorical and religious talents. These 'prophets' derived their claims

from revelations or visions, in which God or a saint appeared to them, or from a divine letter which they had mysteriously received. Peter the Hermit, the most important popular leader of the First Crusade, was thus rumoured to have received a letter from the hands of Christ Himself while he was lost in prayer at the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem. They confirmed their divine election by working miracles and healing the sick wherever they went (Alphandéry and Dupront 1954:51–5; Cohn 1971:60, 62). Followers of the great leader shared in his extraordinary merits. The poor who followed Peter the Hermit and Emicho of Leiningen toward Jerusalem considered themselves the elite of the crusading army. This self-glorification is seen clearly in the stories of the *Tafurs*, the fearful army of beggars whose indiscriminate savagery aroused at least as much fear among the Christian knights as among the Moslems,

but who were held in great honour by the poor (Cohn 1971:65–6).

The First Crusade was accompanied by a mass popular movement, but there was less popular uproar during the Second, while during the Third such outbreaks of sentiment occurred only in England. For this reason, I have taken the popular crusade of 1096 as an ideal type, but the characteristics noted here were present in all the popular crusades: the tense expectation of reaching Jerusalem, the blind reverence for the prophetic leader, and the feeling that one was directly and especially chosen by God.

The Children's Crusade fits this tradition. The masses who went to Palestine in 1212 had their own 'prophets'; the Germans following Nicholas and the French Stephen. The chronicles show clearly that Nicholas considered himself summoned by God. He derived his authority from a personal revelation. The *Schäftlarn* annalist wrote that



Figure 3. Peter the Hermit, praying at the Holy Sepulchre and receiving a letter from the patriarch of Jerusalem destined for Pope Urban II. From William of Tyre's *History of the crusades* (thirteenth century). BN MS. fr. 9084, f. 1r.

Nicholas intended to liberate Jerusalem "by divine order" (*Ann. Schef.*:338). He also maintained that he could lead his followers through the Mediterranean with dry feet to the Holy Land (*Chron. Eb.*:450; *Sic. Cron.*:181). The Trier chronicler, as we have already mentioned, saw that Nicholas held in his hand a kind of cross in the form of a tau (*Gest. Trev.*:399), the badge of the pilgrim, the wanderer and the miracle worker. It was carried by itinerant preachers after the example of their patron saint, the hermit Anthony (le Goff 1972:173, 238). The theme of a letter from heaven recurs in the story of the French shepherd Stephen, as we have seen. Many others testified that Stephen wrought great miracles at Saint-Denis (*Chron. Laud.*:70-1).

The participants on the Children's Crusade thought that they were the elect of God and that they could accomplish what the knightly armies sent by the pope had not managed to do: "they intended to cross the sea and recover the Holy Sepulchre, which the kings and nobles had not done" (*Ann. Rein.*:665). Other sources, such as the Marbach annalist, confirm that the crusaders were convinced that they were acting on divine instructions: "many thought that they were acting not out of foolishness, but on divine inspiration" (*Ann. Marb.*:82; *Chron. Reg. IIIa*:234). Although the liberation of Jerusalem was central to the Children's Crusade, the crusaders seem to have been much less obsessed than earlier folk crusaders with dreams of the end of days, a subject to which I shall return in more detail. Nonetheless, it is entirely proper to describe the Children's Crusade as a popular crusade. The liberation of Jerusalem and the Holy Land must have been ideals which had struck deep roots in popular piety. Had this not been the

case, it would be difficult to explain how, after the disasters and disappointments of the Third and Fourth Crusades, Nicholas still managed to get together so many thousands of people who were ready to defy all dangers for the sake of recovering Jerusalem for the Christians.

Although mass involvement was minimal in the twelfth-century crusades, Fulk of Neuilly, a talented penitential preacher who was much influenced by the poverty movement, found the masses of northern France once again receptive when he preached the Fourth Crusade. Nothing actually happened, and the knights left for Venice in 1202 without a contingent of the poor. But the events of 1212 show that the affair had rekindled crusading enthusiasm among the poor. The Children's Crusade was the first popular crusade in which the poor did not set out for Jerusalem in the wake of the crusading armies, but rather acted entirely on their own initiative. Pope Innocent III had temporarily stopped preaching the crusade to Palestine after 1204, for he needed all the strength he could muster for the battle against the Albigensians in southern France. Only in 1213 did he launch a new propaganda campaign for a crusade to Jerusalem (Roscher 1969:138, 140).

The sources give hints which may explain something of this new outburst of activity. The Albigensian Crusade had aroused enthusiasm among the poor, who went to Languedoc in great numbers to help the armies of Simon de Montfort in their battle with the Cathari. The fall of Béziers in 1209 would have been impossible without their help (Zacour 1962:327). Since the populace was more agitated than usual at this time, the Children's Crusade of 1212 becomes more comprehensible. Another occasion for

the expedition may have been the order of Pope Innocent III to hold penitential processions in all towns on Wednesday after the octave of Whitsuntide (23 May 1212) for the success of the expedition against the Moors in Spain (de Janssens 1891:8–9, 25). But such trivial occurrences as the papal summons cannot explain fully the strength of the outburst of 1212. There must have been deeper fundamental motives.

Besides this spontaneous taking of the initiative by the poor, there is a second important distinction between the Children's Crusade and previous popular crusades. The poor who went to Jerusalem in 1096 were convinced that the liberation of Jerusalem was merely the harbinger of the last days, in which Jerusalem would come to stand in the centre of history, and that they themselves would play a great role in all the dramatic events and would finally join the last emperor in his thousand-year realm. But there is no evidence of this conviction among the crusaders of 1212. They did not go to Jerusalem in an apocalyptic mood. Certain traits of the Children's Crusade seem to imply a chiliastic movement. Stephen and Nicholas were 'prophets' of the same type as Peter the Hermit, the monk Rudolf and other miracle workers. They too were alleged to have worked miracles, and Nicholas is said to have had power to divide the Mediterranean. Cohn suggests that this means that the Children's Crusade was one of the many chiliastic movements which regularly affected society at that time.³⁸ Alphandéry deduces the chiliastic character of the Children's Crusade from the words of the *Chronicon rhythmicum Austriacum*, particularly the phrases "Christ is at hand" and "youth and maidens will be joined in purity".³⁹ But since the *Chronicon* was only

compiled around 1270 and gives an extraordinarily free version of the Children's Crusade, one cannot rely on it.

One of the most typical features of all chiliastic movements was their extreme dualism, separating all of history into the life and death struggle between the good, the followers of Christ, and the evil, the servants of Antichrist (Cohn 1971:84–8, especially 85). The poor considered themselves Christ's elect. The Jews were originally thought to be the leading servants of Antichrist, but they shared this dubious distinction from the thirteenth century on with the clergy (Cohn 1971:74–84). The decisive battle between the two camps would be fought at the onset of the end of days. Before the crusaders went to Jerusalem, they thus had to eradicate the adherents of Antichrist in their own land, the Jews and the clergy. Violence and homicide were indeed constant features of all folk crusades. Jewish communities along the Rhine and the Mosel were attacked and virtually extirpated by the crusaders in 1096, despite the bishops' attempts to protect them. Jewish quarters along the Rhine fell victim to Rudolf's agitation in 1146, and again in 1189, as the Third Crusade was being prepared, the Jews of London and York were persecuted. During the shepherds' crusade (*Pastoureaux*) of 1251, the hatred of the participants was directed particularly against the clergy (Cohn 1971:95–6).

We find no evidence of such violence during the Children's Crusade. Even the most hostile chronicler, the frequently cited Marbach annalist, mentions no excesses against the Jews or the clergy. His narrative does make clear that relations between laity and clergy were somewhat strained, for the people accused the clerks who opposed the

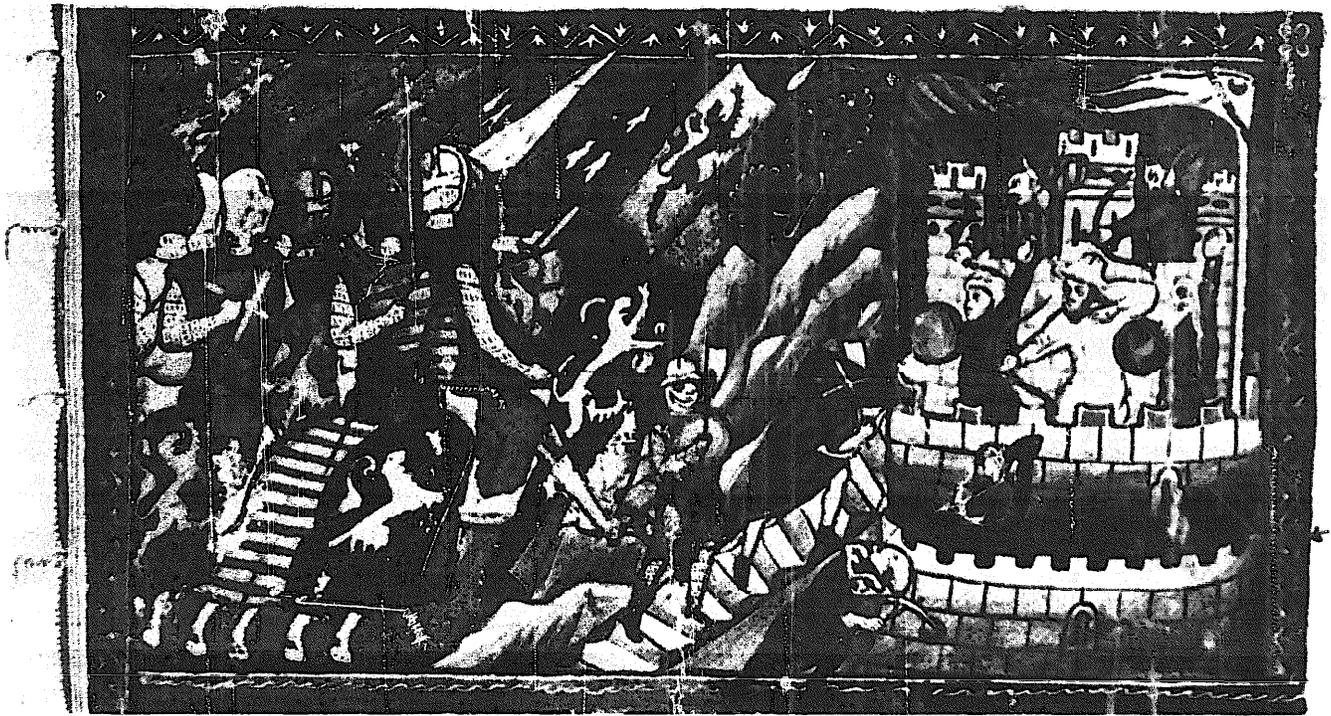


Figure 4. The siege and capture of Antioch. From William of Tyre's *History of the crusades* (thirteenth century). BN MS. fr. 9084, f. 53r.

crusade of being skeptical more from envy and greed than from love of truth and justice.⁴⁰ But we are never told that this tension found release in an open conflict of people and clergy. Since violence against opponents who are considered demonic enemies of Christ is a constant feature of popular chiliastic movements, it seems to me that eschatological and chiliastic expectations played an absolutely minimal role in the Children's Crusade, which was unquestionably an enterprise of the poor; they set out for Jerusalem on their own initiative for the first time in 1212.

The First Crusade had been an undertaking which concerned all Christendom. Rich and poor, knights and foot-soldiers, all were summoned by the pope to free Jerusalem. The author of the *Gesta Francorum* divided the crusaders into knights and

pilgrims, *milites* and *Peregrini* (Dupront 1963: 456). Everyone did his duty on the crusade; the knights led the holy war to free Jerusalem, but their work only achieved its spiritual consummation through the presence of the poor pilgrims. The knights were reminded by this that their conquests had meaning only in the context of the pilgrimage to the Holy Land. The poor pilgrims were in a certain sense the justification for the fighting crusading knight.⁴¹ But the role of the poor was often very important on a more practical level: when, for example, after the fall of Antioch in 1098 the leaders delayed the march on Jerusalem by squabbling interminably over how the booty should be divided, the pressure of the poor forced them to proceed (Rousset 1955: 560–1).

The preaching of the Second Crusade was dominated completely by the overwhelming

personality of Bernard of Clairvaux, who was the conscience of the crusaders and determined the spiritual content of the crusade. Bernard directed his preaching exclusively toward the knightly class, not to all of Christendom as had been the practice earlier (Mayer 1972:100). The crusade was the opportunity for the knights to do penance for their sins and to place themselves totally at the disposal of Christ. The crusading knight was not to go to the Holy Land to kill, but to be killed, according to St Paul's words: "For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain" (Phil. 1:21; Delaruelle 1953:58-9). Bernard sharply rejected the chiliastic movements which had begun under the influence of the monk Rudolf in the Rhineland. He vigorously opposed persecuting the Jews and would have nothing of eschatological movements, which he considered an extortion of God's grace and thus actually sacrilegious (Delaruelle 1953:57; Mayer 1972:100). There was no place for the poor in Bernard's preaching; he was baffled by their enthusiasm and despite his own considerable eloquence was unable to direct their devotion into the proper paths.

The participation of the poor was also considered undesirable on the Third Crusade. The emperor Frederick Barbarossa demanded that all who took the cross be able to support themselves for at least two years (Mayer 1972:137). The lustre of the idea of the poor as the elect of God is totally lacking. They were considered ballast hindering the movement of the knightly armies. But the failure of the Third Crusade caused considerable disappointment. The holy war seemed to have become a political tournament, and faith in the knights and their weapons was shaken. In this mood, Peter of Blois, humanist and secretary of Queen

Eleanor of Aquitaine, wrote his *De peregrinatione Hierosolymitana accieeranda*, in which he examined the reasons for the failure of the crusade and proposed new methods.

Peter began with a lament about the fall of Jerusalem: "all of Jeremiah would understate the wretchedness of the present day" (MPL 207:col. 1060). But a new hope had arisen in his heart when he heard that the "great men of the land" had taken the cross and were on their way to free Jerusalem and thereby atone for their sins. Unfortunately, they took the wrong route and showed themselves unworthy of the kingdom of God by fighting for a worldly kingdom. Their last deeds were even worse than their first. They had chosen the service of him whose service is to rule, but just as dogs return to their vomit (Proverbs 26:11), they rebuilt a spiritual Jericho which they had abandoned by taking the cross. Is it not insane, the author asked himself, to delay in a time of urgent need, when the wolf is raging in the sheepfold, and only to run to help when he has already devoured the flock? The rich were perhaps chosen, but not by Him who had elected his son Jesus and had sent Him to earth; for if they had been chosen by Him, they would have regretted and repented their sins. Nothing stands in the way of true penance as much as superfluous possessions and high position. For the Lord, who is awful in his counsels concerning the children of men, constantly cleanses the poor in the purgatory of poverty, but He pours all desires of human life like water over the rich, for whom he has stored up eternal punishment, so that they will rot in their own filth.

Peter thus rejected the rich, for they did not understand his words, and turned instead to the poor, imploring the spirit of

the Lord to come over him to bring good news to the poor (Isaiah 61:1). He advised the poor not to trust princes (Psalm 146:3), but to follow the counsel of the Almighty. Let the poor alone, for to them belongs the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 5:3). manifold experience teaches us that the soldiers of Christ are not given victory by their money or by their weapons, or by the warrior's courage, but only by the power of the Lord of hosts. The Lord does not need our property. He conquers in weakness, not in strength. Therefore it seems that now that God has rejected the great people of the world, to whom he had offered the splendour of the crusade, He has chosen men of lower origin, for whom he had offered the splendour of the crusade; He has chosen men of lower origin, for whom He has preserved the glory of this undertaking. Only God will guide our footsteps, and he will free the land which He has chosen as His own dwelling and has therefore made a "second heaven" (MPL 207:col. 1070). Peter thus rejected Bernard's concept; the knights and the wealthy cannot do penance for their sins and be humble of heart. They have transformed the crusade into a worldly venture, which was thus necessarily doomed to failure. Only from the poor, who possess nothing but their trust in God, can the liberation of Jerusalem still be hoped for.

The same tone is displayed by another twelfth-century humanist, Alan of Lille, in a sermon on the festival of the Exaltation of the Cross (14 September), ending with a lamentation on the loss of Jerusalem and the relics of the true cross.⁴²

Sed quia dicemus, cum illud amiserimus per quod triumphamus, per quod redempti sumus, per quod diabolum vincimus, scilicet crucis signaculum, crucis munimentum? Iam Christus cum suis instrumentis recessit a nobis. Nec irum, cum vulpes foveas habeant, et volucres celi nidos: Filium autem hominis non

habet ubi caput suum reclinet [Luke 9:58]. In prelati ecclesie non potest hospitium habere, quia hospita est ibi symonia; in militibus ei hospitium renegatur, ubi rapina hospitat; in burgensibus ei hospitium non datur, ubi usura suum locavit tabernaculum; a mercatoribus relegatur, ubi mendacium dominatur; in plebeis locum non invenit, ubi furtum suum hospitium collocavit. Ubi ergo hospitabitur Christus? In solis Christi pauperibus, de quibus dicitur: Beati pauperes spiritu, quoniam ipsorum est regni celorum [Matthew 5:3] quod nobis prestare dignetur.

The theories of Peter of Blois and Alan of Lille were first put into practice by the popular preacher Fulk, pastor of the village of Neuilly near Paris. He may have had a wild youth, but later repented and began to take his duties as parish priest more seriously. He discovered that his education was inadequate and thus went to Paris to study under the theologian Peter the Chanter (Gutsch 1928:183-6; Baldwin 1970a:18-20, 36, 107-11, 136-7). He began his great success as a reform preacher in 1195, and was greeted everywhere as a 'new prophet' (*Ann. Rein.*:654). He is also alleged to have performed many miracles (Gutsch 1928:196). His entire appearance recalls that of a 'wandering preacher'. He only began to preach the crusade in 1198, probably on the instructions of his master, Peter the Chanter (Alphandéry and Dupront 1959:46; Gutsch 1928:200). Renier of Liège reports that "his sermon aroused an enormous crowd of poor to avenge the offence done to the cross in the eastern Church, and he gave them the sign of the cross, judging that the wealthy were unworthy of receiving such a benefit" (*Ann. Rein.*:655). In 1199, Pope Innocent III, who brought so many reform movements within the bosom of the Church, appointed Fulk to preach the official crusade which was then being organized by the pope (Alphandéry and Dupront 1959:45).

Despite all Fulk's good intentions, the Fourth Crusade failed even more miserably

than had the Third, but the idea that the poor were chosen to free Jerusalem gradually gained currency. In the very year 1212, Francis of Assisi decided to go on crusade. He was the most sublime incorporation of the words of Peter of Blois that the Lord had no need of our goods, and that he would win through impotence rather than strength (MPL 207:col. 1069). Francis did not damn the Moslems and had no desire to kill them. He wanted to win them for Christ. He would have preferred to gain a martyr's crown, but in proclaiming the faith, not by falling by the sword in combat, as St Bernard had urged. This would allow him the fullest possible participation in the death of the Lord, and hasten the conversion of the unbelievers, mindful of the saying "the blood of martyrs is the seed of the Church". The liberation of Jerusalem could scarcely be accomplished more gloriously than by converting the Saracens (Piat 1968:142). Francis prescribed the same rules of conduct for his friars in their contacts with the unbelievers (Piat 1968:184).

He embarked in the autumn of 1212 with a few disciples, but was shipwrecked on the Dalmatian coast, and only with the greatest difficulty did he find a ship to take him back to Italy. But he did not give up hope. In 1217 he tried a second time, once again in vain, and set out a third time in 1219. That June, he left with a few companions for Damietta, at the mouth of the Nile, which was then besieged by a crusading army, and preached the Word to the bewildered sultan al-Kamil and his men. The crusading army was astonished when Francis returned alive. He left Damietta in March 1220 and returned to Italy (Piat 1968:178-84).

The doctrine preached by Peter of Blois and Alan of Lille and incorporated by Fulk

of Neuilly and Francis of Assisi that God had chosen the poor to liberate Jerusalem because the rich and powerful had rejected his grace and become entangled in their worldly cares finds an exceptionally pure expression in Francis' mystical desire for martyrdom. Nothing here is left to human calculation, politics, weapons or fighting. Only surrender to God's will matters. The poor man wanted to suffer and die with the poor man Christ and thus consummate his triumph. The sources suggest that the crusaders of 1212 shared this conviction. The Cologne chronicler says (*Chron. Reg.* IIa:191).

Cumque a multis inquirerentur, cuius consilio, cuius hortatu huic vie se exposuissent, presertim cum ante nonnullos annos reges multi, duces plurimi, populi innumerabiles in manu valida illuc pervenientes infecto negotio reversi fuissent, ipsos vero adhuc etate puerili nec robur nec vires ad aliquid agendum habere et ideo stulte et absque discretionem hoc factum attemptatum ab omnibus iudicaretur, breviter responderunt: in hoc se nutui parere divino et ideo, quicquid Deus de eis fieri vellet, ipsi libenter ac prono animo sustinerent.

This may explain the considerable self-assurance demonstrated on this crusade. Since God had rejected the rich and powerful and their armies, why should one wait for a papal summons or until another army of knights had been raised?

We have already noted that Nicholas stood in the tradition of the itinerant preacher, as did Fulk of Neuilly and St Francis. For Francis the tau was a kind of talisman which he put on the doors of the cells in Franciscan convents and which he often used as a signature for his own letters. He also frequently used a cross in the form of a tau when he performed a miracle (Piat 1968:151). This is very reminiscent of the staff with the tau sign which the Trier chronicler reports that Nicholas carried

(*Gest. Trev.*:399). The fact that eschatological ideas played no significant role in the Children's Crusade also suggests a considerable conformity between the ideas of the crusaders and the theories of such people as Peter of Blois. Peter glorified Palestine as "another heaven" (MPL 207:col. 1070) which would be presented to the poor, but nothing suggests that he had in mind a thousand-year realm or anything of the sort. Alan and Fulk call on their followers to repent and do penance, while Francis wanted to become just as Christ the poor man had been. All hoped that they would thereby hasten the liberation of Jerusalem, but none connected expectations of the end of days to this. Jerusalem had to be liberated from the heathen because Christ had lived there and had sanctified the city by his death and resurrection.

The Children's Crusade was thus part of the great crusading movement in western Christendom to liberate Jerusalem. It was a popular, not an official crusade, coloured by a unique piety in which the central aspect was not the holy war, but Jerusalem and the Holy Sepulchre. It was not led by professional military commanders, but by charismatic 'prophets'. But there were several important differences between this and earlier popular crusades. For the first time the common people set out for Jerusalem in 1212 without an official crusade being preached, while the eschatological ideas which had been such an important motive for participation in 1096 were virtually absent. The differences can be explained if we assume that the Children's Crusade was a product of the revival of the popular crusade which occurred around 1200. The eschatological motivation was minimal or totally absent among the

thinkers who had conceived a central position for the popular crusade after the failure of the Third Crusade. They claimed that in contrast to the First Crusade, in which *milites* and *peregrini*, rich and poor, complemented one another and maintained a balanced unit, the poor would now have a unique role in liberating Jerusalem. Fulk of Neuilly even went so far as to preach that the wealthy were unworthy to participate in the crusade. The conviction that God had rejected the rich and mighty and was counting only on the poor to reconquer the Holy Land was obviously so strong among the common people in 1212 that they did not wait for the pope to summon another army, but rather went on their own initiative to bring it about.

The poor

What was the source of this new strain in the theory of the crusade which emphasized the role of the poor? It may have been a response to the disastrous results of the Third and Fourth Crusades. But the solutions which were suggested to bring an end to the impasse were so radical and at variance with previous thought that we may wonder whether they were not based on an entirely different vision of belief and of the Church.

Peter of Blois, Alan of Lille, Fulk of Neuilly and Francis of Assisi seem to have little in common on first glance. Peter and Alan were learned scholars in the humanities who moved in the highest circles and whose names are generally encountered in connection with the 'renaissance of the twelfth century', while Fulk was a village pastor near Paris and later an itinerant peni-

tential preacher. Francis was the son of an Italian merchant, the apostle of the poor and the founder of the Franciscan or Minorite order. But however divergent their lives and the circles to which they belonged may have been, the four are united by a common impulse toward fundamental ecclesiastical reform and a return to apostolic poverty and the life style of the earliest Christians. All four, in the words of St Jerome, sought to follow the pure Christ, *nudus nudum Christum sequi*.

Thus Peter and Alan declined the high offices which they were offered in order to bear witness to their belief in the fruitfulness of a poor and lowly life. Noting Alan's poverty, a bishop once remarked to him that he was astonished that while his pupils had all attained high position, abbacies and bishoprics, the master himself stayed behind in poverty (Pellistrandi 1974:278). Peter of Blois refused every episcopal see that was offered him and died as archdeacon of Bath. He emphasized his solidarity with the poor in various ways, including a very sharply worded letter condemning Bishop Raoul de Wanneville of Lisieux for having kept his barns closed as long as possible during a famine to drive up the price of grain. The bishop, he wrote, must give and practise charity, for "the pauper is the vicar of Christ" (Mollat 1965:316; Pellistrandi 1974:278). After his conversion, Fulk's life style and words as a preacher epitomized the elect standing of the poor and condemned the wealthy (Gutsch 1928:186-200). Francis' love of poverty and the poor was so great that he made a mystical marriage with his chosen Lady Poverty. In striving for apostolic poverty and imitating Christ the poor man, these four were in the mainstream of the great reform movement which had

thoroughly shaken the Church from about 1100 on.⁴³ The Gregorian reform had successfully combatted moral decay in the Church and among the clergy by ending the excessive power of the laity over church appointments. But there was a strong view within the Church that lay investiture was merely a symptom, and that the real cause of decline was the great wealth of the Church. As long as bishops, priests and monasteries disposed of money and temporal possessions, they could not avoid secular entanglements, nor devote themselves exclusively to their spiritual duties; the germ of decay remained.⁴⁴ The only way which these people saw of preventing secular influence on the Church was a life of poverty. Poverty had been practised in the old monastic establishments, in which all possessions were held in common. At the end of the eleventh century, the demand became increasingly vocal for the Church to live without any material possessions, to follow true poverty in imitation of the poor man Christ, who had no place where he might rest his head (Luke 9:58).⁴⁵ This meant that they sought to recreate the ideal life style of the earliest Christian community, and for this reason they also spoke of 'apostolic life'.

Penitential preachers began to circulate everywhere in western Europe around 1100 proclaiming the new ideal of the apostolic life. Itinerant preachers such as Robert of Arbrissel and Norbert of Xanten called on all believers to renounce their temporal possessions and imitate Christ's poverty. They themselves provided an example of this new mode of life. They were clothed in rough sackcloth, begged for their food, had no permanent dwellings but instead slept outside on the ground, and went everywhere to

preach the word of God. In their hands they carried a staff with the sign of the tau (Le Goff 1972:173, 238). Alongside the desire to live in poverty, the second striking characteristic of the adherents of this new reform movement was their zeal for preaching. In contrast to some of their forebears, they did not wish to shut themselves with their ideal into a monastery, but wanted to proclaim the gospel everywhere, just as the apostles had done (Grundmann 1970:15; Chenu 1957:233–5). The poverty movement had no special doctrinal program. It had no desire to change or sharpen church dogma. Its only purpose was a thorough moral reform of the Church in head and members.

In these ideals there lay a stringent, albeit not invariably directly expressed, critique of the secular clergy, who were often more concerned with benefices and prebends than with imitating Christ and with the salvation of the believers entrusted to their care. It also implied a criticism of the monks, who isolated themselves from the world and failed to proclaim the gospel publicly, as the apostles had done. The anticlericalism of some went so far that they denied the right to dispense the sacraments to priests who were not poor and unencumbered (Grundmann 1970:14). The poverty movement in its extreme form thus became a threat to the hierarchical Church, but the ecclesiastical authorities could never object to the ideal of apostolic poverty as such, however suspicious they were of it.

The first wave of the poverty movement flooded across Europe in the early twelfth century. Penitential preachers circulated everywhere, particularly in the Rhineland, northern France and the Netherlands, summoning the people to poverty and an evan-

gelical life. One of them was Norbert of Xanten, who surrendered his high position at the imperial court in 1115 to live and preach in poverty. He wandered with his followers in the beginning, but in the long run, when he became suspected of heresy and of undermining ecclesiastical discipline, he had to agree to found an order for his followers, the Premonstratensians (Grundmann 1970:44). Other wandering preachers were also forced to found orders, or became heretics if they refused to submit. The vitality of the movement was put seriously to the test in this way, for however distinct their apostolic mission made the new orders from the Benedictines, their spirit was so linked to the old monastic structure that they could hardly expect to have much effect on the masses (Mens 1947:22–3). The problem of the Church's wealth and its inadequate means of mission was thus in no way solved, but remained acute.

At the end of the twelfth century the problem of voluntary poverty again became central. New movements arose everywhere in Europe after 1180, involving the actual practice of poverty, which were much more radical and powerful than those of the beginning of the century. A Christian life which was not experienced in poverty now seemed to be a contradiction in terms: "poverty seemed the matrix of all virtues" (Thouzellier 1974:376). Peter Walden and his disciples in Lyon chose the 'way of the apostles' and came into what in the long run was a hopeless conflict with the Church. Even in university circles at Paris, people were concerning themselves seriously with the problem of poverty. Peter the Chanter, the teacher of Fulk of Neuilly, severely criticized the avarice of prelates and the

construction of expensive churches such as Notre-Dame in Paris. Peter of Blois and Alan of Lille also belonged to this group of learned *magistri* who preached poverty and the imitation of Christ.⁴⁶ In the Rhineland and the Netherlands, pious women adopted lives of absolute poverty (Mens 1947:258–60), and preachers travelled about promulgating this ideal everywhere. Fulk of Neuilly visited the city and environs of Liège in 1200 and made many conversions.⁴⁷

Church officials saw all this jealously; they continued to hold that insisting on absolute poverty meant an attack on church institutions, and by their negative attitude drove many zealots outside the Church into heresy.⁴⁸ But the desire for an apostolic life was burning in so many hearts around the turn of the century that it became impossible to persist in this completely negative attitude any longer; far too many people were threatening to leave the Church. Innocent III understood this, and as soon as he became pope in 1198 he took steps to give the followers of the poor Christ a place within the Church. He thought that this would cut the ground from under the Church's critics, and events proved him right up to a point. He also hoped to create a weapon in the battle against the Albigensians, whose severely schismatic doctrines were a far greater threat to the unity of the Church. His most significant deed in this process of reconciliation was approval of the life style of Francis of Assisi and his followers, who most perfectly epitomized the joint ideals of apostolic poverty and preaching (Grundmann 1970:70–2; Thouzellier 1974:382–7).

The effusions of Peter of Blois and Alan of Lille on the crusade become more comprehensible in the light of the cult of apostolic poverty. The process of corruption which

was poisoning the entire Church had also affected the crusade; power and riches, ambition and avarice had dampened the old fire to liberate Jerusalem. Peter criticized especially sharply the Saladin tithe, a tax to finance the Third Crusade, most of whose yield ended up in princely coffers.⁴⁹ The only way back to the original ideal lay in renouncing all human resources, riches and display of power. The crusade could only be saved if the crusaders were prepared to take the way of poverty, imitating the poor man Christ, with trust in God alone directing the steps of men. "Frequent experience teaches that the soldiers of Christ will gain victory not with money, nor by massive armaments, nor through fighting, but only by the grace of God" (MPL 207: col. 1068). These utterances and the crusade preaching of Fulk of Neuilly, who considered the rich unworthy to take the cross (*Ann. Rein.*:654), are comprehensible only in a religious climate in which poverty had become the fount of all virtues.

The Children's Crusade displays this glorification of poverty and the corresponding rejection of riches and power, with the security that God will give the poor what he had withheld from the kings and mighty of this world. The crusaders of 1212 translated into deeds the words which they heard proclaimed everywhere by itinerant penitential preachers. They believed in the efficacy of poverty and placed their trust not in power and riches, but in the Lord, who had revealed Himself through His son. God had chosen the poor; he needed no armies, and if necessary he would divide the sea before the eyes of His faithful to see them safely to the Holy Land.

It should occasion no surprise that the poor of 1212 shared the convictions of such

prominent intellectuals as Peter of Blois and Alan of Lille. Preaching was a second important element, along with renunciation of worldly goods, in the poverty movement. Everywhere in northern France, the Low Countries and the Rhineland, the areas where the Children's Crusade originated, preachers were summoning men to the apostolic life. The cult of apostolic poverty touched the entire spectrum of contemporary society, particularly those who were threatening to escape the confines of the ordinary parish cure of souls, the marginal groups who were well represented on the crusade of 1212 (Chenu 1957:258). The influence of the piety which came from the poverty cult also explains why eschatological fantasies played such a subordinate role in the Children's Crusade. The poverty movement wanted to reform Church and society by converting men and leading them to apostolic poverty. The view of the reformers was thus directed toward the primitive Church of the apostles. This was the example toward which the Church continuously had to direct itself for renewal, for Christianity was found here in its purest form. The chiliasts on the contrary expected no salvation from reform. Their hopes were fastened on the immediate future, when they saw the end inevitably coming. Whatever now exists will be destroyed, primarily the Church, to make room for the thousand-year realm and the new Jerusalem. Thus reforms no longer made sense. These two convictions were mutually exclusive. Even poverty sects which abandoned the Church, such as the Waldensians, did not go over into speculations about the coming end of days, for their goal remained church reform and a return to the origins (Grundmann 1970:94-7). One could say that the Chil-

dren's Crusade was rather an attempt to bring the crusade back to its earlier religious phase than a jump toward the millennium.

If the crusaders of 1212 in fact considered themselves among 'Christ's poor', the hostility of many chroniclers toward their movement becomes quite comprehensible. The poverty movement involved a severe criticism of church wealth and the old monastic orders, and nearly all the chroniclers whom we have considered came from established, prosperous abbeys, such as Marbach, Ebersheimmünster, Admont and St Jacques's at Liège (*Ann. Marb.*:82; *Chron. Eb.*:450; *Ann. Adm.*:592; *Ann. Rein.*:665). The Marbach annalist also says that the worst reproach hurled by the laity was that the clergy was opposing the crusade from jealousy and avarice (*Ann. Marb.*:82). The penitential preachers reserved especially severe censures for avarice (Longère 1974:266; Mollat 1965:321). The distinctions between the Children's Crusade and earlier popular crusades can thus be explained by the influence of the cult of apostolic poverty, which was reaching its culmination around 1200, and becoming part of the ordinary mental state of the masses. The Children's Crusade in effect represents the union of these strains of medieval religious sentiment.

But the question of the poverty movement leads naturally to one final point. There has been a long discussion of the relationship between the social and economic changes of the twelfth century and popular movements such as the Children's Crusade. No one denies that the two phenomena are linked, but the nature of the link has been debated seriously. Marxist historians have become involved in attempting to prove that all reli-

gious movements were in fact a protection of the oppressed classes against their exploiters, and that this was the beginning of the class struggle. Even non-Marxists have argued that the social motive was the leading aspect of these movements. Against them is a group of scholars who acknowledge that there was some tie with the many social changes, but still give primary force to the religious motive. The conflict has focused on two points: the social origins of the participants in these movements and the interpretation of their ideals.⁵⁰

The proponents of the social theory maintain that the religious movement was essentially lay and that its adherents came primarily from groups suffering from economic changes and the social differentiation which accompanied them: the labouring proletariat of the cities and the small farmers and agricultural workers in the countryside (Russell 1963:30–2; Cohn 1971:53–60; Werner and Erbstösser 1957–8:267). Their dissatisfaction was expressed in collective movements in which they sharply criticized the riches of the Church, the nobles and the bourgeoisie, and preached absolute poverty for everyone. Some surrendered themselves to fantasies about the approaching end of days, in which society as they knew it would be annihilated and a new, more just social framework would arise (Cohn 1971:59–60). That these social demands were expressed in religious terminology is self-evident, since religion was the only frame of reference on which the oppressed could fall back (Werner and Erbstösser 1957–8:267).

Konkret gesprochen heisst das, dass im 12. und 13. Jahrhundert Wunsch und Hoffnungen breiter Schichten, die durch die Klassen hindurch gingen, im Mantel religiöser Forderungen ausgesprochen wer-

den können, ja müssen, da es eine säkularisierte Laienideologie noch gar nicht gibt. Das heisst aber noch lange nicht, dass diese Strömungen rein religiös waren, weil sie subjektiv das Empfinden haben diesen oder jenen Bibelsatz verwirklichen zu wollen.

The protagonists of the religious theory, of whom Grundmann is the leading representative, claim on the contrary that it is impossible to show that the adherents of these movements were from the oppressed classes or even from the laity at all (Grundmann 1970:520).

Denn diese Bewegung ist ursprünglich nicht von den Städten und nicht von den unteren sozialen Schichten ausgegangen, überhaupt nicht von Laien. Sondern Mönche, Eremiten, Kanoniker, vielfach adliger Herkunft trugen sie als Wanderprediger an die Laien heran, nicht zuerst an die städtische Bevölkerung und nicht zuerst an die unteren Stände.

These historians also feel that the ideals of the poverty movement cannot be interpreted as social demands in religious guise. The example of Christ did not cause the itinerant preachers to direct their message of poverty against social inequality, and they did not glorify the socially poor and oppressed. Their words were directed toward all Christians of all ranks who were trying to strive for perfection. Poverty they considered a misfortune which came from original sin and the resulting confusion, and it did not *per se* sanctify (Mollat 1965:321). The socially poor could indeed turn to poverty from the example of Christ by accepting their lot and not revolting (Pellistrandi 1974:285–7). Peter of Blois writes in his treatise that “the mantle of poverty is certainly not ignoble in God’s eyes. Only those paupers displease God who are sustained by hatred and rancour” (MPL 207: col. 1068). The Church was not condemned for its social role, but because it had distanced itself from the

simplicity of the primitive Christian community and thus was blocking rather than furthering the way to salvation (Russell 1965:234). The connection between religious movements and social change can at most be that the many innovations were a stimulus for many persons from all classes to reconsider the fundamentals of the Christian faith.⁵¹

The Children's Crusade has never been mentioned to date in connection with this, for most historians have considered it an exceptional phenomenon falling outside the normal order of things, and thus have never tried to place it in the broader framework of the popular crusades and the religious reform movement. Only the East German historian Werner has spoken casually about the causes of the Children's Crusade in a book review (Werner 1964:910)

...eine rein bäuerliche Bewegung...Sie hatte ihren Ursprung in Gebieten Deutschlands und Frankreichs, die mit ökonomischen Schwierigkeiten kämpfen mussten, die Überschutz an Arbeitskräften besaßen und daher gerade in Juni/Juli, den Erntemonaten, Menschen abstoßen konnten, die sich auf die Suche nach neuen Existenzmöglichkeiten begaben,...er [der Kinderkreuzzug] war eine typische mittelalterliche Form sozialer Bewegungen in religiösem Gewand.

On the other hand, Mayer considers it remarkable that the expedition occurred at just the time of the year when all the workers were needed for the harvest and thus could not be let go (Mayer 1969:692). This may, indeed, be a partial explanation for the reluctance of the persons to whom they were attached to see them go; as 'parents', they tried to restrain their 'children'.

Two elements can be distinguished in the ideals of the Children's Crusade: the tradition of the popular crusade, which implied the longing for a liberated Jerusalem, and the influence of the poverty movement, which implied belief in the

divine election of the poor. The popular crusades have been interpreted, particularly by Cohn, as social movements. He considers the eschatological expectations expressed in the popular crusades a "social myth most perfectly adapted to their needs" (Cohn 1971:60). But there is no evidence in the Children's Crusade of the fantasies of impending chaos which would presage the millennium, when all would be equal and above all the poor would be rewarded. Under the influence of the poverty movement, the Children's Crusade was more an attempt to reform the crusade than a flight into the utopia of the thousand-year empire.

And the purpose of the poverty movement was not, as Grundmann and his followers correctly noted, the exaltation of the poor or the alleviation of their misery, but rather a return to Christ and the moral reform of all classes and orders of society by means of voluntarily chosen poverty or resigned acceptance of that condition. The imitation of Christ was of central importance, and it is no different with the Children's Crusade. The rich and powerful had been rejected by God not because they were exploiters, but because they were bad Christians who had shown themselves unworthy of their high calling and had made the crusade a political act. One can naturally go farther and maintain that the 'real' motives were social, but that they had to be expressed in religious terms since that was the only frame of reference at this time. Russell correctly notes in this connection that an *a priori* philosophical position regarding 'reality' which cannot be proven in the historical context is the foundation of such ideas (Russell 1965:234).

The question remains of the connection between the social background of the crusaders and their religious ideals. Indeed, the



Figure 5. Pilgrims on their way to Jerusalem. From a fresco at St. Peter's Church, Brancion (Saône-et-Loire) (fourteenth century). Photograph by Éditions Gaud.

most difficult problem facing the masses, whose centuries-old life patterns were affected by the changes of the twelfth century, was probably not their poverty. The standard of life of the vast majority of the population before the twelfth century had been very low, and many were even below what we would consider the bare subsistence level. But their lives were regulated by a vast body of tradition and custom which had given them a fundamental security and shelter. Many groups were losing this security in the twelfth century, particularly those who had to pay the price for economic progress and became rootless and disoriented. They could flee to the new towns or remain loosely attached to the farms, but there was really no longer a place for them in society (Cohn 1971:55–60). It is entirely possible that these people sought escape in the Children's Crusade: a new foothold or an ideal which could give direction to their lives. If indeed God had chosen the poor to liberate Jerusalem, these impoverished masses of the world had attained a truly unique position. Their poverty was no longer shameful. They had greater possibilities than others to become just as Christ had been. They did not become rich: for it, but their poverty was transformed from an unbearable burden into a high calling. Precisely because they were poor, they could reconquer the city which had held the fascination of Christians for more than a century and which was the incorporation of God's pledge to His people, that all who suffered for Christ would inherit a glorious future.

Notes

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¹ Hansbery 1938–9:32–4. For an evaluation of Richer of Sénonès as a source for the Children's Crusade, see below, p. 287–8.

² As examples, see Alphandéry and Dupront 1959:124–5 (*Chronicon rhythmicum Austriacum*), 129ff. (*Chronicon S. Medardi*), 136 (*Chronicon S. Bertini*).

³ For the sake of completeness I must also cite Gray 1871. For antiquated or inaccessible literature, see Mayer 1960: nos. 2163–6. Toubert 1965–6 came to my attention too late to be considered but he supports my conclusion that the crusaders were not children.

⁴ Archbishop Johannes died on 15 July 1212 and was followed by Dietrich von Wied on 24 November of that year, but this chronicle places the events in 1213. Eubel 1898:522.

⁵ Holder-Egger 1904: especially 193–6. When Muratori studied the *Codex Estensis*, which includes the chronicle of Milioli, he also supposed that much of this must have originated in a composition of Sicardus. But he caused considerable confusion by publishing the *Chronica imperatorum* without further ado under Sicardus' name. RIS 7:529–626. Holder-Egger provides an accurate account of the transmission of this chronicle in his article.

⁶ *Ann. Gemm.*:510; *Chron. Sav.*:351. The same work is found under the title *Anonymi Continuatio Appendicis Roberti de Monte ad Sigebertum, Recueil des historiens de la France* 18:338–43.

⁷ Haller 1912:53–71, 106. Oppermann (1913: 583–4, 593–5) entered the debate by claiming that provost Friedrich von St Thomas began to write between 1212 and 1214 and had compiled the entire section from 631 to 1214; "The description of the Children's Crusade, one of the most valuable of the entire work, was written by 1213, not in the 1230s". Oppermann's argumentation is subtle, but rather artificial and unconvincing. Haller 1914–15:343–60.

⁸ de Janssens 1891:22. The text reads MCCXII. Passagium exstitit puerorum.

⁹ Alphandéry and Dupront 1959:129–35, and especially 134; compare Miccoli 1961:409–11.

¹⁰ Cited by de Janssens 1891:7 n. 2. The manuscript is BN Paris, MS. lat. 10237, f. 86v: Annis millenis ducentis et duodenis tunc pueri multi sunt effecti peregrini.

¹¹ This line reads ...et iste califas iam de novo panem camelinum sacrificare omisit. *Chron. Alb.*:893.

¹² *Ann. Ner.*:23; also in the *Chron. Ellw.*:37 and the *Auct. Mort.*:467, 1211 is given as the date of the Children's Crusade, but the accounts of these two sources are copied from chronicles which date it 1212 (*Ann. Ellw.*:20; *Ann. Roth.*:501).

¹⁵ *Gest. Trev.*:398: Et primum quidem illud commemoramus, quod paucis mensibus ante eius [Theoderici] electionem mirabile et seculis omnibus inauditum. Pueri namque congregati....

Ann. Plac.:426: Dicebatur enim, quod ipsi puero per angelum nuntiatum erat, quod ipse et eius sequaces sepulcrum Domini de manibus et virtute iniquorum ac pessimorum Saracenorum recuperare debent.

¹⁵ *Ann. Schef.*:338; *Chron. Eb.*:450: Quidam puerulus Nicolaus nomine...asserbat se posse sicco vestigio maris undas transvadare....

¹⁶ *Gest. Trev.*:399: Huius itineris dux et caput erat Nicholaus, quidam puer Coloniensis, gestans super se signum quasi crucis, formam thau habentis, quid debebat esse signum sanctitatis in eo et miraculositatis; nec facile erat discernere, cuius generis et metalli esset.

¹⁷ *Chron. Reg. Ita.*:191: Quidam Maguntie...revertentur. Munro 1913-4:522 n. 61 thinks that this may also mean Monza, in Italy.

¹⁸ Schulte 1900:102; 169-79. The St Gotthard came into use only between 1218 and 1225.

¹⁹ Hansbery 1938-9:35 raises the possibility that the pilgrims went over the Brenner, but his proof is inadequate. He does not note, for example the extremely detailed information on the crusade in the annals of Salzburg and Admont. Munro 1913-14:522 n. 53 suggests that some groups went to Italy and explains the references from Austria in this way. But it seems to me that the chronicles show that the various groups joined forces in the Rhineland and went south as a body from there.

²⁰ See *Sic. Cron.*:180-1, and the account derived from Sicardus in *Sal. Cron.*:30.

²¹ The distance is measured on a modern map. I have assumed that the pilgrims went from Speer via Strasbourg through the Black Forest, along Lake Constance over the Fern Pass to Innsbruck, and from there across the Brenner via Verona, Cremona and Piacenza to Genoa. The itinerary is based on Schulte 1900:17-32, 80-103, and Oehlmann 1879:202-52. Speer is approximately 1,100 kilometres from Genoa; if accomplished in thirty days, this is over thirty-seven kilometres per day. The distance may actually have been somewhat shorter, and if 25 July and 25 August are included, the figure becomes thirty-five kilometres per day.

²² *Ann. Ian.*:131: multitudo maxima peregrinorum, deferentes cruces et bordonos atque scarsellas, ultra septem milia arbitrato boni viri, inter homines et feminas et pueros et puellas.

²³ *Ann. Ian.*:131. Jacobus de Voragine (col. 45) claims that the crusaders were ejected from the city, for the Genoese were afraid of famine and thought that such a large number of persons would be a

danger particularly since they had taken the papal side in the struggle with Frederick II.

²⁴ *Gest. Trev.*:399: Cumque venissent pueri Brundisium, episcopus loci deceptionem deprehendens, non permisit eos transfretare. Ventidi enim erant gentilibus a patre Nicholai, et sic demonum maleficio attracti; propter quod et puer ipse periit, et pater eius Colonie mala morte peremptus est.

²⁵ Alphandéry thinks that this story is legendary, for the same thing is said of the shepherd boy Bénézet, who caused an uproar around 1180 in Provence: Alphandéry and Dupront 1959:117.

²⁶ *Ann. Gemm.*:510: Facta est commocio puerorum; per totam fere Galliam a Windonico castro, et deinceps per civitates et plurima castra et villas vagantium et dicentium, se Dominum querere; non potuerunt choiberi, donec fama urgente ad propria remearunt.

²⁷ *Wil. Chron.*:754: Infinita etiam multitudo parvulorum...confluxit, et versus mare Mediterraneum properantes, cum a parentibus vel ab aliis interrogarentur, quo vellent ire, quasi uno edocti spiritu singuli et universi responderunt: 'Ad Deum'!

²⁸ Zacour 1962:337-40. Hansbery 1938-9:33 n. 16 also took Alberic's side, but Zacour 1962:337-8 rejected Hansbery's arguments for good reasons.

²⁹ Hansbery 1938-9 thinks that there was also a third group of crusaders, which assembled in Sens and thereafter journeyed by Troisfontaines, through the Meuse valley via Liège and Cologne. His most significant source for this theory is the untrustworthy Richer of Sénonès. Moreover, such a detour is absurd for anyone going to the Mediterranean. See also Zacour 1962:333 n. 28.

³⁰ See also Zacour 1962:332. De Janssens 1891:25-27 claims that the Children's Crusade began in France; since the Germans only reached Speer on 25 July, he thinks that the movement was really making progress in Germany only from early July. But preaching the crusade and assembling the participants would have taken at least several months, so there is no good reason to doubt the statement that the German crusade began between Easter and Whitsuntide.

³¹ Hofmeister 1926:304, 316 tries to arrive at an exact age by using these terms, but the reservations which he makes to his own conclusions, together with the fact that he himself admits that such terms as *pueritia* cannot invariably be used in a strict sense, make one doubtful.

³² *Chron. Alb.*:893: De illis tamen quicumque inde evaserunt dedit papa preceptum, ut cum ad etatem pervenerunt, tanquam cruce signati mare transirent.

³³ *Chron. Eb.*:430: ...puelle etiam multe que virgines exierant, gravide revertentur.

³⁴ *Ann. Schef.*:338; *Ann. Adm.*:592; *Ann. Plac.*:426;

Ann. Ian.:131; *Gest. Trev.*:399; *Chron. Eb.*:450. Concerning Stephen, see *Chron. Laud.*:70. Only Sicardus and Salimbene thought that the leaders were minors: *Sic. Cron.*:181; *Sal. Cron.*:30.

³⁵ For this summary of rural economic and social developments, I have used particularly Duby 1968:113–25, 232–59, 279ff.; Duby 1972:203–12; Fourquin 1972a:81–141; Lütge 1967:71–96.

³⁶ While this may have been the case with Urban II, it certainly was not for later popes. At the Council of Clermont in 1095, Urban was probably summoning only the knights, but later the appeal was understood to be directed to all Christians, rich and poor. *Fulch. Carn.*:324 (1969:65–7) expresses this conviction in his version of the pope's oration. See also Alphandéry and Dupront 1954:58–61.

³⁷ Mayer 1972:15. For the *peregrinatio* concept, see also Rousset 1945:70, 134–7; Brundage 1969:31.

³⁸ Cohn 1971:62–3, 89–90. Since Cohn deals only with chiliastic movements, I assume that he considers the Children's Crusade one of them.

³⁹ Alphandéry and Dupront 1959:143; Alphandéry derived the eschatological character of the folk crusades from the fact that many chronicles mention celestial signs, shooting stars and the like, at the beginning of a crusade; see for example Alphandéry and Dupront 1954:61–5, 144, 193; 1959:71. But none of the sources reports that such signs foretold the Children's Crusade save the *Ann. Suess.*:521, and these were written only after 1250.

⁴⁰ *Ann. Marb.*:82: Clericis autem et aliis quibusdam quibus erat mens sanior contradicentibus et iter illud vanum et inutile iudicantibus, vehementer laici resistebant, dicentes clericos esse incredulos ipsosque propter invidiam et avariciam huic facto se opponere magis quam propter veritatem et iusticiam.

⁴¹ Dupront 1963:457 comes to this conclusion through a linguistic examination of the most important sources.

⁴² Alanus de Insulis 1965:282–3. His editor Mlle d'Alverny (143) thinks that this sermon was delivered in 1189, but she gives no convincing arguments for this view, saying only that the sermon was intended to inspire men to liberate Jerusalem and thus was probably delivered before the Third Crusade began in that year. But the expression of disappointment at the end, which we cite here, suggests instead that it postdates the failure of the Third Crusade.

⁴³ This section is based on Chenu 1957:223–57; Cohn 1971:37–41; Mollat 1974a and b; Grundmann 1970; Manteuffel 1970; Vauchez 1970; Mens 1947; Mollat 1965; Russell 1965; Mollat 1966; Russell 1963; Werner and Erbstösser 1957–8.

⁴⁴ For the origin of the poverty movement as a consequence of the Gregorian reform, see Grundmann 1970:508; Vauchez 1970:1569–71.

⁴⁵ Chenu 1957:254 writes of the split in the experience of poverty between the old and new orders: ...la pauvreté, traitée non pas seulement comme une ascèse morale, dans une communauté fraternelle des biens, mais comme la condition institutionnelle du royaume de Dieu dans ce monde.

⁴⁶ On the poverty movement in the University of Paris, see Thouzellier 1974:375–7.

⁴⁷ *Ann. Rein.*:655: 1200. Magister Fulco vir sanctissimus Letare Ierusalem Leodium venit, et verbum salutis tam in civitate quam in vicinis villis praedicans, multos ab errore usurarum compescuit, multis etiam a ceteris erroribus revocavit.

⁴⁸ The line between heresy and orthodoxy was still very vaguely drawn around 1200. The decisive argument in judging a new current of thought was generally whether its adherents adopted an obedient and respectful attitude toward the ecclesiastical authorities. See Manteuffel 1970:102; Vauchez 1970:1572.

⁴⁹ MPL 207:col. 1964: Nunc autem, quod flens dico, inimici crucis Christi, qui debuerant esse filii, per avaritiam suam praetextu cujusdam collectae damnabilis, primam voti sui fidem irritam faciunt, luxuriantes in cruce Domini, et quam olim praedicabant Apostoli, Judaeis quidem scandalum, gentibus vero stultitiam, hodie apud Crucifixi professores, in stultitiam et scandalum converterunt.

⁵⁰ For a summary of the various viewpoints, see Russell 1963.

⁵¹ Grundmann 1970:524. Mit alledem ist nicht gesagt, dass kein innerer Zusammenhang besteht zwischen der religiösen Bewegung und den wirtschaftlich-sozialen Wandlungen im 12. Jahrhundert. Der wachsende Wohlstand, das Aufkommen der Geldwirtschaft, die Zunahme der Stadtbevölkerung und die Anfänge industrieller Gewerbe, auch die veränderte Stellung der Frauen in der Gesellschaft lösten jedoch nicht eine "soziale Bewegung" aufstrebender Klassen gegen die herrschenden Schichten aus, kein Klassenkampf; sondern eine religiöse Bewegung ergriff Menschen aller Stände, die inmitten des wirtschaftlich-kulturellen Aufschwungs Ernst machen wollten mit den Forderungen der Evangelien und der Apostel.

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