

THE SHAMES OF CHRISTENDOM

by

W. N. Carter, M.A.

Copyright © 1930

CHAPTER THREE

THE CRUSADES

There is one incident, or series of incidents, which must not be overlooked, for it has a terrible influence upon the attitude of Jews towards Christianity.

Late in the eleventh century arose the Crusades. The Christians of Europe resolved to rescue the tomb of the Redeemer from the hands of the Moslems. All over Europe there was a rush to arms. The noblest chivalry of the day was joined by the vilest offscourings of mediaeval cities. The blazing cross of the Crusaders covered many an evil heart. It was not difficult to inflame the worst passions of such a motley mob.

As the movement took fire over the Continent a murmur arose that while Crusaders were marching to Palestine to rescue the Saviour's tomb from unbelievers, they were leaving behind them in Europe the race who crucified Jesus. The fanatical horde were roused to fury. They fell upon the unfortunate Jews in every quarter. In Treves, in Metz, in Spiers, in Worms, they butchered the miserable people without distinction of age or sex. Innocent babes were hacked to pieces, torn from their mothers' breasts and slaughtered before their eyes. The old and enfeebled were not spared; the Crusaders waded knee-deep in Jewish blood to show their zeal for Christ.

In the last of these towns it is said that every Jew was slain at the first onslaught except a few who were given refuge in the Bishop's palace. Even this sanctuary was invaded a few days later, and all these unhappy wretches were slaughtered. One miserable family was buried alive while the mob looked on and scoffed. Thousands were killed in these massacres. At Mayence over one thousand were killed.

The toll of death was added to by Jewish husbands and fathers who slew their daughters rather than allow them to fall victims to the lust of the Christian Crusaders.

In some cases, as at Treves, the Bishop allied himself with the murderers. In others, as at Spiers and Metz and Cologne, these ecclesiastics proved their Christianity by seeking to protect them, but too often the lower orders of clergy allied themselves with the terrible work of butchery. In Bohemia, too, the Crusaders marked their march on their sacred mission by a trail of Jewish blood.

In Jerusalem, again, after its capture by Godfrey of Bouillon, all the Jews found in the Holy City were driven into a Synagogue and burnt alive in the name of Christ.

These terrible scenes were repeated in succeeding Crusades.

All along the Rhine and the Danube the slaughter burst out afresh. One great name shines with a brighter glory because of the courage that dared to attempt to stem the prevailing torrent of murder and outrage—that of Bernard of Clairvaux.

His great compassionate heart was filled with pity, and he boldly denounced this revolting barbarity and saved many of the miserable victims. But Bernard's power was all too limited and his attitude too unusual. On the other side was a great array of Churchmen who openly advocated pillage and even murder.

Alongside the name of Bernard that of Pope Eugenius III deserves honorable mention for his opposition to this brutality. It was probably the Crusading spirit at the beginning of the reign of Richard I that brought about the massacres in England at the time of the coronation of the King, and subsequently after he had left on the Third Crusade. This will be noticed in its proper place in the story of the Jews in England.

~ end of chapter 3 ~

<http://www.baptistbiblebelievers.com/>
