

«SPIRITUAL FATHER AND SUPREME PONTIFF»: THE INFLUENCE OF THE LATIN EAST ON PAPAL POLITICS AND ECCLESIOLOGY IN THE TWELFTH CENTURY

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Abstract: *The establishment of Crusader principalities offered to the papacy an extraordinary opportunity to build a relationship between regnum and sacerdotium in the Latin East based on strong theological principles. But was this institutional dialogue bilateral? Starting from the ideal concept of Orientalis ecclesia, the influence of the Crusader states on papal politics and ecclesiology during the second half of the twelfth century is analysed in three fundamental areas: the judgement of apostolicae sedes in resolving the papal schism; the definition of the «crusader» remissio peccatorum, and the «international status» of the Holy Land as a tool for promoting peace in the West.*

Keywords: twelfth century; Latin East; papal schism; crusader indulgence; theory of pentarchy.

Resumo: *O estabelecimento dos principados cruzados ofereceu ao papado uma oportunidade extraordinária para construir uma relação entre reino e sacerdócio no Oriente Latino, baseada em sólidos princípios teológicos. Mas esse diálogo institucional foi bilateral? Partindo do conceito ideal de Orientalis ecclesia, a influência dos estados cruzados na política e eclesiologia papais durante a segunda metade do século XII é analisada em três áreas fundamentais: o julgamento das sedes apostólicas na resolução do cisma papal; a definição da remissio peccatorum «cruzada»; e o «status internacional» da Terra Santa como instrumento para a promoção da paz no Ocidente.*

Palavras-chave: século XII; Oriente Latino; cisma papal; indulgência cruzada; teoria da pentarquia.

1. THE PAPACY AND THE ORIENTALIS ECCLESIA IN THE TWELFTH CENTURY: TWO-WAY INTERACTION OR DEPENDENCY?

In summer 1160, a council met in Nazareth to judge which of the two candidates elected the previous year — Alexander III and Victor IV — was the legitimate pope: the senior clergy of the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem were deeply divided over the choice between the two rivals. In his *Historia Hierosolymitana*, William, archbishop of Tyre and chancellor of the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem, stated that Alexander's legate, Cardinal John of Saints John and Paul, was not allowed to enter the kingdom in his official capacity as representative of the pope until the assembly decided which

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pope they chose to support. Despite the proposal of King Baldwin III, who suggested receiving the cardinal as a private pilgrim *orationis gratia*, the Latin Church of Jerusalem — and some prelates of the Antiochene one — decided to support Alexander III, because he had been elected by the majority of the cardinal bishops¹.

In the aftermath of the council, the Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem, Amalric of Nesle, wrote a letter on behalf of the church of the kingdom to recognize Alexander, whom they «unanimously elected as temporal lord and spiritual father and received of their own free will» (*vos in dominum temporalem et spiritualem patrem elegimus unanimiter et voluntarie recepimus*)². The patriarch and the church of Jerusalem chose to use a formula — *dominum temporalem et spiritualem patrem* — which pointed out the special institutional and spiritual bond established between the papacy and the Latin East since the aftermath of the First Crusade. In the complex context of the schism of 1159, the same expression was used by King Ferdinand II of Léon and by King William I of Sicily³. Together with Jerusalem, these new kingdoms sought new institutional forms of legitimacy and protection fostered by the papal authority even though, according to recent research, they were more flexible than a strict relationship of vassalage⁴.

Anyway, the relationship between the Latin East and Alexander III sketched in this letter was carefully built. Amalric of Nesle's *inscriptio* referred to the pope as *universalis papa*, and his election was considered *sancta* and *catholica*, but the patriarch of Jerusalem used for himself the title of «humble servant of the Church of the Holy Resurrection» (*sancte resurrectionis ecclesie minister humilis*). As Benjamin Kedar argued, this formula, which the papal chancery never employed addressing the patriarch of Jerusalem, was a hidden warning to the Roman See: it appeared in charters draft since 1130 — that is when the idea of *Orientalis ecclesia* became of fundamental importance, as we shall see — and emphasized the authority of the See of Jerusalem, springing from the powerful place of Christ's resurrection, of which Amalric was the rightful keeper, without any reference to the connection with Rome⁵.

The importance that Pope Alexander attached to the support of the *Orientalis ecclesia* was considerable. On 20 January 1161, soon after the news arrived from the council of Nazareth, the pontiff wrote a programmatic letter to his staunch ally Eberhard, archbishop of Salzburg; he announced that «the Eastern Church, in the

¹ Guillaume de Tyr, 1986, book XVIII, chapter 29.

² Hiestand 1985, pp. 225-226, n° 83; Tessera 2010a, pp. 300-307.

³ As for William I of Sicily see *Italia Pontificia* 1935, vol. VIII, 49-50, n° 190; 50-51, n° 194 (the sources are the pro-Alexander life written around 1178 by Cardinal Boso and the chronicle of Romuald of Salerno). See also Pacaut 1981, pp. 40, 46-47.

⁴ Wiedemann 2021, chapters 2-3. For the complex relation between the kingdom of Sicily and the papacy see the essay of Glauco Marco Cantarella in this book.

⁵ Kedar 2014, pp. 8-9.

council solemnly held at Nazareth, in the presence of the king of Jerusalem, [...] together with the whole Western Church» damned Victor IV and his followers and recognized Alexander himself as «spiritual father and supreme pontiff» (*in patrem spiritualem et summum pontificem*)⁶, a broader definition, suitable also for countries like the kingdom of England (where King Henry II called the new pope «father, lord, catholic, supreme pontiff»)⁷, which asserted the Roman primacy — if not his sovereignty — over all Christendom.

Both letters, that of Patriarch Amalric and that of Pope Alexander, were copied in the letter-collection of Admont (Wien, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Cod. 629), which was compiled in the Benedictine monastery of Admont by 1185 and preserved a rich section of materials dealing with the papal schism of 1159, thus highlighting how, for both Alexander and his opponents, the use of literary propaganda spread by a network of faithful people played an important role in staking claims to authority⁸.

As Michele Maccarrone demonstrated long ago, the idea of *Orientalis ecclesia* was connected to the theory of pentarchy developed by Pope Pelagius I, that is the pre-eminence of the five major apostolic sees, the *apostolicae sedes* (Rome of course, but also Jerusalem, Antioch, Constantinople and Alexandria), in case of dispute inside the universal Church. As a matter of fact, Pelagius' idea became a powerful tool during the papal schisms throughout the twelfth century⁹. The role played by the *Orientalis ecclesia* in supporting the Roman pope is a good starting point for examining if the institutional dialogue between the papacy and the Crusader East was bilateral, and what influence on papal politics and ecclesiology the Latin States had¹⁰.

2. THE PAPACY AND THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE ORIENTALIS ECCLESIA

The birth of Latin Outremer had offered to the papacy — since Urban II's times and especially during Paschal II's pontificate — an extraordinary opportunity to build the relationship between *regnum* and *sacerdotium* in the Latin East on strong ecclesiological foundations based on the Gregorian ideas of *libertas*, *restitutio*, and *renovatio ecclesiae* (even if in the harsh reality of Crusader politics, they were more than once disregarded)¹¹. Before analysing the role played by the Latin East during

⁶ *Die Admonter Briefsammlung* 1983, pp. 119-121, n° 65.

⁷ *Die Admonter Briefsammlung* 1983, pp. 123-124, n° 68.

⁸ For the letter-collection of Admont see Hödl 1969 and Hödl 1970. For a survey on papal communication see Althoff, Fönnesberg-Schmidt and Kynan-Wilson 2018.

⁹ Maccarrone 1991, pp. 357-431.

¹⁰ For an overview of the particularities of the Crusader principalities from a political perspective see Barber 2010, and in particular for the kingdom of Jerusalem see the essay of Luigi Russo in this book.

¹¹ Tessera 2010a, pp. 59-74. On Pope Paschal's role see Rowe 1957 and the essay of Rebecca Rist in this book.

the papal schisms, it is important to understand what the concept of *Orientalis ecclesia* meant from a papal perspective in the middle of the twelfth century.

In December 1099, writing to ecclesiastical and lay people after the conquest of Jerusalem, Pope Paschal II labelled the Church of the Latin East as «our mother, the Eastern Church» (*mater nostra Orientalis ecclesia*), which had to be defended by Christian knights and subsequently reformed by churchmen¹². A few months after, on 28 April 1100, in his programmatic letter *Quod per prophetam*, the pope recommended his legate, Cardinal Maurice of Porto, to the Latin East and announced triumphantly that «the Eastern Church, after a long period of captivity, has returned in great part to the ancient glory of freedom»¹³. The immediate precedent of Paschal's vocabulary — and his notion of *Orientalis ecclesia* — is found in the letter of Pope Urban II to the faithful of Flanders, which referred to «the Churches of God in the Eastern territories» (*ecclesias Dei in Orientalis partibus*) and called the people to the «liberation of the Eastern Churches» (*ad liberationem Orientalium ecclesiarum*)¹⁴, perhaps alluding to his unsuccessful and quickly abandoned idea of coexistence between the Greek and the Latin Churches in the East.

As a matter of fact, once the Latin Church of Outremer was reestablished, the papal chancery usually employed a specific *inscriptio*, such as *Ierosolimitana ecclesia* or *Tyrensis ecclesia*, when it addressed the individual church as a recipient of those letters dealing with ecclesiastical disputes or the administration of bishoprics. On the contrary, when the very meaning of the existence of a Latin Church in the East was questioned and the papacy claimed to be the principal responsible for the *liberatio* of the Eastern Church, his chancery chose to use the expression *Orientalis ecclesia*. This expression was also used when the primacy of Peter was threatened by the Eastern apostolic sees of Jerusalem and Antioch, a recurrent motif in relations between the papacy and the Latin Church of the Crusader principalities.

In 1128 the papal legate Cardinal Gilles of Toucy questioned the status of the apostolic see of Antioch against the patriarch of Antioch's claims to be a «colleague and brother» (*collegam et fratrem*) of the pope, insisting on the dual meaning of the concept of «Oriens»¹⁵. Rome was in fact the true «East» of the universal Church (*Oriens universalis ecclesie*)¹⁶; in contrast, the autonomy and independence of Antioch that Patriarch Bernard proudly claimed were the fruit of the papal commitment to

¹² Hagenmeyer 1901, pp. 175: «Ita in omnibus agite, ita pro vestro officio studete, ut mater illa nostra Orientalis ecclesia in statum debitum, largiente Domino, communibus studiis reformetur». In the same letter, the pope referred to the «Church of Asia» (*Asiana ecclesia*) which was released from the hands of the Turks.

¹³ Hiestand 1985, pp. 90-92, n° 4; Tessera 2017, pp. 181-188.

¹⁴ Hagenmeyer 1901, pp. 136-137, n° 2; Becker 1999; Strack 2016; Tessera 2019, pp. 75-76; Smith, 2024, pp. 35-46.

¹⁵ Hiestand 1985, pp. 137-140, n° 29-30; Hiestand 1991, pp. 327-328; Tessera 2010a, pp. 474-477.

¹⁶ Hiestand, 1985, p. 138, n° 29 («Oriens non immerito universalis ecclesie Roma est, a qua quicumque resiliert, fetorem omnibus sanctis fecit»).

the East, and his rebellion would have caused an apocalyptic catastrophe for the whole *Orientalis ecclesia*¹⁷.

Similar ideas about the respective roles of the Roman and the Latin Eastern Church were expressed in 1144 by Pope Lucius II to William of Messines, patriarch of Jerusalem. The recognition of the universal authority of the see of Peter corresponded to a full legitimisation of the jurisdiction claimed by the patriarch of Jerusalem, but the pope wished that King Baldwin III's new conquests would be instrumental to the salvation of the whole *Orientalis ecclesia*, thus introducing an ecclesiological perspective that went beyond the boundaries of a mere legal notion of the *Ierosolimitana ecclesia*¹⁸.

In March 1138, writing to all the Latin faithful living in the Byzantine lands and to those who served as mercenaries in the army of the emperor, Pope Innocent II explained that the liberation of the *Orientalis ecclesia* was a task performed with great losses and bloodshed by *catholici* men, that is people following the authority of the see of Peter, thus challenging the aggressive policy enacted by Emperor John II against the Latin principality of Antioch¹⁹.

Later, Pope Alexander III made a subtle yet interesting distinction between the *Orientalis ecclesia* and the *Orientalis terra*. In his crusade letter *Quantum praedecessores* (July 1165) — which he simply copied from Eugenius III's letter beginning with the same arenga — he evoked, as his predecessors did, the huge effort that the Roman Church made to free the Eastern Latin Church (*Orientalis ecclesia*) from its enemies²⁰. But within some years, when the situation changed and Alexander engaged in a more active way to defend the Holy Land²¹, he distinguished between the poor political and military situation of the Latin kingdom, labelled as *Orientalis terra*, and the unchanged dignity of the Latin Eastern Church (*Orientalis ecclesia*).

The letters *Inter omnia quae* and *Cum gemitus de*, both issued on 29 July 1169 and addressed to Henry, archbishop of Reims, a powerful supporter of the pope, focused on planning a new crusade²². Alexander III repeated the expression *Orientalis ecclesia* to vindicate the special solicitude and pastoral care the papacy should ideally have for the needs of the Eastern Church (*necessitas Orientalis ecclesie*) and its unjust sufferings (*dolores Orientalis ecclesie*) because of its special status as the land of redemption, where Christ had suffered for the salvation of mankind.

¹⁷ Hiestand, 1985, p. 139, n° 29 («Timendum certe et vere timendum, ne propter tuam singularem extollentiam orientalis confundatur ecclesia inter se intestinum miscens excidium et occidentalis ecclesie perdens auxilium»).

¹⁸ Hiestand 1985, p. 179, n° 56.

¹⁹ Hiestand 1985, pp. 168-169, n° 49; Tessera 2010a, pp. 198-202 (with discussion of previous bibliography on the dating of the letter to 1142).

²⁰ Alexandri III papae ep. CCCLX, PL CC, cols. 384-386.

²¹ Rowe 1993, pp. 119-112; Phillips 1996, pp. 149-150.

²² Alexandri III papae ep. DCXXVI, PL CC, cols. 599-601; Alexandri III papae ep. DCXXVII, cols. 601-602; Rowe 1993, pp. 123-124; Tessera 2010a, pp. 341-344.

In parallel, the pope began to develop the idea of a «political» protection of the Apostolic See over the very lands of redemption that the Crusader principalities seemed no longer able to guarantee. Three years before *Inter omnia quae*, the new crusader call *In quantis pressuris* (29 June 1166) referred to the «pressure, distress and difficulties of the Eastern land» (*pressuris, tribulationibus et angustis terra Orientalis*)²³. Finally, on 16 January 1181, the papal chancery issued two dramatic letters, *Cor nostrum* and *Cum Orientalis terra*, where the pope described the Latin kingdom of Jerusalem laid waste due to the illness of Baldwin IV²⁴. The second letter, which recommended the Templar envoys to the Western ecclesiastical hierarchy, referred exclusively to the *Orientalis terra* which was now deprived of its defenders: bishops, archbishops and abbots had to hear the bad news from Outremer, so that they could understand the tragic situation and the needs of the *Orientalis terra* (*statu et necessitate Orientalis terre*) and encourage the secular lords to leave for the Latin East²⁵.

Thus, in twelfth-century papal perspective, the idea of *Orientalis ecclesia* took on a complex meaning, encompassing both the ideal Latin Church born out of the crusade and the political government of the Holy Land²⁶, but it also reflected a precise hierarchical relationship between Rome and the apostolic sees of Jerusalem and Antioch. Consequently, the *Orientalis ecclesia* and its political choices were able to have a deep impact on the disputes involving the Western Church during the papal schisms of 1130 and 1159.

3. THE PAPAL SCHISMS OF 1130 AND 1159: THE INFLUENCE OF THE ORIENTALIS ECCLESIA

In 1128 King Baldwin II faced the problem of female succession to the throne of Jerusalem. The king combined the support of his powerful kinsmen, the Monthléry family, with the legitimization of his dynasty that he had gained thanks to the undisputed authority of the papacy²⁷. The letter *Laudes et gratiarum*, written by the chancery of Pope Honorius II on 29 May 1128, portrayed Baldwin II as an *alter Christus* who had suffered imprisonment and exposed his life for the safety of the Holy City of Jerusalem²⁸. Because of his special care for the *restitutio* of the Eastern Church, the

²³ Hiestand 1984, pp. 251-253, n° 53.

²⁴ Tessera 2010a, pp. 375-376.

²⁵ Alexandri III papae ep. MDV, PL CC, cols. 1296-1297; Hiestand 2008, pp. 163.

²⁶ This idea was also shared by the historians coming from the Latin East: in William of Tyre's *Historia Hierosolymitana* the expression «*Orientalis ecclesia*» is applied exclusively to the Latin Church overseas, born — according to William's view — as an original synthesis of European *latinitas* transferred to the lands of the East and protected by his ties with the Roman Church and the *Romana traditio*, see Tessera 2001.

²⁷ Mayer 1985. For the crusader engagement of Monthléry family see Riley-Smith 1997, pp. 169-188.

²⁸ Hiestand 1985, pp. 141-142, n° 32: «Nos vero, qui in cathedra beati Petri sedemus, licet indigni, personam tuam vera in Domino caritate diligimus et regnum Ierosolimitanum cum dignitate predecessore nostro felicitis memorie papa Paschali antecessori tuo regi Balduino atque Ierosolimitanae ecclesiae iuste discretionis moderamine tandem concessa apostolica tibi auctoritate concedimus».

pope had the power to grant «the kingdom of Jerusalem and its dignity» (*regnum Ierosolimitanum cum dignitate... apostolica tibi auctoritate concedimus*), which, at least in the perspective of the papacy, had been already granted by Paschal II to Baldwin I²⁹. If compared with the much-debated royal status that Pope Anacletus II accorded to King Roger II of Sicily in 1130³⁰, the formula *concedimus regnum* did not imply a papal lordship over Jerusalem with *homagium* and *fidelitas*. The papacy had created such a special bond with the Church and kingdom of Jerusalem that this increased the ideological weight of the *Orientalis ecclesia* when the stability of the Roman See itself was threatened.

When the papal schism burnt out in 1130, both Innocent II and Anacletus II immediately claimed to be supported by the whole Eastern Church, referring to Pope Pelagius I's theory of pentarchy, although the Church of Outremer was deeply divided within itself between the two candidates, especially in the case of the principality of Antioch which had strong political connections with Roger II of Sicily³¹. Flanked by Bernard, the tireless abbot of Clairvaux, at the beginning of February 1132 the king and the Church of Jerusalem openly sided with Innocent II, when the pope wrote triumphantly to his staunch ally, King Louis VII of France, that he found at Cluny a letter «of obedience and subjection» (*litteras oboedientiae et subjectionis*) from the patriarch of Jerusalem and the bishop of Bethlehem³². Meanwhile, Bernard of Clairvaux mentioned the decision of the *Orientalis ecclesia* to shift alliances in difficult areas of France, such as Aquitaine, or to support the cause of Innocent among influential members of the clergy, including the famous preacher Geoffrey of Loroux³³.

This situation allowed Baldwin II's successor, Fulk of Anjou, to take an active role in promoting Innocent's party, thus enhancing the international reputation of the Latin East. In 1133-1134, a high-profile embassy sent from Jerusalem was engaged in a diplomatic attempt — which needs further historical analysis — to reconcile Pisa and Genoa under the pretext of fighting against the Muslim expansion³⁴. Although the mediation failed, as stated by a disappointed letter written by the Jerusalem envoys to Archbishop Syrus and to the consuls of Genoa³⁵, this mission could be a mirror of the intense activity undertaken by Innocent II to create a wide network of alliances and reconcile the two Italian cities, thus preparing a strong support against King Roger II.

²⁹ Tessera 2010a, pp. 159-166. There is no need to doubt Paschal's concession to Baldwin I, as John had recently stated: John 2017.

³⁰ Cantarella 2018. See also the essay of the same author in this book.

³¹ Tessera 2010b.

³² D'Achery, 1723, p. 488.

³³ Tessera 2010b, pp. 7-8.

³⁴ Tessera 2010b, pp. 9-11; Tessera 2010a, pp. 195-198. The embassy was headed by Baldwin, chancellor of Patriarch Fulcher of Jerusalem, and by Bernard Vacher, a trusted man of King Baldwin II and King Fulk of Anjou (see Mayer 1989).

³⁵ *I Libri iurium* 1992, p. 48, n° 30.

On the other hand, in 1139-1140 Innocent II, finally recognized as the legitimate pope, reversed the pattern of the relationship between the Roman See and the *Orientalis ecclesia* in a harsh yet fundamental letter — *Magisterium totius ecclesiae* — sent to the Patriarch of Jerusalem, William of Messines³⁶. Rebuking the patriarch for the ill-treatment inflicted on Archbishop Fulk of Tyre, Innocent pointed to the long-standing action of the Roman Church in defence of the *Orientalis ecclesia* through the bloody sacrifice of his sons (*pro liberatione Orientalis ecclesiae tantopere laboravit*). In this way, the pontiff strengthened the weight of the primacy of St. Peter, which from a theological point of view, had been built on «Gregorian» biblical quotes such as Luke 22,32³⁷.

Pope Pelagius' theory of the five apostolic sees never supplanted the primacy of Peter, but the memory of the key role the *Orientalis ecclesia* played during the schism of 1130 was instrumental for creating consensus around Pope Alexander thirty years later. In 1165 Propst Gerhoh of Reichersberg stated in his *Opusculum ad cardinales* that the final condemnation of Anacletus and the recognition of Innocent II were due to the prevailing opinion of the apostolic sees of Outremer (*rei veritate comperta de consensus apostolicarum sedium transmarinarum*). He conferred a special place to Jerusalem and Antioch, so that the same criterion should have been applied to Alexander III and his rival³⁸.

However, this theory developed more as a propaganda tool (especially against the ecclesiastical circles favorable to the emperor) than as an actual opportunity to enhance the international status of the Latin East. Having secured his position thanks to the council of Nazareth in 1160, Alexander immediately rewarded with privileges those churches and monasteries of Outremer — such as the Holy Sepulchre, St. Mary of Jehosaphat, and Mount Tabor — which supported him³⁹. Then, worried by the possible alliance between Henry II of England and Emperor Frederick I, he did not pay attention to the difficult military situation of the Crusader States until July 1165, when he updated and reissued the crusader call *Quantum praedecessores* of Pope Eugenius III⁴⁰.

A more fruitful reaction was gained the following year, when Alexander III managed to come back to Italy, once again thanks to the initiative of Patriarch Amalric of Nesle. Before June 1166, a distinguished embassy from Jerusalem led by

³⁶ Hiestand 1985, p. 152, n° 40.

³⁷ Tessera 2017, pp. 190-195.

³⁸ Gerhohi Reicherspergensis 1955, pp. 326-28; Gerhohi Reicherspergensis 1897, p. 308; Maccarrone 1991, pp. 400-401; Tomea 1975, pp. 77-80.

³⁹ Hiestand 1985, pp. 224-225, n° 82 (Holy Sepulcher, 15 October 1159: the first surviving letter that Alexander's chancery sent after the *Aeterna et incommutabilis*); 227-231, n° 84 (Mount Tabor, 12 January 1161); 232-233, n° 86 (St. Mary of Jehosaphat, 1 September 1162); Tessera 2010a, pp. 309-310. The privilege for the chapter of the Holy Sepulcher was renewed on 6 October 1163: Hiestand 1985, pp. 234-236, n° 87.

⁴⁰ Tessera 2010a, pp. 328-330.

the Hospitaller Master Gilbert of Assailly brought a dramatic letter (*Satis, ut credimus*) to the Roman curia, which was to be transmitted to all the faithful⁴¹. The patriarch summed up the military failures that had occurred in the Latin East (especially around Antioch) over the last half century and warned the Western Christianity that, without decisive assistance, the Holy City itself would soon fall into the hands of its enemies (a fault that God would also impute to Western leaders). Calling the faithful to the liberation of their *Orientalis* mother, the land sanctified by the physical presence of the Lord, Amalric introduced some new features in the *remissio peccatorum* granted to all those who will answer to the cry of the Latin Church.

4. PILGRIMAGE OR CRUSADE? OUTREMER'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF PAPAL *REMISSIO PECCATORUM*

Together with the idea of *Orientalis ecclesia*, the institutional development of the remission of sins connected to the crusade in the East was a turning point as a result of which the experience of Outremer influenced the norms established by the papacy later in the twelfth century. In 1969, James Brundage drew attention to the fundamental distinction between a remission (or commutation) of penance and a proper «indulgence», according to a technical and theological definition. In fact, it was not until the thirteenth century that the technical concept of «indulgence», namely the remission of the temporal penance due to God, was finally codified in canon law. At the beginning of the crusader movement, the vocabulary employed by the papal chancery was neither clear nor technical, even though it concerned a remission of sins⁴². As pointed out by Jean Richard and taken up with a detailed historiographical reappraisal by Anne Bysted⁴³, both Urban II and Paschal II did not distinguish between the *remissio peccatorum* (remission of sins) granted to visit the sepulchre of Christ, that is for a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, and that granted to fight against the enemies of the Christian faith in the Latin East, that is the goal of the «crusade».

This ambiguity did not favour the military needs of the Crusader states, although it allowed the papacy to gradually extend the idea of *remissio peccatorum* to other conflicts that threatened the Church. In his *Epistle of the people of Liège* to Pope Paschal II, Sigebert of Gembloux copied a letter sent in 1103 by the same pope to the former crusader Count Robert of Flanders, in which Paschal II asked him to take up arms against the dissident people and clergy of Liège, who had sided with Emperor Henry V. The pope guaranteed the count and his knights a special bond with the Apostolic See (*familiaritas*), as well as a *remissio peccatorum*, if they placed themselves

⁴¹ Riant 1881, pp. 386-387, n° II. On Gilbert's embassy see Phillips 1996, pp. 149-154.

⁴² Brundage 1969, pp. 145-153.

⁴³ Richard 1987; Richard 1996; Bysted 2014, pp. 94-96, 164-180.

at the service of the Roman Church by means of a loyal knightly service in the same way that they committed themselves to fighting for Jerusalem (a principle that on the contrary Sigebert considered extremely dangerous *pro horrenda novitate rei*)⁴⁴.

Thirty years later, during the Council of Pisa in 1135, Innocent II applied the same remission which Urban II granted to those fighting for the *Orientalis ecclesia* at Clermont to the armed struggle against his enemy Anacletus II (and against his ally Roger II of Sicily)⁴⁵. His choice was much more significant because he decided to use the same expression — *ad liberationem ecclesie* — that had played a fundamental role not only during the Gregorian struggle, but also in the papal call for the first crusade⁴⁶. Moreover, in the context of the papal schism, the influence of the *Orientalis ecclesia* was considered decisive in consolidating Innocent's authority.

A further step, which was not fully developed with a juridical reflection on the *remissio peccatorum*, was the crusader letter *Quantum praedecessores*, issued by Pope Eugenius III in 1145-1146. This text was deeply influenced by the innovative idea of «transcendental remission» conceived by Bernard of Clairvaux, which entered the theological frame of the temporal penance, that is the unprecedented «sacramental» value attributed to the remission of the penance⁴⁷. However, the pope's letter was mainly focused on the *remissio* and *absolutio peccatorum* that Urban II had already granted «so that whoever has piously undertaken such a holy journey and has completed it, or has died in the attempt, may obtain absolution for all the sins which he has confessed with a contrite and humble heart»⁴⁸.

But the significance of the *venia peccatorum* offered by Patriarch Amalric in 1166 went beyond the formulas previously used by the papacy. Thanks to the authority coming to him from his special connection with the site of Christ's Passion and Resurrection (and not because of a papal mandate), the patriarch of Jerusalem guaranteed that not only the crusader warriors, but anyone who helped the Latin East with donations or advice (*consilium*) would share in the spiritual merits and benefits obtained through the intercession of the «Holy City of Jerusalem and in

⁴⁴ Sigeberti Gemblacensis 1892, pp. 451-452 («Hoc tibi ac militibus tuis in peccatorum remissionem et apostolicae sedis familiaritatem precipimus, ut his laboribus et triumphis ad caelestem Ierusalem Domino praestante pervenias»). See Housley 1985, p. 20.

⁴⁵ Girgensohn, 1972, pp. 1099-1100 («Eis autem, qui adversus eum vel Petrum Leonis ad liberationem ecclesie terra vel mari perrexerint et in eodem servitio fideliter laboraverint, eadem remissio facta est, quam papa Urbanus omnibus proficiscentibus Ierosolimam pro christianorum liberatione in concilio Claremontano constituit»); Housley 1985, pp. 22-23.

⁴⁶ For the idea of *libertas ecclesiae* and its political outcome see Tellenbach, 1936; Szabó-Bechenstein 1985.

⁴⁷ Meschini 1998; Tessera 2010a, pp. 223-224 (including previous and fundamental bibliographical references on Bernard's idea of crusade).

⁴⁸ Grosse 1991, p. 92 («ut, qui tam sanctum iter devote incepit et perfecit sive ibidem mortuus fuerit, de omnibus peccatis suis, quibus corde contrito et humiliato confessionem suscepit, absolutionem obtineat et sempiternae retributionis fructum ab omnium bonorum remuneratore percipiat»). On Pope Eugenius' idea of crusade: Constable 1953, pp. 249-252; Richard 1987, pp. 133-135; Tessera 2010a, pp. 228-230.

the universal Eastern Church»⁴⁹. Amalric extended the same remission granted to the fighters to all those who have died during the journey to Jerusalem and added a special privilege (*remissionem omnium peccatorum suorum*) for those who wished to visit the Holy Sepulchre (or would die while travelling for the same purpose)⁵⁰.

This formula highlights two interesting clarifications that the patriarch introduced: the association of both benefactors and warriors with the spiritual merits of the Latin Eastern Church by virtue of the place of Christ's Passion and Resurrection, and a first, partial, distinction between the *remissio* considered as the fruit of the penitential pilgrimage and its transcendent value, which later led to the idea of «plenary indulgence» including the remission of the temporal penance⁵¹. The example of the *venia peccatorum* of 1166 demonstrated that «indulgences» and *remissiones* could be granted by others than the papacy because of the privileged status that the Latin Church of Jerusalem enjoyed in close contact with the earthly places of Christ's life⁵².

One might wonder whether this affirmation of the authority of the Latin Church of Jerusalem regarding the remission of sins was not also strengthened by the negotiations that, in the spring of 1166, Emperor Manuel Comnenus had begun with Alexander III. The emperor demanded recognition of Byzantine imperial suzerainty in the West and accepted to extend the Roman primacy over the Greek Church⁵³. However, the diplomatic negotiations of the papal envoys in Constantinople stalled over the different interpretation of the Petrine primacy. According to the polemical treatise of Andronikos Camatéros, the basileus maintained that, if the primacy of Rome was linked to the presence of St. Peter, the more relevant the position of Antioch — the first see of the apostle — and even more so that of Jerusalem, where Christ had carried out his teaching, must have been⁵⁴. An echo of these ideas may have influenced the choices of the patriarch of Jerusalem: just few years later, in 1167-1169, a close Byzantine-Frankish political and cultural collaboration renewed the decoration of the church of the Nativity in Bethlehem with a program of mosaics that had profound theological significance⁵⁵.

⁴⁹ Riant 1881, p. 387 («Nos vero, auctoritate dominice Passionis atque Resurrectionis, omnes qui iter Sancti Sepulcri arripuerint, sive auxilium vel consilium, tam in armis quam in ceteris bonis nobis fecerint, omnium orationum et beneficiorum nostrorum, que in sancta civitate Iherusalem, et in universa Orientali ecclesia fiunt, et de cetero fient, participes et consortes constituimus. Illis vero quos in itinere mori contigerit, eandem veniam quam illis qui ad nos veniunt accipere mereantur, cum orationum et beneficiorum nostrorum participatione concedimus»).

⁵⁰ Riant 1881, p. 387 («Omnibus, si pie devotionis affectu Dominicum Sepulcrum pro instanti necessitate visitare volentibus, tam in itinere morte preoccupatis, quam ad nos usque pervenientibus, laborem itineris ad penitentiam et obedientiam atque remissionem omnium peccatorum suorum iniungimus et vitam eternam. Amen»).

⁵¹ Tessera 2010a, pp. 332-333.

⁵² See now Kedar 2025, pp. 103-104.

⁵³ Tessera 2010a, pp. 338-339.

⁵⁴ Darrouzés, 1965, pp. 72-78.

⁵⁵ Kühnel. 2019.

In any case, Amalric of Nesle's message deeply influenced the development of the papal remission of sin in a dialogic process. In his crusader call *In quantis pressuris* (29 June 1166), Pope Alexander III reshaped the idea coming from Jerusalem and went beyond. As was customary, his letter was built by his chancery upon the text of the *narratio* sent by the applicant, but it added a specific section about the *remissio peccatorum* to the instructions already given by Eugenius III in the *Quantum praedecessores*. Alexander promised a remission of all sins (*peccatorum suorum indulgentiam et remissionem*) to those fighting against the Saracens for two years in the East or, alternatively, a remission of half the penance for those who would stay for one year only⁵⁶. Contrary to the experience of the Second Crusade, when the military expedition was planned without prior involvement of the Crusader States (and miserably failed), a careful reflection about the needs of the Latin East gave the papacy an opportunity to better define and clarify the idea of remission and «indulgence» of sins and to unite this with a strong assertion of papal pre-eminence⁵⁷.

Three years later, with the letter *Inter omnia quae* issued on 29 July 1169, Alexander III repeated his earlier statements. According to the authority that God granted him by virtue of his high office (*indultae nobis a Domino auctoritatis officio*)⁵⁸, he could concede a complete remission of the penance to everyone who «stayed there to defend that land for two years and bore the sweat of the battle at the orders of the king and his barons for love of Christ»⁵⁹; a remission of half of the penance was granted to those fighting in the East for one year under the same conditions. Thus, the pope reserved for himself (and not for the Latin patriarch) the possibility of granting a remission of sins, which belonged to his priestly ministry (*per sacerdotale ministerium*). However, on one side he bound it to the policy of the kings of Jerusalem, on the other he remarked the strong connection with the authority of his predecessors — Urban II and Eugenius III — who had launched the crusade⁶⁰. In fact, both the papal calls *In quantis pressuris* and *Inter omnia quae* clearly distinguished, in a specific paragraph formulated with

⁵⁶ Hiestand 1984, p. 253, n° 53 («Preterea quicumque de viris bellicosis et ad terre illius defensionem idoneis ad loca illa, que dominus et redemptor noster Iesus Christus corporali presencia sanctificavit, devocionis amore accesserint et ibi duobus annis contra Sarracenos pro christiani nominis defensione pugnauerint, nos de misericordia Dei omnipotentis et beatorum apostolorum Petri et Pauli meritis confidentes eis omnium peccatorum suorum, de quibus corde contrito et humiliato confessionem susceperint, absolucionem facimus [...]. Hi autem, qui illic per annum, sicut diximus, moram habuerint, de medietate iniuncte sibi penitencie peccatorum suorum indulgentiam et remissionem obtineant»).

⁵⁷ Tessera 2010a, pp. 333-335.

⁵⁸ Alexandri III papae ep. DCXXVI, PL CC, cols. 599-601.

⁵⁹ Alexandri III papae ep. DCXXVI, PL CC, cols. 600-601 («illis qui pro divinitatis amore laborem huius profectionis assumere, et quantum in se fuerit implere studuerint, de indultae nobis a Domino auctoritatis officio, illam remissionem imposita poenitentiae per sacerdotale ministerium facimus, quam felices memoriae Urbanus et Eugenius, patres et anecessores nostri, temporibus suis statuisset noscuntur, ut videlicet qui ad defensionem terrae idoneus, et ad hoc obsequium expeditus, susceptae poenitentiae biennio ibi ad defensionem terrae permanserit, et sudorem certaminis ad praeceptum regis et majorum terrae pro amore Christi portaverit, remissionem iniunctae poenitentiae se laetetur adeptum»).

⁶⁰ Rowe 1993, pp. 123-124; Tessera 2010a, pp. 342-343.

similar words already used by Patriarch Amalric of Jerusalem in 1166, the remission of sins which was linked to the traditional pilgrimage to the Holy Sepulchre⁶¹.

Although cooperation between the Latin East and the papacy greatly improved after 1169, the complexity of the political scenario in the West, overwhelmed by the papal schism and the struggle between Emperor Frederick I and the Italian cities, and the ambiguity of the Byzantine policy inaugurated by Manuel I Comnenus absorbed all the energies of the papacy, prevented a full-scale new crusader expedition, and also changed the assumptions of the relationship established between Alexander III and the crusader principalities.

As a matter of fact, in 1179, during the Third Lateran Council, the bilateral dialogue between the Roman See and the Latin East on the institutional developments of the *Orientalis ecclesia* and the remission of sins changed completely, notwithstanding that the conciliar fathers entrusted Archbishop William of Tyre — who was also King Baldwin IV's chancellor — with drawing up the acts⁶². The papal schism had ended, and the primacy of the Apostolic See of Rome was now undisputed, such that the opening speech, entrusted to Bishop Rufinus of Assisi, claimed for the Roman Church — the «City of the Sun» — the primacy all over the five apostolic sees and all over the churches of the Christian world⁶³. During the same council, the idea of *servitium Dei* to defend the Church not only from Muslim or pagans, but also from its inner enemies and the possibility of gaining spiritual rewards by monetary commutation of the crusader vow, which Patriarch Amalric had already suggested in 1166, were taken up and extended to the new political objectives of the papacy, including the war against Cathar heretics and mercenaries⁶⁴. The crusade was slowly changing in a pious practice of personal redemption, which everyone could afford without being obliged to fight in the East.

5. HERITAGE OF THE WHOLE CHRISTENDOM: THE «INTERNATIONAL STATUS» OF THE CRUSADER STATES

Regardless of the development of the concept of indulgence and the definitive demise of the theory of pentarchy despite special concern for Jerusalem and Antioch, the Latin East influenced papal policy in a third way. After the failure of the Second Crusade, a constant flow of letters and embassies from Jerusalem and Antioch reached the Western courts — especially that of Louis VII — asking not only for military

⁶¹ See i.e. the letter *In quantis pressuris*: «Preterea omnibus dominicum sepulcrum pro instanti necessitate visitare volentibus tam in itinere mortis preoccupatis quam usque illuc pervenientibus laborem itineris ad penitentiam, obedienciam et remissionem omnium peccatorum iniungimus, ut post huius carnis ergastula vitam eternam consequi mereatur» (Hiestand 1984, p. 253, n° 53).

⁶² Guillaume de Tyr 1986, book XXI, chapter 25; Kedar 1992, pp. 207-208.

⁶³ Morin 1928; Pacaut 1982, pp. 19-22.

⁶⁴ Richard 1982; Tessera 2010a, pp. 336-337. See also the recent survey of the conciliar canons in Summerlin 2019.

aid but also emphasising the idea that the Holy Land was the common heritage of all Christianity and that its defence was therefore a shared duty⁶⁵. It would take too long to look at these attempts in detail, and they have been well reconstructed by Robert Smail and Jonathan Phillips⁶⁶. It is sufficient to recall that this idea was already suggested in the *arenga* of *Inter omnia quae* (1169), which was constructed as an excursus of the history of the crusade and made precise reference to the «primacy of charity». This was a key concept which was built upon John 13,15, and was developed by Gregory VII, according to which to lay down one's life for one's brothers, through crusader service, was an effective imitation of Christ's sacrifice⁶⁷. The same concerns were expressed by Alexander III in a second letter, *Cum gemitus quae*, which, as we have seen before, was addressed on the same day to Archbishop Henry of Reims.

Brother of King Louis VII, Henry was also Alexander III's main interlocutor in the delicate mediation for peace between the kingdoms of France and England⁶⁸. Between 1173 and 1174 both the king and the patriarch of Jerusalem, and subsequently Pope Alexander III, repeated to Henry of Reims other appeals dealing with the need for peace in the West to alleviate the difficulties of the Holy Land⁶⁹. On 21 July 1173, at the end of the revolt of King Henry II's sons, the pontiff sent the archbishop a distinguished embassy — which also included the Templar Geoffroy Fulcher, a trusted man of both King Amalric of Jerusalem and King Louis of France — to secure the truce between the two kings of France and England, claiming that the papacy had a specific duty to promote peace and, above all, to ensure that the French and English knights, who had contributed so much to the liberation of the Latin East, could continue their fight. It is noteworthy that Alexander spoke explicitly of a «holy land» that it was the duty of every devout Christian to protect and keep safe⁷⁰.

Further steps were made with two following letters, the *Non sine gravi dolore* and the magnificent *Ingemiscimus et dolemus*, both sent on 23 December 1173, to Henry, archbishop of Reims and Louis, king of France respectively⁷¹. The first letter, which recommended the envoys of King Amalric of Jerusalem, suggested that the sins of all Christians were the moral cause of the incessant wars which prevented peace in Western Europe, especially between France and England, and weakened

⁶⁵ During the 60s the court of King Louis VII of France was the target of numerous diplomatic efforts promoted by the Latin kings of Jerusalem Baldwin III and Amalric, as revealed by many surviving letters: Smail 1969, pp. 8-9; Tessera 2010a, pp. 317-318.

⁶⁶ Smail 1977; Phillips 1996.

⁶⁷ Cowdrey 2001; see also Riley-Smith 1980.

⁶⁸ Falkenstein 1993; see also for Alexander III and Louis VII Pacaut 1953.

⁶⁹ Phillips 1996, pp. 213-222; Tessera 2010a, pp. 348-349.

⁷⁰ Alexandri III papae ep. MCII, PL CC, cols. 962-963 («timemus admodum, sicut possumus de ratione timere, ne contra fideles Christi infidelium audacia crescat et [...] in ignominiam Christiani nominis illam terram sanctam, illam utique ad quam tuendam et conservandam succingi debet omnium Christianorum devotio, praesumant invadere»).

⁷¹ Alexandri III papae ep. MCXLVII, PL CC, cols. 927-928; Hiestand 1985, pp. 275-277, n° 109 (with the old date of 1187).

and caused defeats in the East⁷². This concept led to further development when, after the battle of Hattin and the loss of Jerusalem in 1187, Pope Gregory VIII assigned the responsibility of sins to all Christendom and asked for a general penance and purification⁷³. The second letter was a direct appeal to the king of France, whose actions could guarantee both outcomes: peace in the West and the defence of the Outremer. The political and moral task of Louis VII, who should have been shaken by the destruction of the Holy Land, was therefore to provide for the legacy of Christ, because of the deep veneration he had always shown towards the Holy Sepulchre⁷⁴.

Lastly, on 19 April 1174 the pope congratulated the archbishop of Reims on his tireless efforts on behalf of the Roman See in convincing the king of France to begin peace talks with Henry II of England. The matter was all the more urgent because, if the two kings refused to reconcile, «it would have resulted for each kingdom in wasteful expenditure and danger for the people, and the land of Orient (*Orientalis terra*) would have been exposed — may the Lord prevent it! — to the devastation of the pagans»⁷⁵.

However, in the long-lasting perspective of the pontiff, the idea of an «international status» of the Latin kingdom of Jerusalem was indeed quite different from what the rulers of the Latin East had expected and promoted. After a decade of joint efforts between Jerusalem and Rome, with the growing troubles surrounding the throne of Baldwin IV of Jerusalem, whose effective and capable rule was undermined by leprosy⁷⁶, the papacy chose to assume direct responsibility for the Holy Land, even if this risked delegitimising the power of the kings of Jerusalem.

On 16 January 1181, Pope Alexander III issued the letter *Cor nostrum*, a dramatic crusade appeal which mercilessly depicted the young leper king Baldwin IV, whose illness was described in a gloomy tone (unlike the judgements of contemporary chroniclers)⁷⁷. If the Holy Land had no king, the responsibility for the defence fell on its temporal lord — the pope, according to the Jerusalem letter of 1160 — and spiritual father — the pope, once again — who in turn made use of his universal authority to urge Christian knights to fight a war at the same time material and spiritual. Alexander III went so far as to say that anyone who did not feel affected by the calamities of the Holy Land, or who had not taken up arms to defend it from invasion and desecration, could not be considered

⁷² Alexandri III papae ep. MCXLVII, PL CC, cols. 927-928: «quia ubique fere inter Christianos reges et principes guerra mota est et contentio, et sic peccatis nostris exigentibus factum est ut se interimant mutua clade bellorum, qui olim consueverant nationes paganas et exteras debellare».

⁷³ For Gregory VIII's crusader letters: Tessera 2017, pp. 203-205; Smith 2018.

⁷⁴ Hiestand 1985, pp. 276-277; Smail 1969, pp. 16-17; Tessera 2010a, pp. 349-350.

⁷⁵ Alexandri III papae ep. MCXXXVI, PL CC, cols. 987-988 («utriusque regnum dispendia rerum et pericula proveniant personarum, et Orientalis terra exponatur, quod avertat Dominus, directioni paganorum»); Pacaut 1953, pp. 43-44.

⁷⁶ For Baldwin IV's reign: Hamilton 2000.

⁷⁷ Alexandri III papae ep. MDIV, PL CC, cols. 1294-1296; Tessera 2010a, pp. 375-378. See also Rowe 1993, pp. 130-131; Smail 1977, pp. 37-38. This call was reissued by Pope Lucius III in 1184: Ligato 1998, pp. 127-128.

a Christian⁷⁸. The same day, the papal chancery doubled its efforts with a second letter, *Cum Orientalis terre*, sent to the ecclesiastic hierarchy, urging them to support with financial assistance and preaching the Templar envoys appointed to attend the assembly of Nonancourt (April 1181), where they should facilitate a peace treaty between Henry II of England and Philip II of France⁷⁹. Thus, in the eyes of the papacy, the Holy Land had become the spiritual and earthly mirror of Christianity: the pope had the imperative duty to remind Christian princes that their wars provoked the success of the infidels in the East, as Alexander III repeated to Archbishop Henry of Reims more than once. What Raymond Smail had defined as «the international status of the Kingdom of Jerusalem», that is the moral and political responsibility that the West was called to assume — since the time of the fall of Edessa in 1144 and the Second Crusade — to protect the earthly places of redemption, now became the last resort for the fate of Jerusalem.

In spring 1184, showing extraordinary institutional flexibility, King Baldwin IV skilfully exploited his apparent political weakness to decide the destiny of his kingdom when he perceived that his leprosy was growing worse and that he could not trust in the factions surrounding the throne of the Holy City. The new status of the Crusader states that the papacy had shaped allowed him to entrust the choice between his two rival sisters, Sybil and Isabel, to an international committee — composed of the pope, the kings of France and England, and the emperor — if his heir, the child Baldwin V, already elected, had died prematurely⁸⁰. The proposal was far-sighted, but Patriarch Eraclius' mission failed⁸¹, Baldwin IV died aged twenty-four in spring 1185... and everyone knows how the story ended. The child king died suddenly in 1186: thanks to the complicity of his wife, and heir to the throne, Queen Sibyl, Guy of Lusignan seized power and so deeply divided the high court of Jerusalem that he indirectly caused the disaster at Hattin in July 1187 and the loss of Jerusalem few months later⁸².

However, the ideas arising from the interaction of the papacy and the crusader principalities of Outremer in the twelfth century — the identity of the *Orientalis ecclesia*, the development of crusade indulgence, and the international status of the Holy Land — left a lasting legacy that deeply influenced the collective consciousness of Western Christianity for centuries, and marks even today — *nostris temporibus*, as Pope Urban II would have liked to say — in an equally complex context, the fate of the land «where the Lord's feet have stood»⁸³.

⁷⁸ Alexandri III papae ep. MDIV, PL CC, col. 1293: «Non est utique Christianus, ut praescriptae terrae calamitatibus non movetur, nec accingitur ad ipsam ad infidelium incursibus defendendam, quam occupare laborant, et suis, quod absit, spurcitiis profanare».

⁷⁹ Alexandri III papae ep. MDV, PL CC, cols. 1296-1297; SMAIL 1969, p. 18.

⁸⁰ Hamilton 2000, pp. 206-207; Tessera 2010a, pp. 383-384. See also Mayer 1972, pp. 204-208; Smail 1977, pp. 24-25.

⁸¹ For a detailed account of Patriarch Eraclius' mission see Ligato 2007, pp. 140-156. See also Tessera 2010a, pp. 384-387.

⁸² An excellent summary is provided by Ligato 2007 and Nicholson 2022, pp. 117-133.

⁸³ Alexandri III papae ep. MCXLVII, PL CC, col. 927; Schein 2005, pp. 96-97.

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