



The Today Crusaders

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We hear from time to time angry curses against the crusaders, passionate diatribes against the crusaders, and vows to annihilate, at all costs, the crusaders.

It seems so normal to call the Western armies “crusaders” that this appellative passes unnoticed, when we should be shocked of such a stupendous error. Even if the use of this expression aims at some very specific purposes, and is part of a larger strategy, we must highlight it as a sign of our obscure times and we do not think it is superfluous to say a few words about it.

The real crusaders are long gone.

Everybody knows too well that the crusaders were “fighters of God,” so it is at least odd to see other “fighters of God” using the word “crusader” as an insult. How profound is the ignorance and the influence of the profane mentality today?

As we said, the real crusaders are long gone. No Western soldier could be called a crusader. The genuine crusader was a pilgrim oriented to Jerusalem, but no Christian army is interested in this Center anymore. Even the Muslims changed their sacred orientation from Jerusalem to Mecca.

So intense the profane mentality invaded the Occident, that no Western Christian could be called a crusader. No Western Christian would understand the traditional way of life, and no Christian would fight for this type of life. The modern Westerners are no crusaders, but “anti-crusaders.”

However, even though the crusaders’ pilgrimage to Jerusalem is long gone, we still can witness today a rather active pilgrimage to Santiago of Compostela, in Spain. But Spain changed so much during the Reconquista, that its “fighters of God” took an apocalyptic dimension.

When the Templars came back to Europe, their first establishments were in Spain. Santiago of Compostela is located in Galicia, a name reminding us of the Celts. Galicia is not only the part of Spain that first became free from the Saracens’ domination, but also a Templar cradle (the Templar fortress of Ponferrada is part of the Compostela pilgrimage) and a house of the Holy Grail. O Cebreiro, at 3,500 feet above sea level, not far away from Ponferrada, is a typical Celtic village (with Celtic round houses), where, the legend

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says, the Grail is preserved. In the 12th century, the church of Santa Maria la Real was built nearby. It contains a sacred chalice that commemorates a 15th century Eucharistic miracle. The legend states that the Holy Grail from which Christ drank wine during the Last Supper was hidden in O Cebreiro. A priest who had his doubts about the validity of the story was using the cup for the Eucharist. A massive snowstorm had been raging outside and only a single peasant had climbed the mountain to hear the mass. The priest began to criticize the man for coming through the storm when suddenly the bread and wine turned to flesh and blood.

It is well-known the Celtic influence upon the Grail legend and also the involvement of the “Templars” as guardians of the Holy Grail. What is less known or accepted is the Islamic influence.

The Santiago of Compostela Cathedral contains a sanctuary with a baldachin where Saint Jacob’s image is presented on three levels. The bottom level shows Saint Jacob the Teacher (spiritual master); the middle level shows Saint Jacob the Pilgrim; the top level shows Saint Jacob as *Matamoros*. This last representation, even though it took an apocalyptic dimension, since Saint Jacob became a Kalki-Avatâra, indicated the most exoteric understanding of the Tradition and ended with a terrible and shameful drama, when the Catholic Spaniards destroyed the traditional societies of the newly discovered America.

In 1216, Jacques de Vitry became the bishop of Acre. He was a type of exoteric fundamentalist of the “holy war,” and he was the one who preached the crusade against the Cathars. Also, Vitry saw the Orders of Chivalry as apocalyptic crusaders. He based his viewpoint on Zechariah’s text: “I saw by night, and behold a man riding upon a red horse, and he stood among the myrtle trees that were in the bottom; and behind him were there red horses, speckled, and white” (1, 8), and, of course, on the Apocalypse of John: “And I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals, and I heard, as it were the noise of thunder [Santiago is the son of thunder], one of the four beasts saying, Come and see. And I saw, and behold a white horse: and he that sat on him had a bow; and a crown was given unto him: and he went forth conquering, and to conquer. And when he had opened the second seal, I heard the second beast say, Come and see. And there went out another horse that was red: and power was given to him that sat thereon to take peace from the earth, and that they should kill one another: and there was given unto him a great sword. And when he had opened the third seal, I heard the third beast say, Come and see. And I beheld, and lo a black horse; and he that sat on him had a pair of balances in his hand. And I heard a voice in the midst of the four beasts say, A measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny; and see thou hurt not the oil and the wine. And when he had opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth beast say, Come and see. And I looked, and behold a pale horse: and his name that sat on him was Death, and Hell followed with him. And power was given unto them over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword, and with hunger, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth” (chapter 6).

The bishop of Acre assimilated the red horse to the Templars, the white horse to the Hospitaliers, the black horse to the Teutons and the speckled horse to the other Orders. And he explained that the role of the Templars was to defend the Church against the Saracens in Syria and the Moors in Spain.

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This very exoteric perspective was shared by the famous Al-Mansûr. In 976, when Al-Hakam II died, his son, Hishâm, was only eleven years old. But he became very powerful and, significantly, based his strength on an army of slaves and nomads. In 981, Hishâm became Al-Mansûr Bi Llah, “the victorious in the name of Allâh.” In those times, the pilgrimage to Santiago of Compostela could be compared to the pilgrimage to Mecca. Al-Mansûr was aware of this, which made Compostela his target: in 997 the city was ransacked, and before setting fire to the basilica, this frightening warrior ordered his soldiers to tear off the doors and the bells.

Saint Jacob was seen as an apocalyptic knight. After the appearance of the venerate patron-saint, Santiago Matamoros, “Saint Jacob killer of the Moors,” with the victorious battle of Clavijo, in 844, the war-cry in Spain became “Santiago y cierra, Espana.” In 1492, the year of the kingdom of Grenade’s fall, which puts an end to the Moslem presence in Spain, Christopher Columbus accosted on Pile of Guanahani, which he baptized San El Salvador. And it is with the cry of Santiago that the Spanish conquistadores will give the attack for the conquest of the New World.

The legend also says that Steven, a Greek-Orthodox bishop, who was intensely devoted to the apostle Saint Jacob, achieved in 1064 the pilgrimage to his sepulcher. One day, he heard the villagers calling upon the saint in these terms: “Holy Jacob, good knight, deliver us from the evil that threatens us.” and Steven, outraged, told them: “You stupid and ignorant people, you should not call Saint Jacob knight, but sinner!” However, the following night, the apostle appeared to him, dressed as a knight: “Steven,” he said to him, “you ordered that I should be called sinner and not knight, therefore I appear to you, so that you doubt not that God gave me the orders to fight and to be its champion against the Saracens.”

However, the Byzantine bishop’s outrage illustrates a deeper significance of the holy war and of the fighter of God, a significance well understood by the Templars in the Holy Land.

It is known today that, in the Middle Ages, the Christians and the Muslims did not only battle each other and that sometimes confrontation did not mean war. Beyond fight and loathing, there were not only external contacts and exchanges, but profound spiritual encounters, inspired mainly by the Islamic esotericism.¹ We can simplify and assume three levels, corresponding to the traditional triad *Corpus – Anima – Spiritus*:

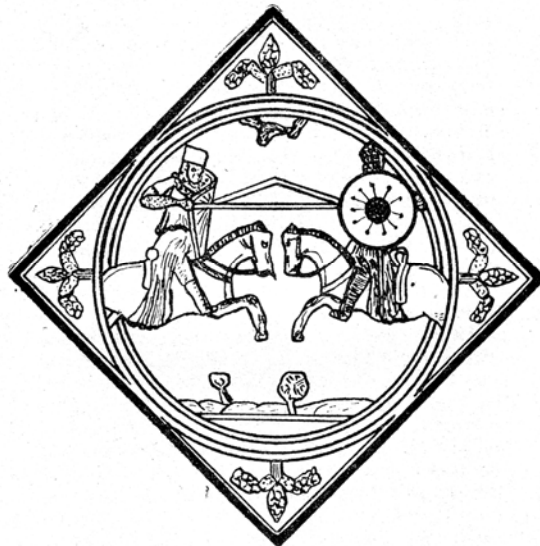
¹ See René Guénon, *Influence de la civilisation islamique en Occident*, in **Aperçus sur l’ésotérisme islamique et le Taoïsme**, Gallimard, Paris, 1973, and our work **The Near West**.

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1. The most exterior and terrestrial one corresponds to Santiago Matamoros (*Corpus*).²



2. The intermediary one corresponds to the Chivalric confrontation and, to some extent, to Saint Jacob the Pilgrim (*Anima*).



² We are well aware of the rich symbolism and implications of Saint Jacob's function as Matamoros, but that would take us too far away.

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3. The inner and celestial one corresponds to the spiritual brotherhood between Christian and Muslim, and to Saint Jacob the Teacher and Apostle (*Spiritus*).



As we said, Spain was not only the land of Reconquista and of Al-Mansûr's war but also of the Templars and the Holy Grail. Wolfram von Eschenbach suggested that Parzival's saga was found by Kyot in Spain, among Arabic manuscripts, and there are opinions among the Arthurian researchers advancing the idea that the Holy Grail legend found its near origin in the Islamic Spain.³ It is also said that Titarel's ancestor came from Asia to Spain.

Eschenbach narrated as well that, "Gahmuret's ways were those that moderation dictated, and no other. Boast he rarely did, great honor he meekly bore, haughtiness had no part in him. Yet this noble man felt there was no one who wore a crown, neither king nor emperor nor empress, of whose household he wished to be, except one who had supreme power on earth over all lands. Such was his heart's will. He was told that in Baghdad there was a man so powerful that two-thirds of the earth, or more, was subject to him. To heathens his name was so great that he was called «The Baruch,» and such was his power that many kings were vassals to him and subject were their crowns. The office of Baruch exists today, and just as Christian law looks to Rome, as our faith enjoins, there the heathen order is seen and from Baghdad they take their papal rule – deeming this entirely proper – and the Baruch gives them absolution for their sins."⁴

Gahmuret, the emblem of Christian Chivalry, became the knight of The Baruch ("the Blessed one"), the almost "Lord of the World," with the center in Baghdad. In spite of the hierarchy The Baruch – Gahmuret, Gahmuret appears not only as "father of the Grail,"

³ We should remember that Christian Rosenkreutz received a similar influence.

⁴ Wolfram von Eschenbach, **Parzival**, Vintage Books, New York, 1961, p. 9.

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but also as the one who brings to *concordia* and unity the Orient and the Occident. He battles the black army of Moors and the white army of Christians, and marries the black queen Belacane, and, after that, the white queen Herzeloide. The black queen is Feirefiz's mother; the white queen is Parzival's mother. Feirefiz is Muslim, Parzival Christian, but Feirefiz is also black and white – a subtle symbolism, suggesting also the esoteric Islamic influence.

Feirefiz and Parzival, separated for years, will start a ferocious fight, when they first meet, but at the end they acknowledge their brotherhood and their only and same father, which expresses a symbolism we don't have to translate. And Parzival, the king of the Holy Grail, will take with him to Montsalvage no other knight of the Round Table but his Muslim brother Feirefiz (he was allowed to bring just one companion). And we can assume that Parzival and Feirefiz were riding one and the same horse, as it is shown in the Templar seal.

Unfortunately, but unsurprisingly, after the Grail Age, Feirefiz disappeared and only the Matamoros remained visible. The lack of esotericism in the Christian society and more and more often in the modern religious Islam, conducted to the great disarray and confrontation of the present days, and many times today the so-called "fighter of God" is the school bully.

In comparison to the Grail Age, the picture of the modern world is a very different one. The crusaders are long gone and the modern religious men act with enthusiastic and aggressive *sancta simplicita* to bring disorder and darkness in as many fields as possible, forcing in the end the coming of the universal "Saint Jacob" with the sword and the white horse, to bring the Mercy of God, which does not mean that the reward for these modern religious men will be different from the one received by Judah in the Christian Orthodox tradition. God is Merciful in His Righteousness.