



## HISTORY

# What *really* led to the Crusades?

## Part 4

BY JOHN HENRY NEWMAN

*Few topics have become as confused, as clouded over with historical misinformation, or as conducive of a misplaced “say nothing about it; I already know more than I want to” complacency of mind than the Crusades — the series of military expeditions launched from Europe against Moslem-Turkish forces in the East commencing in 1095 and continuing through the following two centuries. (Which should, for historic completeness, also include the successful defense of Malta in 1565 against Turkish invaders; the naval defeat of the Turks in 1571 at the Battle of Lepanto; and the final elimination of the Turkish threat to Europe in 1683 before the gates of Vienna.)*

**I**T OFTEN happens in the history of states and races, in which there is found first a rise and then a decline, that the greatest glories take place just then when the reverse is beginning or begun. Thus, for instance, in the history of the Ottoman Turks, to which I have not yet come, Soliman the Magnificent is at once the last and greatest of a series of great Sultans. So was it as regards the house of Seljuk [See: “What really led to the Crusades?” Part 3, *CPR*, Sept./Oct. 2008]. Malek Shah, the son of Alp Arslan, the third sovereign, in whom its glories ended, is represented to us in history in colours so bright and perfect,

*A clear picture of this vast conflict requires first that it be seen in its full historical context. To help supply that context, CPR here publishes the fourth installment in this series: excerpts from a set of brilliant lectures “On the History of the Turks,” delivered to English audiences in 1853 by John Henry Cardinal Newman. Newman gave his talks, as he put it, “when we [the English people] are on the point of undertaking a great war in behalf of the Turks” — in the Crimea — something Newman saw as requiring examination, given the Turks’ historic role vis à vis the West. CPR here taps these lectures’ larger value in placing the Crusades in the context of Western history.*

— editor

that it is difficult to believe we are not reading the account of some mythical personage. He came to the throne at the early age of seventeen; he was well-shaped, handsome, polished both in manners and in mind; wise and courageous, pious and sincere. He engaged himself even more in the consolidation of his empire than in its extension. He reformed abuses; he reduced the taxes; he repaired the high roads, bridges, and canals; he built an imperial mosque at Bagdad; he

*John Henry Newman, English divine, philosopher, man of letters, and leader of the Tractarian Movement, lived from 1801 to 1890.*

founded and nobly endowed a college. He patronised learning and poetry, and he reformed the calendar. He provided marts for commerce; he upheld the pure administration of justice, and protected the helpless and the innocent. He established wells and cisterns in great numbers along the road of pilgrimage to Mecca; he fed the pilgrims, and distributed immense sums among the poor.

**H**E WAS in every respect a great prince; he extended his conquests across Sogdiana to the very borders of China. He subdued by his lieutenants Syria and the Holy Land, and took Jerusalem. He is said to have traveled round his vast dominions twelve times. So potent was he, that he actually gave away kingdoms, and had for feudatories great princes. He gave to his cousin his territories in Asia Minor, and planted him over against Constantinople, as an earnest of future conquests; and he may be said to have allotted to the Turcomans, finally, the fair regions of Western Asia, over which they roam to this day.

All human greatness has its term; the more brilliant was this great Sultan's rise, the more sudden was his extinction; and the earlier he came to his power, the earlier did he lose it. He had reigned twenty years, and was but thirty-seven years old, when he was lifted up with pride and came to his end. He disgraced and abandoned to an assassin his faithful vizir, at the age of ninety-three, who for thirty years had been the servant and benefactor of the house of Seljuk. After obtaining from the Caliph the peculiar and almost incommunicable title of "the commander of the faithful," unsatisfied still, he wished to fix his own throne in Bagdad, and to deprive his impotent superior of his few remaining honors. He demanded the hand of the daughter of the Greek Emperor, a Christian, in marriage. A few days, and he was no more; he had gone out hunting, and returned indisposed; a vein was opened, and the blood would not flow. A burning fever took him off, only eighteen days after the murder of his vizir, and less than ten before the day when the Caliph was to have been removed from Bagdad.

#### *Whoso shall strike against His cornerstone shall be broken*

Such is human greatness at the best, even were it ever so innocent; but as to this poor Sultan, there is another aspect even of his glorious deeds. If I have seemed here or elsewhere in these Lectures to speak of him or his with interest or admiration, only take me, Gentlemen, as giving the external view of the Turkish history, and that as introductory to the determination

of its true significance. Historians and poets may celebrate the exploits of Malek; but what were they in the sight of Him who has said that whoso shall strike against His corner-stone shall be broken; but on whomsoever it shall fall, shall be ground to powder? Looking at this Sultan's deeds as mere exhibitions of human power, they were brilliant and marvelous; but there was another judgment of them formed in the West, and other feelings than admiration roused by them in the faith and the chivalry of Christendom. Especially was there one, the divinely appointed shepherd of the poor of Christ, the anxious steward of His Church, who from his high and ancient watch tower, in the fullness of apostolic charity, surveyed narrowly what was going on at thousands of miles from him, and with prophetic eye looked into the future age; and scarcely had that enemy, who was in the event so heavily to smite the Christian world, shown himself, when he gave warning of the danger, and prepared himself with measures for averting it. Scarcely had the Turk touched the shores of the Mediterranean and the Archipelago, when the pope detected and denounced him before all Europe. The heroic pontiff, St. Gregory the Seventh, was then upon the throne of the apostle; and though he was engaged in one of the severest conflicts which pope has ever sustained, not only against the secular power, but against bad bishops and priests, yet at a time when his very life was not his own, and present responsibilities so urged him, that one would fancy he had time for no other thought, Gregory was able to turn his mind to the consideration of a contingent danger in the almost fabulous East. In a letter written during the reign of Malek Shah, he suggested the idea of a crusade against the misbeliever, which later popes carried out. He assures the emperor of Germany, whom he was addressing, that he had 50,000 troops ready for the holy war, whom he would fain have led in person. This was in the year 1074.





A Seljuk Turk

In truth, the most melancholy accounts were brought to Europe of the state of things in the Holy Land. A rude Turcoman ruled in Jerusalem; his people insulted there the clergy of every profession; they dragged the patriarch by the hair along the pavement, and cast him into a dungeon, in hopes of a ransom; and disturbed from time to time the Latin Mass and office in the Church of the Resurrection. As to the pilgrims, Asia Minor, the country through which they had to travel in an age when the sea was not yet safe to the voyager, was a scene of foreign incursion and internal distraction. They arrived at Jerusalem exhausted by their sufferings, and sometimes terminated them by death, before they were permitted to kiss the Holy Sepulchre.

***'I will suck that blood which is so ruddy in your throat ....'***

Outrages such as these were of frequent occurrence, and one was very like another. However, I think it worthwhile to set before you, Gentlemen, the circumstances of one of them in detail, that you may be able to form some ideas of the state both of Asia Minor and of a Christian pilgrimage, under the dominion of the Turks. You may recollect, then, that Alp Arslan, the second Seljukian Sultan, invaded Asia Minor, and made prisoner the Greek Emperor. This Sultan came to the throne in 1062, and appears to have begun his warlike operations immediately. The next year, or the next but one, a body of pilgrims, to the number of 7,000, were pursuing their peaceful way to Jerusalem, by a route which at that time lay entirely through countries professing Christianity [See: *Baronius, Gibbon*]. The pious company was headed by the Archbish-

op of Mentz, the Bishops of Utrecht, Bamberg, and Ratisbon, and, among others, by a party of Norman soldiers and clerks, belonging to the household of William Duke of Normandy, who made himself, very soon afterwards, our William the Conqueror. Among these clerks was the celebrated Benedictine Monk Ingulphus, William's secretary, afterwards Abbot of Croyland in Lincolnshire, being at that time a little more than thirty years of age. They passed through Germany and Hungary to Constantinople, and thence by the southern coast of Asia Minor or Anatolia, to Syria and Palestine. When they got on the confines of Asia Minor towards Cilicia, they fell in with the savage Turcomans, who were attracted by the treasure, which these noble persons and wealthy churchmen had brought with them for pious purposes and imprudently displayed. Ingulphus's words are few, but so graphic that I require an apology for using them. He says then, they were "exenterated" or "cleaned out of the immense sums of money they carried with them, together with the loss of many lives."

A CONTEMPORARY HISTORIAN gives us fuller particulars of the adventure, and he too appears to have been a party to the expedition [*Vid. Cave's Hist. Litterar. in nom. Lambertus*]. It seems the prelates celebrated the rites of the Church with great magnificence, as they went along, and traveled with a pomp which became great dignitaries. The Turcomans in consequence set on them, overwhelmed them, stripped them to the skin, and left the Bishop of Utrecht disabled and half dead upon the field. The poor sufferers effected their retreat to a village, where they fortified an enclosure and took possession of a building which stood within it. Here they defended themselves courageously for as many as three days, though they are said to have had nothing to eat. At the end of that time they expressed a wish to surrender themselves to the enemy, and admitted eighteen of the barbarian leaders into their place of strength, with a view of negotiating the terms. The Bishop of Bamberg, who is said to have had a striking presence, acted for the Christians, and bargained for nothing more than their lives. The savage Turcoman, who was the speaker on the other side, attracted by his appearance, unrolled his turban, and threw it round the Bishop's neck, crying out: "You and all of you are mine." The Bishop made answer by an interpreter: "What will you do to me?" The savage shrieked out some unintelligible words, which, being explained to the Bishop, ran thus: "I will suck that blood which is so ruddy in your throat, and then I will hang you up like a dog at your



gate." "Upon which," says the historian, "the Bishop, who had the modesty of a gentleman, and was of a grave disposition, not bearing the insult, dashed his fist into the Turcoman's face with such vigor as to fell him to the ground, crying out that the profane wretch should rather be the sufferer, for laying his unclean hands upon a priest."

This was the signal for an exploit so bold, that it seemed, if I may so express myself, like a particular inspiration. The Christians, unarmed as they were, started up, and though, as I have observed, they may be said to have scarcely tasted food for three days, rushed upon the eighteen Turcomans, bound their arms behind their backs, and showing them in this condition to their own troops who surrounded the house, protested that they would instantly put them all to death, unless they themselves were let go. It is difficult to see how this complication would have ended, in which neither side were in a condition either to recede or to advance, had not a third party interfered with a considerable force in the person of the military governor, himself a pagan, of a neighboring city [Gibbon makes this the Fatimite governor of some town in Galilee, laying the scene in Palestine. The name Capernaum is doubtfully mentioned in the history, but the occurrence is said to have taken place on the borders of Lycia. Anyhow, there were Turcomans in Palestine. Part of the account in the text is taken from Marianus Scotus.]; and though, as our historian says, the Christians found it difficult to understand how Satan could cast out Satan, so it was, that they found themselves at liberty and their enemies marched off to punishment, on the payment of a sum of money to their deliverers. I need not pursue the history of these pilgrims further than to say, that, of 7,000 who set out, only 2,000 returned to Europe.

Much less am I led to enter into the history of the Crusades which followed. How the Holy See, twenty years after St. Gregory, effected that which St. Gregory attempted without result; how, along the very way which the pilgrims I have described journeyed, 100,000 men at length appeared cased in complete armor and on horseback; how they drove the Turk from Nicaea over against Constantinople, where he had fixed his imperial city, to the farther borders of Asia Minor; how, after defeating him in a pitched battle at Dorylaeum, they went on and took Antioch, and then at length, after a long pilgrimage of three years, made conquest of Jerusalem itself, I need not here relate.

To one point only is it to our present purpose to direct attention. It is commonly said that the Crusades failed in their object; that they were nothing else but a

lavish expenditure of men and treasure; and that the possession of the Holy Places by the Turks to this day is a proof of it. Now I will not enter here into a very intricate controversy; this only will I say, that, if the tribes of the desert, under the leadership of the house of Seljuk, turned their faces to the West in the middle of the eleventh century; if in forty years they had advanced from Khorasan to Jerusalem and the neighborhood of Constantinople; and if in consequence they were threatening Europe and Christianity; and if, for that reason, it was a great object to drive them back or break them to pieces; if it were a worthy object of the Crusades to rescue Europe from this peril and to reassure the anxious minds of Christian multitudes; — then were the Crusades no failure in their issue, for this object was fully accomplished.

The Seljukian Turks *were* hurled back upon the East, and then broken up, by the hosts of the Crusaders [Newman here notes that: "I should observe that the Turks were driven out of Jerusalem by the Fatimites of Egypt, two years before the Crusaders appeared." According to "The Free Dictionary by Farlex" (at <http://encyclopedia.farlex.com/Fatimites>), the Fatimites were a "Dynasty of Muslim Shiite caliphs founded in 909 by Obaidallah, who claimed to be a descendant of Fatima (the prophet Muhammad's daughter) and her husband Ali, in North Africa. In 969 the Fatimids conquered Egypt, and the dynasty continued until overthrown by Saladin in 1171." Saladin was a Kurd].

**T**HE LIEUTENANT of Malek Shah, who had been established as Sultan of Roum (as Asia Minor was called by the Turks), was driven to an obscure town, where his dynasty lasted, indeed, but gradually dwindled away. A similar fate attended the house of Seljuk in other parts of the Empire, and internal quarrels increased and perpetuated its weakness. Sudden as was its rise, as sudden was its fall; till the terrible Genghis, descending on the Turkish dynasties, like an avalanche, cooperated effectually with the Crusaders and finished their work; and if Jerusalem was not protected from other enemies, at least Constantinople was saved, and Europe was placed in security, for three hundred years

[At this point, Newman further noted that: "I am pleased



Pope St. Gregory the Great



Statue of Godefroy de Bouillon,  
King of Jerusalem,  
a leader of the First Crusade.

to see that Mr. Sharon Turner takes the same view strongly (*England in Middle Ages*, i. 9). Also Mr. Francis Newman (in his "Lectures at Manchester," 1846) says "The See of Rome had not forgotten, if Europe had, *how deadly and dangerous a war Charles Martel and the Franks had had to wage against the Moors from Spain.* [emphasis added — editor] A

new and redoubtable nation, the Seljuk Turks, had now appeared on the confines of Europe, as a fresh champion of the Mohammedan Creed; and it is not attributing too much foresight or too sagacious policy to the Court of Rome, to believe that they wished to stop and put down the Turkish power before it should come too near. Be this as it may, such was the result. The might of the Seljukians was crippled on the plains of Palestine, and did not ultimately reach Europe ... A large portion of Christendom, which disowned the religious pretensions of Rome, was afterwards subdued by another Turkish tribe, the Ottomans or Osmanlis; but Romish Christendom remained untouched: Poland, Germany, and Hungary, saved her from the later Turks, even during the schism of the Reformation, as the Franks had saved her from the Moors. On the whole, it would seem that to the Romish Church we have been largely indebted for that union between European nations, without which Mohammedanism might perhaps not have been repelled. I state this as probable, not at all as certain."

### **Populousness, fire, resources, fanaticism**

I said earlier that we are bound to judge of persons and events in history, not by their outward appearance, but by their inward significance. In speaking of the Turks, we may for a moment yield to the romance that attends on their name and their actions, as we may admire the beauty of some beast of prey; but, as it would be idle and puerile to praise its shape or skin, and form no further judgment upon it, so in like manner it is unreal and unphilosophical to interest ourselves in the mere adventures and successes of the Turks, without going on to view them in their moral aspect also. No

race casts so broad and dark a shadow on the page of ecclesiastical history, and leaves so painful an impression on the minds of the reader, as the Turkish. The fierce Goths and Vandals, and then again the Lombards, were converted to Catholicism. The Franks yielded to the voice of St. Remigius, and Clovis, their leader, became the eldest son of the Church. The Anglo-Saxons gave up their idols at the preaching of St. Augustine and his companions. The German tribes acknowledged Christ amid their forests, though they martyred St. Boniface and other English and Irish missionaries who came to them. The Magyars in Hungary were led to faith through loyalty to their temporal monarch, their royal missionary St. Stephen. The heathen Danes reappear as the chivalrous Normans, the haughty but true sons and vassals of St. Peter. The Saracens even, who gave birth to an imposture, withered away at the end of 300 or 400 years, and had not the power, though they had the will, to persevere in their enmity to the Cross. The Tartars had both the will and the power, but they were far off from Christendom, or they came down in ephemeral outbreaks, which were rather those of freebooters than of persecutors, or they directed their fury as often against the enemies of the Church as against her children.

**B**UT THE unhappy race, of whom I am speaking, from the first moment they appear in the history of Christendom, are its unmitigated, its obstinate, its consistent foes. They are inexhaustible in numbers, pouring down upon the South and West, and taking one and the same terrible mold of misbelief as they successively descend. They have the populousness of the North, with the fire of the South; the resources of Tartars, with the fanaticism of Saracens. And when their strength declines, and age steals upon them, there is no softening, no misgiving; they die and make no sign. In the words of the Wise Man, "Being born, they forthwith ceased to be; and have been able to show no mark of virtue, but are consumed in wickedness." God's judgments, God's mercies, are inscrutable; one nation is taken, another is left. It is a mystery; but the fact stands; since the year 1048 the Turks have been the great Antichrist among the races of men.

I say since this date, because then it was that Togrul Beg finally opened the gates of the North to those descents, which had taken place indeed at intervals before, but then became the habit of centuries. In vain was the power of his dynasty overthrown by the Crusaders; in vain do the Seljukians disappear from the an-

nals of the world; in vain is Constantinople respered; in vain is Europe saved. Christendom in arms had not yet finished, it had but begun the work, in which it needed the grace to persevere. Down came the savage hordes, as at first, upon Sogdiana and Khorasan, so then upon Syria and its neighboring countries. Sometimes they remain wild Turcomans, sometimes they fall into the civilization of the South; but there they are, in Egypt, in the Holy Land, in Armenia, in Anatolia, forming political bodies of long or short duration, breaking up here to form again there, in all cases trampling on Christianity, and beating out its sacred impression from the breasts of tens of thousands.

Nor is this all; scarcely is the race of Seljuk quite extinct, or rather when it is on its very death-bed, after it had languished and shrunk and dwindled and flickered and kept on dying through a tedious two hundred years, when its sole remaining heir was just in one obscure court, from that very court we discern the birth of another empire, as dazzling in its rise, as energetic and impetuous in its deeds as that of Togrul, Alp, and Malek, and far more wide-spreading, far more powerful, far more lasting than the Seljukian. This is the empire of the great (if I must measure it by a human standard) and glorious race of Othman; this is the dynasty of the Ottomans or Osmanlis; once the admiration, the terror of nations, now, even in its downfall, an object of curiosity, interest, anxiety, and even respect; but, whether high or low, in all cases to the Christian the inveterate and hateful enemy of the Cross.

#### ***Parallel and contrast: the Seljukian and the Ottoman***

There is a certain remarkable parallel and contrast between the fortunes of these two races, the Seljukian and the Ottoman. In the beginning of the twelfth century, the race of Seljuk all but took Constantinople, and overran the West, and did not; in the beginning of the fifteenth, the Ottoman Turks were all but taking the same city, and then were withheld from taking it, and at length did take it, and have it still. In each case a foe came upon them from the north, still more fierce and vigorous than they, and humbled them to the dust.

These two foes, which came upon the Seljukian Turks and the Ottoman Turks respectively, are names by this time familiar to us; they are Genghis and Tamarlane. Genghis came down upon the Seljukians, and Tamarlane came down upon the Ottomans. Tamarlane pressed the Ottomans even more severely than Genghis pressed the Seljukians; yet the Seljukians did not recover the blow of Genghis; but the Ottomans survived the blow of Tamarlane, and rose more formidable after it, and have long outlived the power that inflicted it.

Genghis and Tamarlane were but the blind instruments of divine vengeance. They knew not what they did. The inward impulse of gigantic energy and brutal cupidity urged them forward; ambition, love of destruction, sensual appetite, frenzied them, and made them both more and less than men. They pushed eastward, westward, southward; they confronted promptly and joyfully every peril, every obstacle that lay in their course. They smote down all rival pride and greatness of man; and therefore, by the law (as I may call it) of their nature and destiny, not on politic reason or far-reaching plan, but because they came across him, they smote the Turk.

THESE THEN were one class of his opponents; but there was another adversary, stationed against him, of a different order, one whose power was not material, but mental and spiritual; one whose enmity was not random, or casual, or temporary, but went on steadily from age to age, and lasts down to this day, except so far as the Turk's decrepitude has at length disarmed anxiety and opposition. I have spoken of him already; of course I mean the Vicar of Christ. I mean the zealous, the religious enmity to every anti-Christian power, of him who has outlasted Genghis and Tamarlane, who has outlasted Seljuk, who is now outlasting Othman. He incited Christendom against the Seljukians, and the Seljukians, assailed also by Genghis, sunk beneath the double blow. He tried to rouse Christendom against the Ottomans also, but in vain; and therefore in vain did Tamarlane discharge his overwhelming, crushing force against them. Overwhelmed and crushed they were, but they revived. The Seljukians fell, in consequence of the united zeal of the great Christian commonwealth moving in panoply against them; the Ottomans succeeded by reason of its deplorable divisions, and its decay of faith and heroism.



**Pope Urban preaching  
the First Crusade**

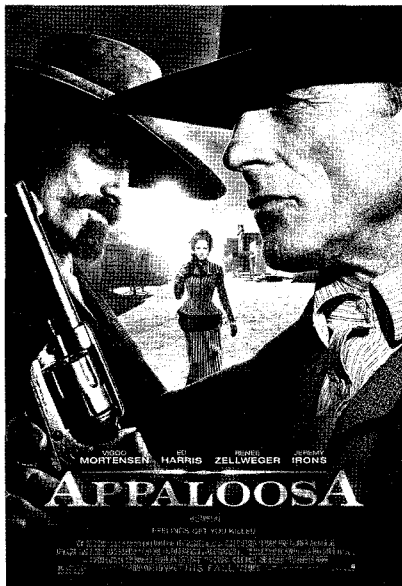
— *Next issue: The Ottomans and the Christians*



# Three movies to look for on DVD

B Y E L D O N Q U I C K

**I**S THERE a crack in the solid wall of the Hollywood liberal worldview? Glimmers of hope come from three movies coming out in the past few weeks. Since by the time my observations on the movies comes out in print the movies will have long ago disappeared from the big screens, I suppose I am recommending movies to be rented at the DVD store or viewed on HBO more than films one may visit a theater to see. Nevertheless, in my capacity as the one assigned to go to the movies so you don't have to, I recommend the following three movies. As you may have noticed from my previous articles, I am a great fan of Westerns. Life in the Western is so much simpler than life today.



Good and evil are as clear as black and white. One didn't need a wall of law books to determine right from wrong. Bad guys use their strength to bully, cheat, steal, kill, and generally make life difficult for the good guys. Good guys are brave and stand up to the bad guys and defeat them. The gun is the persuader of last resort, but when it is used it is used with surgical precision and accuracy.

Now comes Ed Harris's movie *Appaloosa* — and it truly is Ed Harris's movie — based on a 2005 novel of the same name by Robert B. Parker, the script is co-written (with Robert Knott) by Ed Harris and the film is produced by Ed Harris, directed by Ed Harris, stars Ed Harris, and comes with a theme song composed and sung by Ed Harris over the closing credits.

Neither Parker's original story nor Harris's film make any claim to originality of plot. They do, however, strive for authenticity, and succeed: in costumes, sets, dialogue, manners, and customs. The story line is as familiar and comfortable as an old shoe. We all know where it is going, but the fun is in seeing how it gets there. The good guys — Virgil Cole (Ed Harris) and his partner, Everett Hitch (Viggo Mortensen) — ride into town from an unknown past (think Alan Ladd, Gary Cooper, Clint Eastwood).

They are there to rid the town of the cruel tyranny of the powerful English rancher Randall Bragg (Jeremy Irons) and his men. The girl, Allison French (Renee Zellweger), falls for Virgil. Her life is threatened. He saves her. The bad guy is brought to justice. The good guy rides into the sunset and an unknown future (think *Shane*, *High Noon*, or *High Plains Drifter*).

The basic plot is a cliché, as are several moments and scenes, but the clichés are done with respect and love. They bring joy to the audience, like seeing an old friend one hasn't seen in years. Of course, this is only the essential story. A lot of twists on it keep the movie interesting and often surprising. For instance, Allison is not not exactly pure as the driven snow, nor does she have a heart of gold. Her heart goes to whatever alpha male appears at the moment on the scene. And Virgil does not ride off into the sunset, his partner does. But Virgil stays to be with Allison, though he is fully aware she will probably not be faithful to him.

The dialogue is sparse, and it is tellingly to the point. Real men don't feel the need to explain themselves. It is also frequently insightful and funny. The gunfights

*Eldon Quick, a retired actor living in Hollywood — going to the movies so you don't have to.*