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Book Review by Guy Perry: [G.J.M.Perry@leeds.ac.uk](mailto:G.J.M.Perry@leeds.ac.uk)

The Papacy and Crusading in Europe, 1198-1245, by Rebecca Rist (London: Continuum, 2009: pp. xiv + 272).

Rebecca Rist is currently a Lecturer at Reading, and this book won her the Arts and Humanities Research Endowment Trust Fund prize for Best Early Career Research Output (2010). It is therefore well worth a slightly belated review in EHR. It is a work that brings together many of her principal interests: crusading, the Church, and, above all, the relationship between religious belief and political ideas in the central Middle Ages. Rist has since moved on to focus on an even more torturous interplay: namely, that between the papacy and the Jews in the same period. The Papacy and Crusading in Europe examines the papal authorization of ‘internal’ crusades – against heretics, and against its political opponents – in the first half of the thirteenth century. The book combines a panoramic breadth and sweep with some intensely rewarding detail, chiefly drawn out of very close attention to the relevant letters of Innocent III, Honorius III and Gregory IX. This is undoubtedly the book’s chief strength, though substantial debts to the work of Patrick Zutshi are discernable, here and there, in the analysis.

Rist argues that 1198-1245 was the crucial period in the crystallization, development and expansion of the idea of ‘internal’ crusading. By the mid-thirteenth century, the papacy had a much broader conception of the uses to which crusading could be turned. This meant that, after 1250, the Crusade swiftly became a prime means for the Church to deal with its political opponents in Italy. So far, it is a well-worn story. But Rist aims to supply the missing detail on how this change took place. Following in the footsteps of her PhD supervisor, Jonathan Riley-Smith, she chooses to do so from the

papal perspective – giving us the ‘view from the curia’ in much more detail than we have had so far.

She divides the main body of the book into four chapters. Three of them focus on individual popes and crusades against heretics, whilst the last gives us a more concentrated analysis of the development of ‘political crusades’. This structure permits one of the book’s great achievements: that is, a sophisticated understanding of each pope’s individual contribution to the developing corpus of ideas and precedent. Rist robustly reaffirms the centrality of Innocent III, citing his decisions to authorize crusades against political opponents (Markward of Anweiler) and heretics (the Cathars) as a collective watershed. By extension, therefore, she sees the decade 1199-1209 as the crucial formative one. But she also shows that whilst Innocent’s successors kept to the basic course that their great predecessor had charted, they also adapted his methods and approach to achieve results in new and quite different situations.

The book is littered with interesting subsidiary points. One of the finest of these comes when Rist turns to the question of how one defines a heretic in early thirteenth-century canon law. She shows the impact that canonists had on the thought-world and actions of popes like Gregory IX. Similarly, Rist does well to demonstrate that even a potentially radical act, such as Innocent III’s authorization of a crusade against Markward of Anweiler, could be presented in traditional defensive terms. She has a particularly good grasp of nature of the shift that took place in the mid-thirteenth century. The idea of the Holy Land as the absolute priority begins to change, in practice, under Gregory IX and Innocent IV, as political crusades – above all, against the Hohenstaufen – move into the spotlight. But, tellingly, such campaigns were often

proclaimed as crusades against heretics, in one way or another: that is, against targets that had quickly become reassuringly familiar.

Rist is on strong ground when she emphasizes the novelty of crusading against heretics and against the papacy's political opponents in the early thirteenth century, and the way in which individual popes crafted their message to justify this. She also finds space for substantial discussions of crusading expeditions that do not normally get much airtime. (For instance, Gregory IX's campaigns against the Stedinger and against other German heretics, crusades against heretics in Bosnia, and so on and so forth.) In other words, we get a much stronger sense of the variety of crusading within Europe by the mid-thirteenth century, setting Gregory's wars against Frederick II in a better and clearer light.

There are, of course, some weaknesses too. Rist's introduction is heavy, and her long discussion of Gratian's *Decretum*, although revealing, does not hang together particularly well. She is strangely reserved about the 'Eastern' Crusades, and how they relate to what was happening within Europe. But it is only by adding them into the mix that we can really understand the full complexities of papal priorities and decision-making. And Rist's interest in the finer points of papal language could be taken still further. In his use of Biblical metaphor, Innocent III had a great heritage to draw upon. The bark of St Peter, adrift in stormy seas, was a favourite, famously deployed by Gregory VII more than a century earlier. Likewise, more could be said, not just about the 'excessive rhetoric' of the papal conflict against the Hohenstaufen, but about its effects on how people thought and acted.

The volume is well presented, clearly laid out, and has a thorough index. A map might have helped the reader to pursue the crusades around Europe. Both the appendices contain useful additional material. But perhaps more of Rist's summary of the printed

history of the papal correspondence (in Appendix A), and the current debate on the papacy and 'internal' crusades (Appendix B), should have been contained in the main body of the work.

This book represents almost the logical conclusion of its kind of approach: looking very closely at papal attitudes, above all through the detailed reading of the letters. The book's main strength, though, is also its weakness. It substantiates its case very well. But a great deal of space is devoted to proving points that are either well-known already, or else which could be readily surmised. It can come as no surprise, for example, that the papacy skilfully adapted its rhetoric according to audience and circumstance. In this respect, particularly, there is a sense of missed opportunity for a deeper discussion. But this should not take away from all that this book has to offer. Rist's work will be a fundamental staple, in her field, for some time to come.

G. PERRY  
University of Leeds