

PHILIPPE DE MÉZIÈRES' PORTRAIT OF PETER THOMAS
AS A PREACHER

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Assessing the preaching of Peter Thomas, the indefatigable Carmelite friar and papal legate who along with King Peter I was the driving force behind the crusade of 1365 to Alexandria, is no easy task. No manuscripts of his sermons survive, unlike those of other preachers such as Humbert of Romans, the fifth master general of the Dominican Order and a famous preacher of the mid-thirteenth century, or Pierre de la Palu, another noted Dominican preacher of the early fourteenth century who became the titular patriarch of Jerusalem.¹ Philippe de Mézières, chancellor of the kingdom of Cyprus under King Peter I and biographer of Peter Thomas, emphasizes his preaching throughout his biography and has the great merit of being his contemporary. By his own admission, however, he was unashamedly impartial. As he states in his biography, 'One thing I should write, and by God's witness I should be speaking the truth, that from that time onwards I chose him as my most unique father by the grace of God, and he me, although unworthy, as his son'.² Philippe de Mézières biography of Peter Thomas is written within this context. What is more, he wrote it in the spring of 1366, shortly after Peter Thomas' death on 6 January of that year, with a view to promoting the application King Peter I of Cyprus was to submit to Pope Urban V for the legate's canonization, an application turned down.³ With these caveats in mind, however, the biography does give valuable information on Peter Thomas as a preacher. Here the

¹ J. DUNBABIN, *A Hound of God: Pierre de la Palu and the Fourteenth Century Church*, Oxford, 1991, 143-144; P.J. COLE, *Humbert of Romans and the Crusade*, in *The Experience of Crusading*, 2 vols. Cambridge, 2003, vol. 1, ed. M. Bull and N. Housley, 157-161.

² *The Life of St Peter Thomas by Philippe de Mézières*, ed. J. SMET, *Textus et Studia Historica Carmelitana*, II, Rome, 1954, 101.

³ R. BLUMENFELD-KOSINSKI, *Philippe de Mézières's Life of Saint Pierre de Thomas at the Crossroads of Late Medieval Hagiography and Crusading Ideology*, in *Viator*, 40, No. 1 (2009), 223, 227, 230 and 245-247.

geographical range, the content and the success or otherwise of his preaching will be presented and discussed.

Preaching, while important in the recruitment and funding of fourteenth century crusades, did not have the same importance as in the preceding centuries, with crusades depending less on the expertise of preachers and more on popular enthusiasm in the wake of a military success, such as the capture of Smyrna in 1344, or even expressing themselves as a form of social protest.⁴ As a preacher, Peter Thomas reflects the accommodation to preaching the Carmelite Order had reached by the mid fourteenth century. The Cistercians had played a leading role as crusade preachers during the twelfth century, while from 1215 onwards the newly formed mendicant orders of the Franciscans and Dominicans came to predominate as crusade preachers.⁵ The Carmelites, in contrast, who began as a contemplative order and only adopted mendicancy in the later thirteenth century in the teeth of opposition from within their own order, had no tradition of preaching. The pope granted them a license to preach in 1253-1254, but only with Episcopal permission, which was sometimes withheld. There is little evidence of them being active as crusade preachers, partly perhaps on account of the withering criticism of ignorant and incompetent Carmelite preachers delivered by Nicholas Gallicus in his *igneae sagitta* of 1270, in which he emphasized the primacy of the solitary way of life, stating that preaching if done at all should be a by-product of contemplation and not an end in itself.⁶ Nonetheless, by the close of the thirteenth century the Carmelites, by now a mendicant order were imitating the Franciscans and Dominicans in emphasizing learning as a preparation for preaching. The Carmelite scholar John Pascal, a contemporary of Peter Thomas who became bishop of Rochester, produced a cycle of 70 model sermons.⁷ As regards crusade preaching, the Carmelites participated actively in it from the 1340s if not earlier. On 30 July 1345 Pope Clement VI, referring to the naval alliance against the Turks concluded by the papacy, Venice, the Hospitallers and King Hugh IV of Cyprus, instructed the prior general of the Carmelite Order to begin crusade preaching along with other

⁴ N. HOUSLEY, *The Avignon Papacy and the Crusades, 1305-1378*, Oxford, 1986, 127 and 144-149.

⁵ H.E. MAYER, *The Crusades*, Oxford, 1972, 1990³, 96.

⁶ A. JOTISCHKY, *The Carmelites and Antiquity*, Oxford, 2002, 24-25, 37, 81-82, 93 and 97.

⁷ F. ANDREWS, *The Other Friars: Carmelite, Augustinian, Sack and Pied Friars in the Middle Ages*, Woodbridge, 2006, 44.

religious orders and offer indulgences. The pope sent a similar letter to the Carmelite provincial prior of Germany in February 1346.⁸

Philippe de Mézières refers to Peter Thomas' preaching activity throughout the Life. One feature making a strong impression is the geographical range of this preaching. From some time prior to 1345 until the Alexandria crusade of 1365, a time span of over 20 years, Peter Thomas preached in France, Italy and throughout the eastern Mediterranean. Some time before May 1345, when he was appointed a procurator of his order at the Carmelite General Chapter held in Milan, Peter Thomas was living as a lector in Cahors, preaching there among his other duties for a period of three years. Philip de Mézières recounts how on a memorable occasion he preached there during a drought, promising that rain would come. A downpour ensued before the sermon's end.⁹ Some years later, and following the completion of his studies in Paris, where he attained a doctorate in theology, he was appointed regent of the Carmelite stadium in Avignon, where he preached at the papal curia. In the spring of 1357 Pope Innocent VI sent Peter Thomas and William Conti, the Dominican bishop of Sozopolis, to Constantinople to organize assistance for the Byzantine Emperor John V Paleologus, who soliciting military aid from the West had declared his readiness to convert in person and bring his empire under the jurisdiction of the Roman Church. Philippe de Mézières states that the emperor embraced Roman Catholicism, 'Brother Peter having continuously preached to him and guided him', a distortion of the truth, given that the emperor's intent antedated Peter's arrival.¹⁰ Unlike other mendicants, who frequently preached to Muslims, Peter did so rarely, but Philippe de Mézières records him as preaching to a mixed Christian and Muslim audience during his pilgrimage to the Holy Places, undertaken from Cyprus, where Peter Thomas had journeyed after leaving Constantinople. This would have been in 1357 or 1358.¹¹

The year 1359 was a milestone for Peter Thomas, both regarding his career and his area of jurisdiction as a preacher. On 11 May 1359 Pope Innocent VI appointed him papal legate in the east with wide ranging powers, with a view to coordinating a new naval alliance against the Turks of Asia Minor. His area of jurisdiction included

⁸ *Bullarium Carmelitanum*, ed. E. Monsignano, 2 vols. Rome, 1715, II, 581-583 and 583-585.

⁹ J. SMET, *Life of St Peter Thomas*, 57.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 60-61, 75 and 201-206.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 81-82.

Constantinople, the whole of Latin Romania, comprising Greece and the Aegean area, Venetian Crete and the Lusignan kingdom of Cyprus. He was also appointed bishop of Coron, a Venetian possession in the southern Peloponnese. The two papal letters recording this appointment authorized him to preach the crusade and to offer the relevant indulgences throughout the area under his legatine jurisdiction, while a third letter, also dated 11 May 1359, granted him inquisitorial powers against schismatics, heretics and their helpers, powers he was to make full use of in the course of his preaching.¹² In his biography of Peter Thomas, Philippe de Mézières likewise stresses that at this time the pope sent him out to the eastern Mediterranean 'not a papal nuncio ... but a special and universal legate of the Apostolic See', stating that 'he piously bestirred all Christians of his legation ... and there uplifted the said emperor and all the lords and people ... by his preaching'. Philippe de Mézières specifically mentions him preaching in Smyrna, Rhodes, Constantinople, Cyprus, Crete and Turkey 'sometimes with many galleys, sometimes with a few', thereby indicating that he travelled extensively around the wide-ranging area under his legatine jurisdiction.¹³

The galleys were central to this preaching activity, for they were hired from the Venetians and paid for out of papal funds. Hence when Peter Thomas wished to journey to Crete to extirpate a heresy that had arisen among the Latins on the island one argument his retinue employed to dissuade him was that he had retained the many galleys that he had in his service 'for the words of his wonderful preaching in the service of God against the Turks' over the time limit, and would therefore be unable to pay the considerable sum that the duke would demand from him. Peter Thomas proceeded to Crete nonetheless, preaching a sermon there to ascertain the heretics' beliefs, although ultimately more forceful means were employed against them.¹⁴ On leaving Crete he went to Smyrna, being responsible for the pay of the garrison stationed there. Philippe de Mézières stresses how he paid them on occasion out of his own funds, how as well as preaching and admonishing he often ventured forth with them to battle against the Turks, and how he employed his incomes, including those derived from his preaching, to fund the defense of Smyrna and the war against the Turks, living austerely. Incomes he derived from Cyprus, Rhodes

¹² E. MONSIGNANO, *Bullarium*, I, 101-103 and 105.

¹³ J. SMET, *Life of Saint Peter Thomas*, 84-86.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 87-89.

and the Venetian and Genoese communities were put to the same use. This feature of preaching in conjunction with other activities is mentioned earlier in a more general context. Philippe de Mézières describes Peter Thomas as teaching, making war, baptizing infidels and reducing schismatics to obedience throughout the area under his legatine jurisdiction on arriving there.¹⁵ He clearly does this to show how Peter Thomas excelled in all activities relevant to crusading, not simply as a preacher.

Philippe de Mézières makes it clear that Peter Thomas preached to convert schismatics as well as inspire people to participate in or donate sums towards the crusade. His preaching in the cathedral of the Holy Wisdom of Nicosia, Cyprus, before the Greek clergy on Easter Day, 5 April 1360, had this specific aim in mind. This was also one of his aims, but not the sole aim, when he conducted a subsequent Episcopal visitation of Coron in the Peloponnese. Philip of Mézières describes how 'he began to preach in the province of Achaea, to guide, to reduce the schismatic Greeks to the obedience of the Holy Church, to reform the Latin churches and their rectors, to comfort the princes and nourish the people in the Word of God'.¹⁶ Clearly preaching in the Peloponnese was directed, albeit with a different purpose, to the Latins as well as the Greeks. Following the capture of Adalia in 1361 by the forces of King Peter I of Cyprus Peter Thomas arrived there to consecrate churches and institute clergy, but while there 'he stirred and comforted the Christians guarding the city for the king and piously left many spiritual privileges there', which appears an oblique reference not only to his preaching but also to the indulgences he must have granted. On returning to Cyprus 'he marvelously aroused the king, nobles and even the people of Cyprus to the destruction of the faith's enemies', an allusion to crusade type preaching.¹⁷

Peter Thomas preached in Cyprus in two localities in order to stop the plague then raging there by appeasing God's wrath, as Philippe de Mézières recounts. He first preached in the capital, Nicosia, before the assembled king, nobles and people, instructing them to organize a procession on an appointed day, before which they were to fast on bread and water. On the day of the procession, he led the barefoot crowd from the royal palace to the great cemetery of Nicosia where once again he preached to them before leading them

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 84-85 and 89.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 92-93 and 95-96.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 97.

back to the city, where after hearing a mass in the cathedral of the Holy Wisdom they retired to their homes. Peter Thomas then went to Famagusta where he likewise gathered the people, instructing them to be ready for marching in procession on an appointed day, having previously fasted on bread and water. In Famagusta as opposed to Nicosia it was not only the various Christian denominations who took part in the procession but also Jews. He then led them to the cathedral of St Nicholas and preached before them, apparently moving by the power of his preaching not only the Latins who understood the content of his sermon but also the other Christian denominations and even infidels who happened to be present, with Turks and Saracens being explicitly mentioned.¹⁸ Philip de Mézières states that the plague abated from Cyprus after his sermons. Peter Thomas' ability to alleviate the plague in Cyprus recalls his similar achievement in Cahors, France, at the beginning of his ecclesiastical career, when his preaching ended a drought.

From October 1362 until the end of 1364 Peter Thomas was travelling through Europe along with King Peter I of Cyprus, where both men tried to galvanize enthusiasm for the king's planned crusade, although with very disappointing results. Philip de Mézières records him preaching in Italy on three separate occasions. The first of those was in North Italy. No specific locality is given, but Peter Thomas is described as clearly showing the need for a crusading expedition and declaring the king's word, which he could hardly have done other than by preaching. Following the conclusion of peace between the papacy and the city of Bologna, something achieved with considerable difficulty in September 1363 and in part due to the exertions of Peter Thomas, both Philippe de Mézières and Peter Thomas entered Bologna in January 1364. There Peter Thomas was compelled to preach a sermon recalling to obedience those who were opposed to the peace, a task in which he apparently succeeded. Shortly after his appointment as patriarch of Constantinople and legate of the crusade in July 1364 Peter Thomas 'was proclaiming and preaching the mystery of the cross and the *passagium*'. On occasion Philippe de Mézières infers that Peter Thomas preached, without stating this explicitly. He recounts how en route to Venice the legate moved the faithful, applied the sign of the cross onto their shoulders and invited them to join the *passagium* of the king of Cyprus, something that must

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 98-100.

have entailed preaching. After the arrival in November 1364 of King Peter I in Venice, Peter Thomas, aware of the despondency of the disappointingly small group of men gathered there for the crusade, preached to them on a continuous basis.¹⁹

From Venice the crusading forces went first to Cyprus, then in August 1365 to Rhodes, where a Hospitaller contingent joined them, and they attacked Alexandria in October 1365. Philippe de Mézières records Peter Thomas as preaching in all three places. As the forces were ready to leave Cyprus 'the legate piously preached to the small army of the king on the mystery of the cross and the lord's passion [and] gave the venerable sign of the cross to all making the passage ...'. Following the army's arrival in Rhodes, he preached vigorously on the cross in conjunction with numerous other activities, hearing confessions, absolving sins, advising the king and exhorting all present, from barons and knights to simple soldiers and the poor, so that he hardly ate and slept. Perhaps most extraordinary was his giving out of crosses not only to Latin 'but even to schismatics', which must refer to Greeks, either Rhodians or Cypriots.²⁰ In Alexandria, following the capture of the city by the crusader forces and the decision of the majority among them to abandon it on account of not having the resources to hold it, both King Peter I and Peter Thomas implored them without success to change their minds. Both Philippe de Mézières and Guillaume de Machaut, another contemporary who composed an epic poem in vernacular French on the capture of the city, mention this. Whether Peter Thomas gave a sermon to them is doubtful, but Philippe de Mézières records him 'ut remanerent milites admonentem' (urging the knights to stay). The verb 'admonere' while probably meaning to urge in this context, can also mean to preach.²¹ Mézières recounts later on that Peter Thomas employed innumerable arguments to persuade the crusaders to retain Alexandria, while Machaut states that 'he gave a fine address' on this particular occasion. Therefore the possibility that he preached to them cannot be wholly discounted.²²

What was the content of Peter Thomas' preaching? As stated earlier, none of his sermons survive, and unfortunately Philip de Mézières tends to eulogize his preaching without specifically

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 103-104, 113 and 119-121.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 124 and 126.

²¹ *Mediae Latinitatis Lexicon Minus*, ed. J.F. Niemayer, Leiden, 1997, 21.

²² J. SMET, *Life of Saint Peter Thomas*, 134; GUILLAUME DE MACHAUT, *The Capture of Alexandria*, trans. by J. Shirley, introduction by P. W. Edbury, Aldershot, 2001, 85.

describing its content. Nonetheless on some, but not all, occasions Mézières does recount in summary fashion what he said in his sermons. The occasions can be subdivided into three groupings, natural disasters, preaching against heretics and crusade preaching, although his Avignon sermons escape such categorization. When asked to preach in Cahors to stop the drought he comforted the people, promised rain and told them to place their faith in Our Lady.²³ Later on, when resident in Avignon as regent of the Carmelite *studium* there, he spared none in his preaching, not even the pope, and made the audience smile in the middle of his sermon by recounting beautiful moral tales. If indeed he spared none during his preaching, he resembles the Dominican Pierre de la Palude in this regard. Pierre's surviving sermons, found in manuscript form in the municipal library of Clermont Ferrand, include one that he preached before King Philip VI of France and his court on the feast of Corpus Christi, in which he sharply criticized royal monetary policies causing currency fluctuations injurious to the church and the ordinary people. Pierre de la Palude warned the king that by oppressing the church he was sinning against both the church and God and breaking his coronation oath, and would thus forfeit his kingdom through God's judgement. Peter Thomas, whose legatine powers included inquisitorial powers, similarly threatened the duke of Crete when the latter was unwilling to provide the help of the secular arm against Latin heretics with sentences of interdict and excommunication, the closure of the Latin churches and deposition.²⁴

Philippe de Mézières gives an indication of the content of Peter Thomas' preaching in Cyprus after assuming legatine powers. He states that once he had gathered the Greek clergy inside the cathedral of Nicosia, with the express aim of reducing them to obedience towards the Roman Church, he expounded the sacred scriptures, a standard technique among preachers in general, clearly showed them the error of their ways and informed them about the true faith and the obedience due to the Roman Church. Mézières points out that he first requested royal permission, although he does not state whether this was actually granted.²⁵ This is an important point. Preaching was disseminated not only by preachers on an official level, but also unofficially by nobles via their feudal ties and familial contacts, while

²³ J. SMET, *Life of Saint Peter Thomas*, 57.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 61 and 88; J. DUNBABIN, *Hound of God*, 147-149.

²⁵ J. SMET, *Life of Saint Peter Thomas*, 92.

by the fourteenth century popes could not in practice launch a crusade and its preaching without the assent of the secular rulers affected.²⁶ Mézières states that Peter Thomas continued preaching to the Greeks of Cyprus even after his controversial preaching in the cathedral, which had sparked off a riot necessitating the dispatch of royal troops, 'by the consent and favour granted by the devoted and Catholic king'. Against this one must set the account given in Leontios Makhairas, the fifteenth century Greek chronicle, according to which King Peter I wrote to the pope requesting him not to send out such troublesome legates in future.²⁷ If Peter Thomas had indeed not obtained the royal permission to preach which he had apparently sought, this in itself would have constituted grounds for such a complaint.

That Peter Thomas continued preaching in Cyprus, to Latins and others as well as to Greeks, is recorded by Mézières further on in his biography, although once again he is vague on the content. Following the capture of Adalia in 1361 'he animated the king, nobles and even the people of Cyprus in the destruction of the enemies of the faith', an oblique reference to crusade preaching. In response to the plague which had visited Nicosia and Famagusta, Peter Thomas is recorded preaching twice in Nicosia, before and in the course of the procession he organized. On the first occasion he led them to penitence and tears, stating that should they wish to be on good terms with God and change their life for the better then the plague would abate, while on the second he recounted various marvellous happenings. In Famagusta, where he preached a sermon before non-Chalcedonian Christian denominations, Jews and Muslims as well as Latin and Greeks, Mézières simply states that it was so uplifting as to move all to tears, without divulging its content.²⁸

Mézières is somewhat more forthcoming with regard to the contents of Peter Thomas' preaching in northern Italy during the years 1362-64, when he went there with King Peter I to drum up support for a crusade. Describing his preaching in general terms, he states that Peter Thomas demonstrated to the communes of Venice and Genoa and to various other rulers the suitability, potential and

²⁶ C. T. MAIER, *Sermons and Preaching*, in *The Crusades: An Encyclopedia*, ed. A. Murray, 4 vols. Santa Barbara, 2006, IV, 1090-1092; N. HOUSLEY, *Avignon Papacy*, 85.

²⁷ J. SMET, *Life of Saint Peter Thomas*, p. 93; LEONTIOS MAKHAIRAS, *Recital concerning the Sweet Land of Cyprus, entitled 'Chronicle'*, ed. R.M. Dawkins, 2 vols. Oxford, 1932, I, §§ 101-102.

²⁸ J. SMET, *Life of Saint Peter Thomas*, 97-100.

necessity of a crusade venture, showing the harm caused by the negligence of the Christians, proving their obligations to the venture, transmitting the king's word to them, addressing their replies and resolving their doubts over the passage. In Bologna he quoted the Holy Scriptures, recounted unheard of marvels, transformed the sins committed against the pope and King Peter, first censuring and then forgiving the people, reproving those engendering harm and recalling them to penitence and to the obedience of the church. In Venice, where he had the difficult task of consoling and encouraging the disappointingly small number of crusade recruits, he preached to the king and others incessantly 'animating all in the mystery of the cross and showing God's victory to rest not in a multitude of people but from heavenly fortitude, demonstrating that God would help the few undertaking the venture'.²⁹

Crusade preaching continued in Cyprus, Rhodes and Alexandria, but Mézières hardly states its content. Following the passage of the crusaders from Venice to Cyprus in late 1364 and the peace of April 1365 concluded between Cyprus and Genoa Peter Thomas preached to the crusading forces gathered in Cyprus, probably in the late spring or early summer of 1365. As regards content, he preached once again on the mystery of the Cross, as well as on the Lord's passion. Following the army's move from Cyprus to Rhodes in August, Mézières waxes lyrical on the effort and the effect of Peter Thomas' preaching, but not on its content. Following the capture of Alexandria in October and the decision eventually taken to abandon the city Mézières states that Peter Thomas showed 'by an infinity of arguments' in what way the retention of Alexandria would redound to the honour of God and the benefit of Christianity as well as the city of Jerusalem, whereas its retrocession would cause harm and dishonour to the Christians, but without stating what these arguments were.³⁰ To glean at least some of them one has recourse to Mézières' fellow countryman and contemporary, Guillaume de Machaut. Guillaume recounts how Peter Thomas in addressing the crusaders invoked St Thomas, the disciple of Christ who went to India and died there 'for doing good and for no other cause'. He also stated that by leaving they would be undoing all the good work they had accomplished and would also be dishonouring their commitment to serve the crusade, 'And one who serves, it's said,

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 103-104, 113 and 119-121.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 124, 126 and 134.

must serve until the work's completed, or he'll lose his pay'.³¹ How ironic that Guillaume should be more forthcoming here on the content of Peter Thomas' crusade preaching than Mézières himself, his self-acknowledged spiritual son.

How does Philippe de Mézières assess the effect of Peter Thomas' preaching? Anxious to promote the canonization of his spiritual father, his testimony is far from objective, exaggerating Peter Thomas' successes and consciously covering up his failures. The attempt to establish his sanctity appears early on. In describing the reaction in Cahors to the downpour allegedly brought on by his preaching, Mézières states that 'having seen this miracle, those of the city and province considered Brother Peter himself a saint, as also on account of his life and his marvelous conversation'.³² When recounting the effect of his preaching in Avignon, Mézières states that all revered and esteemed him highly, especially merchants, burgers and women. Through his preaching women were induced to renounce the pearls adorning their heads and superfluous jewelry, he made people laugh or cry and by the end of his sermons all were consoled and edified. The Holy Spirit spoke through him from a young age, and no other contemporary preacher's words reached out and were followed like his own. For the only effects of his preaching were the augmentation of the Roman Catholic faith and the good of his brothers and of all to whom he spoke.³³

In singing Peter Thomas' praises, Mézières was not above twisting the truth in order to emphasize the success of his preaching. He states that the Byzantine emperor John V Paleologus converted as a result of Peter Thomas' preaching and declared obedience to the Roman Church, even though Peter Thomas' arrival in Constantinople was the result, not the cause, of the emperor's decision to convert.³⁴ When preaching as a papal nuncio to an audience of Christians and Muslims in the Holy Land, Mézières states that its effect was mixed, with some Muslims and false Christians saying 'he is good', while others said the opposite. Yet Mézières also admits that some time after Peter Thomas' departure from the Holy Land King Hugh IV of Cyprus sent letters to pope Innocent VI containing the information that the Mamluk sultan, on hearing of Peter Thomas' arrival and preaching in Jerusalem, and

³¹ P. W. EDBURY and J. SHIRLEY, MACHAUT, *The Capture of Alexandria*, 85.

³² J. SMET, *Life of Saint Peter Thomas*, 57.

³³ *Ibid.*, 61.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 75 and 201- 204.

of his departure from his lands, immediately sent for the emir of Jerusalem, whom he had beheaded for allowing Peter Thomas to get away.³⁵ This strongly suggests that Peter Thomas' preaching had caused great anger, at least among the Muslims. Perhaps King Hugh was informing the pope of this because he feared that Peter Thomas' controversial preaching could worsen relations between Cyprus and the Mamluk sultanate, harming the considerable amount of trade between them. As early as 1336 Pope Benedict XII had initially postponed and then cancelled crusade preaching in Cyprus until an expedition from the West should set out, in response to a letter from King Hugh IV stating that crusade preaching without the back up of an expedition simply angered the Muslims without benefiting the Christians.³⁶ The king's letter in the wake of Peter Thomas' visit seems to reflect a similar situation.

In describing Peter Thomas' preaching after becoming papal legate throughout the lands under his legatine jurisdiction Mézières predictably states that all were edified. He also maintains, however, that the Turkish emir of Ephesus began rendering tribute, which he had never done for a previous legate or Christian, and that thenceforth he always honoured Christians visiting his lands.³⁷ Given that this emir faced internal strife at around the end of 1359 this information may be correct. Alternatively, however, it could be a garbled version of the treaty with the emirate of Aydin, in which the city of Ephesus, called Theologo in the medieval period, was located. The Hospitaller Grand Master and Archbishop Francis, Latin archbishop of Crete and papal legate, concluded this treaty on 18 August 1348. According to its terms, half the commercial dues from Ephesus and other cities were granted to the members of the naval alliance of the papacy, the Hospitallers, Venice and Cyprus, as well as allowing Christian merchants to trade freely within the emirate.³⁸ Turning to the successful extirpation of heresy among the Latins of Crete, it is clear from Mézières' account that on this occasion Peter Thomas' inquisitorial powers as papal legate were far more effective than any preaching. In a wider context, however, one should point out that crusade preaching against heretics was perfectly licit. Pope John XXII ordered the Dominican prior of

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 81-83.

³⁶ N. HOUSLEY, *Avignon Papacy*, 31 and 86.

³⁷ J. SMET, *Life of Saint Peter Thomas*, 86.

³⁸ E. ZACHARIADOU, *Trade and Crusade: Venetian Crete and the Emirates of Menteshe and Aydin (1300-1415)*, Venice, 1983, 54-55, 66 and 205-210.

Hungary to organize such preaching in February 1327 against Cathars, although he rescinded the order on discovering that it violated the jurisdiction of the Franciscan inquisition in the country.³⁹

As regards Peter Thomas' preaching in the cathedral of the Holy Wisdom in Nicosia, here again the truth is willfully misrepresented. According to Mézières, many of the assembled Greek clergy confessed their errors when he preached to them, and the whole enterprise was spoilt only because one Greek priest, inspired by the devil, began shouting at Peter Thomas, creating a tumult among the Greeks gathered outside the cathedral, who forced their way in with the help of evil Greek priests who opened the doors for them on the inside. The resulting riot was broken up following the dispatch of royal troops.⁴⁰ The fifteenth century chronicle of Leontios Makhairas recounts quite a different version of this incident, this section of it having possibly been written by Demetrios Daniel, a Greek in the service of Queen Eleanor, wife of King Peter I. It states that the Greek clergy were locked into the cathedral and that the commotion began when the Latins confirmed a Greek priest called Mantzas. When the other Greeks resisted the administration of this sacrament the Latins tried to force it on them, thereby provoking a riot. The chronicle adds that after this incident King Peter ordered Peter Thomas to leave Cyprus and sent three knights to the pope asking him not to send legates provoking trouble.⁴¹ The claim that Peter Thomas was asked to leave is patently untrue, but given King Hugh's earlier letter on Peter Thomas' preaching in Jerusalem the possibility that King Peter likewise wrote to the pope about the riot in the cathedral of the Holy Wisdom cannot be completely discounted. Mézières goes on to claim that after this incident Peter Thomas continued to preach to the Greeks of Cyprus and thereby confirmed the Greek prelates in obedience to the Roman Church 'which had never been done formerly by any legate or prelate'. This is also completely untrue, for the Greek clergy had accepted the primacy of the Roman Church as far back as 1260, under the terms of the *Bulla Cypria*.⁴²

Mézières repeats the claim that schismatic Greeks were reduced to obedience as a result of Peter Thomas' preaching when recounting

³⁹ J. SMET, *Life of Saint Peter Thomas*, 88-89; N. HOUSLEY, *Avignon Papacy*, 73-74.

⁴⁰ J. SMET, *Life of Saint Peter Thomas*, 92-93.

⁴¹ L. MAKHAIRAS, *Recital*, I, §§ 101-102.

⁴² J. SMET, *Life of Saint Peter Thomas*, 93; *The Cartulary of the Cathedral of the Holy Wisdom of Nicosia*, ed. N. Coureas and C. Schabel, Nicosia, 1997, no. 78.

his Episcopal visitation to the see of Coron in the Peloponnese. He also reformed the rectors and churches of the Latins there, while the nobles, hearing his divine words and holy conversation 'were converted to devotion and to a better life'. Whether the Greeks were also moved is left unsaid.⁴³ As regards the effects of Peter Thomas' preaching in the cemetery of Nicosia during the outbreak of the plague Mézières states the following; all were moved to tears, all felt spiritual joy in their hearts, the plague abated and had Augustine or any other doctor of the church preached this sermon he would have been satisfied with it. Three of these four effects can be regarded as conventional eulogizing, but the one about the plague subsiding recalls the miracle in Cahors, when rain fell in a drought-stricken region as a result of his preaching. Mézières wants us to believe that Peter Thomas' preaching brought on miracles.⁴⁴ The same is stated regarding his subsequent preaching in Famagusta, allegedly so effective that it moved to tears not only the Latins of the Church of Rome understanding its content, but other nations not understanding and even infidels, with the mortality brought on by the plague ceasing forthwith. Other than being moved to tears, people were moved to offer money for the crusade and to repent of their former enmities as a result of Peter Thomas' preaching. Mézières maintains that this was the case when he preached in North Italy in general and in Bologna in particular. But even these successes in preaching could not gloss over the fact that the response to King Peter's call for a crusade was disappointing, something that Philip de Mézières makes clear in his narration of the king's journey to Italy and Europe.⁴⁵

Following the departure of the crusading forces for the East, Mézières records Peter Thomas as preaching to them in Cyprus, on Rhodes and possibly in Alexandria. In Cyprus his preaching on the mysteries of the cross moved King Peter to declare that he would not return to Cyprus before leading his army in person into infidel territory, even if he had to die, although at the end of the passage Mézières makes it clear that there were detractors who were only partially silenced by the resolution both king and legate had shown.⁴⁶ But Rhodes provided the climax for Peter Thomas' preaching. Mézières recounts in familiar terms how his preaching of the cross

⁴³ J. SMET, *Life of Saint Peter Thomas*, 94-95.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 57 and 98-99.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 99-100, 103-104, 113 and 120-121.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 124.

uplifted the minds of all, moving them to tears and animating them to suffer even death for Christ, moved even infidels in Christian service to convert in great devotion. The greatest stress, however, is on how in the whole army not one Roman Catholic failed to receive Holy Communion, even though many among them had not confessed for around ten or twenty years, while the greater part of the army had undoubtedly joined the expedition not out of devotion, but because of vanity, greed and the king's largesse.⁴⁷ One recalls here the words of another famous preacher, the thirteenth century Dominican Humbert of Romans, who in expounding the motives of the crusaders said:

Now let them be soldiers who were once plunderers. Now let those who once fought against their brothers fight against the barbarians. Now let those who fought as mercenaries for a few coins win eternal rewards.⁴⁸

Anticlimax was to follow, as when following the capture of Alexandria and the decision taken to abandon it, Peter Thomas unsuccessfully implored the troops to stay. A few heeded his words, but the greater part prevented them 'at the devil's instigation' states Mézières. This reminds one of how he blames the devil for inflaming the Greek priest whose agitation prevented Peter Thomas from converting the Greeks prelates assembled in the cathedral of Nicosia. Yet if Mézières blamed the devil, Peter Thomas himself blamed the church and indeed Pope Urban V himself in a letter he wrote to the pope and Emperor Charles IV, stating that Alexandria would have been retained had people come in sufficient numbers and had the church provided its due.⁴⁹

In emphasizing the effect and success of Peter Thomas' preaching in order to promote his canonization, Mézières omits not only his failures, when these are not blamed on external factors, but also more mundane or less exalted aspects of a preacher's mission. Preachers could delegate preaching so that their message could reach a wider area. In the twelfth century when Bernard of Clairvaux was unable to appear in person during his preaching tours, he sent out envoys with letters of exhortation the essentials of which he wrote himself but which his chancery could alter to suit local circumstances.⁵⁰ Peter

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 126.

⁴⁸ P.J. COLE, 'Humbert of Romans', 172-173.

⁴⁹ J. SMET, *Life of Saint Peter Thomas*, 92, 134 and 139.

⁵⁰ H.E. MAYER, *The Crusades*, 96.

Thomas himself on arriving in Cyprus as a papal legate appointed vicars for preaching the crusade. A letter dated 28 September 1361 that he wrote from Nicosia mentions two of them, the Franciscan Cosma de Castro and an unnamed Dominican from Venice, nominated to preach the crusade in Venice and to give crosses to those wishing to go to Smyrna, send others in their stead or contribute financially. Financial contributions were to be sent to Crete by two persons chosen by the doge.⁵¹ The appointment of a Franciscan and a Dominican reflects the pre-eminent role both these mendicant orders played in preaching from the thirteenth century onwards. Mézières never mentions such substitute preachers. Nonetheless, he does state that when preaching and performing other duties in the far flung areas under his legatine jurisdiction Peter Thomas travelled 'sometimes with many galleys, sometimes with a few, and on occasion with just one'.⁵² While the number of galleys employed may be connected to the amount of danger posed by pirates operating in eastern Mediterranean waters, it may also reflect a practice of sending vicars to areas he could not visit himself, with preaching among the duties entrusted to them.

Another practice central to crusade preaching that Mézières mentions only obliquely is that of granting indulgences. The practice of offering indulgences to persons willing to go on a crusade or to contribute financially towards one originated outside Rome. Crusade indulgences were essentially 'manufactured' by preachers, not the pope or the official church, in response to the needs of the people and the requirements of a particular crusade. The theory justifying their grant was formulated after the inception of this practice, which was too popular to be stamped out, and the grant of indulgences remained central to fourteenth century crusade preaching, notwithstanding the abuses that had crept into the practice.⁵³ When Pope Innocent VI sent Peter Thomas to the East armed with full legatine powers the ability to confer a variety of crusade indulgences was among them, but Mézières refers to them in a very indirect fashion. He states that on becoming papal legate in 1359 he offered 'many spiritual and temporal benefits' to the Christians living in the area of his legatine jurisdiction, and he also offered spiritual benefits to the Christians garrisoning Adalia following its capture in 1361, which would have included

⁵¹ J. SMET, *Life of Saint Peter Thomas*, 211; N. Housley, *Avignon Crusades*, 139.

⁵² J. SMET, *Life of Saint Peter Thomas*, 86.

⁵³ H.E. MAYER, *The Crusades*, 32; N. HOUSLEY, *Avignon Papacy*, 128-143.

indulgences.⁵⁴ In describing Peter Thomas' activities as custodian of Smyrna and responsible for paying its garrison he states that among the incomes he donated for its upkeep were those he acquired from preaching, an oblique reference to the grant of indulgences in return for crusade funds.⁵⁵ Yet this aspect of Peter Thomas' preaching is never emphasized or even spelled out clearly, perhaps because its monetary connotations would detract from the saintly image that Mézières was so anxious to construct for his spiritual father through the medium of his preaching.

To sum up, Mezieres highly partial presentation of Peter Thomas as a preacher distorts the truth by exaggerating his successes, playing down his failures and concealing aspects of his preaching considered mundane or unsavoury. It is also very disappointing as regards the actual content of his preaching, although to be fair medieval chroniclers in general seldom wrote about the contents of crusade sermons, and where such information does exist it concerns the preaching of high ranking secular clergy as opposed to mendicant clergy.⁵⁶ In addition, the compilation and dissemination of model crusade sermons, such as those of Humbert of Romans, meant that to some extent at least contemporaries were familiar with the content of preachers' sermons and so chroniclers did not consider it worthwhile to record them. Nonetheless, what does come through clearly in Mezieres laudatory biography, even when allowing for the ulterior motives of its author, is that Peter Thomas was a highly active and vigorous preacher possessed of boundless energy and unyielding resolution, who made his presence felt for good or ill.

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⁵⁴ J. SMET, *Life of Saint Peter Thomas*, 84-85 and 97.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 89.

⁵⁶ C.T. MAIER, *Preaching the Crusades: Mendicant Friars and the Cross in the Thirteenth Century*, Cambridge, 1994, 1998³, 111.

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