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On 9 December 1917, British and Dominion forces captured Jerusalem from the Turks, and two days later, heading a solemn procession, General Edmund Allenby entered the Holy City on foot. In London, Punch published a memorable illustration which epitomized the great achievement. Captioned 'The Last Crusade', it showed Richard Coeur de Lion looking down towards Jerusalem and nodding contentedly, 'My dream comes true!' As so often, Punch seemed to resonate with the general mood: the allusion to the campaign in Palestine as the 'new' or the 'last' Crusade, and to the British soldiers fighting there as 'new' or 'modern' Crusaders, was widely disseminated, both during and after the war. Numerous books offered their own variation on the theme: Khaki Crusaders (1919), Temporary Crusaders (1919), The Modern Crusaders (1920), The Last Crusade (1920), With Allenby's Crusaders (1923), The Romance of the Last Crusade (1923), and so forth. It continues to be perpetuated in popular historiography today.

It is perhaps this Crusading mania which has overshadowed the remarkable fact that just a few weeks before the British occupation of the city, the Press Bureau — a section of the government's own Department of Information — issued the following D NOTICE to the press:

15 November 1917. 1.45 pm.

NOTICE TO THE PRESS. PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL.
(NOT FOR PUBLICATION OR COMMUNICATION)

The attention of the Press is again drawn to the undesirability of publishing any article, paragraph or picture suggesting that military operations against Turkey are in any sense a Holy War, a modern Crusade, or have anything whatever to do with religious questions. The British Empire is said to contain a hundred million Mohammedan subjects of the King and it is obviously mischievous to suggest that our quarrel with Turkey is one between Christianity and Islam.

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1 Punch, 19 December 1917, 415.
3 Public Record Office [PRO], Kew, Notice D.607 (15 December 1917), FO/395/152, no.
Needless to say, Punch was not deemed an enemy of the people for this breach of the censorship regulations. By February, newspaper articles commissioned by the Department of Information, written by British officials and wired from Palestine — via Whitehall — to Fleet Street, adopted a tone which, according to the terms laid down in the D-notice, was unmistakably ‘mischiefous’. One such telegram opened with the words, ‘As it was in [the] days [of the] Crusaders so to-day soldiers of the West are visiting the churches of Jerusalem and Bethlehem for prayer and thanksgiving’. It went on to note that ‘Two of the commanders who have played a great part in the South Palestine campaign are descended from knights who fought in the wars of the Crusades’.

A month later, the Department of Information surpassed itself by releasing a 40-minute official film entitled The New Crusaders: With the British Forces on the Palestine Front. And yet, as late as October 1918, in response to a protesting telegram from Egyptian HQ about a reference in The Times to ‘this new crusade’, the Cable Room censor dryly remarked: ‘The Censors in this Room have long had instructions to be very chary about passing the word “Crusade’”. So which was it to be: Was it simply a bureaucratic blunder, or did it hint at a more complex representational quandary? What was at stake in the invocation, or suppression, of the Crusading theme?

This article suggests that the stakes were high indeed. Notwithstanding its genuine strategic objectives or its complex historical consequences, the Palestine campaign was consciously staged by the British government as an exercise in propaganda, shaped, filtered and capitalized on in order to enhance the nation’s morale. Palestine, after all, was unlike any other imperial catch. It


4 Wingate to FO, 14 February 1918, FO/371/3383, fo. 98–9.
5 Roger Smither (ed.), The Imperial War Museums Film Catalogue, vol. 1, The First World War Archive (Trowbridge 1994), item FWM 17.
6 Censor’s minute on note from M.L.T.A. to Press Bureau, 28 October 1918, HO/139/27.
7 The British propaganda effect during the first world war has been described as an impressive exercise in improvisation. Certainly, the organization of the propaganda apparatus was notoriously fragmented and overlapping. Tempting as it is, however, to turn to this interdepartmental mismanagement as the source of any ambiguity in propaganda matters would be to over-simplify. The News Department — created in the Foreign Office on the outbreak of war to serve Allied and neutral journalists — operated, albeit unofficially, as the authoritative body regarding propaganda policy-making. It continued to perform this role after the establishment of the Department of Information in February 1917. Most significantly, it appears that during the decisive period that led to and followed the occupation of Jerusalem — autumn 1917 to spring 1918 — propaganda concerning the Palestine campaign was controlled by one man, Sir Mark Sykes. See M.L. Sanders and Philip M. Taylor, British Propaganda during the First World War 1914–1918 (London 1982), 1, 26, 64 and passim; Roger Adelson, Mark Sykes: Portrait of an Amateur (London 1975), esp. 241, 245–8. See also Gary S. Messinger, British Propaganda and the State in the First World War (Manchester 1992); Peter Buitenhuis, The Great War of Words: Literature and Propaganda 1914–18 and After (London 1989); Care Haste, Keep the Home Fires Burning: Propaganda in the First World War (London 1977).
was the Holy Land, steeped in religious and historical memories: few seemed more germane than Richard Coeur de Lion’s failure to win Jerusalem.

However, the almost-instant evocation of the Crusade in the context of the British advance in Palestine exposed faultlines and tensions which normally remained obscured within the self-assured ethos of imperial order. As the D-notice so clearly suggests, the most obvious strain concerned the relationship between Britain and its imperial subjects abroad. The invocation of the Crusade, with Jerusalem as its coveted prize, positioned the conflict against the Ottoman Empire firmly within the context of a Christian–Moslem struggle. This threatened to upset Britain’s political stand by alienating or even provoking its Moslem subjects and allies, but it also called into doubt two of the most cherished convictions of Empire: the idea that imperial affiliation transcended religious denomination, and the notion that religious toleration was the cornerstone of a benign British colonial rule. Ironically, the very conscious act of having to suppress the Crusading theme made it seem all the more inevitable. It constructed the Crusade as a known ‘secret’, shared by all British (Christian) people, against their imperial subalterns.

Nevertheless, this was a secret shared by only a privileged few. The Crusading theme, far from being ubiquitously available, was in fact socially and culturally confined, marking a high-brow cultural register. Rather than reflecting a unified British centre, the idea of a ‘Last Crusade’ indicated the considerable distance between the men who were shaping British wartime propaganda and the people for whom this propaganda was being shaped. For the majority of the British people, Jerusalem and the Holy Land evoked first and foremost not memories of medieval conquests and European expansion, but rather the sacred memories of the Old and the New Testaments. So, while the Crusading image denoted a distinct imperial ambition concerning the earthly Jerusalem, this popular sentiment invoked a ‘Jerusalem’ which was associated, somewhat self-reflexively, with vernacular religious traditions, with hymns and sermons, Sunday school classes and the family Bible; in a word, with Home. As such, it offered a contesting ethos which, when merged with the weariness of war, presented an inward-looking vision, very different from the heroic, expansionist narrative constructed by government officials. The propagandists, it seems, were as alien to the indigenous population at home as they were to the indigenous population abroad. Consequently, the propaganda material generated by the conquest of Jerusalem, and the impact it had on the nation’s morale, did not live up to the War Cabinet’s original expectations. As will be shown, this was not simply a problem of representation. The difficulty in fabricating the official narrative also reflected a genuine ambiguity concerning Britain’s imperial interests in Palestine. The failure of the ‘Last Crusade’ propaganda anticipated, and was indicative of, the failure of the ‘Last Crusade’ itself.

Finally, the fact that a seemingly marginal episode such as the Palestine campaign could have provoked such acute questions concerning the relationship between the Empire and its subjects suggests that the ‘Holy Land’ — both
literal and metaphorical — played a more momentous role in the evolution of modern Britain’s imperial ethos than has perhaps been realized. As Christopher Hill and Linda Colley have shown, from the seventeenth century onwards, the Protestant Biblical vocabulary — a Chosen People, a Promised Land — was crucial to the forging of British imperialism.9 What has been virtually overlooked, however, is the way in which this imperial quest was conceived and performed in relation to the geographical Holy Land. The Palestine campaign of 1917–18 captures this juxtaposition of the metaphorical and the literal: it is the moment in which Britain’s imperial ethos was finally forced back, as it were, on its original birthplace. The ‘Last Crusade’, then, is also offered here as part of a broader project of exploring the role of the Holy Land in the construction of British imperial language, identity and history.

When Prime Minister Lloyd George met Allenby in June 1917 to discuss the anticipated advance in the Palestine Front, he informed the commander that the War Cabinet ‘expected “Jerusalem before Christmas”’.9 From the very outset of the war, Lloyd George’s conviction that only a military action in the Middle East could hasten an Allied victory was matched by his personal interest in publicity and propaganda.10 The campaign in Palestine combined the two objectives. During a discussion in the War Cabinet on 2 April 1917, ‘great stress was laid on the moral and political advantages to be expected from an advance in Palestine, and particularly from the occupation of Jerusalem, which, it was pointed out, would be hailed with the utmost satisfaction in all parts of the country’. A success in Palestine, ‘quite apart from its purely military aspects’, would ‘counteract the depressing influences of a difficult economic situation’.11 Sensing that the public had to be prepared for an anticipated military action in the Middle East, the Prime Minister ordered his newly-appointed Director of Propaganda, John Buchan, to initiate a campaign under the slogan, The Turk Must Go.12

Propaganda concerning the future of the Ottoman Empire had long been a contentious issue. For Kitchener and his entourage, the possibility of a Moslem Holy War against Britain, and in particular a Moslem uprising in India, was a

11 CAB/23/2, 2 April 1917 (1).
recurring nightmare. Although a *Jihad* against Britain, proclaimed by the Sultan in November 1914 and embraced by the keen Germans, failed to kindle a substantial Moslem response, its explosive potential continued to haunt British officials. Concurrently, of course, members of the Arab Bureau were engaged in an arduous effort to woo Arab leaders into launching a pro-Allied revolt against the Ottomans. This made the religious issue a double-edged sword. The Moslems were enemies, but they were also subjects and allies; the best propaganda strategy, then, was to avoid the religious resonance altogether. An official D-notice issued in December 1914 — and renewed in March 1915 and February 1916 — maintained that "The publication of any matter calculated to have needlessly hostile effect upon the Mohammedan opinion should be avoided. Discussion of the question of the Caliphate is to be deprecated." It was this same logic which dictated the D-notice quoted at the beginning of this article, and it is worthwhile looking more closely at the circumstances in which it was issued. On 12 November 1917, Major Hugh Thornton, serving at the War Cabinet Offices, wrote to John Buchan: "I send you the enclosed note for what it is worth. It was sent to me the other day by a friend of Lord Milner's who has very intimate connections with the East." Enclosed was a press cutting from the *Evening Standard* of 8 November, stating that "Jerusalem itself is now directly menaced, and for a thousand years it has been in the hands of the "infidels". If we capture the town, it will mean that for the first time the flag of a Christian nation will float over its walls." Lord Milner's anonymous — and annoyed — friend added:

Could not Press Censor explain to the Editor that comments of this nature are ill advised, in view of the fact that our nearest ally to this front is the King of the Hejaz and other chiefs of Arabia, who are strict Muhammadans and greatly revere Jerusalem and all places connected with our Lord...."

Three days later, on 15 November, the Press Bureau issued the D-notice prohibiting any suggestion 'that military operations against Turkey are in any sense a Holy War, a modern Crusade, or have anything whatever to do with religious questions'. Just like the previous notices, or the note from Milner's friend, the new D-notice presented guidelines which were merely tactical.

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17 Thornton to Buchan, 12 November 1917, FO/395/152, no. 218223.
18 Notice D.607, FO/395/152, no. 218223.
Anyone with 'intimate connections with the East' would instantly recognize that it was 'ill advised' to allude to the British campaign as a Crusade — even if it actually was one. It was 'undesirable' and 'mischievous' to suggest that the British quarrel with Turkey was one between Islam and Christianiry — undesirable and mischievous, but not necessarily untrue. In its very existence as a conscious act of censorship, the D-notice was stating exactly what it was trying to suppress.

Ironically, the notice was attempting to renounce the idea of a Holy War against Turkey by locating the explosive Christian-Moslem tension within the British imperial framework, in which imperial affiliation was expected to come before, and even obliterate, religious difference. This, of course, was a myth. That the 'Mohammedan subjects of the King' thought differently is made evident by a telegram sent by Allenby to the War Office on 2 December 1917: 'Owing to reluctance of Pathans with 58th Rifles to fight against their co-religionists, the Turks, I have been compelled to withdraw the Pathan Company from front line for employment on lines of communication.' As far as the Pathans were concerned, religious affiliation came before imperial duty, and the war had everything to do with religious questions.

To be sure, just a few months earlier, the Department of Information itself advocated the Crusading theme in the open. Converting Buchan's broad guidelines for The Turk Must Go campaign into a tangible list of publications, Stephen Gaselee (one of the Foreign Office's 'bright young men') included a section entitled, 'The Holy Land: A New Crusade.' In his letters to scholars, asking them to contribute articles for the propaganda effort, Gaselee ruminated about French, Arab and international interests in Palestine, before concluding:

However, it is particularly on the sentimental, romantic and religious side of the Palestine campaign that the Prime Minister and Buchan wish emphasis to be laid, especially in the ecclesiastical press, and if you will keep the crusading idea in mind as you write the article, I feel certain that the results will be what they want.

Gaselee was writing just a few days after the War Cabinet considered and hailed the 'moral and political advantages to be expected from an advance in Palestine.' The War Cabinet did not specify what these advantages were; as far as Gaselee was concerned, they were intimately connected with 'what might be called the new Crusade for the liberation of the Holy Land'. The author of the D-notice — perhaps it was Gaselee himself — held the same view. Indeed,
had the Crusading image been less instinctive, less immediate, there would have been no need for the notice in the first place.

But the association was not ubiquitous. To see why, we must first explore the cultural denotation of the Crusading metaphor and consider its social availability in the decades preceding the war.

"Sire, only come hither and I will show you Jerusalem!" Thus spake the valiant knight, Sir Brian de Gurnay.

"Nay", replied King Richard of England, and he buried his face in his armour, tears were in his eyes, and with hands uplift to Heaven he exclaimed: "Lord God, I pray Thee that I may never see Thy Holy City, if so be that I may not rescue it from the hands of Thine enemies!

Printed in Gothic script, this is the opening paragraph of Major Vivian Gilbert's *The Romance of the Last Crusade* (1923), an autobiographical account of his military service in Palestine during the war, and probably one of the most extravagant manifestations of the Crusading theme. The first chapter of the book, however, is a fictional prelude: it introduces a young Brian Gurnay, "just down from his first year at Oxford, a typical product of the English public school" (2), who is basking in the sun just outside his estate, Ivythorne Manor, reading a book, from which the above passage is quoted. Tremendously excited by the romantic adventures of his ancestor, that 'valiant knight', Brian exclaims: 'To fight in thy cause, to take part in that Last Crusade I would willingly leave my bones in the Holy Land! Oh, for the chance to do as one of these knights of old, to accomplish one thing in life really worth while!' (5). Just then, his old mother, Lady Mary, enters with *The Daily Telegraph*, announcing the prospect of war. Brian is thrilled: 'He almost fancied the blood that had come down to him from Sir Brian de Gurnay was mounting to his head' (7).

This scene is cited at length in Peter Parker's *The Old Lie: The Great War and the Public School Ethos*. Indeed, it is a superb illustration of the idea that the gentlemanly tradition of chivalry, honour, patriotism and sportsmanship — associated so firmly with a public school education, and embodied here in the Crusading theme — was not only instrumental in the mobilization of a generation of keen young men, but also central to the way in which the Great War was anticipated, imagined and understood.26 Explicit references to images of Crusades and Crusaders played a crucial role in this cultural context.27 The seminal contribution to this tradition was without doubt the work of Sir

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Walter Scott, *Ivanhoe* (1820) and *The Talisman* (1825), in which the Crusades — with an Anglicized Richard Lionheart storming the Holy Land — were depicted as a defining episode in the emergence of English nationalism. Considering the huge sales of cheap editions of Scott’s work throughout the century, and his many epigones, his influence cannot be overstated.

It has been suggested that the public school ethos — and, we might add, the idea of the Crusade — was disseminated throughout society by the indefatigable work of sports clubs and boys’ movements, school missions and men’s colleges, popular fiction and illustrated magazines. Vivian Gilbert believed that all British soldiers were Crusaders, whether they owned the appropriate cultural baggage to recognize it or not: ‘The spirit of the Crusaders was in all these men of mine who worked so cheerfully to prepare for the great adventure!’ (37). Nevertheless, he was almost dazzled by the romance which suddenly touched the lives of his men, until then ‘as dull and uninteresting as the ledgers they kept in their dismal London offices’, as they were carried away from their ‘stuffy little bedrooms’ into a land steeped with ‘a thousand memories of all the gallant crusaders’ (110–11).

Of course, if anything, Gilbert’s patronizing tone suggests that the image of the Crusader was closely associated with a very distinct, and very privileged, social group. Thrilled by the conquest of Jerusalem, Major-General Guy Dawney, of the GHQ staff in Palestine, was reminded of his ‘old crusading ancestor who killed the Saracen and the lion on those very hills!’3 For Dawney — just like for the fictional Brian Gurney — the idea of the Crusade was intimately associated with his own ancestral identity. Indeed, it is hardly surprising that soldiers from the ranks seldom invoked the Crusading image. A survey of wartime diaries, letters and memoirs suggests that the Crusading theme played an insignificant part, if at all, in the soldiers’ understanding of the campaign during their service in Palestine. It is telling that even published memoirs which employ the Crusading metaphor in their title — Cooper’s *Khaki Crusaders* (1919), Summers’s *Temporary Crusaders* (1919), Adams’s *The Modern Crusaders* (1920) and others — make surprisingly few references to it in the text itself; in some cases, especially when based on diaries written on the spot, there are none. On the other hand, for the men who were shaping

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32 The following analysis is based on some 50 diaries, letters and memoirs from the Imperial War Museum collection, in addition to 30 printed biographical accounts, published primarily in the decade following the war, 15 military and regimental histories, and 3 troop journals. I have concentrated mainly on British writers — with several Australian and South African exceptions — who served on the Palestine front any time between summer 1917 and spring 1918, most of them in the ranks or as subalterns.
the representation of the events in Palestine — John Buchan (Brasenose College, Oxford, author of *Life of Scott*), Stephen Gaselee (Eton, King’s College, Cambridge), or Mark Sykes (Beaumont, Jesus College, Cambridge) — the Crusading metaphor was all but instinctive, rooted in their education, their genealogy, their religious upbringing. Gaselee, a keen medievalist and a devout Anglo-Catholic, was described as ‘a lover of the past, with a certain affection for lost causes and a firm belief in the spiritual value of custom and tradition. To the end of his life he seemed to move familiarly among princes, cardinals and patriarchs, as in some historical novel.’ Sykes, a Catholic, turned the 60-foot replica of the Eleanor Cross near the gates of his estate into a war monument: friends, tenants and employees killed in the Great War were commemorated as modern-day Crusaders. After his untimely death in 1919, his own figure as Crusader was set up in brass, with a Paynim lying under his feet, and Jerusalem in the background. The Crusade represented a chauvinistic force which was constantly at work underneath the more sober, vigilant foreign policy. If Mark Sykes could be said to embody Britain’s complex, often incompatible interests in the Middle East, his brassed armoured figure suggests the return of a repressed, unconditional imperial ambition.

This affinity between class, Orientalism and the Crusades was best manifested in the enigmatic figure of T.E. Lawrence. A self-fashioned Englishman, born in Wales to an Irish father and a Scottish mother, Lawrence appeared to have actively encouraged the legend that he was a descendant of Sir Robert Lawrence, an alleged companion of Richard Coeur de Lion. His academic speciality was Crusading history: his BA thesis, exploring the influence of the Crusades on European military architecture, was later published as *Crusader Castles* (1936). During his service in Arabia, Lawrence’s familiar flowing, white, Arab robes and his golden dagger seemed to obliterate this Crusader’s persona. However, when put to the test, the Crusader was always outed. Summoned by Allenby to take part in the entrance ceremony into Jerusalem, Lawrence removed his Arabian garb, and members of the personal staff lent him a uniform, red tabs and a brass hat, ‘till I looked like a major in the British Army’, Lawrence wrote. Lowell Thomas’s lecture, the main vehicle of perpetuating the Lawrence myth, was at first promoted in London as *The Last Crusade*, despite — or, rather, because of — the Arabian garment. Lawrence evokes the fantasy of dimming the opposition between East and West, but also conveys, reassuringly, that beneath his deceptive mantle, lies as committed a Crusader as ever.

Still, it is crucial to note that Lawrence’s imperial quest, his ‘Crusade’, seldom linked him directly to Jerusalem or even to the Holy Land, but rather to the golden sand-dunes of Arabia. Even here, the invocation of the Crusade

hinged not so much on its original historical context, but on the more general cultural opposition between Orient and Occident. Indeed, in the decades preceding the war, the image of the Crusade was less coherent than it might appear. The Victorian fusion of the Arthurian epic, the iconic battle of St George and the annals of Richard Lionheart into a seemingly unified myth of chivalry meant that the image of the Crusade was domesticated, Anglicized, typified, divorced from its actual historical context. This involved a playing-down of the violence, barbarity and religious intolerance which initiated and sustained the Crusades. Anglicans read the Crusaders’ atrocities as typical examples of Catholic wrongdoing, but even Catholics could employ the temporal distance to construct the ‘modern’ Crusade as an enlightened, rectified version of the Holy War. All in all, the Crusade was now often applied in a much looser way, as a metaphor for fighting a just cause, be it temperance, suffragism or missionary work; one could refer to a ‘civilising Crusade’ without apprehending any oxymoronic resonances.

It was in this symbolic mode that the image of the Crusade was first used in the first world war. Bishop Winnington-Ingram being quite literal-minded when he declared, in 1915, that the Church should ‘mobilize the nation for a Holy War’. Still, it was usually in a more figurative sense that this concept was evoked. In a speech delivered in 1916, Lloyd George declared that ‘Young men from every quarter of this country flocked to the standard of international right, as to a great crusade’. This latter phrase — _The Great Crusade_ — was also the title of his 1918 collection of war speeches. The significance of the Holy War concept to British propaganda — both official and unofficial — is demonstrated by an extraordinary variety of wartime and postwar visual images: from ephemera like postcards of British soldiers in full armour and recruiting posters showing a knightly St George clashing with the Dragon, to stained-glass windows and monuments of majestic Crusaders. The coffin of the Unknown Warrior, set up in Westminster Abbey in 1920, contained a real Crusader sword, given by King George V from his private collection. Sykes himself acted in a propaganda film, _It is for England_, a ten-reel saga about St George reincarnated as an army chaplain in the war. All this outstanding


38 David Lloyd George, _The Great Crusade_ (London 1918), 11.


40 Michael Cavaghan, _The Story of the Unknown Warrior_ (Preston 1995), 26. To be sure, the Crusader as a central motif in war propaganda and postwar commemoration was not limited to Britain. As Mosse has shown (op. cit., esp. 70-106), Germany and France employed the same visual vocabulary, which also, no doubt, shaped the articulation of their ambitions concerning Syria and Palestine. In Russia, on the other hand, Palestine was associated with a strong tradition of popular piety, manifested in annual mass pilgrimages to Jerusalem. Unfortunately, a discussion of these issues is beyond the aims and scope of this article.

41 Adelson, op. cit., 211-12.
discursive energy made the Crusaders’ actual historical quest to Palestine almost redundant. Britain was fighting a Holy War in Europe, with the Kaiser made to figure as the Dragon against Britain’s St George.

Paradoxically, the transformation of the Crusade into a metaphor throughout the nineteenth century was taking place parallel to an increasing British involvement in Palestine. In fact, Britain’s ‘Last Crusade’ could be said to have begun in 1799, when a British naval force, under Sir Sydney Smith, bombarded the old walls of Acre in support of the Ottoman offensive against Napoleon’s army. It was a remarkably symbolic moment: Richard Coeur de Lion conquered Acre from Saladin in 1191; exactly a hundred years later, the last Crusaders in the Holy Land were driven away from the very same spot. This episode already suggests the complex interplay between Britain’s imperial considerations concerning Palestine and the land’s historical and religious resonances, not in the least because in 1799, and throughout the entire nineteenth century, Christian British forces were fighting with, rather than against, the Moslem Ottomans. It was only during the first world war that the political and military conditions were once again set in a way which virtually begged for a realization of the metaphor. When Lloyd George was setting out to shift the military balance from the stalemated Western Front to the Middle Eastern side-show, he was also suggesting a literalization of the Crusading metaphor, restoring it to its original historical, geographical and even moral terms. Could a literal Crusade in the Palestine side-show eclipse the metaphorical Crusade — the Holy War — waged against the Kaiser in France and Belgium?

The answer, sure enough, was no. And nowhere was this failure more visible than in the main propaganda event of the Palestine campaign, namely, Allenby’s entry into Jerusalem.

Two days after the conquest of Jerusalem, Allenby entered the city in ‘the official manner which the catholic imagination of Mark Sykes had devised’, as T.E. Lawrence had put it. While the D-notice could be issued to the ‘private and confidential’ eye of the newspaper editors alone, the ceremony was essentially a public display, a series of symbolic, both visual and textual, gestures. Hence it demanded an explicit, unambiguous expression of the signification of this pivotal event — exactly what the propaganda apparatus, with its ‘secret Crusade’ policy, was trying to avoid.

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42 Consequently, the nineteenth-century European penetration of Palestine was often described by contemporaries as the ‘Peaceful Crusade’: ‘the gradual “reconquest” of the “Holy Land” for Christianity through religious, cultural, and philanthropical penetration’. Significantly, this idea was widespread on the Continent, especially France and Germany, but not in Britain. See Alexander Scholch, Palestine in Transformation 1856–1882: Studies in Social, Economic and Political Development, trans. William C. Young and Michael C. Gettity (Washington 1993), 66.

43 Lawrence, op. cit., 453.
The War Cabinet devoted much time to the staging of the occupation of the City, and to securing official control over the dissemination of reports and photographs. Britain’s main concern, as Lord Curzon explained, was that "news should be made known in a way calculated favourably to impress India and the Mohammedan world". Curzon suggested that, on the occupation of Jerusalem, "a proclamation should be issued throughout the Moslem world, announcing that we are the protectors of the Moslem religion and would pay every respect to the Moslem Holy Places". He was requested to discuss the matter with Sykes and prepare a declaration to that effect. It proclaimed martial law in the city, urged people to return to business as usual, and promised to safeguard all institutions holy to Christians, Jews and Moslems. The Mosque of Omar and the Tomb at Hebron were to be placed under exclusive Moslem control. Allenby, furthermore, was ordered to announce that the hereditary custodians of the Waqf at the gate of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre "have been requested to take up their accustomed duties", in remembrance of the "magnanimous act of the Caliph Omar who protected [the] church".

Significantly, just a few weeks before, on 2 November, the Cabinet had issued the Balfour Declaration. The British conquest of Palestine was undoubtedly seen as the first step towards the realization of the pledge made to the Zionists. It is notable, then, that the events in Jerusalem were being handled and staged with exclusive attention to Moslem, rather than Jewish, sensibilities. This could have been a conscious effort to counterbalance the effects of the Balfour Declaration, criticized so ardently by Curzon. Certainly, notwithstanding her long-term ambitions in Palestine, Britain’s most immediate objective was to prevent an outbreak of Moslem hostility. After all, the battle over Jerusalem was perceived first and foremost as the mythical struggle between Christianity and Islam, a dichotomy in which the Jews had little part to play.

This acute attentiveness to Moslem reaction is demonstrated by the idea to stage the entrance in accordance with an ancient Arab prophecy, which claimed that the prophet from the west would enter Jerusalem through the Golden Gate and bring an end to Turkish rule when Nile water was brought into Palestine. Major-General Guy Dawnay, who discussed the prophecy in a letter to Lieutenant-Colonel Alfred Parker, the Military Governor of Sinai, pointed out that Nile water was carried to Palestine via the British-built pipeline. No less miraculously, "the Chief’s name when written in Arabic spells..."
‘al Nebi’, that is, the prophet. Dawnyay maintained that ‘it would be a pity not to take [Allenby] in by that gate and to arrange for the fulfilment of any other details which local folklore may expect’. The plan, however, was not feasible. ‘Unfortunately’, explained Allenby to his wife, ‘you had to go through a Moslem graveyard and the area of the Mosque of Omar, so it was dropped.’ The etymological wonder which made Allenby ‘al Nebi’ was nevertheless employed.

This unabashedly cynical attempt to entice Moslem opinion by literalizing an ancient prophecy is all the more telling considering the calculated suppression of any allusion that would appeal to a British, Anglican or even Christian constituency. If the conquest of Jerusalem did hold a ‘sentimental, romantic and religious side’ for the British people, surely this was the moment to exhibit it. This, at last, was the opinion of Bishop MacInnes, the Anglican Bishop of Jerusalem, who wrote to the military authorities in October. He suggested that Christian buildings, which had been used for centuries as Moslem mosques, should now be restored to their original use. The proposal was considered by the Arab Bureau:

Bishop MacInnes appears to regard our invasion of PALESTINE somewhat in the light of a Crusade, the success of which should place Christianity in a predominant position over ISLAM and other confessions. At least, the carrying into effect of his proposals would undoubtedly have that effect upon the native mind. This is a natural enough attitude on the part of a Christian Bishop, but it does not take into account the questions of military and political expediency by which we must be guided.

The Bishop, thwarted but not yet beaten, requested to join Allenby’s entourage in his official capacity, or even as an honorary chaplain, in uniform. This idea, too, was rejected: ‘It would be inadvisable for Bishop MacInnes to come in any capacity, as it would surely lead to trouble with our Allies, whose ecclesiastics (many of whom have stronger claims perhaps) would consider that a march had been stolen on them.

Subsequently, the ceremony had no Anglican, or even Christian, features. Nor did it stress, in any way, the fact that this achievement was won by the British and Dominion armies with virtually no Allied assistance. The British were highly suspicious of French efforts to capitalize on the victory; the French consul in Jerusalem was not permitted to join Allenby’s procession on the grounds that these were military, not civilian, circumstances. Still, the procession was carefully arranged to represent the entire constituency of the

48 Dawnyay to Parket, 16 November 1917, Dawson Papers, IWM 69/21/2, box 2, ‘Egypt 1917–18’.
49 Allenby to wife, 11 December 1917, quoted in Newell, op. cit., 190. Allenby’s comment is not altogether clear, considering that the Golden Gate had been walled up since Crusading times.
51 Graves to Deedes, 15 October 1917, FO/882/14, PA/17/12.
Allied force in Palestine.\textsuperscript{44} In addition to the Commander-in-Chief and staff officers, it included ‘the Commanders of the French and Italian detachments, the heads of the Picot Mission and the Military Attachés of France, Italy and United States of America’. The procession entered the city through the Jaffa Gate and then made its way to the citadel, where Allenby read the proclamation. The guards represented ‘England, Scotland, Ireland, Wales, Australia, India, New Zealand, France and Italy’.\textsuperscript{55} Symbols of British prevalence were reduced to a minimum; the War Cabinet ordered that ‘no flags should be hoisted’.\textsuperscript{56}

It would be wrong, however, to conclude that the ceremony was devoid of more complex symbolism altogether. Indeed, Allenby’s entrance on foot seems to be the one feature which had been truly imprinted on collective memory.\textsuperscript{57} This feature, too, was dictated by London. On 21 November, Allenby was informed that it would be of considerable political importance if you, on officially entering the City, dismounted at the City Gate and entered on foot. German Emperor rode in, and the saying went round “a better man than he walked”. Advantage of contrast in conduct will be obvious.\textsuperscript{58}

Significantly, these stage directions constructed Allenby’s entrance not so much in relation to Jesus Christ, as in relation to the Kaiser. It was not Christian humility which Allenby was expected to exhibit, but rather German vanity which he was expected to counteract.\textsuperscript{59} Indeed, this reference to the Kaiser was so effective because it located the Germans at the heart of the British–Turkish (or Christian–Moslem) struggle. The press, always keen to celebrate German defeat, was quick to grasp this. The \textit{Daily Sketch} wrote that this was ‘a staggering blow to the German dream of domination in the East and to the Kaiser’s pretensions as “keeper” of the Holy Places’.\textsuperscript{60} ‘Allenby is rather the restorer of justice and fairness among all creeds than the arrogant conqueror that the Kaiser would have been — and tried to be before the war’, wrote the \textit{Daily Mirror} under the sub-title, \textit{Un-Kaiserly}. To people who seemed to think ‘that we do not make enough of our victories’, the \textit{Mirror} explained, ‘This is because British generals and the British people hate boasting. And the fact reminds one of the contrast between the German Emperor’s

\textsuperscript{44} It did not, however, include representatives of the Egyptian Labour Corps, despite its crucial contribution to the establishment of communication lines and hence to the British victory.
\textsuperscript{45} Allenby to WO, 11 December 1917, WO/33/946, no. 8693. For the directions issued on 10 December 1917 and given out to each member of the procession, see WO/95/4369, Z/776027. This document makes no reference to the presence of Indian troops.
\textsuperscript{46} CAB/23/4, 26 November 1917 (4). This was a reply to Allenby’s query.
\textsuperscript{48} WO to GHQ Egypt, 21 November 1917, WO/33/946, no. 8582.
\textsuperscript{49} In March, the Department of Information published a leaflet ‘setting out in parallel columns General Allenby’s Proclamation to the inhabitants of Jerusalem and a Proclamation issued by the German Military Authorities in Holon, Northern France’. See Ashcroft to Gaselee, 20 March 1918, FO/395/242, no. 52214.
\textsuperscript{50} \textit{Daily Sketch}, 11 December 1917, 1.
swagger into Jerusalem (and all over the East) before the war.61 In other words, the symbolic act of staging the British entry to contrast with the Kaiser’s visit of 1898 was actually instrumental in reducing the contentious Christian connotations. To be sure, there was no clear reference to the well-known fact that the Kaiser entered the city wearing a Crusader’s outfit (in what G.K. Chesterton had called a ‘mixture of madness and vulgarity which literally stops the breath’).62 Even here, the Crusading theme was suppressed, at least explicitly.

All in all, then, Allenby’s entry into Jerusalem seemed to be underscored by an absence: the absence of any explicit reference to a British, rather than an Allied, victory; and the absence of any clear Anglican, or even Christian, gestures. This, as we have seen, was a highly calculated move, indicating British caution, perhaps even weakness. It was, however, possible to read this absence in a different way. The Times, for one, understood immediately that this silence was quite eloquent: ‘General Allenby and his companions were on foot, and made no effort to impress the imagination of spectators. No effort was needed. The measures taken spoke and will speak for themselves.’ The newspaper nevertheless hastened to speak for them too:

To see in this attitude on the part of the British Commander a mere calculation of political expediency would be gravely to misread and seriously to underestimate its significance. In its essence it is a vindication of Christianity. At a moment when Christendom is torn by strife, let loose through the apostate ambitions of those who have returned in practice to the sanguinary worship of their ‘Old German god’, it stands forth as a sign that the righteousness and justice that are the soul of Christian ethics guide Christian Victors even in the flush of triumph.63

As the newspaper makes clear, it was precisely the conspicuous absence of any British/Christian features which pointed so clearly to the actual presence of the British/Christian ethos. Religious toleration — a time-honoured feature of British colonial rule — becomes a quintessential Christian quality, a term that is set in opposition not so much to the Moslem Turk, as to the German. This was not the Christianity associated with the actual holy places, the Christianity of the Crusaders’ faith, which stood against Islam, and hence was denounced so ardently by the D-notice. Rather, this was the Christianity of the metaphorical Holy War. ‘Christian’ is redefined here as sportsmanlike, righteous, just, not losing one’s ethics even in the flush of victory, in a word: chivalrous.

This is made evident by the continuous references to the Caliph Omar and his ‘magnanimous act’ of protecting the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. A Press Bureau Circular, issued on 5 January 1918 and entitled ‘JERUSALEM — A Contrast in Methods — Guilt of the Central Powers’, stated that ‘1280 years

61 Daily Mirror, 11 December 1917, 6.
63 The Times, 13 December 1917, 9. The leader opened with a comparison between Allenby’s entrance and the Kaiser’s.
ago, an Arab conqueror of Jerusalem showed the same enlightened spirit which characterises the government of our present Ally King Hejaz; his respect for the holy places of Christianity is in striking contrast with the disregard shown by the modern Turk for the holy places of Islam.64 Moslem chivalry, then, was being annexed, made to anticipate and pair British chivalry, which was really another way of describing the ‘soul of Christian ethics’. The Times was thus able to state proudly that ‘SALADIN entered [Jerusalem] in triumph as GENERAL ALLENBY enters it to-day’,65 and the Daily Express wrote that Jerusalem was a city ‘of wonderful memories of suffering, devotion, and chivalry, for the Arab caliphs have never had superiors in chivalry, and are rightly numbered among the “very parfait knights”’.66 Caliph Omar, Saladin, Feisal, the Moslem Indian soldiers of the 123rd Outram’s Rifles who were guarding the Mosque of Omar — all knew the meaning of religious toleration and of benevolence and chivalry. They were all ‘Allies’, united against the unholy Central Powers. They were all, so to speak, ‘Christian’. As we have already seen, the D-notice of 15 November insisted that imperial affiliation came before religious denomination. Now, however, the very concept of religious difference was being challenged altogether. The original Crusading image, with its threatening division of East/West, Christianity/Islam, was sublimated into something quite different. The Times thought that this was what a modern crusade was all about.

Nevertheless, it is important to note that this in itself was only one possible interpretation of the ceremony. ‘The ceremony was full of dignity and simplicity’, wrote W.T. Massey in his report to the London press, ‘and it was full of meaning’.67 But what did it mean? Sykes’s ‘catholic imagination’ staged an event which offered multiple interpretations: with proper direction, it could be (and was) employed to appeal to the Pope, Russian peasants, Moslem Indians, the Zionists, the Arabs of Jerusalem, the Americans, and so forth.68 Luckily, The Times knew what it meant specifically for the British people, and was keen to share this knowledge with its readers. But the ceremony could not represent itself: it had to be interpreted, explained, represented.

Consequently, there was an acute discrepancy between the way the ceremony was arranged and the actual propaganda capital that it was supposed to excite at home. It seems hardly surprising, then, that just two weeks after it rejoiced in the news that ‘considerable publicity’ has been given to the fall of

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64 Press Bureau Circular no. C.6120, 5 January 1918, FO/395/236A.
65 The Times, 11 December 1917, 7.
66 Daily Express, 11 December 1917, 2.
67 The Times, 17 December 1917, 9.
68 Cf. Wingate to FO India, 13 December 1917, FO/395/I52, no. 236464; FO to the Vatican, 10 December 1917, FO/371/3061, no. 234308, and numerous other dispatches in FO/371/3061. The telegram to Sir George Buchanan, the British ambassador in St Petersburg, maintained that ‘While the appeal should be to Russian religious sentiment, it is important that the statements should contain nothing offensive to Moslem feelings. Expressions such as ‘Holy War’, ‘Crusade’ etc., should be avoided though the Turks [as Turks, and not as Moslems] may be held up to just execration.’ See FO to Buchanan, Petrograd, 8 December 1917, FO/395/I52.
Jerusalem 'and that the event had produced a marked effect throughout the world', the War Cabinet was disturbed to learn that 'scant use had been made, for propaganda purposes, of the capture of Jerusalem'. And while Sir Edward Carson insisted that 'a vast amount of propaganda had been despatched abroad', it was pointed out that 'comparatively little use had been made of the material by public speakers in this country. It was suggested that material of interest on this subject should be sent to the clergy and ministers of all denominations, with a view to its use in the churches.' So it was back to the Crusading business after all.

Following the occupation of Jerusalem, Sykes made vigorous efforts to generate propaganda material. On 7 January 1918, he telegraphed Gilbert Clayton, the chief political officer of the Egyptian Expeditionary Forces (EEF), stating that press articles were 'badly wanted'. 'We are losing precious opportunities of propaganda and enthusiasm throughout the world', he warned. Of course, the dispatches from Palestine were delayed by innumerable bureaucratic difficulties, but ultimately it was a representational problem. 'This is vile barren stuff', Sykes commented on one of the drafts sent to him by Clayton: 'He has no idea of propaganda and goes wrong at every turn.' In a revealing telegram sent to Clayton, Sykes stormed:

Tell Storms ring off the highbrow line. What is wanted is popular reading for the English church and chapel folk; for New York Irish; Orthodox Balkan peasants and Mujiks; French and Italian Catholics; and Jews throughout the world; Indian and Algerian Moslems.

Articles should give striking actualities, and description of scenes; picturesque details. River the British onto Holy Land, Bible and New Testament . . .

At a frenzied pace, Sykes continued to shift faces, location, illumination and background music, in order to generate propaganda for specific target groups. In the case of British readership, by 'ringing off the highbrow line', Sykes meant that the high, non-partisan imperial tone should be replaced with a more biased, pietistic voice. It marked an official return to Gaselee's suppressed theme. 'Holy Places of Jerusalem', a piece wired from Palestine to London, approved by Sykes and published in The Times of 23 March 1918, opened with a description of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, and the tombstone 'beneath which the Anglo-Norman knight, Sir Philip Daubigny, has lain undisturbed for nearly seven centuries, waiting till the English came again'. Press articles like this, and a propaganda film like The New Crusaders, all

69 CAB/23/4, 17 December 1917 (12).
70 CAB/23/4, 2 January 1918 (12).
71 Sykes to Clayton, 7 January 1918, FO/395/237, no. 4282.
72 Sykes, minute on draft sent by Clayton for press publication, n.d., FO/171/3383, fo. 18.
73 Sykes to Clayton, 15 January 1918, FO/371/3383. See also Jeremy Wilson, Lawrence of Arabia (London 1989), 467.
74 The Times, 29 March 1918, 3.
produced and distributed by the Department of Information, now alluded explicitly to the Crusading past. The fact that the D-notice prohibiting any reference to the Crusades continued to be enforced — at least occasionally — points to a more sophisticated awareness of the possible distinction between home and foreign propaganda. However, it also suggests that Sykes knowingly deviated from the official line, because he recognized that notwithstanding Moslem sensibilities, a representation of the Palestine campaign which would only employ the secular-imperialistic vocabulary would simply fail to excite the British public. Another propaganda article, 'Easter Day in Jerusalem', acknowledged this openly:

During the British occupation of Palestine we have been very sedulous in considering the religious feelings of others. The shrines and festivals sacred to elder or alien creeds have been more than respected. So much so, that some have wondered whether we had any religion of our own. This Easter in Jerusalem has been the answer. The British Army has celebrated the greatest festival of the Church in a place where the English under arms have never before prayed at Easter. King Richard never reached the Holy City, but King George's men communicated and sang the Easter hymns, in their own church of St George outside the Damascus Gate of Jerusalem. . . .

Still, it is crucial to note that these propaganda articles began with the Crusading heritage, before swiftly moving on to explore other aspects of the British presence in the Holy Land. 'Holy Places of Jerusalem' opens with the idea that British soldiers have at last returned to Palestine, but it ends with an image of the 'married soldier, with wife and children in his mind', who goes 'most often' to the Church of the Nativity at Bethlehem: 'It reminds him of Christmas, of his family, and of home.' 'Easter Day in Jerusalem' concludes on a strikingly similar note:

Memories of the place, of its past of mystical tradition, of its sacred story, haunted those who worshipped within the walls of the Church of the Sepulchre; but it was of home, and of our own kin in France, and of our own customs of praise and thanksgiving at Easter that we were reminded while kneeling in St George's — that little island of England's soil, set in Palestine to cheer the wanderers in distant lands.

What begins as a quest to the east, ends with a yearning gaze towards the west; kneeling in Jerusalem, it is England's soil that comes to mind. The new Crusaders are actually wanderers in distant lands; and they are homesick.

In attempting to account for this narrational shift, we should note that in his forceful and detailed telegram Sykes did not highlight the Crusades. Rather, he demanded 'picturesque details' only, 'River the British onto Holy Land, Bible and New Testament'. This, it appears, was no oversight: it is here that one
senses the limited cultural purchase of the Crusading theme, its distinct social flavour and undeniable highbrow quality. This was not the tension between the metropolitan imperial centre and its Moslem subjects, but rather a cultural tension within the metropolitan centre itself. The propaganda effort demanded 'popular reading for the English church and chapel folk', and Sykes was suggesting a conscious emphasis on the biblical associations of Jerusalem and Palestine. This might seem obvious, even trivial, but the fact is that until this stage of the campaign, official propaganda concerning the Palestine Front simply did not allude to the biblical aura of the land.

Sykes may have taken his cue from the Prime Minister's speech in the House of Commons on 20 December 1917. Lloyd George began with an implicit reference to the Crusading past before moving on to reminisce about the 'sacred memories' associated with the Holy Places: 'The name of every hamlet and hill occupied by the British Army, and over which British soldiers fought in this famed land, thrills with sacred memories. Beersheba, Hebron, Bethany, Bethlehem, the Mount of Olives are all names engraved on the heart of the world.' It is indicative that Lloyd George was the one to point to this sentimental aspect of the Palestine campaign. Brought up in a Chapel-going family, Lloyd George's childhood was steeped in religious imagery, so characteristic of popular Protestant piety. Elsewhere he famously confessed: 'I was brought up in a school where I was taught far more about the history of the Jews than about the history of my own land.' No wonder that the place-names of Palestine were more familiar to him 'than those of the Western Front'.

The distance between this popular religious culture and the Crusading ethos hinged on a range of political, social and religious demarcations, which had emerged in seventeenth-century England. It was then that the evolution of a plebeian culture began, a culture which centred around biblical language and was characterized by highly literalized, often naively personal, readings of Scripture. Following the insights of Hill and Colley, I have already pointed to the significant contribution of the Protestant language to the construction of Britain's imperial mission. However, throughout the eighteenth century, this vernacular vocabulary was equally instrumental in the projection of a distinct domestic ethos. Eric Hobsbawm has singled out the Bible, The Pilgrim's Progress and Fox's Book of Martyrs as the texts from which 'English labouring men learned the ABC of politics, if not the ABC of reading'. As F.P. Thompson went on to show, the biblical images of the Chosen People and the Promised Land were central to the articulation of grievances and anticipations associated with the emerging working-class consciousness. Paradoxically, the

79 UK Parliamentary Debates (Commons), 5th ser., vol. 190, 20 December 1917, col. 2211.
80 David Lloyd George, 'Afterward' to Philip Guedalla, Napoleon and Palestine (London 1925), 48.
81 Chaim Weizmann, Trial and Error (New York 1949), 152.
same historical events — the French Revolution and the Napoleonic wars — which brought the British closer to the earthly Jerusalem — also rekindled a millenarian fervour which, even in its secularized form, reinforced the identification of ‘Jerusalem’ with the pursuit of a new English social order. It was shortly after Sir Sydney Smith’s bombardment of the Palestine coast that William Blake was envisioning the building of Jerusalem ‘in England’s green and pleasant land’.

To be sure, it is hardly necessary to retreat to Blake’s millenarian mysticism in order to appreciate that rather than evoking an actual territory in the Middle East, this vernacular religious imagery was identified with ideals quintessentially English, and implemented, in the most literal terms, in the English landscape. The origins and significance of this tradition are discussed elsewhere. For now it is enough to recognize that by the beginning of the twentieth century, popular religious culture offered a self-reflexive assurance, in which the Holy Land mirrored back the traditions and institutions of daily religious life: the family visit to Church and Chapel; Sunday school with its half-forgotten lessons in Scriptural geography; hymns and sermons; the family Bible.

Nowhere is this more evident than in the letters, diaries and memoirs written by the ‘homesick Crusaders’ themselves. It has already been suggested that rank-and-file soldiers fighting in Palestine very seldom evoked the Crusading image. While it is always more difficult to demonstrate the absence of specific imagery, there are nevertheless themes which appear with such persistent frequency and in such abundance in the soldiers’ writings that there can be little doubt as to their significance to the soldiers’ lives. First and foremost among these was the idea that the landscape of Palestine was unquestionably related to the Bible, to Christian history and Christian ethics. As one articulate soldier explained, ‘There was first a sense of being on familiar ground, of having witnessed the whole scene before somewhere, which was followed by the transition to the Bible stories of childhood’s days.’

It was this sentimental view of the campaign that would prove to be the popular perspective Sykes was seeking. Certainly, it had its productive aspects, not least because it distanced the campaign from the explosive Christian-Moslem crux and located it safely within a nostalgic, golden realm of a rural English churchyard, a secure image of ‘Home’, more articulate and suggestive than any war aims speech. The fusion between the Crusading theme, so intuitive for British propagandists, and the latter’s conscious appeal to the vernacular biblical tradition, produced the hybridized icon of the homesick Crusader. Geographically, it contrasted the image of the Holy Land with the image of ‘Home’, as the movement eastward was balanced by a gaze westward (to England, but also to the trenches in France). Politically, it indulged the Crusading image while shifting it away from the contentious Christian-Moslem context, back to domestic religious practices. In terms of propaganda,
it employed the Crusading ethos of military expansion, but only to evoke ‘Home’ as the initial cause which had justified the Holy War in the first place. In terms of the language of class, it constructed the English Tommy as a spiritual descendant of the (Norman?) chivalrous knight, while ascribing to him the religious enthusiasm of reformed culture and even (Anglo-Saxon?) dissent. Most significantly, this image reflected a negotiated stand between official propaganda and public consumption. It perpetuated the Crusading image, but in a way that would appeal to popular traditions and to the weariness of war.

Paradoxically, the image of the homesick Crusader corresponded with the striking fact that commentators on the Crusading features of the Palestine campaign were seldom, if at all, anxious about the disturbing resonances of the analogy: the idea that this new Crusade might end like the previous ones, the question of the Crusaders’ own future, now that their goal had been achieved; or even the fact that the Balfour Declaration did not quite coincide with the vision of a new Christian kingdom in Palestine. ‘We need not question who is going to be in Jerusalem’, Sykes said in an interview to the Observer in December 1917. ‘It is sufficient to know that the Turk has gone.’ Thus, while it seemed obvious that Britain would not give up this new threshold to India, the exact nature of the arrangement was still unclear, with incompatible British promises made to the Zionists, the Arabs and the Allies. The image of the homesick Crusader — duty distressed by longing, public commitment stained by private reluctance — captured this ambiguity, which would eventually characterize Britain’s presence in Palestine throughout the mandate years. David Fromkin has asserted that from a British point of view, the Middle East settlement of 1922 had become largely out of date by the time it was effected. British policy-makers imposed a settlement in which, for the most part, they themselves no longer believed. Fromkin, of course, is relating to a complex web of political, military and economic interests; however, it seems to echo a very basic sentiment shared by soldiers and propagandists alike, from as early as 1918.

In his speech in the House of Commons just before Christmas 1917, Lloyd George pondered on the sentence of posterity: ‘It would be rather interesting, looking at the year 1917, if it were possible to project ourselves into the year 2017 and to observe the events of this particular year.’ For one, he had no doubt ‘that, when the history of 1917 comes to be written, and comes to be read ages hence, these events in Mesopotamia and Palestine will hold a much more conspicuous place in the minds and in the memories of the people than many an event which looms much larger for the moment in our sight’.

85 Observer, 16 December 1917, 9.
87 UK Parliamentary Debates (Commons), 5th ser., vol. 100, 20 December 1917, cols 2212, 2211.
Horatio Bottomley, editor of the notorious *John Bull*, was not impressed: "Well, in the East we have done wonders — although I do not agree that in years to come the fall of Jerusalem will be talked about (except, possibly, in some revised version of the Bible) as the great outstanding feature of the war."

Bottomley was closer to the truth. Barring an unlikely historiographical shift in the next few years, it seems probable that the Palestine campaign will continue to be overshadowed by the cataclysmic events on the Western Front. As the title of a recent collection of essays suggests, the experience of the Great War continues to be understood as that of *Facing Armageddon*. The Palestine campaign, with its feasible objectives, linear narrative, relatively few casualties and, most important, its unequivocal victory, simply could not — and cannot — be moulded into an Apocalypse. It seems no coincidence that the only Middle Eastern campaign to be adequately acknowledged by first world war historiography has been Gallipoli, which, after all, sustained the familiar trench leitmotif of entrapped soldiers, perpetually butchered.

It is highly ironic, then, that an actual battle of Armageddon was fought in Palestine. The battle of Megiddo — the biblical Hebrew name for Armageddon — is included in the Official History, part of the offensive of September-October 1918. As Jonathan Newell has shown, military and biographical accounts of Allenby have tended to dwell extensively on this episode. After all, he was to become Marshal Viscount Allenby of Megiddo and Felixstowe. The fact that the field of battle was quite remote from the actual biblical Meggido suggests that this was yet another conscious act of myth-making, and like so many other fabricated myths concerning the Holy Land, it did not endure. Indeed, by the time the British were fighting at Armageddon, the metaphor had long worn out, despite correspondents’ feeble attempts to revive it. Even Cyril Falls’s *Armageddon 1918* (1964), a detailed study of Allenby’s advance, does not elaborate on the metaphor, and it is not difficult to see why: Allenby’s swift progress up to Damascus was certainly not the bloody, colossal, definitive clash envisioned in John’s Revelation; that was taking place in the trenches of the Western Front.

Matthew Hughes has recently asserted that ‘The romantic appeal of the EEF cavalcade through lands with profound historical and religious attachment has done little to encourage objective study’. In fact, as this article has attempted to demonstrate, it was very much the religious and historical aura of the land

88 *John Bull*, 29 December 1917, 8.
91 *Armageddon*, a war film describing Allenby’s campaign in Palestine with some re-enacted scenes, was issued in November 1923. See Rachel Low, *The History of the British Film 1918–1929* (London 1971), 130, 293.
which initiated the campaign in the first place. The problem was that the biblical vocabulary, long divorced from its original birthplace, had gained multiple, often contradictory significations. At the end of the day — that long summer day which began with Brian Gurnay reading his book on the glittering lawn — the representation of the Palestine campaign as the last Crusade was never genuinely threatening, nor very successful, because the literalization of the metaphor had never succeeded in surpassing the metaphor itself. The Western Front Armageddon overshadowed the literal Armageddon in Palestine; the Holy War in Palestine was never more than a side-show of the Holy War in Europe; and the real Promised Land remained Blighty.

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