

Fort Bend Christian Academy - Department of Worldviews and Apologetics

Chris Henderson

**The Crusades: Their Morality, Justification, and Judgement**

A Thesis Submitted to

the Teacher and Students of the Advanced Apologetics Class

By

**Jonathan Tong**

**December 2018**

## Table of Contents

<b>Introduction</b> .....	4
<b>Historical Background</b> .....	5
The Western Church and Europe.....	6
The Byzantine Empire.....	18
Islamic Powers.....	20
War In The Middle Ages.....	23
The Justification of The Crusades.....	27
Cost.....	29
Conclusion.....	31
<b>The Crusades</b> .....	33
The First Crusade.....	33
Muster.....	38
Planned Journey.....	38
The People’s Crusade.....	39
The King’s Campaign.....	41
Campaign.....	47
Conclusion.....	59
Result.....	62
Inter-crusade Period.....	63
The Second Crusade.....	67
Crusades in Europe.....	69
Anti-Jewish Sentiment.....	70
Major Kings.....	70
Campaign.....	72
Conclusion.....	74
Result.....	77
Inter-crusade Period.....	77
Christian Holdouts.....	85
The Third Crusade.....	86
Major Kings.....	88

Campaign.....	91
Conclusion.....	99
Result.....	100
The Fourth Crusade.....	101
Campaign.....	103
Conclusion.....	110
Result.....	111
<b>Conclusion.....</b>	<b>113</b>
<b>Bibliography.....</b>	<b>117</b>

## **Introduction**

The crusades are considered one of Christianity's darkest times, as to modern Christians the idea of fighting for God is inconceivable; there was slaughter and bloodshed in the name of a gracious God who offers love and forgiveness to all. It is an assumption, made by many of all walks, that the crusades were violent conquests for land, wealth, power, and religion, while others draw comparisons to Islamic terror and *jihad* - holy war. As the Church has been confronted with its previous actions, Christians have found themselves apologizing endlessly for events which happened nearly a 1,000 years ago, and which, more importantly, very few understand outside of their modern viewpoint. It is a Christians' responsibility to know their history; before they apologize, believers must understand what they are apologizing for. In order to accomplish this, one must review the unique position that the Papacy found itself in by 1095, as the unique blend of culture, interpretation of Scripture, and outside influences saw the crusades forged as a product of their time. People cannot approach this history with their assumptions, as all observations will be based on a pile of stereotypes and facts without context, which fails to provide the depth that is needed. The Crusaders truly believed that the war they fought was justified and holy, and there was nobody to say otherwise.

Considering that entire books have been written about individual crusades, this thesis will only briefly detail the events that transpired, though it aims to cover significant events. Through the historical review of each crusade, and through informed commentary on the events, this thesis seeks to construct a judgement for the first four crusades; as complex events, each crusade will be analyzed separately. It should be noted, however, that this thesis will only focus on their journeys into the East; while events from Europe may be covered, they will not be the focus of this paper; the goal of the crusades was Jerusalem, which was located in Palestine. The exception to this rule is the Fourth Crusade, considering that it never reached the Holy Land. The actions of the kings, people, and popes who contributed to the phenomenon, as well as their perspectives on the matter, will be compared against modern Christian theology, as well as the standards of their own times.

### **Historical Background**

The world during the crusades, to modern eyes, is familiar yet confounding; Popes asserted control over kings, bastard sons betrayed their siblings for power, and the common folk were the property of knights, barons, earls, etc. Of course, one must put aside whatever previous judgements about this society that may be held before examining them; backwards as it was, this

was their way of life. By setting the stage with various locations, beliefs, and props, readers can begin to understand why the crusaders performed the way they did.

### The Western Church and Europe

The Fall of Rome gave life to countless compact kingdoms in Europe, as the conquering barbarians inherited portions of its culture, language, and most importantly, religion. Though the Roman Emperors had relocated the capital to Constantinople, the Catholic Church was left to fend for itself in the oncoming storm of invasions. However, as new civilizations converted to Christianity, the influence of the Papacy grew until most of Europe recognized Christianity as its primary religion. When the First Crusade was declared, Western Christians were incredibly motivated to go by several factors: their need for forgiveness, pilgrimage to Jerusalem, a need for unity, and the protection of fellow Christians.

It is important to understand how Medieval Christians viewed relics and saints, as they carried importance which is simply not held by most modern believers. The veneration of saints, mainly in shrines, as well as their relics, was an important part of life for many believers. While everyone in the Church is a saint, the practice of revering them had begun with the original martyrs, who were honored, out of respect, for their martyrdom in Christ. The original Church had set aside the title of “saint” for those who had been martyred, as originally, saint was used to

refer to a Christian who had died and was believed to be with God. Throughout the centuries, the honoring of saints slowly grew in significance, as they were portrayed as paragons to be imitated in order to come closer to God. This veneration frequently crossed over into outright worship, which, according to the scholarly learned, is against God's command; many commoners ended up worshipping saints, instead of giving them respect and veneration, though the educated made the distinction. In fact, saints appeared to have taken the place of pagan gods; there were saints for everything: for rain, protection against an ailment, good crops, or even just a cold. This worship mentality was further promoted through the saints' shrine, which was a specially designed tomb which displayed their remains, or objects that they had touched, such as their clothing or bed, though they also included an idol in their likeness. This was important, as, at the time, it was believed that as a saint's worldly power decreased, their spiritual power grew and would continue to radiate from their remains and belongings; the belief originated as far back as the first centuries of Christianity.<sup>1</sup> Also, included in the tomb was a list of miracles that the saint had performed on the behalf of believers; though most of these can be explained with science today, the people simply attributed them to divine intervention due to their poor understanding of the world around them. The curing of even a headache was considered a miracle; this would then be recorded by a custodian who watched over the tomb. Sometimes, merely touching the saint's clothes was enough, or his image, though there are records of

---

<sup>1</sup> Madigan, *Medieval Christianity*, 324.

desperate pilgrims consuming dust or oil in the tomb; wax or oil used in the candles was considered capable of curing the needy.<sup>2</sup> Overall, anything even remotely related to the saint could be considered a relic capable of inducing miracles; this view of the martyrs led to it becoming a massive industry centered around relics and blessings. Because of this, pilgrims began to expect blessings as part of an exchange; once venerated, or given a gift or alm, the saint was expected to intercede for the believer in Heaven, which would, hopefully, manifest itself in the physical world, thus alleviating the venerator of their illness or secure them a blessing. If the saint failed to produce a miracle for the people, sometimes the image of the saint would be torn down, dragged through the mud, and ridiculed, though some suppliant believed that the lack of an intervention was due to their own sinfulness.

The shrines and remains of saints caused pilgrims from all over to travel and venerate them at their shrine; in modern times, they might be called tourist attractions. Regardless, one could profit off the vast horde of travellers who needed food, shelter, and divine intervention; this was certainly a major factor in the “discovery” of a saint’s bones, which, naturally, would be housed in an elaborate shrine. The relics of a saint were also considered economically important; they could secure divine intervention for the community who owned them and were used in public ceremonies. Important transactions were sworn with a relic, and when the community struggled in an epidemic or famine, the relics were displayed in public processions as society

---

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 325.



searched for a miraculous antidote. They would also be displayed by an army before battle, as well as being carried into battle in order to channel God's divine favor. Due to the importance of relics, the aforementioned custodian was on constant watch for those who attempted to make a *furta sacra*, or "pious theft" of the remains. In the West, Rome was an incredibly popular pilgrimage destination as the remains of St. Peter himself were guarded in his basilica, while scores of other saints, among them being Paul, were scattered throughout the city. Rome's prestige was compounded by the fact that Jesus had, in effect, stated that Peter was the foundation of the Church, and that he held the keys to Heaven.<sup>3</sup> If one could beg to Peter himself, one could possibly receive a more favorable reception into God's Kingdom. Meanwhile, in Constantinople, the Byzantines literally imported the remains of saints as it had no martyrs to call its own; the remains of Timothy, Andrew, and Luke were interred within shrines there which made it a popular place to visit, as well as granting it prestige.<sup>4</sup> So, when the crusades began, an untold number of relics were discovered and shipped West into Europe, while in the East, they were carried by crusaders in order to strengthen morale in the fight against the Muslims.

Though the Church commonly denounced violence, even going as far to introduce the Peace of God, as well as the Truce of God,<sup>5</sup> Europe remained a violent place; petty wars between

---

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 332.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 328.

<sup>5</sup> Madden, *Concise History of the Crusades*, 6.

minor nobles sprouted up quite commonly, while major wars between kings, while less common, still occurred. Even as they warred, many of the belligerents recognized that, according to the Church's teachings, what they were doing was wrong. This was not exclusive to wars; some recognized that their entire lifestyles were corrupt. For society at the time, in order to amend for wrongdoings, an act of penance was to be undertaken by the repentant in order to purify the soul, usually at the behest of the Church. These acts could vary wildly: a donation of land, money, or property to some Church related organization, as well as prayer, fasting, flagellation, the taking of a vow, or pilgrimage, either to a nearby shrine, relic, or even to distant Jerusalem; the greater the crime, the more difficult and sacrificial the atonement. This purification was seen as incredibly important, because the Church taught that every human would face a "weighing of souls"- one's purity would determine if they were condemned to everlasting suffering, or be raised into Heaven. This was emphasized by artists at the time, as there were many paintings and statues that depicted sinners in terrible suffering in the underworld.<sup>6</sup> In light of this, perhaps one of the best examples of this need for repentance was represented by Fulk III, Count of Anjou, (972-1040 A.D.). He constantly fought, schemed, and murdered in order to retain control over his county; he burned his wife at the stake, orchestrated assassinations, and brought ruin to

---

The Peace of God threatened kings with divine sanctions for killing, or otherwise harming, noncombatants, while the Truce of God was an effort made by the Church in order to prevent war on Sunday and other Holy Days. These measures were ineffective in their respective roles, as many kings simply ignored them.

<sup>6</sup> Asbridge, *The Crusades*, 11.

his neighbors.<sup>7</sup> In a letter, the count wrote that ““he had caused a great deal of bloodshed in various battles,”” which speaks a great deal that even Fulk himself believed that he had killed more than what was necessary. Over his lifespan, in order to atone for his sins, Fulk made four separate pilgrimages to Jerusalem, in which the last one saw him being led naked to the Holy Sepulchre<sup>8</sup> begging for forgiveness, while his servant whipped him.<sup>9</sup> Suchs acts of devotion clashed with his sadistic, malicious lifestyle, yet this overwhelming need for repentance was felt by many in Europe, especially among those who warred. To many, a pilgrimage to Jerusalem was the ultimate act of devotion, capable of washing away even the most terrible of sins. However, acts of faith had another dimension to them: they were performed in order to win favor with God. While modern Christians do not believe that God’s favor can be, in a sense, bought, this was not the understanding at the time. Though the theological basis for this interpretation is shaky, Christians should not judge their predecessors for doing this; some of their intents may have been pure, and only God can see man’s heart. To the supplicants, it was much the same case as the veneration of saints: once venerated or given an offering, the donor was expected some type of service in return. Sometimes, a generous land donation was made with the intent of guaranteeing a blessing; to emphasize this point, Stephen of Blois donated a forest to a monastery before his participation in the First Crusade, and made the monks promise that they

---

<sup>7</sup> Stark, *God’s Battalions*, 88.

<sup>8</sup> A church built in 335 AD; many (at the time) believed it to be the site of Jesus’ crucifixion, burial, and resurrection.

<sup>9</sup> Asbridge, *The Crusades*, 5.

would pray for his safety, as well as his success.<sup>10</sup> An act of faith was also believed to be able to cure people of their ailments or illnesses; approaching a shrine of a saint, or one of their relics, was believed to help the pilgrim, as the saint would then pray to God for them. The physical journey to the site, as well, was believed to bring one closer to Christ, as pilgrimage sites were commonly distant and difficult to reach. By travelling out to these locations, one would come to resemble how Christ journeyed all throughout Palestine, exhausted after a long journey, therefore having a religious experience. Regardless of the cause, acts of devotion, especially pilgrimage, were seen as highly valuable by Medieval society.

Jerusalem was regarded with utmost awe and respect throughout the Church's history; for one, it had been where Jesus had performed miracles; it was where he lived, died, and was resurrected. For the devout, viewing Jerusalem and the surrounding area was the closest that they could physically get to their Savior; it was a historically important location to Christianity. In fact, it was considered with such awe in Medieval culture, that Jerusalem was placed in the center of maps. The holiness of it was helped by the fact that practically anything from the area could be marketed as a relic; it was a literal goldmine; everything was sanctified because Jesus and his beloved disciples had traveled there, and therefore had overwhelming spiritual power. Even today, visiting Jerusalem is an act that many Christians aspire to complete, for many of the same reasons as in the past, sans the holy relics. Secondly, the disciples had begun the Church in

---

<sup>10</sup> Stark, *God's Battalions*, 114.

the holy city, and from there it had slowly spread throughout the world. The Papacy laid claim that they were descended from Peter's leadership as the Bishop of Rome; they could trace their ancestry back to a disciple who had borne witness to Jesus and on whom the Church had been built. Thirdly, the Holy Sepulchre, which held a seat of importance within Christianity, was destroyed. Tariqu al-Hakim, head of the Fatimid dynasty, ordered the Sepulchre's destruction in 1009, and desecrated it; this news was met with massive outrage among Christians everywhere.<sup>11</sup> Though it was rebuilt forty years later, and its destruction was eighty years before the First Crusade, the lasting bitterness over this action was revived in order to draw recruits for the crusades.

Europe, as previously mentioned, was generally crisscrossed by wars of all sizes, from those that encompassed multiple kingdoms, to petty skirmishes along farmlands; most of these smaller battles were caused by the local authority, perhaps a baron, viscount, or some other minor noble. Though the king sat at the top of a medieval hierarchy, there were still lots of opportunities for these lesser lords to capture more territory, or otherwise take from their neighbors, as many kingdoms had a weak grip over their subjects; kings could not prevent their subjects from killing each other. However, their loyalty as vassals could be relied upon when the king summoned them in order to fight a major war with rivals, except in succession wars or usurpations. From the Papacy's perspective, all these wars happened far too often, therefore

---

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 91.

instituting the Peace and Trust of God. However, much like the kings who could not control their vassals, these measures of peace were frequently ignored by the kingdoms, which spurred the Church on to find other solutions. So, when a legitimate threat to the Eastern Church presented itself, a call to arms, ironically, was able to accomplish more than all the Papacy's efforts for peace; the crusades offered the Church an opportunity to funnel Europe's bellicose spirit into something productive.

While Christianity had been united in the Roman Empire, its fall also brought about the Church's split into east and west. While the Western territories, as well as Rome, fell to barbarians and darkness, the Roman emperors moved the capital to Constantinople, bringing along with them, they argued, the head of the Church. If Rome had declared Christianity the state religion, and if Rome had propagated it, then, it was argued, when the capital moved, the original Church, which carried the leadership, was transferred as well.<sup>12</sup> This was the basis for their claims to supremacy over the Western Church. However, this divide between the Churches was also cultural, as well as doctrinal. For one, the language that the Bible was written in differed, as the West insisted on using Latin, while the East translated theirs into Greek. The Greeks looked down on the westerners as they had merely "picked up" Christianity from the remnants of Rome, while they had continued the original Church. Also, the regions in which the Churches operated differed, and therefore, questions arose from the new converts of who was the

---

<sup>12</sup> Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition, Volume 2*, 150-2.

true Church. The Churches disagreed on certain doctrine, such as how *Filioque*<sup>13</sup> was to be interpreted, as well as the dates of holidays, such as Easter. However, the biggest controversy between the two lay in who held authority. In the west, it was recognized that the no king could claim power over the Pope, but in the east, since the emperor was the one who allowed Christianity in the Empire, he held authority over the Church, and as such, everything was organized as he wanted it to be. This caused no little debate between the two, as in the West, the Papacy vehemently attempted to deny kings power within the Church; the issue of lay investiture, or the act of a king appointing someone to Clerical positions, challenged the Pope's authority directly. This, to Rome, was a sign that their lands were wracked with sin and in need of purification, as well as that the Eastern Orthodox Church, who supported the emperor, had all been led astray. Despite all these differences, however, both Churches desperately wanted to unify, or at the very least reconcile their differences. This can be seen in how communication continued, despite their rivalry, as well as how both Churches argued for their supremacy, much like two young brothers bickering. Unfortunately, this discourse would worsen their relations, as, naturally, each Church thought the other illegitimate, and therefore discounted each other's opinions and arguments. This came to a head, when in 1054, a papal legate from the Western Church pronounced excommunication on the Eastern Patriarch, therefore making their split

---

<sup>13</sup> Filioque is basically an interpretive issue of how the Holy Spirit is brought to Christians, however, its interpretation drastically changes the importance of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The issue began back in the original Nicene Creed of 325, and has continued ever since for nearly 2000 years. During the Medieval ages, the Filioque clause was a major source of controversy between the two Churches, as well as within both Churches.

official and final. Despite this growing chasm, the crusades offered multiple opportunities to reconcile, as nothing quite fosters gratefulness like rescuing your estranged brother in their hour of need.

Christian-Muslim relations in the Dark Ages were shaky at best, and outright violent at worst, with multiple incidents of massacres and executions having been recorded. However, some Christians, who had been conquered back in the first waves of Islamic expansion, were able to peacefully coexist with their neighbors in the Middle East, though they were subject to special taxes unless they converted to Islam, in a similar vein to Christians being persecuted in the Middle East today. Unfortunately, even if the majority of Christians living or passing through Islamic territory remained unharmed, a portion were still subjected to harsh treatment. In fact, as early as the eighth century, Christians were being massacred, their churches burned, and travelling the open road was dangerous. These persecutions were fairly common and continued for centuries, as, in 1064, a Bishop and his party of pilgrims were ambushed by Muslims, where two thirds were killed. This was preceded by other incidents, such as how in 1040, Ulrich of Breisgau was stoned to death near the Jordan.<sup>14</sup> This did not at all slow down the steady stream of pilgrims seeking redemption; many desired to stem the violence in order to make pilgrimage safer, but with no control over the local rulers, it was impossible to tell if things would become better or worse. However, given the fact that Muslim forces had conquered a vast

---

<sup>14</sup> Stark, *God's Battalions*, 92.



swathe of the Byzantine Empire, so much so that Constantinople was endangered, things did not look favorable for the Christians. Pilgrims would now have to take their chances with further dubious, local authorities, authorities, who, under the Byzantine Empire, would have let them pass without harm. Bandits and thieves within these cities would be given more leeway for their crimes against Christians, as the rulers, while not actively promoting violence, did not necessarily protect Christians, either. This was also not to mention that it became exponentially more dangerous to be in the Jerusalem area, as, during the 11th century, there was a war between the two Islamic dynasties. Despite all this, pilgrims kept travelling to Jerusalem; many were killed. By restoring the Empire's territories, the Western Church would be doing the Eastern Church a favor, whilst simultaneously protecting its own people in the process.

In summary, Western Europe was presented with several strong reasons to send a crusade into the east, conditions which were a unique product its time. The chaotic political landscape of Europe saw minor warlords rise and fall, which ensured that warriors who had killed would see themselves guilty and in need for repentance. This intense need for purity caused Christians to seek out ever more devout and intense acts of penance for their sins, the culmination of which came to be pilgrimage to Jerusalem, and so many went. However, a pilgrimage to Jerusalem was a time consuming and dangerous task, with individuals and parties being executed and massacred by Muslim authorities. These same Muslims also happened to be making war on the Byzantine

Empire, which was down to its last few territories, and who was in dire need of help. So, a military expedition, sanctioned by the Church, could be used in order to address all these issues in one fell swoop.

### The Byzantine Empire

While the Fall of the Roman Empire gave birth to countless small kingdoms in Western Europe, the surviving Romans in the East, the Byzantines, refused to recognize these illegitimate children. To them, this territory, which was merely temporarily occupied by barbarians, would eventually be reclaimed by the Empire, for they had once ruled territory in Spain, the coast of North Africa, Egypt, Jerusalem and its coast, as well as modern day Turkey, Greece, and Italy. However, by the start of the First Crusade in 1095, this territory had declined significantly. Italy and Western Greece were lost to the “barbarians”, while the energetic Islamic states had conquered everything up to the coast of Turkey.<sup>15</sup> Constant wars and weak emperors had left the empire in a disastrous position, however, this did not quench its desire to rebuild the Roman Empire. Yet, how did the Byzantines, who had wielded so much power, arrive here? Firstly, while the Byzantine Empire ruled much of the area around the Mediterranean from around 500-600 A.D., it soon faced a problem which saw the decline of the Romans: there was simply too much land to defend. There was always something the Byzantines had to fight against, such

---

<sup>15</sup> Madden, *Concise History of the Crusades*, 5

as the Berber tribes in North Africa, the Visigoths in Spain, various barbarians in Central Europe, Slavs pushing down from the North, the resurgent Persians in the East, and various desert tribes around Jerusalem and Egypt. An especially brutal war with the Persians that began in 602, and lasted over twenty years, saw Constantinople, the crown jewel of the Byzantine Empire, come under siege. However, the Persians were routed, so the Byzantines survived. On the other hand, this war left both them and the Persians severely weakened, and they lost vast swathes of territory immediately after, as the Arabs, newly united under Islam, began their rapid expansion. The Byzantines lost nearly everything: Spain, North Africa, Egypt, Palestine, and Turkey all lay in the hands of the Muslims, and during this time, Constantinople came under siege multiple times; each time, it endured and survived. Over the next 300 years, emperors fought to reclaim their territories in the Middle East, and the Muslims pushed back; this cycle of violence continued until 1071, which saw a crushing military defeat for the Byzantines.<sup>16</sup> Sensing weakness, the Muslims conquered Turkey up to the coast, while others took advantage of the blood in the water; the Normans, led by Bohemond and his father, had taken Byzantine holdings in Italy, while more barbarians amassed north of Greece. It is this situation in which Alexios I (sometimes spelled Alexius) was crowned Emperor, and he immediately raised an army of mercenaries, whilst simultaneously sending a plea for help to the Western barbarians, but more

---

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

importantly, to the Western Church in Rome.<sup>17</sup> While he had hoped for a military response, Alexios had no idea what he had bargained for.

### Islamic Powers

From 610 to 732 AD, Islam experienced an extraordinary growth which few have matched, from the deserts of modern day Saudi Arabia all the way up through the Mediterranean coast to Spain, and to France as well, if they had not been defeated finally by Charles Martel. While, from the outside, this was an impressive empire, internally, there were crippling divisions which prevented any unity among Muslim people. The first of these divisions appeared in 661, when Ali, the current Caliph (head of state) at the time, died. There were disagreements on who should rule next, which saw the splitting of Islam into two sects: Shiites and Sunnis. Over hundreds of years, these two states lost further power as individual rulers broke away to be independent, but relations between the two main bodies were healthy. However, in 969, a Shiite faction called the Fatimids seized power in Egypt and invaded Sunni lands. Though the Sunnis were based in modern day Iraq, which was not damaged by this invasion, the Fatimids did, however, manage to conquer Jerusalem and its coast. However, the tide of this conflict changed to the Sunnis' favor, as the Turks, who were nomads at the time, had come down from Central Asia, converted, and begun fighting for Sunni Islam. In doing so, they reconquered Jerusalem

---

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

and most of the other lost territories by 1090.<sup>18</sup> This enmity mirrored how the two Churches were divided, and much likewise, they failed to reconcile, which weakened both sects of Islam martially. Though Islam could not perform a focused expansion as before, it was still a force to be reckoned with, evident in how the Byzantines were unable to take and hold their old territories, in fact being pushed back to Constantinople instead.

Now, fighting for centuries in the desert, several important military decisions were made in order to increase fighting effectiveness. Firstly, Islamic armies heavily employed a form of light cavalry as the main force in their armies. In comparison to European armies, this cavalry was not equipped with heavy armor; instead, they wore leather armor, sometimes with metal scales in order to maximize speed, and while some type of melee weapon was wielded, a short bow was also given to each rider. So, in order to maximize their effectiveness, formations of this cavalry would ride to the flanks of the enemy and harass them with their bows, attempting to goad the enemy into moving against them. Once the enemy gave chase, they would perform a feint retreat back out into the desert, where they would suddenly turn around and smash their enemies, who were now split off from the main formation. However, if their opponents managed to maintain their formations, unless the riders wanted to perform a cavalry charge into the main body, there would be no real battle, just some ranged harassment. This gave the Muslim armies a distinct advantage in the desert: this cavalry based force allowed them to choose their

---

<sup>18</sup> Asbridge, *The Crusades*, 19-22.

engagements as they wished, to chase the enemy down after a successful battle, or to disappear into the desert if they were defeated.<sup>19</sup>

However, Muslim military might, in terms of its naval power, was sorely lacking. While they did retain control of a navy, being people of the desert, Muslim rulers would hire others to build their ships, as well as to crew them. It just so happened, that, from having conquered Byzantine lands, that many of these ship crews were filled with the ranks of renegade Christians, as well as mercenaries, therefore leaving their true loyalties dubious. The Islamic navy was also hampered by the fact that their ships were always technologically behind the Western ships, who employed new techniques and equipment in order to stay ahead of the competition. These two weaknesses combined ensured, according to some reports, that when a naval battle was at hand, some crews simply leapt out of their ships without a fight. This effectively crippled any type of naval presence which either Sunnis or Shiites could field; the open seas remained completely uncontested, allowing the Western powers to employ their own ships to maximum extent; the two Churches could rely on their navies in order to secure an advantage.<sup>20</sup>

---

<sup>19</sup> Stark, *God's Battalions*, 72.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 75.

## War In The Middle Ages

For the residents of Medieval Europe, war was common; it was an eventuality. When the time came, a king, baron, or knight could call their loyal vassals to arms, and they could be expected to obey due to the feudal vows that bound them. The majority of the army would be made up of infantry with varying degrees of equipment; vassals were expected to equip themselves in war, with a few exceptions. However, they would innately have some mix of swords, spears, axes, and shields, with bows, and more importantly, crossbows, mixed in. Crossbows were incredibly dangerous to other infantry, as, in comparison to a bow, they required much less skill to use, while garnering much better results. However, they could not reach as far, due to their heavier ammunition, and they also had a much longer reload time, requiring a loader to crank another bolt into place. They fired a single heavy bolt, much like a rifle does, straight ahead of itself; it could be expected to penetrate the toughest armor of the day. This armor, which was worn by all the nobility, would be chainmail: it is comprised of small iron rings, each ring interlocked with four others, which creates a curtain of iron deflecting most deadly blows.<sup>21</sup> Plate armor, or the armor that everyone imagines knights in, did not exist at this time, and was fairly impractical for foot combat; an ordinary knight would equip chainmail and a helmet in order to protect himself.<sup>22</sup> Meanwhile, some of the infantry might have possessed the

---

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 71-72

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

same if they were rich or lucky; the majority would just have leather, or even just clothing, for armor.

Nowadays, knights have been romanticised to the point that the original soldiers have been completely forgotten. While chivalry did exist, which knights were expected to follow, as it was their code, they were still first and foremost bloody warriors. Knights were dedicated fighters who had begun their training from a young age, as they were apprenticed to knights as young as five years old, and thus were accustomed to violence. This lifetime of training, augmented with their superior equipment, made them a force to be reckoned with on foot; however, what truly set a knight apart from the common foot soldier was his horse(s), as the ownership of a horse cemented the knights' role as calvary. Calvary during this time was critically important during battles in the open, as, firstly, a formation of knights on the battlefield was devastating due to their speed, martial skill, and critically, charges. Secondly, knights were used to chase down fleeing combatants, which ensured that if the enemy army was broken, they would be fully destroyed without being given the chance to reform. In doing so, a strategic victory would be secure, as the opposing lord would have to call upon new vassals, or ransom captured ones in order to rebuild their army. Because of their training, equipment, and effectiveness on the battlefield, knights were placed into their own class which offered them a certain amount of prestige, though not necessarily wealth. In modern times, a knight could be



seen as part of the middle class, above all the peasants, but located at the low ends of nobility, with few lands to call his own.

Many kingdoms in Europe at the time had fortified their cities with walls and castles; special equipment and tactics were devised for conquering these bastions. An important rule to note is, that at any time, even with a massive hole in their walls, the city could parley for surrender and they would be given reasonable demands. This rather generous option was always left open because the standard procedure for capturing cities was to slaughter the soldiers and civilians, women and children included, as an example in order to discourage other cities from fighting, therefore making the invaders' job easier. If this occurred, the castle would also be looted, and possibly razed if the conqueror did not want it. While reprehensible in modern times, such killing went by unnoticed; there were countless wars in Medieval Europe, and this was simply how they engaged in it. Now, as to how the city was captured in the first place, there were several tried and true methods which were used for hundreds of years. Firstly, if the besiegers did not want to engage in a costly assault on the city, they could encircle it and prevent supplies from entering it, thus slowly starving the population. This strategy relied on the fact that there were enough troops to sufficiently defend a perimeter around the entire city, and if an opposing relief force from the outside broke through, the besiegers would suddenly find themselves in a precarious position. Secondly, various siege equipment, such as ladders, siege

towers,<sup>23</sup> and battering rams, could be constructed in an attempt to overcome the city's defenses through brute force. On the other hand, this equipment could be costly in time and money to construct, and still required brave men to push it up to the enemy walls, all the while being exposed to various projectiles, and if they managed to get close enough, boiling oil, rocks, and thrown spears. If they succeeded, on the other hand, men would be able to scale and take the walls, in the case of ladders and towers, or rush through the gates, in the case of a battering ram. Finally, if encirclement and siege equipment both failed, the besiegers could always try bribing someone on the inside for entry, though this, by nature, was not very reliable.

Perhaps more important than knights, siege equipment, or even the army as a whole, was the mighty wagon. While for actual combat, wagons were useless, they were indispensable in carrying supplies for the army, and in enemy territory, these supplies were vital. When skillfully harnessed, a horse could carry up to 2,000 pounds of cargo, which was far more than what a human could carry, therefore granting armies a staying power which they would not otherwise have.<sup>24</sup>

These strategies and equipment were what allowed the crusades to even stand a chance of military success, operating thousands of miles away from home in territory which was very much hostile to them. The superior design of chainmail was what allowed European armies to

---

<sup>23</sup> Siege towers are basically wooden towers on wheels which are pushed up to the enemy's walls.

<sup>24</sup> Stark, *God's Battalions*, 61.

weather the hit and run assaults of the Muslims, while their crossbows constantly posed a deadly threat to any would-be attacker. The inclusion of wagons within the crusades was vital in sustaining extended campaigns into Islamic territories, which saw the crusades fighting for years at a time in the deserts of the Middle East.

### The Justification of The Crusades

It is a modern assumption that the crusades were conquests for land, wealth, power, and are a tragic example of what people will do once inspired by religion. However, as has been detailed, there were quite a few reasons to reclaim the Muslim territories surrounding Jerusalem, but, to the crusaders, there was very little worldly gain to be had in these conquests. As was mentioned, nobles were trapped in a petty cycle of violence which naturally saw them in deep need of forgiveness. Though they had been taught at a young age to make war, they were also taught by the Church that their wars were sinful, that their lifestyles were corrupt, and that they needed to sacrifice in order to attain purity. So, when Pope Urban II was mustering the First Crusade, he proclaimed that, “Christian warriors, who continually and vainly seek pretext for war, rejoice, for you have today found a true pretext... If you are conquered, you will have the glory of dying in the very same place as Jesus Christ, and God will never forget that He found you in the holy battalions... Soldiers of Hell, become soldiers of the living God!”<sup>25</sup> In saying

---

<sup>25</sup> Michaud, *History of the Crusades*, 51.

this, Urban II, through his authority as Pope, had proclaimed the First Crusade as a sanctified war, which would be fought on the behalf of God; the Church would no longer condemn war, it would sanction it. Though the West was justified in fighting a war to rescue the Byzantine Empire, according to Augustine's theory of just war,<sup>26</sup> there was no way he could have foreseen the Church sanctifying war; the Pope had overextended his power in saying this, as one cannot make war holy on the behalf of God. Only God, directly commanding his people to fight, can truly use a broken thing like war for good; humanity is corrupt and sinful, we could never sanctify a war. This contrasts with the wars in the Old Testament; God was with Israel, and through those conflicts, he displayed his power and might. The crusades were also pitched as a pilgrimage to Jerusalem; each crusader swore a vow to reach the Holy Sepulchre, which was sometimes accompanied by other vows to ensure purity.<sup>27</sup> This was accompanied with the Church granting a complete remission of sins; however, though crusaders were incredibly motivated by salvation, this did not convert into transformation. This was actually acknowledged by Urban II, who understood that many would simply not change their lifestyles; he proclaimed at Clermont, "God has instituted in our time holy wars, so that the order of knights... [who] have been slaughtering one another... are not forced to abandon secular affairs completely by choosing the monastic life or any religious profession, as used to be the custom,

---

<sup>26</sup> Just war theory attempts to create parameters for a morally justified war; this includes a defensive cause for the war, such as the protection of a certain people group, as well as the minimum use of violence in order to achieve victory.

<sup>27</sup> Madden, *Concise History of the Crusades*, 9.

but can attain some measure of God's grace while pursuing their own careers, with the liberty and dress to which they are accustomed."<sup>28</sup> The Pope acknowledged that he was working with an, ultimately, warlike and savage people who desperately wanted to be saved, though not necessarily change; he roused the barbarians to do the most righteous thing within their short reach: to holy war. Comparisons were drawn between feudal relations and their relationship to God; as lords could rely on their vassals to come to their aid when under attack, their heavenly Lord could also rely on their aid against those who opposed Him.<sup>29</sup> While Urban II may have had good intentions when he preached, it is not the Church's job to sanction violence against anyone, even enemies; today, Christians focus on Jesus' teachings of mercy and forgiveness; while we have learned from the mistakes of our predecessors, we must not forget them, lest they repeat. With the Church portraying a crusade as a way to redeem oneself of their sin through their vows to God, there was practically no reason not to go, except the costs involved.

### Cost

Crusading was expensive; its cost would easily outstrip any material gains made, not to mention the fact that a crusader was risking life and limb in a war with an uncertain outcome. In order to prepare for the crusades, a knight would need to be able to buy arms, armor, a riding

---

<sup>28</sup> Peters, *The First Crusade*, 11-12.

<sup>29</sup> It should be noted that Papal indulgences did not exist at the time, therefore, one cannot say that crusaders fought as a way to "pay off" the Church for redemption.

horse along with several warhorses, mules, or other beasts of burden, servants, tents, food, and even more money to buy supplies along the way, as well as a wagon to carry his currency, as coins were used at the time and are heavy, and the sheer amount required its own wagon; knights shared a treasury wagon. A crusader would also need to save up enough money for his family while he was away, which brought the total cost of a crusader to roughly four to five times his annual income, an immense cost.<sup>30</sup> As knights were far richer than peasants and commoners, much like today's middle class, this cost was inconceivable to very many. It was so great that the Church pleaded that the wealthy to fund poorer crusaders so that they could take up arms and join the crusade; many lesser soldiers were subsidized by others. This meant that, in the end, it was a few rich, noble families who would perpetuate this expedition, yet even they had to make massive sacrifices in order to garner funds. Among these were ownership rights: for the First Crusade, Godfrey sold Verdun, an entire county, to King Philip of France; there were also numberless lesser transactions with the commoners, as they suddenly found themselves the owners of the land they had lived on.<sup>31</sup> However, instead of selling the land, nobles would sometimes mortgage their properties to monasteries or other Church organisations, with the terms being somewhat different than modern times; the organization would collect any profits off the territory until the noble had repaid his debt. In case the debt was never repaid, the Church

---

<sup>30</sup> Riley-Smith, *The First Crusade*, 43.

<sup>31</sup> Stark, *God's Battalions*, 112.

would claim full ownership over the property; some agreements even explicitly stated that only the debtor could repay it, and that if he were killed, the land would be foreclosed, thus belonging to the Church.<sup>32</sup> In this way, many lands were disseminated to lesser nobles, commoners, and the Church, which greatly weakened the rich. On the other hand, the nobility saw these transactions as holy in nature, despite the massive amount of property that was sold or mortgaged; what God had given to them, they would return to their Lord. These financing methods were used again and again throughout the crusades, with no conceivable material gain covering the overwhelming cost of them. Even though land gain was a possibility, during the First Crusade, the Pope had specifically decreed that any territories captured were to be turned over to the leading “prince” at the time; this was assuming that Alexios I, the Byzantine Emperor, would take command of the army sent to his aid.<sup>33</sup> In any case, crusaders did not expect to profit from their endeavors; many returned home without most of the equipment they had begun with, as years of travelling and fighting destroyed what they had.

### Conclusion

The crusades, in the context of the Medieval Ages, were the ultimate expression of faith for the nobles and knights who fought in them. While the Pope should be condemned in

---

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 113.

<sup>33</sup> Madden, *Concise History of the Crusades*, 12.

sanctifying war, there is no doubt that what he did touched the hearts of many Europeans. The crusades called to them uniquely; possibly no other circumstances have called for soldiers in the same way as these expeditions; from the crusaders perspective, it was a pilgrimage to the holiest land in all the Earth, it was a war against the enemies of Christianity which united both sides of the Church, a war which was sanctified and offered each pilgrim a chance to cleanse himself of his sins. Through his sacrifices, in wealth, power, and blood, one could bring back relics which would better his community through their spiritual power, as well as please his heavenly Lord, which would undoubtedly see him blessed. After training for war from a young age, and being shamed spiritually throughout all the years for his savageness, the crusades offered a knight a use of his corrupt lifestyle for the good of Christianity, which offered an escape from the endless, sinful violence in Europe. In the end, even if the crusades' bloodshed was unjustified, and should never be repeated, the response to them by the people was not; as a response to the Pope's call, nobles, knights, and peasants bankrupted themselves to serve Christ on a long and perilous journey. Such a response of utmost devotion should be commended by Christians everywhere, and is a zenith to be emulated; as the crusaders saw, they were following Christ's command, as was written, "if anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me."<sup>34</sup> For those who were marked by the cross, there was simply no doubt in their

---

<sup>34</sup> Matthew 16:24.





By the year 1095, there were many strong reasons to send a military expedition to the East, though the greatest among these was Alexios I's plea for help; an explicitly martial force needed to be assembled in order to fight his enemies, as well as to reclaim his lost lands. The current Pope at the time, Urban II, was uniquely suited in temperament and position to call for the First Crusade; he was originally trained as a knight, so he understood that their bellicose nature was a product of how they were raised, yet also understood how their overwhelming need for repentance could be aroused in order to draw recruits for the crusades. Meanwhile, Pope Gregory VII, his predecessor who served from 1073-1085, had made sweeping changes within the Papacy, increasing the its influence in secular wars whilst simultaneously flexing the Church's muscles; Gregory seriously considered raising an army of God and leading it himself into the East. However, Gregory's plan failed, as he needed to find a king to rule in his place while he was away; Henry the IV, Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire, had been chosen, but he began to contest the Papacy's power through lay investiture. This spiralled into open conflict when Henry raised up an antipope<sup>36</sup> and marched on Rome itself in order to depose Gregory. The true Pope was forced to flee the city, as most of it was taken, and later died in exile. When Urban II was elected Pope, the city still lay under the control of the antipope and Henry, which he took back through political maneuvers. Popes and kings would struggle for power for centuries afterwards; it is in this situation in which Urban began preaching the First Crusade. In

---

<sup>36</sup> Generally regarded as someone who makes a claim to the Papacy, but was not legitimately elected by cardinals.

doing so, he attempted to reestablish the Papacy's power over the kings of Europe, which, for the most part, was successful; though Philip I, King of France, and Henry IV of Germany refused to appear, many of their nobles, on the other hand, left their earthly lords to fight for their heavenly Lord. This reestablished the Papacy's secular power in Europe, as it proved where the nobles' loyalties truly lied; to Church and God. Through tainted by the political rivalry of the authorities, as the Pope exploited their loyalty, the faith and devotion of the lay shined true; the Christians trusted Urban to direct them towards righteousness and were ready to follow him, but instead were funneled down a dark path into bloodshed. If 21st century Christians had the same conviction, they would be able to accomplish mighty works for God throughout the Earth; if their predecessors had carried the same teachings as today, they would have glorified the Lord.

It is widely acknowledged that on November 27th of 1095, Pope Urban II delivered a speech outside of Clermont, a French city, calling out for the faithful to take up arms and become a crusader, to mark themselves with the cross. However, before delivering his rousing speech, the Pope had carefully built up support beforehand to ensure that someone would mark themselves, therefore inspiring others to do the same. On the way to Clermont, Urban II stopped in Le Puy along the way, where he met Adhémar, a respected provincial bishop; though no records exist of them meeting, there is strong evidence that the bishop pledged to assist the Pope in the First Crusade. When Urban II fell silent after his speech, Adhémar was the first person to

stand up and take the crusader vows, thereby becoming the first crusader; others followed suit afterwards. The very next day, the Pope declared that the bishop would be his official representative in the coming expedition, and that all crusaders would follow his orders. However, Adhémar never participated in any battles; Church law forbade the clergy from fighting, though not the lay folk; someone was still needed to lead the troops into battle.<sup>37</sup>

Thankfully, the bishop was acquainted with a local king, Raymond IV of Toulouse, who ruled the majority of south-eastern France.<sup>38</sup> It just so happened, that on the day after Urban II's speech, ambassadors from Toulouse arrived pledging Raymond's allegiance; the Pope, or the Bishop, had spoken with him apparently, as this was an extremely quick "reaction." Raymond's pledge backed the First Crusade with a strong, secular leader who could summon an army, as well as command them effectively, which naturally prompted fellow kings to take the vows as well. Ironically, Raymond had been excommunicated twice by Pope Gregory VII for marrying relatives, though, over the years, he had reconciled with the Papacy, otherwise he would not have been included in Urban II's and Adhémar's opening gambit.<sup>39</sup>

Immediately after the Council of Clermont, the Pope began a preaching tour all throughout France, as well as commanding the ecclesiastical leaders of different regions to begin preaching the First Crusade. Urban II visited and blessed countless shrines nearby, which caused

---

<sup>37</sup> Brundage, "Adhémar of Le Puy," 202-12, in *Speculum* Vol. 34, 1959.

<sup>38</sup> Asbridge, *The First Crusade*, 45.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

huge crowds to appear, whilst simultaneously writing letters to clergy in England, Flanders, Normandy, as well as other lesser states.<sup>40</sup> These lesser preachers began travelling throughout their territory wielding relics, images, and scripture; they quoted, from Matthew 16:24, “if any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me,” among many others.<sup>41</sup> Through their use of effective preaching, as well as the Medieval mentality of scripture, these wandering preachers were able to extend the Pope’s call far beyond France, reaching millions of people in total. An ever increasing amount of individuals sewed crosses onto their clothing; the true extent of the faith was made clear as thousands banded together.

Urban II’s First Crusade, though political in body, was at its core a fundamentally religious war to retake Jerusalem; he was incredibly creative with preexisting ideas. The crusades were an amalgamation of multiple theories, doctrines, and raw passion; St. Augustine’s just war was blended with penance and redemption; these ideas, in turn, were taken from pilgrimage, particularly Jerusalem, as each crusader found himself vowing to reach the Holy Sepulchre, the tomb of Jesus. War, through this pilgrimage, was thought to be sanctified and pure, which was astounding against the backdrop of the senseless violence in Europe.<sup>42</sup> This was the main doctrinal motivation of the First Crusade; other crusades would attempt to imitate it in every way.

---

<sup>40</sup> Stark, *God’s Battalions*, 105.

<sup>41</sup> Madden, *Concise History of the Crusades*, 9.

<sup>42</sup> Stark, *God’s Battalions*, 108.

### Muster

There were two main bodies of people who responded to the call: the People's Crusade and the Prince's Crusade. These expedition forces, in truth, were loosely organized mobs of fighters, led by various leaders whose positions suddenly came upon them, with the exception of the nobility. Most of these forces began with individuals or small groups of crusaders responding to the call in their local towns and parishes, beginning the long journey to Constantinople.

### Planned Journey

In order to keep such a large force supplied during their journey across Europe, the Pope set the official departure date for August 15, 1096. This was done in order to ensure that all the crops had been harvested, therefore supplying the armies with food as they travelled across Europe; the Byzantines would be preparing likewise, as it was agreed that Constantinople would be the rally point. It was expected that the crusaders would link up with Byzantine forces, then coordinate with Alexios, and each other, in order to fight their way to Jerusalem while restoring Byzantine territory along the way. Upon fulfilling their vows, crusaders, like pilgrims, were expected to simply return home, while the Emperor would consolidate his territories. Some,

however, never planned to leave the Holy Land, evident in how Baldwin brought along his wife and infant child.<sup>43</sup>

### *The People's Crusade*

Kings, nobles, and knights were not the only ones who took up the cross; thousands of commoners, including women, sold everything that they had in order to go to the Holy Land. They were led by one man: Peter the Hermit; Peter was a silver-tongued preacher who travelled from town to town rousing the masses to action, as well as gaining donations from nobles. On April 19th, he departed Cologne with a mob numbering at least 20,000.<sup>44</sup> Passing through Hungary, he arrived at Semlin, where it was discovered that an advance party had been murdered by the locals. This enraged Peter's forces, and he lost control of them as they assaulted the city, killed inhabitants, then pillaged the area for five days.<sup>45</sup> Though brutal and uncalled for, this behavior was not entirely uncommon in Medieval Society; petty wars had broken out for smaller slights before; this is not to condone their actions, as they were quite un-Christian like, even by their time. Peter would lose control once more in Bulgaria, which resulted in a battle with the locals once more; this time, he was defeated. Thankfully, the Byzantines escorted the mob the rest of the way to Constantinople, arriving on August 1st; Alexios received Peter into his palace,

---

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 131.

<sup>44</sup> Norwich, *Byzantium*, 33-35.

<sup>45</sup> Stark, *God's Battalions*, 124.

where he was given gifts. After this, the Emperor shipped them across the Bosphorous, where, due to a lack of discipline, Peter's forces marched to battle without his command, as they were eager to continue on before the other crusaders; they were slaughtered, and the survivors merged into the more organized forces that followed.<sup>46</sup>

Unfortunately, back in Europe, Peter's preaching had unforeseen consequences: Jews were being slaughtered by Christian mobs. This was rationalized by the perpetrators as just, as one put, "you are the children of those who killed our object of veneration; and he himself had said: 'There will yet come a day when my children will come and avenge my blood.'"<sup>47</sup> This interpretation of Scripture, which mainly arose from anti-Jewish sentiment, was vehemently condemned by the Pope and the Church; Jesus commanded his followers to love their neighbors, not massacre them. How this came about when even the Pope denounced it is somewhat unclear; it may have been racism, or perhaps it was easier to kill nearby Jews than to go to Jerusalem to fight the Muslims, which was true. There were two groups, one led by a German noble named Emicho, and the other led by two of Peter's followers who had lagged behind. Both groups attacked various Jewish populations in Europe as they travelled east, but upon entering Hungary were destroyed by the Hungarians; however, some of the Jews survived these purges due to local bishops; in fact, bishops risked their safety multiple times in order to try and

---

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 125.

<sup>47</sup> Simson, "Chronicle", 25, cited in Eidelberg, 1996.



protect the Jews before the mob arrived. This protection, sadly, did not always work, as it became evident that these persecutors would destroy Churches in order to kill them.<sup>48</sup> For these actions, the deadly mobs were condemned by the entire Church; today, Christians should remember these brave clergy members who stood up to protect those around them. Thankfully, these were isolated incidents which saw Christians scrambling to protect the Jewish population and did not occur anywhere else, except the capture of Jerusalem.

### *The King's Campaign*

In comparison to Peter's motley force, the armies led by European kings were much more equipped, skilled, and disciplined, though they departed at different times and travelled different paths. Their forces mainly consisted of closely knit family who could afford to crusade, as well as their surrounding vassals, thus forming a cohesive force of nobles and vassals who were united by blood; Count William Tête-Hardi of Burgundy had five sons and four daughters. Three of his sons took the cross and joined the First Crusade, while a fourth became Pope Calixtus II and approved the attack of Damascus in 1122. As for his daughters, three were married to men who joined the Count in the crusade, while the fourth had given birth to a First Crusader; in addition, one of Count William's granddaughters was married to a Norman and both joined the crusade. This same family would contribute even more in the Second Crusade, where

---

<sup>48</sup> Stark, *God's Battalions*, 126.

ten took up the cross.<sup>49</sup> With the added servants and vassals who followed these nobles, not to mention poorer knights under their payrolls, William's forces would easily number in the hundreds, if not lower thousands; a sizeable force given the immense cost per person. The First Crusade was led by four main kings, and their families, who funded the majority of the expedition that headed east; they were Hugh of Vermandois, Godfrey of Bouillon, Bohemond of Taranto, and the aforementioned Raymond IV of Toulouse. While many other nobles journeyed on the Crusade, these four would emerge as the authoritative leaders who would be mentioned time and time again throughout history.

Hugh of Vermandois, who was the brother of the King of France, Philip I, was the first king to arrive at the grand walls of Constantinople. While his men camped in the suburbs, Alexios had the delight of aweing Hugh with the splendid wealth of the Byzantine Empire in his palace. At the end of this tour, Alexios expressed desire to lead the crusade alongside the Western kings, simultaneously asking for Hugh's loyalty through an oath. This oath promised that any cities captured, that had once belonged to the Mediterranean-spanning Empire, would be promptly handed back to the Emperor. Since Hugh had no idea if any of the other kings had taken the oath; he refused, so Alexios simply put him under house arrest until he did.

Grudgingly, the Westerner gave in, which was followed by Alexios sending him across the Bosphorous in order to keep him away from Constantinople. Hugh had resisted for so long

---

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 110-11.

because he did not want to owe anything to the Emperor; however, Alexios' request was fairly reasonable, and only highlights the fact that the Western king did not want to be indebted to this Byzantine. Therefore, from a Christian standpoint, what Hugh did was wrong, as Christians should not be afraid to sacrifice personal gain for the kingdom; from a pragmatic standpoint, he was wise in avoiding Alexios' hand; the Emperor was obviously manipulating him by deliberately caging him within his palace; such men are untrustworthy.

Godfrey, the ruler of Bouillon and Duke of the Lower Lorraine, set out on the crusade with his brothers: Eustace III and Baldwin of Boulogne. Having raised their armies, they departed together at the end of August and travelled overland to Constantinople; however, he had to pass through Hungary, which at this point had dealt with the People's Crusade and therefore were understandably unhappy when another army arrived at their borders. Negotiations were held, and it was agreed that a large sum of money would be given to the King of Hungary for the crusaders to pass. To ensure no violence broke out, Baldwin and his family, his children and wife who he brought along, were held as hostages until the army had crossed over into Bulgaria; this act of vulnerability should be pointed out, as it helped to heal the wounds from the People's Crusade, and should be commended. From here, Godfrey travelled down to the Sea of Marmora, the body of water which connects the Aegean and Black seas, where, right outside of Constantinople, he lost control of his troops. They pillaged the surrounding countryside for eight

days for not entirely clear reasons; whatever the reason, the soldiers shoulder the blame of disobeying their king, an act unfitting of Christ's followers. Alexios, in order to prevent further damages, asked Godfrey to swear an oath of loyalty to him, much like Hugh of Vermandois had been. Godfrey, following the footsteps of Hugh, declined to swear the oath; in response, Alexios refused to transport his army across the Bosphorus, or supply his army with food, which prompted Godfrey's men to pillage the suburbs to survive. This forced the Emperor to reopen the markets, which saw a three month staring contest ensue; Godfrey blinked first, when, in January 1097, he ordered his troops to assault the city.<sup>50</sup> This attack failed, as Constantinople was simply not threatened by the Westerners, so the Germanic King finally swore his loyalty to Alexios, who promptly transported him across the Bosphorus. The bickering between these two rulers, and the hostility held towards each other, is shameful, as Christians of the same faith should work side by side; on the other hand, technically, they were not of the same faith.

Before the First Crusade, Bohemond of Taranto had fought under his Norman father in Southern Italy where they had carved out a kingdom from Byzantine lands; he had actually fought against Alexios himself and routed his forces less than a decade before the crusades. However, Bohemond's kingdom had slowly been whittled down through various wars, some with the Byzantines, thus leaving him with little territory; he looked east towards the Holy Land with the intent of claiming land for himself. Mustering what he had, Bohemond, along with his

---

<sup>50</sup> Madden, *Concise History of the Crusades*, 21.

nephew, Tancred, arrived at Constantinople in April 1097.<sup>51</sup> Needless to say, the Emperor and his people treated him with a mixture of fear and hate which had been well-earned. Anna, Alexios' daughter, wrote that, "the sight of him inspired admiration, the mention of his name terror... his arrogance was everywhere manifest; he was cunning, too."<sup>52</sup> Well aware of the tensions between himself and the Emperor, the Norman warlord quickly swore the oath of loyalty to Alexios, partly to escape the threat of assassination, as well as to reconcile with the Emperor; he also put in a request to be made commander of the crusade. Since Bohemond's kingdom had been mostly lost, he sought to rebuild it in the Holy Land; being the official commander of the Crusade would help him achieve that. Such behavior was somewhat normal for Medieval times, but unjustified for the First Crusade; it was a mission of sacrifice, after all, not of gain. Alexios accepted his loyalty, though did not give him command, then quickly transported Bohemond across the Bosphorus.

Finally, Raymond of Toulouse, along with Adhemar the Bishop, arrived in the April of 1097, just after Alexios had dealt with Bohemond. He commanded the largest force of the crusaders, which unfortunately meant he did not have tight reins on them; several skirmishes had occurred between himself and the Byzantines before he arrived at Constantinople, probably instigated by individuals. As with all the others, Alexios requested an oath of loyalty; Raymond

---

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 22.

<sup>52</sup> Comnena, *Alexiad*, 422.

refused to take it, but this time because he claimed God was his Lord, a valid argument. The other kings urged Raymond to simply take the oath, but he still refused; he considered himself the leader of the Catholic forces, given the Pope's meetings with him and Adhemar. Instead, he offered to take the oath if the Emperor took up the cross and led the crusade personally; Alexios declined, but they reached a compromise. Raymond swore to respect the Emperor and his property, but did not swear loyalty to him. With that, he was transported across the Bosphorus, and the roughly 1,000 mile trek to Jerusalem began.

Given the events that had transpired in and around Constantinople, both the Western kings and the Emperor distrusted each other; the crusaders saw Alexios as a scheming manipulator, while the Westerners were viewed as a ragtag band of unruly barbarians by the Byzantines.<sup>53</sup> In light of this, Alexios sent a rather token force of Byzantines in order to stake claim to recaptured territory, which was, per the oath, rightfully his. On the other hand, the fact that only a fraction of the troops seen in Constantinople were joining the crusaders further soured their view of the Byzantines, and fueled the belief that they were simply being used as pawns in the Emperor's wars. Political intrigues were nothing new for the kings; they had courts back home in Europe and knew the treachery which lay within them; despite these previous experiences, their motivations for refusing the oath were mainly selfish, and not formed on the basis of Alexios' scheming; his actions informed them that he should not be trusted, but only

---

<sup>53</sup> Stark, *God's Battalions*, 137.

because it threatened their property, power, and prestige. Pragmatically, however, the Westerners were justified in being suspicious of Alexios, as will be seen. In any case, roughly 100,000 Christians in total set out on the greatest endeavor of the Medieval Ages.<sup>54</sup>

### Campaign

The first city the crusaders besieged was Nicaea, which was under Islamic control at the time, as well as the Turkish sultanate's capital.<sup>55</sup> These were the same Turks who had converted to Islam who had pushed the Byzantines out of Turkey. A relief force was sent to break the siege, which encountered the crusaders on May 21st; the Turks suffered a major defeat, and the city began negotiating for surrender; however, they spoke with Alexios, who kept the knowledge secret from the Catholic forces; he wanted to ensure that his city would be returned unharmed before the barbarians did anything. The next morning, the day of a planned assault, the crusaders awoke to the surprising sight of Byzantine banners flying from the walls of Nicaea. Though the crusaders understood that the city would be given to Alexios anyways, they felt cheated of a chance to loot, as well as lost further trust in the Byzantines, who were obviously politically cunning and opportunistic; of course, this would be morally wrong, as it would be robbing the Emperor of his property, as well as of innocent citizens'. On the other hand, their opinion of

---

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 138.

<sup>55</sup> Madden, 23.

Alexios was not helped by the fact that his troops had not helped with the fighting. Meanwhile, the surrendering Turkish commanders were taken to the Emperor's palace, where they were greeted with respect, then sent home and continued to fight against the Westerners.<sup>56</sup> So far, the Emperor certainly did not seem to care whether his actions hurt the First Crusade, instead of maintaining the Empire's image.

The crusaders then set out for Antioch as their next major destination while travelling in two groups; Bohemond and Tancred led their Normans as the vanguard, while Raymond and Godfrey followed behind a day behind them.<sup>57</sup> Between July 26th and June 1st (dates are disputed), a battle occurred somewhere west of Dorylaeum, which saw a large Turkish force assault Bohemond at dawn. The ensuing battle lasted a full day, with heavy casualties for both forces. It would have continued the next day, but the rear guard arrived, broke the opposing army in a cavalry charge, then proceeded to chase down as many as they could, thus securing a crusader victory. However, the retreating Turks razed the surrounding countryside, most importantly destroying wells and foodstuffs, which would greatly hamper the Christian forces in the coming months as a blistering summer began. It took roughly four months to reach Antioch in October, which saw many lesser cities reclaimed for the Byzantines, but the crusaders suffered greatly along their march; as Fulcher of Chartres, a cleric, recorded, "truly, either you would

---

<sup>56</sup> Stark, 144.

<sup>57</sup> Madden, *Concise History of the Crusades*, 24.



laugh or perhaps shed tears out of compassion, when many of our people lacking beasts of burden, because many had died, loaded wethers, she-goats, or dogs with their possessions... Occasionally armed knights even used oxen as mounts.”<sup>58</sup> As the author of the *Gesta* states, “...we barely emerged or escaped alive... we lost most of our horses.”<sup>59</sup> With the loss of so many horses, most of the knights simply became basic infantry, while also losing the ability to completely chase down an army before it could escape and regroup. Many also threw away their armor and arms, as the equipment was too heavy to carry without a beast of burden, which there suddenly was a keen lack of.<sup>60</sup> Such events are simply bound to happen in the course of war.

During the journey to Antioch, Tancred and Baldwin of Boulogne took 100 mounted knights and travelled to Edessa, where they were received warmly by Thoros, its ruler. He was subordinate to the Turks by word, but really ruled an independent state; on the other hand, he lacked an heir, and therefore his kingdom would soon fall apart. Here, Baldwin was adopted by the childless leader and proclaimed as the heir to the throne; immediately thereafter, a coup killed Thoros and Baldwin was proclaimed the Count of Edessa, thus becoming the first crusader kingdom. Interestingly, the Western King did not restore this territory to Alexios, keeping it for himself and breaking his oath, which demonstrates the escalating enmity and distrust between the Greek and Western forces. Overall, the suspicious death of Thoros, followed by the violation of

---

<sup>58</sup> Fulcher of Chartres, “Chronicle,” in *The First Crusade: The Chronicle of Fulcher*, 48-49.

<sup>59</sup> Anonymous, *Gesta Francorum*, 23.

The *Gesta Francorum* was an account written by one of Bohemond’s foot soldiers; no name is given.

<sup>60</sup> Stark, *God’s Battalions*, 147.

his oath, even if it had been very forced, was incredibly selfish of Baldwin; such acts are not befitting of a Christian and are worthy of hate. Baldwin and Tancred then returned to the main force, who were now at Antioch.

Antioch was extremely well fortified for its time; on one side, mountains blocked invading armies, unless they wanted to scale the steep terrain, while sturdy walls and towers enclosed the other. The city was defended by a Muslim garrison, not numerous enough to man all the defenses, but was mainly populated by Christians of both denominations; importantly, the cathedral had been recently transformed into a horse stable as an insult, thus leaving a large population of potential traitors.<sup>61</sup> The crusaders at this point had around 40,000 troops left, which made the prospect of a head on assault risky, so the kings set up a siege; however, there was not enough troops to fully encircle the city, which allowed supplies to flow into Antioch. Although a difficult city to conquer, especially with the men that they had, it was viewed as strategically important in order to move supplies, as well as for territorial control. The crusaders starved over the winter months, while plague ran up and down the ranks. As Fulcher of Chartres wrote, "...the famished ate the shoots of beanseeds growing in the fields and many kinds of herbs... also horses, asses, and camels, and dogs and rats. The poorer ones even ate the skins of the beasts and seeds of grain found in manure."<sup>62</sup> The crusaders suffered losses due to starvation

---

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 148.

<sup>62</sup> Fulcher of Chartres, "Chronicle," in *The First Crusade: The Chronicle of Fulcher*, 55.

while a steady stream of deserters began leaving the camp; the kings grumbled that the Byzantines would not ship supplies to the coast via ships, which they could then escort inland to the hungry soldiers. The situation looked bad, but it only got worse; a large Islamic relief force arrived and a battle was fought on February 9th, 1098. Amazingly, the crusaders emerged victorious despite being outnumbered and weakened, claiming valuable supplies from the enemy in order to sustain the siege. However, this was not the end of their troubles; after fighting in the South and losing Jerusalem to the Fatimid dynasty, who were Shiite Muslims, a massive Sunni army began moving north in order to fight these new invaders. This prompted a large wave of desertion among the troops, with one massive group of 4,000 leaving, including Stephen of Blois, as well as Peter the Hermit. Tancred rode out and captured Peter, where he was taken back to the other nobles; he begged forgiveness, and it was granted. Meanwhile, the deserters encountered Alexios at the head of a sizeable Byzantine army, in order to lay claim to Antioch, where they informed him of the dire situation, which prompted him to set up camp and await further news. From a military perspective, this was quite reasonable; why push forward when your allies may be dead? On the other hand, Alexios through this action, revealed his intentions to better Byzantium, and only Byzantium; if he was truly the Crusade's ally, he would march to their aid. Obviously, he was not. The crusaders, once they found out, were rightfully enraged at his inaction.

Finally, the siege came to an end when Bohemond called a meeting with the other kings. He argued that if someone could conquer Antioch at last, then all rights to the city would be theirs, to which everybody except Raymond, ironically, agreed; the Emperor was nowhere to be seen. Raymond wanted to retain his promise of friendship with the Emperor and contest the ownership of Antioch, possibly for himself. It is hard to tell what his intentions were, as there seemed to be genuine loyalty towards Alexios despite his actions; still, Raymond may have simply coveted the city. Bohemond, after getting the majority of the kings to agree with him, then revealed that he had secured a traitor after the long months, who would let them into the city through his tower; such an action would be his claim to Antioch and a kingdom, but did not serve the Crusade outside of its conquest. On the night of June 3rd, 1098, Bohemond's forces scaled the city walls and opened the gates, thus leading to the capture of Antioch. This was a short lived victory, however, a mere six days later, the crusaders found themselves besieged by the Sunni army; after spending six months outside of Antioch, they were now trapped within its walls. The second siege of Antioch had begun.

This time, the besieging forces were numerous enough to prevent supplies from reaching the city; the crusaders were still starving. Soldiers continued to desert, though the chances of escape were dubious with an army outside, but some made it through to Alexios; he, Stephen, and other deserters, who were about to march south after hearing of Antioch's capture, instead

decided to retreat before it was too late, thus leaving the Westerners to their fate. When the surviving crusaders heard this, it enraged them and destroyed any remaining trust they had in the Emperor. Alexios was wrong to abandon the crusaders in their hour of need; his loyalty had been sundered and was void. On June 14th, Peter Bartholomew, a count, reported Saint Andrew revealing the location of the Holy Lance<sup>63</sup> within the city. While many were skeptical, they dug at the spot Peter identified, and they found a piece of iron which was proclaimed to be the relic. Though many viewed Peter with suspicion, Raymond supported him in his claims; the Lance undoubtedly increased the morale of the weary troops. Bohemond, using this to his advantage, put forth a risky plan to fight the Muslims in the open; if the siege continued, they would surely be starved out; everybody agreed that it was their best chance of survival. The kings led their troops out on June 28th, and with the Holy Lance displayed prominently, they stunningly routed the much larger Muslim forces in a head on battle. This is mostly attributed to the fact that there were divisions within the Islamic forces, and upon seeing a bloody battle, some simply left; this caused a chain reaction within the ranks which saw a large portion of the army flee. This shocked both the Muslims and the crusaders themselves; the Syrian chronicler Ibn al-Qalanisi recorded, “thereafter the Franks, though they were in the extremity of their weakness, advanced in order against the armies of Islam, which were at the height of their strength and numbers, and

---

<sup>63</sup> Also called the Lance of Longinus, this lance was believed to have been the one that pierced Jesus’ side after he had been crucified, and therefore was an extremely holy relic.

they broke the ranks of the Muslims and scattered their multitudes.”<sup>64</sup> Such an outstanding victory was attributed to the spiritual, as the Christian soldiers claimed that they had witnessed angels and saints from heaven join the battle.<sup>65</sup> Even if God had not sent his angels to fight, the victory in itself was a miracle; the First Crusade had endured and triumphed over the grueling fighting in Antioch, and now lay free to march to Jerusalem, its ultimate goal.

Unfortunately, the crusaders stalled, mainly because summer was setting in again, but also because of political maneuvering; Bohemond and Raymond were arguing over ownership of the city. All the kings, except Raymond, rightfully recognized their vows to Alexios as void considering their treatment and abandonment. Springing off of this, Bohemond lay claim to the city, since it had been agreed upon that whoever took the city had its rights; he had opened the gates which allowed the defeat of Antioch, after all. However, the other kings, naturally, contested his claims to the city, so the arguments continued on endlessly and a decision was not reached. Each king was wrong in coveting the city; though it was incredibly valuable, no doubt, it was not the goal of the First Crusade; this judgement seems to have been shared by foot soldiers as they threatened to tear down the walls if they did not continue on to Jerusalem.<sup>66</sup> These heated debates were further accentuated by the loss of Adhemar the Bishop, who had, as the Papal legate, advised the nobility in spiritual manners, but also diffused tense political

---

<sup>64</sup> al-Qalanisi, *The Damascus Chronicle*, 46.

<sup>65</sup> Anonymous, *Franca Gestorum*, 69.

<sup>66</sup> Madden, 29.

situations such as this one. He had fallen when a plague descended on Antioch over the summer, which saw many others die. The crusaders' suffering was further accentuated in the winter as everybody began to starve once again; Antioch had been under siege for a full year, which would have had a devastating impact on the surrounding countryside. This led a group of crusaders to arm themselves and overwhelm a nearby town for supplies; some reports say that cannibalism occurred.<sup>67</sup> While horrific, humans do terrible things in order to survive.

Finally, in January, a decision was reached: Bohemond would remain in Antioch, while Raymond became commander in chief, though he had to bribe the other kings; it was only the title, not their loyalty. The army began marching south along the coastline, where they were finally resupplied and reinforced by ships; of course, these were not Alexios' ships, instead, they were from western countries as far away as England.<sup>68</sup> Meanwhile, the Emperor wrote to the Fatimids in Egypt, informing them that he was not related to the crusaders in any way; Alexios was truly the backstabbing schemer that the crusaders had thought him. The Fatimids, despite this message, seem to have been oblivious to the crusade's goal, as they actually offered to form an alliance with the Westerners. This was because of the enmity between the Sunni and Shiites, especially poignant after the Fatimids conquered Jerusalem. The Turks and other Sunni Muslims, unable to put up a fight, and actually quite eager to move the crusaders towards

---

<sup>67</sup> France, *Appeal of the First Crusade*, 287, in Madden, 2002; Riley-Smith, *The First Crusade*, 66.

<sup>68</sup> Stark, *God's Battalions*, 154.

Jerusalem, actually paid the Westerners to leave their cities alone as they approached. The crusaders accepted this deal quite readily, as they wanted to avoid further delays before summer arrived once again; the crusaders finally reached Jerusalem on June 9th.

Despite the earlier misunderstanding of the Fatimids, the Muslim forces were incredibly well prepared for the coming assault: they had expelled any Christians within the city, poisoned or drained the wells outside, and had begun assembling a large army in Egypt. The crusaders, on the other hand, were in their worst situation yet: summer was beginning, with their only source of water being the Jordan twenty miles away, they only numbered around 15,000, down from the 40,000 at Antioch, and they did not have time for a long siege. However, they did not have anything to properly assault the walls and could not construct siege engines due to a lack of trees. On top of this, being several hundred miles behind enemy lines, their only supply line were the ships on the coast at Jaffa, which was roughly forty miles away from Jerusalem, which made it a dangerous trip.<sup>69</sup> On June 13th, an ill-advised assault was made which saw the crusaders being pushed back, as well as losing their only ladders. Amazingly, four days later, six ships arrived at Jaffa with supplies, reinforcements, and some engineers as well; these ships were dismantled on the spot and escorted inland, where the wood was used to create two siege towers. As they were built, a priest reported having a vision on July 8th which promised victory if all the crusaders fasted and marched around the walls; the men took it as authentic. So, on July 11th, after fasting

---

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 156.



for three days, the armies marched around Jerusalem barefoot, then proceeded to the Mount of Olives where a sermon was given by Peter the Hermit. Although such signs could be explainable with modern day science, this thesis will not deny the possibility that there were indeed divine interventions.<sup>70</sup> With morale high and, and as the crusaders saw it, divine favor secured, the crusaders launched an attack on July 14th which saw violent fighting on the walls as the crusaders pushed up their towers, but ultimately ended as a stalemate. However, by the end of the next day, Jerusalem was overrun by the crusaders which was then followed by a slaughter; the Islamic defenders on the walls had retreated back into the city, thus creating a rather difficult situation for the Christians. Killings of those within the city began; here, some individuals acted barbarically, setting fire to mosques and surrounding buildings, but others mercifully, taking prisoners; what was displayed was both the worst and the best of the common soldier. The penitent soldiers then entered the Holy Sepulchre caked in blood, thus fulfilling their vows to God.

Historians have pointed to this violence in order to paint the First Crusade as a horrid atrocity, with other crusades following in its footsteps. For example, Raymond of Aguilers wrote that “men rode in blood up to their knees and bridle reins.”<sup>71</sup> However, a close examination of this report reveals the absurdity of it; even if they had slaughtered tens of

---

<sup>70</sup> See Historical Background.

<sup>71</sup> Document in Peters, *The First Crusade*, 264-68.

thousands, would there be enough blood to rise up to their knees while they were riding horses? Such absurdity is taken as literal by modern readers, but to Medieval Europe, it was read more like propaganda. Other testimonies, meanwhile, still attest to the fact that there was a large slaughter, in which truth, there was; on the other hand, medieval rules of war entirely justified the deaths in the crusaders' eyes, as Jerusalem had failed to surrender. Slaughters after a siege were simply normal and continued to be for hundreds of years; though unjustified in our times, the crusaders had every right to kill the inhabitants of Jerusalem. Despite this, there is strong evidence that fewer civilians died than had been thought; originally, historians had estimated that over 70,000 had died, but now, it is believed to be somewhere between 3,000-5,000.<sup>72</sup> This is in accordance with how ancient propaganda worked where military victories were greatly exaggerated; in 1274 B.C., Ramses II writes how he had utterly destroyed the Hittites, while in reality, his victories were quite meagre.<sup>73</sup> This same language was used to either emphasize the crusaders total victory, or to rouse the Muslim people to action; both sides turned a relatively minor, though barbaric, slaughter, in accordance with medieval law, into an atrocity to be remembered for centuries.

Finally, Jerusalem had been conquered, yet it was still not over. One final battle remained: the Fatimid army that had been assembled in Egypt was on the move. Not wanting to

---

<sup>72</sup> Asbridge *The Crusades*, 102.

<sup>73</sup> Copan and Flannagan, "Ethics of 'Holy War,'" 217.

become trapped in a siege like they had in Antioch, the crusaders left a small force behind to guard Jerusalem, while the remaining number, roughly 10,000, marched out to battle against a force of around 20,000.<sup>74</sup> Amazingly, once again, the crusaders emerged victorious; they had arrived at the enemy camp while they were resting and routed them before they were able to form a battle line. At last, after travelling 2,000 miles over four years with thousands of casualties in-between, the First Crusade had been completed and accomplished its objectives; Urban II's crusade had succeeded.<sup>75</sup>

### Conclusion

The First Crusade, as bloody and violent as it was, was morally justified through the lens of Medieval society. War was simply accepted in their world alongside the devastation that it brought along, but Urban II elevated this into something righteous; every battle was part of an armed pilgrimage. Though the Pope's sanctification of the war is theologically wrong, the uneducated masses, who trusted in him, took his word to heart, thus propelling all of Europe forward on a grand endeavor. While the lay commoners can be blamed for whatever poor behavior that occurred throughout the crusade, Urban II should be recognized as the instigator. Of course, Christians should never turn to violence in order to solve their problems, and should

---

<sup>74</sup> Tyerman, *God's War*, 160.

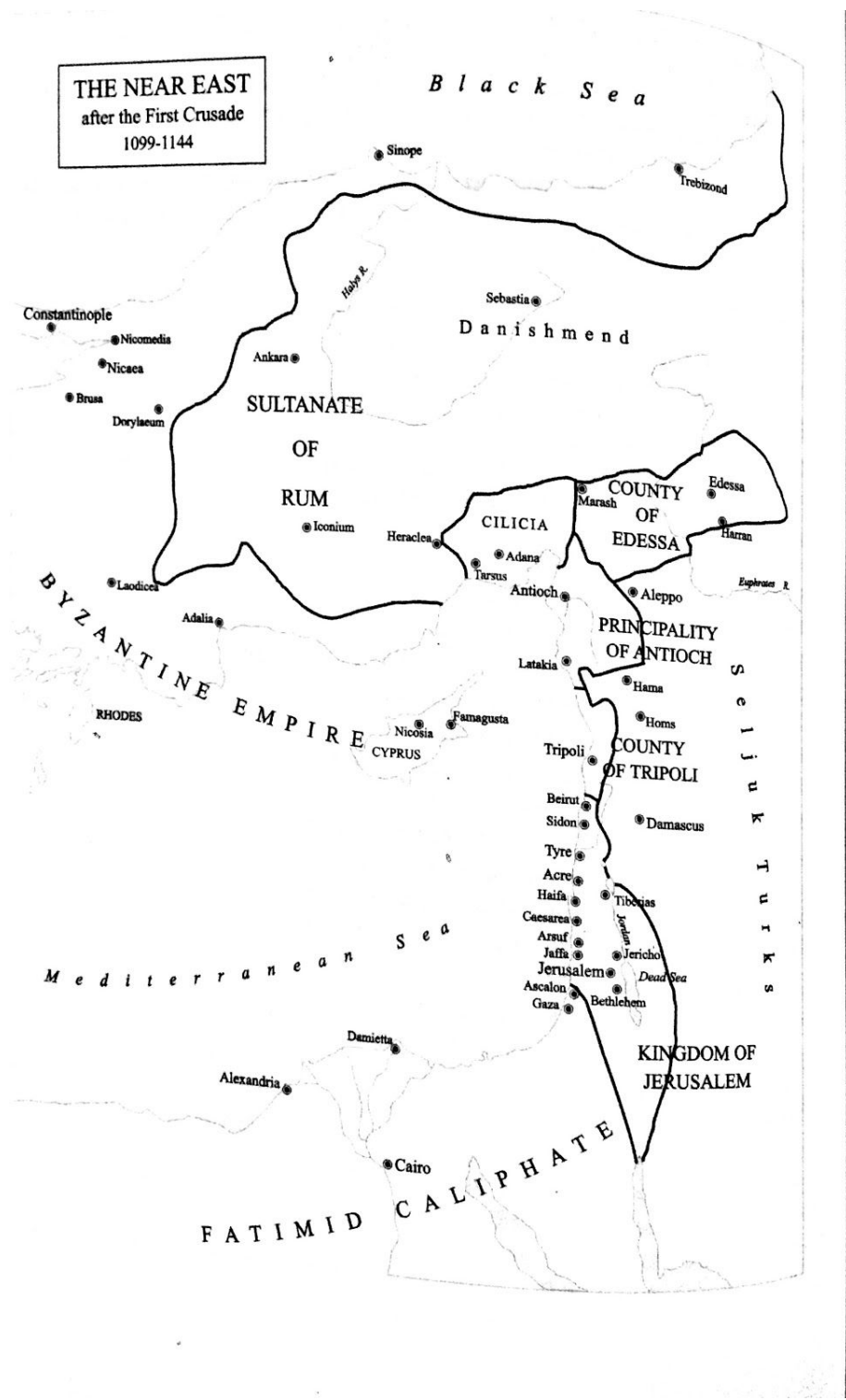
<sup>75</sup> Asbridge, *The Crusades*, 103.

instead be loving and slow to anger; the footsoldiers, for the most part, did not share this attitude. Despite the weak theology, the sheer fervor and passion that motivated these men to suffer so much was truly genuine; they believed that they were the Lord's, and they endured every adversity for his name. Somehow, despite coming close to breaking multiple times, considering that they had suffered a 90% desertion/casualty rate,<sup>76</sup> the crusaders emerged victorious by retaking Jerusalem and restoring some of the Byzantine Empire's lands.<sup>77</sup> The Crusade, as a military campaign, was morally justified in its actions and goals to reclaim lost Christian land, restore the Byzantine Empire, and stop the killings of pilgrims. Despite the political backstabbing which plagued the kings, they did not represent the majority of crusaders, who, while barbaric, still desired to serve the Lord. Although tensions increased between the East and West Churches, the crusade undoubtedly gave the Empire a new lease of life which allowed it to survive, and continued to by presenting a new enemy to the Muslims. Perhaps even more important than this, was the influx of pilgrims; the Holy Land was now much safer to visit; the previous Muslim treatment of Christians had dissuaded many from pilgrimage, but now it was secure in Christian hands. The First Crusade was astoundingly successful, but its success would guarantee bloodshed for centuries to come.

---

<sup>76</sup> It should be noted that a deserter's chances of survival were still fairly low, as they were in a land very much hostile to them.

<sup>77</sup> Considering the previously mentioned figure of at least 100,000 crusaders, including the People's Crusade, weak, and elderly, and the fact that only 10,000 were left after the Siege of Jerusalem, this level of bloodshed was astounding for Medieval times, even with a high amount of desertions.



Map of the kingdoms created by the First Crusade.<sup>78</sup>

<sup>78</sup> Madden, *Concise History of the Crusades*, 34.

### Result

The First Crusade caused a significant power emerge as a result of its conquests: the crusader kingdoms, which was comprised of the Kingdom of Jerusalem, County of Tripoli, Principality of Antioch, and the County of Edessa. These were ruled by the Western kings, instead of Alexios, due to their abandonment at Antioch; Godfrey ruled over Jerusalem, not as king, but as the “Protector of the Holy Sepulchre.”<sup>79</sup> Meanwhile, Baldwin, his brother, ruled over Edessa until Godfrey’s death in 1100; after this, he travelled south and was crowned king in his place. Bohemond and Tancred ruled Antioch, which saw them come into conflict with the Byzantines once more, as they still wanted to reclaim their territory, by treachery or by force. The final major city, Tripoli, was ruled by Raymond’s descendents, though they became vassals to King Baldwin. Despite these impressive holdings, it was a miracle that the Muslims did not immediately retake all this land within a couple of years; the kingdoms had a fundamental weakness.

With their pilgrimage completed, a large majority of the soldiers began the journey home to Europe, mostly through the newly captured ports, thereby leaving the kingdoms very weakly defended. This can be attributed to several reasons: for one, farming was difficult in the area due to it being a desert mainly, which was incompatible with feudalism, a social system based on land and farming. The barrenness of the land contributed to an economical weakness, which saw

---

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 36.

the kings field much smaller armies than they had commanded in the crusade. Secondly, Muslims lay to the North, South, and East of the kingdoms, thus completely surrounding them with enemies who wanted to retake Jerusalem for their own holy reasons, such as the Dome of the Rock. This is also not to mention the various Islamic holdouts within the kingdoms, which, when coupled with the lack of an army, caused travelling to be dangerous in the Holy Land; this is ironic, considering the safety of pilgrims had been one of the reasons to crusade. This was further compounded by the fact that the Byzantines attempted to damage the crusader states through both direct attacks, as well as alliances with Muslim powers. Thirdly, many of the troops still had a family to go back to, as well as a massive debt to pay off; when they returned, these men were hailed as heroes and their acts made legendary all throughout Europe. In fact, this euphoria over the success of the First Crusade caused several small armies to fight in the Middle East a few years after it; the First Crusade inspired all of Europe for centuries. Finally, living in the Middle East, as a European, was difficult; they were always in the ethnic minority, with the Jews, Muslims, and Greeks being predominant.<sup>80</sup>

### Inter-crusade Period

Many of the original crusaders, who stayed, actually became incredibly tolerant for their time. They learned Arabic, Hebrew, and Greek, the local languages, as well as married outside

---

<sup>80</sup> Stark, *God's Battalions*, 171.

of their ethnicity; they made no attempts to convert the local Muslims or Jews, and they were allowed to flourish within the kingdoms. As Fulcher of Chartres described, “we have already forgotten the places where we were born; many of us either do not know them or have never even heard of them... Another takes as his wife, not a woman of his own stock, but rather a Syrian or Armenian, or even, occasionally, a Saracen (Muslim) who has obtained the grace of baptism... The several languages of various nations are common here and one joins faith with men whose forefathers were strangers. For it is written: ‘The lion and ox shall eat straw side by side.’”<sup>81</sup> This mixture of culture, ethnicity, and religion was unique to the world at the time, which actually caused conflicts with visiting Europeans. Usama, an Arabic writer, was attacked by a foreign Western Christian as he attempted to pray towards Mecca, instead of the East as a Christian would; seeing this scuffle, several Knights Templar pried the visitor off of him and apologized.<sup>82</sup> The tolerance of the Christian rulers was astounding; in doing this, the crusader kingdoms exemplified Christ-like stewardship.

The Knights Templar were a special, new type of monk order formed in the Holy Lands; they were basically warrior monks recruited from knights. The order was supposedly founded by King Baldwin II around 1120, when he took a group of knights under his service and gave them the House of Solomon<sup>83</sup> as their headquarters.<sup>84</sup> It was later approved formally by the

---

<sup>81</sup> Fulcher of Chartres, *Historia Hierosolymitana*, quoted in Brundage, *The Crusades: A Documentary*, 74-75.

<sup>82</sup> Hillenbrand, *The Crusades*, 333.

<sup>83</sup> The House of Solomon is believed to be where Solomon’s Temple was located.

<sup>84</sup> Stark, *God’s Battalions*, 174.



Catholic Church at a council in 1128, where it was given a Rule; this prescribed a knight's diet, daily activities, property, and attire—in order to identify themselves, they wore a red cross displayed against white.<sup>85</sup> The Templars made it their mission to protect the crusader kingdoms from harm; they constructed multiple castles, hired mercenaries, and fought in wars alongside other Christians; this protection also extended to the Jews and Muslims living within the land, an incredibly Christian act considering what had happened 30 years prior. On the other hand, their numbers were quite limited, with their highest numbers reaching into several thousand (with support staff) which caused their forts to be incredibly tough, and also expensive.<sup>86</sup> In order to accommodate these costs, the Templars became experts in financial management in Europe; they were gifted many properties by nobles, thus giving them a large income which they augmented through money-lending; they were the predecessors to the great banks in Europe, as they instituted loans, interest, and currency storage. The Templars were also trusted by kings in important treaties or deals. As an example, in 1158, the King of England was marrying his son to the daughter of the King of France; in order to ensure that the dowry was paid, the French king turned over some castles to the Templars, who held them until the marriage was complete, and the dowry paid.<sup>87</sup> The Templars soon became an influential part of Europe, all the while defending the crusader kingdoms in far away Palestine. As was mentioned previously, Usama

---

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

<sup>86</sup> Prawer, *Crusaders' Kingdom*, 261.

<sup>87</sup> Stark, *God's Battalion*, 178.

was favorably treated by the Templars; this was not his only encounter with them, as he actually interacted with them frequently. Another encounter involved him heading to a mosque owned by the Templars, which had been converted into a church; upon Usama's arrival, they cleared the floor so that he could pray.<sup>88</sup> The military order was as tolerant as the kingdom it was located in; outside of war, they treated their neighbors with all respect and compassion, even defending them against their family from Europe, thereby exemplifying ideal Christian character.

A second military order soon sprouted out of the desert: the Knights Hospitallers. Unlike the Templars, who were founded purely for military purposes, the Hospitallers originally managed a lavish hospital within Jerusalem; this hospital accommodated up to 2,000 people in feather beds (which not even nobles could afford reliably), and provided extravagant meals; these submitted to Kosher, Halal, or neither depending on the patient. Anyone could come to the hospital and expect service, as it was completely free, although a disproportionately large number of Christian pilgrims were treated. In order to fund this charitable institution, the Hospitallers relied on generous donations made by nobles; some of these donations happened to be castles and forts. Thus, they began their military branch in order to garrison them. After this, the Hospitallers became an official military order protecting pilgrims along the road from Jaffa, the port, to Jerusalem, though they would later fight in wars as well. Although they would

---

<sup>88</sup> Munqidh, *The Book of Contemplation*, quoted in Asbridge 2010, 180.

always have fewer men than the Templars, as well as property, they constantly fought to protect the Holy Land and the people.

The military orders would stand guard over the crusader kingdoms for over 200 years until the Holy Land was lost; they were a constant which the Church could rely upon no matter what. The Templar Orders', especially the Hospitallers', service to the common people is commendable; they were role models for their time, and still are in how they cared for the weak, sick, and poor. Due to their sacrificial lifestyles, they became prestigious and renowned throughout all of Europe, as returning pilgrims shared what they saw with others. However, to the Orders, this mattered little; despite their best efforts, Palestine was never truly safe from the Islamic threat; it came as a big shock to Europe when the County of Edessa fell.

### The Second Crusade

A new Muslim warlord had risen to power, named Zengi. In November 1144, he had marched an army up to Edessa, besieged it, then conquered it, thus spelling the end of the County of Edessa. This stunned the West, as they had believed that everything had been alright in the East; the crusader kingdoms had ruled unmolested for over 40 years, but now the enemy was destroying them. Strategically, the loss of Edessa brought serious implications, mainly the fact that there was now a significant Muslim presence isolating the kingdoms in the North, while a

large portion of Christian Palestine was lost; the remaining kingdoms were exposed. In response, one year later, Pope Eugenius II began calling for a new crusade through a papal bull, *Quantum praedecessores*; it called armies to the cross once more, but this time with the expectation of astounding victories that the First Crusade had; they remained legendary after 40 years.<sup>89</sup> The Second Crusade sought to liberate Edessa, much like they had Jerusalem; it truly attempted to repeat what the First Crusade had accomplished. Crusading was made more appealing by the fact that it offered economic privileges, such as the protection of one's property, as well as spiritual.<sup>90</sup> Though these benefits helped the recruitment process, they are doctrinally unsound; Christians serve Christ as a reaction to his love and out of allegiance, not for a reward. However, these were also practical; with the knights away from home so long, their families could come to ruin either from the debt that had been incurred, or by petty lords seeking more territory. Ultimately, these benefits were justified in Medieval Society. Meanwhile, as Peter the Hermit had travelled the country rousing the people, Bernard of Clairvaux, a highly respected and influential theologian, even able to rebuke the Pope without fear, began making high profile visits to kings. They were all too eager to receive him and take up the cross; the most important two were King Conrad III of Germany, and King Louis VII of France, who was accompanied by his wife, Eleanor. It was planned that they would depart in Easter 1147 for Constantinople.

---

<sup>89</sup> Madden, *Concise History of the Crusades*, 52.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*

### Crusades in Europe

An important difference between the First and Second Crusades was the approval of crusaders to fight in Europe. It began when a group of German crusaders requested permission to fight against the Wends (pagans) in Eastern Europe; this request made it to Bernard, who forwarded it to the Pope, where it was approved with one condition: in order to attain salvation, the crusaders would either convert the Wends or wipe them out. As was written by Bernard, “we utterly forbid that for any reason whatsoever a truce should be made with these peoples, either for the sake of money or for the sake of tribute, until such a time as, by God’s help, they shall be either converted or wiped out.”<sup>91</sup> This was drastically different than the liberation of the Holy Land; it was a true, bloody religious war, not unlike Islamic *jihad*. By approving such a conquest, Eugenius fundamentally changed the nature of crusading for the worse, as well as breaking with Christian theology. By extending Crusade into Europe with the goal of forcibly killing or converting, the Pope tarnished Christ’s name.

Another change the Second Crusade made was the approval of Christian crusaders to assist their Spanish brothers in the Reconquista; it will not be covered in this thesis. Though this conflict was anything but new, nor the request for aid, the turnout was much greater than it had been previously; crusading fervor was at its peak after the success of the First Crusade.

---

<sup>91</sup> Bernard of Clairvaux, 92

### *Anti-Jewish Sentiment*

Bernard's preaching, as the previous crusade, roused the masses to action, though the targets of their fervor were not always what the Church sanctioned. On his visits, Bernard stressed that the crusaders not attack the local Jewish population; unfortunately, people ignored him and massacres, once again, began to occur, largely in the same area as the previous ones. Radulf, one of his pupils, had begun preaching anti-Semitic rhetoric, thus rousing the population to purge their lands; upon hearing this, Bernard rode out at once and ordered the end of the killings. Ephraim of Bonn, a Jewish Chronicler, wrote that Bernard said, "my pupil Radulf who advised destroying them did not advise properly. For in the book of Psalms is written concerning the Jews, 'Kill them not, lest my people forget.'" Everyone esteemed this priest as one of their saints...<sup>92</sup> By denouncing these slaughters, Bernard prevented further deaths and modelled strong Christian behavior.

### *Major Kings*

King Conrad III was in a good position to go on the Second Crusade; he had campaigned twice in the Holy Land, thus giving him military experience to lead his nobles effectively, as well as being powerful in Germany. Funding his army much in the same ways as previously, he

---

<sup>92</sup> Poliakov, *History of Anti-Semitism*, 48.

assembled his vassals and marched to Constantinople, arriving by September 10th, where they were given a cold welcome.<sup>93</sup> The Emperor, now Manuel Comnenus, was not pleased with the large force of barbarians camping outside his city, nor did he want to have to supply them for their journey east. He was also unable, and unwilling to support the crusaders; he had just agreed to a twelve year alliance with a Muslim sultan, which greatly displeased the Westerners.<sup>94</sup> Though this poor behavior was perhaps caused by the First Crusade, it was wrong, as a Christian, to offer Conrad nothing, not even hospitality. Unlike Alexios, Manuel did not require Conrad to give him his loyalty, however, he quickly shipped him across the Bosphorous into Turkey away from Constantinople. Once here, Conrad made a horrible decision; he began marching to Antioch without waiting for the French king. Led by Byzantine guides, he attempted to trace the footsteps of the First Crusade down to Antioch, and like the First Crusade, a battle was fought at Dorylaeum; a Turkish army ambushed him and decisively broke the Germans. Conrad, injured, limped back to Constantinople with the survivors and waited for the French.

Louis VII had desired to go on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem for a long time, so Bernard finally convinced him to by leading a crusade. Eleanor, his queen, also crossed herself; though she did not fight, she wanted to make the pilgrimage as well. Louis, now at the head of a French army, departed for Constantinople, arriving on October 4 to a much more hostile Emperor.<sup>95</sup>

---

<sup>93</sup> Stark, *God's Battalions*, 188.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

<sup>95</sup> Madden, *Concise History of the Crusades*, 56.

Apparently the Byzantines were so hostile that his nobles advised him to attack the capital; this would have been an unwinnable, and unjustified, battle, so Louis did not and crossed the Bosphorus.

### Campaign

Now joined by Conrad, the two kings decided to march along the Southern coast of Turkey to Antioch in order to avoid the same fate as the previous army. Unfortunately, Conrad only made it to Ephesus, where he fell ill and was evacuated; it was probably caused by his previous injuries. At last providing some type of support, Manuel nursed Conrad back to health within his own palace, thus smoothing over the ill will between the two; this reconciliation did not extend to Louis, who had to fight his way down the coast. Though the French remained on Byzantine lands, the Turks sallied forth and harassed them, while skirmishes constantly broke out between the Louis' forces and Manuel's; the Emperor had ordered one of his armies to defend the region, but not from the Turks. It is true that he was upholding his alliance, but this decision was questionable because he attacked crusaders. Bloodied, the crusaders reached Adalia, now Antalya, where Louis attempted to assemble a fleet to take him to Antioch, as the overland journey had been exceedingly difficult; ships rallied from all over the region, but there were too few boats for his entire army. So, Louis, his nobles, and the clergy boarded the vessels,



while the army was ordered to march to Antioch and given money to buy provisions; they suffered heavy losses from the Turks and few arrived. The nobles, meanwhile, began holding councils with the king of Antioch, Raymond.

Good news arrived when the Christians heard that Zengi had been killed and his sons were divided and now at war with each other; on the other hand, they killed the Christians in Edessa, who were a potential threat to their reigns. Raymond called for an immediate strike against Aleppo, which Louis refused to do, which caused tensions between the two. This was not helped by Eleanor, who called for her husband to assent to Raymond's request; she seemed to agree with the king on everything. Finally, after heated discussions, Eleanor threatened to divorce Louis if he did not comply with the plan. This was the final straw for Louis, as he simply refused to strike Aleppo; the details are unclear as to why the Western king rejected the plan; one rumour is that Eleanor had begun an affair with Raymond.<sup>96</sup> If this is true, then Louis' reaction is reasonable, though not necessarily Christ-like. In any case, he put his wife under house arrest and set out for Jerusalem in order to fulfill his crusading vow, where he was reunited with Conrad. After being nursed back to health, Conrad had assembled a new mercenary army out of his own pocket and sailed to Jerusalem directly. Here, more councils were held with the local authorities, this time King Baldwin III of Jerusalem, where it was agreed that the crusade would strike Damascus; on the other hand, it was determined that retaking Edessa was

---

<sup>96</sup> *Asbridge, The Crusades, 233.*

impossible. It should be noted that the Muslims in Damascus were allied with Jerusalem, with Baldwin III pointing this fact out to the others. However, the Christians feared that one of Zengi's sons would eventually conquer it, thus leaving the Kingdom of Jerusalem in danger; it would be better if it were in Christian hands at that moment.<sup>97</sup> Even if there was reason to conquer Damascus, this action does not fit Christian behavior and was not the goal of the Crusade. Despite this, the army marched on the city; this backfired horribly when the Second Crusade was defeated in 1148 while besieging the city; they had left their strong posts on the walls in order to attack, and were forced to retreat after becoming trapped in a disadvantageous position. The Second Crusade disbanded as a result.

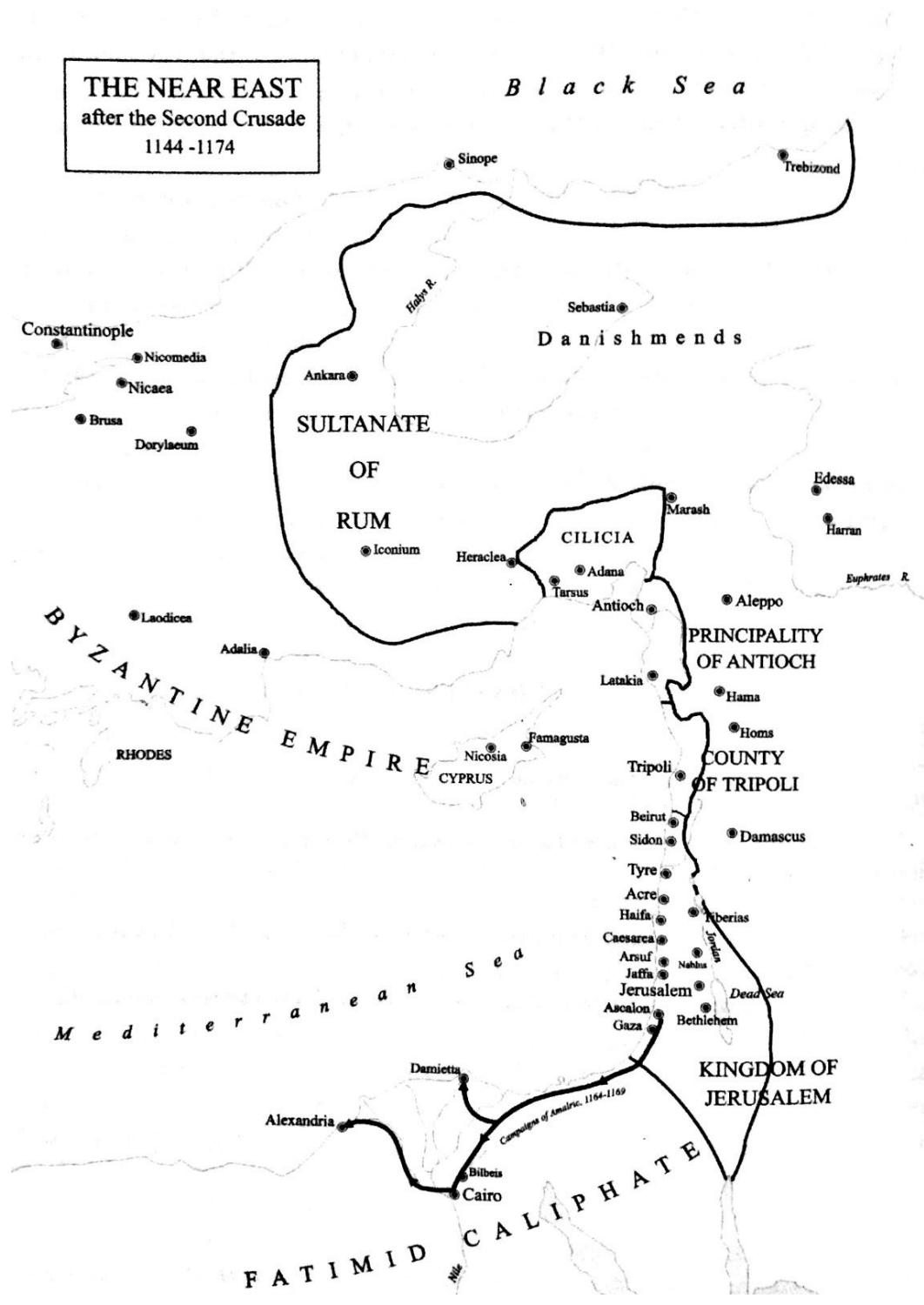
### Conclusion

The Second Crusade's actions are unjustified, particularly the Crusade's actions in Europe and Damascus; these events do not align with the original purpose of retaking Edessa. However, it should be noted that, according to the crusaders, this objective was impossible to achieve. In either case, the Second Crusade failed. Having expected an astounding victory granted by God, it ultimately shattered the idealization of the First Crusade. Its actions would change how crusades were viewed throughout Europe, in particular the use of use crusades at home instead of in the Holy Land. The use of a crusade to kill and convert pagans forcefully is a

---

<sup>97</sup> Madden, *Concise History of the Crusades*, 58.

blatant violation of Jesus' teachings, and is reprehensible; still, it must be remembered that the Church simply did not have the same understanding at the time, nor did the people of Europe. The Second Crusade caused more damage to the crusading movement by breaking morale and creating new enemies in the East.



Map displaying Christian territory after the Second Crusade.<sup>98</sup>

<sup>98</sup> Ibid., 60.

### Result

Though significantly shorter, the Second Crusade had a massive impact in its failure. Most importantly, the air of invincibility that had permeated the European view of the crusades was shattered forever; they thought that God was punishing them for their sins, for why had victory not come while they fought in his name? Many once eager to take up the cross now balked, while their trust in the Pope was shaken to the core. At the same time, crusading began to undergo a fundamental change; they were now wars for salvation, salvation through the destruction of Christ's enemies. This idea is practically indistinguishable from *jihad*, and should be vehemently rebuked. Meanwhile, Islam experienced a sense of elation at the defeat of the crusade; after having failed to reclaim their territory for forty years, a major victory had occurred. The Holy Land now lay in an awkward position; their actions had worsened the situation by attacking Damascus and breaking an alliance, while distrust between the Eastern Orthodox and Catholic was reinforced.

### Inter-crusade Period

Although it would be forty years until the Third Crusade, there were significant changes in the Holy Land. For one, Raymond of Antioch died and was succeeded by a man named Reynald, who was exceedingly petty and hated, even by Medieval standards; he waged war on

the Byzantine Empire and pillaged neighboring Christian lands. Predictably, the Emperor flew into a fury, and so did Baldwin III. Reynald had not honored God in the slightest through his actions; he is best described as an immoral, barbaric king, filled with egocentric desires. Both Baldwin and the Emperor were so bent on Reynald's defeat that they formed an alliance; in return for not assisting Antioch, Manuel would protect the crusader kingdoms by attacking the Muslims, as well as marrying his niece to Baldwin to seal the alliance.<sup>99</sup> The deal was cemented in 1158 with the marriage, and the Byzantines besieged Antioch. Reynald, outmatched, surrendered the city; he was able to rule over it as a vassal, but it had been finally returned to the vestigial Roman Empire. As promised, Manuel attacked the Muslims and secured a ceasefire agreement, though he did not capture any cities; both Christians and Muslims agreed to respect each other's borders in return for his withdrawal. The fact that a Byzantine Emperor had finally honored his oaths was refreshing to the crusader kingdoms, and should be commended; finally, Christian brothers had united. The Muslims also agreed to assist the Emperor in fighting the Turks that lay in between their kingdoms. Lasting peace had been secured for the Holy Land; unfortunately, Reynald broke it in 1160 and was captured by Muslims, whom held him for ransom for 16 years; nobody wanted to pay.<sup>100</sup> Three years later, Baldwin III died, and was succeeded by Amalric.

---

<sup>99</sup> Madden, *The Concise History of the Crusades*, 63.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, 64.

Meanwhile, one of Zengi's sons, Nur ed-Din, emerged victorious in the war with his brother. He proceeded to consolidate his territory in Syria, becoming the uncontested master of it; this was followed by the war with the Byzantines mentioned above. Internally, Nur ed-Din placed a new emphasis on religion and began a spiritual reform which revitalized the Muslim people, as well as encouraging *jihad* once again.<sup>101</sup> This included the reconquest of Jerusalem and other crusader kingdoms; much like the crusaders, for good or for ill, Muslim armies were motivated by their faith.

The uneasy peace was broken in 1164 as the Fatimid caliphate, in Egypt, splintered apart; two viziers vied for power, asking both Amalric and Nur ed-Din for help against the other. With strong reason to either gain further territory, make allies, and to weaken the enemy, both marched armies into the South. This led to a series of wars which saw the Christians take control of several cities, but not Cairo, which ultimately was an important Islamic holdout. Not too long after, the ruling vizier died and was succeeded by his nephew, named al-Malik al-Nasir Salah al-Din Yusuf, or better known as Saladin; he would become the bane of the christian kingdoms. Firstly, he secured the rule of the Sunni through conquering the Shiites, which basically made him the ruler of both Egypt and Syria; he had finally united the squabbling Muslim kingdoms under his rule. Seeing the dangerous buildup of Saladin's power, Amalric and the Emperor launched a joint attack on a coastal city, though it failed because neither leader fully trusted the

---

<sup>101</sup> Ibid., 63.

other. Though this attack was theoretically unprovoked, both rulers saw the writing on the wall; one cannot say this action was fully justified, nor was it unjustified. Amalric continued to make preparations to conquer Egypt, but he died of dysentery in 1174.<sup>102</sup>

At this critical moment, Baldwin IV, the Leper King, was crowned. From a young age, this monarch had contracted leprosy, perhaps as early as nine years old, which would ultimately kill him during his reign.<sup>103</sup> He was ill suited for kingship for other reasons as well; he was only 13 years old at his coronation, as no other male heir existed at the time, while his illness would force him to rule indirectly through his regents. This created a tense reign where multiple factions vied for power, as the king's death was all but assured, gambits to gain the throne were plotted. The lack of loyalty should be criticized, but such conduct was relatively common for their time, and continued for hundreds of years; however, readers can learn from these mistakes of the past and live a better future. Count Raymond III of Tripoli was the first regent who served Baldwin; he attempted to stabilize the kingdom by marrying Sibylla, the Leper King's sister, to a noble in order ensure a heir to the throne. Unfortunately, the marriage lasted less than a year, as the noble died, though Sibylla gave birth to a son as a result; she then remarried Guy of Lusignan, who became the regent after Baldwin's sight failed. The regent then led an army to fight Saladin in 1183, as he had begun attacking Christian territories; Guy did not engage the

---

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., 67.

<sup>103</sup> Asbridge, *The Crusades*, 300.



Muslim forces in battle, despite being provoked; this protected the surrounding land from invasion and was a sound decision. On the other hand, Baldwin was furious that Guy had not attacked Saladin, insulting him as a coward, and deposed him as regent, replacing him with his young nephew. While Baldwin was wrong to denounce Guy, as an attack was ill-advised, it must be remembered that he was in an extremely difficult situation and had little military experience; a dying teenager ruling a kingdom would most likely make rash decisions; very few would fare better than the troubled Leper King. A political rift sundered Jerusalem once Baldwin died in 1185, with his nephew dying a year later; Raymond, who had been named the successor if they had both died, was betrayed and locked outside the city. Sibylla then tricked her enemies into making her husband, Guy, King of Jerusalem through political maneuvering. Vengeful, Raymond unrightly made an alliance with Saladin in order to take the Holy City for himself; by law, it was his, and his enemies were foolish in their betrayal, as they greatly damaged the kingdom in their own power struggle. The situation worsened when Reynald, the same man who was captured and had now returned to power, declared his lands independent of King Guy and began raiding Syrian trade convoys, despite Guy's orders. Given an excuse to fight, Saladin declared war.

Finally, the nobles put aside their incessant bickering and united; Raymond broke his alliance and sided with King Guy, while Reynald stepped in line as well. They formed a strong

army, 20,000 strong, and set up a camp at Nazareth in order to simply wait out Saladin's invasion, much like earlier.<sup>104</sup> So, once again, the cunning Muslim commander attempted to provoke the Christian army into attacking by besieging Tiberias, who begged for their king to aid them. These pleas were made all the more poignant as Raymond's wife was among the besieged. Despite this, Raymond actually advised Guy not to rescue Tiberias, even at the cost of his family; they simply had to wait for victory. This would have resulted in a Christian victory if others had not brought up Baldwin's old insults; now was a chance for Guy to absolve himself of his dishonor and regain his popularity. While the king knew that this decision was poor, he did not have the strength to resist his army's suggestion; very few leaders who are propelled by their followers can resist them. Guy ordered the army to begin marching, so, in response, Saladin filled in local wells, but ensured that his own men would have a ready supply of water.<sup>105</sup> This would greatly influence the battle, as the Christians had to march through a large expanse of desert with little water in the middle of summer; the Muslims attacked them in the wastes while they were exhausted, and defeated the united army. Very few escaped, as Reynald and Guy were captured, while Raymond retreated to Jerusalem. Immediately after the battle, Saladin ordered the execution of any Hospitallers and Templars by his scholars, who, having not been trained as a soldier, made the executions messy and painful.<sup>106</sup> The executions were uncalled for and

---

<sup>104</sup> Madden, *Concise History of the Crusades*, 74.

<sup>105</sup> Asbridge, *The Crusades*, 348.

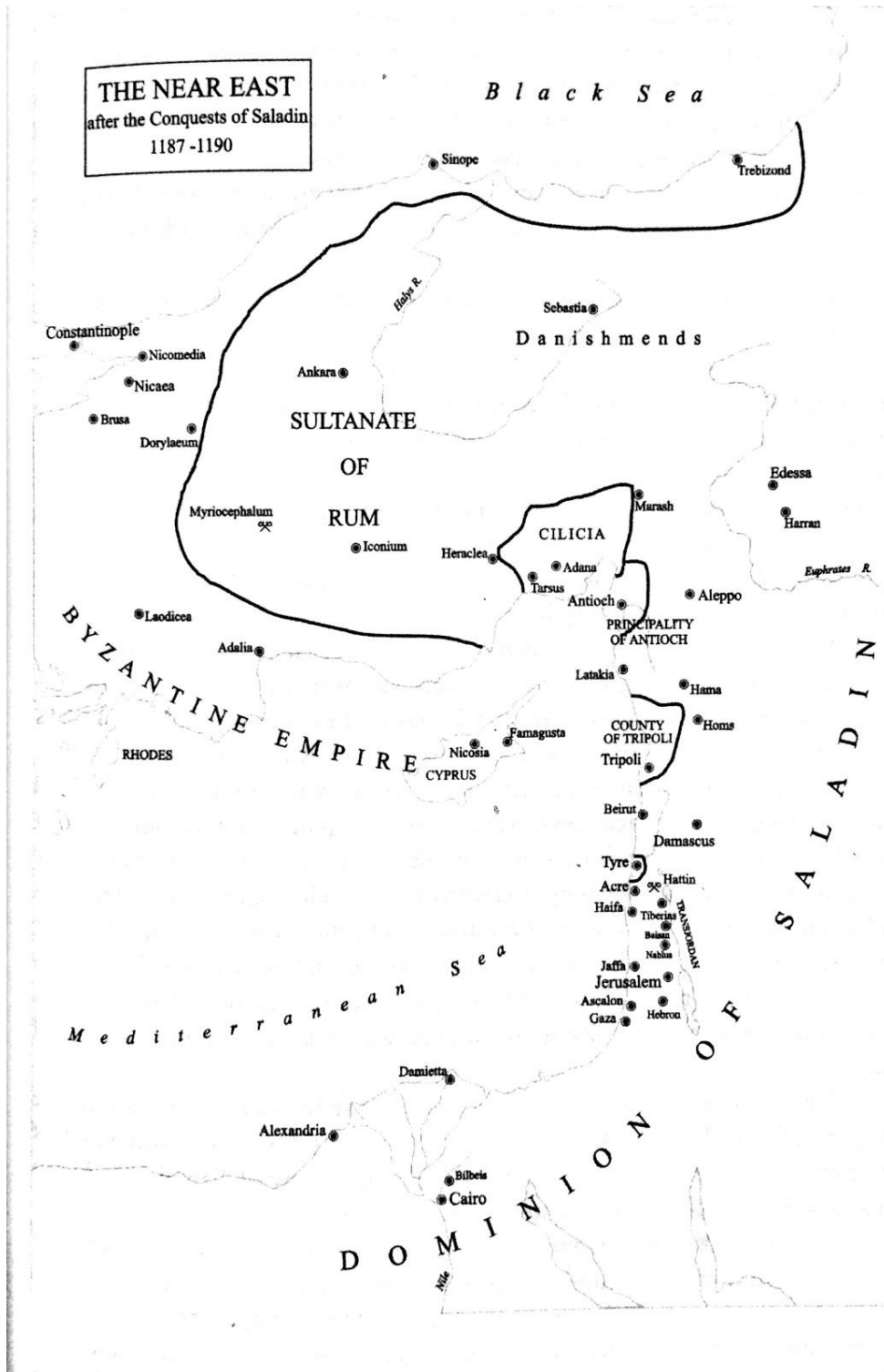
<sup>106</sup> Madden, *Concise History of the Crusades*, 75.

barbaric, but Saladin truly advocated for *jihad* in its totality; this was a strike against Christendom itself, as the Military Orders were renowned for their unshakeable devotion; this is not to mention the fact that these men, being the exemplars of faith, inspired the other soldiers, therefore, killing them would weaken morale.<sup>107</sup> Reynald was also executed, given his long list of offences, while the rest of the army was sold off into slavery or held captive; the Kingdom of Jerusalem was now defenseless. Saladin's forces besieged the Holy City, which had only two knights remaining; the other defenders were armed civilians, barely trained in combat.<sup>108</sup> Due to their grim circumstances, Jerusalem simply surrendered in order to avoid being butchered, as per the laws of siege warfare; in response, Saladin ransomed a portion of the population for their freedom, while the rest, around half of the Catholics in Jerusalem, were taken as slaves. At the end of the day, Saladin paraded down the streets to the Dome of the Rock, where he kneeled in prayer. Jerusalem had been lost.

---

<sup>107</sup> Hamblin, "Muslim Perspectives on the Military Orders," in *BYU Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 40, 2001.

<sup>108</sup> Stark, *God's Battalions*, 198.



Map of remaining Christian territory after Saladin's conquests.<sup>109</sup>

<sup>109</sup> Madden, *The Concise History of the Crusades*, 73.

### Christian Holdouts

Soon, nearby Christian territories surrendered at the sight of Saladin's army approaching; they were allowed to leave peacefully, so they fled to the last remaining Christian ruled cities: Antioch, Tripoli, and Tyre. These three cities survived because of their location along the coastline, as well as the arrival of Conrad of Montferrat. Conrad had attempted to come to the Holy Land with his father, but had become bogged down in Constantinople by helping the Emperor in a war. Meanwhile, his father, William V, had gone ahead and taken command of a castle in the Holy Land; his son finally caught up when he arrived in Tyre. Prior to his arrival, the city was about to surrender, as Saladin had already sent his banners to be displayed along the city walls; Conrad quickly restored morale, took command of the defenders, and called off the surrender. Saladin then attempted to ransom the city for Conrad's father, who had been captured in an earlier battle; the Muslims presented William V before the walls and threatened to kill him if Tyre did not surrender. Amazingly, Conrad held steadfast, refusing to give up despite the threats to his father; surprisingly, William V was not killed and was later released by the Muslims instead.<sup>110</sup> His determination to defend the city was incredible, even by modern times, and should be remembered. After this failure, Saladin brought up a new Egyptian fleet in order to blockade Tyre's port in order to starve out the city; this failed when Christian warships sailed out of the harbor and destroyed the fleet, thus forcing Saladin to assault the city with siege

---

<sup>110</sup> Lane-Poole, *Saladin*, 222; Runciman, used in Baldwin, 1969.

engines, yet failed when Conrad led a cavalry charge out of the gates and routed his army, thus preserving the remnant of the crusader kingdoms from Muslim conquest, and forcing Saladin to retreat. Meanwhile, in Europe, the loss of Christianity's holiest city had cast violent shockwaves; the Third Crusade had been summoned.

### The Third Crusade

The news of Jerusalem's fall was tremendous; Pope Urban III reportedly died of shock upon hearing what had happened.<sup>111</sup> His successor, Gregory VIII issued a papal bull, *Audita tremendi*; it would create the largest movement since the First Crusade, if not far larger. The bull ordered an immediate seven-year truce for all Europeans so that time could be given in order to amass the funds and manpower to crusade; it also requested that Christians begin praying, fasting, and purifying themselves for the success of the crusade, as it was believed its success was determined by the spiritual health of the Church. The Pope declared that Jerusalem had fallen due to their sinfulness, and by crusading, they could redeem themselves and retake the Holy City.<sup>112</sup> As far more things were attributed to the spiritual in Medieval times, though this is incorrect, it was theologically sound in Medieval Times. In response, kings ceased their bickering, with Henry II of England and Philip II of France making peace and crossing

---

<sup>111</sup> Madden, *Concise History of the Crusades*, 77.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*

themselves, while the Holy Roman Emperor, Frederick Barbarossa, was convinced to crusade as well. New taxes were raised, such as the “Saladin Tithe” in England, the burdens of which made the monarchy despised throughout the entire country, while, at the same time, priests had begun fanning out across the continent, preaching for crusaders to give up what was God’s and repent; many smaller armies from minor European countries joined forces with the English, French, and Germans, but more importantly, these men brought countless ships to aid their brethren in whatever way possible.<sup>113</sup> The Third Crusade was off to a great start, but disjointed; the kings had not agreed on a single date to set out for the Holy Land.

A quick note should be made about this arrangement: kings had taken up the cross, such as Conrad and his father, before the Third Crusade had been officially proclaimed, and therefore did not officially participate in it. However, their contributions were vital to the remaining crusader kingdoms; without these reinforcements, the holdouts would have been easily swept up by Saladin’s forces. They had seen the great danger this Muslim warlord had posed and had sacrificed without being prompted to, especially after the fall of Jerusalem; this individual initiative might explain why the Third Crusade saw its leaders coordinate in a rather loose manner, but the lack thereof was still detrimental to the overall crusading effort. However, this reveals that Christians had been watching the happenings of the Holy Land for some time, and

---

<sup>113</sup> Pryor, *Geography, Technology, and War*.

that they were still eager to serve God, even if they had to do it without support or recognition. Selfless sacrifice, as demonstrated by these men, is something that Christians should aspire to.

### Major Kings

William II, a Norman who ruled Sicily, was the first to assemble and send an army to Palestine. Instead of marching overland, he simply sailed directly to Tripoli, a coastal city, and arrived just in time to save it as it had been under siege; his forces did not move further inland, as he died after the battle. Though he played a relatively small role in the Third Crusade, the fact that Tripoli remained in Christian hands was important for the incoming crusaders, as it was another port to dock at. Meanwhile, William's fleet patrolled the Mediterranean for Muslim warships, allowing others to sail safely.

Probably the most prominent king who participated in the Third Crusade was Frederick Barbarossa, the Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire, or Greater Germany. Having been a member of the Second Crusade, he was already well known, experienced, and powerful; he brought the full might of the Holy Roman Empire to bear and assembled a large army under his command, departing on May 11, 1189. According to an estimate, this would be roughly 20,000 men under his direct command, plus whoever he picked up along the way; though this number may be inaccurate, what is known is that Saladin was concerned.<sup>114</sup> This also happened to worry

---

<sup>114</sup> Stark, *God's Battalions*, 204.



the Byzantine Emperor, Isaac II, as the Germans would be marching overland and pass Constantinople once more; the title of “Roman Emperor” also did not sit well with the Byzantines, who still considered themselves the true Romans, therefore, this barbarian was only a knockoff emperor. Therefore, Saladin and Isaac agreed on a secret deal; the Byzantines would hamper the crusaders as much as they could, and in return, Latin churches in Saladin’s territories would be destroyed and converted into Eastern Orthodox ones. Naturally, this seriously crippled East-West Church relations once the Westerners found out, and is reprehensible as it was without any consideration, or respect, towards the other Western Church. Unfortunately, such actions seem to be instinctive to the Byzantine Emperors. So, when Frederick entered Byzantine territory in 1189, he was shocked to find that the (other) Emperor’s forces were attacking his men and that the markets refused his money. So, with no choice, the crusaders began fighting their way across the Byzantine Empire; Isaac, though he had inflicted casualties, exaggerated to Saladin that ““they have lost a great number of soldiers... They were so exhausted that they cannot reach your dominions...”<sup>115</sup> The two Emperors then met, after Frederick wrote an angry letter, where Isaac proceeded to bog down the Germans in pointless negotiations; he basically refused to recognize Frederick unless he dropped his title. Frustrated, the crusaders simply captured Adrianople, then made a deal with Isaac for their passage in return for the city; finally, they had made it into Turkey, but now they had to march to Antioch. Tragically, Frederick

---

<sup>115</sup> Quoted by Brand, “The Byzantines and Saladin,” in *Speculum* Vol. 37, 1962.

drowned during a river crossing; thousands turned around at the death of their Emperor. His son, also named Frederick, led a remnant of around 5,000 men into the Holy Land, where he rendezvoused with other Christian forces; one of the Third Crusade's most beloved leaders had fallen.

While the German crusaders were marching overland, the seven-year truce back in Europe had collapsed; Henry II's son, Richard, had allied himself with Philip (legally his lord) in order to preserve his claim to the English throne; war had broken out again. Here, the character of Richard, as well as Philip, should be criticized; for one, this war was to secure his power, unrightfully, and for the other, it broke a treaty which the French had signed. However, in July 1189, Henry II died, Richard was anointed King of England, and crusade preparations continued. Richard the Lionheart was a great candidate to lead an army of crusaders, at least militarily; he was charismatic, cared for his men, and a (somewhat) pious Christian; he had taken the cross, against his father's wishes, when he heard that King Guy and his army had been defeated by Saladin; this also is possibly why Henry II refused to give him the throne.<sup>116</sup> He assembled a strong army of 15,000, some of which he hired once he arrived in Palestine; he had extra funds from the Saladin Tithe.<sup>117</sup> In order to avoid Isaac's treachery, Richard opted to simply sail directly to Acre, a coastal city, with his entire army, leaving a little bit after the French in April

---

<sup>116</sup> Madden, *Concise History of the Crusades*, 82.

<sup>117</sup> Stark, *God's Battalions*, 208.

10th, 1991; his English fleet had run late because they aided the Portuguese in a war against Muslims.

Philip II, the dominant King of France, was nothing like Richard; he was unattractive in comparison to the charismatic Lionheart, and younger, too. He was also smaller, timid, and susceptible to illness, which later caused him to lose favor with his own men; even before the crusade had begun, Philip had already lost his grip over his vassals, which hurt the French preparations. Because of this, over the duration of the crusade, Philip and Richard would develop a rivalry; this was accentuated by the fact that Philip was the English King's lord, yet the French people obviously favored Richard. Resentment would infect the French King's heart and would later burst out into open conflict.

### Campaign

Though the English and French coordinated their departures, unforeseen events saw them arriving at the Holy Land at different times. Firstly, there was a dispute over some island territories south of Italy, as well as problems with a political marriage: Philip II's sister had been betrothed to Richard, but he refused, opting to marry the princess of Navarre, a Christian kingdom on the Iberian peninsula; this was to help protect his territories while he was away, as well as because there were reports that Philip II's sister had been Henry's mistress. He did not

want to marry someone of questionable character, which carried a very strong argument. Despite this, the French King was adamant about his sister's marriage; a legal battle followed, which saw King Philip defeated and humiliated, and Richard free of the betrothal. After this, they finally set sail; Richard's fleet was blown off course during a storm, and several of his ships, including the ones with his treasury chests and bride, were wrecked on the isle of Cyprus. As it happened to be, Isaac Comnenus, a rogue Byzantine lord, *not* Isaac II, ruled the island; he imprisoned the shipwrecked survivors and plundered the Richard's treasury for himself and refused to return them. In response, the Lionheart simply invaded the island; Isaac surrendered in May 1191. This brief conquest was actually quite significant, as it provided a base for Christian naval forces to resupply from; it would be the last of the crusader states to fall, lasting for over 400 years. While the conquest may have been an excessive reaction, it was justified because Isaac refused to cooperate and return his money and bride. In modern society, it would be as if a stranger found someone's car keys on the ground, then refused to return them; one would have to either wrangle it from their hands, or call in the police. Cyprus was sold shortly after Richard's conquest to the Templars in order to keep funding the crusade.

Meanwhile, King Philip had arrived at Acre, which was undergoing two sieges; a resurgent Conrad, along with a freed Guy, were besieging Acre, a coastal city, while Saladin's army encircled them. Despite being encircled, Guy and Conrad were arguing over who the true

King of Jerusalem was; Conrad, after his amazing defensive victories, held the support of the nobles, while Guy held the official title. Yet again, the kings should be criticized for arguing over titles, ownership rights, and so on, when other much more important matters waited; besides this, Christians should let what is someone else's to remain theirs, and not covet it. Philip decided to give Conrad his support, causing Guy to go to Cyprus to try and win Richard's support; Richard seems to have favorably viewed Guy to an extent, and after finishing up business on the isle, he sailed to Acre as well, destroying a Muslim supply ship along the way; his arrival was legendary. One of the crusaders wrote, "I do not believe any mother's son ever saw or told such elations as the army expressed over the king's presence. Bells and trumpets all sounded. Fine songs and ballads were sung. All were full of hope. So many lights and candles [were lit] that it seemed to the Turks in the opposing army that the whole valley was ablaze."<sup>118</sup>

As can be seen, the English King was beloved by the people, including Philip's men; this admiration had slowly soured his view of Richard, which was made all the worse because he was his lord; Saul had slain his thousands, but David had defeated tens of thousands.

On July 11, the Christians attempted to assault the city to little success; although it failed, the defenders, without Saladin's permission, began negotiating for surrender. They reached a deal, which involved a hefty payment from Saladin to the crusaders, in return for the garrison's safety; so a day later, the Muslim defenders marched out of the city and were willingly taken

---

<sup>118</sup> Ambroise, *History of the Holy Wars*, 38.

captive. Negotiations had also been ongoing with Saladin for quite some time; unfortunately, he refused to ransom his troops, given the fact that they were not told to surrender, as well as to buy time while he “brought up” the payment; he was politically astute and tried to turn the situation to his advantage. Richard, realizing that Saladin was simply stalling him, ordered the execution of 2,700 prisoners in front of the Muslim army; while quite brutal, Richard did not have many options. If he waited for Saladin’s payment, the Muslims would have time to bring up more forces; imprisoning them within the city would be a security threat, thus forcing him to leave men behind. However, even if it had weakened the Third Crusade, Richard should have shown mercy to his prisoners; the executions were not absolutely necessary for the crusade to continue. Unfortunately, this would not have been very pragmatic; events like this one have occurred in more recent wars where, due to a lack of manpower, prisoners cannot be easily taken, which makes the killings tragic and unnecessary, but vital for the success of an operation.<sup>119</sup> Therefore, Richard’s decision to massacre his hostages, from a pragmatic stance, was justified; from a Christian perspective it was not, but in a war, compassion, regrettably, is placed in the back seat. Today, these killings should be apologized for and buried in the past.

After Acre’s capture, Philip announced his decision to return home, despite the begging of all the other crusaders; apparently, he had been constantly sick in the Holy Lands, suffering from some illness, and did not want to continue on. Another darker motive, however, was to

---

<sup>119</sup> An example would be the American paratroopers on D-Day.

strike against Richard's territories in France (the English king owned the French coastline) in order to better himself, as well as out of petty spite. This was a disgraceful action due to his vengeful motives, and that he specifically began doing so while Richard was away with his men. As for the French king's vassals, only a single noble returned home with the king. The rest decided to fight on.

The Third Crusade, now solely headed by Richard, began the march down to Jerusalem in August 1191 with an excellent strategy: the crusaders marched directly along the shore while the Christian fleet mirrored them. In doing so, Saladin's forces could not outflank the army, nor could he besiege it effectively as they would be constantly resupplied by the ships. The Muslim response was to follow the crusaders, probing them and trying to goad them to attack; they would fall back into the desert where they could battle on their own terms. Richard was able to maintain order within his army so that they would not take the bait, as well as marching at a leisurely pace with frequent stops; this greatly improved the morale of the troops and preserved health. However, the Muslims constantly prodded the crusaders, searching for a weakness; on August 26th, a fog descended on the rear guard, causing them to lag behind and leaving a gap in-between the crusaders. Saladin struck. There was a quick battle which saw the Christians losing, but the tide turned when Richard rode from the front, with his calvary, and saved the survivors. In order to prevent this event from repeating, Hospitallers and Templars were placed

in the rear and vanguard, while the overall formation was organized in order to be more defensible.<sup>120</sup>

Saladin, unwilling to confront the crusade in a head on battle, desperately sought out a suitable killing ground, much like he had done with King Guy's army in the desert; meanwhile, Richard made good use of the fleet, having them transport weary, injured, and ill soldiers. Finally, on September 3rd, Saladin led a head-on attack; the Third Crusade had turned inland at the Dead River. Though the Muslims were defeated after a bloody day of fighting, Richard was nearly killed by a crossbow bolt, only being saved by his armor; he was very lucky. Two days later, while Saladin was scouting for a better killzone, Richard successfully defeated one his commanders by luring him into a meeting for a parley, then immediately attacking as soon they had ended; he did not actually want to parley. Though this act might seem like an abuse of a parley, it was justified because Saladin had specifically told the commander to stall the Crusade through negotiations; in doing so, the Muslim had, effectively, rejected any possible treaty.<sup>121</sup> Now just north of Arsuf, which is north of Jaffa, an open plain lay between the Third Crusade and the city; this was Saladin's chosen field of battle, as the wide expanse favored the Muslim calvary. While it was fairly obvious location for a confrontation, Richard did not want to commit to a battle himself, as simply making it to Arsuf would be enough for him. So, on

---

<sup>120</sup> Ibid., 94.

<sup>121</sup> Asbridge, *The Crusades*, 467.



September 7, 1191, there was a pitched battle between 30,000 Muslims and 15,000 Christians; the crusaders marched directly to the city, all the while fighting off attacks throughout the day.<sup>122</sup> Richard was able to maintain order until, critically, a charge began in his rear lines towards the enemy; as he was unable to stop it, he reacted decisively and ordered the rest of the army to charge as well; seeing this, Saladin ordered a counterattack.<sup>123</sup> Somehow, the Christians emerged victorious in the ensuing chaos by routing the Muslim forces and successfully reached Arsuf.

Arsuf was a bloodbath for both sides, but the Christians ultimately came out the victor; Saladin's empire was distraught at the recent defeats, which caused his support to crumble, he had to rebuild the army, and failed to stop the crusaders. Just three days after the battle, the Third Crusade reached Jaffa, 40 miles away from Jerusalem; Saladin resorted to increasingly desperate measures, concluding that he could not defeat the crusaders in open combat, he utilized a scorched-earth policy, razing Ascalon's walls, a port city, on September 12th. He was very vulnerable while doing this, as his men were working around the clock, and if Ascalon were captured, the Westerners would have a beachhead from which to invade Egypt from. Richard attempted to lead his men down to defeat him, but the crusaders refused; they would take Jerusalem, as it was the goal of the Second Crusade. As a compromise, the crusade decided to fortify Jaffa while keeping an eye on Saladin's movements; this was a mistake, as the Muslims

---

<sup>122</sup> Ibid., 470.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid., 472.

began fortifying the path to Jerusalem after Ascalon was neutralized. In January of 1192, the Third Crusade started up again and made it within 12 miles of Jerusalem, where they were halted by poor weather.<sup>124</sup> Both knightly orders advised against an attack on the city, to which the nobles agreed, and a retreat to Ascalon began; this action was not well received by the rank and file soldiers, and morale plummeted, with many leaving for Jaffa instead.

Meanwhile, politics had begun hampering the crusade once more; Conrad, who was displeased with Richard's support of King Guy, agreed with Saladin to plot against him, though not necessarily attack the crusaders. Simultaneously, news arrived that Richard's brother, John, had formed an alliance with Philip, and together they had begun assaulting the Lionheart's lands in France. Philip and Conrad should be condemned for these actions as they do not represent Christian behavior; Christians are to love one another in all circumstances, not betray them while they are vulnerable. In order to make peace with Conrad, Richard promised to grant him the crown of Jerusalem; this was for naught, as the would-be king was killed by the Assassins,<sup>125</sup> who were acting of their own volition. As a replacement, Henry of Champagne, Richard's nephew, was crowned King of Jerusalem; this healed the divisions which had long plagued the crusader kingdoms, as everyone respected the Lionheart. Finally, the Third Crusade began marching on Jerusalem once more on June 7th. Upon arriving at the Holy City, it quickly

---

<sup>124</sup> Madden, *Concise History of the Crusades*, 88.

<sup>125</sup> The Assassins were a group of radical Islamists who followed the teachings of the Old Man on the Mountain; they largely worked for their own interests and did not hold loyalty to a lord.

became apparent that the Christians simply could not take it, as it was summer, there was no water, and Saladin's army was ready for them. Once again, the nobles agreed to turn around, this time to march into Egypt and break Saladin's kingdom, as if they could conquer his homeland, then Jerusalem would be drastically easier to retake. This march into Egypt failed because the common foot soldiers refused to abandon the Holy City, even if it was tactically suicidal for them to attack; the English king declared that if someone else was willing to lead them to Jerusalem, he should take command, as he himself would have no responsibility of the doomed endeavor. Nobody stepped up. Finally, in October 1192, Richard the Lionheart set sail for home; he could no longer ignore the destruction of his own kingdom, which ended the Third Crusade. However, before he left, he had managed to negotiate a truce with Saladin which allowed Christians to visit Jerusalem, though Ascalon was returned to Muslim control; this treaty failed when Saladin died less than a year later on March 4th, 1193.

### Conclusion

With the mission of reclaiming Jerusalem and restoring the crusader kingdoms, which had stood in Christian hands for nearly 100 years, the Second Crusade was well-justified in its goal, but failed to accomplish this task due to a variety of factors. For one, the death of Frederick Barbarossa had crippled a large wing of the crusade; German support had evaporated

after his death. The remaining forces were bogged down in politics, which clearly had immoral motivations; the crusaders, mainly the kings, were impure and did not harmonize for the Crusade's benefit, instead seeking their own. As for Richard's actions against the Muslims, specifically the executions, they cannot be fully condemned, nor justified, as the situation was incredibly difficult to navigate. Meanwhile, despite their kings' bickering, the common foot soldiers were dedicated in their task of reclaiming Jerusalem, though perhaps to the point of being blind to reason; divisions between the leaders and soldiers halted progress, as though there were far more important strategic objectives besides Jerusalem, its religious importance overshadowed logical thinking. Without breaking Saladin's power in Egypt, the crusade could only accomplish a temporary victory; even if they had retaken the Holy City, it would have been difficult to defend from concentrated Muslim attacks from the South and East. So, with the Lionheart's treaty, the situation was more like a stalemate; unfortunately, it was a short truce due to Saladin's death.

### Result

Despite its failure, Richard had done much good: he had rescued the remaining crusader kingdoms, conquered Cyprus for Christendom, and had resolved the political strife which had destroyed the Kingdom of Jerusalem. While the Lionheart had attempted to create lasting peace

and at least secure access to Jerusalem, he failed, though not for his own mistakes. One of the big lessons that the West took from the Third Crusade was the strategic importance of Egypt; if Christendom could secure its footing in the Nile, then Jerusalem would be much easier to capture and defend. In fact, this strategy was the basis for many subsequent crusades; of course, this information had to be properly disseminated to the masses, who, as Richard found, were unwilling to back away from a chance to reclaim Jerusalem. So, an important shift away from the Holy City began towards foreign soil; the reclamation Jerusalem was still the end of the crusades, but the means by which they would bring this about changed drastically.

#### The Fourth Crusade

Calls for the Fourth Crusade began a mere six years after the end of the Third, in comparison to the roughly 40 year periods of tranquility that had followed its predecessors. With the taste of defeat fresh in their mouths, it was much harder to rouse Europeans to action and begin another campaign into the East; besides this, there were other key factors which prevented another crusade: the Lionheart was at war with Philip in an attempt to reclaim his lands, while Germany had been torn asunder between two rivals who claimed Frederick's throne. In short, the countries which contributed the most soldiers were currently sending them all into wars against each other; this is not to mention any losses suffered during the Third Crusade. To make

the matters worse, in March 1199, Richard was killed during a castle siege when he was struck once more by a crossbow bolt; he had not been wearing his armor, as he was simply surveying the situation.<sup>126</sup> Many believed that the Fourth Crusade would never happen.

After Innocent III's ascendancy to the Papacy, he had begun calling for a new crusade, seeing the failure of the Third, as early as 1198; notably, he made an important change in crusading. From the First Crusade, it had been believed that by suffering on a pilgrimage to the Holy Sepulchre, and connecting to God on a spiritual level, as described in the historical background, one's sins could be purged. Now, in an attempt to control the crusaders more directly, an indulgence was given as a reward for a term of service, in this case one year; Innocent III's actions secularized the crusades and made the Church the authority. While perhaps understandable in Medieval Europe, today, the Church would be denounced worldwide for doing such a thing; though the crusaders served God, the sacrificial nature of crusading had been lost, as they were transformed into a service for spiritual payment. Innocent's actions serve as a strong example of what the Christians should never do: transferring God's authority to themselves. This new interpretation would become standard in later crusades, partially due to the Church's growing secular authority.

---

<sup>126</sup> Madden, *Concise History of the Crusades*, 94.

The calls to the Fourth Crusade were largely ignored until 1199, when Thibaut, the brother of Henry of Champagne, and the nephew of the Lionheart, hosted a tournament.<sup>127</sup> During this tournament, he publicly announced that he was taking the cross; many of the participants followed suit, as well as his family and vassals. Meanwhile, a preacher named Fulk of Neuilly had been touring the French countryside and rousing the masses to action; this further encouraged nobles to take action. So, Thibaut, was joined by Count Louis of Blois, his cousin, as well as Count Baldwin of Flanders; there were also numerous lesser nobles besides them. Though they were nowhere near as powerful as Philip, together, they could amass a large force to go on the crusade. Their plan was simple: invade Egypt through the Nile to weaken Muslim-held Jerusalem.

### Campaign

Now, the troubles of the Fourth Crusade began; though the crusaders had agreed to sail to their destination, as well as use their fleets to support themselves up the Nile, none of the lords owned a navy. So, they formed a contract with the Venetians, the shipbuilders of Europe; in return for 91,000 marks,<sup>128</sup> they would construct 50 warships, along with enough ships to transport around 35,000 men in total.<sup>129</sup> The thing was, the French lords did not have the money

---

<sup>127</sup> Ibid.

<sup>128</sup> A common currency of Medieval Europe.

<sup>129</sup> McNeal and Wolff, "The Fourth Crusade," 162.

on hand, as they had planned to charge each crusader for passage in order to meet the sum.

However, they overestimated how many people would actually show up, and found themselves 31,000 marks in debt, even after taking as many loans as they could.<sup>130</sup> As previous crusaders had usually travelled alone unless sworn to a king, many potential funders simply found passage on other ships; the French lords simply did not have enough influence or charisma to attract enough men to their command. As the fleet had been completed by early 1202, the Westerners were in a sticky situation; the Venetians had honored their end of the deal, but the French had not. Negotiations were held, and it was decided that the crusaders would retake Zara, a city which had rebelled against Venice, and repay their debt through loot. This presented another problem for the crusaders: Zara, ruled by the Hungarian King, was technically Christian; this did not set well with many of the crusaders, and many refused to participate in the siege; to some, the attack was reprehensible because they would spill Christian blood. On the other hand, in refusing to attack, they would break their oaths to the Venetians, who were also Christians; in short, they were damned if they did, and damned if they did not. The only two people who could have truly solved the situation were the Venetians and the Pope; the shipbuilders could have either smoothed over the debt, at great cost to themselves, or Innocent III could have possibly diverted funds to bail out the crusaders. In conclusion, it was a complicated situation that left the French powerless, and in the wrong. A portion of the army besieged Zara along with the

---

<sup>130</sup> Ibid., 167.



Venetians, and the city fell; the French sent envoys to the Pope begging for forgiveness.

Innocent III pardoned them, but not the Venetians, which he excommunicated; however, the Venetian crusaders, as well as the footsoldiers, were not informed this in order to maintain morale.<sup>131</sup>

After taking Zara, the Westerners were still in massive debt, but an opportunity to absolve themselves arrived along with Alexius Angelus' envoys. Alexius, the prince of the Byzantine Emperor, had been locked away when his father, Isaac II, the same one who attacked the Third Crusade, was deposed by Alexius III. However, Angelus had escaped and was now looking for soldiers to reclaim his throne; his offer was very appealing. Firstly, he would shower the French in enough marks to repay their debt, and then some, which provided a solution to the Fourth Crusade's problem; not only that, but he promised to support the crusaders with Byzantine troops, as well as to formally submit the Eastern Church to the Pope. Here was a chance to reunite the Church! For the Venetians, installing an emperor of their own would be massive; their trade fleets had been hampered by the Greeks for decades; placing a more favorable ruler would resolve this.<sup>132</sup> Despite all this, some of the crusaders refused to participate; the Venetians had practically taken control of the crusade, and spilling further Christian blood was simply too much. In response to the official decision to attack

---

<sup>131</sup> Madden, *Concise History of the Crusades*, 101.

<sup>132</sup> Asbridge, *The Crusades*, 529.

Constantinople, many simply left, either to go to the Holy Land, or returned home. On the other hand, the remaining crusaders were not counting on besieging the ancient city, as Angelus had stated that the people would welcome him as their rightful ruler; it would be easy, according to the exiled prince. Sailing once more, the crusade arrived at Constantinople on June 23rd without incident; Alexius III did not have a fleet to halt the incoming invaders. Shouting up at the walls, the Westerners presented the prince amid good cheer; to their shock, Angelus was booed and jeered at by the citizens of Constantinople. Obviously, the people did not care about the rightful heir; the crusaders were trapped in yet another sticky situation. Constantinople was practically impenetrable with its back to the sea, and sporting some of the largest walls in Medieval history, and not only this, but the city had fought off armies ten times as large as the Fourth Crusade, all the while being outnumbered; this time, the defenders outnumbered their adversary.<sup>133</sup> The crusaders could not simply leave, as, technically, their contract with the Venetians had expired; they had to pay up on the spot, immediately. On top of this, they had sworn to aid the Byzantine Prince in reclaiming his throne, and they did not want to betray their honor, as if they left him now, they would be humiliated. With no option remaining, the Westerners attacked a suburb on July 5th; though they were outnumbered, the Byzantines were cowardly and retreated at the first sign of combat. A few days later, the crusaders pushed into central-Constantinople, where they set buildings ablaze before falling back. These fires caused significant damage to the northern

---

<sup>133</sup> Madden, *Concise History of the Crusades*, 102.

section of the city and demoralized the citizens; why were they not winning? Alexius III had not repelled the weak invaders, who were obviously outnumbered, and the city was actually hurting for the first time in centuries; the chaff at their doorstep should have already been blown away. The fact that it was slowly gaining entry instead inspired dread in the hearts of the Greeks. In fact, the citizens were so demoralized that Alexius III simply fled overnight, as he feared an uprising or a coup.

The crusaders, to their surprise, were greeted with a warm welcome the next morning. Isaac II, Angelus' father, had been restored to the throne, but was now blind thanks to the false-Emperor, so Alexius IV was crowned co-Emperor to rule alongside him, though he acted as the Emperor. The crusaders now requested that their end of the deal be honored, starting with the marks; Angelus managed to deliver the first half of the payment, giving them 100 thousand marks, but soon struggled with the other half. In desperation, he began looting the tombs of fellow emperors for jewelry; he melted down church icons that were made of gold and silver.<sup>134</sup> These actions, once again, horrified the citizens as they looked on with a mix of disgust and shock. Despite these measures, Angelus found that that he was still in debt, and now began paying tribute; however, on the advice of his countrymen, he stopped, as the Greeks still looked down on the Western barbarians, and the co-Emperor's previous actions had already made him massively unpopular with the populace. The young ruler did not want to undergo a coup; now

---

<sup>134</sup> Ibid., 106.

Angelus was entombed in a lose-lose situation, as continued payments would see him overthrown, yet he had to pay the Westerners, or else. This ultimately resulted in the final meeting with the crusaders in November 1203. Upon insisting that Angelus fulfill his oath, the crusaders were shouted down by the nobles and aides within the palace; considering the Emperor's word as void, the Westerners left with the intent of getting what they were owed, this time by force. However, before they could make their move, a coup occurred and Alexius IV was replaced by Alexius V, who strangled his predecessor. Conveniently, Isaac II died as well to natural causes.

Though only Angelus was required to repay the crusaders,<sup>135</sup> the leadership of the Fourth Crusade decided to attack Constantinople anyways; they still needed money to pay the Venetian fleet, which had stayed with them this whole time, and Alexius V had murdered their debtor. The rank-and-file troops were informed that now, the death of Alexius V, for the murder of their former ally, and the conquest of Constantinople were the Fourth Crusade's goals; the Greeks were portrayed as the enemies of Christ in a series of sermons. These men were not informed of the Pope's commands; in a letter, Innocent III had written, "...let no one among you rashly convince himself that he may seize or plunder Greek land on the pretext that they show little obedience to the Apostolic See..."<sup>136</sup> Even if this letter had been read to the soldiers, it probably

---

<sup>135</sup> This is also the cause of his murder; if the prince was dead, he could not repay it, therefore the crusaders would leave, as nobody else was sworn to repay the debt.

<sup>136</sup> Queller and Madden, *The Fourth Crusade*, 224.

still would have failed in preventing an attack on Constantinople; anti-greek sentiment had been building up for years. As mentioned previously, various emperors had hampered Catholic forces throughout the crusades, whether refusing to help, signing treaties with Muslims, or even engaging the Westerners in open battle. The Byzantines' actions had led to the deaths of thousands, if not tens of thousands, of Christians; more recently, a massacre of Catholic Christians had occurred in 1182, which had been instigated by the emperor himself.<sup>137</sup> In any case, though the invasion of Constantinople was definitely unjustified, it was not without cause; however, Christians are taught to be forgiving, and seeing as how the crusaders failed in this regard, modern Christians should learn from their mistakes.

A series of skirmishes occurred which culminated with the crusaders claiming a portion of the city by April 12th. Overnight, Alexius V fled the city, and Constantinople surrendered the next morning. For three days, the crusaders turned everything inside-out, looting whatever was valuable from churches, palaces, homes; anything they could get their hands on, they took. During this time, many valuable artworks were destroyed, while relics were confiscated and shipped back west. At great cost to the Byzantines, the crusaders finally absolved their debt with hundreds of thousands of marks to spare; according to Medieval law, this looting was justified, but even so, it was quite a disgusting haul. Crusader behavior towards the civilians should also be criticized, as they would steal, rape, and possibly murder the innocent; this is the exact

---

<sup>137</sup> Ibid., 135.

opposite of the tolerance that was seen in the crusader kingdoms; Christians should apologize for these despicable acts. As they had conquered the city, the Westerners chose Baldwin of Flanders to rule Latin Byzantium; though the Byzantine Empire with a few cities, the majority were taken by the crusaders. This territory was divided up among the new kingdom, the Venetians, and the French; the Fourth Crusade remained to establish this new territory and did not press on to the Holy Land. Pope Innocent III was incredibly displeased at this turn of events, but accepted Constantinople back into the Catholic Church; he could not deny the significance of the city to the Church. After remaining within Latin Byzantium for a year, the crusaders returned home; the Fourth Crusade was over.

### Conclusion

The Fourth Crusade was an unmitigated disaster. Though its premise was sound, the call to arms had drawn few due to the very recent failure of the Third Crusade; the Fourth Crusade was very weak, and thus forced to rely on Venice for support. Critical mistakes were made during the negotiation of the fatal contract, namely, the assumption that there would be enough crusaders to pay the bill. While in truth there may have been enough men to fill the Venetian fleet, lackluster leadership saw them departing for the Holy Land through their own means. The massive debt of the Fourth Crusade guided it to Constantinople, and through its conquest, finally

paid it off; in truth, the entire situation could have been avoided, but the crusaders had trapped themselves in a situation with no way out. Meanwhile, the Venetians and the Pope stood by idly, letting their debt overcome them and guide their decision making; they are to blame as much as the crusaders; because of poor planning and inaction, Christians warred against one another. Though they were forced to do it, according to their oaths, the general behavior of the crusaders towards Byzantines was very poor, condemnable, and un-Christ like. The conquest of Constantinople did not take the Fourth Crusade to Egypt, nor did it assist the crusader kingdoms in Palestine; it had completely lost sight of its original goal. It is on this point that the Fourth Crusade is declared unjustified.

### Result

The crusades as a whole suffered a massive blow to their reputation due to the sack of Constantinople. Though they had reclaimed the city for the Catholic Church, this would ultimately prove futile; the Byzantines were able to reclaim their lost territory after 60 years. Constantinople was never the same afterwards; this was perhaps the worst sack it had suffered in its history, as countless relics and treasures were stolen or destroyed. East-West Church relations were sundered once more, and the Greeks came to resent the Westerners for what they had done, and still do today. As for the West itself, the nature of crusading changed once more, mostly for

the worse; crusades were pitched as military service for a reward from the Church; this strengthened the Church's power over secular affairs. It also moved the nature of crusading away from the religious piety that had inspired so many during the First Crusade, and to a more secular, worldly view of an exchange between two people; it was the Church, not God, who the crusaders served. Though it was said that the rewards were a gift from God, the Church was the one granting these gifts; the Pope abused his power.



### **Conclusion**

Though this single assessment of the crusades is incredibly brief, it has been able to draw several conclusions. The most important one, after seeing the sheer amount of information about the crusades, is that, morally, they are a mixed bag; as war is said to bring out both the best and worst in humans, the same can be said twice-fold for a religious war. The actions of individuals, mainly those in power, swung the loyalty of the crusade from side to side; of course, the devotion of the individual still held sway, even if it was submersed in the will of others. As has been demonstrated throughout the paper, there was a constant line of disagreement among the different parties: popes and kings, kings and kings, kings and soldiers, soldiers and popes. While it is certain that none of them are in the right, none of them are completely in the wrong either; the actions of individuals, whether they were acting out of faith, pragmatism, or selfishness, produced the history that is read today.

This thesis will highlight two major positive points of the first four crusades; the First Crusaders, and the Hospitallers. The piety displayed by the common soldier, and their concern for their holiness, is to be imitated; as Christians, we should be pious and seek Christ in all situations, for what is the world worth, when Christ is to be gained? The crusaders' sacrifices to take up the cross were massive, irreversible, and model Christian behavior; this is not to say that

their actions during the crusade were commendable, but that their desire to please God was. Meanwhile, the Hospitallers almost perfectly embody Christ's teachings; they too, sacrificed what they had in order to care for the weak, poor, and sick, and when the time came, to defend them. They selflessly fought to defend the Holy Land and its people, and by the fall of the crusader kingdoms, they had lost everything doing so, being pushed out into the Mediterranean. Somehow, despite this, they have survived nearly 1,000 years into today, and, phenomenally, continue their original mission: caring for the sick. It is astonishing that they have lasted so long and endured so many changes, but even more so, that they remember their roots in Jesus' teachings to love; Christians should remember the Hospitallers and what they did.

It should also be noted, however, that as the crusades evolved over a 200 year period, it seems that they moved further away from God, and their original mission. This is most evident in the ever increasing presence of the Pope in crusade affairs, as they opened up new fronts, added benefits, or subtly changed the nature of crusading altogether. Such actions are an unfortunate result of the Church's dominance over Europe, made all the more prominent through the crusades themselves. Through various bulls, sermons, and priests, popes were able to employ the faith of their flocks to continue the crusades, and as was seen, for increasingly dubious reasons. Because of the Church, the crusades, overtime, lost their peninental, sacrificial nature, while the conviction displayed during the First Crusade became a status quo. It is

condemnable that the popes utilized their authority in such a way, but, as it is said, power corrupts.

Another thing that should be noted is the general of the crusaders during war; while, sometimes, they acted with grace and compassion, other times they unnecessarily slaughtered soldiers, civilians, and prisoners, simply to make a point, or because they were used to it. Christians should apologize for these acts, as even though a war may be justified, that does not make such behavior right. Even if logic dictated that they be killed for the betterment of the crusade, mercy should have been displayed. One other thing that Christians should apologize for is the Sack of Constantinople, mainly its treatment of the citizens; the bastion of the Byzantine Empire was ruined through the looting, and the population suffered in the three days in which the crusaders pillaged the city. Christians should never act maliciously or selfishly, even if the world tells them that they are in right to do so; modern church goers should learn from their predecessors' mistakes and exemplify Christ in their treatment of others, no matter the circumstances.

Even if this thesis fails to fully justify the morality of the crusades, it has proven that, truly, the crusades were complex events based on a slew of factors, events, and characters. If Christians, today, are to properly understand the crusades, they must study them in depth further; of course, such studies could continue on for years, given that the crusades lasted for centuries;

therefore, this brief overview has attempted to bridge that gap with brief overviews and justifications; in this, the author hopes that it has succeeded in its task.

## Bibliography

Ambroise, and Marianne Ailes. *The History of the Holy War: Ambroises Estoire De La Guerre Sainte*. Translated by Marianne Ailes. Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2003.

Anonymous, *Gesta Francorum: The Deeds of The Franks and other Pilgrims to Jerusalem*. Edited by Rosalind M. T. Hill, Oxford: Clarendon Press 1979

Asbridge, Thomas S. *The Crusades: The Authoritative History of the War for the Holy Land*. New York: Ecco, 2010.

———. *The First Crusade: A New History*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2004.

Baldwin, Marshall. *A History of the Crusades*. Lieu De Publication Inconnu: University of Wisconsin Press, 1969.

Brand, Charles M. "The Byzantines and Saladin, 1185-1192: Opponents of the Third Crusade." *Speculum*: Vol. 37, no. 2 (1962): 167-81.

Bredero, Adriaan Hendrik. 1994. *Christendom and Christianity in the Middle Ages: the Relations between Religion, Church, and Society*. Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans.

Brundage, James A. *The Crusades: A Documentary Survey*. Whitefish, MT.: Literary Licensing, 2011.

———. "Adhemar of Puy: The Bishop and His Critics." *Speculum* 34, no. 2 (1959): 201-12.

Eidelberg, Shlomo. *The Jews and the Crusaders: The Hebrew Chronicles of the First and Second Crusades*. Hoboken, NJ: KTAV Pub. House, 1996.

Caner, Ergun Mehmet., and Emir Fethi. Caner. 2004. *Christian Jihad: Two Former Muslims Look at the Crusades and Killing in the Name of Christ*. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications.

Cantor, Norman F. 1994. *The Civilization of the Middle Ages*. New York: HarperPerennial.

Comnena, Anna. *Alexiad*. Edited and translated by Edgar R. A. Sewter, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1969.

Hamblin, William J. "Muslim Perspectives on the Military Orders during the Crusades," *BYU Studies Quarterly*: Vol. 40 (2001) : Iss. 4 , Article 8.

Hill, Rosalind M., and Anonymous. *Gesta Francorum ; The Deeds of the Franks and the Other Pilgrims to Jerusalem*. Edited by Rosalind M. Hill. London: Nelson, 1962.

Hillenbrand, Carole. *The Crusades Islamic Perspectives*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999.

Ibn-al-Qalānisī, Ḥamza Ibn-Asad, and Hamilton A. R. Gibb. *The Damascus Chronicle of the Crusades: Dhail or Mudhayyal Tarik Dimashq. Ausz. Engl.* Erscheinungsort Nicht Ermittlbar: Verlag Nicht Ermittlbar, 1932.

Lane-Poole, Stanley. *Saladin: All-powerful Sultan and the Uniter of Islam*. New York: Cooper Square Press, 2002.

Madden, Thomas F. *The Concise History of the Crusades*. 3rd Student ed. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2014.

———. *The Crusades: The Essential Readings*. UK: Blackwell, 2002.

McBrien, Richard P. *Lives of the Popes: The Pontiffs from St Peter to John Paul II*. 1st ed. San Francisco, CA: Harper San Francisco, 1997.

Michaud, J. Fr. *History of the Crusades*. Translated by W. Robson. New York: Redfield, 1852.

Munqidh, Usamah Ibn. *Book of Contemplation - Islam and the Crusades*. Edited and translated by Paul M. Cobb. Penguin Books, 2008.

- Norwich, John Julius. *Byzantium: The Decline and Fall*. London: Folio Society, 2003.
- Pegg, Mark Gregory. 2009. *A Most Holy War: the Albigensian Crusade and the Battle for Christendom*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Pelikan, Jaroslav Jan. *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine*. Vol. 2. The Spirit of Eastern Christendom. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978.
- . *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine*. Vol. 3. Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Pr., 1978.
- Peters, Edward. *The First Crusade: The Chronicle of Fulcher of Chartres and Other Source Materials*. 2nd ed. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1998.
- Phillips, Jonathan. *The Fourth Crusade and the Sack of Constantinople*. New York: Penguin Books, 2005.
- Pieper, Josef. *Scholasticism: Personalities and Problems of Medieval Philosophy*. South Bend, IN: St. Augustine's Press, 2001.
- Poliakov, Léon, and Richard Howard. *The History of Anti-semitism: From the Time of Christ to the Court Jews*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1975.



Pryor, John H. *Geography, Technology, and War: Studies in the Maritime History of the Mediterranean, 649-1571*. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2000.

Prawer, Joshua. *The Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem: European Colonialism in the Middle Ages*. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1972.

Queller, Donald E., and Thomas F. Madden. *The Fourth Crusade: The Conquest of Constantinople*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000.

Riley-Smith, Jonathan Simon Christopher. *The First Crusade and the Idea of Crusading*. Philadelphia: Univ. of Pennsylvania Press, 1986.

Setton, Kenneth Meyer, Robert Lee Wolff, and Norman P. Zacour. *A History of the Crusades. the Later Crusades, 1189-1311*. Edited by Harry W. Hazard. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2005.

Stark, Rodney. *God's Battalions: The Case For The Crusades*. New York, NY: Harper One, 2009.

Thomas, Heath, Jeremy A. Evans, and Paul Copan. *Holy War in the Bible: Christian Morality and an Old Testament Problem*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2013.

Tyerman, Christopher. *God's War: a New History of the Crusades*. Cambridge (Mass.): Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2008.

Yoder, John Howard. *The Politics of Jesus: Vicit Agnus Noster*. 2nd ed. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1994.