

Righteous Flames: The Use of Fire as a Weapon from the First through the
Albigensian Crusade

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*“If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered;
and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.”*

John, 15:6

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Introduction

On April 8th, 1099 after the military success of the First Crusade, a Frankish knight named Peter Bartholomew lit himself on fire to prove God's support for the righteous endeavors of Christendom.¹ Bartholomew ardently believed in the mission of the crusade. As a knight sent from France to recapture the Holy Lands, he was told that this mission was to fulfill the will of God.² Bartholomew trusted that he had God's support for the military endeavors to capture Muslim held territories and therefore trusted that the fire would not injure him.³ Fire was more than just an element or a weapon; it was a means of evoking the will of God. In Christian theology, God announced himself and his desires or dislikes through fire; should fire injure a person, then God had signified his dissatisfaction with the actions of the individual.⁴ Thus, Peter Bartholomew believed he would be spared of the pain of perishing in the flames because of God's righteous support of the crusades, which He had already encouraged through the military successes of the army. The knight died on April 20th, 1099 from injuries sustained by the fire.⁵

Fire captivates. It has long held the imagination of religious and secular thinkers, such as Aristotle who compared it to the likes of the human soul and the origin of movement in the universe.⁶ Fire was the state of the soul, a glimpse at an otherworldly or divine power that manifested itself on earth.⁷ Peter Bartholomew was not the first man to be enticed by fire. At the

¹ Steven Runciman, *The First Crusade and Foundation of the Kingdom of Jerusalem*, Vol. 1 of *A*

² Jonathan Riley-Smith, *What Were the Crusades: Fourth Edition*, (San Francisco, Ignatius Press, 2009), 2.

³ Steven Runciman, *The First Crusade and Foundation*, 274.

⁴ Jay Rubenstein, "Holy Fire and Sacral Kingship in Post-Conquest Jerusalem," in *The Journal of Medieval History*, 470-484, November 10, 2017, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/03044181.2017.1346939?needAccess=true>.

⁵ Steven Runciman, *The First Crusade and Foundation*, 274.

⁶ Aristotle, *The Complete Works of Aristotle: The Revised Oxford Translation*, Vol. 1 of *Bollingen Series*, ed. Johnathan Barnes, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 645.

⁷ *Ibid*, 645.

time of the First Crusade, fire was used only with the strict purpose to “destroy” heresies that challenged Christianity, as God had done to the biblical cities of Sodom and Gomorrah.⁸ When used as a weapon, fire was unlike any other weapon of the time for its indiscriminately destructive nature. The presence of a weapon of such an atrocious caliber divulges a narrative about the degree of humanity that was ascribed to enemy combatants.

My thesis will explore the dynamic military interactions between Latin Christian crusaders and the heretics, Orthodox Christians, and Muslims they encountered by focusing specifically on cases where fire was used as a weapon. From the years of 1000 to 1200 fire was reintroduced in the medieval legal system as a punishment exclusively for heretics, those who stray from Christianity.⁹ It becomes a weapon intimately connected with religion and conceptions of justice. The use of fire during war reveals a new understanding of the approaches crusaders took when engaging with ‘the other.’

Before 1064, fire had not been systematically used as a form of punishment since the late Roman Empire’s persecution of Christians.¹⁰ Throughout the period from the First Crusade through the Albigensian Crusade, from 1095 to 1229, fire became an increasingly more prominent weapon of crusading armies, which consequently fell within the same period as the trials of heresy that reinstituted the use of incendiarism in Western Europe.¹¹ This beacons the need to study the use of fire throughout the crusades. Chroniclers mention the various uses of fire in battle and imbue in their discussion the customs, beliefs, and prejudices they held against the different religious and ethnic groups they fought. Fire becomes a perspective by which to explore the Latin Christian conceptions of their enemies because of the religious significance it evokes

⁸ Genesis 18:16, Revised Standard Version.

⁹ R.I. Moore, *The War On Heresy*, (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 2012), 2.

¹⁰ *Ibid*, 2.

¹¹ *Ibid*, 2.

and the legal precedence in its use. Through the use of fire an extraordinary narrative of the crusades is revealed, evoking God's righteousness in the Latin Christian mission to claim territory for the Church.

The First Crusade began in November of 1095, when a synod gathered in Claremont to council Pope Urban II on current challenges facing of the Christian State; it was here that the novel idea emerged and changed the nature of warfare in Medieval Europe. At Claremont, Pope Urban II created a new class of warrior, the *crucesignati* or those 'signed with the cross,' and sent in God's name through Papal authority to take back besieged Christian lands.¹² The novelty of the crusader, as this class would later be termed, merged the religious authority of the Pope with geopolitical interests of Christendom. A new era of holy war emerged for the first time in Christian history. Throughout this period, in various theaters of war, the use of fire signifies an understanding of crusader perceptions of other peoples and religions based on that group's status within Christendom.

Pope Urban II's speech presented at Claremont in 1095 sparked the crusades. He laid the foundation for how Christians would view the struggle between East and West for centuries. As the crusading armies burned, pillaged, and killed their enemies in Europe and in the Holy Land it suggests the deep motivations – fears and desires – of the crusaders. Fire was a weapon that transcended the act of burning, and brought the wrath of God to bear on the enemy. Against whom fire was used and the ways in which fire was used reveals the type of danger crusaders perceived in their enemy. Thus, a conflict that began as a threat towards the Orthodox Christian

¹² Jonathan Riley-Smith, *What Were the Crusades*, 2.

state of Byzantium evolved into a vastly more complex web of geo-political conflicts, involving secular and religious forces competing for power.¹³

There is no end to the scholarship on the crusades, from the development of Papal authority to the endless battles. Yet, no history exclusively on the use of fire as a weapon exists in this period. This thesis is an effort to address this lacuna. As such, my thesis remains in line with a new set of historians that are working to reconstruct the relations between Muslim and European combatants. To guide the framing of the discussion on Islam, I rely on two key scholarly monographs. First is Benjamin Kedar's *Crusade and Mission: European Approaches toward the Muslims*, which challenges the notion of an initial religious antagonism between Europeans and Muslims. In its place, he introduces the idea of a gradual initiative, spanning two hundred and fifty years, from neglect of Islam into a dedicated commitment to convert Muslims to Christianity. Kedar finds that missions focused on Muslim conversions emerged only in the mid-thirteenth century. His conclusion, however, draws on a larger history of disregard of Islam by crusaders, which explains the interactions and battles I analyze between Latin Christians and Muslims. The progression in the relationship, be it combative or peaceful, between the Latin Christian and Muslim armies became integral to my discussion on fire.

The second monograph that shaped this thesis is John Victor Tolen's, *Saracens: Islam in the European Imagination*, which narrates the history of European contact with Muslims from the seventh to the thirteenth century. His discussion is led by a wide variety of primary sources chronicling and classifying all documented interactions between Europeans and Muslims. Tolen's work provides the broader context in which I was able to situate both groups and their

¹³ *Ibid*, 5.

conceptualization of the other. This enabled me to place the uniqueness of the ways in which fire was used as a weapon against Muslims.

Another foundational text of this thesis, separate from the debate on Islam, is R.I. Moore's *The War on Heresy*, in which he writes a linear history of the trials of heretics in Western Europe culminating in the Albigensian Crusade. His work introduces similar topics of heresy discussed in this thesis, specifically as fire is used as a punishment for heresy. Nonetheless, he neither addresses the implications of fire as a weapon, nor discusses the crusades as their own practice of the medieval legal system other than the Albigensian Crusade. I primarily used Moore's research as a timeline to narrate the progressive intensification of the use of fire throughout the crusades. Moreover, Steven Runciman's three-volume set, *A History of the Crusades*, became an invaluable bibliography to draw on as a historiographical foundation. Using nearly every primary source from the crusades, Runciman curates an impressively detailed history from the decade leading up to the First Crusade to well after the conclusion of the Fifth Crusade. He discusses the crusades in depth as well providing particular detail to the battles. Runciman's research became integral to locating the significant moments where fire was used and explaining the broader context of the battle's history.

While the secondary literature provides the necessary context, this thesis engages a set of primary sources that chronicles specific cases where fire is used as a weapon. Rather than addressing the use of fire as a purely chronological progression, it became clear in my research that fire was vigorously used against heretics and sparingly against Muslims; thus, revealing the need for separate discussions for each of the various groups encountered by crusaders in order to extract the Latin Christian perception. Integral to this discussion become the biases and prejudices that each chronicler imbues throughout his text. The chronicles date from 1095 to

1229, from the First to the Albigensian Crusade. For the First Crusade, I rely heavily on Robert of Remis' *Historia Iherosolimitana*. I also draw on the anonymous *Gesta Francorum et aliorum Hierosolimitanorum* and Oderic Vitalis', *The Ecclesiastical History of the Orderic Vitalis*. To deepen the discussion of the First Crusade, I add the perspective of Anna Komnene, daughter of the Byzantine Emperor, with her work, *The Alexiad*. For the Second Crusade, I largely work with the Frankish knight, Odo de Deuil's *de profectione Ludovici VII in orientem* to recount the pilgrimage through Byzantium. The narrative for the Third Crusade focuses on the anonymous *Itinerarium Peregrinorum et Gest Regis Ricardi*. To chronicle the Fourth Crusade, I rely mainly on the work by the Frankish knight Robert di Clari, *The Conquest of Constantinople*. For my work on the Albigensian Crusade I use the poem by William of Tudela and his anonymous successor, *The Song of the Cathar Wars*. Notwithstanding the sources discussed in my thesis, a further history, one that draws on additional primary sources not included in my thesis, remains necessary. Nonetheless, this serves as an introduction to an obligatory discussion on the history of the use of fire as a weapon.

Chapter One: On Fire And The Crusades

The crusades pivot the history of warfare within the Latin Christian canon. In Europe, the eleventh and twelfth centuries witnessed an emergence in the consolidation of a centralized Christian Church, the widespread proliferation of Latin Christianity, and the prominence of discussions on justifications for acts of war. Similarly, in this period, the use of fire as a weapon was reintroduced into the developing Latin Christian legal system; yet, fire had long since held a theological and liturgical significance. At the calling of the crusades in 1095, fire was not a weapon classified solely as a consequence of war, such as swords and arrows, nor was fire strictly religious in its use. The use of fire drew from both political and religious symbolism in its significance as a weapon of war. When fire is used in war, it melds the world of Latin Christendom with the political motivations of the battle. Key to understanding how and against whom fire can be used during this period of history is distinguishing the multitude of factors that contributed to the significance of fire.

The crusades sought to expand Christendom, as a series of military campaigns pursuing Christian control over the Holy Lands, and later, in parts of Europe. The ambitions of the crusades cannot be separated from religion. All aspects of Medieval Western European culture were steeped within the Latin Christian faith.¹⁴ An undeniable devotion to God proclaimed by the Papal authority in Rome percolated into every aspect of life. No political or legal action existed beyond the religious frame of mind, lest it be heretical.¹⁵ To call for a crusades, a Papal

¹⁴ Jonathan Phillips, *The Fourth Crusade and the Sack of Constantinople*, (London: Jonathan Cape, 2004), xvii.

¹⁵ Robert Bartlett, *Trial by Fire and Water: The Medieval-Judicial Ordeal*, (Oxford: Claredon Press, 1986), 37.

mandate was required. As the vicar of God, the Pope was proceeding on the behalf of God. Thus, the crusaders believed themselves to be fighting for their faith.¹⁶

The First Crusade continued a discussion among theologians about the justification of warfare. Historian James Brundage explained the complexity of religious wars, claiming theological beliefs were rooted in the notion wherein “the righteous are forced to wage just wars because the wrongdoing of the wicked forces the just man to repress them.”¹⁷ To briefly summarize the complex notion of Just War in Western Christendom, St. Augustine determined three criteria by which to exact just war in a way that reconciles war within Latin Christianity: “*auctoritas principi, a causa iusta, and a intention recta.*”¹⁸ First, *auctoritas principi* is the idea that a legitimate ruler must call the war.¹⁹ In the case of the crusades a legitimate leader would be the Pope, as he acts as an agent of God. Second, a just war requires a justified purpose to engage in war. It needs a wrong to correct; this could be “defense of ones country, laws, and traditional ways of life; the recovery of land or property which has been unlawfully appropriated by another; or the enforcement of a judicial sentence.”²⁰ The third criterion of just war, according to St. Augustine’s definition, is righteous purpose. That is “war must be the only feasible means of achieving the righteous purpose.”²¹ Separate from just cause, Augustine articulated that the righteous purpose required that the intention behind the war must be uncorrupted. War had to be the only means by which to reach the initiator’s ends of ultimately creating good.

¹⁶ Jonathan Riley-Smith, *What Were the Crusades*, 2.

¹⁷ James A. Brundage, *Medieval Canon Law and the Crusader*, (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1969), 19.

¹⁸ *Ibid*, 19.

¹⁹ *Ibid*, 20.

²⁰ *Ibid*, 20.

²¹ *Ibid*, 20.

Holy war, pursued in the crusades, required adherence of St. Augustine's criteria of just war, but then furthered the notion of religious justification in the pursuit of Christendom. Brundage further articulates the religiosity behind the crusades, noting "the pope regarded his campaign not only as a just war, but also a holy war in defense of the Church itself."²² In calling the First Crusade, crusaders took solemn oaths of loyalty to return Christian territories from Muslim invaders.²³ They sought to protect Christendom. The warriors were charged with a religious authority justifying the Papal demand for vengeance and were then repaid with indulgences.²⁴

The Papal blessing of the crusades was amplified by granting indulgences in the form of penance vowed to the crusaders by the Pope. Historian Jonathan Riley-Smith notes, "the most characteristic feature of the crusading was that it was penitential... in which [crusaders] paid God what was due to him on account of their sins."²⁵ The significance of penance granted to crusaders was novel at the time of the crusades because in Latin Christian theology, there was no true remittance of sin until the crusades.²⁶ This meant that the only means by which to be totally absolved of sin and enjoy heaven was to participate in the crusades. Indulgences granted to those on the campaigns became the sole means by which to be truly righteous. The indulgences granted made crusades massively popular throughout Latin Christendom. Riley-Smith notes, "the popes who granted indulgences for volunteers fighting in other theaters of war than the East seem to have believed that crusading was too useful an instrument to be confined to expeditions

²² *Ibid*, 24.

²³ Riley-Smith, *What Were the Crusades?*, 3.

²⁴ *Ibid*, 3.

²⁵ *Ibid*, 3.

²⁶ *Ibid*, 60.

destined for Jerusalem.”²⁷ Holy war was not confined to just the eastern theater in Jerusalem, but as Riley-Smith explains, the commonality of granting indulgences linked the crusades in Spain, southern France, and Jerusalem as procuring the same ends: the spread of Christendom.

More than just religious events, the crusades sought secular ends on behalf of the Papacy. Each crusade, from the announcement of the First Crusade in 1096 to the culmination of the Albigensian Crusade in 1229, could not be separated from the political ends they pursued. The crusades expanded territories under control of the Pope, and warfare was the means by which to acquire and expand the territory (and thus, wealth) belonging to Latin Christendom. Nonetheless, the crusades were an era when the discussions on warfare were led and defined by the Church and theologians. The Papacy sought to provide justification of the religiously mandated military endeavors, which led to the melding of religion, crusade, and the crusader. Crusaders, the military leadership, and papal authority evoked religion as the justification of their actions.

The same religious mandate beacons the use of fire as a weapon. The use of fire represents Latin Christians' perspectives of both religion and justice. First, is the consideration of fire as a biblical symbol. Fire used as a weapon of destruction was integral in Latin Christian liturgy and imagery. Fire held a religious fervor, as burning for an eternity in hell was the fate that sinners inevitably must suffer. Beyond the symbolic meaning of hellfire and eternal damnation, fire is the means by which God shows His fury to destroy those straying from the faith.²⁸

The Bible is replete with dire warnings against heresies and descriptions of the destructive punishment the perpetrators will face. No cautionary tale remains more potent than in

²⁷ *Ibid*, 5.

²⁸ *The Holy Bible: Containing the Old and New Testaments*, Revised Standard Version, (New York: Meridian Books, 1974), Genesis:18 & 19.

the Apostle Peter's second letter. In it, he ominously forewarns that there are "false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Master who brought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction."²⁹ Peter's warning defines heresy and extends the boundary of who is considered heretical to include the cohorts of heretical preachers; both being lost to God and thus, predestined to suffer the same fate – abolition from the earthly realm. The consequence of engaging in heresy or following heretical leaders is destruction, not just death of the heretic, but a symbolic eradication of the heretic and his or her heresy, so as to ensure the preservation of the Church and its preaching. Peter forbids both the reluctance of exacting the punishment and the sparing of anyone who strays from the faith and engages in heresy. A true and faithful Christian, by this discussion, must act swiftly to eliminate heresy.

Referred to as the "cities of the valley," Sodom and Gomorrah, in chapters eighteen and nineteen of Genesis, are ultimately set aflame by God. The cities established a notorious reputation, "for their sin is very grave."³⁰ Convicted on the grounds of licentious and odious behavior, including, but not limited to, blasphemous sexual behavior, the citizens of both cities are condemned by God to suffer an eternity of hell. Before serving an infinite punishment, God determines to use fire to destroy the inhabitants and eliminate any trace of their culture in flames. The question of some good people suffering for the sins of others arises. In an attempt to salvage some of the cities' inhabitants, Abraham then poses the question to God, "Wilt thou indeed destroy the righteous with the wicked?"³¹ His attempt to delineate between followers of heresies and the heretics themselves fails insofar as he is unable to find even twenty souls worth redeeming in both cities, as all had been corrupted by heresy.

²⁹ *The Holy Bible*, 2 Peter 2:1.

³⁰ *The Holy Bible*, Genesis 18:16.

³¹ *The Holy Bible*, Genesis 18:24.

Amongst the rampant sins of heretics, sparing any souls would be impossible as heresy saturates all of society. As Peter warns, there is no difference between the heretical preachers and their followers. All must suffer the same fate as all heretical souls and those associated with heretics have strayed from God. Despite the pleas of Abraham, God enacts His punishment and “rained on Sodom and Gomorrah brimstone and fire.”³² No remorse is present in God’s fury; destruction was an application of justice; “so it was that God destroyed the cities of the valley.”³³ The depiction in the Bible of the use of fire by God to destroy the cities evokes the imagery of hellfire and eternal damnation, the converse of God’s mercy offered to faithful Christians. The inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah, who ignored the credence of God and disobeyed Christian law, were destroyed in fire. Bombarded by fire and brimstone, or rocks cloaked in flames, the people, their belongings, any traces of their society were leveled and consumed by the flames. As the warning of Peter heeds, the inhabitants brought their own “swift destruction.”³⁴ No respite shall be offered in the face of heresy.

The biblical pursuit to eradicate heresy becomes the basis of the legal system that sought the same ends. During the Gregorian reforms of the latter parts of the 11th Century, crime and punishment are based within “political charges or accusations.”³⁵ For heretics, this meant that those charged with the crime were treated and tried similarly to those committing a political threat. As the society became more religious and the Church took on a more powerful social influence, trials of heretics became increasingly common.³⁶ Those convicted of heresy who

³² *The Holy Bible*, Genesis 19:24.

³³ *The Holy Bible*, Genesis 19:29.

³⁴ *The Holy Bible*, 2 Peter 2:1.

³⁵ Colin Morris, ‘*Judicium Dei*: The Social and Political Significance of the Ordeal in the Eleventh Century’, *Studies in Church History*, vol. 12, (1975), 103.

³⁶ R.I. Moore, *The War On Heresy*, 2.

refused redact an illicit faith were burned.³⁷ Since religion permeated the medieval legal system, Christian imagery beacons the use of fire as the process by which to eliminate heresy.

Fire, however, was not a universally accepted means of destruction across Latin Christian theology because of its brutal and destructive nature even though it is mentioned in the Bible. The Second Lateran Council, a synod held in 1139 in Rome, attempted to prevent the use of fire as a form of punishment. The clergy determined the “devastating and malicious crime of incendiarism” was a “pernicious and inimical calamity [that] surpasses all other kinds of destruction.”³⁸ As a particularly vile form of destruction, Lateran II saw no religious benefit, symbolic or otherwise with incendiarism and determined fire to be a *crime*. The Christian theologian Gratian, writing after the release of Lateran II, similarly argued that sinners would invariably suffer an eternity in hell, which surpassed the pain any temporal punishment would inflict.³⁹ The eternal hellfire would be the true punishment for sinners. Moreover, Gratian argued against the use of fire as a weapon because of the extraordinary nature of its effects, “for it exceeds every punishment that has ever been suffered in this life.”⁴⁰ Unlike swords, siege weapons, and javelins – all commonly seen in the crusades – Gratian argued that fire presented too extreme a punishment to be used as a weapon.

Despite the sparse warnings against fire, its use as a weapon persisted. So much of fire’s appeal as a weapon is rooted in the horror and enchantment fire has held in people’s experience and imagination. The use of fire throughout the Crusades incorporates both religious beliefs and conceptions of righteousness. Thus, it was varyingly used dependent the group that crusaders

³⁷ *Ibid*, 2.

³⁸ Council Fathers, “The Second Lateran Council – 1139 AD.” *Papal Encyclicals Online*. Accessed December 15, 2017, <http://www.papalencyclicals.net/councils/ecum10.htm>.

³⁹ Gratian, *Tractatus de Penitentia: A New Latin Edition with English Translation*, ed. and trans. Atria A. Larson, (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University Press, 2016), 275.

⁴⁰ *Ibid*, 275.

fought against based on the humanity ascribed to them. The use of fire against another group was more than a weapon; fire's destruction evokes a religiously symbolic spectacle; a moment meant to arouse divine symbolism.

Chapter Two: Heretics

In the Bible, Peter ominously forewarned of heretics' continual presence in society and the need to eradicate such dangers to society. He claims that "false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies... bringing upon themselves swift destruction."⁴¹ Peter's caution reminds Christians that the righteous will triumph and that heretics will face certain annihilation.

Heretics are groups and individuals that defied the teaching of the Church in Rome and challenged Papal authority. Twelfth century heretics in Western Europe became organized threats to the vitality of the Church. The crusaders who took up the responsibility of the cross witnessed a "new breed of heretics [that] are aggressive reformers who insist on changes in the Church that will bring Catholicism into line with their own ideas."⁴² More than a physical threat to Christian territory, these groups threatened the sanctity Christian religion at a time when the Church was consolidating as a centralized religious and political authority. Heretical reforms focused on "a desire for radical changes among the clergy and in the relations between the Church and society."⁴³ Among devout followers of Christianity, dissenters encountered no toleration. Heresy was seen as malignant cancer, encroaching on the wellbeing of the greater good of Christendom.⁴⁴ Therefore, heresy had to be swiftly and harshly eradicated.

⁴¹ *The Holy Bible*, 2 Peter 2:1.

⁴² M.D. Lambert, *Medieval Heresy: Popular Movements from Bogomil to Hus*, (New York: Holmes & Meier Publishers, 1977), 39.

⁴³ *Ibid*, 39.

⁴⁴ Robert of Remis, *Historia Iherosolimitana: Robert the Monk's History of the First Crusade*, trans. by Carol Sweetnam, (Burlington: Ashgate, 2005), 96.

For nearly two centuries, from the 1060s to the 1220s, there was a peak in the fear of heresy plaguing Western Europe.⁴⁵ Throughout the Middle Ages, the Church created and reinforced the image that “heresy was the work of the devil.”⁴⁶ As part of the larger Gregorian reforms of the twelfth century, heresy was “swept up in the far broader and faster streams” of the movement within the Church.⁴⁷ Heresy directly challenged the Church’s efforts of centralization and thus was not tolerated.⁴⁸ Trials of heresy became so commonplace that they developed systemized processes designed to convict, prove heretical, and then punish.⁴⁹ In laying the groundwork for a “persecuting society,” as historian R.I. Moore articulates, the intense and deliberate persecution of heretics was part of “a tremendous extension of power of the literate” to create institutions of power throughout Europe.⁵⁰ The legal system not only developed to cure the wrongdoings of heresies, but also to achieve a centralized Christian authority.

The practice of incendiarism to punish heretics dated back to the Roman Empire, but had not been used by Christians for nearly six hundred years until the burning of heretics at Orléans in 1022.⁵¹ It was during this time, from the eleventh and into the twelfth century, when the use of fire against heretical groups was reintroduced and integrated within the legal framework. Despite warnings of the religious and temporal dangers of the use of fire, (as seen in the Second Lateran Council,) incendiarism became the mechanism within the Latin Christian legal system to punish heretics.⁵² Although incendiarism is not solely limited to the punishment of heretics, it was the

⁴⁵ M.D. Lambert, *Medieval Heresy*, 3.

⁴⁶ *Ibid*, 5.

⁴⁷ R.I. Moore, *The Formation of a Persecuting Society: Power and Deviance in Western Europe, 950-1250*, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1987), 18.

⁴⁸ Moore, *The War on Heresy*, 8.

⁴⁹ *Ibid*, 7.

⁵⁰ *Ibid*, 153.

⁵¹ *Ibid*, 3; *ibid*, 14.

⁵² *Ibid*, 3.

preferred practice of destroying heresies in the Bible. The dominant Christian theology and notion was that “the heretic who willfully persisted in his error was condemned to the pains of hell for eternity” through incendiarism.⁵³ The enforced penance and torture applied in particular to heretics, is constructed by Christian liturgy and theology because fire had a dual function in Christianity, offering both cleansing and punishment.⁵⁴

Yet, even during this period of mass incrimination and hysteria towards heretics, clerics were not inclined towards exacting such a brutal punishment. From records of legal persecutions of heretics, there were “few exceptions” that clerics would not attempt to save the souls of those convicted rather than forcing them to burn.⁵⁵ More often than not, in Medieval Christian society, “burning represented a failure” insofar as it was a loss in salvation of souls for the responsible clerics.⁵⁶

Despite the attempt to limit the use of incendiarism against heretical groups, the practice of burning heretics “pervaded the culture and shaped the growth of Europe, including both the tendency to recurrent and frequent persecution of more or less arbitrarily defined minorities.”⁵⁷ The strictness of criteria delineated heretics from righteous Christians and created a mechanism for swift punishment. The frenzy and fear of heresy that consumed Latin Christendom carried across the Mediterranean during the crusades. The legal precedent established clear process so

⁵³ M.D. Lambert, *Medieval Heresy: Popular Movements from Bogomil to Hus*, (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1977), 5.

⁵⁴ Atria A. Larson, “Gratian’s *Tractatus de penitentia*: A Textual Study and Intellectual History” (PhD diss., Catholic University of America, 2010), 158.

⁵⁵ R.I. Moore, *The War On Heresy*, 9-10.

⁵⁶ *Ibid*, 9.

⁵⁷ *Ibid*, 6.

that when faced against heretical groups, deemed as such by the Church, crusaders knew to use fire.⁵⁸

The heretical pursuit to create a separate Church through reform becomes integral to understanding the severity of a response developed in Latin Christendom. The twelfth century was a period defined by Papal reform efforts aimed at integrating Christian beliefs throughout all aspects of lay lifestyles. Many heretical groups sought to implement different liturgical practices to those decided upon by the Church; yet, it was through daily liturgical practices that the Church established a binding connection with Christians. Although attributed to Pope Innocent III with the expansion of his claim of *plenitudo potestatis*, or “fullness of power over the lives and business of the Christian people,” a series of papal figures centralized the Church during the twelfth century and into the thirteenth century.⁵⁹ A need to reform the Church’s role with relation to its followers made heretical groups particularly threatening given reform efforts on behalf of Papal authority. Coinciding interests over the dominion of Christian souls directly opposed heretics and the Papal States. The threat of another reform movement that were outside conscience efforts led by papal authority would not be tolerated.

⁵⁸ *Ibid*, 2; Robert Bartlett, *Trial By Fire and Water*, 37.

⁵⁹ Moore, *The War on Heresy*, 229. Many of these reforms were led under Pope Innocent III, who oversaw the Fourth Lateran Council. Lateran Four is attributed with being a particularly strong pursuit to integrate the Church with the everyday lives of followers of Christ. These reforms included the extension of the Holy Sacraments to include marriage.



Figure One. Neal Schwartz, “The First Crusade.”

The First Crusade

Those who fought in the First Crusade set out to reclaim territory belonging to the Orthodox Christian state, Byzantium.⁶⁰ The Latin Christian crusaders fought under the Holy Cross and chanted, “*Dues Vult! God wills it!*”⁶¹ They were inspired by the Latin Christian Pope, Pope Urban II’s speech at Clarendon, who evoked the religious commandment, “Christ commands” that the Franks “destroy that vile race from the land of our friends.”⁶² Although Pope Urban II was referring to the Seljuk Turks invading eastern territories of Byzantium, the

⁶⁰ Marek Mesko, “Anna Komnene’s Narrative of the War Against the Scythians,” in *Graeco-Latina Brunensia*, Vol. 19, Masaryk University, 2014, https://digilib.phil.muni.cz/bitstream/handle/11222.digilib/131948/1_GraecoLatinaBrunensia_19-2014-2_5.pdf?sequence=1; OJ Thatcher and E.H. McNeal, “Calling the Crusades,” in *Muslim and Christian Conact in the Middle Ages: A Reader*, ed. Jarbel Rodriguez, (New York: University of Toronto Press, 2015), 52.

⁶¹ Robert of Remis, *Historia Iherosolimitana*, 81.

⁶² *Ibid*, 56.

crusaders encountered a heretical group, the Paulicians, while on their pilgrimage and executed swift and merciless justice.

The Paulicians were a heretical group, in modern day Bulgaria, which had consistently posed a military threat to the Byzantine Empire.⁶³ At the time of the First Crusade, the Paulicians held a notorious history within the Church. They believed that God created the heavens and Satan created the earth; therefore, Satan had domain over humans. This clashed with Christian theology insofar as Christians believe the one God created the earth, man, and the heavens.⁶⁴ The Paulician beliefs threatened the image of Jesus Christ, savior of the Christian people, because their theology inherently argued that he would have been imperfect, created in the image of the Devil.⁶⁵ Thus, the Paulicians posed a theological threat to both Orthodox Christians and Latin Christians in believing and preaching a different interpretation of the Bible.

The daughter of the Emperor of Byzantium, Anna Komnene, recounts the pervasive threat of the Paulicians in her history, *The Alexiad*, written around 1148. In it, she writes of an encounter between the Byzantine army with the Paulicians long before the arrival of the Latin Christian armies. After a battle between the Byzantines and the Paulicians, the heretics' land was taken and divided among men in the Byzantine army and the women and children were held in citadel until they, too, were later released. There is, however, no detail of anyone killed once the Byzantines conquered the Paulician city.⁶⁶ Even "those responsible for their absurd behaviour – ... [Alexius I] condemned to exile and imprisonment on islands. The others were granted an amnesty and allowed to go away wherever they wished."⁶⁷ The Byzantines fought the Paulicians

⁶³ *Ibid*, 10.

⁶⁴ M.D. Lambert, *Medieval Heresy*, 11.

⁶⁵ *Ibid*, 11.

⁶⁶ Anna Komnene, *The Alexiad*, 156.

⁶⁷ *Ibid*, 156.

because of their heresy; yet, the punishment, endured only by the sect's leaders, was excommunication and exile. The heretical leaders were sent to live on an island, as Anna Komnene concludes.⁶⁸ In exile, The Paulicians remained enemies of Christendom, be it Orthodox or Latin Christianity, at the time of the First Crusade.

In 1096, while traveling over land toward Jerusalem, the crusaders encountered the same heretics as the Orthodox Christians had; however, in this confrontation, the same toleration was not offered to the Paulicians. Robert the Monk, believed by modern historians to have been the Abbot of the Benedictine abbey of St-R  mis, records the scene in his account, *Historia Iherosolimitana*. The chronicle follows the literary convention that the crusades were a commandment directed from God; he writes from the perspective that the success of the crusaders came not necessarily from crusaders' actions, but from the justice God supported through their holy war.⁶⁹ This text gives particular insight to the religious fervor and justification behind the burning of the Paulicians.

Robert the Monk vividly describes how the crusaders attacked their city, "stripped it of all its goods and burnt it along with its inhabitants."⁷⁰ The unequivocal statement leaves no doubt that it was legitimate to use fire against heretics. The secular powers leading the crusade were fulfilling a punishment following a sentence of heresy determined by the Church. Much like legal processes in Western Europe, "heretics were condemned by a church court and then handed to the secular powers for punishment."⁷¹ For the case of the Paulicians, there would be no appeal

⁶⁸ *Ibid*, 156.

⁶⁹ Carol Sweetenham, "Introduction" to *Robert the Monk's History of the First Crusade*, (Burlington: Ashgate, 2005), 2.

⁷⁰ Robert of Remis, *Robert the Monk's History*, 96.

⁷¹ Moore, *The War on Heresy*, 7.

for redemption, simply a course of swift justice. Indeed, in his account, Robert the Monk further justifies the use of fire by claiming:

That [the use of fire] reflected no discredit on [the Franks] because the detestable preaching of the heretics was creeping like canker and had already infected the surrounding regions with its depraved dogmas just as its perverted aim had been to turn them aside from the true faith.⁷²

According to Robert the Monk, the use of fire against heretics is justified because of the danger that these heretics posed to the sanctity of Latin Christendom. This is the same rationale that was used among the Western European literati to cast heretics as dangers to the sustainability and morality of all Christendom. Thus, one would expect that all groups that the Church labeled heretical should suffer the same fate of incendiarism.

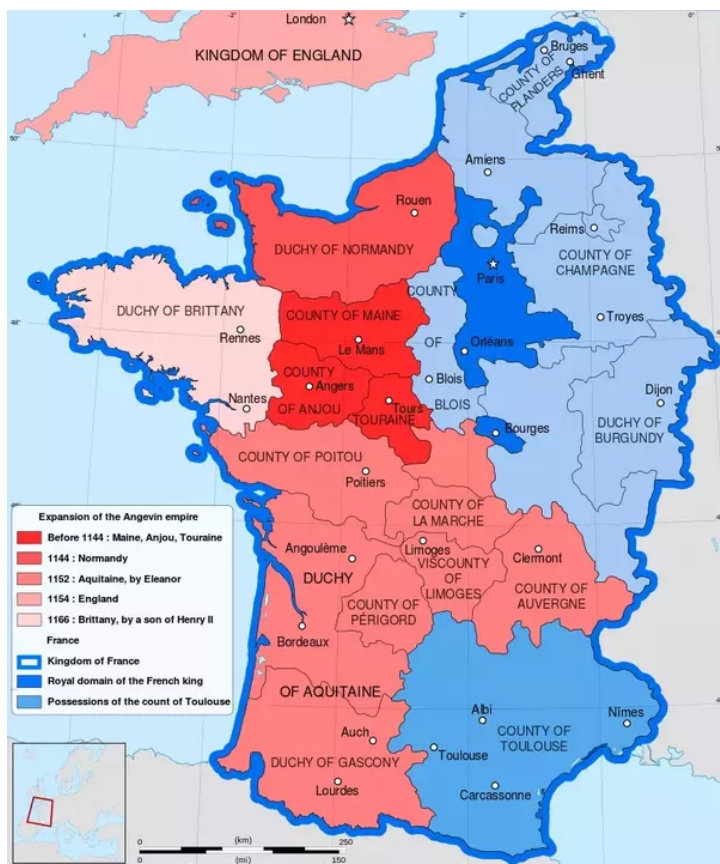


Figure Two. John Bartram, "Expansion of the Angevin Empire."

The Cathar Heresy and the Albigensian Crusade

In January of 1208 a papal legate, Peter of Castelnau, was assassinated north of Arles, a city in southern France.⁷³ The assassin was later identified as a servant of Raymond VI, the Count of Toulouse. The legate was murdered the morning after he and the Count had allegedly been seen arguing violently. In their discussion,

⁷² Robert of Remis, *Robert the Monk's History*, 96.

⁷³ Jonathan Sumption, *The Albigensian Crusade*, (London: Butler & Tanner Ltd, 1978), 15.

Raymond VI attempted to “return to grace” following a minor solecism, or clerical mistake, which lost him favor among members in the Church.⁷⁴ Despite a lack of definite proof of the Count’s responsibility of the murder of Peter of Castelnau, Pope Innocent III nonetheless declared Raymond VI guilty of murder.⁷⁵

Beyond the convicted murder of a papal legate, Raymond IV was complicit, by the perspective of the Church, in the Cathar heresy.⁷⁶ It was a rampant heresy plaguing Southern France, or so the Church foretold.⁷⁷ Offering the Pope opportunity to show the just intention in eradicating heresy and just cause in the illegitimate murder of a clergyman, Pope Innocent III claimed just war against Raymond VI. Thus, this seemingly insignificant murder escalated into the Albigensian Crusade through a web of political interests to remove Raymond VI.

From the Medieval legal system, protecting heretics was as dangerous to Christendom as preaching heresy. From Peter’s second letter in the Bible, the righteous Christians had a duty to destroy heretics. With a full knowledge of the threat that the Cathars posed to the Church, “[Raymond VI] had failed to suppress the heresy by force, and this made him a protector of heretics, if not a heretic himself.”⁷⁸ The failure of Count Raymond to eradicate every trace of the Cathar heresy, which infected southern France, made him a heretic. Among the members of the Church, it was believed that even his civil authorities were “unwilling... to prevent further expansion of the sect.”⁷⁹ The Church determined Count Raymond VI of Toulouse to be complicit in heresy for not acting righteously and swiftly in the name of God.

⁷⁴ *Ibid*, 15.

⁷⁵ *Ibid*, 15.

⁷⁶ *Ibid*, 15.

⁷⁷ *Ibid*, 16.

⁷⁸ *Ibid*, 16.

⁷⁹ *Ibid*, 16.

The heretical group generating a large following in Languedoc region was the Cathars. Historian M.D. Lambert explains, “more than any other group, the Cathar heretics inspired alarm and hostility.”⁸⁰ The fear of the Cathars was rooted in their ability to spread quickly amongst lay classes in society.⁸¹ Catharism argued that individuals who preformed a specific series of prayer and penance were deemed “perfect” and could therefore recite the Lord’s Prayer.⁸² In Christian theology, however, the Lord’s Prayer was reserved solely for certain members of the clergy. Thus, central to Catharism was a decentralization of the Church, pulling spiritual power away from the clergymen, and granting it to the laymen followers of Catharism. Many amongst the Latin Christian clerics argued that this heresy had made its way into the upper tiers of society and within Count Raymond VI’s royal court.⁸³ The general acceptance of Catharism throughout southern France was evidence of the dangers heresy could pose to Christian territory.

By condemning the Count of Toulouse as a heretic, he was also deemed a traitor. In 1199, before calling the Albigensian Crusade, Pope Innocent III revived portions of Justinian’s Roman law that “equated heresy with treason.”⁸⁴ The charge of heresy went beyond the erroneous preaching of scripture, but constituted a political subversion of the papal state. Count Raymond VI of Toulouse was found guilty of conspiring against the Church and the Pope, who was the vicar of God. Therefore, in the Augustinian tradition of just war, Pope Innocent III called for the Albigensian crusade in 1209. He proclaimed, “Go forth with the church’s cry of anguish ringing in your ears. Fill your souls with godly rage to avenge the insult done to the Lord.”⁸⁵

⁸⁰ M.D. Lambert, *Medieval Heresy*, 108.

⁸¹ *Ibid*, 118.

⁸² *Ibid*, 109.

⁸³ *Ibid*, 118.

⁸⁴ Moore, *The War on Heresy*, 8.

⁸⁵ Jonathan Sumption, *The Albigensian Crusade*, 77.

Under the control of Odo III, Duke of Burgundy, and Hervé de Donzy, the Count of Nevers, two prominent secular leaders of northern Frankish territories, an army under the cross gathered to uproot the Cathar heresy.⁸⁶ Pope Innocent III granted indulgences to the crusaders, promising eternal salvation in return for their militaristic pursuits in Southern France.⁸⁷ According to the accounts of the poet William of Tudela and his anonymous successor, the crusaders are documented as acting in the defense of Christianity and employed every means to accomplish their ends of eradicating heresy.⁸⁸ Although William of Tudela announces himself in the first several stanzas as a supporter of the papacy and its French allies, he took issue with the particular cruelty with which the crusaders destroyed heretics.⁸⁹ He reacted specifically to the unprecedented number of times fire was used to burn towns, villages, and heretics. Of the thirty-four cities sieged, twenty-three were destroyed by fire.⁹⁰ As part of this destruction by fire, numerous heretics were burned at the stake for their dangerous beliefs.

In the *Song of the Cathar Wars* there is mention of at least twenty-three cases of the use of fire. Apparent throughout the text was the author's aversion to such a violent display by the crusaders. As per the format of the text, *Song of the Cathar Wars* was recited to a court of nobility as a poem.⁹¹ In the pursuit of eliciting a stronger reaction from listeners, William of Tudela inserts his personal opinions on the atrocities as he recounts the series of events. Despite the emphasis he places on the bloodshed of the Albigensian Crusade, William of Tudela's account and the narrative is largely historically corroborated with only two minor errors in

⁸⁶ *Ibid*, 78.

⁸⁷ *Ibid*, 77.

⁸⁸ Janet Shirely, "Introduction" to *A Song of the Cathar Wars: A History of the Albigensian Crusade*, written by William of Tudela and anonymous, trans. by Janet Shirely, (Burlington: Ashgate, 2011), 2.

⁸⁹ Janet Shirely, "Introduction," 1.

⁹⁰ William of Tudela and Anonymous, *The Song of the Cathar Wars*.

⁹¹ *Ibid*, 4.

detail.⁹² Indeed, the extent of violence narrated by William of Tudela reveals just how important to Latin Christendom the eradication the Cathar heresy became.

With Papal mandate from Innocent III, the crusaders traveled to the Languedoc with the intention of capturing the city of Béziers first. Emissaries from the armies of the Franks offered the citizens a potential reprieve. The Papal legate had a list of more than two hundred



known heretics living in Béziers, and **Figure Three. "Béziers in Modern France."**

in an attempt to avoid bloodshed, he offered the Christians inhabiting Béziers an opportunity to turn in the heretics living among them, and in turn, the crusaders would refrain from destroying the city.⁹³ Should the citizens of Béziers deny the opportunity to give up the Cathars among them, "they would be stripped of all they had and put to the sword."⁹⁴ The threat of the sword, however, would not be the fate of the Christians and the Cathars in Béziers.

Drawing in practice from the story of Sodom and Gomorrah, in which God refused to save even the worthy men amongst the sinners, even the Latin Christians in Béziers were

⁹² *Ibid*, 4. The errors Janet Shirely explains historians have noted are the duration of the siege of Termes and location of a council held at Arles which was most likely held at Montpellier. Beyond these two details, his narrative matches those of other chroniclers.

⁹³ Jonathan Sumption, *The Albigensian Crusade*, 92; William of Tudela and anonymous, *The Song of the Cathar Wars*, trans. Janet Shirley, (Burlington: Ashgate, 2011). 19.

⁹⁴ *Ibid*, 19.

punished by the crusaders.⁹⁵ Protecting and sheltering heretics carried the same heretical sentence as participating in heresy. The violence broke out when a Frankish “chief and his servant lads,” stormed the streets to plunder whatever was within grasp.⁹⁶ Following the servants, a second wave of invaders rampaged the city, “they invaded the churches and slaughtered the terrified citizens who had gathered there for safety.”⁹⁷ There were no righteous citizens in the Latin Christian crusaders’ judgment. The entire city was consumed in flames. There was no disinclination to save the lives of Christians, not even those seeking refuge in the cathedral, as the Cathedral of Béziers was set aflame at the hands of the crusaders.⁹⁸

The symbolism evoked by burning a cathedral and massacring individuals who sought sanctuary inside churches throughout Béziers reveals the depth of conviction crusaders held in their battle against heresy. Despite the massacre at the Cathedral of Béziers, crusaders had long upheld the sanctity of Latin Christian churches. In another battle of the Albigensian crusade, a Frankish knight, Peter of les Vaux-de-Cernay, condemns the murderer of a priest in a church; “his cruel attacker showed no respect for the holy place or the holy man; he raised the sharp lancet which he held and struck a fierce blow through the centre of the priest’s tonsure, murdering the Church’s minister in the church.”⁹⁹ However, the crusading army, carrying the cross and fighting for God, only showed mercy for righteous Christians in their campaign. By seeking refuge inside churches the townspeople believed they would be safe, given the sanctuary of the space. Latin Christians, however, only recognized the sanctity of true Christian churches and clergymen whilst encouraging the destruction everything heretical.

⁹⁵ *The Holy Bible*, Genesis 19:27.

⁹⁶ William of Tudela and Anonymous, *The Song of the Cathar Wars*, 21.

⁹⁷ Jonathan Sumption, *The Albigensian Crusade*, 93.

⁹⁸ William of Tudela and Anonymous, *The Song of the Cathar Wars*, 21.

⁹⁹ Peter of les Vaux-de-Cernay, *Historia Albigensis*, trans. W.A. and M.D. Sibly, (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 1998), 113.

Mercy was not given to Latin Christians because they did not act righteously. Thus, even though the vast majority of Béziers' populous was not known heretics all inhabitants suffered the same fate, incendiarism. The list of two hundred known heretics in the hands of the papal legate named only a mere one percent of the city's total population as Cathar heretics, two hundred people of twenty thousand inhabitants.¹⁰⁰ The sinful decision to harbor heretics made by the citizens was inherently heresy and thus must be destroyed. Just as Abraham pleads with God asking for salvation for at least ten righteous men in Sodom and Gomorrah, none can be spared so long as they protect and live among heretics. Heretics and their contemporaries had to be purged.

Another source chronicling the massacre at Béziers, by William of Puylaurens, a former chaplain of the Count of Toulouse, further justifies the mass murder of Béziers' inhabitants on the grounds of their heretical convictions:

It was widely held at the time that the Lord had wrought vengeance on them for their having treacherously murdered their lord Trencavel on the same feast day, although they were also charged with unspeakable offences by way of heretical beliefs and blasphemies.¹⁰¹

As an extremely devout and pious Christian, the narrative of William of Puylaurens revealed a zealous abhorrence towards heretics. He “was unswervingly loyal to the Catholic Church” as a Latin chronicler of the crusaders' efforts in southern France.¹⁰² Written after returning from the battles of the Albigensian Crusade, the chronicle violently condemned the Cathar heretics. He denounces the inhabitants, “for their sins, bereft of divine guidance.”¹⁰³ Much like the narrative

¹⁰⁰ Charles Phillips, “Massacre of Beziers,” French History, *Encyclopedia Britannica*, last modified March 22, 2017, <https://www.britannica.com/event/Massacre-at-Beziers>

¹⁰¹ William of Puylaurens, *The Chronicle of William of Puylaurens: The Albigensian Crusade and its Aftermath*, trans. W.A. and M.D. Sibly, (Rochester: The Boydell Press, 2003), 33.

¹⁰² *Ibid*, 33.

¹⁰³ *Ibid*, 33.

of Robert the Monk, the decisiveness on the behalf of the crusaders is justified because the heretics defy God and the Church. Unlike William of Tudela, William of Puylaurens writes with no remorse, only the conviction of righteousness.



Figure Four. "Lavar in Modern France."

The siege and subsequent burning of Béziers was followed by a similar incident in Lavar. It was the next city the crusaders besieged, though it offered no strategic military advantage. The citizens of Lavar were notorious for protecting one of the largest heretical populations in southern France.¹⁰⁴ The people of Lavar were renowned for their heresy that even William of Tudela, who often speaks of the atrocities committed by the crusaders, commends them for swiftly administering justice.

He claims, "it is right that they should be punished and suffer so terribly, for... they refuse to obey the clerks and crusaders."¹⁰⁵ In Lavar, unlike Béziers, as the siege was concluded, the townspeople were removed, rounded up in a field and then burned. The crusaders "collected as many as four hundred of [the townspeople] in a meadow and burned them."¹⁰⁶ The example made of the citizens of Lavar reinforced the legal system of Western Europe: heresy met no toleration. However, what sets the Albigensian Crusade apart from the legal sanctions is that,

¹⁰⁴ Jonathan Sumption, *The Albigensian Crusade*, 129.

¹⁰⁵ William of Tudela and Anonymous, *The Song of the Cathar Wars*, 41-42.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid*, 41.

crusaders rarely offered heretics a chance to recount their heresy and return to proper Christianity.¹⁰⁷

The fact that heretics were systematically burned over a two hundred year span in the crusades reveals the extent to which heresy constituted a threat to the established Church. Moreover, the Albigensian Crusade exposes just how important it was for Latin Christian crusaders to root out all heretics even if it means executing Christians. In fact, rather than repulsion towards such violence, crusaders were revered for eradicating heresy in the region. The knight and chronicler Peter of les Vaux-de-Cernay, notes the satisfaction the crusaders took in burning the people of Lavaur.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁷ Moore, *The War on Heresy*, 9.

¹⁰⁸ Peter of les Vaux-de-Cernay, *Historia Albigensis*, 33.

Chapter Three: The Orthodox Christian Dilemma

The Hagia Sophia, a church of magnificent splendor and the seat of the Orthodox Christian Patriarch, held mass on July 16th, 1054. On this day, two papal legates delivered a Papal Bull from Rome to the church's altar. It contained notice of the Orthodox Church and its constituents' excommunication from Latin Christendom.¹⁰⁹ Although this is an isolated incident at the apex of a long history of miscommunications and distrust, the excommunication led to the schism between eastern Orthodox Christians and western Latin Christians.

Rather than being outside the Christian faith, Orthodox Christians and Latin Christians still recognized the other as Christian. Historian Steven Runciman defines schism as, "a separate faction within the Church, whereas heresy is associated with false doctrine."¹¹⁰ The term schism was used to define the relationship between the Latin Christian Church of Western Europe and the Orthodox Christian Church in the Byzantine Empire, although a deeper animosity between the two groups persisted. Besides one theological disagreement over the filioque, or division between God and "the Son of God," both Churches believed in the same God and recited the same bible.¹¹¹ However, the Eastern and Western Churches were deeply separated culturally, based on a lingering resentment from the fall of the Roman Empire. Runciman furthers that the underlying problems that plagued their relationship, though touching on liturgical, personal, and

¹⁰⁹ Matt Stefon and Geoffrey Wainwright, "The Great east-west Schism," in *The Church and its History, Encyclopedia Britannica*, last modified November 30, 2017, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Christianity/The-Photian-schism-and-the-great-East-West-schism#ref300921>.

¹¹⁰ Steven Runciman, *The Eastern Schism: A Study of the Papacy and the Eastern Churches During the XIth and XIIth Centuries*, (Oxford: Claredon Press, 1955), 1.

¹¹¹ Matt Stefon and Geoffrey Wainwright, "The Great east-west Schism."

economic disagreements, were rooted in nationalistic rivalries, which made “disputes more bitter.”¹¹²

The somewhat problematic label of schism cast the Orthodox Church and its followers as neither heretical nor of the same status as Latin Christians. At the onset of the First Crusade, Pope Urban II sent Frankish troops to the Emperor of Byzantium Alexios II’s aid to reclaim Christian lands and avenge Christian deaths, even though the ‘Christians’ he referred to were the Orthodox Christians.¹¹³ The longer tradition of antagonism between the two Churches made it difficult to maintain this alliance throughout the crusades that were sent on campaigns through Byzantium to reclaim the Holy Land. The Byzantines, Greeks, or Christians, as the Latin Christian sources interchangeably refer to followers of the Orthodox Christian sect, did not hold a consistent position in the opinions of crusaders as either enemy or ally. Rather, the confusion surrounding the classification of the Greeks was a point of contention throughout the crusades. The problem of labeling the Greeks from the perspective of the Latin Christians stems from the duality of heretical language and derogatory phrases that were interchangeably used to indicate their humanity.

A recurrent theme throughout crusading texts is the denunciation of the Greeks, for both their religion and their corrupt characters. Robert the Monk, in the First Crusade, refers to the Greeks as “an effeminate race” whose soldiers only fought (and inadequately at that) for the Patriarch because they were paid.¹¹⁴ The Franks were comparing the futile, compulsory military of the Byzantines to the crusaders’ voluntary participation. The crusaders believed themselves to

¹¹² Steven Runciman, *The Eastern Schism*, 2.

¹¹³ OJ Thatcher and E.H. McNeal, “Calling the Crusades,” 52.

¹¹⁴ Robert of Remis, *Robert the Monk’s History*, 137; *Ibid*, 97.

be fulfilling the desire of God; their rallying cry claimed, “God wills it!”¹¹⁵ The Crusaders concluded that the Latin Christian enjoyed superiority in battle. These condescending claims are used repeatedly in descriptions of the Greeks throughout the Third and Fourth Crusades.¹¹⁶ Apparent from such remarks, is an objection to the Orthodox Christian belief in God. The Greeks were not truly men of God in the way righteous Latin Christians were; thus, the Orthodox Christians lacked equal respect in the eyes of Latin Christians. Ultimately, the Byzantines were Christians, deserving respecting, but given their culture and minor difference in theology, they were not granted equal status of Latin Christians. Acceptance or appeasement of another culture, however, did not endure throughout the crusades. The Latin Christian views of the Greeks quickly devolved into one of abhorrence and distrust. During the Second Crusade, the term heretic was used more prevalently to describe the Byzantines. The Frankish Monk, Odo de Deuil, wrote, “[w]e know other heresies of theirs, both concerning the treatment of the Eucharist and concerning the procession of the Holy Ghost.”¹¹⁷

Byzantium occupied a unique position, that of a nearly heretical sect and of equal status of Christians. Labeled as neither equal nor heretics by the Latin Christians, Greeks were not destined to suffer as heretics had before; yet, the escalation of conflict and animosity between the two groups changed the crusaders’ stance on the use of fire against Greeks as they more

¹¹⁵ *Ibid*, 81.

¹¹⁶ *Chronicles of the Third Crusade: A translation of the Itinerarium Peregrinorum et Gest Regis Ricardi*, trans. Helen J. Nicholson, (Brookfield: Ashgate, 1997), 57; Robert di Clari, *The Conquest of Constantinople*, trans. Edgar Holmes McNeal, (New York: Columbia, 2005), 100.

¹¹⁷ Odo de Deuil, *De profectione Ludovici VII in orientem*, ed., trans. Virginia Gingerick Berry, (New York: Columbia, 1948), 56-57. The specific labeling of Greeks as heretics is not isolated to just Odo’s text, but also seen in Steven Runciman’s *History of the Crusades*, who writes of a longer tradition of known Greek heresy from the perspective of Latin Christendom. Steven Runciman, *The First Crusade and the Foundation of the Kingdom of Jerusalem*, vol. 1 of *A History of the Crusades*, (London: Cambridge, 1951), 23.

frequently interacted. While the label ‘heretic’ carried the sentence of incendiarism, this form of violence was often not accepted when dealing with Orthodox Christians.



Figure Five. Neal Schwartz, "The First Crusade."

The People's Crusade

In 1095 Pope Urban II called for the First Crusade; he commanded the Frankish armies to come to the aid Emperor Alexios II of Byzantium against the threat of the Seljuk Turks. Although some bishops preached the crusade as a way to recruit a following, it was mainly evangelical preachers among the poorer classes who rallied the initial group of crusaders. Most notable among the preachers of the crusade was Peter the Hermit.¹¹⁸ Traveling throughout Western Europe, Peter the Hermit recruited some fifteen thousand men to take part in the initial pilgrimage to Jerusalem.¹¹⁹ His crusade was later called the People's Crusade. Without military leadership, the men set off to Jerusalem as “a casual but consistent stream of pilgrims without leaders or any form of organization” that eventually became notorious for pillaging the

¹¹⁸ Steven Runciman, *The First Crusade*, 113.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid*, 114.

Greeks.¹²⁰ Bound by only the preaching of Peter the Hermit, the crusaders quickly “gave themselves over to wickedness, for they destroyed and burned the palaces of the city.”¹²¹

The People’s Crusade was condemned and considered dangerous among the Byzantines chroniclers for the violence they wrongfully sought against the Greeks.¹²² The daughter of the Byzantine emperor, Anna Komnene, recounted that certain men amongst Peter the Hermit’s army sought to overthrow the “long coveted Roman Empire,” or the Byzantine state, because of the violence exhibited against the Byzantine non-combatants.¹²³ She illustrates the distrust of Latin Christian ambitions as they crossed through the region.

A similar sentiment of condemnation for unprecedented violence towards the Byzantines is echoed in Latin sources. An English chronicler, the Benedictine Monk Oderic Vitalis, wrote: “acting with horrible cruelty to the whole population... [the crusaders] impaled others on wooden spits and roasted them over a fire.”¹²⁴ Even though Oderic Vitalis lists the use of fire among other atrocities committed by Latin Christians, he singled out the use of fire as a particularly violent act, condemning the “horrible cruelties” inflicted upon the whole population.¹²⁵ The language he employs suggests the harm of using fire indiscriminately against the general population, rather than a select group. Latin Christians established a precedent for the use of fire as a form of punishment exclusive for heretics who have abandoned God and refuse to

¹²⁰ *Ibid*, 115.

¹²¹ Anonymous, *The Deeds of the Franks and Other Jerusalem Bound Pilgrims: The Earliest Chronicle of the First Crusade*, ed. and trans. Nirmal Dass, (New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2011), 26.

¹²² Steven Runciman, *The First Crusade*, 117; Thomas Asbridge, *The First Crusade: A New History*, (New York: Oxford), 2004, 101.

¹²³ Anna Komnene, *The Alexiad*, X, 6, trans. E.R.A. Sewter and ed. Peter Frankopan (London: Penguin Classics, 2003), 279.

¹²⁴ Oderic Vitalis, *The Ecclesiastical History of the Orderic Vitalis*, vol 5, ed. and trans. M. Chibnall, (Oxford, 1975), 33.

¹²⁵ *Ibid*, 33.

recant their heresies.¹²⁶ Therefore, Oderic's revulsion against the use of violence directed at the Greek people shows that at the time of the People's Crusade around 1096, the Byzantines were still considered Christians, believing in the same God, which should have granted them certain safeties from the use of fire as a weapon even in war.

These sentiments are echoed in Robert the Monk's *Historia Iherosolimitana*. Like Oderic Vitalis, Robert the Monk condemns the use of fire and violence that this group of Latin Christians incited: "Even though they have a prince, they still continue to plunder: they set on fire the houses they came across and stripped the churches of their riches and ornaments."¹²⁷ By condemning the prince's lack of leadership, Robert is suggesting that Latin Christian military leadership should have prevented the plundering and use of fire against Greek civilians and churches. In a categorized statement of contempt for the violence inflicted by the People's Crusade, Robert's text suggests the particular harm that fire brought – the utter destruction that it causes should be reserved for select instances and against certain groups. The significance of the destructive and symbolic powers of fire was not the result. Fire was only harmful and unjust in this particular context of being used against Christians, even if it was a different sect. Robert and Oderic, both recognized the use of fire as unjust and a particularly cruel form of murder. To them, this extreme form of violence is not an accepted military tactic against Orthodox Christians.

Other sources corroborate a similar narrative of the rampage and devastation left by Peter the Hermit's crusade. *Gesta Francorum et aliorum Hierosolimitanorum* is an anonymous source

¹²⁶ R.I. Moore, *The War on Heresy*, 9.

¹²⁷ Robert the Monk, *Robert the Monk's History*, 56-57.

considered to be one of the most important and accurate sources of the First Crusade.¹²⁸ The narrative follows the literary tradition in medieval Europe wherein the story is meant to “make it obvious that this event is just one more episode in God’s grand scheme of redemption for humankind.”¹²⁹ The author of *Gesta Francorum* reinforces how opposed the Franks were to the rampage that was the People’s Crusade as well as condemning the initial crusaders as acting against God and the Pope’s will; “After they crossed over, they did not cease from doing all kinds of evil deeds, burning and devastating homes and Churches.”¹³⁰ Plundering and using fire against Greeks were the evil deeds tainting the legacy of the People’s Crusade. From these texts, and others like it that condemn the use of fire against the Greeks, there are parameters on the use of fire as a weapon insofar as recognized Christians should not have endured this suffering.

¹²⁸ Nirmal Dass, “Introduction” to *The Deeds of the Franks and other Jerusalem-Bound Pilgrims*, ed. and trans. by Nirmal Dass, (New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2011), 1.

¹²⁹ *Ibid*, 2.

¹³⁰ Anonymous, *The Deeds of the Franks and other Jerusalem-Bound Pilgrims*, ed. and trans. by Nirmal Dass, (New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2011), 26.



Figure Six. "The Second Crusade, 1147-49."

The Second Crusade

The Second Crusade, from 1147 to 1149, ended in a loss for Latin Christendom with the holy Christian territory of Jerusalem returning to the Seljuk Turks.¹³¹ Latin Christians occupied and fought in three separate theaters of war in the Second Crusade: crusaders fought in the west in Spain, in the North in Slavic territories, and to the east against the Turks.¹³² Leading the eastern expedition was Conrad III of Germany and following closely behind him was a Frankish army under the lead of King Louis VII. Both armies set out with the intent of recapturing the holy city of Edessa from the Turks.¹³³ Problem arose between the Byzantines and the Latin

¹³¹ Jonathan Phillips, *The Second Crusade: Extending the Frontiers of Christendom*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), xxiv.

¹³² *Ibid*, xxvii.

¹³³ *Ibid*, 168.

Christians in the crossing to Edessa. A Frankish monk, Odo de Deuil, who wrote on the military endeavors of King Louis VII, noted that the route with the most favorable conditions to Edessa was also the longest, which happened to run throughout the length of the the Byzantine Empire.¹³⁴

Odo de Deuil chronicles the first half of the Second Crusade as Latin Christian crusaders from both France and Germany traveled through Byzantium. He notes the Byzantines' denial to provide ample provisions and shelter to crusaders, which strained the already arduous road to Edessa. Tensions between the two groups grew to be so heightened that the German army destroyed an unnamed Byzantine village. As Odo de Deuil narrates, the Latin Christian troops were stationed outside a Byzantine town along the route to Edessa, some of the wealthier among the crusaders entered to purchase provisions and lodging. The incident began when a Greek circus performer entered a bar and began to charm a snake as well as perform other circus acts.¹³⁵ The Germans, abashed by the sorcery, "tore him to bits."¹³⁶

The animosity between the Latin Christians and the Greeks was so tense that it was the impetus that escalated the conflict; for, "they attributed the crimes of one man to all, saying that the Greeks wished to poison them."¹³⁷ The relationship between the Greeks and the crusaders had been strained since the People's Crusade, and worsened during the Second Crusade, which provoked the battle to break out in the town. It was ultimately the degrading and mistrusted view of the Greeks that intensified the conflict to the point that the Germans setting fire to the town.¹³⁸

¹³⁴ Odo de Deuil, *De profectione Ludovici VII in orientem*, ed., trans. Virginia Gingerick Berry, (New York: Columbia, 1948), 89.

¹³⁵ *Ibid*, 43.

¹³⁶ *Ibid*, 43.

¹³⁷ *Ibid*, 43.

¹³⁸ *Ibid*, 43.

The Germans “rallied in order to avenge their own shame and the slaughter of their fallen comrades, and they burned nearly everything outside the walls.”¹³⁹ The decision to use fire is an appropriate response given the murder of German crusaders by the villagers. In this case, the use of fire is acceptable, as noted by Odo de Deuil, because the Germans were exacting vengeance. The Greeks threatened the Latin Christian mission to re-conquer Edessa by threatening crusaders; thus, endangering what the Latin Christians believed was God’s mission. When Orthodox Christians opposed the crusading army, they no longer were granted protections against the use of fire.

¹³⁹ *Ibid*, 43.



Figure Seven. "The Fourth Crusade, 1202-04."

The Fate of Constantinople in the Fourth Crusade

The Fourth Crusade is unlike previous Holy Wars insofar as it shows the moral hazard of political interests corrupting the crusaders who set out to fulfill God's mission. What began as a mission led by the Franks to face the threat of the Seljuk Turk army in 1202, ended with the sack of Constantinople, capital of the Byzantine Empire, in 1204. Constantinople was set aflame by the Latin Christian army, killing the non-combatant, Orthodox Christian inhabitants.

The sack of Constantinople, however, presents as an appropriate extension of a just war by the Latin Christian sources. Pope Innocent III granted further allowances of violence in the name of Holy War with Papal Bull issued in 1178.¹⁴⁰ Historian and translator of Fourth Crusade

¹⁴⁰ Edgar Holmes McNeal, "Introduction" to *The Conquest of Constantinople*, ed. and trans. Edgar Holmes McNeal, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 45.

texts, Edgar Holmes McNeal explains “Pope Innocent had warned the crusaders not to attack any Christian lands ‘unless the inhabitants should wickedly oppose their march or some other *just or necessary cause* should arise.’”¹⁴¹ The value of this Papal Bull redefined when violence was acceptable and against whom it may be used. For crusaders this provided them with flexibility, should they violently combat other Christians. Unlike the previous discussion on violence that was rooted in St. Augustine’s formula of just war requiring just cause, just purpose, and proper authority, Pope Innocent III was claiming just cause for every action in the pursuit of the crusaders’ mission. From this mandate it could be argued that any opponent to the crusading army became an enemy to God’s will and the need to retake the Holy Land.¹⁴² Even before embarking on the Fourth Crusade, crusading armies knew of the acceptance of violence towards Christians should they oppose crusading efforts.

The Papal Bull provides the basis from which a Frankish narrative, written by the Robert di Clari, justified the violence behind the Latin Christians ambitions in their campaign to conquer Constantinople. As a knight who would be privy to the decisions and perhaps even the discussions of the Kings leading this expedition, Robert di Clari focused on justifying and documenting the decisions made and the subsequent actions taken in wartime, something not done by previous sources from crusaders. Moreover, for the first time in the various crusading texts presented, members of the clergy became consultants in determinations and discussions of battles and sieges.

At the onset of the Forth Crusade, the Franks allied with the deposed Patriarch of Byzantium’s son, Prince Alexius IV. An envoy from Prince Alexius IV to the Frankish army

¹⁴¹ *Ibid*, 45.

¹⁴² In Robert the Monk’s telling of Pope Urban II’s speech, he concludes that the people were riveted, preaching, “God wills it!” From this point forward, the language of God’s mission and Papal authority to bring about the crusades melded the will of God with the Crusades.

offered that with the restoration of Alexius on the royal throne, Alexius would bring the “the whole empire under the authority of Rome, from which it has long been estranged.”¹⁴³ This political pursuit in the name of Christendom, as encouraged by Prince Alexius IV of Byzantium, required a diversion of the crusading army from its intended goal from fighting the Seljuk Turks to the capture of Constantinople.

Armed with this self-serving rationale, the Latin Christians besiege the city in order to restore the rightful ruler, Alexius IV, and bring the Orthodox Christian state under the dominion of the papacy. The problem, however, was not how the crusaders would claim the throne for Alexius, but how they would preserve their power over another state with a massive population that believed in another form of Christianity. Difficulty arose for the crusaders in Constantinople when a Byzantine leader murdered Alexius IV.¹⁴⁴ The Frankish barons knew their “position had become desperate” given their support of Alexius IV further antagonized them in the minds of the people of Constantinople.¹⁴⁵ Without recourse the crusaders faced a difficult decision of either fleeing or fighting. Historian Jonathan Phillips argues, given the “antagonistic relationship” that already existed with an anti-West Patriarch seizing control, “the crusaders could more readily construct a case to explain an attack on the Greeks.”¹⁴⁶ After an atrocious battle for the city, Robert di Clari unsurprisingly states, “thus the city was taken.”¹⁴⁷

Swiftly after toppling the wall Constantinople, hoards of crusaders spilled into city and soon faced the daunting task of asserting control over the population of roughly five hundred

¹⁴³ Jonathan Phillips, *The Fourth Crusade*, 127.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid*, 234.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid*, 235.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid*, 236.

¹⁴⁷ Robert of Clari, *The Conquest of Constantinople*, 99.

thousand Orthodox Christians.¹⁴⁸ Beset that they could not subdue the Greeks even after conquest, the crusaders considered their limited options to take the city without facing massive crusader losses. As Robert di Clari rationalizes, given the perceived danger the Greeks residing in Constantinople opposition to the crusaders' control, the Franks determined, "they would not be able to defend themselves, or lest the city should be set on fire behind them and they be burned."¹⁴⁹

In the sack of Constantinople, setting fire to the city and its inhabitants is presented as the most reasonable option left to the crusaders, given the nature of the layout of the streets of Constantinople; "lest [the Greeks] should slay [the Franks] in the streets, which were so narrow that they would not be able to defend themselves."¹⁵⁰ In the end, a German count, supposedly Bertold of Katzenellenbogen, is attributed with setting the fire that burned Constantinople.¹⁵¹ From the military's perspective, the crusaders were acting within necessary means to defend their hold over Constantinople. Moreover, Pope Innocent III's mandate granted violence against Christians for the pursuit of God's mission to spread Christianity. Thus, in burning Constantinople, Robert di Clari argues protecting the crusaders was protecting the will of God. Despite this righteous claim, the crusaders are still excommunicated upon their return from this crusade.

In terms of the significance of incendiarism, however, Robert di Clari never refers to the Greeks as 'heretics.' As presented in chapter two, heretics and those associated with them will indisputably receive justice in the form of incendiarism; yet, this term is omitted in Robert di Clari's writing. The omission of condemning the Greeks is recognition on the part of the Latin

¹⁴⁸ Jonathan Phillips, *The Fourth Crusade*, 236.

¹⁴⁹ Robert of Clari, *The Conquest of Constantinople*, 99.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid*, 99.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid*, 100.

Christians that burning Constantinople was a misguided and wrong decision. Despite the persistent presentation of the Orthodox as a dangerous or lesser ‘other’ that the Latin Christians engaged with in the other crusading texts, there is no condescending sentiment towards the Greeks in his text. That is not an indication that the decades of suspicion and distrust towards the Orthodox Christians no longer existed by the Fourth Crusade. In fact, as Jonathan Phillips argues, the antagonism between the two states led to the decision of the crusaders to sack Constantinople.¹⁵² The lack of either the condemning title ‘heretic’ or the signaling of any real menaces felt towards the Byzantines from the crusaders reinforces the notion that fire may only be used against heretics and their co-conspirators.

¹⁵² Jonathan Phillips, *The Fourth Crusade*, 236.

Chapter Four: Muslim Combatants

The conception of the crusades originated in Pope Urban II's speech at Claremont in 1095. His discourse established a narrative that defined an enemy of all Christendom, both Eastern and Western Churches, as the Seljuk Turks. As recorded by the eyewitness account of Fulcher of Chartres, Pope Urban II claimed the crusades to be "a battle against the pagans."¹⁵³ Muslims were worse than sinners; they were worshipers of "demons."¹⁵⁴ This same heretical language is mirrored in Robert the Monk's account of the pope's speech, claiming the Turks to be "an accursed and foreign race, enemies of God."¹⁵⁵ Pope Urban II's speech laid out clear partitions between Christendom and Muslim Turks. As the Pope explained, the Turks were a group encroaching on Orthodox Christian land in the Holy Land and massacring innocent Christians, they threatened not only Christianity, but also Christendom's political control in the region.¹⁵⁶

The Seljuk Turks were referred to by Latin Christian sources as Saracens, Ishmaelites, pagans, and heathens, among other labels; apart from a few exceptions, the Turks were not uniformly referred to as 'Muslims' until the sixteenth century.¹⁵⁷ This is not due to a lack of knowledge of the religion of Islam, but more because of a disinterest on the part of Christians to meaningfully engage with Islam on a theological basis. Latin Christians, however, attempted to explain the vast military exploits of the Islamic Empire within the context of the Bible, even

¹⁵³ Fulcher of Chartres, "Urban's Speech - Version of Fulcher of Chartres" in *Muslim and Christian Contact in the Middle Ages: A Reader*, ed. Jarbel Rodriguez, (Ontario: University of Toronto Press, 2015), 56.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid*, 56.

¹⁵⁵ Robert of Remis, "Urban's Speech - Version of Robert the Monk" in *Muslim and Christian Contact in the Middle Ages: A Reader*, ed. Jarbel Rodriguez, (Ontario: University of Toronto Press, 2015), 56.

¹⁵⁶ Fulcher of Chartres, "Urban's Speech - Version of Fulcher of Chartres," 56.

¹⁵⁷ John V. Tolan, *Saracens: Islam and Europe in the Medieval European Imagination*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), xv.

centuries before the crusades.¹⁵⁸ As military conflict escalated between the two groups, Christians “portray Muslims primarily as military enemies, divine chastisement for Christian sins.”¹⁵⁹

In accordance with the biblical narrative of Ishmaelites, the militaristic, nomadic tribes of the Seljuk Turks originated further east into the Steppe territories. Around the tenth century, the Turks moved westward conquering territory to establish and spread their Sunni Islamic beliefs.¹⁶⁰ The Islamic Empire quickly spread throughout modern-day Iran, into the Arabian Peninsula, and even towards Byzantine territories in present day Turkey when the first crusade was heralded in 1095.¹⁶¹

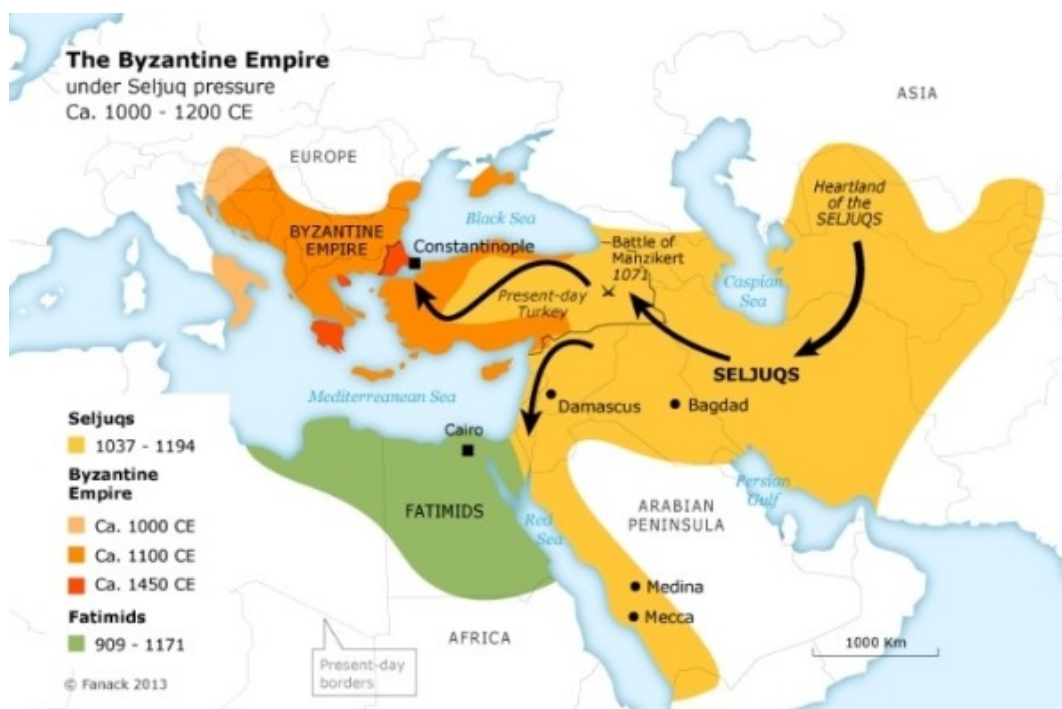


Figure Eight. Sehrat Engül, “Byzantine Empire Under Seljuk Pressure.”

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 69.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 72.

¹⁶⁰ Ahmed H. al-Rahim, “Seljuk Turks” in *The Oxford Dictionary of the Middle Ages*, ed. Robert E. Bjork, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), accessed on February 27, 2018, <http://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780198662624.001.0001/acref-9780198662624-e-5285>.

¹⁶¹ John V. Tolan, *Saracens*, 69.

The Latin Christian crusading narrative defined the Turks by their unparalleled violent tendencies in battle.¹⁶² Nonetheless, consistently lacking from the threat posed by Seljuk Turks is a threat to Christianity. The Muslim enemies of the first crusades were pagans or idolaters, but not heretics.¹⁶³ They threatened only political control over Christian states, not the Christian religion; they were a military threat not uncommon to Latin Christians, as they had fought the Vikings or Magyars.¹⁶⁴ Unlike the heretical sect of the Paulicians, who in the First Crusade were deemed a “canker and had already infected the surrounding regions with its depraved dogmas,” there is no such condemnation of Muslims that constituted them as such a malevolent threat.¹⁶⁵

Even as enemies in war, Muslim combatants, more often than not, were respected by their Latin Christian counterparts because of their military capabilities. A Seljuk Turkish knight, Usama Ibn Munqidh, wrote of Frankish knights respecting and enforcing his right as a Muslim to pray.¹⁶⁶ Some time following the end of the First Crusade, when the Latin Christians captured Jerusalem, Ibn Munqidh entered a mosque that had been converted into a church so that he could preform his afternoon prayer. A Frankish knight, following the Latin Christian liturgical practice of praying eastward, became distraught when Ibn Munqidh prayed toward Mecca. He then attempts to force Ibn Munqidh to pray facing the east. In defense of Ibn Munqidh a group of crusaders protect his right to pray; as Ibn Munqidh articulates, “a group of Templars hurried toward him, took hold of the Frank and took him away from me.”¹⁶⁷ The Latin Christian knights return and apologize to the Muslim knight saying, “this man is a stranger, he just arrived from

¹⁶² Robert of Remis, “Urban’s Speech - Version of Robert the Monk,” 56-58.

¹⁶³ John V. Tolan, *Saracens*, 106.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid*, 75.

¹⁶⁵ Robert of Remis, *Robert the Monk’s History*, 96.

¹⁶⁶ Usama Ibn Munqidh, *The Book of Contemplation: Islam and the Crusades*, trans. Paul M. Cobb, (London: Penguin Classics, 2008), 147.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid*, 147.

the Frankish lands... He has never before seen anyone who did not pray towards the east.”¹⁶⁸

What makes this story quite remarkable lies in the crusaders recognition of Islam as a separate and non-threatening religion.

Even though there are specific instances of Latin Christian sources labeling Muslims as pagans, God-less, and other immoral and derogatory terms, as witnessed in Pope Urban II's speech at Claremont, this rhetoric did not define the inter-combatant relations throughout the crusades. From the perspective of Latin Christian crusaders, Muslims “are not inherently evil but are shown as human beings who have either been degenerated by their evil beliefs... or in some cases have still maintained their virtue,” despite the violence that defined the relationship between Christians and Muslims.¹⁶⁹ Historian Benjamin Kedar argues the conception that coincided religious conviction against Islam with the pursuit of the crusades did not come about until the mid-to-late thirteenth century.¹⁷⁰ Until that point, throughout the crusades, Muslims were treated with more respect in battle because they were enemies of Christians in war, not enemies of religion.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid*, 147.

¹⁶⁹ Nicholas Morton, *Encountering Islam on the First Crusade*, (Cambridge: Cambridge, 2016), 49.

¹⁷⁰ Benjamin Z. Kedar, *Crusade and Mission: European Approaches toward the Muslims*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 160-161.



Figure Nine. Neal Schwartz, “The First Crusade.”

The First Crusade

Although the First Crusade was labeled by Pope Urban II as a battle against “an accursed and foreign race,” historian Nicholas Morton declares, “there is little to suggest that he is preaching to an audience that radiated an inherent sense of hatred towards Muslims.”¹⁷¹ Rather, Muslims had only minimal contact with Latin Christendom, mainly limited to the Iberian Peninsula and accounts from the Byzantines. Nonetheless, Fulcher of Chartres, quoting Urban II, recalled the commandment of Christ in his call to arms. The Pope willed that “Christ commands,” the Franks “destroy that vile race from the land of our friends.”¹⁷² The decisiveness

¹⁷¹ Robert the Monk, “Urban’s Speech - Version of Robert the Monk” in *Muslim and Christian Contact in the Middle Ages: A Reader*, ed. Jarbel Rodriguez, (Ontario: University of Toronto Press, 2015), 56; Nicholas Morton, *Encountering Islam*, 41.

¹⁷² Fulcher of Chartres, “Urban’s Speech - Version of Fulcher of Chartres” in *Muslim and Christian Contact in the Middle Ages: A Reader*, ed. Jarbel Rodriguez, (Ontario: University of Toronto Press, 2015), 56.

of the label as a “vile race” determines the Muslim Turks to be a vehement danger toward all of Christendom, striking an alliance between the Orthodox Christians of the east and Latin Christians to the West.

In 1096, the Frankish armies set off to re-conquer the Holy Lands, the City of Jerusalem. Robert the Monk, journeying with the Frankish army notes that immediate conflict between the Turks and Latin Christian forces arose. In their first encounter with the Turkish army, crusaders were unprepared for their military abilities; leaving the crusader camp in dire conditions with no provisions or access to water after a Turkish led attack.¹⁷³ When the Muslim forces returned to ambush the already defeated crusaders, the Franks ran into a nearby castle for refuge. The Turks encircled piles of wood round the castle, with the hope to “burn them alive.”¹⁷⁴ The besieged Christians, keen to save their lives, “set fire to the piles and with God’s help and a favorable wind burnt several of the enemy.”¹⁷⁵ The use of fire is framed as the crusaders sole option to save their lives, not a malicious action to eradicate the Muslim adversary threatening Christendom. Fire is used as a weapon of last resort; one that God endorsed and used to spare the crusaders. In the narrative of the crusades, this act is divine ordinance that Latin Christian ambition will endure, not that the Muslim forces must suffer. The idea of burning Muslims is not present in the first crusade.

As the crusaders continued on with their journey east of Constantinople, they targeted key Muslim strongholds; among these was the city of Nicaea. The anonymous source, *Gesta Francorum*, chronicling the Frankish army’s journey to Jerusalem, notes one other use of fire when besieging the Turkish held city of Nicaea. As standard siege military practices required, the

¹⁷³ Robert of Remis, Robert the Monk’s *History*, 87.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid*, 87.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid*, 87-88.

Franks dug underneath city's fortification and set fire below a tower, so as to break down the wall and enter the city.¹⁷⁶ This siege tactic, known as mining, burned wooden timbers underneath towers or walls so that "supports were burned away and the tower or section of a wall would collapse opening a breach that could be stormed."¹⁷⁷ Fire in this instance is not a device for punishment or murder, but a part of military tactic. Remarkably, in *Gesta Francorum*, like Robert the Monk's tale, the author reveres the military skills of the Muslims, despite their being Latin Christendom's formidable adversaries. Although, this author does not equate Muslim militants with their Christian counterparts, he applauds them and hints even at an intimidation of the Turks. The author notes, "for no other men are naturally born to be warriors as are the Franks and [the Turks]."¹⁷⁸

As the crusaders carried on with their mission, they had thirty violent encounters with the Turks.¹⁷⁹ Among these sieges and battles is the siege of Nicomedia, the battle for Roussa, and in the siege of Antioch; yet, not one of the descriptions of violence mentions the use of fire.¹⁸⁰ Rather, the Muslim combatants are noted for their skill as archers and the Latin Christians for their use in combat of the sword. In fact, Robert the Monk draws a moral equality between crusader and Muslim based off of military skill. Robert the Monk notes the caliber of soldiers as being particularly "distinguished" and "outstanding soldiers."¹⁸¹ He claims, the city's Muslim defenders "could have fought alongside our men on the battlefield if they had not been enemies

¹⁷⁶ Anonymous, *The Deeds of the Franks and other Jerusalem-Bound Pilgrims*, ed. and trans. by Nirmal Dass, (New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2011), 37.

¹⁷⁷ Sean McGlynn, "Siege Warfare: Tactics and Technology" in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Medieval Warfare and Military Technology*, vol. 3, ed. by Clifford J. Rodgers, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 268.

¹⁷⁸ Anonymous, *The Deeds of the Franks and other Jerusalem-Bound Pilgrims*, 43.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.* Calculated from the total number of battles, sieges, and plunders led by Latin Christians.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 108; *Ibid.*, 118; *ibid.*, 120.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 126.

of the name of Christ.”¹⁸² Unlike heretics or even Orthodox Christians, Muslims’ skill in war is revered by Latin Christian crusaders to the point that they consider Muslims equal and worthy adversaries. From these initial interactions with the Turks, a rhetoric of respect develops in Robert the Monk’s text that no other group encountered by the army had held.



Figure Ten. “The Kingdom of Jerusalem and Saladin’s Empire in 1187 A.D.”

The Battle of Hattin

On July 4, 1187, the Seljuk Turkish army, under the command of Salah al-Din Yusuf, otherwise referred to by Christian sources as Saladin, defeated the army of the Crusader States at the notorious Battle of Hattin.¹⁸³ William of Tyre, the Frankish knight, recounts the devastating defeat for Christendom. The battle took place in present-day northern Palestine, strategically located so that the loss, at the hands of Latin Christendom, enabled the Muslim army to easily re-

¹⁸² *Ibid*, 121.

¹⁸³ Peter W. Edbury, “Introduction” to *The Conquest of Jerusalem and the Third Crusade*, (Vermont: Ashgate Publishing Company, 1996), 1.

conquer the territories that had been won by Latin Christendom after the First Crusade.¹⁸⁴ The battle unfolded in a particularly gruesome manner for Latin Christian forces whom the Turks cornered against an arid and rocky hill named the Horns of Hattin.¹⁸⁵

The crusaders, with their backs to the rocky cliffs and encircled by the Muslim army, faced little chance for survival and dwindling provisions.¹⁸⁶ Their conditions worsened when, the Muslims attempting to exacerbate the dire condition of the Christians, set fire to dry brush surrounding the camp.¹⁸⁷ The goal of the fire was not to consume the Christians in flames and eradicate their existence as Christians did to heretics, nor was there mention of anyone perishing in fire. Muslims used fire so it “would cause as much harm as the sun.”¹⁸⁸ The sun, while possessing heavenly properties, did not evoke a trace of religious fervor in the text. As the text shows, the flames encircling the crusaders were not murderous, but more a tactic of psychological warfare meant to intimidate and deprave the Christian warriors. Even in the Christian response to the Battle of Hattin, the use of fire is not condemned as a particularly harsh and excessive display of brutality. The discussion of the battle from the crusader’s perspective reflects on ability of Saladin’s troops to perform with extraordinary skill even though the Latin Christians suffered a great military loss.

¹⁸⁴ Encyclopedia Britannica, “The Battle of Hattin,” in *Middle Eastern History*, The Edbury Britannica, published modified December 5, 2014, <https://www.britannica.com/event/Battle-of-Hattin>.

¹⁸⁵ Steven Runciman, *The Kingdom of Jerusalem and the Frankish East 1100-1187*, vol. 2 of *A History of the Crusades*, (London: Cambridge at the University Press, 1952), 457.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid*, 458.

¹⁸⁷ William of Tyre, “The Battle of Hattin and (4 July 1187) and its Aftermath” in *The Conquest of Jerusalem and the Third Crusade*, trans. Peter W. Edbury, (Great Britain: Scholar Press, 1996), 160.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid*, 160.



Figure Eleven. "The Third Crusade, 1189-91."

The Third Crusade

The Third Crusade was called for in 1189 after the fearsome Seljuk leader, Saladin, reclaimed the Latin Christian Kingdom of Jerusalem following the Battle of Hattin. The Turks were able to claim the Kingdom of Jerusalem as Islamic territory by October of 1187, roughly four months after the Battle of Hattin.¹⁸⁹ In response, Pope Gregory VIII issued a Papal Bull in 1189 calling upon Latin Christian armies to return to the Holy Land under Christian control.¹⁹⁰ The Seljuk Empire posed considerable threat to the stronghold of the presence and control of Christendom in the East; thus, a variety of secular leaders from France (Philip II), Sicily

¹⁸⁹ Thomas F. Madden, and Gary Dickenson, "The Third Crusade" in *The Encyclopedia Britannica*, published January 18, 2018, <https://www.britannica.com/event/Crusades/The-Third-Crusade>.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

(William II), England, Finland, and Germany, among others headed the call and set out to the Holy Lands.¹⁹¹

Crusaders, after their loss at the Battle of Hattin, fled to the city of Tyre for refuge. Saladin, intent to drive the crusaders out of the region, besieged the city for nearly two months. In the anonymous Latin Christian source, *Itinerarium Peregrinorum et Gesta Regis Ricardi*, Saladin watches as “His remaining stonethrowers and galleys were being burned up before his very eyes.”¹⁹² The Christians, besieged by Muslims, had little choice but to prevent their city being over-taken, and for this reason set fire to the siege engines.¹⁹³ The use of fire in this instance was part of warfare, necessarily and to be expected. The display of fire shown against the Muslim forces is not evoking the same religious significance as fire does when used against heretics because it was not designed to destroy individuals accused of crimes against Christendom. Fire, as seen in the siege of Tyre is the sole means crusaders believed for successfully besieging the city; thus, fire becomes a weapon as indispensable as a sword. The siege of Tyre is evidence that fire requires a context with which it must be used in order to inflict damage.

By the Third Crusade, the use of fire as a weapon of defense against Muslims becomes commonplace as a military practice. Fire, though not incendiarism, is frequently used especially as the number of violent interactions between Latin Christians and the Turks nearly doubled from the previous two crusades.¹⁹⁴ Despite the use of fire more frequently used in conflict

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁹² Anonymous, *Chronicles of the Third Crusade: A translation of Itinerarium Peregrinorum et Gest Regis Ricardi*, trans. Helen J. Nicholson, (Brookfield: Ashgate, 1997), 41.

¹⁹³ Sean McGlynn, “Siege Warfare: Tactics and Technology,” 268.

¹⁹⁴ From the research I conducted, the First Crusade had a total of 29 violent interactions between the Muslims and Franks. In the Second Crusade, there were at least 11 violent interactions; however, most Muslim forces were under Orthodox Christian military leadership. In

between Muslims and Christians, in remaining consistent with the First Crusade, the use of fire is not used explicitly with the intent of murder, but as military tactic in siege and naval battles. Blatant incendiarism, or the practice of setting fire with the explicit intent of executing is not seen. Following the same military tactics as in the First Crusade in the siege of Nicaea, fire in sieges was commonplace, so long as it was used with the intent of burning siege or naval machines, not people. This, however, should not to overlook the fact that men still died because of fire; the difference in the treatment of Muslims lies that Latin Christians were not using fire with the intent of punishing Muslims within a religious legal framework. A belief in a different deity did not warrant the use of fire to eliminate Muslims, despite the threat they posed to the political stronghold of Christendom.

The siege of Tyre ended with a victory for the Latin Christian army. Saladin and his army retreated to the Muslim stronghold of Acre, a city exposed to the Mediterranean Sea along its southern and western walls.¹⁹⁵ The Latin Christian military besieged the city with both a naval fleet and an army of foot soldiers. At the siege of Acre, the author of *Itinerarium Peregrinorum* encounters Greek fire for the first time. Although accredited to the Byzantines, Muslim alchemists initially created Greek fire.¹⁹⁶ While today the exact chemical components are unknown, remaining records of the use of Greek fire as a weapon of war describe it as a fire-like substance that was “blasted” from special canisters.¹⁹⁷ This substance stuck to nearly everything it came into contact with, including siege equipment, and required a specific balm to be

the Third Crusade there were at least 50 instances of violence between Latin Christian crusaders and Muslim military forces.

¹⁹⁵ Anonymous, *Chronicles of the Third Crusade*, 83.

¹⁹⁶ Alex Rolland, “Secrecy, Technology, and War: Greek Fire and the Defense of Byzantium, 678 – 1204” in *Warfare in the Dark Ages*, ed. John France and Kelly DeVries, (Burlington: Ashgate, 2008), 419.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid*, 419.

extinguished.¹⁹⁸ The author of *Itinerarium Peregrinorum* described the chemical weapon as incendiary oil” with “bluish-grey flames, which can burn up flint and iron. It cannot be extinguished with water.”¹⁹⁹

Remarkably, when using fire against Latin Christians in battle, Muslims practiced the same restraint, wherein fire appears only as a defensive weapon. In the Latin Christians’ first encounter with Greek fire against Muslim forces, rather than initially being infuriated by the use of fire, the author is awestruck by its nature and devastating abilities. For “no naval battle like that was ever seen before, it was so destructive, completed with such danger and won at such cost.”²⁰⁰ From the description of the battle, “the cost” was largely experienced in the destruction of Latin Christian ships, not particularly in loss of life. The defensive use of Greek fire as targeting machines, rather than explicitly individuals, becomes permissible even when used against Latin Christians. In the passages that follow, the author goes on to continue showing respect for Turkish soldiers in this battle. Muslims remained revered for their military expertise and honor, in part, because they practice similar restraint in the use of fire as the Latin Christians also practiced. In fact, the author denounces Christian women who he claims “dishonorably” killed Turkish soldiers by choosing to behead them “with knives instead of swords.”²⁰¹ By suggesting that the warriors who just poured Greek fire on Frankish ships still deserved an honorable death is a sign that the use of fire as a defensive weapon in war is acceptable.

Of the twelve documented uses of fire by Muslim forces in the Third Crusade, nine of the uses are noted for using Greek fire. Though Greek fire was tremendous and dangerous, not once does the author condemn the actions of the Turks for using a chemical weapon. Rather, he

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid*, 421-422.

¹⁹⁹ Anonymous, *Chronicles of the Third Crusade*, 88-89.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid*, 89.

²⁰¹ *Ibid*, 89.

continually praises and commends their bravery in battle. The reason the use of Greek fire by the Muslims is accepted by Latin Christians is because Greek fire is never used with the sole intent of burning individuals. In the nine cases of Greek fire being used in war, each time the directed aim of the weapon is to burn wooden war machines. The use of fire as a weapon became accepted as a defensive mechanism in war.

Recalling the death of the Paulicians in Robert the Monk's narrative of the first crusade, incendiarism is presented as the indisputable means by which heretics must be destroyed.²⁰² What occurs in combat against Muslims throughout the Third Crusade is an appropriation of acceptable use of fire between Latin Christian and Muslim militaries. Rather than denounce the chemical weapon, the author of the *Chronicles of the Third Crusade* accepts Greek fire as any other tool in defensive warfare tactics. So while the author's acceptance of Greek fire carved out space for the use of fire in war, the use of fire as a punishment remained reserved for heretics.

²⁰² Robert of Remis, *Robert the Monk's History*, 96.

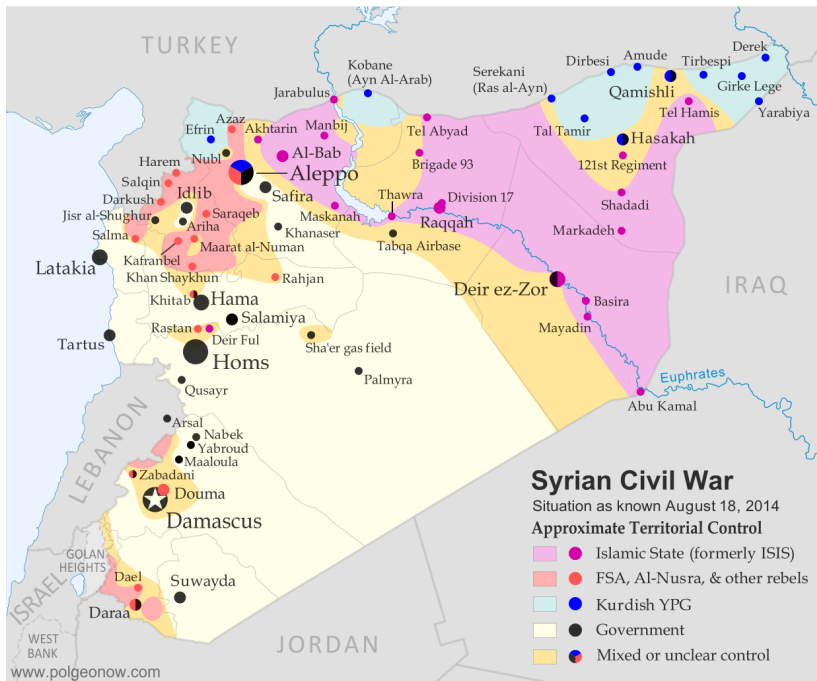


Figure Twelve. Evan Centanni, "Territorial Control in Syrian Civil War as of August 2014."

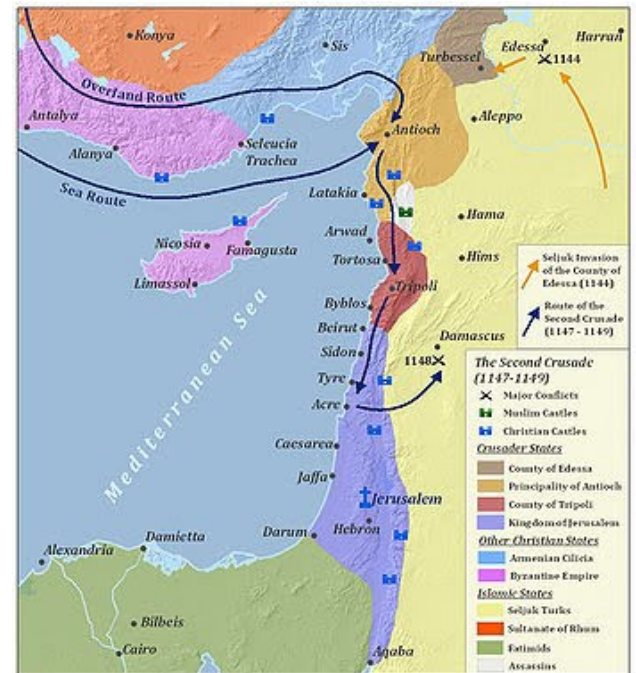


Figure Thirteen. "The Second Crusade (1147-1149)."

Conclusion

Late one evening, on March 16th, 2017, the Independent reported the use of the incendiary weapon, called "White Phosphorus," by Russian military forces against the civilian population of Aleppo, the capital of Syria.²⁰³ White Phosphorus is a recently developed military chemical weapon designed to burn at temperatures above eight hundred fifteen degrees Celsius, or one thousand, five hundred degrees Fahrenheit while exposed to oxygen.²⁰⁴ There was no information reported on the total number of deaths and injuries caused by the incident.²⁰⁵

²⁰³ Matt Bloomfield, "New Footage Shows Russia using 'White Phosphorus' in Syria, Activists Claim," *Independent*, March 16, 2017, <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/syria-russia-war-white-phosphorous-claims-video-footage-a7618976.html>.

²⁰⁴ "An Overdue Review: Addressing Incendiary Weapons in the Contemporary Context, Memorandum to Delegates at the Meeting of States Parties of the Convention on Chemical Weapons," *International Human Rights Clinic Program at Harvard Law School and The Human Rights Watch*, November 2017, 4.

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

Syria has not been the only theater of war that has endured the use of fire since the Albigenian Crusade ended in 1229. In 1945, during World War One, the United States made a tactical decision to drop atomic bombs on the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, not on the European enemy in Germany. In 1940, the German Air Force introduced the destructive military practice *Blitzkrieg*, which dropped bombs meant to destroy oppositional military defenses and cities of civilians. Military-grade incendiary weapons were introduced at the turn of the twentieth during World War I, as European forces engaged in the atrocious trench warfare. Before then was the scorched earth policy in the Civil War and even before that was Napoleon's infamous Battle of Dresden. Fire has been consistently used a weapon in war and condemned on grounds of violating humanitarian principles. The cruelty associated with the use of fire implies violence exceeding the natural bounds acceptable in war.

Incendiary weapons, deemed "one of modern warfare's cruelest class of arms," were made illegal in the 1980 Geneva Convention, Protocol III.²⁰⁶ Despite diplomatic condemnation and modern laws governing warfare, the current civil war ravaging Syria is documented as having a total of twenty-two confirmed uses of incendiary devices in attacks during 2017 alone, with the Human Rights Watch investigating claims of an additional eighteen attacks.²⁰⁷ The use of incendiarism is ongoing. On February 28th, 2018, Pope Francis spoke from the Vatican, asking

²⁰⁶ *Ibid*, 1.

²⁰⁷ "An Overdue Review: Addressing Incendiary Weapons in the Contemporary Context, Memorandum to Delegates at the Meeting of States Parties of the Convention on Chemical Weapons," *International Human Rights Clinic Program at Harvard Law School*, November 2017, https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/supporting_resources/201711arms_mena_syria_incendiary_weapons.pdf 12.

for a ceasefire in Syria.²⁰⁸ He claimed the violence was “inhuman,” evoking similar rhetoric to Lateran II, which originally sought to end incendiarism in 1204.²⁰⁹

The ongoing civil war in Syria occurs nearly eight hundred years following the crusades, and takes place in the same geographical location as the First, Second, and Third Crusade, which were explored in this paper. Fire is not a weapon confined to a world shaped by iron-welded swords and knights on horseback, but one that persists into the twenty-first century with all of the advances associated with modernity. Fire, used as a weapon, brings with it a world of complication as technology advances, allowing for more devastation and suffering. Despite the changes in the nature of warfare and society, the questions raised in the research of this thesis remain relevant and questioned on international legal standards: What does it mean to be humane in war? Though legal and institutional forces attempt to end the use of fire in modern wars, the process to ban incendiary weapons continues with few enforcement mechanisms and more loopholes than prohibitions.²¹⁰

²⁰⁸ “Pope appeals for immediate cessation of violence in Syria,” *Vatican News*, February 28, 2018, <http://www.vaticannews.va/en/pope/news/2018-02/pope-appeals-for-immediate-cessation-of-violence-in-syria.html>.

²⁰⁹ *Ibid*; Council Fathers, *Second Lateran Council*, accessed December 15, 2017, <http://www.papalencyclicals.net/councils/ecum10.htm>.

²¹⁰ “An Overdue Review,” 12.

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