

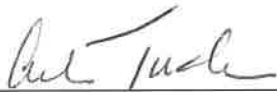
The Path to War: Internal Motivation and Societal Influences in the First Crusade, 1095-1099

By
Victoria Morehead

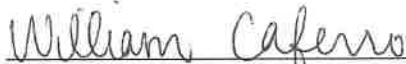
Thesis
Submitted to the Faculty of the
Department of History of Vanderbilt University
In partial fulfillment of the requirements
For Honors in History

April 2019

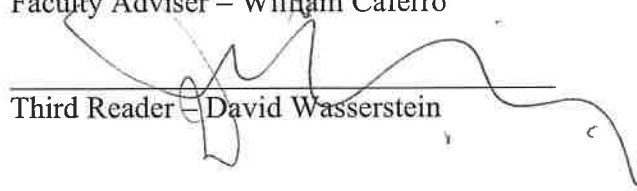
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in History.



Director of Honors – Arleen Tuchman



Faculty Adviser – William Caferro



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Table of Contents

Acknowledgments	3
Map	4
Introduction	5
Chapter 1: Piety, Spirituality, and The Role of Religion	19
Chapter 2: Opportunism and Avarice in the First Crusade	35
Chapter 3: Militancy, Violence, and The Strategy of the Church	50
Conclusion	71
Bibliography	74

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World Map



Figure 1: Map of Europe, North Africa, and Asia Minor with routes of the First Crusade¹

¹ Source: "Map of the First Crusade," Template from *Wikimedia Commons*, 3 September 2005, Accessed 28 March 2019, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Croisade1.png>.

Introduction

On the 27th of November 1095, a large crowd watched and listened to the head of their Church. Prior to this moment, hundreds of Frankish nobles and ecclesiastical officials had gathered at the Council of Clermont in Auvergne, located in modern-day southern France. The ecumenical council was coming to a close after several days, and the crowd was waiting to hear a sermon from the pope who had called them together.¹ When Pope Urban II addressed his audience, his sermon on maintaining peace as good “shepherds” swiftly turned into a speech on the threat of a great oppressive enemy.² Far from their homes in Europe, the Muslim Seljuk Turks had invaded and captured territory from the Byzantine Empire, the Eastern vestiges of Christianity. With the city of Jerusalem and the rest of the Holy Land at peril, the duty to defend the holy Christian domains rested on this crowd’s shoulders.³ The audience had different reactions to the speech. Some were moved to tears, others trembled at the thought of the journey, and the rest discussed the words of the pope amongst themselves.⁴ Despite their doubts and concern, however, the audience heeded the message. Starting from the Council of Clermont, Pope Urban’s call to arms would soon spread across Europe and incite thousands of clergy, nobles, and peasants to embark on what would become the First Crusade (1095-1099).

Chroniclers would mark Pope Urban’s sermon as a miraculously galvanizing speech. Despite any initial concerns, the audience became “fervently inspired” and thought “nothing more worthy than such an undertaking” as the First Crusade.⁵ Still, the announcement of the military campaign was not entirely unexpected. Six months before his speech at Clermont, Pope

¹ Thomas Asbridge, *The First Crusade: A New History*, (New York: Oxford UP, 2004), 32.

² Edward Peters, ed. “The Chronicle of Fulcher of Chartres, Book I (1095-1100),” trans. Martha E. McGinty, *The First Crusade: The Chronicle of Fulcher of Chartres and Other Source Materials*, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1998), 50-52.

³ Jonathan Riley-Smith, *The First Crusade and the Idea of Crusading*, (London: Althone Press, 1986), 26.

⁴ Peters, “The Speech of Urban: The Version of Baldric of Dol,” trans. August C. Krey, *The First Crusade*, 32.

⁵ Peters, “The Chronicle of Fulcher of Chartres,” *The First Crusade*, 54.

Urban II had summoned another ecclesiastical council in the city of Piacenza, Italy.⁶ Among the bishops and dignitaries attending the council were ambassadors hailing from Constantinople, the capital of the Byzantine Empire, where Christians of the East resided. These envoys had come to the council to seek military aid from the West against the Seljuk Turks. In previous years, Muslim armies had successfully defeated Byzantine forces in combat and captured major territories and cities in Asia Minor and in the East.⁷ The Byzantine Emperor Alexius I Comnenus now called upon fellow Christians in the West in hopes of recapturing lost imperial territory.

The Byzantine envoys' presence at the council in Piacenza was significant. They belonged to the Greek Orthodox Church, whose diplomatic relations with the Roman Catholic Church had deteriorated in the Great Schism of 1054.⁸ Imperial and church officials had tried to ameliorate the breakdown in ecclesiastical unity to varying degrees but never fully closed the divide. During his reign, Pope Urban had worked with Emperor Alexius in rebuilding relations between the split churches. At Clermont, he answered the Byzantine embassy's pleas with a promise to urge others "to aid the emperor most faithfully as far as they were able against the pagans."⁹ By launching the First Crusade, the Church sought to fulfill its objectives, which were to save Eastern Christendom and reunite the two churches. Nevertheless, this promise would inspire an extraordinary undertaking that exceeded the expectations of the pope and the emperor. The laity of the West had little to no knowledge of the interests of the Church or the Byzantine

⁶ Asbridge, *The First Crusade: A New History*, 15.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 98.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 99. The Great Schism of 1054 arose from a series of disputes about theology and church practices within the Latin West and Greek East. Over several centuries, the two regions had developed different church traditions, which then became irreconcilable differences. Tensions between the West and the East rose until the Latin Pope and Greek patriarch mutually excommunicated each other, marking the first definite split in the Church. Soon, the West and the East would develop two separate churches, the Latin Roman Catholic and the Greek Eastern Orthodox, respectively.

⁹ Riley-Smith, *The First Crusade and the Idea of Crusading*, 13.

Empire, but their pious enthusiasm proved enough to carry the expedition. While providing aid to Eastern Christendom served as the initial goal, a variety of factors inspired and shaped the motivations of the crusaders.

This thesis argues that the forces driving the First Crusade constituted a synthesis of religion, material desire, and militant strategies. Religion played a major role in the formation of the crusade, starting with Urban's original goal of uniting the two churches. The war campaign utilized church doctrine and lay piety to inspire nobles to go on crusade. Preexisting religious symbols and rituals became incorporated into the crusade's development and resonated with the soldiers' spiritual devotion.¹⁰ A more secular motivation also arose from the opportunities that a large-scale military campaign might bring. As the soldiers traveled through Western Europe and the Byzantine Empire, a distinct interest in material gain, both pecuniary and territorial, consumed the adventurous crusaders. The opportunistic ambition of certain nobles became strong enough to jeopardize the unity and success of the campaign.¹¹ Aside from the motives of the crusaders, the Church's strategy in justifying and creating the crusade also affected the expedition. Centuries of theological developments within the Church resulted in the militarization of Christianity. The shift from spiritual struggle to spiritual warfare justified knights' desire to fight in the name of their religion.¹² This combination of spiritual, secular, and societal influences compelled the crusaders on their journey.

Among those influences was religious zeal, which worked to an astounding and devastating effect. Before knights and clergymen could set foot into the Holy Land, ordinary people answered the call to crusade. The word "crusade" was an allusion to Christ's message to

¹⁰ Cecilia M. Gaposchkin, "From Pilgrimage to Crusade: The Liturgy of Departure, 1095-1300," *Speculum* 88, no. 1 (2013): 46. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23488710>.

¹¹ Asbridge, *The First Crusade: A New History*, 260.

¹² I. S. Robinson, "Gregory VII and the Soldiers of Christ," *History* 58, no. 193 (1973): 171.

his disciples, inviting new followers to “take up the cross and follow [Him].”¹³ When he gave his speech at Clermont, Pope Urban intended to appeal only to members of the nobility, similar to the Frankish nobles who attended the council. In reality, the pope’s call to arms attracted people from all backgrounds, including peasants, women, children, and the elderly.¹⁴ Peter the Hermit, a charismatic priest from Amiens, preached the crusade in northern France and Germany and obtained a large following of peasants along with some clergymen and knights. Under such leadership, this following formed the unofficial crusading campaign known as the People’s Crusade of 1096. Although the People’s Crusade ended in failure, bishops and priests across Europe preached about the crusade with similar enthusiasm and were successful in attracting the faithful to fight.¹⁵ Recruitment steadily rose as preachers appealed to the spirituality of medieval Europeans.

The call to crusade unleashed an extreme religious fervor, but it yielded equally extreme actions and consequences. Driven by an inflamed hatred towards “heathens,” the bands of the People’s Crusade traveled through the Rhineland and destroyed several Jewish communities.¹⁶ Though they wanted revenge for the supposed injustices committed by Muslims against the Holy Sepulchre, they took out their outrage on the non-Christian peoples closest to them. Afterwards, they arrived in Constantinople and met Emperor Alexius, who tried to convince Peter the Hermit to wait for the other nobles coming in the official campaign.¹⁷ Impatient and anxious to reach Jerusalem, the bands of the People’s Crusade continued their journey. They raided Byzantine settlements in Nicaea, incurring the wrath and distrust of their supposed allies. They eventually

¹³ Referring to Matthew 16:24, “If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, take up the cross and follow me,” from Gaposchkin, “From Pilgrimage to Crusade,” 56.

¹⁴ Riley-Smith, *The First Crusade and the Idea of Crusading*, 35.

¹⁵ Asbridge, *The First Crusade: A New History*, 48

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 82, 84.

¹⁷ Anna Comnena, *Alexiad: Book X, Internet Medieval Sourcebook Project*, ed. Paul Halsall and Maryanne Kowaleski, Fordham University, V, <https://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/basis/AnnaComnena-Alexiad10.asp>.

encountered the Turkish Muslim forces. Because of the disorganized nature of the People's Crusade's armies, the Turkish soldiers skillfully and brutally cut them down. Although Peter and a few others escaped and received the Emperor's protection, the vast majority of the crusaders perished, their bodies forming a "pyramid of bones."¹⁸

The level of violence committed and suffered by the participants of the People's Crusade was not unlike the chaos they experienced back in Europe. In the centuries prior to the First Crusade, medieval Europe had experienced tumultuous changes. The Carolingian Empire (800-888), established by the first Holy Roman Emperor Charlemagne (c.742-814), served as the centralizing force in medieval society. A collection of territories including modern-day France, Italy, and Germany, the Carolingian government had stabilized medieval society in Western Europe for several decades.¹⁹ After the death of Charlemagne, the empire became fractured due to secession disputes among his sons. The land became vulnerable to outside invaders, like the Vikings who raided and seized territory. In the following centuries, the centralized rule dissolved. Nobles started to seize power and further divided the realms.

The new system of feudalism arose, which governed the way of life for the European nobility. The decline of the Carolingian Empire led to great social unrest. However, the weakened state authority could not prevent nobles from attacking and seizing each other's private property on a whim.²⁰ Out of necessity, aristocrats fought as knights to defend their territories and their allies. Feudalism operated through the pledging of military service to a lord in return for a "fief," a type of land tenure.²¹ In exchange for land, knights then engaged in bloody conflict for the nobles to whom they pledged their allegiance. Not only did knights fight

¹⁸ Ibid. VI.

¹⁹ Asbridge, *The First Crusade: A New History*, 4.

²⁰ Hans Eberhard Mayer, *The Crusades* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965), 15-16.

²¹ Asbridge, *The First Crusade: A New History*, 4-5.

to settle their family's grievances but the grievances of their lord. The climate of societal turmoil and violence created an entire class of experienced aristocratic warriors. Pope Urban, who was born into a French aristocratic family, was familiar with feudalism and how it operated in medieval France.²² His speech at Clermont was an appeal to his Frankish brethren. Still, his speech moved aristocratic knights outside of France to answer the call to crusade as well. This was the class that Pope Urban wanted to fight as soldiers. No matter their origins, their skills and proclivity for violence would serve the faith and the Church.

The crusade's foundations in the Church have long demanded the attention of modern crusade scholars. In 1935, Carl Erdmann wrote *Die Entstehung des Kreuzzugsgedankens*, which primarily focused on the militant strategies of the Church in conducting a "holy war."²³ Erdmann placed emphasis on Pope Urban's motives towards the crusade: the desire to liberate Byzantine Christians from Muslim rule. He argued the First Crusade followed the natural progression of an ongoing holy war waged by the Church against non-Christians.²⁴ Prior to this new effort, the Church had launched other military campaigns with similar aims. Adhering to established doctrine and precedents, the crusade called by Urban thus formed the latest link in this chain of developments.²⁵ By focusing on the militarized aspects of the crusade, Erdmann diminished the role of spirituality. Though he used the term "holy war," he focused more on the phenomenon of a war being waged for religion rather than the actual holiness that can be

²² Ibid.

²³ Riley-Smith, *The First Crusade and the Idea of Crusading*, 1-2

²⁴ H. E. J. Cowdrey, "Pope Urban II's Preaching of the First Crusade," *History* 55, no. 184 (1970): 178. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24406851>. Indeed, the Church had launched other military efforts prior to the First Crusade, aimed at maintaining Christian territory. Cowdrey's article brings attention to the Reconquista of Spain (718-1492), one of the Church's most arduous campaigns. The Reconquista comprised a series of campaigns against the Muslim population in the southern Iberian Peninsula. The Spanish monarchy and the Church aimed to rid the peninsula of its Muslim presence and ensure the expansion of Christian kingdoms. For more information, see Roberto Marin-Guzmán's "Crusade in Al-Andalus: The Eleventh Century Formation of the Reconquista as an Ideology," *Islamic Studies* 31, no. 3 (1992).

²⁵ Carl Erdmann, *The Origin of the Idea of Crusade*, trans. Marshall W. Baldwin and Walter Goffart, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977): 348.

attributed to such a war. He dismissed the influence of Christian symbols and iconography, like the Holy Sepulchre at Jerusalem. He claimed that Urban strategically used language portraying the crusade as a pilgrimage to Jerusalem solely for recruitment purposes.²⁶ According to him, Urban imagined helping the Eastern Church at large, rather than a singular location. For Erdmann, the impressions that religious symbols like Jerusalem made upon the crusaders took secondary importance.

In fact, Erdmann viewed the crusaders' devotion to Jerusalem as a departure from the "crusading ideal."²⁷ For Erdmann, the crusading ideal, established by the Church, focused on the holy war against the infidel. The crusaders' blind fixation on Jerusalem and pilgrimages only distorted the ideal. While he acknowledged the military machinations of the Church, he argued that the crusaders had diverged too far from the original intention of the Church's aim for holy war.²⁸ Though it was not his focus, Erdmann's argument demonstrated the differences between the Church and the crusaders' intentions. The crusaders had cultivated their own understanding of the crusade's aims. Their perception of their mission, which differed from the Church's intentions, informed their decision to go to war. In spite of the Church's original motivations, the crusaders succeeded in actualizing their own goals. Though historians struggled with the seemingly inflexible nature of his argument, Erdmann drew attention to these changes and ambiguities of motivation in the First Crusade.

Hans Eberhard Mayer noted Erdmann's singular focus on the Church and militancy. In his *Geschichte der Kreuzzüge* (1968), Mayer claimed that Erdmann and other historians gave

²⁶ Ibid., 316, 332.

²⁷ Ibid., 333.

²⁸ Norman F. Cantor, "Medieval Historiography as Modern Political and Social Thought," *Journal of Contemporary History* 3, no. 2 (1968): 62. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/259775>. This bitter condemnation likely stemmed from his disdain for the narrow-minded, militaristic nationalism of the Nazi regime, which he witnessed as he wrote this work. Erdmann was one of the few German academic dissenters against Nazism. In 1943, the Nazi government conscripted Erdmann to the military. In 1945, he died from typhus in an army camp in Croatia.

“too much attention” to the “eleventh-century developments in the Church’s concept of a holy war.”²⁹ He found Erdmann had too readily categorized previous holy wars, like the Norman conquest of Sicily (1062-1072) and the *Reconquista* of Spain (718-1492), as crusades.³⁰ Unlike Erdmann, Mayer thought that the crusade was a unique and singular event. The crusade could rank among these other holy wars, but none of the previous campaigns should bear the distinction of being a crusade. Nevertheless, Mayer agreed with Erdmann regarding the Church’s role in founding a theory of holy war for strategic purposes and of Christian knights as instruments of the Church.³¹ While the rigidity of Erdmann’s arguments drew his criticism, Mayer certainly felt that the analysis of the Church’s intentions was justifiable. As both Mayer and Erdmann observed, the Church had become entwined in the military operations as much as the crusaders, though their motives differed. In spite of its flaws, scholars ought not to diminish Erdmann’s assessment of the Church’s strategies and the crusaders’ divergence from those plans.

In judging these flaws, however, most crusade historians tend to agree that Erdmann greatly undermined the role of religion. While Erdmann viewed the crusaders’ fixation on religious symbols and ideas as an unintended outcome, other scholars argue such Christian aspects resonated with the crusade narrative. Jonathan Riley-Smith’s *The First Crusade and the Idea of Crusading* (1986) emphasized religion as a key component for the drive behind crusading. Looking at the chronicles and nobles’ charters of departure, he analyzed the spiritual views and perceptions of the crusaders, who claimed they were “fulfilling the demands of Christian charity” and “[taking] the cross out of love for Christ.”³² The spiritual devotion and

²⁹ Mayer, *The Crusades*, 20.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 18-19. Mayer referred to Erdmann’s analysis of Robert Guiscard carrying out the Norman conquest of Sicily in the manner of a holy war. Mayer noted there was no evidence for active papal participation in these efforts. From his perspective, the lack of papal involvement disqualified the campaign as a crusade.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 20.

³² Riley-Smith, *The First Crusade and the Idea of Crusading*, 113.

enthusiasm towards Jerusalem proved “it was the goal of Jerusalem that made the crusade a pilgrimage.”³³ He argued that the First Crusade functioned as both a pilgrimage and a penitential act. Undertaking the crusade meant expressing one’s piety and devotion to Christ. While Riley-Smith did not ignore the militant developments highlighted by Erdmann, he detailed how Christian theology and church doctrine made the crusade more palatable to medieval Christians. Overall, his work asserted the importance of religion for the development of the crusading ideal.

Riley-Smith’s expanded focus on religion enabled further study by other crusade historians. A former student of Riley-Smith, Thomas Asbridge detailed the political, social, and religious developments that led to the successful campaign of the First Crusade. In his book *The First Crusade: A New History* (2004), Asbridge explored many of the same arguments on religion as Riley-Smith, such as the symbolic importance of Jerusalem.³⁴ Taking a broader perspective than Riley-Smith, however, he analyzed the conditions enabling the development of a militarized Christianity, bringing attention to the bloody struggles of noblemen and social unrest disrupting everyday life. He argued that the Church handled these concerns of inter-Christian conflict by offering the crusade as an outlet for sanctified violence against a common non-Christian enemy.³⁵ Asbridge also examined the crusaders’ materialistic aspirations and acknowledged the tendency of historians to concentrate on the image of the greedy crusader.³⁶ Noting the monetary sacrifices the crusaders made, he claimed avarice could not be as strong a motivation as historians previously claimed. Still, he described at length the ambitions of nobles, who competed with one another in seizing territories and even shedding the blood of allies.³⁷

³³ Ibid., 22.

³⁴ Asbridge, *The First Crusade: A New History*, 38.

³⁵ Ibid., 4, 5, 36.

³⁶ Ibid., 66.

³⁷ Ibid., 147.

His work weighed the context and complications posed by sanctified violence and the desire for economic gain.

Despite reaching different conclusions, historians have derived their interpretations of the First Crusade from a common body of manuscripts. Years after the war, priests and literate nobles wrote accounts of the crusade, capturing the hardships and victories sustained by the Western European armies. In addition to the European accounts, Byzantine Christians, Muslims, and Jews have written accounts about the First Crusade and its impact on their lives. These chronicles primarily serve as the best documentation for the crusade. Like these scholars, I analyze a selection of the same crusade accounts. Edward Peters's *The First Crusade: The Chronicle of Fulcher of Chartres and Other Source Materials* contains excerpts from chronicles and letters from European, Byzantine, Muslim, and Jewish contemporaries translated by various historians. It notably holds a full translation of the first book of the Chronicle of Fulcher of Chartres, a cleric who followed the armies of Stephen of Blois and Baldwin of Boulogne.³⁸ Church officials like Fulcher wrote the majority of European chronicles, drawing attention to the important religious motives and beliefs held by the crusaders. It also holds excerpts from the chronicle of Ibn al-Qalanisi and letters of correspondence from the Cairo Geniza, which provide insight into Muslim and Jewish contemporaries' understanding of the crusade. On the receiving end of the crusaders' aggression, they draw attention to the more destructive and materialistic designs of the crusaders.

Along with Peter's collection of sources, I examine Rosalind Hill's Latin and English translation of the *Gesta Francorum et aliorum Hierosolimitanorum*. An anonymous foot soldier in the Norman armies led by Bohemund of Taranto authored the *Gesta Francorum*. He would

³⁸ Riley-Smith, *The First Crusade and the Idea of Crusading*, 79.

have experienced combat firsthand, unlike most chroniclers who were clergymen.³⁹ Thus his soldier's perspective provides a straightforward unembellished account of the war's operations. Finally, I examine the fourth, tenth, and eleventh books from the *Alexiad*, the chronicle of the reign of Emperor Alexius written by his daughter Anna Comnena.⁴⁰ While the European chronicles mostly focus on the spirituality and righteousness of the crusaders' cause, the official imperial Byzantine account portrays the crusaders' religiosity as a ruse to pursue more ambitious and avaricious goals.

Crusade historians have gradually tried to expand and redefine common understanding of the First Crusade. The historiography achieves this to varying degrees. On the one hand, historians' dedication to analyzing a particular motivation leads to a well-developed yet restrictive focus. This approach, as demonstrated in Erdmann's approach, overlooks the roles of other influences and makes it easy to underestimate or dismiss them. On the other hand, by presenting all motives and external factors within a narrative, one can only give a broad overview of certain influences while relating the story. For instance, Asbridge's work acknowledges and explores these complex motives and social developments. However, his analysis on the significance of said factors becomes divided as he retells the events of the First Crusade. While it is necessary to provide historical context, committing to a narrative framework can limit and detract from an in-depth study. In both cases, it becomes impossible to achieve full understanding of the motivations and societal influences in the First Crusade.

³⁹ Rosalind Hill, ed., "Introduction," *Gesta Francorum: The Deeds of the Franks and the other Pilgrims to Jerusalem*, (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1962): xiii.

⁴⁰ I take this translation of the *Alexiad* from the online database *Internet Medieval Sourcebook* Project. It is a collection of medieval primary source documents amassed from multiple authors and books with granted permission. The collection belongs to the larger database collection, the *Internet Sourcebook Project*, sponsored by Fordham University Center of Medieval Studies and curated by Paul Halsall and Maryanne Kowaleski.

To avoid these problems, I analyze the motives and societal developments that initiated the First Crusade with equal emphasis and depth. I examine the crusaders' internal motivations, both religious and secular. Though they appear contradictory in nature, both religious and materialistic motivations existed within the minds of the crusaders and significantly influenced the course of the campaign. In addition to studying internal motivations, I also analyze the external societal conditions in which these motives formed. The theological developments and political goals of the Church ultimately informed to the concept of the crusade. The Church's formation and manipulation of the military campaign influenced how the crusaders chose to fulfill their religious and secular desires later in the journey. Setting aside a chronological retelling of events, each chapter examines how each motive or strategy affects the crusaders and the campaign at different stages of the crusade. This approach allows for a detailed analysis of each factor's development and impact. While one or two of these factors tend to receive more attention from crusade historians, this thesis argues that all of these influences are equally worthy of study and consideration.

Chapter One explores the role of religion and spirituality as the initial motivational factor for the First Crusade. In his speech, Pope Urban II drew upon the powerful religious symbolism of Jerusalem and the tradition of the pilgrimage to establish the crusade as a type of penitential pilgrimage by which soldiers could earn the salvation of their souls. During the journey, the spirituality of the crusaders propelled them to face the dangers of war, believing they had the divine favor of God. Other symbols and lay traditions also served as sources of encouragement for boosting morale.

Chapter Two discusses the secular motives of opportunism and material desire among certain crusaders. Societal issues like the Norman conquests of Byzantine territories had bred

the desire for possessions before the First Crusade. When the crusading armies journeyed to the East, certain nobles like Bohemund of Taranto sought material goods from the Byzantine emperor and other Eastern cities. Despite their loyalties to the emperor, nobles fought for the right to possess and govern the Byzantine territories they recaptured. This greed proved problematic for the campaign as a whole, straining the ties with their Byzantine allies and within the armies. Nevertheless, the desire to amass wealth and territory acted as a powerful motivator for some crusaders to undertake the military expedition.

Chapter Three shifts the focus from the crusaders' internal motivations to the Church's influence on the First Crusade. The Church possessed its own motives in launching the crusade and used militancy and warfare as completely acceptable means to fulfill their goals. Following the theories of early theologians, the Church reconciled the integration of war with Christianity. These theories served the aims of later church leaders like Pope Gregory VII, who sought to raise armies for the Church. The formation of a "just war" doctrine was crucial in justifying the First Crusade's existence. The chapter also analyzes instances of societal violence afflicting medieval Europe. To alleviate such conflicts, the Church presented the First Crusade as a means of directing this violence from European Christian society to Eastern battlefields. The religious ideology behind the "just war" emboldened Christian soldiers to enact violence and warfare against Muslim forces, who retaliated in kind.

This thesis examines the three factors individually and assesses their origins, development, and application at different stages of the crusade. I use this approach not to suggest these factors existed in a vacuum separate from one another but to ensure a sufficient, thorough analysis of subjects glossed over by other scholars. The thesis still acknowledges the interplay of these factors. It explores the religious and spiritual influences studied intensively by

historians, but it also focuses on the militarism and desires for wealth that developed alongside and became justified by religious ideology. It demonstrates how a mixture of these elements were instrumental in shaping the crusaders' perceptions of themselves, their world, and their mission. Ultimately, a foundation of interwoven religious and secular influences served as the impetus for motivating medieval European soldiers to go on crusade.

Chapter 1: Piety, Spirituality, and The Role of Religion

In the first book of his chronicle, Fulcher of Chartres describes the tale of a vision experienced by a cleric at the Siege of Antioch. The crusaders had recaptured the city from the occupying Turkish forces, but a new army of Turkish reinforcements were laying siege to the crusaders. Anxious and fearful for his life, this cleric had begun to desert the crusaders. As he fled, the cleric had a vision of the Lord, who appeared before him and asked, “Whither, brother, dost thou run?” When the cleric expressed his fears and concerns, the Lord urged the cleric to return to the crusaders and tell them, “Flee not, but hasten back and tell the others that I shall be present with them in battle.”¹ Reassured by the words of the Lord, the cleric returned and told the crusaders what he heard. This short tale was one of many miracles recorded by Fulcher during the siege. Other crusaders would recount their experiences with visions and visitations, which gave them hope in the midst of great adversity. Strengthened by this faith, the crusaders would overcome the Turkish reinforcements, secure Antioch, and continue their journey to the Holy City of Jerusalem.

As chroniclers like Fulcher illustrate, religious ideology defined the purpose of the First Crusade. Knights, clergymen, and peasants embarked together on an enterprise they believed would “brilliantly [progress] with the help of God.”² As Christians united under the Catholic Church, medieval Europeans held strong spiritual convictions in a divine presence directing their world. Although most crusade historians agree religion was a primary influence on individual crusaders, determining the core religious factors has proven to be challenging. Historians often devoted in-depth studies to ecclesiastical doctrine, lay piety, or liturgical themes, most of which were ritual devotions concerned with purging sin from the soul. With these factors taken as a

¹ Peters, “The Chronicle of Fulcher of Chartres,” *The First Crusade*, 77.

² *Ibid.*, 56.

whole, the cohesion of religion and spirituality served as one of the major motivations for crusaders.

The Debate on Religious Influences

Modern crusade historiography has grappled with assessing the significance of religion during the First Crusade. Erdmann's *Die Enstehung des Kreuzzugsgedankens* had de-emphasized the religious aspects of the Church waging a holy war. In determining the original goal of the crusade, what mattered was the Church's desire for Christendom to triumph over all other religions.³ Christian symbols and practices, such as the pilgrimage to the famed city Jerusalem, thus came secondary.⁴ For the most part, Erdmann criticized the crusaders' motives for deviating from the true intention behind the crusade as determined by the Church. Nevertheless, one must not overlook this divergence in motivations. The crusaders viewed the Holy Land as a major, if not the ultimate, goal at the journey's end. Their fixation on Jerusalem, which Erdmann noted and criticized in his argument, alluded to the importance of religious influences to the crusaders. Their deviance in motivations would ultimately guide the campaign. Erdmann sought to illuminate the concept of militarized Christianity, but in doing so, he radically undermined the significance of religious aspects ingrained in the First Crusade narrative.

In the following decades, historians challenged Erdmann's argument by stressing the religious nature of the crusades. In his book *La Croisade: essai sur la formation d'une théorie juridique* (1942), Michel Villey criticized Erdmann's decision to connect the crusade with earlier battles against non-Christians. In particular, he took issue with Erdmann's interchangeable use

³ Erdmann, *The Origin of the Idea of Crusading*, 330-331.

⁴ Gaposchkin, "From Pilgrimage to Crusade," 44-45.

of “holy war” and “crusade.” Erdmann’s examples of holy wars, such as the Reconquista, did not measure up to the standards of a crusade. For Villey, a “holy war” was quite broadly a war to fight or defend against members of a different faith, whereas a “crusade” also involved a “preaching of the cross,” spiritual boons for participants, and sworn obligations to the mission.⁵ Unlike Erdmann, Villey acknowledged the religious elements associated with the First Crusade. In fact, the element of preaching, the symbolic nature of the cross, and the concept of spiritual rewards were essential to the very definition of a crusade. As Christians, the crusaders would have been driven to pledge their allegiance to the campaign due to the promotion of Christian iconography like “the cross” and the spiritual rewards of such an undertaking.

Hans Eberhard Mayer took this exploration of religious symbols further in his book *Geschichte der Kreuzzüge*. He analyzed the concept of the pilgrimage and its incorporation into the First Crusade.⁶ He drew attention to Pope Urban II’s attempts to preserve the archbishopric of Tarragona in Spain. The pope encouraged pilgrims traveling to Jerusalem to donate their offerings to Tarragona’s church, which would stand against the threat of Muslims in the Iberian Peninsula. In return, they would receive the same benefits as if they made the pilgrimage to Jerusalem.⁷ Mayer argued that this incident served as a precedent for equating pilgrimages to a defense against a non-Christian enemy. He noted how crusaders latched onto this new interpretation of pilgrimage. They received the pilgrim blessing for their weapons, and chroniclers like the *Gesta Francorum*’s author referred to crusaders as “pilgrims.”⁸ The idea of a pilgrimage was important to the crusade’s core. With the spiritual appeal of devotional traditions

⁵ Cowdrey, “Pope Urban II’s Preaching of the First Crusade,” 179.

⁶ Gaposchkin, “From Pilgrimage to Crusade,” 45.

⁷ Mayer, *The Crusades*, 27.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 28-29.

embedded into the campaign, the crusaders had a stronger incentive to participate and go on crusade.

Crusade historians continued to focus on religious ideology and its influence on crusaders. Both Riley-Smith and Asbridge analyzed the crusade as a type of pilgrimage. The hope for spiritual rewards compelled crusaders to undertake the perilous journey. Another scholar, Jay Rubenstein's *Armies of Heaven: The First Crusade and the Quest for Apocalypse* (2011) focused on the preaching and considerations of Christian eschatology, highlighting the Apocalypse as an important theme in the First Crusade. When fighting the Muslim Seljuk Turks, the Christian crusaders saw themselves as continuing the Biblical battle between good and evil.⁹ Rubenstein argued that the crusaders' belief that they were on God's side both validated and fueled their motivations. Cecilia Gaposchkin assessed the use of Christian liturgy and symbols in influencing the crusaders' perception of the military campaign in her article, "From Pilgrimage to Crusade: The Liturgy of Departure, 1095-1300." She argued that the crusade used familiar practices and symbols of lay piety to help crusaders to reconcile their spiritual beliefs with their militaristic mission. These historians, among others, have led insightful studies of church practices, Biblical concepts, and spiritual themes in relation to the First Crusade.

The Speech of Pope Urban II and the Power of Church Traditions

This incorporation of Christian traditions and symbols succeeded due to the efforts of the Church, especially the message of Pope Urban II (r. 1088-1099). Indeed, the First Crusade began as a mission by the Catholic Church to help fellow Christians in the Byzantine Empire. After losing territory in Asia Minor to the Seljuk Turks, Emperor Alexius I Comnenus (r. 1081-

⁹ Jay Rubenstein, *Armies of Heaven: The First Crusade and the Quest for Apocalypse*, (New York: Basic Books, 2011), 46.

1118) sent envoys to Urban at the Council of Piacenza, asking for military aid.¹⁰ Born into a family of nobles, Pope Urban II hailed from the Abbey of Cluny, a respected and influential French monastery closely aligned with Rome.¹¹ His aristocratic background rendered him well-attuned to the concerns and mindset of the nobility he intended to incite. In November 1095, at the Council of Clermont in France, the Pope made use of his noble and ecclesiastical connections and gave a persuasive speech to Frankish noblemen that officially launched the crusade.

Examining this crucial speech has posed some challenges to modern historians. Accounts of Urban's speech were written down years after its announcement and existed in different versions. Some chroniclers were actually present at Clermont, while others recorded from hearsay and using existing sources, leading to variances among each account.¹² Urban's exact words may never be known, but in examining the chronicles together, one can piece together Urban's intentions by analyzing the similarities and differences in the texts. Such chronicles included those of Fulcher of Chartres, Baldric of Dol, and Robert of Rheims, who recorded Urban's speech from a post-war, post-victorious perspective. Fulcher of Chartres claimed to have attended the Council of Clermont, validating his version as an eyewitness account.¹³ As a cleric, he tended to incorporate religious ideology and spiritual themes heavily into his description of events, and his account of Pope Urban's speech was no exception. Baldric, the archbishop of Dol and former archbishop of Bourgeil, constructed his account using the *Gesta Francorum*, the crusade chronicle written by a soldier in Bohemund of Taranto's armies.¹⁴ As expected from his religious background, Baldric expounded on the theological aspects glossed over by the more secular *Gesta Francorum*. Robert of Rheims, a monk and

¹⁰ Riley-Smith, *The First Crusade and the Idea of Crusading*, 13, 15.

¹¹ Asbridge, *The First Crusade: A New History*, 10.

¹² Cowdrey, "Pope Urban II's Preaching of the First Crusade," 177.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Peters, "Urban: The Version of Baldric of Dol," *The First Crusade*, 29.

author of the *Historia Hierosolymitana*, also used the *Gesta Francorum* as a source. He, like Fulcher, claimed to have attended the Council of Clermont.¹⁵ Fulcher and Robert were eyewitnesses to Urban's speech and relied mostly upon memory, while both Robert and Baldric used outside sources to build their accounts. As post-war accounts from church officials, or rather a church authority in Baldric's case, these versions of Urban's speech emphasized the religious aspects that remained relevant throughout the First Crusade.

Robert's and Baldric's accounts vividly described Pope Urban's narrative of Jerusalem's perilous state to compel his audience to go on crusade. In Robert's account, Urban urged his audience to consider the "holy sepulchre of the Lord our Saviour, which is possessed by unclean nations" and to let this knowledge of misdeeds incite them.¹⁶ Likewise, Baldric's account detailed the reports of sacrilege and desecration of the Holy Sepulchre committed by the Muslims.¹⁷ The Holy Sepulchre, the tomb where Christ had been sealed for three days, was one of the most famous pilgrimage sites in Western Christendom. The large-scale pilgrimages to Jerusalem of 1026, 1033, 1054, and 1064 ranged from several hundreds to thousands of people.¹⁸ These numbers were a testament to the site's esteemed status and religious significance in the minds of medieval Christians. Reports of any defilement of the Holy Sepulchre or Jerusalem would have riled Urban's audience. In contrast, Fulcher said little about Jerusalem specifically. He gave vague references to the distant "lands of the Christians" and "God's kingdom" occupied and subjugated by the Seljuk Turks.¹⁹ Fulcher's chronicle showed the Pope providing an indirect reference to Jerusalem, suggesting it was not the central aspect of the speech. This was to be

¹⁵ Peters, "The Speech of Urban: The Version of Robert of Rheims," trans. Dana Carleton Munro, *The First Crusade*, 26.

¹⁶ Peters, "Urban: The Version of Robert of Rheims," *The First Crusade*, 27.

¹⁷ Peters, "Urban: The Version of Baldric of Dol," *The First Crusade*, 29.

¹⁸ Rubenstein, *Armies of Heaven*, 8.

¹⁹ Peters, "The Chronicle of Fulcher of Chartres," *The First Crusade*, 52-53.

expected, since Urban's primary objective was to provide the Byzantine Empire with Western aid. Nevertheless, he still informed his audience about the various outrages committed against the Holy Land. As the chronicles revealed, Urban's anecdotes of sacrilege struck at his audience's reverential feelings for Jerusalem, encouraging them to liberate the most sacred territory in Christendom.

Along with the invocation of Jerusalem, the integration of church practices ultimately led soldiers to view the First Crusade as a type of pilgrimage. The end of Robert's account described Urban's insistence on having trained professional soldiers to join the crusade. In addressing those who did not belong to the knightly class, he claimed laymen needed the "blessing of their priests" before entering upon "the pilgrimage."²⁰ Urban's warning would go unheeded, as the preaching of the crusade spread rapidly and attracted people from all backgrounds, trained knights and inexperienced peasants alike not only in France but also in western Germany and Italy.²¹ Aside from this, however, the promise of the pilgrim's blessing was taken seriously. The tradition of blessing people with safe travels developed into the blessing of the emblematic items of scrip and staff for pilgrims.²² For the trained knights that Urban wanted to go on crusade, swords would also receive the same blessings. The pope and the crusaders would describe the crusade in terms of pilgrimage, alluding to a synonymous association for medieval people.²³ Fulcher recounted the events after Urban's speech, referring to the aspiring crusaders as "pilgrims."²⁴ Even though they had not left for the Holy Land, the crusaders began to consider themselves as pilgrims. As a result, knights regarded the act of going on crusade as the process of embarking on a penitential pilgrimage.

²⁰ Peters, "Urban: The Version of Robert of Rheims," *The First Crusade*, 29.

²¹ Riley-Smith, *The First Crusade and the Idea of Crusading*, 34.

²² Gaposchkin, "From Pilgrimage to Crusade," 48.

²³ Riley-Smith, *The First Crusade and the Idea of Crusading*, 24.

²⁴ Peters, "The Chronicle of Fulcher of Chartres," 54.

In accordance with the goals of pilgrimages, all three accounts addressed the promised absolution of sins for participating in the crusade. Traditionally, undertaking a pilgrimage was a taxing and, therefore, penitential act, for which the forgiveness of sin would be granted to dutiful pilgrims.²⁵ The crusade to Jerusalem promised to operate in a similar manner. In Fulcher's account, Urban stated, with power vested by God, that the "remissions of sins will be granted for those going thither [on crusade]" if they died in battle.²⁶ This admission from the pope applied only to those who perished on the crusade, but it was no less significant to the audience. Institutional church doctrine fostered deep anxieties over the soul.²⁷ Familiar with sermons on divine judgment and the fate of souls steeped in sin, Christians desperately wanted reassurance regarding their own salvation. The First Crusade offered relief from those fears, as undertaking the mission for Christ and Christendom would cleanse the soul of its sins.

Robert's version used similar language as Fulcher's version, echoing the remission of sins with "the assurance of the imperishable glory of the kingdom of heaven."²⁸ This religious imagery would have come as a comfort to the soldiers at that moment and later in the journey when their armies began to suffer casualties. By papal authority, they would have received a guaranteed passage into heaven if they fulfilled their martial duty to their Lord. For those who perished on the journey, Baldric's account offered this reassurance, as Urban claimed it was "of equal value" to Christ for soldiers to die without having reached the Holy Land.²⁹ Even if they could not survive the journey, their efforts would not be in vain. Their very motivations to fight for Christ would guarantee their entry into the Kingdom of God. Offered the reward of salvation, the soldiers undoubtedly felt motivated when they embarked on the First Crusade.

²⁵ Gaposchkin, "From Pilgrimage to Crusade," 50.

²⁶ Peters, "The Chronicle of Fulcher of Chartres," *The First Crusade*, 53.

²⁷ Asbridge, *The First Crusade: A New History*, 6-7.

²⁸ Peters, "Urban: The Version of Robert of Rheims," *The First Crusade*, 28.

²⁹ Peters, "Urban: The Version of Baldric of Dol," *The First Crusade*, 32.

Faith, Miracles, and the Influence of a Spiritual Worldview

After the Council of Clermont officially launched the First Crusade, religious piety and devotion continued to shape the motives of the crusaders. The acceptance of religious beliefs as reality reflected the widespread spirituality within medieval European society. For the crusaders, God's "absolute power was plain for all to see" in the form of miracles.³⁰ These miracles would occur through the power of relics and the participation in the sacraments. The supernatural even made itself known in the natural world. On the 30th of December 1097, during the Siege of Antioch, an earthquake occurred, and many crusaders reported seeing in the sky "a certain sign in the shape of a cross...advancing toward the East in a straight path."³¹ The crusaders interpreted the earthquake and the mysterious sign in the sky, most likely a comet, as supernatural and spiritual omens. Whether or not such miracles could be connected to natural phenomena or mere chance, medieval society accepted these happenings as undeniable proof of the Lord's influence on the world. While processing the events of the campaign, this spiritual outlook generated new insights to fuel their motivations.

As the journey to Jerusalem commenced, the crusaders' religiosity defined their perceptions of the mission, as evident in how they saw a divine presence working in every instance of fortune and misfortune. Acknowledgement of the spiritual emerged readily in Fulcher's chronicle. When discussing actual conflict with Muslim forces, Fulcher attributed victories in battle to the favor of God.³² In the Battle of Dorylaeum, starting on July 1, 1097, the crusader armies of Robert of Normandy, Stephen of Blois, Robert of Flanders, and Bohemund of

³⁰ Asbridge, *The First Crusade: A New History*, 6.

³¹ Peters, "The Chronicle of Fulcher of Chartres," *The First Crusade*, 73 .

³² Dana Carleton Munro, "A Crusader," *Speculum* 7, no. 3 (1932): 327.

Taranto struggled against the Turkish armies of the emirs Koradja and Atsiz.³³ Nevertheless, the crusaders believed they had mustered their strength at the Lord's allowance and won the battle "although no one except God put [the Turkish armies] to flight any longer."³⁴ Fulcher's retelling of the battle captured the general belief that the Lord granted the crusaders their victories. Thus, the soldiers fought invigorated by their trust in a powerful divine being who had pity on them and ensured their success.

There was, however, another side to this belief; the Lord could defeat just as easily as He could grant victory. Before the crusaders at Dorylaeum succeeded, they confessed, some with tears in their eyes, their sins to the Bishop of Puy and four other bishops, who accompanied the clergy on crusade.³⁵ At that point, the crusaders believed their inability to defeat the Turks resulted from the sins they had committed. Their misdeeds had earned them the disapproval of God, who would justly punish them by allowing the Muslim forces to defeat their troops. Through the Sacrament of Penance, crusaders believed they could regain God's favor and rediscovered their motivation to fight. According to Fulcher, God would permit some crusaders to perish, allowing them to receive the increase of salvation.³⁶ In this case, the chastisement from the Lord actually benefited the crusaders in the end. Since Pope Urban II already promised salvation for those who perished at the Council of Clermont, the soldiers felt mostly assured about the fate of their souls if they were to die at any point in the journey. In victory and defeat, the crusaders believed the Lord was in control, renewing their confidence and enthusiasm throughout the crusade.

³³ Peters, "The Chronicle of Fulcher of Chartres," *The First Crusade*, 65-66.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 67.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 66.

³⁶ Munro, "A Crusader," 328.

As they confronted more obstacles in the campaign, crusaders continued to find their spiritual drive in dire circumstances. Fulcher recounted, in 1097, how the armies of Robert II of Normandy and Stephen of Blois witnessed one of their boats sinking. Afterwards, survivors “discovered crosses actually imprinted in the flesh” of the drowned. This miracle served as proof of God’s mercy granting them everlasting life and peace.³⁷ Despite the grave and fatal nature of this incident, crusaders reportedly witnessed a miracle amid the chaos. While one might consider a potential fabrication on the part of soldiers trying to honor their prematurely fallen comrades, Fulcher’s account suggested that the crusaders believed that this incident coincided with the will of God and found some comfort.

Trust in the divine could also be found in the account of Raymond of Aguilers. Raymond was the chaplain to army leader Raymond of St. Gilles, Count of Toulouse, and the author of the *Historia Francorum qui ceperunt Iherusalem*.³⁸ He recounted the various hardships and events the crusaders experienced during the Siege of Antioch, which lasted from October 1097 to June 1098. The crusaders struggled with dwindling supplies, starvation, and desertion until the Bishop of Puy organized a fast and mass “thereupon, the merciful Lord...put off the punishment of His children.”³⁹ Maintaining the siege took a huge toll on the crusaders, but they resorted to prayer and traditional church practices, like fasting, to regain favor from the Lord. Raymond of Aguilers concluded that these devotional practices succeeded as the situation changed for the better. As God “enlarged” His compassion and “multiplied” the shrunken crusader armies, the crusaders managed to defeat the Turkish reinforcements before they aided their brethren in

³⁷ Peters, “The Chronicle of Fulcher of Chartres,” *The First Crusade*, 60.

³⁸ Peters, *The First Crusade*, 156.

³⁹ Peters, “The Suffering of the Crusaders: The Version of Raymond d’Aguilers,” trans. August C. Krey, *The First Crusade*, 196-197.

Antioch.⁴⁰ Raymond expressed the general opinion that God granted a miracle to the crusader armies, allowing them to overcome the enemy. According to his account, the soldiers believed that they could acquire divine favor on the battlefield through their faith and devotional acts. Believing that the Lord was on their side, the crusaders became emboldened and found the will to fight. Faith and devotional acts served as their strength.

The Holy Lance and Objects of Devotion

Under the leadership of church officials and through the soldiers' enthusiasm, devotion and piety comprised the crusaders' religious motivations. Clergymen accompanying knights on the First Crusade served as the means through which spiritual devotion thrived. They primarily exercised their influence over the crusaders by preaching. The Bishop of Puy supposedly ensured that he, the other bishops, abbots, and other clergymen held sermons every Sunday and feast day.⁴¹ With this routine, the crusaders consistently received spiritual messages. Services like the Mass would have reminded soldiers of their spiritual goals and encouraged them to fight in battle. The clergy could not join the knights in battle, but priests still served an important purpose for their combative counterparts. During the Siege of Antioch, around June 1098, crusader armies prepared for battle, but before the soldiers went to the frontlines, priests in white vestments wept, sang hymns, and prayed for the crusaders in their camps.⁴² By performing traditional church practices, the priest concerned themselves with the state of the crusaders' souls. The clergy of the crusaders carried out their sacred duties and provided their laity with protection and inspiration.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Riley-Smith, *The First Crusade and the Idea of Crusading*, 87.

⁴² Peters, "The Chronicle of Fulcher of Chartres," 79.

The crusaders also strove to fulfill their sacred obligations in their devotion to the cross. The crusaders, as mentioned before, bore crosses on their clothes. The crosses were ornately crafted, “either silken or woven of gold, or of any material” and worn at Urban’s command.⁴³ The pope’s involvement suggests that there was a special focus being placed on the cross symbol from the beginning. The cross not only represented Christ’s sacrifice for the world but also the reward of salvation brought by that action. Crosses served as tangible connections to Jesus and salvation, constantly reminding the crusaders of the sanctity of their mission. As Fulcher explained, by “[imprinting] the ideal” of the cross, the crusaders believed they “might attain the reality of the ideal.”⁴⁴ For the soldiers, the symbol of the cross stood at the heart of their mission and motivations.⁴⁵ The crusaders chose to fight in the name of Christ, recapturing sacred territories from the forces of non-Christians, i.e. the Muslim Seljuk Turks. Devoting themselves to the cross, they then concentrated their focus and energy on the crusade and the Lord. Through the symbol of the cross, the crusaders drew on piety and devotion for motivation and began to conceptualize themselves as the armies of God.

The tradition of the veneration of relics served as a powerful motivating factor for the crusaders. In the tenth century, medieval Christians developed an enthusiasm for pilgrimages to saint shrines, where they could ask for forgiveness of sins, a miraculous healing, and other favors.⁴⁶ For them, relics and the miracles associated with them served as the best proofs of the Lord’s sacred presence in the world. Situated in the Near East where the events of the Bible occurred, the Byzantine Empire had a reputation as a prime site for relics. Fulcher claimed it would have been “a great nuisance” to describe the opulence of Constantinople’s numerous holy

⁴³ Ibid., 54.

⁴⁴ Peters, “The Chronicle of Fulcher of Chartres,” *The First Crusade*, 54.

⁴⁵ Gaposchkin, “From Pilgrimage to Crusade,” 56.

⁴⁶ Rubenstein, *Armies of Heaven*, 4.

relics.⁴⁷ Looking beyond his seemingly negative tone, it was clear Fulcher, like other crusaders, felt overwhelmed by the amount of valuable relics surrounding him. Some crusaders tried to collect relics along the journey. Gerbault of Lille, a priest following the armies of Robert of Flanders, stole an arm of St. George from a monastery in the Byzantine Empire; Robert later gained possession of the arm and became known as the “son of St. George due to his rather extreme devotion to the saint.”⁴⁸ The relics of saints and the blessings they bestowed gave crusaders a certain amount of reassurance during their journey. Given their reverence for sacred artifacts, the crusaders pressed forward, undoubtedly driven by the prospects of recapturing more Eastern cities with potentially more relics.

The discovery of the Holy Lance epitomized the power of venerable devotion and its influence on crusaders’ motives. The incident occurred during the Siege of Antioch when a peasant crusader named Peter Bartholomew, frightened by recent earthquakes, received a vision of Saint Andrew the apostle.⁴⁹ Saint Andrew told Peter Bartholomew to deliver some admonishments to the Bishop of Puy for failing to preach well and then offered to show the peasant the location of the Lance that pierced Jesus’ side.⁵⁰ Despite its fantastical nature and the apparent disapproval of authority figures, Peter Bartholomew’s vision was not unusual but fitted within traditions of saintly visions and powerful relics.⁵¹ The vision stood out in its promise of a rare and sacred artifact, a relic directly related to the life of Christ. Relics held a special place in the hearts of medieval Christians, superseding any loyalties to bishops who apparently needed admonishing.

⁴⁷ Peters, “The Chronicle of Fulcher of Chartres,” *The First Crusade*, 62.

⁴⁸ Riley-Smith, *The First Crusade and the Idea of Crusading*, 94.

⁴⁹ Rubenstein, *Armies of Heaven*, 156.

⁵⁰ Peters, “The Discovery of the Holy Lance: The Version of Raymond d’Aguilers,” trans. August C. Krey, *The First Crusade*, 216.

⁵¹ Asbridge, *The First Crusade: A New History*, 222.

The bishops in question viewed the tale with caution. The Church took great care in verifying and validating relics through the proof of miracles, a difficult practice. At the same time of the Lance's discovery, a different "Holy Lance" that already passed the qualifications for verification was currently resting in the relic collection of the Byzantine emperor.⁵² It was not uncommon for churches to stake claims on the same relics, but these holy artifacts often held a history and were already proven to be authentic due to the miracles they performed. The Holy Lance discovered by Peter Bartholomew was new. Nevertheless, the other crusaders were willing to accept Peter Bartholomew's story. Raymond reported thirteen men went to the Antioch Church of St. Peter and dug up the Lance, where the crusaders responded with "great joy and exultation."⁵³ The Lance reinvigorated the morale of the crusaders, weary from the long siege. They must have perceived the discovery of such a relic as a sign of God's favor toward their cause. Crusaders saw the power of God, manifest in the Lance, and regained the courage to face and defeat the Turkish armies of Lord Kerbogha.⁵⁴ In the end, the crusaders' belief in the Lance served as the catalyst allowing them to break the siege and capture Antioch. As this incident proved, devotional objects and ritual practices were capable of stirring the crusaders' hearts and driving them through their mission.

Conclusion

Although he provided great insight into the aims of the Church, Erdmann's approach was too limiting in its treatment of religious influences. As the chronicles reveal, spiritual beliefs and religious practices motivated medieval Europeans to participate in the First Crusade. The

⁵² Ibid., 224.

⁵³ Peters, "The Holy Lance: The Version of Raymond d'Aguilers," *The First Crusade*, 220.

⁵⁴ Peters, "The Defeat of Kerbogha: The Version of Raymond d'Aguilers," trans. August C. Krey, *The First Crusade*, 225.

incorporation of church practices turned the crusade into a somewhat familiar experience to medieval Christians, who grew to see themselves as going on an armed pilgrimage to Jerusalem. Traditions of lay piety, such as the veneration of the cross and of relics, informed the religiosity of soldiers before and during the crusade. The remission of sins preached by Pope Urban II ultimately gave the First Crusade its appeal, compelling medieval Christians to fight for the Lord and for the salvation of their souls.

Still, the same sources that convey the importance of religion in the crusaders' lives also allude to more secular interests. While the crusaders journeyed under the pretext of fulfilling their Christian duties, some took advantage of the opportunities that the crusade introduced. In the East, they saw wealth and territory that they could seize and possess for themselves. Here they could earn worldly riches along with the spiritual rewards they were to receive by undertaking the crusade. Ambitious and avaricious crusaders went to great lengths to obtain this land, spurning their Byzantine allies and fighting fellow nobles. As seen in the crusade chronicles, it becomes clear that material desire was another source of motivation for the crusaders as well as religion.

Chapter 2: Opportunism and Avarice in the First Crusade

The city of Antioch was beautiful, a “very fine and distinguished place.” It resided in the mountains located between modern-day southern Turkey and northern Syria, with the fortified citadel on the highest point. The city itself had many decorative buildings, including several churches and approximately “three hundred and sixty monasteries.”¹ This was the impression it made on the *Gesta Francorum*'s author, a soldier in armies of Bohemund of Taranto. The city made a deep impression on Bohemund himself. At the end of a long siege, he would seize control of the city and become its ruler. This act went against the Church's intentions for the crusade, which was to recapture lost territory for the Byzantine Empire. But the crusaders seized the lost territory for themselves.

The crusaders would succeed in defeating the Seljuk Turks, who had taken Byzantine territory, but in some cases, they did not relinquish control of the land back to the Byzantines. Instead, the crusaders themselves ruled over the territory. As mentioned in Chapter 1, religious piety and devotion played a large role in drawing Christian armies to the East. In spite of this, as the anecdote above reveals, the same chronicles demonstrate that the material rewards attracted some soldiers as much as the spiritual riches. Certain crusaders envisioned the Holy Land as a center of wealth and prosperity. As the armies recaptured Byzantine territories from the Muslims, certain crusaders sought material rewards along with spiritual rewards. In particular, crusaders like Bohemund seemed determined to gain territory, riches, and power in a land far from home. Byzantine Christians regarded the European crusaders with caution, believing their fellow Christians held motives other than the religious. The actions taken by the crusaders

¹ Hill, *Gesta Francorum*, 76-77.

suggest that material desire sometimes overpowered religious loyalties and even jeopardized the campaign.

Debate on the Influence of Material Desire

Crusade historians have debated the extent to which greed served as a significant motive for the First Crusaders. Riley-Smith has downplayed the idea of greed as a potential motive in examining the charters of departing crusaders. Written down by clerics at the owner's request, the charters listed the sales and mortgages made by the knightly nobles before leaving Europe.² Riley-Smith recounted the steep financial costs presented by the charters, which suggested greed had a small role in motivating crusaders. Noblemen had to raise money to join the expedition by renouncing their claims to property rights and selling the property they possessed.³ Undertaking the expedition proved expensive for most crusaders and required much sacrifice. For Riley-Smith, the charters showed that most crusaders were willing to relinquish and abandon material goods for the sake of the journey.

Asbridge agreed with Riley-Smith, noting the high expenses and financial sacrifices made by crusaders.⁴ These actions did not reflect the image of crusaders driven by greed. Furthermore, many charters made references to Jerusalem as the ultimate goal of the crusade.⁵ The references to the Holy Land seemingly implied that the crusaders regarded religious devotion as their top priority. The soldiers would give their possessions and their lives to their sacred cause. As recounted the crusading armies' exploits, however, Asbridge noted instances where the crusaders sought to seize wealth and territory. He claimed that the seizure of

² Riley-Smith, *The First Crusade and the Idea of Crusading*, 15.

³ *Ibid.*, 45.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 68-69.

⁵ Asbridge, *The First Crusade: A New History*, 22.

Mamistra, which resulted in a fight between the armies of Tancred and Baldwin of Boulogne, threatened the “pious vision of Jerusalem” with “personal rivalries and the temptations of wealth and power.”⁶ Asbridge recognized the potential materialistic motives of the crusaders in pursuing this territory. Still, he confined his analysis to a single sentence before moving to a new subject. Asbridge, like Riley-Smith, does not dwell on the presence and implications of material desire in the First Crusade.

Despite Riley-Smith’s claim that avarice was not a viable motivation, his own evidence indicated that crusaders did indeed care about material interests. He suggested that Pope Urban II anticipated the soldiers’ potential for greed. In his speech at Clermont, Urban promised the absolution of sins to knights who fought “for devotion only, not to gain honour or money.”⁷ Here the pope clearly wanted to steer the faithful away from secular vices. In medieval society, avarice was considered to be a serious sin. From Urban’s perspective, the ideal crusader would refrain from acting upon his greedy impulses for the sake of his soul. Still, the inclusion of this caveat indicated that greed held enough influence over some crusaders to constitute a concern for the Church. A few charters also hinted towards the crusaders’ more secular interests. In the charters of Wolker of Kuffern and Achard of Montmerle, the noblemen inserted clauses into their mortgages to allow the possibility of settling in the East.⁸ As shown in the charters, some crusaders expected to settle down in the East and made preparations so as not to lose all of their possessions in vain. They anticipated an exchange and payoff for undertaking the journey. Though they sacrificed their wealth at home, they could find new property and riches to rebuild their fortunes.

⁶ Ibid., 147.

⁷ Riley-Smith, *The First Crusade and the Idea of Crusading*, 40.

⁸ Ibid.

While some scholars like Riley-Smith set aside the idea of greed, others like Asbridge acknowledge the presence of greed but devote minimal attention to analyzing its influence. In response to the limited focus of the historiography, this chapter demonstrates that the sources contain ample evidence of material desire did in fact motivate certain noblemen to join the crusade. The pope acknowledged the existence of avaricious desire when he tried to discourage such ulterior motives in his speech. As proven by the charters, nobles made great financial sacrifices to attend the expedition, but some held contingency plans for restoring lost wealth. The Christian soldiers undoubtedly held a sense of spiritual duty, but they did not hesitate to pursue their self-interests along the journey. While greed may not have constituted the sole influence on crusaders, scholars should consider its presence in the First Crusade. Indeed, there were crusaders that thought about material wealth as they embarked on this military expedition. In light of such circumstances, avarice must have served as significant motivation for some crusading armies.

Inheritance and the Norman Armies

Before analyzing how greed influenced the crusaders, it is necessary to examine the social conditions and important events that bred this material desire. According to Asbridge, the most popular and arguably misleading image of crusaders was that of nobles who were victims of the law of primogeniture.⁹ While the firstborn son inherited his family's fortune and property, the younger sons received little possessions to their name. Denied by birthright, the younger siblings would choose either to start their career in a monastery or seek their fortune elsewhere. Offering a path to the riches of the East, the First Crusade seemed to qualify as an attractive alternative to other mundane careers. However, Asbridge argued that the problem of

⁹ Asbridge, *The First Crusade: A New History*, 68.

primogeniture alone would not be enough to account for all crusaders' desires to undertake the First Crusade. He noted that eldest and youngest siblings alike joined the expedition. In many cases, family members made financial sacrifices to support their journey.¹⁰ Still, Asbridge admitted there were exceptions of crusaders who fit this mold, such as Bohemund of Taranto. He later recounted the ambitious territorial acquisitions of Baldwin of Boulogne and Tancred, the juniors of older and more famous family members. Though the issue of primogeniture may not define the whole body of crusaders, the existence of these exceptions has added a material focus to the campaign that might not otherwise have appeared.

The most prominent instance of primogeniture factoring into personal motives was the case of Bohemund of Taranto, the leader of the Italian Norman crusading armies. He was the eldest son of Robert "Guiscard," or Robert "the Wily," and his first wife Alberada.¹¹ Bohemund fought alongside and aided his father in establishing Norman control of southern Italy, a difficult feat to accomplish.¹² Despite his status as the eldest child, Bohemund received little rewards for his troubles. Robert Guiscard divorced Alberada on the basis of consanguinity, remarried an Italian princess, and had a second son named Roger.¹³ It would be Roger, the eldest son of his second marriage, who would receive Guiscard's inheritance. In this regard, Bohemund held the distinction of being an eldest child affected negatively through the law of primogeniture. It was an unusual occurrence. The divorce effectively reduced him to an illegitimate child. It was not likely that Guiscard forgot about his eldest son, as Bohemund did accompany his father on military campaigns. Nevertheless, the son could not build his fortunes at home and would need to seek them elsewhere.

¹⁰ Riley-Smith, *The First Crusade and the Idea of Crusading*, 47.

¹¹ William B. McQueen, "Relations Between the Normans and Byzantium 1071-1112," *Byzantion* 56: (1986), 441. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/44161007>.

¹² Asbridge, *The First Crusade: A New History*, 58.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 59.

While Bohemund sought to restore his inheritance, what convinced the Italian Norman armies to follow their ambitious leader? The Normans had their beginnings in southern Italy, working as mercenaries for the local Lombards or Byzantine officials. They rose to power and then rivaled their former employers.¹⁴ Years before fighting under Bohemund, the Normans fought under the leadership of Bohemund's father Robert Guiscard against the Byzantine Empire for control over southern Italy. Guiscard won a decisive victory in the Battle of Bari in 1071, causing the Byzantines to lose their last stronghold in Italy and the West.¹⁵ Prior to the crusade, the Italian Norman knights had engaged with the Byzantines in pursuit of securing strategic territories in Illyria, an area within modern-day Albania. They sought to increase their power and influence in the West and in the East. The ambitions of the Normans appeared clear to the Byzantines. The latter tried to propose marriage alliances into the imperial family to stave off conflict but to no avail.¹⁶ Thus, when the Normans followed Bohemund into the First Crusade, they undoubtedly felt the renewal of their battles against the Byzantines.

The Normans' ambitions extended not only to southern Italy but also to Byzantine territory. In 1080, Guiscard launched an invasion on Byzantine-held Illyria, now modern-day Albania.¹⁷ Anna Comnena, the daughter of Byzantine Emperor Alexius I Comnenus, recorded the wars in the *Alexiad*, a multi-volume chronicle of the reign of her father. Anna characterized Guiscard's motives for attacking as a sign of his "insatiable ambition," reviling his plans to seize Illyria and "to proceed still further."¹⁸ Anna's cryptic words suggested that Guiscard's ultimate goal in "proceeding still further" was the emperor's throne.¹⁹ In aiding Guiscard, the Norman

¹⁴ McQueen, "Relations Between the Normans and Byzantium," 427.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 427-428.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 429.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 427.

¹⁸ Anna Comnena, *Alexiad: Book IV*, *Internet Medieval Sourcebook Project*, ed. Paul Halsall and Maryanne Kowaleski, Fordham University, I, <https://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/basis/AnnaComnena-Alexiad04.asp>.

¹⁹ McQueen, "Relations Between the Normans and Byzantium," 439.

armies were fighting their way to the imperial territories and riches of the Byzantine Empire. They would augment their power by attacking their enemies. The wariness and suspicion conveyed in Anna's assessment of Guiscard would permeate into her descriptions of the crusaders. Given the Byzantines' experience with European encroachment on their territory, it is not surprising that the *Alexiad* recognized and emphasized the Europeans' materialistic desires over their piety and religious beliefs.

For Bohemund who fought alongside his father, the Normans' Eastern campaigns might have held more personal significance. In his analysis of Norman-Byzantine relations, William McQueen theorized Guiscard wanted to procure this territory for his eldest son Bohemund.²⁰ While Guiscard's second son Roger would inherit Guiscard's holdings in southern Italy, Bohemund had attended and fought in his father's campaign in the East. Given Bohemund's loyalty, Guiscard was not so indifferent to his disinherited firstborn's plight. Had the campaign ended successfully, it seemed likely that these eastern territories would have served as a pseudo-inheritance for Bohemund upon Guiscard's death. Aside from earning military experience that would serve him in the First Crusade, Bohemund acquired the same invested interest in Byzantine territories as his father. From this standpoint, he might have felt entitled to these lands that he could have rightfully won in combat. Bohemund's ventures in his father's wars had planted the seeds for his ambitions in the First Crusade.

The interactions between the Normans and the Byzantines give insight into the aims of Bohemund and his army in the First Crusade. For the Normans, the bitter rivalry and conflicts with the Byzantines established a precedent of seizing Byzantine territories. When embarking on the First Crusade, some soldiers must have expected a similar pursuit of self-interests. These complex relations also explain some basis for the Byzantines' distrust and disdain of the

²⁰ Ibid., 441.

crusaders. Bohemund, the son of Robert Guiscard, had returned, claiming to be an ally instead of an enemy. Still, it did not seem likely that Bohemund would abandon his and his fathers' ambitions towards the East. He had already gained a taste of Byzantine land and riches. The Norman armies, and those who observed their previous campaigns, certainly viewed the East as a place where one could acquire power and wealth. Under these conditions and assumptions, the possibility of material desire could have attracted some soldiers to the First Crusade.

The Emperor of the East

The desires of the crusaders first led them to Constantinople, the capital of the Byzantine Empire. In order to progress further, the crusading armies needed the cooperation of Emperor Alexius, which proved quite difficult. Despite sharing a common Christian heritage, the Byzantines belonged to the Orthodox Church, which experienced a deep rift with the Catholic Church in 1054.²¹ The split had severed friendly relations between Europe and the Byzantine Empire. As a result, this hindered the crusaders' interactions with the Byzantines from the beginning. Furthermore, the bitter conflicts between the Byzantines and the Normans had established an air of distrust. Given their history with the Normans, the Byzantines had reason to suspect another grab for their wealth and territory. Still, Pope Urban and Emperor Alexius had initiated some reconciliation efforts before the emperor sent envoys to Piacenza.²² Urban hoped to the crusade and the act of helping the Byzantines would serve as the first step for reuniting the churches of Rome and Constantinople. As for the crusaders, they formed a tenuous alliance with the Byzantines for the sake of defeating the Seljuk Turks.

²¹ Asbridge, *The First Crusade: A New History*, 99.

²² Riley-Smith, *The First Crusade and the Idea of Crusading*, 13-15.

This alliance with the Byzantines did not deter the crusaders from pursuing material goals, however. The path to riches and prosperity could be attained through negotiations with Emperor Alexius. As recorded in the *Alexiad*, Alexius was wary of the crusading armies, who were “always agape for money, and seemed to disregard their truces readily for any reason.”²³ While one could accuse the *Alexiad* of bias against the crusaders, the official imperial record nevertheless indicated the tension and distrust between the Byzantines and their “Latin” allies. As Comnena conveyed, the Byzantines genuinely expected greed and other ulterior motives from the crusaders. Still, the Emperor would use this expectation of crusader greed to his advantage by securing loyalties through lavish gifts.

Alexius required each prince and noble to make an oath of allegiance to him.²⁴ In return, crusaders could expect great rewards. For instance, Alexius greeted the first nobleman to arrive in Constantinople, Hugh, Count of Vermandois, “with all honour and shewed him much friendliness” and gained the Count’s allegiance by “giving him a large sum of money.”²⁵ The chronicle of Albert of Aachen, the canon of Aix-la-Chapelle or Aachen, recorded a similar case involving Godfrey of Bouillon and the Emperor. He recounted how the Duke Godfrey received “invaluable gifts of all kinds” taken from “the treasury of Emperor, both gold and silver, purples, mules, and horses, and all that he [the Emperor] held valuable,” which he then distributed among his soldiers.²⁶ As Albert’s anecdote indicated, the gifts of the Emperor were opulent, generous,

²³ Anna Comnena, *Alexiad: Book X*, V. Emperor Alexius also distrusted the crusading armies of the “Latins” because of the first impression made by the participants of the People’s Crusade. The participants raided other Byzantine cities and acted far differently from the trained knights that the emperor was initially expecting. When the First Crusaders arrived in Constantinople, the Byzantines were reluctant, with fair reason, to give supplies and aid to the armies. The Byzantines’ coldness then offended the nobles of the First Crusade, which negatively affected European-Byzantine relations early in the campaign. See Thomas Asbridge, *The First Crusade: A New History*, 101-103.

²⁴ Asbridge, *The First Crusade: A New History*, 110.

²⁵ Comnena, *Alexiad: Book X*, VII.

²⁶ Peters, “Godfrey of Bouillon: The Version of Albert of Aachen,” trans. August C. Krey, *The First Crusade: The Chronicle of Fulcher of Chartres and Other Source Materials*, 167.

and enticing to the nobles and soldiers. Alexius even presented Bohemund, his long-time enemy whom he preferred to hold at a distance, with a chamber containing various gold and silver treasures.²⁷ These oaths of allegiance initially proved beneficial to the Emperor and the crusaders. With lavish gifts, the Emperor could manage the crusaders and minimize the threats they posed to his empire. Likewise, in spite of any suspicions they held towards the Byzantines, the crusaders took advantage of the opportunity, and luxuries, presented to them.

Broken Promises

Over the course of the expedition, the crusaders pursued their self-interests at the expense of breaking their oaths of allegiance to Emperor Alexius. One of the oath's major stipulations was for the crusaders to return any recovered Byzantine territory back to the empire.²⁸ This condition merely reflected the initial goal of the Church and the Byzantine Empire, for Western Europeans to recapture the Byzantine territories occupied by the Seljuk Turks. Trusting the promises of Pope Urban II, Alexius expected the crusaders to restore the stolen lands. Instead the crusaders failed to uphold their vows, which the Muslims recognized. Ibn al-Qalanisi, one of the earliest Muslim chroniclers of the First Crusade, described how the Franks "made a covenant with the king of the Greeks" to restore lost territory, but when the crusaders captured Nicaea, they "refused to deliver it up to him."²⁹ Despite the gifts they received from Alexius, the crusaders still desired to acquire more possessions. As these instances reveal, some crusaders had different goals and motives than the pope or the emperor.

During the Siege of Antioch (1097-1098), Bohemund of Taranto sought to claim Antioch as his own. The crusaders needed to capture the city, since it stood in the way of their route

²⁷ Comnena, *Alexiad: Book X*, XI.

²⁸ Asbridge, *The First Crusade: A New History*, 110.

²⁹ Peters, "The Firanj Seize Antioch: The Version of Ibn al-Qalanisi," trans. H. A. R. Gibb, *The First Crusade*, 232.

south to Jerusalem. The author of the *Gesta Francorum* revealed how his leader hoped to obtain the city. Before the crusaders secured their decisive victory, Bohemund had approached the other leaders with the proposal of letting whoever “[captured] the city or [engineered] its downfall” to possess Antioch; the other nobles refused to comply.³⁰ This incident showed Bohemund’s plans to secure Antioch for himself before the siege properly ended. He worked to orchestrate Antioch’s fall in order to prove a victor’s rights to the land. Indeed, the land was deeply valuable to the crusaders, given the nine months of suffering and sacrifices that they endured, resulting in a triumphant, morale-boosting victory.³¹ Antioch represented the culmination of the crusaders’ struggles, a fine and worthy prize that Bohemund coveted. In the end, Bohemund remained in Antioch for much of the remainder of the crusade until the Siege of Jerusalem (1099); even the author of the *Gesta* left his lord’s army to continue the journey.³² In breaking his oath to the Byzantine Emperor, Bohemund achieved his enduring goal of a conquest in the East.

Though a prominent example, Bohemund was not the only crusader seeking territories in the East. The expeditions to Ma’arrat an-Nu’mān also involved two different crusaders’ attempts to seize a city’s riches. Ma’arrat an-Nu’mān was a wealthy commercial city in a strategic location in northwestern Syria.³³ The knight Raymond Pilet split from Raymond of Toulouse’s army and embarked on an attempt to capture Ma’arrat.³⁴ Raymond Pilet started this independent venture of his own accord, apparently wanting to acquire territory and riches. Before he reached Ma’arrat, he enjoyed initial success with previous cities he encountered. Unfortunately, Raymond underestimated his opponents and the great heat and suffered a costly defeat by

³⁰ Hill, *Gesta Francorum*, 44.

³¹ Asbridge, *The First Crusade: A New History*, 240.

³² Hill, *Gesta Francorum*, 84.

³³ Asbridge, *The First Crusade: A New History*, 248.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

Ma'arrat's Muslim defenders.³⁵ The crusaders would not experience success until Raymond of Toulouse launched the second attempt on Ma'arrat. Initially, the crusaders offered negotiations for a peaceful surrender of the city, but when the Muslim residents refused, the crusaders took and plundered the city by force.³⁶ Al-Qalanisi viewed the crusaders' conduct as treacherous, looting the people they offered to protect. The raids on Ma'arrat demonstrated how crusaders ruthlessly pursued their self-interests while seizing wealth where they found it.

Discord Among Allies

Coupled with such tenacity, the avaricious ventures of the crusaders threw the military expedition into great turmoil. The soldiers' reluctance to part with recaptured Byzantine territory strained European-Byzantine relations further. The oaths of allegiance, which had stabilized the tensions between the two groups, now seemed ineffective in practice. Still, some crusaders earnestly tried to adhere to their vows to the emperor. When Bohemund claimed Antioch for himself, Raymond of Toulouse opposed him in front of the other nobles on the basis of the oath of allegiance they took.³⁷ While Raymond's ventures to seize Ma'arrat might contradict his argument, Antioch was a matter of great importance. The crusaders had agreed to recover the strategic citadel of Antioch for Emperor Alexius.³⁸ Refusal to do so would mean that the crusaders were breaking their oath to their Byzantine allies. Aside from seizing smaller territories, Raymond wanted to retain his powerful imperial ally by supporting Alexius's right to the land.

³⁵ Ibid., 249.

³⁶ Peters, "The Firanj Take Ma'arrat an-Nu'mān: The Version of Ibn al-Qalanisi," trans. H. A. R. Gibb, *The First Crusade*, 236-237.

³⁷ Hill, *Gesta Francorum*, 75.

³⁸ Asbridge, *The First Crusade: A New History*, 242-243.

The contest for Antioch put the army leaders at odds with each other. Noblemen found themselves picking sides between Bohemund and Raymond. At first, the nobles sided largely with Raymond, who wanted to uphold his oath and deliver the city to the emperor.³⁹ They too had taken territories like Nicaea for themselves, but they likely wanted to retain their alliances with the emperor. Bohemund then drew support by arguing that the Byzantines had not delivered aid to the crusaders at Antioch as promised and, thus, lost their claim.⁴⁰ This argument apparently swayed the other nobles. Some leaders returned from other skirmishes to Antioch with Bohemund, while Raymond tried to conduct his own expeditions.⁴¹ The divided support hindered the armies' ability to move past Antioch. It effectively stalled the crusading operations, causing the other soldiers to grow restless and impatient. Ultimately, the contest over Antioch ended without an agreement, forcing Raymond and the other nobles to leave while Bohemund took Antioch. Bohemund's ambition and greed threw the whole campaign into chaos, a testament to the influence of avarice on crusaders.

While the nobles' conflict at Antioch saw no physical casualties, the Cilician expedition, which preceded it, escalated into violence. The belligerents, Tancred, the nephew of Bohemund, and Baldwin of Boulogne, began as fellow crusaders. Before traveling to Antioch, the crusading armies faced two different paths for progressing further, but the armies of Tancred and Baldwin split from the main body of crusaders to take an alternative route through Cilicia.⁴² The two armies traveled separately but explored the same region. This choice to take a distinctly different route might have stemmed from the circumstances surrounding the leaders. Tancred and Baldwin stood in the shadows of their more famous relatives, Bohemund of Taranto and Godfrey

³⁹ Hill, *Gesta Francorum*, 80.

⁴⁰ Asbridge, *The First Crusade: A New History*, 245.

⁴¹ Hill, *Gesta Francorum*, 81.

⁴² Asbridge, *The First Crusade: A New History*, 140.

of Bouillon, respectively.⁴³ Their explorations through Cilicia might have reflected an inner desire to distinguish themselves. Unfortunately, they decided to achieve this through acquiring territory in the same region, causing them to come into conflict.

Baldwin seized control of the city of Tarsus from Tancred, who bitterly refused to accept Baldwin's offer to share.⁴⁴ Tancred felt thwarted in his first attempts to seize territory. He coveted the glory of attaining the city and its riches. He did not want to share a consolation prize. Tancred moved on and captured the city of Mamistra, but Baldwin soon arrived in the region, raising the ire of Tancred and his troops.⁴⁵ Tancred and Baldwin had both acquired new territory and could match each other in strength. With their rivalry renewed in each other's presence, they led their men to exchange blows. The fight was brief and the casualties few, but for the first time, crusaders had fought and killed one another. The nobles' desire for territory and power caused fellow soldiers to battle as enemies. Such skirmishes demonstrated the discord that greed instilled into the campaign, jeopardizing the tenuous unity of the crusaders.

Conclusion

Although it might not have appealed to all crusaders, material desire affected the experiences for certain crusaders and thus the campaign as a whole. Before the knights embarked on the journey, the mere possibility of greed was enough to earn a discouraging admonishment from the pope. The charters of departures, which recorded the financial sacrifices of the crusaders, conversely showed potential plans to recover wealth on the journey. In the years before the crusade, military campaigns against Byzantines wetted the appetites of one set of crusading armies, the Italian Normans, with the promises of obtaining territory. The

⁴³ Ibid., 142.

⁴⁴ Hill, *Gesta Francorum*, 24.

⁴⁵ Asbridge, *The First Crusade: A New History*, 146.

ambitions that Bohemund held during the wars with the Byzantines had carried over into the crusade. These avaricious ventures strained relations between the Europeans and their Byzantine allies long before the crusaders set foot into Constantinople. For a brief time, the crusaders managed to sustain a shaky alliance with the Byzantines. But the riches of the emperor were not enough to sate the desires of crusaders like Bohemund. These ambitious knights took to seizing lands that they promised to return to the Byzantine Empire. Not only did they raise the ire of their supposed Christian allies but also fought one another for power and control. Given these instances, historians should not underestimate the significance of material desire on the crusade.

Overall, the crusaders appeared driven by secular interests as well as religious obligations. The Church intended for the crusade to appeal to knights on a spiritual level, but the crusaders found materialistic motives worth pursuing as well. The internal motivations of the crusaders varied and did not strictly align with the Church's plans to aid Byzantine Christians. This raises the question of how the Church and the crusaders conducted war while holding different motives. As the next chapter shows, the military strategy employed by the Church not only justified the creation of the crusade but also validated the violence and death wrought by the crusaders.

Chapter 3: Militancy, Violence, and The Strategy of the Church

In 1097, the crusading armies arrived at the walls of Nicaea. The walls surrounding the city rose to such a height that “neither the assaults of men nor the attacks of any machine [were] feared.” Upon the towers were ballistae capable of hurling projectiles down at any army. Its western wall resided by a great lake, while three moats engulfed and protected the remaining walls.¹ Faced with these obstacles, the crusaders planned to lay siege to the city from all sides. From the north came the Norman armies of Bohemund of Taranto, from the east the German armies of Duke Godfrey of Boulogne, and from the center the Frankish armies of Count Raymond IV of Toulouse and Bishop Adhemar of Puy. The Turkish soldiers descended from the mountains to attack the armies of Godfrey, Raymond, and Adhemar, while they were still making preparations. The siege almost ended before it began. However, the fortuitous arrival of Count Robert II of Normandy’s armies put the Turkish armies to flight and saved their allies. For the crusaders, it appeared as though “God, who is wont to reverse the plan of the impious,” had turned the siege in their favor from the beginning.²

For five weeks, the crusaders attacked the city walls with siege towers and weaponry. The Turkish soldiers continued to defend Nicaea with arrows and ballistae machinery. Some soldiers from Raymond’s army managed to get close enough to destroy one of the Turkish siege towers. They had created an opening through which the crusaders could take the city. Unfortunately, night had fallen, the darkness making battle far too dangerous, and the Turkish soldiers managed to rebuild the tower.³ Despite such setbacks, the crusaders had worn down the defenders and the citizens of Nicaea. They made an entreaty directly to Emperor Alexius, who

¹ Peters, “The Siege and Capture of Nicaea (May-June, 1097): The Version of Raymond d’Aguilers,” trans. August C. Krey, *The First Crusade*, 183.

² Ibid..

³ Ibid.

had established a camp near Nicaea, and offered to surrender the city. Listening to the advice of an advisor, Alexius decided to accept the offer to prevent the crusaders from sacking the city and stripping away its resources.⁴ The siege reached a relatively peaceful end, but it did not satisfy the crusaders. They had hoped to overcome their enemy on their own after five months of grueling siege warfare. They had no interest in sparing the Turkish soldiers that they were fighting or abandoning the city that they sought to capture.

While the crusaders took issue with the decisions of the Byzantine Emperor, the Church expected them to cooperate with such methods. Aside from the crusaders' desires, the Church possessed its own motives for organizing the crusade, such as rebuilding relations with the Byzantine Empire.⁵ In spite of the Church's efforts, however, the crusaders focused their energies elsewhere. As discussed in Chapters 1 and 2, the soldiers strove either to liberate Jerusalem and other Christian cities with their faith or to acquire territories and riches in the East at the expense of straining relations with the Byzantines. Given this difference between the Church and crusaders' motives, it is necessary to analyze the circumstances in which the Church and the crusaders went to war.

The answer came centuries before the crusade, when the nature of war troubled early Christians with its carnage and evils. The early Church incorporated militant aspects with theology and produced the doctrine of the "just war," which reconciled anxieties regarding faith and service in the military.⁶ The militarization of Christianity became familiarized and promoted in the following centuries, as popes tried to mobilize Christian armies to fight for church interests. At the same time, societal turmoil in the eleventh century developed into a serious problem. Nobles competed with each other for territory and power, and their grievances soon

⁴ Comnena, *Alexiad: Book XI*, II-III.

⁵ Asbridge, *The First Crusade: A New History*, 20.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 24.

led to bloodshed. The slaughter of Christians by other Christians fostered more anxieties and doubts about the state of one's soul, specifically its sins. When Pope Urban promised absolution of sins for those who joined the First Crusade, the Church redirected knightly conflict towards a common goal and a common enemy. As seen in the key battles of Nicaea, Antioch, and Jerusalem, the Christian crusaders' acceptance of religious warfare led to complex interactions with the opposing Muslim forces. Ultimately, the Church used these developments in militancy and violence to resolve theological and societal issues, leading to the creation of the First Crusade.

Saint Augustine and the Doctrine of the Just War

As evident by their participation in the First Crusade, Christian knights acknowledged the idea of fighting and killing non-Christians as part of their sacred duty. As Asbridge noted, this militarized response might seem jarring given the pacifistic messages promoted by the Bible. In spite of the many conflicts recorded within the sacred text, there were numerous calls for pacifism, between the plainly stated "thou shall not kill" from the Ten Commandments and Jesus' message of peaceful resistance in his Sermon on the Mount.⁷ As early as the fourth century, when church theologians confronted the struggle of maintaining strict pacifism, which was made more difficult by the martial Roman Empire's adoption of Christianity as the state religion.⁸ The early Church needed to validate Christianity in a world where violence occurred constantly and was sometimes essential to survival. They developed theological arguments that balanced the ideals of pacifism and the realities of war. For instance, the Old Testament recorded the Israelites' struggle for survival and the wars they waged under the commands and

⁷ Ibid., 23.

⁸ Ibid., 23.

approval of God.⁹ Such accounts suggested warfare sanctioned by a good and just deity was an acceptable response to aggression. Theologians relied on scriptural evidence both to endorse pacifism and to justify warfare under constraints. Christians who found themselves in such perilous situations would not face condemnation from God for acts of self-defense or of military duty. Thus, the incorporation of militant concepts into Christianity was necessary for stabilizing the religion's standing in the world.

The theologian whose works arguably held the most influence on the formation of the crusades was Saint Augustine of Hippo (d. 430). An early church father, Augustine wrote about warfare and violence throughout several tracts, in which he formulated the doctrine of the "just war." In his earlier writings, Augustine tried to rationalize the presence of evil in the world alongside the existence of the purely good Christian God. In the tract *De Ordine*, Augustine saw evil as necessary for the existence of a just world.¹⁰ He believed the presence of evil provided humans with a frame of reference for what was "good." Evil deeds allowed for the existence of "justice," which punished those deeds. Both Good and Evil served to maintain order in this world. *De Ordine* validated the conflict between these two forces as a tumultuous but self-stabilizing balance. When faced with the senseless carnage of war, especially involving Christians, however, Augustine had to complicate his position on evil and sin in warfare.

Augustine revised his argument on evil in *De libero arbitrio*. He established a dialogue in which he argued that earthly desire motivated people to commit evil deeds.¹¹ As a refutation of the idea that God is the cause of evil as well as good, he attributed the blame for sinful acts to the agent's personal malice. Stated plainly, all evil deeds originated from the bad intentions of

⁹ Ibid., 24.

¹⁰ Kevin Carnahan, "Perturbations of the Soul and Pains of the Body: Augustine on Evil Suffered and Done in War," *The Journal of Religious Ethics* 36, no. 2 (2008): 273. www.jstor.org/stable/40014888.

¹¹ Ibid., 274.

mortals, not the divine. With this assertion, he could have easily condemned all soldiers who committed murder in battle. He did not. Instead, Augustine argued further to claim that there were instances of murder motivated by reasons other than ill intent.¹² In *De libero arbitrio*, Augustine, through his fictional dialogue partner Evodius, explained that a soldier did not commit sin by killing an enemy in battle, because his obedience to a just law motivated him, not wrongly-oriented desires.¹³ Augustine thus suggested that killing in warfare, enacted under a just law and a just authority, was not sinful but acceptable. The law, which required the soldier to fight, served an ultimate good, such as the defense of citizens, and thus could not be truly evil. For Augustine, human law and authority were “just” when they aligned themselves with God’s commands.¹⁴ Only under the approval of God could a just authority send soldiers to war without tarnishing their souls in the process. In determining the function of evil and sinful acts, Augustine set the foundations for an acceptable form of war, guided by the “right” motivations.

Historians have recognized the influence of Augustine’s ruminations regarding evil and war on the formation of the crusade. Asbridge explained that later church theologians had simplified Augustine’s theories over time. They summarized his theories by reducing them to three criteria: a “just war” must be initiated by a “legitimate authority,” must have a “just cause,” and must be fought for the “right intentions.”¹⁵ The First Crusade could fit the criteria of a “just war,” as a campaign whose authority was the pope, whose cause was to free territories in Eastern Christendom, and whose intentions claimed to align with God’s will. Of course, this all depended on the criterion of the legitimate authority, who would define the war’s “cause” and “intentions.” For the First Crusade, this authority was Pope Urban II.

¹² Ibid., 275.

¹³ Augustine, *On Free Choice of the Will*, trans. Thomas Williams, (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1993), 8.

¹⁴ Ibid., 8-9.

¹⁵ Asbridge, *The First Crusade: A New History*, 24.

Riley-Smith examined Pope Urban II's usage of Augustine's theories. He argued that Urban repurposed Augustine's argument of violence "justified in response to injury" and proposed "a war of liberation" as an acceptable response.¹⁶ By interpreting the Muslim takeover of Byzantine territories as aggression, Urban justified the First Crusade as a proper and necessary act of violence to combat that aggression. According to Riley-Smith, the pope, as a legitimate authority, established the idea of "liberation," whether it extended to Jerusalem or all Eastern territories, as the righteous cause of this "just war." In determining the "right intentions," Urban turned to Bishop Anselm of Lucca's *Collectio canonum*, which contained Augustine's writings on love.¹⁷ For Augustine, the violence of warfare could serve justice, which "worked through love of God" and set one's enemies on the right path, but Urban rationalized this love as extending not to the Muslims but to fellow Byzantine Christians.¹⁸

Here Urban changed the meaning Augustine's words to suit the aims of the crusade. The theme of love for one's neighbors could be interpreted as the "right intentions" to make the First Crusade a just war. It was the desire to liberate other Christians that validated the crusade in the eyes of God. With the crusade conceptualized as inherently just, the violence that the crusaders committed would not be considered evil and sinful. Through a strategically condensed interpretation of Augustine's writings, Pope Urban legitimized and sanctified the First Crusade under the doctrine of the just war.

Pope Gregory VII and The Armies of the Church

Pope Urban's treatment of Augustine's concepts was not a new development in medieval

¹⁶ Ibid., 17.

¹⁷ Riley-Smith, *The First Crusade and the Idea of Crusading*, 27.

¹⁸ Ibid., 27.

Christianity. The concept of just war had experienced a similar transformation under Pope Gregory VII (r. 1073-1085). In the eleventh century, Cluniac monasteries, such as the one Urban previously joined, had become known for exemplifying rigorous spiritual devotion; this caused officials within the Church to re-evaluate their institutional structure and to implement reform.¹⁹ Pope Gregory VII championed church reforms that aimed to re-establish the authority of the papacy, which had waned in the past decades.²⁰ One of his reforms was a papal army, a military unit that served the Church. Ideally composed of aristocratic knights, this army of the faithful could wage a just war under the authority and commands of the pope. Due to the premature end of Gregory's life, his papal army never came to fruition. Nevertheless, it was the papacy's most recent experiment before the First Crusade to influence and militarize Christian nobles for the Church's purposes.

Gregory acted as a major influence on Pope Urban II. In 1080, Pope Gregory recruited the future Urban II, when he was still a priest at the abbey of Cluny, to become the cardinal-bishop of Ostia in Italy.²¹ Gregory had a great impact on the future Urban II's life and career. Seeing his potential, Gregory brought him to Rome, where he would rise within the ranks of the Church with greater ease. In return for being afforded these great clerical opportunities, the future pope repaid Gregory with his loyalty and support. Although some church officials and secular rulers criticized Gregory's reforms as too rigid and disciplinary, the future Urban remained a constant ally and proponent for Gregory. He continued to support Gregory and his reforms until Gregory's death in 1085.²² The legacy of Gregory VII persisted in the policies of

¹⁹ Asbridge, *The First Crusade: A New History*, 12.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 12-13.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 10-11.

²² *Ibid.*, 14.

his loyal supporter Urban II and thus became an important factor in the mobilization of the First Crusade.

Gregory formulated the idea of a papal army in the context of a power struggle between religious and secular authority known as the Investiture Controversy. Going against secular tradition, he wanted to reclaim for the Church the power to appoint bishops and other ecclesiastical officials to their divinely offices.²³ The right of investiture, held by the German Holy Roman Emperor, included the power to appoint the pope, which undermined the Gregorian Reforms of affirming papal authority. The historian I. S. Robinson examined Pope Gregory and the Church's motives and actions in the crisis. Robinson argued supporters of Gregory wanted to return to the example of the early Church, where Christian emperors of the Eastern Roman Empire wielded lavish funds and military power to persecute enemies.²⁴ Church officials held a romanticized nostalgia for a Church relatively untainted by the problems of their time. This desire for military power reflected a part of the Church's aims for the Gregorian reforms, which advanced the concept of the papal army. Harkening to the Church's roots, Gregory called upon the authority of Saint Peter, the apostle of Christ and the first Pope, over all "emperors, kings, princes, dukes, marquesses, counts and the property of all men."²⁵ The invocation of Saint Peter reaffirmed the connection between the early Church and the contemporary reformed Church under Gregory, grounding his authority in historical spiritual leadership. This renewed spiritual authority also superseded earthly rulers, which alluded to the other aim of Gregorian Reforms.

In asserting ecclesiastical authority, Gregory strove to diminish the power of competing secular authorities, altering the dynamic of medieval society. According to Robinson, Gregory created a stark departure from the standard historical perspective regarding secular and religious

²³ I. S. Robinson, "Gregory VII and the Soldiers of Christ," *History* 58, no. 193 (1973): 173-174.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 171.

²⁵ *Registrum Gregorii VII*, VII, 14 a, 487, quoted in Robinson, "Gregory VII and the Soldiers of Christ," 173.

authority. While the German aristocracy and clergy taught the laity to obey local rulers, a tradition dating back to the ninth-century Carolingian Empire, Gregory denounced secular loyalties and wanted to return to the teachings of the “ancient Fathers.”²⁶ In order to return to the “glory days” of the early Church, Gregory decided to dismantle the existing contemporary social structures hindering the transformation. He challenged the social status quo by undermining secular authority and the connection between rulers and their subjects.

To further diminish the power of worldly rulers, Gregory used tactics, with varying success, to align the laity’s loyalties and motives with the Church. He displayed his strategy in two incidents involving confrontation with kings. The first involved the principal conflict of the Investiture Controversy, challenging the authority of King Henry IV, the Holy Roman Emperor. When he refused to back down or relinquish the right of investiture, Gregory excommunicated him.²⁷ The excommunication would not only affect the king but also place the Holy Roman Empire under interdict, barring the German people from the promise of salvation. This punishment aroused anger and discontent among the laity towards their ruler. Robinson further noted that Gregory absolved the oaths of allegiance between the king and his subjects.²⁸ Without any obligations to the king, the nobility could freely express their dissent or even turn against their former lord. By severing the ties between the laity and secular authority, Gregory subtly manipulated the knightly nobility for the Church’s purposes. Later, Pope Urban II, in persuading the Frankish nobility to go on crusade, mirrored this example of soldiers under papal sway.

In another incident, Gregory negotiated a deal with King Swein II Estrithson of Denmark asking for the compliance of the Danish army to preserve a particular province.²⁹ As Robinson

²⁶ Robinson, “Gregory VII and the Soldiers of Christ,” 172.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 175.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 176.

stated, Gregory was mobilizing the lay nobility while asserting the proprietary rights of the Church over Christian lands. Through the military service of knightly soldiers, the Church would become the active agent in defending Christendom. The First Crusade comprised a similar army of defenders sanctioned by the Church, whose goals were to protect Christian territories. Though Gregory's abrupt death prevented him from actualizing his plans for a true papal army, echoes of his designs can be found in the Church's organization of the First Crusade and of the crusaders.

Societal Turmoil and The Issue of Violence

While theological and institutional developments within the Church influenced the First Crusade, external issues of violence and social unrest also played a role in the militarization of the Christian nobility. This societal upset had its cause in the decentralization of ruling power. Before the eleventh century, the strongest centralized secular authority was the Carolingian Empire, established by Charlemagne.³⁰ The Carolingian Empire covered a great portion of Western Europe and seemed to promise an enduring governance of these lands. However, upon Charlemagne's death, his successors divided the empire among themselves and left it vulnerable to future succession disputes and territorial claims.³¹ Charlemagne's death created a power vacuum that his sons were eager to fill. Their rivalry led to the division of the Carolingian Empire, splitting and reducing its former power. The situation only grew worse, as Vikings, Arabs, and Magyars led invasions against a politically-weakened Europe and its vulnerable population.³² Outsiders took advantage of this lack of centralized governance and sought to acquire European territory and power for themselves. Furthermore, European nobles themselves

³⁰ Asbridge, *The First Crusade: A New History*, 4.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Mayer, *The Crusades*, 15.

began seizing land and power, gaining more influence than the monarchs in some cases.³³ For the next few centuries, the decentralization of power threw medieval society into chaos as both local and foreign lords carved up Europe.

Although feudalism arose to stabilize society, the intricate system of loyalties between nobles continued to cause social unrest in medieval Europe. Feudalism strengthened the bonds among the aristocracy, but it still created the possibility of complicated feuds and acts of revenge.³⁴ When two or more nobles came into conflict, they expected their vassals to fight for them. Bound by oaths of allegiance, the knightly vassals would engage in their lords' struggle for power and sometimes kill their fellow knights. These conflicts would inevitably threaten the more vulnerable members of society, the unarmed clergy and laity. Feudal battles also led to internal spiritual conflicts for the knights. Nobles struggled to reconcile their identities as devout Christians with their roles as noble warriors.³⁵ They feared the potential consequences of their violent actions, the possibility of sin gripping and staining their souls.³⁶ The demands of the feudal system often entrapped members of the aristocracy in violent conflict and a perpetual state of sin.

Seeking to dissolve the tumultuous social climate, Pope Urban II used the First Crusade, among other reasons, as a means to address and amend medieval nobility's violent tendencies. The Church had undertaken the responsibility of reducing knightly conflicts. The accounts of Robert the Monk of Rheims and Baldric, Archbishop of Dol, indicate that during the pope's speech at Clermont, the pope directly criticized his audience of knights for their belligerence. In Robert's version, Urban accused the soldiers of killing and waging war against each other and

³³ Asbridge, *The First Crusade: A New History*, 4.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 5.

³⁵ Andrew A. Latham, "Theorizing the Crusades: Identity, Institutions, and Religious War in Medieval Latin Christendom," *International Studies Quarterly* 55, no. 1 (2011): 238-239.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 239.

urged instead to “let therefore hatred depart from [them], let [their] quarrels end” on the crusade.³⁷ Urban actively discouraged the reckless fighting typically engaged by the nobility. Knights could end the staining of their souls with sin by working together and going on crusade. Baldric’s account described a much harsher papal critique of knights, “guilty of homicide, of sacrilege, robbers of another’s rights,” engaging in behaviors “utterly removed from God.”³⁸ The pope’s accusations indicated societal violence had become a serious issue. Christians were killing fellow Christians. He warned that the nobles were moving away from God’s graces with their unnecessary bloodshed. As the accounts showed, Urban forced the nobility to confront their issues with violence and unite under the crusade’s cause.

Pope Urban II achieved the unification of the crusaders by creating a common enemy, the Muslims. While he made no reference to Augustine in his speech, Urban was using his legitimate authority as the pope to establish a righteous cause for the just war that would become the First Crusade. According to Robert and Baldric’s accounts, Urban roused his audience by listing the injustices that the Muslim Seljuk Turks visited on European pilgrims and Byzantine Christians in the East. Scholars tend to agree that Urban exaggerated the anecdotes of such abuses as inflammatory propaganda.³⁹ Nevertheless, the anecdotes of Muslims as oppressors were effective in inciting the crusaders to war. In Robert’s version, Urban gave a lengthy description of the various terrible deeds supposedly committed by the Seljuk Turks, including pillaging, torture, and desecration of the Holy Sepulchre and other holy sites.⁴⁰ The fabricated yet vivid imagery of injustices demonized the Muslims and Islam in the eyes of the crusaders. At the same time, it drew sympathy for the Byzantine Christians suffering from these supposed

³⁷ Peters, “Urban: The Version of Robert of Rheims,” *The First Crusade*, 28.

³⁸ Peters, “Urban: The Version of Baldric of Dol,” *The First Crusade*, 31.

³⁹ See Asbridge, *The First Crusade: A New History*, 3, 33; Rubenstein, *Armies of Heaven*, 25.

⁴⁰ Peters, “Urban: The Version of Robert of Rheims,” *The First Crusade*, 28.

indignities. Most Western Europeans would have held little regard for the Byzantines, who belonged to a different church. Hearing the plight of Christians in the East could have reminded them of their duty to care for their fellow Christians back in Europe.

Urban ultimately succeeded in compelling the crusaders to fight an enemy other than themselves. While the knights had fought each other, they had sinned by spilling the blood of other Christians. If they directed their blades to another enemy, however, then the knights' actions would be without sin. In Baldric's account, the pope urged the nobles to "restrain [their] murderous hands from the destruction of [their] brothers" and instead "drive out the Turks."⁴¹ Here Urban offered an alternative to conflict and bloodshed between knights. He indicated it was acceptable for the nobles to target the Muslims, whom he had established as a significant non-Christian enemy. Rather than killing fellow Christians, the crusaders could fight the "infidels" in the East without the consequences of committing any real sin. Urban's offer had a genuine appeal to crusaders and drove them to comply with the Church's interests. By maintaining that the crusaders' fighting would no longer go against the will of God or the Church, the pope ensured that the crusade would be fought for the "right intentions," the final criterion in the just war doctrine. Unburdened and vindicated, the Church and the crusaders could now wage a true just war. Relieving Europe from its issue of societal violence, the First Crusade redirected violence among Christians in the West towards the Muslims in the East.

The Conflicts Between Faiths

The acceptance of sanctified violence held major implications for the Christian crusaders' interactions with the Muslim forces. With their wrath incited and permitted by the pope, the knightly nobility embarked on the journey to the East to expel the Seljuk Turks from the Holy

⁴¹ Peters, "Urban: The Version of Baldric of Dol," *The First Crusade*, 32.

Land. Each battle and encounter caused chroniclers and soldiers to form a narrative that validated their actions. In spite of any admiration for the Turks' battle prowess, the Christian soldiers largely considered their enemies to be barbarians and blasphemers; in contrast, the crusaders saw themselves as the "knights of Christ" who served God's will.⁴² This perspective invoked the incendiary messages of Pope Urban II regarding Muslims. The crusaders did not view the Muslims as equals but as the enemy of Christendom.⁴³ As a result, they believed their actions in war were justified, sanctioned by the pope and by God. This mindset led to persistent acts of violence carried out by both the Christian crusaders and the Muslim soldiers, retaliating against each side's actions. These antagonistic exchanges emerged in three significant battles: the sieges of Nicaea, Antioch, and Jerusalem.

Most of the chronicles of the First Crusade described these bitter conflicts. The *Gesta Francorum et aliorum Hierosolimitanorum* was written by an anonymous soldier in the armies of Bohemund of Taranto. As a soldier, the *Gesta's* author had a better grasp of the great antagonism between the crusaders and their Turkish combatants. Another chronicler, Raymond of Aguilers served as the chaplain of army leader Raymond IV of St. Gilles, Count of Toulouse. As clergyman surveying the conflicts from afar, Raymond of Aguilers recounted in his chronicle how the grueling battles embittered the crusaders to their enemies. Peter Tudebode, a French priest who went on crusade, described the volatile enmity between the Christian crusaders and the Muslim forces in his chronicle, *Historia de Hierosolymitano*. Ibn al-Qalanisi, one of the earliest Muslim chroniclers of the First Crusade, also provided the Muslim perspective of the crusade as a whole.

⁴² Riley-Smith, *The First Crusade and the Idea of Crusading*, 111

⁴³ Asbridge, *The First Crusade: A New History*, 34.

The European crusaders and the Turkish forces utilized intimidation tactics and open displays of animosity at the Siege of Nicaea, located in modern-day Turkey. Extending from May 14 to June 19, 1097, the Siege of Nicaea was the first battle victory for the crusaders, in which they sent the armies of the Seljuk ruler Kilij Arslan into a retreat.⁴⁴ For the Christian soldiers, this battle served as the first tangible affirmation of God's favor over their expedition in the East. For example, the *Gesta* recounted how after suffering a costly ambush by the crusaders, the Turkish soldiers brandished "ropes with which to lead [the crusaders] bound" as prisoners and slaves.⁴⁵ Despite their great casualties, the Turks still felt confident of victory at that point and chose to undermine the crusaders' efforts with mockery. As indicated by the ropes, the Muslim soldiers viewed the crusaders as merely enemies to subdue and enslave. The crusaders also showed their disdain for the Turks. After slaying Turkish forces in the mountains, the crusaders decapitated them and threw their enemies' heads into the city to demoralize the remaining Turks.⁴⁶ This graphic battle tactic clearly aimed to disturb the Turks physically and psychologically. Nevertheless, such severe actions were acceptable to the soldiers, for they were striving to defeat the "infidels." This sentiment emerged in the great displeasure the crusaders held towards Emperor Alexius when he allowed the Turkish forces to surrender and retreat.⁴⁷ Even though victory was assured, the crusaders felt denied of the ultimate triumph of crushing their opponents utterly. A battle won by great bloodshed was more preferable to them than peaceful negotiations. While this desire may seem costly, the crusaders expected and wanted this violent outcome. The Siege of Nicaea bore witness to the beginning Christian crusaders and Muslim soldiers' growing acceptance of committing brutal acts of violence against each other.

⁴⁴ Peters, "The Siege and Capture of Nicaea (May-June, 1097)," *The First Crusade*, 181.

⁴⁵ Hill, *Gesta Francorum*, 15.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 17.

The trends of violence and retaliation between the Christian and Muslim armies continued during the arduous Siege of Antioch. Lasting from October 1097 to July 1098, the Siege of Antioch encompassed two fierce sieges for the control of the city, which greatly strained the crusaders' resources and resulted in many cases of desertion and death by starvation.⁴⁸ The lengthy duration, dwindling supplies, and high casualties made the siege into one of the greatest trials of the First Crusade. The crusaders found satisfaction in the eventual downfall of their enemies. Raymond of Aguilers spoke of a "joyful and delightful" incident towards the end of the siege where some Turkish soldiers tried to flee into the mountains but encountered the crusaders and fell to their deaths.⁴⁹ The chronicle reflected the crusaders' callous attitudes to their opponents, with whom they struggled for several months. The anti-Muslim sentiment had originated from the pope's speech back in Europe, but actual battle engagements transformed the animosity into hatred.

The Muslim forces keenly perceived this justification for sanctioned violence. Al-Qalanisi recalled the reaction of a Turkish king to the arrival of the "Firanj," or the Frankish crusaders, in Constantinople. Upon hearing the news, King Dā'ud bin Sulaimān bin Qutulmish made preparations to face the crusaders, including "carrying out the obligation of Holy War."⁵⁰ Al-Qalanisi suggested the Muslims understood the crusaders to be waging a "holy war" for Christianity. The crusaders' cause had horrific consequences, however. At the end of the siege, the crusaders killed, imprisoned and enslaved the majority of Antioch's Muslim population.⁵¹ The crusaders held little regard for the Muslim civilians, treating them with the same hatred as

⁴⁸ Peters, "The Siege and Capture of Antioch, Kerbogha's Attack, and the Discovery of the Holy Lance (October, 1097-July, 1098)," *The First Crusade*, 187.

⁴⁹ Peters, "The Fall of Antioch: The Version of Raymond d'Aguilers," trans. August C. Krey, *The First Crusade*, 206.

⁵⁰ Peters, "The Firanj Seize Antioch: The Version of Ibn al-Qalanisi," *The First Crusade*, 231.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 233.

they would with Muslim soldiers, as both Raymond and al-Qalanisi's chronicles showed. Sanctified violence resulted in acts of great cruelty in the name of one's faith.

The Siege of Jerusalem in 1099 represented the height of the antagonistic relationship between Christians and Muslims. As the crusaders approached the long-sought city of Jerusalem, the Muslims, who had lost the major cities of Nicaea and Antioch, were determined to defeat the crusaders. Thus, the encounters between the opposing forces became increasingly aggressive towards the end of the crusade. Peter Tudebode recounted how the Turkish forces hid near fountains and wells to ambush and kill crusaders.⁵² Given the scarcity of resources, including water, the desperate crusaders viewed this act of sabotaging the Christian military effort with great contempt.

Peter Tudebode also described an incident where Muslim soldiers disrupted a priestly procession meant to boost the crusaders' morale.⁵³ Although the Turk's actions amounted only to mockery and scorn, they had undermined a religious ceremony by turning it into a boisterous spectacle, which angered the crusaders. Even without physically attacking the crusaders, the Muslim soldiers aimed to belittle and crush their opponents' spirits through whatever means necessary. Still, the crusaders managed to retaliate and enact their vengeance against the enemy. While the crusaders were constructing catapults, they apprehended a Muslim spy; they bound the spy and used the catapult to propel him into the city, killing him in the process.⁵⁴ While the murder served as a warning to potential spies, the crusaders could have carried it out with simpler means and minimal effort. The excessive display was meant to satisfy the soldiers'

⁵² Peters, "The Fall of Jerusalem: The Version of Peter Tudebode," trans. John Hugh Hill and Laurita L. Hill, *The First Crusade*, 246.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 246.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 247.

desire for revenge. Up until the crusaders captured Jerusalem, the tensions between Christians and Muslims were rife with sabotage, mockery, and brutal deeds.

The antagonism between the two armies came to a violent end with the crusaders' triumph in the Siege of Jerusalem. Using the last of their resources, the crusaders constructed wooden siege towers and projectile-throwing war machines and managed to break through the Muslim army's defenses.⁵⁵ Once they scaled the walls of Jerusalem with ladders and entered the city, the crusaders began to descend upon the Muslim armies in full force. Overwhelmed, the Muslim defenders made a retreat, and the crusaders "pursued them, killing, and lopping off heads."⁵⁶ Once inside the city, the crusaders set a relentless assault upon the enemy soldiers. Chasing the "Saracens [Muslim soldiers] and other infidels" to the "Temple of Solomon [the Al-Asqa Mosque]," the crusaders fought and killed the enemy in great numbers until the blood flooded the Temple.⁵⁷ Wading ankle-deep in blood, the crusaders did not limit the carnage to the enemy soldiers. Of the Muslim men and women hiding in the temple, the crusaders killed and took prisoners as they pleased.⁵⁸ Ibn al-Athir, another important Muslim chronicler of the First Crusade, claimed the Frankish crusaders killed over 70,000 people, most of which were Imams and Muslim scholars.⁵⁹ The Christian soldiers held no qualms in attacking the Muslim population of Jerusalem. Even after eliminating the threat of the enemy forces, the crusaders considered the Muslim civilians as their enemies, because they were not Christians.

The Muslims of Jerusalem were not the only targets of the crusaders' attack. Jerusalem possessed a Jewish population, which was also at risk for being non-Christians. Prior to the First

⁵⁵ Peters, "The Frankish Triumph: The Version of Raymond d'Aguilers," trans. August C. Krey, *The First Crusade*, 259.

⁵⁶ Peters, "The Fall: The Version of Peter Tudebode," *The First Crusade*, 248.

⁵⁷ See Peters, "The Fall: The Version of Peter Tudebode," *The First Crusade*, 248; Hill, *Gesta Francorum*, 91.

⁵⁸ See Peters, "Frankish Triumph: The Version of Raymond d'Aguilers," 260; Hill, *Gesta Francorum*, 91.

⁵⁹ Peters, "The Firanj Conquer Jerusalem: The Version of Ibn al-Athir," *The First Crusade*, 273.

Crusade, the People's Crusade of 1096 resulted in the pogroms in the Rhineland, where multiple Jewish communities fell under attack by mobs of crusading peasants and suffered great loss of life.⁶⁰ While those persecutions remained preserved in documents, scholars had little knowledge of any Jewish records during the Siege of Jerusalem for many years. In 1952, however, S. D. Goitein researched the collections of Jewish accounts from the Cairo Geniza and found documents written by Jewish survivors.⁶¹ The documents consisted of letters of correspondence between the Jews of the East, dealing with the aftermath of the crusaders' capture of Jerusalem. A letter from an Egyptian Jew described the fate of the Jewish population of Jerusalem. He claimed the Frankish crusaders "killed everybody in the city, whether of Ishmael or of Israel" and imprisoned the survivors; other communities already made ransoms for some prisoners, while other Jews remained in "captivity in all parts of the world."⁶²

This report of Jerusalem's Jews aligned with chroniclers' accounts of crusaders killing and imprisoning the Muslim population of Jerusalem. The crusaders wanted to rid the Holy City of the non-Christians "corrupting" it, including Jews in the mass slaughter and plunder. Upon learning about the misfortune befalling the Jews of Jerusalem, other Jewish communities raised funds to ransom the Jewish prisoners. A surviving letter from the Jewish community of Cairo discussed how they collected "one hundred twenty-three dinars for retrieving the Torah scrolls and ransoming the remnants of Israel who had escaped from the sword."⁶³ The sympathetic communities sometimes succeeded in rescuing their fellow Jews and what remained of their

⁶⁰ The armies of the People's Crusade traveled through the Rhineland and attacked the Jewish communities of Worms, Mainz, Cologne, and many others. The crusaders subjected the Jews to forced conversions and killed those who did not comply. Hebrew chronicles written by Jewish survivors detailed the suffering and martyrdom of the Jews, including the ritual suicides committed by the Jews to evade forced conversion. For the full accounts of two Hebrew chronicles, see the appendices of Robert Chazan *European Jewry and the First Crusade*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987).

⁶¹ Peters, "'May God Restore It Forever': The Geniza Letters," trans. S. D. Goitein, *The First Crusade*, 263.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 269.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 272.

prized possessions. In spite of these efforts, however, the liberated Jews often became displaced in foreign lands, while others remained prisoners as indicated by the Egyptian Jew's letter. While Jews were not the principal enemies of the First Crusade, the crusaders nevertheless perceived them as threats for not sharing the same faith. Under these conditions, the crusaders wielded violence and warfare against Muslims and Jews alike.

Conclusion

Overall, militarized Christianity, as developed by the early Church, and the presence of societal violence both influenced the organization and execution of the First Crusade. Saint Augustine's theories on war had successfully reconciled warfare and pacifist concepts in church doctrine. Under certain conditions, Christians that committed acts of violence did not have to fear sin staining their souls. This spiritual exemption emboldened future church officials to apply his ideas when calling the faithful to fight. Pope Gregory VII's concepts of a papal army built upon the foundation set by Augustine and served as a recent influence on the crusade's formation. Finally, discord and unrest in medieval society allowed Pope Urban to turn the First Crusade into an outlet for directing internal violence towards a common non-Christian enemy. The pope intended for the crusade to aid the Byzantine Christians in the East, but it managed to alleviate problems in the West as well. The Church succeeded in using the First Crusade as a tool to develop military power and heal societal tensions.

Compelled by these factors, Christian crusaders fought Muslim armies with the justification of religious and militant ideologies. The violence of war was brutal and vicious, but the crusaders seldom worried if fighting was sinful. To the Church, the doctrine of just war validated the soldiers' actions. The crusaders themselves found it acceptable to wage war

against those who did not share the Christian faith. From their perspective, the murder of a Christian was a sinful act, but that of a non-Christian was a different matter. The crusaders' treatment of Muslim and Jewish civilians was cruel, but this level of violence became justified and normalized before and during the crusade under the concept of the just war.

Conclusion

The First Crusade was born from the machinations of the Church and the inner drive of the crusaders. Both religious and secular motivations compelled medieval Europeans to participate in this war. In heeding the pope's words, they sought to fulfill a sacred obligation to fight Muslim armies in the East and reclaim Byzantine territories for Christendom, for which they would receive spiritual rewards. In addition to securing their place in the afterlife, some crusaders also took a chance in amassing wealth and territory to sate their desires in the material world. At the same time, the Church tried to meet its own goals by joining theology and warfare, leading to the creation of a violent war. This mixture of motivations and social influences appears in the chronicles. Studying the significance of religion, material desire, and militant strategies together can augment and strengthen our understanding of the First Crusade.

The size of the scope of study poses a problem to crusade historiography and is a problem that this thesis sought to answer. Erdmann's work had reduced the role of religion in favor of emphasizing the militaristic aims of the Church, narrowing the historical discussion. In the following decades, scholars like Riley-Smith, Asbridge, Rubenstein, and Gaposchkin have worked to expand the historiographical field and to reintegrate the importance of religion, spiritual piety, and Christian symbols. Others like Robinson or H.E.J. Cowdrey conducted similar research as Erdmann and analyzed the theological and political developments within the papacy and the Church that played a role in the formation of the crusade. While this research on religious and militaristic influences has fostered new insight into the motives of crusaders and the crusade itself, historians have limited their research either to one or both of these factors. The historiography has provided numerous, rich, in-depth analyses that respond to the narrow

argument of Erdmann but struggle to move past it. It is no exaggeration when Cowdrey stated that Erdmann's argument had "dominated discussion during the past generation."¹

The sources have contributed to this limited prioritization of factors. Most of the chronicles, with exceptions like the *Gesta Francorum*, were accounts written by clergymen. Authors such as Fulcher of Chartres would have some insight into the Church's goals and would incorporate a substantial Christian perspective into their writings. Given the authorship of the chronicles, the influences of religion and the Church tend to feature prominently to scholars. In this regard, the identity and biases of the chroniclers pose a slight challenge to scholars' interpretation of the First Crusade. Relying either on memories of their experiences or the accounts of other crusaders, the chroniclers recount the details and aspects of the journey that they valued the most. It can be difficult at times to discern which motivations or social influences affected the crusaders or only the chronicler. Whatever facts from their memory they embellish, however, it is undeniable that the chroniclers tried to record "as truthfully as possible, what is worth remembering and what [they] saw with [their] own eyes on that journey."² This thesis has taken into account the authors' biases and perceptions of truth and has attempted to uncover the aspects "worth remembering" and those potentially overlooked.

Chapter Two of this thesis has thoroughly analyzed the role of avarice in the First Crusade. Riley-Smith and Asbridge have dismissed the motive of avarice as an insignificant or outdated argument. Nevertheless, a more secular desire for material wealth was a palpable element whose impact on the crusade could be felt in the chronicles. It bred conflict between the Byzantines and the Europeans, damaging the relationship that already suffered the strain of the Great Schism of 1054. The seeds for material desire were already sown with the Norman

¹ Cowdrey, "Pope Urban II's Preaching of the First Crusade," 178.

² Peters, "The Chronicle of Fulcher of Chartres," *The First Crusade*, 48.

acquisitions of Byzantine territories. Crusaders like Bohemund of Taranto, Tancred, Baldwin of Boulogne, and Raymond of Toulouse broke their promise to their Byzantine allies, the people they were meant to aid, by taking control of territories. The crusaders' actions, as recounted in the chronicles, were indicative of a desire for material riches and land, which some of them succeeded in acquiring. In light of these facts, it appears that avarice served as a significant motivator for crusaders and deserves more scholarly consideration. Even if a factor like religion has more prominence in the chronicles, one should not dismiss the other influences affecting the reality of the crusade.

For the reasons stated above, the thesis has striven to address the wide range of motives and influences that have shaped the First Crusade. By exploring religion, material desire, and militant strategies of the Church in separate chapters, this study attempted to analyze each aspect with equal attention and deliberation. This method serves to illuminate the development and importance of the three subjects, which historians have both examined and dismissed. Though one or two factors tend to receive emphasis above all others, significant evidence exists for a complex array of motives and societal influences in the same and in different sources. Future in-depth research on a wide range of factors could help to expand the current state of crusade historiography and, subsequently, knowledge of the crusade and its participants. The First Crusade did not represent the power of religious piety nor the materialistic aspirations of soldiers nor the acts of violence justified by church doctrine. All three factors had a profound effect on the crusaders and the crusade as a whole and are equally deserving of scholarly consideration. From its conception to its end, the First Crusade embodied the multi-faceted beliefs, influences, and motivations of medieval Europeans.

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