

Source #1: WESTERN EUROPEAN: Pope Urban II

Excerpt from Speech at Clermont 1095, calling for a crusade

From the confines of Jerusalem and from the city of Constantinople a grievous report has gone forth and has - repeatedly been brought to our ears; namely, that a race from the kingdom of the Persians, an accursed race, a race wholly alienated from God, 'a generation that set not their heart aright and whose spirit was not steadfast with God,' violently invaded the lands of those Christians and has depopulated them by pillage and fire. They have led away apart of the captives into their own country, and a part have they have killed by cruel tortures. They have either destroyed the churches of God or appropriated them for the rites of their own religion. They destroy the altars, after having defiled them with their uncleanness....The kingdom of the Greeks is now dismembered by them and has been deprived of territory so vast in extent that it could be traversed in two months' time."

"This royal city, however, situated at the center of the earth, is now held captive by the enemies of Christ and is subjected, by those who do not know God, to the worship the heathen. She seeks, therefore, and desires to be liberated and ceases not to implore you to come to her aid. From you especially she asks succor, because as we have already said, God has conferred upon you above all other nations great glory in arms. Accordingly, undertake this journey eagerly for the remission of your sins, with the assurance of the reward of imperishable glory in the kingdom of heaven.."

Summary/Report:

Witness Tweets:

Source #2: WESTERN EUROPEAN: Stephen, Count of Blois and Chartres, Crusader

Excerpt from a letter to his Wife Adele; Antioch, March 29

Count Stephen to Adele, his sweetest and most amiable wife, to his dear children, and to all his vassals of all ranks - his greeting and blessing,

You may be very sure, dearest, that the messenger whom I sent to give you pleasure, left me before Antioch safe and unharmed and through God's grace in the greatest prosperity. And already at that time, together with all the chosen army of Christ, endowed with great valor by Him, we had been continuously advancing for twenty-three weeks toward the home of our Lord Jesus. You may know for certain, my beloved, that of gold, silver and many other kind of riches I now have twice as much as your love had assigned to me when I left you. For all our princes, with the common consent of the whole army, against my own wishes, have made me up to the present time the leader, chief and director of their whole expedition.

You have certainly heard that after the capture of the city of Nicaea we fought a great battle with the perfidious Turks and by God's aid conquered them. Next we conquered for the Lord all Romania and afterwards Cappadocia. And we learned that there was a certain Turkish prince Assam, dwelling in Cappadocia; thither we directed our course. All his castles we conquered by force and compelled him to flee to a certain very strong castle situated on a high rock. We also gave the land of that Assam to one of our chiefs and in order that he might conquer the above-mentioned Assam, we left there with him many soldiers of Christ. Thence, continually following the wicked Turks, we drove them through the midst of Armenia, as far as the great river Euphrates. Having left all their baggage and beasts of burden on the bank, they fled across the river into Arabia.

(Source: Dana C. Munro, "Letters of the Crusaders", Translations and Reprints from the Original Sources of European History, Vol 1:4, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1896), 5-8)

Summary/Report:

Witness Tweets:

Source #3: JEWISH PERSPECTIVE, Chronicle of Solomon bar Simson, c. 1140

In the year four thousand eight hundred and fifty-six (1096 in the Christian calendar), one thousand twenty eight of our exile...inflicted upon the Jewish people were the many evils related in all the admonitions. At this time an arrogant people, a people of strange speech, a nation bitter and impetuous, Frenchmen and Germans, set out for the Holy City, which had been desecrated by barbaric nations, there to seek their house of idolatry and banish the [Jews] and other citizens of the land and conquer the land for themselves. They decorated themselves prominently with their signs, placing a profane symbol - a horizontal line over a vertical one - on the vestments of every man and woman whose heart yearned to go on the stray path to the grave of their Messiah.

When the Jewish communities became aware of their intention, they resorted to the custom of our ancestors, repentance, prayer, and charity. The hands of the Holy Nation turned faint at this time, their hearts melted, and their strength flagged. They hid in their innermost rooms to escape the swirling sword. They subjected themselves to great endurance, abstaining from food and drink for three consecutive days and nights, and then fasting many days from sunrise to sunset, until their skin was shriveled and dry as wood upon their bones. And they cried out loudly and bitterly to God.

That year, Passover fell on Thursday, and the New Moon of the following month, Iyar, fell on Friday and the Sabbath. On the eighth day of Iyar, on the Sabbath, the foe attacked the community of Speyer and murdered eleven holy souls who sanctified their Creator on the holy Sabbath and refused to defile themselves by adopting the faith of their foe.

Summary/Report:

Witness Tweets:

Source #4: SOUTHWEST ASIA: The Crusades through Arab Eyes

Excerpt from "The Cannibals of Ma'arra" in *The Crusades Through Arab Eyes*, by Amin Maalouf

"The Franks arrived at dawn. It was carnage. As Ibn al-Athir described, 'for three days they put people to the sword, killing more than a hundred thousand people and taking many prisoners...In Ma'arra our troops boiled pagan adults in cooking-pots; they impaled children on spits and devoured them grilled.' While some of these descriptions might be a bit exaggerated, the people of the towns and villages near Ma'arra would never forget what they had seen and heard. The memory of these atrocities, preserved and transmitted by local poets and oral tradition, shaped an image of the Frank that would not easily fade. The chronicler Usamah Ibn Munquidh, born in the neighboring city of Shayzar three years before these events, would one day write,

'All those who were well-informed about the Franks saw them as beasts superior in courage and fighting ardour but in nothing else, just as animals are superior in strength and aggression.'

This unkind assessment accurately reflects the impression made by the Franks upon their arrival in Syria: they aroused a mixture of fear and contempt, quite understandable on the part of an Arab nation which, while far superior in culture had lost all combative spirit. The Turks would never forget the cannibalism of the Occidentals. Throughout their epic literature, the Franks are invariably described as [cannibals]."

****Important note:** "Franks" is a term used to describe the Europeans in the Arab world. To these people, the wars between 1096 and 1204 were referred not as crusades, but as "the Frankish wars" or "the Frankish invasions."

Summary/Report:

Witness Tweets:

Source #5: SOUTHWEST ASIA: Arrival of the Franks in Antioch

Excerpt from "The Franks** Arrive" in *The Crusades Through Arab Eyes*, by Amin Maalouf

"Rumours circulated constantly about the imminent arrival of redoubtable knights. At the end of July there was talk that they were approaching the village of al-Balana, in the far north of Syria. Thousands of cavalry gathered to meet them, but it was a false alarm: there was no sign of the Franks on the horizon. The most optimistic souls wondered whether the invaders had perhaps turned back. Ibn al-Qalanisi echoed that hope in one of those astrological parables of which his contemporaries were so enamoured: *that summer a comet appeared in the western sky; it ascended for twenty days, then disappeared without a trace.* But these illusions were soon dispelled. The news became increasingly detailed. From mid-September onwards, the advance of the Franks could be followed from village to village.

On 21 October 1097 shouts rang out from the peak of the citadel of Antioch, then Syria's largest city: "They're here!" A few layabouts hurried to the ramparts to gawk, but they could see nothing more than a vague cloud of dust far in the distance, at the end of the broad plain, near Lake Antioch. The Franks were still a day's March away, perhaps more, and there was every indication that they would want to stop to rest for a while after their long journey. Nevertheless, prudence demanded that the five heavy city gates be closed immediately.

In the souks the morning clamor was stilled, as merchants and customers alike stood immobile. Women whispered, and some prayed. The city was in the grip of fear."

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Summary/Report:

Witness Tweets:

Source #6: WESTERN EUROPEAN, Fulcher of Chartres, The Siege of Antioch

In the year of the Lord 1098, after the region all around Antioch had been wholly devastated by the multitude of our people, the strong as well as the weak were more and more harassed by famine. At that time, the famished ate the shoots of beansweeds growing in the fields and many kinds of herbs and unseasoned with salt; also thistles, which being not well cooked because of the deficiency of firewood, pricked the tongues of those eating them; also horses, asses, and camels, and dogs and rats. The poorer ones even ate the skins of the beasts and seeds of grain found in manure.

The endured winter's cold, summer's heat, and heavy rains for God. Their tents became old and torn and rotten from the continuation of rains. Because of this, many of them were covered by only the sky. So like gold thrice proved and purified sevenfold by fire, long predestined by God, I believe, and weighed by such a great calamity, they were cleansed of their sins. For even if the assassin's sword had not failed, many, long agonizing, would have voluntarily completed a martyr's course. Perhaps they borrowed the grace of such a great example from Saint Job, who, purifying his soul by the torments of his body, ever held God fast in mind. Those who fight with the heathen labor because of God.

...On a certain night, he sent twenty of our men over the wall by means of ladders made of ropes. Without delay, the gate was opened. The Franks, already prepared, entered the city. Forty of our soldiers, who previously entered by ropes, killed sixty Turks found there, guards of the tower. In a loud voice, altogether the Franks shouted, "God wills it! God wills it!" for this was our signal cry, when we were about to press forward on any enterprise.

Summary/Report:

Witness Tweets:

Source #7: EASTERN EUROPEAN: Nicetas Choniates, Byzantine Historian

The Fourth Crusade was directed at Egypt. There were, however, a series of financial difficulties which enabled the Venetians, who had been hired as transportation providers, to divert the crusade to their own ends. First it attacked the Christian city of Zara, and then Constantinople itself. The result was the establishment of a series of Latin states in Greece and the Aegean, and the permanent collapse of communion between Catholic and Orthodox Churches. The Byzantine historian Nicetas Choniates here gives an account of the sack of the city.

. . . How shall I begin to tell of the deeds wrought by these nefarious men! Alas, the images, which ought to have been adored, were trodden under foot! Alas, the relics of the holy martyrs were thrown into unclean places! Then was seen what one shudders to hear, namely, the divine body and blood of Christ was spilled upon the ground or thrown about. They snatched the precious reliquaries, thrust into their bosoms the ornaments which these contained, and used the broken remnants for pans and drinking cups, -precursors of Anti-Christ, authors and heralds of his nefarious deeds which we momentarily expect. Manifestly, indeed, by that race then, just as formerly, Christ was robbed and insulted and His garments were divided by lot; only one thing was lacking, that His side, pierced by a spear, should pour rivers of divine blood on the ground.

Nor can the violation of the Great Church [note: Hagia Sophia] be listened to with equanimity. For the sacred altar, formed of all kinds of precious materials and admired by the whole world, was broken into bits and distributed among the soldiers, as was all the other sacred wealth of so great and infinite splendor.

When the sacred vases and utensils of unsurpassable art and grace and rare material, and the fine silver, wrought with gold, which encircled the screen of the tribunal and the ambo, of admirable workmanship, and the door and many other ornaments, were to be borne away as booty, mules and saddled horses were led to the very sanctuary of the temple. Some of these which were unable to keep their footing on the splendid and slippery pavement, were stabbed when they fell, so that the sacred pavement was polluted with blood and filth.

Summary/Report:

Witness Tweets:

Source #8: WESTERN EUROPEAN, Children of the Children's Crusade

The survival of the Crusading spirit during the century is further shown by the extraordinary movement in 1212 which is known as the Children's Crusade. This expedition which, of course, was not a Crusade at all in the strict sense of the term - attracted thousands of children and young adults from northern France and western Germany to its banners. The "Crusade" was preached in France by a peasant boy named Stephen from a village near Vendome. In Germany, a boy named Nicholas from Cologne started the movement. The sorry business was summarized by a chronicler in these terms:

In this year occurred an outstanding thing and one much to be marveled at, for it is unheard of throughout the ages. About the time of Easter and Pentecost,⁴ without anyone having preached or called for it and prompted by I know not what spirit, many thousands of boys, ranging in age from six years to full maturity, left the plows or carts which they were driving, the flocks which they were pasturing, and anything else which they were doing. This they did despite the wishes of their parents, relatives, and friends who sought to make them draw back. Suddenly one ran after another to take the cross. Thus, by groups of twenty, or fifty, or a hundred, they put up banners and began to journey to Jerusalem. They were asked by many people on whose advice or at whose urging they had set out upon this path. They were asked especially since only a few years ago many kings, a great many dukes, and innumerable people in powerful companies had gone there and had returned with the business unfinished. The present groups, moreover, were still of tender years and were neither strong enough nor powerful enough to do anything. Everyone, therefore, accounted them foolish and imprudent for trying to do this. They briefly replied that they were equal to the Divine will in this matter and that, whatever God might wish to do with them, they would accept it willingly and with humble spirit. They thus made some little progress on their journey. Some were turned back at Metz, others at Piacenza, and others even at Rome. Still others got to Marseilles, but whether they crossed to the Holy Land or what their end was is uncertain. One thing is sure: that of the many thousands who rose up, only very few returned.

Summary/Report:

Witness Tweets: