

## Section 1. History and archaeology

<https://doi.org/10.29013/YSJ-22-1.2-3-7>

Ronnie Wei,

Toronto, Canada in grade 11 with university aspirations

### THE POPE AND THE CRUSADES

**Abstract.** While one can point to countless examples of events that altered the history of European, and to a larger extent, world history, there is no doubt that the crusades is one of those events. Lasting over a century, the conflicts between the crusader nations and the middle east solidified the Pope's legitimacy, bolstered the European nation's economy for centuries to come, and increased the Catholic influence on continental Europe extending into Asia. Using data, textbooks, and journals, this research paper examines the crusades from the perspective of the twenty-first century. The research only invites speculations for what the world would be like today without the crusades and centuries of catholic influence that followed.

**Keywords:** Crusades, Catholic, Europe, Pope.

#### Introduction

Lasting from 1095 to 1291, the Crusades remain one of the most influential events in both Christian and Islamic history. It has shaped the destiny and history of countless European and Middle Eastern nations. While its impact on humanity and the involved religions and countries is undeniable, scholars have long debated the true victors of the Crusades. However, one thing is for certain: the Pope rose to power from the Crusades. Deviating from popular interpretations and beliefs, this paper argues that, at the conclusion of the crusades, neither Islamic nor Christian states benefited more than the Pope. As a direct result of the crusades, the Pope gained wealth, authority, and legitimacy.

#### Origin of the Pope

The word "pope" derives from *πάππας*, which is Greek for father. The title was applied to all senior clergy, nobility, and bishops in early Christianity. However, the role itself did not become official un-

til centuries later. According to the Roman Catholic Church, the first recorded Pope was Saint Peter, known as Peter the Apostle, who was one of Jesus's twelve apostles. He became Pope of Rome in AD30. His tenure ended between AD 64 and 68. Saint Peter is widely regarded by the Catholic Church as one of the first leaders of the early church.

According to the Bible, Saint Peter was entrusted by Jesus with the "keys to heaven" (Matthew 16:19). He also oversaw the Roman Catholic Church and its bishops. Due to his close relations with Jesus, who promised him a 'special position in the Church,' Peter's authority was not

questioned. Presently, the Pope functions as the head of the entire Catholic church, having supreme powers over the future of the Church and an influence on Catholic states.

#### The Start of the Crusades

Fast forward to the second millennium. One hundred and fifty eight Popes later, Urban II emerged.

Becoming Pope in 1088, Urban felt that his most urgent task was to secure his position against the anti-pope, Clement III, and to establish his authority as legitimate Pope throughout Christendom in Europe.

The Holy Roman emperor at the time, Emperor Henry IV, quarreled with the Pope, and he subsequently faced a potential rebellion among the German nobles. At the same time, Clement III became the Italian leader of the imperialist faction opposing the Gregorian regime. After Pope Gregory VII excommunicated him, Clement was elected antipope on June 25, 1080, by Henry at Brixen. Clement III reigned in opposition to two successive popes, Gregory VII and Victor III. As an antipope, he opposed the legitimately elected bishop of Rome, endeavored to secure the papal throne, and changed the manner of choosing the pope.

Pope Urban railed against simony and other clerical abuses prevalent during the Middle Ages. Furthermore, on 27 November 1095, Pope Urban II delivered perhaps the most influential speech of the Middle Ages, calling for the start of the Crusades. He summoned all Christians in Europe to war against Muslims in the Middle East in order to reclaim the Holy Land. His cries of “Deus volt!” and “God wills it!” were met with an astonishing response, both among the military elite as well as ordinary citizens. Those who joined the crusader armies wore a cross as a symbol of the Church and loyalty to the Pope.

### ***The First Crusades***

Four armies of crusaders were formed from troops of different Western European regions, led by Raymond of Saint-Gilles, Godfrey of Bouillon, Hugh of Vermandois, and Bohemond of Taranto (with his nephew Tancred). These groups departed for Byzantium in August 1096. After some exchanges, in May 1097, the crusaders and their Byzantine allies attacked Nicea (now Iznik, Turkey), the Seljuk capital in Anatolia. The city surrendered in late June, marking the end of the First Crusade. Having achieved their goal in an unexpectedly short period of time, many crusaders departed for home. To govern the

conquered territory, the crusaders who remained established four large western settlements, or Crusader states, in Jerusalem, Edessa, Antioch and Tripoli.

However, peace was short-lived. Muslim forces began gaining ground in their own holy war against the Christians. In 1144, Seljuk general Zangi, governor of Mosul, captured Edessa, leading to the loss of the northernmost Crusader state. Europe was caught by surprise with the sudden Muslim attacks on the Crusader states. As a result, Christian authorities in the West called for another crusade. Led by two great rulers, King Louis VII of France and King Conrad III of the Holy Roman Empire, the Second Crusade began in 1147. After they managed to assemble their armies at Jerusalem, they attacked the major Syrian city, Damascus, with an astounding army of around 50,000, the largest crusader army yet. The rulers of Damascus called on Nur al-Din, who was Zangi’s successor in Mosul, for support. Together, they defeated the crusaders army, which concluded the Second Crusade. What followed were years in which the crusaders campaigned to capture Egypt. They were defeated by Nur al-Din’s forces in 1169. Following his death, Saladin became his successor. In 1187, he began his major campaign against the crusader’s major city, Jerusalem. His forces recaptured important cities along the way, which sparked outrage amongst the crusaders and started the Third Crusade. In September 1191, King Richard I of England’s army defeated Saladin at the Battle of Arsuf, which was the only true battle of the entire Third Crusade. One year later, Richard and Saladin signed a peace treaty to reestablish the Kingdom of Jerusalem, which successfully ended the Third Crusade.

In 1204, the crusaders declared war on Constantinople, capital of the Byzantine Empire, which started the Fourth Crusade. It ended when Constantinople fell, which nearly destroyed the ancient capital.

### ***Small Crusades***

During the 13<sup>th</sup> century, numerous smaller crusades were started, with goals to combat any groups seen as enemies of the Christian church and the

Pope. For example, the Albigensian Crusade tried to eliminate the heretical Cathari and Albigensian sects of Christianity in France. The Fifth Crusade in 1216 started by Pope Innocent III saw crusaders unsuccessful attempt to secure Egypt from the hands of the Muslim. In 1229, Emperor Frederick II started the Sixth Crusade when he gained control over Jerusalem from the Muslims with a peace treaty. However, just a decade later, it was returned. Spanning from 1248 to 1254, Louis IX organized the Seventh Crusade against Egypt again, but it came to no success. In 1291, one of the only remaining Crusader cities, Acre, fell to the Muslim. This event was the final straw; this defeat marked the end of the Crusader States and the Crusades themselves.

### **Victory of the Pope**

#### ***The Economic Gains of the Pope***

Despite many historians believing the Crusades were ultimately unsuccessful, the Roman Catholic Church surprisingly gained financially despite their numerous losses. Meanwhile, the Pope gained more power than ever. One reason for this were improvements in trade and transportation throughout Europe. The Crusades were a big reason for Europe's wealth increase. The wars created a constant demand for supplies and transportation, which resulted in increased ship-building and manufacturing of various supplies. After the Crusades, there was an increased interest in European travel and learning throughout Europe. Some historians believe this may have paved the way for the Renaissance. Also, the Pope's influence over Catholic nations in Europe was further established during the Crusades. Many of the Crusader States have become world leaders today (Heston [5, 122]). Even though the papacy lost all of its territorial gains in Asia, the Crusades were still an economic and political success in Europe.

the Crusades marked the end of nearly two hundred years of clashes between the west and east. Both sides were devastated by these encounters. Equally, however, both sides benefited. The Pope and the Church received great endowments for the

long crusades, which contributed to his expanded wealth. Men who had taken the Cross and were unable to go, purchased exemptions with their vows. This went to the Church and eventually to the Pope. Taxes for the Crusades were frequently collected and handled by the Church. It is not possible to give any estimate of the total amount which the Church received through the Crusades, but it was an enormous sum (Munro [4, 5]). As a result of the listed factors from the Crusades, the Pope became much more powerful and rich, especially through his control over the appointment of the officials who profited by his wealth. Additionally, Crusader States gained new ways to trade intercontinentally, which provided ways for many new tourists around the world to visit Europe, either for diplomacy or simply leisure. During the same time, between 800 and 1200, Europe began to emerge from the Dark Ages. During this time, the "Classical Era of Islam" took place. Major cities under Muslim leadership increased emphasis on science, medicine and technology. In 1312, The Council of Vienna was established as a center for Arabic, Greek, Hebrew, and Syriac studies, further solidifying European countries' international knowledge after the Crusades (Heston [5, 125]). While the development of Europe after the Crusades was prevalent, so was the Church and the Popes, who gained an enormous increase in wealth. Crusaders gave freely to the Church before marching towards the East. Crusaders also mortgaged or sold their property to ecclesiastical foundations under conditions very advantageous to the Church.

#### ***Increase in the Pope's Authority***

Moreover, the Pope also made reforms to ensure more capital would end up going to the Church. The Church sought control of potential wealth through the priesthood and children of concubines or other out-of-wedlock relationships. The Church instituted celibacy vows for priests, which made it increasingly possible that familial inheritances would go to the Church. Another reform the Church instituted was prohibiting adoptions, which transferred rights of

inheritance in the case of the childless. This may account for two other offsetting institutions, namely, orphanages and homes for the elderly or abandoned. In terms of family structure, there were fewer families, with perhaps more children per family. The Catholic Church accumulated large amounts of land as a result, which was met with much envy from the royalty in France, England, and elsewhere (Heston [5, 129]).

Indeed, the Pope and Church gained economically after the Crusades. He reasserted his authority over Europe and beyond. During the Crusades, the Pope found ways to tighten his control on many monarchies in Europe and established legislation that diminished opposition powers. The Pope gave permission for non-payment of debts owed by crusaders and ordered monarchs across Europe to reinforce the rule. This encroachment upon property rights was one example that provoked less opposition because the creditors were frequently Jews. As each crusader was under the protection of the Church, the Popes interfered in case of capture of individual crusaders by their enemies and also to prevent warfare, which would have hindered men from fulfilling their vows. They censured the Church freely for this purpose; it was met with general approval. The Pope even interfered with the amusements of nobility and clergy, repeatedly forbidding tournaments and threatening to excommunicate all participants. These are just a few notable instances of the Pope adding to his power and control over those who were not members of the clergy. After a century of crusading activity, the Pope's power had enormously strengthened in Europe (Heston [5, 121]).

To grow his following and control even more territory during the Crusades, the Pope offered privileges to anyone who took the Cross. Because of the intense enthusiasm for the Crusades and also because of the weakness of most of the monarchs in Western Europe during the first half of the twelfth century, the Church, and especially the Pope, encroached upon temporal authorities. All crusaders were given the protection of the ecclesiastical courts; thus when a vassal took the Cross, he might escape to a considerable extent

from the jurisdiction of his feudal lord. Moreover, crusader families and properties were taken under the protection of the Church. In this way, many cases were taken from the feudal courts. During the Crusades, outbursts of religious enthusiasm led to the Children's Crusade, which was to be a missionary movement not a military campaign. Thus, throughout the Crusades, there was a great amount of religious fervor, some real reformation in manners, and a greater interest in the Holy Land and Catholic Church. This would redound to the credit of the Pope and increase his influence and power (Munro [4, 350]). At the end of the century that saw the conclusion of the Crusades, saw the temporary union of almost all Christian lands under the authority of the Pope. This was directly due to the Crusades. The capture of Constantinople led to the establishment of a Latin patriarchate there. Furthermore, Bishops of heretical churches in Syria acknowledged the supremacy of the Latin Church, while the rulers of Armenia sought to have the title of king bestowed by the Pope and promised in return to bring the Armenian Church under the Pope. At the time, the possibility that there might be one Catholic Church takeover under the authority of the Pope was legitimate (Munro [4, 351]).

#### ***Solidification of Legitimacy for the Pope***

The Pope also cemented his legitimacy at the conclusion of the Crusades. However, his cementation of legitimacy did not only come as a result of the Crusades. During the mid-eleventh century, the Church did not have the institutional means nor the "moral authority" to employ armed forces in pursuit of their crusading interests. In order for the Catholic Church to pursue the idea of the Crusades, it had to meet two conditions. First, the Church would have to be reconstituted as a legitimate war unit. This meant that it would have to be transformed into a corporate entity with the widely accepted legitimate authority to employ military forces in the pursuit of its interests. Second, the armed nobilities who made up the crusader armies would have to be reconstituted as "soldiers of Christ" (*milites Christi*) willing and able to fight on behalf of the Church and its

interests (Latham [2, 234]). Due to the establishment of these forces in the name of the Church, and with the Pope being the head of the Church, his undeniable position would only be further strengthened.

With the backing of a legitimate army fighting in honor of the Church, the Pope preached crusades against his Sicilian kingdom. This further illustrates another means by which the power of the Pope was enhanced. The Pope repeatedly preached crusades against the Church's temporal foes and offered the participants the same privileges, spiritual and temporal, which were given to those who went on expeditions against the Moslems. These holy wars were sometimes directed against monarchs and other rulers, sometimes against cities, at other times against heretics like the Albigenses, or against the heathen in the north and northeast of Europe (Munro [4, 352]). These armies played an important part in legitimizing the Pope's influence in the thirteenth century.

### Conclusion

The lasting consequences extending from the Crusades would not exist without the initiation of the Pope. Likewise, it only makes sense that the Pope would be the one to reap the rewards of the Crusades. Through the Pope's increasing control on politics, it enabled him to create regulations beneficial to the Catholic Church and the Crusader States; it created the first crusader army, allowed the Church to benefit economically, expanded his following

tremendously and legitimized the Pope's position in the Church. The aftermath of the Pope's influence during the Crusades is still present today. Not only does the Pope still hold the title of being the head of the Catholic Church nearly one millennium later, but some of the Crusader States

have developed into world leaders today. This outcome invites the question: what would be different today without the Pope and the Crusades?

### References:

1. Chevedden Paul E. "The Islamic View and the Christian View of the Crusades: A New Synthesis." Wiley 93, – No. 2. 2008. – P. 181–200. Accessed: – June 30, 2021. URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/24428429>
2. Latham Andrew A. "Theorizing the Crusades: Identity, Institutions, and Religious War in Medieval Latin Christendom." Wiley, – 55. – No. 1. 2011. – P. 223–243. Accessed: – July 3, 2021. URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/23019520>
3. Baldwin M. W., Madden. Thomas F. and Dickson Gary. "Crusades". Encyclopedia Britannica, – December, – 29. 2020. URL: <https://www.britannica.com/event/Crusades>
4. Munro Dana C. "The Popes and the Crusades". Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society, – 55. – No. 5. 1916. – P. 348–56. Accessed: – July 21, 2021. URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/984051>
5. Heston Alan. "Crusades and Jihads: A Long-Run Economic Perspective". *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 588. 2003. – P. 112–35. Accessed: – August, 2. 2021. URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1049857>