

According to the Book of Matthew in the Christian New Testament, after his resurrection from the dead, Jesus appeared before his eleven remaining disciples in Galilee, where he commanded them, "Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." Similarly, in the Qur'an (Koran), the book containing the revelations to Islam's founder, Muhammad ibn Abdullah, the Prophet commanded his followers to "Invite [all] to the way of your Lord. ..For your Lord knows best who has strayed from His Path, and who receives guidance." Thus Christianity and Islam, both of which saw themselves as the keepers of God's ultimate revelation of Himself to humanity, from their respective beginnings had built within their doctrines the commandment to proselytize and spread to include all peoples.

At their beginnings, neither Christianity nor Islam preached the expansion of the faiths by use of the sword.

Yet ultimately both Christians and Muslims were willing to spread their respective faiths by force. As Christians swelled in numbers, they increasingly embraced violence both to punish unbelievers and heretics and to expand the faith. For justification, they often reached back into the Old Testament, in which Israelites had been told to "utterly destroy them [unbelievers], as the Lord thy God hath commanded thee." For their part, after the *hijra* of Muhammad and his followers to Medina, the Prophet began to report revelations of *jihads alsayf* (jihad of the sword). Originally the term jihad was shorthand for *jihad fi sabil Allah* (struggle in the path of God) and had no relation to warfare at all. Most often the term referred to an internal struggle of a Muslim against

temptations, or a particular internal struggle against Muslim heretics or impious leaders. But, as noted above, within a few years of the *hijra*, Muhammad was saying such things as "Whoever fights in the path of God, whether he be killed or be victorious, on him We shall bestow a great reward," and "those who strive and fight has He distinguished above those who sit [at home] by a great reward."

For centuries the proponents of these two religions maintained comparatively good relations with one another. In lands conquered by Muslims, Christians and Jews were able to practice their respective faiths so long as they paid tribute and taxes to Muslim political authorities. Christians and Jews also were able to make pilgrimages to Jerusalem. And in Italy and Spain, Muslims lived in close proximity to Christians for hundreds of years without major altercations. Yet while their respective intellectual elites shared knowledge with one another, the two kept a careful and enforced distance. The papacy labeled Christians who dealt with Muslims as traitors and warned that such treason meant loss of all their property. For their part, most Muslims thought Western Christians were primitive and had little to teach them.



Sometime after 1071 C.E., however, that brittle peace was broken. Seljuk Turks, new converts to Islam who interpreted the term *jihad* in its most warlike way, seized control of Jerusalem from the more tolerant Abbasid Muslims. On November 27, 1095, in a field of Clermont, France,

Pope Urban II called on Western Christians to undertake a (pilgrimage) to capture Jerusalem from the Muslims. By the time the first Christian army arrived in Palestine in 1098, written accounts by one side about the other had been circulated and read (or listened to). Appearing when they did during the period Europeans refer to as the Crusades, there is

little doubt that these accounts created perceptions and stereotypes in the minds of Christians who had never met Muslims, and vice versa.

Moreover, it is clear that these accounts helped to formulate ideas in each camp of how the other should be treated.

As you read the accounts written by Christians and by Muslims, determine the impressions that each side created of the other. Also, you should try to reach some conclusions about how those perceptions and stereotypes (whether accurate or inaccurate) might have influenced the ways in which Christians and Muslims chose to deal with one another.

Before you begin, we must issue a note of caution. From the evidence provided by Christians, you will not be able to determine what Muslims were *really* like, but only what Christians perceived (or wanted their readers to perceive) Muslims were like. This is equally true of the Muslim accounts. Indeed, it is quite possible that some of the writers had never even met the people about whom they were writing. Even so, what you *do* learn will prove extremely

important, for perceptions, impressions, and stereotypes are often just as powerful as facts in prompting individuals to action. To paraphrase historian Claude Lévi-Strauss, what people *think* is true may be more important to them than what is *really* true.

As you finish each document, think of some adjectives that readers of the account might have used to describe "the enemy." Keep a running list of these adjectives as you proceed through the evidence. Be willing also to read between the lines. Sometimes a particular author, in genuinely trying to describe or explain a specific incident, may have nevertheless created a perception in the minds of his readers, intentionally or unintentionally. Be alert for such instances.

Keep the central question in mind: In the written accounts by Muslims and Christians, what impressions did each side create of the other? How might those perceptions or stereotypes have influenced the way each side chose to deal with and treat each other, both during and after the period Europeans refer to as the Crusades?

MUSLIMS ON CHRISTIANS

Document #1. From Imad ad-Din, *History of the Fall of Jerusalem* .

from Francesco Gabrieli, *Arab Historians of the Crusades* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969), pp. 13-137, 148-149, 163, 170-171, 204, 207.

At the same time as the King was taken the "True Cross"² was also captured, and the idolaters who were trying to defend it were routed. It was this cross, brought into position and raised on high, to which all Christians prostrated themselves and bowed their heads. Indeed, they maintain that it is made of the wood of the cross on which, they say, he whom they adore was hung, and so they venerate it and prostrate themselves before it. They had housed it in a casing of gold, adorned with pearls and gems, and kept it ready for the festival of the Passion, for the observance of their yearly ceremony. When the priests exposed it to view and the heads (of the bearers) bore it along all would run and cast themselves down around it, and no one was allowed to lag behind or hang back without forfeiting his liberty. Its capture was for them more important than the loss of the King and was the gravest blow that they sustained in that battle. The cross was a prize without equal, for it was the supreme object of their faith. To venerate it was their prescribed duty, for it was their God, before whom they would bow their foreheads to the ground, and to which their mouths sang hymns. They fainted at its appearance, they raised their eyes to contemplate it, they were consumed with passion when it was exhibited and boasted of nothing else when they had seen it. They went into ecstasies at its reappearance, they offered up their lives for it and sought comfort from it, so much so that they had copies made of it which they worshipped, before which they prostrated themselves in their houses and on which they called when they gave evidence. So when

the Great Cross was taken great was the calamity that befell them, and the strength drained from their loins. Great was the number of the defeated, exalted the feelings of the victorious army. It seemed as if, once they knew of the capture of the Cross, none of them would survive that day of ill omen. They perished in death or imprisonment, and were overcome by force and violence.

Here³ are pictures of the Apostles conversing, Popes with their histories, monks in their cells, priests in their councils, the Magi with their ropes,⁴ priests and their imaginings; here the effigies of the Madonna and the Lord, of the Temple and the Birthplace, of the Table and the fishes, and what is described and sculpted of the Disciples and the Master, of the cradle and the Infant speaking. Here are the effigies of the ox and the ass, of Paradise and Hell, the clappers and the divine laws. Here, they say, the Messiah was crucified, the sacrificial victim slain, divinity made incarnate, humanity deified. Here the dual nature was united, the cross was raised, light was extinguished and darkness covered the land. Here the nature was united with the person, the existent mingled with the non-existent, the adored Being was baptized and the Virgin gave birth to her Son.

They continued to attach errors like this to the object of their cult, wandering with false beliefs far from the true forms of faith, and said: "We shall die in defense of our Lord's sepulcher, and we shall die in fear of its slipping from our hands; we shall fight and struggle for it: how could we not fight, not contend and join battle, how could we leave this for them to take, and permit them to take from us what we took from them?" They made far-reaching and elaborate preparations, stretching out endlessly to infinity. They mounted deadly weapons on the walls, and veiled the face of light with the sombre curtain of walls. They sent out their demons, their wolves ran hither and thither, their impetuous tyrants raged; their swords were unsheathed, the fabric of their downfall displayed, their blazing firebrands lit. ...

When Jerusalem was purified of the filth of the hellish Franks and had stripped off her vile garments to put on the robe of honour, the Christians, after paying their tax, refused to leave, and asked to be allowed to stay on in safety, and gave prodigious service and worked for us with all their might, carrying out every task with discipline and cheerfulness. They paid "the tax for protection permitted to them, humbly." They stood ready to accept whatever might be inflicted on them, and their affliction grew as they stood waiting for it. Thus they became in effect tribute-payers, reliant upon (Muslim) protection; they were used and employed in menial tasks and in their position they accepted these tasks as if they were gifts.

The Franks had cut pieces from the Dome of Rock, some of which they had carried to Constantinople and Sicily and sold, they said, for their weight in gold, making it a source of income. When the Rock reappeared to sight the marks of these cuts were seen and men were incensed to see how it had been mutilated. Now it is on view with the wounds it suffered, preserving its honour for ever, safe for Islam, within its protection and its fence. This was all done after the Sultan left and after an ordered pattern of life had been established. ...

There arrived by ship three hundred lovely Frankish women, full of youth and beauty, assembled from beyond the sea and offering themselves for sin. They were expatriates come to help expatriates, ready to cheer the fallen and sustained in turn to give support and assistance, and they glowed with ardour for carnal intercourse. They were all licentious harlots, proud and scornful, who took and gave, foul-fleshed and sinful, singers and coquettes, appearing proudly in public, ardent and inflamed, tinted and painted, desirable and appetizing, exquisite and graceful, who ripped open and patched up, lacerated and mended, erred and ogled, urged and seduced, consoled and solicited, seductive and languid, desired and desiring, amused and amusing, versatile and cunning, like tipsy adolescents, making love and selling themselves for gold, bold and ardent, loving and passionate, pink-faced and unblushing, black-eyed; and bullying, and graceful, with nasal voices and fleshy thighs, blue-eyed and grey-eyed, broken-down little fools. ...

Among the Franks there were indeed women who rode into battle with cuirasses [armor breastplates] and helmets, dressed in men's clothes; who rode out into the thick of the fray and acted like brave men although they were but tender women, maintaining that all this was an act of piety, thinking to gain heavenly rewards by it, and making it their way of life. Praise be to him who led them into such error and out of the paths of wisdom! On the day of battle more than one woman rode out with them like a knight and showed (masculine) endurance in spite of the weakness (of her sex); clothed only in a coat of mail they were not recognized as women until they had been stripped of their arms. Some of them were discovered and sold as slaves; and everywhere was full of old women. These were sometimes a support and sometimes a source of weakness. They exhorted and incited men to summon their pride, saying that the Cross imposed on them the obligation to resist to the bitter end, and that the combatants would win eternal life only by sacrificing their lives, and that their God's sepulchre was in enemy hands. Observe how men and women led them into error; the latter in their religious zeal tired of feminine delicacy, and to save themselves from the terror of dismay (on the day of Judgment) became the close companions of perplexity, and having succumbed to the lust for vengeance, became hardened, and stupid and foolish because of the harm they had suffered. ...

1) Most Muslims called all the crusaders "Franks" even though they knew full well that they were not all French

2) The religious excitement in Europe led to the "discovery" of numerous relics both before and during the Crusades. Some of these relics were portions of the "True Cross" of Christ's crucifixion (see above), the Holy Lance (that pierced Jesus's side); and the Crown of Thorns. Thus, the loss of what was believed to have been the cross to Saladin was a devastating blow to the crusaders.

3) Here: refers to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, a church that Christians believed enclosed the sites of Jesus' crucifixion and the tomb from which they claim, he was resurrected.

4) Magi... ropes: refers to the Qur'an XX, 69, which describes Egyptian Magi casting down ropes before Moses and making them appear to be serpents.

CHRISTIANS ON MUSLIMS

Document #2. From William of Tyre, A History of Deeds Done Beyond the Sea

trans. Emily Atwater Babcock and A. C. Krey (New York: Columbia University Press, 1943), vol. :1, pp. 60, 68-69, 306-317; vol. 2, p. 323.

In the time of the Roman Emperor Heraclius, according to ancient histories and Oriental tradition, the pernicious doctrines of Muhammad had gained a firm foothold in the orient. This first-born son of Satan falsely declared that he was a prophet sent from God and thereby led astray the lands of the East, especially Arabia. The poisonous seed which he sowed so permeated the provinces that his successors employed sword and violence, instead of preaching and exhortation, to compel the people, however reluctant, to embrace the erroneous tenets of the prophet. ...

There was a certain infidel living in Jerusalem, a treacherous and wicked man, who persecuted our people with insatiable hatred. This man was determined to devise some scheme that would bring about their destruction. One day, he stealthily threw the carcass of a dog into the temple court, a place which the custodians-and indeed the whole city as well-were most careful to keep scrupulously clean. Worshippers who came to the temple to pray the next morning found the mouldering body of the unclean animal. Almost frantic, they at once roused the whole city with their cries. The populace quickly ran to the temple, and all agreed that without question the Christians were responsible for the act. Need more be said? Death was decreed for all Christians, since it was judged that by death alone could they atone for such an act of sacrilege. The faithful, in full assurance of their innocence, prepared to suffer death for Christ's sake. As the executioners, with swords unsheathed, were about to carry out their

orders, however, a young man, filled with the spirit, came forward and offered himself as the sacrifice. "It would be most disastrous, O brethren," he said, "that the entire church should die in this way. Far better were it that one man should give his life for the people, that the whole Christian race may not perish. Promise me that annually you will reverently honor my memory and that the respect and honor due to my family shall be maintained forever. On these terms, at the command of God, I will deliver you from this massacre." The Christians heard his words with great joy and readily granted what he asked. They promised that, on the day of palm branches, in perpetual memory of him, those of his lineage should bear into the city, in solemn procession, the olive which signifies our Lord Jesus Christ.

The young man then gave himself up to the chief men of Jerusalem and declared that he was the criminal. In this way he established the innocence of the other Christians, for, when the judges heard his story; they absolved the rest and put him to the sword. Thus he laid down his life for the brethren and, with pious resignation, met death, that most blessed sleep, confident that he had acquired grace in the sight of the Lord. ...

The reason for the title caliph is as follows: Muhammad, their prophet, or rather their destroyer, who was the first to draw the peoples of the East to this kind of superstition, had as his immediate successor one of his disciples named Abu-Bakr. The latter was succeeded in the kingdom by Omar, son of Khattab, who was likewise followed by Uthman, and he by Ali, son of Abu- Talib. All these prophets were called caliphs, as were also all who followed them later, because they succeeded their famous master and were his heirs. But the fifth in the succession from Muhammad, namely Ali, was more warlike than his predecessors and had far greater experience in military matters than his contemporaries. He was, moreover, a cousin of Muhammad himself. He considered it unfitting that he should be called the successor of his cousin and not rather a great prophet himself, much greater, in fact, than Muhammad. The fact that in his own estimation and that of many others he was greater did not satisfy him; he desired that this be generally acknowledged. Accordingly, he reviled Muhammad and spread among the people a story to the effect that the Angel Gabriel, the propounder of the law, had actually been sent to him from on high but by mistake had conferred the supreme honor on Muhammad. For this fault, he said, the angel had been severely blamed by the Lord. Although these claims seemed false to many from whose traditions they differed greatly, yet others believed them, and so a schism developed among that people which has lasted even to the present. Some maintain that Muhammad is the greater and, in fact, the greatest of all prophets, and these are called in their own tongue, Sunnites; others declare that Ali alone is the prophet of God, and they are called Shiites.