

Crusades

Christianity has been on the defensive against Islam almost from Islam's very beginning. From medieval Muslim aggression to present-day aggression in America, Sudan, Armenia, Malaysia, Indonesia, etc., jihad (in the sense of "holy war"; the word itself simply means "struggle") is an historical and extant Islamic reality. Samuel Huntington, in his flawed but interesting book "The Clash of Civilizations", says:

"Violence also occurs between Muslims, on the one hand, and Orthodox Serbs in the Balkans, Jews in Israel, Hindus in India, Buddhists in Burma and Catholics in the Philippines. Islam has bloody borders."

Paul Fregosi writes in "Jihad":

The story begins around 650 C.E. with the first, unsuccessful siege of Constantinople, and continues with the invasion and occupation, sometimes for hundreds of years, of many European countries. Italy, Sicily, Portugal, France, Spain, Austria, Bosnia, Serbia, Croatia, Hungary, Rumania, Wallachia, Albania, Moldavia, Bulgaria, Greece, Armenia, Georgia, Poland, the Ukraine, and eastern and southern Russia were all battlefields where Islam conquered or was conquered in violent conflicts marked by cruelty, bloodlust, and a fearful loss of life, spread over considerably more than a thousand years.

For over a century and a half the world had forgotten this fact, since most Muslim countries were politically impotent and ruled mainly as the colonies or protectorates of European powers.

... European history has remained transfixed on the Christian Crusades of the eleventh to the thirteenth century, it has largely ignored these Muslim attacks and invasions...When accusing the West of imperialism, Muslims are obsessed with the crusades, but have forgotten their own longer and more gruesome Jihad.

The Crusades were a series of defensive wars against Islamic aggression in the Middle Ages and attempts to recapture the Holy Land from Muslim conquerors in order to allow safe pilgrimage and to protect and maintain the Christian presence there. Jerusalem had been Christian for hundreds of years when Caliph Omar seized it, and following that victory, Muslims warred their way into Egypt, other parts of Africa, Spain, Sicily, and Greece, leaving Christians dead and churches in ruins. They stole lands in the area now known as Turkey, destroying Catholic communities founded by St. Paul himself. They siezed Constantinople -- the "second Rome" -- and threatened the Balkans. They warred their way as far north as Vienna, Austria and Tours, France.

Referring to a battle which took place in A.D. 1243, the Arabian manuscript entitled *Essulouk li Mariset il Muluk* ("The Road to Knowledge of the Return of Kings") had this to say:

When they [Muslims] had despoiled all the country near to Damascus, they advanced to Jerusalem,

took it by storm, and put all the Christians to the sword. The women and girls, having suffered every insult from a brutal disorderly soldiery, were loaded with chains. They destroyed the church of the Holy Sepulchre; and when they found nothing among the living, to glut their rage, they opened the tombs of the Christians, took out the bodies, and burnt them.

Not too shocking considering the Qu'ran teaches:

Q.9: 29 "Fight those who believe not in Allah nor the Last Day, nor hold that forbidden which hath been forbidden by Allah and His Messenger, nor acknowledge the religion of Truth, even if they are of the People of the Book [Jews and Christians 1], until they pay the Jizya with willing submission, and feel themselves subdued."

and

Surah 47:4: "When ye meet the unbelievers, smite at their necks"

and

Surah 4:74: "To him who fighteth in the cause of Allah" [whether he is slain or gets victory] "soon shall we give him a reward of great value."

In other words, Christians are to "convert, submit, or die" 2.

The Hadith (in Abu Huraira) tells us the "prophet" said, "I have been ordered to fight with the people till they say, 'None has the right to be worshipped but Allah,' and whoever says, 'None has the right to be worshipped but Allah,' his life and property will be saved by me except for Islamic law, and his accounts will be with Allah, (either to punish him or to forgive him.)"

OK, so why does the typical Westerner shiver when thinking of the Crusades? Why are Catholics hated for defending Christendom? For the same reasons Christians of all kinds, Protestant or Catholic, are hated in our increasingly secularized world: "I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." (John 17:14) Christianity and its virtues have been under attack since the time of Christ, and even more so since the so-called "Enlightenment." After centuries of attacks on the Catholic Church in "Reformation" circles and the later, consequent rise of secular humanism, moral and cultural relativism, and Marxist political correctness, the Crusades came to be seen and taught as an example of "Western Imperialism" or "Colonialism." Because members of the Church were doing the fighting, Christianity itself (and Catholicism in particular) was slandered as a cause of war. Note how the same people who scream about the Crusades tend to be those who scream about "religion" in general as being at the root of wars, ignoring the fact that atheistic communism and pagan Nazism killed hundreds of millions in the 20th century alone.

All this understood, it must be said that the Popes' noble, reasonable purposes for the war, however, became entangled with the purposes of those with secular interests and more interested in dynastic feuds, economic concerns over Mediterranean trade, or destroying the Eastern Roman Empire. Many "bad guys" jumped onto the Crusade bandwagon and evil was done by some of the Crusaders: the sacking of Constantinople (including the destruction of churches) and the murder of Jews along Crusade routes most definitely took place and are deeply lamentable. There is no excuse for such behaviors except human evil, but this evil was not sanctioned in any way by the Church, in no way

reflects on Church teachings or her purposes for the Crusades, and resulted in the excommunication of many Crusaders responsible.

Footnote

1 Catholics aren't strictly "People of the Book" though we see Tanakh and the New Testament as the infallible and inspired word of God; we are "People of the Church"

2 The inherent evil of the Muslim religion does not mean that all who call themselves "Muslims" are evil! Many Muslims are of the same sort, religiously speaking, as many "Christians"; they don't take their religion that seriously, are merely "cultural Muslims," have enough natural virtue to try to explain away and defuse the Qu'ran's exhortations to violence, or are simply ignorant about Islam's violent history. May God bless, not their religion, but them, bringing them to all Truth, Who is Christ -- not only a Prophet, but the Son of the Living God. Salaam.

Relevant Scripture

Luke 22:36

Then said He [Jesus] unto them, But now, he that hath a purse, let him take it, and likewise his scrip: and he that hath no sword, let him sell his garment, and buy one.