

The recent Hollywood epic *Kingdom of Heaven* has provoked a flurry of articles re-evaluating the crusades. According to the Director, Ridley Scott, the Knights Templar were the “rightwing or Christian fundamentalists of their day.”

Scott, who describes himself as an agnostic, has gone on record stating:

“If we could just take God out of the equation, there would be no f.... problem!”

Reinforcing popular stereotypes about the crusades, Scott’s politically correct, anti-Christian *Kingdom of Heaven*

has been described by Professor Jonathan Riley-Smith, one of the foremost authorities on the crusades, as

“Osama Bin Laden’s version of history”

which

“will fuel the Islamic fundamentalists.”

The popular misconceptions about the crusades are that these were aggressive wars of expansion fought by religious fanatics in order to evict Muslims from their homeland, and force conversions to Christianity. Those who really believe any of that betray their ignorance of history.

A REACTION TO JIHAD

The crusaders were reacting to over four centuries of relentless Islamic Jihad, which had wiped out over 50% of all the Christians in the world and conquered over 60% of all the Christian lands on earth – before the crusades even began. Many of the towns liberated by the crusaders were still over 90% Christian when the crusaders arrived. The Middle East was the birthplace of the Christian Church. It was the Christians who had been conquered and oppressed by the Seljuk Turks. So many of the towns in the Middle East welcomed the crusaders as liberators.

Far from the crusaders being the aggressors, it was the Muslim armies which had spread Islam from Saudi Arabia across the whole of Christian North Africa into Spain and even France within the first century after the death of Muhammad. Muslim armies sacked and slaughtered their way across some of the greatest Christian cities in the world, including Alexandria, Carthage, Antioch and Constantinople. These Muslim invaders destroyed over 3,200 Christian churches just in the first 100 years of Islam.

DEFENSIVE WARS

As Professor Thomas Madden in *The Real History of the Crusades* points out: *“The crusades to the East were in every way defensive wars. They were a direct response to Muslim aggression*

– an attempt to turn back or defend against Muslim conquests of Christian lands. Christians in the 11 th Century were not paranoid fanatics. Muslims really were gunning for them...Islam was born in war and grew the same way. From the time of Muhammad, the means of Muslim expansion was always by the sword...Christianity was the dominant religion of power and wealth...The Christian world therefore was a prime target for the earliest Caliphs and it would remain so for Muslim leaders for the next thousand years...The crusades...were but a response to more than four centuries of conquests in which Muslim had already captured over two thirds of the Christian world.”

THINKING THE UNTHINKABLE

As the London Telegraph points out: *“A more realistic view of history requires less retrospective fantasy and more brain work. It means forcing your heads around to see what motivated men and women centuries ago. Try to think the unthinkable – that the Crusaders were right, and that we should be grateful to them.”*

CHRISTIAN LOVE AND SELF SACRIFICE

Professor Jonathan Riley-Smith explains that crusading was *“an act of love”* for one’s neighbour. An act of mercy to right a terrible wrong. As one church leader wrote to the Knights Templar: *“You carry out in deeds the words of the Gospel, ‘greater love than this hath no man, than that he lay down his life for his friends’.”*

Professor Riley-Smith points out that the goals of the crusades were firstly to rescue the Christians of the East: *“Many thousands of Christians are bound in slavery and imprisoned by the Muslims and tortured with innumerable torments.”* And secondly the liberation of Jerusalem and other places made holy by the life of Christ. The Medieval crusaders saw themselves as pilgrims, restoring to the Lord Jesus Christ His property. *“The Crusader’s conquest of Jerusalem, therefore, was not colonialism, but an act of restoration and an open declaration of one’s love of God...It is often assumed that the central goal of the crusades was forced conversion of the Muslim world. Nothing could be further from the truth. From the perspective of Medieval Christians, Muslims were the enemies of Christ and His Church. It was the Crusaders’ task to defeat and defend against them. That was all. Muslims who lived in crusader won territories were generally allowed to retain their property and livelihood and always their religion.”*

AGAINST ALL ODDS

When we think about the Middle Ages, we inevitably view Europe in the light of what it became rather than what it was. The fact is that the superpower of the Medieval world was Islam, not Christendom. The crusades were a battle against all odds with impossibly long lines of supply and crippling inadequate logistics. It was a David against Goliath enterprise from the beginning. The chances of success for the first crusade were highly improbable. They had no leader, no chain of command, no supply lines and no detailed strategy. The first crusade consisted simply of thousands of dedicated warriors marching deep into enemy territory, thousands of kilometres from home. Many of them died of starvation, disease and wounds. It was a rough campaign that always was on the brink of disaster.

“Yet it was miraculously successful. By 1098, the Crusaders had liberated Nicea and Antioch to Christian rule. And in July 1099 they re-conquered Jerusalem and began to build a Christian state in Palestine.”

A JUDGEMENT OF GOD

When Jerusalem fell to Saladin in 1187, Christians across Europe perceived that God was punishing them for their sins. Numerous lay movements sprang up throughout Europe dedicated to purifying Christian society so that it may become worthy of victory in the East.

Professor Madden of St. Lewis University and the author of *A Concise History of the Crusades* has observed:

“From the safe distance of many centuries, it is easy enough to scowl in disgust at the crusades. Religion, after all, is nothing to fight wars over. But we should be mindful that our Medieval ancestors would have been equally disgusted by our infinitely more destructive wars fought in the names of political ideologies... Whether we admire the Crusaders or not, it is a fact that the world we know today would not exist without their efforts. The ancient faith of Christianity, with its respect for women and antipathy toward slavery, not only survived but flourished. Without the crusades, it might have followed Zoroastrianism, another of Islam’s rivals, into extinction.” □

But for the crusades Europe would have probably fallen to Islam and the USA would never have come into existence.

LEARN TO DISCERN

Dr. Ted Baehr of Movieguide warns viewers to be *“media wise enough to reject revisionist history. The problem is that the future generations could accept this politically correct, anti-Christian propaganda.”*

MOHAMMED VS CHRIST

In his article *“Self Hate, Revisionist History and Christophobia in the Movie Kingdom of Heaven”* Dr. Ted Baehr notes some of the differences between Mohammed and Christ:

“Mohammed was the prophet of war; Christ is the Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6-7).

Mohammed's disciples killed for the faith; Christ's disciples were killed for their faith (Acts 12:2; 2 Tim. 4:7).

Mohammed promoted persecution against the "infidels"; Christ forgave and converted the chief persecutor (1 Tim. 1:13-15).

Mohammed was the taker of life; Christ is the giver of life (John 10:27-28).

Mohammed and his fellow warriors murdered thousands; Christ murdered none but saved many (John 12:48).

Mohammed's method was COMPULSION; Christ's aim was CONVERSION (Acts 3:19).

Mohammed practiced FORCE; Christ preached FAITH (John 6:29, 35).

Mohammed was a WARRIOR; Christ is a DELIVERER (Col. 1:13; 1 Thess. 1:10).

Mohammed said to the masses, "Convert or die!"; Christ said, "Believe and live!" (John 6:47; 11:25-26).

Mohammed was swift to shed blood (Rom. 3:15-17); Christ shed His own blood for the salvation of many (Eph. 1:7).

Mohammed preached "Death to the infidels!"; Christ prayed "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34).

Mohammed declared a holy war (Jihad) against infidels; Christ achieved a holy victory on Calvary's cross (Col. 2:14-15) and His followers share in that victory (John 16:33).

Mohammed constrained people by conquest; Christ constrained people by love (2 Cor. 5:14).

Modern terrorists derive their inspiration from Mohammed and carry out their despicable atrocities in the name of his god; Christians derive their inspiration from the One who said, "Blessed are the peacemakers" (Matthew 5:9).

Modern day disciples of Mohammed respond to the terrorist attacks by cheering in the streets; modern day disciples of Christ are deeply grieved at past atrocities carried out by those who were "Christians" in name only (the Crusades, the Spanish Inquisition, etc.).

Many Muslims are peaceful and peace-loving because they do not strictly follow the teachings of their founder; many Christians are peaceful and peace-loving because they do strictly follow the teachings of their Founder (Rom. 12:17-21).

Mohammed called upon his servants to fight; Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world; if My kingdom were of this world, then would My servants fight . . . but now is My kingdom not from

here" (John 18:36)

Mohammed ordered death to the Jews (see A.Guillaume, The Life of Muhammad, Oxford University Press [1975], p. 369); Christ ordered that the Gospel be preached "to the Jew first" (Rom. 1:16).

The Koran says, "Fight and slay the Pagans wherever ye find them" (Qu'ran 9.5); Christ said, "Preach the Gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15).

Mohammed's mission was to conquer the world for Allah; Christ's mission was to conquer sin's penalty and power by substitutionary atonement (2 Cor. 5:21; 1 Pet. 3:18).

Mohammed claimed that there was but one God, Allah; Christ claimed that He was God (John 10:30-31; John 8:58-59; John 5:18; John 14:9).

Mohammed's Tomb: OCCUPIED! Christ's tomb: EMPTY! "

JIHAD VS THE GOSPEL

The word "crusade" does not appear in the Bible, nor is it commanded. However, Jihad is the sixth pillar of Islam and the second greatest command of Muhammad. It is not only commended, but commanded in the Quran.

The crusades ended many centuries ago. However Islamic Jihad is carried out to this day. Millions of Christians have been slaughtered throughout the centuries by Islamic militants – such as the 1.5 millions Armenians murdered in Turkey in 1915. Christians have continued to be slaughtered by Islamic militants in Indonesia, the Philippines, Sudan and Nigeria to the present day.

Therefore, before Christians fall over themselves to apologise for the crusades, which ended over 700 years ago, it would be wise to first learn from reliable sources what the crusades were all about, and study the Islamic teachings and track record of Jihad over the last 14 centuries. □ “

Slavery, Terrorism and Islam – The Historical Roots and Contemporary Threat”

would provide a good introduction. Those who do not know their past have no future.

For an analysis of the distortion of theology and history in Ridley Scott’s epic, anti-Christian propaganda against the Crusaders, see our review: [***Kingdom of Heaven – Hollywood’s Crusade Against Christianity.***](#)

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See also related article: ***The End of Islam***