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**PETER THE HERMIT AND THE FIRST CRUSADE.**

by

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These were the best of times; these were the worst of times. This was a period in the history of Christendom in which the idealism and imagination of Mankind was exalted to the highest degree; this was the period in which the bestiality and cruelty of Mankind was very evident. This was the period of recorded history which is now referred to as the Crusades. In particular, this was the time of the First Crusade.

To say the least, it is very difficult for us to deal with a period of time such as the Crusades. In all there were eight Crusades lasting just over 200 years. It must be observed that the First Crusade created the pace for the Crusades that followed. The stage of history was set by Charlemagne in 800 A.D. in his consolidated empire that encompassed most of what is now modern Europe. The empire of Charlemagne was dynamic only so long as there was a pattern of conquest and addition to the empire. At the end of the period of Charlemagne or as it is referred to as the Carolingian period the empire was threatened by invasions of Magyars, Saracens and Vikings. One of the interesting perspectives is that Charlemagne brought to his conquered lands the religion of Jesus.

Christianity and the Muslim religion represented very dynamic forces that were in total opposition. Soon after Muhammad's death the Muslim religion by means of a jihad (holy war) forced its way both East and West in a breathtaking expansion of power. In 982 they decisively defeated the Roman Emperor Otto 11, from bases on the coast of Provence they devastated South France and Switzerland. However, in Spain they were more firmly established and here the Reconquists lasted until the end of the Middle Ages.

Christianity was split by the schism of the Roman Christian Church and the Eastern Christian Church. The power of the Roman Church was centered in Rome and the power of the Eastern Church was centered in Constantinople. Islam also was split by a very large schism in the form of the sects of the Sunnites and the Shi'ites. In terms of power neither block represented unified power.

Since about 330 A.D. pilgrims made the journey to Palestine to visit the holy places of Christianity. Early in this period of time the Turkish rulers of Palestine made little effort to oppress the Christians in their pilgrimage to Palestine. This gradually changed and by the period of 500-800 A.D. INCREASING REPORTS DETAILED THE INDIGNITIES AND OPPRESSIONS OF THE Turks. This culminated in 1078 by a wave of persecution by the Turcoman Atsiz. Repeated reports detailed the cruel inhumanities that the visiting Christians suffered.

Upon this scene was introduced one of the most powerful men of all history. Peter the Hermit was the force that made the First Crusade a reality. The concept of a crusade had been considered by ecclesiastics and some nobility for a number of years but the concept had not been turned into reality. It was in Palestine that Peter the Hermit conceived the idea of the First Crusade. At this time Peter was visiting the Holy Land. After he had performed all the

penances and duties of his pilgrimage he demanded an interview with Simeon, the Patriarch of the Greek Church in Palestine. Although Peter considered

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Simeon, to be a heretic, due to his alliance with the Eastern Christian Empire, yet he still was a Christian and as such Simeon felt as acutely as Peter about the persecutions that the visiting Christian Pilgrims experienced at the hands of the Turks. Simeon accepted the views of Peter the Hermit and at Peter's suggestion wrote letters to the Pope in Rome and other influential monarchs of Christendom. In these letters he detailed the misfortunes of the pilgrims urging them to take up arms in the protection of the pilgrims. Toward this end Peter was not slow. From Constantinople he hastened back to Rome to confer with Urban 11 who was the reigning pope. At this time the ship of the papacy floated in very disturbed political waters as a result of the unrest that existed worldwide.

Peter the Hermit was received by Urban 11 most cordially. Peter's enthusiasm was contagious and the idea of the First Crusade seems to have immediately appealed to the Pope. The First Crusade, or as it was referred to at the time as 'the Crusade', was politically acceptable to Urban for a number of reasons. One important factor in the concept of the First Crusade was that it offered to bring all Christians together in a united effort to redress the Turkish wrongs. It must be wondered, at this vantage point of the twentieth century, if the many ramifications of the First Crusade were in evidence to Peter and Urban.

Peter was dressed in the monastic habit with bare feet. Several reports about him have specified that he only ate fish and drank wine. This aspect of the matter could be dealt with in much greater length. Peter the Hermit had a totally charismatic personality in preaching to the common people. On the other hand, Urban dealt with the aspects of Church and secular acceptance of the concept of the First Crusade.

At this time it was the commonly accepted Christian view that the religion of Mohammed was a mortal enemy that was to be opposed at all costs. Although a special place was held for Jesus, the Islamic Jesus is almost unrecognizable to Christians. Muhammad tells the story of the Virgin Birth three times and he was deeply moved by the story. While he was aware that there was something supernatural about Jesus, he had no patience with those who proclaimed his divinity. Even at this early time it was evident that Christianity and Islam were destined to engage in a death struggle from which only one faith could emerge.

Urban 11 was a strong leader who seemed, in retrospect, to have been looking for something to leapfrog Christianity to a point of supremacy. The Church was the largest and strongest political force in the Christian world. At every level of geopolitical influence the Church had representatives and leaders. Since education in terms of reading and writing as well as other subjects are strongly the function of the Church it is of little wonder that the Church was so dominant a power.

Urban 11 came to the throne in 1088 A.D. He was a very practical man with a peculiarly French sense of reaching to the heart of a problem. His original name was Eudes de Lagery and he was born in his family castle near Chatillon-sur-Marne in about 1042 A.D. Rising quickly in the Church Hierarchy he soon became a canon of St. John Lateran in Rome. At this point he abandoned Rome and he took the habit of a simple monk at Cluny which was at that time the intellectual hub of French Catholicism. The abbot of Cluny made him a prior and

sent him on missions to Rome. At this time Gregory VII was impressed by him and made him bishop of Ostia. In an ancient portrait he is pictured as wearing his cardinal's robes, bald with the exception of tufts of hair above his ears but with a long long beard and an unusually heavy mustache. He is presented as being singularly robust and determined.

The characters of both Peter the Hermit and Urban II gave the First Crusade its color. Peter propagated the Crusade to the common people and Urban was the proponent to the nobility and the clergy. The Crusades remained essentially French and aristocratic throughout its life of 200 years. The necessity for a Crusade was proclaimed at a gathering of the clergy and laity at Clermont, in France, on 27 November 1095. As such he was speaking as a Frenchman to Frenchmen concerning a matter of particular relevance to France.

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"Frenchmen" he began, "You who are chosen and beloved by God, as is shown by your many achievements, you who are set apart from all other peoples by the particular situation of your country, and also by your Catholic faith and the honor of Holy Church". The pope spoke in French, standing on a podium in the midst of an immense field around which stood an army of archbishops, bishops, abbots, prelates and priests. His pronouncement had been the result of many days of debate which included many other church matters. One of the key elements of the debate at Clermont had been their logo "Truce of God" which was meant to be the absolute outlawing of fighting involving priests, monks, women, laborers and merchants on any day of the week. At Clermont Urban was able to extend this prohibition further to include certain religious holidays. The irony of the matter was that this pope who extended the "Truce of God" now was calling for a holy war in the Holy Land.

As it turned out the two concepts were closely intertwined. The war against the Turks would divert the energies expended by Christians in killing the Christians. This in itself would be a good thing. When Urban addressed the crowd on that cold November day he was about fifty-three years old but he had the vigor of a much younger man. Great care had been spent in the preparation of his speech which was presented by his resounding voice. Copies of it were made available to ecclesiastical officials and the princes who attended. It was the intention of the pope that his words should be heard all over France and that they should be studied and remembered.

Urban's interpretation of the Prophet Daniel's vision was of the time to come when the Antichrist would set up his tents on the Mount of Olives and sit in Jerusalem on a throne of Solomon's Temple, "as though he were God". But this was of little importance to the crowd. They were whipped to a point of frenzy by the thought of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre being in the possession of the Turks and that the Christians attempting to visit the shrines of the Holy Land were being molested and killed.

Pope Urban continued, "Yes, indeed, yes, it is the will of God. You today see the accomplishment of the word of our Saviour, who promised to be in the midst of the faithful, when assembled in his name; it is He who dictated to you the words that I have heard. Let them be your war cry, and let them announce everywhere the presence of the God of armies!".

At this point Urban II raised up the crucifix.

There was an uproar, a chorus of deafening voices and then a silence as Cardinal Gregorio dei Guidone, pronounced a general confession. As one the crowd fell to its knees, beat their breasts and confessed their sins. The next speaker

was Adhemar of Montell, Bishop of LePuy. He asked that he be allowed to enter the way of God and to take the cross from the pope's hand. Urban gave him the cross. It was not a cross of metal and wood but rather a cross of cloth which was sewed to the right shoulder of the Bishop. As from virtually nowhere strips of cloth cut in the form of a cross appeared and everyone present was busy sewing the crosses in place on their right shoulder.

After Clermont, Urban traveled across France holding councils in most important population centers. He was like an army on forced march preaching the Crusade.

Peter the Hermit spoke to the masses of people. He seemed to have magic words judged by the response of the people. Peter was a very small man. He is described as being "insignificant in appearance". He was a hermit who wore the habit of a monk although it is considered probable that he was not in fact a monk. The people called him "Cucu-Peter". It is suggested that in the popular vernacular this meant "cowled Peter", but it is more possible that this was a term of popular endearment. Peter spoke to the common people while Urban appealed to the clergy and nobility. In fact, the First Crusade would be referred to as the 'poor Crusade' or the Crusade of the poor.

Peter achieved a most unusual popularity with the masses of people who lived, breathed and sweated. He was surrounded by throngs, he reclaimed prostitutes and provided them with husbands, he

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restored peace where there had been strife and his utterances were considered to be little less than divine. This small, ugly man walked barefoot and cared nothing for physical possessions. He was totally dedicated to the vision of the Crusade and he opened the way for all other people to share with him in the glory of its success. Research has led to the question of a connection between Peter the Hermit and the monks of Orval and the Ordre de Sion. Herein lie many facts that seem to fit a pattern of unfoldment.

The nobles mortgaged their estates for mere trifles to Jews and unbelievers or conferred charters of immunity upon the towns and communes within their fiefs, for small sums of money which a short while before would have been scorned. During the spring and summer of 1096 the roads of central Europe were jammed with travelers in some way preparing to go on the First Crusade. The people sold what they could for what they could get. The popular frenzy was in terms of dealing with past and present frustrations and unhappinesses by going on the Crusade. All who were caught in the flame of the Crusade were bound by "The Truce of God" not to take revenge for any injury, not to enjoy the fruits of property usurped from others nor to use deadly weapons; in reward of which they were promised the remission of all their sins. This provided the practical 'carte blanche' in that everything that the Crusaders might do on their way to the Holy Land would be forgiven upon their reaching Palestine.

This point was not lost to the Crusaders. Even though very few of the crusaders -to-be knew where Palestine was, the enthusiasm for the Crusade was very great. The leaders of the First Crusade were to function under the command of Peter the Hermit. Bold adventurers such as Gautier sans Avoir, which when translated means Walter the Penniless. and Gottschalk, of whom nothing is known as to origin except that he was a fanatic of the deepest purple and was typical of the leaders. In the Spring of 1096 there were encampments all over France of Crusaders preparing for their journey. Finally the first element of the First Crusade moved, rolling through Germany like a juggernaut. In the first few weeks the little money that the Crusaders had was spent which left them to forage as best they could. When they entered Hungary at first they were

received well. The passion and fire of the Crusade had not infected the Hungarians as yet. Without money the Crusaders attacked and plundered the dwellings of the Hungarians. The outraged Hungarians attacked the rear of the Crusaders column and slew a great number of the stragglers. The Hungarians took the weapons of those slain back to the city of Semlin and decorated the walls of the city with them. Upon entering Bulgaria, Walter the Penniless was leading an army that seemed to be propelled by its own force. When Walter finally arrived at Constantinople famine and the sword had diminished his force by a factor of one-third.

The greater throng of Crusaders was led by Peter the Hermit. His greater multitude followed closely on the heels of Walter the Penniless with their bulky train of baggage, women and children. Upon arriving in Semlin they saw the weapons of those of Walter's men who had been slain upon the walls of Semlin Peter's followers rioted unrestrained until the fear of retaliation caused them to cease. When the king of Hungary was informed of what had taken place he marched on Peter with a sufficient force to chastise the Hermit. Upon learning of this advance Peter the Hermit broke camp and retreated towards the Morava which was a broad stream that joined the Danube. Many of Peter's crusaders perished in the waters of the Morava and many perished under the swords of the king of Hungary.

In Bulgaria the duke fortified himself at Nissa in fear of an attack by the Crusaders. Through the forests of Bulgaria, Walter the Penniless guided his horde to a city which at that time was named Stralicia, and which is probably Sofia today. The governor of Stalicia was kindly disposed towards Walter and allowed the crusaders to pass around but not through the city. About this time the crusaders under the command of Peter the Hermit approached the Hungarian city of Semlin and there saw on the walls of the city the arms of their comrades. The undisciplined crusaders rioted and the riot turned into a pitched battle in which the Hungarians were soundly defeated. At that moment Peter was not with the body of the column but was with an advance column that had entered Byzantine territory. Peter's army seemed to be functioning on its own without the leadership of Peter. When this host approached Belgrade the people of the city fled to the mountains. Feeling that the city had been abandoned to them, set fire to it. After this devastation the Crusaders left for Nish, reaching it after a grueling seven-day march.

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The Emperor Alexius Comenus had established a large garrison at Nish which was capable of defending itself. Once again Peter asked for provisions and they were provided by Alexius. Peter also requested guides and again Alexius provided what was requested of him. the emperor did require hostages to insure the quiet passage of the crusaders. Peter the Hermit provided the hostages.

The worst of the events so far was about to happen. It amused some of the unruly Germans in the rear guard to set fire to some country homes outside the walls of Nish. They also fired some water mills closeby. The governor was shocked and enraged. It was his decision to teach the crusaders a lesson and as such he ordered his well trained soldiers to attach Peter's rear guard to take the incendiaries and take additional hostages. Those soldiers were put to death. Peter learned that his troops that had been attacked were not without blame. He established a camp on a hill some distance from Nish to regroup his forces Peter sent out heralds to seek out the broken elements of his army and gather them back together.

It was at this moment that the olive branch of help came from Emperor Alexius and the remnant force set out for Constantinople. By the time the force

reached Constantinople it was in a sorry state. Walter the Penniless had already arrived in Constantinople. Alexius gave Peter money and all the supplies that a marching, army needed. When Peter was received by Alexius he was voluble in his thanks for the support. He was most convincing to Alexius as to the plight his army set out to redress. Considering the condition of army, Peter wanted to immediately set out on his march to the Holy Land. Having been received by friends who supplied all their wants the crusaders could not refrain themselves from rapine. It was suggested that it would be wiser to wait for other elements of the Crusade but Peter left Constantinople five days later. Of the once proud army Peter had a scant thirty-thousand crusaders left which included women and children. They were ferried across the Bosphorus.

On the other side of the Bosphorus the sultan Soliman was on the alert with a superior force. Helenopolis was chosen as a place of encampment. It formerly had been occupied by English mercenaries. The Greeks had called it Cibotos and the Franks called it Civetot. This was the place that was chosen to rest and regroup in preparation for the march forward. A detachment from the fort was surprised and slaughtered at a place called Exorogordon. The siege lasted eight days and the crusaders suffered greatly from a lack of water. Their treacherous leader Reynaldo settled the matter by renouncing Christianity and delivering the fort up to the sultan.

Walter the Penniless met a miserable fate with his multitude. After the disaster at Exorogordon Walter's soldiers demanded to be led instantly against the Turks. Being of a cooler head, Walter saw the pitfalls of this approach. His force was insufficient to make such a venture in unknown territory. Walter said that they would not move until they had been reinforced by the great army of the princes had crossed the Bosphorus. Walter showing more bravery than common sense, put himself at their head and the column rushed to its destruction. In the fierce battle that ensued the Turks wreaked a fearful havoc. Of the 25,000 Christians that entered the battle only about 2,000 survived. Walter was pierced by 7 mortal wounds and died.

Peter the Hermit: was disgusted by the excesses of the Christian crusaders. He had brought them from Europe but his heart was now moved with grief and pity at their misfortunes. Peter, reviving his former zeal threw himself at the feet of Alexius Comenus and implored him with tears in his eyes, to send relief to the few survivors of Civetot. In this the emperor consented and sent a force that arrived just in time to prevent the total annihilation of the crusader force. In his wisdom, Alexius caused all the remaining crusaders to be disarmed since he too had suffered from the undisciplined fury of the crusaders.

Meanwhile back in Europe fresh hordes of crusaders were issuing from the woods and wilds of Germany. These forces were under the command of a fanatic priest named Gottschalk. This column like the previous columns raped and pillaged its way through Hungary. The king of Hungary, Karloman, induced Gottschalk and his force to lay down their arms. At this point the king ordered the complete

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slaughter of the Germanic crusaders. Not one crusader survived this ordeal. Other hordes of even more fanatical crusaders got as far as Hungary. Their trail of horror exceeded the bloody trail of these who went before them. The Hungarians slaughtered so many crusaders that it was said that the Danube river was choked with the bodies of the dead crusaders.

It was at this point that some cooler heads prevailed in Europe. In

particular, Godfrey de Boullion Duke of Lorraine and Raymond Count of Toulouse began a grand movement towards Palestine. Estimates varied as to the number of this force but, in actuality, it was probably about 100,000 in strength. After their arrival in Constantinople, Alexius caused the arrest of count Raymond. Alexius demanded an oath of allegiance of Raymond which would bind the Count to him hereafter. Alexius deduced that the Count, being the brother of the King of France, would be an example for other crusader leaders to also take the oath of allegiance.

Meanwhile Godfrey of Boullion traveled through Hungary in a most orderly manner, He found the country strewn with the mangled corpses of the crusaders, Upon seeing this he gave the country up to pillage, Intelligence of this having traveled to Alexius, Alexius committed another blunder. He released his prisoner to return to his forces, Raymond being an honest and straight forward crusader, was finally so tired of the false kindness of Alexius, that Raymond allowed the country around Constantinople to be plundered by his soldiers. A Common saying of the time was that the Turks and Saracens were not such inveterate foes to the Western or Latin Christians as the emperor Alexius and the Greeks. At any rate in the long turn, Count Raymond of Boullion did give Alexius an oath of allegiance binding himself to respect the life and possessions of the emperor and to do nothing whatsoever to harm them,

The last army to arrive in Constantinople was led by Robert, Duke of Normandy who was the fiery and intractable son of William the Conqueror. With the last of the forces ferried across the Bosphorus Alexius at last felt more secure and no longer directly threatened. In the last days of April or the first days of May the crusader forces began the move to the second stage of the journey to the Holy Land.

Until very recently the city of Nicea had been in the Byzantine hands of Alexius, It was now a part of the empire of Kilij Arslan the Seljuk sultan. Kilij Arslan made it his capital due to its natural fortification potentials. The walls were high and there were 240 towers. At this time the sultan was not in presence in Nicea and communication was poor. Within the walled city was a force entirely capable of defending the city for a protracted period of time. The Christian crusader troops surrounded the city. By this time the crusaders were nearly exhausted as a result of their trials.

The Count of Toulouse ordered that under the cover of night the foundation of one of the towers should be dug out. This was a large operation to be carried out at night. When it was finished and the crusaders expected that the wall would crumble in the morning they withdrew for the night. In the morning, much to their amazement, they found that the defenders had repaired the damage in the balance of the night. It was at this point that it was agreed to beg the emperor Alexius to provide relief. Once more Alexius provided assistance and caused a fleet to be built in a very short period of time. The appearance of the ships with supplies inspired fear in the hearts of the defenders. Victory was not to be easily gained. An assault was ordered and in the morning it was found that the imperial banners of Alexius were flying over the ramparts . During the night Nices had fallen by negotiation. Emperor Alexius was most generous to each crusader. Every soldier was provided with a gift of food. The princes were invited to Pelecanum where they were lavishly entertained and were presented with gifts of gold and jewels from the sultan's treasury.

There were now two armies marching about a day's journey apart. The sultan Kilij was aware of the movement of the crusaders and they prepared an ambush for the crusaders in the valley of Dorylacum which is now called

Eskisehir When the crusaders were well within the valley the Turks swarmed down on the crusaders in the early morning hours crying, "Allah Akbar" which means "God is Great" The crusaders formed a defensive circle in the centre of which, quite fortunately, was a spring of fresh water.

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The Turks were well trained at saturation firing on a massive scale This was something that the crusaders had not encountered before At virtually the last moment before annihilation a relief column was viewed coming over the mountain in the rear of the Turks. Kiliç's forces dropped everything and fled the scene on the run The day had been saved by a crusader force led by the Bishop of LePuy who had developed his stratagem without the help of any soldier.

For the first time the crusaders had met the enemy on an enormous scale. In this battle armies were pitted against armies At this time the rains began causing the crusaders more untold suffering. Both Tancred and Baldwin of the reinforcing forces were mostly interested in the spoils of war and they caused their forces to venture towards Tarsus, the birthplace of St. Paul. The garrison forces of Tarsus had been ordered to stand fast. By means of intelligence it was learned that the Christians inside Tarsus were doing every thing possible to insure a Christian victory During the night the Turkish forces slipped away leaving the city to the Christians.

By this time the main body of Christian forces at Heracles made their advance into Lesser Armenia All through the continuing history of the crusades the kings of Lesser Armenia played a prominent role as Christians and superb fighters. Meanwhile, the main crusader army, under Bohemond, Godfrey and the Count of Toulouse continued on its march through Asia Minor. The terrain proved to be more of a problem at this point than the Turks.

Antioch was most unusual compared to most cities in the near East. At one time it was the largest and most powerful city in Asia. It was the third largest city in the empire and it was the richest and most powerful city on the coast of Palestine. As the crusaders approached the city was put on a war footing. Bishop Adhemar was the first to arrive and his forces attacked the Iron Bridge. This vantage point was guarded by two great towers. After a brief encounter the bridge fell to the attackers leaving the city exposed to the crusaders. Bohemond quickly followed and soon the entire crusader army was ringed about the city. The first tactic was that the crusaders merely posted a guard about the city A few assaults were made against the city, but these were of minor import.

After a wait of two days the Turkish leader Yaghi-Sihan decided to probe the crusaders After some severe skirmishes the crusaders began to loose heart. As winter approached the crusaders had increasing fears for the months ahead. Bohemond lead a foraging expedition of some 20,000 crusaders and encountered and defeated a supply column of Turks. By this time reinforcements and supplies for the crusaders had landed at the port of St. Symeon and the tide slowly began to turn for the crusaders.

Spring brought encouragement to Bohemond and he displayed a fierce imagination and absolute ruthlessness. The spring also brought Kerbogha, Atabeg of Mosul, with a large army to relief of Antioch The attack was beginning to go the way Bohemond had planned it. After climbing a breaching ladder, sixty of his men were able to establish a footing and three towers were captured. His position being secured he opened the gates to the crusaders to allow all the attacking element to gain access to the city. The following day Kerbogha arrived at the walls of the city.



During the siege of Antioch a priest named Peter Barthelemy provided an unusual inspiration to the army of Crusaders. Before the city had been taken he had a total of four nightly visitation by Christ and St. Andrew. Each time pair had told Peter Barthelemy of the location of a lance in the city of Antioch. The lance was buried in front of the altar of church of St. Peter. The visitation began some two weeks before the crusaders took Antioch and the last was after the city had been captured. Finally Peter took his dreams to Count Raymond, the Bishop of Puy and Raymond of Altapulto. The crusader leaders were not slow to realize the import of this to the crusader army. The following day they began digging at the appointed spot before the altar of St. Peter's church. After digging all day they had merely moved much earth with nothing to show for their effort. At this point Peter Barthelemy removed his clothes

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except for a jerkin and jumped into the hole and in due course found the lance. This was the lance that had pierced the side of Jesus while he was on the cross. The entire crusader force was thrilled at this find. The lance galvanized the crusaders again into a fighting force.

At this time Peter the Hermit was visiting the camp of Kerbogha to propose that the quarrel between the two religions should be decided by a chosen number of soldiers in mortal combat. Kerbogha scorned this proposal, saying that he could not agree to proposals from a set of such miserable beggars and robbers. Peter the Hermit returned to the city of Antioch. The reason that Peter had taken this step was that the crusader forces were suffering from famine and disease and would in the near future cease to be a worthy combat force. At this point there were only about two hundred knights on horseback and the soldiers were sick and emaciated.

Kerbogha attacked from every side. The crusaders began to wilt from the impact of the attacks. It was at this moment that a cry was raised in the crusader force. The smoke had cleared from the battlefield. Some zealot, with more than ample imagination, cried out to the soldiers to look at the army of the saints, clothed in white and riding white horses, that were pouring over the hills to their rescue. A panic hit the Turkish forces like a sledge hammer and they gave way in all directions. In spite of the attempt by Kerbogha to rally his troops they fled the scene leaving nearly 70,000 dead Turks on the battlefield. The enemy stronghold fell into the hands of the crusaders complete with its rich stores of corn and its droves of cattle and sheep. The crusaders gained a complete victory and many of the Turks embraced the Christian faith the rest being suffered to retreat from Antioch.

There was rejoicing in Antioch that lasted several days. Peter Barthelemy suffered the fate of the disbelieved. He continued to relate his "dreams" and unfortunately increasingly the details were contradictory. Peter Barthelemy was challenged to take the trial by fire to prove the validity of the lance. Bohemund's challenge could not be refused and Peter agreed to the trial. An early time was set for the trial. Peter Barthelemy spent the night before the trial in prayer and fasting. A fire had been set that was twenty feet by twenty feet. By the morning the fire had died down and the remaining coals were glowing. Peter clad only in his jerkin and holding the lance over his head walked through the fire pit. There are two different reports dealing with the outcome of the trial by fire. Considering that there were 60,000 crusaders who witnessed the trial we still have the two widely variant results that were reported. One report was that Peter Barthelemy came through the ordeal unscathed. The other report was that Peter after almost gaining the other side of the fire pit became confused. He turned around and walked back through the

fire pit and at the other side was so severely burned that he died a matter of a few days later in extreme agony. It is today generally conceded that this was in some way a fraud. The experience of the lance provided a rallying point to inspire the crusaders once more to a final victory at Antioch. Without the inspiration of the lance it seems quite certain that the victory would not have been by the crusaders.

It was now July and Godfrey proposed that the crusaders spend the hot months of August and September in Antioch before proceeding to the final quest of the crusade: Jerusalem. In that period of time new arrivals and supplies from Europe renewed the vigor of the army. The army regaining its dynamic impetus grew restive and it was decided to march and lay siege on the small but well defended town of Marah. With their usual lack of organization in terms of supplies they had barely sufficient food to last a week. They suffered great privations until Bohemund came to their aid and the reinforced battle group took the town by storm. The marching army met a delegation of Christians from Bethlehem in Emmaus who expressed the urgent desire for the crusaders to make post haste to Bethlehem. This was like dew drops to an army dying of thirst. Bethlehem was a place of hallowed reverence to the crusaders. For hours the mail-clad legions marched to Jerusalem. At length the spires of Jerusalem shone in burning glory. At this point the very souls of the Christian crusaders were touched with the glory of arriving at their goal. No longer were they callous and brutal crusaders but now they were meek and humble pilgrims. They knelt down and as a body cried out, 'Jerusalem, Jerusalem'. The joy was overwhelming to them.

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After the first emotional release of energy at actually having arrived at their goal, the army moved forward and surrounded the city from all sides. The assault on the city was begun immediately. Mangonels, moveable towers, battering rams and a sow were immediately constructed. The sow is a protective device made of wood and covered with rawhides which was used to protect miners engaged in undermining walls.

The Saracens on the walls viewed these proceeding with considerable alarm. When the machines were constructed the battle began and the Christians fought with a sense of personal dedication that indicated that each man felt his personal responsibility to win the battle. Raymond of Toulouse was able to burst open one of the gates and the flood of crusaders was a torrent that the Turks could not stem. Every Christian seemed to be fighting with the strength of ten men. The Saracens fled to the mosque of Soliman but without time to fortify themselves they were overwhelmed and it is said that 10,000 Turks died in the mosque.

As the battle subsided the native Christians of Jerusalem came forth from their hiding places. They instantly recognized Peter the Hermit as the pilgrim of some ten years ago who had promised to bring them relief. At last Peter received the accolades he so well deserved. The emotion expressed by the native Christians deeply touched each and every one of the crusaders. Afterward Peter the Hermit held some unspecified ecclesiastical office in the Holy City. Fate has not permitted us to know what his eventual destiny was. Some have said that he returned to France and founded a monastery, but this story is without historical foundation. This is the way it was in 1099, in Jerusalem at the end of the First Crusade. The First Crusade laid the foundation for others in the ensuing years but, the glory of being the first to make a crusade belonged to these people from Europe. Peter the Hermit was successful in his mission to relieve the suffering of the Christians in the Holy Land.

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