The Saint and the Sultan: The Crusades, Islam, and Francis of Assisi's Mission of Peace

Paul Moses
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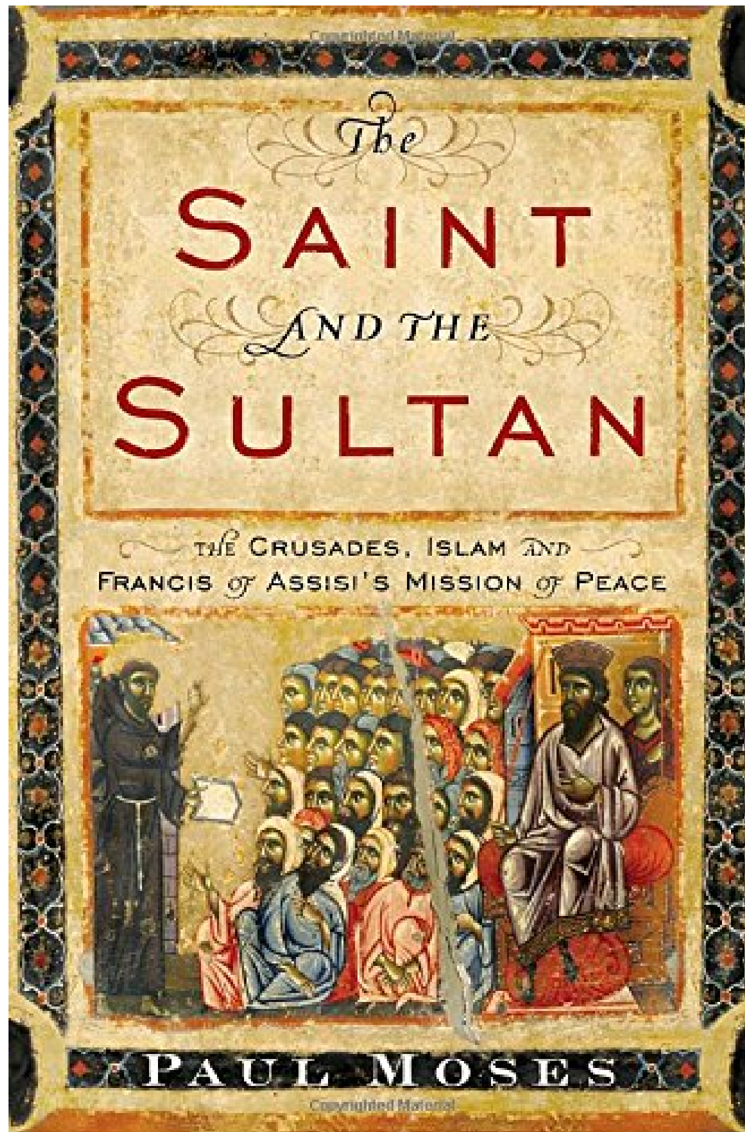

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#190373 in Books Moses Paul 2009-09-29 2009-09-29Original language:EnglishPDF # 1 9.50 x 1.10 x 6.70l, 1.18 #File Name: 038552370X320 pagesThe Saint and the Sultan The Crusades Islam and Francis of Assisi s Mission of Peace | File size: 53.Mb

Paul Moses : The Saint and the Sultan: The Crusades, Islam, and Francis of Assisi's Mission of Peace before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Saint and the Sultan: The Crusades, Islam, and Francis of Assisi's Mission of Peace:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Shades of Pope Francis, S.J.By ChucklesActually already this book on KINDLE but want to do more intensive research. Saint Francis of Assisi was a childhood favorite. I was intrigued by the fact that Francis talked to the birds; truth is they were talking to him. Francis was the son of a very wealthy merchant who suited up, went off to war, was captured and spent a year or more in jail. Eventually freed and founded Franciscan order, decided to visit middle east to put an end to crusades. Befriended with and by al-Adil, Sultan Malik who gifted Saint Francis with protected travel throughout the middle east. The reason for purchasing the book is to study the impact of the equality of these two men. It is rumored that Saint Francis planned to implant some Muslim prayer practice into the Franciscan order and possibly the Sultan may have considered becoming a Roman Catholic... Saint Francis was an embarrassment to the church because he was not a handsome man and he dressed in mole garments, unless he gave them to someone more needy! Very interesting reading historically and religiously as well!2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Inspiring and worthwhile read for our times.By Sandra LaurillaIt was quite a different life that was that of St. Francis than I had thought. This book was recommended to me by a United Methodist minister that I had worked for for many years in the past and knew of my keen appreciation of St. Francis as the patron of our new Pope (my being a Roman Catholic). I was not disappointed in the book as it was a wonderful one in which this Francis worked with the Sultan in the ways of peace in times of such cruelty and war...much like our times today. Very much a good read and inspiring.1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. This book contains a lot of gruesome details and "assumptions" ...By Lynn E.This book contains a lot of gruesome details and "assumptions" about events and actions that may or may not have taken place. It's more of a fictitious account than non-fiction. I have gained more understanding about what is happening in the world today, though, which was the reason I bought this book.

An intriguing examination of the extraordinaryand little known meeting between St. Francis of Assisi and Islamic leader Sultan Malik Al-Kamil that has strong resonance in today's divided world.For many of us, St. Francis of Assisi is known as a poor monk and a lover of animals. However, these images are sadly incomplete, because they ignore an equally important and more challenging aspect of his life -- his unwavering commitment to seeking peace. In The Saint and the Sultan, Paul Moses recovers Francis' s message of peace through the largely forgotten story of his daring mission to end the crusades.In 1219, as the Fifth Crusade was being fought, Francis crossed enemy lines to gain an audience with Malik al-Kamil, the Sultan of Egypt. The two talked of war and peace and faith and when Francis returned home, he proposed that his Order of the Friars Minor live peaceably among the followers of Islama revolutionary call at a moment when Christendom pinned its hopes for converting Muslims on the battlefield. The Saint and the Sultan captures the lives of St. Francis and Sultan al-Kamil and illuminates the political intrigue and religious fervor of their time. In the process, it reveals a startlingly timely story of interfaith conflict, war, and the search for peace. More than simply a dramatic adventure, though it does not lack for colorful saints and sinners, loyalty and betrayal, and thrilling Crusade narrative, The Saint and the Sultan brings to life an episode of deep relevance for all who seek to find peace between the West and the Islamic world.Winner of the 2010 Catholic Press Association Book Award for History

"The story of these two menFrancis and the sultanis told engagingly in this well-researched, timely and fascinating book by Paul Moses ... dramatically narrated ... I highly recommend this book for readers interested in St. Francis, the Crusades, Islam and how the story of Francis and al-Kamil offers us a Franciscan approach to the interfaith challenges we face today." - Murray Bodo, O.F.M., St. Anthony Messenger."...this is a wonderfully written, well researched and timely book. It will surely serve to bring the message of peace that is exhibited in the encounter between Francis and the Sultan to a world desperately in need of recalling such possibilities ... This is a book that belongs int he personal libraries of all Franciscans and all who strive to encounter the other in a loving, Christian and respectful manner." - Daniel P. Horan, O.F.M."Moses's realistic and powerful book gives readers an informed idea of how difficult it was to follow Francis in an age of papal power and the broad acceptance of violence." - Joseph Cunneen, History News Network"An important book ... The Saint and the Sultan is fascinating reading that will change the reader's concept of who St. Francis of Assisi was ... It's sure to stir a lot of conversation in religious circles." - Ed Wilkinson, editor-in-chief of The Tablet"Moses lively account of a little-known but significant chapter in the life of the popular saint of Assisi deserves a wide readership, resonating as it does with world events of our own time." - America Magazine "Paul Moses' fascinating account of St. Francis of Assisi's meeting with Sultan Malik al-Kamil in the midst of the Fifth Crusade not only details the historical record, puts it into context, and tries to strip it of centuries of tendentious distortions, it also documents how its true significance has recently come to blossom and bear fruit in Christian-Muslim relations. In his thoroughly researched and engaging book Moses uncovers and retells the true story of the Christian saint's audience with the Muslim ruler. - Meinrad Scherer-Emunds, Executive Editor, U.S. Catholic"The care and there is no other word for it love with which Moses has drawn the scene for us is really a prayer for ... peace." - Melinda Henneberger, editor-in-chief, PoliticsDaily"The Saint and the Sultan is a provocative, in-depth examination of that little-known but powerful meeting between St. Francis and the 13th century Islamic leader Sultan Malik al-

Kamil...Moses ... shows how the encounter between them is of great relevance to our divided world today." - Brooklyn Daily Eagle"In this sprightly and smart book, Paul Moses rediscovers an ancient moment in time that, in his telling, has timeless resonance." Jon Meacham, Author of American Lion: Andrew Jackson in the White House"This brilliant retelling of a largely forgottenchapter in the life of the most beloved of saints comes just when we need it most.TheSaint and the Sultanshows that faithleads to action, andthattrue holinesscan lead to actions thatprovoke, astonish and evenbaffle the world." James Martin, Author ofMy Life with the Saints"The Saint and the Sultan is a MUST read, supremely relevant today in relations between the Muslim world and the West . . . Paul Moses' outstanding and engaging portrayal offers a unique insight into Francis' overlooked counter-cultural role as a peacemaker during the Crusades for whom Christianity was a religion of peace not conflict." John L. Esposito, Georgetown University Professor of Religion International Affairs, and author of What Everyone Needs to Know about Islam"In The Saint and the Sultan Paul Moses delivers a fascinating lesson from a lost episode of history, and shows how critical it is to understanding today's global conflicts and the possibility of peace through religious dialogue. In the process, he also delivers a terrific story about a Christian saint everyone thought they knew Francis of Assisi and a Muslim world that few realize existed." David Gibson, author of The Coming Catholic Church and The Rule of Benedict"The Saint and the Sultan is an important and timely book. Paul Moses reminds us that the true agents of dialogue and constructive encounter must be courageous enough to talk as well as to listen, even opposing their own people, in the name of justice, dignity and love. Such religious voices are very much needed today, to help us follow the demanding path of peace while avoiding the traps of undignified wars." Tariq Ramadan, Oxford University Professor of Contemporary Islamic Studies, and author of In the Footsteps of the Prophet"Paul Moses' fascinating book throws new light on St. Francis' exemplary ministry of reconciliation. In the midst of widespread ignorance and war the efforts of St. Francis to build trust and overcome mutual antipathy speak powerfully to us today, when misunderstanding and conflict between Christians and Muslims threaten all who share our planet." Charles Kimball, author of When Religion Becomes Evil"The Saint and the Sultan sheds new light on spiritual vision' s power to transcend conflict. Through this book we learn not only about a remarkable set of events of medieval history, but also a lesson in peace making that is of the greatest importance for both those Westerners and Muslims who seek to create better understanding of each other across religious and cultural frontiers rather than simply vilifying one another."Seyyed Hossein Nasr, Professor of Islamic Studies at George Washington University, and author of The Heart of IslamAbout the AuthorPaul Moses, former Newsday city editor and senior religion writer, is a professor of journalism at Brooklyn College and the City University of New York Graduate School of Journalism. He was the lead writer on a Newsday team that won the Pulitzer Prize. He lives in Brooklyn with his wife, Maureen.Excerpt. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved.Part oneThe Road to DamiettaChapter One:Outfitted to KillThe young man who would one day be known as Saint Francis of Assisi was clad in armor and mounted on a warhorse. It is a difficult image to imagine. Artists have long shied away from putting a lance in hands better known for caressing birds. But as the extravagant son of one of his citys wealthiest merchants, Francis would have bedecked himself for battle in the finest style of the day as Assisi prepared to war with Perugia, its hated neighbor to the west. The citys increasingly powerful merchants had risen up against the local noblemen who often stood in their way, driving them to seek refuge in Perugia. It was now up to the merchants and their sons to defend the city against the belligerent Perugians, who were eager to use the dispute as an excuse to go to war with weaker Assisi.On that day in November 1202 when Pietro di Bernardones son mounted his steed and bade farewell to the women of Assisi, there could be little trace of the poverty he would later embody. Francis would have worn the coat of chain mail known as a hauberk as well as the chain hood, gauntlets, and leggings. (The plated armor that would later symbolize the era of chivalry was not yet in use at the start of the thirteenth century.) Since Francis dealt in fine fabrics in his fathers business and was very fond of fashion and chivalry, it is sure that he was arrayed to be the very image of knighthood, wearing a striking tunic of the best fabric over his armor.More to the point, he was outfitted to kill.Shops were closed and bells rang out as the troops paraded through the center of Assisi and out beyond the fortified city walls. The soldiers procession led past their beloved Cathedral of San Rufino, where Francis and so many others in Assisis army had been baptized. The beautiful Romanesque facade of the cathedral was adorned with a vision of the Apocalypse in carved stone figures of a crowned God between star and moon; a Madonna on her throne; and assorted writhing dragons and hideous reptilian birds. The doorway was guarded on each side by stone lions: one was mauling a ram, and the other eating a peasant alive, starting with the head. Eight-year-old Chiara Offreduccio, the future Saint Clare, grew up in a house on the piazza in front of San Rufino but was not home that day. Her aristocratic family had fled town to be safe from the likes of Francis and other merchants who had risen up in anger against the noblemen in a civil war.The cathedral held the remains of a martyr who was drowned in a river in 238 for refusing to sacrifice to pagan gods. The cult of Rufino, the first bishop of Assisi, had long inspired Assisians in their ancient rivalry with Perugia. One story Francis and his compatriots would have known concerned the cathedrals construction during the twelfth century. It was said that the Perugians ambushed some workers and seized a prized oak beam. When the beam proved to be so heavy that even a team of oxen couldnt budge it, the Perugians saw that the hand of God was against them and gave up.In the war against Perugia, oxen pulled the carroccio, a rolling altar that symbolized the wedding of war and religion in the minds of the

people. It was decked not in liturgical splendor but in the city colors of red and blue. It carried Assisis flag and a bell used to alert residents to be ready for battle. The carroccio epitomized the God and commune faith Francis was raised in, one that merged Christianity with political aims often contradictory to itsuch as fighting a war for economic advantage.The colorful altar followed an army of archers and foot soldiers, troops from the various craft guilds, and finally the cavaliers. Francis rode with the Compagnia dei Cavalieri, noblemen and merchants wealthy enough to afford horse and armor. History records no swoons, but at roughly age twenty-one, the rich, dark-eyed Francis was as eligible and dashing as a bachelor could be, a young man who sang poetic love songs from Provenal in a sonorous voice and who won friends not only with his natural charisma and leadership but also with his free-spending generosity. His parents scolded him, saying he spent so much money that he seemed to be the son of a prince. Francis, however, would not be deterred. He had bought into the enticing image of knighthoodliterallywith his fathers money.Francis was a devotee of chivalry; he loved the French troubadours songs and, from his birth, was steeped in their culture. His unusual name signaled that. He had been baptized Giovanni, after Saint John the Baptist. But his father, Pietro, on a business trip in France when his son was born, insisted on nicknaming the baby boy Francesco, or Francis. It was akin to calling a schoolboy Frenchy, as the British writer G. K. Chesterton put it. Pietro evidently was attached to the French.As Papas little Frenchman grew, he became well acquainted with the Chanson de Roland, a gory French epic romance in which the hot- tempered knight Roland and his uncle Charlemagne fought the Muslims in Spain and tried to convert them through warfare. (Although taken as a factual encounter, the story was fiction; Charlemagnes troops probably fought Christian Basques at Roncesvalles, not Muslims.) The French troubadours songs of King Arthur and his heroic band of knights also appealed to Franciss imagination, to the point that he would later envision his fledgling order of scruffy friars as a new kind of nonviolent band of brothers. These brothers of mine are my knights of the round table, he once exclaimed, adding that this would be a brotherhood not of swordplay but of prayer. Francis loved the courtesy and chivalry knights aspired to, even in later years when he rejected their violence.We should not assume, though, that Francis was acting out a childhood fantasy as he headed out to battle Perugia that autumn. He may simply have been under pressure from the culture in which he lived to satisfy an obligation. As former Assisi mayor Arnaldo Fortini wrote in 1959 in his comprehensive biography of Francis, La Nova Vita di San Francesco dAssisi, every man in the commune was expected to present himself at the city gate on the way to battle. Those who failed to do so were severely punished. Men who were wealthy enough to afford serving in the cavalry were expected to saddle up. For upwardly mobile urban merchants, it provided the exciting, albeit dangerous, opportunity to adopt the regalia and values of chivalry, including the codes of honor and loyalty. So for Francis, going to war may have been something more than a romantic lark. He had to do it to maintain his familys honor.Since oaths of loyalty were the foundation of feudal society, it was difficult for young men of the day to avoid being dragged into the constant violence. The historian Lauro Martines observed: Too often, in the thirteenth-century Italian city, doing the restrained or peaceful thing would have required the renunciation of self-identity. The historian was not referring to Francis, but that observation tells the story of his life. Without a radical changesuch as a decision to imitate Jesus as closely as possibleit would have been difficult for Francis to avoid the mayhem. But from all indications, the young Francis was sucked in by the seductive fictions of his time: he longed to be a knight.Larger historical forces also had conspired to put Francis on the road to battle. Holy Roman emperors from Germany had fought to seize control of fractious Italy, clashing with powerful medieval popes who wanted to expand or protect their landholdings. In 1174 merchants in Assisi tried to rid themselves of imperial rule. They failed, and Emperor Frederick assigned Conrad, a ruthless military commander, as Duke of Spoleto to clamp down on the unruly Italian cities. Conrad installed himself as the Count of Assisi in the Rocca Maggiore, a castle that loomed above Assisi. It soon served as a constant reminder of the emperors unwanted authority.In the fading days of the twelfth century, the chessboard began to change. On September 28, 1197, Emperor Henry VI, crowned Holy Roman emperor by the elderly Pope Celestine III, died of malaria at the age of thirty-two in the Sicilian port city of Messina, while preparing to go on Crusade. Celestine III died the following January. With the empire suddenly vulnerable, the College of Cardinals saw an opportunity and voted to name a brilliant and shrewd young canon lawyer, Cardinal Lothar of Segni, to the papacy. Pope Innocent III was destined to be the most powerful of the medieval popes.Educated in Rome, Paris, and Bologna, Innocent grew up in a noble Roman family. His uncle, who reigned as Pope Clement III from 1187 to 1191, had made him a cardinal at the age of twenty-nine. The speedy choice of the talented, energetic thirty-seven-year-old Innocent signaled that the empire was about to be struck.Innocent moved quickly to assert control, assuming power over Italian cities and in particular Conrads Duchy of Spoleto, which included Assisi. He ordered the duke to submit forthwith, and Conrad, knowing that he was outpowered, didnt have much choice. As negotiations continued, the duke went to bargain with papal legates in the city of Narni. Thats when the seething merchants of Assisitired of the years of abuse and angry that they still faced the prospect of having Conrad lord over them, even as he submitted to the popegot their opportunity to attack.They stormed Conrads hilltop fort, spurning papal representatives who tried to calm them, and battered it into a heap of stones. Most likely the teenaged Francis joined the assault.More castles fell as the angry merchants attacked the noblemen in their bastions. Then a street war broke out all around Francis and his family in the narrow confines of Assisi. We dont know for sure if Francis participated, but as the son of one of the

wealthiest merchants, it is likely that he did. Merchants destroyed one fortified house after another, burning them down. The noblemen fled their palaces. Such economic conflict between imperious overlords and a newly assertive merchant class dragged city after city into chaos and, in an era noted for its violence, the tight quarters made this intracity fighting especially dangerous. Rooftop catapults, crossbows, fire, and chains stretched across streets to down horsemen were among the weapons of choice.Girardo di Gislerio, an Assisi aristocrat, sought protection from the rampaging merchants in powerful Perugia. This neighboring city, built on a fifteen-hundred-foot hilltop across the Tiber River, had been battling one community after another to expand its influence. With its easily secured site on the heights overlooking a broad valley, Perugia was becoming the regional powerhouse.The Assisi nobleman presented himself to the Perugians on January 18, 1200. This act betrayed his city, but di Gislerio had little choice but to seek a new protector after his life in Assisi unraveled. He was lord of Sasso Rosso, one of the castles that the merchant-revolutionaries in Assisi had destroyed after dismantling Conrads fortress. He also happened to hold a key piece of property in an area called Collestrada. From their respective hilltops about thirteen miles apart, the communes of Perugia and Assisi both ruled over vast valleys with farms, orchards, rivers, and strategic roadways leading to Rome. The Tiber River divided their domains, with the exception of Collestrada, a disputed strip of land on Assisis side that Perugia claimed. Collestrada was a modest hill with a minor fortification at the top and a hospital for lepers below. The hill sloped gently down toward the Tiber, which could be crossed on the Ponte San Giovanni. Small as this hill was, Collestrada loomed like a mountain in the ancient rivalry between Perugia and Assisi.The combative Perugians were quick to see that by offering protection to the aggrieved noblemen from Assisi, they had the opportunity to justify war against their neighboring city, which their people had hated from one generation to the next. Acting under the honor-bound codes of chivalry, Perugia, a city that symbolized itself as a griffin, a mythical animal part eagle and part lion, took di Gislerio under its wings and demanded that Assisi rebuild the castle that its rabble had trashed and pay damages.Assisis honor was challenged, and amid fevered political speeches in the central piazza near the Bernardones home, its citizens refused to back down. The city walls were quickly built upsome historians have speculated this was when Francis learned the masonry skills he later used to rebuild derelict churchesand an army was organized. Perugian raiders fought skirmishes, chopped down fruit trees, and destroyed crops in the vulnerable hinterlands.These were the historical forces that armored Francis and put him on horseback late in the fall of 1202. He and his fellow soldiers took their places a half mile from the Perugians, who gathered on the other side of the Tiber River near the Ponte San Giovanni. The Assisians occupied high ground, seizing a small castle at the top of the Collestrada hill. In a triumphalist history of Perugia written nearly a century after the battle, one can still sense the Perugians sneers at a foe that had driven its most experienced fighting men into the enemy camp. The author of the Eulistea, poet Bonifazio da Verona, likened the Assisians to chickens.Bonifazio portrayed it as a long and intense battle that ended with the Perugians slaughtering the retreating Assisians. This is confirmed in the writings of Thomas of Celano. There was a great massacre in a war between the citizens of Perugia and Assisi, he wrote. The Perugians sent the blood-soaked Assisians fleeing for hiding places in the woods and in caves, then hunted them down like animals. The battlefield was covered with severed limbs, entrails, and mutilated heads, Bonifazio wrote.~There is no record of Franciss exploits on the battlefield, but our modern-day knowledge of the psychology of warfare tells us that it had to be a frightening experience. Strip away any inclination to romanticize combatespecially hand-to-hand medieval warfareand consider this data from The American Soldier, the U.S. Defense Departments official review of the troops performance in World War II. One-quarter of all U.S. soldiers in the war admitted losing control of their bladders, and an eighth acknowledged defecating in their pants, according to a study cited in the survey.Francis would likely have taken part in the gut-churning cavalry charge to open the battle. The terror that the young combatant felt in his first cavalry charge cannot be underestimated. Hand-to-hand combat is generally more traumatic than warfare fought from a distance, especially during retreats, when most of the killing is done as the pursuers pick off soldiers from behind. Any way you cut it, it had to be a stunningly traumatic event, to be defeated, to see your friends killed, to see your city defeated, said Lt. Col. David Grossman, a retired Army Ranger who became a professor of psychology and military science at West Point.If we are going to understand Franciss transition from warrior to peacemaker, we must consider the uncomfortable notion that Francis killed men on the battlefield. No one can say for sure if Francis slew the enemy, but it is likely he did. His eventual decision to begin a life of penance (which will be addressed in a later chapter) hints that he believed he had sinned seriously on the battlefield. There was a tradition in medieval times that demanded repentance from those who killed in combat. Penitential manuals, which advised confessors on the penance to impose for various sins, told priests to require forty days of atonement for knights who had slain an opponent at waran indication that the conduct was considered sinful. Similarly, bishops issued a directive after the Battle of Hastings in 1066 that soldiers must do a year of penance for each man they killed and seven years for those who killed in a war they fought for economic gain.This idea of repentance for the sins of war is reflected in the songs and writing of the day. The Four Sons of Aymon, an epic romance, told of how Aymons warrior son Rinaldo, having challenged Charlemagne and then later battled the Muslims in the East, returned home to do penance through an ascetic life. To atone for his sins on the battlefield, he labored on the cathedral of Cologne. Early in the thirteenth century the English chronicler Roger of Wendover created a fabulist scene in his work Flowers of History, about a soldier whose wanton

killing had led to his eternal torture in hell. Every time the knight spurred his horse, devils rose up to tear him limb from limb. Then his limbs were reassembled to begin the torture anew.In Franciss era, an influential confessors guide written by the English theologian Thomas of Chobham generally permitted knights to fight on orders of their lords, but told priests to question soldiers closely about their deeds in battle, particularly in an unjust war. In that case, he allowed knights to follow their lord into battle but wanted them to avoid drawing blood except in self-defense.Assisis cause hardly qualified as a just war, which at the time meant fighting to right a wrong. Assisians fought for commercial advantage, starting with their assault on a castle over the objections of papal legates who were trying to reach a peace treaty with a foe already in retreat. The Perugian demand for Assisi to make good on the damage its citizens caused was intended to provoke, but it didnt have to. In short, this was a war fought because of greed, hardly the sort of chivalrous cause sung by the troubadours. This was the use of force to seek short-term economic gain, to humiliate class enemies, and to save face. Furthermore, the rebellious Assisians were on perilous moral ground because they had elected a podest, or mayor, who had been excommunicated. The reason for his excommunication isnt known, but possibly the mayor was a member of the Cathar sect, a heretic religious movement that attacked the church over its wealth andmuch as Francis would somedaysought a return to the simplicity of apostolic times.When the Assisians refused to throw out the mayor, Gerard of Filiberti, Pope Innocent III barred them from receiving the Eucharist and other sacraments. Consider the morality of this war as it appeared in Franciss day: Assisians, deprived of the sacraments and led by an excommunicate, had begun the hostilities by destroying a castle over the objections of a papal envoy. Their enemy, closely aligned with the papacy, had stepped in to protect a respected citizen seeking help against a campaign of local street violence. Furthermore, it would have appeared obvious in that era that God had punished the Assisians by spurning their prayers and allowing their horrific defeat at Collestrada. For the soldier with a conscience, there was no glory in killing for such a cause, only sin.For the rest of his life, Francis was thoroughly convinced of his own sinfulness, much to the amazement of those who admired his holiness. He had made a decision to embark upon a life of penance, he wrote in his last days. The reason could well be that he had killed in behalf of an unjust cause, and knew it.While poorer men were hunted in the woods to be run through with swords and spears, Francis, who was left intact in that field of gore only because he was rich enough to be ransomed, was taken prisoner. He was dragged across the river and up to the commanding Perugian hilltop. His enemies deposited him in a damp dungeon, giving Francis plenty of time to reflect on the horrors he had seenand on the consequences his own actions would have on his soul.