

MATERIALITY ANALYSIS

The Crusader Bible is a famous remnant of the many pieces that were created as French Gothic Illuminations, a set of works that depicted a new style of Christian art. The manuscript, created ca. 1244 – 1254, contains only portions of the Old Testament: Genesis, Exodus, Joshua, Judges, Ruth, and Samuel. Despite its large size, typically attributed to books that were read aloud to others in the church rather than personal use, the book has several other features that imply that it was meant for rich families to read.

The Crusader Bible is also known as the picture book Bible as it is filled with many detailed illustrations; the original contained no captions or forms of writing. Blue ink is heavily emphasized in the background to show when the characters are outside or near a window. Occasionally, the illustrator uses a sandy yellow for the background possibly to present the characters outdoors in a desert-like setting, but, in some cases, the characters are still inside a building. When the illustrator does not use yellow or blue as the background colors, he uses red, which usually indicates the characters are inside a building. In almost all cases, some figures are depicted bowing down to another figure, sometimes Jesus, sometimes another ruler. This implies that red is often used as a background to indicate the presence of royalty. The distinct presence of these colors, as well as green, brown, black, pink, and white, indicate that the creators of the book had access to a wide variety of resources to create these inks.

However, the most unique ink used in the manuscript was blue ink, which was found to have been created from a material called ultramarine through several digital imaging techniques. Ultramarine was a very expensive material to use as it was extracted from a very rare mineral, lapis lazuli.^[1] Therefore, to extract and import enough of it to produce the supply needed for the blue ink seen would mean that the person creating the book had to be quite wealthy. Additionally, unless the book was to be donated to a temple or church, the people who owned it would have to be quite wealthy as well.



[An example of the ultramarine ink used in the manuscript. Fol. 14v Digital Image. Morgan Library Museum. N.p. n.d. Web. 16 Dec. 2015](#)

We can say for sure that the book was not donated to churches for religious leaders to use it to preach to others, however. The most obvious piece of evidence that suggests this is that the book was initially a picture book. To preach to the masses, priests would read out chapters and verses from the Bible they had to those who were present. As the *Crusader Bible* is composed of only pictures, it would make it impossible for anything to be preached.

Additionally, the book's actual contents give even more support to the fact that it was not used for preaching. As mentioned before, the *Crusader Bible* only contains images of portions of the Old Testament. In these images, the actions of several famous Israelites, such as Moses and King David especially, and other less known Israelites are depicted. However, the Old Testament is known as a time of instability – the Israelites are almost always at war. Consequently, the *Crusader Bible* contains mainly graphic images of rape, murder, and adultery. The reason preachers preached to those who attended the services was to provide them with God's instructions on how to live their lives in a fulfilling and righteous way. The majority of these instructions are found in Jesus' and his apostles' teachings in the New Testament. The Old Testament, on the other hand, was often used in the past to incite Christians into starting up wars with others (Seibert 15). It often gave them solace in knowing that their actions were not wrong and that their God supported them. At the time this was created, however, the kingdom was at relative peace. There was no need to urge common townsfolk to war. Consequently, the book was not meant for use in churches.

Now, if the book had not been created for the purpose that most Bibles are created for, why does it even exist? Given the amount and quality of work put into creating such a manuscript, including all the illustrious pictures it contains, the *Crusader Bible* could not have been simply set aside after being developed; it was designed for someone's personal use. Yet, the book is much too big – 15in. x 12in. – for any one person to carry along with them like a pocketbook. Therefore, we can gather that the book must have been used as a symbol of its owners' wealth and royalty, something to impress the audiences that the owner entertained.

However, for a book that was designed mainly for display, the *Crusader Bible* is quite worn down; it has been rebound several times since its creation in the 13th Century. In fact, it contains several captions in different languages – Latin, Persian, and Judeo-Persian – written in to mark the different locations the book had gone. The book had been passed through Italy, Ishafan, Cairo, London, and New York. Unfortunately, people had not always recognized the value this book had; one man had even had the chance to buy it for three shillings from an Arab in Cairo. Soon enough, one woman, Belle Greene, bought the book for the asking price without even bargaining, which surprised Fenwick, the previous owner of the book, who thought it was worth much less than what she was buying it for. Finally, Sydney Cockerell, a museum curator, notified Greene of the true value of the book and she donated it to Jack Morgan, a banker and finance executive, who eventually opened a library for it to reside in. From that day, the book has acquired the value we know it has today. The claim that the book was created for rich owners still remains true, however. Despite the intentions behind the making of the book, for a long time, no one truly appreciated its worth. Since it was not read in public, no one really knew what it was. Therefore, whoever was in possession of the book never understood how fortunate they were. The book's showing in the library finally gave it the value that had escaped the public's notice for centuries.

However, if we trace back the history of the book, we find that it was created in France, before its incredible journey through all the countries mentioned earlier. In fact, it is believed that the *Crusader Bible* was created for the king of France at the time, King Louis IX, also known as St. Louis IX, the "most Christian king of France". As his title shows, Louis IX had strong faith in his beliefs and even led others to battle in the Seventh and Eighth Crusades. Coincidentally, the date of creation and contents of the book and the timing of the 7th Crusade from 1248-1254 coincide with each other as well as Louis IX's strong beliefs. There is no conclusive evidence that the book was solely created for this purpose, but many do believe that these facts prove this is the case.

The Crusader Bible is a very rare artifact that took a while to be noticed for its achievement. Despite the vast amount of resources and time invested in the manuscript, not many rich families that the book might have been created for came into possession of it. Instead, because it was mostly unheard of, anyone could get a hold of it for a very cheap price. Today, it has finally reached the worth that the book's creators intended for it.

Works Cited

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"The Crusader Bible." *The Crusader Bible. The Morgan Library & Museum*, n.d. Web. 17 Oct. 2015.

^[1] "Technical Analysis of the Crusader Bible." *Technical Analysis of The Crusader Bible*. N.p., n.d. Web. 19 Oct. 2015

Reflection

As I read over my paper, I tried my hardest to find out what I could write about to expand my paper. I felt like I had covered all the areas on the *Crusader Bible* that would give me insight into the purpose of its creation. I had made several minor revisions, but the majority of my paper I left in. Finally, after much thought, I realized that I had missed a major point – what the content of the book was actually about. Upon doing some research, I found that the book had contained mainly portions of war and several instances of sin occurring in the Old Testament. However, I found that the soldiers were dressed in armor not was not suitable for their time. I decided to investigate why exactly this was so and found another treasure trove of information. This information led me to discover just who the main person the book was created for is believed to be – King Louis IX. This was very important to my argument as his status fulfilled all the points made in my argument before. He had access to plenty and expensive resources and his beliefs had essentially been written down onto paper. My discovery had led me to discover another aspect of the *Crusader Bible* that made my argument even stronger.