



# The Crusades

## Reference Library

# The Crusades Almanac

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Written by Michael J. O'Neal

Edited by Marcia Merryman Means and Neil Schlager

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## The Crusades: Almanac

Written by Michael J. O'Neal

Edited by Marcia Merryman Means and Neil Schlager

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## Reader's Guide

**T**he term “crusade” is commonly used today to refer to a dedicated, enthusiastic effort. It usually means a total, all-out attempt to correct a problem, such as combating drunk driving or saving an endangered species from extinction. When people use the word “crusade,” though, they may not recognize its distinctly religious meaning and history, even though they might embark on their crusade with religious enthusiasm.

The “Crusades” (with a capital “C”) were a series of military campaigns launched by the Christian countries of western Europe in the late eleventh century. During these battles tens of thousands of people went to war in the Middle East. Their goal was to recapture the Holy Land, or Palestine, from the Muslims and restore it to Christian control. The focus of the Crusaders was the holy city of Jerusalem, now part of the Jewish nation of Israel on the eastern shore of the Mediterranean Sea and still a holy site to three religions: Judaism, Islam, and Christianity. But the impact of the Crusades was felt throughout that region of the world and in Europe.

The First Crusade was launched in late 1095 and ended with the capture of Jerusalem in 1099. The last



Crusade took place in the late 1200s. Historians identify seven separate Crusades, although there were two other highly irregular Crusades that are not generally numbered. The exact number is not important, for the Crusades were a single extended conflict that was fought over the course of two centuries. As the military and diplomatic situation in Jerusalem and the surrounding areas changed, successive waves of European troops flowed into the region to capture a key city or to expel an opposing army that had recaptured the same city. Each of these waves represented one of the Crusades. After each Crusade, particularly the early ones, some of the European invaders remained in the Middle East to rule over Christian kingdoms they had established. Many others returned to their homelands. During the periods between each Crusade, there was relative peace between the warring parties, although tensions simmered beneath the surface.

The Muslim world was slow to respond to the Crusaders. For many decades Muslims were too busy fighting among themselves for power and influence in the Middle East and lands beyond to recognize the threat that the Crusaders posed. Only after they mounted organized resistance were they able to drive the Crusaders out of the Middle East. Hundreds of years later, many Muslims continue to regard westerners as “crusaders” bent on occupying their holy territory.

Historians continue to debate whether, from a European Christian perspective, the Crusades were a success. While the first ended successfully with the capture of Jerusalem, some of the later Crusades were military and political disasters, at least from the point of view of the Europeans. All historians agree, though, that the Crusades would have a profound effect on the development of European civilization. They opened trade routes and promoted commerce, they led to never-before-seen exploration and cultural contact, and they provided inspiration for poets and novelists. They also laid the groundwork for conflict and religious strife that continues in the twenty-first century.

## **Features and Format**

*The Crusades: Almanac* covers the Crusades in thirteen thematic chapters, each examining an element of the two-hundred-year time period. The volume takes the reader

through many aspects of this lengthy conflict. Included are chapters on the origins, history, and aftermath of the Crusades and on the holy city of Jerusalem and the land of Palestine as the focal site of three faiths. There are also profiles of the various groups of Muslims and Christians involved in the fight and descriptions of knights and the conduct of warfare. More than fifty black-and-white images illustrate the text. Numerous sidebars highlight interesting people and fascinating facts connected with the Crusades. The volume includes a glossary, a timeline, words to know, research and activity ideas, sources for further reading, and a subject index.

## The Crusades Reference Library

*The Crusades: Almanac* is only one component of a three-part U•X•L Crusades Reference Library. The set also includes one volume of biographies and another of primary source documents:

- *The Crusades: Biographies* presents the biographies of twenty-five men and women who lived at the time of the Crusades and experienced the battles or the effects of these wars. Profiled are famous figures, such as Richard the Lionheart, king of England; the Muslim warrior Saladin, and Saint Francis of Assisi, as well as lesser-known people, among them, the sultana of Egypt Shajarat al-Durr and the Arab soldier and writer Usamah ibn Munqidh.
- *The Crusades: Primary Sources* offers twenty-four full or excerpted documents, speeches, and literary works from the Crusades era. Included are “political” statements, such as Pope Urban II’s speech calling for the First Crusade. There are also accounts of battles and sieges as well as other events, such as the slaughter of Jews in Europe by Crusaders on their way to the Holy Land. Included are samplings from literature, among them, excerpts from the epic poem *The Song of Roland* and a chapter of the Koran. The Arabic view of the times are featured in such writings as a Muslim historian’s view of the Mongol invasions. The Byzantine perspective is seen, for example, in portions of *The Alexiad*, a biography of the emperor Alexius I Comnenus by his daughter.
- A cumulative index of all three titles in The Crusades Reference Library is also available.

## Acknowledgments

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Marcia Merryman Means

Neil Schlager

## About the Author

Michael J. O'Neal received a B.A. and a Ph.D. in English and Linguistics from Bowling Green State University in Ohio. After teaching at the college level for a decade, he became a freelance writer and book editor. This is his seventh book for younger readers. He lives in Idaho, where he enjoys horseback riding in the company of his wife and their two dogs.

## About the Editors

Marcia Merryman Means and Neil Schlager are managing editor and president, respectively, of Schlager Group Inc., an editorial services company with offices in Florida and Vermont. Schlager Group publications have won numerous honors, including four RUSA awards from the American Library Association, two Reference Books Bulletin/Booklist Editors' Choice awards, two New York Public Library Outstanding Reference awards, and two *CHOICE* awards.

## Comments and Suggestions

We welcome your comments on *The Crusades: Almanac* and suggestions for other topics in history to consider. Please write to Editors, *The Crusades: Almanac*, U•X•L, 27500 Drake Road, Farmington Hills, Michigan 48331-3535; call toll-free 800-877-4253; send faxes to 248-699-8097; or send e-mail via <http://www.galegroup.com>.

# Timeline of Events

- Tenth century B.C.E.** The Jewish Temple of Solomon is constructed in Jerusalem.
- 63 B.C.E.** Jerusalem falls under the control of the Roman Empire.
- 70 C.E.** Romans destroy the Second Temple of Solomon in Jerusalem.
- 313** Roman Emperor Constantine converts to Christianity.
- Fifth century** The breakup of the Roman Empire creates the Byzantine Empire in the East; Jerusalem falls into the hands of the Byzantines.
- c. 610** Muhammad experiences revelations that lead to the founding of Islam.
- 632** The death of Muhammad marks the beginning of a long period of Islamic civil war and separation of Islam into Sunni and Shiite sects.
- 638** The second Muslim caliph, Umar, captures the city of Jerusalem.



- 1054** The Great Schism divides the Christian church into two branches: the Roman Catholic Church in the West and the Eastern, or Greek, Orthodox Church in the East.
- 1071** Seljuk Turks seize control of Jerusalem; The Byzantine Empire is defeated by the Seljuks at the Battle of Manzikert.
- November 27, 1095** Pope Urban II preaches a sermon at Clermont, France, announcing the Crusades.
- 1095–99** The First Crusade is waged ending successfully with the capture of Jerusalem.
- 1144** The city of Edessa falls to Imad al-Din Zengi.
- March 31, 1146** Bernard of Clairvaux preaches the Second Crusade.
- 1148** Under Louis VII, the Crusader army is defeated at Damascus, ending the Second Crusade.
- 1153** The city of Ascalon falls to the Crusaders under Baldwin; the last major victory of the Crusaders.
- October 2, 1187** Jerusalem falls to Saladin.
- 1189** Frederick Barbarossa departs for the Holy Land, launching the Third Crusade.
- 1191** Richard the Lionheart of England and Philip of France arrive in the Holy Land.
- 1192–93** Richard and Saladin conclude the terms of a truce ending the Third Crusade.
- 1193** Saladin dies.
- 1199** Pope Innocent III calls the Fourth Crusade.
- June 1202** The Fourth Crusade departs for Venice, Italy.
- 1203** The Fourth Crusade departs Venice for Constantinople.
- April 1204** Constantinople is sacked.
- May 1204** Crusaders leave Constantinople.
- 1212** The Children’s Crusade is launched.
- 1218** The Fifth Crusade arrives in the Holy Land.

- 1218–19** Damietta, in Egypt, is besieged.
- July 24, 1221** The Fifth Crusade, south of Damietta, is defeated.
- September 8, 1221** The Crusaders return to Europe.
- August 1227** Frederick II departs on the Sixth Crusade.
- February 28, 1229** Frederick II and al-Malik sign the Treaty of Jaffa, restoring Jerusalem to the Christians and ending the Sixth Crusade.
- 1244** The Khwarismians overrun Jerusalem.
- 1248** King Louis IX leaves Europe for the Seventh Crusade.
- 1249** King Louis IX arrives in the Middle East and captures Damietta in Egypt.
- 1250** King Louis IX's forces are defeated by the Egyptians, ending the Seventh Crusade.
- 1258** Mongols capture Baghdad.
- 1260** Baybars defeats the Muslims at the Battle of Ain Jalut.
- May 18, 1291** The city of Acre falls.

# Words to Know

## A

**Allah:** The name of the deity in the Islamic faith.

## B

**Byzantine Empire:** The eastern half of the Roman Empire, whose capital was Byzantium, renamed Constantinople.

## C

**Caliph:** Any successors to Muhammad, the founder of Islam, and the spiritual and earthly leader of Islam.

**Caliphate:** The office of a caliph or the territory ruled by a caliph.

**Catapult:** A large sling used to hurl firebombs and anything else that could cause harm over the walls of a fortified castle or city.

**Cathars:** A sect, or subgroup, of Christians that appeared in southern France around the time of the Fifth Crusade



and who were declared heretics, or people who disagreed with established church beliefs, by the pope and persecuted.

***Chanson de Geste:*** A “song of deeds,” a form of heroic literature in medieval France.

**Chivalry:** From the French word *chevalerie*, meaning “skill in handling a horse,” a code of ethics, or moral values, and behavior expected of all knights, especially those who took part in the Crusades.

**Crusades:** The military expeditions launched from the late eleventh through the thirteenth centuries by Christian European countries to reclaim the Holy Lands of the Middle East.

## E

***Emir:*** A ruler, chief, or commander in an Islamic country or region.

## F

**Fatimids:** The name of the Egyptian Shiite Muslim dynasty that ruled Jerusalem.

**Feudalism:** The social and economic system that existed in Europe during the Middle Ages; refers primarily to the shared duties of noble landowners, the peasants who worked on their estates, and the knights who protected them.

***Franj:*** The Muslim word for Latin Christians, derived from the word “Frank” because large numbers of the Crusaders were Frankish, or French.

***Franjistan:*** The Muslim term for the homeland of the Franj, or the Franks.

**Frank:** Term often used to refer generally to the Crusaders, whatever their national origin, because many were from the Frankish empire, or France.

## G

**Genocide:** The mass slaughter of a religious, national, racial, or ethnic group.

**Great Schism:** The 1054 breakup of the Christian church into the Roman Catholic Church in the West and the Eastern Orthodox Church in the East.

## H

**Holocaust:** The name usually given to the mass slaughter of Jews by the German Nazis before and during World War II (1939–45); used often to refer to any genocide.

**Holy Land:** Palestine, largely modern-day Israel; from a European Christian perspective, the sites of events in the life of Jesus Christ, including the Holy Sepulchre, or Christ's tomb.

## I

**Islam:** Founded in the seventh century by Muhammad, the religion practiced by Muslims and the dominant religion of the Middle East; means "submission" to the will of Allah, or God. In older texts, often called "Muhammadanism," but this word is considered offensive by Muslims.

## K

**Knight:** From the Anglo-Saxon word *cniht*, meaning "boy," a young man-at-arms who owed allegiance to his feudal lord.

**Koran:** Often spelled Qur'an, the sacred scripture, or holy book, of the Islamic faith.

## L

**Levant:** From the French word *lever*, meaning "to rise" (referring to the rising of the Sun in the East), a term that indicates the countries around the eastern Mediterranean Sea.

## M

**Mamluks:** The rulers of Egypt at the end of the Crusades.

**Medieval:** Term used for the Middle Ages.

**Middle Ages:** The period of European history from about 500, when the Roman Empire collapsed, to about 1500; sometimes called the Dark Ages.

**Minnesängers (MINN-uh-seng-erz):** German poet-singers of the Middle Ages who sang of courtly love.

**Mongols:** A nomadic tribe from Asia that overran much of the Middle East during the thirteenth century.

**Muslim:** A member of the Islamic faith.

## N

**Normans:** People from Normandy, a region in France; often used to refer to all French knights during the Crusades.

## O

**Outremer (oo-tre-MARE):** French term, meaning “the land overseas,” for the Latin Christian colonies established after the First Crusade.

## P

**Patriarch:** A high-ranking cleric, or clergyman, of the Eastern Orthodox Church.

## R

**Regent:** A person who rules a kingdom on behalf of a monarch who is disabled, absent, or, as was usually the case, a child.

**Relic:** Any object associated with Jesus Christ or with one of the saints, most important among them being pieces of the cross on which Christ was crucified.

## S

- Saracen:** European word for Muslims during the Crusades; a term probably derived from the Arabic *Sharkeyn*, meaning “eastern peoples.”
- Seljuk:** A large, warlike clan of Turks that overran much of the Byzantine Empire and seized control of Jerusalem in 1071.
- Shiite:** A sect, or subgroup, of Islam that disagrees with the mainstream Muslims.
- Siege:** A military tactic of surrounding a fortified town or castle with the goal of cutting it off from outside aid and, over time, starving the inhabitants into surrender.
- Sultan:** An Arabic ruler, usually of a local region called a sultanate.
- Sunni:** The major sect, or subgroup, of the Islamic faith.

## T

- Troubadours:** Poet-singers of medieval Europe, especially southern France, northern Italy, and northern Spain.
- Trouvères (Troo-VAIR):** Poet-singers of northern medieval France.

## V

- Vassal:** A feudal tenant of a lord.

## Research and Activity Ideas

The following research and activity ideas are intended to offer suggestions for complementing social studies and history curricula; to trigger additional ideas for enhancing learning; and to provide cross-disciplinary projects for library and classroom use.

**Building a Model:** Conduct further research about an event during the Crusades, such as a particular battle or siege. An example might be the siege of Antioch during the First Crusade or the siege of Acre in 1291. Then build a scale model that would show the city, the arrangement of the troops on both sides, and other significant events during the battle or siege. Another possibility is to conduct further research into the architecture of castles during the Middle Ages and build a scale model of a castle that might have been found in the Middle East at the time of the Crusades. Or you might build a model of a siege engine that was used to hurl missiles at castles and fortified cities during the Crusades. Be prepared to explain to your classmates how the siege engine works.

**Maps:** Frequently, the course of a battle during the Crusades turned on characteristics of the geography of the



place where the battle was fought. For example, a force of soldiers might have had to travel through a narrow mountain pass, where they met the danger of ambush, or surprise attack, by opposing forces. In the desert climate of the Middle East, Crusaders often faced great hardship because of the heat and lack of water, so they took different routes to their objective that would take them over cooler mountain passes. Conduct research on this aspect of the Crusades and develop a map showing the Crusaders' route during a particular battle campaign. Pretend that you are one of the military commanders planning the movement of your forces and draw the map that you would give to your troops.

**Poetry:** Imagine that you are an eyewitness to one of the key events of the Crusades. Examples might be the siege of Antioch or the capture of Jerusalem during the First Crusade or one of the battles between Richard I and Saladin. Write a poem that expresses how the event might have appeared to you. You might read some examples of *chansons de geste*, or "songs of deeds," and attempt to write your poem in language that sounds like it might have been used in such a poem. Or imagine that you are one of the Crusaders or a Muslim fighter. Write a letter home, describing the event to your family or perhaps to a noble in Europe or a Muslim religious leader.

**What If ... ?:** Historians like to imagine what might have happened if events had taken a different course. Picture how the world might be different today if the Crusades had not taken place. Or imagine that a specific event of the Crusades had turned out differently. For example, what would have happened if Tancred had not found the large wooden timbers that the Crusaders used to build towers to get over the walls of Jerusalem in 1099? (Remember that an Egyptian army was on its way to help defend the city but did not arrive in time.) Write a short paper in which you consider how things might have turned out differently.

**How Do Historians Know?:** The events of the Crusades took place between about seven hundred and nine hundred years ago. Participants did not keep the kinds of accurate records that might be kept today, and there were no journalists who covered the Crusades on a day-to-basis. How do historians today know what really happened? What documents do they rely on? Conduct research into these questions. Compile a list

of sources that historians use. Examples might include the accounts of William of Tyre, an archbishop and historian who lived in the Holy Land; Raymond of Agiles, a French chronicler of the Crusades; or Anna Comnena, the daughter of the Byzantine emperor at the time of the First Crusade.

**Politics:** Many of the events of the Crusades were influenced by politics. The kingdoms that the Crusaders established in the Middle East were no different from any other kingdoms at the time. People competed for power, influence, territory, and money. There were many arguments over who would rule particular cities, including Jerusalem. In many cases, queens played a central role. Although at that time a queen could not rule by herself, the man she married would become king, so marriages were often political arrangements. Muslims, too, dealt with political infighting, or fighting between different but related groups, and were not always unified in their response to the Crusades. Conduct research into this aspect of the Crusades and write a short paper about the influence of politics on events.

**The Art of War:** Imagine that you are a “photojournalist” sent to cover the Crusades. Of course, the camera had not yet been invented, so you have to record your impressions in sketches and drawings. Create a series of such drawings for a particular event during the Crusades. What would your drawings emphasize? Would they try to persuade your viewers back in Europe that the Crusaders were noble and brave? Or would they focus on the brutality and violence of the Crusades? Or imagine that you were sent by one of the popes or by a European or Islamic ruler to “cover” a Crusade. Write the report that you would send home. Would your report be an honest account of the events that took place? Or would you think it necessary to tell the person to whom you are writing what you think he or she wants to hear?

**Book Report:** Many books have been written about the Crusades. Some study the Crusades as a whole, others focus on one of the Crusades, and still others look at an aspect of the Crusades, such their impact on Jewish people the part played by women, or the role of knightly orders, such as the Knights Templars and the Knights Hospitallers. Go to your library and find such a book that interests you. Write a report that you can share with your classmates. What did you learn about the Cru-

sades that you did not know? Or read a novel or other work of literature that has a Crusade setting. An example might be Sir Walter Scott's novel *The Talisman*. How does the author use events of the Crusades in the work of literature?

**History from the Bottom Up:** Much of history, as it is studied at present, focuses on events from the perspective of kings, popes, generals, and the nobility. This view of history, from the top down, looks at the broad sweep of events. Another approach to history, though, is to look at it from the viewpoint of people who are not famous: common foot soldiers, people along the route that the Crusaders followed to the Holy Land (including European Jews), servants and laborers (for example, washerwomen or blacksmiths) who accompanied the crusading armies, wives who went on Crusade with their husbands, and the like. Write an account of one of the Crusades, or one event during the Crusades, from this "bottom-up" perspective.

**The Crusades on the World Wide Web:** The Internet contains many sites devoted to the Crusades or some aspect of the Crusades. Conduct Internet research on a topic that interests you and write a student guide to Crusade resources on the Web. You might focus on one topic, for example, sites devoted to the Knights Templars or those devoted to studies of the Crusades from an Islamic perspective. Or create a "virtual museum," that is, an online museum, of sites that contain images associated with the Crusades: Jerusalem (including sights that pilgrims might have visited), Crusader castles, Islamic-influenced buildings that still survive in Spain, and weapons and other objects that might be found in a real museum. Write a "museum guide" that would conduct viewers through these Internet sites.

**Biographies:** Many of the historical figures who took part in the Crusades were interesting and colorful figures. Examples include King Richard I of England, Frederick II of the Holy Roman Empire, and the Muslim general Saladin. Conduct research into the life of one of these figures and write a brief report. Or you might research the life of an important background figure, such as one of the popes who called a Crusade (for example, Urban II or Innocent III). What impact did this person have on the Crusades? What impact did the Crusades have on this person's life?

**The Reconciliation Walk:** On July 15, 1999, the nine hundredth anniversary of the capture of Jerusalem during the First Crusade, a Reconciliation Walk was held in the city. The goal of this walk was to try to acknowledge the mistakes of the Crusades and bring Christians, Muslims, and Jews together. Conduct research into the Reconciliation Walk. Who led the effort? Describe the event. Do you think such an event accomplished its goal? Write a brief report and share it with your classmates.

# Geographical Worlds at the Time of the Crusades

1

**O**ne thousand years ago the nations and peoples of Europe, western Asia, and the Middle East held differing cultural and religious beliefs. For hundreds of years tensions and conflicts had divided these clusters of nations. Tensions eventually came to a boiling point in November 1095, when the pope of the Catholic Church, Urban II, called for a Crusade to the Middle Eastern nation of Palestine to reclaim for Christianity the holy city of Jerusalem.

## The nations and peoples of Europe, western Asia, and the Middle East

A full understanding of the Crusades requires an understanding of these different cultural groups. Each had its own history, and all shared an interest in the holy places in and around Jerusalem. The groups that would play a role in the Crusades were the Europeans, the peoples of the Byzantine Empire, the followers of the religion of Islam, and the Jews.

## **Europe in 1095**

Despite their many differences, the countries of Europe, also known as the “West,” shared a belief in Christianity. The version of Christianity that dominated Europe was that of the Catholic Church, centered in Rome. The leader of the Christian church was the pope, who often wielded more power than the kings of Europe, or at least tried to. Because the peoples of Europe spoke so many different languages, the Christian church conducted its affairs in Latin. Latin was the language of the old Roman Empire that had ruled these nations for centuries. It thus became the common language not only of Christian priests, monks, and bishops but also of nearly all educated people in Europe, who generally received their education through the church. Accordingly, this group of European countries was often referred to as “Latin Christendom.” It included such nations as England, Scotland, Ireland, France, Germany, Italy, and northern Spain as well as the countries of Scandinavia and the “Low Countries,” such as Holland.

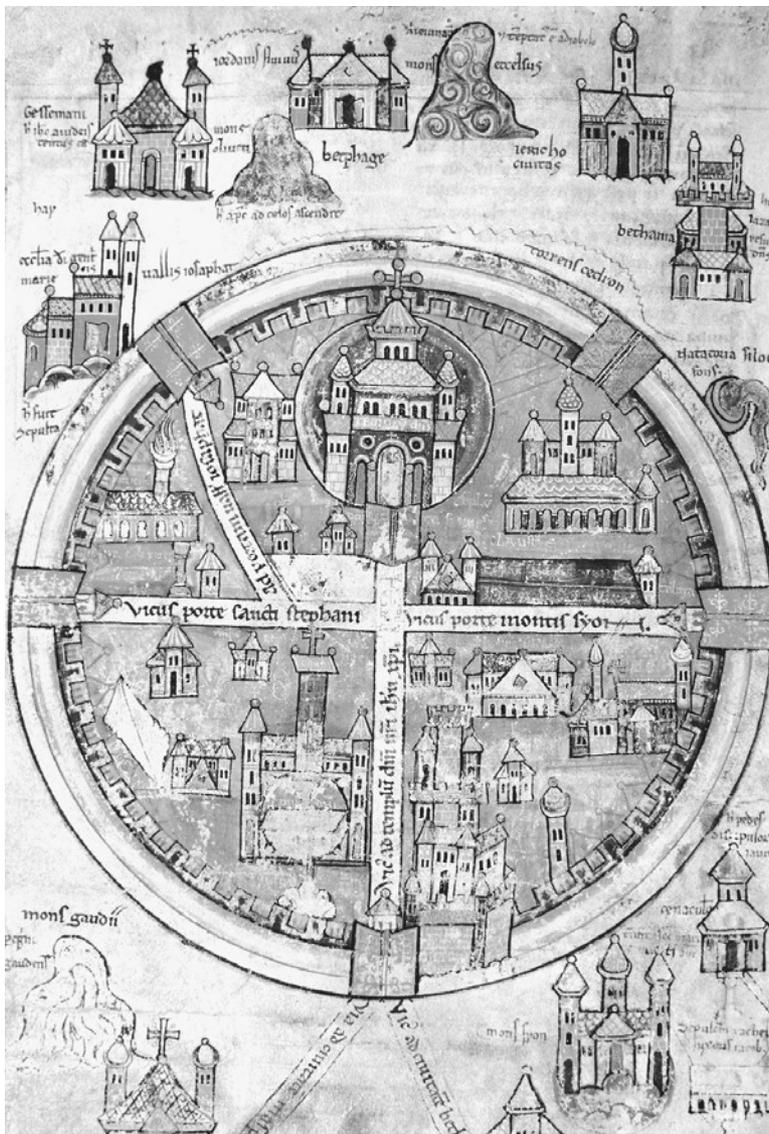
## **The Byzantine Empire**

A second major cultural-religious center was the Byzantine Empire. This empire was formed out of the remains of the Roman Empire in the East. The name comes from the empire’s ancient capital city, Byzantium, although the city’s name was later changed to Constantinople (present-day Istanbul, in Turkey). Because it was more unified, this empire, which stretched from portions of Italy through southeastern Europe and into western Asia, was more powerful than the separate and often quarrelsome nations of the West.

Like the West, the Byzantine Empire was Christian, although the version of Christianity practiced in this region was called Eastern Orthodox or, frequently, Greek Orthodox. The primary language of the church was Greek, but many other languages were used locally. Unlike the nations of the West, which fell into a period of backwardness and turmoil with the end of the Roman Empire, the East developed a rich and complex culture and amassed a great deal of wealth.

## **Islam**

A third major cultural group formed around the religion called Islam, members of which are called Muslims. In



A manuscript illumination from Robert the Monk's "Chronicle of the Crusades" showing a medieval map of the city of Jerusalem. Jerusalem is considered a holy city for the Jews, the Christians, and the Muslims. ©Gianni Dagli Orti/Corbis. Reproduced by permission.

1095 Islam was the dominant religion in the countries of the Middle East as well as in parts of Asia. (Europeans called this region the Middle East to distinguish it from the countries of Asia, which were farther away and therefore called the Far East.) The Middle East extends roughly from northeastern Africa through the Arabian Peninsula and into western Asia. At the time of the Crusades it included such countries as Persia, Syria, Palestine, and Egypt.

From its beginnings in the seventh century, the Islamic world expanded from its roots in the city of Mecca (in today's Saudi Arabia) to include much of North Africa, Arabia, western Asia, and even parts of Europe. Also converting to Islam were the peoples of central Asia, whom the Byzantines referred to as Turks. The Turks in time became powerful militarily, and eventually they overran many of the other Muslim nations, including Syria and Persia.

## **The Jews**

A final group that played a role in the Crusades was the Jews. Unlike Muslims and Christians (both Latin Christians and Eastern Orthodox Christians), the Jews did not have a homeland in any specific country or group of countries. They were widely spread throughout all three regions and preserved their cultural identity through ancient religious practices and a common language, Hebrew. Because they often remained separate from the cultures surrounding them, and because those cultures saw them as different, Jews were often subjected to harsh persecution (prejudice), particularly in the West.

## **Claimants to the Holy Land**

The historical journey that these cultural and religious groups followed and that eventually brought them into conflict before and during the Crusades was long and complex. It started during the early history of Judaism and continued through the first centuries of the Christian era.

## **Judaism**

From a historical perspective, the first seeds of the Crusades were sown as far back as the tenth century B.C.E. (Before the Common Era). At that time the Israelites, or the Jews, under the leadership of the Old Testament king Solomon, constructed a magnificent temple (a place of worship for Jews) in the city of Jerusalem. In a room called the Holy of Holies, the temple housed the Ark of the Covenant. The ark contained the tablets on which the Ten Commandments, delivered to the Old Testament prophet Moses, were

carved. Within the temple was a bare rock called the Foundation Stone. According to the Old Testament, Abraham, the biblical father of the nation of Israel, was prepared to sacrifice his son, Isaac, to God on this stone. As God's "chosen people," the Jews regarded both the temple and the city of Jerusalem as their most holy site and the center of their faith.

The Temple of Solomon survived for four hundred years. Then, in 586 B.C.E., it was destroyed by the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar, who drove the Jews into exile. The Jews returned to Jerusalem and rebuilt the temple in 515 B.C.E., and this "Second Temple" survived until C.E. 70. By this time, though, two new claimants to Jerusalem were on the scene.

## The Roman Empire

One set of claimants was the Romans. The Roman Empire lasted for about five centuries. It began in 27 B.C.E., after years of civil war, when the Roman senate confirmed Gaius Octavius as the sole emperor. The empire had its roots much earlier, however. During the period historians call the Roman Republic, which dated from 527 to 509 B.C.E., Rome had taken over other parts of Italy and nearby territories. Rome expanded greatly during the period of the empire. In time, it dominated the entire area around the Mediterranean Sea, including much of Europe.

In 63 B.C.E. Jerusalem and the surrounding nation of Palestine fell under the control of Rome. In the decades that followed, life under Roman rule became increasingly difficult for Jews, who were persecuted and forced to pay high taxes to Rome. At about the beginning of the Common Era, a radical Jewish group known as the Zealots formed. In C.E. 66 the Zealots launched a revolt against Rome, known in Jewish history as the Great Revolt. The revolt ended in the year 70,



### A Note on Dates

In referring to dates, historians distinguish between the Common Era, beginning with the year 1, and the time before year 1, or Before the Common Era. Many texts use the initials A.D., which stands for the Latin expression *anno Domini*, or "the year of our Lord," in referring to the Common Era. They use B.C., which means "before Christ," to refer to the era before the birth of Christ. Many modern writers, however, believe that these designations seem to exclude people who are not Christian, so they prefer designations referring to the Common Era. Thus, instead of A.D. they use C.E., and instead of B.C. they use B.C.E. By convention, B.C.E. is placed after the year, while C.E. is placed before the year.

when Roman troops laid siege to Jerusalem, massacred the Jews, and destroyed the Second Temple. In 132 the Romans built on the site their own temple to their god Jupiter.

## **Christianity**

The other new group that took an interest in Jerusalem in the first century was the early Christian church. Early Christianity, which formed around the teachings of Jesus Christ, began as a sect of Judaism and shared many of its beliefs. But as time went on Christians separated themselves from Jewish traditions and practices. The Christian church laid claim to Jerusalem as its holy city, for it was the site of many of the key events in the life of Christ. (For this reason, the region around Jerusalem and Palestine is often called the Holy Land.) In particular, it was the site of the Holy Sepulchre, the tomb of Christ. Rescuing the tomb of Christ from the Muslims would become a key motivator for many of the Crusaders hundreds of years later.

As Christianity spread and its influence over the people in the region grew, it became more and more of a threat to Rome, which practiced a pagan religion, worshiping many gods. For three centuries Christians suffered from persecution at the hands of the Romans. This persecution ended abruptly when the Roman emperor Constantine I, who ruled from 306 to 337, could see that Christianity was gaining in power and influence. In 313 he converted to Christianity, declared it the official religion of the empire, and ruled from the eastern capital of Byzantium, which he renamed Constantinople in his own honor. Some historians believe that his conversion was sincere; others believe that he converted only to retain power over the empire. In 391 and 392 the emperor Theodosius I made Christianity the sole legal religion in the empire. These events gave Christians more control over Jerusalem and enabled Christianity to spread throughout the region.

## **The collapse of the Roman Empire**

By the fifth century the Roman Empire's boundaries stretched from England in the northwest across Europe and into Asia. Such a large empire was expensive to maintain and

hard to control and defend. Communication over these long distances was difficult, and the economic demands of ruling such a large empire weakened Rome.

In the fifth century the Roman Empire finally collapsed. The last ruler of a united Roman Empire was Theodosius I, who reigned from 379 to 395. Just before his death in 395, he divided control of the empire between his two sons, and at this point the empire was united in name only. The western realms continued to be ruled by the emperor in Rome, the capital city, but the throne was weakened by a series of child emperors over the next several decades. The eastern part, called the Byzantine Empire, was ruled by an emperor in the capital city of Constantinople. No emperor was ever again able to control both the eastern and western halves.

In the years that followed this division, the empire in the West was almost immediately attacked and overrun by warlike tribes, including the Vikings from the north and various Germanic tribes from the east. These invasions further weakened the western empire. In 476, when the Germanic warlord Odovacar defeated the last western emperor, the Roman senate declined to name a new emperor. In this way, the Roman Empire ceased to exist in the countries of western Europe.

## **Europe before the Crusades**

What followed was a period of turmoil and warfare but also a period when the individual nations of Europe began to unify and grow stronger. Many of these nations, though, were not really nations. Rather, they were loosely connected federations of provinces and regions that shared common languages and cultures but lacked a sense of national identity and purpose. That would begin to change in the centuries preceding the Crusades.

### **The Frankish kingdom**

Among the most important of these nations was the Frankish kingdom (known today as France) in the region Rome had called Gaul. After the Romans withdrew, the

Frankish kingdom was relatively weak. By the eighth century it included a number of loosely related provinces, including Aquitaine, Burgundy, and large parts of modern-day Germany. But Charles Martel, who reigned as king from 714 to 741, and his son Pepin the Short, who reigned from 741 to 768, formed strong alliances with the Frankish nobles and the church in Rome, and the empire began to become stabler.

The kingdom blossomed under Pepin's son, Charles the Great, or Charlemagne, who ruled from 768 to 814. Charlemagne, a skilled military commander and beloved leader, expanded the boundaries of the kingdom. Under Charlemagne the kingdom dominated western Europe and became a center of learning and culture, as he attracted scholars and artists to his court. Beginning in the tenth century further unification took place under the so-called Capetian kings of France, named after the first, Hugh Capet. He and his successors, especially King Louis VI ("Louis the Fat"), subdued many of the less important nobles who tried to defy them, claimed and enforced a hereditary (usually passed down from father to son) right to the throne, and turned the Frankish kingdom into a major nation-state.

### **The Viking and French invaders**

Meanwhile, in the north, the Vikings from the Scandinavian countries of Denmark, Norway, and Sweden joined the Germanic invasions of Europe in the fifth century. Because of the cold climate of extreme northern Europe, there was not enough farmland to support the population, so this southward migration resumed in full force in the ninth and tenth centuries. The Vikings began to raid England in 787, and in 841 they plundered London, starting an era of conquest of the British Isles. Throughout the ninth century the "Northmen" continued to conduct raids down the Atlantic coast in Normandy (a coastal region of France), around the coastline of the Iberian Peninsula (Spain and Portugal), and into the Mediterranean Sea. They also expanded into the Slavic regions of eastern Europe. While the Scandinavians initially were not as strongly Christian as the rest of Europe, many eventually converted to the Christian faith.



## Charlemagne (742–814)

While the reign of Charlemagne, or Charles the Great, predated the Crusades by more than two centuries, he was an important background figure. His life contributed to the ideology, or philosophy, of crusading. For centuries he remained a hero whom many Christian Crusaders strove to imitate.

Charlemagne ruled as king for forty-six years. He was important politically because he gave form to the Frankish kingdom. He was a popular hero and a skilled commander, well loved by his soldiers. In *A History of Europe*, historian H. A. L. Fisher writes:

*To his Frankish warriors he was the ideal chief, tall and stout, animated and commanding, with flashing blue eyes and aquiline nose, a mighty hunter before the Lord. That he loved the old Frankish songs, used Frankish speech, and affected the traditional costume of his race—the high-laced boots, the cross-gartered scarlet hose, the linen tunic, and square mantle of white or blue—that he was simple in his needs, and sparing in food and drink were ingratiating features in a rich and wholesome character.*

During his reign, Charlemagne fought for Christianity against the Danes, the Lombards, the Saxons, the Slavs, the Muslims in Spain, and others. In doing so, he helped cement the position of the Christian church, making it a stabler and more powerful institution throughout Europe. In recognition of his role as a fighter for Christianity, the patriarch of Jerusalem (that is, the chief Greek Orthodox cleric) sent him the keys to the holy places in the city, telling Charlemagne that he relied on the king for their defense. This, plus his many victories over enemies of the Christian church, planted a seed that would grow into the Crusades—the belief that it was God’s will that Christendom extend its realm and that Europe might one day be called on to rescue the holy city. The legends that surrounded Charlemagne contributed to a way of thinking. In the minds of many Christians, the most heroic person imaginable was a Christian knight bearing the cross and willing to fight and die to protect the faith from nonbelievers.

In England, King Alfred the Great, who ruled from 871 to 899, organized an army and turned back the Danes. Then, in 1066, Duke William of Normandy led an invasion of England—the Norman Conquest—that forever changed the face of the island nation. His successors, Kings Henry I and II, accomplished in England what Charlemagne and the Capetians had accomplished in France. They were strong rulers who turned a collection of dukedoms into a nation-state with more of a national identity. The relationship be-

tween England and France, though, was complex. These English kings held as part of their domain large portions of western France. For this reason, England and France were in a near-perpetual state of warfare.

## **The Holy Roman Empire**

A final western power that would play a role in the Crusades was the Holy Roman Empire. This empire was formed in 962 when the German king Otto I was crowned. It lasted until 1806, when the final emperor, Francis II, gave up his title. The Holy Roman Empire had been founded by Charlemagne, who believed that the Roman Empire had not truly ended in the fifth century but rather was suspended. He and his followers, as well as the pope, wanted to restore it to power, so in 800 Pope Leo III crowned Charlemagne as the new Roman emperor.

For the next century and a half, the title was more of a personal honor and carried little political authority. That changed with the coronation of Otto, and for the next nine hundred years the Holy Roman Emperor ruled over a kingdom that consisted largely of Germany but also, at various times, of Austria, Bohemia, Moravia, part of northern Italy, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Switzerland. The emperor was always a German king who, technically, was elected by the German princes and had to be confirmed by the pope. In time, the crown became hereditary.

The political justification for the formation of the empire was that just as the pope represented God in spiritual affairs, the emperor represented God in temporal (earthly) affairs. The emperor, therefore, claimed to be the supreme monarch, or ruler, of all of Christendom. While the Holy Roman Emperor held considerable power, he was never recognized as a supreme temporal ruler of all the Christian nations. Christian countries such as England, France, Denmark, Poland, Sweden, Spain, and others never fell within the boundaries of the empire. One Holy Roman Emperor, Frederick I, or Frederick Barbarossa (“Red Beard”), would lead an army of German knights during the Third Crusade. At the center of the Sixth Crusade was his grandson, Frederick II, who negotiated with the Muslims and won Jerusalem back for Christendom—at least briefly (see “The Third Crusade” and “The Sixth Crusade” in Chapter 6).

In contrast to western and northern Europe, the Byzantine Empire not only survived the breakup of the Roman Empire but also, in the centuries that followed, grew in power and influence. Constantinople became a major world capital, the center of great wealth, learning, and cultural development. Trade flourished from the empire's port cities, especially the capital itself, and the surviving architecture and other artifacts (the man-made objects of a civilization) from the region show its past as a stable, prosperous empire.

## Religious separation of East and West

In time the political separation of the eastern and western parts of the Roman Empire led to religious separation as well. After the collapse of the Roman Empire, both parts of the empire remained Christian. In the West the withdrawal of the Romans left behind a power void that was filled by the church. Without strong temporal rulers or fully unified nations, the church became, in effect, the ruler of much of Europe. The concept of a Christian state, often referred to by the Latin phrase *Res Publica Christiana*, was widely accepted. While the separate nations of Europe warred with one another in the centuries that followed, the Christian church became the dominant social, cultural, educational, and political institution.

In the East, the church fell under the authority of the Byzantine emperor. In the centuries that followed, tensions between the two branches of Christianity emerged. Part of the division was cultural. As noted earlier, the West relied on Latin, not just in the church but also in law, government, and learning. The Latin language enabled people educated by the church to communicate with one another, even if they came from different countries or spoke different dialects of the same language. In the East, by contrast, church affairs were conducted primarily in Greek and other local languages. Not speaking the same language, the two branches of the church drifted further and further apart.

By this time, too, the Byzantine Empire had surpassed the West in power, learning, and influence. Without the support of Rome, western Europe plunged into a period of backwardness, leading many historians to refer to the

Middle Ages in Europe as the Dark Ages. For this reason, the Byzantines tended to look down their noses at the Romans. As Terry Jones and Alan Ereira quote in *Crusades*, at one time a high-ranking member of the eastern church told a Roman clergyman that Rome was home to “vile slaves, fishermen, confectioners [candy makers], poulterers [dealers in poultry and game birds], bastards [children born out of wedlock], plebeians [lower classes], and underlings [inferior commoners]”—in other words, that they were all common, lower-class laborers and shopkeepers. For their part, Europeans tended to share the view of one bishop (also quoted by Jones and Ereira) who had visited Constantinople and found the inhabitants “soft, effeminate, long-sleeved, jewelled and begowned liars, eunuchs [castrated men] and idlers [lazy people]”—that is, they were all weak, lazy, unmanly people who lounged about in fancy clothing. In this climate of distrust and mutual scorn, the two branches of the church competed fiercely over converts to the faith, particularly among the Slavic peoples of eastern Europe. Rome also resented Byzantine churches in its own backyard in southern Italy.

## The Great Schism

Finally, in 1054, these tensions reached a snapping point. The eastern branch of the church refused to recognize the authority of the pope in Rome. In response, the pope excommunicated, or expelled, one of the highest-ranking clergymen of the eastern church. (This excommunication was eventually lifted, but not until 1965.) The clergyman had actually been provoking the division by declaring to the other patriarchs (leaders of the eastern church) that supporters of the Roman church were heretics, or believers in false doctrine.

The result was the Great Schism (or split), creating two separate Christian churches. In the West was the Roman Catholic, or sometimes Latin, Church. In the Byzantine Empire was the Eastern, or often Greek, Orthodox Church. In time, various nations developed their own brand of Eastern Orthodoxy, so reference is made to, for example, Russian Orthodox or Armenian Orthodox Christians.

It is important to remember that this division did not lead to bitterness or permanent ill feeling. Despite their differences, the eastern and western churches, like quarreling siblings, retained a kinship with each other that would play a role in the Crusades, particularly the First Crusade, when East and West were initially allies in the fight against the Turkish Muslims. In the meantime, however, Jerusalem fell under the control of the Christian Byzantine Empire.

## The emergence of Islam

As if the political and religious situation in the Middle East were not complicated enough, a new claimant to the Holy Land emerged in the seventh century: Islam. Islam was founded in the early seventh century by an Arabic preacher named Muhammad (c. 570–632). In 610 Muhammad heard the voice of the angel Gabriel, which revealed to him the words and prophecies of Allah (from the Arabic *al-ilah*, meaning “the One True God”). In the years that followed, Muhammad, who regarded himself as the last in a line of prophets that began with Abraham and included Jesus, spread these revelations to his followers. These revelations became the basis of the Islamic faith, and a follower of Muhammad became known as a Muslim, from the Arabic expression *bianna musliman*, meaning “submitted ourselves to God.” In time these revelations and prophecies were written down in the Islamic sacred text, which is called the Qur’an, usually spelled “Koran” in English texts; the present version of the Koran was written in 651 and 652.

The holiest place for Islam was and still is Mecca (in today’s Saudi Arabia), where Muhammad was born and experienced his revelations. Also regarded as a holy place is the city of Medina, 270 miles (434.5 kilometers) to the north of Mecca. Medina was originally named Yathrib, but its name



An engraving depicting Muhammad receiving his call to become a prophet of the Islamic religion. Corbis. Reproduced by permission.



## A Note on Spellings

The name Muhammad is spelled in various ways, including Mohammed and, especially in older texts, Mahomet. Many words and names associated with Islam and the Middle East have alternative spellings in different English texts. These words are usually Arabic or Persian, and these languages do not use the Roman alphabet. The words, then, have to be transliterated, meaning that they are converted into the Roman alphabet. This process often leads to different spellings, especially because there may be different pronunciations of the words.

These different spellings can become a problem, especially with Internet searches. For example, the Turkish clan that drove the Crusaders out of Jerusalem just before the Seventh Crusade was the Khwarizmians. Sometimes, though, the

name is spelled Khwarizmians or even Khoreszmians. The Muslim caliph, or ruler, who seized Jerusalem in the seventh century was Umar, but many texts spell the name Omar. Even western names written in the Roman alphabet pose a problem. The name of one Crusader castle referred to in the literature of the time is spelled thirteen different ways. Internet researchers need to take alternative spellings into account when entering key words. In books, these names may be found in different places in an alphabetical index.

Older texts written from a western perspective often refer to Islam as Muhammadanism or Mohammedanism. Muslims regard these words as offensive, because they suggest that Muhammad was a deity, or god, rather than a prophet.

was changed to Medina from the Arabic phrase *Madinat al-Nadi*, or “city of the Prophet.” It was at Medina that Muhammad developed his beliefs and first began attracting converts. Jerusalem also held an important place in Islam because it was the site of the Foundation Stone, where Muhammad made a miraculous flight to heaven. In 691 the Muslims built a sacred mosque (place of worship), al-Aqsa Mosque, on a site adjacent to the Foundation Stone. The mosque is next to the site of the Temple of Solomon, which remains sacred to Jews.

### The spread of Islam

At that time the lands of Arabia were populated by largely nomadic clans and tribes—that is, people who moved

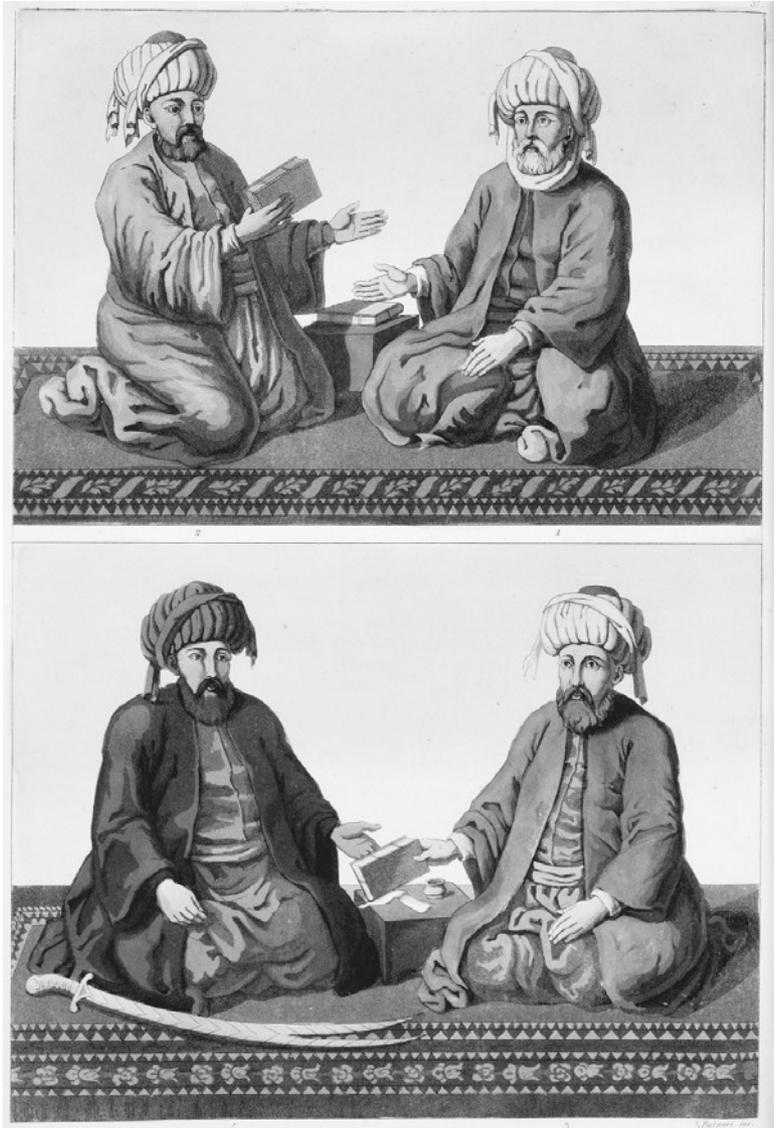


Thousands of pilgrims pray at the Prophet's Mosque in the holy city of Medina. Every year, hundreds of thousands of pilgrims visit the resting place of the prophet Muhammad, which is inside the mosque.

©Suhaib Salem/Reuters/Corbis. Reproduced by permission.

about rather than settling in one location—that competed and fought with one another. The Arabs had played a small role in world history, but after Muhammad, these clans and tribes were united under one banner, with a deep sense of purpose and historical mission, though tensions came to divide Muslims. They believed that they were the successors to the Jews as Allah's chosen people and that Allah required them to spread their faith through conquest.

An illustration from *The History of the Nations* showing the first four caliphs, Muhammad's successors. Under these caliphs, Muslims spread their faith with great efficiency. Private Collection/The Stapelton Collection/Bridgeman Art Library. Reproduced by permission.



Under the first four caliphs, or Muhammad's successors, the Muslims spread their faith with great efficiency. (One major sect, or subgroup, of Islam did not recognize the caliphs as legitimate successors to Muhammad. See Chapter 5 on the division of Shiite and Sunni Muslims.) By the 640s they had seized most of the Byzantine province of Palestine (where Jerusalem was located) and Syria, conquered Persia, and overrun Egypt. In 638, after a lengthy siege, the second



caliph, Umar, accepted the surrender of the city of Jerusalem, which was now in Muslim rather than Byzantine hands (see “Muslims and Jerusalem” in Chapter 2). By the year 700, from their capital of Damascus in Syria, the Muslims ruled an empire that stretched across northern Africa and into central India.

Not content, the Muslims turned their attention to the West. In the early 700s they captured the southern regions of the Iberian Peninsula, which included the countries of Spain and Portugal. From there they crossed the Pyrenees into the kingdom of the Franks, but they were driven back at the city of Tours by Charles Martel exactly one hundred years after Muhammad’s death. In the early 800s Muslims conquered the Mediterranean islands of Sardinia and Corsica and then added the island of Sicily to their empire in 902. Beginning in the 800s they attacked cities in southern Italy and even advanced on Rome, though they were repelled in the 900s and 1000s by armies led by the popes.

**The Great Mosque of Córdoba in Spain, where Muslims are known as Moors.** ©Vanni Archive/Corbis. Reproduced by permission.

## Spanish Islam

During these same years Spanish Christians were limited to the northern part of the Iberian Peninsula, while Muslims occupied the southern regions. Muslims, whom the Spanish called Moors, dominated most of the south from its caliphate, the Umayyad caliphate, based in Córdoba, Spain. (A caliphate is a region or domain ruled by a caliph. “Umayyad” is the name of a family dynasty.) Spanish Christians began to push south to recapture their land. This conflict lasted until the early fifteenth century. At the Battle of las Navas de Tolosa in 1212, a Christian army met and defeated an invading Muslim army from North Africa, and by 1225 only the region around Granada, a city in the far south of Spain, remained under Muslim control. Muslims were finally driven out of Granada in 1492. In the meantime, Spanish Christian kings actively recruited Christian settlers for the reconquered territories, often giving them generous grants of land. This process of recapture and settlement in Spain is known to historians as the Reconquista.

What is important about these events in Italy, France, and Spain is that for more than three centuries, European Christians had come to regard Muslims as enemy invaders and had already engaged in armed conflict with them many times. Christians, both in the East and in the West, believed that Muslims were occupying their holy ground, the same ground to which the Jews also laid claim. Cultures that were in large part defined by religion were clashing, and these clashes would eventually give rise to the Crusades.

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## The Holy City of Jerusalem

**S**eismologists—scientists who study earthquakes—often refer to an earthquake’s “epicenter”: the place just below Earth’s crust where the quake starts and from which it spreads. The word “epicenter” could be used as a figure of speech to refer to Jerusalem, the city in Palestine on the eastern shore of the Mediterranean Sea that became the focus of the Crusades. While several of the Crusades never made it to Jerusalem, capturing—or, later, recapturing—the city was always the Crusaders’ goal, for Jerusalem was the site of many of the major events in the life of Jesus Christ, founder of Christianity.

The “holy city,” though, did not suddenly become an epicenter for conflict in the eleventh century. It had long been a source of conflict among three of the world’s major religions: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. As the site of the Temple of Solomon, the holiest place of worship for Jews, Jerusalem had been the center of Judaism, and it remained so even after the city fell into the hands of the Roman Empire, the Temple of Solomon was destroyed, and the Roman emperor Hadrian built another temple on the site in the second century.

After the Crucifixion (death on the cross) of Christ, the early Christian church laid claim to Jerusalem as its holiest place, for the city was where many of the events in Christ's life took place, including his death, burial, and Resurrection (rising from the dead). Christian control over Jerusalem was confirmed when the Roman emperor Constantine converted to Christianity in 313, declared it the official religion of the empire, and launched a massive construction

project in the city. This project included the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, which housed the tomb of Christ, and other churches. The city remained in Christian hands after the Roman Empire collapsed in the fifth century, for it was part of the Byzantine Empire—the eastern part of the old Roman Empire—and came under the religious authority of the Eastern Orthodox Church. Thus, by the time Jerusalem fell to the Muslims in the seventh century, Christians and Jews had long been struggling with the question of who “owned” the city.

For Christians in the East and in the West, Jerusalem was a place of pilgrimage (see Chapter 3 on pilgrimages to the Holy Land). The goal of any devout Christian was to make at least one such journey to the holy places, or shrines, of Jerusalem and do penance (that is, repent for their sins) on the sites where Christ died and was buried. While most Europeans lacked the money to make a pilgrimage, even peasants and commoners would have been familiar with the concept of making such a trip. Because Christ’s Crucifixion was central to Christian religious views, Christians were increasingly regarding Jews as people to be scorned. In their view, the Jews were responsible for Christ’s death. For their part, Jews regarded Christians as occupiers of their holy city, and they wanted to rebuild their temple there.

Then, late in the seventh century, after Islamic leaders seized control of the city, Muslims built a place of worship, al-Aqsa Mosque, on a site next to the Foundation Stone, the rock upon which Abraham, considered the father of the Hebrew people, had been ready to sacrifice his son to God (see “Judaism” and “The Emergence of Islam” in Chapter 1). Now three major cultural-religious groups were contending for rights to the city. Under these conditions, hatreds were bound to fester and eventually lead to warfare. Since each group regarded the city as among its holiest places, each believed that the presence of the others on holy ground profaned that ground, or made it unholy, so each wanted to drive the others out.

## **Muslims and Jerusalem**

After the death of Muhammad, the founder of the religion of Islam, in the early seventh century, leadership of the faith passed to a series of caliphs, or rulers and leaders of the



Islamic faith. The second of these caliphs was Umar. By the time Umar succeeded to the position, Islam was beginning to expand, and over the next two centuries it established an empire that extended from parts of Spain and Italy in the West, across North Africa and Arabia, and into western Asia. One of the first goals of the caliphs was to gain control of Palestine and Jerusalem. In 636, Muslim forces under Umar clashed with Byzantine forces under the leadership of the emperor Heraclius in a battle on the banks of the Yarmuk River, near the Sea of Galilee. The battle took place in a terrible sandstorm, and the Muslims, accustomed to desert fighting, slaughtered thousands of Byzantine troops. Many of Heraclius's troops were Christian Arabs, but as many as twelve thousand of them deserted and converted to Islam.

When Jerusalem fell to Caliph Umar in 638, most of the city's inhabitants were either Jews or Christians. Initially, they feared for their welfare, but they soon discovered that life under Muslim rule was no worse than it had been under

**Not only did Jews and Christians have holy places in Jerusalem, but so did the Muslims. Pictured here is the Dome of the Rock on the Temple of the Mount in Jerusalem, built upon the site where the Muslim prophet Muhammad is said to have ascended into heaven. ©Christine Osborne/Corbis. Reproduced by permission.**

the Byzantine Empire and in many ways was better. Muhammad had taught that both Jews and Christians were "People of the Book." That is, their religions were based on scripture, as was Islam, and Islam was actually a continuation or fulfillment of these other two religions. Islam did not deny the legitimacy of the Old Testament prophets, such as Abraham, nor did it deny the authority of Christ as a prophet. In the eyes of Muslims, Judaism and Christianity were earlier expressions of God's kingdom on Earth. Islam was thought to be the final revelation of God's word, not a denial of Judaism or Christianity.

Accordingly, Jews and Christians were allowed to practice their religions freely and openly. Places of worship, including the synagogues of Jews and the churches of Christians, remained open, and Jews and Christians were even granted some measure of political independence. Muslims welcomed Christian pilgrims (people who journey to sacred places), who continued to come to Jerusalem both from Byzantine lands in the east and Roman Catholic lands to the west. These pilgrims, then and in later centuries, were a valuable source of income for the city.

This policy of tolerance toward Christians was made clear in the treaty between the former leaders of Jerusalem and Caliph Umar. This treaty came to be known as the Pact of Umar. It originated in 638, but over the next three hundred years it expanded while retaining Umar's name. Surviving written versions of the pact vary a great deal, but one that seems most complete dates from sometime in the ninth century. The pact does not refer to the Jews but focuses instead on relations between Muslims and Christians. Historians generally agree, however, that as a pact between a conqueror and a conquered people, it applied equally to Jews and Christians.

In the pact, quoted by Robert Payne in *The History of Islam*, Umar makes clear that Christians would retain the right to practice their religion: "This peace ... guarantees them [Christians] security for their lives, property, churches, and the crucifixes [crosses] belonging to those who display and honour them.... There shall be no compulsion in matters of faith." Umar even refused to unroll his prayer mat in the city's Church of the Holy Sepulchre out of respect for



## Miracle of the Holy Fire

Visitors to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre can take part in a ritual that predates the Crusades by centuries. This ritual is called the Miracle of the Holy Fire. It is performed at midday on the eve of Easter each year. Normally, only Eastern Orthodox Christians take part in the ceremony, but Roman Catholics often participate as well, especially in years when Easter falls on the same date for Roman Catholic and Orthodox Christians. (The two branches of Christianity use different church calendars, and Easter is often celebrated on different days.)

During the ritual, church leaders, including the Greek Orthodox patriarch—

the chief religious leader—of Jerusalem, go down into the burial area while the congregation holds unlit candles and torches in the darkened church. The faithful believe that the fire of God, symbolizing Christ's Resurrection, is sent down and flames burst forth at the tomb of Christ. Church leaders then emerge from the tomb bearing a lighted torch. From those flames the patriarch lights a candle. The candle is then passed around to Christ's followers in the church. It is believed that Caliph Hakim ordered the destruction of the church in 1009 because he was angered at the Miracle of the Holy Fire.

Christians and the fear that if he did so, Muslims would come to regard the site as their own.

There were some restrictive rules, however. Jews and Christians were required to wear distinctive clothing. They were not allowed to carry weapons or ride on horseback. And while they had to pay special taxes, those taxes were lower than the taxes they had had to pay to the Byzantine rulers. Jews and Christians were also forbidden to hold public office and to study the Koran (the Islamic sacred text) or to imitate Muslims in dress or manner.

All things considered, life for Christians and Jews under Muslim rule, in Jerusalem and other parts of the Middle East, was tolerable at worst and comfortable at best. Meanwhile, trade and business flourished. In fact, for Jews life was actually better. Under the Byzantine Empire, tensions between Christians and Jews in Jerusalem were often high. Christians, who blamed Jews for the death of Christ, were less tolerant of the Jews than the Muslims turned out to be. Byzantine rulers actively sought to convert the Jews to Chris-

tianity. For their part, the Jews resented Christians for controlling traditionally Jewish territory, especially in Jerusalem. These tensions had often led to outbreaks of violence and oppression, to the extent that many Jews provided help and information to the invading Muslim army in 638.

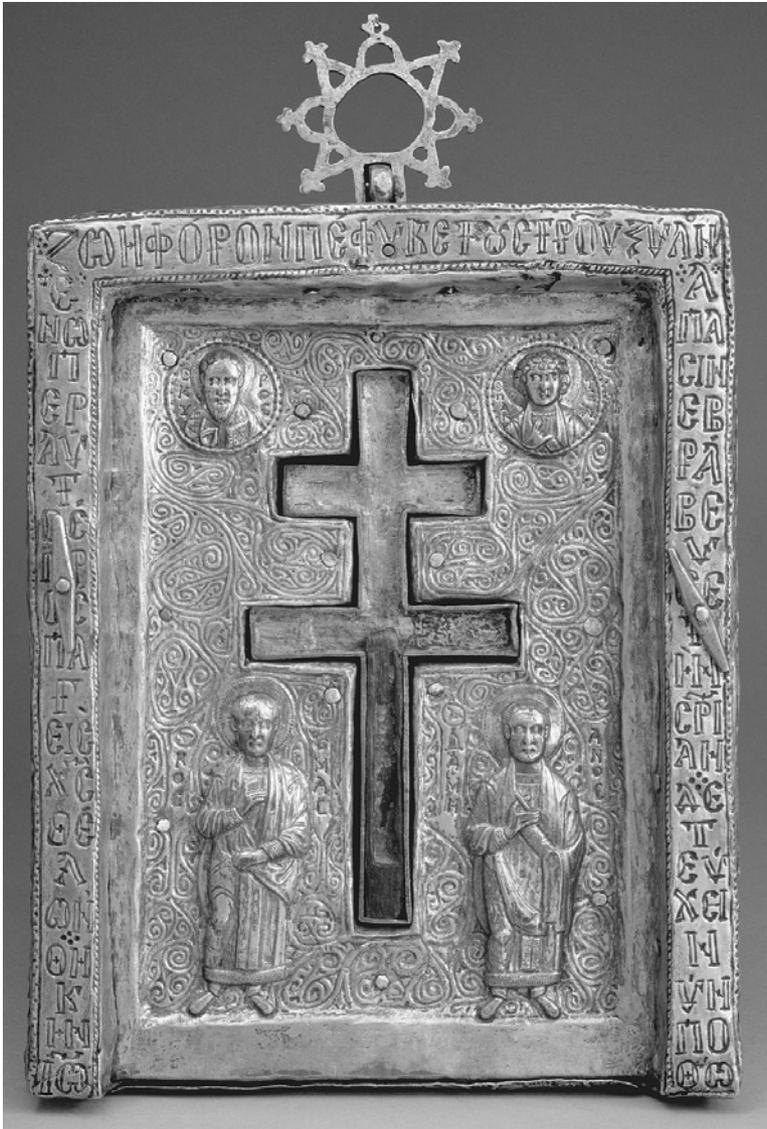
From 638 until well into the eleventh century, relative peace reigned in Jerusalem. The exception was during the years 1004 to 1021, when Jerusalem was under the rule of the caliph Hakim (often written al-Hakim). Hakim was insane, and he subjected both Jews and Christians to terrible persecution (prejudice)—although even he allowed pilgrims from the Byzantine Empire and western Europe to visit the holy sites in Jerusalem. After he was removed from office, though, the policy of religious toleration was restored, and peace again prevailed.

## **Destruction of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre**

A crucial event during the rule of Caliph Hakim was the destruction of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and other Christian buildings in the Holy Land in 1009 and 1010. Included among them were the Church of Saint Anne and the Church of Saint Mary on Mount Zion, the Church of Saint James in the city's Armenian quarter, and the Church of the Ascension on the Mount of Olives. The Church of the Holy Sepulchre, though, was the largest Christian church in the city. Pilgrims to the holy city would have made the church their first destination. Its importance to Christians was that it was on the site where Christ was crucified, buried, and resurrected.

The church had been built in the fourth century by Constantine to enclose the place where Christ was crucified. He had called a meeting in Constantinople with the bishops from that part of the empire. One bishop who attended the meeting was Macarius, the bishop of Aelia Capitolina, the Roman name for Jerusalem. Macarius pointed out that the sites associated with the life and death of Christ were being neglected, largely because of a lack of funds.

Helena, Constantine's mother, was also at the meeting. Like her son, she had converted to Christianity. Accordingly, she made a pilgrimage to the city, bringing with her money



A reliquary containing a particle of the True Cross, on which Jesus Christ was crucified. The True Cross became a central relic of Christendom, a symbol of the Christian faith, and a rallying point for the Crusades. Armoury Museum, Kremlin, Moscow, Russia/ Bridgeman Art Library.

and her son's authority. While she was in Jerusalem, she found the place of Christ's Crucifixion, a rock called Golgotha. She also found a nearby tomb that, according to local tradition, had been the site of Christ's resurrection. The emperor then authorized construction of a church on the site—the same site where the Roman emperor Hadrian had built a temple in the second century. When the Roman buildings were being torn down to build the church, a series of tombs was found cut into

the rock. One of the tombs was identified as that of Joseph of Arimathea, Christ's uncle, who had helped take Christ's body down from the cross and prepare it for burial. In a cave on the site, Helena found nails from what was believed to be the "True Cross" on which Christ was crucified, and even a plaque saying that the site was Christ's burial place. The True Cross would become a central relic (the remains of a martyr, or one who has died for the faith) of Christendom, a symbol of the Christian faith, and a rallying point for the Crusades.

Although the Church of the Holy Sepulchre was rebuilt in 1048, Pope Urban II would use its destruction earlier in the century to justify the Crusades. Hakim's action would become one in a series of "atrocities," or wicked acts, that the pope declared was happening to Christian sites in the city. He used the destruction of the church to inflame his listeners. Many of the Crusaders who went to the Holy Land did so from a desire to rescue the tomb of Christ from the hands of the infidels, or unbelievers.

## **Jerusalem under the Franks**

Because so many of the early Crusaders were from the Frankish kingdom, or France, Muslims referred to all Crusaders as the *Franj*, or Franks, and their native land as *Frangistan*. From the time of the First Crusade until the thirteenth century, Jerusalem was under the control of the Franks for a total of a little more than a hundred years.

This occupation occurred in two distinct phases. The first began when the city fell to the Franks at the end of the First Crusade in July 1099 (see "The First Crusade" in Chapter 6). It remained in Frankish hands until 1187. That year, Muslim forces under Saladin defeated a Frankish army at the Battle of Hattin in July and then laid siege to Jerusalem until it fell in October. The Franks regained control in 1229, after Holy Roman Emperor Frederick II, during the Sixth Crusade, negotiated the Treaty of Jaffa with the Egyptian sultan Malik al-Kamil. When the treaty expired in 1239, the city was briefly occupied by Muslims. It returned to Frankish control in 1241 but was lost once again when a clan of Turkish Muslims, the Khwarismians, attacked the city and drove out the Franks for the final time in 1244.

The extent of the changes made to Jerusalem during this relatively short period of time rivaled that of any other period in the city's history. The goals of the Crusaders were twofold. First, they wanted to transform the city into the spiritual and religious "capital" of Christendom by restoring its holy sites. But they also wanted to transform it into a western Christian kingdom in the East. The Crusaders, though, had yet another motive for rebuilding the city. After

they breached the city's walls in July 1099, they carried out a mass slaughter for three days. The result was that the city was largely depopulated. Few of the Crusaders remained in the city after the Crusade, and those who did were left with the task of repopulating it.

First, though, they had to rebuild the city. They did not have the funds, and the West seemed unwilling to provide them. Much of the money that financed the rebuilding project came from the abandoned wealth of the Egyptian Fatimids, the ruling dynasty that had controlled the city before the arrival of the Turks. The Crusaders used this wealth immediately to begin restoring or rebuilding the churches that Caliph Hakim had destroyed. Central to this effort was the restoration of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, which began immediately and took fifty years to complete. On July 15, 1149, the renovated church was consecrated (dedicated to a sacred purpose) once more, and the façade (front of the building) that was consecrated that day can still be seen by visitors to Jerusalem.

Building churches, though, was not the same thing as resettling Jerusalem. To attract people to the city, the Crusaders began to bring back and encourage the pilgrim trade, which had fallen off in the years just before and after the First Crusade. They knew that doing so would attract money, commerce (business), and people, especially permanent settlers, to the city. After the First Crusade, as the journey to the Holy Land became safer for European pilgrims, more and more began to arrive. In time, countless thousands of pilgrims had to be fed and housed each year.

This influx of what amounted to medieval "tourists" created the need for lodgings (called hostels), places for medical care, money exchanges, and markets for goods and services, and the Crusaders constructed these facilities. By the early thirteenth century a French "tour book" titled *La Citez de Jherusalem* shows the extent to which Jerusalem was taking good care of the pilgrim trade. The book not only describes the holy sites but also goes into great detail in directing pilgrims through the streets to markets, money exchanges, hostels, hospitals, and other institutions.

It is difficult for modern historians to know precisely how successful the Crusaders were in bringing people to the city. No reliable statistics exist about the number of pilgrims

who traveled to Jerusalem. It is known that the Hospital of Saint John, run by the Knights Hospitallers (see “Knights Hospitallers” in Chapter 9), could accommodate two thousand visitors in a single day, suggesting that the numbers were large.

Another way to gauge the success of the Crusader-builders is to examine the public buildings and monuments they left behind. They strengthened and rebuilt the walls of the city. They constructed a palace, as well as monasteries (religious communities run by monks), convents (housing for nuns), hospitals, bathhouses, covered markets, and other buildings. Presumably, they would not have been able to do so without a major influx of money. Initially, this money flowed to the city largely from the pilgrim trade, though as time went on and more European settlers arrived, other forms of commerce and trade added to the wealth of the city.

## **Hygiene and food in the Holy Land**

One way in which the cultures of Europe and the Middle East clashed was in attitudes toward personal cleanliness. The Europeans, from colder climates, rarely washed, and, in fact, hated bathing. In contrast, Middle Easterners, from a hot desert climate, bathed frequently. As time went on, though, Europeans took up the habit of bathing, and among the construction projects the Crusaders undertook were more public bathhouses. A bather first went into a heated room. After he worked up a sweat, an attendant would rub him down with soap and towel him off. He would then go to another room, where he could lie in comfort on a couch. The habit of bathing became so ingrained that it was required on some occasions. Anyone who wanted to be admitted to the Knights Templars, for example, had to bathe at a communal

bathhouse before the ceremony of admission. Many Arabs in the city were disturbed because Europeans, unlike the Arabs, would often walk about in the bathhouses without towels. The habit of bathing was not limited to men. Women had their own separate bathhouses.

The Franks also saw food in the Middle East that they had never seen before. In addition to meats, game birds, and unusual spices that were unknown in Europe, they ate new types of fruit, including bananas, oranges, lemons, dates, peaches, plums, figs, quinces, and various nuts, such as almonds. They found no vineyards in the Holy Land, for Islam forbade the drinking of wine. The Crusaders planted vineyards and produced wine, which they cooled with snow brought from the tops of mountains in Lebanon and protected by straw as it was transported to the city.

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# Pilgrimages to the Holy Land and Communities in the Holy Land

3

**T**o a Christian, Jerusalem during the Middle Ages (500–1500) was both a place on a map and an idea. On the map, it was a far-off city that Christians, if they could read, knew of from the Bible, and if they could not, they learned about from their priests and bishops. As an idea, though, Jerusalem and other sites in the Holy Land fired the spiritual imagination of Christians, because these sites were the birthplace of their faith. Here could be found the place where Christ had been born, the areas where he had lived and taught, the place where his mother had shed tears for his death, and the sites of his death, burial, and Resurrection. For Christians, Jerusalem and the surrounding region were the holiest places on earth.

The goal of any Christian living at that time was to make a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. At the time of the Crusades, the tradition of making such a trip to a sacred place already had a long history, dating back to the 300s and even earlier. Christians wanted to see the buildings that the Roman emperor Constantine had erected to house the holy sites during his reign in the fourth century. The flow of pil-



**The Jewish quarter of Jerusalem. For centuries, Jerusalem and the surrounding region have been sacred places for Christians, Jews, and Muslims.** ©James Davis; Eye Ubiquitous/Corbis. Reproduced by permission.

grims slowed with the Muslim conquest of Jerusalem in the seventh century. Also, continuing political turmoil in Europe up through the ninth century made pilgrimages to the Holy Land the privilege of a select few.

Two events took place that made it easier to make pilgrimages to the Holy Land. First, Hungary, through which pilgrims who traveled on foot had to pass, converted to Christianity. Then the Christian Byzantines extended their

empire into Asia Minor and the Balkans. With these friendly nations in control of much of the route, travel to Jerusalem by land became easier, and by about the year 1000 the flow of pilgrims resumed. Early in the eleventh century, Hakim, the Muslim caliph who ruled over Jerusalem, destroyed the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem as well as other buildings that Constantine had constructed. Pilgrims after this time found a different place than the one their ancestors had gone to, but these buildings would be restored after the First Crusade in 1099.

Not every Christian in Europe could afford to make a journey that was as long, exhausting, and expensive as a trip to the Holy Land. Many peasants and commoners had to remain content with visiting sacred sites in Europe—if they could afford to do even that. Those who did make a trip to the Holy Land, therefore, tended to be from the higher classes, including landowners, clerics (members of the clergy), and prosperous merchants, simply because they had the money.

The typical pilgrim was likely to be a member of the nobility—perhaps a count, a baron, a knight, or a landowning vassal (a person who had sworn allegiance to a lord and, in return, obtained the lord's protection; see "The Structure of Medieval Society" in Chapter 9). Women, of course, made the trip, but they rarely went on their own. The pilgrim might have been accompanied by one or more family members; perhaps, too, by companions who had fought with him in battles against the Muslims in Spain. Each pilgrim, if he could afford it, would bring along a servant, and any party of pilgrims would almost certainly have included a priest or monk, who functioned not only as a spiritual adviser but also as a kind of "tour guide."

While a party of pilgrims might have consisted of just a half dozen people, many such small groups often left on pilgrimages together. Also, parties of pilgrims would encounter others along the route and travel together for greater safety. Thus, a caravan of pilgrims often included a great many people, perhaps dozens or more, and the number grew as the pilgrims proceeded. Occasionally, the numbers were much higher. One group, led by Duke Richard II of Normandy, was reported to have consisted of seven hundred pilgrims. In 1064 and 1065 a group of bishops



## Women, Pilgrimages, and the Crusades

Because of the difficulties and dangers of the journey, pilgrims tended to be men, but many women made the journey with the same enthusiasm as men did. Much of what historians know about pilgrimages comes from women who wrote about the journeys, such as Etheria of Aquitaine (a region in France), who made the pilgrimage in the fourth century.

Many women accompanied the leaders of the Crusades. During the First Crusade, the wives of Baldwin of Boulogne and Raymond of Toulouse traveled with their husbands. Eleanor of Aquitaine went along with her husband, King Louis VII of France, during the Second Crusade, and Richard I of England married Berengaria, daughter of the king of Navarre, while en route to the Third Crusade. Many of the

women who went suffered great hardships. Some were killed during battles. Others died of disease, including a large number during the siege of Antioch in the First Crusade. Some went along as prostitutes. Others served in such roles as cooks and washerwomen. Interestingly, whenever the Muslims accidentally captured a washerwoman, they always returned her unharmed.

There also are many reports that women took part in battles. They often provided water, wine, and food to the troops or carried stones used as weapons during sieges of castles or cities. One report tells of a woman who was helping fill up a moat during the Third Crusade when she was struck by an arrow. As she lay dying, she insisted that her body be used to help fill the trench.

and nobles led a German pilgrimage whose size was estimated by people at the time at between seven thousand and twelve thousand.

### Penance

The chief purpose of a pilgrimage was to do penance, or repent for sins. According to church teaching, sinners could achieve salvation in heaven by showing that they were sorry for their sins, confessing them to a priest, and then offering penance to acknowledge that their sins were offenses against God. Frequently, penance consisted of prayer or giving aid to the poor, but another way to repent was to go on a pilgrimage. The journey itself, because it was so difficult, was part of the penance.



A pilgrim to the Holy Land had to prepare carefully for the journey. Pilgrims first had to confess their sins to a priest, and the priest had to approve the pilgrimage. Without this approval, the pilgrim could not gain any spiritual benefit from the journey. A pilgrim also had to take a public vow before the priest. This vow marked the official beginning of the pilgrimage. The priest would list the specific places the pilgrim was to visit. He would then bless the pilgrim and offer a mass. Later, when the pilgrim returned, the priest would declare that the vow had been fulfilled and that the pilgrim was pardoned of the sins that had required the pilgrimage.

## Preparations

A pilgrimage to the Holy Land took months. Typically, European pilgrims would start as soon as they could in the spring and hope that they could make it to the Holy Land, visit the sites, and return before winter, though problems such as ill-

A detail of the *Map of Christian Holy Lands* floor mosaic. This map depicts several sites in the Holy Land that pilgrims were required to visit during their trip to Jerusalem.

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ness frequently caused delays. Accordingly, a pilgrim had to make many arrangements before departure. One was to raise enough money to make the journey. A noble or other prosperous pilgrim who wanted to travel in style might spend up to an entire year's income to make the journey. Poorer pilgrims often spent much more than a year's income and often relied on donations and support from their families. Landowners often financed the journey by mortgaging their estates (that is, borrowing money on them) or a portion of them. Others sold personal property to raise the money needed.

After the money was raised, the question arose as to how the pilgrim would keep personal affairs in order during a long absence. Shopkeepers and merchants had to find someone to run their businesses. A noble had to find someone to manage his estate. If the noble was entangled in a dispute with a rival noble, plans had to be made for the defense of the estate. This responsibility would often fall to a relative who was a knight. A noble or vassal also had to see to it that any additional duties he had were taken care of. For example, a vassal who also served as a magistrate, or judge, on his lord's estate had to make arrangements for this task to be fulfilled.

There was always the possibility that a pilgrim would die during the journey. With that in mind, many landholders donated their land to a monastery (a religious community run by monks). Their donation was made with the provision that when they returned, they would continue to receive the income from the land until their death. If they died during the pilgrimage, the monastery would own the land, but any income from it would be used to support the pilgrim's widow and children during their lifetimes. Writing a will was a privilege for only a few during this time. All pilgrims, however, were allowed to write wills. This was not an empty precaution. A cemetery outside Jerusalem held the bodies of many pilgrims who did not survive the journey.

## Departure

After the ceremony of taking the vow, a pilgrim would typically depart on foot. A noble would often be followed by dozens, if not hundreds, of well-wishers and family members for the first mile or two. After proceeding for a few

miles on foot, pilgrims with means would then gather their horses; pack animals; and, in some cases, wagons and continue the journey on horseback. Poorer pilgrims, of course, would walk all the way to the Holy Land if they took the overland route.

Before the Crusades, most pilgrims did, in fact, travel by land. Their route depended on where they started the journey. Eventually, pilgrims from countries such as France or from the Holy Roman Empire would reach eastern Europe. After traveling through the kingdom of Hungary and the Balkans, they would arrive at Constantinople, the capital of the Byzantine Empire. They then would travel across Anatolia, a region in western Asia Minor, and over the Taurus Mountains to Antioch, a Syrian seaport at the extreme northeastern tip of the Mediterranean Sea. From there they would proceed down the eastern coast of the Mediterranean through western Syria to Palestine and on to Jerusalem. A pilgrim from France faced a journey of some 1,500 or more miles (more than 2,400 kilometers), at the rate of perhaps 25 miles (or about 40 kilometers) a day. If all went well, the journey would take at least two hard months, but rarely did everything go as planned.

At about the time of the Crusades, many pilgrims were making the journey by sea. By this time the Turks were in control of much of Asia Minor, and they harassed Christian pilgrims. Pilgrims also knew that the Turks had fought the early crusading armies that had taken this route. One of the ironies of the early Crusades is that they were fought in part to keep the overland route to the Holy Land open. While the First Crusade succeeded in capturing Jerusalem, the overland route became more dangerous than it ever had been before. At the same time that the Crusaders were fighting to keep the Holy Land open, many pilgrims were actually en route to the Holy Land by sea.

These pilgrims would converge on one of the port cities along the Italian coast, typically Venice. By about the twelfth century Venice was a major maritime power and the chief point of departure for pilgrims, and the city derived much of its income catering to the pilgrim trade. After the Crusades, official guides to the Holy Land were appointed, licensed, and paid by the city. The city was expensive, so pilgrims arriving there would have to find accommodations

suited to their means. A noble would have little difficulty affording comfortable lodging. A poorer pilgrim had to make do in a hostel (an inexpensive sleeping place) or even sleep on the ground outside the walls of the city.

The next step was to book passage on a ship. On the city square, tables were set up, one for each ship planning to depart to the Holy Land. Pilgrims would simply approach one of the tables and buy their tickets. Payment had to be in Venetian gold ducats, and money changers were everywhere, ready to exchange into the local currency whatever money the pilgrims had brought—for a fee, of course. Passage on a ship cost about sixty ducats, though poorer pilgrims were often able to book the worst shipboard accommodations for thirty ducats. They would then board a ship, which would sail down the Adriatic Sea to the eastern Mediterranean and onward to one of the port cities on the Levant, the European term for the countries that bordered the eastern Mediterranean. Along the way the ship would make port at islands such as Cyprus to stock up on provisions and provide some rest for weary travelers.

## Dangers

A trip to the Holy Land was dangerous, more so the farther a pilgrim traveled away from home. In Europe the roads were still fairly good. People usually welcomed pilgrims to their towns (many of which also contained sacred sites that pilgrims wanted to visit), for the pilgrim trade was a source of income for them as well. Sometimes these towns were the destination of pilgrims who were not headed to the Holy Land. Often pilgrims found hospitality at castles and farms along the way.

The first real danger facing the pilgrims who took the land route to Italy was crossing the Alps. Although pilgrimages started in the spring so as to take advantage of favorable weather, crossing mountainous terrain was always risky. A spring snowstorm could blow up, rivers could rise above their banks during the spring thaw, and bridges were often weakened by the ravages of winter. Whatever route they took, pilgrims confronted the danger of injury or illness, and many arrived in the Holy Land sick or exhausted from the journey. Some ran out of money. A drought during the summer could make food scarce, thereby causing it to become more expen-

sive to purchase. Those who traveled by sea also had a long and difficult journey. Storms at sea could capsize the ships and send pilgrims to their deaths.

One constant danger was bandits. Pilgrims were easy targets, for they typically traveled with few defenses, although a nobleman and his companions might be armed, and prosperous merchants sometimes hired armed guards. Bandits knew that the pilgrims carried money and luxury goods to trade for food and other supplies along the way, and many robbers made a good living off them. Matters were no easier at sea. Pilgrim ships were frequently the prey of pirates, and the commanders of these ships had to go out of their way to avoid areas where pirates were known to lurk.

Another problem related to banditry was extortion. Along the way, local landowners and even entire villages demanded “toll” money for safe passage. Anyone who resisted paying the toll might be killed or at least mugged for money. In the Alps many local nobles held bridges and demanded a toll from pilgrims before allowing them to cross.

Once a pilgrim reached the Holy Land, conditions did not improve. Muslim bandits patrolled the roads leading to Jerusalem and robbed pilgrims when they were almost within sight of their goal. The large group of German pilgrims mentioned earlier in the chapter had to do battle with Arab bandits when they were just two days from Jerusalem. Fighting off the Arabs as best they could, they took shelter in a nearby deserted village and were saved only when Egyptian troops came to their rescue and escorted them to Jerusalem. In fighting the Arabs, though, the pilgrims broke with the tradition that they were to avoid violence because of their pious undertaking. Some historians regard this battle, in which they combined war with a religious mission, as a foreshadowing of the Crusades. After the Crusades, when Jerusalem was restored to Muslim hands, many Christians, even knights, joined Arab bandits in this profitable enterprise.

## Arrival

Upon arriving in Ramleh, usually one day's journey from the last stop in Jerusalem, pilgrims were issued instruc-

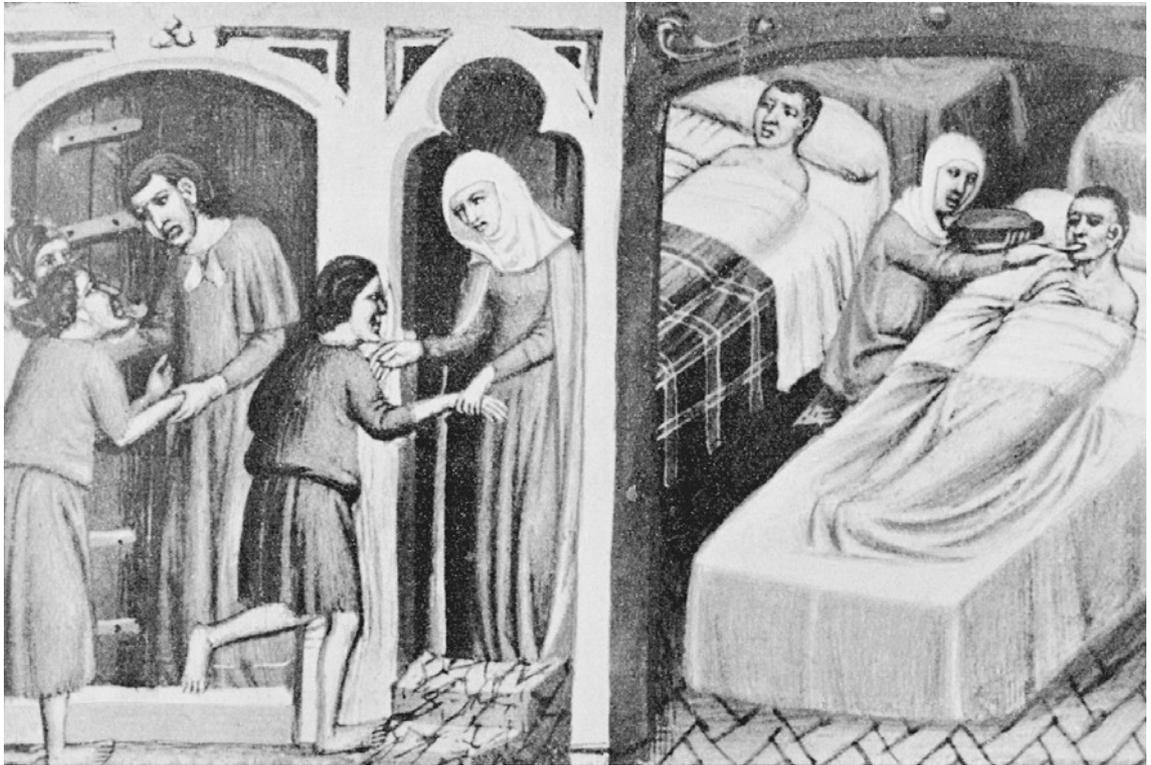
tions. They were always to show Christian charity, patience, and tact. They were to avoid any behavior that could be considered aggressive or offensive. They were not to enter a mosque (a place of worship for Muslims), and they were to stay away from Muslim graveyards. They were always to travel in groups to protect themselves from bandits and pickpockets. Nobles had to be reminded not to engrave their coat of arms into walls and other objects at holy places as well as at inns; graffiti was a problem even a thousand years ago. In particular, pilgrims were not to carry off pieces of holy places or relics, remnants of objects that were held sacred because of their association with saints, though many ignored this instruction and took away with them objects such as stones found at the holy sites.

Typically, visitors arrived at the gates of Jerusalem around nightfall, having left Ramleh in the morning. They paid an admission fee at the Gate of David at the western edge of the city and proceeded to the Hospital of Saint John. The “hospital,” which today would be called a hostel, was run by an order of monks who came to be known as the Knights Hospitallers and who would play a role as warrior-monks during the Crusades. At the hospital, pilgrims could get accommodations, and those who were ill or injured could receive medical care.

## The sites

The next morning most pilgrims headed directly for the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, the most sacred site in the city. To get there, they may have walked down the Via Dolorosa, or Street of Sadness. This was the route that Christ had taken when he carried his cross to his Crucifixion. All along the way, shopkeepers and street merchants, hawking their products, tried to attract the attention of the pilgrims. Many of the pilgrims were crying in religious ecstasy or singing hymns. A visit to the holy sites in Jerusalem was a noisy and raucous affair, not a quiet and reverential experience.

The Church of the Holy Sepulchre had been built by Constantine and his mother, Helena, in the 300s. Legend holds that she discovered the True Cross, the cross on which Christ was crucified, in the rubble of a demolished Roman



temple. The church was a jumble of shrines and chapels, many of them maintained by Christian sects such as the Nestorians, the Armenians, the Jacobites, and the Coptic Christians. Within the immense building, pilgrims could see many of the places connected with Christ's death. They were often amazed that these places were close enough to one another that they could be enclosed in a single building.

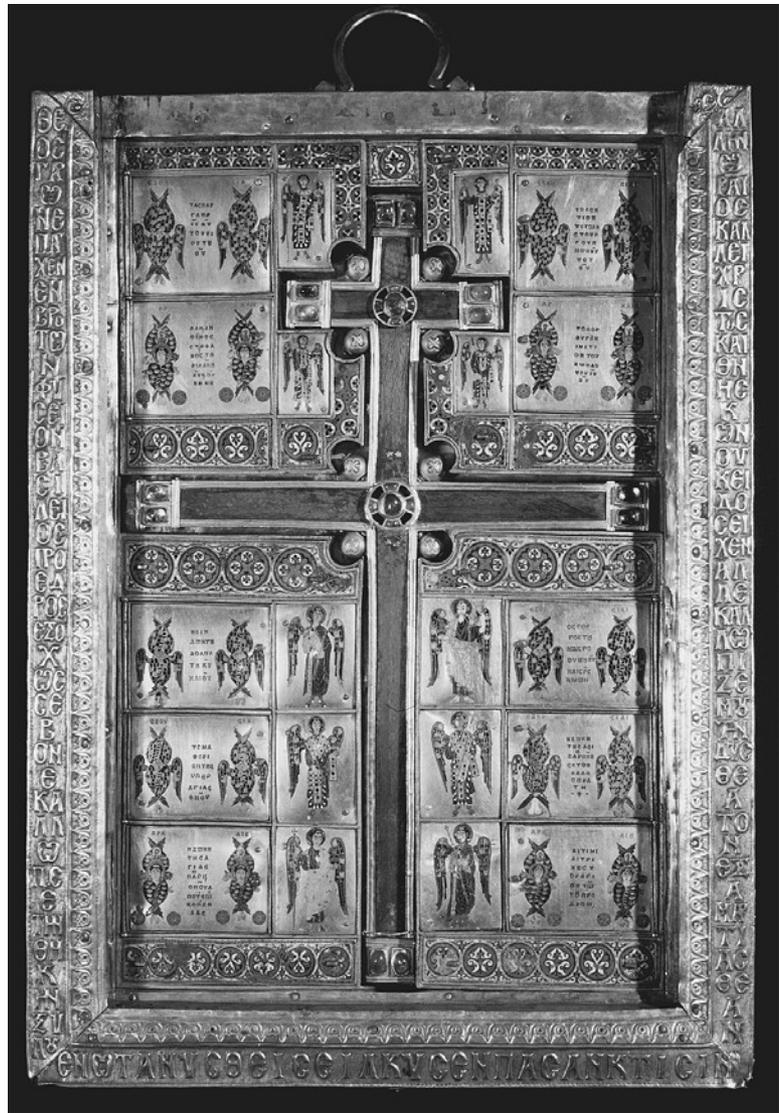
Once inside, they were awed by the places where Christ had been crucified and buried. They could see the hole on Mount Calvary where the cross had been planted in the ground. They viewed the places where Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus had taken Christ's body down from the cross and prepared it for burial, where Jesus had appeared to Mary Magdalene, and where his mother had grieved for him. They stood on the spot where the Roman soldiers had divided Christ's garments. To see the tomb of Christ, a pilgrim had to wait for a Muslim to unlock the door. This was a custom that predated the Crusades and continued into modern times. For

**A thirteenth-century painting of monks and nuns welcoming travelers and caring for the sick who had arrived in Jerusalem for pilgrimages to the holy sites found within the city.**

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Reliquary of the True Cross. Legend holds that Constantine's mother, Helena, discovered the cross, on which Jesus Christ was crucified, in the rubble of a demolished Roman temple. ©Werner Forman/Corbis. Reproduced by permission.



a devout Christian pilgrim, arriving at Christ's tomb after months of hardship and danger was to reach the center of the world—indeed, the center of the universe.

Most pilgrims wanted not just to see the church but to spend the night there and hear mass the following morning. Priests and monks hoped that they would be granted the privilege of saying mass in the church. Many young nobles came to the church to be knighted. Pilgrims who were fortu-

nate enough to spend the night discovered that they were locked inside until the following morning.

The Church of the Holy Sepulchre was not the only holy site in Jerusalem. There were many others, but at least two were almost certain to be on a pilgrim's itinerary, and both were located on the Mount of Olives. The first, the Tomb of the Virgin, was regarded as the burial spot of Christ's mother, Mary, and was located at the foot of the mount. The second, the Church of the Ascension, was on the Mount of Olives itself. This chapel was built on the place said to be where Christ had ascended into heaven after his death.

Christian pilgrims to the Holy Land would take in other sites as well, depending on the amount of time they had, the state of their purse, and the list of sites they had been instructed to see when they took their vow. Many went to other cities in Palestine, such as Jaffa, and some went as far as Egypt to see sites mentioned in the Old Testament. Among the most common places, other than Jerusalem, was Nazareth, Christ's childhood home. At Nazareth pilgrims would have seen the site of the Annunciation, where an angel had told Mary that she was to give birth, and the basilica that was built over the site. Although the Muslim caliph Hakim had ordered that this church be destroyed in 1010, the Crusaders rebuilt it in 1101. Also in Nazareth was Mary's house, which had been turned into a basilica in the sixth century. Tradition holds that a third site in Nazareth, Saint Joseph's House, was where Joseph and Mary had wed.

## Christian communities in the Holy Land

In Bethlehem pilgrims visited the Church of the Nativity, built on the spot—a cave—where Christ had been born. At



### Chapel of the Innocents

A site that pilgrims could visit in Bethlehem was the Chapel of the Innocents. The chapel, which contains numerous bones, memorializes the Slaughter of the Innocents—the killing of children in and around Bethlehem by the Judean king Herod. When Herod learned of the birth of Christ and the prophecies that he was the Messiah, or the savior of the Jews, he was determined to put an end to this threat to his power. He ordered that all male children under the age of two years be killed. Biblical historians debate the number of children who were actually killed. Some put the number at thousands, and others believe that there were as few as twelve.

the Church of the Nativity, they would have seen the tomb of Saint Paula of Bethlehem, buried under the church at her death in 404. In 385 Paula (also known as Paulina and Pauline the Widow) traveled with her daughter, Eustochium, on a pilgrimage to Egypt and the Holy Land. The two women settled in Bethlehem, where they built a convent (a home for nuns) and a hospice (a guesthouse) for other pilgrims. Paula was the first abbess of the convent, and after her death her granddaughter, also called Paula, took over the convent, which continued to operate at the time of the Crusades.

While in Bethlehem, pilgrims could also find accommodations at another Christian community. This was the monastery built by Saint Jerome, one of the major fathers of the Christian church. Jerome first traveled to the Holy Land in about 373, and he was ordained a priest at Antioch. After spending time in Constantinople and Rome, he returned to the Holy Land and, like Saint Paula, settled in Bethlehem in 386. There, with the women's help, he built a monastery, where he wrote treatises about Christianity until his death in 420.

The convent of Saint Paula and the monastery of Saint Jerome were typical of the types of accommodation available to pilgrims in the Holy Land. As noted earlier, visitors to Jerusalem could find hospitality at the Hospital of Saint John, and these and other Christian institutions were welcome stops for weary and poor pilgrims. Throughout the region could be found monasteries, convents, and Christian churches run by various sects, or subgroups, of Christianity, as well as by the Eastern Orthodox Church. When the Crusades began, European Christians believed that these and other Christian communities in the Holy Land were under threat and that Muslims were guilty of terrible crimes against their members. It was to protect not only the sacred sites but also these Christian communities that the Crusades were launched.

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## Origins of the Crusades

**T**he Crusades did not happen spontaneously or as a result of a particular event. A number of factors came together to create the political, social, religious, and economic environment that enabled the “crusading spirit” to take root and spread throughout Europe. Although enthusiasm for crusading periodically cooled, it also revived in response to events in the Middle East.

### The arrival of the Seljuk Turks

The sands of the Middle East had shifted many times throughout the first thousand years of the Christian era. Jerusalem, the ancient center of Judaism, fell under the control of the pagan (one who worships many gods) Roman Empire and then became a Christian city under the Roman emperor Constantine and his successors. After the breakup of the Roman Empire in the fifth century, the city was controlled by the Eastern Orthodox Church and the Byzantine Empire. Then it fell to the Muslims in the seventh century, and in the centuries that followed it was

ruled by the Muslim dynasty of Egypt (see “The Spread of Islam” in Chapter 1).

The sands were destined to shift once again with the arrival of the Seljuk Turks in the eleventh century. The Byzantines gave the name “Turk” to the people who occupied a large area in central Asia. The Turks were primarily a nomadic people (that is, they moved about rather than settling in one place) who belonged to any one of a number of tribes or clans. In the tenth century they converted to the Islamic faith and became part of the Muslim empire.

One of these nomadic clans, the Seljuks, was large and powerful. The Seljuks proved to be ungovernable—that is, they could not be controlled—and they began to overrun the Middle East. In 1055 they seized Baghdad, the capital of modern-day Iraq but at that time in the nation of Persia. They then gained power over Syria and the rest of Persia. They also launched an invasion of the Byzantine nation of Armenia, located east of Turkey and north of modern-day Iran. Finally, in 1071, a little more than two decades before the start of the Crusades, they overthrew the Fatimids, the name of the Egyptian Muslim dynasty that ruled Jerusalem. Once again, control of the Holy Land was in different hands.

The Byzantine emperor, Romanus IV Diogenes, was determined to turn back the Seljuk threat to the shrinking Byzantine Empire. He assembled an army, which met the Seljuks near the city of Manzikert in Armenia in 1071. The Seljuks were tough, experienced warriors, and although they were badly outnumbered, they soundly defeated the Byzantines and captured the emperor.

This event was a turning point. After the historic Battle of Manzikert, the Byzantines were unable to stop the Seljuks, who continued to take lands belonging to the Byzantines in Asia Minor. (Asia Minor is the peninsula of land on the western edge of Asia, bounded on the north by the Black Sea, on the south by the Mediterranean Sea, and on the west by the Aegean Sea.) Of particular importance was the loss of key cities such as Antioch (the ancient capital of Syria but now part of Turkey) and Edessa (now the city of Urfa in Turkey). After centuries of stability and prosperity, the Byzantine Empire shrank to a much narrower area surrounding the city of Constantinople.

## A cry for help

People in Europe were alarmed by these developments for two reasons. First, they were worried that the Seljuk Turks would deny Christians access to Jerusalem, a holy city. At a time when Europeans identified so strongly with the church and believed that one way to win salvation in heaven was by making a pilgrimage (a journey to a sacred place) to the Holy Land, this was a troubling development (see Chapter 3 on pilgrimages to the Holy Land). They were partly correct. While the Seljuks did not officially cut off pilgrim traffic from the West, their presence made the journey far more difficult than it had been. Pilgrims passing through the region often needed armed escorts because of bandits. In nearly every small town along the way, the local ruler would demand money for safe passage. Pilgrims to the Holy Land returned to Europe with tales of great danger and enormous expense. Danger and expense had always been part of the penance, or atonement for sin, of a pilgrimage, but the Seljuks made matters worse.

Westerners were also concerned about the fate of the Byzantine Empire. They knew that if Constantinople fell to the Muslim Seljuks, the empire probably would collapse entirely. They wanted the empire to remain stable and strong, for it served as a buffer between the Muslim empire and the Christian countries of Europe. As things stood, Muslim invaders had already attacked Italy, France, and Spain. They had a toehold in Europe with a caliphate (an Islamic ruling power) in Córdoba, Spain. With no Byzantine Empire to hold the Muslims in check, Europe would face an even greater threat. Some historians believe that the Europeans were correct and that if they had not fought the Muslims during the Crusades, these invasions of Europe would have been more frequent and, in the end, more successful. Much more of Europe could have become part of the Muslim empire.

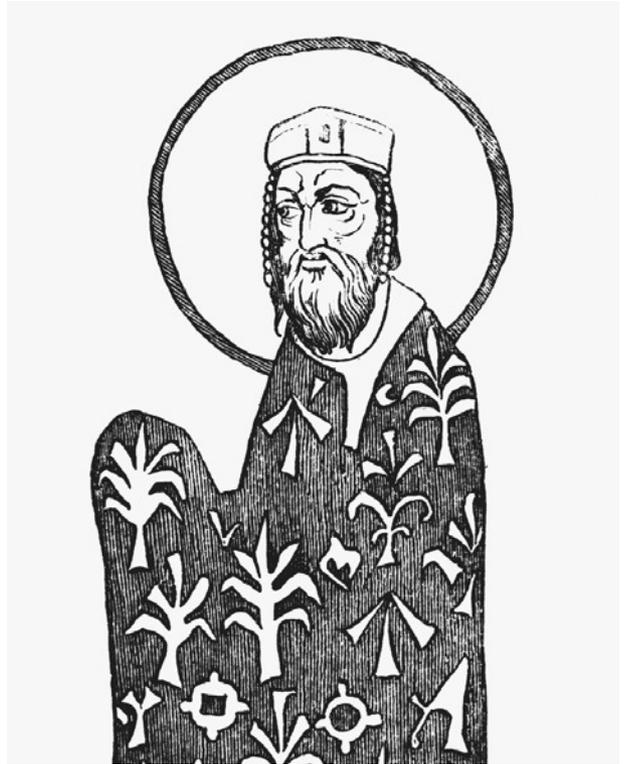
Furthermore, even though the Eastern Orthodox Church and the Roman Catholic Church had split, the Eastern Orthodox Church was still Christian, so western religious and political leaders did not want to see it fall to an unfriendly empire. As early as 1074 Pope Gregory VII, the leader of the Roman Catholic Church, wanted to reunite the branches of the Christian church. He made plans to lead a Christian army

to come to the aid of the East by driving the Seljuks out, but he never put the plan into effect. Gregory and his successors saw events in the East as a way perhaps to reunite the church or, at least, to force the Greek Orthodox Church to submit to Rome.

In 1081 the fortunes of the Byzantine Empire began to improve when a new emperor, Alexius I Comnenus, was crowned. Unlike some of his predecessors, Alexius was a competent ruler and a skillful military leader. Under his leadership, the Byzantines were able to stop the advance of the Seljuks. He knew, though, that he would never be able to drive them out entirely and reclaim Byzantine lands without help from the West. He had to enlarge his army, and he concluded that the only way he could do so was with mercenary soldiers, or hired troops, from the West. Alexius decided that his most promising course of action was to employ French knights to expand his own army, though he would take any help he could get.

Accordingly, Alexius wrote letters to lords and nobles in the West, asking for assistance. As a good politician, he knew that his appeal would be ignored if he based it entirely on a desire to regain his own empire. Instead, he appealed to western Europe's Christian feelings. He described Muslim violence against Eastern Christians. He painted a picture of Christians in the East needing to be delivered from the tyranny, or domination, of Muslim overlords. He argued that it was not acceptable that the holy places of the East should be in the hands of Muslims and Turks, who were not Christians and therefore were considered "infidels," or unbelievers. He raised the image of Muslims denying Christian pilgrims, whether from East or West, access to those holy places.

It is important to note, though, that much of what Alexius claimed was exaggerated, and often false. Moreover,



**Byzantine Emperor Alexius I Comnenus wrote letters to lords and nobles in the West asking for assistance in ousting the Muslims and the Turks from the Holy Land.** *Photograph courtesy of The Library of Congress.*



## A Letter from Alexius

Here is an example of the letters Alexius wrote to the nobles of Europe, describing the evils that he claimed the Turks were committing. This is an excerpt from his letter to Count Robert of Flanders, quoted by Robert Payne in *The Dream and the Tomb: A History of the Crusades*:

*O illustrious count and great consoler of the faith, I am writing in order to inform Your Prudence that the very saintly empire of Greek Christians is daily being persecuted by ... the Turks.... The blood of Christians flows in unheard-of scenes of*

*carnage [killing], amidst the most shameful insults.... I shall merely describe a very few of them....*

*The enemy has the habit of circumcising [to cut off the foreskin of the penis] young Christians and Christian babies above the baptismal font [a vessel for holy water used at baptism]. In derision [disrespect] of Christ they let the blood flow into the font. Then they are forced to urinate in the font.... Those who refuse to do so are tortured and put to death. They carry off noble matrons [married women] and their daughters and abuse them like animals.*

the Muslims who he claimed were guilty of these “atrocities” (or evils) were the Seljuks, not the Egyptian Fatimids who had been in control of Jerusalem for centuries before the Seljuks arrived.

In February 1095 Pope Urban II (c. 1042–1099) was leading a church council in Piacenza, Italy. While he was in Piacenza, a group of diplomatic representatives (political ambassadors) from Constantinople arrived with a direct appeal for help from Alexius. Urban and the other church officials attending the council were deeply moved by the emperor’s plea. Immediately after the council, Pope Urban began to make plans to come to the aid of the emperor. The result would be the First Crusade, which ended with the capture of Jerusalem by Christian forces in 1099 (see “The Sermon at Clermont” in Chapter 6.)

## Other origins of the Crusades

These were the immediate events that led up to the Crusades. They explain the political situation in Europe and the East, but they fail to account fully for Europe’s enthusiastic response to the pope. Throughout Europe, thousands of men



willingly and eagerly “took up the cross” and joined the Crusades. The central question that historians ask about the Crusades is “why?” What were the motives of the Crusaders? Why did Europeans respond as keenly as they did? Can the Crusades be explained by social, economic, or religious factors?

Historians give varying answers to these questions, but all agree that the Crusaders had many motives, or driving

**A painting of Pope Urban II proposing the First Crusade in 1095.** ©Archivo Iconografico, S.A./Corbis. Reproduced by permission.

forces. Many people genuinely believed that Jerusalem had to be liberated from the infidel and that access to the Holy Land for Christian pilgrims doing penance for their sins had to be maintained (see “Penance” in Chapter 3). Others could not pass up the pope’s offer of an indulgence for going on a Crusade. According to church teaching, at death a person’s soul first went to purgatory instead of heaven. Purgatory was a place of punishment for sins committed during a person’s lifetime. The time spent in purgatory was a delay in joining God in heaven. An indulgence was a reduction in the length of time spent in purgatory. Indulgences could be earned by, for example, saying certain prayers or performing certain acts. The pope offered a “plenary” indulgence to Crusaders, meaning that they could bypass purgatory entirely and go straight to heaven.

## **Religious hysteria**

In his essay “The Children’s Crusade,” the historian Norman P. Zacour argues that the Crusades were part of the religious hysteria that from time to time swept through Europe. Zacour reminds his readers that many Europeans in the Middle Ages (500–1500) lived lives that were utterly dreary. Life was insecure, violence was everywhere, and poverty was widespread. In such an environment, people often fell victim to religious hysteria, believing that if this world provided few comforts, the next one would do so. It is no surprise, then, that they responded to Crusade preaching with great enthusiasm. What emerged, according to Zacour, was a kind of mass religious hysteria, or frenzy. Without this hysteria, the Crusades might never have taken place. Two chief instances of this hysteria were the People’s Crusade and the Children’s Crusade.

## **The People’s Crusade**

The People’s Crusade, sometimes called the Pauper’s Crusade, was really the “First” Crusade, although it is not normally numbered as such. It was led by a wandering evangelist named Peter the Hermit. If the Crusades promised high adventure for noble knights fired with zeal, or enthusiasm, to carry out brave deeds, the People’s Crusade was something different. As the historian Franklin Hamilton notes in his

book *The Crusades*, “the grand drama of the Crusades opened with a touch of farce.” The leading characters in this farce were Peter’s ragtag army of commoners and peasants who were swept up in the hysteria of the First Crusade.

Peter’s Crusaders were the first wave of Europeans to arrive in the East after Pope Urban’s sermons preaching the Crusade. Peter was a small man who wore filthy clothes and went about barefoot. With a long, dark face, he was almost comical, and yet he had power over others. Wherever he went, he attracted hundreds of followers, and his army grew like a snowball as it rolled through France and Germany. But the people he drew to the cause were not knights; instead, they were a varied crowd of peasants, petty criminals, women, children, aged people, knights who had been disowned by their families, and ill people. Peter promised them something their feudal masters, those to whom they had previously pledged their service in return for protection, could not—salvation. They could leave their grim life and find the grace of God, perhaps even personal glory, fighting the infidel in the Holy Land. By the time Peter reached Cologne, Germany, as many as fifteen thousand people were already in his army.

The pope had announced that the First Crusade was to depart for the Middle East in August 1096, but Peter and his followers were impatient to go, so they set out from Germany in April. By this time the People’s Crusade had grown even larger. The exact size is a matter of some debate, but estimates range from twenty thousand all the way up to three hundred thousand.

This first wave of Crusaders, often hungry and always badly disciplined, caused nothing but trouble as they traveled to the Holy Land through eastern Europe. They started a riot in Hungary and sacked, or destroyed, the city of Nish, in modern-day Bulgaria. Word of these outrages reached the Byzantine emperor. He sent an armed force to restrain them under the guise of “escorting” them to Constantinople. But fighting broke out between the Crusaders and their escort, and the Byzantines attacked. The People’s Crusaders finally submitted, but not before as many as ten thousand had been either killed or taken into slavery. Still, the People’s Crusade pressed on.

The disappointment of Alexius when these uncouth warriors began to arrive at the gates of Constantinople in July 1096 can only be imagined. They continued to cause trouble, robbing country estates and looting buildings. Alexius, frustrated and angry, settled them in August in a military camp across the Bosphorus Strait in Asia Minor and pleaded with them to wait to continue with the Crusade until trained men-at-arms arrived from Europe.

However, the People's Crusaders, fired with enthusiasm for their holy cause and always hungry, were not willing to wait. On October 21, 1096, Peter was away in Constantinople. In his absence, a large force of People's Crusaders set out to engage the Turks in battle. Leaving the women and children in camp, they marched straight into a Seljuk ambush. Virtually no one survived the assault. The Seljuks then stormed the camp, and five hours later the destruction of the People's Crusade was complete. A few thousand survivors were ferried across the Bosphorus to safety in Constantinople, but the People's Crusade had come to an abrupt and shameful end. When later Crusaders passed through the area, they reported encountering large hills of bones, all that remained of the People's Crusade.

### **The Children's Crusade**

This type of mass religious hysteria did not end with the People's Crusade. Before the Fifth Crusade early in the thirteenth century, a curious instance of mass religious hysteria arose when the so-called Children's Crusade departed for the Holy Land.

In the early thirteenth century a new and larger class of poor was emerging. The population of Europe was increasing faster than the ability to feed it. Wage labor on farms was becoming more common, leading to unemployment in the winter. The burden of taxes on the poor and near-poor was becoming greater. More and more people were wandering the countryside in search of work and charity. These people often resented the church. They believed that God's people were the poor and dispossessed (homeless), not the wealthy and authoritarian church officials. In this climate, the legends of the Children's Crusade took root and flourished in the popular imagination.



Children getting ready to embark on the Children's Crusade to the Holy Land. After departing on their journey, the children were never heard from again, and their fate is uncertain.  
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By this time Jerusalem had been lost to the Muslims in 1187, just before the Third Crusade. The Third Crusade failed to win it back. The Fourth Crusade in 1204 went horribly off course and, rather than marching on Jerusalem, attacked the city of Constantinople (see "The Third Crusade" and "The Fourth Crusade" in Chapter 6). Given these failures, many Europeans thought that if armed knights fighting for the pope could not reclaim the Holy Land, perhaps the poor and the innocent could.

It is unclear how much of what is known about the Children's Crusade is true. But the legend is that in May 1212 King Philip of France was holding court when he was approached by a twelve-year-old shepherd boy named Stephen. Stephen was the bearer of an incredible tale. He held in his hand a letter that he said was given to him by Christ with instructions to deliver it to the king. The letter said that the king was to assemble a Crusade and march on the holy city of Jerusalem.

The king dismissed Stephen, but the boy was eager to free the Holy Land, so he traveled through France, preaching his Crusade. Everywhere he went he gathered followers, much as Peter the Hermit had done more than a century earlier. People saw him as a saint. By the time he reached Vendôme, France, up to thirty thousand Crusaders from all ranks of life had left their families and joined him. Not one of these Crusaders was over the age of twelve.

In June 1212 Stephen's army continued on to the port city of Marseilles, France. When they arrived at Marseilles, two merchants, named Hugh the Iron and William the Pig, agreed to transport the children to the Holy Land. A few days out at sea, a storm sank two of the ships, and all aboard were lost. The other five ships survived, but none of the children was ever heard from again.

Eighteen years later a priest who had accompanied the children returned from captivity in Egypt. Only then did Europe learn the fate of its children. After the storm, according to the priest, the surviving five ships, rather than sailing east to the Holy Land, had turned south to the North African country of Algeria. In Algeria the treacherous merchants sold the children into slavery.

Meanwhile, a second Children's Crusade, not knowing the fate of the first, was forming in 1212 in Germany, led by a boy named Nicholas. This group, which numbered around twenty thousand, crossed the Alps into Italy and the port city of Pisa. Many died of hunger and exposure along the way. At Pisa two ships left, carrying some of these young Crusaders to the Holy Land, but nothing was ever learned about their fate. A second group, led by Nicholas, made its way to Rome, where the pope greeted them, told them that they should take up the cross when they were older, and sent

them home. Only a few ever made it back, and, again, nothing is known of the rest, including Nicholas. In Nicholas's town, parents who had lost their children turned on the boy's father and hanged him.

## The rise of papal power

Another explanation for the Crusades focuses on the increase in the power of the pope, the leader of the Roman Catholic Church. Put simply, the Crusades were a way for popes to assert their authority not only over the church but over temporal (earthly) rulers, such as kings and emperors. In the late ninth and early tenth centuries, the papacy (the office of and institutions surrounding the pope) had been relatively weak, primarily because from 896 to 904, eight different popes reigned. None had a term that was long enough to allow him to expand his authority. Pope Gregory VII, who reigned from 1073 to 1086, was too preoccupied with reasserting the authority of the church in the West to respond to appeals from Constantinople for aid, but he kept alive the hope of reuniting the two branches of Christianity. It would be Pope Urban II who would act on those appeals and use the Crusades as a way to increase church power.

Pope Urban II was a French nobleman by birth, so the Crusades always had a French character and tended to be led by French noblemen. An exception would appear to be Richard I (1157–1199), the king of England, but even Richard, known by his French name *Coeur de Lion*, or the Lionheart, was more French than English. In the Middle East, Muslims referred to all Crusaders, whatever their national origin, as the *Franj*, or Franks. Thus, when the pope preached his first Crusade sermon at Clermont, he was speaking in French, primarily to French aristocrats.

At the time, Europe was still largely divided. Although the French king Charles Martel (c. 688–741) had resisted Muslim advances into the Frankish kingdom, and his grandson, Charlemagne (742–814), or Charles the Great, had taken major steps toward strengthening the Frankish empire, the history of Europe during this time was still chiefly the history of barons and nobles at war with one another. Urban, a practical, worldly man, wanted to put an end to this quarreling,



**Richard I, the king of England, was just one of the noblemen to lead the Crusades.** ©Bettmann/Corbis. *Reproduced by permission.*

unite the nations of Europe, ensure that the Muslims in Spain made no further advances, and strengthen the power of the papacy.

The Crusades were a way to accomplish these goals. The Crusades gave Europe a common purpose and sense of direction. They were a way to impose a kind of truce over Europe and redirect its energies into a holy war in the East. They would help reduce Europe's surplus population, not only through combat deaths but also through resettlement in the East, and they would give Europe's knightly class something to do.

The Crusades would also provide an outlet for the second (and later) sons of nobles and landowners. These sons often had few economic prospects of their own because of what was called "primogeniture." Under the system of primogeniture, the estates of

nobles and landowners were kept intact, rather than being divided up, by passing wholly to the firstborn son when the landowner died. Many younger sons, especially those who did not want to take up the church as a profession, trained as knights, went on to become Crusaders to the Middle East, and gained estates of their own—for the pope promised that they could keep any territory they won during the Crusade. For the young sons of many French noblemen, this was a powerful and irresistible motive for becoming a Crusader. In areas of Europe where primogeniture was not yet widely practiced, the Crusades served to draw many sons and others who made claims on an estate, often leaving such estates in the hands of a single noble or landowner. Those nobles and landowners would encourage crusading as a way to keep control over their land.

The First Crusade provides a typical example of this desire for territory. As the Crusaders were on the march toward Jerusalem, quarrels began to erupt over the question



of who would remain in charge of towns captured along the way. After initial successes at the cities of Nicaea and Dorylaeum (both in modern-day Turkey), two of the Frankish nobles leading the Crusade, Baldwin and Tancred, grew weary of fighting for the cause of the Byzantine emperor, to whom they had made a pledge to restore captured cities. They wanted to capture territory for themselves. To that end, they split their troops off from the main force and headed toward the Mediterranean coast and the city of Tarsus.

The people of Tarsus were largely Armenian Christians, so they welcomed the Crusaders and gladly raised their flag over the city. Baldwin, whose force was much larger than Tancred's, insisted that the city be turned over to him. Seeing that he had little choice, Tancred gave in and headed west along the coast, where he seized the towns of Adama and Mamistra. Like Tarsus, these were Armenian towns whose Christian residents welcomed the Crusaders.

**Illuminated manuscript of a knight traveling to the Holy Land during the Crusades. One of the goals of the Crusades was to give Europe's knightly class something to do.** ©Archivo Iconografico, S.A./Corbis. Reproduced by permission.



**Modern-day Urfa, the site of Edessa, one of the Crusader states. Baldwin and his forces were eagerly welcomed as deliverers by the Christian Armenian residents of the city.** ©Chris Hillier/Corbis. Reproduced by permission.

Baldwin then set his sights on the wealthy city of Edessa farther inland, where he and his forces were eagerly welcomed as deliverers by the Christian Armenian residents of the city. Baldwin's first step after entering the city was to force its ruler to adopt him as a son. The ruler faced a great deal of resentment from his subjects because of his ties to Alexius, and just a month later an angry mob of them killed him. The mob was most likely provoked by Baldwin, who, as the ruler's heir, was now rich. He married an Armenian princess and settled in as the sole ruler of the city and the surrounding area. In one of their first major victories, the Crusaders, ironically, seized a city from Christian rather than Muslim hands.

The "poetry" of the Crusades emphasizes the efforts of noble knights to gain honor and glory. The "religion" of the Crusades emphasizes efforts of sincere Christians to rescue the tomb of Christ from infidels. But the fact remains that the Crusades were often as much business and politics as

they were poetry and religion. Throughout the nearly two-hundred-year history of the Crusades, fighting took up far less time than political infighting, disputes over the crown of Jerusalem and the other Crusader states, and the amassing of wealth. While the popes were not always content with the outcome of Crusades, particularly the failure to recapture Jerusalem, the Crusades helped relocate and redirect much of this misspent energy to the Middle East and a common foe. At the same time, they increased the wealth of many European noblemen.

### **The Crusade against the Cathars**

Another pope who used the Crusades to assert papal authority was Innocent III, who was pope at the time of the Fourth Crusade, which he called in 1198. Innocent, a ruthless, unfeeling pope who craved power, wanted to impose a Christian monarchy over the whole of the known world. He had long wanted the Eastern Orthodox Church to bow to the authority of Rome, and he became obsessed with the reconquest of Jerusalem, which had been lost in 1187.

Not everyone, however, shared the pope's view of papal authority. At the time, a community of Christians who lived largely in southern France refused to acknowledge the pope's authority, either as a temporal or spiritual leader. These people were called the Cathars, a name that means "Pure Ones." In the view of the Cathars, the physical world was evil. They believed that only the poor—in contrast to the worldly and wealthy church—were Christ's true followers. They refused to believe that the sacraments (religious rites) or the words of priests and bishops offered a path to salvation. Many of them wandered the countryside living lives of godliness and poverty. To "correct" the Cathars, the religious order of the Dominican friars, who would themselves lead lives of poverty and simplicity, was formed. But the Cathars refused to yield even to the devout Dominicans.

The pope, though, would tolerate no challenge to his authority. He believed that the Cathars were heretics, or believers in false religious doctrine, and he was determined to wipe them out. His own chilling words, as quoted by Jonathan and Louise Riley-Smith in *The Crusades: Idea and Reality, 1095–1274*, were these:

Let us apply ourselves without cease, and with the help of many, to enforce correction on this vile [wicked] breed of people. Ulcers which do not respond to treatment with dressings must be cut out with the knife. Those who hold cheap the correction of the Church must be crushed by the arm of secular power.

Accordingly, the pope called a “crusade,” urging Christians throughout Europe to rid Christendom of the Cathars. He began by advising the southern French counts of Toulouse and Béiers to rid their provinces of the “enemy” that lived among them. The counts, who were not Cathars, refused to do so. The pope then ordered the northern French to do it instead, promising them that if they went to war against the south, they could keep any property they seized—the same promise Urban II had made to the Crusaders in 1095. By playing the north against the south, the pope was expertly taking advantage of the tension that existed between them. The south tended to be a region of artists, troubadours (singers), and poets. Southerners were apt to see their northern countrymen as ignorant barbarians. The north was more commercial and down-to-earth. Its stereotype of the south was that the people were wild-eyed dreamers.

Enticed by the promise of booty (goods and valuables of the enemy), an army of northern French crusaders led by the Abbot of Cîteaux began launching attacks against small towns in the south of France. Their goal was not to seize territory, as the goal of the first four Crusades had been. Their goal was mass murder. On July 22, 1208, this army attacked the town of Béziers. Elizabeth Hallam, in *Chronicles of the Crusades: Eye-witness Accounts of the Wars between Christianity and Islam*, quotes the abbot, writing later to the pope: “Our forces spared neither rank nor sex nor age. Thus did divine vengeance vent its wondrous rage.” Not a single inhabitant of the town was spared. This genocide (deliberate murder of an entire cultural group) against the Cathars and others whom the pope saw as heretics lasted for twenty years. The goal was to stamp out unbelief and assert the church’s authority, and the popes used crusading as a way to keep this spirit alive.

## The economics of the Crusades

Even during the Middle Ages war was business. It took immense amounts of money to gather and equip an army,

transport it long distances, and provision it along the way. Increasing the expense was generally the massive shadow army of pages (youths in service to a knight), squires (attendants to a nobleman), servants, cooks, blacksmiths, priests, bishops, and prostitutes that accompanied the Crusaders.

But unlike today, when troops are paid out of a national treasury funded by taxes, the Crusaders were largely self-financed—that is, the Crusaders paid their own way. For this reason, the various popes who called Crusades depended heavily on the nobles of Europe. It was the nobles, not the kings, who commanded the resources needed to finance a Crusade. An exception to this system came during the Third Crusade, when Kings Richard I of England and Philip II of France enacted the Saladin tithe, referring to the Muslim general whose military successes prompted the Crusade. (A tithe is a tenth and refers to the custom of Christians to donate a tenth of their income to the church.) The tithe was a direct tax levied, or charged, on all church and nonchurch income. This was the first time in western Europe that such a tax had ever been imposed. It introduced permanently a system for collecting and distributing money raised through taxes to pay the expenses of government.

The knights who fought in the Crusades were not paid. They were compensated with the spoils of war (goods obtained or stolen through war) and with land they seized in the Middle East. In the years following the First Crusade, they transplanted the feudal system of Europe to their colonies. Like landowners back in their home countries, these Crusaders ran their affairs from the cities while employing the local people as tenants on farms, groves, and vineyards in the surrounding areas.

All of this, though, took money and supplies from Europe. One of the permanent benefits of the Crusades was that they led to a more organized system of trade, finance, and credit around the Mediterranean Sea. Like many such developments throughout history, what began in the service of war produced immense benefits later during peacetime. At the center of this system were the Italians, especially the merchants of such trading cities as Venice, Pisa, and Genoa. These cities' locations on the Italian coastline made them naturals for the role. They were centrally located and had

ready access to ports and shipping lanes along the Levant (the countries along the eastern shore of the Mediterranean) and throughout the region.

At first, the merchants of these cities did not see much profit potential in the Crusades; the first Crusaders carried everything they needed with them and took a route overland to the Holy Land. The Genoese altered that view when they took a gamble and shipped supplies and equipment to the siege at Antioch (see “The First Crusade” in Chapter 6). When the blockade was lifted, they had a permanent foothold there as merchants. The Venetians and the Pisans followed the Genoese and carved out their own market share on the Levant. The Italians invested heavily in fleets of ships to transport goods and people.

At times the Crusades wound up serving purely commercial interests. Good examples are provided by the Third and Fourth Crusades. The Pisans played a major role in the Third Crusade, particularly during the siege of Acre (in modern-day Israel). Leading the siege initially was Guy of Lusignan, king of Jerusalem. Guy at first tried to lay siege to the city of Tyre (in modern-day Lebanon), which was by this time in the hands of the Muslim general Saladin. He gathered a force and marched on the city. Incredibly, though, an Italian named Conrad of Montferrat, a Crusader with a talent for finance, had taken control of the city’s business interests and refused to let Guy in. He was happy with the way things were, for he had a monopoly (exclusive ownership) on trade between the city and Europe. Guy then decided to move his forces to Acre to lay siege to that city, and the Pisans offered to help. In exchange for business rights throughout much of the kingdom of Acre, they ferried Guy and his troops to Acre and helped with the siege.

Saladin was in the process of trying, unsuccessfully, to drive Guy and his troops away from Acre when Richard I of England and Philip II of France arrived. With their help, Acre was restored to Christian hands and continued to operate as a key seaport on the Levant during later Crusades. It was this city, a business center, and not the holy city of Jerusalem, that stood as the Crusaders’ last outpost in the Middle East when it fell in 1291, bringing an end to the Crusades.

The Fourth Crusade, under the influence of the doge (duke) of Venice, never got anywhere near Jerusalem. In-

stead, the Crusaders attacked and sacked Constantinople, greatly increasing the power and wealth of the Venetian merchants. The crafty doge was able, in effect, to hijack the Crusade by offering the Crusaders the protection of a fleet of warships in exchange for half of the booty that could be collected. His motive in persuading the Crusaders to attack Constantinople had nothing to do with rescuing the tomb of Christ or freeing the Holy Land. He was angry because the Byzantine emperor was offering more favorable trading terms to the Genoans and Pisans and violating trade agreements with Venice. The sack of Constantinople increased the wealth not only of Venice but also of much of Europe, for the Crusaders returned to their homes with anything of value they could carry from the city.

In sum, the Crusades were not the result of a sudden need in Europe to come to the aid of the Byzantine emperor or solely to reclaim the Holy Land from the Muslims. While these were key factors motivating the Crusades, a number of other factors—religious hysteria, the expansion of feudalism, the custom of primogeniture, growing poverty, social changes, expanding business interests, and the ambitions of popes—all came together at a moment in history. The result was a period of heroic combat and senseless slaughter, of religious fervor and moneygrubbing, of nobility and betrayal, of epic poetry and melancholy tragedy.

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## Division of Shiite and Sunni Muslims

5

**F**rom a European perspective, the First Crusade ended successfully with the capture of Jerusalem in 1099 by forces from western Europe (see “The First Crusade” in Chapter 6). In the decades that followed, the Crusaders, as these fighters were known, remained in control initially of three major Crusader “states” in the region. These states included not only the Kingdom of Jerusalem but also the County of Edessa and the Principality of Antioch.

After the First Crusade most of the Crusaders returned home. Only a few thousand Europeans remained at any time to administer and defend the Crusader states. What may seem puzzling is how so few Europeans could maintain control of the area. In many respects, the Crusader states were like islands surrounded by nations and empires hostile to them. Most of the people in these nations were Muslims, or members of the Islamic faith founded by Muhammad in the seventh century (see “Islam” in Chapter 1). To the north a large portion of Asia Minor was under the control of Muslim Turks, cutting off the land route from Europe. To the east the Muslims controlled Damascus (in Syria), and to the east

Two Muslim warriors doing battle on horseback. The Crusaders were able to keep control of the Crusader states until the 1130s because the Muslims were sharply divided by religious and political factions.

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of Damascus was the Seljuk empire (see “The Arrival of the Seljuk Turks” in Chapter 4). To the southwest, around the southeastern coast of the Mediterranean Sea, was Muslim Egypt. Furthermore, the Byzantines (the Christians of the East), who felt betrayed by the Latin Christians (Christians of Europe), showed little interest in aiding their cause. And yet the Crusaders remained in control of the Crusader states without facing a major threat until the 1130s.

The Crusaders were able to do so primarily because they encountered little organized opposition. Both within the Crusader states and in the surrounding regions, Muslims were sharply divided by religious and political factions, or subgroups. The Egyptian Muslims hated the Turks while frequently trying to find a way to get along with the Christians. Many Arabs in the region claimed to be allied (on the same side) with the Egyptians. But these Arabs, especially those in rich seaport towns along the coast, were often more interested in retaining power locally than in maintaining allegiance, or loyalty, to a distant monarchy. The Turks, too, were divided, with the Seljuks contending with a rival clan called the Danishmend.

Even the Seljuks, who had seized large portions of the Byzantine Empire, were divided. Factions of the Seljuks were led by warlords who plotted and schemed to gain advantage over one another. These warlords included such figures as Duqaq in Damascus and Kerbogha in the city of Mosul. A third, Ridwan in the city of Aleppo, tried to cooperate with the Franks, earning the hatred of his Arab subjects. These divisions prevented the Arabs from mounting any kind of campaign to drive the Crusaders out of the Middle East. They were too occupied fighting among themselves both for political power and for control of their faith.

## **The emergence of the Shiite Muslims**

The Muslim empire had grown steadily from the seventh through the tenth centuries, after the founding of Islam. Although Islam had many successes and converted many members to the faith, it faced a constant threat from within. The threat extended back almost to the founding of Islam. It arose over the question of who would succeed Muhammad as leader of the faith. When Muhammad died in 632, he left no instructions about who would follow him. An assembly of Muslim leaders in the city of Mecca (in modern-day Saudi Arabia), Muhammad's birthplace, chose a man named Abu Bakr as the first caliph, the term used to denote Muhammad's successor. Abu Bakr was one of Muhammad's closest associates and the father of Muhammad's second wife.

Immediately, a group formed that opposed the appointment of Abu Bakr. Members of this group believed that Muham-

mad's successor had to be a blood descendant from the Prophet, as Muhammad was called. They favored a man named Hazrat Ali ibn Abi Talib, or Ali, who was Muhammad's cousin and the husband of Muhammad's daughter Fatima. This dissident, or rebel, group became known as the Shi'at Ali, or "party of Ali," from which the name Shiite (often spelled Shi'ite) comes.

The Shiites were always a minority sect, or subgroup; by the early twenty-first century they made up perhaps a tenth of Muslims in the region. The main group of Muslims is called Sunni, a name meaning "orthodox." "Sunni" comes from the word *Sunna*, or "traditions," referring to writings that describe how Muhammad and his close associates dealt with certain issues. Even in the early years of the twenty-first century, tensions continued to divide the Sunnis and the Shiites in the Middle East.

## The Umayyad dynasty

What followed was a long period of strife in Islam. Abu Bakr, the first caliph, named as his successor Umar. Abu Bakr and Umar had led an army against the Byzantine Empire and achieved a major victory over Byzantine forces in a battle at the Yarmuk River near the Sea of Galilee in 636. Umar, the second caliph, then seized Jerusalem after a lengthy siege in 638. Umar was murdered in 644 by a non-Muslim, and a power struggle developed among several men he had favored to succeed him. Out of this struggle, a man named Uthman became the third caliph.

Uthman came from a powerful, aristocratic Meccan clan called the Umayyads, so the family that led Islam now was called the Umayyad dynasty. The Umayyads moved the capital city of Islam from Mecca to Damascus in Syria. Because of Uthman's aristocratic background, Shiite resentment toward him became even greater. In 656 he was murdered by Muslim dissidents who continued to favor Ali, who came from a humbler background.

Ali thus finally became the fourth caliph, but following a civil war that did not resolve any disputes, he was murdered in 661, again by Muslim dissidents. With Ali gone, the Umayyad clan regained control of the faith, ruling the empire



## Shiite Muslims and Karbala

The site of the Battle of Karbala is still a holy shrine for Shiite Muslims. They believe that Hussain deliberately sacrificed himself at Karbala for the Shiite sect of Islam. He wanted to be brutalized, or ill-treated, by the Umayyad caliph because he sought to demonstrate that rulers who governed by military force rather than by the word of Allah were evil. For this reason, Hussain's martyrdom, or death for the faith, is still celebrated by Shiites.

Hussain's martyrdom is commemorated on a religious holiday called Ashura. On this holiday, Shiite men hit them-

selves in the forehead until they bleed. The martyrdom of Hussain had great significance for the Shiites. The Shiite movement began and was justified because, in the view of the Shiites, Ali was denied his proper place as the first caliph after Muhammad died. His martyrdom, though, fueled the Shiite movement and, as Moojan Momen writes in *An Introduction to Shi'i Islam*, "implanted its ideas deep in the heart of the people." The Shiites remain an oppressed minority of Islam. They tend to be poorer and less educated than the Sunni majority.

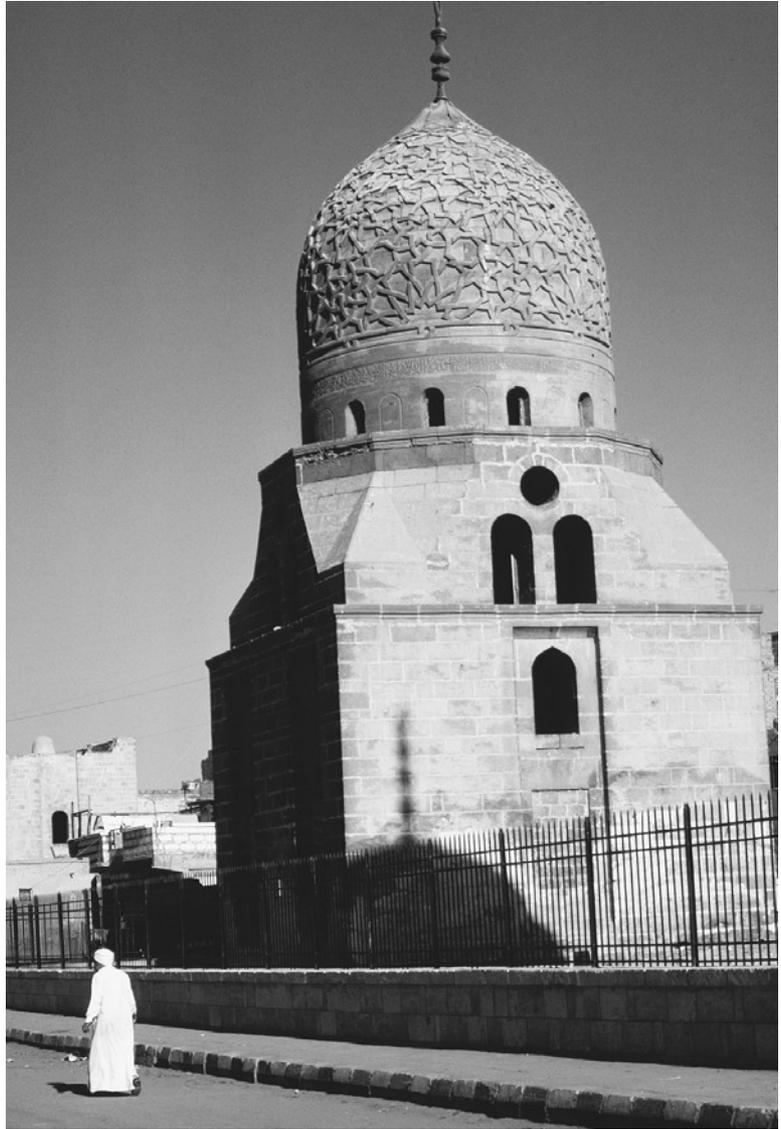
from Damascus. Over the following decades the Umayyads conquered most of North Africa, overran much of Spain, and even marched into France, where they were stopped by the French king Charles Martel at the Battle of Tours in 732.

The division of Islam, though, was complete. The followers of Ali, the Shiites, condemned the Sunni Umayyads as illegitimate, believing that they were corrupt, or dishonest, and unfaithful to the teachings of the Prophet (Muhammad). The Shiite party reflected a great deal of unrest, particularly the resentment of non-Arab Muslims of the strong influence that Arabs had over the faith. In 680 Ali's youngest son, the Prophet's grandson Hussain ibn Ali (often spelled Hussein or Husayn), led the Shiites in another civil war against the Umayyads. The war ended when he and his family were killed in a historic battle at Karbala, south of Baghdad.

## The Abbasid dynasty

Ali's death did not end civil war in the years that followed. The Sunnis from Damascus continued to offend other

A mausoleum of the Abbasid caliphs. This faction of Islam was descended from the prophet Muhammad's uncle, named Abbas. ©Charles and Josette Lenars/Corbis. Reproduced by permission.



factions within Islam as they became more secularized—that is, as they separated religion from the affairs of state. In response, another rebel group formed. Members of this group were descendants of Muhammad's uncle, named Abbas, so they were called the Abbasids.

The Abbasids launched another civil war in 750. They captured Damascus and massacred the Umayyad caliph and



his family. They then moved the Islamic capital to Baghdad, the capital city of modern-day Iraq but at that time in the nation of Persia. From Baghdad, the Abbasid caliphate (the term used to refer to the office of caliph and his domains) ruled over the Muslim empire, which included Syria and Palestine (the nation in which Jerusalem was located), until 1258. The caliph, though, was something of a figurehead; that is, he did not wield much power. While the Baghdad caliphate provided the administrators and religious leaders, power was in the hands of the warriors, the Seljuk Turks. The Turks were Sunnis who were led by a sultan (the king of a Muslim state) in Isfahan, Iran.

Meanwhile, the only member of the Umayyad family to escape the massacre in Damascus—Abdurrahman—established an independent caliphate in Córdoba, Spain, in 755 (see “Spanish Islam” in Chapter 1). Because of the presence of an Islamic caliphate within its borders, European Chris-

**A Muslim cemetery and mosque wall in Tunisia, the ancient stronghold of the Fatimid Shiite Muslims. This faction of Islam was descended from the prophet Muhammad’s daughter Fatima. ©K.M. Westermann/Corbis. Reproduced by permission.**

tians began to see Islam as a growing threat. This feeling of being threatened eventually led to popular support for the Crusades. Other independent caliphates were formed in Morocco in 788, Tunisia in 800, and eastern Persia in 820. In 868 an independent caliphate was formed in Egypt, where the ruling Shiite family was called the Fatimid dynasty, named after Muhammad's daughter Fatima.

This division of Islam into factions, born of a complex and chaotic history, weakened Islam, although the Islamic empire was rich in trade, agriculture, manufacturing, commerce, and learning; Damascus, for example, had seventy libraries. Divisions, though, prevented Islam from presenting a united front against the Crusaders. The movement of the capital from Damascus, which lay just to the east of the Crusader states, to the more distant city of Baghdad would prove fateful. The greater distance from Palestine made it harder for the caliphate to lead opposition to the Crusaders. For their part, the Crusaders were able to take advantage of this factionalism, or division. Often aiding one side and then another, they kept the Muslims on their toes, focused on one another rather than on ridding their lands of the colonists. In fact, at times it was in the interest of one Muslim faction or another to aid the Europeans.

An example concerns the formation of a fourth Crusader state, the County of Tripoli, which lay between Jerusalem and the two Crusader states to the north, Edessa and Antioch. The Muslim emir, or ruler, of Tripoli, learned that forces from Damascus were planning to ambush Baldwin, who was on the march with a small Crusader force from Edessa to Jerusalem to assume the throne of the kingdom after his brother, Godfrey, died. The emir of Tripoli wanted to retain control over the city for himself and did not want Damascus to meddle in Tripoli, so he tipped off Baldwin, allowing him to escape the ambush. Then later, in 1109, when Raymond of Toulouse and a small band of Christian knights marched on Tripoli, Damascus got its revenge on the emir when the forces it sent to help defend the city refused to fight. Only in this way did Tripoli fall and become a fourth Crusader state. A unified Islamic response in Tripoli probably would have prevented the city from falling to the Christians. Without Tripoli, the Crusader states in the north would have remained cut off from Jerusalem.



## The Assassins

Another example of the divisions that undermined Islam in responding to the Crusaders was the formation of a Shiite group called the Assassins. The name was invented by the West; members of the Assassins would have referred to themselves as Ismailis. This name refers to an imam, or Shiite Muslim religious leader, named Ismail, who the group believed was divine. Assassins, then and in the twenty-first century, carry out planned murders for religious or political purposes. One theory about the source of the name is that it comes from the word *hashish*, the drug that members of the group used when they carried out their missions.

The Assassins dedicated themselves to overthrowing the Sunnis and returning Islam to what they considered the true path of the faith. The most militant, or aggressive, wing of the Assassins was formed in about 1090, just five years before Pope Urban II called the First Crusade, by a learned man

**A painting depicting the taking of Tripoli. Tripoli became the fourth Crusader state and was important because it allowed the Crusader states to the north access to Jerusalem.** *Chateau de Versailles, France/ Giraudon/Bridgman Art Library. Reproduced by permission.*

A set of doors with intricate metalwork in a mosque found in Cairo, Egypt. Even though most of Egypt was Muslim, there was constant fighting between the Sunni and Shiite factions. ©Dave Bartruff/Corbis. Reproduced by permission.



named Hasan al-Sabah. His original goal was to base his movement in Shiite Egypt, from there assassinating Sunni leaders. But the Egyptian caliph had no desire to harbor a band of terrorists, so Hasan and his group were forced underground. In the years that followed, they tried to disrupt Sunni Islam wherever they could. For example, in Syria they fanned the flames of disagreement between the Sunni emirs. Thus the Assassins not only became outcasts and sworn ene-

mies of Sunni Islam, but they also became the enemies of the Shiite caliphate in Egypt. For this reason, Hasan actively worked on many occasions for the benefit of the Crusaders, his only ally in defeating Sunni Islam.

## ***Jihad***

None of this is to say that Islam mounted no opposition to the Franks. In the years after the First Crusade and the capture by Christians of Jerusalem, some Muslims revived the tradition of *jihad*, usually translated as “holy war.” The concept of a holy war for Islam was first developed in the seventh century, when Muslims fought the Byzantine Empire to gain control of Jerusalem. Many of those who fought against the Byzantines had been given grants of land, which had remained in the same families for more than four centuries. Now those lands were being lost to the Christians, and some Muslims wanted to fight back.

Thus *jihad* reemerged in the early years of the twelfth century, after the Crusaders seized Tripoli in 1109, then the cities of Beirut and Sidon in 1110. Many desperate Muslims fled these cities, taking refuge in Damascus and Aleppo, both cities in Syria. They were looking for some way to oppose what was happening in their land. In Aleppo an influential judge named Abu al-Fadl ibn al-Khashshab tried to persuade the Turkish ruler to call on the Baghdad caliphate for help in driving out the Christians. The Turkish ruler, Ridwan, though, was trying to get along with the Christians, so al-Khashshab went to Baghdad himself in early 1111.

Military power in Baghdad lay with the Turks, not the Arabs. The Turks supported al-Khashshab, because they wanted to assert their authority over Aleppo. Accordingly, the Turkish sultan ordered his army to get ready for “Holy War against the infidel [unbeliever, in this case the Christians] enemies of God.” In this way, *jihad* was launched against the Christians.

Even so, little damage was done to the Christians. The Turkish sultan sent his force to Aleppo, but in the meantime Ridwan had arrested al-Khashshab and barricaded the city. He believed that the Turks were coming not to “rescue” him but to seize control of the city. After the Turkish forces arrived,

they vandalized the area around Aleppo but then left without taking the city. While nothing was done about Christians in Syria and Palestine, the seeds of holy war had been planted.

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# History of the Crusades

6

The word “crusade” emerged from the Romance languages of Europe, especially French and Spanish, during the Middle Ages—the era in Europe roughly from the years 500 to 1500, often called the medieval period. (These languages are called Romance languages not because they are “romantic” but because they evolved from southern Europe and the region around Rome.) The Old French word *crois* and the Spanish *cruz* mean “cross.” From these words came the French *croisée* and the Spanish *cruzada*. Both of these words mean something like “to take up the cross,” and the connotation (intended significance) of both was that the cross was that on which Christ was crucified. The English word “crusade” developed from these words.

That is “crusade” with a small “c.” With a capital “C,” the term “Crusades” has a more specific meaning. Historians use it to refer to the series of military campaigns launched by the Christian countries of western Europe beginning in the late eleventh century. During these campaigns tens of thousands of men, and even some women, “took up the cross” for the church. As a sign of their vow to their faith, they pledged to wear a large Christian

**King Louis IX of France leading his army of Crusaders. With Louis's defeat in 1250, the last, or Seventh, Crusade came to an end. ©Bettmann/Corbis. Reproduced by permission.**



cross embroidered on their armor and shields. Their goal was to recapture Palestine from the hands of the Muslims and restore it to Christian control. The chief focus of the Crusaders was the Holy City of Jerusalem (see Chapter 2 on the Holy City of Jerusalem), but the impact of the Crusades was felt throughout that region of the world as well as throughout Europe.

Historians conventionally number the Crusades. The First Crusade was launched in late 1095 and ended with the

capture of Jerusalem in 1099. The last, or the Seventh, Crusade ended in 1250, although the Crusader presence in the region did not end until the fall of the last Christian outpost, Acre, in 1291. Historians identify seven separate Crusades, but the Crusades were a single extended conflict that was fought in waves or stages over nearly two centuries.

## The sermon at Clermont

Pope Urban II's first step after receiving the Byzantine emperor Alexius's appeal for help in liberating the Holy Land (see "A Cry for Help" in Chapter 4) was to plan a church council in Clermont, a city in the south-central French province of Auvergne. The council took place in November 1095. Late in the day on November 27, a crowd began to assemble in a field outside Clermont. Many of those in the crowd were bishops, barons (noblemen), and Frankish knights (that is, knights from the Frankish empire, or France). Many others were simple townsfolk and people from the surrounding countryside.

The pope ascended a large elevated platform and began to preach a sermon. Playing expertly on his listeners' emotions, Urban told them about bloodshed in the East, about atrocities (acts of violence) committed by Muslims against Christians. He inflamed his audience by pointing out that these evils were committed not only against Eastern Orthodox Christians (members of the eastern branch of Christianity) but also against pilgrims from the West who were visiting the Holy Land. He painted a picture of the holy city of Jerusalem in the hands of infidels (unbelievers), who were desecrating, or violating and damaging, places sacred to all Christians. Most important, he called on his listeners, especially the Frankish knights, to come to the aid of their Christian brothers and free the city of Jerusalem, including the tomb of Christ, from the infidel. The crowd responded enthusiastically, chanting "God wills it!" The knights and nobles fell to their knees. They proclaimed their allegiance to the pope and vowed to fight in his holy cause. "God wills it!" became a battle cry during the Crusades.

On that chilly afternoon in Clermont, the First Crusade began. For the next nine months, Urban traveled across

France, preaching the Crusade. His appeal met with overwhelming popular approval. All through Europe—but especially in France, Germany, and Italy—priests, monks, and bishops signed up recruits, who saw in the pope’s appeal a chance to win salvation for their souls. A kind of religious frenzy affected many people of Europe. Warfare came to be seen as a way to serve God.

## The First Crusade

From August through October 1096 groups of trained troops, each under the command of a noble, departed from Europe. Most were from France, although significant numbers were from Germany and Italy. The first group, under the command of a noble named Hugh of Vermandois, arrived at Constantinople in October. This group was followed by others through the winter and into the spring of 1097, including those led by the brothers Godfrey, Eustace, and Baldwin from France and a contingent from Italy led by Bohemond of Taranto.

## The road to Jerusalem

The relationship between the western knights and the Byzantines was tense. The Byzantines had already had to deal with the People’s Crusade (see “Religious Hysteria” in Chapter 4) and were inclined to think of the westerners as crude, ignorant barbarians. For their part, the western knights regarded the Byzantines as soft. Despite these tensions, the European and Byzantine forces cooperated, at least for a while. The combined army of Crusaders and Greeks, numbering perhaps sixty thousand, stood assembled at the extreme western edge of Asia Minor in Anatolia (a region in western Turkey). Its first objective was Nicaea, a strategically valuable city located just across the Bosphorus Strait from Constantinople. Nicaea was a Turkish sultanate (a region or country ruled by a Muslim sultan, or king) under the command of Kilij Arslan. Arslan was the commander who had destroyed the People’s Crusade.

The Crusaders suffered heavy casualties in a battle with Arslan’s forces, but their formations held, and the Turks had to withdraw. In May the Crusaders and Byzantines laid siege to Nicaea, which surrendered to Alexius on June 19,

1097. Flushed with success, the Crusaders, now about 700 miles (1,127 kilometers) from the Holy Land and expecting to get there in six weeks, turned their attention to the next city on the route, Dorylaeum. Arslan, though, had different ideas and planned an ambush along their way. Again, despite heavy losses, the Crusader formations held, and the Turks withdrew. The road to Jerusalem seemed clear.

## **The siege of Antioch**

The Crusaders set out for Antioch, a city on the eastern shore of the Mediterranean Sea. Antioch was a large city that controlled the overland route into Syria and thus to Jerusalem, so it was a key objective for the Crusaders.

The Crusaders arrived at Antioch in October and laid siege to the heavily fortified city. (To “lay siege” means to surround a fortified city or castle, cut off supplies from the outside, and hope to starve those inside into surrendering.) The task was daunting, for the city was surrounded by 25 miles (40 kilometers) of walls and 400 towers. As weeks turned into months, the Crusaders ran out of money and food. Many of the poorer Crusaders died of starvation. Convinced that the situation was hopeless, the few Byzantine troops who had remained with the Crusaders returned to Constantinople. Many of the Crusaders deserted, often fleeing under cover of night. On June 3, 1098, after seven months, the siege finally succeeded after Bohemond discovered a corrupt, discontented guard who secretly admitted the Crusaders to the city.

## **The miracle at Antioch**

Word had reached the Crusaders that a massive Turkish army was approaching Antioch to come to its defense. The situation seemed desperate. After seven months of siege, little food was left in the city. The Crusaders, now themselves trapped inside the city’s walls, were nearly delirious with starvation and despair.

When matters stood at their most desperate, a common foot soldier by the name of Peter Bartholomew met with Raymond of Toulouse, one of the leaders of the First Crusade, and Pope Urban’s representative, the bishop of Le Puy, and claimed that he had had a vision in which Saint An-



## The Holy Lance

The discovery of the Holy Lance in Antioch during the First Crusade was almost certainly a hoax. What may be the true lance has been in the hands of various leaders, including the Roman emperor Constantine; Charlemagne (“Charles the Great”), the legendary Frankish king of the late eighth and early ninth centuries; the French emperor Napoleon in the nineteenth century; and the German Nazi dictator Adolf Hitler in the twentieth century. These and other rulers believed that the lance was a source of mystical power. After World War II (1939–45), American forces located the lance and returned it to a museum in Vienna, Austria, where it is housed today. Experts using the tools of modern science continue to investigate whether it could indeed be the actual lance that pierced Christ’s side.

drew revealed to him the location of the Holy Lance. This was the lance that a Roman soldier named Longinus had used to pierce Christ’s side as he hung on the cross—and it was buried, said Peter, under Saint Peter’s Cathedral in Antioch. Raymond was doubtful, but on June 15 he ordered his men to excavate, or dig, under the cathedral. Nothing was found until Peter leaped into the pit and emerged with an iron lance. The Crusaders, inspired by their belief that the Holy Lance had been found, recovered their strength and were ready to do battle against the Turks.

Events took an even stranger twist as the Crusaders marched out of the city behind the Holy Lance and priests bearing crosses. As they approached the Turkish army, all on white horses and carrying white banners, the Turks mysteriously turned and fled. To the weakened eyes of the starving Crusaders, they seemed almost to melt away, like ghosts. The Crusaders believed that God looked

on their cause with favor and had come to their aid with a miracle. The reality, though, was that many of the Turkish troops suspected that their commander was fighting not to defend Islam but to seize land for himself. So at the critical moment, they decided simply not to fight and withdrew from the field.

### Onward to the holy city

Bohemond and Raymond quarreled over who was going to take charge of Antioch. Bohemond wanted it for himself, but Raymond remained true to his oath to Alexius and insisted that the city be turned over to the Byzantines. Food was still in short supply, and some of the Crusaders may have resorted to cannibalism (eating their comrades).

Perhaps the most ironic turn of events was that the Fatimids, the Egyptian Muslim dynasty that had controlled Jerusalem since 638, had regained control of the city the previous year. This was a key event, for it undermined the very foundation of the Crusades. With the Fatimids back in control, the threat to Christian pilgrims from the Seljuks, the Turkish Muslim clan that had overrun Palestine and seized Jerusalem, no longer existed. Christians again had ready access to the holy city.

The Crusades should have ended with the capture of Antioch, but a kind of unreason had taken hold of the remaining Crusaders. They had lived with their dream for so long that they could not give it up. They were driven by a passion for what they believed was a holy cause; a need to fulfill their Crusader vows; and a lust for Muslim blood, the spoils of war, and territory.

Over the next six months the Crusaders made their way south toward Jerusalem, now just 300 miles (483 kilometers) away. They met with little resistance along the way. Further quarrels erupted over who among the Crusaders would take control of such cities as Tripoli and Arqa. Finally, though, the Crusaders—about twenty thousand survivors—mounted a hill called Montjoie. They reached the top of the hill, and before them lay their goal. After three years of hardship and toil, of disease, thirst, hunger, and death, they set up their camps outside the holy city of Jerusalem. The date was June 7, 1099.

## **The siege of Jerusalem**

The Egyptian sultan in control of Jerusalem was not overly concerned by the arrival of the Crusaders. Just the year before, he had taken the city from the Turks. He had at his command forty catapults that could rain death and destruction on anyone who tried to breach the city's walls (see "Siege Warfare" in Chapter 10). He knew that the Crusaders did not have any siege machinery of their own and that they could not build any, for he had ordered every tree within miles cut down. He also knew that they had little food and almost no water—because he had had all the wells outside the city poisoned. He was concerned about the lack of man-

power at his command, but Egypt promised to send more troops by the end of July if he could hold out until then.

Once again, a seeming miracle gave a boost to the Crusaders. One day, a Norman knight named Tancred was leading an expedition searching for food and supplies when he happened across the mouth of a cave. Inside, to his astonishment, he found four hundred large abandoned timbers. The Crusaders quickly gathered the timbers and began to assemble towers for scaling the walls. Morale flagged under the searing heat of the summer, but it again was boosted when the priests led a barefoot procession around the city as the Crusaders sang and blew trumpets. The scorn and insults heaped down by the Muslims from the top of the city walls steeled the resolve (determination) of the Crusaders, who completed the towers just five days later.

On the night of July 14, 1099, the Crusaders began to move the towers into place, often while ducking arrows and firebombs from above. On the morning of July 15, Godfrey and his men had their tower in place against the north wall of the city. By noon they had constructed a bridge to the top of the wall. The first Crusaders leaped across and entered the city. They and their men opened the gates of the city, and the Crusaders rushed inside.

### **The massacre**

What followed cannot be explained. Certain it is, though, that the Crusaders abandoned any adherence to the knight's code of chivalry, or gallantry (see Chapter 9 on knights and the traditions of chivalry). As they stormed the city, they were overtaken by sheer blood lust. They rampaged through the city, killing everyone in sight, including women and children. As many as twenty thousand people lay dead at the end of the invasion. They stormed al-Aqsa Mosque and slaughtered the Muslims who had taken refuge there. They set fire to the synagogue (Jewish house of worship) in which the city's Jews had taken refuge. They seized homes and any personal property on which they could lay their hands. Within days the stench of dead bodies had become so great that the few surviving Muslims were ordered to pile the bodies outside the city walls, where they were burned. It was God's will, the Crusaders believed, that they cleanse the holy

city of unbelievers. When their thirst for blood was satisfied, they gathered in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre to pray.

## The Kingdom of Jerusalem

The first task that lay before the Crusaders was to establish a purely Latin Christian kingdom in Jerusalem and the surrounding area. They elected Godfrey as the city's ruler, but Godfrey declined to take the title of king, saying that he could not wear a crown in the city where Christ had been forced to wear a crown of thorns during his Crucifixion. He took instead the title Defender (or sometimes Advocate) of the Holy Sepulchre. In this role he was to rule over what the French came to call Outremer, meaning "the land overseas." Outremer encompassed not only Jerusalem but also the other cities the Crusaders had captured. These Crusader states included the kingdoms of Antioch, Edessa, and later Tripoli—all under the authority of Jerusalem.

The second task was to deal with the Egyptian army that Cairo had sent but that had not arrived in time to save Jerusalem. This army, which greatly outnumbered that of the Crusaders, camped at the nearby town of Ascalon. Before the Egyptians could begin an assault, the Crusaders marched out and launched a surprise attack at sunrise on August 12. They decisively defeated the Egyptians, putting an end to any further Muslim resistance.

Godfrey died just a year later, and the kingship went to his brother Baldwin, who was crowned king of Jerusalem on Christmas Day 1100. By this time, most of the Crusaders had returned home. As time went on, many who remained in the East adopted Middle Eastern dress and customs. Some even learned to speak bits of the Arabic language. The Europeans and their descendants began to establish business relationships and occasionally even personal friendships with the Jews, Greeks, and Muslims in the area. They undertook a massive building and renovation program (see Chapter 2 about the Holy City of Jerusalem). A French writer named Fulcher of Chartres, who chronicled the early years of the Crusades, wrote in *A History of the Expedition to Jerusalem, 1095–1127*: "We who were Occidentals [westerners] have now become Orientals. He who was a Roman or a Frank has in this land been made into a Galilean or a Palestinian.... We



**Baldwin I crossing the River Jordan. Baldwin was crowned king of Jerusalem on Christmas Day 1100.**

*Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, France/Giraudon/Bridgeman Art Library. Reproduced by permission.*

have already forgotten the places of our birth.... He who was born an alien has become as a native.”

In time, an air of normality settled over the area, although Jerusalem and the other kingdoms were weakened by infighting. This state of affairs would last for about four decades. Then, in a development that startled all of Europe, Edessa fell to a Muslim Turk.

## The Second Crusade

The few thousand Europeans who remained in Jerusalem and the other Crusader states—Antioch, Edessa, and Tripoli—knew that they were vulnerable to attack. But for nearly four decades, no one seemed prepared to step forward and lead the Muslims in an effort to expel the colonists from their land. Inspiration finally came from a Turkish leader named Imad al-Din Zengi, who in 1137 struck with

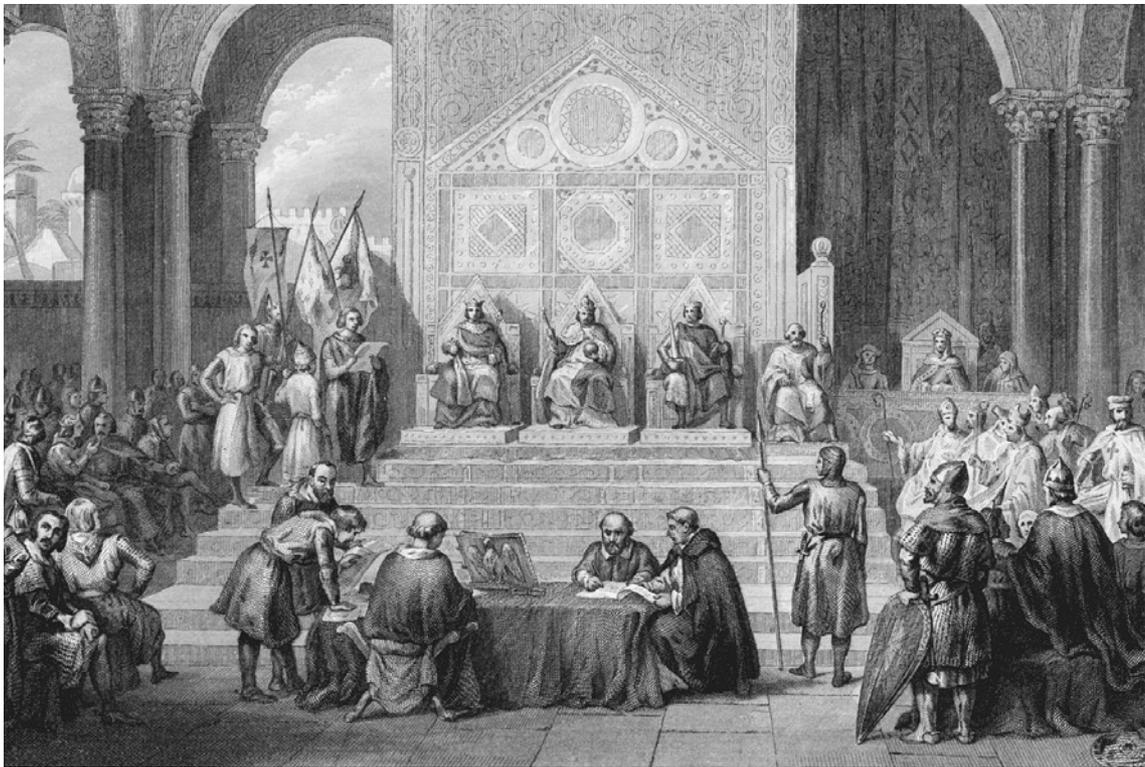
full force at Tripoli, besieged the Frankish garrison (occupying force) that had taken refuge in a nearby castle, and gained control of the city.

In 1144 Zengi set his sights on Edessa, which was the weakest of the Christian kingdoms because of political infighting and a lack of manpower. He besieged Edessa for four weeks, finally entering on Christmas Eve after his men dug tunnels beneath the city's massive walls and set the timbers supporting the walls on fire. In a scene reminiscent of that in Jerusalem forty-five years earlier, Zengi's men slaughtered thousands of men, women, and children. Zengi, though, made it clear that his goal was to drive out the Franks. He ordered that the city's native Eastern Orthodox Christians be spared.

News of Zengi's triumph spread throughout Europe and the Middle East. This was the first time that the Muslims had reclaimed a city from the Franks. It inspired Muslims and terrified leaders both in the West and in Jerusalem. Jerusalem appealed to Europe and the pope for help. The driving force behind the Second Crusade was a monk named Bernard, the abbot of the monastery at Clairvaux in France. Bernard was known throughout Europe as a charismatic (magnetic and captivating) and persuasive speaker. Wherever he went, massive crowds gathered to hear him. Bernard believed that the fall of Edessa was a blessing in disguise. It would give a new generation of Crusaders an opportunity to win salvation by rescuing the Holy Land.

Bernard launched the Second Crusade on March 31, 1146. In a field outside Vézelay, France, he mounted a platform and delivered a stirring Crusade sermon. The large crowd was fired with enthusiasm, mobbing the platform to take the cross. Before long, two massive armies were assembled. The first, led by Conrad III, the emperor of the Holy Roman Empire, departed for the Holy Land in May 1146. The other, led by Louis VII of France, left in June. Their journey was not easy. When Conrad's Germans reached the area around Nicaea, Kilij Arslan's son attacked, wanting to avenge his father's defeat on nearly the same spot a half century earlier. By this time, the Germans were tired and desperately thirsty, and in the short battle that followed nearly nine out of ten soldiers lost their lives.

The remnants of the German army escaped to Nicaea. There they met up with the Franks, who themselves had suffered



**Louis VII of France, Emperor Conrad III of Germany, and King Baldwin III of Jerusalem deliberating the course of the Second Crusade.** ©Bettmann/Corbis. *Reproduced by permission.*

heavy losses at the hands of the Turks as they crossed Asia Minor. The combined forces then started to make their way to Jerusalem.

### **The fiasco at Damascus**

The Second Crusade was a military and political disaster. Eager to engage the Muslims, any Muslims, the Crusaders turned on Damascus in Syria. Their goal was to strengthen the eastern borders of the Crusader states by seizing control of the city. This was a blunder so monumental that it has no explanation. Damascus itself had recently been threatened by Zengi's forces. It was the Christians' only Muslim ally. For its own protection, it had actually formed an alliance with Jerusalem to repel Zengi. By attacking Damascus, the Crusaders foolishly managed to make an enemy of the one Muslim city in the region that was inclined to be friendly toward the Franks.

The Crusaders left Jerusalem for Damascus on May 25, 1148. As the Christian army approached the city, the betrayed

Muslim leaders there made an appeal to Zengi's son, Nur al-Din, a zealous proponent of *jihad*, or holy war, against the Christians. Even though al-Din himself had been threatening Damascus, the ruler of the city concluded that his only choice was to try to join forces with al-Din to drive off the Crusaders (see "Zengi, Nur al-Din, and Saladin" in Chapter 7).

Oddly, the chief protection that Damascus enjoyed was provided not by harsh terrain or other natural barriers but by groves of fruit trees. These groves stretched for up to 5 miles (8 kilometers) away from the city. The trees were planted close together, and each grove was enclosed by high walls of mud. The Crusaders were picked off singly or in small groups by archers on towers in the middle of the groves or foot soldiers armed with lances lurking behind the walls. The Crusaders persisted, though, and drove the Damascenes back behind the city walls.

Then the Crusaders committed a second blunder. Rather than holding the groves, they suddenly moved their

forces to an open plain east of the city. The Damascenes, by now reinforced with refugees and soldiers pouring in from the north, retook the groves. Meanwhile, the Crusaders quickly discovered that there was no water on the plain.

At this point, under the merciless heat of the summer sun, they concluded that the odds of winning were bleak. So they packed up and began a humiliating retreat to Jerusalem. In all, the fighting had lasted about a week. Thus ended the Second Crusade, in stark contrast to the First Crusade. The Crusaders had succeeded only in weakening the Christian kingdoms, making an enemy of Damascus, and strengthening al-Din, who continued to march against Frankish territory in the Middle East.

### **The Christian response**

Nur al-Din continued to nibble at Frankish territory, but he became preoccupied with fighting the Egyptian Muslims. Egypt was wealthy, but its politics were chaotic. The Crusaders were ready to take advantage of this weakness in the Egyptian dynasty. They turned their attention southward to Ascalon, a city that stood between the kingdom of Jerusalem and Egypt and the only city along the Mediterranean coast that had never fallen to the Franks. In 1153 the Crusaders launched a four-month siege of the city, which finally fell in July. The capture of Ascalon was a great triumph, the last one the Crusaders would ever know. For the next century after the capture of Ascalon, the history of the Crusades, from a western perspective, would be a story largely of defeat.

Meanwhile, al-Din was gaining his own triumphs. Damascus fell to his forces without a fight in April 1154. Suddenly, he found himself commander of a large strip of territory on the eastern border of the remaining Crusader states. He might have been the one who drove the Franks out of Muslim lands, but once again he became preoccupied with fighting the Turks to the north and then Egypt. By this time he was growing old and frail. Rather than leading troops in the field, he was spending most of his time in Damascus. He turned his authority over to his successor, Saladin. Saladin proved to be the most fearsome Muslim warrior the Crusaders ever faced. It was to counter Saladin that the Third Crusade was called.

## The Third Crusade

Saladin is the common name given to Salah al-Din Yusuf (1137–1193), who by this time had surrounded the Crusader states as sultan of Syria and Egypt. During the Third Crusade and the centuries that followed, his was perhaps the one name of a Muslim warrior that became widely known in other parts of the world, inspiring a mixture of fear and respect.

### The fall of Jerusalem

The Crusaders were in disarray throughout these years, roughly the 1170s and early 1180s. Internal divisions, infighting, and disputes over succession to the throne of Jerusalem weakened the Crusader states. At one point, civil war threatened the Kingdom of Jerusalem. Only one thing could hold the Kingdom together: an attack by Saladin, which would require the factions, or divided groups, to put aside their differences to preserve the kingdom. But at this point, a state of truce existed between Jerusalem and Saladin. The only thing to do, then, was to break the truce and provoke Saladin. This task fell to the Christian ruler of Antioch, a corrupt man named Reynald of Châtillon. After Reynald attacked a Muslim caravan, Saladin assembled an army of about thirty thousand regular troops and a large number of volunteers and declared war on the Crusaders.

Saladin struck first on July 1, 1187, at the town of Tiberias, located near the Sea of Galilee. Meanwhile, the king of Jerusalem, having learned of Saladin's intentions, had gathered his forces to come to the city's defense and was already on the march. On July 3 they made camp in the desert near the Horns of Hattin, two hills outside Tiberias. On the night of July 3, Saladin's men encircled the camp and set fire to all of the surrounding brush. The following morning, they attacked. Desperately thirsty and with smoke in their eyes, the Franks could put up little resistance, and most were killed or fled.

Saladin's victory at the Battle of Hattin was a turning point in the history of the Crusades. Saladin had just wiped out almost the entire army of Jerusalem, which now stood unprotected to the southwest. Meeting little resistance, he seized nearly every town along the route to the holy city, except for Tripoli, Antioch, and Tyre. Jerusalem fell without a



## Saladin

King Guy and Reynald of Châtillon were both taken prisoner and delivered to Saladin at his tent after the Battle of Hattin. There, Saladin behaved in a way that contributed to his reputation. Gracious in victory, he offered the parched king a drink of water, which Guy gratefully accepted. When Guy tried to offer the goblet to Reynald, Saladin stopped him. Having extended refreshment to Guy, Saladin, by the rules of Arabic hospitality, was obligated to offer him personal protection. But Saladin had no inclination to offer the same protection to the treacherous Reynald. Reynald was taken from the tent, where, moments later, Saladin drew his sword and beheaded him. This type of act was typical of Saladin, who could be noble and generous one moment, and rash and violent the next.

fight on October 2, 1187. In contrast to the scene nearly nine decades earlier in the holy city, no massacre took place, although many of the city's Christians were sold into slavery.

Once again, western Christians were shocked by news from the Levant (the countries on the eastern shore of the Mediterranean). Pope Gregory VIII called for a Third Crusade, which met with an enthusiastic response from the people of Europe. Even before a Crusade was organized, volunteers were arriving by boat in Tyre and Tripoli from England, Flanders, France, Germany, Hungary, and Denmark.

The first organized European force left for the Holy Land on May 11, 1189. It was led by Frederick Barbarossa ("Red Beard"), the Holy Roman Emperor, who believed that the Third Crusade would be the pinnacle, or peak, of his long career as ruler of an empire that dominated central Europe. But once again, crossing Asia Minor proved to be a major

stumbling block. The Germans were harassed continuously by the Turks, and they were dying by the thousands of hunger and thirst. When they arrived at the banks of a cool river in Asia Minor, Frederick could not resist plunging in, where he drowned. The German Crusade thus came to an abrupt end, as most of the remnants of Frederick's leaderless forces turned around and went home.

This left the Third Crusade in the hands of two other European kings, Philip II of France and the newly crowned Richard I of England. Richard was born at a time when France and England were almost constantly at war, largely because of England's occupation of western France. When he came of age, he was knighted by the French king Louis, and he actually learned the arts of war fighting against the forces of his own father. After ascending to the throne of England, Richard



German participation in the Third Crusade came to an abrupt end in 1190 after its leader Frederick I (also known as Frederick Barbarossa), drowned in the Goksu River pictured here. ©Ruggero Vanni/Corbis. Reproduced by permission.

was now in the odd position of having to turn and fight the French, because half of the country was part of his domain. But he had been raised in the French court, where he had learned to think of the English as backward bumpkins.

Popular support for the Crusade was demanding that Richard and Philip put aside their differences to fight Saladin. Each knew that if he left his country to join the Crusade, the



## Richard, Saladin, and Chivalry

A number of legends grew up around Saladin and his willingness to extend the hand of chivalry (courtesy) to Richard. In one battle Richard's horse was killed. Saladin believed that a king, any king, should not have to suffer the indignity of fighting on foot, so he called a truce and had two horses delivered to the English king.

On another occasion, Richard fell ill with a fever. Saladin, not wanting to defeat any other than Europe's best, sent his per-

sonal physician to Richard, as well as gifts of fruit and even snow from the top of Mount Ascalon to cool him. The physician's potion apparently worked, and Richard returned to the field of battle.

These stories may or may not be true, but they became part of the legend of Saladin and his relationship with Richard. They made Saladin almost as much of a hero in the West as he was in the Middle East.

other would attack. The only choice the two kings had was to join forces to fight the common foe. To that end, they levied a special tax, called the "Saladin tithe" (tithe means "tenth" and refers to the custom of Christians of contributing a tenth of their income to the church), to finance what promised to be an expensive expedition.

The two kings met at Vézelay, France, where they assembled their armies. Rather than following the overland route that had defeated Frederick and others before him, they agreed to travel through southern Italy, Sicily, and Cyprus and arrive in the Holy Land by boat. By this time, Guy of Jerusalem had won his freedom from Saladin. He assembled a small army and joined the siege of the city of Acre, which had been going on for nearly two years as Christian forces tried to gain control of it from the Turks. Philip joined him first, followed by Richard, who landed at Acre on June 8, 1191.

Saladin hoped that quarrels would break out among the Crusaders, weakening their resolve. His hope was partially realized. After the city fell to the Crusaders on July 12, 1191, the question arose as to who was going to raise his banner over the city. At one point, Leopold, the duke of Austria, who commanded the handful of Frederick's troops still

in the field, planted his banner in the city. Richard tore it down and threw it into a moat, an impulsive act he would come to regret later. Meanwhile, factions (dissenting groups) quarreled over who would rule the city.

At this point Philip, always more of a politician than a warrior, felt that he had done his duty to his church. After promising Richard that he would not attack western France, he returned home. He had been a reluctant Crusader from the start and took part only because he was pressured to do so by his nobles and popular opinion. The duke of Austria, as well as several other minor nobles from various European countries, also left, annoyed by Richard's impulsiveness and high-handedness. The Third Crusade was now entirely in the hands of Richard I, known as "the Lionheart."

## **Richard and Saladin**

Richard departed for Jerusalem on August 22, 1191. He had trouble getting his forces to cooperate, for Acre was a lively city, and recently an entire boatload of prostitutes had arrived. Imposing tight discipline in the summer heat, he first approached the city of Arsuf, where Saladin launched an assault. Richard was able to maintain discipline, keep his troops in formation, and cut down the Muslim attackers. As a result, Saladin withdrew, badly beaten.

After the Battle of Arsuf, Richard easily took the nearby coastal city of Jaffa. He knew, though, that Jerusalem would be harder to capture. Further, he had received word that his brother John was causing unrest in England and that the country seemed headed toward civil war. Just as disturbing was news that Philip, going back on his word, was threatening to invade Normandy. Richard concluded that he needed to negotiate a peace treaty with Saladin.

Saladin responded by sending his brother, al-Malik al-Adil, to bargain with Richard. The terms of the treaty Richard proposed were extraordinary, and utterly at odds with the purpose of the Third Crusade, the recapture of Jerusalem. Under the treaty, al-Adil would marry Richard's sister Joanna. Joanna and al-Adil would jointly rule Jerusalem. Richard and Saladin would withdraw their forces and go home. Joanna, though, refused to marry a Muslim, and when al-Adil de-



**A basin bearing the name of al-Malik al-Adil. Saladin had sent his brother, al-Adil, to negotiate a treaty with Richard I of England in order to end the Third Crusade. The treaty, however, never came to be.**

*Louvre, Paris, France/Lauros/Giraudon/Bridgeman Art Library. Reproduced by permission.*

clined to convert to Christianity, the negotiations broke down.

For his part, Saladin, too, needed a treaty. His defeat at Arsuf had tarnished his reputation for invincibility. His troops were exhausted. Many of the emirs (Muslim rulers) who had joined him were growing discontented, and even the ambitious al-Adil was giving indications that he was open to negotiations with Richard. Saladin's coalition, based on religious zeal and popular resentment of the Franks, seemed to be falling apart.

Accordingly, the two reached an agreement in March 1192. Under the terms of the treaty, Saladin would retain control over Jerusalem, with the provision that any Christian pilgrim would be allowed to visit the holy city. A piece of the Holy Cross on which Christ had been crucified, which was in Muslim possession in the city, would be turned over to the Franks. The Franks, in turn, retained a ribbon of territory

along the coast extending from Tyre to Jaffa. Holding on to these cities was important, for Europeans could then still pursue their commercial interests in the Middle East.

Richard was about to go home and had returned to Acre to begin preparations when Saladin's army inexplicably attacked and recaptured Jaffa. Richard immediately boarded ship with what knights he could muster (gather) and set sail for Jaffa. Some days after he and his forces made camp outside the city, Saladin and his army attacked. Richard and his small army successfully repelled the attack against seemingly overwhelming odds. It was this battle, perhaps, that cemented Richard's reputation as a brave and heroic commander. Finally, on September 2, 1192, Richard and Saladin signed the treaty that had been negotiated in March. On October 9, Richard left the Holy Land for England.

The Third Crusade had a postscript. As he was returning home, Richard was shipwrecked and had to take the overland route. His journey took him through the domains of the duke of Austria, the same duke whose banner he had thrown into a moat at Acre. Richard tried to disguise himself, but he was recognized at an inn in Vienna. The duke seized him on a charge of murder and turned him over to the Holy Roman Emperor, who held him for ransom (payment for release). Richard remained a prisoner for a year and was released only after a huge ransom was paid.

Richard believed that the Third Crusade had been a success. He strengthened the Frankish hold on the coast and ensured Christians safe passage to the Holy Land. Pope Innocent III, though, took a different view. Richard had failed to reclaim the holy city of Jerusalem. Thus, in 1198 the pope called a new Crusade.

## **The Fourth Crusade**

At the time of the Fourth Crusade, the Kingdom of Jerusalem was ruled by a court in exile at the port city of Acre. The kingdom the court ruled was a small strip of land, at its widest about 10 miles (16 kilometers), that ran from Jaffa to Tyre. This holding, along with Antioch and Tripoli, represented the tattered remnants of the original Crusader states.

Jerusalem, meanwhile, was under the control of Saladin's brother, al-Adil. On the throne in Rome at this time was Pope Innocent III, who believed that the pope, as God's representative on earth, should rule over God's entire earthly kingdom. He bullied and threatened the kings of Europe. He called for the submission of the Eastern Orthodox Church to Rome. And he became obsessed with the reconquest of Jerusalem.

Innocent's call for a new Crusade did not meet with the same enthusiasm that Urban II's call had. The nobles had seen how ruinously expensive earlier Crusades had been. To entice them, the pope devised a new way to finance the Crusade, a tax levied on all the clergy. The tax made it possible for a noble to earn a profit on the expedition. This potential for profit would entirely undermine the Fourth Crusade. Unlike the first three, which had been fought at least in part out of religious motives, the Fourth Crusade turned into a scramble for money and was the most corrupt of any of the campaigns to the Holy Land, which the Crusaders never even reached.

### **Enter the Venetians**

In November 1199 the first Crusaders arrived in Champagne, France. From there, the leaders dispatched envoys (people sent on missions to represent the interests of someone else) to the great merchant city of Venice, Italy, to arrange transportation. Venice was ruled by the aging and blind, but still crafty, doge (or duke) Enrico Dandolo. For a hefty payment, Dandolo agreed to transport the Crusaders. He also agreed to provide fifty armed ships as escorts. In addition to a flat fee per person, based on an estimated number of men, the Crusaders were to pay to Venice half of everything they seized, whether land, money, or personal property. These terms were steep, but the envoys approved the arrangement and returned to France.

The Crusaders left France for Venice in June 1202. When they arrived, they were short on the price they had agreed to pay, primarily because not as many Crusaders were participating as had been anticipated. Early projections were that about thirty-three thousand men would join; in fact, only about eleven thousand arrived in Venice. Since the doge's price was based on the early estimate of the number of men, this meant that each of the Crusaders had to pay three

times as much as he had expected to pay. The barons tried to make up the difference by selling off many of their personal goods, but they were still more than a third short.

### **The attack on Zara**

To make up the difference, the doge offered a proposition. In the Adriatic Sea, not far from Venice, was an island town called Zara. Zara had long belonged to Venice but had recently pledged its allegiance to the king of Hungary. If the Crusaders would attack Zara and reclaim it for Venice, they could pay the money they still owed from any booty they seized in the city.

At first, the Crusaders were hesitant; Zara was a Christian city, and the king of Hungary supported the pope. Faced with little choice and running out of provisions, however, the Crusaders reluctantly agreed, and in November 1202 they attacked Zara. The inhabitants of the town hung banners with crosses over the city walls, trying to persuade the Crusaders to abandon their plan. Their efforts failed, however. The town offered little resistance and fell in just five days. The Crusaders plundered the city and divided half of the spoils.

### **Onward to Byzantium**

On the day after Easter in 1203, the Crusaders, aboard Dandolo's ships, set sail to the east. Rather than heading toward Palestine, the fleet set a course for the coast of the Byzantine Empire and its capital city of Constantinople. Behind this change of plans was the doge. Just as the pope was obsessed with Jerusalem, the doge was obsessed with Constantinople and the trading profits that could be earned there.

Byzantium had been in decline since the death of the emperor Manuel in 1180. Ongoing warfare with the Seljuks had weakened the realm. One of Manuel's successors was a bumbling figure named Isaac Angelus, who was imprisoned by his brother, known as Emperor Alexius III. Alexius III annoyed the Dandolo, for he was giving more favorable trading terms to the merchants of Pisa and Genoa than to Venice.

Imprisoned with Angelus was his son, also named Alexius. In 1201 Prince Alexius escaped and fled to Venice, where he pleaded with the doge and the Crusaders to liberate

An early thirteenth-century Byzantine mosaic depicting the fall of Constantinople to the Crusaders on April 12, 1204. *The Art Archive/Dagli Ort. Reproduced by permission.*



Constantinople from Alexius III. In return, he offered the doge a large sum of money. To tempt the Crusaders, young Alexius promised that the Eastern Orthodox Church would pledge its allegiance to the pope.

The Crusaders, their heads filled with visions of the loot they could carry away from the city, sailed to the port city of Scutari, just on the outskirts of Constantinople. As they invaded the city, its defenders fled, along with Alexius III. The doge released Isaac Angelus from prison and decreed that Isaac and his son would rule jointly. On August 1, 1203, the son was crowned Alexius IV. But the empire was almost bankrupt. Popular resentment was rising over the large sums of money Alexius had pledged to the doge and to the Crusaders, which he now had to collect from his subjects. Both the clergy and the people resisted Alexius's call for submission to the Latin church (the Roman Catholic Church in the West).

Meanwhile, a fire broke out that burned for eight days and destroyed a large part of the city. The population

was incensed (angry), but the object of their ire (hatred) was Alexius, for bringing the Venetian fleet to their city. The people rose up in revolt; one of Alexius's most trusted advisers seized the emperor in his sleep and had him strangled to death. A few days later Isaac died. To the satisfaction of the citizenry, the adviser proclaimed himself Emperor Alexius V.

## **The sack of Constantinople**

The Crusaders, though, refused to recognize Alexius V as the new emperor, regarding him as a usurper (someone who had seized power by force and without any right to it) to the throne. So on April 8, 1204, the Crusaders attacked the city. The Byzantines held out for a few days, but on April 12 the Crusaders breached the walls, Alexius V fled, and the Crusaders rushed the city. The scene was utter chaos as drunken Crusaders rampaged through the city, taking everything they could get their hands on.

The Crusaders were overwhelmed by the richness of the booty that surrounded them. Although the empire itself was nearly bankrupt, the church and the people held enormous wealth, and the empire had gathered treasures from every part of the known world. At the Cathedral of Santa Sophia (often called the Hagia Sophia), the Crusaders took columns of silver from the choir stalls, as well as more golden chalices (drinking cups) and silver candelabra (branched candlesticks) than they could carry. Throughout the city, they seized vases, utensils, and other objects made of gold and silver as well as precious stones, furs, silks, and money. They looted holy relics, remnants of objects that were held sacred because of their association with saints, and ransacked the emperor's sumptuous five-hundred-room palace. Much of this loot was still on display in Venice in the early twenty-first century. Visitors to the Cathedral of San Marco could see there, over the cathedral's entrance, the most famous piece of booty the doge took: the Quadriga, four magnificent bronze horses that Emperor Constantine had brought back from Egypt nine centuries earlier.

On May 16, 1204, Count Baldwin of Flanders was crowned emperor in a lavish ceremony at the Cathedral of Santa Sophia. Thus began what historians call the Latin Empire of the East, but the new empire was not destined to last



**The Cathedral of Santa Sophia (often called the Hagia Sophia) in Constantinople. During the Fourth Crusade the Christians looted the cathedral, taking everything of value back to Europe with them. ©David Samuel Robbins/Corbis. Reproduced by permission.**

for long, just fifty-seven years. Baldwin's subjects were resentful of his efforts to impose Latin Christianity on the realm, and the empire soon began to crumble.

The Fourth Crusade thus came to an inglorious end. Nothing further was said about the infidel, the holy city, or the tomb of Christ. The Crusaders returned home, many of them laden with riches. A few remained in the empire and



## The Lateran Palace

At the time of Pope Innocent III, the Lateran Palace (rather than the modern-day Vatican) was the pope's residence and the seat of the church. It is part of a complex of courtyards, chapels, and halls and includes a magnificent basilica.

The Lateran buildings are built on Lateran Hill. During the reign of the Roman emperor Nero, a strange legend developed about the origin of the name Lateran. It said that the name came from the Latin expression *latitans rana*, which means "run-away frog." Nero was insane, so insane that he once decided that he wanted to be the mother of a baby, and he ordered his

doctors to make him pregnant. The doctors, whose only alternative was being put to death, made the emperor swallow a tadpole, which, they claimed, would make him "pregnant" with a frog growing in his stomach. The doctors then pretended to "bring forth" the frog in birth by administering a purgative (a substance that induces vomiting). Nero was so proud of the frog that he formed an elaborate procession to show it off through the streets of Rome. But when the procession reached the banks of a nearby river, the frog jumped into the water and swam away. Angered, Nero killed the frog's nurse.

ruled over small parts of it. The aged doge had increased his wealth and the power of Venice immeasurably. The last portion of the thousand-plus-year-old Roman Empire was no more. And the Saracens (the Europeans' word for Middle Eastern Muslims) still controlled Jerusalem.

## The Fifth Crusade

Nothing would change with the Fifth Crusade, which was fated to be yet another disaster for Christians in the East. Jerusalem had signed a treaty with al-Adil, the Syrian chief who controlled the city, and for fifteen years peace reigned in the region. With the treaty due to expire in 1215, the king of Jerusalem appealed to the pope for a new Crusade.

Pope Innocent III was happy to oblige. He wanted to keep the crusading spirit alive, because doing so would keep the people under the control of the church. He called for a church council at the Lateran Palace in Rome, the first such general council in the history of the church. There, with hundreds of the highest-ranking clerics in attendance, he es-

established rules for a new Crusade. The Crusade was scheduled to depart for the Holy Land on June 1, 1217. Innocent, though, failed to see his dream realized, for he died in 1216.

In the spring of 1218 hundreds of ships from Germany and France arrived at Acre, where King John was already planning the Fifth Crusade. He had concluded that the best course of action was to attack Egypt, the richest country in the region. He had been urged to take this course by Italian traders and merchants, who hoped to accomplish in Egypt what the Fourth Crusade had accomplished in Constantinople. They convinced John that if the Saracens could be driven out of Egypt, the Crusaders would be able to attack Jerusalem from the south, while other troops would be able to attack from Acre. John was never a very firm leader, so he went along with this ill-advised plan. Once again, a Crusade would be fought for commercial interests rather than for religious purposes.

### **The siege of Damietta**

The first goal was the port city of Damietta. Seize Damietta, and the Crusaders would have control of the Nile River and all of Egypt. The Crusader fleet departed for Damietta in May and sailed up the Nile in August 1218. When they arrived at Damietta, they found a heavily fortified city, so they laid a siege that lasted until November 1219, when the city finally fell.

The siege at Damietta turned into yet another error in the series of blunders the Christians committed. The pope sent a personal representative, a cardinal (the highest-ranking cleric, or member of the clergy, other than the pope) named Pelagius from Portugal. Pelagius was a ruthless, severe man who had no interest in negotiating with the Saracens. His single-minded goal was to fight them. He believed that as long as any were left, they would continue to be a threat. His stubbornness would doom the Fifth Crusade.

As it was becoming clear to the Egyptian sultan that he could not hold Damietta, much less all of Egypt, he offered peace terms to the Crusaders. His terms were nothing short of astounding. If the Crusaders would pack up and leave, he would turn over the relic of the True Cross, and his brother, the ruler of Syria, would give the Crusaders all of



## The Nile River

The Nile is the longest river in the world. Its principal source is Lake Victoria in east-central Africa. Flowing through Uganda, Sudan, and Egypt to the Mediterranean, it spans a distance of 3,470 miles (5,585 kilometers)—4,160 miles (6,695 kilometers) from its remotest headstream in Burundi. The river flows south to north, so traveling “up” the Nile means taking a southward route.

The Nile river basin covers an area of 1.1 million square miles (1.8 million square kilometers). While the Nile’s waters

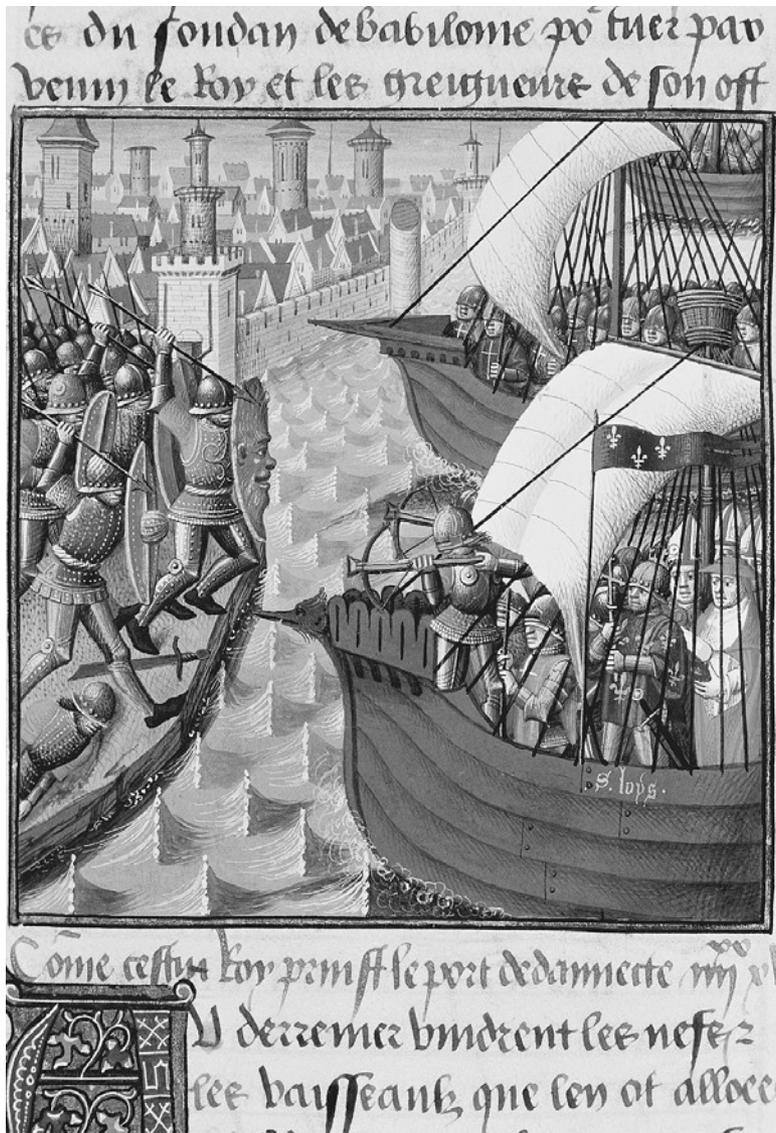
in modern times are controlled by dams, at the time of the Crusades the entire basin would flood each year, leaving behind moist silt in which the next year’s crops would be planted. It would be impossible to overestimate the economic importance of the Nile to the region and to Egypt, in particular. The only fertile lands in this otherwise desert country are found along the river basin, so it has always been a principal source of food and a major trade artery. The Egyptian pyramids and the Sphinx at Giza are located within view of the Nile.

Palestine, including Jerusalem. In return, all he asked was that trade routes between Egypt and Syria remain open.

The goal for which the Crusaders had been fighting for decades was within their grasp. All they had to do was to agree to al-Kamil’s proposal and go home. But to the bewilderment of most of the Crusaders, Pelagius said no. In his refusal he was supported by the Italians, who had no use for Jerusalem. They wanted Damietta, one of the greatest port cities on the Mediterranean. A few days later, they got their wish when the city fell.

In the summer of 1221 John and Pelagius set out from Damietta toward Cairo with a force of five thousand knights and forty thousand foot soldiers. On July 24 they found themselves confronted by the sultan’s army. The Nile River was rising, and the sultan ordered his men to destroy one of the dikes holding it back. The rushing waters trapped the Crusaders in a sea of mud. As they stumbled about trying to escape, the sultan’s cavalry cut them down by the thousands. Pelagius found a boat and made it back to Damietta, where he pleaded for peace. The sultan agreed to an eight-year truce if the Crusaders would leave. On September 8,

A manuscript illumination showing the conquest of Damietta by the Crusaders during the Fifth Crusade. The siege of Damietta, however, turned into yet another blunder committed by the Crusaders. ©Archivo Iconografico, S.A./Corbis. Reproduced by permission.



1221, the remnants of the Fifth Crusade left Damietta. Once again, the West had suffered a humiliating defeat without getting anywhere near the city of Jerusalem.

## The Sixth Crusade

The Sixth Crusade won back Jerusalem without shedding a single drop of blood. Behind this remarkable achieve-

ment was the Holy Roman Emperor, Frederick II, the grandson of Frederick Barbarossa. Frederick was the most powerful ruler in Europe at the time. He came to be known by the Latin expression *Stupor Mundi*, the “Wonder of the World.” It was to him that Europe looked to finally win back Jerusalem.

Frederick had first taken the cross (made a vow to go to the Holy Land and free it) at his coronation in 1215, but for twelve years he did nothing. He wanted to lead a Crusade, but on his own terms and not out of submission to a pope. He had no interest in religious ideology (firmly held beliefs) or in defeating Islam. He wanted to extend his kingdom. For Frederick, adding Jerusalem to his realm would cement his place in history as the Wonder of the World.

Meanwhile, King John of Jerusalem was growing old. He knew that the throne would soon pass to his daughter, Isabella Yolanda. Like all the daughters of the Crusader kings, Isabella could inherit the crown but could not rule the Kingdom of Jerusalem herself. John had to find her a husband who would be suitable as king. The pope suggested a marriage between Isabella and Frederick, whose wife had recently died. Such a marriage, in a single stroke, would solve the succession problem, place a firm and skilled leader on the throne of Jerusalem, and likely persuade Frederick to honor his vow to lead a Crusade.

Everyone agreed with this plan, and in 1225 the wedding took place in Italy. Isabella, only fourteen at the time, was crowned queen, but the understanding was that her father would remain king until his death. Frederick, though, eager to seize power, backed out of the agreement and forced John to yield the crown to him. Frederick thus became king of Jerusalem without having set foot in the Holy Land.

Frederick’s “reign” was short, for Isabella soon gave birth. Their son, Conrad, was now the king of Jerusalem, and Frederick could rule only as regent (a person who rules for a king or queen who is still a child). He knew the barons could elect someone else as regent whenever they wanted. He concluded that his only option was a show of overwhelming force that would bully the barons into submission. To that end, he first landed on the island of Cyprus, where he intimidated the nobles and even imprisoned the sons of the is-

land's king. The king and his nobles, having little choice, agreed to support Frederick as regent for Conrad.

For years the emperor had been carrying on a correspondence with the sultan of Egypt, al-Malik al-Kamil. In these letters, many of them friendly exchanges about philosophy and literature, Frederick learned that al-Kamil had had a falling-out with the sultan of Damascus, his brother al-Mu'azzam Shams-al-Din Turan-Shah. Al-Mu'azzam was actually assembling an army to invade Egypt, and al-Kamil explored the possibility of forming an alliance with Frederick to prevent that from happening. Frederick's delay, though, almost lost him this potential ally, for al-Mu'azzam died, and al-Kamil did not see the new sultan of Damascus as a threat. By the time Frederick reached Acre, al-Kamil had lost interest in an alliance. But the new sultan of Damascus proved to be just as much of a threat to Egypt as al-Mu'azzam had been, so al-Kamil reopened negotiations with Frederick.

Al-Kamil, though, needed to save face with other Muslim leaders. Ever the skilled diplomat, Frederick agreed to help al-Kamil stage an elaborate charade. Frederick marched his army of three thousand knights in one direction, al-Kamil marched toward them, and when the two armies met, the two commanders sat down to "negotiate," though they had already agreed on terms.

On February 18, 1229, the two met in Jaffa and signed a treaty. Under the terms of the Treaty of Jaffa, al-Kamil agreed to hand over Jerusalem, Bethlehem, and Nazareth, as well as a strip of land that would give Jerusalem access to the sea. In return, Muslims would be allowed free access to Jerusalem, and Muslim holy places in the city would remain in Muslim hands. With the stroke of a pen, Jerusalem was finally restored to Christians. It was one of the few occasions when diplomacy (negotiations) would replace the sword.

The treaty was condemned by all sides. Muslims throughout the region were angered that al-Kamil had given up Jerusalem without a fight. Some of the more bloodthirsty Crusaders were angry because they were denied the opportunity to kill Saracens. Frederick, however, brushed aside these objections. He was determined to be crowned king of Jerusalem, but when he entered the city on March 17, 1229, everyone ignored him. The next day, Frederick went to the Church of the

Holy Sepulchre and declared himself king. The only people who witnessed the ceremony were his own troops.

Frederick returned to Acre, where he found that many of the barons were conspiring against him. Then word reached him that the pope had assembled an army to invade Frederick's territory in the south of Italy. Frederick knew that he had to go to defend his realm. After replacing the Franks who had ruled in the Crusader states for so long with as many Germans as he could, he departed from Acre on May 1, 1229. Scorned by most of Acre's population, he tried to sneak out early in the morning. As he passed through a section of the town called the Butcher's Quarter, the butchers recognized him and ran after him, pelting him with fish guts.

## The Seventh Crusade

The Treaty of Jaffa called for ten years of peace, but the Franks spent those ten years in a state of near civil war, further weakening their hold on Outremer. Then, in 1244, another clan of Muslim Turks, the Khwarismians, attacked Jerusalem, leaving few Christian survivors. The desperate Franks tried to form an alliance with the Syrian Muslims to drive the Turks out, but the Turks, in concert with the Egyptians, decisively defeated them in the Battle of Harbiyah in October of that year.

The response in Europe was the Seventh Crusade, which was led by the extremely devout (religious) King Louis IX of France. Louis left Europe in the summer of 1248 and arrived in the Holy Land with his army in 1249. He easily recaptured Damietta in June. Then he marched south on the city of Mansurah. He laid siege to the city, but on February 8, 1250, the Egyptian forces attacked, cutting off the Crusaders' supply routes. Louis held out until April, but his troops were starving, and Louis himself was ill. The Crusaders tried to retreat, but the Egyptians pursued them until Louis was forced to surrender. Louis and his knights were taken captive, but eventually they were ransomed and returned to Europe. Louis ransomed himself by returning Damietta.

Once again, a Crusade to save the Holy Land had failed, and the Crusaders never came near their goal. Europe was growing sick of crusading, few western Christians re-

mained in the region, and all that remained was for those last few to be driven out.

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## Muslim Response to the Crusades and the Cairo/Baghdad Caliphate Split

7

In the late 1090s the European Crusaders in Syria and Palestine were fighting on foreign soil and in harsh, desert conditions to which they were not accustomed. They were far from their homelands and sources of supply. Further, their numbers were not very large; perhaps twenty thousand Crusaders made it to Jerusalem. After the city fell to the Crusaders in 1099, only a few thousand remained in Jerusalem and the other Crusader states, including Antioch, Edessa, and Tripoli. Jerusalem remained defended by only about three hundred knights. Muslims, meanwhile, had shown themselves to be skilled warriors for centuries, as their empire grew throughout the region, across North Africa, and into Spain. Yet the Crusaders did not face a serious threat for more than four decades.

Historians give two related answers to explain why. One is that many Muslims did not regard the Crusaders as a serious threat to them, at least initially. The other is that Islam, the religion practiced by Muslims, was too divided for Muslims to mount a serious response to the Crusades. Because of these divisions, each faction, or subgroup, within Islam tended to see the other factions as greater threats than

the Crusaders. Thus, to understand fully the Muslim response, or lack of response, to the Crusaders, it is necessary to understand these divisions within Islam.

## The major participants

At the time of the First Crusade (1095–99) and in the years that followed, a number of major “players” occupied the Middle East.

- **Sunni Muslims:** The Sunnis were the largest sect, or subgroup, of Muslims. These were the orthodox, or mainstream, Muslims who believed that the rightful successors to Muhammad, the founder of Islam, were the caliphs (Islamic spiritual leaders).
- **Abbasids:** Abbasid was the name of the ruling dynasty of Sunni Muslims. They claimed to be descendants of Muhammad’s uncle, Abbas. The Abbasid caliphate (the office of the caliph as well as his domain) ruled the Muslim empire from the capital city of Baghdad in Persia (modern-day Iraq).
- **Seljuks:** The Seljuks were Turks who had converted to Sunni Islam. The Seljuk Empire was ruled by a Turkish sultan (the ruler of a Muslim state) from the city of Isfahan, in western Iran. While the Abbasids were the spiritual leaders of Sunni Muslims, the Seljuks held the real political power because they had the military might.
- **Shiites:** The Shiites were a dissident, or rebel, faction of Islam. Their name came from the phrase *Shi’at Ali*, meaning “party of Ali.” They believed that Muhammad’s blood relative Ali should have been named caliph after Muhammad’s death. To the Shiites, the Sunni Abbasids and the dynasty that preceded them, the Umayyads, were corrupt, or false. They fought the Sunnis for control of the Islamic faith (see Chapter 5 on the division between the Sunnis and the Shiites).
- **Fatimids:** The Fatimids were a Shiite dynasty that ruled Egypt. They believed they were the descendants of Muhammad’s daughter Fatima. They ruled from an independent caliphate in the capital city of Cairo. The Fatimids had been in control of Jerusalem until 1071, when the Seljuks drove them out, though they retook the city in 1098.



## Response to the First Crusade

As the Crusaders made their way down the eastern coast of the Mediterranean Sea to Jerusalem, they occupied a number of cities, including Antioch and Edessa. To escape the Crusaders, many Muslim refugees from these cities fled farther inland to such cities as Damascus and Aleppo, both in Syria. There they began to demand a response to the Crusaders. One

An illustration depicting the battle between the Muslims and the Crusaders for Jerusalem in 1099.

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leader who listened to their pleas was al-Harawi, who was the chief *qadi* (a position similar to mayor) of Damascus. Al-Harawi traveled to Baghdad to persuade the Abbasid caliph, al-Mustazhir Billah, to send troops to confront the Crusaders.

Al-Harawi encountered two problems, though. One was that Baghdad was a long distance from Jerusalem, so the caliph did not see the Crusaders as a serious threat. The other

was that the caliph had no army to send. Military power resided with the Seljuk Turks and their sultan, Barkiyaruq, in the Iranian city of Isfahan. Isfahan, however, was even farther away from Jerusalem than was Baghdad, so the sultan was even less concerned about the Crusader threat.

Moreover, the Turkish sultan had problems of his own. He was young and inexperienced, and after the death of his father in 1094 he had to fight off rivals for the sultanate and even members of his own military. Syria and Palestine, to him, were distant outposts, so he showed little interest in helping. He was more interested in the closer cities of Damascus, Aleppo, and Mosul. These cities were part of the Seljuk Empire, but they were ruled by Seljuk officers who were more concerned with maintaining their own power than in submitting to the sultan.

During the tenth century Muslims had fought against the Byzantine Christians and won some major battles in the 950s. But by the end of the eleventh century, waging war against Christians was not a priority. The Turks and the Abbasids tended to see the Crusaders as nothing more than soldiers for hire of the Byzantine Christians, who had already been defeated and whose empire was shrinking.

Ironically, that is just what the Crusaders were supposed to have been. The First Crusade was called in response to pleas from the Byzantine emperor. The emperor of Byzantium, the seat of the Eastern Orthodox Christian religion, believed that he could drive the Seljuks out of Byzantine territory if he expanded his army with knights from Europe. He knew, though, that Europeans probably would not help him if he appealed to them to restore his empire. He appealed to them instead on religious grounds (see “A Cry for Help” in Chapter 4). His plan backfired, however. While Crusaders came and fought the Seljuks, they were not fighting for the Byzantine emperor. They and the pope of the Catholic Church in Rome had their own religious goals, and many of the Crusaders were driven by a strong desire to win territory of their own.

The Sunni Muslims, though, did not recognize this threat. Their main concern remained trying to find a way to put down the Shiites, who, from the Sunni perspective, were a greater threat than the Crusaders. Most, though not all,



**A Seljuk relief sculpture of warriors. To the Seljuks, the Crusaders were more of a distraction from their fight against the Shiites, especially the Fatimids.** ©Archivo Iconografico, S.A./Corbis. Reproduced by permission.

Shiites believed the claims made by the separate caliphate in Cairo, Egypt: that the Fatimids were the legitimate successors to Muhammad because they were descended from Muhammad's daughter. The chief focus of the Egyptians was fighting the Sunni Seljuks for control of Palestine and Syria. Regarding the Seljuks as their real enemy, they often formed alliances with the Christians, for they saw the Christians, at least initially, as the only allies they had in fighting the

Seljuks. The key point is that at the time of the First Crusade, two independent caliphates—a Sunni caliphate based in Baghdad and a Shiite caliphate based in Cairo—were more worried about each other than they were about an unruly mob of western Christians in their lands. To the Seljuks, the Crusaders were merely a distraction from their fight against the Shiites, especially the Fatimids.

One way to measure the level of interest Muslims took in the Crusaders is to examine mentions of the Crusaders in the literature of the time. A few Arab poets condemned the Crusaders, and several decades after the First Crusade, several of them celebrated such events as the recapture of Edessa in 1144 (see “The Second Crusade” in Chapter 6). Other poets, though, wrote about their relationships with the Crusaders in more tolerant ways. Some expressed great admiration for the beauty of European women. Others wrote of friendships that they had formed with the Crusaders. Some voiced admiration for the bravery of the Crusaders and their willingness to die, though they were quite troubled by how dirty the Europeans were. They were also puzzled by the European custom of shaving their faces, for Islamic teaching dictated that men should wear beards. Still other poets ignored the presence of the Crusaders. Arab historians at the time noted the presence of the Crusaders but little else. Much of their surviving work is about the quarrels between Sunnis and Shiites rather than about the Crusaders. Had the Crusaders been seen as a serious threat, rather than a nuisance, it is likely that the Arab literature of the time would have expressed more outrage and called to expel them (drive them out).

## The counter-Crusade begins

Only slowly did the Muslims of Syria and Palestine begin to recognize the religious aims of the Crusaders, who did not appear to be going home. They began to search for a leader who could drive out the Crusaders, but they knew that they could not count on Baghdad for help. The leader had to come from within Syria itself, possibly from Aleppo or Damascus.

The first effort to fight back was launched by the *qadi* of Aleppo, who recruited a Turkish emir (commander), Il-

ghazi, from a nearby town to lead the fight against the Crusaders. In 1119 his army, together with an army led by the emir of Damascus, marched on the city of Antioch, and on June 28 they defeated a Crusader army led by the Christian ruler of Antioch, Roger. This was a major blow to the Crusaders, but little came of it. Ilghazi, an alcoholic, died just three years later without having followed up on his victory.

In the 1120s another leader emerged, Ilghazi's nephew Balak. Balak inspired a great deal of fear in the Crusaders. One western historian of the time, Fulcher of Chartres, referred to him as "the Raging Dragon." In 1122 he captured Joscelin, the cousin of the king of Jerusalem, Baldwin II. Then in 1123 he captured the king himself. By 1124 Balak was the ruler of Aleppo, and he began to reconquer territory held by the Christians. But fate intervened. In 1124 the Muslims of Tyre (in present-day Lebanon) called on Balak to rescue them from a Crusader siege of the city. Just before he departed, he was inspecting his troops and the fortifications, or defenses, around Aleppo when a stray arrow struck him in the chest and he died. Once again, Syrian Muslims were left without a leader. In the meantime, the Assassins, a secretive Shiite sect (see "The Assassins" in Chapter 5), continued to try to overthrow the Sunnis. They assassinated the emirs of Aleppo and Mosul, further undermining any united Muslim response to the Crusaders.

## Zengi, Nur al-Din, and Saladin

Serious *jihād*, or holy war, against the Crusaders came from another Seljuk Turk, Imad al-Din Zengi. In 1126 Zengi rose to power in Baghdad. There, the Abbasid caliph tried to free the caliphate from the Seljuks and led an uprising. Zengi was the Turkish general who put down the uprising. In the 1130s he began to reconquer lands in Syria. This effort came to a climax in 1144, when he laid siege to the city of Edessa and finally entered the city on Christmas Eve of that year.

After Zengi's death in 1146, his son, Nur al-Din, remained in charge of Aleppo. The emir of Damascus, though, did not trust al-Din, whom he saw as an ambitious Turk with the aim of conquering all of Syria. Nevertheless, he tried to keep peace with al-Din. At this point, the European Chris-

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tians made a major blunder. They could have kept Aleppo and Damascus divided, but the fall of Edessa to Zengi prompted calls for the Second Crusade in Europe (see “The Second Crusade” in Chapter 6). When the Crusaders, led by French king Louis VII, arrived in the Holy Land in 1149, they attacked Damascus, the Crusaders’ only ally in the region. With little choice, the emir of Damascus called on al-Din to come to the defense of the city. The Second Crusade ended in a humiliating defeat for the Crusaders and succeeded only in strengthening al-Din. In 1154 Damascus fell to al-Din’s forces.

The conflict between Sunnis and Shiites, however, continued. Al-Din, rather than focusing his attention on the Crusaders, turned instead against Egypt and the Shiite Fatimid dynasty. To fight him off, the Egyptians formed an alliance with the Crusaders, but while fighting was going on in Egypt, al-Din successfully attacked near Antioch and captured a large number of Crusader troops, as well as their leaders.

**Muslim leader Saladin in combat with Richard I, king of England. It was only after Saladin patched together a shaky alliance between Muslim leaders in the Middle East that he was able to confront the Crusaders led by Richard.**

Finally, in 1169, al-Din's forces defeated the Fatimids and entered Cairo. At their head was al-Din's nephew, Saladin. Saladin would go on to play a major role in the Third Crusade, but in the meantime he spent the next decade or so subduing other Muslim leaders in the region. Only after he patched together a shaky alliance, or union, with them was he able to confront the Crusader forces led by King Richard I of England.

In sum, it took decades for the Muslims to understand that the Crusaders planned to be a permanent presence in the region. Only then, in the mid-twelfth century, were they able to begin to recapture some of their territory. The capture of Edessa was a turning point, for it represented the first loss of a major Crusader city. From then on, the rest of the history of the Crusades was largely one of defeat, or at best stalemate, for the Crusaders. Still, because of divisions in Islam, it took nearly a century for Muslims to respond effectively to the Crusaders.

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## Jewish People Caught in the Crusades

8

**T**he darkest chapter in the history of the Crusades was the treatment of Jews at the hands of Europe's Christians, both in Europe and in the Middle East. What began as distrust and scorn often turned into widespread persecution and slaughter. Many Crusaders left in their wake the bodies of hundreds of Jews as they made their way to the Holy Land. Jews lost their homes, families, property, and lives in a frenzy of anti-Jewish feeling among many European Christians.

For centuries, Jewish people commemorated the horrors they endured during the Crusades. These memories were only partly overshadowed by the Holocaust of the twentieth century, the systematic extermination of Jews by the Nazi regime in Germany before and during World War II (1939–45). Referring to this later period of violence, the historian Malcolm Billings noted in his book *The Crusades: Five Centuries of Holy Wars*, "The road to the Holy Land ran through what Jews later came to describe as the first Holocaust."

## The Jews of Europe

By the time Pope Urban II called the First Crusade in 1095 (see “The Sermon at Clermont” in Chapter 6), Jews had matured and established communities throughout Europe. In nearly every city of any size could be found synagogues (places of worship for Jews), schools, Jewish cemeteries, and rabbis (leaders of Jewish congregations), some of whom, because of their high level of education, consulted with and influenced civil rulers. These communities had their own local histories. Their religious identity, based on centuries-old rituals and use of the Hebrew language to record, pass down, and practice their traditions, set them apart from the surrounding Christian communities.

Many Christians came to see these Jewish communities as hostile to Christianity. Jews, in their view, were not part of “us,” that is, of the Christian, feudal way of life. They were “others,” a people apart from that way of life, and in that respect they were no different from Muslims. They looked different, dressed differently, spoke a different language, practiced their religion in a different manner, and for the most part did not assimilate into (become absorbed into) the surrounding French, German, English, Spanish, or other communities.

More and more throughout the tenth and eleventh centuries, European Christians feared the threat from the Muslim empire, the empire that had formed around the Islamic faith and the teachings of the founder of Islam, Muhammad. This empire had expanded throughout the Mediterranean region and into Spain (see “The Spread of Islam” in Chapter 1) and in the eighth century had to be driven back out of France. Faced with this fear, Christians were accustomed to referring to “enemies of God” and calling for vengeance, or revenge, on those enemies. While Jews posed no such threat, they were not Christians, so they too fell under the heading of “enemies.”

Also during this period, there developed among Christians a “cult of the cross.” The cross referred to was the one on which Christ was nailed when he was put to death. Crusaders, when they vowed to go to the Holy Land (Jerusalem and the surrounding region) to free it, were said to have “taken the cross.” As a symbol of their promise, they wore a cross on their armor and shields. During the reign of the Roman emperor Constantine in the fourth cen-



This reliquary contains the True Cross, the actual cross on which Jesus Christ died. When Crusaders vowed to go to the Holy Land, they were said to have "taken the cross." ©Werner Forman/Corbis. Reproduced by permission.

ture, a relic (a fragment of a holy object) of the so-called True Cross, the actual cross on which Christ died, was found in Jerusalem. In the centuries that followed, the image of a suffering Christ hanging on the cross, the Catholic crucifix, became central to the faith. Veneration of (devotion to) the crucifix, in turn, led to a focus on Christ's death, and many Christians began to hold the Jews responsible for that death.

One way many Christians acted on this belief was to call for the conversion of the Jews to Christianity. But this belief began to take on more unreasonable forms. Many Christians came to believe, for example, that the Jews were somehow the “agents” of the Muslims in the Holy Land. In France charges were made that French Jews had urged Caliph Hakim to destroy the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, the site of the tomb of Christ, in Jerusalem in the early years of the eleventh century (see “Destruction of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre” in Chapter 2). These charges set off a wave of persecution against the Jews.

Other Christians convinced themselves that the Jews actively supported the Muslim occupation of the holy city of Jerusalem. This was at best a partial truth. Life for Jews was actually better under the Muslims after they took control of the city in 638 than it had been under the Byzantine Christians before that (see “Muslims and Jerusalem” in Chapter 2). None of this mattered, though. Jews, as non-Christians, were infidels, or nonbelievers. So were Muslims. Therefore, when Pope Urban II called the First Crusade, many European Christians interpreted his call to fight “infidelity,” or lack of belief in the Christian faith, as a call to fight any infidel, that is, anyone who did not believe in Christianity. The nearest targets were Europe’s Jews.

## Massacres of European Jews

Persecution of the Jews lasted throughout the Crusades. For example, during the Second Crusade (1047–49) there were uprisings against Jews in the German city of Würzburg. Ronald C. Finucane, in *Soldiers of the Faith: Crusaders and Moslems at War*, quotes the powerful and important abbot (religious leader) of the monastery at Cluny, France, who wrote: “What is the good of going to the end of the world at great loss of men and money to fight the Saracens [Muslims], when we permit among us other infidels who are a thousand times more guilty towards Christ than the Mohammedans.” At the time that one of the leaders of the Third Crusade (1189–92), Richard I, was being crowned king of England, anti-Jewish riots were breaking out in the city of York.

Much of the worst violence, though, took place during the First Crusade (1095–99; see “The First Crusade” in



An illustration of a massacre of the Jews during the Crusades. The Jews were targets because they did not believe in the Christian faith. ©Leonard de Selva/ Corbis. Reproduced by permission.

Chapter 6). Historians have many eyewitness accounts, both from Jews and non-Jews, of violence in cities such as Speyer, Mainz, Cologne, and Worms in the German Rhineland (that is, the area along the Rhine River), as well as in such cities as Regensburg (near Munich, Germany) and Prague (in the modern-day Czech Republic). These cities lay along the route that many Crusaders, particularly German Crusaders, followed to the Middle East.



## Was Christopher Columbus Jewish?

Some people have theorized that Christopher Columbus, who sailed to the New World in 1492, the same year that the Jews were expelled from Spain, was himself Jewish, or at least that his voyage was financed by Jews. These Jews, according to the theory, were looking for a place of refuge and hoped that Columbus might find one across the Atlantic Ocean. There is little evidence to support this theory other than the fact that the crew member who served as a translator for Columbus is known to have been well-versed in Hebrew. (For more on Columbus and his connection with the Crusades, see “The Jews Are Expelled from Spain” in Chapter 13.)

One city whose Jews were hard hit was Worms. Jews in the city heard that those in Speyer were being attacked, so they asked the Christian bishop of Worms for protection. Many even gave him their savings for safekeeping. But as the Crusaders descended on the city in May 1096, they began murdering Jewish men, women, and children. Led by a German named Emicho from the city of Leiningen, they plundered (robbed) the homes of Jews, seizing whatever wealth they could find. Many Crusaders used stolen Jewish wealth to finance their journey to the Holy Land. They destroyed the Jewish cemetery just outside the walls of the city. They looted the city’s magnificent Byzantine-style synagogue. They tried to force Jews to be baptized as Christians. Those who refused were either killed or

committed suicide. In many instances, Jewish men killed their wives and children rather than allow them to be brutalized by the Crusaders. In all, about eight hundred people died.

The Crusaders then moved on to Mainz, where similar scenes were replayed during the summer of 1096. Again, Jews in Mainz heard about events in Worms, so they appealed to the Christian archbishop for protection. Once more they tried to buy protection—this time, from the local count—with silver and gold. But it was no use. The Crusaders again stormed the city. Some Jews, trapped in the archbishop’s palace and grounds, where he tried to protect them, attempted to fight back, but they stood no chance. Others taunted the Christians, hurling insults about Christ and his mother, Mary. These insults, of course, only inflamed the Crusaders. In Mainz, too, many men, seeing that they had no hope of surviving the onslaught, committed suicide, first sacrificing their families. About nine hundred Jews were killed in the city.

## Efforts to help

Not all European Christians shared in this blood lust against the Jews. Many members of the Christian clergy tried to excommunicate, or expel from the church, those who were persecuting the Jews. Numerous local nobles threatened Crusaders with punishment, but they had no way to back up the threat. One historian of the time, William of Tyre, an archbishop, wrote in *A History of Deeds Done beyond the Sea* of the “mad excesses” of the Crusaders, who “cruelly massacred the Jewish people in the cities and towns through which they passed.”

During the Second Crusade, the preaching of Bernard, the abbot at the monastery at Clairvaux in France, like that of Pope Urban II at the start of the First Crusade, aroused enthusiasm for the undertaking (see “The Second Crusade” in Chapter 6 and “Knights Templars” in Chapter 9). Bernard sought to use his great influence to stop the bloodshed. He tried, for example, to silence a monk in the



**A print depicting the conquest of Jerusalem during the First Crusade. Leaders of the Crusade are Peter the Hermit (left) and Louis VI (right), while the image in the center shows Crusaders massacring Jewish residents of the city.**  
©Leonard de Selva/Corbis.  
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Rhineland who was calling on the Crusaders to attack Jews and whipping up anti-Jewish feelings. When he wrote to England, urging the nation to join the Crusade, he cautioned the English against persecution of the Jews.

Many other people tried to help. One historian in Würzburg recorded the story of a Christian washerwoman who found a young Jewish girl inside a Christian church. The girl had been beaten, spat upon, and left for dead. The woman took the girl home, tended her wounds, and gave her shelter. The bishop of the city, pained by the actions of the Crusaders, ordered that the bodies of Jews be collected, cleaned, and anointed with oil in preparation for burial. The bodies were then buried in the bishop's own garden.

The massacres at Worms, Mainz, and other cities did not satisfy the Crusaders' thirst for Jewish blood, however. When the Crusaders stormed Jerusalem in 1099 (see "The First Crusade" in Chapter 6), they slaughtered not only Muslims

but also most of the city's Jewish residents, who had taken refuge in the synagogue. This type of anti-Semitism, or hatred of Jews, persisted throughout the Crusades and beyond, as many Christians in Europe continued to see Jews as untrustworthy, as "Christ killers," and as strangers and foreigners.

European Jews in the centuries that followed the Crusades were systematically excluded from government jobs, the professions, and places of education. At various times, they suffered forced migrations if they refused to convert to Christianity: from England in 1290, France in 1394, and Spain in 1492. Because they were denied many "respectable" ways to earn a living, they often became moneylenders. In this way, they acquired an unfair reputation for greed. Especially inclined to this view were needy members of the middle and upper classes, who often turned to the Jews when they had to borrow money, scorning them even while taking it. One legacy of the Crusades was nearly a millennium of hostility and distrust between Christians and Jews, a legacy whose effects are still felt today.

## For More Information

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## Knights and the Traditions of Chivalry

**N**umerous foot soldiers gave their lives to the cause of reclaiming the Holy Land during the Crusades. Carrying the banners of that cause, though, was Europe's warrior class: its knights. Noble, courageous, and skilled, the knights of Europe, from the viewpoint of the Christian nations, carried out God's work in trying to drive the Muslims (followers of the religion of Islam) out of God's holy places. In the twenty-first century the image of these knights is often romanticized. The "knight in shining armor" occupies an honored, permanent place in the cultural heritage of the West and is a fixture in legends, fairy tales, and epic adventure stories (see Chapter 11 on the literature of the Crusades).

While knights are usually thought of in connection with medieval life, the tradition of conferring knighthood has not died, at least in England. In 1997 rock star Paul McCartney, one of the original Beatles of the 1960s, was knighted by England's Queen Elizabeth II during a ceremony in London. Another rock legend, Mick Jagger of the Rolling Stones, received a similar honor in 2004. Like their forebears hundreds of years ago, these modern knights, in a solemn

and formal ceremony, knelt before the queen. The queen then tapped them on each shoulder with the flat side of a bared sword as she “invested” them with (gave them) the title “knight.” From that time on, as a member of the nobility, each knight became entitled to attach the word “sir” to his name, though it is unlikely that either of these rock-and-roll icons will actually do so.

It is equally unlikely that Sir Paul, Sir Mick, or any of the other prominent artists and citizens of Great Britain who have been knighted in modern times will put on a suit of armor, mount a horse, and set out to conquer new realms for his queen. Knighthood for these and other citizens is granted to recognize cultural achievement or service to Great Britain, typically for charitable work. But the underlying concept of service to the realm has defined knighthood since the Middle Ages.

Closely connected with knighthood is the concept of chivalry. Today, people are likely to use the word *chivalry* to refer to high standards of good manners, protectiveness, and helpfulness. Most often the word crops up in relationships between men and women. A man who politely holds open a door for a woman or who defends her from danger is still said to be acting “chivalrously.” The word reflects, as it did hundreds of years ago, a code of behavior that places value on the protection of others.

“Knighthood” and “chivalry” are not one and the same, but it is impossible to speak of one without addressing the other. And it is impossible to understand either without first looking at the social structure of medieval Europe. It was this social structure that gave rise to the institution of knighthood, including special orders of knighthood such as the Knights Hospitallers and Knights Templars. In turn, knighthood gave rise to the institution and codes of chivalry.

## Origins

First we must consider the origins of the words. Despite the romantic, adventurous images that surround the words “knighthood” and “chivalry,” the origins of the two words are rather homely. “Knight” is an Anglo-Saxon (Ger-

manic-English) word. It comes from the Old English word *cniht*, which means simply “boy.” It evolved into the word “knight” because many early knights were still in their teens when they began to serve as men-at-arms for their lords.

The word “chivalry,” on the other hand, originates in the Romance languages (Italian, Spanish, and French). It comes from the Old French word *chevalerie*, which means something like “skill in handling a horse.” In an age before guns, gunpowder, and cannons, warfare with lances and swords required the knight to battle his opponent personally and up close. Only those who could control and direct the strength and speed of a horse were likely to survive armed combat, although peasants and commoners, in contrast to members of the nobility, had to take their chances on foot. In many early texts, “chivalry” refers simply to the actual ranks of a mounted army, that is, to “troops.” In time, though, the word came to stand for much more, in particular, a code of behavior and ethics to which all knights were expected to hold.

## The structure of medieval society

To understand the institutions of knighthood and chivalry, and the motivations of many of the Crusaders (what drove them in their cause), it is necessary to examine the structure of life during the Middle Ages in Europe. This was the period of time roughly from 500 to 1500, also called the medieval period. Several characteristics of medieval life are important.

### Land

First, land was the source of nearly all wealth. The Middle Ages began to see the appearance of a small middle class that earned its income through such activities as trade and finance. But most wealth during this time was the product of the land. Land provided lumber and stone to build houses, fuel, food crops, animal fur and fabrics for clothing—nearly all of the necessities of life. Those who owned large estates of land, in later years called “fiefs,” had almost always received them as grants from a king for their service, usually in war. With the land came a noble title, such as duke, earl, or baron.

The king ruled absolutely—that is, with complete authority—over his subjects, just as God ruled absolutely over kings. Noble landowners, in turn, ruled absolutely over their smaller fiefdoms in a social and military system called feudalism. Feudalism began primarily in France, but in time it spread through much of Europe, including England. It emerged in the centuries following the withdrawal of the Romans, when Europe was overrun by marauding (raiding and looting), warlike tribes, many of them sweeping across from western Asia or south from Scandinavia. Without the order that the Roman Empire had imposed, life in much of Europe became a free-for-all. Armed bandits, warlords (military commanders), and bands of outlaws were commonplace. The general population had little protection from them. Feudalism provided some measure of security during an extremely insecure period of history.

To drive off these outlaws, the nobles needed to develop small armies of warriors who could pursue them and engage them in combat. The only way they could do so effectively was on horseback; foot soldiers simply could not keep up with the constant movement of plundering armies. Horses, though, were expensive, and it took years to train both the horse and the warrior who rode it. A man who hoped to become a mounted warrior could not do it on his own, because he lacked the time and means to support himself.

To support their cavalry soldiers, called vassals, nobles made grants of land to them. The vassal, in return, owed a duty of loyalty to his “liege lord.” In times of peace he farmed and otherwise managed the land with the help of a large peasant class, but when that land came under threat, he owed service as a warrior. In turn, the lord had to provide his vassals with protection and the means of economic survival. This was the essence of feudalism: It was a system of shared legal obligations that bound together the lord and his vassals, as well as the peasantry beneath them. Its chief feature was a rigid hierarchy, or chain of command, with the king at the top, beneath him his barons, then vassals, then a lower order of knights, and, finally, the peasantry. Each level of the hierarchy owed military service to the level above.

In the early years of this system, during the eighth and ninth centuries, the vassal’s grant of land was returned to the



## Nobility

Texts about the European nobility present a potentially confusing array (collection) of titles, including ranks such as baron, earl, marquess (MAR-kwis), and count. Some of these titles were exclusive to the European continent, while others were distinctive of England. Still others were used both in England and on the Continent, but sometimes the ranks they indicated were different.

One source of confusion is that the titles did not always correspond to rule over a particular expanse of territory. Many were originally granted by a king for service and were simply hereditary ranks (those passed on from father to son). Holding the rank would entitle the nobleman to certain privileges, especially the right to collect income from his sub-

jects and obtain a pension, or allowance, for his widow. A further source of confusion is that the same nobleman could have more than one title. Thus, for example, a duke could hold a secondary title as a marquess (or marquis). Similarly, that duke's son could hold a title as a lower-ranking noble.

One of the most common titles that appears in connection with the Crusades is baron. In Europe, a baron was among the highest-ranking members of the nobility. The title is a feudal one and was granted by the king to a tenant who held the position by virtue of military or other honorable service. Thus, it was not necessarily hereditary. The barons frequently functioned as the king's advisers, though they often competed with him

noble when the vassal died. By about the year 1000, though, this practice was changing, and the land would pass to the vassal's heir, generally his oldest son. The heir would then assume his father's place in the hierarchy. The fundamental duties of the vassal did not change. While he sat in council to give advice to his lord, heard local court cases as a judge or magistrate (an official in charge of the administration of laws), or guarded garrisons (military posts), his primary role was to fight. In this way the European vassals developed into a warrior class, much like the samurai became the warrior class of Japan. Many vassals themselves employed knights, enabling them to muster, or gather, a small army when the need arose. The key point for the purposes of the Crusades is that it was the nobility, not kings, who had the resources and the manpower to fight in the Holy Land. For this reason, a pope calling a Crusade often had to direct his appeal to the nobles, not the king.

for power and occasionally joined together to force the king's hand on issues that affected them. In England, though (and in Japan), barons (or baronets) occupied the lowest rank of nobility. Frequently, the word *baron* was used to refer to any powerful nobleman, a practice that survived into the twenty-first century in such phrases as "baron of industry."

Another common title found in connection with the Crusades is duke. In England, a duke was a hereditary noble whose rank was directly below that of the king. On the continent of Europe, a duke was the ruler of a duchy, typically a territory that was part of a loose collection of states. Thus, within the larger Holy Roman Empire, a duke ruled Austria, which was

therefore a duchy. "Ruled," though, was a relative term. The amount of actual power a duke or any other nobleman held could vary depending on time and circumstances.

In England members of the hereditary nobility ranked as follows, from highest to lowest: duke, marquess, earl, viscount, and baronet. On the Continent, a count was roughly equivalent to a British earl in rank. All of these titles continue to be used in the 2000s. On the European continent they have little governmental meaning and are primarily social titles, but in England the nobility play a political role in the House of Lords in Parliament. Many women hold these titles, and historically women acquired particular titles not through marriage but "in their own right."

## Violence

A second important feature of medieval life was that it was violent. Violence could erupt nearly anywhere and was almost a daily fact of life. Capital punishment (execution) of the most brutal kind was commonplace. Again, without the institutions of the Roman Empire, legal arguments frequently were settled not in an organized court system but in battle or through vendettas (feuds) between families that led to murder and bloodshed. In competition for sometimes scarce economic resources—land, crops, livestock, peasants—neighboring estates frequently resorted to the sword. They often had little choice; it was either that or starvation.

The church tried to channel this hostility so that it was not so random. As a guide, it used both the Old and New Testaments of the Bible, Roman law, and the philosophies of early



## Violence and the Medieval Church

Even the church accepted violence as a fact of life, as the following story illustrates. A French knight prayed at a local monastery that God would allow him to avenge his brother's murder by capturing the murderer. Later, the knight and his companions ambushed the victim, mutilated his face, cut off his hands and feet, and castrated him. The knight believed that he had been successful because of divine help, so in gratitude he donated the victim's blood-stained armor and weapons to the monastery where he had prayed. It would seem incredible today, but the monks gratefully accepted them.

church fathers such as Saint Augustine. It developed a belief system that justified warfare in some circumstances. In the eyes of the church, violence was acceptable or not based on the morality (virtue) of the goal to be achieved. Also considered was the state of mind of the persons responsible for the violence. The church saw the goal of saving the Holy Land as good, so it also saw the violence that accompanied the Crusades, violence of the worst and most brutal kind, as defensible. Some of this violence took place on the way to the Crusades. Often it was directed at Jewish communities in Germany and elsewhere, where Crusaders slaughtered innocent people in the belief that they were carrying out God's will (see Chapter 8). Often it was directed against Muslims, such as when the Crusaders slaughtered the Muslim inhabitants of Jerusalem at the end of the First Crusade (see "The Massacre" in Chapter 6).

## Knighthood

Knights as we know them—horse-mounted, armored soldiers—first appeared on the scene in about the eighth and ninth centuries. While horses had been used in war before then, soldiers usually dismounted in combat because they could fight more effectively on foot. Then the stirrup was developed, allowing the soldier to remain on horseback and keep his balance. The advantage of being mounted was that the knight could brace himself on horseback while he charged his enemy with a lance. At the time, this was a powerful military innovation, or improvement (see Chapter 10 for a discussion of the equipment and weapons of a typical knight).

Training for knighthood began at an early age. Boys as young as seven were sent to serve as pages, or personal attendants, for a wealthy relative or lord. There they would be trained in using weapons and handling a horse. Part of the training



## Military Customs

The modern-day military has customs that began during the Middle Ages. One is the salute. After full suits of metal armor came into use, knights could not easily identify one another as friend or enemy because visors (the fronts of helmets) covered their faces. The visor, though, could be raised and lowered. One knight would commonly greet another by raising his hand, holding it flat, and using the tips of his fingers to lift the visor so that

the other could recognize him. Today's salute mirrors this gesture.

The other custom is that an enlisted soldier is expected to walk on the left side of an officer, just as a squire did hundreds of years ago. As a knight's shield bearer, the medieval squire walked to his left so that the knight, who typically bore his sword or lance in his right hand (most people are right-handed), would be better able to quickly take his shield from the squire in his left hand.

might include a period of apprenticeship. As an apprentice, the young knight served as a squire (assistant) for an older knight, helping him with his horse or in putting on his armor.

Once the young man's training was finished, usually between the ages of sixteen and twenty, he would be ceremonially knighted and swear an oath of fealty, or loyalty, to his lord. He also committed himself to a host of rituals and vows that made knighthood a kind of fraternity, or a brotherly group. The knight was now bound to his lord and had to serve for a fixed period of time, typically four years. During peacetime, he was expected to practice his skills as a knight. He did this with other knights through competitive tournaments, but these tournaments frequently turned into disorderly brawls that resulted in senseless injury and death. Later, kings and the church developed more orderly jousting tournaments, with individual events, to minimize this bloodshed. These jousting tournaments, in which a knight would compete against another knight for the honor of his lady love, became a common feature of life late in the medieval period.

## Knights, the Crusades, and chivalry

Until the time of the First Crusade, knights fought entirely for their lords. The Crusades changed that, however.

To conduct the war to reclaim the Holy Land, Pope Urban II and his successors needed the support of nobles and their knights. In fact, Urban always intended that primarily knights, rather than commoners and peasants, would “take up the cross” (referring to the cross on which Christ died) to invade the Middle East and reclaim its holy sites for Christianity. With the support of bishops, priests, and monks across Europe, the “Christianization” of knights began, and thousands of young men embraced the cause. The sword was now also a symbolic cross of Christ.

Joining a Crusade was a way for these men to reconcile, or bring together, two conflicting demands made by two different “lords.” On the one hand, their earthly lords required them to fight, kill, and plunder. That was their job. Their lord in heaven, though, the lord of the New Testament, required them to “turn the other cheek” and lead a life of meekness, or humbleness. By becoming a Crusader, the church said, a knight could satisfy the demands of his earth-



ly master while also serving his lord in heaven. More than ever, war was thought of as a glorious adventure, a way to acquire wealth, honor, and prestige (status) while fighting in the name of God and the church against those who did not accept God's word.

## The code of chivalry

As the pope's warriors, knights were bound by a code of honor, the code of chivalry. Each knight had to swear that he would defend the weak, the poor, widows, orphans, and the oppressed. He was to be courteous, especially to women; brave; loyal to his leaders; and concerned about the welfare of his subordinates, or those of lesser rank and position. Quoted by Grant Uden, in *A Dictionary of Chivalry*, the knight's code of conduct was fixed in a knightly prayer carved in stone at the cathedral of Chartres in France, one that expresses the chivalric ideal:

**A monk giving a crucifix to a knight leaving for the Crusades.** ©Archivo Iconografico, S.A./Corbis. Reproduced by permission.

Most Holy Lord, Almighty Father ... thou who hast permitted on earth the use of the sword to repress the malice [evil] of the wicked and defend justice ... cause thy servant here before thee, by disposing [turning] his heart to goodness, never to use this sword or another to injure anyone unjustly; but let him use it always to defend the just and right.

Similarly, in the late nineteenth century, French scholar Léon Gautier listed, in his book *Chivalry*, what he called the Decalogue (or Ten Commandments) that governed the conduct of a knight under the code of chivalry:

1. Unswerving belief in the church and obedience to her teachings
2. Willingness to defend the church
3. Respect and pity for the weak and steadfastness in defending them
4. Love of country
5. Refusal to retreat before the enemy
6. Unceasing and merciless war against the infidel
7. Strict obedience to the feudal overlord, so long as those duties did not conflict with duty to God
8. Loyalty to truth and to the pledged word
9. Generosity in giving
10. Championship of the right and the good, in every place and at all times, against the forces of evil

To generations of readers, knighthood and chivalry became almost synonymous with, or identical to, respect for and devotion to women, through epic poems and novels such as Sir Walter Scott's *The Talisman* (1825). The following passage from Scott's novel, in which a Scottish Crusader named Kenneth is addressing a Saracen (Muslim), is typical of the chivalric attitude toward women:

Saracen, replied the Crusader, thou speakest like one who never saw a woman worthy the affection of a soldier. Believe me, couldst thou look upon those of Europe, to whom, after Heaven, we of the order of knighthood vow fealty [faithfulness] and devotion, thou wouldst loathe for ever the poor sensual slaves who form thy harem [the women of a Muslim household]. The beauty of our fair ones gives point to our spears, and edge to our swords; their words are our law; and as soon will a lamp shed luster [a glow of light] when unkindled [the fire is put out], as a knight distinguish himself by feats of arms, having no mistress of his affection.



Three Knights Templars during the Crusades. The Knights Templars were a special order of knights to which many nobles tended to be drawn.

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## Knightly Orders: The Hospitallers and the Templars

Modern military organizations have small, elite fighting forces that are often called on to carry out the most dangerous and difficult missions. Their long and intense training turns them into finely honed fighting machines. More important, membership in one of these organizations is worn as a badge of honor. Those who earn the honor are thought of as a kind of nobility among a nation's men-at-arms and women-at-arms.

In this respect, little has changed since the Middle Ages. Most knights were born into the nobility. Many of these nobles tended to be drawn to special orders of knighthood, including such organizations as the Knights Hospitallers and the Knights Templars. The nobles who served in these organizations did so for a variety of motives: personal pride, a longing for adventure, and a desire to serve their church. But many also served for economic reasons.

The Crusades were expensive, and the nobles of Europe were the ones who largely paid the bill. This put many of them, particularly minor nobles, under great financial strain. Many lost their estates, either because they spent all of their money helping to fund a Crusade or because they were no longer in Europe to defend their land, or both. Faced with the possibility of financial ruin, many chose to serve in elite units. The chief advantage of doing so was the possibility of financial gain, for these units were funded by kings; the church; and wealthier, higher-ranking nobles. While individual knights in these orders received no payment and, in fact, took priestly vows of poverty, the orders themselves attracted a great deal of money. This gave them power, and that power opened doors for their members and provided ways for them to recover financial losses from taking part in the Crusades.

These medieval knightly orders played an important role in the Crusades. They also featured prominently in the history of the European church in the centuries that followed. The two most famous were the Knights Hospitallers and the Knights Templars.

### **Knights Hospitallers**

The first of these knightly orders was the Knights Hospitallers. The Hospitallers began as a monastic order (monks living in monasteries) known mostly for charitable work, but over time they became more of a military order. They were first formed in the 1070s, before the Crusades, when Jerusalem was under the rule of the Muslims. At the time, pilgrims were arriving daily at the holy city. Many were ill and exhausted from their long journey. With the financial backing of a number of Italian merchants, a knight named Gerard Tenque from the Italian city of Amalfi obtained permission from the Muslims to establish a hospital in connection with the Benedictine monastery dedicated to Saint John the Baptist in Jerusalem. This monastery not only would tend to the sick but also would offer “hospitality” to visitors.

During the turmoil surrounding the First Crusade (1095–99), the Knights Hospitallers left the city. After the fall of Jerusalem to the Crusaders in 1099, they returned and reopened the hospital to tend to the even greater number of pilgrims who were making the trip. At the organization’s



height in the early twelfth century, the Hospitallers could take in up to two thousand visitors per day. Although the order continued to be known as the Knights Hospitallers, the official name of the organization changed after the First Crusade. The monastery had always been dedicated to Saint John the Baptist, so the order became known as the Sovereign Military Order of the Hospital of Saint John of Jerusalem, or simply the Knights of Saint John, a name it kept until 1314.

**A late 1870s photograph of the Hospital of Saint John of Jerusalem run by the Knights Hospitallers.**

*Michael Maslan Historic Photographs/Corbis.*

*Reproduced by permission.*

After the fall of Jerusalem, pilgrims to the holy city needed military protection along the route. Although the holy city was in the hands of the Crusaders, the route leading to the city, particularly the vast stretches between Christian strongholds, remained full of danger. The Crusader kings lacked enough manpower to patrol these routes and keep them open. So the new master of the hospital, Raymond du Puy, turned the Knights of Saint John into more of a military force, able to drive off or discourage those who would do harm to pilgrims.

The Hospitallers also became a vital source of information to the Crusaders. Many stayed in the region for long periods of time. They formed relationships with Arabs and often learned to speak the language. Their freedom of movement and ties to the local culture made them familiar not only with Christian customs but with local customs and troop movements as well. As they gained power and provided valuable service, their fame spread, and in 1113 they were officially recognized by Pope Paschal II. Then in 1118 they ended their connection with the Benedictine order of monks. Now they gave their allegiance only to the pope and not to kings or other civil rulers.

The Hospitallers consisted of three classes of members. One, the military class, was called the knights of justice; its members had to be of noble birth. These were the warrior-monks, the policemen who kept open the route to the holy city and dreamed of the destruction of Islam. They became part of the West's standing army in the Holy Land and came to regard future Crusaders as mere migrants to the region.

Additionally, there was a class of chaplains, who ministered spiritually to visitors, and a class of brothers, who did the day-to-day work. Honorary members of the order, called *donates* (related to the word "donation"), funded the operation with gifts. The Hospitallers remained heavily dependent on gifts and donations of money and land, leading to the formation of what were called "preceptories" all across Europe. The preceptories were communities that sought members and raised funds for the organization.

Each of the Hospitallers took a monastic vow and lived a hard life. They could be recognized easily by their black robes emblazoned, or decorated, with a large white



cross. For this reason they were frequently referred to as the Knights of the White Cross. While continuing to care for the sick, they also built rest houses, homes for sick and aging knights, and castles used to strengthen the Crusader states. The best known of these castles was called the Krak (sometimes spelled Crac) des Chevaliers, located high on solid rock northeast of the city of Tripoli (in modern-day Lebanon). At around the time of the Third Crusade, the Muslim general Saladin tried to capture the castle, but it was so impenetrable that he failed, and the castle remained in Christian hands until 1271. One of the Hospitallers' chief military contributions during the Crusades was to aid in the capture of the Egyptian-controlled seacoast city of Ascalon, southwest of Jerusalem, in 1153, the last major victory the Crusaders would ever enjoy. Forces of Hospitallers, though, were present at nearly every military engagement, and the order turned into one of the Crusaders' most potent weapons.

**The Crusader castle Krak des Chevaliers in Tripoli. It is the best known of the castles built by Knights Hospitallers.** ©John J. Jones/Corbis. Reproduced by permission.



**Pilgrims to the Holy Land under the escort of the Knights Templars during the twelfth century.** *Private Collection/Ken Welsh/Bridgeman Art Library. Reproduced by permission.*

After the fall of Jerusalem to the Muslims in 1187, the order moved first to the castle at Margat, east of Tyre (in modern-day Lebanon), and then settled in Acre, a seacoast city north of Jerusalem, in 1189. When Acre fell in 1291, the order moved out of the Holy Land. First it settled on the Mediterranean island of Cyprus, but later it moved to the island of Rhodes and then to the island of Malta in 1530. At this point the order changed its name to the Knights of Malta, the name by which it continues to be known.

In the centuries immediately following the Crusades, the Hospitallers maintained their reputation as warriors. They fought Muslim Turks in the Mediterranean and acted as escorts for pilgrims traveling by sea. But as time went on, their work became entirely charitable rather than military. Perhaps the high point of the Hospitallers came not during the Crusades but in 1783, when a major earthquake hit Sicily. When news reached Malta, the Hospitallers immediately boarded their ships and ferried food and supplies to the ravaged is-

land. Still wearing the black robes emblazoned with the white cross, they sat at the bedsides of the wounded and dying. In modern times the Knights of Malta continue to be known for their charitable and hospital work. In 1926 an association of the Knights of Malta was formed in the United States.

## **Knights Templars**

The Hospitallers won a good deal of fame during the Crusades and survived into the twenty-first century. While they were an important knightly order, they were overshadowed by another more famous and more powerful order, the Knights Templars. To some historians, the history of the Crusades is almost identical with the history of the Templars. Without their help, the Christian communities in the Holy Land probably would not have survived as long as they did. In the early years of the Crusades, the Templars and the Hospitallers acted together. Over time, though, they became rivals, and in the later years of the Crusades, the tension between the two orders even erupted into open conflict. This conflict between the elite guards of the Crusaders weakened the Crusader states and contributed significantly to the ultimate failure of the Crusades.

The Templars were formed in Jerusalem in 1119 by two knights, Hugh des Payens and Godfrey of Saint Omer. Originally, they took the name Poor Knights of Christ. But when King Baldwin of Jerusalem gave the knights a home on the site of the Temple of Solomon (which had been built by the Jews) in Jerusalem, also the site of al-Aqsa Mosque, they took the name Knights of the Temple of Solomon, or Templars (“of the Temple”) for short.

The role of the Templars in many respects was similar to that of the Hospitallers. But while the Hospitallers retained somewhat more of a reputation for charitable work, the Templars were fierce, passionate fighters. Like the Hospitallers, their chief role originally was to protect pilgrims journeying to the Holy Land. In time, though, the Templars served a much broader role. When hostilities with Muslim forces erupted, the Crusader kings simply did not have enough regular troops under their command. The Templars became the special forces that supplemented the regular troops and, in fact, did much of the actual fighting. Their numbers were

never huge; typically, they put up to about three hundred knights in the field. But their ferocity and skill and, especially, experience—in contrast to newly arriving Crusaders—more than made up for any lack of numbers. They were not afraid to die, either. In the final battle of the Seventh and last Crusade, they lost nearly three hundred knights to the Egyptians, and an equal number were slaughtered at the fall of Acre in 1291.

As they gained power and influence, the Templars also frequently acted as advisers. They sat at council tables and took part in the process of deciding on the best course of action. During the Third Crusade, for example, they counseled against marching on Jerusalem, arguing that it would serve no strategic purpose because of the truce between Richard of England and Saladin. None of the rulers in the Holy Land could afford to offend the Templars. Although the Templars owed no allegiance (loyalty) to those rulers, they went to war for them as conditions dictated. The rulers knew that without the Templars, they would find it impossible to hold at bay the Muslims who surrounded them. The Templars dreamed of the day when they could achieve glory by driving the infidel (unbeliever, that is, anyone who was not a Christian) out of the Holy Land. Many secretly also dreamed of the day when perhaps they could even take over as rulers of the Crusader states.

Some Europeans opposed the formation of military orders within the church. The question of the morality of “warrior-monks” was widely debated, especially in church circles. Those who were against the formation of such orders as the Templars believed that a religious order should emphasize prayer or charitable work. Some even thought that fighting, especially by someone who had taken a monastic vow, was sinful. For these reasons, Bernard of Clairvaux, the same Bernard who preached the Second Crusade, wrote a book in support of the Templars whose Latin title is *De laude novae militiae*, or *In Praise of the New Knighthood*.

Bernard also developed rules for the order, and these orders were severe. The Templars took monastic vows. They were to eat simple meals and sleep together in a single room, fully clothed and ready for action, with candles burning. They were never to gaze at women; if necessary, they were to look at

a woman only long enough to identify her. They were allowed no personal property except for three horses, their weapons, and plain dress, notably a white tunic with a red cross. (While the Hospitallers were the Knights of the White Cross, the Templars were the Knights of the Red Cross.) All amusement, including activities such as chess and hunting, was forbidden.

The Templars were given official recognition by Pope Honorius at the church Council of Troyes in 1128. From that point on, they, like the Hospitallers, gave their allegiance only to the pope. Again like the Hospitallers, they received gifts of money and estates, but they attracted more donations, making the order in time immensely powerful and wealthy. The Templars supplemented this wealth by becoming, in effect, bankers in the Holy Land. They made loans and funded merchant activity, often charging very high rates of interest. Many of them learned to speak Arabic, so they not only managed a system of spies but also carried on profitable business activities with the Muslims. The Templars had little trouble recruiting knights from Europe. As the fame of the Templars spread, many knights, especially those who lived on bankrupt estates, were eager to join an order that was growing yearly in power and wealth.

The Templars were composed of three orders. At the top of the hierarchy were the knights themselves, under the control of a grand master. They were usually recruited from the nobility, and only they could wear the white tunic with a red cross. These, of course, were the organization's warriors. Beneath the knights were the sergeants. These men, about five thousand of them, tended to be from the middle classes. Wearing a black tunic with a red cross, they typically served as grooms, or servants, to the knights and often functioned as sergeants at arms. The third class consisted of the clerics, or chaplains. These men carried out religious, medical, and other nonmilitary functions.

The later history of the Templars is as rich as that during the Crusades. After the fall of Jerusalem in 1187, they moved to Acre. With Acre's fall in 1291, they moved to the Mediterranean island of Cyprus. In short order, they abandoned warfare and became the leading money handlers in Europe. Their holdings of land grew, and as they became richer, they served as bankers for such kings as Louis IX of



## Friday the Thirteenth

The superstition of Friday the thirteenth may have begun during this purge (elimination) of the Templars. The pope did not want the arrest of the Templars throughout Europe to occur in a piecemeal (fragmented) way. He wanted as many of them as possible rounded up and arrested at the same time, so that they did not have a chance to flee or organize opposition. To that end, he sent out sealed orders to authorities and military commanders throughout Europe, ordering the arrests. The orders were all to be opened and executed on the same date, on Friday, October thirteenth. The ill fortune of the Templars on that day may have given rise to the widely held superstition that Friday the thirteenth is an unlucky day.

France. Because of their power and because, by papal decree, they were not subject to any rulers, they also became hated and feared.

The organization began to come apart in the early fourteenth century. In 1307 King Philip IV of France needed money to go to war against the Flemish. The only place the spendthrift king could get that money was from the Templars. He hated being dependent on an organization that seemed to have as much power as he did (or more), so he launched a persecution of the order. Aided by the pope he had used his power to install, Clement V, he ordered the arrest of all the members of the order. Their property was confiscated (seized by the government), and they were put on trial. Many were tortured to make them confess to charges such as sacrilege (disrespect of holy things), denial of Christ, homosexuality, and satanic worship. In Paris forty-five Templars were burned at the stake in one day.

With the Templars severely weakened, Pope Clement dissolved the order at the church Council of Vienna in 1312. In 1314 the last grand master of the Templars, Jacques de Molay, was burned at the stake. In England, where the Templars operated out of headquarters on Fleet Street, Templar property was seized without violence and handed over to the Hospitallers.

An intriguing question is whether the Templars, in some form, continue to exist as a kind of shadowy, secret cult that pulls hidden levers of financial and political power throughout the world. Many people believe that they do, that their traditions and rituals have been handed down to various secret organizations or societies through the centuries. These organizations are generally referred to under the umbrella name of the Masons or Freemasons. Others believe that the Templars excavated, or dug, under the Church of the Holy

Sepulchre in Jerusalem and discovered secret, mystical knowledge that was the source of their power.

## Teutonic Knights

The Teutonic Knights was another knightly order, one that was variously called the Knights of the Virgin Mary or the Teutonic Knights of the Hospital of Saint Mary the Virgin. The order was formed at Acre during the siege of that city in 1190. Like the other orders, the members, who wore a white mantle (robe) with a black cross, took vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience. Their major function was to offer aid to German pilgrims in the Holy Land.

After the Crusades, the Teutonic Knights continued to act as warriors. They turned their attention to fighting the Prussians and other “heathens” in eastern Europe. For many years they held extensive territory under the authority of the pope in such countries as Poland, Russia, and Sweden. In 1809 French emperor Napoleon Bonaparte disbanded the Teutonic Knights, but the order was revived in 1834. The Teutonic Knights, now fully a religious and charitable organization, has its headquarters in Vienna, Austria.

By the end of the Middle Ages, as the technology of war evolved and gunpowder came into use, knights as true warriors were beginning to outlive their usefulness. In the centuries that followed, and still today, knighthood became an honorary institution, granted either by royal decree for service to a nation or to members of civic, fraternal, or charitable organizations.

One historical view of the Crusades emphasizes their brutality, ineffectiveness, religious prejudice, plunder, and mindless bloodshed. Another view emphasizes the Crusades as a stage. On this stage the virtues of piety (devoutness), devotion to a cause, and bravery were enacted by sincere Chris-



## Other Chivalric Orders

The history of chivalry through the late Middle Ages continued to witness the formation of knightly orders. These orders were formed for various purposes, and many had colorful names: the Palm and Alligator, the Bee, the Scarf and the Broom Flowers (a reference to the royal family to which Richard I of England belonged, the Plantagenets, a name that means “broom plant”), the Golden Shield, the White Falcon, and even the Fools. Several of these orders consisted of women; the first female knights, according to tradition, fought the Moors (the name given to Muslims on the Iberian Peninsula) in defense of Tortosa, Spain, in 1149.

tians who genuinely believed that their cause was just, as well as by Muslims who were equally committed to their beliefs.

As is frequently the case, the truth lies somewhere between these two views. Although many knights failed to live up to the ideals of the chivalric code, many others did. Like the image of the cowboy in the American Old West, that of the chivalric knight, while often exaggerated, continues to provide a standard of conduct to which many aspire.

## For More Information

### Books

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Gautier, Léon. *Chivalry*. Edited by Jacques Levron and translated by D. C. Dunning. London: Phoenix House, 1965.

Treese, Henry. *The Crusades*. New York: Random House, 1962.

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**W**hile many common foot soldiers fought and died in the Crusades, the western armies were led by the knights of Europe. Some were kings, such as Richard I of England and Philip II of France. Others were important members of the nobility, including princes, counts, dukes, and barons from countries such as France, Italy, and the Holy Roman Empire. Still others were the nobles' vassals, that is, people under the protection of a lord whom they serve, and lower-ranking knights who were under the vassals' command (see "The Structure of Medieval Society" and "Knighthood" in Chapter 9). As European knights, they would have had similar training, and they would have conducted warfare in similar ways.

### The "accoutrements" of a knight

The word *accoutrement* is French and means "equipment." The widespread use of the word among knights at the time reflects the strong influence of France on the Crusades and on knighthood throughout the Middle Ages (roughly 500–1500). Any knight would have taken into bat-



**King Philip II of France led the western armies during the Crusades.** ©Stapleton Collection/Corbis. Reproduced by permission.

tle his “accoutrements” both for defensive and offensive purposes.

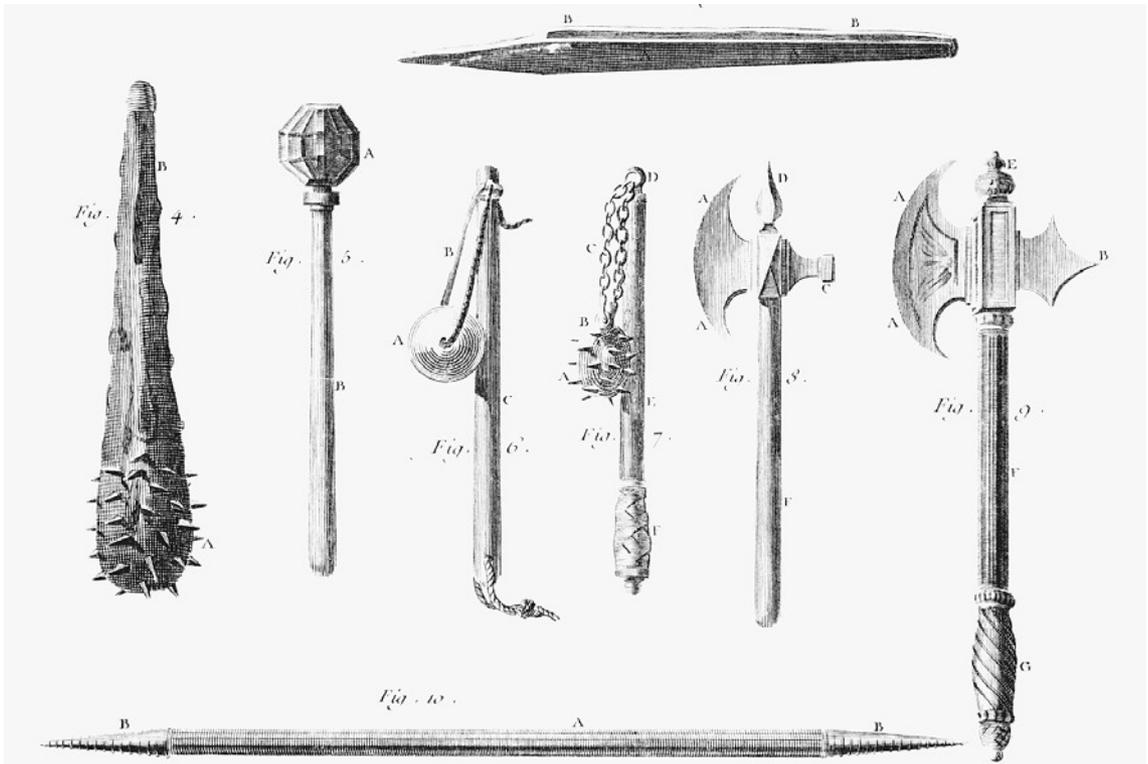
## Armor

To protect themselves, knights wore armor. The earliest armor, the kind a Crusader would have worn, consisted of chain mail. Chain mail was a kind of fabric made up of thousands of small interlocking metal rings. Its strength protected its wearer from blows from a sword. For this reason, many Muslim warriors fought not only with swords but also with maces, though Europeans used maces too. A mace was a staff with a heavy, spiked metal ball at the end. A horse-mounted Muslim warrior would swing the mace at a Crusader, hoping that the blow would knock him off his horse and that the spikes would penetrate his chain mail and helmet. To ward off such blows, knights carried shields, which were usually made of wood covered with leather.

Helmets with visors (a movable face mask), because they covered the face, made it difficult to identify the wearer in battle, giving rise to what was called “heraldry.” Heraldry was a complex system of visual designs used to identify a knight by the noble to whom he owed his allegiance, or loyalty. These symbols also may have served as rallying points during the heat of battle, much like a flag. The symbols consisted of various bars, color schemes, and animals (such as a leopard or lion), as well as a family motto, usually in Latin.

Knights wore these heraldic symbols on their shields and elsewhere, including on their surcoats, or large, sleeveless overcoats worn over the armor. For this reason the symbols came to be called coats of arms. In time, every noble family had its unique coat of arms, a symbol of pride, heritage, and prestige, or status.

As time went on and weapons such as the longbow and crossbow were developed, which many knights viewed as



cowardly because they could be used from afar rather than in close combat, chain mail became less effective. For this reason, armor made out of metal plates began to appear in the thirteenth century. Full suits of metal armor, which protected the knight's entire body, did not appear until about the fifteenth century, so the image of the "knight in shining armor" dates to after the Crusades. In the meantime, bows were becoming more accepted among western warriors. Because of its length and strength, the longbow was effective against distant targets. In the twelfth century the church outlawed use of the crossbow as cruel, but knights ignored this law. Crossbows, which were held sideways, aimed like a gun, and shot using a trigger mechanism, were extremely accurate over shorter distances.

**An illustration of various weapons used during the Crusades. Included are weapons such as lances, maces, and battle-axes.**

©Bettmann/Corbis.  
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## Weapons

The knight fought with two standard weapons. One was the lance, which, because of its length, gave the horse-



## Coats of Arms

Heraldry gave rise to a special vocabulary (including many words from the French), which was almost impossible to understand. A coat of arms might be described, for example, as “argent, a saltire azure, cantoned with four markings of ermine sable.” A crest, an identifying emblem of a knight, might be said to have “a lion’s head erased azure langued gules.” These descriptions, which sound like a foreign language, had meaning to knights in the Middle Ages. They told the knights the colors, designs, pictures, and other features of a coat of arms. In these examples, “azure” is a shade of blue, a “saltire” is an X, “ermine” is

a color combination of black spots on a white background, an “erased lion’s head” meant that it was cut off, and “langued gules” meant that the lion’s tongue was red.

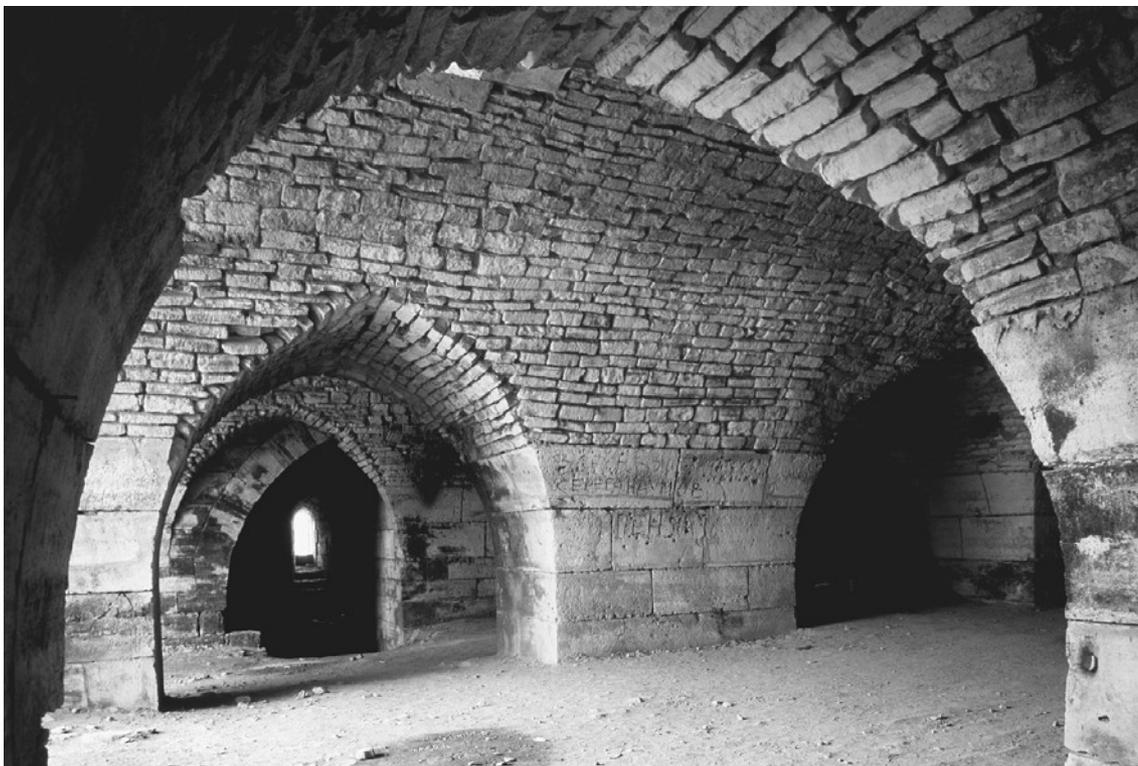
One phrase from medieval heraldry still used in England and often found in English literature is “blot on the ‘scutcheon.’” A ‘scutcheon, or escutcheon, is a shield. A knight found guilty of a dishonorable act would suffer an “abatment of honor,” and a mark, or “blot,” would be placed on his shield, dishonoring him and his family. “Blot on the ‘scutcheon” is still used as a figure of speech to refer to a family’s dishonor or guilty secret.

mounted knight an advantage over enemies on the ground. The other, of course, was the sword. During the Crusades, the sword began to acquire a strong religious connotation, or association, because it was shaped much like a cross, or crucifix. The very term *Crusade* meant “to take up the cross” in the service of God, and for most knights, the sword was a symbol of the cross on which Christ died. Many knights, especially wealthier ones, carried swords that were elaborately decorated with engravings or encrusted with jewels. While the early Crusaders carried their own swords from Europe, those who stayed in the Middle East came to prefer local swords made with steel from the Syrian city of Damascus. This steel was stronger than the steel made in Europe.

All of the accoutrements of knighthood were a badge of prestige. The mere fact of owning a horse, armor, and a dazzling sword was a sign of wealth and position. But as many European knights learned, the heavy armor and weapons suitable in the cooler climates and on the firmer ground of western and northern Europe were often a nuisance in the extreme heat and desert sands of the Middle

East. These differences between the regions led to differences in fighting styles. Heavily armored Europeans rode powerful stallions, or male horses, that could carry their weight. In battle the Crusaders relied on massed, tightly closed formations. They would simply point their lances forward, bear down on an opposing army, and overwhelm it by brute force. In contrast, the Arab and Turkish Muslims were desert warriors. They rode long-legged, nimble, swift mares, or female horses, and wore no armor that would have weighed them down and made them less mobile in the sand. Their chief tactic in battle was to attack repeatedly and then withdraw, trying to draw their opponents out of formation. They would then quickly retreat, shooting arrows at their opponents with small, tightly strung bows.

One problem both the Crusaders and their opponents occasionally had might seem almost comical today. While Europeans preferred stallions, Arabs and Turks favored mares. At times, especially in the spring, when female horses go into



**An interior view of Krak des Chevaliers, one of the most famous Crusader castles. Although many of the Crusaders occupied castles that were already present, in nearly every case the Crusaders strengthened them. ©Elio Ciol/Corbis. Reproduced by permission.**

heat (ready for breeding), the Crusaders' stallions showed more interest in mating with the female horses than in fighting. The Crusaders came to admire the Arabs' swift mares and took a number back to Europe to breed with the stockier horses there. The result was the breed called Thoroughbreds, which are still widely ridden today. All Thoroughbred horses are descended from a relatively few Arabian mares.

## **Castles, sieges, and siege machinery**

Horses, lances, and swords were offensive weapons, used on fields of battle, but equally important was defense, and for defense both the Crusaders and the Muslims relied heavily on castles. Many of the castles the Crusaders occupied were already present when they arrived, but in nearly every case the Crusaders strengthened and expanded them. At the same time, the Crusaders, built many new castles



throughout their kingdoms in the Levant (the European name for the countries on the eastern shore of the Mediterranean). Describing the castle that defended Jerusalem, one pilgrim to the city, quoted by C. N. Johns in an article titled “The Citadel, Jerusalem,” wrote in 1106:

It is curiously built in massive stone, is very high, and of square, solid impregnable [unable to be penetrated] form; it is like a single stone from its base up. It contains plenty of water, five iron gates and two hundred steps to the summit [top]. An immense quantity of corn [grain] is stored in this tower. It is very difficult to take and forms the main defence of the city. It is carefully guarded and no one is allowed to enter except under supervision.

This passage could have described virtually any castle in the Crusader states of Jerusalem, Antioch, Edessa, and Tripoli.

In campaign after campaign, the Crusaders took refuge in castles, often to wait for reinforcements, while their opponents surrounded them. The castles were, in effect, forts,

**A medieval battering ram. Weapons such as this were often used during the Crusades to knock down the walls and gates surrounding a city.** ©Chris Hellier/Corbis. Reproduced by permission.

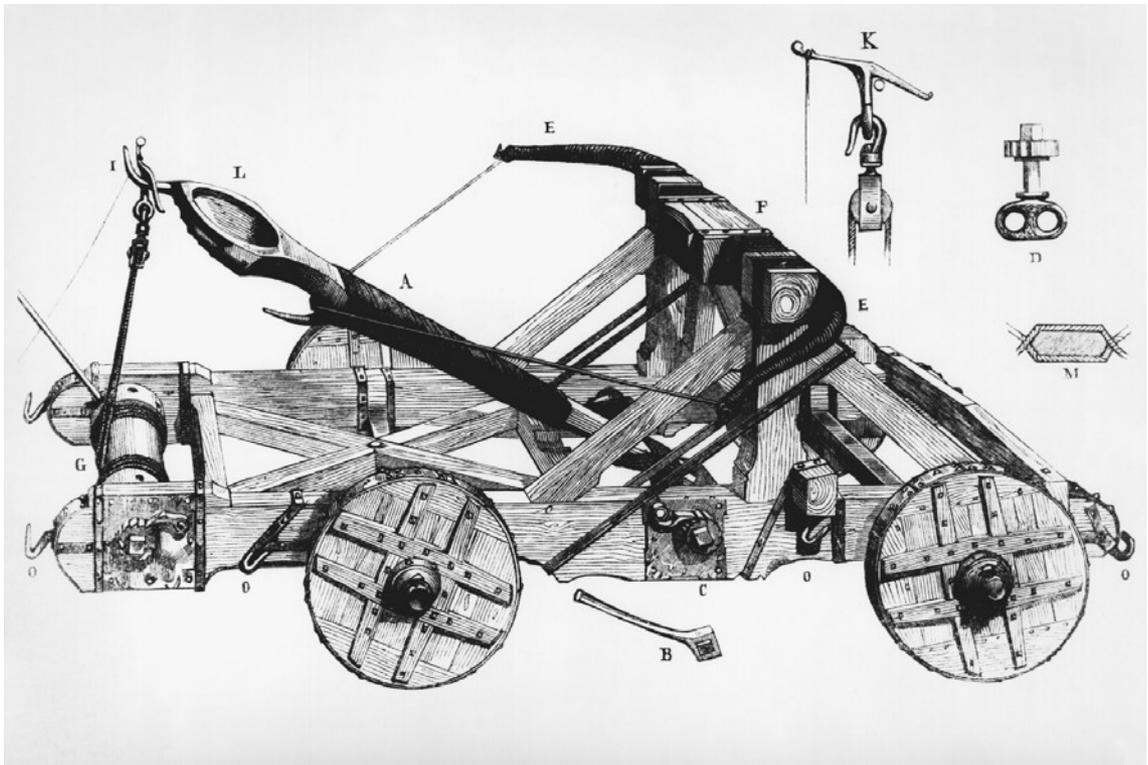
where supplies could be stored and soldiers could find refuge. After the First Crusade, war in the Middle East, from the perspective of the Crusaders, was largely defensive in nature, so the Crusaders learned to make many improvements in the architecture of castles. To better ward off their opponents, they developed such innovations, or improvements, as the overhanging parapet. A parapet is a low wall that defenders crouched behind on the top of the castle's main massive wall, some of which were up to 15 feet (4.5 meters) thick. The overhanging parapet made it easier for them to heave hot oil or to shoot arrows at their attackers below. Another innovation was the angular entryway, which prevented attackers from shooting directly through gates into the castle's interior.

### **Siege warfare**

The chief tactic for capturing an occupied castle or a walled town, which served much the same defensive purpose as a castle, was the siege (from the French word *siège*, meaning "to sit"). An attacking army, whether Christian or Muslim, frequently could do nothing other than camp outside the castle or the city's walls and wait for those inside to surrender. Typically, their goal was to starve the defenders into submission by cutting off supplies, especially food. The more provisions a castle or city had within its walls, the longer it could wait for the invaders to lose patience and leave. Most castles and fortified (strengthened) cities had their own supplies of water and immense caverns that could hold enough food for months, even years. As a result, the besiegers on the outside sometimes ran out of food first.

A well-equipped army, though, was not always willing to wait, so it used "siege engines," or "siege machinery," to gain entry. At the time of the First Crusade, siege engine technology was more highly developed in the East than it was in the West. But Muslim invaders in such places as Spain had used siege machinery, so the Europeans learned from them and were quickly catching up.

Siege engines, which were often built on the spot from materials at hand rather than transported, had at least three functions. One was to batter down walls and gates. The basic engine used for this purpose was the battering ram. Battering rams were typically made of immense poles or tree



trunks, usually with a metal head. A team of men would rhythmically swing the ram back and forth against a gate until it shattered. Often they had to duck arrows, firebombs, or burning pitch (tar) hurled at them from above.

A second function of siege engines was to allow attackers to scale the walls. A long scaling ladder could be easily made from any materials available. Attackers also used scaling forks, which were long poles with hooks used to snare defenders and pull them off the tops of walls. A more elaborate structure was the belfry, or siege tower. This was a tall, movable tower, similar to scaffolding, from which archers could shoot arrows down into a city or over a castle's walls. If it could be moved close enough to the walls, attackers could use it to climb onto the tops of the walls and gain entrance.

A third function of siege engines was to hurl missiles, such as stones and firebombs, over the walls. They could also be used to practice psychological warfare, or warfare designed

**A catapult like the one pictured here was often used during siege warfare to fling beehives, dead and diseased animals, and even the severed heads of captured enemy soldiers and civilians over the walls of the city.** ©Christel Gerstenberg/Corbis.  
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## The Siege of the Castle of Montferrand

A vivid description of siege warfare was provided by William of Tyre, a chronicler who wrote about the Crusades in *A History of Deeds Done beyond the Sea*. Here is a portion of his description of the siege on the castle of Montferrand laid by Turkish general Imad al-Din Zengi in 1137 (for more on Zengi, see “Zengi, Nur al-Din, and Saladin” IN CHAPTER 7).

*Meanwhile, Zengi continued his vigorous attacks upon the besieged with unremitting zeal. The very walls shook under*

*the impulse [force] of his mighty engines. Millstones and huge rocks hurled from the machines fell into the midst of the citadel, shattered the houses within, and caused intense fear to the refugees there. Great fragments of rock and all kinds of whirling missiles were hurled with such violence against them that there was no longer any place of security within the walls where the feeble and wounded might be hidden. Everywhere was danger, everywhere hazard [risk], everywhere the spectre [haunting vision] of frightful death hovered before their eyes.... With this very object in view, their cruel foe redoubled [renewed] his assaults.*

more to frighten and wear down the enemy than to defeat him. A common tactic, for example, was to fling beehives, dead and diseased animals, and even the severed heads of captured enemy soldiers and civilians over the walls.

The latter types of siege engines were much more elaborate than the others and required more engineering. Typically, crusading armies would have in their ranks builders and engineers who were experts in the craft of designing and constructing these engines. A general name given to many of them, especially those that hurled stones, was *perrier*, but they came in different types, depending on how they operated.

One type was the mangon, or mangonel, which was made of a long, flexible beam that was pulled down with a rope to create tension. When the rope was released, stones or firebombs in a hollowed-out cup at the end of the beam would be hurled through the air. In contrast was the trebuchet, which relied not on tension but on a system of counterweights, boxes of stones or sand dropped down on one end of a beam to propel the missile at the other, similar to the operation of a seesaw. Some of these artillery pieces launched other types of missiles. The *ballista*, for example, was much like a very large crossbow and could

throw metal shafts, like large arrows, as well as stones and fire-bombs. While all these engines were used to project missiles over the walls, they could also be used to pulverize the walls, allowing the attackers to gain entrance. The best siege engines could launch missiles as far as 200 or more yards (183 meters) or could hurl stones weighing up to a quarter ton (227 kilograms).

A final tactic used in siege warfare was undermining, often called sapping. This consisted of burrowing under the walls of a castle or a fortified city. The goal was to weaken the walls so that they would collapse. Frequently, undermining would expose wooden timbers used to support the walls. These would then be set on fire, again causing the walls to collapse. Occasionally, the goal of undermining was to create tunnels, which then could be used to flood the castle if the terrain allowed water to flow down from nearby higher elevations. Sometimes, of course, undermining was not a good option because the castle was built on solid rock. Even then, Muslims often brought forces of miners, in some cases hundreds of them, to bore into the rock.

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## Literature and Song of the Crusades

**T**hroughout its history, literature has passed through two broad stages and is still in a third stage. In each of these stages, poets; playwrights; and, in modern times, novelists tended to write about similar subjects, mostly because these were the subjects that interested their readers or listeners. Ancient literature, for example, the literature of ancient Greece and Rome, tended to focus on the activities of gods and their involvement in human affairs. Modern literature, literature since roughly 1700, has focused more on the day-to-day lives of ordinary people in realistic settings. Between these periods were the Middle Ages (roughly 500–1500), when the most common subject matter of literature was neither gods nor ordinary people, but a class of people who fell between the two, larger-than-life heroes.

Many exceptions to these trends can be found, and it would be impossible to assign firm dates to when these shifts took place, just as it would be impossible for a scientist to say specifically when a species of animal first appeared. Nonetheless, some of the most important literary works throughout history show this evolution from the Age



A battle scene illustrated on a page for the *Shahnameh*, or *The Epic of Kings*. Heroic literature such as this was popular during the Crusades era. © Corbis. Reproduced by permission.

of the Gods through the Age of Heroes to the Age of Realism in literature.

## Heroic literature

Much of the literature of the Middle Ages was “heroic literature.” Most of it shared two important features. First, the language used was not the Latin of priests and monks working in their monasteries. Latin was considered the language of educated people in Europe during the Middle Ages. Instead, the literature was composed in the “vernacular” languages, or the everyday languages spoken by people in France, England, Spain, Germany, and the other nations of Europe.

Second, most of this literature was not written down, at least until later, sometimes centuries later. Very often, different versions of a literary work survive. Meanwhile, before the invention of the printing press, most vernacular litera-

ture was passed along orally, often by wandering poets and musicians who entertained audiences with stories about their “betters.” Many of these stories were legends and tales that already existed. Individual poets often could not read, but they had excellent memories, so they could learn lengthy stories and poems to recite. Generally, each would embellish those stories and poems with new details or new story lines, so that as time went on, the stories grew and expanded. Frequently, the later “writer” of a work was simply recording legends that had been passed along for a long time.

Many different groups populated Europe during the early Middle Ages: the Vikings, the Franks, the Goths, the Saxons, the Magyars, and others. They lived in a bloody and violent age. The virtues that ensured survival were not humility, or meekness, but courage, skill as a warrior, and loyalty to a clan or tribe and its leaders. This was a time when heroic kings and warriors strode across the stage of Europe. It was an age of conquerors, of emperors, of warrior dukes and princes, of knights doing battle against chaos, as Europeans tried to emerge from the backwardness of the Dark Ages (as this time period was sometimes called) and form a civilization.

The epic literature of the early Middle Ages, much of it from German-speaking regions, celebrated the deeds of these great men. The epic poem was typically sung or recited to an audience at feasts and on other occasions. Stories such as *Beowulf* in England or the *Nibelungenlied* in the Scandinavian and Germanic countries preserved the real world and the values of bloody warriors who survived through cunning and strength in a dangerous, brutal age.

As time progressed and the influence of the Christian church grew wider, the values celebrated in the epics came into conflict with the message of Christ found in the biblical New Testament. The church, therefore, tried to impose a different set of values on people. The ideal people for the Christian church were not the blood-soaked warriors, but monks and saints. These people were humble and poor. They rejected the world and focused on a life of the spirit. They lived lives of holiness, and they very often died for their religious faith as martyrs.

By about the tenth and eleventh centuries, many of Europe’s warriors were accepting these values. Stories survive

of many nobles—dukes, princes, even kings—who entered the church, became monks, and lived lives of prayer and seclusion, or isolation. They cut their hair in the “tonsure,” a ring of hair surrounding a bald area, to imitate the crown of thorns placed on Christ’s head when he died. Within the church, the most common form of literature was stories celebrating the lives of saints and martyrs.

Then the Christian church began to expand and flex its muscle. Popes became more powerful and had more influence over the people of Europe than their kings did. To the east, the church tried to win converts among the Slavic peoples. Armed Christians resisted the invasion of Islam in Spain and other parts of Europe. Out of this expansion came a new ideal, one that combined the ideals of the epic warrior with those of the saint. This was the Christian warrior, one who mingled deeply held religious faith with a desire to fight for that faith. His sword, with its long blade and crossing hand guard, became a symbol of the cross on which Christ was crucified and died. This development, the Christian knight, flowered during the Crusades. Now warriors were to fight not for territory or to gain vengeance (revenge) against enemies and traitors, as the heroes of the old epics did, but to win souls for their church and their God. The ideal was not the bloody pagan (believer in many gods) warrior of the Germanic epics but someone like a Knight Templar (see Chapter 9), a Christian noble who entered an elite corps of warrior-monks to fight and, if necessary, die for his faith.

### **The chanson de geste**

The literary form called the *chanson de geste* emerged from this blending of the ideals of the Germanic warrior and the Christian saint. The term is French and means something like “song of deeds,” especially heroic deeds, and the *chansons de geste* typically celebrated heroic deeds of chivalry (see “Knights, the Crusades, and Chivalry” in Chapter 9). They were poems that could be sung or recited. They used simple but vivid (dramatic) language that relied on the poetic device of assonance. (Assonance is a kind of rhyme in which vowel sounds are repeated, so that, for example, “lake” would rhyme not just with “take” but also with “tale.”) Like the ear-

lier epics, they were oral literature, passed along by minstrels and troubadours, medieval musical performers.

The earliest chansons de geste probably were composed in about the ninth or tenth century. The most famous examples of the form came a little later, and many dealt with the life of the Frankish warrior-king Charlemagne, or Charles the Great (742–814). Like many chansons de geste, they were composed

in what are called cycles, or separate groupings of poems that look at different parts of Charlemagne's life. Thus, the first group deals with Charlemagne's childhood. The second tells of his efforts to subdue his rebellious vassals (people in service to a lord, who gives them protection). The third treats his battles to extend Christianity to the east. The fourth group deals with his activities before he went off to fight the Moors (or Muslims) in Spain (see "Spanish Islam" in Chapter 1).

### ***La Chanson de Roland***

The most famous *chanson de geste* concerning the life of Charlemagne is contained in the last cycle, which tells of Charlemagne's exploits fighting the Moors in Spain. This poem is called *La Chanson de Roland*, or *The Song of Roland*. The poem, as it survives into the 2000s, most likely was written down around the year 1100, and its probable author was a poet named Tuold, who came from Normandy in France. The subject of the poem is the Battle of Roncesvalles in 778, fought as Charlemagne and his army were leaving Spain and crossing the Pyrenees to return to France. In real life the battle was against the Basques, an ethnic group that lived in the region between France and Spain. But *The Song of Roland* turns it into a heroic battle against the "Saracens," as Muslims usually were called in Europe at the time. Ironically, Charlemagne is remembered more for his only defeat than for his many victories, for much of his army was wiped out at the Battle of Roncesvalles.

One who supposedly fell in battle that day was Charlemagne's nephew, Count Roland. He and his troops were the victims of the treachery of Roland's stepfather, Ganelon. Roland had proposed that Ganelon be sent to negotiate peace terms with the Saracens. Ganelon was angry with Roland because the mission was so dangerous. In his anger, he conspired with the Saracens to lay a trap for Roland, who led the rearguard of Charlemagne's army and was ambushed at the mountain pass at Roncesvalles.

According to the legend, Roland was one of the so-called Twelve Paladins, or close advisers to the king. Roland, however, may not have existed, though he may have been based on an actual person. As the story of the Battle at Roncevalles spread and grew throughout the rest of the Middle Ages, the name of Roland became renowned. Minstrels and



## An Excerpt from *The Song of Roland*

Here is a brief sample of *La Chanson de Roland*, quoted at the *Online Medieval and Classical Library*:

*The battle grows more hard and harder yet,  
Franks and pagans, with marvellous onset,  
Each other strike and each himself defends.  
So many shafts bloodstained and shattered,  
So many flags and ensigns tattered;  
So many Franks lose their young lustihead,  
Who'll see no more their mothers nor their  
friends,  
Nor hosts of France, that in the pass attend.  
Charles the Great weeps therefor with regret.*

troubadours added freely to the legend. Throughout Europe, people knew of Roland's sword Durandal, his trusty horse Veillantif, and the horn of Roland, which he blew to lead troops into battle.

Of course, other chansons de geste were written as well, and some of them had to do directly with the Crusades. One is called the *Chanson d'Antioch*, or *Song of Antioch*, and focuses on the siege of Antioch in 1097, during the First Crusade (1095–99; see “The First Crusade” in Chapter 6). It probably was written by an eyewitness to the siege, Richard the Pilgrim, but it was reworked later by a French writer, Graindour de Douai.

## Lyrics of courtly love

Another type of literature that evolved during the time of the Crusades was poetry that dealt with courtly love. (Courtly love referred to the “code,” or “rules” lovers followed at court.) In France the sources of many of these poems were two separate but related groups of singer-poets. The best known today were the troubadours, who flourished in the southern regions of France, especially Provence, as well as in northern Spain and northern Italy. Many of these poets were knights. The other group were the *trouvères*, who flourished more in northern France. While both groups sang of courtly love, the songs of the *trouvères* tended to be more satirical, or humorous and mocking. A third group, called the Minnesängers, sang of courtly love in the German-speaking regions.

The inspiration behind this form of poetry came from the Arab Muslims (followers of the Islamic faith), both in Spain and in the Middle East at the time of the Crusades. While earlier Christian thinking had seen women as the fallen daughters of the biblical Eve and regarded sex as an animal instinct, the Arabs looked at women with more of a sense of worship. The

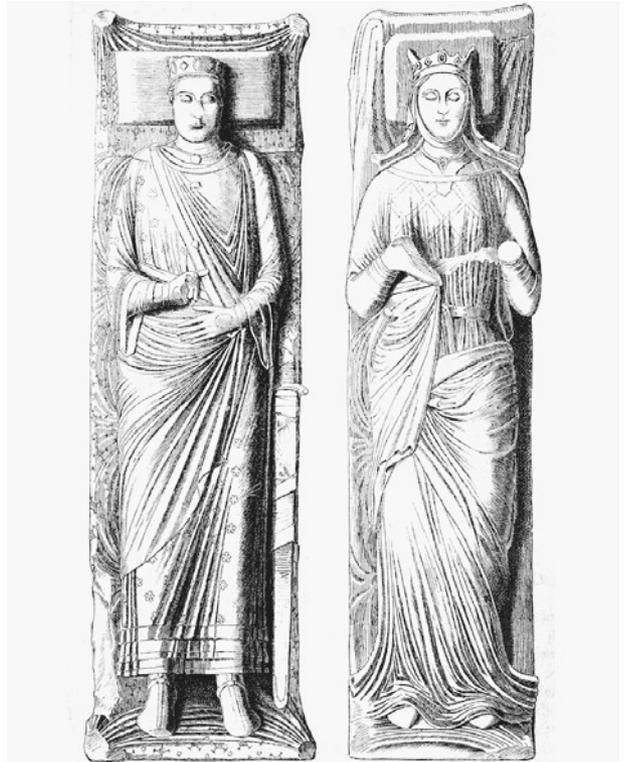
Crusaders took this viewpoint back to Europe. One of the sponsors of a great deal of courtly love poetry was Eleanor of Aquitaine, who accompanied her husband, King Louis VII, on the Second Crusade, which began in 1146. Many of these poems of courtly love dealt with the theme of a knight leaving his ladylove as he went on Crusade.

Courtly love poetry described the intense emotions and the codes of behavior followed by lovers at court. According to the conventions, or “rules,” of the poems, the purpose in life of the courtly lover was to serve his lady. Most of the time, the love affairs in the poems were adulterous, that is, they were relationships outside marriage. This was because most marriages among the nobility were economic and political arrangements and were not based on love. In many other poems, the lover saw his lady as an ideal person whose hand he could never hope to win. The courtly lover saw himself as serving the god of love and worshiping his lady, whom he viewed as a saint. The greatest sin that a courtly lover could commit was faithlessness to his ladylove.

In time, the traditions of courtly love came to be part of much of the literature of the medieval period. One of the great long poems of the late Middle Ages, *The Divine Comedy*, by the Italian poet Dante (written from about 1310 to 1314), relies on courtly love traditions. The speaker of the poem is inspired by his earthly lover, Beatrice, who serves as his guide to Paradise, or heaven. Even later, in the late sixteenth century, Shakespeare’s Romeo sums up the traditions of courtly love when he sees Juliet on the balcony and says, “It is my lady. O, it is my love.”

## Romance

A final literary form from the late medieval period was the romance. This form combined the traditions of the



**Eleanor of Aquitaine (right) was a great sponsor of courtly love poetry during the Crusades.**

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## An Example of a Courtly Love Lyric

Here is a very brief example of courtly love poetry, a short poem written in the tradition of the German Minnesängers. (*Minne-* means something like “ideal love.”) The German version is above the English translation. Interestingly, this poem, found by Gundrata Sidricsdottir and quoted in the Edinburgh University Medieval Society newsletter, *Feudalist Overlord*, was written in the margin of a Bible, apparently by a monk to a nun. The letter shows that the impulses of courtly love were not restricted to laypersons:

*Du bist min, ich bin din,  
des solt du gewis sin,  
du bist beslozen in minem herzen,  
verlorn ist daz sluzzelin,  
danne muost du ouch iemer darinne sin.  
(You are mine, I am yours,  
you should be sure of this,  
you are locked up in my heart,  
the little key is lost,  
so you must always be inside it.)*

chansons de geste and of courtly love lyrics. From the chanson de geste they took the theme of the crusading knight who performed noble and heroic deeds while on a quest of some sort. But his search is for an ideal that he can never attain, or achieve, just as the lady of courtly love lyrics was often beyond reach. Reaching the goal was not as important as the quest itself, the striving for something higher and nobler in life. Romances had many elements that today would be called “romantic,” but the word “romance” in this context always refers to vernacular languages, such as French and Spanish. These were languages that came from southern Europe and the region around Rome. Although German is not a Romance language, many romances came from German-speaking countries.

The topics of romances were still heroes, usually heroic knights. Many treated what was called the “Matter of Britain.” This referred to all the tales and legends surrounding England’s King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table. These stories originated on the British Isles among the people called Celts, but in time they became immensely popular throughout Europe. Sometimes romances treated the “Matter of Antiquity,” meaning heroes connected with an-



A manuscript illumination showing King Arthur drawing the sword, Excalibur, from a stone.  
*HIP/Scala/Art Resource, NY.*

cient cities such as Troy. Finally, the “Matter of France” referred to stories surrounding Charlemagne.

These stories, though, were not like the old epics, nor were they quite like the chansons de geste. The epics were bloody and violent. Mere survival against the forces of chaos was the major goal. The focus of the chansons de geste was heroic deeds. The later medieval romances, in contrast, focused more on the efforts of heroes to make themselves better people or to gain spiritual insight, usually by taking part in a quest. The goal of this quest was often a sacred object, and one of the most commonly sought-after sacred objects was the Holy Grail, generally regarded as the cup that Christ drank out of during the Last Supper. The Grail, however, was a symbol for a higher ideal. This emphasis on the search for a relic, or a holy object, of Christ grew in part out of the efforts of the Crusaders to preserve the holy sites of Palestine and Jerusalem, particularly the tomb of Christ, and relics of the True Cross on which Christ was crucified.



A page from *Perceval; or, The Story of the Grail*, in which the title character embarks on a quest to find the Grail. In this scene knights carry a silver case containing the Holy Grail to France. ©The British Library/Topham-HIP/The Image Works.

In France one of the major writers of romances was Chrétien de Troyes, who wrote primarily from about 1165 to 1180. Largely during these years, he wrote five major romances, all drawing on the Matter of Britain. *Erec* tells the story of a wife who shows her love for her husband by disobeying his commands. *Cligès* is a love story about an unhappy wife who fakes her own death and comes back to life to enjoy happiness with her lover. *Lancelot* was the name of one of King Arthur's knights, who is a slave to love and to his mistress, Arthur's wife, Guinevere. *Yvain* tells of a widow's marriage to the man who killed her husband. Finally, and perhaps the most important of Chrétien de Troyes's works, was *Perceval; or, The Story of the Grail*.

In *Perceval; or, The Story of the Grail* the title character embarks on an adventurous quest to find the Holy Grail. This story became the basis for *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, a well-known fourteenth-century English poem. Much of this material became more familiar to English readers in the fif-

teenth century and after through Sir Thomas Malory's famous *Le morte d'Arthur*, or *The Death of Arthur*, which tells the entire story of Arthur's life and death. It is from Malory that most English readers are familiar with Arthur and Guinevere; the adulterous relationship between Guinevere and Lancelot; Merlin the magician; the Knights of the Round Table; and Arthur's famous sword, Excalibur.

The Holy Grail and the search for it have always been a source of fascination. To many, possession of the Grail would be a source of great mystical power. Writers and historians have had different views of what the Grail even was or what it represented. One suggestion, advanced in a long poem by German writer Wolfram von Eschenbach, called *Parzival*, was that it was a stone from heaven that provided spiritual rebirth. Wolfram, who wrote his epic between 1200 and 1210, claimed that one of the major sources for his poem was a Crusader named Philip, who was the duke of Flanders and had been in Palestine in 1177.

To some, though, the Grail is not even a physical object. Since the Grail held wine that Christ had transformed into his blood at the Last Supper (a ritual that forms a major part of the Catholic Mass), there are theories that the "Grail" is actually Christ's bloodline, or blood descendants. Some historians believe that the Knights Templars, the order of warrior-monks that played a major role in the Crusades, excavated beneath the site of the Temple of Solomon in Jerusalem (see "Judaism" in Chapter 1) and there discovered the "Grail." But what they discovered was that the Grail referred to royal bloodlines and that earlier French kings were the descendants of Christ. Possession of this knowledge, at least according to legend, was the source of the order's immense power, and it was because of this power that the Templars were destroyed by Pope Clement V in the early fourteenth century (see "Knights Templars" in Chapter 9). Some of these theories are unlikely, but they grow out of traditions of mysticism that many Christians and Jews believed in during the Middle Ages.

The Crusades inspired literature not only in the West but in the East as well. After the conclusion of the First Crusade, a poet named Abu l'Muzaffar al-Abiwardi urged Islam to unite to drive out the Crusaders. His poem, quoted by Francesco Gabrielli in *Arab Historians of the Crusades*, was typ-

ical of the type of call to arms issued by poets in the region, particularly as it became clear that the Crusaders were not leaving. Al-Abiwardi wrote:

We have mingled blood with flowing tears, and there is no room left in us for pity.

To shed tears is a man's worst weapon when the swords stir up the embers [glowing fragments from a fire] of war.

Sons of Islam, behind you are battles in which heads rolled at your feet.

Dare you slumber in the blessed shade of safety, where life is as soft as an orchard flower?

This is war, and the man who shuns [avoids] the whirlpool to save his life shall grind his teeth in penitence [regret].

This is war, and the infidel's sword is naked in his hand, ready to be sheathed again in men's necks and skulls.

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## End of the Crusades: Mongols, Mamluks, and Muslims

12

**B**y the middle of the thirteenth century the situation in the Middle East had grown completely chaotic. The Seljuk Empire, which ruled over western Asia, was beginning to fall apart, and in 1244 a new clan of Muslim Turks, the Khwarismians, sacked Jerusalem, leaving few Christian survivors. The remaining Franks (as Crusaders in the Middle East were called) tried to form an alliance with the Syrian Muslims to drive the Turks out, but the Turks decisively defeated a combined Crusader-Syrian army in the Battle of Harbiyah in October 1244. These events triggered the Seventh Crusade, which began in the summer of 1248 and ended with the defeat of King Louis IX of France in 1250 (see “The Seventh Crusade” in Chapter 6).

### The invasion of the Mongols

To understand events in the decades following the Seventh Crusade, it is necessary to go back to a time before that Crusade. As he was preparing for the Crusade in the late 1240s, Louis IX was looking for allies in his fight against the Muslims. One potential ally was the Assassins, the western

Scenes on a candlestick showing a Muslim hunting on a horse with a bow and arrow. Artwork like this was being created by Muslims toward the end of the Crusades era. *The Art Archive/Museum of Islamic Art Cairo/Dagli Orti. Reproduced by permission.*



term for a Shiite Muslim sect, or subgroup, called the Ismailis. The Ismailis opposed the orthodox, or mainstream, Sunni Muslims who ruled Islam from Baghdad (see “The Assassins” in Chapter 5). The Assassins’ opposition to Sunni Islam was so deep that they often formed alliances with the Christian Franks. But the Assassins were a fanatical (passionate and dedicated) sect that could offer little real help. The eventual fall of Baghdad and the Baghdad caliphate (the do-

minion of an Islamic leader) in 1258 ended the Ismaili movement (see Chapter 7 on the Cairo/Baghdad caliphate split).

A more promising ally was a tribe of warlike Asians called the Tatars, or Mongols, who were sweeping westward in the thirteenth century and driving out the Seljuks. Years earlier the Mongols had been led by a ruthless general, the famed Genghis Khan, who had begun invading Turkish territories as early as 1219. For Louis, the chief attraction of the largely pagan Mongols was that they were not Muslims; instead, they worshiped many gods. Louis believed that he could convert them to Christianity and forge an alliance with them; together they could defeat Islam. He held this belief in part because some Mongols were already Eastern Orthodox Christians. They were descended from the Eastern Orthodox patriarch of Constantinople, who had been driven out by the Romans in the fifth century and had settled in Asia.

The king had sent ambassadors to the Mongols before the Seventh Crusade. The ambassadors returned in 1247 and reported that the Mongols expressed some interest in an alliance but were more interested in capturing territory. Such an alliance, they suggested, would distract the Muslims, making it easier for the Mongols to attack Muslim-held territory. Then, in 1248, Mongol ambassadors visited Louis as he was docked at Cyprus (an island south of Turkey in the Mediterranean) to make preparations for the Seventh Crusade. These ambassadors said that the Mongols were willing to help the Christians free Jerusalem from Muslim control. In another round of negotiation, Louis sent to the Mongols an ambassador named William of Rubruck, who was en route during the Seventh Crusade. Meanwhile, the pope, too, had sent an ambassador to Asia to conduct discussions with the Mongols.

William returned with disappointing news. The Mongols, he said, showed no interest in converting to Christianity. Worse, they accepted gifts that Louis had sent as “tribute” (payment) from him and referred to him as their new “vassal” (a person in service to a lord). Louis’s strategy had fallen apart. It is quite possible that if Louis had not insisted that the Mongols convert to Christianity, he might have won a powerful ally in them. Louis, though, was known for his extreme religious piety (he was made a Catholic saint at the end of the century). So strong was his resistance to an alliance with non-

An illustration of the death of Louis. The Crusades ended with Louis's death in 1270. ©Archivo Iconografico, S.A./Corbis. Reproduced by permission.



Christians that he missed a chance to defeat the Muslims and, quite possibly, restore Jerusalem to Christian control. On the other hand, the Mongols were driven solely by the desire for territorial conquest. Historians can only speculate about what the effects of a Christian-Mongol alliance would have been.

Louis stayed in Outremer (the Europeans' term for "the land overseas," or the Christian colonies in the Middle East) for four years after the end of the Seventh Crusade. Dur-

ing that time he strengthened the fortresses at some of the remaining Crusader-held cities, including Acre, Tyre, Jaffa, and Sidon. He also tried to stop the ongoing quarreling among the Crusader barons over territory and succession to thrones. Finally, though, he had to return to France.

After Louis left Outremer in 1254, a state of near civil war prevailed in Acre (in modern-day Lebanon). Merchants from Venice and Genoa, Italy, were openly fighting for their commercial interests in the city. The Knights Hospitallers supported the Genoese, while the Knights Templars supported the Venetians (see “Knightly Orders: The Hospitallers and the Templars” in Chapter 9), and sometimes fighting between the two orders of knights erupted. Few gave thought to freeing Jerusalem or the tomb of Christ, except for Louis. For thirteen years he remained obsessed with his failure to recapture Jerusalem. In 1267 he announced that he was going to return to the Holy Land, and he departed in July 1270 for what is sometimes called the Eighth Crusade. He never arrived. Along the way, an outbreak of disease struck Louis’s Crusader force, and in August, Louis died.

The Mongols, meanwhile, under a khan (king) named Hulagu, were making deeper inroads into the Middle East. They had already attacked in Poland and Hungary, and in 1243 they had defeated the Seljuks in Anatolia (a region in western Turkey). They took most of Persia in 1256 and captured Baghdad in 1258, ending the Baghdad caliphate (see “Response to the First Crusade” in Chapter 7). All of Europe rejoiced, for Baghdad was the capital of the Islamic empire. The Crusaders could very well have marched on Jerusalem with success, but as noted earlier, they were too divided among themselves to take advantage of the opportunity the Mongols had given them. Meanwhile, in Syria, the Mongols captured the Syrian cities of Aleppo and Damascus in 1258, breaking the back of the Seljuks.

## The Mamluks

Even with their victories, the Mongols had not satisfied their desire for empire and territory. After gaining control of Syria, they set their sights on Egypt. Hulagu sent an ambassador to Cairo, who demanded that Egypt submit.



**Tomb of the Mamluks, slave soldiers during the Crusades who fought to win political control of several Muslim states.**

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But by this time military power in Egypt was in the hands of a group called the Mamluks (sometimes spelled Mameluks). The Mamluks were a select fighting force of Turks. They had all been seized as children and raised as Muslims under strict military discipline. Not knowing their real fathers, all were given the name Ibn Abdullah, meaning “son of Abdullah,” referring to the father of Muhammad, the founder of the Islamic faith in the seventh century. As the personal bodyguards of the Egyptian sultan (the king of a Muslim state), the Mamluks were trained to give the individual sultan they served their undivided loyalty. Accordingly, when a sultan died, all of his Mamluk warriors were replaced.

During the Seventh Crusade the sultan of Egypt was deposed, or removed from power, by Saif al-Din Qutuz. Before Qutuz could replace the Mamluks, they came to realize that they were a powerful force in their own right and did not need to be replaced. They were a military force looking



for someone to fight, and the rise of the Mongols now gave them an enemy. Qutuz, too, knew that he faced a threat from the Mongols, so he made no effort to replace his Mamluk guard and, in fact, became their commanding general. With no intention of submitting to Hulagu, he and the Mamluks killed Hulagu's ambassador in Cairo and in 1260 marched through Crusader-held territory to take on the Mongols. The Crusaders were content to watch.

**Modern houses built on the remains of a Crusader castle. Ruins such as these are all that remain of the Crusades era.** ©Roger Wood/Corbis. Reproduced by permission.

Behind Qutuz's rise to power was one of his Mamluk guards, Baybars, who himself had risen to power through a series of political assassinations, or murders. Baybars helped Qutuz become sultan, and together the two marched on the Mongols. At the Battle of Ain Jalut in 1260, Baybars pretended to attack the Mongols and then retreated. The Mongols pursued him and galloped into an ambush laid by the main body of Mamluks. The Mongol army was destroyed, ending the Mongol threat to Islam.

Baybars asked the sultan to make him governor of Aleppo as a reward. The sultan, suspicious of Baybars's ambition, refused, so Baybars assassinated him, marched into Cairo, and proclaimed himself sultan. Firmly in control of Egypt, he then marched on Aleppo and Damascus, easily capturing those cities. Now the Mamluks, not the Mongols or the Muslims, were in control of Syria.

## The end of the Crusader states

With Baybars, more formally known as Rukn al-Din Baybars Bunduqdari, in control of Egypt, the Crusaders were doomed. In 1265 he marched on Caesarea (the old Roman capital of Palestine), captured the city, and destroyed it. He then took the cities of Haifa and Arsuf (in present-day Israel). In 1266 he marched on the Crusader castle at Safed (often spelled Saphet), one of the last strongholds of the Knights Templars, near the Sea of Galilee. The Templars surrendered when they were told that they could escape safely to Acre, but the treacherous Baybars had them all beheaded. The Mamluks then marched on Toron, on the coast, while another Mamluk force moved on Cilicia (a region of Turkey). Along the way the Mamluks killed every Christian they encountered.

By this time all that remained of the Christian kingdoms on the Levant (the countries on the eastern shore of the Mediterranean) were Acre, Jaffa, Antioch, Tripoli, and a few other small towns. Baybars moved on Acre in 1267, but the town was heavily fortified, so he agreed to a truce. It was at this point that Louis IX in France tried to mount an Eighth Crusade to rescue the city. Meanwhile, the Venetian merchants in the city were selling supplies to Baybars, including timber and iron from Europe that he could use to build siege



## Baybars's Note to Bohemond

When Baybars destroyed Antioch, its Christian ruler, Bohemond, was away in Tripoli. Baybars sent him the following letter, quoted by Francesco Gabrieli in *Arab Historians of the Crusades*, gloating about his victory:

*Our purpose here is to give you news of what we have just done, to inform you of the utter catastrophe that has befallen you.... You would have seen your knights prostrate [face down] be-*

*neath the horses' hooves, your houses stormed by pillagers and ransacked by looters.... You would have seen the crosses in your churches smashed, the pages of the false Testaments [the Bible] scattered, the Patriarchs' tombs overturned. You would have seen your Moslem enemy trampling on the place where you celebrate the mass, cutting the throats of monks, priests and deacons upon the altars.... Since no survivor has come forward to tell you what happened, we have informed you of it.*

engines (see "Siege Warfare" in Chapter 10). Not to be outdone, the Genoese merchants were selling slaves to Baybars.

With Acre under a truce, Baybars marched on Jaffa in 1268. After a siege that lasted just twelve hours, he entered the city and destroyed it. He then turned to Antioch, the richest of the Crusader states, where his forces looted the city and butchered every Christian he found. Equipped with massive siege machines, he then took a major Crusader castle, the Krak des Chevaliers, that had resisted siege attempts since the Third Crusade.

## The fall of Acre

By now, the only city of any importance that remained in Christian hands was Acre. Baybars, though, died in 1277, so the final Mamluk attack on the city was delayed for fourteen years. In 1285 Baybars's successor as sultan of Egypt, al-Mansur Qalawun, instead captured the last outpost of the Knights Hospitallers, the castle at Margat (sometimes spelled Marqab). He then laid siege to Tripoli, which he captured in 1289.

Few in Europe cared about this development, for Europeans, in general, were sick of crusading. The surviving

Mongols in the region sent an ambassador to the king of England, Edward I. They proposed an alliance against Qalawun, but Edward was busy fighting the Scots in his own realm. King Philip IV of France, too, showed no interest. The pope sent a force of Italian Crusaders in 1290, but their presence proved to be a disaster. Qalawun had signed another truce with Acre and may very well have decided to leave the city alone, but the Italian Crusaders were not interested in truces. They had come to kill Muslims. One day most of them became drunk, and they butchered a number of Muslim farmers who were bringing their crops to the market in Acre. The barons of Acre were furious, but the damage had been done.

Qalawun vowed revenge. He massed his army to march on the city, but he never lived to get his revenge, for on the way to Acre he died. His son, al-Ashraf Khalil, promised to do what his father had intended. To that end, he assembled an overwhelming military force—sixty thousand cavalry, one hundred sixty thousand foot soldiers, and an impressive collection of siege engines. Meanwhile, the Crusaders tried to fortify the city and shipped out women, children, and the elderly. Remaining in the city were about a thousand knights, fourteen thousand foot soldiers, and some thirty thousand citizens.

The siege of Acre began on April 6, 1291. It continued for six weeks, as al-Ashraf's men rained missiles and firebombs down on the city and one by one destroyed the towers that defended it. Some of their siege engines could hurl missiles weighing a quarter ton. On May 18 al-Ashraf launched a general assault and seized the city. The scene was eerily like the one that had taken place on July 15, 1099, when the Crusaders had entered Jerusalem at the end of the First Crusade and butchered the city's Muslims. Now, in the last battle, the Muslims massacred Acre's Christians. All of the Templars defending the city, some three hundred, were beheaded. The city was then destroyed.

All that remained of the Crusader presence was a Templar castle at the town of Ruad, which held out for twelve years. The Crusades, though, had ended at Acre, and all that remained to mark where they had been were heaps of rubble. In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, talk circu-

lated in Europe of mounting a new Crusade, but little came of it. The Christian rulers of Cyprus retained the title king of Jerusalem, and one, Peter I, managed to gather a European force that attacked Alexandria, Egypt, in 1365. His goal was to capture the city and trade it for Jerusalem. His knights, however, looted the city and returned home. In 1396 King Sigismund of Hungary tried to lead a Crusade, but his army was slaughtered by Turks before it got out of Bulgaria. In 1458 Pope Pius II called a Crusade and even “took the cross” himself, but he died before he could act on his vow. Because these last attempts failed, the Crusades are said to have officially ended in 1291. Nearly two hundred years of bloodshed had finally come to an uneasy finish.

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## Consequences and Associations of the Crusades

**A**lmost exactly two centuries after the fall of Acre, the last Christian stronghold in the East, in 1291—an event that signaled the end of the Crusades—three important events took place in Spain. These events in 1492 could be said to mark the end of the Middle Ages in Europe. That year, King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella finally drove Muslims out of the Iberian Peninsula (Spain and Portugal) after defeating them at their last stronghold, the city of Granada. Also that year, Christopher Columbus began his voyage in search of a westward route to Asia. His voyage launched an age of discovery and exploration that transformed the world, although that transformation had already begun at the time of the Crusades. Finally, Spain offered its Jews an ultimatum: become Christian or leave the country. While many converted under pressure, many others left, and these exiles once again began a search for a homeland. Each of these events reflected long-term outcomes of the Crusades.

## Ferdinand and Isabella drive the Muslims out of Granada

From a military standpoint, the Crusades were an utter failure, at least after 1099. What began with high idealism and religious zeal (enthusiasm) quickly turned into a scramble for money and power. The European Crusaders were often brave, but they were just as often vicious, cruel, and stupid. The Fourth Crusade, which ended with the sacking of Constantinople, destroyed the Byzantine Empire and opened the door for the Muslim Turks to expand farther westward. Not only did the Crusades fail in their purpose, but from Europe's point of view they also made matters worse.

From another perspective, though, the Crusades were successful at least in stemming the Islamic invasion of Europe. After the founding of Islam in the seventh century, it spread throughout the Mediterranean region (see "The Spread of Islam" in Chapter 1). Sardinia, Corsica, Sicily, parts of southern Italy, North Africa, and much of Spain fell to Muslim invaders. From Spain, Muslims launched an invasion of France in the eighth century, though that invasion was beaten back. In the early 1000s Muslims advanced on Rome, but with similar results. During the Crusades and after, Spain reclaimed its territory in what was called the Reconquista (see "Spanish Islam" in Chapter 1), which ended when the Spanish monarchy raised its flag over Granada in 1492. Historians can only speculate, but it seems likely that without the Crusades, Islam would have made further inroads into Europe.

One important outcome of the Crusades is that they diminished the power of the popes and increased the power of Europe's monarchs. It was King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella, not a pope, who drove the Muslims out of Spain (and who financed Columbus's expedition). After the Roman Empire broke apart in the fifth century, western Europe was in a state of chaos. Bandits and warlike tribes overran much of the continent. No one seemed to have the power to drive them away. Feudalism emerged as a social and economic structure that provided people some measure of protection against violence and invasion (see "The Structure of Medieval Society" in Chapter 9).

Feudalism also had the effect of breaking Europe into small, competing principalities (the territories of princes),

duchies (the territories of dukes), and feudal estates. While a king, in theory, ruled over a kingdom such as France or England, real power was in the hands of dukes, counts, and barons who ruled regions of the country. In turn, these regions were divided into smaller landholdings governed by the nobles' vassals, that is, those men who had sworn oaths of loyalty to the nobles in exchange for protection; these men, in turn, frequently made grants of land to knights. This structure is reflected in the names of many of the important Crusaders: Godfrey of Bouillon, Hugh of Vermandois, Raymond of Toulouse. These men were not "French." Rather, they identified themselves with a region of France or even a city.

This patchwork of small regions created a power vacuum that was filled by the Catholic Church and the pope. The concept of Christendom imposed some sort of common purpose over the fragmented states of Europe. Many popes, seeing themselves as Europe's true "kings," wanted to expand their authority. Urban II, for example, called the First Crusade in 1095 in large part to extend the power of the Catholic Church, perhaps even to force the Eastern Orthodox Church, another branch of Christianity in the East, to submit to him (see "Religious Separation of East and West" in Chapter 1). Pope Innocent III, who called the Fourth Crusade in 1199, believed that the pope was the supreme monarch on earth, not just of the church, but of the state as well. He became obsessed with recapturing Jerusalem not because Jerusalem was the site of Christ's tomb, but mainly because it was not part of his worldly "empire."

The failure of the later Crusades to recapture Jerusalem began to break the backs of the popes. After the First Crusade, kings were leading the Crusades: Louis VII of France (Second Crusade), Richard I of England and Philip II of France (Third Crusade), Holy Roman Emperor Frederick II (Sixth Crusade), and Louis IX of France (Seventh Crusade). In effect, Europe's kings were competing with the pope for power. The best example is the Sixth Crusade, which Frederick II—who defied the authority of the pope—conducted without authorization from Rome. The pope, Gregory VII, was so determined to hold back the ambitious Frederick that he made preparations to invade Frederick's realms in Italy while the emperor was on this Crusade. Ten years later Gregory called a Crusade not against "the infidels" (unbelievers, referring to Muslims), but against

Frederick, one of Europe's Christian kings. Frederick fought back and ignored the pope when he excommunicated, or expelled, Frederick from the church.

As Europe's kings were beginning to assert themselves, that is, to claim power and authority, the Crusades were transforming the feudal makeup of Europe. So many of the old feudal lords had either died in the Crusades or transplanted themselves and their families to Palestine and Syria that power began to shift upward toward the king. Now, people were not just citizens of, say, Aquitaine or Toulouse. They were beginning to think of themselves as French. Similar changes took place in England, Italy, and the Holy Roman Empire.

In time, this shift of power from the pope to temporal (worldly) rulers would allow more democratic forms of government to emerge. Even during the Crusades, this process began to take place in England with the Magna Carta, or "Great Charter." The Magna Carta does not make very interesting reading in the twenty-first century, however. It consists of sixty-three demands the nobles of England made of King John I in 1215. They all had to do with such issues as taxes and inheritance laws. The point of the Magna Carta is that it exists, that the English barons made and won their demands. It was the first step toward a more constitutional form of government. Power was flowing from the pope and the church to civil rulers, such as kings and queens. From there it was beginning to flow downward to the people, although this process would take centuries more to complete.

## **Columbus launches his voyage to the New World**

Columbus's goal in sailing to the Far East in part was to establish a base from which Christians could launch a new Crusade to the Middle East. In his journal, dated December 26, 1492, he said that he wanted all the profits from his voyage to be used to finance the conquest of Jerusalem. In his will, he created a fund that he directed to be used for a Crusade.

While Columbus's dream was never realized, his voyages marked the beginning of a new Europe, one that was

very different from the Europe of 1095 when Pope Urban II had called the First Crusade. Many of the changes in Europe resulted from the Crusades. At the beginning of the Crusades, Europe was almost barbaric. The major European cities—London, Paris, and Rome—were backward places compared with cities in the East. There, civilization flourished, not only in the Byzantine Empire (the seat of the Eastern Orthodox Church) but also in such great cities as Thebes, Memphis,

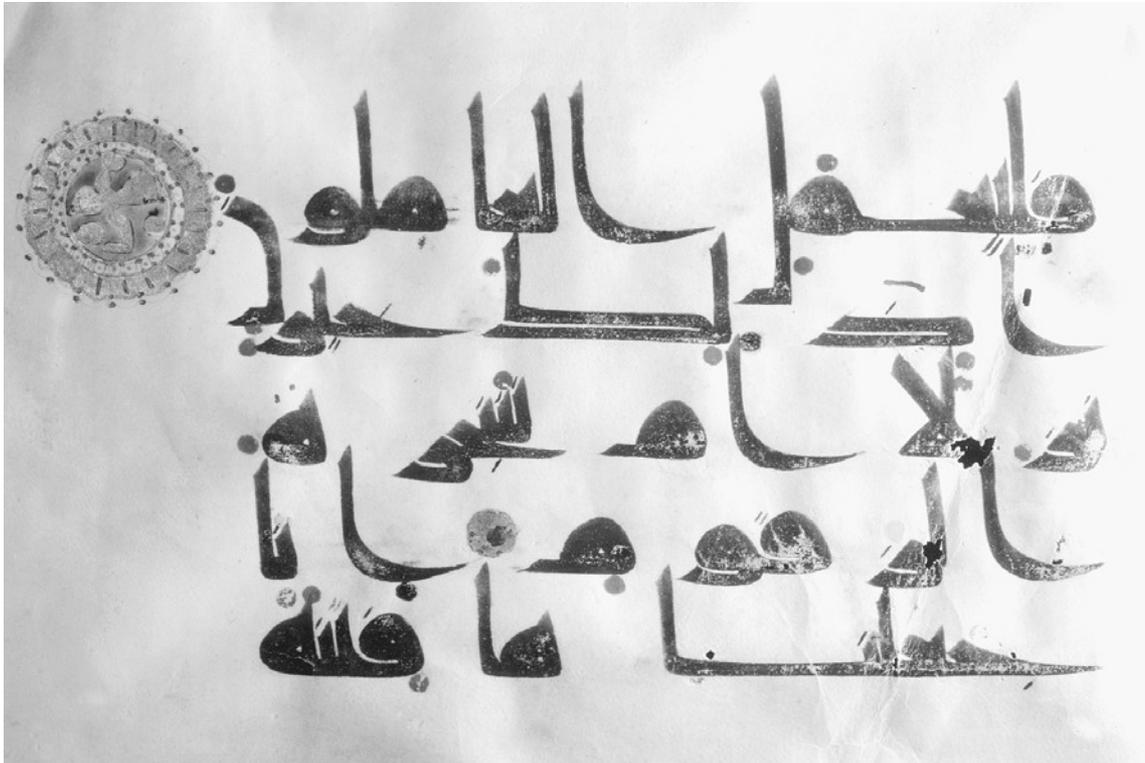
Nineveh, Tyre, Sidon, Damascus, Baghdad, and Jerusalem. In these cities, learning was far more advanced than it was in Europe. They were home to libraries (Damascus alone had seventy libraries) and museums; to advances in medicine and science; to astronomers, mathematicians, skilled crafts workers, and engineers.

Crusaders returned to Europe with new ideas, new foods, and even new words. Alchemy, alcohol, alcove, algebra, algorithm, alkali, amalgam, and arsenal are just some of the “a” words that came from the Middle East. Other borrowings, both of concepts and words, include bazaar, benzene, borax, camphor, cipher, elixir, sequin, soda, talisman, tariff, zenith, and many more from the work of Arab scientists, geographers, poets, and astronomers.

Without the advances in astronomy that came from Arabia, for example, Columbus—as well as numerous other explorers from Spain, Portugal, and Italy—would have lacked the navigational tools needed to make his voyage. The astrolabe, for instance, was a device used for navigation and time-keeping at sea by plotting the positions of the sun and stars (whose names Europe also adopted from the Arabs). The astrolabe was widely used in the Islamic world by 800 and was introduced to Europe by Muslims in Spain early in the twelfth century. Columbus also would have used a navigational tool called a quadrant, which measured altitude and was developed from the Arabs’ *kamal*.

The list of products that Europe acquired from the Middle East seems almost endless. There were fruits—such as limes, lemons, apricots, and oranges—and spices, such as nutmeg, cinnamon, caraway, tarragon, and saffron. Fabrics included damask, satin, silk, and mohair, as well as exotic oriental carpets and the dyes used to color these fabrics. The Crusades led to increased European demand for fine silver and gold jewelry, articles made of precious stones, glassware, and tools made of hard Damascus steel, all from the Middle East and other parts of the world. Among the musical instruments taken back to Europe were the shawm (a woodwind instrument), the lute, and various kinds of drums.

Meanwhile, the Crusades encouraged other important changes in Europe. New roads were built to accommodate pilgrims traveling to the Holy Land. Warfare, as it always



**A leaf from the Koran, the Muslim holy book, written in Arabic script. To better understand Islam, clerics often translated Arabic philosophical texts, including the Koran.**

*©Werner Forman/Art Resource, NY. Reproduced by permission.*

does, introduced new forms of technology, including more effective weapons, and new architectural techniques learned from building better castles. Novel ways of paying for the ventures led to the development of trade, commerce, ship-building, finance, and credit around the Mediterranean. New forms of taxation to fund the later Crusades led to the development of more modern systems for collecting and distributing revenues for public ventures. It also became easier for Europe to keep track of this money. In about 1202 Europe abandoned Roman numerals in favor of what are still called Arabic numerals.

The key point is that westerners were becoming more aware of the wider world. They translated numerous Arabic texts, including medical, mathematical, and scientific books and books on such fields as optics and magnetism. They established universities that were starting to put this knowledge to use, much of it collected by western scholars who had traveled to the East to study. To better understand Islam

(usually, though, with the goal of converting Muslims to Christianity), clerics (clergymen) translated Arabic philosophical texts, and Abbot Peter the Venerable even translated the Koran, the Muslim holy book. Schools were set up in Europe to teach eastern languages, and many missionaries traveled throughout the Middle East and Far East trying to win converts. They returned to Europe with geographical knowledge that expanded the world for Europeans. Europe was emerging from its Dark Ages and from under the thumb of the pope, and many of the fruits of the Crusades created a climate of exploration and curiosity that enabled Columbus and others to gain funding for their voyages.

## **The Jews are expelled from Spain**

The Crusades drove a permanent wedge between Islam and the West. For centuries after Jerusalem fell to the Muslims in 638, Muslims and Christians lived side by side in relative harmony. Some historians believe that during the centuries between 638 and the First Crusade, more Christians than Muslims lived in the Middle East. Numerous Christian sects, or subgroups, flourished, including groups with such names as the Jacobites in Syria, the Copts in Egypt, and the Nestorians of Persia. Each of these groups had its own history, its own interpretation of the Christian message, its own churches, and its own vital community. Many of these Christians held high offices alongside Muslims.

The Crusades, of course, changed that. After Acre fell, Christians in the Middle East began to retreat. Many were fearful of the victorious Muslims and converted to Islam. The Mongols who invaded the region in the thirteenth century came to believe that Allah, the God of Islam, was the true God, so they, too, converted to Islam. Put simply, Islam won the Crusades, at least from one perspective. They drove out the Christians, converted the Mongols, and turned the Byzantine Empire into the Muslim Ottoman Empire, which survived in Asia Minor and surrounding regions until the twentieth century.

In the view of many historians, the Crusades have still not ended. They point out that the same tensions persist in the Middle East that existed a thousand years ago. Pales-



**Palestinian children show off their weapons, catapults and slingshots, which originated during the Crusades. Even after the Crusades, as well as numerous other conflicts throughout the centuries, the Middle East continues to be entangled in turmoil.**

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tine became part of the Turkish Ottoman Empire, but in the peace that was declared after World War I (1914–18), it came under British control. Finally, in 1948, the Jewish nation of Israel was formed out of Palestine. The Jews, after having been driven out of so many places, from Old Testament times until 1492 Spain and beyond, now had a homeland that included the city of the Temple of Solomon, Jerusalem (see “Judaism” in Chapter 1).

A glance at the headlines of any current newspaper on any given day shows that peace still has not come to this troubled region. Jewish Israel is surrounded by Muslim nations that see Israel as hostile occupiers of their holy land. Israel relies heavily on military aid from its chief ally, the United States, which has a long-standing cultural connection with the Jews. The first settlers in America were the Pilgrims, a reminder of the pilgrimages to the Holy Land in the Middle Ages (roughly 500–1500). The first Pilgrims gave many of their towns Old Testament names, such as Hebron, Salem,

Bethlehem, Zion, and Judea. Despite some anti-Semitism (anti-Jewish prejudice), many Jews have found a home in the United States and live in relative peace.

In contrast, Jews in Israel feel as though they are under a constant state of siege against the Arab Muslim nations that surround the country, as do Muslim Palestinians in territories occupied by the Israelis. The result is constant violence and terrorism. The focus of much of the violence is the United States, which is often seen in the Middle East as a new Crusader force, ignorant of Islam and deeply prejudiced against Muslims. To some observers, it was unfortunate that President George W. Bush used the word *crusade* in discussing the war against terrorism after the September 11, 2001, attacks on America. Such a word could suggest to the Muslim world a repeat of historical events now nearly a millennium old. The president's supporters, however, noted that the "crusade" was against terrorism, not Islam.

Meanwhile, the crushed remains of Crusader castles dot the landscape in Palestine. And as Franklin Hamilton notes in his book *The Crusades*: "History may never repeat itself, but certain patterns seem eternal, and the struggle for that sun-parched scrap of earth known as the Holy Land is still going on, in the atomic age as in the days of mounted knights."

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# The Crusades Biographies

Written by J. Sydney Jones

Edited by Marcia Merryman Means and Neil Schlager

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# Alexius I Comnenus

1048

Constantinople

August 15, 1118

Constantinople

Byzantine emperor



Alexius I was the emperor of the Byzantine Empire, the eastern portion of the old Roman Empire based in Greece and Asia Minor, at the time of the First Crusade (1095–99). The first of the Comnenus dynasty, or ruling family, Alexius I inherited a weakened empire at the time of his crowning as emperor in 1081. Byzantium, as the empire was also called, was under attack from all sides, especially from the Seljuk Turks, who had recently converted to Islam. Nevertheless Alexius I managed to restore some of the strength to his land during his thirty-seven-year reign. Alexius I is best known in history as the Byzantine emperor whose call for help against the Turks and Islam was taken up by **Urban II** (see entry), the western pope and spiritual leader of the Catholic Church. This, in turn, played an important part in bringing about the First Crusade and launching the Crusade movement, which resulted in two centuries of conflict between the Christian and Islamic worlds.

“The blood of Christians flows in unheard-of scenes of carnage... Therefore in the name of God ... we implore you to bring to this city [Constantinople] all the faithful soldiers of Christ.”

—Alexius I, letter to Robert of Flanders, which partly inspired the First Crusade; quoted in *The Story of the First Crusade*, [http://www.brighton73.freesev.e.co.uk/firstcrusade/People/Eastern\\_Christians/alexius\\_comnenus.htm](http://www.brighton73.freesev.e.co.uk/firstcrusade/People/Eastern_Christians/alexius_comnenus.htm)

**Alexius I Comnenus.**

*Courtesy of the Library of Congress.*



## An Empire of Many Names

Alexius I ruled an empire that was called many names by different people. Initially these lands were part of the original Roman Empire. But in 284 c.e. this empire was split into an eastern half and a western half for administrative purposes. The part that lay in Asia Minor and Greece was called the eastern Roman Empire. Less than half a century later Constantine, the first Christian emperor, decided to move the capital of the Roman Empire east to Asia Minor, to the city of Byzantium, or Byzantion. Thus the empire gradually began to be called the Byzantine Empire, or simply Byzantium, by Europeans even though Constantine insisted on calling the place “Nova Roma,” or New Rome. To confuse matters even more, the city of Byzantium was later called Constantinople after its founder; when the empire ended in 1453, this name was again changed, finally becoming the Istanbul of modern times.

During the time of Alexius I the citizens of the Byzantine Empire nevertheless thought of themselves as the *Rhomaioi*, occupants of New Rome. In medieval times Alexius’s empire was often referred to as Romania. In fact, the Byzantine Empire kept many of the aspects of the old Roman Empire for much of its existence. Though

Christianity had come to play a more significant public role by the third and fourth centuries, the legal, political, and military structures remained much the same as they had been under the Roman emperors. Even the old imperial Roman title of “Augustus” was used for its emperors. This ultimately changed when the emperor Heraclius (ruled 610–41) declared that from now on the title would be *Basileus*, the Greek word for emperor. Nor was Latin to remain the official language, which was replaced by Greek. Such a change was logical, since the empire was now based both in Greece and Asia Minor. Thus the empire was often referred to as the Greek Empire in the Middle Ages. In turn, the citizens of Byzantium often called their European cousins “Latins.” They did not have a very high opinion of these Latins; except for being able to wage war, they were looked upon as dirty and uncivilized barbarians.

Despite all these name changes, the Byzantines continued to think of themselves as Romans. One final name change occurred in 1453, however, which took the “Roman” out of their name. That year Constantinople fell to the Ottoman Turks and the former eastern Roman Empire was no more, replaced first by the Ottoman Empire and then by modern Turkey.

### The First of His Line

Born in Constantinople (present-day Istanbul) in 1048, Alexius Comnenus was the third son of John Comnenus and the nephew of the Byzantine emperor Isaac I, who

ruled from 1057 to 1059. He thus came from a well-connected and powerful family and was trained from an early age in the arts of war and politics. Both of these skills were necessary for survival in eleventh-century Byzantium. Intrigue and palace plots were the order of the day in this eastern Christian kingdom. Not even emperors were safe from cruel treatment at the hands of their rivals. When the emperor Romanus IV Diogenes lost the Battle of Manzikert in 1071 to the Seljuk Turk **Alp Arslan** (see entry), thus exposing the empire to further attack from these Turkish invaders, Romanus was hunted down by his enemies in Constantinople, blinded, and exiled to a small island prison, where he eventually died. Alexius was thirteen at the time, but the lesson was surely not lost on him: Watch your back!

Alexius was raised mainly by his mother, Anna Dalassena, a woman with a strong sense of purpose for her son, who educated him in matters of politics and diplomacy, or international relations. In the art of war Alexius soon earned a name for himself. This was important, for Byzantium was under attack from enemies on all sides. To the southeast lay the land of the infidel, or nonbelievers: the Islamic world of Mesopotamia (modern Iraq), Syria, and Arabia. Also, following their victory at Manzikert, the Seljuk Turks pressed on into the empire, and by 1081 they had reached Nicaea, an ancient city close to Constantinople. To the west were the Normans, fierce fighters from the French province of Normandy who were of Viking origin. These warriors had carved out a kingdom for themselves in Sicily, in the far south of Italy, where Byzantium also had part of its empire. In 1071, the same year that the Byzantines were defeated by the Seljuk Turks at Manzikert, they were dealt another major defeat by the Normans under the leadership of Robert Guiscard (1016–1085). That year the Normans took the city of Bari, ending Byzantine rule in Italy. Even worse, as far as the Byzantine Empire was concerned, was the fact that Robert and his son Bohemund decided to invade Constantinople itself. Added to these military problems were the Pechenegs, a Turkic nomadic tribe that repeatedly attacked Constantinople from the east.

In 1059 Alexius's father had declined to take the throne after Isaac I stepped down. Thus the Comnenian line was broken, and the role of emperor was taken on by four

leaders, including Romanus IV Diogenes, who brought the empire to the edge of ruin. Alexius's daughter, **Anna Comnena** (see entry), wrote a multivolume biography of her father, *The Alexiad*, a book that deals more with military matters than with personal affairs. In it she mentions that her father served under Romanus at the Battle of Manzikert. He served under three other emperors as a military leader and then a general, gaining fame for some of his victories. He was also employed, along with an older brother, Isaac, to put down rebellions against the empire in parts of Greece. Soon, however, he was plotting his own rebellion.

## Alexius Becomes Emperor

Alexius's success made others jealous. The emperor Nicephorus III and his ministers thought Alexius was becoming too popular among the people and were about to get rid of him and his dangerously powerful Comnenus family when Alexius struck first, taking the crown away from Nicephorus III and sending him to a monastery (religious community). When Alexius's older brother Isaac refused the crown, Alexius took it, becoming Alexius I on April 4, 1081. He had no time to celebrate, however, for his first job was to deal with the invading Normans, who had already taken the island of Corfu, to the west of Greece.

From the beginning Alexius I combined military might with diplomacy and building alliances to defeat his enemies. While fighting the Normans, he brought in the navy of the powerful state of Venice to help. With this naval force he was finally able to push the Normans back. With the death of Robert Guiscard, duke of Apulia, in 1085, the Norman threat ended for the time being. As a reward for their help, the Venetians gained important trading rights in the Byzantine Empire. Similarly, Alexius made treaties with the Seljuks and other Muslim leaders on his eastern borders, using diplomacy where force would not work. In 1091 he defeated the Pechenegs by hiring a rival Turkish tribe, the Cumans, to help eliminate this threat. He thus managed to secure his northeastern borders.

Such operations were not really victories, however. Each of the negotiations came at a heavy price for Byzantium, especially his deals with the Seljuk Turks, which involved giv-



ing up land in exchange for peaceful relations. Despite his efforts, roving bands of the Seljuks continued to take over and settle various parts of Asia Minor, creating a constant threat of further invasion to the Byzantium empire. Alexius I decided to call for help from a completely different part of the world.

## Alexius Turns to the Pope

It is a sign of how desperate Alexius I was—or how desperate the situation was—that in 1093 he sent a letter to a European noble, Robert of Flanders, to ask for help against the Seljuk Turks. This letter was meant to be passed on to Pope Urban II, but there was no reason Alexius I should have expected any aid from that quarter. The Byzantine Empire saw itself as the legal and moral inheritor of not only the Roman Empire but also the Christian religion. Its Eastern Orthodox Church was a rival to Europe's Catholic Church. For the Byzantines the pope was simply the bishop, or religious

**View of the center of Venice, Italy, whose naval fleet Alexius I hired to help in his battle with the Normans in the late eleventh century.** © Archivio Iconografico, S.A./Corbis.

leader, of Rome, one among many bishops. The true leader of Christianity was the leader of the faithful in Constantinople—the patriarch, as the office was called. This split between the two parts of Christianity grew even deeper in 1054 when the Eastern Orthodox Church in Constantinople excommunicated, or excluded from the faith, a messenger from the pope in Rome. There had been little communication between the rival branches of Christianity since then.

Alexius's communication, however, caught the attention of Urban II. In his letter Alexius supplied a long list of terrible deeds that the Seljuk Turks supposedly had committed, some of which were true and others of which were not. He also claimed that all of Asia Minor and Byzantium was about to fall to the Turks and that the treasures of his empire, both physical and spiritual, would go to the Turks if that happened. In his letter to Robert of Flanders, Alexius I also provided a motivation for those who might come to his assistance: "Remember that you will find all those treasures and also the most beautiful women of the Orient. The incomparable beauty of the Greek women would seem to be a sufficient reason to attract the armies of the Franks."

What Alexius I was actually looking for was an army of hired soldiers to keep the peace in his empire. He never bargained for the huge forces that landed on his shores in 1096 as a result of the pope's preaching in favor of a holy war to fight Islam and recapture the Holy Land. These Crusaders, as they were called, answered Urban's plea for a variety of reasons: a sense of religious duty, a love of adventure, a desire to occupy new lands, or the need for food and shelter. The armies that arrived in Alexius's city were hardly the manageable group of soldiers he had hoped for. His scheme to get western help clearly backfired.

The first to arrive was the army of common people led by **Peter the Hermit** (see entry), a priest from Amiens in France who inspired thousands of peasants, or poor workers, to follow him to the Holy Land. Once in Asia Minor, his untrained force was slaughtered by the Turks. A second wave of Crusaders arrived shortly thereafter under the leadership of **Godfrey of Bouillon** (see entry), and these soldiers presented even more difficulties for Alexius I. It was clear that these men had not come simply to retake lands in Asia Minor for

the Byzantines. Alexius I saw them as mercenaries, or paid soldiers, in his service, but Godfrey and his soldiers had different goals. They intended to move into the Holy Land and conquer Jerusalem for the Catholic Church. From the very beginning the two camps did not get along, but in 1097 they did manage to take the city of Nicaea from the Turks. The Crusaders went south, attacking centers of Muslim power in Syria, such as Antioch. Alexius I ultimately failed to aid the Crusaders in this siege, which completely destroyed relations between the Byzantines and the Crusader armies.

From his viewpoint, Alexius I was right in his less-than-friendly greeting of the Crusaders. After all, they were trying to capture lands in Syria, such as Antioch, that were once held by Byzantium. To Alexius these lands were rightly part of his empire. However, it soon became obvious to him that the Crusaders had no intention of returning such spoils of war to him. Instead, they began setting up Crusader states, or principalities, carving up the Holy Land among themselves. The Crusaders knew only about making war, never thinking of diplomacy or using the skill of playing off one enemy against the other. In fact, their siege of Jerusalem in 1099 and the bloody massacre of Muslims that followed risked uniting the Islamic world against them. The only thing that had allowed Alexius I and his empire to remain partly intact was the fact that Islam was divided politically.

When Alexius's old Norman enemy, Guiscard's son Bohemund, took Antioch for himself, Alexius was suddenly faced with yet another foe at his borders. Between 1104 and 1108 the two fought each other off and on until finally Alexius's forces beat those of Bohemund. The death of Bohemund in 1111 left the question of possession of Antioch unresolved. Alexius I went on to battle the Seljuk Turks in Asia Minor, taking back more lost territory. A battle in 1117 against the Turks marked Alexius's final victory in the field. At home a palace plot—hatched by his wife, Irene, and daughter, Anna, to install his son-in-law on the throne instead of the rightful heir, Alexius's son, John—spoiled his last days. On his deathbed the emperor had to use all his strength to get power transferred to John. He died on August 15, 1118.

Alexius I managed to hold together what was basically a dying empire through his skillful use of diplomacy and his

ability to form alliances with even his worst enemies. He played rival tribes against each other and struck with his military might when necessary. But he miscalculated when he invited Latin or European troops into his empire at the beginning of what became known as the First Crusade. For him these troops ultimately became one more power center that he had to battle in the region. They replaced the Byzantine Eastern Orthodox faith with the Catholic Church and created Crusader kingdoms in the Holy Land that rivaled and challenged his own. Alexius's plotting and policies, however, did leave his empire stronger than when he took the throne. By securing his borders through treaty and war alike, he kept the Byzantine Empire alive. He is remembered in history as the man whose call for help to fight Muslims started the Crusades.

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# Alexius IV Angelus

1182  
Byzantine Empire

1204  
Constantinople

Byzantine emperor

**A**lexius IV was one of a long line of emperors of the Byzantine Empire, the eastern Roman Empire. Though his reign lasted only six months, his time spent as head of the empire had far-reaching effects. Alexius IV persuaded the Christian soldiers, or Crusaders, who were gathering for the Fourth Crusade (1202–04) against the Muslims in Egypt to set sail first for his home in Constantinople and put him on the throne as emperor of the Byzantine Empire. If they did this, Alexius IV promised, they would receive enough money, weapons, and ships to fight their Crusade in Egypt as originally planned. But such things do not always work out as expected. Alexius's invitation to the Crusaders led to the sacking of Constantinople in 1204 and the end of Byzantine rule in the capital and surrounding lands for more than half a century. Constantinople and the Byzantine Empire never recovered from this incident. Though Constantinople was recaptured in 1261 and survived until the Turks took it in 1453, the Byzantine Empire had been struck a severe blow in 1204. Alexius IV was eventually put to death by yet another Alexius, his successor, Alexius V.

"[The Crusaders] sent two knights to the emperor [Alexius IV] and demanded again that he should pay them. He replied to the messengers that he would pay nothing, he had already paid too much, and that he was not afraid of anyone."

—Robert de Clari, "The Summons to Alexis," in the Internet Medieval Sourcebook, <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/4cde.html#cp>.

## Plots and Stolen Kingdoms

Based on different sources, the Byzantine Empire was between seven hundred and nine hundred years old by the end of the twelfth century. It had gone through numerous family dynasties of emperors, beginning with the Constantinian family and its founder, Constantine I (ruled 306–337), the person who had moved the capital of the Roman Empire from Rome to Asia Minor, setting up headquarters in the city of Byzantium. The empire that grew out of this move was called the Byzantine Empire, after the name of its major city. By the Middle Ages, the city had changed its name to Constantinople (present-day Istanbul) in honor of its founder. When Constantine's reign ended in 337, the empire was run by eight different dynasties over the next 867 years. The Comnenan dynasty ruled from 1081 to 1185; its last emperor, Andronicus I, was so unpopular in Constantinople that his own citizens rebelled and killed him. After that, the Angelan family took over, with Isaac II Angelus becoming *basileus*, or emperor, of a kingdom that included much of present-day Turkey, Greece, and the Balkans.

Ruling Byzantium, as the empire was also called, was always a messy business. The far-flung lands of the empire were constantly rebelling against Constantinople, and there were infighting and court intrigues, or plots, in the capital. This meant that the emperor had to stay alert to enemies all around. Power could change hands by the simple addition of a drop of poison in the emperor's soup. The word "Byzantine" entered the English language as a description not only of the empire and art of the time but also of anything that was very complex and difficult to understand.

That perfectly describes the situation of the Byzantine emperor. Isaac II immediately had his hands full with rebellions in Bulgaria and Serbia and the arrival of the Third Crusade (1189–92)—or at least the German members of that unsuccessful coalition, or partnership, to win back the Holy Land from the Muslims. In fact, the Germans, under King Frederick I, had come to conquer Constantinople, but Frederick I died en route. Crusades had never been an easy business for the Byzantines. Old rivalries between the western and eastern kingdoms, and between the Roman Catholic Church of the European kingdoms and the Eastern Orthodox Church

of Byzantium, were stirred up. Though these two branches of Christianity should have been friends and allies, in truth there was a deep and lasting suspicion between the two. Such distrust was felt between the ordinary citizens of the two areas as well. The Latins of Europe and the Greeks of the Byzantine region did not get on well. Emperors of Byzantium looked at Europe as just one of many possible threats.

Isaac II overlooked one threat he should have been aware of—namely his own family. So busy was he dealing with outside threats to the Byzantine Empire that he forgot internal ones and lost control of the political situation in Constantinople. In 1195, with Isaac II away in the Greek region of Thrace, Alexius III, the brother of Isaac II, and Alexius's powerful wife, Euphrosyne, stole the throne with the support of army officers. When Alexius III later captured his brother, he had Isaac II blinded, so that he would be unfit to rule again as emperor, and put him under house arrest. Alexius III and his wife were so busy paying off the bribes that had put him in office that he was an ineffective emperor. His wife was better at governing than he was, but in the end there was much corruption at his court, and Alexius III continued to lose parts of the empire.

Alexius IV Angelus grew up amid all these intrigues. After the overthrow of his father, Isaac II, Alexius IV was also imprisoned by his uncle, Alexius III. He spent six years in confinement before he was finally able to escape in 1201 and make his way to Europe, where his sister was married to a German noble.

## **The Fourth Crusade**

Alexius IV must have known what he was getting into when he asked the nobles of Europe for help, for he had grown up with the complex relations among various nobles in Constantinople. He must also have known about the plans in Europe to conquer Constantinople. The German emperor Henry VI wanted to become master of Constantinople, and it was his brother, Philip of Swabia, to whom Alexius IV's sister, Irene, was married. Philip happily took this young man under his wing, and together they came up with a plan to enable Alexius IV to regain his rightful position.

Alexius IV requesting the help of Enrico Dandolo, the doge of Venice, and his Crusaders in invading Constantinople. *Erich Lessing/Art Resource, NY.*



It so happened that their plan matched the needs of a Crusader army gathering at the Italian port of Venice. The Crusaders, under the leadership of Boniface of Montferrat, had been stuck in Venice for some months because they could not afford to pay the Venetians the fee required to transport them to Egypt, where they planned to fight a new Crusade against the Muslims. The Venetians, led by Enrico Dandolo, their eighty-five-year-old doge (ruler), were pressur-

ing the Crusaders to help them put down a rebellion in one of the cities of their empire in return for part of the fee to transport them. These Christian knights did not feel good about attacking other Christians, for the rebellious city was Zara, on the Yugoslavian coast.

Around this time Philip of Swabia and Alexius IV appeared and presented their plan for liberating Constantinople. According to the plan, Alexius IV would help the Crusaders pay off their debt to the Venetians and finance the rest of their Crusade in Egypt if they agreed to get rid of his uncle, Alexius III. This was too good a bargain to pass up, and on October 1, 1202, with Alexius IV in their company, the Crusaders sailed out of Venice. They made quick work of Zara, capturing it for Venice, and after wintering there they sailed on to Constantinople in April 1203. By this time **Innocent III** (see entry), the pope in Rome, had heard of these battles against Christians and excommunicated, or expelled, the Crusaders from the church. They had nothing more to lose by fighting in Constantinople and arrived in the city by the end of June 1203. Alexius IV rode below the gates of the city, telling his people to throw Alexius III out and to restore their rightful emperor. But the people of Constantinople would not support anyone who, in turn, was supported by the hated Latins. There would have to be a battle for the city.

This battle began on July 5, 1203, when the Venetian army was able to break the huge chain blocking the harbor. Then the Crusaders attacked Constantinople by both sea and land. On July 17 the Venetians, led by their ancient doge, were the first to land, and the battle seemed to be favoring the Crusaders. Alexius III grew nervous. Instead of counterattacking, he fled, taking five tons of gold and one daughter with him. Now it was Alexius IV's turn to take the throne. He was surprised to discover that the Byzantines had already released his father, Isaac II, from prison and, despite his blindness, had made him emperor once again. However, with pressure from the Crusaders, Alexius IV was declared co-emperor.

## **The Sack of Constantinople**

Now it was Alexius IV's turn to keep his bargain. He tried to raise money to pay off the Crusaders by increasing

the taxes of the citizens of Constantinople, but this made him unpopular with the people, who also blamed him for bringing the Latins to conquer their city. He attempted to get money from church lands, but this action also angered the people and powerful church officers. The Crusader army, camped near the city, grew restless, and trouble between this army and the citizens of Constantinople was sure to follow. As the winter approached, relations between the Crusaders and Alexius IV broke down. His promises of riches for the Crusaders did not come true, although he managed to raise half the promised funds. He began to withdraw from public life, spending more and more time in his palace. The aged Venetian doge finally confronted Alexius IV, as recorded by Robert de Clari:

Alexius, what do you think you are going to do? Remember we have raised you from a very humble estate. We have made you lord and ... crowned you emperor. Will you not keep your agreement with us and will you not do more? No, replied the emperor, I will not do anything more. No?, said the doge, "wretched boy, we have raised you from the mire, and we will throw you into the mire again and be sure that I will do you all the injury that I can, from this time on.

In the end, however, it was not the Crusaders who unseated Alexius IV but a rival at court, another Alexius nicknamed "Murzuphlus," or "the Bushy-Eyebrowed." A member of the powerful Ducas family, Alexius Murzuphlus brought anti-Latins together and took power, strangling Alexius IV, throwing his father Isaac II back into prison, and declaring himself Emperor Alexius V. He told the Crusaders that there would be no more payments to them.

This was all the Crusaders needed to set them at the walls of Constantinople once again. On April 9, 1204, they struck the city, agreeing to divide the stolen goods among themselves. Though their initial attack was driven back, the Crusaders struck again on April 13 and broke through the city walls. The Crusaders killed men, women, and children and looted private homes and churches. Much of the city was burned, and its treasures were divided among the Venetians, the German emperor, and the Crusaders, with the Venetians taking the biggest share. Alexius V fled the city but was later captured by Alexius III, who blinded him as he had done his own brother and then turned him over to the Crusaders to finish him off.



## The Loot and the Shroud

Ships loaded with loot set sail from Constantinople for Europe after the sack of the city in 1204. Gold and jewels were among this booty, as were works of art and church relics, objects held to be holy because of their association with saints. Even the four horses that now stand so gracefully atop the Basilica of Saint Mark's in Venice originally came from Constantinople. Lands were also part of the stolen goods. Venice won territory on the eastern shore of the Adriatic Sea as well as islands in Greece, including Crete.

The medieval chronicler Nicetas Choniates gives this account of the looting:

How shall I begin to tell of the deeds wrought by these nefarious [evil] men! Alas, the images, which ought to have been adored, were trodden underfoot! Alas, the relics of the holy martyrs were thrown into unclean places! Then was seen what one shudders to hear, namely, the divine body and blood of Christ was spilled upon the ground or thrown about. They snatched the precious reliquaries [vessels holding holy objects], thrust into their bosoms the ornaments which these contained, and used the broken remnants for pans and drinking cups, precursors of Anti-Christ [*one who opposes Christ*], authors and heralds of his nefarious deeds which we momentarily expect. Manifestly, indeed, by that race then, just as formerly, Christ was robbed and insulted and His garments were divided by lot; only

one thing was lacking, that His side, pierced by a spear, should pour rivers of divine blood on the ground.

One of the most famous objects to be looted in 1204 was the Shroud of Turin, thought to be the linen cloth placed over the face of Jesus after he was crucified, which is supposed to bear a likeness of his face as a result. The Shroud of Turin had a long history before it ended up in the bag of a Crusader. This cloth first turned up in 544, in Edessa, a city now part of southern Turkey. While repairs were being made to the outer walls of that city, the cloth was discovered and then placed in a church for safekeeping. Called the Edessa Cloth, it became famous throughout the Christian world, for people believed that the shadowy image of Christ that could be seen on the cloth was a miracle and not the work of a human being. By 1204 this cloth had made its way into the treasury of Constantinople. When the city fell to Crusaders, it was among the objects stolen. It was taken to Athens and began to be displayed in Europe, where it has remained ever since. Kept in Italy, it was given the name Shroud of Turin and has been studied widely by scientists and the faithful to discover the secret behind the sacred image many claim to see on it. To this day the mystery of the cloth has not been fully explained.

With the emperors dead, the Crusaders set up a Latin Kingdom in Constantinople and elected the first Latin emperor, Baldwin I. This put an end to the Fourth Crusade, howev-

**Mosaic of the fall of Constantinople in 1204 to the forces of the Venetians after the death of Alexius IV. This event ended the Fourth Crusade as well as the Byzantine Empire. *The Art Archive/Dagli Orti.***



er, for the new Latin Kingdom had its hands full fighting enemies on all sides. The idea of moving on to Egypt and from there to Jerusalem was put on hold until the next Crusade. During his very brief reign, Alexius IV had managed to so weaken the Byzantine Empire that it would never recover. By inviting the Crusader army to Constantinople, he signed a virtual death warrant for his empire. The only real winners of the Fourth Crusade were the Venetians, who gained loot and new territories to be added to their own expanding commercial empire.

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# Alp Arslan

c. 1026

Khorasan, Persia

November 24, 1072

Turkestan, Central Asia

**Military leader and second Seljuk  
Turkish sultan of Persia and Iraq**

**A**lp Arslan (ruled 1063–72), second of the powerful Seljuk sultans (Turkish leaders), was indirectly responsible for beginning the Crusades, the two-centuries-long conflict between Christians and the followers of the Muslim religion. A military leader of great fame, he solidified Turkish holdings in Persia and Iraq, pushing their new empire to the doorstep of the Christian Byzantine Empire (395–1493), that portion of the old eastern Roman Empire where religious ceremonies were controlled by the Eastern Orthodox Church, as opposed to the Catholic Church of Europe. This empire was based mostly in Asia Minor, or present-day Turkey. With his victory over the Byzantine emperor Romanus IV Diogenes at Manzikert in 1071, he literally opened the door to the West and Europe for Islam. That same year one of his lieutenants captured Jerusalem. These events caught the attention of the pope, who began calling for a Holy War to take back the lands of Palestine and to return the revenues, or income, of Asia Minor to the Byzantine Empire. A tireless warrior, Alp Arslan, whose name means “Hero” or “Courageous Lion,” was killed by a captive commander in 1072.

“Never have I invaded any country or attacked any enemy without seeking God’s help in the plan. Yesterday, however, ... I said to myself, ‘Now I am master of the world and no-one can stand against me.’ Now God has undone me through the least of his creatures.”

—*Alp Arslan; quoted in The Annals of the Saljuq Turks.*

## Leader of the Seljuk Turks

Under their first sultan, Tughril Beg (990–1063), the Seljuk Turks stormed out of their Central Asian homeland to establish an empire stretching from the Aral Sea to the Euphrates River. Proven warriors and skillful in their use of the horse in cavalry charges and lightning-quick attacks with both their short-bladed scimitar (curved sword) and bow and arrow, they won the favor of the Abbasid caliphate, the reigning Arab Muslim dynasty in Baghdad. The Seljuks became hired soldiers and eventually assumed real political power in Iraq. In 1060 Tughril was proclaimed “King of the East and West” and occupied Baghdad. As such, the Seljuks, recent converts to Islam and its orthodox (traditional) Sunni sect, took on a new task as protectors of Sunni Islam. Sunni is one of the two major religious divisions of Islam. It holds that successors to Muhammad, the founder of Islam, do not necessarily have to come from his descendants. It stresses instead the importance of Sunna, or Muslim law, as a source for leadership in the faith. The Seljuks also inherited two new enemies: the Christian Byzantine Empire to the north in Asia Minor and the Fatimid dynasty, part of the breakaway Shiite Muslim sect based in Egypt, with holdings in Syria.

When Tughril died in 1063, he left behind no male heirs, so his nephew, Muhammad ibn Daud, became the new sultan of the Seljuk Turks. Better known as Alp Arslan, he was born in Persia around 1026 (some chroniclers set the date of his birth as late as 1039), the son of Chagri Beg, chief of the territories of Khorasan in ancient Persia, or today’s western Iran. When his father died in 1061, Alp Arslan inherited these Khorasan territories. When he took over from his uncle, his domain increased with the addition of Persian territories around the Caspian Sea and lands in Iraq. This new sultan immediately set to work securing and expanding his empire. Although he was not in the direct line of succession (to inherit the throne), Arslan looked the part of a ruler. As Tamara Talbot Rice noted in *The Seljuks in Asia Minor*, Alp Arslan

was to prove worthy of his throne. Both his appearance and his character fitted him for the role of sovereign [king]; he was extremely tall, yet he added to the impression created by his great height by wearing an immensely high hat, and he grew his moustache so long that, when out hunting, he was obliged to knot its ends behind his head that they should not interfere with his aim. His strength was as great as his aim was



## Nizam al-Mulk

The great Persian statesman Nizam al-Mulk (“order of the kingdom”) was an able bureaucrat and administrator and also promoted religious education in Seljuk territories through a series of *madrasahs*, or Islamic colleges and schools. In addition, Nizam wrote a famous book on kingship and statecraft entitled *Siyasat-nameh*, which has been variously translated as *Rules for Kings* or *Book of Government*. Aged forty-two when he became vizier to the Seljuk sultan Alp Arslan, Nizam preferred the art of diplomacy and international relations to the rough-and-ready militarism of his sultan. Persian by birth, Nizam al-Mulk brought with him a rich tradition, not to mention the Persian language, to the Seljuk court. Nizam’s book on statecraft outlines how a sultan should rule. In that work he created two important institutions that the Seljuk Turks made their own: the office of the *atabeg*, or military adviser to young sultans, and the right of *iqta*, or the granting of income from land that a minister manages.

Considered one of the most brilliant ministers of the medieval East, Nizam al-Mulk went on to advise Alp Arslan’s son and successor, Malik-Shah, in effect becoming

the real sultan, for he trained and dominated the young ruler. Nizam became *atabeg* to Malik-Shah, the first time this title was applied after being mentioned in his own book. Nizam attracted many scholars and poets to the Seljuk court in Isfahan, including the Persian mathematician and poet Omar Khayyam (c. 1048–c. 1131), who became famous for his poetry but was far better known in his day for his work in mathematics and reforming the calendar. Under Nizam’s leadership, the Seljuks created one of the largest empires in the world, with holdings in the Caucasus, Persia, Anatolia, Syria, Iraq, and parts of Arabia. Unlike Alp Arslan, however, Nizam acquired new lands by means of treaty and negotiation rather than through battle. Such success in the end led to jealousy, and Nizam al-Mulk had many enemies at court. He was murdered in 1092 by an Assassin, a member of the breakaway Islamic religious cult that often committed such political murders for self-defense or for hire. His sultan, Malik-Shah, died less than a month later. Following their deaths, the Seljuk empire was broken up into smaller domains and was never again as strong as it once had been.

true, yet his valor exceeded both. Indeed, he was as noble and brave in his conduct as he was magnificent in appearance.

Alp Arslan was a fighter and a conqueror. Luckily, he had an able administrator to help run his huge empire. Nizam al-Mulk (1018–1092) was a Persian who joined the services of Alp Arslan when he was a governor of Khorasan and soon became his vizier, or chief administrative counselor. Nizam served

both Alp Arslan and his son and successor, Malik-Shah (1055–1092). Since Nizam was not only an able administrator but also a statesman, Alp Arslan was free to do what he did best—namely, fight the enemies of Islam and unite the Seljuk Empire. He faced his first challenge in 1064 when his father’s cousin, Kutulmish, opposed his succession and took up arms against him. Alp Arslan and his troops fought this renegade at the Battle of Damagan, during which Kutulmish was thrown from his horse and killed. Following this episode, Alp Arslan had to put down revolts from within his own family when his brother, Kawurd, rose up against him in 1064 and again in 1067.

Meanwhile, the sultan also had neighbors to keep in line. He tried to maintain peace with other Turkish rulers to the east. He accomplished this with the Ghaznavid rulers, whose territories stretched from northeastern Iran and Afghanistan into India, but he was forced to engage in military action against the Qarakhanids, who ruled the region known as Transoxania, in Central Asia, with Samarkand as its central city; this area is now known as the regions of Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, and part of Turkmenistan. With these neighbors to the east finally brought into line, Alp Arslan was able to turn his attention and ambition westward.

## **Expansionist Policies**

In 1064 Alp Arslan first pushed his armies into the valleys of the areas known as Georgia and Armenia, on the borders of Asia Minor, conquering the Georgians, who accepted the Seljuks as their sultans. He also was able to capture the former Armenian capital of Ani as well as the city of Kars. Thus, the Seljuks were in a good position to launch raids into the Anatolian peninsula itself and the Byzantine Empire. Briefly turning south, Alp Arslan and his forces struck the fortified cities of Antioch and Edessa, near the Mediterranean, and then swung north again to invade the Roman Empire in 1068, crossing the Euphrates River, which for centuries had served as the boundary between East and West. He fought Byzantine armies at Keyseri and by 1069 had reached the Aegean Sea, past the fortified town of Konya.

Further action in Asia Minor was put on hold, however, when Alp Arslan took up the request of Baghdad to deal



with the Fatimids in Egypt. He mounted a major expeditionary force, first taking Aleppo in Syria. Now his empire stretched from eastern Persia to the Mediterranean. Meanwhile, however, his troops were resisting renewed efforts by the Byzantine emperor Romanus IV Diogenes to push the Seljuks out of Asia Minor. By 1070 these efforts had succeeded in part, and Alp Arslan's army had been shoved back across the Euphrates again. Word reached Alp Arslan that the Byzantine emperor was planning to mount an even more powerful attack against the Seljuk army left behind in Asia Minor. Romanus assembled an army consisting of two hundred thousand troops, recruiting the faithful and hiring the rest. These mercenaries (paid soldiers) included Norsemen, Slavs, Turks, and even French Normans. Many Sicilians served in his officer corps. Romanus began moving these men east in the summer of 1071, hoping to take the Seljuks by surprise and secure the territory of Armenia as a buffer zone against them.

**The city of Edessa, one of the many cities that Alp Arslan invaded and defeated during his attacks on the Byzantine Empire.**

© Chris Hellier/Corbis.

When word of this Byzantine advance reached Alp Arslan, he cut short his campaign against Egypt and the Fatimids, leaving Atsiz ibn Abaq, his vassal (a person under the protection of a lord) in charge of the campaign, and led his army to rejoin his other men in Armenia. Atsiz used this opportunity and newfound power to attack and greatly damage Jerusalem, thus releasing the city from Fatimid control. Subsequently, however, the Seljuk rulers refused to allow pilgrims of various faiths to gain access to the holy spots of the city, a policy that would have lasting consequences.

Meanwhile, Alp Arslan gathered his forces near Manzikert, north of Lake Van (in the far eastern part of contemporary Turkey, along its borders with Armenia, Iran, and Iraq). Vastly outnumbered by the Byzantine forces, Alp Arslan and his men managed to trap the imperial army thanks to the superior tactics of their cavalry. It also helped that large numbers of mercenary forces deserted Romanus just before the fighting began. The Byzantine soldiers were defeated, and Romanus was taken prisoner—the first time a Byzantine emperor had ever been captured by a Muslim leader. However, instead of taking the captive to Baghdad to show him off, Alp Arslan decided to use the emperor to regain lost land, form an alliance with Byzantium, and attain a long-lasting truce with the Byzantine Empire. Once the ransom for Romanus was paid and he had been returned to Constantinople, the emperor found himself ousted, or removed, from the throne by a new monarch, who imprisoned and blinded him. When Romanus died in prison, the treaty with the Seljuks ended with his death. However, the victory at Manzikert still opened all of Byzantium to Turkish invasions by roving bands, who nibbled away at much of Asia Minor over the next decade.

### **Alp Arslan Turns East and Faces an Ironic Death**

Next, Alp Arslan returned to reconquer his homeland and to battle once again against the Qarakhanids of Transoxania. Before he and his men could cross the Oxus River, south of the Aral Sea, he had to capture a fortress defended by Yussuf Kothual, the governor of the region. When the fortress fell, Yussuf was brought before Arslan, who, forgetting his

usual mercy toward prisoners, ordered that the man be killed. Arslan's famous skill at archery came into play in this final act of his life, for when Yussuf began to curse the sultan, Arslan commanded his guards to untie Yussuf's rope bonds. Taking aim with bow and arrow, Arslan had decided to kill the prisoner himself. But his marksmanship failed him at this critical moment, and the arrow missed Yussuf. Taking advantage of the occasion, Yussuf suddenly leaped at Arslan, drawing a hidden dagger, and stabbed the sultan. Arslan died of his wounds a few hours later, but not before making his peace with God for his arrogance. Arslan used his last breath to name his son, Malik-Shah, his successor.

During his short reign Alp Arslan had managed to cut deeply into the Byzantine Empire, delivering a blow at Manzikert from which the empire would never recover. Though the Byzantine Empire stumbled on for almost four more centuries, it would never regain the power it had before the arrival of Arslan and the great Seljuks of Persia. The Battle of Manzikert marked the beginning of Turkish power in the Middle East. Arslan's Seljuks, virtual rulers of Iraq and Syria as well as sultans of Persia and parts of Asia Minor, were now also in control of Jerusalem, the holy city that represented three religions. The coincidence of these events finally led to appeals by the Byzantine emperor to the pope in Rome for help in dealing with the Seljuks. These appeals were at last heard by Pope **Urban II** (see entry), who in 1095 delivered his famous speech at the Council of Clermont, in the south of France, where he pleaded for a holy war against the Muslims. Urban II got his wish, for in 1096 armies set off from Europe bound for the Holy Land, initiating two centuries of periodic war between Christianity and Islam.

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# Averroës

1126  
Córdoba, Spain

1198  
Marrakesh, Morocco

**Philosopher, jurist, astronomer,  
and physician**



**K**nown in the West by his Latin name Averroës (pronounced ah-vair-O-ehz), the Spanish Muslim, or Islamic, philosopher known in the East as Ibn Rushd was one of the greatest thinkers of the medieval world. His commentaries on the Greek philosopher Aristotle (384–322 B.C.E.), in which he attempted to balance faith and reason, not only shaped thought in the Islamic world in Spain, North Africa, and the Middle East but also introduced the works of the Greeks to later Latin and Christian philosophers of Europe. Living in Spain and North Africa at the time of the Crusades, he was one of the last in the great line of Muslim scholars of the Middle Ages (c. 500–1500 C.E.). Trained as a philosopher and as a doctor, lawyer, and judge, Averroës created dozens of works in his lifetime, only a fraction of which survive in translation. His major work remains *Tahafut al-tahafut* (“The Incoherence of the Incoherence”), a defense of philosophy or the use of reason.

## Descended from a Family of Jurists

Averroës’s full Arabic name was Abu al-Walid Muhammad ibn Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn Rushd. He was born in

“Philosophy is the friend and milk-sister of religion; thus injuries from people related to philosophy are the severest injuries [to religion] apart from the enmity, hatred and quarrels...which are companions by nature and lovers by essence and instinct.”

—Averroës; quoted in Averroës: On the Harmony of Religion and Philosophy.

Averroës, also known as Ibn Rushd. © Archivo Iconografico, S.A./Corbis.

the early twelfth century in Córdoba, Spain, which was then part of the Muslim world and one of the most intellectual and cultured cities in all of Europe. As Philip K. Hitti has noted in his *Makers of Arab History*, the royal library of Córdoba

is said to have housed 400,000 titles, filling a forty-four-volume catalog. ... The university, housed in the great mosque [religious building], embraced among its departments theology, jurisprudence [law], astronomy, mathematics, and medicine. Its certificate opened the way to the most lucrative [high-paying] posts in the realm.

While the fundamentalist (ultraconservative) Muslim rulers of Spain were outwardly very strict and strictly followed the rules of the holy book, the Koran, the court life they created allowed for intellectual freedom. During Averroës's lifetime two different Moroccan dynasties, the Almoravids and the Almohads, controlled Spain, or *al-Andalus*. Many of the rulers were well educated and curious to gain new knowledge even when it conflicted with the religious teachings in the Koran.

The son of famed jurists and legal minds, Averroës came of age in this rich climate. Both his father and grandfather had been Muslim judges, or *qadi*, in Córdoba, and the grandfather had also been the prayer leader, or *imam*, in the city's great mosque. Destined to follow in their footsteps, as a boy Averroës studied the Islamic sciences, philosophy, and medicine. At the university, located in the great mosque, Averroës studied medicine and law. Study of medicine at that time also implied a further study of philosophy. Averroës was influenced by the work of earlier Arabic philosophers, such as Avicenna (980–1037) and Avempace (c. 1095–c. 1138), who died in Saragossa, Spain, when Averroës was twelve. These scholars and philosophers attempted to create a compromise between religion and philosophy.

## At the Court of Marrakesh

Little is known of Averroës's whereabouts from about 1153 to 1169. It seems that he was in Marrakesh, Morocco, by 1153, perhaps helping to develop the colleges that the Almohad caliph, or leader, was founding at the time. He also was involved in research in astronomy, which studied the movement of the planets. While he was in Morocco during this first stay, he observed the star Canope, which was not visible in Spain. This led him to accept Aristotle's theory that the Earth was round, not flat. It is possible that he was employed

as a teacher during these years, and he was clearly also working as a physician. His seven-part encyclopedia of medical knowledge, *Kitab al-kulliyat (Generalities)*, was written between 1153 and 1169. In this work he covered topics ranging from the anatomy of the organs to therapy and hygiene, or sanitation and cleanliness. He was the first observer to note that patients do not suffer from smallpox twice.

During this time in Morocco he met the court physician and philosopher Ibn Tufayl, who was impressed by some of Averroës's early commentaries on Aristotle. Around 1169 Ibn Tufayl introduced this bright scholar to the new caliph, Abu Ya'qub Yusuf (ruled 1163–84). During this first meeting the caliph asked the Cordoban philosopher how the sky came to be and what it was made of. According to early chroniclers of his life, Averroës, fearing a trap that might lead him to provide a less than traditional answer to this question, hesitated to respond. However, upon hearing the caliph talk with Ibn Tufayl in a learned and even scientific manner, Averroës decided to take a chance and proceeded to give this ruler as much information as possible about the subject from both a scientific and a religious viewpoint.

Taken by Averroës's vast knowledge, the caliph sent him away with gifts that showed his admiration. Soon the caliph had a commission for the Spanish scholar. He complained that the translated works of the famous Greek philosopher Aristotle were too difficult and poorly done to understand. Ibn Tufayl decided not to attempt to explain these works, since such a project might take many years. Averroës agreed to take on the project, and it became his main scholarly occupation for the rest of his life.

## **Commentaries on Aristotle**

In 1169 Averroës was appointed chief judge in Seville, Spain, and thus returned to the region of his birth. Two years later he went back to Córdoba as *qadi*. With access to the great library of the university, he was now able to concentrate more fully on his research. But such work was never made easy, for during the 1170s it seems that he traveled as a roaming judge throughout Spain, and in 1182 he was brought back to Marrakesh to replace Ibn Tufayl as physician to the

caliph. When this caliph died in 1184, he was succeeded by his son, nicknamed al-Mansur, “the Victorious” (ruled 1184–99). About this time Averroës was sent back to Córdoba as chief *qadi*, and he remained there until 1195. He died in 1198 in Marrakesh, where his tomb still stands.

Averroës worked on his commentaries of Aristotle and Greek philosophy from 1169 to 1195. They are divided into three types: the *jami*, “epitomes,” or short summations, for beginning students; *talkhis*, middle or intermediate commentaries intended for those with some knowledge of the subject; and *tafsir*, extensive commentaries for the advanced student, in which Averroës explains more than just what the original source contains. Over the years Averroës wrote such commentaries on most of Aristotle’s works, including the *Organum*, *De anima*, *Physica*, *Metaphysica*, *Rhetorica*, *Poetica*, and *De partibus animalium*, as well as other titles by that philosopher, plus works of the earlier Greek philosopher Plato (c. 425–347 B.C.E.), including his *Republic*.

Sometimes Averroës would write all three types of commentaries about the same work. What is amazing about such commentaries is that Averroës did not speak or read Greek. He therefore had to rely on earlier translated texts for his explanations; ironically, it was often these very texts that he was trying to correct. Both in Latin and Arabic scholarship there had been many mistranslations and misunderstandings of the writings of Aristotle. Averroës had to rely on the work of those earlier scholars who had been true to Aristotle but who did not go into great detail in their studies.

The shorter and middle commentaries appeared between 1169 and 1178, with the more extensive studies coming out later. These works as a whole earned Averroës the nickname “Great Commentator” from later Latin and Christian scholars. Between 1174 and 1180 Averroës completed his greatest original works. Of these works, the best known are “The Incoherence of the Incoherence” and *Kitab fasl al-maqal* (*On the Harmony of Religion and Philosophy*). In the first text Averroës defends philosophy and rational thought from attacks made by the Muslim theologian al-Ghazzali, whose *Tahafut al-falasifa* (*The Incoherence of the Philosophers*) had appeared ninety years previously. Averroës takes this earlier argument apart point by point, discussing the creation of the

world, the characteristics of God's will and knowledge, and the fate of the soul.

Applying the freethinking reason of Aristotle to such topics, Averroës sometimes came close to being in opposition to pure Islamic thinking. The same is true of his *On the Harmony of Religion and Philosophy*, in which he attempts to bridge faith and reason. In this work he assumes that the two are completely compatible, or similar, or at least are able to coexist. He also notes that people really can believe only what they are able to understand. He wrote that Muslims are in complete agreement "in holding that it is not obligatory [necessary] either to take all the expressions of Scripture in their apparent [seeming] meaning or to extend them all from their apparent meaning to allegorical [symbolic] interpretation."

Because of such statements, Averroës became the enemy of conservative Muslims, for whom the word of the Koran could not be questioned. He also became known in the West as a champion of rational thought and reason over faith. The truth of his thought lies somewhere in the middle. He did apply the philosophy of Aristotle to questions of religion, but according to most commentators he wove this earlier Greek philosophy into Islamic religious thought.

Because his works were not all translated, or were translated gradually into Latin for European readers, two different schools of thought developed from Averroës's philosophy. The early translations, dating from the thirteenth century, seem to present a much more rational picture—one based on reason—of things than his entire body of work does. This more liberal reading influenced Latin scholars and was called Averroism. According to this philosophy, the world has an eternal nature not necessarily created by God. This God, in turn, is distant from human beings, and there is little sense of divine or godly involvement, or taking part, in human affairs. Similarly, there is no indication of an afterlife, or a life after death. Later readings, however, balance these views, showing that Averroës was no believer in a so-called double truth—that is, one truth for philosophy and another one for religion. Instead, being a faithful Muslim, Averroës noted that when the works of philosophy and the Koran disagreed, then the truth about religion came only



## Paper and the Spread of Knowledge

Great thinkers such as Averroës would never have had the effect they did without the invention of something all of us take for granted today—namely, paper. The earliest written or sketched information appeared on cave walls tens of thousands of years ago. From there people progressed to stone and clay tablets, but these materials were not very portable and also required great effort to create. Many other materials were tried over the centuries, including bark, silk, metal, and even leaves. The ancient Egyptians developed papyrus from a plant found growing near the Nile River. They created what looked like sheets of paper by peeling and slicing the plant into strips and then layering and pounding them together. Not long after that, parchment was made from animal skins. It had several advantages over papyrus: it was stronger, both sides could be used, and if mistakes were made they could be scraped off.

No further advances in writing surfaces occurred until the Chinese invented paper (the name comes from “papyrus,” which it resembles) during the time of Christ. This early paper was made from beaten or pulped plant material and water,

which was spread on a bamboo frame to dry. This writing surface was better than earlier ones, because paper could be made much more easily and quickly. The art of papermaking spread throughout Asia to Japan, Korea, and Tibet, and by the seventh century it had reached Central Asia and Persia. From there it passed into Islamic lands, finding a welcome audience in Baghdad in the eighth century. The Arabs made improvements in papermaking, adding linen fibers to the wood to create a finer, smoother surface for writing. Most important, a paper mill was established in Baghdad, permitting the manufacture of paper on a large scale and enabling Arab writers and thinkers to fill libraries with their knowledge, including their translations of Greek texts.

The Christian West, however, resisted paper. The church declared paper was bad because it was a Muslim product. As late as 1221 Holy Roman Emperor Frederick II declared all official documents written on paper to be invalid, or worthless. Only those written on parchment were legal. All this changed with the invention of the printing press in the fifteenth century. Then paper became popular in Europe as well.

from the Koran. Similarly, his idea of an afterlife included a form of resurrection, or rebirth, and if the world were eternal (never-ending) it was only because it depended on God, who is the eternal creator.

In reality, Averroës was walking a tightrope with his philosophy. He understood Greek free will and reason, but

as a powerful *qadi*, responsible for maintaining Islamic law as stated in the Koran and the Shar'ia, or Book of Laws, he also needed to blend these two traditions. This position finally landed him in trouble. In 1195 al-Mansur needed to rally his people to fight the Christians in Spain. As a result, he had to please the more conservative elements of Islamic society, who had long criticized the work of Averroës. The philosopher was ordered to appear before a tribunal (court) in Córdoba, where he was blasted by his enemies with both true and false accusations. His books were publicly burned, and he was sent into exile in Lucena, a town south of Córdoba. Not long after this incident al-Mansur won a victory over the Christians at Toledo. Perhaps this made the political climate less difficult for the caliph. In 1198 he summoned the old philosopher out of exile and invited him to come to his court in Marrakesh. Averroës, however, did not have much of a chance to enjoy his changed fortune, for he died later that year.

Averroës was perhaps the most important philosopher of the Middle Ages. Although he lived during a time when two major Crusades were fought, it does not appear that his life was much disturbed by these conflicts. His commentaries on Greek philosophy, especially the works of Aristotle, preserved the thoughts and ideas of that early Greek scholar and introduced him to new generations of Muslim, Christian, and Jewish readers. For those Latin scholars who did not read the full range of his works, Averroës became a symbol of reason and free will. The great Catholic saint and scholar Thomas Aquinas (c. 1225–1274) drew upon the work of Averroës to try to balance faith and reason. Averroës wrote almost eighty books during his lifetime, totaling more than twenty thousand pages. Such works deal not only with philosophy but also with medicine, the law, astronomy, and even grammar. A Renaissance man (a man of many and various skills and interests) before the term was used to describe the rebirth of the arts and sciences in fourteenth-century Europe, Averroës was born into an age of Crusader intolerance but managed to rise above such narrow disputes. As Philip K. Hitti has concluded, Averroës—in his various roles as physician, philosopher, scientist, and commentator—made Aristotle accessible, fathered a long-lasting rationalist movement, and greatly contributed to Europe's Renaissance.

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# Al-Zahir Baybars

c. 1223  
Southern Russia

July 1, 1277  
Damascus, Syria

Mamluk sultan

Called the “Napoleon of medieval Egypt,” al-Zahir Baybars, also known as Rukn al-Din Baybars al-Bunduqdari, or simply Baybars, was the savior of Egypt during the critical years of the thirteenth century when that country faced enemies from both Europe and Asia. Baybars, who rose from slave to soldier to sultan (leader), fought the French during the later Crusades, or holy wars, against Islam, and the Mongols, raiders from the plains of Central Asia who tore through the Middle East and destroyed much of Islamic civilization. An intelligent, spirited, and courageous soldier, Baybars was also an able administrator, bringing the centers of Egypt and Syria back to cultural and artistic life during the seventeen years of his rule (1260–77). He was largely responsible for establishing the Mamluk, or slave, dynasty that ruled Egypt, Syria, and Palestine for several centuries and made Egypt the political and religious center of the Muslim world.

## A Trained Mamluk

Baybars was born around 1223 near the north shore of the Black Sea, a region in present-day southern Russia. He was a

“Baybars repeatedly demonstrated quickness of action resolution, courage, shrewdness, prescience [foresight], and determination. He seemed to be able to accomplish many things almost at the same time, and to be always on the move directing affairs of state in Egypt and Syria.”

—Mustafa Ziada, “The Mamluk Sultans to 1293,” in *History of the Crusades. Vol. 2, The Later Crusades, 1189–1311.*

Manuscript illumination of Mongolian horsemen, similar to the ones who captured Baybars during his youth and sold him into slavery. © Stapleton Collection/Corbis.



member of the nomadic (wandering) Kipchak Turks, who hunted in this region. As a young boy his people were attacked by the Mongols, a warrior-like group of nomads who resided in the steppes, or plains, of Central Asia. These Mongols were originally led by Genghis Khan (c. 1162–1227) and then later by his sons and grandsons. By the middle of the 1230s the Mongols had reached the Black Sea region. During one battle Baybars was taken prisoner and sold in the slave markets of present-day Turkey.

Purchased by Syrian merchants, the adolescent Baybars was transported farther and farther into the Muslim world, eventually reaching Egypt around 1240, where he was bought by the Egyptian sultan al-Salih Najm al-Din Ayyub. Al-Salih was to be the last of the Ayyubids, a line of rulers of Egypt established by the great Muslim military leader **Saladin** (see entry). This sultan made a point of recruiting Mamluks (from the Arab verb for “to own”), or slaves, and then training them to be soldiers. The sultan placed Baybars in the elite Mamluk training school located on an island in the Nile River. After several years of hard and thorough drills, Baybars was put into the Bahriyya Mamluks, the regiment that served the sultan.

In 1250 Baybars first made a name for himself when he defended Egypt from the Crusader invasion of **Louis IX** (see entry), king of France. This French monarch was a very religious leader and had spent the past several years preparing a Crusader army to free the Holy Land from Islamic control. His Seventh Crusade (1248–54) would be the last major holy war, though many smaller battles would be fought over the next forty years until the Christian Crusaders were finally pushed out of the Holy Land. During the early part of the fighting and eventual standoff between the Egyptians and French, the city of Damietta, located on the Nile delta (mouth) had fallen to the Crusaders. Then the sultan al-Salih died of tuberculosis, a terminal lung disease. His wife, **Shajar al-Durr** (see entry), a former Mamluk like Baybars, conspired with two advisers of the sultan to keep the death a secret from the troops, both to keep morale up as well as to keep this information from the enemy. Louis IX, however, found out about it through a spy and also discovered a way to cross over the river that separated his men and the sultan’s camp. He sent his brother, Robert of Artois, to attack the Egyptians, chasing them as they retreated into the streets of the nearby town of Mansurah. At this point Baybars and his Mamluks struck, cutting down the Crusaders in the narrow streets of the town and saving the day. A large number of the French king’s best knights, or noble soldiers, were killed at the Battle of Mansurah in February 1250, thus turning the tide of the war. With the arrival of the sultan’s son, Turan Shah, later that month, the French were finally defeated. Louis IX was captured, and Egypt was saved.



## The End of the Crusades

The job of chasing the Christians out of the Holy Land once and for all was left to those Mamluk leaders who ruled after Baybars. The final defeat for the Christian Crusaders occurred at the fortified port of Acre in 1291. On April 5 a huge Muslim force consisting of sixty thousand horsemen and one hundred sixty thousand foot soldiers gathered at the gates of Acre. Though this was not the last Crusader city left in the Holy Land, it was the most important. If it fell, those still remaining—such as Tyre, Beirut, and Sidon—would also surely fall. This enormous Muslim force had been assembled by the Mamluk sultan al-Ashraf al-Khalil; it outnumbered by ten to one the Christian defenders inside the walls.

One thing the Crusaders had in their favor was the fact that their defense was largely being directed by the Christian religious and military orders the Knights Templars and the Knights Hospitallers, both of whom had become famous in the Christian and Islamic worlds alike for their courage and honor in battle. The siege lasted almost two months, during which the Templars, Hospitallers, and other Crusaders fought bravely. When it became clear that the city faced defeat, men, women, and children flocked to the docks to try to board ships, for the Muslims were killing every person they captured. Almost thirty thousand people were eventually slaugh-

tered in this final episode of the two-centuries-old Crusades.

During these final tragic moments, Roger de Flor, one of the Templar knights, disgraced the entire Templar order by seizing a ship in the harbor and demanding a high price for any passenger lucky enough to get onboard. Those who did not have the fare, or ticket price—including nuns and children—were left behind to be killed by the Muslim soldiers or taken prisoner and sold as slaves. (He later became known for his harsh treatment of the civilian population.) Roger de Flor's human cargo consisted mainly of noble ladies of Acre who had the necessary funds. Although he created a fortune in this way, he was later stripped of his knighthood by the pope when his cowardly behavior became known. He went on to serve as a soldier of fortune (one who is paid to find and kill specific people) in Sicily and fought the Turks on behalf of the Byzantine emperor. He was planning to set up his own rival kingdom when he was finally murdered on the order of the Byzantine emperor. Roger de Flor's name is usually associated with his ignoble, or dishonorable, actions during the fall of Acre in 1291. His behavior provides an ironic ending to the Crusader movement, which was supposed to have inspired a sense of honor, loyalty, and nobility among fighting men.

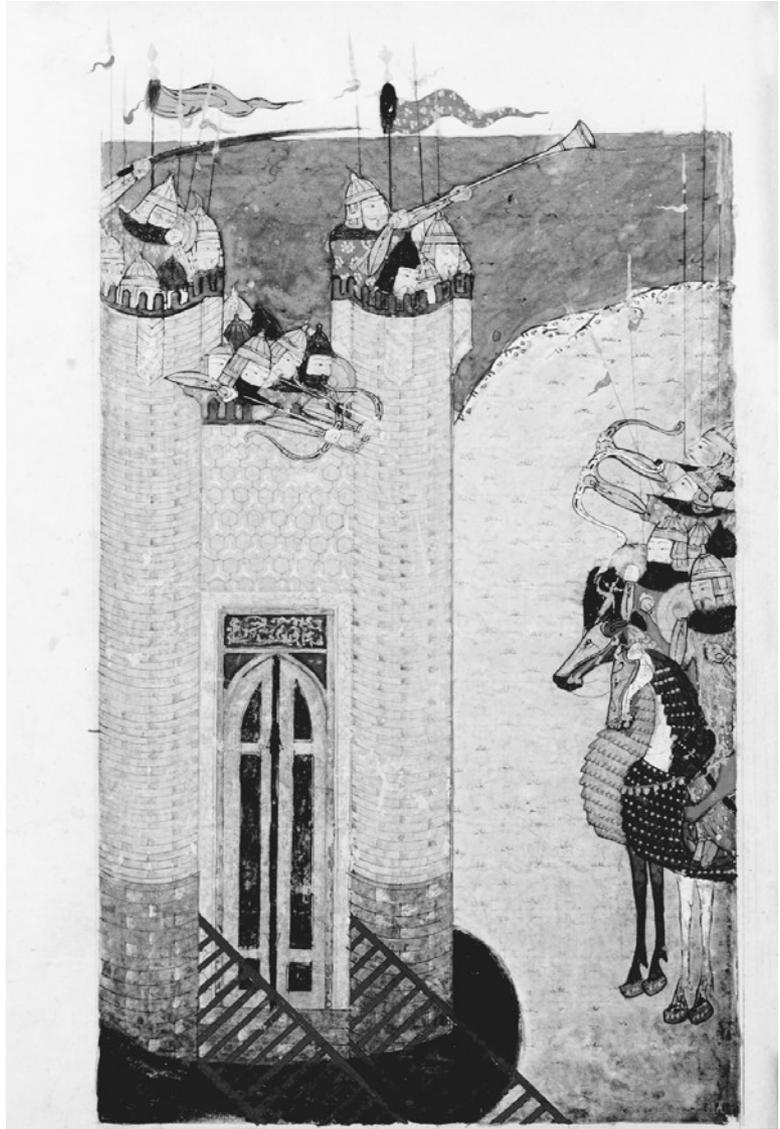
## A Mamluk Dynasty

Baybars and the other Mamluks now saw their opportunity. All that stood between them and control of Egypt was the sultan's son. On May 2, 1250, they attacked Turan Shah during a feast he was giving. Wounded, Turan Shah managed to escape to a fortified (walled and protected) tower in the Nile River. When the Mamluks set the tower on fire, Turan Shah jumped into the river, and Baybars himself finished him off with his sword. After this assassination, there were no more living relatives of Sultan al-Salih to take the throne. Thus Shajarat al-Durr, the sultan's widow, was declared the sultana. Placing her on the Egyptian throne was a way to make the new rulers seem more legal, for Shajarat could be considered the next in line for the Ayyubid crown. In truth, however, the Mamluks held the power. When the rest of the Islamic world complained at having a female leader in Cairo, it was decided that a male needed to be put on the throne in her place. Unfortunately for Baybars, at this point he was passed over for another man, Aybek, who ruled with Shajarat al-Durr for the next seven years. Baybars and Aybek eventually had a falling-out, and by 1254 Baybars had gone into exile, living as a soldier of fortune in Syria.

By 1260, however, a new threat faced Egypt and all of the Middle East. The Mongols were streaming into the region from their home base in Central Asia. Led by Hulagu, the grandson of the great Genghis Khan, the Mongols attacked Baghdad in 1258, sacking, or robbing, the city and killing at least one hundred thousand inhabitants. This effectively ended the Abbasid caliphate, a religious dynasty that could trace its origins back to the uncle of Muhammad the prophet (the founder of the religion of Islam). The Abbasids had ruled in Baghdad since 749 and were the spiritual heart of Sunni, one of the two main branches of Islam. Unlike the other main branch, Shi'ite, which takes the legitimate successor to Muhammad only from the prophet's family, Sunni Islam finds legitimacy (authority) in the written words of Islamic law, the Sunna, and in the words of the holy book, the Koran. Although the Abbasids' political and military power had grown progressively weaker since the rise of the Seljuk Turks in the eleventh century, their role as spiritual guides for Islam was still an important one. The destruction of their city and their dynasty struck a severe blow to the Muslim world. The

**Mongols in battle, one of the many groups that Baybars conquered in defense of Egypt, the country of which he would eventually become sultan.**

*Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, France/Bridgeman Art Library.*



Mongols did not stop with Iraq. They moved on into Syria, and it was clear that they had their sights on Egypt itself.

At this important moment Baybars was welcomed back to Cairo by the new sultan, Qutuz (sometimes spelled Kutuz). Together the sultan and Baybars led an army to meet the invading Mongols, commanded by their general, Kitbogha. The two armies met at Ayn Jalut, near Nazareth in

Palestine, in September 1260. At this battle Baybars led the charge into the Mongol ranks. The fight was fierce, but in the end the Mamluks were victorious. Legend has it that Baybars personally killed the Mongol general Kitbogha. Disappointed because he was not properly rewarded by the sultan, Baybars killed Qutuz on the way back to Cairo and placed himself on the Egyptian throne as sultan. It had taken two assassinations, but finally Baybars had clawed his way to the top.

## **Sultan Baybars I**

Many historians mark the beginning of the Mamluk dynasty with Baybars, for from his time forward, the Mamluks maintained firm control of Egypt and North Africa, as well as Palestine, Syria, parts of Iraq, and Asia Minor. For the next seventeen years Baybars was almost continually at war with one group or another, fighting the Mongols, Christians, other Muslims, and Armenians. He led thirty-eight campaigns into Syria and fought the Mongols nine times and the Armenians five times. For more than half his reign Baybars was away from Cairo. One historian has calculated that Baybars traveled more than 66,000 miles (106,217 kilometers) during his active career.

After defeating the Mongols, Baybars did something very clever to solidify his hold on Egypt. In 1261 he invited the uncle of the last Abbasid caliph (religious leader) to come to Cairo. The man arrived amid great ceremony and was named the next caliph, al-Mustansir. Cairo became the new home of the spiritual leader of Sunni Islam, making Baybars and his regime seem more legitimate. Next, Baybars took up his sword against the Crusaders. His hero and model was the twelfth-century Muslim military leader Saladin, who also rallied the Muslim world to fight the Crusaders and recapture Jerusalem for Islam. Imitating Saladin, Baybars struck at the Crusader states in Palestine, forcing the two most famous religious fighting orders, the Knights Hospitallers and the Knights Templars, to surrender the fortress cities of Arsuf and Safrad, respectively. In 1268 Baybars took the well-fortified city of Antioch and slaughtered its inhabitants. By 1271 the Crusaders had been pushed nearly into the sea. The next generation of Mamluk leaders would complete the job Baybars had begun.

At the same time, Baybars sent forces north to battle and punish the Armenians, who were allies of the Mongols. The same punishing campaigns were mounted against the Seljuk Turks, who had backed the Mongols. In Syria he roundly defeated the Assassins, a radical Islamic sect (religious group). These Ismaili Muslims, as they were called, held mountain fortresses in Syria and Persia and managed to strike fear in the hearts of people in the Middle East through their use of assassination as a political and religious weapon. By 1273 Baybars had wiped out these groups in Syria, gaining control of the entire region. Closer to home, he secured the borders of Egypt to the south and west.

Those peoples that he could not conquer he befriended. Baybars proved himself capable in international politics, establishing friendly relations with courts in Europe and with the Byzantine Empire, or eastern Roman Empire, which consisted of present-day Turkey, Greece, and part of the Balkans. As if all this were not enough, Baybars also created something of a golden age in Egypt and Syria, reestablishing their leadership in scholarship and art by attracting philosophers and scientists to both Damascus and Cairo. He also unified his growing empire through a network of roads and bridges and created a postal system between Cairo and Damascus, in Syria, with twice-weekly deliveries. Baybars was known as a deeply religious man who strictly followed the teachings of Islam. He outlawed the sale of alcohol and helped people make pilgrimages (religious trips) to Mecca. He also enforced the times of fasting, or not eating, during religious observances and built numerous Muslim schools and mosques (religious buildings).

Even before his death, legends and myths had developed about him, some created by Baybars himself. Court scribes (secretaries) were writing histories of his heroic deeds while Baybars was still battling various foes. At the height of his career he traveled to Damascus, where he died on July 1, 1277, after drinking from a poisoned cup supposedly intended for another person. Following this untimely death, his legend grew even more. The *Sirat Baybars* is a folk account of his life that is still popular in the Arabic-speaking world.

Baybars, however, does not need fictional accounts to make his achievements seem larger than they were. In a time

when much of the Islamic world was falling apart, threatened by Mongols and Christians alike, this former slave who rose to become sultan made Egypt a strong state at the very center of the Middle East. The Mamluk dynasty he helped create survived the Turkish invasions of 1517 and hung on in Egypt, in one form or another, until the French emperor Napoleon (1769–1821) arrived there in 1798.

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# Benjamin of Tudela

c. 1127  
Tudela, Spain

1173  
Castile, Spain

**Rabbi, traveler, and writer**

**B**enjamin of Tudela (pronounced to-**DAY**-la) is the author of one of the most famous early travel books, *The Itinerary of Benjamin of Tudela*. A rabbi (religious scholar and leader) originally from Spain, Benjamin set out on a world journey around 1159. During the next fourteen years he traveled to more than three hundred cities, including areas in Greece, Syria, Palestine, Mesopotamia, Persia, and Arabia. He is also believed to be the first European to approach the borders of China. The book he wrote to describe these travels, *Massoath Schel Rabbi Benjamin* (first translated in the 1840s), provides scholars with one of the first eyewitness accounts of life in the Middle Ages throughout parts of southern Europe and the Middle East. Benjamin also gave good descriptions of the physical conditions under which Jewish people lived in these regions. Other topics he reported on include politics, commerce (trade), and geography.

## A Son of Navarre

Born around 1127 in the city of Tudela, located in the northern Spanish province of Navarre, Benjamin came of age

“The city of Bagdad [Baghdad] is...situated in a land of palms, gardens and plantations, the like of which is not to be found in Shinar...Wise men live there, philosophers who know all manner of wisdom, and magicians expert in all manner of witchcraft.”

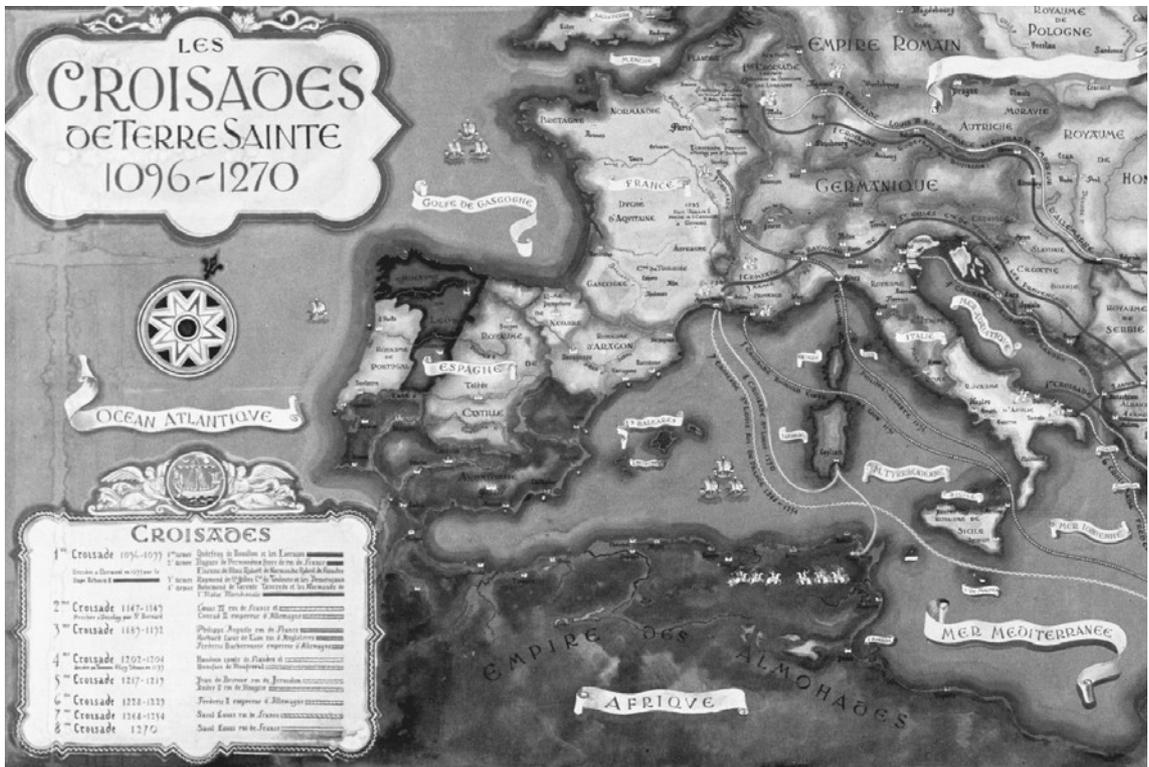
—*Benjamin of Tudela, The Itinerary of Benjamin of Tudela: Travels in the Middle Ages.*

in a time of relative religious tolerance in Spain. Members of the Sephardic community (*Sefarad* is the Hebrew word for Spain), Benjamin's ancestors were part of the diaspora, or migration, of Jews who had come to the Iberian, or Spanish, Peninsula with the Roman legions, though some historians date their arrival to as early as the sixth century B.C.E. In any case, by the twelfth century C.E. the Sephardim (Spanish Jews) made up 90 percent of the world's Jews. In Spain, unlike other regions of Europe, Jews could be found in cities, towns, and villages and were active in all walks of life.

Part of the Spanish mix was also its Moorish history. Since the early eighth century C.E., the Muslims of northwestern Africa of both Arab and native Berber descent had become the rulers of much of the Iberian Peninsula. These Moors, as they were called, formed an Islamic outreach in mainland Europe. The Moorish rulers created a tolerant as well as a multicultural climate, emphasizing science, art, and philosophy. In the Spain, or al-Andalus, in which Benjamin grew up, Muslims, Christians, and Jews all lived in harmony. A golden age of learning and the arts transformed Spanish society. The Jewish philosopher **Maimonides** (see entry) and the Arab philosopher **Averroës** (see entry) were both products of this cosmopolitan, or worldly, atmosphere.

Tudela, a town close to the French border, received its first Jewish families in the eleventh century, when it was still under Moorish control. In 1119—about a decade before the birth of Benjamin—the city and its surrounding kingdom were conquered by Alfonso I, the Christian king of Pamplona and Aragon. As a result of this power shift, the Arab population was forced to relocate to a new quarter beyond the city walls, while the Jewish residents maintained a legal footing almost equal to that of Christians, who were now in control. An atmosphere of tolerance reigned in Tudela, if not in other parts of Spain, where repression and intolerance toward Jew and Muslim alike was becoming the order of the day.

Benjamin studied to be a rabbi, specializing in the *halachah*, or Jewish religious law. Little else is known about his private life until about 1159 (or even later), when he set out on the travels that would take him through much of the known world. Marcus Nathan Adler, translator and editor of



Benjamin's travel journal, *The Itinerary of Benjamin of Tudela*, has suggested possible reasons for the rabbi's journey. Noting that Jews in the Middle Ages were "much given to travel," Adler describes Benjamin as "the wandering Jew, who kept up communications between one country and another. He had a natural aptitude [ability] for trade and travel. His people were scattered to the four corners of the earth." In fact, looking at Benjamin's impressive travel plan, there is hardly a place mentioned that did not have a Jewish population. With fellow Jews so numerous and widespread, it made traveling in these days before organized transportation much easier; at the very least there would be a friendly face awaiting Benjamin at the end of his daily journey.

Adler also observes that during the Crusades—the two centuries of conflict between the Christian West and the Muslim Middle East over control of Jerusalem and the Holy Land—tolerance for different religions was breaking down. Jews as well as Muslims were discriminated against through-

A map of the Crusades in the Holy Land, a good reference to what Europe and the Middle East would have looked like during the time of Benjamin of Tudela's travels. *Réunion des Musées Nationaux/Art Resource, NY.*

out Europe, especially along the Crusader routes through Europe to Palestine. Adler concludes:

It is not unlikely, therefore, that Benjamin may have undertaken his journey with the object of finding out where his expatriated [exiled] brethren [brothers] might find an asylum [safe place]. It will be noted that Benjamin seems to use every effort to trace and to afford particulars [give details] of independent communities of Jews, who had chiefs of their own, and owed no allegiance [loyalty] to the foreigner.

Adler also mentions trade and business interests as another possible motive for making this very difficult journey.

## On the Road

At the time Benjamin set out on his journey, the Second Crusade (1147–49) was ten years in the past. Benjamin's goal may not have been to give an account of this struggle between Christians and Muslims, but during the course of his travels he did visit flash points, or tense areas, in the ongoing combat between Crusades. Beginning his travels with the Spanish city of Saragossa as his first destination, he took two days to reach the ancient town of Taragona, some of whose buildings dated to the time of ancient Greece. From there he traveled to Barcelona, where, Benjamin wrote (in the Adler edition of the *Itinerary*), "there is a holy congregation, including sages, wise and illustrious men," and listed some of the prominent Jews of the city. Benjamin also described the city in terms of geography and commerce: "This is a small city and beautiful, lying upon the seacoast. Merchants come thither [here] from all quarters with their wares, from Greece, from Pisa, Genoa, Sicily, Alexandria in Egypt, Palestine, Africa and all its coasts."

This is the basic formula Benjamin followed throughout his travels: he noted the presence or absence of a Jewish community in all the places he visited, observing who were the most famous scholars or men of commerce or science. He also commented on the economic conditions in such places and about what sorts of businesses and commercial activities were taking place. Often he included notes of a more "touristy" nature, such as descriptions of famous buildings and, in particular, beautiful scenery.

From Spain Benjamin crossed into France at Montpellier and Marseilles. There he commented on the beginnings

of what became known as the Albigensian Crusade, the suppression of a sect, or group, of religious reformers in the south of France who were considered heretics, or persons who hold religious beliefs contrary to traditional church doctrine. From Marseilles he boarded a ship bound for the Italian peninsula, landing in Genoa and also visiting Pisa and Luca on his way to Rome. Benjamin found few Jews in northern Italy. In Rome he estimated that there were about two hundred in all, many of them well known; some even worked for the pope, the leader of the western Christian church. Benjamin also commented on the historical sites of the city, including the ruins of ancient Rome. From there he proceeded south through Naples to the eastern coast of Italy and on to Brindisi and Otranto, where he caught a ship for Corfu, an island near Greece.

## Out of Europe

In Thebes, located north of Athens, Benjamin was surprised to find a very healthy Jewish community of two thousand, with rabbis who showed a high degree of learning. Passing through the northern Greek city of Salonika, he traveled on to Constantinople (present-day Istanbul, in Turkey), the capital of the Byzantine Empire, the Orthodox Christian, eastern half of the old Roman Empire. He reached this city in December 1161. Although he was impressed with the magnificent mosque, or Muslim place of worship, of Saint Sophia and was present to document the marriage of Emperor Manuel Comnenus (1143–1180), he was disappointed by the way the Jewish community was being treated in this otherwise great city. The Jews were forced to live in a ghetto, a zone where only Jews resided; were denied such basic rights as riding a horse; and were generally singled out for bad treatment by the rest of the population.

His lengthy stay in Constantinople allowed Benjamin to record some of his most detailed observations. His comments about the military spirit of the city are interesting:

Wealth like that of Constantinople is not to be found in the whole world. Here also are men learned in all the books of the Greeks, and they eat and drink every man under his vine and his fig tree. They hire from amongst all nations warriors called Loazim (Barbarians) to fight with the Sultan Masud, King of the

Togarmim (Seljuks), who are called Turks; for the natives are not warlike, but are as women who have no strength to fight.

From Constantinople, Benjamin sailed past the islands of the Aegean Sea on his way to the island of Cyprus, where he found a Jewish sect that did not observe the holy day of the Sabbath. From there he crossed to the mainland at Antioch, near present-day Syria, entering lands still held by the Crusaders, those Christian soldiers and knights who had first entered the region in 1096 as part of the First Crusade (1095–99) and had maintained their kingdoms in the Holy Land ever since. Traveling south, he recorded observations about the Ismaili religious sect (subgroup of Islam) known as the Assassins, located near Lebanon. The followers of this sect believed in eliminating their opponents by killing them, thus giving rise to the English word “assassin.”

Moving farther south, Benjamin praised the harbor of Tyre as being one of the finest in the world. He next passed through Acre and into the Holy Land and Jerusalem, which he

described as “a small city, fortified by three walls. It is full of people whom the Muhammadans call Jacobites, Syrians, Greeks, Georgians and Franks, and of people of all tongues,” including a Jewish community of about two hundred. He visited many other locations in the Holy Land, such as Hebron and Bethlehem—he was given free access to these places by the Crusaders—before again traveling north to Damascus, a city that, as he noted, was the seat of the powerful sultan Nur al-Din (1118–1174), who was also the patron of the up-and-coming military leader **Saladin** (see entry). There he found a community of three thousand Jews, among whom “are learned and rich men.”

From northern Syria he crossed into Mesopotamia (part of present-day Iraq), visiting Baghdad, which was considered the largest city in the world at the time and was the seat of the caliphs, or Muslim leaders, who controlled the entire Islamic region. As Benjamin explained it, Baghdad was

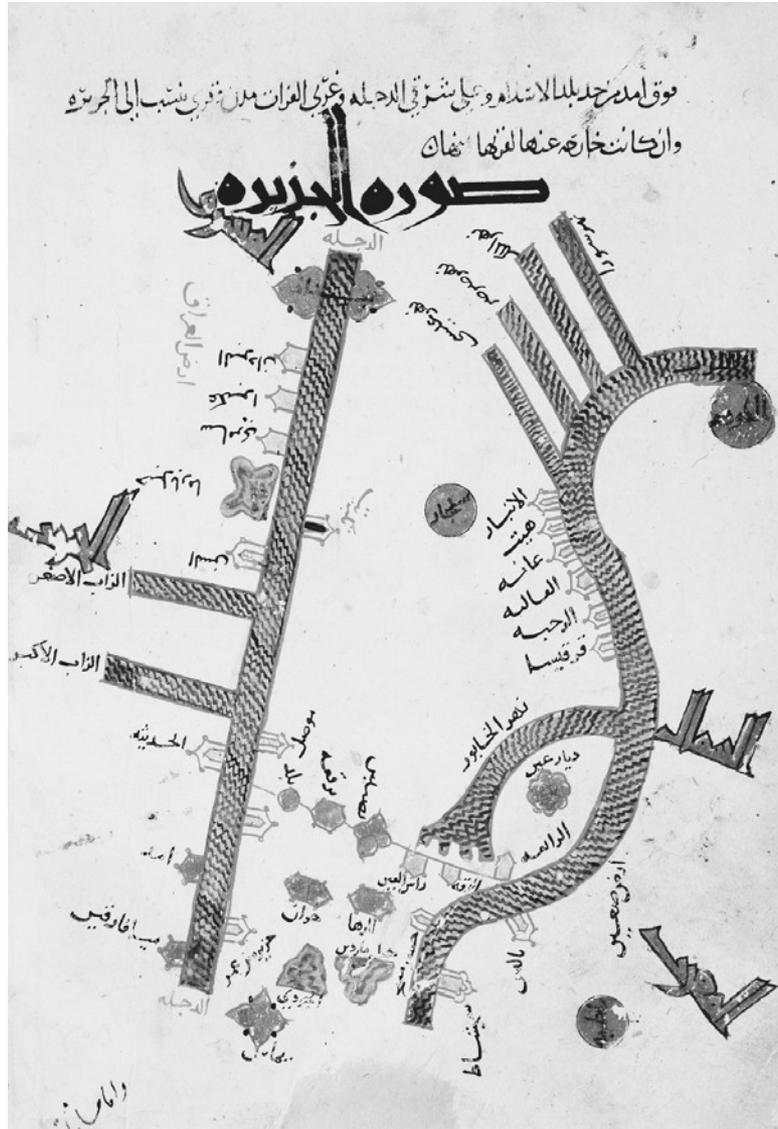
the great city and the royal residence of the Caliph Emir al Muminin al Abbasi of the family of Muhammad [the founder of the religion of Islam]. He is at the head of the Muhammadan religion, and all the kings of Islam obey him; he occupies a similar position to that held by the Pope over the Christian.

Benjamin noted that he found forty thousand Jews dwelling in “security, prosperity and honour under the great Caliph.” Although later observers have questioned this high figure, it is clear that Jews formed a significant part of the population of this city. Some of Benjamin’s best descriptions come from his stay in Baghdad. He painted a colorful picture of the court life of the city and also wrote of the schools for the study of Jewish religious and civic law.

## From Persia to Egypt

Scholars have noted that Benjamin’s descriptions and comments between leaving Baghdad (c. 1164) and arriving in Egypt (c. 1171) seem somewhat far-fetched. It is not known how much of this was the result of his imagination and how much was based on observation. As the writer C. Raymond Beazley noted in *The Dawn of Modern Geography*, Benjamin’s *Itinerary* at this point “is no longer, for the most part, a record of personal travel; it is rather an attempt to supplement [add to] the first part ‘of things seen,’ by a second ‘of things heard.’”

An illustration of the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers. Benjamin may have traveled from Basra, at the mouth of the Tigris River, to the island of Kish in the Persian Gulf. Egyptian National Library, Cairo, Egypt/ Giraudon/Bridgeman Art Library.



According to his *Itinerary*, for the next seven years Benjamin traveled through Arabia and then north to Persia, visiting Isfahan, and on to Samarkand in Central Asia, Tibet, parts of India, and western China. However, Adler has noted that

it is unlikely that [Benjamin] went far into Persia, which at that time was in a chaotic [unsettled] state, and where the Jews were much oppressed. From Basra, at the mouth of the Tigris, he probably visited the island of Kish in the Persian Gulf,

which in the Middle Ages was a great emporium [center] of commerce, and thence [from there] proceeded to Egypt by way of Aden and Assuan.

Adler makes no mention of what would have occupied the missing years in Benjamin's travels, but any estimate of the length of his journey is based on a combination of fact and educated guesswork.

It nonetheless is fairly certain that Benjamin reached Egypt in 1171. His descriptions of Alexandria and the Sinai as well as Cairo, the main city of Egypt, are filled with such richness of detail that they appear to be the result of firsthand observation. He makes mention of the Fatimids, a rival dynasty in Cairo belonging to the Shiite group of Islam, who believe that true successors to the prophet Muhammad ended with the death of his son-in-law, as opposed to the caliphs in Baghdad, members of the Sunni sect of Islam, who believe that the Koran, or holy book of the Moslems, provides guidance to the faithful. When Benjamin arrived, these Fatimids were rulers in name only. Saladin, their former military servant, had assumed real power and was in the process of using Egypt to reunite the Islamic forces and fight the Crusaders.

Benjamin sailed back to Europe in 1173, first reaching Sicily. There he provided a good description of Palermo, after which his *Itinerary* enters into the realm of fantasy, with more hearsay about northern Europe, including Germany, France, and Russia. Scholars believe it is far more likely that Benjamin returned to his native Spain from Sicily, there to write up his observations. Down through the centuries Benjamin's *Itinerary* has gained increasing importance due to its eyewitness accounts. After separating those parts of the book that rely on his own observations from those that were clearly invented or borrowed from other sources, readers are left with a detailed and colorful account of the twelfth-century world, particularly the Middle East at the time of the Crusades.

Benjamin traveled in the region during a time of relative peace—between the Second and Third Crusade (1149–1189)—thereby providing inside information on the daily life of the time. More specifically, his travel book is a valuable source of information about the number and status of Jews in the Middle Ages. “Whatever his intentions may have been,” Adler concludes, “we owe Benjamin no small debt of grati-

tude for handing to posterity [future generations] records that form a unique contribution to our knowledge of geography and ethnology [the study of cultural characteristics of different races] in the Middle Ages.”

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# Bernard of Clairvaux

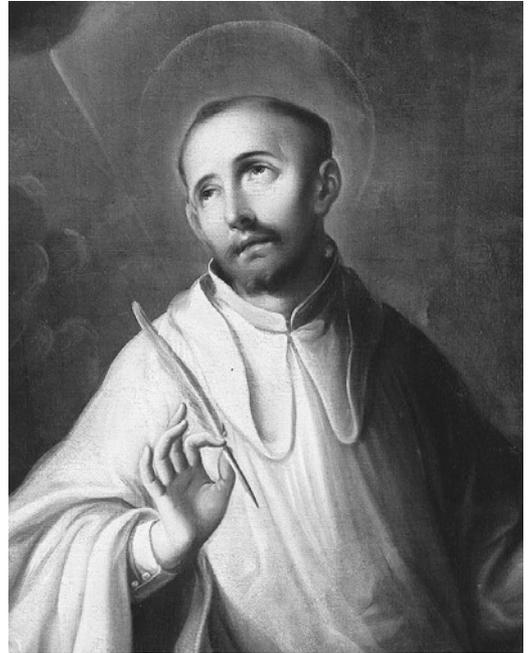
1090

Fontaines-les-Dijon, France

August 20, 1153

Clairvaux, France

**Catholic religious leader and saint**



**B**ernard of Clairvaux was one of the most powerful figures of the twelfth century. A Catholic priest and abbot (director) of a religious institution at Clairvaux, France, Bernard's influence stretched far beyond the borders of France. A powerful speaker and convincing writer, on one occasion he helped choose the pope, or leader of the Catholic Church, and had significant influence on another pope in religious and civil matters. Bernard could charm kings yet be firm toward fellow Catholics about leading a religious life filled with prayer rather than riches. He preached of love but also spoke forcefully in favor of the Second Crusade (1147–49), a Christian military expedition to the Holy Land to help stop the rising power of Islamic forces there. When that Crusade failed badly, he blamed the sins of the Crusaders. Bernard helped spread the popularity of the Cistercian order, a religious group that believed in a simple and disciplined lifestyle, and wrote widely on church matters. He was canonized (made a saint) in 1174.

“The earth has been shaken; it trembles because the Lord of heaven has begun to lose his land.... What are you doing, you servants of the cross? Will you throw to the dogs that which is most holy?”

—Bernard of Clairvaux, quoted in *The Crusades*.

**Bernard of Clairvaux.** *The Art Archive/Pinacoteca Virreinel Mexico City/Dagli Orti.*

## A Noble Birth

Bernard of Clairvaux was born into a noble family in 1090, in the Burgundy region of France. The males were respected knights, or gentlemen trained in the art of war. His father was killed during the First Crusade (1095–99), when Christian soldiers traveled to Palestine and Jerusalem to free the sacred sites of Christianity from control by the Muslims, or followers of the Islamic religion. The life of a soldier, however, was not for Bernard: Before his birth it was said that there was a prophecy, or prediction, that this child would be a great leader of the church. He was sent to Chatillon-sur-Seine, a famous religious school, where he developed his love for literature and writing. There he memorized religious writings and was recognized by his instructors as a promising church scholar.

Following the death of Bernard's mother in 1107, the youth decided to become a monk, a religious man who withdraws from society and chooses to live a life of prayer and hard work. His noble relatives opposed such a move, wanting him to seek higher church offices, but Bernard had made up his mind. Sometime between 1111 and 1113 Bernard and thirty young noblemen of Burgundy, including several of his brothers and an uncle, joined the Cistercian order at the abbey of Cîteaux (or, in Latin, Cistercium), near Dijon, France. This new religious order took its name from its location. Founded in 1098, the Cistercians were a breakaway branch of the Benedictine order of monks. Bernard was attracted to the reforming philosophy of the Cistercians, who wanted to bring religion back to basics.

The monks at Cîteaux were poor and very religious. They did not interact with society, as did other monastic orders. Their buildings and food were all quite simple, and they led a life close to nature, unlike such wealthier orders as the Cluniacs, named after the abbey church of Cluny in France. In his "Apology," dating from 1125 and quoted in the *Internet Medieval Sourcebook*, Bernard takes these rich and lazy orders of monks to task for their luxurious surroundings:

In short, so many and so marvelous are the various shapes surrounding us that it is more pleasant to read the marble than the books, and to spend the whole day marveling over these things rather than meditating on the law of God. Good Lord! If

we aren't embarrassed by the silliness of it all, shouldn't we at least be disgusted by the expense?

Bernard and his friends pumped new blood into the Cistercian order and helped it grow. By 1115 Cîteaux had become large enough that additional houses were needed. Bernard and a group of his followers built another monastery at a place called Clairvaux, far from civilization. He was made abbot (director of the house) and planned to devote his life to prayer and hard work. This routine of manual work, little food, and less sleep eventually took its toll. Although Bernard was sick most of his life, he still managed to work long hours. As a preacher he soon became famous locally; people came to pray at his simple monastery. Word of his good deeds and hard work continued to spread, winning new members for the Cistercians. Soon his dream of a simple life had to change, however, for he was drawn into larger matters of the church.

## A Battle between Popes

Bernard became so well known in the church that other priests and religious officials came to him for advice. He began writing explanations dealing with church law and sent letters to friends and church leaders alike. He also began to record his sermons in works such as *Eighty-Six Sermons on the Song of Songs*. As his fame grew, however, he had less and less time to attend to the daily affairs at Clairvaux.

For example, in 1128 he played an important role in writing the rules of the Knights Templars, an order of soldier-monks that came into being in the Holy Land under the direction of Bernard's friend **Hugh de Payens** (see entry). These rules were approved at the Council of Troyes that same year. In 1130 bigger matters attracted his interest, involving the election of a new pope, or leader of the Roman Catholic Church and essentially of Christianity in Europe. Innocent II was elected by one group of cardinals, or church officers, but another group elected his rival, Anacletus II. Bernard threw his support behind Innocent II, and as a result the French people accepted Innocent II as the true pope. However, Anacletus II and his friends occupied Rome, the seat of church power, and Innocent II was forced to leave the city. Bernard

**Bernard presenting his rules for piety and faith to the faithful. He wrote similar rules for the Knights Templars, and many of his rules were adopted by the Council of Troyes. *The Art Archive/Pinacoteca Nazionale Bologna/Dagli Orti.***



next persuaded Lothair II, the leader of the Holy Roman Empire, a loose collection of mostly German states and kingdoms, to back Innocent II. Lothair ultimately helped restore the pope to his rightful place in Rome.

Bernard also took an interest in church doctrine (beliefs). He fought against what he saw as the misguided policies of the famous medieval philosopher Peter Abelard (1079–

1142). Bernard did not like the way Abelard used reason, or rational and logical thought, to teach about Christianity and the Bible. For Bernard, religion was a matter of faith more than reason. In 1140 Bernard used his influence with Pope Innocent II to have Abelard's theories and writings condemned.

## The Second Crusade

Simultaneously, in the Holy Land and the Middle East, events were taking place that directly affected Bernard's life. Since 1099 parts of this region had been held by Crusader knights from the First Crusade, who had carved out kingdoms, or counties, following the defeat of the Muslims at Jerusalem. Edessa was one of these tiny kingdoms to the north of Jerusalem. Throughout the four decades the Crusaders had been in the Holy Land, the Muslims had slowly joined together to fight their own holy war, or *jihad*, to win back land and holy sites that they considered rightfully theirs. For the Muslims these Christian Crusaders—or Franks, as Muslims called them—were foreign invaders and did not belong in the Middle East. Strong leaders rose up and tried to unite the people of Islam, a diverse group that included Turks, Arabs, and North Africans, among others in the region. One such leader was Zengi, the powerful Turkish ruler of Aleppo and Mosul, who managed to capture the Crusader stronghold of Edessa in 1144.

News that the Islamic fighters were on the move again reached Europe and made leaders think of starting another crusade to help their fellow Christians in the Holy Land. Both Louis VII, the king of France, and Eugenius III, the new pope, called for a Second Crusade. This new pope had been a monk at Bernard's abbey for ten years, and it was Bernard who first recommended him to higher church offices that Bernard himself stubbornly refused to accept during his lifetime. Bernard and this pope were thus very close, and Bernard had great influence over Eugenius III. The pope now asked Bernard, who was one of the most prominent of the church's speakers, to begin preaching for a new Crusade to the Holy Land.

At first there was little enthusiasm among the nobles of Europe for such a Crusade, but as Bernard began to write in



## Ephraim ben Jacob

Bernard of Clairvaux made a personal appearance in the Rhine Valley of Germany to try to stop the renegade monk Randolph from urging the people to kill Jews at the start of the Second Crusade (1147–49). As had happened during earlier Crusades, the spirit of killing nonbelievers began before the Crusaders reached the Holy Land. Bernard preached that Crusaders who killed in the name of God would have all their sins removed. It also became clear there was a second motivation for these Christian warriors: They were free to plunder (grab the possessions of) those they defeated. The Jews of Europe thus became a prime target for Crusaders even before they set out for the Middle East, not because they were particularly wealthy, but because their outsider status in most European countries made them easy targets.

Such anti-Semitic (anti-Jewish) actions were recorded during the Second Crusade by the German Jewish rabbi and scholar Ephraim ben Jacob (1132–1198). His *Sefer Zechirah* (“Book of Memoirs” or “Book of Remembrance”) provides a historical record of these killings and also contains poetic

prayers for the dead. It was Ephraim who documented the words of Bernard of Clairvaux when he was attempting to stop the killings in German cities: “Whoever touches a Jew to lay [a] hand on his life does something as sinful as if he had laid a hand on Jesus himself.”

Unfortunately, condemning and recording such behavior did not stop it. Anti-Semitic actions occurred again during the Third Crusade (1189–92) in England and parts of continental Europe. Ephraim was still alive and recorded some of the worst atrocities (appalling acts of cruelty), including mass killings. He was also able to record an awful incident that happened in 1171 in France, when thirty-one Jewish men and women were burned after being accused of killing a Christian child as part of a religious ritual. Unfortunately, such tall tales of blood sacrifices by Jews were common in Europe. In this document, part of his *Book of Historical Records*, Ephraim wrote, “O daughters of Israel, weep for the thirty-one souls that were burnt for the sanctification of your Name, and let your brothers, the entire house of Israel, bewail [cry out] the mourning.”

favor of a Crusade and to speak at various locations in France and Germany, he soon built up a huge army of supporters. Preaching at a major gathering of nobles and the faithful at Vézelay, in France, on March 31, 1146, he laid out the case for another holy war against the Muslims. He saw this not only as a chance for sinners to win pardons for their previous bad

deeds but also as an opportunity for the two halves of the Christian church—the Roman Catholic Church, based in Rome, and the Eastern Orthodox Church, based in Constantinople in the Byzantine or eastern Roman Empire—to come together again. The powerful members of the audience were swept away by the strong words of this “honey-tongued teacher,” as Bernard has been called. Among others, the king of France and his wife, the powerful **Eleanor of Aquitaine** (see entry), agreed to go on the Crusade. Bernard ultimately persuaded Conrad III, the Holy Roman Emperor, to lead an army as well. He so excited the common people about the Crusade and fighting non-Christians that commoners began slaughtering Jews in Germany. Bernard himself had to travel to Germany to stop these killings (see box in previous page).

The crusading armies finally assembled and set off for Jerusalem and the Holy Land, but a combination of overconfidence, lack of discipline, and infighting among the various local Christian princes and the leaders of the expedition led to a tragic failure. Thousands of Crusaders died of disease even before reaching the Holy Land. Once there, the rest of them were either killed by the enemy or taken prisoner in battles. They did not capture the city of Damascus in Syria, which was one of their goals. This was a serious setback for the West and made the Islamic fighters even bolder. They now saw that the knights of Europe could be defeated if Muslims united against them. For the people of Europe this defeat put an end to the mass popularity of crusading. The Second Crusade was the last fought by common people; future Crusades would involve professional armies drawn from the West.

Bernard was saddened at this defeat for Christianity, but he felt that he was not personally responsible and blamed the Crusaders themselves for this setback. He defended the role he had played in organizing the Crusade and refused to admit it was a mistake. In his “Apologia for the Second Crusade,” quoted in the *Internet Medieval Sourcebook*, he does not apologize at all. Instead, he takes aim at the critics of the Second Crusade:

The perfect and final apology for any man is the testimony of his own conscience. As for myself, I take it to be a small matter to be judged by those ‘who call evil good, and good evil, whose darkness is light, whose light darkness. ...’ I would rather

that men murmur against us than against God. It would be well for me if He deigns to use me for his shield. ... I shall not refuse to be made ignominious [deserving of shame], so long as God's glory is not attacked.

Although Bernard, feeling ill and near death, tried to retire to Clairvaux, one last public service awaited him. In 1153 he helped work out a peace between two warring German regions. Then, exhausted by a lifetime of service, he returned to Clairvaux, where he died on August 20, 1153, not long after his former student Pope Eugenius III had died. Bernard's influence was many-sided. As the historian Hans Eberhard Mayer has noted in *The Crusades*, Saint Bernard of Clairvaux was "at that time the most distinguished figure in the intellectual and political life of the West." An adviser to popes and kings, he was the power behind the major movements of his day, though he always refused to accept a high church office. His preaching and writings were influential in his day and long afterward. He wrote more than three hundred sermons covering all aspects of Christianity and living a good life, more than five hundred letters, and more than a dozen longer works on themes ranging from love and understanding God to explanations of church doctrine. He also played a very important role in the growth of the Cistercian order. During his lifetime almost seventy additional houses grew out of his abbey at Clairvaux. In 1830, more than six hundred years after he was canonized, Bernard was declared a doctor of the church, a respected explainer of church doctrine. He remains one of the most studied figures in church history.

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# Anna Comnena

December 1, 1083  
Constantinople

c. 1148

**Byzantine princess, historian, and scholar**



**A**nna Comnena was one of the most famous female scholars of the Middle Ages. The daughter of the emperor of the Byzantine Empire (the successor to the Roman Empire) based in Constantinople, she lived in the eleventh and twelfth centuries and was known for her scholarship in medicine, astronomy, mathematics, and music. However, she is best remembered for her fifteen-volume biography of her father, the emperor **Alexius I** (see entry), and for a history of the Byzantine Empire during his reign that she wrote in her old age. This work provides much information about the First Crusade (1095–99), which came about as a result of her father’s request for help from the pope, the Catholic leader in Rome, in fighting invading Islamic forces. In this combination of history and biography she paints interesting and detailed portraits of many of the Christian leaders of the First Crusade. She is considered the world’s first female historian.

## A Princess of Byzantium

Anna Comnena was the oldest child of the emperor Alexius I and his wife, Irene Ducas, who was herself related to

“I swear by the perils the emperor endured for the well-being of the Roman people, by his sorrows and the travails he suffered on behalf of the Christians, that I am not favoring him when I say or write such things....I regard him as dear, but the truth is dearer still.”

—*Anna Comnena, The Alexiad of Anna Comnena, book 14, chapter 3.*

**Anna Comnena.** *Courtesy of the Library of Congress.*

an earlier line of Byzantine emperors. Thus there was royalty on both sides of Comnena's bloodline, and her early years were spent in training as a future empress. While she was still a young girl she was engaged to Constantine Ducas, a cousin on her mother's side and son of the emperor Michael VII, who ruled from 1067 to 1078, an acceptable engagement for the time period. This strengthened her rights to the crown, but when a baby brother named John came along in 1087 suddenly all rights to the throne went to him. Comnena never got over this loss and refused to forgive her brother. Not long after this Constantine Ducas died, as did Comnena's hopes for a royal career.

Comnena focused much of her attention on scholarship, learning poetry, Greek philosophy, and medicine. It seems that she was familiar with the work of the famous Roman physician Galen (c. 130–200 C.E.), and she may even have taught and practiced medicine at Constantinople's medical school. While she was still young, two further events shaped her life. In 1096, when she was only thirteen, the Crusader armies arrived to fight the Muslims (believers in the religion of Islam). These groups of European Christian soldiers, referred to as the Latins or the Franks by the Byzantines, seemed like barbarians to the inhabitants of the sophisticated city of Constantinople. Worse, they did not come to help the empire regain territory it had lost to such enemies as the Seljuk Turks, a Turkic tribe that practiced the Islamic religion, who were invading the eastern borders of the Byzantine Empire. Instead, these Crusaders came to win their own kingdoms and to free the Holy Land, consisting of Palestine and Jerusalem, from Muslim occupation. The men of the Crusader forces made a very negative impression on Comnena. The second major event of these years was her marriage in 1097 to Nicephorus Bryennius, a scholar and historian, who came from a powerful family and thus had a possible claim to the throne through his grandfather. Comnena was only fourteen at the time of her marriage.

## Plots and Exile

Comnena came of age during a time when strong-willed women in the Byzantine Empire were not afraid to get

involved in politics. Alexius I was himself the product of such a strong woman: his mother, Anna Desassena. Comnena's mother, Irene, was another strong personality and influenced her husband in making decisions about the empire. Comnena behaved much like these women. If she could not become empress, then she wanted her husband to take power upon the death of her father. She and her mother tried to persuade Alexius I to bypass his own son, John, and make Nicephorus Bryennius next in line to the throne. They continued their efforts even as the emperor lay dying in his bed, but they were unable to make him change his mind.

With the death of Alexius I in 1118, Comnena's brother, John, quickly took power and became Emperor John II. Comnena, however, would not give up. She plotted with others to kill her brother, but her husband would not take part, and the plot failed. She was said to complain later that nature had made a mistake with her husband's gender, for he should have been the woman, so timid was he. John discovered the plot against him and made his sister give up her property and fortune. He exiled her (sent her away) from the court in Constantinople to a place in western Asia Minor where she could not make trouble for him. For nineteen years she remained in exile. When her husband died in 1137, she was allowed to return to Constantinople. Comnena entered a convent (a religious institution for women) that had been founded by her mother.

### ***The Alexiad***

It was then that Anna Comnena began the work for which she is best known, *The Alexiad*, a fifteen-volume prose poem (a poem that reads like a story) about the reign of her father. This work had actually been started by her husband. At the time of his death, Nicephorus Bryennius had completed four books covering the nine years just before Alexius I took power, a time when Nicephorus's own grandfather was fighting for the crown against two earlier emperors. As John C. Rouman has noted in the *Hellenic Communication Service*, Nicephorus's "aim in writing was to glorify the reign of Alexius and his Comnenian line." When Comnena took over the project, her goals were no different. Rouman continues: "As



**A modern view of Constantinople. In Anna Comnena's *The Alexiad* she describes how knights and common people came through Constantinople to fight the forces of Islam during the First Crusade.**

© Underwood & Underwood/Corbis.

one would expect of an educated, dutiful, and devoted daughter, Comnena glorifies the greatness of Alexius." Rouman goes on to compare her history to the work of the Greek historian Thucydides (c. 460–400 B.C.E.), author of the *History of the Peloponnesian War*.

In the volumes of her book Comnena not only presents an outline of Byzantine history from 1081, when her father became emperor, to his death in 1118 but also looks at military technology, weapons, and tactics. In addition, she supplies information on medical theory, writing about her husband's and her father's final illnesses. A large part of the book also deals with Christian or Latin nobles as well as the First Crusade, including descriptions of knights (trained soldiers) and common people who came through Constantinople in the summer and winter of 1096 and 1097 to fight the forces of Islam.

Historians have pointed out that Comnena's account of the First Crusade must be read with caution. First of all, she was only thirteen when these events happened and could

hardly have understood all that was going on around her or known of private conversations between her father and the Crusaders. As John France noted in *Reading Medieval Studies Online*, “Anna Comnena cannot be regarded as an eyewitness of the First Crusade. She was writing some forty years after the Crusade had passed through Constantinople, so childhood recollections can only have added an occasional vividness to her use of other sources.” France also warned that “*The Alexiad* is a life of her father and is very favorable to him.” Despite this slant, the work is still valuable as a piece of history. Comnena had much personal knowledge about events during these years. She also made use of letters and reports from her father’s generals and counselors and appears to have had access to the royal archives, or library, where such official documents were kept.

Her view of the Crusades is definitely that of a Byzantine. As such, she does not much care for the Latin soldiers, whom she calls “barbarians.” The word in the original Greek simply means someone who does not speak the Greek language. However, even in Comnena’s time this word took on the further meaning of an uncivilized person. In fact, these Crusaders were backward by Byzantine standards. Few of them knew how to read or write, and they took little pleasure in arts other than warfare. She presents lively portraits of such Crusade leaders as **Peter the Hermit** (see entry), the French priest who led twenty thousand common people to their deaths at the hands of the Turks; French nobles such as **Godfrey of Bouillon** (see entry), Hugh the Great, and Raymond of Toulouse; and an especially interesting look at Bohemund, son of Robert Guiscard and leader of the Norman forces, who was a longtime enemy of her father’s. This last Crusader seemed both to fascinate and anger her. While he was a handsome man, according to Comnena he was also “by nature a liar” and not to be trusted. She also describes him as being greedy and disloyal. In fact, Bohemund was all of these things. He joined the Crusade to enrich himself and the Normans, who had already created a kingdom in southern Italy.

In *The Alexiad* Comnena also writes about battles of the First Crusade, covering the Byzantine and Christian victory at Nicaea, an ancient city close to Constantinople that the Seljuk Turks had once occupied. She gives fewer details of the later siege of Antioch, another former Byzantine possession in



## Competing Histories

In *The Alexiad*, Anna Comnena provides a firsthand account of the First Crusade from the Byzantine point of view. Hers is one of several eyewitness accounts that later historians have used to assemble a true picture of events at the end of the eleventh century. Another is *Historia rerum in partibus transmarinis gestarum* (*History of Deeds Done beyond the Sea*), by William of Tyre (1130–c. 1184). Like Comnena’s account, William’s version of events also comes from someone outside Europe, for he was born and grew up in the Kingdom of Jerusalem, the territory in Palestine that the Crusaders captured after the First Crusade. Unlike Anna Comnena, however, he came from a very humble, simple family. It is uncertain if he was of French or English origin. He showed a talent for scholarship that led him to become a priest, serving as an assistant to the archbishop, or chief religious leader, of Tyre, an ancient city located in present-day Lebanon. He was sent to Europe to complete his education and training and by 1163 was back in

Tyre, where he became archdeacon in 1175.

William knew many languages, including French, Latin, Greek, Hebrew, Persian, and Arabic. He soon became the official historian of the Kingdom of Jerusalem. He wrote histories of church councils as well as a history of the Middle East from the time of the prophet Muhammad, but he is best known for his work on the Crusades and the Kingdom of Jerusalem up to 1184. Like Comnena, William was writing long after the fact. Unlike her, however, he was able to use documents in many languages to present a more objective history of the events of the First Crusade. His *History of Deeds Done beyond the Sea*, taking up twenty-three books, became the standard text for centuries. Translated into English by William Caxton, the man who introduced the printing press to England, the book was published in 1481 as *Godeffroy of Boloynes; or, The Siege and Conquest of Jerusalem*. It is still used today and remains an invaluable resource for scholars and students of the Crusades.

Syria. In his article in *Reading Medieval Studies Online*, France notes that the value of *The Alexiad* “as a source for the First Crusade diminishes as the army gets farther and farther from Constantinople.” More errors of fact, especially in the chronology, or timeline, occur in those sections that deal with the Crusaders moving through the Holy Land to lay siege to (attack) Jerusalem and recapture it from the Muslims.

Comnena completed her history in 1148. Little of her life is known after that point. A funeral oration was held in 1156, but this does not appear to have taken place very close

to the time of her actual death. Historians think she died around 1148 or, at least, before 1156. *The Alexiad* remains for us a fascinating document from the medieval Byzantine world. As many scholars have pointed out, it is clearly biased—that is, it is not objective. Nevertheless, it provides an inside look at life in the Byzantine Empire during the time of the First Crusade and lets modern readers know how the Byzantines felt about the European Christians of the same period. For James Howard-Johnson, writing in the *English Historical Review*, her biography is “arguably the finest work of history written in the course of Byzantium’s ... existence.” The fact that the book is less than objective does not take away from its importance: “It ... provides a matchless record of an era of dramatic change in Byzantium and the surrounding world. It is packed with solid data (normally well ordered) and expressed in an elegant but not over-ornate classical style.” Also important, according to Howard-Johnson, is the fact that *The Alexiad* “is distinguished by being the first history to come from a woman’s pen.”

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# Eleanor of Aquitaine

1122  
Bordeaux or Belin, France

1204  
Anjou, France

Queen of France and England



**E**leanor of Aquitaine was one of the most powerful and interesting people of the Middle Ages. That she accomplished so much at a time when women usually had little standing (power) in society is amazing. The wife of two kings, she gave birth to three more. Called the “grandmother of Europe” for all the royal lines she started or marriages she arranged, Eleanor was more than simply the power behind the throne. A duchess, or ruler, of the wealthy region of Aquitaine in southern France, Eleanor controlled a huge amount of land. She created a royal court at Poitiers, France, that sponsored such arts as music and poetry.

As queen she counseled her husbands and at times went to war against them. She was not the sort of woman to let fate control her. Instead, she gladly bid farewell to her ill-matched first husband, the king of France, and went head to head with her second husband, the fiery king of England. She helped raise armies for the Second Crusade (1147–49) and went along herself, dressed for battle. Eleanor lived a long and active life, traveling throughout Europe when it was more common for noblewomen to be hidden away in their

“Powerful, beautiful, indefatigable [unstoppable], sensuous [appealing to the senses], literary, an eagle soaring above mere mortals, mother of ten royal children she might indeed be. Some regarded her as the Demon mother who had once, in a bath, assumed the shape of a dragon.”

—James Reston Jr., *Warriors of God: Richard the Lionheart and Saladin in the Third Crusade*.

**Eleanor of Aquitaine.**

© Bettmann/Corbis.

castles. Though she lived in the twelfth century, she would also have fit in well in the twenty-first century.

## **An Aquitaine Heiress**

Eleanor was born in 1122 in either Bordeaux or Belin, in southern France. She was the granddaughter of William IX of Aquitaine (1070–1127), a Crusader in the Holy Land during the First Crusade (1095–99), a religious war to free Jerusalem and the holy sites associated with Jesus from Islamic occupation. William brought back romantic tales of fighting and love in the Holy Land, which he set to verse and music. Among the first troubadours, or medieval noble poets of Europe, he ruled one of the most powerful and richest regions of France. During his lifetime, however, William IX paid more attention to the ladies and poetry than he did to keeping his duchy (region) intact. He went through two wives and finally took up with a married woman, whose daughter he married off to his own son, also named William. Upon the death of his father, William X (Eleanor's father) took over Aquitaine. His court was a very sophisticated (learned and cultured) one, where poets were sponsored, or encouraged to compose verse, and the idea of courtly, or polite, love for the ideal woman took hold. Eleanor was five when her father became duke of Aquitaine; she was his oldest child, and after the death of a brother, stood to inherit the duchy.

Eleanor was educated not only in poetry but also in the world of politics, for she would soon become the duchess. She went everywhere with her father, learning at his side. This childhood came to a sudden end in 1137 when William X died of food poisoning while he was making a pilgrimage (visit) to a European religious site. But William had already made plans for Eleanor that would take effect after his death. He knew the powerless status of a woman, and so he had his daughter put in the care of the French king Louis VI, or Louis the Fat. This king, who did not want to see the powerful lands of Aquitaine lost to France, immediately married Eleanor to his son and successor, Louis VII. This future king of France, however, had not been trained for royal duty. Before his older brother, Philip, was killed, Louis VII was planning to adopt a religious life. The strong-willed Eleanor and the stuffy, less active Louis were not a

great match. The important thing at the time, however, was that Eleanor brought with her to the marriage the large region of Aquitaine.

## Queen of France

In 1137 the couple had barely returned from their honeymoon when Louis the Fat died. Eleanor, who was only fifteen at the time, had in the space of one year become an orphan, the duchess of Aquitaine, a married woman, and the queen of France. Close to him in age yet more worldly than Louis, Eleanor became a powerful queen, advising her husband on political and religious matters. She ran into trouble with the church authorities when she pushed through her younger sister's marriage to an already married man. Eleanor talked Louis into backing her in this effort, and soon she had to deal with the powerful religious writer and preacher **Bernard of Clairvaux** (see entry), who opposed her. It was not until 1145 that Eleanor finally made peace with the church. That year she gave birth to her first child, a daughter she named Marie. Louis, however, had wanted a son to inherit the crown.

About this time, the Middle East forces of Islam were on the march against the Crusader states that had been set up after the First Crusade (1095–99). The powerful Turkish Muslim leader Zengi captured the Crusader city of Edessa in 1144. It was only a matter of time before the Muslims marched on Jerusalem itself. The current pope, Eugenius III, and Bernard of Clairvaux both preached a new Crusade, and Eleanor and Louis, having just patched things up with the church, answered the call. When the leaders of France gathered in the church at Vézelay in 1146 to listen to Bernard call for a new holy war, she knelt with the other nobles and knights and promised that they would fight the Muslims. For Eleanor this was not a matter of staying at home and waiting for her king to return. Instead, she gathered an army of three hundred noblewomen to join the men. Dressed in armor and riding horses, these women planned to take care of the wounded.

The Second Crusade got off to a miserable start. Despite his large army of twenty thousand soldiers, the German king Conrad III was quickly defeated by the Turks and lost most of his men. The French did not do much better, finally



## The Missing King

Unlike the First Crusade, a king, a queen, and an emperor actually took part in the Second Crusade. There was one person, however, who failed to show up for the Second Crusade. The legendary King Prester John supposedly tried to come to the aid of the Christians in the Holy Land but was unable to ford, or cross, the Tigris River with his army. Legend has it that he then took his army north because he had heard that the river froze in winter, and he and his troops could thus reach the other side by marching across the ice. He waited for several years, but no ice appeared. The weather was too warm, and his men began to die of fever in this strange climate. Finally, he had to return home to his kingdom, located somewhere in those regions of Asia not yet explored by western-

ers. Such, at any rate, was the tale told by Otto, bishop of Friesing, in 1145. Otto, in turn, had heard this story from others. It was the beginning of the tale of Prester John, who soon took on mythical importance in the West.

John was supposedly a Christian priest who ruled an enormously wealthy empire in Asia or perhaps Africa. His name appears in many forms: Priest John, Priester John, Presbyter John, and other similar-sounding titles. According to the stories that formed around him, he was an offspring of one of the Three Magi, or holy men, who brought gifts to Jesus when he was born. His distant kingdom had so many riches that, according to one version of the tale, he carried a solid-gold scepter (staff). According to another version, this same

reaching the Crusader state of Antioch, where Eleanor's uncle, Raymond, ruled. This uncle, only a few years older than Eleanor, was a handsome, vital man, unlike Eleanor's husband. She openly complained about the king of France, protesting that although she thought she was marrying a man, what she got was a monk. Raymond was no monk. Soon rumors spread that the uncle and niece were romantically involved. When Raymond asked the French king to help him strike at the Muslims in their center of Aleppo, in Syria, and then retake Edessa, Louis refused, instead deciding to head straight for Jerusalem.

When Eleanor learned of this refusal, she sided with her uncle against her husband and even began talking of leaving the king. She told Louis that she was going to stay in Antioch, but in the end the king kidnapped her and had her

staff was carved from a large emerald. His was supposed to be the perfect Christian kingdom, and his people or subjects dearly loved Prester John, the perfect king. Unfortunately, he was unable to come to the aid of the Christians in the Second Crusade through no fault of his own. Thus the Crusaders had to go it alone. In the popular imagination the absence of this great Christian king explained the defeat of the Crusader army. Be that as it may, it was a convenient excuse at the time; many scholars have suggested that Prester John was invented to explain the terrible defeat of the Christian armies at the hands of the Muslims during the Second Crusade.

The legend of Prester John took on a life of its own, remaining in the minds of Europeans for several centuries. Letters ad-

dressed to the pope, supposedly from Prester John, even arrived in Rome, and the pope is said to have written back. Others claim that Prester John was actually a fictitious, or imaginary, combination of several real kings. Later, when the Mongols began moving out of Asia and attacking Islamic territories in the Middle East, Europeans thought these armies might be Prester John's Christians come to settle a score with the Muslims. By the fourteenth century Prester John's mythical kingdom had moved to Africa. Some maps even located it in present-day Ethiopia. Ironically, these tall tales of Prester John led some Europeans, like the explorer Marco Polo (c. 1254–1324), to develop an interest in Asia and attempt to make contact with the people living there.

taken to Jerusalem. This was the beginning of the end of their marriage. Meanwhile, Crusader armies struck at Damascus, in Syria, where they were defeated. In 1149 Louis stayed in Jerusalem long enough to fight a bit and celebrate Easter, after which he and Eleanor sailed home to France on separate ships. Once again the couple tried to have a son, but when a second girl was born, the marriage was all but over. There was no such thing as divorce in the Middle Ages. Instead, Eleanor claimed that her bloodline and Louis's were too close, and in 1152 she had the marriage annulled, or officially cancelled, by the church. Two months later she remarried.

## Queen of England

This time Eleanor married a much younger man known for his fiery and manly character. Henry Plantagenet, duke of

Anjou, was eleven years younger than Eleanor and stood in line to inherit the English throne. To him, Eleanor, with her vast lands in Aquitaine, was a real prize despite their age difference. When Stephen, the current king of England, died in 1154, Henry became Henry II, king of England, and Eleanor was his queen. Thanks to his wife's land, Henry owned more of France than the king of France himself. Together Henry and Eleanor controlled the most powerful kingdom in the Christian West.

At first Eleanor and Henry were inseparable. She traveled with him throughout his lands, living much of the time in less-than-elegant conditions. In thirteen years she gave birth to eight children, five of them boys. But her husband soon showed that he could not be faithful, and his string of lovers and mistresses ruined their marriage. Eleanor left England in 1168 to return to her native Aquitaine, taking her favorite son, **Richard I, the Lionheart** (see entry), with her. There she turned away from politics for a time, enjoying the culture offered at her court. It is said that she was the originator, or founder, of what became known as "courts of love," where noblewomen would gather to judge the love poems recited by knights and other male nobles of the duchy.

Court life, however, was not enough to keep Eleanor's interest. She managed to persuade her absent husband to announce that his eldest son, who was also called Henry, would be the next king. He was crowned Henry III in 1170, though the father still held all the power. After three years, however, this son, his brother Richard I, and a third son named Geoffrey grew restless. Eleanor took their side against their father, and with the help of the French king they rose up against Henry II. The king of England quickly crushed this revolt and imprisoned his rebellious wife in various castles for the next sixteen years. These were hard times for Eleanor, who was used to being out in the world, traveling across Europe and even to the Holy Land. She survived this imprisonment, however, and was let go following the death of her husband in 1189. As Henry III had also died by this time, the crown went to Richard I, who freed his mother from her confinement. It was she, in fact, who arranged the celebrations for his coronation (crowning) in London.

During Richard's reign, Eleanor once again became a close adviser to a king. On his way home after fighting in the

Third Crusade (1189–92) he was thrown in prison by his political rival, the Holy Roman Emperor. Eleanor managed to keep the kingdom together and fight off attempts by her youngest son, John, to steal the crown. She also arranged for the enormous ransom (payment for release of a prisoner) to be paid to the Holy Roman Emperor to free her son and personally delivered the money to Germany. When Richard I died suddenly in 1199, she stood behind her son John in the fight for the crown. He became king, although not a very good or kind one, yet Eleanor remained loyal to him. In her seventies she continued traveling around Europe arranging royal marriages. In her eighties she finally decided that it was time to slow down. She went to live at an abbey (religious institution for women) at Fontevrault, in the French region of Anjou, where she died in the spring of 1204. She was eighty-two, a very old age for a person living during the Middle Ages.

Eleanor of Aquitaine was a woman far ahead of her time. She was not content simply to be the power behind her man. Instead, she took control herself, helping to recruit forces for the Second Crusade and to install her sons as kings of England. Much of the blame for the failure of the Second Crusade was put on her because of the huge supply train she needed for her three hundred female Crusaders. In reality, it was the infighting among the leaders of this Crusade, as well as poor planning, that were responsible for the failure. Eleanor went on to live a life full of adventure and personal sadness, outliving most of her children. A patron, or sponsor, of the arts as well as a powerful and beautiful woman, Eleanor was an early example of what women could accomplish in the world.

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# Francis of Assisi

1182

Assisi, Italy

October 3, 1226

Portiuncula, Italy

Founder of the Franciscan Order



An Italian of the Middle Ages, Francis of Assisi founded the Franciscans, an important religious order (group) that bears his name. Untrained and not even a priest when he set out on his itinerant (wandering) preaching in the early thirteenth century, Francis wanted to reform the church and bring it more in line with the needs of the common people. Born to a rich family, he gave up his personal wealth and formed a small group of followers who lived a simple lifestyle and preached about nature and the birds and animals of the forest as if they communicated with them. In 1210 Francis and his followers gained the approval and recognition of the pope, **Innocent III** (see entry).

Francis wanted to take his message of love and peace to the Islamic world, preaching to the Moors, or North African Muslims living in Spain. He also attempted to make a truce between battling Christians and Muslims during the Fifth Crusade (1218–21), crossing enemy lines to speak with the leader of the Egyptian forces, **Sultan al-Malik al-Kamil** (see entry). Although he did not convert to Christianity, the sultan was impressed with Francis's honesty and devotion and allowed him to return unharmed to the Crusader camp. Francis was loved by many, but

“Praised be You my Lord with all Your creatures, especially Sir Brother Sun, Who is the day through whom You give us light. And he is beautiful and radiant with great splendor, Of You Most High, he bears the likeness.”

—Francis of Assisi, *“Canticle of Brother Sun and Sister Moon of St. Francis of Assisi.”* Catholic Online. [http://www.catholic.org/clife/prayers/prayers.php?action\\_id=41&name=Saint%20Prayers](http://www.catholic.org/clife/prayers/prayers.php?action_id=41&name=Saint%20Prayers).

**Francis of Assisi.** *The Art Archive/Bardi Chapel Santa Croce Florence/Dagli Orti (A).*



## Five Pillars of Islam

Francis of Assisi tried to convert Sultan al-Kamil to Christianity, but the sultan was also interested in converting the Christian to his religion of Islam. In fact, during the Crusades, one way for prisoners to escape death was to convert to the religion of their captor. The basic tenets, or principles, of Islam—called the Five Pillars of Islam—are organized in five groups.

First, a Muslim must make a *shahadah*, a statement of belief in Allah, the Muslim God, and in Muhammad, as the prophet of Allah. Second are the *salah*, the prayers that a faithful Muslim recites five times a day. Since there are no priests in the Islamic religion, these prayers form a direct link between the believer and Allah. Prayers are said at dawn, midday, late afternoon, sunset, and nightfall, thus setting the rhythm for the entire day. Recited in Arabic, these prayers are chosen from the Muslim holy book, the Qur'an, known in English as the Koran. A typical prayer goes:

God is Great. God is Great. God is Great. God is Great. I testify that there is none worthy of worship except God. I testify that there is none worthy of

worship except God. I testify that Muhammad is the messenger of God. I testify that Muhammad is the messenger of God. Come to prayer! Come to prayer! Come to success! Come to success! God is Great! God is Great! There is none worthy of worship except God.

The third concept is the *zakah*, which means “purification” or “growth.” This is a donation of a part of one’s income to charity in order to teach that wealth is not the most important thing in life. The fourth tenet is *sawm*, or fasting, which involves eating nothing between sunset and sunrise during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan. The fifth and final pillar is the *hajj*, a pilgrimage, or spiritual journey, to the Muslim holy city of Mecca for those who are physically able to do so. More than two million Muslims make this pilgrimage each year.

Ironically, many of these same beliefs—praying, fasting, and giving away part of one’s wealth—were exactly what Saint Francis was preaching. The Christians and Muslims who fought each other during the Crusades had (and still have) much in common in terms of the basic beliefs of their separate religions.

he also was feared by those who were suspicious of his emphasis on simplicity. In 1126, only two years after his death, Francis of Assisi was canonized, or made a saint of the Catholic Church.

### From Riches to Rags

Francis of Assisi’s life turned the romantic “rags to riches” tale on its head. Born Giovanni Bernardone, Francis

gave up his family fortune to serve what he saw as the will of God. Still, he achieved more than riches in his lifetime; his fame spread far and wide, and he remains one of the best-known and best-loved saints of the Catholic Church, inspiring hundreds of books and several motion pictures. His father, Pietro Bernardone, was among the richest men in the city of Assisi, located in central Italy, where Giovanni was born in 1182. The father, a cloth merchant, was traveling on business in France when his first son was born, and he did not much care for the name his wife had chosen for their son, after the biblical John the Baptist. Pietro wanted a practical child who would follow him into business, not someone who might go into the church. He gave his son the nickname “Francesco” (“Francis” in English), a reminder of Pietro’s trip to France at the time of the boy’s birth.

Being the first son, Francis was spoiled by his parents. He was more interested in having a good time than in studying. His father taught him French, which was the international language of business at the time, and it is thought that Francis also traveled with his father on business trips to other countries. In addition, the young boy learned Latin, which was the language of the universities and the church. Francis, however, was never a good writer; as an adult he would dictate letters for others to write down and then sign them with a cross. A happy youth, he had many friends and gathered around him a similarly fun-loving crowd—mostly nobles and children of the wealthy—that enjoyed a good party and singing. By day he worked in his father’s cloth store and proved to be a good salesman. Francis also had dreams of becoming a knight, or professional soldier, riding a fine horse and being elevated to the ranks of the nobility, for though his family was wealthy, it was not aristocratic. Perhaps in war he could prove himself. He dreamed of becoming “Sir Francis.”

He had his chance for military glory in 1202, when Assisi and its rival city, Perugia, went to war. That year Francis fought at the Battle of Ponte San Giovanni and was taken prisoner. He was lucky to survive, since most of the force from Assisi had been wiped out in the battle. He was thrown in prison, not with the common foot soldiers but rather with nobles who had been captured. Still, his imprisonment was not an easy one, for he was chained to a dungeon wall for a year. In 1203

his freedom was finally bought, and he returned to his home in Assisi, where he fell ill for many weeks. When he finally recovered, he had not lost his desire to become a knight.

Next, he took up his sword in the service of Pope Innocent III, who was battling the princes of Germany over the successor to the throne of the German kingdom, or the Holy Roman Empire, as this loose association of German states was called. The leader of that empire thought of himself as the leader of Europe, but the pope also saw himself in that role. This rivalry always caused conflict, and now Francis was going to take part in it too.

### **A Dream Changes Francis's Life**

Francis had been away from Assisi for only one day when he had a dream that changed the direction of his life. While staying at an inn in the town of Spoleto, he dreamed that God told him that the military life was not the way for him to live the good life. Instead of serving a military commander, he should serve the Lord. Francis returned to Assisi in a state of confusion. Unsure what to do, he began visiting the churches of the city and praying. In 1206 he again heard the voice of God telling him to repair a small church in Assisi, which he did, seeing it as his new mission in life. He took money from his father's business to repair the church. His father was angered and took his son before the bishop, or regional church official, demanding that Francis return the money, which he did. Then he also took off all the clothes his father had given him, leaving on only a simple shirt. Francis said he now had only one father—namely, God.

Francis took a vow, or promise, of poverty and began begging for food and shelter. This was at first amusing to the citizens of Assisi and embarrassing for his wealthy father, but Francis was convinced that this was what God had planned for him. While he continued to repair old churches, the meaning of the message he had received suddenly became clear to him during Mass (Catholic church service) one day. God did not mean for him to rebuild churches with stone and mortar but to reform the institution of the church by preaching the truth of Jesus and caring for the sick. Francis followed the exact words of the Bible and went out to spread the word of

God and Jesus Christ in a simple, direct manner. He did not threaten the common people with damnation or a miserable after life in hell, nor did he criticize the wealth of powerful Catholic officials. His was a simple message announcing the joy one could find in Christianity if only one had faith. Soon followers came to Francis, and he formed a small group of the faithful, who called themselves Franciscans.

Francis had never been to a university or studied theology (religious faith and practice). He simply found his calling by preaching to the common people. However, he also wanted official recognition for his group. Tradition has it that in 1210 Francis took matters into his own hands and traveled to Rome to request an audience, or formal visit, with the pope. When Francis came before Innocent III he was almost thrown out because he looked like a tramp. The pope listened to him and then sent him away. That night the pope dreamed of a little man in rags, like Francis, who saved his church from collapsing. The next day Innocent III sent for Francis and gave him official permission to preach. Francis's example encouraged others not only to join his Franciscan order but to begin new ones as well. From Assisi came another child of the wealthy who decided to give up riches in exchange for a life devoted to the church. This religious follower was a young woman named Clare, whom Francis met and inspired. She ultimately went on to form the women's order of the Poor Clares.

## **Taking the Message to the "Heathens"**

As membership in his new order spread throughout Italy—including the towns of Perugia, Pisa, and Florence—Francis decided that he wanted to deliver his message to the larger world, to preach the Bible to the Muslims. In 1212 he set sail for the Holy Land, but when his ship encountered bad weather, he had to return to Italy. In 1214 he set off for Spain to preach to the Muslim Moors who lived there. Again he was unsuccessful, for illness made him cut short his journey and return to Italy. Finally, during the Fifth Crusade, he found an opportunity to spread his message of peace and harmony.

In 1219 the Crusader forces were trying to attack Muslim strongholds in Egypt. It was thought that if they could

first destroy the power of Islam in that region, they could move on to the Holy Land in Palestine and liberate Jerusalem, considered a holy city in Christianity. The two armies were fighting over control of the city of Damietta, which was located at the mouth of the Nile River and blocked access to the upriver journey to Cairo, the Crusaders' ultimate target. However, the city of Damietta held off the Crusaders, who were being led by the pope's aide, Pelagius. Al-Kamil, the Egyptian sultan, or leader, and his forces were battling the Crusaders from outside the city walls at their own camp.

For more than a year the two sides fought, with men dying on both sides. In August 1219 Francis arrived in the Crusader camp. As James M. Powell has noted in his *Anatomy of a Crusade, 1213–1221*, Francis “came not to cheer on the discouraged Christian army or to fight the heathen [people who do not acknowledge God and the Bible], but on a mission of peace.” Francis had a vision announcing the defeat of the Crusaders at an upcoming battle. In his sermon to the troops he predicted this defeat. On August 29 Francis's vision came true, for the Crusaders were drawn into a trap and suffered heavy losses. Sultan al-Kamil proposed a truce following this defeat, and it was then that Francis saw his opportunity to speak with the Muslims.

Francis was mistaken for a messenger sent from the Crusaders to respond to the proposed truce. He was taken to the sultan and attempted to preach the truth of Christianity to him. The sultan brought into his tent his own religious advisers, who urged him to kill Francis. Al-Kamil, impressed by Francis's honesty and bravery, instead showered him with gifts and sent him safely back to the Crusader camp. Francis had attempted to achieve the final goal of the Crusades—freeing the Holy Land from Muslim control—by converting the Muslims rather than by defeating them in battle. As Powell has noted, this was the beginning “of the long-term commitment of the Franciscan order to missions among the Moslems, and especially to the custody of the Holy Places.”

## **Francis Returns to Italy**

Francis's last years were spent in Italy, where his order by that time included thousands of new followers. Ear-



lier, his personality had held the members together, but they now needed rules to live by. Francis insisted that the primary rule of the order be to live in poverty. He did not want to eliminate poverty but instead to make it holy. The houses of the order had to be plain, and friars, as the members were called, were to wear only a robe tied with a cord. If it was really cold, then shoes were permitted. In 1223 he presented the new rule of the order to Honorius III, the pope in Rome;

**Francis presenting his rules for the Franciscan Order to Pope Honorius III, emphasizing the simplicity and piety of the order.**

© Corbis.

in fact, some of the emphasis on simplicity was left out of the document the pope approved. The new members of the Franciscan order wanted to adopt a more intellectual approach to their work. In the future the Franciscans would become less known as happy friars wandering the countryside and preaching God's love than as an order associated with learning, whose members became teachers at the great universities of the Middle Ages.

Francis, however, was determined to continue living the simple life and returned to Assisi, where he spent more and more time alone and in prayer. While praying at a mountain chapel north of the city, it is said that he showed signs of the stigmata, the wounds that Christ suffered on the cross. His hands, feet, and side began to bleed in the exact places where nails and a soldier's spear had pierced Christ's body during the Crucifixion, or death on the cross. Francis was marked by these wounds for the rest of his life. Some modern historians say that these wounds may have been signs of leprosy, a disfiguring skin disease, for Francis had worked closely with lepers and other people with diseases throughout his life.

Francis's health was failing. Although he was only in his forties, his life of poverty and serving others had taken its toll. He died in 1226 and was buried in Assisi. Following his death the legend of Francis continued to grow, and he was made a saint in 1228. Assisi still attracts large numbers of tourists who want to see the home of this famous saint, known for his fondness for life and nature and for his devotion to a simple life of peace and love. Francis was the first Christian to carry this message to the Holy Land as a possible alternative to the violence of the Crusades.

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# Frederick II

December 26, 1194  
Jesi, Italy

December 23, 1250  
Apulia, Italy

Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire



Given the nickname “Wonder of the World,” Frederick II was one of the most powerful emperors who ever ruled what was known as the Holy Roman Empire (962–1806 C.E.), the central kingdom of Europe that included present-day Germany and parts of Italy. Richard Cavendish, writing in *History Today*, called him the “most gifted, vivid and extraordinary of the medieval Holy Roman Emperors.” The life of Frederick II can be taken as symbolic of the fight between church and state throughout the Middle Ages; the emperor battled the power of the pope, the Catholic religious leader in Europe, from the beginning of his reign in 1215 until his death in 1250.

Though his attempts at uniting Italy proved unsuccessful, Frederick II did increase the power of the secular (nonreligious) state over that of the church. Frederick II, raised in Sicily, with its large Muslim (believers of the Islamic religion) influence, also formed a bridge between the worlds of Christianity and Islam. He respected Muslim and Arabic learning, and as leader of the Sixth Crusade (1228–29) he recovered Jerusalem and parts of the Holy Land without shooting an arrow. The only bloodless Crusade in the two centuries

“Of faith and God he had none; he was crafty, wily, avaricious [greedy], lustful, malicious [mean], wrathful [angry]; and yet a gallant man at times, when he would show his kindness or courtesy; full of solace [comfort], jocund [cheerful], delightful, fertile in devices [strategies].”

—The Chronicle of Salimbene; quoted at <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/salimbene1.html>.

**Frederick II.**  
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of otherwise fierce fighting between Christianity and Islam, the Sixth Crusade showed the power of compromise and bargaining. Unfortunately, it was a lesson ignored by both sides.

## More Sicilian than German

Frederick II was the only son of Henry VI, emperor of the Holy Roman Empire, and the Sicilian princess Constance. His father was descended from the German noble family of Hohenstaufen, while his mother was of Norman origin, the daughter of King Roger II of Sicily, who created a culturally rich and intellectual royal court that helped introduce Arabic learning to western Europe. Born in Italy in 1194, Frederick II was an orphan by the time he was four. Though his father had provided for his election as the next German king in 1196, this meant nothing once Henry VI was dead. Even Frederick's uncle, Philip of Swabia, was unable to hold the German electors to their word, for as soon as Henry VI was declared dead they began competing among themselves to take the crown away from the youthful Frederick.

Frederick was kept in Sicily, where he was under the protection of Pope **Innocent III** (see entry), who became his guardian. The boy was raised in the Sicilian kingdom, a region heavily settled by Muslims and deeply influenced by Islamic religion, scholarship, art, and architecture. Having grown up in the Sicilian city of Palermo, he came to understand the traditions of two cultures, the Islamic East and the Christian West, but was a firm believer in neither. He also grew up speaking several languages, and as a future king he learned how to ride and to fight like a knight, or noble soldier.

In 1209 the pope arranged a marriage for the teenage Frederick II with Constance, the sister of Pedro II, the king of Aragon, a region in northeastern Spain. This marriage was planned for political reasons. Though Constance was ten years older than Frederick, the successful match lasted until Constance's death in 1222. Meanwhile, the fighting continued in Germany to see who would become the next emperor. Both Philip and Otto IV were elected as the next king by competing groups of German princes, the first step in becoming emperor of the Holy Roman Empire. This empire was the third most important



## Holy Roman Empire

Frederick II was one of a long line of emperors of what was called the Holy Roman Empire. For most of the thousand years of its existence, this empire was more imaginary than real, an empire on paper. Established in 962 C.E., the Holy Roman Empire was thought of as a child of the old Roman Empire. That empire collapsed in the fifth century. In 800 the powerful leader Charlemagne (742–814) once again established control over much of Europe. He was crowned Roman emperor by Leo III, who was the pope at the time. With the last of Charlemagne's dynasty dying out in 899, that empire also fell apart. However, a strong German prince named Otto began to unify the lands of Germany, and in 962 he was crowned the first emperor of the Holy Roman Empire.

This emperor was typically a German king, elected by a group of strong German princes, for much of the existence of the empire. But his imperial crown, or title of emperor, came from the Catholic Church. Becoming king of Germany was the first step in becoming emperor, but it did not always mean that the pope would approve of the choice. Over time, however, the German kingship and the office of emperor were handed down from father to son and from one family to another. It remained in German hands until 1438, when

the house of Hapsburg, the rulers of Austria and Spain, took it over.

From the beginning of the Holy Roman Empire there was a battle for power between the emperor, who was the secular leader of the heart of Europe, and the pope, who was the religious leader. This fight continued until 1356, when the Golden Bull, an order from the emperor, allowed the emperor to be chosen without the pope's blessing. Once the rivalry with the pope was settled, the emperor next had to face the rising power of individual princes, kings, and powerful cities. Early on in the history of the empire, the emperor lost control of kingdoms such as France and Italy; his control over others was in name only. Germany and Italy were his center of power, and even this power depended on the emperor: If he was strong enough, he could rule an actual empire; if weak, he was emperor only on paper. Frederick II had such power over his princes, but he was frustrated in his attempts to unite Italy by a still-powerful papacy.

The last emperor, Francis I, a Hapsburg, gave up the title and the empire in 1806. By this time the imperial office was merely a title. Europe was divided into strong kingdoms that no longer needed or wanted one emperor to look after them.

political player in medieval Europe, after France and England. Otto IV won this struggle and persuaded the pope to crown him emperor in 1209.

The pope, however, soon became disappointed in this new emperor when he tried to take over Italy, which was traditionally the pope's territory. Encouraged by the pope, the German electors, or princes, changed their minds about Otto and elected Frederick II the German king, just as his father had earlier arranged. In 1212 Frederick traveled to Germany to take up his duties, but first he had to defeat his rival, Otto IV. With some help from Philip Augustus, the king of France, Frederick II was able to accomplish this, and in 1215 he was officially crowned king of Germany.

Frederick II was never as interested in his German kingdom as he was in his Italian one in Sicily and southern Italy. However, he remained in Germany for five years, securing his office and making sure he had the princes of Germany on his side by giving them new rights and powers. He also eased tensions with the pope by promising to lead a Crusade to free the Holy Land from the Muslims and by pledging to separate the kingdom of Sicily from the Holy Roman Empire. The papacy, or office of the pope, had long feared having Rome caught between the German regions and the south of Italy. They were against any attempt to unite Italy as part of the Holy Roman Empire, for the papacy regarded Italy as its own region. With such promises to Honorius III, the new pope, Frederick II won the favor of the papacy and in 1220 was crowned Holy Roman Emperor.

## **Frederick II Returns to Sicily**

Leaving his young son, Henry, behind as the new king of Germany, Frederick II returned to the warmer climate of Italy. He went back on his promise to the papacy about giving up his lands in Sicily and in southern Italy, claiming that he needed them in order to support his Crusade. He set about getting Sicily in shape, creating a strong central government under his rule and putting down any rebellions. As a result of all this reorganization, he kept putting off the time of his Crusade and was able to send only a small force on the unsuccessful Fifth Crusade (1218–21). With the founding of the University of Naples in 1224, he established the first state university of the Middle Ages. The following year he married Yolande, a teenage girl who was next in line to the Kingdom

of Jerusalem, a Crusader state established in the Holy Land after the First Crusade (1095–99). This marriage, which brought with it the title of King of Jerusalem for Frederick II, ultimately led him to go on a Crusade himself.

## The Sixth Crusade

Frederick's marriage to the fourteen-year-old Yolande (he was thirty-one) did not work out well. He liked women too much to remain faithful. He soon sent Yolande to live in Palermo, where she died at seventeen after giving birth to a son, Conrad. The two sons he had with his first two wives were the only ones that were legitimate—that is, born in marriage. But Frederick also fathered numerous illegitimate sons to whom he often awarded important positions. Frederick learned of his wife's death on his way to the Holy Land. It was not the only bad news he received during his trip. When malaria (a disease with symptoms of chills and fever, spread by mosquitoes) struck him and his Crusader army, Frederick II delayed the Crusade once again, and the pope excommunicated, or expelled, him from the church. Once he recovered, he set out again for the Holy Land. When the pope learned of this, as if to emphasize his displeasure, he excommunicated Frederick a second time for daring to set off on the Crusade after being excommunicated.

However, Frederick really did not care about such things. He had his own plans. While he was still in Sicily, he had been communicating with **Sultan al-Malik al-Kamil** (see entry), the powerful ruler of Egypt and Palestine, who let Frederick understand that he might be willing to negotiate a peaceful deal concerning Jerusalem, one of the sultan's holdings. Thus, when Frederick reached the Holy Land with a very small army and with little local support from the religious fighting orders (such as the Knights Templars and Knights Hospitallers) because of his excommunication, he was not really concerned. He knew al-Kamil needed to strike a deal over Jerusalem because the sultan was busy with his own internal fights, trying to take Damascus, Syria, from his nephew.

Frederick II also badly needed a victory in this Crusade in order to reestablish his power base in the empire. Both men were willing to compromise. Frederick made it look

as if he were ready to fight, but in the end no battles were fought. On February 18, 1229, the sultan and the emperor simply signed the following agreement: The Christians would get Jerusalem, Nazareth, and Bethlehem back, as well as a small strip of land along the coast. These lands, long in the hands of the Muslims, had been won by the Christian Crusaders in the First Crusade (1095–99) under **Godfrey of Bouillon** (see entry) and then lost to the Muslims in 1187 under the Islamic leader **Saladin** (see entry). For the past forty years Christians and Muslims had been fighting over this city and region, for it was important to both religions. However, Frederick and al-Kamil were politicians first and believers second. The Muslims got something out of the deal, too. Al-Kamil was promised a truce for ten years, during which time he could fight rival Muslims to secure his own empire. Also, the Crusaders were forbidden to rebuild the destroyed walls of Jerusalem in order to defend it. The city was thus open to attack at any time. In addition, Muslims retained possession of al-Aqsa, their mosque, or place of worship, and were allowed free access to the city.

This agreement pleased both Frederick II and al-Kamil, though both were sharply criticized for it. The Christians, who had settled the area since the First Crusade, felt that Frederick had never really intended to fight. His was a public-relations trick. If al-Kamil had agreed simply to hand over Jerusalem without a fight, these critics argued, just think what could have been achieved with a real battle. The Muslim world also cried out against the handover of Jerusalem. Yet both leaders survived, and their agreement brought a period of peace to the region and temporarily ended the battle over who controlled Jerusalem. Though a Seventh Crusade was fought in the mid-thirteenth century, Frederick's agreement took the wind out of the arguments for a Crusade.

## **Battles for a United Italy**

Frederick II stayed on in the Holy Land for a short time, declaring himself king of Jerusalem, but there was little enthusiasm locally for his leadership. Besides, a new pope, Gregory IX, was in power in Rome and was using the emperor's absence as an opportunity to attack his lands in Sicily. Re-

turning to Italy, Frederick II defeated the pope's army and then forced Gregory IX to nullify, or end, his excommunication. Frederick II spent the next twenty years trying to unify Italy. In 1231 he issued a group of laws, called the Constitutions of Melfi, that provided for a strong central government, a system of taxes, an army, a standard currency (type of money), and a court system, all of which turned Sicily into a wealthy kingdom.

Once Sicily was under his control, Frederick II attempted to dominate northern Italy, but the pope would not stand for this. Gregory IX again excommunicated Frederick II and managed to get cities in the north, which were members of the Lombard League, to resist the emperor. Although he was almost constantly at war with one group or another, Frederick found the time to marry Isabella, the sister of the king of England. In 1235 he also passed what are known as the Laws of the Empire, establishing an imperial court of justice. This was an extremely important move, for it later served as the basis for national law.

The emperor also had to put down a rebellion by his son Henry in Germany. Frederick II sent forces to Germany, defeated the rebels, and threw his young son in prison, where he died in 1242. He replaced Henry as German king with his second son, Conrad. Now Frederick could once again turn his attention to Italy. After the death in 1241 of his enemy Pope Gregory IX, he kept the papacy from electing a new pope for two years. Finally, Innocent IV became pope and was at first controlled by Frederick. But he fled Rome for France, where he held a church council in 1245 that condemned Frederick II as the Antichrist (the biblical enemy of Christ).

Relations were never repaired between Frederick II and the papacy. He suffered a defeat in 1248 by the pope's army and the cities of the Lombard League. Two years later he was beginning to get the upper hand again when he died of dysentery, an infection of the intestines.

Although Frederick II was unable to achieve his goal of uniting Italy, he was still one of the most powerful medieval Holy Roman Emperors. His advances in centralized government—one governing body and set of laws that ruled over large portions of land such as entire countries—paved the way for modern governments. He was in many ways a

man before his time. Religion did not dominate his life, as it did for many other rulers of the Middle Ages. His interest in the arts and learning created a multicultural environment at his court in Sicily. He corresponded with Christians, Jews, and Muslims about philosophical and scientific questions. A rationalist (one who believes in reason over blind faith), Frederick II was an amateur scientist, creating his own experiments on digestion by examining the contents of the stomachs of executed prisoners or seeking an answer to the riddle of language by raising children in silence to see which language they would choose. Such experiments show both Frederick's curiosity and his lack of sensitivity for basic human rights. As king and emperor he made the laws, but he did not always abide by them. That next step in the development of government would have to wait many centuries.

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# Godfrey of Bouillon

c. 1060  
Boulogne, France, or Baisy, Belgium

July 18, 1100  
Jerusalem

**Knight and duke of Lower Lorraine,  
leader of the First Crusade and  
first ruler of the Kingdom of Jerusalem**



**G**odfrey of Bouillon (pronounced boo-YOHN) was a medieval knight, or trained soldier, as well as a duke of the region of Lower Lorraine (in present-day northwestern Germany). He played a major part in directing military operations in the latter part of the First Crusade (1095–99), the European Christian mission to retake the Holy Land in Palestine from the Islamic and Turkish forces that held it. One of several powerful families of landed nobility who raised and commanded armies against the Muslims, or faithful followers of Islam, he was chosen, after Jerusalem fell to the Christians in 1099, as the first ruler of what was called the Kingdom of Jerusalem.

## From Minor Knight to Major Crusader

Godfrey of Bouillon was born around 1060 in either Boulogne in France or Baisy, a city in the region of Brabant (part of present-day Belgium). During Godfrey's lifetime this region was part of the German or Holy Roman Empire, a loose collection of principalities, or small royal states. Godfrey was the second son of Count Eustace II of Boulogne and Ida of

“He was a religious man, mild mannered, virtuous, Godfearing. He was just, he avoided evil, he was trustworthy and dependable in his undertakings.... He was considered by everyone to be most outstanding in the use of weapons and in military operations.”

—William of Tyre, *History of Deeds Done beyond the Sea,* in *The Crusades: A Documentary History.*

**Godfrey of Bouillon.**  
© Hulton Archive.

Lower Lorraine. That he was the second son was very important to Godfrey's future. In the Middle Ages it was the first son who inherited the lands of the parents. As the second-born son, Godfrey had fewer opportunities. Were it not for a bit of family luck, he would have become just one more minor knight in service to a rich landed nobleman. It happened that Godfrey the Hunchback, his uncle on his mother's side, died childless, naming his nephew, Godfrey of Bouillon, as his heir and next in line to his duchy (region) of Lower Lorraine. This duchy was an important one at the time, serving as a buffer (safety zone) between the kingdom of France and the German lands.

In fact, Lower Lorraine was so important to the German kingdom and the Holy Roman Empire that Henry IV, the German king and future emperor (ruled 1084–1105), decided that he would place it in the hands of his own son and give Godfrey less important lands in exchange, as a test of Godfrey's abilities and loyalty. Godfrey served Henry IV loyally, supporting him even when Pope Gregory VII (the leader of the Catholic Church) was battling the German king over who should have more power in Europe, the church or the secular (nonreligious) powers of the kings and princes. Godfrey fought with Henry IV and his forces against the rival forces of Rudolf of Swabia and also took part in battles in Italy when Henry IV actually took Rome away from the pope.

At the same time, Godfrey was struggling to maintain control over the lands that Henry IV had not taken away from him, for the widow of his uncle said that these lands should have come to her. Another enemy outside the family also tried to take away other bits of his land, and Godfrey's brothers, Eustace and Baldwin, both came to his aid. Following long struggles, and after proving that he was a loyal subject to Henry IV, Godfrey finally won back his duchy of Lower Lorraine in 1087, becoming Godfrey IV, duke of Lower Lorraine. Still, Godfrey would never have had much power in the German kingdom or in Europe if it had not been for the coming of the Crusades.

### **Godfrey Takes Command of Crusader Forces**

In 1095 **Urban II** (see entry), the new pope, called for a Crusade (holy war) against the Islamic forces that held

Jerusalem and other religious locations in Palestine. Crusader fever caught on throughout Europe, partly because of the power of the pope but also because there were many knights and second and third sons, such as Godfrey, who were looking for opportunities outside Europe. The pope promised that all sins would be forgiven for anyone who served in the Crusades, but there was also talk of lands to be won there, of new duchies that could be carved out of Muslim lands.

Godfrey took out loans on most of his lands or sold them to the bishops, or regional church leaders, of Liège and Verdun. With this money he gathered thousands of knights to fight in the Holy Land. In this he was joined by his older brother, Eustace, and his younger brother, Baldwin, who had no lands in Europe. He was not the only major nobleman to gather such an army. Raymond of Saint-Gilles, also known as Raymond of Toulouse, created the largest army. At age fifty-five he was also the oldest and perhaps the best known of the Crusader nobles. Because of his age and fame, Raymond expected to be the leader of the entire First Crusade. Adhemar, the assistant to the pope and bishop of Le Puy, traveled with him. There was also the fiery Bohemund, a Norman knight who had formed a small kingdom in southern Italy. He had Viking blood in his veins and fought like a warrior of old, going into battle himself and fiercely combating the enemy until they perished. For Bohemund this Crusade was simply another chance to add lands to his kingdom. There was also a fourth group under Robert of Flanders. No kings participated in this First Crusade.

Each of these armies traveled separately, some going southeast across Europe through Hungary and others sailing by water across the Adriatic Sea from southern Italy. Their first destination was Constantinople, capital of the Byzantine Empire, or eastern Roman Empire. The pope had, in fact, called the Crusade in order to help **Alexius I** (see entry), the emperor of this eastern Christian kingdom, fight the Islamic Turks who were invading his lands from Central Asia and Persia.

Godfrey and his troops were the first to arrive in Constantinople, just before Christmas 1096. During the next several months the other Crusader armies arrived; suddenly, the



**The conquest of Antioch by the Crusaders, one of the first battles of the First Crusade that Godfrey of Boullion took a role in.**

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Byzantine emperor had an army of about four thousand mounted knights and twenty-five thousand infantry (foot soldiers) camped on his doorstep. The Crusader leaders Godfrey and Alexius I had different goals. The Byzantine emperor wanted the help of these professional soldiers to recapture lands that the Seljuk Turks, his enemies to the east, had taken. The Crusaders, however, had the main aim of taking the Holy Land in Palestine from the Muslims and setting up a Christian occupying force there. For them, Alexius I and his Turks were only a sideshow. Worse, the Byzantine emperor expected the Crusaders to take an oath, or promise, of loyalty to him. Godfrey and the other knights agreed to a modified version of this oath, promising to help return some lands to Alexius I. By the spring of 1097 the Crusaders were ready to march into battle.

Their first major victory, with Byzantine soldiers at their side, was at the city of Nicaea, close to Constantinople, which the Seljuk Turks had taken some years earlier. Godfrey



Godfrey of Bouillon and the Crusaders break through into Jerusalem and overtake the city in 1099, ending the First Crusade. © Corbis.

and his knights of Lorraine played a minor role in this action, with Bohemund successfully commanding much of the action. Just as the Crusaders were about to storm the city, they suddenly noticed the Byzantine flag flying from atop the city walls. Alexius I had made a separate peace with the Turks and now claimed the city for the Byzantine Empire. These secret dealings were a sign of things to come in terms of relations between Crusaders and Byzantines.



## A Bloody End

When the Crusaders took Jerusalem on July 15, 1099, they seemed to forget the tenets, or ideals, of Christian behavior. Only the Arab Muslim commander of the city and his guards were allowed to leave unharmed. The rest of the inhabitants of Jerusalem—Muslims and Jews alike—were murdered by the Crusaders. Since they were the only ones left alive in the city, the Crusaders assembled at the Holy Sepulchre, or tomb of Jesus Christ, to pray.

Raymond d'Aguilers, one of the Crusaders who took part in this bloody massacre, left a written description of the

scene, as found in “The Siege and Capture of Jerusalem: Collected Accounts”:

Now that our men had possession of the walls and towers, wonderful [extraordinary] sights were to be seen. Some of our men (and this was more merciful) cut off the heads of their enemies; others shot them with arrows, so that they fell from the towers; others tortured them longer by casting them into the flames. Piles of heads, hands, and feet were to be seen in the streets of the city. It was necessary to pick one's way over the bodies of men and horses. But these were small matters compared to what happened at the Temple of Solomon, a place where religious services are ordinarily chanted. What happened there? If I tell the truth,

## On to Jerusalem

Godfrey continued to play a minor role in the battles against the Muslims until the Crusaders finally reached Jerusalem in 1099. Before that time, he took part in the attack on the fortified city of Antioch in 1098, which fell in June of that year after long and bitter fighting. During the siege some of the Crusaders felt that the battle was hopeless and left the Crusade to return to Europe. Alexius I, hearing of the desperate situation, thought that all was lost at Antioch and did not come to help the Crusaders as promised. When the Crusaders finally took the city, they decided that their oaths to Alexius I were no longer in effect. Bohemund, the first to enter the city gates, claimed the prize for himself. A Muslim force under Karbugah, from the city of Mosul, arrived and battled the Crusaders, but the Christians finally defeated these Turkish Islamic troops.

After this victory, the Crusader army headed south. The bishop of Le Puy, the pope's assistant, had died at Antioch. Bohemund remained behind to secure his new kingdom,

it will exceed [strain] your powers of belief. So let it suffice to say this much, at least, that in the Temple and porch of Solomon, men rode in blood up to their knees and bridle reins. Indeed, it was a just and splendid judgment of God that this place should be filled with the blood of the unbelievers, since it had suffered so long from their blasphemies [lack of respect for sacred things]. The city was filled with corpses and blood. Some of the enemy took refuge in the Tower of David, and, petitioning Count Raymond for protection, surrendered the Tower into his hands.

At this point another Crusader, named Fulk of Chartres, takes up the awful tale:

Some Saracens, Arabs, and Ethiopians took refuge in the Tower of David, others fled to the temples of the Lord and of Solomon. A great fight took place in the court and porch of the temples, where they were unable to escape from our gladiators [professional soldiers]. Many fled to the roof of the Temple of Solomon, and were shot with arrows, so that they fell to the ground dead. In this Temple almost ten thousand were killed. Indeed, if you had been there you would have seen our feet colored to our ankles with the blood of the slain. But what more shall I relate? None of them were left alive; neither women nor children were spared.

and Godfrey's younger brother, Baldwin, also stayed in the north at the Crusader state he had established at Edessa. As they traveled south into Palestine, the Crusaders faced a new enemy. No longer were the Seljuk Turks the rulers of these lands. Now the Christian army had to deal with armies of North African Muslims called Fatimids, who had adopted the name of the ruling family in Cairo, Egypt. These Fatimids had taken Jerusalem in August 1098. The Crusaders would be battling them for the final prize of the First Crusade.

It was in Jerusalem that the legend of Godfrey of Bouillon was born. The army reached the city in June 1099 and built wooden ladders to climb over the walls. The major attack took place on July 14 and 15, 1099. Godfrey and some of his knights were the first to get over the walls and enter the city. Once inside, the Crusaders went wild, ultimately killing every Muslim man, woman, and child. Jews were also slaughtered. It was a shameful end to three years of fighting by the Crusaders, but they had finally done what they had set out to do in 1096—namely, to recapture the Holy Land and, in par-

ticular, the city of Jerusalem and its holy sites, such as the Holy Sepulchre, the tomb of Jesus Christ.

Once the city was captured, some form of government had to be set up. So popular was Godfrey that the other knights chose him to rule what became known as the Kingdom of Jerusalem. The knights wanted to crown Godfrey king, but he refused such a title, saying that he would not wear a golden crown in a place where Christ had worn a crown of thorns. Instead, he took the title of Defender of the Holy Sepulchre. He had his work cut out for him, for soon his army shrank as a result of the loss of knights, some of whom returned to Europe and others of whom competed with one another to create their own kingdoms, or states, in the Holy Land. Godfrey successfully repulsed, or fought back, an attack by Egyptian Muslim forces and also began rebuilding the port of Jerusalem at Jaffa. In June 1100 he led a force to help the Christian soldiers at Damascus, Syria, but on the way he fell ill and was taken back to Jerusalem, where he died on July 18.

Because Godfrey never married, there was no son to take over from him. Instead, his brother Baldwin took the title of king, ruling in Jerusalem until his death. This set the tone for other states formed in the Holy Land. Rather than becoming church lands run by the pope, they ended up in the hands of the Crusader noblemen, who created their own little kingdoms much as they had done in Europe. Godfrey's remaining lands in Europe were soon divided up into smaller holdings.

With the fall of Jerusalem the First Crusade came to a close. Crusader states such as the Kingdom of Jerusalem, the Counties of Edessa and Tripoli, and the Principality of Antioch were created in these former Muslim lands along the coast of the eastern Mediterranean Sea. Jerusalem was regarded as the unofficial capital of these lands. Godfrey's fame spread as a result of his position as the first Christian ruler of the city following the Crusades. Thanks to his good looks and his fighting ability, he became a symbol of the perfect knight, finding his way into medieval histories of the Crusades as well as romances, or early stories, of the Crusades sung by troubadours, or wandering entertainers. The reality was somewhat different. Bohemund was the real military leader and Raymond of Toulouse the best-known nobleman at the time. Godfrey's own brother Baldwin was

the first king of Jerusalem. Godfrey really did not lead the Crusader armies until the siege of Jerusalem. It seems he was chosen because he was respected by the other knights and had no obvious negative qualities. Every special event needs a romantic hero, and Godfrey ended up being the hero of the First Crusade.

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# Hugh de Payens

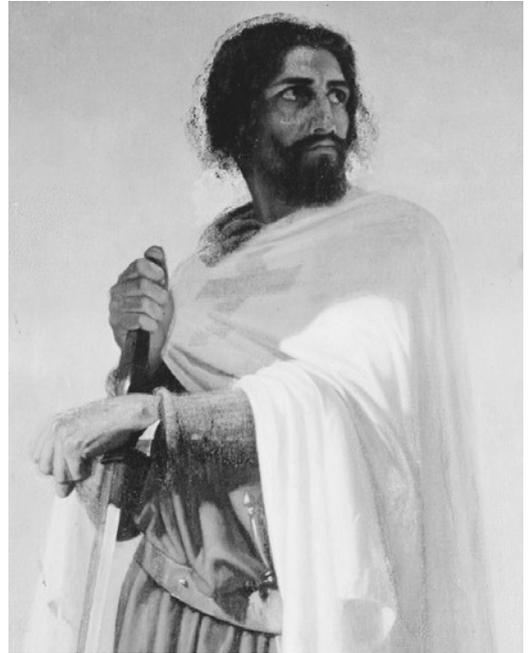
c. 1070

Champagne or Burgundy, France

1136

Jerusalem

**Crusader; founder of Knights Templars**



**H**ugh (also called Hugues) de Payens was a French nobleman who fought in the Holy Land during the First Crusade (1095–99), the initial stage of what became a two-hundred-year conflict between the Christian West and the Islamic Middle East over control of Jerusalem and Palestine. Staying on after the fall of Jerusalem to the Crusader forces, Hugh and a small group of other knights, or trained soldiers of noble birth, founded a protective service that would escort pilgrims, or religious visitors, from the port city of Jaffa to Jerusalem. Given quarters in what was formerly the Temple of Solomon, built by the Jews in Jerusalem, this group of knights adopted the name of Knights Templars in 1118. Ten years later this unofficial group was made a Catholic order of military monks (religious believers) who promised to live a simple life without family and away from society. By the time of Hugh's death in 1136, the Knights Templars had become one of the strongest fighting forces in the Holy Land. The order lasted for almost two hundred years, until in 1314 it was finally disbanded, or broken up, by the French king Philip IV.

“In [1118] certain noble men of knightly rank, religious men,...promised to live...without possessions, under vows of chastity [purity] and obedience. Their foremost leaders were the venerable Hugh of Payens and Geoffrey of Saint Omer.”

—William of Tyre, *The Foundation of the Order of Knights Templars*, in the Internet Medieval Sourcebook, <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/tyre-templars.html>.

**Hugh de Payens.** *Réunion des Musées Nationaux/Art Resource, NY.*



## Gerard de Martigues and the Hospitallers

Hugh de Payens' Knights Templars was not the only military order fighting in the Holy Land. Another important order, both then and now, is the Hospitallers of Saint John of Jerusalem, otherwise known as the Order of Saint John. Like Hugh's Templars, the Hospitallers began with a specific function—namely, to provide assistance to the growing number of Christian pilgrims coming to the Holy Land. As early as the eleventh century there was a hospital set up in Jerusalem specifically for these western visitors, attached to the small church of Saint John. When the Crusaders took Jerusalem in 1099, the master of the hospital was Gerard de Martigues (1040–1120), a former soldier or merchant from Provence, a region in France. At this time the institution was part hospital and part hospice (hotel) for pilgrims. Wounded Crusader knights were treated in this hospital after the Christians took Jerusalem. Gerard, however, saw a larger, military role for members of the religious order that ran the hospital and helped to create an order of knights whose job also included protection of Christians in the Holy Land.

In 1113 his order, the Friars of the Hospital of Saint John of Jerusalem, was recognized by Pope Paschal II, with Gerard becoming the first grand master of the order.

In addition to their medical duties, the monks of this order also fought the infidels, or nonbelievers, in the Holy Land. While the Templars wore a white tunic (a knee-length slip-on top) with a red cross, the Hospitallers' uniform was a black tunic with a white cross. With the death of Gerard in 1120, rule passed to Raymond de Puy. These Knights Hospitallers—or Knights of Saint John, as they were also called—took on an increasingly military role. When Jerusalem fell to the Muslim (followers of the Islamic religion) leader **Saladin** (see entry) in 1187, the Hospitallers moved their base to Acre. They also developed a rivalry with the Templars that ultimately led to civil war between the two Christian orders. Their hospital work nevertheless managed to continue.

When Acre fell in 1291, these knights first moved to the island of Rhodes and later to Malta, where they became known as the Knights of Malta and, still later, as the Order of Saint John of Jerusalem, the name they bear today. Their primary function in the modern world is medical; members of the order are involved in hospital and ambulance work. In their nine-hundred-year history the Hospitallers have thus come full circle back to their origins.

### From France to Jerusalem

Not much is known of the early career of Hugh of Payens. It appears he was born to the lower nobility in the

French region of Champagne or Burgundy. The date of his birth is not recorded. However, John J. Robinson, who has written about the Templar order in *Dungeon, Fire and Sword: The Knights Templar in the Crusades*, notes that Hugh was forty-eight when he became grand master of the order (1118) and that by that time he had already served in the Holy Land for twenty-two years. This would seem to set his birth in 1070 or perhaps a little later. He was known to be a very religious man. While in France, it seems that Hugh was in the service of the count of Champagne, a distant cousin. Later, this count donated lands to a young French priest to build a religious institution. This young priest was, in fact, **Saint Bernard of Clairvaux** (see entry), a powerful speaker and writer who preached in favor of the Second Crusade (1147–49). Bernard and Hugh would later be linked as a result of the process of making the Knights Templars an official Catholic order.

Hugh was one of thousands of knights inspired by the words of Pope **Urban II** (see entry) during his speech to the Council of Clermont in 1095, when he called for a holy war against the Islamic forces that had taken over the holy sites in Jerusalem and Palestine. It is not known which Crusader army he fought alongside, but according to Charles G. Addison, in his online essay “Foundation of the Order of Knights Templars,” Hugh “fought with great credit and renown at the siege of Jerusalem.” After Jerusalem fell to the Crusaders in 1099, various principalities, or states, were carved out of the Holy Land and were ruled by the local nobility according to the European fashion. Jerusalem became known as the Kingdom of Jerusalem, with its first ruler, **Godfrey of Bouillon** (see entry), refusing to accept the title of king. Instead, he was called Defender of the Holy Sepulchre, or the tomb of Christ. Upon his death in 1100, his younger brother, Baldwin I, took the title of king and ruled the Kingdom of Jerusalem until 1118. He, in turn, was followed by Baldwin II.

## **Hugh Forms a Guide and Escort Service for Pilgrims**

During these early years of Christian or Latin occupation of Jerusalem and the Holy Land, the situation for these

new settlers was not always safe and secure. Beyond those cities protected by towers and walls—Jerusalem, Acre, Antioch, and Edessa, among other Crusader holdings—the countryside was dangerous. Armed bands of Egyptians and Arabs made life difficult for those Europeans living in the region. It was also risky for pilgrims who had come to Jerusalem in order to visit the Holy Sepulchre; to Bethlehem to see where Christ was born; or to be baptized in the Jordan River and visit Nazareth, where Christ had lived. Such pilgrims were in constant danger of being attacked by these roving bands of Arabs and Egyptians.

Hugh de Payens had stayed on in Jerusalem following the end of the First Crusade. Like many knights of lesser rank, he had nothing to return to in Europe; as firstborn son, his older brother, Edmund, had taken over the lands of the Payens family. Instead, Hugh dedicated his life to serving the kings of Jerusalem. He married Catherine Saint Clair, but it is not clear if this was before or after he arrived in the Holy Land. He had three sons, one of whom entered church service in France. After his wife died, Hugh decided to live a life devoted to God. In 1118 he and several other knights decided to form an organization to help pilgrims in their visits to the Holy Land. The men included Geoffrey de Saint Omer (or Saint Aldemar), Payen de Montdidier, Archambaud de Saint Agnan, André de Montbard, Geoffrey Bisol, and two other knights known only by their first names of Rossal and Gondamer. These men all promised the patriarch, or head of the church in Jerusalem, that they would live a life of poverty, obedience, and chastity (no sexual relations). At first they were only too true to their word: the knights were so poor that Hugh and Geoffrey had just one horse between them and had to ride together. In fact, the seal, or stamp, of the order showed two knights riding a single horse.

Hugh and his men acted as unofficial escorts to pilgrims landing at the nearby port of Jaffa. They would ride with these people on their journey to Jerusalem, chasing off any attackers. So helpful did these knights prove to be that the king of Jerusalem gave them a home in al-Aqsa Mosque, near the Dome of the Rock, in Jerusalem, which was the original site of the Temple of Solomon of biblical fame. They took their name from these lodgings and were called the Poor Fellow Soldiers of Jesus Christ and the Temple of Solomon, or

the Knights Templars for short. They chose Hugh as their first grand master, or leader. For nine years these men carried on their protective work. As the historian Robert Payne has noted in his book *The Dream and the Tomb: A History of the Crusades*, Hugh inspired his fellow “brothers” in the Templars

with the energy of chastity and obedience. No women might enter the Temple; they were not permitted to embrace any woman, not even their sisters or their mothers. A lamp burned in their dormitories all night; their breeches [pants] were tightly laced, they were never permitted to see each other naked. They were permitted no privacy, and letters addressed to individual Templars had to be read aloud in the presence of the Grand Master or chaplain. They never shaved their beards. Their Spartan [simple and strict] lives were directed toward the single end of protecting the pilgrims and the Kingdom of Jerusalem by killing the enemy.

They were easily recognized wherever they went: they wore a white knee-length top, called a tunic, with a red cross on it.

Hugh and his followers went about their work with single-minded determination. They even learned Arabic and studied the Islamic faith so that they could better understand their enemy. Because of these skills, they also made good diplomats, or middlemen, to talk with the various Muslim leaders at the request of the kings of Jerusalem. So successful were they in protecting pilgrims that soon they were given the task of defending the Kingdom of Jerusalem. However, this was only after their numbers had grown. They began to attract notable, or famous, members not long after organizing. In 1120 Fulk V, the count of the French region of Anjou, became a member of the order even though he was married. He was followed in 1124 by Hugues, the count of Champagne, the cousin of Hugh de Payens. It appears that such memberships were more honorary than actual, however. These men donated money to the cause rather than lifting their swords.

## **The Templars Gain Recognition by the Pope**

Up to this point Hugh de Payens and his men were an unofficial troop. But Hugh wanted to make his Knights Templars an official order of monks, a special order permitted to use violence against its enemies. Through the count of Cham-

pagne, Hugh was put in touch with another distant relative, Bernard of Clairvaux. It seems that the Knights Templars had strong connections in France. André de Montbard, another original member of the Knights Templars who would later become a grand master, was also related to Bernard. This powerful French priest began to push for making the Templars an officially recognized religious order. Hugh himself, accompanied by several members of the Knights Templars, left Jerusalem for Rome to meet with Pope Honorius II, who was impressed with their organization. Meanwhile, Bernard had been busy behind the scenes. He arranged a meeting, called the Council of Troyes, that was attended by important officers of the church. Here the rules of the order were established, written up by Bernard from basic suggestions provided by Hugh. These rules are contained in seventy-two chapters and deal with a variety of matters, from dress to religious practices. Most important, Bernard permitted the use of deadly force by these military monks. In the case of fighting the infidel, such killings were not considered “homicide” (killing a human) but “malicide” (killing evil).

After this meeting, Hugh and his men traveled throughout Europe to raise money to help support the Templars in their work. Hugh went to England and Scotland, where he was warmly greeted and given gold and land grants, creating Knights Templars orders in these countries. He also won new recruits to the order in Jerusalem, but only after the knight proved himself willing to take a vow of poverty and obedience. As a result of this visit to Europe, Templar houses were created in many areas, from Spain to Scotland. Adding to this newfound fame was a work by Bernard of Clairvaux, *In Praise of the New Knighthood*, which honored the life of these warriors for Christ.

In 1130 Hugh returned to the Kingdom of Jerusalem with his new recruits from France and England, where he was welcomed by King Baldwin II. When Baldwin died the following year, he was succeeded by Fulk of Anjou, who was a member of the Knights Templars and who increased their role as protectors of the Kingdom of Jerusalem. Funds and land continued to come into their possession in Europe, making the order very wealthy. By the time Hugh de Payens died in 1136, the Knights Templars order was well established. The order gained more independence in the following years, becoming

answerable only to the pope. During the Second Crusade (1147–49) the Templars entered a new field of activity when the French king was forced to accept a loan from the wealthy order. They soon became international bankers, launching a scheme similar to modern traveler's checks, whereby pilgrims could deposit their money in a Templar house in Europe and a coded letter would be handed over to the order upon their arrival in Jerusalem, allowing them to receive the amount they had left behind in Europe. This banking role expanded over time and eventually led to jealousy on the part of secular (nonreligious) rulers; ultimately, it led to the destruction of the Knights Templars in the early fourteenth century.

Formed as a private army and police force, the Knights Templars had many legends created about them and their time spent in the Temple of Solomon. They were supposed to have discovered secret and powerful knowledge while digging in the temple. Various legends claim that they recovered the Ark of the Covenant, the box where the Ten Commandments had been stored, or the Holy Grail, the cup that Jesus used at the Last Supper and into which his blood was supposedly gathered at the Crucifixion. These legends were spread, in part, because of the secret signals and codes the Templars developed for their banking practices. In reality, however, these military monks were both feared and respected by their enemies, the Muslims of the Middle East, until the order was finally defeated in 1291 and was forced to leave the region.

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# Innocent III

c. 1160  
Anagni, Italy

June 16, 1216  
Perugia, Italy

Pope



The most powerful of the medieval popes (leaders of the Catholic Church), Innocent III was a strong and talented administrator who brought the church to the zenith, or highest point, of its political power. Using the threat of excommunication (expulsion from the church) for princes, kings, and even entire countries, Innocent III put his papacy, or office, above that of political rulers of the time, including the kings of England and France as well as the German emperor. He called for the Fourth Crusade (1202–04), and though the Crusader armies eventually were beyond his control once they left Europe, Innocent III kept a grip on the religious and political affairs inside Europe for the eighteen years of his papacy, which stretched from 1198 to his death in 1216. The year before his death he called the Fourth Lateran Council, the most important church meeting of the Middle Ages, in which he demanded church reform and a new Crusade, or holy war, against the Muslims (believers in the Islamic religion) in the Holy Land of Jerusalem and Palestine. He did not live to see that fifth installment of the long-standing war between Christianity and Islam.

“I have decided...to convoke a general council, by means of which evils may be uprooted...morals reformed, heresies wiped out, the Faith strengthened princes and people won to the cause of aiding the Holy Land...”

—Pope Innocent III, calling for the Fifth Crusade at the Lateran Council in 1215; quoted at [http://www.catholicism.org/OGP/pope\\_chapter7.htm](http://www.catholicism.org/OGP/pope_chapter7.htm).

**Pope Innocent III.** © Archivio Iconografico, S.A./Corbis.

## **A Noble Background**

Like many popes, Innocent III came from an old aristocratic (noble) family. Born Lothario de Segni, he was descended from the Trasimunds, one of the four oldest noble families in Italy, and was educated at the best universities of the day in Paris and in the Italian city of Bologna. There he studied civil (for ordinary citizens) and canon (religious) law. As a youth he was deeply impressed by the martyrdom (death for a cause, usually religious in nature), of the English religious leader Thomas Becket (1118–1170), who was murdered by agents of the king of England. Lothario de Segni had not only aristocratic roots but also excellent connections within the church. His uncle was Clement III, who served as pope from 1187 to 1191. Thanks to his uncle's influence, Lothario rose quickly through the church ranks, becoming a deacon, a rank just below a priest, when he was twenty-seven, and a cardinal, a leading official of the Catholic Church, at the age of thirty.

This rapid rise stopped with his uncle's death in 1191. The new pope, Celestine III, was a rival, and Lothario made no progress in the church for the next seven years. He continued to study law and began to be known for his legal writings. When Celestine III died in 1198, it was Lothario's turn. At the young age of thirty-seven he was selected by the cardinals in Rome to be the next pope, taking the name Innocent III. This election came as a complete surprise to Lothario, since his confirmation as a priest in the church had not yet been completed.

## **Innocent III Sees the Papacy as a Powerful Office**

From the beginning of his rule, it was clear that Innocent III felt that the pope should play the most important part not only in church-related matters, or religious life, but also in temporal, or nonreligious, matters. He followed up the reforms that an earlier pope, Gregory VII (1020–1085), had started. These reforms were intended to affect not only the church itself but also its relations with kings and princes. For Innocent III all power came from God. The pope was God's messenger on earth. Therefore, the pope's power was stronger

than that of any king or emperor. Innocent III called himself the “Vicar [religious representative] of Christ.” The medieval papacy did not have much of an army, so Innocent could not hope to use force to keep the nobles of Europe in line. Instead, he used three powerful weapons: excommunication—the removal of the rights and advantages of the church—for an individual; interdict, or the stopping of all religious activities in a country; and the placing of canon law above civil law, thus limiting a king’s power in his own kingdom.

Innocent III used these tools to help establish the church’s dominance over the major political rivals of the day. He threw his weight behind one of the contenders (competitors) for the crown of the Holy Roman Empire, which basically included the German lands of Europe, and finally had his favorite, **Frederick II** (see entry), placed on the throne. When King John of England (1167–1216) tried to name the next archbishop of Canterbury, the highest church office in his land, Innocent III told him that this was the pope’s job, not his. When John went ahead anyway, the pope declared an interdict on the country of England and excommunicated John. After several years of closed churches, the religious citizens of England demanded that their king give in to the pope so that they could go to church again and save their souls. Innocent III handled the king of France, Philip Augustus (1165–1223), in much the same way. When the king wanted to give up his legal wife and take a mistress (lover), the pope placed an interdict on all of France, forcing Philip to submit to the rule of the church.



**Innocent III, ruling from his pontifical seat after assuming the title of pope in 1198.** © Courtesy of the Library of Congress.

## **Innocent III Calls for a Crusade**

One of the new pope’s first acts following his election was to call for a Crusade, a holy war to rid the lands of Pales-

tine and Jerusalem of Muslims. There had already been three such Crusades by this time; the First Crusade (1095–99) was the only successful one. At that time the knights, or Christian soldiers, had taken Jerusalem back from the mostly Turkish Islamic forces then occupying the city and had set up Crusader states in the region under the control of the Kingdom of Jerusalem. However, Muslim forces regrouped during the next century—guided by such powerful leaders as Kengi, who died in 1146; Nur al-Din, who died in 1174; and **Saladin** (see entry), who lived from 1137 to 1193—and ultimately took Jerusalem back in 1187. Two more Crusades failed to stop the Muslim advance. Now the Crusader states were pushed into a narrow strip along the eastern Mediterranean coast in the present-day lands of Israel, Lebanon, and Syria.

Innocent III wanted to retake Jerusalem and thereby demonstrate the power of the church. He began by calling for a new Crusade as early as 1198. In this call to arms the pope made himself the leader of the new holy war, promising to forgive the sins and debts of all those who took part in the military adventure. To get the kings of England and France to stop fighting each other was a difficult job. In 1199 a truce (peace agreement) was called between those two warring kingdoms; this was the same year Innocent III said that the Crusaders should leave for the Holy Land, but nobody went. Innocent III got help from many preachers, who reached out to the faithful and preached a new Crusade; by the end of 1199 men began to volunteer. It was Innocent III's plan that the Crusaders would gather in the Italian port of Venice and then sail to the Holy Land. However, once the Venetians were involved, Innocent III lost control of the Crusade.

The French made a deal with the Venetians to transport more than thirty thousand Crusaders, but only a third of them showed up. The Venetians said a deal was a deal, however, and asked for the full price to carry the Crusaders. Finally, a new bargain was struck. Now Venice would share in the profits of this holy war. They talked the Crusaders into helping them defeat the residents of the city of Zara, on the Dalmatian (Yugoslavian) coast. This city, which had a large trading empire in the Mediterranean Sea, was causing Venice problems. Against the wishes of the pope, in late 1202 the Crusaders attacked and defeated the Christian city of Zara in order to help pay off their debt to the Venetians.

The Crusaders also decided that they should take over the capital of the eastern Roman Empire, or Byzantium, as it was then called. Centered at Constantinople, this eastern empire consisted of present-day Greece, the Balkans, and Turkey and was led by the Eastern Orthodox Church, a Christian rival to the Catholic Church of Europe. Other Crusades had set off from Constantinople, which was considered a friend and ally in the fight against the “infidels,” or nonbelievers. However, this alliance had weakened over the years. The Latins, as the Byzantines called the European Christians, were not to be trusted. The Europeans felt the same way about the Greeks, as the Crusaders called the people of Byzantium. A plan developed in which the Fourth Crusade would actually take over the city of Constantinople and, using Byzantium’s riches to finance the war effort, go on to the Holy Land and conquer Jerusalem.

When the pope heard of this plan, he again wrote to the Crusaders, ordering them not to attack a Christian empire. Once again the Crusaders ignored him. In April 1204 they stormed the city, stealing the wealth collected by the empire over nearly a thousand years and destroying many of the buildings. It was the worst defeat Constantinople had ever suffered, and the city never recovered from it. The sacking (destruction) of the city made the Venetians rich, for they claimed almost half of the loot. However, this “victory” did little to advance the Fourth Crusade. The Crusaders were stuck in Constantinople for decades, trying to maintain their power and fighting for their very survival. The forces of the Fourth Crusade got no farther than Constantinople, and the Crusade ended in failure.

This, however, did not kill the Crusader spirit in Europe. Innocent III next declared a Crusade against heretics, or Christians who practiced religion in ways not permitted by the church. The heretics in question were a French sect (religious group) called the Albigensians. Their belief in an active Satan got them into trouble with Rome, and Innocent III sent two large armies to the region to defeat their strongholds. This action against heretics was the beginning of Innocent III’s formation of the Inquisition, or tribunals and courts that would investigate and determine the guilt or innocence of accused heretics. During his rule Innocent III also approved two new groups of friars, or roving priests, the Franciscans and



## Two Churches

The writer Mark Twain once jokingly described England and the United States as two countries separated by the same language. A similar statement can be made for the two early branches of Christianity. The western, or Roman Catholic Church, based in Rome, and its eastern partner, the Eastern Orthodox Church, which had its base in Constantinople, are two faiths separated by the same religion. The differences that divided these two branches of the Christian religion were partly political and partly religious. When Emperor Constantine moved the capital of the Roman Empire to Byzantium—or Constantinople (present-day Istanbul), as it came to be called in the fourth century—he was one step ahead of the defeat of that empire in Europe by warring tribes from the north. He took with him the practices of the Roman Catholic Church and set up a new home for it in Constantinople.

While Christianity merely survived during the Middle Ages in Europe, the faith blossomed in Byzantium, with differences growing between the two branches. The first of these differences was language. In the West, Latin was the language of the church. But in the East, most of the faithful spoke Greek, which became the primary language. In the East the priests (ministers of the faith) were allowed to marry, but in the Catholic Church marriage was (and still is) forbidden for priests. In Europe the leader of the church was called the pope, but the leader of the

Eastern Orthodox Church was called a patriarch—and there were several rather than just one. Many other differences, both large and small, separated the two religions.

In 1054 this schism (division) between the two religions became even greater when the patriarch of Constantinople was excommunicated over an argument about control of Latin, or European, churches in Constantinople. Then came the Crusades. The next two centuries witnessed a series of wars between Christianity and Islam over control of the Holy Land. The First Crusade was called in 1095 in order to protect the Byzantine Empire from the Muslim forces of the invading Seljuk Turks—or so claimed **Urban II** (see entry), the pope at the time. Actually, this pope hoped to repair the damage between the two faiths and perhaps also to gain more influence over Constantinople. Relations were never perfect between the Christian Crusaders and their Byzantine allies, but it was not until the Fourth Crusade that the schism was made permanent. When the Crusaders, drunk and disorderly, sacked Constantinople in 1204, it was the final blow to relations between the two main branches of Christianity. Where earlier the competition between the two religions had been among church leaders, now the hatred trickled down to the masses, the ordinary people. The schism between the Roman Catholic Church and the Eastern Orthodox Church remains today.

Dominicans, who would work toward ridding the church of heretics. In later centuries these policies led to the awful extremes of the Inquisition in Spain, where supposed heretics were tortured in order to gain a confession.

One of Innocent III's last achievements was the Fourth Lateran Council, a huge meeting consisting of church officials from both East and West, as well as kings and emperors. Here Innocent III called for still another Crusade and also discussed reforms in the church. These reforms included the abolition (outlawing) of simony, which is the practice of charging a price for religious services such as baptism and the mass, as well as selling religious positions or offices to the highest bidder. Simony is now considered a serious sin and can result in excommunication. Innocent III also proposed a change in the frequency of confession, in which believers admit their sins to a priest and ask for forgiveness. Although Innocent III decided that the faithful should do this every year, later centuries made this a weekly practice.

Numerous other reforms were agreed to at this conference, but the unexpected death of Innocent III in 1216 cut his rule short. Following his death, many of these reforms were not put into effect. If they had been, the later history of the church might have been quite different, and corrupt (dishonest) practices that hurt the church might have been prevented. One thing is certain: never again would the Catholic Church enjoy the power it had during Innocent III's rule. Symbolic of that lost influence is the fact that while waiting for burial, the pope's corpse, which was not well guarded, is said to have been stripped of its fancy clothes and jewels and left half naked. More respected than loved, Innocent III took his power with him to the grave.

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# Sultan al-Malik al-Kamil

1180  
Cairo, Egypt

1238  
Damascus, Syria

Sultan of Egypt, Palestine, and Syria

**A**l-Malik al-Kamil was sultan, or leader, of Egypt and later of Syria during both the Fifth (1218–21) and the Sixth (1228–29) Crusades. After successfully defending Cairo, the capital of his caliphate (kingdom) in Egypt from the Crusaders in 1221, he once again needed to deal with a Crusader army in 1228, under the leadership of the German emperor **Frederick II** (see entry). This time, however, he used diplomacy, or bargaining, rather than force. The result was that Jerusalem passed to the Christian West and al-Kamil was criticized by most of the Islamic world. However, the sultan had reasons for his choices. The city of Jerusalem was no longer as defensible as it once had been, nor were the Crusaders the only enemy al-Kamil was facing in the region. He also had to battle his own family for ultimate control of Egypt and Syria. His diplomatic tactics during the Sixth Crusade created the only bloodless Crusade. Al-Kamil was the last powerful ruler of what is known as the Ayyubid dynasty (1171–1252), founded by the great Muslim leader **Saladin** (see entry).

“In [1229] al-Kamil gave Jerusalem to the emperor [Frederick II].... The news of the handing over of Jerusalem to the Franks arrived and all hell broke loose in all the lands of Islam.”

—*Medieval Muslim chronicler Sibṭ bin al-Jawzī; quoted in The Crusades: Islamic Perspectives.*

## The End of the Ayyubids

Born in 1180, al-Malik al-Kamil Nasir al-Din Muhammad ibn al-Malik al-Adil ibn Bakr—or simply al-Kamil, as he is known in history—was the son of the sultan al-Adil, who was called Safadin in the West. Al-Adil, in turn, was the brother of the famous Saladin, a Muslim of Kurdish origin who rose from the rank of military leader to become the ruler of Egypt and Syria. Saladin recaptured Jerusalem for Islam in 1187, thus bringing about the Third Crusade (1189–92), in which the Christian West tried unsuccessfully to recapture the Holy Land from the Muslims. At his death in 1193, Saladin’s Ayyubid Empire, named after his father, Ayyub, stretched from Cairo in Egypt to Damascus in Syria. His seventeen sons and several brothers began fighting among themselves for power.

In 1201 al-Adil finally managed to gain control of the empire and ruled from Cairo. Once his son, al-Kamil, was old enough, he served his father as vizier, or chief adviser, and was second in command. Another son, al-Kamil’s brother al-Muzzam, was sent to Damascus to manage the Syrian part of the empire. During the lifetimes of both al-Adil and al-Kamil, they not only were faced with Christian enemies, who launched several Crusades, or holy wars, against Islam, but also had to deal with numerous relatives who still wanted a chunk of the Ayyubid Empire. They both tried to reduce the number of these enemies by means of diplomacy and negotiation. Thus, both father and son attempted a risky policy of trying to avoid direct conflict with the Franks, or Crusaders, in Palestine. They did not want to give the Christians living there a reason for uniting with the invading Crusader armies against them. This policy defined much of what al-Kamil did when he became sultan.

For example, when the Europeans were beginning preparations for the Fourth Crusade (1202–04), al-Adil had his vizier son al-Kamil make a deal with the Republic of Venice, which was responsible for transporting the Crusaders. Al-Kamil and his father knew that the Christian Crusaders were planning to attack Egypt and then use it as a base to move on to Jerusalem and the Holy Land. Al-Kamil offered the trading-minded Venetians full access to Egyptian ports at Alexandria and Damietta on the Nile delta, or mouth of the river. In return, Venice agreed not to support

any expedition into Egypt. The bargain was made and kept. The Fourth Crusade never got past Constantinople, the capital of the Byzantine Empire, an eastern Christian kingdom in Asia Minor that includes present-day Turkey and Greece. Egypt and the Ayyubids won a long period of peace, during which they could secure their power against threats from other Muslims.

## The Fifth Crusade

During these years of peace al-Kamil continued to fortify Cairo, a process that had been begun by his uncle, Saladin. He added several towers to the Citadel, the main fortification of the city, and also finished building the walls, which were thirty feet high and ten feet deep. By the late fall of 1217 Crusaders began arriving as part of the Fifth Crusade, led by King John of Jerusalem and the armies of the Christian West, under the command of Cardinal Pelagius, the pope's representative. By the summer of 1218 these forces had arrived in Egypt and begun attacking the Egyptian port of Damietta, which lay between the Crusaders and the Ayyubid capital of Cairo, up the Nile River.

The Crusaders had the first victory in this lengthy war, capturing a small fortress that guarded Damietta. However, al-Kamil was able to raise an opposing force and stop their advance. Neither side was strong enough for a direct attack. The Crusaders were waiting for reinforcements from Italy, and al-Kamil was waiting for more men from his brother, al-Muzzam. When al-Adil suddenly died on August 31, 1218, al-Kamil became sultan. The Christians were encouraged both by this news and by the arrival of more men. They advanced to the fortified walls of Damietta. Al-Kamil, fighting outside, tried to break through the Christian lines but managed only to block the Crusaders' progress upriver. All winter long the two sides fought until, in February 1219, al-Kamil had to leave the battlefield to put down a rebellion within his own court in Cairo. With al-Kamil gone, the Christians advanced, but the Egyptians were finally able to hold them off.

Al-Kamil put down the rebellion in Cairo and made a peace offer to the Crusaders: he agreed to return the Holy



**Manuscript illustration of the battle between the Egyptian forces of al-Kamil and the Crusaders at Damietta during the Fifth Crusade.** © *Archivo Iconografico, S.A./Corbis.*

Lands (except for a couple of fortresses) in return for a truce lasting thirty years. Jerusalem itself could not be defended, since his brother had destroyed the city walls. Many of the professional soldiers in the Crusader forces wanted to accept this offer, but Cardinal Pelagius was against it. He wanted total victory. When his offer was refused, al-Kamil got many additional men and was able once again to take the offensive.

The Fifth Crusade dragged on through the summer, with attack and counterattack. Meanwhile, the citizens inside the walls of Damietta were running low on food and water. In late August of 1219 the sultan received an amazing visitor. Saint **Francis of Assisi** (see entry), the founder of the Franciscan order—a Christian brotherhood that traveled to spread ideas of Christianity, poverty, and charity—came to Egypt to try to find a peaceful solution to the Crusades. He decided to convert the sultan. Crossing the Muslim lines, Saint Francis and his companion were nearly killed. They were finally captured and delivered to al-Kamil, who offered to spare their lives if they would convert to Islam. He was amazed to hear Saint Francis make the same offer to him—if he would convert to Christianity. So impressed was al-Kamil with the honesty and sincerity of this Italian religious man that al-Kamil did not kill him, as his religious advisers urged him to do. Instead, he presented Francis of Assisi with gifts and a safe-conduct back to the Crusader lines and promised to protect him during his visits to Jerusalem. Some historians mention a month-long visit, during which al-Kamil was in daily contact with Saint Francis, while others claim that the visit lasted only a matter of hours or days.

By August 29 the battle was on again. Al-Kamil drew the Crusaders into a trap, killing large numbers of them. After this victory, al-Kamil once more offered the same peace deal. Again Cardinal Pelagius refused, thinking more men were being sent from Europe to aid him. That November the Christians captured Damietta, which was now nearly a ghost city; almost all of its eighty thousand inhabitants had been killed during the fighting or had starved to death during the siege. When the Crusaders could not agree on their next move, it gave al-Kamil a chance to regroup. The two armies continued their standoff, with frequent small battles through 1220 and into 1221.

When more Crusaders arrived in the summer of 1221, that force once again set out on the offensive but were drawn into another trap by the Muslims: They were cornered between the waters of the Nile and a canal whose waters were slowly rising. As the Christians attempted to retreat, the sultan struck, handing the Crusaders a final defeat at the Battle of Mansurah. By September 1221 the Crusaders had sailed back to Europe, and al-Kamil was once again in control of Damietta.



**Dome of the Rock on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem, a holy site for the Muslim faith that al-Kamil retained during the Sixth Crusade.**

© Christine Osborne/Corbis.

## **The Sixth Crusade**

Al-Kamil had no sooner strengthened his kingdom than he received word of another Crusade on the horizon. The Sixth Crusade was led by the German emperor Frederick II, a man who was said to admire Islamic culture and civilization. In fact, al-Kamil had earlier sent a representative to the German emperor, and a correspondence had started between Frederick II and al-Kamil, who discussed topics ranging from Greek philosophy to history. Thus, when the German emperor arrived in Acre in September 1228, al-Kamil was prepared to make a deal rather than start fighting immediately. Working in al-Kamil's favor was the fact that the sultan and his brother in Damascus, al-Muz-zam, had not been on good terms since the Fifth Crusade and were battling for control of the two parts of the Ayyubid empire, Egypt and Syria. When al-Muzzam died in 1227, he passed on his power to his son, al-Nasir, who was also responsible for Jerusalem. Al-Kamil quickly laid siege to Damascus and was involved in this military operation when Frederick II arrived.

Both al-Kamil and Frederick II were realists rather than being driven by religion. For the sultan, Jerusalem was merely a bargaining chip. It could no longer be defended, and he had no real concern for the holy aspect of the city in terms of Islamic tradition, with its mosques (religious buildings) and shrines. It was similar for Frederick II. He was not motivated by a religious desire to recapture the Holy Land from the Muslims but by the fact that such a victory would strengthen his position as emperor against the religious power of the pope in Europe. The emperor led his small army toward Jerusalem as if to attack. For a time nothing happened, but by early 1229 al-Kamil had signed a treaty to avoid bloodshed. In reality, however, all arrangements for transferring Jerusalem had been made before the emperor's arrival. The Crusaders got Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Nazareth, and a few castles leading to the port of Jaffa. The Muslims kept control of some locations inside Jerusalem, including al-Aqsa Mosque and the Dome of the Rock. Most important, al-Kamil won a ten-year truce from the Crusaders. Now he could concentrate on taking back Syria from his nephew.

Al-Kamil, however, was not prepared for the storm of protest his action caused. In Islamic eyes the sultan was supposed to be the defender of the faith, and for most Muslims he had not taken this role in the case of Jerusalem. Nevertheless, he pressed on in Damascus, finally driving al-Nasir out of that city in the summer of 1229. After having survived criticism for not defending Jerusalem, he spent the rest of his life protecting his empire against repeated invasions from Khwarismian Turks in the north and the Mongols of Central Asia, both of whom were the newest enemies of Islam. In addition, there was again a rebellion, led by another of his brothers, resulting in a civil war that finally ended in 1237.

Al-Kamil died in 1238, exhausted by fighting enemies within and without his empire. The following year his nephew al-Nasir took Jerusalem back from the Christians. However, nothing could hold the Ayyubid Empire together now. Al-Kamil's sons in Damascus and Cairo fought another bloody civil war over control of the empire that lasted until 1240. Fifteen years after al-Kamil's death, the dynasty had been eliminated and was replaced by the Mongols and Turks in Syria and by the Mamluks, or soldier-slaves, in Egypt, who finally turned against their Ayyubid masters and seized power



## Ibn al-Baitar

Like many Muslim leaders, al-Kamil hired numerous experts to study and teach at his courts in both Cairo and Damascus. One of the prominent scientists he managed to attract was Ibn al-Baitar, who was born in Malaga, Spain, at the end of the twelfth century. He studied botany and began collecting plants. This knowledge led him to become one of the most famous pharmacists of the Middle Ages, for at that time all medicines were made from herbs. In 1219 he journeyed along Africa's northern coast and into Asia Minor, where he visited Constantinople.

Sometime after 1224 Ibn al-Baitar joined the service of Sultan al-Kamil as chief herbalist, or pharmacist. Once settled in Egypt, he expanded his knowledge of plants to include varieties growing along

the southern coast of the Mediterranean Sea. His botanical knowledge grew following al-Kamil's conquest of Syria in 1229. He collected plants and herbs in Syria as well as in Arabia and Palestine, using Damascus as his new base.

His most famous works include *Kitab al-Jami fi al-Adwiya al-Mufrada*, an encyclopedia of medicinal plants, and *Kitab al-Mlughni fi al-Adwiya al-Mufrada*, an encyclopedia of medicine. The first book lists more than a thousand different medicinal plants and quotes both Arab and Greek scientists. When he died in Damascus in 1248, Ibn al-Baitar was already recognized as the greatest authority on medicinal plants in the Islamic world. When his *Jami* was translated into Latin in 1758, he was hailed as the greatest botanist and pharmacist of the Middle Ages.

for themselves. Al-Kamil was the last powerful leader of the Ayyubids. With his passing it became clear that the empire was in decline.

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# Louis IX

**April 25, 1214**  
**Poissy, France**

**August 25, 1270**  
**Tunis, North Africa**

**King of France**



**L**ouis IX, who ruled as king of France throughout much of the thirteenth century, was a deeply religious and moral man, a legendary figure in French history who was so much admired by other leaders that he was asked to settle international disputes. As a youth he ruled jointly with his mother, Blanche of Castile (1188–1252). He came to the throne in 1236, governing one of the richest kingdoms in the Christian West. He used much of that wealth to fight two holy wars against the Muslims in Egypt and the Holy Land: the Seventh Crusade (1248–54) and another, shorter Crusade in North Africa in 1270, during which he died of fever. Beloved by the people of France, he was called a saint even before being formally canonized, or officially made a saint, by the Catholic Church in 1297. His Crusades marked the end of large-scale holy wars against Islam by the Christian West. Known for his sense of justice, his diplomacy (tact in political matters), and his deeply held religious beliefs, Louis IX became, during the Middle Ages, a positive symbol of how a king should govern.

“The crusades of Louis IX mark both the culmination and the beginning of the end of the crusading movement. None of the earlier expeditions was as well organized or financed, none had a more inspiring leader, none had a better chance of success.”

—Joseph R. Strayer, “The Crusades of Louis IX,” in *History of the Crusades*. Vol. 2, *The Later Crusades, 1189–1311*.

**King Louis IX.** *Courtesy of the Library of Congress.*

## A Youthful King

Louis IX was the fourth child of King Louis VIII of France and Blanche of Castile, who was the granddaughter of **Eleanor of Aquitaine** (see entry), queen of England. Married to Louis while she was still a child of eleven, Blanche proved to be a wonderful choice as a mate for a future king, being both intelligent and strong-willed, like her grandmother. Louis VIII became king in 1223, ruling a realm that had been enlarged by his own father, Philip II. The France that Louis VIII ruled was the largest ever, and when he died just three years later he passed this enlarged kingdom on to his son, Louis IX (his other three children having died). In 1226 Louis VIII died of an illness while returning from southern France after battling the Albigensians, a heretical, or nonconforming, religious group. As he lay dying, Louis VIII made his son the next king, with the heir's mother jointly ruling with him. Louis IX was crowned king of France on November 29, 1226, in the magnificent cathedral of Rheims, France. Blanche was to act as co-regent, or coruler, until the boy reached twenty-one years of age. The most influential person in the young boy's life was his mother, who transmitted her strength of character to her son. She taught him to be religious and to have a strong sense of right and wrong as well as a sense of duty toward his country and people. As a youth, Louis was also trained in the arts of warfare, learning to ride, fight, and lead men. Although he was not a true scholar, he was well educated in religious matters.

At this time France was still a feudal state—that is, one in which powerful noblemen pledged their loyalty to a king in return for large tracts of land. In return, the barons, or noblemen, supplied the king with knights and other fighting forces to protect the kingdom. They accumulated their wealth from the labor of peasants, the poor who rented their farmland for a share of the crops. Now that the kingship was held by a young boy and a woman, these barons thought that they could rebel and gain more power or even total independence from the crown. Blanche, however, was intelligent about using alliances to protect her realm. She first won the influential count of the region of Champagne to her and her son's side. The count helped Blanche protect the kingdom from powerful princes and barons in the north of France as well as from England's King Henry III, who wanted to win back lost territory from France.

Blanche was able to keep the monarchy and its lands together through these difficult years. In 1234 Louis IX married Margaret of Provence, helping to create further alliances among the nobles, and two years later he became the sole ruler, thus ending the stated reason for the rebellion of the barons. Now that there was a male king of mature age on the throne, the kingship was again secure. However, for the rest of her life, Louis IX continued to seek the counsel and advice of his mother.

## Louis IX as Christian Monarch

Louis IX continued many of the policies of his father and grandfather in extending the power of the monarchy, or throne, and placing his close relatives in important administrative positions involving control of the provinces. For example, he named his brother Robert count, or chief noble, of Artois and his brother Alfonso count of Poitiers; a third brother, Charles, became count of Anjou. Louis IX also proved to be skilled in international affairs, staying out of the feud between the pope, the religious leader of the West, and his main rival, the emperor of the Holy Roman Empire, also known as the German kingdom. Louis IX also showed that he was a true Christian by buying back relics (objects held in reverence because of their association with saints) from the time of Christ, including the crown of thorns that Jesus supposedly wore during his crucifixion. For this relic Louis IX constructed a beautiful chapel in Paris called Sainte-Chapelle.

One international situation Louis IX refused to stay out of, however, was the Crusades. These holy wars against the Muslims, whom the Christians called infidels, or unbelievers, in the Holy Land and Middle East were already 150 years old. Jerusalem and its Christian holy sites had been won and lost, bargained over and lost again. Six major Crusades had already been launched against Islam, the most recent ending in the peaceful handing over of Jerusalem to the Christians during the Sixth Crusade (1228–29), which was led by Holy Roman Emperor **Frederick II** (see entry). Since then, however, the Muslims had won the city back. As early as 1244 Louis IX answered the pope's call for a new Crusade, promising to raise an army and reconquer the Holy Land for Christianity.



Stained-glass window of Crusader knights from Sainte-Chapelle, the chapel Louis IX built in Paris to house religious relics such as Jesus' crown of thorns.

© Royalty-Free/Corbis.

Louis IX was a careful planner. During the next four years he raised money and a mostly French army. In 1248 he and his army were finally ready to set sail. Louis had decided he would first capture the Muslim strongholds in Egypt, now the center of power of the Islamic world, and then move on from there to Jerusalem. His was the first Crusade to be solely sponsored by a single king. Although Louis IX took his wife and two brothers along, he left his mother, Blanche, in France to run the government and keep the nobles in line.

The Crusaders spent the winter months of 1248 to 1249 on the island of Cyprus and then traveled on to Egypt that spring. Arriving off the coast of Egypt on June 4, he and his men quickly took the city of Damietta, at the head of the Nile River, defeating Fakhr al-Din, who was leading the Mamluk (slave) army of the Egyptian leader Sultan al-Salih Najm al-Din Ayyub; the latter was the last member of the Ayyubid dynasty, which had begun when the powerful Muslim leader **Saladin** (see entry) conquered Egypt in 1169. The sultan was

deathly ill from tuberculosis (a disease of the lungs) and was in Cairo during this battle, but soon he left the capital to set up a defensive position near the small town of Mansurah, site of an earlier battle between Crusaders and Egyptians during the Fifth Crusade (1218–22). The sultan was accompanied by his favorite wife, **Shajarat al-Durr** (see entry), who took over command of his forces when her husband died in November 1249.

Although the news of the death of the sultan was kept from the Egyptians, Louis IX learned of it through his spies. In February 1250 he decided to launch a surprise attack, aided by another spy who showed the French where to cross a river separating them from the Muslim and Mamluk forces. Louis IX sent his brother, Robert of Artois, to lead this attack, carefully instructing him not to get too far ahead of his reinforcements. In the heat of battle Robert forgot these orders and chased the retreating Egyptians into the narrow streets of Mansurah, where the Crusaders were cut down by the Mamluk leader **al-Zahir Baybars** (see entry). Many of the Crusader's most important knights, including Robert of Artois, were killed, forcing the French to retreat.

Not long after this defeat, Turan Shah, the son of Sultan al-Salih, arrived in Egypt with a large force of fighters and finally captured Louis IX and his men even as his wife, Queen Margaret, was giving birth to a son in Damietta. Margaret, learning of her husband's capture, named the son John-Tristan (meaning "sadness" or "sorrow") and made sure to hold Damietta so that the French would have some bargaining power in negotiating the return of the king. The French situation was aided somewhat by the confusion resulting from a palace revolt in Cairo, in which the Mamluk general Baybars killed Turan Shah, the new sultan, and placed Shajarat al-Durr on the throne as sultana. Following payment for the release of Louis IX, he and his wife and newborn son sailed to the Crusader stronghold of Acre in the Holy Land, leaving behind many wounded Crusaders, who were slaughtered by the Mamluks once the French had left.

Louis IX remained in Acre from 1250 to 1254, becoming the leader of the Crusader states that had been left in the region since the time of the First Crusade (1095–99) and helping to unify and fortify (make strong) the states against a possible attack from both the Muslims and the Mongols, a new



## The Pen and the Sword

While organizing and fighting in the Crusades, Louis IX also found the time to improve domestic life and to sponsor the arts in France. He built hospitals and institutions for the poor, as well as the glorious chapel at Sainte-Chapelle in Paris to house the crown of thorns worn by Christ.

Such sponsorship of scholarship and the arts was also a typical feature of Islamic courts, from Baghdad to Cairo. Although we generally do not associate the arts with the Mongols—those warring tribes from Central Asia who swept into Europe and the Middle East in the mid-thirteenth century—even they honored the skills of famous scholars. One such man of learning was Nasir al-Din (1201–1274), who served as a minister for the powerful Mongol leader Hulagu.

Fresh from his sacking (destruction) of Baghdad in 1258, in which it is estimated that at least one hundred thousand Muslims were slaughtered, Hulagu attacked the strongholds of the Assassins, an Islamic religious sect, or group, who used politically arranged murder to maintain their position in the Middle East. These

Assassins had earlier kidnapped the famous scientist and philosopher Nasir al-Din. After freeing him, Hulagu became impressed with the man's learning and brought him to his court as an adviser.

Nasir al-Din was famous in his time as a philosopher, scientist, physician, mathematician, and writer. He made major advances in the mathematical field of trigonometry, and in science his work in astronomy helped move forward the study of the heavens. He built an observatory that contained many instruments the Mongols stole from Muslim cities they conquered. He was able to produce astronomical (of the solar system) tables, the *Al-Zij-Ilkhani* ("The Ilkhanic Tables"), that revealed the motion of the planets. Nasir al-Din thought this work would take thirty years to finish, but on orders from Hulagu he completed the monumental task in only twelve. In philosophy his *Akhlaq-i-Nasri* ("Nasirean Ethics") became one of the most famous writings on ethics, or moral living. He also wrote widely on religion and produced other scientific studies—all while in the service of the so-called barbarian Mongols.

menace in the region. This warlike tribe came from the plains of Central Asia and, under Genghis Khan and his sons and grandsons, were pushing into Europe and the Middle East, battling Christians and Muslims alike. In the Middle East, Hulagu, a grandson of Genghis Khan, was fighting his way to the Mediterranean Sea. Although they were pagans—nonbelievers in the major religions who worshiped several gods—the Mongols considered Muslims even worse enemies than

Christians and planned to destroy Islam first. However, Louis IX could not help but see the ultimate threat to the Crusader states in these wild warriors from the steppes.

## **Louis IX Returns to France and Launches a Final Crusade**

Louis IX was finally forced to return to France. His mother had died in late 1252, and the kingdom needed its king at home. He immediately set about enacting domestic reforms, sending royal commissioners, or representatives, to check on the running of the local administrations to make sure there was no abuse of power. He also established a fair tax system in France. Internationally, by signing the Treaty of Paris in 1259, he reached a settlement with England's Henry III over the regions of Normandy, Anjou, and Poitou, also making a similar agreement with the regions of northern Spain.

Louis IX, however, was restless. He never gave up the idea of a new Crusade to the Holy Land, where the situation had grown more desperate for the Crusader kingdoms. Under Baybars's leadership, the Mamluks had defeated the Mongols, but they now turned their attention to the Christians. In 1267 Louis IX decided to mount another Crusade. Preparations again took several years, and in 1270 he was ready to depart. For some reason he decided to set out first for Tunis, in North Africa, to establish a base for the Crusade, instead of heading directly for the Holy Land. Landing in Tunis in the height of summer, many of the Crusaders fell ill, including the king and his son. John died of fever on August 3, and his father followed him to the grave three weeks later, his death officially ending this Crusade.

Not long after the king's death, miracles were reported in connection with his burial and remains. As a result of these miracles and his devotion to the Crusades, in 1297 Louis IX was officially canonized (made a saint) by the Roman Catholic Church. As king, he strengthened the French monarchy, introduced administrative reforms, and generally made the position of king of France a respected one. However, his energetic support of both Crusades cost the kingdom dearly in terms of wealth and men; his losses forever changed

the nature of the Crusader movement. As has been noted in "The Crusades of Louis IX,"

the very magnitude of [his Crusades] brought disillusion [disappointment] when [they] failed. If Louis, the richest and most powerful ruler in western Europe, could not conquer the Moslems and recover the holy places, who could? The failure of Louis contributed to the loss of confidence, the hesitations, and even the cynicism which weakened all later crusades.

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# Maimonides

April 6, 1135  
Córdoba, Spain

December 13, 1204  
Cairo, Egypt

Spanish-Hebrew philosopher,  
theologian, and author



One of the foremost scholars of the medieval world at the time of the Crusades, Rabbi Moses Maimonides (pronounced my-MON-uh-deez)—who was also known as Ram-ba'm (from the first letters of his name)—was as influential outside the world of Jewish thinkers as he was within it. In his *Mishneh Torah*, Maimonides organized Jewish law and tradition in a way that could be understood by the average faithful person without an interpretation provided by a rabbi, or Jewish religious leader and scholar. In *The Guide of the Perplexed*, Maimonides attempted to balance the ideas of rational thought—that is, thinking based on reason, explanation, and faith. He concluded that philosophy (a branch of learning that focuses on values and concepts rather than practical, everyday knowledge) supports faith rather than working against it. Beloved in his own age and widely respected into the twenty-first century, Maimonides was the subject of a popular Jewish expression of the Middle Ages (c. 500–1500 C.E.): “From Moses [of the Old Testament] to Moses [Maimonides] there was none like Moses.”

“...May neither avarice nor miserliness, nor thirst for glory or for a great reputation engage my mind; for the enemies of truth and philanthropy could easily deceive me and make me forgetful of my lofty aim of doing good to Thy children.”

—Maimonides, “Oath of Maimonides,” in the Internet Medieval Sourcebook, <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/rambam-oath.html>.

Maimonides. © Corbis.

## Spanish Origins

Moses ben Maimon was born in Córdoba, Spain, in 1135, the son of a rabbi. From his father the young Maimonides (Greek for “son of Maimon”) studied mathematics; astronomy; the literature of the Torah, which consists of the first five books of the Old Testament; and the Talmud, the body of Jewish laws not covered in the Torah. In the multicultural atmosphere of southern Spain, Maimonides also came into contact with Greek and Arabic thought and learned to read and write in several languages.

When the strict North African Islamic sect (subgroup) called Alhomads, or “followers of the prophet Muhammad,” conquered Córdoba in 1148, Maimonides and his family were forced to leave their home. The Alhomads demanded that non-Muslims convert to Islam. If they refused, there were only two choices: exile or death. Maimonides’ family chose exile, and for a dozen years they moved from place to place throughout southern Spain. It was during these years of wandering that Maimonides began his first important work, the *Commentary on the Mishnah*, the ancient oral code of Jewish law, which was finally written down in the third century C.E.

The Mishnah and the Gemara, representing centuries of scholarly interpretation (explanation) of Jewish scripture, are the two books that form the Talmud. However, by the twelfth century such scholarly writings could not be understood by average believers, making it hard to grasp the basics of Judaism. In his article “Maimonides,” Elliot Wachman noted that Maimonides’ task in his *Commentary on the Mishnah* was an important one: “He brought brief, lucid [clear] explanations to each passage in the Mishnah whose meaning was not otherwise evident [clear].” The *Commentary* was written in Arabic and then translated into Hebrew and was read by Jews everywhere. Even in the twenty-first century, it was considered one of the best explanations of the Talmud.

Already in this first work Maimonides was attempting to blend Greek philosophy—especially the belief of the famous thinker Aristotle (384–322 B.C.E.) that nothing is real that cannot be understood by means of reason—with traditional Jewish faith. As part of these commentaries, Maimonides also developed the thirteen articles, or statements, of faith—dealing with such topics as the origins of the Torah, the



## Rashi

Maimonides, or Ramba'm, as he was also called, was one in a long line of famous commentators, or writers, on the Torah and Talmud, the Jewish holy books. Rabbi Shlomo Itzhaki was another medieval scholar who, like Maimonides, was also popularly known by the initials of his name, Rashi (from RABbi SHlomo Itzhaki). Born in the French city of Troyes in 1040, as a youth Rashi wanted to spend his life studying at Talmudic, or religious, schools in Germany. The early death of his father forced him to take over his father's vineyards instead. He spent the rest of his life balancing two occupations: managing the family wine business and writing long, detailed, and very clear explanations of the Old Testament and the Talmud.

Ironically, Rashi's fame spread as a result of tragedy. With the beginning of the

First Crusade (1095–99), Jewish persecution in Europe increased. Crusader armies on their way to the Holy Land to battle Islam first began killing non-Christians in Europe. They attacked Jewish communities along the Rhine River, killing thousands, including major Jewish scholars. Students of these scholars eventually came to study with Rashi, who opened his own school, which became one of the most famous centers of Jewish religious study in Europe. There Rashi's scholars helped him write down much of the Jewish oral tradition of laws and rituals, thus saving them for future generations. His students and sons-in-law spread his work throughout Europe. Rashi, who died in 1105, was one of the best-known Jewish scholars of his day.

afterlife [life after death], and the oneness of God—that ultimately became a primary set of beliefs of Judaism. (Unlike Christians, who believe that the godhead, or divinity, is made up of three, or a Trinity—God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit—Jews believe that God is one.) They were later adapted to serve as the popular “Yigdal” prayer found in most Jewish prayer books, among other prayers that many Jews recite daily.

## Exile

At length, Maimonides and his family had to flee Spain to avoid death at the hands of the Alhomads. In 1160 they settled in Fez, Morocco, where he continued to work on his *Commentary*, often from memory, clarifying complex Tal-

mudic passages without a text. Five years later he and his family were again forced to move after angering the Islamic rulers of Morocco by working with Jews who had been required to convert to Islam. In 1165 the family moved to Palestine, in the Holy Land, where much of the territory was in the hands of the Christian Crusaders who had taken Jerusalem in 1099—an event that marked the beginning of two centuries of hostilities between Christians and Muslims over who should control this place considered sacred by several religions. Maimonides and his family traveled throughout the Holy Land for a little more than a year, finally deciding that the Jewish community residing there was oppressed and living in poverty. They decided to move on once again, this time to the relatively settled regions of Egypt.

In 1166 Maimonides and his family arrived in Fostat (Old Cairo), Egypt. His father died shortly thereafter. Maimonides' younger brother, David, a rabbi who also traded in jewels, supported the family for the next five years, allowing Maimonides to continue his studies and writing. In 1168 he published his *Commentary on the Mishnah*, which first brought attention to him in the Jewish world. This settled existence came to an end in 1171, when David was drowned in a shipwreck, taking the family's fortune down with him. So saddened was Maimonides that he fell ill for a year. After recovering, he realized that he now needed to support his family. He took up the study of medicine and eventually became the physician to the vizier (chief counselor) of the Muslim Egyptian ruler **Saladin** (see entry) and then to Saladin himself. It is reported that during the Third Crusade, King **Richard I, the Lionheart** (see entry), asked Maimonides to become his personal physician, but he refused and stayed in Egypt for the rest of his life.

## A Busy Life

Maimonides led a very busy and productive life. Between 1170 and 1180 he wrote his monumental work, *Mishneh Torah*, a complete code of Jewish law. At the same time, his duties to the sultan (a Muslim ruler) were “very heavy,” as Maimonides wrote in a letter quoted by Wachman:

I am obliged to visit him every day, early in the morning; and when he or any of his children, or any of the inmates of his harem [female relatives living in private, isolated housing],



Page from the *Mishneh Torah*, the systematic code of Jewish law written by Maimonides in 1180 that applied Jewish law to everyday problems.

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are indisposed [ill], I dare not quit Cairo, but must stay during the greater part of the day in the palace. It also frequently happens that one or two of the royal officers falls sick, and I must attend to their healing. Hence, as a rule, I repair [go] to Cairo very early in the day, and even if nothing unusual happens, I do not return to Fostat until the afternoon.

Once home, Maimonides ate a quick meal (the only one of the day) and then faced another heavy load of patients, both Jews and Gentiles (non-Jews). As he described it, "When

night falls I am so exhausted that I can scarcely speak.” In 1177 Maimonides was made *nagid*, the head of all the Jewish communities in Egypt, a position of great honor that brought no income but many more duties. Despite these commitments, Maimonides was still able to continue his scholarly activities.

His *Mishneh Torah* (the title means “Second Torah”) expanded the work begun in the *Commentary*. According to Wachman, it provided “a clear, practical source to which people could turn to answer day-to-day questions of law.” Maimonides arranged the code by topic in order to give the average person “reliable, definitive [final] rulings of Jewish law,” as Wachman further explains. Maimonides divided his huge work into fourteen books, dealing with Jewish laws by subject, so that readers could quickly and easily find what they were looking for. This collection was intended to function as the only book on Jewish law a person would need to consult.

Upon publication, the *Mishneh Torah* became one of the most important books in Judaism and was studied and consulted by Jews around the world. As Wachman noted, Maimonides’ book “was soon acclaimed as the greatest work of Jewish scholarship since the Talmud.” However, the book also had its critics among conservative, more traditional rabbis, who felt that the work undermined, or lessened, their authority. One French rabbi even wanted the book banned by the Inquisition, the Roman Catholic Church’s tribunal (court), which punished heretics, or those who went against the faith. As a result, there were public burnings of *Mishneh Torah* in France.

## Balancing Faith and Reason

Maimonides continued with his busy schedule. In 1190 he wrote the third of his greatest works, the *Moreh Nevuchim*, known in English as *The Guide of the Perplexed*, or confused. With this work the name of Maimonides became well known outside the Jewish world of the Middle East and Spain, for he balanced the work of Greek philosophy with Jewish religion. Written in the form of a very long letter, divided into three parts, to one of his students, the *Guide* mainly attempts to settle differences between the “scientific,” or rational, tradition of Aristotle and the biblical approach to the concept and existence of God. Maimonides concludes that reason and faith can both be useful, for there is much that science and reason

cannot explain. According to the *Guide*, where reason and philosophical explanations fail to find answers to deep questions, such as the creation and the eternal nature of the world, it is left to faith and revelation, or divine inspiration, to supply meaning. Maimonides also analyzes questions concerning good and evil, the purpose of the world and of life, and the meaning of the Ten Commandments.

Scholars have noted that Maimonides' *Guide* must be read with care, for the language is difficult and can easily be misunderstood. Maimonides himself warned against such misunderstandings in the introduction to the work:

What I have written in this work was not the suggestion of the moment; it is the result of deep study and great application [hard work]. ... Do not read superficially [lightly], lest you do me an injury and derive [receive] no benefit yourself. You must study thoroughly and read continually.

Despite such difficulties, the influence of the *Guide* "was great in both Jewish and non-Jewish circles," according to Wachman. Translated into all the major European languages, this final work of Maimonides influenced thinkers from the Catholic philosopher and saint Thomas Aquinas (c. 1225–1274) to the English scientist and philosopher Roger Bacon (1214–1292), serving as a basic text for medieval philosophy.

Maimonides lived until 1204, dying in Fostat, where he was mourned for three days. His passing was also noted throughout the Jewish world. He was buried in Palestine, at Tiberias. As a doctor he was known as a compassionate healer. His lasting contribution to that profession was his emphasis on preventive medicine, or early treatment before the onset of illness. His gift to the world of religion and learning remains huge. Wachman has called his last two works "landmarks in the history of Jewish thought." To mark the anniversary of his birth, in 1985 an international conference was held in Paris to celebrate his achievements, concluding that Maimonides was the most influential thinker of the Middle Ages.

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# Melisende

1105

Edessa, County of Edessa

c. 1161

Nablus, Kingdom of Jerusalem

Queen of the Kingdom of Jerusalem

**M**elisende was one of the most powerful women on either the Christian or Muslim side during the Crusades, several religious wars in the Holy Land spanning two centuries. The daughter of the third ruler of the Kingdom of Jerusalem—the Crusader state carved out of Palestine by the Christians after they took the city from the Muslims in 1099—Melisende ultimately became the coruler of Jerusalem, first with her husband, Fulk V of Anjou, from 1131 until his death in 1143 and then with her young son, Baldwin III, from 1143 to 1152. There were rivalries and infighting among the powerful in Jerusalem, including between Melisende and her husband and son, that made these troubled years.

During her reign, the forces of the Muslims made a comeback in the region. Under the leadership of Imad al-Din Zengi (also known simply as Zengi), a Turkish Muslim *atabeg*, or governor, the Muslims captured the fortified city of Edessa in the north and brought on the Second Crusade (1147–49). This Crusade turned out to be a major failure for the Christian forces. Melisende was perhaps a better patron, or sponsor,

“Melisende seems to have loved power for its own sake. She knew how to make herself obeyed, but she was incapable of turning [her] authority....Her regency [rulership] was marked by military disasters and political errors caused by her inability to rise to a crisis.”

—Zoé Oldenbourg, *The Crusades*.



## The Kingdom of Jerusalem

The Kingdom of Jerusalem was the name given to a twelfth-century Crusader state in Palestine having the city of Jerusalem as its center of power. When the Christian knights, or noble soldiers, of the First Crusade took Jerusalem from the Muslims in 1099, they knew that they would need to organize themselves in order to hold on to the land. Badly outnumbered by neighboring Muslims of Egyptian, Arabic, and Turkish origin, these Crusaders began to carve out little states and principalities (the territory of a prince) according to the same system that was being used in Europe at this time. The nobles would receive land from the king in exchange for their military service. These nobles, in turn, would have a number of vassals, or knights pledged in service to a lord, who would do the fighting, and they would also have peasants, or workers on the land, who would pay rent in return for protection from the nobles and knights. This system was called feudalism, from the Latin word for “fee.”

These transplanted Europeans developed this system in the coastal lands of present-day Israel, Lebanon, Syria, and Turkey, where they set up their states. There was a big difference, however, between feudalism in Europe and in the Middle East. In Europe most of the nobles lived in the countryside, but in Outremer—another name for the Crusader kingdoms meaning “beyond the sea”—the nobles lived mostly in cities, where they built strong castles. The countryside was controlled by Muslims. Thus the economy in

the Crusader states was based more on business and trade than on farming.

The Kingdom of Jerusalem was one of several such Crusader states. The first rulers built it up beyond the borders of Jerusalem to include the port cities of Jaffa, Acre, Sidon, and Beirut. Other Crusader states included the County of Edessa, the Principality of Antioch, and the County of Tripoli. Jerusalem, however, was the most powerful of these states and informally governed the others. Melisende was fourth in the line of rulers of the city and kingdom, but even during her lifetime this arrangement was falling apart. Princes in the other states competed with Jerusalem for power; some even made arrangements with the Byzantine emperor to the north in Constantinople. The nobles always had more power in the Holy Land than they had in Europe. The High Court in Jerusalem made sure the new king was elected properly, handed out money to the king, and helped raise armies.

Jerusalem fell to the Muslims in 1187, and though some of the lands nearby were recovered in the Third Crusade (1189–92), it was not until the thirteenth century that western forces once again occupied the city—and that was for just fifteen years. The title of king continued to be handed down, though this was in name only. For a time the kings ruled from other cities in the Middle East and then from the island of Cyprus, but by the end of the thirteenth century the Kingdom of Jerusalem had become a fictitious, or imaginary, realm.

of the arts than she was a ruler, for she ordered that the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, the supposed burial place of Christ in Jerusalem, be rebuilt, and she established a large abbey (institution for nuns) at Bethany, near Jerusalem.

## **A Child of the Middle East**

Melisende was born in Edessa, a county and city located along the northern boundary of the states the Crusades had established in the Middle East at the end of the First Crusade (1095–99), a part of modern-day southern Turkey. Her father, Baldwin of Bourq, was one of the original Crusaders. From 1100 to 1118 he was the ruler of Edessa, a position given to him by his cousin, Baldwin I, who became king of Jerusalem in 1100. Baldwin of Bourq married the Armenian queen Morphia. Melisende was born in 1105, just after her father had been taken prisoner by the Muslim Turks at the Battle of Harran. She would not see her father until 1108, when he was finally ransomed, an agreed-upon amount of money being handed over for his release. When her father's cousin Baldwin I died in 1118, Baldwin of Bourq was chosen to replace him and became Baldwin II, the king of Jerusalem and unofficial leader of all the Crusader states. The family of three daughters then moved to Jerusalem, where Melisende continued her education.

The reign of Baldwin II was not an easy one. Although history records seven different Crusades, there was, in fact, fighting between Muslims and Christians on and off throughout the Middle East from the end of the eleventh to the end of the thirteenth century. In 1119 Baldwin II had to deal with invading Muslim armies by leading Crusader forces in the defense of the Principality of Antioch, another important Crusader state near the Mediterranean Sea, in the far north of Christian lands. The Crusaders were badly defeated at what became known as the Field of Blood, though Baldwin was able to drive these invading Muslim Turks out the following year. Melisende's father was again captured by the Turks in 1123 and held for ransom. He gained his freedom in 1124.

By this time it was clear to Baldwin II that he would have no sons, so he began making preparations to hand over power to his oldest daughter, Melisende, at his death. Usual-

ly, sons or male relations took over from the previous ruler, but Baldwin wanted to keep the crown in his family. Baldwin thought that his daughter would need the right husband to help her rule. He chose a European nobleman, Count Fulk V of Anjou, a powerful French region. In 1127 messengers were sent to France to make a deal with Fulk, a widower almost twice Melisende's age, who already had an older son. He was promised that he would be coruler with Melisende when Baldwin died. It took a long time to conclude the deal. When Melisende was officially declared the next queen in 1129, Fulk agreed to the marriage.

## Queen of Jerusalem

Melisende and Fulk were married that same year. Soon they had two sons, the oldest being Baldwin, who would become Baldwin III, king of Jerusalem, and a younger son named Amalric, who would become king when his older brother died. As Melisende's father lay dying in 1131, he named Melisende, Fulk, and the infant Baldwin all corulers of Jerusalem. In effect, that meant that Baldwin III's parents were ruling for him until he became old enough to rule on his own. Melisende and Fulk were crowned on September 14, 1131, in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, which was still being rebuilt by the Crusaders.

Things did not go well between the couple almost from the beginning. Melisende was accused of being the mistress, or lover, of the count of Jaffa, a rival to Fulk, whose name was derived from the port of Jerusalem. Soon the kingdom was split into two camps: those who supported Melisende and those who supported her husband. The count of Jaffa actually rebelled against Fulk, bringing in Egyptian soldiers to fight for him. Fulk put down the rebellion, and the count of Jaffa was forced to give up his property, but Fulk was not the winner. Melisende won the support of enough nobles of the Kingdom of Jerusalem so that Fulk, who wanted to rule on his own, had to share that honor with his wife, permitting her to have a real voice in governing Jerusalem. It was also said that Melisende had hired the deadly Assassins, a group of religious extremists and murderers, and that this so terrified her husband that Fulk never again made any decision without first asking Melisende for her opinion.



While these Franks, as the Muslims called the Christian invaders, fought amongst themselves, Zengi, a strong Islamic leader, was building up his forces in the northern Iraqi city of Mosul, hoping to unite the Islamic world to fight a  *jihad* , or holy war, against these Franks. First he had to challenge other Muslims, such as the Muslim leader Unur of Damascus, Syria, to try to gain power in the Muslim world. In 1139 Fulk actually sent a Crusader force to fight with Unur at Damascus against Zengi, their common enemy. Fulk was successful in this. For the next five years things were peaceful in Jerusalem. Zengi was busy keeping his lands together in Iraq, while the Muslims in Egypt had their own internal battles and rivalries to deal with and left the Crusader states alone.

When Fulk V died in 1143, Melisende became the main ruler, since her son was still an adolescent, or under age. She also placed Manasses of Hierges, a local lord and relative of her husband's, in the powerful role of constable of Jerusalem—in effect, making him another ruler. Baldwin III,

**Melisende marrying Fulk V of Anjou, France. The two would become corulers of Jerusalem along with their son, Baldwin III.**

© *Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, France/The Bridgeman Art Library.*

her son, did not like being kept in the background and was eagerly waiting for the moment when he could rule on his own. Rivalry was already growing between the powerful mother and her son. The year 1143 was an important one for the Christians in the Holy Land, for not only did the king of Jerusalem die but also John Comnenus, ruler of the Byzantine Empire, the eastern Roman Empire based in present-day Turkey and Greece.

Zengi, the Muslim leader, took advantage of these deaths and the disorganization in the Kingdom of Jerusalem to invade once again. In 1144 he and his soldiers took Edessa, an action that brought a new wave of Christian Crusaders to the Holy Land in the Second Crusade, which was led by the French king Louis VII and the German king Conrad III. In 1146 Zengi was murdered by one of his own men. His equally powerful son, Nur al-Din, took over his fight to unite Islam. When the new Crusaders arrived in 1147, they attacked Damascus instead of trying to retake Edessa and were badly defeated, further weakening the position of the so-called Latin Kingdoms, or Crusader states in Palestine and Syria.

## **Mother Against Son**

Melisende enjoyed having power too much to want to share it with her son. When the time came for the handover of the crown to Baldwin III in 1145, she ignored the date and continued to rule on her own with the help of Manasses. In addition to her duties as queen, Melisende found the time to oversee the rebuilding of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, which was completed in 1149. This major symbol for Christians was also the primary site that pilgrims (visitors) to the Holy Land wanted to see. Melisende and her architects gave the church a Romanesque look, a style of architecture with round arches and high ceilings. She also founded an abbey for nuns at Bethany, spent a large part of her personal fortune on a project to beautify the city of Jerusalem, and generally supported the churches of the kingdom.

By 1152 Baldwin III was twenty-two and tired of waiting for his mother to hand over power to him. He complained to the High Court of Jerusalem, a group composed of nobles and church leaders who made legal decisions. Baldwin



asked them to divide the kingdom if his mother refused to give up power. They agreed. Baldwin got the cities of Tyre and Acre, while his mother got Jerusalem and Nablus. The court also decided that Manasses had to give up his power. But Melisende would not be defeated so easily.

Tension grew between mother and son, and soon Baldwin attacked Jerusalem and forced his mother to give up both the city and her power. She moved to Nablus, where she kept a hand in government. The rivalry between mother and son was finally laid to rest, and Melisende supposedly became one of her son's closest advisers until her death in September 1161. Melisende was buried at the simple Church of Saint Mary Josaphat in Jerusalem. Baldwin III died a little over a year later. He, however, was buried in the much more important Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

Although she supported art and architecture during her rule, Melisende proved to be an ineffective leader. During

**Monastery on the roof of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, a church rebuilt by Melisende as a pilgrimage site for Christians visiting Jerusalem.**

*© Dave G. Houser/Corbis.*

her time as queen, the Muslims made large gains in recovering land from the Crusaders. The rivalries between husband and wife and between mother and son weakened the kingdom. Jerusalem would not have another female in line to become ruler again until 1186—Sybille, granddaughter of Melisende and wife of Guy of Lusignan. In that case, however, Guy had the role of king and held the real power in the kingdom. The year 1187 marked the beginning of the end of the Kingdom of Jerusalem, when the Islamic leader **Saladin** (see entry) captured Jerusalem. Although the kingdom hung on for another century along a thin strip of land next to the Mediterranean Sea, the end was in sight. Melisende's rule was only one of several reasons for this final loss, but the infighting between competing factions (groups) in Jerusalem was a sign of the loss of Crusader unity among these men and women who had come to fight the infidel (one who is not a Christian), and stayed to build a Christian kingdom in Palestine. In fact, the Christians proved that they were no better at uniting into a single state than the Muslims had been.

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# Peter the Hermit

c. 1050  
Amiens, France

1115  
Liège, Belgium

Preacher

**P**eter the Hermit was a French preacher at the time when Pope **Urban II** (see entry) called for a Crusade, or holy war, against the forces of Islam in Palestine and Jerusalem. The pope demanded that Christians, both rich and poor, go to the Holy Land and end the centuries-long Muslim occupation there. Peter, a poor, ragged preacher living in the French region of Flanders, took the pope's words to heart. He began to preach throughout France and Germany and succeeded in raising a "people's" army of twenty thousand to forty thousand men, women, and children. Most of these people were peasants, or poor workers on the land, who listened to Peter's fine speeches about eternal salvation (forgiveness of sins) and thought it was a way out of their continual poverty and hunger. He also recruited some knights, or real soldiers, for his Crusader army, but most were common people. There were even a number of criminal types, for he attracted such people thanks to his fiery speeches and preaching.

In the spring of 1096, before the main body of Crusader forces, under the leadership of noblemen, had been assembled, Peter and his strange army set off for the Holy

"There was a priest, Peter by name.... In response to his constant admonition [scolding] and call [for a Crusade]...every class of the Christian profession, nay, also women and those influenced by the spirit of penance [seeking forgiveness of sins]—all joyfully entered upon this expedition."

—*Albert of Aix, quoted in The First Crusade: The Accounts of Eye-witnesses and Participants.*

Land. Thousands died on Peter's march across Europe and into Asia Minor due to lack of food, fights with locals on their route, and the normal illnesses and accidents that accompanied long journeys during this time period. There, not far from Constantinople, his troops were quickly cut down by the Seljuk Turks, fierce fighters who had converted to the faith of Islam. Peter later marched with the official armies of the Crusade once they had arrived, taking part in the sieges (attacks) and victories at Antioch in 1098 and Jerusalem in 1099. He returned to France not long after, founding a monastery (religious institution) where he died in 1115. His speeches in Europe from 1095 to 1096 helped spread the message and drum up enthusiasm for the First Crusade (1095–99). Though his role was not as important in creating the Crusader movement as tradition and legend would have it, he still inspired thousands to join in and devote their lives and property to the cause.

### **A Man of Mystery**

Peter the Hermit was born around 1050 in Amiens, France. Little is known about his early life. Some historians think he may have been the son of a Norman knight and that he was perhaps a soldier before turning to religion. There is no record of when or how he started preaching, or even if he was actually a confirmed (church-appointed) priest. It is also not known how he came by the name “hermit,” for religious hermits were those who remained apart from the world, living alone and devoting their lives to religion. However, Peter most definitely went out into the world. By the early 1090s he already had thousands of followers in France. He traveled around the countryside in the area of Île-de-France, near Paris, and also in Normandy, Champagne, and Picardy, speaking to crowds of people at open-air meetings and relying on gifts from the faithful to see him through financially.

Peter was a small, thin man, who went about barefoot and always dressed in a worn-out robe. He rode a donkey and preached the benefits of charity, or giving to the poor, as well as repentance, or asking forgiveness for sins. He was one of many such grassroots preachers who roamed the countryside of Europe at the time, attracting huge crowds eager to hear him speak. He was such a good speaker that his loyal followers

found him almost holy; members of the audience considered themselves lucky if they were able to snatch even a hair off Peter's poor little donkey as a keepsake, or remembrance. The German historian Hans Eberhard Mayer, writing in *The Crusades*, noted that Peter "did not look very attractive, usually being caked [covered] in mud and dirt, as he rode about the countryside on his donkey. Yet he was a man of electrifying eloquence [fine speaking ability] who radiated [gave off] an unusual power." So strong a speaker was Peter that he also attracted the rich and noble to his ranks. Many of these noblemen converted to Christianity as a result of his preaching and handed over all their worldly possessions to Peter and his charities.

Legend has it that Peter traveled to the Holy Land in 1093 as a pilgrim (religious traveler) anxious to visit the places associated with Jesus Christ. However, since about 1070 Jerusalem had been occupied by the Turks. These people from the grasslands of Asia and Persia were fresh converts to Islam and not as tolerant about letting all religions visit the holy city as the Arab Muslims had been when they held the city. A holy shrine to three faiths—Judaism, Christianity, and Islam—Jerusalem was as much a symbol of faith as a living city. Supposedly, Peter had been prevented from visiting the holy places in Jerusalem.

Returning to France, he had a vision of God, who told him that Christians could drive the infidels, or non-Christians, out of the Holy Land and Jerusalem if only they had the courage to try. According to legend, this message took the form of a letter that Peter himself delivered to Pope Urban II in Rome. Thus, Peter was the person who set the First Crusade in motion. In 1095 the pope was being guided by Peter's word when, speaking at the Council of Clermont in southern France, he called for a holy war against the Turks and Islam in the Holy Land. This legend about Peter and the origin of the Crusades was believed for hundreds of years in Europe.

In reality, it is not known if Peter visited Palestine or Jerusalem before 1095; most likely he did not. Instead, he was busy preaching in France, building up a community of faithful followers as well as enough wealth to support several charities. Certainly he never met the pope in person. After announcing the holy war at the Council of Clermont, Urban II went on to speak and preach on the same subject in other places in France. When Peter heard the call, he felt that he needed to

join the cause—probably based on good intentions rather than simply to make himself more popular with the people. As the historian Zoé Oldenbourg has commented in *The Crusades*: “Adored by the people and respected by the great, Peter the Hermit was already, in 1095, a leader of crowds.” She goes on to say that we do not know whether Peter used to his advantage the idea of a holy war as a way to make himself well liked among the people, but he did argue with the pope about claiming credit for the Crusade. In other words, the Crusades presented both a duty and an opportunity for Peter.

## The People’s Crusade

While in the company of loyal followers, Peter traveled throughout France, preaching at Berry, in Champagne, and in Lorraine. He collected money from noblemen to make the trip to the Holy Land and assembled a growing band of very unlikely soldiers to serve God. He and his crowd even received money from the Jews of Europe, a group at odds with Christian beliefs that would later be persecuted by Crusaders. Peter was also rumored to have carried with him a letter from the chief rabbi, or religious and scholarly leader, of the French city of Rouen to the Jews of Mainz, Germany, which asked for them to be charitable to him and his followers when he passed through their territory. In April 1096 Peter and his army of fifteen thousand or twenty thousand moved on to Germany to gather more faithful recruits. Even though the Germans could not understand him when he spoke, they still joined in his popular People’s, or Peasants’, Crusade, as it came to be called.

Most of these followers had no weapons, were poorly dressed, and had no money for a journey of the sort Peter was planning. Many of them joined not out of religious faith but in the hope of a better life. The years 1094 and 1095 had been bad ones throughout the land, with drought, or lack of rain, resulting in ruined crops. Peasants were ready, if not desperate, for a change. Peter’s words, which promised salvation, or deliverance, to the faithful, fell on their ears like water on dry lips. Among the faithful was a knight who would help organize this mass of people.

Walter Sans-Avoir, or Walter the Penniless, gave some sense of military order to the mob, but there were not enough

such actual knights or soldiers in Peter's ranks. Leaving Germany around May 1096, Peter and his followers were well in advance of the main Crusader armies that were still being assembled under the watchful eye of Urban II. In fact, when Urban II demanded that rich and poor alike answer his call, such an odd assortment of people as Peter had gathered was not what he had in mind. Urban had meant rich and poor knights, not Peter's rabble, or disorderly crowd. But by the time Peter and his "army" left Germany and headed for the Holy Land, they numbered between twenty thousand and forty thousand strong and had collected a considerable amount of money for food along the way.

This money soon ran out, however, for food was not always to be found along the route, and if there were not much of it, then food prices would go up. Walter's smaller group had gone first, and Peter and his large troop followed along the same route. Thus, by the time the second group passed through a region, the amount of available food was already low. This caused friction, or hostility, between the Crusaders and the local people. In Hungary battles broke out between the two, with more than four thousand Hungarians reported as having been killed by the Crusaders. While crossing Bulgaria, further conflict broke out. When a local governor attacked the Crusaders after they set fire to his water mills, thousands of Crusaders were killed. Thousands more died of starvation and accidents along the way. It took Peter and his people four months to make the journey, but finally, in August 1096, they reached Constantinople, the capital of the Byzantine Empire, or the eastern Roman Empire, and the seat of Eastern Orthodox Christianity, as opposed to Rome, which was the center of the Roman Catholic Church.



## The Holy Cross

When Peter and his ragtag band of amateur soldiers set off for the Holy Land, they must have made an amazing impression on people along the route. With Peter at the front on his donkey, the knights coming behind on horseback, and the swarms of poor people following on foot, their parade stretched across the horizon. They carried banners with the Holy Cross emblazoned (stitched) on them, and on their shoulders they all wore a patch of white in the shape of a cross.

When the professional armies of nobles and knights followed later, they wore a cross of blood-red cloth on the front of their tunics, or knee-length shirts. Those that came back safely wore the same cross on the backs of their tunics. The Latin word for cross is *crux*, and soon those who went on the holy war were called "Crusaders." The Latin word for "cross" thus gave the name "Crusades" to this two-hundred-year-long battle between Christians and Muslims.

The remains of Peter the Hermit's Crusaders after the massacre at Nicaea during the People's Crusade.

© Corbis.



In Constantinople they were greeted by the Byzantine emperor **Alexius I** (see entry), who was less than pleased with this crowd of simple laborers and women. He had asked the pope for military aid in resisting the invasions of Seljuk Turks, who were threatening his eastern borders. Now he was stuck with thousands of poor people whom he had to feed. The crowd, eager to enter the battle and fight the infidel, was soon causing the Byzantines as much trouble as they had the

Hungarians and Bulgarians. Alexius I agreed to ferry this large force across the Bosphorus Strait, the narrow body of water separating Greece from Asia Minor, where they set up camp at Civetot. Alexius I advised Peter to wait for the better-trained knights and Crusaders, who were on their way to Constantinople, before attacking the Turks, but they did not wait.

In September a band of six thousand Crusaders captured an abandoned castle, Xerigordon, and planned to use it as a base for further operations against the Turks. But soon they were surrounded by the Turks, who controlled the water supply for the castle. After a short siege, the Crusaders were killed. Before word of the disaster got back to the main camp at Civetot, Peter had returned to Constantinople to ask Alexius I for help. He made Walter the Penniless and those he had left in charge promise to remain where they were, but when they heard of the slaughter at Xerigordon, twenty thousand Crusaders set out for the Seljuk city of Nicaea to get even with the Muslims. On October 21, 1096, they walked into a trap set by the Turks, and all but a small band of Crusaders were massacred. Although this put an end to the People's Crusade, Peter nevertheless followed the other Crusader armies to the siege at Antioch, where, it seems, he deserted at one point. From there he went on to Jerusalem, where, in 1099, he preached at the Mount of Olives to inspire the men before they made their final attempt to capture that city. In 1100 he returned to Europe and founded the monastery of Neufmoustier in Liège, Belgium, where he died fifteen years later.

Peter the Hermit is the embodiment, or strong symbol, of the power of the spoken word. He, even more than Urban II, delivered the most famous propaganda (promotional information) for the Crusades. His preaching throughout France and Germany in 1095 and 1096 took the Crusader movement out of the hands of the nobles and placed it in those of the common people of Europe. The legend that formed around him sparked the imagination of the poor people of Europe for generations following the Crusades. He became a popular folk hero, the stuff of myth and legend. In reality, he was a better speaker than a leader. His poor leadership cost the lives of thousands of his followers and set the stage for bad relations between the rulers of the Byzantine Empire and future Crusader armies.

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# Richard I, the Lionheart

September 8, 1157  
Oxford, England

April 6, 1199  
Chaluz, Aquitaine, France

King of England



**R**ichard I was king of England for a decade at the end of the twelfth century, but in that time this “absent” king spent only six months in the country he ruled. Although he was born in England, he was raised at his mother’s court in the French province of Aquitaine, speaking French and practicing the noble art of poetry. But this third son of King Henry II of England (1133–1189) also practiced the manly arts of battle to such an extent that he was dubbed *Coeur de Lion*, or the “Lionheart,” for his bravery and mercilessness. More famous in literature than in life, Richard I was one of those leaders who anger allies and enemy alike. Returning from the Holy Land, he was imprisoned by the Holy Roman Emperor, who headed the Christian kingdoms of Europe; the ransom paid for Richard’s release nearly ruined England financially. He spent the final years of his life in France, where he battled his boyhood friend, the French king Phillip II (1165–1223). Richard’s early death in 1199 ended what has been called one of the worst reigns (periods of rule) in English history in terms of the hardships suffered by his subjects.

“Since the beginning of the world we have never heard of such a knight, so brave and so experienced in arms. In every deed at arms he is without rival, first to advance, last to retreat.... His deeds are not human.”

—A Muslim leader, quoted in *Warriors of God: Richard the Lionheart and Saladin in the Third Crusade*.

**Richard I, the Lionheart.**

© Bettmann/Corbis.

## Born to Intrigue

Richard was the third son born to Henry II of England and **Eleanor of Aquitaine** (1122–1204; see entry). The relationship between his strong-willed parents was a stormy one. Eleanor, who was previously married to Louis VII, the king of France, preferred her cultured court at Aquitaine, in the center of France, to England. Richard was raised in Aquitaine, the favorite of his mother, as she was for him. As was the custom of the day, during his youth he wrote verses in French and in the local Provençal dialect. He also learned the arts of war from William Marshall, his tutor for jousting (combat on horseback). As Richard reached adolescence, it was clear he would be a handsome man: he was tall and powerfully built, which was exactly how a knight (noble military leader) and future king should look. Richard's older brother Henry (following the death of the first son, William) was meant to inherit his father's kingdom, but Richard had powerful ambitions in this area.

At age eleven Richard became duke of Aquitaine and left behind childish things, such as composing and reciting poetry. Soon he began plotting to gain more land and power, sometimes siding with his mother against his father or with his father against his brothers. He badly wanted to gain control of more than just the French possessions of the Plantagenet line of kings, which was also called the Angevin line after the French landholdings in Anjou. This English dynasty, or ruling family, began with Henry II in 1154 and would last until the beginning of the Stuart line of kings and queens in 1603. Besides being king of England, Henry II was also duke of the French holdings of Normandy, Brittany, Anjou, and Touraine; through Eleanor he also held title to the duchy of Aquitaine. He was thus a powerful figure both in England and in France. If the Plantagenets fought among themselves, they were also engaged in an ongoing rivalry, if not outright war, with the Capets, another French dynasty (987–1328).

At least on paper King Henry II and his holdings in France were under the control of the king of France. During Richard's lifetime the main representative of that line was Philip Augustus, son of Louis VII, the former husband of Richard's mother. Philip, who was eight years younger than Richard, spent much time at the court of Aquitaine in

Poitiers, where Henry II attempted to win through treaties what he could not win by war. Many historians believe that Richard and Philip developed a homosexual, or same gender, love for each other in adolescence and early adulthood. To complicate matters, Philip's half-sister, Alais, had been engaged to Richard from an early age. However, Richard's father, Henry II, who always had an eye for pretty women, took the girl for his own mistress, or lover. While still a youth of fourteen, Philip was declared king of France in 1179 and took the name Philip II.

Aquitaine, which was Richard's inheritance, was also a feuding (fighting) region. Its nobles were always rebelling against the rulers in Poitiers. By 1169 Henry II had managed to get these dukes and counts in line, but four years later family peace was threatened by a rebellion of sons against their father. Richard joined his older brother Henry, already proclaimed the next king, and younger brother Geoffrey, duke of Brittany, in open rebellion against Henry II. Their mother, Eleanor, angry at her husband for his continual cheating with other women, encouraged her sons. Henry II invaded Aquitaine and quickly put this rebellion down, but Richard was the last to give in. The sons were forced to pledge loyalty to their father; Richard lost the title of duke of Aquitaine and had to take orders directly from his father.

## **A Soldier-King in the Making**

Such orders, however, were to Richard's liking. During the next five years he was constantly battling with the nobles of Aquitaine and nearby Gascony, who refused to bow to the power of King Henry II. It was during these years that Richard gained the reputation of a fierce and relentless fighter, attacking and seizing castles throughout the Plantagenet lands in France. His resourcefulness and bravery were demonstrated time and again. For example, he gained fame throughout Europe in 1179 for taking the fortress of Taillebourg, on the Charente River, which was believed to be impregnable, or too strong to conquer. Richard staged a scorched-earth campaign, burning crops and poisoning wells, which won him this prize.

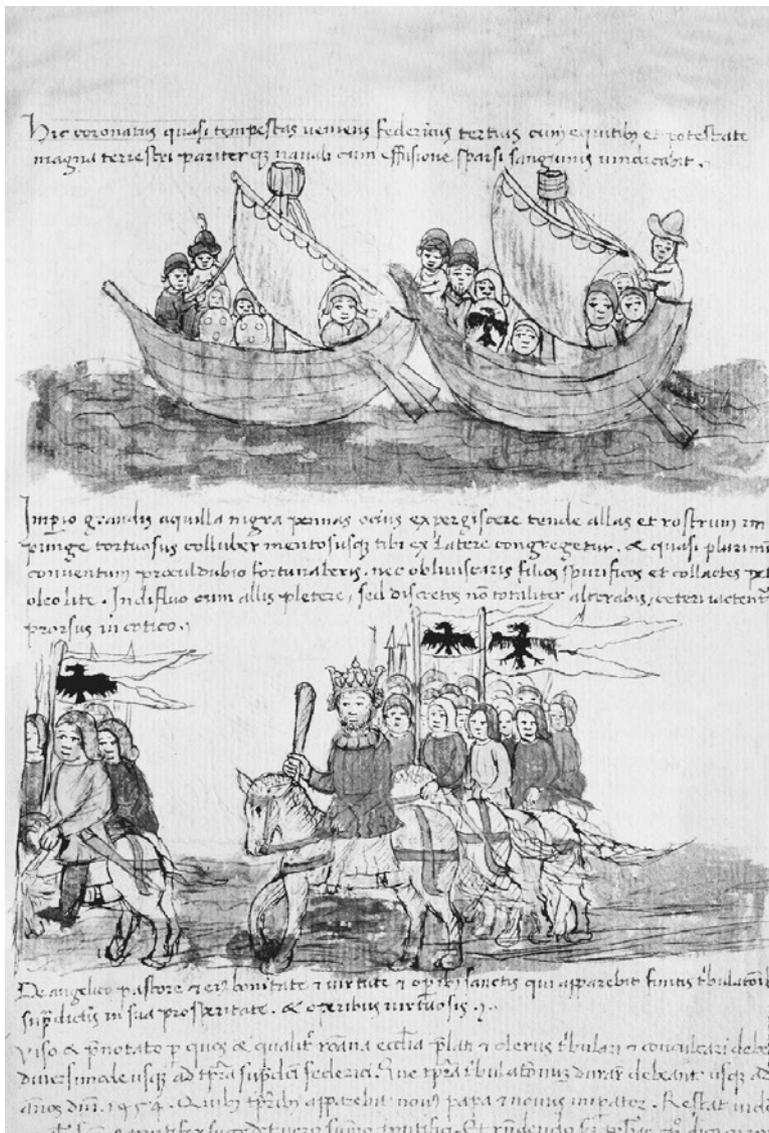
Family problems broke out again when King Henry II demanded that Richard pay homage, or pledge his loyalty, to

his older brother Henry, who was destined to be the future king of England. Richard stubbornly refused to do so, so in 1183 this brother invaded Aquitaine. He was joined in this campaign by Geoffrey, his other brother. Now even Henry II grew alarmed. This war between brothers threatened the Plantagenet line, for it quickly spun out of control, with Richard taking the offensive and slaughtering some of the invaders. The king rode to Aquitaine to try to stop the fighting. However, a truce was put in place only when Henry the Younger, Richard's brother, died of an illness in June 1183. Suddenly, nothing stood in Richard's way to becoming king himself—or so it seemed.

Now that Richard was the new heir, Henry II demanded that he give Aquitaine to his youngest brother, John, who had no duchies. John's nickname "Lackland" points to his landless condition. Richard would not hear of it, for Aquitaine was his homeland. A new round of hostilities broke out between father and son, in part spurred on by King Philip II, Richard's old friend and rival. With the accidental death of Geoffrey in 1186 in a jousting tournament, Richard and John became the only possible heirs to the crown. Philip II, always eager to play one Plantagenet against another, formed an alliance with Richard against Henry II, with both setting out to take the throne away from the father by force. This they accomplished by surrounding the king in his birthplace of Le Mans and burning down the town. Henry II had to flee on horseback from his own son. Deserted by most of his followers, on July 6, 1189, the aged and ill king died, with Richard at his deathbed. Then, on September 3, 1189, Richard traveled to England—one of his few brief visits to that country—to be crowned king of England. Taking the title Richard I, he set out on the new mission of saving the Christian kingdom in the Holy Land.

## The Third Crusade

Word had already reached Europe of the Muslim victories under the leadership of **Saladin** (see entry), specifically his taking of the holy city of Jerusalem in 1187 from Christian Crusaders, who had held it for almost a century. The Crusaders began their struggles against the Muslims, believers in the faith of Islam, at the end of the eleventh century, in an ef-



An illumination of a Third Crusade expedition. Richard I fought in the Third Crusade, defeating the Muslim leader Saladin but never completely capturing the Holy Land. © Archivo Iconografico, S.A./Corbis.

fort to win back the Holy Land for Christianity. This Crusade, or holy war, would last until the end of the thirteenth century. By Richard's time there had already been two Crusades. With the First Crusade (1095–99) the Christian armies had established kingdoms in the Middle East. With the Second Crusade (1147–49) their strength was challenged by new Muslim leaders, among them Nur al-Din (1118–74). Now the pope, leader of the Roman Catholic Church in Rome, called for a



## The Crusade Begins at Home

When Richard I was crowned king of England in 1189, the event seemed to inspire an outbreak of anti-Jewish feeling throughout England. Houses were burned down in the Jewish quarter of London. During one incident in 1190, five hundred Jews in the English city of York killed themselves rather than have an angry mob massacre them. Jews had long been persecuted in Europe as the enemies of Christianity. It was said that they had handed Christ over to the Romans to be crucified, or nailed to the cross, and were thus the targets of hatred for centuries. It was as if the local population in England and Europe felt that they should begin to kill the “infidels” (non-Christians) at home before they set off for the Holy Land to murder Muslims.

The Third Crusade, led by Richard I, was not the only one to inspire such terrible events. With the First Crusade (1095–99) the killings had already begun. One of many unofficial leaders of a Crusader army, Count Emich of Leiningen was especially infamous, or notorious, for his cruelty toward Jews that his army encountered along the

route to the Crusades. This German set his band of mercenaries, or paid soldiers, loose on the Jewish populations in towns throughout Germany, including Spier, Worms, and Mainz, taking prisoners and demanding ransom, or payment to set them free. Even when the money was paid, Emich killed his helpless victims anyway. Another German Crusader named Volkmar did the same thing to the Jewish community in Prague while on his way to the Holy Land; however, when he tried the same deed in Hungary, he and his band were killed by the Hungarian army, one of the few countries in Europe to protect its Jewish population. Emich, too, was defeated by the Hungarians and never reached the Holy Land.

These Jewish massacres were an awful foreshadowing, or warning, of what could be done in the name of Christianity or any strong belief system. While these soldiers claimed they were only fighting the enemies of God in Europe, they were actually motivated by a shameful reason: greed. They were after the money and wealth they could steal from the Jews along the route to help pay for their travels to the Holy Land.

new Crusade to free the holy city of Jerusalem from Saladin, the latest Muslim warrior, and his armies. Even before becoming king, Richard had “taken the cross,” or promised to join this new Crusade. Thus, his first act after becoming king of England was to raise enough money to outfit a Crusader army. He sold all his possessions in England, from church lands to sheriffs’ positions; legend has it that Richard said he would even sell London if he could find a buyer. By the sum-

mer of 1190 he was ready to set sail for Palestine, leaving England to be ruled by his chancellor, William Longchamp. His brother John did not join the Crusade; instead, he stayed in England and immediately began to stir up factions (smaller groups) against Richard.

Richard sailed with the French king, who was also taking an army to fight the Muslims. A third army, under the German emperor Frederick Barbarossa (1123–1190), traveled by land to the Middle East. Richard, however, was not content to journey peacefully to the Crusades. He managed to fight battles and create new enemies for himself along the way. Arriving in Sicily, in the far south of Italy, he became involved in the struggle for succession to determine who would become the next king. Richard ultimately backed a man named Tancred, who had seized control after the death of the previous king. Tancred had imprisoned Richard's sister, Joan, widow of the former king, and was ruling in the place of Constance, the rightful heir to the throne and the wife of Henry VI, the man who would shortly become Holy Roman Emperor.

Although this emperor was really a ruler in name only, officially he was the head of a loose collection of kingdoms making up the Holy Roman Empire (962–1806), in present-day eastern France, Germany, Austria, and Italy. Nevertheless, it was not a good idea to anger him, as Richard would later learn. Charging ahead into this dangerous and delicate situation, Richard sacked and burned the city of Messina, won the release of his sister, and stayed on until March 1191. He then made another stopover on the island of Cyprus, where he again fought over and captured the Christian city of Limassol, looting and killing all who opposed him. In Cyprus he married Berengaria of Navarre, the woman his mother had handpicked for him. This wedding angered his Crusader partner, Philip II, because Alais, the French king's own half-sister, had long been pledged to Richard, even though she had been the mistress (lover) of Henry II.

Richard finally reached the Holy Land in June 1191, in time to aid in the siege of Acre, a Saracen stronghold. (The Saracens were a nomadic Muslim people who came from a region between Syria and Arabia and whose name was equated by the Crusaders with all Muslim or Arab forces.) Despite being sick with fever, Richard and the Crusaders finally cap-

tured the city on July 12, 1191. This victory occurred after a two-year siege, and though the Crusaders came to respect the defending Muslims, this did not prevent them from slaughtering most of the Muslims—under Richard’s orders—once they had been disarmed and were defenseless. During the battle for Acre, Richard managed to anger yet another ally, Austrian duke Leopold V, who was placed in charge of the German Crusaders following the death of Frederick Barbarossa. At one point in the fighting Richard threw Leopold’s standard, or flag with his battle colors, into the mud, not wanting it to stand alongside his and Philip’s.

Soon Richard and Philip also had a disagreement, and the French king set sail for his homeland. Richard was now solely in charge of the Crusader army. Despite being badly outnumbered, he defeated the Muslims under Saladin at the Battle of Arsuf. These two military leaders continued to fight each other for the next few months, with talks of a truce repeatedly called off because of Richard’s unreasonable demands. At one point Richard even offered to give his widowed sister to Saladin’s brother in marriage if the man converted to Christianity. This offer, like his demands for total control of the Holy Land, was rejected by the Muslim leader. A final victory at Jaffa was not enough to win Richard his most desired prize—Jerusalem. Badly outnumbered, he knew that he would not be able to hold the city even if he were able to capture it. Also, word had reached him of trouble at home: His brother John and King Philip II of France were conspiring against him to rob him of his crown. In July 1192 he set sail for England, determined to hold on to his kingdom.

## The Final Years

Fearful of the enemies he had made during the Third Crusade, Richard traveled secretly, in the company of pirates. When his ship was wrecked, he made his way by land, still disguised because of his earlier insult to Leopold of Austria. In the city of Vienna, Austria, Richard was recognized and thrown into a cell in Leopold’s castle at Dürnstein on the Danube. From there he was handed over to Henry VI, the Holy Roman Emperor, who also had a grudge against him. Henry kept Richard as a hostage, and for the equivalent of

roughly one hundred billion dollars in the currency of modern times, he agreed to set Richard free.

Meanwhile, John continued his scheming to become king. However, his mother, Eleanor of Aquitaine, now entered this battle and managed to gather supporters for Richard. The English finally raised a first installment on his ransom, and in March 1194 Richard reached England, put down the revolt, and was crowned king of England for the second time. He remained in the country for just two months, long enough to raise more funds to help him regain territory lost in France along the border of Normandy. Leaving in place Hubert Walter as governor, Richard returned to Aquitaine, where he fought for the next five years. Although the ransom paid for Richard all but ruined England economically, he demanded more funds to build a series of castles to defend his far-flung lands in England and France, the largest being the fortifications at Château Gaillard, on the river Seine, which cost almost two years' income of the British Crown. While other military leaders would end hostilities from harvest time to Christmas every year, for Richard it was always war all the time. His victories against Philip II of France kept the barons (men who had earned titles and land through service to a lord) in line and the money coming in to fuel his war machine.

In the end, however, it was not fighting his longtime rival Philip II that ended Richard's career, but rather a petty (silly) argument over discovered treasure. Philip and Richard agreed to a five-year truce in 1198, but Richard was stirred back into battle when the viscount (a rank of nobleman) of Limoges, France, refused to turn over to the king a treasure that had been discovered by a peasant while plowing his field. When Richard surrounded the castle of the viscount at Chaluz, he forgot to wear his armor and was shot in the shoulder by a crossbow. The surgery to remove the metal tip left his shoulder badly torn, and deadly gangrene (a blood infection) set in. After making his younger brother John the new king, Richard II died on April 6, 1199, and was buried in the abbey (home for nuns) church of Fontevrault, where his parents were also laid to rest.

Richard had so weakened the English treasury, or royal bank, that when John was king (1199–1216) it was impossible for him to retain the lands in France that the English

had long held. Despite his reckless act of pushing the monarchy to the edge of financial disaster with his war economy, Richard was made famous by the balladeers and troubadours, or roving singers and poets, of the day. His fame became the stuff of legend in stories by the Scottish novelist Sir Walter Scott (1771–1832) and tales about the good-hearted bandit Robin Hood. Richard’s claim to fame is a complex one: He was an outstanding soldier and military leader, but he was also capable of great cruelty. In many ways he was politically intelligent, but he was also ignorant of the most basic skills of diplomacy, or international relations. His overblown sense of himself made foes of friends, but his actual enemies, such as Saladin and the Muslims, respected his energy and battle skill.

Richard was one of the most famous of medieval kings because of his warlike nature, yet his accomplishments were not as great as those writing about him after his death would have us believe. As James Reston Jr. has noted, Richard I of England

is one of the most romantic figures of all of English history. In lore that has been embellished [made larger than life] over the centuries and read to schoolboys at bedtime, Richard has become the very epitome [prime example] of chivalry [honorable behavior], the knight fighting bravely for his kingdom, his church, and his lady with axe, shield, and horse. ... Richard is remembered for his bravado [boldness] and cunning—and his extravagance [wastefulness]. He is not remembered for his compassion [kindness and caring], his tact, or his restraint.

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# Saladin

1137

Tikrit, Iraq

March 4, 1193

Damascus, Syria

**Muslim warrior and leader**



The most famous of all heroes of the Islamic faith, Saladin (pronounced sa-la-DEEN) attempted to unite the Islamic world to fight the Christian Crusaders who had taken over the Holy Land of Palestine. The two centuries of conflict between East and West, Islam and Christianity, began in 1095 with the First Crusade, when the Christians tried to recapture the holy city of Jerusalem from the Muslims. This was accomplished in 1099, leading to two centuries of intermittent (on and off) warfare between the European Christians and the mainly Arab followers of the prophet Muhammad (c. 570–632 C.E.), founder of the religion of Islam. Having been named sultan (ruler of a Muslim state) of Egypt, Yemen, Syria, and Palestine, and having established the Ayyub dynasty (1174–1258), in 1187 Saladin assembled an army of Muslim fighters to recapture Jerusalem. This victory angered the Europeans and brought on the Third Crusade (1189–92), led by the English king **Richard I, the Lionheart** (see entry), among others. Saladin was able to bring this Crusader army to a standstill, demonstrating not only great courage but also fairness and mercy to his enemies. He is one of the few warriors

“I have become so great as I am because I have won men’s hearts by gentleness and kindness.”

—Saladin to his son, Zahir;  
quoted in Saladin.

**Sultan Saladin.**

© Bettmann/Corbis.



## Nur al-Din

Nur al-Din (1118–1174), together with his father Zengi, proved to be a powerful model for Saladin in his bid to unite the Islamic world and retake lost lands from the Crusaders. Zengi, the *atabeg*, or Turkish Muslim governor and military leader of Syria, was one of the first Islamic rulers to fight fire with fire during the time of the Crusades. That is, the Christian knights had journeyed to Palestine and the rest of the territories of Syria to fight a holy war against Islam. Two could play at that game, Zengi thought, for the Islamic concept of jihad, or holy war, also provides for fighting against “infidels,” or nonbelievers—that is, those who doubt

the word of the prophet Muhammad and do not accept the Islamic faith. Interestingly, following the First Crusade (1095–99)—which resulted in the slaughter of thousands of Muslims when Jerusalem fell to the Crusaders in 1099—Muslims followed a policy of “live and let live.” With Zengi this policy changed. He had a dream of uniting all of Islam in a holy war. When he and his troops attacked and captured the fortified Crusader city of Edessa in 1144, it made him one of the leaders of a renewed Islamic effort to get rid of the Franks, as the Muslims called the Christian Crusaders. This action also led to the Second Crusade (1147–49).

of the period to be equally respected by both sides, immortalized by Islamic and European writers alike.

### Saladin’s Kurdish Origins

Born Salah al-Din Yusuf ibn Ayyub (literally “Righteousness of the Faith, Joseph, son of Ayyub or Job”), he became known by the westernized name Saladin. His father and other ancestors were of Kurdish origin, coming from Armenia to the north and living in Tikrit, a city in Mesopotamia (present-day Iraq), at the time of his birth in 1137. Although his was an eminent, or well-respected, family, Saladin’s people were not of noble blood. His father, Najm al-Din, was commander of the fortress of Tikrit when his son was born. Shortly after Saladin’s birth, Najm al-Din joined the service of the powerful lord Zengi (ruled 1127–46), who governed the city of Mosul in northern Iraq. Both Saladin’s father and his uncle, Shirkuh, rose to powerful positions under this ruler and his son, Nur al-Din

When Zengi was murdered in 1146, his son, Nur al-Din, took power. Born in Damascus, Syria, Nur al-Din was an unusual leader for his time. Like a modern ruler, he used public relations to spread his fame, assembling at his court poets and historians who would write of his adventures. He took the idea of a holy war further than his father, hoping one day to retake Jerusalem and also to bring Egypt under his control. During the Second Crusade he captured important cities, such as Damascus and Antioch (in present-day Turkey), from other Muslim leaders and was able to defend them against the Crusaders. He also managed to bring lands in Anatolia (the peninsula of Asia

Minor in Turkey) under his control and create a new power base in Egypt.

It was there that the youth Saladin, who was then serving as lieutenant to Nur al-Din's vizier (an executive officer), came into his own. Although Saladin and Nur al-Din eventually became rivals for power in the Muslim world, they both had the same goal of uniting Islam and defeating the Crusaders. Nur al-Din did not live to see the successful completion of his plan to retake Jerusalem from the Christians. That honor was Saladin's. Nur al-Din is remembered in Islamic history as a wise and just ruler whose vision was an inspiration to Saladin and others who followed.

(1118–74), who were attempting to unite the Islamic world. Saladin grew up partly in Baalbek, in the Bekaa Valley of Syria, and later in the ancient city of Damascus, where his father commanded Zengi's militia.

This powerful ruler was partly successful in his efforts to unite Islam. In 1144 Zengi's forces captured the Crusader province of Edessa in northern Mesopotamia, an event that brought more Europeans to fight in the Second Crusade (1147–49). Although Zengi did not live to see their arrival—he died in 1146—the Crusader armies were defeated in 1148 outside the walls of Damascus. This event must have made a powerful impression on the young Saladin. It is not known whether he and his family were still living in Damascus, but the very fact that the mighty Crusaders were defeated by well-trained Muslim forces left a lasting influence on his later career. Little is known of Saladin's early years other than the fact that he was known as a bookish boy who liked to study religion and law. He also had a wild side, playing polo and drinking wine; because of his strong religious beliefs, he later gave up wine.

By the time he was fourteen, Saladin was sent to serve under his uncle, Shirkuh, in Aleppo, a city near the Mediterranean Sea. Shirkuh was by this time a military commander for Nur al-Din, who had taken over power from his father. At just sixteen years of age, Saladin was given a grant, or parcel, of land for his service. He also married the first of several wives, a practice permitted by Muslim law. (He would eventually father a total of seventeen children by his various wives.) From his father, Saladin inherited a gift for diplomacy, or managing international relations, and administration. However, as his biographer P. H. Newby has noted in *Saladin in His Time*, “Since administrators had to be soldiers, too—perhaps first and foremost—he had to be proficient [skilled] in combat: swordsmanship, the management of the horse, archery and above all how to thrust with a lance when mounted.” He would need all these skills in his career, for now he knew that his mission in life was to free Palestine of the Franks.

### **Saladin’s Meteoric Rise to Power**

Saladin continued to gain more and more power. Through his uncle Shirkuh’s influence and his own talents, he rose to prominence under Nur al-Din and his followers. Between 1164 and 1169 he accompanied his uncle in defending Cairo, a city in Egypt, from attacks by Crusaders. During these years he gained valuable military knowledge both from his uncle and from Nur al-Din. Shirkuh became vizier, that is, administrator of the country, in the name of the Fatimids, the political and religious dynasty that had ruled Egypt and North Africa since 909. This dynasty claimed descent from Fatima, the prophet Muhammad’s daughter, and was in direct opposition to the Abbasids, the other powerful Muslim dynasty, which had its base in Baghdad. With the death of Shirkuh in 1169, Saladin himself became vizier, and he proceeded to transform the land of Egypt into a powerful economic center. He fortified Cairo, built public works and houses of worship, and encouraged the arts and sciences. Meanwhile, he was also assembling a strong army under his command. In 1171 he became supreme leader of Egypt by abolishing the old Fatimid caliphate, or successor Islamic regime.

The year 1174 marked a turning point for Saladin. His former ruler Nur al-Din had died, as had a powerful Crusader

king in Jerusalem. The way seemed to be open for him to continue his program to unite the Islamic world. However, he had enemies within the Muslim world who opposed him. In 1174 he defeated two of his strongest Muslim enemies, the lords of Mosul and Aleppo, at the Battle of the Horns of Hamah. He then became governor of Egypt, Yemen, Syria, and Palestine, making him the most powerful man in the Islamic world.

## Saladin Consolidates His Power

Saladin still had to overcome many obstacles to unite Islam. In 1174 and again in 1175 he survived attempts on his life by the Assassins (from the Arabic *Hashashin*), a radical sect, or branch, of Islam that murdered its enemies. He also had to put down revolts by various Arab princes. By marrying Ismat al-Din, the widow of Nur al-Din, he helped consolidate (strengthen) his position as ruler of Syria.

Beginning in 1177 Saladin determined to systematically remove the Crusaders from their fortresses along the eastern shore of the Mediterranean. He launched a series of campaigns that initially were unsuccessful, but in 1179 he had his first victory against the Franks, capturing the Crusader castle at Jacob's Ford. These efforts were slowed, however, because rival Muslim leaders rebelled against his growing power. The leaders in the cities of Mosul and Aleppo again challenged his right to rule, and in 1183 Saladin's forces laid siege to, or blockaded, Mosul. Saladin realized that to maintain control of the situation, he would have to leave his base in Egypt. He established his new power center in Damascus. Saladin was also bothered by ill health; in 1185 he nearly died of one such illness, and he never fully recovered his health.

Despite these difficulties, Saladin continued in his quest for *jihad*, or holy war, against the "infidel" (nonbelievers) Crusaders. (Ironically, the Crusaders also used the term "infidel" when referring to Muslims.) He had established truces with the Crusader states in Palestine, but in his mind there could be no peace until the Europeans were driven out and sent home.

## The Breaking Point

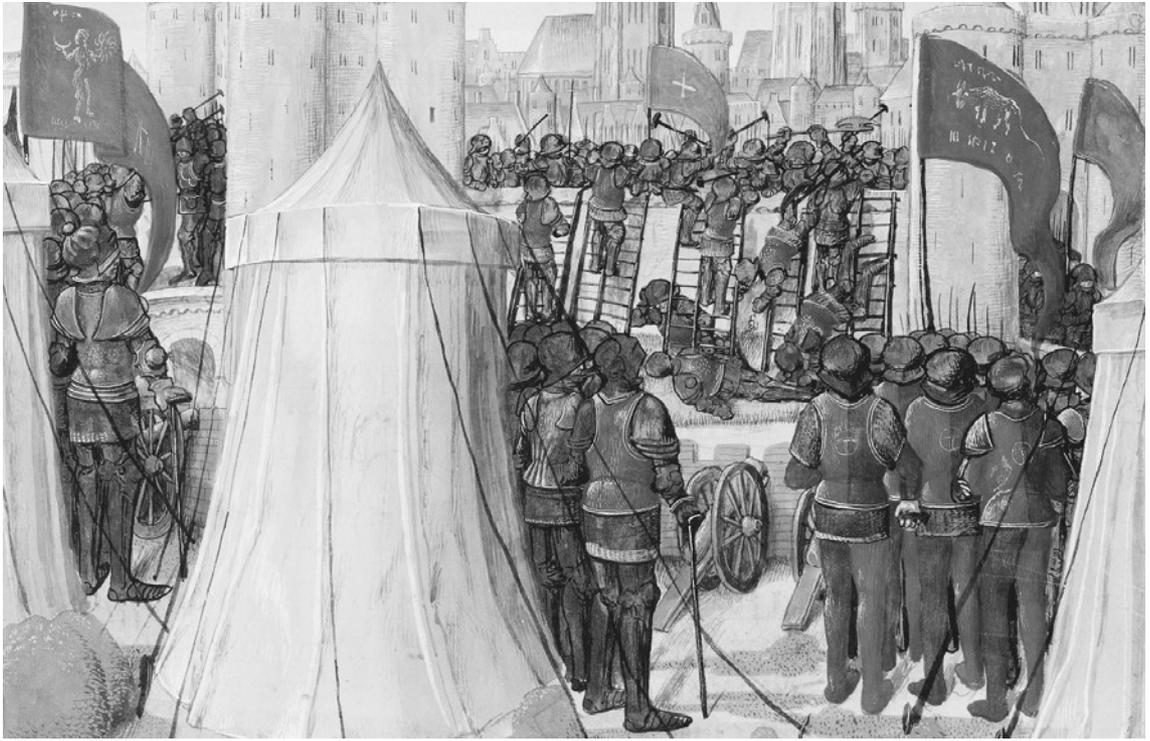
Saladin's plans for ridding the Near East of Christian Crusaders were speeded up by the actions of a Frank named

Reynaud de Châtillon, whose fortress castle of Kerak (to the southeast of the Dead Sea) controlled the caravan and pilgrimage route between Syria and Egypt. When Châtillon attacked one of Saladin's supply trains and took his sister hostage, the Muslim leader had had enough. He gathered a force of twenty-four thousand cavalry and infantry, as well as numerous other volunteers, and moved toward Tiberias, located on the Sea of Galilee in northern Palestine. Once there, he captured the town and set a trap for the Crusader army that was being assembled by King Guy of Jerusalem, the leader of the Franks. Saladin arrayed, or spread out, his troops in a place called the Horns of Hattin, consisting of several hills near Tiberias, and waited for the Christians. Since he controlled the water supplies, he knew he had the upper hand. The Crusader knights, or professional soldiers, were dressed in armor that was both heavy and hot. Attacked by advance bands of Muslim fighters using bows and arrows, many of these knights lost their horses.

The night of July 3, 1187, the Franks were exhausted and almost out of water. The next morning, with the rising sun to his back, Saladin and his troops attacked and conquered the Crusader army, whose leaders were captured or killed. As he had sworn, Saladin beheaded Châtillon, the knight who had captured his sister. Yet he showed mercy to many others: King Guy was set free after promising that he would not fight again, and some knights were ransomed—that is, they had someone pay for their freedom.

With this victory behind him, nothing stood between Saladin and Jerusalem, the first step in his plan to recapture the Holy Land. This city was sacred (holy) to Muslims, Christians, and Jews alike, and for almost a century the Crusaders had made this the center of their foothold in the Middle East. Pushing them out of Jerusalem would send a message to all Christians that their time was up in what Saladin saw as Arab lands. He attacked the city on September 20, 1187, his troops surrounding the walls. Contemporary accounts of the siege speak of arrows falling like rain on the citizens of Jerusalem. The hospitals of the city were filled with the wounded.

After a week of direct fighting, Saladin moved his camp to the Mount of Olives to find a weaker spot in the city wall to attack. At first the citizens of Jerusalem thought he



was leaving the field. However, they were quickly disappointed when he brought in giant catapults (devices for hurling heavy objects) to shower the city with rocks and “Greek fire,” a flammable mixture of pitch, naphtha (known in modern times as crude petroleum), quicklime, and charcoal that ignited whatever it struck. Worn out and running low on water, on October 2, 1187, the inhabitants of Jerusalem were finally forced to give up the fight. Saladin set a modest price for the release of the citizens of the city, and orderly evacuations began after the fall of Jerusalem. This was in marked contrast to the behavior of the Christians when they had captured the city back in 1099. Thousands were slaughtered and the streets ran ankle deep in blood. Saladin showed mercy, permitting most of the inhabitants of Jerusalem to go free and even allowing them to take their possessions with them. Such behavior won him the respect of the defeated Christians. After the fall of Jerusalem, Saladin and his forces took back much of Palestine, leaving only Antioch, Tyre, and Tripoli (the last two in modern-day Lebanon) in Crusader hands.

**Saladin and his army climbing over the walls of Jerusalem on their way to overtaking the city in 1187, shortly before the Third Crusade.** © *The British Library/Topham-HIP/The Image Works.*

## The Third Crusade

Saladin had partly achieved his goal of getting rid of the Franks. However, King Guy broke his word by assembling an army and attacking the Muslim fortress of Acre on the Mediterranean. At the same time, three Christian kings in Europe reacted strongly to the Muslim victory at Jerusalem. England's king Richard I, the Lionheart; France's king Philip Augustus; and Germany's emperor Frederick Barbarossa all gathered armies and headed for the Holy Land to retake Jerusalem. The army under the command of the German emperor was weakened after its leader drowned while trying to cross a mountain stream on his way to the Crusades, but it carried on under Count Leopold V of Austria. Meanwhile, King Richard I and King Philip took their men across the Mediterranean Sea to the Holy Land. Upon arrival, they joined the other Christian forces already there and laid siege to Acre. Saladin repeatedly tried to lift the blockade but was unsuccessful. In July 1191 Acre fell to the Crusaders.

For Saladin this proved to be a terrible defeat, but soon he was encouraged by conflicts within the Crusader armies. Philip and Richard—friends and rivals since childhood—quarreled, and the French king left the field, sailing for France. Richard I had other problems as well. His brother, Prince John, was conspiring with the French king to grab the English crown in Richard's absence. For fifteen months Saladin and Richard I battled up and down Palestine and Syria. At one point it seemed there would be a peaceful solution, but then Saladin decided Richard's terms were too costly to the Arab cause, and the skirmishes and battles continued.

A mutual respect grew up between the two men. It is reported that Saladin sent his personal physician to the English king after he had suffered an injury during battle; at another time the Muslim leader gave Richard a horse after his own was killed. On September 7, 1191, Richard I and his men defeated Saladin at the Battle of Arsuf, with the Islamic forces losing seven thousand men. However, Saladin was able to keep ahead of the Crusaders on their march to Jerusalem. Although Richard I came within sight of the walls of Jerusalem, Saladin prevented the English king from laying siege to the city by controlling the precious water supplies surrounding it.

Despite another minor victory for Richard I at Jaffa, the two military leaders reached a stalemate, or deadlock, in

the Third Crusade, with both finally agreeing to a truce on September 2, 1192. According to the terms of this truce, called the Treaty of Ramlah, Saladin and the Muslims were left in control of Jerusalem, but the Crusaders were allowed to keep some of their holdings along the coast and also were granted the right to visit the city and its shrines as pilgrims, or religious visitors. King Richard I sailed for England the following month. Saladin, exhausted by his labors and battles, returned to Damascus and his family. He did not have much of a chance to enjoy his life away from the battlefield, for late that winter he fell ill with a fever and died on March 4, 1193.

Upon Saladin's death, civil war broke out in his kingdom between his sons and his brother, al-Adil. Al-Adil finally won, and by 1201 he had taken over all of Saladin's former lands. But Saladin was not forgotten. This first Ayyubid sultan was one of the strongest Muslim leaders since Muhammad, uniting the feuding Islamic groups to fight the Christians and returning Jerusalem to the Islamic people. Since then he has remained an inspiration to generations of Arabs who dream of uniting Arabs and Muslims. His tomb in Damascus is a major pilgrimage site for Muslims as well as a tourist attraction. It is not just Arabs who honor his memory; as Newby has written in his biography, Saladin is "Christianity's favorite Muslim." By acting in the chivalrous (honorable and courageous) manner expected of a knight, he won the respect of his enemies and found a place in western literature. In the *Divine Comedy* the Italian poet Dante Alighieri (1265–1321) honored Saladin by assigning him a place in the afterlife reserved for virtuous pagans, or non-Christians. The Scottish writer Sir Walter Scott (1771–1832) also recorded Saladin's adventures in his novel *The Talisman*. As James Reston Jr. has commented in his *Warriors of God: Richard the Lionheart and Saladin in the Third Crusade*, Saladin was "a preeminent hero of the Islamic world. ... In the seemingly endless struggle of modern-day Arabs to reassert the essentially Arab nature of Palestine, Saladin lives, vibrantly [excitingly], as a symbol of hope and as the stuff of myth."

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# Shajarat al-Durr

c. 1223

Armenia or Turkey

1257

Cairo, Egypt

Sultana of Egypt

One of a handful of strong female Muslim leaders at the time of the Crusades, Shajarat al-Durr was a slave who rose from the ranks of mistress, or lover, to become the wife of the sultan (Muslim leader) of Egypt. Following the death of her husband during the Seventh Crusade (1248–54), she assumed joint control of the Muslim forces with two other counselors and helped defeat the Crusader armies of French king **Louis IX** (see entry) at the Battle of Mansurah. After a palace revolt, she was made sultana, or female leader of Egypt, a position she held for three months. She was displaced by those uncomfortable with a female leader and replaced by a Mamluk soldier, Aybeck. Yet Shajarat would not give up her power so easily. She went on to marry Aybeck and in essence continued to rule Egypt on his behalf as he fought enemies abroad until her execution for treason in 1257. Shajarat al-Durr's tale is full of plots, high adventure, and tragedy—the stuff of fiction. However, there was nothing fictional, or imaginary, about her defeat of the French forces during the Crusades. The Egyptian victory at Mansurah in effect ended enthusiasm in Europe to send more Crusaders to the Holy Land

“Capable and beautiful, [she] must have been one of very few women in history who commanded an army in a major battle, as she did against Louis IX, King of France.”

—*Sir John Glubb, Soldiers of Fortune: The Story of the Mamlukes.*



## A Trio of Strong Women

Shajarat al-Durr was not the only powerful woman involved in the events of the Seventh Crusade. While she helped rally the Egyptian troops after the fall of Damietta and contributed to the victory at the Battle of Mansurah, the French camp also had its fair share of strong women.

Louis IX's mother, Blanche of Castile, was the granddaughter of the powerful **Eleanor of Aquitaine** (see entry), who was queen of England. Blanche inherited some of her grandmother's strength of character, marrying Louis VIII, the future king of France, when she was only eleven. Once queen, she showed such leadership abilities that her husband, when lying on his deathbed, named Blanche to rule jointly with their young son, Louis IX. She became the first queen with real power in French history, putting down revolts by lesser nobles in order to secure the crown for herself and her son, finally defeating them and winning the respect of the

French people. When Louis IX left for the Seventh Crusade, he put his mother in charge of affairs in France.

The king was also lucky to have a very capable and loyal wife accompany him to Egypt. Queen Margaret, who was nine months pregnant, was left in charge of Damietta when the king moved his forces to Mansurah to fight the Egyptians. Three days after her husband's capture by the Mamluks, she gave birth to a son. That same day she also learned that part of the Crusader forces were planning to abandon Damietta, thus leaving the place undefended against the Muslims. The queen realized that if they did not hold Damietta, they would have nothing to offer the Egyptians in exchange for King Louis IX. Queen Margaret managed to persuade these Crusaders to stay on, using her own money to feed them. Thus Damietta was held, and Louis IX was later released—all owing to the quick thinking of his queen.

or Egypt. Shajarat al-Durr is often called the "Joan of Arc of Islam," after that famous fifteenth-century French heroine (c. 1412–1431) who also led her armies to victory.

### From Harem to Battlefield

Little is known of the early life of Shajarat al-Durr, who is also called Shajara, Shagrat, Shagar, Shaggar, and Shagarat. Her name has been translated as "Tree of Pearls," "String of Pearls," or "Spray of Pearls." It is supposed that she was born in Armenia or Turkey sometime in the early 1220s.

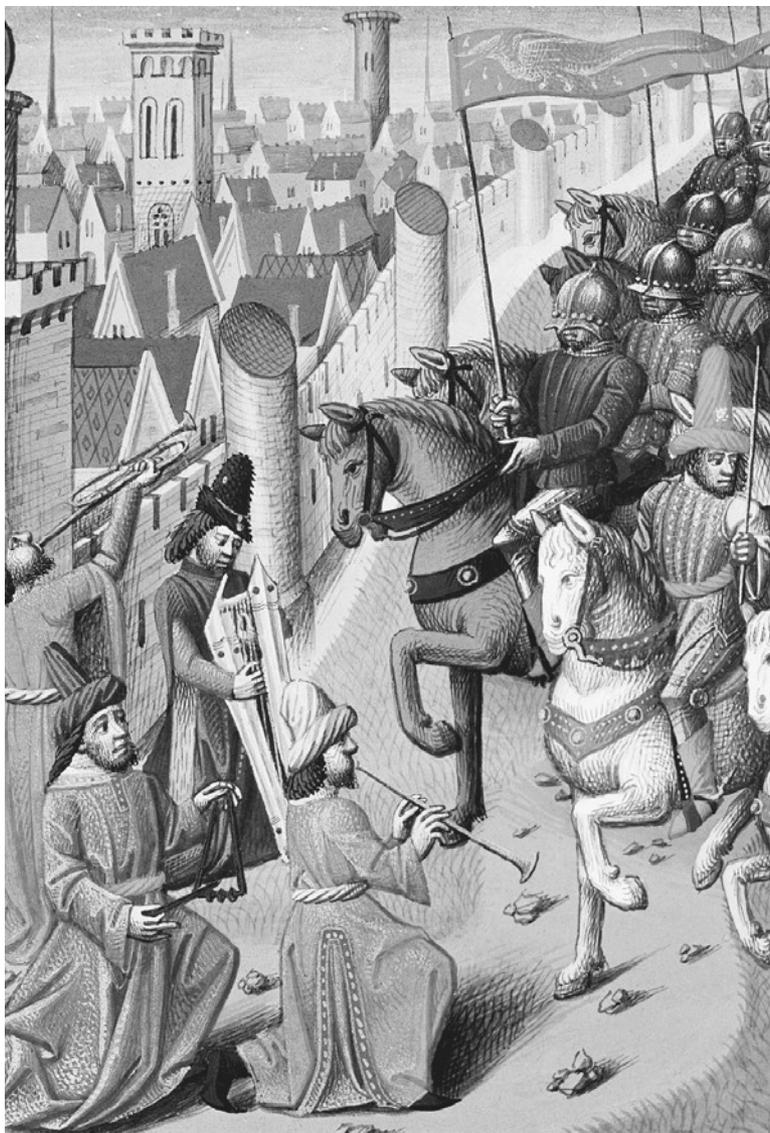
The first historical record of her dates from 1239. At that time she was listed as a Mamluk, or female slave living in a harem, a special area reserved for women who were the wives or mistresses of a Muslim man. According to Islamic law, men are allowed to have up to four wives. This harem belonged to al-Musta Sim, the powerful caliph, or religious leader, of Baghdad (in modern-day Iraq).

It is clear that Shajarat was not only a beautiful young woman but also a very intelligent one. In 1240 she was presented to al-Salih Najm al-Din Ayyub, the sultan of Egypt and the last member of the Ayyubid dynasty, which had begun when the powerful Muslim leader **Saladin** (see entry) conquered Egypt in 1169. Settled in Cairo, Shajarat al-Durr steadily gained in influence and won the favor of the sultan, becoming one of his wives. When the sultan was captured by a rival Muslim in 1248 and thrown into prison for a year, Shajarat al-Durr accompanied him and gave birth to their son, Khalil. After this show of loyalty, Shajarat al-Durr became al-Salih's favorite wife.

In early 1249 a Crusader army under the leadership of Louis IX arrived at the mouth of the Nile River. They, like other Crusaders before them, had made plans to capture Cairo and then move on to the Holy Land and recover Jerusalem. By this time the Crusades had been going on for more than 150 years. These Crusaders quickly captured the city of Damietta. The sultan was dying of tuberculosis (a fatal lung disease) and perhaps also some form of cancer. As his favorite wife, Shajarat al-Durr probably aided al-Salih during these difficult days, but it is not clear how much power she held while he was still alive. Al-Salih decided to direct matters from the battlefield and so left Cairo to set up defenses at the small town of Mansurah, site of a historic victory over the Crusaders during the Fifth Crusade (1218–21). This victory had been won by al-Salih's father, **Sultan al-Malik al-Kamil** (see entry), and now his son hoped to perform the same miracle.

He gathered his elite, or most highly trained, professional soldiers, called Mamluks, or foreign slaves, such as Shajarat al-Durr had been. These trained fighters had been taken as youths from outside the Muslim world—in areas of Turkey, Russia, and even northern Europe—and given a thorough and difficult education in the arts of war. Once they had undergone

An illumination of King Louis IX entering the city of Damietta after he had captured it from the Egyptians during the Seventh Crusade. © *Archivo Iconografico, S.A./Corbis*.



this training, they were considered paid soldiers; although they were no longer slaves in the literal sense, they were still referred to as Mamluks. Many of them converted to Islam.

Shajarat al-Durr accompanied the sultan to the field, and when he died on November 23, 1249, she plotted with his two advisers—Fakhr al-Din, the second in command of the troops, and Jamal al-Din, who was in charge of the palace—to keep the sultan's death a secret. They simply told

the troops that he was very ill and even had a servant bring food to his tent as usual. Meanwhile, Shajarat al-Durr sent an urgent message to the sultan's son (and her stepson), Turan Shah, in Mesopotamia to return to Egypt with his men.

During this same period the French had been gathering new forces and were preparing to attack the Egyptian camp, which was on the other side of a river that separated them. In February a spy showed the French where they could cross the river. Led by Robert of Artois, the king's brother, the French attacked. They quickly took the Egyptian camp and then, contrary to their orders, followed the Egyptians to Mansurah without waiting for reinforcements. At this point the Egyptian Mamluks, led by their young general, **al-Zahir Baybars** (see entry), counterattacked and cut down the Crusaders once they had entered the narrow streets of the town. The rest of the Crusader forces were still crossing the river and were powerless to help. The French had no choice but to retreat, leaving behind the bodies of a large number of their most important knights, or professional soldiers, including the king's brother. Also killed in the battle was the Muslim commander Fakhr al-Din.

## The Sultana

Not long after this victory, Turan Shah, the sultan's son, arrived in Egypt with his forces and finished off the French, capturing the king and most of his army. The rest of the Crusader force at Damietta held out, hoping to trade the city for the return of their king. During all these events Shajarat al-Durr had shown herself to be a strong and capable leader, helping run the government and the military following the death of Fakhr al-Din. With the arrival of Turan Shah, however, this role ended. Instead of showing gratitude to Shajarat al-Durr or to the Mamluks, such as Baybars, for saving his empire, he began awarding high offices, or posts, to his own men, which ultimately brought about a revolt.

The Cairo Mamluks under Baybars and Shajarat al-Durr would not let themselves be shoved aside. On May 2, 1250, the Mamluks, led by Baybars, attacked Turan Shah at a feast he was giving. Wounded, the sultan's son managed to escape to a fortified (strengthened) tower in the Nile River.

When the Mamluks set the tower on fire, Turan Shah jumped into the river. Baybars himself finished the job by killing Turan Shah with his sword. After this assassination, there were no living relatives of Sultan al-Salih to inherit the throne. Even Khalil, the son of the sultan and Shajarat al-Durr, had died by this time. Thus Shajarat al-Durr, the sultan's widow, was declared the sultana and was also proclaimed Umm Khalil, "Mother of Khalil."

Placing Shajarat al-Durr on the Egyptian throne was a way to make the new rulers seem more legitimate, or lawful and rightful heirs to the throne, for she could be considered the next in line for the Ayyubid crown. But Shajarat al-Durr had also proved herself a capable leader. It is clear that her rule was not ceremonial—that is, she did not rule in name only. In fact, she had coins made up with her name stamped on them, and her name was also mentioned during the Friday sermon at the mosques, or Islamic places of worship. Both of these honors were reserved for true leaders. In addition, she continued Turan Shah's negotiations with the French for the ransom (payment) for the king's release. The French paid a large sum, after which Louis IX was released and sailed to Acre in the Holy Land.

Shajarat al-Durr ruled as sultana for almost three months, until criticism in the rest of the Islamic world put pressure on Egypt to have her unseated (removed from the throne). It was a new thing for a woman to rule in Muslim countries. The caliph in Baghdad threatened to send troops to remove her if the Egyptians did not. A compromise was finally reached. In July 1250 Aybek, a high-ranking Mamluk, was made sultan. Although Aybek already had a wife and a son, Shajarat al-Durr realized that her power would be lost if she did not become his partner. She first won him over to her side and then married him, becoming unofficial leader of Egypt. The marriage was more than one of convenience, however, for it seems that Shajarat al-Durr really loved this military leader. For most of their marriage Aybek was far from Egypt, busily fighting Ayyubids in Syria, who claimed that the Egyptian throne rightfully belonged to them and not to the former Mamluks. In Aybek's absence Shajarat al-Durr was the real power center in Cairo. She made sure the government ran smoothly while her husband attended to military matters.



This arrangement worked well for seven years, until Aybek decided to replace her with a new wife, a woman he wanted to marry in order to secure a political alliance with the city of Mosul, in present-day Iraq. Discovering this plan, Shajarat al-Durr grew jealous and plotted the death of her husband, a man she had sacrificed so much for and who was now going to toss her aside. Despite learning of her plot to murder him, on April 29, 1257, Aybek was tricked into coming to her, where her paid assassins killed him. If Shajarat al-Durr thought that she could take over control of the empire through this action, she was wrong. Ali, Aybek's son by his first marriage, was named sultan. Aybek was so powerful that his death would not go unpunished. Shajarat al-Durr must eventually have realized this—too late. After crushing all her jewels into powder so that no one else could have them, she was arrested several days later. She was turned over to Ali's mother, the woman from whom Shajarat al-Durr had taken Aybek. The former sultana was beaten to death with the wooden shoes of this woman's

**Tomb of Mamluks,  
constructed by Shajarat al-  
Durr, where she and all  
those who had fought for  
Egypt were laid to rest.**

© Bettmann/Corbis.

slaves and her body thrown over the high walls of the Citadel of Cairo (the fortress of Cairo) to be eaten by dogs. Later, her remains were gathered up and taken to a mausoleum, or burial place, that Shajarat al-Durr had earlier constructed for herself. It can still be viewed in Cairo today.

Many legends and romantic stories have grown up around the life of Shajarat al-Durr. While some historians all but ignore her, treating her as just another wife of a sultan, others place her front and center during the Seventh Crusade and the Mamluk power grab in Egypt. The truth lies somewhere between these two viewpoints. Shajarat al-Durr not only ruled on her own for a brief time but also successfully (though unofficially) ran the government of Egypt for seven years. Her symbolic importance as one of the few women to gain power in the medieval Muslim world is nevertheless greater than her achievements as a leader.

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# Rashid al-Din Sinan

c. 1133  
Basra, Iraq

c. 1192  
Masyaf, Syria

**Syrian Ismaili Shiite Muslim leader**

**R**ashid al-Din Sinan was known to westerners during the Crusades (Christian holy wars against Islam from the eleventh to thirteenth centuries) as the Old Man of the Mountain, or Shaykh al-Jabal. Sinan—who was a *dai*, or spiritual leader and missionary of the radical Ismaili Shiite sect (subgroup) of Islam, an extreme religious group—led a community of some sixty thousand faithful from his mountain castle of Masyaf, a fortress built high in the mountains of northern Syria. The leader of the Syrian Ismailis for three decades, he fought both Crusaders and other Muslims, especially those of the rival Sunni sect majority, including **Saladin** (see entry). As leader of the faithful, Sinan also instructed his *fidais*, or loyal followers, to assassinate supposed enemies of the Ismailis. Called *hashashin*, these fanatical killers are the source of the English word “assassin,” used to describe politically motivated murderers.

## Sinan Converts to Assassin Sect

Much of the story of Sinan and the Assassins is bathed in the romance of fiction and fantasy. Born Rashid al-Din (the

“Be assured that we do not kill any man in this way for the sake of reward or for money, but only when he has first inflicted [caused] an injury on us.”

—*Sinan, quoted in Warriors of God: Richard the Lionheart and Saladin in the Third Crusade.*



## Sects of the Islamic Faith

Sinan studied the Ismaili and Assassin teachings at the Persian hilltop fortress of Alamut. These sects of Muslims were the result of several schisms (pronounced SKIZ-ems), or splits, within the Muslim world, all of which came about because of fights over succession to the leadership of Islam. The first such schism occurred between Sunni and Shiite Muslims over the succession to leadership of the faithful from the Prophet Muhammad, who had founded Islam in the seventh century.

After Muhammad's death in 632, he was followed by religious leaders called "caliphs." These leaders were not believed to have the same powers of prophecy as Muhammad had. Close associates or, in some cases, relations to Muhammad, the caliphs carried on a united Islam until the fourth one, who was Muhammad's cousin and son-in-law, Ali (he was married to Fatima, daughter of Muhammad). With Ali's death, however, a split took place in the religion. A group called the Shiites broke away from the main branch of Islam, for they be-

lieved that the leadership of Islam should have stayed in the Prophet's family. For them, Ali was the first real successor to Muhammad. They also believe that the true word of God or Allah can be spread only by "imams," divinely appointed representatives of Muhammad. They consider Ali to be not only the first real caliph but also the first such imam, and through him and his sons this office was passed on.

The word "Shiite" comes, in fact, from the phrase *shi-at Ali*—that is, "the party of Ali." These imams were powerful religious leaders of almost divine, or godlike, status for the Shiites. The main branch of Islam, the Sunnis, on the other hand, believed that caliphs, or successors to Muhammad, are the rightful heirs to the leadership of Islam and that these successors did not have to be of Muhammad's family. They did not believe in the all-powerful imams. The Sunnis accepted not only the writings of Muhammad in the Muslim holy book, the Koran, but also the supplemental laws in what is called the Sunna, as being of equal

name means "Orthodox in Faith") near the town of Basra in present-day Iraq, Sinan was brought up in the Shiite Muslim faith, one of the two main branches of Islam, which considers Ali, the son-in-law of the Prophet Muhammad, as the true successor to the head of the Muslim faith. The exact date of Sinan's birth is not known; scholars think that it was either 1133 or 1135, with most agreeing on the earlier date. He was apparently descended from a prominent, or important, family. Following an argument with his brothers, he left home and traveled to

authority in the religious teachings of Islam. For Sunnis the word “imam” now sometimes has the same meaning as “caliph,” but it can also refer simply to the person who leads Friday prayers. It does not have the divine meaning that Shiites give it.

Within the Shiites there were further splits. The so-called Twelvers believe that there were twelve God-inspired imams, while the Seveners believe in only seven and think that the last was Ismail, the older son of the sixth imam, Jafa al-Sadiq, who was passed over for succession. The Seveners are also called Ismailis. For the Twelvers, the last of the imams, al-Mahdi, is supposed to be hidden away from humanity until the end of the world. However, the Seveners believe that Ismail’s spirit and power return through various leaders throughout time. One further schism occurred within the Ismailis over the succession of religious leaders. Breakaway Ismailis became known as “Nizaris,” after the person they backed to become the new religious leader in Cairo at the end of the eleventh century.

Under the leadership of Hasan ibn al-Sabbah, around 1090 this sect established its center at the mountain stronghold of Alamut, in Iran, quickly spreading throughout Persia and Syria. Hasan’s was an esoteric, or mystical, branch of Islam that rejected and went beyond human reason; it had several levels of initiation (or admission through rites and ceremonies) into secrets that supposedly gave participants special powers.

Soon the followers of this first Hasan became known as the *hashashin*, perhaps because of their use of the drug hashish in their rituals or perhaps through some corruption, or misreading, of the name Hasan. These followers included a large group of what were known as *fidai*, who, though not completely initiated into the sect’s secrets, would still defend the faith with their lives. Hasan began using these *fidai* members to kill enemies of the Nizaris; their typical method was by means of a dagger in a public place. Sinan was supposedly descended from a Twelver family and converted to the Ismaili belief when he went to Alamut.

the famous fortress of Alamut in Iran, which had become the center of the Ismailis, a breakaway group of Islam. There he was accepted by the grand master Muhammad and was subsequently educated with the sons of this leader. He became friendly with one son, the future ruler Hasan II, who would later send Sinan to Syria as his emissary, or representative.

It appears that after his education at Alamut, Sinan returned to Iraq around 1160, where he was put in charge of the Ismaili sect in the district of his hometown of Basra. In 1162 Hasan

II, the new imam, or leader, sent him as his deputy to Syria. The Syrian Ismaili leader Abu Muhammad died in 1164, and thereafter Sinan was the *dai* of Syria, next in line to the imam himself. The Syrian Ismailis were not as well organized as those in Iran or Persia. They had suffered at the hands of both the Christian Crusaders, who first appeared in the Middle East in 1096 to recapture the Holy Land from the Muslims, and their fellow Muslims, many of whom were of Turkish origin and belonged to the Sunni majority. There had been massacres and acts of vengeance. A large number of Ismailis had left the cities and gathered in the mountainous region of north-central Syria. It was there, in the castle of Kahf, where Sinan began his work as chief *dai* of the Assassins, as his group of Ismailis were commonly called.

### **Sinan Unites the Syrian Ismailis**

Abu Muhammad, Sinan's predecessor, had not been very successful in establishing a Syrian homeland for the Assassins. Under the leadership of Sinan, new fortresses were built in the mountainous region where they lived and worshiped. Besides Kahf, the most famous of these were Masyaf and Qadmus. Already famous as a teacher and healer with telepathic, or mind-reading, powers, Sinan began recruiting new members to the faith. He taught these members various languages then in use in the Middle East, including French and English, and what would come to be called spy craft: gathering information, putting all communications in a secret code, and using pigeons to send messages. He was able to keep in constant contact with various Ismaili commanders by means of this communication system; in fact, his "pigeon post" may have given rise to the stories about his telepathic powers.

It appears that Sinan, though he had been sent by Hasan II to Syria, was independent of the Persian leadership at Alamut. His followers began to believe in him as the imam and nearly worshiped him as a god. Under his leadership, the Syrian Ismaili sect became far more than just a branch of the new religion. Declaring itself independent of Alamut and Hasan II, it became a powerful new force in the Middle East, one feared by Crusaders and mainstream, or traditional, Muslims alike. Sinan's use of assassination struck fear in the hearts of all his enemies. Westerners called Sinan the Old Man of the Mountain, but actu-

ally this appears to be a mistranslation or a too-exact translation of the Persian word *pir*, which means “master” or “sheik” (chief). Sinan was not simply a fanatic (extremist); his reign in Syria proved that he was capable and talented, and he preserved Ismaili independence against the attacks of various foes.

Sinan’s enemies included anyone who tried to consolidate, or organize, the region, for that would have threatened the Ismailis’ independence. Thus Sinan found enemies among both the Christian Crusaders—or Franks, as the Arabs called them—and the Sunni Muslim leaders, such as Nur al-Din and Saladin, who were attempting to unite Islam. When these two men overran Egypt in 1169, they roused Sinan’s anger, for that was one of the centers of Shiite and Ismaili power. In 1174, when Saladin put an end to the Fatimid caliphate, the Shiite dynasty ruling from Cairo, Sinan knew he must act. Saladin suddenly became the most powerful man in the Middle East, for Nur al-Din had died that year, as had the main Christian Crusader leader. Saladin moved into this power vacuum, and Sinan knew he must stop this military leader before he gained total control of Iraq and Syria. Twice Sinan sent his *fidai* to assassinate Saladin—and both times they failed.

In 1176 Saladin invaded Sinan’s territory. After surrounding the castle of Masyaf and discovering that Sinan was not there, Saladin mysteriously withdrew. The reasons given for this retreat differ, depending on who tells the story. Abu Firas, an Ismaili historian and source of many stories about Sinan, claimed that Saladin was warned off when he discovered an Assassin’s dagger on his pillow, a warning he took to heart. Others say that Saladin found that the threat from the Franks was more urgent and that fighting the Ismailis was a waste of his time. Whatever the reason, it seems that after about 1176 a truce was called between Sinan and Saladin. Some historians even report that in 1187 Assassins fought alongside Saladin and his forces in the decisive battle against the Crusaders at the Horns of Hattin, a victory that allowed Saladin to later recapture Jerusalem from the Christians.

## **Sinan’s Relations with the Crusaders**

Sinan and his followers came into direct conflict with the Crusaders because their mountainous homeland had been

taken from these Christians. Many of the strongest Crusader fortresses, such as Krak des Chevaliers, were located very close to the Assassins' strongholds. Before Sinan's arrival, the Ismailis were forced to pay tribute (a kind of tax) to the Templar order, the group of military monks who controlled much of the region near the Ismaili lands. When Sinan came to power, he tried to achieve peace with these Crusader forces, fearful of fighting two enemies at the same time. To this end, in 1172 or 1173 he entered into negotiations with Amalric, the leader of the Crusaders and king of Jerusalem.

Some historians write that Sinan offered to convert to Christianity to further his cause. It is known that Sinan did not strictly follow the Shiite teachings; as a philosopher he was interested in the teachings of Christianity. Whether conversion was part of the bargain is unknown, but Amalric canceled the tribute Sinan was forced to pay to the Templars. This, in turn, angered the Templars, and they had Sinan's messenger killed on his return journey from Jerusalem. Thus

the Crusaders lost the possibility of having Sinan and his men as their allies. With the death of Amalric in 1174, and once the disagreements with Saladin had been repaired, Sinan and the Syrian Ismailis became allies with the other Islamic forces against the Christians.

## The End of Sinan

Sinan demanded absolute loyalty from his followers. Several stories tell of how many of his followers would jump to their deaths at the snap of his fingers. His telepathic powers are celebrated in tales by the Arab historian Abu Firas. Toward the end of his life Sinan was responsible for one of the most famous and hotly debated assassinations of the Crusades. Conrad of Montferrat, a Frankish leader of the Third Crusade (1189–92), arrived in the Holy Land too late to help out at the port and fortress of Acre (in modern-day Israel), which had already been taken by Saladin. He sailed on to the city of Tyre (in present-day Lebanon), which he helped defend against the Muslim forces. There, Conrad earned the hatred of most of the Islamic world for his slaughter of Muslim prisoners. Conrad was also a rival to England's **Richard I, the Lionheart** (see entry). Moreover, he had personally angered Sinan by seizing one of the Assassins' ships that had landed in Tyre. When Sinan asked for the return of this prize, Conrad refused, killing the ship's captain instead.

In 1192 Sinan had his revenge. Two Assassins who had been disguised as monks in Conrad's household attacked the man in the streets of Tyre, stabbed him repeatedly, and finished the job in a church where the injured Conrad had been taken. One Assassin was killed, and the second was captured and tortured. At first he claimed that Richard I hired him to kill Conrad. Only later did the truth come out—namely, that Sinan was again scheming from a distance.

Sinan died either that same year or in 1193. It is not clear whether he died from natural causes or if there was foul play involved, but many of his followers believed Sinan had actually gone into hiding from enemies and would reemerge to lead them once again when it was safe for him to do so. The man who became the new leader of the Assassins did not have Sinan's force of character or organizational abilities.

Never again were the Syrian Ismailis as strong as they had been under Sinan. As Enno Franzius noted in his *History of the Order of Assassins*, Sinan “was not only an outstanding personality but also an efficient administrator. He consolidated the Assassin position in Syria, organizing and training fidais (probably in the Castle of Kahf), acquiring and erecting new castles, rebuilding and fortifying old ones.” For James Reston Jr. “Sinan was brilliant, clairvoyant [able to read minds], ruthless, deceitful, pious [devoutly religious] and ascetic [self-disciplined], with eyes fierce as meteors, a physician’s power of healing, and a tyrant’s power of awesome destruction.”

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# Urban II

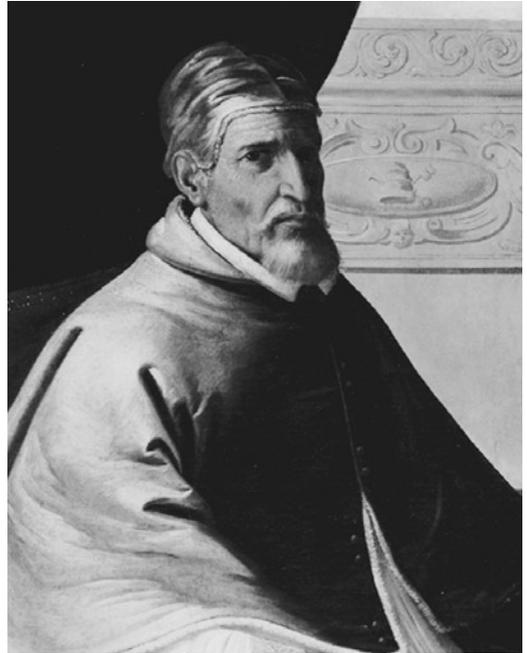
c. 1042

Châtillon-sur-Marne, Champagne, France

July 29, 1099

Rome, Italy

Pope



**U**rban II, a French pope (head of the Catholic Church), ruled at the end of the eleventh century. He was known as an excellent organizer and tireless worker for renewed political power for the church. Following the rule of Gregory VII, who was pope from 1075 to 1085, Urban II helped solidify gains made for the papacy, or the office of the pope, against the political power of the kings of Europe. He developed a central governing structure for the church and ultimately made the papacy a powerful player in Europe, equal to the early monarchies, or kingdoms, of the continent. Clever in the use of the spoken word, Urban's most lasting achievement was his connection with the Crusades. Speaking at a meeting of church leaders held in 1095 in the southern French town of Clermont, he urged the crowd to spread the concept of a Crusade against the Arab and Turkish Muslims—the name for believers in Islam and the word of the prophet Muhammad—who had occupied Jerusalem and the Holy Land of Palestine. His call to arms brought about the First Crusade (1095–99) and resulted in two centuries of conflict between the Christian West and Islam. Although he did not

“The Turks and Arabs have attacked....They have killed and captured many, and have destroyed the churches and devastated the empire.... On this account I, or rather the Lord, beseech you...to destroy that vile race from the lands of our friends.”

—Urban II, “Speech at Council of Clermont, 1095, according to Fulcher of Chartres”; quoted in the Internet Medieval Sourcebook, [http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/urban2\\_hy>fulcher.html](http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/urban2_hy>fulcher.html).

**Pope Urban II.** © Archivio Iconografico, S.A./Corbis.

live to witness the event, his speech inspired Crusader soldiers to capture Jerusalem in 1099.

## **Born Into the French Nobility**

Born Eudes, or Odo, of Lagery, the man who would become Pope Urban II grew up in a French noble family in Rheims, located in the province of Champagne. Being the second son, it was assumed that his career would be in the church, since the firstborn son would inherit the lands. Odo studied at the Cathedral School of Rheims, where he learned the basic skills he would need to enter such a career. In the age in which Odo grew up, such skills included not just reading, writing, and a thorough knowledge of the Bible but also political skills and knowing how to accept and give orders. He was headed for greater things than being a parish, or local, priest. At Rheims he rose to the rank of archdeacon, a senior position in the church under the bishop, or head of a large religious district.

With this experience behind him, Odo left Rheims at age twenty-eight to become a monk, a member of the religious order at the famous monastery of Cluny, located in the French province of Burgundy. There he lived a strictly regulated religious life, working under the abbot Hugh, who was the head of the monastery. Ultimately he rose to the rank of prior, just below the abbot. The monastery of Cluny was known for producing monks with great ambition and a strong belief in reforming the church. These reforms included not only improving the moral lives of those inside the church but also making the church more powerful in the secular, or nonreligious, world.

## **Assistant to the Pope**

Odo was sent by the abbot Hugh to work as an assistant to Gregory VII, one of the most important popes the church has ever produced. Gregory VII was trying to push through reforms in the church that would increase its power over the princes of Europe. His major rival in this effort was Henry IV, emperor of the Holy Roman Empire, a loose collection of German kingdoms that lasted from the tenth to the

nineteenth century. This emperor claimed secular power over his subjects, which for Henry IV meant appointing bishops of the church in his lands. Gregory VII opposed this, telling the emperor that any power he had came from God and that he, Gregory VII, was God's messenger on earth. Thus, the church was more powerful than the state. Such a position was sure to bring Gregory VII into conflict not only with the emperor but with many other kings and princes in Europe as well.

In his position as assistant to Gregory VII, Odo represented the pope on missions in France and Germany, working to strengthen the role of the church in these lands. He made sure to promote bishops who displayed a sense of loyalty toward Gregory VII and who agreed with his plans for a bigger, stronger papacy, getting rid of those who did not. This work earned Odo his own promotion; he became a cardinal bishop, the step just before becoming a cardinal, an office second in power to the pope. (The cardinals elect the pope.) Odo showed that he was not afraid to act against the emperor. On one occasion he was imprisoned by Henry IV but was soon released.

At large church meetings held throughout Europe, Odo also became a tireless spokesperson for reform and directly criticized Henry IV and Clement III, the man whom Henry IV had elected as the so-called antipope, in opposition to Gregory VII. This election of a competing pope by the emperor led to fighting in and around Rome in the 1080s. The emperor's army fought the pope's hired soldiers, or Normans, who had created a kingdom in Sicily, in the south of Italy. These Norman fighters were of Viking origin and were hard to control. At one point it looked as if they would succeed in capturing Rome for Gregory VII, but they ended up destroying the city, and Gregory was forced to go into exile, eventually dying in 1085 without retaking Rome.

## **From Odo to Urban II**

With the death of Gregory VII, the church needed to elect a new pope. Although he was nominated to become the next pope, Odo lost to Victor III, who was not terribly eager to accept the job. Rome lay in ruins, and there was still fighting going on between the church's forces and the emperor's army. Victor III held the position of pope for only three years,

dying in 1088. Odo was again nominated and this time won, choosing Urban II as his official church name. His first act was to tell the world that he would continue the policies of Gregory VII. This was easier said than done. The pope's Norman armies were now fighting among themselves in Sicily, forcing him to go there to try to make peace, so that he could use the Normans for his own needs. He was successful in this endeavor, and by late 1088 he entered Rome with Norman troops at his side. Most of the city, however, was still in the hands of Clement III, the antipope. Urban II excommunicated, or excluded from the church, both the emperor and his antipope. He then went on to win a crucial battle. Urban II was now in control of Rome.

Urban II set about making friends and allies of various princes of Europe so that they would aid him in his fight against the emperor. He arranged marriages and made treaties with the Lombard League, consisting of the cities of northern Italy, to combat the power of Henry IV. While Urban II was traveling, Rome was again occupied by the antipope. He had to wander through Italy for three years before once again assembling enough forces to take the city back in time for the Easter celebrations of 1094.

By threatening excommunication for all who opposed him, Urban II managed to keep the princes and kings of Europe in line. He also spoke out against priests wishing to marry and criticized the practice of simony, or buying and selling pardons and church offices. He established a center of church government in Rome, promoting church law that increased the power of the papacy. Urban II was very modern in his approach to spreading his message. Throughout the eleven years he served as pope, Urban II traveled around Europe, organizing great councils that included the entire populace in order to advertise and popularize his reforms; the major councils were held at Piacenza (March 1095), Clermont (November 1095), Rome (1097 and 1099), and Bari (1098).

### **Urban II Calls for a Crusade**

One of those rulers Urban II wanted to befriend was **Alexius I** (see entry), emperor of Byzantium, the eastern por-

tion of the old Roman Empire whose capital was in Constantinople (present-day Istanbul, in Turkey). This eastern Christian empire was coming under attack by a new force in the Middle East, the Seljuk Turks, who emerged from Central Asia and subsequently converted to Islam. Under such leaders as **Alp Arslan** (see entry), the Seljuks were chipping away at the eastern portions of the Byzantine Empire and had even managed to take the holy city of Jerusalem. Alexius I sent messengers to Urban II asking him to help fight these Seljuk invaders. Urban considered this request at the meeting in Piacenza, but it was at the Council of Clermont, also held in 1095, that he made his most urgent plea for help for the eastern Christians.

This council met from November 18 to November 28, and among other business it conducted was the excommunication of France's King Philip I for having relations with a woman outside marriage. During this council Urban II also reminded the world that the pope and the papacy had ultimate power over the church. The most important speech he gave occurred on November 27, when he proclaimed the need for a holy war against the infidels (non-Christians) who held Jerusalem and Palestine. He told the Christians present that it was their duty to go to the Holy Land and fight in the name of God.

Europe during the Middle Ages was filled with knights, specially trained mounted soldiers who were bound to behave honorably. However, too often knights spent their days killing one another in battle or in tournaments. In his proclamation at Clermont, quoted in the *Internet Medieval Sourcebook*, Urban II told these knights to turn their weapons against the enemies of the Christian faith.

Let those who for a long time have been robbers now become knights. Let those who have been fighting against their brothers and relatives now fight in a proper way against the barbarians. Let those who have been serving as mercenaries [paid soldiers] for small pay now obtain eternal reward. Let those who have been wearing themselves out in both body and soul now work for a double honor.

Urban promised that those who "took the cross" and became Crusaders would be forgiven all their sins if they died on the way to or in the Holy Land. The crowd, numbering



## The Deadly Years

When Urban II called for a Crusade against the infidels, or Muslims, in the Holy Land in 1095, his timing could not have been better. The Islamic world had just lost some of its strongest leaders. In fact, between 1092 and 1094 *all* of the major political leaders in the Near and Middle East and North Africa had died. The Seljuk Turks, who threatened the Byzantine Empire and caused Emperor Alexius I to plead to the pope for help, lost their actual ruler in 1092 when Nizam al-Mulk, the vizier, or chief counsel, was killed; he had skillfully advised Seljuk sultans for three decades. Just one month after his death, Malik-Shah, the reigning Seljuk sultan, died mysteriously, ending a rule that had lasted two decades. His death was followed by those of his wife, grandson, and others close to the throne.

Two years later even worse tragedy struck during what Muslims call the “year of the death of religious and military leaders.” At this time Islam was divided into two separate religious groups: the Shiites, whose Fatimid dynasty had its power base in Egypt, and the Sunnis, who were represented by the Abbasid dynasty in Baghdad. In that single year the rulers of Egypt lost their caliph (successor to the throne) when al-Mustansir died after almost sixty years in power; his vizier died shortly afterward. The Abbasid rulers likewise found themselves without experienced leaders when their caliph al-Muqtadi died. Thus, Urban II could not have picked a better time to send a Crusader army to fight Islam, for the Islamic world in 1095 was in a state of chaos as a result of these losses.

some several thousand, cheered his speech and shouted “God wills it,” promising to join a Crusade.

After this rousing beginning, Urban II appointed a bishop to lead the formation of a Crusader army. This was another blow to the power of the Holy Roman Emperor, for Urban II excluded Henry IV from this great gathering and the preparations for war while he continued to travel throughout Europe preaching the need for a Crusade. A Crusader army was finally assembled by 1096 and headed for the Holy Land. Urban II was more or less in control of the papacy now, though the antipope continued to cause problems until the very end of his life. While Urban II held additional large councils in 1098 and 1099, the Crusader army reached the Holy Land and captured the cities of Nicaea and Antioch (both in modern-day Turkey). On July 15, 1099, they took the big prize of Jerusalem. Ironically, the man who inspired the

Crusades never learned of this triumph. Urban II died two weeks later, on July 29, before the news of the recapture of Jerusalem reached him.

Throughout his rule as pope, Urban II managed to continue to strengthen the reforms of his predecessor, Gregory VII. If he had simply succeeded in winning new power for the church and the papacy against the rising power of kings and princes, that would have been enough to guarantee Urban II a place in history. However, his call to arms, which started the Crusader movement, is what most people remember about this pope. In 1881 Urban II was beatified, the first step in becoming a saint, yet he is not without his critics. Most historians agree that his emotional speech at the Council of Clermont was full of half-truths about supposed atrocities (evil deeds) committed by Muslims against Christians. Many think that Urban's real motive in launching the Crusades was to extend the power of the Roman Catholic Church into the Near and Middle East. Some think that Urban II was secretly hoping to reunify the eastern and western churches. Still others believe that he was just trying to stop the fighting among landowners and princes in Europe and aim such aggression against an outside force. Whatever his motives, the fact remains that Urban II began a very costly series of wars: There were seven Crusades over the next two centuries, with numerous smaller battles in between, which took countless lives from both sides and created friction between the Christian and Islamic worlds that was still being felt in the early twenty-first century.

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# Usamah ibn Munqidh

July 4, 1095  
Shayzar, Syria

November 16, 1188  
Damascus, Syria

Arab lord, soldier, and writer

Usamah ibn Munqidh, a Syrian nobleman and soldier of the twelfth century, sat down at the end of his long and adventurous life and composed his memoirs, known in English as *An Arab-Syrian Gentleman and Warrior in the Period of the Crusades*. This autobiography presents a colorful picture of daily life in many parts of the Middle East and North Africa from roughly the time of the First Crusade (1095–99), when European Christians first came into conflict with the Islamic world over control of Jerusalem and the Holy Land, through the Second Crusade (1147–49), when Muslim fighters began to take back parts of the Middle East from the Crusaders, to just before the Third Crusade (1189–92), when the great military leader **Saladin** (1137–93; see entry) took back Jerusalem from the Christians. Usamah provides eyewitness accounts for many of the major events of the time and also presents detailed and often very critical, or negative, pictures of the Crusaders, whom the Arab world called Franks.

“When one comes to recount cases regarding the Franks [Christian crusaders], he cannot but glorify Allah ... for he sees [the Franks] as animals possessing the virtues of courage and fighting, but nothing else.”

—*Usamah ibn Munqidh, An Arab-Syrian Gentleman and Warrior in the Period of the Crusades: Memoirs of Usamah ibn Munqidh.*



## Ibn al-Athir

If Usamah ibn Munqidh was the most famous Arab memoirist (writer about his life) of his time, then the title of most famous historian must fall to the Muslim scholar Ibn al-Athir (1160–1233), whose full name was Abu al-Hasan 'Ali 'Izz al-Din ibn al-Athir. He was born into a powerful family in a small town on the Tigris River, located north of Mosul (in modern-day Iraq). In addition to owning land, his father was a government official in the ruling Zangid dynasty, which controlled much of Iraq and Syria at the time. Whereas his two brothers followed in their father's footsteps, Ibn al-Athir decided on a more scholarly existence, studying in Mosul and Baghdad. His long life was spent recording the events of his time, for he was an eyewitness to many of the main incidents of the Third Crusade (1189–92) as well as some of the later Crusades. Thanks to his well-placed family members, he had inside information about political affairs.

Ibn al-Athir's most famous historical work is his *al-Kamil fi at-Tarikh* (translat-

ed as "The Perfect History" or "The Complete History"), though he also wrote a history of the Zangid dynasty as well as reference works. Ibn al-Athir's *Kamil* is a chronicle of the Islamic world. It begins with Creation, covers the Persian and Roman Empires as well as the world of the Hebrews, and then focuses on the Muslim world from the time of the Prophet Muhammad (founder of the religion of Islam) in the seventh century until Ibn al-Athir's own period. Although he did not list his sources, his "Perfect History" remains an invaluable source for events during the Crusades. Like Usamah, he mixes firsthand experience—and occasionally even second-hand gossip—with other written texts to paint a picture of the Islamic world during the Crusades. His work has been praised for its detailed survey of Islamic history and its many rulers and leaders as well as for the global, or wider, view he takes of events not just in the Middle East but also in Spain and southern Italy.

### A Syrian Gentleman

Born on July 4, 1095, into the noble family of Munqidh, in northern Syria, Usamah grew up in the ancestral castle of Shayzar, not far from the city of Hama. Usamah came into the world months before Pope **Urban II** (see entry) delivered his famous speech demanding a holy war against the Muslim world to recapture Jerusalem for Christianity. It was one of the most powerful speeches in all of history, for it started what became almost a two-hundred-year conflict between East and West, Christianity and Islam. The castle where Usamah was born sat atop a rocky hill called the Cock's

Comb and was protected by the Orontes River on three sides. Since anyone who occupied this castle controlled the major inland route going north and south in Syria, it was often attacked by enemy armies. It was so perfectly located and designed that the invading Crusaders were never able to capture it, although they eventually established their own military outposts nearby.

Usamah was greatly influenced by his father, Murshid, who was of noble Arab blood and was both a man of action and of intellect (brains). Although Usamah's father loved to hunt and fight, he also spent several hours each day copying parts of the Koran, the Islamic holy book. During his lifetime Murshid copied the Koran forty-three times in black, red, and blue ink. In an article titled "Memories of a Muslim Prince," Viola H. Winder noted that Murshid's life, "as would that of his son later, exemplified Arab culture and the code of chivalry [honorable behavior]." Like many educated Muslims, the father was deeply religious, yet he also had a curious mind and studied astronomy (the science of space) and philosophy (the study of systems of beliefs and principles). When it was Murshid's turn to rule the small kingdom of Shayzar, he refused to accept the position. He did so because he hated politics and feared the damaging effects of power. As a result, in 1098 Murshid's younger brother, Izz al-Din, became the local leader at Shayzar and also accepted responsibility for educating young Usamah.

As Usamah noted in his memoirs, since his family "never felt secure on account of the Franks, whose territory was adjacent," this education focused on military skills as well as more academic subjects. For ten years Usamah studied science, languages, religion, and philosophy in addition to mastering the bow and arrow and sword. Above all, Usamah loved studying literature and reciting poetry. In his memoirs he tells how he and his teacher would often ride along the nearby Orontes River, find a quiet spot under the trees, and recite poetry to each other. His father did not remain totally in the background in Usamah's youth. He encouraged his favorite son to engage in physical activities and taught him courage by his own example.

In his memoirs Usamah recalled one boyhood incident that occurred at Shayzar following the capture of some

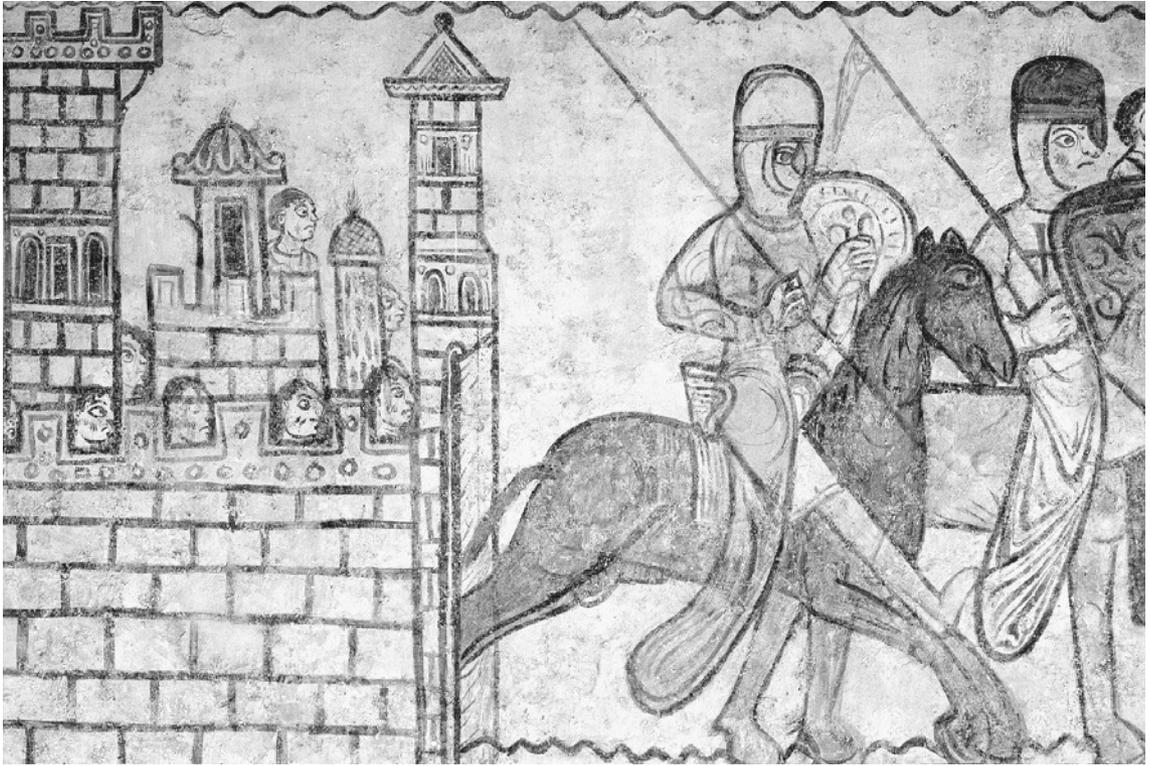
Franks. When an agreement had been reached with other Franks, these prisoners were released. However, soon after they left the castle several Muslim thieves attacked them. Encouraged by his father, Usamah rode out to save these former enemies and took some of the Muslim thieves prisoner. It was this sort of honorable behavior that Usamah's father had taught his son.

From an early age Usamah saw the horrible effects of war. As a young boy he accompanied his father to battlefields where Muslims fought the invading Crusaders. He saw men slaughtered in battle and also witnessed what happened to prisoners. One of his father's best soldiers was captured by the Franks during the First Crusade. After he had had one of his eyes painfully gouged (forced) out by his captors, the Muslim soldier was sold back to Usamah's father in exchange for the best horse in Shayzar and a chest of money.

Usamah was no stranger to violent behavior himself. As he wrote in his memoirs, when he was only ten years old he killed an older servant at Shayzar who was beating a servant boy. However, as Winder commented, "the days of Usamah's youth were made up of more than the forays [raids] and skirmishes [incidents] of battle." In an age when there were still lions and panthers roaming about in Syria, hunting was a daily pastime for the young man. Usamah was as comfortable on a horse as he was at a desk reading his poetry. He became a master hunter by the age of thirteen, using falcons both as aids in hunting and as messenger birds. While he was still a teenager, he was tested in life-and-death situations involving lions, hyenas, and Crusader knights. As Winder noted, "In such an environment Usamah grew to manhood. The years of his long lifetime never tarnished his high standards of honor, honesty, courage, and kindness."

## Into the World

As long as his uncle, the sultan (leader of the kingdom) had no male children, life at Shayzar was agreeable for Usamah. In fact, as Philip K. Hitti commented in the introduction to his translation of *An Arab-Syrian Gentleman*, this uncle's "period of rule furnishes the background for most of the interesting events" in Usamah's memoirs. Unfortunately,



this situation changed when his uncle had a male child. Suddenly Usamah was no longer in favor. In 1129 he left Shayzar for a time and then returned, but when his father died in 1137 Usamah left the fortress of Shayzar for good. The line of the Munqidh family came to a tragic end at Shayzar when a huge earthquake struck the region in 1157, destroying all the buildings and killing everyone in the castle except the new sultan's wife.

Meanwhile, Usamah had made his way in the world, traveling first to Damascus, where he stayed until 1144, and then moving on to Cairo, where he served as a high-ranking government official from 1144 to 1154. He later recorded the jealousies and inside fighting that went on at the court of the Fatimids, who ruled Cairo. During these years he also fought the Franks in the Second Crusade. From 1154 to 1164 he served the powerful sultan Nur al-Din (1118–1174) in Damascus, once again fighting the Franks as well as other Muslims who opposed the sultan's attempts to unify the entire Islamic

**A fresco of one of the many battles in Syria during the Crusades that Usamah witnessed as adviser to the Muslim leader Saladin.**

© *Archivo Iconografico, S.A./Corbis.*

world. Usamah later joined the service of the powerful Muslim leader Saladin, who made him a trusted adviser. Saladin also appointed Usamah, by then an old man, governor of Beirut. Throughout his long and distinguished career Usamah came into close contact not only with powerful Islamic leaders of the day but also with the Franks, whom he regarded as enemies but occasionally as friends.

## The Memoirs

Usamah's love of poetry led him to write twelve volumes of verse. During his lifetime he was known to his fellow Arabs primarily as a poet. However, when he reached the age of ninety, Usamah decided to turn to autobiography and wrote the often rambling story of his life, *Kitab al-I'tibar* ("The Book of Instructive Example"), which has been translated into English as *An Arab-Syrian Gentleman and Warrior in the Period of the Crusades*. These memoirs do not follow any chronological order; instead, Usamah jumps from topic to topic. A description of the hunting life might be followed by an account of fighting Franks and other Arabs or a detailed report of his life and works involving various leaders. As Hitti observed, "The author intends his book to be didactic [a tool for teaching]. ... The favorite theme is that the duration of the life of a man is predetermined [arranged in advance], that its end can neither be retarded [delayed] or advanced by anything man might or might not do." For Usamah, a faithful Muslim, a person's life was determined by Allah, the Muslim God.

The tone of the book, however, is not preachy. His observations on the behavior of the Franks are especially interesting and often humorous. "They are first hand and frank," according to Hitti, "and reflect the prevalent [common] Moslem public opinion" that the Crusaders were mighty warriors but were lacking in most other skills. Usamah is amazed at their medical and legal practices. He watches a Frankish doctor kill two patients that he, Usamah, was trying to save. On another occasion he witnesses the Franks' trial by ordeal, in which a suspected criminal is forcibly kept under water; if the person survives, he or she is pronounced innocent. Usamah found these practices inferior to Islamic medicine and law. He was also shocked by the loose morals of the Crusaders

and their women. At the same time, however, he found a common sense of honor among the monk-soldiers of the Teutonic Knights, a fighting religious order, who protected him on various occasions. He found them to be closer to the Arab ideal: courageous but also true to the teachings of their God.

Usamah also wrote in his memoirs of the sadness he felt at having reached old age. As a young man he was “more terrible in warfare than nighttime, more impetuous [hotheaded and hasty] in assault/Than a torrent [flood], and more adventurous on the battlefield than destiny!” But with the approach of old age all this changed:

But now I have become an idle maid who lies/ On stuffed cushions behind screens and curtains./ I have almost become rotten from lying still so long, just as/ The sword of Indian steel becomes rusty when kept long in its sheath.

Usamah did not have long to complain about his old age, for he died in 1188, shortly after finishing his memoirs. His son later had the book copied, and it spread from the Islamic world to the West. According to Hitti, Usamah’s book is “a unique piece of Arabic literature.” His stories “open before our eyes a wide and new vista [view] into medieval times and constitute [represent] an invaluable contribution to our knowledge of Arabic culture.” Writing in the foreword to this same translation of *An Arab-Syrian Gentleman*, Richard W. Bulliet noted that “nothing in all of medieval Islamic history quite matches [the book’s] vivid and detailed descriptions, and there are few instances of such lucid [clear] first-person writing in the history of Christian Europe.”

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Written by J. Sydney Jones

Edited by Marcia Merryman Means and Neil Schlager

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# Fighting the Holy Wars

**T**he Crusades began in 1095 and raged, on and off, for the next two hundred years. During these centuries, the western Christian world pitted itself against what it thought of as the infidel, or the unbelievers, in the Middle East. In particular, Crusaders, (those who had “taken the cross,” as this fighting for Christianity was called at the time), were battling for reoccupation of the shrines and sites holy to Christians in Palestine: Jerusalem, Nazareth, and Bethlehem. These locations along a narrow strip of the eastern coast of the Mediterranean Sea, sacred not only to Christians but also to Jews and members of the Islamic faith, had been contested for centuries. Although Muslims (believers in Islam and the words of the prophet Muhammad) had occupied Jerusalem since the seventh century, they had generally recognized the rights of those of other religions to have free access to the city. Thus Muslims, Christians, and Jews had lived in relative harmony in Jerusalem. A wrinkle was thrown into this balancing act in the eleventh century with the arrival of a new power in the Middle East: the Seljuk Turks.

1

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This nomadic, warrior-like tribe of Turks from Central Asia had made its way into Anatolia and Asia Minor by the eleventh century, converted to Islam, and become fanatical, or extremist, defenders of that religion. Where before there was compromise between the Christian and Muslim inhabitants of the region, now, with the sudden power swing toward the Seljuks, intolerance was on the rise. The Seljuk Turks threatened the Byzantine Empire (Eastern Roman Empire) in Asia Minor, defeating the emperor's troops at the Battle of Manzikert in 1071. Invited into one of the major centers of Islamic civilization, Baghdad, as "protectors" of the faith, the Seljuks proceeded to sweep west and south through Syria and into Palestine, ultimately occupying Jerusalem itself in 1071. No longer were Christians allowed to visit the sites found there that were connected with the birth and early life of Jesus Christ; even the Holy Sepulchre, the tomb of Christ, was off limits to Christian pilgrims, or religious visitors.

These events did not go unnoticed in the West. As early as 1094 or 1095 the *basileus*, (emperor of the Byzantine Empire) Alexius I Comnenus, wrote to Pope Urban II, the head of the Christian church in Europe, asking for help against the Turks. Urban II took this cry for assistance to heart for several reasons. For Urban II it was important on religious grounds that Christians have access to the sites in the Holy Land, a region then known as Palestine. He also wanted to restore good relations between the two branches of Christianity: the Roman Catholic Church based in Europe, and the Eastern Orthodox Church in Constantinople, capital of the Byzantine Empire. These two branches had been quarreling for centuries and had lately come to new lows in their relations. Another consideration for Urban II was the situation in Europe itself, a continent torn apart by small wars between minor nobles and professional soldiers (knights) who had, it seemed, too much time on their hands. Many of these nobles had older brothers who were going to inherit the lands of their fathers, leaving the younger siblings without resources. In other words, Europe was full of underemployed soldiers eager for a fight and for new opportunities. Urban II wanted to ship these aggressive knights abroad and use their skills to fight for Christianity. These knights would then carve out Crusader kingdoms for themselves in the Holy Land.

In 1095, at the religious conference called the Council of Clermont, Pope Urban II called for a holy war, a Crusade (from the Latin word for “cross”) to liberate the Holy Land from the Muslims. He spoke of harsh treatment of Christians at the hands of the Muslims. Whether or not such tales were true, they did convince those gathered to hear the pope that such a war was necessary. At the end of his passionate speech, the nobles in the audience shouted out, “*Deus volt!*,” Latin for “God wills it.” This became the battle cry of Crusaders in the Holy Land.

Although the primary motivation for the Crusades was religious, there were other factors involved. Historian Karen Armstrong noted the variety of motivations in her Crusades history, *Holy War*:

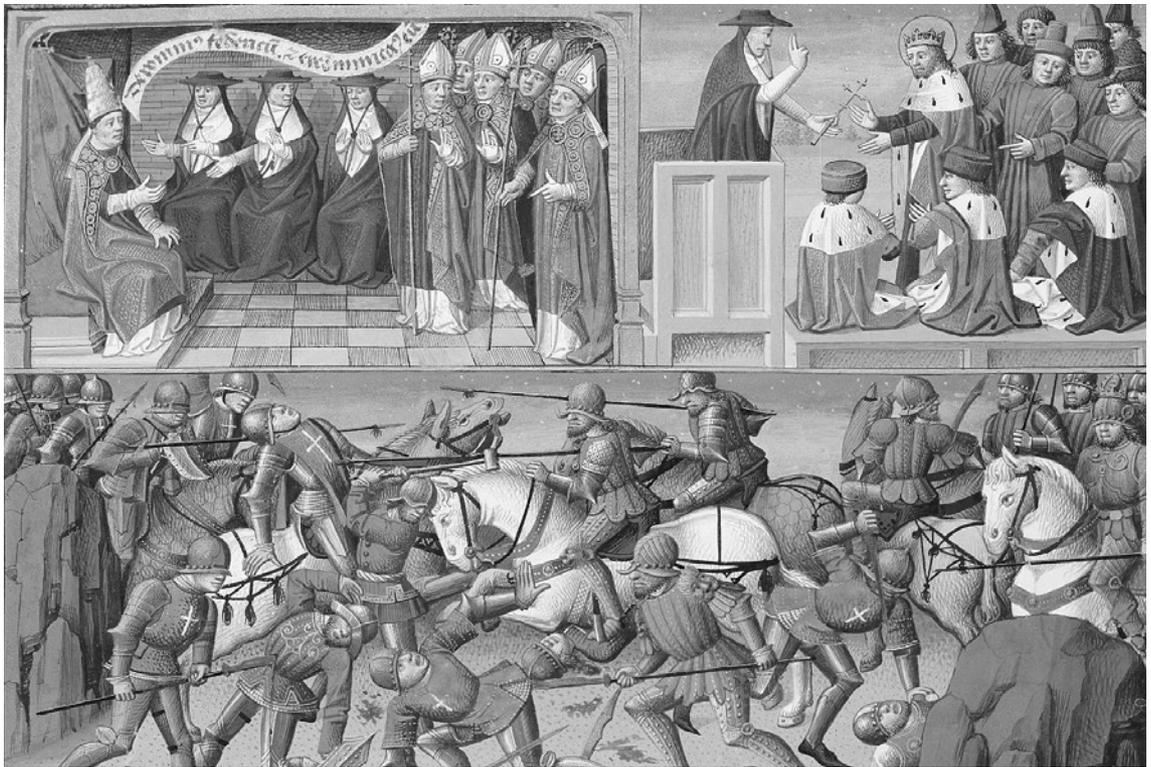
The Crusades, like so much of the modern conflict, were not wholly rational movements that could be explained away by purely economic or territorial ambition or by the clash of rights and interests. They were fueled, on all sides, by myths and passions that were far more effective in getting people to act than any purely political motivation. The medieval holy wars in the Middle East could not be solved by rational treatises [discussions] or neat territorial solutions. Fundamental [basic] passions were involved which touched the identity of Christians, Muslims and Jews and which were sacred to the identity of each. They have not changed very much in the holy wars of today.

From 1095 to the end of the thirteenth century there were seven major Crusades, perhaps more or fewer, depending on which historian is consulted. There were also numerous smaller expeditions from time to time during these two hundred years. Some were sponsored by the papacy (the office of the pope); others by kings or emperors; and still others, such as the ill-fated People’s Crusade (1096) and the Children’s Crusade (1212), by common people who were filled with religious enthusiasm. Though the First Crusade (1095–99) succeeded in winning back Jerusalem for the West, most Crusades ended in disaster from the Christian point of view. The First Crusade was led by nobles, such as Godfrey of Bouillon and his brother, Baldwin, along with Count Raymond of Toulouse, Count Stephen of Blois, and the Norman prince from southern Italy, Bohemund, and succeeded in capturing a strip of land along the eastern Mediterranean from Antioch in the north to

Jerusalem in the south. This conquered territory was called the Latin Kingdom, and its center was in Jerusalem for as long as that city stayed in Crusader hands. The Crusader states, consisting of the Kingdom of Jerusalem, Principality of Antioch, County of Tripoli, and County of Edessa, lasted until 1291 with the fall of the city of Acre.

During those years there was a constant struggle between the Christian Crusaders of this Latin Kingdom, or Outremer (literally “beyond the sea” in Latin), as it was called in Europe, and the Muslims who surrounded them. The Crusaders built fortresses, birthed dynasties, and founded fighting religious orders, such as the Knights Templar and Hospitallers and the Teutonic Knights, which together formed the elite corps of troops protecting Outremer from invasion. Meanwhile, the Muslims, who included ethnic Arabs, Turks, and Egyptians, occasionally produced great leaders to rally the Islamic world and overcome their own internal rivalries in order to concentrate on fighting the European invaders. The idea of *jihad*, or holy war, became a unifying principle for Islam just as it had for Christians. Under leaders such as the Turkish Zengi and his son, Nur al-Din in the early to mid-twelfth century; the great Kurdish military strategist Saladin in the late twelfth century; and the Mamluk, or slave, leaders of Egypt Baybars and Kalavun in the thirteenth century, the Muslims managed to push the Crusaders into an ever-smaller pocket next to the Mediterranean until finally driving the Europeans out of the Middle East in 1291.

The West sent inspired leaders as well. Eleanor of Aquitaine and her husband, Louis VII of France, followed the call of Saint Bernard of Clairvaux to fight, unsuccessfully, the rising power of Islam during the Second Crusade (1147–49). Similarly, Richard the Lionheart of England and Philip Augustus of France fought in the Third Crusade (1189–91) after Saladin recaptured Jerusalem for Islam. The Fourth Crusade (1202–04) was perhaps one of the most disastrous from a western point of view, for the Crusaders never reached the Holy Land. Instead, they were drawn into rivalries over the succession to the throne of the Byzantine Empire and destroyed Constantinople in 1204. This resulted in the establishment of a Latin Kingdom in Asia Minor that lasted for more than half a century and further worsened relationships between the eastern and western churches. Egypt was the center of the Fifth



Crusade (1218–21), and once again the Christian forces were unsuccessful in dislodging the Muslims from Jerusalem. This was accomplished, for a time, by the peaceful means of diplomacy (international relations) between Frederick II, the emperor of the Holy Roman Empire (known also as the German Kingdom) and the sultan, or ruler, of Egypt, al-Malik al-Kamil. Yet only fifteen years later the Turkish Muslims once again seized Jerusalem, setting off the Seventh Crusade (1248–54), led by France's Louis IX. Once more the Crusaders tried to reach Jerusalem via Egypt, and once more they were defeated by the sultan's forces. Louis IX was captured and forced to pay a heavy price for his release. Some historians acknowledge an Eighth Crusade (1270), when Louis IX once again took up the cross and tried for a back-door entrance to Jerusalem via the North African desert, where he, his son, and thousands of Crusaders died of fever, ending the Crusade before it had really begun.

The Crusades changed the world in major ways, both good and bad. On the plus side, there was a meeting of cul-

**A papal legate returning the cross to King Louis IX right before the beginning of the Seventh and final Crusade.** *Musee Conde, Chantilly, France/Bridgeman Art Library. Reproduced by permission.*

tures in the Middle East. Christian knights and Crusaders brought back Arab scholarship, customs, and artistic influences, thus putting Europe in touch with a rich cultural tradition. This cultural contact, in turn, helped bring about the flowering of European culture during the Renaissance of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Commerce also increased between these two parts of the world, leading to increased standards of living on both sides. Additionally, the power of kings and secular (nonreligious) leaders grew during this period, while the power of the church and the pope declined. This was a direct result of the fact that such secular leaders were in charge of the crusading enterprises, even though the pope many times had called for them to be organized. This new balance of power between church and state eventually led to the modern nation-state. On the downside, the idea of international war against the enemies of Christianity or the established church became a part of European thinking. This attitude fueled wars during the Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth century. Worst of all, relations between Christians and Muslims were poisoned for centuries, a consequence the modern world is still living with.

The great events of these Crusades—the battles, treaties, and infighting—were recorded by historians, clergy, and fighting men and women on all sides. In the beginning section of this chapter, “The First Hurrah,” the focus is the First Crusade, perhaps the only successful such mission to the Holy Land. Portions of *The Alexiad*, a biography of Byzantine Emperor Alexius I written by his daughter Anna, and a Crusader letter written by one of the leaders of the First Crusade, from *Translations and Reprints from the Original Sources of European History*, provide the human side of this holy war from the perspectives of the Byzantines and of the invading Christians. The second section, “Unforeseen Consequences,” offers two instances of tragic results of the Crusades, with excerpts from *Chronicles of the Fourth Crusade and the Conquest of Constantinople*, written by a French participant in that Crusade, and from *The Crusades: A Documentary History*. The third section, “The Gentle Art of Diplomacy,” offers two interpretations of the treaty won by Frederick II during the Sixth Crusade, with excerpts from *Translations and Reprints from the Original Sources of European History* and from the *Internet Medieval Sourcebook*. The last section of this chapter, “The Final

Good-Bye," tells two episodes in the final act of the Crusaders in the Middle East: the taking of Jerusalem by Turkish Muslim warriors in 1244, described in a letter from the leader of the Knights Hospitallers who fought there, and the fall of Acre in 1291, with an excerpt from the *Description of the Holy Land and of the Way Thither* by a fourteenth-century visitor to Jerusalem, Ludolph of Suchem.



# The First Hurrah

*Excerpt “Stephen, Count of Blois and Chartres,  
To His Wife Adele” (1098)*

**Originally written by Stephen of Blois; Reprinted in  
“Letters of the Crusades,” from *Translations and Reprints from the  
Original Sources of European History*; Edited by Dana Munro;  
Published in 1896**

*Excerpt from The Alexiad (c. 1148)*

**Originally written by Anna Comnena;  
Translated by Elizabeth A. Dawes; Published in 1928**

**T**he Council of Clermont was called by Pope Urban II in November of 1095. Various pieces of church business were dealt with over the several days of the conference, but on the final day the pope called for a holy war to overthrow the Muslims from power in the Holy Land and return it to Christian domination. Urban II played up the desperate situation of the Byzantine Empire and also the supposed mistreatment of Christians at the hands of Muslims in the region. His words were met with excited approval, and as a result, the First Crusade was officially launched. It would take more than half a year, however, to organize the mission. Western leaders slowly began gathering their soldiers while the wandering preacher Peter the Hermit roused the people of Europe with his fiery speeches and sermons. The people he thus inflamed with the Crusader cause grew impatient. They did not want to wait for the nobility to collect their armies; instead, they formed what became known as the “People’s Crusade,” an army of poor farmers and laborers who set out—men, women, and children—in the spring of 1096 for Constantinople, where the Crusade was to begin. Led by

Peter the Hermit and Walter the Penniless, these followers were poorly equipped and attempted to live off the land as they crossed Europe and headed southwest for Constantinople. In Hungary and Bulgaria they caused great unrest, and thousands among these unlikely Crusaders and the local populations died in disputes over food and property.

The Byzantines were shocked when this mob arrived. They had been expecting an elite corps of soldiers to help them battle the Seljuk Turks, and now they were stuck with this undisciplined crowd. The Byzantine emperor was happy to ferry them across the narrow straits and into Asia Minor, where they were promptly destroyed by the Turks in August 1096. At about this same time, the real Crusader armies began arriving in Constantinople. These Crusaders included Godfrey of Bouillon, who later became the unofficial leader; Raymond of Toulouse, the oldest and best-known of the nobles; Robert of Flanders; Stephen of Blois; and Bohemund of Sicily, who arrived only in April 1097. No kings took part in the First Crusade, and most of the armies were led by French-speaking knights. For this reason, the soldiers quickly became known to the Byzantines and the Muslims as Franks.

Again the Byzantine emperor, Alexius I, was surprised by the force sent to help him. These knights seemed to have their own plans. Although he attempted to have them pledge their loyalty to him, it quickly became clear that the Crusaders were not simply on a goodwill mission. Relations were never very good between the Byzantines and the Crusaders. The first major battle of the Crusade, at the city of Nicaea, close to Constantinople, made it apparent to both sides that they could not trust each other. As the Crusaders were busy attacking the gates, Alexius I plotted behind the scenes to work out a handover of the city from the Turks. By the time the Crusaders entered, the Byzantine flag was already flying over the city.

The victory at Dorylaeum on July 1, 1097, proved to be more of a cooperative effort, however. The Turks attacked the advancing Crusader army, but the Christians held their ground and were aided by the Byzantines, driving the Muslims off. The Crusader army pushed on across Anatolia and south to the great city of Antioch, arriving on October 20, 1097. There they found a well-fortified city that would not be

easily captured. The Crusaders gathered their forces for a long and difficult siege. A letter from Stephen of Blois to his wife and excerpts from Anna Comnena's *The Alexiad* provide different viewpoints of this first major conflict of the First Crusade. Stephen of Blois was one of the nobles who participated in the siege of Antioch, and his description of events to his wife adds a more personal glimpse into the costs of war. Anna Comnena, daughter of the Byzantine emperor, wrote the biographical account of her father's deeds late in life, relying on memory and court records.



### Things to Remember While Reading Excerpts on the taking of Antioch:

- The Crusader army that gathered at Constantinople numbered about four thousand mounted (horse-riding) knights and at least twenty-five thousand foot soldiers. Simply feeding such an army was a difficult task.
- Antioch was the third great city of the old Roman Empire. At the time of the First Crusade, it was strongly fortified with more than four hundred towers built along its huge walls.
- The siege of Antioch lasted seven and a half months, from October 20, 1097, to June 3, 1098. Then the Crusaders themselves, having taken the city, were put under siege for another three weeks by a Muslim army.

**Anna Comnena who wrote *The Alexiad*, the biographical account of her father, Byzantine emperor Alexius I.**  
*Photograph courtesy of The Library of Congress.*



### Excerpt: “Stephen, Count of Blois and Chartres, To His Wife Adele”

Count Stephen to Adele, his sweetest and most amiable wife, to his dear children, and to all his **vassals** of all ranks—his greeting and blessing.

You may be very sure, dearest, that the messenger whom I sent to give you pleasure, left me before Antioch safe and unharmed and through God’s grace in the greatest prosperity. And already at that time, together with all the chosen army of Christ, endowed with great **valor** by Him, we had been continuously advancing for twenty-three weeks toward the home of our Lord Jesus. You may know for certain, my beloved, that of gold, silver and many other kind of riches I now have twice as much as your love had assigned to me when I left you. For all our princes, with the common consent of the whole army, against my own wishes, have made me up to the present time the leader, chief and director of their whole expedition.

You have certainly heard that after the capture of the city of Nicaea we fought a great battle with the **perfidious** Turks and by God’s aid conquered them. Next we conquered for the Lord all Romania and afterwards Cappadocia. And we learned that there was a certain Turkish prince Assam, dwelling in Cappadocia; **thither** we directed our course. All his castles we conquered by force and compelled him to flee to a certain very strong castle situated on a high rock. We also gave the land of that Assam to one of our chiefs and in order that he might conquer the above-mentioned Assam, we left there with him many **soldiers of Christ**. **Thence**, continually following the wicked Turks, we drove them through the midst of Armenia, as far as the great river Euphrates. Having left all their baggage and beasts of burden on the bank, they fled across the river into Arabia.

The bolder of the Turkish soldiers, indeed, entering Syria, hastened by forced marches night and day, in order to be able to enter the royal city of Antioch before our approach. The whole army of God learning this gave due praise and thanks to the **omnipotent** Lord. Hastening with great joy to the aforesaid chief city of Antioch, we besieged it and very often had many conflicts there with the Turks; and seven times with the citizens of Antioch and with the **innumerable** troops coming to its aid, whom we rushed to meet, we

**Vassals:** Subordinates or underlings.

**Valor:** Courage, bravery.

**Perfidious:** Untrustworthy.

**Thither:** In that direction.

**Soldiers of Christ:** Crusaders.

**Thence:** From there.

**Omnipotent:** All-powerful.

**Innumerable:** Countless, numerous.

fought with the fiercest courage, under the leadership of Christ. And in all these seven battles, by the aid of the Lord God, we conquered and most assuredly killed an innumerable host of them. In those battles, indeed, and in very many attacks made upon the city, many of our **brethren** and followers were killed and their souls were borne to the joys of paradise.

We found the city of Antioch very extensive, fortified with incredible strength and almost **impregnable**. In addition, more than 5,000 bold Turkish soldiers had entered the city, not counting the Saracens, Publicans, Arabs, Turcopolitans, Syrians, Armenians and other different races of whom an infinite **multitude** had gathered together there. In fighting against these enemies of God and of our own we have, by God's grace, endured many sufferings and innumerable evils up to the present time. Many also have already exhausted all their resources in this very holy passion. Very many of our Franks, indeed, would have met a **temporal** death from starvation, if the **clemency** of God and our money had not **succoured** them. Before the above-mentioned city of Antioch indeed, throughout the whole winter we suffered for our Lord Christ from excessive cold and enormous torrents of rain. What some say about the impossibility of bearing the heat of the sun throughout Syria is untrue, for the winter there is very similar to our winter in the West.

When truly Caspian [Bagi Seian], the emir of Antioch—that is, prince and lord—perceived that he was hard pressed by us, he sent his son Sensodolo [Chems Eddaulab] by name, to the prince who holds Jerusalem, and to the prince of Calep, Rodoarn [Rodoanus], and to Docap [Deccacus Ibn Toutousch], prince of Damascus. He also sent into Arabia to Bolianuth and to Carathania to Hamelnuth. These five **emirs** with 12,000 picked Turkish horsemen suddenly came to aid the inhabitants of Antioch. We, indeed, ignorant of all this, had sent many of our soldiers away to the cities and fortresses. For there are one hundred and sixty-five cities and fortresses throughout Syria which are in our power. But a little before they reached the city, we attacked them at three **leagues'** distance with 700 soldiers, on a certain plain near the "Iron Bridge." God, however, fought for us, His faithful, against them. For on that day, fighting in the strength that God gives, we conquered them and killed an innumerable multitude—God continually fighting for us—and we also carried back to the army more than two hundred of their heads, in order that the people might rejoice on that account. The emperor of Babylon also sent Saracen messengers to our army with letters, and through these he established peace and concord with us.

**Brethren:** Brothers, comrades.

**Impregnable:** Unable to be penetrated or destroyed.

**Multitude:** Crowd, throng.

**Temporal:** Worldly.

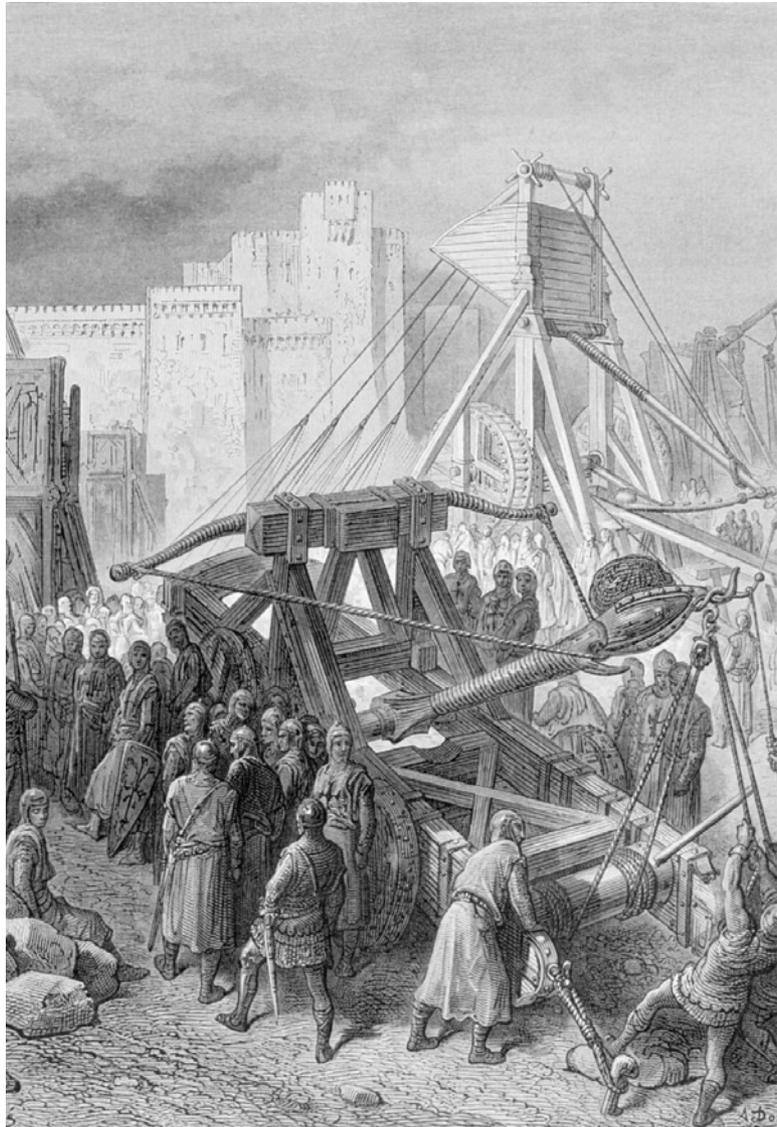
**Clemency:** Mercy.

**Succoured:** Assisted.

**Emirs:** A Middle-Eastern prince or chieftain.

**League:** A measure of distance, approximately three miles.

Crusaders using a catapult to siege the city of Antioch during the First Crusade as described by Stephen, the count of Blois. © Leonard de Selva/Corbis. Reproduced by permission.



**Lent:** A time of fasting and penitence observed by Christians during the forty weekdays before Easter.

**Mariners:** Seamen.

*I love to tell you, dearest, what happened to us during **Lent**. Our princes had caused a fortress to be built which was between our camp and the sea. For the Turks daily issuing from this gate killed some of our men on their way to the sea. The city of Antioch is about five leagues' distance from the sea. For this reason they sent the excellent Bohemond and Raymond, count of St. Gilles, to the sea with only sixty horsemen, in order that they might bring **mariners** to aid in this work. When, however, they were returning to us with those*



*mariners, the Turks collected an army, fell suddenly upon our two leaders and forced them to a perilous flight. In that unexpected flight we lost more than 500 of our foot soldiers to the glory of God. Of our horsemen, however, we lost only two, for certain.*

### ***Excerpt from The Alexiad***

**The conquest of Antioch by the Crusaders, as described by Anna Comnena in *The Alexiad*.** © Archivo Iconografico, S.A./Corbis. Reproduced by permission.





## Bohemund I

The Bohemund (sometimes referred to as Bohemond) of this excerpt was a fair-haired, handsome knight. Some historians have thought that perhaps Anna Comnena was in love with this swashbuckling Crusader, for she gives him many pages of her biography. A Norman with Viking blood in him, Bohemund was one of the major leaders of the First Crusade. He was the oldest son of Robert of Guiscard, something of a robber noble who stole an empire for himself and his family in southern Italy and Sicily. Bohemund and his father were no strangers to the Byzantine Empire, for they had long been at work trying to invade it and win more territory. Although he was considered an enemy of the Byzantine Empire, Bohemund actually pledged his loyalty to the Byzantine emperor.

At the siege of Antioch, as the excerpt shows, Bohemund managed by any means possible to be the one to capture the city. Suddenly, he forgot his promise to the Byzantine emperor and kept the city for himself. Bohemund was one of the many Crusaders who came to fight the Muslims not so much for the Christian God as for his own benefit. He established the Principality of Antioch and did not bother accompanying the Crusaders as they later pushed on for Jerusalem.



## What happened next...

The siege of Antioch was an up-and-down battle for the Crusaders. The Christians surrounded the fortified city all winter long, surviving cold and hunger. By January some of the Christians were already running away; among them was the Byzantine general Taticius,

mentioned in Anna Comnena's account. With the spring came a new threat to the Crusaders, a Turkish army coming to help the people of Antioch. At this point, Stephen of Blois also decided to leave the battlefield. Meeting the Byzantine emperor on his way, Stephen told Alexius I of the desperate situation at Antioch, and the emperor turned back to Constantinople.

However, at Antioch matters improved for the Crusaders. A Muslim force coming to the aid of the city was met and defeated by the Franks and finally, on June 3, 1098, they took the city, killing all Muslim occupants. Then the Crusaders found themselves under siege when another Islamic force, under the Muslim leader Karbugah, attacked the city. Inspired by the discovery of what was supposed to be the lance that pierced the side of Jesus Christ as he died on the cross, the Crusaders rushed out of their fortified city on June 28 and defeated this Muslim army.

The ultimate goal of the First Crusade, liberating Jerusalem from Muslim control, was attained more than a year later when, on July 15, 1099, the western forces took that city and slaughtered all the Muslim inhabitants, including women and children. Jews also were included in the general massacre. After this victory, the Crusaders established the Latin Kingdom, a group of states set up in a narrow corridor along the Mediterranean Sea from Jerusalem to Antioch. Godfrey of Bouillon refused the title of king and, instead, became Defender of the Holy Sepulchre, or Christ's tomb. Those who followed him were less humble and became kings of Jerusalem. The Christians came into control of the Holy Land once again as a result of the First Crusade. However, this resulted in bad feelings between the Europeans and the Byzantine Empire. The Crusaders felt that the emperor had let them down, and the emperor for his part felt that the Crusaders had not kept their promise of loyalty to him. Instead of helping him get rid of the Turks, the Crusaders had created another power base with their Latin Kingdom, in direct competition with the Byzantine Empire. And Stephen of Blois, by the time he reached home, was met with general disapproval for deserting the battle. As the historian Hans Eberhard Mayer noted in *The Crusades*, Stephen's "wife's welcome home was anything but friendly."

## Did you know...

- One of the four Crusader states created in the Middle East was Edessa, a Christian city occupied by the Turks. Baldwin, Godfrey of Bouillon's brother, freed that city even as the Crusaders were pushing on to Antioch. The County of Edessa became the first of the Crusader kingdoms to be established and Baldwin its first ruler.
- So many thousands were slaughtered by the Christian soldiers in Jerusalem that blood flowed ankle deep in the streets.
- News traveled slowly at the time of the Crusades. Pope Urban II, who had called for the First Crusade, died on July 29, 1099, before word arrived of the Crusaders' success. He never knew what events his words had inspired.
- Soon after the fall of Jerusalem, many of the knights and common soldiers in the Crusader army returned to Europe. The number left to protect the Holy Land shrank to only thousands. But those who stayed behind built well-fortified castles, and three religious orders of knights were formed as elite fighting forces: the Knights Hospitallers, the Knights Templar, and the Teutonic Knights. With these soldiers, the Europeans were able to hold on in the Holy Land for two centuries.

## Consider the following...

- Explain some of the primary causes of the First Crusade (from the Western point of view).
- The Crusaders went to the Holy Land for a variety of reasons. Discuss some of the motivations of these Christian warriors.
- If, in 1097, you were a citizen of Constantinople—one of the most sophisticated and cosmopolitan cities of the world in its day—describe how you would feel to have the Crusaders arrive in your neighborhood.

## For More Information

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# Unforeseen Consequences

*Excerpt from Chronicle of the Fourth Crusade and the  
Conquest of Constantinople (1207)*

**Originally written by Geoffrey de Villehardouin;  
Translated by Frank T. Marzials; Published in 1908**

*Excerpt from Chronica Regiae Coloniensis (1213)*

**Reprinted in *The Crusades: A Documentary History*;  
Translated by James Brundage; Published in 1962**

Numerous small Crusades took place throughout the twelfth and into the thirteenth centuries. Quickly after the First Crusade (1095–99), a smaller one was begun in 1101 to bring more troops to the Crusader states established in Palestine, on the narrow seacoast of the eastern Mediterranean Sea. This effort failed, as did several other attempts to send men. But the Crusaders were successful initially because of the internal rivalries among the Muslims. The world of Islam in the Middle East, made up of Arabs, Turks, Egyptians, Kurds, and several other ethnic groups, did not present a united front against the Christian invaders because they were busy fighting one another. In addition to competing ethnic groups, there also were competing branches of Islam. The two major branches, Sunnis and Shiites, were as strong an enemy to each other as they were to the Christians.

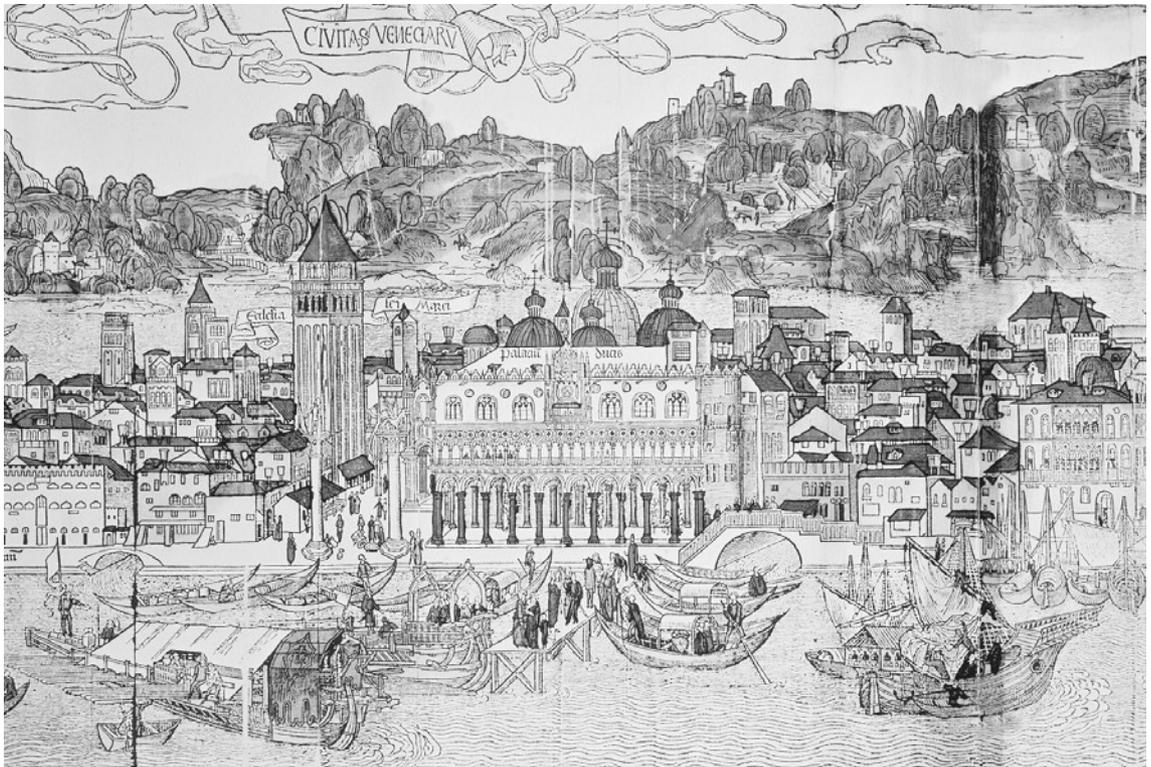
Slowly, though, the Muslims began to unite under strong leaders, the first of whom was Zengi, the *atabeg*, or governor, of Mosul in present-day Iraq. Zengi, a Seljuk Turk, began to gather the Muslims under his leadership and then, in 1144, captured the Crusader state of Edessa. For Zengi, the

fight against the Christians was a *jihad*, or holy war. This defeat for the Crusaders, in turn, brought about a new desire in Europe for a Crusade. Saint Bernard of Clairvaux preached such a new holy war to stop the rising power of Islam. Nobles, including King Louis VII of France and King Conrad III of Germany, took up the cross in the Second Crusade (1147–49), but their effort was a failure. They further damaged relations with the Byzantine Empire, and their complete defeat made the Muslims even bolder as they came to realize that they could beat the Christians.

Zengi was assassinated in 1146, before the Second Crusade, but his son, Nur al-Din, took his place in leading the Muslims of the Middle East against the Crusaders. One of Nur al-Din's generals invaded Egypt, and when he died, his nephew, Saladin, became leader of Egypt and further united the Muslim world. Saladin was perhaps the greatest military leader of the Islamic world, and when he captured Jerusalem from the Crusaders in 1187, he turned the tide against the Europeans. Unlike the aftermath of the Christian victory in 1099, the Muslims did not slaughter the inhabitants of the city. Instead, they let them go under a flag of truce. Though it took another century to drive the Franks out of the Holy Land, Saladin's victory at Jerusalem let the Christians know that it was only a matter of time until the Crusader states would be completely defeated.

As with Zengi's victory at Edessa, Saladin's at Jerusalem inspired a major Crusade. The Third Crusade (1189–91), led by England's Richard I the Lionheart, the king of France, and by the ruler of the Holy Roman Empire, managed to capture the port of Acre, but internal quarrels and too few fighting men led to overall failure. Richard I was able to win only a three-year truce from Saladin, which allowed Christian visitors to see the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem.

By the early thirteenth century, Pope Innocent III began calling for yet another Crusade in the Middle East. This time, however, the plan was to hit the Muslims in Egypt and then use the resources of that country to drive toward Jerusalem. The organization of transport was given to the Venetians, a major sea power at the time and one of the largest trading city-states of Europe. Political and business interests drove the Fourth Crusade (1202–04), and when the



Crusaders were unable to pay the Venetians the agreed-upon price for their transport, they were forced to become soldiers for hire, capturing Zara, a Christian city on the Yugoslavian coast that was causing Venice problems. This changed the entire direction of the Crusade, for after Zara the Christian army sailed to Constantinople, where, for a price, they agreed to install a young Byzantine prince on the throne of the Byzantine Empire. This action resulted in the sacking of Constantinople and the end of the Fourth Crusade; the Crusaders never got near the Muslims or the Holy Land.

Such unforeseen consequences also happened in 1212 with the two Children's Crusades, in which thousands of boys twelve years of age and younger took to the roads to battle in the Holy Land. The leaders, Stephen, a shepherd from France, and Nicholas, of Germany, were themselves boys and led their followers on an unhappy adventure that ended in misery and death for most.

**A view of the center of Venice. The organization of transportation for the Fourth Crusade was given to the Venetians, a major sea power and one of the largest trading city-states of Europe.** © Archivio Iconografico, S.A./Corbis. Reproduced by permission.

## Things to Remember While Reading Excerpts about “Unforeseen Consequences of the Crusades”:

- The First Crusade was the only successful Crusade for the Christians in the two centuries of conflict between Europe and the Middle East.
- Returning from the Third Crusade, Richard I, the Lionheart, was kidnapped by the German emperor and held prisoner until his mother, Eleanor of Aquitaine, could raise enough money from the British for his release. Eleanor was herself a veteran of the Second Crusade.
- The Crusader states developed much the same feudal structure as Europe had, with nobles staking out large areas of land that would be worked by those who promised loyalty to them. Within the first hundred years of their existence, the Crusader states were competing with one another. Peaceful Muslims found a place in such states, and many of the Europeans adopted Middle Eastern ways of dress and living.
- Geoffrey de Villehardouin was a knight and historian who took part in the Fourth Crusade, and his history of that event, written in French rather than Latin, is generally considered reliable. The *Chronica Regiae Coloniensis* is also assumed to be a real text from the time of the Children’s Crusade, but many modern historians have questioned whether the participants were really young children or actually adults taking part in just one more failed mission to the Holy Land.

**Ransom:** To pay money for the release of a captive, especially a noble during the time of the Crusades.

**Pilgrims:** Travelers or visitors to religious sites and holy places.

**Dispossessed:** Had belongings taken away, cast out.

**Perchance:** Maybe, perhaps.

**Estate:** Situation.

**Right:** Very.

**Envoys:** Messengers or official representatives.

**Whither:** To the place.

**Wrested:** To gain by violence or force.



### ***Excerpt from Chronicle of the Fourth Crusade and the Conquest of Constantinople***

*Now give ear to one of the greatest marvels, and most wonderful adventures that you have ever heard tell of. At that time there was an emperor in Constantinople, whose name was Isaac, and he had a brother, Alexius by name, whom he had **ransomed** from cap-*

tivity among the Turks. This Alexius took his brother the emperor, tore the eyes out of his head, and made himself emperor by the aforesaid treachery. He kept Isaac a long time in prison, together with a son whose name was Alexius. This son escaped from prison, and fled in a ship to a city on the sea, which is called Ancona. Thence he departed to go to King Philip of Germany, who had his sister for wife; and he came to Verona in Lombardy, and lodged in the town, and found there a number of **pilgrims** and other people who were on their way to join the host [Crusader forces].

And those who had helped him to escape, and were with him, said: "Sire, here is an army in Venice, quite near to us, the best and most valiant people and knights that are in the world, and they are going overseas. Cry to them therefore for mercy, that they have pity on thee and on thy father, who have been so wrongfully **dispossessed**. And if they be willing to help thee, thou shalt be guided by them. **Perchance** they will take pity on thy **estate**." And Alexius said he would do this **right** willingly, and that the advice was good.

Thus he appointed **envoys**, and sent them to the Marquis Boniface of Montferrat, who was chief of the host, and to the other barons. And when the barons saw them, they marvelled greatly, and said to the envoys: "We understand right well what you tell us. We will send an envoy with the prince to King Philip, **whither** he is going. If the prince will help to recover the land overseas we will help him to recover his own land, for we know that it has been **wrested** from him and from his father wrongfully." So were envoys sent into Germany, both to the heir of Constantinople and to King Philip of Germany.

The barons consulted together on **the morrow**, and said that they would show the young Alexius, the son of the Emperor of Constantinople, to the people of the city. So they assembled all the **galleys**. The **Doge** of Venice and the **Marquis** of Montferrat entered into one,



French knight and historian Geoffrey de Villehardouin, who took part in the Fourth Crusade; his history of that event, written in French rather than Latin, is generally considered reliable.

© Bettman/Corbis. Reproduced by permission.

**The Morrow:** The next day.

**Galleys:** Ships

**Doge:** The title of the leader of Venice.

**Marquis:** A noble title, above a count and below a duke.

A mosaic showing the fall of Constantinople during the Fourth Crusade in 1204. *The Art Archive/Dagli Ort. Reproduced by permission.*



and took with them Alexius, the son of the Emperor Isaac; and into the other galleys entered the knights and barons, as many as would.

They went thus quite close to the walls of Constantinople and showed the youth to the people of the Greeks, and said, "Behold your natural lord; and be it known to you that we have not come to do you harm, but have come to guard and defend you, if so be that you return to your duty. For he whom you now obey as your lord holds rule by wrong and wickedness, against God and reason. And you know full well that he has dealt **treasonably** with him who is your lord and his brother, that he has blinded his eyes and [taken] from him his empire by wrong and wickedness. Now behold the rightful heir. If you hold with him, you will be doing as you ought; and if not we will do to you the very worst that we can." But for fear and terror of the Emperor Alexius, not one person on the land or in the city made show as if he held for the prince. So all went back to the host, and each sought his quarters ....

Now hear of a strange miracle: those who are within the city fly and abandon the walls, and the Venetians enter in, each as fast

**Treasonably:** Through disloyalty or betrayal, especially in the overthrow of a government.

and as best he can, and seize twenty-five of the towers, and man them with their people. And the Doge takes a boat, and sends messengers to the barons of the host to tell them that he has taken twenty-five towers, and that they may know for sooth that such towers cannot be retaken. The barons are so overjoyed that they cannot believe their ears; and the Venetians begin to send to the host in boats the horses and **palfreys** they have taken.

When the Emperor Alexius saw that our people had thus entered into the city, he sent his people against them in such numbers that our people saw they would be unable to endure the onset. So they set fire to the buildings between them and the Greeks; and the wind blew from our side, and the fire began to **wax** so great that the Greeks could not see our people who retired to the towers they had seized and conquered.

It seemed as if the whole plain was covered with troops, and they advanced slowly and in order. Well might we appear in **perilous case**, for we had but six **divisions**, while the Greeks had full forty, and there was not one of their divisions but was larger than any of ours. But ours were ordered in **such sort** that none could attack them save in front. And the Emperor Alexius rode so far forward that either side could shoot at the other. And when the Doge of Venice heard this, he made his people come forth, and leave the towers they had taken, and said he would live or die with the pilgrims. So he came to the camp, and was himself the first to land, and brought with him such of his people as he could.

Thus, for a long space, the armies of the pilgrims and of the Greeks stood one against the other; for the Greeks did not dare to throw themselves upon our ranks, and our people would not move from their **palisades**. And when the Emperor Alexius saw this, he began to withdraw his people, and when he had rallied them, he turned back....

Now listen to the miracles of our Lord—how gracious are they **whithersoever** it pleases Him to perform them! That very night the Emperor Alexius of Constantinople took of his treasure as much as he could carry, and took with him as many of his people as would go, and so fled and abandoned the city. And those of the city remained astonished, and they drew to the prison in which lay the Emperor Isaac, whose eyes had been put out. Him they clothed **imperially**, and bore to the great palace of Blachernae, and seated on a high throne; and there they did to him **obeisance** as their lord.

**Palfreys:** Saddle horses that are not warhorses.

**Wax:** Grow larger.

**Perilous case:** Dangerous position.

**Divisions:** Military units.

**Such sort:** Such a way.

**Palisades:** Fortified areas or enclosures or defensive walls made of wooden stakes.

**Whithersoever:** Wherever.

**Imperially:** Royally, with the clothing of a king.

**Obeisance:** A show of respect by bowing or other gestures.



## Which Alexius?

Alexius was a name taken by many of the emperors of the Byzantine Empire. Alexius I was the emperor who asked for help from Pope Urban II to fight the Seljuk Turks and thus brought on the First Crusade. That Alexius was a member of what was known as the Comnenan dynasty, the family line that ruled in Constantinople from 1081 to 1185. After the Comnenan dynasty came the Angelan dynasty, starting off with Isaac II, the emperor who was blinded by his ambitious brother. This brother who blinded Isaac became the emperor Alexius III, and he threw Isaac and Isaac's son, his own nephew, into prison to take power. Now this son of Isaac II was another Alexius, the one who escaped and ran off to Europe to get the Crusaders to help restore him and his father to power.

When the Crusaders chased off Alexius III, the new emperor became Alexius IV. (He ruled as coemperor with his father, Isaac, after the Crusaders conquered Constantinople, though he had the true power of the throne.) Soon, still another Alexius came into action, a distant relation to the Comnenan family. There were so many men named Alexius by this time that the Crusaders gave this one a nickname, "Murzuphlus," meaning "someone with thick eyebrows," for this man's eyebrows grew in a single strip over both eyes. Alexius Murzuphlus became Alexius V when he killed Alexius IV and put the poor old blind Isaac II back in prison to die. Alexius V did not maintain power for long; it was only a matter of two months until he was killed. He was the last Alexius to rule in Constantinople.

*Then they took messengers, by the advice of the Emperor Isaac, and sent them to the host, to **apprise** the son of the Emperor Isaac, and the barons, that the Emperor Alexius had fled, and that they had again raised up the Emperor Isaac as emperor...*

### **Excerpt from Chronica Regiae Coloniensis**

*In this year occurred an outstanding thing and one much to be marveled at, for it is unheard of throughout the ages. About the time of Easter and **Pentecost**, without anyone having preached or called for it and prompted by I know not what spirit, many thousands of boys, ranging in age from six years to full maturity, left the plows or carts which they were driving, the flocks which they were pasturing, and anything else which they were doing. This they did despite the wishes of their parents, relatives, and friends who sought to make them draw back. Suddenly one ran after another to*

**Apprise:** Tell.

**Pentecost:** Christian festival on the seventh Sunday after Easter.

take the cross. Thus, by groups of twenty, or fifty, or a hundred, they put up banners and began to journey to Jerusalem. They were asked by many people on whose advice or at whose urging they had set out upon this path. They were asked especially since only a few years ago many kings, a great many dukes, and innumerable people in powerful companies had gone there and had returned with the business unfinished. The present groups, moreover, were still of tender years and were neither strong enough nor powerful enough to do anything. Everyone, therefore, accounted them foolish and **imprudent** for trying to do this. They briefly replied that they were equal to the Divine will in this matter and that, whatever God might wish to do with them, they would accept it willingly and with humble spirit. They thus made some little progress on their journey. Some were turned back at Metz, others at Piacenza, and others even at Rome. Still others got to Marseilles, but whether they crossed to the Holy Land or what their end was is uncertain. One thing is sure: that of the many thousands who rose up, only very few returned.



**Imprudent:** Unwise.

## What happened next...

The Crusaders were able to put Alexius IV on the Byzantine throne, but once there he did not keep his end of the bargain. He had agreed to pay the Crusaders for putting him in power, but the money was not there, and the citizens of Constantinople did not want to pay higher taxes to raise the money. Then another Alexius came onto the scene and seized power in February 1204. He killed Alexius IV and made himself Alexius V and told the Crusaders to go home. The Crusaders were not going to leave without their payment. They needed the money to carry on the Crusade in the Holy Land. In April 1204 they began to attack Constantinople and captured the city, destroying much of it and killing thousands of its citizens. It was the worst destruction the city had ever seen. Then the Crusaders became caught up in forming the Latin Empire of Constantinople and never made it to the Holy Land.

Pope Innocent III excommunicated, or expelled, the Crusaders from the Catholic Church for these offenses against



**An illustration of the Children's Crusade showing boys wearing robes with crosses. Some historians wonder if all of the facts surrounding the Children's Crusade are fact or fiction.**

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another Christian land, but the Crusader movement did not end with this shameful act. Instead, the energy and desire to fight for the Holy Land were taken up by the common people and by youths all over Europe. The Children's Crusade of 1212 was a result of such interest. Since the nobles did not gather for a new Crusade, the children took up the cause. A young French shepherd, Stephen of Cloyes, went to the French king, telling him he had a letter from God that instructed him to lead a Crusade. The king told the twelve-year-old to come back when he was grown up. But Stephen preached his message for a Crusade to other children in France and soon gathered thousands around him. They marched south toward the Mediterranean Sea and sailed off from the port of Marseilles, never to be heard of again. One later witness said that two of the ships sank and that the others were captured by pirates and the children sold into slavery.

Stephen's Crusade inspired a similar one by a twelve-year-old German boy, Nicholas, who gathered thousands of

children but also some adults and marched over the Alpine mountain range to Rome. There, Pope Innocent III told them to go home, but many did not make it back to their homes, dying of starvation on the way. Some historians wonder if all the facts of the so-called Children's Crusade are true, but fact or fiction, this shows that the urge to go on a Crusade was still important in Europe at the beginning of the thirteenth century. The tragic Crusades of 1204 and 1212 would lead to further attempts to free the Holy Land from Muslim domination in three more major Crusades.

### **Did you know...**

- During the attack on Constantinople, the Crusaders were in part led by the Venetian doge, or ruler, Enrico Dandolo, a man who was in his eighties. He personally led his forces into battle against the Byzantine defenders.
- Venice was the real winner of the Fourth Crusade, earning money from the Crusaders for transporting them to Constantinople and, at the same time, using the Crusader army to help them win new holdings in Asia Minor and in the Mediterranean as a result of the peace treaty with Constantinople.
- The Latin Empire of Constantinople lasted until 1261.
- Stephen of Cloyes's Children's Crusade supposedly had thirty thousand followers, all of whom died or were sold into slavery on their way to the Holy Land. The second group of young Crusaders led by the German, Nicholas, had almost twenty thousand followers. Only one-third of them survived the march to Rome.

### **Consider the following...**

- What does the sack of Constantinople demonstrate about the motives of many of the Crusaders? Who was the enemy they were supposed to be fighting?
- The Children's Crusades were supposedly led by children. Discuss some of the arguments that you think these leaders used to recruit their adolescent armies.

- How old do you have to be to fight? The age for enlistment into the armed forces is eighteen; should younger children be allowed to join? Why or why not?

## For More Information

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# The Gentle Art of Diplomacy

*Excerpt from "Frederick II to Henry III of England," in Roger of Wendover's Flores Historiarum (1229)*

**Originally written by Frederick II; Reprinted in *Liber qui dicitur Flores Historiarum ab anno Domini MCLIV annoque Henrici Anglorum regis Secundi primo*; Edited by H. G. Hewlett; Published in 1886–89**

*Excerpt from Matthew Paris's Chronica Majora (1258)*

**Originally written by Gerold, Patriarch of Jerusalem; Reprinted in "Letters of the Crusaders," in *Translations and Reprints from the Original Sources of European History*; Translated by Dana C. Munro; Published in 1896**

The disasters of the Fourth Crusade in 1204 and of the so-called Children's Crusade in 1212 left the Christian world worried about the fate of the Holy Land. Pope Innocent III continued to call for a new Crusade, but he died in 1216, before he could see that his attempts to gather a European army for a new holy war in Palestine had finally succeeded. Honorius III, who became the next pope, continued to write letters to the nobles calling for a Crusade. By 1217 enough German and French nobles had signed on for the expedition, which was planned to strike Egypt, take its main city of Cairo, and then use the resources of that kingdom to launch a strike at Jerusalem itself.

This Crusade, unlike earlier ones, was partly led by a church leader, Cardinal Pelagius, whom Honorius III sent as his personal representative. The main leader was, however, King John of Jerusalem, who ruled his very tiny kingdom from the Mediterranean port of Acre, almost totally surrounded by unfriendly Muslims. The Fifth Crusade lasted from 1218 to 1221 and was as unsuccessful as earlier ones conducted by the Christians. The Egyptian sultan (ruler), al-Malik al-Kamil,





**Portrait of Frederick II, leader of the Sixth Crusade. Frederick regained Jerusalem from the Muslims without a battle by negotiating with Sultan al-Malik al-Kamil. © Bettmann/Corbis. Reproduced by permission.**

tion. But he had made a promise to go on a Crusade, and he had to keep the promise. This promise resulted in the Sixth Crusade (1228–29). Frederick II was, however, a very intelligent ruler, as talented in international relations as he was with the sword. He was determined to go on a Crusade in 1228, but before leaving Europe, he was in communication with the Egyptian sultan, al-Kamil, with the offer of a deal. If the Muslim would turn over Jerusalem to the Christians, Frederick II guaranteed a long period of peace. This was important for al-Kamil, who was involved in power battles with other Muslims for control of Syria. For Frederick II such a bloodless victory would be a great boost in his continual fight for dominance in Europe over the Catholic Church.

Matters were largely arranged by letter even before Frederick II set out with his small Crusader force for the Holy Land: Jerusalem would change hands. Still, when it happened, there were those among the Crusaders who were not happy with the arrangement. They thought that Frederick II

managed to defeat the Crusaders at the Battle of Mansurah on the Nile River before they reached Cairo, despite an early Crusader victory at the town of Damietta. The Crusade was long and drawn out; Saint Francis of Assisi, founder of the Franciscan order of monks and church reformer, even made an appearance in 1219 to try to persuade al-Kamil to change religions and so end the battle. The Muslim declined the offer but was impressed with Francis's courage to put himself into the hands of the enemy.

With the failure of the Fifth Crusade, the church stopped sponsoring holy wars in the Middle East. The next two Crusades were funded by royalty, both the ruler of the Holy Roman Empire, Frederick II, and the king of France, Louis IX. Frederick II had long been an enemy of church power and delayed entering the Fifth Crusade long enough to entirely miss the action.

and the army could have won more from the Muslims, who were at a weak point in 1228. They believed that the emperor could have won back more of the Holy Land if only he had been willing to fight.

### **Things to Remember While Reading Excerpts about the Sixth Crusade:**

- Frederick II not only was emperor of the Holy Roman Empire in 1228 when he went on the Sixth Crusade but, through his recent marriage to a fourteen-year-old girl named Yolanda, he also had a claim to become king of Jerusalem and thus make his empire even larger and stronger.
- When he went on Crusade, Frederick II was twice excommunicated, or expelled, from the Catholic Church for previously failing to go on Crusade, as he had promised.
- Frederick was opposed in his mission by the patriarch (Eastern Orthodox religious leader) of Jerusalem, Gerold of Valence, who started a campaign against him.
- Sultan al-Malik al-Kamil had much to gain and little to lose by returning Jerusalem to the Christians. The city's walls had been destroyed not long before, and it was not defensible. It would also be surrounded by Muslims, who could take the city back at any moment. Additionally, two Muslim holy places inside Jerusalem, the Dome of the Rock and al-Aqsa Mosque, an Islamic place of worship, were left in Muslim hands.
- Al-Kamil was as good a bargainer as Frederick II. He knew of the difficulties between Frederick and the patriarch and so slowed down talks about a treaty to put the pressure on Frederick. In the end, he gained more than he had hoped. His keeping Muslim shrines inside Jerusalem especially angered the patriarch, Gerold, and made relations between Frederick and the church even worse than before.
- Frederick II crowned himself king of Jerusalem in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem on March 18, 1229, one day before the arrival of a church official, who had been sent by Gerold to stop all religious services in the city.

- In both the following letters, from Frederick II to Henry III and from the patriarch Gerold to the faithful, al-Kamil is referred to as the “sultan of Babylon.” He was, however, at that time the sultan of Egypt and would only later rule Damascus and Babylon.



### **Excerpt from “Frederick II to Henry III of England”**

*Frederic, by the grace of God, the **august** emperor of the Romans, king of Jerusalem and Sicily, to his well-beloved friend, Henry, king of the English, health and sincere affection.*

*Let all rejoice and **exult** in the Lord, and let those who are correct in heart glorify **Him**, who, to make known His power, does not make boast of horses and chariots, but has now gained glory for Himself, in the scarcity of His soldiers, that all may know and understand that He is glorious in His majesty, terrible in His magnificence, and wonderful in His plans on the sons of men, changing seasons at will, and bringing the hearts of different nations together; for in these few days, by a miracle rather than by strength that business has been brought to a conclusion, which for a length of time past many chiefs and rulers of the world amongst the multitude of nations, have never been able till now to accomplish by force, however great, nor by fear.*

*Not, therefore, to keep you in suspense by a long account, we wish to inform your holiness, that we, firmly putting our trust in God, and believing that Jesus Christ, His Son, in whose service we have so devotedly exposed our bodies and lives, would not abandon us in these unknown and distant countries, but would at least give us wholesome advice and assistance for His honor, praise, and glory, boldly in the name set forth from Acre on the fifteenth day of the month of November last past and arrived safely at Joppa, intending to rebuild the castle at that place with proper strength, that afterwards the approach to the holy city of Jerusalem might be not only easier, but also shorter and more safe for us as well as for all Christians. When, therefore we were, in the confidence of our trust in God, engaged at Joppa, and superintending the building of the castle and*

**August:** Inspiring respect.

**Exult:** Triumph, express joy.

**Him:** God, referred to by the capitalized third-person singular masculine pronoun.

the cause of Christ, as necessity required and as was our duty, and **whilst** all our **pilgrims** were busily engaged in these matters, several messengers often passed to and fro between us and the **sultan** of Babylon; for he and another sultan, called Xaphat, his brother were with a large army at the city of Gaza, distant about one day's journey from us; in another direction, in the city of Sichen, which is commonly called Neapolis, and situated in the plains, the sultan of Damascus his nephew, was staying with an immense number of knights and soldiers also about a day's journey from us and the Christians.



Front view of a gold coin bearing the image of Frederick II. Frederick crowned himself king of Jerusalem after negotiating the return of Jerusalem to Christians during the Sixth Crusade.

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And whilst the treaty was in progress between the parties on either side of the restoration of the Holy Land, at length Jesus Christ, the Son of God, beholding from on high our devoted endurance and patient devotion to His cause, in His merciful compassion of us, at length brought it about that the sultan of Babylon restored to us the holy city, the place where the feet of Christ trod, and where the true worshippers adore the Father in spirit and in truth. But that we may inform you of the particulars of this surrender each as they happened, be it known to you that not only is the body of the **aforesaid** city restored to us, but also the whole of the country extending from thence to the seacoast near the castle of Joppa, so that for the future pilgrims will have free passage and a safe return to and from the **sepulchre**; provided, however, that the **Saracens** of that part of the country, since they hold the temple in great **veneration**, may come there as often as they choose in the character of pilgrims, to worship according to their custom, and that we shall **henceforth** permit them to come, however, only as many as we may choose to allow, and without arms, nor are they to dwell in the city, but outside, and as soon as they have paid their devotions they are to depart.

Moreover, the city of Bethlehem is restored to us, and all the country between Jerusalem and that city; as also the city of Nazareth, and all the country between Acre and that city; the whole of the district of Turon, which is very extensive, and very advantageous to the Christians; the city of Sidon, too, is given up to us with the whole plain and its **appurtenances**, which will be the

**Whilst:** While.

**Pilgrims:** Religious visitors or travelers.

**Sultan:** Ruler, leader.

**Aforesaid:** Mentioned before.

**Sepulchre:** Tomb, burial place; in this case the tomb of Jesus Christ in Jerusalem.

**Saracens:** Term used by Europeans for all Muslims.

**Veneration:** Respect or reverence.

**Henceforth:** From now on.

**Appurtenances:** Attachments, connected areas.

**Resurrection:** Rising from the dead or being reborn.

**Deserts:** That which is deserved or owing.

**Conferred:** Granted, awarded.

**Renown:** Fame, recognition.

**Burnt offering:** A sacrifice to God, often an animal, burned at an altar; here used to mean words of praise.

**Exalted:** Praised, raised in rank.

**Orthodox faith:** True religion, here referring to Christianity.

*more acceptable to the Christians the more advantageous it has till now appeared to be to the Saracens, especially as there is a good harbor there, and from there great quantities of arms and necessaries might be carried to the city of Damascus and often from Damascus to Babylon. And although according to our treaty we are allowed to rebuild the city of Jerusalem in as good a state as it has ever been, and also the castles of Joppa, Cesarea, Sidon, and that of St. Mary of the Teutonic order, which the brothers of that order have begun to build in the mountainous district of Acre, and which it has never been allowed the Christians to do during any former truce; nevertheless the sultan is not allowed, till the end of the truce between him and us, which is agreed on for ten years, to repair or rebuild any fortresses or castles.*

*And so on Sunday, the eighteenth day of February last past, which is the day on which Christ, the Son of God, rose from dead, and which, in memory of His **resurrection**, is solemnly cherished and kept holy by all Christians in general throughout the world, this treaty of peace was confirmed by oath between us. Truly then on us and on all does that day seem to have shone favorably, in which the angels sing in praise of God, "Glory to God on high, and on earth peace, and goodwill toward men." And in acknowledgment of such great kindness and of such an honor, which, beyond our **deserts** and contrary to the opinion of many, God has mercifully **conferred** on us, to the lasting **renown** of His compassion, and that in His holy place we might personally offer to Him the **burnt offering** of our lips, be it known to you that on the seventeenth day of the month of March [...], we, in company with all the pilgrims who had with us faithfully followed Christ, the Son of God, entered the holy city of Jerusalem, and after worshipping at the holy sepulchre, we, as being a Catholic emperor, on the following day, wore the crown, which Almighty God provided for us from the throne of His majesty, when of His especial grace, He **exalted** us on high amongst the princes of the world; so that whilst we have supported the honor of this high dignity, which belongs to us by right of sovereignty, it is more and more evident to all that the hand of the Lord hath done all this; and since His mercies are over all His works, let the worshippers of the **orthodox faith** henceforth know and relate it far and wide throughout the world, that He, who is blessed for ever, has visited and redeemed His people, and has raised up the horn of salvation for us in the house of His servant David.*

*And before we leave the city of Jerusalem, we have determined magnificently to rebuild it, and its towers and walls, and we intend*

so to arrange matters that, during our absence, there shall be no less care and diligence used in the business, than if we were present in person. In order that this our present letter may be full of **exultation** throughout, and so a happy end correspond with its happy beginning, and rejoice your royal mind, we wish it to be known to you our ally, that the said sultan is bound to restore to us all those captives whom he did not in **accordance** with the treaty made between him and the Christians deliver up at the time when he lost Damietta some time since, and also the others who have been since taken.

Given at the holy city of Jerusalem, on the seventeenth day of the month of March, in the year of our Lord one thousand two hundred and twenty-nine.

### **Excerpt from “Gerold to All the Faithful”**

Gerold, **patriarch** of Jerusalem, to all the faithful greeting.

If it should be fully known how astonishing, **nay** rather, **deplorable**, the conduct of the emperor has been in the eastern lands from beginning to end, to the great **detriment** of the cause of Jesus Christ and to the great injury of the Christian faith, from the sole of his foot to the top of his head no common sense would be found in him. For he came, **excommunicated**, without money and followed by scarcely forty knights, and hoped to maintain himself by **spoiling** the inhabitants of Syria. He first came to Cyprus and there most discourteously seized that nobleman J. [John] of Ibelin and his sons, whom he had invited to his table under **pretext** of speaking of the affairs of the Holy Land. Next the king, whom he had invited to meet him, he retained almost as a captive. He thus by violence and fraud got possession of the kingdom.

After these achievements he passed over into Syria. Although in the beginning he promised to do marvels, and although in the presence of the foolish he boasted loudly, he immediately sent to the sultan of Babylon [al-Kamil] to demand peace. This conduct **rendered** him **despicable** in the eyes of the sultan and his subjects, especially after they had discovered that he was not at the head of a numerous army, which might have to some extent added weight to his words. Under the pretext of defending Joppa, he marched with the Christian army towards that city, in order to be nearer the sultan and in order to be able more easily to treat of peace or obtain a truce. What more shall I say? After long and mysterious conferences, and without having consulted any one who lived in the country, he suddenly announced one day that he had made peace with the sul-

**Exultation:** Triumph, great joy.

**Accordance:** Conforming with.

**Patriarch:** One of the four main religious leaders of the Eastern Orthodox Church.

**Nay:** No.

**Deplorable:** Very bad.

**Detriment:** Negative effect.

**Excommunicated:** Expelled from the church.

**Spoiling:** Plundering, stealing from.

**Pretext:** A false reason.

**Rendered:** Made.

**Despicable:** Hated, beneath contempt.

**Articles:** Terms, conditions (of the truce).

**Malice:** Ill will.

**Fraudulent:** Fake.

**Tenor:** General meaning.

**Thither:** In that direction, to that place.

**Manifest:** Obvious.

**Diadem:** Crown.

**Saracens:** Christian term for Muslims.

**Chagrin:** Sorrow and shame.

**Hospitalers/Hospitallers and the Templars:** Fighting orders of the church.

**Seduce:** Persuade to do something.

**Alms:** Donated money.

**Convoked:** Called together.

**Prelates:** High religious officials.

tan. No one saw the text of the peace or truce when the emperor took the oath to observe the **articles** which were agreed upon. Moreover, you will be able to see clearly how great the **malice** was and how **fraudulent** the **tenor** of certain articles of the truce which we have decided to send to you. The emperor, for giving credit to his word, wished as a guarantee only the word of the sultan, which he obtained. For he said, among other things, that the holy city was surrendered to him.

He went **thither** with the Christian army on the eve of the Sunday when "Oculi mei" is sung [third Sunday in Lent, or the period before Easter]. The Sunday following, without any fitting ceremony and although excommunicated, in the chapel of the sepulchre of our Lord, to the **manifest** prejudice of his honor and of the imperial dignity he put the **diadem** upon his forehead, although the **Saracens** still held the temple of the Lord and Solomon's temple, and although they proclaimed publicly as before the law of Mohammed to the great confusion and **chagrin** of the pilgrims.

This same prince, who had previously very often promised to fortify Jerusalem, departed in secrecy from the city at dawn on the following Monday. The **Hospitalers and the Templars** promised solemnly and earnestly to aid him with all their forces and their advice, if he wanted to fortify the city, as he had promised. But the emperor, who did not care to set affairs right, and who saw that there was no certainty in what had been done, and that the city in the state in which it had been surrendered to him could be neither defended nor fortified, was content with the name of surrender, and on the same day hastened with his family to Joppa. The pilgrims who had entered Jerusalem with the emperor, witnessing his departure, were unwilling to remain behind.

The following Sunday when "Laetare Jerusalem" is sung [fourth Sunday in Lent], he arrived at Acre. There in order to **seduce** the people and to obtain their favor, he granted them a certain privilege. God knows the motive which made him act thus, and his subsequent conduct will make it known. As, moreover, the passage was near, and as all pilgrims, humble and great, after having visited the Holy Sepulchre, were preparing to withdraw, as if they had accomplished their pilgrimage, because no truce had been concluded with the sultan of Damascus, we, seeing that the holy land was already deserted and abandoned by the pilgrims, in our council formed the plan of retaining soldiers for the common good, by means of the **alms** given by the king of France of holy memory.

When the emperor heard of this, he said to us that he was astonished at this, since he had concluded a truce with the sultan of Babylon. We replied to him that the knife was still in the wound, since there was not a truce or peace with the sultan of Damascus, nephew of the afore-said sultan and opposed to him, adding that even if the sultan of Babylon was unwilling, the former could still do us much harm. The emperor replied, saying that no soldiers ought to be retained in his kingdom without his advice and consent, as he was now king of Jerusalem. We answered to that, that in the matter in question, as well as in all of a similar nature, we were very sorry not to be able, without endangering the salvation of our souls, to obey his wishes, because he was excommunicated. The emperor made no response to us, but on the following day he caused the pilgrims who inhabited the city to be assembled outside by the public crier, and by special messengers he also **convoked** the **prelates** and the monks.

Addressing them in person, he began to complain bitterly of us, by heaping up false accusations. Then turning his remarks to the **venerable** master of the Templars he publicly attempted to severely **tarnish** the reputation of the latter, by various vain speeches, seeking thus to throw upon others the responsibility for his own faults which were now manifest, and adding at last, that we were maintaining troops with the purpose of injuring him. After that he ordered all foreign soldiers, of all nations, if they valued their lives and property, not to remain in the land from that day on, and ordered count Thomas, whom he intended to leave as **bailiff** of the country, to punish with **stripes** any one who was found **lingering**, in order that the punishment of one might serve as an example to many. After doing all this he withdrew, and would listen to no excuse or answers to the charges which he had so shamefully made. He determined immediately to post some **crossbowmen** at the gates of the city, ordering them to allow the Templars to go out but not to return. Next he fortified with crossbows the churches and other elevated positions and especially those which commanded the communications between

**Venerable:** Respected.

**Tarnish:** Damage.

**Bailiff:** Sheriff.

**Stripes:** Lashes of the whip.

**Lingering:** Remaining behind.

**Crossbowmen:** Soldiers equipped with crossbows, a medieval weapon.

**Manifest** Clear; obvious.

**Menaced:** Threatened.

**Dominicans and Minorites:**  
Catholic religious orders or groups.

**Palm Sunday:** The Sunday before Easter.

**Interdict:** A church censure, or official decree of disapproval.

**Vessels:** Ships.

**Levy:** Collect, as a tax.

**Galleys:** Ships with sails.

**Reproach:** Express disapproval of.

**Remonstrance:** Words of protest.

**Obscure:** Hidden.

**Destitute:** Poor, needy

the Templars and ourselves. And you may be sure that he never showed as much animosity and hatred against Saracens.

For our part, seeing his **manifest** wickedness, we assembled all the prelates and all the pilgrims, and **menaced** with excommunication all those who should aid the emperor with their advice or their services against the Church, the Templars, the other monks of the Holy Land, or the pilgrims.

The emperor was more and more irritated, and immediately caused all the passages to be guarded more strictly, refused to allow any kind of provisions to be brought to us or to the members of our party, and placed everywhere crossbowmen and archers, who attacked severely us, the Templars and the pilgrims. Finally to fill the measure of his malice, he caused some **Dominicans and Minorites** [Franciscans] who had come on **Palm Sunday** to the proper places to announce the Word of God, to be torn from the pulpit, to be thrown down and dragged along the ground and whipped throughout the city, as if they had been robbers. Then seeing that he did not obtain what he had hoped from the above-mentioned siege he treated of peace. We replied to him that we would not hear of peace until he sent away the crossbowmen and other troops, until he had returned our property to us, until finally he had restored all things to the condition and freedom in which they were on the day when he entered Jerusalem. He finally ordered what we wanted to be done, but it was not executed. Therefore we placed the city under **interdict**.

The emperor, realizing that his wickedness could have no success, was unwilling to remain any longer in the country. And, as if he would have liked to ruin everything, he ordered the crossbows and engines of war, which for a long time had been kept at Acre for the defense of the Holy Land, to be secretly carried on his **vessels**. He also sent away several of them to the sultan of Babylon, as his dear friend. He sent a troop of soldiers to Cyprus to **levy** heavy contributions of money there, and, what appeared to us more astonishing, he destroyed the **galleys** which he was unable to take with him. Having learned this, we resolved to **reproach** him with it, but shunning the **remonstrance** and the correction, he entered a galley secretly, by an **obscure** way, on the day of the Apostles St. Philip and St. James, and hastened to reach the island of Cyprus, without saying adieu to any one, leaving Joppa **destitute**; and may he never return!

Very soon the bailiffs of the above-mentioned sultan shut off all departure from Jerusalem for the Christian poor and the Syrians, and many pilgrims died thus on the road.



## Preserving Knowledge

We are able to gain insights into long-ago times because people kept records of what happened. In modern days we call such people historians. In addition to their work, the modern media, such as television and radio, record almost every event that happens. In today's world, some might say that there is too much "history." But in the time of men like Frederick II and the patriarch Gerold, the job of recording events was left mostly to Christian monks, or members of religious orders living in monasteries outside regular society. These monks kept detailed accounts of happenings in the world in works called "chronicles."

Some of the best of these medieval chronicles were kept by monks in one English monastery near London, called Saint Albans. Members of the Benedictine religious

order, these monks went in for the big sweep of history. Roger of Wendover, author of the *Flores Historiarum* ("Flowers of History"), laid out the history of the world from the creation to 1235. It is in his work that Frederick's letter to the king of England is preserved. Another chronicler of Saint Albans, Matthew Paris, wrote a bit later than Roger. His *Chronica Majora* looks at the history of the world from the Creation up to 1259 and includes the letter of Gerold to the "faithful," or members of the Eastern Orthodox religion. An artist as well as a historian, Matthew illustrated his own manuscripts. The work of these early English historians, or chroniclers, was gathered and edited in the nineteenth century in an enormous publishing project called the Rolls Series, which preserves medieval history for the modern world.

*This is what the emperor did, to the **detrimment** of the Holy Land and of his own soul, as well as many other things which are known and which we leave to others to relate. May the merciful God **deign** to soften the results! Farewell.*



## What happened next...

The treaty signed between Frederick II and the sultan al-Kamil gave both sides certain advantages. Yet both the emperor and sultan were surprised by the anger such a treaty caused. The church and other Crusaders complained that Frederick II did not go far enough or that he bargained away

**Detrimment:** Harm.

**Deign:** Consent, agree.

his advantage. At the same time, other Muslims were shocked that al-Kamil, who was supposed to be the protector of Islam, would give Jerusalem back to the Christians, even if Islam did keep control of its most important holy sites in the city.

Both leaders survived the storm of criticism, though. Frederick II was forced to return to Italy to protect part of his empire that had come under attack by armies of the pope. He continued to battle the power of the church until his death in 1250. Al-Kamil used the time of truce with the Crusaders to fight his opponents among the Muslims. He took Damascus and secured his power in Syria. Then he became the protector of Islam against a new enemy, the Mongols, who were beginning to invade the region from their home in Central Asia. The sultan al-Kamil died in 1238, tired out from a life of fighting the enemies of Islam.

Jerusalem stayed in Christian hands until it was sacked in 1244 by Turkish Muslims. This, in turn, led to the Seventh Crusade (1248–54), the last of the large-scale military adventures by Crusaders in the Middle East. Frederick II changed the way Europeans thought about the Crusades. If he could win by diplomacy, or negotiation, what others had failed to win by war, what was the purpose of fighting? This question took some of the enthusiasm out of the Crusader movement.

### **Did you know...**

- Frederick II actually used his Crusader army in the Sixth Crusade not against the Muslims but to bully the Christians in the Holy Land to support him as king of Jerusalem. Some historians say that Frederick's goal was not the conquest of Muslim-held territories in Palestine but the takeover of the Crusader states there.
- Frederick II was one of the best-educated emperors of the day. He was a fan of Islamic scholarship and art, having grown up in Sicily, where Arabs had once been in power. He was nicknamed "Wonder of the World," founded a university, organized his government along modern models, and was himself an amateur scientist.
- Frederick II shocked the Christian faithful in Jerusalem by visiting Muslim shrines.

- At the time of the Sixth Crusade a new enemy to both Christians and Muslims was sweeping down from the north into the Middle East. The Mongols, a nomadic warrior tribe, conquered northern China in 1212 and had become the rulers of Central Asia by 1222. In the 1230s they occupied Russia, Ukraine, Poland, and Hungary. Both Christian Europe and the Muslim Middle East were next on their agenda.

### Consider the following...

- Who do you think was the real winner of the Sixth Crusade, Frederick II or al-Kamil? Why?
- If important issues, such as the handover of Jerusalem to the Christians in the Sixth Crusade, could be solved without bloodshed, why do you think the wars continued between Christians and Muslims during the Crusades?
- Discuss some reasons why the Crusader states in the Holy Land might not have been behind Frederick II and his Sixth Crusade.

### For More Information

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# The Final Good-Bye

*Excerpt from "The Capture of Jerusalem, 1244,"  
in Matthew of Paris's Chronica Majora (1258)*

**Originally written by Master of the Hospitallers at Jerusalem,  
Tolord de Melaye; Reprinted in "Letters of the Crusaders,"  
Translations and Reprints from the Original Sources of European  
History; Translated by Dana C. Munro; Published in 1896**

*Excerpt from "The Fall of Acre, 1291,"  
in Description of the Holy Land and the Way Thither (1350)*

**Originally written by Ludolph of Suchem; Reprinted in *The  
Crusades: A Documentary History*; Edited by James Brundage;  
Published in 1962**

The thirteenth century brought an end to the Crusader states in the Holy Land. These Christian kingdoms had held on from their creation in 1099 by a combination of aid from Europe; military strength provided by their fighting religious orders, such as the Knights Templar and Knights Hospitallers; and a complex policy of playing off one Muslim enemy against another. The Crusaders, who at the time of the First Crusade were angry at Alexius I of the Byzantine Empire for his tricky dealings with the Muslims, had learned such lessons well over the years. They became very good at double-dealing as well, making treaties with one group of Muslims in order to hurt another, stronger group. There was even talk of making an alliance with the Mongols, that warrior-like tribe from Central Asia that was tearing the Middle East apart in the thirteenth century.

However, the Crusaders were not just playing politics against the Muslims; they were also battling each other. As the size of the Crusader states grew smaller and smaller under pressure from Muslim fighters, the Crusaders began turning against one another, fighting over territory and policy. They

even imported conflicts from Europe, as seen in the following selections. The divisions between the various Muslim groups, caused by family or dynasty, and the competing branches of Islam had allowed the Crusaders to capture the Holy Land in the first place. Now the Crusaders were becoming as divided as the Muslims had been, with one state or city making treaties with the Turks or the Egyptians so that they could better compete against another Crusader state.

Of the four original states, the County of Edessa, the County of Tripoli, the Kingdom of Jerusalem, and the Principality of Antioch, little remained by the twelfth century, and it was in much weakened condition. Edessa was lost to the Muslims in 1144, and part of it was sold off to the Byzantine Empire. Jerusalem was lost in 1187 but won back by Frederick II in 1229 by treaty rather than war. That situation would also change, as shown in the following letter from the master, or chief, Hospitaller of Jerusalem describing the sack of the city by a Turkish Muslim force. After 1244 it was all downhill for the Crusaders. The central city for the Kingdom of Jerusalem became the fortified port of Acre, and, to the north, Tripoli and Antioch joined together under one leader. Smaller cities, such as Beirut and Tyre, also were fortified and held on until the very end against the Muslims, as did some of the famous forts, such as Krak des Chevaliers of the Hospitallers.

The fall of Jerusalem in 1244 contributed to the mounting of the last great Crusade to the Holy Land. The Seventh Crusade (1248–54), led by France's Louis IX, struck in Egypt, as had the Fifth Crusade. Like that earlier one, it, too, was a failure for the Christians. But from the Muslim point of view, it signaled the rebirth of Islam. Out of the chaos of that Crusade was born the Mamluk, or slave, dynasty of Egypt, a ruling line that lasted for several centuries and that unified much of the Middle East. These Mamluks were of mostly Turkish origin and were raised as professional soldiers. By 1260 they had become so powerful that they took over Egypt from their former masters. Led by the famous military ruler Baybars, the Mamluks drove the Crusaders into an ever-smaller corner of the Middle East. First, however, they had to deal with the Mongols, who sacked Baghdad in 1258 and were threatening the entire Middle East. The Mamluks defeated the Mongols at the Battle of Ayn Jalut in 1260, and then Baybars was free to turn his armies

against the Christians. Antioch fell in 1268, and all its defenders were slaughtered. Baybars was no Saladin; although he was as great a general, he did not fight like a gentleman. Women, children, and men alike were killed without mercy.

After his death in 1277, leadership of the Mamluks was taken over by the general Kalavun, who continued to battle both the Crusaders and the Mongols. Kalavun made treaties when necessary and sent his troops into battle when such diplomacy did not work, taking Tripoli by force in 1289. By 1291 his son, al-Ashraf al-Khalil, had taken over as sultan of Egypt and gathered a huge Muslim force of about sixty thousand cavalry (horse-mounted soldiers) and about twice as many foot soldiers at the walls of the last great Crusader city, Acre. This was to be the final curtain for the Crusaders.

### **Things to Remember While Reading Excerpts about “The Final Good-Bye”:**

- Although Jerusalem was given back to the Christian Crusaders in 1229, it was impossible to fortify, for the old walls had been destroyed. To secure its position, the Kingdom of Jerusalem made a treaty with the Muslim rulers of Damascus, Syria, who were in conflict with the sultan of Egypt. When these two states went to war with each other, Jerusalem was caught in the middle. The Egyptians hired a tribe of Turks, the Khwarismians, to fight along with them, and these Turks swept into the Holy Land, capturing Jerusalem in 1244.
- The fall of Jerusalem in 1244 brought about the Seventh Crusade, which, in turn, helped create the powerful Mamluk dynasty in Egypt.
- So divided had the Crusaders become in the late thirteenth century that historians note that it was competing Crusaders who urged the Mamluk sultan Kalavun to attack Tripoli in 1289.
- The Crusaders finally united at the threat to Acre, their last stronghold. The military orders gathered their troops there and were aided by soldiers from England, France, and Italy, but it was a situation of having done too little and too late.

A painting depicting the fall of Acre as described by Ludolph of Suchem. © Holton-Deutsch Collection/Corbis. Reproduced by permission.



- When laying siege to Acre, the Muslims decided that they could not break through the thick walls of the fortified city. Instead, they brought in “sappers,” (miners) who dug under the walls, weakening them and ultimately causing them to cave in.
- Written seventy years after the fact, Ludolph of Suchem’s account of the fall of Acre in 1291 should be read with care. Like all good travel writers, Ludolph liked to exaggerate and change history for dramatic purposes. His timeline is generally accurate, but his numbers of Islamic soldiers is greatly exaggerated.



## Excerpts from “The Capture of Jerusalem, 1244”

To the most **potent** lord, M. de Melaye, brother G. of Newcastle, by the grace of God, **humble** master of the holy house at Jerusalem, and guardian of the poor followers of Christ greeting.

From the information contained in our letters, which we have sent to you on each passage, you can plainly enough see how ill the business of the Holy Land has proceeded, on account of the opposition which for a long time existed, at the time of making the truce, respecting the **espousing** of the cause of the Damascenes against the sultan of Babylon; and now wishing your excellency to be informed of other events since **transpired**, we have thought it worth our while to inform you that, about the beginning of the summer last past, the **sultan** of Damascus, and Seisser, sultan of Cracy, who were formerly enemies, made peace and entered into a treaty with the Christians, on the following conditions; namely, that they should restore to the Christians the whole of the kingdom of Jerusalem, and the territory which had been in the possession of the Christians, near the river Jordan, besides some villages which they retained possession of in the mountains, and that the Christians were faithfully to give them all the assistance in their power in attacking the sultan of Babylon.

The terms of this treaty having been agreed to by both parties the Christians began to take up their **abode** in the Holy City, whilst their army remained at Gazara, in company with that of the aforesaid sultan's, to **harass** the sultan of Babylon. After they had been some time engaged in that undertaking, **patriarch** of Jerusalem landed [...], and, after taking some slight bodily rest, he was inspired with a longing to visit the **sepulchre** of our Lord, and set out on that pilgrimage, on which we also accompanied him. After our vow of pilgrimage was fulfilled, we heard in the **Holy City** that a countless multitude of that barbarous and **perverse** race, called **Choermians**, had, at the summons and order of the sultan of Babylon, occupied the whole surface of the country in the furthest part of our territories adjoining Jerusalem, and had put every living soul to death by fire and sword.

A council was on this held by the Christians living at Jerusalem, and ... it was **prudently** arranged that all the inhabitants of the

**Potent:** Powerful.

**Humble:** Modest, not important.

**Espousing:** Supporting.

**Transpired:** Took place, happened.

**Sultan:** Ruler.

**Abode:** Residence.

**Harass:** Make small attacks to wear down an enemy.

**Patriarch:** Religious leader of the Eastern Orthodox Church.

**Sepulchre:** Tomb.

**Holy City:** Jerusalem.

**Perverse:** Wicked.

**Choermians:** A Turkish tribe, also known as the Khwarisimians or the Khorezmians.

**Prudently:** Demonstrating careful thought.

**Battalion:** Military unit.

**Standards:** Flags.

**Adversaries:** Enemies.

**Countenance:** Expression, appearance.

**Dissuade:** Talk out of, advise against.

**Perfidious:** Untrustworthy.

**Ingress and Egress:** Entry and exit.

**Ambuscade:** Ambush.

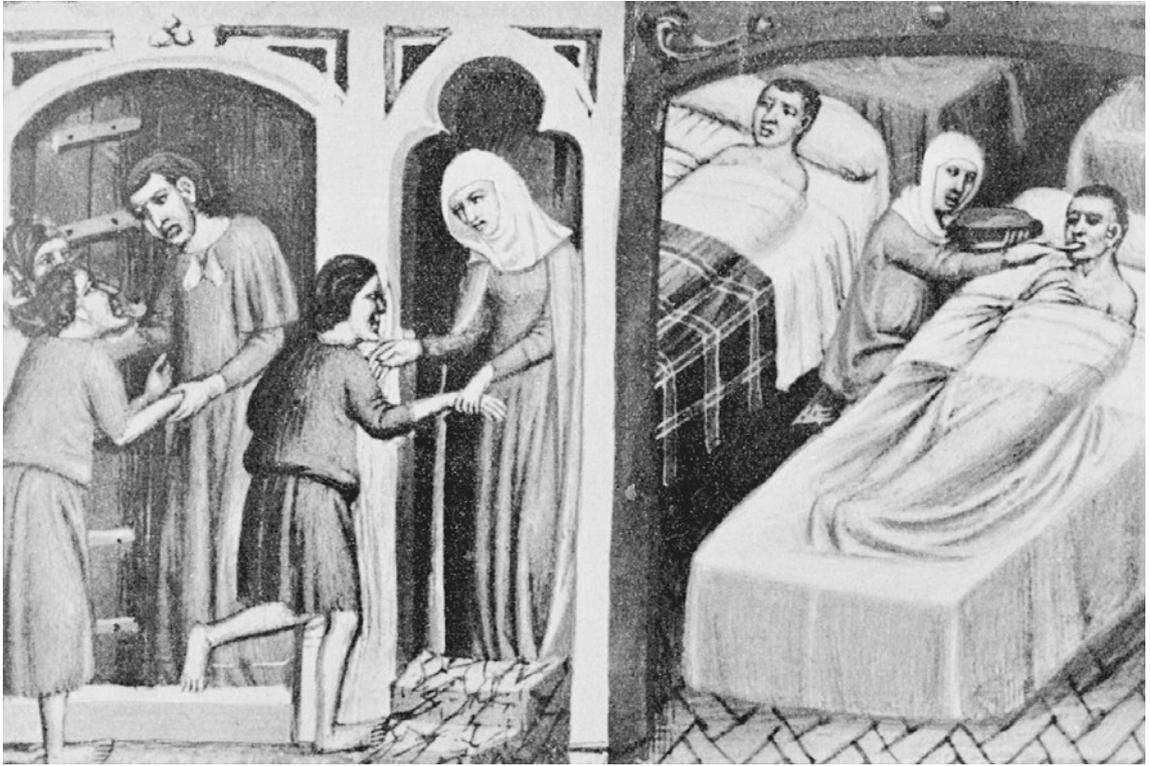
**Slew:** Killed.

**Consecrated:** Made holy.

**Sanctuary:** Place of safety or refuge.

*Holy City of both sexes and of every age, should proceed, under escort of a **battalion** of our knights, to Joppa, as a place of safety and refuge.... After finishing our deliberations, we led the people cautiously out of the city, and had proceeded confidently half the distance, when, owing to the intervention of our old and wily enemy, the devil, a most destructive obstacle presented itself to us; for the aforesaid people raised on the walls of the city some **standards**, which they found left behind by the fugitives, in order by these means to recall the unwary, by giving them to believe that the Christians who had remained had defeated their **adversaries**. Some of our fellow Christians hurried after us to recall us, comforting us with pleased **countenance**, and declaring that standards of the Christians, which they well knew, were raised on the wall of Jerusalem, in token that they had defeated the enemy; and they, having been thus deceived, deceived us also.*

*We ... returned confidently into the Holy City, ... many from feelings of devotion, and others in hope of obtaining and retaining possession of their inheritances, rashly and incautiously returned ...; we, however, endeavored to **dissuade** them from this altogether, fearing treachery from these **perfidious** people, and so went away from them. Not long after our departure, these perfidious Choermians came in great force and surrounded the Christians in the Holy City, making violent assaults on them daily, cutting off all means of **ingress and egress** to and from the city, and harassing them in various ways, so that, owing to these attacks, hunger and grief, they fell into despair, and all by common consent exposed themselves to the chances and risk of death by the hands of the enemy. They therefore left the city by night, and wandered about in the trackless and desert parts of the mountains till they at length came to a narrow pass, and there they fell into an **ambuscade** of the enemy, who ... attacked them with swords, arrows, stones and other weapons, **slew** and cut to pieces ... about seven thousand men and women, and caused such a massacre that the blood of those of the faith, with sorrow I say it, ran down the sides of the mountain like water. Young men and virgins they hurried off with them into captivity, and retired into the Holy City, where they cut the throats, as of sheep doomed to the slaughter, of the nuns, and aged and infirm men, who, unable to endure the toils of the journey and fight, had fled to the church of the Holy Sepulchre and to Calvary, a place **consecrated** by the blood of our Lord, thus perpetrating in His holy **sanctuary** such a crime as the eyes of men had never seen since the commencement of the world.*



At length, as the intolerable **atroc**ity of this great crime aroused the devotion of all the Christians to avenge the insult offered to their Creator, it was ... agreed that we should all ... give battle to these treacherous people. We accordingly attacked them, and fought ... till the close of the day, when darkness prevented us from distinguishing our own people from our enemies; immense numbers fell on our side; but four times as many of our adversaries were **slain**.... On the following ... day, the Knights Templars and Hospitalers ... invoked assistance from above, together with all the other religious men devoted to this war, and their forces, and the whole army of the Christians ... assembled by **proclamation** under the patriarch, and engaged in a most bloody conflict with the aforesaid Choermians and five thousand **Saracen** knights, who had recently fought under the sultan of Babylon ... ; a fierce attack was made on both sides, as we could not avoid them, for there was a powerful and numerous army on both sides of us. At length, however, we were unable to stand against such a multitude, for fresh and uninjured troops of the enemy continued to come upon us, ... and still feeling

A painting of monks and nuns welcoming travelers and caring for the sick in Jerusalem during the Crusades. Nuns, monks, the elderly, and the sick were slaughtered in the Holy City during the Seventh Crusade. © Bettmann/Corbis. Reproduced by permission.

**Atroc**ity: Evil.

**Slain**: Killed.

**Proclamation**: A public order or command.

**Saracen**: Muslim.

**Him:** God or Jesus Christ.

**Mutually exhorted:** Encouraged each other.

**Incomputable:** Uncountable.

**Brethren:** Fellow members of a religious order.

**Instigation:** Initiation, the act of beginning.

**Lombardy:** A part of Italy.

**Guelfs and Ghibellines:** Opposing political factions or groups in the Middle Ages that had different views about the power of the pope versus the power of the German emperor.

**Mercenary:** Soldier for hire.

**Abode:** Stayed.

**Plundered:** Robbed.

*the effects of the recent battle ... we were compelled to give way, abandoning to them the field, with a bloody and dearly bought victory; for great numbers more fell on their side than on ours.*

*And we were so assisted by **Him** who is the Saviour of souls, that not a hundred escaped by flight, but, as long as we were able to stand, we **mutually exhorted** and comforted one another in Christ, and fought so unweariedly and bravely, to the astonishment of our enemies, till we were at length taken prisoners ... or fell slain. Hence the enemy afterwards said in admiration to their prisoners: "You voluntarily threw yourselves in the way of death; why was this?" To which the prisoners replied: "We would rather die in battle, and with the death of our bodies obtain glorification for our souls than basely give way and take to flight...."*

*In the said battle, then, the power of the Christians was crushed, and the number of slain in both armies was **incomputable**. The masters of the Templars and Hospitalers were slain as also the masters of other orders, with their **brethren** and followers. Walter, count of Brienne, and the lord Philip de Montfort, and those who fought under the patriarch, were cut to pieces; of the Templars only eighteen escaped, and sixteen of the Hospitalers, who were afterwards sorry that they had saved themselves. Farewell.*

### **Excerpts from "The Fall of Acre, 1291"**

*After having told of the glories and beauties of Acre, I will now shortly tell you of its fall and ruin, and the cause of its loss, even as I heard the tale told by right truthful men, who well remembered it. While, then, the grand doings of which I have spoken were going on in Acre, at the **instigation** of the devil there arose a violent and hateful quarrel in **Lombardy** between the **Guelfs and the Ghibellines**, which brought all evil upon the Christians. Those Lombards who dwelt at Acre took sides in this same quarrel, especially the Pisans and Genoese, both of whom had an exceedingly strong party in Acre. These men made treaties and truces with the Saracens, to the end that they might the better fight against one another within the city. When Pope Urban ... heard of this, he grieved for Christendom and for the Holy Land, and sent twelve thousand **mercenary** troops across the sea to help the Holy Land and Christendom. When these men came across the sea to Acre they did no good, but **abode** by day and by night in taverns and places of ill repute, took and **plundered** merchants and pilgrims in the public street, broke the treaty, and did much evil. Melot Sapheraph, Sultan*

of Babylon, an exceedingly wise man, most potent in arms and bold in action, when he heard of this, and knew of the hateful quarrels of the people of Acre, called together his counselors and held a parliament in Babylon, wherein he complained that the truces had frequently been broken and violated, to the prejudice of himself and his people. After a debate had been held upon this matter, he gathered together a mighty **host**, and reached the city of Acre without any resistance, because of their quarrels with one another, cutting down and wasting all the vineyards and fruit trees and all the gardens and orchards, which are most lovely thereabout. When the Master of the Templars [William of Beaujeu], a very wise and brave knight, saw this, he feared that the fall of the city was at hand.... He took counsel with his brethren about how peace could be restored, and then went out to meet the Sultan, who was his own very especial friend, to ask him whether they could by any means repair the broken truce. He obtained these terms from the Sultan, **to wit**, that because of his love for the Sultan and the honor in which the Sultan held him, the broken truce might be restored by every man in Acre paying one Venetian penny. So the Master of the Templars was glad, and, departing from the Sultan, called together all the people and preached a sermon to them in the Church of St. Cross, setting forth how, by his prayers, he had **prevailed upon** the Sultan to grant that the broken treaty might be restored by a payment of one Venetian penny by each man, that **therewith** everything might be settled and quieted.... But when the people heard this, they cried out with one voice that he was the betrayer of the city, and was guilty of death. The Master, when he heard this, left the church, hardly escaped alive from the hands of the people, and took back their answer to the Sultan. When the Sultan heard this, knowing that, owing to the quarrels of the people, none of them would make any resistance, he pitched his tents, set up sixty machines, dug many mines beneath the city walls, and for forty days and nights, without any **respite**, assailed



A knight kneeling in prayer before setting out on the Seventh Crusade. Many Knights Templars and Knights Hospitallers were killed during this last Crusade. HIP/Scala/Art Resource, NY. Reproduced by permission.

**Host:** In this context, an army.

**To Wit:** That is to say, namely, for example.

**Prevailed Upon:** Persuaded.

**Therewith:** After that.

**Respite:** Rest.

the city with fire, stones, and arrows, so that [the air] seemed to be stiff with arrows.... There were at that time in the Sultan's army six hundred thousand armed, divided into three companies; so one hundred thousand continually besieged the city, and when they were weary another hundred thousand took their place before the same, two hundred thousand stood before the gates of the city ready for battle, and the duty of the remaining two hundred thousand was to supply them with everything that they needed. The gates were never closed, nor was there an hour of the day without some hard fight being fought against the Saracens by the Templars or other brethren dwelling therein. But the numbers of the Saracens grew so fast that after one hundred thousand of them had been slain two hundred thousand came back. Yet, even against all this host, they would not have lost the city had they but helped one another faithfully; but when they were fighting without the city, one party would run away and leave the other to be slain, ... and each one knew and believed his own castle and place to be so strong that he cared not for any other's castle or strong place. During this confusion the masters and brethren of the Orders alone defended themselves, and fought unceasingly against the Saracens, until they were nearly all slain; indeed, the Master and brethren of the house of the Teutonic Order, together with their followers and friends, all fell dead at one and the same time.... At last the fulfillment of their sins and the time of the fall of the city drew near; when the fortieth day of its siege was come, in the year of our Lord one thousand two hundred and ninety-two [actual date was 1291], on the twelfth day of the month of May, the most noble and glorious city of Acre, the flower, chief and pride of all the cities of the East, was taken. The people of the other cities, to wit, Jaffa, Tyre, Sidon and Ascalon, when they heard this, left all their property behind and fled to Cyprus.... We read in the stories of the loss of Acre that because of the sins of the people thereof the **four elements** fought on the side of the Saracens. First the air became so thick, dark, and cloudy that, while one castle, palace, or strong place was being stormed or burned, men could hardly see in the other castles and palaces, until their castles and palaces were attacked, and then for the first time they would have willingly defended themselves, could they have come together. Fire fought against the city, for it consumed it. Earth fought against the city, for it drank up its blood. Water also fought against the city, for it being the month of May, wherein the sea is **wont** to be very calm, when the people of Acre plainly saw that because of their sins and the darkening of the air they could not see

**Four Elements:** Air, fire, water, earth.

**Wont:** Accustomed.

their enemies, they fled to the sea, desiring to sail to Cyprus, and whereas at first there was no wind at all at sea, of a sudden so great a storm arose that no other ship, either great or small, could come near the shore, and many who **essayed** to swim off to the ships were drowned. **Howbeit**, more than one hundred thousand men escaped to Cyprus. I have heard from a most honorable **Lord**, and from other truthful men who were present, that more than five hundred most noble ladies and maidens, the daughters of kings and princes, came down to the seashore, when the city was about to fall, carrying with them all their jewels and ornaments of gold and precious stones, of priceless value, in their bosoms, and cried aloud, whether there were any sailor there who would take all their jewels and take whichever of them he chose to wife, if only he would take them, even naked, to some safe land or island. A sailor received them all into his ship, took them across to Cyprus, with all their goods, for nothing, and went his way. But who he was, whence he came, or whither he went, no man knows to this day. Very many other noble ladies and damsels were drowned or slain. It would take long to tell what grief and **anguish** was there. While the Saracens were within the city, but before they had taken it, fighting from castle to castle, from one palace and strong place to another, so many men **perished** on either side that they walked over their corpses as it were over a bridge. When all the inner city was lost, all who still remained alive fled into the exceeding strong castle of the Templars, which was straightway **invested** on all sides by the Saracens; yet the Christians bravely defended it for two months, and before it almost all the nobles and chiefs of the Sultan's army fell dead. For when the city inside the walls was burned, yet the towers of the city, and the Templars' castle, which was in the city, remained, and with these the people of the city kept the Saracens within the city from getting out, as before they had **hindered** their coming in, until of all the Saracens who had entered the city not one remained alive, but all fell by fire or by the sword. When the Saracen nobles saw the others lying dead, and themselves unable to escape from the city, they fled for refuge into the mines which they had dug under the great tower, that they might make their way through the wall and so get out. But the Templars and others who were in the castle, seeing that they could not hurt the Saracens with stones and the like, because of the mines wherein they were, undermined the great tower of the castle, and flung it down upon the mines and the Saracens therein, and all perished alike. When the other Saracens without the city saw that they had thus, as it were, failed utterly, they

**Essayed:** Attempted; tried.

**Howbeit:** Nevertheless, in spite of that, however.

**Lord:** Nobleman.

**Anguish:** Suffering.

**Perished:** Died.

**Invested:** In this context, surrounded and attacked.

**Hindered:** Prevented.

**Dwell:** Live, inhabit.

**Lamentation:** Expression of sorrow or great sadness.

**Bewailing:** Sadly regretting.

**Mourning:** Expression of sorrow at someone's death.

**Grandeur:** Greatness.

*treacherously made a truce with the Templars and Christians on the condition that they should yield up the castle, taking all their goods with them, and should destroy it, but should rebuild the city on certain terms, and **dwell** therein in peace as heretofore. The Templars and Christians, believing this, gave up the castle and marched out of it, and came down from the city towers. When the Saracens had by this means got possession both of the castle and of the city towers, they slew all the Christians alike, and led away the captives to Babylon.... When the glorious city of Acre thus fell, all the Eastern people sung of its fall in hymns of **lamentation**, such as they are wont to sing over the tombs of their dead, **bewailing** the beauty, the grandeur, and the glory of Acre even to this day. Since that day all Christian women, whether gentle or simple, who dwell along the eastern shore [of the Mediterranean] dress in black garments of **mourning** and woe for the lost **grandeur** of Acre, even to this day.*



## What happened next...

As Ludolph of Suchem noted, the fall of Acre in 1291 ended the Crusader states. The historian Hans Eberhard Mayer described the last days in *The Crusades*:

The rest of Palestine yielded without a struggle. Tyre capitulated [surrendered] on 19 May; Sidon at the end of June although the Castle of the Sea there held out until 14 July. Beirut followed on 31 July and the two Templar fortresses, Tortosa and the Castle of the Pilgrims, were evacuated on 3 and 14 August. Deliberately and carefully the Mameluks devastated [destroyed] the whole coast in order to ensure that the Franks could never return. The political victory of the Mameluks was won at the cost of the destruction of the ancient Syro-Palestinian city civilization.... Only the ruins of palaces survived to tell of former splendour.

After leaving the shore of the eastern Mediterranean, many of the Crusaders, including the religious military orders of the Templars, Teutonic Knights, and Hospitallers, kept outposts on islands such as Cyprus and Rhodes, but 1291 ended the attempted occupation of the Holy Land by Christians.



## The Sultan of Babylon

Showing all the energy of someone in the United States fighting Communism in the 1950s, the Crusaders looked at the Muslims as a stereotype, or with simplified characteristics. Thus, for the Crusaders, all their Muslim opponents in the Holy Land and in the Middle East were called “Saracens,” though that word actually describes one nomadic tribe in the deserts of Arabia and Syria. So, too, did the Crusaders come up with their own term for Cairo, the major city of Egypt. They called it Babylon, and thus the leader or ruler of Egypt became the “Sultan of Babylon.”

Babylon was an ancient city in the Middle East, probably the wealthiest city of its age. But that age was three thousand years before the Crusades. The word, however, still had power. It meant a place that had great wealth and luxury but also great sin and immoral behavior. So Crusaders talked about the powerful leader of the infidel, or unbeliever, as the ruler or sultan of such a place. So strong was the use of the term in the popular imagination that a romance or adventure poem was written in the fourteenth or fifteenth century called “The Sultan of Babylon,” telling tall tales of the Crusades.

Others returned to their homes in Europe, and some Christian merchants managed to stay on in parts of the Middle East.

### Did you know...

- The Crusades were crushed in 1291, but the idea did not die. In 1300, with a rumor that the Mongols had defeated the Mamluks, there was another call for a Crusade, but nothing came of it.
- The Knights Templars, who had defended the Holy Land for almost two centuries, did not do well after the end of the Crusades. So powerful had they become that they made enemies in Europe. The king of France managed to get them disbanded in 1312; he took their property for the state.
- Another military order, the Knights Hospitallers, survived. They found a new enemy to fight, the Ottoman Turks, who became powerful in Asia Minor in the fourteenth century.

- In 1366 the Catholic pope, Urban VI, called yet another Crusade, this time to battle the Ottoman Turks near the Black Sea. The goal, however, was not to occupy the Holy Land but to keep the Muslim Turks from invading Europe. The Christians once again were defeated.

### Consider the following...

- The Crusaders managed to carve out a slice of conquered land along the eastern Mediterranean as a result of the First Crusade and to hold part of it for almost two hundred years. What changes do you think happened to the way of life of these Crusaders and their descendants who lived in this conquered territory, the Latin Kingdom, over those two centuries? How “European” were they after all those years?
- Discuss the shifting alliances between the Crusaders, the Byzantines, and the Muslims during the Crusades. Was it always a matter of the Christians against Islam?
- Discuss some of the major changes to come about in the world as a result of the Crusades.

### For More Information

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## Call to Arms

2

The religious wars known in the West as the Crusades had to be sold to the faithful. Such a sales job included impassioned words from various popes as well as reports of terrible wrongs done to Christian pilgrims, or travelers, in the Holy Land. Songs and poetry were also used to convince the common people and nobles alike of the need for a holy war against the followers of Islam to recapture the cities and sites in the Middle East that were sacred to Christianity. Today we would call such speeches “half-true news” and entertainment aimed at convincing people of the rightness of a cause “propaganda.” At the time of the Crusades, from the end of the eleventh century to the end of the thirteenth, people in Europe had little experience with such manipulation. Most could not read or write, so they believed what their religious and civil leaders told them. Entertainment came in the form of poets and singers called troubadours. The stories and ballads spun by these aristocratic writers and performers also entered into the subconscious of simple people, forming a strong picture of the brave knights, or Christian warriors, battling the evil infidel, or Muslim.

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The Muslims also had a propaganda machine through their religious leaders, historians, and poets. Busy feuding or fighting with each other, the people of the Middle East were caught unprepared to deal with the invasion of the First Crusade in 1096. The divisions in the world of Islam created by competing branches of the religion and rival dynasties, or ruling lines, allowed the Crusaders to take the Holy Land and set up their Crusader states in Palestine, a strip of land along the eastern Mediterranean from Jerusalem in the south to Antioch in the north. Such divisions were soon put aside, however, as strong leaders from the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, such as Zengi, Nur al-Din (also called Nureddin), Saladin, and Baybars rallied the Muslims around the idea of *jihad*, or holy war, against the infidel. (It is worth noting that both the Christians and the Muslims called followers of the other religion “infidels,” or unbelievers.) Hand in hand with such leaders, the poets, writers, and chroniclers (historians) of the time began to pour out warnings to the people of the Middle East to put aside their differences and fight the common enemy, Christian invaders.

Not everyone, everywhere was caught up in this crusading craze, however. Some resisted the call to arms and tried to examine the real motives for such a holy war. These voices were few. On both sides most were willing to put their lives on the line for such a cause. In Europe there were plenty of knights and noblemen who were looking for opportunities in a new land. The pope’s promise of wiping away all their sins if they went on Crusade also attracted many soldiers who had committed numerous sins in their pasts. For the believers in Islam, the idea of becoming a soldier of God (or Allah, as they called him) was part of the religion. Muslims have a duty to fight for their religion, though they cannot be forced to fight. Still, from the Muslim point of view their lands were being invaded, and few resisted the call to arms to fight the Christian invader.

The call to arms for the Crusades lasted more than two centuries and came from a variety of sources. The first section of this chapter, “*Deus Volt—God Wills It!*,” examines the role of the leader of the Christian Church, the pope, in calling for a Crusade, in the excerpt “Urban II: Speech at the Council of Clermont, 1095.” The importance of the call for help from Christians in the Holy Land is also highlighted in

“The Decline of Christian Power in the Holy Land, 1164: Letter from Aymeric, Patriarch of Antioch, to Louis VII of France.” The second section, “Poetry of the Crusades,” looks at the importance of literature in promoting the Crusades, with an excerpt from the medieval French epic poem, *The Song of Roland* and a troubadour song from Conon de Béthune, “Ahi! Amours! Com dure departie” (“Alas, Love, What Hard Leave”). The Muslim perspective or point of view is presented in the third section, “The Muslim Call to Arms,” in a poem on the Crusades from the Islamic poet Abu l-Musaffar al-Abiwardi, as collected in “The Perfect History” from the medieval Muslim historian Ibn al-Athir. A further look at the divided nature of the Islamic world comes in an excerpt from *The Book of the Maghrib* by the Muslim chronicler Ibn Said. The fourth and final section, “Anti-Crusades,” offers another viewpoint in an excerpt from the “*Annales Heribipolenses*,” written by an anonymous German historian critical of the Second Crusade (1147–49).



## *Deus Volt—God Wills It!*

*Excerpt from “Urban II: Speech at the Council of Clermont 1095.”*

**Speech given by Pope Urban II; Reprinted in *Source Book for Medieval History*; Edited by Oliver J. Thatcher and Edgar Holmes McNeal; Published in 1905**

*Excerpt from “The Decline of Christian Power in the Holy Land, 1164: Letter from Aymeric, Patriarch of Antioch to Louis VII of France” (1164)*

**Originally written by Aymeric, Patriarch of Antioch; Reprinted in “Letters of the Crusaders,” from *Translations and Reprints from the Original Sources of European History*; Edited by Dana C. Munro; Published in 1896**

It is important to remember that the Crusades got their start by the written and spoken word. The emperor of the Byzantine Empire in the late eleventh century, Alexius I, wrote to the pope in Rome asking for help against the threat of a new Muslim power in Asia Minor, the Seljuk Turks. Pope Urban II then spoke forcefully to church leaders and to the nobles of Europe on several occasions, in favor of a holy war to the Middle East. In return for going on such a Crusade, the soldiers of Christ would be forgiven their past sins. This was a strong encouragement to the knights of Europe. Urban II also told of atrocities, or cruel acts, supposedly committed against the Christians of the Holy Land by the Muslims. His speech at the Council of Clermont in 1095 was particularly influential in gaining public support for a holy war of Christianity against Islam known as the First Crusade (1095–99). Of course, Urban II was only one of many church leaders to call for Crusades. Later came the works of Saint Bernard of Clairvaux, who preached the Second Crusade (1147–49), and Pope Innocent III, who preached the Fourth Crusade (1202–04), among others.



**Pope Urban II calling the First Crusade at the Council of Clermont in 1095.**

© Archivo Iconografico, S.A./Corbis. Reproduced by permission.

There were numerous calls for help from the Holy Land in addition to the first letter from Alexius I of the Byzantine Empire. The patriarch of Antioch, or leader of the Eastern Orthodox Church in that city, wrote to the king of France, Louis VII, in 1164 to complain of the weakened power of the Crusader states that were created after the victorious First Crusade. Aymeric, the patriarch of Antioch, explains in his letter the political and military situation in the

Crusader states almost twenty years after the failure of the Second Crusade. The Crusaders were battling a new force in the region, the Muslim military leader Nur al-Din, who had conquered all of Syria and was then moving into Egypt to bring that rich state into his growing empire. The Crusader states, especially the Kingdom of Jerusalem, had their eyes on Egypt as well, not only for its natural resources but also to avoid being caught with strong enemies completely surrounding them. The defeat of Crusader armies in 1164 by Nur al-Din and his general Shirkuh had further weakened the Christian position in the Holy Land, and Aymeric was appealing to Louis VII, one of the leaders of the failed Second Crusade, in the hope of receiving aid from the West. Such aid, in the form of the Third Crusade (1189–92), would have to wait until after the disastrous fall of Jerusalem in 1187 to the new Muslim military leader, Saladin.

### **Things to Remember While Reading Excerpts about the Christian Call for a Crusade:**

- Speeches and documents produced by church leaders, such as the pope, were heard and read by a small minority of the people of Europe. The message of the Crusade was spread to the common people by local preachers, such as Peter the Hermit, a wandering preacher who attracted thousands to his outdoor meetings.
- Peter the Hermit was, in a way, too successful with his preaching, for he inspired the “People’s Crusade,” which took off from Europe for the Holy Land for the First Crusade before the regular armies set sail. These untrained forces, which included entire families, were filled with a desire to do God’s will, and to escape several seasons of poor harvests in Europe. At least twenty thousand joined Peter’s forces, and most were killed either on their way to Constantinople, where the First Crusade was gathering, or just outside Constantinople, where the Turks cut down this untrained crowd.
- The tales of atrocities committed against Christians in the Holy Land also inspired other Crusaders, such as the German leaders Emich of Leiningen and Volkmar, to

begin their Crusade closer to home, killing Jews throughout Germany.

- The First Crusade was the only successful Crusade for the Christians. They captured Jerusalem and were able to establish a Christian foothold along the shore of the eastern Mediterranean with four Crusader states, the Kingdom of Jerusalem, the Principality of Antioch, and the Counties of Tripoli and Edessa, that created a Crusader presence in the Middle East for the next two centuries.
- The Crusader states in the Holy Land were completely surrounded by unfriendly Muslims. The Christians were able to survive by a mixture of military might and smart dealings with competing Muslims groups. They took advantage of the divided Islamic world of the twelfth century by making treaties with, for example, the ruling dynasty in Egypt, the Fatimids, against the Syrian Muslims led by the Turkish Zangid line.
- No treaties could save the Crusader states, though, when the Muslims began uniting under strong leaders, such as Zengi and his son, Nur al-Din. These Turkish Muslims took the Crusader state of Edessa in 1144, an action that spurred the Second Crusade. But with the defeat of that Crusade, it was clear that the balance of power had shifted in the Middle East. The Crusader states were in need of more and more support from Europe, support that was not always available.



### ***Excerpt from “Urban II: Speech at the Council of Clermont, 1095”***

*Most beloved **brethren**: Urged by necessity, I, Urban, by the permission of God chief bishop and **prelate** over the whole world, have come into these parts as an ambassador with a divine **admonition** to you, the servants of God.... Although, O sons of God, you have promised more firmly than ever to keep the peace among yourselves and to preserve the rights of the church, there remains still an important work for you to do. Freshly **quickened** by the di-*

**Brethren:** Fellow members of a religious order.

**Prelate:** High officer of the church.

**Admonition:** Strong warning or criticism.

**Quickened:** Enlivened, stimulated, encouraged.

vine correction, you must apply the strength of your righteousness to another matter which concerns you as well as God. For your brethren who live in the east are in urgent need of your help, and you must **hasten** to give them the aid which has often been promised them. For, as the most of you have heard, the Turks and Arabs have attacked them and have conquered the territory of Romania [the Greek empire] as far west as the shore of the Mediterranean and the Hellespont, which is called the Arm of St. George. They have occupied more and more of the lands of those Christians, and have overcome them in seven battles. They have killed and captured many, and have destroyed the churches and devastated the empire. If you permit them to continue thus for awhile with impurity, the faithful of God will be much more widely attacked by them. On this account I, or rather the Lord, **beseech** you as Christ's **heralds**, to publish this everywhere and to persuade all people of whatever rank, foot-soldiers and knights, poor and rich, to carry aid promptly to those Christians and to destroy that vile race from the lands of our friends. I say this to those who are present, it is meant also for those who are absent. Moreover, Christ commands it.

All who die by the way, whether by land or by sea, or in battle against the **pagans**, shall have immediate **remission** of sins. This I grant them through the power of God with which I am **invested**. O what a disgrace if such a despised and base race, which worships demons, should conquer a people which has the faith of **omnipotent** God and is made glorious with the name of Christ! With what **reproaches** will the Lord overwhelm us if you do not aid those who, with us, **profess** the Christian religion! Let those who have been accustomed unjustly to wage private warfare against the faithful now go against the **infidels** and end with victory this war which should have been begun long ago. Let those who for a long time have been robbers now become knights. Let those who have been fighting against their brothers and relatives now fight in a proper way against the barbarians. Let those who have been serving as **mercenaries** for small pay now obtain the eternal reward. Let those who have been wearing themselves out in both body and soul now work for a double honor. Behold! on this side will be the sorrowful and poor, on that, the rich; on this side, the enemies of the Lord, on that, his friends. Let those who go not put off the journey, but rent their lands and collect money for their expenses; and as soon as winter is over and spring comes, let them eagerly set out on the way with God as their guide.

**Hasten:** Hurry.

**Beseech:** To ask someone desperately for something.

**Heralds:** Messengers, champions.

**Pagans:** Those who do not believe in the Christian God.

**Remission:** Cancellation.

**Invested:** Empowered.

**Omnipotent:** All-knowing, all-powerful.

**Reproaches:** Scoldings, criticisms.

**Profess:** Accept.

**Infidels:** Unbelievers.

**Mercenaries:** Soldiers of fortune, soldiers hired to fight.

**Pilgrims arriving in the Holy Land in response to Pope Urban II's call for the First Crusade.** © Bettmann/Corbis. Reproduced by permission.



**Patriarch:** A church leader in the Eastern Orthodox faith.

**Apostolic See:** One of the major religious districts of the Eastern Orthodox Church.

**Benediction:** Blessing.

***Excerpt from "The Decline of Christian Power in the Holy Land, 1164: Letter from Aymeric, Patriarch of Antioch to Louis VII of France"***

*Aymeric, by the grace of God, patriarch of the holy Apostolic See of Antioch, to Louis, illustrious king of the French,—greeting and Apostolic benediction.*

It would be fitting that we should always write joyful **tidings** to his royal majesty and should increase the splendor of his heart by the splendor and delight of our words. But the reverse has ever been our lot. The causes for tears, **forsooth**, are constant, the grief and the groaning are continuous, and we are unable to speak except of what concerns us. For the proverb says: "Where the grief is, there is also the tongue and hand." The deaths of the Christians are frequent and the captures which we see daily. Moreover, the wasting away of the church in the East **afflicts** with **ineradicable** grief us who, tortured internally even to our destruction, are dying while living in anguish of soul, and, leading a life more bitter than death, as a culmination of our miseries, are wholly unable to die. Nor is there anyone who turns his heart towards us and out of pity directs his hand to aid us. But not to protract our words, the few Christians who are here cry out to you, together with us, and implore your **clemency**, which with God's assistance is sufficient to liberate us and the church of God in the East.

And now we will tell you of all the events which have happened to us. In the **Lent** which has just passed, a certain one [Nureddin] of the men who are about us, who is held as chief among the **Saracens**, and who oppresses our Christian population far more than all who have gone before, and the leader of his army [Schirkuh], having gotten possession of Damascus, the latter entered Egypt with a great force of Turks, in order to conquer the country. Accordingly, the king of Egypt, who is also called the sultan of Babylon, distrusting his own **valor** and that of his men, held a most warlike council to determine how to meet the advancing Turks and how he could obtain the aid of the king of Jerusalem. For he wisely preferred to rule under **tribute** rather than to be deprived of both life and kingdom.

The former, therefore ... entered Egypt, and favored by certain men of that land, captured and fortified a certain city. In the meantime the sultan made an alliance with the lord king [Amalric] by promising to pay tribute each year and release all the Christian captives in Egypt, and obtained the aid of the lord king. The latter before setting out, committed the care of his kingdom and land, until his return, to us and to our new prince, his **kinsman** Bohemond, son of the former prince, Raymond.

Therefore, the great **devastator** of the Christian people, ... collected together from all sides the kings and races of the infidels and offered a peace and truce to our prince.... His reason was that he wished to **traverse** our land with greater freedom in order to devas-

**Tidings:** News, information.

**Forsooth:** Indeed.

**Afflicts:** Causes pain.

**Ineradicable:** Unable to be removed.

**Clemency:** Mercy.

**Lent:** A time of fasting and penitence observed by Christians during the forty weekdays before Easter.

**Saracens:** Muslims.

**Valor:** Courage.

**Tribute:** Periodic payment from one state to another.

**Kinsman:** Relative.

**Devastator:** Destroyer.

**Traverse:** To cross, pass through.

tate the kingdom of Jerusalem and to be able to bear aid to his **vassal** fighting in Egypt. But our prince was unwilling to make peace with him until the return of our lord king.

When the former saw that he was not able to accomplish what he had proposed, full of **wrath**, he turned his weapons against us and laid siege to a certain fortress of ours, called Harrenc, twelve miles distant from our city. But those who were besieged—7000 in number including warriors, men and women—cried loudly to us, ceasing neither day nor night, to have pity on them, and fixed a day beyond which it would be impossible for them to hold out. Our prince having collected all his forces, set out from Antioch on the day of St. Lawrence and proceeded as far as the fortress in entire safety. For the Turks in their cunning gave up the siege and withdrew a short distance from the fortress to some narrow passes in their own country.

On the next day our men followed the enemy to that place and while they were marching ... battle was engaged and they fled. The conflict was so disastrous that hardly anyone of ours of any rank escaped, except a few whom the strength of their horses or some lucky chance rescued from the **tumult**. Those captured were our prince [Bohemond III], the count of Tripoli [Raymond II], ... and some of the brethren of the **Templars and Hospitalers** who had come from the county of Tripoli with the count. Of the people, some were killed, others captured; very few escaped; men, horses and weapons were almost entirely destroyed.

After the slaughter of the Christians the Turks returned to the ... fortress, captured it, and by compact **conducted** the feeble multitude of women, children and wounded as far as Antioch. Afterwards they advanced to the City, devastated the whole country as far as the sea with fire and sword and exercised their tyranny according to their **lusts** on everything which met their eyes.

God is witness that the **remnant** which is left us is in no way sufficient to guard the walls night and day, and owing to the scarcity of men, we are **obliged** to entrust their safety and defense to some whom we suspect. Neglecting the church services, the clergy and **presbyters** guard the gates. We ourselves are looking after the defense of the walls and, as far as possible, are repairing, with great and unremitting labor, the many portions which have been broken down by earthquakes. And all this in vain, unless God shall look upon us with a more kindly **countenance**. For we do not hope to

**Vassal:** Underling, assistant.

**Wrath:** Anger.

**Tumult:** Commotion.

**Templars and Hospitalers:**  
Two military religious orders.

**Conducted:** Escorted.

**Lusts:** Intense longings.

**Remnant:** Remains, or that which is left over.

**Obliged:** Forced.

**Presbyters:** Elders, or senior officials, of the church.

**Countenance:** Support or approval.

hold out longer, **inasmuch as** the valor of the men of the present day has been exhausted and is of no avail...

Above all, the only anchor which is left in this extremity for our hope is in you. Because we have heard from everybody of your greatness, because we have understood that you, more than all the other kings of the West, always have the East in mind... And it is our hope that by your hand the Lord will visit His people and will have compassion on us.

May the sighings and groanings of the Christians enter the ear of the most high and incomparable prince; may the tortures and griefs of the captives strike his heart. And, not to make our letter too long, **lest** we should waste away in this vain hope and be for a long time consumed by the shadow of death, may his royal majesty **deign** to write to us and tell us his pleasure. Whatever we undergo by his command will not be difficult for us. May our Lord Jesus Christ increase in the heart of the king the desire which we desire, and may He in whose hand are the hearts of kings **enkindle** that heart! Amen.



## What happened next...

The papacy, or office of the pope, continued to promote Crusades throughout the twelfth century and into the thirteenth. With the Second Crusade and Third Crusade, the church was a strong supporter of the Christian warriors. In the beginning of the thirteenth century Pope Innocent III, asked for another holy war against the Muslims in the Holy Land. But the Fourth Crusade (1202–04) was one of the great tragedies for the Crusader movement. Proclaimed and blessed by Innocent III, that Crusade never went to the Holy Land but instead attacked the Christian city of Zara on the Yugoslavian coast and then moved on and sacked the capital of the Byzantine Empire, Constantinople, another Christian city, though part of the Eastern Orthodox faith. Innocent excommunicated, or expelled, the disobedient Crusaders, but he later had to accept the fact of this invasion and actually used the victory in Constantinople as an excuse to try to spread the western, or Latin, church rites and traditions over

**Inasmuch As:** Considering that.

**Lest:** To avoid the risk that.

**Deign:** Do something beneath one's dignity or office.

**Enkindle:** To set on fire or into action.



## The Speech That Launched the Holy Wars

What exactly Pope Urban II said at the Council of Clermont is not known, not because there were no reports of it, but because there were too many. In fact, five different chroniclers give five somewhat different versions of that speech. But it is clear that the pope produced arguments for a Crusade that he thought would have the widest possible appeal. In those days before polls, Urban II had to have his finger on the pulse of those he was counting on: the nobles and knights of Europe. Naturally, part of that message was an emphasis on the threat to Christianity that the Turks, recent converts to the faith of Islam, presented.

Perhaps more important, however, was the pope's offer of an indulgence, or the offer to get rid of a person's sins. Normally, Catholics had to confess their sins to

a priest and then receive duties, or penance, to perform as a way to absolve, or relieve, them of such bad deeds. But Urban II announced at Clermont that anyone who joined the Crusade for religious reasons would be freed from such penance. Although historians argue whether this was a complete forgiveness of all sins, it is clear that most Crusaders thought that it was. The pope's offer was actually only one of remission, or cancellation, of any earthly duties of penance for Crusaders. Once, however, the message of the Crusade was preached on the local level, this promise was extended to the cancellation of such sins in heaven as well as on Earth. So popular was it with the participants that this idea of an indulgence was used in each of the Crusades promoted by the church.

the "Latin Empire of Constantinople" that the Crusaders had formed. But these efforts failed, and the schism, or separation, of East and West was only made worse. Such church-sponsored Crusades came to an end with the Sixth Crusade, which the German emperor Frederick II mounted without much religious sponsorship. The need for church propaganda was taken out of the Crusader movement, replaced with the more material concerns of expansion of empire. And for this, a professional army was needed.

### Did you know...

- Officially, the pope was the only one with the proper authority to call a Crusade, but many small expeditions and several full Crusades were proclaimed by people who were

not church officials, such as the German emperor Frederick II at the Sixth Crusade (1228–29). By that time the idea of a Crusade had become one more area of competition between the pope and secular, or nonreligious, rulers.

- As the Crusades proceeded, the papacy became more professional in spreading the word to the faithful. No bull (official pronouncement) was made for the First Crusade. Instead, it was left to local preachers to talk up the movement. By the Second Crusade matters had become more authoritative, with an official letter from the pope explaining the need for the Crusade and listing the privileges of the Crusaders. These privileges included, besides the indulgence, a guarantee to protect the lands of the Crusaders while they were away fighting and sometimes even a cancellation of bad debts, or money owed but not yet paid back. By 1181 the preparations for Crusades had become formalized in the papal bull known as *Cor nostrum*, which was published in all churches and announced by the priests.
- In 1198, in preparation for the Fourth Crusade, a general executive office was set up by the pope for the “business of the cross,” as it was described at the time. Freelance preachers had also come into the business by this time, roaming the countryside and preaching the Crusade.
- By the thirteenth century the church had established a system to spread the word of a Crusade to every corner of the West.

### Consider the following...

- What appeals and information did Pope Urban II use to persuade the faithful to go on the First Crusade? Were these emotional or rational arguments, or were they a mixture of both?
- The propaganda for the First Crusade came both in the written word and in the spoken word. Give examples of both types.
- Discuss some of the ways in which the Catholic Church spread the word of the Crusades.

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# Poetry of the Crusades

*Excerpt from The Song of Roland (c. 1100)*  
**Originally written by Anonymous;**  
**Translated by Dorothy L. Sayers; Published in 1957**

*Excerpt from "Ahi! Amours! Com dure departie/Alas, Love,  
What Hard Leave," (1219)*  
**Originally written by Conon de Béthune;**  
**Reprinted in *Lyrics of the Troubadours and Trouvères*; Edited by  
Frederick Goldin; Published in 1973**

Literature also helped promote the Crusades. However, with so many people unable to read in the Middle Ages, such literature serving the needs of propaganda had to be able to reach more than simply the small educated class. Much of medieval literature was made up of chronicles, or histories, kept by clerks of the church and written in Latin. These histories were not accessible enough or easy enough to understand to be used to promote the Crusades. Instead, more popular entertainment, such as songs and long poems, had the power to move the people, for they were not only written but also performed by traveling singers and poets and by court musicians called minstrels.

One early form of literature about the Crusades was provided in long epic poems that became popular in the twelfth century. Such poems of heroic deeds were fashionable in France and Germany. In France they were called *chansons de geste*, meaning "songs of great or heroic actions." The most famous of these chansons is *The Song of Roland*, written between about 1098 and 1100 by an unknown poet or poets. This poem tells of an actual historical event involving the famous



soldier-king Charlemagne, who was coming back from a military campaign in Spain in 778. Those protecting the last of the long line of Charlemagne's soldiers were killed in an ambush, slaughtered in the Roncesvalles (or in old French, Rencesvals) pass of the Pyrenees mountains by Basques, the natives of a portion of northern Spain. The poem, however, changes this enemy to Muslims, also called Saracens or Paynims.

A tale of betrayal and loyalty, *The Song of Roland* features the heroic knight Roland and his friend Oliver, who die, along with their fellow soldiers, as they protect the king's rearguard. Ganelon, Roland's stepfather, turns traitor to the Muslim leader Marsile and brings about the death of these French knights. Attacked, the courageous Roland refuses to blow his battle horn for help and thus bring the king back into an ambush. Finally, though, after fighting bravely and as he is about to die, Roland blows his horn powerfully, and the king comes too late to help but not too late to avenge Roland's death. The scenes excerpted here recount the battle, while the rest of the poem finds the king getting back at the Muslims and at Ganelon for this sad deed, finally conquering all of Muslim Spain and forcing the infidels, or non-believers, to convert to Christianity.

Thus, in the poem, Charlemagne becomes the great protector in Europe against the invasion of Islam. In fact, Muslim Spain was one of the most powerful and cultured lands in the eighth century, at a time when the Christian powers of Europe were still unorganized, and it remained so into the time of the Crusades. The conquest of Spain as represented in *The Song of Roland* is a long way from the historical truth. Yet at the time the poem was written the preparation for and events of the First Crusade (1095–99) were fresh in the minds of Europeans. Although the events of *The Song of Roland* took place several hundred years before the Crusades, the topic of Christians fighting against Muslims, or Saracens, was the same one that church leaders were preaching to the faithful at the end of the eleventh century. Many scholars therefore consider *The Song of Roland* to be an early form of propaganda to incite and encourage Christians to answer the call to arms against the Muslims in the Holy Land. Throughout the long poem, Muslims, or Saracens, are shown to be evil monsters. This was the picture Pope Urban II hoped to paint of the enemy when he spoke in favor of a Crusade.

Songs also played a part in selling the Crusader message. These became part of the troubadour tradition, the aristocratic or noble poets, singers, and musicians of southern France, who wrote from the eleventh to the thirteenth centuries. They wrote in praise of love and great loss and were often veterans of the Crusades, spinning tales of battles against the Saracens. Their writings frequently were performed by lower-class entertainers known as *jongleurs*, who sang and played musical instruments and sometimes even helped compose the poems and songs. Written in the dialect of southern France, the favorite themes of such songs were love, war, and nature. Northern France later developed a similar tradition. There the troubadours were known as *trouvères*. In the German tradition they were known as *Minnesängers*.



Conon de Béthune (1160–1219) was one of many powerful nobles who took up the troubadour tradition, and as with many other troubadours and *trouvères*, he was an important Crusader. He took part in the Third Crusade (1189–92) as well as the Fourth Crusade (1202–04). He distinguished himself during the Fourth Crusade and stayed on in the new Crusader state created in Constantinople by the Byzantine Empire. He was known for an intense strength and a military spirit that sets his work apart from other such poets. The excerpt provided here is one of his best-known poems and blends the themes of love, loss, and war in one call to arms.

A portrait of Roland from *The Song of Roland*. Many scholars consider this epic an early form of propaganda to incite and encourage Christians to answer the call to arms against the Muslims in the Holy Land.  
© Bettmann/Corbis. Reproduced by permission.

### Things to Remember While Reading Excerpts about Crusader Poetry:

- *The Song of Roland* consists of about four thousand lines of poetry or verse. These lines are further divided into almost three hundred units of irregular length called

*laissez*. Each line has about ten syllables and ends with a sound similar to that of the previous line, but it does not necessarily exactly rhyme with the preceding line.

- *Chansons de geste*, such as *The Song of Roland*, were meant to be performed, accompanied with music, for special social gatherings.
- The poems and songs of the troubadours were written in old Provençal, a dialect of southern France, while the *trouvères* poems were written in old French.
- The poems of the troubadour and *trouvères* traditions did not have a typical or patterned rhyme scheme or structure. Novelty and creativity were the most important elements in their form.
- Such poems usually consisted of three to ten stanzas, or poetical paragraphs, and then usually ended with an *envoy*, a verbal send-off of some sort, saying good-bye and wishing to be remembered.



## ***Excerpts from The Song of Roland***

81

*Oliver's climbed a hill above the plain,  
**Whence** he can look on all the land of Spain,  
And see how vast the **Saracen array**;  
All those bright helms with gold and jewels gay,  
And all those shields, those coats of **burnished mail**;  
And all those lances from which the **pennons** wave;  
Even their squadrons defy all estimate,  
He cannot count them, their numbers are so great;  
**Stout** as he is, he's mightily dismayed.  
He hastens down as swiftly as he may,  
Comes to the French and tells them all his tale.*

**Whence:** From where.

**Saracen:** Muslim.

**Array:** Gather.

**Burnished:** Polished.

**Mail:** Armor.

**Pennons:** Flags.

**Stout:** In this context, strong.

**Quoth** Oliver: "The **Paynim** strength I've seen;  
 Never on earth has such a hosting been:  
 A hundred thousand in **van** ride under shield  
 Their helmets laced, their **hauberks** all agleam  
 Their spears upright, with heads of shining steel.  
 You'll have such battle as **ne'er** was fought on field.  
 My lords of France, God give you strength at need!  
 Save you stand fast, this field we cannot keep."  
 The French all say, "Foul shame it were to flee!  
 We're yours till death; no man of us will yield." ...

"Companion Roland, your **Olifant** now blow;  
 Charles in the passes will hear it as he goes,  
 Trust me, the French will all return right so."  
 "Now God forbid," Roland makes answer wroth,  
 "That living man should say he saw me go  
 Blowing of horns for any Paynim foe!  
 Ne'er shall my **kindred** be put to such **reproach**.  
 When I shall stand in this great clash of **hosts**  
 I'll strike a thousand and then sev'n hundred strokes,  
 Blood-red the steel of **Durendal** shall flow.  
 Stout are the French, they will do battle bold,  
 These men of Spain shall die and have no hope." ...

When Roland sees that battle there must be  
 Leopard nor lion ne'er grew so fierce as he.  
 He calls the French, bids Oliver give heed:  
 "Sir friend and comrade, such words you shall not  
 speak!  
 When the King gave us the French to serve this need

**Quoth:** Said.

**Paynim:** Heathen or Muslim.

**Van:** Vanguard; the troops moving at the front of an army.

**Hauberks:** A long protective shirt or armor.

**Ne'er:** Never.

**Olifant:** Roland's horn.

**Kindred:** Relatives.

**Reproach:** Strong disapproval.

**Hosts:** Armies.

**Durendal:** Roland's unbreakable sword.

*These twenty thousand he chose to do the deed;  
And well he knew not one would **flinch** or flee.  
Men must endure much hardship for their **liege**,  
And bear for him great cold and burning heat,  
Suffer sharp wounds and let their bodies bleed.  
**Smite** with your lance and I with my good steel,  
My Durendal the emperor gave to me:  
And if I die, who gets it may agree  
That he who bore it, a right good knight was he." ...*

90

*The French rise up and on their feet stand close;  
All of their sins are **shriven** and made whole,  
And the **Archbishop** God's blessing has **bestowed**.  
Then on swift **steeds** they leap to saddlebow.  
Armed with the arms prescribed by knightly code;  
All are now ready into the field to go.  
Count Roland said to Oliver right so:  
"Sir my companion, too true the word you spoke,  
That all of us by Ganelon were sold.  
He's ta'en his wage of wealth and goods and gold.  
The Emperor's vengeance I think will not be slow!  
Marsile the King has bargained for our bones:  
He'll need the sword to fetch his purchase home." ...*

95

*From a far land he came, from Barbary;  
The Saracens he calls, and thus he speaks:  
"Well are we placed this field of arms to keep;  
For of these Franks the number is but weak,  
And we may well despise the few we see.  
Charles cannot come to help them in their need,*

**Flinch:** Jerk from fear.

**Liege:** Lord or superior.

**Smite:** Strike.

**Shriven:** Absolved, gotten rid of.

**Archbishop:** Archbishop Turin, one of the main characters in *The Song of Roland*, a warrior and priest.

**Bestowed:** Been placed.

**Steeds:** Horses.

*This is the day their deaths are all **decreed!**"*  
*Archbishop Turpin has listened to his speech,*  
*And hates him worse than any man that breathes.*  
*His golden spurs he strikes into his steed,*  
*And rides against him, right **valiant** for the deed.*  
*He breaks the **buckler**, he's split the hauberk's steel.*  
*Into his breast driven the lance-head deep,*  
*He spits him through, on high his body heaves,*  
*And hurls him dead a spear's length o'er the **lea**...*

98

***Samson** the Duke on the Almanzor runs:*  
*Through gilded shield and painted flowers he thrusts;*  
*Not for defence avails the hauberk tough,*  
*He splits his heart, his liver, and his lung,*  
*And strikes him dead, weep any or weep none.*  
*Cries the Archbishop: "This **feat** was knightly done!" ...*

100

*And **Engelier** the Gascon of Bordeaux*  
*Spurs his good steed, slacks rein and lets him go;*  
*With Escrimiz, Valterna's lord, he's closed,*  
*Off from his neck the splintered buckler broke.*  
*The hauberk's **ventail** he's shattered with the stroke.*  
*He splits his throat between the collar-bones,*  
*A full spear's length dead from the saddle throws;*  
*Then says to him, "The devil take **thy** soul..."*

110

*Fierce is the battle and wondrous grim the fight.*  
*Both Oliver and Roland boldly **smite**,*  
*Thousands of strokes the stout Archbishop strikes,*  
*The whole Twelve Peers are not a whit [a bit] behind,*  
*And the French ranks lay on with all their might.*

**Decreed:** Officially announced.

**Valiant:** Heroic.

**Buckler:** A round shield.

**Lea:** Meadow.

**Samson:** One of the twelve peers, or knights, who fight along with Roland and Oliver.

**Feat:** Accomplishment.

**Engelier:** Another of the twelve peers.

**Ventail:** A flap of mail or armor protecting the lower face during battle.

**Thy:** Your.

**Smite:** To kill by a heavy blow.

*Heaped by the hundred thousands of Paynims lie,  
None can escape unless he turns and flies,  
Will he or nill [unwillingly] he, there must he leave his  
life.  
There France must lose the noblest of her knights,  
They'll see no more their kindred and their **sires**,*

Nor Charles, who scans the pass with anxious eyes.  
Throughout all France terrific **tempests** rise,  
Thunder is heard, the stormy winds blow high,  
Unmeasured rain and hail fall from the sky,  
While thick and fast flashes the **levin** bright.  
And true it is the earth quakes far and wide.  
Far as from Saintes to Michael-of-the-Tide,  
From Besançon to Wissant Port, you'd find  
There's not a house but the walls crack and **rive**.  
Right at high noon a darkness falls like night,  
Save for the lightning there's not a gleam of light;  
None that **beholds** it but is dismayed for fright,  
And many say: "This is the latter time,  
The world is ending, and the Great **Doom** is **nigh**."  
They speak not true, they cannot read the signs:  
'Tis Roland's death calls forth this mighty cry....

115

Now can the French count up the Paynim might  
They see it filling the plains from side to side.  
They urge on Roland and Oliver likewise  
And the Twelve Peers to flee for all their lives;  
To whom straightway the **Prelate** speaks his mind:  
"Barons, my lords, these shameful thoughts put by;  
By God I charge you, hold fast and do not fly,  
Lest brave men sing ill songs in your despite.  
Better it were to perish in the fight.  
Soon, very soon we all are marked to die,  
None of us here will see tomorrow's light;  
One thing there is I promise you outright:  
To you stand open the gates of Paradise,  
There with the holy sweet Innocents to **bide**...."

**Sires:** Fathers.

**Tempests:** Storms.

**Levin:** Lightning.

**Rive:** Tear apart.

**Beholds:** Sees.

**Doom:** Terrible fate.

**Nigh:** Near.

**Prelate:** Church officer, in this case, Archbishop Turin.

**Bide:** To stay with.

Wondrous the battle, and it grows faster yet;  
 The French fight on with rage and fury **fell**,  
 They **lop off** wrists, **hew** ribs and spines to shreds,  
 They **cleave** the harness through to the living flesh;  
 On the green ground the blood runs clear and red.  
 [The Paynims say,] "We cannot stand the stress,  
 French Fatherland, be cursed of **Mahomet!**  
 Your sons are bravest of all the sons of men."  
 There's none of them but cries "Marsile to help!  
 Ride, ride, O King, for we are hard **bested**..."

Count Roland's mouth with running blood is red;  
 He's burst **asunder** the temples of his head;  
 He sounds his horn in anguish and distress.  
 King Carlon hears, and so do all the French.  
 Then said the King: "This horn is long of breath."  
 "'Tis blown," quoth Naimon, "with all a brave  
 man's strength.  
 Battle there is, and that I know full well.  
 He that would stay you is but a traitor fell.  
 To arms! let sound your battle-cry to heav'n!  
 Make haste to bring your gallant household help!  
 You hear how Roland makes desperate lament!"

Straightway to horse the warrior lords have got;  
 Swift through the passes they spur and never stop.  
 Each unto other they speak and make response:  
 "Might we reach Roland **ere** he were dead and gone,  
 We'd strike good strokes beside him in the **throng**."  
 What use is that? They have delayed too long....

**Fell:** Fierce, cruel.

**Lop Off:** Cut or chop off.

**Hew:** Chop.

**Cleave:** Cut, split.

**Mahomet:** Muhammad, the founder of Islam.

**Bested:** Defeated.

**Asunder:** Into pieces.

**Ere:** Before.

**Throng:** Crowd.

160

*The Paynims say, "Why were we ever born?  
Woe worth the while! our day of doom has dawned.  
Now have we lost our **peerage** and our lords,  
The mighty Carlon comes on with all his force,  
Of those of France we hear the shrilling horns.  
The cry 'Mountjoy' sounds fearfully abroad.  
So grim of mood is Roland in his **wrath**  
No man alive can put him to the sword.  
Let fly at him, and then give up the war."  
So they let fly; spears, lances they outpour,  
Darts and **jereeds** and feathered shafts galore.  
The shield of Roland is pierced and split and **scored**,  
The mail rings riven, and all his hauberk torn,  
Yet in his body he is not touched at all.  
Though under him, with thirty wounds and more,  
His **Veillantif** is stricken dead and falls.  
The Paynims flee, abandoning the war;  
Count Roland's left amid the field, unhorsed....*

168

*Now Roland feels that he is at death's door;  
Out of his ears the brain is running forth.  
Now for his peers he prays God call them all,  
And for himself **St. Gabriel's** aid implores;  
Then in each hand he takes, **lest** shame befall,  
His Olifant and Durendal his sword....*

176

*The County Roland lay down beneath a pine;  
To land of Spain he's turned him as he lies,  
And many things begins to call to mind:*

**Woe:** Great sadness.

**Peerage:** Title or rank.

**Wrath:** Anger.

**Jereeds:** Wooden javelins or spears.

**Scored:** Scratched; slashed.

**Veillantif:** Roland's horse.

**St. Gabriel:** An archangel, one of the major biblical angels, who blows his trumpet to announce the Second Coming of Christ.

**Lest:** To avoid the risk that something happens.

*All the broad lands he conquered in his time,  
And fairest France, and the men of his line,  
And Charles his lord, who bred him from a child;  
He cannot help but **weep** for them and sigh....  
His right-hand glove he's **tendered** unto Christ,  
And from his hand Gabriel accepts the sign.  
Straightway his head upon his arm declines;  
With folded hands he makes an end and dies.  
God sent to him His Angel **Cherubine**,  
And great **St. Michael** of Peril-by-the-Tide;*

*St. Gabriel too was with them at his side;  
The County's soul they bear to Paradise.*

**Excerpt: "Ahi! Amours! Com dure  
departie/Alas, Love, What Hard Leave"**





A manuscript illumination of troubadours, popular entertainers during the Crusades. © Gianni Dagli Orti/Corbis. Reproduced by permission.

## What happened next...

The epic poems of the *chansons de geste* and the poems and songs of the troubadours led directly to the creation of longer works of fiction that became known as stories and novels. Such an advance can be seen in the *Decameron* (1348–53) of the Italian Giovanni Boccaccio and the Englishman Geoffrey Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* (1387), both of which led to later poetry and true novels and both of which tell stories from the Crusades.

With the coming of the novel in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, a larger part of the public was able to read, and more views were shared. No longer could literature serve only propaganda. By the twentieth century great anti-war novels appeared, such as *All Quiet on the Western Front* by Erich Marie Remarque, Ernest Hemingway's *A Farewell to Arms*, Joseph Heller's *Catch-22*, and Kurt Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse Five*. Literature was now able to service both sides of an argument.

## Did you know...

- While troubadours and *trouvères* were generally aristocrats at first, in the later tradition they were people who wanted somehow to gain noble status, perhaps through a noble sponsor or through marriage. The *jongleurs*, or minstrels, on the other hand, continued to be mere entertainers, singing but also juggling and playing musical instruments. They often had to tour to earn an income and ultimately, in the late Middle Ages, joined together in guilds, or unions, to protect their status.
- Only about eleven troubadour songs are known from the First and Second Crusades. However, after 1160 the number of such songs and poems hugely increased, and hundreds of them were written down.
- So common was the theme of love in medieval songs that the name for German troubadours, *Minnesängers*, means “those who sing of love.”
- Both the songs and epic poems of the Middle Ages that deal with the Crusades often compare the Muslims, or Saracens, to “dogs” or other animals and use the color



## The First Troubadour

William IX of the French province of Aquitaine is considered by many to be the first troubadour, or performing poet and singer. A veteran of the First Crusade, he brought back with him songs he had heard in the Middle East. In fact, his artistic recordings were more successful than his deeds on the battlefield, for William was more a lover than a fighter. He pioneered songs about the loss of love as well as adventures with ladies, and he turned Aquitaine into a center for European culture, attracting other poets and singers. He also lived what he wrote: often married, when he grew tired of his wives, he would put them in a convent

(religious institution for women) and take up with a new love.

His poetry and songs began a tradition of wandering poets and minstrels that lasted for almost two centuries, but he was better with words than he was managing rebellious nobles and governing his rich territories. William is perhaps best known to history, however, as the grandfather of Eleanor of Aquitaine, who became the ruler of the province, the queen of France, and the queen of England. She also kept the troubadour tradition alive in Aquitaine, and the idea of courtly love, or dignified and polite relations between men and women, grew out of her court, or royal household.

“black” to describe them. Muslims are also portrayed as sneaky in such poems, and not to be trusted, while the Christian knights are typically pure of heart and heroic.

### Consider the following...

- How is Roland described in *The Song of Roland*? How is the Muslim leader Marsile described? How could such descriptions help promote bad feelings between the West and the Muslim world?
- Discuss how the author of “Ahi! Amours! Com dure departie” feels about those who do not join in the Crusade.
- If you were a writer of propaganda, what message would you use to persuade people to go to war? What medium (newspaper, television, film, word of mouth) and what sort of content (“news,” movies, documentaries, novels, poetry, music) would you employ?

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# The Muslim Call to Arms

*Excerpt from "Poem on the Crusades" (twelfth century)*

**Originally written by Abu I-Musaffar al-Abiwardi; Reprinted in Ibn al-Athir's *The Perfect History*; Edited by C. J. Tornberg; Published in 1851–1876**

*Excerpt from Book of the Maghrib (thirteenth century)*

**Originally written by Ibn Said; Reprinted in *The History of the Mohammedan Dynasties in Spain*; Translated by Pascual de Gayangoss; Published in 1840**

The Crusader invasion of 1096 to 1099 took the Muslims of the Middle East by surprise. Leaders of the Islamic world were busy with internal feuds and rivalries when the Christians arrived. The Seljuk Turks, who had established an empire in the Middle East, lost their strongest sultan, or leader, Malik-Shah, in 1092. With his death the Turks, who believed in sharing the rule in the family, scrambled to find leaders for all of the empire. But other Egyptian, Arab, and Syrian Muslims took advantage of this momentary chaos to try to extend their own territories at the expense of the Seljuks. Meanwhile, Muslims were also split into two religious branches: the Sunni Muslims, who followed the *Sunna*, or the words and acts of the prophet Muhammad, who had founded the religion, and the Shiites, who felt that religious authority could be passed on only by direct descendants or relatives of Muhammad. The Sunnis formed their base in Baghdad under what was known as the Abbasid caliphate, a religious and political dynasty ruling from Iraq. By the middle of the eleventh century, however, this dynasty had lost real power, and the Seljuk Turks actually ran things under the



Abbasid name. The other major branch of Islam, the Shiites, had their caliphate, or religious kingdom, in Egypt under the dynasty known as the Fatimids, from the name of Muhammad's daughter, Fatimah. There was also a breakaway Shiite sect (subgroup) the Nizari Ismaili, commonly known as the Assassins, who ruled in the mountains of Syria and Persia.

Thus the Muslim world was split politically and religiously when the Crusaders invaded. Fighting an enemy that was not organized, the Crusaders quickly captured the Holy Land, including Jerusalem, in 1099. The slaughter of Muslims and Jews in that city shocked the Muslim world when news got out. Slowly, as word spread, the Muslim people of the Middle East began to see the Christians as a common enemy. The Islamic faith has a principle known as *jihad*, which, on the personal level, is an effort to follow a religiously correct path in life and, on a more community-wide level, is a promise to protect the faith. This principle was soon adapted for a holy war against the infidel, a word used by both Christians and Muslims to indicate a nonbeliever in their particular faith.

The call to arms in the Islamic world was thus a matter of a religious message, as it was in Europe. Added to this, however, was the sense of anger at being invaded. Although the Holy Land of Palestine and Jerusalem, in particular, was sacred to Islam, Judaism, and Christianity, the fact was that Muslims had occupied it for centuries by the time of the First Crusade and looked on it as their homeland. As seen in the poem by an Iraqi poet of the eleventh and twelfth centuries, al-Abiwardi, there was shock and outrage at the sacking of Jerusalem in 1099 by the Crusaders. This poet was present in Baghdad when representatives from Syria and Palestine arrived to tell of the fall of Jerusalem and to ask for help from the Seljuk Turks to battle the invaders. For al-Abiwardi, the fall of Jerusalem was a sad occasion, but he also expressed anger at the fact that other Muslims did not react to this call to arms.

Ibn Said, a Muslim writer of the thirteenth century, describes the state of Islam in Spain in another excerpt in this section. However, his observations on the divisions and lack of unity between the Muslims that allowed for Christian domination in that peninsula could also be true for the Islamic world of the Middle East. It took strong leaders, including Nur

al-Din and Saladin, to unite the Muslims in the twelfth century and respond to the Christian invasions. These calls to arms by Muslims were, in fact, similar to those of Pope Urban II when he urged the knights and nobles of Europe to stop fighting one another and come together to face a common enemy. For both the Christians and Muslims there was also the sense of a holy war, of fighting for God or Allah. And both used religious leaders to help spread the message of the holy war.

### Things to Remember While Reading Excerpts about “The Muslim Call to Arms”:

- When the Crusaders took Jerusalem in 1099, they spent two days killing all the inhabitants. Sources say that between forty thousand and seventy thousand people were killed, including women and children. After the slaughter, some Crusaders ripped open the bodies of the dead, hoping to find gold coins, which the Muslims supposedly swallowed to hide from their enemies. This massacre shocked the Muslims of the Middle East.
- The region of Syria and Palestine was not totally Muslim at the time of the First Crusade. There were large groups of native Christians living there, who practiced the Eastern Orthodox faith, the religion of the Byzantine Empire. There were also numerous Jews living in the region.
- When the Crusaders arrived, the Muslims at first mistook them for soldiers of the Byzantine Empire. Islam and that empire had long been enemies, so the Muslims were not too worried about such an invading force, for they thought they would not stay long.
- Islamic literary propaganda against the Crusaders often took the form of poetry, and it was written using the

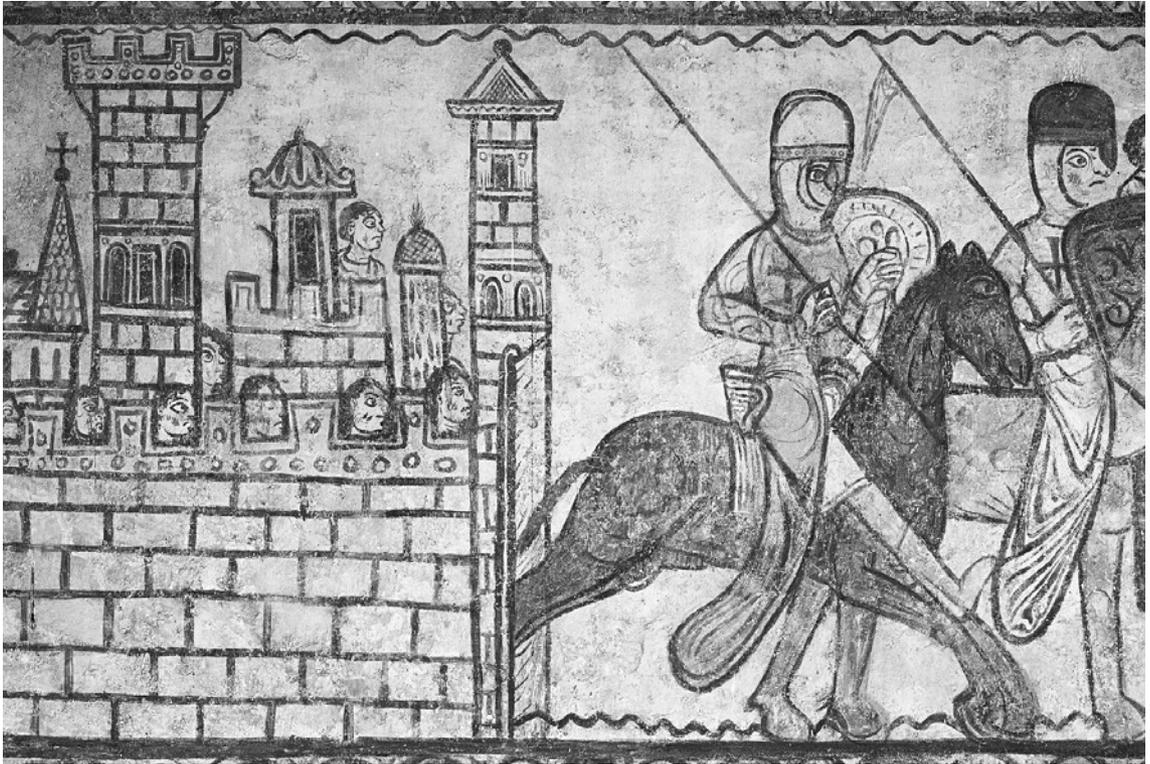


**The Byzantine church of Saint Simeon Monastery in Syria. The region of Syria and Palestine was not totally Muslim at the time of the First Crusade. © John R. Jones/Corbis. Reproduced by permission.**

classical rules of Arab poetry established hundreds of years before the Crusades. Images of loss and destruction caused by the Crusaders thus often use the literary tradition of expressed sadness over the destruction of a campsite instead of a specific city or battle.



***Excerpt: "Poem on the Crusades"***



A fresco showing the Battle of Syria during the Crusades. © Archivo Iconografico, S.A./Corbis. Reproduced by permission.

### **Excerpt from Book of the Maghrib**

Andalus [the Iberian peninsula], which was conquered in the year 92 of the **Hijra**, continued for many years to be a dependency of the Eastern **Khalifate**, until it was snatched away from their hands by one of the surviving members of the family of Umeyyah [Umayyad], who, crossing over from Barbary, subdued the country, and formed therein an independent kingdom, ... During three centuries and a half, Andalus, governed by the princes of this dynasty,

**Hijra:** The date when Muhammad left Mecca for Medina in 622 c.E.

**Khalifate/Caliphate:** General name for an Islamic state during the Crusades.

**Subdued:** Gained control over.

**Discord:** Lack of agreement.

**Prey:** Helpless victim.

**Amply:** More than enough.

**Procured:** Gotten.

**Indolence and Sloth:** Laziness.

**Formidable:** Powerful.

**Assailed:** Attacked.

**Calumny:** False statement.

**Tenets:** Laws or basic principles.

**Privations:** Lack of basic essentials of survival, such as food and water.

**Imputation:** Accusation.

reached the utmost degree of power and prosperity, until civil war breaking out among its inhabitants, the Muslims, weakened by internal **discord**, became everywhere the **prey** of the artful Christians, and the territory of Islam was considerably reduced, so much so that at the present moment the worshippers of the crucified [Christians] hold the greatest part of Andalus in their hands, and their country is divided into various powerful kingdoms, whose rulers assist each other whenever the Muslims attack their territories. This brings to my recollection the words of an eastern geographer who visited Andalus in the fourth century of the Hijra [tenth century A.D.], and during the prosperous times of the Cordovan Khalifate, I mean Ibnu Haukal Annassibi, who, describing Andalus, speaks in very unfavourable terms of its inhabitants.... "Andalus," he says, "is an extensive island, a little less than a month's march in length, and twenty and odd days in width. It ... is **amply** provided with every article which adds to the comforts of life; slaves are very fine, and may be **procured** for a small price on account of their abundance; owing, too, to the fertility of the land, which yields all sorts of grain, vegetables, and fruit, as well as to the number and goodness of its pastures in which innumerable flocks of cattle graze, food is exceedingly abundant and cheap, and the inhabitants are thereby plunged into **indolence and sloth**, letting mechanics and men of the lowest ranks of society overpower them and conduct their affairs. Owing to this it is really astonishing how the Island [i.e., peninsula] of Andalus still remains in the hands of the Muslims, being, as they are, people of vicious habits and low inclinations, narrow-minded, and entirely devoid of fortitude, courage, and the military accomplishments necessary to meet face to face the **formidable** nations of Christians who surround them on every side, and by whom they are continually **assailed**."

Such are the words of Ibnu Haukal; but, if truth be told, I am at a loss to guess to whom they are applied. To my countrymen they certainly are not; or, if so, it is a horrible **calumny**, for if any people on the earth are famous for their courage, their noble qualities, and good habits, it is the Muslims of Andalus; and indeed their readiness to fight the common enemy, their constancy in upholding the holy **tenets** of their religion, and their endurance of the hardships and **privations** of war, have become almost proverbial.... As to the other **imputation**, namely, their being devoid of all senses, wisdom, and talent, either in the field or in administration, would to God that the author's judgment were correct, for then the ambition of the chiefs would not have been raised, and the Muslims would not have turned

against each other's breasts and dipped in each other's blood those very weapons which God Almighty put into their hands for the destruction and annihilation of the infidel Christian. But, as it is, we ask—were those **Sultans** and **Khalifs** wanting in **prudence** and talents who governed this country for upwards of five hundred years, and who administered its affairs in the midst of foreign war and civil discord? Were those fearless warriors **deficient** in courage and military science who withstood on the frontiers of the Muslim empire the frightful shock of the innumerable infidel nations who dwell within and out of Andalus, ... all of whom ran to arms at a moment's notice to defend the religion of the crucified? And if it be true that at the moment I write the Muslims have been visited by the **wrath** of heaven, and that the **Almighty** has sent down defeat and shame to their arms, are we to wonder at it at a time when the Christians, proud of their success, have carried their arms as far as Syria and Mesopotamia, have invaded the districts **contiguous** to the country which is the meeting place of the Muslims, and the **cupola** of Islam, committed all sorts of **ravages and depredations**, and conquered the city of Haleb (Aleppo) and its environs ... ? No, it is by no means to be wondered at, especially when proper attention is paid to the manner in which the Andalusian Muslims have come to their present state of weakness and **degradation**. The ... Christians will rush down from their mountains, or across the plain, and make an **incursion** into the Muslim territory; there they will pounce upon a castle and seize it: they will ravage the neighbouring country, take the inhabitants captive, and then retire to their country with all the **plunder** they have collected, leaving, nevertheless, strong **garrisons** in the castles and towers captured by them. In the meanwhile the Muslim king in whose **dominions** the inroad has been made, ... will be waging war against his neighbours of the Muslims; and these, instead of defending the common cause, the cause of religion and truth,—instead of assisting their brother, will **confederate and ally** to deprive him of whatever dominions still remain in his hands. So, from a **trifling** evil at first, it will grow into an **irreparable calamity**, and the Christians will advance farther and farther until they **subdue** the whole of that country exposed to their inroads, where, once established and fortified, they will direct their attacks to another part of the Muslim territories, and carry on the same war of **havoc** and destruction.



**Sultans:** State rulers or leaders.

**Khalifs/Caliphs:** Islamic religious leaders.

**Prudence:** Caution.

**Deficient:** Lacking.

**Wrath:** Anger.

**Almighty:** In this context, the Muslim god, Allah.

**Contiguous:** Adjoining, next to.

**Cupola:** A rounded vault, forming a roof.

**Ravages and Depredations:** Acts of stealing, looting, and destruction.

**Degradation:** Being put in a low position.

**Incursion:** Invasion.

**Plunder:** Stolen goods.

**Garrisons:** Military outposts.

**Dominions:** Lands, territories.

**Confederate and Ally:** Join together.

**Trifling:** Small, insignificant.

**Irreparable:** Beyond repair.

**Calamity:** Disaster.

**Subdue:** Control, hold in check.

**Havoc:** Chaos and disorder.



## The Theory of *Jihad*

The idea of *jihad*, or holy war, was developed in works of Islamic law, such as the *Sharia*, and also is based on words from the Muslim holy book, the Qur'an (or Koran). It became one of the major duties of every believer in Islam. One Muslim writer noted, as quoted in Carole Hillenbrand's *The Crusades: Islamic Perspectives*, "the *jihad*, and rising up in arms in particular, is obligatory [required] for all able-bodied [believers], exempting no one, just as prayer, pilgrimage, and [payment of] alms are performed, and no person is permitted to perform the duty for another."

Literally, though, the word *jihad* means "struggle," and on the personal

level it was meant to indicate the struggle each believer in Islam went through to lead a righteous or religious life. This struggle was a very personal one against the lower instincts in each of us. Over time, though, this understanding of the concept changed. As the external threat to the Islamic world grew, the principle of *jihad* was adapted as a call to arms of all the faithful to fight the infidel, be they the Byzantines in Asia Minor or the Crusaders who came from across the seas. Preachers at the mosques, or Islamic places of worship, became famous for preaching the holy war, with crowds of up to thirty thousand gathered inside and out to hear them.

### What happened next...

The arrival of the Franks, as the Muslims called the Crusaders, led to the concept of *jihad* as a holy war against these invaders. Muslim writers criticized their fellow Muslims for softness and their leaders for being corrupt and allowing the Crusaders to establish strongholds in Palestine. Although the Seljuk Turks were not eager to come to the aid of Muslims attacked by the Crusaders, later dynasties were willing. The Zangids, a Turkish line that started with Zengi, preached a holy war against the Christian invaders. Under Zengi and his son, Nur al-Din, these Muslims took over Syria, and then, under one of their generals, Saladin, Egypt, too, was captured. Thus the Islamic world was unified for the first time, and during the twelfth century the power of the Crusader states formed in Palestine was steadily worn away. Jerusalem was taken back by Saladin in 1187, and, unlike the aftermath of the Christian victory in 1099, there was no slaughter of the inhabitants. Holy war had become a way of life in the Middle East by the end of the twelfth century.

## Did you know...

- The Koran promotes the idea of *jihad*, but not always as it is thought of in the West. One quote from that holy book declares, “Prescribed for you is fighting, though it be hateful to you.”
- The Muslims fought Crusaders with more than swords and bows and arrows. Zengi, the *atabeg*, or governor, of the city of Mosul and the Turkish Muslim leader who first organized Islam against the Crusaders, was more than a simple warrior. He established *madrassas*, or colleges, of Koranic studies as well as *khanqas*, or lodging houses, where traveling preachers and volunteers stayed as they spread the word against the Crusades.
- Other Muslim poets took up the need for a holy war after al-Abiwardi. Ibn al-Khayyat wrote verses for his patron, or sponsor, in Damascus that described the need for *jihad* against the Crusaders, and other anonymous poets similarly cry out in verse for revenge against the invading Franks. Also, the legal scholar and preacher al-Sulami wrote a report of the First Crusade in *Book of Holy War*, explaining the motives of the Crusaders and analyzing their goals clearly for other Muslims. Al-Sulami blamed defeat on the divided world of Islam and stated that the Crusaders planned to settle permanently in Jerusalem and the Holy Land.

## Consider the following...

- Discuss some of the major divisions in the Muslim world that allowed the Crusaders to be so successful initially.
- What arguments and pleas does the author of “Poem on the Crusades” make to arouse his fellow Muslims to fight the Crusaders?
- The Christians and Muslims thought they were fighting for God or Allah, respectively, in the wars the West calls the Crusades. Explain how, if both parties had God on their side, there could have been a war at all. Who were the “good guys” and who the “bad guys”?

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# Anti-Crusades

*Excerpt from Annales Herbipolenses (1147)*

**Originally written by an anonymous annalist in Würzburg;  
Reprinted in *The Crusades: A Documentary History*; Translated by  
James Brundage; Published in 1962**

**N**ot everyone was convinced by the preaching for a holy war against the Muslims. There were those, as recorded by the following anonymous fifteenth-century historian of the German city of Würzburg, who saw other motives in this call to arms. Clearly, not every knight who “took the cross” and went off to fight the Muslim was a devout, or faithful Christian. Many went for individual profit, for new adventures, or just to escape boredom. Of course, the longer the Crusades lasted and the higher the cost in terms of lives and material, the more critics there were to the Crusader movement. And an unsuccessful mission, such as the Second Crusade (1147–49), as criticized in this excerpt, brought out even more negative opinion.

## **Things to Remember While Reading an Excerpt from *Annales Herbipolenses*:**

- The rise in power of Zengi, the Turkish Muslim governor of Mosul, and his taking of the Crusader state of Edessa in 1144 led to the call for a Second Crusade.

**Cast Down:** Fall on hard times.

**Pseudo:** Fake.

**Belial:** Satan, the devil.

**Anti-Christ:** In Christianity, a person who represents evil on Earth; a false Christ or an unbeliever in Christ.

**Constrained:** Persuaded.

**Vain:** Useless, meaningless.

**Saracens:** Muslims.

**Marquises:** Noblemen with a rank between duke and count.

**Bishops, Archbishops, Abbots:** Church officials of various ranks.

**Prelate:** A church official of high rank.

**Lusted:** Had a strong desire for.

**Novelties:** New or unusual things.

**Straits:** Conditions.

**Merited:** Deserved.

**Zeal:** Enthusiasm.

**Hastened:** Moved quickly.

**Baal:** A false god.

**Kindled:** Aroused, inspired.

- The medieval French clergyman Saint Bernard of Clairvaux preached this Crusade in Europe. One of the most powerful and influential church figures of the twelfth century, Saint Bernard also had many enemies inside and outside the church.
- The Second Crusade was led by the king of France, Louis VII, and his wife, Eleanor of Aquitaine. The German emperor Conrad III also brought about twenty thousand troops, but he was defeated by the Muslims almost immediately.



### **Excerpt from Annales Herbipolenses**

*God allowed the Western church, on account of its sins, to be **cast down**. There arose, indeed, certain **pseudo** prophets, sons of **Belial**, and witnesses of **anti-Christ**, who seduced the Christians with empty words. They **constrained** all sorts of men, by **vain** preaching, to set out against the **Saracens** in order to liberate Jerusalem. The preaching of these men was so enormously influential that the inhabitants of nearly every region, by common vows, offered themselves freely for common destruction. Not only the ordinary people, but kings, dukes, **marquises**, and other powerful men of this world as well, believed that they thus showed their allegiance to God. The **bishops**, **archbishops**, **abbots**, and other ministers and **prelates** of the church joined in this error, throwing themselves headlong into it to the great peril of bodies and souls.... The intentions of the various men were different. Some, indeed, **lusted** after **novelties** and went in order to learn about new lands. Others there were who were driven by poverty, who were in hard **straits** at home; these men went to fight, not only against the enemies of Christ's cross, but even against the friends of the Christian name, wherever opportunity appeared, in order to relieve their poverty. There were others who were oppressed by debts to other men or who sought to escape the service due to their lords, or who were even awaiting the punishment **merited** by their shameful deeds. Such men simulated a **zeal** for God and **hastened** chiefly in order to escape from such troubles and anxieties. A few could, with difficulty, be found who had not bowed their knees to **Baal**, who were directed by a holy and wholesome purpose, and who were **kindled** by love of the*

*divine* majesty to fight earnestly and even to shed their blood for the holy of holies.



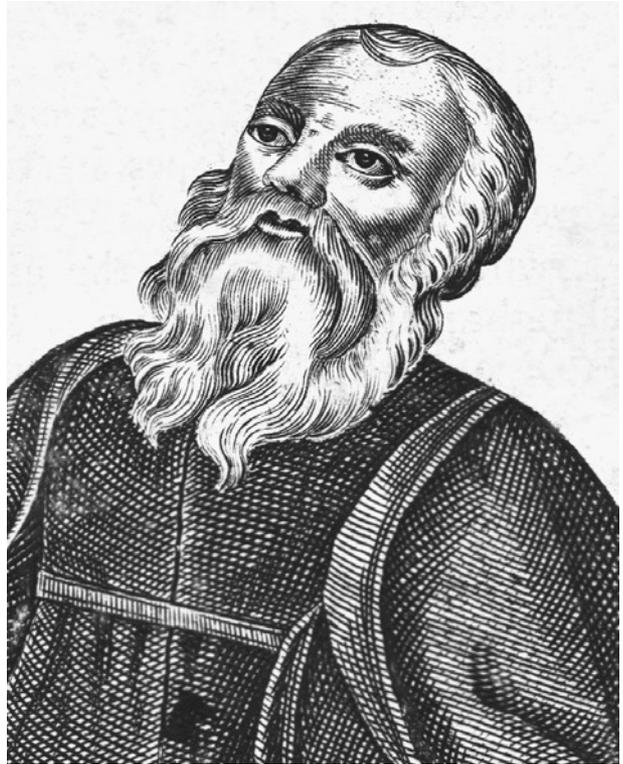
## What happened next...

There was enough blame to go around after the failure of the Second Crusade. Saint Bernard of Clairvaux, however, was not apologizing for his role in promoting the Crusade. He blamed the Crusaders themselves for its failure. But the negative results of this Crusade had large consequences. The church, after all, had put all its resources into the mission and had their most powerful speaker, Saint Bernard, put his full energy and reputation into it. Kings also had supported this Crusade, unlike the First Crusade, in which only minor nobles led the battle. Still, it was a terrible failure, and the Muslims not only had scored major victories but also had gained self-confidence in their holy war against the Christian Crusaders.

Despite continued church support and propaganda for more Crusades, there was a widespread reaction against crusading as a large-scale movement, and there were no more major Crusades for forty years. With the defeat of the Second Crusade the appeal of the Crusader movement weakened. No longer did Crusaders go to stay in the Crusader states. Instead, they went almost as pilgrims, or religious travelers, fighting the “infidel,” gaining a cleansing of their sins, and then returning to their homes in Europe. No amount of propagandizing could bring back the energy and blind faith witnessed in the first two Crusades.

## Did you know...

- Recruitment, or getting an army in the field, was a major goal of propaganda for the Crusades.



One of the most powerful and influential church figures, Saint Bernard of Clairvaux preached on the Second Crusade. © Michael Nicholson/Corbis. Reproduced by permission.

**Divine:** God-like.



A sick pilgrim being treated during the Crusades. Although the church tried to discourage the elderly, women, children, and the sick from going on a Crusade, they were not always successful. *The Art Archive/ Bibliothèque Municipale Reims/ Dagli Orti. Reproduced by permission.*

- The church tried to discourage the elderly, women, children, and the sick from going on a Crusade. But they were not always successful in this effort. The People's Crusade of 1096, the Children's Crusade of 1212, and the Crusade of the Shepherds in 1251 were all examples of Crusader preaching that was too successful and inspired gangs of untrained people to fight the Muslims. Usually, these Crusades ended in tragedy for the participants.
- Knights, or noble soldiers, were the most important recruits for the Crusades. These mounted soldiers on horseback did most of the fighting, but there were many nonmilitary participants to bring along as well. Priests and other church officials were needed to pray for the soldiers before battle and at death; merchants were important to keep the armies supplied with food and arms; surgeons, youths to

take care of the horses, and sailors to transport the armies were also necessary for a well-run Crusade.

- Kinship was an important tool of the recruiter. Sons often accompanied their fathers, brothers went with brothers, uncles and nephews took part together.
- The ties of lordship were also important in gathering an army. If a noble decided to go on Crusade, for example, then many of those in his circle or who were dependent on him also went. Thus it was important for the church to reach out to the higher nobility of kings, princes, and counts. By winning one, many might follow.

### Consider the following...

- Explain how public opinion in Europe affected the progress of the Crusades.

- Discuss three reasons the writer of the excerpt from *Annales Herbipolenses* gave for men joining the Crusades. Which do you feel was the strongest motivation? Why?
- Discuss some of the negative results (from the Western point of view) of the failed Second Crusade. What do you think the Muslim victory in that same Crusade did for the spirit of the Islamic fighters?

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## A Different View



**W**hile much of the literature and historical documentation of the Crusades focus on the conflict between Christians and Muslims, there were other events, views, and perspectives of these times that are of equal importance. The followers of the Jewish religion, both in Europe and in the Middle East, were in many ways caught between the warring parties. Oppressed for centuries because of their supposed role in the death of Jesus Christ, Jews everywhere had a difficult time, but their situation in Europe was generally worse than it was in the Middle East. Often segregated, or separated, into ghettos away from Christians in European cities (and sometimes also from Muslims in the Middle East), the Jews of Europe generally were not allowed to own property, were restricted to certain specified occupations, and were forced to wear an identifying mark or badge to distinguish them from Christians. From being a largely agricultural people, they were compelled to live in cities in Europe where the professions of moneylending and commerce were the only ones open to them.

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During the Crusades, the position of Jews in Europe was particularly dangerous, for traditional hatred bubbled over in the form of pogroms, or mass killings of Jews by Crusaders on their way to fight the infidel, that is, those people of the Middle East who did not believe in the Christian God. In the Middle East, things were often better for followers of the Jewish faith. Generally, in medieval times Jews were more integrated, or mixed, into normal life in the Middle East than in Europe. Although the Islamic holy book, the Qur'an (or Koran) calls the "children of Israel" unbelievers, it also states that Jews should be allowed to live in peace. The Jews in Europe and the Middle East did not take part in the great Crusader conflict between East and West, but they were often caught up in it, as were the Jews of Jerusalem, who were slaughtered along with all Muslims when the city fell to the Christian soldiers in 1099 during the First Crusade.

The histories of the Crusades have often presented the matter from the Christian point of view, neglecting that of the Muslims and also excluding other events in the Muslim world during the two centuries of religious warfare with the West. The Islamic world had a high culture at the time of the Crusades. Both in the arts and sciences, Muslim poets and scholars helped develop a civilization that was in many ways superior to that of the Christian kingdoms of the West at the same time. Muslims were especially strong in areas such as mathematics, medicine, and astronomy and thus looked at the European invaders, most of whom were uneducated, with a sometimes humorous and unflattering eye.

The Crusaders were not the only enemies the Muslims faced in the Middle Ages. Out of Central Asia the Mongols stormed into the Middle East in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. These seminomadic warriors, led at first by the infamous Genghis Khan and later by his sons and other relatives, destroyed entire cities, killing all who fought against them. In many ways they presented a more dangerous threat than the Crusaders, and it was not until the middle of the thirteenth century that a Mamluk, or former slave warrior, from Egypt, Baybars, was able to stop their advance. All in all, the picture of Europe and the Middle East at the time of the Crusades was a very complex one, which cannot be seen solely in the restricted terms of a long-drawn-out conflict between Christians and Muslims.

# The Jewish World

*Excerpt from "The Crusaders in Mainz" (1096)*

**Originally written by Solomon bar Samson; Reprinted in *The Jew in the Medieval World: A Sourcebook*, 315–1791;  
Edited by Jacob Marcus; Published in 1938**

*Excerpt from "Las Siete Partidas: Laws on Jews" (1265)*

**Reprinted in *The Jew in the Medieval World: A Sourcebook*,  
315–1791; Edited by Jacob Marcus; Published in 1938**

*Excerpt from The Itinerary of Benjamin Tudela:  
Travels in the Middle Ages (late twelfth century)*

**Originally written by Benjamin of Tudela;  
Translated by Marcus Nathan Adler; Published in 1907**

In the first excerpt of this section, the twelfth-century Jewish historian Solomon bar Samson describes how the enthusiasm for the Crusades bubbled over at the time of the First Crusade (1095–99), resulting in the killings of thousands of Jews in Germany as these Crusaders passed through the Rhineland on their way to the Holy Land. Considered infidels, the Jews became fair game for some Crusaders who wanted an excuse to loot the property of these people. Emich of Leiningen, a German noble, led one such group of soldiers who were responsible for the killings in the German city of Mainz that are described by Solomon bar Samson. Called Emico in this excerpt, this German Crusader was only one of several unscrupulous (without morals) leaders at the time of the First Crusade. A knight named Volkmar was another.

In the second excerpt, anti-Jewish laws are presented in "La Siete Partidas," or the Seven-Part Code, written in Castile, Spain, in 1265 but not put into effect until almost a hundred years later. In Spain during the thirteenth century the Jews were still too powerful and important to be mistreat-

ed. However, similar anti-Jewish, or anti-Semitic, laws were already in effect in much of the rest of Europe, many of them promoted by the Catholic Church. At the great meetings or councils of the church, called the Lateran Councils, laws were passed restricting the rights and privileges of Jews. The Fourth Lateran Council in 1215 made a law that Jews were forced to wear a badge that separated them from Christians.

In the third excerpt, the twelfth-century Spanish (and Jewish) traveler Benjamin of Tudela provides an account of the situation of Jews not only in Europe but also throughout the Middle East at the time of the Crusades. On the whole, his travelogue shows that Jewish people were better off under Islamic rule than they were in Europe, where they were controlled by Christian laws. Benjamin provides a comparison, for example, of the harsh treatment of Jews in Constantinople, an Eastern Orthodox Christian city, with the kinder and more considerate treatment the Jewish people received at the hands of the caliph, or religious leader, of the Muslim city of Baghdad.

### **Things to Remember While Reading Excerpts from “The Jewish World”:**

- Crusaders were not always armies of noble, God-loving knights, as is shown in the excerpt about the killings of Jews in Mainz. Although the Jews sought safety in the palace of the archbishop, a high church official of the city, they were still killed by Emich/Emico and his men.
- There were numerous laws restricting the rights of Jews in Europe. Jews were forbidden to have Christian servants or to have relations of any sort other than business with Christians
- Innocent III, pope from 1198 to 1216, was the first pope who did not attempt to protect the Jews of Europe. In fact, Innocent III actually added to their persecution by passing a law that forced Jews to wear badges to separate them from the rest of society.
- Under Islamic law, the Jews did not have the full rights of Muslim citizens. They still had to pay taxes to the head of state. Depending on the ruler, however, Jews

might or might not be segregated from the rest of society as they were in Europe.

- Despite or perhaps because of the persecution the Jews suffered, they developed a rich tradition of scholarship and philosophy. The Jewish diaspora, or spreading of Jewish people all over after they left the Holy Land, resulted in small and large communities of Jews throughout Europe and the Middle East, each with its own rabbi or scholarly and religious leader.



### **Excerpt from “The Crusaders in Mainz”**

*It was on the third of Siwan... at noon, that Emico the wicked, the enemy of the Jews, came with his whole army against the city gate, and the citizens opened it up for him. Emico, a German noble, led a band of **plundering** German and French crusaders. Then the enemies of the Lord said to each other: “Look! They have opened up the gate for us. Now let us avenge the blood of ‘the hanged one’ [Jesus].” The children of the holy **covenant** who were there, **martyrs** who feared the Most High, although they saw the great multitude, an army numerous as the sand on the shore of the sea, still clung to their Creator. Then young and old **donned** their armor and **girded** on their weapons and at their head was **Rabbi** Kalonymus ben Meshullam, the chief of the community. Yet because of the many troubles and the **fasts** which they had observed they had no strength to stand up against the enemy.... Then came gangs and bands, sweeping through like a flood until Mayence [Mainz] was filled from end to end.*

*The **foe** Emico proclaimed in the hearing of the community that the enemy be driven from the city.... Panic was great in the town. Each Jew in the inner court of the bishop girded on his weapons, and all moved towards the palace gate to fight the crusaders and the citizens. They fought each other up to the very gate, but the sins of the Jews brought it about that the enemy overcame them and took the gate.*

*The hand of the Lord was heavy against His people. All the **Gentiles** were gathered together against the Jews in the courtyard to **blot out** their name, and the strength of our people weakened*

**Siwan:** The ninth month of the civil year; the third month of the religious year in the Jewish calendar (in May and June).

**Plundering:** Thieving and destroying.

**Covenant:** An agreement with God.

**Martyrs:** People who die for their faith.

**Donned:** Put on.

**Girded:** Secured with a belt.

**Rabbi:** Title of a Jewish religious leader and scholar.

**Fasts:** Periods of not eating.

**Foe:** Enemy.

**Gentiles:** Non-Jewish people.

**Blot Out:** Strike out, destroy.



**Pope John Paul II places a signed note into a crack of the Wailing Wall in Jerusalem asking forgiveness for the persecution Catholics imparted on the Jews.** © AP/Wide World Photos, Inc. Reproduced by permission.

**Bishop:** High Christian Church official.

**Yoke:** In this context, a burden or heavy weight.

**Torah:** Jewish holy book.

**Nicked:** Chipped.

when they saw the wicked Edomites overpowering them. [The Edomites were the traditional foes of the Jews; here, Christians are meant.] The **bishop's** men, who had promised to help them, were the very first to flee, thus delivering the Jews into the hands of the enemy. They were indeed a poor support; even the bishop himself fled from his church for it was thought to kill him also because he had spoken good things of the Jews....

When the children of the covenant [the Jews] saw that the heavenly decree of death had been issued and that the enemy had conquered them and had entered the courtyard, then all of them—old men and young, virgins and children, servants and maids—cried out together to their Father in heaven and, weeping for themselves and for their lives, accepted as just the sentence of God. One to another they said: "Let us be strong and let us bear the **yoke** of the holy religion, for only in this world can the enemy kill us—and the easi-

est of the four deaths is by the sword. But we, our souls in paradise, shall continue to live eternally, in the great shining reflection [of the divine glory]."

With a whole heart and with a willing soul they then spoke: "After all it is not right to criticize the acts of God—blessed be He and blessed be His name—who has given to us His **Torah** and a command to put ourselves to death, to kill ourselves for the unity of His holy name. Happy are we if we do His will. Happy is anyone who is killed or slaughtered, who dies for the unity of His name.... He exchanges the world of darkness for the world of light, the world of trouble for the world of joy, and the world that passes away for the world that lasts for all eternity." Then all of them, to a man, cried out with a loud voice: "Now we must delay no longer for the enemy are already upon us.... Let him who has a knife examine it that it not be **nicked**, and let him come and slaughter us for the sanctification of the Only One, the Everlasting and then let him cut his own throat or plunge the knife into his own body." [A nick in the slaughterer's knife would make it ritually unfit.]

As soon as the enemy came into the courtyard they found some of the very **pious** there with our brilliant master, Isaac ben Moses. He stretched out his neck, and his head they cut off first. The others, wrapped by their fringed praying shawls, sat by themselves in the courtyard, eager to do the will of their Creator. They did not care to flee into the chamber to save themselves for this **temporal** life, but out of love they received upon themselves the sentence of God. The enemy showered stones and arrows upon them, but they did not care to flee, and [Esther 9:5] "with the stroke of the sword, and with slaughter, and destruction" the foe killed all of those whom they found there....

The women there girded their loins with strength and **slew** their sons and their daughters and then themselves. Many men, too, **plucked up** courage and killed their wives, their sons, their infants. The tender and delicate mother slaughtered the babe she had played with.... The maidens and the young brides and grooms looked out of the Windows and in a loud voice cried: "Look and see, O our God, what we do for the **sanctification** of Thy great name in order not to exchange you for a hanged and crucified one...."

Thus were the precious children of **Zion**, the Jews of Mayence, tried with ten trials.... They stretched out their necks to the slaughter and they delivered their pure souls to their Father in heaven....

The ears of him who hears these things will tingle, for whoever heard anything like this? Inquire now and look about, was there ever such an abundant sacrifice as this since the days of the primeval Adam? Were there ever eleven hundred offerings on one day, each one of them like the sacrifice of Isaac, the son of Abraham?

Yet see what these martyrs did! Why did the heavens not grow dark and the stars not withdraw their brightness? Why did not the moon and the sun grow dark in their heavens when on one day, on the third of Siwan, on a Tuesday eleven hundred souls were killed and slaughtered, among them many infants and **sucklings** who had not **transgressed** nor sinned, and many poor, innocent souls?

**Wilt Thou**, despite this, still restrain Thyself, O Lord? For thy sake it was that these numberless souls were killed. **Avenge** quickly the blood of Thy servants which was spilt in our days and in our sight. Amen.

### **Excerpt from "Las Siete Partidas: Laws on Jews"**

LAW I. WHAT THE WORD JEW MEANS, AND **WHENCE** THIS TERM IS **DERIVED**.

**Pious:** Very religious.

**Temporal:** Earthly.

**Slew:** Killed.

**Plucked Up:** Gathered.

**Sanctification:** Making holy.

**Zion:** The Jewish people.

**Sucklings:** Babies young enough to still be breast-feeding.

**Transgressed:** Broken a moral law.

**Wilt Thou:** Will You (meaning God).

**Avenge:** Do harm in return for harm done.

**Whence:** From where.

**Derived:** Originated.



**A painting of a slaughter of the Jews in Mainz by the Crusaders.** Photograph by Vicente Cutanda y Toraya. Museo de Bellas Artes, Zaragoza, Spain/Bridgeman Art Library. Reproduced by permission.

**Dwell:** Live.

**Crucified:** Put to death on the cross.

**Contrary:** Against.

**Ordinances:** Laws.

**Exalting:** Praising.

**Disparaging:** Criticizing.

*A party who believes in, and adheres to the law of Moses is called a Jew.... The reason that the church, emperors, kings and princes permitted the Jews to **dwell** among them and with Christians is because they always lived, as it were, in captivity, as it was constantly in the minds of men that they were descended from those who **crucified** Our Lord Jesus Christ.*

**LAW II. IN WHAT WAY JEWS SHOULD PASS THEIR LIVES AMONG CHRISTIANS; WHAT THINGS THEY SHOULD NOT MAKE USE OF OR PRACTICE, ACCORDING TO OUR RELIGION; AND WHAT PENALTY THOSE DESERVE WHO ACT **CONTRARY** TO ITS **ORDINANCES****

*Jews should pass their lives among Christians quietly, ... practicing their own religious rites, and not speaking ill of the faith of Our Lord Jesus Christ.... A Jew should be very careful to avoid preaching to, or converting any Christian .... by **exalting** his own belief and **disparaging** ours. Whoever violates this law shall be put to death and lose all his property. And because we have heard it*

said that in some places Jews celebrated, and still celebrate, Good Friday, which commemorates the Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ, by way of **contempt**: stealing children and fastening them to crosses, ... we order that ... if in any part of our **dominions** anything like this is done, and can be proved, all persons who were present when the act was committed shall be ... arrested ... and after the king **ascertains** that they are guilty, he shall cause them to be put to death in a disgraceful manner...

### LAW III. NO JEW CAN HOLD ANY OFFICE OR EMPLOYMENT BY WHICH HE MAY BE ABLE TO OPPRESS CHRISTIANS

Jews were formerly highly honored, and enjoyed privileges above all other races, for they alone were called the People of God. But for the reason that they disowned **Him**... and instead of showing Him reverence humiliated Him, by shamefully putting Him to death on the cross; it was proper and just that, on account of the great crime, ... they should **forfeit** the honors and privileges which they enjoyed.... The emperors ... considered it fitting and right that ... they should lose all said honors and privileges, so that no Jew could ever afterwards hold an honorable position, or a public office by means of which he might, in any way, oppress a Christian....

### LAW IV. HOW JEWS CAN HAVE A SYNAGOGUE AMONG CHRISTIANS

A synagogue is a place where the Jews pray, and a new building of this kind cannot be **erected** in any part of our dominions, except by our order. Where, however, those which formerly existed there are torn down, they can be built in the same spot where they originally stood; but they cannot be made any larger or raised to any greater height, or be painted.... And for the reason that a synagogue is a place where the name of God is praised, we forbid any Christian to deface it, or remove anything from it, or take anything out of it by force; except where some **malefactor** takes refuge there.... Moreover, we forbid Christians to ... place any **hindrance** in the way of the Jews while they are there performing their devotions according to their religion....

### LAW V. NO **COMPULSION** SHALL BE BROUGHT TO BEAR UPON THE JEWS ON SATURDAY, AND WHAT JEWS CAN BE SUBJECT TO COMPULSION

Saturday is the day on which Jews perform their devotions, and remain quiet in their lodgings and do not make contracts or trans-

**Contempt:** Disrespect.

**Dominions:** Territories.

**Ascertain:** Discovers.

**Him:** The capital letter used with "Him" refers to Jesus Christ, or the Lord.

**Forfeit:** Give up.

**Erected:** Built.

**Malefactor:** Criminal.

**Hindrance:** Obstacle.

**Compulsion:** Forced service.

act any business.... **Wherefore** we order that no judge shall employ force or any **constraint** upon Jews on Saturday, in order to bring them into court on account of their debts; or arrest them.... Jews are not bound to obey a summons served upon them on that day; and, moreover, we **decree** that any decision **rendered** against them on Saturday shall not be valid; but if a Jew should wound, kill, rob, steal, or commit any other offense like these for which he can be punished in person and property, then the judge can arrest him on Saturday....

LAW VI. JEWS WHO BECOME CHRISTIANS SHALL NOT BE SUBJECT TO COMPULSION; WHAT ADVANTAGE A JEW HAS WHO BECOMES A CHRISTIAN; AND WHAT PENALTY OTHER JEWS DESERVE WHO DO HIM HARM

No force or compulsion shall be employed in any way against a Jew to induce him to become a Christian; but Christians should convert him to the faith of Our Lord Jesus Christ by means of the texts of the **Holy Scriptures**, and by kind words.... We also decree that if any Jew or Jewess should voluntarily desire to become a Christian, the other Jews shall not interfere with this in any way, and if they stone, wound, or kill any such person, ... we order that all the murderers, or the **abettors** of said murder ... shall be burned.... We also order that, after any Jews become Christians, all persons in our dominions shall honor them; and that no one shall dare to **reproach** them or their descendants, by way of insult, with having been Jews....

LAW VII. WHAT PENALTY A CHRISTIAN DESERVES WHO BECOMES A JEW

Where a Christian is so unfortunate as to become a Jew, we order that he shall be put to death just as if he had become a **heretic**; and we decree that his property shall be disposed of in the same way that we stated should be done with that of heretics.

LAW VIII. NO CHRISTIAN, MAN OR WOMAN, SHALL LIVE WITH A JEW

We forbid any Jew to keep Christian men or women in his house, to be served by them; although he may have them to cultivate and take care of his lands, or protect him on the way when he is compelled to go to some dangerous place. Moreover, we forbid any Christian man or woman to invite a Jew or a Jewess, or to accept an invitation from them, to eat or drink together, or to drink any wine made by their hands.... We also order that no Jews shall

**Wherefore:** For that reason.

**Constraint:** Restriction.

**Decree:** Order.

**Rendered:** Made.

**Holy Scriptures:** The Bible.

**Abettors:** Helpers.

**Reproach:** Express disapproval.

**Heretic:** Believer in an unorthodox or unaccepted religious sect or group.



dare to bathe in company with Christians, and that no Christian shall take any medicine or **cathartic** made by a Jew...

**LAW IX. WHAT PENALTY A JEW DESERVES WHO HAS INTERCOURSE WITH A CHRISTIAN WOMAN**

Jews who live with Christian women are guilty of great **insolence** and boldness, for which reason we decree that all Jews who ... may be convicted of having done such a thing shall be put to death. For if Christians who commit **adultery** with married women deserve death on that account, much more do Jews who have sexual intercourse with Christian women, who are spiritually the wives of Our Lord Jesus Christ; ... nor do we consider it proper that a Christian woman who commits an offense of this kind shall escape without punishment. Wherefore we order that, whether she be a virgin, a married woman, a widow, or a common prostitute who gives herself to all men, she shall suffer the same penalty ... [i.e., confiscation of property, **scourging**, or death].

**Manuscript illumination of heretics and Jews supposedly unable to hear the word of God.** © Gianni Dagli Orti/Corbis. Reproduced by permission.

**Cathartic:** Digestive medicine.

**Intercourse:** Sexual relations.

**Insolence:** Being disrespectful.

**Adultery:** Sexual relations outside marriage.

**Scourging:** Being lashed with a whip.

LAW X. WHAT PENALTY JEWS DESERVE WHO HOLD CHRISTIANS AS SLAVES

*A Jew shall not purchase, or keep as a slave, a Christian man or woman, and if anyone violates this law the Christian shall be restored to freedom ... although the Jew may not have been aware when he bought him, that he was a Christian; but if he knew that he was such when he purchased him, and makes use of him afterwards as a slave, he shall be put to death for doing so. Moreover, we forbid any Jew to convert a captive to his religion, even though said captive may be a **Moor**, or belong to some other barbarous race. If anyone violates this law we order that the said slave who has become a Jew shall be set at liberty...*

LAW XI. JEWS SHALL BEAR CERTAIN MARKS IN ORDER THAT THEY MAY BE KNOWN

*Many crimes and outrageous things occur between Christians and Jews because they live together in cities, and dress alike; and in order to avoid the offenses and evils which take place for this reason, ... we order that all Jews ... living in our dominions shall bear some distinguishing mark upon their heads, ... and any Jew who does not bear such a mark, shall pay for each time he is found without it ten **maravedis** of gold; and if he has not the means to do this he shall receive ten **lashes** for his offense.*

## **Excerpts from The Itinerary of Benjamin Tudela: Travels in the Middle Ages**

### *Constantinople*

*Constantinople is a busy city, and merchants come to it from every country by sea or land, and there is none like it in the world except Baghdad, the great city of Islam. In Constantinople is the church of Santa Sophia, and the seat of the **Pope** of the Greeks, since the Greeks do not obey the pope of Rome. There are also churches according to the number of days of the year. A quantity of wealth beyond all telling is brought **hither** year by year as **tribute** from the two islands, and the castles and villages which are there. And the like of this wealth is not to be found in any other church in the world. And in this church there are pillars of gold and silver, and lamps of silver and gold more than a man can count. Close to the walls of the palace is also a place of amusement belonging to the king, which is called the Hippodrome, and every year on the anniver-*

**Moor:** North African and Spanish Muslim.

**Bear:** Wear.

**Maravedis:** Spanish coins.

**Lashes:** Strokes of the whip.

**Pope:** Leader of the Catholic Church, known as the "patriarch" in the Eastern Orthodox Church.

**Hither:** Here.

**Tribute:** Payment.



**Benjamin of Tudela on his journey to the Middle East during the Crusades.** *Mary Evans Picture Library. Reproduced by permission.*

*sary of the birth of Jesus the king gives a great entertainment there. And in that place men from all the races of the world come before the king and queen with jugglery and without jugglery, and they introduce lions, leopards, bears, and wild asses, and they engage them in combat with one another; and the same thing is done with birds. No entertainment like this can be found in any other land.*

*This King Emanuel built a great palace for the seat of his government upon the seacoast.... He overlaid its columns with gold and silver, and **engraved** thereon representations of the battles before his day and of his own combats. He also set up a **throne** of gold and of*

**Asses:** Donkeys.

**Engraved:** Decorated or carved on the surface.

**Throne:** Ceremonial chair for a king.

precious stones, and a golden crown was suspended by a gold chain over the throne, so arranged that he might sit thereunder. It was **inlaid** with jewels of priceless value, and at night time no lights were required, for every one could see by the light which the stones gave forth.... From every part of the empire of Greece tribute is brought here every year, and they fill strongholds with **garments** of silk, purple, and gold.... It is said that the tribute of the city amounts every year to 20,000 gold pieces, **derived** both from the rents of shops and markets, and from the tribute of merchants who enter by sea or land.

The Greek inhabitants are very rich in gold and precious stones, and they go clothed in garments of silk with gold embroidery, and they ride horses, and look like princes. Indeed, the land is very rich in all cloth stuffs, and in bread, meat, and wine.

Wealth like that of Constantinople is not to be found in the whole world. Here are also men learned in all the books of the Greeks, and they eat and drink, every man under his vine and his fig-tree....

No Jews live in the city, for they have been placed behind an inlet of the sea. An arm of the sea of Marmora shuts them in on the one side, and they are unable to go out except by way of the sea, when they want to do business with the inhabitants.... And amongst them are **artificers** in silk and many rich merchants. No Jew there is allowed to ride on horseback. The one exception is the king's physician, and through whom the Jews enjoy considerable **alleviation** of their oppression. For their condition is very low, and there is much hatred against them, which is **fostered** by the **tanners**, who throw out their dirty water in the streets before the doors of the Jewish houses and defile the Jews' quarter. So the Greeks hate the Jews, good and bad alike, and subject them to great oppression, and beat them in the streets, and in every way treat them with **rigor**. Yet the Jews are rich and good, kindly and charitable, and bear their lot with cheerfulness....

#### Tyre

There is no harbor like [Tyre] in the whole world. Tyre is a beautiful city. It contains about 500 Jews, some of the scholars of the **Talmud**.... The Jews own sea-going vessels, and there are glass-makers amongst them who make that fine Tyranian glassware which is prized in all countries. In the vicinity is found sugar of a high class, for men plant it here, and people come from all over to buy it. A man can ascend the walls of New Tyre and see ancient Tyre, which the sea has now covered, lying at a stone's throw from

**Inlaid:** Set into the surface.

**Garments:** Clothing.

**Derived:** Gotten.

**Artificers:** Manufacturers.

**Alleviation:** Easing, lessening.

**Fostered:** Promoted.

**Tanners:** Leather workers and dyers.

**Rigor:** Demanding, extreme conditions.

**Talmud:** A holy book for the Jews.



fair city of large extent, surrounded by walls, with many gardens and plantations, extending over fifteen miles on each side, and no district richer in fruit can be seen in all the world.... The city is situated at the foot of Mount Hermon. The Amana flows through the city, and by means of **aqueducts** the water is conveyed to the houses of great people, and into the streets and market places. The Pharpar flows through their gardens and **plantations**. It is a place carrying on trade with all countries. Here is a **mosque** of the Arabs called the Gami of Damascus; there is no building like it in the whole world, and they say that it was a palace of Ben Hadad. Here is a wall of crystal glass of magic workmanship, with **apertures** according to the days of the year, and as the sun's rays enter each of them in daily succession the hours of the day can be told by a graduated dial. In the palace are chambers built of gold and glass, and if the people walk around the wall is between them. And there are columns overlaid with gold and silver, and columns of marble of all colours ... Three thousand Jews abide in this city, and amongst them are learned and rich men.

#### Baghdad

Baghdad, the great city and royal residence of the **Caliph Emir al Muminin al Abbassi** of the family of Mohammed. He is at the head of the Mohammedan religion, and all the kings of Islam obey him; he occupies a similar position to that held by the Pope over Christians....

There the great king, Al Abbassi the Caliph (Hafiz) holds his **court**, and he is kind unto **Israel**, and many belonging to the people of Israel are his attendants; he knows all languages, and is well **versed** in the law of Israel. He reads and writes the holy language (Hebrew). He will not **partake** of anything unless he has earned it by the work of his own hands.... He is truthful and trusty, speaking peace to all men.

Within the **domains** of the palace of the Caliph there are great buildings of marble and columns of silver and gold, and carvings upon rare stones are fixed in the walls. In the Caliph's palace are great riches, and towers filled with gold, silken garments, and all precious stones.... [During the parade of **Ramadan**] He is accompanied by all the nobles of Islam dressed in fine garments and riding horses, the princes of Arabia, the princes of Togarma and Daylam (Gilan), and the princes of Persia, Media and Ghuzz, and the princes of the land of Tibet, which is three months' journey distant,

**Aqueducts:** Elevated channels for water.

**Plantations:** Estates with crops.

**Mosque:** Muslim church.

**Apertures:** Openings.

**Caliph:** Religious/political leader in Islam.

**Emir:** Title of a Muslim and usually Arab ruler.

**Court:** The establishment of a ruler.

**Israel:** The Jewish people.

**Versed:** Knowledgeable.

**Partake:** Eat or drink.

**Domains:** Areas.

**Ramadan:** Ninth month of the Islamic year, when no food is eaten from sunset to sunrise.



and westward of which lies the land of Samarkand.... Along the road the walls are adorned with silk and purple, and the inhabitants receive him with all kinds of song and **exultation**, and they dance before the great king who is styled Caliph....

He built, on the other side of the river, on the banks of an arm of the Euphrates which borders the city, a hospital consisting of blocks of houses and **hospices** for the sick poor who come to be healed. Here there are about sixty physicians' stores which provided from the Caliph's house with drugs and whatever else may be required. Every sick man who comes is maintained at the Caliph's expense and is medically treated. Here is a building called *Dar-al-Maristan*, where they keep charge of the **demented** people who have become insane in the towns through the great heat in the summer, and they chain each of them in iron chains until their reason becomes restored to them in the winter-time. Whilst they **abide** there, they are provided with food from the house of the Caliph, and when their reason is restored they are dismissed and each one them

The minarets on a mosque. Benjamin of Tudela described mosques like the one pictured here in his manuscript of his journeys during the Crusades. © Jose Fuste Raga/Corbis.

**Exultation:** Celebration, triumph.

**Hospices:** Homes for the sick and dying.

**Demented:** Mentally ill.

**Abide:** Live, stay.

**Sages:** Scholars.

**Synagogues:** Jewish churches.

**Metropolis:** City.

*goes to his house and his home. Money is given to those that have stayed in the hospices on their return to their homes.... All this the Caliph does out of charity to those that come to the city of Baghdad, whether they be sick or insane. The Caliph is a righteous man, and all his actions are good.*

*In Baghdad there are about 40,000 Jews, and they dwell in security, prosperity and honour under the great Caliph; and amongst them are the great **sages**, the heads of Academies engaged in the study of the law. In this city there are ten Academies.... In Baghdad there are 28 **synagogues**, situated either in the city itself or in Al-Karish on the other side of the Tigris, for the river divides the **metropolis** in two parts.*



## What happened next...

Jews continued to be persecuted in Europe during the time of the Crusades. With the Second Crusade in 1147, the Jewish people of Germany were once again set upon by Crusader forces before they left for the Holy Land. The famous church scholar Saint Bernard of Clairvaux, who preached the Second Crusade, had to go to Germany to try to stop this persecution. Again, just before the Third Crusade, the Jews of York, England, were attacked and killed by mobs of Christians.

The legal position of the Jews in Europe continued to worsen during and after the time of the Crusades. Jews were actually expelled from, or kicked out of, certain countries: this happened in France in 1182, in England in 1290, and in Spain in 1492. While the position of the Jew in the Middle East remained stable during much of the Middle Ages, it is obvious from the Arab-Israeli conflict of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries that the two peoples and two religions have difficulty sharing the limited living space of the region.

## Did you know...

- Spain was the home for great Jewish scholars at the time of the Crusades. Maimonides was one of the most fa-



## The Lateran Councils

The great conferences of the Catholic Church during the Middle Ages were held in the pope's palace on the Lateran Hill in Rome and so became known as the Lateran Councils. While the first two such councils dealt with internal policies of the church, the third, in 1179, and fourth, in 1215, deeply affected Jewish history in Europe.

With the Third Lateran Council, Jews were forbidden to have Christian servants, and Christians who lived with Jews even as renters were excommunicated, or expelled, from the church. This council also established that Christian testimony, or statements in legal matters, was considered above that of Jews, and punishment for usury, or unfair lending practices, was

increased. There would be no Christian burial for those found guilty of usury. As a result, the role of moneylender, a necessary one in the Middle Ages, as it is in the modern world, became more and more reserved only for Jews.

The Fourth Lateran Council dealt with many bad practices within the Catholic Church, such as selling church offices. But it also passed a number of anti-Jewish laws. Nobles were forbidden to have Jewish officials working for them. Jews were also forced to pay extra taxes and to wear an identifying badge. Usually, the Fourth Lateran Council is thought of as a great moment in church history, when Pope Innocent III pushed through many reforms. But for the Jews, that council was a disaster.

mous Jewish scholars of the twelfth century, born in Cordova but forced to leave Spain when a radical Muslim group came to power.

- Benjamin of Tudela wrote of travels that took him not only to the Middle East but also, supposedly, as far as China and India. Scholars, however, believe that these sections of his travel guide were simply copied from reports of other travelers and that Mesopotamia, or modern-day Iraq, was his easternmost point of travel.
- Jewish occupations were tightly restricted in Europe. Because Jews could not own land, they were forced into commercial professions and into moneylending. As Christian doctrine, or law, looked at this occupation negatively, Jews were further criticized for taking up this job. In fact, Jews were caught in a no-win situation by such policies.

- The badges that Jews were forced to wear beginning in 1215 ultimately led to the armbands that Jews had to wear during World War II (1939–45), which made them targets in Nazi-controlled Europe.

### Consider the following...

- Why do you think the Catholic Church passed anti-Jewish laws?
- In the course of his travels, Benjamin of Tudela was careful to record the size of Jewish communities throughout the Middle East. What does this tell you about the multicultural aspect of the region during the Middle Ages?
- During World War II (1939–45), it is estimated that more than six million Jews were killed by the Nazis. Explain how Europe's long tradition of anti-Semitism helped create an atmosphere that would make this possible.

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# The Muslim Perspective

*Excerpt from "On the Tatars" (1220–1221)*

**Originally written by Ibn al-Athir; Reprinted in *A Literary History of Persia*; Edited by Edward G. Browne; Published in 1902**

**N**umerous Arab chroniclers and historians told the story of the medieval Middle East from the Muslim point of view. From the twelfth and thirteenth centuries there were writers such as al-Sulami, Ibn al-Jawzi, Ibn Zafir, Abu Shama, Ibn Muyassar, and Ibn Wasil; from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries al-Yunini, al-Nuwayri, al-Maqrizi, and Ibn Taghribirdi present the Muslim perspective on history. These authors provide historical accounts and memoirs, as well as official state biographies. Although their names mean little to Western readers, they form a cornerstone of Muslim and Arab writing from the Middle Ages. One of the best known of these historians is Ibn al-Athir. His book *The Perfect History*, sometimes also called *The Complete History*, is one of the most valuable medieval Muslim documents for modern researchers. From a literary family with two brothers who were also historians and writers, Ibn al-Athir has become one of the authorities on the Muslim world for historians, particularly for the time period from the Seljuk Turk invasion in the late eleventh century to the Mongol invasions of the thirteenth. As a historian, al-Athir



had first-hand knowledge of events in the Middle East, serving with the Kurdish military leader Saladin in Syria. His histories thus blend personal experience with recorded annals (chronologies).

Ibn al-Athir is an example of someone who practiced anecdotal history, or history told through personal story. Arab writers included a wide range of styles and approaches. One highly entertaining early chronicler was Usamah ibn Munqidh, whose *An Arab-Syrian Gentleman and Warrior in the Period of the Crusades* provides the modern reader with an interesting and sometimes humorous look at the Crusaders of the twelfth century from the Muslim point of view. From that perspective, these Christian soldiers were not always the fair-fighting knights they said they were. The Franks, as the Muslims called the Crusaders, might be fierce warriors, as Usamah shows, but they were not very cultured or well-educated people. Usamah, like many other Arab writers, found the Crusaders uncivilized and uneducated. He delighted in stories of Crusader or Frankish doctors using axes to cut off injured limbs, killing the patient in the process. He also made fun of the court system of the Franks, who were fond of dunking suspects into barrels of water to gain a confession. Such a legal system presented a no-win situation for the poor suspect: those who did not confess ended up dying in the process, but were found innocent. And those who confessed to their crime, whether because they were guilty or to avoid drowning, were then condemned to death. Usamah's is only one such voice among dozens, like that of Ibn al-Athir excerpted below, that provides a fascinating insight into the minds of Muslims of the Middle Ages and into the events that shaped the age.

In this section's excerpt, Ibn al-Athir tells of a threat to the Muslims of the Middle East other than the Crusaders—namely, the Mongols. Born in 1160, Ibn al-Athir wrote a history of the world up to 1232, the year before his death. In *The Perfect History*, al-Athir calls the Mongols the Tatars, but they have also been referred to as Tartars. These Mongols came out of Central Asia and were initially led by Genghis Khan. They captured large sections of Asia Minor, Iraq, and Syria and were an enormous threat to Islam in the thirteenth century. Al-Athir gives a feeling for their fierce way of waging war in this excerpt.



Medieval manuscript illumination of two Mongol horsemen. The Mongols were an enormous threat to Islam during the thirteenth century. © Stapleton Collection/Corbis. Reproduced by permission.

### Things to Remember While Reading the Excerpt from “The Muslim Perspective”:

- The fierce invading Mongols were also known as Tatars or Tartars. Some believe that the name comes from *Ta-Tan*, a term of disrespect the Chinese may have given to the Mongols who conquered them. In the modern world the term is used for all the Turkish-speaking people of Europe and Asia.

- The Mongols originally lived in the Gobi Desert of China, north of the Himalayas.
- The Mongols were greatly feared because they showed no mercy to those who resisted them. Although the historian Ibn al-Athir writes about Mongol advances in Persia, the worse was yet to come for Islam. Under Hulagu Khan the Mongols took Baghdad in 1258. Some historians say that they massacred as many as eight hundred thousand of the city's inhabitants, including the caliph, or religious leader, and also destroyed large sections of the city. The sack of Baghdad almost put an end to Arab civilization.



### Excerpt from "On the Tatars"

*For some years I continued averse from mentioning this event, **deeming** it so horrible that I shrank from recording it and ever withdrawing one foot as I advanced the other. To whom, indeed, can it be easy to write the announcement of the death-blow of Islam and the Muslims, or who is he on whom the remembrance thereof can weigh lightly? O would that my mother had not born me or that I had died and become a forgotten thing ere this **befell!** Yet, **withal** a number of my friends urged me to set it down in writing, and I hesitated long, but at last came to the conclusion that to omit this matter could serve no useful purpose.*

*I say, therefore, that this thing involves the description of the greatest catastrophe and the most **dire calamity** (of the like of which days and nights are innocent) which befell all men generally, and the Muslims in particular; so that, should one say that the world, since God Almighty created Adam until now, has not been **afflicted** with the like thereof, he would but speak the truth. For indeed history does not contain anything which approaches or comes near unto it. For of the most grievous calamities recorded was what **Nebuchadnezzar** inflicted on the children of Israel by his slaughter of them and his destruction of Jerusalem; and what was Jerusalem in comparison to the countries which these **accursed miscreants** destroyed, each city of which was double the size of Jerusalem? Or*

**Deeming:** Regarding.

**Befell:** Happened to.

**Withal:** Nevertheless.

**Dire:** Very serious.

**Calamity:** Tragedy.

**Afflicted:** Caused pain.

**Nebuchadnezzar:** Ancient king of Babylonia.

**Accursed:** Being under a curse.

**Miscreants:** People who behave viciously.

what were the children of Israel compared to those whom these **slew**? For **verily** those whom they massacred in a single city exceeded all the children of Israel. **Nay**, it is unlikely that mankind will see the like of this calamity, until the world comes to an end and perishes, except the final outbreak of **Gog and Magog**.

For even **Antichrist** will spare such as follow him, though he destroy those who oppose him, but these **Tatars** spared none, slaying women and men and children, ripping open pregnant women and killing unborn babes. Verily to God do we belong, and unto Him do we return, and there is no strength and no power save in God, the High, the Almighty, in face of this catastrophe, whereof the sparks flew far and wide, and the hurt was universal; and which passed over the lands like clouds driven by the wind. For these were a people who emerged from the confines of China, and attacked the cities of Turkestan, like Kashghar and Balasaghun, and **thence** advanced on the cities of Transoxiana, such as Samarqand, Bukhara and the like, taking possession of them, and treating their inhabitants in such **wise** as we shall mention; and of them one division then passed on into Khurasan, until they had made an end of taking possession, and destroying, and slaying, and plundering, and thence passing on to Ray, Hamadan and the Highlands, and the cities contained therein, even to the limits of Iraq, whence they marched on the towns of Adharbayjan and Arraniyya, destroying them and slaying most of their inhabitants, of whom none escaped save a small **remnant**; and all this in less than a year; this is a thing whereof the like has not been heard....

These Tatars conquered most of the **habitable** globe, and the best, the most **flourishing** and most populous part thereof, and that whereof the inhabitants were the most advanced in character and conduct, in about a year; nor did any country escape their devastations which did not fearfully expect them and dread their arrival.

Moreover they need no **commissariat**, nor the **conveyance** of supplies, for they have with them sheep, cows, horses, and the like **quadrupeds**, the flesh of which they eat, **naught** else. As for their beasts which they ride, these dig into the earth with their hoofs and eat the roots of plants, knowing naught of barley. And so, when they **alight** anywhere, they have need of nothing from without. As for their religion, they worship the sun when it rises, and regard nothing as unlawful, for they eat all beasts, even dogs, pigs, and the like; nor do they recognise the marriage-tie, for several men are in marital relations with one woman, and if a child is born, it knows not who is its father.

**Slew:** Killed.

**Verily:** Certainly.

**Nay:** No.

**Gog and Magog:** Two nations in the Bible that are led by Satan and that fight the Kingdom of God in a final battle.

**Antichrist:** The devil, Satan.

**Tatars:** Tartars, or Mongols.

**Thence:** From there, as a result.

**Wise:** Way or manner.

**Remnant:** Those left over or remaining.

**Habitable:** Able to be lived in.

**Flourishing:** Wealthy and productive.

**Commissariat:** A military department to supply food.

**Conveyance:** Transport.

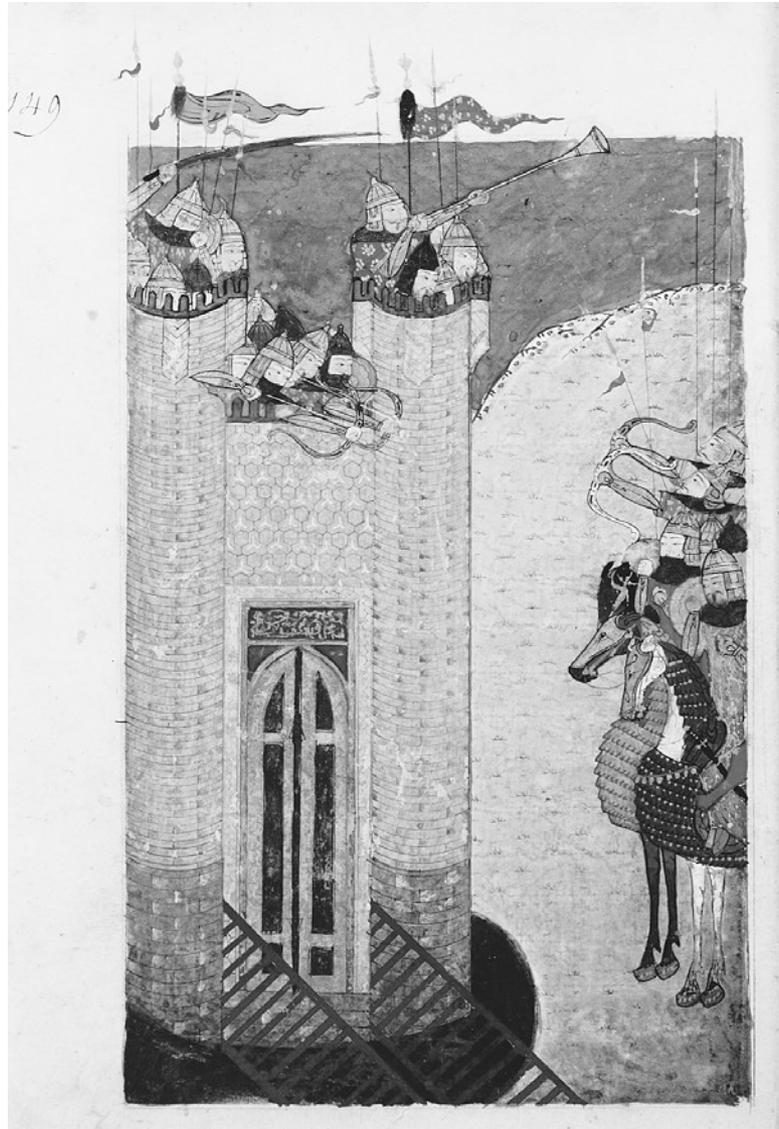
**Quadrupeds:** Four-legged animals.

**Naught:** Nothing.

**Alight:** Arrive.

**Illustration of the Mongols invading Arab lands. When the Mongols sacked Baghdad it almost led to the end of Arab civilization.**

*Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, France/Bridgeman Art Library. Reproduced by permission.*



*Therefore Islam and the Muslims have been afflicted during this period with calamities wherewith no people hath been visited. These Tatars (may God confound them!) came from the East, and **wrought** deeds which horrify all who hear of them, and which you shall, please God, see set forth in full detail in their proper connection. And of these was the invasion of Syria by the Franks (may God curse them!) out of the West, and their attack on Egypt, and occupation of the port of Damietta therein, so that Egypt and Syria were*

**Wrought:** Committed.

like to be conquered by them, but for the grace of God and the help which He **vouchsafed** us against them, as we have mentioned under the year 614 [A.D. 1217–18]. Of these, moreover, was that the sword was drawn between those who escaped from these two foes, and **strife** was rampant, as we have also mentioned: and verily unto God do we belong and unto Him do we return! We ask God to vouchsafe victory to Islam and the Muslims, for there is none other to aid, help, or defend the True Faith....

Stories have been related to me, which the hearer can scarcely credit, as to the terror of the Tatars, which God Almighty cast into men's hearts; so that it is said that a single one of them would enter a village or a quarter wherein were many people, and would continue to slay them one after another, none daring to stretch forth his hand against this horseman. And I have heard that one of them took a man captive, but had not with him any weapon wherewith to kill him; and he said to his prisoner, "Lay your head on the ground and do not move," and he did so, and the Tatar went and fetched his sword and slew him therewith. Another man related to me as follows: "I was going," said he, "with seventeen others along a road, and there met us a Tatar horseman, and **bade** us bind one another's arms. My companions began to do as he bade them, but I said to them, 'He is but one man; wherefore, then, should we not kill him and flee?' They replied, 'We are afraid.' I said, 'This man intends to kill you immediately; let us therefore rather kill him, that perhaps God may deliver us.' But I swear by God that not one of them dared to do this, so I took a knife and slew him, and we fled and escaped." And such occurrences were many.



## What happened next...

The dual threats to Islam, Crusaders and Mongols, were eliminated by the Mamluks of Egypt, a slave dynasty. The sultan, or ruler, of Egypt had a long tradition of using such slave warriors. But in the middle of the thirteenth century these elite soldiers actually took over Egypt, led by their new sultan, Baybars. This amazing soldier and statesman fought and defeated the Mongols at the Battle of Ayn Jalut in Palestine in 1260 and then turned his attention to the Cru-

**Vouchsafed:** Gave, provided.

**Strife:** Conflict.

**Bade:** Ordered.

saders. By the time of Baybars's death in 1277, he had restricted the Crusaders to a few remaining strongholds. His successors, the sultans next in line, finished off the job he had started, defeating the Crusaders at Acre in 1291 and pushing them out of the Middle East totally. There is a certain irony that Islam, one of the most cultured civilizations of its day, was saved by these former slaves, mostly uneducated and only recent converts to the religion.

### **Did you know...**

- Though the Crusaders liked to think of themselves as more civilized than their Muslim enemies, this was not actually the case. In general, the educational level of residents of the medieval Middle East was higher than that of people in Europe. The founder of Islam, Muhammad, said that "the ink of scholars is more precious than the blood of martyrs." He ordered that public education be made available to believers in Islam. Also, the rise of mass-produced paper helped create private and public libraries, and the use of so-called Arabic numerals (originally from India) made mathematics easier than with the Roman numerals.
- Islam preserved the knowledge of the past. Medieval Muslim scholars such as Avicenna, Avempace, and Averroës translated and commented on the works of the great Greek philosophers, thus saving that intellectual tradition for the world.
- Works such as Ibn al-Athir's history are very hard to translate into English from their original Arabic language and not only because of the different alphabet. In Arabic there is no system of capitalization, and therefore it is often difficult to tell the difference between a common noun and someone's proper name. Another difficulty for the translator is that twenty-two of twenty-eight of the characters of the Arabic alphabet are recognized by the presence or absence of dots above or below the characters. More possible confusion is caused by the fact that there are no ending quotation marks in Arabic to show when a direct quote stops.

- The Muslims usually referred to the Crusaders as Franks. Sometimes in other sources this is written “Franj.” This name was used because at the time of the First Crusade (1095–99), most of these Christian soldiers came from French-speaking lands. Although, later, Englishmen, German, and Italians made up larger groups among the Crusaders, the Muslims continued to call them all Franks.
- Taking advantage of disunity among their enemies, the Mongols created an empire that stretched from Korea and the Pacific all the way over to Georgia, Armenia, and Hungary in the west. Only two hundred thousand people strong, the Mongols were able to defeat much larger countries, such as China, with a population at the time of one hundred million. Theirs was the largest empire in world history, ruling an area of almost fourteen million square miles.
- In addition to the Mongols, the other large group of the thirteenth century in the Middle East was the Mamluk empire. Mamluk comes from the Arabic word “to own,” and reminds us of the Mamluk’s slave history.
- After defeating both Mongols and Crusaders, the Mamluks created an empire in the Middle East consisting of Egypt, Palestine, Syria, and parts of present-day Iraq and Asia Minor. Their slave dynasty outlasted many of the more “legitimate” dynasties of the region, remaining in direct power from about 1250 to 1517, when the Ottoman Turks defeated them. However, the Mamluks



## Enemies Everywhere

The Islamic world faced numerous enemies in the thirteenth century. As we have seen, the Crusaders presented one threat, for they maintained their Crusader states along the eastern Mediterranean and also had occasional reinforcements from Europe. Small battles and full-blown Crusade wars continued to disrupt the Middle East throughout the thirteenth century. The Mongols provided another real threat, as Ibn al-Athir explained. However, there was also a third danger from the north during the early decades of the thirteenth century.

With the breakup of the Seljuk Turk empire, another Turkish tribe, the Khwarismian Turks, gained their independence and began pushing southward. A leader of these Turks, Muhammad Shah, though a convert to Islam, was no friend to the old and settled Muslim rulers. In 1217 he pushed his mounted army to Baghdad and chased out the caliph, or religious and political leader, Nasir. These Turks were great warriors and were then at the height of their power, but they made a mistake when they expanded eastward toward Russia and killed a couple of representatives from the Mongols and Genghis Khan. In 1221 Genghis Khan conquered these Khwarismian Turks and forced them afterward to fight in his huge Mongol army, the Golden Horde.

continued to rule in Egypt under the Turks until the arrival of the French and Napoleon Bonaparte in 1798.

### Consider the following...

- Islam was threatened by two enemies in the thirteenth century. Discuss who these enemies were and which you think was the greater threat and why.
- What do you think might have happened if the Mongols had not been stopped in the Middle East? How might the world be different now?
- Discuss how an educated Muslim at the time of the Crusades might describe the invading Crusaders. How did the Crusaders see the Muslims?

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# A Matter of Faith

4

**H**istorians have given many interpretations and causes for the two centuries of war between Christianity and the Islamic world that we know as the Crusades. There were, of course, political concerns, with the Catholic pope wanting to gain power in the Eastern Empire, also known as the Byzantine Empire, the rival Christian empire of the time. Princes, kings, and emperors also had a desire to increase the size of their holdings and perhaps even create new empires in the Middle East. Economic reasons were also important, as many people and cities made a good living off the Crusades, transporting the soldiers and setting up new areas for trade. But most important, the Crusades were about religion and about which religion should control the holy sites in the city of Jerusalem, sacred to Islam and Christianity (as well as Judaism). It was this competition between religions, the debate over whose god was best, that continued to drive the Crusaders and Muslim fighters alike.

The most recent of the great religions, Islam came into existence in the late sixth and early seventh centuries. Christianity thus had about six hundred years head start, and

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Judaism, the third great religion of the Middle East and Europe, was older than both, stemming from perhaps two thousand years before the birth of Jesus Christ. But Islam spread quickly. Its founder, Muhammad, believed that he was visited by the angel Gabriel when he was about forty years old and that the angel told him to become a messenger of the word of Allah, or God. All those who followed or submitted to the word of Allah were known as Muslims; the name of the religion, Islam, means “to submit.” In certain ways Islam is similar to Christianity, especially in that the faithful are always looking for new members or converts from other religions.

Christianity’s holy book is known as the Bible; Muslims have the Qur’an, or Koran, a book that pays special attention to leading a moral and proper life. Islamic law covers practical matters, from what one should eat to how one should deal with the poor and with other Muslims. Written in Arabic, the Koran played a large part in making that language a gathering point for the Islamic world, for the Koran was not intended to be translated. Instead, the faithful were meant to read it in its original language and also to pray in Arabic. As Islam spread in its first four centuries, the central position of the Koran and of Arabic made the religion not only a spiritual movement but also a cultural, or Arab, one. By the time of the Crusades the Islamic world had already reached and just passed the high point of its civilization and empire, controlling lands from India to Asia Minor, from Iraq to Arabia, and from Egypt and North Africa to Spain and southern Italy.

Christianity was also on the rise at the time of the Crusades. In Europe, there was a competition between the leader of the church, the pope, and the kings and emperors who were establishing their kingdoms. The pope and the kings of France and England, as well as the German emperor, were rivals for power in medieval Europe. The church controlled much of the cultural life of the time and also sought to establish itself as the messenger of God on Earth. As far as the popes were concerned, all power, spiritual and temporal (political), came from them.

The teachings of the Bible and the first books of the New Testament, or the Gospels, had a strong influence on both nobles and common people during the Middle Ages.

The miracles of the church were widely accepted and kept the faithful together and believing. However, even in the Middle Ages there were those who searched for their own private forms of religion. Such skeptics and part-believers were found, as we shall see, in both the Christian and Muslim worlds.

The power of religion was used to bring the faithful of both Christianity and Islam to battle. Both sides saw their warriors as soldiers of God, and both spoke of fighting battles for their religion. In the West this was known as a holy war, or Crusade, while in the Muslim world it was called *jihad*, also meaning holy war. The Crusades were an expensive adventure, and to finance it the church often taxed the faithful. Early states of Europe were not organized to allow such taxation of the common people, but the church, with its local priests, was. Also, faith could be used to create elite groups of fighters. From the time of the First Crusade (1095–99), Crusaders were promised to have their sins forgiven in return for their service. This use of faith in wartime was extended even further with the creation of religious military orders, such as the Knights Templars and Knights Hospitallers in the early twelfth century. Faith and religion have continued to play prominent parts in conflicts throughout human history. Most of the time, all participants in a war think that they have God on their side.



## Statements of Faith

*Excerpt from The Koran (c. seventh century)*

**Translated by N. J. Dawood; Published in 1990**

*Excerpt from "The Holy Light; How It Descends upon the Holy Sepulchre," in The Pilgrimage of the Russian Abbot Daniel in the Holy Land (1106–1107)*

**Originally written by Abbot Daniel; Published in 1888**

*Excerpt from "The Prior Who Became a Moslem," in Book of a Thousand Nights and a Night (c. 1000–1400)*

**Reprinted in *The Arabian Nights*;**

**Translated by Sir Richard Francis Burton; Published in 1997**

*"Profession of Faith" (1120)*

**Originally written by Omar Khayyam; Reprinted in *The Sacred Books and Early Literature of the East*; Edited by Charles F. Horne; Published in 1917**

The four excerpts of this section examine different statements about the power of faith and belief. The first is from the Koran, or Islamic holy book, also known as the Qur'an. The teachings and prayers in the Koran were supposedly spoken to Muhammad by God, and it is the source of the major principles of Islam. The Koran was intended to be recited, or spoken aloud, and was written down only in the seventh century, several decades after the death of Muhammad. The excerpt included here celebrates an early victory of the followers of Muhammad, perhaps the taking of Mecca in 630. Muhammad was born there in about 570 and worked as a trader until he had a vision that he was meant to be the messenger of God in a new religion. Muhammad was forced to leave Mecca in 622 for the city of Medina. The Muslim calendar begins from this date, the time of the *hijra* or "flight." Muhammad quickly gained support in Medina, and by 630 Mecca surrendered to him.

The second excerpt describes a miraculous event that takes place every Easter at the tomb, or burial place, of Jesus Christ in Jerusalem. This event is known as the Holy Light, or



**An illustration from *Arabian Nights*.** Private Collection/  
Roger Perrin/Bridgeman Art  
Library. Reproduced by permis-  
sion.

Holy Fire, that supposedly illuminates, or lights up, Christ's tomb. Pilgrims, or religious visitors, come in huge numbers to witness this event. This was true even at the time when the Russian holy man Abbot Daniel paid his visit to Jerusalem in 1106 and 1107. In fact, this miracle of a dancing light that appears the Saturday before Easter was first recorded in the fourth century. During the ceremony the candles that the faithful carry to the church are lit spontaneously by this mysterious light, with no one putting a match to them. Such miracles were more usual in the medieval church and were a powerful influence on the faithful.

The power of miracles in prompting a change of religion is seen in the third excerpt, "The Prior Who Became a Moslem" a tale from the *Book of a Thousand Nights and a Night*. This anonymous gathering of stories from all over the Middle East and even

India is also known as *The Thousand and One Nights* or *The Arabian Nights*. It has not been determined exactly when or where these tales began, but it is thought they were collected starting in about the middle of the tenth century. New tales continued to be added after that date, and events and names from many centuries and many states of the Middle East can be found in them. Perhaps the best-known tales in the West are ones such as "Ali Baba," "Sinbad," and "Aladdin," but these are only the tip of a very deep and rich iceberg of literature. Some collections have all one thousand and one tales, others fewer. The first European editions of this collection did not appear until 1704.

In the last excerpt of this section, another sort of faith is on display. Omar Khayyam, an eleventh- and twelfth-century Persian mathematician and poet, is best known for his collection of verses called the *Rubaiyat*. In his poem, "Profession of Faith," he maps out his own version of what he believed in, somewhere between Islam and Christianity. For

Khayyam, enjoying this world of earthly pleasures seems more important than a promised heaven after death. Such a philosophy was not, however, very common in the Middle Ages, a time when religion drove the major events.

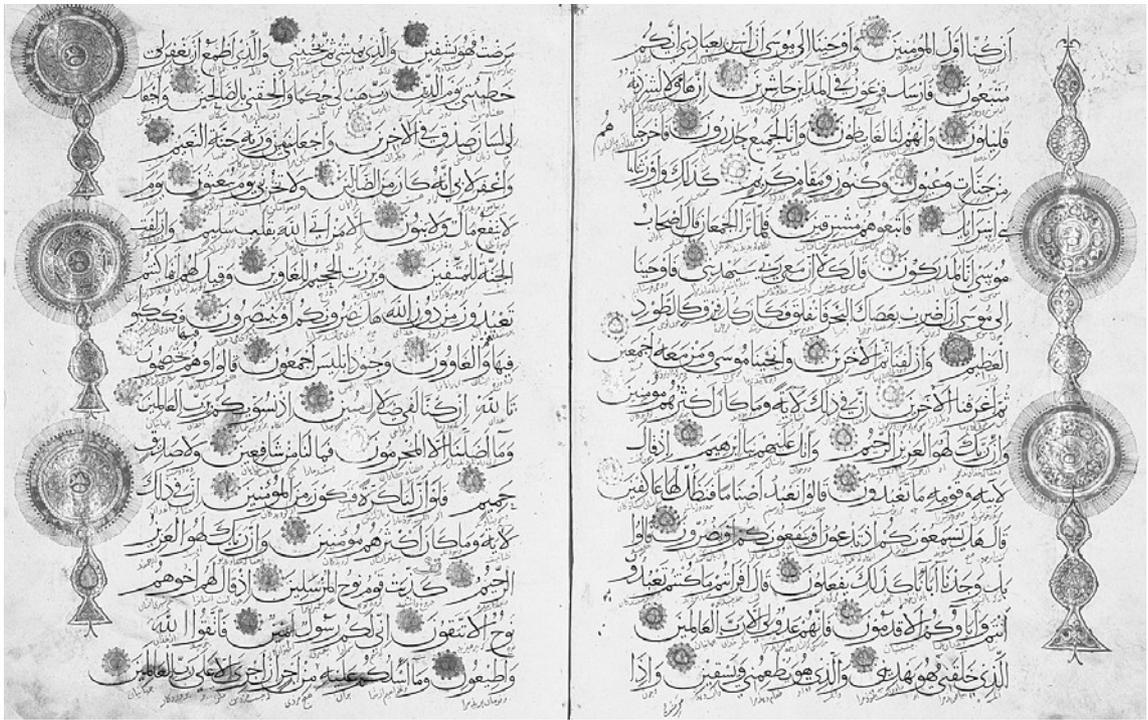
### **Things to remember while reading excerpts from “Statements of Faith”:**

- Unlike the Bible, the Koran refers to religious and historical events but seldom provides narrative accounts. Instead, it focuses on the importance of such events.
- The Koran is divided into 114 *suras*, or chapters. These are not organized by time but by length, beginning with the longest and working toward the shortest prayers.
- Christians, Jews, and Muslims all lived together peacefully, if not always happily, in the Middle East before the time of the Crusades. As can be seen in “The Prior Who Became a Moslem,” Christians and Muslims came into daily contact with one another.
- Omar Khayyam’s *Rubaiyat* consists of about 104-line poems on the themes of love and the enjoyment of pleasures from food to drink.
- Omar Khayyam was much better known in his own day as a mathematician and also an astronomer than he was as a poet. His fame in the West comes as the result of a nineteenth-century translation of his works into English.



### ***Excerpt from The Koran***





Pages of the Koran marking the points for prostration, or prayer. Museum of the Holy Masumeh Shrine, Qom, Iran/Bridgeman Art Library. Reproduced by permission.

### Excerpt from “The Holy Light”

The following is a description of the Holy Light, which descends upon the Holy Sepulchre, as the Lord **vouchsafed** to show it to me, his wicked and unworthy servant.... Many pilgrims relate incorrectly the details about the descent of that Holy Light. Some say that the **Holy Ghost** descends upon the Holy Sepulchre in the form of a dove;

**Vouchsafed:** Granted, allowed.

**Holy Ghost:** Also known as the Holy Spirit.

**Kindles:** Lights, sets ablaze.

**Divine:** Godly.

**Holy Friday:** The Friday before Easter Sunday, also called Good Friday.

**Vespers:** Evening prayer.

**Wicks:** The strips of material that burn in a candle or oil lamp.

**Affix:** Fasten, attach.

**Extinguish:** Put out.

**Dost Thou:** Do you.

**Abbot:** The head of a religious abbey or institution for monks.

**Retainers:** Servants.

**Penitence:** Regret for a sin.

**Pious:** Very religious.

**Cell:** Simple lodging for a monk.

**Morrow:** Next day.

**Turmoil:** Disturbance, confusion.

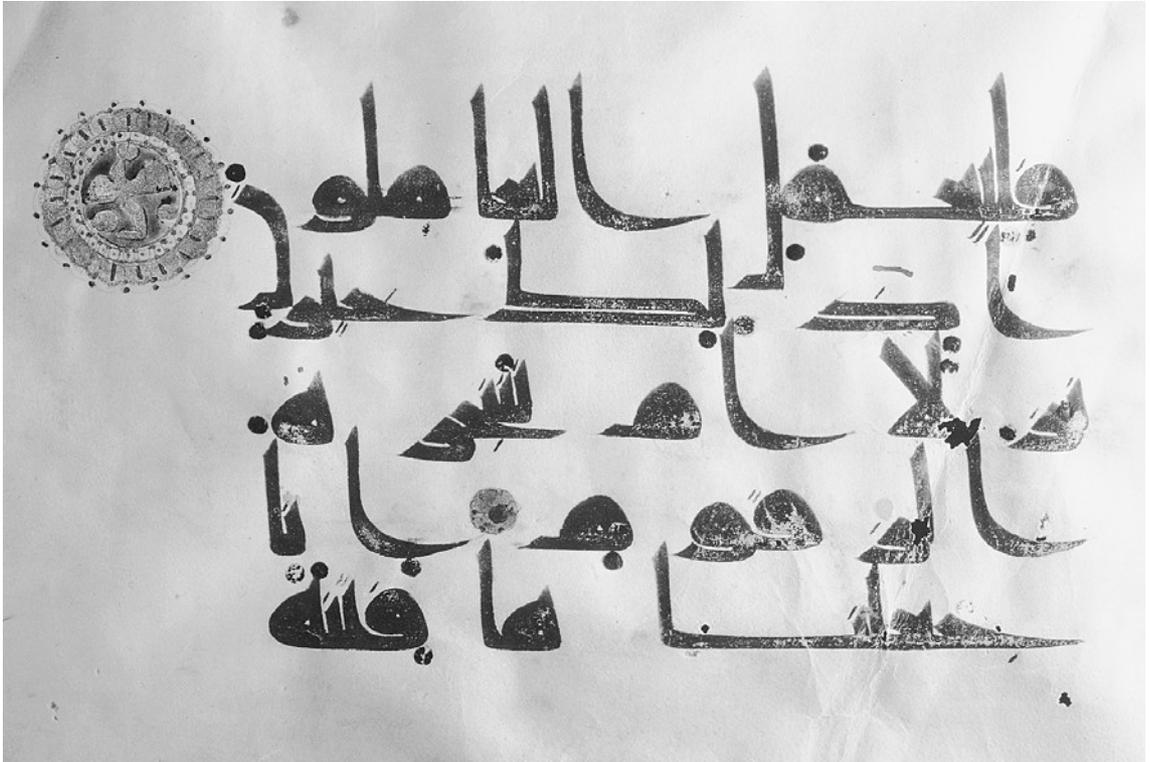
**Suffocated:** Choked from a lack of air.

**Tapers:** Candles.

**Suite:** Attendants or followers.

others that it is lightning from heaven which **kindles** the lamps above the Sepulchre of the Lord. This is all untrue, for neither dove nor lightning is to be seen at that moment; but the **Divine** grace comes down unseen from heaven, and lights the lamps of the Sepulchre of our Lord.... On **Holy Friday**, after **Vespers**, they clean the Holy Sepulchre and wash all the lamps that are there; they fill the lamps with pure oil without water and after having put in the **wicks**, leave them unlighted; they **affix** the seals to the Tomb at the second hour of the night. At the same time they **extinguish** all the lamps and wax candles in every church in Jerusalem. Upon that same Friday, at the first hour of the day, I, the unworthy, entered the presence of Prince Baldwin, and bowed myself to the ground before him. Seeing me, as I bowed, he bade me, in a friendly manner, come to him, and said, "What **dost thou** want, Russian **abbot**?" for he knew me and liked me, being a man of great kindness and humility.... I said to him, "My prince and my lord! For the love of God, and out of regard for the Russian princes, allow me to place my lamp on the Holy Sepulchre in the name of the whole Russian country." Then with peculiar kindness and attention he gave me permission to place my lamp on the Sepulchre of the Lord, and sent one of his chief **retainers** with me to the custodian of the Resurrection, and to the keeper of the keys of the Holy Sepulchre.... Opening the sacred portal for me, he ordered me to take off my shoes; and then, having admitted me barefooted to the Holy Sepulchre, with the lamp that I bore, he directed me to place it on the Tomb of the Lord. I placed it, with my sinful hands, on the spot occupied by the sacred feet of our Lord Jesus Christ.... After having placed my lamp on the Holy Sepulchre, and after having adored and kissed, with **penitence** and **pious** tears, the sacred place upon which the body of our Lord Jesus Christ lay; I left the Holy Tomb filled with joy, and retired to my **cell**.

On the **morrow**, Holy Saturday, at the sixth hour of the day, everyone assembles in front of the Church of the Holy Resurrection; foreigners and natives people from all countries, from Babylon, from Egypt, and from every part of the world, come together on that day in countless numbers; the crowd fills the open space round the church and round the place of the Crucifixion. The crush is terrible, and the **turmoil** so great that many persons are **suffocated** in the dense crowd of people who stand, unlighted **tapers** in hand, waiting for the opening of the church doors. The priests alone are inside the church, and priests and crowd alike wait for the arrival of the Prince and his **suite**; then, the doors being opened, the people rush in, pushing and jostling each other, and fill the church and the galleries,



for the church alone could not contain such a multitude. A large portion of the crowd has to remain outside round **Golgotha** and the place of the skull, and as far as the spot where the crosses were set up; every place is filled with an innumerable multitude.... The faithful shed **torrents** of tears; even he who has a heart of stone cannot refrain from **weeping**; each one, searching the innermost depths of his soul, thinks of his sins, and says secretly to himself, "Will my sins prevent the descent of the Holy Light?" ... At the end of the ninth hour, ... a small cloud, coming suddenly from the east, rested above the open dome of the church; fine rain fell on the Holy Sepulchre, and wet us and all those who were above the Tomb. It was at this moment that the Holy Light suddenly illuminated the Holy Sepulchre, shining with an awe-aspiring and splendid brightness....

This Holy Light is like no ordinary flame, for it burns in a marvellous way with indescribable brightness, and a **ruddy** colour like that of **cinnabar**. All the people remain standing with lighted tapers, and repeat in a loud voice with intense joy and eagerness: "Lord, have mercy upon us!" ...

**A leaf from a Koran written in Kufic script during the Abbasid dynasty.** © Werner Forman/Art Resource, NY. Reproduced by permission.

**Golgotha:** The place where Christ was crucified.

**Torrents:** Fast-moving streams of water.

**Weeping:** Crying.

**Ruddy:** Reddish.

**Cinnabar:** A bright red mineral.



**The Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem is believed to be built on the site of Jesus Christ's tomb.**

© Carmen Redondo/Corbis. Reproduced by permission.

**Kyrie Eleison:** Greek for "Lord have mercy," a prayer said at a Catholic mass or religious service.

**Prior:** Church official or elder.

**Monkery:** Another word for monastery.

**Diligence:** Care.

**Adoration:** Worshiping.

*Directly the light shone in the Holy Sepulchre the chant ceased, and all, crying out "Kyrie Eleison," moved towards the church with great joy, bearing the lighted tapers in their hands, and protecting them from the wind. Everyone then goes home.... Carrying the lighted tapers, we returned to our monastery with the abbot and the monks; we finished the Vespers there and then retired to our cells.*

### **Excerpt from "The Prior Who Became a Moslem"**

*Said Abu Bakr Mohammed ibn Al-Anbari: "I once left Anbar on a journey to 'Amuriyah, where there came out to me the **prior** of the monastery and superior of the **monkery**, called Abd al-Masih, and brought me into the building. There I found forty religious, who entertained me that night with fair guest rite, [ceremony] and I left them after seeing among them such **diligence in adoration** and devotion as I never beheld the like of in any others...."*



A Christian worshipper lights candles at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem. It is at this site that Abbot Daniel supposedly witnessed the Holy Light. © Reuters/Corbis. Reproduced by permission.

**Circumambulating:** Walking around.

**Compassing:** Going around.

**Ka'abah:** The central stone structure of the Great Mosque or church in Mecca.

**Shavelings:** Persons with a shaved head for religious purposes.

**Accosted:** Greeted.

**Therewith:** After that.

**Verily:** Truly.

**Befell:** Happened.

**Moslem:** Muslim.

**Devotees:** Believers.

**Damsel:** Young woman.

**Fairest:** Prettiest.

**Revived:** Recovered.

**Chided:** Scolded.

**Exhorted:** Encouraged.

**Heed:** Attention.

**Abode:** Stayed; remained.

**Acquainted:** Told, made familiar with.

**Slay:** Kill.

**Prostrate:** Stretched out with the face down.

*And next year I made pilgrimage to Meccah and as I was **circumambulating** the Holy House I saw Abd al-Masih the monk also **compassing** the **Ka'abah**, and with him five of his fellows, the **shavelings**. Now when I was sure that it was indeed he, I **accosted** him, saying, 'Are you not Abd al-Masih, the Religious?' and he replied, 'Nay, I am Abdallah, the Desirous.'*

***Therewith** I fell to kissing his grey hairs and shedding tears; then, taking him by the hand, I led him aside into a corner of the Temple and said to him, 'Tell me the cause of your conversion to al-Islam;' and he made reply, '**Verily**, it was a wonder of wonders, and **befell** thus:*

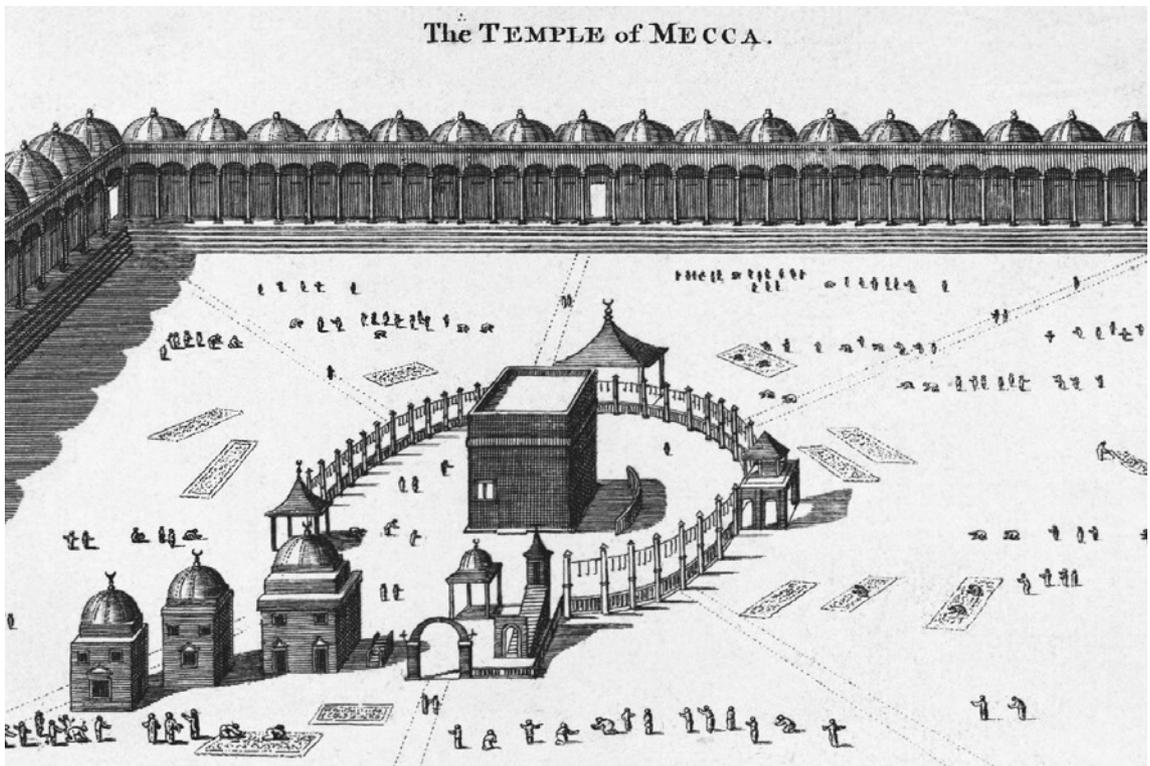
*A company of **Moslem devotees** came to the village wherein is our convent, and sent a youth to buy them food. He saw, in the market, a Christian **damsel** selling bread, who was of the **fairest** of women; and he was struck at first sight with such love of her, that his senses failed him and he fell on his face in a fainting fit. When he **revived**, he returned to his companions and told them what had befallen him, saying, 'Go you about your business; I may not go with you.'*

*They **chided** him and **exhorted** him, but he paid no **heed** to them; so they left him while he entered the village and seated himself at the door of the woman's booth. She asked him what he wanted, and he told her that he was in love with her, whereupon she turned from him; but he **abode** in his place three days without tasting food, keeping his eyes fixed on her face. Now when as she saw that he departed not from her, she went to her people and **acquainted** them with his case, and they set on him the village boys, who stoned him and bruised his ribs and broke his head; but, for all this, he would not budge.*

*Then the villagers took counsel together to **slay** him; but a man of them came to me and told me of his case, and I went out to him and found him lying **prostrate** on the ground. So I wiped the blood from his face and carried him to the convent, and dressed his wounds; and there he abode with me fourteen days. But as soon as he could walk, he left the monastery and returned to the door of the woman's booth, where he sat gazing on her as before.*

*When she saw him she came out to him and said, 'By Allah you move me to pity! Will you enter my faith that I may marry you?'*

*He cried, 'Allah forbid that I should put off the faith of Unity and enter that of Plurality!'*



Said she, 'Come in with me to my house and take your will of me and go your way in peace.'

Said he, 'Not so, I will not waste the worship of twelve years for the **lust** of an eye-twinkle.'

Said she, 'Then depart from me **forthwith**;' and he said, 'My heart will not suffer me to do that'; whereupon she turned her **countenance** from him.

Presently the boys found him out and began to **pelt** him with stones; and he fell on his face, saying, 'Verily, Allah is my protector, who sent down the Book of the **Koran**; and He protects the Righteous!'

At this I **sallied forth** and driving away the boys, lifted his head from the ground and heard him say, 'Allah mine, unite me with her in Paradise!'

Then I carried him to the monastery, but he died, before I could reach it, and I bore him **without** the village and I dug for him a grave and buried him.

An engraving of the Great Mosque in the city of Mecca that is described in "The Prior Who Became a Moslem." © Hulton-Deutsch Collection/Corbis. Reproduced by permission.

**Lust:** Passion.

**Forthwith:** Immediately.

**Countenance:** Face, features.

**Pelt:** Hit.

**Koran:** Muslim holy book.

**Sallied Forth:** Set out or moved quickly.

**Without:** Outside.



Sir Richard Burton who translated *The Arabian Nights*, which includes “The Prior Who Became a Moslem.” Photograph courtesy of The Library of Congress.

**Pavilions:** Decorative summerhouses or structures open to the air.

**Fared Forth:** Traveled or went out.

**Savour:** Flavor.

**Haply:** By chance.

**Seduce:** Lead in the wrong direction.

**Abstained:** Refused to do something.

And next night when half of it was spent, the damsel cried with a great cry (and she in her bed); so the villagers flocked to her and questioned her of her case.

Said she, ‘As I slept, behold the Moslem man came in to me and taking me by the hand, carried me to the gate of Paradise; but the Guardian denied me entrance, saying, ‘It is forbidden to unbelievers.’

So I embraced Al Islam at his hands and, entering with him, beheld therein **pavilions** and trees, such as I cannot describe to you. Moreover, he brought me to a pavilion of jewels and said to me, ‘Of a truth this is my pavilion and yours, nor will I enter it except with you; after five nights you shall be with me therein, if it be the will of Allah Almighty.’

Then he put forth his hand to a tree which grew at the door of the pavilion and plucked there from two apples and gave

them to me, saying, ‘Eat this and keep the other, that the monks may see it.’

So I ate one of them and never tasted I any sweeter. Then he took my hand and **fared forth** and carried me back to my house; and, when I awoke, I found the taste of the apple in my mouth and the other in my hand.’

So saying she brought out the apple, and in the darkness of the night it shone as it were a sparkling star. So they carried her (and the apple with her) to the monastery, where she repeated her vision and showed it to us; never saw we its like among all the fruits of the world. Then I took a knife and cut the apple into pieces according as we were folk in company; and never knew we any more delicious than its **savour** nor more delightsome than its scent; but we said, ‘**Haply** this was a devil that appeared unto her to **seduce** her from her faith.’

Thereupon her people took her and went away; but she **abstained** from eating and drinking and on the fifth night she rose

from her bed, and going forth the village to the grave of her Moslem lover threw herself upon it and died, her family not knowing what was come of her. But, on the **morrow**, there came to the village two Moslem elders, **clad** in hair cloth, and with them two women in like garb, and said, 'O people of the village, with you is a woman Saint, a Waliyah of the friends of Allah, who died a **Moslemah**; and we will take charge of her **in lieu** of you.'

So the villagers sought her and found her dead on the Moslem's grave; and they said, 'This was one of us and she died in our faith; so we will take charge of her.'

**Rejoined** the two old men, '**Nay**, she died a Moslemah and we claim her.'

And the dispute grew to a quarrel between them, till one of the **Shaykhs** said, 'Be this the test of her faith: the forty monks of the monastery shall come and try to lift her from the grave. If they succeed, then she died a **Nazarene**; if not, one of us shall come and lift her up and if she be lifted by him, she died a Moslemah.'

The villagers agreed to this and fetched the forty monks, who heartened one another, and came to her to lift her, but could not. Then we tied a great rope round her middle and **haled** at it; but the rope broke **in sunder**, and she stirred not; and the villagers came and did the like, but could not move her from her place.

At last, when all means failed, we said to one of the two Shaykhs, 'Come and lift her.'

So he went up to the grave and, covering her with his **mantle**, said, 'In the name of Allah the Compassionating, the Compassionate, and of the Faith of the Apostle of Allah, on whom be prayers and peace!' Then he lifted her and, taking her in his **bosom**, **betook** himself with her to a cave hard by, where they laid her, and the two women came and washed her and **shrouded** her. Then the two elders bore her to her Moslem lover's grave and prayed over her and buried her by his side and went their ways.

Now we were eye witnesses of all this; and, when we were alone with one another, we said, '**In sooth**, the truth is most worthy to be followed;' and indeed the truth has been made **manifest** to us, nor is there a proof more **patent** of the truth of **al-Islam** than that we have seen this day with our eyes.'

So I and all the monks became Moslems and likewise did the villagers; and we sent to the people of **Mesopotamia** for a doctor of

**Morrow:** The next day.

**Clad:** Dressed.

**Moslemah:** Muslim woman.

**In Lieu:** Instead.

**Rejoined:** Replied.

**Nay:** No.

**Shaykhs:** Arab or Muslim leaders, also spelled sheikh.

**Nazarene:** A Christian.

**Haled:** Pulled.

**In Sunder:** In pieces.

**Mantle:** Coat or cloak.

**Bosom:** Chest.

**Betook:** Went to.

**Shrouded:** Wrapped for burial.

**In Sooth:** Truly.

**Manifest:** Clear, evident.

**Patent:** Recognizable, obvious.

**Al-Islam:** The Islamic faith.

**Mesopotamia:** Modern-day Iraq.

**Ordinances:** Laws.

**Canons:** Major principles or laws of a religion.

**Tenets:** Central beliefs.

**Abounding:** Having in large numbers.

**Pious:** Devoutly religious.

**Gild:** To apply a thin gold covering.

**Ne'er:** Never.

**Astray:** On the wrong path or direction.

**Perish:** Die.

**Vain:** Being concerned with appearances.

**Base:** Without principles or morals.

**Koran:** Islamic holy book.

**Scroll:** A roll of paper with printing on it.

**Condemns:** Finds guilty or unfit.

**Creed:** Belief.

**Giaour:** A non-Muslim, especially a Christian.

**Turban:** A Muslim headdress.

**Bower:** A comfortable, shady place under a tree.

**Rosary:** In the Catholic faith, a string of beads for counting prayers.

**Twine:** Interlace, twist.

*the law, to instruct us in the **ordinances** of al-Islam and the **canons** of the Faith. They sent us a learned man and a pious, who taught us the rites of prayer and the **tenets** of the faith; and we are now in ease **abounding**; so to Allah be the praise and the thanks!"*

### **Excerpt: "Profession of Faith"**

*Ye, who seek for **pious** fame,*

*And that light should **gild** your name,*

*Be this duty **ne'er** forgot—*

*Love your neighbor—harm him not.*

*To Thee, Great Spirit, I appeal,*

*Who can't the gates of truth unseal;*

*I follow none, nor ask the way*

*Of men who go, like me, **astray**;*

*They **perish**, but Thou can't not die,*

*But liv'st to all eternity.*

*Such is **vain** man's uncertain state,*

*A little makes him **base** or great;*

*One hand shall hold the **Koran's scroll**,*

*The other raise the sparkling bowl—*

*One saves, and one **condemns** the soul.*

*The temple I frequent is high,*

*A turkish-vaulted dome—the sky,*

*That spans the world with majesty.*

*Not quite a Muslim is my **creed**,*

*Nor quite a **Giaour**; my faith indeed*

*May startle some who hear me say,*

*I'd give my pilgrim staff away,*

*And sell my **turban**, for an hour*

*Of music in a fair one's **bower**.*

*I'd sell the **rosary** for wine,*

*Though holy names around it **twine**.*

*And prayers the pious make so long  
Are turned by me to joyous song;  
Or, if a prayer I should repeat,  
It is at my beloved's feet.  
They blame me that my words are clear;  
Because I am not what I appear;  
Nor do my acts my words **belie**—  
At least, I **shun** hypocrisy.  
It happened that but yesterday  
I marked a **potter** beating clay.  
The earth spoke out— "Why **dost thou** strike?  
Both thou and I are born alike;  
Though some may sink and some may **soar**,  
We all are earth, and nothing more."*



## What happened next...

While the view of writers such as Omar Khayyam about religion and private faith was in the minority in the Middle Ages, such a perspective became more and more common after the age of the Crusades. The power of reason over faith, of objective thought over blind belief, increased through the centuries of the Renaissance and Enlightenment, from the fourteenth to the eighteenth centuries. A belief in science also competed against a belief in religions until, by the nineteenth century, the German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche could declare, "God is dead." However, science and industrial progress came into question in the twentieth century, a time that suffered from the threat of global destruction from atomic and hydrogen bombs and from pollution, all the by-products of science and rationalism. In the twenty-first century, religion is once again on the rise in many countries, with nineteen major religions and two hundred and

**Belie:** Show to be false.

**Shun:** Ignore, reject.

**Potter:** A person who makes clay pots.

**Dost Thou:** Do you.

**Soar:** Fly up high in the air.



## Too Earthy for Publication

Both the *Rubaiyat* of Omar Khayyam and the *Book of a Thousand Nights and a Night* gained their most important translations by nineteenth-century Englishmen. Edward Fitzgerald (1809–83), lived a secluded and private life in the English countryside. His first translation of *The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam* appeared in 1859; with later editions supported by famous poets and artists of the day, the book became an instant classic, appealing to the Victorian, or late-nineteenth-century, English taste with its advice that humankind should live life to the fullest, for we do not know what to expect after death.

Sir Richard Francis Burton, translator of *The Arabian Nights*, was born in 1820 and died in 1890. He was, however, a polar opposite to Fitzgerald, leading an

exciting, adventurous life, exploring in Africa and South America. An expert in many languages, he was also a busy writer. Late in life he took on the translation of the *Arabian Nights*, which he published in sixteen volumes in 1885.

Both of these books deal with earthy themes: drinking, making love, and generally having the type of fun that was not always considered proper. Many of the poems and tales of both books were hidden away until the twentieth century. Some critics still complain that parts of the *Rubaiyat* and of the *Arabian Nights*, are not fit for children to read. Others say that the content of the English editions of these books owe as much to the outlook of their translators as they do to the original author or authors.

seventy different identified large religious groups. Only about 13 percent of the world's population identified itself as non-religious in the year 2000, according to one study. With this return to religion comes, unfortunately, the concept of holy war, which is once again a fact of life.

### Did you know...

- Because of the prohibition of translating the Koran, it has become one of the widest-read books in its original language, rivaling even blockbuster novels of the modern day.
- Modern Islam now has 1.2 billion worshippers worldwide, or about one-fifth of the world's population. Chris-

tianity, at the same time, has more than two billion followers, representing about a third of the global population. Amazingly, Christians are divided into about thirty-four thousand separate groups.

- Performing miracles, such as that of the Holy Fire, or Holy Light, in Jerusalem, is required for a person to become a saint in the Catholic Church. The first step is beatification, in which a person is called “blessed” by the church. To be beatified, two miracles associated with that person must be proved by the church. The next step is canonization, or becoming a saint. This process used to be like a trial, in which the person proposed for sainthood had his or her life looked into thoroughly. But without miracles, there would be no saints.
- The organizing device or trick of *The Arabian Nights* is that all the stories are told by Scheherezade, or Sheherazade, to keep her husband, King Shahryar (or Schriyar), from killing her. So she must entertain him with a story each night for one thousand and one nights.
- Conversion, or changing religions, as seen in “The Prior Who Became a Moslem,” did not always happen as a result of an honest change of faith. During the time of the Crusades, prisoners of one side or another could buy their freedom by converting to one religion or another. The most famous attempted conversion during the Crusades was that of the Egyptian sultan al-Malik al-Kamil by Saint Francis of Assisi during the Fifth Crusade in 1219. Francis went to Egypt hoping to end the fighting by persuading the sultan to become a Christian. Instead, Francis had a month-long discussion with the sultan, during which the sultan tried to get Francis to convert to Islam.

### **Consider the following...**

- Discuss some of the similarities and differences between Christianity and the Muslim faith.
- How is the personal faith of Omar Khayyam, as shown in the excerpted poem, different from that of formal religions?

- Explain the effect the Crusades had on modern relations between the West and the Middle East.

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# Using the Faith

*Excerpt from "The Saladin Tithe" (1188)*

**Original declaration of Henry II, King of England; Reprinted in  
Source Book for Medieval Economic History; Edited by Roy C. Cave  
and Herbert H. Coulson; Published in 1965**

**R**eligious faith was put to powerful use during the two hundred years of the Crusades. Time and again, faithful Christians and Muslims were called to arms to fight for their god. Over and over, the inhabitants of Europe and the Middle East were asked by their spiritual leaders to put their private lives on hold and risk all for a matter of faith: control of the Holy Land and the sites in Jerusalem that are sacred to both religions.

Raising an army is not a simple process. Strong preachers were needed on both sides to fire up the people, to fill them with enthusiasm for a holy war. But when the soldiers were gathered, there came the question of who would pay to feed and arm these forces, which were often forty thousand to fifty thousand strong. With the First Crusade (1095–99), Crusaders were expected to pay their own way to the Holy Land and be able to support themselves while there. But such was the enthusiasm for a holy war that armies of common people and poor farmers also set off for Constantinople in 1096, following the powerful preacher Peter the Hermit. These people expected to survive on the





An engraving on King Henry II's tomb. King Henry of England wrote the declaration implementing the Saladin Tithe in order to pay for the Crusades. © Bettmann/Corbis. Reproduced by permission.

goods and property that they could seize from people they conquered in battle. Thus many Crusades started close to home with actions against the Jews. Christians believed that the call for Crusades often legitimized, or made lawful, stealing from the European Jews.

Nobles who set off on the Crusades often sold part of their holdings, or lands, to finance the cost of their own travels and that of the men they brought with them. Richard I, the Lionheart, of England supposedly said that he would sell off all of London to finance his trip during the Third Crusade (1189–92) if he could find a buyer. By 1165 the king of France promised to give a small percentage of his annual income to help fund Crusades and asked the noblemen of his kingdom to do the same. This money was collected by the local, or parish, priest and kept in a huge chest. This practice continued to spread, and in 1185 the king of England was also issuing such a tax. When both the kings of England and France agreed to go on a Crusade in 1188, they decided to put another tax on all those people who did not go to the Crusade to regain Jerusalem from the Muslim leader, Saladin, who had taken the city in 1187. Called the Saladin Tithe, this payment was set at 10 percent of a person's annual income, the highest tax ever laid on the people of these kingdoms. In the following excerpt from the declaration of King Henry II of England, we see exactly who paid this tithe and how much, as well as who was excused from it.

## Things to remember while reading the excerpt from “Using the Faith”:

- The church also raised money for the Crusades by taxing its own clergy, or those ordained to lead religious services. For the Fourth Crusade (1202–04) Pope Innocent III had the clergy pay a fortieth of their yearly income. The bill continued to rise for the clergy, too, reaching a twentieth of their income by the late thirteenth century.
- Muslims also pay a tithe, or religious tax, but in Islam this is called the *zakat* and is one of the five pillars, or main principles, of their faith. This tithe is set between 2 and 3 percent of a person’s annual income and is meant to help support the poor and establish social justice and equality throughout Islam.
- Tax collectors were needed for such tithes, and at first this duty fell to the Christian clergy. But soon, other groups took over the job. Two military religious orders were founded in the Holy Land early in the twelfth century, the Knights Hospitallers in 1113 and the Knights Templar in 1118. To begin with, these religious orders helped Christians in the Holy Land, either in hospitals or by securing their travel to pilgrimage sites. But these functions quickly grew when the church recognized the orders and approved of their role as elite monk-soldiers defending the Holy Land. The Teutonic Knights were added to these groups later, and together the three orders became the professional soldiers of the Holy Land. But they also had a less military role: the Templars and the Hospitallers both helped collect tithes in Europe in 1185 and 1188.
- The Templars and Hospitallers were supported by alms, or charitable money given by the church and nobles. Both orders soon became wealthy. They were then able to establish institutions all over Europe and the Holy Land.
- The famous Catholic scholar of the twelfth century, Bernard of Clairvaux, laid out the rules and regulations of the Knights Templar order. He attempted to clearly define what the Templars could and could not do, from dress to manner of prayer. He also made an excuse for al-



An illuminated manuscript of a knight traveling with a chest containing collected tithes in order to finance the Crusades. © Archivo Iconografico, S.A./Corbis. Reproduced by permission.

lowing such religious men to kill, something that the Christian Ten Commandments seems to disapprove of. In his treatise, or policy statement, “In Praise of the New Knighthood,” Bernard made the distinction between “homicide,” killing another human, and “malicide,” killing evil itself. Clearly, for Bernard and the church, killing Muslims in the name of God did not go against church doctrine.



### Excerpt from “The Saladin Tithe”

1. Each person will give in charity one tenth of his rents and movable goods for the taking of the land of Jerusalem; except for the arms, horses, and clothing of knights, and likewise for the hors-

es, books, clothing, and **vestments**, and church furniture of the clergy, and except for precious stones belonging to the clergy or the **laity**.

2. Let the money be collected in every **parish** in the presence of the parish priest and of the rural **dean**, and of one **Templar** and one **Hospitaller**, and of a servant of the Lord King and a clerk of the King, and of a servant of a baron and his clerk, and the clerk of the bishop; and let the archbishops, bishops, and deans in every parish **excommunicate** every one who does not pay the lawful **tithe**, in the presence of, and to the certain knowledge of, those who, as has been said above, ought to be present. And if any one according to the knowledge of those men give less than he should, let there be elected from the parish four or six lawful men, who shall say on **oath** what is the quantity that he ought to have declared; then it shall be reasonable to add to his payment what he failed to give.

3. But the clergy and knights who have **taken the cross**, shall give none of that tithe except from their own goods and the property of their lord; and whatever their men owe shall be collected for their use by the above and returned **intact** to them.

4. Moreover, the bishops in every parish of their **sees** shall cause to be announced by their letters on Christmas Day and on the **Feast of St. Stephen**, and on the **Feast of St. John**, that each will collect the said tithe into his own hands before the **Feast of the Purification of the Blessed Virgin** and, on the following day and afterwards, each will pay, in the presence of those who have been mentioned, at the place to which he has been **summoned**.



## What happened next...

The amount earned by the Saladin Tithe was quite large for its day, more than seventy thousand pounds, or close to \$100 million. But it was so unpopular among the nobles that the kings of France and of England had to promise never again to set such a high tax, and they kept their word. In the future such taxes were kept at levels of about 5 percent at the highest. One thing such taxes as the Saladin Tithe proved, though, was that the secular, or nonreligious, powers

**Vestments:** Religious robes.

**Laity:** Lay people, or worshippers, as opposed to the clergy, or preachers.

**Parish:** Church administrative district.

**Dean:** Local church official.

**Templar:** Religious military order, the Knights Templars.

**Hospitaller:** Religious military order, the Knights Hospitallers.

**Excommunicate:** Expel from the church.

**Tithe:** A religious tax, usually one-tenth of annual earnings.

**Oath:** A sworn promise to tell the truth.

**Taken the Cross:** Agreed to go on Crusade.

**Intact:** Unused, whole.

**Sees:** Larger administrative districts for the church.

**Feast of St. Stephen:** Holy day in the Catholic Church, December 26.

**Feast of St. John:** Holy day in the Catholic Church, June 22–23.

**Feast of the Purification of the Blessed Virgin:** Holy day in the Catholic Church, February 2.

**Summoned:** Called to be present.



## German Fighting Monks

The Knights Templar was one of several military orders founded during the Crusades. The other main orders were the Knights Hospitallers and the Teutonic Knights, or the Teutonic Order, founded in 1190. Like the Hospitallers, the Teutonic Knights grew out of an order of monks, or religious men, who served at a hospital in Jerusalem. The Hospital of Saint Mary of the Teutons served mostly German crusaders. When it became a fighting order, Teutonic

Knights' members took the usual vow of monks: poverty, chastity, and obedience.

Unlike the two other orders, however, the Teutonic Knights played a role not only in defending the Holy Land but also in bringing central and eastern Europe under the thumb of the church. They were forced into this role because the other two orders were so well organized in the Holy Land and there was little room for the Teutonic

of Europe were able to raise vast sums by this method of taxation. Up to the eleventh century only the church had been able to collect money from the faithful through such tithing, but the nobles had not yet done so. The Crusades provided an emergency situation, though, and the kings of Europe took advantage of it to begin a required tax for a specific purpose. Such a system ultimately led to the modern income tax that people all over the world groan about at tax time.

The Knights Templars became bound up in financing the Crusades when they acted as middlemen in Crusader banking or money transfers from Europe to the Holy Land. Crusaders could deposit their money in Europe with a Templar house and then receive credit for it from Templars in the Holy Land when they arrived there. This system is similar to modern-day travelers checks. This system of credit was important, as many Crusaders were robbed on their way to the Holy Land or lost their funds in shipwrecks en route. The Knights Templars also continued to play an important role in the defense of the Crusader states in the Holy Land, respected by friends and enemies alike. However, the rivalry that grew between them, the Hospitallers, and the Teutonic Knights was partly responsible for the weakening of the Crusader states and their inability to come together to fight their

Knights to grow there. In Europe they fought non-Christians and also breakaway Christian groups. In Transylvania they battled a tribe called the Cumans in the service of Andrew II of Hungary. They also helped defeat tribes in land that is now northern Germany and the Baltic states, bringing them under Christian rule for a Polish duke. The Teutonic Order was centered in Germany and had a strong central administration. This, in turn, helped lay the foundation

for the Prussian state, which ultimately led to modern Germany. The order lost much of its power in the sixteenth century during the Reformation, when the Catholic Church was challenged by the new Protestant Church in Prussia. The Teutonic Knights hung on after that time in the Catholic parts of Germany until the beginning of the nineteenth century. It survived in some parts of Europe into the twenty-first century, but only as a sort of club or honorary order.

common enemy, Islam. The three orders did forget their differences finally, but too late, at the unsuccessful defense of the Crusader city of Acre when it fell to the Muslims in 1291.

This defeat marked the end of the Crusader states in the Holy Land and the Templars, along with the other military orders, retreated from the shores of the eastern Mediterranean Sea. The Templars went to Cyprus, where they gave up their soldiering and focused on banking and money exchange. But as their wealth grew, they gained new enemies, including the king of France, Philip IV, who wanted their wealth to finance a war in Belgium. He arranged for the downfall of the Templars, accusing them of sacrilegious, or nonreligious, behavior. This allowed the king to take the money and property of the Templars. The order was completely destroyed in 1314, and its leader, Jacques de Molay, was burned at the stake for heresy (going against the teachings of the church).

### **Did you know...**

- The system of tithing, or of giving one-tenth of a person's annual crops or income to support the clergy, goes

back to ancient times. This was made obligatory, or required, by the Catholic Church in the sixth century.

- Crusading was an expensive business. At the time of the Seventh Crusade (1248–54), Louis IX of France spent close to three million *livres*, a currency of the time. This amount equaled more than twelve times his annual income.
- By the middle of the thirteenth century the pope had gotten out of the business of sponsoring Crusades, leaving it to the kings of Europe, such as Louis IX of France. The church continued to collect money from the faithful for the Crusades, but this was handed over directly to the Crusaders.
- The three military-religious orders that were developed during the Crusades could easily be identified by their uniforms. While the members of the Knights Templars wore a white robe with a red cross on it, the Hospitallers chose a white cross against a black robe; the Teutonic Knights went for a black cross on a white robe.
- Becoming a knight was no easy job. At the age of seven, noble youths became pages, or boy servants, in the castles of other nobles. Then, at about age fourteen, they traded in the short dagger, or knife, of the page for a sword and trained as squires in the apprenticeship, or the service, of other knights, learning the skills of horsemanship and military techniques. After seven years of such training, they were knighted, usually at the age of twenty-one.
- The Crusades were an expensive and tragic time in terms of lives lost as well as money spent. It is difficult to estimate the total number of people who died in the two centuries of ongoing religious wars, but by adding up the body counts from various contemporary accounts of massacres and deaths by disease and in battles from both the Muslim and Christian documents, some historians have calculated that about 1.5 million people died between 1096 and the end of the Crusades in 1291. Of course, by modern-day standards this seems like a low number. Fifty million died in World War II alone. And then there were also the Mongol wars of conquest during the thirteenth century, at the same time as the Crusades.

It is estimated that forty million people were killed as the Mongols built their empire, this at a time when the total world population was estimated to be just four hundred million people.

### Consider the following...

- Explain how the Catholic Church tried to finance the Crusades.
- Discuss two financial aspects of the Crusades that led to modern banking and taxing systems.
- What role do you think religion should have in the political life of a nation?

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The Crusades: Almanac  
The Crusades: Biographies  
The Crusades: Primary Sources

Ralph Zerbonia, Index Coordinator

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