

The Columbia Encyclopedia, Sixth Edition. 2001-05.

Crusades.

1

(Key) series of wars undertaken by European Christians between the 11th and 14th cent. to recover the Holy Land from the Muslims.

First Crusade

Origins

In the 7th cent., Jerusalem was taken by the caliph Umar. Pilgrimages (see pilgrim) were not cut off at first, but early in the 11th cent. the Fatimid caliph Hakim began to persecute the Christians and despoiled the Holy Sepulcher. Persecution abated after his death (1021), but relations remained strained and became more so when Jerusalem passed (1071) from the comparatively tolerant Egyptians to the Seljuk Turks, who in the same year defeated the Byzantine emperor Romanus IV at Manzikert.

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Late in the 11th cent., Byzantine Emperor Alexius I, threatened by the Seljuk Turks, appealed to the West for aid. This was not the first appeal of the kind; while it may have helped to determine the time and the route of the First Crusade, 1095–99, its precise import is difficult to estimate. Modern historians have speculated that two internal problems also helped trigger the First Crusade: an attempt, begun by Pope Gregory VII, to reform the church, and the pressing need to strengthen the weakened Papacy itself. Direct impetus was given the crusade by the famous sermon of Pope Urban II at the Council of Clermont (now Clermont-Ferrand) in 1095. Exaggerating the anti-Christian acts of the Muslims, Urban exhorted Christendom to go to war for the Sepulcher, promising that the journey would count as full penance and that the homes of the absent ones would be protected by a truce. The battle cry of the Christians, he urged, should be *Deus volt* [God wills it]. From the crosses that were distributed at this meeting the Crusaders took their name. Bishop Ademar

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of Le Puy-en-Velay was designated as papal legate for the crusade, and Count Raymond IV of Toulouse was the first of the leaders of the expedition to take the cross.

Proclaimed by many wandering preachers, notably Peter the Hermit, the movement spread through Europe and even reached Scandinavia. It is estimated that between 60,000 and 100,000 heeded the call and took up the cause of the First Crusade. The chief factors that contributed to this enthusiastic response were the increase in the population and prosperity of Western Europe; the high point that religious devotion had reached; the prospect of territorial expansion and riches for the nobles, and of more freedom for the lower classes; the colonial projects of the Normans (directed against the Byzantine Empire as much as against the Muslim world); the desire, particularly of the Italian cities, to expand trade with the East; and a general awakening to the lure of travel and adventure. 4

Course of the Crusade

The conflict between spiritual and material aims, apparent from the first, became increasingly serious. The organized host of the crusade was preceded in the spring of 1096 by several undisciplined hordes of French and German peasants. Walter Sans Avoir (Walter the Penniless) led a French group, which passed peacefully through Germany and Hungary but sacked the district of Belgrade. The Bulgarians retaliated, but Walter reached Constantinople by midsummer. He was joined there by the followers of Peter the Hermit, whose progress had been similar. A German group started off by robbing and massacring the Jews in the Rhenish cities and later so provoked the king of Hungary that he attacked and dispersed them. 5

The bands that had reached Constantinople were speedily transported by Alexius I to Asia Minor, where they were defeated by the Turks. The survivors either joined later bands or returned to Europe. Alexius began to take fright at the proportions the movement was assuming. When, late in 1096, the first of the princes, Hugh of Vermandois, a brother of Philip I of France, reached Constantinople, the emperor persuaded him to take an oath of fealty. Godfrey of Bouillon and his brothers Eustace and Baldwin (later Baldwin I of Jerusalem), Raymond IV of Toulouse, Bohemond I, Tancred, 6

Robert of Normandy, and Robert II of Flanders arrived early in 1097. At Antioch all except Tancred and Raymond (who promised only to refrain from hostilities against the Byzantines) took the oath to Alexius, which bound them to accept Alexius as overlord of their conquests. Bohemond's subsequent breach of the oath was to cause endless wrangling.

The armies crossed to Asia Minor, took Nicaea (1097), defeated the Turks at Dorylaeum, and, after a seven-month siege, took Antioch (1098) and slaughtered nearly all of its inhabitants, including its Christians. The campaign was completed in July, 1099, by the taking of Jerusalem, where they massacred the city's Muslims and Jews. The election of Godfrey of Bouillon as defender of the Holy Sepulcher marked the beginning of the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem (see [Jerusalem, Latin Kingdom of](#)). A Latin patriarch was elected. Other fiefs, theoretically dependent on Jerusalem, were created as the crusade's leaders moved to expand their domains. These were the counties of Edessa (Baldwin) and Tripoli (Raymond) and the principality of Antioch (Bohemond).

The First Crusade thus ended in victory. It was the only crusade that achieved more than ephemeral results. Until the ultimate fall (1291) of the Latin Kingdom, the brunt of the fighting in the Holy Land fell on the Latin princes and their followers and on the great military orders, the [Knights Hospitalers](#) and the [Knights Templars](#), that arose out of the Crusades.

The Later Crusades

The later Crusades were for the most part only expeditions to assist those who already were in the Holy Land and defend the lands they had captured; they are a single current, and dates are given them only for convenience.

Second Crusade

The Second Crusade, 1147–49, was preached by St. [Bernard of Clairvaux](#) after the fall (1144) of Edessa to the Turks. It was led by Holy Roman Emperor [Conrad III](#), whose army set out first, and by King [Louis VII](#) of France. Both armies passed through the Balkans and pillaged the territory of the Byzantine

emperor, [Manuel I](#), who provided them with transportation to Asia Minor in order to be rid of them. The German contingent, already decimated by the Turks, merged (1148) with the French, who had fared only slightly better, at Acre (Akko). A joint attack on Damascus failed because of jealousy and, possibly, treachery among the Latin princes of the Holy Land. Conrad returned home in 1148 and was followed (1149) by Louis. The Second Crusade thus ended in dismal failure.

Third Crusade

The Third Crusade, 1189–92, followed on the capture (1187) of Jerusalem by [Saladin](#) and the defeat of [Guy of Lusignan](#), [Reginald of Châtillon](#), and [Raymond](#) of Tripoli at Hattin. The crusade was preached by Pope Gregory VIII but was directed by its leaders—[Richard I](#) of England, [Philip II](#) of France, and Holy Roman Emperor [Frederick I](#). Frederick set out first, but was hindered by the Byzantine emperor, [Isaac II](#), who had formed an alliance with Saladin. Frederick forced his way to the Bosphorus, sacked Adrianople (Edirne), and compelled the Greeks to furnish transportation to Asia Minor. However, he died (1190) in Cilicia, and only part of his forces went on to the Holy Land. Richard and Philip, uneasy allies, arrived at Acre in 1191. The city had been besieged since 1189, but the siege had been prolonged by dissensions between the two chief Christian leaders, Guy of Lusignan and [Conrad](#), marquis of Montferrat, both of whom claimed the kingship of Jerusalem. 11

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The city was nevertheless starved out by July, 1191; shortly afterward Philip went home. Richard removed his base to Jaffa, which he fortified, and rebuilt Ascalon (Ashqelon), which the Muslims had burned down. In 1192 he made a three-year truce with Saladin; the Christians retained Jaffa with a narrow strip of coast (all that remained of the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem) and the right of free access to the Holy Sepulcher. Antioch and Tripoli were still in Christian hands; Cyprus, which Richard I had wrested (1191) from the Byzantines while on his way to the Holy Land, was given to Guy of Lusignan. In Oct., 1192, Richard left the Holy Land, thus ending the crusade.

Fourth, Children's, and Fifth Crusades

Pope [Innocent III](#) launched the Fourth Crusade, 1202–1204, which was totally diverted from its original course. The Crusaders, led mostly by French and Flemish nobles and spurred on by [Fulk of Neuilly](#), assembled (1202) near Venice. To pay some of their passage to Palestine they aided Doge Enrico Dandolo (see under [Dandolo](#), family) and his Venetian forces in recovering the Christian city of Zara (Zadar) on the Dalmatian coast from the Hungarians. The sack of Zara (1202), for which Innocent III excommunicated the crusaders, prefaced more serious political schemes. Alexius (later [Alexius IV](#)), son of the deposed Byzantine emperor Isaac II and brother-in-law of [Philip of Swabia](#), a sponsor of the crusade, joined the army at Zara and persuaded the leaders to help him depose his uncle, [Alexius III](#). In exchange, he promised large sums of money, aid to the Crusaders in conquering Egypt, and the union of Roman and Eastern Christianity under the control of the Roman church. The actual decision to turn on Constantinople was largely brought about by Venetian pressure. The fleet arrived at the Bosphorus in 1203; Alexius III fled, and Isaac II and Alexius IV were installed as joint emperors while the fleet remained outside the harbor. In 1204, [Alexius V](#) overthrew the emperors. As a result the Crusaders stormed the city, sacked it amid horrendous rape and murder, divided the rich spoils with the Venetians (who brought much of it back to Venice) according to a prearranged plan, and set up the Latin Empire of Constantinople (see [Constantinople, Latin Empire of](#)). The Crusader [Baldwin I](#) of Flanders was elected first Latin Emperor of Constantinople, but within a year he was captured and killed by the Bulgarians and succeeded by his brother Henry.

There followed the pathetic interlude of the Children's Crusade, 1212. Led by a visionary French peasant boy, Stephen of Cloyes, children embarked at Marseilles, hoping that they would succeed in the cause that their elders had betrayed. According to later sources, they were sold into slavery by unscrupulous skippers. Another group, made up of German children, went to Italy; most of them perished of hunger and disease.

Soon afterward Innocent III and his successor, Honorius III, began to preach the Fifth Crusade, 1217–21. King Andrew II of Hungary, Duke Leopold VI of Austria, [John of Brienne](#), and the papal legate Pelasius were among the leaders of the expedition, which was aimed at Egypt, the center of Muslim strength. Damietta (Dumyat) was taken in 1219 but had to be evacuated again after the defeat (1221) of an expedition against Cairo. 15

Sixth Crusade

The Sixth Crusade, 1228–29, undertaken by Holy Roman Emperor [Frederick II](#), was simply a peaceful visit, in the course of which the emperor made a truce with the Muslims, securing the partial surrender of Jerusalem and other holy places. Frederick crowned himself king of Jerusalem, but, occupied with Western affairs, he did nothing when the Muslims later reoccupied the city. [Thibaut IV](#) of Navarre and Champagne, however, reopened (1239) the wars, which were continued by Richard, earl of Cornwall. They were unable to compose the quarrels between the Knights Hospitalers and Knights Templars. In 1244 the Templars, who advocated an alliance with the sultan of Damascus rather than with Egypt, prevailed. 16

Seventh, Eighth, and Ninth Crusades

A treaty (1244) with Damascus restored Palestine to the Christians, but in the same year the Egyptian Muslims and their Turkish allies took Jerusalem and utterly routed the Christians at Gaza. This event led to the Seventh Crusade, 1248–54, due solely to the idealistic enterprise of [Louis IX](#) of France. Egypt again was the object of attack. Damietta fell again (1249); and an expedition to Cairo miscarried (1250), Louis himself being captured. After his release from captivity, he spent four years improving the fortifications left to the Christians in the Holy Land. 17

The fall (1268) of Jaffa and Antioch to the Muslims caused Louis IX to undertake the Eighth Crusade, 1270, which was cut short by his death in Tunisia. The Ninth Crusade, 1271–72, was led by Prince Edward (later [Edward I](#) of England). He landed at Acre but retired after concluding a truce. In 1289 Tripoli fell to the Muslims, and in 1291 Acre, the last 18

Christian stronghold, followed.

Aftermath and Heritage of the Crusades

After the fall of Acre no further Crusades were undertaken in the Holy Land, although several were preached. Already, however, the term *crusade* was also being used for other expeditions, sanctioned by the pope, against heathens and heretics. [Albert the Bear](#) and [Henry the Lion](#) led (1147) a crusade against the [Wends](#) in NE Germany; Hermann von [Salza](#) in 1226 received crusading privileges for the Teutonic Knights against the Prussians; the pope proclaimed (1228) a crusade against Emperor Frederick II; and several crusades were fought against the [Albigenses](#) and the Hussites (see [Hussite Wars](#)). 19

War against the Turks remained the chief problem of Eastern Europe for centuries after 1291. Campaigns akin to crusades were those of John [Hunyadi](#), [John of Austria](#) (d. 1578), and [John III](#) of Poland. In their consequences, the crusades in Europe were as important as those in the Holy Land. However, although the Crusades in the Holy Land failed in their chief purpose, they exercised an incalculable influence on Western civilization by bringing the West into closer contact with new modes of living and thinking, by stimulating commerce, by giving fresh impetus to literature and invention, and by increasing geographical knowledge. The crusading period advanced the development of national monarchies in Europe, because secular leaders deprived the pope of the power of decision in what was to have been the highest Christian enterprise. 20

In the Levant the Crusades left a lasting imprint, not least on the Byzantine Empire, which was disastrously weakened. Physical reminders of the Crusades remain in the monumental castles built by the Crusaders, such as that of [Al Karak](#). The chief material beneficiaries of the Crusades were Venice and the other great Mediterranean ports. 21

Bibliography

Outstanding among eyewitness accounts are those of [William of Tyre](#), [Richard of Devizes](#), Geoffroi de [Villehardouin](#), Jean de [Joinville](#), [Anna Comnena](#), Fulcher of Chartres, and Nicetas 22

Acominatus.

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