

attitudes and statements alienated the people. The nature of the Church in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries also.

## 7.1.5 Western Europe: The Crusades

The Crusades were great military expeditions that were carried on intermittently for two centuries for the recovery of the Holy land of Jerusalem from the hands of the Muslims. The history of the Muslim occupation of Jerusalem went back to the seventh century, to the reign of Caliph Omar. In 1071 A.D., the whole of Palestine fell into the hands of the Turks, following the Battle of Manzikert. Between 1096 and 1291, eight expeditions were led by the Christian princes and feudal lords of Europe for the recovery of Jerusalem. The Christian knights attached red crosses to their shirts, hence they were called the Crusaders.

### 7.1.5.1 Causes of Crusades

political, economic and social.

The causes of the Crusades were religious,

**1 The religious causes:** The Christians wished to take revenge upon the Muslims for the occupation of their Holy Land. The Seljuk Turks occupied Jerusalem in 1076 A.D. The Christian pilgrims found that their pilgrimages had become far more dangerous and difficult than they had been under the tolerant Arabs. **Stories of the desecration and destruction of churches and the indignities heaped upon the Patriarch of Jerusalem** caused great resentment in Europe. Pilgrims who managed to find their way to Jerusalem came back with exaggerated accounts of the torture and wrongdoings of the Turks. **In the medieval period, religion occupied an important place in the life of the people and they were enraged by the accounts they heard.** They were quick to respond to the appeals of Pope Urban II for a crusade or holy war.

However, the actual reason for the Crusades was the animosity between Islam and Christianity, which was of long standing. The long centuries of Muslim expansion and Europe's struggle against the Islamic domination in Spain and the Mediterranean had created a feeling of great hostility against Islam amongst the Christians. There was a feeling of rivalry and competition for power between the two great religious sects. **Since Islam was a martial creed, the response to it was also militant,** more so as the Church itself had become militant, following the conversion of various barbarian tribes. According to the medieval way of thinking, battles were the only answer to the problem.

**2 The political causes:** The conflicts between the Church of Rome and the Eastern Roman Church had reached a high point in 1054, after which the relations between the two had snapped. As a result, the influence of the Roman Church was at its lowest point. **1 Role of Pope Urban II:** Pope Urban II thought that one way by which he could revive the prestige of the Church was through a religious war. After the battle of Manzikert, the Turks had established their hold over large parts



of Asia Minor and the Mediterranean. The position of Alexis I, the Emperor of the Eastern Roman Empire, was threatened by the Turks as well as other Mongol tribes from the east. He now appealed to the Pope for help against the Turks. Pope Urban II responded positively. Thus the Crusades came about. **② Role of feudal system:** The political situation in Europe was also responsible for the Crusades. By the eleventh century, the feudal system in Europe was in a state of great confusion. The princes, feudal lords and petty chiefs were always involved in conflicts and warfare but there was no real outlet for their ambition. The Pope skilfully utilised the energies and ambitions of the warring feudal lords of Europe and channelled them towards the Crusade.)

**3 The economic causes:** The eleventh century saw various economic changes arising in Europe. These were also responsible for the Crusades. **① Dream of gaining fresh territory:** With the population rise of the eleventh century and stagnation of the manorial system, many of the feudal lords had begun to fall upon hard times. But there were few avenues for expansion or chances for fresh acquisition of land in Europe. So, the feudal lords dreamt of gaining fresh territory in the East and becoming rich once more. **② Promises of freedom from bonded labour:** This dream also motivated the lower classes. The serfs were motivated to join the Crusades by promises of freedom from bonded labour when they returned. Those suffering under a load of debt hoped to earn enough to free themselves from the burden. The poor people also felt that they had nothing to lose. They might in fact earn some money away from the manor. **③ Regaining control over the Mediterranean trade route:** During this period, trade was once again on the rise. The Mediterranean was the main channel for trade between the East and the West. But ever since the Turks had established their supremacy in the Mediterranean region, the European traders were facing great difficulties and massive losses in trade. The merchants of Venice, Pisa and Genoa were eager to regain control over the Mediterranean and win back their trade. For this reason, they participated in the Fourth Crusade.

**4 The social causes:** All the feudal classes were dreaming of breaking out of the stagnant feudal system and making some improvements in their life. The love for adventure motivated the people. They began to dream of change and joined the crusades with tremendous enthusiasm. **① Endeavour of the Knights:** The brave and well-trained knights of medieval Europe had adopted the ideals of chivalry. They were ready to sacrifice their lives for the sake of an ideal. These knights were greatly attracted to the ideal of saving the Holy Land from the hands of the Muslim infidels. The priests were also eager to harness the energies of these brave and chivalrous knights. The knights were the main source of strength of the armies of the Crusaders. **② Forceful preaching of the Pope:** The forceful preaching of Pope Urban II did much to arouse the enthusiasm of the people of Europe. The idea of a crusade was first preached by Pope Urban II at Clermont in 1095. The Pope addressed the Frenchmen as the 'race chosen and beloved by God' and appealed to them to destroy the Turks. More important, he pointed out that the Crusades provided a great opportunity for material advancement. He urged the people to seek fresh land and opportunities in the Holy land as Europe had become saturated. He also sought to stop the 'madness of private war' which was the curse of Europe, by calling upon the knights to either give their swords in the service of God, or to lay them down. Thus Europe was galvanized into the Crusades.



## 7.1.5.2 The Crusades

From 1096 A.D. to 1291 A.D., eight crusades or holy wars took place. Four of them were major wars while the last four were minor ones. The First Crusade lasted from 1096 to 1099.

**1 The First Crusade :** In 1095 A.D., the Eastern Roman Emperor Alexis I asked Pope Urban II for military help to regain the control of Jerusalem from the Turks.

Pope Urban II called an assembly in the French town of Clermont. He appealed to the French knights to take up arms against Turks and free the churches of the Holy Land as well as all of Asia Minor from Turkish hands. Almost 60,000 crusaders answered the call. A great many went to Palestine via Constantinople, many others took the sea route to reach Asia Minor. This was known as the 'peoples' crusade.



Capture of Jerusalem under the First Crusade

Though these crusaders were defeated by the Turks, the next batch of crusaders, which was composed of the knights, captured Antioch in 1098 A.D. The knights set up a free Christian state in Antioch. In 1099 A.D., they were able to capture Jerusalem. The 400 year-odd Islamic domination of Jerusalem was brought to an end. The crusaders carried out terrible crimes against the Turks. The Frankish knight Godfrey set up an independent state in Jerusalem. Some other areas were freed from the control of the Turks and a few more independent states came up in the area. Among them the prominent ones were Edissa and Tripoli.

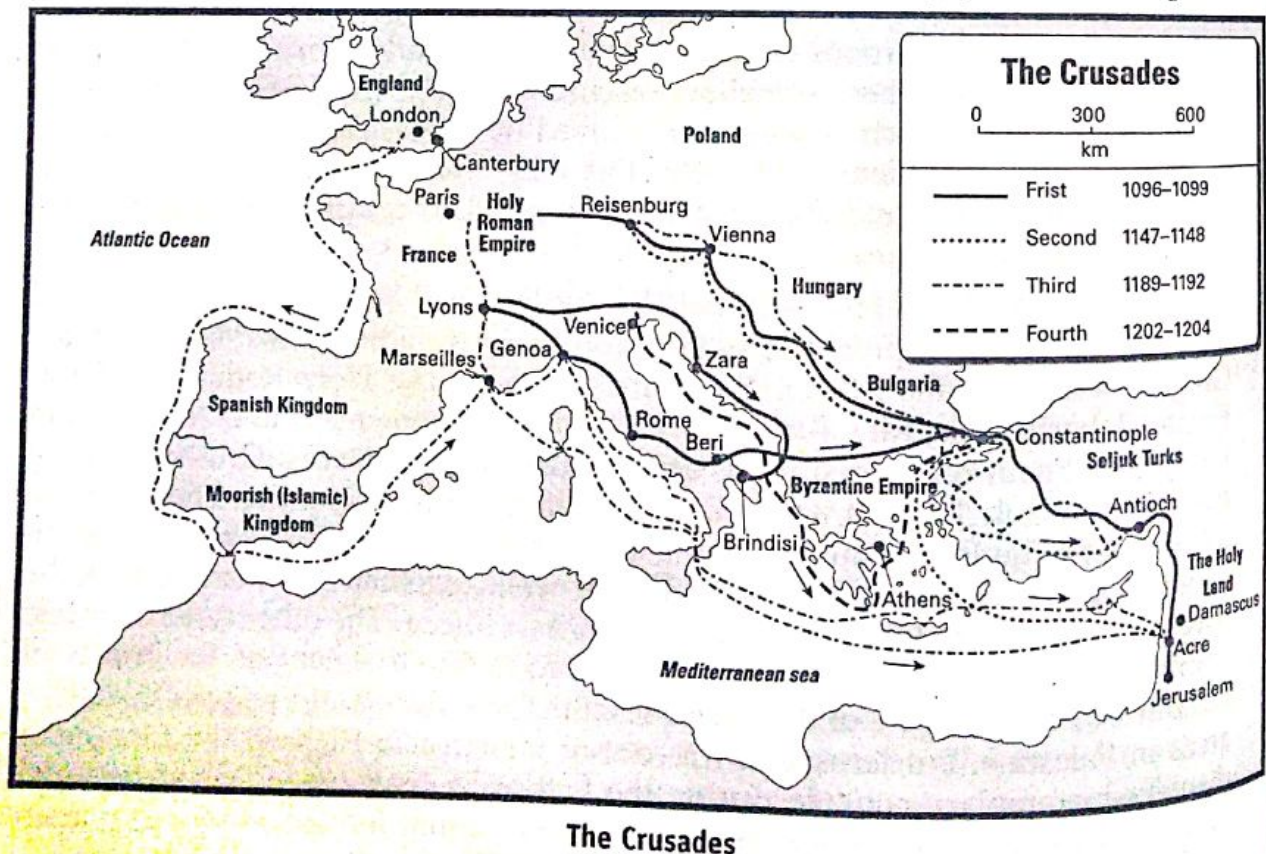
**The Second Crusade :** In 1144 A.D., the Seljuk Turk commander Imaddudin Zangi recaptured the free state of Edissa. When this news reached Europe, the Christian lords of Europe began to prepare for a second crusade. In 1147, Pope Eugene III announced the Second Crusade. After that, the king of Germany Conrad III and the king of France, Louis VII advanced towards Edissa with their feudal lords. But their troops were decimated by the Turkish army in Asia Minor and just a handful of them somehow reached Antioch. The Crusaders made no more attempts to reach Edissa, but moved towards Damascus, taking the Christians from Jerusalem with them. But they were defeated by the Turkish forces near Jerusalem and they had no option but to return to Jerusalem. This Crusade ended in failure.

**3 The Third Crusade:** In 1187 A.D., Saladin, the Sultan of Egypt and Syria, defeated the crusaders and recaptured Jerusalem and its surrounding areas. In 1187, Pope Gregory VIII gave the call for the Third Crusade. The Holy Roman Emperor, Frederick Barbarossa, King Richard of England, also known as the Lion-heart and Philip II of Spain responded to his appeal. This was the largest Crusade ever to leave for the Holy Land. It was a disaster right from the beginning. There was no unity among the European heads of state. Barbarossa left for the Holy Land on his own. The rulers of England and France went together but quarreled on the way. Barbarossa was killed in an accident in Asia Minor. The other two rulers lost many soldiers to a fatal epidemic. They also suffered defeat at the hands of Saladin's troops. In spite of their reverses, the Crusaders could recover extensive areas in Palestine. But Jerusalem was out of their reach. Richard the Lion-heart displayed exemplary courage during the battles. A treaty was signed between Sultan Saladin and the Crusaders. The terms were that Jerusalem would remain



in the hands of the Turks, but the Christians would have the right to visit their holy place on pilgrimage. It is worth noting that Saladin displayed qualities of generalship as well as humanism far superior to those of the Crusaders.

- 4 The Fourth Crusade:** After the Third Crusade, Europe seemed to lose her enthusiasm for the Crusades. But in 1202 A.D., another crusade was launched under the guidance of Pope Innocent III. This was a very mixed group of crusaders. The knights of France took an active part along with the crusaders from Piedmont in Italy, Flanders in Belgium and some areas of Germany. The merchants of Venice and other Italian cities took active part in the Crusade, partly out of their economic interest in regaining control over the Mediterranean trade-route. The crusaders were unable to reach Palestine. Instead, they attacked the Byzantine Empire, laid siege to Constantinople and looted the city. They also established their control over some areas of Greece.
- 5 The Fifth Crusade:** In 1215, the Lateran Council of the Church decided to send another expedition to the Holy Land. This time, most of the crusaders came from Austria, Hungary and the central part of Europe. About 32,000 men attacked the Ayubid kingdom in Egypt in 1217. But the troops of the Egyptian Sultan, Al Kamil attacked the crusaders in the dark of night and destroyed them completely. The crusaders were unable to fulfil their goal.
- 6 The Sixth Crusade:** In 1228, another group of crusaders went to Palestine led by the Holy Roman Emperor, Frederick II. This time the Pope did not support the expedition. The crusaders were able to seize Jerusalem, Nazareth and Bethlehem. Frederick II even took the title of the Emperor of Jerusalem. But the Muslims regained control over the Holy Land in 1244.
- 7 The Last two Crusades:** The Muslim victory in Jerusalem made it necessary for Europeans to mount another offensive against the infidels. In this war, (1248) the Egyptians were aided by various Muslim tribes like the Bahri, Mameluke, Qutuj, Aibak and others. The crusaders were led by King Louis IX of France. But he was defeated and imprisoned by the enemy. France had to pay a ransom equivalent





to one year's income of the state treasury in gold coins for his release. In 1270, Emperor Louis IX made yet another attempt to fight against the Muslims. He attacked Tunisia and North Africa. But his troops could not bear the extreme heat, nor the epidemics that spread through their camps. Louis IX died in Tunisia. After the defeat of this Crusade, the rule of the Christians came to an end in Syria. Towards the end of the thirteenth century, the crusading zeal was dying out in Europe. The intellectual climate of Western Europe was changing in the last two centuries. The enthusiasm for religion that marked the early Crusades was clearly waning. The barbarian love for martial adventure was also replaced by the need to settle down to a quiet life. A more practical view of life, along with economic ambition made the crusader's job appear unimportant, even to devout Christians. The two centuries of contact with the Muslims had dampened some of the hostility and intolerance of the earlier times, even as the personality of leaders like Saladin had aroused admiration in the Western world. Finally, Europe was slowly but surely emerging from the period of economic and political stagnation that made up the age of feudalism. Under these changing circumstances, there was no interest left in Europe for fresh crusades in the fourteenth century.

### 7.1.5.3 The Results

*What were the results of Crusades*  
indirectly such an influence upon the institutions and life of the people of Western Europe that they constitute a great landmark in the history of civilisation". Since the Christians were unable to regain Palestine, the Crusades have also been described as 'the medieval chapter of the long-standing conflict between the East and the West'.

**1 Political changes** (The Crusades dealt a blow to the system of feudalism. Many of the nobles who set out on the Crusades never returned. Their estates often came into the hands of the king. In other cases, many feudal lords had mortgaged their property with the merchants and usurers to get the necessary fund for the Crusades. The failure of the Crusades ruined these people. Yet others returned from the crusades totally bankrupt) Thus, the nobility was greatly reduced in numbers and weakened in power, though the kings of Europe benefitted from the situation. With the decline of the feudal lords, the way was clear for the rise of national monarchies in Europe.

The participation of people from different parts of Europe in the same crusade, must have made them aware of their mutual differences. The decision of the troops of France and Germany to march separately during the Third Crusade might have been due to this reason. Such a tendency was bound to operate against feudalism and create an atmosphere suitable for the emergence of national monarchy.

**2 Economic changes** (In the medieval period, the economy of Europe was agrarian. But as a result of the Crusades, trade and manufacture began to flourish in Europe once more. As the feudal structure became weak, the serfs fled to the towns in search of independent employment. They now took up jobs as artisans and craftsmen. Thus, manufacture began to prosper. Cotton and woollen textiles, iron goods and other industries arose.

As the Mediterranean Sea was freed from the control of the Muslims and the Western merchants established their supremacy in the area, trade with the east began to increase. Luxury items, spices, gems, carpets, fine textiles etc. were imported into Europe from the East. Plenty of gold and silver from the European countries made their way to the eastern countries. During the Crusades, a motley group of people settled down in spots from where they could provide services and sell their wares to the troops. Very soon, these settlements grew into towns.



Moreover, the encouragement given to trade and industry also resulted in the growth of new towns and the revival of old towns. As feudal lords became weaker, the new merchants began to wrest charters for their towns and began to administer them in an independent manner.

**3 Social changes:** In this period, the decline of the feudal lords saw the corresponding rise of the class of merchants and traders. Firstly, with the expansion of trade, a class of prosperous merchants and traders came up, not only in the Italian cities like Venice and Genoa, but also in Antwerp, Flanders, Barcelona and other towns of Europe. Secondly, the feudal lords often borrowed money against their lands when they went for the Crusades. Many of these lords died in the Holy Land, many could not repay their loans. As a result, the creditors, many of them from the merchant class, now had access to huge amounts of land. Now, they became very wealthy, and in fact, became the new source of power in Europe. Apart from this, a new class of urban workers, quite different from the class of serfs, arose in the towns.

When the men went away on the Crusades, the women had to look after the estates and in the case of poorer families, earn the bread. This period is therefore associated with the growing power of, and respect for, women in society.

**4 Increase in the Pope's power and prestige:** The Popes were the ones who initiated the Crusades or the Holy Wars. The knights and feudal lords responded to their appeal and joined the Crusades. Thus, the power and the prestige of the Popes increased vastly in the Christian world. The role of the Popes in trying to protect the Christians from the Muslims gave them undisputed leadership among the Christians.

**5 Intellectual advantages:** Before the Crusades, the Muslim world was more advanced in learning, sciences and in many other intellectual pursuits. But during the Crusades, the Christians came into contact with the Islamic civilisation and began to be influenced by their advanced culture. Many Asian technologies and inventions such as the manufacture of paper, gunpowder, glass, the compass and other inventions reached Europe. **① In the field of science and literature:** The works of Islamic scholars like Ibn Senna, Ibn Rushdi, Al-khwarizmi and others became known to the Europeans. These Arab scholars were masters of medicine, mathematics, alchemy and other such subjects. Many of these subjects were now studied in the European universities. It was through the translations of the Muslim scholars that Europeans came to read the works of Aristotle and other Greek scholars. The Indian system of numbers, the decimal system and the mathematics of Aryabhatta also reached the West through the Arabs, who were studying these texts in Damascus and Baghdad. The influence of Islamic scholars on European literature could also be seen. Oriental works like 'The Arabian Nights' or the 'Panchatantra' came to be known in Europe. Such works exerted a great influence on European literature. **② In the field of exploration:** The Crusades gave incentives to the Europeans to travel. The spirit of adventure which led to the voyages of exploration like those of Marco Polo and Columbus were themselves the outcome of the Crusades. By making men accustomed to travel, the Crusades broke down the narrow walls of provincialism and opened up a new era. During this time there was also a great expansion of geographical knowledge. **③ Way to Renaissance:** The Crusades made the Europeans more tolerant and broadminded. Before the Crusades, the Christians were bitterly critical of the Muslims. Now they began to appreciate the achievements of the Islamic civilisation and many a false notion was eradicated. The greatest benefit,



however, was the expansion of the intellectual horizon of Europe and its rejection of narrowness and insularity. This created the background for the Renaissance, which occurred within the space of a century after the Crusades.



#### **7.1.5.4 Conclusion**

(The Crusades thus influenced practically every field of life in Europe. As a result of the Crusades, far-reaching political, economic and social changes began to take place, which culminated in the end of the medieval age and the birth of the Modern Age. **With the breakdown of feudalism and the emergence of a prosperous middle class, with the expansion of trade and the rise of a national monarchy, Europe was firmly set on the path of progress**) Europe had to thank the Islamic world for much of this progress, because the intellectual interaction with the superior Muslim world had enabled Europe to derive many advantages. In spite of the poverty and decline caused by two centuries of conflict, Europe now took steps to create a new society. However, the Muslims, who had begun with an advantage failed to keep that advantage and gradually fell behind Europe in all fields. It may rightly be said that the manifold results of the Crusades led Europe towards her Renaissance.