

# Christians living

[Religion](#), [Christianity](#)



SOME nine hundred years ago, in 1096, the First Crusade was about to begin. If you had lived in Western Europe then, you might have witnessed large movements of men, wagons, horses, and ships. They were headed for Jerusalem, the holy city, which had been under the control of Muslims since the seventh century C. E. That was the first of the Crusades. Many historians list eight major ones. These expeditions scarred the history of East-West relations. They were accompanied by massacres and cruelty committed in the name of God and Christ. The last major Crusade began 174 years later, in 1270.

The word “ crusade” comes from the Latin word *crux*, which means “ cross. ” Members of the many expeditions sewed the symbol of the cross on their clothing. Why Crusades occurred? The declared motive for the Crusades was to take Jerusalem and the so-called holy sepulcher from the Muslims. But the causes ran deeper. Except for a few incidents, relations between the professed Christians living in the Middle East and the Muslims had been relatively calm. An important factor that led to the Crusades was the turbulent political, economic, and religious climate that prevailed in Europe.

In the 11th century, new rural lands were being given over to agriculture, in an effort to increase food production. City areas were enjoying new life. The population was growing. However, when a famine plunged large numbers of peasants into poverty, many poured into the cities, where unemployment and misery awaited them. Protests often erupted. At the top of the social hierarchy were numerous feudal barons. These professional warlords wanted to take advantage of the political vacuum created by the breakup of Charlemagne’s empire and conquer new estates.

The Church of Rome was also experiencing a period of turmoil. In 1054 it lost control of the Eastern Church. In addition, many of the clergy were being accused of immorality and of meddling in politics. In the course of time, other Crusades were mounted, the last in 1270. However, because of defeats, many began to doubt the legitimacy of such enterprises undertaken in the name of religion. If God really approved of these “ holy” wars, they thought, he would certainly have favored those who claimed to act with his blessing.

Yet, from the 13th century, church jurists tried to justify such religious wars and the clergy’s role in them. During those time and even until now, “ People killing people in the name of religion in Northern Ireland has cost 2, 079 lives in 12 years; 144 of those policemen,” says the Los Angeles Times. Though the basic issue is civil rights—the rights of the Catholic minority versus that of the Protestant majority—religion is deeply involved, and both sides have resorted to a militant solution.

The country has been transformed “ from a quiet backwater and stronghold of strict moral standards to a free-living, mid-20th century society, corrupted and changed by violent words and deeds,” writes Barry White in the Toronto Star. While, “ activist priests have taken to carrying guns” in the north, according to Newsweek, Muslims in the south are fighting their ‘ holy war’ against Catholic majority rule.

Conclusion **THOUGH** the world at large appears to be at peace, “ more than two dozen small wars flicker and rage around the globe . . . taking thousands of lives,” says an Associated Press dispatch. Closer examination reveals the “ dismal truth that probably half or more of the wars now being fought around

the world are either openly religious conflicts or involved with religious disputes,” says newspaper columnist C. L. Sulzberger. The said Crusade affects the people in the community and so made them have their own perception of the war. Some commented negatively about the crusaders and some agreed to their aims. Different opinions occur on to which they support.

But the Crusades and their failures should have taught that economic greed and desire for political prominence can lead to fanaticism and massacre. But the lesson has been ignored. The evidence lies in the many conflicts that have continued to stain many parts of our planet with blood. In these, religion often serves as a front for abominations. References Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, “ What Do The Facts Show? ”, 22 March, 1982, pp. 4-5. Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, “ Religion’s Role in Past Wars”, 22 April 1972, pp. 11-15.