



The Religious Landscape

Islam

Islam had spread through the once Christian strongholds of North Africa and into Spain. In 1053, the vast areas of North Africa had only 5 remaining bishops.

Europe

The Church was hampered by political interference in the appointment of Popes and Bishops. This changed in 1057 when the Roman Emperor died leaving his young son as heir, too young to assume the responsibility of the role. In this power vacuum, the church elected a new pope independently and then set in motion laws to safeguard such independence in future. This was the first step in the Gregorian reform. Christianity could then flourish. A monastery was established at Cluny, which had permission to elect their Abbots and run their affairs free from political interference. Cluny had over 300 monks. Within 100 years, over 1000 smaller monasteries spread throughout Germany, France and Britain. These centres of prayer brought stability and had a civilizing affect on the country.

The Abbot of Cluny gave advice to several popes and eventually became Pope Gregory VII. He put a stop to clerical abuses such as simony (trading in sacred things) and confirmed priestly celibacy, the indissolubility of marriage and that marriage must be by mutual consent.

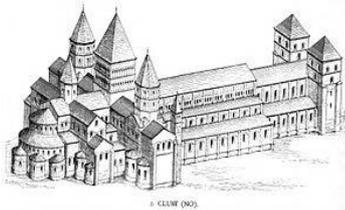
The Christian knighthood, with the principles of upholding the faith and defending the weak, was established in an attempt to lessen the brutality of war.

Byzantine

The patriarch of Constantinople refused to subject his authority to that of the Pope and this led to his excommunication (1054) and the formal split of the Church into the Latin and Orthodox. The affects of this are still with us today. In addition, Pilgrims to the Holy Land who travelled via Constantinople were charged extortionate fees for crossing the Straits.

Pilgrimage

Pilgrimages to Christianity's most holy sites were hugely popular as they were seen as symbolizing life as a journey to God. In addition, the sufferings endured during these long trips were offered up in atonement for ones sins. In 1070 the Sejuk Turks captured Jerusalem, desecrated the Holy shrines and persecuted pilgrims.



The Crusades

Crusades were armed pilgrimages to Jerusalem, to free the holy Sepulchre of Jesus Christ and allow the pilgrims to go, without being killed or ransomed.

The First Crusade (1096-1099)

Pope Urban II held a great Council in France. At the end of the session, the Pope called for help to assist the Christians in the East and to recover the Holy Land from the infidel. The Pope offered the chance of a plenary indulgence to those who took up his call to rescue Jerusalem.

The first to respond, galvanized by Peter the Hermit were the lower classes. They crossed Europe but were massacred near Nicea. Six months later, in 1097, knights from Germany and France, lead by a cardinal and Godefroy de Bouillon, set off on what was to be the only crusade that would free Jerusalem. This peace lasted 150 years, Pilgrims were protected by the Christian Knights.

Second Crusade (1147 - 1149)

The second military expedition to the Holy Land was called for by the Church to recapture the County of Edessa that fell to the Muslims in 1144. They laid siege to Damascus but failed to capture the city, and went back.

Third Crusade (1189 - 1192)

Also known as the Kings' Crusade, the Third Crusade was launched after the fall of Jerusalem to the Muslim leader Saladin in 1187. They failed to recapture Jerusalem but the English king managed to negotiate a free access to Jerusalem for Christian pilgrims.

Fourth Crusade (1202 - 1204)

Pope Innocent III succeeded in raising an army of crusaders. On their way to Jerusalem, they got involved in the struggle for the Byzantine throne. The Fourth Crusade ended with the Sack of Constantinople.

Fifth Crusade (1217 - 1221)

They chose to start their campaign in Egypt. In 1219, they captured the port of Damietta and were offered all the holy cities in return for withdrawing from Egypt. They refused and lost all cities, defeated at Cairo.

Sixth Crusade (1228 - 1229)

The Sixth Crusade was a major success for the crusaders. After arriving in the Holy Land, Frederick II entered into negotiations with the Egyptian sultan who agreed to cede Jerusalem, Nazareth, Bethlehem and other holy cities to the Christians.

Seventh Crusade (1248 - 1254)

Saint Louis IX decided to recapture the Holy Land by conquering Egypt first. After taking Damietta, Louis IX himself was taken captive. After paying a ransom, he was released. As he prepared for a second campaign to the Holy Land, he received a letter informing him that his mother had died. He then returned to France.

Eighth Crusade (1270)

In 1270, the French king Louis IX decided to start his campaign in Tunis. However, disease broke out among the troops shortly after landing and the French king who got ill himself died shortly thereafter.