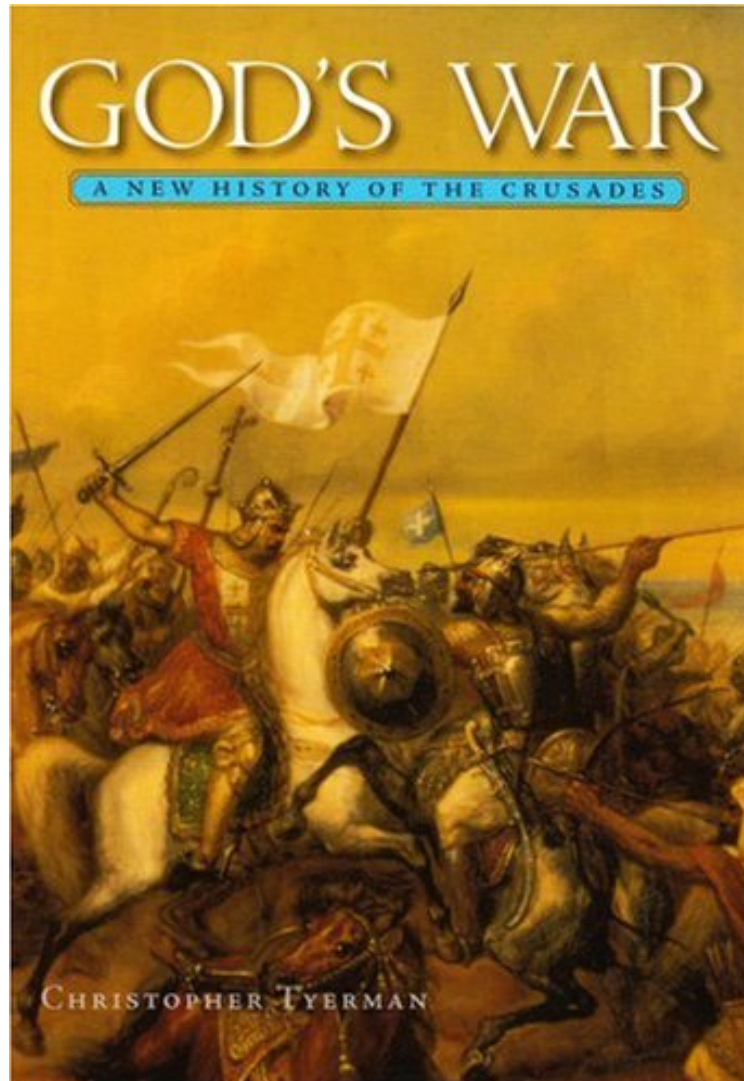


[Free read ebook] God's War: A New History of the Crusades

God's War: A New History of the Crusades

Christopher Tyerman

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Christopher Tyerman : God's War: A New History of the Crusades before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised God's War: A New History of the Crusades:

4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. I'm happy with the investment...By Kimberly K. SandersI purchased "God's War" because I wanted to learn a bit of history about the Crusades and about the philosophies that drive war. This book is exactly what I was looking for. I usually read the reviews for books and use them to help me make a purchase decision. The reviews for "God's War" are understandably mixed. Many who responded negatively seemed not to enjoy the book because it is written in an academic style. The vocabulary can be a challenge. My solution was to

purchase the e-book (in addition to the traditional text I had already purchased). Like other readers, the language, the historical references, and the writing style kept me on my toes. Having it on my iPad gave me immediate access to definitions and Wikipedia. Also, being able to make notes easily was a benefit of the e-book. Still, I often reread paragraphs or pages for full comprehension, but that's just what it takes sometimes. The value of working a bit with a text is in the knowledge and insights gained that can be applied to contemporary issues. For me, the need to know where we've come from is key in understanding where we are now, and ultimately where we're going.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Dry and dense, but insightful. By DAJAs other reviewers have said, this is a dry and detailed book. The prose is not very easy to read, and to follow it you'll probably need to know a lot of the historical background beforehand. Moreover, Tyerman makes a few unambiguous grammatical errors, seemingly because he loses track of where his convoluted sentences are going. But a lot of insight is hidden within the dull text.

Medieval Christians earnestly believed in the crusader cause. But by delving into such detail, Tyerman shows that in nearly every episode of crusading, there were people who mixed their religious obligations with blatant self-interest. Christian kingdoms in the Iberian Peninsula used crusading ideology, along with the full set of church-based incentives for crusaders, to bolster their wars against the Muslim kingdoms. The "Albigensian Crusade" against heretics in southern France was endorsed by the church but driven largely by French nobles' desire to seize land in the region. The Teutonic Knights, founded to forcibly convert the remaining pagan peoples of northeastern Europe, continued to exist long after the conversion of Lithuania left them with no reason for being, and western nobles habitually joined them on "crusading" raids to fight the knights' local rivals. Mediterranean powers from western Europe, like Sicily and Venice, used efforts to bolster the crusader states in the early 12th century as excuses to seize territory from the Byzantine Empire. Westerners' willingness to fight the Byzantines contributed to the convoluted series of mistakes that led the Fourth Crusade to attack Constantinople, but greed wasn't the sole motivation in that case. By the time they actually carried out the sack, the crusaders were trapped by their own bad decisions. And while the sack was a disaster, it may only have hastened the disintegration of an empire that was already being torn apart by civil war.

A major focus of Tyerman's work is how crusading ideology developed. Christianity's history of justifying violence on religious grounds goes back at least to Augustine, but Urban II and his predecessor Gregory VII invented the idea that people could be forgiven their sins if they fought a divinely endorsed war. The resulting system of indulgences, originally designed to encourage the crusades, expanded over the centuries, providing a major motivation for the Protestant Reformation. Meanwhile, the concept of spreading Christianity through violence mutated, especially after crusading itself came to seem futile. In this diffuse form, crusading ideology shaped the European view of the entire world and contributed even to the Spanish attitude toward their conquests in the Americas.

I read this book alongside Thomas Asbridge's *The Crusades*, which isn't as extensive as Tyerman's book but is much better at telling a story and is easier for newcomers to the subject. Asbridge also gives nearly equal space to the Muslim as well as the Christian perspective, whereas Tyerman focuses on Europeans. If you haven't read about the crusades in depth before, go to Asbridge first, but if you have, Tyerman is well worth reading.

6 of 6 people found the following review helpful. massive, informative, entertaining. By Craig MACKINNON To tackle a subject as broad (geographically) and long (in time) as the Crusades is an imposing task. To do so in a one-volume treatment, balancing the line between scholarly research and popular interest is even more difficult. It is a tribute to the author (and, presumably his editors and proofreaders) that this book succeeds. I am no more than an armchair historian, and certainly no expert on the Crusades, so I can only take the word of Tyerman's colleagues that this is a well-researched and referenced text. As an armchair historian, I might be more qualified to testify to the book's general readability, and it is very readable - dense, yes, but also entertaining and informative. More importantly it is never confusing nor does it degenerate into a compendium of names and deeds.

This is no mean feat - Crusading stretched all across Europe and into North Africa and, obviously, the Holy Land. As such, the number of princes, bishops, cult leaders, merchants, and commoners that participated is enormous, made the more confusing because names might duplicate over the centuries and/or between different nations, while some people will have multiple names due to their multiple titles (e.g. King Conrad II of Jerusalem was also Emperor Conrad IV of the HRE). Somehow, Tyerman skirts the fine line between excessive detailed explanation and confusion - you are never required to keep track of all the noble lines of European royal houses!

Another potential pitfall to writing about any military campaign (or sets of campaigns) is to overemphasize certain aspects. Although the chronicle of battles and sieges might be the most entertaining, the reader is hardly well-informed about the true nature of warfare including the logistics, politics, etc. Thus, the various (and varied) Crusades depicted in this book are covered end-to-end: from recruitment to victory (or defeat) on the battlefield. Much space is devoted to the internecine quarreling of the Christian nations (e.g. England vs. France, various claimants to the Imperial throne, the trading rivalries between Venice, Genoa, and Padua, etc.), and how these coloured the national characters of each Crusade. Finances are equally well documented - mounting a campaign over such a distance was expensive.

Ultimately, any such massive history as this comes down to the execution of the writing, and here is Tyerman's greatest success. He comes off as knowledgeable and populist at the same time. It's rare that I'm sent to my dictionary as often as with this book - the author using such new and useful words (to me) as "elision" (deliberately omitting something) and "fissiparous" (reproducing by fission) - but the author also talks of "the gravy train" and uses

other vernacular terms. Thus is such a thick subject rendered entertaining in the hands of a skilled writer. My only complaint is that, as the Crusades proceed, they appear to become much of a muchness. It becomes a formula: 1. set up the political scene, 2. proceed to the recruitment stage, 3. talk about finances, and 4. describe the military campaign. This pattern repeats for each Crusade, meaning it repeats 10+ times through the course of the book. There's not much Tyerman can do about that, I suppose, and maintain his rigour, but it does diminish the reading experience somewhat.

God's War offers a sweeping new vision of one of history's most astounding events: the Crusades. From 1096 to 1500, European Christians fought to recreate the Middle East, Muslim Spain, and the pagan Baltic in the image of their God. The Crusades are perhaps both the most familiar and most misunderstood phenomena of the medieval world, and here Christopher Tyerman seeks to recreate, from the ground up, the centuries of violence committed as an act of religious devotion. The result is a stunning reinterpretation of the Crusades, revealed as both bloody political acts and a manifestation of a growing Christian communal identity. Tyerman uncovers a system of belief bound by aggression, paranoia, and wishful thinking, and a culture founded on war as an expression of worship, social discipline, and Christian charity. This astonishing historical narrative is imbued with figures that have become legends--Saladin, Richard the Lionheart, Philip Augustus. But Tyerman also delves beyond these leaders to examine the thousands and thousands of Christian men--from Knights Templars to mercenaries to peasants--who, in the name of their Savior, abandoned their homes to conquer distant and alien lands, as well as the countless people who defended their soil and eventually turned these invaders back. With bold analysis, Tyerman explicates the contradictory mix of genuine piety, military ferocity, and plain greed that motivated generations of Crusaders. He also offers unique insight into the maturation of a militant Christianity that defined Europe's identity and that has forever influenced the cyclical antagonisms between the Christian and Muslim worlds. Drawing on all of the most recent scholarship, and told with great verve and authority, God's War is the definitive account of a fascinating and horrifying story that continues to haunt our contemporary world.

From Publishers Weekly Starred . This is likely to replace Steven Runciman's 50-year-old History of the Crusades as the standard work. Tyerman (England and the Crusades), lecturer in medieval history at Oxford University, demolishes our simplistic misconceptions about that series of ferocious campaigns in the Middle East, Muslim Spain and the pagan Baltic between 1096 and 1500. Abjuring sentimentality and avoiding clichés about a rapacious West and an innocent East, Tyerman focuses on the crusades' very human paradoxes: "the inspirational idealism; utopianism armed with myopia; the elaborate, sincere intolerance; the diversity and complexity of motive and performance." The reader marvels at the crusaders' inextinguishable devotion to Christ even while shuddering at their delight in massacring those who did not share that devotion. In the end, Tyerman says, what killed crusading was neither a lack of soldierly enthusiasm nor its failure to retain control of Jerusalem, but the loss of Church control over civil societies at home and secular authorities who felt that religion was not sufficient cause for war and that diplomacy was a more rational method of deciding international relations. God's War is that very rare thing: a readable and vivid history written with the support of a formidable scholarly background, and it deserves to reach a wide audience. 16 color illus. (Sept.) Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. Christopher Tyerman has crafted a superb book whose majestic architecture compares with Runciman's classic study of the Crusades. He is an entertaining as well as reliable guide to the bizarre centuries-long episode in which Western Christianity willfully ignored its Master's principles of love and forgiveness. (Diarmaid MacCulloch, author of Thomas Cranmer: a Life) This is a magisterial work. In God's War, the Crusades are not just emblematic episodes in a troubled history of Europe's encounter with Islam. Tyerman shows that they are, with all their contradiction, tragedy and tomfoolery, idealism and cynicism, piety and savagery, fundamentally and inescapably human. (Paul M. Cobb, Associate Professor of Islamic History, Fellow of the Medieval Institute, University of Notre Dame) Tyerman's wonderful book is contemporary medieval history-writing at the top of its game. It is also the finest history of the Crusades that anyone has ever written, fully informed by its predecessors and by the excellent scholarship of the past half century. Trenchantly written on the grand scale and full of vivid detail, clear argument, and sharp judgment, God's War shows how the entire apparatus of crusade became tightly woven into European institutional and social life and consciousness, offering a highly original perspective on all of early European history and on European relations with non-Europeans. It shows no patience with ignorant mythologizing, modern condescension, or cultural instrumentalism. In short, it constitutes a crusade history for the twenty-first century and just in time. (Edward M. Peters, Henry Charles Lea Professor of History, University of Pennsylvania) At a time when interest in the Middle East and the Crusades has reached a new height, Christopher Tyerman has made a significant contribution to the ever-growing shelves of books devoted to this subject. Tyerman's well-written book focuses heavily on the development of ideas about holy war from antiquity onward and on the crusade to the East from the eleventh to the sixteenth century. It is based on a careful reading of both primary and secondary sources and will prove an important resource for a broad audience of scholars, students, and general readers. The comparison with Runciman's history leaps out from the pages of this large volume and the temptation to address it will no doubt seduce others, but this volume is Tyerman

through and through. (James M. Powell, Professor Emeritus of Medieval History, Syracuse University) This is likely to replace Steven Runciman's 50-year-old *History of the Crusades* as the standard work. Tyerman, lecturer in medieval history at Oxford University, demolishes our simplistic misconceptions about that series of ferocious campaigns in the Middle East, Muslim Spain and the pagan Baltic between 1096 and 1500... *God's War* is that very rare thing: a readable and vivid history written with the support of a formidable scholarly background, and it deserves to reach a wide audience. (Publishers Weekly (starred review 2006-07-24) Challenging traditional conceptions of the Crusades, e.g., the failure to retain Jerusalem, Tyerman believes that it was the weakening of papal power and the rise of secular governments in Europe that finally doomed the crusading impulse. This is a marvelously conceived, written, and supported book. (Robert J. Andrews Library Journal 2006-09-15) Christopher Tyerman, who teaches medieval history in Oxford, offers in his new and massive study of the Crusades as a whole a welcome synthesis for the general reader... Full of fascinating detail... *God's War* is a first-rate, scholarly, up-to-date, and highly readable survey of the entire crusading movement... In the gullible age of *The Da Vinci Code*, Tyerman offers a sane, informed, and gripping account of one of the most characteristic and most extraordinary manifestations of the Christian Middle Ages. (Eamon Duffy New York of Books 2006-10-19) Tyerman, an Oxford scholar, combines vigorous argument and nuanced analysis in this deeply learned chronicle of the Crusades... It's the best single-volume treatment of this still-controversial and fraught subject. (Benjamin Healy and Benjamin Schwarz *The Atlantic* 2006-11-01) A magisterial work... it is a shoo-in to become this generation's definitive history of the original Crusades, a series of military expeditions that temporarily returned the Holy Land to Christian rule in the Middle Ages. Hefty, encyclopedic and a darn good read, Tyerman's book has the rarest of virtues among myriad treatments of the subject: It doesn't bend history to preconceptions. (Ron Grossman *Chicago Tribune* 2006-10-29) Anyone who likes knights, castles and battles as much as I do will enjoy Christopher Tyerman's masterpiece *God's War*, a history of the Crusades written with great breadth, clarity and human sympathy: one of the achievements of the year. (Dominic Sandbrook *Daily Telegraph* 2006-12-09) With rekindled controversy about Western invasions of the Middle East, the Crusades of the late Middle Ages take on unanticipated relevance. It is thus a real boon for this strikingly effective book to appear at this time. The key to Tyerman's signal success is his ability to explain both the vicious brutality and the serious Christian altruism that were so intimately intertwined in the crusading experience and that have left such a tangled legacy for Muslim-Christian relations to this day. (Mark A. Noll *Christian Century* 2006-10-17) *God's War* is a long but highly readable account of this extensive back-and-forth struggle. It is an impressive achievement, a work that manages to tie together an extraordinary number of threads across nearly half a millennium of European history. Although it can be taken as a response to Pope Benedict XVI's comments at Regensburg, it is more properly read as an extended rejoinder to Steven Runciman's classic three-volume *History of the Crusades*, published in the early 1950s, a long and colorful account that is nonetheless studded with judgments that now seem prejudiced and amateurish. Tyerman, by contrast, is never amateurish. His knowledge of the period is encyclopedic, and his judgments are sharp, astute, and fair--which is to say unsparing--to both camps. He neither vilifies Islam nor engages in the easy Euro-bashing that is the obverse of Islamophobia. With so many people succumbing to subjectivism these days, it is bracing to come across a historian who remains resolutely above the fray, who insists on viewing the conflict as a whole and who always has the broader context in mind. (Daniel Lazare *The Nation* 2006-12-11) Christopher Tyerman's *God's War* is comprehensive, fascinating, and timely. It deflates comparisons of current U.S. strategies with the Crusades. True, the participation of religious in battle (like Odo on the Bayeux Tapestry) is noteworthy, but so is Tyerman's questioning of the cliché 'Age of Faith.' Indeed, while these books make the Middle Ages seem real, they also make it seem different, and our capacity to entertain the differences is morally crucial. (Tom D'Evelyn *Providence Journal*) Christopher Tyerman's *God's War: A New History of the Crusades* is a doorstop of a book, a mammoth effort to retell, based on modern scholarship, the story of how Western Christendom made war to wrest the Holy Lands from Muslim hands. As we all know, this isn't considered ancient history in the Middle East. (Fritz Lanham *Houston Chronicle*) This thick book compares favorably to Sir Steven Runciman's three-volume *A History of the Crusades* (1951-54), but where Runciman, writing a half century ago, saw the Crusades as Christianity's moral failure, Tyerman sees a violent era: neither Christians nor Moslems were peaceful, and both faced dangerous enemies... In addition to persuasive revisionist interpretations of individual crusades, Tyerman treats the broader scope of crusading, including Spain, the Balkans, and the Baltic. Most importantly for historians, the author sees nothing in the Crusades than can inform modern politics. (W. L. Urban *Choice* 2007-03-01) *God's War* is the new standard in the field... Adjectives for [it] almost fail. "Comprehensive," "monumental," and "epic" come to mind, and they are appropriate but scarcely adequate. In brief, this is a work by a master historian. (Alfred J. Andrea *CT* 2007-07-01) Christopher Tyerman... has written a tome that... draws on the most recent scholarship and offers fresh insights, demolishing myths galore. (A. G. Noorani *Frontline* 2007-05-04) Christopher Tyerman has crafted a superb book whose majestic architecture compares with Runciman's classic study of the Crusades. He is an entertaining as well as reliable guide to the bizarre centuries-long episode in which Western Christianity willfully ignored its Master's principles of love and forgiveness. (Diarmaid MacCulloch, author of *Thomas Cranmer: a Life*)