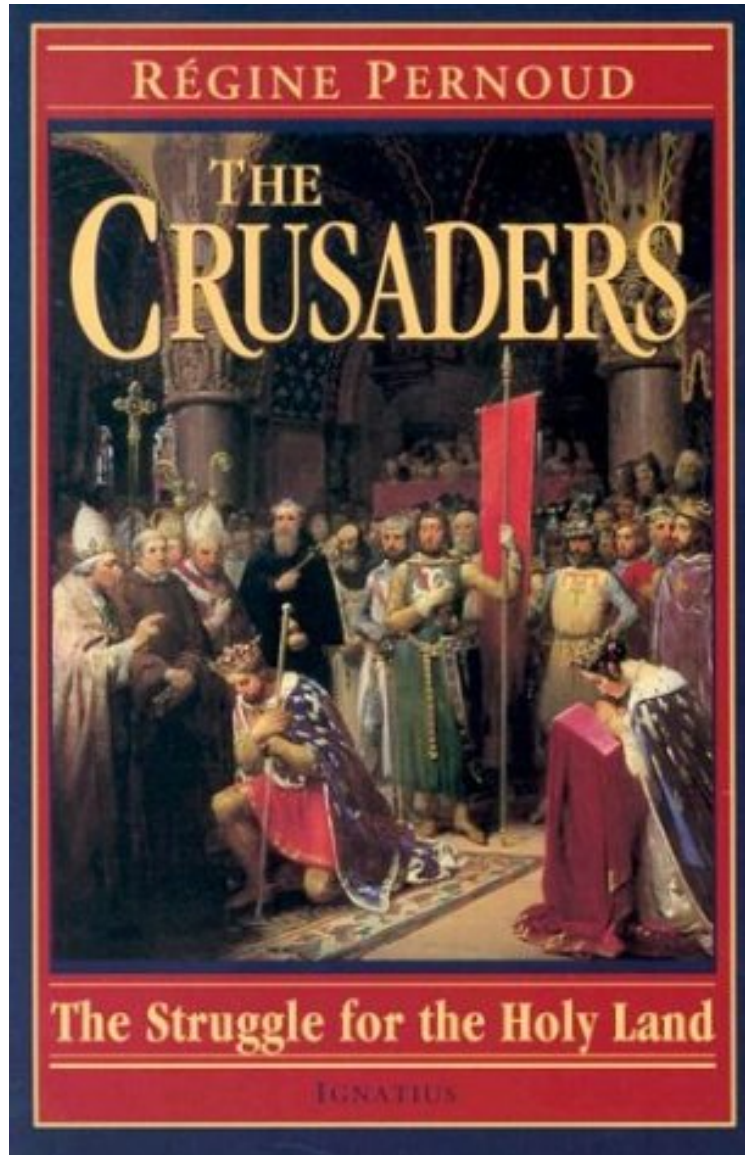


(Download) The Crusaders: The Struggle for the Holy Land

The Crusaders: The Struggle for the Holy Land

Regine Pernoud

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Regine Pernoud : The Crusaders: The Struggle for the Holy Land before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Crusaders: The Struggle for the Holy Land:

5 of 5 people found the following review helpful. A FRENCH HISTORIAN PROVIDES A MORE "POSITIVE" PERSPECTIVE ON THE CRUSADES By Steven H Propp Regine Pernoud (1909-1998) was a French historian and medievalist; she wrote many other books, such as Those Terrible Middle Ages: Debunking the Myths, Joan of Arc: Her Story The Templars: Knights of Christ, A Day with a Noblewoman, etc. She wrote in the Introduction to this 1959

book, "The Crusades represent one of the peaks of achievement of the medieval world, for they are an exploit unique in its kind, being neither migration nor colonization, but a movement of volunteers... For us today they are indeed an amazing spectacle, and one that leads us to conjecture about the men who took part in them. It is from this angle alone that we propose to look at the Crusades... and thus attempt a better understanding of the men who lived through them. What were their modes of life, their outlook, their customs, their mentality?... What was it that stirred them to action, to battle, to love?" She notes that prior to the Crusades, "pilgrims were at the mercy of the whim of such a ruler as the sadistic Caliph Hakim. In 1009 he began without warning to persecute both Christians and Jews and to destroy all the churches and monasteries in Palestine, a savage act that aroused great feeling among the peoples of the West." (Pg. 25) Of the First Crusade, she says, "Contrary to what one might have expected, there was little pillaging on the way. Indeed, there was remarkably little, considering the number of people moving along the roads and the difficulty or enforcing discipline among troops---especially those of the People's Crusade---whose recruitment and formation had been left somewhat to chance." (Pg. 63) She admits, "The massacre that marked the taking of Jerusalem is a tale of blood and horror, and it would have been better for the honor of the Crusaders if it had never been told... It must be remembered, though, that these men had journeyed for three years in constant danger of their lives; that they had known hunger, thirst, and terrible suffering; and that many of them did not reach the end of the road. Their feelings had been exasperated beyond all bearing by the insults that the Muslims had flung at the Cross of Christ from the safety of their ramparts. Is it not surprising that victory was marked by such an outburst of fury; nevertheless the luster of the achievement has been irreparably dulled." (Pg. 81) She also acknowledges, "While the People's Crusade was making its way through central Europe, certain things happened in Germany that popular opinion has confused with events marking the passage of Peter the Hermit's followers. These events showed the dark reverse of the crusading movement. They revealed leaders who were either priests of dubious character... or else brigands... Men like these gathered their followers for a Crusade, but before setting out they were responsible for a number of atrocities against the Jews." (Pg. 126) She observes, "During the course of the thirteenth century ... the activity of the preachers increased in inverse proportion to the amount of enthusiasm for a Crusade. It is significant that the same age that fixed the status of a Crusader from a juridical point of view also turned the preaching of a Crusade into a sort of institution. In the same way, feudal customs were first put into writing at the time when they were beginning to decline. There was felt an instinctive need to protect them, but instead it changed them into an administrative shall---the very opposite of living custom. The thirteenth century was the time when the crusading movement lost its enthusiasm and became an institution." (Pg. 217-218) This is a fascinating and informative perspective on the Crusades, which is an effective counterweight to the portrayals in many other books, as well as the popular media.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Five Stars
By FrancesMonica I appreciate reading a very detailed and objective view of the Crusades. There are many quotes by many actual crusaders included. This book arrived in great condition.
5 of 12 people found the following review helpful. A meandering stroll, not a march...
By Jacques Talbot I bought this book based on the reviews for this and other works, looking for a good introduction to a topic about which I don't know much. Having read it, I'm a little surprised at the high rating it enjoys--not that it's a bad book, actually there's a lot to like about it, but I thought it suffered from a couple of problems that keep me from giving it higher marks. Specifically:
1. I was looking for a book that would tell me what happened--who did what when. This is not that book. It is very tenuously structured according to themes for each chapter: "The Barons," "Women," etc. The main problem with this approach is that Pernoud constantly jumps around from year to year, crusade to crusade, event to event, and for someone like myself without a very solid grasp of the basic chronology, sequence of events, and main players in the drama, it can be quite confusing, or at least leave one with no more than an unorganized mish-mash of vignettes. A secondary problem with this approach is that the material, at least as presented by Pernoud, does not lend itself to this type of categorization. A reader really can't expect to read "The Churchmen" for example and find all the information about religious figures and their activities; in the end, the chapters within the book are also a mish-mash of information.
2. Even without a lot of prior knowledge, it becomes clear from reading Pernoud's book that she is being very selective in the material she presents. In other words, there's a lot she leaves out. A LOT. Again, if this is a topic the reader is already familiar with, this may not be a big mark against, but for a reader like me who comes to this book looking to come away with solid information and understanding it's a huge disappointment. This book really struck me as being the quite personal musings of someone who has long lived with this material and thought about it for many years. It has an informal, almost conversational feel to it. In some ways that's quite nice, but I'm not at a level of familiarity with the Crusades that allows me to fully appreciate this aspect; it's more a source of frustration.
3. The book is unremittingly Eurocentric. That could be OK, but I found it quite limiting and I do not share other reviewers' opinion that she gives a "fair and balanced" picture. I'm not talking about giving the Muslims equal time or coming down hard on the evil imperialist arrogance of the invaders; but while Pernoud does note a couple of the shortcomings of individual characters--and really, given the grand fiasco the Crusades were how could she not--she writes as one totally identified with and uncritical of the idea of reconquering the Holy Land for Christendom. She is quite loquacious when describing the sentiments of King Louis VII (Saint Louis), but comparatively silent on the subject of his competence as a leader or the much more widespread cynicism and greed that inspired the actions of many leading

figures.4. There is only one map in the book and that is basically useless. Apart from these misgivings, I quite liked the book. It is a quick, easy read, as I said, quite conversational in tone. Pernoud clearly has emotional attachment to some of the material, and she makes these quite clear in the course of the book. So long as the reader is familiar with the topic and able to read between the lines, this is fine--it lends a refreshing air of personal relevance and feeling in a genre of writing that all too often suffers from the stifling effect of academic rigor (mortis).

There is no shortage of stories about the crusades, or of biographies of those who played the leading roles in this, the greatest epic of the Middle Ages. But there has been no book in which we could find, recreated, the way of life, the world view, the everyday social organization of those who tempted adventure. They were kings and paupers, barons, clerks, women, and merchants. Some were driven by their faith, others by the spirit of conquest, and some by a hunger for greatness and wealth. Rgine Pernoud presents for us a living picture in which we can view, first hand, the awe of the Christians as they beheld the Muslim world, the myriad ordeals they sustained while traveling for years in unknown lands, and the remarkable way in which they managed to adapt, to colonize, to erect churches and fortresses, and to abide for centuries in the face of an adversary far greater in number. Here, an unrecognized page in our history finally reveals itself. A great historian and writer brings this colorful period alive. Rgine Pernoud, a renowned French archivist and historian, is among the greatest medievalists of our times, and the success of her books has helped to bring the Middle Ages closer to us. Among her numerous works are *Those Terrible Middle Ages!* and *Women in the Days of the Cathedrals*.