

The Ennobling Oath

A Pilgrim's Reflection on the Historiography of the Knights Templar

Seminar #5: The Scholars vs Popular View

We now know much more than ever before about the Crusades. Unfortunately, little of this has reached a general audience—leaving the field to novelists, journalists, or anyone else with a desire to sell books...Frustrated with the ways in which the Crusades have been used and distorted, a few historians are now attempting to close the yawning gap between the academy and general readers.

Thomas Madden, "Crusaders and Historians," *First Things*, June 2005

A. Four basic questions every SMOTJ Knight should know how to answer:

1. What is "The Crusades" and why should we care?
 - a. Crusades were military expeditions undertaken by European Christians in the 11th, 12th, and 13th centuries to recover the Holy Land...
 - b. But: is what was once a "holy" now secularized as "Just War" and part of America policy of regime change?
 - c. Compare First Crusade Mission (1095–1099)—
 - Defend Eastern Christians from Muslim aggression
 - Make pilgrimages to Jerusalem safer
 - Redirect knights' aggression
 - Recapture the Holy Sepulcher
2. How could Christians do this?
 - a. Christians faced the military and political threat of Islam
 - b. Catholics of 11th century invested the pope with more authority; Urban referred to himself as "spiritual ruler of the whole world."
 - c. Europeans, after centuries of political and economic disintegration, entered a new era of self-conscious unity
 - d. How could they? The "conditions were right"—Christian crusaders were swept along by the tides of history
3. Why are the Crusades such a prominent part of history?
 - a. If we fail to see the crusaders' spiritual ideals, we misperceive the spirit of the times. The evil elements of the Crusades, though repulsive, are not the whole story...
 - b. Urban II wanted to defend Christian society against the Muslim offensive...if Christians permitted them to go unchallenged, "they will extend their sway more widely over many faithful servants of the Lord"; does this have a ring of America's and the West's motivation to stop militant Islam?
 - c. Christians of the Crusades believed that violence, if used rightly, based on Augustine's principles of "just war"
 - d. Lesson: unfortunately, this ideal evaporated in the heat on the way to the Holy Land. The just defense of Christians faded from view, and Christians became increasingly inflamed with avenging the wrongs perpetrated against Christians and their holy places—especially Jerusalem.
4. What is your narrative for being part of the modern Order of Templars?

B. Crusade Historiography Suggested Readings: **1950—Present**

1. Thomas F. Madden, *The Concise History of the Crusades*, Roman & Littlefield, 2013
2. Jonathan Riley-Smith, *The Crusades, Christianity, and Islam*, Columbia University Press, 2008
3. Christopher Tyerman, *Fighting for Christendom: Holy War and the Crusades*, Oxford University Press, 2005
4. Johnathan Phillips, *The Fourth Crusade and the Sack of Constantinople*, Viking, 2004
5. Thomas Asbridge, *The First Crusade: A New History*, Oxford University Press, 2004