



# The New Concise History of the Crusades (Critical Issues in World and International History)

*Thomas F. Madden*

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A third edition of this book is now available. How have the crusades contributed to Islamist rage and terrorism today? Were the crusades the Christian equivalent of modern jihad? In this sweeping yet crisp history, Thomas F. Madden offers a brilliant and compelling narrative of the crusades and their contemporary relevance. With a cry of "God wills it!" medieval knights ushered in a new era in European history. Across Europe a wave of pious enthusiasm led many thousands to leave their homes, family, and friends to march to distant lands in a great struggle for Christ. Yet the crusades were more than simply a holy war. They represent a synthesis of attitudes and values that were uniquely medieval so medieval, in fact, that the crusading movement is rarely understood today. Placing all the major crusades within the medieval social, economic, religious, and intellectual environments that gave birth to the movement and nurtured it for centuries, Madden brings the distant medieval world vividly to life. From Palestine and Europe's farthest reaches, each crusade is recounted in a clear, concise narrative. The author gives special attention as well to the crusades' effects on the Islamic world and the Christian Byzantine East. More information is available on the author's website."

## The New Concise History of the Crusades (Critical Issues in World and International History) Details

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## **From Reader Review The New Concise History of the Crusades (Critical Issues in World and International History) for online ebook**

### **Sandy Salzinger says**

OK, this was a slog. I would have had more of a tough time if it was more than 225 pages. Not really the author's fault- his writing is crisp and to the point. There's just so much information! It was a good introduction to this period of time. I've come to the conclusion that reading about specific events in history is probably preferable to histories of large swaths of time. But in retrospect, I certainly learned a lot that I didn't know before and it is a good launching off point for further research.

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### **Susan says**

The New Concise History of the Crusades by Thomas F. Madden This book provides an excellent look at the crusades, putting them in perspective for their time and in relation to current world politics. It is a great overview for the uninitiated and a great review for folks who have studied the crusades.

The book opens by providing a setting just prior to the first crusade, placing us in the mindset of Medieval Europeans. From there, the information is laid out chronologically. The book closes with the authors analysis of how the crusades were held up as examples of chivalry, later to be reviled as early colonialism, and finally how they relate to modern politics. The pacing is good, not getting bogged down in minutiae or in lists of dry ancient reference texts. Occasionally, there were more names being used than I could keep easy track of, simply because I was unfamiliar with the subject matter.

I learned quite a bit from this book and that makes me happy. Before listening to this book, what little I know came from popular movies and books, and, of course, I couldn't rely on those to be accurate. I really liked how the book was laid out chronologically and I deeply appreciated the author's constant efforts to have the reader think like a Medieval European.

In addition to this, the author often gave examples of Muslim impressions of the crusades. This in particular was fascinating. For Europeans, and even Americans, the crusades were a big deal, and continue to influence our culture, if mostly through popular media. At the time of the crusades, the Muslim world barely took note of them, seeing them as just yet one more barbarian force to be repelled (and the crusades were often repelled). The crusades had a greater impact on the Byzantine Empire, mostly because places were sacked and sometimes burned.

It was fascinating to see how the crusades evolved over time. Initially, the word 'crusade' was not associated with the pilgrims who ventured east for religious enrichment. Old, young, sick, healthy, men, & women traveled on pilgrimage. It was only later that such pilgrimages became armed men crusading to the east, with the blessing of pope and lord, to defend Christian lands.

In short, this book was an excellent read and definitely worth shelf space as a reference work. It is chock full of info on the European leaders, the Byzantine reactions, the few bits directly affection Muslim affairs, and how the crusades were affected by the Mongols. The book does an excellent job of placing the reader in a Europe steeped in a religious culture and how that affected, even directed, the actions of European leaders. It's even worth a reread.

Narration: Claton Butcher gave a good performance. He had a clear voice that used a little emotion as needed, so it was not textbook dry. He also went to the effort of pronouncing people and place names with the correct accents. Such touches are so appreciated by this listener!

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## Michael says

Normally I wouldn't give a short survey of this sort four stars. It is very well written, though not especially eloquent. It is simply a brief overview of the entire crusading era. Individual crusades and even battles that could use book length treatments are covered in a matter of pages. Nonetheless, the author's intentions: 1) to give the reader a full picture of what took place during the various crusades, and perhaps more importantly, 2) to once and for all demolish long-held fantasies about the Crusades and the crusaders, is smashingly accomplished. It is brief but comprehensive, even the bibliography is profoundly educational. It dismantles the Marxist economic-determinist interpretation of the Crusades as unprovoked pre-colonialism by the warmongering and wealth-craving West, perpetrated against the peace-loving East. While Bill Clinton and his ilk point to the Crusades as sowing the seeds of 9/11 (not mentioned in the book), in fact the Crusades were utterly unremembered and unknown in the Muslim world until the last 100 years. Madden reminds readers that the Crusades were launched after Islamic conquest had conquered nearly 75% of Christendom. This book does a superb job of whetting the reader's whistle for more in-depth study of this unbelievably fascinating epoch and clash of civilizations and religions.

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## Toonvanelst says

As one who obtained a master degree in medieval history with a thesis on the fifth crusade, I feel it is my duty to recommend this new concise history of the crusade to everybody who wants to learn more on the crusades.

Comments on the shortness or occasional lack of detail of this marvelous account are not to be taken serious. The author clearly defines that he only wants to tell the bare essentials of crusader history. He wants to sketch the big trends and evolutions in the latin East and the West and comment upon the most important events and their short and long distance results. Thomas F. Madden was succesfull in his outset on every point.

Furthermore, the author takes up his responsibility as a historian to dispell the most tenacious misconceptions and popular beliefs on crusader history. This book contains the most recent theories accepted by the current generation of modern crusader historians. But it is not elitist or closed off to a small part of the population that already has a certain knowledge about the crusades. It is accesible to all.

In a time where the crusades are wrongfully applied to justify recent wars and acts of violence, everybody should take the time to get informed properly. The new concise history of the crusades is an excellent, honest and thrustworthy starting point to arm yourself against misuse of the past.

Read it!

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## John says

Though this is an informative and useful work for an introduction to the subject, the author comes very close to editorializing in favor of the Crusaders. Although one could say that choosing a side is inevitable, this is a subject that one should work hard towards having a "Just the facts, ma'am" approach.

## Christopher says

Anyone wanting great knowledge of the Christian account of the crusades should read this book!

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## Lisa says

Ch. 2: Pope Urban II called for the first crusade and they captured Jerusalem.

Ch. 3: Rise of Latin kingdom of Jerusalem and second crusade

Ch. 4: 3rd Crusade and Decline of Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem. Nur Ed-Din unified the Muslims and preached Jihad against the crusaders while the crusader states crumbled. Nur Ed-Din died, and then Saladin united Egypt and Syria and waged Jihad, aiming to take Jerusalem and all the Holy Land from the crusaders. The crusaders, parched in the hot desert and without water, were defeated by Saladin's army at the Horns of Hattin, an extinct volcano. This was the biggest defeat of the crusades. All the great cities capitulated after this, including Jerusalem. Pope Urban III called for a third crusade, the largest military enterprise of the Middle Ages, led by kings and other elite, including Frederick Barbarossa (the German "Roman emperor" that the Byzantine emperor resented), Richard the Lionheart of England (who eventually took command of the entire crusade), and Philip Augustus of France. The Teutonic knights, another military order, was also born at this time and received lands in the Levant and Germany. Richard the Lionheart helped capture Cyprus which was a rich source of provisions and remained under Latin rule for the next four centuries. Richard and his men tried to retake Egypt and Jerusalem but were never successful. He had to go back home to keep Philip from taking his lands in France, but he did manage to secure a truce with Saladin so pilgrims could visit the Holy Land, plus the kingdoms on the coast were restored to the Latins and their divisions healed.

Ch.5: The fourth crusade to win back Egypt and Jerusalem: Innocent III called for another crusade. He called for a truce among the warring knights; many agreed to go. The crusaders first made a treaty with Venice to pay them for a fleet of ships and supplies. The crusaders failed to raise the sums necessary, since only a third of the number expected showed up. So the crusaders agreed to help Venice recover Zara. This was not successful as the Pope was against the crusaders attacking a Christian city. Then Alexius IV of Constantinople asked the crusaders to help him retake the emperor's throne. In return, he would help finance their crusade. They agreed, but after Alexius failed to pay them back for helping him regain the crown, they sacked Constantinople, ravaging the city, its riches, and its people, including women and children.

Ch. 6: Albigensian crusade: Simon de Montfort took control of this and was given all conquered lands at the Fourth Lateran Council. Raymond of Toulouse tried to recapture lands but failed. The Peace of Paris ended the crusade, Raymond was absolved, but he had to pay the crown a large war indemnity and to give his wife, Joan, to the brother of Louis IX. The result was that all the lands of Toulouse ended up as part of the patrimony of the king of France. The Dominican inquisitors eventually put an end to the Albigensians in Languedoc. The children's crusade: Nicholas of Cologne inspired millions of poor people to follow him to Jerusalem and rescue it from the Muslims after the sea would open up for them. In Lombardy the group separated, most went home, and some were sold into slavery. The Teutonic Knights led the Baltic Crusades against the pagan Prussians and conquered the region.

Ch. 7: Innocent III called for people from all walks of life to fight in the fifth crusade and/or help finance it. This gave spiritual benefits, such as the crusading indulgence, to even women, the elderly, and sick. This was the seed of abuses that led to the Protestant Reformation. Frederick II, the Holy Roman Emperor, also heeded the call. It became a papally sanctioned war against the infidel rather than a pilgrimage. The

crusaders first tried to conquer Egypt via Damietta. They captured it, but then lost it again and had to evacuate Egypt. Emp. Frederick kept delaying, but after marrying the daughter of King John of Brienne of Jerusalem, he declared himself king of Jerusalem and eventually made a treaty with the sultan which included a 10-year truce and gave to Frederick a strip of land connecting the Holy Sites to the coast. In return, Jerusalem remained defenseless and unfortified and Muslim residents remained with own justice and means to safeguard their religious interests.

Ch. 8: Louis IX (St. Louis) launched two well-organized crusades to win back Jerusalem. His first goal was to conquer Damietta, Egypt. This failed. Next he went to Jerusalem to help the Christians there. He calmed dissensions there and rebuilt fortifications. He left and then the Mongols arrived with the goal of conquering a world empire. They too failed to gain Syria. St. Louis launched a second crusade starting at Tunis. He died there.

Ch. 9: The crusader states were wiped away without a trace. In the 14th century the power of the pope declined while the power of monarchs increased. The Ottoman empire captured Constantinople. There continued to more attempts made to launch crusades up through the 1500s.

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### **Gabriel Jones says**

I believe this book does an excellent job with examining each of the crusades from a practical perspective of evaluating the purpose of each crusade, whether or not each crusade was justified, and how we should reflect on the crusades from our modern perspective. Some of the historical accounts range from miraculous stories of victory to selfish, wicked acts of depravity. I found the book quite dry and difficult to read after the third crusade, but it still serves as helpful resource for someone who has not studied the topic before.

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### **RK-isme says**

Only read this book if you're a student and it's assigned reading.

It was okay but as a 'concise' history I must say that too much was cut out. A great many events but little detail. There is an obvious Christian bias here which meant that much of what was left out was that which may not look good for the Catholic Church. It's sort of a bloodless Crusades. And this is a passionless review. You don't have to 'like' it.

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### **Blair says**

#### **The Story of the Crusades in Historical Perspective**

The "Big Bang" theory of the Crusades claims they were the first round of European colonialism and imperialism, ruthlessly attacking the civilized and peaceful Muslim civilizations of the East, causing them irreparable harm and even being the reason they became radicalized.

The crusades need to be examined in their historical context. The Muslims had conquered the heart of Christianity, including Egypt and Syria as well as the Holy Land. Historian Thomas Madden reminds us that the people of Medieval Europe simply did not think the way we do today, so judging their actions by modern

standards is misleading. Christianity was as central to their lives as Islam was for Muslims. Violence was endemic in their society, as it was in the Middle East.

### **The First Crusade to a Divided East**

The First Crusade was declared with intention defending the Byzantine Empire against Muslim attacks. It also had the beneficial effect of giving the armies plaguing Europe something to do other than fight each other. Arab occupied Jerusalem had allowed Christian churches to flourish in order to encourage the pilgrims who were its major source of income. When the Seljuk Turks captured Jerusalem, churches were destroyed, clergy murdered, and pilgrims seized. This provided popular motivation for the First Crusade with atrocity stories of the holy places being defiled and pilgrims attacked.

The seeming miracle of the conquest of Jerusalem during the First Crusade was made possible because the conflict between Fatimid Egypt and the Seljuk Turks had divided and weakened the Muslim side. The Fatimids has just retaken Jerusalem a year before the Christian conquest. As with most other campaigns, it was a tale of internal rivalry and conflict on both the Christian and Muslim sides. It seems that the side with the least internal conflict at the time would prevail.

### **Concise, or a Selective Use of Material?**

Madden challenges the conception that the conquest of Jerusalem was an unusually violent affair.

*"By the standards of the time, adhered to by both Christians and Muslims, the crusaders would have been justified in putting the entire population of Jerusalem to the sword [for resisting the invaders]. Despite later highly exaggerated reports, however, that is not what happened. It is true that many of the inhabitants, both Muslims and Jews, were killed in the initial fray. Yet many were also allowed to purchase their freedom or were simply expelled from the city. Later stories of the streets of Jerusalem coursing with knee-high rivers of blood were never meant to be taken seriously. Medieval people knew such a thing to be an impossibility. Modern people, unfortunately, often do not."*

There is no consideration of the weight of evidence for this firm conclusion. I therefore compared the author's account with that from the Muslim historian Ibn al-Athir, from Arab Historians of the Crusades. He reports (without suggesting it is unusual or shocking) that the crusaders massacred the population of every city they conquered on the way to Jerusalem during the First Crusade. As for Jerusalem itself, Ibn al-Athir writes:

*"The population was put to the sword by the Franks, who pillaged the area for a week. A band of Muslims barricaded themselves into the Oratory of David and fought on for several days. They were granted their lives in return for surrendering. The Franks honoured their word, and the group left by night for Ascalon. In the Masjid al-Aqsa the Franks slaughtered more than 70,000 people, among them a large number of Imams and Muslim scholars, devout and ascetic men who had left their homelands to live lives of pious seclusion in the Holy Place."*

These two accounts are not strictly contradictory, but they leave a very different impression. Madden chose to omit many details of crusader brutality. He does not mention that, according to the Frankish chronicler Radulph of Caen, *"In Ma'arra our troops boiled pagan adults in cooking-pots; they impaled children on spits and devoured them grilled."* It should be kept in mind that the soldiers were starving, and there is no evidence that this horrific event happened more than once.

I get the impression our Roman Catholic author is deliberately understating the brutality of the crusaders, perhaps to compensate for exaggeration elsewhere. But this is more than following the title's promise to be concise - it amounts to selective use of evidence. Is the burning of the one hundred thousand "impious"

books in the library in Tripoli a minor detail to be left out of a “concise” account, or does it tell us something about Catholic thinking at the time he would rather forget? He does correctly point out the behavior of the crusaders was little different from that of the Muslims in the same time period.

### **Life in the Crusader States**

The crusader state in the Middle East lasted for nearly 200 years. During this time it became a normal player in an already fragmented region, engaging in commerce and joining military alliances with neighboring Islamic powers. The Westerners adopted some aspects of the local Arabic culture, although there was little religious interaction between them. A Muslim writer is quoted as saying that although some of the Franks (as they called the westerners) had taken to living like Muslims, there were interesting differences:

*"The Franks are without any vestige of a sense of honor and jealousy. If one of them goes along the street with his wife and meets a friend, this man will take the woman's hand and lead here aside to talk, while the husband stands by waiting until she has finished her conversation. If she takes too long about it he leaves her with the other man and goes on his way."*

### **The Fourth Crusade Disaster**

The Fourth Crusade is a story of unintended consequences. The city of Venice was contracted to construct a fleet for the crusaders. They also had a trading relationship with Egypt, the target of the crusade, thus there was a conflict of interest. The crusaders turned up in far fewer numbers than expected and could not afford to pay.

The convenient solution was for the crusaders to attack the Croatian (thus Christian) city of Zara, which had rebelled against the Venetians. Then they were enticed by an exiled prince of Constantinople to travel to that city and restore his "rightful" rule, which would supposedly meet little resistance. Of course it did not work out that way, and the crusaders found themselves in a desperate situation. Although greatly outnumbered, the mercenary soldiers of Constantinople had little will to fight, and the crusaders ended up conquering the city of their fellow Christians. Although Constantinople tried to peacefully surrender, he tells us, *"The army of Christ fell upon the Queen of Cities with startling ferocity."* The Christians brutally sacked the city, causing it permanent damage from which it never really recovered.

### **Crusading Against Fellow Christians**

Crusading was not confined to the Middle East. The Reconquista campaign to roll back the Muslim occupation of Spain was also considered to be a crusade. Nor were crusades limited to fighting Islam. Pogroms against the Jews occurred in the Rhineland, although he argues they were carried out by those unfit for the real crusade (meaning the lower classes), and were opposed by the church hierarchy (but how hard did they really try?). There was also constant crusading against the pagans in the northeast of Europe. We are told, *"In short, they were given a choice: convert or die. Here was a true Christian holy war."* It is interesting that Jews and Muslims in the Middle East did not receive this treatment.

Crusades were also declared against fellow Christians, such as the Albigensians (or Cathars) in southwestern France. The casual way he refers to this as a heresy suggests that he really believes they strayed from the True Mother Church, and deserved what they got. Massacres of entire cities were not enough to finish the job. But he concludes, *"Thanks to the work of the Dominican inquisitors, Albigensianism was virtually extinct in Languedoc within a century."* The Dominican Order was created for this purpose.

### **Turks and Protestants: Fellow Enemies of the Faith**

In the 1500's the Turks became a serious military threat, occupying large parts of Eastern Europe. As a result, in his words, the church "failed to recognize the danger from within", which was Martin Luther and the Protestant reformation. Thus "*the Protestants and the Turks had a mutually beneficial, although unintentional, relationship... Without them, Protestantism might conceivably have gone the way of Albigensianism.*" The situation at the time was very complex, so this may be overstated. But one gets the impression the failure to slaughter the Protestants might be a matter of regret.

### **The Legacy of the Crusades**

Madden finishes the book with a discussion of the legacy of the Crusades, both in the West and for Muslims. He says:

*"It is one of the most remarkable events in history that the Latin West, an internally divided region seemingly on the brink of conquest by a powerful empire, suddenly burst forth with amazing new energy, neutralizing its enemies and expanding across the globe. Amazingly, the specter of advancing Muslim armies, which for centuries had posed such danger, no longer constituted a serious threat. Indeed, as the gaze of Europeans spanned new global horizons, they soon forgot that such a threat had existed at all. The Muslim world was no longer viewed as a dreaded enemy, but simply as one more backward culture. From that perspective the medieval crusades seemed distant and unnecessary - a discarded artifact from the childhood of a civilization."*

While he mentions that the "new energy" of the West derived from its science and industry, it is worth noting that occurred because of the Protestant Reformation and the decline in power of his beloved Catholic Church that tried to suppress that very science. The West "won" the crusades by losing the religious reason to fight them in the first place.

### **A Constructed Long Memory**

*"It is commonly said that memories in the Middle East are long, that although the crusades may have been forgotten in the West, they were still vividly remembered where they happened. This is false. The simple fact is that the crusades were virtually unknown in the Muslim world even a century ago. The term for the crusades, *harb al-salib*, was only introduced into the Arab language in the mid-nineteenth century. The first Arabic history of the crusades was not written until 1899."*

Although the crusades were of monumental importance to Europeans, to the Muslims they were a minor episode in the many other wars fought against various infidels. The actual impact was trivial compared with the destruction of Baghdad by the Mongols, to give just one example. The prominent place of the crusades in Muslim ideology today is a "constructed memory", taught to them by Europeans in the nineteenth century. It may be convenient to blame western imperialism for the decline of the Muslim empire, but the Crusades had little to do with it.

However artificial this constructed memory might be, one must remember that it has been around for over a century now, and is therefore is now an integral part of the Muslim identity. The point of this book is to help us stop feeding this delusion we created.

### **Not Much Difference Between the Two Sides**

After reading this and other works about the Crusades, my conclusion is there was little real difference between the two sides. Crusading is simply the Christian version of jihad. Both sides had moral standards that they usually failed to live up to. Slaughter of civilians was normal and expected, although breaking your word when you made a deal not to slaughter them was considered reprehensible. Both sides were beset by internal rivalry, and spent more time fighting among themselves than against each other.

While there is some selection of evidence to downplay Crusader brutality, it does not really affect the integrity of the work. I recommend this book to anyone interested in understanding the impact of the crusades on Western and Islamic history. But read other accounts as well.

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## Carlos says

This book was simply amazing! Madden takes you through the almost six centuries of western European history that were influenced by the idea of the Crusades. Furthermore, Madden is able to make the reader appreciate the Crusades through the lenses of the people who lived and were influenced by them. Throughout the book, Madden is able to show the most vital aspects of the Crusades without being bogged down by the details of every military tactic. Likewise, through the use of excellent maps at every stage of the Crusades Madden is able to give the reader a geographic picture of what the crusading world looked like. Lastly, without classifying the actions of the men in charge of these campaigns Madden is able to show all the ideals that motivated the crusaders, from the most selfish to the truly pious. Since Madden doesn't make judgment calls on the actions taken by these men, the prose feels as close as one can get to the objective truth that modern journalism aspires to achieve in events of war. Moreover, what topped Madden's already fascinating book was his analysis of the perceptions of the Crusades throughout the centuries. First of all, Madden takes the narrative of the Crusades all the way up to the eve of the Protestant Reformation in an attempt to demonstrate how the impact of the crusading mentality affected Europe until Europe no longer considered itself a unified Catholic region. By rounding off the most iconic part of the Middle Ages with the beginnings of the Renaissance Madden is able to put the globe into its appropriate perspective for students who try to understand the changes that started the Renaissance. Finally, Madden concludes the book with a discussion of the perception of the Crusades from a historical and academic point of view in the last few centuries. This is where the book seems to shine for me; Madden tries to put the Crusades back into a historic perspective while trying to point out all the ways in which the Crusades have been judged by the most convenient narrative of the current political movement. He shows how they were first sanctified as civilizing missions to the barbaric Middle East during the imperialistic decades of the 18th and 19th centuries; he shows how they were demonized as warlike colonial imperialism during the later part of the 20th century. Likewise, in a magnificent analysis of the Middle Eastern Islamic histories of the Middle Ages, Madden is able to show how the entire concept of the Crusades was foreign to the peoples who westerners think as most deeply affected by them. Madden shows how in the politically diverse region where the Crusades took place, the Muslims saw the Crusades as nothing more than another political power fighting for dominance. Furthermore, Madden shows how the European concept of the Crusades was only shared with the Middle East after the colonial period after WWI. Madden then ends the book by calling the reading to try to understand the Crusades as a historical event through the lens of the societies who have rise to it, not by the societies who sought to characterize them.

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## Gabe says

Just as promised, a concise history of the crusades with some thought on what they stand for in the grand scheme of history, including some thoughts on other famous takes written by historians or in pop culture.

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## Jason Young says

Thorough, interesting, concise and very well written, just not my favorite subject.

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## Don says

A fine overview of an important part of history that is widely misunderstood or ignored, particularly in the United States.

The author does a fine job of describing who, what, when, where, and to some degree, why this strange chapter of history unfolded in Europe and the Middle East. The book is certainly a solid, accurate account ... until he bumbles his way through the final pages covering The Legacy and Conclusion. He apparently was out of space and out of time, because he summarily dismisses several fine works as "wrong." He actually seemed to resent Karen Armstrong (*Holy War*) and James Reston Jr. (*Warriors of God*), for being popular authors, and goes on to contradict himself to the point of coming across as a two-bit Catholic apologist. To his credit, the rest of the book did not seem to betray his bias that comes clear only at the end.

Simply put, it's too bad he didn't convince his editors that he needed a few more pages and a few more days to explain his ideas more clearly, because ... well, he just doesn't do that very well at the end. He would have done much better, in fact, to delete the Legacy and Conclusion, because of his obvious discomfort with those topics. He says flatly that "it is not the crusades that led to the attacks of Sept. 11, but the artificial memory of the crusades constructed by modern colonial powers and passed down by Arab nationalists and Islamists."

Uh... isn't that true about just about *everything* in history?

-- It is not the French-and-Indian War and the resulting debt and confusion that led to the Declaration of Independence, it was the rabble-rousers (Payne, Adams, et al) who constructed artificial issues.

-- WWI did not lead directly to WWII, it was really a emotional construct of Adolf Hitler and the Third Reich.

-- And, the mortgage bubble did not lead to the current overall economic crisis, but the way it was portrayed by those who passed it down.

Riiiiight. Because if those who write and talk about these things would have done it differently, then it could have remained a secret, and then there wouldn't have been a run on the market, etc. Too bad about the way those guys artificially constructed that thing, eh?

But that's what apologists do, they shift the discussion incrementally so they can fit it for a new set of lenses.

Fortunately, we don't have to be (gag) "professional historians" to understand that perception is very much a part of reality. And the fact that the Christians still come off as the worse of two sets of bad guys in this passion play is something that Madden cannot seem to abide.

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## Susan says

This book provides an excellent look at the crusades, putting them in perspective for their time and in relation to current world politics. It is a great overview for the uninitiated and a great review for folks who have studied the crusades.

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I learned quite a bit from this book and that makes me happy. Before listening to this book, what little I know came from popular movies and books, and, of course, I couldn't rely on those to be accurate. I really liked how the book was laid out chronologically and I deeply appreciated the author's constant efforts to have the reader think like a Medieval European.

In addition to this, the author often gave examples of Muslim impressions of the crusades. This in particular was fascinating. For Europeans, and even Americans, the crusades were a big deal, and continue to influence our culture, if mostly through popular media. At the time of the crusades, the Muslim world barely took note of them, seeing them as just yet one more barbarian force to be repelled (and the crusades were often repelled). The crusades had a greater impact on the Byzantine Empire, mostly because places were sacked and sometimes burned.

It was fascinating to see how the crusades evolved over time. Initially, the word 'crusade' was not associated with the pilgrims who ventured east for religious enrichment. Old, young, sick, healthy, men, & women traveled on pilgrimage. It was only later that such pilgrimages became armed men crusading to the east, with the blessing of pope and lord, to defend Christian lands.

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