



The Knights Templar

Stephen Howarth

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The age of the crusades--complex, battle-torn & fiercely pious--encompassed the rise & fall of an Order of fighting men, equally devoted to God, war & the defense of Palestine. Here's a meticulously researched & absorbing history of that order. The Knights Templar joined together in 1118, shortly after the 1st Crusade had swept thru the Holy Land & stolen Jerusalem from Islam. In the strict hierarchy of the feudal world, where every man owed loyalty & allegiance to his overlords, the Templars obeyed none except the Pope. Acquiring land & castles by gift, conquest & purchase in every part of Europe & the eastern Mediterranean, they became a church within the Church, a state within the State. They were bankers, merchants, diplomats & tax gatherers. They themselves were poor. The wealth of their Order was legendary. Were the Templars, as St Bernard said, "worthy of all the praise given to men of God," or, as Pope Clement V said, "horrible, wicked & detestable"? Drawing on a variety of original source material, Stephen Howarth assesses the faults & fine qualities of the brotherhood, examining the reasons for its initial allure & eventual, ignominious obliteration. Brilliantly elucidating to a wide audience & understanding of the chaotic age that pitched Richard Coeur de Lion against Saladin & Christian against fellow Christian.

The Knights Templar Details

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Sean Helms says

Most of this book I considered a good, and refreshingly unbiased, history of the Templars from their founding and through the Crusades to their end in France. The volume is full of facts I found interesting and enlightening, especially during the years when the Christian Kingdom of Jerusalem remained in existence. Unfortunately, the time of the Templars covered in this book was not so precise. The Templars are referred to as 5000 in France with all of them successfully arrested on the order of Philip IV, when actually only between 600-700 were rounded up and imprisoned. Furthermore, there was absolutely no mention of 18 ships of the Templar fleet escaping from La Rachelle, France, or the empty treasure vault of the Paris Temple.

In re-cap, my 4 stars is for the body of work written about the founding of the Templars and their actions throughout the Holy Land, before, during, and after the liberation of Jerusalem.

Samuel says

The Knights Templar by Stephen Howarth is THE most comprehensive and seemingly accurate book on the Knights Templar I have ever picked up! It's a history book that reads like a fantasy novel (as with most stories of the Templar), however, Howarth has really done his homework, and I will use this book as a reference from now until the end of time on any Templar writing. While it's hard to substantiate many occurrences and tails from the the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the bibliography for The Knights Templar is extensive and includes some very credible sources. Furthermore, it's very seldom that you don't want a history book to be over, but I seriously wish that this book was double the size. Stephen Howarth is not only a thorough historian but also an amazing, and highly intellectual writer that delights and informs in his unique style.

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Ibrahim Fawzy says

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Tom says

A straight forward history of the Templar knights, without any goofball Da Vinci Code theories. This was written back before a lot of revisionist history made the knights out to be the bad guys, so they are portrayed heroically. The narrative bogs down in the last 40 pages, making the telling of their demise a hard slog to get through.

Nancy says

Well written and a good summary of a long, complex history. It forcefully reminded me of how far the current 'middle east conflict' can be traced through time and geography. It also reinforced my understanding of how much horror can and is perpetrated in the name of 'god.'

Ahmed says

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Matt Leiv says

"When they pursue the enemy they do not ask 'how many are they?', but only, 'where are they?'."

A thorough and well done historic analysis of the entire history of the templar, and the crusades.

The author does not take sides, offering in depth detail about atrocities committed by both sides over many hundreds of years, and the reasoning both sides used in each situation.

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The life of the templar was above all war, and commitment, while living in personal voluntary poverty. This book does a great job of going into much depth about the templar history without offering a bias in their favor. A good historical text for anyone interested in the subject.

They lived a hard life of war and principles such as never backing down from a battle unless the odds were greater than 3 to 1 against them, several times taking victory under 10 to 1 odds, and one recorded battle was over 20 to 1.

Mohammed Orabi says

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Robin says

Clear and surprisingly easy to read. The long list of names gets confusing now and then, as is true of most

history books, but I found this author's style to be very comprehensible, which is especially important when he is writing about a topic that is often a mess of myth and mayhem.

Erik Graff says

I've read a score of books which touch on The Knights Templar, many of them relaying speculations about the treasures of Solomon (including, by some accounts, the Ark of the Covenant itself) found when they took possession of the Temple Mount in Jerusalem; or repeating the slanders of the accusers from the Holy Office (Inquisition) and French throne who condemned them for heresy and sodomy; or imagining them to be a secret gnostic order; or attributing to them the discovery and possession of the Grail. This book, to its credit, sticks to the contemporaneous sources and tells a straight history of the Order from its creation to its destruction, a period spanning the years 1119 through 1312.

Howarth presents his history as an engaging story, involving the reader emotionally with many of the persons and events described and giving enough historical and sociological background to allow even those new to the period enough sense of context to follow along. There are a few heroes, the greatest of them being a Moslem, Saladin, and there are many monsters, most notably Philip the Fair, King of France, and his lackies. All-in-all, the history appears balanced and even the motives of the worst characters are explained plausibly.

As regards the mysteries of the Order, many of which came out in the papal and state charges against them, the author does suggest that perhaps they did indeed possess what is now known as The Shroud of Turin, captured during the Crusaders' sack Constantinople, a thesis advanced by several scholars.

Ahmad Idriss says

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Dick says

I just finished a book that was a real surprise to me. This book which is authored by Stephen Howarth was loaned to me by a man of the same name who is my neighbor who is not the author. Yeah I know that is strange. But that is another story.

I thought that I would speed read it, right? I mean I have read a lot of Masonic history and have a number of books on my book shelves. Speed reading this book will not work. It is way too full of hard facts 12th century history to run through it. I took world history in both high school and college, but never had this many facts and perspective presented in such an effective manner.

This book is set in the age of crusades with all the glory and gore that goes into that time period. What started off with great intentions - providing protection to Christians going to and from the Holy Land and ending up so very different. The power of the Knights Templar is legendary - their military prowess along with their financial wealth is well known. The Knights Templar reported to the Pope and to one else in the beginning. That is not how society worked in those days.

They acquired land and castles via gifts for the most part as well as conquest. This was all over Europe and the eastern Mediterranean. They were made up of diplomats, tax gatherers, as well as bankers and merchants. Individually they were poor, but as an organization, they were hugely wealthy and as a result powerful.

Over the course of time they got cross ways with the church in Rome, who had accumulated enormous financial debt to the Templars that the church finally had to literally put them out of business.

Given that my wife, my brother and sister in law were in Provence in May of '14, the names of places was of special interest. I found myself frequently putting down those names and places and then going to the Internet to look them up and/or going to Google-earth to look at them.

This book is extremely well researched and literally absorbed my interest while reading it. encompassed the rise & fall of an Order of fighting men, equally devoted to God, war & the defense of Palestine.

If you have interest in the Masonic Order as well as the Knights Templar and of that period of history - you will enjoy this book. It is not a book to speed read, but is full of an outstanding research effort. The thing I liked the most was the author's effort - successful - to explain the politics of the time. Fascinating.

The end of the order is brutal - but given the power in Rome and the politics of Rome, was entirely predictable.

Jaclynn says

"The Templars were not angels or saints; but they were not devils either."

There were dozens of military-religious order knights during the crusades, so why are we all so obsessed with the Templars? Partly because they were a member only secret society. The Templars seem to be founded upon a mystery: how can an order of pseudo-monks be militaristic? Isn't that a contradiction? Partly because of their dramatic and unjust demise. Part of the reason for the enduring mystique is the sheer range of business the Templars transacted. The order began as bodyguards, protecting pilgrims on the roads around Jerusalem in the 12th century. They developed into an elite military force. In the 13th century they added international banking services to their range of skills and took over accountancy services for royal governments. They were largely tax exempt and protected by the authority of the Pope. As an organization they could rival whole countries for wealth and military capability. Until someone greedy enough came along and wanted to take away everything that the Templars had, and at any cost.

Very well researched though obviously biased toward the Templars. They were religious fanatics who murdered people for no logical reason whatsoever. The author gleans over this and paints a much prettier picture of the order. It would have been helpful for the author to include maps when discussing locations. Not everyone knows their medieval geography; names of locations change over time. Some helpful maps would have made things clearer for me.

Keith Davis says

A solid history of the rise and fall of the Knights Templar which eschews all the newagey nonsense that has been attached to the Templars and sticks to historical facts. By extension it is also a nice introduction to the story of the Crusades.
