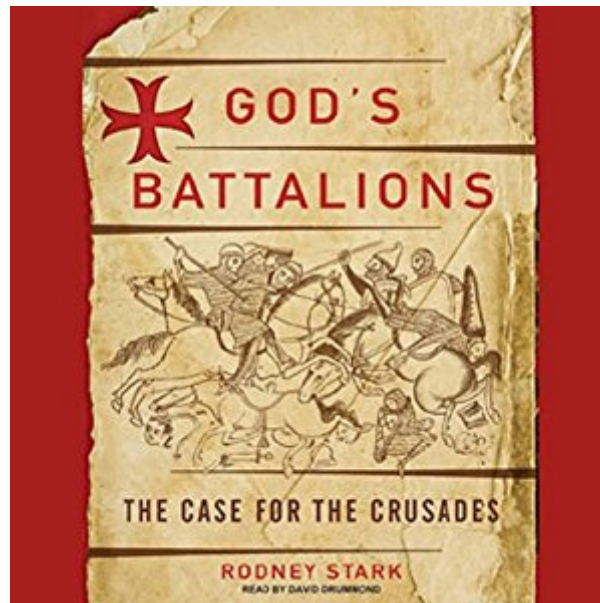


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# God's Battalions: The Case For The Crusades



## Synopsis

In *God's Battalions*, distinguished scholar Rodney Stark puts forth a controversial argument that the Crusades were a justified war waged against Muslim terror and aggression. Stark, the author of *The Rise of Christianity*, reviews the history of the seven major crusades from 1095-1291 in this fascinating work of religious revisionist history. --This text refers to the Preloaded Digital Audio Player edition.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

This book is a good beginning history of why Christians first went to fight in the Crusades. On November 27, 1095, Pope Urban II gave a speech graphically detailing the torture, rape, and murder of Christian pilgrims and the defilement of churches and holy places committed by the Turks. "They destroy the altars, after having defiled them with their uncleanness. They circumcise the Christians, and the blood of the circumcision they pour into the vases of the baptismal font...They torture people...by perforating their navels, and dragging forth the extremity of the intestines, bind it to a stake; then with flogging they lead the victim around until the viscera having gushed forth the victim falls prostrate on the ground...What shall I say about the abominable rape of women? To speak of it is worse than to be silent. On whom therefore is the labor of avenging these wrongs and recovering this territory incumbent, if not upon you?" This is the traditional explanation of how and why the First Crusade began. Alexius Comnenus, the emperor of Byzantium, had written from his embattled capital of Constantinople to the Count of Flanders,

requesting that he and his fellow Christians send forces to help the Byzantines repel the Seljuk Turks. These were recent converts to Islam who had invaded the Middle East, ambushed Christian pilgrims to the Holy Land, captured Jerusalem, and driven to within one hundred miles of Constantinople. This book counters more recent criticism that the long-ago crusades are helping to fuel modern Islamic fury. Not true. The author shows how Muslim antagonism about the Crusades did not appear until about 1900, when there was a reaction against the decline of the Ottoman Empire and against European colonialism in the Middle East. Anti-crusader feelings did not become intense until after the founding of the state of Israel in 1948. A very well-written and highly researched book.

Thought-provoking polemic by Rodney Stark arguing that the Crusades were provoked by Muslim aggressive and were launched in response to appeals for help from the Eastern Empire. Stark sets out to counter the revisionist view of the Crusades as unjust, violent, imperialistic adventures and presents a good amount of evidence that this may be the case. However, much of his analysis is simplistic especially his 6-8 lines "Conclusions" at the end of each chapter. The reality is that the Crusades were not a single event. The term is short-hand to describe a incredibly complex period of history that lasted 200 years and saw the clash of Christians, who were themselves split between Catholic and Orthodox and further split by national and personal rivalries, and Muslims, who were also themselves split between Turks, Egyptians and Arabs factions and often aided by Christian mercenaries and turncoats. The book itself is an easy read and presents a thought-provoking perspective but, in my opinion, is too much of a polemic to be taken as a piece of scholarship.

Point: The Crusades were not unprovoked. They were not the first round of European colonialism. They were not conducted for land, loot, or converts. The crusaders were not barbarians who victimized the cultivated Muslims. They sincerely believed that they served in God's battalions (kindle 3371). Path: Stark walks the other side of the fence. He reveals what is on the flip side of the coin which no one talks about anymore. I am sure that the author got tired of hearing undocumented and illogical arguments surrounding the Crusades and finally sat down and compiled arguments from the actual sources left to us. Sources: Stark pulls from sources during the Crusades until today. He sites all the popular authors on the Crusades, both from the West and Muslim world. He does so thoroughly and coherently. (I think I actually found a sentence without a footnote somewhere in there!) Agreement: I greatly appreciated reading this alternate view of the Crusades. The truth is that the Crusades were not bloodless, gentle, nor fair - on either side. But

that does not mean that they were colonialistic, one-sided, brutal offensive on a peace-loving Muslim populace. Personal App: When people bring to the conversation arguments about the Crusades and why ISIS cannot be blamed for their horrific violence, I can now say, "Yes, about those Crusades." Favorite Quote: "To sum up the prevailing wisdom: during the Crusades, an expansionist, imperialistic Christendom brutalized, looted, and colonized a tolerant and peaceful Islam. Not so. As will be seen, the Crusades were precipitated by Islamic provocations: by centuries of bloody attempts to colonize the West and by sudden new attacks on Christian pilgrims and holy places (kindle 139). It would be worth another read and I would recommend it to someone who is interested in history or interested in the Muslim world."

An engaging and truthful portrayal of the crusades. Insightful and witty and very politically incorrect, this book will hold your attention and inform.

A thorough and objective look at the history of the crusades. Unlike many of the anachronistic writings of a number of contemporary historians, the book is well researched and attentive to factual detail.

enjoyed the book.....recommended

It was a good read, and reasonably balanced and accessible. The book neither portrays the crusaders as saints nor as infidels.

An interesting view and new interpretation of the facts. Very convincing and reasoned. And not impossibly heavy to read. Stark makes the case for the Crusades being an intervention to protect pilgrims, and a drain on finances, instead of making the middle east a dumping ground for second sons and adventurers seeking their fortunes. I found his ideas to be logical and make sense of the odd bits of the history of the Crusades.

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