GENERAL EDITOR'S FOREWORD

History without historiography is a contradiction in terms. The study of the past cannot be separated from a linked study of its practitioners and intermediaries. No historian writes in isolation from the work of his or her predecessors nor can the commentator – however clinically objective or professional – stand aloof from the insistent pressures, priorities and demands of the ever-changing present. In truth there are no self-contained academic ‘ivory towers’. Historians’ writings are an extension of who they are and where they are placed. Though historians address the past as their subject they always do so in ways that are shaped – consciously or unconsciously as the case may be – by the society, cultural ethos, politics and systems of their own day, and they communicate their findings in ways which are specifically intelligible and relevant to a reading public consisting initially of their own contemporaries. For these reasons the study of history is concerned most fundamentally not with dead facts and sterile, permanent verdicts but with highly charged dialogues, disagreements, controversies and shifting centres of interest among its presenters, with the changing methodologies and discourse of the subject over time, and with audience reception. *Issues in Historiography* is a series designed to explore such matters by means of case studies of key moments in world history and the interpretations, reinterpretations, debates and disagreements they have engendered.

Tyerman’s subject – the crusades – is only the second medieval topic to join the Issues series. Like its predecessor on the Norman Conquest by Marjorie Chibnall it has a long and complex historiography. In Christopher Tyerman’s densely crowded but clearly argued pages the reader will find a perceptive and challenging survey which brings out the shifting centres of interest among the many writers who have engaged with this subject, the different agendas which underpinned their various offerings, the kind of sources they used and relied on, and the impact of their particular religious, political and cultural contexts. Early chroniclers such as William of Tyre and his

changing posthumous reputation come under scrutiny. Reformation perspectives such as John Foxe's *History of the Turks* (1566) are examined and as Tyerman's survey progresses through the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries writers such as Thomas Fuller, Voltaire and Edward Gibbon are drawn into the discussion. The cultural as well as political significance of Napoleon's late eighteenth-century Egyptian and Syrian campaigns is considered as is a nineteenth-century predilection to view crusaders as well-intentioned missionaries. When we reach the twentieth century Lawrence of Arabia receives a passing mention. Sir Steven Runciman's multi-volume history of the crusades, however, is accorded a full, but certainly not reverential, treatment. Modern American contributions to crusade historiography – some of them far from illuminating – are rehearsed. Claude Cahen, 'a rare marxist', and the Egyptian Aziz Suryal Atiya find a place here. Tyerman casts his net very widely; his subject dictates that he should.

Present-day relations between the West and Islam help to make Tyerman's book a highly relevant text for students and their teachers. The author's account of the historiography of the crusades emphatically rejects easy modern parallels. Nonetheless by virtue of its subject matter this volume does more than unpack the many layers of a particular topic which has continued to exert its fascination on generations of commentators over the centuries. Revealingly this study opens a window on to a broader landscape of deep-rooted, uneasy and often brutal international relations.

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