



Taking The Cross

Charles Gibson

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In the Middle Ages not all crusades were fought in the Holy Land. A two-pronged threat to the Catholic Church was growing within Christendom itself and Pope Innocent III called for the crusade against heresy to eliminate both the Albigenses and Valdenses, two movements that did not adhere to Church orthodoxy.

Andreas, a knight who longs to go on crusade to the Holy Land, finds himself fighting against one in his French homeland. While Andreas wages war for the lives and religious freedom of his people, a battle rages within his soul.

Eva, a young woman of a new religious order, discovers a secret message within a letter about the death of the father in the Holy Land. As she learns more of her father, she is forced to confront a profound and perilous spiritual inheritance for which she must fight.

Filled with battles of the flesh and the spirit, Taking the Cross reveals a passionate aspect of Medieval times where some fought ardently for the freedom of others.

Taking The Cross Details

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Cranky - The Book Curmudgeon says

5 Cranky Stars!

The novel is packed with action and adventure, plot twists and mystery. Set in France in 1209, the book accounts the dramatic and confusing time of the crusades. An often past over piece of history, when the crusaders, on their native soils, sought to kill heretics, who preached beliefs that were not the dogma of Catholic Pope Innocent III. This bloody time in history where Christian was pitted against Christian was particularly confusing times and the precursor to the Inquisition's reign of terror. In the name of spreading the message of Jesus, innocent people were made to flee their homes or convert to Catholicism or be brutally killed as a heretic. The author is not preachy or negative to any religion as he shows the reader what it means to be a Christians even at this volatile time. He uses words that are so precise and vivid to describe the setting of battles, country sides and the visions you can truly see each page come to life. The reader can understand the dialogs of the characters by the use a few well-placed words in a French dialect. It makes the reader hear the characters' voices without making it hard to read.

The story begins with a group of knight and the lord, Raimon Rodgers, racing to meet the commander of an advancing crusading army before they reach and destroy the land and the many sects of Christians the Viscount has living there. They are impeded by a small vacant eyed boy and his father, who Raimon Rodgers takes pity on. Raimon Rodgers takes the father and his son under his protection. The viscount is a compassionate and wise man, whose character flaw maybe being to compassionate. The mindset of the trouble cavalier, Andreas on the first page, draws the reader in. As the story progresses, the reader learns that the humans are not just battling each other but their inner demons as well in the Earthly and spiritual realms. The story switches from the heroes to a town in a mother tells her daughter they must leave and go to another very quickly. It seems that the girl, Eva, also has a gift of sight like the knight, Andreas. As the author moves between settings, without confusing the reader, both seem to show a picture of the spiritual warfare that is taking place alongside the blood and gore of each battle.

Eva and her mother move to a part of the lands the Viscount Riamon Rodgers has set aside for the widowed women of the men who fought to protect Jerusalem. The women are a religious sect, who pray and are celibate much like nuns, but unlike many other women they could own land and some like the strong heroine, Eva, even worked as a carpenter, whose work adorns many churches alters. The story takes place over a few months in 1209 when a particularly brutal attack took place of a holy feasting day. The historical events seemed were very well researched by the author, who helped the reader understand the mindset of Pope, Crusader, Viscount, and his people. As the story unfolds the hero and heroine who are not in the same places at the same time, but are experiencing visions that keep the reader turning pages. The plot is not only of action and battles but of how Eva and a group of her family and friends solve a mystery set in motion by Eva's father while he was on the battle field s in the Holy City, Jerusalem It also has the troubled soul of the hero, Andreas intertwine in the story as it unfold. Every page makes the reader want to know more, learn who will live or die, what is the message Eva's father is trying to convey through the letter and relics Eva

inherited.

I would say this has been the most interesting book I have read this year and I give it five stars.

The talented author has created a true page turning story that educates the reader on the story of this tumultuous time in history and Christ's message. This book made me question my knowledge of the crusades and who was truly a heretic. I could see it taught as an added reading for a college course on history of the Middle Ages. It could be suitable for some advanced young adult reader, who would find value in the message of acting with love and compassion. It is very rare to have such a strong heroine in this setting, but the vocabulary and battle scenes could be a bit challenging for some young readers.

Kate Hasbrouck says

I usually do not go for historical fiction, but when I learned this book was about the crusades, it intrigued me. And I was not disappointed!

The main characters, Eva and Andreas, were such a contrast to one another that I would get pulled into their thoughts and all I could wonder was how they were connected! The author did a great job creating characters who were wonderfully lovable in their imperfect ways.

The historical past of this book is interesting as well as informative. The plot is strong, has a really good flow, and is well paced all the way to the end.

Let's just say I was dying for the next one as soon as I finishes Taking the Cross!

Markus H says

At first you are asking yourself the question: What does the author want to tell ? But the more you advance the more you get hooked. Telling the story from two sides was very interesting.

The characters are well described. A very interesting read.

I made the mistake to read it with the Kindle App on my phone. Which is a pity and doesn't do the book its deserved justice.

If you're interested in this period (or history novels in general) Highly recommended.

Five stars, every one well deserved.

I was provided with a complimentary copy of this book so I could give an honest review.

Katie Andraski says

Taking the Cross is a well researched novel about the Albigensian crusade against heretics in the south of

France. Gibson says he was drawn the question, "In such confusing age when Christians were battling Christians, what does it look like to be a true Christian, live like a true Christian?" Taking the Cross is how he worked this out. It is the gripping story of Eva, a woman who joined the Beguines a religious order that allowed women to how their own lands. She discovers mysterious objects in the chest her father sent along with a letter after he died in a Crusade fighting the Saracens. Andreas is a young knight who must fight for his homeland against a corrupt church. He too is troubled by amulets with markings similar to the ones Eva finds. Taking the Cross explores mysteries similar to the ones Dan Brown explores in The DaVinci Code. It is a fast read that accurately explores the Albigensian Crusade and enlightens the reader about the thirteenth century. It also describes how spiritual forces tempt and influence people. I'm very much looking forward to a sequel. I highly recommend this book if you're looking for a fast read that explores mysteries that still intrigue us today.

Margaret says

This was an educational and entertaining story, which is one of the things that I love about reading historical fiction. I always thought the crusades took place in the Holy Land not the south of France. I really like the authors writing style, the story flowed smoothly with enough descriptions that I was able to visualize the setting and feel of the time period. His knowledge and love of this period in history is evident. Introduced to Andreas in the first chapter then Eva in the next this story weaves back and forth until they connect. I was able to get to know the characters, there was depth here and realized that this wasn't just a story about physical battles but also those internal ones.

This is Charles Gibson's debut and also the start of a series, definitely an author I will be reading more of. Be sure to check out his website,

Diego Jimenez says

A very interesting historical fiction novel. Most of the events and places are real, as well as some of the main characters. It gives a well informed view of the early 13th century. Two apparent parallel stories kept me with the expectation they would cross at some point. It didn't happen. I was waiting that some given information would come back me and suddenly surprise me, but didn't happen either. (spoiler alert?) The end of the book shows up sort of like the end of a chapter, without explaining why were some characters obsessed with this or that, or why the main characters so important. Several things left unfinished or unresolved. DISCLAIMER: I received the book for free, in exchange for an honest review.

Manrico says

It is a good piece of historical fiction in that it keeps you reading and it is evident that the author knows the period and the location well. What it is also a plus in my opinion is that it is also quite thought-provoking. I was provided with a complimentary copy of the book so I could give an honest review.

Adicesbooks Reviews says

When I kept in my hands this book, I thought to be about for reading a religion book. As soon as I started browsing the pages, I noticed to have between my hands a detailed historical account of the Middle Age, or rather, of the crusades that the Catholic Church ordered against those people charged of heresy. The book, titled *Taking The Cross* is an amazing historical fiction written by Charles Gibson, an established American author passionate about historical tales.

To write this book, the author travelled for long to France, in the region of Languedoc, one of the lands where *Taking The Cross* is set. The book is closely intertwined with religious topics, because the Crusades, also said “religion wars”, are the main subject of the novel. The work opens with a map which describes the route followed by crusaders and knights committed to defend the borders of lands threatened from the battle. The story begins, instead, with an historical note that introduces the topic of this novel. The main event is set in July 1209, an important date that marked the history of bloody crusades. Every chapter of the book opens by describing the life and the deeds of two characters: Andreas and Eve.

The first is a knight who became the bodyguard of Raimond Roger Trencavel, The Viscount of Carcassonne, Albi and Beziers, three lands inhabited by Albigenes and Valdenses, two French communities that did not comply with the Catholic Church orthodoxy and for such a reason accused to be heretic. The second character of the book is Eve, a 20 year old woman hosted along with her mother in the Beguine community, in Orange, placed in the South of France. Beguines are women who live a simple and wealthy religious life with taking no vow.

Eve is a skilled sculptor of trunks and is hired by the bishop Pietro to decorate the cathedrals in Orange. Through alternate chapters, *Taking The Cross* tells about the lives of Andrea and Eve, by linking them to the cruelties and massacres occurred during the crusades. Between 1208 and 1209, indeed, Pope Innocent III ordered well two merciless crusades against heretics in France. The previous battles were conducted against Saracen and foreigners, but in this historical lapse of time, Andreas and his lord Ramon are forced to fight their same brothers in the region of Languedoc.

It is to prevent another vain and needless massacre that Ramon attempts to get a meeting with the papal legate Armand Amaury, the monk who is also the commander of the crusading army. The papal army moves in this region of France and Ramon, followed by Andreas and his loyal knights, moves to Montpellier, by going through the woods and grounds where skulls and bones are buried, that are the remains of previous battles. The journey is marked by a random meeting with a villager and his younger son.

The two have been victims of raids perpetrated by crusades and during one of these, the elder son has been murdered. Meanwhile, Eve discovers a secret letter about his father, another man murdered during the crusades. This letter contains upsetting truths that can endanger the life of the girl. The bishop Pietro attempts to protect and avoided her to be accused of heresy. This stage of the novel proves that inside the Catholic Church, not all the priests were agreeing with the crusades.

Unfortunately, Pope Innocent III and the cruel Armand were persuaded of the contrary and to convert heretics, they were even available to kill them! To protect his people, Ramon plans to take the Cross from Armand, this is a medieval expression that meant the will to become a crusader. This is a deceit naturally, planned to allow inhabitants to leave the region besieged by crusaders. In this novel, hence, the Cross also becomes a symbol of oppression and bloodshed. Thank to an effective style of writing, the author also managed to turn the Cross into the inner conflict of those men forced to defend their land and kill their

people.

At last, the crusades weren't then too different of other modern religious wars and it is for this reason that Charles Gibson ends his novel with another final historical note where he also launches a real religious message, namely that God and Jesus are for all human beings and not only for an only religion. Taking The Cross left in our hearts the memory of an historical event that no-one should never forget.

In this highly descriptive novel, the emotional strain is very high and it is possible to feel it during the read of the various chapters, in turn enriched by a description of the languages, symbols and culture of the Middle Age. For this, I think it would be marvelous if someone could get a movie from the book. Waiting the movie, I suggest you to turn off the Television and turn on the reading of Taking The Cross!

Jerry Kyle says

A very engaging book. I could not stop reading it. As an Francophile, I own a house in France so the fact that this story took place in France encouraged me to buy it. The story is based on historical fact. It covers an area of history that is not often discussed, but showed a horrible period of Christian history. It is even more relevant today due to what is happening in our world today. I hoped to read more about this author.

Bershanned says

I won't spoil this book, for anyone, even though, I am tempting... Taking the Cross is a noble, generated book! I can't say, there was not a moment, I did not want to keep this book in my purse with my bible and other girly goods.

Melinda says

Gibson brings the carnage and destruction of the Albigensian Crusade with clarity in impeccable detail. His prose is outstanding, you will feel transported to this brutal time in history.

Gibson dives right into the narrative from the start, I could not put the book down. It is gripping, heartbreaking and suspenseful. Imagine the Roman Catholic Church launching a full scale expedition against fellow Christians in France for basically not conforming to their rules. A turbulent and conflicting period all in the name of religion. I'm well versed with the Crusades, Gibson's effort is severely provoking. With the present day state of our world, certainly causes one to ponder if history will repeat itself, once again under the guise of religion.

Taking the Cross is not for the faint of heart. The battle scenes are savage, nothing inappropriate, only vivid descriptions of the mayhem and barbaric violence occurring. So many lives needlessly taken, very affecting leaving the reader disgusted and angry. Enough political/religious strife touched upon without boredom or weighing the story negatively. Fabulous balance. Ironical a 'religious' war is so incredibly inhumanly violent.

The two main protagonists contrast and compliment providing magnitude to the entire narrative. Andreas – a battle weary knight and Eva – belongs to the religious order of Beguines. The narrative alternates between

Andreas and Eva allowing different perspectives from varying positions as well as providing their respective back story's. Their lives are parallel but not connected directly at this point, you sense their lives will tether at a pivotal point (speculation on my part) based on peppering of scenes throughout the plot. Characterization is well done, you are more than familiar with these two compelling players.

Gibson creates a riveting story, full of suspense during a bloody and religiously turbulent time. Taking the Cross will appeal to a wide audience – history, christian fans, ALL will enjoy a well presented story highlighting the Albigensian Crusade

Emma says

VERDICT: Brilliantly weaving together major elements of French Medieval culture, Taking The Cross makes you relive an essential page of the 12th century fight between the established Christian powers and the so-called heretics. Packed with powerful symbols and images, action and suspense, it will actually teach you history while leading you on a fast paced adventure.

my full review is here:

<http://wordsandpeace.com/2014/10/21/b...>
