The Military Orders: From the Twelfth to the Early Fourteenth Centuries

Alan Forey

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The present volume seeks to summarize recent research on individual orders and is based on a wide range of primary sources, providing a survey of these orders up to the early 14th century. The reasons for the emergence and establishment of military orders on the various borders of Western Christendom and within the West are discussed, as are the military functions and roles which they assumed. The major contribution which they made to the defence and expansion of Western Christendom necessitated considerable funds and reserves of manpower - the ways in which these were obtained are considered, together with the governmental machinery which was developed to enable the orders to carry out their tasks and to utilize their resources effectively. Although their members combined a military with a monastic way of life, the military orders are shown to have differed from other religious foundations not only in their daily routine but also in administrative structure and in their predominantly lay membership. The orders' attempts to increase their wealth helped to provoke criticism, which was also encouraged by the decline of Christian fortunes in the Holy Land. Proposals for reform were not implemented, but changing circumstances led to a modification of roles in the late 13th and early 14th centuries, while the Temple was destroyed through the actions of the French crown. The final chapter is devoted to these topics.

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