

Thomas Fuller's beautifully printed account of the history of the Crusades.

Fuller, Thomas. *The historie of the holy warre*. Cambridge, Printed by R. Daniel, for Thomas Buck, and are to be sold by John Williams, at the Signe of the greyhound in Pauls church-yard. 1640. 11 3/8 inches (290 mm), 9 pp. l., 286, [28] pp.

It is impossible to dislike Thomas Fuller. His works overflow with good cheer. Even at his least original, he had a genius for pungent and genial rephrasing and offhand wit that gives his most trifling paragraphs an inimitable charm. His two great folio productions do offer much original scholarship, and the pleasure of close association with a supremely lively mind. They are *The Church History of Britain* (1655) and *The History of the Worthies of England* (1662). Both are still consulted as authorities: they abound in telling detail and vivacious prose, offering a rich mine of quotations to enliven modern scholarly writing, which cannot but seem stodgy by comparison. To write serious works that are irresistibly readable, without indulging in distortion, vulgarity, or gross oversimplification is a rare art: Fuller possessed it as few others have.

Apart from a volume of indifferent verse, this *Historie of the Holy Warre* was Fuller's first book. It was published in 1639, with a second edition following in 1641 (reproduced here) and three more within the decade. The subject had been made popular in England by Fairfax's translation of Tasso's poem on the First Crusade, *Gerusalemme liberata, or Jerusalem Delivered* (1600). Fuller presented his account of the Crusades in four books of history with a supplement of discursive commentary, "voluntary and over-measure, *only to hem the end of our history that it ravel not out.*" Elaborate chronological tables (**Spreads 158–68**) conclude the work.

The volume was handsomely printed at the Cambridge University Press, with an engraved title-page by one of the leading practitioners of the day, William Marshall. At the top, to the left is a crusader, Baldwin, King of Jerusalem, to the right is a portrait of Saladin. Below, crusaders advance and retreat, from Europe to Jerusalem: "We went out full but return empty." A map of Palestine appears at **Spread 13**. One may judge of its accuracy by Fuller's caveat: "Of thirty maps and descriptions of the Holy Land, which I have perused, I never met with two in all considerables alike: some sink valleys where

others raise mountains; yea end rivers where others begin them; and sometimes with a wanton dash of their pen create a stream in land, a creek in sea, more than nature ever owned. In these differences we have followed Scripture as an impartial umpire.”

The volume is in its original calf binding. A contemporary owner has added to the flyleaf (**Spread 2**) a passage from Job 5:21 in the Authorized Version, with an anonymous distich occasionally found on tombstones, in churches or in the *Ars moriendi*:

Mors tua, mors Christi, fraus mundi, gloria coeli, Et dolor inferni sunt
meditanda tibi.

(Contemplate your death, Christ’s death, the deceits of the world, the glory of heaven, and the torment of hell). Two former owner’s names are visible. On the front pastedown (**Spread 2**) is the signature of the orientalist Henry George Keene (1781–1864), like Fuller, a Cambridge graduate. Another Cambridge association is found on the free endpaper (**Spread 3**), which bears the signature of the University Librarian “T[homas] Kerrich, M[agdalene] C[ollege] C[ambridge]” (1748–1828).