

AUTHOR'S PREFACE

Two forces affecting the human spirit came into play in the crusading movement: the idea of pilgrimage to the sites of primitive Christianity and the idea of holy war—knightly combat in the service of the church. Each has a distinct history, and whoever inquires into the origins of the idea of crusade may consequently follow two different routes.

The view that has prevailed up to now has concentrated on the pilgrimage aspect. Scholars have indeed referred, for the sake of completeness, to the hierarchical tendencies of the papacy and to the wars against the heathens in southern Europe, but their main argument is that the peaceful pilgrimages to the Holy Sepulcher that had long been taking place eventually turned into expeditions of armed conquest. As a result, pilgrimages have been closely researched, and special efforts have been made to discover the events in the East that would have caused the objective to change from pilgrimage to conquest. The prehistory of the crusading idea has acquired, therefore, either an Eastern cast or one determined by East-West relations, whereas the many crusades undertaken in other theaters—against heretics and opponents of the papacy, as well as against heathens—have been regarded as “aberrations” or degenerations of a “genuine” idea of crusade.

This view is erroneous. The “aberrations” had long been there, and the “genuine” crusade proceeded from them far more than from a supposed change in the condition of pilgrims and of the city of Jerusalem. The central, historically essential process was the evolution of the “general” idea of crusade, which was oriented to ecclesiastical objectives as such and not tied to a specific locality, such as Jerusalem. Unlike earlier investigations, this book pursues the second component of crusading—the idea of Christian

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knighthood and of holy war. It is obvious that the roots of this idea should not be sought in Palestine; its emergence coincides with the total development of the Christian peoples. We are concerned with the problem of "the church and war" and, by the same token, with the historical foundations of the Western ethic of war and soldiering.

The present work, therefore, is not meant to illuminate the origins of the crusading *movement* from every direction. Rather, it is confined to the *idea* of crusade and its development up to the First Crusade. Otherwise, attention would also have to be paid to the social, political, and economic conditions that obviously formed the external presuppositions for crusading; a characteristic illustration is that mercenary troops began to appear in the West simultaneously with military and colonizing expansion. But what set in motion the soldiers of the High Middle Ages was not only the prospect of payment, booty, and new land, but also that of heavenly reward and the forgiveness of sins. In attempting to grasp the latter fact in isolation, we do not mean to close our eyes to all conditions other than those purely affecting the human spirit. Since the idea of crusade was given form by the church, account has to be taken of those social, constitutional, and political circumstances that conditioned the attitude of the church and the papacy toward the issue. But it would be vain to attempt to ascertain in precisely what proportion ideological and material motives were combined in the crusaders. While the thesis that the church's call was their only motive is self-evidently false, the opposite view that its call was ineffectual and a mere façade is equally untrue. The ecclesiastical idea of crusade was a historical force: that much is clear. Our object here is not to determine how psychologically effective it was by comparison with other, competing influences, but to investigate how the idea took shape and what transformations it underwent.

The problem has been posed before. It has always been

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accepted that the crusades cannot be explained apart from the "religious exuberance" of the age. There have also been frequent suggestions that the crusades must be related in some way to the church reform of the eleventh century and to the Investiture Contest. Yet, as far as I can see, no one has pursued the matter. We are presented either with generalities or, when precision is attempted, with distorted images. In my view, the best words on the prehistory of the crusading idea are in the second chapter of volume eight of Ranke's *Universal History*, where he makes a fundamental distinction between the hierarchical and the popular ideas of crusade: they paralleled one another for some time and only merged under Urban II. Though Ranke too closely identified the popular idea of crusade with the idea of pilgrimage, he nevertheless pointed out the route along which the essentials of the story may be discovered.

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CARL ERDMANN