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War and Peace in the Medieval World

The peace which is peculiar to ourselves we enjoy now with God by faith, and shall hereafter enjoy eternally with him by sight. But the peace which we enjoy in this life, whether common to all or peculiar to ourselves, is rather the solace of our misery than the positive enjoyment of felicity.

St. Augustine of Hippo, *The City of God*, in *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, ed. Philip Schaff, 14 vols. (New York: Christian Literature Co., 1886), vol. II, bk. xix, ch. 27

St. Augustine says that the hopes of pagan philosophers, such as Marcus Terentius Varro, that peace could be achieved in this world were an idle dream. Thus, Augustine reminded his audience that the peace Christ promised was to be enjoyed only in the next world and only by those who had been saved. As for this world, the earthly city was in a perpetual state of decay. The view that warfare pervaded human activity persisted at least until the High Middle Ages. John of Salisbury said that periods of apparent peace may occur, but human strife and violence will always result in more war.¹ The people of the ancient world understood well what war was, but they had only a limited concept of peace as our age imagines it. The word peace meant different things to different people in the ancient world. Among the Greeks, it was simply the absence of war, usually accompanied by abundance. The earliest meaning of the Latin word *pax* was a pact by which all signatories agreed not to fight. But, for early Christians, peace was a positive and dynamic force, woven into the fabric of their religion, which signified not only abstention from war, but also an avoidance of all contention and bloodshed, together with a positive injunction to love and forgive all.² However, human frailty being what it is, the pacifism of early Christians was less easily achieved in practice.

The Augustinian earthly city

The severely ascetic Tertullian, who adhered to the Montanist party and was regarded by more orthodox Christians as a heretic, insisted that while war had been permitted in the Old Testament, Christ had taken away the sword in the New Dispensation. Tertullian taught that merely to wear the garb of a soldier—even that of the rank and file and even if the soldier was not required to make sacrifices to pagan gods—was incompatible with a Christian way of life, because a good Christian could not serve two masters. Not only were Christians forbidden to fight in wars, they were also prohibited from bringing lawsuits.³ Religion had played an important role in the life of Roman soldiers. As recruits, Roman soldiers had to swear loyalty to both the emperor and the gods, and to participate in religious rites and make sacrifices to the gods on a regular basis. These religious observances were supervised by their officers. This sacralization of army life was an important part of Roman military discipline. From the time of Constantine, these pagan religious rites were modified and adapted to Christian practice.⁴ Although the first three centuries of the Christian era have been regarded as the most pacifistic in the history of Christianity, in fact, there is to be discerned a militancy that had a sharp cutting edge. Some early Christian theologians tended to demonize non-Christians, such as pagans and Jews and even other Christians, whom they regarded as heretical. Martyrdom was eagerly sought out as spiritual combat, and the language of Christian devotion in St. Paul's Epistles is sometimes pervaded with martial metaphors.⁵ Debates among Christian theologians were often acrimonious and polarized Christian communities. When Christianity became the state religion and the political culture was de-secularized, this led to intolerance and violent persecution.⁶

Pacifist sentiments were unevenly distributed among early Christians in the Roman world. Such beliefs seem to have been more prevalent in the Greek-speaking parts of the Eastern Empire; in the older parts of the Western Empire, most Christians had also come to prefer more peaceful ways; but in those frontier provinces of the Western Empire where Germanic and Magyar invasions were a constant danger, Christians recognized the need for the protection provided by the Roman legions. It was among Armenians in the East that the first notable group of Christian soldiers was recruited in about 173 CE to serve in the "Thundering Legion." Since Roman soldiers were also

assigned to other duties, such as service in the constabulary and fire-fighting units, some Christian thinkers began to make a distinction between service in the Roman army and participation in war.⁷ The accession of the Emperor Constantine ended both the persecution of Christians and the brief period of Christian pacifism. The new emperor was viewed as the anointed of the Lord after he displayed the Christian cross on his banners and won the battle of Milvian Bridge in 312 CE, ending a period of civil war and disputed imperial succession. The Christian concept that earthly rulers governed by the grace of God would have been familiar to earlier pagan emperors. Yet, Constantine was not immediately converted to Christianity after his famous victory; he participated in a pagan military triumph on his return to Rome, and he remained a catechumen and put off baptism until the last moment of his life. Constantine saw no reason not to allow his subjects to erect a temple in his honor, although he believed that it was inappropriate for them to offer sacrifices to him. He also embodied the restoration of Roman values after a period dominated by half-Germanic emperors. Whether Constantine's victory brought a Christian defeat of paganism or a triumph of Roman military values is less clear. Christians were now obliged to take up the full responsibilities of Roman citizenship. Within a century, only Christians were allowed to serve in the Roman army, and even clergy were known to wield weapons against invading hordes.⁸

The theological controversies of the early fourth century CE confused and dismayed the Emperor Constantine. He was inclined to be tolerant toward pagans because he hoped to reconcile Christians and pagans and persuade them at least to share a common monotheism. The officials of the Roman Empire retained a strong belief in hierarchical order and consensus in political matters and did not understand why theologians could not also work toward that end. Constantine promoted the Council of Nicaea in 325 to reconcile these divergent views; while most bishops signed the Nicene decrees and creed, some zealots preferred doctrinal purity to Christian unity. Later Roman emperors were no more successful than Constantine in promoting concord and unity within the Christian Church, and they often had to resort to coercion in a vain attempt to maintain peace.⁹

The decision by Constantine's nephew, the Emperor Julian, called the Apostate, to return to paganism appears to have provoked much disorder

within the Roman Empire. Anti-Christian riots were particularly severe at Alexandria in 362 CE, and were made worse by the provocations of the Arian Bishop George, who not only promoted discord within the Christian community, but also incited his followers to destroy pagan temples. A crowd fell on Bishop George and beat him to death. Although the late-classical historian Ammianus Marcellinus was himself a pagan, he disapproved of those who promoted strife between pagans and Christians, and advocated toleration of all religions as a matter of principle. The Emperor Julian was also a tolerant man, but he had to warn Christian bishops that their theological disputes were disturbing public order and preventing both Christians and pagans from worshiping in peace. "Experience had taught him [Julian] that no wild beasts are such dangerous enemies to men as Christians are to one another." In the days when new popes were elected by acclamation of the people of the city of Rome, proceedings could be quite violent. Ammianus tells us that in 363–364 CE, the election of a new pope in the Basilica of Sicinius resulted in rioting that left 127 people dead, and the authorities restored order only with great difficulty.¹⁰

Another symbolic blow to the concept of the *Pax Romana* came with the destruction of the *ara pacis*. This altar, dedicated to peace and abundance, which Augustus had erected on the Campus Martius, traditionally a field dedicated to the exercise of arms, seems to have been dismantled when the Emperor Theodosius suppressed pagan cults in 391–392. Flooding and encroachment had also contributed to its reduced visibility, but there can be no doubt that prelates such as St. Ambrose wished to make the point that peace came only from Christ, not Roman emperors. The idea that the emperor could provide peace and abundance in this world was superseded by the promise of peace in the next world for those who were saved.¹¹

It is perhaps understandable that Christians who professed their beliefs with such fervor and often displayed the enthusiasm of recent converts, might resort to violence. But what were the reasoned views of the early Fathers of the Church? John Helgeland insists that it is difficult to discern a coherent doctrine of pacifism among the early Church Fathers. Their objections to Christians serving as soldiers in the Roman army were largely limited to the pagan religious observances that might accompany the discharge of military duties. At the same time, it seems that Christians were very loyal to the Roman Empire

and accepted the need for an army to protect the borders of the empire. The early Church Fathers might have expressed an aversion to war and a condemnation of murder, but that does not mean that they did not recognize the necessity of self-defense.¹²

It was St. Augustine who shaped the discussions concerning war and peace in late antiquity and in the medieval West. He was already steeped in the classics of the Greco-Roman world before he became a Christian. His great task was to reconcile Roman legal thinking with the knowledge derived from the Hebrew Old Testament and the evangelical message of the New Testament. The Old Testament was filled with examples of wars undertaken by God's command to punish and correct the wicked; war was morally justified under certain circumstances, which provided justification for the Roman concept of a just war. The New Testament did not specifically condemn war, but rather provided a guide to personal conduct that made it difficult to envision a Christian living the life of a soldier. This was an idea that St. Augustine was not comfortable with, since the pacifism associated with the Manichean beliefs that he had repudiated when he became a Christian did not accord well with his belief that war was a consequence of original sin. Augustine's one concession to what remained of early Christian pacifism was that a Christian could not kill in self-defense because that would be inconsistent with the Christian love of one's neighbor. Only rulers and magistrates possessed the authority to declare war.¹³

Because the people of the Roman Empire had largely converted to Christianity toward the end of the fourth century, Augustine's views concerning war had changed. While an espousal of nonviolence had been morally appropriate for the early Christian era, Augustine became convinced that the use of force had become acceptable for advancing and defending the Christian religion. But Augustine became disillusioned with this concept in later years, and this was reflected in his *City of God*, which is dominated by the theme of war. He had come to apprehend that the Roman Empire was fighting a losing battle against imminent political collapse, and that this was leading to a "Hell on earth." In such a situation, a morally wise man would be bound by duty to fight to preserve what remained of political society. This was the basis of Augustine's doctrine of "just war." He thought that war was the price one had to pay for peace, and even the most just of rulers could not avoid engaging in

war since his more turbulent neighbors would force it on him. This was because the basic cause of war was wickedness.¹⁴

St. Augustine expanded on Cicero's concept of just war as compensation for lost territory or goods, which led to the status quo ante bellum. The Augustinian doctrine of just war went beyond mere compensation and sought punishment, not just for injuries done to a people or a nation, but also for violating the moral order. Thus, the Augustinian just-war doctrine got into the business of punishing sin as well as crime. Moreover, it did not distinguish between offensive and defensive wars, it was total and unlimited in scope, and the enemy, including noncombatants as well as soldiers, could be punished without regard to individual culpability.¹⁵

St. Augustine had originally believed that no one should be coerced into accepting Christianity or Christian unity. But his experience with the Donatist heresy changed his mind. Finding instances of compulsion in both the Old and the New Testaments, such as the conversion of St. Paul, St. Augustine concluded that compulsion and free will were not mutually exclusive concepts. When heretical groups refused to accept ecclesiastical discipline peacefully, he asserted that the imperial authorities had a duty to enforce discipline on dissident Christian groups, although the use of violence should be tempered so as to punish and not destroy those who disturbed the peace and unity of the Christian Church. However, it was not easy to enforce conformity on Christians, whether orthodox or heterodox, who were steeped in the religious culture of martyrdom. We might ask how this differed from the earlier persecutions of Christians by the imperial authorities in pagan times. St. Augustine would have answered that the application of physical coercion by imperial authorities in Christian times was a kind of paternal discipline and was done for the right motives.¹⁶ Physical coercion of evil doers could provide a degree of peace for those who were law-abiding:

Surely, it is not without purpose that we have the institution of the power of kings, the death penalty of the judge, the barbed hooks of the executioner, the weapons of the soldier, the right of punishment of the overlord, even the severity of the good father. All of these things have their methods, their causes, their reasons, their practical benefits. While these are feared, the wicked are kept within bounds, and the good live more peacefully among the wicked.¹⁷

Thus, the possibility of war among Christians was recognized by St. Augustine when he endorsed the necessity of punishment of heretical Christians by the secular authorities (in this case, the Roman state). Augustine did not regard this as civil war, but rather a manifestation of the continual conflict between the City of God and the City of Man. Augustine based his argument on a study of Exodus 32, where God commanded Moses to order the sons of Levi to slay those who worshiped the golden calf. St. Augustine called this perpetual struggle a holy war. This doctrine of Augustine was subsequently cited by Hildebrand, later Pope Gregory VII, to justify the extension of the crusading wars from infidels only to those who were heretical, schismatic, or excommunicated. But, whereas St. Augustine had restricted the authority for declaring such a war to temporal rulers, Pope Gregory VII claimed the authority for proclaiming a holy war for the papacy.¹⁸

St. Augustine assumed that living as he did in the earthly city, man's life would always be plagued by discord, and out of discord, war inevitably arose. Lasting and universal peace could only be found in Heaven, and would only be available to those who were saved. The best that could be achieved in this imperfect world was to attempt to limit such conflict to just wars fought within certain ethical boundaries. If this could be achieved, humankind might, from time to time, experience concord as well as discord. Wars would be fought to secure peace, but since peace is such a fragile thing in this anarchical world, moments of peace could only be temporary. Just wars come at a heavy price and were immensely destructive, because the legacy of just wars was generations of bitterness and the possibility of more wars.¹⁹ Thus, St. Augustine rejected the pacifism and antimilitarism of the earlier Church Fathers. The doctrine that some wars were commanded by God, which runs throughout the Old Testament, was reasserted, and the teachings of Christ, which took the sword of vengeance out of the hands of Christians, were seemingly laid aside.

St. Augustine conceded that "peace is the instinctive aim of all creatures, and even the ultimate purpose of war," but then he qualified this statement by adding that everyone desires a peace that is to his own advantage. Even when men strove for peace, it remained a contested concept. In this world, after the Fall of Man, all creatures, human and animal, wanted peace, but only for their own convenience and dominion, which was an unstable foundation for peace. If conflict occurs on an almost daily basis in families, households, and

friendships, is it any wonder that political society is so frequently disturbed by insurrections and civil wars?²⁰ “Peace is a doubtful good, because we do not know the heart of our friend, and though we did know it today, we would be ignorant of what it might be tomorrow.”²¹ St. Augustine insisted that the proper moral view is that an unjust peace is no peace at all: “It comes to this then; a man who has learnt to prefer right to wrong, and the rightly ordered to the perverted, sees that the peace of the unjust, compared to the peace of the just, is not worthy of the name of peace.”²² St. Augustine’s teachings brought the classical Roman concept of a just war into the corpus of Christian thought. This concept of just war derived from Roman law and Stoic philosophy. While some Christians thought the concept of just war departed from Christian teaching, the related concept of holy war could be derived from the Scriptures.²³

The sixteenth-century French humanist and historian Jean Bodin thought that for St. Augustine to assert that this world will always be devoid of real peace was philosophically incorrect because that implied that God could not alter the course of events in the world that he governed. However, Augustine, mindful of the doctrine of human free will, had anticipated that objection. Those who ponder these matters are seemingly forced to believe either that Divine Providence does not reach to these outer limits of things or that surely all evils are committed by the will of God. Both horns of this dilemma are impious, but particularly the latter. For although it is unsound and perilous to the soul to hold that anything is beyond God’s control, yet even among men, no one is blamed for what he could not do or prevent. The imputing of negligence is indeed more pardonable than the charge of ill-will or cruelty. Reason therefore not unmindful of piety is in a manner forced to hold that the things of this earth cannot be governed by powers divine or that they are neglected and unnoticed, rather than hold they are all governed in such wise that all complaining about God is inoffensive and blameless.²⁴

Following the collapse of the Roman Empire in the West, Christian thinkers had little choice but to accept the legacy of classical antiquity as it applied to warfare and statecraft. Although St. Augustine had demonstrated in the *City of God* that the Roman Empire was tainted, it was all that remained to protect Christians against barbarian invaders. What was to be learned from the New Testament was neither coherent nor helpful in defending Christian society, while examples derived from the Old Testament depicted Jews going to war in

response to direct commands from God to exterminate heathens living in the Promised Land. The political and military theories of the Greeks and Romans offered not only more practical examples of how to deal with troublesome neighbors, but also the example of a degree of ethical restraint in warfare—even though both Greece and Rome were bellicose societies. The doctrine of the just war enjoyed continued support from the leaders of the Church as the early Middle Ages saw continued onslaughts of pagan hordes in northern and central Europe and Muslims bent on conquest and *jihād* from the south.²⁵

Other Fathers of the Church also recognized the need to accept the Roman concept of just war, and to work with the Roman authorities to protect Christianity from internal and external enemies. St. Ambrose, bishop of Milan, who was the first of the Fathers to urge this cooperation, taught that prudence, fortitude, and justice were all closely related to the desire for self-preservation. The courage to protect the weak and to defend one's home and country against bandits or barbarians was suffused with justice. However, fortitude should always be combined with prudence. St. Ambrose reminded his audience that David never engaged in war unless compelled to do so, he always prayed for guidance before battle and he always offered thanks to God when he won a victory, such as when he slew Goliath.²⁶

St. Augustine wrote his *City of God* following Alaric's sack of Rome in 410. But he was careful to point out that the civil wars between Sulla and Marius were cruel far beyond anything perpetrated by the invasions of the Goths or Gauls.²⁷ The Germanic and Turco-Mongolic invasions disrupted the unity of Rome not only by their violent eruption into the empire, but also by their own lack of political unity and stability as well as by their diverse religious views. Some of these invaders remained pagans, and those who had accepted Christianity were likely to be heretical. The Latin Church began to assume some of the temporal functions of the former rulers as the Western Empire disintegrated, but the chaos of late antiquity and the early Middle Ages delayed and hindered the process of assimilation and civilization. These invasions also destroyed what was left of a peace ethic and weakened the concept of a just war. The precept that only a legitimate ruler could declare war made no sense when tribes and kinship groups replaced city-states and empires. Ultimately, the emergence of Christendom as a moral and religious entity would help to tame the bellicosity of tribal chieftains and warriors, or at least, turn their

aggression outward. With the emergence of feudal monarchies, bishops and abbots as feudal lords could be drawn into feuding and warfare, and their armed followers sometimes included secular and even monastic clergy. But the Church as an institution never approved of this kind of clerical behavior.²⁸

Before he became bishop of Milan, St. Ambrose had been a Roman official from a senatorial family, and he derived his moral justification for Christian participation in just wars from Ciceronian Stoicism. However, he continued to reiterate that the Church had abhorred bloodshed from the earliest part of the Christian era. Clerics could not hold an office that would require them to pronounce a sentence that prescribed mutilation or death, nor were they permitted to bear arms in time of war, although they could accompany armies into the field as chaplains. Those persons who served as soldiers after receiving baptism could not thereafter be ordained as priests.²⁹

Barbarians, war, and violence

The Roman Empire was quite unprepared for the barbarian invasions that occurred after 260 and the accompanying instability. The Mediterranean littoral had not seen war for many generations, and the imperial government was in the hands of an aristocracy that had grown accustomed to peace over a long period. By contrast, the periphery of empire was governed and defended by professional soldiers who had to deal with military emergencies at a moment's notice. Germanic, Turco-Mongolic, and Persian peoples made repeated incursions. Here, "it was plain," as Peter Brown observes, that "peace was a momentary lull in the laws of nature." The interior of the Roman Empire was one of the few places in history where a great state had attempted to establish a zone of peace where civilians ruled instead of soldiers.³⁰

What Christians living within the Roman Empire of late antiquity could observe of the Germanic and Turco-Mongolic peoples who came out of the Steppes of Central Asia and who penetrated the frontiers seemed to bear out what St. Augustine said about the earthly city. Azar Gat argues that the so-called "Dark Ages," or the early medieval period, was characterized by a "collapse of civilization" because the peoples who overran the Roman Empire in the West were so primitive that they were like the Iron-Age peoples who had

preceded classical antiquity. Tribal warfare, as found, for example, among the Celts and the Germans of northern Europe, was characterized by endemic violence, but little in the way of organized war. Hunter-gatherers often raided the resources of agriculturalists, and the prizes sought were usually cattle, women and children, or sometimes crops. Adult male prisoners were rarely allowed to live. Because of high mortality rates among males, tribal societies had difficulty replenishing themselves; children were needed to provide replacement warriors, and women were needed to perform labor since many of the men would have been warriors. By contrast, Roman attitudes toward prisoners of war were quite unusual, because they absorbed almost all captives into Roman society—even if some were enslaved. In the long run, Roman willingness to take in foreign populations and Romanize them undoubtedly contributed to the greater demographic resources that they could draw on when raising armies.³¹

Although some Germanic peoples were primarily agriculturalists, in other tribes, almost every boy was expected to become a warrior, and every adult male as a warrior was expected to follow his tribal chief during the campaigning season. There was little difference between warriors and noncombatants, and civil and military leadership were fused into one. No concept of just war, such as had been developed in the Roman world was to be found in Germanic society because every warrior decided for himself whether or not to take up arms, but those who followed peaceful pursuits were looked down on. The Germanic tribes were therefore largely devoted to warfare and worshiped gods in the form of animals such as bears and bulls. Their kings had a divine mission to lead their warriors into battle. Unlike the Roman legions, these Germanic warriors moved about with their whole families. Because most of the Germanic and Turco-Mongolic peoples were semi-nomadic and refused to fight pitched battles, preferring raiding and other more mobile tactics, the Romans found it difficult to engage and defeat them using Roman methods of warfare. Moreover, the costs of sustaining an army to fight the tribal peoples along extensive frontiers and to contain their incursions raised taxes to such a level that the empire in the West could not survive.³²

Peter Heather has argued that the Roman Empire in the West was not brought down by social and moral collapse, but as a consequence of penetration and conquest by Turco-Mongolic peoples. Even in the late fourth century CE,

the Roman army still maintained dominance on all its European frontiers. It was the Persian frontier that posed the greater danger, not the northern frontier. Along the Rhine-Danube border, the Germanic hosts had coalesced into client kingdoms, and the Romans frequently made alliances with them and recruited German auxiliaries into the Roman army. In the fourth and fifth centuries, Rome still maintained control over this situation, but the recruitment into the army of non-Roman elements, whose loyalty and reliability were questionable, made it difficult to respond to the greater threat posed by Sasanian Persia. The depredations and conquests in the late fourth century by the Huns, who came out of the Steppes of Asia, forced very large groups of Germanic refugees to throng the Danube frontier, asking for refuge within the empire. Because so many troops had to be deployed to deal with the Persians, insufficient legions remained on the Danube frontier to control the new immigrants as they settled in Roman territory. The Goths went on the rampage in the Danube and Balkan regions, and found willing allies among the Huns and Alans. The victory of the Goths at the Battle of Adrianople in 378 allowed them to range more widely as they pillaged the Balkans. But the Goths were not yet ready to overwhelm the empire because they lacked the manpower resources and military technology to successfully lay siege to fortified cities, and could not feed their hordes, which included women and children, solely by pillaging. For the moment, they lacked the economic base to continue fighting.³³

The situation was quite different a century later when the barbarian presence within the empire had grown larger and Roman economic and military sources had diminished. With the removal of the last emperor in the West in 476, Roman political culture, characterized by an imperial court and a bureaucracy that made decisions for the whole empire and deployed the army for its protection, disappeared within a few years. Earlier, in the western part of the empire, the senatorial class had withdrawn to their private estates, where they continued for some time to live a life devoted to Latin literature and pagan rituals. In 260, they were excluded from military command in favor of professional soldiers of humble birth. The Emperor Constantine had come from this latter background. The senators were untouched by Constantine's conversion, but most of his courtiers were Christians. Although the senators were made welcome at Constantine's court, most of those in the West became more rusticated. Loyalty to the emperor remained strong in the East, but grew

weak in the West. The West remained economically backward, but the Eastern Empire with its numerous towns and a more developed economy prospered and could afford to pay the increasingly higher taxes needed to maintain the Roman army and bureaucracy. While the senatorial aristocrats in the West eventually became Christianized, they made no effort to come to terms with the Germanic newcomers who eventually replaced them in positions of power.³⁴ Provincial Roman cultures survived in a few places, such as southern Gaul, for some time thereafter, but Roman landowners became a distinctly less privileged class as tribal kings and their followers established themselves during the invasions of 376 and 405/6, which brought substantial migrations of Germanic and Turco-Mongolic warriors and their families. These widely dispersed incursions of Germanic tribes had been accompanied by the expansion of the Huns in the Central Steppes of Asia, and the hordes that overran the Roman Empire contained both Germanic and non-Germanic groups such as the Iranian-speaking Alans and the Huns. Under Attila, the Hunnic conquest had for a brief moment lent a degree of unity to the Western Empire, but following the death of Attila in 453, the Western Empire continued to disintegrate, and after 476, imperial authority was replaced by a number of smaller Germanic and Hunnic kingdoms. In this new world, advancement in a person's career depended on following the king as a warrior rather than the extended and expensive education in classical Latin and Greek that had been required for a career in the Roman bureaucracy. While some degree of literacy among elites persisted, clearly the level of education had declined.³⁵

Christianity and Germanic society

The small degree of unity and concord that fragmented Germanic societies possessed came from the conversion of these small kingdoms to Christianity by missionaries sent north by the popes in Rome. In this way, the Germanic peoples were incorporated into Christendom. The laws and institutions of the medieval Church owed much to Imperial Rome, and the clergy and scholars of that institution had access to and preserved much of the learning of classical Rome. One of the most important legacies of the ancient world was the concept of a universal world-state and the *Pax Romana* that had prevailed within that

empire. Given the chaotic circumstances of late antiquity and the early medieval period, the task of recovering this legacy was very difficult.

One of the most important approaches to peace in the early medieval world was monasticism. Ultimately, it had much to contribute, but in the short run, it did nothing to promote an engagement with public affairs in the Ciceronian tradition. The monastic approach to peace was ascetic, that is, it was based on an inner tranquility that necessitated a retreat from the world. This withdrawal from public life in an age of turmoil and political disintegration tended to weaken the classical Roman concept of concord in political society. Since the time of the Emperor Constantine's acceptance of Christianity, the Roman emperors and their Byzantine, Merovingian, and Carolingian successors had hoped that Christian influence and the cooperation of the clergy, with their resources of learning and literacy, would assist in governing the empire and maintaining unity and peace. But, instead, the monks chose to go into seclusion in the desert or the mountains and away from the cities. This monastic seclusion was reinforced by the severely ascetic belief of some of the Fathers of the Church, such as St. Ambrose and St. Jerome, that the peace of God and the false peace of this world would never coincide, and the former could be approached only through contemplation, poverty, and chastity.³⁶

Arnaldo Momigliano says that Christianity unintentionally proved to be a disruptive force after the Roman Empire was weakened by severe economic decline. Wealth was diverted to ecclesiastical building projects and religious charities, and prelates came to wield a rival authority that could not but undermine secular authority. Hermits and the first monks were rebellious and disruptive influences before monastic rules were drawn up by St. Basil in the East and St. Benedict in the West. Monasticism, as we have seen, proved to be a subversive force by causing monks to withdraw from the duties of citizenship. Among the reasons why there was more stability and cohesion in the Eastern Empire was that the Greek Fathers of the Church, such as St. John Chrysostom, were more supportive of imperial government than St. Augustine and his disciples in the West, who strongly criticized the Roman political apparatus. The loyalty of the Byzantine clerics and divines stood in contrast to the unwillingness of their counterparts in the West, who were more conciliatory toward the Germanic invaders than toward Roman pagans. But, most of all, the Church as an institution simply replaced the Roman Empire in the West.³⁷

At the same time, it must be said that it was the Christian Church that effected a synthesis of Latin and Germanic cultures by undertaking the conversion of the rural population and by preserving something of the Roman administrative and juridical systems. The Germanic peoples had never sought to destroy Roman culture, and they became willing partners in this synthesis even as their incursions destroyed Roman imperial unity. Slavery had been the economic foundation of the Roman Empire, but Western monasticism, with its emphasis on asceticism, intellectual endeavor, and manual labor for all members of the monastic community, pointed in a different direction, and gave dignity to manual labor. It also opened up the possibility of technological improvements, which made the increasingly scarce resources of labor more efficient and productive.³⁸

Although the monks were supposed to lead cloistered lives, Pope St. Gregory the Great, the last of the Latin Fathers of the Church, called on a group of Benedictine monks to cross the Alps in 597 and convert the peoples of Britain and northern Europe. The conversion of the Germanic peoples was largely carried out by monastic missionaries, leading to the unity and consolidation of what we call Christendom.³⁹ This was not easily accomplished. The Franks had a well defined warrior class that spent the campaigning season pursuing feuds between families. When they came under the influence of Gallo-Roman bishops, such as St. Gregory of Tours, St. Hilary, and St. Martin, these prelates, so far from disapproving of their bellistic predilections, merely encouraged the Frankish warriors to go after their heretic or heathen neighbors, such as the Alans, Visigoths, and Frisians. The Venerable Bede likewise recognized the need for a warrior class among the Anglo-Saxons because they still faced the enmity of pagan neighbors, and wars of defense against them were morally justifiable. However, there were also wars of aggression against neighbors that lacked such moral justification. But ecclesiastical authorities could not be too strict in their reprimands of these warrior-kings as long as they protected their subjects from pagan incursions and assisted the work of Christian missionaries. In any case, the pagan Germanic peoples had believed that war necessitated cooperation between pagan gods and warriors, and this was a cultural disposition that Christian bishops and missionaries found easier to adapt to than to eradicate. The ideal Christian warrior-king, whose actions were regarded as just and merciful, and who led his people in a Christian and

patriotic war to contain the heathen Danish invaders of eastern England, was Alfred the Great.⁴⁰

Anglo-Saxon kings, such as Alfred the Great, Aethelred II “the ill-advised,” and Edwin of Northumbria, attempted to make peace with the Danish invaders in Anglo-Saxon England, although only Alfred enjoyed much success. The first two kings resorted to paying tribute, but discovered that the Danes and other Vikings had little to gain from a peace treaty as long as they lived by raiding. Only if they could be turned into settled territorial rulers with something to lose as well as to gain from the bargain could they then be expected to honor the terms of a treaty. Like the original meaning of the word *pax*, the concept of peace, as it was understood by the Vikings, was something quite limited in terms of time, place, and people.⁴¹

It was usual for early medieval rulers to claim that their governance would bring peace to their subjects. This was a customary way of asserting the legitimacy of their rule and their determination to preserve social order. It was also a way of maintaining continuity with the *Pax Romana* of the earlier Western Roman Empire. The wisdom of Solomon as a judge and peacemaker was also invoked by many medieval rulers, but the reality was otherwise. War remained endemic in the early medieval world, and the panegyrics and prayers of court poets and clerics offered but a weak bulwark against the incursions of Vikings, Muslims, Slavs, and Magyars in the West during this period. Although Christ was recognized as the Prince of Peace, it was unclear how far the example of Christ as a bringer of peace was applicable to the temporal government of this world. The political theorists of early medieval Europe found that the image of Solomon provided more concrete examples of how a peaceful king in this world should rule. Solomon’s name, in Hebrew, meant “peacemaker,” and he was also understood to prefigure the coming of Christ. He embodied justice and wisdom, ruled over a united Israel, and built the Temple. Despite a few character flaws, King Solomon was considered an exemplary monarch—especially when contrasted with King Saul or the pharaohs. The great Frankish rulers, such as Charlemagne, and the Anglo-Saxon kings, such as Alfred the Great, all regarded King Solomon as an exemplar.⁴²

While the Germanic peoples often settled their quarrels by fighting, there were also peaceful ways of resolving their differences. Two important parts of

any process of peace-making in early medieval Europe were oath-swearing and the exchange of hostages. These customs held true throughout Europe from the Danube Basin to the Atlantic. It was understood that divine sanctions and the threat of death stood behind these exchanges of oaths and hostages. Marriage alliances were also an important means of preserving or securing peace, but they were more commonly employed to reinforce peace with neighboring tribes and kingdoms rather than to bring an end to hostilities. More usually, they were instruments to preserve peace between two political entities that shared common cultures, such as between Viking and Anglo-Saxon kings, but this did not occur until the latter began to regard the former as equals rather than marauders. Marriage alliances were also linked to concepts of peace because the very notion of peace in the medieval imagination grew out of kinship. In early Iceland, which was converted to Christianity in about 1000 CE, until about 1260, there was no state capable of enforcing judgments, but there was a highly developed system of laws and courts. Enforcement of the courts' judgments was in the hands of the aggrieved party. Anthropologists tell us that all cultures develop the means of resolving disputes and imposing concord, but Christianity was remarkable for defining the clergy as a group that could assist in the resolution of conflicts. This was not so apparent in the early medieval world where members of the clergy might still retain relationships with chieftains and warriors who were parties to a feud. However, despite these tainted kinships many of them did actively seek to heal conflicts. They possessed rhetorical resources for encouraging forgiveness, or at least, accepting compensation without forfeiting honor by drawing on biblical literature and parables. If any of the recalcitrant parties refused to accept arbitration, then they could be threatened with ecclesiastical penalties and eternal hellfire.⁴³

For the Venerable Bede, Edwin of Northumbria was a model king who pursued a policy of peace by suppressing violence within his kingdom and who pursued "legitimate" violence against the external enemies of the kingdom. Kings who refused to wield the sword for these ends and did not conform to this model of kingship were not worthy to wear their crowns and endangered the lives of others. One of the principal meanings of peace in the early medieval period was internal order—the freedom to travel the king's highway without fear of molestation. In this sense, peace meant no more than enforcement of

public order and security of travel. It was a rare commodity in Christian Europe, although Bede asserts that a lone woman with a child could travel safely during the reign of Edwin, the first Christian king of a united Northumbria in the early seventh century. Peace also generally prevailed in privileged places such as the households of kings, religious sanctuaries, and monasteries—but rarely on the king's highway except in Edwin's Northumbria.⁴⁴

Alfred, the ninth-century King of Wessex, is the only monarch in English history called "the Great." He earned this reputation by defending his subjects by the sword against Viking marauders, and also by his endeavors to secure a peace settlement with the Danes that was embodied in a formal treaty. In this effort he employed the usual early medieval diplomatic tools for obtaining peace, that is, exchanging hostages, swearing of oaths, and paying tribute. A man of scholarly tastes himself, he also sought the help of the church and employed scholars to translate writings from the Roman past and excerpts from the Bible that encouraged the cultivation of habits of peace. In the Alfredian translation of Boethius's *Consolation of Philosophy*, he emphasized that strong and wise kingship was a guarantee of peace when done in concert with the Christian Church. Later generations likened him to King Solomon in his wisdom and love of peace.⁴⁵

Although a longing for peace did exist in the tribal cultures of northern Europe before the coming of Christianity, the Nordic and Germanic notions of peace seem to have assumed that periods of peace would always be short and fleeting.⁴⁶ Early Christian Ireland, however, affords an example of a native peace ethic that was more carefully thought out. As early as the seventh century, this concept of peace was identified by the *Audacht Morainn* (*The Testament of Moran*) with good kingship. The just ruler not only sought to secure peace and tranquility within his household and during all hostings and assemblies, he also protected his subjects from hostile neighboring tribes and kings. Moreover, he accepted that he had a duty to relieve the distress of his subjects following natural disasters such as storms and plagues. While it was recognized that a just ruler would sometimes have to employ violence in order to preserve the peace and keep external enemies at bay, he was admonished to keep bloodshed at a minimum. Other Irish writings of this period also reveal a determination to reshape notions of kingship in accordance with Christian morality and to devalue martial culture.⁴⁷

Concepts of peace were limited in the early medieval world, and their existence was more usually to be found in the imagination rather than in reality. They were usually embodied in literary epics, poems, and sermons. A ruler would be regarded as a peaceful king if he could unite the adherents of his hall or kingdom in the face of external enemies. To have attempted to pursue a larger policy of peace against the many and dangerous external enemies would have been foolish. The many external threats present in early medieval Europe placed limits on the pursuit of peace by rulers. Yet, some progress was made toward building a peace ethic, however primitive it may seem to us.

Germanic concepts of warfare were influenced by customary rules for pursuing a feud, which was a quarrel between kinship groups. One of its most striking features was the idea that quarrels could be settled by a monetary composition as an alternative to bloodshed. Some of the Germanic tribes were not particularly warlike, and Wulfila, one of the leaders in Visigothic Spain, refused to permit the Book of Kings from the Old Testament to be translated into the Goth language because he thought that it was an inflammatory incitement to war. The Lombards in Italy were distinctly more warlike, while the Anglo-Saxons were more peaceably inclined—especially within a kinship group or neighborhood.⁴⁸

The Carolingian Empire and feudalism

The assimilation of the Germanic peoples into the Christian world led to a reorientation of views on war. In Germanic society, war was a kind of moral action, and was more admired than peace. Because the early Christian values of love and concord were little esteemed by Germanic warriors and because the Church needed the protection and assistance of the Germanic rulers and their warriors, the prelates and clergy of the Catholic Church had to accommodate the martial values of Germanic culture and society.⁴⁹

The Carolingian Empire represented an attempt to revive the Roman Empire in the West under the tutelage of the Church. It brought a degree of political and military unity to most of the former provinces of the Western Roman Empire minus Moorish Spain, North Africa, and Britain. It also

incorporated Catalonia, Lombard Italy, Saxony, and Friesland. The imperial title was bestowed on Charles the Great, or Charlemagne, by Pope Leo III in Rome on Christmas Day 800. Although Charlemagne sought to revive the Roman administrative system, what he actually got was an embryonic form of feudalism because his companions, known as counts, were given land in exchange for military and judicial service. The Germanic peoples were ignorant of the Roman concept of *res publica*. Their society was bound together by ties of personal loyalty. Charlemagne also did his best to revive learning and literacy, and to convert the pagan peoples beyond the frontiers.⁵⁰

Feudal society was characterized by vassalage, a bond of loyalty between a *vassus*, or warrior companion, and his lord; vassalage predated the Carolingian Empire and originated in the followers of the Germanic tribal chiefs. A similar system, called *companionage*, was also found in Celtic societies. Although the status of vassalage was originally servile, it gradually took on an honorable distinction. From the time of Charles Martel, the grandfather of Charlemagne, these bands of warriors coalesced under their chiefs for the purpose of establishing peace and order among Christians under the leadership of the Carolingian dynasty. Each chieftain or lord was bound to furnish a band of warriors for the king when called on to do so, and the bond between the lord and his *vassi*, or warrior followers, was supposed to last a lifetime. In return, the king was supposed to bestow gifts on his *vassi*, including grants of land. Charlemagne was generous in the distribution of largesse to his followers, and in doing so, he fulfilled the most kingly characteristic of rule in Germanic society. The gold that he distributed came from military campaigns that were usually justified by the forced conversion of heathens, but which, in reality, were thinly disguised expeditions to gather loot.⁵¹

Peace was very hard to come by because friendship in premodern societies did not exist outside of kinship. Blood relationships were very old and certainly predated feudalism. Kinship, along with vassalage, became one of the two foundations of the feudal system. Feudal lords, of course, could usually count on *vassi* or liegemen, but it was generally assumed that an ordinary knight had no friends except kinsmen by blood or by marriage. Quite simply put, there was no neutrality. In feuds or trials by compurgation or by combat, kinsmen were the only ones that a knight could rely on for support. This also seems to have been true of lesser folk. Following Roman legal principles, only kings

were supposed to declare war. All other forms of violence were viewed as being akin to banditry. During one ten-year period, armies in the Frankish kingdoms were involved in various wars, raids, rebellions, mutinies, civil strife, and other instances of large-scale violence on thirty-seven different occasions.⁵²

In the last days of the Carolingian Empire, the perpetual state of war, including military expeditions on the frontiers as well as internal conflict, caused warriors or vassals to look for protective relationships with lesser lords rather than with the Frankish kings. The latter were left without the military resources they needed to protect the Church and their subjects, and their authority became increasingly meaningless. There were many indications of the decline of Carolingian power in the last years of Charlemagne's life. Two of his sons predeceased him, and his surviving son Louis the Pious lacked ability as a military leader. Frankish expansion came to an end in Italy and Spain, and the threat of a Danish invasion remained great. The poor suffered from economic distress; warfare continued on the frontiers. There was discord and rebellion among Charlemagne's *vassi*, who refused to render military service—possibly caused by the failure of Charlemagne's successors to provide booty and other rewards through wars of expansion. A general war-weariness existed; many wished for a ruler of more peaceful disposition, which they found in Charlemagne's surviving son Louis the Pious. In his last years, Charles the Great increasingly turned to asceticism, and in the final disposition of his wealth, gave most of it to the Church, leaving his heir destitute. The nobility also suffered a decline in wealth. The combination of weak leadership and economic decline brought an end to Charlemagne's great project. Anarchy and disintegration followed before a new social and political system emerged.⁵³

The period of peace established by the Frankish empire of Charlemagne was short-lived. Louis the Pious, a man of peaceful temperament, had assumed that the barbarian raids that had troubled the Carolingian Empire were at an end. However, the invasions of Arabs, Magyars, and Scandinavians resumed, and the fortifications that had been dismantled had to be rebuilt. Even in the heart of the Frankish lands, neither cities nor rural communities were entirely safe. The raids depopulated a number of villages and monasteries, but the monastic chroniclers may have exaggerated the damage done. Since the Vikings usually penetrated the interior by rowing up the rivers, they diminished commerce just as the flight from the villages diminished agricultural production, while the

disruption of monastic life led to declining levels of literacy and scholarship. Gradually, the Franks learned to build better defenses, and the Norsemen, once they had settled in Normandy, seem to have driven back the Vikings who continued to raid along the northern coast. Because defense against the barbarian and Saracen raids became the highest priority, much time and effort was invested in fortifying towns and monasteries, and building castles. Since the castles were in the hands of the feudal nobility rather than being under royal control, royal authority was thereby weakened. Very few of the Christian kings of this period were able to organize resistance, and the castles of the feudal nobility served as bases from which they could pursue feuds or pillage the peasantry rather than fighting the external enemies.⁵⁴

As a consequence of a quarrel among Charlemagne's three grandsons, the Emperor Lothaire, Louis the German, and Charles the Bald, the empire was divided into three parts, Lotharingia, Saxony and Bavaria, and Neustria, by the Treaty of Verdun of 843, which effectively recognized the end of the Carolingian Empire. The treaty failed to bring peace because Louis and Charles both wanted access to the Rhineland and failed to observe the terms of the treaty, which in any case, did not correspond to ethnic and racial boundaries. Hence, the new political units lacked coherence, and military leadership was divided. In Charles the Bald's new kingdom of Francia and Neustria, his subjects included Franks, Bretons, Gauls, Aquitanians (who were descended from the Romans), Basque-speaking Gascons, Goths, and Spaniards. Charlemagne's attempt to revive the Roman Empire in the West and to impose unity on the lands that he ruled had failed because he never succeeded in curtailing ethnic particularism nor curbing his own desire to bestow a throne on each of his heirs. Moreover, areas such as Bavaria, Lombardy, and Aquitaine remained autonomous regions within the empire, while Gascony and Brittany were never incorporated within the Carolingian Empire. Although the King of Neustria and Francia appointed royal officials to keep the peace and administer the law, collect taxes, and render military service, by the end of the 880s, this system had ceased to function, and this part of Charlemagne's empire had disintegrated. That Charles the Bald pursued military adventures elsewhere did nothing to restore unity.⁵⁵

The feudal political units that succeeded the Roman and Carolingian empires were at first exceedingly numerous and too weak to maintain peace

and stability. Feudal rulers might hold a variety of titles—sometimes vested in one person—including emperor or king, prince, duke, prince-bishop, or count, and so on. These feudal lords could claim only a limited allegiance from *vassi* or fiefholders, who lived on grants of land held of their lords. These fiefholders were drawn from an emerging knightly class. Originally a household retainer, the knight's status grew with the spread of the culture of chivalry and the holding of feudal fiefs. Fiefholders owed a limited amount of military assistance to their lords as specified in the feudal contract. Some fiefholders possessed tenants of their own, an arrangement called subinfeudation. Some fiefholders also had landless knights in their households. Since they possessed fortified castles, they were in a position to engage in private warfare on their own. Many *vassi* owed allegiance to more than one feudal lord, and the uncertainty concerning which lord they would follow in a conflict only exacerbated instability. This was largely true of the feudal societies of mainland Europe because the Norman variety of feudalism, imposed on England as a consequence of the Conquest, did not allow subinfeudation. All fiefholders of the Anglo-Norman kingdom were tenants-in-chief of the crown. Since the hierarchy in feudal society was military in nature, and was distinct from manorial or urban society, there existed a wide gulf between feudal rulers and ordinary people.⁵⁶

Chivalry and warfare

Peace was not thought to be a natural state of affairs in the Middle Ages. Chivalry, the knightly code of behavior with its emphasis on performing acts of valor on the battlefield, ensured that peace was unlikely to be achieved in Europe or its borderlands. Before the advent of chivalry in the Frankish lands and the use of mounted knights on the battlefield, warfare in Northern Europe often involved great hostings of warriors. The Vikings were particularly given to quick raids for booty and ransom of hostages. However, the building of strong castles and the use of heavy war horses and expensive armor made warfare more static and limited. At the same time, the mentality of the knightly class caused war to become a constant activity, even if it was fought on a more limited scale. Those who were defeated in battle were more likely to be taken

prisoner and held for ransom because the victorious knights saw that there was profit to be made in such trade. And, unlike most earlier conflicts, knights were now fighting Christians who shared a common chivalric culture.⁵⁷

The medieval knight was essentially a warrior who insisted on his right to dispense violence whenever his sense of honor was offended. Despite the propaganda contained in chivalric literature concerning the protection afforded to widows, orphans, and others incapable of defending themselves, they were the main cause of the violence that created widows and orphans, and generally disturbed the peace. In short, many knights differed little from common brigands and were responsible for much of the violence that was endemic in medieval society. Monastic chroniclers—such as Orderic of Vitalis, a twelfth-century English monk in the Norman monastery of Saint-Evroul, and Suger, abbot of Saint-Denis near Paris—praised the efforts of monarchs, such as William I and Henry I of England, who endeavored to bring such “proud and turbulent men” to justice and restore a measure of peace. When William Rufus, son of the Conqueror and later King William II, was campaigning in Maine in 1098, he released some prisoners on parole. Some of his followers protested his leniency. William explained that knights could be trusted to keep their word in such matters or their reputations would forever be blackened. Orderic commented that a concept of *notitia contubernii*, or “a fellowship in arms,” had emerged whereby prisoners were now captured instead of being slain, although they were not freed without being ransomed. This was a practice that had emerged in France and was called by Gerald of Wales *Gallica militia*, a new rule of chivalry sometimes practiced in France. This chivalric behavior was generally extended to aristocratic combatants, but ordinary soldiers sometimes benefitted. Yet, it remains generally true that during the High Middle Ages, the violence generated by knights probably posed a greater threat to public order than crime or popular rebellion.⁵⁸ Orderic, in his *Ecclesiastical History*, was a severe critic of brutal and ill disciplined knights and a defender of Henry I’s efforts to curb the depredations in Henry’s Duchy of Normandy. When some rebel knights allied themselves with Angevin invaders in an attack on monastic lands and tenants in 1136, Orderic contrasted their acts of brigandage, spoliation, and sacrilege with the tight discipline that Roman commanders had maintained over their cohorts. Clearly, Henry I had great difficulty in persuading the knights within his lands

to be guided by the rules of warfare of the new chivalry. Orderic may have drawn on the *De re militarii* of Vegetius for his knowledge of Roman discipline.⁵⁹

Nobility was thought to derive from prowess; honor came from the demonstration of prowess generation after generation, and it could only be retained by wielding the sword in battle. The continuing demonstration of prowess was the principal characteristic of chivalry. Those who had earned the noble status that derived from prowess were privileged to dispense violence as their sense of honor dictated. Both chivalric literature and eyewitness accounts of battles tell us that knights found the slaughter and mayhem of hand-to-hand combat exhilarating. It conferred identity. Jean de Bueil, viscount of Carenton and count of Sancerre, who assisted Joan of Arc at the Siege of Orleans, proclaimed that war was a “joyous thing” because it allowed a knight to perform brave deeds, acquire honor and glory, and enhance his reputation.⁶⁰ The display of rage in battle was more highly admired than the exercise of restraint. Needless to say, it made it more difficult for commanders to impose discipline and to persuade knights to focus on carrying out battle orders and securing military objectives rather than seeking personal encounters and hand-to-hand fighting. In both chivalric romances and eyewitness accounts of battle, knights display a love of tournaments and actual warfare that strikes modern sensibilities as distinctly blood-thirsty. A knight believed that he could not be respected “until he has taken and given many blows.” We must remember that the chivalric values of the medieval warrior held that prowess was diminished by peace, and his income was lessened by the lack of opportunity to win booty and collect ransom. The distinction between public war (*bellum*) and private war (*duellum*) is a modern one; the only difference between actual war and the tournament in medieval times was that the property of noncombatants was not destroyed or stolen in the latter form of combat. While the lances used in tournaments had blunt rather than sharp points, mock combat was still a dangerous sport, and participants could and did suffer fatal accidents. No one doubted that tournaments were a simulation of or a rehearsal for war.⁶¹

Knights looked forward to war not only as an opportunity to display prowess, but also because of the prospect of garnering booty and ransom. They understood that war brought widespread destruction to the persons and property of noncombatants; this was regarded as natural and not a cause for

regret. But, then, chivalry had nothing to do with ordinary people. Armies had usually lived off of the land since ancient times, and to leave the lands and properties of the subjects and peasants of one's enemy untouched was to afford that enemy an advantage in the struggle. Naturally, slash-and-burn tactics would also provoke an enemy to do the like by way of revenge. This bears eloquent witness to the values of the code of chivalry, which never really extended beyond the small world of knights. Chivalric culture was also full of contradictions. While there is evidence that it did place constraints on the conduct of war among Christian knights, there are also many instances of sheer brutality in the treatment of enemies on the battlefield, including both prisoners of war and noncombatants. When warriors and soldiers were captured on the battlefield, usually only those nobles who could afford to pay ransom were spared and taken captive. For others whom the mounted knight encountered on campaign, there was only violence and destruction. Persons of humble birth received little or no consideration; this sometimes included well born ladies.⁶²

According to the author of *L'Histoire de Guillaume le Maréchal*, the first thing that knights must concern themselves with when wielding the sword was preserving their reputation. Then, they must be attentive to defending themselves, their families, and friends. Glory would also accrue to those who defended their homeland. In last place, they should also remember their duty to preserve the peace of the Church. Honor and reputation were always foremost in the mind of the medieval knight, and this is revealed alike by poetic romances, songs, and narrative memoirs—whether biographical or autobiographical. Such a knight was known as a *prudhomme*, or a man of prowess.⁶³

Some thirteenth-century sources such as the *Histoire de Guillaume le Maréchal* suggest that the advent of chivalric culture brought some restraint to warfare. However, the wars between the kings of England and France over the Angevin territories in France were particularly lengthy and nasty because the Capetian monarchs and their knights saw the struggle as a defense of the patria. The Battle of Bouvines in 1214 was a hard-fought engagement in which the French exacted a heavy toll on the invaders and were little interested in taking prisoners. Abbot Suger of Saint-Denis went so far as to suggest that the foreign invaders should be treated like Saracens, and their bodies left unburied for the beasts of prey to feed on. The chivalric culture that the Normans

introduced into England in 1066 mandated the humane treatment of prisoners of war of noble status while condoning the harsh treatment of prisoners of low status. Duke William of Normandy knew how to be ruthless when enemies or subjects broke faith with him, but when he invaded England in 1066, he went out of his way to follow the accepted rules of warfare under the code of chivalry and to show mercy to the Anglo-Saxons. When his soldiers destroyed property or took booty without permission, William made restitution. William I had sought the assistance of Pope Alexander II in legitimizing his conquest of Anglo-Saxon England in exchange for assisting papal reforms. A group of Norman bishops had already drawn up a penitential ordinance reaffirming church teaching that soldiers who had killed in battle or during the suppression of a domestic rebellion had committed “grave sin” and needed to perform lengthy public penance. This also assisted the Conqueror’s efforts to impose stricter discipline on his army. Bishop Ermenfrid of Sion was sent to England as a papal legate, and confirmed this document, although William himself was exempted from the obligation to perform such penance. The pope also granted William the right to nominate prelates within his kingdom.⁶⁴

Whether the pre-conquest Anglo-Saxons possessed rules of war is uncertain. They fought mostly defensive wars to ward off foreign invaders, but we know that on one occasion, following the Battle of Stamford Bridge in 1066, the Norwegian invaders, led by Harald Hardrada, were put to the sword following their defeat. When the Normans overcame King Harold Godwinson’s exhausted Anglo-Saxon army at Hastings a short time later, the margin of victory was so narrow that the Normans decided that they could not spare the lives of the defeated Anglo-Saxons if they were to complete the conquest of England. The Battle of Hastings was an exceptionally bloody affair, and William did not feel that it was appropriate to spare the Anglo-Saxon warriors. Later, William the Conqueror did show clemency to rebels when, by English custom, he could have exacted harsher penalties. Normandy and England after the Conquest were more chivalrous societies than Anglo-Saxon England, where rebels were commonly put to death. William’s usual practice was to exile such persons and confiscate their estates, but to spare life and limb. However, persons of lower status could expect severe punishments from their Norman rulers.⁶⁵

As Anglo-Norman power extended into the Celtic borderlands of the British Isles, a great disparity between the conduct and methods of warfare

could be observed in the Norman and Celtic camps. King Edward I was a rather poor model of chivalry, and he and the Anglo-Normans did not extend the chivalric courtesies to Welsh and Irish prisoners of war because Edward regarded them as rebels, and in Celtic warrior society, methods of warfare were more brutal and it was still the practice to slay all prisoners and take their heads. Also, the Norman commanders believed that severity would deter future revolts, raids, and acts of terrorism; they could also claim that they were merely paying back the Welsh and the Irish in kind. Yet, there were occasional exceptions to this brutality. Following a skirmish between English and Irish warriors at Bagenbun Creek in Waterford in 1170, the English took seventy prisoners. One of the English knights insisted that the prisoners should be killed because foreign countries were never conquered by clemency. However, another English knight, Raymond le Gros, argued that the prisoners should be spared because "they are no longer our enemies; they are human beings." In the event, the majority of the English knights prevailed and the prisoners were put to death. Gerald of Wales, while admitting that it was common practice for the Welsh and the Irish to kill prisoners, insisted that the Celts were defending their homelands, and that the Anglo-Normans were excessively brutal and could have set a better example. It has been suggested that one of the reasons that the Celts slaughtered prisoners of war instead of ransoming them was because they lacked a monetary economy. Chivalric culture and knighthood hardly existed in Wales, and the Welsh practiced guerilla warfare. They could capture castles by surprise attacks, but they lacked the expertise and equipment for sieges. The Irish also engaged in guerilla warfare that mostly took the form of cattle raids on the herds of other tribal chieftains. The Scots were more adept in their methods of warfare, and could fight pitched battles and counter English heavy cavalry charges.⁶⁶

The reduction of private war in medieval Europe was a joint effort of the Church and the new feudal monarchies. As the recently Christianized Germanic tribes were absorbed into the feudal kingdoms of the medieval Latin West, they brought with them "a cult of war and belligerence," which was at the core of the code of chivalry. Knights bred in this chivalric culture were encouraged to seek adventure and single combat, and later, to joust in tournaments. The bellicosity of feudal warriors was also directed against external enemies, and received the sanction of the clergy as just-war. The opportunities for

adventure and combat in the First Crusade not only helped to rid Western Europe of these disruptive individuals, but also bestowed on them the status of Christian warriors. Indeed, the encouragement of the Church made chivalry into a kind of order or estate that placed the knight who went forth to protect the holy places on the same hierarchical level with the priesthood.⁶⁷

In the High Middle Ages, monarchs—especially those of England and France—sought to gain control over warlike manifestations of violence and to enforce a royal peace. How far this was successful remains a matter for scholarly debate. However, chivalric culture maintained the belief that a knight committed no offense against his suzerain if he killed an opponent in seeking revenge for offending his knightly honor—provided that he followed all of the proper forms prescribed by the rules of knightly combat. Although the chivalric code sanctioned individual combat between two knights to settle points of honor, it was incompatible with the rules governing blood feuds, where tactics and practices such as ambush, mutilation, or the slaying of prisoners were usual. This knightly prowess was considered a private right that did not concern the king. In chivalric literature, kings were inclined to answer that an offended knight had a right to exact revenge, but only after the matter had been decided by the king could a judicial combat be allowed. The kings of England and France claimed regality with the right to dispense justice at all levels of society, including jurisdiction over chivalric disputes. They justified this as necessary to permit “the peaceful practice of Christianity.” Thus, the values of chivalry and the interests of royal government were quite different.⁶⁸

Other than the Angevin-Capetian Wars, the conflicts of the eleventh and twelfth centuries mostly consisted of violent quarrels among lords and vassals. As the feudal monarchs extended their jurisdictions they attempted to gain a monopoly on violence within their kingdoms, but this necessarily meant persuading the perpetrators of violence to take their fighting elsewhere. Whereas the Church sought to impose peace by sending warriors as crusaders against the Saracens, feudal monarchs, once they had imposed a degree of peace on their own kingdoms, were also able to send larger armies to fight rival Christian kings. In the intervals of peace, such as occurred from time to time during the Hundred Years War, a problem presented itself concerning soldiers who were thrown out of employment in France and roamed the countryside in search of adventure and booty. These bands of unemployed soldiers sometimes

challenged royal armies or found themselves engaged in secondary wars with peasants. In 1346, Edward III of England dealt with the problem by sending the Black Prince to Spain to help Peter the Cruel of Castile counter an attempt by his half-brother to divert the royal succession and seize the crown. Both of the opposing armies were composed of veterans of the wars in France. Thus, a measure of peace could be brought to France by mounting a war in Spain. Just-war theories could also be turned against the Church, as in the conflict between King Philip the Fair of France and Pope Boniface VIII.⁶⁹

Another solution to the problem of bringing internal peace to countries plagued by roving bands of soldiers was suggested by Philippe de Mezières, an official in the service of the King of Cyprus, who was known for promoting a greater awareness of the ideals of chivalry and the duties of knights. He proposed taking knights and their men-at-arms into royal armies for permanent service. Those who proved to be good soldiers could be retained, while those who were interested only in looting could be discharged. Honoré Bonet (or Bouvet), a Benedictine monk, and Christine de Pisan, a French poet, redefined *chivalry* in terms of service to the commonwealth; both, along with the English cleric John of Salisbury, advocated imposing on royal armies the kind of discipline practiced by the Romans and set forth in *De re militarii* by Vegetius, who was widely read during the Middle Ages.⁷⁰

Honoré Bonet summed up the duties that knights and other soldiers owed to their feudal lords. When a *vassus* swore loyalty to his lord, being a king, duke, or count, he was obliged never to do anything that might hurt the interests of his lord. However, the *vassus* was not obliged to fight for his lord, even in a just cause, unless his lord paid him wages. But, if the king or lord lacked the means to do so, the *vassus* must assist him—especially in a defensive war.

Medieval just-war theories

The laws of war during the Roman Empire required justification for every war, but it was agreed that wars in defense of imperial borders or the pacification of non-Roman peoples living on or beyond the frontiers were always a just cause. To these just causes of war, the Christian successors of the Roman Empire in the Middle Ages added the defense of Christendom against pagans, a category

that included Vikings, Magyars, Muslims, and others who invaded Christian territory or the Holy Land.⁷¹ Thus, the Church continued to preserve something of the just-war theory inherited from Roman law and the teachings of St. Augustine and the Church Fathers.

Gratian of Bologna, or Franciscus Gratianus, an Italian cleric, reformulated the principles of just war around 1148. There had been earlier collections of canon-law legislation and opinions of the Fathers of the Church, but Gratian's *Concordia discordantium canonum* (*Concord of Discordant Canons*), also known as the *Decretals*, was the first that was systematically organized. It became a basic reference for medieval canon lawyers and theologians concerned about ethics. Gratian reiterated the Augustinian doctrine that war, conducted in a spirit of Christian charity and love of one's neighbor, was useful for persuading the sinner to give up his sinful ways. Consequently, service as a soldier was not "inherently sinful." Insofar as they fought injustice and punished sinners, they acted as ministers of God. The same was true concerning corporal punishment, mutilation, or execution of thieves, bandits, and pirates. One can see that Gratian did not distinguish between sin and crime or between war and the administration of justice. Overriding all of this was the admonition that the object of war was a return to peace, and once victory had been achieved, the soldier or magistrate should be merciful to captives. At the same time, soldiers who fought only for pay or booty were explicitly condemned.⁷²

Although Gratian is concerned with the question whether a Christian may participate in war, only part of his ideas derive from St. Augustine and the Fathers of the Church; other concepts, such as the need for a formal declaration of war by a ruler or a magistrate, originated with Cicero and Roman law, and were transmitted through the writings of St. Isidore of Seville, an early medieval Spanish prelate and doctor of the Western Church. Gratian cites St. Augustine to the effect that wars of defense are allowable against enemies of the Church in order to avenge an injury by those enemies. To these criteria for a just war, St. Thomas Aquinas later added another criterion—that the war so declared be fought for the right intention, that is, to punish the transgressor and restore peace. We should note that no justification was provided for fighting wars to preserve the state since this particular abstract concept, of the political community having an existence apart from the person of the king, although known to the Romans, was not revived again until the sixteenth century.⁷³

The Roman emperors had claimed to be lords of the world. The Carolingian emperors were content to claim the title “lord of Europe,” but when Gratian’s successors, the Decretalists, began to codify canon law in the twelfth century, they asserted the idea that there was only one emperor of the world, and he could not be an infidel, but rather, had to be a Christian. This authority had been bestowed on the Roman emperors of the Christian era after the time of Constantine by the popes because, as vicars of Christ, they had a world-wide dominion over the souls of men. This would later give them authority to proclaim the crusades and to divide parts of the New World among the Spanish and Portuguese. Supposedly, the popes could also authorize the conquest of non-Christian peoples, not because they were nonbelievers, but because they had violated the laws of nature by unnatural acts, such as sodomy and cannibalism.⁷⁴

John of Legnana (1320–83), professor of canon and civil law at the Studium in Bologna and vicar general to Pope Gregory XI, was the first jurist to address the whole corpus of rights and duties as they pertain to rulers who engage in war. His efforts were also the first by a layman to base the primary justifications for engaging in war on natural law rather than the law of nations, although he does not completely cast aside the justification for war based on divine law. He was not much interested in the moral philosophy of war, or more concretely, constraints on how war was conducted. He allows that the pope may proclaim a crusade against the infidel Saracen to recover the Holy Land, and he may also declare war against an emperor or a prince if he is heretical, schismatical, or if he usurped “the rights and liberties of churches.”⁷⁵

Concerning the origins and causes of wars, Honoré Bonet or Bouvet believed that war originated in Heaven when God drove out the bad angels led by Lucifer. If war originated in Heaven, one should not be surprised to find it in this world. Armed conflict also arose out of the contrariness of human nature. Battle was viewed as an appeal to the judgment of God. War was reasonable and compatible with natural law and man-made law. Nor could it be contrary to divine law, since there were occasions in the Old Testament when God commanded his chosen people to wage war. The evil that is occasioned by the prosecution of war derives from the misconduct of combatants who try to make war serve their own ends of revenge, looting, and rapine, rather than securing justice. War must always be proportionate to the

offense offered. Because God uses soldiers as martial instruments to punish sin does not mean that He loves soldiers.⁷⁶

Most of those who lived in the medieval European world assumed that God intervened directly in battles and rewarded one side with victory and punished the other side with defeat. Unless the apologists of the losing side could plausibly explain how this happened, their rulers risked forfeiting claims to legitimacy. This providential explanation of the outcome of battle was attributed to an epistle supposedly written by St. Augustine known as the *Gravi pugna*, which asserted that God awards victory to the army whose cause is just. Only a minority of clerics, such as Philippe de Vilette, abbot of Saint-Denis, recognized that God might, for his own good reasons, award victory to the wicked. Or, as the Venerable Bede suggested, this might happen because Christian peoples had grown morally lax and God needed to punish them.⁷⁷

The belief, still widely accepted as late as the fourteenth century, that war served no useful purpose except to punish man for his sins, was challenged by the revival of interest in Vegetius, who held that war was a means of bringing about peace. His *De re militari* was read, paraphrased, cited, and translated from the Carolingian era into the early modern period. Vegetius, thought to have been a Christian who had lived in the fourth century CE, had much to say about the practical aspects of making war to restore justice, order, and peace. He emphasized that war should be fought for a clear political purpose. War must be carefully planned and quickly fought with as little waste of resources as possible. It was to be judged only by the achievement of a successful victory, and not by the heroic deeds of individuals. Good leadership and experience were important for success, and the implication was that such qualities were not always to be found in the well born. Moreover, because war should only be waged for the common good, there was an obligation of citizenship that required that all citizens should undergo military training in order to help defend the political community rather than employing mercenaries.⁷⁸

Influenced as he was by Aristotle, St. Thomas Aquinas believed that peace was the natural condition of mankind, and thus, he rejected St. Augustine's argument that there existed a perpetual conflict between the City of God and the City of Man. Nor did he accept the idea that warfare was inevitable between Christians and infidels. Although all humans bore the burden of original sin, this did not completely obliterate people's natural inclination to peace, nor did

it make war necessary and inevitable. St. Thomas did not care for the motivation of the crusades, nor did he think that the divine command to slay idol-worshippers in Exodus 32 offered a precedent for Christians to follow, although he allowed, like St. Augustine, that heretics could be persecuted.⁷⁹

Aquinas did follow St. Augustine in arguing that the purpose of war was to secure peace, and to restore political and social harmony. He laid down the conditions that were necessary for securing these ends: in order to be considered just, a war must be declared and the army summoned by the authority of a ruler rather than a private individual; there must be a just cause for declaring the war; and the belligerents must intend either to seek “some good” or avoid an evil.⁸⁰ Just as kings and magistrates have the authority to wield the sword of justice to punish criminals or internal enemies of the state, so also they have recourse to wield the sword of war against external enemies. The power to dispense justice and the power to make war go together.⁸¹

Thus, the medieval teachers of law, known as legists, agreed that war was lawful, and justification for war could be derived both from divine authority and natural reason. The concept of just war, from the time of its Aristotelian origins, had remained very flexible. War could not be an end in itself, but a just war could be undertaken not only to secure or restore peace, but also to acquire glory, or to enslave and govern barbarians or non-Greeks, who, because of their inferior status, deserved to be subdued. To this, the Romans added the legal concept of redressing an injustice by war. This could include the recovery of goods or territory, the defense of the state, or the vindication of honor. The Germanic kingdoms, which succeeded the Western Roman Empire, preserved the study of Roman law, a belief in the right of self-defense, constraints on how war was to be waged, together with a recognition of the need to restrain interpersonal violence and feuding. Although warfare was prevalent in medieval Europe, in general, warriors accepted the limitations on war imposed by the Church.⁸²

By the end of the thirteenth century, we can discern four types of war. There was the Roman style of conflict in which the hostile parties usually fought to the death and took only a few prisoners, who could be slain or enslaved, but could not claim the privilege of ransom. The crusades against the Saracens would be an example of this category. The second category comprised public war between Christian princes, in which spoil could be taken and noble

prisoners ransomed. Feudal warfare, the third type of war, was considered to be *guerre couvert*, or covered war, in which the combatants, by custom, could kill or wound, but not burn or pillage. The fourth category was the state of truce, in which war was merely suspended, but not ended. When we look beneath the surface of warfare in the medieval world, the situation could be complicated. Maurice Keen gives the example of a ten-year period during the Hundred Years War. Besides the war between the two kings of France and England, which involved two different conflicts—one in Provence and another concerning the succession to the crown of Castile—the king of France was also at war with the king of Navarre; the rival houses of Blois and Montfort were at war with one another in Brittany; and elsewhere, the counts of Foix and Armagnac were engaged in another struggle. At the same time, *routiers*, or free mercenary companies, were pillaging the countryside. In such a state of affairs the distinction between public and private warfare seems meaningless.⁸³

From the High Middle Ages until the sixteenth century, there existed side-by-side two distinct just-war theories: the first was the *jus ad bellum*, a religious doctrine that derived both from theology and canon law, and which concerned the right to make war; and the *jus in bello*, which was a secular but ethically sanctioned set of rules concerning what was allowable in methods of fighting. In the medieval and Renaissance periods, custom required that princes not resort to war without justification, but princes and states found that just causes were not difficult to discover—no matter how transparently false they were. It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that just-war doctrines failed to deter war.⁸⁴ The concept of just war was also validated by chivalric culture, which praised and romanticized the noble warrior fighting in the service of the Church and the prince, and also acting as the protector of the meek and the poor. The values of chivalry were also celebrated by the creation of highly select orders of chivalry, such as the English Order of the Garter, or in Burgundy, the Knights of the Golden Fleece.⁸⁵

Works of chivalric literature, such as the *Morted' Arthur*, sometimes displayed the same aversion toward periods of peace that we find in the writers of classical antiquity because it was widely believed that peace depleted the martial ardor and skill at arms of the warrior. On hearing the news that war with the Romans would resume, King Arthur and his court are depicted as

rejoicing that they would once again have the opportunity to perform feats of arms, for they believed that they had languished in inglorious peace for too long.⁸⁶ English writers of the fourteenth century had experience of war throughout their lifetimes, and they did not particularly long for war, but they did fear that peace would lead to effeminacy and a decay of martial prowess. Certainly, a theme running throughout many chivalric romances is that war directed against the sultan and the Saracens was always just.⁸⁷

The Peace and Truce of God

The early Middle Ages in the West saw instability and widespread violence. Toward the end of this period, following the disintegration of the Carolingian Empire, several peace movements originated in France and spread from there into Germany. One was the Cluniac Revival, a monastic movement that emphasized a more strict observance of the Benedictine Rule and which originated at the monastery of Cluny in Burgundy. The Cluniac movement achieved widespread influence because the abbots and priors of Cluniac houses stood outside of the feudal hierarchy, and Cluny was subject to the authority only of the popes. Indeed, four abbots of Cluny became popes, and their influence contributed to a revival of papal power, which had been weakened in the previous years. The other two movements were led by the French bishops. The first was the Peace of God, which emerged after about 975 CE, and was aimed at limiting the depredations of troublesome warriors on church buildings and the clergy as well as protecting pilgrims, merchants, peasants, and shepherds. The Truce of God, another peace movement, dating from the early eleventh century, was also led by the French bishops and sought to prohibit conflict among Christians during certain holy days and seasons of the ecclesiastical calendar. These movements attempted to achieve complete internal peace within Christendom and reached a peak in 1095 when Pope Urban II, a former abbot of Cluny, proclaimed a holy war against the Saracens at the Council of Clermont. Neither of these peace movements attempted to abolish war, but only to impose constraints on feuding, and some of the lesser forms of conflict and violence, and to allow war to be declared only by the proper authorities. The limitations on the methods of warfare were not

observed by the crusaders in their wars against the Saracens and Turks, and their religious fanaticism and spoliations shocked the Byzantine Greeks who had long fought with their Muslim neighbors without displaying such excesses. Moreover, the pacifism of the regular clergy was repudiated by the emergence of military monastic orders such as the Knights Templar.⁸⁸

The Church did sometimes sanction peace movements, such as the Peace and Truce of God, but this particular movement enjoyed only limited success because it failed to secure sufficient support from the secular authorities, and the Church had no effective way of enforcing such a policy. The feudal nobility continued to carry on private wars and to pursue vendettas. The church could only resort to excommunicating particularly notorious offenders, but such spiritual penalties were widely ignored—especially since bishops often excommunicated people indiscriminately for trivial matters such as property disputes with their neighbors.⁸⁹

The same peace movement also attempted for a time to ban certain weapons, such as crossbows and long bows, which were proscribed by the Council of the Lateran in 1139. However, some theologians thought that it was justified to use such weapons against infidels, pagans, and heretics. The later introduction of gunpowder weapons does not seem to have provoked the same degree of condemnation by Church authorities. The prejudice against missile weapons appears to have arisen more from chivalric values than from motives of Christian charity, and should probably be attributed to a dislike of the kind of mercenary soldier who employed projectile weapons. It is also interesting that the clergy did not object to blessing swords, lances, and military banners.⁹⁰

Truces were frequently resorted to in medieval warfare. Although acts of violence ceased during the truce, there still existed a climate or condition of warfare because it was understood that hostilities would eventually resume. Little wonder, for violence was very much a part of daily life in the medieval world. Apart from the frequent wars, most ordinary people carried staves when they traveled as well as knives for eating. By all accounts, these were frequently employed as weapons in quarrels. In societies where feuding was common, such as medieval England, feuds were rarely solitary affairs as they might be in the later Italian style of dueling in the period of the Renaissance. In medieval England, feuds were often carried on with the assistance of friends and kinsmen (usually the same individuals), and typically took the form of an assault on a

fortified house rather than an individual ambush on the highway. The injury inflicted on one person was understood to affect the larger kinship group. The more organized form that vengeance took made it difficult to secure lasting peace. The assumption persisted into early modern England that a person needed friends to survive in a hostile world because the state was too weak to protect the individual. It was also assumed that those who were not friends must be enemies since there could be no neutrality. This assumption reached back to ancient Rome, when Publius Syrus, a freed slave, said that a person should “treat your friend as if he might become an enemy.” Because the people who inhabited such societies had a highly developed sense of shame, the dispensing of justice and attempts at reconciliation had to be staged with much theatricality. Wrongdoers had to be humbled as well punished before a large audience. However, public executions and corporal punishments did little to deter crime and probably set a bad example for the resolution of conflicts. Most people equated justice with vengeance. Yet, it has been observed that in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, the English were more receptive to royal attempts to suppress violence than the French, who held on to concepts of private warfare and the judicial combat. Subsequently, both realms seemed to have suffered from an increase in violent protest and crime as a consequence of the Hundred Years War. Feuding was, and remains, characteristic of societies with weak or nonexistent governments. The monarchs of this period understood that peace began with the suppression of violence and the enforcement of public order through the exercise of royal justice, and many of their subjects came to share this view. Like the maintenance of domestic public order, peace-making between states was never easy.⁹¹

The papacy and the crusades

The desire to divert Christian warriors away from feuds and wars with other Christians and to bring peace to the Latin West was at least as important to Pope Urban II as protecting the Eastern Church and securing the Holy Places against the Saracens by proclaiming the First or Jerusalem Crusade. This was why the pope, a Cluniac monk, had proclaimed the Peace of God at the same time that he promised forgiveness of sins to the crusaders. Urban was following

the example of an earlier pope, Leo IV (847–55). After Saracen marauders had sacked Rome and desecrated St. Peter's Basilica in 846, Pope Leo urged the Franks to drive them out of Italy with the promise that those who died doing so would find their way to a heavenly reward. In effect, this was an early attempt to define a war fought against Muslim infidels in defense of the Holy Faith as a holy war and to promise forgiveness of sins and immediate salvation. That the pope had the authority to issue such a proclamation is questionable, and it certainly did not define new doctrine. Nevertheless, subsequent popes would repeat this exhortation and promise.⁹² Subsequently, Pope John VIII (878–79) granted an indulgence to those who undertook to fight pagans and infidels, and fell on the field of battle. Such soldiers would obtain remission of their sins and immediately enter into "eternal life." Effectively, the bull subsequently published by Pope Urban was a proclamation of holy war. This sacralization of combat against the Saracens was accompanied by the ritual blessing of the crusaders' armies, their weapons, and banners. John of Salisbury believed that just as the secular prince possessed the temporal sword, the pope and bishops also possessed a spiritual sword that was to be wielded in cooperation with the secular authorities, but always in conformity with God's will. Preachers such as the Benedictine monk Gerald d'Avranches helped to legitimize warfare at the time of the First Crusade and to popularize the so-called "warrior-saints," such as Saints George, Mercurius, and Demetrius, who had been Christian soldiers in the Roman army and martyrs, and who might intervene in the battles fought by the crusaders to ensure Christian victory.⁹³

The crusading concept derived from the earlier practice of undertaking pilgrimages to the Holy Land or other sacred places for the purpose of doing penance or advancing one's spiritual growth. Pilgrims enjoyed a special protected status in Roman canon law, wore distinctive insignia, and were supposed to be afforded hospitality in monasteries. The proclamation of the First Crusade combined the pilgrim's vow to undertake a pilgrimage to the Holy Land with fighting a holy war; the crusader also undertook to fight for the stated objectives of the holy war, and was promised remission of punishment for past sins. The older view that the violence of war involved "grave sin" and necessitated public penance following absolution gave way to the practice of private penance in the Age of the Crusades. In the Christian lands that he passed through on the way to the Holy Land or in undertaking to recover

lands lost to conquest by the Saracens, the crusader was to enjoy the special status of a pilgrim.⁹⁴

Those who took part in the First Crusade consisted of a mix of volunteer crusaders and paid mercenaries, but we must be wary of making too fine a distinction between the two. Both were recruited with the promise of pay from the Byzantine emperor and indulgences from the pope. This was a formula for rewards that had worked for Pope Leo X in the earlier crusade against the Normans in Sicily and in the Roman Schism of the 1060s that resulted in the conflict between pope and anti-pope. Furthermore, those popes who preceded Urban II had also designated those conflicts as holy wars. Thus, we should not be surprised to see that both altruism and self-interest were incorporated into the Wars of the Crusades.⁹⁵

Christians in the Latin West had reason to fear the political and military power of the Muslims. The Muslims had conquered the formerly Christian lands of Asia Minor, North Africa, and much of the Levant; they dominated most of the Iberian Peninsula and threatened the kingdom of the Franks before Charles Martel turned them back at the Battle of Tours in 732. Muslim pirates had ruled the western Mediterranean, kidnapped travelers, and sacked the towns of the littoral while building fortified strongholds in Italy and southern France. Although individual Christian kings put up a brave defense from Leon and Navarre, Western Christendom lacked the organization and military might of the Byzantine Empire, which for long had held off Muslim expansion. The papacy blessed the individual knights who began to come from all over Western Christendom to do battle with the Saracens, and gradually such military expeditions acquired the status of a holy war. Thus, by the late eleventh century, the era of the crusades had begun, and this military effort acquired a degree of unity under the leadership of the papacy.⁹⁶

The proclamation of a holy war against the Saracens went well beyond the more limited aims of a just war. The popes of this period seemed little concerned with limitations on how these wars were fought or the ultimate ends of these crusading expeditions. Moreover, it was an inconsistent policy to proclaim holy war abroad, while attempting to maintain the ideal of religious peace at home. The popes broke this truce themselves when they encouraged crusades against heretics and excommunicated persons in the West such as the Cathars, and became involved in factionalism when the Great Schism of the

Avignon papacy divided the allegiances of faithful Christians, or when they failed to remain impartial during the Hundred Years War between England and France.⁹⁷ The practitioners of just war in classical antiquity had sought to avoid displeasing their pagan gods, and thus, the Greek and Roman wars were not devoid of a religious sanction, but the medieval crusades embodied a degree of militancy that owed more to the Hebrew modes of warfare found in the Old Testament.⁹⁸

Pope Gregory VII taught that the feudal aristocracy, from knights to kings, had a duty to serve the interests of the Church and fight its wars. This meant not just wielding the sword against heathens and infidels, but also serving the interests of the see of St. Peter in its struggles with the Emperor Henry IV, or whomsoever opposed the interests of the papacy. Again, this necessarily brought Christians into conflict with other Christians. This was part of the so-called Investiture Controversy, which was, at bottom, basically a struggle over wealth and power, or whether the pope could appoint clerics to episcopal sees on the basis of talent and ability, or whether the emperor could use such offices to buy the support of aristocratic families. Gregory VII also claimed the power to remove temporal rulers, and he had excommunicated the Holy Roman Emperor Henry IV in an attempt to depose him. He had also threatened King Philip I of France with the same penalty, and warned him that he would place France under the interdict if the king did not behave himself. This would have forbidden the ministration of the sacraments to the king's subjects in an attempt to raise a rebellion against him, which probably would have provoked a civil war. In short, Pope Gregory VII came to look on the feudal nobility as *vassi* of the papacy, and in return for fighting his battles, Gregory promised them remission of the punishment due to their sins.⁹⁹

Whether knightly aristocrats were suitable instruments for the exercise of papal power is open to question. Before the late eleventh and early twelfth centuries, theologians had difficulty seeing how a knightly career could be compatible with following the path to salvation. The code of chivalry had taken over pagan and barbarian attitudes regarding dueling, feuding, warfare, and courtly love that were difficult to reconcile with Christian morality. So evil and violent were some of these values that a knight could achieve salvation only by abandoning knighthood for the monastic life, so it was thought. The papal proclamation of the Wars of the Crusades, however, not only made the

profession of arms respectable, but conferred on knighthood the status of an order comparable to the priesthood or the monastic life. Jean de Bueil, in his *Le Jouvencel* (c. 1481), asserted that the knight who fights for a good and just cause is as blessed in the sight of God as a monk who follows the contemplative life. The profession of arms now became a path to salvation sanctioned by the Church.¹⁰⁰ The shared martial and religious experience of the First Crusade became a justification for subsequent crusades, and was readily adaptable to the martial ethos of the Germanic peoples. At the same time, because books of chivalry advanced other goals, such as the pursuit of honor, glory, and adventure, it became harder to recruit knights to participate in the wars against the Saracens when they could win honor, glory, and profit closer to home.¹⁰¹

One of the foremost advocates of Gregory VII's holy war against infidels, heretics, and other enemies of the Church was St. Bernard, the founder and first abbot of the Cistercian monastery of Clairvaux. Although he agreed that clerics could not bear weapons, he made an exception for the military monastic order known as the Knights Templar. Bernard believed that monastic peace was purely ascetic and consisted of an inner peace that was obtained by withdrawing from the world and taking the vows of poverty and chastity. The secular clergy lived in and had a duty to promote peace in this world, although St. Bernard did not believe that the peace of the kingdom of Christ could ever be achieved in this life.¹⁰² St. Bernard was most insistent that Christian rulers were never to enter into alliance with Muslims until their political power and religion were first destroyed. He did not believe that non-Christians should be killed unless they molested Christians, but he added that where the two lived in close proximity, Muslims were likely to display aggression toward Christians. As for those who took up the crusader's white cross, Bernard proclaimed that "the Christian glories in the death of the non-Christian, because Christ is glorified."¹⁰³

There were both clerics and laymen who questioned the papal policy of holy war. Whereas the proponents of the papalist position, that is, the assertion of the temporal as well as spiritual supremacy of the pope, taught that *concordia*, or peace in this world, came from God and flowed down through the spiritual hierarchy, Marsilius of Padua's use of the term *pax*, or peace, in the title of his treatise, *Defensor Pacis*, meant "civil peace or tranquility," and referred to a state

that functioned properly and smoothly; it had nothing to do with peace between states. Marsilius also makes an oblique reference to Italy, which had possessed unity when it was part of the Roman Empire, but now was disturbed by the Bishop of Rome, as Marsilius always calls the pope. Marsilius had been rector of the University of Paris, usually a bastion of theological orthodoxy, but after the papal condemnation of his *Defensor Pacis* in 1326, he was forced to flee and continued to be widely regarded as a heretic. Besides its attack on papal power and the mischief that it caused, the *Defensor Pacis* is noteworthy for its secular approach to the origins of the state and its sources of authority. Marsilius insists that the state is purely a product of human reason invented to wield coercive power to resolve conflicts, and its authority derived from the consent of the people. The state was not a moral entity dedicated to cultivating virtue; it was simply an instrument for dispensing justice by arbitrating disputes between individuals and groups. The ecclesiastical hierarchy had no business interfering in the government of the secular state because the people's will is the supreme authority. The role of priests is simply to provide moral guidance; they do not possess coercive authority, which belongs exclusively to secular rulers. Marsilius carries this a step further and insists that in matters of church-state relations, the temporal ruler is supreme.¹⁰⁴

Another critic of the exercise of temporal powers by the popes was the poet Dante, born a generation before Marsilius. Being an Italian and well steeped in classical literature, Dante was always an admirer of universal monarchy modeled on the Roman Empire. This form of government reflected the unity of God, and was conducive to peace and harmony; it found its best approximation in the Holy Roman Empire. The existence of two or more monarchs, who did not recognize one another's authority would necessarily make the settlement of disputes very difficult, if not impossible. This universal monarch must be someone "who brings out the best of others" by his example rather than his words. This method of government would allow each citizen to seek his or her own best interests and would make governing by force unnecessary. The political society that Dante believed would result would display the virtues of peace, order, and justice. Its model in classical antiquity was St. Augustine's earthly city rather than the heavenly city because Dante clearly preferred the dominant influence in the world to be the emperor rather than the pope. Dante had personal reasons for disliking papal power since

Pope Boniface VIII had meddled in the politics of Dante's native city of Florence and caused Dante to be driven into exile.¹⁰⁵

The papal policy of sending bellicose rulers and knights to fight the Saracens in the Levant may have brought a degree of peace to the Latin West. But once the popes got in the habit of thinking that these knights and crusaders were their *vassi*, and could be sent to make holy war against other Christians, whose orthodoxy was suspect, or believing that they could intervene in the politics of Italian towns or the affairs of the Holy Roman Emperor, they promoted new divisions within Christendom. This was especially true in their relations with the Byzantine emperors and the prelates of the Greek Orthodox Church, who did not accept the papal concept of holy war.

War and diplomacy in the Byzantine Empire

One of the objectives of the crusaders was to bring much-needed assistance to the Byzantine Empire. The Byzantine, or Eastern Roman Empire, with its capital at Constantinople, did not possess a strong martial culture as did the Western Roman Empire and its medieval successors. The Eastern Father of the Church, St. Basil the Great, condemned warfare in the strongest of terms. While he admitted that a soldier must obey orders, St. Basil declared that anyone who slew another in battle must abstain from receiving communion for three years. To be a warrior did not confer status or earn glory as it did in the West. As the heir to a strong legal tradition, the Byzantine Empire continued to apply the Roman concept of just war to defend its territories or to reconquer lost lands. What particularly distinguished Byzantine rulers and generals from their Roman predecessors, however, was their consistent attempt to employ diplomacy to avoid war wherever possible, and to marshal legal arguments for declaring war when bloodshed could not be avoided. If war could be avoided, the Byzantine emperors were even prepared to pay tribute to their enemies. The practice of paying tribute money to their Persian, Arab, and tribal neighbors avoided some of the devastation of war. The Byzantines also sought to reduce conflict with tribal groups, such as the Serbs and Bulgars, by attempting to Christianize them. Their efforts to convert such ethnic groups were often successful, but this did not always put an end to hostilities. When

the Bulgars continued to be troublesome, Byzantine diplomats persuaded the Magyars to attack the Bulgars from the rear. The Frankish crusaders regarded these practices as mere cowardice.¹⁰⁶

The Byzantine Empire claimed to be a continuation of the Roman Empire in the East, and its rulers called themselves “emperors of the Romans.” The Emperor Justinian, mindful of the unity that once existed throughout the whole empire, undertook to reconquer the most important of the lost western provinces by driving the Visigoths, Ostrogoths, and Vandals out of Spain, Italy, and North Africa. This proved to be a heavy drain on Byzantine resources. When the Muslim expansion of the eighth century deprived Byzantium of these territories together with the important resources of men and treasure in Anatolia, the Byzantine Empire was thereafter reduced to little more than one of a number of successor states of the former Roman Empire. This great loss was brought about not only by civil war and political instability; the enslavement of free peasants in Anatolia had undercut the economic prosperity and tax base of the Byzantine Empire, and this also contributed to military collapse. Unreliable mercenary soldiers had replaced native Anatolian soldiers in the Byzantine army. Moreover, the intolerance of the Byzantine Church led to persecution of Armenian, Egyptian, and Syrian Christians for their resistance to Greek Orthodox beliefs. It increased the hatred between Armenians and Greeks, and made dissident ethnic and religious groups willing to consider alliances with the Turks, who already served as mercenary troops within the empire. Both Christians and Jews who lived in the parts of the Byzantine Empire that were conquered by the Muslims were content to live under their conquerors because the Muslim discrimination against Jews and heterodox Christians was less onerous and the taxes were lighter than living under the Byzantines. Moreover, they were also exempted from military service. To the west, the Normans of Sicily and southern Italy also wished to acquire Byzantine territory and were better organized than the Turks. As Greek authority disintegrated in Anatolia, Turks, Persians, and Arabs migrated into the region, and Muslims were successful in converting most of the native population, who also became Turkified. Those Christians who held out against the process of Islamization were increasingly isolated from other Christians.¹⁰⁷

In matters of secular government, Byzantium was one of the more peace-loving states of the ancient and medieval worlds, but surrounded as they were

on all sides by hostile tribes and powers, the Byzantines had no illusions about the need to resort to war to achieve peace and promote stability. While Byzantium was frequently at war with its belligerent neighbors, the Byzantine emperors expressed a desire for peace for their subjects and insisted that they wished for peaceful relations with the Turks, Arabs, and other powers. At the same time, the emperors, as the successors of the ancient Greek and Roman states that had preceded Byzantium, did not let their enemies forget that they were not afraid of war, and were prepared to wage war. Such ideas reflected the Byzantine Christian heritage; they thought that wars were caused by the devil and were contrary to man's peaceful nature. Consequently, the only just wars were defensive wars. By contrast, the Western European concept of just war also encompassed wars fought to avenge injustices. Some of the neighbors of Byzantium, such as the Arabs, Turks, and the crusaders, had a concept of holy war to defend and expand their religious societies. These holy wars were proclaimed by religious authorities such as the caliph of Baghdad and the pope of Rome; by contrast, the wars fought by Byzantium were declared by the emperor, a temporal ruler. Despite the danger presented by Islamic expansion and *jihād*, the Byzantine Christians never espoused the concept of holy war against the Saracens. The Byzantines had a secular concept of just war, and insisted that they fought only in self-defense, for recovery of territory forcefully and wrongfully taken, and because treaties had been broken by other powers. The object of their wars, so Anna Comnena, the daughter of the Emperor Alexius I, insisted in her *Alexiad*, was always the restoration of peace. This included the recovery of territory that had belonged to the Byzantine Empire in about 1100 CE; Anna did not contemplate the reconstitution of the Roman Empire as it had existed at its greatest extent. The moral foundation of Anna's ideas about just war derived from her knowledge of Aristotelian philosophy, Roman jurisprudence, and the ideas of St. Augustine. In other words, she had a good understanding of the criteria for determining when war was justified in both the ancient and medieval worlds of thought.¹⁰⁸

The Byzantines viewed the Turks as barbarians rather than as Muslim infidels. Warfare between the two was endemic, but the Byzantines, who knew their Muslim neighbors better than the Frankish crusaders or the popes, did not fear being overwhelmed by the Arabs and the Turks the way the Latin

Christians did. Except in times of crisis, the leaders of the caliphate and the Byzantine Empire did not try to forcibly convert one another's subjects, and they were more tolerant than was the case in the Latin West. The Byzantines believed that God would ultimately allow them to triumph over their enemies, but understanding that their enemies surrounded them and had the advantages of geography, greater manpower and greater resources, they could never hope for more than to employ clever stratagems, catch their enemies off guard, and win small victories. They also had to learn to accept something less than the total and crushing victory that the traditional Roman martial ethos had once demanded in the days of the republic and early empire. They must sometimes be prepared to negotiate the terms of peace in order to end a war. Hence, the Byzantines came to value diplomatic skills as much as military expertise. Consequently, avoiding battle was frequently part of the Byzantine strategy. Constantly beset by enemies, the Byzantine emperors could lead their soldiers into war or speak the language of diplomacy. They knew how to employ the rhetoric of war, but adhered to the moral assumption that peace was always preferable. Anna Comnena thought that unnecessary bellicosity or provoking the enemy was quite simply a display of bad military leadership. War was regrettable, but it was also part of everyday life.¹⁰⁹

When the Frankish crusaders arrived at the court of the Emperor Alexius I, Anna Comnena says that they did not need a pretext for engaging in duels or war. One of the Franks boasted to the emperor of how he used to go out and wait at a certain crossroads near his dwelling to which quarrelsome knights customarily resorted and anxiously awaited an antagonist with whom he might engage in single combat, but none ever showed up because of his reputation for bravery and skill at arms. The emperor thought it well to send this Frankish knight off to help recover the Holy Places as quickly as possible.¹¹⁰

Before the rise of Renaissance sovereign states, for as long as Latin Christians thought of themselves as belonging to a single Christian commonwealth, the practice of diplomacy hardly existed in the West, and was probably incomprehensible to the warrior mentality. Frankish knights lacked understanding and appreciation of the Byzantine practice of exchanging ambassadors with their enemies among the Turks and Arabs. This had long been a Byzantine practice, by which they gathered intelligence, exchanged

prisoners, and sometimes avoided war. To Latin crusaders, this furnished proof that the Byzantines were treacherous, duplicitous, and effeminate. They made unreliable allies, and these stereotypical views of the Byzantine rulers helped to justify the sacking and conquest of Constantinople and the establishment of the Latin Empire there. All of this poisoned relations between Latin and Orthodox Christians, and helped to perpetuate the schism between the two churches.¹¹¹

As members of loosely organized military expeditions, the crusaders were volunteers who tended to be contentious, self-willed individuals who were not very amenable to military discipline. Those knights who participated in the Fourth Crusade (1202–4), which was preached by Pope Innocent III, had taken a pilgrim's vow to make their way to Jerusalem to secure the Holy Places. They had a falling-out when the Venetians, on whom they were dependent for transport by sea, attempted to persuade them to attack the Dalmatian city of Zara—then in Hungarian hands—to satisfy their unpaid debts. A dissident minority of the crusaders felt bound to fight the Saracens rather than fellow Christians. Yet another crisis occurred when Alexios Angelos, the pretender to the Byzantine throne, sought to persuade them to descend on Constantinople and help him seize the throne and depose the usurping Alexios III, who had deposed and blinded the previous emperor, Isaac II. Again, the crusaders would be fighting fellow Christians, although some of the Latin prelates insisted that the current regime in Constantinople was schismatic and offensive to the papacy, and the installation of Alexios would reunite the Latin and Greek Orthodox Churches. This the crusaders found more persuasive. They helped Alexios Angelos depose Alexios III, and the former became Alexios IV, but when he was unable to pay the expenses of the crusaders, he himself was deposed and murdered. His successor, Alexios V, ordered the crusaders to depart and menaced them; so with the blessing of the Latin bishops, the crusaders attacked and looted Constantinople for five days. Then they crowned Baldwin, count of Flanders as the new Byzantine emperor, and installed a Latin Catholic as patriarch of Constantinople.¹¹²

That the efforts of the Frankish crusaders to recover the Holy Places and protect Eastern Christianity against the Saracens proved to be so very destructive should cause little surprise; political thought and practice in the Latin West remained primitive compared to that of the Byzantines, and the

crusader armies were ill disciplined. War was one of the main functions of the medieval state in the West, and images of kings who pursued peace are few in number in the medieval world. This is reflected in the martial ethos of those warriors who came to be known as knights. *Miles*, the medieval Latin term for knight, first appeared in about 970 in France to describe a mounted warrior of superior social status, and became widely used within the next sixty years to describe a coherent group associated with certain aristocratic families. The emergence of this knightly class also coincided with the decline of the Carolingian monarchy and the need to provide protection for the poor and the innocent. Because knights did not always live up to these ideals, many churchmen continued to distrust them until the papacy employed them in the crusades and made knighthood respectable.¹¹³ Combat offered the only way to test the mettle of a knight, and chivalric culture made no distinction between *bellum*, or public war, and *duellum*, or private combat. Besides spilling much blood, this constant effusion of chivalric belligerence could be sustained only by a tremendous expenditure of wealth and human energy. The Church had coopted the culture of chivalry and the concept of knighthood, and had sought to direct this bellicosity outward during the crusades, but the knightly class did not become less ferocious. This chivalric culture or warrior ethos was partly inherited from classical antiquity, but had been reinvigorated by the development of new cavalry tactics based on the introduction of the stirrup, which allowed the mounted warrior to wield his weapons more effectively from the saddle. Of course, not all knights took up the vocation of crusading in distant lands, and the concentration of martial energy in royal armies presented a strong temptation to use such forces against other Christian princes. As these medieval monarchies developed, the wars among the Christian kings of Europe became more extensive.¹¹⁴ Clearly, the themes of chivalric literature were not consistent with maintaining the Peace and Truce of God in the West. Such writings often placed considerable emphasis on the maintenance of honor or the need to go to the aid of *vassi*, lords, and allies in pursuit of feuds, or fighting for suzerains in the numerous wars between Christian kings. Thus, participation in crusades in the Holy Land would have to compete with these other activities, which in any case, were not consistent with maintaining the Peace and Truce of God in the West. This merely confirmed the belief that peace would never last very long in this world.¹¹⁵

The Hundred Years War and papal diplomacy

The so-called Hundred Years War actually lasted 116 years and consisted of a series of wars. The cause of the conflict was that the kings of England had possessed lands in France ever since the Norman Conquest, and were, for that reason, technically *vassi* of the kings of France for those possessions. However, King Philip VI of France considered Edward III to be a disloyal *vassus* and attempted to confiscate the latter's French possessions in 1337. Although this was a conflict between two sovereigns and should be considered an interstate war, it also contained elements of feudal and dynastic conflict and provoked violent popular protests.¹¹⁶

There were inherent contradictions in the nature of these late medieval monarchies of France and England. One of the main duties of the monarch was to preserve the king's peace, and that helped to define both medieval kingship and the early modern state. A king's subjects looked to him for peace and protection. Peace with political entities that were not part of the king's realm could be established only by formal agreements between parties whose status, from a modern point of view, had yet to be established, just as the distinction between private combat and public war began to emerge slowly in the early modern period, and was accepted even more slowly by members of the aristocracy, who were more concerned with honor than legal distinctions. In the early modern period, as the sovereign state established itself more completely, the language and practice of diplomacy also developed slowly—partly because the phenomenon was so new that statesmen lacked a vocabulary for foreign relations, international relations, and diplomatic practice. In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the task of making peace between England and France was largely undertaken by the papacy, which could draw on the resources of clerical scholars who staffed the papal secretariat. During part of this time the popes were resident in Avignon—a period known as the Great Schism—and their influence was diminished. In the task of making peace between England and France, the popes failed, but their efforts are worth discussing.¹¹⁷

One of the problems that hindered negotiations for peace between England and France during the Hundred Years War was that England's embryonic diplomatic service was more advanced than that of France. The English

recognized early on the need to maintain an archive of treaties and correspondence, and to have diplomats who were experienced and possessed a knowledge of canon and civil law. When envoys of Henry V of England entered into negotiations in 1418 with the French, they discovered that the latter were unfamiliar with the earlier Treaty of Brétigny of 1360 and possessed only a vague knowledge of the geography of their own country. Gradually, it came to be realized that, although diplomatic missions needed to be led by persons of high noble status, their staffs had to include clerks who had studied civil and canon law at a university. The French government was much slower to develop an archive with easily retrievable information at this time, and French diplomats had to rely on polemical tracts and propaganda for summaries of the king's negotiating points. In any case, diplomacy during the late medieval period was viewed as a legitimate weapon of war; if conditions for concluding an alliance, a peace, or a truce were refused, this provided a legitimate reason for proceeding to a resumption of hostilities.¹¹⁸

Like the Romans, most of the French kings believed that rulers could not achieve peace if they did not make war. But, by the fifteenth century, many people in France thought otherwise. Bishop Jean Juvénal des Ursins, who was a pacifist, thought that the French people were quite tired of perpetual wars, and "would have accepted a Saracen as king if only he had given them peace." Charles V, "the wise," was at least one monarch who thought that the king of France should, with divine assistance, work for peace. The Jacquerie of 1358 was essentially a protest against the exactions levied on the peasantry to pay for the war with the king of England. From their point of view, it was never very clear who the enemy was. The term might include the English, the mercenary soldiers employed by the king of France, or the French nobility, who engaged in feuds and private warfare among themselves. While the concept of peace was certainly admirable, among the problems encountered when agreeing to a peace was how to restrain unemployed soldiers. War often provided a cover for bands of criminals, who in peacetime, devoted themselves entirely to robbing and pillaging. Travel on the highways in France during the Hundred Years War could be more dangerous during the time of a truce than when war was actually being waged.¹¹⁹ Yet, there remained many reasons why peace between England and France was desirable. The Hundred Years War contributed to perpetuating the Great Schism between the Roman and the

Avignonese lines of popes. The peasant revolts in both England and France were popular reactions to devastation and high taxes brought on by war; the English Parliament wished to see the war ended; and Christendom was under siege by the Ottoman Turks. Many English subjects thought that their Plantagenet rulers were more interested in their French possessions and neglected their duties in their English kingdom, but the Plantagenets persisted in laying claim to their possessions in Gascony.¹²⁰

The people of the medieval world often looked to the papacy to promote peace within Christendom. This was not easy during the Great Schism when there were two lines of popes, one living in Rome and the other living in Avignon, a papal enclave in the Rhone Valley. Although the papal enclave at Avignon was technically not part of the kingdom of France, the Avignonese popes were usually French born, and it was difficult for the rulers of England not to view them as puppets of the king of France. For that reason, the English usually looked on the Italian popes as the true successors of St. Peter. Nevertheless, Avignonese popes, such as Innocent VI and Clement VI, did actively promote peace between the kings of England and France during the Hundred Years War. Clement VI, when he tried to bring Edward III of England and Philip VI of France to agreement, was well informed concerning who the important decision-makers and advisers to the kings of England were among the members of the royal family, the royal council, the English nobility, and the Corporation of the City of London, and he bombarded them all with letters in an attempt to bring the war between the two kings to a final conclusion. It was not easy for late-medieval monarchs to accept papal arbitration because concepts of royal sovereignty were already well developed, and these kings did not want to be regarded as papal *vassi*. In 1356, Hélie de Talleyrand, Cardinal of Périgord, dean of the College of Cardinals and diplomatic representative of Pope Innocent VI at Avignon, attempted to secure a truce between King John II of France and Edward, Prince of Wales, the “Black Prince.” The forces of both sides were drawn up for battle at Poitiers, and both were, at first, agreeable. The cardinal repeatedly crossed between the two battle lines trying to reach an agreement, but found the king of France unwilling to compromise unless the English surrendered without fighting and allowed the French to take as prisoners and hold for ransom four out of every five English knights—some 100 in all. The English

understandably refused, and the battle went forward. The English won, and King John II himself was taken prisoner.¹²¹

The former French crusader, Philippe de Mézière, who, after his return from the Holy Land, had entered the service of King Charles V of France, and subsequently, that of his heir, Charles VI, did much to promote crusading efforts and to send assistance to the Byzantines and the other Christians of the East. He remained convinced that the Hundred Years War between England and France must first be concluded in order to end the scandal of the Great Schism and restore unity to the Latin Church; only then could substantial Western military assistance be directed to the fight against the Turks. Only in the latter part of his life, after he had joined the religious order of the Celestines, when Mézière and his disciples acted as diplomatic intermediaries between Charles VI of France and Richard II of England, did his idealism find acceptance in both realms. One of his followers, Robert the Hermit, also a former crusader, was dispatched to Rome and Avignon in an attempt to persuade the two popes to resign and end the schism, and also to Richard II at Eltham Palace to plead for peace between England and France.¹²²

The French ultimately prevailed in these conflicts, but the Hundred Years War left a legacy of hatred and bitterness between England and France. The various peace treaties of Brétigny (1360) and Troyes (1420) that punctuated the various phases of this long conflict settled very little and contributed to a resumption of the fighting. After 1453, when the king of England lost English Gascony, France increasingly became an absolute monarchy, while England traveled down the road to civil war. It was now very clear that the papacy's influence in arbitrating peace had declined. Thereafter, the most fruitful ideas on how to achieve peace in this world tended to come from the lesser clergy or from laymen.

Emergence of a peace ethic

Late-medieval critics of the martial ethos pointed out the limitations of chivalric culture. Honoré Bonet condemned acts of individual bravado undertaken without the permission of the knight's commander. He reprimanded those who acted out of anger, vainglory, and undue concern for

personal honor, and reminded knightly warriors that they were always to submit to the discipline of their commanders. As royal armies came into existence, the emphasis on discipline tended to run counter to the anarchic individualism of chivalric culture because such individuals did not usually think in terms of duty or the good of the commonwealth. Bonet particularly condemned looting and pillage, and reminded knights of their obligation not to prey on poor laborers, widows, and the poor, or to wantonly lay waste to dwellings and churches. Bonet recognized that the law of arms, although never codified like canon and civil law, did usually restrain how knightly warriors treated their enemies. But there were limitations on how far the law of arms applied to prisoners of war. Such courtesies applied only to knights and members of the nobility and not to members of the commonalty or non-Christians, so members of the aristocratic warrior class were always careful never to surrender to those who were not bound by the same rules.¹²³ Honoré Bonet insisted that there was no law that allowed Christian princes to make war on the Saracens because they were infidels, nor did scripture permit the use of force to convert nonbelievers or to take their possessions. But Bonet did maintain that the Holy Land had become the lawful possession of Christians because that was where the passion of Christ had occurred, and consequently, the Saracens had seized it wrongfully.¹²⁴

The English poet and gentleman, John Gower, condemned the clergy in general and the popes in particular for stirring up wars. In his *Vox clamantis*, Gower accused the pope of disturbing Christian concord by siding with the French in the Hundred Years War. Many of the clergy not only fanned the flames of war, but also actually bore arms against other Christians instead of tending to the cure of souls. In his *Confessio amantis*, in which Gower poses a question about the morality of the crusades, the priestly confessor answers that it is permissible to preach the faith to non-Christians and to suffer martyrdom, but not to slay non-Christians in a holy war. That was not how the Apostles had spread the Christian faith.¹²⁵ Gower was certainly no pacifist and believed in the concept of just war, but he also became a critic of decaying chivalric culture during the Hundred Years War because he thought knights were not adhering to their code to protect widows and orphans, to defend the Church, and fight for the common good. They were a violent and disputatious lot, and went to war out of pride or the pursuit of booty. Just as often, they failed to fight in wars

when duty compelled them to do so, stayed at home, and violated their oaths by oppressing the poor. As the Hundred Years War dragged on, Gower ceased to believe in the justness of Edward III's claims in France, and he thought that many who participated in that conflict had dishonored the profession of arms.¹²⁶

Disapproval of the way that wars were fought, and indeed, of the very concept of armed conflict, was not limited to the monastic clergy. For example, John Wyclif, a secular priest and theologian, quoted the words of Christ from the New Testament to show that differences should be settled by peaceful means and the exercise of patience. John Bromyard, a fourteenth-century Dominican friar, said that both Holy Scripture and history demonstrated that wise rulers who contemplated going to war, should fast, pray, and examine their consciences before deciding to unfurl their banners in declaration of war, and should always heed good counsel. Pacifist concepts were espoused mostly by individuals and a few religious communities. Such persons usually refused to be drawn into war even in defense of their possessions and property. One of the reasons that St. Francis of Assisi (1182–1226) insisted on complete poverty for his mendicant friars was that he viewed the possession of goods and treasure as a source of war and conflict among men. St. Francis longed for a restoration of the Golden Age, a concept derived from the Book of Genesis as well as pagan philosophers such as Hesiod, Ovid, and Lucretius. Declarations of pacifism by lay confraternities, such as the Penitents in Italian cities or the Beguines in Flanders, could not count on papal support. Pope Nicholas IV declared that they ought to be prepared to defend their own religious communities or the towns in which they dwelled. Although they were technically laymen, the members of these confraternities claimed clerical status in their refusal to bear arms, and they were offended by insensitivity to their principles on the part of ecclesiastical authorities. The civic authorities also treated them as laymen and showed little respect for their intransigence in the face of marauding armies or rioting townsmen. Moreover, these lay confraternities were often regarded as being tainted by heresy. The belief that an ideology of pacifism could change the world is a modern phenomenon, which was first enunciated by Erasmus and his circle of Christian humanists. Even then, their influence was quite limited. In the medieval and early modern periods, the expression of pacifist sentiments continued to be associated with

heresy. The medieval Church was more concerned with defining when war was justified or bestowing blessings on crusades and crusaders than with restraining warfare. The Church was more usually to be found in a militant posture than in a passive stance.¹²⁷

Religious communities officially designated as heretical were often pacifist. In southern France, the Cathars, or Cathari, whose progenitors were thought to be disillusioned crusaders who had picked up their ideas from an obscure sect in Bulgaria on their return from the Holy Land, but probably had originated in Western Europe, rejected war except in self-defense. The Waldensians, who originated in thirteenth-century Burgundy and Piedmont, claimed exemption from military service. Like the Montanists, their second-century predecessors of Asia Minor and North Africa, the Waldensians wished to withdraw from secular society, which they particularly associated with cities; they sought refuge in a rural hinterland in order to live a more simple life. In a number of ways, pacifistic movements such as Waldensianism, which had been founded by Peter Waldo, a wealthy merchant who had once lived in Lyons, paralleled monasticism; but whereas the monastic orders never posed a challenge to ecclesiastical authority and enjoyed the approbation of the Church, the Waldensians constituted a radical religious sect that challenged papal authority, or more specifically, what they called "Constantinianism," the papal claim to wield the temporal sword and to employ force to correct errant temporal rulers, heretics and infidels. The Waldensians at first tried to remain within the church structure, but after their excommunication in 1184, they sought refuge in the Alpine valleys of Lombardy. The Hussites of Bohemia also had a pacifist wing led by Peter Chelciky, who argued that the pacifism of the early Christians had been repudiated after the Emperor Constantine promoted a union of the Roman state and the Christian Church. Chelciky thought that the state existed only to correct sinners, and that good Christians should hold neither military nor civil office. Eventually, the bellicose wing of the Hussites prevailed, and the Bohemian peasants made war against the Holy Roman Empire.¹²⁸

In the latter part of the fourteenth century, the wars in France were going badly for the English, and this probably helped to stimulate a reevaluation of accepted attitudes toward war and peace. Preachers were quite sure that the cause of these misfortunes was an abundance of the sins of lechery and luxury

among the aristocracy. Thomas Walsingham, a monk at St. Albans Abbey, in his *Chronicon Angliae*, was especially critical of John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster and King Edward III in his declining days. The chroniclers and political commentators of this period always perceived a link between morals and political events, and their audience would have recognized the parallels with biblical passages. A prophecy, probably by John Erghome, asserted that the king's association with his mistress, Alice Perrers, had effeminated him, and he had lost his zest for war.¹²⁹

John Wyclif's efforts to build a "peace ethic" mark a distinct break with medieval clerical thinking about war and peace. He rejected much of the teaching of St. Augustine about the inevitability of war and sought inspiration in the early Christian teachings which predated the Emperor Constantine. Wyclif also refused to accept the concepts of just war and holy war as proclaimed by the papacy, and he accused the pope, at that time residing in Avignon, and the bishops of sowing discord and fomenting war among Christian princes in order to enhance papal power.¹³⁰ That Wyclif stood outside the mainstream of medieval theological and political thought concerning the exercise of civil authority can be seen in his assertion that the origins of civil dominion were to be found in human sinfulness, and the very exercise of such authority unavoidably involved the bearer of the swords of justice and war in the commission of sin. Wars could be fought only for motives of Christian charity and not for temporal gain, although Wyclif does allow for the invasion of the lands of non-Christians in order to convert them to the true religion or to punish them for inflicting injuries on Christians. Wyclif does not accept the examples from the Old Testament of the Hebrews making war against other peoples by divine command because God no longer issued such commands, and Christians were instead to follow Christ's example of humility and charity.¹³¹

John Gower also became disposed to a policy of peace because he had ceased to believe in the concept of just war when two Christian kings prolonged the war between England and France—the conflict that we know as the Hundred Years War. Gower, who had enjoyed the patronage of Richard II, was at first inclined to excuse the king's misrule because of his youth and lack of experience, but when Richard continued to place his confidence in supporters who pursued their own selfish and destructive interests, Gower began to

despair in Richard's will to accept reforms, and transferred his allegiance to Henry of Bolingbroke, earl of Derby, who succeeded as Henry IV in 1399.¹³² Gower viewed Henry IV as a divinely ordained bringer of peace both at home and abroad. He wrote *In Praise of Peace* and other works to support Henry's candidacy for the throne during the parliamentary proceedings that led to the bestowal of the crown on him. In his poetry, Gower told the new Lancastrian king that although monarchs had a legal and moral right to declare war as long as their objective was the ultimate restoration of peace, it was better to avoid war between Christian kingdoms in the first place because "peace is best, above all earthly things."¹³³ Ironically, one of the reasons why Richard II had been overthrown was because members of the aristocracy believed that he intended to conclude peace with the king of France. Aristocrats such as Thomas, Duke of Gloucester, led an anti-French and pro-war faction because his followers had profited from the war, and they believed that Richard did not project the image of a warrior-king and indulged himself only in pleasure.¹³⁴ Gower continued to admire Henry IV, but the new king's ability to maintain peace in his kingdom and lordships was weakened by his usurpation of the throne—despite the support of most of his subjects. He faced rebellions and civil disturbances in England and Wales as well as conflicts with Scotland and France. Sixty years later, during the reign of Henry IV's weak and inept grandson, Henry VI, Richard, Duke of York, attempted to advance his claim to the throne before Parliament by reminding his audience that the Lancastrians were a usurping dynasty. A few months later, York was killed at the Battle of Wakefield, which was part of the first of the three conflicts that made up the Wars of the Roses.¹³⁵

Despite the official propaganda about the blessings of Tudor rule and the fictions introduced by Shakespeare in his cycle of history plays, which depicted the Wars of the Roses as one continuous war instead of three separate and somewhat shorter conflicts, the baronial and dynastic wars of the late fifteenth century were not nearly as bloody as is generally supposed. The French historian Philippe de Commynes thought that English commanders and soldiers showed more restraint than was the case in mainland European wars, and avoided killing prisoners or plundering the countryside because they cared about public opinion. Despite the dynastic conflicts of the fifteenth century, it was probably a more peaceful time in which to live than the sixteenth century

with its religious conflicts and persecutions and economic upheavals. Indeed, John Gillingham believes that “England in the fifteenth century was the most peaceful country in Europe.” It was not heavily taxed, and unlike many states of mainland Europe, it was not burdened with a standing army and did not need to spend the huge sums expended elsewhere on municipal fortifications. Also, England was not as militarized as comparable states, and it was backward in military technology, and remained so until the sixteenth century.¹³⁶

Among early Christians, a full acceptance of the peace ethic seems to have been limited to groups whose orthodoxy was open to question. Within the Roman world of late antiquity, pacifism was more widespread among Greek-speaking Christians than in the Latin West, and hardly existed at all in the outposts of empire. As long as Christians pursued proselytizing activities, debated abstruse theological doctrines or enthusiastically sought martyrdom, there always existed the possibility of conflict. Christian theology bred dissent and heresy from the beginning, and ecclesiastical politics has never been a game for the faint of heart. Paganism disappeared slowly, and while many pagans were tolerant of other beliefs, Christians grew increasingly intolerant of the old beliefs. Once Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire, Christians were obliged to take up the duties of citizenship which could include military service.

There was more than one theological school of thought in the early Christian Church, but it was the Augustinian tradition that remained dominant through much of the medieval period. St. Augustine of Hippo associated pacifism with the heretical sect that he had broken with when he converted, and he never did succeed in reconciling pacifistic inclinations with his belief that God used war to punish man's sins. Moreover, as a practical matter, he could see no other way of suppressing heretical groups and repulsing barbarian incursions, which raised the possibility of war among Christians as well as between Christians and non-Christians. A just war was to be preferred to an unjust peace. As the boundaries of empire retreated in late antiquity, the problem of defending Christendom fell into the laps of the ecclesiastical authorities, and in the absence of city-states and emperors in the former Roman Empire in the West, the clergy had to provide a lead in fending off the enemies of the Church, maintaining a degree of stability and furnishing an example of constancy.

Insofar as a peace ethic survived in late antiquity and the early Middle Ages, it was to be found in monasticism. But monasticism was a severely ascetic movement that sought refuge in that inner peace that was consequent on withdrawal from the world. However, the monastic movement took a different direction when the Papacy called on a group of Benedictine monks to undertake the conversion, or reconversion, of Britain and northern Europe. This effort did ultimately bring a degree of peace to Western Europe by incorporating those Germanic kingdoms and tribes into the larger entity of Christendom. The acceptance of Christianity was perhaps less than complete because the warrior culture of the Germanic peoples could only be contained and not eliminated. Rather, their bellicosity was directed outward against heathens, heretics, and infidels. This led to the papal proclamation of the Wars of the Crusades, which sought to recover the Holy Land and drive the Moors out of the Iberian Peninsula. A by-product of the effort to tame the martial tendencies of the warrior class was the emergence of a chivalric culture, which imposed some constraints on how wars were fought and how prisoners and noncombatants were treated, but which at the same time, perpetuated a martial ethos.

The Augustinian view that war was intended as a divine punishment for man's sins was challenged by St. Thomas Aquinas, who believed that peace was the natural condition of mankind—including both Christians and non-Christians alike. There also occurred a revival of interest in Vegetius's *De re militarii*, which held that war, quickly and efficiently executed, could secure peace. This required a clear focus on military and political objectives, and undermined the view that wars provided the opportunity to validate honor and win glory for aristocratic warriors. This perhaps contributed little toward the establishment of a peace ethic, but it did reinforce the idea that wars needed a moral and legal justification that should be based on natural law. This approach to the concept of just war necessitated the study of both Roman and canon law in order to maintain constraints on how wars were fought. However, princes seldom failed to present compelling arguments for the justness of the many wars that they fought. Despite the many writers who sought to establish a peace ethic, at the end of the Middle Ages, there still remained a strong aversion to prolonged periods of peace, and the prejudice persisted that peace bred effeminacy and made it more difficult to find valiant soldiers.