

Popes, Cardinals and War

THE MILITARY CHURCH IN RENAISSANCE
AND EARLY MODERN EUROPE

D.S. Chambers

I.B. TAURIS
LONDON · NEW YORK

Contents

List of illustrations	vii
List of abbreviations	ix
Acknowledgements	x
Preface: Italy and history	xiii
Prologue	1
1 'Dux et Pontifex': the medieval centuries	4
2 Relapse and Renaissance, 1305–1458	24
Babylonian captivity	24
Divided command	32
Renaissance: the early phase, 1420–58	38
3 Pius II (1458–64): warmaker and historian of war	53
Pius and the idea of war	54
Pius and his cardinals at war in Italy	59
Anticlimax: Pius's crusade	69
Sequel: Paul II and war, 1464–71	72
4 God's work or the Devil's? Papal wars, 1471–1503	75
Introduction: the middle age of the Renaissance papacy	75
Sixtus IV's Italian wars	79
Innocent VIII (1484–92): the Neapolitan Barons' War and Osimo	89
Alexander VI (1492–1503): French invasion and Cesare Borgia's campaigns	93
Conclusion	101

5	The Julian trumpet, 1503–13	110
	Alarms and excursions, 1503–9	110
	‘Out with the barbarians!’ (1): failure against Ferrara, 1510–11	118
	‘Out with the barbarians!’ (2): the road to victory, 1511–13	125
6	Post-Julius: the late Renaissance papacy and war, 1513–65	134
	Leo X: more war, 1513–21	134
	The interlude of Adrian VI, 1521–23	143
	Clement VII: years of danger, 1523–34	144
	Paul III: war, peace, reconstruction, 1534–49	152
	The last phase of the Renaissance papacy, 1549–65	162
7	A farewell to arms?	167
	The reformed papacy and war	167
	Towards modern times: the armed challenges of Napoleon and the <i>Risorgimento</i>	178
	Epilogue	189
	Notes	191
	Bibliography	217
	Index	225

Preface: Italy and history

The theme of this book is emphatically not the history of Italy, but, since the papacy's engagements in war – and popes' and cardinals' personal participation in it – were to a large extent happening there, some introductory guidelines over the many centuries to be covered, particularly over the central period of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, may be of help. Even so, readers may have to bear allusions in the text to unfamiliar and under-explained persons, places and events, and may still remain baffled by the complexities of Italian medieval and early modern history. Unfortunately, no attempt to present a history of Italy ever seems quite to succeed; those multi-volume series written by numerous different authors invariably frustrate the reader by the variety of approaches and too little precise detail.¹

One starting point would be to present this theme of a belligerent papacy in its Italian background as a struggle for physical survival. The bishopric of Rome, with its primacy over the Church, or over the world as some proponents were to claim for it, and its sacred associations with St Peter and countless martyrs, had its base halfway down the Italian peninsula. This was a highly vulnerable location. Italy was subjected to foreign invaders in every century of the Christian era, from every direction in turn, and the problem of dealing with aggressive invaders has had much to do with forging the papacy's often warlike standpoint. For the earlier period, up to the twelfth century, this is briefly illustrated in Chapter 1, but it is important to stress from the outset two important points.

The first important point is that the Bishop of Rome, like other medieval bishops, possessed from time immemorial local estates and castles, but in addition claimed much more widespread temporal possessions, thanks to political 'donations' and their successive

confirmations. The first and most famous of these was the donation allegedly made by the Emperor Constantine I some time after his conversion to Christianity and the decision to remove the capital of the empire from Rome to Byzantium (henceforward Constantinople) in 326–30. It supposedly gave to the Pope imperial rights and possessions in Italy, as well as lordship over all islands, but there is no doubt that the basis of this was an eighth-century forgery, and later donations, more modest and not always consistent with each other, were more authentic.

Among the most significant of these donations was that of Pepin the Short, King of the Franks, dated to the year 751 and later confirmed by his son Charles I (Charlemagne). This deed underlines the close bond forged between the papacy and the new dynasty of Frankish kings, former ‘mayors of the palace’ to the Merovingians. Sole king of the Franks since 770, ruler of roughly the eastern half of modern France and parts of western Germany, Charlemagne expanded his power on a vast scale. His many wars, against Moors in Spain (continuing the efforts of his father and grandfather), against pagan Saxons, Avars, Slavs and others in central Europe, and against Lombards in Italy, coincided well with the interests of the papacy. He was (as Einhard, his contemporary biographer, records) extravagantly devoted to the see and shrine of St Peter, and avowed himself to be the Pope’s military protector against all secular enemies, including the violent people of Rome, leaving the Pope free simply to pray and serve the faith. Charlemagne was in return rewarded with the title of ‘Emperor Augustus’ (no apologies to Constantinople) and crowned in Rome by Leo III on Christmas Day 800.

In practice, this condominium of world authority, and the separation of papal and imperial functions, did not work smoothly after Charlemagne’s death (814). His inheritance was subdivided, and the titles of ‘King of the Romans’ and (when crowned) ‘Emperor’, though not filled at all for considerable periods, were to pass to other Germanic dynasties; some holders, particularly Henry IV of the Franconian line in the later eleventh century, claimed superior divine authority and defied the papacy over major Church appointments and other matters. Nevertheless, roughly from Charlemagne’s time, it became widely known, if not always accepted, that there were papal legal claims to rights in much of Umbria, southern Tuscany and Campagna (‘from Radicofani to Ceprano’), and east of the Apennines, in the former Greek Exarchate of Ravenna, a region called ‘Pentapolis’ which included the Adriatic coastal

strip from Rimini to just north of Ancona and the Marches (borderlands), the region still called 'Marche' today. Originally the three Marches of Fermo, Camerino and Ancona, by ca. 1100 all three were known simply as the March of Ancona. The papal claims extended also over much of present-day Emilia-Romagna even as far north as Bologna and Ferrara. Some serious efforts were being made by the popes to realise such territorial rights until the emperors of the Staufen dynasty, first Frederick I Barbarossa (reigned 1155–89), challenged them by force and, supported by armies that represent the last of the great Germanic invasions of the peninsula, tried to reimpose direct imperial authority in Italy.

By the early thirteenth century, under Pope Innocent III, during a hiatus in imperial potency, a more coherent 'papal state' with some recognised boundaries and institutions of government was emerging in central Italy. The map attempts to explain the region under discussion, which was of relevance from the thirteenth to the nineteenth century. From 1278, when the Emperor Rudolf of Habsburg finally conceded papal claims in Romagna, this turbulent province, also the neighbouring March of Ancona, became the special target of papal attempts at recuperation and consolidation. It would, however, be wrong to suppose that all papal claims of secular jurisdiction, taxation and service, etc. were exactly defined, or that they applied with equal force all over a large region of central Italy, or that local warlords and others readily conceded obedience to Rome. This was no modern state yet, no equivalent to the contemporary strong monarchies of France or England. Force of tradition and forceful possession counted more than written deeds of donation. Indeed, a remark attributed to Pope Julius II in 1512 probably expresses what for centuries remained the prevailing assumption of the papacy and its supporters, that the legal rights of the Church were so ancient that it would be shameful to dispute them.²

The second point, which relates closely to the first, is that since 1059 the papacy had established a special relationship or feudal dependency over the southern half of Italy, which in less than a century was upgraded into a kingdom. It was bestowed on the most recent and successful of foreign invaders, a Norman dynasty, who did the work of subjecting Greeks and Lombards on the mainland and Arabs in Sicily. The papal purpose was to obtain security and a reliable source of military protection. In practice this was not always forthcoming; and after the Staufen inherited the southern kingdom through marriage, and from

1230 onwards became mortal enemies of the papacy, the prospect looked bad. However, to obtain the fall of the Staufen the papacy in 1263 conferred the kingdom on a branch of the Capetian dynasty, kings of France, in the person of Charles I, Duke of Anjou. This 'Angevin' dynasty continued to rule the kingdom (it was always known simply as 'il Regno') till the early fifteenth century, although Sicily from 1282 split away to be ruled by the kings of Aragon, by conquest but also by claim of heredity from the Norman–Staufen line. The kingdom continued to be of vital importance to the papacy.

Of course the reality of power, or at least of economic power, in thirteenth- and fourteenth-century Italy, indeed in all Europe, lay in the expanding and prosperous northern cities of Italy – above all in Milan, Venice, Genoa and Florence. For them the temporal preoccupations of the papacy were only of relative interest, though northern banking firms, particularly those of Florence, would for long act as the papacy's creditors and revenue collectors. An irregular pattern emerged that divided Italy on pro-papal lines ('Guelf', Angevin, civic constitutional) – a notable example being Florence – and pro-imperial lines ('Ghibelline', aristocratic, tyrannical), such as Milan, which was controlled by the Visconti dynasty. There were factions in many cities that represented conflicting interests and exploited these supposedly irreconcilable party labels, although the affluent maritime republics, Venice and Genoa, did not fall into either camp. Most cities – excluding Florence, Venice, Genoa, Siena and Lucca, which retained varying forms of elective institutions and some respect for the rule of law – developed into signorial regimes, under the rule of one man, or one family. Such a regime often grew out of some form of civic appointment, which was by vote or acclamation made into a permanent 'captaincy', at best a semi-benevolent tyranny.³ Ferrara had one of the most long-standing of these regimes, ruled since 1240 by the Este dynasty; Mantua, under the Gonzaga family since 1328, was another example. This pattern also applied to the relatively small towns and their adjacent territories within the papally claimed regions of central Italy. By the fourteenth century, when the papacy – although based at Avignon from 1309 until 1377 – made strong efforts to impose control on these regions, its military legates often had to compromise with the strongmen, warlords or local dynasties in effective control there. They might be recognised as papal 'vicars', conditional on payment of tribute and military service; it was

thus that turbulent and in some cases former 'Ghibelline' clans, such as the Montefeltro, with their lordship centred on Urbino in the Marche, the Malatesta of Rimini, the da Varano of Camerino, the Baglioni of Perugia and others, were accommodated. But as they tended to become hereditary and virtually independent, prospering as *condottieri* (mercenary military captains under contract) in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, papal policy changed to attempting a more direct control, sometimes by family alliance, sometimes by force or the threat of it. A special case was Bologna, a city in a key position, since it controlled one of the main routes over the Appenines to Tuscany. There in the fifteenth century a local family, the Bentivoglio, came to challenge or uneasily to share the government of the city with papal legates; the total control of Bologna came to be an overwhelming priority for the papacy.

The idea of the ultimate sovereignty of the emperor, a figure elected by a small number of German princes and prince-bishops, was never eliminated from northern Italy – and in 1310–13 Henry VII of Luxembourg led a last military invasion – but the subsequent election of Lewis of Bavaria was disputed and not recognised by the new pope, John XXII (pope 1316–34). The authority of the empire was still further degraded; its role in Italy became even more nominal, becoming little more than the theoretical source of civil law and right to bear titles of honour. In practice the neighbouring monarchy of France had a much stronger impact on the peninsula throughout the later medieval period, and not least upon the papacy, when transferred to Provence (1305–77).

The condition of the southern kingdom remained crucial. The relative stability of Angevin rule there was shattered, as was much else in western Europe, by the schism in the Church, caused by the rival papal elections in 1378 of Urban VI and Clement VII. Urban was recognised throughout Italy, except by Giovanna I in Naples. Urban backed a cadet line of the family in the person of Charles of Durazzo, Giovanna was murdered, and Clement, who was recognised in France, backed for the kingdom Louis, Duke of Anjou and Count of Provence. Having two separate 'Angevin' branches claiming the kingdom greatly complicated the picture, though it was the Aragonese line ruling Sicily and aspiring to the mainland kingdom since the 1420s that eventually prevailed; in 1442, Alfonso V of Aragon was installed, favoured by the papacy over Angevin rivals.

There was another Italian prize over which the monarchy of France, or its ruling Valois dynasty, had in the late fourteenth century managed to gain an interest: the duchy of Milan. It was through the marriage of Giangaleazzo Visconti's daughter Valentina with Louis, Duke of Orleans, although this Orleanist claim to the Visconti inheritance remained dormant for over a century. Milan, under the control of Giangaleazzo Visconti from 1378, duke in 1395, had become the most formidable of Italian powers. Visconti ambitions under Giangaleazzo, only cut short by his sudden death in 1402, had threatened both the papacy and Florence; renewed under his son Filippo (duke from 1412 to 1447), they caused from the 1420s to the 1440s a new series of wars involving Florence, Venice and the papacy.

If one were to pause and contemplate the condition of Italy in about 1450, however, it would be clear that a degree of stability had been restored; indeed, the next forty years or so would come to be regarded by sixteenth-century writers as almost a golden age. There was a single papacy, and even the alternative idea of a General Council of the Church, the body which at least had ended the Great Schism in 1417, was discredited, since the Council of Basel in the 1430s became too radical. The kingdom of Naples was stable under the able rule of the Aragonese Alfonso I, succeeded by his bastard son Ferrante in 1458; Milan, after a brief republican interlude, passed in 1450 into the hands of Francesco Sforza, the military captain who had married Filippo Visconti's daughter, and the ducal regime (sanctioned, but not much more, by the emperor) continued there until 1499. Venice was advancing as a mainland power in north-east Italy, having acquired not only Verona and Padua but, in the wars against Filippo Visconti, Brescia, Bergamo, Crema and Ravenna. The republic of Florence, which had expanded within Tuscany, annexing Arezzo and Pisa, was now informally controlled by the hyper-rich banker, and main financier of the papacy, Cosimo de' Medici, succeeded by his son Piero 'the Gouty' in 1464 and his grandson Lorenzo, known as 'il Magnifico', in 1469. The main Italian powers had even attempted in 1455 to set up a system of arbitration to monitor future conflicts and preserve peace. It did not work, but at least it was an attempt to put diplomacy before force. The various minor states were still carrying on with civic regimes dominated by princes – for these former mercenary captains, city bosses and landed proprietors were assuming an increasingly princely style. Mantua, in most respects

a satellite of Sforza Milan, continued to be ruled by the Gonzaga family, most notable of whom was the highly cultivated *condottiere* Ludovico Gonzaga (marquis, 1444–78); Ferrara, since 1471 a papal dukedom, was still ruled by the d'Este, as were Reggio and – an imperial dukedom – Modena; Federico di Montefeltro of Urbino likewise became a papal duke in 1474.

Admittedly, several internal Italian wars and some sensational assassinations disturbed the relative stability of the political balance which lasted to 1494. The murder of Duke Galeazzo Maria Sforza of Milan in 1476 led to the dominance of his brother Ludovico 'il Moro'; the young heir to the dukedom, Giangaleazzo, died in 1494, and the ambitious Ludovico obtained this title. The attempted murder of Lorenzo de' Medici in 1478 (contrived by the Pazzi family, but with the support of the Pope's nephew Girolamo Riario and others) and successful killing of his brother Giuliano caused a war between Florence and the papacy, allied with its traditional standby, the King of Naples; it also led to a tightening of direct Medici control over Florence's politics. Two more wars broke out in 1482 and 1485–86, in both of which the papacy was drawn into the complete reversal of its traditional position, declaring war on the kingdom of Naples, its principal vassal and supposed protector. Soon after this, the assassination – partly an act of Florentine revenge – of Girolamo Riario in 1488, whose mini-princedom of Imola and Forlì had represented a new papal experiment in control of the Romagna, was another destabilising event. The Riario state within the papal state was nevertheless a precedent for the much more formidable princedom to be established by force by Pope Alexander VI's son Cesare Borgia in 1499–1503.

But it was the invasion or 'descent' (*calata*) of Charles VIII of France in 1494, urged on by Ludovico Sforza out of jealousy or fear of Ferrante, King of Naples, that shattered the system which had prevailed during the previous half-century. Once again the southern kingdom was the fulcrum of crisis. Charles professed to be representing the Angevin claim to the throne of Naples in his rapid advance down the west side of Italy. Alfonso, Duke of Calabria, the son and heir of King Ferrante, who had died early in 1494, proved less formidable as king than he had been as a military commander, and abdicated in the face of rebellion while Charles was still on his way; after the French arrived in Naples, Alfonso's son Ferrantino fled to Sicily. But the collapse of the southern kingdom and

its Aragonese ruling dynasty was not the only upheaval in Italy. Piero de' Medici, Lorenzo's son who had succeeded to his father's role in 1492, had bargained unsuccessfully with Charles VIII on the latter's journey south through Tuscany in early November 1494, and was overthrown on his return to the city. Deeply influenced by the threatening sermons of the Dominican friar Girolamo Savonarola, the Florentines established a more constitutional republic that for the next twenty years remained steadily pro-French, largely in the vain and costly hope of reconquering its rebellious subject city, Pisa.

Charles VIII did not manage to stabilise his conquest of the southern kingdom, for which in any case he had failed to obtain papal sanction and investiture. In 1495 he returned to France pursued by an Italian coalition in which Ludovico il Moro of Milan and Venice were leading members. In Naples the dispossessed dynasty attempted a comeback with Spanish help; Ferrantino recovered Naples but died unexpectedly in October 1496; Alfonso's brother Federico briefly succeeded him. However, the entry upon the scene of the King of Spain, Ferdinand of Aragon, freed by his conquest of Granada (1492) to turn his attention to the wider world, proved fatal. An entirely new, Hispanic era for the south of Italy was beginning, deeply alarming also for the papacy. Ferdinand turned from providing military aid to his relative to accepting Federico's deposition by the French in 1501, on the grounds that he had appealed for help to the Turks, and claimed the crown for himself. He alternated between fighting the forces of Charles VIII's successor Louis XII, and cynically making secret agreements to divide the southern kingdom with him. Disastrous French defeats in battle in 1503 led eventually to renunciation of the ancient French claims, and an agreement whereby the widowed Ferdinand would marry Louis XII's niece, pay him a large sum of money, and incidentally obtain the papal investiture as king. The outcome was a new regime in both Naples and Sicily of government by Spanish viceroys. In the north, meanwhile, another French invasion in 1499 led by Louis XII, making good his inherited claim to Milan as Duke of Orleans, had been even more unsettling than the first *calata*. Allied with Venice, the French army succeeded in overthrowing the regime of Ludovico Sforza. Milan faced a French government of occupation, and meanwhile the Venetians advanced their domination of eastern Lombardy, annexing Cremona. The spread of the Venetian land empire had been alarming the rest of

Italy for a long time; the suspicion that Venice was aiming to dominate Italy seemed more and more justified, because the republic had also seized southern ports in Apulia and was to move into some of Cesare Borgia's conquests in Romagna after his fall in 1503. The climax came in 1509, when Julius II, Louis XII and the Emperor Maximilian declared war on Venice, and after the victory of Agnadello, on the river Adda, occupied much of its land empire. The republic soon, however, regained most of it, as the subsequent war turned into an Italian alliance, including Venice, against foreign forces. The republic of Florence was punished in 1512 for its support of the French, and had the Medici reimposed by force; henceforward the Medici, who also acquired the papacy the following year, ruled Florence in a blatantly princely manner.

As this Foreword began by stressing the vulnerability of Italy to invasion, so it might end on the same note, with reference to the Ottoman Turks. The great call to arms against the Seljuk Turks and for the liberation of Jerusalem at the end of the eleventh century was important in formulating ideas and practice about war in defence of the Church and against Islamic power, but the Ottoman Turks represented a more direct and formidable threat to Italy, Rome and the lands of the papacy. After becoming a naval as well as a land-based military power in the course of the fourteenth century, their encroachment upon what was left of the Byzantine empire proceeded rapidly. Its climax was the capture of Constantinople in 1453, and was followed at intervals by conquest of the rest of the Greek mainland and islands. It should be appreciated that the papacy felt very much at the front line of defending Christendom, particularly after mainland Italy was invaded and the civilian population of Otranto massacred in 1480; its coastline, meanwhile, was for long threatened by Muslim pirates. There was no lasting relief from this sense of imminent danger until the naval victory of Lepanto in 1571.

Second, a final word needs to be said about the long-lasting theme of French invasions and occupations of Italy, and the ascendancy of France, which from the later thirteenth century the papacy had tried to use for its own advantage and security. This came to an end in the early sixteenth century. For, in spite of renewed French military offensives under Louis XII and Francis I, Italy was not destined to fall under French domination so much as Spanish or imperial. This became the likely prospect after the election of the Habsburg Emperor Charles V in 1519, and the fairly inevitable outcome after imperial victories over the French

in 1521 and 1525. Imperial or Spanish viceregal regimes governed both Milan and Naples, and Florence – after the fall in 1530 of the briefly revived republic – was restored to the Medici thanks to Charles V. Cosimo I became an imperial duke in 1537, and married Eleonora of Toledo, daughter of the imperial vicar of Naples. Siena came under his control in 1557, and in 1569 his title was raised to grand duke. The principal independent Italian powers left after the storm were Venice and the papacy, both of them to survive unharmed until the time of Napoleon.

It remains a debating point whether the papacy, which had invested so much military and financial effort into the recuperation and consolidation of its possessions in Italy, had contributed greatly to Italian political disunity and weakness, as the Florentine writer Niccolò Machiavelli (1464–1527) in one context suggested (*Discorsi*, I chap. 12). Perhaps, on the contrary, and since the empire had become so ineffective in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the papacy was potentially quite a powerful force for stabilising Italy. Machiavelli also appreciated this possibility, and some of the popes of the later renaissance period, particularly Julius II, were among his model princes, along with Ferdinand of Aragon and Cesare Borgia, for their skills of deception, decisive resolution, and domination of fortune. But Machiavellian theories and paradoxes are not the issue in this book, which is concerned rather with why the Church, or its principal officers, were so inescapably involved in war.

Prologue

‘What monstrous new fashion is this, to wear the dress of a priest on top, while underneath it you are all bristling and clanking with blood-stained armour?’

Thus St Peter’s famous greeting to Pope Julius II when he presented himself at the gates of heaven in 1513, according to the satirical dialogue *‘Julius Exclusus’*,¹ most often attributed to Erasmus. Julius replies defiantly that, unless St Peter surrenders and opens the gate, he will return with reinforcements and throw him out.

This book will emphasise that, however monstrous, it was not a new fashion at all in the early sixteenth century for popes, let alone cardinals, to participate actively in war. And war sponsored and sometimes even conducted by themselves is intended here, war by the central government of the Catholic or Roman Church, rather than war declared by a secular power that enjoyed the Church’s blessing. Even if the Gospels on the whole enjoin peace, the cause of defending the Church by force had plentiful sanctions, metaphorical or otherwise, in the Old Testament and was all too compatible with the idea of ‘just war’ formulated by St Augustine and developed by many later writers. Canon law forbade the clergy to shed blood, but was ambiguous on various other points (in addition to the fact that mortal harm can be inflicted in many ways without involving bloodshed). They were not banned from uttering exhortations to violence or accompanying, directing and granting absolution to its perpetrators. Only a fine line distinguished such permissive pugnacity from the prohibition addressed to all clergy, except those monkish knights in the military religious orders that arose in the twelfth century, from wielding weapons and slaughtering foes in combat.

Four or five centuries of war against Islam, whether hot Holy War or cold Holy War, further contributed to the militarisation of western

Christianity, but 'holy war' was not only to be fought in the east, in defence of the faith or (even more of a catch-all slogan) defence of the Church. It was also to be fought in the west, sometimes against heresy, schism or disobedience committed by secular rulers but more



'Julius Exclusus': anon. woodcut, ca.1522-23 in a German version of the text, printer and place of printing unknown (Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University).

continuously in defence of jurisdictions and territorial rights in Italy – rights believed to be the papacy's by divine sanction as well as by legal prescription and long-established custom. There will be some concentration here upon the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the era conventionally labelled 'Renaissance', but stress will be laid that this period saw only the climax of a war process stretching back in time to the Lombard invasions of Italy in the sixth century and continuing, if rather less ferociously, right until the final collapse of the temporal power in 1870. The use of force, initiated by successive popes and – from the eleventh century – their close assistants, the cardinals and other higher clergy to whom power was delegated, lay behind the expansion of papal government and jurisdiction in Italy and Europe from the thirteenth century onwards. It persisted during the papacy's nadir in the fourteenth century and its recovery in the fifteenth century, perhaps reaching a climax during Julius II's reign as pope, but still continued thereafter, in spite of the diffusion of disapproval and dissent. In general, the point is the paradox that leaders of the Church, although their vocation was peaceful, in the course of many centuries contributed rather more to the process of war than to that of peace – and in some cases they did so with a surprising directness and brutality. No doubt they firmly believed that God and righteousness were on their side, but it is a truism that firm belief often underlines barbarous acts. In other branches of the Church a parallel story might be told, but the present enquiry is concerned with only the most highly organised and prominent institution of Christendom: the papal monarchy.

Julius II simply went a step further than most popes, particularly in his winter campaign of 1510–11 against the Duke of Ferrara and his allies, when he took personal command in an offensive military operation (the siege of Mirandola). Julius's direct participation in war, an episode central to the theme of this book, will be re-examined in detail, but it will be set comparatively within the widest possible span of time and presented as one episode of a complex and continuous theme in the history of the papacy.

1 'Dux et Pontifex': the medieval centuries

'Blessed are the peacemakers.' But blessed, too, have been the war-mongers throughout the Christian centuries. Among the many aspects of this paradox a particular problem arises: how far could papal authority and the clerical hierarchy go in supporting or even committing acts of war in defence of the Church? The question has never been resolved with precision. St Ambrose (ca. 340–97) proclaimed that – unlike Old Testament leaders, such as Joshua or David – Christian clerics should refrain from force: 'I cannot surrender the church, but I must not fight' 'pugnare non debeo'; 'Against weapons, soldiers, the Goths, tears are my arms, these are the defences of a priest.'¹ These precepts set the canonical line, but a fine distinction in culpability came to be admitted between inflicting violence directly and inciting others to acts of violence and bloodshed. It remained a matter of serious concern throughout the Middle Ages and beyond: how was the necessary defence of the Church to be defined and limited? Could the clergy, the officers of the Church, in conscience wholly avoid being involved in homicidal physical conflict, at least in self-defence? This opening chapter has to take the main story, which concerns the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, a long way back in time, and cannot attempt much more than a skeletal outline.

In practice, when acute physical dangers threatened the Church, and its Roman power base in particular, active response must have seemed a matter of duty. The site of Rome, halfway down the 'leg' of Italy, was extremely vulnerable once the huge resources, military and naval strength, and well-maintained road system of the empire had gone.

Successive hordes of invaders attacked or threatened the Roman bishopric’s sanctuaries and scattered estates, as well as overrunning other provinces of Italy. In the summer of 452 Pope Leo I reputedly stopped the Huns in their tracks only thanks to a miraculous if terrifying overflight of St Peter and St Paul, but Pope Gregory the Great (590–604) confronted the Lombards with military leadership. He exhorted his military captains to strive for glory, and provisioned and directed troops in defence of Rome.² Two centuries later the recurrent invaders were Muslim Arabs or Moors from North Africa. Leo IV (pope 847–55) accompanied the Roman army that fought victoriously against Muslim pirates at the mouth of the Tiber, and was responsible for building fortified walls to protect the Borgo Leonino, the district near St Peter’s.³ John VIII (pope 872–82) in 877 commanded a galley in a joint naval campaign with Amalfitan and Greek forces against the Muslims. Maybe the scale of the victory was exaggerated, but the nineteenth-century historian Ferdinand Gregorovius felt justified in writing ‘this is the first time in history that a Pope made war as an admiral’. He quoted a letter allegedly from the Pope himself, claiming that ‘eighteen ships were captured, many Saracens were slain and almost 600 slaves liberated’.⁴ In 915 John X (pope 914–28) was present at another victory against Muslims on the river Garigliano in 915, and wrote to the Archbishop of Cologne boasting that he had bared his own chest to the enemy (‘se ipsum corpusque suum opponendo’) and twice joined battle.⁵ It is arguable that the papal resistance was largely responsible for saving the mainland of Italy from the Muslim domination that befell Sicily and much of Spain.

A very different challenge was presented by the northern ascendancy of the Frankish monarchy in the eight and ninth centuries. Its professed role was to protect the papacy, and this included large-scale ‘donations’ of territory in Italy, by Pepin (754), Charlemagne (774) and Louis the Pious (817).⁶ These confirmed at least some of the items in the forged ‘donation’ of Constantine, according to which the recently converted Emperor Constantine I, who moved his capital to Byzantium (henceforth Constantinople) in 330, transferred to the Pope extensive rights and possessions in the west. Not until the ninth century, however, did the boundaries of these claims begin to become at all geographically precise, including much of Umbria and extending north of the Apennines to parts of Emilia.

The Frankish kings' protective, military role was graphically expressed by Charlemagne in a famous letter congratulating Leo III (pope 795–816) on his accession. In this he declared that, while his own task was to defend the Church by arms, the Pope would simply need to raise his arms to God, like Moses did to ensure victory over the Amalikes (Exodus XVII, 8–13).⁷ The other side of the bargain was that the Pope should perform coronation of his protector as emperor, the revived title duly conferred on Charlemagne in Rome on Christmas Day 800. As the imperial office also carried an aura of divinity, this protective role would eventually lead to trouble, a challenge over primacy of jurisdiction, but meanwhile it helped to preserve the papacy's dignity. Another Germanic dynasty subsequently rescued it from the scandalous if obscure confusion that prevailed in Rome during the first half of the tenth century. During that period the local nobility, and even two unscrupulous matriarchs, Theodora and her daughter Marozia, determined the appointment and even perhaps the deposition of several popes. After 960, however, three Saxon emperors, all named Otto, began to repair the situation. Early in 962 Otto I was crowned by Marozia's son, John XII (pope since 957), who had appealed for his protection, but in December 962 John was deposed by Otto.⁸ According to Liudprand, Bishop of Cremona, who acted as Otto's interpreter and is therefore fairly credible as a source, this was in response to collective denunciations by senior Roman clergy. Among the alleged offences of John XII were fornication, drunkenness, arson and playing at dice, but a special emphasis seems to have been placed on publicly bearing arms. Ultimately he had turned against his imperial protector and advanced with troops against Otto's army 'equipped with shield, sword, helmet and cuirass'. Otto allegedly declared, 'There are as many witnesses to that as there are fighting men in our army.'⁹

Most successful in sharing or dominating the papacy's authority was Otto I's grandson Otto III. He resided in Rome once he had come of age in 996 and oversaw the appointments of his cousin Bruno of Carinthia (Gregory V, pope 996–99), who crowned him emperor, and the learned Gerbert of Aurillac (Silvester II, pope 999–1003). Both Otto I and Otto III also issued new 'donations', confirming the Frankish concessions of papal title to territories formerly occupied by Byzantine Greeks and Lombards. Much of central Italy, including Umbria, southern Tuscany and lands bordering the Adriatic roughly from the region of

Ravenna down to Ascoli, were redefined as potential lands of St Peter. Only ‘potential’, of course, because these claims under ‘donation’ would be hard to realise and enforce; centuries of effort, with many setbacks, lay ahead. After a relapse under local political forces in the early eleventh century, the papacy again came to be protected by a German royal dynasty. From 1046 to 1055, under the Salian Henry III, a succession of reputable popes were appointed, and to one of these, Victor II, Henry conceded rule over the March of Ancona, but seemingly as an imperial vassal.¹⁰ For popes to have to admit the superiority or semi-parity of the emperor’s office was a hard price to pay for security.

In the course of the eleventh century lofty ideas were advanced concerning both the nature of papal authority and – as an inevitable aspect of this – ecclesiastical sanctions of warfare. There were of course earlier pronouncements on the superior nature of papal power. Gelasius I (pope 492–96) is credited with introducing the idea of the Church as a principality set above all earthly princes and the pope as the vicar not only of St Peter but of Christ himself. Nicholas I (pope 858–67) pronounced that the papacy was the greater of the two lights set over the earth, that popes were princes over the whole world, and only with their sanction could the emperor use the sword; he even quoted St Peter’s use of the physical sword against Malchus.¹¹ But it was not until the eleventh and twelfth centuries that scholars concerned with establishing the ‘canon law’ of the Church – pronouncements, rulings and precedents governing Church affairs laid down by successive popes and jurists – built up systematically, with the support of theologians, the ‘hierocratic’ theory of superior and universal papal power, including the power to depose unworthy rulers.¹²

These ideas, however strong in their implications for future wars, need not concern us at this point so much as two practical measures designed to ensure more effective papal authority, both of them the achievements of Nicholas II (pope 1059–61). One was the decree that laid down regular procedure in papal elections: that popes could only be elected by the ‘cardinal’ bishops, priests and deacons of Rome. As well as this constitutional provision aimed at stabilising the papal monarchy – though it failed for centuries to avert counter-elections of ‘anti-popes’ – in the same year 1059 a momentous step was taken to bring the southern half of Italy and Sicily under the legal lordship of the papacy. This was the grant of conditional rulership made to the Normans Robert

Guiscard and Robert of Capua, who had previously been regarded as the most troublesome and threatening of intruders in that region. The Treaty of Melfi created them dukes 'by the grace of God and St Peter', with a promise of the lordship of Sicily, conditional on its recapture from the Muslims. It decisively overruled or disregarded any surviving claims of Greeks, Lombards, Muslims or other *de facto* occupiers, and the inclusion of Sicily seems to have depended on the donation of Constantine rather than any later, more valid concessions. This turning of southern Italy into a papal fief, with obligations upon its ruler to owe the Pope military support, would have enormous consequences in the future.

Specifically on the issue of war, first, there was also a legalistic dimension that developed in the eleventh century. One of the earliest specialists in canon law, Burchard of Worms (ca. 965–1025), insisted 'the clergy cannot fight for both God and the World', but later canonists accepted that the problem was more complicated than this.¹³ Second, there was also a spiritual dimension, investing war – in certain circumstances – with a positive value. This was an aspect of the monastically inspired reform movement in the Church. Leo IX (pope 1049–54), Bruno, the former Archbishop of Toul, was one of a group of serious reformers in Lorraine who combined austere religious standards with a warrior mentality, as did his colleague Wazo, Bishop of Liège, who was acclaimed by his biographer as a 'Judas Maccabeus' in his military exploits, praised for defending Liège and destroying the castles of his opponents. As archbishop Bruno had led a force in support of Emperor Henry III. As pope he waged war against his deposed predecessor Benedict IX and his partisans in 1049–50 and personally commanded an army of Swabians against the Normans in June 1053, suffering defeat at the Battle of Civitate, the disaster that made clear that the only way forward was to adopt the Normans as allies rather than enemies. Among Leo IX's recorded declarations was the precept 'Those who do not fear spiritual sanction should be smitten by the sword', though it was intended mainly against bandits and pagans.¹⁴

Penetrated by both monastic reforming zeal and by canon law experts who insisted on a universal, ultimate pontifical authority over the emperor and all other secular powers, the later eleventh-century papacy was almost bound to accept that force could be sanctioned, that war and bloodshed in the right cause could even be sacred. Matters reached a head in the 1070s, with recurrent conflict between the Franconian Henry

IV, king, and the emperor-elect since 1056 and the former monk Hildebrand as Gregory VII (pope 1073–85). Even before he became pope, Hildebrand had been involved in the use of force. He may have served with Leo IX; certainly he was associated with Alexander II (Anselm I of Lucca) in 1061–63. He had been largely responsible for bringing the Normans into papal service, and for employing independent military figures such as Godfrey of Lorraine. They enabled Alexander to overcome the anti-pope Cadalus, Bishop of Parma ('Honorius II'), who for a while had controlled Rome.¹⁵ Hildebrand, unlike so many of the medieval popes, was not born into the nobility or warrior caste, but scientific tests of his bones have shown at least that he was sturdily built and used to riding a horse.¹⁶

Soon after becoming pope, Gregory VII issued direct orders to the papacy's mercenary forces, notably the Normans under Robert Guiscard. On 7 December 1074 he wrote to Henry IV, claiming that thousands of volunteers were calling upon him to combine the roles of 'military commander and pontiff' ('si me possunt pro duce ac pontifice habere') and lead in person an army to aid eastern Christians against the Seljuk Turks.¹⁷

Gregory's conflict with Henry IV was at first a war of words rather than of arms. It was partly legalistic, over investiture to higher Church appointments and the need for clerical reforms, but even more over incompatible temperaments and claims of superior authority. The conflict blew hot and cold; in 1075, until the autumn, Gregory seemed on the point of agreeing to crown Henry emperor, but the following year he was excommunicated. Nevertheless in January 1077 he presented himself at Canossa as a penitent. In 1080 Gregory excommunicated Henry IV for the second time, whereupon the pro-imperial bishops at the Synod of Brixen elected Guibert, Archbishop of Ravenna, as anti-pope. Then Gregory announced that 'with the cooler weather in September' he would mount a military expedition against Ravenna to evict Guibert. He also had in mind a campaign to punish Alfonso II of Castile for his misdeeds, threatening him not just metaphorically: 'We shall be forced to unsheathe over you the sword of St Peter.'¹⁸ While it would be hard to prove that Gregory VII ever wielded a material sword, and his frequent pronouncements invoking 'soldiers of Christ' or 'the war of Christ' may sometimes have been metaphorical rather than literal,¹⁹ it is easy to see how his enemies – those serving Henry IV or Guibert of Ravenna – could present his combative character as bellicose on an almost satanic scale.

'What Christian ever caused so many wars or killed so many men?' wrote Guy of Ferrara, who insisted that Hildebrand had had a passion for arms since boyhood, and later on led a private army. Guibert, who wrote a biographical tract denouncing Hildebrand, made similar allegations.²⁰ Such criticism carried on where the militant reformer and preacher Peter Damiani (1007–72) had left off; although in many respects Damiani's views on what was wrong with the Church were compatible with Hildebrand's, he had insisted that ecclesiastical warfare was unacceptable: Christ had ordered St Peter to put up his sword; 'Holy men should not kill heretics and heathen...never should one take up the sword for the faith.'²¹

Further justifications of military force initiated and directed by popes had to be devised. Gregory's adviser and vicar in Lombardy from 1081 to 1085, Anselm II, Bishop of Lucca, made a collection of canon law precedents at his request. In this compilation Anselm proposed that the Church could lawfully exert punitive justice or physical coercion; indeed, that such a proper use of force was even a form of charity. 'The wounds of a friend are better than the kisses of an enemy,' he declared, and – echoing St Augustine – 'It is better to love with severity than to beguile with mildness.'²² He invoked the Old Testament parallel, arguing that Moses did nothing cruel when at the Lord's command he slew certain men, perhaps alluding to the punitive slaughter authorised after the worship of the Golden Calf (Exodus XXXIII, 27–8) or to the earlier battle of Israel against the Amalekites, when the fortunes of war depended on the effort of Moses's keeping his arms in the air (the episode Charlemagne had quoted to Leo III). Anselm does not go so far as to recommend that popes and other clergy should personally inflict violence on erring Christians, but he allows that they could mastermind it; the rules might be even more relaxed in wars against non-Christians, including lapsed and excommunicated former members of the Catholic Church.

Few of Gregory VII's successors could equal that extraordinary pope's remorseless energy, but on their part there was no renouncing of coercion by force. Even Paschal II (pope 1099–1118), a sick and elderly monk, who submitted to the humiliation of imprisonment by the Emperor Henry V in 1111, spent much of his pontificate going from siege to siege in the region of Rome. In the year of his death he supervised the mounting of 'war machines' at Castel Sant'Angelo to overcome rebels occupying St Peter's.²³ Innocent II (1130–43) was engaged in war

with a rival elected soon after himself – possibly by a larger number of the cardinals – who took the name Anacletus and for a while even controlled Rome itself. Both of them found strong backers. Anacletus persuaded the German king Lothar to bring military force against his rival; Innocent obtained the support of Roger II, the Norman ruler of Sicily. In July 1139 Innocent definitely had the worst of it when an army led by himself was ambushed at Galluccio, near the river Garigliano between Rome and Naples. He was taken prisoner and had to concede to Roger investiture as king of Sicily, which Anacletus had previously bestowed on him. This was a considerable upgrading of the title ‘Apostolic Legate’, which had been conferred on Roger’s father and namesake in 1098 in recognition of the successful reconquest of Sicily from the Muslims. The grant of kingship was the culmination or reaffirmation of the policy intended to ensure a strong and loyal military defence for the papacy in the south. As a favoured relationship it had not worked altogether smoothly. One of its lowest points was Robert Guiscard’s delay in coming to the help of Gregory VII in 1084, when he delivered Rome from its long siege by Henry IV, but caused a bloodbath; another low point was the war in the 1130s mentioned above. Yet another papal defeat by Norman forces, in spite of the concession of kingship to Roger II, befell Adrian IV at Benevento in 1156.²⁴ In all these military conflicts it cannot be proved that Paschal II, Innocent II, Anacletus or Adrian IV engaged physically in fighting, but in each case they accompanied armies and appear to have directed – or misdirected – field operations.

A formidable challenge arose in the middle of the twelfth century on the part of the empire, the very authority that was supposedly ‘protecting’ the papacy. In the hands of Frederick I ‘Barbarossa’, of the Swabian Staufer or Staufen family – generally but incorrectly called Hohenstaufen – the empire or its lawyers advanced its own claims to government of cities and lands in northern Italy, including the city of Rome, despite local civic aspirations. The English cardinal Breakspear, elected as Adrian IV (pope 1154–59), duly crowned Frederick in 1155, but his safe arrival at St Peter’s had depended on his relative, Cardinal Octavian, securing it with armed force.²⁵ The imperial decrees issued at Roncaglia, near Piacenza, in 1158 made clear that Frederick had no greater respect for the judicial, fiscal and territorial claims of the papacy than he had for civic autonomy.²⁶ Adrian IV, under whose rule there

had been a certain advance in papal control of central Italian castles and towns, protested vehemently to the emperor.²⁷ In practice, however, in his three invasions of Italy Frederick was more concerned with Lombardy and its rapidly growing and *de facto* independent mercantile cities, above all Milan, which as punishment for its defiance he devastated in 1162. Without seeking direct military confrontation, the astute Sieneese jurist Cardinal Rolando Bandinelli, elected as Alexander III (pope 1159–81), gave financial and moral support to the Lombard cities. He had meanwhile to contend with a series of anti-popes elected by pro-imperial cardinals. After the Lombard League's famous victory against Frederick at Legnano in 1174 Alexander was able to play the role of mediator and peacemaker. Much of central Italy nevertheless was subjected in his time to imperial, not papal, jurisdiction and taxation, under the direction of men such as Christian of Mainz, whose administrative capital was Viterbo, and Conrad of Urslingen, who in 1177 became imperial Duke of Spoleto. In 1164 Frederick Barbarossa had even ordered Christian to move with an army to help install his anti-pope in Rome.²⁸ The reversal of this imperial heyday had to wait until after the deaths of Barbarossa (drowned on crusade in 1190) and his son Henry VI in 1197.

* * * * *

Since the end of the eleventh century, meanwhile, a vast extension of papally authorised warfare had developed, with the aim of aiding eastern Christians and capturing and holding Jerusalem and the Holy Land against Muslim forces. The military expeditions of the cross – crusades – instituted by Pope Urban II at Clermont in 1095, drew much of their appeal from the indulgence promising many privileges, including assurance of salvation to sworn-up participants. Recruitment was from the beginning mainly the business of the clergy, and often military operations were also under their control. Although Urban II did not himself accompany the First Crusade, he delegated authority to Adhémar, Bishop of Le Puy, reputedly the first person to make the vow at Clermont. Adhémar, as papal legate, showed rather more tactical skill and leadership than most of the lay warriors in the earlier stages of the expedition. At the siege of Nicaea he commanded the right flank of Raymond of St Gilles's army and supervised the undermining of one

of the towers; he was responsible for the diversion that led to the capture of Dorylaeum and played an important role in fighting off the Saracen siege of Antioch.²⁹ Adhémar's death at Antioch prevented him from taking part in the capture of Jerusalem, or being held at all responsible for its horrendous sacking.

The new crusading warfare in the east must have done much to extend within Catholic Christendom the language and justification of sanctified violence, in addition to wars in the cause of imposing universal papal authority in the west. The notion that the ecclesiastical ruler was obliged to defend the Church by force was clarified by the severe Cistercian Bernard of Clairvaux (1090–1153), a staunch supporter of Innocent II and inspirer of Eugenius III (pope from 1145 to 1153). St Bernard, Abbot of Clairvaux since 1115, liked the imagery of the sword. The pope, he declared, possessed two swords to suppress evil, one spiritual, the other physical or material. The first was only his to use, but the second he could delegate to a secular ruler to use at papal bidding. 'The [material] sword also is yours and is to be drawn from its sheath at your command, though not by your own hand,' he wrote, in his famous book of advice, *De Consideratione*, addressed to Eugenius.³⁰

Not even St Bernard, however, made entirely clear this subtle distinction between direct and vicarious use of force; only recently, in 1149, he had reproached Eugenius for using the sword, in the form of Sicilian troops and the papal militia – led rather improbably by a cardinal known as Guy the Maiden ('milicie prefecit cardinalem Guidonem cognomento Puellam') – to overcome the seditious Roman commune and regain control of the city.³¹ It was permissible, however, for the material sword to be wielded on behalf of the Pope by members of the new religious Orders of Knights of the Hospital of St John and Knights Templar; the latter's rule St Bernard supposedly had drawn up and caused to be accepted in 1128. Even if, in the case of the Hospitallers, the fighting brethren were distinct from the numerous priestly brethren in the order, it is clear that the whole order was associated with 'holy violence'.³²

While St Bernard's forceful teaching was based on spiritual inspiration, the compilers of canon law and commentaries upon it also dealt with the subject. The greatest of these, Gratian (d. by ca. 1179), a monk at Bologna, went to the heart of the matter in *Causa* 23, *Questio* 8 of his famous *Decretum* (ca. 1140). Gratian discussed at length the obligation

of ecclesiastical rulers to defend the Church; clerics, he reiterated from St Ambrose, should not bear arms, but they could exhort others to attack the enemy. He justified this by historical examples, and, while insisting there should be no shedding of blood by clerics, was somewhat equivocal about their role in military operations.³³ Other contributors to the debate included Huguccio (d. 1210), who was adamant that clergy could not take any active part in fighting, and the writer of an anonymous *Summa*, who was, however, prepared to allow some participation, for instance in self-defence.³⁴

Although for various reasons, including temporary weaknesses of the papal see, kings and other lay rulers took command of the Second and Third Crusades, popes generally came to prefer placing the management of 'holy wars' in the hands of senior clergy. In particular they favoured members of the College of Cardinals, those papal electors and advisers sometimes styled 'senators of the Church' or 'members of the Pope's body', whose formal powers had been growing since the mid-eleventh century.³⁵ The first example of a papal legate commissioned to raise and lead an army against heretics in a Christian land was Cardinal Henri de Marcy, who was sent against the Cathars of Languedoc in 1181; he succeeded in capturing the castle of Lavaur.³⁶ Only a few years later, after the loss of Jerusalem to Saladin in 1187, it was reported that all the cardinals had sworn to take the cross.³⁷ In fact none did so, and the management of the Third Crusade was assumed by the Emperor Frederick Barbarossa – persuaded into the job by the same Cardinal Henri de Marcy – together with Richard I of England and Philip II of France. But in August 1198, when planning began for a Fourth Crusade, that great administrator, Innocent III (pope 1198–1216), intended that it should be in the hands of four cardinals, two of whom, Cardinals Soffredo and Peter Capuano, should go ahead of the army to Palestine.³⁸ It need not concern us here that the original plan went wildly wrong, that Peter Capuano was snubbed after the management had passed to secular French and Burgundian barons and their Venetian creditors – leading to the famous diversions first to Zara and then to Constantinople (1202–4) – even if some collusion in these events by Innocent III himself has sometimes been suggested.³⁹

Maybe it was partly because of the Fourth Crusade and its outcome that Innocent III and his successor Honorius III (pope 1216–27) tried to ensure that the next papally authorised 'holy wars' would be

commanded by churchmen. This was demonstrated first in the campaign against the Cathar or Albigensian heresy in south-west France, which became a major extension of crusading warfare against enemies of the Church within Catholic Christendom. At first Innocent appointed various prelates as his special legates to try methods of persuasion, but the murder of one of them, Pierre de Castelnau (14 January 1208) – presumably by an agent of the Cathars’ protector, Raymond VI of Toulouse – made repression by force all the more inevitable. The main crusading army was entrusted by Innocent to Cardinal Milo, but the Abbot of Cîteaux, Arnaud Amaury, soon took over the command. In his report to the Pope, Arnaud Amaury described with gusto the taking of Béziers (22 July 1209): ‘Our men did not spare class, sex, or age; almost twenty thousand perished within an hour; and after this total slaughter of the enemy, the whole city was sacked and set on fire.’⁴⁰ Arnaud Amaury, explaining this as the effect of divine fury exerting revenge upon the heretics, may have exaggerated the numbers slain, and may have spilt no blood himself, but his report should disabuse one of any idea that clerical warriors were less bloodthirsty than laymen.

Similarly, Honorius arranged for the Fifth Crusade, which Innocent had been planning since 1215, to be launched in 1218 under the direction of two cardinals. Its aim was to regain the Holy Land by way of the Nile delta. Cardinal Robert of Courçon was spiritual director, but Cardinal Pelagius, a Spaniard, was in charge of military operations. Pelagius was too assured and forceful; his intransigence – acting against the advice of John of Brienne and other military laymen – wrecked the expedition. He rejected favourable peace terms offered by the sultan, which would have handed back Jerusalem, central Palestine and Galilee to Christian control, and although the successful taking of Damietta might seem to have vindicated his policy (Pelagius claimed it for direct rule by the papacy) little was done to rebuild and strengthen the city over the next year. In July 1221 the crusaders were surrounded, outnumbered and their camp flooded. Pelagius escaped, carrying with him food and medical supplies, and finally in August had to accept much less favourable terms than were previously offered. It is hardly surprising that Pelagius’s shortcomings provoked criticism. ‘When the clergy take on the function of leading knights to battle that is certainly against the law,’ commented the author of a polemical poem (ca. 1226).⁴¹ For a long

while most of the initiative in launching crusades passed back to lay rulers and commanders – not that they obtained much greater success.

The failure of successive crusading expeditions in the east, above all the humiliating capture of Louis IX of France (St Louis) and surrender of Damietta early in 1250, provoked criticism, even a suspicion that perhaps such wars – not to mention the use of crusading ideas to attack disobedient Christians – incurred divine disfavour. Worse was yet to come, with the return of Constantinople to Greek hands in 1261 and the fall in 1291 of the Palestinian port of Acre, the last remnant of the crusader kingdom established in the early twelfth century. A new generation of scholars reviewed the whole contentious question of coercive papal power and military violence. The most famous of them, the Dominican theologian Thomas Aquinas (ca. 1227–74), taught that the clergy could be supportive, but active participation was a violation of decorum, of what was appropriate to their office.⁴² A much more robust line was taken by the canon lawyer Henry of Susa (b. ca. 1200; d. ca. 1271), since 1261 Cardinal Bishop of Ostia (hence known as ‘Hostiensis’): in his *Summa Aurea* he defended unequivocally papal warfare against recalcitrant Christian rulers. Hostiensis had even had some military experience, as papal legate in the north Italian war against Ezzelino da Romano in 1259.⁴³ Others were called in 1270 to advise the new pope, Gregory X, who had been in Palestine when elected and was strongly motivated as the would-be revivalist of eastern crusading. Among these commentators upon the prospects and the morale of western Christendom was the Dominican Humbert of Romans, who set out to refute all the objections of the pacifists. He dealt with Christ’s injunction to St Peter to put up his sword by suggesting that Christ meant Peter only to refrain on that particular occasion.⁴⁴ Normally Peter had an obligation to defend himself as well as to defend the Lord, otherwise he would be conniving at both homicide and (by not defending himself) suicide. From this followed the strict obligation of Peter’s apostolic successors to defend the Church and themselves by force. Humbert had to acknowledge the traditional canonical ruling that the clergy should not shed blood, but he left the ethics of clerical warmongering ambiguous and flexible. ‘God approves of the sword,’ he insisted: it was the duty of prelates to concern themselves with Holy War, and of the Pope to take charge of a crusade; he cited the Old Testament to sanction priests encouraging warriors before battle (Deuteronomy, XX, 2–3).⁴⁵

Italy, however, became the main theatre of papally led Holy War from the thirteenth century onwards. For a long while popes did not hesitate to sanctify these territorial Italian wars as crusades, extending to their participants the attraction and privilege of indulgences; such campaigns, although directed against fellow Christians, were after all in theory also about defending the endangered Church.⁴⁶ While the recurrent issue of universal jurisdiction in Christendom had much to do with this, of enforcing the papacy's authority over all other rulers including that of the emperor, in practice much of the conflict related to the more pragmatic, less ideological policy of extending and imposing papal lordship in the central part of the peninsula, east as well as west of the Appenines. Apart from some episcopal estates in the region of Rome – the original 'Patrimony of St Peter' – these territorial claims rested on the successive deeds or supposed deeds of donation to St Peter mentioned earlier, to which had been added, but then disputed and denied to the papacy, the vast bequests of Matilda Countess of Tuscany (d.1115), including lands in the northern region of Emilia.⁴⁷ It was the lawyer pope, Innocent III, and his successor, Honorius III, who systematically proclaimed and tried to enforce the claims, not shrinking from coercion by means of war. Their policy, which was to last for centuries, appears to have started with Innocent III's campaign in the March of Ancona against Markward of Anweiler, henchman of the Emperor Henry VI, who was trying to retain control of that region.⁴⁸

Gregory IX (pope 1227–41) and Innocent IV (pope 1243–54) followed the example of Innocent III by expressing their belligerence verbally rather than by taking part themselves in the fighting against the Staufens. Henry VI's son, the charismatic Frederick II (1194–1250), was crowned emperor in Rome in 1220 but soon was in violent conflict with the papacy. It was provocation enough that he made his power base in Italy, having inherited the southern kingdom from the Norman line through his mother Constance, but his court became notorious for profanity and intellectual licence, tolerance of heresy and employment of Muslims, and the image was diffused of Frederick as a Messianic figure, the last emperor and lord of the world. Gregory IX excommunicated him, however, for disobedience, after he started on a crusade in September 1227 only to abandon it, and then – without making penance or seeking

absolution – set off again the following year, reached Jerusalem and crowned himself king. The success of this extraordinary adventure was brief and had depended on good relations with Muslim potentates, but it made the failure of so much papal effort to regain the Holy Land look ridiculous. During Frederick's absence in 1228–29 Gregory sent an army to invade the kingdom, which may have been 'the first army to fight under the banner of St Peter'.⁴⁹ An uneasy peace was made after Frederick's return, but in the later 1230s open war between pope and emperor broke out again, in Lombardy.

Innocent III's system of direct and centrally controlled papal government, meanwhile, with delegation of regional powers to rectors or legates, was being continued by his successors. These officials, usually cardinals, were often engaged in military campaigns or confrontations; indeed, in the early thirteenth century we enter the great age of the warrior-cardinal, which lasted for the next three hundred years. Unfortunately, as a rule it is very difficult to enter the mental world of these martial prelates, and their consciences, needless to say, are a closed book to us. They wrote few personal letters that survive, no diaries or memoirs. Only during and after the fifteenth century will it be slightly easier to gain some conception of personality. But in the papal wars of the thirteenth century they had many prototypes and predecessors. It was a time when war was becoming steadily more complicated and expensive; the papacy, like other powers, had to rely increasingly upon mercenary troops, often non-Italian, though even those raised within the papal lands by customary obligation might also expect to be paid.⁵⁰ The scale of the Church's investment in war and defence was enormous, and always increasing; it accounts for much of the trouble concerning taxation and fund-raising that the papacy was continuously to encounter.

Innocent IV, who withdrew from Rome first to his native Genoa and then to Lyon, was more politician and jurist than man of war, but in his own commentary on the Decretals, completed in about 1245, he laid down a strong ruling about the obligation to use force in self-defence, particularly in the cause of recuperating lost lands from the infidel,⁵¹ and although he did not appear on the battlefield himself, some of his cardinals did. Innocent summoned a General Council of the Church at Lyons in 1245 mainly to discuss the continuing conflict with Frederick II and depose him. It was allegedly at this council that broad-brimmed scarlet hats with tassels on strings were introduced for the cardinals,

to remind them to be ready to shed their blood, not so much as martyrs for the faith as for their role as defenders of the liberty of the Church.⁵² Soon after the Council of Lyons the emperor fulminated in a reform manifesto: 'Whence have our priests learned to bear arms against Christians?' in reply to scurrilous invectives against himself as the beast of the Apocalypse.⁵³ The tone of the invectives, attributed to Cardinal Ranier of Viterbo, was relentless: 'This Prince of Tyranny, this overthrower of the Church's faith and worship... like Lucifer... Destroy the name and fame of this Babylonian... Cast him forth!'⁵⁴

There seems to have been no lack of warrior-cardinals ready for appointment to the rectorships of different regions, sometimes to hold greatly extended authority for the duration of military campaigns. Cardinal Ranier of Viterbo, for example, who had organised the massacre of the imperial garrison at Viterbo in 1243, had then become the Pope's vicar in Tuscany and central Italy, as well as the master of invective against Frederick.⁵⁵ From 1249 Cardinal Pietro Capocci (ca. 1200–59), formerly a lay military commander who had led a force against the Romans in 1231, was made legate and rector throughout central Italy. Capocci was charged with directing the campaign against Frederick II and organising an invasion of the southern kingdom.⁵⁶ After initial victories in the March of Ancona, Capocci's campaigns went less well; he suffered heavy losses and had to fall back on defensive tactics and regrouping his army with troops drawn from civic militias. His nephew Giovanni retook Foligno, but Cardinal Capocci made little headway in provoking rebellion and carrying out an invasion of the southern kingdom after the death of Frederick II. He nevertheless earns a place of honour (if 'honour' be the appropriate word) among committed military cardinals.

Even more distinguished in that class was Cardinal Gregory of Montelungo, the legate of Lombardy since 1238, who masterminded the defeat of Frederick II's siege of Parma in 1247. Gregory was praised by Salimbene, the eccentric Franciscan chronicler of Parma, for his knowledge of war, both theoretical (he allegedly owned a book on the subject) and practical: 'He knew well how to order the line of battle... he knew when to lie quiet and when to overrun the enemy.' Cardinal Gregory succeeded in 1247 in capturing the emperor's new fortress of Victoria, and even appropriated Frederick's camp pavilions and 'special equipment pertaining to war' ('peculiariorum que pertinebant ad bellum').⁵⁷ In a letter to the Greek emperor in 1250 Frederick ranted:

These priests of ours wear cuirasses instead of liturgical vestments, bear lances instead of a pastoral staff and, for a eucharistic reed, darts and sharp arrows... Holy cardinals and prelates... one gives orders to the troops, another organizes the cavalry, another exhorts men to war, some leading the army and bearing the battle standards.⁵⁸

Two other militarised prelates were involved – but not very gloriously – in the continuing conflict between the papacy and the Staufen dynasty, represented since Frederick's death in 1250 by his son Manfred. The struggle over the southern kingdom continued. Innocent IV's nephew, Cardinal Guglielmo Fieschi, led a papal army against Manfred in September 1254, after the collapse of a precarious peace treaty.⁵⁹ Manfred's victory near Foggia, the papal army's dispersal for want of pay and the cardinal's own flight made this a rather inglorious instance of clerical military campaigning. Even more galling was the failed expedition in May 1255 of the Florentine Cardinal Ottaviano Ubaldini (a cardinal from 1244 to 1273), who had led an army of mercenaries, and others who had taken the cross, to attack Lucera, the Muslim stronghold and colony established by Frederick II in Apulia.⁶⁰ Ubaldini was forced to capitulate. Later he was immortalised by Dante as 'il Cardinale', characterised as an epicurean eternally entombed in the sixth circle of Hell (*Inferno*, X, 120).

A prelate more successful in war than Guglielmo Fieschi or Ottaviano Ubaldini was Filippo Fontana, Archbishop of Ravenna. Perhaps it is surprising that Fontana was never created a cardinal, but he distinguished himself as apostolic commissary sent in 1252–53 to pacify the Romagna and then to oppose the tyrannical Staufen protégé Ezzelino da Romano. In 1256 Fontana raised an army to recapture Padua from Ezzelino, calling up 'soldiers of Christ, St Peter and St Anthony'. He rode out 'in Christ's name with a silver cross preceding him and the banner of the cross raised above him'.⁶¹ According to Salimbene, two Franciscan lay brothers gave extraordinary service to Fontana in the attack on Padua; one of them, acting as standard-bearer and leader of the army, shouted battle cries from Old Testament sources, and the other, who had formerly been Ezzelino's military engineer, constructed a battering engine that in front spouted fire and behind was full of armed men.⁶²

In the 1260s papal authority finally destroyed the Staufen and their allies in Italy. The main strategy was the adoption by Urban IV (pope

1261–64) of Charles of Anjou, brother of Louis IX of France, as his vassal to rule over Naples and Sicily.⁶³ The hope was – as before – that the papacy would be able to depend on a grateful and loyal dynasty in the south, to protect and to fight for, the interests of St Peter. As ever, the danger was that the adopted dynasty might overreach itself.

Charles was crowned king in January 1266 by Urban’s Provençal successor, Gui Faucoi, Clement IV (pope 1264–68), and lost no time in hastening further south to win his usurped throne by force with huge financial support from the papacy. Cardinals Riccardo Anibaldi and Ottaviano Ubaldini accompanied the Angevin troops and granted absolution; the latter, as papal legate, continued with them as far as the border of the kingdom, but no cardinal appears to have been present at the bloody Battle of Benevento at the end of February, where Manfred was slain. The Bishop of Cosenza, Bartolomeo Pignatelli, was allegedly sent afterwards by the pope to have Manfred’s corpse exhumed from the (papal) soil of Benevento and deposited in a distant river. Charles wrote a coldly gleeful letter to Clement: ‘I inform your Holiness of this great victory in order that you may thank the Almighty, who has granted it and who fights for the cause of the Church by my arm.’ Some years later, the deplorable fate of the glamorous libertine Manfred was immortalised by Dante: ‘Fair-haired he was, beautiful and noble in appearance’ (‘biondo era e bello e di gentile aspetto’); Dante lodged him outside Purgatory to delay his entry (but only for thirty years), on account of his contumacious defiance of the Church (*Purgatorio*, III, lines 103–45).

The final end of the Staufen came two years later, with the downfall of Manfred’s young nephew Conradin, who had inspired surprisingly wide support in Italy, including the city of Rome. Cardinal Rodolfo of Albano preached the crusade in February 1268 against this tragically doomed adolescent, and against the Muslim military base at Lucera, which held out for another year,⁶⁴ but in August Charles of Anjou’s army overcame Conradin’s forces at the Battle of Tagliacozzo. After this victory, Charles of Anjou again wrote in triumph to the pope, to bring ‘the happy tidings which have so long been desired by all the faithful of the world... We have slain such numbers of the enemy that the defeat of Benevento appears insignificant.’ Conradin escaped from capture, only to be recaptured near Rome and surrendered by his partisans to the armed forces of Cardinal Giordano, cardinal legate of the Campagna. Taken back to the kingdom, the boy was publicly beheaded in Charles’s

presence at Naples on 29 October. Dante found only few words to express the ultimate outrage, listing it in the confession of Hugh Capet about the iniquity of his descendants (*Purgatorio*, XX line 66), but the nineteenth-century historian Ferdinand Gregorovius – a German Protestant and nationalist even more anti-papal, pro-imperial and anti-French than Dante – represented it as ‘the sentence of history that Germany should no longer rule over Italy...though’, he added more hopefully, ‘the struggle of the Staufen was successfully continued in other processes for the deliverance of mankind from the despotism of the priesthood’. Clement IV, who died only a month later, may have been rather shocked, but presumably he convinced himself that Charles of Anjou’s mission to destroy Satan’s brood had been for the good and defence of the Church.

Another favourable arrangement, made later in 1275–78, was Rudolph of Habsburg’s gift to the papacy of imperial rights in the Romagna; the papacy had for long claimed the Romagna in vain by virtue of the historic donations.⁶⁵ This development, however beneficial in appearance, like the adoption of the Angevin dynasty soon committed the papacy to even more warfare in Italy. In the first place, all prospects changed regarding the southern kingdom when a conspiracy and rebellion in Sicily against French domination broke out in Palermo on the eve of Easter 1282 (known as ‘the Sicilian Vespers’). Supported by the forces of Peter of Aragon, sent to claim for him the Staufen inheritance, this insurgency turned into a war that dragged on for the next twenty years.

The Pope at this time of humiliation for the papal–Angevin design was Martin IV (pope 1281–85), the French cardinal Simon de Brie (created in 1261). Martin was berated by the Franciscan Salimbene for being ‘a strong hunter before the Lord’, but if he was obstinate in pursuing war to make good the concession of Romagna, thereby causing many lives to be lost, he achieved little in the cause of Charles I of Anjou, only squandering most of the enormous funds put aside for a crusade in the east.⁶⁶ Cardinal Gerardo Bianchi of Parma was sent to Sicily in June 1283 to obtain unconditional surrender, but failed to do more than put down the rebellion in Naples.⁶⁷ In these closing years of the century, papal military campaigns were more successful in the north, where cardinal legates continued to head punitive military operations. Cardinal Bernardo of Provence reduced the city of Forlì to obedience,⁶⁸ while Napoleone Orsini, as papal legate in the March of Ancona, had a similar commission against Gubbio in 1300.⁶⁹ This is not to forget the outbreak of violence

south of Rome between the Gaetani and Colonna clans in 1297–99, a war over landed possessions provoked by the seizure of a consignment of money by the Colonna; it was essentially a family vendetta between Boniface VIII (Tommaso Gaetani) and Cardinals Jacobo and Pietro Colonna. The Pope tried to dignify his campaign by issuing crusading indulgences, and, although he did not participate himself in any military action, he specifically ordered the destruction of Palestrina and other inhabited castles, for which he was reviled by Dante (*Inferno*, XXVII, 102).⁷⁰ Having vanquished the Colonna, however, in the end Boniface – whose papacy expressed the zenith of the medieval papacy’s aspirations to universal authority – did not persist with violence. He gave way to Guillaume de Nogaret, the legal henchman of Philip IV, King of France, without a fight; his arrest at Anagni in September 1303 was a notable display of non-resistance. But it came at the end of two and a half centuries of extraordinary aggression and bellicosity on the part of St Peter’s successors and their principal agents in central Church government.

There is no simple explanation for all this bellicosity. In part, as we have seen, popes were driven by obligation and immediate danger to provide defence for the sacred places and associations of Rome, their seat of dignity and divine authority. But they also used the physical sword – not only delegating it to secular rulers and commanders but often retaining its administration under clerical, but seldom personal, control – for the wider purposes of defending Rome and the Church. From the late eleventh to the thirteenth century military force was even used in furtherance of the papal claim to universal authority. It was also used against Muslims and heretics. But its most habitual use was to defend or regain control of lands, titles and possessions in Italy over which the Church claimed legal rights. This was to continue and to increase during the next centuries, always at enormous financial cost, which may help to explain the papal loss of momentum over organising crusades in the east. The arrest of Boniface VIII by the agents of the King of France meanwhile seems a fitting end to this introductory chapter. For by 1300, just as the heroic age of the Crusades was past, the empire’s prestige and authority were much reduced. France remained for several centuries the most formidable secular power to not only dispute the authority of the pope over the Church, but also to determine the papacy’s status in Italy.