THE PEACE OF GOD

Geoffrey Koziol

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Contents

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Abbreviations

AASS	*Acta sanctorum quotquot toto orbe coluntur*. 68 vols. Antwerp: Société des Bollandistes, 1643–present. http://acta.chadwyck.com/.
Bessin	*Concilia Rotomagensis provinciae* … Edited by Guillaume Bessin. Rouen, 1717.
CJS	Chartes originales antérieures à 1121 conservées en France, Centre de Médiévistique Jean Schneider, Université de Lorraine (Nancy). Traitement électronique des manuscrits et des archives (TELMA). http://www.cn-telma.fr/originaux/index/.
Cluny	*Recueil des chartes de l'abbaye de Cluny*. Edited by Auguste Bernard and Alexandre Bruel. 6 vols. Paris, 1876–1903. Cartae Cluniacensis electronicae. http://www.uni-muenster.de/Fruehmittelalter/Projekte/Cluny/CCE/.
Constitucions	*Les Constitucions de Pau i Treva de Catalunya (segles XI–XIII)*. Edited by Gener Gonzalvo i Bou. Barcelona, 1994.
GEC	*Gesta episcoporum Cameracensium*. Edited by L. C. Bethmann. MGH SS 7:393–525.
HL	*Histoire générale de Languedoc*. Edited by C. Devic, J. Vaissète, et al. 16 vols. Toulouse: Édouard Privat, 1872–1904.

Mansi	*Sacrorum conciliorum nova amplissma collectio*. Edited by J. D. Mansi et al. 31 vols. Florence and Venice, 1759–98. http://www.documentacatholicaomnia.eu.
MGH	Monumenta Germania Historica. http://www.dmgh.de/.
	Capit.: *Capitularia regum Francorum*. Edited by A. Boretius and V. Krause. 2 vols. Hanover, 1883, 1897.
	Conc.: Concilia.
	Const.: Constitutiones et acta publica imperatorum et regum.
	Formulae: *Formulae Merowingici et Karolini Aevi*. Edited by K. Zeumer. Hanover, 1886.
	SS: Scriptores in folio.
	SRG: Scriptores rerum Germanicarum in usum scholarum separatim editi.
Newman	William Mendel Newman. *Catalogue des actes de Robert II, roi de France*. Paris: Sirey, 1937.
Orderic Vitalis	*The Ecclesiastical History of Orderic Vitalis*. Edited and translated by Marjorie Chibnall. 6 vols. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969–80.
Ordonnances	*Les Ordonnances des rois de France de la troisième race* ... Edited by E. de Laurière et al. 21 vols. and supplement. Paris, 1723–1849.
Rodulfus Glaber	Rodulfus Glaber. *Historiae libri quinque*. Edited and translated by John France. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989.
PL	Patrologiae cursus completus ... Series Latina. Edited by J.-P. Migne. 221 vols. Paris, 1844–1902. http://pld.chadwyck.com/.
RHF	*Recueil des historiens des Gaules et de la France*. Edited by M. Bouquet et al. 24 vols. Paris, 1869–80.
Saint-Maixent	*Chartes et documents pour servir à l'histoire de l'abbaye de Saint-Maixent*. Edited by Alfred Richard. Poitiers, 1886.

A Note on Sources

Given the number of Peace councils and decrees, it has not been possible to cite all the primary sources by which each is known. In any case, the citations are readily available. Goetz, "Kirchenschutz," gives complete references for the early ones. Hoffmann, *Gottesfriede*, both identifies the sources and provides considerable critical commentary. For the later Peace in southern France and Catalonia, see the citations in Bisson, "The Organized Peace," and Carraz, "Un *revival* de la paix?" The primary sources for the early German *Landfrieden* and *Reichsfrieden* are, for the most part, discussed in Wadle, *Landfrieden*.

A few Peace decrees have been translated into English in the appendices to *The Peace of God*, edited by Head and Landes, and in *Vengeance in Medieval Europe: A Reader*, edited by Daniel Lord Smail and Kelly Gibson (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009). A few independent translations can also be found online.

Map 1. Important place-names for Chapters 1 and 2.

Map 2. Important place-names for Chapter 3.

Introduction

When the Apostle Paul wrote that "the peace of God …
surpasses all understanding" (Phil. 4:7), he did not have
in mind the historical movement known as the "Peace of
God." But he might as well have, for few subjects in medi-
eval history have received so many contradictory inter-
pretations. Many have believed that it was a response to
a surge of violence among the aristocracy; just as many
deny there was any surge of violence at all. Some think it
was fundamentally a millenarian movement that marked
the first appearance of "the common people" on the polit-
ical stage; others think it was neither millenarian nor pop-
ular. It has been seen as a movement in which bishops
wrested responsibility for maintaining social order from
secular political leaders; as a movement used by secular
political leaders to reassert their responsibility for social
order; as a movement spearheaded by monks for the
reform of society and the church. It has been thought one
of the most transformative events of the Middle Ages. It
has been thought a sideshow.

   Given such disagreements, it is hard even to define
exactly what the Peace of God was, since any definition
requires one to take a stand on the above debates, at
least implicitly. So for the moment one must keep to a
very open definition. The Peace of God was a program

originating in the last years of the tenth century that protected certain specified categories of persons and places from certain kinds of actions. Broadly speaking, the places protected were churches and their environs; the persons protected were the unarmed. Speaking even more broadly, the actions prohibited were the kinds that historians have tended to classify as "violence" of the sort habitually perpetrated by a warrior aristocracy. The movement began in southern France (specifically, in Aquitaine), soon took root in Burgundy, and from there spread widely: to Provence, Catalonia, Languedoc, and Septimania; to Normandy, Flanders, and the royal domain. Ultimately it even entered Germany, where it soon evolved into a slightly different institution known as the "territorial peace" or *Landfriede*. As it spread, its stipulations became more precise and new limitations were established. The most important of the new limitations prohibited nearly all acts of violence during specified periods of time—this being known as the Truce of God. Of course, the devil is in the details and the details are complicated. For that reason, it may be helpful to state, at the outset, some of the arguments that will be presented.

First, the Peace of God did rely on some traditional structures and injunctions inherited from the ninth-century Carolingian reform. Yet it was also something truly new and different. The only way scholars have been able to minimize its novelty is by cherry-picking evidence, thereby greatly oversimplifying Carolingian discourses and practices of peace. In order to explain this argument, in order to understand exactly what in the Peace was new and what was old, it will be necessary to deal somewhat extensively with the antecedents of the movement. This essential background is presented in the first chapter.

Turning to the second chapter, on the Peace and Truce themselves, there probably was no great increase in "violence" in the late tenth and early eleventh centuries. There

was, however, an increasingly dense implantation of lord-ships. These lordships were not those of new castellans only. Bishops, cathedral chapters, and monasteries were also establishing more coherent lordships. As a result, there was more friction locally among those who had claims to lordship, creating the perception that violence was a greater problem than it had been. Also as a result, lords had a greater need to delimit their respective rights and powers where their powers bordered each other or were interspersed with each other. The Peace of God was one of the first and most fruitful means by which lords created the territorialization of local power that became a hallmark of the high Middle Ages.

As to why the Peace of God has been interpreted so differently by so many different historians, two reasons will be advanced. First, the movement changed as it entered different regions. The politics of the Auvergne, where the program first appeared, were not at all the same as those of Poitou, where it next appeared. When the movement was then adopted in Burgundy, Flanders, Normandy, and Catalonia, it came into regions whose politics were different yet again. Although a program with a very consistent set of stipulations, the Peace of God was adapted to many different political landscapes. Moreover, the sources that inform us about the specific instantiations of the Peace and Truce belong to a number of different genres. A conciliar decree, a chronicle, an episcopal *gesta*, a piece of hagiography, a charter, a circular letter, all had their own distinctive characteristics and concerns. As a result, each type of source reveals a different aspect of the Peace of God; none reveals it in its totality. In fact, the most seductively detailed sources may well be the most misleading of all.

Finally, the Peace of God did not end violence; it simply tried to establish measures to prevent it, while codifying when and where one could apply it if such measures failed.

Nevertheless, one can still maintain with some plausibility that the development of the Peace and Truce of God really was one of the most important events of the entire Middle Ages. For it was in articulating the program that secular and ecclesiastical leaders learned how to legislate in ways that overcame the limitations of what had passed for legislation under the Carolingians. And in implementing the program, they created the kinds of institutions that empowered local communities to govern themselves. This is the subject of the second and third chapters.