

*Slaying the Servants of the Lord: The Killing of Bishops in Medieval Germany, c.900–1300**

To say that medieval society was often violent is, of course, to state the blindingly obvious. Yet such a cliché conceals a more complex reality. Violence in the Middle Ages was a multi-faceted phenomenon. Both medieval law codes and social custom, as reported by contemporary chroniclers, distinguished between illegal and improper violence and a resort to force that might be necessary, and even praiseworthy—not just in self-defence, but to recover stolen property, to avenge injury, the death of kinsmen or grave affronts, or indeed sometimes to enforce the law and restore peace. In these latter circumstances, even killing was permissible—justifiable homicide as opposed to murder. To slay one's enemy in open conflict, especially if that conflict had been publicly announced in advance, was often deemed licit; killing in secret, or by deception or through treachery was not, and was condemned as murder, usually to be punished by death or outlawry.¹ The point was made expressly in a peace edict issued in the name of the German king Henry (VII) (then still a minor) in 1224, and subsequently repeated in the *Sachsenspiegel*: 'Who kills another in secret, which is called murder, shall be punished [by death] on the wheel'. Those who killed people with daggers, the weapon *par excellence* for secret assassination, would suffer the same fate.²

There were, in addition, constraints that operated to limit violence and its impact, and one of the most fundamental was that the clergy ought neither to take part in nor be victims of violence, a stance reinforced by the Peace of God movement that began in France in the later tenth century. The principle had, however, been stated long before then, and the protection of the clergy from violence was justified by the often-cited biblical injunction: 'Touch not my anointed, and do my prophets no harm'.³ And if clerics should be spared in feud or warfare,

* I am grateful to Drs Alan Murray and Levi Roach for their comments on previous drafts of this article. I should also record how much I have benefited from the work of the late Professor Timothy Reuter, despite some criticism in detail here. Tim had intended to write an article on this topic but did not live to do so.

1. For an excellent introduction, see W.C. Brown, *Violence in Medieval Europe* (Harlow, 2011), esp. pp. 50–52, 199–200, 239–40, for the contrast between homicide and murder.

2. *Constitutiones et Acta Publica Imperatorum et Regum (1198–1272)*, ed. Ludwig Weiland, Monumenta Germaniae Historica [hereafter MGH] (Hannover, 1896), pp. 398–401 (no. 284), at 400 (cc. 9–11).

3. Psalms 104:15 (Vulgate), 105:15 (AV); 1 Chronicles 16:22. See, for example, *Das Register Gregors VII.*, ed. E. Caspar, MGH, Epistolae Selectae (2 vols, Berlin, 1920–23), ii, p. 631 (Reg. IX. 37); *Correspondance de Yves de Chartres*, ed. J. Leclercq (2 vols, Paris, 1949), i, p. 200 (no. 49); *Ex Arnoldi Libris de S. Emmerano*, ed. Georg Waitz, MGH, Scriptores [hereafter SS], IV (Hannover, 1841), p. 559.

how much more so should this be the case for bishops, the leaders of the Church whose divinely sanctioned status had been validated by their consecration.⁴ Even an assault upon a bishop was considered reprehensible. When *circa* 900 King Zwentibold of East Francia (the later Germany) struck Archbishop Radbod of Trier over the head with his own pastoral staff a contemporary noted that this was the worst of his many crimes and ‘contrary to the honour due to a bishop’.⁵ Murder was far more wicked, and no clerical writer—and the great majority of our sources were clerical in origin—would consider the killing of a bishop (except perhaps in battle) other than murder, and certainly not in any sense justifiable. As Guibert of Nogent commented on Bishop Gaudri of Laon, who was killed in an uprising in that town in 1112, and of whom he disapproved, ‘sinner though he was, yet he was of Christ the Lord’.⁶ The penalties for those who disregarded such prohibitions were thus supposed to be severe. If secular punishment was lacking, as it usually was, at the very least the perpetrators should merit excommunication. The murderers of Archbishop Fulk of Rheims in 900 were cast out from the ranks of the faithful by the solemn anathema of no less than twelve bishops.⁷ The penances required from the sinners who committed such crimes were, at least in theory, long and arduous. A German synod in 916 decreed that:

Whoever through treachery lays his hand on Christ the Lord, namely on a bishop, his father and pastor, since he is committing sacrilege, and he who destroys and burns a church of God, since this is sacrilege, or he who shall have killed a monk or priest, or who is a perjurer and plots the death of his lord the king, or shall swear [an oath] through greed, or commits parricide—it is pleasing to this holy synod that he should do penance in one place, that is in a monastery, all the days of his life, or do strict penance for twelve years, according to the canons, three years on bread, salt and water, and he should abstain from flesh and wine all the days of his life.⁸

4. The best general treatment of the topic discussed here is by R. Kaiser, ‘“Mord im Dom”: Von der Vertreibung zur Ermordung des Bischofs im frühen und hohen Mittelalter’, *Zeitschrift der Savigny-Stiftung für Rechtsgeschichte. Kanonistische Abteilung*, lxxix (1993), pp. 95–134. For a detailed, if rather breathless, survey, see also B. Schütte, ‘Gewalt gegen Bischöfe im frühen und hohen Mittelalter’, *Historisches Jahrbuch*, cxliii (2003), pp. 27–63.

5. *Annales Fuldenses sive Annales Regni Francorum Orientalis*, ed. Friedrich Kurze, MGH, *Scriptores Rerum Germanicarum* [hereafter SS rer. Germ.], VII (Hannover, 1891), p. 134 (tr. T. Reuter, *The Annals of Fulda* [Manchester, 1992], p. 140).

6. ‘Quamvis peccator, Christus tamen domini’: *Guibert de Nogent. Histoire de sa vie*, ed. G. Bourgin (Paris, 1907), p. 167.

7. *Die Konzilien der Karolingischen Teilreiche, 875–911*, ed. W. Hartmann and G. Schnitz, MGH, *Concilia*, V (Wiesbaden, 2014), pp. 457–8.

8. ‘Quisquis per dolum mittet manum suam in christum domini, episcopum videlicet, patrem et pastorem suum, quia sacrilegium committit, et qui ecclesiam dei devastat et incendit, quia et hoc sacrilegium est, vel qui monachum vel presbiterum occiderit, et qui periurat et in interitum domini sui regis intendit, vel per cupiditatem iuraverit, vel patricidium committit, placuit sanctae synodo, ut in uno loco, id est monasterium, peniteat omnibus diebus vitae suae, vel XII annos districtae peniteat, secundum canones, tres annos in pane, sale et aqua, a carne vero et vino omnibus diebus vitae suae absteineat’: *Die Konzilien Deutschlands und Reichsitalien, 916–1001*, ed. E.-D. Hehl, MGH, *Concilia*, VI (2 vols, Hannover, 1987–2007), i, p. 31.

Those who inflicted violence upon or even killed bishops, or indeed other clerics in major orders, were thus deemed to be the equivalent of those who murdered rulers or their own parents, therefore the most shocking of crimes.

Such canonical precepts were of course promulgated by churchmen for their own protection, and represented an ideal that was not necessarily upheld in practice—nor indeed was it unusual for Church councils simply to repeat previous decrees verbatim.⁹ What, if any, effect they might have had on the behaviour of the lay audience to whom they would, in theory, apply we cannot securely know, although one might doubt whether many lay aristocrats would have willingly submitted to very harsh penances. There are indications, however, that the Church's view had at least some impact. When a Swabian nobleman proposed to blind or otherwise mutilate Bishop Salomon of Konstanz, whom he had taken prisoner *circa* 914, his knights refused, saying that this would be an attack on Christ.¹⁰ The legislative pronouncements of Duke Bretislav of Bohemia (d. 1055) followed canonical models in equating those who murdered priests with parricides and fratricides.¹¹ When Bishop Walcher of Durham was killed during a local blood feud in 1080 this was, according to the historian of the see, 'a crime abominable to everyone'.¹² And, at least with regard to bishops, rulers or members of the nobility might sometimes have qualms about resorting to violence, however tempted they might have been to indulge their passions. King Henry IV of Germany, we are told, and this by a hostile commentator, especially hated Bishop Burchard of Halberstadt, whom he considered to be the ringleader of the rebellion against him in Saxony, and would have liked to put him horribly to death, but was restrained by reverence for his episcopal office.¹³ And soon after the accession of Henry's great-grandson Frederick Barbarossa in 1152, there was a dispute at his court between Count Thierry of Flanders and the bishop of Cambrai over which of them had the right of comital jurisdiction over the city of Cambrai. The angry count told the prelate that had the latter not been ordained by God he would have taken the head from his shoulders. But he restrained himself, and the king managed to patch up a peace between the two.¹⁴

9. S. Hamilton, *The Practice of Penance, 900–1050* (Woodbridge, 2001), pp. 56–8, 60, discussing this 916 council.

10. Ekkehard IV. *St. Gallen Klostersgeschichte*, ed. H.F. Haefele (Darmstadt, 1980), p. 46.

11. Cosmas of Prague, *Chronica Boemorum*, ed. B. Bretholz and W. Weinberger, MGH, SS rer. Germ., new ser., II (Berlin, 1923), p. 87 (bk II, ch. IV) (tr. L. Wolverson, *The Chronicle of the Czechs. Cosmas of Prague* [Washington DC, 2009], p. 116).

12. *Symeon of Durham. Libellus de Exordio atque Procursu istius hoc est Dunhelmensis*, ed. and tr. D. Rollason (Oxford, 2000), pp. 218–19.

13. Lampert of Hersfeld, *Opera*, ed. Oswald Holder-Egger, MGH, SS rer. Germ., XXXVIII (Hannover, 1894), p. 265 (tr. I.S. Robinson, *The Annals of Lampert of Hersfeld* [Manchester, 2015], p. 320).

14. Lambert of Watrellos, *Annales Cameracenses*, ed. Georg Heinrich Pertz, MGH, SS, XXVI (Hannover, 1859), p. 524, discussed by T. Reuter, 'The Medieval German *Sonderweg*? The Empire

This would suggest, therefore, that violence against, or the murder of, bishops was rare, and that when it did occur it was regarded with revulsion. The outcry that followed the slaying of Thomas Becket might seem to exemplify this. Yet while Becket's death was greeted with general condemnation, interestingly this was not, at least overtly, because he was a prelate, and therefore ought to have been inviolate, but rather due to the perception that he was a defender of the Church's liberties, and also because of the abominable circumstances of the murder, in the archbishop's own cathedral while he was in full pontifical dress and about to attend Vespers. Those who sought retribution for his death were certainly not moderate in how they depicted it; Archbishop William of Sens at one point compared the murder to Christ's Passion, but, following St Augustine, it was the cause rather than the consecrated status of the victim that made him a martyr. 'Revenge, O Lord, the blood of your servant and martyr the archbishop of Canterbury, who has been killed, or rather crucified, for the freedom of the Church'.¹⁵

The case of Thomas Becket was, however, unusual, not just because of the circumstances that led to his death, but also because of its rarity. It had been ninety years since a bishop (Walcher of Durham) had died by violence in the kingdom of England; and more than a hundred and fifty years elapsed after Becket's death before another bishop was to perish violently—Edward II's unpopular treasurer Walter Stapledon, bishop of Exeter, who died at the hands of the London mob in October 1326. The killing of bishops was similarly unusual in northern France, that is, in those parts of the kingdom where royal authority or that of the provincial rulers was generally respected. During the eleventh and twelfth centuries only one bishop died by violence in the three metropolitan provinces of Rouen, Sens and Tours, and that was in Brittany, still a marginal and relatively lawless region. Admittedly, the situation was rather different elsewhere, and between 990 and 1220 nine other French bishops died by violence, but no less than seven of these were in the south, where the king's authority was weak, local authority equally ineffectual in many areas, law and order at a premium, and, during the later twelfth century, heresy was also making rapid advances. The other two instances both occurred in the metropolitan province of Rheims, in the east of the kingdom, another area of divided authority not as yet fully under royal control.¹⁶ The case of Gaudri of Laon, shocking though it was, was therefore decidedly rare.

and its Rulers in the High Middle Ages', in T. Reuter, *Medieval Politics and Modern Mentalities*, ed. J.L. Nelson (Cambridge, 2006), pp. 388–412, at 391.

15. *Materials for the History of Thomas Becket, Archbishop of Canterbury*, ed. J.C. Robertson and J.C. Sheppard, Rolls Series, lxxvii (7 vols, 1875–83), vii, pp. 429–33 (no. 735), at 431, and 740–743 (no. 740), quotation from p. 741, also by William of Sens. And as early as May 1171 Alexander III described Becket as a martyr who rested among the saints in heaven: *ibid.*, pp. 483–5 (no. 755), at 484. Cf. Kaiser, 'Mord im Dom', pp. 96–7.

16. M. Sora, 'Les évêques assassinés dans le royaume de France (xi–xii siècles)', in N. Fryde and D. Reitz, eds, *Bischofsmord im Mittelalter/Murder of Bishops* (Göttingen, 2003), pp. 97–120,

There was, however, one kingdom in the medieval Christian west where violence towards bishops was far from unusual, and, while hardly an everyday occurrence, still happened with distressing frequency, despite the occasional qualms that may have been expressed. In the four centuries between 900 and 1300 around thirty bishops died by violence in the kingdom of Germany—and several other cases are possible, but not securely attested in contemporary sources; this in a kingdom with some forty-five bishoprics, as opposed to seventy-five in France.¹⁷ Furthermore this was but the tip of the iceberg, for there were also a significant number of failed assassination attempts, imprisonment or other forms of violence directed against bishops, and other senior churchmen as well. It would seem, therefore, that not everyone shared the qualms about anti-episcopal violence that have been mentioned above. Why there was such a high level of violence directed against those who should have been protected by their office is the crux of this essay.

Timothy Reuter suggested that anti-episcopal violence was triggered by the crisis of Henry IV's reign and the Investiture Contest and that before 1070 this was largely absent from Germany, not least because the rulers before Henry IV steadfastly upheld and protected their bishops.¹⁸ The quarrel between Gregory VII and his successors and the German monarch, and the concurrent rebellions against the latter's rule, undoubtedly destabilised the German Church and led to bitter disputes within individual sees—there were, at this period, schisms in half the forty-five episcopal sees in the *Reich*—often accompanied by prolonged fighting, and this led directly to the deaths of at least two German bishops, and probably of three more.¹⁹ There was undoubtedly an upsurge of violence directed against bishops at this period. But the crisis of the 1070s certainly did not initiate such violence, and several other bishops were killed during the late eleventh and early twelfth centuries in circumstances that appear not to have been

especially 97–100. Sora also includes the murder of Robert of Cambrai in 1174, but this see was part of the empire, not of the kingdom of France. The three cases in the north were Lambert of Thérouanne (1083), Gaudri of Laon (1112) and Hamon of St Pol de Léon (1171).

17. One should remember when reading this article that the medieval kingdom was considerably larger than modern Germany, including the Low Countries, Switzerland, Alsace and Lorraine, and, as a subject kingdom, Bohemia. Some of the examples discussed below have been taken from these regions.

18. T. Reuter, 'Peace-Breaking, Feud, Rebellion and Resistance: Violence and Peace in the Politics of the Salian Era', in *Medieval Politics*, pp. 355–87, at 367–9.

19. H. Zielinski, *Der Reichsepiskopat in spätottonischer und salischer Zeit (1002–1125)* (Wiesbaden, 1984), pp. 181–7, 296–8 (maps); Kaiser, 'Mord im Dom', pp. 104–8. Those whose deaths were directly attributable to the conflict were Archbishop Werner of Magdeburg (1078) and Bishop Burchard of Lausanne (1088); the probable cases are those of Archbishop Udo of Trier (1078) and Bishops Burchard II of Halberstadt (1088) and Volkmar of Minden (1096). For Volkmar, see Gerold Meyer von Knonau, *Jahrbücher des deutschen Reich unter Heinrich IV. und Heinrich V.* (7 vols, Leipzig, 1890–1909), v, pp. 10, 59, who reckoned murder probable but not certain. The other cases will be discussed below.

connected with the quarrel between imperial and papal supporters, or ruler and rebels.

Reuter stated bluntly that, 'under the Ottonians and early Salians, not a single bishop of the *regnum Teutonicum* met with a violent end within the territorial boundaries of the Reich'.²⁰ Yet there *were* instances during the tenth century and early eleventh centuries, albeit not as many as occurred later. Bishop Olbert of Straßburg was murdered in August 913, possibly in an uprising in that city.²¹ Bishop Dodilo of Brandenburg was 'strangled by his own people' in 980, and his grave subsequently desecrated during the Slav uprising of 983.²² And in January 1019 Bishop Henry of Lausanne 'finished his life as a martyr', although modern scholars will surely sympathise with Cono, the thirteenth-century historian of the see, who quoted the inscription on his tomb proclaiming his martyrdom, but then complained that 'I have been unable to find out either from written documents or by report from whence he was derived, nor who they were who killed him, nor for what reason, nor about any punishment for his death'.²³

The episcopal body count for this earlier period may have been small, but to the list above we should add several other German bishops who suffered savage mutilation, which was intended to disqualify them from holding ecclesiastical office: notably Bishops Einhard of Speyer, blinded in 913, and Benno of Metz, blinded and castrated by his local enemies in 927;²⁴ and Archbishop Herold of Salzburg, who was blinded, and Patriarch Engelfried of Aquileia, castrated, both on the orders of Otto I's younger brother Duke Henry of Bavaria (probably in 954/5 as a punishment for rebellion).²⁵ During the same rebellion Archbishop Frederick of Mainz abandoned his see and retired to become a hermit, apparently through fear of the king.²⁶ And in or about 1013, the *milites* of Margrave Gunzelin of Meissen sought to murder Bishop Arnulf of Halberstadt to punish him for an alleged insult to their lord. The

20. Reuter, 'Peace-Breaking, Feud, Rebellion and Resistance', p. 369.

21. Regino of Prüm, *Chronicon cum continuatio Treverensi*, ed. Friedrich Kurze, MGH, SS rer. Germ., L (Hannover, 1890), p. 155 (tr. S. Maclean, *History and Politics in Late-Carolingian and Ottonian Europe: The Chronicle of Regino of Prüm and Adalbert of Magdeburg* [Manchester, 2009], p. 234); *Annales Sangallenses maiores*, ed. Georg Heinrich Pertz, MGH, SS, I (Hannover, 1826), p. 77; Kaiser, 'Mord im Dom', pp. 102–3.

22. Thietmar of Merseburg, *Chronicon*, ed. R. Holtzmann, MGH, SS rer. Germ., new ser., IX (Berlin, 1935), pp. 118–19 (III. 17) (tr. D.A. Warner, *Ottonian Germany: The Chronicon of Thietmar of Merseburg* [Manchester, 2001], p. 141).

23. 'Nec in scriptis potui invenire, nec per famam, unde fuit oriundus, vel qui fuerunt qui cum occiderunt, vel quare, nec vindictam de eius morte': Cono, *Gesta episcoporum Lausannensium*, ed. Georg Waitz, MGH, SS, XXIV (Hannover, 1879), p. 797.

24. Regino of Prüm, *Chronicon*, ed. Kurze, p. 155 (tr. Maclean, p. 233); *Ex miraculis S. Glodesindis*, ed. Georg Heinrich Pertz, MGH, SS, IV (Hannover, 1841), p. 237, and *Vita Iohannis Abbatis Goziensis*, *ibid.*, p. 348 (ch. 4); *Les Annales de Flodoard*, ed. P. Lauer (Paris, 1905), p. 43.

25. Thietmar, *Chronicon*, ed. Holtzmann, p. 88 (II. 40) (tr. Warner, p. 121).

26. Widukind, *Rerum Gestarum Saxonicarum*, ed. P. Hirsch and H.-E. Lohmann, MGH, SS rer. Germ., LX (Hannover, 1935), p. 117 (III. 27) (tr. B.S. Bachrach and D.S. Bachrach, *Widukind of Corvey. Deeds of the Saxons* [Washington DC, 2014], pp. 114–15).

bishop was forced to hide to escape them, while his followers lied that he had already left the scene.²⁷ No doubt these unfortunate prelates would have been surprised to learn that they were living in a golden age of episcopal safety under royal auspices, although, in the case of the bishop of Halberstadt, Henry II was indeed very annoyed and insisted on the punishment of the miscreants and the bishop being compensated by a substantial fine. The most one can say about such cruel punishments as those imposed upon the other prelates is that they may have been inflicted as an allegedly milder alternative to execution, although one doubts that this came as much consolation to the victims.

Why then were German bishops so frequently murdered or threatened with murder? In a few cases, as with Bishop Henry of Lausanne, we lack information, beyond the mere fact of the bishop's violent death.²⁸ Occasionally, where we are better informed, it appears that such murders were what we might call random crimes, sometimes opportunist, which reflected the potential of medieval society for violence, but are hard to categorise as other than 'one-off' events; although in a few cases, if the relevant sources were less sketchy, other reasons for the murder might possibly be discernible. Thus Bishop John of Mecklenburg was taken prisoner during the great Slav uprising of 1066 and subsequently murdered in captivity, allegedly sacrificed to one of the pagan gods.²⁹ Bishop Conrad of Utrecht was stabbed to death in 1099 by a Frisian trader whose property he had ordered to be confiscated,³⁰ while Dietrich, bishop of Zeitz, was murdered in 1123 by a dissident lay brother of the monastery that he had founded at Bosau in Holstein, who resented being punished for his faults.³¹ Both of these killings would seem to have been responses to affronts, although not ones that contemporary opinion would have regarded as being justified, especially from social inferiors. Meanwhile Lambert, bishop-elect of Brandenburg, was killed by robbers in 1138,

27. Thietmar, *Chronicon*, ed. Holtzmann, pp. 388–91 (VI. 96–8) (tr. Warner, pp. 301–2).

28. Cf. Bishop Arnold of Merseburg, whose alleged murder in June 1126 was widely reported, but with conflicting reports as to the circumstances: *Chronica episcoporum ecclesiae Merseburgensis*, ed. Roger Wilmans, MGH, SS, X (Hannover, 1852), p. 188, whose author noted that he had received various information about the bishop's death in what he suggested was a robbery, but he believed that it was a punishment rather than something deserved (*piaculum quam meritum*); brief mentions without detail in *Die Reichschronik des Annalista Saxo*, ed. K. Naß, MGH, SS, XXXVI (Hannover, 2006), p. 587, and *Annales Rosenveldenses, a. 1057–1130*, ed. Georg Heinrich Pertz, MGH, SS, XVI (Hannover, 1859), p. 104. The thirteenth-century Lauterberg chronicle suggested that he was killed during Lothar III's expedition against Bohemia in that year: *Priester Konrad. Chronik des Lauterbergs (Petersberg bei Halle/S.)*, ed. K. Naß, MGH, SS rer. Germ., LXXXIII (Wiesbaden, 2020), pp. 86–7.

29. Adam of Bremen, *Gesta Hammaburgensis ecclesiae pontificum*, ed. B. Schmeidler, MGH, SS rer. Germ., II (Hannover, 1917), pp. 193–4 (III. 51) (tr. F.J. Tschan, *History of the Archbishops of Hamburg-Bremen. Adam of Bremen* [New York, 1959], p. 157).

30. *Annales Magdeburgenses, a. 1–1188*, ed. Georg Heinrich Pertz, MGH, SS, XVI, p. 180; *Annalista Saxo*, ed. Naß, p. 497.

31. *Frutolfs und Ekkehard's Chroniken und die anonyme Kaiserchronik*, ed. F.-J. Schmale and I. Schmale Ott (Darmstadt, 1972), p. 364 (tr. T.J.H. McCarthy, *Chronicles of the Investiture Contest. Frutolf of Michelsberg and his Continuators* [Manchester, 2014], p. 279), copied by *Annalista Saxo*, ed. Naß, p. 576.

possibly on his way back to his see from Rome.³² More problematic, in a different sense, are accusations of poison. If true, such killings were premeditated, and strictly speaking, therefore, hardly random, but they were secret and thus difficult to prove, and may have been inferred from deaths caused by gastric illnesses or fever. Poison was certainly suspected in the case of Thietmar, bishop-elect of Halberstadt, in 1100, although no reason for this was given.³³ By contrast, a very definite accusation was made that Frederick of Namur, bishop of Liège, was poisoned in 1121, as we shall see below. Nor indeed were bishops the only prominent clerics to suffer from apparently random acts of violence. To give only a few examples, in 1070 an aristocratic cleric called Aribo, brother of the margraves of Meissen, was killed by his own serfs—Lampert of Hersfeld, aristocratic apologist as he was, hinted that he had brought this upon himself by his unpleasant nature; in 1100 the founding abbot of the monastery of St George at Isny in southern Swabia was murdered by one of his own monks, and in 1199 the dean of Bremen was stabbed to death by a smith at Dikhuisen in Frisia.³⁴

Yet random violence alone cannot explain why so many German bishops died by violence during the central Middle Ages. It is indeed possible to create a taxonomy of episcopal murder, which helps to explain why the phenomenon was so widespread. One can advance no less than five main reasons for the violent deaths of bishops, although the categories suggested below are not necessarily mutually exclusive.

First, there were disputed episcopal elections. Such instances were, of course, hardly confined to Germany, but whereas in other kingdoms these precipitated frequently long-running, legal disputes, in the *Reich* they often led to violence. This was particularly the case when outside authority, whether this was the monarch or someone else, sought to impose an external candidate in defiance of strongly entrenched local interests. It was just such an attempt which led to the blinding of Benno of Metz in 927. He was an outsider, a canon of Straßburg, appointed to the see by King Henry I who was seeking to consolidate his recently acquired control over Lotharingia. But in doing so, the king offended a powerful local comital family, whose partisans were almost certainly responsible for the attack on the unfortunate Benno. After his removal, his successor was the leader of this family, Adalbero, who held the see for more than thirty years from 929 onwards.³⁵ Similarly, in 1066

32. *Annales Magdeburgenses*, ed. Pertz, p. 186; *Annalista Saxo*, ed. Naß, p. 611.

33. *Gesta Episcoporum Halberstadensium*, ed. Ludwig Weiland, MGH, SS, XXIII (Hannover, 1874), p. 101; *Annalista Saxo*, ed. Naß, p. 500.

34. Lampert of Hersfeld, *Opera*, ed. Holder-Egger, pp. 117–18 (tr. Robinson, p. 134); *Die Chroniken Bertholds von Reichenau und Bernolds von Konstanz*, ed. I.S. Robinson, MGH, SS rer. Germ., new ser., XIV (Hannover, 2003), p. 539 (tr. I.S. Robinson, *Eleventh-Century Germany. The Swabian Chronicles* [Manchester, 2008], p. 336); *Annales Stadenses*, ed. Johann Martin Lappenberg, MGH, SS, XVI, p. 353.

35. J. Nightingale, *Monasteries and Patrons in the Gorze Reform: Lotharingia, c.850–1000* (Oxford, 2001), pp. 72–4.

Archbishop Anno of Cologne, who had recently taken over control once again at the royal court of the teenage Henry IV, attempted to impose his nephew, Conrad of Pfullendorf, as archbishop of Trier, in the teeth of bitter opposition from the clergy and people of the city. Within two months of his installation Conrad was murdered, the ringleader of the conspiracy being the local burgrave.³⁶ The election of Frederick of Namur to the see of Liège in 1119 was hotly disputed, and he was (probably) murdered two years later. The author of his *vita* alleged that he was given a poisoned drink by his butler, who had been suborned to do this by his disappointed rival for the bishopric, although the symptoms described there might also suggest accidental death through ergotism.³⁷ Archbishop Norbert of Magdeburg faced a serious, and potentially life-threatening, insurrection in 1129. Norbert, the founder of the Praemonstratensian Order, was an outsider, a native of Xanten in the Rhineland, who had been appointed to the see by King Lothar with the advice of a papal legate after the cathedral chapter had failed to agree on a suitable candidate; and his attempts to introduce reforms, including trying to crack down on clerical marriage and replacing secular canons by Praemonstratensians, had not been well-received locally.³⁸ This case will be discussed further below.

One of the most notorious episcopal murders occurred as a result of the disputed election at Liège in 1191, with rival candidates supported by the Duke of Brabant and Count of Hainault. (The duke's candidate was his brother, Albert, archdeacon of Louvain.) Emperor Henry VI, to whom both candidates initially appealed, disregarded the election and imposed a third candidate, the brother of one of his closest associates, but Albert then went to Rome and appealed to Pope Celestine, who confirmed his appointment. He was subsequently, on papal instructions, consecrated by the Archbishop of Rheims in September 1192. Two months later Albert was murdered by three German knights who had

36. Lampert of Hersfeld, *Opera*, ed. Holder-Egger, pp. 102–3 (tr. Robinson, pp. 112–13); *Chroniken Bertholds von Reichenau und Bernolds*, ed. Robinson, p. 201 (tr. Robinson, p. 119); *Gesta Treverorum, continuatio a. 1015–1132*, ed. Georg Waitz, MGH, SS, VIII (Hannover, 1848), p. 182 (c. 9); Theoderic, *Vita et passio Conradi archiepiscopi*, *ibid.*, pp. 214–19. Conrad was one of several relatives whose appointment Anno secured to German sees: Zielinski, *Der Reichsepiskopat in spätottonischer und salischer Zeit*, pp. 24, 70.

37. *Vita Friderici episcopi Leodiensis*, ed. Wilhelm Wattenbach, MGH, SS, XII (Hannover, 1856), pp. 505–6 (cc. 7–8). By contrast, the *Annales S. Iacobi Leodiensis*, ed. George Heinrich Pertz, MGH, SS, XVI, p. 640, recorded his death and miracles, but not that he was murdered. See J.-L. Kupper, 'La double mort de l'évêque de Liège Frédéric de Namur (†1121)', in Fryde and Reitz, eds, *Bischofsmord im Mittelalter*, pp. 159–70, at 166–7, and J.-L. Kupper, *Liège et l'Église impériale, XIe–XIIe siècles* (Paris, 1981), pp. 145–54, for the dispute itself. This bishop should not be confused with an earlier Bishop Frederick of Utrecht, who had allegedly been murdered at the instigation of Empress Judith, wife of Louis the Pious, c.834, and whose *Passio* had been written early in the eleventh century.

38. For his election, see *Vita Norberti Archiepiscopi Magdeburgensis*, ed. Roger Wilmans, MGH, SS, XII, pp. 693–4 (c. 18). The *Vita* was written c.1160, although Norbert was not canonised until 1582. For Norbert as archbishop, D. Claude, *Geschichte des Erzbistums Magdeburg bis ins 12. Jahrhundert* (2 vols, Cologne, 1972–5), ii, pp. 8–14.

gained his confidence by claiming to be, like him, political exiles from their native land. What, however, made this case notorious was not just that it was a brutal and deliberate assassination, but that Henry VI himself was widely suspected of having sent the hit squad who murdered the archbishop. The emperor publicly denied this—as Henry II with Archbishop Becket—but it was notable that the murderers, unlike those of Becket, were neither disowned nor punished.³⁹

Almost as infamous was the murder of Bishop Rainald of Toul in 1217, at the behest of his predecessor Matthew, who had been deposed from the see some years earlier by a papal legate, Cardinal Ugolino of Ostia (the future Pope Gregory IX). It is possible that a family feud underlay this murder, since Rainald was related to the counts of Bar while his murderer belonged to the family of the dukes of Upper Lotharingia, but there seems also to have been a lengthy schism in the church of Toul.⁴⁰ Thereafter, while episcopal appointments might continue to be controversial, they did not lead to the murder of candidates or incumbents, although disputed elections could still engender considerable violence. Thus at Trier in 1242 a disgruntled candidate not only appealed to King Conrad IV, who duly granted him the *regalia*, but stirred up the townspeople to sack the houses of the canons who had opposed him and have the archdeacon, a respectable elderly man, paraded through the streets in disgrace to the execration of the populace.⁴¹

The potentially violent and unstable loyalties of townsmen was indeed another element threatening the well-being of German bishops. Two prominent prelates were murdered, and a number of others were at grave risk of their lives in insurrections by the inhabitants of their episcopal cities or other towns. Such disorders were often caused by disputes between the bishop's household, and more particularly his military following, and the citizens. Hence Burchard II of Halberstadt was killed in April 1088 after rioting broke out between his knights and the inhabitants of Goslar. The most detailed account of what took place did also suggest that the latter had been encouraged by the bishop's enemy, Margrave Ekkehard II of Meissen, who after many years in dispute with

39. R.H. Schmandt, 'The Election and Assassination of Albert of Louvain, Bishop of Liège, 1191–2', *Speculum*, xlii (1967), pp. 639–60. For the election dispute, see also Kupper, *Liège et l'Église impériale*, pp. 176–9. The principal sources are the *Vita Alberti episcopi Leodiensis*, ed. Johannes Heller, MGH, SS, XXV (Hannover, 1880), pp. 135–68, and *Le Chronique de Gislebert de Mons*, ed. L. Vanderkindere (Brussels, 1904), pp. 257–80, although a large number of both German and non-German writers made briefer mention of this event; for example, *Chronik des Lauterbergs*, ed. Naß, pp. 166–7. Innocent III later identified the leader of the murderers as Otto of Barkstein, who was subsequently prominent in the conquest of Sicily: *Regestum Innocenti III Papae super negotio Romani Imperii*, ed. F. Kempf (Rome, 1947), pp. 153, 219. Cf. N. Vincent, 'The Murderers of Thomas Becket', in Fryde and Reitz, eds, *Bischofsmord im Mittelalter*, pp. 211–72.

40. Richer, *Gesta Senoniensis abbatiae*, ed. Georg Waitz, MGH, SS, XXV, pp. 286–8 (III. 3–4). For Matthew's deposition, see *Die Register Innocenz' III. 12 Pontifikatsjahre 1209/10*, ed. A. Sommerlechner, O. Hageneder et al. (Vienna, 2012), pp. 292–3 (no. 149).

41. *Gesta Treverorum, continuatio quinta*, MGH SS, XXIV, pp. 405–6.

Henry IV was looking to change sides, whereas Burchard remained resolutely opposed to the monarch. But whether or not this was the case, the actual conflict appears to have been spurred by the arrival of fresh troops to reinforce the bishop's already substantial bodyguard, whose behaviour made the citizens fear for their safety. Stones and roof tiles were thrown, the soldiers battered down the doors of houses and killed those they found inside, even children—so we are told by the so-called 'Saxon Annalist'—and the town was set on fire. The bishop, who had tried to quiet the tumult, was then stabbed with a spear—although the much briefer account in the *Gesta Episcoporum* of the see said that he was hit by an arrow as he looked out of an open window.⁴²

Almost three quarters of a century later, Arnold of Selenhofen, archbishop of Mainz, was killed in an uprising by the citizens of that city in June 1160. He had taken refuge from the revolt in a local monastery to which the rebels set fire, with the archbishop inside. They then broke in, chanting 'Kill him, kill him, don't let him live', and cut him to pieces. His naked body was left for three days, exposed to the mockery of women selling provisions and prostitutes (*mercatrices [et] meretrices*), before the clergy dared to prepare him for burial.⁴³ Admittedly, the causes of this appalling incident were more complex than simply hostility between archiepiscopal ruler and urban dependents. Among the leaders of the insurrection were some of Arnold's own *ministeriales*, whom he had alienated by changes he had made in office-holding among his military household, and the final attack which had led to the archbishop's death had been led by a knight. But the wider citizenry were fully involved in the insurrection, and indeed some months earlier they had taken over the cathedral and the archbishop's palace, plundered his property and driven him from the city. Frederick Barbarossa himself had intervened, from northern Italy where he was then campaigning, ordering the 'clergy, *ministeriales* and citizens' of Mainz to re-admit him, and to restore his property. There was, therefore, a wide-ranging movement within the city against the archbishop. And what may have triggered the eventual and fatal outbreak of violence was the archbishop gathering troops to re-impose his authority by force. But despite the role of the *ministeriales*, to the significance of which we shall return later, the murder of Archbishop Arnold did not involve them alone, and his biographer expressly condemned the *profana et pestilentia multitudo* of Mainz who had participated in his death.⁴⁴

42. *Annalista Saxo*, ed. Naß, pp. 479–81; *Gesta episcoporum Halberstadensium*, ed. Weiland, pp. 100–101. Cf. *Chroniken Bertholds von Reichenau und Bernolds*, ed. Robinson, p. 469 (tr. Robinson, p. 292).

43. Christian, *Liber de calamitate ecclesiae Moguntinae*, ed. Hans Reimer, MGH, SS, XXV, pp. 236–48, at 243–4 (c. 10).

44. The major sources are the *Vita Arnoldi Archiepiscopi Moguntini*, in *Bibliotheca Rerum Germanicarum*, II: *Monumenta Moguntina*, ed. Philippe Jaffé (Berlin, 1866), pp. 604–75, especially 655–73 (for the murder itself, pp. 671–3), and Christian, *Liber de calamitate ecclesiae Moguntinae*, a thirteenth-century history of the see. But this incident was widely noted by

Urban insurrections were, however, far more widespread than simply these two fatal examples, and might well have claimed the lives of a number of other prelates. Archbishop Anno of Cologne was forced to flee from that city in April 1074 by an uprising which had been sparked when members of his household attempted summarily to commandeer a merchant's ship for the archbishop's own use. After this incident had led to a riot, the archbishop inflamed the situation by publicly threatening condign punishment for those townsmen responsible for opposing him, and a noisy and disorderly protest became a full-fledged revolt. Lampert of Hersfeld, our chief and almost our only source for these events, was adamant that the enraged citizens wanted to kill the archbishop, and as they sacked his palace and plundered its valuables they did slay an unfortunate man who was hiding there, thinking him to be the archbishop. Anno escaped only because some of his household smuggled him in disguise out of the besieged cathedral at night, and led him out of the city through a postern gate.⁴⁵ Three years later two other urban revolts against prelates occurred. At Cambrai the citizens took advantage of their bishop's absence at the royal court to enter into a 'sworn conspiracy' to deny him entry into the town unless he recognised their *coniuratio*—presumably therefore their wish for greater self-government in an early 'commune'. The bishop enlisted the help of Count Baldwin of Mons and gathered an army, and the citizens eventually agreed to surrender in return for a promise that no punishment would be exacted. But once the bishop's ill-disciplined troops entered the city they began to plunder and killed a number of people. One of the casualties was the brother of a wealthy merchant, who was so enraged by this that he plotted to betray the town to the bishop's enemies, and the implication of the account is that he planned to kill the bishop. He was, however, betrayed and executed.⁴⁶ In the same year, 1077, Archbishop Siegfried was driven out of Mainz by an uprising of the citizens, although this was provoked not by the archbishop or his men but by the brutal conduct of the knights of Rudolf of Swabia, recently elected as king by those who opposed Henry IV. When Rudolf came to Mainz for his

contemporary and later writers, for example, *Annales Magdeburgenses*, ed. Pertz, p. 191; *Chronica Regia Coloniensis*, ed. Georg Waitz, MGH, SS rer. Germ., XVII (Hannover, 1880), pp. 104–5; and *Cronica S. Petri Erfordensis Moderna*, in *Monumenta Erphesfurtensia*, saec. XII, XIII, XIV, ed. Oswald Holder-Egger, MGH, SS rer. Germ., XLII (Hannover, 1899), p. 180, which mentioned the archbishop's military preparations. For the emperor's attempt at mediation, see *Die Urkunden Friedrichs I*, ed. H. Appelt et al., MGH, Diplomata, X (5 vols, Hannover, 1975–90), ii, pp. 101–3 (no. 289) (also *Vita*, ed. Jaffé, p. 641). For the role of the *ministeriales*, J. Keupp, 'Reichsministerialen und Bischofsmord in staufischer Zeit', in Fryde and Reitz, eds, *Bischofsmord im Mittelalter*, pp. 278–83.

45. Lampert, *Opera*, ed. Holder-Egger, pp. 185–90 (tr. Robinson, pp. 222–8). The account of these events in *Vita Annonis Archiepiscopi Coloniensis*, ed. Rudolf Köpke, MGH, SS, XI (Hannover, 1854), pp. 492–3 (II. 21), was largely copied from Lampert.

46. *Gesta Episcoporum Cameracensium*, ed. Ludwig C. Bethmann, MGH, SS, VII (Hannover, 1856), pp. 393–525, at 498.

royal coronation his troops started brawling with the citizens, and in the ensuing battle more than a hundred people were killed.⁴⁷

One of the most serious such incidents took place at Magdeburg in 1129. Archbishop Norbert was, as we have seen, an outsider, and a determined and by no means tactful reformer. By June 1129 he had already survived two attempts to assassinate him, one of them indeed by a cleric from his own household. Relations with the citizens had broken down, and revolt began after it was rumoured that Norbert planned to strip the cathedral of its treasures, and even desecrate the tombs of his predecessors, and then abscond during the night. Norbert and his household, along with two of his suffragan bishops who were also present, took refuge in an old tower keep next to the cathedral which had been built by Emperor Otto I almost two centuries earlier, where they were besieged by the enraged mob. The next morning the rioters forced an entry into the tower, to be confronted by the archbishop in full pontifical dress. One of his knights who tried to interpose was struck down and badly wounded, and the archbishop spattered with his blood, although a sword blow aimed at him missed. He was saved only when some calmer spirits intervened, carrying relics from the church, and then belatedly the burgrave arrived to restore order. But it is clear that at least some of the rioters intended to kill the archbishop, and that he was for a time in mortal danger.⁴⁸

By the thirteenth century hostilities between burghers and bishop were almost endemic in many German cities, as the citizens (or at least their civic leaders) increasingly sought to free themselves from the burdens of episcopal lordship and to conduct their own affairs. Often this led to the expulsion or flight of the bishop who retreated to a rural castle, to conduct the affairs of the diocese from there rather than from his cathedral. No bishops were actually killed in these disorders, but once again some of them were in very real peril. For example, a long-standing dispute between the townspeople and bishop of Würzburg culminated in an uprising in 1253. Bishop Herman was captured and threatened with death by the citizens, who threw some of his knights into the River Main and attacked other members of the clergy and looted their property. They tried to force the bishop to surrender his castle at Marienberg on the opposite bank of the river, overlooking the city, but he was eventually rescued by two of his *ministeriales*. Thereafter both Herman and his successors lived at Marienberg and abandoned their palace inside the city.⁴⁹ Similarly, the

47. *Frutolfs und Ekkehard's Chroniken*, ed. Schmale and Schmale Ott, p. 86 (tr. McCarthy, p. 116); *Chroniken Bertholds von Reichenau und Bernolds*, ed. Robinson, p. 269 (tr. Robinson, pp. 167–8).

48. *Vita Norberti Archiepiscopi Magdeburgensis*, ed. Wilmans, pp. 698–9 (c. 19); confirmed by the briefer accounts in *Gesta Archiepiscoporum Magdeburgensium*, ed. Wilhelm Schum, MGH, SS, XIV (Hannover, 1883), p. 413, and *Annalista Saxo*, ed. Naß, p. 591.

49. *Michaeli de Leone Canonici Herbipolensis Annotata Historica*, in *Fontes Rerum Germanicarum*, ed. Johann-Friedrich Böhmmer (4 vols, Stuttgart, 1843–68), i, pp. 462–3.

archiepiscopal palace at Mainz was burned down in an uprising in 1274, and the archbishops subsequently preferred to reside in rural castles or in the much smaller town of Aschaffenburg.⁵⁰ The paradigm of such problems came at Cologne, where relations between the citizens and archbishop, which had often been difficult, broke down completely in 1257 and initiated a period of almost continuous conflict, which lasted until the definitive defeat of the archbishop at the Battle of Worringen in 1288. During this period, and in fact from very soon after 1257, the city became more or less completely autonomous.⁵¹

A third and very serious threat to the safety of German bishops came from their own military following. German bishoprics possessed substantial landed endowments, and had large numbers of troops at their disposal, from which they were expected to provide military assistance to the rulers—as too were some of the wealthier abbeys. This was already the case during the later tenth century—the so-called *Indiculus Loricatorum* of 981 listing military contingents to be sent to Emperor Otto II, then campaigning in southern Italy, included those to be provided by four archbishops and fourteen bishops, who in total were expected to provide over a thousand armoured cavalrymen (*loricati*). Individual contingents varied from those of the archbishops of Cologne and Mainz and the bishop of Augsburg, each of whom had to furnish a hundred horsemen, down to the bishop of Cambrai, from whom a mere twelve were required—although only three others were asked for less than forty.⁵² Later sources suggest that if anything the military followings of bishops had grown larger, and were often more numerous than those provided for imperial expeditions by lay nobles. Archbishop Rainald of Cologne brought more than 500 knights with him when he joined Frederick Barbarossa in Italy in 1161. Some bishops also possessed a significant number of castles, which required garrisons.⁵³ These troops were a mixture of free vassals, most of whom held fiefs

50. J. Schneider, 'Foundations and Forms of Princely Lordship: The Archbishopric of Mainz', in G.A. Loud and J. Schenk, eds, *The Origins of the German Principalities, 1100–1350: Essays by German Historians* (London, 2017), pp. 101–20, at 119.

51. M. Groten, *Köln im 13. Jahrhundert* (Cologne, 1995), pp. 180–206.

52. 'Indiculus loricatorum in Italia mittendum', in *Constitutiones et Acta Publica* (911–1197), ed. Ludwig Weiland, MGH (Hannover, 1892), pp. 632–3 (no. 436). The significance of this list has been much debated. For military service by bishops to the Crown after 1002, see Zielinski, *Der Reichsepiskopat in spätottonischer und salischer Zeit*, pp. 220–42.

53. *Das Geschichtswerk des Otto Morena und seiner Fortsetzer*, ed. F. Güterbock, MGH, SS rer. Germ., new ser., VII (Berlin, 1930), p. 135. Other lists of episcopal followings include those at the Venice peace conference of 1177, *Historia Ducum Veneticorum*, ed. Henry Simonsfeld, MGH, SS, XIV, pp. 84–5, and at the Mainz diet of 1184, *Chronique de Gislebert de Mons*, ed. Vanderkindere, pp. 157–8, although the latter's figures may be exaggerated. Important discussions by B. Arnold, 'German Bishops and their Military Retinues in the Medieval Empire', *German History*, vii (1989), pp. 161–83; T. Reuter, 'Episcopi cum sua militia: The Prelate as Warrior in the Early Staufan Era', in T. Reuter, ed., *Warriors and Churchmen in the High Middle Ages: Essays Presented to Karl Leyser* (London, 1992), pp. 79–94, especially 82–5; and T. Reuter, 'Filii matris nostrae pugnant adversum nos: Bonds and Tensions between Prelates and their milites in the German High Middle Ages', in *Chiesa e mondo feudale nei secoli X–XII: atti della dodicesima settimana internazionale di studio*, Mendola, 24–28 agosto 1992 (Milan, 1995), pp. 247–76.

from the see, and *ministeriales*—that peculiar German class of those who were both knights but also unfree, quasi-servile retainers who in a real sense ‘belonged’ to their lord and who might, even as late as the early thirteenth century, be transferred to the ownership of others along with lands and other property.⁵⁴ As time went on, the *ministeriales* became more numerous and important; by 1200 they comprised at least two-thirds of German knights.

The often-fragile discipline of these military retainers has already been noted, and they displayed a considerable capacity for violence. But, despite their quasi-servile status, *ministeriales* also had rights—the earliest known definition of the rights, duties and privileges of a ministerial following was drawn up for the knights of the bishopric of Bamberg during the pontificate of Bishop Gunther, 1057–65.⁵⁵ By the twelfth century *ministeriales* almost invariably staffed the senior offices of the bishop’s household, and some became increasingly wealthy and powerful, despite their technically unfree status. Abbot Guibald of Corvey, the trusted counsellor of King Conrad III, was by no means the only churchman to discover that the office-holding *ministeriales* on his church’s lands were used to running them as they saw fit and disliked interference by their nominal lord.⁵⁶ And the military service rendered by episcopal knights, whether these were legally ‘free’ or *ministeriales*, was always a matter of reward and reciprocity, and not simply obligation.⁵⁷ A bishop needed therefore to maintain good relations with his *ministeriales*, to respect their rights and look after their interests, and foster their loyalty through persuasion and favour—but not all bishops managed to do this, and the results could be catastrophic. Thus Bishop Gebhard (IV) of Regensburg was murdered by one of his own knights in 1105, whom he had apparently injured in some way—we are told nothing more, but although Gebhard was alleged to have gained the see by simony while still under the canonical age, and seems to have been regarded as an unworthy member of the episcopate, his death

54. For example, in an agreement between Archbishop Gerhard II of Bremen and Henry, Count Palatine, the head of the Welf family, settling a long-running dispute concerning the county of Stade in September 1219: *Hamburgisches Urkundenbuch*, I: 786–1300, ed. Johann Martin Lappenburg (Hamburg, 1842), pp. 375–6 (no. 432). The literature on *ministeriales* is vast and often confusing; the best introduction remains B. Arnold, *German Knighthood, 1050–1300* (Oxford, 1985), especially ch. 2, pp. 23–52, and B. Arnold, ‘Servile Retainers or Noble Knights: The Medieval *ministeriales* in Germany’, *Reading Medieval Studies*, xii (1986), pp. 73–84. J.B. Freed, ‘The Origins of the European Nobility: The Problem of the Ministerials’, *Viator*, vii (1976), pp. 211–41, offers a largely historiographical treatment, but is helpful in summarising older German-language debates about the origins of this group. See also T. Zotz, ‘Die Formierung der Ministerialität’, in O. Engels, ed., *Die Salier und das Reich* (3 vols, Speyer, 1991), iii, pp. 3–50.

55. *Bibliotheca Rerum Germanicarum*, V: *Monumenta Bambergensia*, ed. Philippe Jaffé (Berlin, 1869), pp. 50–52 (no. 25); Arnold, *German Knighthood*, pp. 27, 59.

56. *Die Urkunden Konrads III*, ed. F. Hausmann, MGH, *Diplomatum Regum et Imperatorum Germaniae*, IX (Vienna, 1969), pp. 391–2 (no. 221) (Mar. 1150).

57. M. Krätschmer, ‘Rittertum und Lehnswesen im Stauferreich: Zu Organisation und Rekrutierung der Ritterheere im 12. und 13. Jahrhundert’, *Frühmittelalterliche Studien*, liv (2020), pp. 349–94, especially 366–74.

apparently resulted from a personal slight, rather than his religious failings.⁵⁸ Arnold of Mainz perished in 1160 in a popular uprising, but one in which some of his own *ministeriales* were involved. Ironically Arnold, unusually for a German prelate, was himself from a ministerial background, which one might imagine would have made him aware of potential problems, but he managed to upset his *familia*, first through a dispute about financial support owed for the Mainz contingent serving in Italy in 1158—which one argumentative *ministerialis* persuaded his fellows they were not obliged to provide—and then by replacing some of the ministerial office holders with his own relatives. The result was a conspiracy against him which, combined with the grievances of the citizens, led to his death.⁵⁹ Similarly, soon after his election in 1174, Bishop Robert of Cambrai, despite making many promises to those who hoped to benefit from him, ‘provoked the hatred and envy of the greater men against him’. He was then killed in an ambush while travelling. While this case is not absolutely certain, it seems probable that these ‘greater men’ were those of his own following. Robert, it should be noted, while a trusted counsellor of Count Philip of Flanders, was an outsider who was chosen for the see through the latter’s influence. Perhaps wisely, the next two bishops were elected from within the chapter.⁶⁰

Finally, there was the murder of Conrad of Querfurt, bishop of Würzburg, in 1202. Conrad was a figure of considerable consequence: chancellor both of Henry VI and then of the latter’s brother King Philip, imperial governor of the kingdom of Sicily in 1196–7 and then one of the leaders of the German Crusade of 1197–8. But having persuaded a reluctant Pope Innocent III to translate him from his original see of Hildesheim to Würzburg, he then fell out with two powerful and well-connected *ministeriales* of the latter bishopric, Bodo and Henry of Ravensburg, either over his attempts to recover the property of the see (according to Arnold of Lübeck) or because of his moving to punish them for killing another *ministerialis* in a feud (so the chronicler of the monastery of Lauterberg in eastern Saxony, who provided the most detailed and circumstantial account). The bishop was attacked and cut down as he left his cathedral after Vespers on 3 December 1202.⁶¹

Once again, these four murders were part of a much wider phenomenon. There was, in addition, another possible but unconfirmed case of episcopal murder, for local tradition at Brixen alleged that Bishop

58. *Frutolf und Ekkehard's Chroniken*, ed. Schmale and Schmale Ott, p. 232 (tr. McCarthy, p. 198); *Annalista Saxo*, ed. Naß, p. 517; Meyer von Knonau, *Jahrbücher*, iv, p. 262.

59. *Vita Arnoldi Archiepiscopi*, ed. Jaffé, pp. 612–16, 625–9; Keupp, ‘Reichsministerialen und Bischofsmord’, pp. 278–81.

60. *Gesta Episcoporum Cameracensium*, ed. Bethmann, p. 509.

61. Arnold of Lübeck, *Chronica Slavorum*, ed. Johann Martin Lappenberg, MGH, SS rer. Germ., XIV (Hannover, 1868), p. 256 (VII. 2) (tr. G.A. Loud, *The Chronicle of Arnold of Lübeck* [London, 2019], p. 263); *Chronik des Lauterbergs*, ed. Naß, pp. 184–5. His murder was more briefly noted by Burchard of Ursperg, *Chronicon*, ed. O. Holder-Egger and B. von Simson, MGH, SS rer. Germ., XVI (2nd edn, Hannover, 1916), p. 95.

Burchard was killed by a *ministerialis* of his church in 1098.⁶² But attacks upon, and sometimes murders of, abbots by the *ministeriales* of their monasteries also occurred all too frequently. These included, for example, the slayings of Rupert, former abbot of Reichenau and then abbot of Gengenbach in Alsace, in 1076, who, we are told, was killed by the *servitores* of that latter monastery, against whom he had been defending its possessions and rights;⁶³ Abbot Ludwig of Reichenau in 1135, where the *ministeriales* were allegedly encouraged by the man who then succeeded him as abbot; and Abbot Bertho of Fulda in 1277.⁶⁴ Guibald of Corvey complained about a plot to murder him by some of his abbey's *ministeriales* in 1149 after he had tried to punish them for the theft of some horses.⁶⁵ And other bishops may have escaped with their lives but still suffered serious ill-treatment at the hands of their own *ministeriales*. Bishop Burchard of Münster was arrested by his own *ministeriales* in 1106 and handed over in chains to Henry IV, as punishment for his disloyalty towards the emperor.⁶⁶ Other bishops who were imprisoned by their own *ministeriales* included Conrad of Straßburg in 1192, Archbishop Adalbert of Salzburg in 1198 and Ulrich of Gurk in 1247. In this last case the culprits ravaged the bishop's lands while he was in captivity and only released him on payment of a substantial ransom.⁶⁷ Bishops and other churchmen might also be at risk from other people's *ministeriales*. Henry V had to restrain one of his own royal *ministeriales* from killing Conrad of Salzburg in 1111 when the archbishop opposed the agreement then under negotiation between monarch and pope, while Bishop Eckbert of Bamberg was held prisoner for the whole of Lent 1233 by the *ministeriales* of the Duke of Carinthia.⁶⁸ Henry VI, clearly no respecter of ecclesiastical persons, became so enraged by one Saxon abbot who was locked in conflict with his diocesan bishop that he ordered some of his *ministeriales* to have him executed, although the abbot managed to avoid them and later recovered the emperor's grace.⁶⁹

62. Meyer von Knonau, *Jahrbücher*, v, p. 9.

63. Lampert of Hersfeld, *Opera*, ed. Holder-Egger, p. 259 (tr. Robinson, pp. 312–13); *Annales Gengenbacenses*, ed. Georg Heinrich Pertz, MGH, SS, V (Hannover, 1844), p. 390, which expressly identified the killers as knights; *Chroniken Bertholds von Reichenau und Bernolds*, ed. Robinson, pp. 218–19 (tr. Robinson, p. 130).

64. *Annalista Saxo*, ed. Naß, p. 599; Arnold, *German Knighthood*, pp. 138, 227.

65. *Das Briefbuch Abt Wibalds von Stablo und Corvey*, ed. M. Hartmann, with H. Zatschek and T. Reuter, MGH, Briefe der deutschen Kaiserzeit, IX (3 vols, Hannover, 2012), i, pp. 218–20 (no. 119).

66. *Chronica Regia Coloniensis*, ed. Waitz, p. 44.

67. *Annales Argentinenses a. 673–1207*, ed. Philippe Jaffé, MGH, SS, XVII (Hannover, 1861), p. 89; *Annales Sancti Rudberti Salisburgensis*, ed. Wilhelm Wattenbach, MGH, SS, IX (Hannover, 1851), p. 778; *Monumenta Historica Ducatus Carinthiae*, II: *Die Gurker Geschichtsquellen, 1233–69*, ed. August von Jaksch (Klagenfurt, 1898), pp. 46–7 (no. 587).

68. Otto of Freising, *Chronica sive Historia de Duabus Civitatibus*, ed. A. Hofmeister, MGH, SS rer. Germ., XLV (Hannover, 1912), p. 327 (VII. 14) (tr. C.C. Mierow, *The Two Cities: A Chronicle of Universal History to the Year 1146 A.D. by Otto of Freising* [New York, 1928], pp. 419–20); *Annales Sancti Rudberti Salisburgensis*, ed. Wattenbach, p. 785.

69. *Chronik des Lauterbergs*, ed. Naß, p. 273.

A fourth factor in the continuing violence towards bishops and other leading ecclesiastics was the prevalence of feuds in Germany. As has often been noted, the German nobility were enthusiastic and vengeful participants in often murderous blood feuds, in which churchmen were often caught up, more usually as victims but sometimes as by no means reluctant participants.⁷⁰ The overwhelmingly aristocratic composition of the German episcopate, more marked here than in almost any other kingdom of the medieval west, where bishops were often the younger sons or brothers of counts or other local aristocrats, heightened this involvement, particularly since the constraints which should have protected churchmen so often proved ineffectual.⁷¹ Even relatively minor slights might potentially lead to violence. Thus, during the siege of Milan in 1161, Barbarossa's half-brother Conrad and the brother of the king of Bohemia granted the consuls of that city a safe-conduct to allow them to come to propose surrender terms. The knights of the archbishop-elect of Cologne, Rainald of Dassel, who were unaware of these negotiations, intercepted and captured the consuls—and the two princes were, we are told, so enraged by this insult to their honour that they proposed to kill the archbishop, even though he had known nothing about what had happened. They had to be strictly forbidden from doing so by the emperor, with whom Rainald had taken refuge.⁷² Other blood feuds arose from family disputes. The quarrel which led to the murder of Albert of Liège in 1192 began with a disputed election, but also stemmed from the competition between two of the leading aristocratic families in Lower Lotharingia. Rivalry between the two leading families of Upper Lotharingia may well have played a part in the murder of Rainald of Toul. But it was a dispute between relatives that led to one of the most shocking and widely publicised murders of a prelate, that of Archbishop Engelbert of Cologne in 1225.

Engelbert belonged to the family of the counts of Berg, one of the most influential noble houses of the region, and was the fifth member of that family to hold the see in the previous century.⁷³ After the death

70. Most obviously, Reuter, 'Peace-Breaking, Feud, Rebellion', especially pp. 358–71, but also the classic study by K. Leyser, *Rule and Conflict in an Early Medieval Society: Ottonian Saxony* (London 1979), esp. pp. 10–14, pointing to the significance of feuds within kin groups; most recently, C. Reinle, 'Violence, Feud and Peacemaking', in Loud and Schenk, eds, *Origins of the German Principalities*, pp. 181–204.

71. C.-R. Brühl, 'Die Sozialstruktur des deutschen Episkopat im 11. und 12. Jahrhundert', in *Le Istituzioni ecclesiastiche della 'societas Christiana' del secolo XI–XII. Diocesi, pieve e parrocchie*, Miscellanea del centro di studi medioevali, viii (Milan, 1977), pp. 42–56, especially 47–8, who suggested that 93 per cent of German bishops whose origins were known were aristocrats. Zielinski, *Der Reichsepiskopat in spätottonischer und salischer Zeit*, pp. 19–66, and Reuter, 'Bonds and Tensions', pp. 257–8; note the latter's unambiguous statement, 'the churches of the *regnum teutonicum* were aristocratic churches'.

72. *Das Geschichtswerk des Otto Morena und seiner Fortsetzer*, ed. Güterbock, p. 143.

73. His great-uncle Bruno had been archbishop (1131–7), then his uncles Frederick (1156–8) and Bruno (1191–3). Engelbert's father, Count Engelbert (d. 1189), was their brother, while another brother, Arnold, was bishop of Osnabrück (1173–91). Adolf (archbishop, 1193–1205) was his first cousin.

of his elder brother at the siege of Damietta in 1218 he also inherited most of the his father's lands. On his departure from Germany in 1220, Frederick II had appointed Engelbert as regent for his nine-year-old son, Henry (VII), left as nominal ruler of the *Reich* in the emperor's absence. What led to his death was not, however, his political role, but a dispute with a cousin, Count Frederick of Isenburg, concerning the wealthy nunnery of Essen, of which Frederick was advocate. According to his biographer, Caesarius of Heisterbach, what led to the murder was the archbishop reproving the count for unduly exploiting his position, about which he had received repeated complaint from the nuns. Caesarius suggested that the archbishop was at first reluctant to intervene since Frederick was his kinsman—they were first cousins—but eventually sent him a stern warning, which however he softened by offering to recompense him for his own revenues for any financial loss that this might entail. Nevertheless this rebuke led the count to conceive a mortal hatred for the archbishop, whom he suspected (so we are told) of wishing to disinherit him. He disguised his enmity, offered to escort his cousin as he travelled to the royal court and then waited for a suitable moment to ambush him, which occurred when most of his household had gone on ahead to prepare his lodgings. As dusk was falling on 7 November 1225 the count's knights under his personal direction dragged the archbishop from his horse and killed him.⁷⁴

The life by Caesarius was superficially hagiographical—the count was, for example, described as imitating Judas in his betrayal—but interestingly there were still enough nuances to suggest another side to the deceased prelate. His warlike propensities were noted—he was compared with Judas Maccabeus as 'he took a personal role in the overthrow of his enemies', he was active in recovering alienated property of his see and he was in dispute with the Duke of Limburg concerning his brother's inheritance.⁷⁵ All of this might have meant the count's alleged fears were not entirely groundless. Nevertheless, the murder was still shocking, because of the circumstances, the blood relationship between murderer and victim, the suspected collusion of the count's brothers who were both themselves bishops (of Münster and Osnabrück) and not least in that Engelbert appears to have been popular with the citizens of Cologne. It was widely noted throughout Germany. The historian of the archbishops of Trier, for example, wrote that the murderers behaved 'not with human fierceness but with diabolical cruelty', inflicting no less than forty-eight wounds on the archbishop.⁷⁶ This

74. 'Leben, Leiden und Wunder des heiligen Engelbert, Erzbischofs von Köln von Caesarius von Heisterbach', ed. F. Zschaek, in *Die Wundergeschichten des Caesarius von Heisterbach*, ed. A. Hilka (3 vols, Cologne, 1933–7), iii, pp. 249–53, 256–62 (II. 1–2 and 5–7). Caesarius claimed that his account of the murder was based upon the count's confession before his execution, as written down by his notary Tobias.

75. *Ibid.*, pp. 241–2.

76. *Gesta Treverorum, continuatio quarta*, MGH, SS, XXIV, p. 400; cf. *Chronica Regia Coloniensis*, ed. Waitz, pp. 255–7; Burchard of Ursperg, *Chronicon*, ed. Holder-Egger and

particular assassination was also unusual in that the culprits were actually punished, an issue to which we shall return later.

Last but by no means least were those bishops who died in battle. One might, as Timothy Reuter suggested, exclude these from any discussion of the murder of bishops *stricto sensu*.⁷⁷ Yet there are good reasons for not doing this. First, these prelates undoubtedly died by violence. Secondly, the military involvement of the German episcopate was unusual within the medieval Church as a whole. Elsewhere in Christendom warlike bishops were the exception; in Germany they were more or less the rule. Furthermore, German bishops did not just die in battle fighting the heathen—deaths which might be seen as meritorious—but increasingly in internal conflicts within the *Reich*. Finally, not all deaths in battle were the same, and in a few instances a prelate's death during or in the aftermath of battle was indeed quite deliberate, and therefore akin to other murders.

Richard of Cornwall, writing to his nephew Edward (the future king of England) soon after his own coronation as king of Germany in 1257, commented that 'we have courageous and warlike archbishops and bishops in Germany', and that it would be no bad thing if English bishops were to follow their example. He went on to describe how the archbishop of Trier, who had opposed his election, had attacked his camp at Boppard with a host of armed men and had set up war machines to bombard it.⁷⁸ This was one of many instances where German prelates commanded troops in person. Of course, not all those who accompanied troops to battle, or even directed their activities, would have actually fought hand to hand or wished to shed blood themselves. But many did undoubtedly take an active part, despite canonical prohibitions, and Caesarius of Heisterbach wrote disapprovingly that almost all German bishops cared more for the wages of their soldiers than for the welfare of the souls entrusted to them.⁷⁹ Christian of Buch, archbishop of Mainz (1165–83), 'a worshipper of Mars who abandoned the example of (St) Martin', according to one hostile critic, and who was alleged to have personally slain nine men with his three-headed mace during one of his many battles in Italy, may have been an extreme example of the breed, but he was far from being the only one.⁸⁰ His successor at Mainz,

Simson, p. 116, who wrote (probably wrongly) that many priests had been killed with the archbishop; *Annales Marbacenses*, ed. H. Bloch, MGH, SS rer. Germ., IX (Hannover, 1907), p. 90; *Annales Sancti Rudberti Salisburgensis*, ed. Wattenbach, p. 783; *Cronica S. Petri Erfordensis Moderna*, ed. Holder-Egger, p. 226.

77. Reuter, 'Bonds and Tensions', p. 271.

78. 'Annales de Burton', in *Annales Monastici*, ed. Henry Richards Luard, Rolls Series, xxxvi (5 vols, 1864–9), i, p. 394.

79. Caesarius, *Dialogi de Miraculis*, ed. Joseph Strange (2 vols, Cologne, 1851), i, p. 99 ('De contritione', c. 27).

80. *Mainzer Urkundenbuch*, II: *Die Urkunden seit dem Tode Erzbischof Adalberts I (1137) bis zum Tode Erzbischofs Konrads (1200)*. Teil II: 1176–1200, ed. P. Acht (Darmstadt, 1978), pp. 640–46 (no. 392), at 645; *Annales Stadenses*, ed. Lappenberg, p. 347; Reuter, 'Episcopi cum

Conrad of Wittelsbach, 'seemed not to be a bishop, but rather a master of knights'.⁸¹ Gerhard II of Bremen, archbishop from 1219 to 1258, was 'a stern persecutor of his enemies, who defended his church rather with the secular sword than the spiritual'.⁸² Among his contemporaries in the mid-thirteenth century was Siegfried III of Mainz, archbishop from 1230 to 1249, a scion of the counts of Eppstein, a family who held the see of Mainz in almost as tight a grip during that century as the counts of Berg did Cologne somewhat earlier.⁸³ About him we are told that:

With the face and soul of a lion, he became a lion, and he began to make widows and orphans, to burn villages and destroy cities, to devour men and reduce the land to a desert, and be wonderfully pleasing to the pope [!].

He also allegedly distributed the treasures of the church to 'plunderers', a term which one suspects meant his own troops.⁸⁴ Nor were these prelates reluctant to involve themselves in the thick of battle. Arnold of Trier had had a long and active career as a warrior before he encountered Richard of Cornwall. In an earlier engagement, against the troops of King Conrad IV in 1246:

The archbishop of Trier was rightly estimated to be at the forefront of this battle, and not skulking in the rear. In the first clash he penetrated deep into the ranks of the enemy, and he and his men manfully drove them back in flight as far as the river bank near Frankfurt and valiantly pursued them. For this the landgrave singled him out for special praise.⁸⁵

Similarly, in 1261 Bishop Walter of Straßburg had two horses killed under him before he was captured while fighting against the people of his episcopal city.⁸⁶ Even those who limited their role to matters of the spirit may sometimes have done so reluctantly. Thus Bishop Henry Knoderer of

sua militia', p. 81. For a balanced discussion of this issue, see J. Keupp, 'Die zwei Schwerter des Bischofs: Von Kriegsherren und Seelenhirten im Reichsepiuskopat der Stauferzeit', *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte*, cxvii (2006), pp. 1–24. And while by the thirteenth century canon lawyers recognised that prelates might sometimes have to provide military contingents for rulers, they remained insistent that clerics should only carry weapons in self-defence and implacably opposed to bishops personally participating in warfare: L.G. Duggan, *Armsbearing and the Clergy in the History and Canon Law of Western Christianity* (Woodbridge, 2013), esp. pp. 128–44.

81. *Annales Stederburgenses auctore Gerardo praeposito, a. 1000–1195*, ed. Georg Heinrich Pertz, MGH, SS, XVI, p. 221.

82. *Historia monasterii Rastedensis*, MGH, SS, XXV, p. 505.

83. Schneider, 'Foundations and Forms of Princely Lordship', p. 106.

84. 'Hic vultum et animum leonis induens, leo factus est, et cepit orphanos et viduas facere, villas comburere, civitates destruere, homines devorare, terram in desertum deducare et pape mirificere complacere': Christian, *Liber de calamitate ecclesiae Moguntinae*, ed. Reimer, p. 247 (c. 23).

85. 'In hoc conflictu non cum ultimis sed cum primis archiepiscopus Trevirensis est merito computandus, qui in primo congressu hostium cuneos penetravit potenter et in fugam conversos usque ad vadum fluvii prope Frankenvort cum suis viriliter et intrepide est persecutes. Itaque prae ceteris eum dictus landgravius specialiter commendant': *Gesta Treverorum, continuatio quinta*, p. 411. The landgrave (of Thuringia) was Henry Raspe, set up as anti-king against Conrad IV in 1246.

86. Ellenhard, *Bellum Walthesianum, a. 1260–1263*, ed. Philippe Jaffé, MGH, SS, XVII, p. III (c. 24).

Basel, who brought a contingent of a hundred knights to join the army of King Rudolf before the battle of Dürnkrot in 1278, rode before the army exhorting the troops and promising them 'a dwelling place in the angelic choir'. He was well-armed and riding a war horse and 'would have most freely ridden into battle, if the king had permitted this'. Bishop Henry was a friar, and from a poor background, yet he had clearly absorbed the bellicose ethos of his peers.⁸⁷ With this record of active involvement in warfare, it is no wonder that German bishops often came to grief.

At the beginning of this period, in the thirty years from 880 onwards, at least seven German bishops died in battle against either Vikings or Magyars—an eighth, Arno of Würzburg, was, depending on which source one trusts, either killed fighting the Slavs or murdered while celebrating mass, in 892.⁸⁸ Bishop Henry of Augsburg was missing believed killed in Otto II's defeat by the Arabs in Calabria in 982, and similarly Archbishop Thiemo of Salzburg was either slain or died in captivity when the 1101 Crusade was defeated in Asia Minor.⁸⁹ The German bishop of Riga, Berthold, another warlike prelate in the forefront of the battle, was killed fighting against the pagan Livonians in 1198 when his horse bolted and carried him into their ranks. Bishop Dietrich of Estonia, who was also German, was killed during an expedition against the Livonians in 1219.⁹⁰ All these casualties came while combatting the unbeliever, but from the time of the Saxon rebellion against Henry IV onwards bishops died in battle at the hands of fellow Christians. Archbishop Werner of Magdeburg fell at the battle of Melrichstadt in August 1078, at which Bishop Adalbero of Würzburg was captured, both of them opposing the king. Later in the same year Archbishop Udo of Trier died during the siege of Tübingen, although it is not absolutely clear that this was through violence.⁹¹ Bishop

87. *Chronica Colmariense, a. 1218–1304*, ed. Philippe Jaffé, MGH, SS, XVII, pp. 250–51; J.B. Freed, *The Friars and German Society in the Thirteenth Century* (Cambridge, MA, 1977), p. 133.

88. The bishops of Minden and Hildesheim drowned while fleeing from a defeat by the Danes in 880, the bishop of Metz was killed fighting the Vikings in 882 and the archbishop of Mainz similarly in 891: *Annales Fuldenses*, ed. Kurze, pp. 94, 97–8, 119 (tr. Reuter, pp. 88, 91, 121); Regino of Prüm, *Chronicon*, ed. Kurze, p. 119 (tr. Maclean, p. 211); Thietmar, *Chronicon*, ed. Holtzmann, pp. 64–7 (II. 23). Archbishop Dietmar of Salzburg and the bishop of Freising fell fighting the Hungarians in 907 and Bishop Rudolf of Würzburg in 908: *Annales Alamannici*, ed. Georg Heinrich Pertz, MGH, SS, I, p. 54. For the varying accounts of the death of the latter's predecessor Arno, Regino of Prüm, *Chronicon*, ed. Kurze, p. 140 (tr. Maclean, p. 215); *Annales Wirzburgenses*, ed. Georg Heinrich Pertz, MGH, SS, II, p. 241.

89. *Gerhardi Vita Oudalrici episcopi Augustani*, ed. Georg Waitz, MGH, SS, IV, p. 418; *Frutolf's und Ekkehard's Chroniken*, ed. Schmale and Schmale Ott, p. 170 (tr. McCarthy, p. 166), copied by *Annalista Saxo*, ed. Naß, p. 506; *Passio Thiemonis Archiepiscopi*, ed. W. Wattenbach, MGH SS, XI (Hannover, 1854), pp. 52–62.

90. Arnold of Lübeck, *Chronica Slavorum*, ed. Lappenberg, p. 215 (V. 30) (tr. Loud, p. 224); Henry of Livonia, *Livländische Chronik*, ed. L. Arbusow and A. Bauer, MGH, SS rer. Germ., XXXI (Hannover, 1955), pp. 10, 155 (tr. J.A. Brundage, *The Chronicle of Henry of Livonia* [2nd edn, New York, 2003], pp. 33, 174).

91. *Brunos Buch vom Sachsenkrieg*, ed. H.-E. Lohmann, MGH, Deutsches Mittelalter, II (Leipzig, 1937), p. 91; *Frutolf's und Ekkehard's Chroniken*, ed. Schmale and Schmale Ott, p. 90 (tr. McCarthy, p. 117); *Gesta Treverorum, continuatio*, MGH, SS, VIII, p. 183 (c. 9).

Burchard of Lausanne was killed fighting for Henry IV on Christmas Eve, 1088, and one source suggests, perhaps in error, that two other prelates died in the same battle. Archbishop Liemar of Bremen, another imperial supporter, was also captured during the same engagement.⁹² Admittedly, after this troubled decade bishops managed to avoid death in battle against their compatriots, although not participation in warfare, for more than a century. But then Otto of Lippe, bishop of Utrecht, died fighting after he had been drawn into taking sides in a blood feud between the burgrave of Groningen and the men of Drenthe and Coevorden in 1227. One of his successors, William of Mecheln, fell during a similar conflict in 1301.⁹³ Others, such as Walter of Straßburg, were probably lucky to survive. Thus Bishop Michael of Regensburg was wounded in battle against the Hungarians in the mid-tenth century and left for dead, losing an ear in the process. 'He was held to be a brave warrior by all the clergy ... and his mutilation brought him no shame but rather greater honour'.⁹⁴ Archbishop Willibrand of Magdeburg was wounded while fighting against the margraves of Brandenburg in 1240, and the bishop of Halberstadt captured during the same engagement.⁹⁵ Archbishop Conrad of Cologne was wounded in the cheek while fighting against the duke of Limburg in 1241, and captured by the count of Jülich a year later.⁹⁶ Prelates who were captured in battle were not necessarily treated gently. Conrad of Cologne managed to obtain his release by paying a ransom, but not all were so fortunate, including his two immediate successors in that see. Archbishop Engelbert II was captured while leading an expedition attacking the territory of the count of Jülich in 1267, and held captive by the count for three and a half years.⁹⁷ Archbishop Siegfried was captured at the battle of Worringen and held in chains for a year since he had been *armatus* when he was captured.⁹⁸

Those bishops who took an active part in warfare—and clearly many did—were obviously more at risk than those who may simply have accompanied armies and rendered religious services to the combatants. But there are occasional indications that bishops were singled out, and their deaths in battle did not simply result from hot blood and the heat of combat. Werner of Magdeburg was killed as he fled after the battle

92. *Gesta episcoporum Laussanensium*, ed. Waitz, p. 799. The *Gesta episcoporum Halberstadensium*, ed. Weiland, pp. 101–2, said that Archbishop Sigewin of Cologne and Bishop Otto of Regensburg also died in this battle. But two Regensburg necrologies date the death of Bishop Otto to 6 July: *Necrologia Germaniae*, III: *Dioeceses Brixinensis, Frisingensis, Ratisbonensis*, ed. F.L. Baumann, MGH (Berlin, 1905), pp. 319, 341.

93. *Chronographia Johannis de Beke*, ed. H. Bruch (The Hague, 1973), p. 162.

94. Thietmar, *Chronicon*, ed. Holtzmann, p. 73 (tr. Warner, p. 112) (II. 27).

95. *Gesta Archiepiscoporum Magdeburgensium*, ed. Schum, p. 422.

96. *Chronica Regia Coloniensis*, ed. Waitz, pp. 278, 283.

97. *Series episcoporum et abbatum Germaniae. Archiepiscopi Colonienses*, ed. Oswald Holder-Egger, MGH, SS, XIII (Hannover, 1881), p. 287; Freed, *Friars and German Society*, pp. 102–4.

98. *Cronica S. Petri Erfordensis Moderna*, ed. Holder-Egger, p. 292.

of Melrichstadt; according to one almost contemporary account this was either by 'the common people', 'or as some say he was hanged'.⁹⁹ If this testimony is suggestive, but inconclusive, the death of Otto (II) of Utrecht in 1227 was unequivocally deliberate, and effectively premeditated murder. As his army disintegrated, after it had incautiously advanced into a marsh where it became trapped, the bishop was taken prisoner and then killed after capture, being attacked with swords and finally having his throat cut. His body was then sunk in the marsh. By contrast, some of his lay allies who had been wounded in the fight were spared.¹⁰⁰ The bishop's enemies actively sought his death, when they could, had they chosen, have taken him prisoner.

There were, therefore, several different if inter-related reasons for the number of bishops, and indeed other senior churchmen, within the German *Reich* who died violently and the considerably larger number who were threatened by violence. To suggest, as Reuter did, that such casualties were almost exclusively due to revolts by the bishops' own *ministeriales* is therefore a gross over-simplification.¹⁰¹ But to assess the phenomenon and its ramifications fully it is necessary also to bear in mind at least four other issues.

First, there was the question of the commemoration of slain bishops and their posthumous reputation. How far were these unfortunates revered as martyrs or celebrated for their suffering, or seen as exemplars for the Church? The short answer is generally not. Chroniclers might not approve the killing of bishops, but they often recorded their deaths relatively briefly. Commemoration was rare, and even when it did exist was usually perfunctory. Only five murdered prelates, Conrad of Trier, Frederick and Albert of Liège, Arnold of Mainz and Engelbert of Cologne, were honoured by commemorative biographies, as well as Thiemo of Salzburg who died on crusade. (An account of the *Passio* of Burchard of Halberstadt, believed to have been composed by his nephew and successor Herrand, no longer survives.)¹⁰² None of these prelates were sanctified, and for the most part these *vitae*, though describing them as martyrs, said little or nothing about their spiritual qualities. There were, so we are told, miracles at the tombs of Conrad, Frederick and Albert. Only with Conrad is there much detail of these, and all that was said about Conrad himself was that he was of noble birth, his family were wealthy, he was dedicated to the Church by his parents, well educated, and that his kinsman Archbishop Anno loved him.¹⁰³ All of this would certainly explain his suitability for the episcopate by

99. *Frutolfs und Ekkehard's Chroniken*, ed. Schmale and Schmale Ott, p. 90 (tr. McCarthy, p. 117).

100. *Gesta episcoporum Traiectensium, 1130–1232*, ed. Ludwig Weiland, MGH, SS, XXIII, p. 414 (c. 25). Cf. *Chronica Regia Coloniensis*, ed. Waitz, p. 260, which said that the bishop and one of his brothers, also a cleric, were beheaded.

101. Reuter, 'Bonds and Tensions', p. 271.

102. Schütte, 'Gewalt gegen Bischöfe', pp. 58–9.

103. *Vita et Passio Conradi*, ed. Waitz, pp. 214, 218–19.

contemporary standards, but there was nothing here of any vocation or religious qualities. Frederick of Liège apparently contemplated going on pilgrimage in his youth, but his brief *vita* was otherwise devoted to his illustrious birth and descent from Charlemagne, the circumstances of his election with much denunciation of the sins of the rival candidate for the see, his death, and reports of the miracles at his tomb, with which the *vita* makes clear that the canons of the cathedral were not at all happy.¹⁰⁴ Neither here, nor in the life of Albert, was there anything much about the religiosity of the victim. Though longer than these other two, Albert's *vita* was devoted almost entirely to the election dispute, his sufferings and poverty in exile and a detailed account of his murder, the *mors turpissima* as it was described. While the sick were allegedly cured at his tomb, the only detail given was about a woman who came there only a few days after his death.¹⁰⁵ The *vita* of Arnold did praise his devotion to study as a young man, that as archbishop he kept religious clerics about him, rebuilt churches and was generous to the poor, and ordered the troops he led to Italy not to steal or to molest the poor.¹⁰⁶ But otherwise his biography was devoted to his public career, the various disputes in which he was involved, and a long account of his murder. It ended with his burial, and there was no mention of any miracles. The author tried to find good qualities to praise—the ones that might be expected of a respectable archbishop—but this was essentially a portrait of a clerical politician who came to a bad end. And at least one highly connected contemporary had no very high opinion of Arnold. Otto of Freising wrote that his feud with the Count Palatine Herman 'had stained almost the whole Rhineland' with pillage, bloodshed and arson—the more powerful they were the more harm they did—and that they were rightly condemned by the emperor's court, even if the archbishop was spared any penalty because of his age and archiepiscopal office.¹⁰⁷ Caesarius of Heisterbach was commissioned to write the life of Engelbert by the latter's successor, and the atrocious circumstances of the murder enabled him to present the archbishop as a martyr—he even compared him at one point to Thomas Becket, writing that Engelbert too had died to preserve the liberty of the Church¹⁰⁸—but, as we have seen, he occasionally allowed his view of him as a warrior to show through. And indeed towards the start of his account he gave the game away: Engelbert's 'precious death', he said, 'supplied the holiness which his life lacked'.¹⁰⁹

104. *Vita Friderici episcopi Leodiensis*, ed. Wattenbach, pp. 504, 506–8 (cc. 5, 9–15), on the miracles. Kupper, 'La double mort de l'évêque de Liège', pp. 162–5.

105. *Vita Alberti episcopi Leodiensis*, ed. Heller, pp. 165, 168 (cc. 43, 47).

106. *Monumenta Moguntina*, ed. Jaffé, pp. 611, 613, 619, 621–2.

107. *Die Taten Friedrichs oder richtiger Cronica*, ed. F.-J. Schmale (Darmstadt, 1965), pp. 372–5, 378–9 (II. 45, 48) (tr. C.C. Mierow, *The Deeds of Frederick Barbarossa by Otto of Freising and his Continuator Rahewin* [New York, 1953], pp. 160–61, 163).

108. *Die Wundergeschichten*, ed. Hilka, iii, pp. 276–7.

109. 'Sanctitatem, que vite defuit, mors preciosa supplevit': *Die Wundergeschichten*, ed. Hilka, i, p. 236.

Earlier, before he had accepted that commission, he had claimed in a homily that one of his monks had bluntly told the archbishop to his face that he was 'a good duke, but not a good bishop'.¹¹⁰ Caesarius, therefore, seems to have been making the best of a bad job. Nor did any of these five murdered prelates become the centre of a cult. If, for example, the author of Frederick's *vita* was trying to promote one, he had no effect, for loyalty, identification and liturgical commemoration at Liège by the mid-twelfth century became ever more centred on the Merovingian-era martyr Bishop Lambert, whose remains were translated to a new tomb in 1143, and Frederick was swiftly forgotten.¹¹¹

If these were the slain bishops deemed most worthy of some memorial, what about the others? It is probable that in many cases such commemoration was deemed clearly inappropriate. How, for example, would one celebrate such secular-minded bishops as Conrad of Würzburg or Otto II of Utrecht? Conrad's support for Philip of Swabia in the dispute about the kingship after 1198 had led the rival king, Otto of Brunswick, to denounce him to the pope as 'a scandalous person' who was unfit to be a bishop, and while such a claim was *parti pris* there was still evidence to back up this accusation, not least his relentless and unscrupulous careerism.¹¹² Otto of Utrecht had not only been killed in battle while leading his army, but his episcopate had been disastrous for his see. The historian of the church of Utrecht made no bones about this.¹¹³

He found the church free from all debt, the bishopric rich and well-furnished, and the episcopal revenues paid in full and most promptly, free from all yoke. Hence he started his rule most prosperously ... but his later rule was very different from what happened at first, since afterwards he expended both his and others' property on wars, and especially civil and internecine conflicts.

Later on, the same author concluded his account of Otto's career by saying that he had reduced his bishopric and its inhabitants to poverty, and 'dragged with him to death and destruction both his men and what was left of his bishopric, and its character and reputation'.¹¹⁴

Secondly, to what extent did those who murdered, or inflicted violence upon, bishops suffer appropriate punishment or make amends for their crime? Once again, the answer would seem to be very rarely.

110. Ibid., pp. 153–4 (homily 43); Reuter, '*Episcopi cum sua militia*', p. 80.

111. Kupper, 'La double mort de l'évêque de Liège', pp. 168–70.

112. E. Bünz, "Eiferer der Gerechtigkeit" oder "schändliche Person"? Konrad von Querfurt, ein Reichsbischof der Stauferzeit (1194–1202)', in J. Rudolph, ed., *Konrad von Querfurt und die Zeit der Staufer* (Querfurt, 2003), pp. 10–31, at 27.

113. 'Ecclesiam omni debito exutam, episcopatum divitem et habundantem et redditus episcopales invenit plenos et ab omni iugo expeditissimos... sed non sic ultima primis respondebant, qui pluribus postea guerris et maxime civilibus et intestinis sua et non sua expendebat': *Gesta episcoporum Traiectensium*, ed. Weiland, p. 410 (c. 18).

114. Ibid., p. 415 (c. 26).

After the murder of Conrad of Trier, the burgrave went on pilgrimage to Jerusalem, and drowned while on the way there. According to the testimony of Sigebert of Gembloux, writing perhaps a generation later, this journey was on the orders of Henry IV (or more probably Anno of Cologne). But while Conrad's biographer knew of the pilgrimage, he was not aware of any outside pressure, stating, 'I do not know why he was moved to do this', and considered that the death of the burgrave and the various evil ends that allegedly befell the four men who actually committed the murder were simply God's punishment. It seems probable therefore that they had escaped secular retribution.¹¹⁵ It may have been comforting to know that those who killed clerics faced 'certain damnation', as Bernold of Konstanz remarked of the murderer of Abbot Manegold of Isny, but punishment in this world seems rarely to have been exacted.¹¹⁶ After the murder of Arnold of Mainz, a council held in the emperor's presence by the (anti-) pope, Victor IV, in Italy, and then a provincial church council at Erfurt, excommunicated the culprits, but no further retribution was exacted until Frederick Barbarossa returned from Italy in 1163. Some of those who were responsible were then exiled, so we are told by a relatively late source, the privileges of the city were cancelled and its walls sentenced to be destroyed.¹¹⁷ But the *ministeriales* who had plotted against the archbishop, and who were probably the ringleaders of the revolt, seem to have escaped punishment, and indeed remained in control of the archbishopric and its property thereafter—assisted by the fact that Christian, archbishop from 1165, spent almost all his eighteen-year long pontificate in Italy, and only twice actually visited his see.¹¹⁸ The *vita* of Albert of Liège lamented bitterly that his murderers, unlike those of Becket, were welcomed back at the royal court.¹¹⁹ Nor were the two *ministeriales* who slew Conrad of Würzburg in 1202 punished. King Philip had begun to doubt the loyalty of the slippery bishop, who was suspected of wishing to change sides in the civil war then raging in Germany, and so was rumoured not to be altogether sorry at his demise. But, more significantly, the culprits were the nephews of Henry of Kalden, marshal of the royal court and one of the closest and most loyal followers of both Henry VI and Philip—he was indeed the man who later in 1209 avenged Philip's own murder. Retaining his loyalty was far

115. *Chronica Sigeberti Gemblacensis*, a. 381–1111, ed. Ludwig C. Bethmann, MGH, SS, VI (Hannover, 1844), p. 362; *Vita et Passio Conradi*, ed. Waitz, p. 219; Kaiser, 'Mord im Dom', p. 124.

116. *Chroniken Bertholds von Reichenau und Bernolds*, ed. Robinson, p. 539 (tr. Robinson, p. 336).

117. *Das Geschichtswerk des Otto Morena und seiner Fortsetzer*, ed. Güterbock, p. 140; *Cronica S. Petri Erfordensis Moderna*, ed. Holder-Egger, p. 180; Christian, *Liber de calamitate ecclesiae Moguntinae*, ed. Reimer, p. 245 (c. 14); J.B. Freed, *Frederick Barbarossa: The Prince and the Myth* (New Haven, CT, 2016), pp. 310–12.

118. Keupp, 'Reichsministerialen und Bischofsmord', pp. 288–90; Brühl, 'Die Sozialstruktur des deutschen Episkopat', p. 54.

119. *Vita Alberti episcopi Leodiensis*, ed. Heller, pp. 167–8 (cc. 46–7).

more important than punishing his nephews; indeed the Lauterberg chronicler said that 'fear of the marshal' restrained the king from acting against the murderers.¹²⁰ In another high-profile murder case (albeit not of a bishop), that of the Inquisitor Conrad of Marburg in July 1233, public sympathy was clearly on the side of the killers, since Conrad was felt to have been cruelly misusing his authority to extirpate heresy, and contemporary accounts of his death were notably unsympathetic to the victim. The Worms annalist described Count Henry of Sayn, whom Conrad had accused of heresy and who was suspected of organising the murder, as 'a Christian man ... and living most honestly', while another author from Trier even praised him as 'a wall for the house of the Lord'. The count was formally acquitted of any involvement at a diet at Frankfurt in February 1234.¹²¹

One might have expected that the major power seeking justice for murdered bishops or other clerics would have been the papacy. The Second Lateran Council of 1139 had, for example, decreed that only the pope could absolve from excommunication those who laid violent hands on clerics or monks.¹²² Yet, while the loss of the papal registers before 1198 may distort the picture, the evidence from the thirteenth century suggests that papal reaction was often limited, not least because the pontiffs were well aware of the limitations on their ability to secure appropriate punishment. When Innocent III wrote to influential German ecclesiastics concerning sanctions against the murderers of Conrad of Würzburg, his principal concern was to prevent the culprits or their heirs continuing to hold their fiefs from the see.¹²³ Bishop Gerhard of Passau was forced to resign in 1232 after he instigated the killing of one of his canons and the mutilation of several others 'who would not consent to his wicked deeds'. We are told that some of their fellow canons took the severed head of their deceased *confrère* to Rome and showed it to Gregory IX, which must have concentrated the pope's mind and made the scandal impossible to ignore. Gerhard was certainly degraded; he was already *quondam* bishop by the end of August 1232 when the pope instructed the canons to send a delegation to Rome

120. *Chronik des Lauterbergs*, ed. Naß, p. 186: 'Some said that he did not really regret the death of the bishop because the latter had begun to support the party of King Otto, while others maintained that he was unable to sentence the murderers because of his fear of the marshal'. Keupp, 'Reichsministerialen und Bischofsmord', pp. 293–6. For Henry's revenge killing of Otto of Wittelsbach, see *Annales Marbacenses*, ed. Bloch, p. 78.

121. *Chronica Regia Coloniensis*, ed. Waitz, pp. 264–5; *Annales Marbacenses*, ed. Bloch, p. 95; 'Annales Erphordenses Fratrum Praedicatorum', in *Monumenta Erpbesfurtensia*, ed. Holder-Egger, pp. 86–7; *Annales Wormatienses*, MGH SS, XVII, pp. 39–40; *Gesta Treverorum, continuatio quarta*, p. 402; J.J. Halbekann, *Die älteren Grafen von Sayn* (Wiesbaden, 1997), pp. 379–92.

122. *Sacrorum Conciliorum Nova et Amplissima Collecta*, ed. Giovanni Battista Mansi (31 vols, Florence, 1759–98), xxi, p. 530.

123. *Die Register Innocenz' III., 5 Pontifikatsjahr 1202/1203*, ed. O. Hageneder, C. Egger, K. Rudolf and A. Sommerlechner (Vienna, 1993), pp. 298–302 (no. 154) (Jan. 1203); *Die Register Innocenz' III., 6 Pontifikatsjahr 1203/1204*, ed. O. Hageneder, J.C. Moore and A. Sommerlechner (Vienna, 1995), pp. 193–6 (no. 113), 196–7 (no. 114) (July 1203).

to choose a new bishop in his presence. But although Pope Gregory continued to be concerned with the affairs of this see, he seems mainly to have been worried about Bishop Gerhard's financial mismanagement and its parlous economic state.¹²⁴ Another source claimed that when Gregory was informed of the murder of Conrad of Marburg and of the execution of two other friars who had been involved in his inquisition he simply exclaimed in disgust, 'the Germans always were mad (*furiosi*) and now they have mad judges too'.¹²⁵

Nevertheless, the popes do seem to have made some effort in this respect. When, after a long-running dispute about tithes, Bishop Bruno of Meissen was imprisoned in 1222 and one of his chaplains mutilated, Honorius III excommunicated the culprits, although the main impetus for making the sinners do penance and pay compensation came from the Landgrave of Thuringia.¹²⁶ The two bishops who colluded in the murder of Engelbert of Cologne had to go to Rome and both were subsequently deposed from office by a provincial synod called under papal auspices, while the actual murderer, Count Frederick, was excommunicated and went to Rome to seek absolution, but this was refused.¹²⁷ Gregory IX ordered the man who murdered Bishop Berthold of Chur in 1233 to expiate his crime by a pilgrimage to the Holy Land.¹²⁸ Nevertheless, the strong impression remains that such papal action probably worked better against guilty churchmen than laymen, and was only really effective when backed up by allies on the ground.

There were indeed only two cases where those who slew bishops are known to have received condign punishment. Matthew, the predecessor and murderer of Rainald of Toul, was put to death soon afterwards by his own uncle, Duke Thierry of Upper Lotharingia—one report suggests that he was left to die in an iron cage. Here the duke seems to have been anxious not to be thought complicit in the bishop's death, and hence took such drastic action against the culprit to prove his innocence.¹²⁹

124. Herman of Niederaltaich, *Annales*, ed. Philippe Jaffé, MGH, SS, XVII, pp. 391–2; *Les Registres de Grégoire IX*, ed. Lucien Auvray (4 vols, Paris, 1896–1955), nos 845, 856 (the election), 857, 1465, 3124.

125. *Annales Wormatienses*, p. 40.

126. *Urkundenbuch der Markgrafen von Meissen und Landgrafen von Thüringen*, ed. Otto Posse, Codex Diplomaticus Saxoniae (3 vols, Leipzig, 1882–98), i, pp. 85–6 (no. 92), 90 (no. 97) (this last also in *Registrum Honorii Papae III*, ed. Pietro Pressutti [2 vols, Rome, 1888–95], ii, p. 121 [no. 4272]).

127. *Die Wundergeschichten*, ed. Hilka, iii, p. 279; *Emonis Chronicon*, ed. Ludwig Weiland, MGH, SS, XXIII, pp. 510–11.

128. Reinhold Röhricht, *Die Deutschen im Heiligen Lande* (Innsbruck, 1894), p. 127. For the murder, *Annales Marbacenses*, ed. Bloch, p. 95; *Annales Colmarienses minores*, MGH, SS, XVII, p. 189; 'Liber Anniversariorum Ecclesiae Maioris Curiensis', in *Necrologia Germaniae*, I: *Dioecesis Augustensis, Constantiensis, Curiensis*, ed. Franz Ludwig Baumann, MGH (Hannover, 1888), p. 637.

129. *Chronicon Albrici monachi Trium Fontium*, ed. Paul Scheffer-Boichorst, MGH, SS, XXIII, p. 906. Richer, *Gesta Senoniensis abbatiae*, ed. Waitz, pp. 286–8 (III. 3–4), who said that the duke killed his nephew with a spear. *Epistolae Saeculi XIII e Regestis Pontificum Romanorum Selectae* [hereafter *Epp. saec. XIII*], ed. Karl Rodenberg, MGH (3 vols, Berlin, 1883–94), i, p. 30 (no. 38).

The other killer to pay the ultimate penalty for his crime was Frederick of Isenburg, the murderer of Engelbert of Cologne. Here retribution came from the latter's successor Henry and, above all, the people of Cologne, who captured the count after his return from Rome and, after he had made his confession, had him broken on the wheel.¹³⁰ But this execution was most unusual—those who killed bishops seem generally to have got away with their crime; they were either too powerful or well-connected, or there was no will to exact punishment.

The third issue which we need to consider is the role of bishops themselves as the guilty parties in meting out violence or even committing murder. Bishops were, as we have seen, accustomed to leading armies and actively involved in warfare. Nor did they shrink from ravaging the lands of their enemies, despite the undoubted suffering that this caused to the inhabitants.¹³¹ And Gebhard of Passau was by no means the only prelate to commission violence against other clerics. During the early 1070s a dispute between the bishops of Prague and Olmütz in Bohemia (which the German rulers certainly considered to be part of their empire) led the former personally to lead an assault on the latter, and subsequently one of his vassals waylaid and mutilated the messenger who had been sent to complain to the pope about this attack.¹³² In 1219 Honorius III ordered an investigation into a later bishop of Olmütz who was alleged to have committed two murders as well as a string of sexual offences.¹³³ But such bad behaviour was not limited to Bohemian bishops. Thus Count Hugh of Egisheim was murdered in his bedchamber in 1089 by servants of Bishop Otto of Straßburg, having 'trusted too much in the false bishop'.¹³⁴ The latter's successor at Straßburg, Conrad, was deposed in 1123 for his part in the murder of Duke Berthold of Zähringen.¹³⁵ Bishop Eckbert of Bamberg was strongly suspected to have been an accessory in the murder of King Philip, while the latter was staying in his episcopal palace, in 1208 and spent a long time in exile as a result.¹³⁶ The involvement of Dietrich of Münster and Engelbert of Osnabrück in the murder of their cousin Engelbert of Cologne, and the misdeeds of Gebhard of Passau, have already been discussed. Bishop Albrecht of Regensburg and the abbot

130. *Chronica Regia Coloniensis*, ed. Waitz, pp. 258–9.

131. Thus Bishop Dietrich of Münster devastated the land around one of his enemies' castles in 1016, and Bishop Wolfer of Passau ravaged the lands of two local counts in 1199: Thietmar, *Chronicon*, ed. Holtzmann, pp. 457–8 (VII. 48) (tr. Warner, p. 341); *Annales Sancti Rudberti Salisburgensis*, ed. Wattenbach, pp. 778–9.

132. Cosmas of Prague, *Chronica Boemorum*, ed. Bretholz and Weinberger, pp. 121–3 (II. 27–8) (tr. Wolverson, pp. 146–9).

133. *Epp. saec. XIII*, i, p. 65 (no. 90). Also *Registrum Honorii III*, ed. Pressutti, i, p. 301 (no. 1812).

134. *Chroniken Bertholds von Reichenau und Bernolds*, ed. Robinson, p. 476 (tr. Robinson, p. 296).

135. *Annalista Saxo*, ed. Naß, p. 576.

136. *Annales Marbacenses*, ed. Bloch, pp. 78–9; J.R. Lyon, *Princely Brothers and Sisters: The Sibling Bond in German Politics, 1100–1250* (Ithaca, NY, 2013), pp. 163–70.

of St Emmeran in that city both took part in an attempt to murder King Conrad IV by the see's *ministeriales* in December 1250.¹³⁷ And in 1278 Count William IV of Jülich was murdered by the people of Aachen, allegedly 'with the knowledge and consent (*de scitu et consensu*) of Archbishop Siegfried of Cologne'.¹³⁸ Nor indeed was such criminal activity confined to bishops—in 1090 Margrave Ekkehard II of Meissen was killed in an ambush, allegedly set up by the Abbess of Quedlinburg.¹³⁹ Furthermore, episcopal *ministeriales* might take the law into their own hands, with or without the consent or even knowledge of their lord, as when in 1152 the knights of the bishopric of Hildesheim murdered Count Herman II of Winzenburg, a dangerous neighbour of the see, and his pregnant wife.¹⁴⁰

That German churchmen were sometimes agents of or accessories to violence should hardly surprise us. They were, after all, almost invariably from the nobility, and although most had been destined for the Church from an early age, and probably educated in a cathedral school,¹⁴¹ they still shared in the values, and all too often the behaviour, of their class. Bishop Otto of Straßburg was, for example, a younger brother of Duke Frederick of Swabia, the founder of the Staufien dynasty, Eckbert of Bamberg a son of Duke Berthold V of Merania (d. 1204), and Abbess Adelheid of Quedlinburg the sister of Emperor Henry IV. And the nobility of Germany resorted to violence and blood feud, and often to outright murder, with an enthusiasm that had no parallel among their contemporaries in other kingdoms. While, as some historians have argued, even feuds had rules and there were mechanisms to bring them to an end, these were often honoured in the breach rather than the observance. All too often ideas of fair play and chivalry went by the board.¹⁴² Nor were rulers able to prevent such feuds, even though they might try in individual cases to resolve them. They did indeed from the early twelfth century onwards attempt to impose peace agreements on their nobles, but the very frequency of these suggests that they were far from effective. Nor did such agreements or pronouncements seek entirely to ban feuds and private warfare, but simply to regulate

137. Herman of Niederaltaich, *Annales*, ed. Jaffé, p. 395.

138. *Annales breves Wormatienses*, MGH, SS, XVII, pp. 74–9, at 78.

139. *Chroniken Bertholds von Reichenau und Bernolds*, ed. Robinson, p. 481 (tr. Robinson, p. 299).

140. *Annales Palidenses auctore Theodoro monacho*, MGH, SS, XVI, p. 86. Other instances are cited by Reuter, 'Peace-Breaking, Feud, Rebellion and Resistance', p. 371.

141. J. Barrow, 'Education and the Recruitment of Cathedral Canons in England and Germany, 1100–1225', *Viator*, xx (1989), pp. 117–38, especially 120–24.

142. For example, the assassination of Count Ulrich of Pfirt by Barbarossa's son Otto, count palatine of Burgundy, in 1197 at a conference where they were supposed to be making peace: *Annales Marbacenses*, ed. Bloch, p. 70. On rules and conflict resolution, see especially G. Althoff, *Family, Friends and Followers: Political and Social Bonds in Early Medieval Europe*, tr. C. Carroll (Cambridge, 2004), pp. 147–52; Brown, *Violence in Medieval Europe*, pp. 135–63 (largely with reference to Thietmar of Merseburg); Reinle, 'Violence, Feud and Peacemaking', especially pp. 185–90.

conflicts and to mitigate their impact. Thus in December 1188, before departing on crusade, Frederick Barbarossa issued an edict concerning feuds, but his concern was simply to limit the means by which these were conducted, primarily to prevent arson and also to ensure that the commencement of any dispute was announced in advance.¹⁴³ Furthermore, political assassination was a normal part of politics in Germany in a way that it was not elsewhere, and notably in France or England, where rulers were increasingly concerned to outlaw private violence and punish offenders. Lay nobles were all too often the victims of targeted assassination, including indeed the highest of the land. The anti-king Herman of Salm was murdered in an inheritance dispute with his relatives in 1088.¹⁴⁴ Philip of Swabia was slain by one of his own allies, whom he had offended by refusing him his daughter's hand in marriage, in 1208.¹⁴⁵ Conrad IV survived the assassination attempt at Regensburg in December 1250 by sheer luck, hiding under a bench while the murderers killed one of his servants whom they thought was him. King Albrecht (of Habsburg) was killed by his nephew in 1308.¹⁴⁶ But such murders were not confined to kings, and numerous lay nobles died by violence (far too many to list in full here), often for the same reasons as did their episcopal relatives: at the hands of irate townspeople,¹⁴⁷ or their own or other people's *ministeriales*,¹⁴⁸ by local rivals,¹⁴⁹

143. Burchard of Ursberg, *Chronicon*, ed. Holder-Egger and Simson, pp. 65–9; also in *Die Urkunden Friedrichs I*, ed. Appelt et al., iv, pp. 275–7 (no. 988).

144. I.S. Robinson, *Henry IV of Germany, 1056–1106* (Cambridge, 1999), pp. 268–9.

145. The fullest accounts are by Arnold of Lübeck, *Chronica Slavorum*, ed. Lappenberg, pp. 281–4 (VII. 12) (tr. Loud, pp. 286–90); *Regestum Innocenti III papae super negotio Romani Imperii*, ed. Kempf, pp. 347–9 (no. 152).

146. 'Chronica de Gestis Principum', in *Bayerische Chroniken des XIV Jahrhunderts*, ed. G. Leidinger, MGH, SS rer. Germ., XIX (Hannover, 1918), pp. 58–9.

147. For example, Count Dietrich of Falkenburg, brother of the then archbishop, by the men of Cologne in 1268, *Menkonis Chronicon*, ed. Ludwig Weiland, MGH, SS, XXIII, pp. 553–4; Count William of Jülich by the men of Aachen in 1278 (above, n. 137); and Count Ludwig of Homberg, a relative of King Rudolf, killed by the citizens of Berne in 1289, *Annales Colmarenses maiores*, ed. Philippe Jaffé, MGH, SS, XVII, p. 216.

148. For example, Count Sighard of Burghausen by his own and other people's *ministeriales* at Regensburg in 1104, *Frutolf und Ekkehard's Chroniken*, ed. Schmale and Schmale Ott, p. 186 (tr. McCarthy, pp. 174–5); *Annalista Saxo*, ed. Naß, p. 512; *Annales Augustani a. 973–1104*, ed. Georg Heinrich Pertz, MGH, SS, III (Hannover, 1839), p. 136; Reuter, 'Peace-Breaking, Feud, Rebellion and Resistance', pp. 356–7; Count William IV of Burgundy by his own men in 1127, *Annales Sancti Disibodi*, MGH, SS, XVII, p. 23; *Annalista Saxo*, ed. Naß, pp. 592–3; Count Burchard of Luckenheim ambushed and killed by the knights of his own lord, Herman II of Winzenburg, in 1130, *Annalista Saxo*, ed. Naß, pp. 592–3; *Chronicon Gozecense*, ed. Rudolf Koepke, MGH, SS, X (Hannover, 1852), p. 155. Duke Bratislav of Bohemia was assassinated by one of his own huntsmen in 1100: *Annalista Saxo*, ed. Naß, p. 500.

149. The murder of Count Frederick of Goseck in 1085, ambushed while he was hunting, was probably due to this, although the chronicler of his family monastery was uncertain as to the exact cause: *Chronicon Gozecense*, ed. Koepke, p. 146. Count Emicho of Leinigen was murdered by the knights of Duke Frederick (II) of Swabia in 1117: *Frutolf und Ekkehard's Chroniken*, ed. Schmale and Schmale Ott, p. 336 (tr. McCarthy, p. 263). Henry the Proud, duke of Bavaria, was saved by one of his own men taking a blow meant for him, in a dispute with a local count over the succession to the bishopric of Regensburg c.1132–3: *Historia Welforum Weingartensis*, ed. Ludwig Weiland, MGH, SS, XXI (Hannover, 1869), p. 465 (c. 19). Cf. J.B. Freed and P. Geary, 'Literacy

disputes within their own families,¹⁵⁰ personal slights,¹⁵¹ or occasionally they were simply the victims of random violence and the weakness of law enforcement.¹⁵²

Finally, there was the question of episcopal lordship. German bishops acted as territorial lords in a way that prelates in other kingdoms did not. It was not just that sees were wealthy, possessed extensive lands, and often had significant military followings. They also possessed judicial rights—from the time of Otto III onwards, but especially during the first half of the eleventh century, rulers had often granted comital powers to bishops.¹⁵³ Increasingly, too, they gained regalian rights over tolls and minting, and by the late twelfth century were considered to be among the imperial princes. Occasionally they might be formally installed as provincial rulers, as when Barbarossa appointed the bishop of Würzburg as duke of eastern Franconia in 1168 and the archbishop of Cologne as duke of Westphalia in 1180. These episcopal rights and powers were confirmed, and made more general, by Frederick II's treaty with the ecclesiastical princes in 1220. As local lords they were therefore on a par with secular princes, and like them they were concerned to develop and enhance their own territories, and in competition with their neighbours to do so.¹⁵⁴ The involvement of prelates in warfare was by the thirteenth century almost exclusively the consequence of their role as imperial princes, and a number of the killings of bishops discussed above were related, to a greater or lesser degree, to their role as territorial lords and the impact of that lordship. Townsmen and *ministeriales* tried to escape from episcopal lordship or resented the efforts of prelates to exercise this. Otto of Utrecht, for example, died while trying to restore his see's lordship over the county of Drenthe, granted to it by

and Violence in Twelfth-Century Bavaria: The "Murder Letter" of Count Sibito IV', *Viator*, xxv (1994), pp. 115–29, for an example from the reign of Frederick Barbarossa.

150. Count Frederick of Pfirt was murdered by his own son c.1233: *Annales Marbacenses*, ed. Bloch, p. 95. A dangerous dispute arose c.1125 between Count Conrad of Wettin and his cousin Henry, margrave of Meissen, when Conrad questioned the legitimacy of the son born posthumously to another member of this family: *Chronik des Lauterbergs*, ed. Naß, pp. 85–6, although the principal victim was a leading *ministerialis* of Conrad, blinded and mutilated by his enemies.

151. Count Florenz of West Friedland was ambushed and murdered in 1132 after he had begun a feud with the family of a woman whom he had sought to marry and her uncle had refused him. The murderers were her two brothers: *Annales Egmundani*, ed. Georg Heinrich Pertz, MGH, SS, XVI, p. 453. Duke Conrad of Swabia was murdered in 1196, allegedly by the husband of a woman he had raped, Burchard of Ursperg, *Chronicon*, ed. Holdere-Egger and Simson, p. 74.

152. Two of the sons of Otto of Nordheim, former duke of Bavaria and a key leader of the Saxon rebellion against Henry IV, died in such incidents in 1100 and 1103, one killed by sailors in Frisia, the other in a robbery while travelling: *Frutolfs und Ekkehard's Chroniken*, ed. Schmale and Schmale Ott, p. 336 (tr. McCarthy, pp. 193–4).

153. H. Hoffmann, 'Grafschaften in Bischofshand', *Deutsches Archiv für Erforschung des Mittelalters*, xlvii (1990), pp. 375–480.

154. A. Bihrer, 'Forms and Structures of Power: Ecclesiastical Lordship', in Loud and Schenk, eds, *Origins of the German Principalities*, pp. 83–100; *Die Urkunden Friedrichs I*, ed. Appelt et al., iii, pp. 5–7 (no. 546), 362–3 (no. 795). English translations of the 1180 and 1220 documents in Loud and Schenk, eds, *Origins of the German Principalities*, pp. 349–55.

Henry II and the early Salians.¹⁵⁵ Neighbouring lords feared the claims of episcopal lords, as apparently in the case of Engelbert of Cologne, or fought with them to secure local predominance, especially as royal power atrophied in the thirteenth century. Bishops were drawn overwhelmingly from the aristocracy, and generally from the higher ranks of that class, and all too often they behaved in a manner that was little different from their secular relations. In those circumstances, for all the Church's insistence that bishops were different, and sacrosanct, attacks upon them must frequently have seemed to laymen as justifiable, as they were within the context of lay society. This was despite the fact that many of the killings discussed above were by their circumstances clearly 'murder' as defined by secular law and custom—involving as they so often did concealment, conspiracy, treachery and disloyalty—and hence the term has been used unapologetically in the discussion above. But in the violent politics of medieval Germany such killings, whether of clerics or laymen, were all too frequent.

One might well argue that, in the perennial debate about the so-called German *Sonderweg*, whether Germany was different from other kingdoms in the Middle Ages, the frequency and savagery of this recourse to violence was one of the key areas of difference. The Church was not immune from this prevailing violence, and the lordships and powerful resources of many bishoprics, the extensive and often ill-disciplined military followings, disputes with the inhabitants of episcopal cities, the warlike propensities of many bishops and the family ties between prelates and lay nobility, all contributed to the risks which bishops in particular ran. The extensive body count among German bishops, unprecedented in other kingdoms, was the result.

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155. Hoffmann, 'Grafschaften in Bischofshand', pp. 440–41.