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"Signiferi et duces esse dicuntur Georgius, Mauricius, Mercurius and Demetrius": Apparitions of Warrior Saints on the Battlefields (11th-13th Centuries)

Esther Dehoux

Abstract
Chronicles, hagiographic texts, songs and poems all mention saints such as George, Demetrius, Maurice, Peter and Michael appearing on the battlefields. Dating from the 11 th-13th centuries, these writings are part of a specific context, marked by the reform of the Church and the tensions that this caused, particularly in the Empire, the demands and expectations, both political and spiritual, of the men-of-war, as well as the expeditions conducted against the Muslims. These appearances helped to legitimise the causes defended and the battles fought. They also bear witness to the existence of a particular kind of pastoral care, aimed at the bellatores*, and to its success, as they reveal the development of a piety particular to warriors.*

Keywords
Crusades; Holy warriors; Legitimation; Preaching; Devotion; Piety; Poems; Old French Epic; Hagiography; Chronicles.

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"SIGNIFERI ET DUCES ESSE DICUNTUR GEORGIUS, MAURICIUS, MERCURIUS AND DEMETRIUS": APPARITIONS OF WARRIOR SAINTS ON THE BATTLEFIELDS (11TH-13TH CENTURIES)

Esther Dehoux*

In the months following the English victory at Mons in August 1914, some people claimed to have seen medieval archers led by St George, others a luminous cloud or warrior angels. Though varied in detail, these accounts all trace back to a short story titled *The Bowmen*, published on 29 September 1914 by the fantasy writer Arthur Machen.[1] While clearly fictional,[2] the narrative enjoyed considerable appeal, reflecting the long-standing affinity between imaginative storytelling and propaganda. Indeed, visions of saints - whether warriors or not - were not uncommon on historical battlefields, and many texts from the eleventh to the thirteenth centuries, a period marked by profound transformation associated with the fragmentation of the Carolingian Empire and the reform movements within the Church, attest to such phenomena. Chronicles, hagiographic accounts, and old French epics all feature these saintly apparitions. In these writings, the *sanctus bellator* resembles the warrior of the time, appearing at the heart of the battle, wielding weapons, and closely familiar with the concrete realities of warfare. This essay aims to demonstrate how these diverse sources contributed to broader efforts to legitimize warfare and, through the development of a pastoral discourse attuned to the social and political

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[1] The text can be accessed at the following website: https://www.eastoftheweb.com/short-stories/U Books/Bowm849.shtml

[2] G. Blondeau, *"Des archers dans la cité de Saint-Georges: la légende des anges de Mons (1914-1918),"* in *Le feu et la folie: l'irrationnel et la guerre (fin du Moyen Âge-1920)*, ed. Laurent Vissière and Marion Trévisi (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2016), 19-38.

conditions of the time, to affirm the place and define the mission of the man-of-war.

I. Legitimising arguments

In medieval narratives, the presence of saints on the battlefield often serves as a powerful literary and ideological device. By describing one or more saints leading an army, medieval authors introduced a key element of legitimisation that not only validated the military action but also strengthened the authority of its initiator by presenting the cause as divinely endorsed. Yet the choice of saint is far from arbitrary. Invoking the Apostles, the Archangel Michael, or martyr-warriors such as George or Maurice shifts the focus from legitimising a specific campaign to articulating the social and spiritual role of the *bellator*.

A. Defending a cause[3]

In the *Liber ad Henricum IV imperatorem*, written in 1085–1086, Benzo of Alba - a fervent supporter of Emperor Henry IV - recounts the confrontation that took place in Rome on 14 April 1062. The clash pitted the supporters of Peter Cadalus, bishop of Parma and (anti)pope elected by partisans of Empress Agnes, the emperor's mother, against the forces loyal to Pope Alexander II. Known as Honorius II, Cadalus is portrayed by Benzo as victorious, with the imperial armies prevailing in the conflict. Twenty years after the event, tensions between the Empire and the papacy remained high. Benzo of Alba, recounting both the battle and the entrance of the Cadalus into Rome, emphasised that the antipope was accompanied by saints to underscore that his undertaking enjoyed heavenly assistance and, consequently, divine favour.[4] Twice he specifically mentions the presence of the Apostles. In the first instance, he attributes the victory over the Normans allied with Alexander II not to the strength of Cadalus's supporters, but explicitly to the intervention of Christ's apostolic companions. In a later episode, Benzo recounts how these same Normans attempted to ambush the imperial troops, but the attack was thwarted - again, thanks to the guidance and support of the Apostles.

[3] This paragraph builds in part on findings presented in an earlier contribution by the author: "*Adest noster exercitus previis apostolis cum Mauricio et Carpophoro*. Des saints sur le champ de bataille (XI^{e}-XII^{e} siècles)," in *Le miracle de guerre dans la chrétienté occidentale*, ed. Philippe Desmette and Philippe Martin (Paris: Maisonneuve & Larose, 2018), 55-64.

[4] Benzo of Alba, *Ad Henricum IV imperatorem*, ed. Georgius Heinricus Pertz, in *M.G.H., Scriptores*, XI (Stuttgart, 1854), II, 18, 620-621.

Two features lend Benzo of Alba's narrative its distinctive character. The first is the collective presence of "the holy Apostles", or simply "the Apostles". Tradition holds that they divided the world among themselves for missionary work; yet in Benzo they appear united at Rome, accompanying Peter Cadalus and leading him "to the church of blessed Peter", indeed '"o the temple of blessed Peter", in opposition to the adherents of Alexander II. Notably, Benzo does not ascribe any hierarchical order among them; even Peter holds no privileged place. Simply unity, not primacy, is the governing principle. The second distinctive feature lies in Benzo's vexillological precision. He describes each of the Apostles as bearing a *labarum* - an ensign reminiscent of those carried by the imperial legions after Constantine's visionary dream in 312 - specifically, a *vexillum* surmounted by a Chrismon. Arrayed in this manner, encircling Cadalus, the Apostles symbolically link the Empire to its Late Antique predecessor, presenting it as the embodiment of the true *Ecclesia*, governed through the cooperation of emperor and pope willed by God.

Other details in Benzo of Alba's account also attest to divine approval of the election of Peter Cadalus by the bishops and notables of the Empire and Lombardy, assembled by the Empress Agnes. Notably, the author twice employs the possessive pronoun "his" in relation to God, referring to the Apostles explicitly as *his* ("Apostolos suos"). This rhetorical choice serves to emphasise that the Apostles intervened on the battlefield as God's agents. While the theological meaning is clear, the grammatical construction invites closer scrutiny. In its first occurrence, the possessive refers not only to God, but specifically to the Trinity - whose glory is praised by the people, and who, through *his* Apostles, grants victory. A few lines later, the same possessive is used again to signal that God, through *his* Apostles, continues to bestow new *mirabilia*. His reference to the Trinity, rather than simply to God, evokes not only the Father and the Son but also the Holy Spirit - who, according to tradition, is intimately connected to the Apostles, but who, since the promulgation of the bull *In nomine Domini* in 1059, has also been invoked as the one who inspires the cardinals in the election of the pope. By depicting "*his* (God's) Apostles" surrounding Peter Cadalus, Benzo seeks to overturn that claim and to confer undeniable legitimacy on the candidate of the imperial camp. Further on, referring to the wonders performed through the Apostles, Benzo speaks of God rather than the Trinity. He refers to Acts 5:12, when Luke notes that "many miracles and wonders were done among the people by the hands of the Apostles." This verse concludes the account of the divine punishment of Ananias and Sapphira, whom Peter condemned for lying to and testing the Holy Spirit by secretly withholding part of the money from the sale of their land.[5]

[5] *Acts* 5, 1-11.

Through his rhetorical strategy, Benzo implicitly presents the election of Alexander II as an offence against the Holy Spirit and the subsequent defeat of his supporters as divine retribution. In his view, God disapproved of both the manner and the outcome of Alexander's election. By stating that the Apostles had fought "for the freedom of the Empire" and that Cadalus was "Dei designatione apostolicus" - a friend of the Apostles by God's own appointment - Benzo affirms that God favoured the bishop of Parma and, more broadly, the older tradition of imperial involvement in papal elections.

"*Electus*": this is how Benzo of Alba twice describes Peter Cadalus, underscoring that his claim to the Roman cathedra is in no way illegitimate – it is because he has been chosen that he intends to assume this office. Benzo further reinforces Cadalus's status by referring to him five times as "domnus," a title connoting "a mark of significant respect," "no doubt due to the virtue that those who know him discern in his religious life."[6] This designation adds another layer of legitimacy, pointing to Cadalus's moral and spiritual authority as a consecrated servant of God. On two occasions, however, Benzo refers to him more specifically as "noster domnus," acknowledging that, at that point, Cadalus was recognised as a legitimate pontiff by the imperial camp. The situation changed when the Romans were reconciled and, united in singing the *Kyrie Eleison* and raising their standards, saluted the prelate - thereby acknowledging the validity of his claim, his personal virtues, and his authority. Benzo writes that Cadalus went to Saint Peter's as a "domnus electus," accompanied by the people of Rome, but was enthroned simply as "domnus." In this final instance - uniquely in the text - there is neither possessive nor adjective, for the pontiff is presented, at least in Benzo's eyes, as fully legitimate and universally recognised.

Unity now prevailed, but it required qualification. When Cadalus arrived in Rome, it was not the Romans who opposed him, but only the Normans. Benzo, aware of the role played by the great Roman families in the election of Cadalus, carefully distinguishes between the inhabitants of the city and the supporters of Alexander II. Once the Normans had fled, it was "all the people" who sang the glory of God and accompanied the prelate from Parma. Still, Benzo acknowledges that after the final battle, "our Romans took pity on the other Romans who had gone with the Normans." Unity was therefore recent, but it required qualification, but when Peter Cadalus headed towards Saint Peter's, it was indeed "tota Roma" that accompanied him, with the army and the people standing together on the steps as he sat on the cathedra.

[6] H. Oudart, *Robert d'Arbrissel, ermite et prédicateur* (Spoleto: Fondazione Centro italiano di studi sull'Alto Medioevo, 2010), 138 and 113.

The population rallied behind the Cadalus, but according to Benzo another Roman beat them to it. He writes that the Apostles led Cadalus's troops, but adds two other saints to the ranks: Maurice and Carpophorus. The latter, one of the Four Crowned Saints of Albano, was venerated alongside Secundus, Severian, and Victorinus in one of Rome's oldest basilicas.[7] By highlighting Carpophorus's presence, Benzo signals that this ancient figure of the Roman *sanctorale*, like the Apostles, stood with Peter Cadalus against Alexander II, his counsellor Hildebrand - later Gregory VII - and their Norman allies. Along with Carpophorus, it shows that the Roman saints saw in the Parmesan bishop a defender of both the Church and the Roman people. This claim would have held particular resonance in 1085–1086, when Benzo was writing, since the basilica housing Carpophorus's relics had been destroyed in the great fire set by Robert Guiscard in May 1084.[8] While the devastation caused by the Normans who had come to rescue Gregory VII was still visible - while those same Normans expelled the Antipope Clement III and Emperor Henry IV from the city, and Gregory VII, having fled Rome, was now dead and his successor not yet elected - Benzo recalls events from more than twenty years earlier. In 1062, he writes, Carpophorus had stood among those whom the not-yet Gregory VII opposed. Despite the support of the saints, including Carpophorus, Peter Cadalus was ultimately not chosen. And now, as if in divine retribution that could not be denied, the church of the Four Crowned Saints - along with the city itself - lay in ruins, devastated by Gregory VII's own allies. In 1085–1086, at the height of the controversy - when Clement III, Emperor Henry IV's candidate, could plausibly be regarded as the legitimate pope due to the vacancy of the See of Peter - Benzo entered the fray. Recounting events from decades past, he crafted a narrative often marked by supernatural interventions, using it to support those aligned with his position, to caution his contemporaries, and to urge them, through the lessons of history, to take the emperor's side.

Subsequently, alongside Carpophorus, Maurice also appears at the head of the Cadalus and his supporters. His presence in Benzo's account is far from incidental: it reflects the prominent role the saint had come to occupy within the religious and political imagination of the Empire by the tenth century. From 926, when Henry I acquired Saint Maurice's spear - previously held by the king of Burgundy - the Ottonian kings and later emperors increasingly sought to obtain

[7] J. Guyon, "Les Quatre couronnés et l'histoire de leur culte des origines au début du XI^e siècle," *Mélanges de l'École française de Rome, Antiquité* 87 (1975), 505-561.

[8] H. Taviani-Carozzi, *La Terreur du monde. Robert Guiscard et la conquête normande en Italie. Mythe et histoire* (Paris: Fayard, 1996), 459-468; L. I. Hamilton, "Memory, Symbol, and Arson: Was Rome 'sacked' in 1084?," *Speculum* 78.2 (2003), 378–99.

relics associated with the Theban legionaries.[9] Beginning in 937, these relics were venerated in the Abbey of Saint Maurice in Magdeburg, founded by Otto I and elevated to the status of a metropolitan cathedral in 960, largely due to the wealth of its treasury.[10] The transfer of the Burgundian regalia to Henry III in 1018, followed by the incorporation of Burgundy into the Empire in 1032, marked the culmination of the "Germanization"[11] of the saint of Agaune: he evolved from a personal protector into the dynastic patron saint and, ultimately, the spiritual guardian of the entire Ottonian realm.[12] Thietmar of Merseburg could thus write, at the beginning of the eleventh century, that Maurice was watching over "the salvation of the homeland"[13] and Benzo of Alba recalled, in 1085-1086, that Maurice accompanied Cadalus in 1062. In doing so, they positioned Maurice not simply as a heavenly supporter, but as a divine witness whose presence affirmed the righteousness of the cause and the alignment of the imperial camp with God's will.

Maurice, indeed, is a singular martyr. Two texts written in the fourth and fifth centuries relate his life and the circumstances of his death.[14] According to these accounts, the Theban legion, summoned to Gaul at the emperor's request to suppress a revolt, refused to act when ordered to honour the pagan gods before taking up arms - or, as Eucherius of Lyon relates, when they realized that obedience would mean fighting against fellow Christians. Declared guilty of insubordination, Maurice and his men were tortured and ultimately executed

[9] L. Ripart, "Saint Maurice et la tradition régalienne bourguignonne (443-1032)," in *Des Burgondes au royaume de Bourgogne (V^e^-X^e^ s.)*, ed. Pierrette Paravy (Grenoble: Académie delphinale, 2002), 225-232. [In fact, the early history of the Lance is very hard to establish. For the recent state of research, see M. Schulze-Dörrlamm, "Die heilige Lanze in Wien: Die Frühgeschichte des karolingisch-ottonischen Herrschaftszeichens aus archäologischer Sicht," *Jahrbuch des Römisch-Germanischen Zentralmuseums* 58 (2011): 707–42; F. Kirchweger, "Die Forschung zur Heiligen Lanze," in *Die Heilige Lanze in Wien: Insignie - Relique – Schicksalsspeer*, ed. Franz Kirchweger (Wien: Schriften des Kunsthistorischen Museums, 2005) 10–21.

[10] P. Bertrand, "Le trésor des reliques de Magdebourg sous les Ottoniens," in *Autour de saint Maurice. Politique, société et construction identitaire*, ed. Nicole Brocard, Françoise Vannotti, Anne Wagner (Saint-Maurice, Fondation des archives historiques de l'abbaye de SaintMaurice, 2012), 209-218.

[11] L. Ripart, "Saint Maurice et la tradition régalienne bourguignonne," 225.

[12] Ibid., 229.

[13] Thietmar of Merseburg, *Chronicon*, in *Die Chronik des Bischofs Thietmar von Merseburg und ihre Korveier Uberarbeitung*, *M.G.H., ss. rer. Germ. ns* 9, ed. Robert Holtzmann (Berlin: Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, 1935), II, 17, p. 58.

[14] É. Chevalley, "La Passion anonyme de saint Maurice d'Agaune," *Vallesia* 45 (1990), 37-120; "*Passio Acaunensium martyrum auctore Eucherio episcopo Lugdunensi*," in *Passiones vitaeque sanctorum ævi Merovingici et antiquiorum aliquot*, ed. Bruno Krusch, *M.G.H., srm*, 3 (Hanover, 1896), 20-41.

by beheading. In both versions, Maurice dies not simply because he is a Christian, but because he refuses to obey an unholy command - one that directly contradicts God's will. His presence in Rome in 1062, alongside the Apostles and Carpophorus, is therefore a sign of God's support for Cadalus and the defenders of the imperial cause. It also serves as a warning: Maurice, who gave his life rather than betray the demands of the faith, cannot be imagined as accompanying the papal army whose actions - according to Benzo - run counter to God's will. By pointing out that Maurice was accompanying Cadalus and his men, Benzo of Alba declares the undertaking to be aligned with divine intention. In doing so, he positions Maurice not merely as a heavenly supporter, but as a witness whose presence confirms the righteousness of the imperial cause. To oppose Cadalus - as Alexander II and his allies had done - while Maurice is among his celestial companions, is, in Benzo's view, to resist the fulfilment of God's plan. His words, written in 1085–1086, thus function as encouragement to the emperor's supporters, exhortation to those wavering in their allegiance, and warning to those aligned with the papal cause.

B. Defining a place and a role

In the eleventh century, other saints were likewise invoked to legitimize military campaigns, particularly those directed against Muslims. Such is the case in a poem composed in Pisa following the joint Pisan and Genoese victory over the North African cities of Mahdia and Zawila in 1087.[15] To encourage the troops before the battle, the bishop reminded them of the Old Testament accounts of David and the Maccabees, who had triumphed with God's help. The soldiers then confessed, received communion, and collectively praised Christ, invoking his name as they marched into battle. As the armies rushed towards each other, a most terrible sound was heard: the Archangel Michael appeared, intervening in the fight and attacking the Muslims as though they were the dragon of Revelation. At his side was the Apostle Peter, brandishing both cross and sword. Their visible, active presence not only comforted the Christian warriors but also led them to victory.[16]

The idea of the Archangel and the Apostle intervening in a battle between Christians and Muslims was not new. Half a century earlier, in the 1040s, Andrew of Fleury, a monk of Saint-Benoît-sur-Loire, wrote a continuation of the

[15] For a critical edition and accompanying study, see H. E. J. Cowdrey, "The Mahdia Campaign of 1087," in *Popes, Monks and Crusaders*, ed. Herbert E. J. Cowdrey (London: The Hambledon Press, 1984), XII 1-XII 29.

[16] H. E. J. Cowdrey, "The Mahdia Campaign," XII 26.

Miracula sancti Benedicti.[17] In it, he reports that, frustrated by the disasters caused by Saracen incursions into Catalonia, four counts of Barcelona – Guifred II of Cerdanya, Ermengol II of Urgell, Bernat Tallaferro of Besalú and Ramon Borell of Barcelona[18] – decided to join forces to combat these raids. Although there were only 500 of them to fight 20,000 opponents, Bernat Tallafero reassured the Catalan warriors that they had nothing to worry about, as they would only have to fight enemies who were outnumbered ten to one, as Sts. Michael, Peter and the Virgin Mary would take care of the other three quarters of the Muslim fighters.[19] Encouraged by this assurance, the Catalan troops launched themselves into battle and emerged victorious.[20] Andrew of Fleury offers no further details of the battle itself, but in the following chapter, he reports that a cleric from Monte Gargano – at the sanctuary dedicated to the Archangel Michael – received a vision of the rejoicing of the angels and the Virgin in the aftermath of the triumph they had secured for the Christians on the Iberian Peninsula.[21]

While the Archangel's intervention during battle had served to legitimise earlier expeditions and to encourage future campaigns against the same adversaries, this role gradually recedes in later narratives. St Michael ceases to be the central figure of divine intervention on the battlefield. Instead, other holy warriors take centre stage, as the Church increasingly associated the Archangel with clerical ministries - an association intended to emphasise both the singularity and the pre-eminence of the ecclesiastical estate.[22] This shift is evident in Geoffroy Malaterra's account of the deeds of Roger I, count of Calabria and Sicily, and his brother Robert Guiscard, written between 1098 and 1101. Among the events he relates is the Battle of Cerami in 1063. Although the Muslim forces vastly outnumbered the Christians, Roger's rousing speech dispelled any fear. As he finished speaking, a warrior appeared, mounted on a

[17] On this point, see the thesis by C. Dejardin-Bazaille, *Les miracles de saint Benoît d'André de Fleury. Hagiographie et histoire: transcription, traduction et commentaire historique* (Aix-en-Provence: Université de Provence, 2003).

[18] To identify these four counts, we have relied on the genealogical tables II, III and V provided in M. Aurell, *Les noces du comte. Mariage et pouvoir en Catalogne (785-1213)* (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 1995), 558-559 and 561.

[19] Similar motif appears in Raymond of Aguilers's account, who reports that St. Andrew urged the crusaders to engage only one-tenth of the opposing forces, assuring them that George, Demetrius, and Theodore would take on the remaining nine-tenths. See J. Flori, *La guerre sainte. La formation de l'idée de croisade dans l'Occident chrétien* (Paris: Aubier, 2001), 342.

[20] *Les miracles de saint Benoît écrits par Adrevald, Aimoin, André, Raoul Tortaire et Hugues de Sainte-Marie*, l. IV, X and XI, ed. Eugène de Certain (Paris: Renouard, 1858), 187-190.

[21] *Les miracles de saint Benoît*, 190-191.

[22] E. Dehoux, *Saints guerriers. Georges, Guillaume, Maurice et Michel dans la France médiévale* (Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2014), 151-220.

white horse and bearing a spear surmounted by a cross, with a pure white standard. He rode straight toward the front lines, ready for battle. As the fighting commenced, his bravery and martial prowess were evident to all, as he fearlessly charged into the densest ranks of the enemy. Stunned and elated, the Norman soldiers followed him, invoking both God and the mysterious rider - whom they believed to be none other than St. George.[23]

Around the same time, Saint George came to the fore in crusade narratives, particularly in accounts of the Battle of Antioch in June 1098. After seven months of a difficult siege, the Crusaders took the city. However, the citadel remained in the hands of the Muslims led by Shams ad-Dawla, the son of the governor of Antioch, and continued to resist Christian assaults. On 5 June, Kerbogha's troops, who had come as reinforcements, encircled the city, placing the crusaders in a precarious position. Internal tensions, desertions, and the weight of prolonged hardship compounded their difficulties. Visions announcing began to multiply, but it was the discovery of the Holy Lance on 14 June that truly revived the crusaders' morale and enthusiasm. With negotiations having failed, confrontation became inevitable. The battle took place on 28 June and ended in a resounding victory for the Crusader forces. Chroniclers writing in the early twelfth century consistently portray the outcome as miraculous. While Fulcher of Chartres notes only that the Muslims were frightened by a sign from heaven,[24] others describe divine intervention in more concrete terms. Raymond of Aguilers, for example, states that, by the power of God, the Crusader troops increased from eight to thirteen divisions and thus became equal in numbers to their enemies.[25] A letter sent to the clergy of Lucca reports that the Christian warriors saw a white banner at the head of their army and a multitude of fighters whose origin was unknown.[26] Most strikingly, the anonymous *De gesta Francorum et aliorum Hierosolimitanorum* describes a moment when the battle seemed lost - until an innumerable host of horsemen clad in white descended from the mountains and turned the tide of battle. This heavenly army, the author specifies, was led by none other than Sts. George, Mercury, and Demetrius.[27]

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[23] Geoffroy Malaterra, *De rebus gestis Rogerii Calabriae et Siciliae comitis et Roberti Guiscardi ducis fratris ejus*, ed. Ernesto Pontieri (Bologna: N. Zanichelli, 1924), 43-44.

[24] *Fulcheri Carnotensis historia hierosolymitana (1095-1127)*, ed. Heinrich Hagenmeyer (Heidelberg: C. Winter, 1913), 255-258.

[25] J. Flori, *Pierre l'Ermite et la première croisade* (Paris: Fayard, 1999), 384-385.

[26] *Die Kreuzzugsbriefe aus den Jahren 1088-1100*, ep. 17, ed. Heinrich Hagenmeyer (Innsbruck: Wagner, 1901), 167.

[27] *Histoire anonyme de la première croisade*, ed. Léon Bréhier (Paris: Honoré Champion, 1964), 151-159.

This episode was widely picked up by later chroniclers who drew on the earliest accounts to shape their own versions of events.[28] One of the most prominent was Peter Tudebode, who, following the *De gesta Francorum*, refers to the miraculous intervention no fewer than three times. According to him, an innumerable host of warriors on white horses - led by Sts. George, Demetrius, Mercury, and even Theodore - swept down from the surrounding hills. They joined the Christian army and drove back any Muslim fighters who had not already been killed.[29] Baldric of Bourgueil also describes this heavenly cavalry: a multitude of horsemen, bearing standards as white as their mounts, descended from the mountain under the command of George, Demetrius, and Mercurius to aid the Christians.[30] In his *Gesta Dei per Francos*, Guibert of Nogent speaks of this "adjutorium," or divine assistance, witnessed by many and led by the "glorious martyrs" George, Mercurius, and Demetrius.[31] Hugh of Fleury, a Benedictine monk, repeats the two key details - the testimony of numerous witnesses and the leadership of the saintly martyrs[32] –, as do Robert the Monk in Reims,[33] and the Englishmen Henry of Huntingdon[34] and William of Malmesbury,[35] all following the author of the *Gesta Francorum Iherusalem expugnatnium*, an anonymous work, though traditionally attributed to Bartolf of Nangis.[36] A few years later, around 1126, inspired by Peter Tudebode's account,

[28] About this point: E. Lapina, *Warfare and the Miraculous in the Chronicles of the First Crusade* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2015); B. C. Spacey, *The Miraculous and the Writing of Crusade Narrative* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2020).

[29] Petrus Tudebodus, *Historia de Hierosolymitano itinere*, ed. John Hugh Hill, Laurita Lyttleton Hill (Paris: Libraire orientaliste P. Geuthner, 1977), 111-113; Petrus Tudebodus, "*Historia peregrinorum euntium Jerusolymam ad liberandum Sanctum Sepulcrum de potestate ethnicorum*," in *Recueil des historiens des croisades*, *Historiens Occidentaux* III (Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1866), 173 and 183.

[30] *The* Historia Ierosolimitana *of Baldric of Bourgueil*, ed. Steven Biddlecombe (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2014), 80-84.

[31] Guibert de Nogent, *Gesta Dei per Francos*, ed. Robert B. C. Huygens (Turnhout: Beprols, 1996), 240-242.

[32] Hugh of Fleury, "*Itineris Hierosolymitani compendium*," in *Recueil des historiens des croisades*, *Historiens occidentaux*, V (Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1895), 365.

[33] Robert the Monk, *Historia Iherosolimitana*, in *Recueil des historiens des croisades*, *Historiens occidentaux*, III, l. VII, ch. XIII, 832.

[34] Henri of Huntingdon, "*De captione Antiochæ a Christianis*," in *Recueil des historiens des croisades*, *Historiens occidentaux*, V (Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1895), 378.

[35] William of Malmesbury, *Gesta regum Anglorum*, ed Roger A.B. Mynors (Oxford-New York: Clarendon Press, 1998), l. IV, 365.3, 638-639.

[36] *Gesta Francorum Iherusalem expugnantium*, in *Recueil des historiens des croisades*, *Historiens occidentaux* III (Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1866), 496.

the author of the *Chronicle of Saint-Maixent* describes the fighting around Antioch and again mentions the intervention of Saint George and his companions.[37]

Whether attested in the Holy Land or in Rome, these apparitions helped to endorse the cause being defended, whether it was that of an anti-pope or that of Christianity, which had to be protected, or Jerusalem, which had to be reconquered. They attest to the support of God and the heavenly hosts for the undertaking. At the same time, they contribute to shaping St. George - and, to a lesser extent, the saints who accompany him - into models held up by clerics for imitation by the men of war. In doing so, these narratives reinforce the place of the warrior within Christian society by defining his mission: to serve an earthly authority that initiates the expedition, distinct from the eschatological authority claimed by the Church itself.

II. Saintly Apparitions as Testimonies of Pastoral Care *ad status*

By invoking St. Michel, then Georges and his companions, the chroniclers were continuing a pastoral approach that had been developing since the tenth century - one that gradually sought to assign the warrior a defined place within Christian society, a role, and ultimately a specific path to salvation. These saints found their way not only into the songs that entertained and preserved memory of the past, but also into narratives that served the purpose of spiritual instruction and conversion. Like certain images, paintings and stained-glass windows, such accounts attest to the success of preaching. They offer evidence for the emergence, particularly from the final decades of the twelfth century onward, of a form of piety specific to the warrior class.

A. Supporting pastoral discourse

In referring to Sts. George, Demetrius, Maurice and other holy warriors, the chroniclers were not introducing anything new. They were simply repeating the names long familiar from preaching - saints commonly invoked when clerics addressed men of war. Their references also serve as testimony to this pastoral practice. Baldric of Bourgueil, for instance, states that in Antioch, the crusaders "saw" what they had already "heard."[38] St. George fighting for the faith. His remark not only confirms the prominent place granted to the Cappadocian warrior in the religious instruction offered to the *bellatores*, but also - though briefly - affirms the notion of war as just, good, even holy. This is evident, for

[37] *La chronique de Saint-Maixent 751-1140*, ed. Jean Verdon (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1979), 160-163.

[38] *The* Historia Ierosolimitana *of Baldric of Bourgueil*, 102.

example, in the *laudes* of Autun from the tenth century,[39] and in those of Arles and Besançon in the eleventh,[40] where St. George's protection is explicitly invoked on behalf of the *exercitus* - now referred to as the *exercitus christianorum* rather than, as in earlier times, the *exercitus Francorum*. This shift reflects the broader social and political transformations linked to the disintegration of the Carolingian empire. The *ordo ad armandum* of Cambrai, dated 1093, also includes a prayer asking God to grant victory "per merita sanctorum martirum tuorum et militum Mauricii, Sebastiani, Georgii." However, the intended beneficiary is not the Christian *exercitus* as a collective force, but rather the individuals who compose it - those who have just taken up arms.[41] By at least the end of the twelfth century, the holy warrior was no longer invoked solely as a protector of armies. He was also expected to extend his benevolence to individual combatants themselves, as the crusaders at Antioch experienced when St. George appeared at their side in battle.

Geoffroy Malaterra confirms this latter point. In his account of the battle of Cerami, he notes that the "quidam eques" who led the Norman troops into combat was immediately and unequivocally identified as St. George.[42] Such a swift recognition can only be understood in light of the established association between conflicts against Muslims and the apparitions of warrior saints - foremost among them St. George - on the battlefield. This connection suggests the existence of a specific pastoral discourse directed to warriors, which praised the military virtues of the Cappadocian saint, emphasised his concern for the fate of Christian troops, and celebrated his active role in fighting the enemies of the faith. The "militarisation" of saints - such as Julian of Brioude, whose personality and hagiographic tradition had become increasingly out of step with the socio-political realities of the time,[43] and the parallel "sanctification" of warriors, most notably Count William - known as St. William of Gellone - also bear witness to the Church's attentiveness to the status of the *bellatores* and the role they occupied within society. For clerics, the challenge was to offer

[39] E. H. Kantorowicz, "Ivories and Litanies," *The Journal of Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 5 (1942): 56-81.

[40] "*Laudes seu* acclamations," in *Sancti Protadii Vesuntini episcopi liturgia*, *PL*, 80, col. 411; A. Prost, "Caractère et signification de quatre pièces liturgiques composées à Metz en latin et en grec au IX^e^ siècle," *Mémoires de la Société nationale des Antiquaires de France* 7 (1876): 178-180.

[41] J. Flori, "Chevalerie et liturgie. Remise des armes et vocabulaire 'chevaleresque' dans les sources liturgiques du IX^e^ au XIV^e^ siècle," *Le Moyen Âge* 84 (1978): 437-438.

[42] Geoffroy Malaterra, *De rebus gestis Rogerii Calabriae et Siciliae comitis*, 43-44.

[43] E. Dehoux, "À l'épreuve de l'an mil. Grandeur et déclin du culte de saint Julien de Brioude (IX^e^-XI^e^ siècle)," in *Brioude aux temps carolingiens*, ed. Alain Dubreucq, Christian Lauranson-Rosaz, Bernard Sanial (Le Puy-en-Velay: Almanach de Brioude, 2010), 279-304.

exemplary figures adapted to contemporary conditions and to the social, political, and spiritual expectations of the lay aristocracy.[44]

Orderic Vitalis makes explicit reference to these saintly figures a few decades later, in the years 1131-1140, when he notes that Gerold, chaplain to the earl of Avranches and Chester, "invited the people of the court as much as he could to correct their lives by offering them the example of their predecessors," among whom he cites Sts. Demetrius and George, Maurice, Eustace and his companions,[45] and that he is interested in the life of William, the count who became a monk at Gellone. These are the saints of the armies - figures whom the Anglo-Norman cleric presents as exemplars to his audience, exhorting them to imitate their virtues, to persevere in the Christian faith and to labour for its propagation, or even its defence, to the point of martyrdom if necessary. For Orderic, as for Gerold, William is the "holy athlete who, after long struggles, renounced the world and fought gloriously for the Lord under the monastic rule."[46] For both men, only two forms of death are truly worthy of a Christian warrior: one that occurs on the battlefield, in defence of the Church or in the effort to expand Christendom, and one that is embraced far from the world, in the silence and discipline of the monastery.[47]

When he copied the *Vita Guillelmi*,[48] the religious of Saint-Évroult did not discard the passages recalling the political and military career of the saint of Gellone and, drawing even on epic tales that mentioned the capture of Nîmes and Orange. He carefully distinguishes between the hagiographic narrative, which he regards as a "relatio," a true and authentic account "read with reverence by studious readers and listened to in the community of brothers," and the "cantilenae" sung "in the vulgar tongue" by *jongleurs*.[49] His reservations about the latter are evident, yet Orderic Vitalis does not condemn the profession of arms. Rather, he urges warriors to "leave the world" and enter "the sheltered harbour of regular life," convinced that a man of war cannot hope to end his days rightly without renouncing the sword. His primary aim, however, appears to be the edification of his fellow monks - perhaps particularly those who struggled with the rigours of monastic life and longed for the worldly past they had left behind.

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[44] M. Aurell, "Conclusions," in *Entre histoire et épopée. Les Guillaume d'Orange (IX^e^-XIII^e^ siècles)*, ed. Laurent Macé (Toulouse: Presses universitaires du Midi, 2005), 268-276.

[45] Orderic Vitalis, *The Ecclesiastical History of Orderic Vitalis*, ed. Marjorie Chibnall, III, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), 216.

[46] Ibid.

[47] J. B. McGregor, "The Ministry of Gerold d'Avranches: Warrior-Saints and Knightly Piety on the Eve of the First Crusade," *Journal of Medieval History* 29 (2003): 219-237.

[48] Orderic Vitalis, *The Ecclesiastical History*, 216-227.

[49] Ibid., 218.

The ambiguity surrounding the figure of William of Gellone reflects the spirit of the time. The model he embodied fulfilled both the spiritual and social aspirations of the aristocracy – but it was the *dux*, the military leader, who truly captivated the imagination, and the clerics were well aware of this. In Brioude, where William laid down his arms before leaving the world, they kept the memory of the episode alive, displaying the count's shield for the faithful, and perhaps placing greater emphasis on his military exploits and physical strength than on his renunciation of worldly life.[50] At Gellone, although pilgrims could obtain a token bearing the effigy of the saint they venerated, the variety of representations offered was limited. William was not depicted as a monk or religious figure. Instead, he appears as a mounted warrior: helmeted, bearing a shield, lance, and standard, and often associated with a tower. He also carries a horn - a reference to his *cort-nez*[51] - and, although the *Vita* makes no mention of it, he is sometimes depicted with an unusually large nose, a clearly deliberate and conscious borrowing from the epic tradition.[52]

Although not favoured by Orderic Vitalis, epic songs nonetheless played a role in the moral and spiritual formation of men of war - just as Arthurian romances contributed to the conversion and edification of their audiences.[53] *La naissance du Chevalier au Cygne*, composed at the end of the twelfth century, recounts, for instance, how newly knighted young men returned to the "moster Saint-Wimer" after a modest supper to stay up all night and listen as a *jongleur* recited the life of Saint Maurice.[54] Crusade songs were no exception: in urging *bellatores* to take up the cross, they readily invoked the apparitions of heavenly armies and their saintly leaders fighting alongside Christian warriors. The

[50] *La Prise d'Orange. Chanson de geste de la fin du XII^e siècle*, ed. Claude Regnier (Paris: Klincksieck, 1983), 79, states that those who "go to Saint Gilles" can see the "escu Guillelme et la targe florie". On this point, see K. A. Smith, "Ungirded for Battle: Knightly Conversion to Monastic Life and the Making of Weapon-Relics in the Central Middle Ages," in *Between Sword and Prayer: Warfare and Medieval Clergy in Cultural Perspective*, ed. Radosław Kotecki, Jacek Maciejewski and John S. Ott (Leiden, Boston (MA): Brill, 2018), 182-206, 182-183.

[51] L. Macé, "Icône du saint, figure du héros: les déclinaisons du cor sur les sceaux et les monnaies dans la Provence et le Languedoc des XII^e-XIII^e siècles," in *Entre histoire et épopée*, 139-154.

[52] E. Dehoux, "'Bien vos connois au cors et au visage, as poinz quarrez et as leës espaules': autour des enseignes de pèlerinage à l'effigie de Guilhem, guerrier saint de Gellone," », in *L'Église et la violence (X^e-XIII^e siècle)*, Cahiers de Fanjeaux 54 (2019): 239-256.

[53] On this point, see M. Aurell, *La légende du roi Arthur, 550-1250* (Paris: Perrin, 2007), 447-510; C. Gîrbea, *Communiquer pour convertir dans les romans du Graal (XII -XIII^ee siècle)* (Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2010).

[54] In the *Naissance du chevalier au cygne*, it is noted that the newly knighted young men returned to the "Saint-Wimer moster" after a "little supper" to stay up all night and listen to a "juggler" "tell" them about the life of the Theban (v. 3176-3195).

Chanson d'Antioche, originally composed by Richard the Pilgrim and later revised by Graindor de Douai in the final years of the twelfth century,[55] recounts the miraculous intervention of St. George and his companions during the capture of the city.[56] Two additional episodes in the poem also highlight the protection these martyr-saints offered to the crusaders. The first one is when Suleiman's men had just been defeated by the troops of Raymond of Saint-Gilles at the Battle of Dorylaeum on 5 July 1097. As the Muslims were preparing to encamp in the Valley of Gurhenia, they were attacked by Sts. George and Demetrius. The two of them caused such panic that Muslim soldiers turned on one another in confusion, slaying each other in the chaos. Those who survived fled in terror, abandoning their weapons and supplies to the Christian victors.[57] Later in the story, Godfrey of Bouillon stands guard as the crusaders rest near Antioch. Alert to the stealthy approach of Muslim forces, he quickly dons his *haubert* and helmet, seizes his sword, shield, and standard, mounts his horse, and rides out to confront the enemy - accompanied by two mysterious knights whom he neither recognises nor addresses. The Saracens, having identified Sts. George and Demetrius among his escorts, are seized with fear and flee. Some are unable to escape and fall to the blades of the three warriors. At daybreak, the Christian troops awaken to find the severed heads of their enemies strewn in the sand - an image that fills them with joy as they realise what has occurred.[58]

La conquête de Jérusalem, another crusade song composed in the last years of the twelfth century, also features the apparitions of holy warriors. After their success in Caesarea, Bohemond, Tancred and their men advanced to Ramla, where the arrival of Muslim reinforcements from Ascalon and Caesarea sparked off a violent confrontation. The situation quickly became dire for the crusaders - if not altogether hopeless - until the miraculous intervention of Sts. George, Bartholomew, Demetrius, and Denis turned the tide.[59] Later in the poem, the saints reappear during the climactic assault on Jerusalem. The city, besieged since 7 June, had stubbornly resisted. But on 15 July, Godfrey of Bouillon

[55] L. A. M. Sumberg, *Étude historique et littéraire de la* Chanson d'Antioche (Paris: Picard, 1968), 361 sees Graindor's poem as an incitement to the Third Crusade and dates its writing to after the Christian defeat of 1187. S. Duparc-Quioc believes it predates the capture of Jerusalem (*La Chanson d'Antioche*, ed. Suzanne Duparc-Quioc (Paris: Librairie orientaliste P. Geuthner 1977), 139).

[56] *La Chanson d'Antioche*, v. 9052-9079.

[57] Ibid., v. 2156-2191.

[58] Ibid., v. 2759-2796.

[59] J. Subrenat (trad.), "Richard le Pelerin, Graindor de Douai, *La Conquête de Jérusalem*," in *Croisades et pèlerinages: récits, chroniques et voyages en Terre sainte (XII^e^-XVI^e^ siècle)*, ed. Danielle Régnier-Bohler (Paris: Robert Laffont, 1997), 191-192.

launched a final offensive. With the aid of George and Demetrius, the crusaders succeeded in breaching the walls and entered the city in triumph.[60]

Recounted by the chroniclers of the First Crusade and evoked in epic narratives directly or indirectly linked to the Eastern expeditions, the intervention of St. George - and, with him, Mercurius, Demetrius, Theodore, and even Maurice – at Antioch in 1098 stands as an essential episode in the promotion of the *sancti bellatores* in Western Christianity. The encouragement to take part in military expeditions to the Holy Land is clear, but the portrayal of the saint on horseback, wielding a lance and striking down an adversary, does more than merely honour the crusader. It enhances the value of the man-of-war in general. It conveys to the warriors that the saints invoked in their prayers are not indifferent to their condition but accompany them on the battlefield. The miracles reported on the battlefields of the Holy Land confirm this message, and, as the chroniclers insist, the witnesses were many.

B. Internalising the message

The French epics offer valuable insights into how this message was received and internalised by warriors. This is particularly evident in the *Chanson d'Aspremont*, composed around 1190, in which St. George approaches Roland, reassures him just as he is about to confront the giant Mandaquin, and invites him to shout his name as he charges.[61] George, once honoured for securing victory and later invoked for the protection of armies, now appears as the one whom the warrior calls upon in the heat of battle - summoned like a comrade-in-arms. This marks a significant development. No longer confined to the *laudes* or prayers recited during rituals such as the presentation of arms, the devotion being encouraged had evolved into something more intimate and personal: a relationship in which the warrior regarded the saint as his "particular patron."

In this passage, the *Chanson d'Aspremont* presents the backstory behind the invocation "Saint Georges!," a formula which, like other expressions of the type or those following the model "Par saint X," appears frequently in romances, *chansons de geste*, and fabliaux. Invoking the saint in this way serves to affirm the truth of a statement and to underscore the seriousness of a commitment.[62] The

[60] Ibid., 282-283.

[61] *Aspremont. Chanson de geste du XII^e siècle*, ed. and trad. François Suard (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2008), v. 8143-8157.

[62] *Le Roman de Renart*, ed. Mario Roques (Paris: Honoré Champion, 1958), v. 10838-10843 and 13665-13667; "Des ii changéors," in *Recueil général et complet des fabliaux des XIII^e et XIV^e siècles imprimés ou inédits d'après les manuscrits*, ed. Anatole de Montaiglon, Gaston Raynaud, I (Paris: Burt Franklin, 1877), v. 100-105.

choice of a warrior among the figures of the *sanctorale* may be linked to the military context in which he is invoked. For example, in the early years of the thirteenth century, Vivien, who declared his intention to become a "good knight," called upon St. George to witness his vow.[63] Such invocations could also echo the formulaic cries of battle. In the *Chanson de Jérusalem*, written at the end of the twelfth century, it is noted that when Baudouin leads his men into battle,[64] they would "hoot and cry 'Holy Sepulchre' and 'Saint George'". Shortly thereafter, in *L'Escoufle*, Jean Renart wrote that the Christians would charge to the cry of "Traï, traï! Ferés, ferés! / Felon paien, n'i garirés, / S'onques Diex fist rien por saint Jorge!"[65] The saint's assistance is not only invoked but expected - indeed, taken as certain. This confidence strengthens the troops' resolve, yet the battle cry can also shift into something more urgent and personal, becoming a desperate prayer when the warrior fully grasps the brutality of the conflict and the threat to his own life. Such is the case in the *Chevalerie Ogier*, where Ogier the Dane, seeing the grass soaked red with blood, calls upon the Virgin, St. George, and his "company" to protect him and preserve his life amid the chaos of battle.[66]

This closeness can also be expressed through the term "friend," which St. George uses to address Godfrey of Bouillon in the *Chanson de Jérusalem.*[67] The term conveys the privileged - indeed, almost exclusive - nature of their relationship.[68] It is inseparable from the proposal George, the Cappadocian saint, makes to the Christian leader: he invites Godfrey to join the saints in battle so that they might test his mettle and he, in turn, might demonstrate his valour. This allusion is unmistakable in a northern French version of the song, composed in a region where tournaments were especially popular. It becomes even more explicit in the account of the apparition of the *sancti bellatores* near Ramla, where, after the fighting had ended, George and his companions are said

[63] *Les Enfances Vivien*, ed. Magali Rouquier (Geneva: Droz, 1997), 841-842.

[64] *La Chanson de Jérusalem*, ed. Nigel R. Thorp (Tuscaloosa-London: The University of Alabama Press, 1992), v. 8852-57.

[65] Jean Renart, *L'Escoufle, roman d'aventure*, ed. Franklin P. Sweetser (Geneva: Droz, 1974) c. 935-937.

[66] Raimbert de Paris, *La chevalerie Ogier de Danemarche. Poème du XII^e siècle*, ed. Joseph Barrois (Geneva: Slatkine reprints, 1969), c. 12506-12512.

[67] *La Chanson de Jérusalem*, v. 5977-5984.

[68] We find the same idea in the *Chanson d'Aspremont*. St. George approaches Roland and speaks to him "softly, laughing" (v. -81538154). His message is intended to be reassuring, as the young man is about to face Mandaquin, but the laughter and thoughtfulness show the friendship that unites the two combatants, and François Suard uses the adverb "amicalement" to describe the phrase "doucement an riant" (*Aspremont*, 521).

to have gathered to joust.[69] Warrior saints and earthly knights share the same culture.

The growing prominence of the cult of warrior saints in aristocratic circles led, over time, to a fewer heavenly armies appearing on the battlefield. By the thirteenth century, such interventions were no longer deemed necessary. Some authors, such as Johannes Codagnellus and Albertus Miliolus, explain the rapid and disconcerting departure of the troops of al-Kamil, the Sultan of Cairo, in February 1219 as the result of an intervention by St. George.[70] The chronicles of Ernoul and Bernard, treasurer of St. Peter of Corbie, also mention, around 1230, Saint George's participation in the Battle of Montgisard on 25 November 1177.[71] Such episodes could still be reported, but they no longer provoked astonishment. James I, King of Aragon and Count of Barcelona, offers a telling testimony of this shift. Reflecting on the conquest of Majorca in 1229, he recalled having heard Muslims speak of a white rider bearing white arms who appeared at the head of the Christian forces. James concluded that the figure was St George and affirmed this interpretation. In his view, the identity of the mysterious warrior was clear: it could only have been the Cappadocian saint, whose appearances among Christian armies fighting against the Saracens had become well known through numerous accounts.[72] While Saint George's intervention may still provoke astonishment among the defeated, it no longer does so for the Catalan prince. For him, it appears almost self-evident - or at the very least, unexceptional. The aid of the *sanctus bellator*, often described in tangible terms, is accepted by those who invoke him, entrust their fate to him, or fight in defence of the Christian faith as a natural, even legitimate, element of warfare. Late thirteenth century copyist of BnF Français 25516 even implies that the Saracens themselves were aware of this. In a variant he includes in his version of the *Roman de Robert le Diable*, he notes that although the Muslims did not know the

[69] *La Chanson de Jérusalem*, v. 851-854.

[70] Johannes Codagnellus, *Gesta obsidionis Damiatæ, 1217-1219*, ed. Oswald Holder-Egger, *M.G.H.*, *ss*, 31 (Hanover, 1903), 475; *Alberti Milioli notarii Regini Liber de temporibus et ætatibus et cronica imperatorum*, ed. Oswald Holder-Egger, *M.G.H.*, *ss*, 31 (Hanover, 1903), 474. St. George, accompanied by innumerable fighters, is said to have passed through the al-Adiliya encampment, announcing the death of all those who did not leave the area, thus causing the soldiers protecting Damietta to flee and enabling the Crusaders to begin the siege of the city under favourable conditions.

[71] *Chronique d'Ernoul et de Bernard le Trésorier*, ed. Louis de Mas-Latrie (Paris: Renouard, 1871), 43-45.

[72] Jaume I, "*Crònica o llibre dels feits*," in *Les quatre grans cròniques*, ed. F. Soldevila, (Barcelona: Ed. 62, 1971), 48.

knight's identity, upon seeing him charge with shining white arms, they assumed he must be Saint George.[73]

Familiarity favours quick recognition. Jacobus de Voragine offers a telling example in chapter 56 of his *Legenda aurea*, dedicated to St. George. He recounts that when the Christians were preparing to lay siege to Jerusalem, a young man of striking beauty appeared to a priest, identifying himself as St. George, "general of the Christians." He urged that some of his relics be taken to Jerusalem, assuring them that his presence would accompany them. During the siege, when the Christians hesitated to scale the ladders due to fierce resistance from the Saracens, St. George appeared once more - this time clad in white armour bearing a red cross. He assured them they could ascend safely under his protection and would succeed in taking the city. Encouraged by the vision, the Christians launched their assault, captured Jerusalem, and slew the Saracens.[74] The famous hagiographer claims to have found this account in the "History of Antioch," but the *Historia Niceana vel Antiochena* makes no mention of any intervention by the saintly dragonslayer apart from the one at the Battle of Antioch.[75] It was rather William of Tyre's chronicle that had served as a more direct source. Both William of Tyre and Jacobus de Voragine recount the appearance of a mysterious warrior on the Mount of Olives, who encouraged the crusaders to advance their siege engines and ladders in order to seize the Holy City. Yet neither author focuses on the identity of the figure. William of Tyre refers merely to a "quidam miles" who never returned to the camp, while in earlier narrative, those by Raymond of Aguilers, we can read that the participants of the battle "were never able to find out who this knight was."[76] Jacobus de Voragine may have recalled the scene on the Mount of Olives - the siege equipment, the crusaders' discouragement - and, like James I of Aragon, inferred from the description that the mysterious figure could only have been St George.[77]

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[73] *Robert le Diable*, ed. and trad. Élisabeth Gaucher (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2006), 369 for the variants of verses 2550 *et sq*.

[74] Jacobus de Voragine, *Legenda aurea*, ed. Giovanni Paolo Maggioni (Florence: Sismel- Ed. del Galluzzo, 1998), 398.

[75] *Balduini III historia Nicæna vel Antiochena*, in *Recueil des historiens des croisades*, *Historiens occidentaux* 5 (Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1895), 171-172.

[76] Willelmus Tyrensis archiepiscopus, *Chronicon*, ed. Robert B. C. Huygens (Turnhout: Brepols, 1986), l. VIII, chap. 16, 407-408.

[77] The *Conquête de Jérusalem* recounts that St. George, accompanied by St. Maurice, charged onto the battlefield alongside Godfrey of Bouillon and, at the end of the day, led the Christian forces "safely into Jerusalem," disappearing once the gates and exits were secured. The notable differences from Jacobus de Voragine's version suggest that he was not drawing on the crusade song as a direct source. (p. 282-283).

From the last decades of the twelfth century onward, the presence of the holy warrior alongside the earthly one was no longer surprising; within the narrative, it served above all to encourage the latter to identify with the former. Also, the terminology used to describe or refer to warrior saints evolved over time. Between the composition of the chronicles of the First Crusade and Jacobus de Voragine's *Golden Legend*, the term *sanctus* or *saint* continued to be employed. Yet even when Jacobus de Voragine recounts the saint's torments in vivid detail, the emphasis on martyrdom becomes less central.[78] Terms such as *bellator*, *miles*, *eques*, "knight," or simply "warrior" continue to identify the saint primarily as a man of war. However, these designations are increasingly accompanied by adjectives like *ber*, *bon*, *baron*, or *noble*, which underscore the qualities attributed to and expected of the holy combatant. His military prowess and noble lineage are thus equally celebrated, and - when combined with descriptions of his rich and distinguished armour - position him squarely within the cultural and social ideals of medieval nobility. The desire for *captatio benevolentiae* is evident - but there is more at stake. The identity of the troops commanded by the saints, and by St. George in particular, had evolved. In the early twelfth century, terms such as *deductor*, *ductor*, and *dux* were used to describe the leader of the horsemen descending from the mountains to support the crusaders on the plains. But only a few decades later, titles like *sire*, *mesires*, or *Monseigneur* were used to affirm the authority of St. George over Christian forces. The expression *dux christianorum*, used by Jacobus de Voragine to describe St. George, serves both as evidence and as the culmination of this cultural shift.[79] Like the other honorifics gradually adopted, it reflects the warrior's recognition of the saint's authority. At the same time - and because such language always carries an idealized dimension and is meant to instruct - it invites the warrior to deepen his connection with the one who, as a master of warfare, preceded him into eternity. The relationship between the *sanctus bellator* and the earthly warrior is one of reverence; it may even be understood as a form of spiritual kinship. In the *Chanson d'Antioche*, for instance, the man who demonstrates unwavering resolve in facing the Saracens is honoured with the title "son of Saint George."[80]

Finally, visual culture offers compelling evidence of the *sanctus bellator*'s recognition as a patron saint. A striking example is found in the church of Saint-Jacques-des-Guérets.[81] The Descent into Limbo depicted on the southern wall of

[78] Jacobus de Voragine, *Legenda aurea*, 394-398 and 965-970.

[79] Ibid., 398.

[80] *La Chanson d'Antioche*, v. 6051-6067.

[81] About these paintings, see E. Dehoux, "Peintures de chanoines. Images et messages à Saint-Jacques-des-Guérets," in *Convaincre et persuader: communication et propagande aux XII^e et XIII^e siècles*, ed. Martin Aurell (Poitiers: CESCM, 2007), 563-614.

this modest sanctuary was covered, in the middle of the thirteenth century, by another scene: a succession of five-armed horsemen whose names are revealed in the inscriptions. The deterioration of the painting means that it is no longer possible to identify the last two men, but it still shows that they rode, along with Matthew and Hugh, behind Saint George, who has now disappeared even though he is clearly identified. The Cappadocian was not a newcomer to the local sanctuary. He was the patron saint of the Abbey of -Saint-Georges-du-Bois, to which the priory-cure of Saint-Jacques-des-Guérets belonged, and had been depicted in one of the sashes of the axial window a few decades earlier, as a warrior during a spiritual battle against Evil. The painting added to the nave in the thirteenth century is even better preserved. It bears witness to the reception of the teaching given. Having been exhorted to imitate Saint George and, in so doing, to make virtues triumph over vices, the aristocrats who commissioned the paintings added to the south wall of the nave demonstrated their desire to follow the saint from Cappadocia and the resolutely warlike example that he embodied.

Philippe of Courtenay and Guillaume of Tanlay opted for a different image of Saint George. In the stained-glass window they commissioned between 1210 and 1225 - where they themselves are depicted - the saint appears as a man of war, but also as a martyr.[82] This dual representation is significant. The chronicles of the First Crusade had already reported that George and his companions died for their faith, readily drawing a connection between those who had given their lives for Christ and those about to risk their own in battle. The *Chanson d'Antioche*, composed in the final decades of the twelfth century, was even more explicit: it proclaimed that the warrior who died in combat, having lived without neglecting works of mercy, would join the company of those who had gone before him.[83] This message was not new, but for a long time, the prospect of dying in battle was one that those concerned considered only to reject. The goal was to survive and, ideally, to perform the heroic feat that would secure honour and lasting glory. To represent the death of the *sanctus bellator* is therefore to signal that the model embodied by the saint had become fully internalised - so much so that combatants were now capable of envisaging an *imitatio sancti* that extended even to martyrdom. The appearance of martyrdom in visual representations - particularly when such images were commissioned by lay patrons - thus attests to the deep and lasting appropriation of pastoral discourse by the early thirteenth century.

[82] *Les vitraux du Centre et des Pays de la Loire* (Paris: Éditions du CNRS, 1981), 37-38.
[83] *La Chanson d'Antioche*, v. 1305-1320.

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Over the decades, as the story was written and rewritten, its narrative structure changed little - far less, in fact, than the identity of the saints that were invoked. Archangel Michael and the Apostle Peter may have been called upon to encourage Christians departing from Pisa, Genoa, Rome, and Amalfi to fight the Muslims in Mahdia and Zawila, or - like Peter, in association with the other Apostles - to support the cause of an anti-pope. But from the twelfth century onward, these figures gradually gave way to others: George, Demetrius, Maurice, Mercurius - saints who were resolutely martial, who had died for their faith, and who were presented as models for the *bellatores*. The accounts of their apparitions portray holy warriors who closely resemble their earthly counterparts, leading them into battle and accompanying them into the heart of combat - thus affirming the reality of the protection being invoked. In doing so, these narratives helped define both the mission and the role of the Christian warriors, offering them not only a framework for action but also a place within the divine order. The social and even political status of the *milites Christi* was thereby affirmed and consolidated, just as the broader organisation of Christian society was reinforced. By this time, the Archangel Michael had come to be more closely associated with the clergy, whose primacy and authority were now supported by the eschatological dimension of their ministry. Yet the spiritual aspirations of the warrior class were also acknowledged - and fulfilled. These texts worked toward the recognition of a distinct path to salvation, one that did not necessarily pass through the cloister. This message, conveyed through a wide array of channels - from prayers to songs - bore fruit: the evolution of terminology reveals a growing intimacy between holy warriors and their earthly counterparts, with the former increasingly recognised as the "special patrons" of the latter.

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