Monks, Feuds, and the Making of Peace in Eleventh-Century Flanders

Geoffrey G. Koziol

The Peace of God was apparently introduced into Flanders by Bishop Gerard of Cambrai in 1024 at Douai. However, Gerard's own biographer tells us that Count Baldwin IV of Flanders was the real instigator of the declaration, since he had pressured the bishop into an action of which Gerard did not wholly approve. In 1030 it was again Baldwin who had the Peace declared, this time at an assembly held at Audenaarde, in the diocese of Tournai, an assembly which the count apparently summoned and presided over himself. Some historians have conjectured that in 1036 another declaration of the Peace of God was made; but of this we know nothing, not even if it really occurred. Finally, Baldwin's son, Baldwin V, established a Peace for the diocese of Thérouanne in conjunction with the bishop of Thérouanne. This was probably in 1042 or 1043.[1]

Geoffrey Koziol is assistant professor of history at Harvard University. He is currently writing a book on the ritual of politics and conflict dispute in northern France during the Middle Ages.

1. E. I. Strubbe, "La paix de Dieu dans le nord de la France," *Recueils de la société Jean Bodin pour l'histoire comparative des institutions* 14 (1961):489-501; Jean-François Lemarignier, "Paix et réforme monastique en Flandre et en Normandie autour de l'année 1023," *Droit privé et institutions régionales, études historiques offerts à Jean Yver* (Paris, 1976), pp. 443-468; Henri Platelle, "La violence et ses remèdes en Flandre au XIe siècle," *Sacris erudiri* 23 (1971):101-173; Roger Bonnaud-Delamare, "Les institutions de paix dans la province écclésiastique de Reims au XIe siècle," *Bulletin philologique et historique du comité des travaux historiques et scientifiques*, 1955/1956 (Paris, 1957), pp. 143-200; Michel de Bouard, "Sur les origines de la trève de Dieu en Normandie," *Annales de Normandie* 9 (1959):169-189; Georges Duby, *The Three Orders: Feudal Society Imagined*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Chicago, 1980), pp. 21-43. A crucial issue in the chronology of the Flemish peace is the date of the Peace at Douai. Traditionally dated to 1036, Duby has convincingly argued that it should be dated to 1024-1025. See his "Gérard de Cambrai, la paix et les trois fonctions sociales, 1024," *Compte rendu des séances de l'Académie des inscriptions et belles lettres* (Paris, 1976), pp. 136-146; also E. Van Mingroot, "Kritisch Onderzoek omtrent de Datering van de *Gesta Episcoporum Cameracensium*," *Revue belge de philologie et d'histoire* 53 (1975):281-332. I have not be able to consult a major work on the Peace in Flanders, since it remains unpublished: J. De Smet, "De Paces Dei der Bisdommen van het graafschap Vlaanderen, (1024-1119)" (thesis, 1956); some of its conclusions regarding

Much is uncertain about these assemblies; but however one reads the evidence, it is clear that there were three or four major declarations of the Peace of God under the leadership of the counts of Flanders within twenty years. The counts were clearly interested in the movement. Yet after the Peace of Thérouanne, the promise of the movement aborted. There were no further declarations of the Peace for Flanders, with or without the count's participation, until 1093.[2]

A waning in formal peace activity after the 1040s was common throughout France. The reasons for this are uncertain; but in the case of Flanders one possibility, at least in the beginning, is that the count was simply too busy fighting to concern himself with the Peace. From 1047 to 1056, Baldwin V was at war with Henry III fighting for the control of Lotharingia, and much of the fighting occurred in Flanders itself. In 1053 the imperial forces even penetrated beyond Lille, into the very heart of Baldwin's county. The war only ended upon the emperor's death in 1056, on terms quite favourable to Baldwin.[3]

Another area hard hit in this war was Hainaut, which as an ally of Flanders and as a gateway between Flemish and Lotharingian territory had been wasted by both armies. Among those in Hainaut who suffered most, at least by their own reckoning, were the monks of Lobbes. The monastery had to be extensively rebuilt. Finding money to do this was difficult partly because many of Lobbes' Flemish estates had been lost during the preceding years and partly because of the war itself. So in 1060 the abbot decided to take the relics of the abbey's patron, Ursmer, on a tour, a *delatio*, through Flanders. He hoped that the saint's prestige and the monks' laments would convince the count of Flanders to restore their Flemish estates.[4]

the early period are presented by Lemarignier and Platelle. If, however, Duby's arguments about the date of the Peace of Douai are correct, then De Smet's belief in a peace proclaimed in 1036 may be incorrect.

2. Albert Vermeesch, *Essai sur les origines et la signification de la commune dans le nord de la France* (Heule, 1955), pp. 57-69; also Roger Bonnaud-Delamare, "La paix en Flandre pendant la première croisade," *Revue du nord* 154 (1957):147-152; Bonnaud-Delamare, "Les institutions de paix," pp. 188-198; Platelle, "La violence et ses remèdes," pp. 116-119.

3. Francois-Louis Ganshof, "Les origines de la Flandre Impériale," *Annales de la société royale d'archéologie de Bruxelles* 46 (1942-1943):124-134.

4. *Miracula sancti Ursmari in itinere per Flandriam facta*, chap. 1 (*MGH SS* 15.2:837-838), hereafter, *Miracula*. The few sections not printed in the *MGH* can be found in *AASS* April II, pp. 570-575. Unless otherwise noted, citations will be to the *MGH* edition. Such *delationes* were becoming relatively common in this region during the period. They are discussed, with passing mention of the *delatio* of Lobbes, in two

Although the chronicler is too high-minded to admit it, one also suspects that the monks expected to garner enough gifts from the faithful to permit them to begin the reconstruction of their monastery.[5]

So it was done. For about the next three months, the monks of Lobbes covered over three hundred miles, passing through three different bishoprics and at least a score of cities and towns. Shortly after completing the tour, one of the monks wrote an account of the journey–or more accurately, an account of the miracles that had occurred during it, thanks to the powers of St. Ursmer.

The *Miracula sancti Ursmari* is a wonderful source since its author had a fine sense of detail and drama and probably worked from notes compiled on the spot, an ordinary practice at shrines and on tours of relics a little later as Benedicta Ward has shown.[6] *Miracula*'s author was also surprisingly objective about the events he witnessed. Of course these events included levitating relics and demonic apparitions, phenomena whose objective reality and reasonableness few of the age would have doubted.[7] But generally the miracles he describes are plausible enough to have actually occurred.[8] Certainly he does not strain the reader's credulity by producing any fire-breathing dragons like that which appeared in the miracles of Notre-Dame of Laon in the next century.[9] He is also honest enough to record one of his saint's failures and to acknowledge and address

articles: Pierre Héliot and M.-L. Chastang, "Quêtes et voyages de reliques au profit des églises françaises du moyen âge," *Revue d'histoire écclésiastique* 59 (1964):789-822 and 60 (1965):5-32; and Pierre-André Sigal, "Les voyages de reliques aux XIe et XIIe siècles," *Voyage, quête, pèlerinage dans la littérature et la civilisation médiévale* (Paris, 1976), pp. 75-104. The tour of Lobbes is also discussed in the context of the Peace of God, but in somewhat summary and dismissive fashion, by Hoffmann, *Gottesfriede und Treuga Dei*, pp. 146-147.

5. Heliot and Chastang, "Quêtes et voyages de reliques"; Benedicta Ward, *Miracles and the Medieval Mind* (London, 1982), pp. 150-158.

6. According to Ward, *Miracles and Mind*, a notary was assigned to record the miracles of the Virgin at Rocamadour (p. 146) and at Becket's tomb individuals were also assigned the task of writing down whatever miracles they witnessed (pp. 90-93). Bernard of Clairvaux's preaching of the crusade in Germany was attended by many miracles, and his companions took notes on them, which they immediately collated to create a daily dossier (pp. 180-181).

7. *Miracula*, chap. 16, p. 841; chap. 5, pp. 838-839.

8. See, for example, *Miracula*, chap. 21, p. 842, where a lame woman struggled to keep up with the crowd following the monks and their relics. Finally she appealed to Ursmer for aid and felt such an infusion of grace that she was able to throw away *one* crutch and catch up with the group by hobbling along on the knuckles of one hand, chimpanzee-like, while holding onto the remaining crutch with the other. A less scrupulous writer would surely have had her toss away both crutches and sprint ahead.

9. *Miracula sanctae Mariae Laudunensis* (*PL* 156.981).

the skepticism with which some witnesses greeted an alleged cure.[10]

Detail, drama, naturalism: these characteristics make this account a thoroughly enjoyable piece of literature. They also make it a superb source for answering the kinds of questions modern historians like to pose. In particular, we can read the *Miracula* to learn how the monks of Lobbes used their relics to resolve feuds and to restore the peace. For more than cures, more than miraculous displays of vengeance against unbelievers, this is what the writer believed had been his saint's greatest miracle in Flanders: He had simply brought peace.

The nobles of Flanders were famous for the zest with which they feuded. As Henri Platelle has written, "They fought simply for the sake of fighting."[11] Doubtless the frequent campaigns and constant military preparation of recent years had only reinforced their aggressiveness, since the public competition of battle would have heightened their touchy pride and their fear of being shamed, making it that much harder for a warrior to back down from an affront to honour, estate, or family. We also know from other Flemish sources that wars could decimate the upper ranks of the nobility, the leaders from an older generation. Once they were gone, a struggle ensued to redefine the pecking order, a struggle not unlike the successional strife that still sometimes emerges between organized crime families.[12] Each assault, each murder, only embedded a feud deeper into

10. *Miracula*, chap. 5, pp. 838-839; *Miracula*, chap. 19 (*AASS* April II, p. 574. In the former instance the author does mention with some satisfaction that those who rejected the monks' intervention in a feud were all killed some months later.

11. Platelle, "La violence et ses remèdes," p. 126 and generally pp. 108-114.

12. The point is made quite clearly in the *Vita sancti Willibrordi* by Abbot Theofrid of Echternach, chap. 36 (*MGH SS* 23:28: The men of the Walcheren united long enough to turn back an invasion by Robert the Frisian. But then they turned to fighting each other: "In perniciem exarsit mutuam et, caesis nobilioribus insulae primatibus, in tantam prorupit discordiam, ut neque libere ingredi neque egredi ulli esset copia." One might also point out that in the *Miracula sancti Ursmari*, two of the most important feuds involved *iuvenes* at the heads of retinues and *familiae*, i.e., ambitious men not yet having any formal authority. Their involvement in these feuds perhaps indicates that what was at stake in the feuds was just that kind of competition for supremacy after the death of former leaders described by the *Vita Willibrordi*. Similarly, the *Miracula sancti Donatiani* (*MGH SS* 15.2:858) records an outbreak of feuding in 1096 during the absence of the count and the *meliores natu* on Crusade. Conversely, the *Historia translationis sanctae Lewinnae* (*AASS* July V, pp. 623-627), which records a *delatio* by the monks of Bergues in 1058 (just after the war with the empire had ended) mentions not a single feud, even though the monks passed through exactly the same towns visited by the monks of Lobbes two years later. Widespread feuding therefore appears to have been not endemic in this society, but periodic, erupting in concentrated bursts durings moments of particular stress, when the mechanisms that ordinarily kept feuds from escalating were inoperative.

a community since every attack called for further vengeance. In this way, the wars between Henry and Baldwin not only distracted the count from continuing his promotion of the Peace of God, but they also engendered the feuds that the Peace had been designed to prevent.

Whatever the reasons, the monks of Lobbes found feuds everywhere they went. At Strazeele, wrote our author, "some knights were so hostile to each other that no mortal man could bring them to peace."[13] At Oostburg no one dared leave his house without an armed guard.[14] In light of what has just been said about the destabilizing effects of war, it is surely no coincidence that the monks travelled through just that area of Flanders around Lille where Henry III had concentrated his attack a few years earlier. That is where the feuds were worst because that is where the wars had most undermined the fabric of leadership. But wherever they found feuds, the monks tried to make peace. Sometimes their efforts were in vain[15] but, for the most part, they were remarkably successful.

Ending feuds was no easy task. The *Miracula* itself shows us lords who failed to make peace.[16] Other Flemish sources, like the *Vita sancti Macharii*, describe feuds which the count of Flanders himself could not end.[17] Where powerful lords failed, the monks of Lobbes and, of course, St. Ursmer succeeded. How did they do it? Because of our author's attention to detail we can actually begin to glimpse just what forces the monks marshalled to end feuds. In so doing, we may have an insight or at least a hypothesis about the direction of the later Peace movement as a whole in Flanders.

Of several noteworthy incidents, two are particularly illuminating. The first occurred at Bergues, where the monks finally caught up with the count and countess of Flanders, who received them with honour.[18] It happened to be Pentecost. The next day a great assembly was held outside the town. In addition to the monks and the count and countess, the bishops of London and Thérouanne and a great concourse of the Flemish nobility were also present. As the writer describes it, the monks laid down their relics and began to talk of peace and concord. We do not know what they preached, but we might infer the gist from themes the writer dwells on in the

13. *Miracula*, chap. 5, p. 838.

14. *Miracula*, chap. 12, p. 840.

15. The only egregious failure acknowledged by the writer occurred early in the journey, at Strazeele (*Miracula*, chap. 5, p. 838). The incident is discussed below.

16. As in the case of Hugh at Blaringhem, discussed below.

17. *Vita sancti Macharii*, chap. 22 (*MGH SS* 15.2:617-618).

18. *Miracula*, chap. 8-9, pp. 839-840.

beginning of his work in a passage that sounds remarkably like a well-honed sermon.[19] Perhaps, then, they said that their monastery had been destroyed in the recent wars, that their peasants had fled, that nothing remained of their church but rubble. Perhaps they explained that they had decided to travel through the towns of Flanders that had also suffered in the wars, bearing the relics of the saint who had converted the Flemish to Christianity, that he might now convert them to the true peace of Christ.

At some point in this sermon the count began to second the monks' sentiments. After all, the day before he had formally restored the monks' property in Flanders and received it under his protection; in other words, he had just himself set an example he now expected his men to follow. Then came the real stroke of genius. The monks not only invited the nobles to make peace among themselves, but one by one they called out the name of each one that was known to have a feud and challenged him to make a reconciliation with his enemy. Our writer is quite correct when he says, with his usual perspicacity, that no one present "dared to refuse" the monks' entreaties. In the presence of the count and countess, in the presence of two bishops and the relics of Ursmer, on the day after Pentecost, who in such a setting would have dared refuse to make peace when he heard his name called out for all to hear?

What the events at Bergues show is that the monks were masters at creating situations in which it was impossible not to swear peace and embrace one's enemy. They were, after all, expert liturgists, experts, that is, in using ritual and ceremony to create the right atmosphere. At least some of those who had been sent on this journey had probably been chosen for just these skills that were necessary for choreographing the masses and processions they would celebrate along the way. They used the same skills to create liturgical ceremonies which stirred up fervor for peace. Was the problem that knights were proud men, fearful of public shame, eager for public acclaim? Then the monks would force them into a public setting where they would be publicly shamed if they denied peace and publicly praised if they accepted it.

We can see this at Bergues. We can also see it in an event that transpired at Blaringhem, not far from St-Omer.[20] Two young knights had quarrelled, and the quarrel had degenerated into a name-calling contest. The lord of the men, one Hugh, gathered his other knights and managed to reconcile them, even getting them to

19. *Miracula*, chap. 1-2, p. 838.
20. *Miracula*, chap. 6, p. 839.

embrace each other and kiss, which was the formal, ritual, and public sign of peace. But one of the two harboured his anger, the one, says the author, "who had been more deeply wounded by the slander." One day after the lord had left town, he approached his unsuspecting enemy and ran him through with his lance. As the author ruefully remarks, it was a murder "just because of a single word."

The writer sets the scene well and builds up to the crisis. The murderer had been given refuge in a church when the lord returned to town and vowed to take him. At Bergues it just happened to be a holy day, the night of Ascension. This was the moment the monks chose to make their solemn entry into the city. Probably they were led in by a throng of people as they usually were on their journey. And perhaps they spoke to the curious as they had spoken at Bergues, reminding their audience of the horrors of war and the blessings of peace, telling them also of the miracles their saint had already accomplished, miracles which were beginnings to make the monks famous and draw crowds to them.

The next morning the townsfolk gathered outside the church where the murderer had taken sanctuary; waited, says the *Miracula*, with the knights ranged in two groups: one ready to kill in order to seize the murderer, the other ready to kill in order to prevent him from being seized. Our writer is hitting his stride now. As the sun rose, he says, "the whole sanctuary glistened red as the morning sun struck the shields and rows of arms. The horses snorted and whinnied in anticipation. And Hugh's men stood surrounding the church, their swords drawn, so many men eager to shed the blood of a sinner." But then the monks seized the initiative away from Hugh by passing through the middle of the crowd and into the church. Up to this moment, Hugh had been quite ready to violate the church and to arrest the murderer. But that was when it had just been a small local church, whose canons or priests would have been unable to resist the lord's will. The monks' solemn procession through the line of warriors into the church changed all that; if Hugh now violated the church, he would be seen by everyone to have risked testing a strange saint of unknown powers, whose guardians had come explicitly to make peace. Hugh may still have been willing to violate the sanctuary, but the monks had upped the ante. Into a political confrontation of known dimensions, they had induced a religious charge which threw everything into uncertainty.

Once inside the church the monks found the young man lying quite still, prostrate before the alter as if he were already dead. The

monks celebrated a mass, not for the young man alone but for all the faithful of the town, and sang litanies and psalms which implored divine clemency against such dangers as the town now faced. Then, garbed in albs and vestments as for a solemn mass, they returned outside. They summoned Hugh before them, before his knights and his enemies, before the entire town, "lest for the blood of one sinner he allow the arms of the knights to clash." Hugh refused even to listen to their pleas. All entered the church, monks and lord, knights of both sides, perhaps also some of the townspeople pressing through the narthex for a better view. Abruptly, without warning or ceremony, the monks placed the relics of St. Ursmer on the ground in the middle of the crowd, showing by that rude gesture how much the lord's rejection of peace had hurt the saint, how the prostrate saint now himself begged Hugh for peace.[21]

> Everyone was astonished and humbly lowered his eyes. And their restraint showed clearly enough that they recognized who lay in their midst, even they who had not known him. Tears flowed from the eyes of all. Piety and wrath vied in their hearts. At last, piety won out in Hugh, and he permitted that wretched youth to depart, safe in life and members, and even with his grace. On this occasion, among the knights present that day almost a hundred enemies made peace.

How had they done it? In understanding their success, we do not need to appeal, rather helplessly, to such vague notions as the strength of popular fervor or the people's awe before the power of relics. These were surely factors, but we should also remember that these were hard-headed men. Even the monks were capable of laughing at a blind old woman who sought healing.[22] In any case, thanks to his love of detail, the author of the *Miracula* allows us to be much more specific about how fervor, awe, and even self-interest worked to resolve feuds by showing us a pattern and method to the

21. On the meaning of setting relics on the ground, see Patrick Geary, "L'humiliation des saints," *Annales: E.S.C.* 34 (1979):27-42, trans. in Stephen Wilson, ed., *Saints and their Cults: Studies in Religious Folklore and History* (Cambridge, 1983), pp. 123-140.

22. *AASS* April II, p. 574. The monks laughed, believing that because her blindness was the natural result of age rather than of trauma or disease there could be no cure. Of course, they may have laughed less out of disdain for the woman than to distance themselves from the prospect of their saint's near certain failure. Still, it is interesting that the monks appear to have believed that some physical problems could not be cured.

monks' actions. For example, it is surely no coincidence that the monks often staged their grand entries on major holy days, times of bells and processions, solemn masses and sermons, times when the churches and monasteries would be most visible and accessible to the public, when people's sensitivity to religious demands would be sharper than usual. The monks made certain that they had religious sentiment on their side.

In a feud, the monks had an unerring instinct for identifying the key figure whose yielding would bring peace. Having identified him, they isolated him and worked on him; and by singling him out, they made the feud his responsibility if he denied their entreaties. Thus they worked on Hugh. Of course, Hugh was lord of the castle and interested in doing justice. However, as Karl Leyser has noted, a lord's justice was neither impartial nor transcendent. It was a matter of politics and friendship, a matter for negotiation and intrigue.[23] Hugh could have found a way out of the feud if he had wanted, perhaps by temporarily exiling the offender. The question was, "Did he want to?" Evidently the author of the *Miracula* did not think so since he says that Hugh had been quite willing to kill the man and his supporters. But in pursuing the murderer so ruthlessly, was not Hugh in effect taking his own kind of vengeance on a man who had affronted his own honour by violating an accord for which the lord had been personally responsible? Occurring as it did in a setting where the rising chiefs of retinues were trying to expand their power, was not this flout of his ambitions rather than the feud itself Hugh's real concern? Moreover, people had a right to vengeance.[24] The murderer had done no more than exercise that right and redeem his honour. Perhaps he should be exiled or be forced to pay compensation both to the victim's family and to the lord for having violated the prior accord. But for Hugh to reject all compromise and utterly destroy him would have been seen by some as waging his own vendetta. It would also have been a denial of the peculiar justness of the accused's search for vengeance and therefore as a further affront to his family's honour. Viewed in this light, far from ending the feud, Hugh's pursuit of his own rights would only have exacerbated

23. Karl Leyser, *Rule and Conflict in an Early Medieval Society: Ottonian Saxony* (Bloomington, 1979), chap. 10, passim, also pp. 36, 39.

24. Hanna Vollrath, "Herrschaft und Genossenschaft im Kontext frühmittelalterlicher Rechtsbeziehungen," *Historisches Jahrbuch* 102 (1982):61, with numerous references. This article, a sophisticated updating of Kern's idea of Germanic law, should only be read in conjunction with the subsequent rebuttal by Hans-Werner Goetz, "Herrschaft und Recht in der frühmittelalterlichen Grundherrschaft," *Historisches Jahrbuch* 104 (1984):392-410.

the situation by identifying the lord's interests with those of the victim's faction.

At some level, Hugh must have been aware that his own vindication risked escalating the feud. If so, he must have wished for a graceful way out, but he had neither the right nor the power to impose reconciliation on the victim's family. Nor did he have the option of backing down himself since that would have shown him to be weak. The feud had become too deeply embedded to be renounced voluntarily by its participants.

The monks, however, could transcend the feud because they were strangers–strangers figuratively because they were citizens of God's city, not this earthly one. This difference was probably less important than the fact that they were literally outsiders, since the monks were not from Flanders at all but from Hainaut: close enough to be familiar with the culture, concerned at its failures and sympathetic with its problems,[25] the monks were distant enough not to be part of the structure of the feud.[26] They could therefore legitimately pose as the disinterested defenders of peace. With their role as outsiders, they brought, as we have seen, a sense of nearness to the unknown and an atmosphere of heightened expectation.

This incident also shows that however important the monks were, the sentiments of the crowd were crucial. In fact, the monks' role

25. This is shown, for example, in the author's tracing the origins of one feud to the insults *iuvenes* often trade: "duos milites, qui aliquando disceptaverant inter se verbis asperioribus, utpote juvenes," (*Miracula*, chap. 6, p. 639).

26. The ability of holy men from outside a community to settle disputes which no one within the community can settle appears frequently enough to establish a pattern. It was the case with Bernard of Clairvaux, who settled many disputes during his tour of Germany (above, n. 6). It was also the case with St. Macarius, a mysterious Greek who came to be regarded as a saint in Flanders and who successfully intervened to pacify feuds where even the count of Flanders failed (above, n. 17). One also thinks of the tour of Arnulf of St-Médard through the towns of Flanders, a journey made purposely for the establishment of peace (*Vita sancti Arnulfi confessoris* [*AASS* August III, pp. 230-254]). Arnulf was Flemish by birth (and therefore like the Hainautian monks of Lobbes familiar with the culture); but having spent many of the past years in the Ile-de-France he was no longer personally involved in Flemish politics or Flemish feuds. Peter Brown has also commented on this phenomenon with respect to sixth-century Syria. Here, too, holy men were frequent mediators of village conflict. And here, too, the resolution of conflict was heavily imbued with a penitential character by which a small community, suffering from division, was made whole again and received, through collective penance, a "new deal." As in Flanders, the holy man's task was made easier because a substantial portion of the population wanted the conflict to end. Finally, Brown believes that the holy man was able to play this role because he was "the stranger 'par excellence.'" Peter Brown, "The Rise and Function of the Holy Man in Late Antiquity," *Society and the Holy in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley, 1982), pp. 126-137.

was to create a structure which simply channelled and amplified those sentiments. Many in the crowd must have wanted peace and been willing to let the monks do their work–certainly the murderer and his family. At least some of the local nobility did not want to be dragged into what had originally been nothing but a quarrel between two hot-headed, ill-tempered youths.[27] In addition, burghers and some of the local clergy feared that their property inside and outside the city would be attacked in a private war producing new losses that would come hard on the heels of the emperor's devastating campaign. Of course, Hugh himself was looking for a way to back down without losing face, without losing the image of being in control.

So the monks singled out Hugh and worked on him. In this way, they transformed the very structure of the feud because by singling out one party and making him appear responsible for perpetuating the conflict, the monks broke the antagonistic, factional divisions that fed the feud. Where before there had been two roughly equal factions opposed to each other, now there was just one individual who appeared to resist the desires of all the rest. Standing above the prostrate monks in a holy space, surrounded by everyone else, Hugh had been physically and psychologically isolated. And this was important because, whether feigned or not, the mere appearance of near unanimity within the town made Hugh's yielding that much easier since he could now pose as the merciful and high-minded benefactor of the common good. This was the point at which the monks produced their trump, bringing out their relics and giving the avenger the religious excuse he needed to back down without losing face.

Now the crowd again played an important role, lending confidence to the one who had backed down by taking up his example. For once, Hugh had made peace and was feeling perhaps a bit anxious about what he had done. Then others came forward to confess their own crimes and kiss their enemies. The one individual who had stood in the way of peace had now returned to the community. The community was whole again, and what followed was a joyous celebration of wholeness as knights came forward to confess their wrongs and beg forgiveness from their enemies.

We know what this celebration looked like because the author described one at Oostburg, where perhaps forty knights had been involved in an escalating feud.[28] The knights threw their arms down

27. Above, n. 25.

28. *Miracula*, chap. 12, p. 840.

to the ground, and after swearing peace on the body of the saint, they embraced each other. Then everyone went into the church and sang the *Te Deum* and other holy songs "in the manner of the region." All the people sang, not just the clergy but the laity, not just the men but the women, while the bells pealed and the monks asked God to have mercy on the souls of those who had died in the feuds. At Oostburg as at Blaringhem, what had begun as a feud between individuals or individual families ended in a paroxysm of peace that united the entire community and made all its members, regardless of status or allegiance, partakers of a single religious experience.

As news of the monks' skills spread, the movement gained momentum. Soon crowds came out to meet the monks long before they reached towns, and people threatened by vengeance sought out the monks in order to prostrate themselves before the relics and beg forgiveness. The scene at Blaringhem was repeated with the monks, their relics, the victim, and the crowd all kneeling or standing together, surrounding one person who alone appeared to resist peace, who alone threatened the unity of the community. Thanks to our author's sensitivity, we can sense the turmoil within these people who were torn between two nearly equal demands. On the one hand, they felt the need to take vengeance; on the other, they felt the need to forgive and make peace. And once more, what tipped the balance toward peace was the skill of the monks in isolating certain leaders from their supporters and making them feel the weight of the pressures that worked for peace. At Lissewege, for example, the target, a *iuvenis* named Robert, already the head of a large retinue of knights, lay stretched out on the ground, reddening and blanching in turn, gnashing his teeth, clawing the ground and eating dirt in his grief. For three hours he lay there, groaning as the monks, burghers, and bearded knights stood silently around him, uttering no sound but sobs. The young man groaned because the monks had, in effect, paralyzed him, not by any miracle but simply by forcing him to choose between two unquestioned duties. The young man would have his vengeance. He would not give in to the monks. In fact, however, at last he did. After three hours of prostrate silence, he rose to make his peace. After all, this was the only way he could have walked through the crowd that pushed in on him and look everyone in the face.[29]

The sobbing crowd of burghers and knights that surrounded Robert points once again to considerable popular support for peace

29. *Miracula*, chap. 16, pp. 840-841.

and, by extension, for the ideals of the Peace of God.[30] Indeed, by a rather natural dialectic first described by Max Gluckman, the very expansion of feuds tends to create mounting pressure for peace.[31] Without that repository of good will, the monks would have been powerless.

On the other hand, we should not ignore the existence of less altruistic motivations. It is, for example, entirely possible–even likely–that the young men in these dramatic tableaux were consciously manipulating the monks for their own ends.[32] Thus, Hugh of Blaringhem, insulted and impotent in the face of a feud prosecuted against his will, might well have decided to play the role of a blustering lord, knowing in advance that he would never have to act on his empty threats since the script's final scene called for his wrath to turn to mercy. He would also have known that far from weakening his authority, acting out such a transformation would only enhance his image by showing himself in turn vengeful and merciful, the twin virtues of good lordship. Robert of Lissewege's marathon paralysis may also have concealed a degree of calculation. Coming as it did toward the end of the monks' tour, his three-hour prostration may indicate that the publicity of Ursmer's *delatio* had inflated the currency of piety so that ever more extravagant gestures were needed to proclaim the sincerity of one's devotion.

Monks, then, were not the only ones who understood the uses of ceremonial. Laymen had mastered them as well. Nor was this true only of *iuvenes* like Hugh and Robert. Great lords above all knew how to use the discourse and rites of peace for their own ends. The tour of the monks of Lobbes, for example, was successful in large part because the count of Flanders had not only sanctioned it but also actively promoted it. What was true of the count was also true of the castellans who welcomed the monks into their towns.[33] Without their support, the monks would have achieved nothing; but the lords struck a good bargain because by supporting the monks' cause they increased their own prestige and, what was no small thing, gained at least a momentary measure of peace.

30. Bernard Töpfer, *Volk und Kirche zur Zeit der beginnenden Gottesfriedensbewegung in Frankreich* (Berlin, 1957), although Töpfer concentrates on the way monks created that support rather than on how they responded to popular demands.

31. Max Gluckman, "The Peace in the Feud," *Past and Present* 8 (1955):1-44, reprinted in his *Custom and Conflict in Africa* (Oxford, 1973).

32. I owe the following suggestions to Professor William Miller.

33. In addition to the above examples, see also *Miracula*, chap. 10, p. 840, where the castellan of Furnes received the monks on the order of the countess.

Political cunning and self-interest, psychological tension, a sincere desire for peace: these are not mutually exclusive explanations of the monks' success. In reality, all these elements were equally present, if not within the same individual then surely within the same crowd. So it was too in more formal declarations of the Peace of God, where kings, bishops, and counts enhanced their political authority by presiding over assemblies charged with popular enthusiasm.[34] Yet we have also seen that not even the favour of the powerful and the support of the many were insufficient to end feuds. One also needed to know how to amplify and channel these currents of good will. Monks, the skilled manipulators that they were of liturgy and ceremonial, had just such knowledge. Indeed, the techniques used by the monks of Lobbes in ending feuds appear to have been borrowed from the disciplinary customs of the cloister. For example, the public naming and challenging of those who had offended the peace–the technique used by the monks at Bergues–recall the way violators of the monastic rule were denounced in the common chapter; the technique of ritually isolating persons who had offended community norms echoes the disciplinary practices of monasteries.[35]

Just how important the monks' mastery of ritual was in making peace emerges from their one recorded failure at Strazeele.[36] There they gained the consent of one faction of a feud to try to make peace, but an apparently large minority resisted. As in the incidents already described, the monks then tried to force the issue by picking up their saint and surrounding the intransigents in a closed circle, believing that if they could ever bind them within the circle then the power of the devil that possessed them would be destroyed. Instead, before the monks could close the circle a black dog crossed between the monks and their opponents. The men took the opportunity to move away, refusing to be engaged. There were undoubtedly many local factors which might explain why this particular feud was so intractable–so intractable indeed that our author records, with a pardonable tone of vindication, that nearly all were subsequently slain in the contracting coils of the ensuing private war. It is also telling that the failure occurred early in the monks' journey, that is,

34. See the balanced presentation by Hans-Werner Goetz, "Kirchenschutz, Rechtswahrung und Reform. Zu den Zielen und zum Wesen der frühen Gottesfriedensbewegung in Frankreich," *Francia* 11 (1983):193-239.

35. Ulrich of Cluny, *Consuetudines Cluniacenses* 2.6, 2.17, 3.3 (*PL* 149.705, 708, 735); *Liber Tramitis Aevi Odilonis Abbatis*, ed. Petrus Dinter, Corpus consuetudinum monasticarum, vol. 10 (Siegburg, 1980), pp. 216-218; *The Monastic Constitutions of Lanfranc*, ed. and trans. David Knowles (London, 1951), pp. 111-113.

36. *Miracula*, chap. 5, p. 838.

before their saint's renown had been established, before the townspeople's expectations could be raised. Yet it is surely significant that in this case the monks were not allowed to establish a foothold for their ritual since the circle that was such an important element in their restructuring of the feud was not only uncompleted, but actually violated by a profane animal, a representation of the devil. They therefore never managed to isolate any individual within the community, as they did in their successful interventions.

If this failure underscores the importance of ritual in making peace, it also reminds us just how difficult the monks' task was. So many different elements had to converge before one could hope for success. Even then there was no guarantee that the pacts sponsored by the monks would endure. Of course, neither our author nor any other sources tell us whether these particular reconcilitions lasted; but, in fact, we know from other sources that the Flemings generally remained a tumultuous and violent people, so that even if these particular feuds ended, the nobles' propensity for feuding did not. These facts might lead one to suspect, as Hoffmann suspected, that peacemakers like the monks of Lobbes ultimately failed in their mission; but that is too easy a conclusion.[37] Even a momentary peace was well worth struggling for and represented a considerable success, particularly since the outbreaks of feuding appear to have been not endemic, but periodic, erupting during the power vacuums created by wars. Ending a set of feuds in this context might well have taken care of matters for a substantial period of time.[38]

More important, we should not so emphasize the monks' short-term goal of ending feuds that we forget that over the long-term they may well have succeeded in a more essential task–educating people about the ideals of the Peace of God. Historians have long tended to see this movement as a crucial turning point in early medieval culture. The creation of a new ideal of Christian knighthood, the popularization of lay piety, increasingly vocal demands for a purified clergy, all this and more has been seen as the legacy of the Peace.[39] Yet even in acknowledging their importance, one may still be puzzled at how so much could have been accomplished by a few scattered and infrequent councils.

37. Hoffmann, *Gottesfriede und Treuga Dei*, pp. 148-150.

38. Above, n. 12. It is significant in this regard that efforts to renew the peace seem to have occurred in Flanders at regular, well-spaced intervals: the tour of Lobbes in 1060; the *elevatio* of St. Donatian at Bruges in 1070; the mission of Arnulf in 1083-1084; and another *elevatio* of Donatian in 1096.

39. Töpfer, *Volk und Kirche;* Georges Duby, "Laity and the Peace of God," in *The Chivalrous Society*, trans. C. Postan (Berkeley, 1977), pp. 123-133.

What the *Miracula sancti Ursmari* shows is that the lessons were repeated and that what happened at the great peace councils is only one aspect of the movement. The dictates of the Peace were not taught in only a few unusual assemblies. They were also discussed in more informal assemblies like that at Bergues. Here no articles of the Peace of God were declared, at least none that we know of. Something much more important to the lasting success of the movement in quelling feuds and instilling the values of the Peace did happen. The monks of Lobbes, together with the count and countess, preached about the need for peace and reconciled the real feuds of individuals.

Nor did the monks of Lobbes work alone. Other Flemish saints, like Macarius and Arnulf, also preached peace and reconciled feuds. Arnulf even worked in and around the very region through which the monks of Lobbes had passed a generation earlier.[40] There were also other informal councils such as that at Bergues. The *Miracula sancti Donatiani,* for example, tells of an assembly at Bruges (a city visited by both Arnulf and the monks of Lobbes) summoned by the count of Flanders in 1070 for the dedication of the church at Hasnon. Although no mention is made of a formal declaration of the Peace, the setting recalled the Peace assemblies. There were relics. The great of the county attended, including bishops and abbots. Miracles occurred–including the reconciliation of a feud.[41] The same source tells of a similar assembly, again at Bruges, held in 1096, while the count and the great nobles of Flanders were overseas on crusade. During their absence, *bella intestina* had flared up and was so severe that "brother did not fear raising a hand against brother, nor son against father." The provost of Bruges, acting in the count's place, therefore had the relics of Donatian placed outside the church, in public, where a great crowd of persons of both sexes gathered to listen to sermons. At last, inspired by the saint, "all entered a pact of peace as one."[42]

The enunciation of the ideals of the Peace of God or the reconciliation of feuds in terms of the Peace may therefore have been fairly common at local assemblies in Flanders. In other regions of France,

40. Above, notes 17 and 25; also Platelle, "La violence et ses remèdes," passim, with, however, a serious misreading of the *Vita Arnulfi* on pp. 155-156. Macarius, of course, worked in the early part of the century; but that does not invalidate the point, rather it only indicates how long the process of Christianization took in northern Europe.

41. *MGH SS* 15.2:857.

42. *MGH SS* 15.2:858, discussed briefly by Hoffmann, *Gottesfriede und Treuga Dei,* p. 150.

the principles of the Peace were also recalled outside the great assemblies. Ivo of Chartres wrote of "the custom of our church," according to which he was about to hold a synod "in which we will deal with many issues involving ecclesiastical affairs and the peace of the entire region."[43] A Norman council held at Lisieux in 1064 decreed "that the Truce of God be frequently repeated." De Bouard, commenting on this text, believes that the Peace was in fact regularly reaffirmed in Normandy.[44] It was also a custom in the diocese of Limoges to hold semi-annual synods which reaffirmed the Peace. At these synods, sermons about peace were delivered. Those who had violated the Peace were received as penitents, and psalms of penitence were sung. Apparently only those laymen involved in infractions of the peace attended, but Ademar of Chabannes mentions the holding of other councils where the attending laity heard sermons about the meaning of peace.[45] Finally, the peace canons of Lillebonne, Douai, Thérouanne, and Laon required local priests, on Sundays and feastdays, to pray publicly for those who were observing the Peace of God and to damn publicly those who were violating it.[46]

Perhaps these efforts did not end feuds once and for all; but it would be incredible to suggest that they had no effect in changing the way at least some conceived of social order and in giving those who wanted peace the courage to demand it. Certainly they help explain why Urban II's proclamation of the Truce of God in 1095 received such rapid implementation in northern France, particularly in Flanders. Urban did not preach into a vacuum. Bishops like Ivo and Arnulf and monks and canons like those from Lobbes and Bruges had thoroughly prepared the ground for him.[47]

43. *Correspondance,* ed. J. Leclercq (Paris, 1949), p. 258, no. 62 (1096). Although written after Urban's proclamation of the Peace at Clermont, the fact that Ivo spoke of this as a *consuetudo* indicates that the practice preceded 1095, as Hoffmann recognized (*Gottesfriede und Treuga Dei,* pp. 197-198).

44. De Bouard, "Sur les origines de la Trève de Dieu," p. 187 and n. 55. See also Hoffmann, *Gottesfriede und Treuga Dei,* pp. 169-175.

45. L. Delisle, "Notices sur les manuscrits originaux d'Adémar de Chabannes," *Notices et extraits des manuscrits de la Bibliothèque nationale* 35 (1896):266-267, 271.

46. The bishops of Lillebonne, for example, wrote, "Presbiteris autem precipimus ut in festivitatibus ac diebus dominicis qui hanc pacem observaverint pro illis preces agendo benedicant. Illos vero qui infregerint aut qui infractoribus concesserint maledicant." The wording of the other councils mentioned is similar: Bonnaud-Delamare, "Institutions de paix," p. 184; Hoffmann, *Gottesfriede und Treuga Dei,* p. 172.

47. See Hoffmann, *Gottesfriede und Treuga Dei,* pp. 146-152, 169-175, 186-189, 195-205, 219 for references to the Peace before and immediately after Urban's decree, especially p. 195, where he argues that Urban's proclamation did not reintroduce the truce after a long hiatus but confirmed an established custom of the French

There is at least one tantalizing indication that the message of the peacemakers had been taken to heart. In the time of Robert II (1093-1111), the burghers of Aire-sur-la-Lys obtained from the count a confirmation of their communal organization and its customs.[48] They called this organization an *amicitia*. Its members' essential obligation was to bear each other aid as if they were brothers. This in itself recalls the language of the peacemakers. Still more striking is that like them, the members of the *amicitia* were especially concerned with the problem of ending feuds. For example, the statutes prohibited feuds for a period of forty days following a murder during which time judges were to attempt to achieve a reconciliation of the parties. Those who rejected such mediation were to be expelled from the brotherhood.

In its concern with feuds and its language of brotherhood and friendship, this commune, like many others, surely reflects the influence of the Peace movement as a whole. In particular, its militant appropriation of self-help betrays the influence of the Peace of Soissons in 1093 and that of St-Omer in 1099, both valid in Flanders and both authorizing ordinary parishioners to take up arms in defense of the peace (though only at the command of their bishops).[49] The initiative of the men of Aire also benefited by seconding a policy promoted by the count himself for Robert had played a pivotal role in the declaration of the Peace at St-Omer. In 1111 he went so far as to issue a Peace on his own authority.[50] Yet Arnulf of Soissons, the canons of Bruges, and the monks of Lobbes would also have been justified in regarding the programme of the *amicitia* as the fruit of their own repeated efforts. In proof, one needs simply to point out that Aire is located within a few kilometres of Strazeele and Blaringhem, and not far from Furnes and Bruges–the very region where these three preached the need to end feuds.

Thus the great peace assemblies were only the beginning of the Peace of God, whose ideals were literally brought home to the laity in their own towns and villages through the work of monks and priests. Such local efforts have been ignored by historians because they did not result in articles through which we can trace the development of the Peace as an institution.[51] On the other hand, it is perhaps by just such small events, simply because they were more parochial, that the ideals announced in the great councils became part of the vernacular of everyday life.

(and increasingly the Roman) church. For further detail on Flanders, see also the citations given above, n. 2.

48. Raoul van Caenegem, "Coutumes et législation en Flandre aux XIe et XIIe siècles," *Les libertés urbaines et rurales du XIe au XIVe siècles. Actes du colloque internationale, Spa, 5-8 septembre 1966* (Brussels, 1968), p. 125; Platelle, "La violence et ses remèdes," p. 125.

49. Vermeesch, *Essai sur les origines*, pp. 57-69.

50. See references cited above, n. 2.

51. Thus Hoffmann, *Gottesfriede und Treuga Dei*, pp. 146-149, writes that the *Miracula sancti Ursmari* is primarily important because it informs us of the council at Bergues, while he dismisses St. Arnulf's mission of peace as essentially a "personal initiative" limited to ending feuds, and therefore as largely unimportant for the history of the movement.