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Framing the Problem

Despite the very extensive primary evidence that can be assembled, clerical involvement in medieval warfare is a problem that has received relatively little scholarly attention.\(^1\) Though it is quite common for historians to note that clerics (and in particular, bishops) were involved in the prosecution of warfare, this behaviour has not been the subject of much sustained or detailed study. Discussion of the subject has tended to fall into two categories: notices of clerical participation in battles or sieges in biographical studies of the clergy in question,\(^2\) or reference to the obligation to provide quotas of knights for royal military service (\textit{servitium debitum}).\(^3\) The latter in particular is sometimes used as a shorthand to indicate the entanglement of the Church in the institutions of royal government.

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Only a small number of studies stand apart from this trend. David S. Chambers’ *Popes, Cardinals and War* is a substantial work which addresses the popes and cardinals who became military leaders during the renaissance period. It is primarily a narrative history of its subjects’ endeavours as generals, which are contrasted with the disapproval expressed by canonists. In addition, Chambers gives a very useful retrospective on the earlier history of papal involvement in warfare and some useful summaries of the canonical material.\(^4\) Clerical involvement in warfare in the Empire in the early and high Middle Ages has been addressed variously by Friedrich Prinz, Timothy Reuter, and Benjamin Arnold. Prinz placed a heavy emphasis on the psychology of fighting clergy, discussing the canonical material at length while stressing that the unusually exalted political position of the Carolingian bishops both drew them into military activity and made them practically (and perhaps legally) immune from the canonical checks that held back their junior colleagues.\(^5\) Addressing a later phase of imperial history, Reuter and Arnold both considered a range of important aspects of the phenomenon. Reuter remarked on the criticisms levelled from various quarters at bishops who became involved in war, though he also drew attention to Lucius III’s uncertainty on this. Both commented on imperial bishops’ leadership of warriors, especially *ministeriales*, and both considered the difficulties and conflicts that resulted from those relationships.\(^6\) Like Prinz, they highlighted the aristocratic complexion of the imperial episcopate, arguing that this affected the outlook of their subjects, and suggested that the great resources of imperial sees (generally much greater than their French or English counterparts) were the basis of episcopal military power, but compelled bishops to act in the bellicose fashion of lay magnates. Both depicted the military power of bishops in relation to royal power, Arnold suggesting that the military activities of imperial bishops were compensation for the weakness of royal power, and Reuter that royal military service could be considered part of a gen-

