

Cathar or Catholic:
Treading the line between popular piety and heresy in Occitania, 1022-1271.

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ABSTRACT

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The Occitanian Cathars were among the most successful heretics in medieval Europe. In order to combat this heresy the Catholic Church ordered preaching campaigns, passed ecclesiastic legislation, called for a crusade and eventually turned to the new mechanism of the Inquisition. Understanding why the Cathars were so popular in Occitania and why the defeat of this heresy required so many different mechanisms entails exploring the development of Occitanian culture and the wider world of religious reform and enthusiasm. This paper will explain the origins of popular piety and religious reform in medieval Europe before focusing in on two specific movements, the Patarenes and Henry of Lausanne, the first of which became an acceptable form of reform while the other remained a heretic. This will lead to a specific description of the situation in Occitania and the attempts to eradicate the Cathars with special attention focused on the way in which Occitanian culture fostered the growth of Catharism. In short, Catharism filled the need that existed in the people of Occitania for a reformed religious experience. Despite all the church's active attempts to quell the Cathars, it was only when a new group of religious men providing an orthodox solution to the religious need of Occitanians and a new political culture came to Occitania that the Cathars were finally eliminated from the fabric of society.

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I. Introduction

Peter of Castelnau stood on the bank of the Rhone River, just outside of Arles, waiting to take a ferry across. It was 15 January 1208, and it was the last day of Peter's life. Perhaps while waiting for the ferry, Peter filled his mind with happy thoughts of his old life as a Cistercian monk. It had been five years since he had last seen his beloved home of Abbey Fontfroide, located 15 kilometers southwest of Narbonne, in the foothills of the Pyrenees near the border of Aragon and the County of Barcelona.¹ It had not been his idea to leave the abbey and venture into Occitania, a land rife with heretics; if it had been left up to him, he would still be working the lands of the monastery. However, since he was a monk, his life was not his own to direct. Therefore, when Pope Innocent III ordered him to undertake a preaching mission in the lands between the Rhone and the Garonne, Peter went. He travelled into a land "where once the true faith had flourished" "to preach peace and support the faith."² Thankfully, Innocent had not sent him into battle alone. Another of Fontfroide's monks, Brother Ralph, accompanied Peter and Arnold Amalric, the leader of the Cistercian order, led the duo. "The preachers travelled on foot and on horseback among the wicked and misbelieving heretics, arguing with them and vigorously challenging their errors".³

The group embarked on their journey in the winter of 1203 with the intention of fighting heresy and the apathetic tolerance on the part of rulers that allowed it to thrive. They spent five

¹ Constance Hoffman Berman, "Medieval Agriculture, the Southern French Countryside, and the Early

² Peter of les Vaux-de-Cernay, *The History of the Albigensian Crusade*, trans. W. A. Sibly and M. D. Sibly (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2000), p. 7-8; 31.

³ William of Tudela and Anonymous, *The Song of the Cathar Wars: A History of the Albigensian Crusade*, trans. Janet Shirley (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1996), p. 12.

years chiding leaders like Count Raimond VI of Toulouse, for their inaction against heretics. The monks attempted to be “candlesticks” illuminating the straight and narrow path for wayward souls. They deposed lackadaisical bishops and even debated the leaders of the heresy.⁴ Barefoot, clothed in his white habit, the picture of poverty, Peter had done everything he could to reach the Occitanians only to be met with hate, lies and all manners of ill-will. To the priests and bishops he was a sanctimonious, brown-nosed little monk; to the people, he represented an unwelcome foreign intrusion into local politics. So great was Peter’s unpopularity, he was once forced to flee from Beziers after the locals threatened to murder him. All this adversity made Peter long for his simple days of abbey life behind the safe, protecting walls of Fontfroide. He was tired of being a papal legate. He wrote to Innocent asking to be recalled. These fields were not ripe for reaping, these bishops dumb and numb, these rulers obstinate and deceptive. The “wrath of princes and kings” was constantly upon the group. Over the course of five years Peter had come to the conclusion that preaching would not fix these errors; only the sword would bring these errant fools back into the fold. Heresy was a “root of bitterness” “deeply embedded in the hearts of men”.⁵

Perhaps as he stood on the banks of the Rhone Peter was pondering the events of the day before. He had been in an unproductive conference with Raimond VI since before the Christmas festivities. The topic of the conference had been the count’s continued flirtation with heretics and his employment of routiers; both were violations of official church policy as outlined by Canon 27 of the Third Lateran Council and cause for excommunication. The count was a “crafty and cunning, slippery and unreliable” man, who had done nothing to quell the growth of heresy in his

⁴ R. I. Moore, *The War on Heresy*, (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 2012), p. 241.

⁵ Peter of les Vaux-de-Cernay, *History*, p. 8-9.

lands.⁶ A truly duplicitous man, Raimond had often made promises to change his behavior only to renew his “wretchedness.” Peter was sent to ensure that Raimond was living up to the promises he had made to order to achieve a conditional escape from his latest excommunication. Word had reached Rome that Raimond had once again fallen into wickedness. The monk had been given the job of chastising the wayward count, and securing a guarantee that he would repent and begin to stand against heresy. If repentance was not forthcoming, Peter had been tasked with delivering an ultimatum to the count: if Raimond did not repent, his vassals would be released from their oath of fealty, his lands would be opened up to faithful Catholics to conquer, and the properties which Raimond held as fiefs from the papacy would be taken. Raimond, no stranger to papal demands, responded in the predicted manner and protested his innocence of all charges. The monk and the count were at an impasse. Tensions were high; tempers flared. Peter declared the count once again excommunicate. Raimond hurled abuse at the monk, declaring that as long as Peter remained in the count’s lands, Raimond would be watching him. Perhaps the count intended this to be nothing more than a terrifying prospect or perhaps it was a thinly concealed death threat. For Peter, it was just another unhappy instance in the string of unfortunate events that had befallen him in Occitania.

Whatever thoughts filled the monk’s head, it is clear that he was distracted. He did not see the lone rider who approached from behind. The stranger drove a sharp lance into the legate’s back, piercing him “between his ribs.” In the confusion and chaos, the murderer disappeared and the legate expired, the first casualty of what was to become a long war. Peter’s pierced body was carried back to St. Gilles and a lavish memorial was built to commemorate him. When word of the murder reached Innocent in Rome, he was incensed. As a legate, Peter was acting as an extension of the papal person, any injury that befell a legate was akin to injuring

⁶ Peter of les Vaux-de-Cernay, *History*, p. 31

the pope himself. Raimond was immediately blamed for the crime, despite a lack of any clear evidence of his guilt. Innocent sent a new wave of letters to the various kings of Christendom notifying them that swift action must be undertaken to punish Peter's killers and crush the heretics once and for all. Unlike his previous letters, these demanded action and promised rewards. By June of 1208, a massive army the size of which had not been seen since the First Crusade had assembled in Lyon, ready to enter Occitania. That January murder inaugurated ten years of bloody holy war, followed by another quarter-century of political warfare, which ended only with the introduction of the Inquisition and the formal absorption of the lands between the Garonne and the Rhone into France proper.

The Albigensian crusade as the war is called, seems like a simple enough affair. As the chroniclers related: heresy had infected Christendom; it turned men away from the true God and made them hostile to the Church. It was a cancerous tumor that threatened the very existence of the Church, a threat worse than that of the followers of Muhammad; it needed to be rooted out at any and all costs. Therefore, the weapon of holy war was employed. Diplomacy had been attempted; preaching had been tried. There was nothing left to do, but allow warriors of Christ to eliminate heresy. Modern historians struggle, however, to find a more satisfying explanation for the events of 1208-1218, especially considering the crusade's abject failure in its one main objective. It seems that for every village besieged, every heretic burned, a new town revolted, more heretics thrived, and yet by 1278 heresy had been successfully eliminated. Something more must have been going on behind the scenes. Suggestions proffered for this more satisfying explanation are extensive. Some view this as nothing more than the natural evolution of the

theory of holy war.⁷ It was only a matter of time, they argue, before the mechanism of Crusade was turned from an external force of conquest to an internal force of coercive judgment. It had even been tried before; shortly before the Albigensian crusade was called, Innocent had attempted to call a crusade against his enemies in southern Italy. Others view the war as a perversion of the crusading ideal. Instead of a holy war, the Albigensian crusade was cultural genocide against a pacifist, tolerant, and idyllic community.⁸ These historians go so far as to question whether heresy even existed in Occitania, claiming the church's evidence is compromised and thus should be treated as highly suspect, if it is to be believed at all. Both of these theories contain elements of truth: a cultural genocide was indeed occurring, and it was a reasonable evolution of holy war theory; however, by choosing to focus on one end of the spectrum or another, the reality of life in the Midi, as well as life in Europe, is oversimplified.

It must be remembered, that Europe in the early thirteenth century was coming out of a period of chaos, revolution, restructuring and reform, which had begun in the tenth century with the decline of Carolingian authority. New sources of authority and power were emerging which competed with one another in an attempt to be recognized as *the* correct and ultimate source of power. Petty strongmen were giving way to powerful monarchs with somewhat defined boundaries. Changes were occurring in the quotidian aspects of people's lives. New rules emerged defining marriage, family and employment relationships. Religion was attempting to restrict who was in and who was out, creating a homogenous faith for all of Europe. However, in the face of all these changes, Occitania was a time capsule standing in the way of these cultural,

⁷ Norman Housley, *The Later Crusades: From Lyons to Alcazar, 1274- 1580*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), p. 235 & Jonathon Riley-Smith, *The Crusades: A History*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), p. 166.

⁸ Hans Eberhard Mayer, *The Crusades* 2nd ed., (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), p. 214

ecclesiastical, and political developments.⁹ In the political world, Occitania was a mess of petty counts, power hungry bishops, numerous feudal overlords, and semi-independent towns, which resulted in the absence of a unifying, central authority. Her culture was unlike that of Northern France, England and Germany; her Christianity was not like that of Rome. Seen in this light, the Albigensian crusade becomes so much more than a reaction of the church against heresy. It becomes a war of ideology and identity, her battlefields a theater in which ideas were allowed to leave the realm of intellectual ether and enter the physical world. When the crusaders marched against the forces of the south they discovered that heresy and social order were so thoroughly entwined with one another, nothing short of a total societal shift could have divided the two. This was the lesson of the Albigensian Crusade. Out of the blood and chaos of war came a new Occitania. The lands between the Rhone and Garonne rivers were remade: culturally, they were remade in the image of Northern France; politically, they were drawn into the Kingdom of the Capetian monarch; and religiously, orthodox Catholic Christianity replaced regional deviations. Before embarking on an examination of the social restructuring which flowed out of the Albigensian Crusade, some foundations and parameters must be laid.

The very moniker, Albigensian Crusade, provides a minor problem for historians. To what extent can the war that ravaged the Occitanian lands be called a “crusade”? In order to answer this, a historian must first decide if she is a traditionalist or a pluralist in regards to crusade history. For the traditionalist, a military endeavor should only be considered a crusade if its goal was the liberation or defense of the Holy Land.¹⁰ Therefore, despite the papal backing and the crusader-like indulgences which were granted for military actions in southern Italy, the Baltics or in the Iberian Peninsula, as their goal was not the lands in which Christ walked, they

⁹ Moore, *War*, p. 189

¹⁰ Christopher Tyerman, *The Crusades: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004) p. 145

cannot be viewed as crusades. On the other hand, the pluralist cares not for the destination of the military campaign, focusing rather on the campaign's origin and organization. They look to see if the call to arms emanated from a pope, if the men who embarked were given crusader status, and if the action was subject to popular preaching. If a military endeavor met these specifications, a pluralist would view it as a crusade.¹¹ This paper will subscribe to the pluralist view as it seems quite clear that contemporaries viewed the Albigensian affair along the same lines as Holy Land campaigns. The chroniclers of the Albigensian conflict liken it to the First crusade, it was certainly preached widely in northern France, and the men who fought in it were given the same privileges as men who travelled to the Holy Land. Moreover, by viewing this conflict as a crusade it is thrust into a larger dialogue concerning the ways in which men and religion interacted during the late twelfth and early thirteenth century. Religious officials used crusades as a means of maintaining control on religious thought and political thought as well as a way of bringing orthodoxy to different areas. The Albigensian affair fits perfectly into the evolving concept of holy war as it would have been understood in the twelfth century. As the arguments of this paper seek to show how the war necessarily affected much more than just the religious life of the Occitanian people, it is beneficial to use the lens of crusade when describing it.

Next, the historian must decide whether she is taking a long or a short view. That is to say, what should the periodization of the Albigensian crusade be?¹² There are a few different tracks one might take in an attempt to answer that question. In a traditional short view the historian might limit herself just to the years of actual military actions in which the chief crusader Simon de Montfort led the host, 1208-1218, or one might push that date forward to

¹¹ Norman Horsley, *The Later Crusades: From Lyon to Alcazar* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992) p. 2

¹² Laurence W. Marvin, *The Occitanian War: A Military and Political History of the Albigensian Crusade, 1209-1218* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008) p. xiii

1228 when the official peace treaty was signed between Raimond VII of Toulouse and the Parisian government. Such a view lends itself well to military historians who wish to explore the development of military tactics. A short view might also be employed if the historian wanted to examine just the existence and the effects of heresy in Occitania; in this case, she might start in the early twelfth century (perhaps even the eleventh) and work her way forward ending in or near 1279 when the Inquisition was implemented and the lingering heretical element was formally eradicated. In both of these cases the events in Occitania are removed from the larger topic of crusading as well as from the larger events in Europe and viewed as a localized problem. On the other hand, a long view might be employed to show how events in Occitania related to the greater idea of crusading on a whole. Often in these general overviews of the whole crusading phenomena the Albigensian affair takes a backseat, wedged in near the Children's crusade as an anecdotal element, rather than a fundamental cog that deserves to be studied in its own right.¹³ This paper will subscribe to the short view as it affords a greater degree of importance to the events within Occitania. It will begin in the mid eleventh century and conclude with the implementation of the treaty of 1228, minor mention will be made regarding the events of 1278. This time frame will allow for a deeper exploration of the total combination of heresy and Occitanian culture. The roots of the heresy of Occitania will be traced and the differences in society will be outlined.

As was mentioned earlier, there is confusion among scholars as to how to classify this incident stemming from the need to place blame or excuse certain actors from the consequence of their actions.¹⁴ The crusade's inability to deal with heretics translates into a total whitewash of

¹³ For example: Jonathan Riley-Smith's *The Crusades: A History* or Hans Eberhard Mayer's *The Crusades*

¹⁴ Elaine Graham-Leigh, *The Southern French Nobility and the Albigensian Crusade* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2005) p. 9

all potential religious conviction. Northern French knights were simply looking for quick fortunes and new lands. The whole thing was nothing more than a land-grabbing affair. Or Innocent III is depicted as helpless to stop a mechanism of terror. One might be able to blame him for the initial folly of believing in the ability of a crusade to defeat heretics, but he surely could not be blamed for the bloodlust which came to define the war. Like a child telling a lie that suddenly balloons out of proportion, Innocent was powerless to direct the crusaders. None of these are beneficial definitions. It ought to go without saying that the historian's job is not to heap condemnation or praise on the people and events she studies. Regardless of one's moral or ethical feelings, the Albigensian crusade occurred and deserves to be understood without the judgment of modern man. However, as time continues to hurry forward it is often tempting to look back to the past with a sense of by-gone nostalgia in which that which has been lost to time is honored and revered, sometimes rightly so, sometimes simply in an exaggerated state. Occitania and the Cathars have been subject to this rosy retrospect for several centuries, so much so that historians writing narratives of the Albigensian Crusade see fit to describe the Cathars as simply misunderstood southerners living their lives in the same manner they always had, without a shred of doctrinal difference. They are praised for their "liberality and sophistication," to the point at which they are little more than wholly innocent victims of a mindlessly violent juggernaut that was the Crusade.¹⁵ They are excepted from modern sensibilities' desire to condemn historic war criminals for what would undoubtedly be called crimes against humanity today. However, such a view ought to be seen as suspect to an historian, whose job is not to pass judgment on previous generations, but to try and understand what people did and why they did it. While it is true that the Crusade was a violent juggernaut, it is incorrect to view the Occitanians

¹⁵ Christopher Tyerman, *God's War: A New History of the Crusades*, (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2006), p. 566 & Walter Wakefield, *Heresy, Crusade and Inquisition in Southern France, 1100-1250*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974) p. 54

are merely helpless victims who took no part in violent atrocities. “Faith, bigotry and atrocities were the prerogatives of all sides.”¹⁶

This rosy re-writing is best viewed in R. I. Moore’s *The War on Heresy*, in which chronology is forsaken in order to vilify the Crusaders. Moore describes the admittedly violent tenor with which Simon de Montfort came to run military operations during the Albigensian campaign. He appropriately defines the campaign as one in which the crusaders sought to “conquer and rule by terror.” Following this characterization, Moore offers a particularly bloody anecdote: “When Simon de Montfort took Bram in the spring of 1210, he allowed the garrison to retreat to Cabaret with all their noses cut off and all their eyes put out, except for one left to a leader, to guide them.” All that is missing from this melodrama is the cue card instructing the audience to hiss. Going on, Moore attempts to acknowledge the possible ferocity of the Occitanians, being careful to qualify them as reactors not provocateurs, stating that after such atrocities, “the resisters, when they could, replied in kind.” The example given for the reply in kind is of the similar mutilation which befell two *captured* knights, who after having their “ears, noses and upper lips” cut off “were left naked, in bitter weather, to find their way back to Carcassonne.” While this seems like a reasonable retaliation, Moore has presented the events in their reverse order. The mutilation of the two knights occurred during the winter of 1209/1210, de Montfort’s violence was, one may remember, in the spring of 1210. How a prior event might come as reply in kind, Moore chooses not to address.¹⁷ This paper will, therefore, attempt to neither rehabilitate crusaders nor condemn them; it will attempt to neither ignore the violence on the side of the heretics nor overly emphasize it.

Finally, a brief note on terminology must be made. A number of names exist to describe

¹⁶ Tyerman, *God’s War*, p.

¹⁷ Moore, *War*, p. 251

the beliefs to which the heretics of Occitania subscribed: Cathar, Albigensian, Medieval Manichee. Even more names exist if one attempts to catalogue the whole of heretical thought which emerged in the eleventh and twelfth centuries; one has Publicans, Humiliti, Waldensians, etc. While some beliefs are easily pigeonholed into one category or another, others are not as easily classified. Part of this lies in the general difficulty that exists when a historian attempts to peer beyond a man's actions into his motivations and convictions. Actions and words are often reliable witnesses of religious convictions, but not always. Further, while one might label himself a Catholic or Buddhist or a Mormon, this does not necessarily denote a whole-hearted acceptance of every element of a religion's doctrine. Knowing this, a careful decision must be made in the naming of the southern French heretics. The term Cathar will be used to describe the whole of heresy in Occitania. While some of these heresies contained related elements they were not part of a singular unified heresy and therefore ought not to be thought of in that manner. In spite of these differences, in the eyes of the church heresies were viewed as interrelated. However, a specific subset of the larger heresy existed which contained similar elements.¹⁸ This is the main heresy against which the crusaders fought and will be called Albigensian after the city and the conflict.¹⁹

Just as many names exist for the heretics dwelling in these lands, so too does the land itself possess many names. Ecclesiastical writers might call the region *Provincia*, separating it from *Francia* or *Gallia* that is, northern France; however, this title can also be narrowed to refer more specifically to the county of Provence and its immediate surrounding area. Others call the

¹⁸ William of Puylaurens, *The Chronicle of William of Puylaurens: The Albigensian Crusade and its Aftermath*, trans. W. A. Sibly and M. D. Sibly (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2003), p. xxix

¹⁹ An in-depth analysis of the different names given to heretical beliefs and the political ramifications of the different names see: Mark Pegg, "Heresy, Good Men, and Nomenclature" in *Heresy and the Persecuting Society in the Middle Ages: Essays on the Work of R. I. Moore* ed. Michael Frassetto (Boston: Brill, 2006), p. 227-239.

region Languedoc (from the term *langue d'oc*) referencing the different linguistic tradition which dominated specific stretches of land, in which northern France was the *langue d'oïl*. This is an imperfect moniker. The region in which the *langue d'oc* was dominant was smaller than the region infected with heresy.²⁰ Additionally, the term is a bit of an anachronism, being used primarily by the royal French government for administrative purposes after the period of intense hostility.²¹ This work will refer to these lands as either Occitania or the Midi, but these titles are also victims of limitations. The term “Midi” is used to denote the “part of southern France stretching from Marseille in the east to Aquitaine in the west” including “Provence, the lower Rhone valley, Quercy, the Rouergue, the Agenais, the county of Toulouse, the Trencavel viscounties...and Foix, Couserans, and Comminges which stretched southward to the Pyrenees.”²² However, this term can be quite general. Occitania, like Languedoc, is dependent upon a linguistic difference; that is, it denotes the region in which *Occitanian* was spoken. Occitanian is a Romance language, however, it does not resemble the language spoken in the North. The closest correlation is Catalan.²³ While both these terms are rather broad and can incorporate territories that were not expressly affected by heresy, they are the best terms available. Despite referring to areas that did speak the *langue d'oc*, the areas encompassed by the terms Midi and Occitania contained cultural differences, causing these lands to be viewed as “something apart” from the France of the north.²⁴ With these constraints in place, I will briefly sketch the outline of this paper.

²⁰ William of Puylaurens, *Chronicle*, p. xxviii-xxix

²¹ Wakefield, *Heresy, Crusade, and Inquisition*, p. 50

²² William of Puylaurens, *Chronicle*, p. xxviii

²³ Michael Costen, *The Cathars and the Albigensian Crusade*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), p. 1

²⁴ Wakefield, *Heresy, Crusade, and Inquisition*, p. 50 & Costen, *Cathars*, p. 1

In order to show how enmeshed the Occitanian culture was with heresy such that nothing short of a total re-orientation of society was required to eliminate it, this paper will begin by tracing the history of the persecution of heresy in Western European Christendom. This will entail detailing the eleventh century emergence of a new mindset bent on the persecution of divergent beliefs. Persecution came after a long period of silence and coincided with the development of strong, unified systems of authority. Next, the roots of heretical thought in Occitania will be explored. While particular attention will be paid to the Cathar heresy, it will by no means be the only avenue of heretical thinking explored. The different strands of popular piety, the Patarenes and the Dominican friars will be among the different types of religious thinking explored. Coupled with the exploration of the origins of heresy will be a description of Occitania, her culture and her political life. Illuminating how Occitania developed in relation to other parts of Western Europe will help illuminate the reasons why heretical thinking was so prevalent here. This will move into a description of the various non-violent attempts (and one violent one) by the Catholic Church to quash heresy. Accompanying the description of each attempt will be an explanation of why it failed. From here we will launch into the Albigensian Crusade itself: how it was called, the make up of its battles, and the successes and failures the military campaign had regarding the existence of heretics. Finally, the paper will conclude with a look at the years immediately following the conclusion of officially sanctioned armed conflicts. The implementation of the Inquisition aided in the final eradication of the Cathar heretics, however, Inquisition alone was not responsible. The make-up of Occitania changed during the protracted years of violence, a change which helped create an environment in which unorthodoxy could no longer thrive, either in the religious or the political sphere.

II. The End of Silence: Historical Origins of Medieval Heresy

The Albigensian Crusade was, in the minds of contemporaries, first and foremost a holy war to be waged against the enemies of Christ. But this was not a normal holy war like the one fought against Muslims in the Holy Land. Rather, it was a military expedition against fellow Christians, albeit Christians who were in error. While the violence the Albigensian Crusade employed to deal with heretics was a somewhat new creation, the problem of who decided what orthodoxy constituted, of how to know whom God would claim as His own, was one which had plagued the Church since its promotion to accepted state religion from persecuted minority faith.²⁵ To the contemporary Catholic, the followings heresies amassed betrayed the strength of a silver-tongued mountebank to sway the simple. To a historian removed from the passions of the age, they illustrate the natural lack of uniformity of religious practice one would expect to find within a faith that spanned a massive territorial area. Indeed, the very nature of medieval Christian belief fostered the existence of divergent theologies, as it was based on three pillars: scripture, the writings of the fathers, and tradition; all of which are topics that are subject to interpretation. These heresies were capable of influencing the simple and “destroying the vineyard of the Lord of Hosts,” disrupting the work of the harvesters.²⁶ However, as the early church became entwined with secular authority during the reign of Constantine, eliminating them became easier. Ecumenical councils were called and matters of faith and doctrine debated and

²⁵ R. I. Moore, *Formation of a Persecuting Society: Power and Deviance in Western Europe, 950- 1250* (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1987), p. 11; Wakefield, *Heresy, Crusade, and Inquisition in Southern France*, p. 16.

²⁶ Letter from Innocent III to Philip Augustus in Donald A. White, *Medieval History: A Source Book*, (Homewood: The Dorsey Press, 1965), p. 80

decided. Certain theories, most notably Arianism, were pushed outside the realm of acceptable doctrine and its supporters were persecuted. Active attempts were made to marginalize those who fell outside of Nicaea: properties were confiscated, meetings were banned and enfranchisement restricted. While violence was sometimes employed, it stemmed from the political rather than ecclesiastical sphere and was, theoretically, used only against the most heinous heretical offenders. However, between the fifth and the eleventh centuries reports of the persecution of heresy drop out of the historical record.²⁷

It is tempting to try to read this silence as an elimination of heresy and a so-called “golden age” of homogeneous Christian belief. Various historians and chroniclers have taken this path; it is simple, it is easy and, in its basest elements, it is a comforting view.²⁸ However, it is an incorrect reading of the past and it is intellectually disingenuous. Silence ought not to be taken to mean absence, especially when silence is quite easily explained.

In 410, Rome was sacked ending the period in which the Empire might have intervened in the distant West, religiously or politically. Heresy required an accuser and in a world after Imperial Rome but before Holy Rome, no accuser emerged. The sack eliminated the only source of unity, authority, and order that might have allowed an accuser to emerge. In the absence of any source of unity, authority or order, regional bishops emerged as founts of power. This, added to the difficulty of communicating between these regional centers of religious scholarship, causes it to be no surprise that “unorthodox” thought was promulgated unchecked as orthodoxy. When charges of heresy are occasionally leveled, they take the form of squabbles between

²⁷ Edward Peters, ed., *Heresy and Authority in Medieval Europe: Documents in Translation* (Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia Press, 1980), p. 57 & Arthur Siegel, “Italian Society and the Origins of Eleventh-Century Western Heresy” in *Heresy and the Persecuting Society in the Middle Ages: Essays on the Work of R. I. Moore*, ed. Michael Frassetto (Boston: Brill, 2006), p.43.

²⁸ Peters, *Heresy and Authority*, p. 58

religious men, rather than allegations of a widespread movement capable of seducing the common man.

Some historians believe that this change reflects an actual division in the character of heresy. They divide heretical belief into two halves: the one called popular heresy is preached and admired by the masses, the other called learned heresy, constrains itself to the realm of the educated.²⁹ This distinction, however, misses the point and even adds somewhat to the illusion of a unified Christian public. It supposes that while bishops were bickering over questions of pneumatology, Christology, and eschatology the mind of the Christian peasant was dormant. It is unlikely a bishop who entertained notions of non-Nicene Christology would keep these teachings to himself. Moreover, the distinction assumes a passive peasantry. Christianity lent itself to syncretism quite well; this is especially true in the years before a strong papal presence in the outlying regions of the faith. Pagan superstition was added to official doctrine with relative ease. While there are distinctions between heresies that draw the masses and heresies that consume the minds of intellectuals, the difference lies in application rather than substance.³⁰ Ideas were undoubtedly spread to the greater public. Chastisement, however, was retained for the educated; as the bishops were the only members of society the church could realistically influence.

Further evidence that heresy did not disappear from the fabric of Christian life despite a lack of historical evidence of its existence can be drawn from the fundamental change that occurred in the understanding of what it meant to be a heretic. A heretic to a medieval Christian was someone who, despite being shown an error within his religious thinking, persisted in

²⁹ Tyerman, *God's War*, p. 569

³⁰ Moreover, the distinction assumes the peasantry's inability to ponder the larger questions and mysteries of God. This seems quite narrow and elitist. Surely a peasant farmer faced with the deaths of many children, continued raiding of his crops, and the violence of landless knights, had time to ponder why a benevolent God would allow such things to happen.

retaining faulty theology.³¹ This is a careful definition that allows itself to be fluidic and ever changing, a fluidity that was required due to the lack of a coherent body of scriptures which defined Christianity. Dogma was still being defined in the early middle ages, and important aspects of theology had not yet been established. Therefore heresy had to be defined not in concrete terms, but in abstract ones.³² Fragility of the homogenous was implicitly imbedded into the definition of heresy as a survival mechanism. Beliefs were only considered heretical if an outside source deemed them to be, thus providing the church with the ability to change course as required. In this manner, the church was able to keep itself alive during the period of political instability that followed the collapse of Rome.

Christianity during the early middle ages was without a strong central authority. Although men sat on St Peter's throne in the Vatican and occasionally made claims to being the supreme shepherd of the flock, their actual authority was limited to the city of Rome (occasionally the pontiff was even powerless there). Europe during the early middle ages was without a strong form of government; Rome had fallen to the Visigoths in 410. Chaos and disorder threatened to take control. The world was "treacherous, full of temptation, violent- and the human beings in it were too weak to do much about it."³³ However, disorder and chaos did not win. Rather, the church emerged as a fount of authority and order, order which came from God himself. Those who were tasked with laboring did so for the sake of the whole society. In turn for their labor others, whose lot in life was to fight, were tasked with protecting these people. Both groups were unable to pay great attention to their spiritual lives, being forced to engage daily with a fallen world which sought to lure them through temptation into evil deeds. These two groups then, were forced to look to a third group: those who prayed. Shut away in

³¹ Moore, *War*, p. 9

³² Wakefield, *Heresy, Crusade, and Inquisition*, p. 15

³³ Peters, *Heresy and Authority*, p. 59.

monasteries, men and women sought to honor God through their removal from the meaningless flux that was the world, and their total dedication to a life of obedience, charity and poverty.

Monks and nuns thus were able to establish themselves as holy people in a world ruled by lust, greed, and pride. They were banks, reservoirs of a sacred power that could be doled out as needed onto the other two groups of society. What emerged, then, were “locally based cults” and “rural communit[ies] equipped with the relics of its patron saint” supported by the wealth of a noble family of those who fought. Thus, a close relationship grew between nobles, who lived very much in the heart of the meaningless flux of the world but worried about their souls, and the clergy, who desired to live without the world but might be sucked in due to logistical matters. A noble would give a gift of land to group of monks, allowing their minds to be freed from financial nonsense; in return, the monks would say prayers for the noble and his family, freeing the noble from worrying about penitential nonsense. Through this relationship, Christianity became both a religion that sought to enforce the separation of mankind into a tripartite society, and one with an “emphasis on shame rather than sin, atonement rather than repentance, orthopraxy rather than orthodoxy”. This focus on behavior rather than belief, this reliance on faith to save through “liturgy, ritual, the power of saints and relics” created a faith which was removed from the hearts of men and subject to corruption.³⁴ It was due to the lack of a clear-cut definition of heresy and the absence of a strong authority to govern the faith, that the persecution of heresy does indeed disappear from the historical record causing a veneer of homogeny earlier historians assumed referred to doctrinal harmony.

³⁴ Peters, *Heresy and Authority*, p. 59.

Adhémar of Chabannes, in the first half of the eleventh century, helps break the nearly 500 years of silence.³⁵ Born in Limousin around the year 998, Adhémar had entered the church at a young age. From his vantage point in the Benedictine monastery of St Cybard in Angoulême, the monk spent his days as many other monks of his age did, copying manuscripts and writing histories.³⁶ In one of his chronicles the monk details the resurgence of an old heresy, that of the Manicheans. He reported that in 1018, Manicheans could be found in Aquitaine. Four years later, the Manicheans pop up in Orléans posing as canons who were “more religious” than most; King Robert of France had them burned. Also in 1022, it is noted that Manicheans could be found in Toulouse and in 1026, following a council, several had been put to death by flames.³⁷ The abhorrent practices are described in detail in an attempt to explain their appeal to the masses:

A little later, Manichaeans appeared throughout Aquitaine leading the people astray. They denied baptism and the Cross and every sound doctrine. They abstained from food [meat] and seemed like monks; they pretended chastity, but among themselves they practiced every debauchery. They were ambassadors of Antichrist and caused many to turn away from the faith.³⁸

Adhémar selected the label of Manichean for a very specific and rhetorical reason. Manicheans, the followers of Mani, were well known to the ecclesiastical community, thanks, in part, to the writings of that most famous reformed Manichee, Augustine of Hippo. These were writings with which Adhémar would have been intimately familiar. Moreover, the doctrine of the Manichean heresy related specifically to a prophecy made by St Paul in 1 Timothy 4 in which Paul warns that “deceiving spirits” will cause people “to abandon the faith.” These teachings included everything Adhémar described as belonging to the heretics of Aquitaine: prohibitions against

³⁵ Daniel F. Callahan, “Ademar of Chabannes and the Bogomils, in *Heresy and the Persecuting Society in the Middle Ages: Essays on the Work of R. I. Moore*, ed. Michael Frassetto (Boston: Brill, 2006), p. 32

³⁶ Peters, *Heresy and Authority*, p. 73-4.

³⁷ Wakefield, *Heresy, Crusade and Inquisition*, p. 18

³⁸ Walter L. Wakefield and Austin P. Evans, trans and ed., *Heresies of the High Middle Ages* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1969), p. 74

certain foods and against sexual relationships.³⁹ What Adhémar intended through this labeling was for the church to be quickly cued in to the substance of this heresy, namely the dualistic nature of the heresy.⁴⁰

The application of the label Manichean, as well as the attributes Adhémar applies to the heresy of Aquitaine, has led historians to assume that there was some connection between the Manicheans of Augustine's age and the heretics of the early eleventh century. This is also due in part to the relatively sparse descriptions Adhémar provides for the Aquitaine heretics in comparison to the fuller descriptions he provides for other heretics in his chronicle. Historians posit that these heretics were direct descendants from Mani and his followers; believing that the theology had continued unbroken in an underground fashion for many hundreds of years. Steven Runciman was the most well known proponent of this theory, cataloged in his work, *The Medieval Manichee*.⁴¹ This view seems quite unlikely and has fallen out of favor in recent years starting with Father Antoine Dondaine's work.⁴² In his work, Dondaine turned the tide of medieval heresy historiography away from a casual acceptance of the legacy of Mani and toward a belief heresy was "not Manichaean, did not have external roots, [and] had occurred in a number of places independently". While certain elements of the Cathar heresy, mainly the abstaining from meat and the belief that matter was evil, are similar to the teachings of Mani, Catharism was also influenced through trade relationships with the Near East. For Dondaine, the heresy could be traced to the Bogomil church that had sprung up in Bulgaria. All of the heresies recorded by Adhémar including but not limited to that of Aquitaine, contained elements of

³⁹ 1 Timothy 4:1-5, New International Version

⁴⁰ Callahan, "Ademar of Chabannes," p. 32

⁴¹ Callahan, "Ademar of Chabannes," p. 32; Moore, and Steven Runciman, *The Medieval Manichee*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1947).

⁴² See, A. Dondaine, "L'origine de l'hérésie médiévale" (1952) written in response to Raffaello Morghen's *Medioevo Cristiano* (1951).

Bogomil belief: rejection of the Trinity, rejection of the Old Testament, rejection of the church hierarchy, rejection of sacraments, and rejection of meat. However, this view requires the combination of all heresies and thus does not adequately express each heresy's specific elements. As Adhémar's heretics did not have "any unified body of doctrine" "each of the groups called Catharists must, it seems, be treated separately." Taking this separatist approach, but retaining elements of Dondaine's thesis, several things become clear not only about the development of heresy in Aquitaine, but of heresy throughout Europe. While they were not relics of antiquity, elements of ancient tradition were observable and it was in light of these older heresies that contemporaries understood the present ones. Heresy was, as Dondaine understood it, equal parts a response to "local conditions" and a desire to "return to the purity of the gospels."⁴³ Finally, it must be known that "the rise of the heresies is explicable only in light of that revival of piety which occurred everywhere in western Europe at every level of society."⁴⁴

Popular piety was an intellectual and spiritual movement that sought to reconcile the current physical church with the ancient spiritual church that was detailed in scripture and tradition. This piety was behind the hordes of peasants and knights who flocked to the Holy Land to do battle with Christ's enemies. It drove them as they ventured out on any holy pilgrimage to visit a shrine to a saint. It was behind the decisions of wealthy men like Francis of Assisi and Peter Waldo of Lyon who turned their backs on their wealth and lived a life akin to that of the biblical apostles. People all over Europe were caught up in the desire to live the *vita apostolica*, the Apostolic Life. By living up to the apostolic ideal, it was believed one could have a truer, richer experience of God, salvation might be secured, and His favor garnered. Through this movement there was a "blossoming of devotional piety" which manifested itself through a desire

⁴³ Callahan, "Ademar of Chabannes," p. 33-4

⁴⁴ Wakefield, *Heresy, Crusade, and Inquisition*, p. 19-20

for “reform of Christian life” “without giving up traditional fundamental doctrines.”⁴⁵ Revivals of piety coincided with critiques of the current world order. Areas which drew criticism within the church were plentiful and covered the whole spectrum of religious life: the papacy had degraded into little more than a political office open for exploitation; monks ignored the rule of St Benedict, instead amassing great fortunes for themselves; priests were hardly worth imitation. In short, spiritual rot had crept into to the Master’s storehouse and threatened the harvest. To counteract the spiritual rot that threatened their very souls, men attempted to create more perfect reflections of biblical ecclesiastical institutions. Most famous of these attempts was the creation of the monastery at Cluny in Southern Burgundy.⁴⁶ Founded in 910 by William, Duke of Aquitaine, Cluny was to be “a haven of prayer for the redemption of his soul and those of all its friends and patrons ”. Unique measures were taken to ensure that the monastery remained pure; it was created to be independent of the local political powers which might attempt to “annex its land and income for their own use.”⁴⁷

Although Cluny was the most obvious fount of reform, it was hardly the only source of change within medieval Christianity. The charter, with its abundant exceptions, provided a model that spread across the French countryside into parts of Iberia, Italy and Germany. Other houses were formed at Gorze, Bronges, and Winchester in the Rhineland, Flanders and England respectively.⁴⁸ All sought to adhere more strictly to the Rule of St. Benedict, all sought to be more authentic safe heavens from the temptations of the meaningless flux. The papacy was emerging from the mire of Roman politics, becoming more than just a ceremonial title. Mendicant preachers traversed the European countryside; religious orders emerged which sought

⁴⁵ Peters, *Heresy and Authority*, p. 60 & Wakefield, *Heresy, Crusade, and Inquisition*, p. 19

⁴⁶ Peters, *Heresy and Authority*, p. 60

⁴⁷ Moore, *War*, p. 81

⁴⁸ Moore, *War*, p. 81

to emulate and surpass Cluny in religious piety. Popular piety was a genuine movement which encompassed European minds as men learned they could “pursue a Christian life that had hitherto been confined to hermitage or monastery” life.⁴⁹ However, popular piety and religious enthusiasm for reform could quickly fall into an out-right rejection of some of the formal elements of the church’s administration. The revival of piety could become disillusionment.

Disillusionment with the institution of the church was by no means a new development in the tenth and eleventh centuries. Men had long questioned the effectiveness of clergy and sacraments, especially in light of the sinful nature of man. Donatism, a heresy of Northern Africa provides us with a clear example of this. Donatists had questioned whether priests who had forsaken the faith during times of persecution could be forgiven and if the sacraments they delivered were effective. The fervent belief that such priests could no longer function within the church drove the church to the point of schism. In the years following the establishment of Cluny, disillusionment with the church similarly grew to the point of schism. Unlike the Donatists, this period of disillusionment was different. While Donatism had a clear line of doctrine- believing in the ineffectiveness of a sinful priest’s sacraments equaled heretical thinking-there was no such line of demarcation between popular piety enthusiasts and heretical thinkers. Instead there were degrees of heretical thinking as the same desire to live a more abundant and godly life drove both orthodox supporters of ecumenical reform and those who fell into heresy.⁵⁰ Righteous religious enthusiasm could quickly fall into an out-right rejection of some of the formal elements of the church’s administration; enthusiasts become fanatics easily. Indeed, heretics and reformers often looked the same in the eyes of the laity. There was an exodus from the protection of cloister walls as both heretics and godly men took to the roads to

⁴⁹ Wakefield, *Heresy, Crusade, and Inquisition*, p. 21

⁵⁰ Siegel, “Italian Society,” p. 53

spread the good news of personal devotion. Men who wanted to create more perfect institutions and men who felt the whole system was a sham, leveled criticism against wealthy monasteries. Those fired with zeal preached without waiting for papal authorization and without proper educations. The Spirit stirred within them and they could not be stopped. To illustrate the connections between reform and heresy let us take two examples: the Milanese Patarenes and Henry of Lausanne. One was a group able to amass political power before finally allying itself with the reform papacy. The other was a decisive figure credited with helping to bring heresy to Occitania. Both, however, held fast to apostolic ideals and believed themselves to be accurately living a Christian life.

III. Rag-pickers and a Wandering Preacher

In 1028, just two years after Adhémar chronicled the burning of heretics at Toulouse, a heresy was reported in the mountains of Monforte. Recorded is a conversation between Aribert, archbishop of Milan, and the leader of the heretics, Gerard, in which their doctrine is laid out. This doctrine seems similar to that of Adhémar's "Manicheans": they ate no meat, despised the ecclesiastical hierarchy, rejected the doctrine of the Trinity, and practiced chastity and poverty. They valued the Scriptures and based their theology on their own interpretations. Furthermore, they held their possessions in common and had little use for the Catholic Church, having their own pontiff who travelled throughout the world. "There is no pope but our pope, though his head is not tonsured, and he is not ordained."⁵¹ Through Aribert's probing, the doctrine is further fleshed out. The fleshly incarnation of Christ is dismissed in favor of a purely spiritual nature; the Holy Spirit is reduced from equal member of the Triune Godhead to a mere aid in "the Spiritual understanding of the holy scriptures." It was supposed that with the absence of sex, mankind would continue to reproduce "without coition, as the bees do."⁵² When the full measure of their heretical teaching was revealed Aribert reacted swiftly. Soldiers were sent to the stronghold to bring those within back to Milan so their conversions might be ensured lest, continuing in their error the heretics might contaminate the whole of Italy. Some were convinced to return to the "faith which the whole world holds" and "were saved. Many others leapt into the

⁵¹ Siegel, "Italian Society," p. 43; Moore, *Birth*, p. 20

⁵² R. I. Moore, *The Birth of Popular Heresy*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995), p. 20

flames...and dying wretchedly were reduced to wretched ashes.”⁵³ However, fire was not enough to purge the growing tide of religious discontent.

Despite similarities, the heresy for which the people of Monforte were willing to die seems to have developed its theology independent from Manichean or Bogomil influence.⁵⁴ The absence of direct connections to outside founts of influence, suggests that internal circumstances were driving religious individuals to seek new avenues of religious expression in rejection of current ones, mainly the increasing connections between the ecclesiastical hierarchy and the sources of political authority. The selfsame connection that occurred between nobles and monasteries in Gaul existed within the position of archbishop in Milan. The man who wore the title of archbishop was in control of not only the spiritual lives of the Milanese people but also of their political lives as well. The ecclesiastical lands that supported the church had been donated to the church by the *capitanei* (the leading aristocratic families). The church, in turn, allowed this land to be worked by the *capitanei* providing them with wealth and status. It was from these families that the man who became archbishop came, and a cycle of mutual dependence emerged. The church needed the wealth of the *capitanei* to survive, and the *capitanei* needed the church’s endorsement to keep working its lands.⁵⁵ The strong familial ties thus allowed for the continuation of clerical marriage, and entrance into the institution of the church was closely guarded and monitored through a system of fees. Moreover, the church managed to maintain control over the burgeoning merchant economy; merchants needed privileges and protection that only the archbishop and the *capitanei* could provide. The church in Milan was thus able to control every quotidian aspect of life. There was no way to exist without the institutional mechanism of the church. Again, these circumstances were not unique to Milan and its

⁵³ Moore, *Birth*, p. 21

⁵⁴ Siegel, “Italian Society,” p. 50-53

⁵⁵ R. I. Moore, *The Origins of European Dissent* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1977), p. 56

surrounding lands. However, while in Gaul monasteries were undergoing reform in the name of Cluny resulting in ripple-like changes through the church, no such system for reform existed in Milan.

Instead, reform took the form of heretical protest. The Monforte sect had worked to develop a theology that allowed for the successful circumnavigation of the ecclesiastical oligarchy that worked to keep the social order as it had been. They were defeated by a man who had much to gain and everything to lose if his position became unnecessary. Aribert, through savvy and shrewd maneuvers, had managed to ingratiate himself and the city to the emerging founts of authority: crowning the German King, Conrad II, king of the Lombards in 1025 and standing in Rome, as the pope's equal, during Conrad's imperial coronation in 1027.⁵⁶ Furthermore, Aribert had seen to the further polarization of Milanese society through careful manipulations of the rights of the *capitanei* at the expense of the rights of those who existed on the second tier of Milanese society, the vavassours. This growing gulf between social categories resulted in violent resistance as well as ideological resistance such that when Aribert died he left behind "a tradition of violent hostility between citizens and knights as his political legacy, dangerously complementary to the edifice of ecclesiastical abuse". This tradition manifested itself in 1056 when a group of townsmen caught up in the fervor of religious enthusiasm and the *vita apostolica*, managed to take control of the religious and political life of Milan.⁵⁷

It was out of the endangered vavassour class that the message of reform came to represent a force of real change in Milan. Arialdo, the son of a vavassour, began to spread a message of reform in the Milanese countryside. By all accounts his life was a model of piety, piety which the clerics of the city had seemingly forgotten. He was chaste, always in prayer, and

⁵⁶ Moore, *Origins*, p. 56

⁵⁷ Moore, *Origins*, p. 55-57

without any trappings of wealth or property. Unsurprisingly, he drew attention and managed to convert a group of clerics to his way of thinking. Together he and his small group lived a communal life following closely the ideals of poverty, chastity and obedience, rejecting the ideas of clerical marriage, nepotism and the complex relationship of patronage between religious officials and the *capitanei*. They stood as intermediaries between the priests and monks: uncloistered and among the people, capable of providing sacraments, and driven by a penitential withdrawal from the pleasures of the world. The reformers came to be called “Patarenes,” a name derived from the Italian word for rag, used to describe the lowest workers in the cloth trade. Whether this name was used because the bulk of the Ariald’s followers came from the poorer classes, rag-pickers, or whether that was simply a condescending classification leveled onto the group by the current ecclesiastical hierarchy, is unknown. Certainly, poorer members of society were attracted to the Patarene movement with its emphasis on poverty and communal living; however, it would be incorrect to assume that only the poor desired Ariald’s message. It is known that the Patarene movement attracted members from across the socio-economic divide; with a large portion coming from the citizens of Milan (*cives*). These *cives* were employed in a variety of positions; they were “merchants, the notaries, the lawyers, and the judges”.⁵⁸ Additionally, the movement covered society vertically rather than horizontally. Its affects were described thusly: “one household was entirely faithful [i.e. pro-Patarene], the next entirely faithless; in a third the mother believed with one son while the father disbelieved with another [son].”⁵⁹ In this manner, through associating with persons on all sides of the social and economic spectrum, the Patarenes were able to spread their message, moving into the city from the countryside.

⁵⁸ Moore, *Origins*, p. 58

⁵⁹ Moore, *War*, p. 78

On 10 May 1057 Arialdo preached a sermon that was effectively a declaration of war against the excesses and abuses of the Milanese clergy. He condemned the sexual impropriety in which the clergy openly lived. He stated that all members of the ecclesiastical institution, were guilty of the sin of simony and because of this sin the Milanese people ought to avoid churches, for they were “filthy as stables”, and to avoid the sacraments these priests administered as they were worthless.⁶⁰ Arialdo’s preaching was so effective he ushered in a riot in which the townspeople threatened the clergy with death if they did not take an oath of celibacy and abandon their families. Most importantly, this sermon inaugurated roughly twenty years of ideological warfare in which reformers attempted to topple the bishops and nobility through the destruction of their monopoly on the church. Despite preaching a message directly similar to that of the Donatists of Northern Africa, Arialdo and his followers were not condemned as heretics.⁶¹ Following the sermon of 10 May, Milan’s archbishop excommunicated Arialdo; Arialdo appealed this decision to Rome, a move which started a program of cooperation between the Vatican and the Patarenes. To understand why cooperation was possible and why the Patarenes were not labeled heretics due to their anti-establishment tendencies, we must look at the reform policies of the Gregorian papacy.

Coinciding with Arialdo’s program of reform in Milan was a grander program of reform that was sweeping across Europe. As mentioned above, the monastery at Cluny created a pattern other monasteries followed in an attempt to free ecclesiastical centers from their dependence upon noble families. Popular piety, which had earlier flowed in a myriad of disconnected currents, came together under the banner of Cluny to effect real change on the whole of European Christendom. Reformers managed to take control of the papacy in 1046, ten years

⁶⁰ Moore, *War*, p. 77

⁶¹ Moore, *Origins*, p. 60; Moore, *War*, p. 79

before Ariald began his mission of reform in Milan. The same social tensions and familial rivalries that dominated bishoprics throughout Europe dominated the papacy. When the King of the Germans, Henry III, came over the Alps expecting to be crowned Emperor by the bishop of Rome, he discovered an office wholly embroiled in local politics and three sitting popes, at least two of whom had secured their title through the sin of simony. Disgusted with the situation, Henry deposed all three and installed his own man, a reform minded man, to the bishopric.⁶² Leo IX (1049-1054) and the popes who followed him, brought to Rome and the whole of Christendom, the lessons of Cluny. Leo held synods throughout “northern Italy, German and France” in which the abuses of the church, simony and clerical marriage, were expressly condemned and those found guilty of these sins were deposed.⁶³ These reform-minded popes ensured that their work would continue on by surrounding themselves with a “cadre of committed and talented reformers,” and by allying themselves with likeminded thinkers outside the confines of Rome.⁶⁴ It is for this reason that the Milanese Patarenes appealed to Rome following their excommunication and why the Patarenes were able to spread their message further than ever before. Certain concessions had to be made, mainly the Donatistic element of Patarene belief that the sinfulness of priests could cause them to be corrupted conduits of grace had to be rejected, but once that settlement was in place total collusion was possible. The reform cadre supplied the Patarenes with funds to spread their message throughout the Northern Italian towns in Lombardy and Tuscany.⁶⁵ Not all reform movements were as triumphantly accepted into the new order of Christianity as the Patarenes despite having similar messages of poverty, rejection of simony, and reform. While the Patarenes and the reform papacy were deepening

⁶² Leo was not the first German pope Henry installed. The first two, Clement II and Damasus II, died shortly after taking office.

⁶³ Morris, *The Papal Monarchy*, p. 86; Moore, *War*, p. 83.

⁶⁴ Moore, *War*, p. 84

⁶⁵ Moore, *War*, p. 85

their relationship with one another, another wave of religious enthusiasm swept over the European countryside. This time enthusiasm “overstep[ed] the bounds of doctrinal orthodoxy”.⁶⁶

In 1116, near the start of the Lenten season, two men approached Hildebert, Bishop of Le Mans, with a request. Their leader, a young man named Henry, wanted to enter the city and preach during the weeks before Easter. Admittedly, he was a little strange; with “the haggard face and eyes of a shipwrecked sailor, his hair bound up, unshaven, tall and of athletic gait, walking barefoot even in the depths of winter” just like a hermit of old. Dressed in rags, he made his home in doorways and his bed in the gutter.⁶⁷ He had a “fearful voice” always at the ready to enter into a sermon. In spite of these oddities, he was:

of unusual holiness and learning...[his] eloquence could move a heart of stone to remorse. It was claimed that all monks, hermits and canons regular ought to imitate his pious and celibate life, and that God had blessed him with the ancient and authentic spirit of the prophets⁶⁸

Perhaps in light of this prophetic spirit, perhaps because Hildebert was in a hurry to head to Rome for the Easter festivities, the bishop acquiesced to the disciple’s request, welcoming Henry “cheerfully and generously”. After all, Henry was not the only rootless monk of the age, and even his eccentric garb and strange behavior had precedents. Monks crisscrossed the French countryside practicing varying degrees of self-mortification and extreme poverty. One such fellow was described as being short only a club in his costume of lunacy. They attempted to tear men away “from the errors of their lives” by assailing the “ramparts of vice and infidelity.” Despite the eccentric quality and character of these monks, most clerics believed them to have messages worth hearing. Hildebert was himself something of a reform sympathizer, who rejected the ease with familial patronage could (and did) dominate ecclesiastical offices. It was, therefore,

⁶⁶ Moore, *Formation*, p. 16

⁶⁷ Moore, *Birth*, p. 34

⁶⁸ Moore, *War*, p. 111-112

a shock when Hildebert returned from Rome to be met by jeers and to find his city in an uproar. Henry's mien of godliness was a "Trojan" he wore to disguise his true heretical self.⁶⁹

Once Hildebert was gone, Henry's true message came to light: subversion of the proper ecclesiastical channels. As is often the case, the young men of the city were quick to latch onto Henry's teaching and his criticisms of their elders. In their excitement the younger members of the clergy built Henry a platform from which he could preach, and once his "fearful voice" began to ring out denunciations of their sins, the young clerics began to weep.⁷⁰ Henry's sermons incited the citizens of Le Mans to rebel against the clergy; they were told not to pay for ecclesiastical services such as burials in sacred ground. The clergy were personally attacked for their wealth and property; their belongings were thrown away and their grand houses destroyed. Henry even preached radical dogmas "a faithful Christian would shudder to repeat." Women who had engaged in sexual sins were to appear naked before everyone then ultimately were to be redeemed through marriage. When the clerics attempted to stand against Henry and restore order to their city, they were "viciously beaten" and covered with the "filth of the gutter". Unable to restore order, the clerics fled the city in hopes of saving their lives, seeking shelter with the count of the region. Hildebert was only able to arrange for Henry's departure from the city with the aid of the count and his knights. Henry's message, however, had been so appealing and intoxicating to the masses, that even in his absence, love for the monk and his message remained in the hearts of the people of Le Mans. As for Henry, expulsion from Le Mans did nothing to deter his message or his zeal for preaching. The monk simply continued on his way to a new town and

⁶⁹ Moore, *Origins*, p. 84-5

⁷⁰ Moore, *Formation*, p. 17

riper fields.⁷¹ Incidentally two of the young clerics left Le Mans with him, only to return tails between their legs a short time later.

Several things stand out in this encounter. While the chroniclers of these events call Henry a heretic even at this early date, it is not immediately clear that Henry was, in fact, a heretic. It is unlikely Hildebert would have allowed Henry to begin preaching without first discussing matters of theology with him. This seems especially true considering the emissaries Henry send ahead.⁷² Rather than a mien of godliness hiding a heart of heresy, it is more likely that Henry was simply too much of a progressive reformer. Indeed, his message was strikingly similar to that of the Patarenes. Fine clothes and jewels were to be thrown away and the long hair of women was to be cut off and burned. Humility was to be cultivated through self-abasement and self-mortification. Prostitutes were pardoned for their offenses and attempts were made to bring them into the fabric of respectable society through marriage, albeit marriages consecrated not by the official authorities. The people of the town were to confess their sins in front of each other, such that all might work together.⁷³ His goal and the goal of the Patarenes, was to remove the boundaries that stood between the common man and God, spiritual empowerment. The question then becomes, why did Henry fail to bring about a change in the ecclesiastical life of Le Mans and go down in history as a heretic, while the Patarenes had a measure of success?

The easiest explanation is that Hildebert was unprepared for the firestorm he unleashed by allowing Henry to preach. Although he was a reformer and most likely did stand against simony and clerical marriage, it seems he was unwilling to make a total break from the church's old ways. Le Mans' small size also added to the difficulty Hildebert had in allowing for the wholesale adoption of Henry's message. Milan was a wealthy city at the forefront of economic

⁷¹ Moore, *Origins*, p. 85-89

⁷² Moore, *Formation*, p. 17

⁷³ Wakefield, *Heresy, Crusade and Inquisition*, p. 23 and Moore, *Origins*, p. 88-89

development and near centers of Levantine trade. When the Patarenes brought their message to Milan, the merchants, although they owed their origins to the aristocratic classes, had progressed to a state that allowed them to continue without the church's assistance. Comparatively, Le Mans was a backwater; her economy was inextricably tied to the church hierarchy. Without the church, trade crumbled. This had been demonstrated effectively in 1092, when the city had been placed under interdict and the profit margins of the "inn-keepers, the jesters, the butchers and bankers" dropped.⁷⁴ Perhaps, Hildebert was unwilling to follow Henry quite that far down the rabbit hole, preferring instead a more moderate approach to reform. Whatever the cause of Hildebert's change of heart, the fact that Henry's message lingered long after his departure illustrates the pervasive quality of popular piety. His message tapped into the dissatisfaction that the townspeople felt on account of the growing intrusion of the church upon their daily lives.⁷⁵ These "deep and lasting passions and grievances" were not limited to Le Mans, and Henry was not finished spreading his message.

It is also not expressly clear that after leaving Le Mans Henry was viewed only as a heretic. Despite the records referring to his southern travels as furthering to "spread the germ of his heresy in remote places" his message is not viewed as being unredeemable.⁷⁶ Between his expulsion from Le Mans and his appearance before an ecumenical council at Pisa in 1135, Henry travelled through Aquitaine and northern Italy, preaching a message called heretical by the chroniclers. The substance of this message is vague; it is only known that after Henry had been in a region:

⁷⁴ Moore, *War*, p. 113-4

⁷⁵ Moore, *War*, p. 116

⁷⁶ Moore, *War*, p. 118

Christians will scarcely enter the doors of the churches: they reject the holy mystery, refuse offerings to the priests, first fruits, tithes and visits to the sick and withdraw their habitual piety.⁷⁷

The substance of this message does not seem to have changed much since Henry's time in Le Mans. He was still preaching a message that seeks to upset the social order being promulgated by the hierarchy of the church, a message that tapped into existing currents of discontentment that lingered in the hearts of European Christians. Henry's message is, on the surface, no more extreme than that of the Patarenes. Indeed, Henry had a thoroughly developed and canonical understanding of the reasons for his preaching:

I confess that I obey God rather than man, for obedience is owed to God rather than to men. To answer your question about my mission: He sent me who said, 'Go, teach ye all nations.' He who imposed the duty was the same as He who said, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.' Furthermore, I accept the Scriptures of the New Testament, by which I verify and corroborate the aforesaid statements.⁷⁸

Despite this scriptural and seemingly orthodox grounding, Henry's message was viewed as upsetting and heretical. His views on infant baptism are likened to a Pelagian denial of original sin. By remaining adamant in his denial of the efficacy of sacraments consecrated by sinful ministers, Henry shows himself to be both a Donatist and, possibly, an Arian. Furthermore, Henry's insistence on denying the usefulness of priests in binding men and women in marriage, his insistence that priests are not needed to hear confessions and hand out penance, and his dogged determination that bishops and priests should have neither wealth nor benefices show that Henry is persistent in his critique of the growth of ecumenical influence in the daily life of Europeans.⁷⁹

In 1135 this persistence landed Henry in trouble with the archbishop of Arles, in whose lands Henry had been preaching. He had the monk arrested and brought before an ecumenical

⁷⁷ Moore, *War*, p. 118

⁷⁸ Wakefield and Evans, *Heresies*, p. 116

⁷⁹ Wakefield and Evans, *Heresies*, p. 116-7

council presided over by Pope Innocent II. Henry was condemned as a heretic but, rather than facing an ordeal or a martyr's death, he was ordered to accompany Bernard of Clairvaux back to his monastery.⁸⁰ This decision, at its core, echoes the forced concessions the Patarenes were required to make in order to receive papal backing and support of their message. It is not out of bounds to think that the clerics at the council of Pisa believed in and agreed with certain elements of Henry's message. It is likely they assumed that by sequestering the errant, would-be reformer, the problematic elements could be purged and his overall message rehabilitated. Thus, Henry could be, like the Patarenes, a respectable model through which popular piety and religious enthusiasm could be channeled to effect reasonable change through established religious institutions. The council's decision to place Henry into Bernard's monastery at Clairvaux enforces this assumption as the Cistercian order was on the forefront of religious change in the twelfth century.⁸¹

Despite all of Duke William's efforts, Cluny had begun to exhibit signs of institutional and spiritual rot near the close of the eleventh century. Cluniac houses grew to resemble the grand estates of the landed gentry. Her monks were, to put it crassly, fat, rich and happy. These lives of comfort and wealth seemed diametrically opposed to the life of poverty, mortification and self-denial to which monks ought to have subscribed. Many wondered if a rich, land-owning church was what Christ had in mind when he named Peter the Rock; many wondered how the simple Rule of St Benedict might be followed by monks whose estates and serfs were numerous. Among those who questioned Cluny's efficacy was Robert of Molesmes. Alienated by the wealth of Cluny and equipped with new ideas, Robert set off to create a more perfect monastery

⁸⁰ Wakefield and Evans, *Heresies*, p. 115

⁸¹ Moore, *War*, p. 71

in which the Rule of St Benedict was once again the central element of the monastic life.

Robert's critiques of monastic culture were as follows:

We do not work with our hands, he told his assembled brethren, as we read that the holy fathers did. We receive abundant food and clothing from the tithes and oblations of churches, and by casuistry or force take for ourselves the tithes which belong to the priests. In this way we are gorged with the blood of men and are participators in sin.⁸²

In 1098, he created the abbey at Citeaux as an answer to these criticisms. The grand gifts of prime real estate were rejected in favor of wastelands far from the evils and temptations of the meaningless flux of the world. The monks would not employ serfs to work the land, but rather their own two hands. Echoing the increased involvement of the church in the private lives of the laity, the monks at Citeaux would not have any private life at all, taking their meals together, sleeping communally and working alongside one another. Indeed, there would eventually develop a role for *conversi* or members of the laity who wanted the spiritual benefits of monastery life, but were because of their social status unable to take spiritual orders.⁸³ It was also an attempt, like that of the Patarenes, to draw those enticed by the *vita apostolica* into the homogenizing fold of the official church.

Cistercian monks soon became powerful in the politics of Christendom and the order received important papal privileges of immunity from local episcopal jurisdiction and exemption from the payment of ecclesiastical tithes. It was partly as a result of these ecclesiastical privileges that scores of unaffiliated monasteries and hermitages began to be attracted into the new Cistercian order.⁸⁴

Notwithstanding good intentions and positive precedent, Henry was not attracted to the simplicity of the White robed monks. He fled the monastery at Clairvaux and in so doing, ensured that both he and his message would forever be viewed as heretical. More importantly, his flight established a tradition which pitted Henry's message and the Cistercian order against

⁸² Moore, *War*, p. 71-3

⁸³ Berman, "Medieval Agriculture," p. x; 1

⁸⁴ Berman, "Medieval Agriculture," p. 1

one another.⁸⁵ Following his arrest, condemnation, censure, and jailbreak, Henry returned to Occitania and continued to preach his message of community, poverty and radical reform. Bernard of Clairvaux began a pursuit of the renegade and his influence, following him through “Bergerac, Perigueux, Sarlat and Cahors to Toulouse and Albi”.⁸⁶ Along the way, the charismatic preacher Bernard “instructed many simple folk in the faith, called back the wandering, restored those who had been subverted,” he even preformed numerous miracles that served to attest to the power of the Cistercian order and the ineffectiveness of Henry’s message.⁸⁷ A council was held in Albi in which Henry’s doctrine was rebutted systematically. Then Bernard posed a question to the gathered horde: who would they follow? In response:

the whole people began to execrate and decry the wickedness of [Henry], and joyfully to receive the word of God and the Catholic faith. ‘Repent’, said [Bernard]. ‘Each of you is contaminated, Return to the unity of the church. So that we can know which of you has repented and received the word of life, raise your right hand to heaven as a sign of Catholic unity,’ All raised their right hands in exultation.

Thus, Henry’s message was, for the time being, quieted.⁸⁸ However, questions arise from the two different paths radical religious enthusiasts ventured down during the eleventh and early twelfth centuries: why were the Patarenes able to assimilate into mainstream currents of reform and become orthodoxy while Henry’s message was not? Superficially, it would seem that Henry’s message was simply one of irredeemable heresy containing no elements of reforming truth, while the Patarenes had a message of mostly acceptable truth into which minor mistakes had crept. This is all too simple an explanation. Differences between heretics and reformers did not “lie in the loathing of clerical hypocrisy, avarice, or corruption” nor were differences initially found in

⁸⁵ Moore, *War*, p. 119

⁸⁶ Moore, *War*, p. 121

⁸⁷ Wakefield and Evans, *Heresies*, p. 125.

⁸⁸ Costen, *The Cathars*, p. 55

matters of doctrine.⁸⁹ Moreover, such an explanation ignores the obvious fact that Henry was neither the first man nor the last man with a radical message to find an eager audience for his message of reform in the lands between the Rhone and the Garonne and that the heretical elements of reform continued to be preached here long after Henry had gone. Rather, certain political and cultural circumstances made Occitania open to a type of radical religious enthusiasm that defied all attempts at rehabilitation into the mainstream.⁹⁰

⁸⁹ Moore, *War*, p. 140

⁹⁰ Moore, *War*, p. 120

IV. The Lands Between the Rhone and Garonne

Although it had been loosely absorbed into the Merovingian *regnum Framcorum* in the sixth century, the Midi was not “French”. Theoretical ties to Paris and the French monarch existed among the counts and castellans that controlled the region, however these ties were understood in the broadest sense. This sense grew more and more theoretical as the Merovingian dynasty gave way to the Carolingian in spite of the massive “renaissance” promulgated by Charlemagne in the later years of his reign. In an adoration of all things Roman, Charlemagne embarked on a campaign of revival of the lost and forgotten ways of Christian Rome. The private chapel at Charlemagne’s new capital of Aachen was modeled after the Imperial church at Ravenna; Charlemagne went so far as to import architectural elements from Ravenna to adorn his masterpiece. Coins were minted depicting Charlemagne clean-shaven and looking like a new Augustus. Learning and law were revived, manuscripts were saved from destruction, and a new type of script, Carolingian minuscule, was created to aid in the transcription of older texts. Augustine’s *City of God* was culled for the rules that ought to be applied to a society of believers. Religion was closely monitored with an eye toward Rome; it was under Carolingian control that the Rule of St Benedict emerged as the dominant guide for monasteries.⁹¹ The imposition of the Rule of St Benedict, the success of the Carolingian miniscule, the growth of a unified law code – all these developments were devices of order and unification. This renaissance did not have a chance to penetrate far into the “mountainous and relatively

⁹¹ Diarmaid MacCoullough, *Christianity: The First Three Thousand Years*, (New York: Penguin Books, 2009), 352-4

undeveloped lands between the Alps, the Massif Central and the Pyrenees” as the lands between the Rhone and the Garonne had only been added to Charlemagne’s territories in 801, shortly before his death in 814.⁹² The chasm between the Midi and northern France was deepened following Charlemagne’s death, as the laws of partial inheritance dictated that the empire be divided amongst the surviving sons. This division resulted in the creation of competing empires and a “progressive loss of [political] cohesion” swept over Europe. The Midi came under the control of Pippin II and was a force of resistance against the stronger son, Charles the Bald. Charles eventually dominated Pippin II, but this domination came at a heavy cost: the creation of a system of balance and exploitation that both alienated and empowered the counts and vassals who ought to have been loyal servants of the King of the Franks.⁹³

While Carolingian power broke down, the viscounts and vassals undertook a program of increased militarization and the loss of political cohesion trickled down from the king to the counts to the vassals of the various counts. Titles became hereditary, but continued reliance on non-primogeniture inheritance practices caused patrimonies to be divided into minuscule plots and petty units.

In 900, viscounts existed in Nimes, Beziers, Narbonne, Carcassonne, Toulouse, Roussillon, Catalonia, Albi, and the Limousin. By 975 the independent noble families in the Languedoc numbered at least 150, all claiming their titles and power by hereditary right.⁹⁴

These petty units in turn embarked on their own campaigns of militarization as fortified castles began to dot the countryside. Castles could be entirely owned by a single noble family or they might be gifted to a lesser noble in hopes of currying favor, obligation, and fealty. The plethora of castles translated into a society militarized at all levels, where men thought of themselves as

⁹² Moore, *War*, p. 120; Costen, *The Cathars*, p. 4

⁹³ Costen, *The Cathars*, p. 1-5

⁹⁴ Costen, *The Cathars*, p. 5

knights before any other designation. The process of building castles began in the eleventh century, denoting a relatively wealthy countryside.⁹⁵ All of which resulted in a precarious political situation, “a jumble of lordships within which nobles families intermarried and formed both formal and informal alliances with each other and with nobles and kings from other regions.” Marriage and warfare went hand in hand in Occitanian diplomacy. Thus, while belonging historically to the *regnum Francorum*, Occitania was directly or indirectly under the political influence of a range of external influences. The east lay under the guardianship of Imperial Germany. Aquitaine was combined with England under the Angevin kings; however, the English kings themselves were supposed vassal subjects of the King of France, which only added to the already murky mire. The Counts of Barcelona and Catalonia attempted to extend their control over the Pyrenees and often married into the noble families of both Aquitaine and Toulouse. Apart from the external multitude of political forces vying for control of Occitania, two relatively strong noble families attempted to dominate local politics: the counts of Toulouse and the Trencavels.⁹⁶

The counts of Toulouse were among the oldest and most powerful of the noble aristocratic families of the Midi. Their name claimed the largest stretch of Occitanian countryside, and they had direct (albeit it largely ceremonial) ties to the kings of England and Germany. Despite the antipathy to heresy that would come to define their region and rule, the early counts of Toulouse appeared thoroughly enamored with the Catholic Church and a count of Toulouse aided in the taking of Jerusalem.⁹⁷ However, despite this wealth and prestige, the counts of Toulouse were no more in control of Occitania than the Capetian king of France, ruling

⁹⁵ Costen, *The Cathars*, p. 11-2

⁹⁶ Marvin, *The Occitanian War*, p. 5

⁹⁷ Wakefield, *Heresy, Crusade and Inquisition*, p. 50

instead as a “first among noble equals.”⁹⁸ This shaky claim to power translated into a tiered system of aristocracy, in which the older noble families were forced into competition with lesser, newer noble families over resources, wealth, and fealty. These newer nobles were often nothing more than strong men with a castle and a handful of knights to support them in a quest to advance their family name. It is from the ranks of this group that the second most powerful family in Occitanian emerged. Originally, the Trencavels were simply appointed viscounts of Beziers. They managed, as many others did following the collapse of Carolingian authority, to transmute this appointed position into a hereditary one. Shrewd marriages and keen political alliances with strong nobles, allowed the Trencavels to distance themselves from the rest of the slowly rising, second-string nobles, effectively creating their own territorial empire with holdings at Beziers, Albi, Carcassonne, and Razes. This swath of land bisected the holdings of the counts of Toulouse, creating an understandable animosity between the Toulousian counts and the Trencavels that lingered throughout history despite a strategy of intermarriage between the two families.⁹⁹ In addition to these two families numerous other lesser nobles and castellans exercised a measure of control in the Midi, these ranks included the counts of Foix, the rulers of the mountain holdings in Cabaret, the bishop of Narbonne, the count of Comminges and more. Additionally, the amount of land that could be subjected to direct feudal overlordship was limited in that a “large proportion of the arable land...was held in free of allodial tenure”.¹⁰⁰ If the situation was not murky enough with ceremonial ties to external rules and a cornucopia of nominal local counts and lords, a final category of possible rulers was slowly starting to emerge in Occitania.

⁹⁸ Marvin, *The Occitanian War*, p. 5

⁹⁹ Wakefield, *Heresy, Crusade, and Inquisition*, p. 52

¹⁰⁰ Wakefield, *Heresy, Crusade and Inquisition*, p. 52

As mentioned above, the growth of castle building in the Midi betrayed a society in which surpluses of wealth were available. In locating the source of this new wealth a further difference between the Midi and *Francia* is uncovered. Occitania developed a relatively stable economy during the twelfth century, dependent not only on internal agricultural production (cereals, apples, hemp and grapes) but upon external commerce as well. Towns existing on the coast benefited especially from the Crusade movement, making massive profits off the transportation of pilgrims and soldiers alike. Urban growth and agricultural expansion rapidly changed the face of the south of France, such that by 1200 “it was difficult to find large areas of waste”.¹⁰¹ In place of these large areas of waste, new settlement patterns emerged. “Up to the mid-tenth century...the countryside was organized according to the old Roman system of *villae*.”¹⁰² Then the older system was replaced by a system of towns and cities. In addition to the older Roman settlements and other naturally expanding villages, some of these large population centers were artificially created by churchmen and nobles alike. On church lands *sauvétés* were established as places of protection for the peasantry from increased exploitation at the hands of increasingly militarized nobles. Near pre-existing cities, bourgs and communes designed to facilitate market growth began to gather more of the growing population. In northern France a slow and steady reduction of the personal freedoms of the peasantry was the norm, but in Occitania the growth of cities provided new avenues to achieving even greater personal freedoms.¹⁰³ In a town substantial wealth might be acquired by many which allowed for the breakdown of traditional social divides. A wealthy commoner might have more real political power and influence than a weak noble. Lines were further blurred as military obligations were extended to include townsmen wealthy enough to exercise the kind of armed violence usually

¹⁰¹ Costen, *The Cathars*, p. 31

¹⁰² Costen, *The Cathars*, p. 16

¹⁰³ Costen, *The Cathars*, p. 17

restricted to nobility. Furthermore, the “urban oligarchy developed a self-confidence and a financial solidity which made them formidable opponents” in a battle for political control.¹⁰⁴

Towns that had been established through charters and provisions often offered potential residents great privileges.¹⁰⁵ While certainly not to the scale of their northern Italian counterparts, towns in the Midi were sources of great wealth and political autonomy unknown in much of *Francia*.

Toulouse provides a particularly helpful guide for understanding the importance of the growth of towns to conceptions of power in Occitania.¹⁰⁶

Lastly, one final source of political influence and authority must be examined: the church. Just as fragmentation defined the secular system of authority in the Midi, it also defined the state of ecclesiastical authority. Bishoprics were organized in such a way that no clear hierarchy of leadership could exist. Towns loosely connected under one secular ruler might be under two different religious ones.

The archiepiscopal see of Narbonne included the bishoprics of Toulouse, Carcassonne, Elne, Beziers, Nimes, Lodeve, Uzes, Adge, and Maguelonne, but the see of Agen was subject to Bordeaux, and those of Albi, Cahors and Rodez were subject to the Archbishop of Bourges. The sees of Comminges and Couserans were under the jurisdiction of the Archbishop of Auch.¹⁰⁷

The links between the nobility and episcopal offices, which were being actively removed from the church in the north, remained central to religious life in the south. Gregorian reform, which was remaking the church from the top down, had few supporters in the south. Noble families still actively pursued monopoly control over clerical offices and the partial inheritance rules that resulted in patrimonies parceled into fractions also resulted in fractioned benefices. The sin of

¹⁰⁴ Costen, *The Cathers*, p. 33

¹⁰⁵ Wakefield, *Heresy, Crusade, and Inquisition*, p. 55

¹⁰⁶ For more information regarding the development of the city of Toulouse any of the works by John Hine Mundy would be beneficial. In particular one could read Mundy's *Title* for a invaluable look at the connections between heresy and the city.

¹⁰⁷ Peter of les Vaux-de-Cernay, *History*, p. xxxix

simony was practiced openly as ecclesiastical offices were bought and sold regularly. Nepotism also thrived; once a noble family achieved control over an ecclesiastical office, the office would be converted into an inheritable position.¹⁰⁸ Clerics often more closely resembled princes than monks, exercising high degrees of political influence; the Archbishop of Narbonne was co-ruler of much of the city. Pluralism was practiced regularly in an attempt to offset the poverty that hindered a bishopric's growth. As a result of this deep interest in political affairs, ecclesiastical services often took a backseat.¹⁰⁹ The southern church was relatively under-developed in comparison with the church in *Francia*, Germany and parts of Italy. "[R]eligious ritual, language, and gesture" were predominant in Occitanian faith at the expense of doctrine.¹¹⁰ These deficiencies were compounded by the increasing influence of the same popular piety movement that was sweeping over northern Europe causing reforms. Believers in apostolic poverty found the wealth and excesses of the church abominable. The laxity of the ecclesiastical rulers (as well as simple incompetency characteristic of most priests of this age) allowed for a wealth of variant religious beliefs to be preached in their lands.¹¹¹

In summation, princes, kings, counts, councils and bishops all competed for political precedence in the Midi creating an overabundance of sources of political authority resulting in a deficiency of actual practiced authority. Many people had a claim to authority while few, if any, had the resources, respect and power to exercise that claimed authority. Blurring lines of social distinction as well as increases in personal autonomy created a society highly aware of what stratifications did exist. Just as their counterparts in the north did, many in the south embraced popular piety in response to the excesses of the church and the abuses of political power on

¹⁰⁸ Costen, *The Cathars*, p. 21-22

¹⁰⁹ Wakefield, *Heresy, Crusade, and Inquisition*, p. 65

¹¹⁰ Moore, *War*, p. 120

¹¹¹ Wakefield, *Heresy, Crusade, and Inquisition*, p. 67

behalf of the secular rulers. This popular piety was not limited to the poor, however, but wholly embraced by members of all social levels. Nobles hoped some type of religious reform might help them increase their real political power. Religious leaders wanted more power over their dioceses. Townsmen wanted a faith that was relevant to their new experiences. The whole of Occitanian society desired a religion which:

plainly affirmed the values of a world in which small groups...stood together as equals dependent on each other, suspicious of outsiders and hostile to every external claim on their obedience, allegiance or wealth.¹¹²

However, while in other areas popular piety movements were co-opted into official programs of reform (remember the Patarenes in Milan), no such officially endorsed outlet existed within Occitania. Thus, when wandering preachers came spreading messages promising a truer and more authentic religion the Occitanian inhabitants warmly embraced them, viewing these messages as a means to changing their faulty society or as a means of justifying the present circumstances. Having already seen one such example in the figure of Henry of Lausanne and his ready acceptance into Occitanian society, let us now turn to the other messages of popular piety that flourished in the Midi throughout the twelfth century, messages that eventually coalesced into the perceived full-fledged heresy against which the Albigensian Crusade was called.

¹¹² Moore, *War*, 140-142

V. The New Heretics

Although the showdown between Bernard of Clairvaux and Henry of Lausanne ended with the people of Albi recanting their allegiance to Henry's message and reaffirming the official doctrines of the Catholic Church, the internal disquiet longing for reform was not smothered; instead it simply took on a new form. During the middle of the twelfth century a "new" movement came out of the Balkans and infiltrated Europe. Describing this heresy as new is slightly problematic. While it certainly contained elements previously unknown in the cities west of the Balkans, the more meaningful substance of the popular piety message remained unchanged. Still under attack were the many abuses of the Catholic Church's clergy. It was only the practical ritualistic elements of heresy that took on a new flair through the incorporation of Bogomil influences.¹¹³ First entering the North in 1140, the movement worked its way southward along trade routes (it was especially thought that weavers and those employed in the cloth trade were subscribers to the Bogomil doctrines), eventually entering the Midi in 1150. The origin, it was thought, was the persecuted Bogomil church of Bulgaria, itself a product of the teaching of Mani combined with "the Paulicians and the Massalians".¹¹⁴ It is unlikely that Bogomil doctrine was adopted wholeheartedly and without revision by the people of the Midi,

¹¹³ The description of Cathars that will follow has been culled from Michael Costen's *The Cathars and the Albigensian Crusade*, Walter L. Wakefield's *Heresy, Crusade and Inquisition in Southern France, 1100-1250*, and in the introduction to Peter of les Vaux-de-Cernay's *The History of the Albigensian Crusade* by W. A. Sibly and M.D. Sibly however these are certainly not the only sources available. Other good resources include Malcolm Barber's *The Cathars* and Walter A. Wakefield's *Crusade, Heresy and Inquisition*. For a wholly different interpretation one should consult Mark Gregory Pegg's *Most Holy War*.

¹¹⁴ Costen, *The Cathars*, p. 58

however several elements of the Bogomil sect's practice do have direct correlations with Albigenian heresy. For one, the Cathars and the Bogomils both abstained from the consumption of "foods which were the products of coition", lived "celibate lives" and practiced frequent fasts. Precedence was placed upon the New Testament scriptures when creating doctrine.¹¹⁵

The most notable element of the Bogomil church was the "moderate dualism" which pitted two "wholly antagonistic principles of good and evil" against one another. It has been posited that this dualism was simply a deepening of the pre-existing dualism typical of Christianity (that is, the existence of two different types of substances, spirit and flesh); however, this is not expressly clear. They maintained that there were in fact two gods, one good and one evil. The evil god was believed to be the god of the physical, material world. While the evil god's exact origins are unknown (moderates believing the evil god to be a created being and a fallen angel or a rebellious son of the good god, absolutists viewing him as a wholly divine co-eternal being with the good god) his wickedness was clear. All of the physical creation was a mockery of the perfect spiritual world in which the good god dwelt. This low opinion of the material world translated into a rejection of the Catholic Church. The whole of the organized church, all priests, bishops, and cardinals, as well as the sacraments, were viewed as worthless, sinful, ineffective and damning edifices serving only to lead men away from the true faith. Humanity existed in a pitiful state: spiritual souls fell with the evil god and were now imprisoned in jails of flesh and bone. These souls were doomed to toil in a wicked world, living a life steeped in sin until they died only be reincarnated and go through the cycle again and again, hoping that one day the cycle would be ended. Celibacy was highly prized as sex resulted in

¹¹⁵ Costen, *The Cathars*, p. 58

pregnancy that in turn resulted in condemnation of another soul to toil in the endless cycle of life in the meaningless flux.¹¹⁶

Priests and sacraments did a soul no good; they could not offer salvation. Freedom from the cycle could come only when the soul was freed from the body, which might take many tries. Undergoing a special ceremony, the *consolamentum*, on one's deathbed, could speed up the cycle. This was the spiritual baptism of which Christ spoke. Certain qualifications were laid upon whom might receive the *consolamentum*: namely those who were "fully instructed and prepared adults" or those who were dying. This was a direct rejection of the sacrament of infant baptism and could be seen as bordering on the Pelagian heresy. Pelagians rejected the doctrine of original sin, believing mankind was able to live a good life without the aid of God. Adam condemned mankind by setting a bad example, not by endowing humans with sin. However, the Cathar insistence that only educated adults might undergo the *consolamentum* perhaps ought not to be viewed in this fashion. It seems more likely that the Cathars viewed freedom from the cycle of reincarnation as a reflection of personal growth, a growth that could only come from wisdom and age. Indeed, Cathars most certainly believed in original sin as they believed they sinned by their very material existence. Moreover, their insistence on not allowing children to undergo the *consolamentum* should be viewed as no more strange than their reluctance to allow cows and chickens to undergo the ritual. Most of the believers in the Cathar doctrines waited until their deathbeds to undergo the ceremony for once it had been administered a total denial of earthly comforts had to be undertaken and an ascetic life adopted. Those who underwent the *consolamentum* well before their death became the preachers of the Cathar faith, called *perfecti* (for men) and *perfectae* (for women). *Perfecti* took on the appearance of other followers of the

¹¹⁶ Some Cathars believed that one's reincarnation as a human was not guaranteed, one might be returned to earth as a pig or a sheep, thus explaining the abstinence from the consumption of flesh.

vita apostolica, dressing in much the same manner as Henry of Lausanne or an early ascetic hermit. Travelling in pairs, clothed in the simplest clothing and with minimal provisions, *perfecti* travelled throughout Europe preaching their doctrines to all who would hear.

They renounced all property; undertook never to take the life of any man or warm-blooded beast, no matter what the circumstances; consumed no animal products, such as meat, cheese, eggs or milk; and promised never to tell a lie or swear any oath.¹¹⁷

Those who were sympathetic to the Cathar but waited to take the *consolamentum* were called *credentes* or believers. Being a believer required no great lifestyle change. One needed only to support the itinerant *perfecti* when they arrived in town, avoid the Catholic Church's empty sacraments, take part in certain ceremonies, and undergo the *consolamentum* before death, beyond that he was free to live a normal life complete with meat, sex and property. This easy doctrine allowed for the rapidity with which Catharism spread.

While *perfecti* could be found preaching throughout France, Italy, Germany, nowhere was the sect's influence more strongly felt than in southern France and northern Italy. This ought not be surprising given the rapid and widespread acceptance of the message of Henry of Lausanne. When he was finally forced out of the region, he left a "sense of discontent" later preachers were quick to tap into. The people of Occitania were desperate for an outlet through which to channel the religious enthusiasm and fervor that dwelt within their hearts. Occitanians were people who "were troubled by the divisions within the church, who were offended by the indifference of some of the clergy to their needs and who were deeply concerned and fearful about their own salvation."¹¹⁸ As the church was unable, or unwilling, to provide them with such an outlet, the people would latch onto any preacher and message that would. Furthermore, the reforms and revivals that did come to Occitania had no real support within the church. The

¹¹⁷ Peter of Les Vaux-de-Carney, *History*, p. xxxiv

¹¹⁸ Wakefield, *Crusade, Heresy, and Inquisition*, p. 77

clerics who did preach the values of the *vita apostolica* did nothing to actually live those values allowing for a feeling of resentment to dwell within the hearts of men. In the mid-twelfth century, no one seemed more able than the Cathars, to provide the people with such an outlet. Indeed, it was a role they were more than prepared and pleased to assume.

Catharism won its many converts through “constant reference” to both the New Testament and the tenants of popular piety that enthralled and captivated the hearts of Europeans. They advocated in “extreme form the most vital elements [of the] religious fervor of the twelfth century: poverty, chastity, personal holiness in a corrupt world.”

In a simple ecclesiastical structure they drew together the major forces of religious dissent and religious enthusiasm. They read the Scriptures and preached in the vernacular, fostering a sense of participation among their audiences. Their ritual acts were attractive by their simplicity. Thus, for a part of the population, they satisfied pious aspirations better than did the established clergy.¹¹⁹

Beyond this attractive simplicity, the Cathars spoke against simony, clerical marriage, and the gross accumulation of wealth and power that defined the majority of ecclesiastical institutions. These were seen as sinful activities of a sinful church much to the delight of those outside the church who were embroiled in the general struggle for power. This preaching effectively removed a player from the murky myriad of political life, an action the princes, nobles and townsmen were unable to take. The affirmation of the notion that the church was a wholly sinful edifice further played into the desires of the townsmen and the nobles by allowing the vast estates the church had acquired to become fair game for seizure and repurposing. More benefits came from the ability of *credentes* to put off the *consolamentum* until one’s deathbed. This allowance meant that people could spend their lives in the accumulation of lands, possessions and powers confident that an avenue of salvation would still be open to them before they died. The ability to procrastinate salvation meant that people could play on both sides of the religious

¹¹⁹ Wakefield, *Crusade, Heresy, and Inquisition*, p. 77

divide without worrying about the consequence of eternal damnation which might come from the unequivocal selection of one option over the other. Thus one could, and often did, support both *perfecti* and priests. Land might be gifted to a monastery in order to receive the spiritual benefits of monastic prayers, and *perfecti* might be welcomed into one's home to offer a blessing. Support for the Cathar preaching was not limited to the nobles and townsmen, however. For the common people the *perfecti* provided the much desired preaching that officially endorsed preachers were either unable or unwilling to fulfill.¹²⁰ Scriptures were read in the vernacular so that everyone might understand. Particularly important and thus often read and explained, were passages dealing with Christ's passion and the organizational structure of the early church. Focusing on the structure of the early church allowed for the illumination of the many offenses of the church establishment as well as the accuracy of the Cathar structure. Christ's passion tapped into the suffering experienced by most people and served to provide a reasonable explanation for the evil that seemed to govern the world. Suffering ceased to be an unexplained phenomenon and became a reasonable and expected outcome of life in an inherently sinful world.¹²¹

Estimating how persuasive and pervasive the message of the Cathars was is a difficult task. Wakefield has posited "without any pretence of statistical accuracy" that perhaps as many as 1500 *perfecti* existed at the opening of the thirteenth century. Knowing how many *credentes* existed is similarly difficult. Old "generalizations that they were very numerous, if not a

¹²⁰ When critiquing the Catholic Church in Occitania, one must be careful not to be too generalizing in statements of condemnation and judgments of incompetency and irrelevancy. While the Occitan church was certainly less developed than its counterparts in *Francia* or Germany, it was not without some effective and pure members. Devout Catholics were present in every socioeconomic stratum just as there were heretics. Not all priests were engaging in the sins of money grubbing, simony and fiscal extortion nor did all priests view their ecclesiastical duties as money-making enterprises. Likewise, the church outside Occitania was not without its own "bad apples" who clung to the old pre-reform traditions.

¹²¹ Wakefield, *Crusade, Heresy, and Inquisition*, p. 32; 67

majority” are clearly incorrect. Nonetheless it is clear that by the “thirteenth century heresy was solidly established” in Occitania “but that this was true only of certain areas.”¹²² Although seemingly mutually exclusive, Catharism and Catholicism existed side-by-side in both the hearts and homes of the majority of Occitanians; it was simply no great shame to have a heretic in the family. This was especially true among noble families in which one son could become a bishop while another joined the ranks of the *perfecti*.¹²³ The Count of Foix, for example, had a sister who had undergone a *consolamentum* and his wife was a Cathar sympathizer. Moreover, it must be remembered that sympathizing with the Cathars and devotion to the whole of the Cathar doctrine were not the same thing. One could have respect for the teachings of the *perfecti* while still rejecting the more radical elements of the doctrine. As the twelfth century rolled into the thirteenth many of the fortified castles and the artificial towns created around them by the castellan families became centers of the Cathar worship. While Albi was the most well-known of these centers, it was by no means the only one. Others centers could be found at “Lavaur, Puylaurens, Laurac, Fanjeaux, Montreal, and Mirepoix”. Furthermore, several of the more well-known towns, Toulouse, Carcassonne, and Beziers, also enjoyed a thriving Cathar culture.¹²⁴ Even locations without a central Cathar stronghold had some exposure to the preaching. As it was understood by the chroniclers:

following the example of Toulouse, the neighboring cities and towns where the heresiarchs had taken root were caught up in the shoots put out by that city’s unbelief, and became infected with the dreadful plague, miserably and to an amazing degree. The barons of the South almost all became defenders and receivers of the heretics, welcomed them to their hearts and defended them against God and the Church.¹²⁵

¹²² Wakefield, *Crusade, Heresy, and Inquisition*, p. 70; 76

¹²³ Wakefield, *Crusade, Heresy, and Inquisition*, p. 78

¹²⁴ Peter les Vaux-de-Cernay, *History*, p. xxxv & Wakefield, *Crusade, Heresy and Inquisition*, p. 71

¹²⁵ Peter les Vaux-de-Cerany, *History*, p. 10

Figuring out the actual numerical quantity of believers, however, seems to be an irrelevant task. The issue is not how many Cathars there were, but how much power and influence they had or were perceived to have as well as where that power and influence was located.

In commenting on the state of the church and the success of heretics in the south Bernard of Clairvaux remarked that Occitania was a land that housed “churches with no people and Christians without Christ.”¹²⁶ This seems too great a generalization. While it is obvious that the Cathar message had many followers, it does not necessarily follow that this translated into a wholehearted denial of all the tenants of the Catholic Church.¹²⁷ Rather, it is more likely that Bernard of Clairvaux was remarking on the region’s hesitation to persecute the Cathars. The great success of this message did not go unnoticed to those within Occitania, a fact that again attests to the existence of some healthy ecclesiastical institutions. However, the progress of the Cathar message could not be checked as the “co-operation of lay and religious officials...was not forthcoming...Lack of concern and energy at the top discouraged lower ranks of clergy from action.”¹²⁸ Part of this lack of a response can be attributed to the high degree of tolerance characteristic of the Midi. Along with exotic products, the proliferation of commerce in the towns brought a cache of new people and new ideas to the region. This, in connection with the lack of a strong church or secular polity, allowed for tolerance to permeate the region. As mentioned above Cathars and Catholics came from the same families. When Cathar sympathizers were discovered this co-existence meant that a bishop simply accepted the sympathizer as he was. Furthermore, many of the clergy felt the Cathars were in no way heretical. Again one must remember the Patarenes and their success. It is not unreasonable to assume that younger members of the clergy, also intoxicated with the *vita apostolica* that had so

¹²⁶ Moore, *War*, p. 224

¹²⁷ Wakefield, *Heresy, Crusade, and Inquisition*, p. 76

¹²⁸ Wakefield, *Heresy, Crusade and Inquisition*, p. 77-8

thoroughly inebriated the laity, truly believed that the Cathars were the wave of the future. Tolerance also came from the natural difference that existed between sympathizing and accepting the Cathar message. Due to their piety, their wholehearted embrace of poverty, and their apparent spiritual wisdom Cathar *perfecti* enjoyed the respect of most Occitanians, even those who did not agree with their message. Cathars were not expected to dwell in the shadows or fringes of society. Rather they were welcomed into people's homes and churches, their messages preached openly. Additionally tolerance came out of the social classes that had the most to gain from the success of the Cathar message. It has already been noted that the emerging town councils and the lesser nobles stood to greatly improve their lot in life through the embracing of Cathar doctrine. If the church's control over lands and tithes was wicked, the rural, lesser aristocracy stood ready to assume that control. In light of this tolerance it seemed highly improbable, if not outright impossible, that the Cathar message could ever be extracted from Occitanian society from within. It thus fell to those outside the regional church to combat the Cathar message. However, before looking at these attempts to combat the Cathars we must first examine how and why the Cathars came to be viewed not as radical reformers but as diabolical heretics.

Attempting to know just how heretical the Cathars were is a difficult and contentious task for the historian. It is equally difficult to judge how organized the Catholic Church honestly believed the Cathar cult was. The reason behind this difficulty lies in the provenance of the sources available to the historian. The chroniclers who wrote the histories of this movement were generally members of the Catholic Church and subscribers to the mainstream reform movement. It can easily be assumed that while writing their observations of the Cathars a modicum of inflammatory rhetoric directed their hands. Even those records compiled by reformed Cathars are

surrounded by a healthy air of suspicion. The desire to paint a good story or to live up to the expectations of one's audience allowed the authors room for embellishment. Finally, sources which came out of official church investigations, be they ordeals or the Inquisition, most certainly need to be viewed with a highly skeptical eye. Torture provides the answers the torturer is seeking. However, while some historians might see in this less than impartial background a reason to discount the whole of the historic evidence of the Cathar heresy, such a leap effectively shuts down any investigation. What ought to be employed is a healthy degree of skepticism, not outright denial. Denial ignores the very real presence of non-mainstream thinkers in Occitania, and paints the chroniclers as villainous fiction writers. Moreover, denial implicitly acknowledges the ulterior motives that might have guided a writer's pen, without exploring them. These ulterior motives speak as loudly, if not louder, than the actual words contained within the historical record. Take for example the tendency of clerics to view the many different heresies that existed in the world as foxes tied together by their tails. A historian taking a literal interpretation might believe that Innocent is claiming a unified origin for all heretics. Such an interpretation has led to the conventional historical idea of the Medieval Manichee.¹²⁹ Supporters of the Medieval Manichee idea believe, as the sources seem to state, that the heretics in southern France were direct decedents of the followers of Mani. As connections with the Far East grew, elements of re-incarnation were added to traditional elements of Mani's teachings. It was supposed a whole anti-Church existed, with an Anti-Pope dwelling in the mountains of Bulgaria and an organized clergy that sought to undermine the Catholic Church at every turn. However, when understood through a metaphorical lens, this idea suddenly seems to deal less with physical connections and origin points, and have more to do with an orthodox Christian truth that all heresy and unorthodox belief was a creation of Satan. The heretical beliefs themselves were the body of the

¹²⁹ Moore, *Origins*, p. 9

many foxes with Satan and his perversions of truth assuming the role of the joined tail. By ignoring the rhetorical element, mainstream historiography has allowed the wholly invented hierarchy of clerical organization to pervade its understanding of the Albigensian Crusade to the detriment of understanding the nuances of the changes which were occurring in the definitions of Orthodoxy. Crusaders did not believe they were waging war against a unified system of belief; this was not belief like that of the Muslims. They were instead waging war against incorrect interpretations of their own Holy Scriptures.

The literal interpretation is not merely a fault constrained to the traditionalist; revisionists fall victim to the literal as well. Historians like Moore and Mark Gregory Pegg make the mistake of viewing catholic chronicles as wholly subjective flights of fancy, interpreting metaphorical elements as hard fact. While perhaps accurately denying the conspiracy theory of the existence of a highly organized heretical church administration with roots dating back to late Antiquity, Moore and Pegg travel too far down the road of denial.¹³⁰ Their works stress the absence of organized religious dissent, highlighting instead variations in society that they label as merely cultural difference, in some places going so far as to claim the entirety of religious difference was an invention of the reform-minded papacy and its supporters. For them there were no heretics in Occitania. While some elements of this theory might have roots in truth (it is certainly unlikely that a unified heretical church with ties to Bulgaria and a history dating back to Antiquity existed), it cannot be argued that no heresy existed in Occitania. Such a dismissal ignores the very real truth that the Christians in Occitania were different than the Christians in northern France or in Rome. Clear and important rhetorical reasons support the creation of such lavish background stories. By giving the Cathars a foreign background allowed mainstream

¹³⁰ This argument is most notably made in Mark Gregory Pegg's *Most Holy War* and in R. I. Moore's *The War on Heresy*

reformers to distance themselves from heretics. Proponents of the heresy could not, therefore, claim to be popular piety enthusiasts trying to live according the *vita apostolica*. A benefit also lay in having a known and named enemy; if the doctrine of Mani had once been beaten into obscurity the church could do so again. Taking a middle line between ancient roots and total dismissal, one is able to understand the problems Cathars, as radical subscribers to the *vita apostolica*, presented to organized institution of the Church. Neither the love of evil nor the desire to preach wickedness motivated the Cathar *perfect* in the promulgation of their doctrines; rather, it was the desire for a more authentic and holy Church. Such a desire would not have been shocking or unknown to the mainstream reformers as they too were driven by the same desires and thus should not shock modern historians. Lastly it is important to keep in mind that the Cathars did not consider themselves to be heretical in their belief. Just as those who had pushed earlier reforms through the church (and just as those who would continue to work for its reform), the Cathars believed they were bringing the church back to a state of purity. They did not believe they were creating or inventing anything, they simply believed they had a more accurate understanding of the scriptures and ecclesiastical traditions; they believed they were helping bring a more authentic church back to life. So what then garnered the Cathars the label of heretic if it was not their motivation for preaching?

During the latter half of the eleventh and throughout the twelfth century the popular piety movement ceased to be a regional phenomenon of unorganized preachers. Rather, reform took on a systematic and institutional form. These changes have been previously alluded to in the descriptions of the successes of the Cluniac and Cistercian monasteries and their widespread effects as well as in the description of the merging of the Patarene movement with the reform papacy. With the merging of these various popular piety movements into a singular whole, the

vita apostolica came to have a set definition. The church structure did indeed need some reform, simony could not be tolerated nor could clerical marriage. However, while some good could come from the careful critique of the institution and clergy, “it was a short distance from” boycotting the services of these sinful clerics to the outright denial of the efficacy of their doctrines and sacraments. Such a denial could eventually lead to an outright denial of the church altogether, which certainly could not be abided.¹³¹ Thus the definition of the orthodox popular piety movement came to be dependent upon a coupling of reform to the institution of the church. Some preachers of the popular piety movement, like the Patarenes and those hermits who were drawn into the Cistercian order, allowed their messages to be transformed in order to fit into this coupling, dropping the extra elements of the messages which did not directly relate to the most important elements of reform. However, as evidenced through the example of Henry of Lausanne, this was not always possible. To those who would not conform, the coupling of reform and the church had pulled the *vita apostolica* down into the muck and the mire of the world it was trying to escape. It was “the combination of veneration for personal asceticism and the avoidance of corrupt priests” which gave certain popular piety movements the appearance of heresy.¹³² The Cathar belief that Catholic church was a creation of the evil God, powerless to save anyone, obviously struck at the heart of the reform papacy that was doing everything in its power to reaffirm its importance. Another transgression that caused the Cathar *perfecti* to be considered heretics was the rejection of the imposed separation between clergy and laity that became a pillar of the reform movement.¹³³ Even though the Cathars had a minor hierarchy in the *perfecti* they did not believe in the elaborate separation between those who could and could not preach. Finally, the orthodox reform movement was continually increasing its influence over

¹³¹ Moore, *War*, 102

¹³² Moore, *War*, p. 94

¹³³ Moore, *War*, p. 125

the everyday life of Christians. New rules written by the church decided who could marry whom; thus removing the rights of procreation and inheritance from the secular realm to the ecclesiastical. Burials required official sanctions from a priest or bishop, and often implicitly required a donation of either land or money. Social distinctions were more firmly drawn, with the coupling of notions of freedom to wealth and poverty with servitude and serfdom. Conceptions of time were altered as holy feast days and Sabbaths were elevated and separated from the rest of the calendar year. Confession ceased to be a public event, but became a private ceremony.¹³⁴ These reorganizations of the social order, were viewed with suspicion by many and were wholly rejected the Cathars. They preached a faith of community, appearing in the eyes of Occitanians as “champions of old and familiar ways against the newfangled, disruptive and expensive ones being pressed” by the organized church.¹³⁵ Indeed, throughout the latter half of the twelfth century Catharism continued to gather and direct the religious piety of the laity, “especially in the towns, stimulat[ing] the formation of religious associations and confraternities that occasionally fell foul of the” organized church.¹³⁶ Because of these numerous breaks from the mission of the organized church, it was only a matter of time before the Cathars message was viewed as heretical to those outside Occitania and given the tolerance and acceptance with which Occitania viewed Catharism, “it was inevitable that the need for action would be seen at the highest levels and, as the church became centralized, that the papacy would take the lead” and in 1178, the papacy did just that.¹³⁷

¹³⁴ Moore, *War*, p. 117; 178 & R. I. Moore, *The First European Revolution, c. 970-1215*, (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2000), 52-55

¹³⁵ Moore, *War*, p.126

¹³⁶ Moore, *War*, p. 171; 191

¹³⁷ Wakefield, *Heresy, Crusade and Inquisition*, p. 80

VI. Delegates and Councils: Early Church Responses to Heresy

Late in the summer of 1178, a legate of Pope Alexander III, Peter of St Chrysogonus; a Cistercian abbot, Henri de Marci; and a “contingent of experienced diplomats and administrators” came to confront the Cathars of Occitania head on.¹³⁸ This was an international effort supported by both Henry II and Louis VII, and had been called in response to a letter composed by Raimond V, count of Toulouse. The prestige the group this would have held in northern Europe meant nothing in Occitania. Upon entering Toulouse the coalition was met with hostility and mockery; the townsmen called them “imposters, hypocrites, and heretics.”¹³⁹ Attempts to employ the old system of *inquistio*¹⁴⁰ to rout out heretics failed as the townspeople used it to settle past grievances. One man was singled out as a potential, suspected heretic, Peter Maurand. The selection of Maurand serves to illuminate how the *inquistio* was twisted into a self-serving mechanism. A wealthy landowning member of the Toulousian town council, Maurand most likely blocked the advances of other men. He was certainly a thorn in the side of the Count of Toulouse, as any council member who had the wealth and the ability to stand against the count’s wishes was. Despite an initial flippant attitude to the whole affair, refusing to come when summoned, Maurand was eventually broken and confessed to his heresy: he did not believe in transubstantiation. This was hardly the full-fledged heresy of Mani the delegation had expected to find. However, heresy was heresy and therefore Maurand was punished. His lands

¹³⁸ Moore, *War*, 191

¹³⁹ Moore, *War*, 193

¹⁴⁰ The people were required to name, under oath, anyone amongst the rank who had been suspected of a crime.

and possessions were taken, he was to be exiled from the city for forty days, and three years of his life had to be spent in service of the poor in Jerusalem.¹⁴¹ After the humiliation of Maurand, the delegation apparently felt their work in the city was complete and departed. The rest of their expedition remained as unspectacular as its mean beginning. A “debate” was held with two men, Bernard Raymond and Raymond of Baimac, who, upon being called heretics by their neighbors, wished to check their beliefs against those of the legates. Despite their ignorance of Latin, the two men were able to provide orthodox answers to the questions of the legate and were seemingly free of heresy. However, again the people of the Midi used this mechanism to their own advantage. Count Raimond himself attested to the heretical nature of the two men’s doctrines and thus the two men were declared excommunicate.¹⁴² Upon concluding these excommunications the mission felt it had served its purpose and promptly returned to Rome to attend the Third Lateran Council.

The mission can hardly be called a triumphant endeavor. A massive heretical church had hardly been uncovered, let alone destroyed. However, rather than deducing heretics did not exist, the Cistercian abbot and the papal legate remained steadfast in their conviction that a “flourishing, well-entrenched and well-organized” heretical church lingered just below the surface of Occitanian society, claiming that had their mission been detained but three years “we would hardly have found anyone there who would call upon the name of Christ.”¹⁴³ To combat this underground force of spiritual pollution, new means of combating heresy would be required. The idea that new means of combating heresy were needed was not one limited to those who had toiled fruitlessly in Occitania. Rather, it was a feeling that prevailed in the hearts of those working to centralize and empower the Catholic Church. Thus a process of cooperation between

¹⁴¹ Moore, *War*, p. 193-6

¹⁴² Wakefield, *Crusade, Heresy, and Inquisition*, p. 85

¹⁴³ Moore, *War*, p. 198

the church and the state was created through several pieces of ecclesiastical legislation. The basic assumption was that the church needed to identify those whose beliefs were unorthodox and the state would ensure their transition into orthodoxy, employing violence when necessary.¹⁴⁴ Henri de Marci created the first of these pieces of legislation at the Third Lateran Council.

In September of 1178, one thousand high-ranking prelates of the church gathered to affirm and clarify “uncontroversial decisions [made by] earlier councils in respect of the discipline of the clergy” and other matters which had reigned supreme in the minds of the mainstream reformers. This was, in a way, an official declaration and definition of what it meant to be an orthodox reformer. It was also an official declaration of what the Church believed to be true regarding heresy. In Canon 27 these beliefs are officially outlined:

since in Gascony and the regions of Albi and Toulouse and in other places the loathsome heresy of those whom some call the Cathars...has grown so strong they no longer practice their wickedness in secret, as others do, but proclaim their error publicly and draw the simple and weak to join them, we declare that they and their defenders and those who receive them are under anathema, and we forbid under pain of anathema that anyone should keep or support them in their houses or lands or should trade with them...As long as such people persist in their wickedness, let all who are bound to them by any pact know that they are free from all obligations of loyalty, homage, or any obedience. On these and on all the faithful we enjoin, for the remission of sins, that they oppose this scourge with all their might and by arms protect the Christian people against them. Their goods are to be confiscated and princes are free to subject them to slavery.¹⁴⁵

Much is contained in this final and longest canon regarding the ways in which the church viewed heretics and how it believed they could be eradicated. For one, the church is effectively confining any and all men who could be called Cathars to the outside of society. Cathars were to be viewed as wholly other in comparison to those within the Christian Church. By dissolving the

¹⁴⁴ Peter of Les Vaux-de-Cernay, *History*, p. xxxvi

¹⁴⁵ Peters, *Heresy and Authority*, p. 168-170

pre-existing feudal relationships between Cathars and respectable members of society, the church was forcibly removing Cathars from entry into even the most basic of social interaction. In short, Cathars were to be no better than any of the other undesirable members of society; they were to be viewed as lepers or Jews, total social pariahs. The effect was simple: Cathars had no place in the new world the reformed Church was creating.¹⁴⁶ They were not to be viewed as good-natured, but misguided, popular piety enthusiasts but instead as wholly other, wholly wicked heretics. Canon 27 was followed in 1184 by the bull *Ad abolendam*, in which the violent and militaristic mechanism for the eradication of heretics took on a definite form and the symbiotic relationship with the state was again alluded to. Heretics and their supporters were to be excommunicated by the local ecclesiastical authority and then handed over to the secular authority for punishment.¹⁴⁷ Additionally, a defense against lackadaisical clerics was created. The failure to act against heretics in a prudent and fervent manner could result in a three-year suspension, something that might result in the total financial ruin of a bishop.¹⁴⁸ Despite the seemingly sweeping nature of these bulls, they had little actual effect on Occitanian society. Canon 27 and *Ad abolendam* were enforced in some regions, usually after being co-opted by the local secular polity and transformed into a mechanism for the repression of his political rivals.¹⁴⁹ However, regardless of their actual implementation, the fact that such proclamations were made reflected the growing strength of the reform church as well as the papacy's ever-expanding view of itself and its powers to influence society. What mattered was not that these bulls were enforced, but that the church believed it had the power to so legislate affairs in the secular and ecclesiastic segments of society. With these laws "on the books" so to speak, it was only a matter

¹⁴⁶ Moore, *War*, p. 207

¹⁴⁷ Peters, *Heresy and Authority*, p. 170-3

¹⁴⁸ Moore, *War*, p. 205

¹⁴⁹ Wakefield, *Crusade, Heresy, and Inquisition*, p. 86

of time before a pope strong enough to stand against the Cathars ascended St Peter's throne. When such a pope came, it was believed that these bulls could be employed for the effective eradication of heresy in the Midi. On 8 January 1198, ecumenical efforts to combat heresy gained the papal champion they needed.

Innocent III, ascended to St Peter's throne with very distinct ideas about what Christianity and the papacy ought to look like. He was culmination of the grand claims pontiff had been making throughout the eleventh and twelfth centuries and believed that the time was right to see these claims transition from just verbal assertions of power into actual power. Innocent viewed his position in the following manner:

Who am I and of what lineage that I should take my place above kings? For to me it is said in the Prophets, 'I have this day set thee over nations and over the kingdoms, to root out and pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build and to plant.' To me it is said in the Apostles, "I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." The successor of Peter is the Vicar of Christ: he has been established as a mediator between God and man, below God but beyond man; less than God but more than man; who shall judge all and be judged by no one."¹⁵⁰

Nowhere in the grand vision Innocent had for the papacy was an allowance for the existence of heresy or heretics. In Innocent the campaign against heresy came to replace the other reform campaigns that had, until 1198 defined the actions of the post-Gregorian papacy. Those who "call themselves Cathars" were to be more "detested than Simon Magus" the namesake of the sin of simony.¹⁵¹ They were worse than the Muslims who had retaken the Holy Land. As a result of this opinion, Innocent planned to take on heretics armed with the 27th Canon of the Third Lateran Council and the bull *Ad abolendam*; to these he would add his own armament: *vergentis in*

¹⁵⁰ Letter from Innocent III to Philip Augustus as quoted in Sidney R. Packard, *Europe and the Church Under Innocent III*, (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1927), p. 15

¹⁵¹ Moore, *War*, p. 237

senium. Issued in March of 1199, *vergentis in senium* was specifically written to the laity and clergy of Viterbo. In it this bull, heresy is equated to the old Roman crime of *lèse-majesté*, in short, heresy was high treason against the person of God and His appointed officials. This bull was a major step in both the persecution of heresy and the in the development of papal monarchical theory.¹⁵² Heresy is inextricably linked to not only an ideological rejection of Catholic doctrine but to the worse crime of rejecting the social and political order. *Vergentis* allowed not only for the same proscriptions as *Ad abolendam* and Canon 27, that is the confiscation of property held by heretics, but also the further exclusion of those deemed heretical from the fabric of society. Heretics were “to be declared infamous, incapable of holding political office, and denied access to the courts.” Worse still, these penalties were to be extended to the offspring of those found heretical, regardless of the child’s religious affiliation. “Life only is to be allowed to their children, and only as an exercise of mercy.” This amounted to nothing short of the total removal from society of those considered heretical and their offspring. The sins of the father became the sins of the son.¹⁵³

While ostentatiously making these grandiose and devastating claims against heretics, Innocent had also internalized the idea that violence against heretics was considered a failure on the part of the church. Violence ought to come only after all other avenues of admonishment had failed. Thus, he did not start waging the ideological war against Cathars in Occitania with swords of steel, but with the sword of the Spirit. In April 1198, just four months after assuming the papal tiara, Innocent sent two Cistercian preachers, Rainer (the pontiff’s personal confessor) and Guy, to Occitania to assess the spiritual state of the people therein. The duo had wide powers to act in the pope’s name. First and foremost, they were to preach orthodoxy to the Occitanian people.

¹⁵² Wakefield, *Heresy, Crusade, and Inquisition*, p. 87 & Moore, *War*, p. 238

¹⁵³ Moore, *War*, p. 238

However, should they discover heretics, Rainer and Guy had the power to excommunicate them and to confiscate the properties of both heretics and their supporters. Idle bishops could be rebuked and whole swaths of land could be placed under interdict, effectively ceasing all ecclesiastical services wherever the legates found supported heretics. The fact that Rainer and Guy were Cistercians further illuminated the ever-deepening connection between the popular piety movement and the established church. Every team of preachers that ventured into Occitania following the team of Guy and Rainer until the conclusion of the Albigensian Crusade would be culled from Cistercian abbeys (the major exception being Dominic and his followers who will be discussed below).¹⁵⁴ It was following the recall of Guy and Rainer that Innocent pulled Peter of Castlenau from his monastery and made him a papal legate to the monk's homelands between the Rhone and the Garonne. Having already spoken of the hardships faced by Peter and his team up to the point of his assassination, as well as the few successes the delegation made (mainly constrained to a purge of the most errant members of the clergy) we will pick up the narrative with Peter shortly before his death.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵⁴ Wakefield, *Crusade, Heresy, and Inquisition*, p. 86

¹⁵⁵ A cursory overview of the major events of the Albigensian Crusade will follow. For a more thorough military exploration of these events readers should consult Laurence Marvin's *The Occitan War*. For an examination of these events along a cultural line, Mark Gregory Pegg's *Most Holy War* should be reviewed.

VII. The Crusade Comes to Occitania

Peter, pierced and near death, retained his composure to the end. Despite the wound to his back, the monk raised his arms heavenward, forgiveness for his murderer on his lips, “May God forgive you, even as I forgive you.” At the cockcrow, he took his last Eucharist; by dawn his soul had gone to be with the Father.¹⁵⁶ Arnold Amalric was tasked with reporting the news back to Rome. Grief was upon the whole Church. Innocent was shocked and angered. It was one thing for the counts of Occitania to thumb their noses at the papacy; it was a wholly separate issue to bring injury upon his holy person, as the murder of Peter had. Peter had been “a man surely renowned amongst righteous men for the conduct of his life,” a man sent “to preach peace and support the faith.”¹⁵⁷ That such a man, who had nothing but Christ’s love in his heart, should be cut down by the ministers of Satan, was unthinkable. The death was the catalyst needed to push Innocent toward more drastic measures, “it was no longer enough merely to rouse men of learning to preach against [heresy]; instead it required the use of armed force.”¹⁵⁸ Amalric stressed that now was not the times for words, urging Innocent to draw up a bull granting “indulgences” like those promised to Holy Land defenders, to all who would travel to Occitania and do battle against the heretics. This bull should be sent to “France, to the Limousin, to Poitou, the Auvergne and Perigord.” Less than three months after Peter’s death, Innocent sent out a letter containing an admonishment for the southern bishops and a call to arms for all Christian men. As he wrote to Philip Augustus, “wounds that do not respond to the healing of poultices must be

¹⁵⁶ William of Tudela, *Song*, p. 13

¹⁵⁷ Peter of les Vaux-de-Cernay, *History*, p. 31

¹⁵⁸ William of Puylaurens, *Chronicle*, p. 28

lanced with a blade.” The heretics had upped the ante and in the absence of pro-active bishops and correcting kings, Innocent would call upon the whole of Christendom to solve the heresy problem. He would put aside the “poultice” for the “blade” which was to be wielded against the ever-present heretics, the lazy bishops who allowed them to thrive, and the princes who supported them. “From beyond Montpellier as far as Bordeaux, all that rebelled were to be utterly destroyed.”¹⁵⁹

In his letter to the masses, dated March 10, Innocent spoke first to the ecclesiastical brothers, “the Archbishops of Narbonne, Arles, Embrun, Aix, and Vienne.” He handed these previously lazy bishops a prescription they were to follow lest Peter’s death be in vain. They were to water the seed that was Peter’s preaching, with their own zealous preaching to “strengthen the Catholic faith, and eradicate vices and encourage virtues.” Next, those responsible for Peter’s murder, and all those who “may have helped, advised, or encouraged [Raimond] to commit such a crime,” were to be “excommunicated and anathematized,” judgments which were to be enacted throughout all the dioceses of Occitania. Authority to pass this judgment was given to the bishops by the triune Godhead, the two saints of Rome, and by the papal person himself. Finally, “formal interdict” was to be pronounced on any and all places Raimond and/or his abettors might flee. This “sentence of condemnation” was to continue (and be renewed) until the guilty turned themselves over to Rome and won “pardon by giving appropriate satisfaction” to the Holy See.¹⁶⁰ Despite the thorough nature of these prescriptions, Innocent was, however, not going to rely on the bishops’ efforts alone. The Church had been relying on the local clergy to no avail for well over sixty years. Instead, Innocent now looked to lance the wound that was heresy with the new mechanisms the church had created through with

¹⁵⁹ William of Tudela, *Song*, p. 13

¹⁶⁰ Peter of les Vaux-de-Cernay, *History*, p. 34-35

27th Canon of the Third Lateran Council, the bull *Ad abolendam*, and Innocent's own *vergentis in senium*.

“Let us turn now to those who, fired with zeal for the true faith, are ready to gird themselves to avenge this righteous blood...To these, let the archbishops and the bishops give a firm promise that they will be granted remission of sins by God and His vicar [Innocent]...” so begins the section of Innocent's letter which is geared toward the knights of Christendom, knights he hoped to attract to the southern cause through the application of Crusader indulgences.¹⁶¹ Following Amalric's advice, good preachers were sent to France, a land “accustomed to [waging] the Lord's wars” and accustomed to working with the reform papacy, and men all over the kingdom took up the cause. Appeals were made to Philip Augustus and the other greater suzerains of Occitania to take control of the heresy situation, displaying the pontiff's desire to work within the confines of the feudal system. He repeatedly called for a truce between the two greatest suzerains of pieces of Occitania: John of England and Philip Augustus. These calls fell upon deaf ears. Philip stressed he was busy defending himself against Otto, the German Emperor and John; while John was busy trying to retake lands he had lost in northern France. Innocent, it seems, was expecting this result. He had previously expressed his contempt for kings on crusade by excluding them from his first crusade (the Fourth Crusade), as he believed kings were the root cause behind the Third Crusade's inability to take back Jerusalem. The Crusade of 1189-1192, while retaking some of the Levantine Coast, had been unable to reverse the losses of Hattin. The Crusader army, led by Richard the Lion-hearted, had marched upon the city, as if to take it, only to turn their backs and head back to the coast. Innocent attributed this failure to the leadership of the Crusade, believing that the kings took their petty political struggles with them and allowed these struggles to dictate military operations. Philip

¹⁶¹ Peter of les Vaux-de-Cernay, *History*, p. 35

Augustus had returned from the Holy Land early, only to encourage rebellions in Richard's lands. Moreover, sometimes kings refused to respect the proper order of power, believing themselves to be over the pope. This meant they would make treaties with Muslims without first consulting his Holiness, allowing their earthly greed to control them, overriding the pontiff's holy cause. Then there was the Frederick Barbarossa problem. If a king died while on crusade, his army would dissolve. These armies would, understandably, head for home to deal with the inevitable political strife that came with a new king. For these reasons, when Innocent planned his crusades, he chose to rely upon aristocratic nobles rather than kings. Despite the appeals to kings to involve themselves in the correction of their vassals, Innocent ensured that the crusade would go on with or without their support. Letters were sent throughout France to "all prelates, counts and barons and all the inhabitants of the Kingdom" urging men to take up the cross.¹⁶² These letters stressed Innocent's belief that the whole of Christendom was open to the pontiff for administration. In so circumventing the typical feudal relationships, Innocent proved himself to be true to his own understanding of the grand and awesome powers of the pontiff.

"So rouse yourselves knights of Christ! Rouse yourselves, strong recruits of Christian knighthood" thus went Innocent's call to arms which was readily answered by the mighty magnates of France. Preachers roamed the kingdom, offering salvation in exchange for a mere forty-days service. It was an attractive offer. Occitania was close so travelling there would be cheaper than heading all the way to the Levant. Better still, it was close enough that any spoils which took the form of lands or castles could easily be governed without leaving one's patrimony far behind. Soon a massive force was preparing itself for a rendezvous in Lyon. Notables among the crusading horde included the "Duke of Burgundy, the Counts of Nevers and Saint-Pol and numerous other[s]" as well as Simon de Montfort, a man who had abandoned the

¹⁶² Peter of les Vaux-de-Cernay, *History*, p. 42

Fourth Crusade after it made plans to attack Christians.¹⁶³ The army that assembled was awesome in contemporary eyes:

Nor shall I try to tell you how they were armed, equipped and mounted, nor about the iron-clad horses and their emblazoned trappings, for God has made never a clerk or a scholar clever enough to tell you the half of it, nor to list all the abbots and the priests gathered there in the host...¹⁶⁴

Men came from across France to take up arms against the heretics; men arrived from the “length and breadth of the Auvergne, from Burgundy, from France, from the Limousin.” Indeed, the cause was so just that men arrived “from the whole world – north and south Germans, Poitevins, Gascons, men from the Rouergue and Saintonge”.¹⁶⁵ Mixed among the notables and the clergy were pious peasants, camp followers, paid soldiers, and pilgrims. They assembled in Lyon near the end of June, a host generously exaggerated to encompass 100,000 foot soldiers and 20,000 knights.¹⁶⁶ There were “countless horsemen,” lines of soldiers that stretched longer than the “whole army of Milan,” and enough “learned men” that councils took place in the encampment. “God as my witness, it was an enormous force.”¹⁶⁷

When the crusader army arrived in Lyon, they were surprised to find their archrival had been reconciled to the True Church. Since hearing of the gathering force that planned to attack him, Raimond had been actively seeking absolution or allies anywhere he could. He went to Philip Augustus who ordered the vassal to submit to the pope. When this answer proved unsatisfactory, Raimond went to Philip’s enemy, Otto of Germany, a move that garnered no aid and served to irritate Philip. Raimond next appealed to his nephew, Raimond Roger of the Trencavels, who also declined to enter into a treaty with the cornered Count. Finally, realizing

¹⁶³ Peter of les Vaux-de-Cernay, *History*, p. 41; William of Tudela, *Song*, p. 14-15

¹⁶⁴ William of Tudela, *Song*, p. 14-15

¹⁶⁵ William of Tudela, *Song*, p. 17

¹⁶⁶ Costen, 121. It is unlikely that the actual number of assembled crusaders was this high; however, there is no doubt the force that gathered was larger than other crusade armies had been of late.

¹⁶⁷ William of Tudela, *Song*, p. 17

the sum of the forces stacked against him, Raimond appealed to the papacy. Amalric, Raimond declared, was hard-hearted and stubborn; the Count sincerely wished to repent and be reconciled, but felt Amalric was unjustly denying him absolution. Innocent, hoping for a bloodless restoration sent one of his personal priests south, Master Milo. However, whatever joy Raimond might have felt upon hearing of the new legate's appointment quickly soured when the fullness of the requirements of absolution were made clear to him. Milo had been instructed to defer to Amalric in all matters, stressing that Milo was to "be his instrument." The new legate called for Raimond to meet him in Valence for what would amount to a humbling ceremony for the count. He was required to admit to his numerous faults including, but not limited to, the harboring of heretics and the employment of mercenaries. Seven fortified castles were to be handed over to the papacy as a security measure. Raimond was forced to acknowledge the dissolution of all his vassal's fealty oaths, if he again turned his back on the papacy. The count and the legate next ventured to Saint-Gilles so that Milo might publicly rebuke Raimond, admonishing him against having further dealings with Jews, heretics, and *routiers*. The rebuke was not yet over; as good shepherds know, a wayward sheep must be taught a painful physical lesson to encourage it to never stray again. Thus, Milo flogged a naked Raimond in front of a crowd. The murder of Peter of Castelnau was then alluded to; though there was still no direct evidence that Raimond had anything to do with the assassination, appearances had been damning enough to warrant a display in which the bleeding Raimond was paraded out of the church which had housed his chastisement and forced to walk, broken, in front of Peter's lavish tomb.¹⁶⁸ Finally, to complete his censure and display his new convictions, Raimond took a crusader vow in which he promised to aid the approaching army in this holy quest to eliminate heresy. Chastisement completed, Raimond was welcomed back into the fold, his excommunication lifted. The newly reconciled

¹⁶⁸ Peter of les Vaux-de-Cernay, *History*, p. 42-44

Raimond rendezvoused with the crusading host outside of Lyon. Being under the same crusader vow as the rest of the host, Raimond was free from attack; the crusaders could neither legally nor morally attack his lands. However, the French knights had not travelled all the way to Lyon just to be turned back. They too had taken the crusader's vow; they would do their bloody penance and earn their eternal reward. A redirection was therefore needed. Raimond's young nephew, Raimond-Roger, and his cities, Beziers and Carcassonne, became the new target.

Historians are torn when it comes to understanding the reasons behind the Crusade's decision to attack the Trencavel lands. Elaine Graham-Leigh and Pegg see no clear reason for the selection of the Trencavel lands beyond the simple reason that a redirection was needed and Beziers was close by.¹⁶⁹ They contend that the selection of Beziers as the new target of the Crusade's fury was a wholly surprising event none could have predicted, expected or explained. Such a view however, in addition to offering nothing of substance to the ongoing historical conversation, ignores or waves away several vital facts. The redirection can be viewed as a logical result of the complex suzerain relationships of Occitania as well as a result of quick and clever thinking on Raimond VI's part. Trencavel lands cut Raimond's lands in half, and, despite being the nephew of the Toulousian count, Raimond-Roger was more closely aligned with Pere II of Aragon. Furthermore, Raimond-Roger had refused to offer his uncle service and support against the crusade during the autumn of 1208. It is, therefore, not too much of a leap to suggest that the newly reconciled Raimond VI saw an opportunity to use the crusade to his advantage, his own tool for rebuking and admonishing his wayward nephew and vassal.¹⁷⁰ Nor is this view

¹⁶⁹ Elaine Graham-Leigh, *The Southern French Nobility and the Albigensian Crusade*, (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2005), p. 51

¹⁷⁰ It is in reference to this point that Graham-Leigh might have a reasonable objection. She contends that the leaders of the crusade would not have trusted the advice of a fickle man such as Raimond. He had switched sides and broken numerous promises so it was reasonable to assume that he might do so again. This seems especially reasonable when one has hindsight of later betrayals on the part of Raimond.

without precedent. During the campaign of Bernard of Clairvaux, the Count of Toulouse, Alphonse-Jordan (Raimond VI's grandfather) managed to redirect the preacher to Trencavel lands, especially the city of Albi, which was the stronghold of the Trencavels, playing it up as the true origin of heresy. Again, during the campaign of Henri de Marci, Raimond V redirected efforts away from his own cities onto the cities of the Trencavels. If anything, Raimond VI's suggestion really ought to have been expected and would have come not as a shock to contemporaries.¹⁷¹ Indeed, the town of Albi, from which the term Albigensian is derived, was within the Trencavel borders displaying clearly that heresy and the Trencavels had unfortunately been grouped together well before the Crusaders had ever even taken their vows.

This unfortunate coupling provides a second reason that might account for the redirection of the Crusade's anger: the Crusade had been called to battle heretics, and Trencavel lands were filled with heretics. As was mentioned above, rumors of heresy in Occitania were nothing new in the thirteenth century. The region's heretical reputation was sealed during the Third Lateran Council (1179) when Henri de Marci proclaimed the sorry state of Catholicism in those lands. Echoing Bernard of Clairvaux's sentiment that the region was littered with "Christians without Christ," de Marci painted a picture of a land in which the heretics were operating with "their own bishops and priests" as well as "their own evangelists" who "seduced the people and preached to them new doctrines drawn from their own evil hearts."¹⁷² Henri de Marci had believed the church's only recourse to the growing disease was holy violence. It will be remembered that this was cemented in Canon 27 of the Third Lateran Council. As Occitania was filled with both supporters of heresy and heretics who made their headquarters at Albi and various other cities

However, considering the trusting nature of Simon de Montfort when dealing with southern nobles and the honest desire to see the southern Christians welcomed back into the fold, it seems incorrect and narrow-minded to not ascribe at least a modicum of influence to Raimond.

¹⁷¹ Moore, *War*, p. 147, 188

¹⁷² Moore, *War*, p. 192

which made up the Trencavel heartland, it seems obvious that the Crusade would attack these lands. Indeed, the chronicles describe Beziers as a “notable city...entirely infected with the poison of heresy.” It was filled with not only heretics but “robbers, lawbreakers, adulterers and thieves of the worst sort, brimful of every kind of sin.”¹⁷³ It is surely no surprise, then, given the city’s reputation as well as the precedent of earlier anti-heresy campaigns, that the crusaders and Raimond VI headed for Beziers.

When word reached Raimond-Roger that the crusade’s holy indignation had been deflected onto him, the viscount attempted to broker a deal with the crusaders akin to that of his uncle. However, despite his pleading, the crusaders would not be swayed. This time, diplomacy would not subvert the sword. Raimond-Roger departed Montpellier, where his entreaties had occurred, and set to preparing his lands for war. A “generous and open-handed” knight, the youth was of great courage and was most “certainly Catholic.” However, because of his youth, the adolescent allowed his vassals to treat him as a friend, rather than a lord. Moreover, he followed the example of his uncle and allowed heretics to be maintained in his lands. His youth most likely added to his stubborn decision to stand against the crusade, following his failed attempt to submit. Beziers, a town that lay along the banks of the Orb River, was to be the first city hit; it was the only stronghold before the Trencavel capital of Carcassonne. Despite advance warnings of the approach of the powerful crusader army, few citizens of Beziers choose to flee their city. Their Viscount had encouraged them to stand their ground against the hostile force, before withdrawing to prepare the defenses of Carcassonne. He took a few of the city’s Jews and some of the heretical leaders with him.¹⁷⁴ The citizens would not be swayed, even after the advancing horde reached the banks of the Orb River on the evening of 21 July, and the terrifying fullness of

¹⁷³ Peter of les Vaux-de-Cernay, *History*, p. 48-49

¹⁷⁴ William of Tudela, *Song*, p. 18-9

the size of the host was made clear to them. Contrary to the seeming bloodlust of the crusade, illustrated in the rejection of Raimond-Roger's submission, there was a real concern among the knights and clergymen of the crusade to avoid the spilling of Catholic blood. Killing a heretic was penance, killing a Christian was murder. Beziers' bishop, Renaud of Montpeyroux, brought the army's demand into the city: hand over the heretics and all Catholics would be spared. To make matters even easier, the good bishop had a list of 222 names already drawn up. No one but the heretical need die, no property needed to be lost. The city refused, those listed were their neighbors, their friends. Renaud, still eager to avoid unnecessary bloodshed, begged the city's Catholics to, at the very least, flee for their own safety; outside the city's wall was a juggernaut of orthodoxy that thirsted for heretics. Still the citizens refused. They would not abandon their neighbors and brothers anymore than they would hand them over to this army. Confident in their city's defenses, the citizens of Beziers decided to stand together. The citizens had ample reason to expect their survival: Bezier's walls were thick, and the people had had warning of the army's approach. It was also believed that the sheer size of the crusader army would be a benefit to Beziers. Such a large army could not be sustained for long. The knights would grow bored, their money and food would run out, they would disperse just as surely as they would come. The people of Beziers took a calculated risk; unfortunately for them, they gambled and they lost.

Within a few short hours on 22 July 1209, Beziers' militia was overpowered and the city's gates were broken open. Camp followers and military men poured inside. Terror and chaos ruled as the once orderly citizens fled their defensive positions and sought places of safety. It took no more than three hours for the whole of the city to be brought to its knees under a leaderless army. Like locusts, these invaders swept over the city seeking treasure and spoils. In the rampant chaos of pillaging, plundering, and purifying, a problem presented itself: how could

the army tell heretic from Catholic? The citizens had gathered together in churches for protection, they would run back to their homes to protect their property. The bloody and rubble filled streets hardly seemed an appropriate place to sit down to an *inquistio* style theological discussion regarding the nature of God and the material world. And even if such a discussion could be had, the dastardly heretics, fearful of death, would simply lie. The 222 knew the crusaders would be looking for them, giving them ample reason to hide. Historical legend has it, that the legate Amalric provided the answer to this quandary, quoting Second Timothy, “Kill them all, God know will know his.”¹⁷⁵ While these words were probably not actually uttered by Amalric, there is little doubt that this was the spirit of the crusaders’ subsequent action. All inhabitants were slaughtered, the town sacked, the buildings burned. It was the first victory of God’s army against Satan’s bedfellows.

The problem of not knowing whom to slaughter and whom to save was not confined to the bloody streets of Beziers. Throughout the crusade’s many battles and sieges, there was a decided lack of theological exposition. Heretics were found due to their infamy and due to external accusations, not because of thorough presentations of their divergent beliefs. Association with heretics was all that was required for guilt to be assumed. While heretics were burned en masse in several specific incidents, it certainly did not follow that all sieges were marked with holy executions. While a few pairs of itinerant preachers still traversed the lands between the Garonne and the Rhone, the papal legate was not providing a preaching campaign that hoped to correct the Cathar theology. Amalric was not interested in debates. Rather, the crusade operated on the belief that the Cathars had been given a chance to fix themselves; despite their errors having been repeatedly pointed out, heretics continued to cling to their erroneous beliefs as if they were true. The problem was further compounded given the highly tolerant

¹⁷⁵ 2 Timothy 2:19

nature of the Midi which has already been alluded to. Nobles like the Count of Foix who had *perfecti* and Cathar sympathizers within their families would offer armed resistance to the crusaders as the war effort lengthened.

In addition to illuminating a problem that would linger on the minds of crusaders throughout the war, the massacre at Beziers provided a model to which the first half of the Albigensian Crusade would adhere. The campaign season would open with the total sack of a large city, generally a center of Cathar preaching, similar to, but not the same scale of, the massacre at Beziers. Following this initial shocking conquest on the part of the crusaders most of the smaller neighboring towns would quickly submit to the crusader army. For example, after the rapid destruction of Beziers and Carcassonne, Fanjeaux, Montreal, Mirepoix, Limoux, Pamiers, Castres, Lombers and Albi capitulated without a fight.¹⁷⁶ These cities then waited for the crusaders to return home for the season before rushing to repudiate their surrender. Part of what made this cycle possible was the limited crusade indulgences that had been granted to the crusaders. Forty days service was all that Innocent had required of soldiers in order to earn a crusade indulgence. This short period of service caused substantial staffing limitations, a problem that would plague the crusade between the years of 1209 and 1214. The forty-day period of service meant that Simon de Montfort needed to achieve as much as possible as quickly as possible before his army melted away. Most of the time he was in the Midi, Montfort had but a “very small group of permanent crusaders and retainers who remained...for exorbitant pay.” Thus, the cycle was born out of necessity. First there would be a quick and devastating defeat of a large Occitanian town. The violence of this quick campaign had a clever purpose.

All agreed that at every castle approached by the army a garrison that refused to surrender should be slaughtered wholesale. They would meet with no resistance anywhere, as men would be so

¹⁷⁶ Wakefield, *Crusade, Heresy, and Inquisition*, p. 103

terrified at what had already happened. That is how they took
Montreal and Fanjeaux and all that country.¹⁷⁷

This model was repeated at Minerve and Termes in 1210 and Lavaur in 1211. Each of these sieges began “by laying waste to the surrounding countryside, burning crops, uprooting trees and destroying buildings, dykes, and dams, and ended more often than not with burning and looting, and the dispersal –at best- of the defeated population.”¹⁷⁸ This was followed by mass capitulations on the part of the surrounding smaller Occitanian towns, capitulations that would last only until the winter months. Montfort and his small band of men would then struggle throughout the bitter winter to try and hold all they had acquired, usually losing a significant number. The bitter winter would also be filled with countless pleas on Montfort’s part to increase the number of crusaders. When spring, and the crusading season, came Montfort’s vengeance would rain down on those towns that had betrayed their capitulations.¹⁷⁹ Regardless of these continual shifting alliances, through dogged determination, Montfort was able to establish his control over the Occitanian countryside by the autumn of 1212.¹⁸⁰

It was during these initial shock campaigns that the majority of heretical burnings occurred. At Minerve, for example, roughly 140 *perfecti* were burned despite being offered a pardon if they would but convert. The Cathars responded: “Why do you preach to us? We will have none of your faith. You labour in vain. Neither death nor life can separate us from the faith we hold.”¹⁸¹ With these words, the Cathars resigned themselves to the flames; they would not accept conversion. The 140 were taken outside the walls of Minerve and brought before a huge pyre. “All were thrown on it, though indeed there was no need for [the] soldiers to throw them on

¹⁷⁷ Moore, *War*, p. 248

¹⁷⁸ Moore, *War*, p. 250-1

¹⁷⁹ Laurence W. Marvin, “Thirty-Nine Days and A Wake-up: The Impact of the Indulgence and Forty Days Service on the Albigensian Crusade, 1209-1218” in *The Historian* vol. 65, no. 1 2002 p. 76-7 & Wakefield, *Crusade, Heresy and Inquisition*, p. 103

¹⁸⁰ Moore, *War*, p. 249

¹⁸¹ Moore, *War*, p. 253

it, since they were so hardened in their wickedness that they rushed into the fire of their own accord.”¹⁸² This act serves to provide the historian with a clear understanding of how the Cathars viewed their own religion. Those who went to the flames at Minerve did so with the belief they were being martyred to their faith just as St Stephen had been long before. What is more, this act of martyrdom served to fortify the resolve of the Occitanian people to hold fast to their traditional beliefs and ways of life. Rather than terrifying the region into passivity and submission, the mass burnings and bloody massacres served to invigorate a resistance movement.

¹⁸² Moore, *War*, p. 253

VIII. Failure of the Holy War

Southern resistance to the crusaders remained a largely incoherent mess of regional strongmen fighting a guerilla campaign against Montfort and his men throughout 1209-1212.¹⁸³ When the crusade first came, some devote Catholics who did not believe the Cathar message could coexist with their orthodox faith, were pleased. The crusade was the weapon they needed to restore the purity of the church in the Midi. Albi, despite being the namesake of the conflict remained loyal to Montfort until his death. It was from Cahors that the merchants who bankrolled the crusade heralded. However, support was not the norm. The town of Puylaurens, for example, rejected the new lord Montfort had given them and welcomed their old leader back. In Lagrave, the citizens simply murdered their crusader lord. However, in 1211-1212 southern revolt took on a unified form following an attempted attack on Toulouse.¹⁸⁴ The city, despite being split into two confraternities (one supporting Cathars and one working against heretics) acted as one to repel Montfort's army. After successfully ending a two-week siege (Montfort and his men withdrew to Foix to engage in some raiding) the city of Toulouse, despite being split, remained "wholly committed to the war against the invaders."¹⁸⁵ Although the success at Toulouse was followed by a total collapse of the south in favor of the Crusaders, the precedent was set. The "south began to regard the war as one of the [Midi] against the foreign, northern invaders."¹⁸⁶ Indeed, just as the crusaders were unable to view the Cathars as anything other than

¹⁸³ Costen, *The Cathars*, p. 137

¹⁸⁴ Costen, *The Cathars*, p. 138

¹⁸⁵ Wakefield, *Crusade, Heresy, and Inquisition*, p. 106

¹⁸⁶ Costen, *The Cathars*, p. 138

an unrecognizable totally terrifying and wholly diabolical sect, the men in the south thought the crusaders to be “terrifyingly, diabolically alien.”¹⁸⁷ In December 1212 the fears of alien conquest that had kept southern resistance to the crusade alive were further ignited through a series of statutes issued by Montfort. Irritated by the treachery he encountered on the part of the vacillating southern lords, the crusader called a *Parlement* and composed the Statutes of Pamiers, a series of laws that would bring the political and social structure endemic to the north to the south. It was an attempt to bridge the “yawning chasm of mutual incomprehension” which existed between the crusaders and the southerners.¹⁸⁸ Most importantly, Montfort wanted to ensure the work he had begun in the “removal of heretics and the elimination of the ill-doing robbers and all evil-doers” would continue undeterred and to see to it “that once made right” Occitania would remain so.¹⁸⁹ Montfort and his *parlement* passed thirty-six total statutes, several of which are worth examining in detail as they highlight the “otherness” of Occitanian society that allowed for and cultivated the Cathar doctrine.

The Statute of Pamiers begins:

Simon, Count of Leicester, Lord of Montfort, and by God’s grace Viscount of Beziers and Carcassonne, and Lord of Albi and Razès, desiring to...bring peace and order permanently to this land...now establish the following customs to be followed in all our territory, and order that they shall be held inviolable by everyone. The customs are these. All privileges of the churches and the religious houses granted by canon or human law, and their liberties are to be kept and preserved by all men everywhere.¹⁹⁰

This first provision directly attacked the Cathar understanding that the church was an absolutely evil institution. It will be remembered that this viewpoint allowed for the co-opting of church lands, which added to the easy acceptance of the Cathar doctrine by many lesser nobles in

¹⁸⁷ Moore, *War*, p. 259

¹⁸⁸ Moore, *War*, p. 266

¹⁸⁹ Peter of les Vaux-de-Carney, *History*, p. 321

¹⁹⁰ This translation of the Statutes of Pamiers can be found in Appendix H of Peter of les Vaux-de-Cernay’s *History of the Albigensian Crusade* translated by W. A. Sibly and M. D. Sibly, p. 321-9

Occitania. The next ten statutes further provide for the protection of the church against lay interference. For example, statute two disallows the subjection of churches by laity, three requires tithes be given according to the rules outlined by the papacy and without hesitation, and statute four insists on the support of the separation of the clergy and laity, by placing clerics outside the official system of taxation. Statute six furthers the divide between clergy and laity by placing all clerics outside the civil legal system. The solidification of this divide had been an especially integral part of the reform papacy and its champions. Its elimination had been an integral part of Cathar doctrine that sought to place all Christians upon equal grounds.¹⁹¹ The church's new way of viewing time was also attested to through statutes five and nine that highlighted the importance of the Sabbath and of feast days. In statutes eleven through sixteen, Montfort re-affirms the penalties for harboring heretics outlined in *Ad abolendam* and forbids the re-integration of even reformed heretics into his new southern society. Starting with statute seventeen Montfort shifts his focus from an attack on the Cathar rejection of the separation of the church to an attack on the very structure of southern life outside the church.

Statute seventeen: "The barons and knights of France are required to render service to the Count whenever there is a war against his person..." This statute confronts head on the murky political situation that existed in Occitania as a result of the absence of a single centralized authority. The loose system of vassalage that had defined Occitanian political culture since the breakdown of Carolingian authority was now being replaced with the firmer understanding of feudal vassalage that had remained active in the north.¹⁹² Montfort also campaigns for the total elimination of southern nobles and knights from society regardless of their ecclesiastical

¹⁹¹ Moore, *War*, p. 125

¹⁹² This statute also seems to be directly addressing the problem of manpower shortages that had caused Montfort so many problems during these first few years. By demanding military service in exchange for land grants, Montfort ensured that he would always have a ready supply of knights to protect and expand his demesne.

background for a period of at least twenty years. When a man attempted to provide the men required by his knight's fee, he could only use French knights (statute eighteen). All castles and fortifications had to be handed over to Montfort according to the Count's whim and all lesser barons, counts and knights were required to heed any and all calls Montfort made (statutes twenty and twenty-one). Montfort curbed the castle-building movement that defined Occitanian society during the eleventh and twelfth century by forbidding the construction of any fortification. Partial inheritance is rejected in favor of the law of primogeniture that was the custom of "France round Paris" (statute thirty-three). Throughout these statutes Montfort attempts to integrate the new societal standards that had accompanied mainstream ecclesiastical reform in the north into the fabric of southern society. The southern nobility were relegated to an outlaw status, *faidit*, so that Montfort and his companions would be able to move into the void their departure left. It is clear that the desire to remake the south in the image of the north stemmed from Montfort's revelation that Occitanian society and Catharism were codependent. It was a revelation that the crusader had culled from his three years of violent warfare against the Occitanians.

Although Montfort's Statutes were never fully put into practice they highlighted a flaw inherent to Innocent's solution of the Cathar problem, a flaw which had already been highlighted during the massacre at Beziers: Cathars and Occitanians were one in the same. This is not a gross generalization, but honest observation. As one Occitanian noted, "We [Catholics and Cathars] have been brought up side by side...Our closest kinsmen are numbered among them. Everyday we see them living worthy and honourable lives in our midst."¹⁹³ While certainly not all Occitanians were dualists, and not all Cathars believed in the importance of reducing the rule of nobles, a spectrum of attitudes were present in the south that allowed for these views to co-exist. The years of isolation from the rest of *Francia* and the church's weak influence in the region did

¹⁹³ Moore, *War*, p. 263

not exempt Occitania from experiencing the wave of popular piety that swept over Europe throughout the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Rather, it ensured that Occitania would develop a unique response to the *vita apostolica*. That response as was mentioned above, took the form of Catharism. By viewing this movement as a heresy and not offering a viable alternative, other than violent conversion to the tenants of Catholicism, the Church had set the Crusade up for failure. And fail it did.

Despite going into 1213 from a position of strength and winning a grand victory at the battle of Muret in September even though his army was quite a deal smaller than that of the southern resisters, Simon de Montfort rapidly lost his ground.¹⁹⁴ The King of Aragon had managed to convince Innocent to restrict crusade preaching during the winter of 1212, so when the summer campaign season began Montfort's tiny army remained tiny. The Count of Toulouse, after fleeing from Muret in disgrace, had spent the Christmas season with King John of England attempting to secure support for his position. Even more terrible for Montfort's position, Innocent's eyes, once fixed on the south, had begun to stray to the East. It was no secret that Innocent was planning a new crusade to the Holy Land, one that would redeem him from the spectacular failure that was the Fourth Crusade. Because of this plan, the war effort in Occitania was seen as hindering the glory of the church, rather than adding to it. It seemed likely that at the great ecumenical council Innocent was planning all crusade indulgences for the south would be revoked. Worse still, the legal justification of Montfort's claims to the lordship of the many southern cities he had conquered was fuzzy at best. Raimond VI's son, Raimond VII, had been active in Rome pleading his and his father's everlasting orthodoxy and it seemed that Innocent might be weakening in his resolve to keep even the children of heretics from inheriting. A papal legate was sent to assess the Occitanian situation and when Montfort asked if papal endorsement

¹⁹⁴ Costen, *The Cathars*, p. 140

of his holding of the Midi would be forthcoming the only answer he received was wait and see.¹⁹⁵ Everything in Occitania would be decided upon in the Fourth Lateran Council.

Despite the heavy importance clerics laid upon the Fourth Lateran Council, its provisions had no more lasting impact than Innocent's prestige after his death. Just as his body was stripped of its funeral finery, the proclamations of the Fourth Lateran Council were similarly stripped of their binding qualities. What should have been the conclusion of warfare did, in fact, prolong it.¹⁹⁶ Raimond VII would not be deprived of his patrimony and revitalized the southern resistance movement starting with the capture of Beaucaire in July 1216. Montfort suffered a quick loss of lands and grounds, culminating with a long siege at Toulouse in which he lost his life. The death of the Count of Montfort added to the growing hopelessness of the Crusader position.¹⁹⁷ By 1223 Raimond VII possessed all but Beziers and Carcassonne. The northern French aristocracy that Montfort had installed in hopes of remaking the south had largely abandoned the fiefs. Those who remained were little more than bandits.¹⁹⁸ The church had seemingly abandoned the Crusaders, their eyes fixed on the Levant. Simon de Montfort's son gave up the entirety of the family's claims to the south in 1225 allowing the Capetian monarchs to take control of the southern situation. Despite the French monarch's involvement the situation in Occitania quickly dissolved into a stalemate, the stalemate it had been caught in since Peter of Castelnau's death. "[N]either side had a basis for unconditional victory..." one "lacked the resources to repel invasion, the other to sustain victory."¹⁹⁹ A treaty was created in 1229 that allowed for an effective ceasefire of crusading violence to be proclaimed throughout Occitania and for the eventual absorption of the region into the whole of France proper by 1271. Holy War had failed

¹⁹⁵ Wakefield, *Crusade, Heresy, and Inquisition*, p. 110

¹⁹⁶ Moore, *War*, p. 266

¹⁹⁷ Wakefield, *Crusade, Heresy, and Inquisition*, p. 121

¹⁹⁸ Wakefield, *Crusade, Heresy and Inquisition*, p. 124

¹⁹⁹ Moore, *War*, p. 268

to extricate Catharism from Occitanian culture. However, while the Holy War was grinding to a halt, a dramatic new movement was coming into its own.

IX. Conclusion: A New Alternative

Three years after Innocent dispatched Peter of Castelnau, “two chosen champions” came out of Spain and journeyed to Rome: Diego, bishop of Osma and Dominic his loyal canon.²⁰⁰ They wanted to resign command of their bishopric and devote themselves wholeheartedly to the spread of the Gospel to pagans. Innocent, however, had other plans for these two would be missionaries and ordered them back to their see. On the voyage back, Dominic and Diego met Peter and Ralph. The Cistercians spoke of their seemingly pointless task, the hostility they faced from the Occitanians, and their desire to abandon their task. Hearing the woes of their Cistercian brethren, Dominic and Diego formulated a plan.

To calm the concerns of the legates [Diego and Dominic] gave this salutary advice: leaving everything else aside, they should concentrate more vigorously on their preaching; and they should counter the criticisms of the ill-disposed by displaying humility in all their conduct; by following the example of the Divine Master in deed and word; by going about on foot and without gold or silver ornaments; and by generally imitating the ways of the Apostles in all respects.²⁰¹

In short, the Spanish monks told the Cistercians to cash in on the attractive tactics of the *perfecti*. It seemed clear to Diego and Dominic that the Cistercians were not connecting with the locals because they represented all that southern society detested. To further impress upon the Cistercians the value of the *perfecti* tactics, the two abandoned plans of returning to Spain and instead took to the Midi. Once there, Diego and Dominic engaged in a preaching campaign complementary to that of the Cistercians. The new style “won Dominic the admiration of his

²⁰⁰ The Chronicle of William of Puylaurens, 23

²⁰¹ Peter of les Vaux-de-Cernay, *History*, p. 16-7

fellow Catholics and made him the founder of an important and religious order.”²⁰² Sometimes Dominic was on good terms with the force of the Crusade and sometimes he was not. The preacher made little attempt however to remain on the crusade’s good side as it was not his goal. Instead, Dominic remained committed to apostolic evangelism.²⁰³

By 1215, Dominic’s belief that that the influence of the *perfecti* “might be more effectively contested by those who could match the austerity of life and humility of demeanor” had resulted in the creation of the sixteen houses of his followers in Toulouse. These houses were placed, not under the rule of St Benedict, but under that of St Augustine; the canons vowed “to possess no property and to combat heresy by preaching and pastoral solicitude.”²⁰⁴ A commitment was made to a thorough theological education resulting in the combination of Dominicans and the new universities of Europe. By 1234, there were 100 Dominican houses throughout Europe. These houses represented a new model of preaching, the friars. Friars were a unique combination of priests and monks. They rejected property, lived by begging, and devoted themselves to serving the world they remained within and yet without.²⁰⁵ It seemed that popular piety in Occitania finally had a champion. What’s more, the Catholic Church finally had a popular and orthodox establishment in the region. It was thus through the efforts of two programs not called by the Church that Catharism in Occitania was dispelled and society was transformed.

For all their ecclesiastical legislations and military campaigns the Catholic Church had failed to effect any real change in Occitanian society. Instead, the Crusade and the various harsh penalties imposed on those suspected of heresy only served to further solidify the resolve of the

²⁰² Moore, *War*, p. 242

²⁰³ Wakefield, *Crusade, Heresy and Inquisition*, p. 137

²⁰⁴ Moore, *War*, p. 270

²⁰⁵ Moore, *War*, p. 271

Occitanians to remain true to their traditional roots of community and faith. When change eventually did come to the Midi, it was through indirect means. The restructuring of society that Simon de Montfort's Statues of Pamiers hoped to accomplish through force came as a long-term result of the Peace of Paris. As the Midi was gradually absorbed into the realm of the Capetian kings, northern customs naturally came to replace traditional southern ones. The tangled web of political leaders was transformed into an understandable feudal state, with the French king at its head. Autonomy was taken away from the towns, only to be granted back under official endorsement from the king. Montfort's hypothesis that Occitanian culture was aiding heresy was proven correct, as accompanying this political transformation was a loss of what it meant to be an Occitanian.²⁰⁶ The mendicant preachers who made up the friar movement were able to successfully ensure that even if remnants of the old ways existed among some citizens of the Midi, they would not fall back into the embrace of Catharism. Instead, by assuming the ideal of the *perfecti* while retaining orthodox teachings, the mendicants were able to bridge the gap that had existed for so long between popular piety and the church. These changes, it must be noted, did not occur in a wholly peaceful and easy manner. When the Dominicans turned into Inquisitors their popularity often decreased, and several attempts were made by displaced Occitanian nobles to retake the lands and political autonomy that they had lost. Nonetheless, neither of these movements was nearly as violent as those that had preceded them and both were far more successful than any predecessors as well. By the dawning of the fourteenth century the long war on Occitanian belief was over: Occitania had become Languedoc and the Cathars had become Catholic.

²⁰⁶ Costen, *The Cathars*, p. 183

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