

IN HER VOICE:
THE DESTRUCTION OF THE CATHARS IN LANGUEDOC

A Thesis by

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The following faculty members have examined the final copy of this thesis for the form and content, and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Arts with a major in Liberal Studies.

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DEDICATION

To my beloved parents, Warren and *Gwendolyn Stumm*

"Fiction and non-fiction are only different techniques of story-telling."

--Arundhati Roy

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I would like to thank Dr. Anthony Gythiel. His inspirational lectures have opened up a new world for me intellectually, historically, and spiritually. He is a scholar in the truest sense of the word, and I will always be extremely thankful I've experienced the incredible privilege of being his student.

ABSTRACT

The following thesis is a narrative history of the persecution and ultimate elimination of a Christian heresy called Catharism. Their destruction was brought about by the Roman Catholic Church which saw the Cathar's strength in numbers, wealth, and organization as a viable threat to its power. Pope Innocent III called for a crusade against the heretics - the Albigensian Crusade beginning July, 1209, in the southern region of France known as Languedoc (Occitania).

The most powerful noble of this period is Count Raymond VI of Toulouse. He took every possible means to protect his subjects and land from the ravages of the Crusading army. His unwillingness to persecute heretics exemplifies the choice made by the majority of noblemen in the South and portrays best what was then known as "*parage*."

The voice of this narrative is that of a Cathar woman, a *perfecta*, raised in a noble family of believers, and educated by Cathar *perfectae*. She represents many Occitanian women: educated and financially independent seeking spiritual guidance and purpose. The Cathar faith offered her position, equality, and a voice - all forbidden in the Roman Catholic Church.

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PRINCIPAL FIGURES

Armaury de Montfort (1192-1241): Took up his father's banner, titles, and holdings in 1218, after the death of Simon, only to eventually sell all to the French crown.

Arnald-Amalric (Amaury) (d. 1225): Abbot of Cîteaux and Papal Legate; appointed archbishop of Narbonne; leader of the attack on Béziers in 1209.

Blanch of Castile (1185-1252) Queen of France, then Regent after the death of King Louis VIII in 1223 until her young son, Louis IX, came of age. She was a devout Catholic and a shrewd and powerful monarch.

Domingo de Guzman (1170-1221): Founder of the Dominican Order, canonized as St. Dominic in 1234.

Esclarmonde of Foix (1151 c.-1215): Sister of Raymond Roger, Count of Foix. Received the *consolamentum* in 1204 and became an active *perfecta* leader in hospitality of Cathars and in the education of girls.

Foulques (Fulk) of Marseilles (1155-1231): Appointed Bishop of Toulouse in 1205. He was known for his ruthlessness in pursuing heretics and despised by the citizens of Toulouse.

Guilhabert of Castres (d. c. 1240): Cathar bishop of Toulouse, respected and revered above all Cathar *perfecti*.

Innocent III (1160-1216): Elected pope in 1198, he declared the Albigensian Crusade in 1208 and he convoked the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215. He was greatly feared because he exploited the political power of the papacy; he strongly believed in the "fullness of power."

Louis VIII (1187-1226): King of France for only three years. Launched the Royal crusade in 1226. He was succeeded by Louis IX.

PRINCIPAL FIGURES (continued)

Peter (Pedro) II of Aragon (1174-1213): Crowned in 1204 by Pope Innocent III. He was hugely successful in driving out the Moors from most of Spain in 1212, and called "the Catholic" because of his loyalty to the Pope and the Church. He was the brother-in-law of Count Raymond VI and the suzerain over Raymond-Roger, Viscount of Trancavel. He became an ally of the Languedoc cause turning his allegiance from the Pope.

Philip II (Philip Augustus): King of France, 1180 - 1223.

Raymond Roger, Count of Foix (d. 1223): He was the most aggressive and pugnacious of all the nobility in the fight against the Church. Though not a Cathar, he was a staunch supporter of the heretics. His wife, Philippa, became a Cathar *perfecta*, as did his sister, Esclarmonde. He was a relative and steadfast supporter of Raymond VI and came to this count's defense at the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215.

Raymond Roger Trancavel (1188-1209): Viscount of Béziers and Carcassonne, vassal of Peter II, and nephew of Raymond VI. He supported divergent cultures, religions, and heresies in his domain, and resented any interference on the part of the Church. He was beloved by his people.

Raymond VI (1156-1222): The Count of Toulouse and most powerful noble in Languedoc. He was a source of extreme agitation to the Pope in that he refused to persecute the heretics. He was married five times (second wife, Beatrice, became a Cathar *perfecta*) and excommunicated three times. He led the fight against the Crusade, and did so in a manner which often appeared to be cooperative with the Church.

Raymond VII (1197-1249): Son of Raymond VI and last count of Toulouse.

Simon de Montfort (1165-1218): As a fearless warrior with strategic brilliance and superior leadership, he became the leader of the Church's campaign against heresy. Although a devout Catholic, he was aggressive and ruthless in his desire for personal power.

MAPS/IMAGES

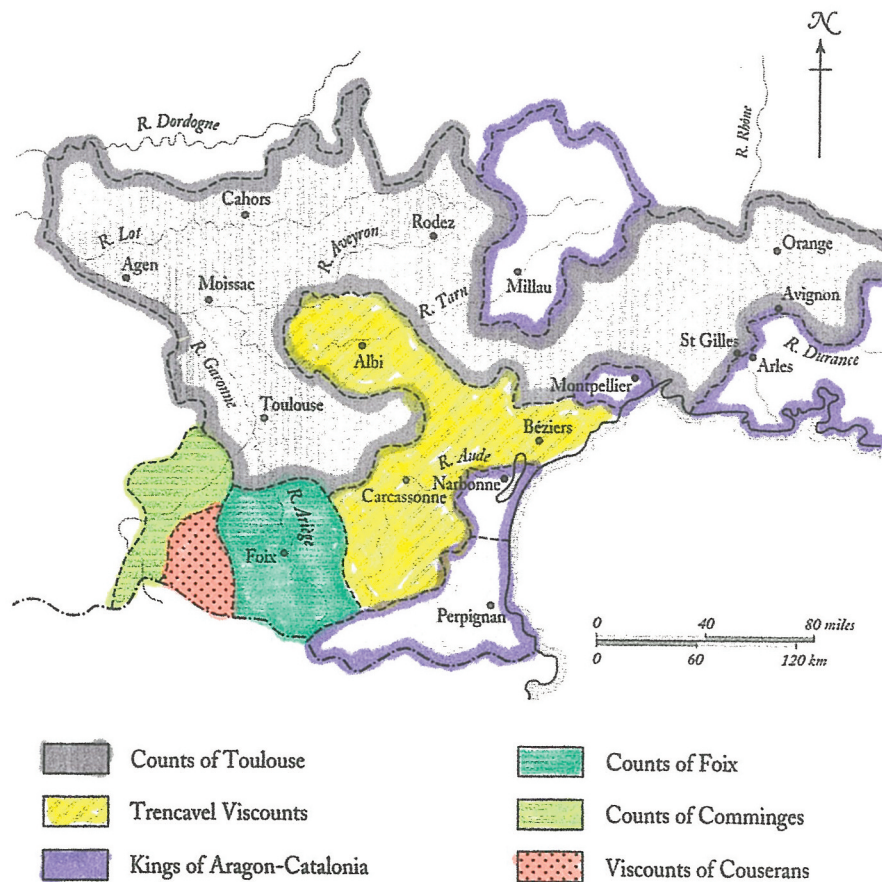


Map #1
The Lands of Occitan Catharism (Weis).

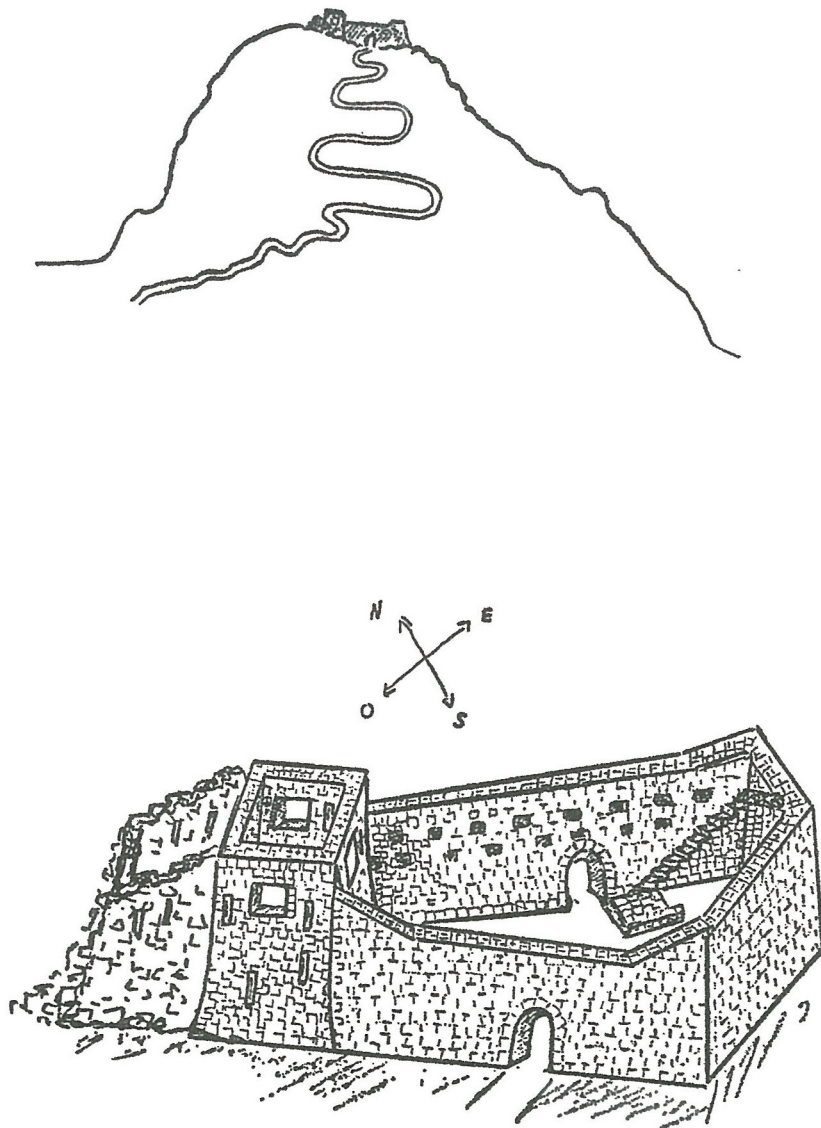


Map #2

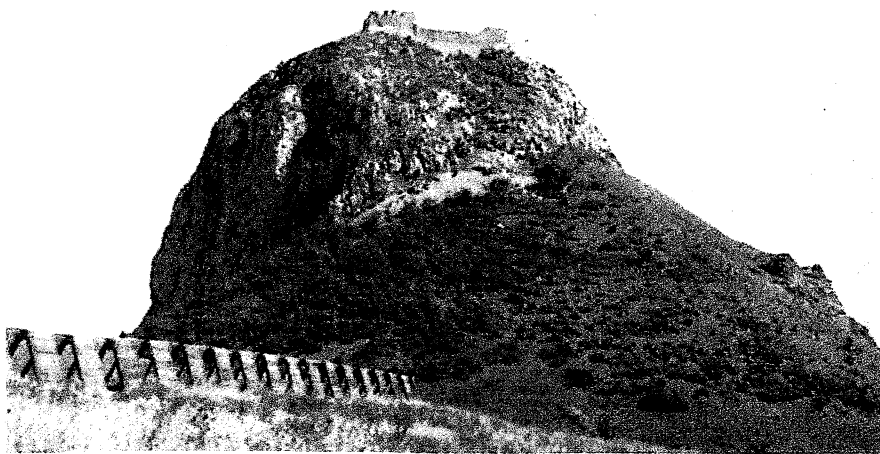
Territories affected by the Albigensian Crusade (Barber).



Map #3
The political structure of Languedoc before the Albigensian Crusade
(Barber).



Diagrammatic sketch of the fortress of Montségur with the road leading up to it (Oldenbourg).



The castle of Montségur as seen from the southwest (Oldenbourg).

DEFINITIONS

Apparellamentum: A monthly confession of sins by the *perfecti* to a deacon.

Burgher: A wealthy and important man in the community.

Consolamentum: The Cathar sacrament (baptism) that elevated *credentes* to the position of *perfecti* and *perfectae*.

Convenensa: The initiation ceremony for a *credentae*.

Credentes: Believers of the Cathar faith; supporters of the *Perfecti*.

Dualism (absolute): The belief in two equal and independent opposing principles: good and evil.

Dualism (moderate): The belief in two independent opposing principles, evil being the lesser of the two.

Endura: The Cathar rite where in one who has received the consolamentum receives only water thereafter.

Faidits: Dispossessed knights.

Filius maior: The elder or first son to follow in the steps of a Cathar bishop.

Filius minor: The second son to follow the first (above).

Interdict: An action by the clergy of the Church forbidding the Catholic citizens of a town, city, or even an entire country from receiving the Sacraments of the Church.

Jongleur: One who performs the songs of a troubadour.

Parage (in the *langue d'oc*), n.: The civilization, culture, life of the Languedoc; to evoke the "highest moral values current in secular society."

DEFINITIONS (continued)

Perfectus: One who has received the *consolamentum* and follows the apostolic example of living.

Perfectae: Female *perfecti*.

Melioramentum: A prayer or greeting to acknowledge another as a believer in the Cathar faith.

Routiers or *Mercenaries*: Soldiers hired for wages.

Ribauds: Poverty ridden individuals who were unruly, adventure seekers with nothing to lose.

Seigneur: A feudal lord.

Suzerain: A feudal lord who has control over those in another country.

Troubadour: The author of romance literature including poem and song.

Vassal: One who is under the protection of a feudal lord to whom he owes loyalty.

INTRODUCTION

The original "telling" of the Albigensian Crusade was, of course, by the victor - the Roman Catholic Church. The detailed progress of the Crusade against the Christian heretics, the Cathars, has been documented by the chroniclers of the Roman Catholic Church. However, the books, writings, and stories of the Cathar believers have been all but obliterated by the Church.

The declared intent of the Crusade was to eliminate the heretics and punish those who aided the Cathars or simply ignored their existence. The power of the Roman Church was being threatened by the organized and thriving Cathar church. Also, this heretical church held great wealth - as did all of Languedoc. The evils of power and greed in combination with the Church and the military might of the French Crown would destroy the civilization of Languedoc. It was accomplished with calculated terror by the "Army of God."

The Albigensian Crusade lasted twenty years beginning with the murder of a papal legate in Toulouse, January 14, 1208, to the Peace of Paris on April 12, 1229. The heinous acts of violence committed by the Church and its crusaders during this time should leave its papal heads [Innocent III and Gregory IX] hanging in shame - a war of Christians killing Christians.

The beginning of the Albigensian Crusade is marked to a degree with the scourging of Count Raymond VI of Toulouse in order to obtain reconciliation with the Church (his punishment for not pursuing and eliminating Cathar believers in his region). The end of this war is marked with the scourging and penance of his son, Raymond VII, at Notre Dame - an act of final surrender. However, the violence and persecution of the Cathars continued with full papal approval, self-righteous vigor of the French bishops, and thousands of northern French crusaders eager to fight for the promise of wealth and the indulgences given by the Church.

This writing is in the voice of an educated woman of nobility, the daughter of Cathar supporters in the region of Toulouse. She was educated by Cathar *perfectae*, and has received the *consolamentum*. Through her eyes we witness and experience, in part, this atrocious period of European history. During her life, all that made the southern region of France so appealing was destroyed. Languedoc, as it was called, was rich in knowledge and culture. It possessed a thriving feudal economy wherein more than tolerance existed between Christian, heretic, Jew, and Muslim. And there existed a strong desire for spiritual guidance. The Church did not fulfill this need; it had become obsessed with wealth and power. However, the Cathar

perfecti did indeed offer answers and direction to the spiritual seeker. It was the *perfecti* and *perfectae* who promoted the Cathar system of values: condemnation of property, the evil of sex, and the need for repentance. In this independent region of France, the Cathar heresy found abundant acceptance and flourished into a strong and well organized church. However, its threat to the Roman Catholic Church would not be ignored. To the Pope and the Crusaders, the Cathars were recognized as enemies of Christ and a threat to Christianity; to the Cathars, the Roman Catholics were seen as deluded servants of Satan.

It was the Cathar heresy in southern France, and the pleas of Pope Innocent III, that gave King Philip II reason for the brutal invasion of the French Crusaders. Ultimately, Languedoc would become annexed to the whole of France creating a world power for the next five generations. Catharism, therefore, changed the face of Europe, especially France, as we know it today.

CHAPTER 1

MONTSÉGUR, 15 MARCH, 1244

Listen, you can hear the soft rustling of foot soldiers in the valley deep below as they build the mass burning pyre. Tomorrow morning we will walk down from our Montségur fortress and step up to our deaths. We were given a choice: swear allegiance to the Roman Church or die. We made our choice. Two days ago, the *consolamentum* was administered by the *perfecti* to the *credentes*, the majority of those surrendering, and also to numerous knights, soldiers, and mercenaries. These men who fought valiantly in our defense are now choosing to die by our side and in our faith - amazing.

In the morning we will say farewell to our families and friends and to all those who have been here to assist and protect us. You might think there would be an atmosphere of fear and dread, a foreboding of what we are about to face, but it is quite the opposite. All over the fortress you can hear the gentle sounds of voices praying and singing in praise. We are soon to rejoin our Creator. But tonight, let me tell you the story of my people, my country, my faith, and our journey to this night.

CHAPTER 2

LANGUEDOC, 1200

This was a good time to be living in the southern region of France known as Languedoc, or the Midi. It is also referred to as "Occitania" : the *langue d'oc* (the word yes is *oc*, not *oui*) as opposed to the *langue d'oui* of the North. Our beautiful land is comprised of much diversity: we have the southern Mediterranean coast which includes the cities of Nîmes, Montpellier, Béziers, and Narbonne. Within these port cities the warehouses overflow with wine, oil, wool, and leather ready for trade with Spain, Italy, and beyond. Far north the rocky plateau of Minervois rises and the Montagne Noire (the black mountain). To the west lies the great city of Toulouse on a bend in the River Garonne. To the east, we have Provence; to the west, Aquitaine; in the south, we have the majestic Pyrénées (within these mountains lies the fortress of Montségur); and to the far south, Aragon and Catalonia (O'Shea, 18).

Our land contains a wealth of abundance in its rich and productive soil, its flourishing of art and industry, its vast network of trade by land and water, its culture and history, and its open acceptance and appreciation of all ethnicities and religions. But it must be said, Languedoc is highly coveted in

the ruling hearts and minds of its neighboring countries.

At the turn of the century, we were a prosperous feudal society primarily centered in and around our towns and cities. The soil was fertile, industry and business were growing, art and crafts were flourishing. Trade was developing and increasing between the north and south via the Rivers Rhône and Garonne, and all were sharing in the prosperity from wealthy burghers to the artisans and peasants. The motto of my people has been, "to work is to pray." They go hand in hand.

Languedoc was home to many refugees who had fled persecution from the north and east, especially Jews and heretics. They brought with them their own art and crafts. Consequently, one new and thriving industry in the South was that of papermaking. Often, these craftsmen, locals and exiles, expressed their faith in their work. In papermaking, that expression was evident in their watermarks. Most had multiple meanings, but the message to a fellow believer was clear. For instance, the 'stag' was an emblem of the fight against evil - that evil being the Roman Church. The 'ladder' represented virtue and good works; the 'hand' was the emblem of labor. The 'heart' was the mark of the love of labor, and utmost, the 'rose' was the watermark representing the "God of Silence" and "secrecy" so often

essential to the survival of the heretic (Bayley).

The Crusades of the Roman Church had also brought an abundance of wealth to the Midi - especially in the port cities of Toulouse, Avignon, Narbonne, and Marseilles. It was from the merchants of these cities that the Crusaders purchased their provisions and equipment en route to the Holy Lands. On their return, they sold their booty and loot to these same merchants.

The nobility of Languedoc were primarily independent of their suzerain authorities (i.e. the kings of England, France, and Aragon). Of course, there were the occasional clashes in battle with each count or viscount fiercely guarding his domain; but overall, there existed what we call "*parage*": a respect for the civilization, culture, high moral values, and a sense of unity in the Languedoc (Oldenbourg, 164).

We were a welcoming, tolerant people at the turn of the 13th century wherein both Muslims and Jews played a vital role in our society. Because of the contact and acceptance of the Muslim world in the Midi, the university at Toulouse was the only French institution of learning to offer a course on Aristotle based upon recent discoveries made by Arab philosophers (Oldenbourg, 24). The Muslim merchants were included in our markets; the

Muslim physicians were respected. The Jews played an enormous role in our economical environment, often the driving force in our commercial success. They often held positions of importance in medicine and education; their schools were held in high esteem and all (including non-Jews) were welcome to attend lectures. Jews often sat in positions of importance on local governing councils. They were pivotal in the success and momentum of our business communities and were included in our society.

Our major cities were witnessing great strides in the advancement of architecture with the building of magnificent cathedrals and in education with new universities. The atmosphere of religious, cultural, and educational stimulation brought about intellectual questioning and reasoning. This was, in turn, opening up our minds to "new" ideas, choices, and possibilities. We were becoming much more a "thinking" people; we were questioning the dogma, orthodoxy, and rituals of the Roman Church.

We Occitanians are a romantic and passionate people and the expression of such was much in evidence in the early part of this century. The songs and literature of the troubadours were encouraged and often sponsored by the nobility of Languedoc - especially the noblewomen. The lyrical poems of the troubadour, written in the Occitan language, found an

ardent audience in the aristocratic class and the middle class as well. These are stories of unattainable love, *amour courtois*, of noble deeds performed by a Knight for his Lady - the lady of his heart - with no motive other than to uphold her honor. The knight's actions are made by his free choice and represent, perhaps, much more than meets the reader's immediate eye. The troubadours' words may refer to the noble desires of an individual's spiritual choices rather than to the reverence, worship, and dedication to a particular woman.

In a fiercely independent society, our spiritual and religious choices were respected and supported. We were French by birth and Catholic by culture. The French Crown and Roman Church were considered to be "foreign" powers in our country. It was the teachings and truth of the Cathars that ran through and touched all our lives - it was what fed our spiritually hungry souls.

CHAPTER 3

THE CATHAR CHURCH

At the beginning of the 13th century, The Cathar Church in the region of Languedoc was wealthy, powerful, and extremely well organized. Each territorial diocese was lead by a bishop, followed by a *filius maior*, *filius minor*, and deacons. All were Cathar *perfecti* or 'Pure Ones,' - those who had received the sacrament (baptism) of the *consolamentum*, the only sacrament of the heretical church. They led lives of poverty and self-denial, owning nothing, carrying no belongings other than a book or two, and wore simple black robes belted by a cord. They traveled on foot.

The Cathar missionaries traveled in pairs going from town to town, city to city. They took literally the scripture that states that Christ is present when 'two or three are gathered together' (Barber, 75). In this manner, they took their heretical message everywhere while living the apostolic example as described by Christ in the book of John. They were the true followers of Jesus Christ. These good men, *bons hommes*, were welcomed and highly respected wherever they went. They brought with them knowledge and offered to all friendship, comfort, sometimes medical skills,

financial aid, labor, and most importantly, a spiritual way of life that made sense. These teachers, always *perfecti*, welcomed all; no one was shunned or turned away. If a *credens* so chose, the *consolamentum* could be administered by one of these teachers.

The *consolamentum* is the only sacrament (baptism) which we Cathars hold as sacred. All others, those of the Roman Church, are regarded as useless and abhorred. Often this sacrament is administered at the end of one's life. As you will see, the expectations and self-sacrificing demanded of a Cathar *perfectus* are extremely difficult to uphold. Consequently, many believers have chosen to wait until the end of their lives before taking this step to salvation. Both male *perfecti* and female *perfectae* are involved in the initiation ceremony; however, the officiating *perfectus* is usually a man.

The rite is as follows: First a prayer is offered by the officiating *perfectus*: "Bless us; have mercy on us. Amen. Let it be done unto us according to Thy word. May the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost forgive all your sins" (repeated three times). Then all present recite the Lord's Prayer: "Our father which art in heaven, hallowed by thy name. Let thy kingdom come. Thy will be fulfilled, as well as in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our supersubstantial bread. And forgive us our trespasses, even

as we forgive our trespassers. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory for ever. Amen." The officiating *perfectus* then reads the scripture from John 1:17. This is followed by additional requests for forgiveness. The presiding *perfectus* then places the Book - either the New Testament or the Gospel of St. John - on a table covered with a cloth and proceeds to instruct the *credens* on what will be expected of him or her upon receiving the *consolamentum*. The following is asked of the *credens*: "(name), you wish to receive the spiritual baptism by which the Holy Spirit is given in the Church of God, together with the Holy Prayer and the imposition of hands by Good Men. This holy baptism, by which the Holy Spirit is given, the Church of God has preserved from the time of the apostles until this time and it has passed from Good Men to Good Men until the present moment, and it will continue to do so until the end of the world. (Name) keep the commandments of Christ to the utmost of your ability. Do not commit adultery, kill, lie, nor swear an oath nor steal. You should turn the other cheek in the face of those that persecute you. You must hate this world and its works and the things that are of this world." The *credens* answers, "I will," and is then a *perfectus* or *perfecta* as the case may be (Martin, 54).

In all of Languedoc, there were probably fewer than 1,000 Cathar *perfecti* in the year 1200. However, there were thousands of Cathar *credentes* and thousands of supporters of those believers. Catharism spread into every aspect of our society: nobility, peasant, burgher, merchant, farmer, and artisan. There was hardly a family who did not have at least one *perfectus/perfecta*, numerous *credentes*, and almost all were supporters of the heresy. Furthermore, there was not a single lord in Languedoc who would consent to seeking out and persecuting heretics. Here we felt safe and we trusted in the protection of our rulers.

CHAPTER 4

HISTORY AND HEXOLOGY OF CATHARISM

The exact origin of our dualist faith is not known. There has been speculation about our connection to the Gnostics, the Manichaeans, the Waldensians (here we are quite similar), and the Bogomils. It was during the reign of our own Count Raymond V of Toulouse that papa Nicetas, the Bogomil bishop from Constantinople, made his appearance in Languedoc at the first and only official Cathar council, the Council of St. Felix in 1176 in a village south of Toulouse, St. Felix de Caraman. It was an "international symposium of Cathars from all over Europe. Here a defined order was established in the Cathar Church" (Martin, 61).

Papa Nicetas, as he was fondly called, impressed upon our Cathar leaders the importance of order. He converted the "moderate" dualist Cathars of Lombardy and Languedoc to the two principles of "absolute" dualism and assisted in the establishment of a diocesan organization similar to that of the Roman Catholic Church. All bishops, present and newly elected, received the *consolamentum* if necessary, and were consecrated or reconsecrated at this council by Nicetas (Barber, 72). All were now Cathar

perfecti.

The territorial boundaries of the Cathar dioceses were set; these boundaries most often followed the existing boundaries of the Catholic Church and beyond. The established order gave added formidable strength and unity to the newly organized heretical church.

Under the leadership of each bishop would be a first or elder son, *filius maior*, who would act as successor to the bishop, and a second or younger son, *filius minor*, who would follow in this process. The deacons/deaconesses were next in line although there truly was no hierarchy as all are considered equal. These *perfecti/perfectae* men and women maintained the communal centers, schools and convents, and provided hospitality for the traveling Cathar missionaries (Barber, 77).

Of utmost importance to the Cathar Church is the acceptance of absolute dualism, or the "two principles," as mentioned. Absolute dualists believe in the existence of two worlds: the "Evil" world is all that of matter, including flesh, and is corruptible. The "Good" world is of spirit, incorruptible and eternal. All matter was created by the Devil (Evil), including the human body. God (Good) agreed to give the human body movement by giving each man and woman a soul. The "souls are of God and bodies are of the Devil"

(Barber, 101).

Following the strict dictates of this absolute dualist belief is extremely difficult; it includes much fasting and praying. The scripture in I Thessalonians 5:16 that says to "pray without ceasing" is taken quite literally. The diet of the *perfecti/perfectae* is extremely limited and excludes all foods of flesh (animal) and focuses on fruits, vegetables, and grains. The daily behavior of each *perfecti/perfectae* must include these three rules: (1) never use the hand to kill people, animals, or plants; (2) never use the mouth to speak evil words; (3) and do not use the womb for the creation of more matter - so no sex (Gythiel - notes). This being said, you can understand why the numbers of individuals who actually received the *consolamentum* and adhered to the challenges of the heresy were limited. It was, and is, nearly impossible. This is why many of us chose to receive the *convenensa* - the initiation ceremony for a *credens*. With this comes the promise of receiving the sacrament of the *consolamentum* at the time of death. However, timing is important so it is convenient, of course, to have *perfecti* living nearby. If we do not receive the sacrament before death, our soul is doomed and destined to pass from one body of flesh to another body of flesh (human or animal, male or female). With the salvation of the

consolamentum, administered only by a *perfecti*, we are assured a return to heaven upon death thereby avoiding another reincarnation. For us, Hell is to live again and again here on Earth.

The growth of the Cathar Church by the year 1200 was astonishing. As mentioned earlier, the number of *perfecti* was limited, but the number of *credentes* and supporters was in the tens of thousands. People of Languedoc were seeking answers to spiritual questions and doubting the age-old prescriptions and dogma of the Roman Church. The kind, logical, and intelligent teaching of *perfecti* missionaries offered answers and enlightenment.

Catharism offers an answer to the uncomfortable problem of belief in the angry and avenging God of the Old Testament, a judgmental God who sent his only son to suffer horribly and die on this earth. This God is not our God. The Devil is the author of the Old Testament with the exception of the books of "Job, the Psalms, the books of Solomon, of Jesus son of Sirach, of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, and of the twelve prophets" (Barber, 93).

Our God is a God of mercy and love, not of suffering and destruction. Therefore, Jesus, in whom we absolutely believe, was in a form which only seemed human. Christ could not have issued from the womb; he was not born

of Mary, but merely "shadowed" within her (Weis, xxii). We do not take the incarnation, crucifixion, or the resurrection of Christ literally. There will be no final judgment as threatened in the New Testament; the evil cycle will end when the last soul is released from its human entrapment of flesh and enters heaven.

It's really quite simple: all things invisible, spiritual, and ethereal were created by the god of light. Therefore, our God of light is not concerned with sleeping arrangements, marriage, or if we befriend a Jew or Muslim. Because of our belief in transmigration or reincarnation, we view each other, men and women, as equals. We believe (as did the Gnostics and the ancient Stoics) in the existence of the Divine Spark within each person. It is our choice to turn away from all things of matter (Evil) and live a life of poverty and tolerance (Good). We find the swearing of an oath, a strong tradition in our feudal society, to be absolutely repugnant. All sacraments of the Church are seen as meaningless including marriage and baptism.

Finally, we see the clergy of the Church as useless and unnecessary to communion with our God. How ludicrous to think a mere human (flesh) could forgive sins! We are one in our hatred of the Roman Catholic Church, the

"Church of Satan." By 1200, we were a direct challenge to the power and control of the Roman Church in the Midi (Lambert, 21).

CHAPER 5

CATHAR WOMEN

Women embraced Catharism whole-heartedly for many reasons, and the solid and steady growth of our church is directly related to these mothers, daughters, sisters, aunts, and cousins. Why? You must remember that the Roman Church had literally turned its back to us. The Church is strictly a patriarchal organization and has very little use for the female (the Virgin Mary being the exception). We were not allowed into their schools nor could we serve at the Church altars. Fewer women, seeking education, were entering Catholic convents because these institutions were no longer properly funded by the monasteries. The Cathar church offered numerous alternatives to women of the South: education, service, equality, purpose, and respect.

It was the Cathar women who nurtured the ideals, values, and beliefs of our faith within the walls of their homes. They wove the beliefs and high moral character of our faith into the daily fabric of the lives of their families. Consequently, they raised sons and daughters who naturally were

"believers." They may not have become *perfecti* or *perfectae*, but they were *credentes* and/or supporters of the faith. The faith was linked from family to family, and the powerful families who supported the Cathars and ruled Languedoc were linked together by marriage which dramatically increased the regional influence of Catharism.

When a woman receives the *consolamentum*, she then becomes a *perfecta* and is elevated to a position of honor and respect in the community. This was a popular life choice for a middle-aged woman after the demands of raising her children were completed. She was then allowed to fulfill roles and needs of importance, and this she did with gusto.

The South has long had a system of "partible inheritance" wherein the legacy is shared evenly by sons and daughters. Many noble women brought abundant wealth to the church; they were quite independent and financially well equipped to found and lead various Cathar organizations. Many established schools; some organized and ran convents or group homes for daughters, widows, and dowagers of the petty local nobility and artisan classes (O'Shea, 41). Others became well known for their homes of spiritual services and hospitality.

These gracious *perfectae* organized gatherings for visiting *perfecti* and often included troubadours and jongleurs to entertain everyone after the preaching was completed. The troubadours referred to these women as "*bela ereta* - the fair heretics" (O'Shea, 44). One of the most influential of all *perfectae* hostesses was Esclarmonde of Foix. She was sister to Raymond Roger, Count of Foix. Her name, in the Occitan language, means "Light of the World."

There were other famous *perfectae* hostesses at this time including Esclarmonde's sister-in law, Philippa (the wife of the Count of Foix) and her two sisters, Fais de Durfort, and Blanche de Laurac(a brave woman whom I shall discuss later). However, it is of Esclarmonde that stories and legends have been passed down: it is her example of faith at work and spiritual humility that we believers try to replicate even now.

Esclarmonde of Foix was the educated and cultured daughter of the Count of Foix, Bernard I, and Cecile Trancavel. Both the houses of Foix and Trancavel had been known to protect heretics for many decades so, no doubt, Esclarmonde was raised in the knowledge and values of the Cathar faith. As a widow, she openly embraced the faith at the age of fifty-three after her children were grown. She received the *consolamentum* in 1204

from the hands of the Cathar bishop Guilhabert de Castres. Several other noble women also joined Esclarmonde in this ceremony at Fanjeaux, and it was witnessed by her brother, Raymond-Roger Count of Foix.

The hospitality of Esclarmonde was renowned - especially her house in Pamiers. She and her sister-in-law, Philippa, also jointly ran a house for *perfectae* at Dun in the Pyrénées. It was this particular house that served as a prototype for future Cathar houses. It functioned as both a school for young girls and a reclusion location for women of all ages. She was tireless in her efforts to establish various schools, hospitals, and convents, and to profess the true faith whenever the opportunity was presented.

A story is told of Esclarmonde, this dignified and powerful woman, revered by all Cathar believers at the time, being rudely dismissed by the companion of (St.) Dominic Guzman during a religious debate between the Catholic and Cathar preachers at Pamiers: Brother Stephen of Mini dismissed an interjection of Esclarmonde saying, 'Go tend your distaff, madam; it is no business of yours to discuss matters such as these' (William de Puylaurens in Oldenbourg, 60). Such a cultural and social faux pas had to have been seen as crude and ignorant by the observing and educated audience; however, it seems to have gone right over the heads of Dominic

and his companions. The irony is that she probably organized the debate in the first place.

Esclarmonde was not diminished in the least. She was seen as fearless and bold - an example of so many Cathar *perfectae* of this time - even more so than their male counterpart. And for some of these great ladies, the fact that they were supported by and related to the powerful Lords of Languedoc had to give their bravery an edge. Also, the wisdom and foresight of Esclarmonde must be mentioned: it was at her urging that Raymond de Perella rebuild the fortress of Montségur, high in the Pyrénées, as a stronghold and haven of safe-keeping for the Cathars in the future.

The persecution of Cathar *perfecti/perfectae*, *credentes*, and all supporters would exponentially expand. However, it is impossible to believe that Esclarmonde could begin to imagine the heinous actions the Roman Church and its army of Northern Crusaders would take in the massive effort to suppress the Truth of our faith and eliminate the threat of our church. None of us could have seen the horror of what was to come.

CHAPTER 6

THE NOBILITY OF LANGUEDOC

By the early part of this new century, warring between the feudal lords had become, for the most part, unnecessary. Territorial lands had been divided and the interests of the nobility were elsewhere. It was no longer a society disciplined for warring although each lord had his own loyal knights who were trained and equipped in readiness just in case. However, the knights would not be enough if a large-scale battle ensued.

The South had not witnessed the two centuries of Viking invasions which had hardened the North. Especially effected were the principalities of Normandy, Anjou, and Champagne which were now centralized, authoritarian states under the suzerainty of the French Crown. Instead, the Midi had experienced relative peace; land was available without feudal service. Consequently, no feudal army could be raised in the Midi. The only alternative for the Southern lords was to employ mercenaries or, as they were called, *routiers*. Therefore, a major problem existed with the ruling nobility of the Midi: there existed no unifying system of peace keeping

among the lords of Languedoc. It was this particular debility alone that would ultimately be its weakest link in the fight to maintain independence and a sense of nationalism separate from the French Crown and the Roman Church.

The interests and focus of the nobility in the South were not on battle but on those matters of refinement. Learning, education, poetry, and music were held in high regard. However, they were fiercely independent and extremely passionate in maintaining this position from the Crown (whose influence was virtually non-existent in the South) and from the clutching grasp of the Roman Church. The "enemy" was anyone who challenged the autonomy of the nobility - especially the counts and viscounts of Toulouse, Foix, and Trancavel.

Even though Languedoc displayed the rituals of Catholicism, its spirit of nationalism embraced Catharism as its true church. The ideals of the heresy were parallel, to a large degree, with the cause of *parage* - to evoke the very highest moral values current in secular society (Oldenbourg, 164). Virtually every noble family had members who were *perfecti/perfectae* or *credentes* as explained earlier. The political play of inter-marrying in all the noble families created a web of heretical strength across the Midi. Because

of this, the counts of Languedoc were not inclined to pursue nor suppress heresy within their territorial boundaries. The pressure to do so by the Roman Church was met with indifference and rarely little if any action. In fact, just the opposite seems to be the case: the Cathars contributed substantially to the economic welfare of each community and, because of this regional connection, were free to spread their message freely over the expanse of Occitania.

The most powerful of all the noble houses of the South was that of Toulouse. Its vast domain was in part under the diversity of overlords which include the King of England, the King of Aragon, and the Roman Emperor. The geographical distance of each would seem to guarantee the autonomy and freedom of the Counts of Toulouse. The lack or inability to exert a controlling hand also holds true within the counts' various provinces.

In a sense, the three counts of Toulouse, Raymond V (1148-94), Raymond VI (1194-1222), and Raymond VII (1222-49) are representative of the beginning and end of the Cathar movement during their successive reigns. They figure strongly in the list of fascinating characters playing a role in the rapid growth of our church and in its heinous destruction. During the ruling period of these three counts of Toulouse, Catharism went from

being the accepted religion of the Midi, a serious threat to the Roman Church, to a minority of a hunted and persecuted few.

It was during the reign of Raymond V that papa Nicetas, the Bogomil bishop from Constantinople, made his historical appearance at the official Cathar council mentioned earlier. This event and the size of its membership did not go unnoticed by the ruling lord. In 1177, Count Raymond V, although known for his generosity and kindness, was alarmed by the strength of heretical movement and appealed to Louis VII and to the Cistercians to intervene (Lambert 83). Pope Alexander III sent his Cardinal Legate, Peter of Chrysogonus, to Toulouse to investigate; however, the cardinal saw the impossibility of bringing down this vast number of heretics. He chose instead to make an example of one Cathar supporter, Pierre Maurand, a wealthy businessman or burgher in Toulouse, who was publicly humiliated (Lambert, 83). It would take much more than this to even give cause for alarm to the Toulousian heretics.

During the reign of Count Raymond VI, our entire world was violently and permanently shattered. I shall tell you more of this later in my account of the Crusade, or war, the Roman Church declared upon the people of the Midi. As you shall see, Raymond VI did not shun his commitment to support

and protect his people, including the Cathars, and would fight valiantly to maintain his power and hold onto his vast domain. If it meant lying to the Church, public scourging, even excommunication by the Church, he did it. Raymond was revered and loved by his people. However, from the beginning of his reign, the Church had its eye on him. He was not a man of Catholic convention; for example, by the year 1200, Raymond had buried his fourth and penultimate wife, Joan of England; his court was a mixture of Jews, Cathars, and Catholics. His friends were not distinguished for their reverence or piety, and a favorite was said to be the troubadour, Peire Vidal, who was famous for his compositions and his exploits (O'Shea, 46). But Raymond wasn't a man to be controlled by any source of outside authority. This can also be said of the counts of Trancavel and Foix.

Even though the counts of Toulouse were liege lords of the greater noble families of Languedoc, they had little if any control over them. The Trancavel family, hereditary Viscounts of Béziers, possessed domains that included the districts of Carcasses, Albigeois, and Razès; these lands stretched from the Tarn to the Pyrénées and were in vassalage to the King of Aragon. At this time, young Raymond Roger Trancavel was the Viscount of Béziers and Carcassonne. He was a favored vassal of Peter II and a nephew

of Raymond VI. This lord also supported divergent cultures, religions, and heresies in his domain, and he profusely resented any interference on the part of the Church. He too was beloved by his people.

The Counts of Foix, were safely removed in the vastness of the Pyrénées. As mentioned earlier, Raymond-Roger Count of Foix, was the brother to our beloved Esclarmonde and husband to Phillipa, both Cathar *perfectae*. As you shall see, this Count of Foix was the most aggressive and pugnacious of all the nobility in the fight against the Church and its determination to destroy the Cathar heresy. He showed no mercy for those who opposed him; if provoked to his limit, he could be violently brutal - even to the point of hanging his own brother.

Raymond-Roger was also a relative and steadfast supporter of Raymond VI and would articulately come to this count's defense at the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215. He was brazenly outspoken in the faces of bishops and the Pope; he was not one to back down or remain silent. He too was loved by his people.

Vitally important to the powerful nobility of Languedoc was the King of Aragon, Peter II, crowned by Pope Innocent III in 1204. He was a renowned hero in the Catholic realm because of his huge success in driving

out the Moors from most of Spain in 1212, and he was called "the Catholic" because of his loyalty to the Pope and the Church. However, his alliance to the Pope wavered and ultimately fell when Innocent III declared a crusade against the Cathars. Peter became a powerful ally of Languedoc. He was unwavering in his support of his brother-in-law, Count Raymond VI, and ultimately sacrificed his life for the cause of *parage* - our culture and our way of life in Languedoc.

There were also many lesser nobility who stood strong in their heretical support and in their defense of their homeland and its customs. They joined forces with the counts of Toulouse, Foix, and Trancavel to fight against the onslaught of the Church's crusading army of the North. But all these counts, viscounts, and men of lesser nobility had long been independent of one another. Consequently, they lacked the necessary cohesiveness to enable them to form a strong opposition to the "Army of God." Sadly, this army was to come down on them with a vengeance like never before seen in the Midi.

CHAPTER 7

THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH

The Church was more than aware of the growth of heresy, especially our Cathar Church, in the region of Languedoc at the turn of the century. However, up to this point its attention had been primarily elsewhere: destroying the "infidel" in four Crusades to the Holy Land. The Church had limited its actions toward the growth and spread of heresy by setting violent examples of execution, making official declarations of condemnation, and preaching.

In 1002, the first known execution of Cathars, ten burnt at the stake, occurred in Orleans and Toulouse; another Cathar was condemned and burnt in Cambrai, 1077; several heretics were imprisoned then grabbed by a mob and burnt in Soissons in 1114; and Peter de Bruys was condemned and burnt in Saint-Gilles, 1126. It continues: The Church's Council of Tours denounced the advance of Catharism in 1163; the Council of Lombez denounced the Cathars in 1165; then the Third Lateran Council, with the urging of Pope Alexander III, pronounced an Anathema on the Cathars followed by a preaching campaign against the heretics in 1180 (Oldenbourg, 390). As

horrible as all this sounds, it is nothing compared to what was going to come when the Church cardinals selected a new Pope in 1198.

The Italian aristocrat, *Lotario dei Conti di Segni*, was crowned Pope Innocent III on 22 February, 1198. By the age of thirty-seven, he had studied law in Bologna and theology in Paris. He was to prove to be a "legalistic intellect" and a "redoubtable opponent." In his words, he was "higher than man, but lower than God" (O'Shea, 33). This Pope saw his elevated duty to be the interpreter of the will and desires of God, and it was his responsibility to see that all - kings and counts included - obeyed and served this interpretation. Consequently, as you shall see, the decisions and actions of Pope Innocent III will forever change the face of France, destroying what had been the life and culture and freedom of Occitania.

The wealth and power of the Roman Church did not impress the people of the South. As mentioned, our nobility and our people were uncompromising in the inviolability of our independence. This is what encompassed who and what we were then - our culture, our civilization, our very way of life. The majority of the Church bishops were arrogant and self-righteous; the majority of the clergy was uneducated and offered little or no spiritual guidance. Although most of us attended services of Mass and went through

the motions of the various sacramental rituals, we were by and large all Believers in the Cathar faith and its heretical message. Without a doubt, Catharism inspired an illimitable hatred of the Church. We saw it as a conspicuous failure of true Christianity, and its clergy, especially its pretentious bishops, were an example of moral decadence.

So where was the new Pope to begin in his determination to wipe out the growing threat of Catharism? It truly was an organized church of wealth and power in the South, respected and embraced by our people, and its leaders were relentless in their accusations of evil within the "Devil's Church." His Church had become a joke to the common people of Languedoc and to its leaders. This humiliation would not be tolerated and the growth of the heretical church had to be stopped.

First, Pope Innocent III reaffirmed the decisions of the Third Lateran Council in its condemnation of heresy. Secondly, having shown himself to be a man of considerable circumspection, he began an investigation by his Legates (Cistercian) of the bishops and the secular authority of the South. To his dismay, he judged the heretical expansion to be due to the evil example set by his bishops. One example: When the Pope appointed Fulk (*Foulques*) of Marseille as the new Bishop of Toulouse, the

see consisted of nothing more than debt. It is said that, "the creditors were so pressing that Fulk was forced to water his four mules in the wells of his house rather than take them down to the river where they might have been seized to cover debts" (Barber, 58). This particular bishop was successful in turning around the financial situation of his bishopric, but he was despised by the people of Toulouse. As for the other bishops of the South, Pope Innocent III had his Legates suspend the majority of them thereby relieving each of his duties and his power. It is doubtful that any willingly surrendered his accumulated wealth.

The Pope could no longer depend on his bishops, so he handed over illimitable power to his Legates. The hope was to enable them to deal with the problem of Catharism and root out its heretics. The Papal Legates were met with either mildly disguised ill-will or outright hostility. Obviously, this was not going to work. The Pope went so far as to rescind the 1095 excommunication of Count Raymond VI after hearing the Count's usual placating promise of support. However, the Raymond VI quickly returned to his "old" ways and continued to protect Cathars, plunder abbeys, and turn monasteries into his own private fortresses (Oldenbourg, 88). Consequently, the Count was sentenced to be excommunicated again by the Papal Legate,

Pierre (Peter) of Castelnau. As you shall see, this action and the relationship of ill-will between the Papal Legate and Count Raymond VI will evolve into an excuse for the declaration of war, or a Crusade, against Cathar heresy and against all of Languedoc, its protector.

In the meantime, Pope Innocent III continued to find or at least display peaceful ways of suppressing the growing heresy. In 1203, he sent Cistercian monks, Papal Legates, to debate the Cathar *perfecti* and preach against heresy. The Cistercians were considered to be an elite group known for their discipline, piety, and austerity. Although they were not anywhere close to what the order had been intended when founded by St. Bernard, this was the best the Pope could do. The group consisted of Pierre de Castelnau, Brother Raoul, and the Abbot of Cîteaux, Arnaud Amaury as the leader of their mission (Oldenbourg, 91). This group had little success with either debating or preaching. It wasn't that they were not intelligent and well-educated, it was simply that they were not taken seriously by the people of the towns and villages in which they visited. Their mounted arrival, complete with baggage and accoutrements representative of their wealth, shone starkly against the simplicity of dress and humility of character displayed by Cathar *perfecti*.

In 1205, the preaching mission was joined by two Spaniards, Don Diego de Acebes, Bishop of Osma, and his young sub prior, Dominic de Guzman (Strayer, 41). They offered wise advice: imitate the asceticism shown by the *perfecti*. Dominic "saw the value of the ideal of absolute poverty" (Strayer, 42) in order to gain the respect shown to their opponents and perhaps gain an audience with an open mind. Neither of the Cistercian abbots were about to tolerate the garments of poverty and humility. However, Dominic and his followers did and the Order of Dominicans or the Preaching Friars was established. It is said that "Dominic traveled indefatigably round the countryside, visiting villages, towns, and chateaux, and setting an example by his way of life which was more austere than that of the *perfecti* themselves" (Oldenbourg, 93). In spite of Dominic's efforts, the preaching mission resulted in failure.

Now Pope Innocent III saw his only alternative to be the use of violence. After all, it had been successfully sanctified and willingly used in prior crusades against those who opposed the authority of the Roman Church. Why not now? To the Pope, another "Holy War" seemed to be the only way to succeed in obtaining and implementing his objectives - or rather, the directives of God.

CHAPTER 8

PRELUDE TO THE ALBIGENSIAN CRUSADE

On 10 March, 1204, Pope Innocent III sent a letter to the King of France, Philip Augustus (Philip II) saying, "It is your responsibility to harry the Count of Toulouse out of those lands which at present he occupies; to remove this territory from the control of sectarian heretics; and to place it in the hands of true Catholics who will be enabled, under your beneficent rule, to serve Our Lord in all faithfulness" (Oldenbourg, 4). The Pope, in fact, promised Philip II (Philip Augustus) the kingdom of all France if he would lead an army of crusaders against the heretics. The King refused then and twice again.

Meanwhile in Toulouse, Count Raymond VI was having his difficulty with the Pope's Legates, Peter of Castelnau and the Abbot of Cîteaux, Arnald (Amalric) Armaury. These two were stirring the anti-heretical embers in Languedoc by looking for any prelates suspected of sympathizing with the Cathars. The bishops of Béziers and Viviers were suspended; they tried to do the same with the Archbishop of Narbonne. This bishop was not intimidated by the Legates and refused to budge. The Legates were making

little or no headway in the elimination of heresy (Oldenbourg, 5).

In the spring of 1207, Papal Legate, Peter of Castelnau, fed up with Raymond's lies and blatant lack of support in the effort to stamp out heresy, excommunicated him publicly and put his entire territory under interdict pronouncing an anathema: "He who dispossesses you will be accounted virtuous, he who strikes you dead will earn a blessing" (*Histori Albigensis*, Oldenbourg, 5). Raymond did what he had to do, and what he had done since becoming Count of Toulouse: He made promises he had no intention of keeping. In August, 1207, Raymond VI was again pardoned (O'Shea, 65).

By autumn of 1207, Raymond VI, having kept none of his promises, was excommunicated again! This time, a list was drawn up for all to witness: "He had stolen Church property, offended bishops, outraged abbots, used mercenaries, given public office to Jews, and supported the Cathars...All of Europe was invited to disregard him, to take whatever was his with the blessing of the pope" (O'Shea, 66). That winter, in St. Gilles, Raymond tried to negotiate a resolution with Peter of Castelnau; this led nowhere. The negotiations ended on 13 January, 1208, in the midst of anger and resentment. Early the next morning, Peter and his Papal party left St. Gilles heading for Rome. As they waited for the ferry to cross the River Rhône, an

unidentified horseman, or perhaps an officer of Count Raymond's, rode upon him and thrust a spear through the back of Peter's neck.

Depending on the observer, the murder was either a crime or a mistake. It really doesn't matter. This incident was just what Pope Innocent III needed to fan those anti-heretical embers into a raging fire. The Pope called Peter of Castelnau a martyr and made sure he was canonized soon thereafter. Count Raymond VI's lack of action to suppress heresy in his domain, his continual conflicts with the papal legates, and now his suspected involvement in this murder gave the Pope justification to attack.

Now in his early fifties, Raymond VI had no choice but to submit to a public scourging on the steps of the great church in St. Gilles, 18 June, 1209. His punishment was witnessed by at least twenty bishops and a throng of his own people. Before his whipping, he was forced to swear his obedience to the Pope and his legates. He was then stripped to the waist to receive the humiliating and painful lashes. The terms of Raymond's pardon were set by the new Papal Legate, Milo. They were harsh and impossible, but none the less, Raymond VI swore to the following: "He had to give up all rights over any religious foundation in his domains, hand over seven of his castles, never again use mercenaries, let the legates pass judgment on any complaint filed

against him, apologize to all the bishops and abbots he had offended, dismiss all Jews from his service, and treat as heretics all those who were designated as such by the Church" (O'Shea, 69).

Fourteen days after his scourging, Count Raymond VI, with his knights, traveled north to join the Church's crusading army. He publicly announced his intentions to pursue the Cathar heretics and punish all who gave them shelter. Of course, he had no intention of doing so, but there was no other way for him to protect his own domain. He was still as reticent as before to persecuting any of his people. His mind had not changed in the slightest.

Innocent III called for a crusade against the heretics on 10 March, 1208. He recruited his two faithful, self-righteous, and wrathful legates, Bishop Foulques and the Abbot of Cîteaux, Arnald Amaury, to preach the crusade to the nobility of the North. He desperately needed their support in order to raise an army. At first the barons and lords refused. However, King Philip II finally relented to the pleas of the Pope, released his Northern noble vassals, and the building of a crusading army was underway. This would be an army the size of which had never been seen in Languedoc.

CHAPTER 9

THE WAR MACHINE OF THE ALBIGENSIAN CRUSADERS

The most powerful barons and nobles of the North moved toward the South accompanied by thousands of foot soldiers and weapons of warfare never before seen in Languedoc: *trebuchet*, *mangonel*, *chatte*, chain mail, *destrier*, *gonfalon*, *halberd*, crossbow, pike, and *ballista* - ugly, terrible words describing instruments of trauma, destruction, and death. All preparations and assemblage was in the city of Lyon; the departure day for the South was set for St. John's Day, 24 June, 2009.

The truth is, the French Crusading army marched on its neighbor who was "unprepared to deal with it and, right up to the very last moment, still hoped to avoid bloodshed by depriving the invader of any excuse for military action" (Oldenbourg, 103). However, the Crusaders were determined. The Church had given each the promise of full forgiveness of sins (before and after), a moratorium on all debt and full payment by the Church. The Northerners were required to "volunteer" an annual forty-day submission to the Church. This Crusade against their neighbors in the South, their fellow

Frenchmen, kinsmen, was as good an excuse as any for meeting that obligation.

The knights of the North were well equipped for war. They had been raised and trained for battle - this was their life. They were the *corps d'elite* of the army. They came to battle well prepared and well defended: "His armor protected him so effectively that arrows, indeed even sword-strokes and spear-thrusts, could be rained upon him without his coming to any harm" (Oldenbourg, 104). This type of protective gear was expensive and restricted to the very fighting elite. Next in the military line is the squire whose armor only covered the upper portion of his body. The sergeant-at-arms was provided only a kind of shirt sewn with leather strips - no protection from a sword. The common foot-soldier possessed merely a tall shield (Oldenbourg, 105).

The auxiliary troops included the "professional" soldiers who specialized in military arts and included the archers, crossbowmen, sappers, miners, and siege-engineers. The lesser elements of the military hierarchy included the *routiers*, mercenary soldiers, of whom we have already spoken.

They were essential, brutal and forbidden by the Church but used by all anyway. Following the *routiers* were the *ribauds* - men who were pitifully

poor, lacking in weapons, most often shoeless, and loyal to no one. They were desperate and had nothing to lose. Consequently, they were a weapon of terror which robbed corpses and looted everything within reach (O'Shea, 71).

There were also non-combatant members of the army - those who carried baggage, did the washing, set up tents, repaired and sewed clothing, carried and tended the armor, and built various fortifications such as the huge platforms that would hold the catapults or *trébuchets*. Of course, there were always the prostitutes and the rag-tag pilgrims who came along for the thrill of whatever might be gained. These men were followed by the so-called crusader pilgrims - those individuals who came simply for the sheer excitement of death.

It is estimated that the "Army of God" stretched for more than four miles - a terrifying sight. The monstrous collection of thousands of troops, each wearing the scarlet Cross, and their horses moving down the Rhône Valley plus the miles of floating barges bearing the army's necessities of war was cause for terror to all who witnessed. Leading this chilling sight was the ostentatious and ruthless Papal Legate and Abbot of Cîteaux, Arnald Armaury.

By now, Pope Innocent III had set into motion a heinous sway of death and destruction which was soon to descend upon the South. There was no turning back. No one in our country would be safe. Cathar, Cathar sympathizers, Jew, Muslim, Catholic men, women, and children would all be subject to the monster that was moving our way. The Pope's fear of the Cathars and its growth was so great that he officially set his command in words in March 1208: "Attack the followers of heresy more fearlessly even than the Saracens - since they are more evil - with a strong hand and a stretched out arm" (Barber, 107). The Pope, it would seem in his use of the militant language of the Old Testament, saw destruction of the Cathars as just and right. The use of force had been rationalized by St. Augustine in the fifth century and so, to Pope Innocent III, "this was a legitimate weapon in the face of unbending obstinacy" (Barber, 9).

As you shall see, the Cathars, then and now, would not bend to the dictates of the Pope, nor pledge an oath of allegiance to the Roman Church. Our abhorrence of the "Devil's church" is such that we would prefer death over submission, prefer death over pledging an oath, and even prefer death over killing another human or animal.

CHAPTER 10

THE SIEGE OF BÉZIERS

The opening battle of the Albigensian Crusade, the siege of Béziers, announced to all of Occitania the extent to which the Roman Church was willing to go in order to destroy the threat of heresy. It would seem that the fate of the entire Crusade rested upon the victory of this first battle. Sadly, the Crusaders ruled the day, and no one was spared: Cathar, Catholic, clergy, Muslim - every man, woman, and child was slaughtered by the sword.

On 22 July, 2009, the feast day of St. Mary Magdalene, we are told that more than 20,000 Crusaders were encamped outside the fortress walls of Béziers. There had been a half-hearted attempt at negotiations the day before. Apparently the newly appointed Bishop of Béziers, Renaud de Montpeyrous, met with the clergy in command of the Crusade. These so-called men of God demanded the city surrender two-hundred and twenty two persons who were said to be either Cathar *perfecti* or held positions of leadership within the heresy. The clergy provided a list of names: all were wealthy and well-known business men of the city - burghers. In exchange, all

remaining citizens could safely leave the city and escape the punishment awaiting the heretics. This seems unreasonable - attack a city of 10,000 or more in order to capture 222 Cathar heretics. It doesn't really matter the number, the council leadership and the citizens of Béziers flatly refused to relinquish or betray their fellow brethren (Strayer, 61).

The people of Béziers were proud of their independence and fiercely loyal to their viscount, Raymond-Roger Trancavel. He had recently ridden into Béziers early in the morning and warned its citizens of the approaching army. He urged them to fiercely defend themselves and promised to return with support from Carcassone. He quickly departed and the Jews of the city followed (Tudele, 19).

The Bishop urged, even "begged," the citizens to reconsider their decision and turn over the accused to the Crusaders. "But the majority of the townspeople said they would rather be drowned in the salt sea than take his advice, that the crusaders should not get so much as a pennyworth of their possessions from them or in any way change their rule over the town" (Tudele, 19). Confidence in their ability to resist the enemy was strong. They had a well-fortified city and knew they could hold out a siege long enough for the Crusaders to grow weary, complete their forty-day obligation, and go

home. Something went terribly wrong. Maybe it was cockiness on the part of the youth of Béziers near one of the gates of entry (some say it was the burghers of the city). There had been a back-and-forth exchange of threats between these young men of Béziers and the mercenaries and *ribuads* just outside the gate. It amounted to a taunting of sorts between the two sides with jeers, ugly shouts, and wild threats. These brazen few decided to make a "rash and unorganized sortie" against the nearby enemy. There was a scuffle and in the confusion of retreat, the gate was left open; word of entry rapidly spread throughout the Crusader's army. The massacre was underway immediately and it was unstoppable.

Legend has it that when the commander, Abbot of Cîteaux, Arnald Amaury, was asked by his Crusaders how they were to differentiate between Cathar and Christian, he reportedly said, "Kill them all; God will know his own!" (Strayer, 62). Consequently, the streets ran red with innocent blood; the horror of it is unimaginable. What followed was a wild and frenetic grab for wealth by the *ribauds*. But it was not long in their hands; the Knights of the North took claim. With that, the *ribauds* angrily burned down the city.

When the massacre at Bézier was reported by Arnald Amaury to Pope Innocent III, he stated that "neither age nor sex was spared and that about

twenty thousand people were killed" (Strayer, 62). This number seems exaggerated; however, we do know that among the slaughtered, more than one thousand citizens, including Catholic clergy, were burned to death in the Church of St. Mary Magdalene. It was her feast day, and here they prayed for protection. It was not to be. The papal Legate expressed no remorse for the slaughter; the Pope seemed to be of similar opinion. The atrocities committed at Béziers were a warning to all of Languedoc that the same experience would be theirs if they did not persecute and eliminate the heretics in each region.

It seems obvious that the policy of "kill all" had already been set prior to the siege of Béziers. It has been chronicled that, "The lords from France and Paris, laymen and clergy, princes and marquises, all agreed that at every castle the army approached, a garrison that refused to surrender should be slaughtered wholesale once the castle had been taken by storm. They would then meet with no resistance anywhere as men would be so terrified at what had already happened. This is how they eventually took Montreal and Fanjeaux and all that country..."(Tudele, 21). It should be said, however, that Count Raymond VI and his knights did not engage in any part of the slaughter at Béziers nor was the Count of Foix present.

It has been chronicled that the Crusaders remained in the lush green meadows outside Béziers for three days before moving on to attack Carcassonne. Can you imagine! The stench of death, smoldering fires, decay, ruin, and a visual constant of what they had accomplished was all right before them. And yet, this is where those in command chose to "rest" the Crusading army in preparation for the next battle. There is no record of regret or remorse.

Now it was on to Carcassonne and its Viscount, Raymond-Roger Truncavel, nephew to Count Raymond VI. It was well known that Raymond-Roger supported divergent cultures, religions, and heresies in his domain, and strongly and vociferously resented any interference on the part of the Church in his domain. He was beloved by his people - considered one of them. Before the fighting began, Raymond VI begged his nephew to not fight him and "go along" with the Crusade in order to save all their properties and people. Raymond-Roger had said "no." His loyalty was strong - perhaps even greater than that of Raymond VI. After all, his mother, sister, three brothers, and aunt (Beatrice of Béziers, wife to Raymond VI) had all received the *consolamentum*. He would not join the Crusade under false pretenses. As you shall see, this viscount will sacrifice all to save his own

people.

As with Béziers, Carcassonne seemed an impregnable impossibility to the Crusading army - at least that is what the people of this great city believed. It "perched on top of a steep hill, surrounded by massive walls, with no cover for the assailants outside the walls, there could be no thought of taking the city by storm" (Strayer, 64).

Raymond-Roger sought help from his suzerain, Peter II, King of Aragon. But the King had little success in negotiating with the commanding Legates. He was only able to secure the promise that Raymond-Roger and twelve others would be released. It has been chronicled that upon hearing this pathetic offer by the clergy, the King responded saying, "That will happen when donkeys fly" (Tudele, 24). When the young viscount heard the offer, he soundly rejected it and said he "would rather let his men be skinned alive, would take his own life; never in all his days would he accept these terms nor abandon even the worst of all his vassals" (Tudele, 24).

Raymond-Roger took matters into his own hands and the fighting continued. However, the time of year was not on his side. It was the heat of summer and water was running short within the fortress walls. Carcassonne was secure for the moment, but the lack of fresh water, fouling of the

cisterns, left the city vulnerable. As the heat of the summer wore on, infants, children, aged, and ill were dying. Flies covered the city; the ground was crawling with maggots (O'Shea, 99). This could not continue any longer.

On 15 August, 2009, a month to the day from the massacre at Bréziers, Raymond-Roger made the decision to step directly into the enemy camp and negotiate surrender. He gained the promise of a release for all citizens of Carcassonne, but they could take absolutely nothing with them (not even a penny). And so the people of Carcassonne left their home and all of value. Also free to leave were all the declared heretics including *credentes*, *perfecti*, and known supporters of the heresy. (Not one Cathar was retained, yet the declared purpose of this Crusade was to eradicate the heretics from the South.)

In return for his surrender, Raymond-Roger, Viscount of the great Carcassonne, was to have been held hostage until final terms of surrender could be agreed upon. However, he was taken prisoner and thrown into his own dungeon where he remained until his untimely death a few months later. This young prince, technically a Catholic, but one who protected and actually promoted heresy in his domain, was made an example, a lesson, to all his fellow nobility in the South. The Abbot of Cîteaux, Arnald Amaury, saw the

capture of Raymond-Roger and surrender of Carcassonne as divine intervention saying to his commanders, "My lords, now you can see what miracles the king of heaven does for you, since nothing can stand against you" (Tudele, 26).

Arnald Amaury then went about the task of finding a "good" lord to rule over the newly conquered lands of Trancavel. He asked various nobles of the North including the Count of Nevers and the Count of St. Pol. Both refused having no interest in taking the inheritance of another man - it would amount to a personal disgrace (Tudele, 26). Attention then fell on the Lord of Montfort, Simon, who was ready and more than willing to step into this position.

Simon de Montfort had proven his loyalty to the Church and proudly displayed his pious dedication to his Catholic religion. He had served in the army of the Fourth Crusade and had made a name for himself when he refused to participate in the sacking of Constantinople. Simon was respected for his strategic brilliance and his bravery. In the eyes of the Church, Simon de Montfort was the perfect choice. He had demonstrated the Church's desired qualities for its leadership: a cruel nature, aggressive for power, and most of all, fearless. He was elected by a unanimous decision.

CHAPTER 11

SIMON DE MONTFORT

By late autumn, 2009, Simon de Montfort held his new title of lordship over the Béziers and the Carcassonne region. However, he knew he did not have the support of the other overlords. He was holding merely a handful of knights and mercenaries; the majority of the Crusaders considered their forty-day service requirement met and returned to the North. However, the fear generated by the odious behavior in Béziers still held sway over the Trancavel region. Therefore, Simon, with fewer than thirty knights, was able bring to submission the towns of Albi, Castres, Casseneuve, Fanjeaux, Gontaud, Mirepoix, Tonneins and many others. It was, however, strictly an outward show of submission to their new lord whom they equally feared and hated.

After the death of Raymond-Roger Trancavel, in order to strengthen his claim to the Trancavel region, Simon bought up the rights of heredity from Raymond-Roger's young widow, Agnes de Montpellier, and her infant son (Strayer, 68). Simon had no sense of honor regarding another man's

inheritance as was demonstrated by the Northern counts of Nevers and St. Pol earlier. His motive to obtain power over-rode such age-old cultural and societal behavior. The civility of the nobility would not be included in the code of Simon de Montfort; he was to become a brutal tyrant.

In the fall, the Crusade came to a temporary halt. The King of Aragon was angered at the outcome of the Papal Legate's betrayal of Raymond-Roger and displayed open hostility toward Simon. The Count of Toulouse was still trying to get back into the good graces of the Pope in order to protect his own; the Count of Foix was also primarily focused on his own domain. The lesser lords of the South were squabbling with one another. It seemed hopelessly obvious that unification of the Southern nobility was not to be. Too many years of individual independence and relative freedom from outside authority (other than each other) had numbed them to the need for such unification. This would prove a fatal weakness.

By September, 2009, it was evident that Count Raymond VI was not going to keep his earlier promises made to the Church: the persecution of heresy, the abolition of toll-gates, the immediate dismissal of mercenaries and Jewish administrators from his service - all of which, if done, would disintegrate his government (Sumption, 106). Consequently, the Council of

Avignon presided over by Legates, Milo and Arnald Armaury, agreed that an interdict be placed upon all citizens of Toulouse for continuing to shelter the heretics, and Count Raymond VI was to be excommunicated once again. Raymond appealed to the Pope in January of the following year. By now, no one believed the Count's professions of loyalty to the Church, but he still remained the most powerful noble in the South, and diplomatic care had to be exemplified. Ultimately, the interdict was lifted and the Pope set aside Raymond's excommunication.

Meanwhile, the wave of terror brought about by the Crusading army in just two month's time had the expected effect: the Cathar *perfecti* and *perfectae* went underground in well protected hiding places. They no longer wore their black robes but dressed instead in the various clothing of local citizens. As terror reigned supreme in Languedoc, especially in the Trancavel lands, many supporters, of course, professed their loyalty to the Roman Church; many simply vanished.

Action was soon to heat up. Simon's wife, Alice de Montfort, was an intelligent and vigorous supporter of her husband's mission. In the spring of 1210, Alice brought approximately one-hundred reinforcement troops to the South. A wave of new Crusaders was soon to follow; all were anxious to join

the war against their neighbor and in doing so, complete their forty-day requirement of service and gain the indulgences promised.

CHAPTER 12

THE CRUSADE, 1210 - 1215

In early March, 1210, Simon de Montfort led his army on a rampage of hideous examples of brutality. In doing so, he demonstrated the possible fate of anyone who might choose to oppose him. After overpowering the protective garrison at Montlaur, the citizens fled in the midst of confusion. Those who were not so fortunate were hanged. A more heinous example of brutality awaited the men of Bram. Later in March, the town of Bram was captured after a three-day battle of resistance. Simon de Montfort ordered the entire garrison of men to have their eyes gouged out and their noses and upper lips cut off. "One man was left with a single eye and the task of leading his blinded comrades to Cabaret" (Oldenbourg, 136). A priest who had been accused of treason was captured, stripped of his clerical position, dragged through the streets of Bram while tied to a horse's tail, then hanged. Simon showed no mercy.

The brutality of Simon was calculated and deliberate. Consequently, his hideous examples of savage brutality brought about swift declarations of

surrender from townspeople throughout the region of Minervois (Sumption, 111). It was only to get worse; Simon soon presided over the mass executions of Cathar *perfecti/perfectae*. After the capture of Minerve, he ordered one hundred and forty believers burnt on 22 July, 1210; when Lavaur fell, he burnt four hundred Cathars at the stake; at Castels, ninety-four were burnt; there would be more.

The age-old tactics of battle, crop destruction, killing of livestock, burning of lands, and slaughter of innocents were incorporated into this Crusade. However, Simon de Montfort applied all on a grand scale, and to top this wide swath of destruction, he added the evil element of gruesome brutality. In doing so in Languedoc, he was destroying its economy thereby weakening any possible defense. In the eyes of the Church, Simon was exceeding every expectation in eliminating the Cathar heresy. How he accomplished elimination and by what means seemed not to matter.

So often it did indeed seem that fate, or luck, was on the side of the Crusaders' leader. Simon de Montfort looked to be unbeatable whether he was supported by forty knights or four-hundred. For instance, in July, 1210, the acquisition of the hilltop fortress of Termes, high in the Corbieres, was thought to be impossible - even for Simon. After a lengthy and so far

unsuccessful siege, it seemed this might be the case. It had been an extremely hot summer, the Crusaders camp lacked food and water, and many soldiers were ready to head North before the end of their forty-day commitment. Then rain, torrential rain, began to fall just when Simon's forces were cut by at least half. Termes might have been victorious over the Crusading army, but water pollution and an epidemic hit the castle. The lord of the castle (or chateau), Raymond de Termes, was forced to flee with his men during the night. He was soon captured and thrown into a dungeon in Carcassonne where he later died. His men were hanged (O'Shea, 127).

The rules of warfare did not apply to Simon de Montfort's decisions. Honor was not a consideration. When the châteaux of Lavaur was stormed by the Crusading army on 3 May, 1211, Simon commanded that all eighty Occitan knights be hanged. The leader of the knights was Aimery of Montréal who had sworn allegiance to Simon then double-crossed him in order to come to the aid of his sister, Geralda. These two were the children of the grand Cathar *perfecta* hostess mentioned earlier, Blanche of Laurac. Simon showed no sympathy to Aimery sending him straight to the gallows. Geralda, a much loved noblewoman known for her hospitality and generosity to Cathar *perfecti*, was thrown into a well and stoned to death. The butchery

continued: Simon de Montfort and Arnald Armaury discovered four-hundred *perfecti/perfectae* in Lavaur. It is said that as Bishop Faulque's White Brotherhood sang the *Te Deum*, the Cathars were burnt in the largest bonfire of humanity (O'Shea, 181). It seems the level of brutality and dishonor knew no limits by either Simon or Arnald Armaury.

The war against heresy did not touch the domains of the most powerful count, Raymond VI of Toulouse, or that of his powerful vassals, the Counts of Foix and Comminges until spring of 1211. It was within the domains of these lords that the largest centers of heresy flourished. The abomination of the Crusading army had only strengthened the resolve of support and sympathy for the heretics. As for Raymond VI, he was still trying to settle the issue of his excommunication, charges of murder, and a multitude of other reasons for being in disfavor with the Church.

The papal legates, especially the Abbot of Cîteaux, saw Raymond VI as a menace and a threat to their efforts in the extermination of heresy. The legates would ensure that Raymond would find no way of excusing or justifying the behavior which had brought him to this point. He was finally summoned to appear before a Council in Saint-Gilles where he was to prove he was not guilty of supporting heresy and that he had nothing whatsoever

to do with the murder of the papal legate, Peter of Castelnau. But Raymond was refused a hearing on the multitude of accusations of much less importance (failing to expel heretics from his domains, disband his mercenaries, and abolish certain tolls). If his word could not be trusted in these smaller matters, he could not be trusted nor believed in the matters of utmost importance, heresy and murder.

Raymond VI met with Simon de Montfort in January, 1211. King Peter II was present to aid his vassal and hopefully protect him from further retribution by the papal legates. Little was accomplished. Finally, at a council held at Arles, Raymond VI was given an ultimatum by the Legates which specified the impossible conditions he would be required to meet. It has been said that Raymond and King Peter II had to wait outside, in the cold and wind, before receiving this final ultimatum. The demands of the Legates were of such severity that upon reading the document, Raymond and the King quickly departed for Toulouse. On his way, Raymond read aloud the Legate's demands for all to hear; it was truly a blatant declaration of war. On 17 April, 1211, the Pope confirmed the sentence of Raymond's excommunication (Oldenbourg, 148). In June, Simon de Montfort led his Crusaders into the region of Toulouse.

The great city of Toulouse represented "the heart" of Languedoc. With its lord, Count Raymond VI, by his presence still master, he also remained master of the entire region. Toulouse and the Count served as a rallying point for all the surrounding domains and the Count's vassals. The Count had one powerful opponent within his walls, the newly appointed Bishop, Foulques of Marseilles, mentioned earlier.

By summer, 1211, Bishop Foulques had cleaned up the economic mess in his bishopric and had become well known for his ambition and his persuasive eloquence. In the excuse of giving his followers the sacraments of the Church, forbidden under the interdict, he formed a secret society known as the "White Brotherhood." But these men did more than receive the sacraments: they were militant Catholics, numbering about five hundred, who specialized in terrorist activities. Their targets for looting and destruction were the homes of Jews and heretics living in Toulouse. The "Black Brotherhood" was formed by Toulousians to fight these attackers (Oldenbourg, 152).

It was no secret that the Bishop hated the Count and encouraged all who would listen to turn against their liege lord. Finally, Raymond VI ordered Bishop Foulques out of all regions of Toulouse, and the Bishop promptly

joined the camp of the Crusaders. Raymond then ordered all the clergy under Foulques to also leave the city, "barefooted, and bearing the Holy Sacrament" (Oldenbourg, 155). Of course, Toulouse was again put under interdict.

During this time, Simon de Montfort had made little progress in his siege of Toulouse. The forty-day commitment of many of his troops was nearing an end and the army was running low on necessary provisions in order to sustain itself. Simon withdrew causing him to lose prestige and weakening his image as the indomitable commander. Up to this point, he had experienced an unbroken succession of victories causing many to believe his military decisions and actions were truly divinely inspired. We know the devil has many disguises! Simon now found himself and his army being attacked from all directions by his "new" vassals, yet he still remained undefeated. With his departure from the region of Toulouse, he set his sights on the territories of Foix.

As you already know, the Count of Foix, Raymond Roger, brother to our beloved Esclarmonde, was an outspoken and at times violent supporter of the Cathars. He made no secret of his loyalty and his protection of the Cathars even though he did not declare himself among our numbers. He

never wavered in his steadfast embrace of his Catholic religion, but that loyalty obviously was not extended to the leadership of the Church.

Simon de Montfort next set out to terrorize the region of Foix. His weapon of terror had worked well in other regions of Languedoc, so why not here. Numerous villages, châteaux, and towns were plundered and burned. Fire was set to fields and vineyards, but his momentum was brought to a sudden halt at the city of Foix. Here he learned that two of his most trusted companions, Lambert de Thury and Gauthier Langton, had been taken prisoner. Simon retreated to Carcassonne.

By now, The Count of Toulouse and the Count of Foix, along with his son Roger-Bernard, had joined forces. They were strengthened with the addition of two thousand troops sent by the King of England and were ready to take the offensive position and regain Castelnaudary. Even though outnumbered, Simon was able to stubbornly hold off the siege and the Counts of Foix and Toulouse retreated. But it really was not much of a victory for Simon. Many of his knights were deserting his campaign - even the commander of the mercenaries! Simon could only count on the seasonal influx of troops from the North who were duty-bound for forty days. By spring, 1212, Simon was able once again to gain the upper hand with the

reinforcement of new troops.

The Counts of Toulouse and Foix, with their unorganized assortment of troops, retired to the court of Peter II to plan a new military campaign (Oldenbourg, 157). (An interesting interjection: Peter II had given one of his sisters, Eleanor of Aragon, to marry Raymond VI in 1204, and he also gave another sister, Sancha of Aragon, in 1205 to eventually marry Raymond's son.)

In December of 1212, Simon de Montfort called for a council or assembly of bishops, nobles, and burghers. It is interesting to note that the papal legates were excluded from this council suggesting that Simon hoped to free himself from their dictates and constant reprimands. His goal was to gain the control of the government of Languedoc, and he did not intend on sharing it with the clergy. This should have not taken anyone by surprise.

It was the hope of Simon to create a new aristocracy who would answer only to him. In return for their loyalty, he generously distributed land. All laws of the south were abolished and replaced by the feudal practice of the north. The "time-honored systems of inheritance, justice, and civil procedure (which) formed the touchstone of medieval identity" was eliminated (O'Shea, 136). And most outrageous, wealthy southern

noblewomen could only marry suitors from the North.

Interesting to note, there was no mention of heresy in the official statutes drawn up in the Assembly at Pamiers, but Simon did pledge to continue his fight in the name of Christ. This was an outrageous insult to the customs of civilization in the South, and it was a provocation not only to the Counts of Toulouse, Foix, and Comminges, but to King Peter of Aragon who held direct suzerainty over much of their lands (Barber, 129).

CHAPTER 13

KING PETER II AND THE BATTLE AT MURET

In January, 1213, King Peter of Aragon sent his emissaries to petition Pope Innocent III on behalf of himself and his brother-in-law, Count Raymond VI. The King had no intention of going to battle against the northern Crusaders or against the Church. However, his vassals were looking to him for help against the tyrannical and heinously brutal advances of Simon de Montfort. Peter believed his position of prestige and proven value to the pope in his victory over the Moors would be influential. His emissaries recounted the horrors being committed by Simon De Montfort and the papal legates; they argued that the Crusading knights of the North could be put to a greater use by joining Peter in the fight against the Muslim infidel.

It seems Innocent III took Peter's words to heart. He already was having doubts about the "spirituality" of the Crusade. The atrocities being committed by his legates and Simon de Montfort were not in line with his original intention of the Crusade. Also, as a strong supporter of Peter II, he no doubt sympathized with the King's position with his vassals in Languedoc.

In January, 1213, Pope Innocent III began sending out letters announcing that the Albigensian Crusade was over, effective immediately (O'Shea, 137). The severe letter sent to Simon de Montfort 15, January, 1213 reads in part:

The illustrious King of Aragon has informed Us that...not content with taking up arms against the heretics, you also have fought, under the banner of the Crusade, against Catholic peoples; that you have spilt innocent blood, and have invaded, to their detriment, the domains of the Count of Foix and those of the Count of Comminthes and of Gaston de Bearn, his vassals, though the population of these said domains was in no way suspect of heresy...Being unwilling, therefore, to deny him [the King] his rights, or to divert him from his praiseworthy intentions, We have appropriated by force; lest by retaining them unjustly you cause it to be said that you have laboured for your own advantage, and not for the sake of your faith...' (Oldenbourg, 161).

The Papal Legates quickly convened a Council at Lavaur. They were not about to loose the ground already gained against the Counts of Languedoc. Arnald Armaury even threatened to excommunicate the King for defending Raymond VI. These pious and arrogant men were in agreement that the Count of Toulouse must be prevented from regaining his rights no matter the cost. If it meant a war with the King of Aragon, so be it. They knew Raymond was and would continue to be 'the protector of heretics' - a position from which he would never waiver. This could not be allowed.

Pope Innocent's decision to suspend the Crusade proved to be temporary. With the influence of his Legates, he reversed his previous position. On 21 May, 1213, Peter of Aragon received the Pope's written response to the petition made by the King's emissaries: 'Would God that your wisdom and piety had grown in proportion [to your renown]! You have acted ill, both towards Us and yourself...' (Oldenbourg, 160).

King Peter II, a devout Catholic, made his decision to take up the cause of the South. The country was ravaged; the Occitanians were losing the war with the Church and its Crusading army. Much of the lands were burned, crops destroyed, property ransacked and looted, and thousands of its people had been terrorized and brutally massacred. Occitania was losing what it most cherished, its way of life (civilization) - *parage*.

Finally, there was hope! The forces of the South, including the thousand knights raised by the King of Aragon, were three times greater than that of the Crusaders when they met in battle 12 September, 1213. Count Raymond VI had great hope that the course of the Crusade was about to turn in a new direction. The "Holy War" against heresy would be shown to be a fraud and strictly a means to gain power and control of Languedoc.

The King of Aragon and his knights had laid siege to the town of Muret by the time the Counts of Toulouse (Raymond VI and his son) and the Counts of Foix and Comminges, as well as many other Lords of Languedoc arrived. With them also came a vast multitude of craftsmen and citizens of Toulouse. Very early the following morning, the Southern nobles gathered in a meadow to decide the day. The King spoke: "My lords, hear what I want to tell you: Simon is here and he cannot escape. You must realize this: we shall give battle before evening. Be ready, each one of you, to lead your men and to give and take hard blows. If they had ten times the numbers, we should make them turn and run!" (Tudele, 69).

With the victorious words of the King still ringing in their minds, all readied themselves and their troops for battle. When the command was given, they charged the gates forcing the French Crusaders back inside. It is written that, "Attackers and attacked struggled across the threshold, they threw darts and lances and gave great blows; both sides made blood spurt so freely that you would have seen the whole gate dyed scarlet" (Tudele, 70).

There was a lull in the fighting. The King and his commanders could not make further advancement inside the castle, so they withdrew to their

respective tents to rest and restore their energy with food and drink. Simon de Montfort, the brilliant strategist, knew he was at a disadvantage with the size of his army. However, he saw his opportunity in this moment of calm and ordered his troops to launch a surprise attack while their assailants were in their tents. Bishop Foulques then gave all the sign of the cross. They divided into three companies and rode straight for the enemy encampment with banners waving. When the King of Aragon saw the advancement of Simon's troops, he and some of his companions rode immediately to confront them. Confusion broke out in the camp and it was impossible to give or hear orders. The French converged upon the King and he was killed. At the age of thirty-nine, this large man of strength known as the finest warrior in all of Aragon, lay dead.

The knights of the royal House of Aragon died with their king. They did not run. But the death of King Peter brought immediate panic to the Toulousians who fled in fear over the open countryside. The French rode them down killing each one like hunted and chased animal. Those who reached the River Garonne, hoping to escape the sword of the Crusaders, were drowned in the fast moving current. It is estimated that seven thousand Toulousain infantry were slaughtered or lost to the river (O'Shea, 149). This

day of defeat has been chronicled for all time: "It diminished the whole world, be sure of that, for it destroyed and drove out *paratge* (*parage*), it disgraced and shamed all Christendom" (Tudele, 68). The men of the Church, however, did not see the battle as a disgrace. In fact, it was just the opposite. Bishop Foulques and (St.) Dominic, together with various clergy, had been gathered safely in Muret's church during the battle. They were of the opinion that divine interaction had again ruled the day.

Count Raymond VI and his son fled the country to England, quite demoralized by this monstrous defeat and unable to return to Toulouse. Bishop Foulques led the procession of clergy back into the city of Toulouse to negotiate surrender with the city's consul members. Simon continued to conquer the Count's domain, piece by piece. He was seldom met with resistance the next eighteen months; however, the atmosphere of hatred and hostility generated toward him was palpable.

The aggressive behavior of Simon de Montfort on the battle field was matched in the Roman Church by the influential and anti-heretical Dominic Guzman mentioned earlier. His self-righteous attitude toward those who differed from his Catholic orthodoxy fueled the formation of the Order of the Preaching Friars, and later the Dominican Order. This order was initially

created to support monks who chose to live the apostolic example as shown by Christ's apostles and Dominic de Guzman, and they preached the "truth" of the Roman Church. The Dominican Order was later given the responsibility of checking the behavior of wayward priests.

Following the extreme anti-heretical attitude of Dominic, who was well known for his harsh and sometimes cruel disposition, the order evolved into an organization in which it aggressively sought out the capture and punishment of heretics, supporters of heretics, or anyone who had in any way attended to the needs of a heretic - including kindness. Their mission became one of supreme suppression, if not extinction, of heresy. Furthermore, the Roman Church legitimized all the heinously brutal efforts that the Dominicans used in achieving this mission.

CHAPTER 14

THE FOURTH LATERAN COUNCIL

November, 1215, it is said that the assembly of clergy who gathered for the Fourth Lateran Council was the largest in a thousand years! There were said to be sixty-one archbishops, four-hundred twelve bishops, eight-hundred abbots and priors. Also, every known kingdom in Christendom was represented - two thousand eighty-three dignitaries in total. Noticeably absent were the leadership of the Cathar *perfecti* and Simon de Montfort (O'Shea, 151).

Formal decisions and declarations were made at this council that should have remained outside the realm of Catholicism were it truly representing the teachings of Jesus Christ: Jews and Muslims of all Europe would hereafter be required to wear a yellow circle on their clothing - they were not considered first-class citizens; all were called upon to recapture Jerusalem from the Infidel; and the Pope would decide the fate of

Languedoc in a special meeting of all major principals except, of course, any Cathars.

The orthodoxy of the Church was again defined in such a way that it clearly undermined any legitimacy of Catharism: The dogmatic statements issued in the first canon of the Council defined transubstantiation, the affirmation of the necessity of baptism, and the legitimacy of marriage. These statements of faith were to serve as a "check list" on identifying heresy. Heresy was defined as "obstinate deviation from the definitions of the Church" and was grounds for conviction (Lambert, 108).

The third canon dealt with what was to be done with the heretics. The last Lateran Council in 1179 had deemed acceptable the use of force against heretics. By now, such force had been in use for more than six brutal and bloody years. All heretics were to be condemned and anathematized. Sanctions to be taken against them were defined and to be carried out by secular authority. Indulgences were offered to those who would fight heresy, the same indulgences received by anyone who would fight the Infidel (Lambert, 108).

Finally, it was time to deal with Count Raymond VI and the volatile situation in Languedoc. In attendance with the Count was his fifth and last

wife, Eleanor (sister of King Peter II), and his son, Raymond the Younger, now nineteen years of age. There also in the Count's defense was the fearsome Count Raymond Roger of Foix, and surprisingly, the Abbot of Cîteaux, Arnald Armaury who now was a sworn enemy of Simon de Montfort.

It has been chronicled: "Down on their knees they went before the Pope in order to recover the lands of their forefathers. The Pope watched the boy and his behavior, was aware of his lineage and understood the errors of the Church and clergy who opposed him. Grief and anger moved his heart to pity, and he sighed and shed tears" Tudele, 73). This is certainly a side of Pope Innocent III we had yet to experience. The same chronicler, in describing the young Raymond says, "The pope ordered the boy's absolution for never was a more charming child born of woman. He was alert, intelligent and well behaved, and of better descent than anyone of these or former days..." (Tudele, 73).

Bishop Foulques of Toulouse came out charging especially at Count Raymond Roger of Foix saying he harbored Cathars in his lands and had massacred Crusaders. Raymond Roger, quick to anger, responded:

Never had he attacked...any worthy pilgrim...making his pious way to some holy shrine. But as for these thieves, these traitors without either Faith or honour, who wear the Cross that has been our ruin—why, it is true that any one of them who has fallen into the hands of

me or mine has lost his eyes, his feet, his hands or his fingers (Oldenbourg, 181).

The Count of Foix continued to address the Pope using much harsher words in his description of the Bishop of Toulouse:

As to this Bishop—for all his vehemence I tell you that through him, in person, both we and God have been betrayed...When he was made Bishop of Toulouse, so great a fire swept across this land that never will water suffice to put it out. More than five hundred thousand, old and young, has he destroyed, body and soul. By the faith I owe you, this man's deeds and words and conduct make him appear, not so much a Legate of Rome, but rather Antichrist! (Oldenbourg, 181).

The atmosphere became so "poisonous" that Pope Innocent took a break from it all and went into his gardens to think - perhaps to pray. We can hope. He returned with his decision: Simon de Montfort was to retain all the lands of Languedoc. Raymond VI's son would become heir to various smaller possessions of inheritance if he showed himself worthy (Martin, 94).

The official decree of the Fourth Lateran Council on 14 December, 1215 read:

Raymond, Count of Toulouse, having been found guilty on both these indictments, and his inability to govern these domains according to the Faith having been long since demonstrated by divers sure tokens, is hereby forever excluded from exercising authority therein, where his hand has all too heavily lain hitherto; and he shall dwell henceforth in a place to be agreed beyond his frontiers, there to do fitting penance for his sins. If he in all humility do obey this decree, he shall receive

for his upkeep a yearly sum of four hundred marks. It is further decreed that all those lands which the Crusaders have won from the heretics, their followers, agents or receivers, together with the city of Montauban and also that of Toulouse, where heresy is most rife, shall be bestowed upon the Count de Montfort, that gallant Catholic gentleman, who has done more than any other person in this affair, that he might hold those lands from whom he must needs in right and duty have them. The remainder of the country that is not as yet conquered by the Crusaders will be placed, according to the Church's commandment, under the protection of those best able to maintain and defend the interests of peace and of the Faith; that thus provision may be made for the Count of Toulouse's only son when he comes of age, and that if he show himself worthy he may obtain the whole, or a portion only of his patrimony if that be more fitting (Oldenbourg, 182-183).

The war against the heretics was to continue and Simon de Montfort was now, according to the Council, Count of Toulouse. This decree was a terrible blow to all the true Lords of Languedoc, to all its citizens, and to our way of life, *parage*. Wasn't there one among the twelve hundred seventy-three clergy who could see the evil in this decree? Apparently not.

The assembly was fully aware of the atrocities committed by the Crusaders: massacres, burnings, devastation of lands and crops, and the formal complaints from the Southern counts and the King of Aragon. Even so, they chose to legitimize the actions of Simon de Montfort and the Crusaders. The Church, in fact, took its own moral defeat and sanctified it into law. The actions taken by this Council are shameful (Oldenbourg, 183).

All that remained for Simon de Montfort was the investiture of the King of France. King Philip II submitted to the decision of the Church and pronounced the title upon Simon on 10 April, 1216. All the lands of Toulouse and Trancavel now were in the hands of a Northern baron giving the king considerable influence in the South where he had experienced none before. However, Simon's power lay only in writing and only with a Crusading army surrounding him.

CHAPTER 15

THE CRUSADE, 1216 - 1218

Spring, 1216, Count Raymond VI, now sixty years in age, and his young son, Raymond, nineteen, returned to Marseilles, France, then traveled on to the city of Avignon. This region of Provence was eventually to be included in young Raymond's inheritance. However, the Count was not content with letting him settle for less than was his birthright. Both were of the same opinion; the battle with the Church and the Crusaders was not over.

The towns along the River Rhône had retained their independence during the Crusade. While its nobility was fighting in the west, many of these towns had become major enterprising centers, autonomous and prosperous, and often controlled by forceful alliances. They had, however, experienced the ineffective and irksome attempts of Simon de Montfort to rule through various bishops. Therefore, the towns of Provence, especially Marseille, Avignon, and Tarascon were thrilled at the return of Count

Raymond and his son. In support, they were able to raise a substantial army for him seemingly overnight, and a double invasion was planned.

While Count Raymond VI was raising an army in Spain, the younger Raymond and his new army attacked Simon's Crusaders laying siege to Beaucaire. It seemed a total surprise, yet the citizens were forewarned and threw open their gates to Young Raymond. The Crusaders were forced out of town but managed to hold its castle and *redorte* (a large triangular tower) just outside the town walls. The southern troops set fire to the *redorte* and the Crusaders surrendered. However, they were able to hold the castle another four months with little signs of help from outside. News of Young Raymond's attack on the Crusaders spread like wild fire - even to the Crusader's commander four-hundred miles to the north in Toulouse.

Simon de Montfort had decided to make his move on Toulouse; however, its citizens were furious at the decisions of the Lateran Council, and Simon was universally hated. The people of Toulouse had heard of young Raymond's victory in the south and were determined to keep Simon out of their city. That didn't stop Simon. He hit Toulouse forcefully, aided by the pious and ever power-hungry Bishop Foulques. The Bishop, with his gift of eloquence, convinced the city dignitaries to meet outside the city's walls and

work out a truce. They agreed and were promptly put in chains and taken to Simon's camp. Without any leadership, Toulouse fell: the Crusaders spent a month looting and destroying the city. However, their commander was about to make his fatal mistake.

Simon, thinking Toulouse to be under his control, left the city in early June to fight the nobility of the southern regions in Beaucaire. But the besiegers had built a temporary wall to the west of the castle preventing any of Simon's men getting close or relieving those Crusaders within the castle. There was a stand-off. Young Raymond's troops were well supplied, thanks to the river, while Simon's troops ran low; within the castle, the defenders of such were forced to eat their own horses. These men sent out distress signals to Simon, they were ready to surrender. So, on the 24th of August, and he finally agreed to accept terms. The defenders of the castle were allowed to leave, and Simon and his army withdrew. Young Raymond was victorious!

Pope Innocent III did not learn of this victory by young Raymond. The month before he had been traveling through Perugia where he died. It seems no one knew of his death until at least a day later. By then, when found by Jacques de Vitry, the Pope had been striped by thieves and left "naked and

rotting in the close summer heat" (Sumption, 186). It is indeed a pitiful ending to his life.

Meanwhile in Toulouse, as the Crusaders were plundering the city, the citizens took advantage of Simon's absence and managed to build up a stockpile of weapons, what ever they could gather, in readiness to revolt and fight. They were ready when Count Raymond VI rode back into his city early on 13 September, 1217, his symbol of a twelve-point gold cross unfurled on a banner and waving for all to witness. The Toulousians were ecstatic! Their salvation was at hand. Truly! The citizens of Toulouse saw Raymond as their savior. It has been chronicled:

When the count entered through the arched gateway all the people flocked to him. Great and small, lords and ladies, wives and husbands, they knelt before him and kissed his clothing, his feet and legs, his arms and fingers. With tears of delight and in joy they welcomed him, for joy regained bears both flower and fruit.

'Now we have Jesus Christ!' they said to each other, 'now we have the morning star risen and shining upon us! This is our lord who was lost! Through him worth and *paratge* (*parage*) are freed from their graves, are healed and restored, and our whole kinship regains power for ever!' (Tudele, 123).

Rebuilding of the city's defenses began by everyone in the city, "high or low, rich or poor, man or woman, they (all) worked feverishly to erect a line of fortifications around the community" (Strayer, 112). The French soldiers

who did not escape were killed.

Occitania was united! Men from all the provinces of Languedoc came to join Count Raymond. Counts, viscounts, nobles, knights, and the *faidits* - those dispossessed nobles who wanted revenge. All were streaming into Toulouse to fight for their homeland - to fight for *parage*.

It didn't take long for Simon to hear the news of Count Raymond's return and on October 8, his dreaded red lion banner was seen in the fields north of the city. Simon immediately attacked; however, his army was weak. Many of his troops had disbanded themselves on the way back to Toulouse refusing to fight. A long eight-month siege ensued during which at least six battles occurred.

Each battle seemed to resemble the first: the French armored horsemen and infantry rushed at the city gates passing through an obstacle course of sharpened stakes and treacherous ditches. The Toulousians, men, women, girls and boys, pelted the French troops with rocks, stones, arrows, spears - everything that could be thrown and slow down the progress of the French troops. Then Roger Bernard of Foix, son of the defender of our faith, Count Raymond-Roger, and just as much a warrior, would burst upon the Crusaders and with his troops, bring Simon's forces to a standstill again

and again (O'Shea, 163).

Bishop Foulques, ever the enemy of Count Raymond, quickly left Toulouse and began preaching in the North trying to raise support for Simon against his own city! Alice de Montfort, Simon's wife, appealed to the King for renewed military assistance. Spring, once again, brought fresh troops south to Simon's aid. But Count Raymond also received reinforcements. Young Raymond arrived bringing fresh troops to aid his father and was welcomed with the same public burst of ecstatic energy and enthusiasm.

The siege of Toulouse was taking too long. Troops and Legates were complaining. Simon decided to take another approach. He had a huge "cat" (catapult or *trébuche*) constructed. On June 25, 1218, Simon ordered the cat rolled into place. The terrified Toulousians let go a storm of rocks, debris, anything that would slow the Crusaders.

Apparently Simon was attending morning Mass when the fighting began. Finally, he crossed himself, put on his helmet and declared, "Jesus Christ the righteous, now give me death on the field or victory!" (O'Shea, 165). Shortly after, Simon watched his brother, Guy de Montfort, die from a crossbow shot. Then, in the melee of battle, a huge stone hit Simon on the head. It is said the stone was launched from a catapult operated by a woman!

(Their catapults were called the "*male voisine*," or "bad neighbor.") Simon de Montfort's head immediately split open. He was dead.

Amaury de Montfort, Simon's son, tried to take up his father's mission, but it was impossible. He did not have leadership skills or the strategic military genius of his father. The siege of Toulouse was lifted; the Toulousians celebrated, and the Counts of Languedoc began the task of regaining their stolen properties.

CHAPTER 16

THE CRUSADE, 1219 - 1226

The Roman Church was not ready to give up its war on heresy. To admit defeat would be to admit the possibility of fault - divine fault. As Pope Innocent III made well known, it is the elevated duty of a Pope to interpret the will and desires of God, and it is his responsibility to see that all - kings and counts included - obey and serve this interpretation. So now, Pope Honorius III must complete the fight, and the fighting army needed a new leader.

It seems there was only one reasonable choice for leadership: the son of the King of France, Louis. King Philip II was offered a tremendous amount if his son would fight to defend the policies of the Church - namely the elimination of heresy. Philip II agreed and in doing so, ended forever the possibility of any future military support being given to the Church without a

demand for subsidies.

On 16 May, 1219, Louis reluctantly left Paris leading his troops south to meet Amaury de Montfort at the siege of Marmande near the border between Agenais and Bordeaux. Together they assembled a formidable army including some thirty counts with an enormous throng of knights and foot soldiers (Sumption, 204). Upon seeing the enormity of the Crusading army, the townspeople immediately surrendered. No doubt, most remembered the fate of those at Béziers and hoped to be spared. That was not to happen. It was Amaury de Montfort's turn to set the brutal example of what would happen to those who opposed him, and he was not opposed by either the Prince or the clergy present.

The commander of Marmande and his knights were spared. However, all citizens of Marmande were massacred. Men, women, children, Catholic, Cathar - it didn't matter - all were killed. The number of those slaughtered is estimated at five thousand. The streets of Marmande were thick with dead bodies and ran red with the blood of its townspeople. The ferocity of the attack and the blood-lust of the soldiers leave no doubt as to the powerful existence of Evil. There can be no other explanation for the heinous behavior of the Crusaders and their leaders.

After Marmande, the Prince and Amaury de Montfort led their army south and laid siege to Toulouse. By now the city was so well fortified that any attempt to take Toulouse was easily thwarted. After six weeks, the impatient Prince and his knights headed for home. Amaury remained with his few soldiers, but he had no funds with which to hire additional military aid - mercenaries. Therefore, the siege was lifted and the Toulousians were again victorious.

Pope Honorious III called this victory at Toulouse a "miserable setback," but more setbacks were to come as Amaury continued to lose ground in future sieges. Furthermore, young Raymond, now Count Raymond VII, and his friend and supporter, the young Count of Foix, Roger-Bernard, were steadily and methodically regaining all that had been lost during the Crusade; they would both soon be excommunicated from the Church (Strayer, 119).

Amaury de Montfort continued to display his military incompetence and managed to lose most of his father's gain in the South. Finally, he signed a truce with the two young Counts of Toulouse and Foix in the summer of 1223, sold all his remaining claims to the French Crown, and left Languedoc. It is said that he dug up the ox-hide pouch which contained his father's

remains and returned to the small Montfort estate outside of Paris (O'Shea, 177).

The years from 1221 to 1225 saw major changes in the leadership of both Crusade, Church, and Occitanian nobility. First, Dominic (Saint) de Guzman died in 1221. By now, the Church had sanctioned his Dominican Order of friars and the Inquisition was underway. The Abbot Arnald Armaury (Arnald-Amalric) also died during this period leaving the legacy of his vicious words spoken at Béziers. Perhaps he had a change of heart in his pious attitude toward the heretics. In his latter years, he was an outspoken enemy of both Simon and Amaury de Montfort and fought ineffectively for the rights of Count Raymond VI. Sadly, the Count died in 1222, still excommunicated from the Church, never once wavering from his professed loyalty to all his people. King Philip II (Philip Augustus) died in 1223, and that same year saw the death of our fearless defender, Count Raymond Roger of Foix. By now, the young counts of Toulouse and Foix had taken up the fight of their fathers (Martin, 99).

This was a time of reemergence for the Cathars. Although Languedoc, as a whole, was in a veritable state of impoverishment due to the fifteen years of war, a sense of freedom and safety existed again and we all,

Christian and Cathar, came out of hiding. Our indomitable Cathar bishop, Guilhabert of Castres, left the fortress of Montségur and tirelessly began preaching again. He administered the *consolamentum* to new believers in Lauragais, Fanjeaux, Laurac, Castelnaudary, Mirepoix, and Toulouse. The years of battle and suffering had not dampened the respect and acceptance of heretics, especially the Cathar *perfecti/perfectae*. If anything, the popularity of the Cathar church and its message had exponentially increased. It seemed that our way of life as it had been known before the Crusade was returning (O'Shea, 173). That is, of course, what we all wanted to believe.

CHAPTER 17

THE KING'S CRUSADE

The death of King Philip II, 14 July, 1223, was the loss of one of the most capable rulers of France - at least of the Capet family. The new king, Louis VIII, now possessed the strong legacy left by his father: the enemies of France were subdued and the country was now a powerful force in Europe. With Amaury de Montfort's renouncement of his claims in Languedoc to the French King, the next step in expanding the wealth of the Crown was the acquisition of the South. Once again, the Roman Church provided the motive for France to invade and hopefully gain the entire region and its abundance of wealth.

A new Papal Legate had been appointed to Paris by Pope Honorius III, Cardinal Romano de San Angelo. Said to be a ruthless and power-hungry man, it is no surprise that he strongly favored another crusade against the South.

The Cardinal promised King Louis a tenth of all French Church incomes for the next five years. The King would in turn march the French Crusaders again into the region of Languedoc hoping for a final victory in the Albigensian Crusade (O'Shea, 181).

In the spring of 1226, King Louis VIII began the march of his monstrous army south toward Avignon. Here they expected clear passage through the city and subsequent use of the city's bridge necessary for crossing the River Rhône. The citizens of Avignon thought otherwise; the gates were shut to the Crusaders. The siege of this city lasted more than three months in the sweltering heat of summer. The conditions of the troops were beyond miserable: flies were thick as was the filth; disease was mounting and, in turn, so were casualties due to dysentery. At least three thousand men died and thousands were weakened. Then a turn of events - the city surrendered!

Even with the loss of approximately three thousand soldiers, the Crusader's army was formidable. The sight alone caused many southern nobles to submit to the King. However, the might of this army did not cause either Count Raymond VII or Count Roger-Bernard of Foix to falter in their quest to regain their birthrights.

The biggest enemy of the Crusading army seems to have been disease and the resulting dysentery. Even the King was not immune; he became seriously ill while in Montpensier and died on 8 November, 1226. He had been reluctant to participate in this new Crusade, but greed spurred him on. The young King Louis VIII paid with his life.

The new King of France, Louis IX, was only a child. Therefore, it was his mother, Blanche de Castile, who acted as regent and filled the royal vacancy. It is an interesting point that both Count Raymond VII of Toulouse and Blanche de Castile had as their grandmother, Eleanor of Aquitaine, the twelfth century queen of both France and England. This fact, however, would not soften her intentions or desires regarding the conquest of Languedoc and the elimination of heresy. Blanche de Castile was a devout Catholic.

Raymond VII continued to fight for two more years but was unable to make a significant difference in regaining his family's domain. He still held Toulouse and all the lands north, but the Crown held the old Trencavel lands including Albi, Carcassonne, Béziers, and everything east of the Trencavel viscounty to Beaucaire on the River Rhône (Strayer, 136). It seems there would be little change without once again the shedding much blood. Frankly, all of Occitania was sick of war; very few were willing to continue the fight.

For the past two years, the Crusaders had destroyed the countryside around Toulouse: crops were burned, orchards leveled, water contaminated. The skies were black with smoke for an entire year! It was demoralizing. There was an overwhelming desire for peace; hence, a conference convened at Meaux, December, 1228 - January, 1229, wherein an agreement was reached.

On 12 April, 1229, Thursday before Easter Sunday, the Treaty of Meaux-Paris was ratified. History seems to have repeated itself: Count Raymond VII received a punishment similar to that of his father; he was scourged in front of a throng of onlookers on the front steps of the new Paris cathedral, Notre Dame. Blanche of Castile was in attendance, along with her young son, the future King Louis IX, and Papal Legate and primary advisor to Blanche, Cardinal Romano de San Angelo. Raymond had agreed to the scourging and much more in order to bring about peace for Occitania.

Not only was the Count stripped of his clothing and publicly whipped, he was stripped of his wealth and most of his land. Among the many stipulations applied by the Church, Raymond was to exterminate heretics by all possible means. (He would soon be assisted by a new institution of the Church - the Inquisition.) The Church also stipulated Raymond was to fund

the building of a new university in Toulouse in which new clerics would be taught Catholic theology. Finally, he was forced to promise the hand of his only child, Jeanne of Toulouse, in marriage to a younger brother of the future King uniting Toulouse to France. Upon her death, the French Crown would inherit the lands of Toulouse. He was allowed to keep the city of Toulouse and his title.

All the Counts of the South eventually signed the treaty, even the irascible and much reluctant Count of Foix who was known as the very spirit of resistance. Obviously, this was a 'forced peace' but most of the southern nobility were young - Raymond VII was only thirty-two. There was always the possibility of a change in circumstances in the future, a change in their favor, and the treaty could be renounced. After all, treaties are only binding for the conqueror (Oldenbourg, 247)

CHAPTER 19

THE INQUISITION

I was torn in pieces by the evils that rack the brains of
unhappy men. Do God's eyes not reach to the prisons of
the Inquisition?

CARCEL, goldsmith of Seville
(Victim of the Spanish Inquisition)

This new institution devised by the Roman Church, the Inquisition, was despised and feared in all of France and beyond, yet it is to last long beyond the telling of this story. Pope Gregory IX (1227-1241), a legally minded activist toward the elimination of heresy, greatly accelerated the procedures set in place by his uncle, Innocent III. In 1231, he instituted the Papal Inquisition which was primarily employed in the southern regions of France and northern Italy. It gave its "agents" full power to use whatever means necessary to search out and eradicate heretics. These agents were

primarily recruited from the Dominican Order of friars - their founder had vigorously preached the Church's hateful standard against heresy. These special representatives of the Church came from a clerical order in which they were highly trained in a "special vocation against heresy" (Lambert, 101).

The Dominican Inquisitors were masters at record keeping; they were to become masters at interrogation as well employing whatever means necessary to extract a confession out of an individual or information that might lead to additional arrests. Giving false witness meant the strong possibility of execution at the stake, and the Inquisitors were experts at following up on all possible leads.

Nothing was to stand in the way of a speedy and efficient trial against the accused. Therefore, the checks designed in canon law to ensure a fair trial, validity of evidence, and impartiality of the judge were all set aside (Lambert, 102). The Inquisitor made the final call; extensive debate was rarely necessary in order to find reason to sentence a suspect.

Upon sentencing, especially those convicted of actually being a heretic, the individual was handed over to secular officials for execution (burning). After all, the Church could not soil its "holy hands" in such a

manner. There were lesser penalties meted out to those who simply were acquainted with heretics. However, when individuals were accused of heresy, their property was usually confiscated (often then given to the accusers), they were denied civil rights, imprisoned indefinitely, tried in secret, and forbidden to know the names of their accusers. If convicted, they were burnt at the stake and denied Christian burial (Leff, 42). An individual could be exempt from execution if he/she came forward, confessed guilt of heresy and/or revealed the guilt of others. Sadly, this fear of accusation often turned neighbor against neighbor, friend against friend. The Inquisition destroyed the simple freedom of trust in Languedoc.

The odious behavior of the Dominican Inquisitors earned them the nickname *Domini canes*, the hounds of the Lord. These "bloodhounds of orthodoxy" were relentless in searching out those whose views and behaviors were found to be unacceptable. The interpretation of "heresy," according to the Church, was any theological error that is defended with 'stubbornness' - "this is the key" (Gythiel, notes). Upon identification, these individuals were immediately thrown into prison, tortured with unbelievable cruelty (often beyond endurance) and forced to confess. At times, the physical evidence of their torture was such that they were unable to walk to their own execution;

efforts were made to hide this from the public spectators (Armstrong, 456).

There seems to be no shame associated with the actions of the Inquisitors, no conscious - perhaps no heart. A story is told of an elderly woman in Toulouse who, upon her deathbed, requested the *consolamentum*. A Cathar *perfectus* was summoned to perform the sacred ritual. However, an Inquisitor learned of this incident and immediately went to the woman's house to investigate. Thinking she was talking to the beloved Cathar, Bishop Guilhabert de Castres, she described her faith to the Inquisitor. This was enough for him - it was a confession. She was then taken in her bed and burnt (Martin, 180).

Discontentment grew with the detested activities of the Inquisitors; there were attempts to halt the Inquisition but to no avail. In 1240, young Raymond Trancavel, son of Raymond Roger, assembled an army in Aragon and laid siege to his rightful city of Carcassonne. The siege lasted over a month resulting in violent loss of life on both sides. Finally a truce was agreed upon. The would-be viscount never would regain his birthright.

Count Raymond VII did not oppose the Inquisition openly until the spring of 1242 after persuading King Henry III of England and Hugh de

Lusignan of Aquitaine to join forces with him (Martin, 113). Raymond VII's revolt gained impetus in Avignonet with the murder of two Inquisitors, Stephen of St. Thibéry and William Arnold on May 28, by a small group of Cathar supporters. Of course, this news spread quickly and joyfully! It is said that one priest rang the bells of his church in celebration!

Initially, Raymond VII took French possessions with ease. However, as in his long embattled past, all began to go wrong. King Henry landed in Bordeaux with such a small army that he was almost immediately defeated. Hugh of Lusignan, fearing he would also lose, switched sides and joined the French. But the worst betrayal of all was that of Roger-Bernard of Foix, son of the Cathar defender, Count Raymond Roger of Foix. Perhaps the Count of Foix believed he had no other way of protecting his people and truly thought the revolt was doomed; he signed a separate peace agreement with the French (Martin, 114). Raymond VII again was forced to submit to the French Crown and signed a peace treaty at Lorris, 30 October, 1242.

Cathar *perfecti* and *perfectae* had gone back into hiding with the onset of the Inquisition. There was no choice. However, as mentioned, the "bloodhounds" of the Church were relentless in searching out heretics, especially our beloved leaders. The fortress of Montségur, high in the

Pyrénées, had been the official stronghold of believers since the completion of its fortification in the early part of the century. With the savageness of the Inquisition raging in all of Occitania, it seemed our only location of safety.

CHAPTER 20

MONTSÉGUR

In the spring of 1243, Raymond VII convened a council at Béziers to decide on the fate of the heretics at Montségur. His true intention, however, was to find a way of eliminating the Inquisition from Toulouse. The Archbishop of Narbonne presided over the meeting of bishops and resident abbots of the area. The hope of many Dominicans was to be relieved of their Inquisitorial duties. Most were not Inquisitors but had paid a high price for the brutal and odious actions of their brothers; many convents of the Preaching Friars had been attacked and plundered by angry citizens. The brutal murder of two Inquisitors in Avignonet, along with their entire party, heightened the fear. However, the leadership of the Dominican Order refused the request. After all, they were not in the line of fire and were determined to bring down the 'Synagogue of Satan' at Montségur (Martin,

114). "These men were as impervious to fear as they were to many other human sentiments" (Oldenbourg, 338). Raymond VII's attempt to rid Toulouse of the Inquisition was a failure, and he was still under excommunication for the murder of the two Inquisitors because it occurred in his region.

In 1243, the council reconvened in Béziers to again decide on the ultimate fate of the heretics at Montségur. The French Crown and Pope Innocent IV were ready to implement the harshest of measures in order to eradicate the heretics from Languedoc - especially those at the Cathar fortress headquarters of Montségur. Raymond VII agreed with the clergy; he would sacrifice these subjects whom he could no longer defend and hopefully gain peace for himself and his people.

The formation of a massive army was soon underway to be led by the new Royal Seneschal in Carcassonne, Hugues des Arcis, and the Archbishop of Narbonne, Peter Amiel (Oldenbourg, 339). By the end of May, 1243, the Crusader's army of approximately seven thousand soldiers was encamped at the base of Montségur and the siege had begun.

Montségur, 1243. In 1204, when Raymond de Perella agreed to the request of Esclarmonde de Foix to fortify his castle located high in the

Pyrénées, he fully realized the potential danger for himself and his family; both his mother and mother-in-law were Cathar *perfectae*. When the Inquisition began, Bishop Guilhabert de Castres requested that the fortress become the official headquarters for the Cathar faith. Raymond de Perella agreed. In response, the Roman Church excommunicated him and topped that with a death sentence *in absentia*. As with our beloved *perfecta*, Esclarmonde, it is doubtful that Raymond de Perella could have imagined the horror that would eventually take place at the base of his castle fortress.

Montségur is situated in a remarkable setting: It is located on a "pog" (Latin *podium*: elevated place, and French *pic*: peak). It is an enormous mass of limestone rock about a mile and a half long and varying from 900 to 1,500 feet wide. Its highest altitude is approximately 3,900 feet, and the summit of Montségur provides a spectacular panoramic view (Markale, 19).

The fortress is almost inaccessible except from the southern slope. There is a platform or wide ledge which irregularly surrounds the fortress approximately five-hundred feet above. To the east of the fortress, the ledge extends and becomes only a few yards wide. It is at this eastern edge that our protectors positioned their defense and their *barbican*, or stone thrower (Markale, 20). All around the fortress are sheer cliffs some two-

hundred to three-hundred feet high. The fortress of Montségur did indeed seem to be impenetrable!

Many of us, *perfecti*, *perfectae*, and *credentes*, fled to this sanctuary for safety and escape from the Inquisitors. We not only feared for our own lives, but we knew our presence meant potential danger for our neighbors and friends who were supporting us. Even though they were not all *credentes*, we knew they could still be hunted down by the Inquisitors, arrested, tortured, and indefinitely imprisoned because of their association with us. It was best for all that our whereabouts be unknown.

When Raymond de Perella rebuilt the fortress, he was liberally paid for his work and the subsequent upkeep of Montségur. Our church possesses immense wealth, and much of it has been stored in the castle cellar since its restoration. Even though we abhor material possessions, it has been of vital importance that we have this protective fortress where we can come for a respite or for permanent residence. Also, we've always acknowledged that our wealth might someday need to be used in order to purchase paid militia for our protection.

Initially, many Cathars lived in the village near the base of Montségur between the castle and the northern slope. Winding and twisting paths

offered protection, and the mountains to the east and west provided isolation. This is where the *perfecti* and *perfectae* lived. It would have been unthinkable for them to live inside the castle; this is where our military protectors and their families were housed. The living conditions in the village were not easy. Most quarters were small and cramped, primitive at best, but it was generally a congenial and peaceful community. There were also numerous huts constructed on the wide west ledge of this gigantic rock. Some chose this location, closer to the castle, but here they had to endure the ravages of winter weather. However, if danger seemed eminent, all hurried inside the castle walls for protection.

Montségur became a pilgrimage location - a sacred spot in the minds of *credentes* throughout Languedoc. Many traveled here to pay their respects to the *perfecti* and *perfectae*. Expeditions were made up to the castle for singing and services; these were often led by Bishop Bertrand d'en Marti, our revered Bishop Guilhabert's successor. The village became a busy community; merchants flocked in from neighboring villages and towns eager to find customers.

Inside the castle were Raymond de Perella, his appointed co-lord and son-in-law, Pierre-Roger of Mirepoix, their families, and the hired soldiers

(approximately one-hundred fifty) and often their families also. The castle is almost 2,250 square feet in surface area with an open-air paved courtyard of about 300 square feet in the center. Three stories of structures are arranged around the courtyard: workshops, smiths, arms rooms, and living quarters. There are also stables for the sure-footed small horses and mules. Water, the necessity for life, has continually been replenished in the cistern running through stone or baked clay gutters (Markale, 27).

As for sustenance, we've grown some crops where possible and always had grazing livestock plus hunting and fishing in nearby streams. We have never been without communication with the outside world even during the worst of the siege. Therefore, supplies have been readily available to us when necessary. For the most part, we have been self-sufficient: we've made our own clothing with fabric woven from the wool of our sheep; we have used animal skins for shoes and outer garments of warmth; and have even created our own vegetable and mineral dyes. Buckles, tweezers, and even decorative items such as pendants were created by artisans and craftsmen and women in the village. Nothing has gone to waste. The *perfecti* and *perfectae* usually have not performed the laborious tasks mentioned; however, they have given the Montségur community their skills in medicine and weaving; some are

herbalists, blacksmiths, and even chandlers. Of course, they first and foremost have tended to the spiritual needs of the *credentes*.

There seems to be much interest in the wealth of our church - our "treasure." Much of what we have has come from the men and women of nobility who have become *perfecti* and *perfectae*. Upon receiving the *consolamentum*, their lands, castles, jewels, etc. have been given to our church. Also, there have been numerous gifts of generosity from the multitude of supporters of our faith whether or not they were *credentes*. But our "treasure" consists of more than land, money, and jewels. It also includes sacred books, manuscripts of antiquity by learned doctors, literature, and much more. All this has been safely protected within the castle.

When the French Crusaders arrived in May, 1243, those in the village were forced to quickly retreat to the castle fortress for protection. We had a garrison of ninety-eight knights and about one-hundred soldiers or men-at-arms under the command of Pierre-Roger of Mirepoix. Pierre-Roger is from a Cathar family, however, he is not a pacifist and has proven his willingness to use whatever means necessary to support our community. (Unfortunately, this included armed robbery and the assassination of two Dominican

Inquisitors in Avignonet.) When those in the village retreated to the castle, we already had over four-hundred persons living within its walls. It became very crowded!

The Crusaders had little success during the first six months of the siege. When necessary, we were able to penetrate the enemy lines - even in quite large groups. You probably wonder why we didn't keep on going once we penetrated the enemy camp; why did we return. First, we do not fear death and we wouldn't forsake those remaining within the fortress. Secondly, we would be forced to stay constantly on the run - always trying to escape the hounds of the Church. Staying together and remaining at Montségur was our unanimous choice.

The commander, Hugues des Arcis, realized that waiting us out, hoping we would surrender out of necessity, was not going to happen. A much more drastic approach was necessary. He had to find a way to assault our fortress. This seemed nearly impossible due to the sheerness of the cliffs. The only face of Montségur that could be scaled in somewhat safety was on the eastern slope; however, this could only be reached by using steep and obscure paths. These paths led to the very narrow summit mentioned earlier which lies approximately thirty feet below the actual fortress. Of course,

we had this crest heavily fortified; any surprise attempt at taking this location would result in the assailants being pushed over the ledge to their death hundreds of feet below.

Consequently, the focus of Hugues des Arcis turned to the crest on the southern slope of Montségur. This was an even more precarious location; from this point, our soldiers positioned the *barbican* which continually fired rocks heavily down upon the enemy. In November, he made a plea to Basque mercenaries for help. These men knew the area and were more than willing to assist the Crusaders for a price. They made a midnight assault, massacred the guards, and took command of the *barbican*. This was a terrible loss for us. The French troops were then able to turn the *barbican* against us and bombard the interior walls of the castle. They also began construction on a giant *trebuchét* which would be capable of throwing huge rocks into our walls.

The commander of our garrison, Pierre-Roger, recognized the severity of our situation within the castle walls. He persuaded our Bishop, Bertrand d'en Marti, to remove much of our treasure. With the complicity of some French sentinels who were well paid, we were able to move a large quantity of gold and silver to a fortified cave in the upper Ariège Valley and from

there on to the castle of Usson on the Donnézan (Markale, 37). Before returning to Montségur, our treasure bearers were able to recruit military assistance from a Catalan leader, Corbario. However, this was a complete failure because Corbario and his men supposedly lost their way.

The siege continued through the bitterly cold months of winter. In the castle, although extremely crowded, we continued with the challenge of survival. We were well stocked with provisions and our cistern was full. The damage to the castle walls was restricted primarily on the eastern side, so we felt relatively protected. All this time, almost one year now, we have been in hopes of military assistance from the nobility of Languedoc. Once, word was received from Count Raymond VII with instructions to continue resisting the Crusaders, but nothing more.

In early March, our remaining knights and soldiers-at-arms were prepared to attempt an attack against the Crusaders. (What courage we've witnessed in our protectors - less than a few hundred men opposing an army of thousands!) We were still able to maneuver through enemy lines and bring back fresh provisions and limited military assistance so Pierre-Roger and his men were hopeful for a limited victory. However, disaster struck when our cistern became polluted with dead rats. This was no accident; it was an act

of betrayal by someone in the garrison. Our fight was over. We, as one, gave Raymond de Perella and Pierre-Roger de Mirepoix authority to negotiate surrender (Markale, 38). The siege was over.

It would seem the commanders of the Crusading army have been lenient to some degree. We have been given two weeks before our final surrender. All their troops are removed from Montségur until then. Those of us who choose to surrender have been promised our lives will be spared if we confess and pledge allegiance to the Roman Catholic Church. We can then leave with all our possessions and arms. Of course, it is well known that *perfecti* and *perfectae* will refuse to take such an oath.

These past fifteen days have been truly peaceful for us - finally. We have celebrated one last solar festival together, and we've experienced moments of happiness with our loved ones and friends. We have spent much time worshipping, singing, and praying together, and during these precious days, we've had time to give away any belongings and say our goodbyes.

Many *credentes* have chosen to receive the sacred ritual of the *consolamentum* thereby joining the *perfecti* and *perfectae* - a total of two-hundred five persons. Raymond de Perella and Pierre-Roger de Mirepoix, along with most of the garrison and their family members, have chosen to

remain here with us until our final surrender.

Tomorrow, four of our members will be hidden deep inside a cave within the castle. With the aid of Pierre-Roger, they must safely escape by way of ropes let down the west face. They have the daunting challenge of retrieving our treasure and carrying on our true message of faith. We are hopeful for their success.

16 March, 1244. Look! The soft golden glow of a beautiful sunrise is just now visible in the eastern sky. Deep in the valley below the glimmer of the lit burning pyre is also visible. We are ready to join hands and take this final walk together, and we will sing and pray as we descend these familiar ragged and twisted paths of our mountain. Thank you for sitting beside me this last night and traveling with me over the years once again to this final day. Farewell.

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