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The Albigensian Crusade: The Intersection of Religious and Secular Authority (1209-1218)

Alexis Nunn

I. Introduction

In 1209, Innocent III called the Albigensian Crusade to eradicate heresy from Languedoc. He believed the threat of heresy had become too great to handle through peaceful means. For him and many other Catholics, the fear of heresy was very real, and he saw military intervention as the last resort. There is no doubt that he was driven by sincere belief, but the resulting war could not be fought according to Innocent's vision as political concerns began to outweigh religious concerns. The authority of the Catholic Church relied on the support of secular power, something that was desperately needed in Languedoc, where the Church lacked not only secular support, but where their religious authority was undermined by the growth of the Cathar movement. Political power and religious authority were closely intertwined during this period, but they sometimes worked at cross purposes to one another, especially in the theater of war. The different political views between the local population and the crusaders only complicated matters as the local population viewed the crusade as a war of aggression and territorial expansion, rather than a just war meant to reassert Catholicism in the region. Limited military support meant that crusaders could not afford to be lenient, and any resistance had to be punished harshly. Yet the transgressions of the crusaders were not particularly barbaric in the framework of medieval warfare, and both sides used violence to assert their authority.

II. The Political Situation Before the Crusade

To understand why the Albigensian Crusade was called, it is important to understand the political situation in Languedoc in the decades preceding the war. The region was not a unified polity, but a collection of powerful countships which swore allegiance to several monarchs. This allegiance was only nominal at best, and in reality, the countships exercised considerable political autonomy. Borders were not fixed, and relied on the ability of a lord to maintain military control. As a result, they constantly contracted and expanded with changing fortunes in war and the formation of new alliances.¹ This lack of unity is reflected in the fact that the area had no official name, but was alternately called the 'Albigensian region' or the 'Provençal lands' by contemporaries, and either Languedoc or Occitania by modern historians.² The area was composed of the western regions of Aquitaine, the Pyrenees, the Massif Central, and the cities of the central plains: Toulouse, Carcassonne, Beziers, Narbonne, Montpellier, and Nimes. Provence is also sometimes included as part of the region as it had a similar culture, but it was not an official target of the crusade. The Pyrenees and the Massif Central were both mountainous regions that resisted the control of individual counts, and the central plains were cut by major river valleys that further hindered any attempts at centralization.³

Ostensibly most of the area was part of the *regnum Francorum*, but the King of France exercised minimal authority over the region, and Languedoc maintained a distinct cultural identity from its northern neighbor.⁴ Furthermore, certain areas swore allegiance to other

¹ Laurence W. Marvin, *The Occitan War: A Military and Political History of the Albigensian Crusade, 1209-1218* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 5-9. Joseph R. Strayer, *The Albigensian Crusades* (New York: The Dial Press, 1971), 1-5.

² Strayer, *The Albigensian Crusades*, 10. Walter L. Wakefield, *Heresy, Crusade, and Inquisition in Southern France, 1100-1250* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1974), 50.

³ Strayer, *The Albigensian Crusades*, 11-13.

⁴ Marvin, *The Occitan War*, 4-5. Strayer, *The Albigensian Crusades*, 1-10.

monarchs; Western Aquitaine belonged to the English king, Provence to the Holy Roman Emperor, and several countships to the count-kings of Aragon-Catalonia.

By the beginning of the crusade, the count-kings of Aragon-Catalonia had greatly expanded their power in the region by using the traditional connections between the two regions to their advantage. The cultural ties between Catalonia and Languedoc stretched back centuries; trade had existed from at least the time of the Romans.⁵ Over the course of the twelfth century, the political power of Aragon-Catalonia expanded in Languedoc. In 1150, the Count of Barcelona had also become the King of Aragon through marriage, giving them claims to not only Béziers, but Provence as well.⁶ In 1166, the count-king Alphonse II seized Provence, and in 1179, the Trencavel viscounties switched their allegiance from the counts of Toulouse to the count-kings of Aragon-Catalonia.⁷

This expansion of political power was not part of a vision of conquering Languedoc, and they considered their Languedocian holdings as separate from Catalonia and Aragon, with no intention of ever forming them into a single trans-Pyrenees empire. Instead, their expansion into the region was primarily driven by a desire to check the growing authority of the Capetians.⁸ The seizure of Provence and the Trencavel lands by the counts of Barcelona incited conflict with the counts of Toulouse, vassals of the French crown. To balance this power, Alphonse II cultivated

⁵ Damian Smith, *Crusade, Heresy and Inquisition in the Lands of the Crown of Aragon (C. 1167-1276)* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 19-25. Trade connections continued well past the end of the crusade. The Pyrenees did serve as a barrier of sorts, especially in the winter, but connections continued to flourish between the two regions, especially as they specialized in different trade goods and benefitted from trade with each other.

⁶ Thomas S. Bisson, *The Medieval Crown of Aragon: A Short History* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), 27. Marvin, *The Occitan War*, 7.

⁷ Bisson, *The Crown of Aragon*, 37-38.

⁸ Bisson, *The Crown of Aragon*, 36-37.

alliances with the Pyrenean borderlands, and his son Peter II further extended Catalanian influence through his marriage to Maria of Montpellier in 1204.⁹

The English and French monarchs also sought to expand their power in the region. Both the French and English kings tried to claim direct control of Toulouse through their marriages to Eleanor of Aquitaine. In 1141 Louis VII of France had tried to seize Toulouse and failed. After he repudiated Eleanor of Aquitaine, she married the English king, who also attempted to take control of Toulouse in 1159, which the French king decided was not okay. This set off nearly forty years of war between Toulouse, now allied with the French, and the English.¹⁰ This war ended with the marriage of Raymond VI of Toulouse and Joan, King Richard I's sister, a match that potentially threatened Capetian power in the region. Although the king did not take active measures against it, it would work to Raymond's disadvantage during the crusade as the count struggled to find allies and the English monarch failed to provide adequate support.¹¹

Counts also suffered from internal threats to their authority, especially from other counts. The counts of Toulouse were some of the most powerful and independent in the region, but the Trencavel family checked their political ambitions. The Trencavel counts were able to gain significant control around Béziers and Carcassonne during military conflicts between the king of Aragon and the count of Toulouse in the mid-twelfth century, effectively cutting the Toulousain lands in half and diminishing the power of the counts of Toulouse over the region. They

⁹ Bisson, *The Crown of Aragon*, 37. William of Puylaurens, *The Albigensian Crusade and its Aftermath*, trans. W.A. Sibly and M.D. Sibly (Suffolk: The Boydell Press, 2003), 29-30.

¹⁰ Marvin, *The Occitan War*, 7-9, 13. Richard Benjamin, "A Forty Years War: Toulouse and the Plantagenets, 1156-96, in *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research* 61 (1988), 270-285.

¹¹ Claire Taylor, *Heresy in Medieval France: Dualism in Aquitaine and The Agenais* (Suffolk: The Boydell Press, 2005), 148.

remained antagonistic toward one another, despite the fact that Raymond VI was the uncle to the young viscount Raymond-Roger Trencavel.¹²

Town councils also limited the political authority of counts. Society was based around fortified towns called *castra*, which created a decentralized distribution of power that favored strong town councils.¹³ These councils were able to use the constant warfare between the counts and viscounts of the region to their advantage and establish *de facto* autonomy, which caused serious problems during the crusade as each *castra* determined their support for the crusade based on what they could gain from it.¹⁴ In the lands of the Crown of Aragon, a sense of unity had formed around the counts of Barcelona as a response to the Muslim threat, and in France, the Capetians had been able to greatly solidify their control through administrative restructuring and victory in war. Their status as kings further legitimized their authority, and both Peter II of Aragon and the Capetians actively fostered a favorable relationship with the papacy in order to strengthen their authority over their kingdoms.¹⁵ Languedoc was secure enough from outside threats that no sense of unification formed around Toulouse, and wars with the English, French, and Spanish undermined Toulousain authority, allowing the Toulousain consulate to gain ever increasing freedom from comital control beginning in 1189.¹⁶

The power struggles of the region resulted in near constant warfare over the twelfth century. The endemic warfare of the region required the extensive use of mercenaries, much to

¹² Elaine Graham-Leigh, *The Southern French Nobility and the Albigensian Crusade* (Suffolk: Boydell Press, 2005) 91-92.

¹³ John Hine Mundy, *Liberty and Political Power in Toulouse, 1050-1230* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1954), 18-21.

¹⁴ Mundy, *Liberty and Political Power*, 74-75.

¹⁵ James W. Baldwin, "The Kingdom of the Franks from Louis VI to Philip II: Crown and Government," NCMH, 511-513. Smith, *Heresy and Inquisition in the Crown of Aragon*, 26. This is not to say that the authority of these monarchs was fully accepted by everyone, or that they did not face opposition, simply that certain aspects of their political situations gave them some advantage in establishing their authority.

¹⁶ Mundy, *Liberty and Political Power*, 60.

the Church's dismay. Mercenaries were a common feature of medieval warfare across Europe, but they were perceived as a particularly bad threat in Languedoc because they posed a physical threat to the Catholic Church at the same time that the Church felt spiritually threatened by the growing popularity of heresy.¹⁷ Mercenaries were disliked even by the men who employed them, but they were necessary. Mercenaries were better trained and formed more cohesive military units, and they became increasingly common in warfare beginning in the eleventh century. However, mercenaries' lack of political affiliation made them a dangerous threat to the social order, and they were universally mistrusted and disliked.¹⁸ Peter of les Vaux-de-Cernay condemned Raymond VI of Toulouse for having "a remarkable liking of mercenaries, whom he employed to rob churches, destroy the monasteries, and whenever he could, deprive his neighbors of their possessions."¹⁹ While Raymond's use of mercenaries was in no way "remarkable," Peter's comment does reveal the threat mercenaries posed to church property and the difficulty lords had in controlling them, especially if lords failed to pay their wages or terminated their employment.²⁰ At the Third Lateran Council in 1179, prelates condemned mercenaries and heretics together:

The regions of Albi and Toulouse and in other places the loathsome heresy of those whom some call the Cathars...we declare that they and their defenders and those who receive them are under anathema... With regard to the Brabanters, Aragonese, Navarrese, Basques, Coterelli and Triaverdini, who practice such cruelty upon Christians that they respect neither churches nor monasteries...like pagans destroy and lay everything waste, we likewise decree that those who hire,

¹⁷ John France, *Western Warfare in the Age of the Crusades 1000-1300* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1999), 68. Marvin, *The Occitan War*, 18-19. Graham-Leigh, *Southern French Nobility*, 96.

¹⁸ Constance Brittain Bouchard, *Strong of Body, Brave and Noble: Chivalry and Society in Medieval France* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998), 23, 33, 44. France, *Western Warfare*, 70.

¹⁹ Peter of les Vaux-de-Cernay, *Historia Albigensis*, trans. W.A. Sibly and M.D. Sibly (Suffolk: The Boydell Press, 1998), 24-25. Shortened 'PVC' in remainder of footnotes.

²⁰ GEM Lippiatt, *Simon V of Montfort and Baronial Government* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 89. France, *Western Warfare*, 72.

keep or support them, in the districts where they rage around, should be subject in every way to the same sentence and penalty as the above-mentioned heretics.²¹

This decree opened up not just heretics and mercenaries to prosecution, but those that employed them as well. It placed heretics, mercenaries, and their supporters outside of Christian society, and thus judged them as legitimate targets of war.²² Pope Innocent III used the conclusions of the Third Lateran extensively throughout the crusade to justify the excommunication of Raymond VI.²³ The papal legate Peter of Castelnau first excommunicated Raymond for his refusal to banish mercenaries from his land, and Innocent III reaffirmed that excommunication “for retaining men from Aragon.”²⁴

As a result, crusaders targeted mercenaries alongside heretics. At Moissac in 1212, Count Simon de Montfort, the secular leader of the crusade, “swore by all the saints of the Holy Land that he would not let one of them escape alive unless they handed over the mercenaries that caused them so much trouble.”²⁵ Despite this obvious dislike of mercenaries, Simon de Montfort also employed them, and he sought monetary support from the papacy in order to pay them.²⁶ Mercenaries were a necessary evil, but the rhetoric surrounding them was important in establishing who was and who was not a justifiable target for violence, and at what point the use of mercenaries went from being tolerable to untenable.²⁷

²¹ Third Lateran Council, Canon 27, trans. Norman P. Tanner, *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, accessed at <http://www.papalencyclicals.net/Councils/ecum11.htm>.

²² Marvin, *The Occitan War*, 20. Frederick H. Russell, *The Just War in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 256.

²³ France, *Western Warfare*, 70.

²⁴ William of Tudela, *The Song of the Cathar Wars*, 13. Innocent III, letter to Raymond VI May 1209, in PVC, trans. Sibly & Sibly, 304-305.

²⁵ William of Tudela, *The Song of the Cathar Wars*, trans. Janet Shirley (Brookfield: Scolar Press, 1996), 62.

²⁶ Anonymous Successor to William of Tudela, *The Song of the Cathar Wars*, 91. Marvin, *The Occitan War*, 17.

²⁷ Russell, *The Just War*, 189, 241-243.

III. The Religious Situation Before the Crusade

Church authority was weak in Languedoc, because the church often found itself in conflict with the local nobility, which allowed Catharism to take root and flourish. In Languedoc it was possible for powerful men to be in charge of both the local bishopric and the secular seat of power. The nobility also sought to take control of the most powerful bishoprics, which resulted in large financial discrepancies and furthered conflict between interest groups.²⁸ The Gregorian Reform temporarily halted this development, but nobles had managed to reassert their control over important bishoprics by the mid-twelfth century.²⁹ More powerful clergymen had serious disputes over the limits of Church authority and property rights, such as the dispute between the canons of St. Anthony and Raymond-Roger, the Count of Foix. The abbot of St. Anthony and Raymond-Roger shared the lordship of Pamiers, but Raymond-Roger consistently flouted Church authority, even going as far as installing his wife and sister, confirmed heretics, on Church land.³⁰ These conflicts often turned violent. Peter of les Vaux-de-Cernay accused Raymond-Roger's knights of having "dismembered...a priest celebrating mass."³¹ During the war, this harsh treatment of clergymen would result in Raymond-Roger's lands being targeted by the crusaders.

Money also turned into a major issue. Revenue and property were key causes of conflict between the clergy and nobility.³² Many dioceses crossed political boundaries, increasing the number of lords bishops had to reach financial agreements with, and creating conflict over the

²⁸ Michael Costen, *The Cathars and The Albigensian Crusade* (New York: Manchester University Press, 1997), 80.

²⁹ Costen, *The Cathars*, 80.

³⁰ PVC, 104. It was the fact that they were heretics that caused problems. If they had been Catholics, such an arrangement would not have been out of the ordinary.

³¹ PVC, 104-105.

³² Costen, *The Cathars*, 78-80. Strayer, *The Albigensian Crusades*, 6-7.

collection of funds and tithes.³³ Fulcrand, the bishop of Toulouse from 1179 to 1201, was particularly weak, and “he could find nothing to count on by way of revenues”³⁴ and could not even travel around his own diocese for want of money.³⁵ His successor suffered from similar issues and was an active supporter of the crusade. As a result of such poor finances, bishops tended to overtly focus on money, which attracted accusations of greed and of having too much worldly concern from both the lay population and the papacy. Laypeople derided the “disgraceful behavior of the clergy,”³⁶ and Pope Innocent III felt that the clergy should focus on spirituality, targeting specific bishops, particularly archbishop Berenguer of Narbonne (1191-1211) for their failure to act properly.³⁷ Berenguer, a competent administrator, had political ties to the Crown of Aragon, and he acted as the king’s representative in the early years of the crusade. His career was marked by an active, political role in his diocese, something that was common in the twelfth century as diocesan business became more complex. This administrative role did not cohere with Innocent’s idea of what a bishop should be. For the reform-minded Innocent, the role of a bishop was preaching and pastoral care, especially when heresy was such a serious threat.³⁸ If Berenguer had taken an active stance against heresy, Innocent most likely would have ignored his more political dealings, but Innocent believed Berenguer had allowed heresy to flourish in his diocese. Innocent disparaged him and several other Languedocian clergymen as “dumb dogs who refuse to bark.”³⁹

³³ Strayer, 6-7. Costen, *The Cathars and the Albigensian Crusade*, 78-79. Taylor, *Heresy in Medieval France*, 150.

³⁴ William of Puylaurens, *The Albigensian Crusade*, 22.

³⁵ William o Puylaurens, *The Albigensian Crusades*, 22.

³⁶ William of Puylaurens, 25. PVC, 17.

³⁷ Elaine Graham-Leigh, “Hirelings and Shepherds: Archbishop Berenguer of Narbonne (1191-1211) and the Ideal Bishop,” in *The English Historical Review* 116 (2001), 1101-1102.

³⁸ Graham-Leigh, “Hirelings and Shepherds,” 1095-1098. Graham-Leigh, *The Southern Nobility*, 79-83.

³⁹ Innocent III, 1203 Letter, in Graham-Leigh, “Hirelings and Shepherds,” 1084.

In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, laymen expressed an increased interest in religious reform, particularly by embracing the apostolic life.⁴⁰ The apostolic life was patterned on an ascetic lifestyle based on lives of the apostles of the New Testament. This movement was spurred by the monastic reform of the eleventh and twelfth centuries, which saw the establishment of new orders interested in embracing an ascetic lifestyle and rejecting more worldly involvements.⁴¹ The twelfth century saw a rise in the desire of laypeople to get more involved with religious life, something that Innocent III warmly embraced.⁴² However, in Languedoc, where the clergy was so obviously invested in the secular world, laypeople turned to heretics to fulfill their spiritual needs. For many people, the distinction between heretical groups and the official church was unimportant, and they supported whomever they felt lived a moral lifestyle.⁴³ For example, Raymond-Roger, the count of Foix, fought bitterly with the canons of St. Anthony, but he believed that he was a good Catholic, and he made donations to Cistercian houses, which were actively supported by Innocent.⁴⁴

Heretics appealed to Languedocian society for many reasons; Waldensians and Cathars were both present in the region, although Catharism was considered the biggest threat.⁴⁵ There

⁴⁰ Costen, *The Cathars*, 96-97. Taylor, *Heresy in Medieval France*, 150. RI Moore, *The War on Heresy* (Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press, 2012), 46-55.

⁴¹ Malcolm Lambert, *The Cathars* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1998), 12. C.H. Lawrence, "The Cistercian Model," in *Medieval Monasticism* (New York: Routledge, 2015), 158-183, specifically 158-160. Michael D. Bailey, "Religious Poverty, Mendicancy, and Reform in the Late Middle Ages," in *Church History* 72 (2003), 457-483.

⁴² James Powell, *Anatomy of a Crusade, 1213-1221* (Philadelphia PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1986), 56-63. Lambert, *the Cathars*, 12.

⁴³ Lambert, *Cathars*, 134-135. Susan Taylor Snyder, "Cathars, Confraternities, and Civil Religion: The Blurry Border Between Heresy and Orthodoxy," in *Heresy and the Persecuting Society in the Middle Ages*, by Michael Frassetto (Boston: Brill, 2006), 241-251.

⁴⁴ Tudela, *Song of the Cathar Wars*, 75.

⁴⁵ PVC, 10-14. Mark Gregory Pegg, *The Corruption of Angels The Great Inquisition of 1245-1246* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001), 96, 130; *A Most Holy War: The Albigensian Crusade and the Battle for Christendom* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 25-26, 175; and RI Moore, *The War on Heresy*, 204-208 have recently argued that Catharism was not as hierarchical or organized as many scholars claim, but was rather an invention of the Catholic church. Moore argues that it was used as a means of political control by the church (*War on Heresy*, p. 294-295), but as Peter Biller points out, both scholars take a narrow approach to the issue to the point of ignoring and/or omitting evidence and risk reducing the issue to a binary of authentic belief vs political

were many similarities between Catharism and Catholicism, including penance, confirmation (or *consolamentum*), and a hierarchy, but there were also important theological differences that made Catharism appealing.⁴⁶ The Cathars were called either *perfecti* (perfected) or believers depending on whether or not they had received the *consolamentum*, or laying on of hands; only those who had received the *consolamentum* became *perfecti*. The *perfecti* vowed to live an austere lifestyle, refraining from sexual relations and meat consumption, and they dedicated their lives to prayer and preaching.⁴⁷ A believer was anyone who listened to a *perfecti*, irrespective of the degree of their devotion to Cathar beliefs. Non-*perfecti* were not expected to follow the more stringent guidelines, such as abstention from sexual intercourse, warfare, or the consumption of animal products.⁴⁸

Certain Cathar doctrines, particularly regarding marriage and usury, were appealing to Languedocians. Marriage became an important sacrament between the ninth and twelfth centuries, and the Church forbid marriages within seven degrees of consanguinity.⁴⁹ This made it incredibly difficult for the peasants of the Languedoc to find partners, and although many ignored the decree, it caused tension between laypeople and the clergy. Although the Cathars generally anathematized marriage, they did not try to restrict it among their believers.⁵⁰ Marrying

connivance: Peter Biller, "Goodbye to Catharism?" in *Cathars in Question*, ed. Antonia Sennis (Melton: Boydell and Brewer, 2016), 274-204, particularly p. 281 & 294.

⁴⁶ Malcolm Barber, *The Cathars: Dualist Heretics in Languedoc in the High Middle Ages* (Harlow, England: Person Education, 2000), 104-106. Lambert, *Cathars*, 73-80. Cathars believed in dual godhead; the God of the Old Testament was evil and the God of the New Testament was good. Sin led to reincarnation, which was bad because it kept souls tied to the corrupt world. Thus, Cathars condemned sex as the vehicle which created bodies for souls to reincarnate into. This influenced their opinions on marriage, discussed below.

⁴⁷ James Capelli, "Summa contras haereticos," in *Heresies of the High Middle Ages*, trans. Walter L. Wakefield and Austin P. Evans (New York: Columbia University Press, 1969), 302-306.

⁴⁸ Costen, *Cathars*, 68.

⁴⁹ Constance B. Bouchard, "Consanguinity and Noble Marriages in the Tenth and Eleventh Centuries," *Speculum*, 56 (1981): 268.

⁵⁰ Anselm of Alessandria, "An Inquisitor's Notebook," in *Heresies of the High Middle Ages*, ed. Wakefield and Evans, 369. Capelli, "Summa contras haereticos," 304.

close relatives was especially important in the Languedoc because it allowed property to remain concentrated within the family, which was essential in a society where property was split among all heirs, both male and female.⁵¹ Usury, too, was common practice in the urbanized environment of Languedoc.⁵² Trade, including in silks, spices, and silver, formed a critical part of the Languedoc economy.⁵³ The extensive trade of the region made it necessary for merchants to charge interest on loans, much to the ire of the Church.⁵⁴ In 1139, the Second Lateran Council had formalized their position on usury, and “condemned that practice accounted despicable and blameworthy by divine and human laws.”⁵⁵ While usury continued to be practiced across Europe, Cathars believed “that usury is not forbidden,” making their religion more appealing to the merchants, moneylenders, and nobility of the Languedoc as people did want to live moral lives.⁵⁶

Catharism was especially popular among women because it allowed them more opportunities for religious expression than the Catholic Church. The area lacked religious houses for women until 1206, long after Catharism had been established in the region. As a result, orthodox avenues for female religiosity were restricted.⁵⁷ As a Cathar, a woman could achieve the rank of *perfecta*, a position of considerably more influence than anything she could have gained in the Catholic Church. In fact, the number of female *perfectae* was nearly equal to that of their male counterparts, something that was certainly not true for Catholic nuns and their male

⁵¹ Costen, *Cathars*, 91.

⁵² Strayer, *The Albigensian Crusades*, 5-9.

⁵³ Jonathan Sumpton, *Albigensian Crusade* (London: Faber & Faber, 1978), 24.

⁵⁴ Costen *Cathars*, 93.

⁵⁵ Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils, *Second Lateran Council*, ed. Norman P. Tanner, <http://www.papalencyclicals.net/Councils/ecum10.htm>.

⁵⁶ “Tenets of the Italian Cathars,” in *Heresies of the High Middle Ages*, ed. Wakefield & Evans, 357, 361.

⁵⁷ Taylor, *Heresy in Medieval France*, 160. Sean Martin, *The Cathars* (Herts: Oldcastle Books, 2012), 70.

counterparts.⁵⁸ Catharism allowed women to preach, although they primarily practiced their religion within their own homes, which often acted as meeting places. They played an important role in spreading Catharism across the region through their social networks.⁵⁹

William of Tudela draws attention to the popularity of Catharism among women when he remarked that “many fair women were thrown into the flames”⁶⁰ when they were convicted of heresy. Peter of les Vaux-de-Cernay “found the women heretics even more obstinate and determined than the men.”⁶¹ In 1206, when Diego, the bishop of Osma, and his companion Dominic of Guzman began preaching in Languedoc, they established a religious house for women who had converted to Catharism.⁶² The attraction of Catharism was also not restricted by class. Many noblewomen were accused of being heretics, including the wife and sisters of the count of Foix and Giraude, the dame of Lavaur.⁶³

The Church saw the rising popularity of heresy as a very real threat not just to their authority, but to the spiritual salvation of Christendom as a whole.⁶⁴ The unity of Christendom was a special concern for Innocent, who believed that it was necessary in order to resist the Muslim threat in the east and to reconquer the Holy Land.⁶⁵ Heresy threatened this vision, and the very spiritual survival of Christendom. In a letter to the Archbishop of Auch in 1198, Innocent warned that the “ministers of diabolical error are ensnaring the souls of the simple and

⁵⁸ Lambert, *The Cathars*, 151-152.

⁵⁹ Lambert, *The Cathars*, 148-149.

⁶⁰ William of Tudela, *Song of the Cathar Wars*, 18.

⁶¹ PVC, 85.

⁶² Lester K. Little, *Religious Poverty and the Profit Economy in Medieval Europe* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1978), 155.

⁶³ PVC, 104, 117. William of Puylaurens, 40.

⁶⁴ Bernard Hamilton, “The Albigensian Crusade,” in D. Abulafia, *NCMH* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 164.

⁶⁵ Rebecca Rist, *Papacy and Crusading in Europe 1198-1245* (London: Continuum, 2009), 46.

ruining them.”⁶⁶ He hoped to bring heretics back into the Catholic Church, so that they “may be recalled to the Lord from the error of their ways” lest they “steal from us not temporal substance but rather spiritual life.”⁶⁷ While the threat of heresy to Church authority was troubling, it was only a symptom of the greater problem of the danger heresy presented to the spiritual integrity of Christendom.

That threat was amplified by the perceived expansion of heresy. Churchmen often described heresy as a disease as a way to account for its rapid spread and to illustrate the danger it posed to the spiritual health of the Christian population.⁶⁸ The Cistercian monk Caesarius of Heisterbach described it as a disease that had “in a short space of time infected as many as a thousand cities, and if, it if had not been reduced by the swords of the faithful, I am sure that it would have corrupted all of Europe.”⁶⁹ The English monastic cleric Roger of Wendover also referred to heresy as “this plague”⁷⁰ and Peter of Vaux-de-Cernay called it “this detestable plague.”⁷¹ William of Tudela “saw this lunacy spreading so much faster than before and tightening its grip every day.”⁷² Heresy was a problem that threatened to spread beyond the bounds of Languedoc and undermine the entire Catholic Church. The Church simply could not allow it to exist.

⁶⁶ Innocent III, Letter to the Archbishop of Auch 1198, accessed at <https://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/source/innIII-policies.asp>.

⁶⁷ Innocent III, *Cum unus Dominus*, in *The Cathars and the Albigensian Crusade*, trans. Rebecca Rist, ed. Catherine Legu, Rebecca Rist, and Claire Taylor (New York: Routledge, 2014), 33.

⁶⁸ RI Moore, “Heresy as Disease,” in *The Concept of Heresy in the Middle Ages (11th-13th C.)*, *Proceedings of the international conference, Louvain, 1973*, 10-11. Leuven, Belgium: Leuven University Press.

⁶⁹ Caesarius of Heisterbach, *The Dialogue on Miracles*, in *Heresy, Crusade, and Inquisition*, trans. Walter L. Wakefield (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974), 196.

⁷⁰ Roger of Wendover, *Flowers of History*, in *Crusade and Christendom*, ed. Jessalyn Bird, Edward Peters, and James Powell (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), 68-69.

⁷¹ PVC, 9.

⁷² Tudela, 12.

IV. Preaching: The Buildup to Crusade

Innocent first sent out preachers in an attempt to convert heretics or otherwise drive them out from Languedoc. He hoped to work with local lords in this endeavor, but they remained at best ambivalent and at worst outwardly hostile to his legates.⁷³ Their attitude toward the legates stemmed from the close relationship that had developed between the nobility and accused heretics, and the tense relationship between the nobility and the prelates of the Church. Raymond-Roger Trencavel was “certainly Catholic” but his youth and inexperience made him “friendly with everyone,” and he employed three known heretics in his central administration.⁷⁴ Raymond-Roger, the count of Foix, was related to heretics, and Raymond VI was close to several heretics and “none of the papal legates could ever persuade him to drive [them] from his domain.”⁷⁵ From the beginning, the legates had little political support in their mission, which hindered their ability to punish heretics who refused to repent.

Innocent’s preaching missions were based on the work of Bernard of Clairvaux, a Cistercian who had preached in the region in the 1140s. Unfortunately, his efforts were limited by his age and health, and he advocated for more preachers to be sent to the region. He believed that heresy was best resolved through logic and debate, not force, but his campaign also laid the groundwork for denying heretics their legal rights.⁷⁶ Henry of Clairvaux first championed the use of force against heretics in his missions of 1181, when he led an army into Languedoc and captured the castle of Lavaur. However, his sojourn in Languedoc was brief, and he returned to

⁷³ Hamilton, *The Albigensian Crusade and Heresy*, 165-166.

⁷⁴ Tudela, 18-19. Graham-Leigh, *The Southern Nobility*, 60-61.

⁷⁵ PVC, 23, 104.

⁷⁶ Beverley Kienzle, *Cistercians, Heresy and Crusade in Occitania, 1145-1229* (York: York Medieval Press, 2001), 106-108, 78-104.

Rome in 1182 to deal with Church affairs there. Nevertheless, his actions served to justify the use of force against the internal enemies of the Church.⁷⁷

In 1198 Innocent sent the legates Rainier and Guy, but they were replaced with the Cistercians Arnold Amalric, who was the abbot of Cîteaux, Peter of Castelnau, and Ralph of Fontfroide in 1204. Their campaign was a complete failure. Besides the lack of political support, the local population constantly ridiculed them. William of Tudela lamented that the more Arnold Amalric preached, the more the people “scorned him for a fool.”⁷⁸ When Arnold Amalric and Fouquet of Marseilles travelled around the Agenais preaching against usury, the people “said scornfully, ‘There’s that bee buzzing round again!’”⁷⁹ Discouraged and beaten down, the legates were ready to go home in 1206.⁸⁰ Luckily for the preachers, the arrival of Diego, the bishop of Osma and Dominic of Guzman brought new hope of success. Both Diego and Dominic were intent on saving souls and reforming corrupt clergymen.⁸¹ They had not been sent to Languedoc by the pope, but had stopped to preach on their way home from visiting the Curia. Concerned with what they saw in Languedoc, they resolved to preach to the wayward heretics and convince them of their errors.⁸² Diego reprimanded the legates for travelling in luxury and urged the legates to instead show “humility in all their conduct; by going about on foot and without gold or silver ornaments; and by generally imitating the way of the Apostles in all respects.”⁸³ After all, heresy was appealing because the heretics followed the apostolic lifestyle, and Jordan of Saxony remarked that this “false holiness” was “in striking contrast to the stylish and expensive carriages

⁷⁷ Kienzle, *Cistercians and Crusade*, 132-134.

⁷⁸ Tudela, 12.

⁷⁹ Tudela, 32.

⁸⁰ PVC, 17.

⁸¹ Little, *Religious Poverty*, 154.

⁸² PVC, 16.

⁸³ PVC, 17.

and furnishings displayed by those who had been sent.⁸⁴ Diego and Dominic experienced some success, as they managed to turn the *castrum* of Servian against the heretics, and they established a religious house for reformed heretical women at Prouille.⁸⁵ Both men were aware of what made heresy attractive and they took steps to combat it, experiencing more success than the other legates, although they, too, struggled to make any significant gains, and the preachers experienced a significant setback in 1207 when both Diego and the legate Ralph of Fontfroide died. In 1208, the legates were “driven to appeal to the Holy See” as they “were unable...to extinguish the fire” of heresy.⁸⁶

The final straw came one morning in January 1208 when “one of those attendants of Satan” murdered Peter of Castelnau on the banks of the Rhône.⁸⁷ Blame fell immediately on Raymond VI of Toulouse, who had argued with Peter the night before and had refused the legate’s request for an armed guard out of the territory. Peter had recently excommunicated Raymond for his refusal to eject mercenaries from his lands, and the meeting had been an attempt at reconciliation.⁸⁸ Despite the allegations, Raymond did not plan the death of the legate and it had most likely been carried out by a squire looking to gain the count’s favor. Either way, the pope was incensed and fully blamed Raymond for the tragedy. “Forward then soldiers of Christ! Forward, brave recruits to the Christian army!” he wrote passionately, “Let the universal cry of grief of the Holy Church arouse you...to avenge this monstrous crime against your God!”⁸⁹

⁸⁴ Jordan of Saxony, *Libellus*, trans. Order of Preachers (2012), 18.

http://www.op.org/sites/www.op.org/files/public/documents/fichier/libellus_en.pdf.

⁸⁵ PVC, 18. Little, *Religious Poverty*, 155.

⁸⁶ Puylaurens, 27.

⁸⁷ PVC, 33.

⁸⁸ Tudela, 13. PVC, 32-33.

⁸⁹ Innocent III, in Peter of Vaux-de-Cernay, *History of the Albigensian Crusade*, 37.

Despite these fiery words, preaching did not end with the start of the crusade. Dominic continued to actively preach in the region, and he developed a close relationship with the crusade leader Simon de Montfort. In 1215 he formed the Dominican Order to carry on his preaching mission. Together, the Order and Simon helped fulfill Innocent's goal of using the combined effort of the material sword and the spiritual sword to root out heresy.⁹⁰ Simon also granted Dominic Casseneuil so that he could continue his mission converting heretics. The fortress provided Dominic a financial base, which gave him the resources he needed to weaken popular support for heresy while Simon attacked the political structures that protected it.⁹¹ As part of Dominic's mission against heresy, the Order prepared its adherents for a life of preaching and emphasized obedience, especially to the Church hierarchy, in a way that set them apart from the monastic orders of the past. The Order synthesized canonical reform and the new lay spirituality, and they continued to work diligently against the threat of heresy throughout the crusade.⁹² Their continued efforts reflected the Church's hope that heretics could still be reformed without resorting to violence even as the crusaders ravished the land.

V. The Crusade: Who's in Charge?

While the murder of Peter of Castelnau ultimately triggered the crusade, the papacy had been moving toward a military approach for quite some time. Already in 1204, Innocent understood the necessity of using secular authority to support religious authority. In a 1204 letter

⁹⁰ Gerardi de Fracheto, *Vitae fratrum ordinis praedicatorum : necnon Cronica ordinis ab anno MCCIII usque ad MCCLIV*, ed. Benedict Maria Reichert (1896), 322.

<https://archive.org/stream/fratrisgerardide01domi#page/n9/mode/2up>: "Illo quoque tempore comes Montisfortis pugnans contra hereticos gladio materiali et beatus Domincus gladio verbi Dei...". Christoph Maier, *Preaching the Crusades: Mendicant Friars and the Cross in the Thirteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 18-20.

⁹¹ Jordan of Saxony, *Libellus*, 22. Lippiatt, 97.

⁹² Little, *Religious Poverty*, 162-168.

to Philip Augustus, the king of France, he wrote, “the secular arm may restrain those whom ecclesiastical discipline does not recall from evil, and that spiritual vengeance may follow close upon those who, trusting in their own ferocity, do not fear the material sword.”⁹³ Philip Augustus was the natural choice to support the papacy against heresy, as he was overlord of Toulouse and, except for some marital problems, considered a loyal son of the Church.⁹⁴ Unfortunately, Philip had little interest in getting involved militarily in the region, despite repeated pleas from Innocent up through the start of the crusade. By 1208, Philip was firmly entrenched in a war against both England and the Holy Roman Empire, and he wrote to Innocent that “he was beset on his flanks by two great and ravening lions, Otto, self-proclaimed Emperor and John, king of England, who—one from each side of France—were devoting all their powers to overturning his kingdom.”⁹⁵ Philip Augustus was not sympathetic to Raymond VI, however. He accused his vassal of working against him “by marrying the King [of England]’s sister,” and never providing military support for the French kingdom.⁹⁶ Philip refused to go himself or send his son, but he did allow his barons to take the cross if they so desired.⁹⁷

So, with no obvious secular leader, the crusade assembled in June 1209 under the papal legates. The force was unusually large for a medieval army, although exact figures are difficult to determine. Laurence W. Marvin gives a figure of thirty thousand, based on the armies of the Fourth Crusade and Philip Augustus’ army.⁹⁸ Crusader pilgrims, who were too poor to travel to

⁹³ Innocent III, *ad sponse sue*, in *Albigensian Crusade: A Sourcebook*, trans. Rebecca Rist, 35.

⁹⁴ Baldwin, *Kingdom of the Franks*, 513. Strayer, *The Albigensian Crusades*, 2-3. Jim Bradbury, *Philip Augustus, King of France 1180-1223* (London: Longman Publishing, 1998), 173-189.

⁹⁵ PVC, 41-42.

⁹⁶ Philip Augustus, letter to Innocent III April 1208, in Peter of Vaux-de-Cernay, *The History of the Albigensian Crusade*, trans. Sibly & Sibly, 305-306.

⁹⁷ PVC, 42.

⁹⁸ Marvin, *The Occitan War*, 30-33. The Fourth Crusade had involved around 33,000 men and Philip Augustus’ army may have numbered as much as 17,000 [the largest of any European power at that point]; both were very large armies by medieval standards; the crusaders arriving for the Albigensian Crusade would not have been as financially

the Holy Land and were for the most part untrained but still wanted to earn a crusading indulgence, made up the bulk of the army.⁹⁹ Faced with an invading army, Raymond VI sought reconciliation with the church, with involved a humiliating ceremony in which “he was led naked the doors of the church...[and] the legate gave him absolution by scourging him.”¹⁰⁰ After, Raymond VI joined the crusade to protect his lands from seizure. The crusade was left without a target, but Raymond managed to maneuver the crusade toward his enemy and nephew, Raymond-Roger Trencavel, whose lands were rife with heresy.¹⁰¹

The crusaders first attacked Béziers after Raymond-Roger Trencavel’s attempts at reconciliation were rebuffed. The viscount left for Carcassonne, leaving Béziers to defend itself. The citizens of Béziers felt prepared for a siege and few left the city as the crusaders approached.¹⁰² Camped before the city walls, the crusaders were pelted with abuse and arrows by the defenders. Enraged, “the servants of the army...approached the city walls...and mounted an attack. Astonishingly they captured the city inside an hour.”¹⁰³ In the chronicles, the ensuing events are described as a massacre. Peter of les Vaux-de-Cernay claimed that “up to seven thousand of them were killed”¹⁰⁴ in the church of La Madeleine, and William of Tudela lamented that the crusaders “killed everyone they could find...even priests.”¹⁰⁵ Caesarius of Heisterbach

constrained as those going on the Fourth, as Languedoc was relatively easy to travel to. Sumpton, *The Albigensian Crusades*, 86 gives a figure of around 20,000.

⁹⁹ Marvin, *The Occitan War*, 33-35; “Thirty-Nine Days and A Wake-Up: The Impact of the Indulgence and the Forty Days Service on the Albigensian Crusade” *The Historian* 65 no. 1 (2002), 87-88. ⁹⁹ Daniel Power, “Who Went on the Albigensian Crusade?” *English Historical Review* 128, no. 534 (2013), 1062.

¹⁰⁰ PVC, 44.

¹⁰¹ Marvin, *The Occitan War*, 30-38. Graham-Leigh, *The Southern Nobility*, 54-55, 60-61, 74-75. Graham-Leigh argues that the Trencavel lands were not significantly more heretical than the surrounding lands, but the Trencavels had a particularly bad relationship with the Cistercians, who played a prominent role in the fight against heresy and were well loved by Innocent III. Either way, heresy was present in the region, and Raymond VI had no qualms about attacking his nephew, who had previously refused an alliance against the crusaders: Tudela, 15, 18.

¹⁰² Tudela, 19. Marvin, *The Occitan War*, 40.

¹⁰³ PVC, 50.

¹⁰⁴ PVC, 51.

¹⁰⁵ Tudela, 20-22.

claimed that Arnold Amalric ordered the death of everyone in the city, as “the Lord knows those who are his own.”¹⁰⁶ However, as Marvin points out, the devastation of Béziers could not have been as bad as the chronicles made it out to be. For one, Arnold Amalric never uttered those words, and most likely, had no idea the attack occurred until after it was over. Furthermore, the church of La Madeleine could not possibly hold seven thousand people. Perhaps most importantly, though, is the fact that Béziers continued to be a major population center after its capture. This would not have been possible had the city been razed as the chroniclers claimed. Instead, the apparent destruction of the city reflects the rapid speed at which it was taken, which was highly unusual, and the prominent role that poor pilgrim-crusaders played in capturing the *castrum*.¹⁰⁷ What the siege of Béziers does reveal is the lack of control the legates had over the crusaders, and the need to better control the rank and file soldiers, especially to prevent them from looting and burning captured property.

The crusaders next targeted Carcassonne. Carcassonne fell under the lordship of Peter II of Aragon who, as both a loyal Catholic and opponent of the crusade, hoped to mediate between his vassal and the legates. Peter attempted to negotiate with the crusaders, but the legates would agree to the *castrum*'s surrender on the grounds that only Raymond-Roger and eleven others would be allowed to leave the city with their possessions. That, the king noted, would “happen when donkeys fly.”¹⁰⁸ But Peter's willingness to support Carcassonne's citizens only went so far. Peter refused to offer military assistance, claiming that “there was nothing he could do for them except pray...since I told you, I ordered you to drive out the heretics.”¹⁰⁹ Peter left, and

¹⁰⁶ Caesarius of Heisterbach, *The Dialogue on Miracles*, trans. Walter L. Wakefield, 197.

¹⁰⁷ Marvin, *The Occitan War*, 42-45.

¹⁰⁸ Tudela, 24.

¹⁰⁹ Tudela, 23. PVC, 178.

Carcassonne was placed under siege. The *castrum* capitulated, and Raymond-Roger was imprisoned, where he later died.

As an interesting contrast to Béziers, all the citizens were allowed to leave the city, including Cathar sympathizers.¹¹⁰ Carcassonne's voluntary surrender and the legates' ability to maintain control over this siege no doubt played a role in the milder treatment of the citizens. The legates' firmer grasp of power is revealed by the fact that Arnold Amalric explicitly forbid the crusaders from keeping "any of the town's wealth," and the crusaders listened to him.¹¹¹

After Carcassonne had surrendered, the legates realized they needed a secular leader to retain control of the territory and to thoroughly root out heresy. Legates acting as military commanders was problematic, as it directly involved them in killing, something that most theologians directly forbid, although some made an exception for heretics, who had willfully abandoned the Church. In general, the clergy tried to avoid taking an active role in military engagements during the crusade, but they did continue to lead troops on occasion.¹¹² Furthermore, knights generally resisted overt clerical domination and would follow the orders of a fellow knight more willingly.¹¹³ However, convincing a lord to commit themselves to an extended campaign in a hostile region proved difficult. The leadership of the crusade and the Trencavel lands were first offered to the Count of Saint-Pol, the Count of Nevers, and the Duke of Burgundy. However, they all refused it as "they had plenty of land in the Kingdom of France."¹¹⁴ A more pressing reason behind their refusal was most likely the difficulty any leader would have in subduing the region; those who already had land saw no reason to risk their lives

¹¹⁰ Andrew Roach, *The Devil's World: Heresy and Society 1100-1300* (White Plains: Taylor and Francis, 2005), 87.

¹¹¹ Tudela, 26.

¹¹² Marvin, *The Occitan War*, 53. Russell, *The Just War in the Middle Ages*, 252-256. Kienzle, *Cistercians, Heresy and Crusade*, 136-137.

¹¹³ Lippiatt, *Simon V of Montfort*, 67.

¹¹⁴ Tudela, 26. PVC, 55.

for territory that had proven resistant to comital authority for generations and would most likely be even more hostile to foreign rule.¹¹⁵

Finally, the legates offered the position to Simon, the fifth count of Montfort and the titular Earl of Leicester. He was an effective bridge between the chivalric practice and ecclesiastical ideals that the legates sought.¹¹⁶ While he swore allegiance to both the French and English kings, he firmly supported the French monarchy, especially after King John of England confiscated his English lands. His ancestors had grown increasingly close to the French king over the last few generations, but he was at the lower end of the French nobility, with limited landholdings and only ten vassals.¹¹⁷ As such, the Albigensian Crusade offered a ripe opportunity for Simon to expand his political power. Still, he was reluctant to accept as he had limited financial means and no promise of robust military support. In the end he accepted “on the understanding that [the crusaders] would come to his help if summoned.”¹¹⁸

Of course, Simon was also chosen for his piety. He was a man “in tune with the whole Christian world”¹¹⁹ and wholly committed to the idea of crusade and reform. He had abandoned the Fourth Crusade at the command of the pope, giving up the opportunity to gain wealth and land in the east.¹²⁰ Peter of les Vaux-de-Cernay emphasized Simon’s piety throughout the crusade, noting that he would often go into churches to pray as they travelled through the countryside or before major battles, and he also had close ties to the Cistercians.¹²¹ Throughout the crusade he continued to give gifts to Cistercian houses in return for their spiritual support,

¹¹⁵ Marvin, *The Occitan War*, 54.

¹¹⁶ Lippiatt, *Simon of Montfort*, 67.

¹¹⁷ Lippiatt, *Simon V of Montfort*, 2, 19-23. Marvin, *The Occitan War*, 56.

¹¹⁸ Tudela, 28.

¹¹⁹ PVC, 57.

¹²⁰ Geoffrey Villehardouin, *The Conquest of Constantinople*, in *Chronicles of the Crusades*, trans. Caroline Smith (New York: Penguin Books, 2008), 30.

¹²¹ PVC, 207-209, 276. Lippiatt, *Simon of Montfort*, 1, 182.

and he shared his spoils of conquest most liberally with his Cistercian allies, even though he often suffered from financial shortages.¹²²

The choice of Simon proved problematic for Peter II. For one, the legates had put Simon in charge of the Trencavel lands without consulting Peter, ignoring his position as overlord of Carcassonne. For another, Simon was a loyal supporter of the French king and would most likely pursue policies that favored the French, rather than the Aragonese, Crown.¹²³ Peter refused to accept the homage of Simon for Carcassonne, as he “wished to hold the city for himself.”¹²⁴ An agreement between him and Simon was bound to favor Simon more than Peter, who needed military support for his fight against the Muslims, something Simon could not provide so long as he was occupied with fighting heresy in Languedoc.¹²⁵ However, feeling obligated to follow the will of the pope, especially as he prepared for a holy war against the Spanish Saracens, Peter II eventually capitulated and accepted Simon as his vassal.¹²⁶

Despite this acceptance, Peter continued to try and negotiate peace between the crusaders and his vassals. At Pamiers in 1210, Peter met with the crusaders, “hoping to arrange peace between our Count [Simon] and the Count of Foix.”¹²⁷ He also met with Arnold Amalric at Portet.¹²⁸ In early 1211, he tried to reach an agreement in which “the count [of Foix] swore to abide by the instructions of the Church and not attack the crusaders, especially the Count de Montfort” and Simon “would give back all the territories of the count.”¹²⁹ None of these

¹²² Lippiatt, *Simon of Montfort*, 182. PVC, 95.

¹²³ Smith, *Heresy and Inquisition in the Lands of Aragon*, 33-34.

¹²⁴ PVC, 67.

¹²⁵ Lippiatt, *Simon of Montfort*, 28-29. PVC, 175.

¹²⁶ PVC, 67. Smith, *Heresy and Inquisition*, 32-33. Bisson, *The Crown of Aragon*, 39.

¹²⁷ PVC, 80-82.

¹²⁸ Tudela, 32.

¹²⁹ PVC, 103.

negotiations achieved anything “worth a trashy buckle-ring,”¹³⁰ but Peter was not willing to offer more tangible support than this before 1213. In May 1210, the knights of Montréal asked for military assistance, but he demanded they turn over Cabaret in return, something they were unwilling to do.¹³¹ Such an alliance would have been advantageous to both the lords of Montréal and Peter, but the lord of Montréal may have had heretical sympathies, and thus did not want to risk turning them over to such a staunchly Catholic lord.¹³² While the people of Languedoc turned to Peter for support in general, they were still leery of outside interference in their internal affairs.

Peter was also preparing for his campaign against the Almohads in Spain, which necessitated a stronger position in Languedoc. As such, he sought to establish good relations with both the crusaders and their opponents. In pursuing this aim, he negotiated marriages between his son and Simon de Montfort’s daughter, and his sister and Raymond VII of Toulouse.¹³³

VI. The Crusade: Conflicts Between Secular and Religious Leaders

Simon may have been chosen as the secular leader of the crusade, but the legates continued to play an influential role in how the crusade was conducted, and the papacy fully expected to control the trajectory of the crusade. When Simon sought advice, he turned to a combination of knights and bishops. At the siege of Minerve in 1210, Simon, “ever discreet and reliant on good counsel, declared that he would take no action in regard to accepting the surrender of the *castrum* unless it had the approval of the abbot, the appointed leader of the whole of Christ’s business.”¹³⁴

¹³⁰ Tudela, 32.

¹³¹ PVC, 81.

¹³² Sibly & Sibly, in PVC, 81 n20.

¹³³ PVC, 107. D. Smith, *Innocent III and the Crown of Aragon*, 82, 94-95. The marriage between Peter’s son and Simon’s daughter never took place.

¹³⁴ PVC, 83-84.

In 1217 at the siege of Toulouse, the legate Cardinal Bertrand offered Simon advice on how to deal with his enemies should the city be captured, and the bishop of Toulouse offered Simon advice and support throughout the crusade.¹³⁵ Simon took this advice seriously, and the legates played a critical role in determining how the crusade should proceed.

While Simon enjoyed a generally positive relationship with the legates and bishops on crusade, they did not always agree completely. For the most part, these disagreements were minor, but a major argument erupted between Simon and Arnold Amalric over the dukedom of Narbonne. Authority over Narbonne was traditionally shared between the archbishop and viscount of Narbonne, and both Simon and Arnold sought to expand their own authority over the *castrum* by claiming the dukedom for themselves.¹³⁶ Arnold claimed the dukedom through his position as archbishop of the city, and Simon through his position as the chief crusader. In claiming both secular and religious authority over Narbonne, Arnold was essentially working within the same framework as local bishops who had been criticized for their more political role. Arnold most likely avoided similar accusations because of his position as a papal legate and his membership in the Cistercian Order.

In February 1215, Simon received the homage of the town's viscount, further alienating the crusader from the archbishop. At the Fourth Lateran Council, Arnold refused to support Simon's claims to Toulouse, and Innocent reprimanded Simon for withdrawing "the loyalty you owe to [Arnold]."¹³⁷ In March 1216, Simon toured through northern France and was formally invested "with the duchy of Narbonne, the city of Toulouse and all those territories within his

¹³⁵ Tudela 94, 130, 142, 148, 164.

¹³⁶ Sibly & Sibly, in PVC, 250-251 n.29.

¹³⁷ Innocent III, *Quot et Quanta* (2 July 1215), in *The Albigensian Crusade: A Sourcebook*, trans. Rist, 47-48. Marvin, *the Occitan War*, 239.

domains which had been won by the crusaders,”¹³⁸ by Philip Augustus, despite Philip not having the authority to invest either the dukedom of Narbonne or the territories of Toulouse that fell under the lordship of the English crown.¹³⁹ Arnold responded by excommunicating Simon, although it ended up meaning little, especially as Arnold’s participation in the crusade greatly diminished after the arrival of the legate Peter Benevento in 1214.¹⁴⁰ The conflict was only resolved in early 1217 when the new pope Honorius III reinstated Arnold as Duke of Narbonne and called representatives of Simon and the archbishop to Rome to resolve their quarrel.¹⁴¹

Despite Arnold’s obvious political ambition, he and the other legates also continued to try and convert heretics throughout the crusade, although their fear that heretics would only pretend to be Christian to escape punishment meant they did not always accept protestations of innocence or repentance. Consequently, they also attracted accusations of burning faithful supporters of the church. In 1209

two heretics were brought before the Count... after taking counsel the Count decided that they should be burnt. The second heretic—the disciple—was seized with heartfelt grief; he began to show contrition and promised that he would freely forswear heresy and obey the Holy Roman Church in all things. A heated discussion arose amongst our people when they heard this; some said that now he was prepared to do what we had told him to do, he ought not to be condemned to die, others maintained that on the contrary he deserved death, arguing that it was plain that he had been a heretic and the promises he was now making owed more to his fear of impending death than to his desire to follow the Christian religion.¹⁴²

Despite this fear, the legates did try to convert heretics for the most part. At Minerve in 1210, Arnold Amalric agreed to spare the lives of the citizens if “they agreed to be reconciled

¹³⁸ PVC, 255-256.

¹³⁹ Marvin, *The Occitan War*, 240-241. The dukedom of Narbonne had been created in the 11th century by the Counts of Toulouse in order to expand their own authority.

¹⁴⁰ PVC, 250-251. Marvin, *The Occitan War*, 239.

¹⁴¹ Rist, *Papacy and Crusading in Europe*, 84.

¹⁴² PVC, 62.

and obey the order of the Church,” and visited several houses and “tried to convert them to better things.”¹⁴³ In 1211, the bishops “with the army went in[to Les Casses] and began to preach to the heretics in the hope of recalling them from error.”¹⁴⁴ At Muret in 1213, even though hostilities had already broken out between the crusaders and their opponents, the Bishop of Toulouse still sent “a priest to urge them to turn to the Lord God even at this late stage.”¹⁴⁵ What these persistent efforts reveal is a continued desire by the pope and his legates to convert heretics rather than simply kill them; the desire for reform never went away, despite the resistance and hostility the crusaders faced.

These attempts at reconciliation did not always mesh well with the more military aspects of the campaign. At Muret in 1213, the legates hoped to reach an agreement with Peter II of Aragon without resorting to violence. Fed up, Simon de Montfort told the bishops that “we have endured enough...the time has come for you to allow us to fight.”¹⁴⁶ This exchange reveals the influence legates still had in determining the course of the crusade, and it shows how the religious and secular aims of the crusade did not always align. The conflicts between the legates and Simon did not cause any rifts that threatened the overall success of the crusade, but it does reveal how religious ideals did not always coincide with the military realities of the war and how the ambitions of the legates came into conflict with the ambitions of Simon de Montfort.

VII. The Crusade: Conflicts Between Legates and the Pope

The legates did not always act in accord with the pope’s wishes. During the crusade, Innocent thought strategic decisions should be a papal reserve, but such a policy was difficult to

¹⁴³ PVC, 84-85.

¹⁴⁴ PVC, 120.

¹⁴⁵ PVC, 212.

¹⁴⁶ PVC, 208.

implement when he was so far away from the theater of war.¹⁴⁷ Occasionally this led to disagreements with his legates, especially as they were much less inclined to forgive men like Raymond and take a more aggressive military role. In 1214, Innocent sent a letter to his new legate Peter of Benevento telling him to reconcile Toulouse to the Church, as “they have knocked on the door—and for those humbly knocking an approach to the Church is not to be shut off.”¹⁴⁸ While this was an honest effort on Innocent’s part to repair relations between the Church and Toulouse, the chronicler Peter of les Vaux-de-Cernay, who represented the opinion of the legates, chose to interpret the arrival of Peter of Benevento as a diversion that allowed Simon de Montfort and the crusaders “to cross to Quercy and the Agenais and attack their enemies.”¹⁴⁹

Simon de Montfort’s forays into Quercy and the Agenais were especially problematic because they belonged to the Plantagenets and were not official targets of the crusade. While King John did not have the best relationship with the papacy, the Plantagenets were still considered orthodox sons of the Church, and Innocent had no desire to entirely cast them out. However, the misuse of Church funds, religious dissent, and weak comital control flourished on both sides of the Garonne; furthermore, Simon had no loyalty to a king who had confiscated his lands.¹⁵⁰ English support of the crusade was always weak as King John was under excommunication and his lands under interdict. Some Englishmen did take the cross, but Peter of les Vaux-de-Cernay accused them of “showing poor commitment to Christ’s work.”¹⁵¹ However,

¹⁴⁷ Graham-Leigh, *The Southern Nobility*, 56-57.

¹⁴⁸ Innocent III, *Etsi Tosoanorum excessus* (25 January 1214), in *The Albigensian Crusade: A Sourcebook*, trans. Rist, 46.

¹⁴⁹ PVC, 230.

¹⁵⁰ Nicholas Vincent, “England the Albigensian Crusade,” in *England and Europe in the Reign of Henry III* ed. K.U Björn (Taylor and Francis, 2002), 71. PVC, 154.

¹⁵¹ PVC, 194, 127.

general opinion in England heavily favored the crusaders, and Peter's complaints most likely reflected John's lukewarm attitude rather than the English crusaders on the ground.¹⁵²

Like Peter of Aragon, John did not support heresy, and the English crown had actively campaigned in Languedoc in the 1170s, ostensibly because it was heretical. However, Raymond VII was the son of John's sister Joan, and Toulouse was now seen as a potential ally rather than the implacable enemy they had been in the twelfth century.¹⁵³ In 1214, John, "who was much disturbed that his nephew...had been dispossessed of his territories,"¹⁵⁴ mustered an army in Gascony. Viewed as a hostile move by the crusaders, he was still in the area after he had been defeated by Philip Augustus at the Battle of Bouvines in July, and his continued presence was most likely a defensive maneuver to prevent further attacks by both the French and the crusaders.¹⁵⁵ Despite his opposition to the crusade, John would never be an active threat in the same way Peter of Aragon would become.

The crusade lacked a clear policy in how to deal with noble opposition to the Church. Innocent wanted to avoid treating them too harshly as to avoid accusations of greed, and Philip Augustus warned that Raymond's lands could not be confiscated "until he is condemned for heresy."¹⁵⁶ Innocent was more interested in reforming local lords to the Church and replacement was a last resort.¹⁵⁷ Such reformation efforts were essential to his dreams of establishing a unified Christendom.¹⁵⁸ However, in deciding how nobles should be treated, the Church

¹⁵² Vincent, "England and the Albigensian Crusade," 75.

¹⁵³ Vincent, "England and the Albigensian Crusade," 69-77.

¹⁵⁴ PVC, 234.

¹⁵⁵ Sibly & Sibly, in Peter Vaux-de-Cernay, *The History of the Albigensian Crusade*, 234.

¹⁵⁶ Philip Augustus, Letter to Innocent III April 1208, in PVC 306.

¹⁵⁷ Graham-Leigh, *The Southern Nobility*, 49-50.

¹⁵⁸ Innocent III, *Post miserabile* (August 1198), in *Crusade and Christendom: Annotated Documents in Translation from Innocent III to the Fall of Acre, 1187-1291*, ed. Jessalyn Bird, Edward Peters, and James M. Powell, 32-33. Powell, *Anatomy of A Crusade*, 18-20. J.C. Moore, *Innocent III: To Root Up and To Plant* (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 44-47, 55-56.

evaluated all aspects of noble behavior toward the Church, not just their attitudes toward heresy.¹⁵⁹ Thus, men such as Raymond-Roger, the count of Foix, opened themselves up to attacks by the crusaders; Raymond-Roger made donations to the Cistercian abbey of Boulbonne and actively sought to make peace with the crusaders, which should have ensured the safety of his lands, but his conflicts with other religious houses and his violent response to crusader trespasses on his land served to justify the seizure of his land in the legates' eyes.¹⁶⁰ For the most part, the legates were much less forgiving toward the nobility and quicker to punish their transgressions.¹⁶¹ Negotiations often failed between the legates and the local nobility because the legates expected the nobility to fulfill harsh penalties, no matter how impractical. In 1211, the legates demanded that Raymond VI

“must dismiss the mercenaries that same night or next morning; must restore their rights to the clergy, who should be supreme in everything...the count must expel all faithless Jews...[and] hand over to the abbot and his advisers all the heretical believers...nor in future should they wear clothes made of rich fabrics but only coarse brown capes...they must dismantle their castles and strongholds. No knight must reside in a town but out in the country among villeins; they must never exact unjust tolls...all usurers must renounce usury.”¹⁶²

Such demands were especially onerous on the mercantile economy of Languedoc and nearly impossible to fulfill. After all, many nobles resided in town so that they could benefit from the region's rich trade, and there was not a secular ruler in Europe that accepted the supreme authority of the clergy willingly.¹⁶³ Peter sympathized with Raymond's plight and

¹⁵⁹ Graham-Leigh, *The Southern Nobility*, 59-69.

¹⁶⁰ Tudela, 75-76; PVC, 113, 104.

¹⁶¹ Jessalyn Bird, “The Paris Masters and the Justification of the Albigensian Crusade,” *Crusades* 6 (2007), 126-129.

¹⁶² Tudela, *Chanson*, 38-39.

¹⁶³ Strayer, *The Albigensian Crusades*, 5-9. Costen, *Cathars*, 93.

argued that the demands “must be changed!”¹⁶⁴ The agreement was rejected, and the next day, the legates excommunicated Raymond once again.¹⁶⁵

For the pope, the most important consideration during the crusade was whether or not it was fought justly. He wanted above all to nullify the threat of heresy, preferably through conversion rather than force. In justifying the crusade, Innocent relied heavily on the interpretations of the Paris masters.¹⁶⁶ Heretics were legitimate targets of military action because they threatened the physical existence of the Catholic Church, in the same way that the Saracens in the east threatened Christendom. However, there was debate on the extent clergymen could get involved in condemning the murder of the Church’s enemies. Similarly, war was justified only if the crusaders themselves had pure motives.¹⁶⁷ In pursuing this aim of a just war, Innocent was sensitive to criticisms of greed, especially after the troubles of the Fourth Crusade, and he was more than willing to pursue reconciliation with local leaders such as Raymond VI and Raymond-Roger.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁴ Tudela, 38.

¹⁶⁵ PVC 108-109. This meeting occurred at either Montpellier (Peter of Vaux-de-Cernay) or Arles (Tudela) on January 27 1211. Montpellier is the more likely location. Peter claimed that Raymond agreed to the terms and then broke his promises and fled; Tudela claimed that Raymond outright rejected the terms after discussing them with the Toulousains. Tudela’s account is probably more accurate as Peter was constantly trying to denigrate Raymond as unfaithful and deceitful (see PVC 22-25 for a description of all Raymond’s faults, many of them exaggerated). Additionally, as town councils were powerful political bodies, it would not be out of the ordinary for Raymond to discuss terms of surrender with them.

¹⁶⁶ Bird, *Paris Masters and the Justification of the Albigensian Crusade*, 119.

¹⁶⁷ Russell, *The Just War*, 215-218.

¹⁶⁸ Bird, “Paris Masters,” 126; Graham-Leigh, *The Southern Nobility*, 68-69. Geoffrey Villehardouin, *The Conquest of Constantinople*, 17, 24, 30. J.C Moore, *To Root Up and To Plant* (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 107-111, 120-122. Jane Sayers, *Innocent III: Leader of Europe* (New York: Longman Publishing, 1994), 175: The Fourth Crusade had been a disaster for the papacy as it had severely undermined the pope’s authority. From the beginning, Innocent struggled to maintain control of the crusading forces, who left for the Holy Land from several departure points, against the wishes of Innocent. The Venetians were contracted to build a fleet for the crusaders, once again without papal oversight. When the crusaders were short of funds, the Doge of Venice suggested that the crusaders help him attack Zara. Innocent forbade the attack, “for it is a Christian city.” Shortly thereafter, the crusaders ignored Innocent’s demands to leave Constantinople alone, except for a handful of crusaders, including Simon de Montfort, who followed the pope’s orders and continued to the Holy Land. Constantinople was also a Christian city, and these attacks were unacceptable; the crusaders’ decisions to divert to Zara and Constantinople were seen as greedy, and despite Innocent’s condemnation of the attacks, they attracted criticisms of the Church as well. Innocent could not control the crusaders, and it made him especially vigilant to accusations of greed during the Albigensian Crusade.

When Peter II accused the crusade of taking the lands of loyal Catholics, Innocent took his word for it and ended the crusade indulgence on Peter's advice.¹⁶⁹ In 1213, Innocent reprimanded Arnold Amalric and Simon de Montfort for they had "led the crusaders into the territories of the Count of Toulouse and have thus not only occupied places inhabited by heretics but have equally extended greedy hands into lands which had no ill reputation for heresy."¹⁷⁰ Innocent willingly listened to Peter because he had proven throughout his reign that he was a pious king. He had been crowned by Innocent, and it had enhanced his position as a Christian monarch, and Innocent felt that the Church had "especially taken care to honour you [Peter], and on account of this you have accrued both power and fame."¹⁷¹

Peter II was in no way sympathetic to heresy; he had implemented the death penalty for heretics in his lands, and he had sworn to continue his persecution of heresy when he was crowned by the pope.¹⁷² He had even drawn attention to the problem when he sent a letter to the pope complaining "how heretical they were" in Carcassonne.¹⁷³ His opposition to the crusade did not stem from disapproval of the crusade's aims but rather from how it was carried out and the threat it posed to his own political authority.

At the Battle of Las Navas in 1212, Peter led a resounding victory against his Muslim enemies, granting him great moral authority. It was only after this victory that Peter seriously began to petition the pope to end the Albigensian Crusade, and the pope was willing to listen because of the reputation Peter gained from his success against the Muslims.¹⁷⁴

¹⁶⁹ PVC, 153.

¹⁷⁰ Innocent III, letter 18 Jan 1213, in *Historia Albigensis*, trans. Sibly, 310.

¹⁷¹ Innocent III, *Is in Cujus* 21 May/1 June 1213, in *The Albigensian Crusade: A Sourcebook*, trans. Rist, 43.

¹⁷² Smith, *Heresy and Inquisition*, 32.

¹⁷³ Tudela, 12.

¹⁷⁴ Smith, *Innocent III and the Crown of Aragon*, 116-120.

The legates were outraged when they learned Innocent had ended the indulgence. They immediately sent a delegation to Innocent who, convinced of their argument, “declared his response to the King’s envoys invalid.”¹⁷⁵ He reprimanded Peter for practicing “impiety under the appearance of piety” and warned him to “not dispense, through yourself or others, advice, help or favour to them [Toulouse].”¹⁷⁶ Despite the crusaders’ flouting of papal mandates, the papacy still relied on and trusted the reports of his legates. When made aware of the reasons behind the crusaders’ actions, Innocent usually sided with them. However, Innocent would continue to try and resolve the differences between the two sides of the crusade. In the same letter that he reprimanded Peter for acting impiously, he also urged him to work with Simon to destroy heresy.¹⁷⁷

The way in which the pope and his legates resolved their conflicts can most clearly be seen in the Anonymous Successor’s account of the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215. Raymond VI, Raymond VII, the Count of Comminges, and the Count of Foix travelled to Rome to petition the pope for their lands back. Innocent was ready to do so, lamenting that “bitter accusations reach me each month,” and that his legates “ought to be giving alms, not taking them.”¹⁷⁸ But his legates advised him against it, asking “how can you thus covertly disinherit the count de Montfort, a truly obedient son of holy Church?”¹⁷⁹ In the end, after much debate, Innocent affirmed Simon’s possession of the fief, but he ordered that the count of Foix’s castle “should be given back to him,” and forbid the crusaders from making war on either the Count of

¹⁷⁵ PVC, 185.

¹⁷⁶ Innocent III, *Is in Cujus*, 44.

¹⁷⁷ Innocent III, *Is in Cujus*, 45.

¹⁷⁸ Tudela, 79.

¹⁷⁹ Tudela, 77.

Comminges or the Count of Foix.¹⁸⁰ He also absolved Raymond VII of any blame and ensured that he would retain Provence, while his father was sent into exile and lost all of his lands.¹⁸¹ As much as Innocent wanted to reform the Languedocian nobility to the Church, he accepted his legates' complaints against Raymond as legitimate and understood the need to reward Simon, "who had struggled courageously and faithfully above all others in the fight for the faith."¹⁸² Even if accepted complaints brought against the crusaders, he still trusted the judgement of his legates above all else.

VIII. Resistance and Control: Maintaining Authority

Resistance to the crusade began to consolidate in 1213 around Peter of Aragon. In 1212, Peter successfully defeated the Almohads in Spain and turned his full attention to Languedoc. As his father before him, Peter's policy was to ensure the safety of his vassals and check the power of the Capetians in the area.

Peter's relationship with Simon dissolved in the face of Peter's mounting hostility toward the crusade. Even though Peter had accepted Simon de Montfort as his vassal, Simon's loyalty to the French Crown was problematic, especially after Simon de Montfort proved unhelpful to Peter's fight against the Almohads, and Peter repudiated Simon in 1213.¹⁸³ Peter of les Vaux-de-Cernay accused Peter II of being unfair and claimed that Simon had "never failed to carry out his obligations to the king."¹⁸⁴ This was not strictly true, as Guy de Lucy had left Spain at a critical moment in order to assist the Albigensian Crusade at Simon's request, which had deeply angered

¹⁸⁰ Tudela, 82.

¹⁸¹ PVC, 254-255. Sumpton, *The Albigensian Crusade*, 181.

¹⁸² PVC, 254.

¹⁸³ Lippiatt, *Simon of Montfort*, 28-29. PVC, 175. Smith, *Heresy and Inquisition*, 32-33.

¹⁸⁴ PVC, 189.

the king.¹⁸⁵ Around the same time as Peter sent his missives to the pope asking for an end to the crusade, he also accepted the count of Toulouse as a vassal. Toulouse had traditionally been “part of the domains of the king of France,”¹⁸⁶ and in taking Toulouse under his protection, Peter expanded his own power at the expense of the Crown of Aragon’s longtime enemies.¹⁸⁷ While it was not unusual for someone to swear fealty to more than one lord, the oaths of allegiance sworn by the count of Toulouse effectively transferred his lands and loyalty to the Crown of Aragon.¹⁸⁸

Unfortunately, Peter’s resistance would be short-lived. In September 1213, Peter arrived before Muret, intending to face Simon de Montfort in open battle. Raymond VI advised the king to “plant barricades round the tents so that no cavalry can get through; then if the French try to attack, first we use crossbows to wound them and then as they swerve aside, we make our charge and rout them all.”¹⁸⁹ However, Peter rejected this advice as cowardly. Instead, Peter opted to lead a charge across the marshes, taking a position in the second row, a highly unusual and dangerous move for a king in medieval warfare.¹⁹⁰ It would prove to be a grave mistake. The army charged in a disorderly manner, “paying heed to neither count nor king,” and Peter was “struck and so severely wounded that his blood spilled out on the ground and he fell his full length dead.”¹⁹¹ The battle quickly turned into a rout as Peter’s men panicked and fled, and the crusaders “set upon the hindmost and slew many thousands of them.”¹⁹² Peter’s death ended dreams of Aragon-Catalonian expansion in the Midi, and the people of Languedoc would not mount another major rebellion until 1216, when Raymond VII was able to build a significant

¹⁸⁵ D. Smith, *Innocent III and the Crown of Aragon*, 101-102.

¹⁸⁶ PVC, 180.

¹⁸⁷ Smith, *Innocent III and the Crown of Aragon*, 125. Graham-Leigh, *Southern Nobility*, 119.

¹⁸⁸ Sibly & Sibly, in PVC, 180-181, n40.

¹⁸⁹ Tudela, 70.

¹⁹⁰ PVC, 211.

¹⁹¹ Tudela, 70.

¹⁹² PVC, 211-212.

coalition against Simon de Montfort. This second phase of rebellion would last much longer and would not be resolved until after the death of the chief crusader in 1218.¹⁹³

The crusade did have some support among the local population, primarily among disaffected lords and the merchant class. Count Baldwin, Raymond VI's brother, sided with the crusaders because he "did not want to be under his brother's control" and "anything he should conquer with them should be entirely his own."¹⁹⁴ When Baldwin first came to Toulouse in 1194 after growing up in France, Raymond refused to accept him until he "obtained the letters and seals from the prelates and barons who knew of his birth."¹⁹⁵ Raymond remained resistant to Baldwin, and even when Baldwin fought against the lords of Baux on his behalf, he "did not reward him by assigning any territory to him."¹⁹⁶ The crusade offered Baldwin a chance to stake a claim in the region, and he remained a loyal supporter until his death in 1214. The merchant class also offered support to Simon. Simon alleviated his reliance on local lords by turning to the burghers and granting them significant economic boons in exchange for their support, such as exemptions from tolls and customs.¹⁹⁷

But for the most part, the crusaders struggled to foster and maintain support among the local nobility. Languedocian nobles were primarily interested in pursuing their own political autonomy and tended to support whichever side promised the most political gain.¹⁹⁸ Afraid of approaching crusaders, *castra* would often surrender, only to rebel after Simon de Montfort moved on. In late 1209, both Castres and Lombres deserted the crusade.¹⁹⁹ Early in 1212, both

¹⁹³ Marvin, *The Occitan War*, 242-267. Smith, *Inquisition and Heresy*, 17-25.

¹⁹⁴ Tudela, 45. PVC, 121-122.

¹⁹⁵ Puylaurens, 31.

¹⁹⁶ Puylaurens, 31.

¹⁹⁷ Lippiatt, *Simon of Montfort*, 147.

¹⁹⁸ Lippiatt, *Simon of Montfort*, 147-150, 166-167.

¹⁹⁹ PVC, 72.

Rabastens and Puylaurens had “sworn oaths and broken them.”²⁰⁰ In late 1213, “many knights in the Count’s territory now seceded from God, the Church and our Count” while Simon was occupied in Provence.²⁰¹ Early the next year, Narbonne broke from the count “because they believed no more crusaders would come.”²⁰² Aimeric, lord of Montréal, also “deserted God and the Count.”²⁰³ The lord of Cabaret, Peter-Roger, “an old man rich in years of evil-doing,”²⁰⁴ resisted the crusaders and the lordship of Simon, much as he had resisted the lordship of the Trencavels. His goal was always to maintain his own independence, and he was representative of the kinds of opposition Simon would face.²⁰⁵

These broken alliances were met with quick and violent retribution. The nobles who defected did not necessarily see their actions as betrayal, as it was a common cultural practice in the region, but Simon de Montfort envisioned his rule in the context of northern French customs, which saw the actions of these lords as the worst sort of treachery.²⁰⁶ William of Tudela reported that after several *castra* reneged, Simon reconquered the area with force, and “in Touelles, which surrendered to him, he killed every wretch that he could find there.”²⁰⁷ At Lavaur in 1211, Simon de Montfort had the defenders put to the sword, “the Dame of Lavaur, sister of Aimeric and a heretic of the worst sort, thrown into a pit and stones heaped upon her,” and “innumerable heretics” burnt.²⁰⁸ This was the first time during the crusade in which the crusaders did not attempt to convert the heretics before burning them, and the massacre at Lavaur was

²⁰⁰ Tudela, 55. PVC, 129.

²⁰¹ PVC, 222.

²⁰² PVC, 225.

²⁰³ PVC, 73.

²⁰⁴ PVC, 69.

²⁰⁵ Marvin, *The Occitan War*, 63-65. PVC, 68-69.

²⁰⁶ Marvin, *The Occitan War*, 65. Lippiatt, *Simon of Montfort*, 206.

²⁰⁷ Tudela, 56. PVC, 145.

²⁰⁸ PVC, 117. Tudela, 41. Tudela says 400 heretics were burnt.

comparatively large to other sieges during the crusade.²⁰⁹ This was a result of the dangerous opposition Lavaur presented to the crusade, and the fact that they openly harbored the traitor Aimeric of Montréal.

Violent punishment was used against all traitors, whether they were Languedocian or French. When a French clerk betrayed Montréal to the enemy, Simon had him “dragged by a horse through the city of Carcassonne and hanged.”²¹⁰ A Frenchman who killed Giraud de Pépieux’s uncle was “thrown into a pit and buried alive,”²¹¹ even though the Frenchman was of high rank, which usually alleviated the type of punishment inflicted.

Punishment was also used against those who refused to surrender in the first place. In September 1212, Simon demanded that Moissac hand over the mercenaries or “he would not let one of them escape alive.”²¹² At the beginning of the crusade, “all agreed that 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.”²¹³ The need to reduce the amount of resistance was important as Simon’s military support became rather limited after 1209, and he did not have the resources to face unified resistance.²¹⁴

The crusaders were not the only ones to violently punish their enemies. In 1211, the Count of Foix and his men “clubbed [crusaders] to death.”²¹⁵ Giraud de Pépieux, who defected after the death of his uncle, captured a contingent of crusaders and “put out their eyes; more than that, he cut off their ears and noses and upper lips and sent them off naked to find their way back

²⁰⁹ Marvin, *The Occitan War*, 103-105.

²¹⁰ PVC, 73-74.

²¹¹ Tudela, 30.

²¹² Tudela, 62.

²¹³ Tudela, 21.

²¹⁴ Marvin, *The Occitan War*, 45, 238.

²¹⁵ Tudela, 42. PVC, 183.

to the Count.”²¹⁶ Baldwin, Raymond’s brother, was betrayed by the lord of Lolmie and “hanged from a walnut tree.”²¹⁷ When the crusade’s opponents retook Castelnaudary in autumn 1211, they killed many of the crusaders stationed in the surrounding garrisons.²¹⁸ Near Carcassonne in 1212 the son of Raymond-Roger, Roger-Bernard, and a contingent of mercenaries killed crusaders “and tore them limb from limb, the rest they took to Foix. Here they kept them in chains and tore them to pieces with the most monstrous tortures.”²¹⁹

Such actions were not unusual in medieval warfare. The perceived brutality of the war comes from the fact that it lasted nearly twenty years and subjected the area to sustained warfare based around sieging and raiding that was more intense than Languedoc was used to.²²⁰ While warfare had been endemic to the region for over a century, it had always been focused on the relatively small power struggles of the local nobility within the same cultural context, while the Albigensian Crusade introduced large armies under foreign leaders intent on changing a significant part of Languedocian society. For Simon and his crusaders, violence was essential to maintaining their authority; the ability to back up claims to authority with military success was a key component of legitimizing authority across Europe during this period. The difference for Simon de Montfort lay in the fact that his actions were “justified by canon law rather than feudal practice.”²²¹

The generally brutal nature of medieval warfare is reflected in the way the chroniclers discussed violence. Violence was always justified for whichever side the chronicler supported, despite both the crusaders and their opponents doing many of the same things. For Peter of les

²¹⁶ PVC, 70.

²¹⁷ PVC, 222-225.

²¹⁸ PVC, 130.

²¹⁹ PVC, 189, 169.

²²⁰ Marvin, *The Occitan War*, 22.

²²¹ Lippiatt, *Simon of Montfort*, 206-207.

Vaux-de-Cernay, a staunch supporter of the crusade, the actions of the crusaders were always valid. In 1210, when the crusaders “put out the eyes of the defenders, over a hundred in number, and cut off their noses,”²²² Peter made sure to emphasize that this was a necessary response to the previous transgressions of the crusade’s opponents and not out of a “delight in cruelty”²²³ even though when Giraud de Pépieux did the same to the crusaders it was “a wicked crime, unheard of cruelty!”²²⁴ The Anonymous Successor of Tudela did not support the crusade, and as such, excused the actions of those that opposed the crusade. When the locals attacked the crusaders in 1218, “they hacked and dismembered them, so that feet and fists...littered the battlefield and encrusted the reddened ground.”²²⁵ Tudela’s Successor described such actions as only “a scene of war,”²²⁶ while Peter of Vaux-de-Cernay described the same actions as brutal and as “acts of madness.”²²⁷

The need to violently suppress dissention partially arose from the limited military support Simon de Montfort had. Despite the large turnout of crusaders at the beginning of the campaign, they quickly dispersed once they earned their indulgence. The proximity of Languedoc to their homelands made their obligations to the crusade short-lived.²²⁸ After the first campaign ended in 1209, the “great host broke up, for it could hold together no longer.”²²⁹ Both the nobility and common men departed at an alarmingly frequent rate, and in 1210, a forty-days minimum service

²²² PVC, 79.

²²³ PVC, 79.

²²⁴ PVC, 70.

²²⁵ Song of the Cathar Wars, 180.

²²⁶ Ibid.

²²⁷ PVC, 274.

²²⁸ Marvin, “Thirty-Nine Days and A Wake-Up: The Impact of the Indulgence and Forty Days Service on the Albigensian Crusade, 1209-1218,” in *The Historian* 65 (2002), 75. Daniel Power, “Who Went on the Albigensian Crusade?” in *English Historical Review* 78 (2013), 1056.

²²⁹ Tudela, 28.

was instituted to earn the indulgence.²³⁰ Despite this, men would leave as soon as their forty days' were up, even if it meant leaving in the middle of a siege. In 1211, Simon was forced to lift the siege on Toulouse "when the crusaders had completed their forty days service."²³¹ In 1213, men left during a siege in Albi; "left almost alone, Guy [de Montfort] was compelled to abandon the siege."²³²

Simon's strongest support came from his immediate family and vassals. Simon could not call on the support of his extended family, however. They were mostly men of equal or greater rank with close ties to the Capetian monarchy. The king offered them better chances of advancement; Simon, on the other hand, lay outside the sphere of royal government, even though he served in the royal court for several years. As a result, Simon's staunchest supporters throughout the crusade remained his immediate family and men who had close geographical ties to him or were his social inferiors. For example, both Robert Mauvoisin and Simon of Neauphle came from lands bordering the Montfort fiefs in France. Both stayed in the Midi well beyond the minimum service, and Robert served as an important administrator during the crusade.²³³

Throughout the crusade, Simon relied on the support of his brother and son. Guy de Montfort joined his brother in December 1211 after returning from the crusader states, where he had served as lord of Sidon.²³⁴ In 1212, Guy subdued the territories of the Count of Foix while Simon besieged Penne. After he had "completely destroyed numerous strong *castra*" he returned to Penne to assist his brother as other crusaders departed after completing their forty days' service.²³⁵ Simon would take a similar tactic at the siege of Moissac, where the brothers worked

²³⁰ Marvin, "Thirty Nine Days," 78, 85.

²³¹ Puylaurens, 42.

²³² PVC, 196, 158, 232-233, 252.

²³³ Lippiatt, *Simon of Montfort*, 20, 62-68, 72-74. PVC, 71.

²³⁴ PVC, 144.

²³⁵ PVC, 157-158.

together before Simon sent Guy to capture more fortresses.²³⁶ Simon trusted his brother to expand and maintain the crusaders' military authority over the region, and Guy was one of the few who stayed throughout the duration of the crusade.²³⁷ In return, Simon granted Guy the fief of Rabastens in 1213.²³⁸ In 1215, Simon sent his brother as his envoy to the Fourth Lateran Council to stop those "obstructing the business of the faith by working for the restoration of the Counts of Toulouse and Foix to their former position."²³⁹ Guy not only helped Simon obtain new territory but also represented him and helped maintain those claims. Simon's son played a similar role; in 1213, "Amaury with his small force applied himself vigorously to attacking and capturing castra in Gascony."²⁴⁰ The following year Simon left Amaury in charge of the siege of Casseneuil, and he played a leading role, along with Guy de Montfort, in the struggle over Beaucaire.²⁴¹ In 1217, Simon "left another large force...under the command of his son Amaury."²⁴²

Simon's wife, Alice Montmorency, also provided considerable assistance during the crusade. She played an important role in raising troops for the crusade; in 1210, she travelled to the Midi "accompanied by numerous knights."²⁴³ This support was essential to Simon's ability to go on the offensive, and it was not the only time she led troops from France into Languedoc.²⁴⁴ She was especially important in securing the financial support of her family, the powerful Montmorency clan, although Simon still struggled to raise enough funds.²⁴⁵ She also played an

²³⁶ PVC, 164-165.

²³⁷ Lippiatt, *Simon of Montfort*, 57. PVC, 195, 168, 230, 240-1, 252, 259.

²³⁸ PVC, 218.

²³⁹ PVC, 254.

²⁴⁰ PVC, 198.

²⁴¹ PVC, 233, 259.

²⁴² PVC, 271.

²⁴³ PVC, 78.

²⁴⁴ PVC, 161, 205. Tudela, 151.

²⁴⁵ Tudela, 146. Lippiatt, *Simon of Montfort*, 60.

important negotiating role with departing crusaders. In 1213, she “begged them passionately not to turn their backs on the Lord’s business,”²⁴⁶ and managed to convince the bishop of Chartres to remain with his troops. By 1217, she was acting as castellan of Toulouse while her husband campaigned elsewhere.²⁴⁷ In a region where alliances shifted overnight, the support of Simon’s family was crucial to securing stability and maintaining authority. In 1211, Simon de Montfort suffered when “his Countess was at Lavaur; their eldest son, Amaury, was ill at Fanjeaux; a daughter, born in the area, was being nursed in Montréal. None of them could see each other or give each other any support.”²⁴⁸ Languedoc would never provide Simon the political support he needed, so he turned to his personal networks instead.

IX. Conclusion

Simon de Montfort died in 1218 while attempting to take Toulouse. He was succeeded by his son, Amaury, who proved to be a much less effective ruler than his father, although the papacy continued to support his claims until Amaury ceded them to the French king in 1219.²⁴⁹ Pope Honorius III would take a more active role than his predecessor in the second half of the Albigensian Crusade, but he became increasingly disillusioned with the ability of military force to deal with the threat of heresy. It is in Honorius’ reign that we begin to see the beginning of the Inquisition process that would eventually replace the crusade after 1229.²⁵⁰ Honorius emphasized the need for French involvement in the region, and finally, after many years of trying, persuaded the French King, now Louis VIII, to take military action in the region in 1226.²⁵¹ In 1229,

²⁴⁶ PVC, 96.

²⁴⁷ Marvin, *The Occitan War*, 271.

²⁴⁸ PVC, 132.

²⁴⁹ PVC, 278.

²⁵⁰ Rist, *Crusading and Papacy*, 87.

²⁵¹ Honorius III, *Populus Israel* a (3 Jan 1218), in *The Albigensian Crusade: A Sourcebook*, 51. Rist, *Papacy and Crusading*, 107. Marvin, *The Occitan War*, 301.

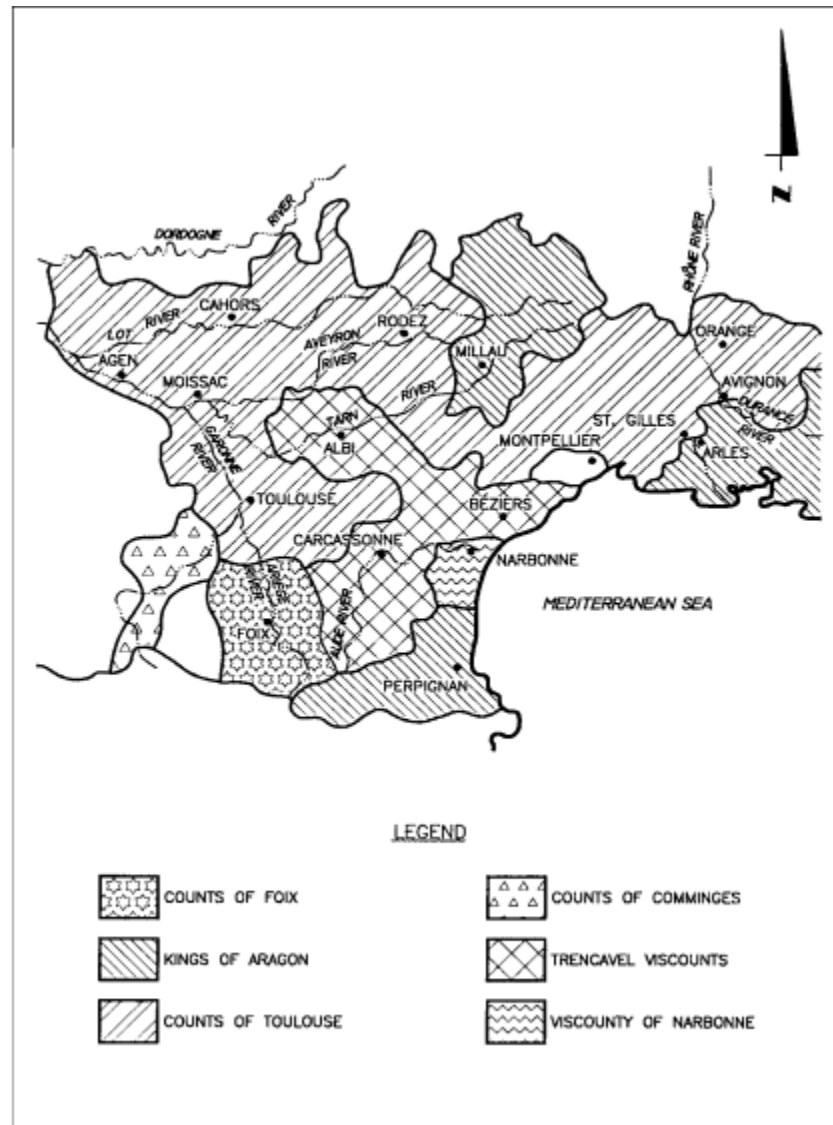
Raymond VII finally capitulated and formally surrendered to the French government; he would retain his lands, like most lords in the region.²⁵² For the most part, life continued on in Languedoc as it had always done after the end of the crusade; the region would not consider itself as French until well in the nineteenth century, despite being more firmly under French political control, and it would maintain strong cultural ties to Catalonia until the French Revolution.²⁵³ Yet the crusade subjugated the region to French authority, and this allowed the Inquisition to take place as religious leaders worked with the backing of secular authorities to eradicate heresy from the land.

The crusade reveals how the lack of strong political support in Languedoc resulted in a violent war that sought to suppress both religious and political dissent. The need to punish the crusade's opponents arose not from religious conviction but from weak political strength. For the crusade's opponents, the war was an act of aggression on the part of the French, but the legates and crusaders themselves identified strongly with the religious motivations behind the crusade. The relationship between religious ideology and political ambition was complex, and the different cultural perspectives of the crusaders and Languedocians further complicated matters. The resulting war was not significantly more violent or barbaric than any other medieval war, but it was horrific nonetheless.

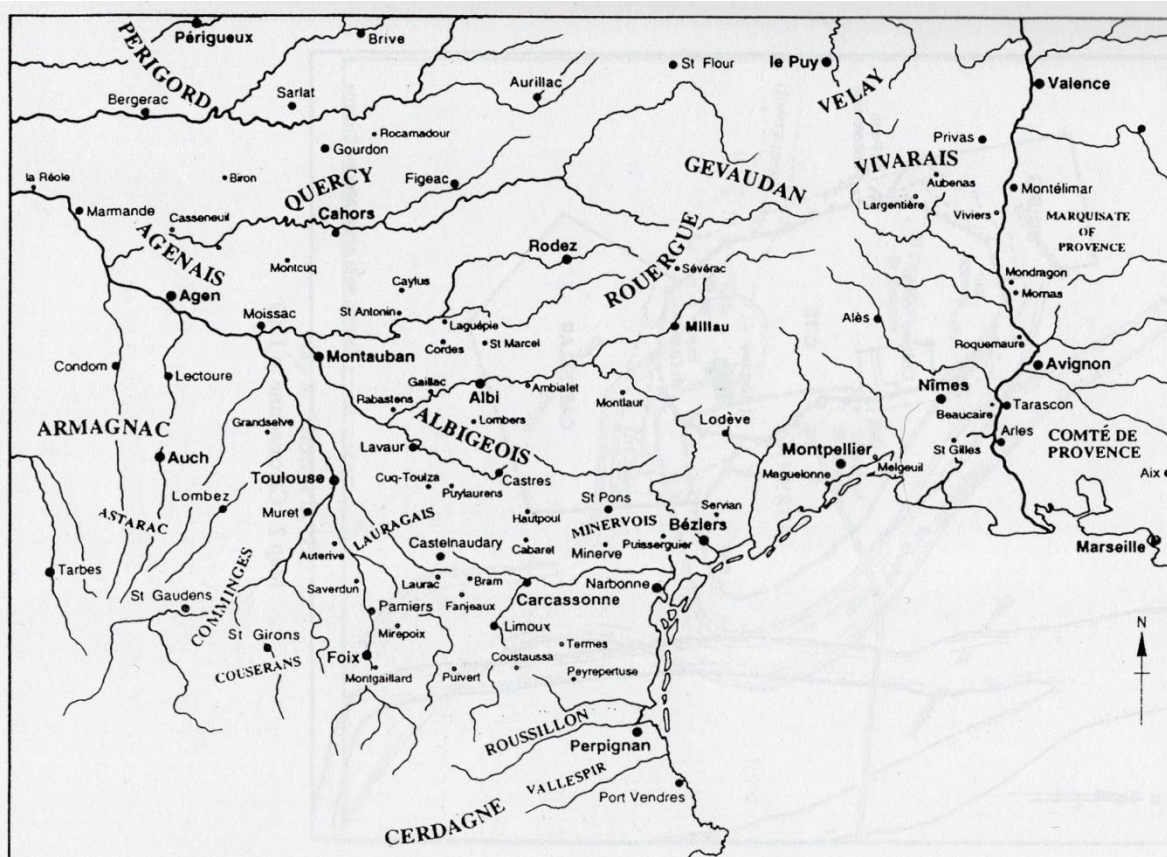
²⁵² Marvin, *The Occitan War*, 302. Graham-Leigh, *The Southern Nobility*, 2.

²⁵³ Smith, *Heresy and Inquisition*, 25.

Appendix A: Maps of Languedoc



Marvin, Laurence W. *The Occitan War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), xviii.



Map 1. The Midi in the early 13th century

Sibly, W.A. and M.D. trans. and eds. *The History of the Albigenian Crusade: Peter of les Vaux-de-Cernay's Historia Albigenensis* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2000), xi.

Appendix B: Important People

❖ **Simon de Montfort (1165?-1218)**

- Secular leader of the crusade. While he made significant political gains during the crusade, he also believed in the religious goals of the crusade. He had particularly close ties to the Cistercians, unlike the local nobility, making him particularly popular with the papacy. He came from northern France.

❖ **Raymond VI of St. Gilles (1156-1222)**

- Count of Toulouse. He suffered from poor relations with the papacy. He was an ineffective political leader for the most part, and he was never able to establish a loyal base around himself.

❖ **Raymond VII of St. Gilles (1197-1249)**

- A more charismatic leader than his father, Raymond began to play a prominent role in 1216 when he was eighteen. He would eventually surrender in 1229 to the French monarchy, tired of war.

❖ **Innocent III (r. 1198-1216)**

- Considered one of the most political popes, he would call three crusades, including the Albigensian. Despite this, he honestly believed that heresy threatened the very existence of Christianity and thought the crusade was the only way to solve the problem. However, during the crusade he would prove indecisive in how he dealt with complaints against the crusaders.

❖ **Arnold Amalric (d. 1225)**

- Cistercian abbot and papal legate during the crusade. Probably one of the most politically motivated of the clergymen active in the region, he also claimed the dukedom of Narbonne after being named archbishop in 1212. He played an important leadership role in the Crusade until about 1212.

❖ **Raymond-Roger, Count of Foix (d. 1223)**

- One of the most skilled military commanders during the Albigensian Crusade. However, Simon de Montfort antagonized him on multiple occasions, turning him into an implacable enemy. While he was not accused of heresy himself, his sister and wife were known heretics.

❖ **Raymond-Roger Trencavel (d. 1209)**

- The young viscount of Carcassonne and Béziers. He was captured and imprisoned, where he died. He most likely died from illness, but some accused Simon de Montfort of having him purposely killed.

❖ **Philip Augustus (1165-1223)**

- King of France during the Albigensian Crusade. He remained lukewarm to the endeavor as he was involved in a war with both England and the Holy Roman Empire during the beginning of the crusade, and he did not see the region as worth the investment.

❖ **Peter II 'The Catholic' of Aragon (1178-1213)**

- King of Aragon-Catalonia. He opposed the crusade, despite his hatred of heresy. Like many southerners, he viewed the crusade in political terms rather than religious. He died in 1213 at the Battle of Muret.
- ❖ **John I of England (1166-1216)**
 - His involvement in the crusade was minimal, but he was viewed with mistrust by the crusaders because his sister had married Raymond VI. However, he was more concerned with his war against Philip Augustus, and he was excommunicated by the Church, so he did not offer much support to Toulouse
- ❖ **Honorius III (r. 1216-1227)**
 - While he was primarily focused on the fifth crusade, Honorius did institute a fairly hefty tax to fund the Albigensian Crusade. He did provide more support than Innocent, and he was successful in getting the French monarchy involved in the crusade. He also saw that crusade was not going to solve the problem of heresy and began the processes that would lead to the Inquisition.
- ❖ **Fulk of Marseilles, Bishop of Toulouse (1150-1231)**
 - An ardent supporter of the crusade, he actively sought to convert heretics and foster support for the crusade in Toulouse. His success was limited. He had been a troubadour before the crusade, but had joined the Cistercian Order in 1195.
- ❖ **St. Dominic of Guzman (1170-1221)**
 - Interested in reform, he established the Dominican Order so that he could better combat heresy in Languedoc. Along with Diego, the Bishop of Osma, he was responsible for reforming how the legates preached in Languedoc in the early 1200s. He also established a religious house for reformed female heretics.
- ❖ **Amaury de Montfort (1195-1241)**
 - Simon de Montfort's son. He would provide valuable military support during the crusade and replaced his father after he was killed in 1218.
- ❖ **Alice Montmorency (d. 1220/1)**
 - Simon de Montfort's wife. She would prove to be valuable in recruiting crusaders and securing the financial support of her family. She also provided political support for her husband by serving as the castellan of Toulouse while Simon campaigned.
- ❖ **Peter of les Vaux-de-Cernay**
 - A chronicler who ardently supported the crusade. He was present at many of the events he described. He was particularly fond of Simon de Montfort. His chronicle ends rather abruptly in 1218, soon after Simon's death, possibly as a result of his own death. Fond of miracles and hyperbole.
- ❖ **William of Tudela (~1199-1214)**
 - Another contemporary chronicler, he was more critical of the crusade's aims and he represents a Languedocian view. His chronicle was continued by an anonymous chronicler, who was much more critical of the crusade and viewed the crusaders as greedy land-grabbers.

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