

Albigensian Crusade

The **Albigensian Crusade** or the **Cathar Crusade** (1209–1229; French: *Croisade des albigeois*, Occitan: *Crosada dels albigeses*) was a 20-year military campaign initiated by Pope Innocent III to eliminate Catharism in Languedoc, in southern France. The Crusade was prosecuted primarily by the French crown and promptly took on a political aspect, resulting in not only a significant reduction in the number of practising Cathars, but also a realignment of the County of Toulouse in Languedoc, bringing it into the sphere of the French crown, and diminishing both Languedoc's distinct regional culture and the influence of the counts of Barcelona.

The Cathars originated from an anti-materialist reform movement within the Bogomil churches of the Balkans calling for what they saw as a return to the Christian message of perfection, poverty and preaching, combined with a rejection of the physical to the point of starvation. The reforms were a reaction against the often perceived scandalous and dissolute lifestyles of the Catholic clergy in southern France. Their theology, neo-Gnostic in many ways, was basically dualist. Several of their practices, especially their belief in the inherent evil of the physical world, conflicted with the doctrines of the Incarnation of Christ and Catholic sacraments. This led to accusations of Gnosticism and attracted the ire of the Catholic establishment. They became known as the Albigensians, because there were many adherents in the city of Albi and the surrounding area in the 12th and 13th centuries.

Between 1022 and 1163, the Cathars were condemned by eight local church councils, the last of which, held at Tours, declared that all Albigenses should be put into prison and have their property confiscated. The Third Lateran Council of 1179 repeated the condemnation. Innocent III's diplomatic attempts to roll back Catharism were met with little success. After the murder of his legate Pierre de Castelnau in 1208, and suspecting that Raymond VI, Count of Toulouse was responsible, Innocent III declared a crusade against the Cathars. He offered the lands of the Cathar heretics to any French nobleman willing to take up arms.

From 1209 to 1215, the Crusaders experienced great success, capturing Cathar lands and systematically crushing the movement. From 1215 to 1225, a series of

Albigensian Crusade

Part of the Crusades



Massacre against the Albigensians by the Crusaders

Date	July 1209 – April 12, 1229
Location	Languedoc , France
Result	Crusader victory

Belligerents

Crusade:

Papal States

- Episcopal Inquisition
- Dominican Order
- Militia of the Faith of Jesus Christ
- Hospitallers of the Holy Spirit
- Knights of Saint George

Kingdom of France

- Duchy of Burgundy
- Duchy of Brittany
- County of Nevers
- County of Auxerre

Cathars

County of Toulouse

- Viscounty of Béziers and Albi
- County of Valentinois
- Lordship of Séverac

Marquisate of Provence

Viscounty of Béarn

County of Astarac

Crown of Aragon

revolts caused many of the lands to be regained by the Cathars. A renewed crusade resulted in the recapturing of the territory and effectively drove Catharism underground by 1244. The Albigensian Crusade had a role in the creation and institutionalization of both the Dominican Order and the Medieval Inquisition. The Dominicans promulgated the message of the Church and spread it by preaching the Church's teachings in towns and villages in order to stop the spread of alleged heresies, while the Inquisition investigated people who were accused of teaching heresies. Because of these efforts, all discernible traces of the Cathar movement were eradicated by the middle of the 14th century. Many historians consider the Albigensian Crusade against the Cathars an act of genocide.^{[3][4]}

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- County of Comminges
- Viscounty of Carcassonne
- Lordship of Menèrba
- Lordship of Tèrmes
- Lordship of Cabaret
- Lordship of Montsegúr

Exiled knights

Commanders and leaders

Simon de Montfort †

Amaury VI of Montfort

Philip II of France

Louis VIII of France

Odo III of Burgundy

Ramon Berenguer IV of Provence

Balduin of Toulouse

Leopold VI of Austria

Adolf VI of Berg

Engelbert II of Berg

Raymond Roger

Trencavel

Raymond VI of

Toulouse

Raymond VII of

Toulouse

Roger-Bernard II of Foix

Peter II of

Aragon †

Casualties and losses

At least 200,000^[1] to at most 1,000,000^[2] Cathars killed

Considered by some scholars to be an act of genocide against the Cathars, including the coiner of the word genocide himself Raphael Lemkin.^{[3][4]}

Cathar theology

The word "Cathar" is derived from the Greek word *katharos*, meaning "clean" or "pure."^[5] Partially derived from earlier forms of Gnosticism, the theology of the Cathars was dualistic, a belief in two equal and comparable transcendental principles: God, the force of good, and the demiurge, the force of evil. Cathars held that the physical world was evil and created by this demiurge, which they called *Rex Mundi* (Latin, "King of the World"). *Rex Mundi* encompassed all that was corporeal, chaotic and powerful. The Cathar understanding of God was entirely disincarnate: they viewed God as a being or principle of pure spirit and completely unsullied by the taint of matter. He was the God of love, order, and peace. Jesus was an angel with only a phantom body, and the accounts of him in the New Testament were to be understood allegorically. As the physical world and the human body were the creation of the evil principle, sexual abstinence (even in marriage) was encouraged.^{[6][7][8]} Civil authority had no claim on a Cathar, since this was the rule of the physical world. Accordingly, the Cathars refused to take oaths of allegiance or volunteer for military service.^[9] Cathar doctrine opposed killing animals and consuming meat.^{[10][11]}

Cathars rejected the Catholic priesthood, labelling its members, including the pope, unworthy and corrupted.^[12] Disagreeing on the Catholic concept of the unique role of the priesthood, they taught that anyone, not just the priest, could consecrate the Eucharistic host or hear a confession.^[13] They rejected the dogma of the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist and Catholic teaching on the existence of Purgatory.^[14]

Catharism developed its own unique form of "sacrament" known as the *consolamentum*, to replace the Catholic rite of baptism. Instead of receiving baptism through water, one received the *consolamentum* by the laying on of hands.^{[15][16]} Cathars regarded water as unclean because it had been corrupted by the earth, and therefore refused to use it in their ceremonies.^[17] The act was typically received just before death, as Cathars believed that this increased one's chances for salvation by wiping away all previous sins.^[18] After receiving *consolamentum*, the recipient became known as *perfectus*.^[19] Prior to becoming a "perfect", believing Cathars were encouraged but not required to follow Cathar teaching on abstaining from sex and meat, and most chose not to do so. Once an individual received the *consolamentum*, these rules became binding.^[14] Cathar perfects often went through a ritual fast called the *endura*. After receiving the *consolamentum*, a believer would sometimes take no food and rely only on cold water, a practice eventually resulting in death. The procedure was typically performed only by those close to death already.^[20] Some members of the Church claimed that if a Cathar upon receiving the *consolamentum* showed signs of recovery, the person would be smothered to death in order to ensure entry into Heaven. This did sometimes happen but there is little evidence that it was common practice.^[21]

Despite Cathar anti-clericalism, there were men selected amongst the Cathars to serve as bishops and deacons. The bishops were selected from among the perfect.^[22]

Background

The Cathars were part of a widespread spiritual reform movement in medieval Europe^[23] which began about 653 when Constantine-Silvanus brought a copy of the Gospels to Armenia.^[24] In the following centuries a number of dissenting groups arose, gathered around charismatic preachers, who rejected the authority of the Catholic Church. These groups based their beliefs and practices on the Gospels rather than on Church dogma and sought a return to the early church and the faith of the Apostles. They claimed that their teaching was rooted in Scripture and part of Apostolic tradition.^[25] Sects such as the Paulicians in Armenia, Bogomils from Bulgaria and the Balkans, Arnoldists in northern Italy, Petrobrusians in southern France, Henricans in Switzerland and



Map of Languedoc on the eve of the Albigensian Crusade

France, and Waldensians of the Piedmont area on the border of France and Italy, were violently persecuted and repressed.^[26] The Paulicians were ordered to be burned to death as heretics;^[27] the Bogomils were expelled from Serbia^[28] and later subjected to the Inquisition^[29] and the Bosnian Crusade; Peter of Bruys, leader of the Petrobrusians, was pushed into a bonfire by an angry mob in 1131.^[30] A number of prominent 12th century preachers insisted on it being the responsibility of the individual to develop a relationship with God, independent of an established clergy. Henry of Lausanne criticized the priesthood and called for lay reform of the Church.^[31] He gained a large following.^[32] Henry's preaching focused on condemning clerical corruption and clerical hierarchy, and there is no evidence that he subscribed to Cathar teachings on dualism.^[33] He was arrested around 1146 and never heard from again.^[34] Arnold of Brescia, leader of the Arnoldists, was hanged in 1155 and his body burnt and thrown into the Tiber River, "for fear", one chronicler says, "lest the people might collect them and honour them as the ashes of a martyr".^[35] The Waldensians, followers of Peter Waldo, experienced burnings and massacres.^[36]

Although these dissenting groups shared some common features with the Cathars, such as anti-clericalism and rejection of the sacraments, they did not, except the Paulicians and Bogomils, subscribe to Cathar dualist beliefs. They did not specifically invoke dualism as a tenet.^[37] The Cathars may have originated directly from the Bogomils, as some scholars believe in a continuous Manichaean tradition which encompassed both groups. That view is not universally shared.^[38] Following the First Crusade, Latin settlers established a dualist community in Constantinople. It is theorized that this group provided Westerners with Latin translations of Greek Bogomil texts, which included the *consolamentum* ritual, thus helping to generate the first organized dualist movement in Western Europe.^[39]

By the 12th century, organized groups of dissidents, such as the Waldensians and Cathars, were beginning to appear in the towns and cities of newly urbanized areas. In western Mediterranean France, one of the most urbanized areas of Europe at the time, the Cathars grew to represent a popular mass movement,^{[40][41]} and the belief was spreading to other areas. One such area was Lombardy, which by the 1170s was sustaining a community of Cathars.^[42] The Cathar movement was seen by some as a reaction against the corrupt and earthly lifestyles of the clergy. It has also been viewed as a manifestation of dissatisfaction with papal power.^[43] In Cologne in 1163, four Cathar men and a girl who had traveled to the city from Flanders were burned after refusing to repent. Burnings for heresy had been very uncommon, and in the past had sometimes taken place at the behest of noblemen for political rather than religious reasons over the objections of leading Catholic clergy. After this event however, they grew more frequent.^[44] Contact was maintained between the older dualist communities in the Byzantine Empire in the east and the new ones in Western Europe. Emissaries from the former strengthened the dualist beliefs of the latter.^[45]

Catharism continued to spread. Cathar theology found its greatest success in the Languedoc. The Cathars were known as Albigensians because of their association with the city of Albi, and because the 1176 Church Council which declared the Cathar doctrine heretical was held near Albi.^[46] The condemnation was repeated through the Third Lateran Council of 1179.^[22] In Languedoc, political control and land ownership was divided among many local lords and heirs.^{[47][48]} Before the crusade, there was little fighting in the area and it had a fairly sophisticated polity. The Languedoc would eventually be incorporated into the Kingdom of France, which lay to the north, but before the crusade began, it was generally separate. The County of Toulouse, the dominant political entity in the region, was a fief to the Angevin Empire. In many areas south and east of Toulouse, the Crown of Aragon and the Principality of Catalonia were both more influential than the French kingdom or even northern Languedoc.^{[49][50]}

On assuming the papacy in 1198, Pope Innocent III resolved to deal with the Cathars and sent a delegation of friars to the province of Languedoc to assess the situation. The Cathars of Languedoc were seen as not showing proper respect for the authority of the French king or the local Catholic Church, and their leaders were being protected by powerful nobles,^[51] who had a clear interest in independence from the king.^[52] At least in part for this reason, many powerful noblemen embraced Catharism despite making little attempt



This Pedro Berruguete work of the 15th century depicts a story of Saint Dominic and the Albigensians, in which the texts of each were cast into a fire, but only Saint Dominic's proved miraculously resistant to the flames.

Raymond ordered his execution;^[56] William of Tudela blames the murder entirely on "an evil-hearted squire hoping to win the Count's approval".^[57]

Pope Innocent declared Raymond anathematized and released all of his subjects from their oaths of obedience to him.^[58] However, Raymond soon attempted to reconcile with the Church by sending legates to Rome. They exchanged gifts, reconciled,^[59] and the excommunication was lifted. At the Council of Avignon (1209) Raymond was again excommunicated for not fulfilling the conditions of ecclesiastical reconciliation. After this, Innocent III called for a crusade against the Albigensians, with the view that a Europe free of heresy could better defend its borders against invading Muslims. The time period of the Crusade coincided with the Fifth and Sixth Crusades in the Holy Land.^[49]

Military campaigns

Initial success 1209 to 1215

Assembling of the initial army

By mid-1209, around 10,000 Crusaders had gathered in Lyon before marching south.^[60] Many Crusaders stayed on for no more than 40 days before being replaced. A large number came from Northern France,^[61] while some had volunteered from England.^[62] There would also be volunteers from Austria.^[63] The question of who would lead the crusade was unclear. In early 1209, Philip II had learned of an anti-French alliance between King John and Holy Roman Emperor Otto IV, both of whom were overlords of different

to follow its strict lifestyle restrictions.^[53] In desperation, Innocent turned to Philip II of France, urging him to either force Raymond VI, Count of Toulouse to deal with the heresy or depose him militarily. By 1204, he offered to bless those willing to go on a military campaign against the Cathars with the same indulgence given to crusaders travelling to the Holy Land (the Fourth Crusade, in its late stages at the time, had not shown any signs of going in that direction). However, Philip was engaged in conflict with King John of England, and was unwilling to get involved in a separate conflict in the Languedoc. Hence, the plan stalled.^[54]

One of the most powerful noblemen, Raymond VI, Count of Toulouse, did not openly embrace Cathar beliefs, but was sympathetic to Catharism and its independence movement.^[22] He refused to assist the delegation. He was excommunicated in May 1207 and an interdict was placed on his lands.^[22] Innocent tried to deal with the situation diplomatically by sending a number of preachers, many of them monks of the Cistercian order, to convert the Cathars. They were under the direction of the senior papal legate, Pierre de Castelnau. The preachers managed to bring some people back into the Catholic faith, but for the most part, were renounced.^[55] Pierre himself was extremely unpopular, and once had to flee the region for fear that he would be assassinated. On January 13, 1208, Raymond met Pierre in the hope of gaining absolution. The discussion did not go well. Raymond expelled him and threatened his safety.^[54] The following morning, Pierre was killed by one of Raymond's knights. Innocent III claimed that

parts of the Languedoc. This motivated him to stay out of the crusade. He refused to campaign in person but promised to send a contingent of troops, insuring that he would have a say in any political settlements that would result from the conflict. Papal legate Arnaud Amalric, Abbott of the Cistercian monastery Cîteaux Abbey, assumed command of the enterprise.^{[64][65]}

As the Crusaders assembled, Raymond attempted to reach an agreement with his vassal, Raymond Roger Trencavel, viscount of Béziers, for a united defense, but Raymond Roger refused him. Raymond decided to make an accommodation with the Crusaders. He was fiercely opposed by the Amalric, but at Raymond's request, Innocent appointed a new legate, Milo, whom he secretly ordered to obey Amalric. On June 18, 1209, Raymond pronounced himself repentant. He was scourged by Milo and declared restored to full Communion with the Church. The following day, he took the Cross, affirming his loyalty to the crusade and promising to aid it. With Raymond restored to unity with the Church, his lands could not be attacked. The Crusaders therefore turned their attention to the lands of Raymond Roger, aiming for the Cathar communities around Albi and Carcassonne. They marched out of Lyon on June 24 and arrived at the Catholic town of Montpellier on July 20.^{[66][67]} Trencavel, Count of Foix, was not formally a Cathar but tolerated their existence.^[68] He initially promised to defend the city of Béziers, but after hearing of the coming of the Crusader army abandoned that city and raced back to Carcassonne to prepare his defences.^[67]

Massacre at Béziers

The Crusaders captured the small village of Servian and then headed for Béziers, arriving on July 21, 1209. Under the command of Amalric,^[69] they started to besiege the city, calling on the Catholics within to come out, and demanding that the Cathars surrender.^[70] Neither group did as commanded. The city fell the following day when an abortive sortie was pursued back through the open gates.^[71] The entire population was slaughtered and the city burned to the ground. It was reported that Amalric, when asked how to distinguish Cathars from Catholics, responded, "Kill them all! God will know his own." Historian Joseph Strayer doubts that Amalric actually said this, but maintains that the statement captures the "spirit" of the Crusaders, who killed nearly every man, woman, and child in the town.^[72]

Amalric and Milo wrote in a letter to the Pope, claimed that the Crusaders "put to the sword almost 20,000 people".^[73] Strayer says that this estimate is too high, but noted that in his letter "the legate expressed no regret about the massacre, not even a word of condolence for the clergy of the cathedral who were killed in front of their own altar".^[74] News of the disaster quickly spread and afterwards many settlements, with Narbonne being a prominent example, surrendered without a fight. Others were evacuated. The Crusaders encountered no opposition as they marched toward Carcassonne.^{[73][75]}

Fall of Carcassonne

After the Massacre at Béziers, the next major target was Carcassonne,^[76] a city with many well known Cathars.^[77] Carcassonne was well fortified but vulnerable, and overflowing with refugees.^[76] The Crusaders traversed the 45 miles between Béziers and Carcassonne in six days,^[78] arriving in the city on August 1, 1209. The siege did not last long.^[79] By August 7, they had cut the city's water supply. Raymond Roger sought negotiations but was taken prisoner while under truce, and Carcassonne surrendered on August 15. The people were not



Carcassonne with the Aude river in the foreground

killed but were forced to leave the town. They were naked according to Peter of Vaux-de-Cernay, a monk and eyewitness to many events of the crusade,^[80] but "in their shifts and breeches", according to Guillaume de Puylaurens, a contemporary.^[81] Raymond Roger died several months later. Although his death supposedly resulted from dysentery, some suspected that he was assassinated.^[82]

Simon de Montfort, a prominent French nobleman, was then appointed leader of the Crusader army,^[83] and was granted control of the area encompassing Carcassonne, Albi, and Béziers. After the fall of Carcassonne, other towns surrendered without a fight. Albi, Castelnaudary, Castres, Fanjeaux, Limoux, Lombers and Montréal all fell quickly during the autumn.^[84]



Cathars being expelled from Carcassonne in 1209

Lastours and the castle of Cabaret

The next battle centred around Lastours and the adjacent castle of Cabaret. Attacked in December 1209, Pierre Roger de Cabaret repulsed the assault.^[85] Fighting largely halted over the winter, but fresh Crusaders arrived.^[86] In March 1210, Bram was captured after a short siege.^[87] In June, the well-fortified city of Minerve was besieged.^[88] The city was not of major strategic importance. Simon's decision to attack it was probably influenced by the large number of perfects who had gathered there. Unable to take the town by storm because of the surrounding geography,^[89] Simon launched a heavy bombardment against the town, and in late June the main well was destroyed and on July 22, the city, short on water, surrendered.^[90] Simon wished to treat the occupants leniently, but was pressured by Arnaud Amalric to punish the Cathars. The Crusaders allowed the soldiers defending the town as well as the Catholics inside of it to go free, along with the non-"perfect" Cathars. The Cathar "perfects" were given the opportunity to return to Catholicism.^[91] Simon and many of his soldiers made strong efforts to convert the Cathar perfects, but were highly unsuccessful.^[92] Ultimately, only three women recanted.^[91] The 140 who refused were burned at the stake. Some entered the flames voluntarily, not awaiting their executioners.^[93]

In August, the Crusade proceeded to the stronghold of Termes.^[94] Despite sallies from Pierre-Roger de Cabaret, the siege was solid.^[95] The occupants of Termes suffered from a shortage of water, and Ramon (Raymond) de Termes agreed to a temporary truce. However, the Cathars were briefly relieved by an intense rainstorm, and so Raymond refused to surrender.^[96] Ultimately, the defenders were not able to break the siege, and on November 22 the Cathars managed to abandon the city and escape.^[95]

By the time operations resumed in 1211, the actions of Arnaud-Amaury and Simon de Montfort had alienated several important lords, including Raymond de Toulouse,^[97] who had been excommunicated again. The Crusaders returned in force to Lastours in March and Pierre-Roger de Cabaret soon agreed to surrender. In May the castle of Aimery de Montréal was retaken; he and his senior knights were hanged, and several hundred Cathars were burned.^[98] Cassès fell easily in early June.^[99] Afterwards, Simon marched towards Montferrand, where Raymond of Toulouse had placed his brother, Baldwin, in command. After a short siege, Baldwin signed an agreement to abandon the fort in return for swearing an oath to go free and to not fight again against the Crusaders. Baldwin briefly returned to Raymond, but afterward defected to the Crusaders and remained loyal to them thereafter.^[100] After taking Montferrand, the Crusaders headed for Toulouse.^[101] The town was besieged, but for once the attackers were short of supplies and men, and Simon de Montfort withdrew before the end of the month.^[102] Emboldened, Raymond de Toulouse led a force to attack Montfort at Castelnaudary in September.^[103] A force of Crusaders arrived to relieve Montfort, and just barely beat back a counterattack by Occitan forces under

Raymond-Roger. Montfort broke free from the siege, and Raymond was forced to withdraw.^{[104][105][106]} Throughout the first part of 1212, Simon worked on encircling Toulouse. He was successful through a combination of rapid military movements and his policy of quickly getting towns to surrender in exchange for not being sacked. The encirclement of Toulouse restricted Raymond's communication with his allies in Aquitaine and the Pyrenees. He faced a shortage of income and increasingly disloyal vassals.^[107]

Toulouse

To repel the Crusaders, the Cathars turned to Peter II of Aragon for assistance. Peter II had been crowned king by Innocent III in 1204. He fought the Moors in Spain, and served in the Battle of Las Navas de Tolosa.^[108] However, his sister, Eleanor, had married Raymond VI, securing an alliance.^[109] Peter was able to use his victories in the south against the Moors, along with the persuasion of a delegation sent to Rome, to lead Innocent III to order a halt to the crusade. Innocent trusted Peter and was hoping to bring an end to the Albigensian Crusade in order to launch a new crusade in the Middle East and to maintain pressure on the Moors. As the Cathars had suffered many defeats, and as those bishops he felt had been too lenient with heresy had been removed, he believed that the time had come to bring peace to the Languedoc. On January 15, 1213, Innocent wrote to Arnaud Amaury, papal legate and newly appointed Bishop of Narbonne, as well as to Montfort. He rebuked Simon for his alleged attacks on Christians and ordered him to restore the lands that he had taken. In addition, Innocent removed most of the crusading indulgences and demanded that Simon and his legates hold a council, listen to Peter, and report their feelings to him.^{[110][111]} Peter petitioned the clergy at the Council of Lavaur to restore Raymond's lands, arguing that he was ready to repent. If this was unacceptable, the lands could be placed under the protection of his son while he went on crusade. The council rejected his recommendations, refusing to absolve Raymond and insisting that the lands Peter believed should be returned were still influenced by heresy.^[111]

Peter rejected the council's verdict.^[111] Concerned that Simon had grown too powerful,^[112] he decided to come to the aid of Toulouse.^[113] The Crown of Aragon, under Peter II, allied with the County of Toulouse and various other entities to oppose Simon.^[114] These actions alarmed Innocent, who after hearing from Simon's delegation denounced Peter and ordered a renewal of the crusade.^[115] On May 21, he sent Peter a letter severely castigating him for allegedly providing false information, and warning him not to oppose the Crusaders.^[116] He was threatened with excommunication.^[111] The crusade was not restored to its initial status. In April 1213, Innocent issued the papal bull *Quia maior*, which called for the Fifth Crusade. It limited indulgences exclusively to Crusaders from the Languedoc.^[117]

Peter's coalition force engaged Simon's troops on September 12 in the Battle of Muret. The Crusaders were heavily outnumbered. Peter and Simon both organized their troops into three lines. The first of the Crusader lines was beaten back, but Simon managed to outflank the coalition cavalry. Peter II was struck down and killed. The coalition forces, hearing of his death, retreated in confusion.^{[114][118]} This allowed Simon's troops to occupy the northern part of Toulouse.^[119]

It was a serious blow to the resistance, and in 1214 the situation became worse. As the Crusaders continued their advance, Raymond and his son Raymond VII of Toulouse were forced to flee to England.^[120] King John of England was wary of the crusade due to Simon's loyalty to the French crown. He visited the Languedoc, and though direct confrontation between English troops and Crusaders was usually avoided, a contingent of King John's soldiers did help defend Marmande against the Crusaders in 1214. In 1214, Philip won a major victory against the English-German alliance at the Battle of Bouvines, helping to solidify the success of the Albigensian Crusade.^[63] In November, Simon de Montfort entered Périgord^[121] and easily captured the castles of Domme^[122] and Montfort;^[123] he also occupied Castelnau and destroyed the fortifications of Beynac.^[124] In 1215, Castelnau was recaptured by Montfort,^[125] and the Crusaders entered Toulouse.^[126] The town paid an indemnity of 30,000 marks.^[127] Toulouse was gifted to Montfort.^[126] The Fourth Council of the Lateran in 1215 solidified Crusader control over the area by

officially proclaiming Simon the Count of Toulouse.^[128] It proclaimed that all of the lands previously Raymond VI that had been conquered by the crusade would be placed under the control of Simon IV de Montfort, and that the lands which had not yet been conquered would be placed under the protection of the Church until Raymond VII was old enough to govern them.^[129] The Council also once again called for a new crusade in the Middle East, which dried up recruits for the Albigensian Crusade, forcing Simon to rely increasingly heavily on mercenaries.^[130]

Revolts and reverses 1216 to 1225

Raymond VI, together with Raymond VII, returned to the region in April 1216 and soon raised a substantial force from disaffected towns. Beaucaire was besieged in May. After three months, the occupants were running low on supplies, and reached an agreement with Raymond to surrender the castle in exchange for being allowed to leave with their arms.^[131] The efforts of Montfort to relieve the town were repulsed.^[132] Innocent III died suddenly in July 1216^[133] and the crusade was left in temporary disarray. The command passed to the more cautious Philip II of France, who was reluctant to vigorously prosecute the crusade.^[134] At the time, he was still heavily involved in conflict with King John of England.^[135]

Montfort then had to put down an uprising in Toulouse before heading west to capture Bigorre, but he was repulsed at Lourdes in December 1216. On September 12, 1217, Raymond retook Toulouse without a fight while Montfort was occupied in the Foix region. Montfort hurried back, but his forces were insufficient to retake the town before campaigning halted.^[132] Responding to a call from Pope Honorius III to renew the crusade,^[136] Montfort resumed the siege in the spring of 1218. On June 25^[132] or 29,^[136] while attempting to fend off a sally by the defenders, Montfort was struck and killed by a stone hurled from defensive siege equipment. Toulouse was held, and the Crusaders driven back. Popular accounts state that the city's artillery was operated by the women and girls of Toulouse.^[132] In August, reacting to the crusade's recent failures, Honorius restored full crusading indulgences to those fighting against the Cathars.^[137]

The crusade continued with renewed vigour. Philip refused to command in person, but agreed to appoint his son,^[138] the also reluctant^[139] Prince Louis, to lead an expedition.^[138] His army marched south beginning in May 1219, passing through Poitou. In June, an army under Amaury de Montfort,^[139] son of the late Simon,^[140] joined by Louis, besieged Marmande. The town fell^[139] in June 1219. Its occupants, excluding only the commander and his knights, were massacred.^[141] After capturing Marmande, Louis attempted to retake Toulouse. Following a siege of six weeks, the army abandoned the mission and went home. Honorius III called the endeavour a "miserable setback". Without Louis's troops, Amaury was unable to hold on to the lands that he had taken, and the Cathars were able to retake much of their land.^[142] Castelnaudary was retaken by troops under Raymond VII. Amaury again besieged the town from July 1220 to March 1221, but it withstood an eight-month assault. In 1221, the success of Raymond and his son continued: Montréal and Fanjeaux were retaken and many Catholics were forced to flee. By 1222, Raymond VII had reclaimed all the lands that had been lost. That same year, Raymond VI died and was succeeded by Raymond VII.^[143] On July 14, 1223, Philip II died, and Louis VIII succeeded him as king.^[144] In 1224, Amaury de Montfort abandoned Carcassonne. Raymond VII returned from exile to reclaim the area.^[145] That same year, Amaury ceded his remaining lands to Louis VIII.^[128]

French royal intervention

In November 1225, the Council of Bourges convened in order to deal with the Cathar heresy. At the council, Raymond VII, like his father, was excommunicated. The council gathered a thousand churchmen to authorize a tax on their annual incomes, the "Albigensian tenth", to support the Crusade, though

permanent reforms intended to fund the papacy in perpetuity foundered.^[146]

Louis VIII headed the new crusade. He took the cross in January 1226.^[147] His army assembled at Bourges in May. While the exact number of troops present is unknown, it was certainly the largest force ever sent against the Cathars.^[148] Louis set out with his army in June.^[149] The Crusaders captured once more the towns of Béziers, Carcassonne, Beaucaire, and Marseille, this time with no resistance.^[148] However, Avignon, nominally under the rule of the German emperor, did resist, refusing to open its gates to the French troops.^[150] Not wanting to storm the well-fortified walls of the town, Louis settled in for a siege. A frontal assault that August was fiercely beaten back. Finally, in early September, the town surrendered, agreeing to pay 6,000 marks and destroy its walls. The town was occupied on September 9. No killing or looting took place.^[127] Louis VIII died in November and was succeeded by the child king Louis IX. But Queen-regent Blanche of Castile allowed the crusade to continue under Humbert V de Beaujeu. Labécède fell in 1227 and Vareilles in 1228. At that time, the Crusaders once again besieged Toulouse. While doing so, they systematically laid waste to the surrounding landscape: uprooting vineyards, burning fields and farms, and slaughtering livestock. Eventually, the city was retaken. Raymond did not have the manpower to intervene.^[149]

Eventually, Queen Blanche offered Raymond VII a treaty recognizing him as ruler of Toulouse in exchange for his fighting the Cathars, returning all church property, turning over his castles and destroying the defences of Toulouse. Moreover, Raymond had to marry his daughter Joan to Louis' brother Alphonse of Poitiers, with the couple and their heirs obtaining Toulouse after Raymond's death, and the inheritance reverting to the king. Raymond agreed and signed the Treaty of Paris at Meaux on April 12, 1229.^{[128][151]}

Historian Daniel Power notes that the fact that Peter of Vaux-de-Cernay's *Historia Albigensis*, which many historians of the crusade rely heavily upon, was published only in 1218 leaves a shortage of primary source material for events after that year. As such, there is more difficulty in discerning the nature of various events during the subsequent time period.^[62]

Inquisition

With the military phase of the campaign against the Cathars now primarily at an end, the Inquisition was established under Pope Gregory IX in 1234 to uproot heretical movements, including the remaining Cathars. Operating in the south at Toulouse, Albi, Carcassonne and other towns during the whole of the 13th century, and a great part of the 14th, it succeeded in crushing Catharism as a popular movement and driving its remaining adherents underground.^[152] Punishments for Cathars varied greatly. Most frequently, they were made to wear yellow crosses atop their garments as a sign of outward penance. Others made obligatory pilgrimages, which often included fighting against Muslims. Visiting a local church naked once each month to be scourged was also a common punishment, including for returned pilgrims. Cathars who were slow to repent suffered imprisonment and, often, the loss of property. Others who altogether refused to repent were burned.^[153]

Friars of the Dominican Order, named after their founder, Saint Dominic, would travel to towns and villages preaching in favor of the teachings of the Church and against heresy. In some cases, they took part in prosecuting Cathars.^[154]

From May 1243 to March 1244, the Cathar fortress of Montségur was besieged by the troops of the seneschal of Carcassonne and Pierre Amiel, the Archbishop of Narbonne.^[155] On March 16, 1244, a large massacre took place, in which over 200 Cathar perfects were burnt in an enormous pyre at the *prat dels cremats* ("field of the burned") near the foot of the castle.^[156] After this, Catharism did not completely vanish, but was practiced by its remaining adherents in secret.^[128] The Inquisition continued to search for and attempt to prosecute Cathars. While few prominent men joined the Cathars, a small group of ordinary



The type of yellow cross
worn by Cathar repentants

followers remained and were generally successful at concealing themselves. The Inquisitors sometimes used torture as a method to find Cathars,^[157] but still were able to catch only a relatively small number.^[158]

In 1242, Raymond VII launched an unsuccessful rebellion against France. He died in 1249, and when Alphonse died in 1271, the County of Toulouse was annexed by the Kingdom of France.^[147] The Inquisition received funding from the French monarchy. In the 1290s, King Philip IV, who was in conflict with Pope Boniface VIII, limited its funding and severely restricted its activities. However, after visiting southern France in 1303, he became alarmed by the anti-monarchical sentiments of the people in the region, especially in Carcassonne, and decided to remove the restrictions placed on the Inquisition.^[159]

Pope Clement V introduced new rules designed to protect the rights of the accused.^[160] The Dominican Bernard Gui,^[161] Inquisitor of Toulouse from 1308 to 1323,^[160] wrote a manual discussing the customs of non-Catholic sects and the methods to be employed by the Inquisitors in combating heresy. A large portion of the manual describes the reputed customs of the Cathars, while contrasting them with those of Catholics.^[162] Gui also describes methods to be used for interrogating accused Cathars.^[163] He ruled that any person found to have died without confessing his known heresy would have his remains exhumed and burned, while any person known to have been a heretic but not known whether to have confessed or not would have his body unearthed but not burned.^[164] Under Gui, a final push against Catharism began. By 1350, all known remnants of the movement had been extinguished.^[160]

Legacy

Influence

According to Edward Peters, the violence of the Albigensian Crusade was not in line with the reforms and plans of Innocent, who stressed confession, reform of the clergy and laity, and pastoral teachings to oppose heresy.^[165] Peters maintains that the violence was due to the crusade being under the control of mobs, petty rulers, and local bishops who did not uphold Innocent's ideas. The uncontrollable, prejudicial passion of local mobs and heresy hunters, the violence of secular courts, and the bloodshed of the Albigensian Crusade sparked a desire within the papacy to implement greater control over the prosecution of heresy. This desire led to the development of organized legal procedures for dealing with heretics.^[166]

As a result of the Albigensian Crusade, there were only a small number of French recruits for the Fifth and Sixth crusades.^[167] Strayer argues that the Albigensian Crusade increased the power of the French monarchy and made the papacy more dependent on it. This would eventually lead to the Avignon Papacy.^[168]

Numerous songs concerning the Albigensian Crusade survive from the troubadour poet-composers, particularly those who were also knights. For instance, the troubadour Raimon de Miraval wrote a song pleading with Peter II to recapture his castle which had been captured by Simon, while a co-written song by the troubadours Tomier and Palaizi condemns the treatment of Raymond VI and urges him to fight back.^[169] However, the crusade and its immediate aftermath inaugurated the eventual decline of the troubadour tradition. Many Occitan courts had been patrons of the troubadours, and their destruction resulted in the gradual deterioration of the practice and the immigration of most troubadours from Southern France to royal courts in Italy, Spain and Hungary.^{[170][171][172]}

Genocide

Raphael Lemkin, who coined the word "genocide" in the 20th century,^[173] referred to the Albigensian Crusade as "one of the most conclusive cases of genocide in religious history".^[3] Mark Gregory Pegg writes that "The Albigensian Crusade ushered genocide into the West by linking divine salvation to mass murder, by making slaughter as loving an act as His sacrifice on the cross."^[174] Robert E. Lerner argues that Pegg's classification of the Albigensian Crusade as a genocide is inappropriate, on the grounds that it "was proclaimed against unbelievers ... not against a 'genus' or people; those who joined the crusade had no intention of annihilating the population of southern France ... If Pegg wishes to connect the Albigensian Crusade to modern ethnic slaughter, well—words fail me (as they do him)."^[175] Laurence Marvin is not as dismissive as Lerner regarding Pegg's contention that the Albigensian Crusade was a genocide; he does, however, take issue with Pegg's argument that the Albigensian Crusade formed an important historical precedent for later genocides including the Holocaust.^[176]



Pope Innocent III excommunicating the Albigensians (left). Massacre against the Albigensians by the Crusaders (right).

Kurt Jonassohn and Karin Solveig Björnson describe the Albigensian Crusade as "the first ideological genocide".^[177] Kurt Jonassohn and Frank Chalk (who together founded the Montreal Institute for Genocide and Human Rights Studies) include a detailed case study of the Albigensian Crusade in their genocide studies textbook *The History and Sociology of Genocide: Analyses and Case Studies*, authored by Strayer and Malise Ruthven.^[178]

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External links

- Albigensian Crusade (<http://xenophongroup.com/montjoie/albigens.htm>)

- [The paths of Cathars \(https://web.archive.org/web/20070927095200/http://www.chemins-cathares.eu/index_uk.php\)](https://web.archive.org/web/20070927095200/http://www.chemins-cathares.eu/index_uk.php) by the philosopher Yves Maris.
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- [The Forgotten Kingdom – The Albigensian Crusade – La Capella Reial – Hespèrion XXI, dir. Jordi Savall \(http://www.classicalacarte.net/Fiches/9873.htm\)](http://www.classicalacarte.net/Fiches/9873.htm)
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