

CONFLICT AND CONSCIENCE: IDEOLOGICAL WAR
AND THE ALBIGENSIAN CRUSADE

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by

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ABSTRACT

CONFLICT AND CONSCIENCE: IDEOLOGICAL WAR AND THE ALBIGENSIAN CRUSADE, by John W. Bauer, 120 pages.

This thesis is a case study on ethics within war. The thirteenth century Albigensian Crusade was a war against a heretical religious ideology known as Catharism whose tenets threatened the social order of Europe. The campaign took place in present-day southern France, a region that was at the heart of medieval Christendom. While the Church had recognized the area's slow decline into heresy for over a century, only during the papacy of Pope Innocent III did the situation escalate to necessitate armed conflict. Following the papal call to crusade, Christian nobles and knights from France and Germany formed an ad hoc army that waged a war of occupation for two decades (1209-1229) against an elusive enemy. Despite the military accomplishments of the Crusade, the most important factor leading to its eventual victory was moral. In the end, the nobles and citizens of the region were persuaded to abandon their sympathies toward the Cathar heretics, not through violent coercion but by winning their hearts and minds. This case study's particular emphasis on the moral challenges of this unique type of ideological war offers a historical parallel with the Global War on Terrorism that our nation engages in today.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The conduct of warfare and the moral evaluation of that conduct are inextricable. Throughout history, we are presented with examples from the past showing that wars have moral limitations.¹ Time and again, limits have been the result of moral choices that have brought restraint to what would have otherwise been limitless violence. From a human point of view, one would suggest that this is a good thing. Only our imagination can bear witness to the consequences of limitless violence, especially in today's atomic age defined by man's newfound capability to destroy entire populations at once. Arguably, a mix of two components, practical and moral, provides the restraint necessary to prevent this disastrous outcome. Yet in the past when man has identified a threat to his system of moral norms, he has been apt to defend through military action that which he believes to be morality itself. Such conflict can be referred to as a certain type of ideological war, or more specifically, a war whose goal is to defeat an insidious moral ideology. By considering a historical precedent of this particular cause for war, we stand to gain insights on the unique challenges and pitfalls of this type of conflict.

The High Middle Ages (1000-1300) were a time when the people of Europe knew their moral heroes. During this age, the Roman Catholic Church conferred the title of sainthood upon those who were worthy of veneration and emulation for their embodiment of the Christian principle and practice. In turn, popular knowledge of these important figures no doubt helped shape the moral norms of this period in history. While living out the fullness of Christian integrity during their lives, the Saints often had an important role

to play in the story of Medieval Europe. During this period, a number of prominent Saints arose. Among these, two had a particularly unique connection. St. Francis of Assisi and St. Dominic were men who lived their lives completely independent of one another save two brief meetings. In an uncanny parallel, each purportedly received their distinctive call from God at virtually the same time, during the spring of 1206.² The two men went on to become heroes of Christendom during the High Middle Ages, and the religious orders they established, the Franciscan and Dominican Orders, continue to survive with much vitality even to this day. What was it about this time in history that prompted the emergence of two individuals who had such a profound impact on the moral conscience of Medieval Europe? The answer can be found in the crucible of Innocent III's pontificate (1198-1216), a pontificate that was largely defined in the first years of the Albigensian Crusade.

The Albigensian Crusade (1209-1229) was a military campaign against heresy in Languedoc, a region that encompasses present-day Southern France. Distinct from the eight numbered Crusades to the Holy Land that took place between 1095 and 1272, the Albigensian Crusade was a war against an enemy internal to Christendom, namely a heretical ideology. The heresy that created this ideological enemy was a Manichean religious movement, among whom the most prominent members were known as Cathars. To the popes of the High Middle Ages, this movement was not a mere anti-Christian philosophy but rather a particularly radical and dangerous ideology. After nearly five decades of active measures to stop its spread, the leader of Christendom reluctantly chose military conflict as a last resort. At this point in time, the Pope saw the war as such an important endeavor that he was willing to shift focus from efforts to regain Jerusalem

from the Muslims to what he believed was a more urgent necessity. In the mind of the Pope, the Albigensian Crusade was a war against an enemy that had become a direct threat to the stability of Europe.

Pope Innocent III and his predecessors believed that the Albigensian heresy was dangerous to Christendom because it threatened its moral conscience. While the heresies prior to the twelfth century had all been almost entirely doctrinal, the Albigensian heresy was novel in that it was also a moral heresy.³ Disputes over doctrine had been a matter of importance for the Church since Christianity's inception, often becoming heresy when the teachers of false precepts refused to accept the primacy of the See of Peter, the Bishop of Rome. In the case of the Albigensian heresy, false doctrine went so far as to produce moral and civil disorder. Specifically, the Church recognized the heresy's practical effect of devaluing human life as a clear threat to the stability of Europe. The Cathars had breached a boundary of philosophical acceptability that the Pope, as the arbiter and leader of Christendom, could no longer tolerate. He viewed the security of Christendom directly and unequivocally at risk. Pope Innocent is supported in this regard by at least one historian. Hilaire Belloc, in his book *The Great Heresies*, names the Albigensian heresy as one particularly dangerous heresy that in the Roman Catholic Church's two thousand-year history posed a direct threat to the Church's survival. In the case of the Albigensian heresy, Belloc calls it great in that it nearly prevailed.⁴

The word heresy literally means to divide. At its root, the word refers to a belief or set of beliefs that contradict a generally accepted standard. In the context of the Catholic Church, it refers to a teaching that directly conflicts with the revelation of divine truth as defined by and affirmed by the Magisterium, that is, the authoritative teaching of

either the Pope or the collective body of bishops in communion with each other and the Pope. To prevent the corruption of the faithful, the Church throughout history has attempted to adjudicate whether a philosophy or religion has violated one of the essential doctrines of the faith. In engaging heresy in this manner, the Church's motive, first and foremost, was to correct and halt its spread. From the days of the early Christians, preaching was the primary means of combating heresy. Yet despite centuries of determined efforts, heresies have survived not in their elements of falsehood but in the truths they have contained. Driven by an inherent appeal that has fueled its spread, the most dangerous forms of heresy have been those that have attacked from within and included active efforts to discredit and even to replace the established norm.

This military venture of eight centuries past launched against the Albigensians has particular relevance today when considering the moral character of our current conflict, the Global War on Terrorism. When the American President first launched this global war, he deemed that the security of both the United States and the rest of the world was threatened by a radical Islamic ideology that advocated no limits on the destruction of human life. In its essence, the philosophy of Jihadism⁵ has challenged the universal standards of moral acceptability. It is, in a sense, a contemporary moral heresy, not only for the Church, but also for the civilized world. Facing this threat as leader of the world's most powerful nation, President George W. Bush took upon himself the responsibility to engage and to defeat it. Interestingly, this venture has brought with it its own set of moral challenges, namely, debate over just war, the use of force and civilian casualties, and the treatment of detainees, to name a few. The challenges that have resulted from war waged

against a system of ideas make this notion of a moral enemy in modern asymmetric war worthy of study and analysis.

The Albigensian Crusade offers a unique case study on the moral challenges and potential pitfalls of war waged against this type of enemy. It is a historical example of a morally principled entity that sought to preempt an ideological threat by directing a military campaign against the ideology itself. The undertaking yielded a series of unique challenges. First, what the Crusade's leaders perceived as being militarily necessary was at times in conflict with the moral norms the Crusade was fighting to defend.

Additionally, once the Crusade had occupied a significant portion of Languedoc, it encountered obstacles unique to a violent and determined insurgency. Furthermore, the enemy's use of propaganda and slander severely threatened the survival of the Crusade. Yet despite these challenges, the key to victory was realized not in an escalation of violence but rather through its diminished role. The Albigensian Crusade was won not through coercion by the sword but through conversion of the heart and persuasion of the intellect. This project, by peering back into history through the lens of moral influences on war, seeks to yield a better understanding of this particular type of conflict, namely a war against a heretical ideology.

A discussion of some of the key terms is necessary to establish a common understanding of terminology used throughout this thesis:

1. Morality is a collection of principles which determine the acceptability or impropriety of human actions. Consequently, morality has a direct influence on the choices man makes. When encapsulated within a certain set of principles, it has the capacity to establish norms of behavior that govern conduct. The extent to which morality

influences war is dependent not only upon these norms, but also upon the discernment of individual decision-makers, particularly leaders, each with their own interests, judgment, and moral code. In this respect, the individual moral code, we shall say, is a reflection of the individual conscience. Strategically, the moral choices begin with the decision to go to war. At the operational and tactical levels of war, decisions include the determination of where to attack and of which weapons to use. The following analysis of the Albigenian Crusade will consider the moral influences and their consequences in both cases, specifically just war, *ius ad bellum*, and justice in warfare, *ius in bello*.

2. Just war (*ius ad bellum*). Just War Theory has long been a difficult yet important subject that has drawn the attention of some of history's most important philosophical minds. Plato, Aristotle, St. Augustine, and St. Thomas Aquinas are among the pre-medieval and medieval examples. Throughout history, the Roman Catholic Church has likewise directed a considerable amount of attention to the theory of Just War. As the technology and lethality of military machines have advanced, this theory has evolved to address the current reality of warfare while continuing to recognize the necessity for moral standards within war.

3. Total war. The term "total war" implies warfare without limits. With respect to the Catholic Church, it wasn't until after observing the ghastly consequences of twentieth century warfare and observing the capabilities of modern technology that popes have explicitly condemned total war outright as intrinsically immoral. Before that, however, in various times throughout history the prospect of total war has ebbed and flowed. Michael Walzer, in his book *Just and Unjust Wars*, states that "sieges are the oldest form of total war."⁶ Warfare in the High Middle Ages, also known as the Age of Sieges, commonly

recognized this exception to moral limits within the scope of the most common tactic of the era, that of the siege.

4. Military necessity. Men at arms throughout history have used military necessity as an exemption to certain moral limits within war. When necessity is applied in this fashion, it justifies methods required to produce tactical and operational success, including unintended yet likely effects that run counter to established moral norms, such as today's International Laws of War. An example would be the bombing of a legitimate military target that may result in civilian casualties. Today, the exception to the absolute prohibition on killing noncombatants is further justified using the principle of "double effect,"⁷ a rule that relates to military necessity. Men at arms both present and past have had their own understanding of military necessity based on the military capabilities of their day and the threat they faced. Yet the principle of necessity is the same, and it constitutes an important aspect of justice in war, or *ius in bello*.

The primary research question that will guide this historical analysis is an elusive one. Namely, how did the moral challenges that existed within the war against heresy influence the outcome of the Albigensian Crusade?

The following is a brief by-chapter synopsis of the thesis:

Chapter two includes a discussion and analysis of the medieval context surrounding the Albigensian Crusade, from the role of the papacy in European society to the prevailing views on just war.

Chapter three begins with the nature of the Albigensian heresy and attempts to reveal the reasons why it posed an imminent threat to the Church. It describes the first

events of the Crusade itself, from the assembly of an army to the first two battles, the sieges of Beziars and Carcassonne in 1209.

Chapter four gives an in-depth account of the decisive moments that characterized the Crusade's struggle for survival. It includes the emergence of a single leader of the Crusade, Count Simon de Montfort, who faced the tactical and operational challenges of war waged against heresy. The chapter ends with the aftermath of the Battle of Muret, an event which nearly dealt the Crusade a decisive defeat and which would have arguably allowed heresy within Europe to prevail indefinitely.

The fifth chapter details the final years of the Crusade and explains how the Church was ultimately successful in defeating the heresy entrenched within Languedoc.

This thesis will explore the background, conduct, and outcome of the Albigensian Crusade with a particular focus on the inner workings of the human conscience. It will explore the forces that pull and tug on the minds of the key protagonists, from practical motivations to moral norms and personal standards of integrity. Among these individuals was Pope Innocent III, who was at the outset the strategic impetus for the war. Also of note was Count Simon de Montfort, who served as the military leader of the Crusade from 1209 until his death in 1218. Finally, there was St. Dominic, who founded the Dominican Order of Preachers that sought to defeat the ideology itself. The system of moral norms that these men labored to defend and attempted to embody had emerged from centuries of tradition and of Christian theological and philosophical interpretation. These moral principles were extremely important to the conduct of medieval life within Christendom at the start of the thirteenth century, and the defense of these norms ultimately drove Christendom to the war of the Albigensian Crusade.

¹Michael Walzer, *Just and Unjust Wars*, 2d ed. (United States of America: HarperCollins Publishers, 1992), 24. In fact, Walzer (see pg xvii) argues in his preface to the second edition that “just wars are limited wars...governed by a set of rules.”

²Warren H. Carroll, *A History of Christendom*, vol. 3, *The Glory of Christendom* (Front Royal, Virginia: Christendom Press, 1993), 161.

³Albert Clement Shannon, *The Popes and Heresy in the Thirteenth Century* (Villanova, Pennsylvania: Augustinian Press, 1949), 1.

⁴Hilaire Belloc, *The Great Heresies* (London: Sheed & Ward, 1938; reprint, Rockford, Illinois: Tan, 1991), 11.

⁵Mary R. Habeck, *Knowing the Enemy: Jihadist Ideology and the War on Terror* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 35.

⁶Walzer, 160.

⁷*Ibid.*, 153. The modern principle of double effect attempts to give military necessity a more objective standard. For example, while double effect does not permit non-military objectives to be targeted singularly, it does permit the destruction of non-military objectives as the secondary effect of an attack on a legitimate military target. For the act to be morally permissible, it must meet four conditions: (1) the act must be good in itself or at least morally indifferent; (2) any bad outcome from the act must be incidental and not the means to the good ends; (3) the act must have just intention with all bad intention removed from the act; (4) there must be a proportionally grave reason for permitting the bad effect.

CHAPTER 2

CHRISTENDOM AND MEDIEVAL LIFE

Introduction

The year was 1199. Jerusalem had fallen to the Egyptians twelve years earlier, and the Crusader Kingdom was still unable to regain the Holy City. The newly elected Pope Innocent III decided to make an impassioned call for a Fourth Crusade, its objective being to regain full control of the Holy Land. Rather than fighting for Jerusalem itself, the expedition was aimed against Egypt under the presumption that a military victory in Africa could best facilitate negotiations for a favorable settlement with the Egyptians. However, instead of proceeding to Egypt, the Venetian fleet coerced the crusaders into attacking the Hungarian city of Zara, using the crusaders' shortage of payment as their tool of persuasion.¹ At Zara, the deposed heir to the Byzantine throne convinced the crusaders to attack Constantinople, promising in return a generous monetary reward, provisions for the entire army, and a Byzantine army to join them in attacking Egypt.² For many of the crusading nobles, this was an offer they could not refuse. Yet when the Pope learned of this change in the Crusade's plans, he sent an immediate dispatch to forbid the expedition, but it arrived too late.³ The Venetians and crusaders successfully breached the walls of Constantinople in 1203, and the deposed heir Alexius took the throne. However, when the Byzantines reneged on their promise, the crusaders decided to take for themselves what was promised them. They besieged the great city a second time, sacking the city in one of the most deplorable, unanticipated debacles in the history of Christendom. A contemporary chronicler described it as a scene of massacre and pillage.⁴

The Fourth Crusade sheds light on three important characteristics of crusades during this age. First, the Pope had limited ability to influence the conduct of the crusade after its initial call to arms. The speed of communications severely hindered the Pope's ability to manage the details of a military campaign, restricting the role of Holy See to the initial call but not much more. Second, the sacking of Constantinople reflected the common consequence of storming a walled city. Sieges during this era undoubtedly were considered total war by their participants, making the degree of violence suffered by the citizens of Constantinople not as unique as our modern minds might expect. Considering this assumption, it is difficult to blame the aftermath on religious differences or fanaticism. On the contrary, the leaders of Christendom at this time had great hope that the Churches of east and west could be reunited.⁵ Finally, the self-interest and errant judgment of individual nobles often influenced the operational decisions of the crusade, introducing an array of conflicting motivations that drove the Fourth Crusade to an objective that was far outside the original intent. On the other hand, some principled crusaders recognized this ensuing change of objective and chose to take no part in it. Specifically, Count Simon de Montfort, the future leader of the Albigensian Crusade, and a handful of others broke with the crusading fleet at Zara and continued to the Holy Land, refusing to participate in the attack on Constantinople.⁶ Nevertheless, a sizeable crusader army, numbering close to 20,000,⁷ continued with their Venetian partners and carried out the deed that many historians suggest led to the fall of the Byzantine Empire.

When Constantinople fell, the Church in Europe was at its height. Pope Innocent III (1198-1216) brought the papacy to the pinnacle of temporal influence during the first part of the thirteenth century.⁸ This influence was most apparent to the kings of Europe,

who either heeded or often found themselves compelled to observe the moral authority of the Holy See. Concurrently, the so-called Medieval Renaissance in the mid-twelfth century had begun to bring new life to Europe following the cultural stagnation of the Dark Ages. While the feudal system continued to provide the social structure of Europe, an intellectual awakening was slowly manifesting itself throughout the continent. The rediscovery of Aristotelian thought and other ancient ideas pertaining to truth and justice was beginning to permeate the political and social character of Western Europe. Likewise, the Church was making great strides as an institution under the pontificate of Innocent, who assembled the ecumenical council of Lateran IV, one of the three most important councils in Church history.⁹ Amidst this array of flowering achievements for Europe and Christendom, Pope Innocent III effectively applied the Gregorian doctrine of papal supremacy like few others, and the Holy See consequently became the most influential leader in all of Europe.

During the first decades of the thirteenth century, however, Christendom was not free from internal challenges. Wars between France and England, France and the Holy Roman Empire, and the Crusade against the Albigensians weighed heavily on the mind of the supreme pontiff (see Figure 1, map of Europe around 1200). Furthermore, the English, French, and German monarchs continued to challenge papal authority, leaving Innocent to deal with a string of controversies that involved the most powerful rulers of Europe. Combined with the failed expeditions to regain the Holy Land and the Fourth Crusade's toppling of Constantinople, the Pope was forced to address an array of pressing issues, each of which could potentially affect the future course of Christendom.



Figure 1. Map of Europe, about 1200

Source: R. Ernest Dupuy and Trevor N. Dupuy, *The Encyclopedia of Military History* (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1986), 362.

In such a dynamic and troubled age, one can easily sympathize with the early thirteenth century popes as they faced the array of difficulties amidst such complex times. A host of powerful actors filled the stage, each competing for their own interests amidst a

social order whose only universal rule of law was the canon of the Church. The great captain and arbitrator during this time was the pope. Historically, in their role as leaders of Christendom, the popes used various instruments of persuasion to keep Europe on course lest society become shipwrecked. This was the precedent Innocent III inherited and carried with him throughout his pontificate. He balanced this complex atmosphere with his vision for the Church, which included systematic reform and increased control of the ecclesial hierarchy. The Church's influential position placed the Pope unequivocally at the center of the diplomatic and moral sphere in Medieval Europe. Therefore, in order to understand the context of Europe at the start of the thirteenth century, one must have an appreciation for the unique character and vast functions of the papacy within the scope of the political and social dynamic of the era. To gain a firm grasp of this distant time, this chapter will explore the Church and medieval life as well as the aspects of warfare and just war that helped to define conflict in the High Middle Ages.

The Church in the High Middle Ages

The Roman Catholic Church served as the stabilizing force in Europe during the High Middle Ages. Its institutions preserved and promulgated moral and canon law in an age where civil law was often weak or arbitrary. At its helm was the Holy Father, Bishop of Rome, elected successor of the Apostle Peter, and in the title first proclaimed by Pope Innocent III, the "Vicar of Christ."¹⁰ Medieval popes such as Innocent III believed it was necessary for the Church to exercise its temporal power in order to preserve Christian doctrine and enforce the moral right. Consequently, the popes of the High Middle Ages considered obedience to papal authority essential for the sake of feudal society as a whole.

At the beginning of this period, the secular kings of Europe were applying their influence and even direct authority over the election and appointment of bishops. The practice was known as lay investiture. However, in the mid-eleventh century, Pope (Saint) Gregory VII took a determined stand against this temporal encroachment upon the autonomy of the Church. In 1075, he ignored the wishes of the Holy Roman Emperor by decreeing papal authority over the appointment of all bishops and strictly prohibited lay investiture. While this act addressed a particular dispute with the Emperor, the message to the rulers of Europe was clear: the Holy See would not yield to the wishes of any secular king. In his last words to Emperor Henry IV, Pope Gregory sent the following: Gregory, servant of the servants of God, to King Henry, health and apostolic benediction (blessings) if he yields to the Apostolic See that obedience which is due from a Christian king.”¹¹ By formally issuing a pronouncement to end the investiture controversy, Pope Gregory VII effectively reclaimed the principle of papal authority. He decreed in what became known as the Gregorian Doctrine that Christian kings did not have authority over God and hence were subservient to the Church. Furthermore, in order for the Catholic Church to be truly universal, the Church as an institution had to be free from the power of temporal rulers. Therefore, it followed that only validly ordained clergy could elect bishops, who in turn could only be confirmed by the Pope. While the controversy restored Church authority over the selection of bishops, the larger effect was to declare a doctrine of papal authority over Europe’s Christian kings.

For the next two hundred years, popes applied the Gregorian Doctrine in varying degrees. In 1198, Christendom was introduced to a pope who was determined to bring this doctrine to fulfillment. That year, the cardinals of the Church elected a man to the

papacy that would put the principle of papal authority into practice like no other medieval pope before or after him.¹² His name was Lorthario Conti, and upon election he became known as name Pope Innocent III. When he was a young man studying in Paris, the future successor of Peter had visited the grave of the martyr St. Thomas Becket, the Archbishop of Canterbury whose murder came by order of King Henry II in 1170.¹³ The emotion and memory from this experience of his youth gave Innocent III a conviction that carried with him throughout his papacy; in the spirit of St. Thomas Becket, he believed that the Church must not bow to any temporal ruler. Combined with a brilliant mind and a keen grasp of canon law, Innocent became one of the most administratively adept and influential popes of the Middle Ages. His tremendous influence on the rulers of Europe together with the responsibility he believed he held as Pope gave him unprecedented ability to maintain and enforce the moral laws of the Church.

During the High Middle Ages, popes had at their disposal an array of ecclesial penalties to combat violations of canon and moral law. The Church applied the most visible of these sanctions in response to the actions or omissions of the Christian kings of Europe. The most well known among these penalties was excommunication, a judgment that in effect caused the recipient to lose membership with the Church. The practical effect was the denial of the sacraments, such as Holy Communion and confession, to which being a member of the Catholic Church was a prerequisite. The next sanction was interdict, a papal decree that denied the sacraments to an entire region or kingdom. Usually, popes imposed interdict for a relatively short period to extend the effects of excommunication to a king's subjects, presumably to apply popular pressure against a rogue king. Both punishments served as effective instruments of enforcing papal

authority, and Pope Innocent III used these penalties extensively to apply the rule of moral law throughout his pontificate.

After he was elected, Pope Innocent III's first controversy regarded the marital obligations of the King of France. King Philip Augustus (1180-1223) married the Danish princess Ingeborg in 1193, but the day after the marriage strangely sought an annulment. Pope Celestine III refused one, initiating a dispute between the King of France and the papacy that lasted nearly 20 years. King Philip later compounded his predicament by marrying another woman in 1200, prompting the newly elected Pope Innocent to take action. He imposed the ecclesial penalty of interdict upon the whole of France, which was only lifted when the new queen died a year later. Innocent III was clearly placing the utmost priority on defending the moral law and deterring what would otherwise be a scandal for all of Christendom rather than seeking a diplomatic compromise. Even the "eldest son of the Church,"¹⁴ that is France, had to be disciplined despite the cost of strained relations with the royal line that had for centuries been a steadfast ally of the papacy. Finally, in 1213, King Philip relented and allowed Ingeborg to return as his queen. This controversy was indicative of the degree to which Innocent III was willing to persevere in order to uphold what he considered the moral right.

Another dispute that resulted in the use of ecclesial penalties occurred with Emperor Otto IV of the Holy Roman Empire. Otto IV and Philip of Swabia were participants in a 10-year dispute over the throne. When Philip was murdered in 1208, Otto was left as the lone contender. Apparently due to hard feelings over the Pope's change of support in favor of Philip in 1207, Emperor Otto defiantly invaded the Papal States three years later. For this, the Holy Father excommunicated Otto and relieved all of

his subjects of their fealty toward him.¹⁵ This was significant not only in the dismissal of Otto from the Church, but also in the exercise of the Church's authority to adjudicate oaths. During the Third Lateran Council (1179), the council declared that Christians were not bound to oaths pledged to heretics. Innocent III, in this case, applied the spirit of this doctrine to Otto's excommunication. He released Otto's vassals from their oaths of fealty to the Holy Roman Emperor, since their oaths were made under the presumption that the Emperor was in full communion with the Church. Otto's change in status therefore nullified all past pledges. This papal decree reemphasized the weight of the council's proclamation and once again asserted the authority of the Church over what the Pope deemed a matter of moral right.

Innocent III's other major challenge from a European king occurred during an investiture controversy with King John of England. John, the unpopular successor to Richard the Lionhearted and son to Henry II, refused to accept papal authority following the election of the Archbishop of Canterbury. Innocent, reacting to John's belligerence, imposed interdict on England in 1208. John retaliated by seizing Church property and expelling a number of bishops. For this, Innocent excommunicated the king personally, but John was well past the point of being concerned about excommunication. Four years later, Innocent declared King John effectively deposed, causing John to finally relent, but only after King Philip Augustus of France had begun to make preparations to invade England.¹⁶ King John agreed to forfeit the throne of England to the Pope and in turn receive it back as a papal fief. This noteworthy exchange between Pope Innocent and an English king ended in disgrace for King John and marked the summit of papal influence in the High Middle Ages.

The popes of the High Middle Ages steadily grew in prominence throughout the period until the papacy reached its peak as medieval Europe's temporal and spiritual leader in the thirteenth century. This final ascension to its height of influence can be attributed to Pope Innocent III. Rather than overemphasizing Pope Innocent's strict enforcement of morality and papal authority, historians generally depict Innocent III as a sincere, principled pope who consistently sought to preserve the moral right. His recognition of the fragile moral state of Europe combined with the tendency among medieval kings toward lawlessness led him to believe that papal authority was absolutely essential to the stability and prosperity of feudal Europe.

Feudalism and Medieval Life

One can best describe the essence of Medieval Europe as feudal. Hand in hand with the feudal structure stood the Roman Catholic Church, equipped with its own parallel hierarchy that served both the Church and its people. Feudal society relied heavily upon the Church's institutions, with its developed systems of canon law, centralized authority, and ideological precepts to help serve as a cohesive and stabilizing force throughout Europe.

Feudalism arose following the gradual collapse of the Roman Empire. As the Empire declined, landowners who carried the titles of nobility were incrementally freed from their allegiance to the emperor, inheriting their own sovereignty. They evolved into the kings, dukes, counts, and barons of the Middle Ages, who each pledged fealty to their noble superior in a pyramidal structure of allegiance and interdependence. By the time Europe had reached the thirteenth century, many nobles were largely independent. For example, the semi-autonomous region in southern France only conveyed nominal fealty

to the French King. This area contrasted with the nobles of the north, which fell unmistakably under the dominion of the King of France. It was in the context of this feudal structure that the nobles of Europe lorded over their lands, and those that were under them provided them both tribute and sustenance.

Following the great pagan and Mohammedan invasions of the eighth through eleventh centuries, Europe began to emerge from the Dark Ages. A current of change and achievement had swept across the continent, resulting in the most significant movement of progress in centuries. It took on a variety of forms. The Spanish *Reconquista*, the successful defense against Viking and Magyar conquests, and the successive Crusades to the Holy Land represented both a determined military response as well as a unified effort within Christendom. Furthermore, an intellectual rebirth occurred, often referred to as the Medieval Renaissance. This gave rise to Europe's first universities in the twelfth century and included a flowering of independent philosophical inquiry, especially following the reintroduction of Aristotle's metaphysical and scientific works.¹⁷ Next, great advances took place in the realm of law¹⁸ as individual rights began to first become codified, the greatest milestone of which was the Magna Carta signed by King John of England in 1215 while under duress from his revolting nobles. Finally, economic vitality led to the rise of towns and cities, which tended to appear outside of Europe's many castles and later became incorporated into the castle's walled defense. By the start of the thirteenth century, many towns and cities throughout Europe found themselves protected by walled fortifications.¹⁹

What did not change was the way Europeans viewed heresy. Even before the Roman Empire sanctioned Christianity as a legal religion, heresy had always been a

capital crime. When the religion of the Empire was paganism, the Christians themselves bore the fate of this severe punishment. Despite the fall of the Empire in the fifth century, Roman common law continued to be widely enforced throughout Europe until well into the High Middle Ages.²⁰ Consequently, heresy remained among the most severe of crimes, presumably the result of a deeply entrenched notion of justice resulting from nearly thirteen centuries of precedence.

While the transition from the Dark Ages gave rise to new prosperity and progress, the age was not free from conflict. Despite the influence of the Church and its desire to prevent Christians from fighting one another, armed conflicts were still common. Additionally, the many profound societal advances that took shape in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries had only minor effects on the form and practice of warfare. The moral standards governing just war and justice in war remained largely unchanged. One can conclude that while economic, social, political, and even military conceptions were evolving, Europe's conscience remained constant. It remained firmly rooted in Christendom's collective conception of Christian morality, the foundation upon which Europe in the High Middle Ages had been built.

The Age of Sieges.

One source of new ideas came as a result of the military campaigns to the east. Beginning in 1097 until the end of the Crusades in 1271, the knights that returned from the expeditions to the Holy Land helped spark a cultural awakening within Europe.²¹ The mixing of peoples from throughout Europe and the Middle East stirred new ideas that led to Christendom's widespread economic and intellectual revitalization. As one would expect, the crusading experience provided a catalyst for the creative energies of military

thinkers as well. Since castles defined the High Middle Ages, the returning knights continued to perfect the art of walled defense while at the same time they discovered new tactics in siege warfare. The result was a widening asymmetry within medieval war as castles became more formidable, compelling attacking armies to counter defensive technological advances with offensive innovations of their own.

In the High Middle ages, Europe developed technological and tactical improvements to overcome the inherent problems of medieval warfare. First, large standing armies were expensive and therefore rare. Instead, more common were small yet mobile bands of knights suited for economy of force battles, moving quickly to catch vulnerable enemies off guard or to seize key castles. To counter the threat of mounted raids, advances in the technology of castle defenses were essential to survival of nobles in the High Middle Ages. Since sieges dominated the wars of this period, the development of castles with formidable defenses that even the most effective siege engines could not penetrate led to time-consuming sieges. If the attacker was able to persevere to the end of a lengthy siege, the result was usually mass casualties for the defender as starvation spread throughout a garrison or the weakened defenses were finally breached. It was for this reason that siege warfare yielded a brand of combat that was both time consuming and brutal.²²

In the strategy of medieval war and conquest, gaining control of a region meant winning over its castles. Europe's large number of castles resulted from the importance of land in feudal Europe. Ownership of land was the primary source of wealth.²³ For centuries, the shallow economic character of feudalism had made currency and goods less prominent than proprietary wealth. In order to protect their lands, the nobles built an

extensive network of castles. By the thirteenth century, castles dotted the continent in an endless array of defensive bastions.

The necessity to protect lands also gave rise to the militarization of feudal society. It was for this reason that the nobles of Europe became synonymous with the military class of knights. Each knight was usually accompanied by a squire and one to four mounted sergeants. Additionally, as towns and cities began to emerge, citizen foot soldiers became more common and typically took the form of militias. Still, with the lack of economic prosperity and wealth of the era, it was difficult to raise large armies due to their relatively high cost. Instead, noble knights and their vassals were most often compelled to join armies due to an obligation of fealty or a spirit of volunteerism rather than through the receipt of payment for military services. Encouraged by the necessities of the feudal system, the knight retained his position as the foremost fighting entity throughout the High Middle Ages.

Combining the high cost of armies with the time-consuming nature of the siege, kings and nobles conducted military ventures within Europe in a manner that sought to control castles, towns, or cities. When a military campaign was undertaken, an invader was usually prepared to conduct a successive series of sieges. However, when commanders were able to accept risk in their rear areas, armies were often known to bypass strong points and instead concentrate their efforts on conducting a decisive siege. This was due to the economic constraints of the defender, who was often unable to garrison more than a handful of armed men at any given castle. Therefore, it is easy to understand why an attacker would attempt to vanquish his opponent quickly through a single engagement rather than through a prolonged campaign of costly sieges.

One instance of this strategy in action was the siege of Chateau Gaillard in 1203-1204. Chateau Gaillard had been built by Richard the Lionhearted seven years earlier and was considered the strongest fortress of its time.²⁴ Seated in the heart of the contested lands of Normandy, the French King Philip Augustus believed that if he could vanquish this single fortification, he could gain English fiefs north of the Loire.²⁵ He surrounded the castle in the autumn of 1203 and subjected the English garrison to nearly seven months of siege, with the attack on the walls beginning in earnest in February of 1204. On the 6th of March, the garrison surrendered, after having lost 60 of its original 200 defenders.²⁶ This example brings to light two points. First, the brutality of the siege was contingent upon the stubbornness to accept surrender. While the losses could have been the result of a mix of starvation and a month's worth of direct attack, one thing is certain; the losses would have been higher had the French breeched the walls and stormed the castle. Second, this important single engagement shows the operational importance of seizing a key strongpoint, whereby the King of France won from King John of England all of Normandy in a relatively short and bloodless conflict.

Another example of a great siege from this era is the aforementioned conquest of Constantinople in 1204. While much larger in scale than the attack on Chateau Gaillard, this action is useful in illustrating the alternative outcome of siege warfare, that is, when the defending force did not surrender. Once inside the city, the attacking crusading army and their Venetian allies were inevitably faced with an overwhelming task. While grossly outnumbered by a sea of hostile inhabitants, they needed to gain control of the city and defeat those that could then, much more than before, bring violence to their own fighting force. The result was a brutal scene of urban battle, where countless Byzantines were cut

down by the sword. The inevitable result of this tactical predicament is one reason why sieges have always been considered total war.²⁷ The principle of military necessity has seemed to demand it, while the norms governing the conduct of war throughout history have allowed it. In the minds of the attackers, had they not resorted to such tactics after penetrating the city's great walls, they could have easily been beaten by the convergence of the defending remnant and the angry mob.

The consequence of the attack on Chateau Gaillard seems acceptable to our modern conscience, while the conquest of Constantinople does not. Yet during this age of siege warfare, where the necessity of certain tactics was instilled in the mind of the medieval knight, the aftermath of Constantinople was probably only considered unfortunate yet justified. One thing is certain, that in an age of sieges, successful attacks on castles yielded one of two outcomes: surrender or tragedy. However, the fact that a garrison such as Chateau Gaillard could capitulate and still be spared their lives is testament to the existence of moral limits. Nevertheless, the deplorable consequence of the Fourth Crusade's outcome has made the age known for its brutality in war. These contrasting examples clearly show the combination of moral restraint and the practical estimations of military necessity that governed siege warfare during the High Middle Ages.

War and the Kings of Europe.

Like wars throughout history, war in the High Middle Ages occurred because individuals had competing interests. At the beginning of the thirteenth century, Europe featured an array of kings who gave life to the wars of the age. An analysis of their individual motives is useful to understand why there were wars during this time and for

what reasons they were fought. Despite the militaristic nature of feudal Europe and the propensity for war, the kings were somewhat restrained by their common bond of religion. Had these kings not fallen under the same banner of Christendom, it is very possible that many more wars would have plagued Europe during the High Middle Ages. Yet more often than not, the motivations that did lead kings to war were the fulfillment of their own worldly ambitions.

The first dynamic pervading the ruling families of Europe was the complex system of family ties. It was common practice to use marriage as a vehicle of peace, yet the practice usually yielded only short-term results. Generations of intermarriage formed complex hereditary lines that tended to breed long-term conflict as the original gestures of goodwill were later forgotten. Consequently, most medieval wars were fought over claims to lands and thrones. Perhaps the most famous example of this is the Norman invasion of England in 1066. Yet another is the devastating conflict between France and England during the 100 years war of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. During the early thirteenth century, a similar dynamic led to the Battle of Bouvines, a battle which at this point deserves brief consideration.

The Battle of Bouvines in 1214 was the single decisive engagement between France and the Holy Roman Empire during the thirteenth century. On the one side was King Philip Augustus of France, who had allied himself with the most recent papal choice for the throne of the Holy Roman Empire, Frederick II of Sicily. On the other stood Emperor Otto IV, allied with his uncle King John of England, who provided only a small English contingent. The battle was part of a two-pronged invasion of French lands, the main thrust coming from the northeast which caused the meeting engagement at

Bouvines. With the support of the papacy, the French side carried the legitimate backing of Christendom, unlike the excommunicated Otto who was no longer considered a Christian king. In a dramatic open field battle that was unique to this age of sieges, the predominantly French force vanquished the Emperor's army, leading directly to Otto's loss of the throne.

Meanwhile, the great conflict on the Iberian Peninsula was the ongoing *Reconquista* of Spain. There, the kings of Castile, Portugal, Navarre, and Aragon had allied together to drive the Muslim forces south. By the start of the thirteenth century, the Christian armies had been waging war for nearly five centuries against the Islamic occupiers and had made significant headway, winning back most of Spain for Christendom. In 1212, the combined Christian armies waged a decisive battle against the Moors at Las Navas de Tolosa, and once again the Christian armies prevailed. So important was the Spanish victory here that some historians have called it the most significant battle of the 770 year War of Reconquest.²⁸ The leaders of the Christian armies received great prominence within Christendom for this victory. Among them were Pedro II of Aragon and Alfonso VIII of Castile, although in retrospect Pedro's role was relatively minor since the Castilians did the bulk of the fighting. Furthermore, in contrast to the religiously founded motivations of the Castilian king, Pedro seemed to have a thirst for the expansion of his kingdom rather than a selfless desire to wage war for Christendom. Nevertheless, Pope Innocent III recognized Pedro as a great protector of Christendom, a distinction that would later lead Pedro to challenge the crusaders of the Albigensian Crusade.

While the Church conveyed its firm commitment to justice and to the preservation of the moral right, most kings within Europe were more likely to serve their own interests and shrewdly leverage the Church to their advantage. Few kings during the High Middle Ages demonstrated a benevolent commitment to Christendom. The few exceptions included the well-known Richard the Lionhearted of England (1189-1199) and King (Saint) Louis IX of France (1226-1270). By and large, the popes as leaders of Christendom were often compelled when war broke out to take a single side. Amidst these imperfect circumstances, popes would typically support one party that most closely resembled a just defender against another that was an unjust aggressor. In reality, it was a matter advocating the side that represented the greatest degree of justice. Only within aggressive acts of war that directly defended Christendom did the popes find the tenets of just war adequately fulfilled.

Medieval Just War Theory

The papal call for crusade was heavily influenced by Medieval Just War Theory. Since the scholars of the Middle Ages were churchmen, the most prominent theoreticians combined the disciplines of theology and philosophy to produce a coherent formula on the just application of military force. Largely unchanged in Medieval Europe from the era of St. Augustine (d. 430), the Church did in fact improve upon Just War Doctrine following the great intellectual awakening of the twelfth century. Nevertheless, the basic ideas of just-war decision and justice within war remained largely unaffected. It was in this context that Pope Innocent III, who was known for his mastery of canon law, called for four crusades during his pontificate.²⁹

The tradition of Just War Theory began with the great thinkers of ancient Greece. Aristotle was the first to coin the phrase “just war.”³⁰ Following Romans such as Cicero who wrote extensively on the subject, the Church became the keeper of Just War Theory in Europe for the thousand years following the fall of Rome. Most prominent among its writers was St. Augustine, bishop of Hippo who was later named a Doctor of the Church. Augustine’s writings were for medieval scholars the primary source of synthesis between Christian theology and the great Hellenist and Roman philosophers until the late thirteenth century. His description of just war formed the foundation for Medieval Just War Doctrine. Augustine’s basic tenet was that just war avenged injuries.³¹ Therefore, proper authorities could wage war against a party who had unjustly seized lands, for example. It is also important to point out that Augustine spoke of both the damage done to provoke conflict as well as the offenses done to the moral order by the belligerent. Living in a time when the Church was nearly overcome by heresy, Augustine was familiar with threats to the moral order. Therefore, his understanding of just war permitted war to deliver justice upon a party that had inflicted injury, which included the ideological effects of heresy.

The next important period for the Church and Just War Theory occurred during the pontificate of Urban II (1088-1099). In 1095, Urban II called for the First Crusade, and his decision was heavily influenced by the tenets of Just War Doctrine established by Augustine. Only a half century following the great schism between the Christian Churches of the East and West, the Pope still considered the Byzantine Church part of Christendom and looked forward to the day of its reunification with Rome. With the Muslim threat pressing from the east and only slowly being expelled from the Iberian

Peninsula, the Pope saw the armies of Islam as an imminent threat. With the holiest shrines in Jerusalem in danger of destruction and the safe passage of Christians to the Holy Lands in jeopardy, Pope Urban called for war against the Turks in Palestine. Consistent with Augustine's doctrine of avenging injury, Christendom responded with an overwhelming military force gathered from all parts of Europe. The crusading army succeeded in its mission and took Jerusalem in 1099.

As Europe's first universities appeared in the twelfth century, attended largely by the most promising of churchmen, medieval minds began to elaborate upon Augustine's ideas of just war. A flurry of writings from canonists and theologians resulted, eventually leading Pope Gregory IX (1227-1241) to direct the formal codification of what was commonly understood as Medieval Just War Doctrine, completed by the Dominican canonist St. Raymond of Penafort in 1234. The model that emerged provided a five-step test: first, that those waging war must be laymen; second, that the objective of war had to be either the restoration of stolen property or the defense of the Church; third, that war had to be in fact necessary; fourth, that the combatants possessed just intention which did not include the desire to punish; and fifth, that the war was waged by virtue of proper authority.³² Under this framework, the Crusades of the High Middle Ages were considered just wars. This belief received its final reinforcement by another Church Doctor, the Dominican St. Thomas Aquinas, who completed his synthesis of Aristotelian philosophy, theology, and Just War Theory in the late thirteenth century.

Throughout the High Middle Ages, the most intelligent minds of the day consistently supported the medieval popes on the just cause for war to defend Christendom. Any threat to the survival of the Church and the societal structures which it

sustained constituted just cause. Furthermore, they believed that the lawful authority to wage war, if rightfully in the hands of kings, would even more rightfully belong to the popes as Vicars of Christ and leaders of Christendom. There is little doubt that popes, scholars, and kings saw eye to eye in this matter. Likewise, the people of Medieval Europe no doubt saw the preservation of justice and the moral right resting firmly on the shoulders of the Holy See, evidenced by the overwhelming numbers answering the popes' successive calls to crusade over the course of two centuries.

Conclusion

To our modern detriment, historians often overlook the relevance of the High Middle Ages with respect to modern war. The cause of this indifference is undoubtedly the great cultural chasm between now and then, creating an unfamiliarity that makes medieval times seem even more distant than ancient Greece or Rome. While to a great degree many of the social, political, economic, and military ideas and constructs have evolved in a dramatic way since the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the underlying elements of the human condition maintain a source of parallel that our modern perspective should not overlook. Part of the obstacle the modern student of history must overcome can be remedied by developing a cultural understanding of the High Middle Ages. In this endeavor, the modern mind must have some sense of imagination for the times, a time when the papacy and the Roman Catholic Church were at the height of influence and when the militarized society of feudal Europe was characterized by a different standard of moral acceptability. By gaining an appreciation for the complex dynamic of this period in history, one can see the many parallels that do in fact exist. It is

in this context that we begin the task of unraveling the war that defined early thirteenth century Europe: the Albigensian Crusade.

¹R. Ernest Dupuy and Trevor N. Dupuy, *The Encyclopedia of Military History* (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1986), 381.

²Joinville and Villehardouin, *Chronicles of the Crusades*, trans. M. R. B. Shaw (New York: Dorset Press, 1985), 50.

³Warren H. Carroll, *A History of Christendom*, vol. 3, *The Glory of Christendom* (Front Royal, Virginia: Christendom Press, 1993), 156.

⁴Joinville, 91.

⁵Carroll, 169.

⁶Dupuy, 380.

⁷Joinville, 93.

⁸Margaret Deanesly, *A History of the Medieval Church: 590-1500* (London: Methuen & Co Ltd, 1973), 140.

⁹Norman F. Cantor, *The Civilization of the Middle Ages* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1994), 418.

¹⁰Thomas Bokenkotter, *A Concise History of the Catholic Church* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1977), 124.

¹¹Warren H. Carroll, *A History of Christendom*, vol. 2, *Building of Christendom* (Front Royal, Virginia: Christendom Press, 1987), 502.

¹²Deanesly, 140.

¹³Bokenkotter, 124.

¹⁴T. F. Tout, *The Empire and the Papacy* (London: Rivingtons, 1899), 322.

¹⁵Warren H. Carroll, *A History of Christendom*, vol. 3, *The Glory of Christendom* (Front Royal, Virginia: Christendom Press, 1993), 174.

¹⁶Deanesly, 144.

¹⁷See Cantor, 305-306. Many of Aristotle's works did not become available in Medieval Europe until the twelfth Century, when a number of previously unavailable texts of Aristotle were translated in Spain from Arabic to Latin.

¹⁸The Church's role in integrating rational thought into society led to the explicit condemnation of trial by ordeal by the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215 (see Jenks, 127). Trial by ordeal determined guilt by subjecting the accused to fire, water, or other perils under the premise that if they were innocent, then God would spare them.

¹⁹John France, *Western Warfare in the Age of the Crusades: 1000-1300* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University, 1999), 107.

²⁰Frederick H. Russell, *The Just War in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 40.

²¹Oliver Lyman Spaulding and Hoffman Nickerson, *Ancient and Medieval Warfare* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1993), 321.

²²Dupuy, 333.

²³France, 1.

²⁴Hoffman Nickerson, *The Inquisition*, 2nd ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1932), 112.

²⁵Dupuy, 367.

²⁶Spaulding, 333-334.

²⁷Geoffrey Parker, *The Cambridge Illustrated History of Warfare* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 161.

²⁸Carroll, 178.

²⁹Theology and canon law first became separate disciplines during the pontificate of Innocent III. The four calls to crusade by Innocent III were the 4th Crusade (1202-1204), the Albigensian Crusade (1209-1229), a call to crusade during the Spanish *Reconquista* (1212), and the Fifth Crusade (1218-1221), which began two years after his death in 1216.

³⁰Russell, 3.

³¹*Ibid.*, 18.

³²Russell, 128. Proper authority lay in the hands of kings and popes.

CHAPTER 3

ROAD TO CONFLICT AND CRUSADE

Introduction

In the year 1204, a young Spanish priest accompanied his bishop, Diego of Osma, to meet with the Holy Father in Rome. The bishop sought the Pope's release from his episcopal duties to preach Christianity to the nomads on the steppes of the Ukraine.¹ As a result of their meeting, the Pope partially granted his request. However, instead of sending him east to convert non-Christians, Pope Innocent III sent him west to aid in Christendom's most pressing crisis: the Albigensian heresy.

The Bishop of Osma's companion, who later became known as St. Dominic, was a youthful thirty four years of age and had been at the bishop's side since his ordination. Dominic and his bishop had become keenly aware of the heresy in southern France on their two previous trips through the region. On these occasions, the pair realized the degree to which heresy had permeated the whole of society, from the nobles to the peasants. At the direction of the Pope, Bishop Diego and Dominic proceeded to Languedoc, joining the monks of the Cistercian order who had labored for decades attempting to stem the heresy's spread. The Cistercian effort was led by Abbot Amalric of Citeaux and papal legate Peter de Castelnau, the appointed representative of Pope Innocent whose words bore the weight of the Holy Father himself. The Cistercians carried with them the frustration of a complete lack of progress bordering on total failure.² They welcomed the arrival of Bishop Diego and Dominic, two priests that would dramatically change the Church's approach to combating the anti-Christian religion of the Albigensians.

The asceticism of the Albigensian heretics contrasted greatly with the perceived opulence of the Catholic clergy in Languedoc. Leading the heretics was a group called the Cathars, whose leaders condemned the excesses of the Church while themselves accepting a life of poverty. These accusations found a sympathetic ear among the nobles of southern France, and they in turn satisfied their ambitions by using the philosophy of the Cathars to justify confiscation of Church possessions. It also appealed to the artisan and peasant classes, who favored violent attacks on Church property to whittle away the temporal power of the clergy.³ Because the measure of wealth in feudal society was land and since the Church owned an enormous amount, this lawlessness in Languedoc eventually began to deprive the Church of her social stature and wealth. Since the affluence of the Church was the primary point of contention, when the Cistercians arrived in a new location to preach against heresy accompanied by caravans of oxen, traveling in carriages with their vast provisions, and wearing expensive vestments, the heretics and their supporters instinctually rejected their teachings as false and hypocritical.

First appearing in Languedoc in 1206, the Bishop of Osma and St. Dominic represented a significant change in approach. The two men embodied a life of poverty that even eclipsed the asceticism of the Cathars. They became known for traveling barefoot from town to town to preach against heresy.⁴ In their dress and demeanor they reflected a total lack of regard for themselves. Their strategy to combat heresy was summed up in their own words:

It will not be by words alone, that you will bring back to the faith men who rely upon example. Look at the heretics; it is by their affectation of holiness and of evangelical poverty that they persuade the simple. By presenting a contrast you will edify little, you will destroy much, you will gain nothing; put to flight the show of holiness by the practices of sincere religion.⁵

Furthermore, the character of the two wandering priests was known to be beyond reproach, giving greater credibility to their witness. One of St. Dominic's early companions, Jordan of Saxony, eloquently described St. Dominic following his arrival in Languedoc as "a burning torch, the first in sanctity, the lowest of all humility, shedding around him an odour (sic) of quickening life, a perfume like incense on a summer's day."⁶ The Castilian preachers engaged in "theological tournaments" with leading Cathars, matching the heretics in their asceticism and philosophical arguments at the same time.⁷ In observing the bishop and his companion, the Cistercians monks realized the error of their over reliance upon wealth. They too embraced this image of poverty and followed the example of the Castilian foreigners from Osma. By the end of 1206, Pope Innocent III had added his papal endorsement by formally prescribing the methods being used by Dominic and Bishop Diego in Languedoc.⁸

Dominic and his bishop were more than just two humble clerics who arrived on the scene offering a novel approach to combating heresy. Together, they embodied the true spirit of the Christian ethic. Somewhat surprisingly, after the Bishop of Osma returned to Castile two years later to die, Dominic voluntarily returned to Languedoc alone to complete the bishop's mission there.⁹ This decision reveals two important aspects of the Christian ethic demonstrated in St. Dominic. First, the insidious nature of heresy in Languedoc was so great that a Christian foreigner would voluntarily return there alone to assist in defeating it. Second, the moral norms of Christendom, portrayed so perfectly in Dominic, seemed to compel him to do so. It was these same norms personified in a simple priest that would later weigh so heavily on the crusade itself.

Likewise, for Pope Innocent the heresy was a particularly dangerous foe, and the nobles in Languedoc had allowed it to persist for far too long. At the same time, he was certain that under the current conditions preaching alone would not dislodge the heresy. In November of 1207, he made a fourth appeal to the King of France, Philip Augustus, to intervene against heresy in southern France.¹⁰ Less than two months later, before the Pope received the reply, an armed agent of the Count of Toulouse murdered the papal legate assigned to Languedoc. In this bloody event, Pope Innocent III became fully convinced that the primary enemy of the Church at that moment was not the Islamic advance on the Holy Land but the Albigensian heresy, and a military campaign was required to defeat it. For him, just cause was clear, and the threat was imminent. He could wait no longer on the reluctant King of France. He would press for military service from the leading nobles of France, even without the king's endorsement. It would be for the Church a just war, necessary for the defense of Christendom. In the mind of Pope Innocent III, the Crusade had begun.

The Threat: Cathars and the Albigensian Heresy

Despite the tremendous influence of the Roman Catholic Church on Medieval Europe and feudal life, heresy was nonetheless able to take root and flourish in southern France during the twelfth century. While the Church had sporadically faced the problem of heresy for twelve centuries prior, at no time had a military solution seemed so necessary. In the past, the internal policing of feudal common law had effectively thwarted its rise, a system which reserved the severest of civil punishments for the crime of heresy. However, at the start of the thirteenth century in the region known as

Languedoc, heresy had found safe haven, permeating the very character of an entire society.

The Church council held at Tours in 1164 first named the Albigensian heresy after the city of Albi, a town central to Languedoc and one of the most notorious enclaves of the heretical ideology. The ideology based its ideas on Manicheanism, the ancient heresy that appeared initially in the third century. Its founder was Mani, a Mesopotamian who was heavily influenced by the dualist traditions of the Persian Zoroastrians and the Gnostics.¹¹ The term dualism refers to a philosophical means of explaining good and evil in the world. To the Manichean, the world was essentially created by two gods, one creating the spiritual world that is good, and the other creating the material world that is evil. From this basic proposition, a number of beliefs logically followed. First, since the evil being had created the material universe, the world was in turn evil. Next, any process that assisted in the further creation of the material universe, such as procreation, was evil. Marriage, therefore, was a state of perpetual sin. Even the consumption of foods derived from the act of animal procreation, such as meat, eggs, and milk, was an unclean act. A group known as the Cathari, who took their name from the Greek word for “pure,” had adopted a derived form of this Manichean ideology. It was the Cathars that formed the nucleus of the Albigensian heretics.

The Cathars claimed to be Christian, making their ideology a direct challenge to the faith of the Catholic Church. While denying the Church’s authority, sacraments, and dogmatic precepts, they organized their counter-religion using a structure of authority similar to that of the Church. For example, the leaders of the Cathars were known as the “Perfect,” while the majority of their followers were merely “Believers.” This created a

hierarchical system that loosely mirrored the clergy and laymen of the Church. The “Perfect” were those who had received the “Consolamentum,” a rite in which they renounced their Christian baptism and bound themselves to follow the Cathar teachings against marriage and procreation, which also included a life of strict asceticism and fasting. The “Perfect” owned no property, wore conspicuous black robes, and took part in a practice called the “Endura.” The “Endura” was a suicide ritual carried out by starvation which was considered by the Cathar “Perfect” to be the highest form of death.¹² In fact, any form of suicide that achieved the same effect of releasing a person from the evil grip of the world was encouraged. On the other hand, the “Believers,” which comprised the majority of the Cathars, were not bound to any of the Cathar teachings. Instead, they promised to receive the “Consolamentum” at the end of their lives or on their death beds, whereby they too would become “Perfect.” Among their few obligations was the veneration, usually consisting of a deep bow, of the relatively few that had accepted the lifestyle of the “Perfect.” The so-called religion was arguably much less rigorous for the “Believer” than the Christian faith, since it dispensed of virtually all accountability for one’s actions. “Believers” were able to live their entire lives free from any obligation to right conduct, since the Cathars rejected the existence of any objective moral principles. Under this ideological system, many Albigensians effectively sought escape from morality itself.

While claiming to be a movement that was a purer form of Christianity, the Albigensians presented themselves as a religion that directly opposed the Catholic Church. They rejected the Yahweh of the Old Testament as being inconsistent with a God who was good and just.¹³ They spoke out prolifically against the accumulated wealth of

the Church, and they incited great resentment toward the moral authority of Church leaders and the Pope. This led to Cathar doctrines that rendered irrelevant the swearing of oaths. Since oaths were a stabilizing force in feudal life, this teaching undermined a key component of medieval society. Theologically, at the root of the Albigensian doctrine was a denial of the divinity of Christ, claiming that God would never take the corrupted form of man and make himself subject to the evil of the material world. To the Church, this tenet made the religion of the Albigensians a false Christianity. From this fundamental precept, the Albigensians deduced an ideology that formed a complete and total negation of the Catholic Christian doctrines. Yet their insistence on maintaining the Christian label made them all the more of a threat. It was in a sense for Christendom an attack from within.¹⁴

The Church had identified the danger posed by the Albigensian heresy nearly a century earlier. In 1119, Pope Callixtus II held a council in Toulouse, the capital city of Languedoc, which declared the Albigensian heretics excommunicated.¹⁵ Three decades later, St. Bernard set out within Languedoc to launch a preaching campaign against the heresy. While he and his order of Cistercians were known as the most influential moral force in Christendom at the time, they made little progress.¹⁶ At the Third Lateran Council of 1179, the Pope decreed that those nobles who harbored the heresy within their possessions would forfeit their rights as suzerain, effectively negating all oaths of fealty toward nobles that were heretic supporters.¹⁷ This symbolic judgment in theory released their subjects from their feudal obligations and invited Christian nobles with appropriate title to replace them. While not immediately significant, the proclamation later became

important during the Albigensian Crusade, when it was used to provide justification for the Crusade's campaign of occupation.

Despite the Church's aggressive efforts to counter heresy's spread, the ideology continued to become even more firmly rooted in Languedoc. By 1165, there was already widespread acceptance of the Albigensian heretics throughout southern France to such a degree that in many areas heretics were permitted to teach their doctrines openly. Contrary to the fiercely negative stigma towards heresy that existed throughout the rest of Christendom, the situation in Languedoc was such that even the Catholic bishops dared not to challenge them.¹⁸ The Albigensians had their own bishops, held their own synods, and even established their own convents. Over the course of subsequent decades, heresy's softening effect on the Catholic clergy led to a lack of eagerness to preach orthodox Catholic doctrines, an error that Bishop Diego had noted upon his arrival in 1206. By that time, nobles were completely unwilling to impose any civil penalty on known heretics since many of them were heretics themselves or had family who were members of the Albigensian sect. The following exchange between a knight from Languedoc and a Catholic bishop demonstrates the state of affairs:

Said the Bishop to the knight: 'So why do you not expel them from your territory and put them to flight?' He replied: 'We cannot; we were brought up with them, there are many of our relatives amongst them, and we can see that their form of life is a virtuous one.'¹⁹

At this point in time, the dilemma of ousting heresy seemed insurmountable. With heresy firmly planted, the moral norms of Languedoc were rapidly changing as the Albigensian ideology began to replace the Church as the region's normalizing force.

From the perspective of Pope Innocent III, the Pope was uniquely responsible to ensure the moral order of Christendom. In this prosperous and influential part of Europe,

heresy had presented a serious and imminent threat to that order. In a letter to the archbishop of Aix, Innocent conveyed his concern by describing the heretics and those who had accepted their ideology:

They (the “Perfect”) assail the teaching of the Roman Church, cloaking their iniquity under the guise of justice in order that they may be saluted by men in the marketplace as “rabbi” and may seem to be alone righteous and just. They seduce the hearts of listeners by new artifices ensnaring the simple and the unlearned, so that the blind leading the blind both the leaders and the followers, or rather the seducers and the seduced, fall into the pit of perdition together.²⁰

For Pope Innocent, there were essentially two levels of the heresy. First, the members of the “Perfect” sought to undermine the Church and instigated the heresy’s spread. Next were the “Believers,” who by accepting the philosophical arguments of the “Perfect” chose to discount the existence of the moral right. If the world was evil, then how could objective good be a reality while confined to this earthly life? In this vein, Pope Innocent felt particularly compelled to act in order to protect the naive, those that would accept this philosophy and in turn suffer greatly from it. Not only was the Pope concerned about the greater moral order, he also aimed to free the victims of this ideology from their errant teachers.

Besides the shear momentum being generated by the heresy, the deteriorating situation in Languedoc had a series of secondary causes. First, Pope Innocent had determined that the region’s Catholic bishops had for years failed to uphold the true teachings of the Catholic faith in the face of an antagonistic ideology. To remedy this shortcoming, the Pope removed a number of bishops and priests from their positions and replaced them with clergy that were better suited to face heresy. Second, efforts to preach the orthodox tenets of Christianity had become increasingly dangerous. The Cistercians and others had reported increasingly frequent incidences of hostility and even acts of

violence toward them, and their safety was now in question. Third, the nobles had refused to enforce the Christian ethic in their territories. Chief among these was the principle suzerain of Languedoc, Raymond VI of Toulouse, whose first wife had been a Cathar “Perfect.”²¹ The unwillingness of Raymond, himself an important Catholic nobleman, to subvert heresy and preserve the moral norms of Christendom was extremely troubling. It was within the realm of this defiant suzerain that Pope Innocent III eventually sought armed conflict as the solution to a dire situation for Christendom.

Murder, Decision, and the Call to Crusade

The counts of Toulouse had long been among the richest and most powerful ruling families in Europe. In the late eleventh century, Raymond IV of Toulouse had been one of the heroes of the First Crusade, and he provided a substantial military force against the Muslim forces in the Holy Land.²² His thirteenth century descendant, Raymond VI, received similar prestige from the reputation of the counts that preceded him, but he was unable to live up to the same standards of honor and virtue as his predecessors. As suzerain of the lands of Languedoc (see Figure 2 for map of Languedoc in 1209), he received fealty from a wide array of semi-independent nobles. In turn, he was a vassal to the King of France for his lands in the north, the Holy Roman Emperor for his lands east of the Rhone, and the King of Aragon for some of his lands in the south, although in every case only nominally. No king or emperor was either able or willing to impose their direct authority on Languedoc, the region made famous for the “invention” of the troubadour during the High Middle Ages.²³ Reflecting well the carefree spirit of the troubadour, Raymond VI was most interested in enjoying a privileged, untroubled life,

and as a result, he became a poor administrator and an unprincipled prince of Christendom.

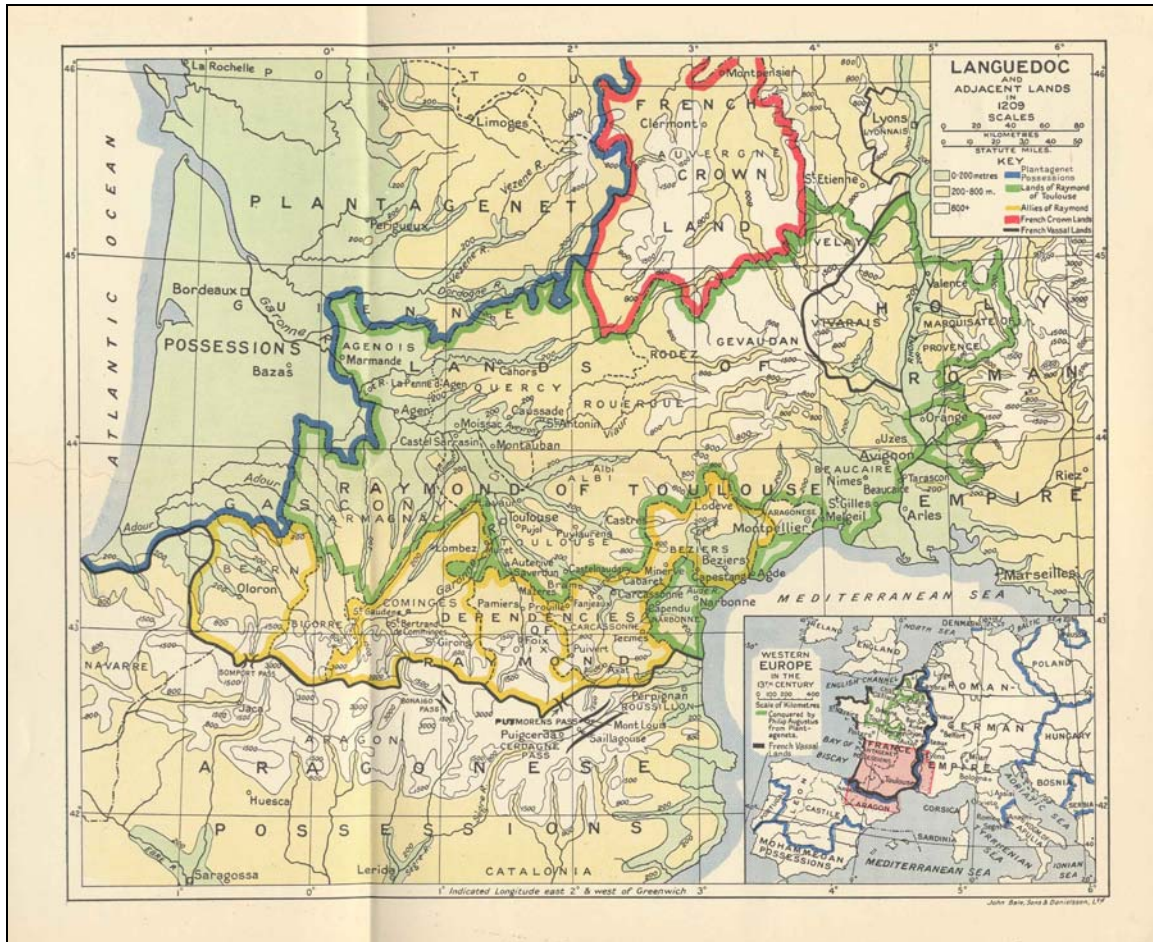


Figure 2. Map of Languedoc in 1209

Source: Hoffman Nickerson, *The Inquisition*, 2nd ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1932).

When Raymond succeeded his father, Raymond V, in 1194, the seeds of heresy had been already deeply rooted in Languedoc. The elder Raymond, alarmed by heresy's reach and the degree to which public disorder seemed to accompany it, had ordered not only the sentence of exile but the burning of all heretics.²⁴ Yet the younger Raymond was

his own man. He abandoned the strict approach of his father and opted instead for a path of least resistance. By the end of the first ten years of his rule, the Albigensian heretics had gained the passive approval of nearly all nobles in Languedoc, including Raymond himself.

Turning a blind eye to heresy was not Raymond's only offense in the eyes of the Church. He also employed mercenaries, a practice that had formally been condemned at the Third Lateran Council in 1179. Mercenaries, unlike the foot soldiers and knights that fought for their lords, were not "governed by the normal bonds of a hierarchical Christian society."²⁵ This created a problem for the Church in ensuring that the moral norms of Christendom were followed in war, since the mercenary troops fell outside of the feudal system of accountability. Interestingly, when Pope Innocent presented a list of charges against Raymond in 1207, the accusations of harboring heretics and mercenaries carried with them equal weight. It was for these reasons principally that the Pope subsequently excommunicated Raymond and placed Languedoc under interdict. Nevertheless, Raymond ignored these sanctions and persisted in his policy of leniency while continuing to tolerate heresy within his dominion.

With Raymond of Toulouse expelled from the Church, Pope Innocent III once again turned to King Philip Augustus of France to intervene in Languedoc. While he believed that the problem of heresy was best handled as a matter of internal policing, the involvement of the suzerain was the next best option. Yet the King of France was fully engaged. Philip was committed to his war with King John of England and did not wish to be distracted by another campaign, much less to provide nobles for such an undertaking.

With the Pope's fourth appeal to Philip enroute to Paris, the event that provided the strongest impetus for action occurred, an event that aroused the will of Christendom.

On 15 January 1208, a purported assassin of Count Raymond murdered the papal legate Peter de Castelnau. With the vivid memory of his visit to Thomas Becket's tomb firmly in his mind, Pope Innocent was determined to stand up against what he saw as an outrageous and lawless offense against the Church. With all of the persuasive power at his disposal, he launched a series of letters to nobles throughout France and the Holy Roman Empire, calling upon them to take up arms under the banner of Christendom and declaring Raymond's rights as suzerain lost. In those letters, the Vicar of Christ deemed Raymond's lands forfeited, citing the decision of Lateran III against overlords of heretics.²⁶ The response to this murder of a cardinal of the Church inspired nothing less than outrage throughout Christendom. This was one call to crusade that would not go unanswered. Since it was a formally proclaimed crusade, those that answered the call to arms were eligible for the customary crusading indulgence for 40 days service, which was nevertheless a relatively short amount of time for an army to be assembled.²⁷ It was apparent that Pope Innocent III envisioned a swift military operation of short duration.²⁸ The moral order had to be restored in Languedoc, and it would be accomplished through a rapid campaign of occupation.

Overwhelmingly, the barons of northern France responded. While King Philip remained singularly committed to his war with England, he reluctantly permitted his nobles to crusade in the south. A remarkably sizable army for its day was assembled, that is for sure, although history is devoid of firm numbers.²⁹ Based on a realistic estimate for the times, it was probably a total force of 40,000-60,000. Included in this number was the

most surprising of participants: the Count Raymond of Toulouse himself. Anticipating the impending doom that approached him after being denied protection from by his three suzerains, Raymond found no other recourse but to submit to the Church. In the summer of 1209, he arrived at the crusading camp as it was assembling after having subjected himself to a humiliating scene of public penance where he processed past the tomb of De Castelnaud and also received absolution.³⁰ Raymond had mercifully been readmitted to the Church, after which he asked to join in the Crusade and pledged to enforce the removal of heresy from his territories.

This astonishing turn of events demonstrates once again the Crusade's true foe. As guilty as Count Raymond may have been, he was not the enemy. The dire situation in Languedoc had resulted from a security crisis and inept Christian governance with respect to heresy. Violence toward the Church prevented priests from preaching against heresy, and tolerance encouraged its spread. The solution that military intervention could provide was regime change to rid Languedoc of the lawlessness that the heresy had caused. Compounding the situation was the serious moral problems that the heresy propounded, which created the makings of a social crisis that if ignored could upset the entire stability of Christendom. Consequently, the problem of heresy in Languedoc was more than a debate with an enemy of Christianity over doctrine. Rather, the Albigensian heresy was a moral force that threatened to replace the Christian ethic in the heart of Christendom. In his role as leader of the Church, the Pope felt he had the solemn responsibility to protect the innocent from the destructive effects of this enticing philosophy. It was in this context that Innocent believed he had fulfilled the prerequisites of Medieval Just War Doctrine.

Once war in Languedoc began, it lasted a total of 20 years, its duration and difficulties being far beyond what the Pope had initially anticipated. While the Albigensian Crusade came to be a long, drawn out struggle against an elusive enemy, there were periods of time in which no fighting occurred. The chief single event of the entire war was the decisive conventional battle at Muret in 1213. Yet at its outset, the Crusade was largely an asymmetrical conflict, with none of the lords of the south remotely able to match the great size of the crusader army. Hence the Crusade initially proceeded virtually unchallenged, and the primary resistance offered was the form of asymmetric warfare most common to the age: the siege.

The Initial Campaign

The intent of the Albigensian Crusade is best encapsulated in its opening actions. With a large army assembled, the crusaders proceeded south to the two most notorious and impenetrable safe havens of heresy: Beziers and Carcassonne. Two years before his death, the papal legate, De Castelnau, had been driven out by the people of Beziers for his preaching. Likewise, the Archbishop of Carcassonne had been expelled from his own city as well.³¹ From that time on, the two Mediterranean towns had been considered inaccessible. Yet as the sizable military force of the crusaders approached and eventually forced the capitulation of these rogue cities in the summer of 1209, the character of the Crusade and its objectives became clear. The crusaders sought regime change in a short campaign of conquest, and its first target was the walled city of Beziers.

Along the way to Beziers, the crusading army was met by Roger Trencavel, viscount of Beziers and Carcassonne. He ambitiously hoped to negotiate a peaceful settlement, but he instead was denied the chance to even speak to the leaders of the

Crusade and was expelled from the crusading camp.³² The reason is obvious. The large crusading army was assembled for only 40 days. After four years of attempts to persuade the King of France to intervene in the south, the Crusade's leaders were not going to allow this opportunity to employ force go to waste based upon the insincere promises of a known heretic supporter. The curious question is why the crusaders did not apprehend him. The crusaders were not interested in holding him captive. Rather, they sought his submission, and if he refused to submit, they would deprive him of his possessions and effectively banish him to exile. Exile was the common punishment for heretics, and Pope Innocent also had recently made it the sanction for those in Languedoc that harbored them. Therefore, the nobles preferred to let him go and give the count the opportunity to surrender the city. Shortly after this encounter, the crusading army arrived simultaneously at Beziers along three separate axes of march, whereby it established its first siege.

The initiation of the attack on Beziers occurred unexpectedly, which led directly to its unanticipated outcome. While the nobles were conferring together on the strategy for the assault, an armed force from inside the town infiltrated into the crusading camp, killed a lone crusader, and threw his body into the river. This event triggered an overwhelming response from the camp followers, which the new papal legate later described as an unarmed band of underlings that accompanied the main fighting force. They breeched the city gate, presumably because it had been left open for its clandestine sortie, and in a rage decimated the town. A significant portion of its inhabitants perished at the hands of the frenzied attackers, and the town was set ablaze. The crusading nobles, attempting to control the situation, soon entered the town to mitigate the damage, but it was too late. The entire town was burned and most of its citizens killed. In the official

correspondence from legate Arnold Amalric to Pope Innocent III, he reported that 20,000 people died at the hands of the crusaders, who spared no one.³³

The troubling result of this horrific event reflects the problem of total war in siege warfare. A town under siege could either surrender or be stormed. As was the custom, the people of Bezers had been given the opportunity to surrender. The Bishop of Bezers, who was with the crusaders, helped to craft the terms, which included the safeguarding of life and property except for those who were known heretics. However, Bezers refused the offer. Still, with such a sizable force, a medieval army would not have been compelled to offer terms of surrender to a town guilty of the providing safe haven to heresy except that their moral norms dictated it. In their minds, military necessity did not warrant the killing of thousands of people that would voluntarily submit. On the other hand, once inside the walls, control of an army amidst such a large population of hostile people, whether combatants or noncombatants, presented a completely different predicament. Consequently, the events that unfolded yielded the worst possible outcome, morally speaking. Of the 20 years of war, it is the massacre at Bezers for which the Albigensian Crusade is primarily remembered.³⁴

Bezers also demonstrates the noteworthy set of challenges in exercising command and maintaining control of a large medieval army. In this age of warfare, large armies were rare, so leaders were most likely unaccustomed to directing forces of such massive size. Additionally, at this time there was no single leader in charge of the Crusade. The nobles, when the attack began, were conferring as a group to determine the best plan of attack, exercising command by committee, so to speak. Furthermore, it is clear that the nobles lost control of their men, who burned the town, an act that was

clearly against the wishes of their leadership. The Crusade's nobles would have been foolish to have intended to burn the city, since a town left intact offered vast wealth to the victor while a destroyed town gained nothing. So, as is the case throughout history with so many first battles, its execution was far from flawless and the outcome was at best a partial success.

The army then marched to the fortress city of Carcassonne to begin a siege there. At this point, King Pedro II of Aragon arrived to negotiate terms favorable to his vassal, Robert Trencavel. Instead, he left soured by the obstinacy of the crusaders, who once again permitted Robert to go free while insisting upon unconditional surrender.³⁵ After a failed assault and a drought that weakened the townspeople's will to resist, Carcassonne finally surrendered. What followed was a dramatically different outcome than Beziers. The crusaders allowed its citizens, heretics included, to go free, but in leaving they were ordered to process naked from the town. It was in this manner that the city's infrastructure was preserved and bloodshed was avoided. This more morally acceptable ending makes evident the crusaders' primary motive to seize and preserve the town. As a result, it is clear that the campaign's initial objective was occupation rather than the capture of heretics.

Following the fall of Carcassonne, the crusading army effectively dissolved. The crusading nobles had fulfilled their obligation to serve, defined by the crusading indulgence granted for 40-days service. Before the nobles returned home to their castles, they had the task of selecting a baron to maintain and administer the two captured cities. They chose a relatively unimportant figure, among the less prominent nobles of the Crusade, but one that had a reputation as both a man of character and a fearless warrior.

His name was Count Simon de Montfort. He, along with a small remnant of knights, would take possession of Beziers and Carcassonne. While the two cities represented a significant prize, the nobles curiously avoided the responsibility of rebuilding and governing these hostile cities. They understood well that to stay in Languedoc, far away from home, would pose a significant personal risk, much greater than the risk incurred while participating in the campaign with an enormous crusading army. Simon de Montfort, on the other hand, took on this dangerous duty for a variety of reasons discussed later.

In this initial campaign of overwhelming force directed at the two most prominent bastions of heresy in Languedoc, the unequivocal goal was the removal of nobles that persisted in harboring heretics. All efforts to preach against heresy in those two cities had been effectively blocked by their inhabitants. In making the final decision for a crusade, Pope Innocent III understood that the people of Languedoc would have to face the severe consequences of war. What is important to note is that the initial military operation paid little attention to heretics. The primary goal was to deprive heresy the sanctuary of Languedoc and to punish its leaders who had for so long given them quarter. Hence, the crusaders exercised a noticeable degree of restraint, demonstrating at least among the nobles and clergy their willingness to adhere to the Christian moral principles of justice in war. Despite the army's anxiousness to bring the fight to the enemy, an enemy that would have logically been embodied in the heretics themselves, the crusaders chose a tempered and less destructive strategy. It was an approach they believed to be consistent with the established moral norms of Christendom.

Conclusion

In the decades prior to the Albigensian Crusade, heresy had slowly embedded itself within Languedoc. After countless non-violent attempts to defeat the ideology had failed, Pope Innocent III felt compelled to call for the use of force. First, it was a series of appeals to the King of France to intervene. When that went unanswered, the Pope called upon all of Christendom to take up arms in a crusade, a crusade that would have as its military objective regime change. Initially, the Crusade targeted the cities that held the primary seedbeds of heresy and replaced its count with a noble loyal to the Church. There was no doubt within Europe or the Vatican that this was a just war. Heresy was a crime, and the Catholic society of southern France was in the mind of the Pope clearly at risk.

While the response among men-at-arms was at first enthusiastic, interest began to wane by the end of the initial campaign. Unlike the far off crusades to the Holy Land, this campaign was relatively close in distance for the French and German knights and infantry that responded, making the temptation to return home much stronger. Furthermore, by the end of the 40-day obligatory period of service, two cities had been taken and many other castles had been left abandoned. Neither was an armed enemy at this point opposing the Crusade, nor was military force being used to engage heretics. So, in the minds of knights and nobles alike, the campaign by mid-summer of 1209 had achieved a successful outcome, and consequently nine out of ten crusaders returned home. The remnant that remained numbered at approximately 4,500.³⁶ For the majority of the crusading army, who were all in a sense volunteers, the lack of interest in remaining in Languedoc resulted in the lack of an identifiable enemy force to fight.

This relatively small army that remained, we will later learn, was insufficient to control the castles and towns that had capitulated.³⁷ By the end of 1209, the Crusade had fully transitioned from occupation by an overwhelmingly superior force to a conflict that included a stubborn insurgency and even conventional battles. Furthermore, warfare waged by those representing the moral norms of the Church had produced bitter enemies, among them Raymond of Toulouse and Pedro of Aragon. Had the crusaders allied themselves more closely with the powerbrokers of the region and played the diplomat, one might argue that the difficulties that beset the next 19 years of war could have been avoided. Yet one thing was certain: preserving the moral order was the Crusade's only objective. Political ambitions and hard feelings were not going to upset this fundamental and ultimate goal. As a result, the consequences of politics and the moral decisions made during the initial campaign set the stage for what was to come, a future that saw the Crusade fighting for its life.

¹Hoffman Nickerson, *The Inquisition* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1923), 84.

²Jean Guiraud, *St. Dominic* (London: Duckworth, 1901), 15 and 24.

³*Ibid.*, 18.

⁴Nickerson, 85.

⁵Guiraud, 25.

⁶*Ibid.*, 8.

⁷Nickerson, 86.

⁸*Ibid.*

⁹Guiraud, 17.

¹⁰Nickerson, 92.

¹¹Jonathan Sumption, *The Albigensian Crusade* (London: Faber and Faber, 1978), 32-34.

¹²Warren H. Carroll, *A History of Christendom*, vol. 3, *The Glory of Christendom* (Front Royal, Virginia: Christendom Press, 1993), 163.

¹³Sumption, 48.

¹⁴Nickerson, 54.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, 61.

¹⁶Sumption, 45-46.

¹⁷Albert Clement Shannon, *The Popes and Heresy in the Thirteenth Century* (Villanova, Pennsylvania: Augustinian Press, 1949), 37.

¹⁸Carroll, 165.

¹⁹William of Puylaurens, *The Chronicle of William of Puylaurens: the Albigensian Crusade and its Aftermath*, trans. W. A. Sibly and M. D. Sibly (Woodbridge, UK: Boydell Press, 2003), 25.

²⁰Shannon, 13.

²¹Carroll, 166.

²²Nickerson, 35.

²³See Nickerson, 36-37. The word “troubadour” means a poet of lyrical love. It is considered by Nickerson one of the region’s foremost cultural contributions to the history of the world. The language of the troubadour was “*langue d’oc*,” contrasted from the language of northern France, which was “*langue ‘oui*.” More than a mere style of poetry, the cult of the troubadour professed the ideal of courteous love. The movement reached its height in the twelfth century, dissipating by the end of the thirteenth century.

²⁴See Nickerson, 63-68. The burning of heretics was a common practice that stemmed as much from centuries of precedent as it did from the medieval idea that heresy corrupted the body and soul. Many prominent Church figures disapproved of the punishment, to include St. Bernard, who called it “excessive cruelty” (Nickerson 63, 67, 68). It was a punishment only imposed by civil authorities for a civil crime, and not by the Church, whose ability to impose penalties was limited to ecclesial sanctions (eg. excommunication and interdict).

²⁵Peter of les Vaux-de-Cernay, *The History of the Albigensian Crusade*, trans. and eds. W. A. Sibly and M. D. Sibly (Woodbridge, UK: Boydell Press, 1998), 229.

²⁶Nickerson, 96.

²⁷The significance of the indulgence itself is often overstated. While it conditionally provided for the remission of the temporal punishment due to past sins, it did not guarantee the faithful's entrance into heaven. Nevertheless, the crusading indulgence was significant to the life of the Medieval Christian. It was equivalent to the Papal indulgence granted for making a pilgrimage to Rome or (beginning in 1210) for pilgrimages annually on the 2nd of August to the Church of the Portiuncula, the chapel of St. Francis of Assisi.

²⁸Shannon, 42.

²⁹Nickerson, 110; Sumption, 86.

³⁰Nickerson, 103.

³¹Vaux-de-Cernay, 55.

³²Nickerson, 112.

³³Vaux-de-Cernay, 289-290.

³⁴Nickerson, 114-115; Carroll, 172. The number of dead reported by papal legate Amaury totaled more than twice the population of the entire town, which makes the figure unlikely. Nevertheless, the actual number killed is less important for this discussion than the number understood by Pope Innocent III. It was his standards of moral acceptability that would either allow the Crusade to continue or be terminated.

³⁵Nickerson, 117.

³⁶Ibid., 120-121.

³⁷Ibid., 126.

CHAPTER 4

SIMON DE MONTFORT IN COMMAND

Introduction

In the fall of 1209, Count Simon de Montfort and his small remnant of crusaders found themselves grossly outnumbered and in hostile territory. The men that composed the enormous crusading army during the summer months had for the most part returned to their native lands, and those that remained were left to perform the dangerous task of reestablishing the moral order in a region that had tolerated widespread heresy for nearly a century. While the transfer of authority to Simon de Montfort came with promises of fealty from the vanquished knights and nobles of the south, the gestures were short lived. One after another, the men of Languedoc who were disingenuous turned against Count Simon, creating what would become in the ensuing years a perilous situation for the Albigensian Crusade.

Notorious among this wave of turncoats was Giraud de Pepieux, a knight of Roger Trencavel of Beziers. After initially pledging loyalty to Simon and establishing his trust, he within months had betrayed the cause. The events that follow were among the most barbaric acts of the entire conflict. Just months after De Montfort's assumption of command, Giraud took a number of the crusaders prisoner and then sent them off naked to find Simon with their faces dismembered and their eyes removed with the exception of a single man with one eye to lead the way. Simon found himself compelled to face both betrayal and the need to respond to such a barbaric act. His reprisal came six months later in the spring of 1210. By this time, after an increasing number of local knights and nobles had withdrawn their loyalties from the Crusade, Count Simon and his crusaders had lost

more than forty castles and maintained control of only eight.¹ Besieging and capturing the castle at Bram in March, De Montfort subjected one hundred of its defenders to the same fate as the prisoners of Giraud, releasing them to march eyeless to the enemy refuge of Cabaret.² Within nine months, the struggle had seemed to escalate to an unthinkable level of brutality.

This early exchange is noteworthy for three reasons. (1) The deed committed by Simon de Montfort occurred at the start of the Crusade, and as an isolated act it represented the worst incident of cruelty committed by the crusaders during the entire conflict. However, while his enemies continued to use this barbaric practice, Simon de Montfort did not.³ Something caused him to abandon the practice of maiming and releasing his prisoners. (2) The small size of the crusader remnant clearly encouraged the opportunistic southern lords to defect. In a time when secular authorities demanded and enforced law by the sword, the perceived governing power of Simon de Montfort, his thirty crusading knights,⁴ and his total force of 4500 over all of Languedoc conveyed weakness that his enemies sought to exploit. (3) Simon saw the duplicitous lords of Languedoc as offenders of the moral order that he was laboring to restore. From Raymond VI down to many of the southern knights, betrayal spread throughout Languedoc during the winter of 1209-10 as those that had been deprived of lands and influence as a result of the Crusade embraced the opportunity to revolt. For the Crusade to survive, it first had to stop the insurrection, especially among those who boldly knelt before Count Simon in feudal homage and later violated their own oaths. If viewed through the lens of military necessity, as necessity pertains to the administration of a military occupying government, then Simon's reprisal at Bram at first glance seems to

fall within the bounds of justice in medieval war, which provided for the righting of wrongs. Therefore, while repulsive in its brutality, the crusading army most likely failed to suffer from a moral crisis by committing this atrocity. On the other hand, it seems likely that Simon de Montfort some time afterwards found his own moral conscience troubled, a moral consequence that arguably led him to adopt greater restraint.

Throughout his eight years as the Crusade's leader, Simon de Montfort attempted to balance military necessity with the limits that the moral norms of Christendom as interpreted by his own moral conscience. Against what appeared to be insurmountable odds, the crusaders under Count Simon's leadership incrementally gained castle after castle and town after town despite betrayal, ambush, and at times fierce resistance. By establishing himself as interim feudal governor of nearly all of Languedoc by the end of 1211, he further had the task of maintaining the rule of law and of providing civil administration for the regions he occupied. Under these conditions, Simon de Montfort endeavored to reconcile his own ethic of the Christian knight with the necessities of defeating his enemies and, above all, ridding Languedoc of heresy. His methods, we will find, were imperfect. At the same time, a noticeable easing in the severity of his tactics seemed to take place over time. While he succeeded in achieving great success on the battlefield, his inability to win over the native peoples of Languedoc presented a nagging problem that he was never fully able to overcome. All of these challenges came together within the man, Simon de Montfort, creating a moral struggle of conscience that drove the conduct of the campaign.

The Crusader Remnant

Count Simon de Montfort was the military leader of the first eight years of the Albigensian Crusade. This period included the vast majority of combat actions associated with the 20-year war, a period where the crusading army rarely had an overwhelming numerical advantage. On more than one occasion, De Montfort and his men were outnumbered ten-to-one, and in the case of the campaign's only open field battle at Muret, he was outnumbered forty-to-one. His amazing level of tactical success amidst unfavorable odds was very much the result of his persona as a warrior and leader.

Simon de Montfort became leader of the Crusade in his late forties, an old man by the standards of the times.⁵ At its outset, he was a relatively minor count among the crusading nobles. Yet after the capture of Carcassonne, his suzerain the Duke of Burgandy and the papal legate both requested and then insisted that he take command of the small army that would remain. After refusing three times, he finally agreed. The many nobles that had initially taken part in the Crusade had realized the precarious situation that the Crusade had found itself in by late summer of 1209. The crusaders had massacred the city of Beziers. Many people in Languedoc had fled to the hills, leaving their castles abandoned. Whoever was to assume control of this vast expanse of rogue provinces was sure to face a hostile populous. Only with a man at the helm who was a superbly capable knight, an able administrator, and a resilient leader fiercely loyal to the Church could the Crusade even begin to hope for the promise of success. In an act of obedience to his overlord and the prelate who spoke for the Pope himself, Count Simon assumed this difficult undertaking.

Historians and chroniclers alike agree that Simon de Montfort was a formidable military leader. Count Simon's own chronicler described him as a man of significant courage and experience in the profession of arms.⁶ Even the heir to Count Raymond VI later acknowledged his own profound respect for De Montfort, praising his courage and fidelity and claiming he possessed every quality that belonged to a great prince.⁷ Responding to a Cistercian monk during a bleak moment of the Crusade, De Montfort once exclaimed:

Do you think I am afraid? My work is the work of Christ and the entire Church is praying for me. We cannot be defeated.⁸

It is a sound assumption, therefore, to presume that Simon de Montfort's motives were to further the goals of Christendom rather than to serve himself. He was incurring significant risk by accepting a seemingly impossible task not out of a quest for personal gain, but rather to assist the mission of the Church to which he was so passionately devoted. This deep affection drove De Montfort to attempt to emulate the moral norms of Christendom while adhering to chivalric custom and personal honor, together forming personal standards of right conduct that the challenges of the Crusade would severely test.

Likewise, the knights and soldiers that remained with the Crusade following the summer of 1209 assumed considerable personal risk. Gone were the nobles who had so benevolently offered their armies to the crusading cause and in their stead were volunteers who Count Simon was himself compelled to pay. In fact, they considered their mission so dangerous that these men demanded twice the usual amount offered in pay for other wars.⁹ The crusader remnant was a mix of French (as those from present-day northern France were known) and Germans, and the knights continued to flow in and out

of Languedoc on 40-day tours of duty, the time required to receive the crusading indulgence. As an army, they were well equipped to continue the endeavor of siege warfare and gain and maintain the many castles and fortified towns that dotted the countryside. To defeat the formidable defenses that were present in thirteenth century Languedoc, they constructed giant siege engines and other apparatus, to include wheeled roofs to protect sappers while they dug under a castle's walls. Their ranks were filled with the medieval versions of artillerymen, engineers, cavalry, and infantry. Despite their inadequate numbers and the hostile lands they were attempting to occupy, the crusaders did in fact have the necessary array of military capabilities to conduct such a campaign. Yet it was not their military capability or promise of extra pay that would give them the confidence they needed to succeed, but rather the intangible.

Many instinctually associate the term "religious war" with fanaticism. In the case of the Albigensian Crusade with its fundamental mission being the removal of heresy, one would at first glance tend to make the same assumption. There is no doubt that some of its participants, on both sides, were driven by some degree of religious or ideological fanaticism to the point of irrational brutality. However, this was not the primary force behind the Crusade. In fact, the conduct of the war was no more savage than other wars of the age.¹⁰ On the surface, it was a war of politics, and the issues that produced the will to fight on both sides were questions of moral authority and just occupation. On the one hand, the crusaders believed they were the protectors of goodness and morality, possessing the endorsement of the Pope and the backing of the sizable train of clergy that often accompanied them which in their eyes made their cause just. On the other hand, the southern nobles that chose to oppose them believed they were the victims of unjust

aggression. They in turn sought and received the sympathy of many among the native inhabitants of Languedoc. Hence, neither side held what should be considered an unreasonable or fanatical position. Rather, both sides remained true to their own conception of morality, of military necessity, and of justice in medieval warfare.

While both sides were similar in their desire for political justice, they were different in their belief in the existence of objective moral norms. Moral relativism had accompanied heresy into Languedoc, and as a result many southern nobles had their own subjective idea of right conduct and authority. Unlike those that resisted the Crusade, the crusading army under the command of Simon de Montfort had a “strong sense of moral unity.”¹¹ Hence as a leader, he was able to maintain control over his men despite the diverse nature of the army, and unlike the disaster at Beziers, there is no indication that the army under his command ever conducted themselves in a way he did not intend. Furthermore, the crusaders were not an undisciplined band of brigands, but rather an ad hoc medieval army that deliberately and systematically carried out a campaign of occupation in Languedoc. If there was one aspect of the crusaders that was unusual, it appears to have been their courage. While often outnumbered, they continued to press the offensive, on one occasion besieging a castle when they themselves were outnumbered ten to one by the garrison inside.¹² Simon de Montfort never seemed to be daunted by numerical disadvantage, which had the effect of inspiring a boldness that permeated the crusader ranks. Yet the self-assurance that the crusading army exuded was not simply the result of their trust in the skill and audacity of their leader. There were two other notable reasons for the pervading confidence of the crusaders.

The first of these reasons was that the campaign carried with it numerous reports of miracles. For example, in the summer of 1210 Simon de Montfort and his crusading remnant besieged the walled town at Minerve, their first since the siege of Carcassonne a year prior. Upon their arrival, the crusaders discovered a small spring near their lines that yielded only a trickle of water. Count Simon's chronicler reported that soon, however, the spring miraculously began to pour forth in abundance, providing enough sustenance for the entire army and their horses throughout the duration of the siege.¹³ After nearly two months of siege and bombardment from the crusader's siege engines, the lord of the town finally sought peace. The terms of surrender included the transfer of authority to Count Simon and the offer to spare all "Perfected" heretics if they would agree to return to the Catholic faith. In response, the entire town renounced heresy. However, all but three of the many Cathar Perfect residing there did not. So radical were the group of 100 hardened heretics that they cast themselves into the fire built for them.¹⁴ The crusaders perceived their success at Minerve as a great victory that was the result of divine intervention, a belief that caused the confidence of the crusaders to soar. Other reports of miracles included visions of crosses observed by the townspeople of nearby Toulouse during the siege of Minerve, a soldier whose unarmored chest deflected a crossbowman's arrow, and captured crusaders emerging from the flames of an execution unscathed.¹⁵ An attempt to verify the occurrence of these miracles today is not only impossible but of little relevance to the broader context of the Crusade. Of consequence was the tremendous impact of these stories on the morale of the crusading army, reaffirming for them the notion that they were firmly on the side of the moral right.

The other reason for the confidence of the crusaders was the cumulative effect of the uncanny series of successes that the campaign enjoyed despite being outnumbered. Seizing castle after castle and town after town, the crusading army by the end of 1211 had control of all of Languedoc with the exception of the cities of Toulouse and Montauban.¹⁶ By this time, both sides considered such an unbroken series of victories against overwhelming odds extraordinary. Hence, the crusaders became increasingly emboldened in their efforts, while the more numerous forces of the resistance refrained from meeting the crusading army in open battle, the one exception being the decisive Battle of Muret.¹⁷ Hence, the crusaders fearlessly followed Count Simon de Montfort, and the Crusade aggressively pursued the task of regaining for Christendom the moral order of Languedoc.

The Early Years and the Problem of Insurgency

From the beginning, the fate of the Crusade seemed to rest firmly on the leadership, determination, and skill of Count Simon de Montfort. His responsibilities included the command of the army of occupation that was slowly gaining control of Languedoc. Additionally, he had to deal with the problems of governance and a growing enemy that became more elusive with each passing day. What was required to succeed, both militarily and administratively, was to him of the utmost concern. With a relatively small army whose survival was continuously threatened, De Montfort often seemed compelled to use harsh tactics to quell the rebellion. Yet this requirement to rule while keeping with the faith of the Church tested his own integrity as a Christian knight. It was here that Simon faced his own internal dilemma.

Within a year of De Montfort's assumption of command, the situation in Languedoc had transformed into a full-fledged insurgency. In turn, the rise in guerilla tactics and political duplicity severely challenged the capabilities and resolve of the crusader army. Yet the army on the offensive was unstoppable, and as long as it was able to wage conventional combat, it remained invincible. As the reputation of De Montfort's army preceded itself, a number of castles capitulated without resistance. Despite the southern nobles that opposed him, many in Languedoc cooperated with the crusaders, seeing the new regime as a force of order and stability.¹⁸ By the end of 1212, Count Simon de Montfort was beginning to attain legitimacy as governor and the people of Languedoc saw the crusaders less as foreign occupiers. Contributing to this was De Montfort's inherent respect for the civilian population. Citizens themselves were never targeted. He treated captured citizens within the norms of justice common to medieval society: traitors, mercenaries, and heretics alone received capital punishment for their collaboration with the enemy. However, while De Montfort considered himself firmly rooted within the bounds of justice in war, the enemy employed propaganda to depict the crusaders as ruthless conquerors to bolster the insurgent cause.

The insurgency's challenge to the reputation and legitimacy of the Crusade was at its height following the siege of Lavaur in 1211. There, Simon de Montfort faced a significant set of obstacles. First, the town was well defended, and in fact nearly outnumbered the attacking force of crusaders in the amount of men at arms that were garrisoned within its walls.¹⁹ Additionally, when De Montfort was unwilling to make concessions during the negotiations with the lord of Lavaur, Raymond VI of Toulouse, who had up until this time supported the Crusade, withdrew his valuable logistical

support to the crusaders in disgust.²⁰ Finally, as a group of crusader reinforcements were enroute to the join the siege, an insurgent force led by a southern noble ambushed them, inflicting a large number of casualties. Nevertheless, the siege persevered, and after nearly six weeks, the crusader army penetrated the walls and the defenders surrendered. At this point, Count Simon faced the dilemma of dealing with the captured heretics as well as the large number of prisoners, which included several knights. His decision was swift. Those 300 Cathar Perfect that refused to renounce heresy were burned, and 80 captured knights were led out of the town and executed. The reasons for his orders can only be inferred, but it is likely that that they included a combination of military necessity and what he believed to be just punishment. As mentioned before, heretics during this age were subject to capital punishment by the rule of medieval law. Likewise, the execution of prisoners was common,²¹ especially those that may have been suspected of treason. Nevertheless, Lavaur stood out as a monument to the insurgent cause, both for the heretics and the rebellious nobles of Languedoc who stubbornly resisted Simon's rule. They used the chilling tale of brutality and execution to garner popular support, fueling the opposition that would directly challenge the authority of the Crusade for years to come.

Outnumbered and facing a growing insurgency from the beginning, Simon de Montfort's decisions in the Crusade's early years brings to light the challenges of an occupying force within hostile territory. His task was to bring order to Languedoc, a region that he never fully controlled during his time as commander of the Crusade. In addition to the operational challenges he experienced, Count Simon encountered duplicity and treason among those southern nobles that enthusiastically joined the

Crusade only to resist him in secret. Chief among these was Count Raymond of Toulouse, joining after Lavaur a vast number of knights and other nobles of Languedoc who despised the authority of a noble from the north. As the insurgency grew in intensity and violence, De Montfort was pressed to counter the activities of the enemy out of necessity, a predicament that pushed him to answer violence with violence. One consequence of this escalation eventually pitted the crusaders against the moral norms that the Crusade was attempting to defend and the great arbitrator of these norms, the Holy Father.

The Pope Suspends the Crusade

Reeling from the insult received at Carcassonne and the expulsion of his vassal Roger of Trencavel, the King of Aragon had in the summer of 1209 begun to formulate a plan. In his mind, he deserved the overt respect of the Crusade, all of whose leaders were inferior to him in nobility. Pedro was one of three kings on the Iberian Peninsula, and in all of Western Europe, he was known as one of the most loyal to the Church. His royal line had fought valiantly against the Moors for centuries, and the opportunity for a great victory against the Muslim Almohad Empire loomed near in the future. With the Kings of England and the Holy Roman Emperor excommunicated and the King of France refusing to crusade in Languedoc, Pedro stood out as one of the most prominent European leaders in the eyes of the Pope. Yet the Albigensian Crusade had upset Pedro's vassalage in Languedoc and threatened his power north of the Pyrenees. Greatly reduced in number from the initial campaign of 1209, the crusader force had become vulnerable. With the right mix of diplomacy and military force, King Pedro of Aragon saw the opportunity to restore his own nobles to their rightful claims. Furthermore, if he came to the rescue of

Raymond of Toulouse, he could expand his influence by being seen as the great liberator of Languedoc. With these considerations in mind, the King of Aragon began to set the stage for his own military campaign into Languedoc to oppose Simon de Montfort and to cripple the Crusade.

Pedro's first step was to re-establish a foothold in Languedoc by offering a small Argonese contingent to Count Raymond VI. Since Raymond of Toulouse was married to Pedro's sister,²² this was both a logical step and convenience of a strategically motivated marriage that served to facilitate diplomatic ease. The Argonese forces reinforced mercenary troops that were already defending the last two of Raymond's possessions, the towns of Toulouse and Montauban. This assistance would help to prevent Simon de Montfort from gaining full control of Languedoc. As long as there were a few remaining pockets of resistance, Pedro believed he would have the chance to make his ultimate plan a reality.

Next, King Pedro sought to remove legitimacy from the Crusade by directly discrediting Count Simon de Montfort before the Holy See. He knew well that if the Pope lifted his moral support for the Crusade, the campaign under Simon's leadership would eventually fail. The opportunity presented itself in the summer of 1212. When De Montfort and his crusaders seized the lands of Comminges and Bearn, Pedro invoked his rights as suzerain while appealing to the Pope. Pedro claimed that while crusading against the Moors, which included the victory at Las Navas de Tolosa,²³ Montfort had unjustly deprived him of his vassal lands.²⁴ In an elaborate diplomatic effort that added this offense to a lengthy list of charges against Count Simon that included brutality and injustices against Christians, the emissaries of King Pedro brought the King's grievances

directly to Pope Innocent III. These reports caused the Pope to become concerned that the violence being wrought upon Languedoc was creating irreconcilable conditions. If the nobles were to continue resisting the Crusade, even the most Catholic ones, then the conflict would undoubtedly drag on for decades, which the Holy Father wanted to avoid. Furthermore, the reports of atrocities deeply troubled the supreme pontiff,²⁵ that a mission preached by the Church could bring about such unruliness and unnecessary destruction. Therefore, the Pope at once withdrew his support from the Crusade and temporarily suspended it. In January of 1213, Pope Innocent sent out a flurry of papal correspondence, ordering that Montfort restore the lands he had seized from the vassals of Aragon and suspend the Crusade altogether. This put into motion a chain of events which nine months later brought an enormous Argonese army across the Pyrenees to challenge Simon de Montfort and his crusading army.

Pedro's plan successfully achieved its desired effect. Through a mix of diplomatic maneuvering and slander, it had cast the crusaders as a rouge military force needlessly upsetting the balance of power in Languedoc. By alienating its nobles the conflict was being prolonged. Suspension of military operations would provide the forum for negotiation and settlement, which this trusted prince of Christendom, the King of Aragon, wisely offered. Furthermore, Pedro's charges had suggested that De Montfort and the crusaders had breeched the standards of justice in war and needed to be brought back under control. Yet the Pope was unable to anticipate the duplicitous motives of Pedro, and the Crusade's suspension instead removed legitimacy from Simon and placed it in the hands of King Pedro, the ruler who secretly plotted for the Crusade's demise.

Narrow Escape at Muret

By the spring of 1213, there were a number of noteworthy movements occurring simultaneously within Christendom. First, the Pope had decided to call a new crusade to the Holy Land, a campaign that would become the Fifth Crusade. In his mind, since the situation in Languedoc had somewhat stabilized, it was time to once again come to the aid of the Christians in Palestine. Additionally, the investiture crisis between the Pope and King John of England continued, and the interdict that the Pope had imposed entered its sixth year, an unprecedented length of time for the harshest of ecclesial penalties.²⁶ King Philip Augustus of France ended his 20-year dispute with the papacy by taking his wife Ingeborg back as queen. With papal relations fully restored, King Philip embraced the opportunity to gather an invasion force against his longtime foe and troubled peer, King John, since the Church had ruled that an excommunicated king of England was unworthy of his rights as suzerain. The pressure on the English king proved too much to bear, and in an unprecedented move, King John reconciled to the Church and relinquished his kingdom to Pope Innocent, receiving it back as a fief. All of these matters, each tremendously important to the order and security of Christendom, became important concerns of the Holy See at virtually the same time, the spring of 1213.

With these many issues together weighing heavily on the mind of the pope, Innocent did not become aware until June that the claims made by King Pedro against the Crusade were almost entirely false. When he did, the Pope restored his wholehearted support for Count Simon, and he then issued a letter to King Pedro forbidding any attack upon Simon de Montfort and his crusading army.²⁷ Yet Pedro's plan at this point was fully in motion, and he ignored the pope's demand. The King of Aragon had begun to

deploy his army into Languedoc, arriving in late summer to combine forces with Raymond of Toulouse. The size of this total force is widely debated, but a conservative estimate is forty-four thousand.²⁸ A crushing blow to the Crusade seemed an absolute certainty.

It is worthwhile to pause for a moment to once again ascertain the motives of Simon de Montfort. For four years he had endured nearly continuous combat, a violent insurgency, and at the end, slander which had caused the Pope's loss of confidence. While in 1209 De Montfort might not have considered the mission in Languedoc as impossible as the other nobles, the appearance now of an enormous enemy force must have convinced him otherwise. Upon seeing the size of Pedro's army, he prepared his last will and testament in anticipation of his likely death.²⁹ Simon here did not see an utterly hopeless situation and seek compromise. Rather De Montfort, reflecting the qualities of a leader of principle and realizing that the Church must prevail over heresy in Languedoc, prepared for battle. He seemed undeterred, believing that God would deliver him from this peril if it was His holy will. Hence, he did not retreat or seek terms of surrender, but instead gathered every available knight at his disposal and met his powerful enemy head on.

In September of 1213, the allied enemy army of Raymond and Pedro laid siege upon the town of Muret, a short fifteen miles southwest of Toulouse. Holding the garrison were a mere thirty knights and seven hundred infantry.³⁰ A short time later to the satisfaction of the attackers, Simon de Montfort arrived with an additional eight hundred and sixty mounted troops, who in full view of the enemy entered the town. The stage was fully set for the decisive battle of the Crusade.

Accompanying the crusaders inside the walls of Muret were six bishops, three abbots, and among others, St. Dominic.³¹ Prior to the battle, the defenders attended Mass, received confession, and touched a relic of the True Cross before riding out into battle. Although grossly outnumbered and seemingly trapped within the grip of the siege, Simon had devised a bold plan that would bring the fight to the enemy on the open field, dividing his mounted force into three squadrons and departed out from the western gate. Using mobility to his advantage, De Montfort and his knights enveloped and then isolated the separated enemy formations, destroying them in succession and achieving within hours complete victory. At the end, King Pedro laid dead on the field, and when Simon de Montfort discovered the fallen king, he dismounted and embraced his lifeless body in a gesture of respect. Trapped between the crusader cavalry and the river Garbonne, thousands of enemy infantry had been decimated, the remains of which were later discovered during the nineteenth century.³² The crusaders lost only one knight and at most eight other horsemen.³³ The single-most decisive engagement of the entire conflict had yielded an astonishing victory for the cause of the Crusade. While Muret's outcome was extraordinary, there is little debate over the magnitude of the victory. Few times in history had a small European army faced one of similar stock many times its size and prevailed.³⁴

More than anyone, Simon de Montfort perhaps best appreciated the crusader's extraordinary triumph against overwhelming odds. It is safe to say that he considered the victory miraculous, directly attributing the outcome to the intercession of St. Dominic (see figure 3 for Pere Besson's woodcut depiction of St. Dominic) and to the Holy Rosary, a devotional prayer that the Virgin Mary had purportedly enjoined upon Dominic

some time prior to the battle.³⁵ Simon de Montfort even had a chapel built inside Muret thought to be the first chapel ever dedicated to the Rosary. To this day, devotion to the Rosary continues to be profoundly important to the life of the Catholic Church.³⁶ Following Muret, De Montfort's relationship with St. Dominic grew even greater in intensity. During the next year, he had St. Dominic perform the marriage of his oldest son Amaury and baptize one of his daughters, an indication of the profound respect Count Simon had for this simple priest. Despite the many bishops and abbots that were associated with the Crusade, De Montfort seems to have chosen the lowly Castillian foreigner as his most intimate spiritual guide. In this regard, not only did the turning point for the Crusade come in the fall of 1213, but there is evidence to suggest that the Battle of Muret also served as a pivotal juncture within the conscience of the Crusade's leader.



Figure 3. St. Dominic at Muret, Woodcut by Pere Besson
Source: Augusta Drane, *The Life of St. Dominic* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1891), 138.

Conclusion: The Aftermath of Muret and the Formation of Conscience

In the wake of the crusader triumph at Muret, many throughout Europe sought to make sense of this lopsided victory. The Argonese were defeated and their Christian king dead. Raymond of Toulouse was severely weakened both militarily and politically, his failed alliance with Pedro revealing to all his own nefarious motives. Pope Innocent III, before uncertain of the benevolence and commitment of Simon de Montfort, was now fully convinced of his loyalty to the Church. The following year, King Philip Augustus of France dealt a devastating blow to Holy Roman Emperor Otto at the Battle of Bouvines, and the power of the French Crown over its sovereign lands now seemed secure. As everything seemed to fall into place for the papacy and the French monarchy, Crown Prince Louis joined the Albigensian Crusade in 1215, helping Count Simon secure the city of Toulouse for the first time. Then, late that year, Pope Innocent convened one of the three greatest councils in the history of the Church, called Lateran IV.³⁷

The purpose of the Fourth Lateran Council, in the words of the Pope, was “the reform of the universal Church, the improvement of morals, the extinction of heresy, and the strengthening of the faith.”³⁸ Present were 500 bishops, 800 abbots and priors, and ambassadors of every European sovereign king.³⁹ In its first canon, the Council condemned the philosophy of Manichean heresy in a litany of proclamations on doctrines of the faith aimed at countering the anti-Christian religion of the Cathars. Among the council’s other decrees, the Pope made a final ruling on the lands of Languedoc, naming Simon de Montfort rightful overlord.⁴⁰ The Council bore witness to the state of the Church at that time in history, characterized by a general decay that only reform could hope to remedy.⁴¹ It was also at this ecumenical council that St. Dominic and St. Francis

of Assisi met for the first time. Both were present to request the papal approval of their own fledgling mendicant orders, requests boldly made at a council that sought to outlaw the creation of new religious orders altogether. A year later following the death of Pope Innocent, Pope Honorius formally approved the orders of St. Francis and St. Dominic. Christendom was at its height, while two simple priests labored in their own way to begin movements that would reveal the Church's true soul.

Following the Battle of Muret, Simon de Montfort's actions seem to reflect an unmistakable trend toward leniency and moderation. For the next four years, the crusaders continued to campaign throughout unsecured portions of Languedoc and the Rhone valley, waging siege warfare on numerous towns and castles. Yet among the crusader side, there is no record of the executions and brutality that existed in the earlier years despite the atrocities still being committed by their enemies. As time went on and as the task of securing Languedoc remained challenged by insurgency, this shift in tactics on the surface might to some seem counterintuitive. However, by considering how Simon's moral conscience may have evolved as a result of the early years of the Crusade, we may begin to appreciate the weight of the moral norms and the practical effects of a revolting populous upon his decisions. In this vein, there are three probable influences. First is the close correlation that the growing friendship between De Montfort and St. Dominic seems to have with this pattern. The influence of this priest who became known for his near-perfect personification of the moral norms of Christendom appears to have directly effected the decisions of the Crusade's leader, most notably following the Battle of Muret. Second, the Pope's influence presents another possible explanation for the Crusade's less violent approach toward heretics and the southern knights that opposed

him. However, there is reason to believe that the influence of Pope Innocent was not as strong as the effect of De Montfort's relationship with St. Dominic. The papal correspondence to Simon de Montfort bears witness to this conclusion.⁴² Finally, the practical consequences of harsh tactics aimed at defeating a growing insurgency most likely was a contributing cause. After all, it seems that De Montfort must have realized after years of fighting that these tactics were alienating the southern nobles instead of winning them over. Yet Simon de Montfort's uncompromising character and his deep-rooted conviction that those who subverted the law should be punished suggest this factor was the least influential of the three. No doubt, the Pope, his own pragmatism, and St. Dominic all played a role, but the primary influence was unquestionably St. Dominic. The movement within Simon de Montfort's moral conscience made apparent in his shift towards leniency demonstrated the impact of the simple priest that became his trusted spiritual guide and close friend.

The conduct of the Crusade during its early and most formative years was almost entirely the reflection of its leader, Count Simon de Montfort. At first outnumbered and alone within a hostile land, his first instinct was to use heavy-handed tactics against his enemies out of necessity. Yet his initial approach lasted less than three years. At some point within the workings of his conscience, De Montfort realized that he had potentially violated some of the same Christian norms he was working so hard to defend. Most probably, his growing friendship with St. Dominic helped him to draw this conclusion. His was a realization that what was permissible by the standards of justice in war did not necessarily represent what should be done. Hence in order for De Montfort himself to come to terms with the moral right, his conscience underwent a process of formation, and

through the influence of St. Dominic this formation came to reflect the goodness of the Christian faith. The result was a marked shift toward leniency, a campaign strategy that in the long term preserved the moral integrity of the Crusade and facilitated the efforts of ideological persuasion that dealt heresy its ultimate defeat. The moral shortcomings prior to 1213 therefore do not provide reason to condemn either the Crusade or its leader. On the contrary, the Crusade and its trend toward restraint bears witness to the Christian idea of redemption, that man can err but still embrace a greater degree of goodness despite his imperfect past. Hence the moral norms of Christendom had prevailed, but before vanquishing the philosophy of the Albigensian heresy, the fullness of this Christian ethic had to gently impose itself upon those that fought in its name.

¹Warren H. Carroll, *A History of Christendom*, vol. 3, *The Glory of Christendom* (Front Royal, Virginia: Christendom Press, 1993), 174.

²Peter of les Vaux-de-Cernay, *The History of the Albigensian Crusade*, trans. and eds. W. A. Sibly and M. D. Sibly (Woodbridge, UK: Boydell Press, 1998), 69-70 and 78-79. The practice of maiming prisoners was not new to medieval warfare. Years earlier, King Richard the Lionhearted of England had done the same to French prisoners, who his men had blinded and sent back to King Philip Augustus of France with the exception of a single man spared one eye.

³The southern knights continued to use this tactic throughout the Crusade, for example, in 1217-8 at the siege of Toulouse (see Vaux-de-Cernay, 274).

⁴Vaux-de-Cernay, 64.

⁵Jonathan Sumption, *The Albigensian Crusade* (London: Faber and Faber, 1978), 101.

⁶Vaux-de-Cernay, 56.

⁷Augusta T. Drane, *The Life of St. Dominic* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1891), 186-7.

⁸Sumption, 101.

⁹Vaux-de-Cernay, 64.

¹⁰Albert Clement Shannon, *The Popes and Heresy in the Thirteenth Century* (Villanova, Pennsylvania: Augustinian Press, 1949), 29.

¹¹Hoffman Nickerson, *The Inquisition* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1923), 107.

¹²Vaux-de-Cernay, 146.

¹³*Ibid.*, 86.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, 85.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, 70, 79, and 86.

¹⁶Sumption, 153.

¹⁷Vaux-de-Cernay, 77.

¹⁸Nickerson, 135.

¹⁹Vaux-de-Cernay, 112.

²⁰This estrangement marked a significant turning point in the relationship between the most powerful native prince of Languedoc, Count Raymond VI of Toulouse, and Simon De Montfort, creating a rift between the two men that would persist for years until the death of the De Montfort.

²¹Drane, 86.

²²Sumption, 156.

²³See Carroll, 178. Since Las Navas de Tolosa was possibly the most important battle of the entire 770-year war of Reconquest, it is easy to understand how Pedro would have instantly gained such prominence as a great defender of Christendom.

²⁴Nickerson, 137.

²⁵Carroll, 181.

²⁶See Carroll 175 and 184. Carroll states that even a mere three years of interdict was unprecedented. The ecclesial penalty was eventually in place for more than six full years before it was finally lifted as a result of King John's reconciliation with the Church.

²⁷Nickerson, 142.

²⁸*Ibid.*, 154. Nickerson accepts the historian Delpech's estimate that the southern cavalry had at least 4000 and the southern infantry numbered more than 40,000. This does not include the Toulouse militia, which he states was a sizable force. Peter Vaux de Cernay estimates nearly 100,000, a number which was most likely included camp

followers and others that provided the logistical needs of the army (see Vaux-de-Cernay, 209). Drane also uses 100,000 and 40,000 to reflect the total size of the army and the number of combatants, respectively (see Drane, 142). While the numbers are significant, the important point was that the Crusaders were vastly outnumbered.

²⁹Nickerson, 149.

³⁰Ibid., 147.

³¹Jean Guiraud, *St. Dominic* (London: Duckworth, 1901), 36.

³²Vaux-de-Cernay, 212.

³³Nickerson, 161.

³⁴Ibid., 145.

³⁵Drane, 147.

³⁶Many popes throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries have emphasized the great importance of the Rosary to the Church as a “spiritual weapon” (see Pope John Paul II’s apostolic letter *Rosarium Virginis*, dated 16 October 2002). Among the most prominent of these exhortations was Pope Leo XIII’s encyclical *Supremi Apostolatus Officio*, delivered on 1 September 1883, which is quoted in Chapter 5 (see pg 84).

³⁷Norman F. Cantor, *The Civilization of the Middle Ages* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1994), 418.

³⁸Guiraud, 66. From the Papal Bull dated 19 April, 1213.

³⁹Drane, 155.

⁴⁰Carroll, 190.

⁴¹Drane, 155-156.

⁴²See translated excerpts of papal correspondence in Appendix F of Vaux-de-Cernay, 304-312. It is apparent that Pope Innocent III had somewhat of an inherent mistrust for Simon de Montfort prior to the Battle of Muret. De Montfort most likely interpreted the strong language that the Pope directed toward him in the winter and spring of 1213 as the result of inaccurate reports and misinformation at the Vatican.

CHAPTER 5

VICTORY FOR CHRISTENDOM

Introduction

Four years after the decisive Battle of Muret, Count Simon de Montfort was still struggling to control the rebellious nobles of the south. In the fall of 1217, he marched upon Toulouse, the largest city in Languedoc and the seat of its former suzerain, for the fourth time since the start of the Crusade. His aim was to reestablish his authority there, an authority confirmed by the Fourth Lateran council's decree that stripped the excommunicated Count Raymond VI of Toulouse entirely of his possessions. When Simon arrived, he once again found the Toulousians uncooperative and rebellious. A short time earlier, the citizenry had defiantly welcomed the exiled Raymond back and expelled Count Simon's wife and family who were in residence inside its castle.¹ At this point, it was imperative that De Montfort counter the unlawful actions of Raymond and re-assert himself as its new governor. To accomplish this, he once again besieged the principle city of Languedoc.

The unsuccessful siege of Toulouse began in October of 1217 and lasted nine months. Within the city's walls, a sizable army of mercenaries reinforced the nobles and knights that had taken Raymond's side.² The siege of Toulouse presented a unique set of problems for the crusaders. First, the walls which surrounded the town were so extensive that it was impossible for the crusading army to completely surround it. Consequently, the crusaders were incapable of preventing the flow of reinforcements and supplies in and out of the town. Tactically, it seemed that Simon de Montfort had abandoned the concept of a traditional siege and instead sought to establish a breach to enter the city and then

defeat its defenders. Likewise, the enemy forces within Toulouse wished as much to destroy the crusading army as to raise the siege, and for nine months they launched offensive sorties to engage the crusaders arrayed outside its gates. After nine months, the engagements had become increasingly frequent. When the crusaders completed construction of an enormous “cat,” which was a mobile, roofed apparatus that protected sappers while they worked to breach the city’s walls, the Toulousians launched a violent assault to destroy it. During the attack, Count Simon de Montfort was mortally wounded when a stone cast by a catapult from within the walls of Toulouse stuck him in the head. Here, after years of close brushes with death, from being surrounded and outnumbered to alone and betrayed, the resilient leader of the crusading army finally fell. With its great captain dead, the crusaders withdrew and abandoned the siege.

While it would seem that this sort of misfortune would threaten the survival of the struggling Crusade, it in fact did the opposite. De Montfort’s tragic death inspired a new resurgence of crusading nobles from Northern France, to include the crown prince Louis.³ At the same time, Count Simon’s death provided a psychological boost for the insurgent cause. Yet with the arrival of fresh reinforcements, the crusaders were able to secure their holdings despite the loss of their beloved leader.

As the Albigensian Crusade continued on with success and failure during the nine years of Simon de Montfort’s command, a second parallel effort ran largely unseen in the shadow of the military campaign. It was in a sense a separate line of information operations, that is, a concerted effort to undermine the ideological current characterizing the enemy in the war of ideas. This undertaking did not take its directions from the military commander, and its missionaries acted for the most part independently and with

great autonomy. Working to this end on the one hand were the papal legates and the Cistercians, who had for decades labored fruitlessly against heresy. Consequently, there is very good reason to believe that it was newcomers who made the greatest progress, and the obvious addition was Dominic and his fledgling Dominicans who by 1217 were still only seventeen in number.⁴ With St. Dominic as both inspiration and guide, he and his mendicant⁵ monks slowly succeeded in winning the hearts of De Montfort, the Pope, and the people of Languedoc. It was this line of operations, more so than military actions, which contributed most directly to the defeat of the Crusade's professed enemy, heresy. While military actions were essential to the Crusade's success, ultimately it was a nonlethal campaign of persuasion facilitated by military presence that led to the war's conclusion.

Political Victory for the Crusade

After Simon de Montfort's death in 1218, the Crusade took on a less aggressive nature, and the next six years of the campaign were for the most part unremarkable. Opposition continued and the crusading army under De Montfort's son Amaury became increasingly depleted in resources and will. Then, in 1224, a surprising turn of events occurred which finally embarked the Crusade on the path toward peace. King Louis VIII, the new French King who had years before crusaded alongside Count Simon in Languedoc, accepted Amaury's request for the king to assume responsibility for the lands under the control of the crusaders. In this transfer of authority, Amaury de Montfort and his crusading army departed Languedoc for good.⁶ As a demonstration of his resolve to bring the Crusade to a close, King Louis in 1226, a short time before his own death that year, gathered his own crusading army and proceeded into Languedoc. After fifteen years

of war, the nobles of Languedoc were finally prepared to acquiesce to the French crown, even in Toulouse.⁷ Finally, in 1229, Count Raymond VII⁸ signed the Treaty of Paris to end formally the conflict by paying homage to the child-King Louis IX, later known as St. Louis, as the rightful suzerain of Languedoc.⁹

While the Treaty of Paris represents the event that marked the end of the Crusade, it is not in itself sufficient to explain how heresy was defeated. The source of will for the insurgency was not Count Raymond VII, but rather the nobles collectively in defiance of the Crusade. Something had changed to allow the political settlement to become a reality. Simply stated, the nobles were no longer compelled to harbor heretics. Unlike the nobles of the early thirteenth century who enjoyed great autonomy as lords of semi-independent states, the nobles now were willing to return to the norms of Christendom under the rule of the French king. In a dramatic philosophical transformation, heresy had lost its influence and grip on the rulers of Languedoc. How this ideological change occurred is a question that we must answer in order to understand how the Church ultimately achieved victory against the Albigensian heresy.

A Campaign of Extermination

Many historians, even those who have been overwhelmingly sympathetic to the Church during this age, have stated and even asserted that the Albigensian Crusade was in essence a campaign of extermination.¹⁰ While the Crusade may have begun with an intention among its lay-leaders that resembled this characterization, it is inaccurate to describe the entire Crusade in this manner. At its outset, the professed enemy of the Crusade was heresy, and for many the logical solution to the problem of heresy was to destroy those that propagated the ideology itself, the heretics. This conclusion seemed to

be further justified by medieval common law, still in use in Languedoc during this time,¹¹ which permitted the use of capital punishment for heresy. Since the Crusade's operations were planned and carried out by nobles, the secular arm seemed fully warranted in applying this form of punishment not only to the offense of heresy, but for offense of disrupting the public order.¹² Yet this approach appeared to have created unease among those clergy-observers of the Crusade, most notably Pope Innocent III. For the Pope and others that considered themselves bound to the norms of the Church, a campaign of extermination could never be consistent with the principles of Christianity, principles that had, since the early Church fathers, always placed mercy above justice. Hence, the Vicar of Christ found the need to require restraint, beginning in 1210 when the Pope mandated that all heretics be given the opportunity to renounce their beliefs before the civil authorities could impose execution.¹³ Additionally, there were other moral influences that had the effect of promoting greater restraint, such as the evolving conscience of the Crusade's leader, Count Simon de Montfort, who became markedly more lenient after the campaign's first few years. Hence, it is clear that the true spirit of the Crusade did not support the extermination of heretics but rather, under the influence of the Church's moral norms, essentially halted the strategy of using executions as a means of defeating heresy.

During the early period that was most notorious for its executions, Count Simon de Montfort's chronicler provides details of the three instances of mass executions of heretics. Following the sieges at Minerve, Lavaur, and Les Casses, a total of roughly 540 heretics were burned at the stake, presumably on the order of De Montfort. These sieges all took place in 1210 and 1211, the second and third years of the Crusade. Together, they

were the only recorded executions of heretics during the entire campaign, which is remarkable considering the countless number of sieges that the Crusade conducted between 1209 and 1229.¹⁴ Furthermore, heresy continued to persist openly throughout Languedoc for years after these incidents occurred. Hence, either Simon had forbidden the execution of heretics after 1212, or the heretics went underground, shedding their conspicuous black robes out of fear for their lives. Most likely, a combination of the two comprises the truth. While the Cathar “Perfect” applauded suicide and were known to welcome the sentence of death, they must have realized the long-term implications on the survival of their movement. However, most salient to the evolving character of the Crusade was the growing importance of moral influences. By abandoning the practice of mass executions of heretics, Simon de Montfort had in the eyes of the Crusade’s observers conceded to the moral norms of Christendom in a way that preserved his own integrity and that of the mission of the Church.

The extermination theory is grossly inadequate to explain the triumph over heresy in Languedoc. Principally, this is because there is no evidence to indicate that the killing of heretics led to any degree of long-term success in overcoming heresy. On the contrary, the execution of heretics seemed to inflame popular discontent for the crusader mission, making the populous even more sympathetic to the heretical ideology and fueling an insurgency that endeavored to oppose crusader rule. Instead, the facts suggest that the capture and killing of heretics occurring early on in the campaign was relatively insignificant to the Crusade’s outcome, failing to produce the effect sought by its leader. Considering that the political settlement of 1229 does not explain heresy’s demise and the extermination theory is equally insufficient, there must be another, more compelling

reason. The answer is found in the intellectual force of persuasion that St. Dominic and his fledgling mendicant order transmitted among the people of Languedoc.

Information Operators

At the start of the thirteenth century, Christendom was in a state of growing decay¹⁵ while the power of the papacy was at its height. Ecclesial impropriety, a departure from orthodoxy, and the growing affluence of the clergy made the Church very much in need of reform. The Pope, while wielding the greatest instruments of influence at his disposal, found that he alone could not change the course that the Church and medieval society had begun to take. Yet from the very heart of the Church emerged not one, but two saintly men who embodied the moral norms of Christianity in a way that compelled Europe to rediscover the Christian tradition. They were St. Dominic and St. Francis of Assisi, two men whose consciences inspired them to forsake their privileged upbringings and instead embrace a life of poverty for the sake of the Church. In doing so, they each established movements that were both unsolicited and devoid of collaboration with one another. The fact that these two men presented a common antidote for Europe's struggle with materialism and theological subjectivism at precisely the same time strongly indicates that Christendom desperately needed a reintroduction to its fundamental Christian roots.

For St. Dominic, the first prominent figure to fall under his influence was Simon de Montfort, who after meeting the simple Spanish priest near Fanjeaux in 1209, began a relationship that would drastically influence both his conscience and decisions as a leader. Next were Popes Innocent III and his successor Honorius, who approved Dominic's request for a new religious order, named by Pope Innocent the Friars

Preachers at a time when the papacy was seeking to halt the spread of new orders. In time, the remainder of Europe found itself captivated by the intellectual current of the Dominican movement. By 1222, a year after St. Dominic's death, the order had grown to include 500 priests and brothers and 100 nuns, stretching from England to Hungary and Spain to Rome.¹⁶ At the same time, the few Dominicans that remained in Languedoc had succeeded in nurturing the seeds that eventually expelled heresy from the region, a phenomenon that led directly to the Crusade's successful conclusion.

Historian Norman Cantor describes the Dominicans as the "intellectual shock troops" of the Crusade, and in a sense they were.¹⁷ While not formally affiliated with the crusader army, the shared goals of defeating heresy combined with the prominent friendship formed early on between De Montfort and Dominic made the two men brothers in purpose. However, the interaction between the Dominicans and the crusaders cannot be overemphasized without losing the spirit of St. Dominic's mission, which was to "promote orthodoxy and good morals and to eradicate heresy and evil customs."¹⁸ His method was both radical and compelling at the same time, preaching the doctrines of the Christian faith as much in deed as in word. In fact, this was part of the uniqueness of Dominic's ethic that he taught to his fellow preachers, that outward deeds more than words succeed in winning the hearts and minds of men. His biographers have recorded many tales of his outward virtue. For example, when Dominic and his followers were once invited into the home of a wealthy heretic believer, they declined the soft beds and lavish meals to sleep on the floor instead and eat only soup and bread. On another occasion after Dominic convinced a heretic of his errors, the heretic stated that he was unable to renounce heresy since he in his poverty relied upon other heretics for his only

financial support. Dominic sought to rectify this by attempting to sell himself into slavery, and he was only prevented when a generous donor offered money to free the heretic from his state of poverty.¹⁹ Such was the life of austerity and sacrifice from which Dominic and his followers preached, causing their message to ring true among their listeners within Languedoc.

A central focus of the early Dominicans was education, and they had a particular concern for the education of youth. Since the Cathars had established many schools to form the minds of children from an early age, specifically the poor, the Dominicans' own educational endeavor became even more of a necessity to counter the long-term effects of heresy.²⁰ The Dominican emphasis on teaching the true doctrines of Christianity at a time when Europe was only beginning its medieval intellectual renaissance quickly became one of the defining characteristics of the order. Only a half century later, the Dominicans were prolific throughout the universities of Europe. Included in this number were two well known Dominicans, St. Thomas Aquinas and St. Albert the Great, who wrote works of philosophy and theology suggesting that reason and faith were not only compatible but also inseparable. These important medieval scholars followed a spiritual and intellectual tradition initially created by St. Dominic as a response to the heretical teachings of the Cathars.

As a result of the labors of the Dominicans in Languedoc, the prominence of the Albigensian heresy over time waned, being replaced by the orthodox Christian doctrines promoted by St. Dominic and his relatively small group of Friars Preachers. Southern nobles, who years earlier obstinately refused to exile heretics since many shared blood relations with them or were prominent in their communities, saw the dominance of heresy

evaporate from their midst. Conversion had occurred through intellectual and spiritual persuasion, causing submission to authority naturally to follow. That this conversion was obtained by force of arms is both unbelievable and nonsensical. Rather, it appears exceedingly clear that it was the efforts of the Dominicans that yielded ideological change, leading directly to the Crusade's success. While the Dominicans did not provide the political solution to end hostilities, St. Dominic and his followers did in fact attain the ultimate objective of the Crusade, that of victory over heresy.

Conclusion

Lacking a decisive military conclusion and devoid of a dramatic political compromise, many historians have seemed to dismiss the outcome of the Albigensian Crusade as if it occurred by accident, thereby discounting its significance. Nevertheless, at least a handful of others have conveyed an appreciation for the Crusade's effect on European history. Among them, Hoffman Nickerson states that for France, the historical significance of the Albigensian Crusade was that it established French national unity and won for France the boundaries that exist to the present day.²¹ Following the Treaty of Paris in 1229, all of Languedoc fell under the rule of the French Crown, lands that were among the most culturally sophisticated of the entire West.²² On a larger scale, he states that the Crusade also preserved the moral order of Christendom, an order that relied heavily upon the stability and authority that the Church provided feudal Europe.²³ In this regard, papal authority was affirmed as the arbiter of European politics in the Middle Ages. Hilaire Belloc goes a step further to speculate that, had the Crusade failed, the kingdom of France would have likely collapsed and the Cathar heresy would have continued to spread freely in Europe.²⁴ In this vein, a successful rejection of the moral

order of Christendom within Languedoc and its replacement with an anti-Christian current of moral subjectivity could have introduced a plague of ideological divisiveness throughout Christendom. Meanwhile, Europe during the thirteenth century struggled to defend herself from various external enemies. There were the Muslim armies in Spain and the Holy Land as well as the Mongol invasions from the east. Had Medieval Europe not preserved its own moral unity, it may have failed to hold back these external enemies and consequently might not have evolved into the Western Civilization, replete with its enduring moral roots, which we know today.

The more subtle moral influence emerging from the Albigensian Crusade was the movement founded by St. Dominic, the Order of Friars Preachers. This saintly man's departure from Languedoc in 1217 to address the larger problem of Church reform inspired a widespread return to orthodoxy throughout Europe. His battle waged against errant ideological currents, corrupt clergy, and unbelief took as its point of departure the objective moral teachings of the Church. It was a mission that sought to right the conscience of all of Christendom, and in this mission his most important tool was the promulgation of the simple devotion made famous by the Battle of Muret, the Holy Rosary. Pope Leo XIII acknowledged St. Dominic's significance when he instituted the month of the Holy Rosary in the late nineteenth century:

None of you, venerable brethren, are ignorant what woes and afflictions were caused to the Church of Christ towards the end of the twelfth century by the Albigensian heretics, who, born of the sect of the later Manicheans, filled the south of France and other parts of Europe with the most pernicious errors. Carrying everywhere the terror of their arms, they sought to extend their power by fire and sword. Then, as you know, God in His mercy raised up against His enemies a man of eminent sanctity, the Father and Founder of the Dominican Order. This man, great by the integrity of his doctrine, by the example of his virtues, and by his apostolic labours (sic), undertook the magnificent task of

defending the Catholic Church, not by force, nor by arms, but by the sole weapon for overcoming the enemies of the Church and defeating their impiety. And the event proved that he was right. For, in fact, the use of this prayer having been spread and practised (sic) according to the instruction and institution of St. Dominic, piety, faith, and concord once more flourished. The enterprises of the heretics failed, and their power gradually decayed; a vast number of souls returned to the true faith, and the fury of the impious was vanquished by the arms of the Catholics, who repelled force by force.²⁵

It is important to note that while the Church has never condemned the use of military force outright, it has taught from antiquity that conversion to the faith cannot be won by force or arms but only by force of persuasion. St. Dominic's example and influence clearly bore witness to the importance of the latter tenet of this paradox. Even while the violence of a military campaign at times jeopardized his mission, he succeeded in winning the hearts of men so that peace might flourish and the delicate order of Europe might survive.

¹Peter of les Vaux-de-Cernay, *The History of the Albigensian Crusade*, trans. and eds. W. A. Sibly and M. D. Sibly (Woodbridge, UK: Boydell Press, 1998), 270.

²Ibid., 271.

³ Ibid., 279. Prince Louis later became King Louis VIII of France.

⁴Jean Guiraud, *St. Dominic* (London: Duckworth, 1901), 89-90.

⁵The term mendicant comes from the Latin *mendicare*, meaning "to beg." At virtually the same time yet independent of one another, St. Dominic and St. Francis of Assisi both established religious orders that were premised upon a life of poverty, movements that helped to bring about a sweeping reform of the Church following the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215.

⁶Warren H. Carroll, *A History of Christendom*, vol. 3, *The Glory of Christendom* (Front Royal, Virginia: Christendom Press, 1993), 201.

⁷Ibid., 201.

⁸Count Raymond VII of Toulouse succeeded Raymond VI, the lord of Languedoc at the start of the Crusade, upon his father's death in 1222.

⁹As a testimony to the profound influence and rapid spread of St. Dominic and St. Francis' mendicant orders on all of Christendom, King Louis IX (1226-1270) during his lifetime became a member of the Franciscan Third Order (see G.K. Chesterton, *Saint Thomas Aquinas: Saint Francis of Assisi* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2002), 281).

¹⁰Sr. Augusta Drane, who is sympathetic to the Crusade, calls the Crusade a war of "extermination" (see Augusta T. Drane, *The Life of St. Dominic* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1891), 84). Other historians who sympathize with the Cathars, such as Jonathan Sumption and Henry Charles Lea, also share this imprecise characterization.

¹¹Edward Jenks, *Law and Politics in the Middle Ages* (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1898), 22.

¹²Drane, 114.

¹³Nickerson, *The Inquisition* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1923), 127.

¹⁴While it is difficult to quantify the exact number of sieges conducted by the Crusaders, Peter of les Vaux-de-Cernay and other comprehensive sources enumerate the many that have been recorded. Some castles were turned over peacefully, others surrendered following an initial siege and negotiations, and still others were successfully attacked and stormed. For the purposes of this discussion, the number of individual towns and castles that the Crusade occupied, which in each case would have made the heretics within their walls subject to the authority of the Crusading army, probably numbered between 100 and 150. This is a substantial number considering that only three sieges resulted in mass executions of heretics, and these three occurrences were limited to the Crusade's first few years.

¹⁵Drane, 155-6.

¹⁶Guiraud, 127.

¹⁷Norman F. Cantor, *The Civilization of the Middle Ages* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1994), 428.

¹⁸Guiraud, 64.

¹⁹Drane, 91.

²⁰Nickerson, 91.

²¹*Ibid.*, 190.

²²Hilaire Belloc, *The Great Heresies* (London: Sheed & Ward, 1938; reprint, Rockford, Illinois: Tan, 1991), 95.

²³Nickerson, 70.

²⁴Belloc, 93.

²⁵Drane, 136-7.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

The moral challenges of our current Global War on Terrorism reflect a set of particular problems experienced in early thirteenth century Europe, namely during the Albigensian Crusade (1209-1229). The lessons of this ideological conflict from the past, a war that “preserved the moral unity of Europe so that it remained unbroken until the sixteenth century,”¹ lie all but buried under eight hundred years of accumulated history. Nevertheless, the lessons learned during this conflict ring as true today as they did during the High Middle Ages. While the analogy is not complete in every respect, the indisputable fact is that the leaders of what was known as Christendom then, with its some 70 million members,² like much of the Western world today, believed there were certain ideas worth fighting for. In the case of Pope Innocent III (1198-1216), the enemy was a heretical religious ideology, one that found appeal in the consciences of men, leaving them unable to discern good and evil. The seductive philosophy of the Cathar religion began to tear an important part of Christendom apart from within, leaving moral and political disorder in its wake as it spread with an alluring appeal. The whole region of Languedoc in present-day France, encompassing one of the wealthiest and most prosperous areas in Europe, began to defy the established norms of Christendom as adjudicated by the Vicar of Christ, the Roman Pontiff. During this time, the Church was not merely an institution that represented a particular mode of faith, but rather it was, in the words of R.W. Southern, “one of the greatest, most integrated, and best developed systems that has ever been devised for the conduct of human life.”³ The defense of this

system was surely an imperative for Medieval Europe, just as the defense of the western ideas of right reason and justice receive such energy today.

In our present day, a principled American president has sought to engage a global movement that unites itself under the mantle of a radical Islamic ideology, an ideology commonly referred to as Jihadism. Using the means at his disposal, President Bush in 2001 launched a war that has employed military forces in Afghanistan and Iraq while allying with other countries throughout the world to eradicate terrorism from within their own borders. While the just nature of these decisions, particularly in Iraq, is in our present time controversial, medieval just war tradition seems to provide justification for this War on Terrorism. Applying the tests of the High Middle Ages for just war, or *ius ad bellum*, requires the fulfillment of four conditions. (1) “Just cause.” Most agree that the United States had just cause to engage a global foe following the catastrophic events of September 11th, 2001, a condition that allowed for the righting of wrongs and the preservation of the moral order.⁴ President Bush saw this threat as not simply limited to Al Qaeda but rather encompassing all terrorist groups and legitimate governments with sympathies to Islamic extremism and in active defiance of world order. (2) “Just intention.” This condition demands benevolence and an intention for peace on the part of the protagonist, which in contemporary American foreign policy is perhaps the easiest of the four to justify. (3) “Necessity.” In this regard, the magnitude of the threat once again became imminently clear when passenger jets destroyed the twin towers of the World Trade Center and slammed into the Pentagon. To respond and to respond quickly to that attack was once again a requirement for the preservation of world order. (4) “Proper authority.” While the passage of a United Nations Security Council resolution authorizing

war certainly would have added weight to this condition, it was clearly not a prerequisite in the context of Medieval Just War Doctrine. On the contrary, the medieval requirement was simply that only proper rulers could wage war, not private persons. Under this definition, the President of the United States is once again justified. Therefore, a convincing argument can be made that President Bush, by launching a global campaign against Jihadism, was acting within the bounds of *ius ad bellum*. The decision to go to war, or the just war decision, is the first parallel between today and the medieval war waged against a heretical ideology from ages past, the Albigensian Crusade.

In the case of Pope Innocent III's declaration of war against the Albigensian heresy, similar responses to the medieval test for *ius ad bellum* exist. (1) Just cause was explicit in Just War Doctrine to provide for the defense of the Church, whose ministers, property, and freedoms were in jeopardy within Languedoc.⁵ The socially destructive philosophy of the Cathars, condemning procreation and marriage and advocating suicide, was clearly in opposition to the centuries-old idea of the existence of universal good as advocated by both Christian theology and Aristotelian thought. Furthermore, the Cathars' moral defiance to the established norms of Christendom was clearly a threat to the Church as well as the moral order of Europe. (2) Just intention prescribed that the objective of war was peace, an idea that was deeply ingrained in the purpose and mission of the Church. To preserve peace, the popes of the High Middle Ages sought to promulgate truth while safeguarding the moral order, and this order was severely threatened by the rise of the Albigensian heresy. (3) The third test was necessity to wage war, and the Pope saw war as a necessity following the murder of the papal legate Peter de Castelnau. In his mind, this act of violence was the last straw in a pattern of lawless

behaviors committed by the rulers of Languedoc. De Castelnaud's murder created the urgent need for military intervention to restore order and to facilitate the nonviolent mission of conversion through preaching. (4) Finally, proper authority was in the hands of the Pope who, as both a temporal ruler and the spiritual leader of Christendom, had over a hundred years of crusades combined with the Gregorian doctrine as papal precedent. Therefore, it is reasonable to argue that the Albigensian Crusade was during the High Middle Ages regarded as a just war.

If both the Global War on Terrorism and the Albigensian Crusade can satisfy the tests for *ius ad bellum*, there is another aspect of just war theory which deserves even greater consideration in light of the current conflict. This facet is justice in war, or *ius in bello*. *Ius in bello* ranges from the strategic level, for example where to deploy military forces and what geographic bounds in which to limit them, to the tactical level, addressing the acts of individual soldiers and leaders on the battlefield. It is within this precept that one may find, in both the Global War on Terrorism and the Albigensian Crusade, the predominance of moral challenges. In both instances, due to the particular nature of this type of war, there was a distinct ideological component of war separate from armed combat, as articulated by President Bush in his updated National Security Strategy for Combating Terrorism (NSCT) released 6 September 2006:

From the beginning, the War on Terror has been both a battle of arms and a battle of ideas – a fight against the terrorists and their murderous ideology. In the short run, the fight involves the application of all instruments of national power and influence to kill or capture the terrorists; deny them safehaven and control of any nation; prevent them from gaining access to WMD (Weapons of Mass Destruction); render potential terrorist targets less attractive by strengthening security; and cut off their sources of funding and other resources they need to operate and survive. In the long run, winning the War on Terror means winning the battle of ideas.⁶

The battle of ideas, in the words of President Bush, is the essential element to achieve ultimate victory in this kind of conflict. The Albigensian Crusade supports this assertion, and it might be said that the Crusade's leaders at some point arrived at the same conclusion. Nevertheless, the important lesson of Christendom's war against the Albigensian heresy was that success in the battle of ideas could only be achieved by adhering to objective moral principles within *ius in bello*.

During the Albigensian Crusade, the war's largely unseen front was the ideological battlefield. Nonetheless, its importance was critical, in part because it was here that the crusaders struggled to stay true to the moral principles over which the war was being fought. Following nearly a century of deterioration in the moral order within Languedoc, the Pope believed that a war of occupation was necessary to ensure the Church's access so that ideological dialogue would be possible. Yet while the occupying army of the crusaders was initially successful, they soon received from the southern nobles the full weight of their resentment and refusal to submit. The result was a violent insurgency, which included the violation of feudal oaths on par with treason, the adoption of guerilla tactics, and the implementation of an aggressive propaganda campaign. Counterinsurgency tactics, in turn, escalated in violence, yielding civilian casualties and alienating the local feudal authorities. Consequently, Count Simon de Montfort found his legitimacy injured both within Languedoc and on the outside, most notably with the Pope himself. Concurrently, a small group of Dominicans waged the war of ideas outside of De Montfort's purview as commander, making slow progress against the heretical ideology. The two lines of operation, military and informational, shared at least one significant facet: the extent to which the Crusade abided by *ius in bello* either slowed or hastened

their advance against heresy. In this regard, the number of challenges or the amount of success they achieved in the long run depended upon the degree to which the Crusade adhered to the principles of the Christian faith that they espoused. Of those instigating these challenges, there were principally two groups, those immersed in heresy and those who comprised the insurgency.

The first dilemma for the military forces of the Crusade was the question of how to defeat an ideology with the force of arms. Essentially, it was the problem of achieving religious conversion through battle and occupation. From the Crusade's outset, its leaders saw this less as a question of justice in war as it was a matter of proper enforcement of civil law. Professed heretics were criminals in medieval society. As such, they were in medieval "common law" guilty of a capital crime. Therefore, in the early years, the military forces of the Crusade sought to capture heretics and then burn them at the stake, an intent that incidentally was not fully carried out but on a few occasions throughout the entire course of the Crusade. Yet over time, the Crusade's commander, Count Simon de Montfort, began to realize the contradiction between what the Church professed and his campaign waged in the name of the Catholic faith. Church tradition had always held that conversion could not be obtained by coercion. St. Dominic, the holy priest who just a few years earlier had arrived in Languedoc to preach against heresy, most certainly bore witness to this assertion. As the friendship between St. Dominic and the Crusade's leader grew over time, De Montfort's seems to have changed his approach, and three years into the Crusade he no longer sought out heretics for the purpose of destroying them. The change suggests that the relationship between these two men caused a transformation within De Montfort's conscience, and the evidence strongly suggests that this

transformation brought about a policy of leniency more consistent with the religious beliefs that the Crusade was attempting to defend.

The second challenge was the insurgency. Count Simon de Montfort and many of the other crusading nobles were men of medieval chivalry. Personal honor and integrity of conduct were to them immensely important ideals. Combined with what they saw in the Crusade as their sacred mission for the Church, *ius in bello* was undoubtedly both recognized and understood. Yet the mounting obstacles of facing a violent insurgency over an extended period of time, especially when vastly outnumbered, naturally yielded significant moral challenges. This was the case during the Albigensian Crusade, and Count Simon de Montfort initially counteracted violence and treachery with an armed fierceness that he perceived as militarily necessary. Since the just war tradition of *ius in bello* permitted this exception of military necessity,⁷ De Montfort did not immediately experience a crisis of conscience. However, he later discovered that in the context of this Crusade military necessity was not sufficient. By departing from the moral norms that the armed mission was fighting to defend, the Crusade contradicted itself and nearly suffered defeat. In turn, the war of ideas was rendered ineffective, a fact that St. Dominic in his frustration most likely brought to the attention of the Crusade's leader. The entire Crusade risked slipping into the same moral abyss as the heretics, a consequence that not only surrendered the moral high ground, so to speak, but also directly threatened the line of operations that waged the battle of ideas.

In both cases, that is, dealing with the heretics and the insurgents, Count Simon de Montfort came to realize that what was permissible in *ius in bello* was not synonymous with what was necessary to win in the "long-war." Restraint was not only required, it was

an imperative. Today, the United States military holds as doctrine a number of Principles of War. Recently, joint doctrine has added three additional principles, the first of which is “restraint.”⁸ This is for good reason, since American leaders have learned that in our current world adherence to what is commonly regarded as *ius in bello* is often not sufficient. American military forces fight the current Global War on Terrorism under the mandate of a thorough array of rules of war, rules of engagement, and standards of conduct. Many of these restraints take into account the strategic “big-picture” far removed from the battlefield, to include the impacts on indigenous, American, and international public opinion as well as the consequences of collateral damage that is exploited by enemy propaganda. Still, with military forces steeped in combat, commanders often find restraint at odds with military necessity, which at times creates the conditions for atrocities. This is where the dilemma arises, at the intersection between moral norms and military necessity. It is here that the lessons of the Albigensian Crusade can provide the most value.

The moral norms that produced success in the Albigensian Crusade were not a prescriptive set of rules, but rather the essence of the Christian ethic transmitted by the Roman Catholic Church. In their most compelling form, they were embodied in the person of St. Dominic. St. Dominic, as we have found, almost perfectly epitomized the moral norms of the Church. His spark was “voluntary poverty in the service of others,”⁹ a moral pulpit from which he influenced the consciences of both crusader and heretic alike. Over time, his small band of followers grew into one of the most important religious orders in the history of the Church, and by the end of his life his Dominicans had stretched all across Europe. Nevertheless, of greatest relevance here is not the virtue of

St. Dominic or his tremendous influence, but rather his witness to the existence of objective moral truth. In opposition to St. Dominic and the Church was a worldview often referred to today as moral relativism, the idea that each human conscience, regardless of its formation, distinctly defines what is good and what is evil. Yet if each individual conscience can be unique but still morally right, the term conscience loses its meaning and instead becomes an excuse for human subjectivity. Subjectivity reaching its full maturity within war begets atrocity and limitless warfare. This is exactly the problem that the subjective state of military necessity created for Simon de Montfort and that it presents for us today. Objective moral truth must be adhered to as well as defended; otherwise, the ideological ground on which it stands will quickly dissolve.

In our present day, we are fighting the Global War on Terrorism under the premise that there are certain truths pertaining to the dignity of human beings that the United States of America must defend. Like Pope Innocent III and Simon de Montfort, we too are living in a time of competing ideologies. The ideological enemies that aggressively threaten the moral order are global Jihadism and relativism, themselves unwitting allies. The Jihadists argue that Western notions of democracy, liberalism, human rights, personal freedom, and international law are illegitimate and opposed to Islam. They take this philosophy a step further by asserting that the evil generated by these ideals justifies all manner of death and destruction, to include the wanton killing of the innocent.¹⁰ Bolstering this extremist movement is a worldwide current of moral relativism, which includes the belief that all are governed by their own conscience, making relativists unwilling if not unable to speak out credibly against the philosophy of global Jihad. Like the moral heresy of the Albigensians, Jihadists desire to impose a

philosophical division on the world by arguing that their worldview is reasonable and just. In doing so, they threaten the existing moral order of the civilized world, the same moral order that condemns torture, political assassination, and genocide. Jihadism, therefore, is in a sense modern heresy. This heresy forms the essence of a dangerous enemy that seeks to destroy those that resist them with any means at their disposal, without limits and irrespective of any rational principles of morality.

Our shortcomings in this current struggle are obvious. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, in a speech made at the Army War College in 2006 on the challenges of fighting the Global War on Terrorism said, “If I were grading I would say we probably deserve a ‘D’ or ‘D-plus’ as a country as to how well we’re doing in the battle of ideas that’s taking place in the world today.”¹¹ In this regard, the Albigensian Crusade offers a strategy. To overcome the ideology of global Jihadism, the United States and others internationally that seek to defend the moral order must persuade. This force of persuasion will only be effective if presented in action as well as word. People of good will and right reason throughout the world are open to the arguments made in favor of objective moral principles. However, if the United States cannot show that its military abides by these same principles, our nation stands little chance of forming a partnership against Jihadism with the rest of the world. The lesson of the Albigensian Crusade for today is that our moral principles must be in word and action both consistent and true in order to convince. As the military arm of our nation, we must hold tight to this presupposition to succeed in the ideological war of our current times, one that will surely consume our efforts for years to come.

¹Hoffman Nickerson, *The Inquisition* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1923), 70.

²Thomas Bokenkotter, *A Concise History of the Catholic Church* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1977), 139.

³*Ibid.*, 122.

⁴Frederick H. Russell, *The Just War in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 19.

⁵*Ibid.*, 39.

⁶National Security Council, *National Strategy for Combating Terrorism* (Washington, D.C.: September 2006), 7.

⁷Russell, 19-20.

⁸Department of Defense, Joint Publication 3-0, *Joint Operations* (Washington, D.C.: 17 September 2006), A-3.

⁹Nickerson, 86.

¹⁰Mary R. Habeck, *Knowing the Enemy: Jihadist Ideology and the War on Terror* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 162.

¹¹Irving Lachow and Courtney Richardson, "Terrorist Use of the Internet: the Real Story," *Joint Forces Quarterly* 45 (2nd Quarter 2007): 102.

APPENDIX A

CHRONOLOGY OF THE ALBIGENSIAN CRUSADE

- 1206 St. Dominic arrives in Languedoc
- 1208 Murder of Papal Legate Peter de Castlenau
Pope Innocent III's call to crusade
- 1209 Siege of Beziers and Carcassonne
Simon de Montfort named as military leader of the Crusade
Simon's first meeting with St. Dominic
Maiming of crusaders by Giraud de Pepieux
- 1210 Crusader reprisal at Bram (over 100 enemy maimed)
Siege of Minerve (100 Cathar "Perfect" burned, 3 reconciled)
- 1211 Siege of Lavaur (300 heretics burned, 80 knights executed)
Siege of Les Casses (80 heretics burned, none reconciled, all others freed)
First siege of Toulouse fails
- 1212 Siege of St. Antonin (defending count and his knights imprisoned)
Siege of Moissac (Simon accepts surrender and orders execution of all mercenaries)
Battle of Las Navas de Tolosa in Spain
- 1213 French mobilization to invade England
Knighting of Simon's son Amaury
Battle of Muret
- 1214 Battle of Bouvines
Marriage of Amaury by St. Dominic
Baptism of De Montfort's daughter by St. Dominic
- 1215 Crown Prince Louis joins Crusade and helps Simon de Montfort secure Toulouse
Magna Carta signed by King John of England
Fourth Lateran Council
- 1216 Innocent III dies
Pope Honorius formally approves Dominicans and Franciscan orders
- 1217 St. Dominic disperses his 17 followers in May
St. Dominic himself departs Toulouse for Rome in September
Raymond VI regains control of Toulouse in late September
Seige of Toulouse begins in October
- 1218 During seige of Toulouse, Simon de Montfort dies (in late June); siege ends
- 1221 St. Dominic dies
- 1222 Mongols invade Eastern Europe
Count Raymond VI of Toulouse dies; is succeeded by Raymond VII
- 1223 King Philip Augustus of France dies; is succeeded by Louis VIII
- 1224 King Louis VIII accepts Languedoc from Amaury
- 1226 St. Francis dies
King Louis VIII dies; succeeded by Louis IX (St. Louis)
- 1229 Treaty of Paris ends Albigensian Crusade

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