

# The Albigensian Crusade



Figure 1: Saint Dominic

## 1. The situation in Languedoc

Whereas at that time the church spread out its richness and many priests carried out a dissolute life; Cathars, the poor among the poor, carried out a life of ascetics and quickly became a real danger to the Church of Rome. Also, Pope Innocent III preached the Crusade against the heretics of 1199 to 1209 and requested at the same time on several occasions the armed support of the King of France, Philippe Auguste. This finished, after negotiations, by launching the Crusade (1209-1229) which followed the spiritual Crusade (1179-1198).

If the heretics were much more severely hunted in the areas of North, the country of Oc, via the nobility, was much more accessible. The nobility tolerated the heretics in their strongholds which made the hunting the Church imposed on them all the more difficult.

Whether they were the lords of Toulouse, Foix, Carcassonne or elsewhere, it cannot be considered that they were themselves Cathars. In fact, the majority of them had a grandmother, a mother or a believer or parfaite in the faith. Since their more tender childhood, they had always lived with Cathars and, if these lords took their defence, it was more a refusal of the interference of the Holy See in the administration of their fields, that for really protecting the religion.

One can consider that the zone delimited by Toulouse, Foix, Carcassonne and Albi was the cradle of Catharism with for epicentre being Fanjeaux. In 1177, Raymond V, Count of Toulouse alerted the Pope Alexander III and the King of France, Louis VII, to the increasing expansion of the heresy.

### The spiritual Crusade

In 1179, the Church of Rome decided the crusade should not be based on war, but on the sermons of its legates through famous campaigns and village heretics. They spoke then about a spiritual Crusade.

The armed crusade of 1209 to 1229 was not wanted by the Church of Rome. The Church initially tried to eradicate the Cathar way by peaceful means. Pierre de Castelnau and Raoul de Fontfroide (an abbey close to Narbonne), joined by Arnaud Armaury, took pilgrimage and tried, village after village, house after house, to bring back belief in the catholic faith.

They were helped in their task by Domenic de Guzman who was one of the rare clerics who understood Catharism to better fight it. Therein lay a pontifical paradox: while encouraging the actions of Pierre, Raoul and Domenic without providing any financial assistance to them, Rome already prepared an armed Crusade.

A few years later in 1206, in Fanjeaux, with the assistance of Diège d' Acébès, Bishop of Osma in Spain, Domenic de Guzman founded the Dominican Order and instituted the first Dominican convent of Prouille which aimed to be a refuge for Cathars women returned to the catholic faith. Fanjeaux, because of its geographical position, was of strategic importance to both the prohibited church and the Crusaders.

It was in Fanjeaux in 1204, that Esclarmonde, sister of Raymond Roger, Count de Foix, received the rite of ordination. Her brother attended the ceremony chaired by Guillaibert de Castres, Cathar bishop of Toulouse.

It was also from Fanjeaux that Simon de Montfort launched his attacks against Mirepoix, Saverdun, Pamiers, Limoux, Albi and Muret. It was during these battles that Pierre II, King of Aragon, lost his life.

Guillaibert de Castres, Cathar bishop of Toulouse, was a great spiritual and political adviser to the nobility of reorganizing the Lauragais and a great adviser of the Cathar church after the victory of Simon de Montfort. He had little success in the time after 1220.

It was in 1232 that he founded the seat of the Cathar Church in Montségur. In 1207, he was sent to debate for 15 days with Domenic de Guzman in Montreal. This debate remained in the memories of the Cathar church as having been one moment of the spiritual crusade in which it had initially convincing results when people who were Cathars, converted to Catholicism, returned to Catharism.

During these years, Innocent III threatened Occitan nobles who gave refuge in their lands to heretics on several occasions, and pushed the bishops to fight the Cathar Church.

In 1198, following the laxity of these lords and bishops (a number of them were eventually relieved of their duties), Pope Innocent III issued a crusade of entirely another order: the Albigensian Crusade.

From 1198 to 1209, the Pope found the King of France, Philippe Auguste had no greater resolve to support the cause as did his own bishops. His protests and requests were left unresolved.

However, if the Pope needed the King of France to fight the heresy, he was extremely occupied by the two wars which he carried out on the one hand against the King of England, John, brother of Richard the Lionheart and brother of Henry II and Aliénort of Aquitaine, and on the other hand, with Othon, Emperor of Brunswick from Germany.

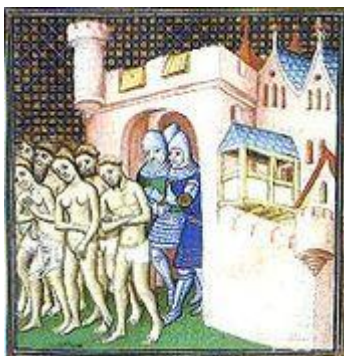


Figure 2: The Cathars expelled from Carcassonne, 1209

## 2. The Armed Crusade 1209-1229

It was necessary to await two major events so that the things moved towards the Crusade: the assassination of Pierre de Castelnau in 1208 (financed by Raymond VI, Count of Toulouse - although that was never proven) and the decision of the Pope to put in play the grounds of the heretics and accessory to heresy.

The principle was simple: a lord convicted by the Catholic Church of complicity in heresy or, more seriously still of heresy, who became the target of a lord who, having made him captive or having killed him could, with the blessing of Rome, seize all his land and goods.

It is to be noticed that Simon de Montfort, a great destroyer of Cathars and organizer of multiple burnings at the stake, saw his goods increased considerably from this 'setting in prey of the property'. Moreover, any lord or soldier taking part in the Crusade, were themselves protected, their families and goods by the church and received a discharge from the Church.

This setting in prey of the property did not have any effect in the country of Oc. Initially, because the Occitan lords did not wish to seize the goods of their neighbours in this way when there was not a man who did not have a Cathar mother, a brother or a sister. This explains why, for 10 years, the

invectives from Innocent III did not have any response from the Occitans. It was the assassination of Pierre de Castelnau and a new correspondence of the Pope with Philippe Auguste that finally pushed the lords of France (to the north of the country of Oc) to be interested in the Crusade preached for a decade by the Holy See. The result of this war (1209 - 1229) is doubtful however, following which, Catharism became empowered.

In 1209, through disillusionment (and politico-geographical interests), Philippe Auguste reached the Pope's conclusions after financial negotiations. He raised the Host ('L'Ost'), which required each vassal to be placed at the disposal of its suzerain with men-at-arms 40 days' duration.

### **The surrender of Raymond VI**

Before this time, Raymond VI, Count of Toulouse, recognised the real threat of Crusade and setting in prey of his property. As a pacifist-enthusiast who tolerated the Cathars in his lands (he was excommunicated inter alia by Pierre de Castelnau), thus saw himself constrained to subject himself to the requirements of the Pope.

Having been the subject of multiple charges by Arnaud Amaury and, being highly suspected of having financed the assassination of Pierre de Castelnau (January 14, 1208), he was to go to Saint-Gille or he would be judged and condemned by a court that wanted, above all, to make an example to mark the Occitans' spirits.

He was to lend oath to Pope Innocent III and to the Catholic faith, by taking the Cross. Raymond VI was obliged to join the Crusade. His participation was only symbolic as he took only minimal passive part in the actions undertaken against Occitans.

### **The capture of Béziers and Carcassonne**

Raymond VI's nephew, Raymond Roger Trencavel, Viscount of Carcassonne, Narbonne, Albi and Béziers, obvious guardian of Cathars, did not have the authorization to join his uncle to vindicate himself from the Cross. Arnaud Amaury indeed refused to receive him: to have released the Host that had been requested for so long, to deny them their first spoils and to release at full speed an army of frustrated mercenaries, would have had disastrous consequences. Moreover, the papal legate made a point of showing any power that the Crusade in Oc that this was only an example.

Trencavel thus took refuge in his strengthened city of Béziers, which he put in defence. However, he did not remain there in spite of his will to fight to the last breath and returned to Carcassonne.

Having refused to deliver the heretics, the Host made siege of Béziers. On 22 July 1209, some of the defenders left their walls through incredible imprudence, causing the Crusaders, mercenaries to make a headlong dash for the gates in such haste, that the Biterrois did not have time to turn around in their enclosure and to close the gates. The mercenaries and the Crusaders invested the city and began sacking it and the massacre of approximately 20,000 inhabitants.

At that time, it was considered normal to massacre all the occupants of a city that dared to resist a siege. Men, women, children and priests had their throats cut in the streets and the churches without religious distinction, both Catholic and Cathar. When one crusader asked Arnaud Amaury, Abbé of Cîteaux and leader of the Crusade how to recognise the Catholics from the Cathars, he replied: "Kill them all because the Lord will recognise His own."

When Béziers had fallen, the setting in prey of lands was carried out. The Duke of Burgundy and the Count of Nevers refused the Trencavel lands, proposed by Arnaud Amaury. It was put to the vote which lord would take possession of the lands. A knight, who had hitherto been unknown but having shown an unquestionable courage throughout the operation was elected: Simon de Montfort.

The Crusade then went on towards Carcassonne. The siege of the city lasted from 1 to 15 August, 1209. After the capture of the two boroughs (Sant-Vicens and Sant-Miquel) attached to the city, Pedro II, King of Aragon, brother of Raymond VI and uncle of Trencavel, proposed his services as mediator on 5 and 6 August. The Viscount considered the terms of the Crusaders to be unacceptable and Pedro II completed his mission and returned from Carcassonne to Aragon.

Faced with an intolerable situation after the Crusaders captured the river Aude because of the lack of water, a compromise was reached. Trencavel surrendered to the Crusaders and the inhabitants of Carcassonne were forced to give up the city and their goods at once. The goal for the Crusaders being not to risk the destruction of the spoils of the city as had been made by the sacking and fire of Béziers.

Trencavel was thrown into a dungeon of its own city within the Pinte tower and there, officially, died of dysentery on 10 November, 1209. However, many believed that he was in fact assassinated by Simon de Montfort. Trencavel, because of his youth (24 years) and his heroic resistance faced with Crusader armies, even represented at the bottom of his cell, a symbol for resistance to the invaders.



Figure 3: Simon IV of Montfort

### 3. Summer - autumn 1209: Lauragais, Ariège and Tarn

In six weeks, Simon of Monfort carried the Crusade to the ends the Aude, Ariège and the Tarn rivers. After the defeat of Trencavel, Raymond Roger of Foix went to Simon of Monfort to propose a truce to him.

The lords of Castres opened their doors to the French Army. In both cases, de Montfort required hostages in good faith, of whom Aimery, youngest son of Raymond Roger, was one. Castres was the very first place to stake the Cathars. A parfait and a believer were taken prisoner, judged and condemned to the stake. The stake was figured into a cross and was not an apostolic stake. Simon de Montfort faced papal decrees on the matter and the lawsuit was not held in an ecclesiastical manner.

The three castles of Pierre Roger, in Cabaret, were in time the target of the Crusaders but, perched on peaks in the steep slopes, Monfort reconsidered after a first unfruitful attack. Vital, Abbé of Saint-Antonin and co-lord of the town of Pamiers with the Count of Foix, offered Monfort to divide the co-lordship with him instead of Raymond Roger in order to shelter Raymond Roger from the exactions of the Crusade. Monfort was very pleased to be able to position a garrison on the Foix – Toulouse axis and accepted the Abbé's proposal. In this way, he benefited from it by the occupation of Mirepoix, which he gave to his faithful lieutenant, Guy de Lévis. On the return journey towards Fanjeaux, the Crusade took the town of Saverdun.

Hardly being reinstated in Fanjeaux, Monfort set out again this time towards Lombers between Albi and Toulouse to take possession of it, the lords of the city having offered it to him. In fact, it was given to him in ambush but it escaped little from the ambush. The knights, fearing terrible reprisals, hastened to subject and to pay homage to him.

Nothing more remained but for him but to occupy Albi, the last fortified town of old Viscount Trencavel. The city was directed by a bishop, who gave him the keys of the city without coming to blows. The bad season for any conqueror came then and, the Host was penned up in Fanjeaux for the winter. It is doubtless that in this period, seeing his troops decreasing, Simon de Montfort

determined to assassinate the Trencavel Viscount at the bottom of his pit in order to kill the very tentative embryo of rebellion.

### **1210: Return to the Aude**

During the winter of 1209, the first insurrections appeared. Guiraud de Pepieux, knight of a small stronghold fief of Minerve occupied the castle of Puisserguier for an obscure reason of family revenge, in the absence of Simon de Montfort. Two Crusader knights were held captive, had their eyes pushed out, their ears, nose and upper lips cut and were thrown out naked on the road to Carcassonne. It was then the turn of Alaric to raise itself. Finally, a troop of Crusaders fell into an ambush close to Cabaret and was decimated.

Some suggest that these three revolts say much about the safety of the lands conquered in 1209. The guerrillas organized themselves for a more general rising. The knights and the inhabitants of Castres, Lombers and Montreal took the cities again while saving the Crusader occupants.

In the final stages of 1209, these were the 40 places which were lost for the Crusade and Simon de Montfort. They did not remain with him any more, whereas Béziers, Carcassonne, Pamiers, Albi, Saverdun, Limoux, Saissac and Fanjeaux did.

In spring 1210, with reinforcements, Monfort took the majority of these cities again; of which Bram was the subject of a fast siege of hardly three days because of the lack of natural defences. Simon de Montfort remembered the torture victims of Puisserguier and made a hundred inhabitants undergo the same fate.

Pedro II, King of Aragon and Suzerain of the county of Foix, took the initiative of organising a conference joining together Simon de Montfort, Raymond VI, Raymond Roger de Foix and Pedro II in Pamiers in order to prevent Foix undergoing the same fate as Carcassonne in August 1209. This conference was a failure and Monfort only went to face the Count of Foix in front of the gates of his castle.

A few months later, again on the initiative of Pedro II, a truce was agreed between the Host and Raymond Roger. It was indeed important that de Montfort did not push the King of Aragon to enter the war against the Host with the aim of defending the lands on which he exerted a right of Suzerainty. Pedro II by no means desired War as long as Toulouse was not threatened.

In June 1210, the Crusade moved towards Minerve which was situated within strong natural defences, making it difficult to attack. Four catapults were installed by de Montfort to ruin the castle. After five weeks of siege, because of the summer heat of Causse and the increasing difficulties of water supply, Guillaume de Minerve capitulated without condition. At the bottom of a ravine de Montfort saw 140 heretics thrown into the flames. The fall of this high perch caused many good knights to be surrendered without a fight.

Certain places conquered in 1209, rose up during winter of the same year and were subdued again during the summer 1210. Termes was amongst these. They prepared the machines of war to be sent in Carcassonne when, warned of the intentions of de Montfort, Pierre Roger de Cabaret brought together approximately 300 men in an expedition of destruction. Alerted the Crusaders left the city and after some engagements succeeded in safeguarding the machines, which were dispatched to de Montfort in carriages drawn by mules and oxen under heavily armed escort. The siege of Termes lasted four months. Its natural defences made the place practically impregnable. The engagements lasted days and days, weeks and weeks.

The Hosts took over from other Hosts; moreover, Raymond of Termes could count on the ceaseless attacks of Pierre Roger de Cabaret who did not cease to badger the convoys of reinforcements and supplies of the Crusaders.

Finally, the besieged asked to negotiate and proposed their surrender for the following day. But, during the night, a terrifying storm made it possible to fill the cisterns of the castle. The surrender was thus cancelled. Unfortunately, the water of the cisterns was polluted by the carcasses of animals that had died. Thrown into a panic, the defenders escaped and gave up the place to the Crusaders who seriously started to doubt the end of the siege. Raymond de Termes was imprisoned and died in a tower in Carcassonne three years later. The fall of Termes had an enormous repercussion on the area, as had the fall of Minerve, and on the resistance, which broke down.

Simon de Montfort turned towards Castres and Lombers then which, having been handed over spontaneously in 1209 rebelled for a few months and were suddenly given up during the summer of 1210 again.



Figure 4: The Battle of Montgey, 1211

#### 4. 1211: Return to the Tarn

The Crusade moved this time towards Lavaur, regarded as being the capital of the heresy within a few miles of Toulouse. In the spring of 1211, the siege of the city began. Raymond VI, Count of Toulouse and co-lord of Lavaur since 1203, came to the rescue while beginning negotiations with the Crusaders in order to avoid fighting, as was his practice. Each with its opposite, Raymond IV's brother, Raymond Roger, Count of Foix and his son, Bernard Roger, set an ambush close to the town of Montgey for a column of German Crusaders and exterminated them until the last.

The Toulousains, extremely divided on the subject of heresy, formed two militias: the white brotherhood under the orders of Foulques, bishop of Toulouse, and the black brotherhood, under the Count of Toulouse. It was the former that sent 6,000 men to Lavaur to support Simon de Montfort. Believing that it was a prompt reinforcement from Toulouse, the defenders realised their mistake and lost hope. The city fell to the hands of Simon de Montfort on 3 May, 1211.

The choice of Lavaur was not random. The aim of the capture of the town, very near to the city of Raymond VI, was to force him to drop his weapons in front of the Host. Lavaur was an important refuge for parfaits and parfaites. A certain number of Cathars refugees in the towns of Cabaret and Roquefort had enlarged their ranks. It was not less than 400 heretics who were thrown in what was certainly the largest of pyres in the war against the heresy. Aimery of Montreal, ardent defender of the town was hung then the throats of about 80 knights were cut.

#### Summer 1211: the first siege of Toulouse

De Montgiscard and the Crusaders had bivouacked and were transported towards Toulouse by keeping to the right bank of the river Hers and then to the bridge of Montandran.

Raymond VI, accompanied by the Counts of Foix and Comminges hurried at the head of an army of 500 knights towards what is today the aerodrome of Lasbordes and destroyed the bridge of Montandran. The Crusaders ended up crossing the river downstream and, at the end of heavy combat which cost the lives of nearly 400 men, Simon de Montfort gained the victory. He was no closer than one mile of the walls of Toulouse.

On June 17, 1211, the Crusaders planted their tents facing the current Saint-Sernin district. The first attack was launched by the Counts of Bar and Chalon on the ramparts that joined at the time what is today le Grand Rond and la Place Wilson more precisely, to the immediate surroundings of the current district of Colombette.

The ramparts of the city were roughcast, of around fifty towers and were pierced by a dozen doors. They were also protected by ditches whose water was collected from the Garonne, on the level from the current Pont Saint-Michel. To the outside of these ramparts, a band of waste ground ran even, bordered by a palisade and a second ditch. Any foot soldier saw he would be discovered there at once.

The same principle taken by every fortified city of the time was to approach the ramparts by filling the ditches with all kinds of materials, besieging them protected by vast boiled-leather shields. For that, trees, vines, plantations and fields were all devastated to fill these ditches. The Crusaders fashioned anything of stone then with two blows of this kind, they weakened the rural economy of the city. The first counter attack was carried out by the Count of Foix. All camps were confused, 200 died and 1,000 wounded by that soldier.

By the side of the Count de Foix and de Comminges was a renowned knight, Hugues d'Alfaro who gave his name to a street of Toulouse, the rue Raymond d'Alfaro which was transformed into rue Del Farao and ends in rue Pharaon. The siege had lasted for 10 days when Hugues d'Alfaro wanted to try a large attack with his brother.

Raymond VI opposed it, as always accustomed to timidity as regards military action. Hugues d'Alfaro ignored him and pounced on the Host in the hour after lunch. Simon de Montfort organised counter attacks but the evil was done and, the Toulousains returned to their walls with spoils and captive Occitans released from the Crusaders. A number of Crusader soldiers and horses were killed.

On 27 June, a second sortie of Hugues d'Alfaro did great damage in the Crusader ranks. It was certainly one of the reasons that pushed Simon de Montfort to give up the siege of the city keep.

For the first time, the French Army came up against a force as strong as itself. The forces implored Raymond VI, the Counts of Foix and Comminges and the Toulousains, who had disregarded their last conflict, that they had been right to undertake the campaign.

To that were added supply difficulties for the Crusaders, which were exacerbated by their own actions when they had devastated the neighbouring countryside to fill the ditches of the city. It was necessary for them to go further and further to seek their supplies, which were regularly intercepted by the Toulousains. On 29 June, Simon de Montfort decided to beat a retreat while leaving the wounded, sick and armour on the battle field.

### **Winter 1211 - Spring 1212: The Albigensian, Quercy, the Resident of Agen**

De Montfort went with his Albigensian infantry to the surprise victory of the Occitans at Castelnaudary. With unexpected reinforcements and a lenient winter, the Crusade did not observe the usual winter truce. Thus the Crusaders took Palmarède, Touelles, Cahuzac and others. Victorious sieges were held in Saint-Marcel and Raymond VI was repelled with his troop from his defeat of Castelnaudary then at Hautpoul.

The Lauragais lands were conquered again after the Albigensian campaign. In Puy-laurens, Raymond VI faced a strong Crusader army reinforced by troops arrived from the valley of the Rhine, Westphalia, Saxony and Frise. This army was estimated in an exaggerated way at 30,000 men, and Raymond VI preferred to give up the city like his castle without fighting. From here, it was the turn

of the Tarnais lands along the Tarn valley and the towns of Rabastens, Montégut, Gaillac fell from what could be described as a ‘military walk’.

Low Quercy and Agen were to undergo the same fate. Montauban, Castelsarrasin and Mossiac were in the hands of Raymond VI. The Bishop of Agen asked for the intervention of Simon de Montfort, who preferred to circumvent these cities by going to the north.

He conquered Montégut and camped in front of the town of Penne d’Agenaise, a city extremely well defended by Hugues d’Alfaro, son-in-law of the Count of Toulouse and frightening adversary of the Crusaders. He would have preferred to evacuate the inhabitants of the city to save food and water, instead installing 400 mercenaries. The battle was of artillery – stones answering stones. Hugues d’Alfaro made several sorties to try to set fire to the Crusader catapults but each time came up against a defence as determined as his own. The siege lasted several weeks before Simon de Montfort anticipated the end of some forty of his reinforcements and asked his brother, Guy, to join him with a host newly arrived at Carcassonne. With Simon in the West and Guy in the East, the castle was quickly the target of convergent artillery fire. Despite the crossfire, the Crusaders made little progress and Monfort built a giant catapult. On 25 July, the Crusader army, which had been reduced recently because of the end of their period of service and lacking food and water in the heat of a torrid summer, capitulated after eight weeks of resistance by Hugues d’Alfaro.

Simon de Montfort turned towards Toulouse and halted in front of Mossiac on 14 August. Mossiac, to the north of Toulouse was a strategic place for the defence of the city. Reinforcements from the son of the Count of Foix and 300 Toulousains were dispatched there the day before. The city was defended by strong walls. A cat was built for the occasion. A cat was a kind of cover under which the Crusaders could fill the ditch with earth, faggots, straw, corn, etc. The goal was to fill the ditch and then cause the ramparts to fall. For that, they would dig a tunnel under the wall which was supported by wooden beams, called a sap. Once the tunnelling was beneath the walls of the city, the tunnel was filled with straw and wood and set on fire. The fire would weaken the tunnel supports and cause the tunnel to collapse, taking the foundations of the wall with it. The defenders of Mossiac tried to set fire to the cat and, at the time of these counter attacks, Monfort was wounded and narrowly missed being captured.

The following day, the Crusaders attacked all the defences and pushed the defenders to negotiate their surrender. The price of their defeat was to hand over to de Montfort the 300 Toulousains that had come to help defend the town. None were spared. In spite of the promises of de Montfort to allow surrender, the monastery was never the less plundered by the Crusaders.



Figure 5: Bull of Innocent III

## 5. September 1212: Raymond VI threatened

After having lost his lands in Lauragais, Quercy, Agen and Comminges and, feeling more and more threatened, Raymond VI asked for council from his brother-in-law, Pedro II, King of Aragon.

Before the first siege of Toulouse in 1211, he had already made a show of homage. This put the country under protection of Pedro II, his new suzerain.

In 1209, following the defeat of Raymond Roger Trencavel and with the capture of Carcassonne, Pedro II had refused the homage of de Montfort for a long time. It was normal for a person in de Montfort’s position to pay homage to his suzerain, who protected the lands, but Pedro II refused to

accept him in place of his old vassal, Trencavel.

After much hesitation and especially the insistence of Pope Innocent III, to whom the king was even a vassal, he agreed to accept the homage of the leader of the Crusaders on the express condition that Simon de Montfort would not continue the Crusade in other lands where Pedro II was suzerain to the north of the Pyrenees, including the country of Foix. Not only had de Montfort damaged his lands but also those of Bernard IV of Comminges and Leon of Béam, who also were both vassals of Pedro II.

The risk was great for Pedro II as he would be stripped of his possessions over the Pyrenees. Moreover, nothing indicated that Monfort would have made him homage for these new conquests, as for Carcassonne. It seems more than probable that his intention would have been to integrate these lands into the French nobility by putting them under the protection of Philippe Auguste.

### **January 1213: Oaths of Toulouse**

Pedro II of Aragon decided to take the position as mediator between Occitans and the Roman church. He proposed to Innocent III to take the Toulousain lands under his protection and to undertake the orthodox management of the city.

Raymond VI was to make penitence in either the Holy Land or Spain and the king committed himself to providing a Catholic education for his heir Raymond VII, who was not yet touched by the 'heresy'.

This did not account for Simon de Montfort and especially the legate, Arnaud Amaury, supreme head of the Crusade. Such a Spanish suzerainty on the Occitans' lands then cut them off and deprived them of their objective, which was the capture of the Toulousain lands.

Hitherto, the legate had shown a great deal of imagination in preventing the Count from defending himself on the facts from the allegations against him for the last three years. These allegations included his implication in the assassination of Pierre de Castelnau and his protection of the heretics. As long as Raymond VI could not clear himself, the crusade had a legal reason to continue and the two leaders were still able to hope to put their hands on the Occitans' lands.

The legates could only oppose Pedro II's proposals to end the conflict and not to receive his proposal for an Occitan protectorate. As a result of the legates' foreseeable position, the King of Aragon faced the facts on 27 January, 1213 and the lands of Toulouse, Foix, Comminges and the Viscount of Béam were given, *ipso facto*, to the protection of Pedro II. Raymond VI, Count of Toulouse, Raymond Roger, Count of Foix, Bernard IV, Count of Comminges and Gaston, Viscount of Béam, gave homage to their new suzerain.

### **May 1213: The surrounding of the city**

Pedro II, having been rebuffed by the Council of Lavaur and Innocent III for his proposal for a protectorate of the lands of the Count, the Crusade began again with fervour, this time in the direction of Muret, twelve miles south of Toulouse.

Simon de Montfort was too weak to consider a renewed siege of Toulouse and decided to weaken the city by encircling it and proceeding to systematically destroy its harvests, vines and fruit trees, thus putting in danger the survival of the Toulousains. In spite of some sorties of Toulousain mercenaries, Raymond VI lost 17 strongholds including Pujol, a small fortified town close to Sante Foix d'Egrefeuille.

As the harvest arrived in the areas not yet destroyed by the Crusaders and unable to take in the corn because of the close proximity of the French at Pujol, Raymond, Count of Comminges and the son

of the Count of Foix took their troops, reinforced by the Toulousain militia and some mercenaries into the walls of the town. The town was all the more quickly taken as it came to be heard – both the defenders and the besiegers – that de Montfort and other Crusaders were on their way to Pujol. The defenders were massacred either on the spot or later in the streets of Toulouse by the exalted population. This Occitan victory had a very particular importance as it was the first victory they had since Montgey in 1211.

The Crusaders were reduced by the departure of approximately forty knights. Having heard rumours of the preparations of Pedro II, the leaders of the Crusade, Simon de Montfort and Arnaud Amaury, chose to negotiate with the King of Aragon. Pedro II was not impressed by the decision of the Council of Lavaur and was prepared to enter the war against the Host. The negotiations were short and the Aragonese army crossed the Pyrenees with weapons and supplies.



Figure 6: Simon IV de Montfort

## 6. September 1213: the battle of Muret

On 10 September, the troops of Toulouse, Comminges and Foix met with those of Pedro II, who arrived the day before, at the gates of Muret.

The 30 Crusader knights, who then occupied the city, faced the impressive army that had camped in a neighbouring plain, dispatched a message to de Montfort, who set out at once from Fanjeaux.

The forces of Pedro II were in the West of the Garonne. De Montfort coming from the east was able to cross the river and to enter the city without fighting. The trap was thus set by the King of Aragon. It was evidently much simpler to concentrate the enemy in a place easy to besiege.

It is difficult to assess the numbers of the forces involved. However, it is coherent to count de Montfort's forces at 1,000 cavalry and infantrymen on the one hand and between 2,000 and 4,000 knights and 2,000 infantrymen on the Aragonese and Occitan side.

On 12 September, after mass, Pedro II convened his great council with the Occitan Counts. Two strategies clashed at the council. Raymond VI, always timid in the techniques of war, would have been satisfied with a siege. Michel de Luesca, a knight of Pedro II preferred instead the panache of a hoard of heavy cavalry in open country as corresponding more closely to the rank and prestige of the King of Aragon.

It was also the will of Simon de Montfort to fight in open ground. Indeed, to attack the enemy in a maze of carriages and tents of the Occitan camp proved to be a true trap for his heavily armed cavalry. De Montfort wanted to reproduce the strategy that he had used in Castelnaudary, a comparable situation because of his numerical inferiority. The two camps thus chose the provocation of its enemy to attract it into open ground. The Toulousain forces simulated an attack on the main gate in order to cause the French Crusaders to exit the city. A short time thereafter the French left by a concealed door, thus simulating their escape and causing the Occitans to pursue the French who appeared to be attempting to escape.

The Crusaders attacked the first squadron of the Count of Foix, supported by the second squadron of the King of Aragon, who showed audacity by risking his position close to the line of attack. Having noticed the royal banner, the Crusaders took Pedro II for a target. The King was quickly

struck and died of the blow. Seeing their king on the ground, it was a complete rout of the Aragonese and Occitan ranks. During the cavalry battle the Toulousain militia were rushed towards Muret, benefiting from few remaining forces to invade the city. The defence made short work of them.

The short confrontation of the two knighthoods had turned and de Montfort divided his troops. The first body gave chase to the Aragonese cavalry and the Occitans in rout. The second force turned around and took the militia. In both cases, the only safety for the allied forces was to cross the river, either by swimming or on the few boats that were available. The Occitan troops were not experienced or professional and, in spite of their numbers, the majority were either put to the sword or drowned in the Garonne. It is estimated that about 20,000 Aragonese and Occitans perished in the battle of Muret.

An important ossuary is located at the place, called 'le Petit Jofréry' on the left bank of the Garonne, within 2kms northeast of the city.

### **1214: After Muret**

After such a defeat, Raymond VI was extremely isolated. Having always preferred political solutions to military, he decided to save what could still be his. He was unable to count on the support of the successor to Pierre II and even less on Philippe Auguste, who had been dispossessed of his suzerainty on the lands of the Count by the Oaths of 27 January. Raymond VI therefore turned to England for support. On 15 December, he was in London with his son, who was also a nephew of John the Usurper, King of England.

During this time, on the recommendations of the Pope, de Montfort did not attempt to take Toulouse. Pope Innocent III did not wish to see the total forfeiture of the Count but simply to see his conforming to the Papal will.

The Crusaders turned instead to the lands of the Count of Foix to carry the devastation there again. At the end of 1213 and the beginning of 1214, to face the rebellion of the Marquis de Provence, a stronghold of Raymond, de Montfort moved into the area in revolt and continued as far as Burgundy, where he negotiated the marriage of his son, Amaury, with the daughter of the Prince of Burgundy.

On 17 February, 1214, Baudouin, half-brother of Raymond VI, was captured and imprisoned in the castle of Montauban having spent an hour in the camp of the Crusaders. Having fought at Muret against his half-brother, his judgement was a simple formality and he was hung on a walnut tree outside the city.

It could be assumed that the defeat at Muret would have destabilised or destroyed the Occitan resistance. Quite to the contrary, many cities subjected to de Montfort were raised in rebellion and with them many small boroughs which had been subjected only to constraint and force. The hour of revolution had not arrived yet for lack of a leader, but the first steps were there while waiting for the advent of its leader, Raymond VII the Younger. Narbonne was certainly one of the most rebellious cities at this point, causing de Montfort to attack several of its castles.



Figure 7: Innocent III

## 7. January 1214: the mission of Pierre de Bénévent

On 17 January, 1214, Innocent III named Pierre de Bénévent as legate of the Crusade, having all rights. He did so while omitting to give reasons to either de Montfort or Arnaud Amaury, as the Pope had been wary for some time of the excesses of the two leaders of the Crusade, who had exceeded their prerogatives.

The role of the legate was to reconcile Muret with the Church and to inquire into the possible arbitrary dispossession of Raymond VI for the Viscount of Nîmes. The Counts of Foix and Comminges asked for their reconciliation and obtained it with the help of the handing-over of castles and hostages as guarantee. Pierre de Bénévent took the road to Toulouse and met seven consuls of Toulouse in Castelnaudary who had gone to meet him to obtain the reconciliation of the city. This was arranged for 25 April in Narbonne. For the first time, the Toulousain consuls had disunited themselves from the noble family. Finally, the Count himself subjected and lent oath to the Roman Church.

### Spring and summer 1214: Quercy, Agen, Perrigord and Rouergue

After having married his son with Béatrice of Viennese in Carcassonne, de Montfort went again to Agen, more precisely in Montpezat, which had rebelled. Then, it was the turn of Marmande and Casseneuil; these cities had concentrated local resistance. The siege of Casseneuil lasted more than seven weeks.

Despite the firing of catapults for days and nights, the capture of the city was not easy to achieve. A ditch of 25 meters breadth and 15 meters deep appeared to be an insuperable obstacle. The Crusaders tried to throw a bridge over the ditch: the first attempt fell inside when it was thrown over, the second proved to be too short. A third option was to fill it. The attackers then built a travelling tower with shelters, from which some men could easily throw earth and branches into the ditch. The tower was provided on its top with tanks of water making it possible to prevent any fire catching from the arrows of the defending archers. They tried at the time of a sortie to burn the tower but it did not work. In the face of the imminent attack – the tower was now very close to the walls – the defenders escaped and fled. The city was burned to the ground and the remaining inhabitants were either burned or put to the sword. After this, de Montfort ordered the complete destruction of the ramparts.

On 18 April, the case was heard. The bloody end of Casseneuil had been heard throughout the countryside and a number of places were taken again by de Montfort without him having to fight a battle because of the lack of defenders: Domme, Castelnaud and Beynac. Other places subjected themselves to the approach of the Crusaders: Capdenac, Figeac, Rodez, Cahors and Mende. The knights of the Cross had only one final aim, the restitution of places already conquered but which had the annoying tendency to rebel as soon as de Montfort left again.

### 1215: the Council of Montpellier

The issue at the Council of Montpellier was to decide action to be taken by the Crusade after the oaths of Narbonne. Foulque, Bishop of Toulouse returned in his city and took his quarters in the Narbonnese castle; the remainder for the Count's family, knights and sergeants.

The Count thus moved to the home of a friend, David de Rouaix, former consul, before probably residing with the Count of Foix, his son Raymond VII having moved to the court of his uncle, John the Usurper, King of England. To the 120 hostages given in good faith at the Oaths of Narbonne,

the 12 consuls of the city were added. A military truce was then observed by both de Montfort and Raymond VI awaiting the decision of the Pope as for the work of the Council of Montpellier.

### **1215: The Crusade of Prince Louis**

During March 1215, the elder son of Philippe Auguste finally obtained his Crusade, which he had deferred, on the insistence of his father, two years earlier. During this time, Philippe Auguste was extremely occupied with warfare against England and had asserted his lack of means in order to postpone his participation in a Crusade which he had tolerated but had never legitimated. Now, having overcome the English army, he finally decided to have interest in the Albigensian lands.

Indeed, de Montfort, vassal of the Holy See had conquered a number of lands which were likely to escape from the suzerainty of the King of France. It was also an issue, if not to put an end to the interference of the Holy See on his royal lands to at least control it. De Montfort saw as a bad omen the arrival of Prince Louis of France, who arrived after the battle.

Following the revolt of Narbonne in 1212 and with the abdication of Raymond VI in the same city, the walls of these two cities were to be demolished. In spite of the vehement protest of Arnaud Amaury, he was proclaimed Duke of Narbonne against the will of Innocent III. After de Montfort took possession of the castle of Foix, as authorised at the oath of Narbonne, the leader of the Crusade and Prince Louis took the road to Toulouse.

The entry of de Montfort into the city keep was a real trauma for Toulousains, who, after six years of resistance were seen at the mercy of their worst enemy. De Montfort required that the walls of the city be demolished, the fortified houses be raised to their foundations and that the towers be brought down. Only the Narbonnese castle escaped from the destruction. The forty days passed and Prince Louis left again for Paris. It is quite strange, this participation in the Crusade of the son of the King, who had so much to fear and had, in the end, been successful in giving little to the military or political planning of the Crusade.



Figure 8: Homage of de Montfort to the King of France

## **8. November 1215: Lateran IV**

On 1 November, 1215, the 12th ecumenical council in history opened, which was certainly to be the major work of Pope Innocent III, who died eight months later. This council was to decide fate of the Albigensian lands.

The plenary assemblies of what will be remembered as Lateran IV were attended by 412 bishops and archbishops, 800 abbots and priors, a thousand clerks and lay people and princes and barons. All the monks of the Albigensian Crusade were present, Arnaud Amaury at the head.

The Counts of Toulouse and Foix could not hope for the monks to plead their cause in front of Foulques, the Bishop of Toulouse, Arnaud Amaury and Guy de Vaux Cernay. The debates which began on 14 November were little more than storms between the partisans and victims of Crusade on Occitan land.

In 1214, because of his act of submission, Raymond VI had transmitted all his goods to his son, Raymond VII. He beseeched mercy for him with the hope that justice would be returned to his son. He saw this as necessary for the survival of the Occitan dynasty. With the Council, he was humble but not a coward. He did not even assert anything for himself, but claimed for his son the goods and possessions of his ancestors.

Raymond VII, small son of the sister of the King of France, Louis VII, son of Jeanne, her the same daughter of the King of England, Henry II and heir to the glorious lineage of Saint Gilles who had

distinguished themselves in the Crusades in the Holy Land made great effect on the Pope. To such a degree that the Pope declared that Raymond the Younger, at 19 years old was a good Catholic and that nothing justified him to lose his lands. It was then enacted that Saint Siege would commend to Simon de Montfort to manage his goods well.

The Count of Foix pleaded his cause and asked that the castle given to the hands of the Church in pledge of his goodwill at the time of the Council of Narbonne be returned to him. Lastly, Raymond de Roquefeuille took the defence of the young Trencavel aged 8 years, son of the Viscount of Béziers and Carcassonne, which was overcome in 1209 at the time of the capture of the city by the Host.

The procedure of the council required the Pope to hold the opinion of a two thirds majority of the plenary. Therefore, he brought together the prelates in private.

Eventually, Innocent III formulated his dissension clearly and started a general outcry when he ordered the restitution of the goods of Raymond the Younger. Faced with the 300 prelates disgusted to see Simon de Montfort despoiled of his rights to the Toulousain lands, Innocent III was constantly supported by the archdeacon of Lyon, who reminded the assembly that his father had taken the cross in penitence and that public opinion would not accept the son of the Count being dispossessed of his family heritage.

The Pope then tried to carry the debate on another point, that of the general dissatisfaction with many Catholics to de Montfort and the fact that his military campaigns did not always tend to differentiate between good Catholics and heretics when it did not suit his own interests. It was indeed in public knowledge that many Occitans had their goods confiscated by the Crusade and that the line between the Holy action of the Church and the personal interest of de Montfort shifted.

There too, he was confronted with the amazement of the prelates who asked that the Head of the Church should be in no manner worried by charges without base. Finally, exhausted and with an end of the argument, Innocent III beat a retreat and left in de Montfort's possession the guardianship of the heritage of Raymond VII. At this point, the representative of the King of England intervened, who specified that it was out of the question to deprive Raymond his heritage, which came to him in right from the line of his mother, Jeanne, the sister of John the Usurper.

On 30 November, the sentence of the Council fell: Raymond VI was definitely deprived of his lands and Jeanne could preserve her rights which were managed according to the orders of the Church. De Montfort was seen giving to her all the lands conquered as well as the towns of Toulouse and Montauban. The remainder of the country not yet conquered by the Crusade would then be managed by the mandate of the Church and given to the guardianship of people able to defend the interests of Peace and the Faith in order to provide Raymond the Younger when he reached an adequate age. Lastly, the castle of the Count of Foix remained under the appropriation of the Church while awaiting further investigation.

Simon de Montfort became the new Count of Toulouse in place of Raymond VI, who was entirely deposed of his rights and condemned to exile. All the efforts of Pope Innocent III had been useless to stop the inexorable mechanism which he had even elaborated and had started to prevent the Crusade from arriving at its more extreme consequences. He managed all the same to obtain for the deposed Count decent incomes and to safeguard the goods and rights of his wife.



Figure 9: Simon de Montfort

## 9. After Lateran IV

At the end of February 1216, Simon de Montfort became the new Count of Toulouse following Lateran IV and he was even granted the title of Duke of Narbonne, which was presented at the doors of Toulouse in order to seize the power officially there.

Two ceremonies were held to ratify the taking of this title on 7 and 8 March, within the Narbonnese castle in the presence of the Bishop of Toulouse, Foulques, the archbishop d'Embrun and several other prelates. The continued dismantling of the last fortifications of the city followed.

In August 1216, de Montfort went to Pont de l'Arche in the Eure to pay homage for his new grounds to the King of France, Philippe Auguste who accepted him with feasts. His triumph was complete in spite of the four fields which he always coveted and over which he was driven to despair to have within reach the Marquis of Provence, the stronghold of the Counts of Toulouse, the counties of Foix, Comminges and Béarn.

### 1216 - 1224: Reconquista

The sentence of the Council of Lateran IV given, Raymond VI had immediately left Rome and was joined by his son one month later. The first steps of the Occitan re-conquest appeared at the time of the insurrection of the Marseillais against the Church whose sanctuaries were taken by storm. Raymond VI and his son settled in a low city when an emissary came to inform them that their presence was awaited in Orange. They thus entered the city triumphantly the following day. The Provençal insurrection had just begun.

On 11 May, 1216, Raymond the Younger sent a message to the consuls of Agen to order the raising of an army, opening a second front with the Crusaders. His father in addition went to the Pyrenees to seek assistance from the court of Aragon.

### The Siege of Beaucaire

Beaucaire was the headquarters of the Crusade for all the Eastern part of the conquered country. Because of this, it was a symbolic fortified town for the Occitan army to capture.

Raymond VII presented himself with his army at the gates of the city, whose keys were given to him by the nobility. The Crusaders that occupied the city, too few for an arranged battle, waited for the Occitans to finish penetrating into the city to surround their tower. Taken in part by the inhabitants who were won over to the Toulousain cause, they were constrained by the Occitan attacks and forced to beat a retreat. They were caught and locked up in the castle. Raymond VII organized a blockade and set up walls around the city.

On 5 June, 1216, Guy de Montfort, alerted by the perilous situation of his soldiers arrived under the walls of the city, besieging the Occitans who were now the defenders of the city... He was joined the following day by his brother, Simon. The ensuing battle was of vital importance for the continuation of the Reconquista. If Beaucaire was taken again and Raymond VII became a prisoner, that would be the end of the Provençal rebellion. On the other hand, a failure of the French was likely to be fatal for the Crusaders: the movement of revolt would be amplified. The whole country would be devoted to the Toulousains, they would not miss out on supplies, or the Crusaders would find it increasingly difficult to find supplies. The siege missed a chance in June and July. Simon de Montfort was held in failure for been able only to observe the extent of the victory Raymond VII took, the young leader who missed the cruelly against the Occitans since 1209.

At the beginning of August, in despair, de Montfort launched an attack which was stopped dead. Worse still, the Toulousains launched into the pursuit of the French and inflicted heavy losses on them. On 15 August, de Montfort attacked the walls of Beaucaire for the fourth time. The plan of the Crusaders went badly because of the incredible reaction of Toulouse, which had anticipated the strategy of de Montfort. It was an appalling carnage. The leader of the Crusade then acknowledged his defeat and struck camp on 24 August, taking the road to Toulouse in the hope that the situation would change: it did not get any better.

The latest news de Montfort received from Toulouse was of an alliance between citizens and nobility complicit with the former Count of Toulouse, who remained in Catalonia or Aragon. Three days after leaving Nîmes, de Montfort camped in Montgiscard, within the gates of the town's keep. The defeated siege of Beaucaire had weighed heavily on the finances of the Crusade and he decided that the money would be remade from the Toulousains.

The Toulousains, fearing they had revolted too early, dispatched members of the consul at de Montfort, who imprisoned them in the Narbonnese Castle. The entry of the Crusaders in the city caused a general panic because of their plundering and molestation of its inhabitants in their houses. Ahead of this plundering, they went on foot from district to district sacking the town, until a single cry went up "With weapons" and, in a flash, the population revolted. Every person was provided with axes, pikes, knives or crossbow and they went to the streets and threw up rough barricades.

The leader of the Crusader army, behind Guy de Montfort, had entered the city by the southern and south eastern gates. They had hard combat in front of Saint-Etienne cathedral, with the Toulousains taking the lead, little by little. Simon de Montfort ordered the city set ablaze and the fire was started in the Joutxaigues district, propagating quickly in the district of Saint-Rémésy. The Templar command, next to the church of Dalbade, lost all of its files in the disaster. Benefiting from the Toulousains being occupied with extinguishing the fires, de Montfort went to the aid of his companions who were cut off in the Saint-Etienne cathedral.

He led a squadron and crossed the Montoulieu gate where the Grand Rond currently lies and charged from the Place Saint-Scarbes to Place Saint-Etienne. The Crusaders then launched an initial attack along the rue Croix Baragnon without being able to force the barricades. The second attempt, while being held for a time at the Port Cerdane, was also a failure. With night falling, de Montfort regained the Narbonnese castle, where the members of the consul had been locked up.

Bishop Foulques spent the night sending messages with the aim of appeasement. Despite their position of strength, the Toulousains were conscious that they were facing defeat with renewed attacks from the Crusaders. They therefore surrendered their weapons to Foulques, who convinced them of de Montfort's leniency.

On the site that is occupied by the Wilson public garden, Foulques and Guy de Montfort accepted the Toulousains surrender to put an end to the insurrection. The trap was closed again on the Toulousains when Foulques presented to de Montfort the nobility that had been taken as hostage and provided a long list of others who had been involved. Many were rounded up, and the Narbonnese castle was quickly filled. Another 400 hostages were beaten and taken to the castle of Cépière.

At the dawn of the third day, at the Eglise de Saint-Pierre des Cuisines, a proclamation was read indicating that the agreement of surrender between Foulques and the Toulousains were null and void and that there would be no forgiveness for the insurrection. The weapons and equipment surrendered were confiscated by agents of torture and there was a continuation of greater hostage

taking primarily amongst the ranks of the nobility, knights and the elite. The last fortifications were destroyed and the city was finally given over to plundering. Nothing was left.

The role of Bishop Foulques remains prone to controversy. What was the role he really played in entrapping the Toulousains? Here opinions diverge: some remember his ousting of the *manu militari* of the city in 1211 and it is possible to consider his role to be a question of revenge for his share of Toulouse.



Figure 10: The seal of Raymond VII

## 10. February and March 1217: The Siege of Montgrenier

At the time of the Council of Lateran IV, the Count of Foix, Raymond Roger had alleged that he had been reconciled with the Church since the seizure of his castle and claimed his desire for this to be returned to him and his restitution.

De Montfort coveted Foix and saw his own desires would be foiled to the benefit of the Count as a result of his hearing at the Lateran. Eventually, de Montfort found a pretext to prevent the Count's plans for restitution from succeeding.

Raymond Roger had built a fortress at Montgrenier for his garrison to be placed in a strategic and aggressive position. It needed no more than for de Montfort to suggest the rupture of the truce and to attack the fortified town, which sheltered a garrison of knights and sergeants, led by Roger Bernard, the son of the Count of Comminges. Pierre Roger de Mirepoix, the future defender of Montségur was also at Montgrenier. The siege was started on 6 February, 1217, in the heart of a winter that ravaged the area.

Leaving the command of the place to his son, Raymond Roger went to Perpignan, to meet the Pope's commissionaires to again ask for the restitution of his castle and for the lifting of the siege of Montgrenier. Seeing events moving in the direction of the Count of Foix, the Prior of Fontfroide and the Abbé of Saint-Thibéry requested the suspension of the hostilities of de Montfort, who defied the Church and made ready to occupy the castle of Foix under the guardianship of the Church. He undertook to build new defences there.

The situation in Montgrenier worsened daily during this time. Water supplies were low and the blockade was so tight that the defenders could not go down to the river to get fresh supplies. The defenders then started negotiations with the Prior of Fontfroide. On 25 March, it was ruled that a garrison of Crusaders settle in Montgrenier, surrendered by Raymond Bernard and his men. While de Montfort may not have been able to prevent the reconciliation of Raymond Roger with the Church, he did manage to take possession of the castle and had treated the Papal Commissioners with the greatest contempt. He was therefore in a delicate position with respect of the Church but his position in the area had been consolidated, which enabled him to turn finally towards Provence.

## September 1217: the Liberation of Toulouse

One of the greatest days in the history of Toulouse was 13 September, 1217, the date of the return of Raymond VI after two years of exile. It was certainly the major success of the Occitan reconquest. The sack of the city in the previous year, far from having subjugated the population, on the contrary had only served to reinforce Toulousain rancour.

During August, the Toulousain resistance sent messengers to the Count sharing the knowledge that de Montfort was fighting in Provence against Adhémar de Poitiers. Raymond VI crossed the

Pyrenees accompanied by a limited number of knights and went to meet with the Viscount of Couserans, Roger de Comminges, the former defender of Montgrenier, at Saint-Lizier. Other barons were also present to hold a council of war – Bernard IV, his son, Bernard V and the son of the Count of Foix, Roger Bernard.

It was then for Toulouse, Foix and Comminges to liberate themselves from the yoke of the Crusaders. It was decided to secretly enter Toulouse by the left bank, the Narbonnese castle being on the right bank. The army would cross the Garonne towards Cazères. Once the river was passed there was nothing more to do but to follow the road that connected Saint-Gaudens to Toulouse.

It was in Salvetat that the first collision occurred. The combat was short but hard. A few Crusaders escaped quickly. After a day and a night, Raymond VI presented himself in front of the suburb of Saint-Cyprien. It was 12 September.

During this season on the Garonne, thick fog allowed the troops to pass unseen below the watchtowers of the Crusaders. They crossed the Garonne at the watchtower of Bozacle towards the old slaughterhouses and gathered to enter the borough of Saint-Sernin.

The joy of Toulouse ignited in front of the Occitan banner and insurrection and thirst for revenge quickly erupted. The Crusaders were surprised by the scale of the revolt and took refuge in the Narbonnese castle, the Bishop's Palace or in the cloister of Saint-Etienne and the monastery of Saint-Sernin. The Narbonnese castle was completely surprised and they hurried to send alarm before the Toulousains surrounding the palisades and walls could cut off communication.

Toulouse was re-established in a legitimate capacity. The Count gave set up new leaders for the city, creating positions for municipal institutions and the consulate, granting high office for David de Rouaix. He refused to hunt for those collaborators who acted in favour of the Crusaders, even though there was sufficient evidence against them. In the absence of Bishop Foulque, the cathedral of Saint-Etienne and the basilica of Saint-Sernin were given to him and they were immediately transformed into fortresses. Their bell-towers were the best watchtowers of Toulouse.

The fortifications having been raised to the ground to some extent by de Montfort, the city felt dangerously vulnerable. The inhabitants therefore undertook to build new walls as quickly as possible: using the external streets as ramparts and setting fire to certain houses within the immediate surroundings of the Narbonnese castle in order to shelter archers and artilleryists. The task was such that every inhabitant was called to duty – Count, knights, the middle-classes, merchants, men, women, children and the old.



Figure 11: The Siege of Toulouse

## 11. 22 September 1217: The attack of Simon de Montfort

On Friday 22 September, 1217, Guy de Montfort arrived with his nephew, Guy, the marshal Guy de Lévis, Foucaud de Berzy, Alain de Roucy and Hughes de Lacy. They immediately attacked because Toulouse would quickly become an impregnable place as a result of the renewal of the fortifications. They found a passage by the streets Saint-Jacob, Ninau and Fermat.

On the strength of the unhappy experience of the sacking of 1216, the Crusader knights went on foot and made a headlong dash for the Toulousains with their swords in their hands. They progressed towards the cathedral when they were stopped by the defenders, joined quickly by Bernard de Foix and his squadron. They could not even reach the Place de Saint-Etienne.

The first reinforcements for the defenders were the Count of Comminges, his nephew, Roger and Bertrand Jourdain de l'Isle. Others were mobilised in force, including Quercinois, the faidits of Lauragais, Arnaud de Montégut and Pelfort de Rabastens. They ran throughout the city giving hand to the defence of the Toulousains. On either 8 or 15 October, Simon de Montfort arrived at Baziège and camped to the south of the city.

## **The Great Siege of Toulouse**

Toulouse was armed to the teeth when it had to undergo the shock attack which occurred around the Narbonnese castle. No advantage was gained: after a bitter battle with archery, torches ablaze, charges, frays, hand to hand combat, the Crusaders were again stopped in their dash and had to break the combat. This victory had enormous repercussions on the population.

Failing to take the city, de Montfort decided at the least cut off the road to the reinforcements of Gascogne, which passed to the south. He set up a second siege facing the Saint-Cyprien district and left the command of the first to his son, Amaury, who could not prevent the Count of Foix from entering the city. Faced with the weakening of the first siege, Simon continued with the second.

Throughout the winter of 1217, the war engines entered into action, having hardly been built. Meanwhile, the Toulousains had built new walls and had dug trenches to hold the Crusaders as far back as possible to prevent any attack. Simon de Montfort felt very ill at ease with this false siege and the indecisive, sporadic attacks. Supplies of food were getting through the siege by their own routes, reinforcing the position of the defenders. Doubt had taken the spirit of the French.

He then changed strategy. The goal was to attract the defenders out from their walls, and to take them in an ambush from behind and to drive them back into the city with the favour of a disorganised retreat. While part of the Crusader army set up the ambush, the other part attacked. They entered the palisades and crossed the ditches, reaching the gates of the city but were again foiled by the Count of Comminges and Roger Bernard de Foix. It was another failure reminiscent of the siege of Beaucaire. Aware of the current state of his forces and the failure of all his attempts to capture the attack, de Montfort suspended all military action in the suburbs in Easter 1218.

At this point, the Toulousains organised a massive sortie undoubtedly in order to seize the advantage over the camp of the attackers. The fray was general but the Occitans did not finish the attack and turned face. Faced with the beginning of this retreat, the troops remaining on the walls launched into the attack in their turn and the ensuing battle was bloody for both camps.

May 1218 saw the arrival of a formidable army of reinforcements for the Crusaders at the head of which were about thirty high-ranking barons. De Montfort could finally put into action his plan: to completely block the city and to begin with, to renew the siege of the Saint-Cyprien district which had been abandoned a few months earlier. On approximately 20 May, the Crusaders attacked the district. Despite their great number and the furious combat they carried out, they were again pushed back. The French despaired to be able to cut the communication of the city with Gascogne on day, when torrential rains fell, flooding the Garonne which broke its banks, carrying the old bridge (which was a little way downstream from the current Pont Neuf) and the Pont Neuf of the time. With the flood ended, de Montfort entered the completely devastated and defenceless district. He occupied and transformed the hospital into a fortress.

On 2 June, he attacked to the north of the city, facing the Toulousains who had taken the initiative from him. There was a bloody battle. With all the charges and all the attacks having been valiantly pushed back, the Crusaders took down and regained their encampments, leaving many dead behind.

The capture of Saint-Cyprien district cut the communications with Gascogne but only by land. By the river, the city continued to receive men and supplies. Then, de Montfort understood his error:

one could not take Toulouse if open combat is offered. The attacks of the knighthood, the pitched battles, were not providing these opportunities.

On 3 June, the decision was taken to utilise the ‘génie’. The construction of machines of war was launched, particularly that of an immense cat, a wooden gallery put on wheels and bordered by sheet metal to resist the heaviest balls. At this time, they learned of the arrival of Raymond VII, who was accommodated in great joy.

This reinforcement concerned de Montfort. He then seriously hesitated over the action to be taken in this siege. In addition, the lords who had reinforced the Host seemed now to have some doubts about the good of their action. Unquestionably, in their eyes, Count Raymond VI was within his legitimate right to want to defend his city. The city was defended with such passion, its inhabitants were devoted to their suzerain, their heroism and the military science made it increasingly difficult to see in this Crusade an offensive action against the forces of evil that had been the purpose at the beginnings of the Albigensian Crusade. Simon de Montfort had to act quickly and decided to attack on the following day, 24 June, 1218, at dawn.



Figure 12: The death of Simon de Montfort, 1218

## 12. The death of Simon de Montfort

The great battle of Toulouse lasted two days and began at dawn on 24 June, 1218. The first action of the Crusaders was to put the Cat in position. On top of the ramparts, the Toulousains saw the advance, step by step, of this enormous war machine, being able to shelter hundreds of soldiers. This occurred between the Narbonne castle and the camp Saint-Michel to the site of the current Jules Guesde alley.

The trebuchets were immediately put into action causing some damage to the higher structures of the cat. All the population, men, women and children were busy consolidating the defences, bringing materials for the trebuchets and catapults.

In the morning of 25 June, the Occitans burst onto the ground in the direction of the meadow of Montoulieu. They were pushed back twice but pushed forward again thanks to the fresh troops who supported them. The major stake of the battle was the destruction of the cat, which represented a very real threat to the walls of the city. A flood of stones and balls launched by the Toulousain trebuchets and mangols fell on the French.

At this point, an archer reached the head of Guy de Montfort’s warhorse. The animal bucked while Guy was hit by a crossbow bolt on his left side. Simon de Montfort rushed to the scene with the aid of his brothers.

*Et la pierre arriva tout droit ou il fallait,  
Si bien frappa le Comte à son heaume d'acier,  
Que les yeux, la cervelle aussi les dents du fond,  
Le front et les mâchoires elle fit éclater,  
A terre, il tomba mort, livide, ensanglanté ...*

*And the stone arrived straight and true,  
So well the Count with his steel helm struck,  
That eyes, brain also teeth of the bottom,  
The face and the jaws it made burst,  
To ground, he fell dead, bruised, bloodstained...*

Then there was an immense clamour of joy from the ramparts, one rushed into the streets to announce the news and all the bells of the city rang. Two comrades in arms of de Montfort went on foot to cover the body with a blue cape. The battle immediately ended. The sad procession went to

the vault of the Narbonnese castle, where it awaited Foulque. The catapult that had hit the leader of the Crusade had been built in Saint-Sernin and had been operated by women.

On 26 June, Amaury de Montfort inherited the goods of his father and especially inherited the command of the Crusade. He was only 20 years old.

On 1 July, anticipating the end of the forty days service, he decided to launch an ultimate attack. He was a total failure. On 25 July, the Crusaders set fire to their siege engines at the Narbonnese castle and departed. The Siege of Toulouse was over.

Amaury de Montfort took the road to Carcassonne with the skin of his father prepared according to the French way: the body had been boiled to detach the skeleton, the remainder of the body having been buried immediately. The bones were buried in a niche in the cathedral of Saint-Nazaire.

## **What is Catharism?**

### **A religious fact**

A reading of the New Testament - in particular of the Gospel according to St John - impressed the Gnostic tradition in the first centuries AD, and particularly led men of the Middle Ages to formulate a dualistic Christianity that completely cleared God of the existence of Evil and the conditions which enable it to appear: perishable matter, suffering flesh and mortality. They allotted to a “bad principle” opposed to “true God”, the creation of the visible, material, corruptible and transitory world, where Evil appears.

Consequently, they developed a distinction between “good an invisible, spiritual and eternal creation”, and “bad”, dedicated to destruction. However, this distinction between good and evil also devalued the redeemer role of the Passion of Christ and the absolute pre-eminence granted to the Holy Spirit. Cathars believed that the Holy Spirit became infused by the laying on of hands, which allows the heart to release itself from its diabolic carnal prison. This was instead of the tradition of baptism by water. They also refused to partake of the Eucharist and negated the principles of Hell and the last Judgement. They were certain that at the end of times all hearts would be saved: by its theology, cosmogony, liturgy and ethics, Catharism proposed at the same time an explanation of the world and a way to mercy which claimed to be only an evangelical message. Such a message was incompatible with official Christianity. It was declared “heresy”.

For this reason, it was between the Aryanism of the IV<sup>o</sup> century and Protestantism, the greatest heresy of the Middle Ages, and caused the most serious crisis faced by medieval Christendom. Throughout the Balkans, England, Catalonia, Champagne, Flanders, Northern Italy and the Rhineland, the bogomilism of Eastern Europe and Catharism of Occitan were the two branches of “the Church of the Friends of God” whose vocation of universality ran up against the defensive reaction of Roman Catholicism. It was to give in turn spiritual, military and legal weapons, that the Papacy instituted the Order of the Preaching Friars (Dominican Order, or Black Friars), launched the “Crusade against the Albigensians” (1209 – 1229), then founded the Inquisition in 1234.

### **A fact of company**

The strength of the establishment of Catharism in what is now called Languedoc, was not possible except for the tolerance, then with the open complicity of, the local authorities, feudal princes, lords and urban consulates. Founded in 1167, with the Council of Saint-Felix-in-Lauragais, the four Cathar Bishops of Agen, Toulouse, Carcassonne and Albi, set up publicly in ‘anti-Church’ behaviour, seriously undermining the moral authority of the Catholic clergy, weakening its temporal and economic power in the region.

Around the Cathar Church of parfaits (‘perfect ones’), which constitutes its clergy, revolves all the company of the believers. Paradoxically, whereas the Cathar dogma and liturgy, by their reference to primitive Christianity, appear to have many antiquated views, the Cathar company carried innovative values: at its centre are new relationships of man with justice, money, work, and sex, and this takes shape through the evolution of the statute of women; as there were so many fracture lines within this belief system when compared to the traditional feudal order, that it is not surprising that the traditional order attempted to restore itself with all its rigour in the conquered country.

### **A historical fact**

Lastly, the Albigensian crusade had as a consequence the annexation by the Crown of France of all the lands which now constitute Languedoc, and the ousting of the House of Aragon-Catalonia from north-Pyrenean geopolitical space, in a time when the Occitan principalities looked more readily towards Barcelona than towards Paris.

An Occitano-Catalan state had even been born in Toulouse, by the oaths of January 27, 1213. But its suzerain Pedro II, the Count de Barcelona and King of Aragon, was killed in the battle of Muret in September of the same year, leaving any Catholic who had taken him as the leader of the coalition which tried to block the conquests of Simon de Montfort and his crusaders without a head.

The Cathar Church disappeared from Languedoc in 1321, when the Inquisition, after ninety years of ceaseless policing and legal activity, burned in Villerouge-Termenès, in the Corbières, the last known parfait, Guillaume Bélibaste. The Inquisition thus broke the “apostolic chain” of which the Cathars claimed they were part when they claimed that the HOLY SPIRIT had been transmitted to them by the laying on of hands, from generation to generation, since the time of the Apostles.

The capture of the country of Oc and Catharism even less left a few deep traces in the sensitivities and the unconscious collective of the Occitans. The Crusade is to some extent their American Civil War; the defeat of the Count of Toulouse and his vassal, the eradication of the ‘heresy’ and annexation with the French Crown, marked more or less the end of the “courteous” civilisation of which the troubadours had sung. For this reason, Catharism, which was the exact contemporary of the zenith of this civilisation, and undoubtedly one of its factors, is a great moment of Occitan history. That esoteric deviances and para-histories as well as the trade of false mysteries of nature too often authenticates it, could not make them forget that, for two centuries, a daring and pure thought opened out on the ground of Oc, that many men and women assumed to be true until the torment: a thought which was, in addition, tolerant.

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|-------------|---|
| 1022        | 12 canons fired in Orleans. First to carve the history of the Middle Ages   |
|             | Pyres in Turin, Toulouse, Aquitaine.  |
| c. 1025     | Second half 12th century.<br>Gregorian reform.  |
| 1135 - 1140 | Pyres in Liege.<br>First mention of Cathars communities with a Episcopal hierarchy.   |
| 1143        | Pyres in Cologne.<br>Call of Evervin de Steinfeld to Saint Bernard.   |
| 1145        | Mission of Bernard de Clairvaux into Toulouse and Albigensian.<br>Presence of heretic communities in the villages.                                |
| 1157        | Council of Rheims against the heresy.   |
| 1163        | Stakes in Cologne, Bonn, Mainz.<br>Eckbert de Schönau creates name “Cathars”.   |
| 1165        | Conference of Lombers in Albigensian. Presence of an Occitan Cathar bishop (Sicard Cellerier).  |
| 1167        | Parliament of Saint-Felix in Lauragais. Organisation of the Western Cathar Churches: four Occitan bishops, one French bishop, one Italian bishop. |
| 1170 - 1180 | Vaudès preaches freely in Lyon with his companions.   |
| 1178 - 1181 | Mission and pre-crusade directed by the Abbé of Clairvaux, Henry de Marcy, papal legate, in Toulouse and Albigensian.                             |

- 1182 Vaudès and the poor of Lyon are driven out by the archbishop, Jean de Bellesmains.
- Décrétale de Vérone.
- 1184 Agreement of the Pope and the emperor. Anti-heretic measurements on a European scale. Cathars and Vaudois anathemas.
- 1194 - 1222 Raymond VI, Count of Toulouse. Pinnacle of the Occitan Catharism.
- 1198 - 1216 Pontificate of Innocent III.
- 1202 - 1206 Failure of the Cistercian missions sent by the Pope to Languedoc.
- 1206 Beginning of the counter-preaching of Dominicans. Foundation of the monastery of Prouille.
- 1208 Assassination of the legate Pierre de Castelnau. Papal Bull initiating a crusade against heresy and 'setting in prey of property'.
- Beginning of the crusade.
- 1209 Massacre of Béziers, capture of Carcassonne, death of Raymond Roger Trencavel. Simon de Montfort becomes Viscount of Carcassonne. Brotherhood of Francis of Assisi recognized by the Pope. Casseneuil.
- 1210 Capture and to sacking of Minerve (140 burned). Capture of Termes. Dominica and his companions in Toulouse, at the side of Bishop Foulque.
- 1211 Victory of the Count of Foix at Montgey. Capture of Lavaur by Simon de Montfort, 80 knights have their throats cut, 400 heretics burned. Sacking of Cassès (60 burned). Battle of Castelnaudary.
- 1212 Conquest of Agen and Quercy by Simon de Montfort.
- 1213 Homage of Raymond VI of Toulouse to King Pedro II of Aragon. Battle of Muret. Death of King of Aragon. Destabilisation of Occitano-Aragonese relations.
- 1215 Lateran IV: investiture of the Count of Toulouse to Simon de Montfort. Foundation of the Order of the Precious Brothers or Dominicans.
- 1216 Beginning of the re-conquest of Raymond VI of Toulouse and his son, the young Count.
- 1218 Simon de Montfort kills the defenders of Toulouse.
- 1219 Crusade of Prince Louis of France, massacre of Marmande.
- 1220 - 1221 Occitan reconquest of the Count of Toulouse, re-establishment of the Cathar Church of Toulouse.
- 1221 Death of Dominique. Death of Raymond VI.

- 1222 - 1249 Raymond VII, Count of Toulouse.
- 1223 Reconquest of Carcassone by Raymond Trencavel, reestablishment of the Cathar Church in Carcassonne.
- 1224 Amaury de Montfort defeated, regains Île-de-France and yields its rights to the crown of France.
- 1226 Royal Crusade of Louis VIII. Submission of a number of vassals of Raymond VII. Cathar Council of Pieusse and creation of the Bishop of Razès.  
Burning at the stake of Pierre Isarn, Bishop of Carcassonne, Caunes, Minervois.  
Death of Francis of Assisi.
- 1226 - 1270 Louis IX (saint Louis) King of France.
- 1227 - 1229 Wars of Cabaret and Limoux.
- 1227 - 1239 Bloody pre-Inquisitorial missions of Conrad de Marbourg in Germany and of Robert le Bourge in France (Flanders, Burgundy, Champagne).
- 1229 Treaty of Meaux-Paris. End of the Albigensian Crusade. Capitulation of Raymond VII. Creation of the University of Toulouse entrusted to the preachers and the coding of anti-heretic repression. By the introduction of French royal seneschals in Carcassonne-Beziers and Beaucaire-Nimes, the country passes from now on under royal and French administration. The Cathar Churches are clandestine.
- 1232 At the request of Guilhabert de Castres, Monségur becomes 'the head and the seat' of the prohibited Church.
- 1233 Foundation by Gregory IX of the Inquisition, entrusted to the beggars orders.
- 1234 - 1235 Risings against the Inquisition in Toulouse, Albi and Narbonne.
- 1239 13 May, burnings of Mont Aimé in Champagne (180 deaths). Destruction of the Cathar Church in France.
- 1242 Attack of the Avignonnaise against the Inquisition by the knights of Montségur, signal of the entry in the war of Raymond VII. The country is raised.
- 1243 The allies of Raymond VII are beaten. Treaty of Lorris. Beginning of the siege of Montségur.
- 1244 16 March, burning of Montségur (225 deaths). End of the Cathar Church organised in Occitan. Reconstitution of a hierarchy of the exile of Lombardy. Systemisation of the Inquisition to end the sieges of Carcassonne, Albi and Toulouse.
- 1249 80 Cathar believers burned in Agen on order of Raymond VII. Death of Raymond VII. His son-in-law, Alphonse de Poitier, brother of Louis IX succeeds him.
- 1255 Chabert de Barbaïra returns to Quéribus, last place still in the hands of the "faydits", these Occitan knights dispossessed of their lands and resistant in secret.
- 1258 Treaty of Corbeil, which defines the border between the kingdoms of France and

- Aragon.
- 1268 Victory of Guilfres on Gibelins : the Inquisition cana ct freely in Italy.
- 1270 Death of Louis IX.
- 1271 Death of Jeanne of Toulouse and Alphonse de Poitiers. Annexation of the county of Toulouse to the royal French domains.
- 1278 Burning arenas of Verona (200 burned). Destruction of the Italian Cathar Churches.
- 1280 - 1285 Irregular procedures of the Inquisition in Carcassonne and Albi ; plot against the archives of the Inquisition in Carcassonne.
- 1295 Pierre and Guilhem Authié join the Occitan Church in Italy.
- 1300 - 1305 Bernard Délicieux and the ‘Carcassonne Rage’.
- 1300 - 1310 Attempt at a revival of a Cathar Church by the Authié brothers.
- 1303 Geoffroy d'Ablis named Inquisitor of Carcassonne.
- 1307 Bernard Gui named Inquisitor of Toulouse.
- 1309 Jacques and Guilhem Authié, Arnaud Marty, Prades Tavernier, Amiel de Perles, Philippe de Talairac and Raimond Fabre captured and burned. Guilhem Bélibaste flees to the other side of the Pyrenees.
- 1310 Pierre Authié is burned in Toulouse at the same time as 17 relapse.
- 1315 - 1330 Burning of Franciscan Spiritualists in Languedoc.
- 1318 - 1325 Inquisition campaign of Jacques Fournier, Bishop of Pamiers.
- 1321 Burning of Guilhem Bélibaste at Villerouge-Termenès.
- 1325 Burning of a Cathar believer at Carcassonne.
- 1329 Burning of 3 Cathar believers at Carcassonne.
- 1412 Last sentences against Italian Cathars.
- 1463 Conquest of Bosnia by the Muslim Turks: end of Bosnian Catharism.