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# The Heretical Dissidence of the ‘Good Men’ in the Albigeois (1276-1329): Localism and Resistance to Roman Clericalism

Julien Théry

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Volume 4

Cathars in Question

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# Cathars in Question

Edited by  
Antonio Sennis



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## The Heretical Dissidence of the ‘Good Men’ in the Albigeois (1276–1329): Localism and Resistance to Roman Clericalism\*

*Julien Théry-Astruc*

On 25 January 1286, before an inquisitorial court presided over by Bernard of Castanet, the bishop of Albi, a citizen from Castres known as Raimon de Baffignac, who had been arrested for the crime of heresy, mentioned in his confession a conversation that he claimed to have had about seven years beforehand with a knight named Guilhabert Lantar, who came from the area of Guitalens. They were lunching together in Albi where they had just met. Both had come to the episcopal city to appear before the ecclesiastical court. As related by Raimon de Baffignac, their observations were so compromising that the judges, or their notary, made sure that they were recorded in direct style, as reported speech, within the interrogation minutes. The two diners were rather unhappy with their affairs at the ecclesiastical court and began by deploring the *potentia cleri*, the power of the clergy, who had now set science above nobility, depriving the latter of the honours formerly bestowed upon it, which were now cornered by the clerics.<sup>1</sup> According to the document lodged by the Inquisition and that has survived in the form of a single copy made in the sixteenth century, the discussion proceeded as follows:

He also said that he, Raimon, said to the aforementioned Guilhabert Lantar: ‘Sire, in the olden days, we took delight in many things, I mean in courting the ladies,<sup>2</sup> in singing, in making love,<sup>3</sup> but nowadays we spend

\* My thanks to Anita Saxena Dumond for translating this paper into English, to the Centre d’Étude Médiévales (EA 4583) of the Université Paul-Valéry de Montpellier for funding the translation, and to the anonymous reviewer for his/her observations.

<sup>1</sup> Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France (henceforth, BnF), MS lat. 12856, fol. 8v. This first passage in direct style was translated with commentary by J.-L. Biget, ‘Les cathares devant les inquisiteurs en Languedoc’, *Revue du Tarn* 146 (1992), 227–42.

<sup>2</sup> *Domiciare*, a verb deriving from Occitan, is very rare. See C. Dufresne du Cange, *Glossarium mediae et infimae latinitatis*, ed. G. A. L. Henschel and L. Favre, 10 vols. (Paris 1883–7), *ad voces domneiare* and *domuciare*.

<sup>3</sup> It seems that here the Latin verb *psallere* is a distortion, by the archpriest of Lauzerte who



too much time thinking about the payments and pilgrimages imposed upon us by the clerics, from which we have no means to escape; our predecessors were not made to pay such a high price for these things, or so I have often heard.’ He also said that to what he, Raimon, said to the aforementioned Guilhabert Lantar, the same Guilhabert Lantar replied to the same Raimon as follows: ‘Raimon, Raimon, have no doubt, as we still have a few people who can and do have us pay a fair price for these things; and we will introduce you to them, if you come to visit us on our shore.’<sup>4</sup>

The following year, as we learn from reading the rest of the confession – now recorded in indirect style – Raimon de Baffignac travelled to Guitalens to levy a tithe from a lease. He once again met Guilhabert Lantar, who, ‘remembering the friendship that they had forged in Albi’, invited him first to go fishing with him on the Agout river. Then, after taking him home to cook the fish they had caught, the knight led him to a hideout set up in a ‘very remote and secret’ place on the river banks, to eat their catch in the company of ‘the two persons that he had mentioned to him’ and who were hiding there.<sup>5</sup>

In one of their customary interpolations, the minutes state that when speaking of these ‘persons’, whom he had greeted with a triple genuflection, Raimon de Baffignac ‘meant heretics’ (‘due de personnis de quibus fecerat mentionem – intelligens de hereticis – debebant prandere cum ipso’). But in truth, the citizen from Castres had fallen into the hands of the Inquisition not because he had believed these individuals to be ‘heretics’, but because he thought them *boni homines*, ‘good men’, despite ecclesiastical teachings and repression against them. The discussion recounted to the Inquisitors, regardless of the reasons why the accused reported it and regardless of the deformations it may have suffered from the time it was written down, in Latin, by the court scribe, to the translation proposed here, affords an illustration of the prime motivation for religious dissent: dissatisfaction and the hostility aroused by clerical control.

copied the document in the sixteenth century, of the Occitan verb *sallhir*. A rather modest translation of the verb is given here.

<sup>4</sup> ‘Dixit etiam quod ipse Ramundus qui loquitur tunc dixit dicto Guillaberto *Lantar*: “Domine, tempore antiquo solebat esse quod multimode letabantur, scilicet domiciando, cantando, psallendo, modo vero satis habemus facere cogitando de premiis et peregrinationibus quas nobis clerici sciunt injungere, quibus non possumus evadere quoquomodo; solebat enim nostris predecessoribus, ut sepe refferri audivi, melius forum fieri de predictis”; dixit etiam quod hiis a se Ramundo dictis dicto Guillaberto *Lantar* idem Guillabertus *Lantar* ipsi Ramundo respondit: “Ramunde, Ramunde, non dubitetis, quoniam adhuc sunt nobis alique persone que sciunt et possunt de predictis facere bonum forum, quas vobis ostenderemus si in nostra riperia veniretis”’ (Paris, BnF, MS lat. 12856, fol. 8v).

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, fol. 9r.

'Heresies' were born, in the twelfth century, out of the protest raised by the Gregorian reform and of the criminalization of opposition movements by the new Church.<sup>6</sup> The construction of an autonomous ecclesiastical institution was based on a far stricter separation between the laity and the clergy than before,<sup>7</sup> the latter being bound by new rules and invested with new powers. Radical evangelism and traditional evangelical forms of religious life in southern France were proclaimed to be heresy because those involved refused this redefinition of the clergy. As suggested by the recent analyses undertaken by Jean-Louis Biget and Mark G. Pegg,<sup>8</sup> it was only in a late stage – that is, in Languedoc, from the end of the first quarter of the thirteenth century onward – that the Church's intransigence and persecution made certain dissidents sway towards a dualistic Christianity that portrayed the entire material world as the work of the cunning Devil. The 'labelling theories' of deviance developed by sociologists such as Howard Becker and Erwin Goffman, as well as Michel Foucault's pattern of 'perverse implantation', certainly provide useful suggestions to understand how some dissenters finally came to embrace, to a certain extent, some of the features and ideas that ecclesiastical categorization had rather improperly and arbitrarily ascribed to so-called 'heretics' for more than two centuries.<sup>9</sup> The fact remains, however, that the commitment to and support for dissidence, in the thirteenth century and even into the beginning of the fourteenth century, corresponded to a protest against pastoral discipline, ecclesiastical levies and clerical domination as a whole, which were stronger than ever before. Clericalization was a part of the Gregorian project and was compounded in the thirteenth century with the

<sup>6</sup> See *Inventer l'hérésie? Discours polémiques et pouvoirs avant l'inquisition*, ed. M. Zerner (Nice, 1998); U. Brunn, *Des contestataires aux 'cathares': discours de réforme et propagande antihérétique dans les pays du Rhin et de la Meuse avant l'inquisition* (Paris, 2006); R. I. Moore, *The War on Heresy: Faith and Power in Medieval Europe* (London, 2012). For recent syncretical accounts, see, for instance, J. Théry, 'Les hérésies, du XII<sup>e</sup> au début du XIV<sup>e</sup> siècle', in *Structures et dynamiques de la vie religieuse en Occident, 1179–1449*, ed. M.-M. de Cevins and J.-M. Matz (Rennes, 2010), pp. 373–86; I. Bueno, *Le eresie medievali* (Rome, 2013).

<sup>7</sup> See J.-C. Schmitt, 'Clercs et laïcs', in *Dictionnaire raisonné du Moyen Âge*, ed. J. Le Goff and J.-C. Schmitt (Paris, 1999), pp. 214–29.

<sup>8</sup> J.-L. Biget, 'Réflexions sur l'hérésie dans le midi de la France', *Heresis* 36–7 (2002), 29–74 (pp. 43–8), repr. in J.-L. Biget, *Hérésie et inquisition dans le midi de la France au Moyen Âge* (Paris, 2007), pp. 106–41; J.-L. Biget, 'Réflexions sur l'hérésie au Moyen Âge: l'exemple des "cathares"', in *Religion et politique: dissidences, résistances et engagements*, ed. L. Albaret, H. Latger and J.-F. Wagniar (Paris, 2006), pp. 22–35; M. G. Pegg, *The Corruption of Angels: The Great Inquisition of 1245–1246* (Princeton, 2001), pp. 80–1; M. G. Pegg, *A Most Holy War: The Albigenian Crusade and the Battle for Christendom* (New York, 2008), pp. 25–7, 46; M. G. Pegg, 'The Paradigm of Catharism; or, the Historians' Illusion', in the present volume.

<sup>9</sup> J. Théry, 'L'hérésie des bons hommes: comment nommer la dissidence religieuse non vaudoise ni béguine en Languedoc? (XII<sup>e</sup>–début du XIV<sup>e</sup> siècle)', *Heresis* 36–7 (2002), 75–117 (pp. 97–107).

implementation of the triumphant papal monarchy's theocratic ambitions. Clericalism was particularly oppressive in Languedoc, where the clergy's temporal powers were widely developed. The negative concept of anticlericalism is thus relevant to the study of 'heresy' in Languedoc, especially after the Albigensian crusade, so long as the content of this inherently flexible term is precisely defined to suit this particular case.<sup>10</sup>

The denigration of the clergy and the denunciation of their excessive hold over government or social life did not necessarily mean that their role as mediators between men and God, the very essence of their condition, was questioned. The hostility towards the clerical culture or power did not, moreover, involve only heretics. For example, it also permeated knightly culture. This hostility was, in fact, proportional to the influence of those that it targeted – Boniface VIII thus bitterly lamented it, at the very time when the Church's power was at its zenith, in his famous bull *Clericis laicos* (which, in 1296, imposed the pope's prior authorization for the temporal princes to levy taxes from the clergy).

It is rather difficult to distinguish clearly between two forms of anticlericalism, one superficial in that it directed hostilities solely at certain of the clerics' behaviours or values, the other radical and heretical as it rejected the holy authority of the clergy. Hostile attitudes towards the clerics no doubt veered between these two positions. Each might have been separated from the other by mere degrees of intensity. Their distinction is made all the more difficult due to the Church's endeavour to amalgamate them. Indeed, the Church justified its institutional forms by making an inseparable link between its spiritual mission and its necessary temporal powers. Hence the pope's *plenitudo potestatis* and the claimed superiority of clerical authority over secular power; hence, also, the resort to canonical sanctions against those who, by causing prejudice to the ecclesiastical institution's economic or political interests, were also considered to jeopardize its work of salvation. At the beginning of the fourteenth century, any form of persistent disobedience

<sup>10</sup> About medieval anticlericalism in general, see in particular *Anticlericalism in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, ed. P. A. Dykema and H. A. Oberman (Leiden, 1994); *Pfaffen und Laien: eine mittelalterlicher Antagonismus? Freiburger Colloquium, 1996*, ed. E. C. Lutz and E. Tremp (Fribourg, 1999); *L'anticléricisme en France méridionale (milieu XIIe-début du XIVe siècle) = Cahiers de Fanjeaux 38* (2003). About heretical anticlericalism in the Middle Ages, see in particular W. L. Wakefield, 'Some Unorthodox Popular Ideas of the Thirteenth Century', *Mediævalia et humanistica* 4 (1973), 25–35; R. I. Moore, *The Birth of Popular Heresy* (Toronto, 1995 [1st edn 1975]), pp. 27–71; J. Chiffolleau, 'Vie et mort de l'hérésie en Provence et dans la vallée du Rhône du début du XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle au début du XIV<sup>e</sup> siècle', *Effacement du catharisme (XIIIe–XIVe s.) = Cahiers de Fanjeaux 20* (1985), 73–99; G. Despy, 'Hérétiques ou anticléricaux? Les "cathares" dans nos régions avant 1300', in *Aspects de l'anticléricisme du Moyen Âge à nos jours: hommage à Robert Joly*, ed. J. Marx (Brussels, 1988), pp. 23–34; D. M. Webb, 'The Pope and the Cities: Anticlericalism and Heresy in Innocent III's Italy', in *The Church and Sovereignty, c. 590–1918: Essays in Honour of Michael Wilks*, ed. D. Wood (Oxford, 1991), pp. 135–52.

to the Church, regardless of its anticlerical nature, could be qualified as heresy.

Lastly, so as better to evoke the complex nature of the protests against clericalism during the first post-Gregorian centuries, we should note that the acknowledgment of alternative religious mediations, although considered a crime of heresy, did not necessarily go hand-in-hand with the rejection either of orthodox sacraments or of clerical authority as a whole.

Albi and its region in the last quarter of the thirteenth century and the first quarter of the fourteenth century is fertile ground for the study of the relationships between the 'heresy' of the good men of Languedoc and the clericalism of the theocratic Church stemming from the Gregorian reform. The energetic action of the character who heard Raimon de Baffignac's confession, the bishop Bernard of Castanet, establishes a unit of time – from the appointment of this papal chaplain to the see of Albi, in 1276, until 1329, date of the final conviction for heresy based on the denunciations recorded during the Inquisition trials that he held. This militant episcopate, devoted to subduing the circles that resisted ecclesiastical order, gave rise to violent conflicts which only came to an end many years after Bernard of Castanet had been transferred to the see of Le Puy, in 1308. This half-century of Albi's history is well documented. The numerous studies dedicated to this field by Jean-Louis Biget, from a fundamental article published in the *Cahiers de Fanjeaux* in 1971 to more recent publications, have provided great insight into Languedoc heresy.<sup>11</sup>

For the perspective adopted here, the analysis will successively focus on two aspects. We shall first briefly examine the elements that can be pieced together, with more or less ease, of the religious life of Albi heretics, while questioning the relationships between dissident practices and ecclesiastical order. This examination will be mainly based on a critical reading of the textual material produced by the inquisitorial activities in the Albigeois, in which Bishop Bernard of Castanet played a crucial part. Then, moving on to the second aspect, we shall present the place of 'heresy' – and, more broadly, the discord between ecclesiastical government and secular society – within

<sup>11</sup> J.-L. Biget, 'Un procès d'inquisition à Albi en 1300', *Le credo, la morale et l'inquisition = Cahiers de Fanjeaux* 6 (1971), 273–341; J.-L. Biget, 'Aspects du crédit dans l'Albigeois à la fin du XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle', in *Castres et Pays Tarnais: XXVI<sup>e</sup> congrès de la Fédération des sociétés savantes, Languedoc-Pyrénées-Gascogne* (Albi, 1972), pp. 1–50; J.-L. Biget, 'La restitution des dîmes par les laïcs dans le diocèse d'Albi à la fin du XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle', *Les évêques, les clercs et le roi (1250–1300) = Cahiers de Fanjeaux* 7 (1972), 211–83; J.-L. Biget, 'Extinction du catharisme urbain: les points chauds de la répression', *Effacement du catharisme (XIII<sup>e</sup>–XIV<sup>e</sup> s.) = Cahiers de Fanjeaux* 20 (1985), 305–40, also in Biget, *Hérésie et inquisition*, pp. 206–28; J.-L. Biget, 'Sainte-Cécile et Saint-Salvi: chapitre de cathédrale et chapitre de collégiale à Albi', *Le monde des chanoines = Cahiers de Fanjeaux* 24 (1989), 65–104; J.-L. Biget, 'La législation synodale: le cas d'Albi aux XIII<sup>e</sup>–XIV<sup>e</sup> siècles', *L'Église et le droit dans le Midi (XIII<sup>e</sup>–XIV<sup>e</sup> s.) = Cahiers de Fanjeaux* 29 (1994), 181–213.

the political history of Albi, in the twilight of the good men's resistance. Inquisition, as we shall see, was but one of the weapons – though it was the supreme one – used by Bernard of Castanet in his long struggle to impose his ultra-clericalist rule on the local oligarchy.

*The para-ecclesial religion of the good men and their friends: insight gained from the Inquisition archives*

*Inquisitorial sources: shortcomings, deformations and difficulties of interpretation*

To attempt to describe the religious lives of heretical good men and their 'friends' or 'followers' is a perilous undertaking with certain prerequisites and a number of necessary methodological precautions. The notion of 'religion' is understood here in a sense close to that held by the word in the Middle Ages, when it referred to a religious lifestyle, the way in which people lived their faith. The term did, however, frequently refer to a specific rule, which will not be the case here. In what follows 'religion' simply refers to a set of ideas, feelings and singular practices; these are not external to Christianity and are far from being sufficiently formalized to define any unit of a denominational nature.<sup>12</sup>

If twelfth- to fourteenth-century 'heresy' in Languedoc was centred on forms of religious life, it is because there were people in the region who actually practised that lifestyle, and were venerated by others for doing so. This was in contrast to the erudite heresies of former centuries, which mainly consisted in dogmatic positions upheld by extremely small circles of scholars. However, the resistance nourished by the good men of Languedoc in the last decades of the thirteenth century and the first decades of the fourteenth century was not really a 'popular' heresy according to the two usual meanings of the adjective, as has been shown – and contrary to common assumptions – by J.-L. Biget.<sup>13</sup> It was, for one thing, rather restricted: the quantitative analyses undertaken to date, though approximate given the condition and nature of the documents, establish that the good men's friends

<sup>12</sup> See P. Biller, 'Words and the Medieval Notion of "Religion"', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 36 (1985), 351–69.

<sup>13</sup> Biget, 'Extinction du catharisme', pp. 317–19. Biget, 'Réflexions sur l'hérésie', pp. 60–1. See also, for another area in Languedoc, J.-L. Abbé, 'La société urbaine languedocienne et le catharisme au XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle: le cas de Limoux (Aude)', in *Religion et société urbaine au Moyen Âge: études offertes à Jean-Louis Biget*, ed. P. Boucheron and J. Chiffolleau (Paris, 2000), pp. 119–39. J. H. Mundy's findings for Toulouse are in line with this view. See J. H. Mundy, *The Repression of Catharism at Toulouse: The Royal Diploma of 1279* (Toronto, 1985), and the review of this book by J.-L. Biget in *Annales: économies, sociétés, civilisations* 1 (1987), 137–40.

rarely represented more than ten to fifteen percent of the population in the areas studied and, more often than not, represented five to ten percent at the most. In Bernard of Castanet's time (1276–1308), the dissidents probably amounted to barely ten percent of the 8,000 to 10,000 inhabitants of the city of Albi, one of the greatest strongholds of heretical resistance to the clerical order. When the entire diocese is taken into account, the proportion was even smaller, and the group had practically disappeared by the final years of the episcopate. For another thing, and countering the second sense of the term 'popular', dissidence gained only very few followers from humble backgrounds; the sociology of accused individuals reported to the Inquisition confirms that the good men's friends came from the rural minor aristocracy and, above all, urban social classes born of the economic growth since the eleventh century, the well-off or rich middle classes formed of craftsmen and merchants.<sup>14</sup>

The inquisitorial records are practically the only source from which a glimpse of heretical religious life can be gained. Prescriptive, narrative or polemical sources hardly mention this topic, and only for the purpose of providing a distorted and very negative picture; they above all provide information on their authors and their attitudes, rather than on the heretics themselves. The surviving texts related to dissident liturgy or theology are few and far between; we know nothing of their diffusion; they do not teach us much about the life of the followers, and they reveal, at the very most, only ritual rules. Only the confessions recorded by the Inquisition offer matters of any substance. We are thus reduced to studying 'heresy' through the sources produced from its persecution. This perverse situation obviously greatly limits access to the reality of dissidence.

The inquisitorial records are the written recomposition, after their translation into Latin, of oral discussions. As such, they barely allow the voices of the accused to be heard, though they often create the illusion of doing so upon reading. Even if we acknowledge that snippets of the dissidents' real discourse can be gathered from the texts stemming from their statements, the fact remains that these addresses were severely restrained by the conditions in which they were uttered. Besides the impediments caused by the recording procedures, the content of the confessions was first and foremost determined by the inquisitors' questions.<sup>15</sup> Historical research is thus fully dependent on

<sup>14</sup> Biget, 'Un procès d'inquisition', pp. 298–304; Biget, 'Extinction du catharisme', pp. 319–24; J.-L. Biget, 'Cathares des pays de l'Agout', in *Europe et Occitanie: les pays cathares, actes de la 5e session d'histoire médiévale organisée par le Centre d'études cathares* (Carcassonne, 1995), pp. 259–310 (pp. 270–2, 283, 306–7).

<sup>15</sup> See in particular J. H. Arnold, *Inquisition and Power: Catharism and the Confessing Subject in Medieval Languedoc* (Philadelphia, 2001); Pegg, *The Corruption of Angels: Texts and the Repression of Medieval Heresy*, ed. C. Bruschi and P. Biller (York, 2002); L. J. Sackville, *Heresy and Heretics: The Textual Representations* (York, 2011); *Inquisitors and Heretics in Thirteenth-Century Languedoc: Edition and Translation of Toulouse Inquisition Depositions*,



their interests. These vary greatly according to the context of the case.<sup>16</sup> This is easy to note when comparing the two main inquisitorial sources related to Albi and its region during the period under review.<sup>17</sup> In 1299–1300, Bernard of Castanet and the inquisitor of Carcassonne, Nicolas d'Abbeville, held extremely swift trials, judging up to thirty-five defendants in barely four months of hearings, whereas in 1286–7, the same bishop and the inquisitor Jean Galand had conducted trials against eleven individuals that lasted more than twenty months. Tellingly, the two sets of trials produced roughly equal volumes of data, despite the disparity in the number of defendants. In the earlier series, Bernard of Castanet took all the time he needed to gather as much information as possible on those of his diocesans who mixed with the good men. From the file thus compiled he was able effectively to organize control of dissident groups and targeted repression, within a long-term strategy. In the later series, by contrast, the bishop was acting urgently. His objective this time was rapidly to condemn the arrested guilty parties, in order to bring a severe blow to the circle that was on the verge of neutralizing his temporal power. In the first series, the confessions therefore provide far greater details on the dissidence. Yet it remains true that the inquisitorial interrogations mostly sought to prove heresy in legal terms. Thus, the records are more often than not reduced to the repetitive recording of stereotyped facts which, according to the law, were sufficient to establish the crime – in this case, the ritual greeting of the good men, the receiving of their blessing and of their 'sacrament', administered *in articulo mortis* and named *consolament*. As for the rest, Bernard of Castanet was quite obviously not seeking to learn about the specific nature of heresy (the great attention paid by Jacques Fournier to the detail of the deviances, in the Inquisition trial that he conducted in Pamiers in 1318–25, is a unique case).<sup>18</sup> To this we may add another major difficulty (to which we shall return): the inquisitorial discourse that shaped the source material describing dissident practices was systematically inflected with the very hostile prejudices and distorting vocabulary of the Church.

1273–1282, ed. P. Biller, C. Bruschi and S. Sneddon (Leiden, 2011), especially ch. 3 of the introduction.

<sup>16</sup> Good examples of the crucial importance of context for the understanding of a particular series of inquisitorial trials are Biget, 'Un procès d'inquisition', and C. Vilandrau, 'Inquisition et "sociabilité cathare" d'après le registre de l'inquisiteur Geoffroy d'Ablis (1308–1309)', *Heresis*, 34 (2001), 35–66.

<sup>17</sup> For what follows, see also Biget, 'Un procès d'inquisition', and Biget, 'Cathares des pays de l'Agout'.

<sup>18</sup> *Le registre d'inquisition de Jacques Fournier (1318–1325)*, ed. J. Duvernoy, 3 vols. (Toulouse, 1965). See in particular E. Le Roy Ladurie, *Montaillou, village occitan* (Paris, 1975); and M. Benad, 'Par quelles méthodes de critique des sources l'histoire des religions peut-elle utiliser le registre de Jacques Fournier?', in *Autour de Montaillou, un village occitan: histoire et religiosité d'une communauté villageoise au Moyen Âge*, ed. E. Le Roy-Ladurie (Castelnaud-la-Chapelle, 2001), pp. 147–55.

Yet, despite the extent of these shortcomings and distortions, the archives of persecution do allow us to retrieve certain significant elements related to dissident religious life.

*'Good men', 'good life', 'good words', 'good faith'*

About one year ago, or thereabouts, *Magister* Raimon Calvière, notary at the Lord King's court in Albi, *compater* of the said witness, asked him to walk with him to his dovecot. [...] Upon entering the said dovecot, they found two men; the aforementioned witness asked *Magister* Raimon to tell him who the men were and enquired as to their condition. And the said *Magister* Raimon replied to the said witness that they were some of those good men who were called heretics, that they lived well and in a holy manner and that they fasted three days a week and did not eat meat. Then the said witness, who was astounded (as he said), told the said *Magister* Raimon that they would be dead if ever word got around. Then the said *Magister* Raimon added that he should not say such things and that several other good people of Albi were to come and visit the heretics and that the said witness should do as the others, because there would arise many good things from friendship and familiarity with the said heretics.

(Confession of Guiraud Delort, 16 December 1299)<sup>19</sup>

One day, [...] late at night, Ermengaud Vena, from Réalmont, came to see the said witness and told him that two of those good men who were called heretics [...] were in Guilhem de Maurian's home and were preaching there, and that he should come to hear and see them, because they were good men and that they taught many good things. So the said witness and the said Ermengaud Vena went together to the said Guilhem de Maurian's home and found the said Raimon del Boc, heretic, who had almost finished his sermon and was saying that God had not made these temporal and transitory things, but celestial and eternal things; and the said heretic said many other things that the said witness did not remember (he said). [...] When required to say why the said witness and the other aforementioned persons had worshipped the said heretics in the manner described, he said

<sup>19</sup> G. W. Davis, *The Inquisition at Albi, 1299–1300: Text of Register and Analysis* (New York, 1948), pp. 156–7: 'Annus est vel circa, magister Raymundus Calverie, notarius curie Albie domini regis, compater ipsius testis, rogavit eum quod iret spatiatum cum eo ad columbarium suum. [...] Et intrantes domos dicti columbarii, invenerunt ibi duos homines, de quibus quesivit ipse testis a dicto magistro Raymundo cujusmodi homines erant illi seu cujus conditionis erant; et ipse magister Raymundus respondit ipsi testi quod erant de illis bonis hominibus qui dicebantur heretici et vivebant bene et sancte et jejunabant tribus diebus in septimana et non comedebant carnes. Tunc ipse testis atonitus (ut dicit) dixit dicto magistro Raymundo quod mortui essent si sciretur. Tunc dictus magister Raymundus subjunxit quod non diceret talia, quia et aliqui alii boni de Albia debebant convenire ibidem et dictos hereticos visitare et quod ipse testis faceret sicut alii, quia de amicitia et familiaritate dictorum hereticorum provenirent ei multa bona.'



that it was because they believed the latter to be good men, and to have a good faith.

(Confession of Garnier de Talapie, 1 March 1300)<sup>20</sup>

Maybe twenty-eight or thirty years ago [...], two men from Albi [...] came to his shop and said: '*Signeur Peyre*, two prudent men have come to this town, they are good, holy men, they are well advised and they know many good words; this is why it would be good for us to go and visit them.'

(Confession of Peire Astruc, February 1325)<sup>21</sup>

We could multiply the examples of this type of passage in which are described, within the defendants' confessions, the circumstances of their first direct contact with the good men. Compiling these short accounts would form a good starting point from which to study the reasons why people chose to join the dissidence, as they appear through the reading of the inquisitorial records. Of course, the concern of the defendants to minimize their errors, possibly to protect one person or to incriminate another, is the most obvious of the factors which oblige us to grant very little factual truth to these narrative sequences. But the present texts, like many others of the same kind, taken from the confessions of two citizens (*cives*) of Albi and a notary from Réalmont, recurrently show the authority of the heretical good men and the spiritual concern of those who acknowledged it.

What is hidden behind the evasive monotony of the words 'good' and 'well'? Their repetitive use to describe the virtues ascribed to the good men is certainly not due solely to the inquisitorial format. Why are the leaders of dissidence of 'good faith'? The only explicit justification that regularly appears in the confessions is the one mentioned by Guiraud Delort in the

<sup>20</sup> 'Quadam die de qua non recolit, de sero tarde, Ermengaudus Vena de Regali Monte venit ad ipsum testem, dicens sibi quod duo de illis bonis hominibus qui dicuntur heretici, quorum unus vocabatur Raymundus *del Boc*, maritus olim de *na* Cabriaga de Albia, et socius ejus, cujus nomen ignorat ipse testis, ut dicit, erant in domo Guillermi de Mauriano et predicabant ibi et quod ipse testis veniret ad audiendum et videndum eos, quia erant boni homines et docebant multa bona. Tunc ipse testis et dictus Ermengaudus Vena simul venerunt ad domum dicti Guillermi de Mauriano et invenerunt dictum Raymundum *del Boc*, hereticum, dicentem quasi in fine sermonis sui quod ista temporalia et transitoria non fecerat Deus set celestia et eterna, et multa alia dixit tunc dictus hereticus, de quibus non recolit ipse testis, ut dicit. [...] Requisitus quare ipse testis et alii predicti adoraverunt predictos hereticos modo predicto, dixit quod propter hoc quia tunc credebant ipsos esse bonos homines et habere bonam fidem' (ibid., p. 216).

<sup>21</sup> 'Viginti octo anni vel triginta potuerunt esse vel circa, [...] duo homines de Albia [...] venerunt ad operatorium suum et dixerunt sibi sic: "*Signeur Peyre*, in villa ista venerunt duo probi homines qui sunt sancti homines et boni et bene consulti et sciunt multa bona verba, quare bonum est quod vadamus ad eos visitandum"' (Paris, BnF, Collection Doat, MS 27, fol. 34r).

quoted extract: the good men fasted very frequently and banned meat from their diet. Those who helped them in their clandestine life had to find them fish, as did Guilhabert Lantar and Raimon de Baffignac, according to the latter's tale. More generally, the good men 'led a good and holy life', say the accounts registered in the Inquisition records. A good share of their authority obviously stemmed from their personal asceticism. Their deeds and their pure and modest lifestyles seemed to be in agreement with their evangelical message, establishing it as genuine – as opposed, of course, to the less rigorous life of the secular clergy and, more broadly, to the power of the Church (which was easily perceived, by the populations who disliked its political and economic influence, as contradictory to its mediatory ambitions). Here we find the echo of eminently anticlerical themes, the leitmotif of the protest movements since the Gregorian reform: a pure and humble existence as the primary requirement of the apostolic life.<sup>22</sup>

In the case of the heretical dissidence in Languedoc in the last quarter of the thirteenth century and the first quarter of the fourteenth century, it should be noted that the good men, although they lived modestly, did not profess a general contempt of wealth, unlike the Waldensians. Contrary to the 'Poor Men of Lyon' (or the 'Poor Men of Christ'), who travelled around Languedoc during the same period, they obviously did not believe money to be impure in itself, as they handled it frequently. Money-lending (*commenda*, in the texts) was, indeed, part of their everyday business. The sections of the minutes that broach this subject are far too numerous and circumstantial to correspond to forced confessions intended to corroborate the inquisitors' scurrilous views. One defendant at the trials of 1299–1300, for example, described how the good men Raimon del Boc and Raimon Didier obtained a refund of fifteen pounds which the mother and aunt of *Magister* Garnier de Talapie 'had borrowed from them [...], as they could see in their entries' ('scriptis seu memorialibus'); this tells us that the good men kept accounts. As the two debtors were either dead or had gone missing, they obtained payment from their son and grandson.<sup>23</sup> There is a lack of information as to the details of this practice. It is not known if the loans granted by the good men gave rise to the payment of interest. The money may have come from deposits, and certainly from donations made by followers (many of whom, we may here recall, were affluent). The good men in particular received payment for the administration of the 'sacrament' *in articulo mortis* (during the trials of 1286–7, the judges systematically enquired about the sum of money given; the deed was obviously sinful from their point of view, as it had been a capital crime for clerics to practise simony since the Gregorian reform). Moreover, defendants sometimes mentioned that the

<sup>22</sup> For a recent and suggestive account, see Moore, *The War on Heresy*, pp. 45–161.

<sup>23</sup> Davis, *The Inquisition at Albi*, pp. 131–3. See the examples cited and discussed by Biget, 'Les cathares devant les inquisiteurs', p. 239, and Biget, 'Cathares des pays de l'Agout', pp. 302–3.

good men or their friends had made promises of wealth to encourage them to join the dissidence.<sup>24</sup> This did not necessarily mean in the form of loans but maybe, more broadly, the possibility of benefiting from specific economic solidarity thanks to the dissident network. We might also wonder whether the defendants were not seeking, in this case, to be somewhat excused for their crime by claiming non-spiritual motivations for their socializing with the heretics. Whatever the case, the good men's particular affinity with money deserves to be underlined. It is no doubt related to a major driving force of the dissidence. Indeed, its members overwhelmingly belonged to social groups that were doomed to spiritual indignity and deprived of all chance of salvation because of the opprobrium the Church cast on of the very practices that made them affluent: interest-bearing loans, trade and all business based on monetary speculation.

The dissident ministers, who were persons who led a 'good life' and were of 'good faith', brought 'much good' to their followers, as Guiraud Delort stated in his confession. Of course, possible loans from the good men or mutual assistance from their followers were not among the main motivations for dissident support, which remained a principally religious engagement. What, therefore, was the substance of the *multa bona* granted to the good men's friends? Mostly, it consisted in 'good words', as declared in Peire Astruc's confession. These *bona verba* corresponded to two kinds of practices: rituals and preaching.

Only two types of ritual appear in the confessions: the blessings and the *in articulo mortis* 'sacrament'. The first was mainly administered upon addressing a ritual reverence to the good men *in adventu et recessu*, upon greeting or parting. This was a series of three genuflections (certain confessions specified that the followers, who had previously removed their hats, placed their hands on the ground) accompanied thrice by a request to be blessed, such as: 'Bless us, good Christians, keep us from harm', to which the good men replied each time 'God will save you' or an equivalent phrase ('Pray to God', for example).<sup>25</sup> Moreover, the good men blessed the bread before eating in the company of their friends (this fact, however, is rarely mentioned).<sup>26</sup> The only

<sup>24</sup> See Biget, 'Cathares des pays de l'Agout', p. 303. See also, for instance, Davis, *The Inquisition at Albi*, p. 190 (first encounter of Bertran de Montagut with the *boni homines*).

<sup>25</sup> See for instance, in Raimon de Baffignac's confession: 'Dixit etiam quod cum fuerunt ad dictam boariam et viderunt dictos hereticos, ipsos reverenter, flexis genibus, adoraverunt, ter flectendo genua et manus ponentes singulis vicibus super terram et singulis etiam vicibus dicendo: "Benedicite, bon chrestia, parcite nobis"; et singulis etiam vicibus respondentibus ipsis hereticis: "Dious en sia pregats"' (Paris, BnF, MS lat. 12856, fol. 6v). About this ritual as documented in the records of the first inquisitions in Languedoc, see Pegg, *The Corruption of Angels*, pp. 92–103.

<sup>26</sup> See for instance Guilhem de Maurian's confession: 'Dixit etiam dictus testis quod illo sero quo venerunt ad domum predicti Raymundi, adhuc dicti heretici erant jejuni et tunc, parata mensa, Raymundus *del Boc*, hereticus predictus, qui erat antiquior alio,

'sacrament', the *consolament*, was exclusively referred to in the confessions using the inquisitorial term *hereticatio*, that equated it with a ritual for joining a sect. For the persecutors, it was the stamp of full adhesion to 'heresy'. The records often associate it with the vocabulary of *receptio* (though it remains unclear how far this agrees with the dissidents' concepts, if at all): 'ipse hereticus receptit eum et hereticavit'. The descriptions of the *hereticatio* were generally reduced to the form imposed by the judges: they thus provide very little detail. The dying persons first expressed their desire to place their souls in the hands of the good man by placing their hands within his while calling upon him to help them, in terms that were not specified. The good man then placed 'a book' (no doubt containing part of the Gospel), or his hands, above the believer's head while speaking the ritual words and genuflecting.<sup>27</sup>

The dissidence was thus distinguished by sacred practices that were reduced to the bare minimum. Significantly, the lack of any other heretical liturgy encouraged the inquisitors, who sought to portray dissidence as a fully fledged sect, to interpret the ritual greeting of followers as a ceremony of *adoratio* (the only word used to describe it in the confessional texts). In orthodoxy, by contrast, the status of the clerics, which formed the basis for a clerical society that stood separate from lay persons, was upheld through the intensive practice of numerous and elaborate mediations.<sup>28</sup> By rejecting the sacraments and with the absence of any real worship, the religious life of the good men and their friends was in contrast with the evolution of the orthodox religious practice since the eleventh century, which had been even further accentuated since the beginning of the thirteenth century.

The good men's 'good words' also included their sermons (which the Inquisition minutes normally referred to as *monitiones*). Between the *in adventu* and *in recessu* blessings, the heretical ministers' religious activity, apart from any possible *hereticatio*, consisted in speaking to followers. Information as to the content of their preaching is scarce within the Albi trials. The brief indications provided by the confession of *Magister* Garnier de Talapie, mentioned above, represent the dualism that characterized the good men's teachings, according to inquisitorial sources from the end of the thirteenth century and the beginning of the fourteenth.<sup>29</sup>

accepta mapa super humerum suum, tenens una manu panem et alia cultellum, dictis quibusdam verbis de quibus ipse testis non recordatur, distribuit panem ipsi testi et dicto Raymundo hospiti eorum et dicto consocio suo heretico' (Davis, *The Inquisition at Albi*, p. 124).

<sup>27</sup> See for instance *ibid.*, pp. 147, 173–4.

<sup>28</sup> On the connection between the denial of the sacraments (especially of the Eucharist) and the rejection of clerical power, see in particular Biget, 'Réflexions sur l'hérésie', pp. 34–5.

<sup>29</sup> See in particular some texts (dated 1301–5) edited from volume 34 of the Collection Doat at the BnF by R. Manselli, 'Per la storia della fede albigese nel secolo XIV: quattro documenti dell'inquisizione di Carcassona', in *Studi sul Medioevo cristiano offerti a Raffaello Morghen per il 90o anniversario dell'Istituto storico italiano (1883–1973)*, 2 vols. (Rome, 1974),

The lack of details found in the confessions regarding the doctrinal content of the *monitiones* is probably not solely due to a lack of attention on behalf of the inquisitors. Frequently, as in the case of Garnier de Talapie, the defendants did not remember what the good men had said (*non recolit*, say the texts). Also, the minutes systematically report that the defendant had 'not understood' (*non intellexit*) the words spoken by the dissident ministers during the *hereticationes* (though the insertion *ut dixit* often casts doubt on this lack of understanding). The possibility that defendants claimed not to have understood so as to minimize their transgressions certainly cannot be entirely disregarded. But this no doubt also provides insight into the limited internalization that seems to have characterized dissident religious life. More generally, dissidence seems to have been marked by the highly passive role played by followers. It would seem that the good men 'friends of God' at the end of the thirteenth century and beginning of the fourteenth, a little like the monks of the high Middle Ages, took sole responsibility for the celestial relationship on behalf of the believers – thus relieving those believers of the need to attain purity, or to understand the precise meaning of their holy words and gestures. The 'magical' (in the broad sense as defined by Durkheim and Bourdieu) efficiency of the rituals took precedence, excluding any mysticism; the spiritual commitment and the personal piety of the believer did not, or so it would seem, hold much importance.<sup>30</sup> This is very different from all heretical movements in the twelfth century, which were notable for their trend towards a universal calling and evangelical proselytism:<sup>31</sup> the good men of the late thirteenth century, by contrast, did not at all require their followers to live according to any particular demands.

The dualist theology of the dissident ministers, regardless of the mythological subtleties, did not provide the followers with much substance to guide their conduct.<sup>32</sup> What was important for the latter was no doubt to be reassured by 'holy, good and wise' men, whose pure life ensured their authority, that any form of materiality was evil and that salvation was ensured not (only or necessarily) by obedience to the Church, but simply by the administration of a sacrament *in extremis*. The behaviours for which the Church condemned to damnation the lower nobility or merchant middle-class (usury, trade, birth control and other breaches of pastoral discipline, or denial of the clergy's authority) were hence no longer to be seen as particularly sinful actions – no more than any other aspect of life. Finally, to use the venal words attributed to

I, 499–518. For a recent account of references to dualism in inquisition depositions, see P. Biller, 'Cathars and the Material World', in *God's Bounty: The Churches and the Natural World*, ed. P. Clarke and T. Claydon (Woodbridge, 2010), pp. 89–110.

<sup>30</sup> For the broad use of the term 'magical', see É. Durkheim, *Les formes élémentaires de la vie religieuse* (Paris, 1912); P. Bourdieu, *Langage et pouvoir symbolique* (Paris, 2001).

<sup>31</sup> Moore, *The War on Heresy*, pp. 45–161.

<sup>32</sup> See, for instance, J. H. Arnold, 'The Preaching of the Cathars', in *Medieval Monastic Preaching*, ed. C. Muessig (Leiden, 1998), pp. 183–205; Biller, 'Cathars and the Material World'.

Raimon de Baffignac in the extract referred to at the beginning of this article, the good men had the power to 'make a fair price' ('bonum forum facere possunt'), a far better price than the clerics, for the peace of the followers' souls. Their mediation was far less cumbersome, while what we might call their soteriological offer was infinitely more advantageous.

The triviality of these comparative short cuts must not eclipse the reason why people adhered to the good men's religion: spiritual anxiety and the followers' absolute need to ensure their salvation. The fact that the resistance continued for almost a century after the beginning of the inquisitorial campaign in Languedoc might in itself suggest the extent of the existential unease that compelled people, despite the ensuing dangers, to socialize with the good men. There are a number of clues in the confessions as to the deep desire that stirred the good men's friends. A royal official named Peire de Mézens, for example, travelling with Guilhem de Maurian, seized the opportunity, when they passed two men bearing crosses (as a sign of penitence for the crime of heresy), to talk to him (Guilhem) about the good men, telling him that he would sorely like ('multum vellet') to meet them – obviously already aware that Guilhem knew them well enough to occasionally act as their guide and messenger. Subsequently, as Guilhem told the inquisitors, Peire had repeated this wish to him 'on many occasions, possibly as many as ten or more times, upon different occasions'. When, eventually, Guilhem finally told Peire that he was to meet the heretics, it was 'with great joy', *cum magno gaudio*, that the latter asked him where they were to be found.<sup>33</sup> There is no reason to believe that these details were pure invention on behalf of Guilhem before the judges. (Guilhem might have been seeking to minimize his wrongs by exaggerating the personal resolve of those he had presented to the heretics, but it should be noted that the inquisitors had already promised him a pardon; his interest, therefore, was mostly to inform on a sufficient number of the good men's friends to satisfy the court.) The insistence and enthusiasm of Peire de Mézens were corroborated by the declarations of another defendant at the 1299–1300 trials, Raimon Augier, concerning the *hereticatio* of the very same Peire, who was said to have issued an ardent request on his death bed: 'the said sick man [...] told the said witness that he absolutely wanted

<sup>33</sup> 'Dixit quod XII anni possunt esse et ultra, ut sibi videtur de tempore, quod ipse testis ivit in Franciam cum magistro Petro de Medenco seu de Medano, tunc procuratore domini regis in senescallia Carcassonensi et Bitterrensi; et intrantes per civitatem de Turonis, in ingressu civitatis, obviaverunt duobus hominibus pro heresi crucesignatis et ex hoc sumpta occasione, idem magister P. dixit ipsi testi quod multum vellet videre hereticos et scire sectam eorum. Et extunc multociens, forte X vicibus et amplius, diversis temporibus, repeciit eadem verba idem magister P. eidem testi, videlicet quod libenter videret hereticos et sciret sectam eorum. [...] Tandem anno immediate preterito [...] dixit idem testis dicto magistro Petro quod modo posset videre illos bonos homines, videlicet hereticos, de quibus multociens rogaverat eum. Et tunc dictus magister cum magno gaudio quesivit ubi erant' (Davis, *The Inquisition at Albi*, pp. 128–9).

to be welcomed into the heretics' sect and that he shouldn't reject his wish, as this was, in any case, what he wanted.<sup>34</sup> (This account was not, at least not solely, a ploy of Raimon's to exonerate himself from having encouraged Peire to commit *hereticatio*, as it coincides with a detail found in Guilhem de Maurian's statement, according to which Peire became impatient because Raimon was taking a long time to bring the good men to his bedside.)<sup>35</sup> The numerous known cases of people returning to heresy after disavowal, in particular to receive the *consolament* at their time of death,<sup>36</sup> also bear witness to the strength of the religious feeling that led them to overlook the Church's outright condemnation of dissidence.

*The religious life of the good men and their friends: three general characteristics*

The summary analysis of the good men's religion and that of their friends, as seen through the Inquisition archives, highlights three general characteristics which all question, to different degrees, the relationships between dissidence and orthodox clericalism. These characteristics are non-exclusivity, informality and localism.

It is important first to underline the actual compatibility, within dissident practice, of favouring both the good men and the orthodox religion. There are abundant examples. Thus, Peire Aymeric, a merchant from the Albi region who became a 'heretic' in 1287, first received the last rites from the Church before asking the good men for the *consolament*, according to his nephew's confession.<sup>37</sup> Moreover, the cases of churchmen who were friends of the good men are not rare – such as the six canons of the church of Saint-Salvi d'Albi,<sup>38</sup> or the priest from Guitalens<sup>39</sup> denounced during the 1286–7 trials. Although

<sup>34</sup> 'Ipse testis venit ad dictum infirmum, qui dixit eidem testi quod omnino volebat recipi in sectam hereticorum et quod nullo modo contradiceret ei, quia modis omnibus sic volebat' (ibid., p. 147).

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., p. 130.

<sup>36</sup> See, for instance, Biget, 'Cathares des pays de l'Agout', p. 290 and n. 106.

<sup>37</sup> 'Item dixit quod mensis est vel circa, cum predictus Petrus Aymerici, avunculus ipsius testis qui loquitur, infirmaretur infirmitate de qua obiit, postquam jam communcasset, una nocte, [...] pulsatum fuit satis suaviter ad ostium et cum ipse testis vellet ire ad fenestram ad videndum quis pulsaret, dixit sibi dictus infirmus: "Vade, et aperi ostium"; et iens inferius, aperuit ostium et invenit ibi Poncium Nycolay predictum et duos hereticos [...], qui omnes ascenderunt superius et intraverunt cameram ubi dictus infirmus infirmabatur; et accedentes ad dictum infirmum, unus illorum hereticorum, receptis manibus dicti infirmi inter manus suas, recepit eum secundum ritum et modum hereticorum in sectam suam, ipso infirmo hoc volente et petente' (Paris, BnF, MS lat. 12856, fol. 23r).

<sup>38</sup> Confession of Vital Vignal. See J.-L. Biget, 'Sainte-Cécile et Saint-Salvi', pp. 88–9 and n. 126.

<sup>39</sup> Paris, BnF, MS lat. 12856, fol. 9r. See Biget, 'Cathares des pays de l'Agout', p. 297 and n. 130.



it seems obvious that the dissident followers could not avoid the religious obligations imposed by the Church, as to do so would risk them being accused of heresy, nothing proves that they actually had any desire to avoid them.

Some examples demonstrate that the good men's friends maintained a clear interest in orthodox ecclesiastical mediation concurrently, or simultaneously, with their resort to dissident mediation. Thus, a certain knight of Montdragon, named Matfred Baudrac, whom the Inquisition obliged to do penance at a non-determined date, had nevertheless made a donation to the nuns of La Salvetat in 1266.<sup>40</sup> The same was true for Bérenguier Azémar and Peire Baudier, citizens of Albi who, according to the above-mentioned confession (in 1299) of their fellow citizen Guiraud Delort, went to hear mass after having 'worshipped' the good men in Raimon Calvière's dovecot.<sup>41</sup> The phenomenon has been noticed by historians<sup>42</sup> (not just for Languedoc 'heresy', moreover),<sup>43</sup> and is sometimes referred to as Nicodemism or irenicism – labels taken from notions in the Reformation period. The first of these two terms presupposes a certain duplicity, to which it would no doubt be simplistic (and anachronistic) to reduce the dissidents' attitudes. The good men's friends, contrary to the nicodemites vilified by Calvin, did not necessarily feel that they had to choose between two clearly defined options.<sup>44</sup> They faced, in all likelihood, not an intimate choice between two entirely separate pathways, between two possible and exclusive Churches, but rather a doubt as to the best way to ensure their salvation, and a lack of confidence in ecclesiastical mediation. Their desire was to find the best solutions to their religious concerns. This was more of an indecisive quest, a wandering, than devotion to a new Church. The Languedoc dissidence, furthermore, had no institutional dimension. In the late period contemplated here, religious life with the good men was so scantily organized that the term 'church', even in its loosest sense of a simple community of followers, is hardly appropriate when referring to the 'heretics'.

This leads us to the second characteristic emerging from the Inquisition archives: the informal nature, in all ways, of heterodoxy. In the last quarter of

<sup>40</sup> Davis, *The Inquisition at Albi*, p. 126 and n. 11.

<sup>41</sup> See Biget, 'Extinction du catharisme', p. 334 and n. 116.

<sup>42</sup> See, for instance, Y. Dossat, 'Les cathares dans les documents de l'Inquisition', *Cathares en Languedoc = Cahiers de Fanjeaux* 3 (1968), 71–104 (esp. pp. 97–100: 'Iréanisme à Sorèze'); Arnold, *Inquisition and Power*, pp. 20–1; Biget, 'Réflexions sur l'hérésie', p. 66.

<sup>43</sup> See, in particular, G. G. Merlo, *Eretici e inquisitori nella società piemontese del Trecento, con l'edizione dei processi tenuti a Giaveno dall'inquisitore Alberto De Castellario (1335) e nelle Valli di Lanzo dall'inquisitore Tommaso di Casasco (1373)* (Turin, 1977), p. 102.

<sup>44</sup> See C. Ginzburg, *Il nicodemismo: simulazione e dissimulazione religiosa nell'Europa del '500* (Turin, 1970). É. Labrousse, 'Perspectives plurielles sur les frontières religieuses', in *Les frontières religieuses en Europe du XV<sup>e</sup> au XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, ed. R. Sauzet (Paris, 1992), pp. 205–13. T. Wanegffelen, *Ni Rome ni Genève: des fidèles entre deux chaires en France au XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Paris, 1997), about 'l'entre-deux confessionnel' in the early modern period.



the thirteenth century, a heretical hierarchy existed no more in the region of Albi than in the rest of Languedoc; there were merely good men who travelled around, attempting with diminishing success to perpetuate their tradition, communicating among themselves with difficulty, possibly attempting to maintain tenuous ties with their dissident friends in Lombardy.<sup>45</sup> A more or less general tendency to dualism was not sufficient to bestow upon their theology the precision and stability of a dogma, as views no doubt differed between ministers, whose varying level of education did not guarantee a uniform or very sophisticated magisterium.<sup>46</sup> The followers' convictions were obviously even more varied and were no doubt mostly lacking in doctrinal consistency. Lastly, dissident religious practice had all the appearances not of a structured church life, but of simple sociability, and was not very specific despite its clandestinity.<sup>47</sup> The words used in the confessions to talk of the relationships with heretic 'ministers' were those of friendship and familiarity. People went to 'visit' the good men; eating, drinking and talking in their company was evidently very important. The substance of dissidence mostly consisted in this everyday, though transgressive, exchange with the *boni homines*, as well as in actions to support their secret rituals and their illegal, rootless existence.

The informal condition of 'heresy' was not unknown to the Church, even though the latter took care, in the legal, theological or narrative texts, to present it as a subversive counter-Church. The inquisitorial documents relevant to the Albi region at the end of the thirteenth century and the beginning of the fourteenth century do not report any institutional heretic structures; they confirm that, in practice, the inquisition did not consider the dissidence to be very well organized. The minutes speak only of 'heretics' – as they named the good men – and of 'believers'. The latter term, unlike the former, was not used systematically and did not refer to a particular status that might have been conferred upon the relevant individuals. In most cases, 'believer' was obviously used as a synonym for 'friend' of the heretics.

Furthermore, the vocabulary associated with belief appears in two types of context. In one, it presupposes an affiliation with a well-structured organization; in the other, to the contrary, it proves the informal nature of dissidence. The records do indeed speak of the 'heretics' believers', as if the fact of mixing with the good men went hand-in-hand with joining a sect under their authority and with devotion to a specific religion.<sup>48</sup> And yet, according to the

<sup>45</sup> See Théry, 'L'hérésie des bons hommes'. Biget, 'Réflexions sur l'hérésie', pp. 42–3.

<sup>46</sup> For instance, we learn from a confession recorded by the inquisitors that two *boni homines* who lived in the Agout region between 1270 and 1285 could not read. See Biget, 'Cathares des pays de l'Agout', p. 283 and n. 73.

<sup>47</sup> See Vilandrau, 'Inquisition et "sociabilité cathare"'.

<sup>48</sup> See, for instance, Paris, BnF, MS lat. 12856, fol. 6v: 'Dictus Augerius et ipse recognoverunt se credentes eorum, scilicet hereticorum'. Ibid., fol. 7r: 'Bernardus Arnaldi de

minutes of the confessions and sentences, the defendants' guilt resided only in the fact that they 'had believed that the heretics were good men', which tended to clear the notion of 'believer' of any imputation of conversion to a faith or engagement in a sect-type group.

As already mentioned, only the *consolament* ritual, from the inquisitorial point of view, marked the admission of the 'believer' into the 'heretics' sect' (hence the notion of *hereticatio* used in the documents to refer to that which the inquisitors considered to be an induction ceremony, during which the 'believers', according to them, formally expressed their desire to be *recepti*, that is, 'admitted'). Thus, the 'heretical sect' as defined by the Inquisition only included those who had received the *consolament*, that is to say, almost exclusively the good men. Except for this very limited group, the large majority of individuals liable to inquisitorial sanction were only judged according to their degree of socialization with the 'heretics'.

To legally qualify the misconduct that could be attributed to the good men's friends (and more generally to the supporters of all other types of 'heretics' around whom dissident movements developed), canonical legislation had first only defined two categories of offenders: the 'defenders of heretics' (*defensores*) on one hand and, on the other hand, their 'hosts' (*receptatores*), meaning all those who 'welcomed them or helped them in their homes or on their lands', according to the terms of the canon *Sicut ait beatus Leo* promulgated by Alexander III at the third Lateran council of 1179.<sup>49</sup> The simple fact of giving credit to the good men's words and of believing in the effectiveness of their rituals was therefore not clearly, at that time, considered to be a crime against the orthodox faith. The same canon of Lateran III merely regretted the fact that the 'heretics' of Gascony and Toulouse 'convinced the weak and simple to embrace their views' ('ad consensum suum simplices attrahant et infirmos').<sup>50</sup> In the text, these credulous persons were plainly

*Dosans significavit dictis hereticis quod de credentibus et amicis eorum de Carcassona intellexerat sinistra'.*

<sup>49</sup> X 5.7.8; *Corpus iuris canonici*, ed. E. Friedberg, 2 vols. (Leipzig, 1879–81 [repr. Graz, 1959]), II, 780: 'Eos et defensores et receptatores eorum anathemati decernimus subiacere et sub anathemate prohibemus ne quis eos in domo vel in terra sua tenere vel fovere aut negotiationem cum eis exercere presumat'. The third canon of the council of Toulouse (1119) and the twenty-third canon of the second Lateran council (1139) only spoke of *defensores*: *Sacrorum conciliorum nova et amplissima collectio*, ed. J.-D. Mansi, 31 vols. (Venice, 1759–98), XXI, 226–7, 532. The fourth canon of the council of Tours (1163) prohibited 'ne receptaculum quisquam eis in terra sua prebere aut presidium impertire presumat' and excommunicated 'tanquam particeps iniquitatis eorum' anyone who didn't conform to the prohibition of all contact with the heretics, but it did not mention *credentes*, although it referred to the possible existence of *conventicula*, that is of small heretical houses or communities (*ibid.*, 1177–8).

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*: 'Quia in Vasconia, Albigesio et partibus Tolosanis et aliis locis ita hereticorum, quos alii Catharos, alii Publicanos, alii Patarenos, et alii aliis nominibus vocant, invaluit damnanda perversitas, ut jam non in occulto, sicut alibi, nequitiam suam exercent,

different from the *defensores* and the *receptatores*, mentioned afterwards, who were the only ones to be formally condemned. Under Innocent III, when the repressive process was stepped up (concomitant, we should note, with the beginning of a crucial phase in the construction of pontifical theocracy and with the development of the ensuing ecclesiological contestation), the legal texts – for example the decretal *Vergentis in senium* (1199) or the *Excommunicamus* canon of the fourth Lateran council (1215) – added two ancillary categories: the ‘partisans’ (*fautores*) and the ‘believers’ (*credentes*).<sup>51</sup> And in another *Excommunicamus* canon dated 1229, and included in the *Liber Extra* five years later, Gregory IX assimilated the fact of being a heretic with that of ‘believing in the errors of heretics’, with the formulation ‘we similarly consider to be heretics all those who believe in their errors’ (*credentes autem eorum erroribus similiter hereticos iudicamus*).<sup>52</sup> In an article of the bull *Ad Extirpanda* (1252, dealing with heretics in the Italian cities), Innocent IV added to a passage taken from *Vergentis in senium* a sentence that summarized this legal evolution: ‘Those who believe in their errors should be punished as heretics too’ (*Credentes quoque erroribus hereticorum tanquam heretici puniantur*).<sup>53</sup>

The loose, vague, poorly outlined forms of adhesion – or, to use a more appropriate term, of participation – in dissident religious life had therefore made it necessary, in order to render persecution technically possible, to legislate on the crime of simply ‘believing’ and on its equivalence to the crime of heresy itself. It remains the case that the distinction between *heretici* and *credentes*, between ‘good men’ and the ‘good men’s friends’, was perfectly clear in the reports drawn up under the inquisitors’ authority. The imprecision and the variability of the actual content of the *credentes*’ guilty ‘belief’ were clearly present in the minds of the jurists – who were the only ecclesiastics in any way concerned (due to professional reflexes) with the nuances of this particular classification. The Languedocian jurist Bernard de Montmirat (the renowned *abbas antiquus*), for example, made a careful distinction in his comments on the *Decretals* (drawn up between 1259 and 1266) between those who ‘believed in the errors of the heretics’ and those who ‘believed that

sed errorem suum publice manifestent et ad consensum suum simplices attrahant et infirmos, eos et defensores et receptatores eorum’.

<sup>51</sup> *Vergentis in senium* (X. 5.7.10; *Corpus iuris canonici*, ed. Friedberg, II, 782): ‘Contra defensores, receptatores, fautores et credentes hereticorum aliquid severius duximus statuendum’; *Excommunicamus* (X. 5.7.13; *Corpus iuris canonici*, ed. Friedberg, II, 788): ‘Credentes preterea, receptatores, defensores et fautores hereticorum excommunicationi decernimus subiacere’.

<sup>52</sup> X. 5.7.15; *Corpus iuris canonici*, ed. Friedberg, II, 789.

<sup>53</sup> *Ad extirpanda*, §27, Latin text and French translation in P. Gilli and J. Théry, *Le gouvernement pontifical et l’Italie des villes au temps de la théocratie (fin XIIIe–mi-XIVe s.)* (Montpellier, 2010), pp. 569–88 (pp. 580–1).

certain heretics were good men<sup>54</sup> – though this did not prevent him from recommending the same sentence for all. In practice, in dealing with the accused, it would indeed have been tricky for the Inquisition to distinguish between these two types of belief. And the formulation 'having believed that the heretics were good men' used in the sentences as we saw, reveals the truth: the dissidence did not consist in an alternative faith. It was first and foremost the recognition of a religious Christian authority outside the Roman Catholic Church.

This brings us to the final topic of reflection inspired by the inquisitorial archives, concerning the notion of 'good man'. *Bos homs* was the name most commonly used for the dissident ministers by their friends (the records also show, though less frequently, the expressions 'prudent men' (*probi homines*), 'good Christians' and 'friends of God'). The expression became common as early as the twelfth century: the first occurrence appears to be found in a famous letter, dated 1165, that relates a confrontation between Languedoc prelates and good men.<sup>55</sup> It was still part of the 'heretics' everyday language' ('comunis loquela hereticorum') at the end of the thirteenth century, as we see in the terms of a form from the apostolic penitentiary written by Cardinal Bentevenga in 1289 regarding a case concerning some inhabitants of Carcassonne: 'Fuissetque eis indicatum quod essent de illis hereticis qui juxta communem loquelam hereticorum boni homines nuncupantur.'<sup>56</sup> Yet this name was not specific to dissidence, or even to religion. This is a fact that deserves very careful consideration if we are to grasp the nature of Languedoc 'heresy'.<sup>57</sup> Since the early Middle Ages, the term *boni homines* or *probi homines* had been used to refer to the most affluent people in local society, those who

<sup>54</sup> Cited by H. A. Kelly, 'Inquisitorial Due Process and the Status of Secret Crimes', in *Proceedings of the Eighth International Congress of Medieval Canon Law* (1988), ed. S. Chodorow (Vatican City, 1992), pp. 407–27, repr. in H. A. Kelly, *Inquisitions and Other Trial Procedures in the Medieval West* (Aldershot, Burlington, 2001), no. II (p. 414). See also H. Maisonneuve, *Études sur les origines de l'inquisition*, 2nd edn (Paris, 1960). A. Boureau, *Satan hérétique: histoire de la démonologie (1280–1330)* (Paris, 2004), pp. 46–8.

<sup>55</sup> *Sacrorum conciliorum nova et amplissima collectio*, ed. Mansi, XXII, 157–68. Roger of Howden, *Gesta Regis Henrici Secundi*, ed. W. Stubbs, 3 vols. (London, 1868–70), II, 105–17.

<sup>56</sup> *Der Registerband des Cardinalgrosspönitentiars Bentevenga*, ed. C. Eubel, *Archiv für katholisches Kirchenrecht* 64 (Mainz, 1890), pp. 3–69 (pp. 39–40), cited by A. Fossier, 'La pénitencerie pontificale en Avignon (XIV<sup>e</sup> s.), ou la justice des âmes comme style de gouvernement', *Les justices d'église dans le Midi, XIe–XVe s. = Cahiers de Fanjeaux* 42 (2007), 199–239 (p. 232).

<sup>57</sup> See in particular M. G. Pegg, 'On the Cathars, the Albigensians, and Good Men of Languedoc', *Journal of Medieval History* 27 (2001), 181–95; Théry, 'L'hérésie des bons hommes', esp. pp. 107–16; R. I. Moore, 'When did the Good Men of the Languedoc Become Heretics?' (unpublished lecture in Berkeley, 2006, online: <http://rimoore.net/GoodMen.html>); M. Bourin, 'Les dissidents religieux dans la société villageoise languedocienne à la fin du XIII<sup>e</sup> et au début du XIV<sup>e</sup> siècle', in *L'hérétique au village: les minorités religieuses dans l'Europe médiévale et moderne*, ed. P. Chareyre (Toulouse, 2011), pp. 201–16; Moore, *The War on Heresy*, pp. 201–2.

played a key role in the socio-political life of communities (members of the juries that dispensed justice, representatives of the authorities in dealings with the lords, etc.).<sup>58</sup> The name 'good man' referred to an authority whose main characteristic was *that of being native to a place*. This was indeed the case with the authority of the dissident good men in Languedoc, whose 'heresy' was due to their rejection of an ecclesiastical institution that had been profoundly clericalized and centralized. Regarding this matter, we may note that the monks belonging to the Grandmont order, founded at a time when the boundaries between reform movements and heresy remained unclear, were called 'good men'.<sup>59</sup> Now, the rule established by the founder Étienne de Muret (deceased in 1124), which obliged the good men of Grandmont to lead an evangelical life, specifically forbade any difference in status between the clerics and the laymen within the order.<sup>60</sup>

Moreover, the heretics referred to here were not the only dissidents in Languedoc to be called good men by their followers. The inquisitorial documents provide proof that the name was also used by the Waldensians.<sup>61</sup> Ultimately, the specificity of the dissidence of the good men who were not

<sup>58</sup> See, in particular, G. Musca, 'Una famiglia di *boni homines* nella Terlizzi normanna e sveva', *Archivio storico pugliese* 21 (1968), 34–62; K. Nehlsen-von Stryk, *Die boni homines des frühen Mittelalters: unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der fränkischen Quellen* (Berlin, 1981); M. Bourin-Derruau, *Villages médiévaux en Bas-Languedoc: genèse d'une sociabilité*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1987), I, 315–24, and II, 177–9; P. Ourliac, 'Juges et justiciables au XI<sup>e</sup> siècle: les *boni homines*', in *Justice et justiciables: mélanges Henri Vidal*, Recueil de mémoires et travaux publié par la Société d'histoire du droit et des institutions des anciens pays de droit écrit 16 (Montpellier, 1994), pp. 17–33; A. Guillou, 'Gérontes et bons hommes d'Orient et d'Occident', *Jahrbuch der österreichischen Byzantinistik* 44 (1994), 125–34; H. Gilles, 'Probi homines', in *Lexikon des Mittelalters* (Munich, 1995), VII, 234; M. Bourin, 'Les *boni homines* de l'an mil', in *La justice en l'an mil* (Paris, 2003), pp. 53–65. And see for instance a letter from Pope Alexander III (1159–81) to the people of Città di Castello, in *Papsturkunden in Italien: Reiseberichte zur Italia pontificia*, ed. P. F. Kehr, 6 vols. (Vatican City, 1977), V, 177: 'Dilectis filiis bonis hominibus majoribus et minoribus de civitate que dicitur Castelli tam presentibus quam futuris in perpetuum'.

<sup>59</sup> My thanks to Didier Méhu, who long ago drew my attention to this use of *boni homines* to name the members of the order of Grandmont. See Giles Constable, *The Reformation in the Twelfth Century* (Cambridge, 1996), pp. 58–9, 74. See also the striking fact observed by R. I. Moore, 'When did the Good Men of the Languedoc Become Heretics?', that according to Roger of Howden (*Gesta Regis Henrici Secundi*, I, 7, 194), King Henry II of England, when he fell ill in 1170, insisted that he did not want to be buried at the abbey of Fontevraud, and demanded instead that his body be given to the holy *boni homines* of Grandmont.

<sup>60</sup> About the order of Grandmont, see A. Leclerc, *Histoire de l'abbaye de Grandmont, paroisse de Saint-Sylvestre (Haute-Vienne)* (Saint-Prouant, 1999 [1st edn 1909]); C. A. Hutchinson, *The Hermit Monks of Grandmont* (Kalamazoo, 1989); J. Becquet, *Études grandmontaines* (Ussel, 1998).

<sup>61</sup> See, for instance, *L'inquisition en Quercy: le registre des pénitences de Pierre Cellan (1241–1242)*, ed. J. Duvernoy (Castelnaud-la-Chapelle, 2001), pp. 74, 76, 84, 112, etc. Also G. Audisio, *Les vaudois: histoire d'une dissidence (XII<sup>e</sup>–XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle)* (Paris, 1998 [1st edn Turin, 1989]), pp. 53–4 (an occurrence from the diocese of Castres, 1327).

Waldensians, and that of their friends, was rather a lack of one: *they did not have their own name*.<sup>62</sup> This is a very important piece of historical information in itself; one that has been hidden beneath the names arbitrarily attributed to the dissidents in the anti-heretic treaties and repeated, since that time, throughout historiography. The notions of 'Cathars' and 'Catharism' in particular, which have been commonly used since the nineteenth century, hide the informal reality of the dissidence of these nameless good men by giving it an identity that it never had.<sup>63</sup> These terms are absent from the archives of the Languedoc inquisition (which never refer to the non-Waldensian good men other than by the generic name 'heretics').<sup>64</sup> In his highly important doctoral thesis, Uwe Brunn determined that Eckbert von Schönau, the Benedictine monk who introduced the use of the word 'Cathar' to refer to the heretics of Cologne in 1163, took it directly, along with its definition ('catharos, id est mundos' – 'cathars, meaning pure'), from the writings of Innocent I, a fifth-century pope, on the subject of heresy in late antiquity.<sup>65</sup> This clearly demonstrates the importance of abandoning this terminology.

To a large extent, a study of the religious practices and beliefs of the heretical good men and of their followers, based on a critical reading of the sources related to inquisitorial practices, remains to be done. These documents have rarely been taken into consideration for themselves, and even less frequently in relation to the precise socio-political environment in which they were produced; the historiography of 'Catharism' has often been restricted to searching them for elements to confirm the data systematically put forward by doctrinal or narrative sources.<sup>66</sup> Thus, the ecclesiastical construction of

<sup>62</sup> See Théry, 'L'hérésie des bons hommes', 108–17, for further reflections on this fact.

<sup>63</sup> See Pegg, *The Corruption of Angels*, pp. 15–19; Pegg, 'On the Cathars, the Albigenians, and Good Men of Languedoc'; Théry, 'L'hérésie des bons hommes'; Pegg, 'The Paradigm of Catharism'.

<sup>64</sup> In his *Practica inquisitionis* (a treatise, not a source immediately produced by inquisitorial activity, although it uses inquisitorial material), Bernard Gui speaks of 'Manichees', as opposed to Waldensians. *Practica inquisitionis heretice pravitatis auctore Bernardo Guidonis*, ed. C. Douais (Paris, 1886), pp. 129, 223, 239, etc.

<sup>65</sup> U. Brunn, 'Cathari, catharistae et cataphrigitii, ancêtres des cathares du XIIe siècle?', *Heresis* 36–7 (2002), 183–200 (pp. 190–1 and nn. 23, 25); Brunn, *Des contestataires aux 'cathares'*.

<sup>66</sup> But see the new approaches, for instance, of Biget, 'Les cathares devant les inquisiteurs'; Biget, 'Cathares des pays de l'Agout'; P. Biller, 'The Cathars of Languedoc and Written Material', in *Heresy and Litteracy, 1000–1530*, ed. P. Biller and A. Hudson (Cambridge, 1994), pp. 61–82; Arnold, 'The Preaching of the Cathars'; P. Biller, 'Cathar Peacemaking', in *Christianity and Community in the West: Essays for John Bossy*, ed. S. Ditchfield (Aldershot, 2001), pp. 1–24; Arnold, *Inquisition and Power*; Pegg, *The Corruption of Angels*; Vilandrau, 'Inquisition et "sociabilité cathare"'; *Texts and the Repression of Medieval Heresy*, ed. Biller and Bruschi; I. Bueno, 'A Comparison of Interrogation in Two Inquisitorial Courts of the Fourteenth Century', *Annual of Medieval Studies at CEU* 12 (2006), 49–68; *Inquisitors and Heretics in Thirteenth-Century Languedoc*, ed. P. Biller, C. Bruschi and S. Sneddon; Sackville, *Heresy and Heretics*, pp. 114–52.



heresy and of the myths that it produced ultimately led historians to view the dissidence of the nameless good men as an alternative Church.

As can be gleaned from the Inquisition archives of the Albi region from the last quarter of the thirteenth century, the real situation was quite different. That which the Church persecuted as heresy was the practice of Christian religion with two main characteristics: it was para- or extra-ecclesial, and those who held a mediation function (the *boni homines*) did not impose any constraint on the believers' lifestyle. The power derived from the holy authority of the good men was reduced to a bare minimum: they may have given advice on evangelical life, but made no demands that carried the threat of not attaining salvation, as that was ensured by their *in extremis* sacrament, regardless of the kind of life lived by the believer. The dissidence arose from a 'malaise', as formerly described by Gabriele Zanella in a series of pioneering articles on heresy in northern Italy.<sup>67</sup> It emerged from the feelings of dissatisfaction and anxiety aroused by the new ecclesiastical mediation, and was felt particularly within certain circles that formed a minority and were socially rather privileged: prosperous citizens, and members of the nobility who had remained marginal to the changing economic and socio-political landscape, and thus found their traditional status under threat. More specifically, the malaise which led such people to socialize with the good men was induced by the demands of the Church – demands clearly related to its new institutional form, that is, to clericalism. By transposing, *mutatis mutandis*, a notion recently proposed for the modern and contemporary periods, we might say that the good men's dissidence, doubtless as for most 'heresies' in the medieval West, fell within 'religious anticlericalism'.<sup>68</sup>

*Heretical dissidence and episcopal theocracy in Albi: the ultra-clericalism of Bernard of Castanet*

*A belligerent bishop appointed by the pope to regain control*

Due to a lack of sources – meaning due to the lack of intense repression – we know practically nothing of 'heresy' in Albi between the middle of the 1240s and the end of the 1270s, which marked the beginning of a period covered with some precision by the confessions recorded during the inquisition trials held by Bernard of Castanet from 1285. The bishop Durand de Beaucaire (1228–54), during the last decade of his rule, followed by his successor, Bernard de Combret (1254–71), did not put much zeal into

<sup>67</sup> G. Zanella, *Hereticalia: temi e discussioni* (Spoleto, 1995).

<sup>68</sup> See *L'humaniste, le protestant et le clerc: de l'anticléricalisme croyant au XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle*, ed. T. Wanegfellen (Clermont-Ferrand, 2004); *L'anticléricalisme croyant: jalons pour une histoire, 1890–1914*, ed. C. Sorrel (Chambéry, 2004).

combatting the good men's dissidence. J.-L. Biget has shown that their lack of eagerness stemmed from the need to maintain good relations with the consular bourgeoisie in order to secure their support in resisting the French king's claims to the feudal lordship in Albi.<sup>69</sup> The city, held by the bishop since the elimination of Viscount Trencavel as a result of the Albigenian crusade, was the object of increasingly hardy undertakings by the royal officials, following the surrender, to King Louis IX, of the count of Toulouse Raimon VII (1243), the last opponent to Capetian power in Languedoc. Outside Albi, however, for the entire diocese, the documents left by the more ardent inquisitorial affairs give proof that 'heresy' was prosperous during this period.<sup>70</sup> This was no doubt also the case in the episcopal city.

It is likely that the dissidence was further stimulated by Bernard of Castanet's government. The new bishop's relentless combat against 'heresy' was but one of the elements (although a key one) of a general policy that aimed to bring to heel a local society which had forever been recalcitrant with regard to the Roman Church's central authority. The ruthless wielding of a true episcopal monarchy, fashioned according to the *plenitudo potestatis* model claimed by the thirteenth-century popes for all Christianity, exacerbated all of the reasons for the para-ecclesial religious practices around the good men.

In 1276, Innocent V appointed Bernard of Castanet to the Albi episcopate under his own authority, after a five-year vacancy of the see brought about by the canons' inability to agree upon Bernard de Combret's successor. To rule a diocese that had been renowned as a land of heresy since the twelfth century,<sup>71</sup> the first Dominican pope thus chose a zealous servant of pontifical sovereignty, a tough man who had found employment, during the previous decade, in situations of strife between the Roman Church and secular societies. A jurist from the region of Montpellier, Bernard of Castanet had entered the Curia in 1265 and had soon reached the positions of Papal Chaplain and auditor of causes of the Sacred Palace. He had in particular carried out two difficult missions: in 1266 against the Ghibellines of Piacenza and Cremona,<sup>72</sup> and from 1268 to 1270 against the Rhineland rebels who were holding the archbishop of Cologne prisoner. Upon this occasion, he had resorted to particularly harsh canonical sanctions, in particular promulgating

<sup>69</sup> Biget, 'Un procès d'inquisition', pp. 312–13.

<sup>70</sup> *Inquisitors and Heretics*, ed. Biller, Bruschi and Sneddon. See also Biget, 'Un procès d'inquisition', pp. 277–8.

<sup>71</sup> See J.-L. Biget, 'Les "Albigeois": remarques sur une dénomination', in *Inventer l'hérésie?*, ed. Zerner, pp. 219–56, repr. in Biget, *Hérésie et inquisition*, pp. 142–69; Moore, *The War on Heresy*, pp. 118–22.

<sup>72</sup> Gilli and Théry, *Le gouvernement pontifical*, pp. 113–99; J. Théry, "'Cum verbis blandis et sepe nefandis": une mission pontificale en Lombardie après la bataille de Bénévent (1266–1267)', in *Legati e delegati papali: profili, ambiti d'azione e tipologie di intervento nei secoli XII–XIII*, ed. M. P. Alberzoni and C. Zey (Milan, 2012), pp. 195–218.



major excommunication against all citizens of Cologne, obliging all of the clergy to desert and forbidding all supplies for its inhabitants.<sup>73</sup> The same dogged fighting spirit, directed at gaining the submission of the local clergy and laity to the Church's power, presided over his actions as the bishop of Albi.

On the day following his arrival in the city, in January 1277, Bernard of Castanet announced that a new cathedral was to be built. The tremendous financial needs generated by the Sainte-Cécile building site, further increased by extensive construction work on the episcopal palace, went side-by-side with a forceful policy to retrieve any of the Church's property that lay within the hands of the non-clergy, in particular through the compulsory so-called 'recovery' of tithes (those who failed and refused to pay were excommunicated),<sup>74</sup> and with the systematic enforcement of episcopal pre-eminence within a rigorous and rationalized administration of the diocese's temporal goods, often taken badly by the lower clergy. At the beginning of the fourteenth century, the bishopric of Albi had become one of the richest in France. The fruits of this success, the massive fortifications of the episcopal palace of La Berbie and the first formidable walls of the new church, heralded the new power of the ecclesiastical magisterium.

#### *Exceptionally intransigent Christian discipline*

In the field of Christian discipline, the policy implemented by Bernard of Castanet was particularly authoritarian – one could call it a policy of terror.<sup>75</sup> In order to drive straying groups back to the Church, the very notion of pastoralism, which involved efforts to persuade the soul and thus required a certain amount of comprehension, seems to have been largely discarded by the new bishop in favour of systematic repression.

Castanet waged an outright war against moneylending. The first canon to be added to the diocese's synodal statutes shortly after his advent proclaimed the excommunication of moneylenders and obliged priests to publicly denounce them every Sunday and on holidays.<sup>76</sup> Campaigns were soon organized to flush out the guilty parties and to oblige them to hand over their profits. The ecclesiastical court was particularly hard on the accused, who on occasion seem to have suffered mistreatment and, it seems, were denied

<sup>73</sup> See J. Théry, 'Les Albigeois et la procédure inquisitoire: le procès pontifical contre Bernard de Castanet, évêque d'Albi et inquisiteur (1307–1308)', *Heresis* 33 (2000), 7–48 (pp. 13–16).

<sup>74</sup> Biget, 'Aspects du crédit'; Biget, 'La restitution des dîmes'.

<sup>75</sup> See J. Théry, 'Une politique de la terreur: L'évêque d'Albi Bernard de Castanet et l'inquisition', in *Les inquisiteurs: portraits de défenseurs de la foi en Languedoc (XIIIe–XIVe siècle)*, ed. L. Albaret (Toulouse, 2001), pp. 71–87.

<sup>76</sup> See Biget, 'La législation synodale'.

all right to appeal. The bishop thus chose to attack, head on, the ordinary practices of merchants, who were not only condemned to eternal damnation, but were also harassed in their earthly life by the episcopal system of justice. In 1302 the inhabitants of Cordes presented the royal reformers with a list of grievances against Bernard of Castanet; this contained five articles dedicated to the abuse used in the repression of moneylending.<sup>77</sup>

Measures taken to control the sexual practices of the faithful were also exceptionally stringent.<sup>78</sup> Bernard of Castanet particularly endeavoured to be personally made aware of and to condemn forms of behaviour in this area that were forbidden (there is evidence, in particular, of a Sainte-Cécile canon who was sentenced to prison for life when found guilty of sodomy). The additions made to the diocese synodal statutes, in 1280, have no known equivalent in the Capetian kingdom of that period. They explicitly mention sodomites, proclaiming the excommunication of all those who sinned against nature, and they compelled those among the clerics who had cure of souls, if they had committed a sin of the flesh, to *repeat* their confession; if they failed to do this they would be suspended. This measure even seems to have been extended to laymen who infringed the new and very precise synodal regulation of sexual practices. In synod, Bernard of Castanet did indeed impose upon the confessors a particularly extensive conception of *contra naturam* sin that included any carnal intercourse that was beyond a very narrowly defined 'natural mode'. As specified by the members of the clergy who were questioned during a papal enquiry in 1307–8,<sup>79</sup> any coupling that was not performed 'as is commonly done, meaning embracing each other [that is, from the front] or from the side' or during which the man 'shed his seed in whatsoever manner outside the due repository' (*nisi in instrumento debito*), was assimilated to an act contrary to nature, for which the authors were *ipso facto* excommunicated and could only be absolved after having confessed to the bishop in person.<sup>80</sup> The inhabitants of Albi who failed to

<sup>77</sup> Archives du Tarn, AC Cordes, FF 49. See C. Portal, *Histoire de la ville de Cordes, Tarn (1222–1799)* (Albi, 1902), pp. 30–1.

<sup>78</sup> See Biget, 'Législation', and Théry, 'Les Albigeois', pp. 28–30.

<sup>79</sup> The records of this enquiry, kept at the Vatican Archives (Archivio Segreto Vaticano, henceforth ASV, *Collectoriae* 404), are edited in my doctoral thesis (2003): J. Théry, 'Avec le vrai et le faux: l'enquête sur les crimes de l'évêque d'Albi Bernard de Castanet (1307–1308)', forthcoming. See Théry, 'Les Albigeois', and the abstracts of the doctoral thesis in *Revue Mabillon* 15 (2004), 277–9, and in *Heresis* 40 (2004), 192–7.

<sup>80</sup> ASV, *Collectoriae* 404, fol. 67v (deposition of Raimon Delort, a priest from Albi): 'Ipse episcopus mandavit eis quod quicumque, esset masculus vel femina, qui venirent ad eorum confessionem et confiterentur eis quod inter se commixti fuissent carnaliter aliter quam comuniter fiat, videlicet se amplexando vel utroque a latere jacendo per modum naturalem, tamen quod ipsi curati non absolvent eos, sed quod eos remitterent ad ipsum episcopum absolvendos ab illis peccatis; et hoc eis imposuit quod nisi facerent quod ipse eos faceret poni in carcere. Item dixit ipse qui loquitur quod aliqui, tam masculi quam femine, fuerunt sibi qui loquitur confessi predictum modum commixtionis carnalis; et cum eis diceret quod

report their transgressions to their confessors, or who subsequently refused to seek pardon from the bishop, had to live with the notion of their excommunication and knew that they might die in a state of mortal sin. This situation necessarily led to a certain alienation from the Church. The legal framework established by Bernard of Castanet for the sexuality of his subjects was, moreover, in all likelihood designed to prevent people from practising birth control – a practice which, like the loan of money with interest, was particularly prevalent among the new merchant middle-classes, who wished to limit the division of assets to protect their wealth.

The immoderate use of spiritual sanction completes this portrait of Bernard of Castanet's excessively repressive spiritual government. Excommunication, traditionally used flexibly, for persuasive purposes, was applied with the obvious aim of permanently excluding any black sheep. Similarly, the sentences of interdict, which were applied in particular to lands belonging to those who refused to hand back Church goods as demanded by the bishop, were applied to the bitter end, seemingly with no mercy at all. There are traces of *funera per arbores*, meaning that the bodies of believers living on lands that were under interdict were left to hang from trees, as they had died while being refused the last rites and a Christian burial.<sup>81</sup>

*The battle against the consular oligarchy to preserve the episcopal temporal lordship*

This stringent Christian discipline represented only one facet of the clerical power exerted over the citizens of Albi. Political life too was marked by a highly authoritarian clericalism. As lord of the city, Bernard of Castanet practised a temporal government that was no less intransigent than his spiritual administration.

Insofar as the documents show, the bishop seems to have dispensed secular justice with extreme severity. The testimonies of the inhabitants of Albi recorded by the papal inquisitors in 1307–8 (which obviously stem from sources that did not shed good light on the bishop but are partly corroborated by the rare archives that were kept) mention the merciless repression of crimes through spectacular and bloody punishments. Apparently, Bernard of

irent ad episcopum predictum ad obtinendum absolutionem super predictis, quia ipse testis qui loquitur non audebat eos absolvere, illi confitentes dicebant quod ipse eos absolveret si vellet, quia ipsi nunquam irent ad episcopum propter hoc'. *Ibid.*, fol. 131v (deposition of Peire Enjalran, a priest of the cathedral of Albi): 'Dixit quod ipse audivit recitare in sinodo sententiam excommunicationis lata per dictum episcopum in illos qui comiterent peccatum contra naturam, et audivit dici quod episcopus interpretabatur illam sententiam qualitercumque vir effunderet semen, nisi in instrumento mulieris debito'.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, fol. 163r (deposition of Peire Ferreol, a Franciscan friar from the house of Albi): 'Item non vidit eum reconciliantem ecclesias vel cimiteria; et tamen vidit terram domini Bertrandi vicecomitis et totam terram Lautraguesii interdictam et funera per arbores.'

Castanet often stepped in to increase the sentences. Even for children or for a young pregnant woman guilty of theft, the bishop seems to have refused all mercy, imposing death sentences despite the families' pleas.<sup>82</sup>

This harshness cannot be explained solely by the will to inculcate subjection, but should be considered with a more specific stake in mind: that of municipal autonomy in Albi. The bishop was in this case seeking to establish his pre-eminence despite the charter obtained by the bourgeois in 1269, which entrusted the judgement of criminals to a jury of *probi homines* (reputable men) gathered together with the episcopal bayle. The subordination of the municipal institutions required a relentless fight against the ambitions of the city's elite, who were eager to extend their meagre powers. Bernard of Castanet blocked the establishment of autonomous municipal notaries, banned the regulation of professions or the free distribution of taxes by the consuls, contested the *universitas's* right to a common house and probably attempted to restrict the freedom acquired under the episcopate of his predecessor. However, by encouraging the infringements of a triumphant royal jurisdiction, with systematic appeals lodged against the judgements of the *Temporalité* (the secular court of the lord bishop), the oligarchy did succeed in implementing a strategy particularly dangerous to the episcopal power. As from 1278, Bernard of Castanet was obliged to defend his rights before the seneschal of Carcassonne. The history of the episcopacy was also that of the continuous advancement of the king's justice in a city that was beyond his reach until the see became vacant in 1271. Leaving no hope for communal emancipation, the bishop's intransigence

<sup>82</sup> See for instance the deposition of the merchant of Albi Raimon Baudier (ASV, *Collectoriae* 404, fol. 58r): 'Item dixit se vidisse et audivisse quod cum quidam nomine Fabianus, comorans Albie, esset condempnatus per consules et alios proceres de Albia usque ad XX, ut est moris, ad bulliendum in oleo, episcopus, ipso teste presente et vidente, dixit quod volebat quod dictus Fabianus primo traheretur seu rossegaretur per totam Albiam usque ad furcas de *Sang Amaran* et quod bulliretur ibi in oleo et truncaretur capite et suspenderetur ibidem. [...] Item dixit quod vidit quod cum tres pueri de Albia acusarentur quod furati fuissent carnes et cutellos et marsupia et dicti consules et proceres usque ad XX non possent bene concordare in sententia, magister G[uillelmus] de Tribus Virginibus venit coram dicto episcopo et episcopus tunc dixit: "Quid est hoc?"; et dictus magister G[uillelmus] dixit: "Domine, tres pueri qui furati fuerunt carnes et cutellos et marsupia; et consules et proceres non concordant in sententiando eos"; et episcopus dixit: "Suspendatis eos apud Vallem Cabreriam". [...] Interrogatus si scit quod ita fuerint suspensi sicut episcopus dixit, dixit quod sic, quia ipse qui loquitur sequutus fuit eos usque ad pontem et in crastinum vidit eos suspensos in Valle Cabreria. [...] Item dixit quod vidit quod cum quedam mulier pregnans filia Jacobi *Regambal* et uxor d'*en Rizols*, galopodiarii de Albia, esset condempnata per consules et proceres de Albia usque ad XX ad submergendum pro furto lini et dragmarum et quarundam aliarum rerum de quibus ipse testis non recordatur, venit dictus Jacobus *Regambal* cum quibusdam amicis suis, ipso teste presente et vidente, coram episcopo et supplicabat quod, cum dicta mulier esset pregnans, quod vellet dictam sententiam mitigare vel saltem differre quousque peperisset; et dictus episcopus dixit quod si portaret duos vel plures quod volebat quod sententia mandaretur exsequitioni.'

brought about a shift in alliances; the elite of the city consequently joined ranks with the royal officials against the episcopal lordship.<sup>83</sup>

The progressive escalation, over more than twenty years or so (1277–99), of the conflict between the oligarchy and the bishop, and its final explosion in the first years of the fourteenth century (1300–8) into an open combat, give a clear idea as to the interconnection of religious dissidence and political contestation, as well as to the social establishment of the ‘heresy’ of the good men.

*The Inquisition as the supreme weapon against the two facets of dissidence*

The Inquisition was used by Bernard of Castanet as the centrepiece of a policy aimed at monitoring and intimidating the small circle of good men’s friends. As seen previously, the very long trial of 1286–7 was used to methodically collect denunciations – more than four hundred in all, half of which concerned the inhabitants of Albi. Practically all of the latter belonged to the city’s elite. For the twelve following years, Bernard of Castanet used this file to strike, at the time of his choosing, certain individuals who had been reported, freely singling out for arrest, according to the context and the status of his relationship with the Albi citizens, those who were the most severely compromised and contributed significantly to the existence of ‘heresy’, or those who were the most active participants in the opposition formed by the municipal oligarchy. Whoever had reason to believe that they were among those denounced lived in fear of being arrested at any time and must have hesitated before engaging in battles for the autonomy of the consular institutions.

As from 1297, and for a period of more than two years, Bernard of Castanet was faced with a trial that he was powerless to put a stop to; it was led by the bourgeois before the royal courts to neutralize his secular justice to the benefit of the king.<sup>84</sup> The bishop’s temporal jurisdiction was at risk of being paralysed. It was at this crucial point that the second series of Inquisition trials was launched, between December 1299 and March 1300. The twenty-five inhabitants of Albi who were among the accused were all from the most influential families and were also among the most active opponents to episcopal power. Bernard of Castanet thus found confirmation of his theocratic convictions, according to which those who opposed the temporal interests of the Church were also those who opposed the true faith that it defended. His own intransigence in the exercising of episcopal power had, of course, largely contributed to this state of affairs. He was rightly able to identify municipal opposition and ‘heresy’ as being two facets of the same enemy.

The ensuing events even further corroborated this point of view. Struck hard by the trials of 1299–1300, the city elite were more than ever exposed to

<sup>83</sup> See Biget, ‘Un procès d’inquisition’, pp. 316–22.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 322–5.

new arrests that could at any time, at the bishop's whim, deliver anyone who had been denounced to the Inquisition, with no hope of return. Bernard of Castanet seems to have chosen a strategy of terror to overcome the resistance of his defiant diocesans. In 1300–1, the situation had become unbearable, inciting most of the oligarchy to engage in an anti-inquisitorial movement which had a truly political dimension. Indeed, the Albi bourgeois forged an alliance with those of Carcassonne and of several other Languedoc cities, naming a Friar Minor, Bernard Délicieux, as leader, and they strove under his command, by all possible means, to discredit the inquisitors before the pope and the king of France.<sup>85</sup> Bernard of Castanet was one of the main targets. At the beginning of the year 1302 a riot, orchestrated by the bourgeois, forced him to flee from the city, which remained in a state of semi-insurrection for a number of years.

After the failure of the anti-inquisitorial movement between 1303 and 1306, the oligarchy did not cease trying to get rid of the bishop. They finally succeeded in a roundabout manner. In the spring of 1307 two canons from Sainte-Cécile cathedral, both members of eminent local families, presented a series of terrible accusations against Bernard of Castanet to the Papal Curia. Unlike the complaints elaborated by the citizens of Albi in previous years, these did not allege the arbitrary arrests justified by heresy. They did not even mention the Inquisition. However, the canons reported the numerous crimes, negligences and pastoral abuse of a tyrannical episcopal government, as well as denouncing Bernard of Castanet for his depraved morals. Pope Clement V, whose accession had marked within the Curia the defeat of those who took a hard line against the secular resistance generated by the ecclesiastical government, grasped the opportunity to launch an enquiry that in itself looked like a repudiation of the bishop and weakened his position, thus justifying his transfer to the episcopal see of Le Puy (July 1308). The prosopographical study of the 114 prosecution witnesses auditioned in Albi provides a clear confirmation of the identity of those who opposed the episcopal temporal lordship and of the good men's friends, revealing that the groups were one and the same.<sup>86</sup>

The repression of 'heresy' clearly played a major role in the turbulent political life of Albi during the time of Bernard of Castanet. In terms of the sequence of events and from the structural point of view, it would be difficult to separate it from the other aspects of the theocratic government enforced by the bishop. Faced with religious dissidence born out of the local discontent aroused by Roman clericalism, Bernard of Castanet opted for outright war, for a full-on attack that left no room for compromise, through the immoderate pursuit of an ultra-clerical policy.

<sup>85</sup> A. Friedlander, *The Hammer of the Inquisitors: Brother Bernard Délicieux and the Struggle against the Inquisition in Fourteenth-Century France* (Leiden, 2000).

<sup>86</sup> Théry, 'Les Albigeois'. Théry, 'Avec le vrai et le faux'.

Conclusion

The heretical dissidence of the good men swiftly disappeared, both in the region of Albi and elsewhere in Languedoc, in the twenty years that followed Bernard of Castanet's transfer to Le Puy (1308).<sup>87</sup> The accession of John XXII, in 1316, sparked off an inquisitorial reaction following the appeasement brought by Clement V (1305–14) – and the new pope hastened to offer a resounding promotion to the old theocrat bishop by appointing him cardinal of Porto at the end of the year 1316. The city of Albi, in 1319, just as that of Cordes in 1321, was subject to solemn penance for its past opposition to Bernard of Castanet and to the Inquisition.<sup>88</sup> The former bishop of Albi may have been the author of an initial list of articles of accusation drawn up for the trial of the leader of the anti-inquisitorial movement Bernard Délicieux, arrested by order of John XXII in 1317.<sup>89</sup> Sentenced to life in prison, the Franciscan Brother died in the dungeon. Ultimately, his wrongdoing was to have led protest actions (in favour of different groups of outcasts: the good men's friends, the beguines and spiritual Franciscans) in which the common principle was to reject the very category of heresy<sup>90</sup> a 'self-terminating' and criminalizing category that historiography can now be freed from, by ceasing to consider heresy as a fact in itself, and by approaching dissidence in terms of resistance to Roman clericalism. Until 1329, the inquisitors of Carcassonne continued to condemn a few Albi citizens denounced almost thirty years beforehand, during the Albi trials of 1299–1300.<sup>91</sup>

Persecution, however, even if it played a major role in the extinction of dissidence, is unlikely to have been the only reason.<sup>92</sup> The Franciscans' accommodating pastoral approach was far more decisive, together with a marked relaxation of the ban that the Church had established on mercantile business,

<sup>87</sup> See Biget, 'L'extinction du catharisme'.

<sup>88</sup> The records of the collective penitence of Cordes are edited in *Le livre des sentences de l'inquisiteur Bernard Gui, 1308–1323*, ed. A. Palès-Gobilliard, 2 vols. (Paris, 2002), II, 1218–39. Those of the collective penitence of Albi are edited in Théry, 'Avec le vrai et le faux'.

<sup>89</sup> A. R. Friedlander, *Processus Bernardi Delitiosi: The Trial of Fr. Bernard Délicieux, 3 September–8 December 1319* (Philadelphia, 1996). See M. de Dmitrewski, 'Fr. Bernard Délicieux, OFM: sa lutte contre l'inquisition de Carcassonne et d'Albi, son procès, 1297–1319', *Archivum Franciscanum historicum* 17 (1924), 455–88 (pp. 474, 486).

<sup>90</sup> Théry, 'L'hérésie des bons hommes', pp. 103–5. See for instance Délicieux's claim that even St Paul and St Peter would have been declared heretics by the inquisitors: 'Item dixit ibidem quod si sanctus Petrus et sanctus Paulus essent coram inquisitoribus, quantumcumque fuerint et sint boni christiani, inquisitores eos ita male tractarent quod facerent eos heresim confiteri' (Friedlander, *Processus Bernardi Delitiosi*, p. 72).

<sup>91</sup> See Biget, 'L'extinction du catharisme'.

<sup>92</sup> See Biget, 'L'extinction du catharisme', and Biget, 'Autour de Bernard Délicieux: franciscanisme et société en Languedoc entre 1295 et 1330', *Revue d'histoire de l'Église de France* 70 (1984), 75–93.



*The Heretical Dissidence of the 'Good Men' in the Albigeois*

and also the stronger royal power of the Capetians in Languedoc, in a region where the secular authorities had always been quite slack, giving free rein to para-ecclesial religious life just as they did to excessive ecclesiastical power. These three factors had reduced the need for dissidence by slightly restricting and by adapting the clericalism that had been part and parcel of ecclesiastical mediation since the Gregorian reform. And, probably much more important: by 1320–30, the localist (and thus anti-Gregorian and anticlerical) tradition represented by the good men had completely disappeared. It had taken a century and much violence for it to die.