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Making Enemies: Latin Christendom in the Age of Reform

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In the district of Toulouse a damnable heresy has lately arisen, which, after the nature of a cancer, gradually diffusing itself over the neighbouring places, has already infected vast numbers throughout Gascony and other provinces; and while, serpent-like, it is concealed beneath its folds, in proportion to its unseen advances, so it injures more grievously the Lord's vineyard in the persons of the simple-hearted. Therefore, we command the bishops, and all God's priests resident in those parts, to be vigilant, and to inhibit, under pain of anathema, all persons from sheltering in their territories or presuming to protect the known followers of such heresy. Nor may they have intercourse with such followers either in selling or buying, in order that the benefits of society being denied them, they may be compelled to renounce the errors of their ways. And whosoever shall attempt to contravene this injunction, shall be included under their curse as a partaker of their crime. But if they shall be discovered by Catholic princes, let them be taken into custody and incur the forfeiture of all their goods. And since they frequently assemble from different places at one hiding-place, with no reason for coming together except agreement in heresy, let all such hiding places be diligently sought out, and, when discovered, forbidden under canonical censure.[1]

This, the seventh canon of the Papal Council of Tours in 1163, marked the beginning of the long campaign against the Cathar

heresy in the County of Toulouse. In the course of the following half century or so its description was gradually elaborated: in 1165 at Lombers, near Toulouse, the leaders of the heresy, described as *bons homs*, publicly excoriated the abuses and repudiated the authority of the Catholic hierarchy;[2] in 1178 they were found to include some of the leading men among the citizens of Toulouse, and to espouse a theology based upon belief in the separate creation and creators of matter and spirit;[3] in 1179 they were given the name (among others) of Cathars by the Third Lateran Council, and in 1201 said to have originated in Bulgaria;[4] by 1250 they were shown to comprise a group of hierarchically organised sects, with their own theology and ritual, their own bishops and even their own pope (who lurked in the Balkans),[5] and by 1270 they had been given a history which asserted, among other things, that the heresy had been brought to the west by "Franks who went to Constantinople to conquer the land and discovered this sect".[6] The story is not consistent in all its details, which in the later part of the twentieth century were subjected, along with their sources, to increasingly rigorous and sceptical criticism,[7] but until very recently almost all the historiography of heresy and inquisition in twelfth- and thirteenth-century Europe has been based on the acceptance of these assertions more or less at face value.

The seventh canon of the Council of Tours also marked a turning point in ecclesiastical policy, implying that the authorities should actively search out the presumed heretics and their followers in their homes and private meeting places, rather than just reacting to the preaching of heresy or other public attacks on the Church, and that "Catholic princes" whose role had previously been to punish heretics handed over to them by ecclesiastical courts might now be expected to take the initiative in hunting them down. From this point onwards can be traced the elaboration of increasingly comprehensive and severe measures against heretics and their supporters everywhere, but especially against the County and people of Toulouse, against whom the Albigensian Crusade was launched in 1209. Its consequences included, after two decades of bloody and bitter warfare, the conquest and annexation of what became the southern parts of modern France and the extinction of the courtly culture of the Languedoc, the establishment of the papal inquisition at Toulouse in 1233, and the subsequent extension of its powers and activities throughout most of Latin Europe, and the ever deeper entanglement of the Church in the military and political conflicts of thirteenth-century Italy.[8]

It has usually been assumed that in promulgating their canon the prelates assembled at Tours under the presidency of Pope Alexander III were reacting to the widespread diffusion in the Languedoc over the last several decades (or even, in the oldest but no longer accepted version, since the beginning of the eleventh century) of dualist heresy which had originated in the Balkans. There is however the difficulty that while there is quite specific and well (though not lavishly) documented evidence in existence that such heresy had been spreading in the Rhineland and Flanders since the early 1140s[9] – there is no good reason to think it was longer – and would continue to do so for some decades to come, there is no convincing evidence of its presence in the south. In the first place, the wording of the canon of Tours itself, though laden with melodrama, is conspicuous for its vagueness, in sharp contrast to contemporaneous reports from northern Europe which, though for the most part brief (with the important exception of the sermons of Eckbert of Schönau)[10] are quite specific as to the times and places at which heretics

were encountered. Secondly, the only heretics whom are known to have been active in this region earlier in the twelfth century, Henry of Lausanne and Peter of Bruys, were quite certainly not Cathars, with whom they shared nothing except scepticism of the claims of the Catholic clergy. And thirdly, before Henry and Peter one has to go back another hundred years to find allegations of heresy in the region, and those allegations, though hindsight for long associated them with Balkan dualism, clearly arose directly out of political tension and intrigue at the courts of the King of France and the Duke of Aquitaine.[11] In short, if the concern of the prelates at Tours was to counter the diffusion of the Cathar heresy among the people it is difficult to see why they turned their eyes towards the south, rather than north-east towards Flanders and the Rhineland.

The context of the Council may illuminate the content of the canon. Tours was the principal stronghold of Henry II, King of England, Duke of Aquitaine and Count of Anjou, and the Council was held directly under his auspices. Alexander III, driven from Italy by Frederick Barbarossa, was at this time heavily dependent on his protection. Henry, not generally admired for his piety, had firmly instructed the bishops of his kingdom to attend the Council, a striking departure from the policy of his Anglo-Norman predecessors, who had generally gone out of their way to discourage contact between their bishops and the papal curia.[12] As it happened, in his capacity as Duke of Aquitaine Henry claimed the overlordship of the County of Toulouse. In pursuing that claim he had suffered a severe and humiliating reverse in 1159, when he had assembled the largest army of his entire reign against Toulouse, only to be forced to retreat when his own lord, King Louis VII of France, placed the Count under his personal protection. In revenge Henry undertook what one chronicler, William of Newburgh, described as his "forty-year war against Toulouse".[13] If successful the polemic which branded that region as a nest of heretics would render it liable to invasion, and the Count to deposition, while Louis VII, if he should attempt once more to protect it, would forfeit his right to the fealty of his vassals, including Henry himself.

The character of the canon of Tours as polemic is confirmed by the remarkable (though little remarked) fact that all of the evidence for the presence and activity of the so-called Cathar heretics – indeed, of any heretics – in Toulouse in the next two decades, including the confrontation at Lombers in 1165, and including the papal mission to the region of 1178, comes from Angevin sources – and not just from Angevin sources, but overwhelmingly from the *Gesta Henrici* and the *Chronicle* of Roger of Hoveden, who was regularly employed by Henry in a diplomatic capacity.[14] Other contemporary chroniclers, not only from the region, but from continental Europe in general, have nothing to say about these heretics or their activities. The 1178 mission, which both laid the groundwork for the Albigensian crusade and anticipated in its methods the most powerful techniques of the papal inquisition, was led by two papal legates, Cardinal Peter of S. Chrysogono and Abbot Henry of Clairvaux, but it was dispatched at the vigorous urging of Henry II and heavily staffed by members and former members of his curia; it has recently been suggested that Roger of Hoveden was one of them.[15]

For reasons that we need not pursue here Henry II's successor reversed his policy towards Toulouse in the 1190s, and King Philip Augustus of France kept well clear of the initial stages of the Albigensian Crusade, though his successors were by far its greatest beneficiaries. Conversely,

the reception of the reports of Peter of S. Chrysogono and Henry of Clairvaux by the Third Lateran Council in 1179, and papal sponsorship of further missions to the Languedoc, culminating in the Albigensian Crusade, and the formulation of the first canon of the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215 as a rebuttal and condemnation of the Cathar heresy and its supporters, are sufficient testimony of how readily Henry II's version of events was accepted, and how eagerly the leaders of the Church embraced the cause. Nevertheless, the extraordinary dependence of what still passes for the early history of Catharism in the Languedoc on these Angevin sources offers strong circumstantial grounds for suggesting what a closer examination of the texts, were there time, would confirm, that the wars against heresy of the thirteenth century were preceded and prepared by a campaign of propaganda undertaken, in this instance at least, quite deliberately and for overtly political ends.

That is not to say, however, either that Henry II and his councillors fabricated their charges *de novo*, or that their activities are sufficient by themselves to explain the growth of anxiety about heresy in thirteenth-century Europe and the adoption of increasingly sweeping and severe measures against those suspected of it. The credibility of the accusations against the Count of Toulouse and his subjects, even in the eyes of those who formulated them, depended on a longer history, including a longer history of polemic, and a wider context. The region had become a prime focus of anxiety about heresy in the Western Church by the early 1140s, thanks in part to the activity in the region, in the 1120s and 30s, of two formidable and radical critics of the Church, Henry of Lausanne and Peter of Bruys.[16] Henry first appeared at Le Mans in 1116, as one of the itinerant preachers of whom Robert of Arbrissel is the best known,[17] who in the decades around 1100 brought the Gregorian reform, passionately but imperfectly, to western France. He preached in the city with the permission of Robert's friend and patron Bishop Hildebert of Lavardin, but whether by accident or design his attack on the cathedral clergy aroused such enthusiasm among the people of the town that the canons were expelled, and for some weeks Henry presided over what amounted to a commune.[18] His history in the immediate aftermath of his expulsion from Le Mans is unknown, but in 1134 he was charged with heresy at the Council of Pisa, by the Archbishop of Arles, and convicted, but soon escaped to return to his vocation. Ten years later when Bernard of Clairvaux set out to combat Henry's influence he followed a route which took him from Poitiers through Bordeaux, Bergerac and Cahors to Toulouse and Albi.[19]

Henry's success had been considerable, if Bernard's vivid account of "churches without people, people without priests, priests without the deference due to them"[20] is to be believed – and it probably is, for it is a description essentially the same as that which Pope Gregory VII applied to the Western Church as a whole in the eleventh century, and the remedies which Gregory had prescribed found no effective support whatsoever in this region. Henry owed his success not only to the charismatic eloquence with which he had terrified the clergy of Le Mans, but to a coherent and radical community-based theology and ecclesiology, of which the elements are preserved in the record of his debate with a monk named William, probably a short time before the Council of Pisa in 1134.[21] During the same decades, the 1120s and 30s, this region was also traversed by another preacher of similar views, eloquent and passionate enough to stir his audiences to attack churches and burn crosses, Peter of Bruys; it seems that there was some connection between the two, or their followers.[22]

Apart from William's record of his debate with Henry, which achieved some circulation but was quickly forgotten, the treatise against the Petrobrusians of Peter the Venerable, abbot of Cluny, probably composed in 1139, is the first systematic account and rebuttal we have of heresy preached to the people of western Europe rather than propounded in the schools. Even more than the letters with which Bernard of Clairvaux prepared his mission of 1145 it is a striking testimony of how suddenly and rapidly popular heresy, which had aroused little interest or anxiety in the west for decades – and indeed for centuries – past, now assumed in the years around 1140 a prominent place among the concerns of the Church, as voiced by its two most admired and influential leaders, Bernard of Clairvaux and Peter the Venerable.

Nevertheless, the concurrent preoccupations of Peter the Venerable, recently brilliantly expounded by Dominique Iogna-Prat,[23] strongly suggest that these anxieties were not aroused by the success of Henry and Peter of Bruys alone, substantial though it undoubtedly was. At this time Peter the Venerable was also beginning to bring together the ideas which he would present in two other treatises, much more important in the perspective of history as well as in the eyes of his contemporaries, against the Jews (1143–44) and against the Saracens (1154). That is to say, Peter undertook, as Iogna-Prat has shown in close and compelling detail, a systematic defence of Catholic Christianity against the perceived alternatives, and in doing so defined and proclaimed with great precision both the identity which it had assumed in the wake of the seismic social and ecclesiastical upheavals of the eleventh century, and also the new structures of theology, worship and discipline which were being erected in the early decades of the twelfth, founded on the sacraments of the Eucharist, penance and ordination and centred on the person of Christ. In that perspective the targets of Peter's invective, heretics, Muslims and Jews, were important not for their teachings and practices in themselves, and still less for their real impact on the lives or beliefs of Christians, but for what they could be represented as opposing. They were, or rather in Peter's hands became, the 'other' against which Latin Christendom defined itself.

Peter the Venerable was not the first writer to assume on behalf of Latin Christendom this posture both defensive, in that it represented the Catholic faith as helplessly vulnerable to a vast array of real and imagined dangers, and aggressive in respect of the counter-measures which he advocated or which his arguments implied. Such anxieties had been voiced increasingly stridently, and directed against a growing number and variety of enemies, since early in the eleventh century. Breton and Welsh saints, who had once been accepted as beacons of holiness, began to be caricatured as the fraudulent exploiters of superstitious and backward peoples. The Greek Church – with, indeed, an earlier history of rivalry to exacerbate its alleged evils – was also represented by the champions of the reforming papacy as a backward and corrupt source of heresy and superstition.[24] This reputation both reinforced and was reinforced by the assertions of Balkan or Constantinopolitan origins for the Cathar heresy and continuing contacts between western and eastern heretics which, as we have seen, became increasingly frequent and specific from the second half of the twelfth century onwards. Within western society itself the poor, the peasantry, the leprous, the prostitute, were subjected to increasingly elaborate invective, designed to sanction and reinforce the social barriers which kept them in their ever more narrowly confined places, and sexual relations between men began to be elevated to a special place in the hierarchy of evil. The admiration for the superior sophistication and accomplish-

ments of both Islamic and Jewish culture which could still occasionally be expressed by Catholics around 1100 was rapidly superseded by the vilification and demonisation which became habitual, and the Jews themselves were exposed to increasingly violent and systematic persecution.[25]

All of these animosities served a variety of purposes, and it is no coincidence that all of them were directed, in one way or another, against groups who might challenge, or be seen as a challenge to, the position which a newly formed and newly defined clerical class was assuming at the head of Latin Christendom, as the expounders and defenders of its faith, the advisors of its princes and the arbiters of its social order. We cannot follow the details now. For our present purpose what needs to be noted is that during the eleventh and twelfth centuries, in which Latin Europe assumed the character and identity that shaped its modern history, the progression from polemic to war can be traced at many different levels from the purely political form represented by Henry II's war against Toulouse to the much longer and wider war of Latin Christendom itself against its perceived and proclaimed enemies internal and external, in which its character was forged and its identity shaped for a millennium to come.

FOOTNOTES

1 William of Newburgh, *Historia rerum Anglicarum* ii.xiii, ed. R. Howlett, *Chronicles of the Reign of Stephen etc.*, Rolls Series, London, 1884–5, I, p. 137.

2 Roger of Howden, *Chronica*, ed. W. Stubbs, Rolls Series, London, 1869, II, pp. 105–7.

3 *Gesta Regis Henrici Secundi*, ed. W. Stubbs, Rolls Series, London, 1867, I, pp. 202–6, 214–20

4 J. D. Mansi, *Sacrorum conciliorum nova et amplissima collectio*, xxii, col. 231 sqq.

5 Rainerius Sacchoni, *Summa de catharis et pauperibus de Lugduno*, ed. A. Dondaine, *Le liber de duobus principiis*, Rome, 1939, pp. 64–78

6 Anselm of Alessandria, *Tractatus de hereticis*, ed. A. Dondaine, "La hiérarchie cathare en Italie: II", *Archivum Fratrum Praedicatorum* 20 (1950), pp. 234–324.

7 See, most recently and radically, Mark Pegg, *The Corruption of Angels: The Great Inquisition of 1245–1246*, Princeton: Princeton UP, 2001, especially pp. 15–19, 141–51, and for an overview, Malcolm Lambert, *Medieval Heresy: Popular Movements from the Gregorian Reform to the Reformation*, 3rd ed., Oxford: Blackwell, 2002.

8 James Given, *Inquisition and Medieval Society: Power, Discipline and Resistance in Languedoc*, Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1997; H. C. Lea, *A History of the Inquisition of the Middle Ages*, 3 vols, New York: Harper & Brothers, 1887 (frequently reprinted, remains the best general account).

9 Eberwin of Steinfeld to Bernard of Clairvaux, Migne, *Patrologia Latina (PL)* 282, col. 676–80; R. I. Moore, *The Origins of European Dissent*, 2nd ed., Oxford: Blackwell, 1987, pp. 168–90, but see now Uwe Brunn, "L'hérésie dans l'archevêché de Cologne, 1100–1233", *Heresis* 38 (2003), pp. 183–90.

10 *PL* 195, col. 11–102.

11 Paul of St Père de Chartres, *Gesta Synodi Aurelianensis*, in Martin Bouquet (ed.), *Recueil des historiens des Gaules et de la France*, (Paris: Victor Palme, 1738–1904), vol. 10, 536–9; Ademar of Chabannes, *Chronicon*, ed. J. Chavanon, Paris: Picard, 1897, p. 194; the argument of this paragraph is more fully stated by R. .I. Moore, "The War Against Heresy in Medieval Europe", *Historical Research* (forthcoming).

12 W. L. Warren, *Henry II*, London: Yale UP, 2000, pp. 451–2.

13 John Gillingham, *The Angevin Empire*, London: Arnold, 2001, pp. 29–30.

14 R. I. Moore, "Les albigeois d'après les chroniques angevines", *La Croisade Albigeoise. Actes du Colloque du Centre d'éétudes cathares Carcassonne, October 2002*, Carcassonne: Centre d'études cathares, 2004, pp. 81–90.

15 John Gillingham, "The Travels of Roger of Howden and his Views of the Irish, Scots and Welsh", *Anglo-Norman Studie*s 20 (1998), pp. 152–69, reprinted in Gillingham, *The English in the Twelfth Century: Imperialism, National Identity and Political Values*, Woodbridge: Boydell, 1999; John Gillingham, "Royal Newsletters, Forgeries and English Historians: Some Links between Court and History in the Reign of Richard I", in Martin Aurell (ed.), *La Cour Plantagenêt (1154–1204)*, Poitiers: CESCM, 2000, pp. 171–86.

16 Moore, *Origins of European Dissent*, pp. 82–114.

17 Bruce Venarde, *Robert of Arbrissel: A Medieval Life*, Washington DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2003.

18 *Gesta Pontificum Cenomannensium*, in Martin Bouquet (ed.), *Recueil des historiens des Gaules et de la France*, vol. 12, pp. 547–51. Our reading of Henry's teachings, however, will be significantly modified by Monique Zerner's forthcoming edition of his debate with the monk William. See, meanwhile, her "Au temps de l'appel aux armes contre les hérétiques: du *contra Henricum* du moine Guillaume aux *contra hereticos*" in Monique Zerner (ed.), *Inventer l'hérésie? Discours polémiques et pouvoirs avant l'inquisition*, Nice: Centre d'etudes medievales, 1998, pp. 119–56.

19 Geoffrey of Auxerre, *Vita Prima s. Bernardi*, *PL* 185, col. 410–16.

20 *Epistola* 241, *PL* 182, col. 434.

21 R. Manselli, "Il monaco Enrico e la sua eresia", *Bullettino dell'Istituto italiano per la storia del medio evo* 65 (1953), pp. 36–62, trans. R. I. Moore, *The Birth of Popular Heresy*, London: Arnold, 1975, pp. 46–60. Monique Zerner, however, has shown that the manuscript used by Manselli is a later and inflated version of our earliest account of this debate.

22 Peter the Venerable, *Tractatus contra Petrobrusianos*, ed. James Fearns, *Corpus Christianorum Continuatio Mediaevalis* 10 (1968).

23 Dominique Iogna-Prat, *Order and Exclusion: Cluny and Christendom face Heresy, Judaism, and Islam (1000–1150)*, trans. Graham Robert Edwards, Ithaca: Cornell UP, 2002.

24 R. I. Moore, *The First European Revolution, c. 970–1215. The Making of Europe*, Oxford: Blackwell 2001, pp. 146–7.

25 R. I. Moore, *The Formation of a Persecuting Society: Power and Deviance in Western Europe, 950–1250*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1987, passim.