

History of the Crusades.
Episode 167.
The Crusade Against the Cathars.
The End of the Crusade.

Hello again. Last week we saw King Louis' Crusade besiege the city of Avignon, which capitulated after three months, leaving King Louis free to continue on to his destination, Languedoc.

Now, before we follow the Crusaders out of Avignon, there's a couple of matters we need to discuss. Firstly, while King Louis has been besieging Avignon, a veritable stream of lords and noble personages from Languedoc have been pouring into the city, desperate to renounce their battles against the Church and throw themselves at the mercy of the French crown. Now you should remember that Languedoc has now been at war for nearly 20 years, and pretty much everyone in the region has just had enough. They are desperate for peace. With the despised Simon de Montfort no longer providing an incentive for them to take up arms, many of the former rebels have simply lost the will to fight.

There is, of course, another factor driving their will to surrender. Should they decide to defy King Louis, the odds were stacked against them. King Louis' army is massive, and Raymond VII has no army of his own to match it. The siege at Avignon had shown that King Louis was prepared to go to great lengths to defeat cities which dared to defy him, and the massacre at Marmonde, back in 1219, served as a lesson that King Louis would show no mercy to the citizens of rebellious cities. So nobleman after nobleman streamed into King Louis' camp outside Avignon, bearing letters of submission and pledging their allegiance to the French crown. In what must have been a devastating blow for Raymond, even the young Count of Comminges, who of course had been a steadfast ally of the rebel cause, placed his forces at King Louis' disposal.

In his book "The Albigensian Crusade", Jonathan Sumption states that some of the letters of submission being presented to King Louis were quite extreme in their pledges of loyalty. He gives an example of the letter provided by Sicard of Puylaurens, a rebel who had fought against Simon de Montfort at Castelnaudary, and who had defended Toulouse against King Louis back in 1219 when he was a Crusading Prince. The letter described Sicard of Puylaurens as being drunk with delight at King Louis' presence in the south. He then proceeded to state that he, and I quote "rolled in the mud to kiss the toe of your glorious Majesty. We bathe your feet with our tears, illustrious Lord, and we crave the privilege of being received as slaves beneath your protective mantle." End quote. As the cream of Languedoc's nobility filed into Avignon to also bathe King Louis' feet with their tears, Raymond VII found his resistance against the French invasion slipping through his fingers.

The second event of note to occur during the siege of Avignon was that King Louis became ill. Becoming ill during a siege is not unusual, particularly one conducted in unsanitary surroundings during a particularly hot summer, and an outbreak of dysentery had already taken its toll on the French army, with many crusaders dying of the disease. King Louis made every attempt to conceal his illness and maintain a business-as-usual facade, but it was clear to those close to him that King Louis was actually quite a sick man.

Sickness aside, the Crusader army, with King Louis at its head, marched triumphantly into Languedoc in September 1226. And guess who rode ahead of the army, receiving surrenders and pledges of loyalty from the citizens of Languedoc? It was Arnold Amaury. Remember him? The former Archbishop of Narbonne is now a very old man, but still a staunch persecutor of heretics.

The Crusaders marched unopposed into Beziers and then on to Carcassonne. Carcassonne was being held by the Count of Foix on behalf of his vassal, the teenage son of Raymond Roger Trencavel. Back in June, the garrison of Carcassonne had pledged its support to the French crown, and according to Jonathan Sumption, the Count of Foix himself had traveled to Avignon, then had attempted to submit to King Louis, even offering his son as a hostage. However, the Papal Legate Romanos had refused the Count of Foix's attempts at submission, and he was forced to leave Avignon empty-handed.

The capitulation of most of Languedoc, without even an arrow being fired, was of course, a devastating blow to Raymond VII. It seems that during King Louis's march into his territory, Raymond remained in the city of Toulouse, while King Louis was showered with gifts, wined and dined, and welcomed with open arms.

After leaving Carcassonne, King Louis traveled to Pamiers, where he sat down to the business of installing a northern French government in his new territory. He appointed a governor to rule at Carcassonne and at Beaucaire, and a raft of officials were allocated to serve under them. Now satisfied that the French crown was safely installed in the region, King Louis then rode to Albi.

Now, by this time in late October 1226 King Louis' health has deteriorated to the point that he is seriously ill. While ordinarily he may have decided to seal his conquest by marching to Toulouse and defeating both the city and Raymond, winter is coming, and both the ailing King Louis and his army are not overly keen to start a winter siege. So King Louis turned his horse around and headed back north to Paris, with some assistance, because at this stage he is so ill that he is having trouble staying on his horse.

A couple of weeks later, King Louis died. The official cause of his death was, oddly, excessive chastity, but modern historians have concluded that dysentery was the more likely culprit. Luckily for King Louis, he died leaving a male heir, but unluckily for everyone, King Louis' son was only 12 years old, so the new King Louis IX had to take a back seat, while his mother, the formidable Blanche of Castile, took the reins of power and ruled France as his regent.

What did this mean for Languedoc? Well, it meant that the region had to take a back seat, and look after itself, while Blanche of Castile busied herself trying to pull the French aristocracy into line back in Paris, and prevent them from taking advantage of the instability which always accompanies a child monarch. The governance of Languedoc was left in the hands of the King's cousin, a man called Humbert of Beaujeu, who was to rule the region with the assistance of 500 knights and a bunch of bureaucrats. The rebel forces, now reduced to just Raymond VII, the Count of Foix, and the people of a few defiant cities such as Toulouse, managed to retake the odd fortification or town here and there, with the northern French responding by attempting to wrestle them back.

Over the next couple of years the rebels did make some progress, but it was becoming clear to Raymond that this was a completely different type of war to that fought against

Simon de Montfort and his Crusaders. Why? Well, firstly, because the pure, unadulterated loathing by the people of Languedoc for their occupiers just wasn't present against the representatives of the French crown, as it was for Simon de Montfort and his Crusaders. The southern French, of course, would prefer not to be ruled by northerners, but Humbert of Beaujeu and his knights just didn't inspire people to rise up and risk their lives in rebellion, as Simon de Montfort once had.

Secondly, and more importantly, it was clear that the royal presence in Languedoc was going to be much harder to dislodge than Simon de Montfort. Simon de Montfort was just one man trying to found a dynasty. He had no other military backers, other than the Church, whose only assistance from the military point of view was to call for volunteers to go to Simon's assistance. Defeating Simon de Montfort was always a tantalising possibility, as it would probably result in Languedoc reverting to self-rule. Humbert of Beaujeu however, had the might of the French crown behind him. Defeat Humbert of Beaujeu and another governor would be sent from Paris to replace him. The likelihood of being able to force the mighty Kingdom of France out of Languedoc, with a few victories by a ragtag bunch of rebel fighters, was laughably remote.

Raymond VII was no doubt pondering these factors in the summer of 1228. During the summer of 1228, Humbert of Beaujeu ordered the crops and vineyards around the rebellious city of Toulouse to be destroyed. This was no quick slash and burn mission, such as those frequently undertaken by Simon de Montfort. That would've been bad enough. This was much, much worse. Under the protection of squadrons of archers, Mark Pegg in his book "A Most Holy War" describes thousands of men toiling in the summer sun with axes and shovels, systematically digging up grapevines and any other food producing plant they came across, pulling the plant out roots and all, and burning them, completely destroying any possibility of the area producing any food well into the future. For the people of Toulouse, this was absolutely crushing. Nearly 20 years of war had dramatically reduced their capacity to grow their own produce, and the few vines they had managed to cultivate or replant were precious beyond measure. Now all these plants were being thoroughly, systematically and comprehensively destroyed.

The summer of 1228 also saw Blanche of Castile consolidate her hold on power, and word from Paris was that she was finally getting the upper hand over the ambitious members of the aristocracy who had attempted to gain some personal mileage out of King Louis' unexpected death. Any chance there was of the French crown abandoning Languedoc vanished with Blanche's new assertion of power. In fact, the new pope, Pope Gregory IX, started advocating for another Crusade, and he urged Blanche of Castile to muster the French army to crush the rebellious southerners and the heretics once and for all.

As the year 1228 rolled on, Raymond's military advisers began urging him to seek terms with Blanche, and one of his top men actually defected to the French crown. In November of 1228 Raymond VII had finally had enough. He sent a messenger to the royal court in Paris indicating that he wished to surrender and that he, and I quote "longed with all his heart to be restored to the fold of the Church and the service of his Lord the King" end quote.

Towards the end of the year 1228 a truce was called, and arrangements were made for the main parties to the conflict to meet near Paris for a more formal, permanent peace to be arranged. It took three months for the terms of the treaty to be thrashed out, but in the end terms were agreed.

On the 12th of April 1229, the now 31 year old Raymond appeared, walking barefoot and dressed humiliatingly in his shirtsleeves, in front of the partly-completed Cathedral of Notre Dame in Paris, which was in the process of being built. Amongst the crowd of people watching on were Bishop Folquet, one of the few Churchmen from Simon's day still alive, Arnold Amaury now having passed away; the Papal Legate Romanos; Conrad of Urach, who was now the Legate for England; Amaury de Montfort; young King Louis IX; and his formidable mother. The crowd watched on as Raymond was formally reconciled to the Church. He was then taken to the Louvre and temporarily imprisoned, while the terms of the peace treaty were put into effect.

What were the terms of the peace treaty? Well, I'm glad you asked. Raymond was officially recognized as the lawful Count of Toulouse, but with landholdings substantially less than those enjoyed by his father, Count Raymond VI. All of his possessions in the Rhone Valley were transferred to the French crown, with those in Provence, including the city of Avignon, being held by the Church. The unfortunate Trencavel family were once again disinherited, with the Viscounties of Carcassonne and Beziers being absorbed into the Kingdom of France. Raymond was left with the County of Toulouse, the northern section of the Viscounty of Albi, together with the Quercy and Agenais regions to the north. The routiers fared well from the agreement. So long as they could prove that they were not heretics, all routiers were settled back on their ancestral lands, ending their days as roaming landless highway men. The Count of Foix was likewise able to continue ruling the County of Foix, save for the City of Foix and two castles, which were temporarily handed over to King Louis. Raymond was ordered to restore the lands and wealth to the Church which had been confiscated during the Crusade, and to pay to the church the rather hefty sum of 10,000 silver Marks. Raymond was also ordered to demolish the defensive walls of the city of Toulouse and 30 other fortified towns, including Fanjeaux, Castelnaudary, Montauban, Lavaur and Moissac, with work to commence immediately. The French crown would also occupy the Narbonnais Castle in Toulouse, and Raymond agreed to pay 6,000 Marks to improve the castle and provide for its upkeep.

There were two conditions of surrender, however, that were instrumental in changing forever the nature and character of southern France. Count Raymond VII only had one child, a girl Joanna, who was currently nine years old. While Raymond was being detained in the Louvre, Joanna was collected from Carcassonne and brought to Paris. As part of the settlement, it was agreed that she would marry one of the French King's brother's, Alphonse of Poitou, who was also nine years old at this time. Joanna lived in Paris for the next seven years and then married Alphonse. Now this part is the kicker. The inheritance laws of northern France now applied, and the old Roman laws which had previously operated within southern France, allowing women to inherit land on equal footing to men, were ignored. Therefore, when Count Raymond died his lands would pass to Alphonse, and if Joanna and Alphonse had no children, the lands would be absorbed into the French crown.

And that's exactly what happened. Count Raymond VII died 20 years later in 1249, while both Joanna and Alphonse died around 20 years after Raymond. They were childless, so the County of Toulouse was absorbed into the French crown, and southern France found itself a mere extension of northern France. There was no south or north anymore, there was just France. The language, customs and laws of the north operated across Languedoc and it became one of the many provinces of the powerful Kingdom of France.

The second condition of the peace treaty which concerns us moving forward, was the stipulation that Raymond VII seek out and punish heretics within his territory, in accordance with the instructions provided by the Church. Why is this so important? Well, dear listeners, it's important because this condition lays the foundation for the Church's next phase of its persecution of the Cathars of Languedoc. And that next phase is: Inquisition.

The Crusade against the Cathars, although having achieved the perhaps surprising result of extending the direct holdings of the French crown across southern France, hasn't actually achieved its original goal. There are still Cathars in southern France. In fact, once the peace treaty is settled, Cathars who had fled to neighboring tolerant countries to escape persecution, began to return. Trudging through the mountain passes from the Kingdom of Aragon back across the Pyrenees into Languedoc, and across from Lombardy to the east, it was pretty clear to everyone that Languedoc, after 20 years of Crusading, still had a Cathar problem.

So despite the fact that this podcast series is about the History of the Crusades, and if we are going to restrict ourselves to what it says on the box we should be ending here, we aren't going to end here. We are going to boldly go where this series has never gone before: out of Crusading, into Inquisition; and out of the 12th and 13th centuries into the foreboding territory of the 14th century. So strap yourselves in, people, as we prepare to watch the spawning of the Inquisition, as the Catholic Church switches from military action to interrogation, in its attempts to rid Christendom of heresy.

But before we leave off, we should tie up some loose ends from the Crusade. We saw from the gathering at Paris for the formalization of the peace treaty, that Bishop Folquet was the only player left from the original bunch of Crusaders, Simon de Montfort, Pope Innocent III, and Arnold Amaury having previously passed away. Simon's brother Guy de Montfort, who had the misfortune to be shot in the groin with a crossbow bolt just prior to Simon's own death, was killed back in 1228, fighting to suppress Raymond VII and his rebel forces during the last throes of the Crusade.

Simon's heir Amaury de Montfort went on to have an interesting life. Having returned to his family's modest landholdings in northern France after the Crusade, he distinguished himself in the service of the French crown and rose to the rank of Constable of France. However, his lands weren't really extensive enough to support him in his new role, and he fell into debt. The Church paid off his debts, and in return, Amaury embarked on one of the Crusading expeditions to the Middle East, one led by the Count of Champagne. By all reports, he fought bravely, but was captured by the Muslims and ended up spending eighteen months in a prison in Cairo. He became ill during his imprisonment and died in 1241, on his way back to France.

Simon de Montfort's youngest son, also named Simon de Montfort, had the biggest impact on history. In fact, if you Google the name "Simon de Montfort" today, the search takes you to the younger Simon de Montfort. So young Simon ended up out-Googling his dad. Young Simon, penniless and with nothing to do, left France in 1241 and journeyed to England to claim one of Simon senior's ancestral titles, the Earldom of Leicester. He not only managed to take the title, he rose to such heights within the English court that he ended up marrying the sister of King Henry III. Later, he turned against King Henry, leading one of the great baronial rebellions against the English crown. He ended up dying on the battlefield in England in 1265.

And what about the main players on the rebel side of the Crusade? Well, we will be following them as we leave the Crusade and move towards the Inquisition. Join me next week as we do exactly that. Until next week, bye for now.

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