

History of the Crusades.
Episode 177.
The Crusade Against the Cathars.
Have we not horns?

Hello again. Last week we were introduced to Bernard Delicieux, a Franciscan friar from Carcassonne who was not exactly a fan of the Dominican Order and the Inquisition they were undertaking. We are going to start this week's episode by fast forwarding to the year 1303. The Authie brothers have managed to steer clear of the Inquisition for the past few years and are still constantly on the move in the County of Foix, preaching, advising and administering the rites of the Cathar faith. In Carcassonne, Bernard Delicieux may well have been reflecting on how busy the past couple of years has been.

So what has Bernard been up to? Well, here are a couple of highlights. Over the past few years, Bernard started to become well known for his opposition to the Inquisition and those with complaints about the Inquisition in particular, and the operation of the Church in general, began finding a sympathetic ear in the Franciscan friar. But Bernard wasn't just a good listener. In a time where, understandably, fear of the Inquisitors made most people keep their concerns to themselves, Bernard was happy to voice those concerns to whomever would listen. In October of 1301 a person who was prepared to listen to those concerns was none other than the King of France.

Now, the King of France at this time was King Louis IX's grandson King Philip IV, also known as Philip the Fair. Now, if you're thinking that Philip the Fair sounds like a reasonable sort of bloke, well, you're wrong. The "Fair" in King Philip's name referred to his appearance, not his personality, in fact, to prevent people gaining the wrong impression of Philip the Fair, his name really should be altered to something like Philip the Good-Looking, or Philip the Hottie. Because King Philip definitely wasn't reasonable, he wasn't equitable, and he most certainly wasn't fair. Historians are divided about Philip the Fair's legacy. While it's undeniable that he consolidated the rule of the French crown and pulled the French Kingdom into line, he did so by means of breathtaking cruelty, seemingly unconcerned about who he would crush on the way to empowering the French crown, whether it be family members, the French people or the Knights Templar, who he persecuted ruthlessly, throwing them under the bus of the Inquisition, and confiscating their wealth. It was said of Philip the Fair that under his reign, France was great and the French wretched.

For those of you who are "Game of Thrones" fans, I've mentioned previously the rumor that the creator of the "Game of Thrones", George Martin, was influenced by the "Accursed King" series of historical novels written by Maurice Jewel. Well, the "Accursed Kings" series of novels commences with the reign of Philip the Fair. In fact, there's a lot of Tywin Lannister in Philip the Fair.

Anyway, back to the narrative. Now, by the year 1301, the rumblings of discontent amongst the residents of southern France against the Church and the Inquisition had turned into something that was ringing alarm bells for the French crown. Rumors had begun to reach Philip the Fair's court in Paris that the discontent was so deep and heartfelt that some of the nobility of Languedoc were being urged to ally themselves with the Kingdom of Aragon and split away from the Kingdom of France. These may have been just rumors, but they concerned Philip the Fair enough for him to send a couple of his trusted advisers, one of whom was a man named Jean de Picquigny, southwards to investigate.

As Bernard Delicieux was one of the more open and eloquent of the voices against the Inquisition, it's not surprising that the King's agents chose to meet with him. And knowing Bernard's way with words and his persuasive nature it's no surprise that the concerned citizens of Languedoc were happy for him to express their grievances.

Now, Bernard Delicieux was a smart man and a savvy operator. He knew that the King's men weren't going to be moved by reports of torture or unfairness, because the French crown itself was more than happy to use these methods if the ends justified the means. No, Bernard knew that the way to push the buttons of the King's representatives was to reveal to them that the grievances held by the people of Languedoc, and the concerns they raised, were a threat to the office, authority, and stability of the French crown in southern France.

So Bernard spun his arguments to reflect this. For his first meeting with the King's men he brought with him a group of grieving wives whose husbands had been condemned to imprisonment inside The Wall. Bernard told the men that the people imprisoned inside The Wall deserved justice from their King. Instead, the Inquisitors were able to imprison people at will on flimsy charges, then torture them until they confessed, however falsely, to whatever the Inquisitors wished them to confess.

Bernard also raised concerns about the despised Bishop of Albi, Bishop Castanet. The Bishop's palace in Albi had become a den of iniquity, with the Bishop's many lovers coming and going without even attempting to disguise what they were doing. The manner in which Bishop Castanet used the town of Albi to service his own greed and sinful pleasures was, argued Bernard, contrary to the interests of King Philip. One by one, Bernard listed all the grievances held by the residents of southern France against the Church in general and the Inquisition in particular. Each grievance was carefully spun to cast it in light of its effect on the French crown.

After a few months of carrying out their own investigations, and being persuaded by the eloquent Bernard Delicieux, the King's men arrived at their conclusion, and it was exactly as Bernard had hoped. They decided that there were grounds for determining that the Inquisitors had abused their power in Languedoc and that this overstep with their authority was also affecting Philip the Fair's subjects to the extent that the crown might need to intervene.

The allegations, however, were of such a nature that they needed to be ruled upon by the King himself. The King's agents had no authority to act on such a serious issue by themselves, so the King's men needed to go to Paris to brief King Philip on the situation. Upon hearing that this was to occur, the citizens of Carcassonne and Albi were keen to fund the passage of one of their own to Paris, so that their case could also be put before the King. Who was the obvious choice to carry their message? The Franciscan friar who had laid the foundations for the successful complaint, Friar Bernard Delicieux. So it was that in October 1301, Bernard Delicieux found himself standing in the presence of Philip the Fair, along with a small support group of citizens from Albi and Carcassonne, as well as the King's adviser Jean de Picquigny.

Now, for both Bernard and Jean, this must have been quite a nerve-racking experience. They were standing before not only the most powerful man in France, but arguably the most powerful man in Europe, an autocrat whose word was the law. If King Philip decided on a whim that Bernard's allegations against the Dominicans amounted to heresy, well he

could condemn him on the spot and throw him into the maws of the people he was complaining against: the Inquisitors. Jean would have briefed Bernard extensively on what to say and what not to say, but Bernard's challenge would have been to rein in his persuasive rhetoric. While Kings appreciate being advised, they don't appreciate being told what to do, especially Kings like Philip the Fair. But still, the men must have been hopeful that they could sway King Philip to their cause.

In a sign that the King was taking their complaints seriously, his Dominican advisers, who were nearly always present at these types of meetings, had been excluded, and were currently waiting impatiently outside the room. Unfortunately, we don't know exactly what transpired during this session between Philip the Fair and Bernard Delicieux, but from Bernard's point of view it must have gone well. When King Philip dismissed the friar and his supporters, the excluded Dominicans pleaded with him to be able to present their side of the story. It wasn't until five days after the meeting that King Philip allowed them to do so.

It seems that by that time, King Philip may have already made up his mind. Despite the protestations of the Dominicans, King Philip ruled in favor of Bernard. The monarch seemed to have been particularly moved by Bernard's descriptions of the misdeeds of the Inquisitor, Foulques de Saint-Georges. Friar Foulques had repeatedly abused his power as an Inquisitor, seemingly reveling in torturing whomever came under his control, and using rape as a weapon to extract confessions from women, with the result that he had fathered a number of children in the Carcassonne region. His excesses had been brought to the notice of the Dominican order, which had responded not by dismissing him from office, but by transferring him from Carcassonne to Toulouse, allowing him to continue his debauchery and excess on a new set of victims.

King Philip handed down his written decision in December 1301. Here is an extract of what he decided, and I quote. "Friar Foulques of the Order of Friars Preachers, who pretends to be the Inquisitor of heresy in the region of Toulouse, trying rather to sow than to uproot those errors and vices it was his duty to destroy, who under the pretext of the law violates the laws, who under the semblance of piety commits impious utterly inhuman acts, and under the guise of defending the Catholic faith commits evil deeds abhorrent to the human mind, through his trials and Inquisitions, by capture and tortures of the utmost refinement, has extorted confession from helpless people, whom he declares, according to his whim, to be stained by the crime of heresy, and convicts through the power and fear of torture, and the suborning of false witnesses, went throughout those regions, scandal plainly has arisen, as has the fear of an uprising of the people, unless steps are taken swiftly to correct the situation." End quote.

Now, although Philip the Fair has ruled in favor of Bernard and the citizens of Languedoc, the steps he decided needed to be taken to prevent an uprising of the southern French didn't include shutting down the Inquisition completely. No, King Philip was happy to see the Inquisition continue so long as its actions didn't result in an undue amount of civil unrest. To prevent its actions resulting in civil unrest, King Philip imposed some new safeguards. Before the Inquisition could arrest someone in southern France, they now had to get authorization from the Bishop and secular authorities in the region. And, this is the interesting part, appeals against the behavior of the Inquisitors were to be adjudicated not within the Dominican order itself, but by a combination of the leaders of both the Dominican Order and the Franciscan Order, meaning that Bernard himself would be able to rule on the complaints.

This came as a huge blow to the Inquisition. Their power, for the first time, had been checked by the French crown, and it also indicated to the Order that they had a powerful enemy in the form of the Franciscan friar Bernard Delicieux, and from this time onwards, Bernard would have a giant target on his back, so far as the Inquisition was concerned. King Philip's decision gave hope to the people of Languedoc that perhaps the Inquisition may eventually be shut down completely by the French crown, and it emboldened the citizens of Toulouse to take a tougher stance against both their despised Bishop, Bishop Castanet, and the monastery of Dominican friars within the city.

As punishment for his transgressions, Philip the Fair fined Bishop Castanet the staggering amount of 20,000 livres, money which handily made its way out of the coffers of the Church and into the coffers of the French crown. King Philip also removed the temporal office held by the Bishop. He was now merely the Bishop of Toulouse and not the Bishop and Lord of Toulouse. To protect himself from his angry flock, who believed his punishment hadn't gone far enough, Bishop Castanet acquired a contingent of armed bodyguards, who accompanied him at all times when he moved around the city, and the citizens of Toulouse, not going so far as to physically attack their Bishop or the Dominican Friars, took their frustrations out instead on the Dominican monastery which was regularly defaced and vandalized, and its well-tended gardens of vegetables and herbs which were regularly uprooted.

But really this just wasn't enough. While the Inquisitors had been placed on a leash by the French crown, that leash was very long. The Inquisition still continued. Innocent people were still arrested and tortured, and the despised prison in Carcassonne, The Wall, was still in operation. So the following year, in 1302, the Franciscan friar Bernardo Delicieux headed another delegation of concerned citizens from the south, and they all made the long journey to Paris once again, to see whether they could get some more action from Philip the Fair. It seems that this time, however, they were unable to meet with the King, or if they did meet with him, the meeting was short and unproductive.

They did however, manage to gain an audience with the Queen of France, Queen Joan of Navarre. Queen Joan was sympathetic to the complaints made by Bernard and his companions, and seemed particularly moved by the accounts of the wives of men imprisoned inside The Wall. She gave them a gift of 1,000 livres to advance their cause, then made vague promises to raise the matter with the King. Having to be content with this outcome, the group made the long journey back home.

Unfortunately, the journey to Paris did nothing to address the concerns held by the people of Languedoc about the Inquisition. Back in Languedoc, particularly in the city of Carcassonne, tensions continued to rise.

Which brings us to the year 1303. By the summer of 1303 the tension within Carcassonne was almost palpable. In the streets, revolution was in the air, and combined with the heat of the season, the city had a sort of a pressure-cooker feel to it. Oddly, perhaps being unable to stand the heat any longer, the representative of the French crown in Carcassonne, the King's adviser Jean de Picquigny, who had accompanied Bernard to his first meeting with the King, and the chief Inquisitor of Carcassonne, Geoffroy d'Ablis, both decided to leave the city, Jean heading to the Agenais to attend to crown business, and Geoffrey to Toulouse to attend to Church business.

Then Bernard made a fateful decision. While these two men were out of the picture, he sent word around the town that he would be delivering an important sermon on Sunday, the 4th of August 1303 in the church inside the Franciscan monastery. He urged every household in Carcassonne to send at least one representative to hear the sermon. Accordingly, when the 4th of August rolled around, the church was packed with curious citizens, all of them wondering what Bernard was going to say. Those who expected Bernard to give a rousing sermon full of passion and drama were not disappointed. However, it was the parable that he recounted at the close of his address which gave many pause for thought.

Bernard described how once, long ago, a group of rams were living at peace with each other in a beautiful meadow. Their idyllic existence was only marred by the fact that every now and again two butchers would visit the meadow. The butchers would select a ram, separate it from the rest of the flock, and lead it off to be slaughtered. This kept occurring, and over time the flock became depleted, miserable and wretched. Finally, the remaining rams could take it no more. One morning, one of them asked the others "Have we not horns?", and they formulated a plan to attack the butchers next time they visited the meadow, and that's exactly what happened. When the butchers arrived, expecting to be confronted with meek rams who would allow themselves to be led to the slaughter, they were instead confronted with angry rams. The horned rams attacked the butchers, who fled from the meadow never to return.

At the end of the sermon, a thoughtful silence descended. It wasn't hard for the congregation to connect the dots. The butchers were the Inquisitors, and they, the people of Carcassonne, were the rams. The friar was telling them to fight back. As the people streamed out of the monastery into the streets, there were some in the crowd moving more quickly than the others: the spies and informants who were sent to take note of Bernard's speech and report back to their masters were racing to fulfill their tasks. Having first rushed into the Dominican headquarters to inform the black friars about the speech, one of these counselors of Carcassonne Guy Sicra, a man who was firmly on the side of the Inquisition, gathered a couple of companions and raced to Toulouse to collect the chief Inquisitor for Carcassonne, Geoffroy d'Ablis, and bring him back to the city. Likewise, messages were sent westwards to locate Jean de Picquigny, the King's man, and deliver him a message. And what was the message? The shocking news that the Franciscan friar, Bernard Delicieux had just urged the citizens of Carcassonne to rise up in full revolt against the Inquisition.

Join me next week to see Bernard's plans come to fruition, with the storming of the hated prison The Wall. Until next week, bye for now.

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