

History of the Crusades.
Episode 184.
The Crusade Against the Cathars.
The Dark Years 1309 and 1310.

Hello again. Last week we saw the Inquisition move a little closer to the town of Montailou and the Authie brothers. Guillaume Authie's wife was questioned by the Inquisition in 1308, and in May of that year a raid was conducted on Montailou.

While Guillaume Authie, who was in Montailou when the raid took place, along with another perfect Prade Tavernier, managed to escape, some of the villagers were arrested. The good news for the Cathars of Montailou was that their secret remained undiscovered. The raid hadn't revealed the shocking fact that their priest was a Cathar and the handful of villagers arrested indicated that the inquisitors had no idea of the extent of Catharism in the village. Now, at this time, it was not only Montailou which was feeling the heat of the proximity of the Dominicans. All over the County of Foix raids were occurring. Cathars were being arrested, interrogated and occasionally executed. Some Cathars were cracking under interrogation and were naming other Cathars that they knew. These were nerve-wracking times for both the Perfect and the Cathar faithful in the region. It was during this nail-biting period in Cathar history that Arnaud Marty was ordained a Perfect by Guillaume Authie. Remember Arnaud Marty? Guillaume Authie stayed at the Marty farm during his early days in the Sabarthes, and Arnaud Marty had thrown his brother Bernard's cap onto the floor after he had failed to remove it in the presence of the Perfect. Guillaume Authie had then picked up the cap and flicked it across the room where it landed perfectly on a hat rack, much to the hilarity of everyone who saw it. Well, shortly after escaping the raid on Montailou, Guillaume Authie ordained Arnaud Marty as a Perfect. Now, poor Arnaud Marty had a rough start to his career as a Perfect. These were trying times, and it's possible that Arnaud was not temperamentally suited to the life of danger endured by all the Perfect. Shortly after his ordination he showed up, absolutely panic-stricken, outside the house of a Cathar woman in Luzenac. In his book "The Yellow Cross", Rene Weis speculates that he must have chanced upon a patrol or some way or another had strayed into the path of the Inquisitors. The woman offered to hide Arnaud inside her house, and she placed him inside a large chest, then left the house, locking it securely as she departed. When she returned, there was no sign of Arnaud. He had climbed out of the chest in her absence and, finding the door locked, had escaped by breaking through the roof of her house. Arnaud then went on the run. Arnaud's brother Bernard, the one with the cap, discovered in early June 1308 when he went to gather his flock of sheep from where they had been grazing, that Arnaud had, in his absence, sold all of their twenty sheep and five lambs, for the sum of 19 pounds. A furious Bernard tracked his brother down. Arnaud apologized and promised to pay the money back, stating that he needed the cash to fund his escape from the Inquisitors, some of it likely being used as a bribe to encourage local officials to turn a blind eye to his activities.

Arnaud eventually decided he couldn't stand the heat any longer. He was going to flee into exile to Catalonia in the Kingdom of Aragon. In the months which followed, he did exactly that. He managed to travel to Roussillon without attracting the attention of the Inquisition and from there travelled deep into the safety of Catalonia. Not surprisingly, Arnaud wasn't alone in fleeing to Catalonia. Over time, many of his Cathar friends and relatives will make the same journey across the Pyrenees, and quite a significant community of exiled Cathars will establish themselves at various locations in Catalonia.

In his book "The Yellow Cross", Rene Weis reports, that many years later in 1320, over a decade after the time that we're now examining, Arnaud's sister Blanche would share her favorite after-dinner story to a group of gathered Cathars still in exile in Catalonia. What was her favorite after-dinner story? Well, it involved her being interrogated by the infamous Inquisitor Geoffroy d'Ablis. Geoffroy knew that her brother was a Perfect, so to satisfy him Blanche pretended to be dimwitted, and eventually confessed to some minor heretical offenses. She then dramatically threw herself at Geoffroy's mercy, collapsing prostrate on the floor in front of him and grabbing his legs. Apparently, Geoffroy was quite moved by this display and patted Blanche on her shoulders, telling her that she wouldn't be harmed. He then released her without charge. Blanche stated, and I quote "I hadn't even confessed the half that I had done and knew of others" end quote.

But we have digressed. We will leave the happy bunch of Cathars exiles in Catalonia to their reminiscences in 1320 return back to 1308 where things are about to heat up once again.

In Montailou, on Sunday 8th of September 1308, at the same time as Arnaud Marty and numerous other Cathars were making their way over the mountains to the safety of the Kingdom of Aragon, the Inquisition conducted a major raid on the village of Montailou. Now, Sunday 8th of September 1308 was actually the feast day of the Nativity of the Virgin Mary, one of the most important Church holidays of the year. As a consequence, the entire population of Montailou would be in the village so they could attend Church that morning. It was during the early hours of the morning of this day that the Inquisition surrounded the entire village and herded everyone into the castle. Now it is during this raid that Pierre Clergue's duplicitous role as both priest and Cathar comes to the fore. In his book "The Yellow Cross", Rene Weis asserts that Pierre Clergue not only knew the raid was going to take place, but actually helped to organize it. In support of this assertion. Rene Weis points out that there were no Perfect in the village at the time of the raid, which may indicate that Pierre Clergue knew of the timing of the raid and was able to warn the Perfect away. There was also the fact that the raiders had with them not only a list of the names of all the residents in the village, but also information about who was and who wasn't a Cathar. The Clergue brothers, handily for them, were able to point the finger at people they were in conflict with or whose arrest would advance their business interests, and identify them to the Inquisition as Cathars. Now, clearly by doing this, the Clergue brothers are now playing a very dangerous game. Quite possibly, concern about their need to ally themselves closely with the inquisitors to protect their own Cathar ties and to ensure that suspicion of heresy didn't fall on them, lead them to betray a large number of their fellow villagers. But it certainly didn't make them popular with many of the people in Montailou. The raiding party included the traitor Guillaume Payre, Pierre Authie's former personal assistant who had sold out two Perfect to eliminate a debt he had incurred inside The Wall. There were enough men in the raiding party for a person to cover each of the exits out of the village. Then the inquisitors went from house to house with their lists, gathering the residents, detaining them and ordering them to walk to the castle. A couple of people did manage to escape. A Cathar woman hurriedly gathered a loaf of bread and a sickle used for harvesting wheat and walked calmly to one of the checkpoints. When questioned, she stated that she was a farm labourer who had been staying in the village to help with the harvest and was now on her way home. The soldier let her through. She left her husband and two children behind in Montailou and made her way to Catalonia. A handful of others also managed to flee, but most of the villagers, 250 or so inhabitants were caught, and were forced to make their way up the hill to the castle.

Now of course, Pierre Clergue as priest of the village and Bernard Clergue as bailiff of the village, would have been prominent in assisting the Inquisition to identify the villagers who were now all herded together inside the castle, and to determine exactly what was to be done with them. It's unclear exactly what happened inside the castle, but it appears that some villages were issued with demands to present themselves in person at Carcassonne for further interrogation, while others, no doubt traumatized by the dramatic events which had occurred, confessed their heresy publicly in front of everyone. With over 200 people to process it would have been a long day for everyone concerned, and some delegation was required. Pierre Clergue was given the task of issuing the summonses to the villagers, which would require them to present themselves to the Inquisitors in Carcassonne. Justifiably, many Cathars, who were issued these summonses by Pierre, who of course, was secretly a Cathar himself, were outraged by what they viewed as his duplicitous behavior. They were probably even more outraged when they discovered that the bailiff of the town, Pierre's brother Bernard, was legally entitled to confiscate the property of those convicted of heresy in his role as the representative of the Count of Foix. As such, the events of the 8th of September resulted in the Clergue brothers broadening, to a significant extent, their economic and political hold over the village. It's safe to say that the Clergue brothers made some pretty formidable enemies that day with villagers whose family members had been taken by the Inquisition and were now imprisoned inside The Wall.

Wanting to seek some revenge, one man whose brother and father had been taken, hired a forger from Limoux to fake an inquisitorial summons, which was printed to appear as if it had been issued against Pierre Clergue. The idea behind the plan was that Pierre Clergue would be taken to Carcassonne and, under examination by the Inquisitors, would be forced to confess his heresy. However, the plan didn't work. Two French soldiers were hired to deliver the summons to Pierre Clergue, but instead of going meekly with them, he had them arrested, having spotted the fact that the summons was a forgery due to the fact that the Inquisitorial seal had been stamped on the wrong part of the document. Having failed in his attempt to get the priest arrested, the villager then attempted to murder Pierre Clergue. That plan also failed and Pierre Clergue then declared the villager to be a heretic, forcing him to go into hiding. He eventually made his way to the Kingdom of Majorca.

The Clergue brothers managed to duck and weave their way around angry villagers, Inquisitioners, and Cathars. Their enemies were numerous, and they must have felt nearly constantly under threat of either being uncovered by the Inquisitors or faithful Catholics, or being denounced or physically assaulted by angry Cathars. Still, amazingly, they both managed to stay out of trouble. They proceeded in a business-as-usual type manner in the village, and Rene Weis points out that, despite their obvious flaws, their dedication to the Cathar faith and the Cathar cause can't really be questioned. Despite the obvious dangers, the Clergue brothers were active in ensuring that the Cathar Perfect were able to resume their regular visits to Montailou, and that everyone in need of the consolamentum could have the ritual administered in the village by a Perfect, despite the growing danger to everyone involved.

The year 1309, however, was a dark one for the Cathars of the County of Foix in general and for the Authie brothers in particular. Early in 1309, Jacques Authie, son of Pierre Authie and himself a Cathar Perfect, was arrested. He had been one of the two Perfect arrested by the Inquisition following the betrayal by Guillaume Peyre. He had managed to escape back then, but this time he wasn't so lucky. Having undergone a couple of months of interrogation, the Inquisition declared that he was to be executed. There's not a lot of

information about what was happening within the Authie network at this time, but there's evidence that Guillaume Authie traveled to meet with Pierre Authie sometime in the spring of 1309. Pierre was at that time hiding in a village around 20 miles northeast of the city of Toulouse. Both Authie brothers were now quite elderly men. If they were meeting to try and find a way out of the tightening net of the Inquisition, they were unsuccessful. On Sunday, the 10th of August 1309, Bernard Gui issued a public appeal to, and I quote "all the soldiers in Christ of Languedoc" end quote, to join him in capturing Pierre Authie and two other Perfect whom Pierre Authie had ordained, promising them in return spiritual as well as material rewards.

Two weeks later, Pierre Authie was arrested, having been discovered walking near his last hiding place, a farm, owned by two Burgundian brothers near a Cistercian Abbey, in the village of Grandselve. By the end of 1309 the Inquisition had arrested most of the Perfect within the Authie network, including Guillaume Authie and Prades Tavernier. After nine long, long months spent in the custody of the Inquisitors, Pierre Authie was sentenced by Bernard Gui and Geoffroy d'Ablis to be burnt alive as a heretic. The execution took place on Thursday night of April 1310, when Pierre Authie was publicly burnt at the stake outside the Cathedral of Saint Etienne in the city of Toulouse. Apparently when he was asked if he had any last requests, Pierre responded by stating that he wanted to preach one last time to the gathered crowd, declaring that he would be able to convert every last one of them to the Cathar faith. His request was denied. His brother Guillaume and the other Perfect were also burnt alive as heretics sometime during 1310, although the dates and circumstances of the executions are unclear.

The years 1309 and 1310 were cataclysmic for the Cathar faith. The execution of their Perfect meant that the faithful could no longer be administered the consolamentum at the hour of their death, no new Perfect could be ordained, and there were no senior Cathars to console, protect and comfort them. During these traumatic times, many Cathars fled to the Kingdom of Aragon. Others found themselves arrested by the Inquisition and interrogated. A few managed to dodge the reaches of the Inquisition and carry on their faith in secret.

I guess it won't come as a huge surprise to you to learn that the Clergue brothers, who always seemed to be able to dodge and weave their way out of trouble, were able to carry on their activities. As Rene Weis states in his book "The Yellow Cross" and I quote "While the rest of Montautou was drowning, the Clergues were thriving amid the wreckage; meaning of course, Pierre Clergue was having more sex than ever." End quote.

In fact, Rene Weis is able to report that the descendants of the Clergue brothers are still living in Montautou today, so how's that for staying power?

While things are looking rosy for the Clergue brothers, unfortunately it's all nearly over for the Cathars of Languedoc. Bernard Gui and Geoffroy d'Ablis have done an effective job to date of clearing the Cathars out of southern France, and the Cistercian Jacques Fournier, who will be appointed Bishop of Pamiers in the year 1317, will finish the job off.

But we will leave the demise of the Cathars of Languedoc for the moment, because Jacques Fournier has another man firmly in his sights, and we will be following that story first. So join me next week for the trial of Friar Bernard Delicieux. Until next week, bye for now.

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