

History of the Crusades.
Episode 185.
The Crusade Against the Cathars.
The Trial of Bernard Delicieux.

Hello again. Last week we examined the dark years of 1309 and 1310 which saw the Authie Brothers and the Cathar hierarchy in the County of Foix arrested by the Inquisition and executed.

Both Geoffroy d'Ablis, head Inquisitor of Carcassonne, and Bernard Gui, head Inquisitor for Toulouse, were present in Toulouse for the execution by burning of Pierre Authie. And for the two men, the death of one of the Cathar Perfect who had revived the religion in the south must have felt like an ending of sorts. Well, it was and it wasn't. The Inquisition didn't consider its work to be complete with the death of the Authie brothers. There were still Cathars in the County of Foix, even if their numbers were dwindling. In Montailou, for instance, a significant portion of the residents of the village are still of the Cathar faith, as is the priest of the town. So the inquisition rolled on.

The year 1314 was an interesting one for the Kingdom of France. King Philip IV, with the assistance of his-right hand man, Guillaume de Nogaret and the compliant French Pope Clement V had, for a number of years, been contriving to gain control of the military Orders in general and the Knights Templar in particular.

The Knights Templar had grown into an astonishingly wealthy and powerful institution, and with the loss of Acre in the Middle East back in 1291 spelling the end of the Middle East and Latin Christian possessions, Philip the Fair had the idea that the military power and the wealth of the Orders would really be better off serving the French crown than the Church. The elderly and sickly Pope Clement V, who was by this time totally under the thumb of the French King, seemed to agree. Shortly after Queen Joan's death in 1305 King Philip proposed that all the military Orders be merged into one body called "The Order of the Knighthood of Jerusalem". The head of this new order would be a king. Not just any old king, of course, but Philip the Fair himself. Not surprisingly, there was quite a bit of opposition to this plan, and it didn't get off the ground. But from that point on, Philip the Fair was intent on bringing the Knights Templar to heel by curbing their power and confiscating their wealth. A great political struggle then ensued between the elderly but very savvy Grand Master of the Templars Jacques de Molay in one corner versus Philip the Fair, his adviser Guillaume Nogaret, and Pope Clement in the other corner.

The Grand Master put up a valiant fight, but in the end his opponents were just too powerful. On Friday, the 13th of October 1307 King Philip ordered the Grand Master and a raft of Knights Templar to be arrested. They were charged with numerous offenses against the Church, and under torture many confessed. Pope Clement backed up this move by issuing, no doubt under King Philip's direction, a Papal Bull on the 22nd of November 1307, instructing all remaining Knights Templar to be arrested and their assets seized. In another Papal Bull, in 1312, Pope Clement officially dissolved the Order. Jacques de Molay, the elderly Grand Master of the Templars initially confessed to heresy under torture, but later retracted his statement. He was then found guilty of being a relapsed heretic and was sentenced to be burned alive at the stake in Paris on the 18th of March 1314.

Supposedly just before he was consumed by the flames, Jacques de Molay imposed a curse on two of the three men he viewed as being responsible for his own downfall and the downfall of the Order of the Temple. These three men were, of course, King Philip, Guillaume Nogaret and Pope Clement. By the time of the Grand Master's execution, Guillaume Nogaret had already died, having collapsed and passed away of an unknown illness in the year 1313. What was the curse imposed on the remaining two men? Well, that they would all die before the year's end, and they complied by doing exactly that. The elderly and frail Pope Clement died a month later, which wasn't too much of a surprise, but the much younger and seemingly healthy King Philip IV, aged only 46, apparently suffered a stroke during a hunting expedition and died not long after, on the 29th of November 1314.

So, by the end of the year, 1314, three of the most powerful political players in Europe, Pope Clement, Philip the Fair, and his adviser Guillaume Nogaret, had all exited the political stage. As a consequence, Europe needed both a new French King and a new Pope. Both appointments ended up being less than straightforward.

Philip the Fair's eldest son, Louis, was crowned King of France, becoming King Louis X. However, Louis was to be King for only two years. Having invented indoor tennis, he played a long and exhausting match two years into his reign, after which he drank a vast quantity of cooled wine, which may, unfortunately, have been poisoned. And then he died. Louis' wife was pregnant when he died, so his brother Philip ruled as regent on behalf of the unborn child who, when born, only lived for five days. Philip subsequently managed to have himself crowned King, becoming Philip V or Philip the Tall, continuing the tradition of descriptive Philips.

The appointment of the new Pope was nearly as difficult a process as the crowning of the new French King. Of course, there was pressure from Rome for a Pope to be appointed who would base himself in Rome and not France. And of course, there was pressure from the French crown for the appointment of another compliant Pope like Pope Clement, who would base himself at Avignon and do what he was told to do by the French King. In the end, a compromise was reached. The man elected to be the new pope, Pope John XII was a Frenchman, but he promised to move the Papal seat back to Rome. However, after being installed as Pope, he reneged on his promise and the Papacy continued to be based at Avignon under his rule. So just to summarize, the new Pope, John XII, assumed office on the 7th of August 1316 while the new King, Philip V was crowned in January 1317.

Now, there is another appointment around this time which is central to our story, because in March 1317 the abbot of a Cistercian abbey, a man called Jacques Fournier, was appointed Bishop of Pamiers. Jacques Fournier was an ambitious, intelligent man who had studied theology at the University of Paris. As we have mentioned previously, he will eventually rise as far as it is possible to rise within the hierarchy of the Catholic Church by becoming the third Avignon Pope, Benedict XII. But that event is nearly 20 years in the future. At the moment, Jack Fournier is in his thirties and is a slightly overweight, ambitious intellectual who will distinguish himself in his new role as Bishop by exhibiting a zeal for hunting down heretics on a level to match that of the Dominican friars.

Now, the new Pope John XII was a stickler for obedience. In a letter he wrote shortly after becoming Pope, laid out his worldview, which was and I quote "for poverty is good and chastity is greater, but obedience is greatest of all" end quote. Basically, Pope John wanted everyone to fall in line and do exactly what he told them to do. When casting his

eye over the citizens of Europe. His gaze settled on some Christians who seemed to be a bit rebellious and who didn't seem to be toeing the church line in the manner in which the Pope wished them to. Those Christians who were not being obedient were the Spiritual Franciscans of Beziers and Narbonne, one of whom, of course, was our old friend Bernard Delicieux.

Now, for some time now, tensions had been building within the Franciscan order between two competing factions, the Spiritual Franciscans and the Conventual Franciscans. The dispute concerned the application of poverty to the Friars in the Franciscan order, but all we need to know, for the purposes of our discussion, is that Bernard Delicieux was a vocal supporter of the Spiritual Franciscans, while the head of the Franciscan Order was a Conventual Franciscan. The head of the Franciscan Order wished to impose his Conventual views on all the Franciscan friars, including the Spiritual Franciscans, but the Spiritual Franciscans were having none of it. In fact, they were being rather disobedient.

The head of the Franciscan Order decided to bring this disobedience to the attention of the newly appointed Pope John. As a result, Pope John issued summonses to the Spiritual Franciscan friars of Beziers and Narbonne, ordering them to come to Avignon and explain themselves. Fifty-four friars made the journey to Avignon. Not surprisingly, they chose as their spokesman the gifted orator Friar Bernard Delicieux. On the 23rd of May 1317, the 54 friars were ushered into the Papal audience chamber at Avignon to hear Bernard Delicieux speak to the Pope on their behalf. Now, apparently, on this day, the Papal audience chamber was packed with people - a raft of cardinals, prelates, and men of the cloth, all eager to gain the ear of the new Pope and influence his thinking. Bernard Delicieux was given leave to speak, but shortly into his speech, he began to get heckled by the audience, not by the Pope himself but by the men seeking to place their mark on the Papacy. The heckling grew more and more intense until men were actually standing and hurling abuse at Bernard, calling out his past misdeeds and indiscretions.

Now this display of disobedience was something the new Pope just could not tolerate. Friar Bernard Delicieux had only just started his speech, and already the room was in an uproar. Pope John knew that to restore order, he had to take sides. Either all the senior clergy who had risen from their seats and were yelling at Bernard needed to be ejected from the room so that Bernard could continue on without interruption, or Bernard himself needed to be removed. For Pope John, the decision was an easy one. The sensible Conventual Franciscan, who was the head of the Franciscan Order, had complained of the rebellious nature of the Spiritual Franciscans, and here, surely, was proof. Pope John ordered Bernard to be seized. He was taken to the dungeons and would be chained there until the Pope worked out what to do with him.

Now, as Bernard Delicieux waited in the darkness and solitude of the dungeon, it was pretty clear that while there were plenty of people lining up to level charges against him, primarily the Dominican Friars and the Conventual Franciscans, his friends and allies were in much shorter supply. While Bernard had been in tight spots before, he had always been able to rely on friends in high places to help him out. But most of those friends, Jean de Picquigny, Queen Joan, and even Philip the Fair and Pope Clement, were now all dead. The new Pope had no inclination to release him from captivity. Bernard was clearly a disobedient person, and in fact, Pope John was increasingly of the view that the whole sect of Spiritual Franciscans were disobedient people, and perhaps they were all guilty of some sort of crime against the Church. So Bernard stayed locked up in miserable conditions in chains, in the dark, in solitude with little food or sustenance until it could be

determined whether he had committed any heresies or crimes for which he could be charged.

And, of course, back in the 14th century, the best way to see whether a person was guilty of a crime was to torture them, to see whether they would confess. The first person to line up to torture Bernard to see whether he would admit to any transgressions was a fellow-Franciscan, one of the leaders of the Conventuals, Bonigracia de Bergamo. For the remainder of the year 1317, so for six long months, Friar Bonigracia de Bergamo put the question to Bernard Delicieux, determined to prove once and for all that the pesky, Spiritual Franciscans were actually heretics who should be all swept aside in favor of the more conventional Conventual Franciscans. The year 1317 ticked over into 1318 and, deep in the dungeons of Avignon, Bernard learned that four of his fellow Spiritual Franciscans who had journeyed with him to Avignon had been executed, burned at the stake as heretics in Languedoc. The Inquisitors who had interrogated, charged and convicted the four men were not Dominican friars, but Conventual Franciscans.

Franciscans were now executing their fellow Franciscans in the name of eliminating heresy. This shift, from men of the Church seeking out Cathars to torture and execute, to men of the Church seeking out other men of the Church to torture and execute, caused a bit of a stir in the wider community, to the extent that some people were beginning to view the executed friars as martyrs and men who had suffered grave injustice, men whose memory could be used to incite disquiet and unrest against the Church.

This, unsurprisingly, posed a problem for Pope John XII. He had one of the most popular Franciscan friars in southern France incarcerated within the dungeons of Avignon. It suddenly became important to ensure that Friar Bernard Delicieux wasn't seen as suffering any great injustice at the hands of the Church. Torturing Bernard and then charging him with a crime backed by flimsy evidence and then executing him, suddenly wasn't an option. The Church had to be seen to be serving true justice to Bernard. He had to be formally charged and given a trial at which he could be publicly seen to be defending himself. The most legally sharp minds in the upper echelons of the Church got to work.

The first mind to be put to the task was, surprisingly Bernard de Castanet, once the despised Bishop of Albi, but now Cardinal de Castanet, having risen to dizzying heights within the Church hierarchy. Towards the end of 1317 Cardinal de Castanet drafted a list of forty charges against Bernard Delicieux, and teams of investigators were sent to Languedoc to gather evidence in support of the charges. These forty charges were later joined by a new set of sixty-four extra, more detailed charges, thought to have been drafted by Bernard Gui.

By the spring of 1318 the evidence had been gathered and the matter was ready to proceed. Friar Bernard Delicieux was consequently brought to trial at Avignon in June 1318. Now, unfortunately, not a lot of information is available about this trial. What we do know, however, is that Bernard put on a masterful display despite his poor physical state of health. He refused to answer most of the charges, stating that the judges were not qualified to preside over his trial and demanding that the matter be moved to Languedoc, where he could be tried by men who had knowledge of his activities. It seemed to be a fair request, and in response to it, the Church promptly excommunicated Bernard. Then the Church grudgingly acceded to his request and ordered that the trial be moved to Languedoc.

So in late August 1318 Bernard was moved from the dungeons in Avignon to Languedoc. In his book "The Friar Of Carcassonne", Stephen O'Shea reports that the men who were employed by the Church to escort Bernard from Avignon to Languedoc were ordered to question him on the road, in the hope that Bernard would drop his guard and make admissions that could be used against him at his trial. During the many discussions that Bernard had with his traveling guards, he freely admitted to being a Spiritual Franciscan, and apparently even predicted that Pope John would die shortly. The men gave evidence to this effect at his trial.

The trial was to take place in the Bishop's palace at Carcassonne. It would last nearly three months, from the 12th of September 1319 to the 8th of December 1319, and was to be presided over by two judges, one of whom was the new Cistercian Bishop of Pamiers Jacques Fournier. The charges leveled at Bernard fell into four main groups. The first was the very fact that he was a Spiritual Franciscan. The second was a charge of treason against the French crown due to the failed Majorcan plot of 1304. The third, the murder of Pope Benedict XI who had conveniently died shortly after ordering Bernard to be arrested and taken to Rome in 1304. And finally the last charge was the obstruction of the Inquisition in Languedoc.

Now, this trial must have been a fascinating spectacle. Bernard had been granted his wish. His trial was a public one, and by the standards of the day, relatively fair. Bernard was made fully aware of the allegations against him and was able to question evidence placed before the court.

Over the next three months the sharp minds of Friar Bernard Delicieux and the Bishop of Pamiers, Jacques Fournier, would duel back and forth, each one trying to outwit the other. Bernard however, was of course at a distinct disadvantage. The Church had teams of investigators tasked with seeking out and compiling evidence against Bernard, whereas Bernard, who had been in captivity for the past couple of years, was only able to use his memory and his wits to counter the information put before him. Bernard had been tortured, starved and placed in solitary confinement, so while his mind may still have been razor sharp, his body was weakened and he tired easily. Regardless, he put up a stiff fight. Here's how the charges panned out.

The charge of Bernard being a Spiritual Franciscan was all but ignored by the court. Bernard had freely confessed to this anyway, and it didn't seem to be something the court wanted to spend much time on.

In relation to the charge of treason against the French crown, the court clearly had some jurisdictional problems. Philip the Fair had already dealt with this matter and had sentenced Bernard to house arrest over a decade earlier. The matter was clearly one for the French royal courts to deal with, not the Church, and deal with it they already had. However, perhaps the waters had been muddied by the fact that Bernard had been transferred into the custody of the Papal courts after Pope Clement was elected. Regardless, Pope John had ordered that this charge be included, and included it was. Bernard's defense to the charge was that he had traveled to Majorca to talk Prince Ferran out of the plot, rather than to advance his scheme. Unfortunately, Bernard seemed to embellish his story about dismantling the plot, and not only was the Church able to call witnesses to discredit Bernard's version of events, Jacques Fournier seemed to take Bernard's story as an insult to the court. As a result, Jacques Fournier ordered Bernard to be taken down and tortured until he told the truth. Bernard was tortured but failed to

confess, despite being tortured to the extent that significant and permanent damage was done to his hands.

Next up was the small matter of the murder of a Pope. The basis of this charge was the evidence that Bernard once had in his possession a book of necromancy and spells, and that in the spring of 1304 Bernard had prepared a mysterious package to be sent to Perugia in Italy. Bernard denied owning the book and so was taken away and tortured. A few days later, he confessed to owning the book, but denied any involvement in killing Pope Benedict.

The final set of charges, concerning Bernard's obstructing the inquisition in Languedoc, took up the bulk of the court's time and effort. For two whole months, Jacques and Bernard duelled back and forth about this matter. Bernard set out in detail the ways in which the Inquisition had operated unfairly, people being accused of heresy and being unable to even know who levelled with the charges against them, innocent people being tortured until they confessed to heresies, etcetera, etcetera. Bernard poured out in detail every accusation of unfairness he had witnessed in his long years of railing against the injustices. And the court didn't dispute any of this because, well, that wasn't the issue here. The issue wasn't whether the Inquisition had operated fairly, but whether Bernard had tried to shut it down. Bernard maintained that it was the actions of particular Inquisitors which he opposed, and not the Inquisition itself. In the end, as the weeks of arguments turned into months, Bernard became exhausted. Exhausted and demoralized.

Then Jacques Fournier offered him a lifeline. If he confessed freely to not only obstructing individual Inquisitors but the Inquisition as a whole, then he could ask for the court's forgiveness. However, if he persisted in his denials and the court found him guilty, he would be executed for heresy. Bernard was given three days to think the matter over. On the 3rd of December, he uttered the words that the court had been desperate to hear. The words were, and I quote "Despite the justifications and excuses put forth by me in my statements and responses on favoring and obstructing, I now admit my guilt." End quote. Bernard was taken back to his cell, with the court adjourning the matter for handing down of the verdict on all charges, and sentencing, on 8th of December 1319.

On the 8th of December 1319 the decision on Bernard's guilt or otherwise, was announced to a large crowd of people gathered in the market square of Carcassonne. Bernard stood in full view of the crowd, a now sickly, elderly man with a frail, tortured body and disfigured hands. The decision read to the crowd, was as follows. On the charge of killing the Pope, Not Guilty. On the charge of treason, Guilty. On the charge of obstructing the Inquisition, Guilty. The charge of Bernard being a member of the Spiritual Franciscans had been abandoned during the trial and wasn't mentioned.

Bernard was sentenced as follows. He was to be defrocked, meaning that he was no longer a member of the clergy and could no longer call himself Friar Bernard Delicieux. He was then sentenced to life imprisonment within The Wall of Carcassonne, with the extra punishment of spending his imprisonment shackled in solitary confinement and restricted to a diet of bread and water. Oddly, this last part of the sentence was reduced due to the personal intervention of Jacques Fournier, who wrote a letter to the jailer inside The Wall later that same day. The letter stated, and I quote, "having assigned him [meaning Bernard Delicieux] to a strict confinement in The Wall, subjecting him to perpetual imprisonment in irons and a diet of bread and water, we, out of consideration for his age and weakness, and particularly at this moment for the weakness that can be discerned in his hands,

believe that he should be dispensed from performing this penance and thus give you, by this document, the permission to exempt him from irons and fasting." End quote.

This unexpected act of mercy earned Jacques Fournier the outrage and ire of both King Philip V and Pope John. When he heard of Bernard's last minute reprieve, King Philip wrote to Jacques Fournier stating that Bernard should have been sentenced to death, going even further by stating that it was the preference of the French crown that Bernard Delicieux, and I quote "Should suffer death not once, but many times, if human nature would only allow it." End quote. Pope John was likewise appalled at the leniency shown to Bernard. In a margin note appearing in the Inquisition register of Bernard Gui, a clerk has written and I quote, "My Lord, the most holy Pope John XII, after sentence delivered against Bernard Delicieux had been read before him and the Lord Cardinals in a private consistory, and after learning their attention of the right to mitigate the punishment, revoke this stipulation entirely, and ordered that Bernard Delicieux be subject to the full rigor of the sentence and that the conditions of his punishment be completely observed." End quote. Pope John XII wrote to Jacques Fournier, formally revoking the mercy shown to Bernard, and relegating him to chained solitary confinement and restricted diet in February 1320.

In his book "The Friar Of Carcassonne", Stephen O'Shea speculates that Bernard Delicieux may have died in jail before the letter was acted upon. He died sometime in early 1320, and was buried in an unknown and unheralded location. Bernard Delicieux, frail of body at the end, but I would like to think still strong in mind, died in the jail he had fought so long to shut down, one more victim of a system whose injustices and cruelties he had tried so hard to defeat.

The Inquisition, of course, is still rolling merrily along. There are still Cathars in Languedoc, and there is still a little village called Montailou, containing not only Cathar villagers, but a Cathar priest. There is also at this time one single Cathar Perfect still preaching the Cathar faith. Join me next week as we take a look at the pursuit by the Inquisition of this last Cathar Perfect, in an episode unsurprisingly entitled "The Last Cathar Perfect". Until next week, bye for now.

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