

# The Cathars: Chronology of Events

by James McDonald



BC-AD

100 BC - AD 100 sees the flourishing of Gnosticism in the Middle East, including one of the three main strands of early Christianity.

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**Birth of Manes:** Manes, a minor member of Persian royalty, was born in Mesopotamia, and was executed for his new religion (incorporating dualist beliefs) in AD 277.

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early  
eleventh  
century

Theodora, Empress of Byzantium, had a multitude of Paulicians put to death.

1012

The first Cathars known in Europe were noted in the Limousin.

- 1022 King Robert II of France (996-1031) had thirteen distinguished citizens, ecclesiastic and lay, burnt alive at Orléans "because he feared for the safety of the kingdom and the salvation of souls". Ten were canons of the *église collégiale de Sainte-Croix* (Church of the Holy Cross) and another had been confessor to Queen Constance. They were described, in Medieval fashion, as Manichæans, meaning they were dualists. They died steadfast in their beliefs despite torture. This action earned the king the soubriquet *Robert the Pious*.
- 1022 Several cathars were discovered and put to death at Toulouse.
- 1028 **Catholic Council of Charroux** is convened at the suggestion of Guillaume V of Aquitaine. The Council is charged with devising a way of combating religious (Cathar) "error".
- 1045 Roger, Bishop of Chalons, observed that the sect was spreading in his diocese, and asked of Wazo, Bishop of Liège, advice as to the use of force.
- 1049 **Catholic Council of Reims** convened to formulate an understanding of Cathar beliefs.
- 1051 At Goslar, in the Christmas season of 1051, and in 1052, (Cathar) "heretics" were hanged because Holy Roman Emperor Henry III wanted to prevent the spread of "the heretical leprosy".
- 1056 **Catholic Council of Toulouse** threatened Cathar "heretics" with excommunication if they did not repent.
- 1077 In 1076 or 1077, a Cathar is condemned to the stake by the Bishop of Cambrai. Other Cathars are given a choice, by the magistrates of Milan, of converting to Catholicism or being burnt at the stake. Most chose to be burned at the stake.
- 1118 The Emperor Alexius Comnenus has a number of Bogomils executed (possibly triggering a move of survivors into Western Europe).
- 1119 **Catholic Council of Toulouse:** Presided over by Pope Calixtus II, this Council charged the secular powers with responsibility for dealing with "heretics" severely.
- 1135 **Catholic Council of Pisa.** A cleric, Henri du Mans, disowns his "errors" (though he later re-adopts them).

- 1139 **Second (Catholic ) Lateran Council.** Presided over by Pope Calixtus II, this council again stresses that the secular powers must take rigorous action against the heretics.
- 1142 Bogomils are burnt in Cologne.
- 1144 A Catholic mob storms a prison where the Bishop of Soissons keeps heretics imprisoned, and burns them alive. A similar incident occurs at Liège, though a few are rescued from the fire. Yet another similar incident happens at Cologne.
- 1148 **Catholic Council of Reims.** This council decrees that Lords harbouring "heretics" on their land will be treated as their accomplices.
- 1157 **Catholic Council of Reims.** This council lays out repressive procedures against the "heretics".
- 1163 **Catholic Council of Tours.** Presided over by Pope Alexander III, this Council establishes a less unjust and arbitrary procedure against the Cathars.
- 1165 **Council at Lombez.** Condemnes the *boni homines*.
- 1167 **Cathar Council** held in Saint-Félix de Caraman. This council established an administrative organisation in the Languedoc and agreed matters of doctrine. It was presided over by Nicetus, the Cathar bishop of Constantinople, who had travelled from Bulgaria.
- 1167 Execution of seven Burgundian Cathars at the stake in Vézelay.
- 1179 **Third (Catholic) Lateran Council.** Presided over by Pope Alexander III, this council attempts to restore the tattered dignity of the Catholic Clergy. It also anathematizes the Cathar "heresy".
- 1180-1181 Henry, cardinal-bishop of Albano, raises an armed expedition against the stronghold of "heretics" at Lavaur a fief of Raymond Roger, viscount of Béziers. He takes Lavaur and forces the submission of Raymond-Roger.
- 1183-1206 Over an extended period, Bishop Hugo of Auxerre attacks a number of neo-Manichæans. Some are despoiled, some exiled, and some sent to the stake.

1195		<b>Catholic Council of Montpellier</b>
1197-8		In 1197, Peter II the Catholic (1196-1213), King of Aragon and Count of Barcelona, issues an edict in obedience to which the Waldensians and all other schismatics are to be expelled from the land. Any found in the kingdom after Palm Sunday of the next year was to suffer death by fire, and confiscation of goods. In 1198 the <b>Catholic Council of Gerona</b> publishes the decrees of Peter II.
1198		<b>Pontificate of Innocent III, starts.</b> (Ends 1216)
1200		King Philip Augustus of France has eight Cathars burned at Troyes.
1201		King Philip Augustus of France has a Cathar burned at Nevers.
1203	<i>Autumn</i>	Two monks from the Abbey of Fontfroide, legates of Innocent III, Pierre de Castelnau and Raoul de Fontfroide attempt to coerce the Count of Toulouse, Raymond VI into initiating a crusade against the Cathars in his county.
1204		King Philip Augustus of France has several Cathars burned at Braisne-sur-Vesle, and many Cathars burned at Paris, including priests, clerics, laymen, and women.
1204	<i>February</i>	Peter II of Aragón convenes a debate in Carcassonne between Catholics and Cathars (followed by a second one between Catholics and Waldensians).
1204		<b>Cathar Council of Mirepoix.</b> The proceedings are largely unknown, but it is possible that Raymond de Pereille was asked to rebuild the Château of Montségur (Montsegùr) to provide a Cathar stronghold.
1206		<b>Preachings of Dominic Guzmán</b> (later St Dominic) to the Cathars in the Languedoc. In spite of his reputed eloquence, Saint Dominic fails to convince the "heretics" to renounce their beliefs. Recognising the Roman Church's failure, Pope Innocent III declares all southern fiefs forfeit. He also called on the lords of France to take part in the crusade against the Languedoc.
1206		Esclaremonde of Foix, the Count's sister, is administered the Consolamentum, so becoming a Parfaite.
1206	<i>22 November</i>	<b>Foundation of Prouille</b> , a Dominican convent set up by Dominic Guzmán to rival existing Cathar establishments.

- 1207 **Colloquy of Montréal** Final debate in Pamiers between the Catholics (Dominic Guzmán) and the Cathars (notably Benoît de Termes), then between the Catholics and the Waldensians.
- 1208 *15 January* Murder of Pierre de Castelneau as he is about to cross the River Rhone in Saint-Gilles following an unsatisfactory meeting with Raymond V. The killer is identified as an officer of Raymond VI of Toulouse.
- 1209 **Council of Avignon.** Although there is no evidence against him, Raymond VI of Toulouse is excommunicated again.
- 1209 *18th of January* **Submission of Raymond VI of Toulouse.** Stripped to the waist, Raymond is flogged in public on the spot at Saint-Gilles where Pierre de Castelneau had been killed. He was then authorised to lead a crusade against his own subjects, required to discriminate against his Jewish subjects, and absolved from his supposed sins.
- 1209 *June* **Initiation of the Crusade.** The crusade is preached throughout Europe, and an army raised mainly from the areas now comprising northern France. The crusading army is mustered under the command of Arnaud Amoury the Cistercian Abbot of Cîteaux. Tens of thousands of Crusaders are enlisted. They are mainly Northern French, keen for plunder, the remission of their sins, and an assured place in Heaven. They are crusaders in every sense, wearing the crusaders cross and enjoying all of their privileges (protection of goods, suspension of debts, and so on).
- 1209 *22nd of July* **The Massacre at Béziers.** On 22 July 1209 the Crusader army arrived at Béziers on the periphery of the area in the Languedoc where Cathars flourished. There were believed to be around 200 Cathars in the town among a much greater population of sympathetic Catholics. The crusading army sacked and looted the town indiscriminately, while townspeople retreated to the sanctuary of the churches. Arnaud Amoury, the Cistercian abbot-commander is said to have been asked how to tell Cathar from Catholic. His reply, recorded later by a fellow Cistercian, demonstrated his faith: "Kill them all - the Lord will recognise His own". The doors of the church of St Mary Magdalene were broken down and the occupants slaughtered. 7,000 people died in the church including women, children, clerics and old men. Elsewhere many more thousands were mutilated and killed. Prisoners were blinded, dragged behind horses, and used for target practice The town was razed. Arnaud, the abbot-commander, wrote to his master the Pope: "Today your Holiness, twenty thousand citizens were put to the sword, regardless of rank, age, or sex". Reportedly, not a single person survived.

- 1209 *1st to the 15th of August* **Siege of Carcassonne.** From 1st to 15th of August Carcassonne is besieged. Its Viscount, Raymond-Roger Trencavel, is seized during a truce and without their commander the inhabitants surrender. The Crusaders expel the inhabitants with a day's safe conduct, so that they can loot at leisure. Arnaud writes to the pope to explain why on this occasion no-one had been killed. It is at this stage that Simon de Montfort is appointed to hold Raymond-Roger's territories.
- 1209 *10th of November* **Death of Raymond-Roger Trencavel** in mysterious circumstances, in his own prison.
- 1210 *February* **Siege of Bram.** When the castle at Bram falls in 1210, 100 prisoners have their noses cropped, their lips cut off and their eyes gauged out. One man is left with one eye so that he can guide the others away. With a hand on the shoulder of the one in front, and the one-eyed man at their head, a file of blind prisoners winds its way to Lastours (Cabaret), a visible demonstration of the ineffable mercy of God's Army.
- 1210 *February* **Simon de Montfort** fails repeatedly to capture the Castles of Lastours (Cabaret).
- 1210 *Early June* **The "Montréal Meeting"** is convened between Peter II of Aragón and Languedoc lords. The lords were prepared to swear allegiance to the king in return for his support. The negotiation fell through.
- 1210 *22 July* **Capture of Minerve.** Following a six-week siege, 150 Cathar men and women are burned alive when they refuse to abjure their faith. The Cistercian Vaux de Cernay notes that it was not necessary to throw them to the flames, for they went voluntarily. They claimed that "neither death nor life can separate us from the faith to which we are joined". Their behaviour seems to have impressed some of their persecutors, but not enough to raise qualms about killing them.
- 1210 *22nd of August-November* **Siege of Termes**, which fell after a four-month siege.
- 1211 **Council of Montpellier**, at which Raymond VI of Toulouse is excommunicated for the third time.
- 1211 *Early March* **Surrender of Cabaret**, under diplomatic rather than military pressure.
- 1211 *3rd of May* **Capture of Lavaur.** Lavaur falls after a siege, after which the French crusaders excel even themselves in cruelty and disregard for the

accepted rules of war. Aimeric-de-Montréal and 90 knights are hanged. The chatelaine, Geraldine de Lavaur, is thrown alive into a well which is then filled with stones until her screams can no longer be heard. As in all other cases, Cathar Parfaites decline to abjure their faith. 400 cathars are burned by the crusaders, "with great joy" as de Cernay noted. (The crusaders generally burned people alive with great joy - cum ingenti gaudio). One Parfait allegedly renounced his faith. The rest sing as they are being led to the pyres.

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| 1211 | <i>16th to 29th of June</i> | <b>Siege of Toulouse.</b> Simon de Montfort besieges Toulouse, without success.  |
| 1211 | <i>September</i>            | <b>Siege of Castelnaudary.</b> The tables turned, Simon de Montfort is besieged in Castelnaudary by the Count of Toulouse and his ally the Raymond Roger Count of Foix.  |
| 1212 | <i>16th July</i>            | <b>The battle of Las Navas de Tolosa.</b> Turning point of the Crusade against the Moors in Spain.   |
| 1212 | <i>8th of September</i>     | <b>Surrender of Moissac.</b> Simon de Montfort captures cities of the Albi and the Quercy regions which had rebelled against the occupation by the crusaders.  |
| 1213 |                             | <b>Councils of Orange and Lavaur.</b>  |
| 1213 | <i>27th of January</i>      | Raymond VI of Toulouse renders feudal homage to Peter II King of Aragón.   |
| 1213 | <i>July</i>                 | Raymond VI of Toulouse recapturs Pujol.  |
| 1213 | <i>September</i>            | <b>Battle of Muret.</b> Simon de Montfort is besieged in the Castle of Muret by Raymond VI of Toulouse and Peter II of Aragón. Due to Peter's foolhardy bravado he is killed in hand-to-hand fighting, and a battle already won by the allies is converted into a route by de Montfort's forces. Raymond VI of Toulouse goes into exile, seeking refuge with his Plantagenate relative King John of England. |
| 1215 | <i>May</i>                  | <b>Surrender of Toulouse</b> to Simon de Montfort.   |
| 1215 | <i>1st of June</i>          | Prince Louis and Simon de Montfort enter Toulouse.   |
| 1215 | <i>November</i>             | <b>Fourth Lateran Council.</b> This Council was the main event of Innocent III's pontificate. Pope Innocent expanded Gregory VII's claims to temporal as well as spiritual matters, trying to impose a theocracy on  |

the Christian world. A practical application of these temporal claims was the purported dispossession of Raymond VI of Toulouse whose estate was allotted to Simon de Montfort, who thus adopted the title Count of Toulouse.

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| 1216 | <i>May-24th of August</i>                  | <b>Siege of Beaucaire.</b> Raymond, the son of Raymond VI of Toulouse, the future Raymond VII of Toulouse, lands in Marseille and besieges Beaucaire. When de Montfort leaves Toulouse to intervene, the inhabitants of Toulouse seize the opportunity to revolt (see next). |
| 1216 | <i>Early September to October</i>          | <b>Popular Uprising in Toulouse</b>  |
| 1217 | <i>February-March</i>                      | <b>Siege of Montgrenier</b>  |
| 1217 | <i>22nd of May</i>                         | <b>Surrender of Peyrepertuse</b>   |
| 1217 | <i>12th of September</i>                   | Raymond VI of Toulouse re-enters Toulouse.   |
| 1217 | <i>13th September 1217 to 22 July 1218</i> | <b>Second Siege of Toulouse.</b> Stung by the humiliation of losing Toulouse, Simon de Montfort besieges the city again.   |
| 1218 | <i>25th of June</i>                        | During the siege of Toulouse a stone hurled from a mangonel strikes Simon de Montfort on the head and kills him, an event that is still celebrated in the Languedoc. After his death his son Amaury takes over the leadership of the crusade.                                |
| 1218 | <i>October 1218 to June 1219</i>           | <b>Siege and capture of Marmande</b>   |
| 1219 | <i>16th of June - 1st of August</i>        | <b>Third Siege of Toulouse</b>   |
| 1220 | <i>July to March 1221</i>                  | <b>Second siege of Castelnaudary</b>   |
| 1221 |  | Raymond VI of Toulouse captures Montréal.  |



1222		Raymond VI of Toulouse builds a fortified village for refugees at Cordes (Now called Cordes sur ciel).
1222	<i>August</i>	Death of Raymond VI of Toulouse.
1223		<b>Council of Sens</b> , at which attempts are made to end the crusade. Churchmen insist that it continue.
1223	<i>March</i>	Death of Raymond Roger of Foix. He is succeeded by Roger Bernard II (the Great) Count of Foix (1223-1241)
1223	<i>July</i>	<b>Death of Philip II</b> (Philip Augustus), King of France.
1223		<b>Start of the reign of Louis VIII</b> (1223-1226). Defeated, Amaury de Montfort turns to the King of France for help and bestows his rights on the French King. Louis VIII, appointed commander of the crusade by the pope, carries out more atrocities in the Languedoc. His death reverses the Crusaders' fortunes and Raymond VII of Toulouse recovers part of his estate.
1224	<i>February</i>	Raymond Trencavel II recovers the estates of his father Raymond-Roger Trencavel who died at the hands of the Crusaders at Carcassonne in 1209. Amaury de Montfort returns to France.
1225		Raymond VII of Toulouse is declared an enemy of the Church.
1225		<b>The Council of Bourges</b> initiates a second crusade.
1226		<b>Cathar Council of Pieusse</b> creates a Cathar bishopric in the Razés.
1226	<i>30th of January</i>	Led by the King of France, Louis VIII, French crusaders arrive in the Languedoc. With the exception of Toulouse, local resistance collapses.
1226	<i>July</i>	Carcassonne surrenders to the French Crusaders.
1226	<i>9th of September</i>	The Crusaders take Avignon.
1226	<i>3rd of November</i>	Death of Louis VIII while returning to France.
1226		Accession of Louis IX (later Saint Louis), and since he is still a child, start of the regency of Blanche de Castille.

- 1227 Start of the Pontificate of Gregory IX (1227-1241).
- 1227 **Council of Narbonne** endorses the excommunication and anathema against Raymond VII of Toulouse.
- 1228 Raymond VII of Toulouse submits to Blanche de Castile Regent for Louis IX of France. Raymond Trencavel II and other seigneurs are stripped of their possessions and become *faidits*. Raymond Tranceval seeks refuge in Aragón.
- 1229 *January* **Treaty of Meaux** under which Raymond VII of Toulouse pledges to exterminate "heresy", to marry his daughter to the son of Louis VIII Alphonse de Poitiers (brother of Louis IX). The treaty also specifies that the County of Toulouse would be consolidated within the Kingdom of France if the marriage produces no heirs. The establishment of the Inquisition is often dated from this meeting, though it had already been planned before this treaty.
- 1229 **Council of Toulouse.** Devises procedures to apply the Treaty of Meaux.
- 1229 *Spring* Roger-Bernard de Foix makes his peace with the Louis IX.
- 1232 Guilhabert de Castres, the most prominent Cathar bishop administers the Consolamentum in hundreds of Languedoc townships. He then establishes himself in the Cathar stronghold at Montségur (Montsegùr) - where he holds a Cathar Council.
- 1233 *13th April* Gregory IX formally established the Inquisition, and appoints the Dominicans to administer it.
- 1234 210 people are condemned to the stake by Inquisitors at Moissac.
- 1237-1241 Following a request from Raymond VII of Toulouse, the widely despised Inquisition agrees to suspend its activities in the county of Toulouse for a four-year period.
- 1239 *September* 183 Cathars are burned at Montwimer (Marne) in the presence of the Count of Champagne.
- 1240 *7th of September - 11th of October* Raymond Trencavel II returns from exile in Aragón with an army and besieges Carcassonne.

- 1240 *16th of November* **Surrender of Peyrepertuse** to the French.
- 1241 **First Siege of Montségur.** To appease Louis IX, Raymond VII of Toulouse, besieges Montségur ( Montsegùr) but without success.
- 1241 *May* Death of Roger Bernard II (the Great) Count of Foix 1223-1241.
- 1242 *28 May* **Massacre of Inquisitors at Avignonet.** As part of an abortive uprising, two widely hated inquisitors were killed, along with their retinue, by soldiers from Montségur ( Montsegùr) (led by Pierre-Roger de Mirepoix).
- 1242 *20 May* **Royan.** Henry III, King of England lands on the Atlantic coast of the Aquitaine.
- 1242 *July* **Taillebourg.** Victory of Louis IX King of France over Henry III, King of England at Taillebourg.
- 1243 *January* **The Peace of Lorris** by which Raymond VII of Toulouse definitively surrendered to Louis IX.
- 1243 *Spring* **Council of Béziers:** Raymond VII of Toulouse appeals for his excommunication to be lifted. The Council decides to "cut off the head of the dragon" referring to Montségur ( Montsegùr).
- 1243 *May* **Siege of the Château of Montségur.** Montségur ( Montsegùr) is besieged by the French Crusaders begins. Inside, a military garrison of around 200 knights and soldiers protected a further 200 Parfaits and their families.
- 1244 *March* **Fall of the Château of Montségur** after a siege lasting 10 months. Between the start of negotiations of the surrender and the final rendition, some 25 ordinary believers opt to receive the Consolamentum, knowing the implications.
- 1244 *16th of March* Around 225 Parfaits, including the 25 recent additions, were burnt alive on a huge pyre at the foot of the pog of Montségur (Montsegùr) (in a field now called the 'Prat dels Cremats (field of the burnt).
- 1247 *7th of April* Raymond Trencavel II submits in Béziers.
- 1248 **Crusade to the Holy Land.** Louis IX (later Saint Louis) goes off on

crusade , and is later captured in Egypt.

1248 Death of Raymond VII of Toulouse, without a male heir. His estates pass to his daughter, Jeanne, married to Alphonse de Poitiers, brother of Louis IX.

1255 **Return of Saint Louis**

1255 *Spring* **Surrender of Quéribus** After the fall of the Château of Montségur (Montsegùr), Cathar resistance had centred on another remote mountain stronghold, this time in the Fenouillèdes, in the Roussillon, legally belonging to the King of Aragón and so outside the jurisdiction of the French crown. Another siege was planned. This time the Cathars leave before the arrival of the French troops, fleeing presumably to seek sanctuary elsewhere in Catalonia, Aragón or Piedemont.

1258 *11th of May* **Treaty of Corbeil.** This treaty, concluded between Saint Louis and Jaume I of Aragón, ratified the French seizure of Queribus and the surrounding area in the Fenouillèdes. Aragón ceded all lands north of the River Agly. Subsequently Louis IX and Philip the Bold re-inforced or rebuilt Puilaurens, Aguila, Queribus, Peyrepertuse and Termes to form a line of defence for the new border. These five castles are together known as the five sons of Carcassonne. Many Cathars withdraw to even more remote places of safety such as caves or forests. Others are sheltered by friends or flee to Piedmont. Some die of exposure or starvation, or fall into the hands of the Inquisitors.

1268 "28 cart loads" of Cathars are burned alive at Plaisance in Lombardy.

1271 *October* **Annexation of the county of Toulouse.** Following the death of Alphonse de Poitiers and Jeanne de Toulouse the county of Toulouse is incorporated into the French Royal Demesne.

1278 Cathar persecutions continue elsewhere. 200 Patarins are burnt at the stake in Sermione. 200 Cathars are burnt in Verona.

1321 **Death of Guillem Bélibaste,** Guilhem Belibaste was the last known Parfait in the Languedoc, burned alive at the château at Villerouge Termenès.

1328 510 Cathars are walled up alive in the Lombrives cave, on orders from the Inquisitor Jacques Fournier, who is later elected pope.

