

IDENTITY UNDER (THREAT OF) FIRE: CATHAR IDENTITY AND COMMUNITY  
IN THE THIRTEENTH CENTURY LAURAGAIS

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## **Dedication**

*For Lily, friend of friends, who always smiled when I came home.*

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## Introduction

Scholars studying medieval heresy have arrived at a crossroads. One path deconstructs the medieval orthodox view of heresy as an exaggeration of small, isolated threats while denying the existence of large-scale, cohesive heterodox movements. The other path continues a long-standing strand of historiography that understands heresy as opposed to but not created by medieval orthodox theorists, organized counter-churches that wrote their own texts, formulated their own doctrines, and actively resisted the orthodox forces that tried to demolish them. At the center of this debate lies “Catharism,” a dualist Christian tradition in southern France and northern Italy, prominent between 1150 and 1350, which the Church perceived as a threat that needed to be eliminated.<sup>1</sup> The Cathars stand at the center of this debate because the largest number of sources related to later medieval heresy are either theirs or attributed to them, making those sources a suitable means by which to investigate how those whom the Church labeled as heretics conceived of themselves and their place in the European Christian landscape.

Both of these strands of argumentation about Catharism explore principally the perspective of inquisitors who distort the identities of those under investigation. The most recent investigations of “Catharism” by Mark Pegg (a deconstructionist) and Caterina Bruschi (a traditionalist) tend to ignore the lives and experiences of the

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<sup>1</sup> This study uses “Cathar” and “Catharism” as a general descriptor of the religion and its participants, but understands the problematic nature of the terms. Rather than reinventing the terminology, the study uses the common language of scholarly discourse about the group. Also, instead of the general label *Perfecti* that refers to the Cathar elite, the study substitutes “Good Men” and “Good Women.”

deponents that resonate in the inquisition records in favor of a more inquisitor-centered analysis in an attempt to establish whether or not a Cathar Church ever existed.<sup>2</sup> Rather than focusing on the question of whether or not a Cathar Church existed in the thirteenth century, this study turns to the lives and the experiences of those who practiced and/or encountered Catharism in order to paint a more faithful picture of what that religion involved spiritually, politically, and socially. This study examines the assertions about belief and the experiences of those who believed or who encountered those who believed to arrive at a sense of what Catharism meant to those who practiced it.

Discussing Catharism in this way also requires a shift in perspective on the meaning of religion to those who participated in Catharism. Instead of understanding religion as a set of symbols or along the lines of beliefs, practices, and ethics, a modern construction of the meaning of religion, what those connected to Catharism experienced was fluid and dynamic, and they also constructed their own religious and social discourse.<sup>3</sup> The focus on belief and propositional, doctrinal truth takes the approach of the inquisitors themselves, who sought to root out such details from those who came to the court. The shift to a lens of social practice and lived experience with the religion provides a clearer picture into the world of medieval religion.

As a result of centering the experiences of those who encountered Catharism, their stories illuminate the self-constructed identity or identities as asserted by those

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<sup>2</sup> Mark Pegg, *The Corruption of Angels: The Great Inquisition of 1245-1246* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001). See also Caterina Bruschi, *The Wandering Heretics of Languedoc* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

<sup>3</sup> For the construction of religion as a modern phenomenon, see Talal Asad, *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993) 40-54.

deposed by the inquisitors. These inquisition records provide striking examples of the relationship between self-perception and religious affiliation, even though the records only contain fragments of otherwise complicated religious identities under the influence of families, neighbors, and ultimately the competing religious ideas that swirled in the towns and villages. The available fragments of identity remaining in the inquisitor register that is the center of this study reveals that those who believed in Catharism and carried those beliefs as their identity believed that they were good and faithful Christians, and that the rituals performed by the Good Men and Good Women were meaningful and effective Christian practices. This Christian identity reflects a tension between what modern scholars see as Catholic and Cathar, but those who experienced and practiced Catharism did not necessarily recognize the tension, at least until the inquisitors told them otherwise. This tension in the identity of those connected to Catharism also effectively demonstrates the contestedness of Christianity in the High Middle Ages, showing that Christian identity was never singular, despite the claims of medieval Catholic scholars and clerics, nor was any practice connected to that identity uniform across the entire Christian landscape of Europe.

As a means for exploring these notions of Cathar identity and community, the study examines a single manuscript, Toulouse, Bibliothèque Municipale MS 609, which contains the depositions of around 4500 people connected to Catharism at varying levels.<sup>4</sup> These depositions were the result of interviews conducted by two inquisitors,

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<sup>4</sup> This study uses a digital transcription of this manuscript made available by Jean Duvernoy. *Enquête de Bernard de Caux et Jean de Saint Pierre, copie vers 1260 du 4ème livre et de partie du 5ème livre pour le Lauragais (1245-1246, 1253). MS 609 Bibliothèque Municipale de Toulouse*, ed. by Jean Duvernoy. Accessed at



Bernard de Caux and Jean de Saint-Pierre, during a region-wide inquisition in the Lauragais, the immediate region south-east of Toulouse, from 1245-1246.<sup>5</sup> This inquisition, the largest of its time, was performed in response to the murder of two other inquisitors at the hands of a group of Cathar sympathizers in Avignonet in 1242. Once they arrived, the inquisitors demanded that every male over fourteen and every female over twelve testify in front of them at the monastery of Saint-Sernin in the town of Toulouse.<sup>6</sup> The inquisitors deposed the witnesses in Occitan, the language of the region, and scribes recorded the interviews in Latin in the final manuscript in ten volumes. After the inquisitors concluded their interviews, several scribes copied the ten volumes between 1250 and 1260, and the surviving volumes came to rest in Toulouse sometime in 1790.<sup>7</sup> Unfortunately, only two volumes of the original ten have survived, leaving the picture of Catharism in this region tantalizingly incomplete and presenting an intensely localized picture of the religion. The two remaining volumes, however, contain engaging and rich descriptions of how the people in the region's towns and villages participated in Catharism. These descriptions provide a lens through which to gaze upon the religious identities of those called to the inquisitors' court and provide insights on the religions in the medieval Lauragais.

How the villagers and townspeople saw themselves through religious lenses lies at the center of this study. The term "identity," however, is amorphous and ambiguous,

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<http://jean.duvernoy.free.fr/sources/sinquisit.htm>. The study will continue to refer to these volumes as [MS 609] and will supply the original folio numbers, along with the item number and page number from the edited edition.

<sup>5</sup> See figure 1 on page 126 for a map.

<sup>6</sup> Pegg, *The Corruption of Angels*, p. 39.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 20.

and it needs contextualization in order to align with the experiences and self-conceptions of the deponents in MS 609. For the purposes of this study, “religious identity” implies self-identification with a particular religion, in this case either Catharism, Catholicism or perhaps both, formed under the influence of social factors such as their families, their friends, their workplace, the religious discussions in the town squares and even the inquisitors who came to uncover and destroy the Cathars. The Cathars also aligned their self-conceptions with written and oral texts: their service books, their rituals, and the doctrine that the Good Men explained to them through public preaching or personal visits to the homes of believers. Finally, traumatic experiences, especially the Albigensian Crusade and the onset of the inquisition shaped the ways in which Cathars, former Cathars, and Catholics conceived of themselves and their place in a contested Christian landscape. Once the inquisition drew clear lines between Catharism and Catholicism, and therefore heresy and orthodoxy, both Catholics and Cathars were forced to define themselves as opposites to the other, both solidifying and challenging their religious convictions.

Communities also lie at the heart of a close reading in MS 609. The recounted experiences of the deponents suggest several communities of believers within the towns and villages. The villages under investigation formed separate religious communities dependent on the type of Christianity they practiced. Sometimes the village agreed unanimously on its adherence to Catharism, but other villages were divided along Catholic and Cathar lines. Within Cathar religious communities, smaller communities formed based on relationships with other believers within a town or village, connections with believers in other villages, the texts and the interpretation of those texts that defined

their religion, and several common emotions felt in response to the participation in religion. Cathar responses to the traumatic events such as the Albigensian Crusade and the onset of the medieval inquisition reshaped these connections and emotional attachments.

The picture of Catharism contained in MS 609 resonates to some extent with the somewhat generic descriptions contained in more general histories of Catharism, which have used MS 609 to varying degrees.<sup>8</sup> General histories of Catharism have described the religion as dualist, as a descendent from Bogomilism from the East, and as having four rituals that shaped the religious lives of those who participated in the religion. The inquisitors pointed their questions at these beliefs, and the deponents in MS 609 affirm that the Good Men and Good Women had a dualist theology and practiced a set of religious rituals. The most important ritual to the Cathars was the *consolamentum*, a spiritual baptism that either advanced a novice into the elite ranks of the Good Men and Good Women or served as the last rites and means of salvation for the Cathars. In addition to the *consolamentum*, the Cathars practiced another ritual that the inquisitors called the *apparellamentum*, a public confession given to the Good Men before an initiate underwent the *consolamentum*. The Cathars also practiced a ritual that the inquisitors considered “adoration,” called the *melioramentum* in the registers of the depositions. This ritual involved common Cathar believers greeting the Good Men and Good Women with reverence and respect, bowing to them and asking the Good Men and Good Women to pray for them and to lead them to salvation. Finally, some have suggested the Cathars,

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<sup>8</sup> See for example, Malcom Barber, *The Cathars: Dualist Heretics in Languedoc in the High Middle Ages* (Harlow: Pearson Education Limited, 2000) and Malcom Lambert, *The Cathars* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd, 1998).

in the early fourteenth century, practiced a death ritual called the *Endura*, during which the participant starved himself/herself to death, though this ritual does not appear in the descriptions in MS 609.<sup>9</sup>

Of these rituals, the *consolamentum* and the *melioramentum* appear most often in the depositions of MS 609, and therefore receive the most attention in the exploration of how rituals contributed to the Cathars' notions of their identity. In particular, the *melioramentum*, or the "adoration" ritual, blended into the natural social fabric of the towns and villages by amalgamating with the villages' standards of social courtesy. On the other hand, the *consolamentum* stood sharply apart from, but similar in function to the Catholic practice of last rites, offering an alternative path to salvation than that offered by the Church. The choice to have a Good Man come to the bedside of a dying loved one often split families in two and caused other social and religious rifts within the village itself. Participation in and acceptance of the power of the *consolamentum* signified a person's definite acceptance of Catharism and rejection of the Catholic priests' authority to administer soul-saving sacraments. Despite the rejection of the sacramental power of the priest, however, the villagers do not appear to consider themselves as something other than good Christians. The parish priests and the travelling friars may have told the villagers otherwise, but it was not until the crusaders on the Albigensian Crusade destroyed their towns and the inquisitors arrived, who brought with them legal penalties, that some of those who believed in Catharism recanted their beliefs after becoming aware of the consequences of holding Cathar beliefs.

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<sup>9</sup> Lambert, *The Cathars*, 240-244.

Despite many attempts to discuss Cathar beliefs and the place of Catharism in the study of medieval heresy, several past historians have hijacked the history of Catharism and shaped that history around a distorted anti-Catholic ideology that polemicizes the Church while it seemingly explores Catharism. Chapter one discusses how these past historians, both in the early-modern era and in the present day, have imagined the Cathars in a genealogy of anti-Church sentiment. Early modern historians of heresy in particular considered the Cathars and other medieval heresies as forerunners of the Protestant Reformation, while those religious movements did not conceive of themselves as a reformed version of Catholicism. Instead, those who participated in heterodox Christianities understood themselves to participate and believe in Christian practices, while they rejected specific practices of the dominant church. Only when the Church used violence against those the Church labeled as Cathars as an assertion of their authority did those who subscribed to Catharism completely understand that they had defied the Church and, in some cases, sought absolution for their sins. Other historians have also imagined the Cathars as more progressive than their Catholic counterparts, positing that the Cathars offered both more opportunities to women and that the Cathars actively rebelled against the institution of the Catholic Church rather than situating the believers into a milieu of swirling and competing religious beliefs and practices, all of which had equal claim to being “Christian” until the Church took violent action to say otherwise. Modern French historians have even imagined the Cathars as the martyrs of a southern French culture that the Church destroyed in concert with northern France’s political leaders. The deponents in MS 609 do not assert such progressive ideas and

ideals, and in many cases present examples that counter the claims of later historians who shaped their understanding of Catharism through ideologically tinted lenses.

Chapter one also examines how the inquisitors used medieval assumptions about the character and nature of heresies to construct an ideal-type of heretic in order to develop a system for rooting out heretics from village communities. The inquisitors drew on source material, including the Third Lateran Council that connected Catharism to Manichaeism because of their common dualism, that polemicized the believers as superstitious fools whom the Good Men and Good Women had duped into following the heresy, and that saw Catharism as a fiercely anti-sacramental cult bent on undermining the Church's spiritual authority. The deponents in MS 609 do recount holding an anti-sacramental and dualist theology, but their stories do not suggest a sense of belonging to ancient dualism, nor do the deponents testify to intentionally undermining the Church's authority in a manner that suggests a sort of spiritual rebellion.

Chapter two explores the ways in which written and oral texts shaped the self-conceptions of the Cathars by giving them a spiritual and doctrinal foundation. These written texts and rituals played a role in developing a textual community in the villages and towns. The Good Men used written materials in their daily pastoral care practices. These written materials, in the form of portable service books, not only identified a Good Man as a spiritual authority in the village, at least in the minds of those who accepted Catharism, but they also played a significant role in the administration of rituals, especially the *consolamentum*. In both uses of the ritual, the deathbed rite and the advancement into the ranks of the Good Men and Good Women, the Good Man officiating the ritual placed his service book on the head of the person receiving the ritual.

The service books therefore acted as a conduit for both salvation and evidence of the spiritual authority invested in the Good Men.

The second chapter also explores how the Good Men and Good Women transmitted Cathar doctrine to potential believers through public preaching, home meetings, and education. The means by which Good Men and Good Women transmitted the Cathar doctrine depended largely on gender and the religious ambitions of an individual or their family. For women whose families desired for them to become Good Women, their religious education began at a young age and took place in monastic-style houses in which they could learn from the Good Women. Good Men frequented these houses, leading prayers and performing rituals, and also providing instruction for the young girls. Men received their religious education in various ways, not the least of which was religious education side by side with craft-trade apprenticeships. Both men and women, moreover, heard the words of the Good Men in their own homes or in the homes of friends. During these more intimate meetings, the Good Men discussed matters of religion with the believers, though MS 609 does not spell out specifically what those conversations entailed. The Good Men and the believers also performed the *melioramentum* or “adoration” ritual, during which the believers acknowledged the sanctity of the Good Men and asked them to pray for the believers’ good end and eventual salvation through the *consolamentum*.

The role of the *consolamentum* in the formation of common emotional identities among the Cathars lies at the center of chapter three. The villagers’ different reactions to the *consolamentum* elucidate the religious divide in some villages and the important role of deathbed rituals in the thirteenth century. The deathbed version of the ritual invoked a

wide range of emotions stretching from awe in the Cathars to anger and sadness in those who rejected Catharism entirely. The *consolamentum* also provided relief from religious anxieties about death for the Cathars due to their belief that a deathbed *consolamentum* guaranteed the recipient's salvation. The reaction of those who witnessed the deathbed ritual, whether Cathar or Catholic, also engendered bonds between those who viewed the ritual in the same ideological way. For the Cathars, the religious symbol of the *consolamentum*, especially when it ushered a new initiate into the ranks of the Good Men and Good Women, brought people together with a sense of awe for the newly minted holy person. For Catholic scholars and polemicists of the time, however, the *consolamentum* in any form represented the "birth" of a new heretic and a potential poison to the other Catholic believers in the village.

Chapter three also discusses the emotional bonds formed during the performance of the *melioramentum* or "adoration" ritual. The performances of this ritual not only brought the Cathar believers together in religious fellowship, it also provided a means by which Cathars could identify each other. The identification of co-believers in a town where religious affiliations were divided between Catharism and Catholicism reinforced a Cathar believer's connection with the Good Men and Good Women and gave them a sense of solidarity with other believers. When the travelling Dominican and Franciscan friars came to the towns and preached against the Good Men and Good Women, such a feeling of solidarity provided believers with a sense of justification for resisting the friars' teaching. Even in the small, more intimate gatherings of believers in their private homes, the performance of the "adoration" ritual imbued the believers with a sense of camaraderie.



That sense of solidarity became crucial to the survival of Catharism after the coming of the crusaders during the Albigensian Crusade. The crusaders rushed into towns and villages and mercilessly slaughtered countless people associated with Catharism. The line separating orthodoxy and heterodoxy became increasingly clearer, causing many Cathar believers to reconsider their religious affiliations, but the Crusade did not halt Cathar activities completely. The events of the Albigensian Crusade also left a lasting impression on those who witnessed them. Many of the deponents in MS 609 remember the Crusade as a sort of temporal landmark that separated a time when those connected to Catharism could practice openly and without the fear of reprisal or persecution. The violent events of the Albigensian Crusade also caused the remaining Cathars to invest more emotion in their rituals, both as a means of standing steadfast in their faith and as a means of reassurance in an increasingly anxious time.

The Albigensian Crusade ended in 1229, but an even more aggressive and insidious anti-Cathar force appeared in the later 1230s. The arrival of the inquisitors signaled the beginning of the end of Catharism as a communal belief system and caused even more anxieties in the minds of the suspected participants who fell under the inquisitors' gaze. An individual's affiliation with Catharism now carried legal consequences up to a fiery death at the stake. The sight or even mere imaginings of trials, public humiliation, imprisonment, and death by fire caused the believers to reevaluate their religious leanings and many returned to the Catholic fold. Those who remained firm in their adherence to Catharism formed deeper emotional bonds with their co-believers whether at private meetings in believers' homes, in hiding, or during escapes to other villages, towns, or "countries." Those whom the inquisition did find guilty and

punish also bonded together in their similar shame of having to wear the yellow cross on their clothing. As a semiotic marker for past religious affiliation, those who wore the cross felt a sense of shared burden with those who had a common punishment. All of these emotional connections influenced how believers interacted and identified with their religion and thus how they conceived of themselves and their place in the religious life of the village as well as the larger world.

The confluence of identity and community in a close reading of MS 609 paints a rather clear picture of religious life in the villages in the Lauragais that fell under the investigative gaze of the inquisitors. While the deponents identify with Catharism and Catholicism in many different ways, the same types of religious moods and motivations appear throughout MS 609 and point to the importance of religion in the shaping of personal identities. For the study of medieval religion itself, the deponents in MS 609 present a picture of the contestedness of Christianity in the High Middle Ages and of the lives of those who participated in a heterodox version of Christianity. In a broad view, the deponents in MS 609 add one piece to the rather complicated religious puzzle of medieval Christianity.

## Chapter 1: Present and Past Imaginings of the Cathars

If anything definitive might be said about the Cathars and Catharism, it is that the group and its religion have captured to a substantial degree the imaginations of both historians and those enthusiastic about history. Several groups, movements, and individuals have employed the Cathars' story in a variety of ways, whether they annex the Cathars' plight to their own history or to identify them as a forerunner of a larger, more revolutionary movement. Some have connected the Cathars to the myth of the Holy Grail, perhaps most notoriously the medievalist and Nazi SS officer Otto Rahn and more recently the novelist Dan Brown.<sup>10</sup> The Cathars have even appeared in recent mainstream media, used in a dialogue about the Catholic Church's pedophilia scandal.<sup>11</sup> Such imaginings of the Cathars and Catharism by historians and popular writers make connections that both distort what historical sources are able to partially reveal about the Cathars and create a mythology loosely based on somewhat unreliable sources.

This chapter explores the ways in which historians, inquisitors, and even the Cathars themselves imagined Catharism, the exploration of which removes distorting lenses in order to examine Cathar identity. Non-Cathars have shaped the discourse of Cathar identity to such a degree that the narratological layers that the inquisitors and modern historians have created need peeling back in order to separate them from the self-constructions by the Cathars themselves. The peeling back of these layers does not,

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<sup>10</sup> For a good analysis of Rahn's place in Cathar historiography, see Malcom Barber, *The Cathars: Dualist Heretics in Languedoc in the High Middle Ages*, 208-212. Dan Brown, *The DaVinci Code* (New York: Random House, 2003).

<sup>11</sup> The Daily Show, April 7<sup>th</sup>, 2010: Steve Carrell, first broadcasted on Comedy Central on April 7, 2010, directed by Chuck O'Neil and Written by Rory Albanese and J.R. Havlan.

however, reveal any sort of “authentic” Cathar identity, but it does permit one to hear the somewhat muffled voices of those people suspected of belonging to the religion and thus a small glimpse into how these same people imagined themselves through their religion.

The manuscript at the center of this study, MS 609, provides a suitable means by which to perform such a task. MS 609 presents a sufficiently large set of just over 6000 interviews involving around 4500 people. Two inquisitors formulated the questions and conducted the interviews, and several historians, both recent and past, have discussed the manuscript, whether they reconstruct some of the stories to paint a picture of a singular town or in order to provide a piece to the overall picture of Catharism.<sup>12</sup> MS 609, however, despite its large number of interviews, only affords the present a small sample of Cathars and Catharism, given that the inquisitors only drew people from the region of Toulouse. On one hand, then, any conclusions drawn from MS 609 cannot fully speak for the entirety of the Cathar phenomenon, both those accused of it and those charged to hunt it down and root it out. On the other hand, MS 609 provides valuable insight into Catharism and those who identified with it on a local level, revealing communities of believers connected by experience, religion, and other personal networks.

This study takes the past historiography of MS 609 as a point of departure and challenges the conclusions of historians who boil Catharism down to a set of social symptoms or causes. Instead of looking for sociological, psychological, or political

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<sup>12</sup> See especially Mark Pegg, *The Corruption of Angels: The Great Inquisition of 1245-1246* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001). Also see John Hine Mundy, *The Repression of Catharism at Toulouse: The Royal Diploma of 1279* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1985) and John Hine Mundy, *Society and Government at Toulouse in the Age of the Cathars* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1997).

explanations for the successes and failures of the religion, exploring the ways in which the people who encountered and participated in Catharism defined their religious and social identities provides another piece of the historical puzzle. Rather than replacing the previous historiography, such an approach makes necessary corrections and adds to the dialogue by shifting the focus back onto the participants themselves, and allows the Cathars to speak mostly on their own terms, though filtered through the ideological coloring of the inquisitors who tried to uncover the religious leanings of the villagers and townspeople.

First, then, the “imaginings” of later historians and medieval inquisitors and polemicists, moreover, require further analysis in order to draw more reasonable and realistic conclusions. These historical imaginings of the Cathars carry considerable social, religious, and, most importantly, political weight, all of which have consequences for those being imagined and those doing the imagining. Since these historical conceptions classify and organize the Cathars according to the one doing the imagining, this chapter considers the Cathars as an “imagined community,” a collection of connections, however accurate or inaccurate, that give an identifying shape to the religious group in the eyes of present historians. Once recognized as a community by others, the Cathars, or any other group of people, religious or not, become historical actors, whose actions weigh greatly on the minds of those considering them, whether hostile or sympathetic. A focus on communities counters the post-modern conceptions of the nation, which sees the nation playing the larger historical role in formulating identity rather than focusing on the individuals who do the real construction in the formation of their own identities.

Formulated by Benedict Anderson in his book about nationalism and the modern nation-state titled by the same name, the phrase “imagined communities” explains how the people who make up a people group “imagine” themselves in relationship to each other. Yet, Anderson argues, the nation manages its cohesiveness because the citizens of any particular nation imagine a “horizontal comradeship” or that citizens imagine a connectedness with those whom they know “belong” to the same nation despite never having met them.<sup>13</sup> Thus, at any given time, citizens of a nation imagine fellow citizens living out their daily lives in ways that seem familiar to them, especially since they have similar experiences and identities, whatever their socio-economic status and job requirements. This imagining inculcates powerful emotions in individuals, and, as Anderson argues, ultimately creates feelings of belonging and connectedness with the result that such imaginings form an ideology and provides permission for people to kill for and give their lives in the name of that nation and ideology.

Anderson’s formulation for the birth of nationalism and the nation-state provides powerful insights for the modern era, but the same sort of imagined connectedness applies to the Middle Ages as well, though in a different context. Though the nation-state did not exist in Europe during the Middle Ages, its kingdoms and local communities provided environments that gave people multiple ways to connect with each other.<sup>14</sup> These connections, formed horizontally like the bonds created by the modern nation-

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<sup>13</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (London: Verso, 2006), 4-7.

<sup>14</sup> Susan Reynolds, *Kingdoms and Communities in Western Europe, 900-1300* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984). Also see Kathleen Davis, *Periodization and Sovereignty: How Ideas of Feudalism and Secularization Govern the Politics of Time* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008). See also Patrick J. Geary, *The Myth of Nations: The Medieval Origins of Europe* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003).

state, provided one of the fundamental components of a person's identity in the Middle Ages. A person in the Middle Ages could not claim that they were French or German in the same way as citizens of those countries can today, but, at the very least, they could claim allegiance to or affiliation with regional kingdoms as subjects of those kingdoms. Christianity between these kingdoms also played a role in developing a person's identity. Even in the case of the Cathars, who called themselves "Good Christians, Good Men, and Good Women," Christianity and an individual's connection to it played a key component in the identity formation process.

Modern historians have also imagined the Good Men, Good Women, and the believers. The way that historians have imagined the Cathars, however, has generally been through ideologically tinted lenses that distorts the historical record more than it illuminates it. While most twentieth century historians of heresy have not connected the religious phenomenon to anything insidious, Rahn being a notable exception, they have imagined it as a part of their own past, with the result of inflating the role of the Cathars or other groups like the Waldensians, Beguines, Lollards, or Hussites in the development of Christianity or medieval politics. In some cases, this has led to some historians imagining the Cathars as a reform group, gender-equalizing progressives or as the martyrs of a lost southern French culture destroyed by the north. Historians of the later twentieth century and twenty-first century, like Mark Pegg and Caterina Bruschi, have, however, deconstructed many of these notions, examining Catharism, and heresy as a whole, for that matter, mostly free of that ideological coloring, but are still overly concerned with questions such as the existence or non-existence of a Cathar "church."

Medieval inquisitors and polemicists had their own conceptions of the Cathars in the High Middle Ages. The inquisitors imagined the Cathars and other “heretics” as contradictory to or inconsistent with their own conceptions of “true” religion. For the inquisitors, those performing the inquisitions or those writing manuals about how to perform them, the Cathars and other heretical groups stood in direct opposition to their beliefs and way of life. As such, the inquisitors read the doctrines of the Catholic Church into the practices of the Good Men, Good Women, and believers, which stood in complete contradiction to their own beliefs. In MS 609, this phenomenon shows most clearly through the questions the inquisitors posed to those under investigation, questions specifically targeted to root out those who believed in a clearly defined set of wrong beliefs. These questions had as their foundation certain assumptions about heresy and its historical roots that, many times, were at odds with what the deponents in MS 609 claimed that they believed.

Using these three classifications (historians, inquisitors, and the “heretics” themselves) as a point of departure to explore the various ways the Cathars have been imagined, the chapter finds that examining the religious group through these lenses only provides fragments of the religious identities of the deponents in MS 609. At the very least, however, changing the lens from ideologically based assumptions to the words and memories of those who practiced the religion only allows for a somewhat clearer view through an already opaque window. While this lens change cannot explicitly show how the deponents presented Good Men, Good Women, and believers: the deponents, in the record, create a chasm between themselves as deponents and the believers themselves. It can, on the other hand, illuminate their social relationships, their basic religious practices,



and the way they interacted with the Good Men and Good Women, both positively and negatively. After these non-Cathar assumptions have been identified, one can then approach those under investigation on their own terms, and add another piece to the complicated historiographical puzzle that “Catharism” presents.

Prior to the twentieth century, the majority of the historiography done on the Cathars and other “heretical” groups had a distinct Protestant resonance in its discourse.<sup>15</sup> The tenor of this discourse took its cue from, perhaps most appropriately, Martin Luther himself, who saw “heretics” as the predecessors to his challenge of the church, chiefly because of the many groups’ emphases on the Gospels.<sup>16</sup> During the nineteenth century especially, Protestant scholars like Ludwig Keller wrote histories of medieval heretics in order to provide a foil to their Catholic opponents.<sup>17</sup> Such historiography is politically skewed against the Catholic Church and it distorts the picture of the past by painting the heretics, Cathars among them, as revolutionaries whom the Church had to suppress in order to maintain its control. While the Cathars may not have been afraid to assert their position against the Church (in documents other than the inquisitor register), labeling them proto-Protestants is a bit of a stretch, especially since the deponents in MS 609 do not espouse anything resembling Protestant beliefs.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> For an excellent survey of this historiography, see Abraham Friesen, “Medieval Heretics or Forerunners of the Reformation: The Protestant Rewriting of the History of Medieval Heresy” in *The Devil, Heresy, and Witchcraft in the Middle Ages: Essays in Honor of Jeffrey Burton Russell*, ed. Alberto Ferrerio, (Leiden: Brill, 1998) 165-190.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 165-166.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 189.

<sup>18</sup> For such an assertion by Good Men themselves, see “The Vindication of the Church of God” in *Heresies of the High Middle Ages: Selected Sources Translated and Edited*, eds Walter L. Wakefield and Austin P. Evans (New York: Columbia University Press, 1969), 596-606.

The beginning of the twentieth century marked a renewal of scholarship on the Cathars, not at the least because of the discovery of manuscripts containing the Cathar rituals.<sup>19</sup> The rituals provided historians with a new source that did not carry the same historically problematic features of inquisitor manuals and polemical treatises. Despite new lenses through which to examine the phenomenon of heresy and the contemporary historiography of heresy shaped by the discovery of the rituals, however, some scholars imagined heresy in such a way that privileged certain aspects of the religious groups over others, especially those aspects that critiqued the beliefs, practices, and agents of the Catholic Church.<sup>20</sup> In the late twentieth and the early twenty-first century, however, scholars have deconstructed much of this body of scholarship, throwing aside much of the anti-Catholic rhetoric, though some of the same views of medieval heresy, such as Catharism's connection to other dualist groups, remain intact.

Of the many perspectives on Catharism that remain problematic, perhaps the most troubling is the near-continuation of the early modern Protestant argument that understood the Cathars and other heretics as forerunners of the Reformation. This sort of argumentation continues today in scholarship that views Catharism as an organized reform movement that challenged the Catholic Church in an organized and institutional

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<sup>19</sup> See Leon Clédat, *Le Nouveau Testament: Traduit Au XIII<sup>e</sup> Siècle En Langue Provençale Suivi D'un Rituel Cathare*, (Genève: Slatkine Reprints, 1968) for the Occitan ritual (originally published in 1887) and Antione Dondaine, *Un Traité Néo-Manichéen Du XIII<sup>e</sup> Siècle: Le Liber De Doubus Principiis, Suivi D'un Fragment de Rituel Cathare* (Rome: Istituto Storico Domenicano, 1939).

<sup>20</sup> Peter Biller, "Through a Glass Darkly; Seeing Medieval Heresy" in *The Medieval World* edited by Peter Linehan and Janet L. Nelson (New York: Routledge, 2001). Biller's article also outlines the development of the historiography of heresy in the 20<sup>th</sup> century quite well, going well beyond the scope of the present study. See also Biller, "The Historiography of Heresy in the USA and Great Britain, 1945-92" in *The Waldenses* for a specific treatment of historiography done in those regions.

manner. A recent proponent of this view, Malcolm Lambert, supposes that, much like Luther, the return to and the importance of the scriptures in Cathar theology, the groups' rejection of church buildings, and the Cathar rituals presented "a simplifying and clarifying process" that directly confronted the Church and its theological doctrines.<sup>21</sup> In this article, Lambert bases the majority of his arguments on the rituals, a treatise reconstructed from a polemic against the Cathars, and other inquisitor-written sources.<sup>22</sup> These sources, while interesting and somewhat persuasive of the modern historians' "reformer" label, cannot speak for the entirety of Catharism. The version of the Occitan ritual that Lambert cites, for example, did not exist until 1310, whereas Catharism in its various forms existed beginning from at least the mid to late twelfth century.<sup>23</sup> The Good Men who produced this version of the ritual had endured both the Albigensian Crusade and the beginnings of the inquisition, and thus may have been filled with more vitriol directed towards the Church due to these traumatic events. Lambert also restricts his discussion of the Cathars to Italy, skipping over the Provençal context entirely. Lambert does suggest that the Cathars were less of a reform movement than their rituals suggested, but this suggestion that the Cathars comprised an organized resistance

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<sup>21</sup> Malcolm Lambert, "Catharism as a Reform Movement" in *Häresie und vorzeitige Reformation im Spätmittelalter* eds. Herausgegeben von Frantisek Smahel, (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1998), 26.

<sup>22</sup> The reconstructed treatise is "A Manichean Treatise" in eds Wakefield and Evans, 494-510. Christine Thouzellier reconstructed the treatise from the writings of Durand De Huesca, who wrote specifically against the Cathars. See Christine Thouzellier, *Un Traité Cathare inédit du début du XIII siècle d'après le liber contra Manicheos de Durand de Huesca*, (Louvain, 1961).

<sup>23</sup> Jean Duvernoy, "Nouveau Testament Occitan: Rituel Cathare MS PA 36 de la Bibliothèque de la ville de Lyon," [http://jean.duvernoy.free.fr/text/pdf/cledat\\_intro.pdf](http://jean.duvernoy.free.fr/text/pdf/cledat_intro.pdf), 9.

movement against the Catholic Church, especially considering earlier historiography that considered Catharism as proto-Protestants, are troubling.<sup>24</sup>

Tied to the notion of labeling Catharism a reform movement is some historians' view of Catharism as an intentional "challenge" to the Catholic Church. Certainly, given the response of the Church both physically (in the form of the Crusade) and in print, the perceived threat of Catharism and heresy in general weighed greatly on the minds of Catholic writers, but asserting that Catharism presented a "challenge" assumes that Cathar organizational coherence existed to such a degree that all members at all levels in a Cathar organization vehemently opposed to Catholic orthodoxy. A recent historian, Mark Pegg, also finds great trouble with this line of reasoning, positing that such thought stems from bias towards a purely intellectual-historical understanding of medieval heresy that privileges ideas, thoughts, and attitudes over temporal specificities and particular cultural practices.<sup>25</sup> Pegg, however, takes this argument to the extreme, suggesting that nothing that anyone might call a "Cathar church" ever existed.<sup>26</sup> Pegg's suggestion does effectively deal with the potential presentist bias in the historiography of the Cathars, but it fails to recognize the common patterns between the Cathar communities that suggest at least some commonalities and organization and flatly dismisses any notion of *ecclesia* in the history of Catharism.<sup>27</sup> Pegg certainly stands correct in his assertion of doubt about the grand, counter-Catholic organization of Catharism, but he fails to consider each

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<sup>24</sup> Lambert, "Catharism as a Reform Movement," 35.

<sup>25</sup> Mark Pegg, "Catharism' and the Study of Medieval Heresy" in *New Medieval Literatures*, Vol. 6, eds. David Lawton, Rita Copeland, and Wendy Scase, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 252 and 263 especially.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 252. See also Pegg's other works, most especially Mark Pegg, *The Corruption of Angels*, 15.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 263.

community's ability to form religious networks of their own. This, of course, is not to suggest that these individual religious communities comprised "splinter cells" of heretics who openly defied the Church, but to dismiss any sort of organization whatsoever seems, at best, overly dismissive.<sup>28</sup>

No assertion of reformist ideas ever appears in MS 609, at least not in the words of those under investigation. The deponents had real motivation to deny that they believed in anything opposed to the doctrine of the Church, not the least of which were the inquisitors sitting in the room with him/her. Present in the depositions, however, are the deponents' claims that people heard the Good Men preaching doctrine that did not align with orthodox theology, though they themselves may not have recognized the contradiction. Arnaldus Ganerii, from the town of Mansum, deposed on May 27, 1245, told the inquisitors that he heard the Good Men preaching that God did not make the physical world, that there would be no resurrection of the flesh, and that they opposed the Eucharist, baptism, and marriage.<sup>29</sup> The same style of preaching by the Good Men against Catholic doctrine appears constantly throughout the manuscript in a nearly formulaic manner, but it does not suggest that Arnaldus or any other deponent had sought to reform the Catholic Church or change its sacramental theology.<sup>30</sup> Nor does Arnaldus' testimony leave any hint of a large-scale organization opposed to the Catholic Church, though it does reveal that the Good Men intentionally preached against Catholic doctrine.

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<sup>28</sup> For a similar argument against Pegg, see Caterina Bruschi, *The Wandering Heretics of Languedoc* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 7.

<sup>29</sup> MS 609 fol. 1a, item 1, in Duvernoy, 6.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, Arnaldus claims that he once believed those things, but he had since renounced those beliefs, despite not asking for penance from a prior inquisitor. *Et sunt VII anni quod primo credidit h. esse bonos, et sunt V anni quod ultimo dimisit ipsam credulitatem, et non habuit penitentiam a Fratre Ferrario.*

This presents evidence that Catharism offered an alternative version of Christianity in the region of Lauragais in the thirteenth century as a part of a sprawling and contested Christian landscape.

While some historians, like Lambert, have represented Catharism as proto-Protestant or reform movements against the Catholic Church in the thirteenth century, others have mythologized the Cathars as symbols of women's equality, especially on the matter of women's participation in the "Cathar clergy."<sup>31</sup> Anne Brenon, the director and president of the Centre National d'Etudes Cathares in Carcassone, France, contends that Catharism constituted an "egalitarian Christian counter-church," where women had as many opportunities as their male counterparts.<sup>32</sup> Brenon suggests that the Good Women, unlike Catholic nuns and more like the Beguines, were not confined to the monastic cloister nor "restricted to contemplation, fasting, and long hours of prayer," and that the women's freedom of movement and ability to instruct novices rendered Catharism more friendly to women than Catholicism.<sup>33</sup> The depositions in MS 609 make clear that women played an active role in the Cathar ministry, including sometimes (though rarely)

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<sup>31</sup> See Peter Biller, "Cathars and Material Women" in *Medieval Theology and the Natural Body*, eds. Peter Biller and A.J. Minnis, (York: York Medieval Press, 1997) 61-107, for a good overview of past historiography done on women in Catharism.

<sup>32</sup> Anne Brenon, "The Voice of the Good Women: An Essay on the Pastoral and Sacerdotal Role of Women in the Cathar Church" in *Women Preachers and Prophets through Two Millennia of Christianity*, eds. Beverly Mayne Kienzle and Pamela J. Walker (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 115.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 121.

performing the Cathar rituals, but this does not suggest that Catharism viewed women in a more “equal” manner than did Catholicism.<sup>34</sup>

Brenon’s arguments skip over and do not contemplate fully the situation of Cathar women, many of whom struggled to complete the religious training the Cathars offered. In this respect, Brenon does not take into account that many of the women who sought to become Good Women or served as Good Women either did not complete the training or only participated as Good Women for a short time, often in their youth. One of the deponents in MS 609, Dulcia Faure, a woman from the town of Villanova Comitalis, testified that she spent the first two years of her new religious life as a young girl undergoing religious instruction in order that she would become a Good Woman herself.<sup>35</sup> Dulcia explained that she had received instruction from two Cathar women, Gualharde and Blanche, who introduced her to the lifestyle she would have to sustain for the rest of her life. She recounted how she ate bread blessed by the women, “adored” them three times, and heard them preaching.<sup>36</sup> Dulcia then concluded her testimony by telling the inquisitors that she had not completed her training due to her youth and therefore her inability to perform the tasks and the austere life to which the Cathar women had introduced her.<sup>37</sup> Many other women like Dulcia recall similar situations of

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<sup>34</sup> See Richard Abels and Ellen Harrison "The Participation of Women in Languedocian Catharism," *Medieval Studies* 41 (1979): 215-251. They present data that show 45% of the ministers in MS 609 were female.

<sup>35</sup> MS 609, fol. 184b, item 19 in Duvernoy, 480-481.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid. . . . medit pluries cum eis et de pane benedicto ab eis, et pluries ad(oravit) h(eticos) ter. . . et pluries audivit predicationem eorum.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid. et non fuit hereticata quia non poterat facere propter iuventutem illa que heretici faciunt vel precipiunt observari.

failaure and experiences with Good Women in MS 609, and thus Brenon's claim for Catharism providing an extraordinary opportunity for women seems untenable.

Moreover, during Dulcia's training, Good Men frequently preached at the house where Dulcia received her instruction, but Dulcia did not testify that the two women preached during her stay, suggesting that the females deferred to the males when the two genders appeared together. Furthermore, the later Cathar ritual permits women to perform prayers with men, so long as the men lead the prayer.<sup>38</sup> Brenon acknowledges this paradox, noting that those under investigation only used the words for preaching, *praedicatio* and *praedicaverunt*, when discussing male ministers, but Brenon explains this away by positing that she finds it difficult "to imagine that Good Women who taught novices in their establishments had nothing to tell the believers they met."<sup>39</sup> Brenon has a small point, but she does not acknowledge that the instruction provided by women did not carry the same sort of authoritative weight of their male counterparts. Women instructing novices also does not depart from Catholic practice, either, especially since women instructed other women in monastic situations where men were not available. Taken even further, Brenon's claim for women's ordination in Catharism may have been a reflex of older, looser understandings of ordination, given recent explorations of the question of women's ordination in Catholicism by Gary Macy.<sup>40</sup> Instead, Brenon's argument offers a false choice for these women to make between Catharism and

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<sup>38</sup> "Catharist Rituals (part A)" in Walter L Wakefield and Austin P Evans, *Heresies of the High Middle Ages: Selected Sources Translated and Annotated*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1969), 491.

<sup>39</sup> Brenon, "The Voice of the Good Women," 128.

<sup>40</sup> Gary Macy, *The Hidden History of Women's Ordination: Female Clergy in the Medieval West* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).



Catholicism, in that it assumes that the former present more opportunities and quasi-equality for the Cathar women.

Thus, any attempt to locate gender equality among the Cathars is a perilous expedition. In the first place, the quest to find such equality rests on modern assumptions, particularly that women in the Middle Ages felt repressed by their male counterparts and sought the same sort of “liberation” women sought in the twentieth century. Second, and perhaps more importantly, the use of a group that the Catholic Church labeled heretical tempts those who dislike the Catholic Church to use these groups against them, just as earlier Protestants saw themselves in prototype in the Cathars. No person aligned with the Cathars in the Middle Ages, moreover, produced anything that suggested that they took an gender-equal religious stance. In addition, no extant Cathar text includes a discussion of the equality of women, which, it stands to reason, would have appeared in the text had it been a cornerstone to Cathar identity. Even in opposition to Catholic rules, Cathar women experienced limitations of spiritual and pastoral authority such as deferring to males in all the religious experiences shared between the genders, quite like that of Catholic women, though those limitations came in different forms.

Historians, particularly French historians, have also imagined the Cathars as the martyrs of southern French civilization, destroyed by the north of France, and considers the Cathars to be a part of southern French identity. Such a view stems largely from those writing a history on the part of the south that identifies the north as an oppressor and enemy of the south. Some writers of literature and history in the south of France used the Cathars to show the ways in which the north had destroyed their religion. Such

historiography also tends to paint the south as a landscape full of tolerance, openness, and progressiveness, opposed to the rigidity of the north, with its creativity-oppressing, orthodox religion in Catholicism and centralized monarchy.<sup>41</sup> The danger in writing history in this manner, quite like discussing Cathars as reformers or women-liberators, lies in the assumption that the Cathars saw themselves as a distinct part of southern France, which, from the depositions in MS 609, is clearly not the case. At no point in MS 609 do the deponents discuss the division between the north and the south. They do not mention the King and his relationships with the nobles in the south, nor do they discuss the role of the Albigensian Crusade in the destruction of their own, distinct culture. The deponents do remember the Crusade and its effect on their ways of life, which suggests changes in their local village identity, but they do not represent themselves as members of a larger Occitanian society.

The Cathars have also appeared in various forms of French media, especially since the late 1960s, a time when the French experienced political unrest due to situations both foreign and domestic, including France's emerging as a nuclear power. Emily McCaffery, who produced an article on the place of the Cathars in twentieth-century southern French consciousness, finds a large revival of public interest in the Cathars occurred in the late 1960s, especially surrounding a revolt against the Gaullist state in 1968.<sup>42</sup> During this time, McCaffery argues, the drive to form a collective southern consciousness caused citizens to reevaluate the Albigensian Crusade and its meaning as a

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<sup>41</sup> See Barber, *The Cathars*, 220-221.

<sup>42</sup> Emily McCaffrey, "Imagining the Cathars in Late-Twentieth Century Languedoc," *Contemporary European History* 11 (2002): 417.

symbol of northern oppression.<sup>43</sup> Along these same lines, Malcolm Barber argues that the Cathars were present in the political discourse of the 1970s in the form of an audio recording of an anti-north reading of thirteenth-century troubadour poetry.<sup>44</sup> The Cathars have since appeared in their own television program, in print media, and became a large part of the tourist industry in southern France. Even the famous travel specialist, Rick Steves, takes space in his travel guide of France to explain the history of the Cathars, their importance in French history, and points out specific tourist spots for those Cathar enthusiasts who wish to visit their historical sites.<sup>45</sup>

Such imagining of the Cathars as symbols from the past fuels modern political movements, but it does not speak to any sort of identity present in those under investigation by the medieval inquisition. The deponents had legal punishments like death, life imprisonment, and public shame at stake during their interviews with the inquisitors, stakes much different than a north-versus-south political dichotomy. Thus the deponents belonged to a much different political scene, which was divided along Catholic/Cathar lines rather than the divisions of northern and southern France. Fractures did exist between the north and the south of France in the Middle Ages, but those political disagreements did not directly affect the religious lives of the deponents in MS 609, though the consequences of those disagreements, like the Albigensian Crusade, did.

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid., p. 417. Another article argues more specifically about the construction of the southern identity and its political ramifications. See Andrew Roach, "Occitania Past and Present Southern Consciousness in Medieval and Modern French Politics," *History Workshop Journal* (1997): 1-22. Roach also explores the notion of national identity in the south of France in the thirteenth century, which he concludes is not present in the minds of its inhabitants.

<sup>44</sup> Barber, *The Cathars*, p. 221.

<sup>45</sup> Rick Steves, *Rick Steves' France 2011*, (Berkeley: Avalon Travel, 2011), p. 555.

Medieval inquisitors, under the influence of a variety of motivations, much like modern historians, also imagined the Cathars according to theological and traditional descriptions guided by a number of assumptions about Catharism and heresy in general. It was the inquisitors' task, appointed to them by the Pope and their respective monastic order (usually Dominican, at times Franciscan), to find the heretics amongst the populations in Europe. Such an investigation required the inquisitors to operate in a systematic manner due to the relatively large regions where some had reported the heretics to be and due to the sheer numbers of people they summoned for questioning. The inquisitors, however, did not just randomly select people nor did they stop after asking such general questions like "are you a heretic?" Such a starting point led to further questions, guided by what the inquisitors suspected of specific heretical groups, based on an established body of literature that extended back to nearly 200 years before the inquisition recorded in MS 609 took place. These assumptions played a role in the inquisitor's imagining of the heretical groups they attempted to unearth, causing them to categorize their statements as completely opposite to themselves that positioned heretics like the Cathars as religious contradictions to orthodoxy. These assumptions and investigative techniques have also colored the way that the Cathars and their habits have reached the present, and thus finding a notion of Cathar identity requires making an account of such assumptions in order to get beyond them and investigate how those being questioned about heresy may have represented themselves in the face of such questioning or apart from it.

Writings about the Cathars used up more polemicist ink than any other medieval heresy. Descriptions of medieval heresies by orthodox authorities began to appear in the

written record at the beginning of the eleventh century. These descriptions contain many tropes similar to descriptions found in later centuries, especially concerning their beliefs and habits. More often than not, polemicists wrote about the heretics and their misinterpretation of scripture and a variety of reasons for why they did so. In the eleventh century, for example, Ralph the Bald, a medieval historian and opponent of heresy, wrote about an incident of a man named Leutard studying and misinterpreting scripture, which Leutard claimed stemmed from his falling asleep and having bees enter his body through his penis and leaving through his mouth, stinging and tormenting him through the whole ordeal.<sup>46</sup> Ralph the Bald noted that Leutard was completely insane, and thus attributed insanity to those who believed in what the Church had labeled “heretical.” The trope about badly inspired biblical interpretation this account holds continued throughout many discussions of heresy in the Middle Ages, and even went so far as to label those accused of heresy as ignorant fools who fell prey to superstition because of their lack of ability to read Latin and thus properly interpret scripture. While the question of heresy and literacy on the part of the Cathars receives attention in the next chapter, noting it here supplies at least one trope that contributed to the inquisitor assumptions about heretics that framed the investigation that led to the production of MS 609.

Another eleventh-century description of heresy also connects medieval heresy to ancient dualism, another common trope found in discussions of medieval heresy that continued even into the twentieth and twenty-first century. Adémar of Chabannes, who

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<sup>46</sup> Ralph the Bald “Leutard and the Bees” in Wakefield and Evans, *Heresies of the High Middle Ages*, 72.

wrote and compiled a history of France in 1028, described a group of unspecified heretics as “Manichaeans,” dualist heretics from the ancient world.<sup>47</sup> The connection to dualism, especially Manichaeism because of a reliance of Augustine of Hippo’s description of his former religion, played an important role in the development of orthodox constructions of medieval heresy, especially the Cathars. Polemicists continually and consistently connected various groups of heretics to Manicheans in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, either using the word “Manicheans” specifically or expounding on the errors of “Manichean dualism.”<sup>48</sup> Such a typology has continued in modern scholarship to some extent, either labeling the Cathars “Manicheans” or connecting them to the Bogomils, another dualist group from the east.<sup>49</sup> Proponents of this view see commonalities between the Bogomils and the Cathars in the manuscripts that modern scholars discovered in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, particularly in their form and purpose.<sup>50</sup> In opposition to the view that supports a Cathar connection to the Bogomils, Mark Pegg, though he does not focus on the ritual manuscripts in particular, postulates that the inquisition and the inquisitors largely extrapolated the Cathar rituals from common cultural and social practices among the people in the south of France,

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<sup>47</sup> Adémar of Chabannes, “Manichaeans in Aquitaine” in Wakefield and Evans, *Heresies of the High Middle Ages*, 74.

<sup>48</sup> See, for example, Alan de Lille, “On Catholic Faith against the Heretics of Our Own Time” translated in Wakefield and Evans, *Heresies of the High Middle Ages*, 215-217.

<sup>49</sup> See especially Steven Runciman, *The Medieval Manichee: A Study of the Christian Dualist Heresy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1960). Runciman traces the development of Catharism through other dualist Christian traditions.

<sup>50</sup> Bernard Hamilton, “Wisdom From the East: The Reception by the Cathars of Eastern Dualist Texts” in *Heresy and Literacy, 1000 – 1530*, eds. Peter Biller and Anne Hudson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 48- 49; Also see Christine Thouzellier, *Rituel Cathare*, (Paris: Sources Chrétiennes, 1977), 182-184, also referenced and argued against by Biller on p. 49. Thouzellier recognizes Bogomil forms in the ritual, but does not assign a Bogomil origin to the ritual as Hamilton does.

completely dismissing any notion of a Bogomil origin.<sup>51</sup> Regardless of the Cathars' "true" origin, however, the early polemicists' descriptions of medieval heresy remain important because those descriptions influenced the ways that later inquisitors and polemicists constructed their notions of "heresy" and recorded deponents' responses.

The Catholic polemicists also painted medieval heretics as fierce opponents of the Catholic sacraments and doctrine, in concert with earlier descriptions of heresy at a time of increasing Catholic emphasis on sacraments and priestly power. Adémar of Chabannes continued his short description of heresy and heretics, adding, "They denied baptism and the Cross and every sound doctrine. They abstained from food and seemed like monks; they pretended Chastity, but among themselves, they practiced every day debauchery."<sup>52</sup> Adémar's description matches later descriptions of Cathars by other polemicists, save one feature: the heretics' exclusion of the sacrament of baptism. James Capelli, who wrote his polemics just before the inquisitors who recorded MS 609 undertook their investigation, reported that the heretics did have a sacrament of baptism, though a different form of baptism than Catholics practiced, that was the sole source of their salvation.<sup>53</sup> In line with previous thinking about the Cathars, however, Capelli does expound on how the Cathars denied the sacraments of the Eucharist and matrimony,

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<sup>51</sup>Pegg, *The Corruption of Angels*. See also Mark Pegg *A Most Holy War: The Albigensian Crusade and the Battle for Christendom* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008). Pegg presents this argument most clearly in *A Most Holy War*.

<sup>52</sup> Adémar of Chabannes, "Manichaeans in Aquitaine" in Wakefield and Evans, *Heresies of the High Middle Ages*, 75.

<sup>53</sup> James Capelli, *Summa Against the Heretics* translated in in Walter L Wakefield and Austin P Evans, *Heresies of the High Middle Ages: Selected Sources Translated and Annotated*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1969), 302.

claiming that the Cathars believed that marriage made salvation impossible.<sup>54</sup> Capelli also discussed the heretics' asceticism, particularly their "peculiar" dietary habits, but Capelli adds that the Cathars abstained from all "meat, eggs, fowl, or cheese" since the consumption of these foods would exclude a person from salvation. Combined with the Catholic association of the Cathars with ancient dualism, these peculiarities and doctrines formed a standard set of assumptions and beliefs about dualist heresy that influenced the later conceptions of Catharism of later polemicists and the inquisitors who hunted down the heretics themselves.

The inquisitors in charge of the investigation that produced MS 609, Bernard de Caux and Jean de Saint-Pierre, would, no doubt, have this type of information at the front of their minds before questioning any of the deponents. The two belonged to the Dominican order, which had answered the call to search out and counter heterodox practice with preaching and teaching, and whose members wrote several of the earlier treatises about heresy. As members of the order, the two men most likely received instruction and training concerning the task they were about to undertake. The assumptions the two inquisitors carried with them comes out best through the questions that they asked those who had come to give testimony. These questions, focused more on the witnesses' actions or what they saw in the past rather than what the witnesses currently believed, directly followed Catholic ideas about the nature of Catharism, which it saw as a version of Manichaean dualism and anti-sacramentalism and therefore a challenge to church authority.

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 305.



These questions, however, do not appear directly in the register that records the interviews done with those the inquisitors called to testify. Instead, the questions are apprehensible from the responses of the deponents.<sup>55</sup> The two inquisitors put this battery of questions to nearly every witness who claimed contact with the Cathars in an effort to uncover just what heterodox practices occurred in the region. At times, the interviews ended as soon as they began, especially if the witness told the inquisitors that he never saw or never heard the heretics. Poncius Ganzanhae, for example, testified that he had not seen or heard the heretics in over twenty years, and that when he did see them, he did not adore them nor see anyone else adore them.<sup>56</sup> The inquisitors did ask the further question of whether or not someone like Poncius saw anyone else participating in any heretical behavior, but let them go on their way shortly thereafter. When the witness told the inquisitors that he or she had seen a heretic, the witness exposed himself or herself to nearly the entire battery of questions about the deponent's life, the deponent's neighbors, the deponent's religious activities, and who else the deponent might have witnessed associating with the Good Men or Good Women that were guided by the inquisitors' assumptions about what the Cathars practiced.

After a witness testified that he or she had seen a heretic, even twenty years before, the inquisitors directed their questions towards what the inquisitors thought to be

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<sup>55</sup> Mark Pegg has an extensive list of the assumed questions asked of the deponents in MS 609, which he explores at length. See Mark Pegg, "Questions about Questions: Toulouse 609 and the Great Inquisition of 1245-46" in *Texts and the Repression of Medieval Heresy* eds. Caterina Bruschi and Peter Biller, (York: York University Press, 2003), especially pp. 114-115. This article expands on an earlier chapter in his work *The Corruption of Angels*.

<sup>56</sup> Ms. 609 fol. 3b, item 18 in Duvernoy, 12. Item anno die quo supra Poncius Gazanha testis ipse dixit quod vidit h(erticos) publice stantes apud Mansum, but non ad(oravit) nec vidit ad(orare), et sunt XX anni vel circa.

true about the Cathars and those associated with them. The inquisitors designed questions specifically to root out activities they thought the deponents might have participated in, especially those practices like the Cathar rituals that the inquisitors knew about previously. The inquisitors also might have asked with whom the witness saw the heretics, where the witness saw the heretics, and what the witness had heard the heretics say. The inquisitors, however, did not design the questions to be open-ended. Unless the witness volunteered extra details, the questions seemed to yield “yes” or “no” responses, based on the formulaic nature of the answers recorded in the register. One of the more common questions asked the deponents whether or not they heard the heretics preaching that God had not made all the visible things in the world, that baptism (by water) and matrimony offered no salvation, that the host was not the true body of Christ, and that the flesh would never be resurrected.<sup>57</sup> These questions show explicitly what the inquisitors expected from the deponents and the deponents’ encounters with the Cathars. They expected the Cathars to hold religious beliefs that ran counter to Catholic teaching, that while true to some degree, may have elided what some believers actually believed because the inquisitors did not ask the right questions.

The inquisitors also asked about deeds and practices of heretics in the past rather than what the deponents themselves believed. The actions of the deponents did not always line up with the Catholic assumptions about Catharism and suggest that the Good Men, Good Women, and believers imagined themselves in a different way than the

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<sup>57</sup> See MS 609 fol. 5b-6a for such an example. He(reticos) cre(didit) esse bonos homines et habere bonam fidem et esse amicos Dei et posse salvari per ipsos, licet sciret quod Ecclesia persequeretur eos, et audivit errores de visibilibus, quod Deus non fecerat ea, et quod hostia sacrata non erat corpus Xi et quod baptismus et matrimonium nil valebant ad salutem, et quod corpora mortuorum non resurgent.

inquisitors did.<sup>58</sup> Poncius de Rozenge from Laurac, whom the inquisitors had called to testify on June 22, 1245, for example, told the inquisitors that he had once believed the heretics to be good men and to have good faith, that the church was pursuing them, but that he had not heard the heretics' preaching against the sacraments and their errant belief about the creation of the physical world.<sup>59</sup> The inquisitors' focus on actions instead of beliefs caused the deponents to speak about the things they had seen or done in the past rather than discussing what they currently believed. The same line of thought progressed into the next questions that dealt with physical action: seeing and hearing the heretics performing their rituals and giving their sermons. While this focus on action limits the present's view of what the people in the depositions believed, it does show another way in which the inquisitors' questions limited the information they received partly due to their insistence on asking questions about specific actions that doctrinal assumptions about Catharism guided them to ask.

The inquisition performed by Bernard de Caux and Jean de Saint-Pierre focused most squarely on the Cathars, but the two did ask questions about the Waldensians, another group the Catholic Church had labeled heretical. Asked about the Waldensians, Poncius de Turre, from the village of Laurac, told the inquisitors that he had never been familiar with them nor any of the other heretics. Like the others, of course, Poncius de Turre instantly noted that he had never believed in their errors or adored them, and the conversation quickly turned to matters more directly related to his witnessing of the Good

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<sup>58</sup> Pegg, *The Corruption of Angels*, p. 45.

<sup>59</sup> MS 609, fol. 3a-3b, item 17 in Duvernoy, 12. *Predictos h(eticorum) cre(didit) tunc esse bonos homines et habere bonam fidem licet sciret quod Ecclesia persequeretur eos sed non audivit eos dicentes errores de visibilibus nec de sacramentis nec ipse credidit predictis erroribus.*

Men preaching in several towns.<sup>60</sup> The inquisitors' association of Waldensians with Cathars exposes one of their more interesting assumptions, that perhaps the Cathars and Waldensians had some relationship with each other besides just being "heretical" and being targeted by the inquisitors, perhaps that they acted in concert to corrupt souls. The inquisitors do not follow up on the questions about the Waldensians, suggesting either that the inquisitors were not as concerned about the Waldensians or that the same sort of questions and assumptions about the Cathars applied to the Waldensians as well.

In order to get behind some of these inquisitor assumptions, some scholars have explored the inquisitor registers with the goal of understanding the responses to their questions as a discourse and a series of power relations. John Arnold, for example, explores inquisitor manuscripts, including MS 609, and finds that the inquisitors deployed authoritative language in order to both construct their identities as inquisitors, while at the same time constructing a confessing subject in the deponent that found pleasure in the release of his or her answers.<sup>61</sup> In a similar vein, James Given understands the process of formulating questions and the executing of these investigations as a way for the inquisitors, and therefore the Catholic Church, to control deviant behavior.<sup>62</sup> These approaches, both informative and persuasive, only speak to the power relationships between the inquisitors and deponents, forgoing a broader view of

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<sup>60</sup> MS 609. fol. 191a, item 53 in Duvernoy, 497. Poncius de Turre filius Poncii de Turre miles t(estis) i(pse) d(ie) q(ou)d apud Tholosam et apud Mirapiscem et Lauracum et Montem Auriol et apud Perelha et Montem Securum et in aliis locis vidit hereticos publice morantes, sed nullam familiaritatem habuit cum eis, nec cum Valdensibus nec cred(idit) nec ad(oravit).

<sup>61</sup> John Arnold, *Inquisition and Power: Catharism and the Confessing Subject in Medieval Languedoc* (Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001), 11.

<sup>62</sup> James Given, *Inquisition and Medieval Society: Power, Discipline, and Resistance in Languedoc* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997), 4.

the inquisitorial imagining of heresy or reconstructing the views of the Good Men, Good Women, and believers themselves. The production of power and the discourse it creates comprises one aspect of the formation of the inquisitorial assumptions and questions, but, unlike this chapter, does not take into account the perspective of those on the other side of the inquisitors' table. Put another way, without the Cathars' self-understandings, the discourse remains one-sided and does not fully account for the exchange of identity claims put forward in the inquisition registers.

The inquisitors thus produced a register full of testimony by those who witnessed but not necessarily experienced the religion, but colored in a very specific way by the inquisitors who conducted the interviews. Not every person in every village believed in Catharism. Catholicism and Catharism in a sense competed for believers, leaving the villages divided, though the villagers did not initially recognize it. Like anthropologists, a comparison first made by Carlo Ginzburg, the inquisitors uncovered information based on what they expected to find from the people they interviewed in order to separate the Catholic from the Cathar.<sup>63</sup> These records comprise a sort of odd ethnography cultivated on the premise that once the inquisitors had uncovered and explored the beliefs and actions of heretics, that they could name them, categorize them, and then they could suppress them. These records also make it difficult for the deponents to have any real voices of their own and free from the coloring of the inquisitors' imagination of what it meant to be a Good Man, Good Woman, or believer. Stuck somewhere outside the lines

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<sup>63</sup> Carlo Ginzburg, "The Inquisitor as Anthropologist," in *Clues, Myths and the Historical Method*, trans. John Tedeschi and Anne C Tedeschi (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), 160 especially.

of the inquisitors' constructions, however, bits of the deponents' lives come across quite clearly and provide a means to understand how the deponents imagined themselves.

Yet, the inquisitorial coloring of Catharism in MS 609 distorts the picture of the day-to-day lives of the deponents to such an extent that information about personal relationships and village life are difficult to pull out from the interviews. Unlike the inquisition done nearly a century later by Jacques Fournier, which became the basis for Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie's path-breaking *Montaillou*, MS 609 does not contain descriptions that lead to such a vivid picture or that would allow any *Annales*-inclined historian to paint a picture of the villagers' *mentalité*. Absent from Ms. 609 are characters like Pierre Clergue and Beatrice de Plainsoles, the two lovers caught up in the former's abuse of Cathar doctrine to seduce women.<sup>64</sup> MS 609 does, however, contain interviews that speak to the social relationships between people in the various villages and within the villages themselves, though not in lucid detail like the descriptions of the lives of the villagers in *Montaillou* reconstructed by Ladurie.

The records of MS 609 show that deponents' families comprised the most fundamental connection between those under investigation. The inquisitors themselves noted this, beginning many of the interview recordings with a short description of the deponent's family, whether the person was the son or daughter, someone's husband or wife, or whether or not the deponent had children. Those giving the interviews, however, did not spend considerable time talking about members of their own immediate family, with exception of when a family member received the *consolamentum* on their deathbed.

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<sup>64</sup> Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie, *Montaillou: The Promised Land of Error*, trans. Barbara Bray (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), 157.

The absence of discussion about immediate family members in the interviews probably resulted from the deponents' desire to keep their family members away from the inquisitors as much as possible, which is not very surprising given the that the inquisitors actively hunted suspected people down and prosecuted them to the fullest extent of secular law or because the family members were deponents themselves.

The deponents, however, did spend a considerable amount of time discussing the habits of those outside their family, unless there was a family divide, suggesting that the deponents had higher commitments to their family than to their neighbors. On May 27<sup>th</sup>, 1245, Willelmus de Canast from the town of Mansum testified in front of the friars that he had followed a friend to the friend's uncle's house near his town, where he witnessed a fatally ill Willelmus de Malhorggas receive the *consolamentum* on his deathbed.<sup>65</sup>

Countless other examples like this appear throughout the manuscript, not all of which detail the *consolamentum*. Some recounted seeing heretics in the houses of people they knew. Others recounted their friends leading them or introducing them to the heretics. What these descriptions suggest is that, even if at a superficial level, the people under investigation saw themselves connected to both people who believed as they did and the shared past events that shaped their lives, therefore allowing for a somewhat clear picture of the personal relationships with other Cathars. Such memories and stories also make clear that the people under investigation had common experiences in hearing the words of the Good Men and welcoming the Good Men into their homes, experiences that, had they

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<sup>65</sup> MS 609. fol. 1b, item 11 in Duvernoy, 9. Item anno die quo supra W. Donat t(estis) i(pse) dixit quod ipse t(estis) et W. de Canast iverunt apud Laurac et duxeruntt inde W. B. et socium eius h. apud Mansum et introduxerunt eos in domum Willelmi avunculi dicti Willelmi de Canast, et ipse Willelmus de Malhorggas infirmabatur tunc, et d(ictum) h(ereticum) hereticaverunt tunc d. Willelmum.

shared them with each other, may have formed bonds and a common identity through their fellowship with the Good Men.

Beyond the connection to their families and their immediate surroundings in the villages, other evidence suggests that those under investigation knew that the Cathars existed in places outside their own villages and influenced people in those places. Several accounts of people leading the heretics (*ductores*) from place to place appear in the manuscript, suggesting a network of heretics and believers with common relationships, beliefs, and experiences. The inquisitors surely knew of people who performed this task, and their questions guided their deponents to speak about those whom the deponents knew participated in these duties. Poncius Aigra from the town of Monte Auriol told the two friars that he knew of twelve people from his town who counted themselves among the friends of the heretics and led them from place to place.<sup>66</sup> Another role related to the *ductores* was the role of the *nuncius* or messenger. The register does not make completely clear what sorts of messages the *nuncii* delivered, but it does make apparent that people sent messages to the Good Men in hiding.<sup>67</sup> These tasks certainly played a significant role after the crusade and the coming of the inquisitors,

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<sup>66</sup> MS 609 fol. 142a, item 15 in Duvernoy, 368. Item dixit quod Galterius Guitarz, W. Boneti, Ar. Boneti, Iohannes de Aigrevila, Ponciai Massa, W. Massa, Dulcia Gaufresa, Petrus Massa iunior, Tholsanus Massa, B. Gaurauz, Tholsanus Massa, P. Andreas, omnes isti de Monte Auriol sunt credentes et amici hereticorum et ductores et receptatores eorum, et hoc cre. quia pluries de ipsis vidit cum h. et audivit de aliis et de omnibus quod predictum est.

<sup>67</sup> MS 609 fol. 252a, item 22 in Duvernoy, 692. Anno et die p. Arnaudus Martini t.i. d. q(uo)d quando (heretici) stabant publice i(pse) t(estis) fuit nuncius R. Petri heretici apud Castrum novum, et fuit ibi cum eo per medium annum, sed non ad(oravit). eum qd recolat. Vidit tamen Isarnum de Sancto Germano et Arnaudum Gris et Bernardum Petri dictum h(ereticum) adorare, sed nunquam aud(ivit) pred(icationem) eius. Et sunt XL anni vel circa.



when the Cathar Good Men and Good Women had to stay mobile in order to avoid capture or worse. Though the inquisitor record does not speak to many exchanges between the *ductores*, *nuncii*, and the people who volunteered to either house the fugitive heretics or to receive the messages, it suggests a common link between village communities connected by a belief in Catharism. These exchanges would have provided a powerful tool with which to cultivate a trans-regional identity in that the connections between places would have formed a greater sense of connectedness and community among the Cathars.

More important than how the inquisitors or polemicists conceived of or labeled those whom they accused of being heretics, none of the deponents in MS 609 ever referred to themselves or other believers as heretics, only as “Good Christians” or “Good Men” or “Good Women.” The deponents never seem to doubt their standing as Catholics and swear their fidelity to the Church because of their presence in front of the inquisitors. Though the influence of the inquisitors’ place in the room no doubt influenced the responses of the deponents, they nevertheless seem keen to tell the inquisitors that they had renounced whatever heretical beliefs they had believed in the past, beliefs which they did not see as unorthodox until after the Crusade and the onset of the inquisition. In regard to the “heretics” themselves, the deponents usually referred to them as “Good Men” or “Good Women,” suggesting that the deponents may not have understood the “heretics” the same way that the inquisitors did. Mark Pegg has made great issue out of this point, claiming in several places that the label “Good Man” referred to a title held

commonly among men and used at times that required courtesy.<sup>68</sup> While partially persuasive, Pegg's argument discounts that many of the deponents fully acknowledged in the ritual the soteriological power of the Good Men. The belief in such a power might do enough to suggest that those who believed in the Good Men and Good Women had abandoned their "heretical" beliefs completely, but that does not seem to be the case, at least from the testimonies recorded in the register. Instead, the testimonies read like the believers had their feet in two doors, imagining that they were participating in what they understood to be correct Christian practice while that very practice had been condemned by the Church, because the Church had an institutional claim to authority over Christian doctrine and practice the dominant authority on what it meant to be a "Christian" in western Europe during the Middle Ages. While not completely clear, the deponents' representation of themselves and their connections to both other believers and Catharism shows at least one way in which the Cathars and their believers constructed their identities as "good Christians" while practicing a form of Christianity that the Church labeled heretical.

Considering the Cathars as an "imagined community" thus requires a three-pronged consideration. The coloring of the group by past historians and the inquisitors themselves has so shaped the present's notions of the religious group, that seeing and understanding how the group constructed their own identity requires changing lenses in order to look beyond assumptions colored by ideology, misunderstanding, and even fear.

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<sup>68</sup> Mark Pegg, "Heresy, Good Men, and Nomenclature" in *Heresy and the Persecuting Society in the Middle Ages: Essays on the Work of R. I. Moore*. Ed. Michael Frassetto, (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 230-234. Pegg repeats this argument in several places, most recently in his *A Most Holy War*.

Such a consideration requires viewing the relationships between the historian and the past, the inquisitor and the deponent, and the Cathars to their own communities. These relationships have shown the ways in which each category of person has imagined the religious group and how those imaginings constructed a notion of identity for the Cathars. For the present historian, removing the inventory of these imaginings allows a somewhat clearer window into just how the Cathars constructed an identity for themselves, away from the ideological coloring of the other two groups.

Historians have imagined the Cathars perhaps in the most creative ways, positioning the Cathars according ideological standpoints or, like Otto Rahn, creating a further mythology about the group that ties into other legends like the Holy Grail.<sup>69</sup> Many historians have used the Cathars as part of their ideological construction of the past, usually in opposition the Catholic Church. The historians that imagine the Cathars in this way have seen them as forerunners of the Protestant Reformation, identifying Cathar theology and doctrine as analogous or identical to the theology of Martin Luther. Painting the Cathars in such a manner places too much weight on their opposition to the Church. The deponents in MS 609 do not speak out directly against the Church, and while they sometimes espouse doctrine that opposes the Church's teachings, it does not suggest that they formed an organized opposition to the Church designed to supplant Catholicism as the dominant religion in medieval Europe. Nor do espousals of once

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<sup>69</sup> Several popular history books that make loose connections between the two based on circumstantial and dubious evidence have exhausted the connection between the Cathars and the Holy Grail. See Otto Rahn, *Crusade Against the Grail: The Struggle Between the Cathars, The Templars, and The Church of Rome*, trans. Christopher Jones (New York: Inner Traditions, 2006). See also Jean Markale, *Montségur and the Mystery of the Cathars* (New York: Inner Traditions, 2003).

believing in Cathar doctrine suggest that Catharism comprised a reform movement in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. All that the interviews in MS 609 show on this point is that an alternative version of Christianity existed in medieval Languedoc and that many people believed these things at one time or another.

Some historians have used the notion of Catharism as an alternative Christianity as a way to paint the Cathars as a progressive group that provided women more opportunities than the Church allowed. Not only does MS 609 provide examples that show that men had more opportunities to preach the doctrine than women did, and the Catholic Church seems to have offered similar opportunities, even women's ordination. Women may have had the opportunity to educate women in houses, but such an experience does not seem different than the experience of women in Catholic monasteries. Imagining the Cathars in this way again colors Catharism a different shade than the experiences of the deponents in MS 609 suggest. Historians have also imagined the Cathars as a part of the historical identity of the south of France, martyrs killed by the Church as a sign of Northern oppression. MS 609 does not contain any person who speaks to such a conception, nor does any sense of "southernness" or anti-north sentiment appear in the words of those under investigation, though it does contain a sense of local community.

Medieval Catholics, both the inquisitors and polemicists of heresy, imagined the Cathars in a much different manner than historians have imagined them. The Cathars' Catholic opposites imagined the Cathars as a construction of complete opposition to orthodoxy and their ways of living. The inquisitors and polemicists both relied on assumptions about heresy that had been used throughout the history of Catholic

orthodoxy, aligning the Cathars with ancient traditions and enemies of the Church. These assumptions led the inquisitors in charge of the inquisition in the Lauragais, which resulted in MS 609, to ask pointed questions about what the deponents had done. These questions, formulaic in nature, painted a picture of Catharism tailored to those assumptions, and which may leave out the more nuanced beliefs of Cathar believers who simply wanted to escape the inquisitors' chamber and avoid any punishments.

The Cathars themselves, at least those under investigation in MS 609 imagined themselves connected to other Cathars in their surrounding communities. Most often, this meant making connections with their families and neighbors, all of whom had come under the gaze of the inquisitors. The existence of Cathar *ductores* (guides) and *nuncii* (messengers) also suggest that the Cathars connected with other believers in different parts of the region. The deponents also do not seem inclined to represent themselves as anything other than adherents to Catholicism, even if they believed in the Catharism at one point in their lives. They never consider themselves heretics, nor call themselves "Cathars," further suggesting that they considered themselves orthodox believers. These horizontal connections comprised the landscape in which the Cathars and their believers formed their conceptions of themselves and what they presented to the inquisitor, despite the inquisitor's assumptive line of questioning.

While the assumptions of historians and inquisitors remain in the discussion, the rest of this study focuses specifically on the tools with which the Cathars formed their identities. Using their connections to each other and their beliefs about their religion, the study continues to explore the way in which religious texts and emotions influenced by traumatic events and feelings of fellowship and solidarity shaped the constructions of

identity present in MS 609. These connections, which have been the focus of this chapter, provided a network in which the Cathars and believers operated, generating common experiences and expectations among themselves. This network must remain at the forefront of the discussion, a discussion that will be made clearer with the addition of texts and emotions.

## Chapter 2. “Heresy” and the text: Cathar Textual Communities

Historians who have studied medieval heresy have emphasized the connection between the rise of literacy in the Middle Ages and the growth of heretical movements like the Cathars.<sup>70</sup> The written materials employed by the Cathars and other groups like the Waldensians, though few have survived both time and inquisitorial targeting, reveal this connection quite clearly. While the Church criticized the Good Men and other heretical preachers for being “illiterate,” meaning that they could not read Latin nor had they received the proper education on scripture and interpretation, the Good Men did write and use texts written in the vernacular in their every day pastoral care. The Cathars relied on their texts, whether physical artifacts like the Cathar ritual books or the transmission of their ideas through their education of new believers, whom the Church labeled as illiterate dupes of heretical preachers. These texts assist in illuminating the core of what it meant to be a Cathar, since they present a view into how the Good Men,

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<sup>70</sup> The question of literacy and heresy has received a great deal of attention from a variety of different approaches. See R.I. Moore, “Literacy and the Making of Heresy” in *Heresy and Literacy 1000-1530*, eds. Peter Biller and Anne Hudson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 19-37 for an argument for the rise of literacy and the connection to heresy. See Peter Biller, “Heresy and Literacy: Earlier History of the Theme” in *Heresy and Literacy 1000-1530*, 1-18 for a historiography of the theme of literacy in heresy. See also Peter Biller, “The *Topos* and Reality of the Heretic as *Illiteratus*” in *The Waldenses, 1170-1530: Between a Religious Order and a Church*, (Burlington: Variorum, 2001), 169-190 for the medieval understanding of this connection. See Anne Brenon “The Voice of the Good Women: An Essay on the Pastoral and Sacerdotal Role of Women in the Cathar Church” in *Women Preachers and Prophets through Two Millennia of Christianity* eds. Beverly Mayne Kienzle and Pamela J Walker, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 247-261 for small descriptions of Cathar women and texts. Also on the theme of Cathar women and texts, see Peter Biller, “Women and Texts in Languedocian Catharism” in *Women, the Book, and the Godly: Selected Proceedings of the St Hilda’s Conference, 1993 vol. 1*, (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1995), 171-182.

Good Women, and the believers expressed their common ritual experiences and communal values, rather than sources that are filtered through the lenses of inquisitors.

This chapter explores the relationships between the Cathars and their texts from a slightly different position than previous scholarship on medieval heresy, examining the way in which these texts played various roles in the lives of the deponents in MS 609. Discussions of texts, both written and oral, appear throughout the testimonies of those under investigation, and thus suggest that the books and their contents played a significant role in the formation of the identities of the Cathars. While the relationships individuals had with these texts differed in certain respects, many of the same currents run through the descriptions provided by the deponents. These relationships make clear the profound influence texts had on both the Good Men, Good Women, and the believers, developing their sense of attachment to and inclusion in Catharism.

The Cathar texts created religious and social connections among believers and organized the Cathars present in MS 609 into what Brian Stock has called a “textual community.”<sup>71</sup> Stock argues that textual communities form through bonds created by a text that an individual has mastered, interpreted, and utilized in order to shape the thought and action of those who heard the text.<sup>72</sup> Furthermore, Stock argues, textual communities generate concepts first acted out by individuals or groups and only later do they form norms and a collective consciousness.<sup>73</sup> Stock also suggests that textual communities do

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<sup>71</sup> Brian Stock, *The Implications of Literacy: Written Language and Models of Interpretation in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), 88-241. See also Brian Stock, *Listening for the Text: On the Uses of the Past* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990).

<sup>72</sup> Stock, *The Implications of Literacy*, 90.

<sup>73</sup> Stock, *Listening for the Text*, 13.



not necessarily imply that such a community relied specifically on written texts. Instead, Stock argues, shared assumptions allowed for engagement with oral performances of the text, allowing participants, literate or not, to debate and discuss the text being performed.<sup>74</sup> As this chapter will make clear, Catharism fits into this conception nicely, with written and oral texts playing a significant role in the individual religious lives of those who participated in Catharism and the community, holding them together and defining them.

Stock's theory, however, requires some modification to completely fit into the picture of Catharism painted in MS 609. Stock's conception relies principally on the reading or oral performance of the text, but does not consider the role of the physical artifact of the text as a religious object or relic. Throughout MS 609, deponents recount the use of books in the performance of the rituals and as an identifying marker of the Good Men and Good Women, making the artifact an important component in the generation of the community. Attitudes towards the book, especially reverence, created a religious and social understanding between the Good Men, Good Women, and their followers. Since the material artifact plays such a central role in the rituals of the Good Men, Good Women, and the believers, despite the Cathars' anti-materiality, its inclusion is necessary in order to fully understand the formation of the textual community of Cathars in MS 609.

As a central part of their religious lives, the Cathar books played a central role in the performance of the main ritual of initiation, the *consolamentum*, and thus comprised one of the formative components of becoming a Good Man or a Good Woman. Cathars

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<sup>74</sup> Stock, *The Implications of Literacy*, 91.

also performed the *consolamentum* as a form of last rights for their believers, and thus the book played a significant role in the last moments of a believer's life. The deponents also speak of how possessing the book signified the Cathar elite, making it a social marker and inculcating respect for that elite on the part of the common believer. Additionally, the books contained the scriptures relevant to the Cathars' spiritual teachings, and those scriptures require consideration in context with the rest of the artifact. Finally, the book also gives the impression of an ideological statement against Catholicism, mimicking and yet differentiating itself from the books that contained Catholic texts, despite the Cathars' abhorrence of materiality, a component of their dualist theology. These relationships suggest that the Good Men, Good Women, and the Cathar believers had a strong devotional tie to the book, which provided Cathar textual communities with one of its central components.

The texts utilized by Cathars did go beyond the physical ritual book used for prayer and ritual performance to include the oral performance of the rituals and preaching in town squares in order to convert potential believers. The Good Men, either residents of the towns or outsiders, preached a standard message in public and invited people into their homes to discuss their faith with them. Listening and meeting with the Good Men and Good Women allowed believers to take part in the religion that had come to their towns and to connect with others who had accepted that religion. These meetings influenced the course of the listeners' religious lives and thus affected their self-conceptions, even if they swore off these beliefs to the inquisitors later. Several accounts of people hearing the Good Men's preaching and going to visit with the Good Men and Good Women appear in MS 609, suggesting that believers depended on the

Good Men and Good Women to interpret Cathar texts and doctrine for them in both public and private settings, helping shape their textual community and thus their identity.

The Cathars used other methods to spread their doctrine and faith through teaching. In addition to speaking with believers in their homes, Good Men and Good Women educated future elites in houses where initiates could experience the asceticism they would practice for the rest of their lives. Other Good Men instructed villagers in craft trades like weaving sewing, and even writing while also preaching to them about Cathar doctrine while their apprentice worked.. Women, on the other hand, received religious education in the Cathar houses set aside for that specific purpose, though they too received instruction in domestic trades designated to them by societal norms. Nevertheless, the Cathars use of education in these ways points to how the Good Men and Good Women transmitted their texts, creating a society literate in their faith and doctrine. These experiences played a dual role in the formation of the identity of the believers, by giving them a sense of purpose in the world or a trade to practice alongside a set of religious beliefs that helped shaped how they perceived themselves.

Catholic polemicists and the inquisitors consistently claimed that the Cathars, both the elite and the common believers, were Latin illiterates who could not properly interpret scripture, thus leading to their superstitious and heretical beliefs.<sup>75</sup> For the Good Men, the Catholic polemic usually focused on the their inability to work with written materials, especially in Latin, and therefore their lack of authority in interpreting the scriptures. For the common believer, the polemic focused on believers being both

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<sup>75</sup> For an account of the inquisitor and polemicist claims about illiterate heretics in general see Peter Biller, “The Topos and Reality of the Heretic as *Illiteratus*” in *The Waldenses*, 169-190.

completely illiterate and being foolish enough to fall for superstition presented to them by the Good Men and Good Women. In MS 609, this comes across most clearly when the inquisitors ask deponents about the doctrinal and spiritual “errors,” a question that relied on the assumption that the Good Men and Good Women could not interpret scripture correctly because of their inability with Latin. The inquisitors, then, identified heretics by their association with a particular spoken religious text, in this case the words of the Cathar preachers, and with the various vernacular books the Good Men used in their ministries. Catholic polemicists turned the use of these books against the Good Men, claiming that the books had no religious authority and that the books represented the work of illiterate religious highwaymen, bent on the corruption of the souls of Christ’s flock.

The Cathars did, however, maintain a high level of vernacular print literacy among the Good Men and even some of the believers, a skill viewed with suspicion on the part of the inquisitors and other Catholic authorities. In MS 609 there are several instances of deponents reporting about Cathars using written materials in daily life, even outside the realm of religion. Good Men helped create or at least facilitated the production of charters and other financial documents.<sup>76</sup> Their religious texts, however, comprised the largest component of their literary activities, at least in written form. These books are present throughout the witnesses’ testimony, partly due to the fact that the two inquisitors had an awareness of the use of such books, but also because the book played a central role in the Cathar rituals and was a significant social marker that

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<sup>76</sup> Peter Biller, “The Cathars of Languedoc and Written Materials” in *Heresy and Literacy, 1000 – 1530*, eds. Peter Biller and Anne Hudson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 63-64. Biller cites Ms. 609 fol. 135b, 34b, and 239b.

signified a Good Man. On November 25, 1245, Martinus Caselis from the town of Cambiac appeared in front of the inquisitors and confessed that a woman named Aimersende told him that she had seen a “book of the heretics” that belonged to a Good Man (whom the inquisitors, perhaps mistakenly, label a “deacon”) in the possession of other believers.<sup>77</sup> According to Martinus, Aimersende also told him that the deacon had been captured and that he had entrusted the book to these believers before he was captured.<sup>78</sup> The trust placed in the believers on the part of the Good Man demonstrates that, at the very least, the Good Men prized these books and did not want them to fall into the wrong hands, signaling the importance of the book to both Good Men and believers.

Petrona Fizela testified in front of the inquisitors two days later, recounting a story that explains at least one of the roles of books in religious life of the Cathars, the books’ function as a religious relic. She told the inquisitors that two men had asked for the Good Men when a young man had fallen ill. The Good Men arrived at the house and the men asked them to perform the *consolamentum* on the boy. The Good Men refused, explaining that the boy was much too young to receive the rite and the spiritual responsibilities that came with it. After the boy had passed away, however, the Good Men did place the book on top of the boy’s head, read from the book, and performed the

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<sup>77</sup> Ms. 609 fol. 237b, item 1 in Duvernoy, 649. Martinus de Caselis capellanus quondam de Auriaco t.i. d. qd Aymersendis uxor Willelmi Vicarii de Cambiac dixit i.t. qd P. Arnaldi et Ramundus Vassero et Helias de Cambiac et Willelmus Vicarius et Bernardus Sabbaterii cum consilio Iordani Saissii et Willelmi Saissii dominorum de Cambiac et quorundam aliorum consilio, tradiderunt dicte Aimersende unum librum hereticorum qui fuerat diachoni hereticorum de Caramanno.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid. Quod teneret illum usquequo esset ordinatum quis deberet illum habere, et dictus diachonus h. commendaverat dictum librum supradictis hominibus antequam esset captus, scilicet quando fuit in dicta villa de Cambiaco. See Pegg, “Heresy, Good Men, and Nomenclature,” p. 238 for an argument against the use of “deacon” as a marker for Cathar hierarchy. Pegg argues that the word “deacon” only signals respect for the person.

ritual, setting the boy's soul free, but not investing him with the religious power of a Good Man.<sup>79</sup> Petrona's testimony, among the many like it, demonstrates one of the primary functions for the books used by the Good Men. The Good Men used these books in the performance of the *consolamentum*, the ritual that either initiated believers into the ranks of the Good Men (or Good Women) as a form of ordination or as a form of last rights for the common believer. In the case of the young man who died and had the book placed on his head for the ritual, the book, along with the words of the Good Men, provided a conduit for his salvation. As a tool of the ritual, then, the book played a significant role in the formation of Cathar identity in virtue of it being both a social marker in terms of the standing of a Good Man and as a physical representation of the way to salvation for Cathar believers.

The books themselves also contain markers, both literal and metaphorical, that communicate Cathar identity, especially on the part of the Good Men. MS 609, however, does not contain any descriptions of these books. The inquisitors simply wanted to know whether or not the witness had seen a book or knew of anyone who had seen a book. One of these ritual books has survived both time and inquisitorial targeting, and serves as a good representation for what the books discussed by the deponents in MS 609 may have looked like in size and shape. This Cathar service book survives in the archives at the Bibliothèque Municipale in Lyons under the name MS Palais des Artes 36, also called the

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<sup>79</sup> Ms. 609 fol. 77a, item 40 in Duvernoy, 200-201. Anno et die p. Petrona Fizela ... Bernardum Roco, B. Delbosc, et tunc infirmus rogavit d.h. quod reciperent ipsum, sed tamen ipsi noluerunt ipsum recipere quia multum iuvenis erat, et dum ipse infirmus audivit qd nolebant ipsum recipere, infirmus clausit oculos quasi mortuus, et tanta cito d. heretici posuerunt librum super caput dicti iuvenis et i.t. et o. a. ad. ibi d.h. flexibus l genibus, et fuerunt hoc anno in estate IIIor anni vel Ve.

Lyons Manuscript.<sup>80</sup> The text of the *consolamentum* appears towards the end of the manuscript, after an Occitan translation of the New Testament. During the ritual, the Good Man would have placed the entire book on the head of the believer receiving the rite while reading the text of the ritual either from memory or from another copy of the ritual text. The surviving ritual text attached to the New Testament is a vernacular manuscript that also gives at least some sense of how the physical book itself drew the attention of the inquisitors and the Catholic polemicists who had identified this sort of text with those the Church considered heretics.

The Cathars in MS 609 would have employed a manuscript similar to the Lyons Manuscript, which was copied around the year 1310.<sup>81</sup> A single Cathar scribe (or a scribe sympathetic to Catharism) copied this manuscript from an earlier source.<sup>82</sup> The manuscript is of a relatively small size, measuring 17.5 by 13.2cm, suggesting portability, useful in the Good Men's preaching and performing services like the *consolamentum* in believers' homes.<sup>83</sup> Maryvyn Roy Harris has suggested that the Cathars may have appropriated this version of the New Testament from the Waldensians, who arrived in Languedoc at nearly the same time, though the Cathar scribe most likely added the vernacular ritual later.<sup>84</sup> This suggests that Cathar scribes, or scribes paid by the Cathars,

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<sup>80</sup> Lyons, Bibliothèque Municipale, MS Palais des Artes 36. The book has been reproduced photolithographically in Leon Clédat, *Le Nouveau Testament: Traduit Au XIII<sup>e</sup> Siècle En Langue Provençale Suivi D'un Rituel Cathare*, (Genève: Slatkine Reprints, 1968).

<sup>81</sup> Jean Duvernoy, "Nouveau Testament Occitan: Rituel Cathare MS PA 36 de la Bibliothèque de la ville de Lyon," [http://jean.duvernoy.free.fr/text/pdf/cledat\\_intro.pdf](http://jean.duvernoy.free.fr/text/pdf/cledat_intro.pdf), 9.

<sup>82</sup> Marvyn Roy Harris, "The Occitan New Testament in ms. Bibl. Mun. de Lyon, PA 36; A Cathar or Waldensian Translation," *Heresis*, 44 (2006): 163-185, 167.

<sup>83</sup> Duvernoy, "Nouveau Testament," 3.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, 172.

placed the ritual alongside translations of the New Testament and in other service books that contained the Cathar rituals like the Lyons manuscript.

Every Good Man received a book containing, at the very least, a copy of the ritual as a tool to use for pastoral care.<sup>85</sup> Given the large number of Good Men not only in the earlier period before and during the Albigensian Crusade but also during the period in which the Lyons manuscript was produced, several hundred copies of the New Testament and the ritual must have existed at one time.<sup>86</sup> From the testimony of those interviewed in MS 609, however, the use of the New Testament only appears in one deposition, perhaps signaling that the inquisitors did not wish to emphasize the use of the New Testament in Cathar pastoral care.<sup>87</sup> The text of the Cathar ritual does quote scripture, however, suggesting that the Cathars did focus on these scriptures and employed them often.

Although the surviving ritual is bound in a New Testament, this does not mean that the ritual always appeared alongside the New Testament. Peter Biller has suggested that the ritual may have appeared not only in smaller copies of the Gospel of John, but perhaps in single quires containing only the ritual, though no such pamphlet or booklet

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<sup>85</sup> See “Catharist Rituals (part B)” in Wakefield and Evans, *Heresies*, 488-491 and 492-494.

<sup>86</sup> Peter Biller, “The Cathars of Languedoc and Written Materials,” in *Heresy and Literacy*, 71. This also suggests that crusaders targeted and destroyed the books containing the rituals, since only one such service book has survived.

<sup>87</sup> The words “new testament” only appear once in MS 609. MS 609, fol. 76a, item 32 in Duvernoy, 198. The witness, Willelmus Rigaut, testified that he had heard a man named Ramundo Barta say that rejected the Old Testament after espousing common Cathar doctrine. Item dixit qd audivit a dicto Ramundo Barta qd baptismus et matrimonium et hostia sacrata nihil valent ad salutem, et quod corporum resurrectio non erat et quod dictus Ramundus non credebat nisi Novum Testamentum, et hoc audierunt Bamunda uxor i.t. et filius eius Hysarnus et Aimengars leprosa.



has survived.<sup>88</sup> Moreover, dating locates the manuscript temporally late in the history of Catharism, suggesting that the service books could have appeared in any number of formats prior to the creation of the Lyons manuscripts, whether a booklet with the ritual alone or a hybrid manuscript like the Lyons manuscript. During the twelfth and thirteenth century, the ritual may have travelled among Cathars in a variety of different ways, whether through written media or through oral performance, but always with a physical text as a ritual anchor and thus the central part of the Cathar textual community.

The Lyons manuscript also provides evidence that shows that the Cathars understood, by the fourteenth century, that the Church sought to suppress them. This evidence especially shows a Cathar need for discretion and even secrecy. Jean Duvernoy, for example, has argued that whoever owned the Lyons manuscript kept it in a bag hung around their neck, perhaps externally indistinguishable from Catholic service booklets carried by priests.<sup>89</sup> Coupled with its small size mentioned above, this suggests that the Cathars not only created such a manuscript with portability in mind and highly valued such a manuscript (wanting to keep it close to their heart), but also that the Cathars would desire to keep their books close to them in order that the books not fall into the hands of others who might wish them harm.

The script used to pen the Lyons manuscript also points toward a Cathar understanding of the need for secrecy. The single scribe, Duvernoy reports, used a gothic script common to the years 1230-1330, though it does not suggest any specific location.<sup>90</sup> The use of a common script would have helped the ritual text conform to other religious

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<sup>88</sup> Biller, "The Cathars of Languedoc and Written Materials," in *Heresy and Literacy*, 73.

<sup>89</sup> Duvernoy, "Nouveau Testament," 3.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

manuscripts at the time, indiscernible from the other biblical manuscripts of its time, despite the heterodox ritual at the end. Duvernoy also argues that the scribe wrote the majority manuscript in haste, as evidenced by the sloppiness of his penmanship, hastiness that suggests that the scribe understood the illegal nature of the text he copied.<sup>91</sup> Even if the scribe himself was not a Cathar, but rather copied the manuscript in the employment of the Cathars, he nevertheless would not want to possess the text for long, perhaps even urged by his Cathar customers to hurry along the reproduction, lest he fall under suspicion.

The Lyons manuscript provides a copy of the New Testament that both conforms to the style of biblical manuscripts while at the same time presenting a visual critique of the Catholic biblical manuscript tradition. The manuscript adhered to standard conventions with its double columns, regular script, common writing support (parchment), and decorated *incipits* for each Gospel and epistle. The bible, however, was arranged in a non-canonical order, suggesting a further challenge to the Church's religious and scriptural authority.<sup>92</sup> The Lyons manuscript also contains very simple decorations, in the form of elaborated letters and the occasional geometric designs, though the scribe did draw a fish occasionally in order to test his pen.<sup>93</sup> Such decoration remained consistent with Cathar theology, which posited a completely evil material world, much like its Gnostic antecedents. Thus, the manuscript acted as a sort of visual polemic, in that it departed from the orthodox tradition in its use of vernacular language

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<sup>91</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>92</sup> Anne Brenon, "Cathars and the Representation of the Divine: Christians of the Invisible" in *Iconoclasm and Iconoclasm: Struggle for Religious Identity*, (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 254.

<sup>93</sup> Clédat, *Le Nouveau Testament*, 7, for example.

and in that it included the Cathar ritual with the New Testament as a clear assertion of the Cathars' Christian identity.

The importance of the book in the lives of the Cathars and their believers shows a sort of social logic that surrounds the book itself. In the first place, the book imbues the Good Man who carries it with a sort of power, in that it gave him the physical marker of spiritual authority. This spiritual authority rested in the Good Man's ability to preach Cathar doctrine as a leader and provided him the tool with which he could save the souls of the believers. In another sense, as suggested by the Good Man entrusting his book to the group of believers, the book inculcates feelings of reverence and the need for the believers to protect the book because of its importance. The book also acts as an agent, in that it is the conduit by which salvation came to those who believed in Catharism and had received the rite of the *consolamentum*. Thus, the book creates social meanings just by virtue of its existence and its place in Cathar theology. It also decentralized the material aspect of the text, in that the text was only a vehicle for the transmission of doctrine and a conduit for salvation alongside its power as a ritual relic. The books certainly caused a sense of awe in the minds of the believers, both from the sight of the book and the spiritual power that the rituals contained.

The books, moreover, show the tension in the identity of the Cathars rather well. On one hand, the books contain passages of scripture that would have been familiar to any Christian. The presence of such scripture made the words of the Good Men believable and in line with what believers heard for the majority of their lives and thus seem only another insight into their religion in no way contradictory to what they had learned in the past. On the other hand, the book itself contains material directly opposed

to Catholic orthodoxy and the book's construction shows an apparent need for discretion, suggesting that, at the very least, the Good Men and Good Women knew their lack of standing with the Catholic Church. On the part of the believers, however, it is not completely clear whether or not the books' outward appearance gave the Cathars any sense of their non-Catholic identity. It may have reinforced their identity as good Christians because of the presence of the New Testament, but the common believer may not have understood that the book was, according to the Catholic Church, illegitimate because of its use of the vernacular language and production by a scribe whom the Church did not authorize. The believer also may not have had the ability to read the book and thus not recognize the presence of the New Testament. The believers may have played the role of accomplice in the hiding or the protection of the book, but they may have understood this as simply protecting a sacred artifact, thinking that it belonged to good, Christian men, whom the inquisitors later called heretics.

While the physical presence of the book played a powerful role in the formation of Cathar identity, the public preaching of and the visits to the believers' homes by the Good Men also shaped how the Cathars understood their identification with Catharism. The preaching of the Good Men figures prominently in the deponents' responses to the inquisitors' questions. At these meetings and public sermons, believers would interact with the Good Men and Women and perform the *melioramentum*, the ritual that the inquisitors and polemicists called "adoration."<sup>94</sup> The *melioramentum* brought the Good Men, Good Women, and the believers together and helped cultivate feelings of

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<sup>94</sup> The ritual "adoration" is also called the *melioramentum* in inquisitor sources. See Pegg, *The Corruption of Angels*, 92.

connectedness among them by giving them a means by which they could identify each other. The preaching and the visits to the homes of believers also allowed believers to see and converse with people who had also revered the Good Men and, in some cases, believed in them as spiritual leaders and savers of souls. This practice of “adoration” provides a clear view of the ways in which the Cathar rituals, as texts, influenced the identities of the believers with the rituals’ specific protocol and repetitious phrases.

While anyone could attend the public sermons of the Cathars, participation in the rituals of the *melioramentum* and the *consolamentum* seems to have required “true faith” on the part of the believer, though some villagers participated perhaps with feigned religious sincerity in order to conform to social norms. On November 6, 1245, the wife of Geraldus de Castronovo, Honors, a resident of the village of Auriac, testified that while she visited the house of a woman named Bernarda Bonafos, Bernarda encouraged her to “adore” the Cathars with her and her husband. The Good Men, however, instructed her not to perform the ritual if she did not have faith in them, much like the requirement for participation in Catholic rituals.<sup>95</sup> Participants in the ritual would repeat the words “Bless us, Good Men. Speak God to for us.”<sup>96</sup> When Bernarda encouraged Honors to

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<sup>95</sup> MS 609 fol. 90b, item 126 in Duvernoy, 234-235. Item anno et die quo supra VIII ydus novembris6 Domina Honors uxor Giraldi de Castronovo7 t.i. d. qd vidit apud Tholosam in domo de na Bernart tunc dominam B.. Bonafos et R. Gros et duos alios h. s.s. et v i ipsam Bernart dominam domus et mater cum eis et Hugonem Vitalis filium dicte Bernarde et Iohannam de Viridifolio ancillam domus, et i. t. iverat in dicta domo ad sanandum bracchium suum de quo infirmabatur, quia apud Auriacum non poterat invenire consilium, sed i. t. nec d. Hugo Vitalis ad. p., sed dictam Bernardam et Iohannam ancillam vidit bene adorantes, et Bernarda dicebat i.t. et docebat quod ad. d.h., et i.h. tunc dixerunt i.t. quod non faceret nisi haberet fidem in eis. Et sunt X anni vel circa

<sup>96</sup> MS 609 fol. 2b, item 13 in Duvernoy, 10. Benedicite, Boni Homines, orate deum pro nobis. This phrase repeats 90 times throughout Ms. 609 with slight variation, signaling a

participate, Bernarda most likely offered instructions on how to perform the ritual even if those instructions were a simple command for Honors to follow Bernarda's lead. Even with the lack of these verbal or nonverbal instructions in the register, Bernarda's encouragement signals a codified practice with a prescribed set of words meant to inculcate feelings of reverence toward the Good Men and Good Women on the part of the participants.

Honors' testimony also reveals that the performance of the ritual signified the performer's identification with the Cathars, just like any other religion. The Good Men's instructions for Honors to not perform the ritual unless she believed in them and their faith, suggests that the performance of the ritual required self-identification with the Cathars, an internal affirmation that would manifest itself through the external performance of the ritual.<sup>97</sup> Extended to a community of potential believers, the performance of the adoration would have bound people together, simply by virtue of performing the rituals with other believers. Furthermore, the bonds created by this communal participation formed a community of believers, on whom the Good Men could depend as religious adherents. Combined with the role of the book in the *consolamentum*, then, the adoration ritual provided believers with powerful ways by which to associate themselves with the Good Men and Good Women.

A contrary view of the "adoration" ritual is that the inquisitors and polemicists reconstructed the "adoration" ritual from the common social courtesy practices at the

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uniformed method for performing the rituals. Cf. Pegg, *The Corruption of Angels*, pp. 92-93.

<sup>97</sup> Cf. Lambert, *The Cathars*, 142.

time termed *cortesia*.<sup>98</sup> Pegg's argument rests largely upon testimony of witnesses in MS 609 who admit that they bowed to the Good Men, but that they did not perform the bow with reverence towards the Good Men and Good Women.<sup>99</sup> Willelmus Garcias, a resident of the town of Fanjos, for example, claimed that he only bowed to the Good Men because it was what his parents did and it was what one did when the Good Men came into one's home, not because he believed that the Good Men could save his soul.<sup>100</sup> Garcias' testimony therefore suggests a blurry division between the religious and social realms in village life. Residents of these medieval villages would not have made the distinction between social and religious practice. The people who lived in the villages influenced by the Cathars saw them as a part of the natural social fabric of their village and accorded them due social respect that may or may not have carried religious meaning or intent. Once in front of the inquisitors, however, the line between social and religious life needed clear definition, which, at least in the case of Garcias, deponents were very quick to point out to the inquisitors.

John Arnold also entertains an argument similar to Pegg's, suggesting that those who performed the "adoration" ritual had one of three potential motivations. Arnold finds that believers who performed the "adoration" ritual did not usually do so as a means to express their Cathar faith because of the rituals' similarity to non-Cathar social practice. Second, Arnold does find that those who performed the ritual with religious

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<sup>98</sup> Pegg, *The Corruption of the Angels*, 92-93

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, 92-93.

<sup>100</sup> MS 609 fol. 164b, item 47 in Duvernoy, 419. Cited in Pegg, *Corruption of the Angels*, p. 95. Item dixit qd nunquam receptavit h. in domo propria nec comedit cum eis, nec de pane benedicto ab h.. Pred.h. nunquam cred. Licet pluries adorasset eos, sed propter familiaritatem quam parentes i.t. habebant cum d.h. oportebat ipsum facere ea que fecit cum h., non propter fidem nec credulitatem qd haberet cum eis.

intent did express a desire to eventually receive the *consolamentum* and recognized the power of the Good Men. Thirdly, like Pegg, the “adoration” ritual usually only served as social shorthand for respect and greeting regardless of a person’s desire to express their religious faith.<sup>101</sup> Arnold’s three-level system works better with the cases in MS 609 than does Pegg’s, but does not fully account for the potential religious meaning in the performance of the ritual. In Honors’ case, for example, the Good Men’s admonition for her not to perform the ritual unless she had “good faith” signals a clearly religious situation, but only because the Good Men explained that dynamic to her. When a deponent claimed that they did not include any religious meaning in their performance of the ritual, the deponent displayed an understanding that the ritual could carry religious meaning and told the inquisitor as much, suggesting the tension between the social and religious realms. Honors’ testimony, moreover, suggests that the Cathars may have incorporated what was once just common social practice into their religious ritual system, much like Christianity adopted other social and religious practices throughout its development.

The testimony concerning the “adoration” ritual also clearly displays the tension in the religious identity of the Cathar believers, in that the Cathar believers thought that these practices were completely orthodox, since those who taught them to perform the ritual seemed much like Catholic preachers. In both cases described above, religious meaning is clearly present in the performance of the rituals, even if, as is the case with Willelmus’ example, the participant did not perform the ritual with any religious intent. This suggests that the adoration ritual comprised a key component of what it meant to be

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<sup>101</sup> John Arnold, *Inquisition and Power*, 131.



a Cathar, in that performing the ritual with religious intent, defined by the Good Men, identified a person as a part of the Cathar group. The inquisitors certainly thought as much, since the question of “adoration” appears in nearly every register. On the other hand, since the ritual conformed to the bounds of every day social courtesy, at least in terms of the ritual’s actions, Cathar believers did not see understand any religious conflict in the performance of this ritual. Only later, when the inquisitors told them that they had erred, did the people understand that what they had done was wrong in the eyes of the Catholic Church.

In addition to the visits to the homes of believers and the performance of the “adoration” ritual, Good Men also preached in town squares, both before and after the Albigensian Crusade, though the Crusade limited instances of public preaching and attached new anxieties to that preaching. Forensa Forners from Mansum testified to Bernard de Caux and Jean de Saint-Pierre that she and her husband had seen the Good Men and Good Women preaching to several people near Cabaretum 18 years before her testimony. She said that she also saw the same people “adoring” the Good Men and Good Men while listening to their sermons in public.<sup>102</sup> Similar to Forensa’s testimony, Guillelmus de Lagrassa from the town of Avignonet testified that his father had been involved with the Cathars for five years.<sup>103</sup> According to Guillelmus, he saw the Cathars

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<sup>102</sup> MS 609 fol. 5b, item 79 in Duvernoy, 16. Item dixit quod stetit apud Cabaretum cum viro suo per duos annos, et vidit ibi predictos hereticos et hereticas et pluries ad. eos et audivit predicationem, et vidit quod omnes homines et mulieres de villa veniebant ad predicationem h. publice, et ado. eos. Et sunt XVIII anni vel circa.

<sup>103</sup> MS 609 fol. 133b, item 51 in Duvernoy, 345. Anno et die p. Guillelmus de Lagrassa t.i. d. qd Bernardus de Lagrassa pater i.t. fuit h. per multum tempus et i.t. fuit nutritus cum h. bene per duos annos et dimidium, et fuit per quinquennium hereticus indutus, et postea recessit a dicto Bernardo Gras patre suo h. et ab aliis sociis suis h.. Et recognovit

preaching in multitudes of places, offering the inquisitors the names of three towns, Mount Maurum, Mirapiscem, and Laurac. Guillelmus also reported that several people gathered and came to hear the Cathars' preaching and adored them as well.<sup>104</sup> These two examples show the prevalence of Cathar preaching in the region surrounding Toulouse both before and after the Crusade.<sup>105</sup> The preaching of the Good Men in multiple places across the region, suggests that the various villages and towns had similar religious sentiments and experiences shaped by the words of the Good Men.

When the Good Men preached in the town squares, they often competed with preachers from other Christian groups, especially the Waldensians and the Dominicans. For those who came to listen to the preachers in the square, these competing discourses might have made it more difficult, if not impossible, for the villagers and townspeople to discern which speaker actually carried the "right" message. Since the Good Men carried with them books that looked like those the Dominicans carried, spoke about the same scriptures, and acted in a similar manner as their Catholic counterparts, the Good Men would have seemed equally authoritative to those who came to hear them speak. In addition, the villagers and townspeople might not have understood that the Dominican preacher carried the weight of the institutional Church behind him, at least until the

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sectam illorum esse malam et damnosam. Et ad. tociens h. quod non recordatur, et fuit adoratus a pluribus dum permansit hereticus.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid. Item apud Montem Maurum et Mirapiscem et apud Lauracum et in multis aliis locis terre vidit h. publice stantes sicut ceteri homines, predicantes et fere omnes homines de terra conveniebant et veniebant audire predicationem eorum, et ad. eos.

<sup>105</sup> John Arnold has done an excellent survey of the styles of Cathar preaching and the numbers of preachers and listeners based on the Fournier register and the Doat collection, which contains multiple inquisitor records from the thirteenth century. See John Arnold, "The Preaching of the Cathars," in *Medieval Monastic Preaching*, ed. Carolyn Muessig, (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 183-206.

Dominicans came back as inquisitors who sought to eliminate what the Good Men and Good Women had sewn into the religious fabric of the villages and towns.

The religious discourse in the towns, therefore, gave the listeners a choice as to which speaker, whether Cathar, Waldensian, or Catholic, they identified with the most, though the villagers did not always completely understand the religious consequences of that choice. The various groups often encountered and debated with each other, presenting their listening public with several different points of view, each presenting a version of Christianity that seemed equally authoritative and authentic. On December 7, 1245, Poncius Amelii, a resident of the village of Miravall, told the inquisitors that he had witnessed a Cathar Good Man and a Waldensian, a certain Bernard Prim, having a debate in a public area near Laurac 37 years earlier and before the coming of the Crusaders.<sup>106</sup> Unfortunately, Poncius did not include in his description what material the two men had debated, but his testimony nevertheless reveals that those who came to listen to the sermons of the various preachers in the area heard conflicting messages from different orally transmitted texts. Those who listened to the preaching, however, were not simply passive listeners; the listeners must have brought the preachers' words home with them and shared the words, either amongst their family or with their neighbors, who may or may not have heard the same things from the preachers.

The interviews in MS 609 therefore suggest that, at least in public settings, the Cathar Good Men had ample opportunities to transmit their beliefs to believers who had

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<sup>106</sup> MS 609 fol. 198a, item 1 in Duvernoy, 519. Anno Domini MCCXLV nonas decembris Poncius Amelii senex notarius de Miravalle t.i. d. qd vidit apud Laucum in platea Isarnum de Castris hereticum disputantem cum Bernardo Prim valdensi presente populo eisdem castris, sed i.t. non ad. d.h. nec vidit ad.. Et sunt XXXVII anni.

become accustomed to hearing sermons in public and, perhaps, discussing them with their families and neighbors. The public square, as a marketplace of ideas, must have had a profound effect on the ways in which believers in any version of Christianity conceived of their religious selves. For the Cathars and their believers, moreover, this intellectual marketplace provided a means by which Cathar theology and doctrine could inculcate feelings of community among the believers. The feelings of connectedness brought on by a person's identification with the messages of sermons among the believers who sided with the Good Men also reinforced the strong feelings of faith in the doctrine itself, acting as a way to legitimize their chosen beliefs in the midst of an environment that swirled with different ideas about what it meant to be a "Christian," a term of religious description obviously under contention by, at the very least, Catholics, Cathars, and Waldensians in the region surrounding Toulouse.

The contestedness of what it meant to be a Christian in this area in the thirteenth century also signals the tension between Catharism and Catholicism in the religious identities of those who came to testify in front of the inquisitors. The deponents represented themselves as Christians who had "true" faith, who came to understand that they had "wrong" beliefs in the eyes of the inquisitors only after those inquisitors told them so. Given that the deponents, who were recounting their pre-inquisition activities and beliefs, had these identity-forming forces working in their lives, it should come as no surprise that they did not initially understand themselves as believers in anything opposed to Catholic orthodoxy. The believers would not have completely understood the implications of the differences in affiliations between the preachers, especially since each preacher claimed that they represented the true church of God, made claims about the

veracity of their words, and discussed things with potential believers that resonated with the Catholic faith.<sup>107</sup> Moreover, the believers may have accepted portions of what the Good Men taught them about theology and ritual practice, but any “heretical” belief presented enough of a threat to the inquisitors to request the villagers’ presence for an interview.<sup>108</sup> Even without understanding the competing views of the preachers in the town square, the Cathar believers still hedged their bets the message of the Good Men, only later to learn that the group with a strong institutional support, the Catholic Church, considered that message to be “heretical.” The different trajectories of the preachers’ words therefore sent believers in several directions, though it seems that the Cathar believers sampled from each preacher in understanding their religious identities, but identified with the Cathars the most.

In addition to the oral texts delivered in the public squares, the Good Men and Good Women also exposed potential believers to Catharism through more intimate education, whether in a monastic-like house setting or as a part of the believers’ education in a trade. The type of exposure a particular believer experienced depended largely on their gender. Men largely received their religious training alongside craft and trade education in a non-monastic setting, and they did not take monastic-style vows at least until they received the *consolamentum*. On the other hand, from the descriptions in MS 609, the record makes clear that many women received religious education in Cathar theology in monastic-style houses (though they did not take monastic vows) in which the women lived and performed religious duties like prayer and fasting. The inquisitors

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<sup>107</sup> Arnold, *Inquisition and Power*, p. 159.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 161.

called these religious homes the “houses of the heretics.” Each of the houses conformed to one of three models: large houses for religious training, family households, and sanctuaries for female Cathars whose families had cast them off.<sup>109</sup> For the purposes of this study, the large houses for religious instruction are the most relevant because they are the sites of the direct transmission of the Cathar texts from the *magister* to the novice. The educational experiences had by the Cathar novices provided a powerful means by which the Good Men and Good Women could transmit their doctrine to women, all while working in ways that did not deviate from the standard religious practices in the village during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.

In these “houses of the heretics,” women began their education at a very early age. Na Comdors, a woman from the town of Mansum, testified to the inquisitors that she had received the *consolamentum* when she had not yet reached ten years of age, despite not wanting to do so.<sup>110</sup> Another woman, Covinens Mairanel, from the village of Fanjos testified that she had received the ritual when she was either ten or twelve years old.<sup>111</sup> In this instance, the reception of the *consolamentum* signified that the girls (or their parents in their stead) had taken a sort of vow to continue to perform the religious functions of the Good Women and live ascetic lives. Such an early age for the beginning of religious education suggests that not only did the girls’ parents have a desire to send

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<sup>109</sup> Yvette Paiement Debergue, “Good Women as Nuns? A Reinvestigation of the Sources,” *Heresis* 42-43 (2005): pp. 63-64.

<sup>110</sup> MS 609 fol. 20b, item 208 in Duvernoy, 47. Item anno et die quo supra na Comdors uxor quondam Stephani Herma t. i. dixit quod non erat X annorum mater sua violenter fecit fieri ipsam t. hereticam, et fuit heretic induta per IX menses.

<sup>111</sup> MS 609 fol. 161b, item 38 in Duvernoy, 414. Anno et die p. Covinens uxor B. Mairanel t.i. d. qd cum i.t. esset X annorum vel XII Petrus Coloma frater i.t. erat credens hereticorum et fecit eam dari hereticis

their girls to the Good Men and Good Women in order to be educated, but that desire also did not seem to present any challenge to their religious faith. Since other parents sent their girls off to monasteries run by the Catholic Church at an early age, perhaps as early as nine years old, sending their girls to the houses of the Good Men and Women did not seem like something extraordinary. Rather, as a part of regular religious practice, sending children to a monastic-like setting would have seemed quite normal to any person living at the time. This training shaped the religious identities of these young girls by giving them a theological and cosmological framework with which they could comprehend the world around them, even if they did not completely understand it.

The path of instruction these girls had to follow in order to receive the *consolamentum* required a great deal of fortitude on the part of the girls. Like other monastic settings, the girls spent their days fasting, praying, and listening to preaching, but they also learned how to be Good Women by fasting and praying, and they participated in the rituals, especially the “adoration” ritual. Audiardis Ebrarda, from the town of Villanova Comitalis, for example, told Bernard de Caux that as a Good Woman who lived in one of these houses for Cathar women, she participated in the rituals and listened to the Good Men preach.<sup>112</sup> The girls also had to undergo a probationary novitiate period of undetermined length during which they proved their readiness to accept the *consolamentum*. During this probationary period, the girls received instruction

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<sup>112</sup> MS 609 fol. 184a, item 18 in Duvernoy, 480. Anno et die p. Audiardis Ebrarda requisita... t.i. d. qd ipsa fuit hereticata apud Villam novam per Hysanum de Castris et s.s. h. in domo Bemarde Recorde hereticarum et tunc i.t. ad pluries p.h. flexis genibus ter... et tenuit sectam h. per unum annum orando, ieiunando, hereticos adorando, predicationem eorum audiendo et alia facienda que heretici faciunt et precipiunt observari, et postea dimisit dictam sectam hereticorum et accepit virum.

in the ways of the Good Women and were required to perform three fasts that lasted for forty days each.<sup>113</sup> Dulcia Faure, for example, underwent the probationary period for two years before the Good Women told her that she was not ready to receive the *consolamentum* on account of her youth, suggesting that perhaps the prescribed age of initiation was not uniform across these Cathar houses.<sup>114</sup> Beyond these details, the instruction the Good Woman novices received is unfortunately opaque. From what is present, however, it seems clear that the girls who would (or would not) become Good Women received instruction based on beliefs and practices.<sup>115</sup> These beliefs and practices would have supplied the girls with a sense of religious identity as future Good Women and connected them to the already vast network of Cathar women in Languedoc.<sup>116</sup>

The large houses for training women only lasted until the coming of the inquisition in the 1230s and 1240s.<sup>117</sup> Once the inquisitors arrived, the Cathar women no longer had place set aside for the sole purpose of training them in Cathar doctrine or to enjoy fellowship and build religious relationships with their fellow Cathar women. Furthermore, once the inquisitors had settled in and began their tasks of searching out

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<sup>113</sup> MS 609 fol 41a, item 167 in Duvernoy, 102. Item dixit qd i.t. stetit cum d.h. apud Lauracum in duabus domibus sed nescit cuius erant, et venerunt ibi Faniaus et s.s.h. et v i c e plures homines et mulieres de Lauraco quorum nomina ignorat, et o. et i.t. aud.. pred. d.h. et ad. eos, sed d.h. noluerunt i.t. hereticare donec bene esset instructa secundum mores hereticarum et fecisset primo tres quadragesimas.

<sup>114</sup> MS 609 fol. 184b, item 19 in Duvernoy, 480. Et non fuit hereticata quia non poterat facere propter iuventutem illa que heretici faciunt vel precipiunt observari.

<sup>115</sup> Peter Biller, "Women and Texts in Languedocian Catharism," in *Women, The Book, and the Godly*, 174.

<sup>116</sup> Abels and Harrison show that 45% of the Cathar elite was Good Women, and that, in the years before the Albigensian Crusade as many as 91 Good Women existed, at least from the evidence in Ms. 609. Considering that MS 609 only comprises 20% of the original inquisition register, many more Good Women probably existed during this time. See Abels and Harrison, "The Participation of Women in Languedocian Catharism," 234.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*, 233.



those whom they perceived as heretics, the women in the monastic houses became mobile and joined their male counterparts as itinerants because their families had previously cast them out or simply returned home to their families where they received refuge.<sup>118</sup> Those returning home would, no doubt, have shared their experiences with the family members who welcomed them back home and been those whom Bernard de Caux and Jean de Saint-Pierre most suspected of heresy. Unclear, however, is whether or not the Good Women would have discussed with their families what they had learned from the Good Men and Good Women during their stay. These Good Women still had the spiritual power to perform rituals and to lead women in prayer granted to them by the rite of the *consolamentum*, and it does not seem likely that they would abandon their beliefs straightaway. All of this suggests that the religious instructions provided to the women during their time in the monastic-style houses shaped their subsequent conceptions of themselves to a substantial degree in relation to these new events, which drew the line between orthodoxy and heresy.

Male believers had a much different experience in their reception of Cathar religious training in situations quite unlike the religious houses in which the women received their education. Many of the Good Men practiced trades like sewing in various towns and took on apprentices to instruct in these trades. Unlike men who joined Catholic orders like the Dominicans and the Franciscans, these men who apprenticed under the Good Men did not have to take monastic vows. Nor is it clear whether or not the Good Men designated them as their apprentices under a contract like the trade guilds of the time did. These men who accepted these apprenticeships, however, had to be

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<sup>118</sup> Ibid., 237-238.

willing to hear the Good Men speak about their religious views. Bernardus de Villanova from the town of Laurac, for example, spent one year under the instruction of two Good Men, Bernardus Mazerolas and his friend, who instructed Bernard de Villanova in sewing. Bernardus de Villanova also reported to the inquisitors that during his year with the Good Men, he saw several other men come visit the Good Men at their shop, though Bernardus did not tell the inquisitors how he knew that the men were “heretics.”<sup>119</sup> Likewise, Bernardus de Podio from the village of Fanjos testified that he spent two years as the apprentice of a Good Man who was a practicing furrier.<sup>120</sup> These apprenticeships brought along with them religious instruction as well.<sup>121</sup> Arnaldus d’en Terren, also from Fanjos, confessed to the friar-inquisitors that he had spent a year with a Good Man named Petrus Columba who both taught Arnaldus and others to sew and to “adore” the Good Men, both Petrus Columba and the other Good Men who frequented his shop.<sup>122</sup>

Besides Arnaldus’ testimony about receiving instruction on how to perform the “adoration” ritual, what the apprentices learned in their religious education remains unclear. From the description of the books used by the Good Men and the general

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<sup>119</sup> MS 609 fol. 77a, item 39 in Duvernoy, 200. Anno et die p. Bernardus de Villanova t. i. d. qd vidit Bernardum de Mazerolas et s.s.h. apud Laurag in domibus ipsorum hereticorum et stetit cum d.h. per annum, et docebant eum suere, et vidit plures homines venientes ad operatorium d. hereticorum, sed non recolit de nominibus, et pluries i.t. ad. d.h. ter ... Et sunt XL anni vel circa.

<sup>120</sup> MS 609 fol. 150b, item 3 in Duvernoy, 393. Item anno et die p. B. de Podio cavo t.i. d. qd in domo P. Columba heretici pellicerii fuit per biennium conductus ab eodem heretico causa discendi officii de pelliparia

<sup>121</sup> Lutz Kaelber, “Sociological Explanations of Cathar Success and Tenacity in Languedoc: A New Perspective Focusing on the “Houses of Heretics,” *Heresis* (2003): 38.

<sup>122</sup> MS 609 fol. 153b, item 9 in Duvernoy, 399. Item dixit qd ipse stetit cum Petro Columba heretico per annum qui docebat ipsum ad suendum, et d.h. docebant ipsum et alios scolares adorare eos, et ad. eos. Et sunt XX anni vel circa.

confession of former beliefs to the inquisitors, it seems that the Good Men instructed their novices in the core Cathar beliefs: the creation of the material world by an “evil” God, the holiness of the Good Men and the Good Women, and the ability of the Good Men to save souls through the ritual of the *consolamentum*. It stands to reason that the Good Men would probably have employed New Testament scripture in their discussions with their apprentices as well as interpreting those scriptures through the lens of Cathar doctrine. However, since the inquisitor records do not contain a description of such instruction, the specific curriculum designed to educate a new believer remains elusive. The Good Men may not have even used a planned program of education, but simply spoke causally to their novices, easing in the more complex theology and doctrine slowly and at a pace suitable for their novice to follow.

This style of workspace proselytization on the part of the Good Men also begs the questions of the balance between craft education and religious instruction and the desire of the apprentice to learn more about the craft or the theology put forth by his master. None of the deponents who experienced this sort of training discuss their motivations for joining the Good Men as apprentices. Lutz Kaelber argues that mostly young men joined the Good Men as apprentices because of the Good Men’s standing in the society as well-trained artisans.<sup>123</sup> Such an argument seems solvent, but the argument does not consider that the Good Men also held solid social standing with the people in villages as holy men. Like the girls sent off for a monastic-style religious education, families may have sent their young men to the Good Men because they understood that the Good Men would

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<sup>123</sup> Lutz Kaelber, “The Social Organization of Early-Thirteenth-Century Catharism in Comparative Perspective,” *Social Science History* 21:1 (Spring 1997): 121.

provide their sons with religious training and that their sons could eventually become Good Men as well and thus guarantee their salvation. While this did not match the monastic education model followed by the Catholic Church, it does not suggest that the Cathar believers understood that they were sending their sons to heretics. Only later did the believers acknowledge that they had done something against the Catholic Church.

The religious education of young men by the Good Men through their training in artisanal crafts also suggests a way in which these men conceived of their religious selves. The religious training offered to men in the workplace may seem like an uncomfortable situation to modern eyes reflecting on their own workplaces, but it does not seem completely out of place in thirteenth century Southern France. This sort of training would have provided the novices with a comfortable place in which to learn, and the novice would have learned the trade and the religious beliefs through men who had a mostly good reputation in the villages. As a part of “normal” social functioning in these towns and villages, moreover, beliefs that opposed Catholic teachings would have come across as commonplace and reasonable. The apprenticeship environment, moreover, provided the novices with a sense of who they were and how they fit into the society at large. The teachings of the Good Men and apprentices’ statuses as their novices would have gained the novices recognition in the wider community, and, if they became a Good Man later in their lives, that standing would only increase. Since Catharism was largely transmitted through families, it comes as no surprise that many who believed in the teaching of the Good Men and Good Women developed tension in their religious identity in that they believed in the Good Men but never doubted their orthodoxy.

The lack of description of the training of either the men or the woman also begs the question of whether or not any unity in instruction and interpretation existed in the teaching of the Good Men and Good Women. MS 609 does seem to suggest that many of the people who underwent instruction by the Cathars did have similar experiences in what they were taught and how the Good Men and Good Women communicated those ideas to them. Dulcia Faure and Audiardis Ebrarda, for example, both experienced the same sort of rigorous fasting and instruction in the performance of the “adoration” ritual.<sup>124</sup> The girls also experienced the same sort of probationary period, suggesting at least some unity in the expectations the Good Women had for their novices. Some unity also exists in the instruction of the men who learned Cathar dualist theology while serving as an apprentice in the artisanal trades. What remains unclear are the specific details of exactly how the different Good Men and Good Women interpreted specific parts of Cathar theology and doctrine. This suggests multiple “textual communities,” in that multiple Good Men and Good Women may have interpreted texts, both written and oral, in ways that did not mirror each other completely.

The service books, rituals, and Cathar teachings therefore acted as significant social agents that set apart Good Men and Good Women, and thus defined a person’s place in the social hierarchy. For the Good Men especially, their possession of the book, full of scriptures or just the ritual, signified a higher standing in the eyes of those who believed in the religious power of the Good Men or in the eyes of the inquisitors who sought to repress them. The transmission of these texts to Cathar novices also generated,

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<sup>124</sup> See. MS 609, fol. 184b, item 19 in Duvernoy, 480-481 for Dulcia and MS 609 fol 41a, item 167 in Duvernoy, 102 for Audiardis Ebrarda.

at least among the Cathars, social respect and reverence for those who received instruction under the premise that they would one day become Good Men or Good Women. For women this meant undergoing a monastic-style novitiate in houses set aside for the training of future Good Women, while for men this meant becoming an apprentice in a trade under the direction of a Good Man.

This style of training, especially among the men, must have increased their social standing with fellow Cathars to at least some degree. While MS 609 does not provide the details of how a person moved from one tier of Cathar society to the next, it does suggest that men may have moved up the social ladder in both economic standing and socially because of their affiliation with the Good Men, at least until the crusaders and inquisitors arrived in the region. The social power of Cathar belief, at least up until the time that the Cathars became oppressed, suggests that Cathar doctrine, theology, and the rituals all had a sort of social logic, clearly on display by the ways that people, both Cathar and non-Cathar, reacted to its presence or the influence it had on their lives by joining the Cathar community, continuing to practice the religion, or to reject it entirely.

The ways in which Catharism had an effect on its communities also suggests that the religion formed “textual communities,” beyond the ways in which Brian Stock described by adding a material dimension in the form of the Cathar ritual books. Others have found that the Cathars mirrored the Waldensians in their formations of textual communities, in that the Cathars interpreted texts for the “laity,” but ignores the physical

dimension of the Cathar ritual texts.<sup>125</sup> The physical artifact of the book not only identified a Good Man and his place in the society, it clearly articulated Cathar identity claims. The physical text also shaped the ways in which the communities identified themselves and their relationships with the Good Men who helped shape the course of their religious lives. Since the book played such a prominent role in the lives and especially the process of death in the lives of the Cathar believers, as a conduit for salvation, the relationship between physical books and the boarder textual community plays a significant role in understand how the Cathars perceived themselves.

The texts also influenced the Cathars' identities in meaningful ways beyond their social standing. The physical books and the Cathar preaching added to the duality of their identities, in that the interpretations and understanding of the texts arrived to the common believers in ways that mirrored how they received the same sorts of messages from the Catholic Church, through traveling monastics like the Dominicans and the Franciscans. Some of the texts, like the "adoration" ritual and the craft apprenticeships, also fit into the normal social practices of the day, and while many of the people in the region understood that the ritual had religious meaning attached to it, it nevertheless did not appear out of the ordinary or heretical necessarily. Those who performed the ritual with religious meaning understood that the performance of the ritual constituted an act of heresy when the inquisitors told them so. Also, given that the Good Men used the New Testament in their preaching in the style akin to their Catholic counterparts, many of the messages contained in the Good Men's sermons would not have seemed "out of place"

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<sup>125</sup> Lutz Kaelber, *Schools of Asceticism: Ideology and Organization in Medieval Religious Communities*, (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1998), 207-208. Also see Caterina Bruschi, *The Wandering Heretics of Languedoc*, 113-114.

when compared to the sermons of the itinerant friars. The theology of the Cathars certainly differed from that of the Catholic Church, but those who believed the words of the Good Men may not have understood the fundamental differences.

The Cathar texts were one of several tools used in the self-construction of Cathar identity by Good Men and Good Women. In addition to the texts, several traumatic events in the lives of the Cathars generated emotional responses that also connected them to each other and shaped their conceptions of themselves. While the experiences differed depending on whether a person was a Good Man, a Good Woman, or a common believer, many of the emotions inculcated by these events had a powerful effect on and changed how the Cathars conceived of themselves. The next chapter deals with these emotional experiences, connecting the Cathars to their local communities and the broader Cathar community in myriad other ways.



### **Chapter 3. Outpourings of Emotion: Cathar Emotional Communities**

Religion can generate profound and powerful emotions. In religious services around the world, adherents perform rituals and listen to sermons that inculcate a variety of emotions ranging from feelings of awe and guilt to feelings of connectedness and community. Like the modern world, religious services in the Middle Ages also engendered emotions in those who participated in them, albeit in perhaps slightly different ways. The descriptions of Cathar practice provided by the deponents in MS 609 paint a picture of many emotionally charged moments in the lives of the Cathar believers, even during the inquisitorial proceedings themselves. These pictures run counter to the inquisitors' stark recording of the deponents' religious experiences that seem to render Catharism devoid of emotion. While these emotional moments appear somewhat oblique on the surface, careful consideration of the words of the deponents and the religious practices of Catharism reveal religious and social experiences full of emotive detail.

This chapter explores the various ways in which emotions and emotional experiences shaped the lives of the Good Men, the Good Women, and the believers. While the study continues to focus most squarely on the believers themselves, it does entertain the ways in which the Good Men and the Good Women played a role in the shaping of their believers' emotional lives. These emotional moments and experiences provided feelings of connectedness and solidarity that shaped the Cathars' understanding of themselves as Christians, and as a distinctive group after the coming of the Crusaders and inquisitors. While these experiences varied from person to person, they nevertheless provided an emotional cohesion among the believers. These emotional bonds within smaller networks of Cathar believers developed a community of believers centered

around the Good Men and Good Women who attended to their spiritual needs and cultivating a sense of belonging and kinship among the believers.

These emotional bonds and connections between the deponents from the villages and towns in the Lauragais in MS 609, unified by their participation in Catharism, form what Barbara Rosenwein has called an “emotional community.”<sup>126</sup> Rosenwein argues that emotional communities are comprised of people who share the same sorts of emotional experiences and place the same amount of value on those experiences. These experiences and emotive reactions change over time and several may exist at any given time.<sup>127</sup> Rosenwein, moreover, argues that these communities exist in small and large form, with the small form being subordinate to the large form. The large form of connectivity, argues Rosenwein, forms from fundamental assumptions like values, goals, and modes of expression.<sup>128</sup> The smaller form, however, takes these assumptions and “reveals” the overarching emotional community’s possibilities and limitations through the varied experiences of smaller groups that adhere to the assumptions of the large community but interpret them differently.<sup>129</sup> Furthermore, these emotional communities do not consist of one or two emotions, but rather a constellation of emotions. Rosenwein argues that “constellations” of emotions were dependant on both the emotions the community emphasized and the emotions the communities dismissed as tangential.<sup>130</sup>

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<sup>126</sup> Barbara Rosenwein, *Emotional Communities in the Early Middle Ages* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006), 2.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*, 24.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*, 24.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*, 24.

The experiences of the former Good Men, Good Women, and believers recorded in MS 609 reflected several smaller emotional communities in the various villages and towns of the Lauragais, connected to the larger picture of Catharism in southern France and northern Italy. Catharism was never unified, despite sharing doctrine and theological understanding across its landscape. Like the Catholic Church, which was divided into parishes that formed small emotional communities of their own yet was connected to the larger Catholic picture, the villages formed their own Cathar emotional communities while staying connected to the larger Cathar community in southern France. These smaller groups that made up the core of Cathar believers experienced the religion in their own ways and understood it on their own terms. This varies the sort of emotional experience between the villages, but it also connects them to a larger picture that provided a religious understanding of the world through a common theology.

The influence of emotions and the bonds created among the Cathars appear most clearly in the performance of their rituals, particularly the “adoration” ritual and the *consolamentum*. While both rituals inculcated powerful feelings of awe and reverence, the deathbed, last rights version of the *consolamentum* played a larger role in the formation of the believers’ identities. From the descriptions of the deponents in MS 609, it appears that the deathbed was the site of disagreement among the people in the towns and villages. Some people clearly wanted the Good Men to perform the ritual, whereas others desired a priest to give the dying person their last rights. The choice between the Cathars and the priests at the deathbed signals a choice to identify with Catharism, though those who wanted the Cathars to administer the rights defied the Catholic Church

did not consider the performance of the ritual to be “un-Christian,” at least until the inquisitors told them otherwise.

In addition to the rituals, this chapter considers series of events and developments important in the history of Catharism that had a devastating impact on the Good Men, Good Women, and the believers. The Albigensian Crusade, launched by Innocent III in 1209 completely changed the nature of the Cathar religious experience by adding risk into the religious equation. Though they continued, at times, to preach in public and move openly, the Good Men and Good Women began to be hunted by the crusaders and had to take refuge among those sympathetic to Catharism, making any sort of public activity substantially dangerous. The deponents in MS 609 do not discuss the events of the Crusade directly, largely because the inquisitors do not ask questions about the Crusade and the crusaders’ activities, but it nevertheless remains in the discussion as a marker of time in the minds of the deponents. The deponents’ use of the Crusade as a temporal divide signals the Crusade’s impact on the emotional experiences of both the Cathars and the non-Cathars who nevertheless witnessed the, at times, brutal events unfolding in their villages and towns.

Like the Crusade, the onset of the inquisitions in the Lauragais in the mid-1230s transformed the emotional experiences of the Cathars from feelings of inclusion and fellowship to dislocation, fear, and loss. The inquisitions cemented the Cathars’ place as subalterns in the religious landscape of southern France, and drew the definitive line between Catharism and Catholicism. Some emotions like solidarity, camaraderie and fellowship continued, but under the influence of repression, a much different overarching force than the general religious connectedness before the coming of the inquisitors. The

Good Men no longer had the freedom to move without potential danger, and the believers had to keep their allegiances to Catharism more private and more intimate within smaller circles of fellowship. The inquisition recorded in MS 609 was one of the largest in the thirteenth century, but it was not the only inquisition. The deponents recount for Bernard de Caux and Jean de Saint-Pierre their experiences with at least two previous inquisitors, suggesting that some of the deponents had experienced an inquisition before they met with the two inquisitors in charge of the investigation that comprised MS 609. The onset of the medieval inquisition triggered a growing sense of anxiety and fear in the minds of those who lived in the villages under investigation, especially after reports and actual examples of the inquisitors' punishments reached the villagers and townspeople through messengers or rumor. There also seems to be a sense of frustration among the deponents, especially considering that many of them had already gone before an inquisitor and confessed what they had done in the past.

The coming of the crusaders and the inquisitors also marks a change in Cathar identity from an assuredness in their standing as Christians to a group marginalized from "mainstream" religious thought and practice in their village. The tension in their religious identities, brought on by the conflict of competing Cathar and Catholic practices, of those who participated in Cathar rituals and believed in the Good Men and Good Women disappeared, since the actions of both the crusaders and especially the inquisitors made the choice between Catholicism and Catharism completely apparent. Still, even in the face of such a choice, the villagers and townspeople still connected with co-believers. These emotional connections now centered more on fear for the individual and the family than on village-wide fellowship. The emotions had an acute effect on the

identities of those who believed in Catharism, an identity undergoing changes due to a series of traumatic and life-changing events.

Both before and after the Crusade, the performance of the Cathar rituals present common emotional experiences among the believers, suggesting the formation of a community. The “adoration” ritual paints an especially clear picture of Cathars coming together in religious fellowship and sharing feelings of joy, reverence, and awe for the Good Men. Though the deponents do not speak to this connectedness in their testimonies to the inquisitors, their stories makes clear that this ritual generated a feeling of camaraderie among the believers, especially when the Good Men preached outdoors to a large group, whether in the villages and towns themselves or in the seclusion of the forests. Even in the more private setting at a believer’s home, the emotive feelings of the “adoration” ritual must have been quite strong among the believers in attendance, since the performance of the ritual revealed to them other members of the larger Cathar community in their particular village.

Believers often met with Good Men in the forests, signaling a high level of commitment to the religion by meeting with the Good Men by virtue of traveling at least some distance to hear the Good Men speak and to participate in the rituals. Before the Crusade, believers met with the Good Men in these places because they knew they could find the itinerant Good Men there. After the Crusade and after the arrival of the inquisitors, however, believers conducted these meetings in secret, forming bonds through participating in risky and secret activity. Ramundus Fornerii, from the village of Berellas testified to Bernard de Caux and Jean de Saint Pierre that eleven years earlier he

witnessed several people whom he knew meeting with the Good Men in the woods.<sup>131</sup> Ramundus testified that he saw these people listening to the preaching of the Good Men and adoring the Good Men with their “knees having been bent,” signaling that the believers adored the heretics while on their knees.<sup>132</sup> This places the events a few years after the end of the Albigensian Crusade and the arrival of the first inquisitors, meaning that these men felt they had to meet the Good Men in secret, rather than in their homes or in the village square. In the time before the Crusade, believers did at times meet with the Good Men in the woods, but after the Crusade and the arrival of the inquisitors, the potential physical harm and/or legal consequences amplified the need for discretion when engaging in increasingly risky behavior. The sheer act of visiting the Good Men collectively created bonds among those who chose to attend these meetings, allowing believers to see their co-believers and to be able to identify them once they returned to the village or town. After the Crusade, a trip into the forests could not have been a risk-free activity, meaning that the drive to visit with the Good Men must have been quite high in these believers to make the choice to see the Good Men in this fashion.

The visits of the Good Men and the Good Women to the homes of believers speaks to these religious affinities in a very similar fashion to the meetings of the Good Men and believers in the forests. Countless deponents testified to the practice of the

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<sup>131</sup> MS 609 fol. 49b, item 27 in Duvernoy, 130. Ramundus Fornerii t.i. requisitus de veritate dicenda...coram F. B. de Cautio inq. apud Tholosam negavit. ..Dixit etiam qd vidit in nemore de la Selaia R. Gros. The woods/forest was a popular place to meet the Good Men, especially because of their itinerancy.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid., et s.s.h. et v i c e Sapdalenam et Sichardam dominas de Las Barreles et Ramundum filium d. Sicharde et Petrum Guarner et Stephanum Donati qui comedebant quando i.t. venit et Petrum Babau et Petrum Bernardi et W. Mauri, et o. et ipse qui loquitur audiverunt predicationem d.h. et ad. eos flexis genibus.

“adoration” ritual occurring in this intimate setting. Petrus Pages, who lived in the town of Laurac, for example, testified that he saw several people of the same family and others invite the Good Men into their home to hear their preaching and adored them afterwards.<sup>133</sup> These smaller meetings of Good Men and believers must have created a strong sense of fellowship among the believers. Even before the coming of the crusaders and the inquisitors, the Church and secular authorities attempted to make clear that religious activities like this were illegal, and thus people who attended these household meetings must have felt some sense of solidarity with those who participated with them.<sup>134</sup> At these meetings, believers could, at the very least, identify and therefore connect with those who believed as they did and discuss their religious experiences with their comrades in religious practice. While MS 609 does not give the details of these conversations and connections, it does supply the setting in which people with a common religious affinity exchanged ideas. This speaks directly to a naturally occurring fellowship in a house-church setting, especially since many people attended these meetings to learn about the Good Men and Good Women and to participate in their rituals.

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<sup>133</sup> MS 609, fol. 78a, item 44 in Duvernoy, 202. Item vidit apud Lauracum in domo Bernardi del Verger Bertrandum Martini et s.h. et v i c e dictum Bernardum Verger et Willelmam matrem eius, Rainaut, Iohannem de na Arnalda, Ramundum de Capite stagno, P. Beneg et plures alios de quibus non recolit, et o. et i.t. audierunt pred. d.h. et ad. eos.

<sup>134</sup> Some of the first laws against medieval heresy appear in the canons of the Third Lateran Council in 1179. See “The Third Lateran Council, 1179: Heretics are Anathema” in *Heresy and Authority in Medieval Europe*, ed. Edward Peters (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1980), 168-170. The Fourth Lateran Council in 1215 and several Papal bulls reaffirmed these laws. Secular authorities also passed laws against heresy in the thirteenth century, which leveled penalties of property loss until the individual reconciled with the Church. Many of these secular laws came in the 1230s alongside the founding of the medieval inquisition.



Public preaching in the town square also suggests that Catharism generated religious bonds strong enough to unite entire villages. Florenza Fornerii of Mansum told the inquisitors that, after the Albigensian Crusade, she saw every person in the village of Cabaretum come together in the town square to hear the Good Men preach. Later, Florenza recounted, the villagers “adored” the Good Men in public.<sup>135</sup> Descriptions of public “adoration” are not frequent in MS 609, but Florenza’s testimony suggests that it did happen on at least one occasion, suggesting that Cathars comprised the entire village. Even if Florenza exaggerated and not every villager participated in the ritual, seeing so many of their fellow villagers may have created the desire within them to join the other villagers in their faith and provide them with the same sort of feeling of connectedness and solidarity, even if some villagers were not believers themselves, forming a “small” emotional communities in the town, especially after the events of the Crusade. This emotional community meeting, like those formed in private homes or in the secrecy of the woods, connect together with each other to form two levels of the larger emotional community. The individuals who participated in the ritual created unity among themselves, extended that community to the rest of the Cathar believers in their town, and which in turn connected that community to the larger Cathar landscape linked together by the Good Men who travelled between the villages.

In addition to the “adoration” ritual, the believers associated the Good Men with salvation after death, a connection that addressed the natural concerns about death across

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<sup>135</sup> MS 609 fol. 5b, item 79 in Duvernoy, 16. Item dixit quod stetit apud Cabaretum cum viro suo per duos annos, et vidit ibi predictos hereticos et hereticas et pluries ad eos et audivit predicationem, et vidit quod omnes homines et mulieres de villa veniebant ad predicationem h. publice, et ado. eos. Et sunt XVIII anni vel circa.

the medieval religious landscape.<sup>136</sup> Moreover, Catholic doctrinal discussions among the clergy about the existence of Purgatory began in the twelfth century, perhaps adding to the anxiety about death and the afterlife that plagued the minds of medieval European Christians, including the laity who learned about Purgatory through their parish priest.<sup>137</sup> For the Cathars, salvation entailed transcending the material realm to return to a “pure” realm, much like their Gnostic antecedents, but they did not posit the existence of a place equivalent to Catholic Purgatory.<sup>138</sup> Receiving the *consolamentum* ensured passage out of the material realm, providing relief to the anxieties brought on by thoughts of Purgatory or Hell, perhaps giving the Cathar believers a greater assurance of their salvation beyond what the Catholic sacraments could offer them. This ritual also competed with the equivalent last rites ritual in Catholicism that provided the same sort of comfort in the face of death. The *consolamentum* guaranteed salvation and was available to anyone who professed a belief in the Good Men.

The believers expressed this desire for salvation through prayer with the Good Men, asking for death in the presence of the Good Men in order to receive the *consolamentum* and therefore salvation. Guillelmus Vitalis told the inquisitors that he had seen three perform the “adoration” ritual, bending down on their knees and genuflecting several times. After this, the men asked the Good Men, whom they called “Masters,” to pray to God for them, so that they, being sinners, could be made into “Good

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<sup>136</sup> Scholars have dealt with the conceptions of death in Middle Ages repeatedly. For a good collection of essays on the subject see, *Last Things: Death and the Apocalypse in the Middle Ages*, eds. Caroline Walker Bynum and Paul Freedman, (Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia Press, 2000).

<sup>137</sup> For the development of Purgatory, see Jacques Le Goff, *The Birth of Purgatory* trans. Arthur Goldhammer, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986).

<sup>138</sup> Arnold, *Inquisition and Power*, p. 129.

Christians” (Good Men) and to lead them to a “good end.” The Good Men blessed them and then the believers prayed again to be made into Good Men and to be led to a good end.<sup>139</sup> By a “good end,” the believers meant that they wished to die after having received the *consolamentum* so that they could achieve instant salvation after they passed away. Moreover, the Good Men only performed the *consolamentum* on the deathbed when death seemed certain. If the “consoled” person did not die and broke the strict, ascetic rules that governed the “perfected” life of a Good Man or Good Woman, the ritual became invalid and would have to be performed again. The deponents in MS 609 report several instances of Good Men performing the *consolamentum* for both the dying and new initiates, signaling its importance as an assuaging force in dispelling the anxieties about death, at least for those who believed in Catharism.

Of the types of *consolamenta* described in MS 609, the deathbed variety seems to have occurred the most often. Willemus de Canast from Manusc, for example, reported to the inquisitors that he had seen the uncle of Willelmus de Malhorgas, who had become gravely ill, state a desire for the Good Men to come to his house and to perform the *consolamentum* for him on his deathbed. A friend named Willelmus Donatz sought out two Good Men, Rumundus Bernardi and his *socius*, whom Willelmus Donatz led back to the house of the dying man. There, the two Good Men performed the *consolamentum* for

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<sup>139</sup> MS 609 fol. 253b, item 54 in Duvernoy, 699. quod quadam nocte i.t. ad denunciationem Arnaldi Vitalis de Beceta nunc condempnati pro heresi et Petri Stephani de Besceta i.t. exivit ad aream suam una cum predictis Arnaldi Vitali et P. Stephano, et invenerunt ibi Guillelmum Carreira et Petrum de Belestar s.e.h., et ibi i.t. ad. p.h. ter flexis genibus dicendo ante ipsos h. in qualibet ganuflexione "Benedicite", et addidit post ultimum "Benedicite" : "Domini, rogate Deum pro isto peccatore quod me faciat bonum christianum et perducatur me ad bonum finem", et heretici respondebant in qualibet "Benedicite" : "Deus vos benedicat". Et addebant post ultimum "Benedicite": "Deus sit rogatus quod vos faciat bonum hominem et perducatur vos ad bonum finem."

Willelmus de Malhorgas' uncle, and upon hearing the words of the ritual performed by the Good Men, the uncle passed away.<sup>140</sup> The connection between the Good Men and salvation served as a way for believers to assuage their anxieties about death, providing them comfort in a rather difficult time. Moreover, the acceptance of the Good Men into the homes of the dying signaled a rejection of the Catholic version of the deathbed ritual suggesting that the Cathar ritual provided more comfort to those who adopted Catharism than did the equivalent Catholic ritual, though, until the inquisitors told them otherwise, the believers did not see the ritual as a departure from orthodox Christian practice. For someone like Canast, seeing the Good Men perform the ritual and the comfort it provided to both the dying person and their family must have been moving, especially since Catholic forces tried to teach the villagers and townspeople about the “errors” of this practice. This also leaves open the possibility that those who witnessed deathbed *consolamenta* may have found the ritual so moving that they began to believe in the spiritual power of the Good Men and adopted Catharism.

Performances of the *consolamentum* did not always receive a warm reception by the people living in the villages and towns because of the competition between Catholics, Cathars, and Waldensians, a conflict that often extended to families. Ramundus Fizel, who lived in the town of Laurac, testified to Bernard de Caux and Jean St. Pierre that when his nephew had fallen ill after the Albigensian Crusade, Faure Trobat and

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<sup>140</sup>MS 609 fol. 8a, item 97 in Duvernoy, 22. Item dixit quod dum W. de Malhorgas avunculus i. t. esset infirmus in infirmitate qua decessit, voluit habere h. qui hereticarent ipsum, et inde i. t. et W. Donatz venerunt apud Laurac et adduxerunt Ramundum Bernardi et socium s. h. ad domum ipsius Willelmi ubi iacebat dictus infirmus, et d. h. hereticaverunt tunc dictum W. de Malhorgas avunculum i. t. Et interfuerunt d. hereticationi W. de Canast avunculus i. t. , Durandus Badias et Iohannes Badias defuncti, Willelma Sicresa, P. de Malhorgas filius dicti Willelmi de Malhorgas.

Willelmus Faure brought the Good Men to him at night, but Ramundus Fizel's uncle refused the right of the *consolamentum* because the uncle believed that the Good Man would damn his nephew and not save him.<sup>141</sup> Another man, Poncius de Bautavila, who lived in the town of Bautavila, told the inquisitors that he had angrily screamed “no!” when asked if his brother wanted to receive the deathbed ritual.<sup>142</sup> Petrus de Resenges also told the Good Men to go away because he did not want his wife to receive the *consolamentum*, according to Martinus de Caselis from the town of Cambiac, who testified in front of the inquisitors on November 25, 1245.<sup>143</sup> These refusals suggest negative emotions that tore families apart rather than bringing them together. Especially after the coming of the crusaders and the inquisitors, the villagers and townspeople understood that the Good Men and Good Women were “enemies” of the Catholic Church, and that the reception of such a ritual could damn the soul of anyone who received it and would therefore die as a “heretic.”<sup>144</sup> This formed a “small-sized”

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<sup>141</sup> MS 609 fol. 193a, item 64 in Duvernoy, 501. Anno et die p. Ramundus Fizel t.i. d. qd cum R. Fizel avunculus i.t. infirmaretur infirmitate qua decessit Faure Trobat et Willelmus Faure qui postea fuerunt heretici adduxerunt hereticos de nocte ad ianuam dicti infirmi et volebant introducere illos h. ad hereticandum d. infirmum, sed i.t. noluit nec permisit.

<sup>142</sup> MS 609 fol. 129a, item 1 in Duvernoy, 335. Item dixit quod cum i.t. infirmaretur infirmitate quadam venit Poncius de Villanova de Las Bordas frater i.t. ad eum qui tenebat i.t. in potestate sua et quesivit ab i.t. si volebat se reddere hereticis, et i.t. respondit iratus quod non. Op. cit. Pegg, *The Corruption of Angels*, p. 111.

<sup>143</sup> MS 609 fol. 238a, item 1 in Duvernoy, 649. Item dixit ipsi t. d. Aimerssendis qd Petrus Arnaldi iam dictus et Ramundus Vassero et dictus Helyas et d. Arnaldus Sabbaterii de Cambiaco adduxerunt h. apud Felgairac nuper ad preces Austorge de Resenges ut hereticarent P. de Resenges virum ipsius Austorgue qui erat infirmus, et d. Austorga cum dictis hominibus de Cambiac venit coram dicto infirmo et rogavit eum instanter quod redderet se hereticis, quia ibi erant dicti probi homines qui adduxerant dictos hereticos, et tunc d. Petrus de Resenges respondit iratus quod nolebat eos.

<sup>144</sup> See Pegg, *The Corruption of Angels*, 110. Pegg notes that by 1242, well after the Crusade and the inquisitors' arrival, most people understood the implications of the

emotional community of Catholics who stood against the Cathars, in that those who did not wish their loved ones to receive salvation (or damnation) at the hands of the Good Men, stood fervently opposed to the ritual being performed on their loved ones.

The strong reactions to the deathbed ritual provided by the Good Men suggests that the *consolamentum* also caused a tension in the villagers' religious identities, though the line between Catholic and Cathar seems more distinctly drawn in this case. The sacramental authority of Catholic priests to perform deathbed rituals was legally codified at the very least by Pope Lucius III in 1184.<sup>145</sup> The itinerant Dominican and Franciscan friars also preached against the authority of the Good Men to save souls, though, given the continued growth of Catharism in the late eleventh and early twelfth century, it does not seem that the two groups of mendicant preachers achieved much success, since so many instances of the *consolamentum* appear in the inquisitors' registers.<sup>146</sup> The villagers and townspeople, however, did not always see the line between Catharism and Catholicism, especially the line drawn by the Church through canon law. Many villagers associated the Good Men with physicians and healing, and thus may have called them to the bedsides at times to simply administer medicine to the sick, not to have the Good

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Cathar rituals in the eyes of the Church, and thus led to people rejecting the Good Men and their ritual.

<sup>145</sup> See "Pope Lucius III: The Decretal *Ad Abolendum*, 1184 in *Heresy and Authority*, 170-173. The Pope condemns anyone who received the *consolamentum*, thereby giving Catholic priests the sole authority to save souls. The Pope also gives secular authorities the power to prosecute heretics. It seems, however, that that authority was often not enforced until after the arrival of the inquisitors.

<sup>146</sup> Dominic himself appears in several depositions in MS 609, but the witnesses only tell the inquisitors that Dominic had absolved them of their sins, not what Dominic said against the Cathars themselves. Considering his mission and charge by the Church, however, it seems reasonable to conclude that Dominic would have railed against any of the Cathar rituals, especially the *consolamentum*.

Men console their loved one.<sup>147</sup> Some of the villagers may have desired the presence of the Good Men in this context alone, only to have their neighbors report to the inquisitors mistakenly that the Good Men had visited their home to minister rites to the dying person in their family.

The two rituals, the “adoration” ritual and the *consolamentum*, played a significant role in the development of a person’s identification with Catharism by providing them with a sense of connectedness with each other that enriched their religious experiences. After the Crusade, these ritual gatherings and experiences acted as a way to assuage the fear brought on by repression, as more and more people came under attack either by the crusaders themselves or the inquisitors who followed in their wake. The *consolamentum* also provided a means of comfort after a family had lost a loved one. Those whose family members received the ritual would be able to feel a sense of relief that their mother, father, brother, or sister had received salvation and had moved on to experience the afterlife, much like the Cathars’ Catholic counterparts.<sup>148</sup> These common religious expressions and moods bonded the Cathar believers as an emotional community in both senses of Rosenwein’s conceptions, in that smaller emotional communities

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<sup>147</sup> See Peter Biller, “Medicine and Heresy” in *Religion and Medicine in the Middle Ages*, eds. Peter Biller and Joseph Ziegler (York: York Medieval Press, 2001). Pegg also makes this association. See Pegg, *The Corruption of Angels*, especially 106 -109. Finally, see Walter Wakefield, “Heretics as Physicians in the Thirteenth Century,” *Speculum* 57:2 (April, 1982), 328 – 331.

<sup>148</sup> The Cathar conception of afterlife seems unclear from the sources, and needs more scholarly attention. John Arnold suggests that the Cathars believed that souls that did not receive the *consolamentum* would return to another body and have the chance to live a holier life and thus receive true salvation. See Arnold, *Inquisition and Power*, p. 129. This is not made clear from MS 609.

existed within the towns that also connected to the larger circle of Cathars throughout the region.

Beginning in the year 1209, the Catharism began to change from a religion that could be practiced in the open into a religion that required an increasing level of discretion. King Phillip II Augustus, at the behest of Pope Innocent III, sent the duke of Burgundy and the count of Nevers with 500 of their knights into Languedoc to crush the “heretics.”<sup>149</sup> The call for the crusade came shortly after a papal legate, who had been sent to the region in order to preach against the Cathars, was killed at the hands of someone the Church perceived to be a Cathar. The events of the Crusade were brutal. Crusaders flooded into Languedoc, striking down Cathars and their supporters alike, burning supposed Cathars. In one instance, a Cathar woman was thrown into a pit and buried with stones.<sup>150</sup> The citizens in Toulouse responded to the Crusaders in kind. During one of the assaults on the city, for example, Cathar supporters buried a priest up to his shoulders and struck him with stones and arrows before burning his body and feeding his remains to dogs.<sup>151</sup> Countless people lost their lives in the midst of the many battles across the region, and many more people witnessed the events. For the Cathars, the Crusade brought with it the message that the Church had identified them as an enemy in need of elimination. This meant, at least until the Peace of Paris in 1229 that ended the Crusade, the Good Men and Good Women needed places to hide in order to avoid the

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<sup>149</sup> For analysis of this series of events, see Mark Pegg, *The Corruption of Angels*, p. 5. Also see Pegg, *A Most Holy War*.

<sup>150</sup> Peter of les Vaux-de-Cernay, *Historia Albigensis*, in *The History of the Albigensian Crusade*, trans. W.A. Sibly and M.D. Sibly, (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 1998), 117.

<sup>151</sup> *Ibid.*, 274.



swords and stakes of the Crusaders. Such a change caused the Good Men, Good Women, and the believers to either swear off their Cathar association completely or to hide it more carefully, especially since their identification with Catharism could bring them under the sword. Eventually, the crusading army, under the command of Raimon VII, the count of Toulouse, halted the operation completely, culminating in the signing of the Peace of Paris in 1229.

After the first few years of the Crusade, the number of Good Men and Good Women practicing in the Lauragais decreased. Richard Abels and Ellen Harrison, in their statistical analysis of MS 609, show that the sightings of Good Men and Good Women sharply decreased between 1217 and 1222, before rebounding in the years that directly followed the Crusade.<sup>152</sup> The number of sightings decreased again once the inquisitors arrived in the 1230s and 1240s, suggesting that the arrival of the inquisitors caused many people who had aligned with Catharism to abandon their faith. At the very least, the reduction in the number of Good Men and Good Women in the Lauragais would have deprived the believers in the towns and villages of their common link in the Good Men, who would have encouraged them to remain faithful despite the hardships they faced.

The testimony of the deponents in MS 609 makes clear that the Crusade caused a dramatic shift in how the Cathars conceived of themselves and how they interacted with each other. MS 609, however, does not contain detailed descriptions of what happened during the Crusade. The inquisitors never asked the deponents what they saw, nor did

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<sup>152</sup> Abels and Harrison, "The Participation of Women," 234.

they ask them to comment on the events' impact(s) on their lives.<sup>153</sup> The inquisitors simply wanted to know what the deponents had heard, seen, and/or done in connection with the heretics. Rather than telling the inquisitors a candid explanation of their participation in Catharism, the deponents may have hidden certain activities and exaggerated their quickness in swearing off Catharism entirely. This suggests that the actual community of Cathars in the Lauragais may have been even larger than the collection of witnesses in MS 609.

The memory of the Crusade, however, lives on in the register in the form of a temporal demarcation.<sup>154</sup> In several places throughout the register, the deponents said phrases that the inquisitor scribes translated to *ante adventum cruce signatorum* (before the coming of the crusaders). Bernardus Amielh from the town of Mansum, for example, told the inquisitors that, before the arrival of the crusaders, he had seen the Good Men walking around in public near the town of Mansum.<sup>155</sup> The public movement of the Good Men that Bernardus describes suggests that the Good Men moved freely and publically without the fear of being accosted. On March 12, 1246, Bertrandus de Quiders, a knight from Mansum, told inquisitors that, before the first arrival of the crusaders he saw his grandmother Garsenda and her friend Gualharda with some Good Women near Mansum, and that the two women had brought the Good Women back to their homes and eaten bread and nuts with them. Bertrandus added that he had seen this before the first

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<sup>153</sup> Pegg, *The Corruption of Angels*, 87.

<sup>154</sup> Pegg, *The Corruption of Angels*, 87-88, 118-119.

<sup>155</sup> MS 609 fol. 18b-19a, item 194 in Duvernoy, 44. Item anno et die quo supra B. Amielh t.i. dixit quod nunquam vidit h. nisi captos nec cred.. ...accepit et cetera omnia. Postea dixit quod ante adventum Crucesignatorum vidit h. publice ambulantes per carrerias apud Mansum. Op cit. Pegg, *Corruption of Angels*, p. 87.

arrival of the crusaders, a statement that suggests there was greater freedom of movement and association prior to the Crusade.<sup>156</sup> At the very least, these examples show that the Crusade lingered in the minds of the deponents, marking a change from when the Cathars appeared in public more often versus private identification with the Good Men and Good Women after the time of the Crusade. The believers now understood that if they kept their belief in Catharism, they ran the risk of falling under the swords of the crusaders inculcating feelings of fear among the Cathar communities.

The Crusade also decreased the sightings of Good Men and Good Women, implicating a decrease in the overall number of believers. Abels and Harrison find that the number of Good Men and Good Women, at least according to the sightings of them made by the deponents in MS 609, decreased dramatically after the coming of the crusaders because the Good Men and Good Women either died or switched their religious allegiance back to Catholicism.<sup>157</sup> A decrease in the public appearance of the Good Men suggests that they did not have the same sort of opportunities to assert their religious beliefs to a potentially non-believing public, at least not without fear of Crusader reprisal. Instead, the activities of the Good Men were limited to those whom the Good Men could trust: true believers who could keep the Good Men hidden. The coming of the crusaders, then, made the identification of a person with the Good Men and Good Women a particularly perilous enterprise, and thus more difficult to witness,

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<sup>156</sup> MS 609 fol. 29b, item 404 in Duvernoy, 66. Anno et die quo supra, IIII ydus marcii Bertrandus de Quiders miles t.i. dixit quod vidit Garsendam aviam i.t. et Gualhardam amitam testis hereticas stantes publice apud Mansum Sanctarum Puellarum in domibus propriis earum et ibi ipse dum erat puer Ve annorum vel circa comedit pluries panem et nuces et alia comestibilia que dabant i.t. d.h., s n a e, et fuit ante primum adventum cruce signatorum.

<sup>157</sup> Abels and Harrison, "The Participation of Women in Languedocian Catharism," 243.

though the Crusade did not halt the actions of the Cathars completely. The crusaders' actions signaled an end to the life of open pastoral care and public preaching previously enjoyed by the Good Men and Good Women before the Crusade. The public sermons declined in number, making it difficult for the message delivered by the Good Men to reach the believers or potential converts. The crusaders' actions also made it apparent to the villagers and townspeople exactly what the Church saw as the difference between the Cathars and the Catholic Church. These men and women now had to confront the reality that they held beliefs that could eventually lead to their public humiliation by former Cathars and those who never believed in Catharism in the form of a yellow cross being sewn on their garments or to their execution at the stake.

In the later years of the Albigensian Crusade, between 1223 and 1229, and a few years that followed the Crusade, the sightings of Good Men and Good Women temporarily increased in the Lauragais due to relaxed pressure from the Catholic Church.<sup>158</sup> This increase signaled a return of believers who may have sworn off their faith in the face of the violent persecutions of the crusading army and a return to pre-Crusade levels of activity on the part of the Good Men and Good Women. According to the numbers provided by Abels and Harrison, the ranks of the Good Men actually increased to levels that surpassed pre-Crusade Catharism. The deponents do not speak to an increasing number of conversions or an increase in proselytization; the inquisitors did not ask them questions that would lead them to such answers, though the deponents may

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<sup>158</sup> Abels and Harrison, *The Participation of Women in Languedocian Catharism*, 234. Abels and Harrison supply data that shows an increase in the number of sightings of both Good Men and Good Women. Their data suggests a sharp decrease in the years before and during the Crusade, followed by an increase in sightings in the later years of the Crusade and an even larger increase in sightings after 1229.

have desired not to say if they had seen more Good Men and Good Women, since it would make them more suspicious to the inquisitors. Still, the increase in sightings documented by Abels and Harrison from the depositions in MS 609 remains notable, especially considering the response it engendered on the part of the Church in the coming years. The Good Men and the Good Women returned, at least until the arrival of the inquisitors, to their pre-Crusade activities, and did not have to move around with the same level of secrecy or be under the fear of death at the hands of the Crusaders, who never stayed in one place for long.<sup>159</sup>

The coming of the crusaders therefore temporarily disrupted the activities of the Good Men and the Good Women, but the Crusade did not stop them completely. The Good Men still preached in public from time to time, and they still paid visits to the houses of believers, where believers adored them and/or performed the other Cathar rituals. Ramundus de Venercha, from the village of Valle Drulia, testified that, after the coming of the crusaders, he saw Adam Bamundi, a shepherd from Cadenac, associating with a Good Man named Poncius Scutifer, who had been a Good Man for two years. Adam the shepherd also ate with the Good Man and listened to his preaching, despite Adam knowing the man to be a “heretic.”<sup>160</sup> Associating and interacting with the Good Men and the Good Women were not limited to the shepherds outside of the village. The Good Men continued to visit their believers under the cover of night. Arnaudus de

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<sup>159</sup> Walter L. Wakefield, “Heretics and Inquisitors: The Case of La Mas-Saintes-Puelles,” *The Catholic Historical Review* 69:2 (April 1983), 216.

<sup>160</sup> MS 609 fol. 232a, item 2 in Duvernoy, 629. R. de Venercha chausidicus t.i. d. qd i. vidit Adam Bamundi capellanum de Cadenac commorantem cum Poncio Scutifero qui erat hereticus indutus per duos annos et amplius, et comedebat cum dicto heretico predictus Adam et sciebat bene ipsum esse hereticum. Et hoc fuit postquam crucesignati venerunt ad terram istam.

Bonabac, a man from Lantarium, for example, testified that he had seen Good Men enter the home of Petrus de Resengas at night. The Good Men also said they had come to Petrus' house because they knew that he and his wife were believers.<sup>161</sup> The Good Men and the believers therefore continued to practice their religion more secretly and privately after the Crusaders' repression, because they understood that moving in public spaces required greater caution as well as trust within their religious circles.

Those who believed in Catharism now had the violent response of the Church shaping how they conceived of themselves and their place in the social fabric of the village or town. The people who did not immediately swear off any association with the Good Men and Good Women could now identify themselves as people separate from those who believed in the teachings of the Catholic Church. This does not mean that these believers began to call themselves "Cathars" or "Albigensians," nor does it mean that the Crusade galvanized people into fighting and resisting the oppression of the Church.<sup>162</sup> It does mean, however, that believers saw the clearly demarcated difference between the Good Men and Church, and could make the decision to stay loyal to the Good Men and their message, though the deponents in MS 609 seem all too quick to swear to the inquisitors that they had never participated in Catharism at all or had recently recanted their previous beliefs, perhaps suggesting that their connection to Catharism was not as strong as those who managed to flee the snares of the inquisitors.

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<sup>161</sup> MS 609, fol. 200a, item 24 in Duvernoy, 525. Arnaudus de Bonabac qui stetit cum P. de Resengas t.i. d. qd dum i.t. stabat cum P. de Resengas et Austorga uxore ipsius Petri, audivit hereticos de nocte intrantes in domum dicti P. de Rasengas, et quia d.t. audiverat quod Austorga uxor d. P. de Rasengas erat credens hereticorum.

<sup>162</sup> See Pegg, *The Corruption of Angels*, 15-19. No deponent in MS 609 ever referred to themselves as such, nor do they refer to anyone else as a "Cathar" or "Albigensian."

The choice between Catholicism and Catharism after the coming of the crusaders also caused friction within families. The decision to accept, to return, or to not accept Catharism therefore caused a wide range of emotions in those who had to make the decision. These decisions suggest two smaller-scale emotional communities connected to Catharism, dependant on a person's religious affiliation. A person who made the decision to accept Catharism or to continue in their faith joined an emotional community held together by solidarity, made stronger by persecution and repression. Those who renounced or railed against Catharism also formed an emotional community, held together by their disdain for the Good Men, Good Women, and their rituals. These divides even split nuclear families. On Decemeber 20, 1245, Ramunda Jocglar, a woman from Mansum, told the inquisitors that, after the Crusade, her father had expelled her from his home on account of her belief in the Good Men and Good Women and because her father thought that she was a whore.<sup>163</sup>

A family member's refusal of the Good Men at the bedsides of the dying also caused divisions within the family. Aimerssens Vicarii, a woman from the town of Cambiac, testified that she had heard that, after the Crusade, someone had seen two Good Men come to the side of Peter de Resengas' bedside when he was sick. The Good Men had come to perform the deathbed version of the *consolamentum*, but Peter refused to

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<sup>163</sup> MS 609 fol. 40b, item 167 in Duvernoy, 101. Anno quo supra XIII kls ianuarii Ramunda filia Ramundi Jocglar conversa de heresi t.i. d. qd cum d. pater suus expulisset i.t. de domo sua propter hoc quia credebat ipsa esse meretricem. This label, given orthodox assumptions about "heresy" and licentiousness, is not surprising. While it does not speak well about those actually believed in a particular heretical religion, it is important to note as an inquisitor assumption.

accept the ritual and to become a Good Man in death, which deeply grieved his wife.<sup>164</sup>

Willelma Funerii, a woman from Castro Novo Darri also grieved greatly when she discovered that her sister Rixenda had become a “heretic.”<sup>165</sup> These passages give off the sense that family members felt betrayed when someone in the family rejected the religion of the family, the unit that provided the most common vehicle for the transmission for both Catharism and Catholicism. Given that the crusaders had burned down homes and killed people for believing in the Good Men, it is not surprising that family members felt a sense of grief or anger when one of their own chose to believe in something that exposed the family to possible persecution.

The Crusade and the emotional experience wrought by the events of the Crusade also shaped the ways in which those connected to Catharism understood themselves in relationship to their non-Cathar co-villagers and the larger Languedocian society. The coming of the crusaders not only made clear the choice between Catharism and Catholicism, it solidified in the minds of those who experienced either religion what it meant to belong to a particular community of believers, whether Cathar or Catholic. For those Catholics who “strayed” from orthodoxy in the past, this meant swearing off whatever “heretical” beliefs that they had previously held, reaffirming their Catholicism and defining themselves in opposition to the Cathars or, if they had never understood the

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<sup>164</sup> MS 609 fol. 240a, item 22 in Duvernoy, 654. Item eodem die et anno d. Aimerssens t.i. d. qd audivit Stephanum Augerii dicentem P. Valencii in domo ipsius Petri Valencii qd heretici fuerunt ducti P. de Resengas in infirmitate, sed d. P. noluit hereticari unde Austorga uxor i. doluit multum. De tempore dixit post mortem dicti P. de Resengas.

<sup>165</sup> MS 609 fol. 253a, item 34 in Duvernoy, 694. Anno et die p. Willelma uxor Ramundi Furnerii t.i. d. qd vidit apud Lauracum in domo de Na Francesca ipsam Francescam et Rixendam sororem i.t. hereticas, et tunc i.t. iverat ibi ad vldendum ipsam Rixendam sororem suam que venerat ibi ad manendum pro ancilla, et quando venit ibi invenit ipsam hereticam et doluit multum.



difference in the first place, they now identified themselves as adhering to the teachings of the Catholic Church and its representatives. For those who retained their belief in Catharism, however, the coming of the crusaders and the persecution they brought with them may have reinforced the fellowship among the remaining believers. These remaining Cathars also developed a stronger sense of identity in opposition to Catholicism.

After a small uptick in Cathar activities following the end of the Crusade, the Catholic Church responded by establishing the medieval inquisition.<sup>166</sup> Pope Gregory IX issued the papal bull *Ille humani generis* in 1231, which called on the clergy to seek out, discover, and to prosecute those whom the clergy believed to have come under the influence of heresy, essentially establishing the office charged with performing these tasks.<sup>167</sup> Inquisitors, who usually belonged to the Dominican order, soon worked their way into the Lauragais, and started inquiries into the lives of villagers and townspeople. The inquisition caused those who came under its gaze to rethink their position on Catharism. The punishments handed down to guilty parties included life imprisonment or death at the stake, making associations with the Good Men and Good Women particularly perilous. The arrival of the inquisitors solidified the line sketched out by the competing preachers in the town squares prior to and after the Crusade, but the inquisitors made it absolutely clear that being on the wrong side of that line could bring serious punishments, and thus many believers abandoned their practice of Catharism for Catholicism. This renewed hostility differed from the Crusade in that it sought to root

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<sup>166</sup> Abels and Harrison, "The Participation of Women in Languedocian Catharism," 234.

<sup>167</sup> Pope Gregory IX, "The Decretal *Ille humani generis*, 1231" in *Heresy and Authority*, 196-198.

out the Cathars rather than just destroying towns and villages, but nevertheless caused a number of emotions in those under investigation, not the least of which was fear.

The inquisition performed by Bernard de Caux and Jean de Saint Pierre was not the first time those who came to answer the questions of the inquisitors had experienced such a trial. At least two previous inquisitions into Catharism had been made prior to the arrival of the two in charge of the inquisition contained in MS 609.<sup>168</sup> The memory of these inquisitions lives on in the testimony of some deponents in MS 609, and suggests reactions of frustration, bafflement, and even helplessness. Arnaldus Garnerii from Mansum, for example, testified during the inquisition of 1245-1246 that he had previously confessed his “errors” to Father Ferrier, an earlier inquisitor, and had not believed these “errors” again after his first confession.<sup>169</sup> Others, like Willelma Garrona from the town of Laurac recalled that she had testified not only in front of Friar Ferrier, but they had also told Willelmus Arnaldus, another friar-inquisitor, about her contact with the Good Men, and that Friar Arnaldus had relieved her of her sin.<sup>170</sup> The presence of these inquisitors inculcated strong feelings of resignation and disillusionment as the result

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<sup>168</sup> Willelmus Arnaldus and Esteve de Saint-Tibéry performed the first inquisition around 1242, and no record of this inquisition has survived. A Friar Ferrier performed the second around 1243 in the wake of the murders of Arnaldus and Saint-Tibéry, the depositions of which are contained in Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, collection Doat vol. 23. The deponents mention the first two inquisitors only about nine times, but they mention Friar Ferrier three hundred and thirty six at least. For more on Friar Ferrier, see Walter L. Wakefield, “Friar Ferrier, Inquisitor,” *Heresis* 7 (1986), 33-41. Also see Walter L. Wakefield, “Friar Ferrier, Inquisition at Caunes, and Escapes from Prison at Carcassonne,” *The Catholic Historical Review* 58, vol. 2 (July 1972), 220-237.

<sup>169</sup> MS 609 fol. 1a, item 1 in Duvernoy, 6. Et omnia predicta fuit confessus Fratri Ferrerio inquisitori, et post dictam confessionem non vidit h. vel hereticam.

<sup>170</sup> MS 609 fol. 72b, item 3 in Duvernoy, 193. Item dixit qd cred. p.h. esse bonos h.. Et sunt XXV anni qd primo, ...et sunt II anni qd dimisit. ...conf. Fratri Ferrario. Dixit tamen qd mater i.t. fuit heretica induta, et sunt XXXV anni vel ca qd est mortua. Et omnia ista revelavit F. Willelmo Arnaldi et postea fuit confessa omnia p. F. Ferrario.

of a continuing hostile presence in the Lauragais. The inquisitors brought with them the legal codification of religion that permanently defined the difference between Catharism and Catholicism, and those who went before the inquisitors knew that they could face serious legal punishment, in the form of penance, imprisonment, or even death. With the consequences for believing and continuing to believe in what the inquisitors called “heretical” being so high, feelings of helplessness and perhaps impending doom must have weighed heavily on those who had received a summons.

The inquisitions and inquisitors incited frustration and even rage among some of those who came into contact with the inquisitors, extending the range of emotions brought on by the arrival of the inquisitors beyond anxiety and fear, categories that have received a great deal of attention in other scholarship.<sup>171</sup> Frustration turning to rage manifested most clearly in the actions taken by Cathars in Avignonet against the inquisitors Willelmus Arnaldus, a Dominican, and his Franciscan counterpart, Esteve de Saint-Tibéry in 1242. A group of Cathar sympathizers, armed both with weapons and an understanding of the meaning of the friars’ presence, broke into the castle and murdered the two friars. The murder was apparently brutal and full of emotionally motivated symbolism. According to Ermessenda Peliceria, a woman from the town of Planha, a man named Willelmus de Planha cut out the tongue of friar Arnaldus after they had killed him, perhaps signaling that the Cathars wanted the inquisitors to remain quiet in addition to their frustration and rage.<sup>172</sup>

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<sup>171</sup> Bruschi, *The Wandering Heretics of Languedoc*, 142-197.

<sup>172</sup> MS 609 fol. 85b item 45 in Duvernoy, 224. Dixit etiam quod idem Willelmus dixit qd ipse abscidit lingam Fratri Willelmo Arnaldi inquisitori. See Pegg, *The Corruption of Angels*, p. 28.

The murder also caused a sense of joy and relief among Cathar sympathizers. Bertrandus de Quiders from Avignonet told Bernard de Caux and Jean de Saint-Pierre that he had heard others rejoicing that the work of the inquisition would be undone and that the land would once again be free, suggesting that some of the deponents saw the inquisitors as an affront to their way of life and their cultural space.<sup>173</sup> The joy in reaction to the murder of the inquisitors also suggests that those in support of the murders saw the end of the life of the inquisitors as a reopening of the possibility to practice their religion openly. These attitudes, however, do not seem to be prevalent among the rest of the deponents in MS 609, who seem eager to reconcile with the inquisitors or very quick to deny any contact with the Good Men or Good Women. Still, the joy experienced in the wake of the murder of the inquisitors indicates at the very least a small amount of support for Catharism, and perhaps reaffirmed individual associations with Catharism, which waivered in the face of the Crusade and the inquisition.

In the wake of the murder of Willelmus Arnaldus and Esteve de Saint-Tibéry the Church both sent an army to sack the Cathar fortress of Monségur in 1244 and, in 1245, sent Bernard of Caux and Jean de Saint-Pierre to pick up where the two dead inquisitors had left off. The events at Montségur have been well chronicled by scholars, but deponents do not discuss the events in their testimonies.<sup>174</sup> This does not necessarily

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<sup>173</sup> MS 609 fol. 140b, item 222 in Duvernoy, 355. Requisitus quare noluit interesse neci inquisitorum respondit quod credebat et dicebatur ab aliis quod negotium inquisitorum esset extinctum et tota terra esset liberata et non fieret de cetero Inquisitio. Also see Pegg, *The Corruption of Angels*, p. 28. For the conception of space in the Lauragais, see Megan Cassidy-Welch, "Memories of Space in Thirteenth Century France: Displaced People After the Albigensian Crusade," *Parergon* 27 vol. 2 (November 2010), 111-131.

<sup>174</sup> Zoé Oldenbourg *Massacre at Montségur*, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1961) is the most well known and is cited the most often in discussions of the events at Montségur.

indicate that the deponents were not aware of the siege of the castle, but simply that the inquisitors did not have any interest in recording their reactions to it. The event must have provided confirmation that the Church meant to destroy the Catharism and would persist in its efforts. Though these sorts of reactions do not appear in the testimony of the deponents in MS 609, who could not renounce their Catharism quickly enough, the event at Montségur perhaps left other Good Men, Good Women and believers not contained in MS 609 feeling defeated and resigned. The choice between Catholicism and Catharism, if it still remained unclear after the coming of the Crusaders, now became clearer, as did the consequences that came with making that choice. Family members watched as their loved ones went to prison, and, in the worst case, watched their loved ones engulfed in flames while tied to a stake. Many of those who found themselves in front of the inquisitors chose to abjure their faith, but many others fled into the forests, the mountains, or to lands abroad, retaining their Catharism and continuing the practice of its rituals.<sup>175</sup>

Catharism, however, did not come to an end in the Lauragais after the inquisition of Bernard de Caux and Jean de Saint Pierre. MS 609 does not contain any account of believers happy to retain their Catharism because all of the deponents stressed non-association with Catharism or repentance to the inquisitors. At least one scholar has suggested that the deponents in the registers lied about their participation, whether in the past or continuing at the time of the inquisition, perhaps due to threats of reprisal from

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<sup>175</sup> The punishments of those tried in MS 609 do not survive with the original manuscript and are contained in another manuscript that Mark Pegg has explored thoroughly. For descriptions of the punishments, see Pegg, *The Corruption of Angels*, pp. 126-130.

Cathars interested in keeping the Good Men and Good Women safe.<sup>176</sup> Though they are not present in MS 609, those who did not swear off their Catharism due to the pressures from the Church and their soldiers felt a real connection to the religion they believed in, and suggesting that they had the agency to make a choice between the Catholicism and Catharism. This choice to follow the Good Men and Good Women brought the consequences of public humiliation and/or execution because of their continued allegiance, and thus would have brought on stronger feelings of togetherness because of their common plight.

Those who did choose to retain their belief in Catharism after 1246 must have scattered and reconnected based on the experiences they had during the Crusade and after the coming of the inquisition. These events must have also left a lasting community-wide impression on the remaining Cathars of a confirmed sense of their “otherness” and how that “otherness” influenced their social standing in the villages and towns. MS 609 makes clear that the routines and missions of the Good Men and Good Women continued even in the face of repression, and given that Catharism survived in Languedoc for the next century, this sense of “otherness” must have lived on as well. This attachment also suggests that Catharism was successful in retaining believers and perhaps even welcoming new believers into the fold after the Crusade and the inquisition. What does appear unclear, however, is how those who continued to believe in Catharism thought of themselves and represented themselves to other villagers after these events. Some Cathar treatises and other documents written after the Crusade and the onset of the inquisition do survive, but the exact provenance of the documents either come from documents written

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<sup>176</sup> Pegg, *The Corruption of Angels*, 63-73.

by polemicists or inquisitors or appear well after the time of the inquisition performed by Bernard de Caux and Jean de Saint-Pierre, such as the registers of Jacques Fornier in the fourteenth century. These documents paint a picture of Catharism quite unlike the picture contained in MS 609, a Catharism that, until the arrival of the Crusaders and inquisitors, appeared in the open alongside Catholicism as a viable form of Christianity to practice, and these later documents have received due attention by other scholars like Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie.

The emotional bonds forged by the traumatic events during the Crusade and the inquisitions reshaped small communities and their connections to a larger community of common Cathar experience. The bonds that united these various communities were certainly not universal, since it stands to reason that not every Cathar knew everyone else in their village-sized network of believers or recognized that a larger religious community existed, in contrast to the Catholic emotional communities that were certainly aware of their larger and broader connections to a universal church. The Crusade and the inquisition, however, raised the Cathars' awareness of each other on a larger scale because these events made the Cathars flee their home villages and bonded together in other Cathar strongholds like Montségur. Thus, it may be best to think of the remaining Cathars in Languedoc and those who fled to lands abroad as smaller communities of people linked by their common experiences of persecution, who perhaps mourned the loss of their way of life. In terms of shaping the conception of emotional communities, this suggests that the large Cathar community influenced the smaller emotional communities by giving those communities a framework around which the smaller communities can connect with each other through their dispersal. Though the Good Men

and Good Women linked their communities together before the Crusade, they continued to do so after these traumatic events by uniting the victims through a abhorrence of a common enemy in the Church's inquisitors and their shared wanderings while fleeing those forces. The specific experiences of the smaller emotional communities certainly differ between the smaller communities, but they nevertheless are capable of identifying with each other because those experiences are similar and inculcate the same emotions, like fear, loss, helplessness, solidarity, and camaraderie.

Even for those who swore off their former Cathar faith in front of the inquisitors, their lingering Cathar affinities brought them shame after they reentered the Catholic fold. For a person like Willelma Martina from Fanjos, who told Bernard de Caux on March 12, 1246, that she had sworn off her Cathar beliefs many years ago, the effects of those beliefs lasted well after her original confession, in that she had to, literally, wear the shame of believing in Catharism on her chest. In Willelma's case, she had confessed previously to Saint Dominic himself, and Dominic required her to wear two crosses for two years as penance.<sup>177</sup> These crosses, usually yellow in color, signified that a person once believed the heresy that, in the minds of Catholics, had infected the lands.<sup>178</sup> The imposition of these crosses identified a person has having once fallen into error,

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<sup>177</sup> MS 609, fols. 160a – 160b, item 31 in Duvernoy, 412. Dixit etiam qd predicta fuit conf. Fratri Dominico de ordine Predicatorum et habuit penitentiam ab ipso quod portaret duas cruces a parte ante per duos annos.

<sup>178</sup> Pegg, *The Corruption of Angels*, p. 126. The origin of the yellow crosses remains unclear. Malcolm Lambert suggests that the Church developed the crosses as a sign of penance beginning as early as 1231, with Lucius III's decretal *Ad abolendam*. The yellow crosses became commonplace in inquisitor sentences, and appear in the inquisitor manuals that followed MS 609, most famously Bernard Gui's. See Malcolm Lambert, *Medieval Heresy: Popular Movements from the Gregorian Reform to the Reformation*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2002), 110-111.



subjecting them to the jeers and insults of the members of the village who always stood strong in their Catholicism. Those who wore the cross must have felt both connected to those who also wore the crosses, by virtue of the same experience of penance and feelings of shame and remorse, but felt reconnected to the Catholic community that would eventually welcome them back into the fold. Even for those who never believed in Catharism, the religious and communal bonds and fractures created by the events in the Lauragais must have been powerful, even if the events only reinforced the Catholics' belief in their faith.

The distinction between Cathar and Catholic, the contestedness of Christianity, and the emotional affinities that came with belonging to either group played a significant role in the formation of new religious identities for the people living in the Lauragais. The demarcation of new religious boundaries through the Crusade and the inquisition provided the villagers and townspeople with a dramatic way to identify what they were not, and thus gave them a sense of forced segregation, categorization, and even a reinforcement of stereotypes of Cathars and Catharism. For a Catholic, this meant taking account of what how Catharism opposed their Catholicism. The same process worked for the Cathar believers, who now understood that the Catholic Church expected them to denounce their beliefs or suffer punishment, and, thus, they could construct their religious identities based on opposing the church, an opposition reinforced by their emotional experiences. Yet, still at stake in all of these constructions was what it meant in the thirteenth century to be a good and faithful Christian.

The emotional connections instilled by the Cathar rituals proved especially important after the coming of the crusaders and the inquisitors by providing the Cathars

with a sense of community, religious affinities, and shared experience in the face of what proved to be traumatic experiences. The performance and participation in the rituals united believers through their expressions of reverence and respect for the Good Men and Good Women. At the deathbed, the *consolamentum* served to provide comfort to those about to die and their families who desired their loved ones to receive the rite. These emotions drew people together, giving them a sense of solidarity and fellowship with their co-believers.

Emotional connections also shaped the way in which people identified their own place as an individual in social landscape of their villages and how their villages collectively understood the individual's religious place in that society. Once the inquisitors arrived and made clear the line that divided Catharism and Catholicism, the townspeople and villagers could identify themselves with a particular faith, but at the cost of potentially alienating their family members or, in the case of the Cathars after the onset of the medieval inquisition, suffering legal punishment. The divide between religions also split the villagers into separate communities, fostering frustration and indignation among religious rivals. Those whom the inquisition found guilty of heresy and who swore off their Catharism formed a third category whose religious associations caused them to wear yellow crosses sewn onto their clothing. In the case of some families, moreover, a person's religious affiliation could divide the family, whether a family member denied the presence of the Good Men at their deathbed or one member expelled another because of their religious leanings. All of these examples suggest that the emotional experiences caused by the two newly defined, oppositional religions in play in

the Lauragais reshaped the way people conceived of who they were and how they fit into the religious and social landscape of their villages.

The heightened conflict of the two religions in the Lauragais also generated feelings of anger and frustration in some Cathars that perhaps developed out of a general feeling of fear of both the crusaders and the inquisitors. This sentiment caused the massacre of the two inquisitors in Avignonet, and perhaps the alleged intimidation of witnesses by Cathar sympathizers, who supposedly threatened deponents on their way in to see the inquisitors.<sup>179</sup> After the events of the Crusade, such sentiment hardly seems surprising. This sentiment, however, does not suggest that large numbers of Cathars acted as an organized resistance against the inquisitors or the Church. It does provide a sense of the importance of the religion to those who continued to believe it in the face of opposition. Had the religion not generated strong emotions in its believers, the individuals would not have acted in such a violent and, in the case of the massacre of the inquisitors, such a personal manner.

The presence of emotions in MS 609, while difficult to detect and even more difficult to ascertain with certainty, does speak to the varieties of religious experience in the Lauragais in the thirteenth century. These emotional connections show a deep personal religiosity, and dispel any notion that the average believer passively believed in any particular religion. Religion mattered to every person in these towns and villages, and the reaction to a person's religious affiliation speaks to the importance of religion in village life well. The choice between the religions may not have initially been perfectly clear, but the emotional attachment to fellow participants in the religion and the

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<sup>179</sup> Pegg, *Corruption of the Angels*, 63-64.

emotional connectedness with fellow co-believers rings through quite clearly in the accounts in MS 609. As a component of a person's identity in the region during the Middle Ages, these emotions of fear, hope, shame, and solidarity brought on by the connection to a community of believers formed the core an individual's conception of himself/herself and the larger community, both religious and social, to which he or she belonged.

## Conclusion

This study has shown a variety of ways the Cathar Good Men, Good Women, and the believers conceived of themselves and their place in the religious landscape of the Lauragais in the thirteenth century. These people reflected on their identities while under the influence of several social and religious forces. Whether the villagers and townspeople felt the influence of the Good Men and the Good Women, their neighbors, or the inquisitors who came to interrogate them, these external forces both shaped and threatened their sense of self and caused them to sharpen their notions of who they were. The depositions in MS 609 provide many examples of the identity-making forces at work during the thirteenth century in the villages of the Lauragais in the thirteenth century: how the Cathars imagined their connections to each other, the texts of the Cathar faith, and the emotions that both Catharism and the Church engendered within the villagers and townspeople.

When read with Cathar theology and the Cathar rituals in mind, the identities contained in MS 609, though they only appear in fragments, provide the basis for a larger discussion about the overall picture of Catharism in the region. The depositions in MS 609 show that the villagers and townspeople did not always see the border between Catharism and Catholicism, at least until the Crusaders' actions defined the distinctions and the inquisitors drew the line between the two religions with clarion certainty. Even when these distinctions became perfectly clear, the attachment to Catharism or Catholicism dictated how the townspeople and villagers imagined themselves fitting into both their religions, with their co-believers, and with the other villagers who did not hold the same religious beliefs. These personal, social, and religious connections and

individual perceptions of one's place in the social fabric of the village make up the pieces of the identity recoverable from the inquisitor manuscripts. These pieces are valuable in the study of Catharism because they allow scholars to engage the Cathars more on their own terms, rather than how the inquisitors and polemicists perceived them.

A close reading of MS 609 finds that those who believed in Catharism had intensely personal experiences with the religion. The intensity of these personal experiences depended on how invested an individual was in Catharism. In some cases, believers worked closely with the Good Men and Good Women, either performing tasks to help the Good Men and Good Women or working to become a Good Man or Good Woman himself/herself. These highly personalized connections with the Good Men and Good Women, therefore, speak to a more local and regional identity rather than a collective identity among Cathars throughout Europe during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, though the Cathars did travel between France and Italy.<sup>180</sup> The inquisition undertaken by Bernard de Caux and Jean de Saint-Pierre, though it was the largest of its time, covered a specific region of the south of France, and therefore does not provide a sense of Catharism in northern France or in Italy, where the divide between Catharism and Catholicism was drawn more starkly along intellectual lines. This local identity also speaks to individual motivations for joining the Cathars, whether that motivation was the urging of the family, a sense of camaraderie with neighbors and friends, or, most

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<sup>180</sup> Italian Catharism took on a slightly more intellectual tenor and perhaps a more aggressive stance against the Catholic Church than did the Cathars in France. The Italian Cathars also do not seem to have suffered the violence of the Albigensian Crusade, and the inquisition settled into that region a few years later than it did in Languedoc. For a wonderful account of Italian Catharism, see Carol Lansing, *Power and Purity: The Cathar Heresy in Medieval Italy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).

importantly, a sense of connection with the Cathar rituals and the messages of the Good Men.

While MS 609 speaks well to how the Cathar believers perceived themselves and the Good Men and Good Women, how the Good Men and Good Women saw themselves and their place in society needs more attention. Accounts of the Good Men and Good Women and their role in village religious life appear frequently in MS 609, but these accounts usually appear in depositions of former believers. Those who were Good Men or Good Women at one time or currently were Good Men or Good Women did not disclose to the inquisitors the full breadth of their activities or very quickly told the inquisitors that they had not been a Good Man or Good Woman for a rather long time. The inquisitors only wanted to know if a deponent had been a Good Man or Good Woman and when the deponent had ceased believing or renounced their position, if they had done so. The inquisitors' line of questioning therefore results in an even murkier picture of the Good Men and Good Women, leaving the question of their place in notions of Cathar identity open for exploration and discussion.

The fragments of Cathar identity contained in MS 609 appear in several ways, not the least of which is how the villagers and towns people imagined their social connections and related to the other people in their religion and village society. Catharism was largely a family affair among the believers, though the deponents spend more time talking about the activities of their neighbors rather than their own family members. The connection to the family suggests that the introduction of a person to the religion happened naturally and smoothly, as a normal part of every day life. Children that parents had dedicated to the Good Men and Good Women, like Ducia Faure, spent

their early years in the care of the Good Women, learning how to perform the day-to-day religious tasks of the Good Women. How the Cathars perceived themselves in the religious landscape of the Lauragais, then, did not depend on strange and unnatural forces working on them, like the inquisitors and polemicists imagined. Instead, these identities were constructed from the very present local social forces that weighed on individual lives and the influence of their families, not completely unlike the transmission of the religious identity of other faiths in medieval Europe.

Beyond the family, the townspeople and the villagers shared religious experience while they visited the home of another or invited people into their homes to listen to the Good Men and, in some cases, the Good Women. In these homes where the villagers and townspeople could discuss religion openly, at least before the Crusade and the arrival of the inquisitors, the exchange of ideas flowed easily, which, in turn, shaped their conception of the immediate surroundings of their village and region and their place within the social structure of the village. These visits, moreover, provided villagers and townspeople with opportunities to engage in some of the rituals Catharism practiced, further connecting them to a network of believers both inside their towns and outside the towns in the broader region that had a similar religious identity. During the Albigensian Crusade, these intimate meetings became ever more important to the Cathars, especially since they had seen so many of the same people who had shared in their religion with them in the past fall victim to the violent actions of the crusaders. These meetings provided reassurance during a time when a great sense of anxiety was felt among the Cathars, giving them, at the very least, a sense of solidarity and connectedness with one another.



The Cathars, no matter an individual's rank in the two-level religious hierarchy, identified themselves through a connection with texts, both physical artifacts and the words of the Good Men and Good Women transmitted through preaching and teaching. This attachment to Catharism meant an identification with their rituals, particularly the "adoration" ritual and the deathbed *consolamentum*. In the case of the physical texts, the book that the Good Men carried with them stood as an increasingly noticeable social marker, identifying the Good Man to his larger religious community and to the inquisitors who eventually hunted him. The Cathar service books also ushered the Cathar believers into the elite ranks of the Good Men and Good Women or provided the conduit for his or her salvation. Whether the texts granted authority, made a person a target for questioning or even persecution, or gave someone comfort in the last hours of their lives, the identification with such texts provided a powerful way for a person to conceive of themselves and their place in the village social landscape. The Cathar teachings and the rituals furnished the Cathars with a way to understand who they were and a purpose for their lives as well as a comforting guarantee of salvation after death through the performance of the *consolamentum*.

The practice of the *melioramentum* and *consolamentum* rituals also gave the Cathars a sense of their religious identities as good, practicing Christians. Like the gatherings at the homes of the believers, the participation in the *melioramentum* and the *consolamentum* allowed other believers to see who among their fellow villagers and townspeople had adopted the teachings of the Good Men and the Good Women. Also, given that the performance of the rituals required the believers to have "true faith," the participation in both rituals acted as an affirmation or reaffirmation of an individual's

belief in the religion as well as a marker to the rest of the community who identified with Catharism. Rather than mirroring a set of social practices alone, these rituals provided the believers with meaningful spiritual experiences, whether a feeling of fellowship, reverence, and the relief of spiritual anxiety, and thus provided lenses through which the Cathars could see their religious selves.

Beyond the rituals, the verbal transmission of Cathar doctrine to the villagers and the townspeople also played a role as an identity-making force. The preaching of the Good Men in public areas, especially when that preaching came in the form of a debate with a Waldensian, a Dominican, or a Franciscan, influenced the religious persuasions of the townspeople and villagers. In this marketplace of ideas and versions of faith, the villagers and townspeople could listen and interpret for themselves which religious authority to follow. For the listeners in the crowd this decision did not constitute a willful act of heresy, at least in their minds; the Good Men, Waldensians, Franciscans, and Dominicans in the village centers holding their debates would have seemed equally believable. Moreover, though each religious authority made claims about their path being “correct” in terms of leading a Christian life, the villagers and townspeople did not completely understand the consequences of siding with the Good Men, despite the urging of Catholic authorities. Only when the inquisitors arrived, with the full legal force to prosecute “heretics,” did the villagers and townspeople fully understand the potential consequences of the religious choices.

Thus, the arrival of the inquisitors in the Lauragais in the middle of the twelfth century completely changed how people practiced Catharism. The arrival of such a hostile force not only made the line between Catholicism and Catharism completely

clear, it also caused the villagers and townspeople to either rethink their religious affiliation with Catharism or to reaffirm their allegiance to either faith. The Cathar reactions to the inquisitors formed newly powerful emotional communities based on religious affiliation. For the Cathars, these emotional experiences engendered a wide range of responses, whether they escaped to another region or even confronted inquisitors who came to destroy them with deadly force. The relationships between fugitive Cathars developed during times of persecutions would no doubt have been more powerful and intimate than during times of tolerance, connecting believers together across regions and giving them a larger sense of sense of their identity as a marginalized group. Even those who fell into the hands of the inquisitors and suffered punishments experienced a sense of emotional bonding, especially those who wore a yellow cross, in that they could identify those who carried the same burden of public shame and give them a sort of support system.

The ways in which the Cathar believers understood their religious identities before the Crusade and the establishment of the inquisition suggests a tension between Catholicism and Catharism in the believers. At no point in MS 609 do the deponents speak of standing against the Church or believing in Catharism just because it opposed the Church. Instead, the deponents reflect back on a time when they did believe in Catharism, as adhering to Christianity, only to be told by the inquisitors that they held beliefs that had legal and theological consequences. The texts and the rituals used by the Cathars did not seem so out of the ordinary to the average person in the towns and villages in the Lauragais before the Crusade and the medieval inquisition. For medieval scholars and theologians, this line was absolutely clear, but the townspeople and villagers

did not necessarily understand the divide between Catholicism and Catharism, even if a parish priest tried to draw that line for them. Instead, the different and equally believable representatives of Christianity, whether a parish priest, itinerant friar, or Good Man, presented versions of Christianity that all seemed authentic and orthodox to those who listened to the preachers' words. Therefore, before the Crusade and the inquisition, the villagers and townspeople continually crossed this blurry line between orthodoxy and heterodoxy, following practices not because they had a desire to fall on one side of this divide or the other, but because these rituals and beliefs carried significant meanings for them and for their community.

Understanding heterodox religious belief in this way has real consequences for the study of Catharism and medieval heresy in general. Rather than focusing on difference, scholars must turn their gaze towards the similarities between the Cathars and Catholicism and make an attempt to reconcile why so many people believed in what the Good Men taught. This does not mean categorically dismissing adherence to Cathar belief and the practice of the rituals as merely social practices in the towns and villages. Instead, it means examining the ways in which the Cathars' rituals and beliefs resonate with the practices of the Church, and making an attempt to understand why Catharism was so attractive to potential believers. While propositional beliefs and theology was of greater importance to the inquisitors, those who practiced the religions in the villages would have found more meaning in the rituals, perhaps because they did not understand

the intricacies and differences in the theologies.<sup>181</sup> The motivations for the Good Men to minister to the believers mirrored that of a Catholic priest; the concerns the believers brought to the Good Men were much the same as the concerns that they took to their priests, perhaps suggesting a failure on the part of local priests to minister to their parishes. Had Catharism ministered to believers and practiced the religion in a manner completely dissimilar to that of the Church, they would not have gained such a following in the Lauragais or the rest of Southern France and Northern Italy because the religion would have seemed unrecognizable to them and therefore unattractive. Instead, the Good Men and Good Women presented practices and a theology of salvation that resonated with the religious system of Christianity already in place in the region with modifications to the theology and ritual practices that made Catharism unique. Only at the critical juncture of death did the differences between Catharism and Catholicism become manifestly clear. While this study makes suggestions as to how the Good Men's and the Good Women's interactions with the believers influenced the identity of the believers, more scholarly effort into the understanding of Cathar pastoral care and how it influenced the spread of the religion is required in order to make sense of why so many people in the south of France and northern Italy adopted Catharism as their form of Christianity.

A close reading of MS 609 also offers a shift in perspective in the general study of medieval religion. Perhaps like inquisitors themselves, some modern historians have sought their own identities in the stories of medieval "heretics," looking for analogous thoughts, moods, or motivation in them that resonate with modern issues like the

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<sup>181</sup> See Ninian Smart, *The World's Religions* 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 11-22. Smart's seven dimensions divides theological belief from ritual practice.

Protestant Reformation and women's liberation. Scholars must examine an even bigger picture: the understanding of why people attached themselves to and identified themselves with movements the Church deemed to be "heretical" and how the Church's use of the label caused people to jump back over the orthodox/heterodox line. This requires zooming out from examining the particulars of the key individuals who led these movements like Peter Waldo, John Wycliffe, or Jan Hus and instead shifting the focus to those who followed their teachings. The focus on the average believers gives historians a better perspective simply by allowing a view of religious practice and choice at the ground level. While other "heretical" movements may not have the same diverge completely from the theology and ritual practices of the Catholic Church, how people in the Middle Ages identified themselves with their particular religions must be the cornerstone of any approach to the study of medieval religion in order to understand the plurality of Christianities in the medieval European landscape.

The depositions in MS 609 also demonstrate the contestedness of Christianity in the High Middle Ages. If the actions of Pope Innocent III and the various church councils do not provide enough evidence already, the way the believers engaged with Catharism clearly suggest that an individual's conception of being a "Christian" depended largely on the variety of their religious experiences based on local and communal practice. For the study of the history of Christianity, this means looking at specific local or regional scenes and connecting those scenes to the bigger picture of multiple Christianities throughout Europe. Doing so will allow scholars to make meaningful comparisons between different ideas of what it meant to be a Christian as

they try to reconstruct the overall picture of medieval “Christendom.”<sup>182</sup> For the study of “heresy,” this requires scholars to disregard the category of “heresy” almost entirely and understanding the various groups that the Church and past scholars have labeled “heresies” as, using Peter Brown’s term, “micro-Christianities” with their own theology and religious identities.<sup>183</sup> If scholars of late-antiquity consider Arianism and the Monophysite Christianities as meaningful and independent Christianities, scholars of the Middle Ages must also shift their historiography to include medieval heresy in this discussion in order to paint a more faithful picture of Christianity. This shift dismisses the “heresy” from the study of the Middle Ages, and therefore does not privilege the medieval Catholic Church’s definition of what it meant to be a Christian in the Middle Ages. This approach allows scholars to engage these various groups on their own terms, adding further historical empathy to the historiography of religious difference and an abundance of clarity to the religious landscape of the Middle Ages.

In the last analysis, while this study does not complete the overall picture of Cathar identity in the thirteenth century, it does point in a direction that would allow scholars to engage heterodox religions like Catharism more empathetically. This means reading inquisitor registers with a sharp critical eye, but allowing for the possibility that the deponents can and do speak about their religious experiences candidly. This cannot offer an authentic account of what it meant to believe in Catharism and to practice its rituals, but it can suggest ways in which the people who practiced the religion conceived

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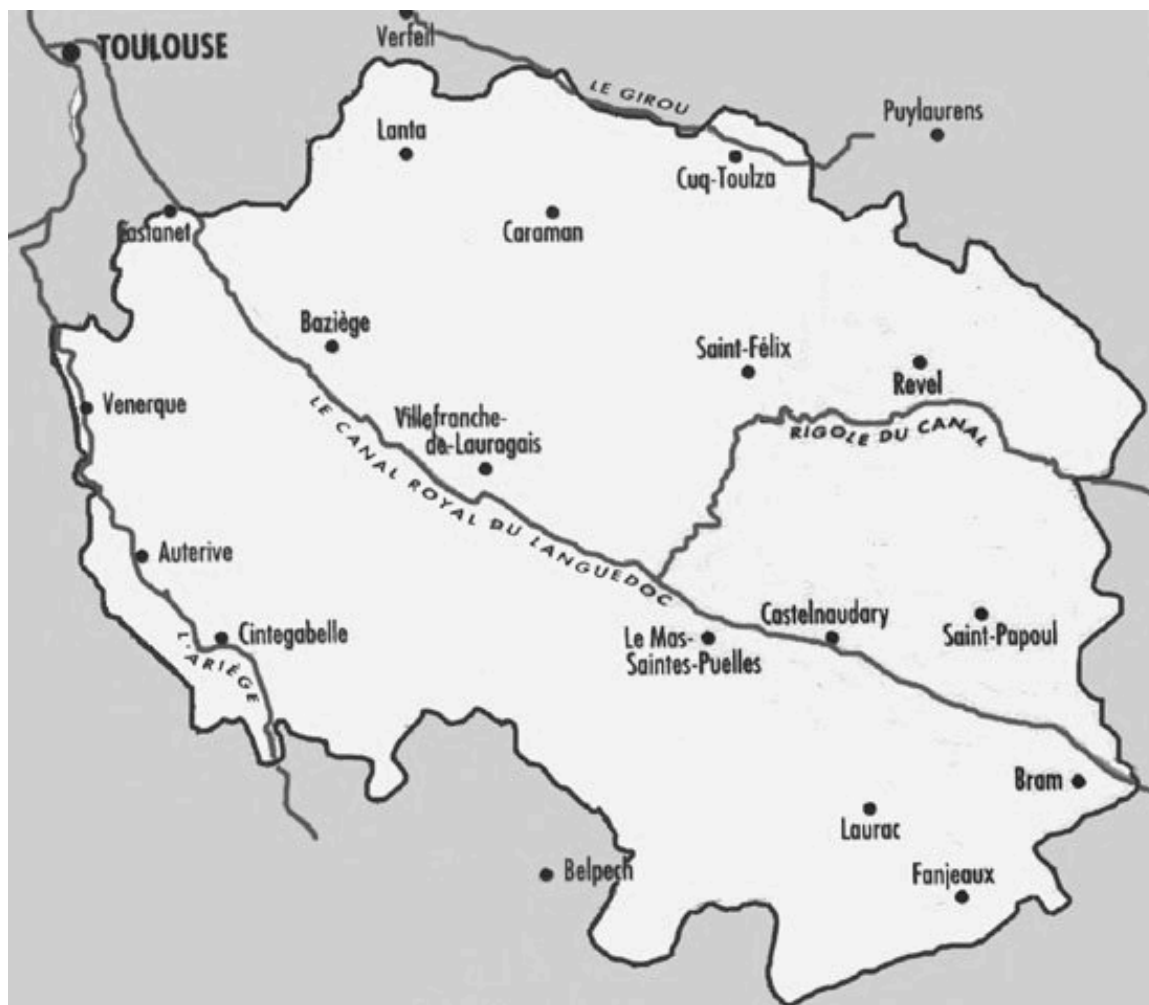
<sup>182</sup> For the problem of the label “Christendom,” see John Van Engen, “The Christian Middle Ages: A Historiographical Problem,” *American Historical Review* 91 (1986) pp. 519-52.

<sup>183</sup> Peter Brown, *The Rise of Western Christendom: Triumph and Diversity A.D. 200-1000* 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2003).

of their religious identities and presented themselves to hostile forces. These identities comprise the core of religious experience of Christians, whether Cathar, Catholic, or otherwise, in the Middle Ages and deserve to be in the forefront in any historiography concerning religion. To study religion otherwise places the scholar squarely in the chair of the inquisitor: a hostile force set to uncover what someone believed at a certain point in time and to use that belief for their own ideological constructions of the past.



Figure 1: Map of the Lauragais. Found at <http://pprlp.pagesperso-orange.fr/family/images/cartes/carte-lauragais.jpg>



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