The Templars, Sionists, and the Freemasons

Book One - Episode 18

The Cathars



This work is a translation of a book written and published originally in Turkish.
The book in whole consists of 23 episodes.

Previous Episode: Mediterranean Empire

This episode in our book is not directly related to the Templars, the Sionists or the Freemasons... However, it was necessary to tell it, and further it was just the right time chronologically. Therefore, we studied and summarised this subject as well. After all, there's a crusade that was involved in it, which of course, is related to the Catholic Church.

Christianity is one of the most widespread religions on earth. Despite this fact, it is very difficult to describe what kind of a religion it is. It contains many complex elements. The most important of these is the identity of Jesus. If there is no Jesus, there is no Christianity.

Christians are not in complete agreement on the details of this identity. They all agree that his life should be modelled on his example and his teachings have to be followed, but this is not enough.

Some regard him as the "Son of God", others as a "messenger of God", even others as a direct "manifestation of God", some as a "prophet", others as an "extraordinary sage", whereas some consider him simply as a "person of good will".

The disagreement concerning the identity of Jesus, without considering the principles of the religion and the methods of worship, led to divisions within Christianity.

The Bible is almost the single source of what historically is known about Jesus. In the absence of other sources, the accuracy of the accounts in the Bible is questionable. In the early years of Christianity, the Gospel writers, who were considered to be the apostles of Jesus, provided all information available in this context. They did not intend to write a "history", but to persuade people to become believers in the religion they had created. It must never have occurred to them that this religion they proposed would later undergo different forms. Moreover, even though what is written in the Gospels is told as a historical narrative, in fact there is another meaning behind most of the accounts.

In Christianity, information about Jesus did not end there. Apart from the fact that some of the Gospels were discarded because they were deemed inappropriate, dogmas, the basic principles of the faith, were added to the religion.

In the past, everyone learnt by hearsay whatever he had been told about the principles of the religion, and was pleased with what he had learnt. No one would ponder over what they had been told, or ask questions that puzzled their minds; they did not see the need to do so at all. When such questions began to be raised, it became necessary to give answers or to make explanations. This was the case not only in Christianity but in other religions as well.

The Church could never say that it did not know the answer to questions about Christianity, and is unable to give an explanation. It could neither speak of options nor leave the matter ambiguous. It made the explanations it felt as relevant. It put them forward as complete and definite, unchanging truths, i.e. **"dogmas"**.

In fact, another fundamental element of the Christian religion is the **"Church"**, which is the authority of beliefs, principles and methods. The Roman Catholic Church, which we frequently refer to in this book, is one of them.

In fact, since there is no other Catholic Church, it is not necessary to attach the word "Rome" to it. However, since the word "catholic" can also be used as an adjective meaning "all-encompassing" in Western languages, it has become customary to add the word "Rome" when referring to the Catholic Church, which today can also be referred to simply as the "Vatican". Although the term "Vatican" today refers to an independent state in terms of international relations beyond a town within the city of Rome, in a sense it is also identified together with the Catholic Church.

In Christianity, there is also a term as the **"True Church"**. In fact, every different Church identifies itself with this concept, considering and asserting to be the primary and the true authority of the religion.

However, there are also those who argue that the true Church is in fact the "Church of Christ", that it has long since been lost and even deliberately abolished, and that it needs to be re-established. According to these arguments, the Catholic Church is not the "True Church", but a corrupt institution pursuing its own interests.

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In Christianity, there are those having been misinformed about the first formation of the Church. This misconception is that the Catholic Church in Rome was formed first and that the Orthodox Church in Constantinople was an offshoot. Whereas, the truth in this matter is as follows:

After the famous meeting at Nicaea in 325, the Roman Emperor Constantine I (Constantine the Great) founded the first Church in the sense of an institutional authority. He placed a "patriarch" at its head. He united religion with the state, and brought them under his unquestionable sovereignty.

The following year, he moved the centre of the Empire from Rome to where Istanbul stands today and named it as **"New Rome"**. The centre of the Church was transferred to the patriarchate in this city, later known as "Constantinople". The archbishop, who had remained in "Old Rome", became the most powerful person over there.



When Constantine I died, his three sons shared the empire as Rome, Constantinople, and Alexandreia. Soon after, two of these united. Then the archbishop in Rome declared his independence, and claimed that the True Church was in Rome, he being the true pope.

The Pope accused the patriarch in Constantinople of heresy, because the Orthodox Church, which recognised Jesus as the sole authority, rejected the Pope's claims as false and opposed the rules he was trying to impose on religion.

There are many more differences between the Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church, but this disagreement alone was more than enough to cause a rupture between these two authorities. This was one of the reasons for the division of the Roman Empire into East and West in 395.

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After the disintegration of the Western Roman Empire in 476, the Catholic Church started to exercise very hard times.

There were many reasons for this, however this time it was not primarily religion, but the fact that the Church did not have strong political support. This is why the Pope made an agreement with King Clovis I of the Franks of the Merovingian dynasty.

However, this didn't work out as the Church wanted. [We have already dwelled on this subject in one of the previous episodes.]

In 800, when Pope Leo III crowned Charlemagne as "Holy Roman Emperor" and leaned on him for worldly power, the friction between the Orthodox Church and the Catholic Church ceased. One had established its dominance in the east and the other in the west. They divided between them the locations where Christianity was most widespread.

Even the affiliation to the Orthodox Church of people like the Czechs, Slovenes, Polonaises and Croats, who should have been under the jurisdiction of the Church in the west, was not a major problem. It was not as if the Catholic Church was going to ask the Orthodox Church to leave these societies in the west to itself.... It was already overwhelmed with problems that it could not resolve even in the region it was dominating. It did not want to get into more trouble.

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In the 9th and 10th centuries, just as the Catholic Church seemed to be relaxing, the emperors which were backing started to cause problems.

One of these was "who has the authority to ordain the ruling clergy that would become bishops". The Pope argued that he had this authority; the Holy Roman Emperor, on the other hand, attempted to do things his own way, arguing that these people were actually "civil servants performing religious duties".

The disagreement on this issue gradually increased and became converted into a conflict. In 1075, Pope Gregorius VII excommunicated Emperor Heinrich IV simply for this reason alone. Heinrich IV then declared that he did not recognise him, stating that «Gregorius VII is no longer qualified to be pope.»

Although the Emperor and the Pope seemed to reconcile in the years that followed, the tension between them did not come to an end. As a matter of fact, when the new pope, Urbanus II, took office a few years later, Heinrich IV did not ask him to lift the excommunication. The Pope also showed no inclination in this regard. Heinrich IV did not object Godfrey de Bouillon's action to participate, in the crusade, though he had appointed him as Duke of Lorraine, but he did not make any direct contribution by himself.

The Cathar Faith

When "Protestantism" is mentioned in relation to Christianity, we first recall the action of Martin Luther in 16th century, which led to the birth of a whole new sect within this religion. Such initiative was partly in opposition to the dogmas and partly to the practices of the Catholic Church. Historically, reactions against the dogmas of the Catholic Church began much earlier. There were those who protested against the Pope, and created other belief systems within Christianity. These began as early as 4th Century, immediately after the Council of Nicaea.

The Catholic Church in Rome initially relied on Western Roman Empire. However, when that mountain collapsed, the Church was baffled as to what to do. Whatever it did, it could not impose its religious authority, and came across with more reaction than respect. Much later, when it secured the support of the Holy Roman Empire through his intrigues, the reactions in the west of Europe calmed down.

The stirrings that disturbed the Orthodox Church continued in the east. However, they were not limited to that neighbourhood; they also extended towards the west.

In 11th century, in the west as well as in the east of Europe, belief systems contradictory to Catholic dogmas began to flourish in the Christian world.

The Cathar faith is one of them; who knows, perhaps the most important!

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The foregoing was a summary of the history of Christianity for a better understanding of the subject under this heading. We now can give a start to our main topic.

The Cathar faith, though based primarily on the biblical book of Revelation, can be considered a religious doctrine. Its adherents are called Cathars (or Cathares) in Western languages.

The Catholic Church, of course, regarded the Cathars as heretics. In order for this not to be the case, it would have had to either renounce its dogmas or recognise that within the scope of Christianity there could be elements of different beliefs, in other words, tolerate them. This, however, could not to be the case. The Catholic Church, even further, regarded the Cathar faith as even worse than heresy, as a dangerous attempt to shake the foundations of society.

This attitude of the Church was due not only to the principles of the Cathar faith, but also to the peculiar way of life that those believe in this.

There were social factors involved as well. These factors, in turn, were getting in link to economic and political ones.

The word Cathar, as regards Greek etymology, means **"purified"**. The Catholic Church, however, claimed that this word was of Latin origin and meant "cat worshippers".

The Cathars, on the other hand, did not modestly refer to themselves as "purified" in this context, but simply claimed to be good Christians.

Historians and researchers who have been closely involved in this issue have contradictory views about the Cathars.

According to some, the Cathars are an ethnic group who lived for a short time in the 13th Century in a certain geographical area of Europe, and that is all. The area in question is primarily the **Languedoc** region in the south of France.

According to some, however, the Cathar faith actually originated much earlier, and although it was concentrated in that neighbourhood during the period mentioned, it spread over a very wide area, did not end in the 13th century, and continued to exist in many places throughout the following centuries. In this context, there are those who draw similarities between them by stating that Sheikh Bedreddin also sustained the traces of Cathar belief in Western Anatolia in late 14th and early 15th centuries.

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The Cathars are also sometimes referred to as **"Albigenses"**. It may even be seen that these two words are used as synonyms.

In fact, such an identification is incorrect. For the Albigenses are the people of the town of Albi in Languedoc. Most of them once adopted the Cathar faith and way of life, but this is not unique to that town, nor was this belief system initially born in Albi.

Such an identification can be attributed to the following: The area of Languedoc where the Cathars lived, was under the dominion of the Catholic Bishop of Albi. Before the Pope launched an action against this ethnic community, the defenders of Catholicism on the one hand and the Cathar faith on the other had engaged in theological debates in the town of Albi. It was clear from the outset that nothing could be achieved, that no compromise could be attained...

As a matter of fact, the mass slaughter of the Cathars, which was later organised with the aim of exterminating them, is also referred to by the term **"Albigensian Crusade"** [Corresponding term in French is "Croisade des Albigeois"]

Consolamentum

The main tenets of the Cathar faith that caused the Catholic Church not only to react but also to go crazy can be summarized as follows:

- There is a doctrine and a liturgical book that is quite different from those that have been used in Christianity for a long time. Both this book and the ritualistic practices performed according to this book are called Consolamentum.
- The dogmas of the Catholic Church are rejected. In particular, the worship of the cross is strongly opposed. It is argued that these are not the works of Jesus, but were invented by the clergy.
- Jesus is not regarded as a "savior" but just as a person who gave the first example of Consolamentum. His words are said to have conveyed not a set of divine principles, but a profound spiritual knowledge, the meaning of which can only be understood by those who are competent. [Consolamentum means "consecration" or "consolation" in the vocabulary sense of "Oc", the language formerly spoken in the region of southern France that later waes converted to Languedoc].
- It is held that only those who have reached the age of maturity can have a faith.
- In order to become a cleric, one must undergo the Consolamentum. Moreover, no distinction is made between men and women.
- It is accepted that a person who undergoes the Consolamentum strengthens his faith and gains momentum in cleansing his soul from evil.
- The spiritual universe is believed to have been created by God, who is invisible, infinite and who embodies all goodness. The world, in contrast, is the creation of Satan. The world cannot be improved; it will remain as it is. However, it is envisioned that the human spirit can be brought to a higher level and be enabled to progress towards perfection.

The last principle of the Cathar faith listed above, reflects its fundamental character. This is because the Cathar faith is based on what is called Dualism, which may be explained as "the constant struggle between elements and entities that are opposed to each other in every respect".

As regards this point of view, it is similar to many religions and belief systems in the East. It also has compatible aspects with Buddhism and Hinduism, but it is closest to a religious belief system known as **Manicheism**. Most researchers believe that the connection between Cathar faith and Manicheism was established by the **Bogomils**.

[**Manicheism**: A belief system created by the Iranian Mani (Manes) in late 3rd Century, combining the principles of Zoroaster, Buddha and Jesus, and envisioning spiritual development without any social or political change in society.

Bogomils: 10th century followers of a type of Christian sect that originated in Bulgaria, influenced by Manicheism. This belief system spread to Western Anatolia and the Balkans, and then to Central and Western Europe, after taking Macedonia under its influence].

Cathars believed in both God and Jesus. However, they opposed the trinity of "God-Jesus-Holy Spirit" and said that the clergy had invented it. They argued that no one could enter between God and man, that there was no need for an "authorized intermediary" or a "religious official" for faith. They argued that if the belief in God was acquired through an intermediary, it would be "second-hand" and that each person should acquire his or her own belief on his or her own, and in first-hand. In other words, they were against the "clergy" of the Catholic sect and against a hierarchical institutional structure in religious administration.

The reasoning of the Cathars in this context was as follows:

God exceeds the concept of "birth". He is a purely spiritual being, free from matter. He is love. Love is incompatible with force. The material creation of the universe was achieved through the use of force. Therefore matter, and therefore the world, is fundamentally evil. The formation of the world was the handiwork of a "swindler god", Satan, who sat on the divine throne by force.

Since matter is fundamentally "evil", Jesus cannot be the son of God, stripped of matter, immortal in the flesh. He can only be a prophet, and because he is mortal, he died on the cross for the principle of love.

When love is distorted and dissolved in power, the result is "Rome". The word "amor" spelled backwards means "love". Accordingly, Rome is the opposite of love, it is lovelessness.

With this view, the Cathars accused the Catholic Church of being more worldly than spiritual. They even opposed considering the cross as sacred and respecting it. According to them, the cross of the Catholic Church was a far worse idol than even the idols of the Pagan faiths that Christianity had fought against for centuries.

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The Cathars appreciated human devotion, courage, especially fearlessness against fire and humility. They considered going to church for worship to be "a pitiful state of man". They therefore worshipped outdoors or under a roof of some kind.

They found it pointless to stand in a certain direction and to place something like a cross in front of them.

In their communal masses, they would sit in a circle and look at each other's faces.

There was no set day or time for masses. They were organized whenever they were needed.

It is not to be imagined that at these masses, someone would pick up the Consolamentum and read it, and the others would listen. No!...



The Consolamentum had two functions: One was for the initiation of the one who was to be raised among the Cathars as a "Perfect", and the other was to console or send off happily the one who was leaving his body in this world to prepare himself for another birth. For this reason, the Consolamentum was read especially to a person who was about to die or probably be dyeing. If the person who was expected to die did not, he or she would spend the rest of his or her life among the "Perfects".

The Perfects

In order to understand the Cathar faith well, it is first necessary to understand this concept.

Those who wished to advance in life by gaining knowledge on the direct path to perfection underwent the practice of initiation. Such people were referred to as "Perfects", and those who followed them religiously were called "Believers". [in French: "Parfait(e)s" - "Croyant(e)s]

Being an ordinary Cathar, or a "believer" as they called it, was in a way easy, but in reality difficult. They didn't have to do anything. Their lives would not change. They had to take on certain obligations on their own volition. They had to adopt and follow the principles of the Cathar faith. They had to be honest, humane, and hard-working. If they did not do these things, no one would stand up to them, interrogate or try to expel them from Catharism. Thinking for themselves was their own business. The decision was theirs. There was no compulsion...

The living conditions of the authorities were more severe than those of the believers. They had to follow every requirement of the faith strictly.

The Cathars did not organise a society consisting only of adherents of this faith. They formed an ethnic community everywhere, but even in small villages they lived together with those having other faiths, even Catholics. They had no quarrel with them. They seemed to refute the opinion that in order to have peace and harmony in society, everyone's religious belief must be exactly the same.

Although they opposed the dogmas of the Catholic Church, this only applied to themselves. They were against compelling others. They avoided any conflict or friction, they did not despise the Catholics with whom they lived together, and although they advised them to follow the path of theirs, did not attack the faith of others in any way.

Since they attached great importance to knowledge and culture, learning and education, and were committed to good self-education, they also puzzled the Catholics with whom they lived, leading some of them to convert to the Cathar faith; this is true.

A sort of missionary engagement... But it was a very effective mission, because it was not only about faith, but also about opposition to discrimination between rich and poor, master and slave, against worldly passions and hatred.

In other words, the Cathars lived within the feudal order of society, did not rebel against it, but set out principles that undermined its basic elements. For this reason, even if one would not directly adopt to be a Cathar, they had many adherents, and these were getting increased. This was the utmost factor frightening the Catholic Church.

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Most of the believers, who made up the majority of the Cathars, worked as weavers. Some worked on a nobleman's farm, especially in animal husbandry, and a few engaged in trade. The more competent ones worked in the special hospices established by the Cathars, conducted services, helped the faithful to improve their religious knowledge, and provided education, especially for girls.

Why especially girls?

Because in the Middle Ages, boys could receive a certain level of education in monasteries, but girls were kept apart. Cathars, on the other hand, did not discriminate between sexes; they were in favour of equality. Therefore, they accepted that girls should be educated as well as boys. The Catholic Church referred to this attitude as "very inappropriate".

According to the Cathars, believers were free people. The authorities sacrificed their freedom for the benefit of the believers. For example, believers could eat and drink as they wished, have fun, and have children whether they married or not, whereas the Perfects did not eat meat and animal products, did not include entertainment in their lives, and could not have sexual intercourse in any way.

From this description, it seems that the clergy of the Cathars were like that of other religions, but actually they were not. If you were to ask the Perfects, let all the believers come and be initiated. After all, wasn't the aim for people to be perfected and for their souls to go further in the next life!

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Regarding the private life of the Cathars, everyone could have money and personal possessions, but none of them owned real estate. There was no need for that. None of them was rich or poor. Wherever they lived, immovable assets were the common property of the community.

On the other hand, the house in which a person lived was considered to belong to his family for the rest of his life. Moreover, they had their own inheritance law. Everything used by the family was shared among the spouses. From the father as well as from the mother, it would be inherited by their children, without distinction between boys and girls. Even if the family did not have children, it was not a problem because they believed that worldly wealth would remain in the world with all the evils because it was already wicked. But it was necessary to use it during earthly life. There would be someone to use it anyway.

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Let's return to the Perfects.

This required at least three years of preparation. During this period, the candidate would carefully listen to and follow the explanations of the Perfects.

However, if the candidate would realise that he could not succeed, that this endeavour does not suit him, that he could not give up the pleasures of the world, he could abandon his attempt and return to his ordinary life.

When a candidate would successfully pass the preparatory period, a ceremony was organised for everyone who wish to join. The candidate would answer the questions put to him in front of the attendants. This could be called a chain of promises linked to the principles of life once he was qualified as a Perfect. In particular, he committed himself to the pursuit of justice, to the search for truth, and to devoting himself to God and to the community of good Christians.

Daily Life

There were three basic necessities of daily life for the Cathars.

One of these was to work for a living. In fact, work was regarded as the foremost obligation of every person, regardless of being male or female.

In many esoteric organisations, including Freemasonry, there is a Latin saying as ***"Laborare est Orare"*** (Labouring is worship.) The Cathars did not originate this saying, but it was fitting their understanding exactly.

The second was not to lie or swear under any circumstances, and for any reason whatsoever. So much so that asking a Cathar to prove the truth of something he said with an oath was considered an insult.

The third was not to kill any animal, not even for food. According to them, animals also carried a soul. This soul could have been passed on to it from a human being, or it could have been passed on to a human being. He should go as far as he could on the path of perfection on earth and wait for the time of his natural death. For this reason, Cathar believers were also not supposed to eat meat, but this rule applied only to the Perfects; for the believers it was only a recommendation.

Therefore, a person who had blood on his hands in any way had two options: Either he could prepare to become a "Perfect" or he could leave the community.

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The concept of the Holy Grail also had an important role in the philosophy of the Cathar faith. However, they viewed it quite differently from others. According to the Cathars, the Holy Grail was a means of communication between God and man.

What might Holy Grail would like in their view.... Was it an object?... If so, what would someone do with it when it is in hand, how would it be used, and for what purpose?

For the Cathars, there was no need for such questions to perplex one's mind; these were just questions that had no answer, that were asked in vain, and so on… Because the person who had a soul that was perfected enough to reach it would recognise it and know how to use it anyway. As a matter of fact, the cheerfulness with which the so-called perfects when going to die is attributed to this philosophy.

The Attitude of the Catholic Church

The Catholic Church had only one attitude in relation to the Cathars: This community must be removed from the face of the earth as soon as possible, eradicated, and exterminated forever.

Not all that we have described about the Cathar faith was necessary for the Church to make every effort in this regard. According to the Church, the Cathars were nothing good; even the Muslims were better than them.

Compared to the other communities of 11th and 12th centuries, the Cathars were highly civilised, loved to read and acquire knowledge, and were in favour of tolerance for everyone, regarding both religion and belief. Many of them were also interested in philosophy. They were attracted to literature, poetry in particular. They made every town and even the villages they lived in into a source of culture. Some of them knew Greek, Arabic, and Hebrew. They also taught Kabbalah to the students in their schools.

What could be more criminal than these?... How could the Catholic Church tolerate the existence of such a community in the countries it considered as its sphere of sovereignty? What was if not heresy, to read and write, to be interested in literature and philosophy?

It could be well, if that would be all!.... There were other contradictions that were unacceptable for the Church.

One of these was their observance of the principle of "equality" in all respects, even within their own communities. Indeed, as a by-product of this principle, women, like men, could rise to the highest religious levels in their own communities and become one of the leaders that they called "perfect". By giving them this qualification, they tended to put these ordinary people on a status equivalent with the pope.

It would have been fine if they had lived in a closed society just by themselves.... But they did not do so; they lived together with the Catholics, in the midst of them. They were influencing others and pushing false and dangerous ideas into their heads.

This behaviour was an open humiliation of the Holy Church and a trampling on all that is religious and sacred. Muslims, even Paganists, would not have done such things. The Cathars were the worst of all, far more harmful. Their eradication would have been the greatest service to God, the Church, and humanity.

They had introduced such a religious doctrine that it could easily replace faith for people who had no knowledge other than their beliefs. Indeed, in the Franciscan and Dominican monasteries in France, which were affiliated to the Catholic Church, tendencies in line with the heretical principles of the Cathars were being observed.

This would have been more than enough to remove from earth all those who embraces and supports the Cathar faith...

Nevertheless, Pope Innocent III, acting in good will, sent a few carefully selected Catholic priests to Occitania, thinking, *"Could it not be possible to make the Cathars learn the truth of religion and submit to the apostles of God through confession?"* [The original name of the region now and in this book called Languedoc is Occitania, the land of the Arrow; Occitanie in French. Languedoc actually means "Arrow language"].

The seniors of the region, especially Raymond de St. Gilles VI, Count of Toulouse, were quite pleased with the Cathars. They obstructed the Pope's attempts in this context.

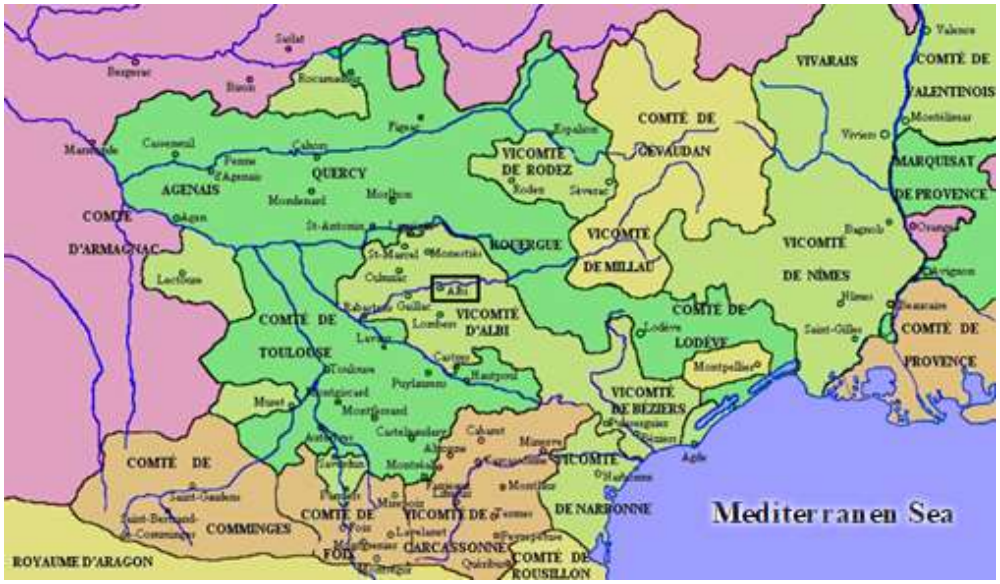
In 1207, the Pope appointed a legate to resolve the problem in the region. The following year, that vicar was murdered. It was rumoured that the murderer was a man of the Count of Toulouse. Hence the Pope held the Count of Toulouse directly responsible and excommunicated him.

It was obvious that this problem was not going to be resolved kindly. The Pope called for a crusade to the region.

This call, however, was not welcomed at all. Because he wanted the lives of thousands of people in return for a murdered clergyman; his pursuit of blood feud was not appropriate. So, the crusading army was formed with the participation of knights, soldiers and even ordinary people who sought religious rewards. All the inhabitants of Languedoc and the surrounding area were attacked.

This crusade is known as the **Albi Crusade** because the aforementioned fruitless attempt was made in the town of Albi in the region.

Below is a map of the political situation of the region at that time:



Source: http://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Croisade_des_Albigeois#mediaviewer/Fichier:Cartes_Occitanie.png

Death to Everyone!

The solution for the crusade on Languedoc had been found, but no experienced commander could be nominated to lead such an army. No one wanted to take on this job. The Pope, who wished to give a start to the crusade as soon as possible, appointed a Cistercian monk named Arnaud Amaury to command the expedition.

Why a monk and not the Knights Templar, who were directly under the Pope's command and considered as his own army?

Some believe that the Pope, having learnt that many of the Knights Templar had adopted the Cathar faith or were inclined towards it, attempted to keep them out. But this is an interpretation associated with the aftermath of the Knights Templar. Those who have done research on this subject have not been able to come up with an explanation based on documents.

The Crusader army first laid siege to the town of Béziers. The people were asked to surrender the Cathars. When the town resisted, the crusaders began their attack. They soon entered in the castle and began slaughtering anyone who stood in their way.

There is a heart-breaking incident related in connection with this attack:

Many of the unarmed people were frightened, escaped and took refuge in the churchyard. The crusaders hesitated to go straight on them. «They all look alike. How are we to recognise and distinguish which are really Christians and which are the heretics?» they asked.

Arnaud Amaury replied as «Kill them all... God recognises his own.»

After the devastation of the entire population of the town of Béziers, **Simon de Montfort** of Normandy, a mixed English and French aristocrat, assumed the command of the crusading armies. He could not refuse the Pope's attractive offer of the Count of Béziers and Carcassonne.

In the previous episode, Simon de Montfort was mentioned in connection with the Templars and the home politics of England. He is the son of this one.

There is no need to go into the details of the slaughter of the Cathars by the crusaders under the command of Simon de Montfort, how every town and every castle in Languedoc was captured one after the other, how Catholics and Catholics alike were massacred, how many so-called "Perfect" people were burnt alive at the stake.



Although many historical accounts related to that period remain buried in obscurity, there is a vast amount of information and documentation in this regard. Most of this accumulation has been obtained from the archives of the Vatican, which recently were allowed to be examined.



Source: http://catharesaude.e-monsite.com/pages/histoire/la-croisade-albigeoise-1.html

In those documents, it is written that only 10-15 out of every 100 people killed were Cathar believers. As an interpretation, it is stated that the Pope took this risk for the future of Christianity (!) and considered this loss as beneficial in the long run.

One of the most remarkable points is that the Perfects who were executed by having been burnt met this event without any resistance and even in the contrary with happiness. As they were being burned, they loudly recited hymns of their own faith. This is also attributed to the Cathar faith. Because they believed that they would leave the body created by Satan here, and move towards spiritual perfection in the next life.

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Simon de Montfort was too ambitious to be satisfied with what he was given. He wanted more, much more. He had an opportunity. He had the greatest power behind him, the Catholic Church. Why shouldn't he go further!... After Carcassonne and its surroundings, he set his sights on Toulouse. He also wanted to be the count over there. He pressed with all his might.

How unfortunate: A stone thrown by a woman with a slingshot over the walls of Toulouse hit Simon de Montfort's head, caused him to collapse and immediately die right there.



Source: https://fineartamerica.com/featured/simon-de-montfort-granger.html

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This mass slaughter, which was not confined to Languedoc but covered almost all the southern regions of France, lasted for about 35 years.

There were two reasons for this.

The first reason is based on the belief in a rumour. It goes like this: Those who took part in this crusade were entering the service of God. In return for this service, they would be saved from their sins and atoned for their crimes. God would of course reward them and give them a privileged place in heaven. This was the greatest reward a mortal could receive in his lifetime. Anyone who could get his hands on any instrument that could be used to kill a man, would rush to the region for this purpose. Many of them killed a few heretics (!) there, got rid of their sins, atoned for them, and returned to their villages with the peace of mind of believing that a good place had been reserved for them in heaven. Then he suggested to all his acquaintances to take advantage of this opportunity. Among them were those who had travelled to Languedoc once, and then returned, however sinned again, and sought redemption once more. This chain of assassinations continued until there was no one left to murder in the Languedoc region.

The second reason was that it was assumed that the Cathars, who did not like confrontation and were opposed to the killing of living creatures, would surrender or be surrendered immediately. But everywhere the crusading army met armed resistance. Moreover, the Kingdom of Aragon in the Iberian Peninsula also supported the Cathars. The Crusader army even felt the need to go on defence in the event of an occasional counter-attack.

The Treasure of the Cathars

The crusade on the Cathars was not motivated by the religious concerns of the Catholic Church only. When the Pope granted Simon de Montfort to be the Count of Béziers and Carcassonne, the goal changed considerably. At that time, the regions of Languedoc and Provence were being ruled by independent feudal lords. The king of France had long had his eye on these lands, and this was a very good opportunity for him

Therefore, beyond its religious character, this crusade converted to a political form. In fact, the political motive became more important than the religious one. The landowners in this region were quick to realise what this war was all about. Under the pretext of eradicating the Cathars, they wanted to grab their land. They resisted and defended themselves with all their might.

Some sources refer to a term as **"Cathar Knights"**. It is stated that among the Cathars, if not the so-called "Perfects", then the "believers", those who could hold a weapon, had started guerrilla-style counter-attacks, and that they were even more condemned for this. Since it was believed that by deliberately killing Christians, they were proving that they were in league with Satan.

However, there is another aspect of this matter... Some bandits gathered and formed gangs. They attacked here and there, killing people, looting their money and valuables. While doing so, they named themselves as "Cathar Knights" and wherever they attacked, they shouted that they would take revenge on the Pope. The Cathars were blamed for all such events. Catholics were made to hate Cathars even more.

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Pope Innocent III died in 1216.

The popes who came after him showed little interest in the slaughters that occurred in the region of Languedoc; they neither instigated the continuation of the expedition nor attempted to stop it. The arrow was already out of the bow. Henceforth, the popes became interested in the works performed by the **Dominican Order**, which had been founded before the crusade began to subjugate the inhabitants of Languedoc to the Catholic Church. In 1233, Pope Gregorius IX transformed this order into an organisation later known as the **Inquisition**.

The most powerful weapon of the Inquisition was burning of the guilty person alive at the stake. In this context, the basic principle was: ***"If the person to be burnt before God is sinless, the fire will not touch him. If he is burnt, his guilt is certain."***

Therefore, not only Cathars were burned at the stake by the Inquisition, but also many others who had been denounced as Cathars for one reason or another.

It seemed that this conflict had nothing to do with the Cathars anymore. The target was not the people, but the castles. There was no indiscriminate slaughter, and those who surrendered were left untouched. The Cathars captured alive were handed over to the Inquisition.

In addition to occupying the territories in the south of France, there was another goal: To seize the Cathar treasure, about which there had been much rumours.

The Cathars lived a simple life and had little interest in worldly matters, didn't they? Hence, how come there is such a thing as the "Cathar treasure"?

There are two different interpretations in this respect.

The first is that the Cathars had long spoken of having a treasure. Although the "treasure" they spoke of probably had a spiritual meaning, they must have been using the word as a symbol. In fact, as far as they are concerned, the concept of the Holy Grail was identical with it. However the Catholics, being accustomed to the clear and precise definitions of the Church, were unable to grasp and evaluate such a symbolic expression. They thought and believed that this community, which did not really had a clear entity, and shared everything equally among themselves, owned a valuable treasure which is hidden somewhere.

Thus, such a concept called the Cathar treasure, which was considered to exist in a concrete sense, emerged.

The second interpretation emphasises the actual existence of a treasure having direct material value. It goes like this:

"The Cathars either discovered it somewhere, hid it so that it would not fall into the hands of someone who, according to their beliefs, could use it for evil purposes, or entrusted it to someone for safekeeping."

Then it is added: *"For if it had been necessary at that time to protect a treasure, no better custodian could have been found than the Cathars."*

If the latter is true, who could have given it to them?

Everyone thinks primarily of the Templars. The treasure of the Templars is thus identified with that of the Cathars.

However, **Bertrand de Blanchefort**, who owned a gold mine in Languedoc in the 12th century, also comes to mind.

Bertrand de Blanchefort, whose name will be mentioned later as well, was the Grand Master of the Order of the Knights Templar for a period in mid-12th Century.

According to another version of this second interpretation, since the Cathars had everything in common and though they lived together with others, they formed a kind of commune among themselves. The money they earned from their labour was deposited in a common vault. They spent very little of it for common purposes. This money accumulated gradually increased over the generations, and eventually reached a size that could be described as a "treasure".

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King Philippe II of France, who indicated no interest in the crusade against the Cathars, died in 1223. His son Louis VIII was not as indifferent as his father. Ignoring the crusaders under the Pope's command, he attacked Toulouse and Carcassonne with his own army.

When Louis VIII died three years later, his son Louis VIII, who was only ten years old, was succeeded by **Queen Blanche de Castille**, who continued this attack in the south. Honorius III, who had been elected to the papacy, supported her, not caring that she was a woman. The Kingdom of France expanded southwards.

Montségur

In early 1240s, the Cathars had been almost wiped out completely, and were confined to a few number of castles.

One of these was the castle of Montségur which was on top of a rocky mass of rocks with an extremely severe slope. It was very difficult to get there. Due to being a very good shelter, according to some, the treasure of the Cathars had been hidden there for a long time, and the warriors called Cathar Knights would break out from there every now and then, attacked the crusaders and returned.



Source: http://www.catharcastles.info

Nonetheless, in one such night attack, Guillaume Arnaud, the head of the Inquisition, and six judges who were accompanying him were caught unprotected and murdered.

The only way to stop this was to take the Montségur castle as soon as possible.

The entire French army surrounded Montségur.

* * *

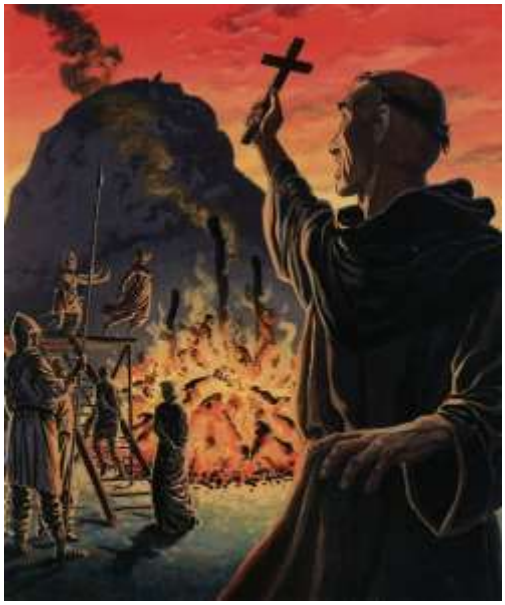
Now, there's a very interesting story in this respect, which may be regarded as somewhat romantic and even a tale.

There were only a few hundred people in the castle, not more.

The number of besiegers were more than ten thousand.

It was known that Montségur had no water supply. There were cisterns filled with rain and melting snow water, but how much water could be collected on this sharp hill, and how long could it last in summertime?

Hugues des Arcis, the commander of the French army, thought that attacking this fortress would be nothing than a suicide, and preferred to wait without doing anything. The inhabitants above over there would either die of hunger and thirst or surrender.



Source: https://www.dygest.co/zoe-oldenbourg/le-bucher-de-montsegur

A whole summer has passed.

Autumn has come and gone. Winter started.

Montségur was still resisting. The situation of the soldiers surrounding the hill was even more dreadful. Because the peasants of the neighbouring villages, who had formed an alliance with those in the castle, were not helping and supporting the soldiers at all.

In another account concerning this issue, which is also based on conjecture and for which no evidence could have been attained, it is stated as follows: *"This castle was connected to the plain by some secret tunnels. At night, there were people who came down and returned without being seen by anyone. Some of them were carrying water and food, while others were shooting the tents of the French army in the corners and running away."*

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In late winter of 1244, the people of Montségur decided to surrender.

Had their resistance been broken after all this time, or had the Cathars said, «They will burn us. It won't touch us. Let those who are not with us be saved», it is unknown.

Pierre Roger, the commander of the castle, and Hugues des Arcis, the commander of the French army, agreed on the conditions of surrender.

Accordingly, Cathars would be handed over to the Inquisition, and non-Cathars would not be tried here, even if they were deemed to have embraced the heretics or killed others in raids, and would be released.

Pierre Roger also asked for a fortnight of non-aggression to put this agreement into practice. After Hugues des Arcis agreed to this, a hush fell over the place.

For a fortnight, not even a head appeared on the castle walls, no sound was heard. It was as if the castle was empty. Hugues des Arcis, who had heard the rumour about the secret tunnels, even began to think for a moment that everyone in the castle had slipped away.

However, the promise was kept. There was no attack. The castle was surrendered to the French. About two hundred Cathars were burnt to a crisp in front of everyone.

According to another account, the Cathars came out of the castle at the end of the given time before everyone else, chanting and cheerfully marching towards the fire prepared to burn them.

Consequently, it was accepted that the crusade towards the Cathars had come to an end. According to the Catholic Church, this was so, but it took a little more fighting to put a definite conclusion to the political victory. With the capture of Puilaurens in 1256 and the castle of Quéribus in 1260, all Languedoc became owned by the King of France.

The previous owner of most areas in Languedoc (the area in relatively dark green colour on the map above in Page 256), Count Raymond VII of Toulouse, had died in 1249, leaving no male heir. All of his property was taken over by his daughter, who had married Alphonse de Poitier, brother of King Louis XIV of France.

In the meantime, the King had married **Margaret de Provénce**, who owned a large part of the Provence region in eastern Languedoc. His son, Louis XIV, alone inherited the entire estate. Moreover, because his uncle had no children, he inherited both Provence and Languedoc as well.

By this means, the political ideal that the kings of France had been pursuing for a long time became realised.

France now also had harbours in the south, in the Mediterranean. This opportunity would bring great economic benefits to the Kingdom.

Despite this was very good for the Kingdom of France, it was very bad for “certain others”. According to them, this place should have remained outside the sovereignty of the King of France. (We will mention these “certain others” later.)

What the Cathars did during that two weeks of non-aggression at Montségur still remains being a mystery.

According to some, it was during this period that the Perfects in the castle gave all the Cathars the Consolamentum, as required by their faith, and prepared them for earthly death. For this reason, they all marched joyfully towards the fire....

According to some, that may have been done, but in fact the non-aggression was used for a completely different purpose. During that period, the treasure of the Cathars was secretly smuggled out in small batches, and hidden in caves somewhere at the foothills of the Pyrenees. Indeed, after the surrender of the fortress of Montségur, nothing useful could have been found there, let alone the treasure.

The Last Cathar

Many scholars are of the opinion that the Cathars were not completely exterminated in the massacres that lasted until the middle of 13th Century.

In fact, both the crusade on Languedoc and the subsequent attacks only targeted important centres. Whereas, there were many small villages in the region. The Cathar faith flourished in those places too. However, the Cathars in the countryside had managed to keep to themselves, and kept their faith as concealed.

Therefore, the Cathars were intimidated, but this belief system did not disappear for good. Indeed, the adventures of **Guillaume Bélibaste** in early 14th Century indicates that the Cathars were still in existence at that time.



Of course, it is recognised that there were many others like him, but this one in particular has gained considerable fame and made his name written in history.

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Guillaume Bélibaste had committed a murder in his youth. In order to escape, he sought refuge with the Cathars. Among them he followed the usual course of education and was even qualified as a Perfect. Years later, he was caught in the town of Carcassonne, where he was seen trying to spread the Cathar faith again. He managed to find a way to escape to Spain before his trial.

In spite of the fact that he was a perfect, and therefore had to abstain from sexual intercourse, Guillaume Bélibaste was actually very fond of women, He used to gather women around him to educate them. While in Spain, he had an affair with the sister of another Perfect, who alike himself, had fled there. When she became pregnant, he married her off to a friend of his in order to get away with it. But he thought it would not be right for him to stay there, so he ran away, and returned to Languedoc.

He started doing the same job again. He was caught again. But this time he could not get away with it. He was taken into trial, and burned in a chateau near Carcassonne.

This story, which actually is quite long, has just been summarised here. This event has been regarded as an evidence that the Cathars were still in existence in 14th Century. This is what we wished to emphasise. Moreover, Guillaume Bélibaste was not the only person who was arrested, interrogated, tried and punished by the Inquisition because he was a Cathar; there were a lot of others, but this one in particular was very well known.

However, this event also points to another fact:

Even if the Cathars continued to exist at a later date, the adherents of this faith no longer preserved the original ritualistic principles of the community as before. Corruption had begun. All that remained were "a few scraps of different Christian beliefs" that contradicted the dogmas of the Catholic Church.

In other words, there were no more Cathars.

These last lines are, of course, an interpretation.

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Those who are fond of speculating on such matters make the following connection between the Cathars and the Templars:

"Even after the Cathars had been largely exterminated, the conflicts in and around Languedoc were fought only for the capture of the treasure. During the siege of Montségur, the Cathars handed it over to the Templars."

This, too, must be an interpretation, but it is told as if it is an absolute fact.

We will close here the subject of the Cathars, which we have explained as briefly as possible, and return to the Templars.

We can now speak of the "Treasure of the Templars" instead of the "Treasure of the Cathars". Thlis shall be so even if the hypothetical treasure of the Cathars is included in it or not.

The subject matter is always about the treasure... Everyone is after it!

One may wonder whether those “certain others” whom we will mention later on were after the same thing as well, or did they have different concerns?

We shall see.

Next Episode: Farewell Jerusalem