

The Family of Niort in the Albigensian Crusade and before the Inquisition*

WALTER L. WAKEFIELD

Part I

THE ROLE PLAYED IN THE ALBIGENSIAN CRUSADE (1209–1229) by the seigneurs of Niort of the *pays de Sault*, near the eastern end of the Pyrenees, and their fate at the hands of the Inquisition and the French crown thereafter have been recounted by various historians. Yet, if one examines the details of their narratives, curious discrepancies appear in statements about the family: their names, their marriage and feudal alliances, the description of their actions. Turning to the sources for clarification,¹ I found that not all the contradictory assertions arose from differing interpretations of what the documents have to tell us. Confusion has been engendered by the problem of names: the scribe's use in a document of only an initial, the appearance of the same baptismal name in generation after generation, occurrence of an identifying place-name in two or more localities, a change in appellation with change of property or habitat. Although the question of names is not the chief theme of this essay, it underlies several aspects of the interpretation of the activities of the Niort family which is offered here.

A few lines to set the scene: Somewhat before the middle of the twelfth century, a heresy reflecting the very old tradition of religious dualism made its appearance in western Europe. The heretics, known widely as Cathars and in southern France as the Albigensians, conceived of this world and all material things as the work of an evil power, who imprisoned therein souls fallen from the spiritual heavens of the good God. Redemption could be achieved only within the sect, which was identified

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¹ No sources not already known were discovered and all those consulted have been published, with the exception of the MS volumes of the Collection Doat of the Bibliothèque nationale, Vols. XXI–XXIV, which I used in microfilm. Regrettably, a copy of MS 609 of the Bibliothèque de Toulouse was not available. Yet perhaps the Niorts are not found among the thousands of names therein; in the work of scholars who have consulted that MS and who discuss the family, I have seen only one statement about them derived from it, and that is erroneous (see n. 172).

as the true church of Christ, while the Roman church and its doctrine were regarded as diabolic in inspiration. The Cathars comprised two groups: the "perfected heretics" — they preferred the name of "Good Men" or "Good Christians" — who, having received a baptism by imposition of hands (*consolamentum*), with its promise of forgiveness of sin, led lives of the strictest asceticism, constant prayer, and evangelism; and their "believers," who venerated and supported the Good Men (and women) and accepted their teaching, but deferred their own baptism until the end of life.

Perfected heretics were always few in comparison with Catholic clergy and monks; except in a few localities their believers were never more than a minority of the population. The habitual tolerance of the Midi gave them more freedom than in most other areas and the spiritual demeanor of the Good Men attracted favorable attention by contrast with the often worldly behavior of orthodox clergy. Increase in numbers and the allegiance of important families made the Cathars, to orthodox eyes, a threat to the very existence of the Roman church and its faith. In the first decade of the thirteenth century, after failure of various attempts to convert or repress the dissenters, Pope Innocent III (1198–1216) found the situation so grave that he proclaimed a crusade against heretics and their supporters. Warriors, largely recruited in northern France, made considerable conquests in 1209 and under the leadership of Simon of Montfort had further successes in following years. In 1218, however, after Montfort was killed, there was a resurgence of southern arms, led by Count Raymond VII of Toulouse, until King Louis VIII of France intervened decisively in 1226. Royal power frightened most of Languedoc into submission and wore down the last stubborn resistance, so that in April 1229 Raymond VII negotiated peace with the young Louis IX and the church, under terms heavily weighted in favor of his adversaries.

Military operations had not destroyed heresy. Thus, in 1233–1234 a new judicial tribunal of the church was charged with apprehending heretics and their supporters and bringing them to repentance or punishment. The Inquisition met serious resistance in early years. Regions which had come under control of the crown also fretted under alien rule. Religious and political resentments flared into war in 1240, when dispossessed nobles of Languedoc and fugitives from inquisitorial prosecution rallied to Raymond Trencavel as he sought to regain from the crown the viscounties of Béziers and Carcassonne which had been confiscated from his father three decades earlier. It was a brief, for them disastrous, conflict. Count Raymond VII fared no better in a short war against Louis IX in 1242. Thereafter, the assimilation of the southern region into the domains of the French monarch went forward without serious check for the remainder of the century, while the Inquisition in those years thwarted much of the expression of religious discontent.

The family of Niort had been established in Sault since the eleventh century. To the *castrum de Aniorto*² with which they were first

² *Castrum* usually designated a castle and associated village. According to Abbé Sabarthes, *Dictionnaire topographique du département de l'Aude* (Paris, 1912), p. 274, the modern Niort (Aude, canton of Belcaire, arrondissement of Limoux) has been moved from its medieval site. It must of course, be differentiated from the larger, Niort (*Niortum*) in the north (Deux-Sèvres).

identified, they added other strong places and made marriage alliances with well-established neighbors. The line of descent of the seigneurs found in twelfth century documents, whose names – William, William Bernard, Bertrand, Raymond, Uzalger – became traditional in the family, is impossible to trace;³ thus, the relationship of the Raymond, Bertrand, and William of Niort⁴ living at the beginning of the thirteenth century cannot be stated. The variety of their contacts, however, indicates the prominence of the family in southwestern Languedoc; they quarreled with the archbishop of Narbonne and lived on friendlier terms with their Trencavel overlords, as well as with the count of Foix, the viscount of Narbonne, the king of Aragon, and various nobles of the Languedoc.

William of Niort, who is mentioned in acts of 1193 and 1206, deserves our special attention because in his marriage to Esclarmonde of Laurac he fathered the sons who became well known to Albi-

³ A. J. Mahul, ed., *Cartulaire et archives des communes de l'ancien diocèse et de l'arrondissement administratif de Carcassonne*, 6 vols.-in-7 (Paris, 1859–1885), V, 117–9, contains extracts from a *Notice historique et généalogique* of the Niort family (Paris, 1853). Some of them are the same as those which follow; the accuracy of others is questionable. The following are all from charters published in Claude Devic and Joseph Vaissete, *Histoire générale de Languedoc*, ed. by Auguste Molinier et al., 16 vols. (Toulouse, 1872–1904), hereafter cited as *HGL*: William Bernard of Niort in 1082 (V, 677); Raymond of Niort, ca. 1095 (V, 740); Bernard and Uzalger of Niort, sons of Willelma, coholders of Niort and Castelpor with Peter, son of Imperia, ca. 1100 (V, 364); Uzalger, nephew of the viscount of Sault, 1145 (V, 1077); Raymond and William of Niort, sons of Agnes, and Odo of Niort, son of Adalmus, holding Niort and Castelpor in conjunction with two other persons in 1152 (V, 1128); William of Niort, 1163 (V, 1273); Odo of Niort, 1171 and 1172 (VIII, 277, 285); Ermessinde of Niort, 1189 (VIII, 1844). Vaissete mentions William of Niort in connection with Niort, Castelpor, and Belfort in 1178 (VI, 67), but I do not know the document on which this is based. The *vallis d'Anior* was included with the castrum of Balaguer and the region of Chercorb in a grant to Miro of Tonneins in 1167 (VIII, 271–2).

⁴ A Raymond of Niort is mentioned as of 1190 in Jean Guiraud, *Cartulaire de Notre Dame de Prouille, précédé d'une étude sur l'albigéisme languedocien au XIIe et XIIIe siècles*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1907), I, CCLXIV; and in the same author's *Histoire de l'Inquisition au moyen âge*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1935–1938), I, 325; II, 8. He also appears in a charter of 1191 (*HGL*, VIII, 411). Bertrand of Niort is named in charters of 1202 and 1209 (*ibid.*, cols. 473–4, 475, 583–4). William of Niort is found in an act of 1193 (*ibid.*, col. 426) and another of 1206, printed in *Layettes du Trésor des chartes*, ed. by A. Teulet, J. de Laborde, E. Berger, H. F. Delaborde, 5 vols. (Paris, 1866–1902), I, No. 812 (hereafter cited as *Layettes*).

gensian crusaders and to inquisitors. He has often been confused with his son of the same name, but his identity is established by depositions in a royal inquest of 1258 concerning a petition of his daughter, Esclarmonde of Ginoules, for return of confiscated property,⁵ in which four of his sons – Bernard Oth, Gerald, William Bernard, and William – are also named. Another son, Uzalger, has hitherto escaped notice, while about a seventh child, Raymond, there has been much confusion.⁶

William of Niort's wife, Esclarmonde, was a daughter of a ruling family of Laurac;⁷ her brother, Aimery, had by 1200 inherited the titles of lord of that place and of Montréal,⁸ and was regarded as "more powerful and more noble than anyone in the land except the counts." It was a family deeply committed to heresy. Esclarmonde's widowed mother, Blanche, by 1200 was a "garbed heretic" (*heretica induta*), as Catholics called one who had received baptism from the Cathars and donned the black robe of the perfected. It was thus that her grandson, Bernard Oth, described her and one of her daughters to the inquisitors in 1242:

He said that Blanche, mother of Aimery of Montréal and grandmother of this witness, and Mabilia, her daughter, were garbed heretics making their residence openly with other heretics at Laurac, and there this witness was taken in his childhood and reared with Blanche, the heretic, for four or five years . . . That was some forty or more years ago.¹⁰

Another of Blanche's daughters, Geralda, married a lord of Lavaur, a center of heretical activity. Esclarmonde, as will appear later, was devoted to the Cathars. Laurac and Montréal under Aimery were notorious for heresy.¹¹

⁵ *Recueil des historiens des Gaules et de la France*, XXIV (ed. by Léopold Delisle [Paris, 1904]), 564, 567, 577 (hereafter *RHF*); *HGL*, VII, pt. 2, cols. 363, 396.

⁶ Bernard Oth gave the names of his brothers except Raymond to inquisitors in 1242 and spoke of Raymond in 1245: Bibliothèque nationale, Collection Doat, XXIV, ff. 96 v, 99 v–100 (hereafter Doat).

⁷ Her mother, Blanche, was either daughter of Sicard of Laurac who appears frequently in charters between 1138 and 1163 (see index of *HGL*, Vol. V) or was married to his son, Sicard, mentioned in 1167 (*HGL*, VIII, 270; *Layettes*, I, No. 207). The biographical notice mentioned in n. 3 erroneously makes Esclarmonde a daughter of the comital house of Foix. ⁸ *HGL*, VIII, 1893.

⁹ Peter of Vaux-de-Cernay, *Hystoria albigensis*, ed. by Pascal Guébin and Ernest Lyon, 3 vols. (Société de l'histoire de France, CCCCXXII, CCCCXXIII, CCCCXXLII [Paris, 1926–1939]), I, 138 (hereafter Cernay). Cf. William of Tudela's words: "N'ot plus ric cavalier en Tolza ni el comtat / Ni plus larc depesaire, ni de major barnat" (*La Chanson de la croisade albigeoise*, ed. and trans. by Eugène Martin-Chabot, 3 vols. Les Classiques de l'histoire de France au moyen âge, XIII, XXIV, XXV [Paris, 1931–1964]), I, 164 (hereafter *Chanson*).

¹⁰ Doat, XXIV, ff. 83 v–4 v.

¹¹ M. H. Vicaire, *Saint Dominic and His Times*, trans. by Kathleen Pond (New York, 1964), pp. 101–6. Guiraud (*Cartulaire*, I, CCXLI, CCLL, and *Inquisition*, I,

William of Niort died between 1226 and 1234; Esclarmonde was still alive in 1240.¹² Neither the dates nor order of birth of their children are clear. Bernard Oth, perhaps the oldest, was born shortly before 1200, as is shown by his remarks about his childhood made in 1242 and confirmed by his further statement at that time that he had been a believer of heretics for some 30 years, that is, since about 1212.¹³ A young man would be apt to make a religious commitment at about age 14, when he was deemed to pass into manhood.¹⁴ He probably married within two or three years after 1212, for he had a son old enough to ride with a raiding party in 1232¹⁵ and he himself was in battle by 1218.¹⁶ In that year, either Gerald or William married.¹⁷ Their brother, Raymond, was killed between 1223 and 1227.¹⁸ The other brothers and the sister lived until the decade of the 1250's.¹⁹ Taking all in all, it may be con-

286, 290, 295) erroneously supposes that another of Blanche's children was Arnold of Mazerolles, perhaps through misreading a sentence in Doat, XXIII, f. 164: "Veniebant ibi . . . Aymericus de Monteregeali et Raines de Mazairolis et Petrus de Mazairolis et Arnaudus de Mazairolis, fratres." Vicaire (*Saint Dominique*, p. 99) seems to accept Guiraud's statement.

¹² He is mentioned in a letter of 1226 (*HGL*, VIII, 819) but spoken of as deceased in 1234 (Doat, XXI, f. 38–38 v). On Esclarmonde, see n. 112, below.

¹³ Doat, XXIV, f. 96 v.

¹⁴ Youths often took oaths of fealty at 14 or 15 (for examples, see *HGL*, VII, 136; *Layettes*, II, No. 3013). The Council of Toulouse (1229) required an oath abjuring heresy of all males at 14, which was often spoken of as the beginning of the age of discretion. See also Ch. DuCange, *Glossarium mediae et infimae latinitatis*, 7 vols. (Paris, 1840–1850), I, s.v. *ablactatio*. ¹⁵ See p. 110, below.

¹⁶ See pp. 103, 104, below. References to his marriage place it only at some time during the Crusade: *RHF*, XXIV, 579, 585.

¹⁷ Jorge Ventura Subirats, "El Catarismo en Cataluña," *Boletí de la nuova Academia de bones lletres de Barcelona*, XXVIII (1960), 96 (hereafter *BNABLB*), states that William married Sanchia, sister of Count Nuno Sanç of Roussillon, and became the count's vicar for Cerdanya and Confluent, an assertion he finds supported by William's witness to acts of Nuno Sanç (see also *HGL*, VIII, 898–9). However, Guiraud in his *Cartulaire*, I, CCLVII–CCLVIII, and *Inquisition*, I, 324, says that it was Gerald of Niort who married Sanchia. A pertinent act published in Pierre de Marca, *Marca hispanica, sive limes, hoc est geographica et historica descriptio Cataloniae, Ruscinonis et circumjacentium populorum*, ed. by E. Baluze (Paris, 1688), col. 1424, gives only "G. de Aniorto." I can only add the complicating factor, unnoticed by either author, that William's wife was named Cavilia and that she admitted to being a believer of heretics: Doat, XXIV, f. 97.

¹⁸ See p. 104, below.

¹⁹ When Gerald died in 1255 or 1256, some of his warrior brothers were still alive (see Part II). Probably Bernard Oth was dead by 1258, when his wife petitioned

cluded that William and Esclarmonde's children were born within a period from a few years before to a few years after the turn of the century.

The center of the Niorts' position was in the region of Sault, a high plateau cut by deep gorges, lying between the upper valley of the Aude River and the county of Foix, where the strong places no doubt jointly held by parents and children, brothers and cousins²⁰ dominated the area along the Rébenty River.²¹ Income was also derived from arable lands on the Sault plateau and in the Lauragais.²² Furthermore, the fortunes of war brought to Bernard Oth of Niort the lordship of Laurac and of the castrum of Besplas, west of Laurac, and probably a share also in Montréal during the Crusade.²³ In many of these regions, the Niorts had a relatively free hand after the death of their overlord, Raymond Roger Trencavel, in 1209, for his son was an infant in exile and Simon of Montfort's conquests came no closer to their chief stronghold than Limoux.

The Niorts in the Albigensian Crusade

There is no basis in the sources for the assertions sometimes made that Gerald and Bernard Oth of Niort fought on the side of the crusaders between 1209 and 1212;²⁴ indeed, none of the brothers

for return of confiscated property: *HGL*, VII, pt. 2, cols. 347, 387; *RHF*, XXIV, 579, 585, 604. On Uzalger, see p. 113, n. 90, below.

²⁰ Gerald of Niort surrendered to the king in 1240 in the name of himself, his mother, his brothers, and his nephews (*HGL*, VIII, 1047; see also Part II).

²¹ Niort and Castelpor were their oldest possessions (see n. 3). Others held during and after the Crusade were Dourne, near the present Fontanès, and the *bastida Rochani*, today Lapeyre (on them, see Sabarthès, *Dictionnaire topographique*, pp. 119, 555). See also n. 23. The extensive possessions in the same area acquired by a Raymond of Niort who, since he lived at least until 1258, must be distinguished from Raymond, son of William and Esclarmonde, will be enumerated below (see Part II of this essay).

²² See n. 120.

²³ See p. 105, below. At some point, Bernard Oth also held the castrum of Roquefort, but surrendered it to the French commander, Humbert of Beaujeu (Doat, XXIV, ff. 101–101v). His recollection of the date (1234) was probably faulty, since Humbert apparently was in Languedoc from 1226 to 1229 and not again until 1240.

²⁴ Guiraud, *Cartulaire*, I, CCLVII; *Inquisition*, I, 324; II, 8; Pierre Belperron, *La Croisade contre les Albigeois et l'union du Languedoc à la France (1209–1249)* (Paris, 1942, pp. 190–1); Zoé Oldenbourg, *Massacre at Montségur: A History of the Albigensian Crusade*, trans. by Peter Green (New York, 1961), p. 281. None of these statements are documented. The pen of Martin-Chabot also slipped when he noted that Bernard Oth helped heretics to escape from Castelnaudary in 1211 (*Chanson*, II, 60, n. 2). The episode took place in 1220–1221, when Amaury of Montfort besieged Raymond VII, as Bernard Oth made clear (Doat, XXIV, ff. 85–85v). Jean Duvernoy ("Guilhabert de Castres," *Cahiers d'études cathares*, XVIII^e année,

was old enough for effective service then. It is understandable that their father would not throw himself into a war in which southern leadership hardly existed, when even his powerful brother-in-law, Aimery of Montréal, wavered in his course, twice making peace with Simon of Montfort in 1209–1210. William of Niort, however, seems to have come to some non-belligerent agreement with Simon of Montfort.

That is suggested by the words of Archbishop Peter Amiel of Narbonne, who recalled hearing conversations in which Montfort reproached “W. of Niort” for committing neither son, daughter, or brother to the Catholic faith, to which William replied that “it was not within his power to do so and asked the count not to vex him on the subject, declaring that he was always at peace outside his own home.”²⁵ Such a conversation would be possible during a truce. Even so, the brutality of the crusaders who captured Lavaur in 1211 would have been a cruel shock. They hanged Aimery of Montréal, who had broken his truce with Simon of Montfort to take command of the defense, stoned his sister, Geralda, to death in a pit, put 80 of the garrison to the sword, and burned some 300 or 400 heretics who were captured there.²⁶

We have no evidence that William of Niort took the field until 1218.²⁷ In Autumn of that year he was with the count of Foix on a raid through the Lauragais and a little later he was wounded while fighting under Raymond VII at Baziège.²⁸ Bernard Oth also had

2d ser., No. 34 [1967], 36) associates the incident with a siege of Castelnaudary by Louis VIII in 1226, although the king is not reported to have met resistance there (see Puylaurens, ch. XXXIV, p. 150). Fernand Niel, *Montségur: le site, son histoire* (Grenoble, 1962), has Guilabert at Castelnaudary in both the siege of 1211 and that of 1220–1221.

²⁵ Doat, XXI, ff. 34 v–5; printed in Célestin Douais, *Documents pour servir à l'histoire de l'Inquisition dans le Languedoc*, 2 vols. (Publications de la Société de l'histoire de la France, CCXCIC, CCC [Paris, 1900]), I, lxiii. On p. lxiv, Douais inexplicably identifies the “W. of Niort” of the archbishop’s statement as Bernard Oth, and Guiraud follows him in that error (*Inquisition*, II, 8).

²⁶ The incident is described in *Chanson*, I, 164–7; Cernay, I, 223–8; and in William of Puylaurens, *Cronica*, ed. by Bessyier in “Guillaume de Puylaurens et sa chronique,” in *Troisième Mélanges d'histoire du moyen âge*, ed. by A. Luchaire (Bibliothèque de la Faculté des lettres de Paris, XVIII [Paris, 1904]), pp. 132–3 (hereafter Puylaurens).

²⁷ A witness in a later royal inquest did speak of an undated action in which he saw men “making war on the count [of Montfort] from the *roca de Aniorto*” (*HGL*, VII, pt. 2, col. 373).

²⁸ *Chanson*, III, 258–61, 276–7. The younger William’s participation in these events is unlikely if he was in attendance on Count Nuno Sanç in 1219, as stated by Ventura Subirats (see n. 17).

military experience at that time, for it is said that a captured French knight was taken to Niort as hostage for Bernard Oth, a prisoner of the other side.²⁹ One might assume that all the Niorts then joined in the reconquest of 1220–1226, although the available evidence pertains only to Bernard Oth and his brother, Raymond. The latter was mortally wounded between 1223 and 1227, as Bernard Oth disclosed in testimony to inquisitors in 1245:

He said that when Raymond of Roquefeuil,³⁰ knight, brother of this witness, lay seriously wounded at the stronghold [*fortia*] of Couiza, in upper Razès . . . this witness came there to see the said invalid and found there Benedict of Termes and his companion, heretics, who hereticated and consoled the invalid. . . .³¹ And this witness and the other persons aforesaid and several more were at the burial of the aforesaid consoled man, who was placed in a crypt,³² since the whole land was under interdict. As to the time, [it was] from eighteen to twenty-two years ago.³³

Bernard Oth had already been at Castelnaudary when it was besieged by Amaury of Montfort in 1220,³⁴ and, in the southern resurgence thereafter, he took possession of Laurac.³⁵ He probably

²⁹ Puylaurens, ch. XXIX, pp. 144–5.

³⁰ Roquefeuil (*Roquajouill*), department of Aude, not to be confused with Roquefeuil (*Rochafolio*, *Rochafolhs*), department of Gard, near Montpellier, which about this time was also held by seigneurs named Raymond. One of them took a vigorous part in the Crusade (*Chanson*, II, 56–9, esp. 56, n. 3; see also the wrong identification of the place in the index [III, 400]). He surrendered to Louis VIII in 1226 (*Layettes*, II, No. 1747).

³¹ Here omitted are a description of the ceremony, names of three men who came with Bernard Oth from Montréal, and mention of a legacy from Raymond to the Cathars, which his brother refused to pay (see Part II of this essay).

³² *Atauch* = *ataud* (Span.).

³³ Doat, XXIV, ff. 99v–100v. Guiraud, *Cartulaire*, I, CXXXVI, gives the date of Raymond's death as 1226, but as 1227 on p. CLV.

³⁴ See n. 24.

³⁵ Laurac had been held by the crusader, Hugh of Lacy, from about 1210 (Auguste Molinier, "Catalogue des actes de Simon et d'Amauri de Montfort," *Bibliothèque de l'École des chartes*, XXXIV [1873], 470 [No. 84] [hereafter *BEC*]) and was probably recovered by southern forces in 1221, when they also took Castelnaudary from Hugh (*HGL*, VII, 65–6). Bernard Oth gave shelter to heretics at Laurac between 1222 and 1226 (Doat, XXI, f. 48v; XXIV, ff. 84v–5; 119–119v) and in 1226 called himself seigneur of the place (*HGL*, VIII, 819–20).

also shared in command or helped to garrison Montréal after it was retaken, for a Bernard Oth of Montréal is mentioned in a document of 1224.³⁶

The intervention of Louis VIII in the Crusade in 1226 drastically altered the Languedocian situation. Many townsmen and seigneurs despaired of further resistance, among them Count Nuno Sanç of Roussillon, neighbor of the Niorts and father-in-law of one of them.³⁷ Even though the siege of Avignon occupied the king during the summer, by September most of Languedoc had been brought to heel without further fighting.

Among those who offered to capitulate were the Niorts. Bernard Oth wrote to Louis VIII in the name of himself, his father, and his brothers offering to negotiate terms for yielding their numerous possessions to his will and pledging their military aid against his enemies. Furthermore, Bernard Oth stated, the seigneurs of Cabaret were ready to follow his lead,³⁸ a proposal explained by the fact that he was married to Nova, daughter of Peter Roger of Cabaret.³⁹ Although the letter is undated except for the year, Vaissete and others have asserted that this was among the earliest of attempts to surrender.⁴⁰ No document explicitly attests that it was accepted, and the capitulation of Cabaret did not occur at that time. Nonetheless, there is reason to believe that Bernard Oth did change sides in 1226.

The evidence comes from testimony of several persons in an inquiry into Niort affairs, made in 1234, when an archdeacon asserted that only Bernard Oth's faithfulness to church and king and the armed force he commanded after the death of the king persuaded the witness not to flee the land,⁴¹ a member of the Knights of St. John at Pexiora asserted that the seigneur of Niort so strongly aided the church and furthered the faith that his acts led "to the death of a thousand heretics,"⁴² and

³⁶ *HGL*, VIII, 811. Montréal had been in the possession of Alan of Roucy until it was recaptured in 1221 (Molinier, "Catalogue," *BEC*, XXXIV, [1873], 470 [No. 83]; *HGL*, VII, 65–6). Bernard Oth was seen there with heretics not long afterward (Doat, XXI, ff. 35v, 39v–40).

³⁷ Count Nuno offered his submission on April 29 and completed it in October: *HGL*, VIII, 831–2; *Layettes*, II, Nos. 1768, 1806; Marca, *Marca hispanica*, col. 1411.

³⁸ *HGL*, VIII, 819–20; *Layettes*, II, No. 1775.

³⁹ *HGL*, VII, pt. 2, cols. 347, 387; *RHF*, XXIV, 579, 585, 604.

⁴⁰ *HGL*, VI, 600. Teulet (*Layettes*, II, No. 1775) and Charles Petit-Dutaillis (*Étude sur la vie et le règne de Louis VIII [1187–1226]* [Paris, 1894], p. 498) date it at the end of April.

⁴¹ Doat, XXI, ff. 41v–2.

⁴² *Ibid.*, f. 38.

other deponents testified about the capture of heretics at Laurac with Bernard Oth's assistance.⁴³ William Solier, a recent convert from Catharism, reported that among the heretics, Bernard Oth was regarded as a great traitor, "since the cause of heresy was gravely damaged by what he did."⁴⁴ Yet it may be that the shift of policy was only momentary, made in expectation of arranging peace with Louis VIII, and that the persecution of heretics attributed to Bernard Oth grew out of a local quarrel; that the offer to surrender had led to recriminations from the Good Men at Laurac, who, in retaliation were driven from the town. This surmise finds support in an incident affecting Raines of Mazerolles, who, when ill, could find no Cathar at Laurac to console him about 1228 and had to travel to Toulouse in search of the consolamentum.⁴⁵

However, Bernard Oth's defection was of short duration. When royal troops attacked Cabaret in 1228 or early in 1229,⁴⁶ according to his own testimony Bernard Oth held the fortress for a month. He found there the heretical deacon, Gerald Abit, and companion and arranged their escort to safety by his father-in-law, Peter Roger of Cabaret, before surrendering.⁴⁷

It may be conjectured that the affair at Cabaret lay at the root of a quarrel between Bernard Oth and his wife, Nova, for soon after the war ended, the knight was determined to rid himself of her, as we learn from the testimony of a monk of Villelongue, near Limoux, in 1234. He reported that Nova had told him that her husband ordered her to accept the consolamentum and become a perfected heretic (which would effectively end the marriage), threatening her with imprisonment if she refused. She fled and never dared return.⁴⁸ The archbishop of Narbonne also asserted that Bernard Oth was ready to use less creditable measures. In 1234, Peter Amiel deposed that Bernard Oth had come to him with the proposition that he arrange for Nova to be arrested in the company of heretics, if, in return, he would be allowed to divorce her. It would be easy to do, he said, "since day and night, at every hour, they abide with her in my hall." The archbishop refused the bargain.⁴⁹

⁴³ One was an eye-witness (*ibid.*, f. 40); another had heard the story from clergy of Laurac (*ibid.*, f. 49–49 v). ⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, f. 43.

⁴⁵ Raines died in Toulouse before he could receive baptism. The date was probably 1228 (Doat, XXI, ff. 223 v–4), perhaps 1229 (*ibid.*, f. 150). Bernard Oth was thus mistaken when he remembered Raines having a part in events as late as 1233 (*ibid.*, XXIV, ff. 86, 91 v, 102–102 v).

⁴⁶ Bernard Oth recalled the date as about 1229 (Doat, XXIV, f. 90–90 v). Another man who was there remembered it as 1228 or 1229 (*ibid.*, XXIII, ff. 235 v–6). Guiraud gives 1229 (*Cartulaire*, I, CCXXV; *Inquisition*, I, 271), Belperron implies that it was 1227 (*La Croisade*, p. 384), Vaisette admits uncertainty (*HGL*, VI, 625).

⁴⁷ Peter Roger fled to Roussillon and later had a house at Niort, where he died about 1240: *HGL*, VII, pt. 2, cols. 345, 347, 387; *RHF*, XXIV, 604; Doat, XXIII, f. 303.

⁴⁸ Doat, XXI, f. 44–44 v.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, f. 35 v; Douais, *Documents*, I, lxii–lxiii.

Whatever their attitude had been in 1226, the warrior brothers of Niort did not easily accept the peace arranged by Count Raymond VII of Toulouse with Louis IX in April 1229. A council was convened by Cardinal Romanus, papal legate, at Toulouse in November 1229, to legislate for the peace and the pursuit of heretics, at which the assembled prelates demanded from the nobility of Languedoc an oath to combat enemies of the church, naming particularly Gerald of Niort and William of Pierrepertuse, who were to be held excommunicate and disinherited unless they submitted in 15 days.⁵⁰ The response of the two men is not known. Also, at the end of the legislative session, Cardinal Romanus conducted an inquisition of heresy, featured by the testimony of a converted heretic, William of Solier.⁵¹ Clerics who were present would later declare that Bernard Oth was gravely inculpated at that time, but again the result is unknown.⁵²

Violence did not disappear when the war ended, for heretics were pursued and burned when apprehended; their partisans struck back against persecutors and informers when they could,⁵³ and attempts were made to recover lands lost during the war. Bernard Oth of Niort had a part in these disturbances, for he became involved in armed skirmishes in 1230 against retainers of Bishop Fulk of Toulouse, who was seeking to take possession of the village of Verfeil.

⁵⁰ Guiraud in one place writes that Raymond of Niort was excommunicated at Toulouse, in another that Gerald, Bernard Oth, and Raymond suffered the ban (*Inquisition*, I, 324; II, 7–8). Lea ignores William of Pierrepertuse in saying that two of the Niort brothers were excommunicated (*Inquisition*, II, 27–8). Ventura Subirats expands the error by saying that all the Niorts were condemned at Toulouse as “receivers” of heretics (“El Catarismo en Cataluña,” *BNAFLB*, XXVIII [1960], 85.

⁵¹ Puylaurens, ch. XXXVIII, p. 155.

⁵² Doat, XXI, ff. 35v, 37; Douais, *Documents*, I, lxiii. The names of individuals who were given the penance of pilgrimage to the Holy Land occasionally are disclosed when later processes recall the sentence of 1229 (e.g., the case of Alaman of Roaix in Douais, *Documents*, II, 69, n. 2) but there is nothing of this sort in subsequent prosecutions of the Niorts.

⁵³ The chronicle of William Pelhisson is the chief source for events of these years. It has been twice edited: by Charles Molinier, *De fratre Guillelmo Pelisso veterimo inquisitionis historica* (Le Puy, 1880); and by Célestin Douais, *Les Sources de l'histoire de l'Inquisition dans le Midi de la France au XIIIe et XIVe siècles* (Paris, 1881), pp. 81–118. It will be cited as Pelhisson with the names of the respective editors. For events of 1230–1233, see Pelhisson-Molinier, pp. 9–13; Pelhisson-Douais, pp. 87–92.

In one affray, Bernard Oth was wounded, heretics were summoned to his bedside, and the result was to confirm his return to heretical sympathies, if, indeed, in his heart he had ever abandoned them.

Verfeil had long been notorious for heresy. In 1145, St. Bernard had cursed its inhabitants for their infidelity,⁵⁴ which deterred them little, for at the beginning of the thirteenth century it was said that few died there without the consolamentum.⁵⁵ During the Crusade, the village had been granted to Bishop Fulk of Toulouse, a donation confirmed by Louis VIII in 1226 and again in the peace of 1229.⁵⁶ Even then, however, affection for heresy, dislike of Bishop Fulk, and fear for their rights among inhabitants of Verfeil inspired such harassment of the bishop and his clerics in 1230 that their armed protection was necessary.⁵⁷

Bernard Oth's renewed role in opposition to the church is revealed when various bits of evidence are assembled. From his own words, we know that he was wounded in the head in 1230, so gravely that his life was despaired of, and was carried to Laurac, where Good Men were summoned to be prepared to console him.⁵⁸ Others tell us that the weapon was an arrow and the scene Verfeil.⁵⁹ When physicians assured the wounded man that he would recover, the heretics were sent to the greater security of Besplas.⁶⁰ News of their presence spread,⁶¹ a *bailli* of the count of Toulouse sought to arrest them, but was turned away,⁶² and a *bailli* of the archbishop of Narbonne was warned against similar ventures, while persons abused by Bernard Oth's men laid complaints in the courts of the count and the archbishop.⁶³ Agents of these two also approached Laurac, only to be repulsed by force.⁶⁴ However, a

⁵⁴ Puylaurens, ch. I, p. 120.

⁵⁵ Guiraud, *Cartulaire*, I, CCXXX, quoting Bibl. de Toulouse, MS 609, f. 213.

⁵⁶ Molinier, "Catalogue", *BEC*, XXXIV (1873), 470 [No. 80]; *HGL*, VIII, 888. The grant in 1226 and 1229 was jointly to the bishop and to the son of Odo of Lyliers.

⁵⁷ Puylaurens, ch. XXXVIII, pp. 156, 157. The bishop blamed the count of Toulouse for his troubles. ⁵⁸ Doat, XXIV, f. 86 v.

⁵⁹ Doat, XXI, ff. 35, 37, 42 v; Douais, *Documents*, I, lxii.

⁶⁰ Testimony of Bernard Oth, 1242 (Doat, XXIV, ff. 86 v—7 v). The archbishop of Narbonne said that all Bernard Oth's brothers came to his bedside (Doat, XXI, f. 35; Douais, *Documents*, I, lxii). Bernard Oth mentions only the presence of his mother.

⁶¹ Testimony of persons who had known that the heretics were at Besplas, one by hearing of it from a physician who attended Bernard Oth (Doat, XXI, ff. 38 v, 40—40 v).

⁶² Testimony of the prior of Le Mas-Saintes-Puelles, who had accompanied the *bailli* (Doat, XXI, f. 40 v). Contrary to Guiraud (*Inquisition*, II, 103), inquisitors had no role in these acts; indeed, none as yet had been appointed.

⁶³ Doat, XXI, ff. 44 v—5, 45 v, 46.

⁶⁴ The archbishop of Narbonne in 1234 reminded the bishop of Toulouse that no one knew better than he the culpable acts of Bernard Oth at Laurac and Besplas (Doat, XXI, f. 35; Douais, *Documents*, I, lxii). Other persons also spoke of the wounding of the count's *bailli* at Laurac (Doat, XXI, ff. 40 v, 45, 47).

French knight, Andrew Calvet, recently royal seneschal for Toulouse, happened to capture a heretic, who, according to Archbishop Peter Amiel's testimony of 1234, confessed that he was one who had attended the wounded man at Laurac. In retaliation, Andrew Calvet was ambushed and slain.⁶⁵

After 1230, Bernard Oth was again a militant defender of the Cathars. His religious partisanship and that of his family inevitably sharpened their already existing rivalry with nearby ecclesiastics over claims to property. Their chief opponent in this respect was the archbishop of Narbonne. One may believe that in pursuing his interests as a seigneur and his duty as a prelate, the archbishop would have disturbed the Niorts, even if they had not set their faces against the new order and made him a target for harassment. Out of that feud, however, developed the subsequent prosecution of the Niorts by the Inquisition.

At best, the lords of Niort and the archbishop of Narbonne could have existed only on terms of simmering hostility. There were conflicts of economic interest, since property and churches in Niort territory belonged to the archbishop and chapter of Narbonne,⁶⁶ and Peter Amiel (1225–1245) was a vigorous, strong-willed man, determined to be master in his see. He had full measure of the hatred of heresy that characterized prelates who came to office during the Crusade, and he could expect, moreover, that confiscations would benefit himself and his church, because of a favorable agreement to that end with Louis VIII in 1226.⁶⁷ In earlier days, he had already acquired various properties confiscated from heretics in Béziers, some of which he had recently transferred to his sister.⁶⁸

⁶⁵ Doat, XXI, ff. 35–35v; Douais, *Documents*, I, lxii. A Peter of Saint Ferréol was rumored to have taken part in the assassination (*HGL*, VII, pt. 2, cols. 333, 343, *RHF*, XXIV, 546, 552). Douais (*Documents* I, lxiii, n. 2) and Petit-Dutaillis (*Étude sur Louis VIII*), p. 318, n. 7, correct Vaissete for calling Andrew Calvet seneschal of Toulouse (*HGL*, VI, 659), but he is named as such in a charter of 1228 (*Layettes*, II, No. 1980). Guiraud gives the date of the wounding of Bernard Oth as 1232 (*Inquisition*, II, 91); Duvernoy puts it in Autumn 1226 ("Guilhabert de Castres," *Cahiers d'études cathares*, XVIIIe année, 2d ser., No. 34 [1967], 37). However, Bernard Oth's statement of the date is supported by the testimony of the archbishop on the murder of Andrew Calvet and confirmed by William of Puy-laurens, who wrote that Andrew was killed soon after the Council of Toulouse ended (ch. XXXVIII, p. 155).

⁶⁶ Numerous documents in the archives of the church of Narbonne pertained to property in regions where the Niorts also held land: J. Tissier, "Les Sources de l'histoire de Languedoc d'après les Inventaires des archives narbonnaises," *Bulletin de la commission archéologique de Narbonne*, XI (1911).

⁶⁷ *Layettes*, II, No. 1808; Richard Wilder Emery, *Heresy and Inquisition in Narbonne* (New York, 1941), pp. 69–72.

⁶⁸ Molinier, "Catalogue," *BEC*, XXXIV (1873), 469, 475, 496 (Nos. 76, 97, 186).

Within a year or two after 1230, Archbishop Peter Amiel was told that several heretics were sheltered at Niort, and in 1234 he knew that there had been more than 30 at Dourne, because, he said, "to ascertain the fact, this year we sent our spies (*exploratores*) and thus we found it to be true."⁶⁹ His demand that they be handed over for trial was ignored. He even attempted personally to interrogate Esclarmonde of Niort:

We went in person to Roquefeuil, a castrum of these Niorts, and found there Esclarmonde, mother of Bernard Oth and his brothers, announcing to her that she bore herself less than well in the Catholic faith, that we wished to hear and inquire of her whether she knew the articles of faith, for she was much defamed in that respect. She answered us that she had a better faith than we and all the prelates of the world and would make no other reply, and so we left her, wrathful beyond measure.⁷⁰

Then, in Autumn or Winter of 1232, violence erupted. Our only information is that supplied by Gregory IX on the basis of what he had been told by the archbishop of Narbonne, neither of them one to minimize a grievance. According to that account, just as Archbishop Peter Amiel was preparing to travel to the Holy See, an armed party led by William, Gerald, William Bernard, and Bertrand, son of Bernard Oth – all of them, the pope declared, by nature heretics and inveterate disturbers of the faith and the peace – raided the archbishop's domains. They burned buildings, made captive some of his people, including clerics, and drove off cattle; they even wounded the archbishop himself and stole his pallium and riding horses.⁷¹

When Archbishop Peter Amiel carried the story of the assault to Pope Gregory IX, he could not complain of the vigor of the response. On March 8, 1233, Gregory commissioned Guy, major archdeacon of Carcassonne, Raymond of Le Fauga, bishop of Toulouse, and Peter, provost of that see,⁷² to investigate four charges which he put forth

⁶⁹ Doat, XXI, ff. 34v–5; Douais, *Documents*, I, lxii.

⁷⁰ Doat, XXI, f. 36; Douais, *Documents*, I, lxiii.

⁷¹ Details are in papal letters (see nn. 74, 76). Douais (*Documents*, I, ix), wrongly names "U. de Niort" among the attackers.

⁷² Guy's name appears in full (Doat, XXI, f. 48v; Douais erroneously calls him William in *Documents*, I, cxxxvi). Peter is designated only by the initial, but his full

against the Niorts: that Gerald, William, William Bernard, Bernard Oth, and Esclarmonde their mother, were defenders of heretics, were publicly defamed for heresy, were believed by Catholics to be heretics, and that their lands were much infected by heresy.⁷³ If these accusations proved to be true, action should follow in accordance with the statutes of the Council of Toulouse. A week after writing this letter, the pope instructed all suffragans of the church of Narbonne to proclaim the excommunication of those who had made the raid;⁷⁴ on May 3, he forbade that any ecclesiastical benefice be conferred on their children;⁷⁵ and on May 26 he ordered Count Raymond VII to confiscate Niort property.⁷⁶ The count did not act, and the commission of inquiry moved only slowly to its work.

The record survives in a defective copy, in which the chronological sequence of the depositions has been rearranged and some testimony has been lost.⁷⁷ It shows that at least four sessions were held in January and February of a year and at a place unstated. The earliest possible date is 1234,⁷⁸ and the place was probably Car-

name is found elsewhere, e.g., Doat, XXI, f. 152. When the bishop or archdeacon occasionally were absent other ecclesiastics of Toulouse or Carcassonne replaced them in the hearings (Doat, XXI, ff. 41 v, 43 v).

⁷³ *Les Registres de Grégoire IX (1227-1241): Recueil des bulles de ce pape*, ed. by Lucien Auvray, 4 vols. (Bibliothèque des Écoles françaises d'Athènes et de Rome, 2d ser [Paris, 1896-1955]), I, No. 1166 (hereafter Auvray), where the letter is only summarized, but the charges appear in the record of testimony taken later (e.g., Doat, XXI, f. 34). Cf. Guiraud, *Inquisition*, II, 26, n. 1.

⁷⁴ Auvray, I, No. 1170.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, No. 1284.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, No. 2241. Cf. the pope's letter of March 7, 1233 advising Raymond VII to rely on the archbishop of Narbonne for counsel (Auvray, I, No. 1165). Guiraud (*Cartulaire*, I, CCLXIV and *Inquisition*, I, 325) misdates this and in *Inquisition*, II, 65-66, produces a baffling sentence in which he cites the papal letters of March 8 and May 23 as addressed to Narbonne, praising the citizenry and appealing to them "pour tenir en respect B. Oth de Niort."

⁷⁷ Doat, XXI, ff. 34-50. The copy was made from a document "au trésor des chartes de sa maiesté en la cité de Carcassonne." The names of two witnesses and the testimony of one of them have disappeared. See f. 41 v, the line following the testimony of William Miliarossa, where a name has been omitted, and f. 39 v, where the statement of R. de *Varanha* ends with his remark "sed credit iste de Guillelmo Bernardi de captione haereticorum idem quod proxime." The preceding witness had made no such statement about William Bernard; thus some testimony has been dropped.

⁷⁸ The session of January 26 (f. 43 v) has the entry "year as above." Documents immediately preceding in the volume were copied from different archives and have no bearing on the date of this record. It groups the witnesses in sequence as follows: (1) without date, the testimony of more than 50 persons, beginning with that of the archbishop; (2) February 1, three witnesses; (3) January 26, 51 witnesses; (4) Feb-

cassonne. More than 113 witnesses were asked if they believed the pope's charges to be true, were questioned about the reasons for their answers, and were allowed to offer further information if they wished. Written statements were produced by the archbishop, major archdeacon, and sacristan of Narbonne to support their assertion of the truth of all the allegations. Six abbots, the Dominican prior of Prouille, five archdeacons, a number of monks, friars, and Hospitallers, more than 60 priests, curés, and deacons, and 11 laymen also testified. Not unsurprisingly, unequivocal denunciations came from the clergy of Narbonne. Some of the archbishop's words have been cited;⁷⁹ his major archdeacon added that Bernard Oth had shown irreverence to the Host and silenced a priest in order to hear a heretic preach.⁸⁰ Of the others, almost all agreed that one or more of the charges were true of one or more of the Niorts. About half said this of all on all counts, some two dozen restricted their testimony to Bernard Oth and Esclarmonde; a smaller number believed only the knight to be guilty. Few had more than hearsay to offer, but some knew that heretics lived in the castra of the Niorts or had seen Good Men in their company.⁸¹ On the other hand, there was the testimony, already noted, of a few persons who described Bernard Oth's actions on behalf of king and church during the Crusade, and other points were made in his favor: the prior of Pexiora stated that the knight was a donat of the house of the Hospitallers there, where he had heard Mass and wished to be buried;⁸² a chaplain had seen Bernard Oth confess and take communion within the year just passed;⁸³ and William of Solier, the convert produced by Cardinal Romanus at the Council of Toulouse, concluded his testimony in this inquiry by saying that he did not at the moment believe Bernard Oth to be a supporter of heresy, because of the report that the knight had made his confession after a sermon by Friar Peter.⁸⁴

The accused were not summoned to appear. The proceedings were less a trial than a fishing expedition to net as much unfavorable evidence as possible.⁸⁵ No doubt the investigators' belief in the

ruary 7, eight witnesses. Someone perhaps rearranged the record to give the archbishop's words first place. Lea, *Inquisition*, II, 28; Guiraud, *Inquisition*, II, 9, 54; Oldenbourg, *Massacre at Montségur*, pp. 280—1, put the hearings in 1233; Lea elsewhere gives the year 1240 (I, 431).

⁷⁹ See pp. 106, 108, 111 above.

⁸⁰ Doat, XXI, ff. 36 v—7 v.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, ff. 35 v, 36 v, 42 v, 43—43 v, 45 v, 48 v.

⁸² *Ibid.*, f. 38—38 v. A donat was a layman who, in exchange for an endowment, was assured of shelter in old age, if desired, and burial in the cemetery of a religious house.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, f. 40 v.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, f. 43; cf. p. 106, n. 44. Another witness had recently seen Bernard Oth take communion (*ibid.*, f. 40 v.). The Friar Peter might have been Peter Seila, companion of St. Dominic, one of the first members of the order and an inquisitor.

⁸⁵ Examination of the document contradicts the statement of Oldenbourg (*Massacre at Montségur*, p. 280) that Bernard Oth had "just as many witnesses" to his orthodoxy as there were accusers. Others have also failed to give an exact description: cf. Guiraud, *Inquisition*, II, 29; Lea, *Inquisition*, II, 28.

complicity of the Niorts in heresy was strengthened, but not until an inquisitor entered the case a year or more later was there an attempt at condemnation on the basis of the evidence that had been gathered.

Uzalger of Niort

Indeed, the threat of action against him did not seem to alarm Bernard Oth, for in 1234 he appeared in Carcassonne to witness an exchange of property, the importance of which is to reveal that not all the Niorts were equally hostile to the church. In August 1234, the monastery of St. Mary at Alet, near Limoux, purchased from the French crown various lands in Razès which had been confiscated for treason and heresy.⁸⁶ The presence of Bernard Oth at the transaction is explained by the fact that it was his brother, Uzalger, newly elected abbot of the abbey, who completed the purchase.

While the document of sale does not identify Uzalger as a member of the Niort family, the fact is proven by Bernard Oth's naming Uzalger among his brothers and a contemporary reference to him in the records of Alet.⁸⁷ About a decade earlier, the monks of that Benedictine house had been dispossessed because of the misconduct of their abbot of that time, being replaced by 12 secular canons from the church of Narbonne, and had been restored only in 1233 after a successful appeal to Gregory IX.⁸⁸ Perhaps their choice of Uzalger as abbot expressed resentment of their treatment by Narbonne, whose archbishop was the Niorts' avowed enemy, perhaps it was owed to lay pressure; it was not deterred by the pope's ban on ecclesiastical office for any Niort. Yet there is no reason to suppose Uzalger unqualified. His fitness did not come into question during a legatine inquiry into a quarrel of the monastery with the archbishop of Narbonne in 1238,⁸⁹ and he remained as abbot during the years that his mother and brothers were being prosecuted for heresy and punished by the king.⁹⁰

⁸⁶ "Nos Odo Coqus . . . vendimus . . . domino Deo et beate Marie et vobis domino Udalgerio, Dei gracia Electensis monasterii electo . . . omnes hereses et faidimenta et adquisitiones et pignora, que ad dominum regem Francie pertinent . . . in terra de Reddesia" (*HGL*, VIII, 974–5).

⁸⁷ See p. 100, n. 6, above, and *HGL*, IV, 422, where the editor, Émile Mabille, wrote "Udalger d'Ajort, *de Ajorto*," which is corrected on p. 1046 to "Udalger ou Uzalger de Niort (*de Aniorto*)."⁸⁸ The name, Uzalger, had a certain tradition in the Niort family: see n. 3.

⁸⁸ For discussion of the troubles of the monastery see *HGL*, IV, 422; VI, 158–9, 560–1; Guiraud, *Cartulaire*, I, CCLXXXIV–CCLXXXV, and *Inquisition*, I, 317–8, 342–3. Uzalger's name does not appear in these narratives.

⁸⁹ Auvray, II, No. 4508.

⁹⁰ Although his name is not given, it was probably Uzalger whose complaints caused Louis IX to order his seneschal to protect the monastery against persons

It was not unusual in Languedoc for a family to produce both avowed heretics and faithful clerics in the same generation, yet Uzalger's career in the church brightens somewhat the somber picture which the archbishop of Narbonne painted of the total infidelity of the Niort family.

The Narbonne Affair; Condemnation by the Inquisition

Not long after Uzalger of Niort obtained for his monastery lands confiscated for reason of heresy, his brother, Gerald, found opportunity to strike again at the old enemy, the archbishop of Narbonne by aiding the revolt of the bourg of Narbonne against him. None of his brothers apparently were with him, and before the conflict was settled, Gerald's attention was drawn away by resumption of the prosecution of his family for heresy.

The city and bourg of Narbonne were separately governed. A dispute began in March 1234 over an attempted arrest for heresy in the bourg by Ferrier, a Dominican friar acting for the archbishop, and three years of alternating conflict and negotiation followed between the bourg and the archbishop, who was supported by the city.⁹¹ Consuls of the bourg called to their aid various barons known to have no love for Archbishop Peter Amiel,⁹² among them Gerald of Niort.⁹³ According to the archbishop, he and other supporters of the bourg were no more than bandits and enemies of the faith and the crown who had been sent to Narbonne by the count of Toulouse.⁹⁴ The affair was finally settled by arbitration of the royal seneschal in March 1237.

A new factor entered the case of the Niorts in 1235 in the person of Friar William Arnold, a Dominican of Toulouse, who had been appointed inquisitor when the tribunal was first established.⁹⁵

who were trespassing on its rights and property (*HGL*, VIII, 1192). The offender was, perhaps, Olivier of Termes. In 1265, "Uzalgercius," abbot of Alet, consulted a famous diviner during a dispute with him (Doat, XXV, ff. 272-4; Douais, *Documents*, I, 78, n. 4). However, a charter dated 1252, once in the archives of Narbonne (summary from Rocque's MS inventory printed in Guiraud, *Cartulaire*, II, 168 [No. 421]), names "le sieur abbé Daignan" of Alet.

⁹¹ The best study of the revolt is in Emery, *Heresy and Inquisition*, ch. iv. It is also described in Guiraud, *Inquisition*, II, 65-73; Célestin Douais, "L'Albigéisme et les frères prêcheurs à Narbonne au XIII^e siècle," *BCAN*, II (1893), 464-79.

⁹² *HGL*, VIII, 1003; Emery, *Heresy and Inquisition*, pp. 86, 172.

⁹³ Emery, *Heresy and Inquisition*, pp. 86, 172.

⁹⁴ The charge is not supported by the documents. The count appointed his seneschal of Toulouse, Pons of Villeneuve, as his representative (*procurator*) for Narbonne (*HGL*, VIII, 1004).

⁹⁵ On William Arnold's career as inquisitor, see Douais, *Documents*, I, cxliv,

At some time after Easter 1235, he was instructed by the papal legate to join with the major archdeacon of Carcassonne in the action already begun by the latter.⁹⁶ William Pelhisson, also a friar of Toulouse and an inquisitor, whose chronicle is our major source of information at this point, tells us that at the first appearance of Bernard Oth and William of Niort, the only ones persuaded or coerced into answering the summons to Carcassonne, they refused to answer questions and sought to depart, but were seized by the seneschal, John of Friscamps, and again brought to interrogation. Bernard Oth continued to stand mute and was condemned to death for contumacy on February 13, 1236. William, however, eventually confessed to associating with and protecting heretics. He was sentenced to prison on March 2. On the same day, Gerald, William Bernard, and Esclarmonde were declared to be contumacious heretics. The count of Toulouse was instructed to confiscate the property of all of them.⁹⁷ However, William Pelhisson recounts, just as the seneschal was preparing to execute the sentence on Bernard Oth, various French notables who had acquired lands in the region intervened to dissuade him, for they were alarmed by the way in which Gerald of Niort was strengthening Laurac and Niort in preparation for war.⁹⁸

Although there is no explicit statement in the sources to that effect, Lea is probably right in saying that Bernard Oth and William were given full freedom by the seneschal after the intervention of

cxlvii; Yves Dossat, *Les Crises de l'Inquisition toulousaine au XIIIe siècle (1233—1273)* (Bordeaux, 1959), pp. 122—51 *passim*. He is not to be confused with William Arnold, bishop of Carcassonne (1248—1255).

⁹⁶ Pelhisson-Molinier, pp. 25—32, esp. pp. 28—9; Pelhisson-Douais, pp. 98—103, esp. pp. 100—1. William Pelhisson's memory was not always exact and it is possible that William Arnold did not join in the prosecution until October, after he had been expelled from Toulouse.

⁹⁷ The sentences are in Doat, XXI, ff. 163 v—7 v; the order for confiscation of property in *HGL*, VIII, 1014—5. Some historians date the acts 1237, presuming that the calendar in use began the year with Easter, although Yves Dossat has shown that in these records a calendar beginning with the Incarnation was employed (“Du début de l'année en Languedoc au moyen âge,” *Annales du Midi*, LV [1943], 520—9). It is most unlikely that William Arnold would wait a year or more after entering the case to issue his sentences, the language of which shows that little new evidence was taken and proof of guilt came largely from the earlier investigation (Doat, XXI, ff. 163 v, 164 v).

⁹⁸ See n. 96. Only Gui of Lévis, who, as seigneur of Mirepoix was a neighbor of the Niorts, urged that the sentences be carried out.

his countrymen,⁹⁹ for Bernard Oth was a witness to an act of homage to Raymond VII in Toulouse on August 12, 1236.¹⁰⁰ Also, if his memory was correct, he was in Alet in that year,¹⁰¹ and a trip to Rome to appeal from the sentence of the archdeacon and inquisitor may have been made in 1238.¹⁰² Thus, it may have been with the Niorts in mind that Gregory IX complained to Louis IX in March 1238 that royal officials were remiss in failing to carry out sentences for heresy against certain important barons.¹⁰³

Yet perhaps the Niorts did not escape without harassment, for there are traces of a military expedition into the region they dominated. An inquest of later date revealed that John Friscamps, the seneschal, mustered troops from Albi for a siege of Roquefeuil,¹⁰⁴ where we know that Bernard Oth was seigneur as late as 1232 to 1234.¹⁰⁵ Men of Niort were involved in the defense, for two brothers were seen in arms against the king, one "among the defenders of the castrum of Roquefeuil," when it was besieged, the other at Niort "during the war of Roquefeuil."¹⁰⁶ The wife of the seigneur of Montségur told inquisitors in 1244 that some years earlier a messenger had come to report that "the French wished to capture Peter Roger, husband of this witness, by the attack on the castrum of Roquefeuil."¹⁰⁷ The date, 1238, is fixed by an act of John of Friscamps in September, confirming to a widow an annual pension and possession of lands she had held with her husband who, at the seneschal's command, had served "in the expedition of Roquefeuil" and "exposing his body to the enemies of the faith and of the king" was killed by them.¹⁰⁸ But the outcome is not revealed nor is any member of the Niort family mentioned in the sources that survive.

⁹⁹ *Inquisition*, II, 29.

¹⁰⁰ *Layettes*, II, No. 2457; on the date see *HGL*, VI, 697, n. 4.

¹⁰¹ *Doat*, XXIV, ff. 90v-1.

¹⁰² His words about the date of that journey are confusing. In 1242, he seemed to speak of it as a recent event ("de tempore hoc anno quando veniebat Romae") and made clear that his intention was to appeal to the pope ("quod appelaret ab archidiacono Carcassonnae socio et coniudice fratres Willelmus Arnaldus [*sic*"]": *Doat*, XXI, f. 97v). Such an journey would have had to start in the summer of 1241, before news of the deaths of Gregory IX and Celestine IV, in August and September, respectively, reached Languedoc, for an appeal with the see vacant would be futile. Yet, as we shall see, Bernard Oth was a prisoner of the king early in that year. Moreover, in 1246, he dated the trip 1238 ("cum ipse testis esset in Lombardia ut dictum est supra . . . de tempore octo anni": *ibid.*, f. 102v).

¹⁰³ *Auvray*, II, No. 4184.

¹⁰⁴ *HGL*, VIII, 1507, 1508-9.

¹⁰⁵ In 1242, he admitted sheltering heretics at Roquefeuil a decade earlier (*Doat*, XXIV, ff. 91-91v), and his mother was there shortly before 1234 (p. 110, above).

¹⁰⁶ *HGL*, VII, pt. 2, cols. 372-3; *RHF*, XXIV, 582.

¹⁰⁷ *Doat*, XXIV, ff. 200v-1.

¹⁰⁸ *HGL*, VIII, 1031. Niel (*Montségur*, pp. 171-2) dates this attack 1240-1241 and names Peter Roger of Mirepoix as the defender of Roquefeuil.

