Capuchins as Crusaders: Southern Gaul in the late Twelfth Century

John France

Swansea University

The Peace and Truce of God has attracted much attention, both as something of importance in itself and because many have thought it played an important role in preparing men's minds for the appeal made at Clermont in 1095. This was firmly endorsed by Erdmann, Delaruelle and Duby, to name simply the most important, and through them it passed into the common currency of crusader writing.[1] The only writer to have contested this view is Marcus Bull, who sharply doubts the impact of this movement on the arms-bearing laity by the end of the 11th century.[2] This article is not concerned with its impact on the First Crusade, but on its continuance in southern Gaul in the twelfth century and the way in which the Capuchin movement, for all its apparent affinity with the Peace Movement, actually drew its inspiration and form from something quite different, the crusading movement. This has not been recognised because the Capuchin movement was distorted by some medieval writers whose attitudes have powerfully influenced modern historians. The Capuchins were an armed fraternity which attempted to end the terrible disorders in central and southern Gaul caused by mercenary bands whose depredations reached a climax at this time. A vision of the Virgin, granted to a carpenter of Le Puy in 1182, was said to have been inspired a wave of popular enthusiasm, as a result of which they enjoyed considerable success. They were called Capuchins (*capuciati*) because they wore a distinctive hood and cloak bearing a badge of the Virgin and Child. This violence arose from a series of political struggles which engulfed southern Gaul in the late 1170s and early1180s.

The Plantagenet, Henry II (1154-89), as duke of Aquitaine, had laid claim to the county of Toulouse as early as 1156, but this was rejected by the counts of Toulouse. There followed Henry's great expedition against Toulouse in 1159 and what has been called 'The Forty Years War', really an intermittent series of conflicts, which dragged on until 1196. Henry's son, Richard, as duke of Aquitaine, was especially concerned with the claim to Toulouse once he had

possession of the duchy by 1174. Inevitably, the kings of France took an interest in this dispute, and usually supported the counts of Toulouse. This conflict, therefore, became enmeshed in the wider Angevin-Capetian rivalry which in the 1180s would severely affect the Berry, where Bourges was an important French royal centre.[3] Moreover, the barons of Aquitaine did not enjoy the stern rule of their Angevin masters, and there were serious rebellions against Henry II and Richard in 1168, 1173-4, 1176, 1178/9, 1182/3, 1188, 1192 and 1193, that of 1183 being strikingly important and far-reaching because of the participation of Henry II's eldest son, Henry the Young King.[4] Furthermore, the kings of Aragon wanted to assert their claim to Provence, the lands east of the Rhône, and other parts of the south, against the counts of Toulouse. This resulted in a series of wars embroiling Provence, the Auvergne and the Languedoc which smouldered on in parallel with the Angevin-Capetian conflicts, particularly after 1166. It is hardly surprising that the kings of Aragon and the Angevins were commonly allies during the twelfth century.[5] The consequences of this violence are described by Stephen, abbot of Ste-Geneviève of Paris who was in the entourage of the Papal Legate, Cardinal Henri de Marcy:

> I followed the bishop of Albano though mountains and valleys,
> Through vast deserts and the savagery of robbers and the very
> image of death, through burnt villages and the ruins of houses
> where there was no security and nothing which did not threaten
> peace and life itself.[6]

At the root of these disasters were the wars of the kings of France, England and Aragon and the counts of Toulouse, but condemning such grandees and their great vassals was, to say the least, impolitic. Contemporaries, therefore, blamed their instruments, the mercenaries. These professional soldiers were used by all the great kings, but they were regarded with contempt and disdain by their employers and with fear by the Church and everybody else who were their victims.[7] The Church disliked all violence but drew a clear line between those who served kings as vassals and were, therefore, defenders of the social order, and men who only fought for money and were regarded as deeply sinful.[8] The vast majority of the 26 French bishops who attended Third Lateran Council in 1179 were from southern Gaul. Their concerns were powerfully amplified by Henri de Marcy, abbot of Clairvaux (1176-79) and later Cardinal Legate to the area. He had written to the pope before the council, urging him to launch a crusade against the heresy which was rampant in the area. Indeed, at some time during the years 1174-77 the Cathar Council of Saint-Félix-de-Caraman (now Saint-Félix-Lauragais) had openly challenged the Roman church with the creation of four Cathar bishops for Albi, Agen, Carcassonne and Toulouse.[9] Canon 27 of the Third Lateran Council in 1179 anathematized the heretics of Gascony, the Albigeois and the Toulousaine,

and, in the very same breath condemned those called *'Brabantionibus et Aragonensibus, Navariis, Bascolis, Coterellis and Triaverdinis'* who destroyed churches and the countryside, the poor and the innocent without any distinction of sex or status. Anyone who employed such mercenary soldiers would have their names published in churches and be liable to excommunication. Those who associated with either the heretics or the mercenary bands would also be liable to excommunication.[10]

'Mercenary' (*mercenarius*) is rather a rare word in the Latin sources of the high middle ages, and always used pejoratively, because it clearly had heavy overtones of Christ's words in which he contrasts the mere hireling (*mercenarius*) who flees at the first sign of trouble for his flock, with himself, the 'Good Shepherd'.[11] It was not used in Canon 27. Geoffroy de Brueil de Vigeois was a monk of St Martial at Limoges who later became abbot of Vigeois (1170-84), to the south-east of Limoges in the modern department of Corrèze. Geoffroy was writing his chronicle in the Limousin in the 1180s at the heart of the area troubled by these soldiers, and he recorded the terrible sufferings they inflicted. He uses the term *mercenarios* of churchmen corrupted by rich living, before going on almost immediately to list the soldiers who afflicted the Aquitaine as *'Primo Basucli, postmodum Teuthonici Flandrenses et, ut rustice loquar, Brabansons, Hannuyers, Asperes, Pailer, Navar, Turlau, Vales, Roma, Cotarel, Catalans, Aragones'*.[12] A thirteenth-century chronicler who provided valuable information on the subject of this paper referred to the mercenaries as: *'Ruthariorum. Arragonensium, Basculorum, Brabancionum et aliorum conducticiorum'*.[13] For the most part such words derive from the supposed origins of these professional soldiers. Brabançons (men of Brabant) is the commonest word used for mercenaries in the 12th century, but the range of terms used in these sources reflects the diverse origins of those who troubled them, recruited by rulers from several areas. Geoffroy de Vigeois explicitly reserves *Palearii* (rough sleepers) for a large group who he says were of diverse origins, who were sent to the Limousin by Philip II Augustus King of France (1180-1223) to assist those who supported the rebellion of Henry II's eldest son, Henry the 'Young King' against Henry II in 1183. Interestingly, Geoffroy reports that the young king was afraid his father would hire these mercenaries away from him by paying them more.[14] The contemporary *Miracles of Our Lady of Rocamadour*, which report a number of stories connected with mercenaries, at first always refer to Basques, then suddenly change to Brabançons.[15] Of course, kings at this time did not maintain large standing armies, so that in intervals of fighting mercenaries were discharged, but they seem to have lingered in the expectation of new employment, causing great devastation and disorder.[16]

It was to combat rather similar violence and disorder, arising from the eclipse of royal power and the subsequent competition between rival local magnates, that the bishops of southern Gaul instituted The Peace of God in the

later tenth century.[17] At the Council of Le Puy in 975 Bishop Guy (c.975-93) had attempted to extract an oath from the arms-bearers of the region to respect the peace. This began the 'Peace of God', which for over half a century attempted to impose a degree of stability in central and southern Gaul and even beyond. We tend to think of it as a form of moral pressure upon the arms-bearers, not least because of the vivid picture painted by Rodulfus Glaber who was writing in the 1030s at the height of the movement. He portrays a Peace Council as a kind of fervent camp-meeting, at which relics were exposed, miracles performed and sermons preached, at the culmination of which the bishops demanded an oath to observe the peace:

> Such enthusiasm was generated that all the bishops raised their
> crosiers to the heavens, and all cried out with one voice to God, their
> hands extended: "Peace! Peace! Peace!" This was the sign of
> their perpetual covenant with God. It was understood that after five
> years all should repeat this wonderful celebration in order to confirm
> the peace.[18]

But while the moral pressure of the excited masses was important, it was accompanied by the threat of force. Bishop Guy was able to call upon his relatives, the counts of Brioude and Gévandan, to help him threaten the recalcitrant.[19] Aimo de Bourbon, Archbishop of Bourges (1031-71), carried this to its logical conclusion by embodying a militia of peasants and some nobles which enjoyed a degree of military success before this attempt to create an army of the Church fell foul of local aristocratic faction, and was destroyed in 1038.[20]

The Truce of God (*Treuga Dei*) originated at the Council of Elne in1027 and became important after the Council of Arles in 1041.It was a rather different concept which from its inception neither sought nor received the same mass enthusiasm. Instead of seeking to protect people, it tried to limit the violence of the powerful by forbidding fighting between Thursday and Monday in recollection of the Crucifixion and in veneration of the Sabbath. At the same time, those who promulgated it proclaimed that it was evil for any Christian to kill another. Implicitly this encouraged the arms-bearers to vent their violence upon non-Christians, though the immediate purpose was probably to reinforce their message.[21] The movement survived as a result of agreements between bishops and local magnates, and indeed spread as a useful instrument in the hands of secular lords, producing the *Landfrieden* in Germany.[22] It may have lost some of its vigour in the course of the 11th century but, Bisson has argued that it was revived by Urban II (1088-99) as a means of ensuring security for the lands of absent crusaders, especially in the troubled south of Gaul. Bull does not think that there was a 'deep-seated ideological linkage' with the expedition proposed in 1095 at Clermont, and suggests that Urban was simply using it as a device to reassure

potential crusaders.[23] Nevertheless, Bisson produces convincing evidence to suggest that in southern Gaul its vitality continued. In 1140 a Synod at Auch was demanding peace-oaths and in 1155 Louis VII of France (1137-80) proclaimed the 'General Peace of the Whole Realm' shortly after a journey through the south to Compostella in 1155. Local peace agreements between bishops and magnates were quite frequent in Narbonne (1149-74) where the Templars were involved, confirmed by popes as late as 1190. They are also found at Elne 1156, and Tarascon (1226) where the agreements allowed for the raising of money and a peace-militia. In 1163 the counts of Toulouse and the bishop of Albi made a peace proclamation after concluding an agreement with the viscount of Béziers. There were other agreements at Toulouse 1163, Comminges 1170 (where a peace-tax received papal confirmation), Rodez 1169-70, Rouergue 1169, Béziers, 1170, Roussillon 1173, Albi 1190, the Bordelais under Richard I in the years 1189-95 and Montpellier in 1215. Clearly agreements between the high nobility and the upper ranks of the Church were important efforts to stabilise society in southern Gaul, leading Bisson to comment: 'the old condominia of higher clergy and baronage which, as we are now learning, had survived the age of ecclesiastical reform.'[24] The effectiveness of such declarations is another matter. It is possible, but far from certain, that it was a coalition of this kind which crushed a group of Duke Richard's mercenaries in 1177.[25] Moral influences of this kind backed by some likelihood of force presumably had some restraining power. However, the crisis of the mercenaries in the very early 1180s seems not to have evoked any such response. Instead there arose the Capuchins. Theirs was a popular movement, sharply contrasting with the baronial organizations noted by Bissell and Cheyette. Moreover, it will be argued here that its origins lay in the crusading movement and that it enjoyed the patronage of the church.

Geoffroy de Vigeois wrote his account of the Capuchins very shortly before his death and it has a sense of immediacy. According to Geoffroy, a poor man of Le Puy, a carpenter called Peter Durandus, was inspired to approach the bishop of Le Puy, Peter IV of Solignac (1159-89), urging him to preach an oath of peace. The bishop was at first dismissive of this pious and humble man, but as the movement grew and organized itself, he was moved to support it. All who agreed to take the oath were required, apparently at the bidding of the Virgin, to wear a white hood (*caputium*) blazoned with her image and the words *Agnus Dei qui tollis peccata Mundi, dona nobis pacem.*[26] He goes on to make it clear that this was a substantial movement, and his account implies that the Capuchins were already a considerable force before the death of the 'Young King' on 11 June 1183, suggesting they originated in 1182-3. Robert of Torigni (c.1110–1186) abbot of Mont St Michel from 1154 wrote a *Chronicon* in which he failed to mention the carpenter's name, but confirms that a carpenter had a vision of the Virgin who presented him with an icon inscribed with the *Agnus Dei*. He was to report this to the bishop and bid him preach the peace and the sign of its adherents would be a

white hood and the icon of Our Lady. Robert stresses that the movement was joined by clergy and people of all classes and succeeded in destroying the enemies of the peace.[27]

Rigord was the author of a life of Philip Augustus, completed in 1196 then revised by 1200. He died in 1209. He emphasises that the problems of the area arose form the quarrel between Aragon and Toulouse (thereby disassociating the king of France from these difficulties), and asserts that God sent aid not through any great person but Durand, a poor man of Le Puy who, shortly before the Assumption, had a vision of Christ who presented him with the picture of the Virgin and its inscription which became the emblem of the movement. On the feast of the Assumption, Bishop Peter and a great assembly of the princes and people of the area listened to an exhortation by Durand, and all were moved to take an oath to maintain the peace and to wear a white scapular set with the holy icon of the Virgin as signs of adherence to this strict fraternity.[28] Gervase of Canterbury was a Benedictine monk and chronicler (c.1145-c.1210) who started his *Chronica* about 1188, covering the period from 1100 to his own time. He stresses the ravages of the *Brabaceni* and says that an un-named carpenter of Le Puy had a vision of the Virgin who bade him preach the peace. The Carpenter was at first reluctant, but eventually approached the bishop who was impressed. Bishop Peter of Solignac then spoke secretly to 12 prominent good men of Le Puy who agreed to support the fraternity which then spread like wildfire, enlisting clergy and laity, rich and poor, who wore the hood bearing a leaden seal of the Virgin.[29]

All these are broadly sympathetic account of the Capuchins. Robert of Auxerre (1156-1212) began his universal chronicle before 1202, for he wrote it at the bidding of his abbot, Milo of Trainel (1155-1202), though we do not know when he wrote the passage about the Capuchins. He is a very hostile witness and says the peace was first proclaimed by 'a man (never named) of humble birth and little fortune', while Eustace of Auxerre, writing after 1206, makes no mention of a carpenter, but makes clear that the movement has its origins amongst humble people.[30] Guiot de Provins wrote a satire, *La Bible*, sometime after 1206. He had certainly been in the south because about 1194 he joined the abbey of Cluny, but we know that in 1184 he was living in the north. Guiot offers a few hostile comments on Durand the Carpenter who, he claims, swindled his Capuchin followers of 200000 livres. The comments are so limited that it is difficult to know what to make of them, except to say that he clearly disdained the Capuchins as humble men.[31] The Anonymous of Laon was almost certainly a Premonstratensian whose *Chronicon Universale Anonymi Laudunesnsis* was probably completed about 1218. He is bitterly hostile to the Capuchins, and presents a very pejorative version of their origins. According to him Durandus was a simple man who was deceived by a greedy Canon of Le Puy. This cleric was concerned lest the depredations of the mercenaries caused the cancellation of the splendid and

luxurious gathering of the local nobility held every August, which was so important to the economy of the town. Therefore the Canon concocted a false vision and convinced Durandus. The Anonymous admits that this inspired the people of Aquitaine, Gascony and Provence to turn against the mercenaries, but he ends, like Robert and Eustace, by accusing the Capuchins of being social revolutionaries, saying that the Capuchins terrified the lords of the area who ultimately crushed them.[32]

In view of the very widespread notice taken of the Capuchins there can be little doubt that this was a substantial and important movement. Gervase of Canterbury and Robert of Torigni were remote from the Capuchins, but they lived within the Angevin 'Empire' which embraced their area of operation. The Anonymous of Laon was deeply interested in Angevin affairs. However, the Auxerre writers provide testimony that by 1183 the Capuchins were active in that diocese which is only 100 miles south of Paris, while Rigord, who came from Alais, tells us that they imposed the peace on the whole of *Gothia*, meaning Languedoc and much of Provence. A charter of Bernard, lord of Anduze to the church of Sommières (Gard) was given in 1183: 'when Philip reigned as king of the French and William of Uzès was bishop of Nîmes (1183-1207), the same year in which the peace of the Blessed Mary was spread.'[33] The sources display very different attitudes to the Capuchins, but leave little doubt that this was a popular movement which originated at Le Puy in the Auvergne with a carpenter called Durandus and spread across the south in reaction to the mercenary plague.

What has not been sufficiently remarked is that the Capuchin movement shared something of the character of a crusade and operated with the specific sanction of the church. This has been obscured by the charge of some later chroniclers that it was a threat to the social order. What has not been sufficiently noted is that the Capuchins were working entirely within the framework of Canon 27 of the Third Lateran Council of 1179. This urged people to act against the scourge of the mercenaries 'following the council of holy bishops and priests'. The Capuchin founder, Durand, appears to have followed this pattern very precisely. According to Geoffroy de Vigeois, Robert of Torigni, Rigord, Gervase of Canterbury Durand approached the bishop of Le Puy and the fraternity was supported by that dignitary. Even the Anonymous of Laon accepts that the church helped and supported the movement. Furthermore, Third Lateran's decree offered to those who fought against the heretics and mercenaries something of the status of crusaders, promising them: 'a remission of two years penance and will be placed under the protection of the Church just like those who undertake the journey to Jerusalem' for those who took active steps to attack[34]. This was not 'the remission of sins' offered by Pope Eugenius III (1145-53) in *Quantum Praedecessores* to those who went on the Second Crusade.[35] Nevertheless, the remission of penance and the mention of Jerusalem cannot have been accidental. In this way action against the enemies of Christendom in southern Gaul was given

enormous prestige and appeal. The architect of Canon 27 was Henri de Marcy who had become firmly convinced of the need for a crusade against the heretics.[36] By 1181 he was Cardinal of Albano and a papal legate, and in that year led the 'Crusade against Lavaur' which violently eliminated a major heretic centre 30 km north of Toulouse, where Count Roger of Béziers, his wife and numerous heretics had taken refuge. The surrender of this place was attributed by the *Chronicle of Clairvaux* to a miracle. By the terms of the surrender all the heretics renounced their errors, though it seems that most soon lapsed.[37] In September 1181 Henri de Marcy, in his capacity as papal legate to southern Gaul attended a council at Le Puy, very shortly after his triumph in the 'Crusade of Lavaur.' He subsequently summoned Councils at Bazas on 24 November and Limoges on 28 February 1182.[38] Since his legacy was specifically intended to purify the church and to mitigate the evils which the area was suffering, and since he was the architect of Canon 27 of Third Lateran, it is not hard to imagine that he urged these assemblies to take militant steps, for that was the whole tenor of his preaching mission in southern Gaul.

It is hardly surprising, therefore, that clerical writers like Geoffroy de Vigeois, Robert of Torigni and Gervase of Canterbury strongly approved of the Capuchins because they were obeying Canon 27 of Third Lateran and taking upon themselves something of the guise of crusaders. There was no word for 'Crusade' in the twelfth century, and contemporary thinkers had great difficulty in integrating Urban's initiative into the framework of Christianity.[39] Modern historians have made even heavier weather of grasping the nature of crusade with various schools developing.[40] This is not the place to discuss this quarrel and its ramifications, except to note that Canon 27 of Third Lateran was a papal initiative which drew a very evident parallel between the liberation of Jerusalem and freeing southern Gaul from mercenaries and heretics. Moreover, it is clear that Durandus was not acting in isolation and was taking his lead from the official hierarchy of the church. Henri de Marcy's example was clear to all. Durandus evidently sought the approval of his own bishop in Le Puy. Other bishops were working in the same direction. Amongst the southern bishops present at Third Lateran was Guillaume de Toucy, bishop of Auxerre under whose rule the Capuchins became established. Another was Pons d'Arsace, archbishop of Narbonne (1162-82). In 1179 he promulgated its decrees at a local council, but in an even sharper form. He made quite explicit the connection between heretics and the mercenaries who protected them and condemned various major figures, including the Vicecount of Béziers.[41] It is hard to imagine how the Capuchins could have spread so widely in so short a time without such official support.

The Capuchins were a popular movement which came into being because the traditional arrangements by which the nobility and the church maintained stability had broken down. This was in part because some of the barons were compromised by their dealings with the mercenaries. Geoffroy de Vigeois reveals

that the Capuchins, although they originated in the Auvergne, were very active in the Limousin and even further to the north. He reports that an especially violent group of mercenaries of mixed origin, the *Paleari*, were driven from the Auvergne by the Capuchins. They fled into the Berry where they were attacked by '*militibus qui Paciferi appellantur, eo quod pacem facere iurauissent*'. At Dun-le-Roi near Bourges the Capuchins killed the mercenaries and burned their corpses. Geoffroy says that Ebles VII de Charenton lord of Dun-le-Roi and other lords were involved in this, and that the number of dead was estimated at 10,525. The Capuchins recovered a great booty which the mercenaries had stolen from churches.[42] The Anonymous of Laon reports that the *Rutharii* fled the Auvergne towards Burgundy, and sought shelter with one *Nabo de Carenci* (perhaps the same Ebles VII). The *iuratos de Arvernis* arrived in force and demanded that Nabo expel them from his town on pain of being himself attacked. He agreed, but pretended to the mercenaries that he would attack the Capuchins. The mercenaries with their wives and families marched out but, unsupported by the treacherous lord, were massacred to the number of 17000.[43] The presence of unemployed mercenaries was clearly an opportunity for noblemen to make money. In the 13th century, when demand for mercenaries in Italy was very high, Lombardy was ravaged by them.[44] But there was another and more obvious reason why the nobility were unable to play a leading role.

This was simply because they were caught up in the fighting and forced to take sides. Everyone knew that the leaders of society were the employers of the mercenaries and that their methods were just as ruthless. Geoffroy de Vigeois records that in a single day in the spring of 1177 some nobles of the Limousin, led by Aimar, Viscount of Limoges, massacred 2000 people of both sexes in a drive towards Brive.[45] The rebellion of the 'Young King Henry' in 1183 triggered a particularly violent convulsion in the Limousin as the lords of the area took the opportunity to rise against Henry II and his son, Duke Richard. The death of Henry the 'Young King' on 11 June 1183 did not end the rebellion led by Aimar of Limoges and Archambaud de Comborn. The rebels were supported by the king of France and the count of Toulouse, and savage fighting ravaged the area. The mercenary leader, Mercadier, doubtless in the service of Duke Richard, targeted the lands of Archambaud de Comborn. Geoffroy, as he tells us, was celebrating the feast of St Pardulf (13 October) in the very midst of this area when the raid occurred: this dates it very precisely. He was obviously an eyewitness to its horrors. There was much destruction and the mercenaries ruthlessly demanded ransoms from the people of the villages. Geoffrey goes on to say that the Capuchins now made common cause with the rebels. He never explains how or why this came about, and the Latin in this passage is very difficult, but the overall importance of the passage, which has not been noted by other writers, is quite clear.[46] When it seemed that the Capuchins (*iuratos Arverniae*) were going to attack them, the mercenary forces under Mercadier melted away.[47] Some time

later, the important mercenary leader, Louvart, in conjunction with the future Raymond VI of Toulouse, attacked Issoudun, Peyrac and Aurillac, from which they extracted a ransom of 250000 *solidi* and ravaged the lands of the English crown: this attack can is dated 7 February 1184.[48] Immediately after, in Lent of the same year, Mercadier, in the service of Duke Richard, attacked the lands of the arch-rebel, Aimar of Limoges, sacked Excideuil and devastated the lands round about.[49] With the nobility drawn into this intense fighting, there could be no possibility of them forming meaningful Peace associations. These divisions also go some way to explain the short life of the Capuchin movement which, despite its effectiveness and enormous spread, seems to have vanished by 1184.

Under the year 1198 the Anonymous of Laon tells us that Mercadier succeeded Louvart (*Lupacius*) as Duke Richard's commander of mercenaries. As an aside, he adds the detail that Louvart had surprised and destroyed the Capuchins at the 'Portes de Berthe'.[50] This event is not dated by the Anonymous, but Robert of Auxerre, although he never mentions the 'Portes de Berthe', does say that the Capuchins were crushed in 1184.[51] This places their destruction in the context of the fighting of 1183-4. The Capuchins were becoming caught up in political conflict, and on this occasion probably siding with the rebels against Richard I. It was one thing for them to attack and destroy unemployed mercenaries at Dun-le-Roi and, on another occasion at Millau. It was quite another for them to fight mercenaries in the service of an important lord, especially one as great as Duke Richard. 'Portes de Berthe' is presented by the Anonymous of Laon as the crushing of a threat to the social order. His rage against the Capuchins is really quite remarkable. The early writers on the Capuchins reflected strong approval, but those who wrote later were deeply hostile and portrayed it as a revolutionary movement. In the words of the Anonymous of Laon:

> This foolish and undisciplined folk had reached the heights of
> madness; they dared to notify counts, viscounts and princes that they
> should treat their subjects more gently than was their usual custom,
> under pain of quickly experiencing the meaning of their anger.[52]

The real reason why the writers of the early thirteenth century were so hostile to the whole movement was that they regarded it as a failure. Their preoccupation was with heresy: not only had the Capuchins not tackled this, but by the time of Innocent III (1198-1216) it was evident that the very milieu from which they came was one in which heresy flourished. Moreover, the Church had moved on to a highly centralized call for a crusade, supervised by the papacy, and the spontaneous associations of Third Lateran must have seemed hopelessly out of date, and, indeed, positively harmful and dangerous to the established order which was now so threatened. This meshed with local aristocratic indignation at

intervention in their affairs to produce the portrait of the Capuchins as a threat to the social order. In reality theirs was an attempt, sanctioned by the Church, to restore order in a troubled area, which failed essentially because there was no aristocratic consensus behind it, unlike the wider crusading movement.

The crusading nature of the movement has thus been obscured by the allegation that it was a revolutionary force, and this has been accepted and amplified by most of the modern historians who have chosen to write about it.[53] The evidence offered by the sources in support of this contention is at best very vague. The Anonymous of Laon says the magnates were threatened and terrorised by the Capuchins who demanded that they treat their subjects 'more gently'. Some accounts are very strange. Robert of Auxerre says that the peace was first proclaimed in the year 1183 by 'a man (never named) of humble birth and little fortune' but adds that it was the magnates of the region, *'Arverniae proceres in mutua pacis foedera coniurarunt'* who attacked the Brabançons who had so long infested the area, killing about 3000 and ending their reign of terror. In the following year, 1184, he reports that the sect of those who are called Capuchins *(Capuciatos)*, founded in the previous year at Le Puy, multiplied in the kingdom of France, but was destroyed by powerful men whose dominion they had insolently challenged. But his condemnation is muted and rather oblique.[54] Eustace of Auxerre wrote the life of Bishop Hugh of Auxerre (1183-1206), and when he comes to the Capuchins immediately tells is that:

[A]t this time there arose in Gaul a truly horrible and dange-
rous presumption which began to drag all the poor people into
rebellion against their superiors and the extermination of their power.'

He never mentions the mercenary scourge, though admits that at first the Capuchins had good intentions – which are never specified. He asserts that as the Capuchins spread to Berry, Burgundy and the Auxerrois its members simply sought to subvert the social order:

There was no longer fear or respect for superiors. All strove to
acquire liberty, saying that it belonged to them from the time of
Adam and Eve, from the very day of creation. They did not under-
stand that serfdom is the punishment of sin! The result was that
there was no longer any distinction between the great and the small,
but a fatal confusion tending to ruin the institutions which rule
us all, through the will of God and the agency of the power of this earth.[55]

As a result, Bishop Hugh took his army to the Capuchin centre of Gy and suppressed the movement, taking away their hoods and ordering that the offending peasants, in all seasons and whatever the weather, should always go bare-

headed, though he remitted this sentence at the request of his uncle, Guy of Noyers, Bishop of Sens (1176-93).[56] This seems a very mild punishment for such subversion, and the contrast with Eustace is interesting

In fact the evidence suggests that the Capuchins were not at all a revolutionary movement. Both Robert of Torigni and Rigord insists that the Capuchins united all classes of society, the rich and the poor.[57] Rigord portrays them as a great fraternity with a strict discipline. He tells us that if one of the Capuchins killed the brother of another, the victim's family was obliged to receive the killer and give him food.[58] This appears to reflect an insistence that the claims of the fraternity transcended even family obligation. Gervase of Canterbury says that nobody who had taken the oath was permitted to leave, and that all were required to rally in arms when called upon to do so.[59] But the Anonymous of Laon, for all his hostility to the movement, seems to have had access to an actual list of the regulations of the Capuchins which are puritan and include prohibitions of gambling and wearing rich clothes, which hardly suggests that the members were poor people. Moreover, joining the Capuchins involved paying an annual fee; according to Geoffroy de Vigeois 6 *denarii*, payable at each Pentecost. The Anonymous of Laon says the fee was 12 *denarii* and that within two months the organization had collected an enormous sum, 400,000 pounds![60] Clearly such a well-financed organization, even if we assume some of the Anonymous' figures have been inflated, could not have been supported by the poor alone who, moreover, could not have afforded the rich clothing prohibited here. Moreover, the puritan nature of these regulations suggests that they were drawn up by very respectable persons who enjoyed the support of churchmen. Prosperous people, perhaps often townsfolk like Durandus himself, whose livings were threatened by mercenary disorders, probably formed the backbone of this highly respectable Capuchin movement. These were the kind of substantial townsmen who Henry II had required to equip themselves with weapons, including swords, by his Assize of Arms of 1181. Two such codes were issued, one for England and the other for the Angevin lands in France, and they clearly supposed that there were substantial numbers of well armed people, quite apart from the knights and nobles, who needed to be enrolled in defence of stability and order.[61] Of course, the rural poor may well have offered support, but few of them could have afforded the military equipment and the petty pomp.[62]

Canon 27 of Third Lateran offered a profoundly radical solution to the problems of heresy and internal security in southern Gaul by seeking to use crusading enthusiasm as a means to recruit and organize forces. Although it left the initiative in the hands of lay people, the whole drive against the mercenaries was to be controlled by the bishops, and their preaching, under the leadership of Henri de Marcy, probably had a major role in creating the atmosphere in which the Capuchin movement arose. Pope Alexander III (1159-81) and the Council presumably intended that the errant leaders of society would succumb to moral

pressure, the menace of excommunication backed up by widespread anger and the threat of military force. But the aristocracy were caught up in a climax of violence and divided, and the initiative passed into the hands of others. But this armed confraternity, like the lords, became enmeshed in the political divisions of the area. It was simply not possible to stand outside them. Geoffroy de Vigeois shows us the Capuchins effectively supporting the rebels against Duke Richard of Aquitaine in 1183. In the following year Richard's soldiers took vengeance at the 'Portes de Berthe', ending the movement. This defeat was presented by later writers, reflecting their own preoccupations, as the suppression of a subversive movement. Modern historians accepted this evidence of revolutionary feeling and this has obscured the fact that the Capuchins arose from a radical experiment in adapting the crusade for the purposes of internal security and social stability. In this sense it formed a precedent for the much greater Albigensian Crusade.

Notes

[1] C.Erdman, *Origins of the Idea of the Crusade* tr. M.W.Baldwin and W.Goffart (Princeton, 1977), Chap II, 57-94; E.Delaruelle, 'Essai sur la formation de l'idée de Croisade' , *Bulletin de literature ecclésiastique* 45 (1944), 37-42; G.Duby, 'Laity and the Peace of God,' in *The Chivalrous Society* tr. C.Postan (London, 1977), 124-31, *The Three Orders. Feudal Society Imagined* tr. A.Goldhammer of a French original of 1978 (Chicago, 1980), 327-36.

[2] M.Bull, *Knightly Piety and the Lay Response to the First Crusade. The Limousin and Gascony c.970-c.1130* (Oxford, 1993), Chapter 1, 21-69.

[3] For the wider context see J. Gillingham, *The Angevin Empire* (London, 2001). On the war see J.Martindale, '"An unfinished business": Angevin politics and the siege of Toulouse, 1159', *Anglo-Norman Studies* 23 (2000), 115-54; R. Benjamin, 'A Forty Years War: Toulouse and the Plantagenets, 1156-96,' *Historical Research* 61 (1988), 270-85. This author died in an accident and his supervisor, Professor John Gillingham brought this work to press; Bourges had been purchased by Philip I (1060-1108) in 1101, on which see J.Dunbabin, *France in the Making 843-1180* (Oxford, 1985), 219.

[4] A.Debord, *La Société laïque dans les pays de la Charente, X-XII siècles* (Paris, 1984), 382-402.

[5] C.Higounet, 'La rivalité des maisons de Toulouse et de Barcelone pour la prépondérance médiévale', in C.E.Perrin (ed.), *Mélanges d'histoire du moyen âge dédiés à la mémoire de Louis Halphen* (Paris, 1951), 313-22.

[6] Sequor Albanum episcopum per montes et valles, per vastas solitudines, per praedonum rabiem et mortis imaginem, per incendi villarum et ruinas domorum, ubi nihil tutum, nihil quod non minetur saluti et non insidietur vitae.' quoted in Y.M.-J.Congar, 'Henri de Marcy, abbé de Clairvaux, Cardinal-Évêque d'Albano et Légat Pontifical', *Studia Anselmiana* 43 (1958), 39. Of course Stephen may well have exaggerated the devastation to highlight his own devotion, but it is unlikely that he invented it.

[7] J. D. Hosler, *Henry II: a medieval soldier at war, 1147-1189* (Leiden: Brill, 2007) discusses Henry's employment of mercenaries while for aristocratic attitudes see D.Crouch, 'William

Marshal and the Mercenariat', in J.France (ed.), *The Mercenary Identity in the Middle Age* (Leiden, 2008).

[8] After Hastings all the soldiers of the Norman army had to perform penance for murder, but it was much heavier for the mercenaries than for Duke William's own men, on which see H. E. J. Cowdrey, Bishop Ermenford of Sion and the penitential ordinance following the battle of Hastings', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 20 (1969), 225-42.

[9] Congar, 'Henri de Marcy', 12-19; B. M. Kienzle, *Cistercians, Heresy and Crusade in Occitania, 1145-1229: Preaching in the Lord's Vineyard* (Woodbridge, 2001), 109-134. Rather curiously this work ignores the Capuchins ; B.Guillemain, 'L'épiscopat français à Latran III', in J.Longère (ed.), *Le Troisième Concile de Latran (1179)* (Paris, 1982), 23-32. Amongst the French bishops present who will be mentioned in this article were Guillaume de Toucy, bishop of Auxerre (1167-81): *Gesta Episcoporum Autissiodorensium* in L.M.Duru, *Bibliothèque historique de l'Yonne* 2 vols (Auxerre and Paris, 1850-63), 1.428 and Pons d'Arsace, archbishop of Narbonne (1162-82); the earlier date of 1167 for the Council of Saint-Félix-de-Caraman is not now favoured, on which see C.Taylor, *Heresy in Medieval France. Dualism in Aquitaine and the Agenais, 1000-1249* (Woodbridge, 2005), 172-3.

[10] C.J.Hefele, *Histoire des Conciles* ed. H.Leclerq, 9 vols (Hildesheim, 1973) 5.2: 1106-08.

[11] Vulgate: Iohannes 10. 12-14.

[12] Geoffroy de Vigeois, *Chronica* in P.Labbe, *Novae Bibliothecae manuscriptorum et librorum rerum Aquitanicarum* 2 vols (Paris, 1657), 328. Geoffroy's Latin is very difficult and the P.Labbe edition is not very satisfactory. However, it is the only full text of the Chronicle, and extracts from it appear in M.Bouquet, *Recueil des Historiens des Gaules et de la France* ed. M.Delisle, 24 vols (Paris, 1869-1904), 10. 267-9, 11.288, 12.421-51, 18. 211-23 and MGH SS 26. 199-203. There is a study by P.Botineau, *Chronique de Geoffroi de Breuil, prieur de Vigeois*, unpublished doctoral thesis, École des Chartes, Paris, 1964 but I have not been able to obtain a copy of this.

[13] Anonymous of Laon, *Chronicon Universale Anonymi Laudunesnsis (1154-1219)*, ed. A.Cartellieri and W.Stechele (Leipzig and Paris, 1929), 37.

[14] Geoffroy de Vigeois, 334. *Palearii* is connected with *paleare* meaning a stack of straw;J.F. Niermeyer and C.van der Kieft, *Mediae Latinitatis Lexicon Minus* 2 vols (Leiden, 2002), 2.983.

[15] M.Bull (ed.), *The Miracles of Our Lady of Rocamadour* (Woodbridge,1999) refers to Basques 104-5,134, to Basques and Brabançons 184, and Brabançons only 191,192-3.

[16] The most important general survey of the subject of mercenaries in this period remains H.Grundmann, 'Rotten und Brabazonen, Söldner-heere in 12. Jahrhundert', *Deutches Archiv für die Erforschung des Mittelalters* 5 (1942), 419-92, but for more recent studies see J.Boussard, 'Les mercenaires au XIIe siècle. Henri II Plantegenêt et les origines de l'armée de métier', *Bibliothèque de l'Ecole des Chartes* 106 (1945-6), 189-224 ; J.Boussard, 'Services féodeaux, milices et mercenaires aux Xe et XIe siècles' in *Ordinamenti militari in Occidenti nell'Alto Medioevo: Settimane di Studio del Centro Italiano di Studi sull'Alto Medioevo XV, Spoleto 30 March-5 April 1867* (Spoleto,1968),131-68 ; J.Schlight, *Monarchs and Mercenaries* (Bridgeport,1968) ; S.D.B.Brown, 'The mercenary and his master: military service and monetary reward in the eleventh and twelfth century,' *History* 74 (1989), 20-38; J.France (ed.), *The Mercenary Identity in the Middle Age* (Leiden, 2008).

[17] On the peace movement in general see R.Bonnaud-Delamore, 'Fondement des Institutions de paix au XIe siècle' in *Mélanges d'Histoire dédiés à la mémoire de Louis Halphen* (Paris, 1951), 19-26.

[18] Rodulfus Glaber,*Historiarum Libri Quinque*, in *Opera* ed. J.France (Oxford, 1989) IV:16, 196-7.

[19] H.E.J.Cowdrey, 'The Peace and Truce of God in the Eleventh Century', *Past and Present* 46 (1970), 42-67.

[20] T.Head, 'Andrew of Fleury's Account of the Peace League of Bourges', in T.Head and R.Landes (eds), *The Peace of God. Social Violence and Religious Response in France around the year 1000* (Ithaca, 1992), 219-38.

[21] T.Head and R.Landes, 'Introduction', in T.Head and R.Landes (eds), *The Peace of God. Social Violence and Religious Response in France around the year 1000* (Ithaca, 1992), 7-9. Cowdrey, 'Peace and Truce of God', 44.

[22] A.Grabois, 'De la trève de Dieu à la paix du roi: Étude sur la transformation du mouvement de la paix au XII siècle', in P.Gallais et Y-J. Riou (eds), *Mélanges offerts à René Crozet à l'occasion de son soixante-dixième anniversaire par ses amis, ses collègues, ses élèves et les membres du C.É.S.C.M* 2 vols (Poitiers, 1966), 1 :585-96.

[23] Bull, *Knightly Piety*, 58-9.

[24] T.Bisson, 'The Organized Peace in Southern France and Catalonia ca.1140-1223', *American Historical Review* 82 (1977), 311 [290-311].

[25] These continuations of the Peace Movement are noted by F.L.Cheyette, *Ermengarde of Narbonne and the World of the Troubadours* (Ithaca, 2001), 283.

[26] Geoffroy de Vigeois, 338-9; 'O Lamb of God, who takest away the sins of the world: grant us peace' (tr. *The English Missal for the Laity* (London, 1958), 325) is a prayer said in the Canon of the Mass between the consecration of the Host and the Communion. It would, therefore, have been very well known to the laity as well as the clergy. D.Kennelly, 'Medieval Towns and the Peace of God', *Medievalia et Humanistica* 15 (1963), 35-53 notes that the seal of Narbonne bore this same device and inscription, but this dates from 1218.

[27] Robert of Torigni, *Chronicon* in R. Howlett, *Chronicles of the Reigns of Stephen, Henry II and Richard I*, 4 vols (London,1884-89) 2.309.

[28] Rigord, *Histoire de Philippe Auguste* ed. E.Carpentier, G.Pon and Y.Chauvin (Paris, 2006), 1. 25, 168-9. The older edition is that of H.F.Delaborde (ed.), *Gesta Philippi Augusti Christianissimi Francorum Regis*, in *Œuvres de Rigord et de Guillaume le Breton,* 2 vols (Paris, 1882-85).

[29] Gervase of Canterbury, *Chronica* in W.Stubbs (ed.), *The Historical Works of Gervase of Canterbury* 2 vols (London, 1879-80), 1.300-302, tr. J.Stevenson, *The Church Historians of England* (London, 1879-80) 1.304.

[30] Robert of Auxerre, *Chronicon* MHG SS 26.247 and Delisle, *Recueil* 18. 706; Eustace, 'Life of Bishop Hugh of Noyers (1183-1206)' in Duru, *Gesta Episcoporum Autissiodorensium*, 445-6.

[31] Guiot de Provins, *La Bible* in J.Orr (ed.), *Les Œuvres de Guiot de Provins. Poète lyrique et satirique* (Manchester, 1915), ll. 1927-35.

[32] Anonymous of Laon,, 37-40. 58.

[33] Vic and Vaissette, *Histoire Générale de Languedoc* 8.355. This document was discovered by A.Fayard, 'De Ruessium à Saint-Paulien', *Cahiers de la Haute-Loire* 1976, 43-127, 118.

[34] See above p.78, n.9.

[35] J.Phillips, *The Second Crusade* (New Haven, 2007), 281; Phillips, 55, comments that this was a radical advance even on what Urban II had offered.

[36] Kienzle, *Cistercians, Heresy and Crusade in Occitania*, 121-4, 127.

[37] Geoffroy de Vigeois, 2.326; Roger of Howden, *Chronica* ed. W.Stubbs (2 vols) (London, 1878) 2.160-66; Congar, 'Henri de Marcy', 35-38.

[38] C. de Vic and D.Vaissette, *Histoire Générale de Languedoc* 15 vols (Toulouse, 1872-92) 8. 341-4; 371-3; Hefele, 5:2.112.

[39] J.Gilchrist, 'The Erdmann Thesis and the Canon Law, 1083-1141' in P.W.Edbury (ed.), *Crusade and Settlement* (Cardiff, 1985), 37-45 was significant in drawing attention to this problem.

[40] G.Constable, 'The Historiography of the Crusades' in A.E.Laiou and R.P.Mottahedeh (eds), *The Crusades from the Perspective of Byzantium and the Muslim World* (Washington, 2001) has neatly classified the approaches of modern historians: Traditionalists regard Jerusalem as essential – an example is H.E.Mayer, The Crusades tr. J.Gillingham of a 1965 original in German (2nd edition, Oxford, 1990) : Generalists think that definition is unhelpful and that crusading was subject to ideas and circumstances - C.Tyerman, in his essay 'Were there any Crusades in the Twelfth century?' in his *The Invention of the Crusades* (Basingstoke, 1998),8-29 and in *God's War. A New History of the Crusades* (Harvard, 2006) is a fine example: Popularists emphasise the collective excitement of the people in response to a chiliastic appeal though they are less popular now: Pluralists emphasises papal direction as the defining factor - J.Riley-Smith, *What were the Crusades?* (3rd edition, Basingstoke, 2002) is the founding father here.

[41] Hefele, 5:2.112.

[42] Geoffroy de Vigeois,338.

[43] Anonymous of Laon, 40.

[44] J.France, *Western Warfare in the Age of the Crusades c.1000-c.1300* (London, 1999), 133-5.

[45] Geoffroy de Vigeois, 323.

[46] The Latin in this passage of Geoffrey de Vigeois, 340-41, is very difficult. It reads: 'Dominica mane recesserunt timentes iuratos Arverniae qui venire disponebant, nisi Gillelmus de Chameleyra miles differri consilio faceret pravo: quod factum in tantos poenituit ut Ademarum Lemovicensem sacramenti sui efficerent participem, sicut avunculum illius Archambaldum fecerant pridem.'

[47] Geoffroy de Vigeois, 340-1.

[48] Benjamin, 'Forty Years War', 277.

[49] Geoffroy de Vigeois, 342, while Mercadier's attack is 340-41. Louvart is mentioned in association with another mercenary leader, *Saucius* , and Geoffroy says that they were attacking the lands of the English king.

[50] Anonymous of Laon, 58; On Mercadier in general and his relations with Richard I see J.Gillingham, *Richard I* (New Haven, 1999). The location of the 'Portes de Berthe' is unknown.

[51] See above p.82, n.30.

[52] Anonymous of Laon, 40.

[53] A.Luchaire, first produced 'Un essai de révolution sociale sous Philippe Auguste', *Grande Revue* (1900), 327-28, but later expanded his ideas in *La société française au temps de Philippe-Auguste* 2nd edition (Paris, 1909) tr. as *Social France at the Time of Philip Augustus* tr. E.B.Krehbiel (London: Murray, 1912). A further edition was produced by Harper & Row in New York in 1967. The manuscript of the book was found in Luchaire's papers after his death in 1908 and edited for publication by Louis Halphen; F.L.Cheyette, *Ermengarde of Narbonne and the World of the Troubadours* (Ithaca, 2001), 283-5 treats briefly of the Capuchins, accepting that they were seen as 'a conspiracy against the social order.' R.Fossier, 'Remarques sur l'étude des "commotions" sociales au XIe et XIIe siècles', *Cahiers de Civilisation Médiévale* 16 (1973), 50 ; 45-50 was doubtful about the charge of subverting the social order but never developed his ideas which were firmly opposed by J.Perrel, 'Une révolution populaire au Moyen-Age. Le mouvement des Capuchonnés du Puy 1182-84', *Cahiers de la Haute-Loire* 1977, 61-79 ; some scepticism on this subject was expressed by Fayard, 'De Ruessium à Saint-Paulien', 43-127, but this was buried in a general consideration of the history of the Le Puy

diocese. Duby, *Three Orders*, 327-36 produced a modern and very popular restatement of Luchaire.

[54] Robert of Auxerre, MHG SS 26.247 and Delisle, *Recueil* 18. 706.

[55] The translation is from A.Luchaire, *Social France at the Time of Philip Augustus* tr. E.B.Krehbiel (London, 1912), 17.

[56] Eustace, 'Life of Bishop Hugh of Noyers (1183-1206)' in Duru, *Gesta Episcoporum Autissiodorensium*, 445-6. Hugh's predecessor, Bishop Guillaume de Toucy (1167-81), was the brother of Bishop Guy of Sens and, therefore, Hugh's uncle.

[57] Robert of Torigni, 2.309.

[58] Duby, *Three Orders*, 330 remarks on the social inclusiveness of the movement; Rigord, 40.

[59] Gervase of Canterbury, 301.

[60] Anonymous of Laon, 38-39; Geoffroy de Vigeois 339.

[61] Howden, *Chronica* 2. 253.

[62] In the Charente, at least, there is no evidence at this time of lords imposing new burdens upon their peasants, thereby provoking resistance. This does not seem to have happened until the early thirteenth century: Debord, *Société laïque dans les pays de la Charente*, 403-16, 429-49.