In 1279 the king of France issued a royal diploma which listed 278 citizens of Toulouse whose property had been confiscated for heresy; under this amnesty, the property was to be returned to the citizens or their heirs. The central focus of this study, then, is an edition of the royal diploma and the attempted identification of the 278 citizens, along with a list of proctors who originally petitioned the king for the amnesty. There are also histories of twenty families whose scions were listed, based on the diploma and other surviving documents. All available material on these families is noted, and thus their stories concern the general history of Toulouse, not just its religious aspects.

Part One of the study comments on the nature of Catharism, on twelfth-century events and on the defeat of the Midi during the Albigensian Crusade (1209–1229). Orthodox repression from 1178 to the crusade is emphasized, including an important law against heretics issued by the count of Toulouse. Initially hardly aware of Catharism’s teachings, the orthodox soon devised effective propaganda linking or confounding usury with heresy.

Toulouse was absorbed by northern French power and ecclesiastical repression continued from 1229 until the publication of the amnesty of 1279. The diploma itself, therefore, is a form of treaty between monarch and town that finally removed the threat of property confiscation for past heresy.

The repression in the town of Toulouse was both severe and rapid, Catharism being irreparably doomed by the end of the 1230s, even before the Inquisition was itself well organized. The province having already been beheaded, the later extirpation of rural Catharism was a mere mopping up operation. By analyzing the role of different social classes and groups, it becomes clear that the inquisitors aimed high, both women and the lower classes being under-represented among the condemned. One thing is sure: noble or commoner, the town’s well-to-do were deeply involved in Catharism. Although closely linked, families were not uniform in belief – some members were Cathar and others not. Before the repression, Toulousan society tolerated religious divergence.

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