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William Chester Jordan: A Tale of Two Monasteries

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I

ENGLAND AND FRANCE

IN THE EARLY THIRTEENTH CENTURY

IN ONE SENSE the story of this book opens in the year 1258 when two relatively obscure monks, Richard de Ware and Mathieu de Vendôme, were elected rulers of Westminster Abbey and the Abbey of Saint-Denis. In another sense, however, the monks' story commences more than a half century earlier, when war broke out between King John of England and King Philip II of France. The failure of the two kings and their advisers to resolve the conflict and the persistent turmoil that their failure generated in the ensuing decades provide the essential introduction to the two abbots' history and that of their monasteries in their lifetimes. For it was an almost inevitable consequence of their election to such influential positions that Richard and Mathieu became partisans in the continuing diplomatic and political drama affecting their countries.

It was in the year 1200 that King John of England (1199–1216) took a young girl, Isabelle d'Angoulême, as his wife.¹ Isabelle attracted him because she was pretty and pert, or, in another, duller but no less well-argued interpretation, because marriage to her provided the key to a strategic opportunity. Her family ruled the Angoumois, a principality in western France about 150 kilometers south of the Loire River. Its location and power offered a means to check the rise to prominence of an ambitious baron, Hugues, count of La Marche, but Hugues was already engaged to Isabelle when John decided to act. Thus it was in a preemptive move that he carried Isabelle off and married her himself. The action did not so much secure an alliance with Isabelle's family as it put in jeopardy John's continued possession of the vast array of French lands he had inherited in 1199 on the death of his brother, Richard the Lionhearted (1189–1199). Count Hugues of La Marche owed faithfulness to John, but only as long as the latter treated him justly. The taking of his intended bride was unjust, and when the count gave up trying to obtain satisfaction directly from John, he turned to their mutual overlord, the Capetian king of France Philip II (1179/80–1223), a man who had long coveted the territories in

¹ On Isabelle, see Vincent, "Isabella of Angoulême," pp. 165–219, and Jordan, "Isabelle d'Angoulême," pp. 821–52.

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his realm that were, to his infinite displeasure, under the direct control of the wearer of the English crown.²

The French ruler commanded John to appear before him and his High Court to answer the charges levied against him and to receive Philip's judgment. John categorically refused even though he held his lands in France from and had pledged his faith to the French king. Philip and his court therefore solemnly declared John's French lands forfeit to the crown. War ensued, and by 1204 French troops had subjugated Normandy. By the end of 1206 they had extended their master's control to most of the lands John claimed that were situated north of the Loire River.

Soon afterward John provoked an equally dangerous personage, Pope Innocent III. The issue, the English king's refusal to admit the papal candidate to the see of Canterbury after a disputed election, ultimately led the king and the pope to take actions against each other, the former confiscating ecclesiastical property and sending hostile English churchmen into exile, the latter imposing a kingdomwide interdiction of religious services in 1208. It would not be until 1212 that John extricated himself from this struggle, promising as part of the settlement to accept the overlordship of the pope for his own royal lordship of England.

The line of demarcation established in 1206 between areas of French and English rule on the Continent, to resume the military narrative, was generally stable until the early 1220s, when large additional territories south of the Loire were successfully annexed by Philip's heir and successor, Louis VIII (1223–1226). To be sure, the half century following the initial French conquests saw John and, thereafter, his son Henry III (1216–1272) attempt to regain their lands. Their lack of success had enormous repercussions in English history. The lifting of the papal interdict in late 1212 was the one really bright spot for King John, allowing him to concentrate his efforts on the war with France, but popular disappointment during the year 1214 with his most intensive but wholly ineffective effort to recover his Continental patrimony was a major cause for the great revolt of the heavily taxed English barons that led to the acceptance of Magna Carta in 1215. Magna Carta failed to bring more than a temporary cessation of the revolt, but it did lay the foundation for a longer-term modus vivendi between the crown and the English aristocracy—one often contested, but in the end quite constraining and enduring.³

² This chapter draws substantially throughout on the narratives of Powicke, *Loss of Normandy*; idem, *Thirteenth Century*; Carpenter, *Minority of Henry III*; Baldwin, *Government of Philip Augustus*; Petit-Dutaillis, *Etude sur la vie et le règne de Louis VIII*; and Richard, *Saint Louis*.

³ Carpenter, *Minority of Henry III*, p. 412. For a comprehensive treatment of the politics surrounding the creation of Magna Carta, see Holt, *Magna Carta*.

After his father's death Henry III continued to assert the Plantagenets' claims to the lost French lands, although his attempts, like John's, to enforce these claims by specifically military action never achieved success. His principal opponent for most of his reign was Louis IX (1226–1270), and the two men's opposition sparked a rivalry that lasted until the end of their lives. Yet that rivalry itself gradually transmuted over the years, as it became evident that war was not the English king's best game, and as the French king focused more and more of his attention on the desire to distinguish himself as a crusader. The progressive infrequency and relatively low intensity of Henry III's threats to mount a military expedition to compel acknowledgment of the justness of his territorial claims in France led to the illusion of peace between the two kingdoms in the mid- and late 1240s. It remained to turn the illusion into legal reality, but the most hopeful moments in this process did not come until the 1250s. The two kingdoms remained technically at war until late in that decade.

If the initial shock and the ever-lengthening reality of the loss of the French lands transformed the kingdom of England, the French victories no less profoundly transformed the nature of French society and domestic politics. Success ultimately turned this one among many military, diplomatic, and economic principalities in western Europe into the most powerful kingdom in Christendom. It provided additional substance to the French crown's claims to superiority among Catholic monarchies. And it fed a nascent but deepening patriotism in a realm that until then had been scarcely more than a congeries of loosely attached principalities.⁴

The loss of most of their territories in France in the early thirteenth century did not mean that the English kings or their subjects were wholly estranged from the Continent. English aristocrats, many of whom were descendants of men who had conquered the kingdom in 1066, constituted a community comfortable in French and in regular contact with Francophone Continental kin and friends.⁵ Henry III also retained direct political control of the lands of the southwest that the Capetians did not seize in the thirteenth century, the duchy of Aquitaine (with its capital at Bordeaux and one of its greatest ports at Bayonne) and small adjacent territories. Britain's proximity to the Continent assured that in peacetime trade relations formed an important bond. Wine exported to the island kingdom now, with the loss of Anjou and Poitou, came more dispropor-

⁴ See the collection, edited by Bedos-Rezak, *Polity and Place: Regionalism in Medieval France*, and Dunbabin's *France in the Making*. See also Iogna-Prat, "Constructions chrétiennes," pp. 55–60.

⁵ Lodge, "Language Attitudes and Linguistic Norms," p. 78. Cf. Iglesia-Rábade, "Multi-Lingual Pulpit," pp. 479–92.

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tionately and in larger quantities from the Bordelais.⁶ Finally, travels back and forth of clergymen and pilgrims were never infrequent.

Except, however, for making plans of reconquest, only to execute them unsuccessfully, and strengthening the administration of the much-reduced Angevin Empire, the English king's council devoted far less time to affairs on the Continent after 1215 than had been the case earlier.⁷ In a famous quip, the historian George Sayles once said that King Henry III, "debarred" by his military and political fortunes from replicating his predecessors' travels "to the Continent, was determined to redress the balance by having the Continent come to England."⁸ He meant that those of Henry's Continental relatives who came to the kingdom held a favored place in his sentiments. Critics may have exaggerated the power and danger of these so-called aliens, especially Henry's half-siblings from his mother's remarriage. Nonetheless, after a time these kinfolk from Poitou and its environs, the Poitevins, together with the king's relatives by marriage (to Eleanor of Provence) from both Provence and Savoy, did command a sizable portion of royal benefactions.⁹

The king was also an extravagant man. He was enormously wealthy, as most medieval kings were, but not even a monarch's wealth was limitless. Henry lavished gifts not only on the aliens but also his other friends. Some of his tendencies were kept under control in his youth (he was only nine when he came to the throne in the aftermath of his father's unsuccessful repudiation of Magna Carta). At first, dominion in his government lay with a grand old man, William Marshal, the Earl of Pembroke, but when the earl died only a few years into the reign, control over Henry passed to a triumvirate, a sort of regency council, that included Pandulph, the papal legate; Peter des Roches, the bishop of Winchester; and Hubert de Burgh, the justiciar.¹⁰ William Marshal and, after him, the triumvirate engineered the rebels' appeasement, the face-saving departure of a French invasion force that had come to support them against John, the spiriting away of Henry's mother (in the view of many, the cause of all woes) to her homeland, Magna Carta's prudent reissue, and the enactment of the companion Charter of the Forest in 1217. The new government managed to achieve a level of stability thereafter, even when strains appeared in the regency in the 1220s.

⁶ Boutoulle, "Vigne," p. 293.

⁷ Studd, "Reconfiguring the Angevin Empire," pp. 31–41.

⁸ Sayles, *Medieval Foundations of England*, p. 416.

⁹ Vincent, *Peter des Roches*, p. 37. The now standard biography of Henry's consort is Howell's *Eleanor of Provence*.

¹⁰ There are good modern biographies of two of these men: Crouch, *William Marshal*, and Vincent, *Peter des Roches*. Carpenter's *Minority of Henry III* is also essential.

The king gradually assumed the reins of power, starting in 1223, and in 1225 he reissued the Great Charter. But no scholar has made much of a case that Henry's interest in governance made him an effective ruler. His great advantage was that the people around him, like Hubert de Burgh, who emerged as the dominant presence, were themselves well-schooled administrators, and that the administrative routines established in the twelfth century persisted into the thirteenth. England remained a small well-governed country, as the commonplace has it. To be sure, intermittent squabbles among individual barons, baronial factions, and alien lords hampered the government's operations, and the difficulties that ensued were marked from time to time by politic reissues of Magna Carta as a kind of ritual—a promise on the king's part and, by implication, on the government's to do better.¹¹ Even real lapses in direction from the center had less deleterious implications than they might otherwise have had, thanks to the quality and clever inventiveness of crown administrators working in the long tradition of Plantagenet governance. Thus, for example, in response to the Fourth Lateran Council's interdiction of priests' sanctifying the ordeals hitherto used to try accused felons, it was the judges, not the crown, who worked out a new way of proceeding—namely, trial by petty jury, a unanimous verdict of twelve good men and true to replace the ordeals.¹²

The real crisis in English governance did not begin until the 1240s, and it accelerated in the 1250s. It was occasioned by a fiscal logjam.¹³ First, the period was one during which the king began to expend huge sums on artistic patronage, particularly that associated with Westminster Abbey's rebuilding.¹⁴ Second, in 1242, during an ill-planned and ill-executed regional rebellion against the French king, Louis IX, Henry tried and failed for the last time in a costly £40,000 attempt to reconquer his Continental dominions.¹⁵ Third, he increasingly bestowed honors and wealth, including heiresses, on the aliens in the country, especially the Poitevins.¹⁶ Fourth, Magna Carta and indeed the whole panoply of good customs that the king formally and ritually espoused limited his willingness to try to raise money in ways that some of his predecessors had employed.¹⁷ In

¹¹ Cf. Vincent, *Peter des Roches*, p. 443.

¹² Cf. Groot, "Early-Thirteenth-Century Criminal Jury," pp. 3–35.

¹³ Substantial context is provided in Stacey, *Politics, Policy and Finance*.

¹⁴ On the early stages of the thirteenth-century phase of the Westminster Abbey construction project from 1245 to 1259, see Binski, *Westminster Abbey and the Plantagenets*, pp. 13–29.

¹⁵ Jordan, "Isabelle d'Angoulême," pp. 841–47; Powicke, *Thirteenth Century*, p. 103.

¹⁶ Waugh, "Marriage, Class, and Royal Lordship," pp. 181–207; Carpenter, "King, Magistrates, and Society," pp. 39–70.

¹⁷ Waugh, *Lordship*, pp. 83–104; Stacey, *Politics, Policy and Finance*, pp. 201–37; Turner, *King and His Courts*.

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particular, he or, rather, his agents could be grasping, but his government was never as arbitrary or as exacting as his father's had been in its financial practices, except possibly with regard to the exploitation of the Jews, which, not surprisingly, was particularly intense in the 1240s.¹⁸ Perhaps the elements of the system of governance and domestic political relations could have been maintained in tremulous equilibrium despite these fiscal demands and constraints, but a fifth set of factors intervened in a powerful and determinative way. They can be summed up in one word, Sicily, or the *Regno* as it was also known.¹⁹

From the early days of the thirteenth century the popes were concerned with the possibility that a strong and potentially hostile Holy Roman Emperor might control not only the political and financial resources of Germania, but those of the Italian peninsula to the north and south of the Papal States and those of the island of Sicily.²⁰ Whoever controlled these resources could threaten the integrity of the Papal States and the freedom of the papacy itself. The emperor who had the best hereditary claims to these lands and who appeared—at least in the eyes of Popes Gregory IX (1227–1241) and Innocent IV (1243–1254)—to fulfill the worst of their forebodings in this regard was the Hohenstaufen Frederick II (1215–1250).²¹ Intermittent violence between the emperor and the popes culminated in 1245 in the papacy's relocation to Lyon on the borders of medieval France, where it enjoyed the protective proximity of French military power. At the First Council of Lyon and in the same year Pope Innocent IV solemnly deposed the emperor. Since Frederick did not meekly accept his deposition, the pope looked for a secular champion to fight what he regarded as a just war—a Crusade—against the Hohenstaufen.²²

Innocent's French protector, Louis IX, was unwilling to engage in hostilities, partly for juridical and moral reasons, for he was uncertain as to the legality and righteousness of the pope's deposition of Frederick.²³ His reluctance also stemmed partly from strategic considerations. The French king had recently made a commitment to go on Crusade to the eastern Mediterranean. Indeed, the Council of Lyon gave ecclesiastical blessing to his planned enterprise. War with the empire would have delayed, perhaps prevented, the Crusade, and a favorable outcome was far from certain in any case. Consequently, Pope Innocent IV needed to turn to others, in-

¹⁸ Stacey, "Royal Taxation," p. 207; Carpenter, *Minority of Henry III*, p. 111.

¹⁹ Weiler, *Henry III of England and the Staufen Empire*, pp. 147–71, provides the most up-to-date synthesis, but his assessment of the king's policy as essentially sound sometimes seems to me to involve special pleading.

²⁰ Abulafia, *Frederick II*, pp. 136, 164.

²¹ Ibid., pp. 165, 368.

²² Ibid., pp. 380–89; Jordan, *Louis IX*, pp. 26–29.

²³ Jordan, *Louis IX*, pp. 27–29.

cluding members of the French king's family, but in their case, too, pressure from Louis was sufficient to restrain them from seeking glory and the crowns that theoretically had become available as a result of the papal bull of deposition.²⁴ Moreover, pressure on Innocent IV continued to come from the French king to negotiate or compromise to end the imperial-papal strife, strife that did no good for what was seen as the Catholic powers' proper undertaking, armed resistance to Muslim advances in the Holy Land and its environs.²⁵

When Louis IX went on Crusade in 1248, the situation was still unresolved. Nor did matters improve in 1250 when Frederick II died, for his family stubbornly but quite understandably refused to acquiesce in their disinheritance.²⁶ Papal intransigence or wherewithal (it depends on one's point of view) led to increasingly shrill denunciations of the whole Hohenstaufen family—a brood of vipers that had to be put down. Even the eventual failure of Louis IX's Crusade was by some laid in part at the dead emperor's door. He had done nothing to help Louis; and he was alleged to have connived to keep the French king, who was briefly taken prisoner in Egypt in 1250, in captivity, in order to give himself a free hand against the pope—free, that is, of the French ruler's meddling and verbal warnings.²⁷

Louis IX returned from Crusade only in 1254. In the interval between the emperor's death and the French king's return, the pope continued to cast about for a champion to confront Hohenstaufen forces, in Italy in particular, where his own supporters and their mercenaries, backed by increasingly depleted papal funds, were sorely beleaguered. It was in these circumstances that Innocent IV and his successor Alexander IV (1254–1261) began assiduously to sound out the English as possible collaborators in the defense of the church against the viperous brood of Hohenstaufen threatening it.²⁸ King Henry III was under some pressure himself. He was supposed to go on Crusade, but though he had taken the vow in 1250, he had not done so. He reaped no prestige from this inactivity.²⁹

These circumstances made the imperial business all the more intriguing and attractive—a just and holy war that promised a crown (though not all of Frederick's crowns; the pope's desire was that no one man should ever have such authority again) and the vast wealth and patronage accompanying the rule of a kingdom. In Henry III's case, the imperial

²⁴ Berg, "Manfred of Sicily and Urban IV," p. 120.

²⁵ For general background on the Crusades, see Riley-Smith, *Crusades*.

²⁶ Abulafia, *Frederick II*, pp. 410–14.

²⁷ Jordan, *Louis IX*, pp. 29–30.

²⁸ Powicke, *Thirteenth Century*, pp. 120–22.

²⁹ Tyerman, *England and the Crusades*, pp. 111–18.

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business transmuted into the Sicilian business. After sensitive negotiations, the English king in 1254 accepted the Sicilian crown on behalf of his second son, Edmund. The climate of opinion in England was not entirely favorable to this new royal enthusiasm. “I do not think the king acts wisely” (*Jo ne quid ke li rois face sagement*), one English clerical poet wrote or, rather sang, around 1256: “He who seeks an example, / look to the king of France” (*Ke vot aver semblance, / regarde le rois de France*), who still refused to get involved or let his brothers get involved in the Sicilian business.³⁰

Did Henry have any real sense of the possible complications and problems that would plague his decision? The Italian Franciscan chronicler Salimbene hinted that the English king was incapable of the systematic critical thought necessary to make informed choices.³¹ And a modern interpreter, Simon Lloyd, was moved after his examination of the evidence to muse about the king’s personality and abilities in foreign affairs in these words: “Henry’s capacity to play for high stakes, yet lose” so often, was “truly remarkable.”³² Another has described the rather moody king as “always a slow learner.”³³ Though more sympathetic in general to Henry than many other historians, even Carpenter and Stacey are harsh. The former describes the king as “impulsive, enthusiastic and ignorant of political realities.”³⁴ The latter uses the word “inept” to characterize him and judges the Sicilian policy “utter lunacy.”³⁵ Other scholars have rejected these judgments as too severe.³⁶ On one matter, nevertheless, there is universal consensus: the king of England underestimated the destructive repercussions of becoming involved in the tangle of Italian politics, diplomacy, and war.

All this was in the future in 1254. The delighted pope now had a champion to secure the prize of Sicily.³⁷ Henry agreed to guarantee the papacy’s debts up to 135,000 marks, but payments were demanded more swiftly than they could be made, even with the enormous pressure put on the English church to contribute. If the debts were not paid, it was hard to imagine a Sicilian campaign being mounted. Henry’s prolonged failure to fulfill his promise of aid, thus, could not sit well with the pope, and the threat of papal excommunication hung like the Damoclean sword above

³⁰ Wright, *Political Songs*, p. 44.

³¹ Salimbene de Adam, *Cronica*, 1:445.

³² Lloyd, “King Henry III, the Crusade and the Mediterranean,” p. 119.

³³ Vincent, *Peter des Roches*, pp. 454–55, 463.

³⁴ Carpenter, *Minority of Henry III*, p. 390.

³⁵ Stacey, *Politics, Policy and Finance*, p. 258.

³⁶ Clanchy, “Did Henry III Have a Policy?” pp. 203–16; Weiler, “Henry III and the Sicilian Business,” pp. 127–50; idem, “Henry III through Foreign Eyes,” pp. 137–61.

³⁷ Powicke, *Thirteenth Century*, p. 122.

the English king's head.³⁸ Moreover, Henry's agents in Italy kept coming under pressure to make additional promises; total obligations, partly because of the accrual of interest, came to exceed the originally promised 135,000 marks.³⁹ The king's was a nasty chicken-and-egg conundrum. The conquest of Sicily would open the door to the appropriation of the island's wealth to the Plantagenet and papal cause, but the invasion of the *Regno* required spending money that Henry would not have at his disposal until after the invasion's success.⁴⁰

Although the king continued to do his best to raise money and mollify the pontiff, accumulating the necessary resources was slow and got slower over time.⁴¹ As early as 1257 it became excruciatingly clear that there was no way fully to achieve the crown's goal without recourse to a special general aid or levy—taxation—in England. In 1215 Magna Carta had mandated that the king receive consent to taxation from the common counsel of the realm. The chapter of the Great Charter that imposed consent was omitted in the official reissue of 1225 that became the standard text of the document, but it remained good law all the same.⁴² If Henry was going to levy a tax, he was going to have to call a council of his magnates and barons, who, as he and his advisers were well aware, would use the occasion to air their own grievances against the government. It only added to the king's and the kingdom's misery that the years 1255–1258 were very bad in terms of weather, harvests, and high prices.⁴³ It was almost inevitable that the council would refuse the king's requests unless and until he answered some of their charges of bad governance.⁴⁴ One of their leaders was the powerful and influential Earl of Leicester, Simon de Montfort, the king's brother-in-law and erstwhile confidant.⁴⁵

Already in May of 1258 the king, in order to secure a subsidy, agreed to the reform of the realm through a committee of twenty-four.⁴⁶ At Oxford in June 1258 the king and his party, which included his eldest son

³⁸ Lunt's chapter on Sicilian finances is very informative. I have necessarily simplified an extremely complex story. Lunt, *Financial Relations*, 1:255–90.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 282 and 288.

⁴⁰ See, for example, *ibid.*, p. 288: by the spring of 1258, “the most which [Henry III] would promise a cardinal who claimed to have spent in the promotion of Henry's Sicilian interests 2,000 marks not covered by the 135,541 marks was reimbursement from the revenues of Sicily when he should have obtained possession of the kingdom.”

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 272–90.

⁴² McKechnie, *Magna Carta*, pp. 233–34; Lyon, *Constitutional and Legal History*, pp. 385–88.

⁴³ Titow, *English Rural Society*, p. 97; Bridbury, “Thirteenth-Century Prices,” p. 20.

⁴⁴ Treharne, *Baronial Plan of Reform*, pp. 1–69.

⁴⁵ On Simon de Montfort's relations with Henry III at this stage, see Maddicott, *Simon de Montfort*, pp. 154–62.

⁴⁶ Powicke, *Thirteenth Century*, p. 135.

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and heir, Prince Edward, and the longtime abbot of Westminster, Richard de Crokseley, met with the barons in a great court or council, the famous Oxford Parliament. The barons made considerable demands, ultimately including the expulsion of aliens.⁴⁷ Henry reluctantly agreed, and the baronial plan of reform, the Provisions of Oxford, was born: at its heart were the principles articulated a half century before in Magna Carta.⁴⁸ The plan provided for the establishment of a council of fifteen to be appointed jointly by the king and the barons and intended to advise Henry on policy matters and practical matters of governance. It also called for the establishment of a committee of twelve, appointed by the barons alone, to meet with the council of fifteen regularly at full meetings, thrice a year, of the king's Parliament. The meetings' ostensible purpose was to give oversight to the work of the council of fifteen.

The Provisions enacted limitations on the powers of the heads of governmental departments, like the chancellor, and reinstated the justiciar's office, which Hubert de Burgh had once held. Hubert had fallen out with the king in the early 1230s and was accused of an array of seditious crimes.⁴⁹ Although he managed to keep his estates until his death in 1243, Hubert was witness in 1234 to Henry's suppression of the justiciarship, long regarded as the highest office in the realm, for the justiciar, besides formally heading up the justice system implicit in his title, often served as the king's stand-in when the monarch was traversing his Continental lands in the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries.⁵⁰ The barons saw the reconstitution of the office and its occupation by an ally as an additional check on the king.⁵¹

There were many other chapters in the Provisions of Oxford. Sheriffs, for example, were to be selected from among provincial dignitaries, a clear attempt to localize power, but their terms were supposed to be limited to one year, as well. And they and other local officials were to undergo systematic regular investigation of their activities in office. With these and other reforms enacted, the committee of twenty-four agreed to consider the grant of an extraordinary aid for the Sicilian business.⁵² Whether the royal humiliation would be redeemed by Sicily's conquest remained to be seen, but there was no doubt as to the reality of the humiliation in June

⁴⁷ Trehearne, *Baronial Plan of Reform*, pp. 69–81; Powicke, *Thirteenth Century*, pp. 134–40.

⁴⁸ On the Provisions of Oxford, see Trehearne, *Baronial Plan of Reform*, pp. 82–101. On the statute-like status of the Provisions, even though no official text survives, see Valente, "Provisions of Oxford," pp. 25–41.

⁴⁹ Carpenter, "Fall of Hubert de Burgh," pp. 1–17.

⁵⁰ West, *Justiciarship*.

⁵¹ Trehearne, *Baronial Plan of Reform*, pp. 90–91.

⁵² Ibid., p. 100.

1258. Many of the so-called aliens and their allies rightly saw in the humbling of their royal patron a threat to their own physical welfare and fled the country.⁵³ Precious few in power seemed anymore to heed the distraught king.

The political history of France could not have been more different, although in a catalog of extraordinary triumphs for the crown there was to be one shattering disappointment. The triumphs began with the conquest of Normandy in 1204 and further victories by 1206 in other territories John of England claimed north of or bisected by the Loire River (including Maine, Anjou, and Touraine).⁵⁴ These conquests received military confirmation, after several years of de facto truce, in King Philip II Augustus's great victory at Bouvines on Sunday, 27 July 1214, when he defeated the coalition that King John had assembled from German allies for the northern front of a two-front war against the French.⁵⁵ Meanwhile, toward the southwest, on the second front, Philip's son and heir, the future Louis VIII, moved against King John's own forces. The English monarch beat a hasty retreat rather than fight a prolonged war. The price of his withdrawal to his island kingdom, as remarked earlier, was the rebellion that would produce Magna Carta and later a short and abortive French invasion led by Prince Louis.⁵⁶

The minor setback of the unproductive invasion of England aside, the French went from triumph to triumph. King Philip undertook no further major military endeavors himself after 1214, either to seize lands held by the English south of the Loire or to take possession of territories in the deep south of the country where another confused situation did offer opportunities. There, in the deep south, northern Frenchmen had been involved since 1209 in a violent struggle on the papacy's behalf to dispossess those native political authorities who were regarded as protectors of the so-called Cathar heretics. Throughout southern France (Languedoc and Provence) "good men and women," as they were known, had been articulating beliefs and engaging in devotional practices that already in the middle of the twelfth century struck many prelates as heretical. Seeking to understand the present threat in terms of the heresies of the past, theologians identified certain beliefs of these rebels against the church as dualist or Manichaean.⁵⁷ It was not simply lack of success in countering the here-

⁵³ Ibid., p. 104.

⁵⁴ Baldwin, *Government of Philip Augustus*, pp. 191–96.

⁵⁵ Ibid., pp. 207–19; Duby, *Legend of Bouvines*.

⁵⁶ On Magna Carta, see above. On Louis's invasion, see Sivéry, *Louis VIII*, pp. 133–95.

⁵⁷ In general, see Lambert, *Cathars*, but one of the best correctives, separating what we know about the beliefs and activities of the good men and women and what orthodox churchmen and most later historians have imputed to them, is Pegg's *Corruption of Angels*.

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tics by peaceful means that provoked a Crusade against them and their alleged protectors in 1209, but a series of incidents, culminating in the murder of a papal legate, that did. Pope Innocent III blamed the greatest lord in the south, Count Raymond VI of Toulouse, for the murder (a charge the count always denied) and implicitly for the failure of the various missions to prevent the slide away from orthodox Catholicism. With violence being used against the church, the pontiff believed himself justified in retaliating with a holy war, the Albigensian Crusade, so named from the town of Albi, regarded as a particular hotbed of heresy.⁵⁸ Innocent III promised that those who took part in the war on the papal side (these turned out to be mainly northern Frenchmen) would benefit spiritually and materially from their commitment.

Philip Augustus made modest gestures in support of the war, and his son more vigorous ones, but neither the French nor the English, who were not indifferent to heresy in and about their remaining Continental lands, committed significant resources at this stage.⁵⁹ Thus initially and for several years thereafter the military situation in the south was under the command of northern French barons, most importantly Simon de Montfort (the elder) and, after his death in 1218, his son Amaury. Simon enjoyed significant temporary successes, and at the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215 the pope recognized his ascendancy by deposing Raymond VI and vesting the county of Toulouse and its extensive lands in Simon's hands. However, the military situation degenerated after the close of the council, as Raymond of Toulouse's heir and namesake steadily made inroads against the northern occupiers. By 1223, a year after his father's death and his own formal recognition by his supporters as Count Raymond VII, he had managed to recoup most of his father's losses. Raymond VII also proclaimed his orthodoxy (not that his father had ever acknowledged his heresy or his support of heretics, despite the papacy's charges against him). The situation became so precarious that, hopeless for his personal cause, Amaury de Montfort ultimately ceded his rights in his father's conquests to the new Capetian king, Louis VIII, in January 1226.

Louis VIII accomplished two great feats in his short reign, 1223–1226.⁶⁰ First, he renewed the hot war with England in 1224, conquering a significant swath of territories south of the Loire, including Poitou and its borderlands. He made feints even further into the southwest but for

⁵⁸ For narrative treatments of the war(s), consult Strayer, *Albigensian Crusades*, and Sumption, *Albigensian Crusade*. See also, Pegg, *Most Holy War*.

⁵⁹ For Philip, see Baldwin, *Government of Philip Augustus*, pp. 336–39; for Louis, see Sivéry, *Louis VIII*, pp. 129–31, 206–10. Cf., on England, Vincent, “England and the Albigensian Crusade,” pp. 67–97.

⁶⁰ Sivéry, *Louis VIII*, pp. 239–60, 363–400.

strategic and tactical reasons did not pursue the conquest of the duchy of Aquitaine and its cities, the last great territory in France under English control. Even without seizing Aquitaine, he added thousands of square kilometers to his father's conquests before calling off the campaign. His second achievement was the enforcement of his newly acquired rights in the deep south. Following Amaury's concessions he became the head of the Albigensian Crusade and in a brilliant campaign in 1226 succeeded in inflicting a string of defeats that effectively brought large parts of Languedoc under the French crown's direct control. When Louis VIII died on 8 November 1226 still on campaign, none of these conquests—in the west or south—was absolutely assured. Everything depended on the new king, Louis IX, a boy of twelve, and his mother, Blanche of Castile, the regent.

Faced with resentments over the fact that the dying Louis VIII had assigned the regency to a Spaniard—and a woman at that—and widespread sentiment that a boy king would succumb to a self-aggrandizing aristocratic faction, those who wanted to assure the succession had their work cut out for them.⁶¹ The history of the next several years was fraught with plots, yet the government consistently managed either to disrupt them by playing one faction off against another or, when deflection and appeasement were impossible, using force selectively but effectively to frustrate the plotters. Those French aristocrats who wanted to upend the late king's arrangements were stymied at every turn, and Louis IX under Queen Blanche's tutelage emerged as a decisive and capable ruler as he approached manhood.

Nor were the achievements of conquest in the west or south overturned in this period. The English failed to mount any effective counteroffensive to win back lands either south or north of the Loire. Their most powerful potential ally, Count Raymond VII of Toulouse, even came to recognize that the best hope of retaining his title and at least some portion of his ancestral lands was to compromise with the Capetians. The French royal army's relative success in Languedoc, despite Louis VIII's death, in overcoming native insurgencies and in thwarting more organized resistance made this choice grow all the more attractive to Raymond. And the prospect, on the French side, of ending the Albigensian Crusade, with an agreement favorable to it, even one that recognized the count of Toulouse's retention of a large though much reduced block of lands, was also attractive. The end result was the Treaty of Meaux-Paris of 1229.

The year 1229 thus saw a large area of southern France come under direct Capetian administration.⁶² While Raymond VII's principal patri-

⁶¹ Richard, *Saint Louis*, pp. 36–49.

⁶² Ibid., pp. 96–101.

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mony, the county of Toulouse, was formally recognized by treaty as his of right, the count nevertheless lost to the crown and to other princes and lords considerable lands his father had once held, including large territories in Provence. He also had to agree that his heir, a girl, Jeanne, would marry Louis IX's younger brother, Alphonse. Such a marriage, in the best-case scenario for the French crown, presaged an eventual Capetian, though not necessarily royal, succession in the county of Toulouse. It is a matter of debate whether Count Raymond VII thought these agreements were written in stone, or just felt that he would have to bide his time until more favorable circumstances allowed him to renegotiate or wholly undo them.

The French crown found it costly to keep armies in the field to resist possible English military action and to pacify the south, while at the same time performing the routine tasks of governance and practicing the traditional largesse that bound aristocratic groups and ecclesiastics to the dynasty. One way of raising the money needed was the imposition of confiscatory taxation on the Jews.⁶³ Jews in France belonged to the great lords, and the greatest of the lords, the lord with the most Jews, tens of thousands of Jews, was the king. Philip Augustus had once expelled the Jews from royal lands, at a time very early in his reign when his direct lordship extended over a small geographical region. Sixteen years later, in 1198, he reversed his decision, permitting Jews to resettle in the royal domain. With the considerable expansion of direct royal rule through the conquests in the west and south in the next three decades, new and large Jewish populations also came under the crown's *dominium* either in direct subjugation or indirectly by the subjection of their Catholic lords to Capetian authority.

It was the Jews under the crown's direct *dominium* who were periodically obliged to render to the royal fisc their assets from moneylending to Christian debtors. Typically, royal agents seized the Jews' bonds and fiscal registers, sometimes discounted the loans recorded in them by one-third, regarded as excessive interest or usury (so the holy monarchy of France was not besmirched in this respect), and made the debts payable to the royal fisc. Often enough, the Jews' other liquid assets—money, plate, and jewels—were appropriated to the fisc as well in what were known as *captiones*, takings. The French government had numerous sources of revenue from feudal dues to sales taxes; and it could count on enormous yearly revenues in normal times. War and putting down civil strife, however, put extraordinary demands on any government, as Henry III in England was also well aware, so that recourse to the confiscation of Jewish wealth was

⁶³ For the information provided in the next several paragraphs, see Jordan, *French Monarchy and the Jews*, pp. 128–32.

conceived as legitimate and, however conceived, was a great fiscal benefit. It was certainly one of the most important factors in securing the regency in the difficult early years of Louis IX's reign.

Yet there is no doubt that in royal circles there was continuing concern about benefiting from a business, usurious moneylending, that was in itself sinful. Once the government defeated initial resistance to the regency—and, even more important, once the ratification of the Treaty of Meaux-Paris appeared to assure real continuity between the achievements of the monarchy in the past and its hopes for the future—royal councilors in consultation with the king and his mother took stock of the relationship of France, conceived as a holy Catholic kingdom, and the Jews' status within it. The year 1230 saw a great meeting of the secular and ecclesiastical barons and the king's publication of an edict or statute, the Ordinance of Melun, to which they subscribed and which absolutely forbade lending money at interest in the realm.⁶⁴ It did not forbid pawnbroking, but reduced the profits for Jews by essentially turning it into a used-goods business in which the proprietor of a pawnshop could make a profit only if the pledge left with him failed to be redeemed within the specified time. It then became his to sell. The statute went on to stigmatize as rebels any Christian lords in France who defied these provisions by continuing to allow Jews to lend money at interest.

Anti-Jewishness and its counterpart, the continuing effort to hallow the dynasty and kingdom, and attempts to harness the nobility to the political vision of the crown persisted hand in hand in the 1230s and 1240s, sometimes perhaps fortuitously, at other times because of substantive connections among royal policies. In 1239 the king, who was ruling in his own name but still with his mother as his closest adviser, solemnly received into France the precious Passion relic, the Crown of Thorns, that had been in the possession of the Byzantine emperors since the first mention of the relic in a nonsacred or semisacred text.⁶⁵ The Latin emperor, Baldwin II (1228–1261), who now ruled precariously in Constantinople, which the Franks had conquered during the Fourth Crusade in 1204, needed money in general and needed to pay off his Italian creditors in particular. Thus he agreed to let his cousin, the French king, redeem the Crown of Thorns, which the imperial government had pledged to merchants. In France elaborate efforts were undertaken to craft a liturgical and symbolic interpretation of the relic's presence, one that would leaven the already considerable sacred mythology of the kingdom. France, symbolized by the lily, for example, was now a lily among thorns, to mention a trope that was adopted

⁶⁴ Jordan, "Jews, Regalian Rights, and the Constitution," pp. 4–7; idem, *French Monarchy and the Jews*, pp. 132–33.

⁶⁵ Jordan, *Louis IX*, pp. 107–9; Le Goff, *Saint Louis*, pp. 140–46.

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and adapted to this end.⁶⁶ Soon after the reception of the Crown and many other relics from the Byzantine hoard, the king made the decision to build a sanctuary especially for them. It would take years to complete but would be consecrated in April 1248 as the Sainte-Chapelle, a splendid and costly Gothic architectural reliquary erected next to the royal palace on the Ile de la Cité in Paris.⁶⁷

The aggressive Catholicity of the monarchy was further instanced in 1240, when, responding to a request of Pope Gregory IX, the government summoned northern French rabbis to answer charges that the Talmud contained slurs against Christianity and silly fables that offended the truths of the Bible—so an apostate from Judaism had informed the pontiff.⁶⁸ After the investigation in Paris and what appears to have been some disagreement about the extent of the material in the Talmud that could be interpreted as absurd or as denigrating Christ, Mary, and the tenets of the Catholic faith, the French government ordered the burning of as many copies of the work as possible, an act accomplished in 1242.

It was almost precisely at this time that the crown had to face another rebellion. Louis VIII had intended to provide for his younger sons by assigning appanages when they came of age, territories whose revenues would allow them to rule as great lords and thereby help administer the realm.⁶⁹ Louis IX and his mother saw to the application of the late king's wishes. In 1237 Louis IX's brother Robert received the northern county of Artois as his appanage. In 1241 Alphonse was invested with the county of Poitou, one of the western conquests. And in 1246 Charles received two more conquered western territories, the counties of Anjou and Maine. Although some technical implications of the transfer remained unclear, as was bound to be the case with any new jurisdictional and fiscal arrangement like the appanage system, Artois's transfer to Robert went quite smoothly in terms of what was really critical, the politics of the process. Artois, of course, was an older part of the royal domain lands, not a region that had come under direct royal domination as a result of a relatively recent and bitter war.

Poitou's transfer was different—and potentially so would be that of Anjou and Maine—for the barons of these counties had not necessarily shed their loyalty to the Plantagenets who still claimed overlordship. Even if loyalty was fairly weak toward the former rulers, as it most probably was, local barons also had personal grievances against the Capetians. The

⁶⁶ Mercuri, “*Stat inter spinas lilium*,” pp. 497–512.

⁶⁷ Le Goff, *Saint Louis*, pp. 146–48.

⁶⁸ Jordan, “Marian Devotion and the Talmud Trial,” pp. 61–76; idem, *French Monarchy and the Jews*, pp. 137–41.

⁶⁹ Wood, *French Apanages*, is comprehensive.

experience of being conquered in the campaigns of 1202–1206, 1214, and 1224, no matter what the barons' basic inclinations, inevitably created ripe soil for disputes with the new overlord. Moreover, Capetian kingship, which constructed itself increasingly as sacred, put implicit if vague constraints on local barons' freedom of action. One need only think back to the *Ordonnance of Melun* that declared any magnate who disobeyed the regulations on Jewish life and status to be a rebel. The claim to superiority implicit in the ordinance is the reason that legal historians have come to regard it as a statute, perhaps the first real piece of legislation in Frankish history since around Charlemagne's time.

At first, Poitou's transformation into an appanage in 1241 and the transfer of authority over it from the crown to Louis IX's brother Alphonse seemed to go smoothly.⁷⁰ Barons who were to come under the new order were invited to attend a great festival at the castle town of Saumur to celebrate the transition and to swear allegiance to Alphonse as the new count. They did so with alacrity and displays of good feeling. But resentments rose to the surface soon afterward, in part instigated by King John's widow and Henry III's mother, Isabelle d'Angoulême, who had been forced to return to the Continent on her husband's death. It was Isabelle's several children from her remarriage who would become the alien beneficiaries of enormous and envied amounts of largesse from Henry III. At this juncture Isabelle inspired her husband, Hugues de la Marche (son of the original fiancé from whom John had snatched her), to join with a number of other disgruntled magnates and rebel against Louis IX. It was this conspiracy that Henry III decided to join; Count Raymond VII of Toulouse and other southern barons also thought of joining and in some cases did.

Efforts to stave off a violent confrontation were unsuccessful. The French—regarding the rebellion, let alone the intervention of Henry III and a few other barons, as nothing less than an attempt to rewrite the triumphant history of the last forty years—sent an army as numerous as the locusts of the air and led by Louis IX himself to overwhelm the enemy. It did so in a brilliant series of campaigns in the early summer of 1242 that not only humiliated the opposition militarily (chivalrous though the French forces were in allowing them honorable withdrawal), but also scared many as yet wavering barons into maintaining their neutrality or even supporting the Capetians. The rebellion was crushed. Alphonse became the unchallenged count of Poitou, and a few years later Charles the unchallenged count of Anjou and Maine. The triumphs of the great and holy French monarchy seemed never ending.

⁷⁰ On the events being narrated in the text, see Jordan, "Isabelle d'Angoulême," pp. 842–48, and Richard, *Saint Louis*, pp. 136–41.

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The tribulations, on the other hand, of the distant Crusader States—the Latin East—seemed equally ceaseless, and the long tradition of French participation in the Crusades worked its magic on the still youngish king of France.⁷¹ News of the ravaging of Jerusalem in 1244 by Khorazmian Turks focused Louis IX's attention on the East. His recuperation from a near fatal illness late in the year persuaded him that his prayers for a return to health had been answered, and those prayers included a vow to go on Crusade. Not everyone was pleased with his decision. In particular, his mother was in despair in what was the first important public disagreement between them.

It is likely, though, that they had not always seen eye to eye before 1244. For instance, historians have surmised that they differed in their attitude about the necessity of burning the Talmud, and they also disagreed on the household role of Louis's wife, Marguerite de Provence, whom he had married in 1234.⁷² The marriage was a political one, encouraged and arranged by the king's mother, but Blanche disliked Marguerite (a sentiment returned in full), while Louis, at this point in his life, found his wife to be quite pleasing. To be sure, he later came to have misgivings about Marguerite's political instincts and judgment. She was the sister of Eleanor of Provence, whom Henry III married in 1236, which perhaps gave these misgivings greater weight at this historical moment. Moreover, as Louis IX matured and became ever more penitential in his piety, Queen Marguerite changed less dramatically in the externals of her devotions and to some extent regretted aspects of her husband's devotional journey or, rather, the material manifestations of it, like his disdain for exquisite clothing.⁷³

Neither the alleged disagreements between Louis and his mother over the fate of the Talmud nor their personal differences about Marguerite, however, had much publicity at the time. Louis's barons still harbored the impression that the king was firmly under his mother's guidance when her vocal but ineffective opposition to the Crusade became public knowledge.⁷⁴ She engaged the bishop of Paris, Guillaume d'Auvergne, an erudite theologian and former professor, to caution her son that a vow taken while under the strain of physical suffering was not necessarily binding. Instead of using this as a way to repudiate the intent of the vow, however, the recuperated Louis reswore it. One of the more gossipy chroniclers delighted in describing the emotional and tearful scenes in which Blanche later implored her son to remain in France and attempted frenetically to

⁷¹ Richard, *Saint Louis*, pp. 159–80, and, for further background and context, Phillips, "Latin East," pp. 112–40.

⁷² The most comprehensive biography of Louis's queen is Sivéry's *Marguerite de Provence*.

⁷³ Jordan, "Case of Saint Louis," pp. 215–16.

⁷⁴ Jordan, *Louis IX*, p. 5.

restrain him from leaving the kingdom when preparations were complete in 1248. It is clear that Louis, who departed anyway, had a great deal at stake in going on Crusade: the honor and glory of the French kingdom, the tradition of his crusader ancestors (Louis VII, Philip II Augustus, and Louis VIII), his own recognition as a champion of holy church, and, using modern terminology, coming into his own as an adult.⁷⁵

The period from the taking of the crusader's vow until the departure for Crusade was packed with activity.⁷⁶ The Sainte-Chapelle was being built at enormous cost after the already enormous monetary outlay for the relics that it was to enshrine; one estimate is that the total expenditure was about 100,000 l. t. An almost completely new port was being constructed in the south at Aigues-Mortes in part to facilitate the embarkation of the crusaders—and this created another enormous financial demand on the crown.⁷⁷ Former rebels were encouraged to take the crusader's vow, rather than stay behind and do mischief in the king's absence; encouragement sometimes took the form of cash advances to help pay for their Crusade contingents and pressure on them from the Inquisition to do penance.⁷⁸ Efforts were made both to persuade Henry III to renounce the idea of attacking France while Louis was abroad and to take the crusader's vow himself, while at the same time stockpiles were accumulated in the western territories, like those recently in rebellion, to be available just in case either a nativist uprising or an English invasion became a reality during Louis's absence.⁷⁹

Meanwhile, less costly but time-consuming and anxious undertakings were also dominating French royal circles. Royal demesne towns (communes) were cajoled into offering monetary aid to the looming holy war, as were seigneurial towns to their lords.⁸⁰ Louis responded positively to aristocratic demands that he lobby the pope to restrain ecclesiastical encroachments on their jurisdiction and, evidently, the use of mendicant friars as fiscal agents.⁸¹ He did so probably on principle but also obviously to secure aristocratic support for the Crusade.⁸² Envoys acting in Louis's

⁷⁵ Ibid., pp. 3–13.

⁷⁶ Ibid., pp. 14–110; Richard, *Saint Louis*, pp. 181–204.

⁷⁷ Jehel, *Aigues-Mortes*, is comprehensive, if sometimes jumbled.

⁷⁸ Maier, *Preaching the Crusades*, p. 69.

⁷⁹ Jordan, "Cutting the Budget," pp. 307–18; idem, *Louis IX*, pp. 25–26.

⁸⁰ On the royal communes, see Sivéry, *Capétiens et l'argent*, pp. 140–44. On seigneurial towns—in this case, the Auvergnat urban policy of Louis's brother Alphonse—see Teyssot, "Mouvement communal," p. 203.

⁸¹ The so-called Protest of Saint Louis of 1247; Maier, *Preaching the Crusades*, pp. 129–30.

⁸² Aristocratic support was very considerable (Jordan, *Louis IX*, pp. 18–24, 66–68), but less so among the Bretons than I estimated (p. 67); see the corrective provided in Jones, "Les Bretons et les croisades," pp. 371–72.

behalf tried with uneven success to convince other princes, like the king of Norway, to contribute to the Crusade, but it was always the case that a great many more rulers made plans to go on Crusade than actually went.⁸³ Efforts to broker peace between the papacy and Emperor Frederick II, however, enjoyed no success at all.⁸⁴ Not even secret face-to-face discussions between Louis and Pope Innocent IV brought about any significant softening of papal policy toward the emperor, despite Frederick's often expressed willingness, whether genuine or not, to join the French monarch's expedition.⁸⁵ Frederick would not commit resources before the fact of reconciliation, the lifting of his excommunication, and the annulment of his deposition.

Louis IX's government cut costs everywhere possible in the colossal effort to raise an army, secure shipping, build the port, finish the Sainte-Chapelle, and do all the other business a medieval principality was supposed to do.⁸⁶ At the pope's command it got fundamental financial help from the French church.⁸⁷ The king himself also authorized a thorough-going investigation of the realm in 1247, the intention being to streamline administration and make it more effective fiscally, and to atone for injustices that royal officials had accidentally or deliberately committed against his subjects during his reign. The results of these extraordinary investigations, largely but not exclusively carried out by nonadministrators, Franciscan and Dominican friars and a few other men without any obvious self-interest in hiding the administration's failings, were sobering. The king discovered that levels of corruption, inefficiency, cronyism, and brutality were higher than he had imagined.⁸⁸ It was revealed that there was a deep well of resentment against government, particularly its failure to restrain Jewish moneylending, which, because of bribery of local officials, appeared to be flourishing throughout the country despite the legislation of 1230. Louis fired or forced the retirement of several administrators in 1247 and 1248, transferred others, sent troubleshooters into

⁸³ For Louis's solicitation of Norway and the broad context of Norwegian foreign policy at this time, see Gelsinger, "Thirteenth-Century Norwegian-Castilian Alliance," pp. 55–80. For further illustrations of unfulfilled plans, see also Rodríguez García, "Henry III (1216–1272), Alfonso X of Castile (1252–1284) and the Crusading Plans of the Thirteenth Century," pp. 99–120.

⁸⁴ Kienast, *Deutschland und Frankreich*, 3:609–13.

⁸⁵ Baaken, "Verhandlungen von Cluny (1245)," pp. 531–79.

⁸⁶ Jordan, "Cutting the Budget," pp. 307–18. See also Murray, *Notre-Dame Cathedral of Amiens*, p. 76.

⁸⁷ Jordan, *Louis IX*, pp. 79–82. Whether churchmen desired to or even thought it fair that they should contribute may be doubted; see Buc, *Ambiguité du Livre*, pp. 279–80.

⁸⁸ Jordan, *Louis IX*, pp. 46–63; idem, *French Monarchy and the Jews*, pp. 133–37, 144–46; Sivéry, "Mécontentement dans le royaume de France," pp. 3–4; Bartlett, "Impact of Royal Government," pp. 83–96.

those provinces most poorly governed, reimbursed enormous numbers of petitioners, and cracked down hard and systematically on Jewish money-lenders—all to cleanse himself and his government of the pollution that came from failing to provide justice. How could the Crusade but succeed under such circumstances?

Despite his mother's unhappiness with his going on the expedition, she served as regent in his absence, since his brothers, otherwise likely candidates for the job, accompanied him. He left his eldest son, still a young boy, and his other children behind with Blanche in Paris. Yet Louis took his wife Marguerite along with him. One might speculate that this is evidence of his concern that the two women had to be kept apart to avoid disruption at the court. That he obliged his spouse to leave her children behind in the care of their grandmother, a woman she so disliked (even though Louis's more friendly sister, Isabelle de France, would also be there) could also be seen as another step in what would be an ever-increasing personal distance between the king and his wife.

The Sainte-Chapelle was new to the spiritual landscape in 1248 but was incorporated into the rituals that accompanied the king's departure on Crusade.⁸⁹ The Crown of Thorns was exposed to elite and possibly nonelite faithful at the chapel dedication ceremony in late April of the year.⁹⁰ The real focus of ceremonial action, however, remained the traditional site outside the city at the royal abbey of Saint-Denis. So, after solemnly receiving the purse (scrip) and staff of a pilgrim at Notre-Dame cathedral in Paris, Louis processed barefoot the few kilometers to the abbey. It was there on 12 June 1248 that, having taken communion, he received the pilgrim's sash and took up the *oriflamme*, the battle flag, from the patron and martyr's tomb amid his entourage's shouts of *Montjoie Saint-Denis! Montjoie Saint-Denis!* Mount Joy—symbolically, Zion. Hardly could an acclamation have been more appropriate.⁹¹

This solemn association of the French crown and Zion, the Holy Land, made the failure of the king's Crusade and his brief captivity even harder

⁸⁹ On the relevance of the Sainte-Chapelle's decorative motifs to the joint theme of righteous kingship and crusading, see the excellent and wide-ranging study of Alyce Jordan, *Visualizing Kingship*.

⁹⁰ Billot, "Saintes-Chapelles," pp. 229–48, emphasizes the traditional view of the Sainte-Chapelle of Paris as a private aristocratic family chapel, which it certainly was, like many other similar saintes-chapelles, but Cohen has shown ("Indulgence for the Visitor") that the public nature of the royal chapel and its attendant open spaces has gone unappreciated because of architectural modifications that for a long time have masked this aspect of the building.

⁹¹ A lavish treatment of the slogan and its relation to the cult of Saint Denis is Lombard-Jourdan's "*Montjoie et saint Denis!*" See also her "Munjoie," pp. 35–64, and "Montjoies," pp. 65–98.

to bear. Louis had traveled south paralleling the Rhône River before heading west for the port of Aigues-Mortes. Many other French crusaders and their contingents joined him; still others arrived later or left from different ports. They rendezvoused at the island of Cyprus, where supplies had been accumulating for two years, and made preparations for an amphibious landing in Egypt.⁹² Their strategy, a wise one, was to disable Egypt, perhaps even conquer it, which would effectively eliminate one of the greatest threats to the Crusader States' survival.⁹³

When their preparations were complete, the French launched their invasion and on 6 June 1249 met with initial success, conquering the port city of Damietta. After securing the city, they decided to defer any major advance for several months, an interval that promised to bring additional men and matériel. It was early the next year that the army proceeded up the Nile, only to be outfought by their Muslim opponents in a series of engagements that lasted until April 1250. Louis's brother Count Robert of Artois died at Mansurah in the campaign, and Louis and the survivors of his army were captured. Queen Marguerite, back in Damietta, rallied those who wanted to abandon the city when they heard the news. She did so even though she had just given birth to a baby boy, Jean, Jean Tristan because he was born in *tristesse*, sadness. Her success in stabilizing the situation in Damietta was crucial. The Muslims wanted Damietta back—preferably without a fight. Disputes among Muslim leaders opened the way to negotiations and ransom—money for the release of Louis's troops and Damietta for the king himself. All was arranged within the first weeks after the defeat. Then Louis and his now far smaller army departed Egypt (6 May 1250) and sailed to the Crusader States where he spent four years doing his best with reduced resources to shore up their defenses and heal the internal political struggles that were plaguing them.

Back home in France word of the king's defeat and his captivity provoked a kind of popular Crusade in 1251, which briefly appears to have had Blanche of Castile's support, but as it spent itself in class violence in France she suppressed the so-called Shepherds who constituted it.⁹⁴ Her other living sons, Alphonse and Charles, also released from captivity, did not remain in the Holy Land with their elder brother but returned to France. They made gestures, perhaps sincere gestures, to return to their brother with help, but failed to do so. Alphonse suffered from a serious eye ailment, relieved only by a Jewish doctor's intervention. Charles got himself involved in a succession struggle in Flanders and Hainaut that he hoped would win him the latter fief. He even managed to secure large

⁹² Dianoux de la Perrotine, "Saint Louis à Chypre," pp. 13–16.

⁹³ Richard, *Saint Louis*, pp. 215–16.

⁹⁴ Kerov, *Narodnye posstaniia*, pp. 42–51; Barber, "Crusade of the Shepherds," pp. 1–23. Cf. Beaune, "Messianesimo regio e messianesimo popolare," pp. 114–36.

loans and gifts from northern French towns for the undertaking, money that was therefore not available to refinance the Crusade, although the towns managed both before and during the Crusade to raise enormous sums for the king's expedition.⁹⁵

Through all this period England was largely an absent actor. Fears that Henry III might choose to exploit Louis's desperate plight abroad or disturbances at home, like the rising of the Shepherds or, in late 1252, the regent Blanche of Castile's death, were never realized. Perhaps in addition to Henry's taking the crusader's vow in 1250 the participation of a contingent of Englishmen on Louis IX's expedition was a factor that deterred him from deciding to launch an invasion of France.⁹⁶ Nevertheless, it did become clear to the crusaders in the Holy Land that they could not remain there forever. The news that Blanche was dead did not reach the French king until mid-1253, almost six months after her death. A deeply shaken Louis IX decided he had to return to France. There was still business to finish and arrangements for the Crusader States to be made, but when these were completed, he embarked. The remnants of the great army that had departed Europe in 1248 with such hope landed in Provence in the early summer of 1254 with a king at their head who accepted responsibility for the disaster. He was a sinner, and he had to atone, because he intended to try again and fulfill his—and France's—God-ordained role as defender of Christendom.⁹⁷

From 1254 on, Louis IX, historians agree, set himself on a path of penitential kingship, but this does not mean that the chief features of his rule were his religious devotions. True, he was assiduous in his practice of the Catholic faith.⁹⁸ He incorporated into his devotions rituals—like allowing himself to be whipped with chains and getting up several times a night for prayers—that his friends thought were extreme and his detractors thought were absurd and unkingly. Yet this new Joseph the Patriarch, new Moses, new Solomon, and new Josiah, to name a few of many images his behavior evoked, also spent an extraordinary amount of time governing his kingdom.⁹⁹ His activity in this regard, by almost any

⁹⁵ Jordan, "Communal Administration in France," pp. 293–94.

⁹⁶ On the English contingent and Henry's vow, see Tyerman, *England and the Crusades*, pp. 109–16. See also Maier, *Preaching the Crusades*, pp. 150–51.

⁹⁷ Cf. Schneidmüller, *Nomen Patriae*, pp. 122–23, 208; Le Goff, "Saint Louis and the Mediterranean," pp. 21–43.

⁹⁸ Le Goff, "Saint Louis et le prière," pp. 85–94.

⁹⁹ For the images, see Jordan, "Psalter of Saint Louis," pp. 65–91; idem, "The 'People' in the Psalter of Saint Louis," pp. 13–28; Le Goff, "Royauté biblique," pp. 157–67; idem, "Roi dans l'Occident," p. 4; idem, "Coronation Program," pp. 46–57; Guest, "The People Demand a King," pp. 1–27; Weiss, "Three Solomon Portraits," pp. 15–36; idem, "Biblical History and Medieval Historiography," pp. 710–37; idem, "Architectural Symbolism," pp. 308–20; and Jordan, "Seeing Stories in the Windows of the Sainte-Chapelle," p. 47.

24 CHAPTER I

measure, would be considered obsessive and compulsive, although it was a commonplace that a king, even a sinful king, who treats his subjects well will have God's aid in governance.¹⁰⁰

Relations between the two kingdoms, England and France, and the two kings, Henry III and Louis IX, had something of an unresolved quality about them in the decade of the 1250s, which any serious observer would have noticed. The most striking anomaly was the war, in that it was now a war in name only. And yet, the long truces notwithstanding, it was the pervasive suspicion and hostility between the two realms that remained powerful, occasionally acute, and almost wholly sterile. Henry's desire to win Sicily and Louis's to relieve the Holy Land made the animosity between their two countries doubly counterproductive. Neither ruler could realistically hope to achieve his goal in the absence of a resolution of the fundamental issue, the war. It was a fact of life, too, that as long as the war remained unconcluded, all sorts of other problems would continue to evade solution and would thereby have a destabilizing impact on many other weighty aspects of the history of the two realms. We shall have to return to this matter in chapter 3. Now, however, it is time to look away from the centers of political power and authority and refocus on the other major actors in this story, two churchmen, and also on the two ecclesiastical institutions that helped shape their lives.

¹⁰⁰ Montgomery, *Chastoient*, pp. 43 and 150–51 (lines 3859–68). For details on his governance in the latter period of his reign, see below, chapter 4.