Cathars and Computers: A Digital Approach to Studying Manuscript 609

By

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**Abstract**

When the Albigensian Crusade ended with the signing of the Peace of Paris on 12 April 1229, the Lauragais region in what is now Southern France and the men, women, and children who lived there, had dranatically changed from what it and they were when thew war began two decades earlier. Whereas local nobles had once been tolerant, even sympathetic, towards those accused of heresy, the devastating conflict left them much more willing to combat heresy. Beginning in 1245, the Dominican inquisitors Bernart de Caux and Jean de Saint Pierre began what would become the largest inquisition ever conducted in the Middle Ages. Thousands of depositions were recorded over two hundred and one days.  The original record of this trial is lost, but two volumes with around six thousand testimonies from a copy made a decade later survives as Manuscript (MS) 609 in the Muncipal Library of Toulouse. This manuscript is one of the few records of the from thirteenth-century *inquisitiones heretice dpravitatis*.  It is an immensely important document in the history of medieval heresy and society.  It has also become a text at the center of the contentious and lively scholarly debate over the existence of Catharism, usually assumed to be the most famous heresy of the Middle Age.  If there is no Catharism, then the history of Latin Christianity and the Middle Ages will have to be rewritten.

Recently, the study of MS 609 has been reinvigorated with the work of Jean-Paul Rehr, who encoded and published much of MS 609 earlier this year. Rehr’s encoding of the manuscript included extensive and detailed metadata. Using Rehr’s digital encoding of MS 609, I was able to break the depositions down into their segmented parts. By extracting and analyzing the metadata included in his XML files, I was able to filter and analyze depositions based on specific attributes while still considering the manuscript as a whole.  As such, this thesis contributes to the debate about Catharism by arguing that there is no evidence in MS 609 of a widespread structured heresy in twelfth and early thirteenth-century Lauragais.

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