

WILLIAM CHESTER JORDAN

# Louis IX and the Challenge of the Crusade

*A Study in Rulership*



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AND THE CHALLENGE  
OF THE CRUSADE



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TO THE MEMORY OF  
My Grandmother



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## PREFACE

For serious students of French social and administrative history the reign of Louis IX remains "*le plus malconnu*" of all the major kings of medieval France.<sup>1</sup> Partly, this problem is one of sources—not too few, but too many. There are so many excellent sources concerning Louis IX's reign and such a great number of them are unpublished that it will probably be a very long time before a comprehensive inventory of even the king's own acts can be prepared. The heroic individual efforts over the past several generations (one thinks immediately of Delisle, Delaborde, Strayer, and Carolus-Barré) to publish as many useful records as possible have paid off in literally hundreds, perhaps thousands, of specialized studies of aspects of the saint-king's reign. But, unfortunately, the results of this research have not been fully integrated into contemporary discussions of French medieval history.

The problem is that the best scholarly treatment of the king's rule remains the massive six-volume study by the seventeenth century monastic savant, Le Nain de Tillemont. It has been justly praised, among other reasons, for its accumulation of data in a recent article by Neveu. Nonetheless, it has fundamental weaknesses, at least from a modern point of view: its style is not suited to contemporary sensibilities; it has no fundamental theme other than an absorbing interest in the details of the king's life; it has a profoundly clerical tone which leaves one dubious about its objectivity; and it, of course, predates the explosion of scholarly literature of the last century.

The largest of modern biographies is Wallon's two-volume, *Saint Louis et son temps*, which went through several editions in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. While admirable in its own right and bearing the stamp of most of what was best in nineteenth century French historiography, it too was written before the major part of the serious collection and publication of sources was completed. To cite but one example, Wallon did not have access to Delisle's monumental survey of Louis's provincial administration in volume twenty-four of the *Recueil des historiens* (1904).

Since 1900 many biographies of the king have been published. They fall largely into two classes. There are those which are scholarly, but which tend to be very short, more like interpretative essays than sustained analyses of Louis's reign. Many of these have been carefully done and their authors have added important and suggestive conclu-

<sup>1</sup> As Professor Georges Duby remarked in comments before the Shelby Cullom Davis Center Seminar, Princeton University, 2 May 1975.

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sions to the body of Saint Louis scholarship, but no one in this century has undertaken to write a synthetic treatment of the reign based on the range of existing scholarship. The other large class of studies has been popular biographies. Although, of course, they vary widely in intrinsic value, at their best, like Labarge's recent work, they blend an easy and compelling style with some of the salient results of recent research.

Where is Saint Louis scholarship now? A staggering number of studies have mined the published documents, and many of the records which still remain in manuscript have also been the subject of careful analyses. On the basis of these and similar studies (many comparative in scope), it should be possible to write a satisfying synthetic history of Louis's reign. Indeed, this book has been undertaken with that possibility in mind. Its scope, however, has been limited by my decision to concentrate only on those aspects of the reign that owe their fundamental form and content to the king's personal attention: for this is a study of a man and his efforts to rule well, not of the political and social history of his reign in general.

Even limited in the way I have described, the task has been formidable. The relative unevenness of specialized studies of the saint-king's impact in the south has necessitated a great deal of archival research in that region. The contradictions among various scholarly authorities have often led me to reappraise existing documentation. Some discussion of the difficult and elusive subject of the king's psychology has also seemed valuable, although no attempt has been made to write a complete psycho-biography. Finally, daily—or so it seems—new manuscripts are edited and new articles appear which bear on the general theme of Louis's rulership. Undoubtedly, therefore, this study is tentative: a time will certainly come when, by one of those great collective efforts the French are famous for, the surviving acts of the king will be known and critically edited; problems which now seem unsolvable will melt away under close scholarly scrutiny; and someone will be able to write as comprehensive a study of Louis's role in government as medievalists have a right to expect. But until that time comes, I hope this interim portrait of the king can meet our most pressing needs.

I have imposed one further fundamental limitation on my work. Above all, this study is *thematic*. It draws its organizing principle from the central concern of Louis's life, the crusade. It was the crusade—appearing as a distant possibility—that helped Louis take the decisive steps on the road to personal rule of his kingdom. It was to assure the success of the crusade of 1248-1254 that he dealt imaginatively and firmly with the problems that vexed the administration of his king-

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dom. And finally, it was the failure of the crusade that produced a profound crisis in his life, one whose outcome, the creation of the "ideal" medieval monarchy, was to leave a lasting impression in French government and politics. My close attention to the theme of the crusade should explain the particular aspects of Louis's rulership I have chosen to stress in this book.

Consequently, the study has fallen quite naturally into three parts. The first (chapters one through four) is a detailed account of Louis's preparations for the crusade. The second part (chapter five) examines the period of the crusade itself—the regency at home and the effect of the failure of the crusade on the personal development of the saint-king. The remaining chapters explore the continuing influence of the Holy War, both as a memory and as a new goal culminating in the crusade of 1270.

Several technical matters merit a few words. (1) With regard to currency I have used pounds and l. (the abbreviation for *livres*) interchangeably. I have always had French royal pounds (either *livres tournois* or *livres parisis*) in mind, not English sterling which was worth about four times more in the thirteenth century. The internal rate of exchange between *livres tournois* and *livres parisis* was five to four. Unfortunately, from time to time prices or wages have had to be quoted in local French currencies for which our knowledge of the exchange rates is less certain. (2) With regard to nomenclature, established conventions have been followed: a few famous names appear in English; the majority, however, are given in French or Latin depending on traditional scholarly preference. (3) Editorially I have usually preferred the Hague translation of Joinville to the Penguin version (edited by Shaw) not because it is better overall but because it preserves the short chapter notation of Natalis de Wailly's critical text which, unfortunately, Shaw's does not and because it is a more literal rendering of the original. (4) In general the notes refer first to primary materials, when appropriate, and then to secondary sources in which there are discussions of the issue addressed in the text. Some attempt has also been made to direct the reader to discussions of comparative interest. (5) The map at the beginning of the book should serve for all major references in the text and appendixes; a few specialized maps have been placed directly in the text.

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tration three, MS Cotton Titus A XVII, fol. 43 verso, sixteenth century; the Abbey of Saint-Maurice d'Agaune, Valais, Switzerland, for illustrations four and five, reliquaries from the *trésor*; the Cabinet des Médailles of the Bibliothèque Nationale for illustration six, the *écu d'or* of Louis IX; and the Department of Manuscripts of the Bibliothèque Nationale for the document published in Appendix Four, Languedoc-Doat volume 151 fols. 237-241 verso.

The maps for this book were drawn by Trudy Glucksberg.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank those people who at one time or another have stimulated me to think about the problems discussed in this book. Chief among them are the students I have taught and the colleagues I have worked with at Princeton University, especially my own teachers, Professors Gaines Post and Joseph Strayer. A substantial debt of gratitude is owed also to Professors Charles Wood and John Baldwin, whose vigorous criticisms helped light my way. Mention should also be made of the special libraries and archives which opened their facilities to me, and of the Ford Foundation, the Department of History of Princeton, and the University Committee on Research of Princeton which, at different times, helped support the research which went into this book. The list would not be complete, however, without the name of Miriam Brokaw of Princeton University Press, who gave me needed help and encouragement at every stage in the preparation of the manuscript for publication. There is no doubt in my mind that whatever is good in this study derives much more from the assistance I received from these scholars, students, and friends than from my own efforts. I can claim only the errors as uniquely my own.

## ABBREVIATIONS AND SHORT TITLES

- AC: Archives communales  
 AD: Archives départementales  
 AM: Archives municipales  
 ASHGâtinais: *Annales de la Société historique du Gâtinais*  
 BEC: *Bibliothèque de l'École des Chartes*  
 BN: Bibliothèque nationale  
 CUP: Denifle, *Chartularium universitatis parisiensis*  
*Exceptiones: Exceptiones carcassonensium queremoniis objectae* 1258, HF, xxiv, 541-614  
 GC: *Gallia christiana*  
 HF: Bouquet, *Recueil des historiens des Gaules et de la France*  
 HGL: Vaissète, *Histoire générale du Languedoc*  
*Inq. in rem.: Inquisitio in remensi et laudunensi dioecesisibus* 1248, HF, xxiv, 269-96  
 MHP: *Mémoires de la Société de l'histoire de Paris et de l'île de France*  
 MP: Matthew Paris  
 PL: Migne, *Patrologiae*  
 QBit: *Queremoniae biterrensi* 1247, HF, xxiv, 319-84  
 QCar: *Queremoniae carcassonensium* 1247, HF, xxiv, 296-319  
 QCen: *Queremoniae cenomannorum et andegavorum* 1247, HF, xxiv, 73-93  
 Q . . . *exceptae: Queremoniae in ambianensi, silvanectensi et viromandensi balliviis exceptae* 1247/8, HF, xxiv, 731-44  
 QNor: *Queremoniae normannorum* 1247, HF, xxiv, 1-72  
 QTur: *Queremoniae turonum, santorum, et pictavorum* 1247, HF, xxiv, 94-252  
 SA: *Société académique de*  
*Sententiae: Sententiae a regiis nunciis in carcassonensi senescalia* 1262, HF, xxiv, 618-95  
 SL: Saint Louis (in article titles)  
 SL: *Saint Louis* (in book titles)





LOUIS IX  
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MAP 1: Administrative Map of France under Louis IX. Most of the towns on the map were the seats of royal *bailliages* and *sénéchaussées* or of major dependent fiefs (including appanages) at some time during the reign of Louis IX. A few other frequently mentioned places are also included on the map.

# • 1 •

## SWEARING THE VOW

Louis IX first swore the crusader's vow at the *abbaye royale* of Maubisson in Pontoise in December 1244. Most chroniclers misrepresent the event by concentrating their attention on the happy juxtaposition of the *sacramentum* and the king's recovery from a grave illness. They give little hint that there might have been opposition to the vow or that the magic of this moment found less than a welcome response throughout the kingdom.<sup>1</sup> In fact, most Frenchmen—most of those whose opinion counted—probably disapproved of the decision. To the learned the vow was an aberration, a brief slipping into depression caused by the sickness. To others the idea of the crusade was discouraging in itself: there had been too many defeats and too many misguided efforts in the recent past. For some no doubt there was less uneasiness about the crusade than about the regency it would mean at home: social and political confusion was characteristic of regency governments.<sup>2</sup>

Louis's enthusiasm in the face of such opposition is not easy to explain. Of course, there is always something heroic in standing up to opposition, and this very likely played a part in his pertinacity in fulfilling the vow. But there was much more involved, for he was remarkably steady in his appeal for support; and gradually he found resonances in the desire of many of his people to relive the ancient heroisms. Under the force of his personality, recollection of the problems and failures of the past gave way to nostalgia and an intoxicating affirmation of traditional values.

Only sustained effort could have produced this change, and it was the personal commitment of the king that underlay that effort. His capacity to restore confidence in the idea of the crusade, however, was part of a broader "commitment" to the integrity of his own selfhood, for at the time of his vow in 1244 Louis IX was not yet an autonomous

<sup>1</sup> The early fourteenth century rhymed chronicle of Guillaume Guiart, to cite one example, makes it seem as if there was almost a mad rush to take the cross after Louis's vow; *HF*, xxii, 185. People closer to the immediate royal circle (such as Matthew Paris, the Minstrel of Reims, and Joinville), as we shall see, give a somewhat different impression.

<sup>2</sup> *MP*, v, 3-4; Minstrel of Reims, pp. 334-35 (cf. *HF*, xxii, 331-32). For general remarks on feelings about the crusade, see Labarge, *SL*, pp. 99-100, and Lecoy de La Marche, *France sous SL*, p. 149. Southern, *Making of the Middle Ages*, pp. 55-56, also has some cogent words on mid-thirteenth century cynicism about the crusades.

adult. He was thirty; he was married; he was a father; but he had not liberated himself—politically or personally—from the domination of his mother, Blanche of Castile.

In the peculiar conditions of the early thirteenth century, the Queen Dowager, a strong-willed and resolute woman, had become the focal point of central political authority in France.<sup>3</sup> Although she had not openly sought out this role, the untimely death of her husband, Louis VIII (1223-1226) and the youth of Louis IX, then only twelve, had thrust the regency and its powers upon her.<sup>4</sup> That Blanche regarded the regency as a trust and intended to carry out her husband's and the dynasty's traditional policies vigorously has never been questioned, either by her contemporaries many of whom she overcame in diplomacy and war or by historians who have evaluated her rule.<sup>5</sup>

But the first of the three regencies of Louis IX's long reign, successfully weathered though it was, raises some important and difficult questions. The foremost concerns the date of its termination, for although a picture of Blanche as a power-hungry despot bent on barring her son from his rightful kingship would be ridiculously overdrawn, the habit of power was apparently a comfortable life-style. Thus—or so it might seem—the chroniclers never mention Louis IX coming of age.<sup>6</sup> In the absence of explicit evidence historians have looked to circumstantial factors.

Many have regarded Louis's marriage to Margaret of Provence in 1234 and its neat coincidence with his twenty-first year as twin symbols of the end of the regency, but neither symbol is really persuasive. With the matter of age we seem to be encountering a modern juridical prejudice,<sup>7</sup> for there is little contemporary evidence that people believed royal minorities should end at twenty-one. When we do have evidence on the subject, the age is lower. Philip IV the Fair acceded without a regent at age seventeen in 1285, and a fourteenth century law on the subject laid down fourteen as the preferred age.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>3</sup> The best general evaluation of her character and her life remains Berger, *Blanche de Castille*. See also the brief remarks in Larcena, *SL*, p. 40; and Guth, *SL*, p. 42. Cf. Pernoud, *Chef d'état*, pp. 13-20, as well as her more recent biography, *Reine Blanche*.

<sup>4</sup> Pernoud, *Reine Blanche*, pp. 136-37.

<sup>5</sup> Berger, *Blanche de Castille*; the unanimity of opinions is striking: see also Labal, *Siècle de SL*, pp. 41-45; Larcena, *SL*, pp. 39-40; Wallon, *SL*, I, 6-50; Boulenger, *Vie de SL*, pp. 9-28; Levron, *SL*, pp. 33-54; and Bailly, *SL*, pp. 19-33.

<sup>6</sup> Labarge, *SL*, p. 55; Berger, *Blanche de Castille*, pp. 244-45; Perry, *SL*, pp. 62-63; Guth, *SL*, p. 42.

<sup>7</sup> For the assertion that age twenty-one was the culmination of the regency, see Labal, *Siècle de SL*, p. 45; Boulenger, *Vie de SL*, pp. 28-29; Bailly, *SL*, p. 53; Wallon, *SL*, I, 41, 50; Lévis Mirepoix, *SL*, p. 78. The assertion is correct only insofar as contracts with other seigneurs are concerned; cf. Arbois de Jubainville, *Histoire . . . de Champagne*, v, 250.

<sup>8</sup> On problems of the laws and customs governing royal majority, see Olivier-Martin,

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The question of the marriage itself is more complicated. The marriage partner had been selected by Blanche for political reasons, but what commentators mean when they suggest that the marriage symbolized the end of the regency is that it should have been difficult for Louis to reconcile his new role as a husband to the tutelage of his mother.<sup>9</sup> There is some truth in this. Certainly, the opposition baronial party levied the charge up until about 1234 that Blanche was deliberately keeping Louis unwed,<sup>10</sup> from which it seems reasonable to conclude that contemporaries expected Louis's new role to free him to make his own policies.

But this expectation was not fulfilled. Policies did not change, and the barons were or should have been sadly disappointed in the king's deference to his mother even on the most intimate of subjects regarding his new married life. According to Jean de Joinville, the king's close friend and biographer, Blanche restricted her son's visits to his young wife (she was only fourteen at the time of marriage) and interfered in other ways.<sup>11</sup> Moreover, although the stories that Joinville tells about how they got around her interference (the secret visits, for example)<sup>12</sup> suggest that Margaret and Louis had a tender and happy marriage in the beginning,<sup>13</sup> it is evident from a wide variety of sources that a gradual stiffening developed in their personal relationship.<sup>14</sup> If anything, this temporarily strengthened the king's bond with and emotional dependence on his mother.

The platitude is that Margaret found it difficult to live with a saint, as any normal woman would.<sup>15</sup> This is true as far as it goes, but it does not go far enough. The fact is Louis soon discovered he could not trust Margaret. Edgar Boutaric, the author of the only substantial

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*Réances*, pp. 77-81, 85-86 (he includes an analysis of the fourteenth century order of Charles V but doubts that it represented traditional practice).

<sup>9</sup> Lehmann, *Rôle de la femme*, pp. 341-42 (cf. 343); Levron, *SL*, p. 105.

<sup>10</sup> The baronial position is summarized by Painter, *Scourge of the Clergy*, p. 61.

<sup>11</sup> Joinville, chap. cxix. Cf. the rather refreshing pre-Freudian categorization of Blanche by Chaillou des Barres, "SL à Sens," p. 199: "une belle-mère tyrannique." Cf. Pernoud, *Reine Blanche*, p. 216. An anonymous chronicler (*HF*, xxi, 81) emphasizes the long period of time in the early part of their marriage during which Margaret had no children (the first was born in 1240). This too may have annoyed some contemporaries who perhaps expected early fatherhood to spur Louis on in overcoming his subservience to his mother.

<sup>12</sup> Joinville, chap. cxix.

<sup>13</sup> See also the general remark of the contemporary Senonais chronicler, Geoffroy de Courlon, who might be reflecting the prevailing views of the upper class soon after the marriage when he wrote: "Et rex se cum duxit uxorem dictam, filiam comitis Prouintie, Margaretam nomine, quam multum diligebat" (Julliot, *Chronique*, p. 524).

<sup>14</sup> On Margaret's personality, see Boutaric, "Marguerite de Provence," and Pernoud, *Reine Blanche*, pp. 345-47.

<sup>15</sup> Mager, *SL*, pp. 125-26; Lévis Mirepoix, *SL*, p. 78; Guth, *SL*, pp. 41, 190-91; Bailly, *SL*, p. 58; Guillaing de Bénouville, *SL*, pp. 73-74.

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monograph on Louis's queen, has argued that the king and his mother found it necessary to limit Margaret's field of political action as early as 1241 and 1242. During this period, that of the last rebellion of the reign against the crown, she was compelled to swear to abide by royal policy whatever her own personal interests might be.<sup>16</sup> Nor was this bridling of his wife an isolated incident. Whether in important matters or the most trivial Louis consistently restricted her freedom of action, a situation Margaret bore with difficulty. She was not permitted to accept presents and loans of any importance, to appoint or give orders to the crown's officials, or to appoint her own without the prior consent of her husband and the royal curia. Her control over her children was also limited in mundane matters: without the consent of king and council, she was not allowed to accept presents on their behalf or to employ servants for them.<sup>17</sup>

Much more evidence could be furnished, especially from the later period of their life together, on the coldness of Louis's treatment of Margaret,<sup>18</sup> but Boutaric's argument strongly suggests that the roots of their tensions went back to Louis's long tutelage by Blanche. Substance is further given to this assertion by the fact that Margaret herself eventually tried to duplicate in her authority over her own son, the future Philip III, the type of ascendancy which Blanche had had over Louis. But when Louis discovered that his wife had persuaded the young Philip to take an oath to obey her, in the event of the king's death, until the age of thirty, he intervened and had the pope quash the oath. He then prohibited his son from encumbering himself again.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Boutaric, "Marguerite de Provence," p. 420.

<sup>17</sup> According to Joinville (chap. cxxiv), Margaret regarded the king as "*divers*" on the issue of her freedom of action. This is a hard word to translate. It has been rendered "difficult," "bizarre." The point is Margaret resented the king's restraints on her. See also Labarge, *SL*, p. 162.

<sup>18</sup> Joinville laments that Louis never talked of Margaret (or of his children) during the more than five years he spent as a crusader even though she was present in his entourage; Joinville, chap. cxvi; cf. chap. lxvii. Lehmann, *Rôle de la femme*, p. 349, while offering no alternative explanation, resists interpreting this as a sign of indifference. Even though most historians have no such qualms, indifference cannot be the explanation. Louis's close ties to his children suggest that he did not talk about his family on the crusade for other reasons. Margaret's antagonism toward his life style later in life is much more persuasive evidence of the coldness of their relationship. This antagonism as well as Louis's failure to talk about Margaret are discussed by Eydoux, *SL*, pp. 34-35; Labarge, *SL*, p. 57; and Guth, *SL*, p. 41. Judgments—in the main, favorable—on Louis's attitude toward his children are offered by Perry, *SL*, p. 281; and Wallon, *SL*, II, 468-70.

<sup>19</sup> For the events narrated here and their interpretation, see the "Notes" in the Hague translation of Joinville, p. 290; Olivier-Martin, *Régences*, pp. 95-96; Pernoud, *Reine Blanche*, pp. 352-53; and Lehmann, *Rôle de la femme*, p. 351. Most biographers have been struck by the echo of the king's own life in the incident (see Mauger, *SL*, pp. 126-27; Boulenger, *Vie de SL*, p. 79; Bailly, *SL*, p. 160; and Wallon, *SL*, II, 428).

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If marriage was not the singular event that should be taken to symbolize Louis's passage from tutelage to full authority as a ruler, what should? This is not an easy question. It would be more appropriate, or so I shall argue, to regard the silence of the chroniclers on Louis's coming of age as evidence that a gradual and quite natural shift from the rulership of the aging Blanche to that of her youthful son occurred almost imperceptibly. Blanche may have clung to her powers as regent slightly longer and more tenaciously than another mother would have; this might account for the appearance which persisted that she dominated government. It could also account for the fact that the transmission of authority to her son was punctuated by many difficult moments of which the marriage, or more properly the presence in the household of Margaret, was one of the most important.

One senses this gradual translation of the focus of rulership to Louis in his assumption of his mother's former role as a military leader against hostile barons. He grew in stature as he progressively took over military authority. Some historians see the decisive moment in 1230; others in 1235.<sup>20</sup> Joinville implicitly seems to favor a later date, the early 1240s, when Louis led the victorious troops who crushed the last rebellions. Writers of fiction tend to follow Joinville's sketch.<sup>21</sup>

Of all the events which mark the phases in the gradual transmission of rulership to Louis, the one which created the most public tension between the king and his mother and played the most important symbolic role was his vow to go on crusade. The circumstances are well known. Soon after reducing the last vestiges of rebellion, the king fell desperately ill, so ill, as Joinville reports, that an attendant wished to cover his face with a sheet because she believed he had already passed on. Barely able, Louis vowed to fight another war, a Holy War, if God would permit him to live.<sup>22</sup> Regarding his recovery as God's gift in return for the vow, the young king set about almost immediately to make preparations for the crusade.

Blanche, fundamentally opposed to his projected course of action

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Labarge, *SL*, pp. 39-40; Lehmann, *Rôle de la femme*, pp. 333, 336, 338-39; and Painter, *Scourge of the Clergy*, pp. 94-97. Painter placed his emergence as a military leader in 1235; Lehmann put it closer to 1230.

<sup>21</sup> The events in Joinville are reported in chaps. xxii, xxiii. For an example of a fictional work which follows Joinville's picture, see Delaporte, *SL 1242, drame historique*; cf. also Gastine, *Roi des rois*—a sort of historical romance. On the legends which grew up around Louis's victories over the last rebels, such as the story of the sprouting lances at the battle of Saintes (borrowed from the pseudo-Turpin, *Roland*), see Smyser, *Pseudo-Turpin*, p. 26 n. 1.

<sup>22</sup> Joinville, chap. xxiv. The apparent nearness of death also encouraged him to do right over disputes in which he was involved; cf. Bloch, "Blanche de Castille," p. 235, and Vidier, "Marguilliers," pp. 213-14.



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("when she heard he had taken the Cross . . . she was as miserable as if she had seen him dead"), was the first and in some ways the most significant obstacle in his path.<sup>23</sup> She started by objecting to the quality of her son's vow. With the aid of the bishop of Paris she persuaded Louis to renounce the vow because a vow sworn during an illness was not binding. According to Matthew Paris, who was soon to be a familiar in the royal household and would have access to such information, Louis's renunciation of the original vow was followed immediately by a new promise given in perfect health.<sup>24</sup> Yet Blanche would not be deterred. She had lost her husband on crusade; she could not help but be apprehensive over the safety of Louis and her three other sons who intended to accompany him. She pleaded with tears in her eyes, it is related by the gossipy Minstrel of Reims, and tried at the last to keep her son from leaving her with her own physical strength, but to no avail.<sup>25</sup>

For Louis the crusade (or the idea of it) quickly became the fundamental vehicle for his profound piety.<sup>26</sup> Because the crusade was service for God, his defiance of his mother could be justified or rationalized in his own mind. This is not to say that his struggle with Blanche was without pain to himself. He sincerely loved his mother, but if her piety, which was as deep and genuine as his, did not express itself in enthusiasm for the crusades (a trait she shared with many of her generation), in a certain way this was a positive factor for the young king. It allowed him to assume the sole leadership of a major policy for perhaps the first time in his life. Indeed, in the years immediately preceding the crusade one detects in him a creative vigor so ebullient at times and so full of bravado that one is tempted to associate it less with his religious zeal per se than with an outpouring of energy triggered by his successful liberation from parental domina-

<sup>23</sup> The quotation is from Joinville, chap. xxiv. Cf. Pernoud, *Reine Blanche*, pp. 277-83.

<sup>24</sup> MP, v, 3-4. For the canon law on vows, see *Dictionnaire du droit canonique*, vii, s.v. "Voeu."

<sup>25</sup> Minstrel of Reims, pp. 334-35. Cf. Joinville, chap. lxxxii; and MP, v, 312, 354 (on problems confronting France during the king's absence, problems foreseen by Blanche). The Minstrel's testimony has been fully accepted on the points in the text by Pernoud, *Reine Blanche*, pp. 300-303, 351; Boulenger, *Vie de SL*, pp. 93-94; Levron, *SL*, p. 161; and Guth, *SL*, pp. 43-44. Cf. Perry, *SL*, p. 63. On the general reliability of the Minstrel (which I affirm), opinions vary widely. Negative: Lecoy de La Marche, *Société*, pp. 126-27 (following Natalis de Wailly). Positive: Bémont, "Campagne de Poitou," pp. 290-91; Franchet, *SL*, p. 40.

<sup>26</sup> He perhaps regarded it also as the fulfillment of his destiny (cf. Richard's effort to set Louis's crusade in a broader context of Frankish politics; "Politique orientale de SL," pp. 197-207). In any case, Louis's three immediate predecessors had been crusaders, his father, of course, dying on the Albigensian Crusade. The death of Louis VIII, which might have been a bitter memory to Blanche, could have strengthened her son's determination to go through with his enterprise, that is, to live up to the memory of his father.

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tion.<sup>27</sup> By invoking God against his mother he had, as it were, assured his own personal emancipation.

Louis, as it has been pointed out, was thirty years old in 1244. Nonetheless, emotionally he was still an adolescent when he swore the crusader's vow. The transition from adolescence to maturity commenced in earnest at the moment he decided that nothing and no one would be allowed to stand in his way in fulfilling the vow. The pattern, suggested here, is a familiar one, for although adolescence is the final phase of biological childhood, the adolescent process, it has been shown, reaches its appropriate culmination only when a "new kind of identification" or, rather, commitment "for life" replaces the hitherto undifferentiated and constantly shifting identifications of childhood. There is no precise year or series of years in the life cycle when this transformation must take place: as cultures and families vary, so do the fundamental life experiences of those who must confront the demands of culture and family in order to take their proper place in society.<sup>28</sup>

We must, therefore, always keep in mind that the French royal court in the thirteenth century possessed, as it were, a special ambience, that it was endowed with its own rules and unique behavior. Louis's search for autonomy within this setting was indeed disruptive, but only up to a point, for his environment was the sort in which fervent religious devotion was constantly stressed. There was tension only because people in the royal circle differed about the proper form it should take, although by modern standards the range of these differences was extremely narrow. In this respect what Louis did in finding his own proper place in the structure of relationships in the royal household—the swearing of the crusader's vow during an illness; the defiance of his mother in the name of the vow—paralleled the actions of his sister, Isabella, in finding hers.

In the summer of 1243 Isabella had rejected the offer of marriage of the heir presumptive of the emperor. The union, proposed by Frederick II and at the time supported both by Blanche of Castile and Pope Innocent IV, was declined by Isabella after her recovery from a dangerous illness. Anticipating Louis, she successfully opposed the plans for her future with the vow that if she recovered from her illness she would be forever virgin and dedicate her life to God.<sup>29</sup> As the

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Spieg, "A Review of Contributions to a Psychoanalytic Theory of Adolescence," p. 5.

<sup>28</sup> Erikson, *Identity*, pp. 155, 258.

<sup>29</sup> The information on Isabella is drawn largely from the thirteenth century *Vita* of Isabella by her confidante, Abbess Agnès de Harcourt, who governed the nunnery founded by Isabella (see below n. 41). The best modern biography of Isabella is Garreau, *Bienheureuse Isabelle de France* (for the events narrated in this paragraph, see pp. 26-27, 33-34).

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crusade would dominate Louis's life, so too the commitment to virginity would be the unifying theme of Isabella's.

Besides the biographical evidence of Isabella's friend and biographer, Agnès de Harcourt, on this point,<sup>30</sup> we know that those around her came to regard her chastity as the fulfillment of her life. Thirty years later, the designers of her tomb felt it necessary and appropriate to draw the attention of pious pilgrims to the theme.<sup>31</sup> And those who accepted the deceased Isabella as an intercessor for their tribulations on earth saw in her chastity the mark and characteristic of her holiness. In one of the miracles attributed to her, she was to demonstrate, or so the recipient of her intercession believed, that she could be counted on to use her power to protect that precious gift: seeing a maiden tempted by worldly attractions and *in periculo perdendae virginitatis*, Isabella interceded to convince her to abandon the world, enter the convent which Isabella had founded, and remain forever chaste.<sup>32</sup>

The similarity of Isabella's affirmation of a commitment for life to her brother's decision to become a crusader becomes more important when it is recognized that in the royal household she and Louis were the closest of friends. Again, though Agnès's own evidence is the most direct,<sup>33</sup> various sources suggest the vigor of their friendship. She displayed in many ways an ideal religiosity which Louis consciously or unconsciously tried to imitate. She led the life of a nun without being a nun, much as Louis would someday lead the life of a friar without taking the vows.<sup>34</sup> She wore simple clothes as part of her humility, a motif which Louis would one day adopt for himself.<sup>35</sup> Love for the poor was as important a theme in her piety as in his.<sup>36</sup> Such ties were indissoluble by death: both brother and sister would be portrayed at

<sup>30</sup> Agnès de Harcourt, *Vita*, pp. 799, 802, and elsewhere.

<sup>31</sup> The epitaph no longer exists, but various descriptions remain: *Acta sanctorum*, vi August, 791; Van Langeraad and Vidier, "Description de Paris par Arnold Van Buchel," p. 91; and the so-called *Abrégé de la vie . . . de la bienheureuse Isabel*, p. 10.

<sup>32</sup> The miracles are reported in Agnès's *Vita* and in the *Abrégé de la vie* as supplements. On the convent, below n. 41.

<sup>33</sup> Agnès de Harcourt, *Vita*, p. 801.

<sup>34</sup> Even though Isabella wrote and later probably aided in revising a monastic rule for the convent she founded, she preferred to remain at home and follow the rule. She was buried in nun's habit (an occasion—or the subsequent commemoration of it—which deeply affected Louis IX). On these points, see Rouillard's *Life of Isabella*, p. 793; and the drawing in Montfaucon, *Monumens*, II, pl. xvii, no. 2. See also Garreau, *Bienheureuse Isabelle*, pp. 32, 47-48, 50; and especially on the authorship of the rule the summary views in "Isabella of France, Bl.," *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, vii, 655. On Louis IX's imitation of the friars, below chapter 5 n. 163.

<sup>35</sup> *Abrégé de la vie*, p. 9. See the illustration in Guth, *SL*, p. 206, of what purports to be one of Isabella's tunics. On Louis IX, below chapter 5 n. 158.

<sup>36</sup> The evidence on Isabella is summarized by Garreau, *Bienheureuse Isabelle*, pp. 24-27, 38, 55; on Louis IX, below chapter 5 n. 153.

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her tomb.<sup>37</sup> The pious would see them working their wonders together in Paradise.<sup>38</sup> Ultimately both would be recognized as saints.<sup>39</sup>

The relationship was not one-way. Indeed, it is hard always to know who was influencing whom; but if Louis did learn from and admire his sister, she too could understand and appreciate his longings, his need to act the king. Further, she recognized the tension which this need precipitated in her brother's relations with the other women in the household. At every opportunity she was deferential to the king. She would kneel before him in awe of the sanctity she recognized in him.<sup>40</sup> She abhorred the exercise of power: she refused to be prioress of the convent which she founded at Longchamp in Normandy and which Louis richly endowed, preferring to make the preparations for its foundation through her brother as an act of humility.<sup>41</sup> Louis's ideas on obedience, the obedience of a wife to her husband and of social inferiors to their superiors, which he considered a necessary part of "perfect" love, reflect the ideal which his sister manifested. He explicitly desired his daughters to imitate this ideal in their relations with the men with whom they would spend their lives, for he summarized his notions at the end of his life in a set of instructions addressed to the daughter he named after his sister.<sup>42</sup>

The king's sister, it must be remembered, was a decidedly peculiar phenomenon in the king's circle—not in the intensity of her religious devotion but in her ascetic unworldliness.<sup>43</sup> For all their mutual dislike, the other adult women constantly around Louis—his mother and

<sup>37</sup> For the references to the tomb, above n. 31.

<sup>38</sup> They appear jointly, for example, as intercessors in a miracle reported by Agnès de Harcourt, *Vita*, p. 806.

<sup>39</sup> Louis was canonized in 1297. Isabella was beatified in the sixteenth century, but, as her miracles attest, she was considered a saint in the thirteenth century; cf. "Isabella of France, Bl.," *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, vii, 664-65.

<sup>40</sup> Agnès de Harcourt, *Vita*, pp. 801-2; *Abrégé de la vie*, p. 5. See also Tillemont, *Vie de SL*, v, 379.

<sup>41</sup> On her foundation, the contemporary evidence is enormous; besides Agnès de Harcourt's information which pervades her *Vita*, see Joinville, chap. cxxxix; *Layettes*, iv, no. 5253; Guillaume de Nangis, "Chronicon," *HF*, xx, 557. See also *Abrégé de la vie*, p. 5. For scholarly interpretations of this evidence, see Garreau, *Bienheureuse Isabelle*, pp. 49, 53; and "Isabella of France, Bl.," *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, vii, 664-65.

<sup>42</sup> On Louis's instructions to his daughter, see O'Connell, *Propos de SL*, pp. 191-94, for a modern French text (he dates the original 1267-1268). The OF text may be consulted in Wallon, *SL*, ii, 470ff., but a better edition with some valuable commentary is in O'Connell's "Teachings and Instructions of SL," a Princeton dissertation. Drawing out the influence of Isabella on Louis's children, Garreau, *Bienheureuse Isabelle*, p. 36, has emphasized the fact that the king's sister was the daughter Isabella's godmother.

<sup>43</sup> I have not adduced all the available evidence of the bond that tied Louis to his sister. One additional indication, however, ought to throw some light on the depth of their admiration for each other. As Louis, in his humiliation over the failure of the crusade, would someday allow himself to be disciplined by a beating with chains; so, Isabella endured flagellation *ad sanguinem* for her imagined sins. Louis, evidently, sent her the chains for accomplishing this penance. His own chains he sent as a gift to his

his wife—were alike in their enjoyment of a life of activity. Isabella, throughout her life (she died in 1269, the year before Louis), was retiring and contemplative and, therefore, a perfect counterweight to the able and aggressive Blanche and the able but frustrated Margaret.<sup>44</sup> That Isabella had managed to be herself in such a world and to resist the role that had been mapped out for her as an empress and that she had done so in the name of God were remarkable achievements. Louis had watched her, and when the time came, perhaps without consciously intending to do so, he followed in her footsteps.

This joining or even confusion of personal autonomy with religious devotion was a fundamental element of Louis's personality. An episode directly relevant to this issue was to occur in the Holy Land in the 1250s. There Louis met the young prince of Antioch, Bohemond VI. The king could not resist putting his support behind Bohemond's desire to end the cautious regency of the prince's mother in order that he might assume leadership of his besieged crusader principality. It was not to the point that Bohemond's mother wanted to continue the regency as she knew best. How could she have known the best course? The enemies of Christ needed to be confronted and destroyed (or so the explicit argument ran). I am convinced, however, that in this instance piety again became the handmaiden in a struggle for personal selfhood.<sup>45</sup>

It is no surprise then that Louis's preparations for crusade, viewed as the culmination of his own search for autonomy, have about them a bouyancy and even overconfidence unparalleled in any other period of his life. It was as if nothing were too much for him (was not God on his side?). He foresaw his crusade as the biggest in history.<sup>46</sup> He was prepared to risk a great many resources and most of his prestige by undertaking to construct a completely new port in the south of France so that his crusaders would have the benefit of departing en masse and well organized to do battle with Christ's enemies. Here he actually accomplished what few men could have believed was possible.<sup>47</sup> He envisioned himself leading the troops; against the cautious wisdom of his associates he personally—almost recklessly—led the assault on the beaches of the Infidel.

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daughter Isabella. Agnès de Harcourt, *Vita*, p. 800; *Abrégé de la vie*, p. 8; Guillaume de Saint-Pathus, *HF*, xx, 83. See also Garreau, *Bienheureuse Isabelle*, p. 56; Labarge, *SL*, p. 208.

<sup>44</sup> I call Margaret able because of the impressive way she handled herself and the garrison at Damietta when the king's crusade collapsed in 1250; Joinville, chap. lxxviii.

<sup>45</sup> Joinville, chap. ci, and below chapter 5 nn. 177-80, for further discussion of this incident.

<sup>46</sup> In 1246 he was already thinking of spending six years on crusade; *Layettes*, II, no. 3537. The emphasis on "bigness" has been noticed by Labarge, *SL*, p. 98.

<sup>47</sup> Cf. Jordan, "Supplying Aigues-Mortes," and below chapter 4 nn. 53-80.

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When the king heard that the ensign of St. Denis was ashore he strode across the galley, refusing even for the Legate who was with him to lag behind the standard, and leapt into the water, which came up to his armpits. His shield round his neck, his helmet on his head, lance in hand, he joined his men on the beach. . . . He couched his lance under his arm and put his shield before him, and would have flung himself upon . . . [the Saracens] had not his wiser companions held him back.<sup>48</sup>

All this was still ahead in 1244, but it did not take long for his adolescent exuberance over this new and dangerous adventure to strike his contemporaries. A story told by Matthew Paris is especially instructive. Around 1246, Louis surreptitiously instructed his tailors to sew crosses on the robes that he intended to present to his barons at the traditional gift-giving ceremonies. By voluntarily accepting the gifts (and who could refuse?), they too "took" the cross casting their lot with the king.<sup>49</sup>

The sense of joy and eagerness implicit in this story, this "whimsical piety" as it has been called,<sup>50</sup> is far removed from what we would expect of a thirty-year-old king. It challenges our notions that at every stage in the king's life he was dominated by the somewhat more somber piety of his mother, a piety whose essence historians find in her admonition to her son that death was eminently preferable to the commission of a mortal sin.<sup>51</sup> Whatever we wish to call the cluster of emotions that characterized Louis and explain the earnestness and zeal in his behavior between late 1244 when he took the vow for the first time and June 1248 when he departed Paris, it is fairly certain that in those years he became his own man. A spirit of personal freedom with an accompaniment of religious messianism penetrated his policies and gave them, one might say, an immoderate aspect which it is difficult to ignore. Perhaps some stupid or regrettable things were done in the colossal effort of preparing for the crusade, but no hindrance could dampen the king's overall enthusiasm and determination. The future, as he regarded it, was clear and straight. To put it another way, on the eve of the crusade, Louis was (or, at least, he felt himself to be) finally, firmly free.

<sup>48</sup> Joinville, chap. xxxv; "Letter of John Sarrasin," p. 244.

<sup>49</sup> MP, IV, 502-3; cf. IV, 490. See also Pernoud, *Reine Blanche*, p. 287.

<sup>50</sup> The phrase is Barker and Smail's, "Crusades," p. 789.

<sup>51</sup> The remark, often repeated by Louis, is reported by Guillaume de Saint-Pathus (Margaret's confessor) in his life of the king, *HF*, xx, 64, and by Joinville, chap. xvi. A fuller discussion of Louis's piety, with specific reference to its symbolic manifestations on the eve of the crusade, will be found below chapter 5 nn. 1-28.

## • 2 •

### BARONS AND PRINCES: THE SEARCH FOR PEACE AND ALLIES

A Christian world at peace was always an ideal, but the crusade gave the need for peace a critical immediacy.<sup>1</sup> Only in an atmosphere of domestic peace could Louis IX assure for himself the collection of needed revenues for the crusade. Only in an atmosphere of international cooperation could foreign princes join meaningfully into his preparations. A full explanation for his activity in this sphere, however, must also take into consideration the idyllic vision, to which the king certainly ascribed, of the eve of a crusade as a time of pulling together among conflicting social and political groups.<sup>2</sup>

The need to enunciate and put into practice special efforts for maintaining internal peace was far from imaginary: as recently as 1241-1243 baronial rebellions had disturbed France. Nor was this manifestation of aristocratic hostility to the monarchy an isolated instance of civil strife. For twenty years the royal government had had to contest with recalcitrant feudatories over the proper governance of the kingdom. Three fundamental issues had been at stake, or, rather, three waves of fighting can be distinguished.

The least important of these, at least in its immediate influence on the insurrectionary disturbances of the 1240s, was baronial antagonism to the regency of a woman, Blanche of Castile, in the early years of the minority of Louis IX.<sup>3</sup> Although genuinely concerned barons might have misgivings about the prospect of regency government during the coming crusade, it is hard to believe that their specific grievance would center around Louis's selection of his mother to head the government in his absence. By the 1240s Blanche was highly regarded as an effective ruler. More worrisome was the barons' feeling that it was *their proper responsibility to govern in periods of crisis* (such as they felt existed in the 1220s and 1230s), an ominous

<sup>1</sup> The original idea of the Jerusalem-oriented crusade, as it had been enunciated by Pope Urban II in 1095, was that civil wars within Christendom ought to be brought to an end in the interest of the war for God; Munro, "Speech of Pope Urban," p. 239.

<sup>2</sup> Canon 17 of the Canons of the Council of Lyon (1245) called for four years of peace in Europe; MP, IV, 461. Purcell, *Papal Crusading Policy*, discusses this and other provisions of the conciliar decrees and publishes the declaration of the crusade in appendix 1.

<sup>3</sup> For fuller narratives and discussions of the insurrections see the references below n. 9.