

Confession 27

Brune Pourcel of Montailou

Confession of Brune, the widow of Guillaume Pourcel of Montailou, and natural daughter of the heretic Prades Tavernier:

The year of the Lord 1320, the 18th of December. Since it has come to the attention of the Reverend Father in Christ my lord Jacques, by the grace of God bishop of Pamiers, that Brune, the widow of Guillaume Pourcel of Montailou, and natural daughter of Prades Tavernier the heretic, has seen, adored, heard the sermons of the heretics of the Manichaen sect, was their believer, has accompanied them, has been present at the heretication of certain people, has given them things, or brought things to them both for herself and on the part of others, has hidden them and is promised to them, my said lord bishop, wishing to inquire into the above-stated facts, had her cited. Appearing at the bishop's palace of Pamiers before him, who was assisted by Brother Gaillard de Pomiès, substitute of my lord the inquisitor of Carcassonne, she took an oath to tell the pure and entire truth about these facts and all others touching the Catholic faith, as much concerning herself as others both living and dead. The oath taken, she was interrogated by my said lord bishop on all and each one of the above-stated facts and she said, avowed and deposed as follows:

About 18 years ago, at the time of Easter, I do not remember the day, Alazaïs, the widow of Bernard Riba of Montailou came to my house and asked me to bring my son Raimond, who was still at the breast and must have been six months old, to her house because there was a woman of Razès there who was greatly inconvenienced by her milk. I told her that I would not do so, because the milk of that woman would be bad for my son. Finally, after the prayers of this Alazaïs, I brought my son to her house and when I was at her house I found this woman of Razès seated by the fire. I also found there, standing at the door of a room, my father Prades Tavernier the heretic. And I sat down near the fire with Alazaïs and this woman from Razès and the heretic stayed standing at the door of that room, without coming to join us.

And he then said to Alazaïs, loud enough that I heard it, to tell me to do the reverence that believers traditionally do to heretics; Alazaïs told me, on the order of the heretic, to adore him and kneel before him, saying "Bless us, good Christian, and pray for us." When I responded that I did not know how to do it, Alazaïs taught me the way to adore heretics, by kneeling and placing one's hands on the earth and inclining one's head toward one's hands. And then, instructed by Alazaïs, I went to the heretic, stood before him, and kneeled as I had been taught, and said, "Bless us, good Christian, and pray for us." The heretic said something in return but I do not know what, because he spoke in a low voice. I do not recall if I adored him three times, but I do know that it was more than once.

And during the time that I was adoring the heretic, Alazaïs was there helping me, telling me what I should do and say. And after I had adored the heretic, or before, I do not recall, Alazaïs adored the heretic in the same way and also the woman of Razès did so. I did not know her name, nor her village, because when I asked Alazaïs what her name was and where she was from, she told me not to worry about that and would not tell me.

When I left the house, Alazaïs followed me and gave me a large piece of bread, so that I could give it to the baby and a small piece of bread, of the size of a twelfth of the finger of a man, and told me to eat it, which I did outside. When I had eaten it, Alazaïs told me that it was my father who had sent it to me. I responded, "It is to my misfortune that I have eaten this bread; I will not eat it again in the future!" But I do not recall if Alazaïs called this bread the bread blessed by the good Christian.

I then left in anger. Alazaïs said: "Why is what you have done objectionable to you? Your father and those of his sect are good and holy men, they are alone in holding good beliefs, they are the only ones that can save souls and no men can be saved, without being received into their faith and their sect. They do not lie, nor kill anything and they do not eat meat." After which she said to me: "You do not believe it? Then say what you believe!" I told her then what I believed. And at that moment, I believed it in my heart, but afterwards, after having left the yard of this Alazaïs I returned to my right mind and I said to her: "And how can they save souls, if they need to go around hiding themselves?" She replied: "How can you speak thus? You should not say anything bad in the future about these good men, since you have adored them!" This said, I left her and went home.

Then, the next day, she came to my threshing floor, which adjoins my house, and she called me to come out to her. When I left the house, she said that my father was at her house and wished to speak with me. But I did not wish to go with her.

-Who was present? -No one, but us two.

-Did you then believe what Alazaïs said? -No.

-Did you then or the preceding time, send anything to your father? -No.

Later, about a fortnight after, Alazaïs came again to my threshing floor and called me. I left and she told me again that my father was at her house and that I should come adore him. I told her that I would not go for any price. She told me that I was not acting as a good woman would, in not doing what she told me to and coming to see my father and believing in him.

About a month later, but I do not recall otherwise the time, Alazaïs came to my house and told me to come to her house. I told her that I would do so gladly and I went with her. When I was in her house, I found my father standing at the door of the room. There near the fire were Bernard Riba and Pons Riba his son, Raimond and Bernard Belot, brothers, Raimond Benet and the heretic, standing at the door of the room was talking to them. They were also standing up. When I saw them, I went at once out of the house. Alazaïs asked me: "You're leaving so quickly?" I say yes.

-Did you see these people adore the heretic? -No, because I left at once.

-Did you see these people give him anything? -No.

-Do you recall what the heretic said to them? -No.

About a year later, I returned of my own accord to Alazaïs' house. When I was at the house in the main foyer (*foganha*) I found standing near the fire Prades Tavernier, the heretic and kneeling before him was Emersende Marty, who was offering to the heretic, clothed in a blue vestment, some bread and wheat, but I do not know which of these two, because what she was giving was covered by the vestment. Standing before the heretic were Arnaud Vital and Alazaïs Riba. When I arrived, the door of the house was closed and when it opened quickly, I saw this Mersende with her head inclined towards the floor as if she was adoring the heretic in the heretical fashion. And when I

entered, I saw that the heretic, while saying something in a low voice, held his hand over this Mersende. And I stayed a moment with them.

-Did you then, this time, adore the heretic? Did Arnaud Vital and Alazaïs do it? - No.

-Did you yourself or anyone else give anything to the heretic? - No.

Did anyone of those present make a promise to the heretic to be received or received by him into his sect if he were to become sick unto death? -No.

Later, maybe one month after, it seems to me, I went into the grange of Bernard Riba, to steal some grass or hay. I had already taken one sheaf. This heretic, whom I had not seen before and who was seated on the straw which was over the grass, said to me: "And what are you doing?" I told him I was taking some grass because I needed some and, this said, I left quickly, because I was afraid of being caught.

-Did any other words pass between you and the heretic at this time? -No.

-Who was present? -No one but me and the heretic.

-Did you adore him or did you give him anything? -No.

Toward the same time, Bernard Riba had harvested beets and brought them back to his house. He had placed them or had them placed in a portico that was in front of his house. I went four times that same day with a panier to take some of these beets and each time I saw the heretic who was closed up in his house. When I came, he opened the door of the house a little. And seeing me, he said: "Why are you taking those beets?" I told him that I was taking them in order to cook them and give them to my children. He told me that I was acting badly, to take them without the people of the house knowing. When Pons Riba, the son of Bernard arrived, I told him that I had taken some beets and he told me that it was okay.

-Did you see anyone with the heretic that day? -No.

-Did you adore him or did you give him anything? -No.

Around the same time, I needed a flour sifter. I went to Alazaïs' house and when I was at the door, I found her and asked her to lend me one. She said: "Gladly." I opened the door and I saw in the main foyer (*foganha*) near the door of the chamber the above-mentioned heretic, my father, and Alazaïs told me to come in. I said that I could not, because I had left my children alone. She brought me the sifter, I left the house and I did nothing else, nor saw anything else to do with the heretic.

Around that same time, I had made bread and I wanted to cook it in Alazaïs' oven. Having carried the bread to the oven on a plank, I found the heretic in the house, and since there was no one else to help me with the bread I had brought, he came and helped me put it in the oven. And he told me to be careful not to say ill or do ill to anyone, and not to take anything from anyone because it was a sin and it would not be pleasant for the one who had something taken, "just as it would not be pleasant for you if someone took something of yours", and to do ill to no one, and to do well when I was able and to believe in him.

-Did you adore him at that time? -No.

-Who was present? - No one.

Another time, I myself went for spinning to Alazaïs' house and entered in. She and I, we were seated by the fire. When we were there for just a moment, Prades Tavernier the heretic left the room and seated himself on another bench near the fire. When he arrived, we stood up for him. When he was seated, he saluted us in the

habitual manner and told us to sit with him, which we did. He said to me then: "Why do you not believe in me and what I tell you?" I said that I was afraid great misfortune would come to me as a result. He responded, on the contrary, that great good would come to me and no evil, if I were to believe in their faith, because it was good and that it was in this faith that those who wished to be saved would be saved. He said that they were holy and good, and that they suffered much ill for God; that in the sacrament of the altar, what the priest elevated was only bread and wine. He said that if a man or a woman had done great ill, no matter how much, and if they were received by them (i.e. the Roman Catholics) into their faith and their sect, they would not be saved, but if they had done great ill, they would be saved when they were received by them (i.e. the heretics.) He also said that those who were received by them would be received at once into paradise.

He said that it was a sin to do ill to animals or to kill them, although it would be a greater sin to do ill to a man or to kill him, than an animal.

He said that all the souls of the people that they received, whether large or small, would go to paradise, but the souls of those who were not received by them would only be saved with great difficulty.

He said also that those who persecuted or denounced them, or caused them to be arrested, or did them any ill, would never enter into paradise, but would all go to hell.

He also said that those of their sect could absolve all sins and the absolution done by the priests loyal to the Roman Church would avail them nothing.

-Did you believe these heretical propositions at this time? -Yes.

-For how long did you remain in this belief? -About three years. And I adored this heretic, three times, in the manner described above, saying: "May you bless us" and bending my knee before him. I also made him the promise to be received into his sect when I died.

-Who was present? -Alazaïs and I.

-Did Alazaïs adore this heretic? -Yes.

Around the same time, there was another instance where I had no bread to give to my children and I went to Alazaïs so that she could give me some bread. I found her in her house and she lend me a porringer full of flour. Seeing several men in the room above-said, I asked her who they were. She told me that they were my father, the heretic, and then when I went to the door of the room and look inside, I saw my father, and with him, Guillaume Maury and Guillaume Belot, both dead, of Montailou who were talking with him. But I did not see them adore him or give him anything: I did not hear tell later what they were doing there with him, and I did not adore him, nor did Alazaïs, at least not that I saw.

Several days later I returned to Alazaïs' house to return the flour to her and when I was with her in the main foyer, I heard some men talking in that chamber where the heretic usually stayed and which was closed. I asked Alazaïs who it was who was speaking in that chamber. She told me that it was my father who was talking with Pierre Michel of Prades, deceased, who was with him in the chamber. I did not saw these men myself, nor what they were doing in that chamber.

Another time, I came to Alazaïs' house to get some wood I needed. When I was in the house, I found her seated near the fire and I asked her for a faggot. And, while talking with her there, I heard, in the chamber, which was then closed, some men talking

and I asked her who they were. She told me not to concern myself. I insisted very much that she tell me who these men were. And finally she told that there were with my father the heretic, Raimond Benet and Arnaud Belot, deceased of Montailou. Myself, I did not see them, but when she had given me the wood, she told me to leave at once, and I left.

About 15 or 17 years ago, but I do not recall the exact time, around Easter, one day Guillaume Belot, Raimond Benet, the son of the late Guillaume Benet and Rixende Julia, deceased, of Montailou, were bringing to my house around dusk in a blanket of hemp cloth, the late na Roqua, and they told me to give her nothing more to eat or drink of any sort, because that should not be done. And that night, I kept vigil with this Rixende and Alazaïs Pellicier and we asked this Roqua often to talk with us, but she would not do so. I also wanted to give her some bouillon made from salt pork, but we could not open her mouth. On the contrary when we wanted to, to give her something to drink, she closed her mouth even more. She remained in this state for two days and two nights, and she died at the dawn of the third night.

When she died, two birds came to the roof of my house, birds of the night we call chevêches (a type of owl), and they cried on the roof. Upon hearing them, I said that the devils had come to carry away the soul of na Roqua who died.

Then she was dead, at dawn, when day had come, and Alazaïs Azéma of Montailou came and with me wrapped the body of this Roqua in a cloth that she had brought and she was buried in the cemetery of the church there.

Several days later, I was passing by a property that had belonged to this Roqua, and I found there Guillaume Belot. I asked him why he had told me, when he had brought Roqua to my house, not to give her anything to eat or drink, because that should not be done. He told me that he had said that because this Roqua had been received, a long time before, in her own house, by the good Christians, into their sect and their faith and that Guillaume and Raimond Benet had been present at her reception. He did not tell me which heretic had received this Roqua into the sect. But I know very well that my father the heretic was in the house of Alazaïs den Riba then, when na Roqua was hereticated.

Several days after the death of Guillaume Benet, I was going to get water and I met on the road Guillaume Belot, who was the godchild of this Guillaume Benet. I said to him then: "So, is your godfather Guillaume Benet dead yet?" He told me yes, and that he was very glad. I said: "Why are you rejoicing over the death of your godparent?" He said it was because he had been received by the good men (speaking of the heretics) and that he had been present when he was received. He did not tell me which heretic had received this Guillaume, nor who was present at this heretication. But I know very well that at the time when this Guillaume died, my father the heretic was at Alazaïs den Riba's house.

After the death of Raimond Benet, the son of this Guillaume Benet, I went to the burial of this Raimond, and with me came Guillaume Belot. I told him then that the death of this Raimond was a great shame, because he was a beautiful young man and very gifted. Guillaume told me that this Raimond was lucky to die. I replied: "How can you say that?" He said this was because this Raimond had been received by the good Christians. I asked him: "How do you know this?" He said that he had been present when Raimond was received. He did not tell me which heretic, nor in the presence of

which persons. But at the time my father the heretic was in the house of Alazaïs den Riba, as was commonly spoken of among the believers.

About 21 years ago, I was working as a servant for the late Pons Clergue of Montailou, and at that time, I do not recall the exact day, Mengarde, the late wife of this Pons, told me to bring two loaves of bread wrapped up in a mantle and a flagon of wine to the late Guillemette Belot. I was astonished, since the house of this Guillemette was extremely wealthy, that this Mengarde would be sending her bread and wine, and I said to Mengarde: "What should I say to Guillemette -- that she needs bread and wine?" She replied: "Don't worry about it, just give this to Guillemette, because I have spoken with her." I then brought the bread and wine to Guillemette Belot's house and finding the door of her house closed, I knocked at the door. Guillemette came out at once, and opening the door a little bit, so that I could not see into the house, because the door was not entirely open, she stood in the opening. I gave her the bread and wine, saying that Mengarde had sent it. She said that she knew Mengarde was going to be sending it. And after taking it, she closed the door again at once, without telling me to come in or to say anything to Mengarde.

-Did you see anyone else in the house besides Guillemette? -No, and I could not have, even if I had wanted to.

-Did you believe that there were heretics in the house, to whom the said Mengarde had sent this? -I did not believe it then, because I had not yet seen heretics, but later, because of what I have said above and the manner in which it happened, I believe that there were heretics there.

Another time, I brought to Guillemette, on the part of Mengarde, a porringer of flour.

When I was living with Mengarde, na Roqua often came to her house, and spoke with her privately to the point that when I came by and they were talking, Mengarde told me at once to leave and sent me elsewhere. I heard her often say that this Roqua was a good woman and a good Christian and that it was great merit to do good to her.

When Pons Clergue died, Alazaïs Azéma, myself and Pierre Clergue, the rector of Montailou, closed ourselves in the main foyer where the body of the dead Pons was laid out and Alazaïs took the fingernails and toenails of this dead Pons, a good many, and also the hair of his head in the presence and view of the curé who did not oppose it. This done, Alazaïs told me to go look for thread to sew the corpse, which I did. I did not see to whom Alazaïs gave the hair and nails. But later I asked her why she had done that. She told me that it was so the fortune of Pons' house would not leave with his body, but that it would remain in the house.

She avowed all of this of her own free will, and said nothing else pertinent on the matter of heresy, although diligently interrogated. And, she said, she had never confessed in justice or to a tribunal of penance, because she did not believe that she had sinned in believing this, just until the inquisitors cited the people of Montailou for heresy. But now, she detested these errors and repented greatly of all that precedes and was ready to accomplish all penance and said:

I, Brune Pourcel, appearing judicially before you, Reverend Father in Christ, Jacques, by the grace of God bishop of Pamiers, abjure entirely all heresy that rises against the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ and the Holy Roman Church, and all beliefs of heretics, of any sect condemned by the Roman church, and especially of the sect which

I followed, and all complicity, welcome, defense and frequenting of these heretics, under pain of punishment which is due in case of a relapse into the heresy here renounced judicially;

Item I swear and promise to pursue according to my power the heretics of any sect condemned by the Roman Church and especially the sect that I followed, and the believers, followers, welcomers and defenders of these heretics, and those that I know or believe to be in flight for reason of heresy, and to have arrested and sent, according to my power, any heretic at all among them to my said lord bishop or to the inquisitors of the heretical deviation at all times and in any place that I learn of the existence of the above said or one amongst them;

Item I swear and promise to hold, guard and defend the Catholic faith which the Holy Roman Church preaches and observes;

Item I swear and promise to obey and defer to the order of the Church, to my lord the bishop and the inquisitors and to appear on the day and days assigned before them or their replacements, at all times and in whatever place that I receive the order or requisition on their part, by messenger or by letter or in some other way, to never flee not absent myself knowingly in a spirit of contumaciousness and to receive and accomplish according to my power the punishment and the penance that they may judge good to impose upon me. And to this effect I engage my person and all my goods.

When this was done, the said Brune concluded in the present affair and asked to be sentenced on that which precedes, asking humbly that he be merciful towards her.

Done in the presence of my lord Germain de Castelnaud, archdeacon of the church of Pamiers, Brother David, monk of Fontfroide, Brother Arnaud du Carla, O.P. of the convent of Pamiers, and of myself Guillaume Peyre-Barthe, notary of my lord the bishop, who has received and written that which precedes.

After this, the year as above (1320) the 21st of January, the said Brune, appearing judicially in the episcopal chamber of Pamiers before my said lord bishop assisted by Brother Gaillard de Pomiès, substitute for my lord the inquisitor of Carcassonne, remembering more clearly, as she said, said and avowed, under the oath taken by her, that which follows:

After having taken to Guillemette Belot, on the part of Mengarde the wife of Pons Clergue of Montaillou, these loaves and a flagon of wine, and the porringer or bowl of flour, I was one day at Mengarde's house and seated with her near the fire. I asked her why she had sent these things to Guillemette Belot with me as intermediary, although she certainly had enough flour and wine. Mengarde told me that she had done it because there were living there good men and it was to these good men that she was sending it. I then asked her: "And who are these good men to whom you have sent this?" She said that these good men were the Authiés. I asked her then which Authiés. She told me the ones from Ax. I understood then that she had sent this to Guillaume, to Pierre or to Jacques Authié, the heretics. I asked her then why she had sent this. And Mengarde replied that it was because these Authiés were good men and it was great merit to do good for them.

Around this same time, Mengarde and Guillemette were seated one day on the road that runs between Mengarde and Guillemette's houses and the two of them were

talking in great secrecy. I came by and, seeing them talking, I looked at them. Mengarde said to me: "What are you looking at? Go on!" Guillemette then said and I heard her: "It is good that she goes, because she is not to be trusted and one cannot be entirely sure of her, nor be confident." Mengarde said to Guillemette: How do you know?" Guillemette replied that Prades Tavernier, my father, had told her so.

-Who was present? -No one else.

One day, at Christmas, I saw Mengarde, the natural daughter of Bernard Clergue of Montailou, now the wife of Bernard Ayméric, son of Prades Ayméric of Prades who was carrying under a mantle something that looked like bread and a flagon of wine, when she left the house of Bernard Clergue and carried it to the house of the said Guillemette. This happened at the time when the heretics were in the region and at Montailou, or so everyone was saying. But I do not know otherwise if they were then in the house of Guillemette Belot.

-When was this? -I do not recall, but I know well that it was after I had left the house of Bernard Clergue.

-Who was present? - I do not remember.

After having left the house of this Mengarde, one day, I do not remember exactly when, I went to the house of Arnaud Vital the shoemaker and I met Mengarde, who was in front of his house. She said to me: "Where are you coming from?" I told her that I was coming to see Arnaud Vital and she said "And why are you coming now?" I told her that things were going badly for me and I had had much bad fortune. She asked me: "And how is your father?" I told her that I did not know because I had not seen him for a long time. She told me that it would be a great act of charity to do well for him because he was a good man. And at this time, he was manifestly a heretic and considered by all to be such, because it was just a short time before he was imprisoned at Carcassonne.

About ten years ago, when the men and women of Montailou had been cited by Brother Geoffroy, who was then the inquisitor of Carcassonne, I was also cited along with others and I appeared before him in the House of the Inquisition of the City of Carcassonne. The inquisitor asked me if it had been a long time since I had seen my father the heretic. I said I had not seen him for sixteen years, when in fact I had seen him many times during that period and had spoken and done what I avowed above.

He asked me if this na Roqua had died at my house and I told him yes. He asked me also if I had known that she was a heretic. I said no, although I well knew everything that I have avowed above about this Roqua.

-Had you sworn at that time to tell the truth in the matter of heresy as much concerning yourself as others? -I do not recall if I had sworn or not.

This year, having been cited by my lord the bishop and having appeared before him in the episcopal chamber of Pamiers, and interrogated under oath whether I knew that Mengarde, the wife of Pons Clergue, was familiar with and a friend of Guillemette Belot and na Roqua, I said no, which I repent of now, because I did not tell the truth, which is why I am confessing now, and I wish to hold to it.

Done the year and day as above, in the presence of the discreet personage master Bernard Faissier, official of Pamiers, of Brother Aicret, O.P., of the convent of Pamiers and of myself Guillaume Peyre-Barthe, notary above-mentioned, etc.

And the above said Brune renounced and concluded, and supplicated as above, and was reconciled and absolved of the above.

(After this she took the same vow on March 7th, the same year as above (1320) before the inquisitor in the house of the Preachers of Pamiers.)

Done the year and day as above, in the presence of the religious persons my lord Germain de Castelnau, archdeacon of the church of Pamiers, Brother Bernard de Centelles, and David, monks of Fontfroide in the diocese of Narbonne, master Barthélémy Adalbert, notary of my lord the inquisitor, and of me Guillaume Peyre-Barthe, notary of my said lord bishop, who has received and written the above ratification in common with the said master Barthélemy.

On the Sunday assigned to the said Brune, she appeared in the cemetery of Saint-Jean-Martyr, where the Graces were done and there our said lords bishop and inquisitor proceeded to pronounce her sentence in the manner that follows: "Let all know, etc." See the sentence in the Book of Sentences of heresy.

And I, Rainaud Jabbaud, cleric of Toulouse, sworn in the matter of the Inquisition, have, on the order of my lord the bishop, faithfully corrected the said confessions against the original.

NOTE

Condemned on March 8, 1321 to the dungeon of the Wall, she lived to see her punishment commuted into the wearing of double crosses on January 17. 1329.