

Fabrissa den Riba de Montailou Confession 24

Confession and Deposition of Fabrissa den Riba of Montailou:

In the year of the Lord 1320, the 26th of September. 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 Fabrissa den Riba of Montailou has committed numerous offenses in the matter of heresy, knows others who have also committed offenses, has herself engaged in casting magical spells, and is reputed to know numerous people who have testified against Pierre Clergue, the rector of Montailou, my said lord bishop, wishing to know the truth and make inquiry concerning these facts, had her cited. Appearing before him, who was assisted by Brother Gaillard de Pomiès, substitute for my lord the inquisitor of Carcassonne, in the presence of the religious persons the Brothers Arnaud du Carla, of the order of Preachers of the convent of Pamiers, Bernard de Centelles and David, monks of Fontfroide, and myself, Guillaume Peyre-Barthe notary of my lord the bishop, as witnesses to this convocation, Fabrissa presented herself judicially in the chamber of the bishop of Pamiers and swore on the four holy Gospels of God to tell the simple and complete truth on the accusation of heresy and casting spells and other suspected facts mentioned above, as much concerning herself as cited as concerning others both living and dead as witness. This oath having been taken, she avowed and deposed as follows:

About 19 years ago, I don't recall exactly when, sometime between All-Saints and Christmas, Alazaïs, the daughter of Guillaume Benet of Montailou fell sick with the malady that she was to die from. I nursed her during that sickness. One night, at the beginning of the night, Guillaume Benet, the father of this Alazaïs, and Raimond and Guillaume Belot were talking together quietly, because she seemed to be rapidly descending towards death. I saw them talking, but I did not hear what they said. After they spoke in secret with her, Raimond Belot left the house, while the rest of us stayed behind. We were Guillaume Benet, Guillaume Belot, Sibille den Fort (who has been imprisoned), Guillemette Benet, mother of this Alazaïs, and myself, who was sitting up with Alazaïs. Towards dawn, this Raimond Belot who had left the house at the beginning of the night, came back to us, who were keeping vigil with Alazaïs and spoken separately, but in my sight, to Guillaume Benet. When they had talked, Guillaume Benet told me to leave the house and I said at once "We are leaving!"

Guillaume Benet and Raimond Belot left the house with me and when we were outside, Raimond Belot entered into the cellar of the house, while Guillaume remained outside. Raimond Belot then brought out of the cellar two men that I did not recognize, because it was dark; and Guillaume Benet and Raimond Belot brought these two men into the house where Alazaïs lay dying. As for me, I stayed outside. When they had entered and the door of the house was closed, I went home. I did not know who the men were who were in the house. I thought that the two men Raimond Belot had brought were heretics because it seemed they had put them in the cellar and brought them into the house as if they were being brought to hereticate Alazaïs. I believe this because, the next day, when I returned to the house where Alazaïs was lying near death, Guillemette Benet and Raimond Belot held her and they did not allow any woman

to touch her nor her bed. When I wished to approach her bed, as I used to do, they told me to be careful not to touch her or her bed. And this Alazaïs died in the hands of Guillaume and Raimond, and they did not wish me to touch her body after her death, but they themselves prepared the body along with the above-mentioned Sibille. After this, I believe that this Alazaïs had been hereticated by the two men that Raimond Belot had brought.

The second day after the death of Alazaïs, Pierre Clergue, the rector of Montailou was seated in the sun at the door of the church. I went up to him and told him that I would like to reveal something to him and I told him everything, word for word, which I just confessed to you concerning the heretication of this Alazaïs. The rector responded, "Be quiet, be quiet, you do not know what you are saying. There are no heretics in this region; if there were, they would certainly find them." Afterwards, I no longer spoke of this affair to anyone, because I believed it sufficient to have revealed it to my rector. The rector did not speak again of this to me.

Still in that same year, I made my confession sacramentally to a Brother Minor and I confessed all of this to him. He asked me "And what did your rector do?" I heard later from a girl named Bernarde that the Brothers Minor had said to the rector that all the region was full of heretics. The rector responded to them that he did not know of one heretic in the whole region. And at that time Prades Tavernier the heretic was residing openly in Montailou.

I had not been cited concerning these events as witness by my lord the inquisitor of Carcassonne nor by anyone else. Nonetheless I told this to my rector.

One time (I no longer remember the year or day) I went to get some fire from Alazaïs den Riba of Montailou. When I was in the kitchen foyer, I saw a man who was sitting on a cushion. I asked Alazaïs who he was. She told me that he was called Guillaume Peyre and that he bought hides. This Guillaume Peyre then said (and I heard it) to Alazaïs to prepare him something to eat, which she did, by putting some cooked walnuts in a bowl, even though there was meat cooked with cabbage in another pot. Alazaïs then brought a wooden basin, some water and a clean towel and this man washed his hands. Alazaïs poured the water over his hands. Then she placed some clean napkins in front of him and she served him with great care. I was frightened and astonished that she served him in this manner.

-Why you were frightened and astonished at what Alazaïs did for this man? - Because of this, I thought that this Guillaume Peyre was a heretic or an agent of the heretics. The reason I believed this is that many people in Montailou said that Guillaume Peyre was an agent of the heretics and he had come to arrange a meeting of the heretics and their believers. Although I wished to call for Guillaume Peyre, whom I believed to be a heretic or an agent of the heretics, to be arrested, Alazaïs told me not to do so, because he was a good man who sold hides. She told me this at the doorway of the house, as I was leaving, in great anger because of the man I had seen.

After this, I did not speak about it to anyone, not that I know of nor remember. But later, I no longer disputed with this Alazaïs, although previously this had happened often. We ceased to do this, out of fear that one of us might reproach the other about the story of this Guillaume Peyre. Later, indeed, Guillaume Peyre and Alazaïs were imprisoned as believers in Carcassonne.

-Did you speak with Guillaume Peyre about anything, when you saw him? -
Nothing at all.

-Have you confessed this to the inquisitor of Carcassonne or to anyone else? -
No, I never revealed this even to the rector.

Around the same time, I ran a wine tavern. Sibille, the wife of Guillaume Fort, told me to bring a half quart of wine, worth 10 tournois, to Guillaume Benet, who later was condemned and burned posthumously while the said Sibille was imprisoned at Carcassonne. I brought this half quart in a bottle to the house of Guillaume Benet and the said Sibille. He told me that he knew well where the wine had been sent from, since he had provided the money. When I gave him the bottle of wine, he entered into the house and closed the door behind him.

-Did you know or believe there to be heretics in the house? - No.

Na Roqua, while she was alive, had a great friendship with Mengarde, the mother of the rector of Montailou and I often saw the two of them talking together in secret. This na Roqua was imprisoned one time for heresy.

This rector deflowered my daughter Grazide, supporting her and sleeping with her for a whole year, before she married the late Pierre Lizier of Montailou. During the lifetime of her husband, this rector supported her for four years and knew her carnally as often as it pleased him. I often told my daughter to guard herself against sinning with this rector in the future, especially since now she had a good husband, and because he was my first cousin. She told me that it was not a sin for this rector to know her carnally, and that this is what he had told her, after which she reported it to me. Se told me this one time at the door of my house.

-How did you know that the rector had deflowered your daughter and supported her during all this time, as you have just testified? -Because my daughter often told me so herself, and also because it was common knowledge around Montailou.

After this the same year as above (1320) the 16th of November, the said Fabrissa den Riba, having left the prison of the château des Allemans in which she had stayed for seven weeks, because she was suspected of not having told the full truth as much concerning herself as others in the matter of heresy, appearing judicially in the episcopal chamber of Pamiers before my said lord bishop assisted by Brother Gaillard, being coerced neither by force nor by the fear of any torture inflicted or threatened upon her, but of her own free will and voluntarily, avowed and deposed that which follows:

About twenty years ago, I don't recall exactly when, around the time of Easter, I was running my tavern and I did not have a just measure for a half quart of wine. I went to the house of the rector and his brothers, between sext and none (noon and 3 p.m.) because I had heard that there was a pewter pot in this house of the measure of a half quart of wine. At the door of the ground floor, which is just under the chamber of the rector, I found Mengarde, his mother, Guillemette Belot and na Roqua sitting in the sun. I said to this Mengarde that I needed the pewter pot in order to be able to measure a half quart of wine. Mengarde told me that the pot was up above, in the solier (upper floor) near the chamber of the rector, and that if I climbed up I would find the pot. I then climbed the stairs to the upper floor and when I came to the door, I found Guillaume Belot guarding the door. I wanted to enter, but he asked me what I wanted. I said either a pitcher or a jug for wine. He told me to go in, get the pitcher quickly and leave. I

entered into the upper room and found there the rector who asked me what I was looking for. I told him a pitcher and he told me to get it quickly and leave.

I went to get the pitcher, which was on the table in the eastern side of the room. In passing before the door of the rector's room, which was partly open, I looked into the room and saw there, standing at the window that looks toward the Canal, the heretic Guillaume Authié wearing a blue over-tunic and a white tunic and he had a blue hood on his head. I took the pitcher and I left the room because the rector told me to leave quickly.

-Did you know Guillaume Authié before this? - Yes.

-Was there anyone else besides this Guillaume in the room? -I do not know, but I did not see anyone else.

Was there anyone besides the rector in his room? - No.

When I went toward the door of the room to leave, I saw the rector enter the room where the heretic was. And when I was at the door of the upper floor Guillaume Belot said, "Go, quickly!" and I did so.

-Did you see the women go up to the upper floor when you went up? -No, when I left they were still at the same place talking.

-Did you believe then that this Guillaume Authié was a heretic? - Yes, because this was commonly talked about around the region and he was known as such.

Later, within a fortnight, I returned to the rector's house because I needed something from that house, I don't remember what. I entered in the cellar quickly and I found seated at the door of the cellar the said Mengarde, mother of the rector and also within, standing, Bernard Clergue, the brother of the rector and his wife Raimonde. And in the part of the cellar near to the granary I saw standing there Guillaume Authié, the heretic who was dressed in what seemed to be an official over-tunic with a slashed hood over a front with buttons in blue and red fabric. Bernard and Raimonde said to me, "What do you want? Leave at once." And so I did.

-Did you hear this heretic speak to Mengarde, Bernard and Raimonde? - No, nor did they speak to him.

-Did you see them adore this heretic or do him reverence? -No.

At the time when people were saying that there were heretics in the house of Raimond Belot, I saw Mengarde and Raimonde enter into Raimond's house. But I do not know what they did inside.

Mengarde had a great friendship with Guillemette Belot and the heretics frequented the house.

When Pons Clergue, the father of the rector, died many people from the region of Alion came to the house and the corpse was placed in the kitchen foyer (*foganha*). He was not yet wrapped in his shroud. The rector made everyone leave the house, except for Alazaïs Azéma and Brune, the widow of Guillaume Pourcel, the natural daughter of Prades Tavernier the heretic and they alone remained with the rector and they stripped the body. I heard later that these women and the rector took some of the hair and the nails of the dead man. People said that they did this so that good fortune would remain in the house.

-From whom did you hear this? -I don't remember, but everyone talked about it. They did the same when the rector's mother died.

About seven years ago, I don't remember the exact day, the rector was going up, or perhaps descending, to ring for vespers. He passed in front of my house. Since many people at that time were saying that he supported and carnally knew Gaillarde, the wife of Pierre Benet of Montailou, I told him that people were saying this and that if it was true, he was committing a great shame and sinning in committing adultery with a married woman. He told me that one woman was the same as any other and he thought he sinned just as much with one as with any other because he did not believe he sinned with any one. And hearing this I left him at once, because my cauldron was boiling over (i.e. she was furious).

-Who was present? -Grazide, my daughter and this rector.

And she said nothing more, though diligently interrogated.

-When you saw these heretics in the rector's house, did you report it? - No.

-Were you cited at Carcassonne concerning these facts? -No.

-Have you ever before confessed these facts? -No.

-Why did you not confess this the first time you were called by my lord the bishop? -I was afraid of this rector and these brothers and feared if I were to confess this, they would maltreat me.

Interrogated as to whether she repented of the heretical deeds committed she said yes and that she was ready to swear and did as follows:

I, Fabrissa den Riba, 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.

This confession was made the same day and year as above (November 16, 1320) in the presence of our said lords the bishop, Brother Gaillard de Pomiès, the

religious persons Brother Arnaud du Carla of the Order of Preachers, Bernard de Centelles and David Monks of Fontfroide, and myself Guillaume Peyre-Barthe, notary of my said lord bishop, who wrote all of this.

This abjuration made, the said Fabrissa renounced and concluded and asked that sentence be given.

After this, the same year as above (1320) on March 7th, the said Fabrissa.... in the house of the Preachers of Pamiers (Here we find the same formula of ratification before the inquisitor as found in the confession of Barthélemy Amilhac).

Done the same day and year as above, in the presence of the religious persons Brother Gaillard de Pomiès, Arnaud du Carla, Order of Preachers of the convent of Pamiers, and of us Guillaume Peyre-Barthe, notary of my lord the bishop and Barthélemy Adalbert, notary of the Inquisition who have received and written the ratification of these confessions.

And that Sunday...the said Fabrissa appeared in the cemetery of Saint-Jean-Martyr de Pamiers and there her sentence was pronounced by our said lords bishop and inquisitor as follows: "Let all know, etc... See the sentence in the Book of Sentences of the heretical deviation.

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 these confessions against the original.

Notes

This witness is embellishing a bit in her description of the exact features of Catharism. It is true that persons having undergone the process of "consolation", whether perfects or invalids, are no longer supposed to touch persons of the opposite sex, but the zeal of the Belot brothers described here is somewhat puzzling, especially since they are being aided by Sibille. It is also true that on days of strict fasting the perfects would eat no more than some water in which a walnut had been boiled. But then Guillaume Peyre was a believer of the sect of Limoux and not a perfect.

The sentence given to Fabrissa den Riba is not known. She was authorized to remove her cross on January 17th, 1329.