

For some years now, scholarly controversy has surrounded the question of whether the Cathar heresy actually existed. In the summer of 2019, the opposing sides in this debate met at a colloquium in Fanjeaux in southern France, mediated by Jean-Louis Biget, one of the best and most critical students of southern French Catharism (or Albigensianism). Even his authority could not prevent insults from replacing arguments and the discussion from assuming the trappings of a trial, especially on the side of the „sceptics“. Biget himself, however, makes two important contributions to our understanding of the situation in the 12th century: One surrounds the communities of the „bons hommes“ and the „bonnes femmes“ before 1209, and the other relates to the long-disputed charter of the „Cathar Pope“ Niquinta (1167), which Biget exposes as a 17th-century forgery – thus obliterating the supposed Balkan ties of southern French Catharism. The next question will be to what extent the Albigensian Crusade (1209–1229) and the establishment of the Inquisition at the start of the 1230s changed circumstances for both the heretics and their persecutors. Here, too, there are already hopeful beginnings, namely an edition (on the internet) of the „Great Inquisition“ (of 1245/1246) by Jean-Paul Rehr, with a new interpretation of this Inquisition by Jacques Paul.