JOHN NIXON, JR.

Louis IX (1214–70)

Both king and saint, he handsomely excelled
In politics, theology. However,
When there was competition for his talents,
He designated Blanche, his mother, regent
While he marched forth, defender of the church
Against its foe, the crescent militant.
Indeed, he died near Tunis—though of plague,
Not Arab scimitars.

Between crusades,
For heresy on the domestic front,
The royal remedy was: plunge your sword
Into the non-believing belly, far
As it will go. One gets the vivid picture—
Triumphant piety, sheathing its blade;
Unorthodoxy, writhing on the ground.
With saints like that, was there demand for devils?