

AN HISTORICAL STUDY OF
CHRISTIAN COSMIC DUALISM

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ANDREWS UNIVERSITY
AVONDALE CAMPUS

ABSTRACT

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by

Ray C. W. Roennfeldt

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ABSTRACT OF GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH

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Andrews University

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Problem

Cosmic dualism presented one of the most pervasive and challenging alternatives to Christian orthodoxy from early Christian times through to the Middle Ages. Manichaeism was the most prominent sect to purposefully promulgate dualism within the Christian Church, and its success can be measured by the fact that for centuries the Church tended to label anything that seemed to be dualistic as "Manichaeism." The problem for the historian is to determine whether the sects on the fringe of the Church were indeed dualistic and whether they, in fact, had any common link with Manichaeism.

Method

Time and space preclude an exhaustive treatment of all the so-called dualistic sects. Attention has been focused on a few of the more prominent ones—the Priscillianists, the Paulicians, the Bogomils, the Albigensian Cathari, and the Waldensians—in order to give an overview of dualism from just after Mani's death through to the High Middle Ages.

Where they have been available, translated primary source materials have been used in order to give the most accurate view possible.

Procedure

This thesis contains four major sections. Initially, early Christian dualism including Gnosticism and Manichaeism has been considered in order to give a suitable background for the study of later accusations of Manichaeism. This is followed by an overview of sects accused of dualism up to the time of the Albigensian Cathari. The Albigensians are considered in some detail since they have been seen as the fullest flowering of medieval Manichaeism. Finally, the Waldensians are included in this study because of their contact with the Albigensians and some Catholic accusations of dualism directed against them.

Much historical background material has been included because of its importance in understanding the origins and teachings of the various sects.

Results

The research advanced in this thesis suggests that contemporary scholarship has by no means given final answers on the origins or the teachings of the various Christian sects studied. No definite conclusions have been reached on the origins of Christian Gnosticism, and while Mani's theology is fairly well known, there appear to be no demonstrable links from Manichaeism through to the Priscillianists, the Paulicians, the Bogomils, and the Albigensians. Rather than looking for a line of succession, it seems that the individual sects are to be understood best in their own social and religious context.

Conclusions

It seems that the term "Manichaean" was applied by Catholic authors to various unorthodox sects in a derogatory, rather than a strict historical or theological, sense. At this stage, it is almost impossible to determine if some of the groups were dualistic or not. It is, nevertheless, certain that the Bogomils and the Albigensians had dualistic tendencies; while such a charge concerning the Waldensians is almost certainly unjustified.

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A Thesis
Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts in Religion

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Dedication

This work is dedicated to Carmel, Claire, and Jonathan, who by their love demonstrated true Christianity, even while I was searching for it in history books.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PREFACE	vi
Chapter	
I. INTRODUCTION	1
II. EARLY CHRISTIAN DUALISM	6
Introduction	6
Gnosticism	8
Origins of Gnosticism	8
Gnostic doctrinal systems	12
Mani	16
Mani's background	17
Mani's theological forebears	18
Mani's methods	20
Early Christian Manichaeism	23
Theology	23
The geographic spread of Manichaeism	26
Conclusion	27
III. DUALISTIC FOREBEARS AND CONTEMPORARIES OF THE ALBIGENSIANS	29
Introduction	29
The Priscillianists of the Fourth Century	30
The Paulicians of the Sixth Century	33
The Bogomils of the Tenth Century	38
Background	38
Reasons for the rise of Bogomilism	39
Bogomil theology, ethics, and organization	40
Bogomil decline	43
Conclusion	44
IV. THE ALBIGENSIAN CATHARI	47
Introduction	47
Origins of the Catharist Movement	49
The Albigensian Cathari	52
Background of the Albigensian Church	52
The Albigensian belief system	57
The Albigensian Church order and organization	63
Reaction to the spread of the Albigensians	66
Conclusion	68

V. THE WALDENSISANS	71
Introduction	71
The Waldensian Background	73
Peter Waldo	74
A similar Catholic movement	78
Other contemporary Waldensian connections	82
The Spread of the Waldensians	86
Evidence of Dualism	87
In Waldensian writings	88
In Catholic writings	90
In Waldensian organization and practice	91
Conclusion	93
VI. CONCLUSION	95
SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY	101

PREFACE

Over the past decade, historians within my own denomination have been taking a closer look at at least one of the Medieval sects that were accused of dualism within their own time—the Albigensian Cathari. Why should Seventh-day Adventists be particularly interested in the Albigensians? The fact is that Adventists have, for about a century, claimed the Albigensians (and others) as their spiritual forerunners; and it is somewhat threatening to find that those revered forerunners were part of a "dark" heresy.

This present research does not aim to add fresh fuel to the fires of discussion, but rather, its purpose is to attempt an historical study of several of the movements that were accused of "Manichaeism" or dualism. I have tried to view them in the light of their own times, without passing a twentieth-century judgement upon them.

What is it that persuades a researcher to choose a particular topic? Christians have a special admiration for those who have stood staunchly for their faith in spite of persecution, torture, and death—and I am no exception. The desire to research this topic became stronger, when in 1984, the South Pacific Division of the Seventh-day Adventist Church made it possible for me to visit some of the areas where those Medieval Christians had lived and suffered.

Preparation of this thesis and completion of an M.A. in

Religion would not have been possible without the support of the South Pacific Division of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, the Papua New Guinea Union Mission, and Avondale College. These organizations have provided the necessary time and finance.

Guidance in the preparation of this thesis has been provided by Dr. Norman Young, Pastor John Oaklands, and Dr. Alwyn Salom. Dr. Young's own interest in Church History has been a source of inspiration to me since I sat, as an undergraduate, in his first Historical Theology classes. His willingness to respond with wit and wisdom to my chapter-by-chapter efforts has been much appreciated. Pastor Oaklands' reading of the manuscript has encouraged me to aim at a clearer presentation. His help in translating several Italian, French, and German articles is gratefully acknowledged. Dr. Salom's editorial expertise will not be unnoticed in this thesis. His exactitude and efficiency have become a byword among his students, and this one offers his thanks. However, inadequacies in either style or content are entirely my own responsibility.

My typist, Jennie Johnston, has always responded cheerfully to each new demand and deadline, in spite of her own busy schedule of teaching. This has been her first contribution as a thesis typist, but without a doubt, her professional skills and her computer will often struggle with footnotes in the future. Gratitude is also due to Len Hokin who assisted with formatting.

Appreciation must also be extended to my parents—Clarence and Faith Roennfeldt—to whom I owe my love of theology and history. My earliest memories are of a home filled with love and good books!

Finally, this thesis has really been a family effort. My thanks go to my wife, Carmel, who has often lovingly exhorted me to "get out of your study and have some exercise." And to Claire and Jonathan—thank you for your patience with a father who too often had his mind on the past instead of the present.

It is my hope that this thesis might serve to generate loving concern for those who are seen to be different by the majority of the Body of Christ.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The problem of evil and suffering has always presented itself as of formidable proportions to the mind of man. It is something that requires more than just a rational answer, for man faces pain, sickness, injustice, and death every day. He lives within the problem. Edward Vick aptly summarizes man's position:

God may have "the whole world in His hand," but I have to live in this world now. I now experience evil. I must relate to it because I am involved in it, and I must do so now. The Christian theist's trust that as "in the beginning God" so "in the end God" must be worked out in the rough-and-tumble of an evil world. And that is no simple task.

Any solution to the problem of evil has to be validated by living it out in the present evil world. Cosmic dualism is one solution that many, especially in past centuries, have found provided them with at least some satisfactory answers.

Cosmic dualism is the idea that there are two ultimate, conflicting powers or principles in the universe.² One of these principles is believed to be good, usually symbolized by light; and the other which is evil symbolized by darkness. This system offers a convenient answer to one of man's fundamental questions:

¹Edward W. H. Vick, Speaking Well of God: A Statement of the Christian Doctrine (Nashville, Tennessee: Southern Publishing Association, 1979), p. 166.

²A. E. Garvie, "Dualism," in Dictionary of the Bible, ed. James Hastings, rev. ed. edited by Frederick C. Grant and H. H. Rowley (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1963), p. 225.

that, if God is supremely good and all-powerful, why is He not able to make His creatures perfectly happy?¹ Dualism proposed that all suffering could be attributed to the evil principle.² This idea usually resulted in the belief in a sharp disjunction between the material world and the spiritual world, or between flesh and spirit, because it was the Evil One who was believed to have created man and matter. In its purest form, dualism provided no end to the problem of suffering since evil is seen as just as powerful as good. But, in fact, most dualistic religions followed a modified system which affirmed the ultimate victory of good over evil.³ Therefore man could have a chance of salvation if he could release the spark of good which resided within him.

Dualism apparently derived from Zoroasterianism,⁴ but it attempted an early entry into Christianity through the Marcionites, the Gnostics, and the Manichaeans. This is not surprising when it is noted that Christianity entered a world where dualistic beliefs had been accepted by the majority of people for hundreds of years.⁵

¹C. S. Lewis in The Problem of Pain (London: Collins, 1940), p. 14, says that the problem of pain and evil, in its simplest form can be summed up in these words:

"If God were good, He would wish to make His creatures perfectly happy, and if God were almighty He would be able to do what he wished. But the creatures are not happy. Therefore God lacks either goodness, or power, or both."

²Richard Rice, The Reign of God: An Introduction to Christian Theology from a Seventh-day Adventist Perspective (Berrien Springs, Michigan: Andrews University Press, 1985), p. 69.

³Rice notes that this modification compromises dualism (ibid).

⁴M. Rist, "Dualism," Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible (Nashville, Tennessee: Abingdon, 1962), 1:873.

⁵Kenneth Scott Latourette, A History of Christianity, vol. 1: Beginnings to 1500, rev. ed. (New York: Harper and Row, 1975), p. 259.

Dualism made itself felt in the theology and attitudes of the rank and file of Christians, especially in the East; and it was particularly strong in the movement towards monasticism and clerical celibacy. Through these influences, dualism has placed a permanent stamp on many churches, even though it is a distortion of the teachings of Christ.¹

It is all too easy for some present-day Christians to dismiss cosmic dualism as an aberration of the past, even though at times in Christian history there were more dualistic Christian believers than "orthodox."² C. S. Lewis believed that only two views face all the facts of suffering and meaninglessness:

One is the Christian view that this is a good world that has gone wrong, but still retains the memory of what it ought to have been. The other is the view called Dualism . . . I personally think that next to Christianity Dualism is the manliest and most sensible creed on the market.³

That kind of admiration for cosmic dualism should at least persuade the twentieth-century Christian to take it seriously.

However, admiration was not the reaction of the Church hierarchy when it met with cosmic dualism. A great deal of ecclesiastical energy was expended from early Christian centuries through to the High Middle Ages in the great battle against dualism, or "Manichaeism" as it was commonly called. That battle resulted in a great amount of writing by those on either side of the argument;

¹Ibid., p. 260. Latourette also notes that the monastic movement involved not just the negative denial of the flesh, but also carried with it the compulsion to go out to serve in society. Thus, some of the most devoted and esteemed Christians have been those who tended towards dualism. See *ibid.*, pp. 123, 260.

²Ibid., p. 123.

³C. S. Lewis, Mere Christianity (London: Collins, 1952), p. 44.

and some of that is available to the present-day researcher.

This research begins with Gnosticism and Manichaeism because they were the two strongest movements by which dualism first attempted an entry into Christianity. Then the study moves on to some of the Christian groups which were accused of dualism--the Priscillianists of the fourth century, the Paulicians of the sixth century, and the Bogomils of the tenth century. The survey concludes with an overview of the two movements which posed the greatest threat to the Western Church--the Albigensian Cathari and the Waldensians.

Because it has sometimes been assumed that Manichaeism was passed on from one sect to another through to the Middle Ages, the origins of each group is examined in order to trace any line of succession. The doctrinal, ethical, and organizational basis of each group is surveyed in order to discover any conclusive traces of dualism.

Finally, what reason is there for studying a heresy that has long since been buried by the dust of the past? Perhaps there are several reasons. First, any study of a heresy is also a study of the orthodox reaction to that heresy. And every church must ask itself whether its reactions to dissidence today are any more appropriate than past reactions have been. Secondly, it may be that heresy attempts to answer the basic questions of man, especially when the church fails to listen to, or even ignores, the questions being asked. Does the church of the twentieth century grapple seriously with today's agenda? Thirdly, it has very likely been the unorthodox (the heretics, if you will), who have made the church and the world what it is today. It is well to remember that

if we are to understand the present, we must often look back over our shoulders to the past!

CHAPTER II

EARLY CHRISTIAN DUALISM

Introduction

While scholars disagree regarding the origins of Christian dualism, they are agreed that it attempted an entry into the Church at an early stage. Issues of origin are not the primary concern of this chapter, but rather the methods and theology of the dualistic movements as seen particularly in Gnosticism and Manichaeism. Nevertheless, it is vital to consider, briefly, some of the dynamics involved in that development.

Edwin Yamauchi proposes that the essential teaching of Gnosticism "is a radical ontological dualism between the divine and the created, inasmuch as the creation of the world and matter has resulted from ignorance and error."¹ Gnosticism never attained the position of being classed as a world religion, but rather its genius was in

. . . taking over and adapting for . . . [its] own purposes the ideas, the language and sometimes the literature of other faiths. It is this that creates the problem first of defining Gnosticism in such a way as to cover all that is essentially Gnostic, without at the same time including elements common to other faiths which are not necessarily essentially Gnostic at all; and secondly of determining the origin and development of this movement; and the influences which were operative in the process it is not the separate elements in themselves

¹Edwin M. Yamauchi, Pre-Christian Gnosticism: A Survey of Proposed Evidences, 2d ed. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1983), p. 15.

which are Gnostic, but the total synthesis, the system, into which they are combined.¹

Manichaeism was essentially different in that it took Gnostic concepts and reworked them into a world religion that for a time rivalled Christianity. In contrast to Gnosticism which remained a Christian heresy, Manichaeism, though dependent on Christianity to some extent, was able to challenge it as an equal.

Kenneth Scott Latourette sums up the situation by saying that while environmental threats to early Christianity were indeed serious, the most threatening element was the belief in a system which sharply separated the material from the spiritual world; or from the human point of view, separated flesh from spirit. Dualism seemed axiomatic to perhaps the majority of the people entering the Church in its early years.²

Interestingly, while church theologians throughout the Christian centuries were accusing Gnostics, Marcionites, Manicheans, Albigensians, and even Waldensians of being dualists, dualism crept through the back door of the church and issued in movements towards monasticism and clerical celibacy.³ That will be met again later in this study, but the point is well taken that the mingling of cosmic dualism with Christianity in early years would have enormous consequences in later centuries.

¹W. C. van Unnik, Newly Discovered Gnostic Documents, p. 91, as quoted in Robert McL. Wilson, Gnosis and the New Testament (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1968), pp. 4-5.

²Latourette, p. 260.

³Ibid.

Gnosticism

For many years scholars have seen that parts of the New Testament were written against a background of at least a form of proto-Gnosticism. Robert Haardt says,

In certain selections of the New Testament proto- or early forms of Gnostic sects already foreshadow this conflict between the Great Church and Gnosticism, but not until the 2nd Century did the conflict reach its climax. In this connection the names of such celebrated leaders of Gnostic Schools as Basilides, Valentinus with his disciples Heracleon, Ptolemaeus, Markos and Theodotus, or Marcion, who founded a church of his own, will be remembered

In the ensuing, weary and bitter struggle, to which the church owes much valuable stimulus, Gnosis was finally vanquished, yet not before attaining to the status of a universal religion, in the form of Manichaeism.¹

While the emphasis of this chapter will be dualism in full-flower—Manichaeism—it is helpful to ask where that movement sprang from.

Origins of Gnosticism

Robert McL. Wilson describes Gnosis, Gnostic, and Gnosticism as "slippery words,"² and it seems that such has been the case throughout the history of the church. For instance, Irenaeus who faced Gnosticism in the late second century said:

Let us now look at the inconsistent opinions of those heretics (for there are some two or three of them), how they do not agree in treating the same points, but alike, in things and names, set forth opinions naturally discordant.³

Irenaeus' problem has come no closer to a solution in the present day. Scholars still disagree over what constitutes Gnosticism, and

¹Robert Haardt, Gnosis: Character and Testimony (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1971), p. 1.

²Robert McL. Wilson, "Slippery Words, 2: Gnosis, Gnostic, Gnosticism," Expository Times 89 (1977-78):296.

³Irenaeus Against Heresies 1.11.1 (ANF, 1:332).

some even separate Gnosis from Gnosticism. Wilson says:

Gnosticism is a specific Christian heresy, known to us from the writings of Irenaeus, Hippolytus and others, and now from the Nag Hammadi library (which also contains material of other kinds). This is however only a particular manifestation of a wider movement, roughly contemporary with Christianity and developing alongside it, namely Gnosis. It is now clear that gnosis is both wider and older than Christian Gnosticism, but its origins and development remain a mystery . . .¹

It seems that scholars have had problems in formulating a definition of Gnosis because they have been unable to decide on the origin of the phenomenon. Menahem Mansoor claims that a definition is impossible while scholars still disagree about origins.² The theories can be divided into four main types: that Gnosticism grew out of Hellenistic philosophy; that Gnosticism grew out of Oriental religions (Iranian, Buddhist, or Egyptian); that Gnosticism grew out of an apocalyptic, heterodox Judaism; or that Gnosticism grew out of Christianity.³

Each one of these theories has been dominant at various times as scholars have studied the origins of Gnosticism; but then they have lost esteem without being rejected completely. For instance, Kurt Rudolph who appears to favour the idea that Jewish roots were basic to Christian Gnosticism,⁴ also acknowledges the contribution of Iranian-Zoroastrian religious ideas, Hellenistic

¹Wilson, "Slippery Words," p. 299.

²Menahem Mansoor, "The Nature of Gnosticism in Qumran," in The Origins of Gnosticism: Colloquium of Messina, 13-18 April 1966, ed. Ugo Bianchi (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1979), p. 389 (Hereafter cited as Origins of Gnosticism).

³Ibid., p. 390.

⁴Kurt Rudolph, Gnosis: The Nature and History of the Ancient Religion (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1983), pp. 277-81.

thought patterns, as well as social factors such as the situation of the lower classes in Graeco-Roman society.¹

The idea that Gnosticism is the amalgamation of many different religious strands appears often in present-day literature. For instance, Th. P. van Baaren states that

Historically considered, gnosticism has many roots. I am not yet convinced by any theory deriving gnosticism mainly or exclusively from one source. Iranian, Near Eastern, Greek, Judaic and Christian influences have all cooperated in the formation of gnosticism.²

The same author notes that while the historical origins of Gnosticism is a subject of "great importance," it is not absolutely essential to an understanding of Gnosticism as it is found in the sources. He considers that an understanding of the history of religion teaches us that, usually, the elements adopted from various sources are adapted by the borrower's own religion with complete

¹See *ibid.*, pp. 282-92, where Rudolph also appears to take a Marxist stance that Gnosticism was in some way the most radical form of social protest available to the masses at the time. Note also that G. Quispel disagrees with Rudolph's thesis that many religious and social factors were at work in the origin of Gnosticism. Quispel considers that

"Gnosticism is not a late chapter of the history of Greek philosophy and therefore a Christian heresy, an acute Hellenization of the Christian religion. Nor is it a fossilized survival of old Iranian or even Indian religious concepts. . . . It is rather a religion of its own, with its own phenomenological structure And as such it owes not a little to Judaism."

G. Quispel, "Gnosticism and the New Testament," in *The Bible in Modern Scholarship: Papers Read at the 100th Meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature*, ed. J. Philip Hyatt (Nashville, Tennessee: Abingdon Press, 1965), pp. 259-60. C. J. Bleeker disputes Quispel's claim that Gnosticism can be called *eine Weltreligion* on the basis that it is syncretistic. See C. J. Bleeker, "The Egyptian Background of Gnosticism," in *Origins of Gnosticism*, p. 236.

²Th. P. van Baaren, "Towards a Definition of Gnosticism," in *Origins of Gnosticism*, p. 176.

disregard for their original significance and function.¹

A closely related issue of some importance is that of whether or not there was such a thing as pre-Christian Gnosticism. Claims for a pre-Christian origin have generally been based on Gnostic documents which were thought to pre-date Christianity. The Apocalypse of Adam² with its "heavenly redeemer" myth was thought to be the foremost of documents in that category. G. M. Shellrude says of this manuscript that

If this text represents a non-Christian and temporally pre-Christian Gnosticism, then it is the first concrete evidence for a pre-Christian Redeemer myth of this type. The conclusion . . . is that the Apoc. Adam cannot be admitted as evidence of a pre-Christian Redeemer myth because of the₃ clear evidence that it is a document of Christian Gnosticism.

So much for the best evidence of a pre-Christian version of Gnosticism! C. H. Dodd concludes that no Gnostic documents can with any degree of probability be dated before the New Testament; that the typical Gnostic systems all combine in various ways and proportions ideas derived from Christianity as well as other religions and philosophies; and that there can be no general answer to the question of the relation of Gnosticism to Christianity.⁴

According to Wilson,

¹Ibid.

²See Werner Foerster, Gnosis: A Selection of Gnostic Texts, II: Coptic and Mandaean Sources (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974), pp. 13-23.

³G. M. Shellrude, "The Apocalypse of Adam: Evidence for a Christian Gnostic Provenance," in Gnostics and Gnosticism: Papers Read at the Eighth International Conference on Patristic Studies, ed. Martin Krause (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1981), p. 82.

⁴C. H. Dodd, The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel (Cambridge: University Press, 1965), p. 98.

A religion is normally the faith of a particular people; . . . or it may take its rise from a particular founder within an existing tradition, as with Buddhism, Christianity and Islam. In either case we can identify the milieu and the point of origin, but with Gnosticism this is not the case

While it is true that it is impossible to point to a particular founder of Gnosticism as such, and also true that dogmatic assertions like that of Adolf von Harnack, that Gnosticism was "the acute Hellenization of Christianity,"² have been rejected as too simplistic; modern scholars have not moved much closer to a solution of the origins of Gnosticism. Probably the best answer that is available at present is that Gnosticism arose from a cosmopolitan milieu combining aspects from Christianity, Judaism, Hellenism, and other religious influences by adapting cultic rituals in order to make them serve Gnosticism.³

Gnostic Doctrinal Systems

Just as Irenaeus had difficulty in defining Gnosticism because of its multiplicity of belief systems, so the contemporary researcher faces the same problem. Some scholars list sixteen points of commonality between the various Gnostic schools, while others opt for only four.⁴ Yamauchi, however, says that

Most scholars would agree that quite essential to gnosticism is a radical ontological dualism between the divine and the

¹Wilson, Gnosis and the New Testament, pp. 5-6.

²Adolf von Harnack as cited by Hans Jonas, The Gnostic Religion: The Message of the Alien God and the Beginnings of Christianity, 2d ed. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1963), p. 36.

³Wilson, "Gnosis, Gnosticism and the New Testament," in Origins of Gnosticism, p. 512.

⁴For instance, T. P. van Baaren and H. Goedicke, as cited by Yamauchi, p. 15.

created, inasmuch as the creation of the world and matter has resulted from ignorance and error.¹

Thus he sees cosmic dualism as the major distinguishing factor which holds together the various Gnostic systems.

Before looking at the Gnostic systems it would be beneficial to review very briefly the sources available. They can be divided into three types. First, there are patristic polemics against Gnosticism as found in the writings of Irenaeus, Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria, Hippolytus of Rome, and Origen.² Secondly, there are the original Gnostic writings which were greatly expanded by a discovery made in 1945 by some peasants near the town of Nag Hammadi in Upper Egypt. "They found a large jar containing a collection of Coptic Gnostic books and documents dating from the 4th cent. A.D. Altogether there were forty-eight treatises--Gnostic gospels, epistles, etc."³ And thirdly, there are Gnostic elements in apocryphal gospels and acts, which, while not on a par with other sources because it is difficult to distinguish what is definitely Gnostic in origin, remain a source of fruitful research.

MacRae notes that diversity was always a symptom of Gnostic teaching. He says,

If knowledge is given absolute salvific value and is counted the prerogative of a minority, then there is nothing to prevent the multiplication of esoteric systems of knowledge wherever the movement takes root. And that is precisely what happened,⁴ especially after the first generation of Gnostic teachers.

¹Yamauchi, p. 15.

²G. W. MacRae, "Gnosticism," New Catholic Encyclopaedia (New York: McGraw Hill, 1967), 6:524.

³A. M. Renwick and W. S. Lasor, "Gnosticism," The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 1982), 2:485.

⁴MacRae, p. 525.

Thus, it is impossible to sketch the contents of Gnostic doctrine to include all its forms. But, it is important to trace commonly held Gnostic views, particularly as they related to dualism.

The God of Gnosticism is often described as "the alien God," "the unknown God," "the nonexistent God," "the absolutely transcendent God," or "the totally Other." All of these descriptions were designed to stress the complete separation of God from the world. God and the universe, including its created beings, are unalterably opposed as light is to darkness, or good is to evil. Thus, the primary aspect of Gnostic theology was an absolute dualism which could be expressed in a multitude of forms.

The Gnostic delighted in multiplying names, personages, and relationships of the intermediaries between God and man. Their system of explaining the universe can best be described as a cosmogony rather than a cosmology, since they were not at all concerned with a philosophical explanation of the composition of the universe. All of the powers of the universe were seen as essentially evil because of their separation from God, and each played his role in preventing the ascent of man to God.

It was believed that within man there was a spark of the divine—something from God Himself—which struggled to ascend from the world of matter to God. That ascent was attained through gnōsis or knowledge. Man was considered as being composed of matter, a soul (psychē), and spirit (pneuma). Depending on which of these elements was dominant, a man fell into a particular category of existence. Overall, the dualism of Gnosticism was man-centred rather than God-centred.

Gnosticism was a religion of redemption, salvation, and liberation. Salvation was not accomplished by the power of God, but by the gaining of knowledge. That knowledge was transmitted by revelations from Christ or other semi-divine powers to the disciples or other mythical heroes of Gnosticism. Salvation knowledge was not available to everyone, being intended only for those capable of being saved by it. Because gnōsis was not bound by philosophical coherence and indulged freely in the esoteric, the Gnostic's imagination was allowed freedom to create new systems.

What was the effect of such beliefs on ethics and morality? The Gnostic considered himself as separated from the world and its powers. Their true life was to be found in the divine spark of the spirit within them, and so their life on earth was to be an ever increasing withdrawal from the material realm. Paradoxically, that withdrawal could be practiced in two opposite extremes—that of severe asceticism, or even by an almost systematic libertinism. Thus, it is readily observed that dualism was the dominant feature of Gnosticism's theology, cosmogony, anthropology, and soteriology; all of which combined to produce an ethical dualism.¹

When the belief system of Gnosticism is examined the question must be asked: What is really Christian about Christian Gnosticism? In fact, Gnosticism reinterpreted Christian beliefs and practices to such an extent that they were no longer really recognizable. Elaine Pagels says that the Gnostics agreed on one point, and that was that their Christian contemporaries had drastically misinterpreted the revelation in Christ by their

¹The above material on the Gnostic belief system is from *ibid.*, pp. 525-26.

preoccupation with the historical reality of Jesus.¹ She says,

Irenaeus perceives that the gnostics were not simply reacting against naïvely "popular" versions of Christian teaching. He sees that they are challenging² nothing less than the fundamental theological standpoint

Christ was inserted into the Gnostic mythology, but in fact this did not historicize the Gnostic idea of a redeemer, but rather Christ was mythologized to an unsurpassed extent.³ Thus, it is not possible to speak of a "Gnostic Christology."⁴ Although scholars do not now read Gnosticism as "madness and blasphemy" as the early Christians experienced it, it is still hard in the twentieth century to consider Gnosticism as a viable alternative to early orthodox Christianity; especially as it is seen in dualism's fullest-flowering in Manichaeism.

Mani

What connection is there between Mani and Gnosticism? L. J. R. Ort says that "As a rule Mani's religion is typified as a form of gnosticism. Likewise Mani himself is described as a gnosticist. In my opinion this tendency is correct."⁵ Christianity was a potent force in the evolution of Mani's religion, although the resultant religion was almost unrecognizable to orthodox Christianity.

¹Elaine H. Pagels, The Johannine Gospel in Gnostic Exegesis: Heracleon's Commentary on John (Nashville, Tennessee: Abingdon Press, 1973), p. 11.

²Ibid., p. 12.

³Rudolph, p. 151.

⁴Rheme Perkins, "Gnostic Christologies and the New Testament," Catholic Biblical Quarterly 43 (1981):606.

⁵L. J. R. Ort, "Mani's Conception of Gnosis," in Origins of Gnosticism, p. 605.

Mani's Background

Mani (otherwise known as Manes or Manichaeus) was born about the year A.D. 216 in Babylonia, in the vicinity of Seleucia-Ctecephon, the Persian capital. His parents are said to have been of noble Iranian descent, although that is uncertain. His father, Pattak, had joined a Gnostic baptist sect to which he also introduced his son. It is clear from the Cologne Mani Codex that this was a heretical Jewish Christian community called Elkesaites,¹ which claimed to go back to the legendary prophet, Elkesai who appeared about A.D. 100 in Syria.²

Mani's unusual religious experience commenced when he was about twelve years of age. Kurt Rudolph describes what happened:

Mani had his first vision in which his heavenly double, his "twin", his "partner" or "companion", appeared to him and assured him of his constant protection and help. Later, Mani saw in this the effective revelation of the "Comforter" (the Paraclete), or the Holy Spirit, . . . who had revealed to him the "mysteries" of his teachings ³

As a consequence of this, he cut himself off from his environment, and attempted to reform the practice and teaching of his sect. This resulted in a division which eventually ended in Mani's expulsion. Mani himself described that experience in the following words:

When I said these things to them, and destroyed and demolished . . . that very thing they [were zealous for], some of [them], marvelling at me, praised me and regarded me [as] a leader and teacher; but [there arose much] slander in that [sect] . . . on account of me. Some of them regarded me as a

¹See Ron Cameron and Arthur J. Dewey, eds., The Cologne Mani Codex: "Concerning the Origin of His Body" (Missoula, Montana: Scholars Press, 1979), pp. 69-79. The Elkesaites were apparently a Jewish sect connected with the Essenes. They put great stock on the law of Moses, and regarded Jesus as one of a series of reincarnations of the Messiah. See Cecil Roth, ed., "Elkasaites or Elkesaites," The Standard Jewish Encyclopedia, rev. ed. (London: W. H. Allen, 1962), p. 619.

²Rudolph, p. 329.

³Ibid.

prophet and . . . teacher . . . Others were saying: 'Is this really the one about whom our teachers [prophesied], . . . saying, "A certain young man will [rise up from] our [midst] and a new [teacher] will come forth . . . to overturn all our teaching in the way of our forefathers . . . spoke concerning the Rest of the Garment.'" Others were saying: 'Surely, then, is it not error . . . that speaks through him, and does he not wish to lead our people astray and divide our teaching?' . . . Others of them were filled with jealousy and rage, some of whom were voting for (my) death.'

It is obvious that Mani's views were controversial even at that early stage, and they remained so until the time of his death in chains in A.D. 276. At that time "His corpse was mutilated, as was then the custom when dealing with heretics, and was put on show outside the city. In this his community saw the passion and 'crucifixion' (martyrdom) of its master who after this was believed to have ascended into the realm of light."² So ended the life of a remarkable man, who, with great intention had spread his message of dualism far and wide.

Mani's Theological Forebears

Mani "transformed the cramped, ritualistic views of the Judeo-Christian sect in which he had been brought up into a coherent body of Gnostic dogma, uncompromisingly dualistic, consequential, and deeply conscious of having 'unveiled' truths of universal validity."³ M. J. Dresden points out that at the beginning of the third century, Iran was the meeting point of a great many indigenous and imported creeds and beliefs—for instance, local pagan faiths,

¹Cameron and Dewey, p. 69 (all brackets and parentheses are as in Cameron and Dewey).

²Rudolph, p. 331.

³F. L. Cross and E. A. Livingstone, eds., "Manes (or Mani) and Manichaeism," Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church, rev. ed. (London: Oxford University Press, 1974), p. 864.

Zoroastrianism, Hellenistic philosophy and science, Judaism, Christianity, sectarianism of various types, Gnostic philosophies, and the influence of Brahmin and Buddhist monks.¹

F. C. Burkitt says that Manichaeism is "a synthesis, a construction, made up of diverse materials."² While it has been usually viewed as a Christian heresy, and hence as very much indebted to Christian doctrine, some modern scholars have expressed doubts as to whether Mani was ever a Christian.³ Thus, in spite of Christian elements within his writings, it is doubtful as to whether Mani really intended to make Jesus central to his teachings.

While some have denied Mani's indebtedness to Zoroastrianism on the basis that Zoroastrianism was neither truly dualistic nor mythological,⁴ Kurt Rudolph believes that Mani's background in Iran contributed in a primary way to his doctrines. Rudolph says:

Mani's teaching is based on the well-known gnostic dualism of spirit and body, light and darkness, good and evil, but advocates it most radically in dependence on his Iranian heritage. Also the course of the world was seen as recurring periods and was completely systematised in a way which Gnosis hitherto knew only embryonically. Here also Iran seems to have stood godfather.⁵

¹M. J. Dresden, "Manicheism," Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible (Nashville, Tennessee: Abingdon Press, 1962), 3:258.

²F. C. Burkitt, The Religion of the Manichees: Donnellan Lectures for 1924 (Cambridge: University Press, 1925; reprint ed. New York: AMS Press, 1978), p. 71.

³J. Kevin Coyle, "The Cologne Mani-Codex and Mani's Christian Connection," Eglise et Théologie 10 (1979):179-93.

⁴See Steven Runciman, The Medieval Manichee: A Study of the Christian Dualist Heresy (Cambridge: University Press, 1947; reprint ed. New York: AMS Press, 1978), pp. 11-12; and Dmitri Obolensky, The Bogomils: A Study in Balkan Neo-Manichaeism (Cambridge: University Press, 1948; reprint ed. New York: AMS Press, 1978), pp. 9-15.

⁵Rudolph, pp. 335-36.

In fact, at this distance it seems impossible to decipher with any great degree of accuracy exactly who Mani's theological forebears were. The picture is complicated even more by the fact that Mani and his Manichaeism were extremely adaptable. Even within Manichaean writings it is still debatable as to which system Mani actually advocated since the writings of Manichaeism which are extant always reflect particular varieties within a complex whole. It should be remembered that this sect arose out of missionary concerns and from adaptations to the Iranian-Persian, the Christian, and the Buddhist environment in which it found itself. That kind of adaptation, or syncretism, was a dominant feature of Manichaeism from its earliest years.¹

Therefore, even when the teachings of Manichaeism are discovered, it is still difficult to know whether that was what Mani himself said, or whether it is rather a result of a highly adaptable system which he started—a system which had as its base a "conscious syncretism."²

Mani's Methods

Just as Mani's theology was consciously formulated, so too were his methods. One of the most important features of his work was his writing. Mani reproached other religious founders because they had not written their doctrine themselves. J. Ries says,

He wished to avoid this omission in the case of his own church, which was charged with transmitting the last revelation. He himself was its sole author or transmitter. To be such, he invented an alphabet, a Western Aramaic script very close to the Syriac of Edessa, the literary and religious language of the Sassanid Empire and the eastern provinces of the Roman Empire.

¹Ibid., p. 334.

²Ibid.

He translated his works himself, or had them translated, into the languages of the peoples evangelized ¹

Manichaeen canon appears to have consisted of the following scriptures: the "(Great Living) Gospel," the "Treasure of Life," the "Pragmateia" or "(Historical) Treatise," the "(Book of) Secrets," the "Book of Giants," the "Epistles," and "Psalms" and "Prayers."² An important contribution was a picture book illustrating Mani's teachings, called the "(Great) Drawing."³ It seems that Mani was willing to use all available means to get his message across.

From the start of his missionary outreach Mani consciously tried to win the mighty and powerful to his new religion. It seems that with the king acting as the defender of the faith, it was then easier for the Manichaeen to assess the world as a place where demons had been defeated and the light of the other world was already shining in.⁴

As mentioned above, Mani was very adaptable. Mary Boyce says, "As in the west Manichaeism had been reproached with using a cloak of Christianity, so in the east it was regarded as presenting itself as a form of Buddhism."⁵ Latourette says that it was in the Mediterranean world, especially, that Mani is said to have begun his

¹J. Ries, "Manichaeism," New Catholic Encyclopedia (New York: McGraw Hill, 1967), 9:158.

²Dresden, p. 258. See also Ort, p. 606.

³Dresden, p. 258.

⁴Hans J. Klimkeit, "Manichaeen Kingship: Gnosis at Home in the World," Numen 29 (1982):17-32.

⁵Mary Boyce, "Mani," Encyclopaedia Britannica, 14th ed. (Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1970), 14:783.

letters with, "Mani, Apostle of Jesus Christ."¹ Mani, in his own lifetime, established his religion in many places both within and outside the Sasanian Empire, by sending out missionaries.

Manichaeism was established in Egypt by Adda in A.D. 244-61, in Kirkuk by Adda and Abzakhya in A.D. 261-62, and in Margiana and Bactria by Ammo.²

Rudolph says that Mani, himself, journeyed in A.D. 241 by boat to India and up the Indus valley to Turan, where he won over the king to his teachings. About A.D. 242-43 he was back in Babylonia paying his respects to the new ruler, Shapur I. He was able to find favour with him and was received into the royal entourage. He was now able to spread his teachings without hindrance, and he sent out missionaries to Syria, Egypt, and Eastern Iran.³ Mani says, "I have [sown] the corn of life . . . from East to West; as you see [my] hope [has] gone towards the East of the world and [all] the regions of the globe (i.e., the West), to the direction of the North and the [South]. None of the apostles has ever done this"⁴

Mani's life and methods were quite remarkable and resulted in a belief system and a highly organized church which seriously threatened orthodox Christianity for centuries. It is little wonder that Manichaeism was considered the consummate heresy of the early period of the church.

¹Latourette, p. 96.

²Boyce, p. 783.

³Rudolph, p. 330.

⁴Mani Kephalaia, p. 16, quoted by Rudolph, p. 330 (all brackets and parentheses are as in Rudolph).

Early Christian Manichaeism

Theology

Mani did not claim his extreme dualism to be a new religion. He claimed, instead, that true religion had been preached by many prophets including Adam, Enoch, Buddha, Zoroaster, and Jesus. He claimed that all the previous revealers had been restricted by locality, language, nationality, and distortion by adherents.¹

Steven Runciman says that

With Mani Gnostic dualism reached its height of eminence. New Gnostic sects would still be formed here and there, but they contributed nothing new. Manichaeism absorbed the bulk of the Gnostically-minded public ²

What was this religion like that claimed so much for itself and had such an effect for centuries after Mani's death?

Rudolph believes that the essential and probably the oldest characteristics of the Manichaean system are as follows:

At the beginning stands the undeductible antithesis of the world of light and the world of darkness or the good and the evil principle. The ruler of the realm of light, . . . has various names: "Father of Greatness", "King of the Paradise of Light", "most blessed Father" or simply God His being manifests itself in five spiritual attributes or hypostases which are also thought of as "members" or "worlds" (aeons): reason, thinking, insight, speculation and reflection Darkness or Hyle (matter), . . . also has a king and five "worlds": smoke, fire, sirocco, water, darkness, each of which is populated by demons and ruled over by an "archon". Driven by its inherent agitation, the night of darkness (hyle) comes to the borders of the realm of light and begins, filled with jealousy, to fight against it. This is the occasion for the (second) stage of the mixture of the two principles. The God of light, in order to meet the challenge of darkness, creates three "evocations" which form the basic framework for the action of the light world in the following world process. First the "Great Spirit" or the "Wisdom" (*Sophia*) is created from which the "Mother of the living" proceeds. She brings forth the Urmensch (primeval man . . .) The Urmensch now descends to fight with the darkness but is vanquished and leaves his fivefold "soul" to the underworld. This process, however, is interpreted by the Manichaeans not as a defeat but as a

¹Boyce, p. 783.

²Runciman, p. 18.

preventative measure in which the Urmensch, or his "soul", was only bait to catch Hylē ¹

Where does man fit into this complicated mythological system? In fact, Adam and Eve are creations of Darkness because it fears the loss of light, and so it endeavours to bind them to itself as closely as possible. By means of the demons Saklas and Nebroël, Adam and Eve are created. Everything then depends on the fate of the first man. The world of Light counters by sending the "Jesus Splendour" to explain to Adam the plan of the world of darkness. This leads man to saving knowledge, thereby frustrating the plan of Darkness. Man is the central subject of world events and his soul, as part of the light, is the element to be saved. "Spirit" is the saving element and is granted to him by revelation or knowledge. The body is the dark part of man which returns at death to darkness, so that the soul may ascend to the light. The soul that has not been awakened by knowledge must return to life again until it is finally redeemed or judged. The end of the world is seen as the final deliverance of the light particles trapped in the world with the "Christian" scenario of Jesus coming as King to bring judgment on the world. By the dissolution of the material world by fire, the remaining particles of light in the world are purified. Thus the original state is restored even more markedly, although later Manichaeans could not agree on whether the world would really see a complete restoration of the kingdom of Light.²

While it is impossible to discuss here all the implications of this complicated system, it is necessary that a connection between Mani's system and his church's organization be noted. Cosmic

¹Rudolph, pp. 336-37. ²Ibid., pp. 338-39.

dualism, in fact, resulted in a pronounced ethical dualism and a strong ecclesiastical structure.

The church had two categories of members--the elect (or the perfect) and the hearers (or auditors). Ries says concerning the elect,

They lived the whole doctrine, traveled, and preached. Three principles of abstinence marked their lives: the signaculum oris, watch over the senses, avoidance of blasphemy, and abstinence from meat and wine; the signaculum manus, watch over actions, abstention from work and from destruction of plants and animals; signaculum sinus, abstinence from all sexual conduct. . . The elect members led a priestly life, with all nature and all the auditors in their service. They awaited death as liberation in the certitude that they were going immediately to join the Paradise of Light.¹

Nevertheless, it should not be thought that the "second-rate" believers were free to do what they liked. Hans Kippenberg has recently noted that there existed special ethics for the simple believer.² Ort says that

It is worth mentioning that the Hearers are strongly connected . . . with the Elect by means of their knowledge . . . We may conclude . . . that in Mani's opinion the knowledge was at the disposal of all members of the Manichaeon Churches. This is an important conclusion, because it proves that the knowledge (given by Mani) is no secret possession of a limited number of specially initiated adepts.³

Mani did not intend that his theological system would be a "mystery religion" known only to a few (even in the church)--rather, his ideal was that all within the Manichaeon church would have the essential knowledge, and that the message would appeal to all people everywhere.

¹Ries, pp. 157-58.

²Hans G. Kippenberg, "Gnostiker zweiten Ranges: zur Institutionalisierung gnostischer Ideen als Anthropolatrie," Numen 30 (1983):146-73. Abstracted in Religion Index One (1983-84), p. 1141.

³Ort, p. 611.

The Geographic Spread of Manichaeism

The importance and spread of Manichaeism can be illustrated by two facts: (1) Of all the world religions only two (Manichaeism and Islam) arose after Christianity;¹ and (2) Manichaeism was able to attract one of the greatest minds of the early church--the young Augustine.²

Robert Haardt says that Manichaeism started in Mesopotamia and from there spread almost immediately to Palestine, Syria, Asia Minor, Egypt, and North Africa. By the fourth century it had spread to Rome, Dalmatia, Southern Gaul, and Spain, and by the sixth century, while almost disappearing from the Western provinces of the old Roman Empire because of severe repression, it was making new conquests in Eastern Iran and became the official religion of the Uigur Empire of Turkestan in A.D. 762 where it was able to maintain itself until the Mongol invasion of Genghis Khan at the beginning of the thirteenth century. It reached China in A.D. 694 and only disappeared from there from the fourteenth century onward.³

Manichaeism was able to win a remarkable popularity. Though its impetus had been almost spent by the sixth century, the Christian and Moslem world had been given a severe fright. What was it that made Manichaeism so popular?⁴ Many factors can be mentioned, including Mani's obviously winning personality, his creativity, adaptability, commitment, and missionary zeal, and the

¹Sikhism which probably does not qualify as a world religion, arose ca. A.D. 1500, led by the guru Nanak who tried to unite the monotheism of Islam with the Hindu belief in reincarnation. See "Sikhism," *World Book Encyclopedia* (Chicago: World Book-Childcraft International, 1981), 17:375-76.

²Latourette, pp. 173-74. ³Haardt, pp. 1-2.

⁴Runciman, p. 17.

fact that he offered answers that met the questions of his day. But, probably the main reason was that his Manichaeism translated the Gnostic system so that it spoke to the ordinary man. He had no intention of founding a religion that would be known to just a few of the initiated, but rather, that all could express their deepest religious yearnings.¹

Why, then, did Manichaeism fail? According to Runciman it was too antisocial for its age. The authorities were already on the defensive against the barbarian invader, and they were certainly not inclined to look kindly on a faith that forbade killing, even of animals. In addition, they did not favour a teaching that enjoined a large number of its believers to wander about, living on the charity of others, refusing to work, and ignoring civil regulations, all the while exercising a vast influence on the community at large. The ordinary Christian obeyed a hierarchy that was easier for the state to control, and so the Manichaeans inevitably met with persecution. Their church was too passive and non-resistant to survive repression, and in the end it was stamped out.²

Conclusion

Cosmic dualism as found in Gnosticism and Manichaeism had two important consequences in orthodox Christianity which reach down to our day. First, the church was forced to engage in reflection on Theology, Christology, Anthropology, Ecclesiology, and Eschatology which it certainly would not have chosen to do without the influence of the heretical sects. The church is richer today for that early reflection.

¹Jonas, p. 206.

²Runciman, p. 17.

Secondly, the word "Manichaeism" came to be regarded with horror. Runciman comments that

In future the average orthodox Christian, when faced with any sign of dualism, would cry out "Manichaeism", and everyone would know that here was rank heresy, and the authorities be seriously disquieted and take action. . . . Consequently, the historian who meets the word "Manichaeism" in medieval writers cannot at once assume that Mani's teaching in all its complexity is meant. It may be so, but more probably it is not.

That implication does effect the conclusions of future chapters of this study.

¹Ibid., pp. 17-18

CHAPTER III

DUALISTIC FOREBEARS AND CONTEMPORARIES

OF THE ALBIGENSIANS

Introduction

Dualism continued to be a major concern to the Christian Church and its theologians from the time of Mani through to the Middle Ages with its fullest flowering in the Catharist movement. The primary focus of chapter IV will be on the Cathari, but there is need also to consider some of their dualistic forerunners including the Priscillianists of the fourth century, the Paulicians of the sixth century, and the Bogomils of the tenth century, and their relationships, if any, with the Albigensians.

All of these groups were labelled as Manichaeans by their adversaries because they were perceived to be dualists in the Manichaean tradition, and it is because of that, that some historians have tended to see a line of succession from the earlier groups to the later ones. However, Walter Wakefield and Austin Evans note, that in spite of important similarities, there are even more important differences, and that there are in fact, no concrete historical evidences for such a line of succession.¹ Instead, M. D. Lambert believes that dualism must be accounted "one of the

¹Walter L. Wakefield and Austin P. Evans, eds., Heresies of the High Middle Ages: Selected Sources Translated and Annotated (New York: Columbia University Press, 1969). p. 17.

perennial beliefs of mankind" and that such beliefs had a certain attractiveness because

. . . they present a clear-cut world picture to an ignorant convert, or one passing from paganism, and they appear to provide a solution to the perennial theological problem of the presence of evil in a world created by a good God.¹

Dualism, for some reason, must have been preeminently attractive to the medieval mind, for Daniel Walther says that "dualism was, theologically, the mark of the twelfth century heresy."² But, consideration will be given first to a little-known sect which arose in Spain in the fourth century--the Priscillianists.

The Priscillianists of the Fourth Century

Priscillian was born in Spain ca. A.D. 340, and died at Trier in A.D. 386. He was a highly educated nobleman, who, after his conversion to Christianity, joined a lay community of ascetics who became wandering preachers. After attempting clerical reform they turned to a wider mission, but encountered an increasingly fanatical reaction. Priscillian was finally condemned and executed as a Manichaean. J. N. Hillgarth considers that Priscillianism betrayed a disdain for the institutions of the world and that

. . . it became suspect because of its originally lay leadership and intense proselytism. Priscillianism created groups of devotees, especially among women, who withdrew from regular church services to hold gatherings of their own. It made use of apocryphal writings filled with a spirit hostile to marriage, wine, and meat, and it insisted on a theory of inspiration, based on the place given by the New Testament to prophecy in the early church. Priscillianist asceticism seemed more coherent

¹M. D. Lambert, Medieval Heresy: Popular Movements from Bogomil to Hus (London: Edward Arnold, 1977), pp. 17-18.

²Daniel Walther, "A Survey of Recent Research on the Albigensian Cathari," Church History 34 (1965):164.

³J. N. Hillgarth, "Priscillianism," New Catholic Encyclopedia (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1967), 11:790.

and logical than orthodox asceticism in that it directed its message intentionally to all the faithful and was not content with reaching merely a select minority.¹

What was it that stimulated the move toward monasticism and asceticism of which Priscillianism was a part? A. R. Birley senses that the mid-fourth century onwards saw an important development in Latin Christianity. Martin of Tours, Jerome, Ambrose, and others were gathering semi-hermits around them. What is even more significant is that while this was taking place, Damasus, the Bishop of Rome, was certainly no humble monastic. He had gained possession of the bishopric in A.D. 366 after a battle which left one hundred and sixty dead among his opponents.² The discussion regarding asceticism continued during the reign of Pope Siricius (A.D. 384-99), with the lead being taken by churchmen and synods, resulting in Siricius finally issuing the first decretals requiring absolute continence of married clerics in major orders.³

In the 380s Filastrius, Bishop of Brixia, wrote a manual of heresies in which he referred to "Manichees" in Gaul, Spain, and Aquitaine who did not hesitate to preach separation of married couples and abstention from certain foods.⁴ Birley contends that there is no doubt that Filastrius had in mind Priscillian and his followers.⁵

It is clear that Priscillianism was already on the march,

¹A. R. Birley, "Magnus Maximus and the Persecution of Heresy," Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester 66 (1983):17.

²See Daniel Callam, "Clerical Continence in the Fourth Century: Three Papal Decretals," Theological Studies 41 (1980):3-50.

³Birley, p. 18.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ibid., p. 20.

for a synod of bishops convened in Saragossa in October 380 and issued decisions banning the following practices: women attending readings and meetings with men unrelated to them; fasting on Sundays and withdrawal from church in Lent, etc.; hiding away in retreat in country houses or in the mountains; praying barefoot; receiving the eucharist without consuming it; bishops accepting into communion persons excommunicated by other bishops; clergy abandoning duties to become monks; unauthorized persons taking the name "doctor"; and veiling of virgins before the age of forty.¹ One wonders at the scope of these prohibitions, especially in the light of future monastic development, but it is clear that the church had still not recovered from the shock of Mani and the Manichaeans—and that anything that smacked of a rejection of the material must be viewed in an extremely negative light in certain quarters of the church.

The picture is complicated further by the fact that it is almost impossible, at this distance, to decipher the actual teachings of Priscillian from the accusations of his enemies. For centuries, those accusations were the only source material for a study of his teachings, but in 1885, G. Schepss discovered a codex in the library of Wurzburg containing eight short works which appeared to be by Priscillian or a close follower.² Interest has heightened in recent years with the discovery of letters written to Augustine by the Spanish presbyter, Consentius, regarding the successes of the Priscillianists in Spain.³

¹Ibid., pp. 13-14.

²W. H. C. Frend, "The Divjak Letters: New Light on St. Augustine's Problems, 416-428," Journal of Ecclesiastical History 34 (1983):107.

³See *ibid.*, p. 120, and Hillgarth, p. 790.

Priscillianism seems to have spread rapidly within the life-time of its founder, and it attracted the support of some educated laymen who produced apologetic works which are now lost.¹ Priscillian was promoted to a bishopric, which in turn aroused the ire of his political opponents—leading finally to his execution in A.D. 386, for being a magician and Manichaeist.² Hillgarth considers that the accusation of Manichaeism levelled against early Priscillianists is incapable of proof,³ although Wakefield and Evans believe that Priscillian may have held to certain dualistic ideas of gnostic origin.⁴

The sect, after making initial gains seems to have faded from view in the early fifth century—soon after the time of Augustine—although there was a Priscillianist bishop in Provence as late as A.D. 417.⁵ Historians have still not decided whether Priscillian was a heretic or just a leading ascetic, and founder of an ascetic movement. Yet there is little doubt that what he stood for (and died for) was, to a great extent, quickly engrafted into monasticism, whether it had a dualistic origin or not!

The Paulicians of the Sixth Century

While the Priscillianists were active in the West, the Messalians were creating problems for the orthodox in the East.⁶

¹Wakefield and Evans, pp. 12-13.

²Hillgarth, p. 790. ³Wakefield and Evans, pp. 12-13.

⁴Hillgarth, p. 790.

⁵The Messalians were otherwise known as Massalians—the name being derived from the Syriac word meaning "those who pray." See Obolensky, The Bogomils, p. 49.

⁶*Ibid.*, p. 48.

They were at least partly dualistic, and seem to have had some influence on the Paulicians of Asia Minor and Armenia.¹

Paulicianism was a major force from the sixth all the way through to the tenth century. It appears to have originated in Armenia which had had the distinction of being the first nation to have turned officially to Christianity shortly after A.D. 300. Yet, while King Tiridates III was accepting Nicene orthodoxy from Gregory the Illuminator, some disciples of Paul of Samosata were bringing in adoptionistic influences.²

The origin of the name "Paulicians" seems to go back to Paul of Samosata, a bishop of Antioch who had been condemned for his adoptionistic views in A.D. 269,³ although other authors have proposed that the name was derived from the Apostle Paul, in whose writings the Paulicians placed great stock.⁴

Many details of the origin and beliefs of the Paulicians remain shadowy,⁵ since most of the available sources for their study are by their opponents. At this stage their history is far clearer than their doctrines.⁶ One of the few source materials thought to

¹See Harold O. J. Brown, Heresies: The Image of Christ in the Mirror of Heresy and Orthodoxy from the Apostles to the Present (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1984), p. 247.

²Monroe E. Hawley, "The Key of Truth," Restoration Quarterly: Studies in Christian Scholarship 24 (1981):53, and Obolensky, p. 32.

³Brown, p. 247.

⁴Obolensky, p. 58.

⁵Wakefield and Evans, p. 13.

⁶It should be noted that R. Joseph Hoffmann rejects the idea that The Key is even a Paulician document. See R. Joseph Hoffmann, "The Paulician Heresy: A Reappraisal," Patristic and Byzantine Review 2 (1983):251-63. Hoffmann's view remains to be tested by time.

have been a genuine Paulician document is The Key of Truth, a church manual of the Paulician Church.¹ This was discovered by Fred Conybeare in Armenia in 1891. When he evaluated the manuscript in 1896 he concluded that though it had been copied in 1782 by John Vahaguni, it was of seventh- to ninth-century origin. He asserted the The Key reveals a people trying to reproduce primitive Christianity in their own time.² Conybeare believed that some parts of the book had originated in the fourth century.³ The copy discovered by Conybeare was by no means complete. He says,

Many leaves are missing, about 38 of the 150 which the book originally contained. According to the "Acts of the Holy Synod" they were torn out by George of Arkhweli, the owner of the book, when he found that he was detected and feared that it would be seized. The pages torn out were certainly those of which the contents were likely to give most offence. For the context shows that the lost leaves contained attacks on the abuses of the orthodox churches and doctrinal expositions, especially of the Christology of the sect.⁴

In spite of lost pages, copyist errors, and erasures, all of which warn the reader of corruption, Hawley concludes that The Key is virtually the "only substantive document of the Paulicians themselves expressing their ideology."⁵ Conybeare attempted to use The Key to show relationships between the Paulicians, the Bogomils, and Albigensians, and even the Anabaptists.⁶

¹See Fred C. Conybeare, ed., The Key of Truth, a Manual of the Paulician Church of Armenia (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1898), as cited by Hawley, p. 45.

²Hawley, p. 46.

³Conybeare, p. xxix, as quoted by Hawley, p. 46.

⁴Hawley, p. 46.

⁵Ibid., p. 47.

⁶Ibid.

Hawley claims that the Paulicians as a whole were adoptionists but not dualists--if The Key is considered to be normative. According to Hawley,

While some of the Paulicians may have been tainted by this dualistic philosophy, there is no more evidence to support the idea in THE KEY OF TRUTH than there exists to support the charge that the early Christians were cannibals because they ate the Lord's supper. The KEY reinforces some of the claims about what the Paulicians taught, while totally contradicting others.¹

There is no doubt that if the Paulicians were dualists, they appeared to be very different to other dualistic sects. For instance, while Obolensky considered that Paulicianism was based on Manichaeism, he acknowledged that its adherents did not possess the extreme asceticism of Manichaeism. Sexual intercourse, meat, and wine were not forbidden.² It is also clear that they were active, sturdy opposers of both the Latin and the Eastern forms of Christianity, who were ever ready to back up what they had to say with their swords, sometimes in an alliance with the Moslems³--hardly the ordinary picture of an ascetic!

Wakefield and Evans point out that there are conflicting reports among the sources regarding Paulicianists. The Greek sources see them as dualists with a docetic view of Christ, while the Armenian sources indicate that they were adoptionists who accepted God as the creator of the material world while denying the divinity of Christ, with both groups of sources emphasizing the iconoclasm of

¹Obolensky, pp. 27, 42-44.

²Wakefield and Evans, p. 13, and Obolensky, p. 29.

³Wakefield and Evans, pp. 13-14.

the sect.¹ How does one tie together such opposing views?

M. D. Lambert attempts such an harmonization by his argument that adoptionistic views were gradually modified by dualism, but without a complete loss of the original Armenian Christianity.

According to Lambert,

The influence of the earlier Syro-Armenian tradition was not completely supplanted, for it modified the new dualism. In place of the extreme asceticism usual in dualistic sects, rejecting marriage as perpetrating Satan's creation and demanding from adepts strict renunciation of [some] food and drink, the Byzantine Paulicians retained the attitudes of their Armenian predecessors.²

Thus, what Obolensky perceived to be a simulated conformity to orthodoxy by the Paulicians in ethics and even doctrine, may be better explained by a gradually changing sect which may have appeared to be dualistic at times, and at other times, not—and with many traditions which reached back to very early Christian days.³

After a short period of dominion the Paulician state was crushed by the Byzantine armies in A.D. 872, but apparently the religion was far from dead. In the early tenth century the Bulgarian Czar, Peter, asked advice of Theophylact Lecapenus, Patriarch of Constantinople, regarding a sect he categorized as "Manichaeism mixed with Paulicianism."⁴ Lambert senses that "Manichaeism" is a common Byzantine polemical term used for any and all dualistic heresy, but that "Paulicianism" is more precise and indicates that Paulicians were preparing the way for a truly dualistic church in the Balkans.⁵ Obolensky says that

¹Lambert, p. 11. Lambert claims that the transition took place in the eighth century.

²Obolensky, p. 42.

³See Hawley, pp. 49-53.

⁴Cited by Lambert, p. 13.

⁵Ibid. See also Brown, p. 110.

Heresy in Bulgaria was awaiting a leader who would unify the various teachings of the heretics and organize more effectively the struggle against the Church.¹

When that happened under the influence of Bogomil, the orthodox looked back on the Paulicians as being far less dangerous than they had previously thought, for now they faced dualism in its most advanced Eastern form.²

The Bogomils of the Tenth Century

Background

Before the Western Church was called on to face its greatest medieval challenge, the Eastern wing of the Church was battling dualism in the form of the Bogomils. Recent years have seen an increasing interest in this movement which plagued the Eastern Church for several centuries.³ It should be noted that in spite of that interest, there are few remaining first-hand sources from Bogomil and his followers. Most of the available sources are from their opponents—and especially one, Cosmas by name.⁴

Bogomilism arose in the second quarter of the tenth century through the preaching of a priest, Bogomil. His name was very likely a pseudonym meaning "beloved of God," "worthy of God's pity," or "one who entreates God."⁵ Bogomil began his preaching in Macedonia in reaction to the surrounding turmoil, misery, and oppression. His message was that escape from a world which was evil by nature was possible through a life of penitence, prayer,

¹Obolensky, p. 110.

²Brown, p. 249.

³Especially since Obolensky's The Bogomils published in 1948.

⁴Wakefield and Evans, pp. 14-15.

⁵Lambert, p. 13.

wandering, and simple worship.¹ It is thought that, after the fall of Tephrikē in A.D. 872, and the destruction of the Paulicians in Asia Minor, that dualism was carried into Bulgaria and modified by Bogomil and his followers.² At this time Bulgaria was a fringe area—a buffer state—which only began to be incorporated into the Byzantine Empire in A.D. 972. It was a land of barbarians with paganism opposed by the Greek, Armenian, and Latin versions of Christianity, as well as Jewish and Islamic influences. There was an in-bred hostility between Bulgaria and Byzantium which prevented the building of a strong Eastern (or Western) Church. Thus it was that Bogomilism was able to focus the opposition to a pro-Byzantine church as well as the dislike of the peasants for their overlords into a natural platform for the rise of a truly dualistic church in the Balkans.³

Reasons for the Rise of Bogomilism

Obolensky saw Bogomilism in its social, political, and religious context representing the most powerful movement of dissent in the history of the Eastern Church. He viewed it in terms of a popular resistance movement which owed its success to the fact that while not attempting a revival of Balkan paganism, it was fighting Byzantine Christianity and the Empire with its own weapons --ethical teaching derived from the teachings of the Gospels-- resulting in a thirst for personal righteousness, a desire for

¹Wakefield and Evans, pp. 14-15.

²Lambert, p. 12.

³Ibid., p. 13. Wakefield and Evans, p. 14, comment that "In short, Bulgaria in the tenth century seems to have displayed every influence which has been alleged as a direct or contributory cause of heresy."

social justice, and a pity for the innocent suffering.¹ Yet, all too few of the Bogomil opponents could see that Bogomilism (and Paulicianism before it) had been attempting answers to common questions of the day. Obolensky says,

The dualistic cosmology of the Bogomils and the Paulicians was regarded by their Orthodox opponents as an absurd delusion. In the abundant polemical literature which the latter have left us there is only one example of a writer who, despite his violent dislike of the Bogomils, seems aware that behind their fanciful metaphysics there lurked a human problem of singular poignancy. The church teaches that God is the source of all perfection and that the whole world, visible and invisible, is His creation. Yet one does not need to be a philosopher to observe in this world of ours moral and physical evil--suffering, cruelty, decay, death--is abundantly present. How can God, the Supreme Good, be the cause of suffering and evil? Must He be held responsible for wars, epidemics, the oppression of the poor by the rich?²

According to Cosmas such questions were common in tenth-century Bulgaria; questions that were dismissed by Cosmas again as childish and unhealthy, while parish priests were not able to give answers. Bogomilism, in contrast, was able to fill the vacuum by giving logical, consistent answers to the common folk.³ As well, Obolensky credits the popularity of the Bogomils to a poor parish ministry, a corrupted monasticism, and their reputation for holiness.⁴

The presence of the Bogomils was first noted around A.D. 950, and by 972 the Bulgarian priest, Cosmas, was writing his Treatise on the Bogomils which denounced the heretics and emphasized

¹Dimitri Obolensky, The Byzantine Commonwealth: Eastern Europe, 500-1453 (London: Sphere Books, 1974), p. 165.

²Ibid., p. 166.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid., p. 171.

their refusal to obey civil and religious authority,¹ yet the Bogomils did not develop into a true catalyst for societal change—probably because of their anti-world theology.

Bogomil Theology, Ethics, and Organization

It seems likely that Bogomil himself was not an absolute dualist, but rather that his brand of dualism was of the mitigated variety. That is, he did not see God and the devil as co-equal and co-eternal; but rather that the evil creator was to be regarded as inferior to God.² In his followers there was no agreement on that point, and there developed the absolute dualistic Church of Drugunthia and the mitigated dualistic Church of Bulgaria.³ Hamilton points out, however, that both groups adopted the same manner of life and a similar organization. In addition they gave each other ecclesiastical recognition, at least for a time.⁴

There is no evidence in Cosmas the Priest that a division between the perfecti and the ordinary believers existed in primitive Bogomilism, but Hamilton believes that one can see that development by at least the early twelfth century.⁵ Therefore, it seems that a sect which was founded on the doctrine of the two sons of God (Christ and Satan), emphasis on the Lord's prayer, theories about how the soul had been introduced into Adam's body after he had been

¹A. V. Soloviev, "Bogomils," New Catholic Encyclopedia (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1967), 2:633-34.

²See Wakefield and Evans, pp. 14-15, and Lambert p. 14.

³See Wakefield and Evans, p. 16, and Bernard Hamilton, "The Origins of the Dualist Church of Drugunthia," Eastern Churches Review 5 (1973):115-124.

⁴Hamilton, p. 117.

⁵*Ibid.*, p. 120.

made by an evil creator, and a stress on New Testament ethics, purity, and simplicity, gradually became dualistically more radical. Finally, it rejected church sacraments, ritual, feast days, icons, veneration of the cross and the saints, the liturgy, vestments, meat, wine, marriage, and church hierarchy.¹ In spite of their perceived radicalism, the point of contact between the Bogomils and orthodoxy was in fact their use of the New Testament, especially its use in an allegorical way. But the Church was totally frightened by the idea that only the initiates possessed the secret knowledge thus obtained.²

Bogomil dependence on Scripture, apocryphal writings, and traditional beliefs can be best illustrated by reference to a work known as The Secret Supper, originating from ca. A.D. 1190, and said to have been brought to the West by Nazarius. On the subject of the creation of man by Satan, The Secret Supper has this to say:

"He commanded the earth to bring forth all living things--animals, trees, and herbs. The sea he commanded to bring forth fish; and the air, birds of the heavens. And he pondered on making man to serve him; he took clay of the earth and made man like unto himself. And he then bade an angel of the second heaven to enter the body of clay. Of this body he took a part and made another body in the form of a woman and bade an angel of the first heaven to enter into it. And the angels grieved deeply that they thus had a mortal form imposed upon them and that they now existed in different forms. And Satan bade them to perform the works of the flesh in their bodies of clay, but they did not know how to commit sin. The originator of sin accomplished his purpose by his seduction in this way: He planted a paradise and set men therein and bade them not to eat of its fruits. The devil entered Paradise and planted a bed of reeds in the midst of Paradise; of his spittle he made a serpent and bade him remain in the reeds. Thus the devil concealed the knowledge of his deceit so that they would

¹Wakefield and Evans, p. 15.

²Obolensky, The Byzantine Commonwealth, p. 167. In the same passage Obolensky also mentions the common Bogomil use of the parable of the prodigal son to show the two sons of God--Christ and Satan.

not perceive his treachery. He went in to them saying, 'Eat of all the fruit in Paradise, but of the fruit of good and evil eat not.' Thereafter the wicked devil, entering into the evil serpent, deceived the angel who was, in the form of a woman and poured out upon her head a longing for sin, and Eve's desire was like a burning oven. Forthwith, the devil in the form of the serpent came out of the reeds and sated his lust on her with the serpent's tail. That is why [the offspring] are not called the sons of God but the sons of the devil and sons of the serpent"¹

It is quite obvious that the Bogomils both wanted and gave answers to the questions of the origin of human sinfulness and suffering especially in view of the idea that God is supremely good. What then of the idea that God created Adam and Eve? The author of The Secret Supper says,

. . . I, John, questioned the Lord, saying, "Why do men say that Adam and Eve were made by God and placed in Paradise to keep His commandments, and that for transgression of the Father's commandment they were delivered up unto death?" The Lord said unto me: "Hear, John, most beloved. Men are foolish who speak thus, for my Father did not, in transgression (in praevariatione) of His own law, shape bodies of clay, but by the Holy Spirit made (only) all the virtues of heaven. These, however, for their sins and by their fall are found possessing bodies of clay and are delivered up to death."²

The Bogomil mythology is quite clearly based on Biblical material but with a large amount of apocryphal material combined with it. The beliefs based on this system were extremely ascetic, especially in the area of sexuality. Procreation of children only perpetuated Satan's control over the evil creation and so some Bogomils used to turn away from children of baptismal age as from a bad smell.³ Matter and evil were conquered only by the abstinence of the perfecti.⁴

An interesting feature of Bogomilism was its adoption of episcopal government by at least the twelfth century. This was

¹Wakefield and Evans, pp. 460-61.

²Ibid., p. 461.

³Lambert, p. 14.

⁴Soloviev, p. 634.

probably in imitation of the Orthodox and Roman church order which was introduced for practical reasons, and could be easily justified on New Testament grounds.¹ It should be noted that included with the episcopal hierarchical structure, and yet in many ways separated from it, was a fundamental separation of the church between the perfecti and the believer or credentes.² That division was almost identical with that found in the Cathari and will be described in connection with that sect.

It is also obvious what the implications of either an absolute or a mitigated variety of dualism would be for Christology and church ritual. True to form, the Bogomils tended to Docetism, and they rejected a "material" water baptism for a spiritual baptism of laying on of hands.

Bogomil Decline

The Bogomils were at times persecuted, and at other times tolerated. For instance, about 1110, Emperor John II Comnenus discovered Bogomils in Constantinople, and burnings at the stake followed. About 1180, Prince Stephen Nemanja took stern measures against Bogomils in Serbia by burning their leaders and their books. After 1218, the Bogomils prospered in Bulgaria, and actually became the state religion in Bosnia.³

During the fourteenth century, there was a marked decline in Bogomil activity due to the preaching and establishment of friaries by the Franciscans in Bosnia; and then came the conquests by the Turks in Bulgaria and afterwards, Bosnia--and the substitution of

¹Hamilton, p. 120.

²Ibid., pp. 120-21.

³See Soloviev, p. 634, and Wakefield and Evans, pp. 16-17.

the Islamic faith for Christianity.¹ Interestingly, the Gospels and Bogomil writings continued to be read side-by-side with the Koran until at least 1660.² In the meantime, Bogomilism had been carried by some means as far as Russia³ and into Western Europe.⁴ Wakefield and Evans state that

The greatest of the Balkan heresies and the one which was to have the most influence on the heresies of medieval Europe was that of the Bogomils, which made its appearance in Bulgaria in the tenth century.⁵

This will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

Conclusion

It seems clear that from the fourth through to the tenth century the term "Manichaeism" was used to describe any group that represented dualism in either its absolute or mitigated forms. There does not seem to be any evidence that the Priscillianists, the Paulicians, or the Bogomils had any historical connection with the Manichaeans. Any philosophical connection is at best tenuous given the fact that these groups appear to be much closer to New Testament Christianity than Mani ever was.

There also seems good reason to discard the idea of looking primarily for links between the various dualistic sects to prove a line of succession. Except for the Paulicians who may have influenced the Bogomils to some extent, there appears no clear line

¹Wakefield and Evans, pp. 16-17.

²Soloviev, p. 634.

³Obolensky, The Byzantine Commonwealth, p. 372.

⁴Christopher Brooke, Medieval Church and Society: Collected Essays (New York: New York University Press, 1971), p. 143.

⁵Wakefield and Evans, p. 14.

of succession at least up to the tenth century. Rather, it is best to look for the roots of the dualistic sects within their own context--religious, social, or political.

Clearly dualism claimed to have a better answer to the problem of evil and suffering than that offered by orthodoxy. An interesting question is: Did they, in fact, have a more logical and consistent answer? Stephen Runciman considers that the dualists only answered the question by raising new difficulties. For instance, if Satan created the world, why did God allow good to be imprisoned within it? So, they had to create innumerable stories to explain the presence of good in the world; and all the stories tended to restrict the sovereignty of God. Within this system the role of Christ shrinks enormously, and the question must then be asked as to whether there is, in fact, such a thing as "Christian" dualism?¹

There is no doubt but that the Church saw the implications of the dualist heresy, but all too often the response was to fight it with fire and sword. That only increased the dualist's conviction that the Church, too, was essentially worldly and of the "flesh." The story of the Cathari--especially the Albigensian Cathari--is therefore a classic illustration of medieval dualism and Church reaction.

¹Runciman, p. 175.

CHAPTER IV

THE ALBIGENSIAN CATHARI

Introduction

The first solid evidence of the new Western heresy that was to outdo all the others in challenging orthodoxy comes from Cologne in 1143. There, heretics were discovered who tried to live according to the Apostolic tradition—owning nothing, labouring only for daily food, and divorcing themselves from the world in order to pray and fast. They also rejected marriage, spurned milk and meat, replaced the sacraments with the blessing of bread at meals, and substituted baptism for the laying on of hands. Historians have had no hesitation in identifying them as Cathars or Cathari.¹

These twelfth-century heretics were labelled as Cathari from the Greek katharoi meaning "pure." This name was applied by the Cathari, themselves, only to their class of "elect" or perfecti.² They were most often known by the town or region in which they were centred, or by various derogatory epithets—but they were always considered the most dangerous of the medieval heresies.³

¹See Wakefield and Evans, p. 26. For the original source, An Appeal from Eberwin of Steinfeld against Heretics at Cologne, see Wakefield and Evans, pp. 127-32.

²See Runciman, pp. 117-18. Yves Dossat points out that the name "Cathari" was a traditional name for Manichaeans. See Y. Dossat, "Cathari," New Catholic Encyclopedia (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1967), 3:246. For a discussion of the geographic names of the Cathari, see Walther, pp. 146-47.

³Wakefield and Evans, p. 8.

George Shriver believes that studies in Catharism illustrate par excellence the intricacy of the historian's task.¹ Daniel Walther wrote in 1968 that while in the previous twenty-five years an impressive amount of documents had been found, and numerous essays published, much more study was needed in the origins and religion of the Cathari, in the political situation particularly in Southern France, and in the coincidence of courtly love and the Albigensian Cathari.² It appears that most of these items have not as yet received complete treatment.

A separate, but related, problem is that some Protestant historians have tended to approach the study of the Cathari (particularly the Albigensians) through one or other of two pre-suppositions. Some have seen the Cathari through the notion that the true church had gone underground until it gloriously reappeared in the sixteenth century, although there were movements which attempted church reforms before their time—the Cathari being one of those movements. Others have conceived of an unbroken continuity of truth going back to the inception of Christianity—with the Catharists being one of the unmistakable links.³ It is probably true to say that such studies tend to be contemporary,

¹George H. Shriver, "A Summary of 'Images of Catharism and the Historian's Task,'" Church History 40 (1971):49.

²Daniel Walther, "Were the Albigenses and Waldenses Forerunners of the Reformation?" Andrews University Seminary Studies 6 (1968):180.

³Ibid., p. 179. E.J. Broadbent, The Pilgrim Church: Being Some Account of the Continuance through Succeeding Centuries of Churches Practising the Principles Taught and Exemplified in the New Testament (London: Pickering and Inglis, 1931) is an example of this type of work. Broadbent includes Paulicians, Bogomils, and Albigensians as part of the "primitive" church. See pp. 41-101.

rather than being strictly historical; for Catholics have never been displeased that Protestants should see the Albigensian episode as an aspect of the continuing church.¹

That the dualistic heresy reappeared in the form of the Catharist movement should come as no surprise. M. D. Lambert says,

It is a characteristic of dualist heresy that it needs scant basis for a resurrection; defeated, it may easily rise again. It is a form of belief that may appear simply through spontaneous combustion, or at least be fanned into flames again from a few smouldering ashes

Such was the case in the twelfth century. Whereas dualism nearly reached the triumph of permanence in the Balkans, its most spectacular achievements were made in an area quite different in geography, politics, and religion—in France and Italy. It was there that dualism's growth most alarmed the Roman Church, and it was there that the Church finally perfected the means for its extinction. While the heretics and their books disappeared under the force of Crusades and the Inquisition, the records of the inquisitors remain to give us a clearer picture of a dualist church than anywhere else.³ It should be noted, however, that these same records complicate questions regarding the origins of the Western dualists.

Origins of the Catharist Movement

Shriver notes that since Steven Runciman's book, The Medieval Manichee, was first published, the origins of Catharism have been given greater attention.⁴ Runciman emphasized the idea that

the Cathari were part of a greater Gnostic tradition, with the

¹Ibid., p. 184.

²Lambert, p. 12.

³Runciman, p. 116.

⁴Shriver, p. 49.

spread of dualistic ideas from the East. He admits that the history of that spread is difficult to trace, but in the eleventh century there were "probably" missionaries from the Balkans operating in and from Italy, and it is "possible" that occasional pilgrims to the East came back with heresy from Bulgaria and Constantinople. At the end of the eleventh century, the Western Church was definitely brought into contact with the East through the Crusades, and Runciman believes that "this contact must explain the sudden growth of 'Manichaeism' ideas in France."¹ More recent historical studies have been less certain of the origins of Catharism.

While Eastern filiations and relationships were doubtless present, the most productive recent studies have related the rise of Catharism to the reform movements within the Western Church in the eleventh and twelfth centuries.² Wakefield and Evens note that

The heresies of the twelfth century were stimulated by the renovation of religious ideas produced by the reform program in the Church in the preceding century, and especially by the appeal to the example of the apostles. Precepts of the Gospels and the narrative of the early Church in the Acts of the Apostles have repeatedly been a rejuvenating and disturbing force in Christianity, never more potently than in the Middle Ages; one need only mention three saints from three centuries--Peter Damiani, Bernard of Clairvaux, and Francis of Assisi.³

The same authors note that the conclusions drawn by all of the diverse leaders and followers of such heresy stemmed from two basic assumptions: that the apostolic life-style is the only truly Christian life, and that it is the duty of every Christian man and woman to practice it and to preach repentance.⁴ Brenda Bolton says

¹Runciman, p. 118. See also Dossat, p. 246.

²Shriver, p. 49.

³Wakefield and Evans, p. 25.

⁴Ibid.

that "the vita apostolica was adopted as a form of personal and social renewal and that poverty was considered to be a means towards renovatio," with that poverty becoming the distinguishing mark of the "new man" of the twelfth century.¹ The factors that led to an explosion of Catharism in Languedoc, in particular, will be considered in greater detail later in this chapter, but at this stage it is sufficient to say that around 1140 the Catharists can best be seen as reformists in the church, having puritanical interests which they derived from the New Testament, and it was those interests which led them on to an exaggeration of dualism.² When that happened they went beyond reform to rejection:

They were the products and the victims of the age-old desire to pursue a spiritual life in a world which places great difficulties in the way. In the pursuit of purity they went beyond reform to rejection, refusing any compromise between spirit and flesh,³ good and evil, heavenly perfection and an imperfect world.

The consensus of opinion seems to be that Bogomilism influenced Catharism in Western Europe, but that Bogomilism (by itself) is insufficient to explain completely the rise of the Cathari.⁴ Rather, we need to look to conditions in the West as the cause of the Catharist heresy, but strongly influenced (though not created) by influences from the East.⁵ An inner search for grace

¹Brenda M. Bolton, "Paupertas Christi: Old Wealth and New Poverty in the Twelfth Century," in Studies in Church History, vol. 14: Renaissance and Renewal in Christian History: Papers Read at the Fifteenth Summer Meeting and the Sixteenth Winter Meeting of the Ecclesiastical History Society, ed. Derek Baker (Oxford: Ecclesiastical History Society, 1977), p. 95.

²Shriver, p. 49.

³Wakefield and Evans, p. 50.

⁴Wakefield and Evans (pp. 18-19) cite Arno Borst, Jeffrey Russell, and Norman Cantor as being in general agreement with this idea.

⁵Wakefield and Evans, pp. 9, 19.

through communal associations shown in brotherly love, penitence, poverty, and preaching led to renewal and establishment of the Church's religious orders, as well as to new heretical movements—and Catharism is best seen in that light.¹ There is no doubt that in some localities the heresy succeeded just because it was there and appeared to be the only viable religious outlet for a minority desiring a personal commitment.² That was at least part of the picture in Languedoc which saw the success of the Albigensians.³

The Albigensian Cathari

Background of the Albigensian Church

There seems to be no doubt that in Southern France, especially in the area ruled by the Counts of Toulouse--the region soon to be known as Languedoc, land of the southern dialect⁴--heresy put down its strongest roots in the twelfth century. Religious dissent had been chronic there since the eleventh century, and spokesmen for the Cathari and the Waldensians found a ready hearing. Both sects prospered, even though they quarreled with each other; until the Church and the State intervened.⁵

¹Ibid., p. 25.

²M. D. Lambert, "The Motives of the Cathars: Some Reflections," Studies in Church History, vol. 15: Religious Motivation: Biographical and Sociological Problems for the Church Historian: Papers Read at the Sixteenth Summer Meeting and the Seventeenth Winter Meeting of the Ecclesiastical History Society, ed. Derek Baker (Oxford: Ecclesiastical History Society, 1978), p. 55.

³See J. E. Bresnahan, "Albigenses," New Catholic Encyclopedia (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1967), 1:262.

⁴Walther, "Research on Albigensian Cathari," pp. 146-47.

⁵Wakefield and Evans, p. 34.

Southern France was distinguished from the surrounding regions by language. There, langue d'oc was spoken which differed from the langue d'oïl of Northern France, and the Catalan of North-eastern Spain. In fact, the area of Languedoc had not been thoroughly incorporated into the French kingdom. Bernard Hamilton points out that during the twelfth century, the kings of England actually had more influence in the region than the kings of France, for they were the true rulers of Aquitaine and claimed Toulouse as well. English claims to Toulouse were not relinquished until 1196 when the sister of Richard I married Raymond VI of Toulouse. In addition, the Spanish house of Aragon had great influence. For instance, the Trencavel family which ruled the viscounties of Beziers, Carcassonne, Albi, and Razès recognized the overlordship of Aragon.¹

The House of Toulouse was the most powerful of the Southern French families, although the Count's powers were limited because of a complicated network of feudal relationships. This inherent weakness resulted in endemic local warfare, although that did not interfere with a highly profitable import-export trade. This had in turn resulted in the rapid growth of the Southern French cities, the largest of them being Toulouse.²

Languedoc was greatly affected by the flowering of Western civilization—the renaissance of the twelfth century. This is evidenced by the vernacular poetry of the troubadours, the visual arts as seen in the great churches of the area, and the highly

¹Bernard Hamilton, The Albigensian Crusade ([London]: The Historical Association, 1974), p. 10.

²*Ibid.*, pp. 11-12.

cosmopolitan society based on the aristocratic idea.¹ Hamilton concludes:

This prosperous society which enjoyed a comparatively high standard of living and ready access to eastern luxury goods and in which human love and aristocratic behaviour were exalted as ideas seems an unpromising milieu for the spread of Catharism with its austere and world-renouncing creed. Evidently this was not so and certain contingent reasons for the popularity of Catharism may be suggested.²

What were these reasons? Wakefield and Evans stress that heresy had been chronic in this area since the eleventh century because there had been little church reform.³ Bresnahan contends that the simple lives of the Catharist preachers stood out in marked contrast to the clergy of Southern France who had been adversely affected by luxury living, although the same author mentions that many were won by the easy morality permitted the ordinary believer--and it is possible that both dynamics could have operated at the same time!⁴ E. LeRoy Ladurie believes that the south was open to dualism because monastic reform was lacking, and so a vacuum was created where new ideas could easily penetrate. The monks, according to Pope Innocent III, were like mute dogs, "incapable of barking."⁵

Be that as it may, there is no doubt that heresy and politics were intermingled in Languedoc. Either the nobility were receptive to dualistic doctrines or they were eager to see the church and its local prelates lose power.⁶ The impoverished rural

¹Ibid., pp. 13-14.

²Ibid., p. 14.

³Wakefield and Evans, p. 34.

⁴See Bresnahan, p. 263.

⁵E. LeRoy Ladurie, *Histoire du Languedoc* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1962), pp. 37-38, cited by Walther, "Research on Albigensian Cathari," p. 166.

⁶Wakefield and Evans, pp. 35-36.

nobility would certainly have been predisposed to the Catharist preachers who gave religious reasons for the usurpation of tithes. Lambert says,

Disputed allegiances, conflicts, and war costs weakened the position of the lords who might otherwise have supported persecution¹ at the early and vulnerable stage of the heresy's development¹

Fernand Niel saw the causes of the development of the Albigensian Church in similar light: the desire to gain the goods of the church, and the fact that the clergy were ignored as irrelevant by the aristocracy.²

Some have suggested that the primary factor in the rise of the Albigensians was the missionary activities of Bogomil preachers,³ or the adoption of some dualistic ideas by crusaders and traders,⁴ but Niel is probably right in saying that the ground was already prepared.⁵ Another theory of outside influence—that Jews had somehow influenced the Albigensians—has been discounted by Norman Roth because Albigensian doctrine was as opposed to Judaism as it was to Christian orthodoxy.⁶ Others have attempted to find one or more sociological factors which promoted the growth and spread of the Cathari in Southern France. It has been suggested that women, particularly, found added status as perfecti, and so would have been receptive to the new religion. Lambert questions

¹Lambert, "The Motives of the Cathars," p. 49.

²Fernand Niel, Albigensiois et Cathares (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1970), p. 61, and Soloviev, p. 634.

³See, for instance, Brooke, p. 143.

⁴See Bresnahan, p. 262. ⁵Niel, p. 44.

⁶Norman Roth, "Jews and Albigensians in the Middle Ages: Lucas of Tuy on Heretics in Leon," Sefarad 41 (1981):71-93.

this proposal because many women of nobility were to be found among the heretics, and they needed no lift in status.¹

Norman Cohn is probably close to the mark when he relates the desire for voluntary poverty to the social conditions of the Middle Ages. He says,

It is true of all the great heretical movements of the later Middle Ages that they can be understood only in the context of the cult of voluntary poverty. When from the twelfth century onwards there appeared a wealth previously unheard-of in western Europe, most of those who could, revelled in the new opportunities for luxury and display. But there were always some who saw in the new enjoyments so many temptations of the Devil and who felt impelled to renounce all property and to descend into the poverty-stricken masses. And since the contrast between wealth and poverty was far more striking in the towns than on the manor, it was in the towns that voluntary destitution acquired its special significance.²

What then was the background of the Albigensian heresy? There may have been influences from the East, although they are unproved, and may be unprovable; but we can be sure that the local context, especially around Albi, was such that it allowed Catharism to grow prolifically.³ There, every force that may have taken decisive action against the Cathari—the hierarchy, religious, parish clergy, and secular powers—seem to have broken down before them.⁴

¹Lambert, "The Motives of the Cathars," pp. 49-50. It is possible, however, that Catharism offered to leisured ladies a religious role not open to them in the Church.

²Norman Cohn, The Pursuit of the Millennium: Revolutionary Millenarians and Mystical Anarchists of the Middle Ages, rev. ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), pp. 156-57.

³According to Wakefield and Evans, "No one on either side of the argument insists on one explanation to the complete exclusion of the other," p. 9.

⁴Hubert Jedin, gen. ed., History of the Church, 10 vols. (London: Burns and Oates, 1980), vol. 4: From the High Middle Ages to the Eve of the Reformation, by Hans-Georg Beck et al., p. 163.

The Albigensian Belief System

The beliefs of the Albigensians are largely known from the works of their Catholic opponents,¹ although it should be noted that those same opponents included much Albigensian material in their writings.² The sources seem to indicate that dualistic ideas gradually evolved within the Catharist movement. For example, in 1147 Pope Eugenius III went to France to preach the Second Crusade and was horrified at the spread of heresy in the south. He summoned his greatest preacher--Bernard of Clairvaux--to deal with it. Bernard did not accuse the Albigensians of dualism or Manichaeism.³ Daniel Walther says that the main concerns of the Albigensians in the twelfth century seems to have been about apostolic succession and ordination, the rejection of the Old Testament, and extreme simplicity of worship. It appears that it was only later that the charge of dualism became increasingly insistent.⁴ At this stage of their development, the Albigensian Cathari appeared to be quite orthodox to St. Bernard. He wrote of them:

. . . if you question the heretic about his faith, nothing is more Christian; if about his daily converse, nothing more blameless; and what he says he proves by actions. As witness to his faith you may see the man go often to church, show respect to priests, offer his gift, make confession, partake of the sacraments. What could be more orthodox? As regards his life and conduct, he cheats no one, pushes ahead of no one, does

¹Dossat, p. 247.

²See, for example, "A 'Manichaean' Treatise," which is excerpted in Wakefield and Evans, pp. 496-510. For an extensive listing of Albigensian primary and secondary sources see Walther, "Research on Albigensian Cathari," pp. 150-72.

³Walther, "Albigensians and Waldenses Forerunners?" pp. 195-96.

⁴Ibid.

violence to no one. Moreover his cheeks are pale from fasting; he does not eat the bread of idleness; he labors with his hands and thus makes a living.¹

Jean Zurcher sees this comment by Bernard as indicating that the Albigensians were true disciples of Christ,² but in fact, the context shows the exact opposite. Rather, he is pointing out their hypocrisy and destructiveness.³

By ca. 1213, however, there can be no mistaking Albigensian beliefs for orthodoxy. Peter of Vaux-de-Cernay wrote that Toulouse was "totally sunk in deceit."⁴ He went on to describe the heretics as ascribing the New Testament to a benign God, and the Old Testament to a malign one.⁵ They also taught that the sacraments of the church were worthless:

They held as naught the sacraments of the Church to the point of teaching publicly that the water of holy baptism differs not at all from water of a river; that the consecrated bread of the most holy body of Christ is no different from ordinary bread; instilling into the ears of simple folk the blasphemy that the body of Christ, even were it as great as the Alps, would long since have been completely consumed by communicants who took part in it; that confirmation, extreme unction, and confession are trifling and silly matters; and that holy matrimony is nothing else than harlotry, nor can anyone fathering sons and daughters in that state achieve salvation.⁶

Peter of Vaux-de-Cernay also mentions the Albigensian custom of dividing the followers into "Perfect" and "believers," having a church hierarchy of bishops and deacons, and following a special

¹From "A Sermon of Bernard of Clairvaux Against Heresy" in Wakefield and Evans, p. 136.

²Jean Zurcher, "A Vindication of Ellen White as Historian," Spectrum, August 1985, p. 29.

³St. Bernard introduces the above comment by saying, "Though the mischief is clear enough, its perpetrator remains invisible, so artfully does he conceal, in those things which remain in view, every trace of himself." See Wakefield and Evans, p. 136.

⁴*Ibid.*, p. 237.

⁵*Ibid.*

⁶*Ibid.*, pp. 238-39.

Cathari sacrament--the consolamentum.¹ He considered that one of their most "extreme heretical follies" was the prohibition of meat, cheese, and eggs to the perfecti.² Lest it seem that Peter was inordinately harsh on the Albigensians it should be noted that he considered that the Waldensians were much less wicked than some other heretics, and were at times in agreement with the Catholic Church.³

What was it about their vegetarianism that made it the chief folly of the Albigensians? While Zurcher believes that they avoided certain foods so that the sexual passions would not be excited,⁴ their contemporaries perceived it to be a total rejection of the material world because of a dualistic mind-set. Walther comments that

To these Cathari, our material sensuous world was not created by God. Evil has but a borrowed existence. The world is an illusion, and matter (including the human body) is despicable.⁵

This, he asserts, is true of the Albigensians whether they were absolute dualists or mitigated dualists.⁶

The effects of dualism on Albigensian belief and doctrine were many and varied. Christ's body was considered to have had only an appearance of material reality; He did not really die and rise

¹Ibid., pp. 239-40.

²Ibid., p. 240.

³Peter also listed the Waldensians' four main errors: their wearing of sandals in the manner of the disciples; their refusal to take oaths; their refusal to take life; and their belief that the unordained could dispense the Eucharist. See *ibid.*, pp. 240-41.

⁴Zurcher, p. 27.

⁵Walther, "Albigensians and Waldenses Forerunners?" p. 187.

⁶*Ibid.* Yves Dossat says that "there was no real unity of doctrine among the Cathari, excepting their agreement on the principle that the visible world was evil." Dossat, p. 247.

again; for the righteous there was no future bodily resurrection; hell and purgatory were non-existent since cleansing must be achieved on earth and if not achieved by death, must be completed through metempsychosis (transmigration of the soul); and Catholic sacraments were rejected.¹ The sacraments were replaced by a non-material rite of initiation called the consolamentum, by which the ordinary believer passed from that rank to that of the perfecti. This rite was believed to efface all sin and to impart the Holy Spirit.² It is in this area—that of Albigensian ritual—that we have actual Catharist documents.

The Rituel Cathare is available in a Latin text from ca. 1240-1250 and a Provençal text from ca. 1250-1280.³ The Provençal text has five clearly defined sections: the first, a series of Latin prayers with a penitential litany in Provençal with Latin responses which provide common forms for the following rites; secondly, the delivery of a prayer for the ordinary believer; thirdly, the initiation rite for the perfecti—the consolamentum—a baptism of the Spirit by the laying on of hands which was usually administered after a period of abstinence and instruction;⁴ fourthly, a set of regulations for corporate and private prayer; and fifthly, a single rite administering both grades of initiation on a single occasion to a seriously ill candidate. David Tripp says that while this is not the only available source for the Cathari ritual,

¹Bresnahan, p. 262.

²Ibid., p. 263.

³See Wakefield and Evans, pp. 465-94.

⁴Lambert, Medieval Heresy, p. 121.

it does have particular value in that most of the other examples are from hostile writers.¹

Yet, little evidence of dualism can be seen in the Ritual and one must turn to materials which were adopted from the Bogomils to find what at least some of the Albigensians believed.² Tripp believes that the Ritual was derived from an earlier stage of Catharist development when their church hierarchy was much simpler than that of the later Albigensian Church.³

Therefore it is a complicated matter to summarize the belief system of the Albigensians; for while Jean Zurcher asserts that they are not shown to be dualists in this or that document,⁴ it is probably more correct to state that their beliefs varied quite extensively according to time and place.

The Cathari, and even the Albigensians did not always agree on doctrine, but they always presented a united front to the world in rejecting the orthodox sacraments, institutions, and authority; in following an ascetic life-style; in rejecting oaths and the right of the secular powers to punish them for spiritual offenses; in seeing the devil as the prince and creator of this world; and in acceptance of the same form of the consolamentum.⁵

What was the basis and motivation for their beliefs?

Cathari beliefs were based on the New Testament which was believed

¹David Tripp, "Initiation Rites of the Cathari," Studia Liturgica 12 (1977):185. In the same place, Tripp also states that the sources of the opponents are of proven accuracy and that both types of sources throw light on each other.

²See, for instance, The Secret Supper and The Vision of Isaiah in Wakefield and Evans, pp. 447-65.

³Tripp, p. 185.

⁴Zurcher, pp. 21-31.

⁵Wakefield and Evans, p. 49.

to be the work of God. The Old Testament was generally dismissed as having been inspired by the Evil One.¹ But the perfecti were attempting much more than an imitation of Christ and his apostles as found in the Gospels and Acts—they were trying to release the spirit by the means of excessive deprivation.² Therefore, while at times they looked very similar to the orthodox poor, they were much more vehement and certain in their asceticism because it had a much more radical base.³

Walther admits that the Bible was better known in the Middle Ages than is commonly believed,⁴ and a cursory inspection of the Ritual would seem to indicate that the Albigensian Cathari had quite an extensive Biblical knowledge. Although some studies of the Bibles used by the Albigensians has been carried out, more is needed; but it is certain that the Albigensians had at least some Scriptures in the vernacular, for the Inquisitors often asked if the heretics had Gospels, Epistles, or Psalms in the "vulgar Tongue."⁵ Some of the perfecti were master story-tellers, who worked from an ancient store of Biblical and apocryphal stories to discuss the

¹See H. O. J. Brown, p. 257. Jean Zurcher (p. 26) puts the best possible interpretation on the Catharist attitude to the Old Testament when he states,

"Certain books of the Old Testament cause the Cathari problems. They could not believe that God was definitely the author of wars, massacres, executions and all the violence described in the historical books of the Old Testament. That does not necessarily mean that they rejected those books. They tried rather to give them an interpretation in harmony with the concept that they had formed of the character of God."

²Bolton, pp. 102-3.

³Ibid., p. 102.

⁴Walther, "Research on Albigensian Cathari," p. 162. See also Beryl Smalley, The Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1952), pp. xi-xxii.

⁵Walther, "Research on Albigensian Cathari," p. 162.

origin of evil and the fall of man.¹ In spite of accusations that the Albigensians were illiterate rustici,² they explained and defended their beliefs in writing.³

M. D. Lambert summarizes Catharist belief thus:

Cathar belief, just like Bogomilism, to which it was heir, upset the structure of sacramental life in favour of one rite of supreme importance, the consolamentum; replaced a Christian morality by a compulsory asceticism, which made faults consist rather in a soiling by matter than an act of will; . . . eliminated redemption by refusing to admit the saving power of the Crucifixion; and rejected the Trinity in favour of a subordination of two persons to the Father. Cathars could not admit that Christ was God--an angel, perhaps, or the son of God, but still not equal with the Father. Nor could they logically admit that he was man, with a body like that of other men. So the hinge of Christian belief, the Incarnation, was destroyed. Radical dualism went still further in its destruction of the pillars of Christian belief, and can hardly be regarded even as extreme Christian heresy. With its belief in two gods and two creations, it might almost be described as another religion altogether.⁴

In part, it was the gradual change to radical dualism that led to the complete destruction of the Albigensian Cathari for it brought with it some of the same kind of dissensions that had rent the Bogomil church in the East.⁵

The Albigensian Church Order and Organization

The Albigensian Church was divided primarily between the perfecti and the ordinary believers. The perfecti were otherwise

¹Lambert sees this as particularly true of the last phase of Languedoc Catharism. Medieval Heresy, pp. 122-3. See also Lambert, "The Motives of the Cathars," pp. 52-53, Wakefield and Evans, p. 64, and Walther, "Research on Albigensian Cathari," p. 162.

²Walther, "Research on Albigensian Cathari," p. 162.

³Wakefield and Evans acknowledge that the relation of known Catharist works to the whole cannot be ascertained, p. 64.

⁴Lambert, Medieval Heresy, p. 126.

⁵*Ibid.*, pp. 126-27.

known as "Christians," "Good men," "Elect," or the "Consoled."¹ The perfecti only were subject to strict poverty and asceticism, and although there have been accusations that the ordinary believers were not subject to any real system of morality and ethics, it seems that stories about them engaging in immoral orgies and the like are grossly exaggerated.² The fact is that laymen and clergy were alike attracted to the perfecti as followers of the Gospel code of conduct at least as austere as the monastic idea.³ The perfecti, whether male or female, peasant or noble, were accorded the greatest veneration both inside and (often) outside the Albigensian Church. They were the preachers of the sect, and it was from their numbers that the diocesan bishops were drawn. Other perfecti were appointed as deacons who worked somewhat like local pastors.⁴

In the twelfth century the Albigensian hierarchy was willing to give allegiance to an outside influence. In 1172, Bishop Nicetas, an absolute dualist of the Church of Drugunthia visited the West and consecrated a bishop for the Cathars of Lombardy before proceeding on to an Albigensian church council at St. Felix-de-Caraman, near Toulouse. Most western Catharists at that time seem to have been moderate dualists. Nicetas apparently did not consider them to have valid spiritual powers for he re-consoled all the perfecti who were present and reconsecrated the bishops of northern France and Albi, as well as consecrating bishops for the

¹Wakefield and Evans, p. 42.

²Lambert, Medieval Heresy, p. 131.

³Wakefield and Evans, p. 49.

⁴Bresnahan, p. 263.

newly formed churches of Toulouse, Carcassonne, and Agen.¹

It should be noted, however, that the Albigensians seem to have accorded less respect to the dualists from the East than did their Italian counterparts. When the Italian Cathari heard of the moral lapse of Simon who had consoled Bishop Nicetas, the church was thrown into disarray while the Languedoc dualists remained stable.²

As mentioned previously, Walther claimed that many of the Albigensian Cathari were illiterate or poorly educated,³ but this point has been disputed by other writers. Lambert considered that the perfecti included a few who possessed good training and religious culture. He also believed that there was an anti-intellectualist strand among them because they considered that the Roman Church needlessly clouded what was perfectly simple.⁴ Wakefield and Evans, however, cite materials which indicate that the Cathari of the thirteenth century (at least) lived with books, attracted those who would have been literate, operated their own schools, and sent qualified persons to study at some of the great universities.⁵

The Albigensians probably had their hierarchy organized after the Catholic model, and their bishoprics followed the boundaries of their Catholic counterparts; but it should not be

¹Hamilton, "The Origins of the Dualist Church of Drugunthia," p. 128. See also Lambert, Medieval Heresy, p. 128.

²It was believed that if the minister of the consolamentum fell, so did all he had consoled. See Lambert, Medieval Heresy, pp. 128-32. The Albigensians were also quite accommodating to the co-existence of moderate and radical dualism. Ibid., pp. 131-32.

³Walther, "Research on Albigensian Cathari," pp. 166-67.

⁴Lambert, "The Motives of the Cathars," pp. 54-55.

⁵Wakefield and Evans, p. 64.

forgotten that the basis of their church order and organization was the perfecti who dominated the social life of a large part of southern France for over half a century.¹ A particular school of dualism rested primarily on the personality and teachings of a particular leading perfecti who had direct contact with the spiritual world,² and so there was no one leader of the Catharist movement. It may have been the first mass heretical movement without a demagogic or charismatic preacher as its leader. As a movement they belonged to the century of crusades; of penitential journeys for the building of churches; of the communal movement seen all over medieval Europe from Languedoc to the Rhine especially in places with a rapidly developing urban structure.³ In spite of the presence of perfecti, bishops, and deacons, this was essentially a lay-oriented movement and it remained so to its end.

Reaction to the Spread of the Albigensians

While it is not the aim of this study to outline all of the religious, social, and political events involved in the spread of Albigensian dualism and its final demise under the onslaught of the Crusades and the Inquisition, nevertheless it is valuable to consider it briefly because the expanding Catharist movement drew a new, fierce, and organized reaction from the Roman Church.

During the six decades following 1150 the Cathars spread rapidly and met savage repression in the north of France while putting down deep roots in Southern France and Northern Italy. Such

¹Cohn, p. 148.

²Lambert, "The Motives of the Cathars," pp. 53-54.

³Jedin, p. 99.

was their strength that they threatened to replace the Catholic Church in the loyalties of nobles and townspeople alike.¹ By the end of the twelfth century there were four Cathar bishoprics in Languedoc with more churches being added rapidly, but that was to quickly change.

In 1147, Pope Eugenius III, concerned over the spread of heresy in Languedoc, called for the assistance of Bernard of Clairvaux to conduct a preaching tour in Languedoc. Bernard had some success in Albi, but at Verfeil he was not even allowed a hearing, and his successes were short-lived.² After 1200 the Cistercians preached in Languedoc and had some success when in 1206-7 they conducted a preaching campaign using the methods of the Albigensian perfecti. They set aside wealth and power and walked barefoot, begging for the necessities of life. They held public debates with the Cathari and managed to convert some young perfecti.³

Progress was too slow and the Church was moving towards a watershed. Military operations which had ramifications for the unification of France had already begun by 1215, and the Fourth Lateran Council made an end to a period of papal flexibility and experimentation in dealing with dissident movements.⁴ The Albigensian Crusade accomplished far more for the enriching of the

¹Wakefield and Evans, pp. 28-29.

²Runciman, p. 119.

³Hamilton, The Albigensian Crusade, p. 17.

⁴For a discussion of the reasons for the hardening of Catholic response to heresy, see Brenda Bolton, "Tradition and Temerity: Papal Attitudes to Deviants, 1159-1216," in Studies in Church History, vol. 9: Schism, Heresy and Religious Protest: Papers Read at the Tenth Summer Meeting and the Eleventh Winter Meeting of the Ecclesiastical History Society, ed. Derek Baker (Cambridge: University Press, 1972), pp. 79-91.

Northern French crusaders under Simon de Montfort than it did in exterminating heresy.¹ Catharism in Languedoc continued to make progress as is evidenced by the fact that over 6,500 persons in Languedoc were questioned by two dozen inquisitors or their deputies between 1234 and 1280.²

It was the Inquisition that was the major factor in the demise of the Albigensians. Raymond of Toulouse joined the Catholic cause to protect and extend his lands and influence, and the non-violent Cathari were left without any legal or military protection. Although they continued to press their case with zeal and subtlety during and after the Crusades,³ they lost ground under the force of the Inquisition, and nothing was heard of them after the close of the fourteenth century.⁴ Today, the best-known vestige of a once popular movement is the rocky hill of Montségur where on March 16, 1244, several hundred Albigensian leaders took their last stand for their faith--a faith that is still far from understood in doctrine and evangelistic method.

Conclusion

As has already been intimated, the tendency of recent studies of Catharism has been to see the heresy as an integral part

¹Jedin, p. 166.

²Walter L. Wakefield, "Heretics as Physicians in the Thirteenth Century (Cathars and Waldenses)," *Speculum* 57 (1982):328. The records of these inquisitions are in MS 609 of the Bibliothèque municipale of Toulouse in volumes XXI-XXVI of the Collection Doat of the Bibliothèque nationale, Paris.

³Wakefield rejects accusations that the Cathari (and Waldenses) purported to be medical doctors in order to "seduce" the unwary. *Ibid.*, pp. 328-31.

⁴Bresnahan, p. 263.

of the development of medieval religious life and piety. According to Wakefield and Evans

The majority of historians today would no doubt agree that the increased piety and spirit of reform operating entirely within the Church had a great deal in common with the piety and moral fervor which led men out of the Church and into heresy
: . . .

This view is in contrast to the idea that Catharism was just a "sick" religion which promoted an extreme pessimism.

Laymen and clergy of the time were impressed by the Catharist's appearance as a zealous follower of Christ. The Cathari took the Gospels as their guide for conduct; their asceticism was only slightly more extreme than the monastic idea; their criticism of the Church was no more extreme than that of other reformers; and their disdain for the material was rivalled by others within the Church.² As such, their heresy can be viewed as part of the medieval intellectual revival.

Lambert maintains that the medieval heresies failed or were repressed because there was a continuing public commitment to orthodoxy. He says that when that broke down and heretical beliefs and movements were able to maintain themselves successfully against state or church repression, then, the Middle Ages were at an end.³ The Albigensian Cathari were one of the most important of the groups that attempted an early end to the medieval world. They were not

¹Wakefield and Evans, p. 7.

²Ibid., pp. 49-50. See also R. W. Southern, The Pelican History of the Church, vol. 2: Western Society and the Church in the Middle Ages (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1970), pp. 279-80, where he sees Dominic and his Dominicans arising out of a response to the same societal forces which produced the Albigensians.

³Lambert, Medieval Heresy, p. xii

successful, and their failure must be attributed in part to their gradually increasing stress on dualism. Without a doubt, the world of their day was poorer for their passing! The Waldensians, contemporaries of the Albigensians, were more successful than the Albigensians in maintaining their protest for a longer period.

CHAPTER V

THE WALDENSIANS

Introduction

While the Cathari were creating havoc for the Church, especially in Languedoc, another heresy was arising which would have an even longer history of protest against the Catholic Church. This sect would soon be known as the Waldensians. Because both the Waldensians and the Albigensian Cathari originated in the same general area, and because some of their beliefs and practices were similar, the Waldensians were sometimes labelled as "Manichaeans."

The Waldensians have long been a fruitful source of study for church historians. Protestants, in years past, have seen the Waldensians as medieval Protestants of similar ilk to Martin Luther,¹ and while modern-day scholars have tended to be more conservative in their conclusions, several articles in the past decade claim for the Waldensians a common reformation heritage with such as Jan Hus.² Jan Lochman makes a strong plea for a wider perspective on the Reformation than the classical sixteenth-century

¹See, for instance, J. A. Wylie, The History of Protestantism (London: Cassell and Company, 1899), 1:24-25.

²See Jan Milic Lochman, "Not Just One Reformation: The Waldensian and Hussite Heritage," Reformed World 33 (1975):218-24; J. K. Zeman, "Restitution and Dissent in the Late Medieval Renewal Movement: the Waldensians, the Hussites and the Bohemian Brethren," Journal of the American Academy of Religion 44 (1976):7-27; and Amedeo Molnár, "The First Reformation," Moravian Theological Seminary Bulletin, 1972-77, pp. 103-7 (abstracted in Religion Index One 13 [1977-78]:523).

double formula of sola scriptura and sola fide. He perceptively comments that

Every restriction of the term "reformation" should be viewed with caution. It limits and impoverishes our understanding of reform. Every "cult" of a single reformation or even of the one or other reformer--and often have such cults been encouraged in the history of protestantism--is really destroying the way to genuine, that is permanent, multi-sided, comprehensive reformation. Such an approach limits the reformation to its temporal, its historical, even its biographical context. This then stabilizes the movement. What were once vital and historically appropriate fronts are now transplanted into another set of circumstances, which results easily in the overlooking of the pertinent but altered reformation needs of the new and present age. Of all people, it is often reformation oriented confessionalists who miss the concrete reformational requirements of their contemporary situation.¹

Lochman contends that the Waldensians (and the Hussites) were involved in a truly radical renewal movement because they were primarily involved in calling the church back to its primitive roots. Their constant appeal was to the example of Jesus and his apostles. They turned immediately to the Bible, translated it into the vernacular, and preached it in challenging people to discipleship. Therefore the gospels, and especially the Sermon on the Mount, received the greatest amount of attention. Whereas in the sixteenth-century "orthodoxy" would be the area of greatest concentration, in the twelfth century it was "orthopraxy."²

It should not be assumed, however, that all present-day scholars are in agreement with Lochman's thesis. Wakefield and Evans disagree categorically. They consider that Waldo and his followers had much more in common with St. Francis of Assisi than with Luther and Calvin, and that Waldo was completely medieval in outlook and action.³ In fact, whether the Waldensians were genuine

¹Lochman, pp. 219-20. ²Ibid., pp. 221-22.

³Wakefield and Evans, p. 53.

reformers or precursors to the sixteenth-century Reformation, there can be no doubt that they must be viewed in the terms of their own day. Again, it is clear that Protestants have always felt more comfortable in claiming kinship with the Waldensians than they ever were with the Albigensians.

Therefore, the background to the rise of the Waldensians must be surveyed, together with their spread, and evidence of dualism in their writings, teachings, and organizational structures.

The Waldensian Background

The medieval Waldensians claimed for themselves a heritage which stretched back to the fourth century when Pope Sylvester received from Constantine riches which compromised the Church and left only a faithful remnant who kept the light of the Gospel from being completely extinguished.¹ At times Peter Waldo seems to have been confused with Leone, supposedly a contemporary of Constantine and Sylvester.² This line of argument has been modified completely in the last century and present-day scholars are generally in agreement with the Catholic sources which claimed a twelfth-century origin for the Waldensians.³ An inquisitor of the thirteenth century claimed that "The Poor of Lyons had their origins around the year 1170, founded by a certain Lyonese citizen by the name of

¹See the "Letter from the Waldensians of Italy" in Giorgio Tourn, The Waldensians: The First 800 Years (1174-1974) (Turin, Italy: Claudiana Editrice, 1980), pp. 33-34.

²See Tourn, p. 32.

³For an extended discussion and an excellent comparison of original sources on the origins of the Waldensians, see LeRoy Edwin Froom, The Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers: The Historical Development of Prophetic Interpretation (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1950), 1:937-52.

Valdensius or Valdensis, after whom his followers took their name."¹ Emilio Comba and Giorgio Tourn, both Waldensian historiographers, agree that the immediate founder of the movement was Peter Waldo, variously known as Valdensius, Valdensis, Valdès, Vaudès, or Waldes.²

There can be no doubt that Peter Waldo was at least the medieval catalyst who energized a movement which cut across class divisions by attracting wealthy and poor, clergy and laity, educated and illiterate, nobles and peasants, as well as giving equal preaching rights to men and women alike.³ Further, Waldensianism is the only movement that was condemned in the Middle Ages which has survived in continuous form from the twelfth through to the twentieth century.⁴

Peter Waldo

Peter Waldo was a rich merchant of Lyons when he was converted through the influence of a story-teller's version of the life of St. Alexius, the penitent son of a rich man who rejected his bride and went away to live in poverty, returning after many years to die unrecognized and destitute in his father's house. The story made such an impression on Waldo that he consulted a theologian friend who read to him from Matt 19:21. As a result, Waldo decided

¹From a thirteenth-century Inquisition document, cited by Tourn, p. 3.

²Emilio Comba, History of the Waldenses of Italy, From Their Origin to the Reformation (London: Truslove and Shirley, 1889; reprint ed., New York: AMS Press, 1978), p. 12; and Tourn, p. 4.

³Lambert, Medieval Heresy, p. 76.

⁴Lambert notes that in spite of the present flow of research on the Waldensians, the time is not yet ripe to form definitive conclusions. See *ibid.*, p. xiii.

to conform literally to Jesus' command to sell his goods, give the money to the poor, and follow him.¹

The results of his decision were two-fold. First, Waldo became convinced that the same Gospel message which had changed his life should be offered to others like him in their native tongue, and secondly, that he should divest himself of his goods and family and live in strict poverty. Thus Waldo introduced into the already existing wandering-preacher movement the innovation of a vernacular translation of Scripture. His decision in favour of apostolic poverty produced immediate traumas within Waldo's family circle. He insisted on receiving food from others, and his archbishop had to force Waldo to eat with his own wife. It seems that Waldo's wife was far from happy with the arrangements, but he made provision for her needs and endowed his daughters so that they might enter a convent.²

At that stage it would have been quite natural for Waldo to enter a monastery and devote his life to contemplation and obedience, but he was no ordinary ascetic. His poverty was not a matter of merit-building, but rather he saw it as a challenge to others. Replying to a group of scoffers as he was distributing the last of his goods, he said,

'Citizens and friends, I am not out of my mind, as you seem to think, but I am avenging myself of those who were oppressing me in making me a lover of money more than God. This act I do for myself and for you: for me, so that if from now on I possess anything you may indeed call me a fool; for you, in order that

¹Ibid., p. 67. See also Tourn, p. 5. Tourn (pp. 5-6) also notes other versions of this crisis point in Waldo's life.

²See Lambert, Medieval Heresy, pp. 67, 91.

you, too,¹ may be led to put your hope in God and not in riches.'

It was not long before Waldo drew a circle of friends around himself. Thus was born a community which gave itself the name "The Poor in Spirit."² Unfortunately, conflict with ecclesiastical authority was not long in coming. Traditionally, the Church extended the right to preach to the Pope and bishops as the successors of Peter and the Twelve, and to the priests as successors of the Seventy.³ Waldo and his community considered the matter of preaching of such importance that they sent representatives to the Third Lateran Council in 1179 to request permission to preach. Walter Map records that "they insistently asked that they be granted authorization to preach, regarding themselves as fully capable of such a task, whereas they are hardly qualified by half"⁴ Pope Alexander III heartily approved of Waldo's call for poverty but forbade The Poor from engaging in doctrinal preaching, while moral preaching was to be allowed only under the supervision of the local clergy.⁵

The next year (1180), Waldo and his followers were still in the Church, for Waldo assented to an orthodox Profession of Faith which secured his opposition to several dualistic tenets.⁶ Tragically, though, excommunication was not long in coming when some

¹Cited by Tourn, p. 6.

²Tourn notes that by this name, they deliberately attempted to picture themselves "like the first disciples seated before Jesus and seeking to respond literally to His word and example." Ibid., p. 7.

³Lambert, Medieval Heresy, p. 68.

⁴Cited by Tourn, p. 13. ⁵Jedin, p. 101.

⁶For the complete Profession of Faith, see Tourn, pp. 13-14.

of Waldo's followers began preaching in homes, village squares, and even in churches.¹ Hostility was aroused and in 1184 the Council of Verona included the Waldensians in a list of condemned movements.²

What was it that led to Waldo's separation from the Church? Later Waldensian writings would convey the idea that Waldo considered himself to have received a direct commission from God to preach, and that the state of the Church and its clerics demanded that his commission could not be ignored.³ Tourn maintains that Waldo intentionally included in his Profession of Faith an affirmation that the call to the life of poverty was by divine "precept," which left no choice.⁴ Harold O. J. Brown considers that the source and power of the Waldensians' conviction lay in the authority of Scripture and their desire to make it known as widely as possible. Unlike the Cathari who circulated various legendary versions of biblical texts, the Waldensian vernacular translations were as reliable as the Vulgate on which they were based.⁵ It seems, in fact, that Waldo did not desire separation from the Catholic communion, and never completely lost the conviction that reconciliation with Rome would eventually be accomplished.⁶ That never took place, partly because after 1205 Waldo's Poor split into

¹Lambert, Medieval Heresy, pp. 69-70.

²Tourn, p. 12. Others condemned in 1184 were the Cathari, the Patari, the Humiliati, the Arnoldists, the passagians, and the Josephines. See Jedin, p. 104. Bolton notes that the condemned sects were divided into two groups--those who had claimed the right to preach, and those who taught contrary to the Church. See Bolton, "Tradition and Temerity," p. 85.

³Lambert, Medieval Heresy, p. 70.

⁴Tourn, p. 11.

⁵Brown, p. 263.

⁶Lambert, Medieval Heresy, p. 78.

two groups--the Poor of Lyons and the Poor Lombards of Northern Italy. The Poor Lombards continued to move further away from the Church as they developed their teachings in new situations and circumstances.¹

It appears certain that what had begun as a popular lay movement opposed to medieval clericalism and ignoring class distinctions, was wholly underestimated by the Papacy and the bishops, which meant that a heresy emerged largely out of the attitude of the Church.²

A Similar Catholic Movement

The rise of the Waldensian movement was not something that took place in a vacuum. It was, in fact, part of a larger movement. Norman Cohn notes that

Over a period of some four centuries, from the Waldensians through the Franciscan Spirituals to the Anabaptists one finds men wandering through the land, living a life of poverty and simplicity in imitation of the apostles, and preaching the Gospel to a laity avid for spiritual guidance.³

The idea that by changing his way of life, a man could make a personal response to the conditions of the time seems to have been common especially among the merchant class. They, of all classes, were gaining the greatest material benefits from the new economic conditions. It was from this class that the two most celebrated exponents of voluntary poverty came--Peter Waldo and St. Francis of Assisi--one a heretic, and the other canonized within two years of

¹Ibid., pp. 78-81.

²See Kurt Viktor Selge, "Einige Aspekte des frühen Waldensertums," *Theologische Zeitschrift* 30 (1974):131-37, abstracted in *Religious and Theological Abstracts* 18-19 [1975-76]:2161. See also Lambert, *Medieval Heresy*, pp. 80-81.

³Cohn, p. 40.

his death.¹ Waldo and the Waldensians cannot be understood apart from other movements. Some of those movements were within the Church (for example, the Franciscans), and some were outside the Church.

The similarities between Waldo and Francis are many and obvious. Both were city-dwellers, born just thirty years apart. They were both gripped totally by the gospel and propelled into lives of poverty. Each worked as a missionary-preacher on the very frontiers of the Church, but there was a very evident difference.² Latourette comments that "Francis was no heretic. A humble son of the church and a layman, he submitted himself to the constituted ecclesiastical authorities."³

Francis of Assisi was born around 1181, the son of a well-to-do cloth merchant, Peter Bernardone. Francis was baptized John, but was called "Francesco" by his father. He was sensitive, intelligent, musical, open, and generous. Two factors combined to bring about a profound change in Francis' religious life. First, in 1202 he was taken prisoner in an inter-city war between Assisi and Perugia and confined for two years.⁴ Amid conditions that were uncomfortable and with his future uncertain, Francis seems to have been indifferent to the seriousness of his situation. His acceptance of the situation apparently grated on the nerves of the other prisoners who accused him of being insane.⁵ Francis was, in

¹Ibid., p. 157. See also Bolton, "Paupertas Christi," p. 96.

²Tourn, p. 27.

³Latourette, p. 430.

⁴Jedin, p. 177.

⁵John Holland Smith, Francis of Assisi (London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1972), p. 31.

fact, ransomed by his family the year before a truce was arranged between Assisi and Perugia.¹

Some time later Francis faced a second crisis. He became seriously ill and depressed. Those around him thought him insane, and his father became convinced that that was the case after Francis took some of the family's goods, sold them, and gave the money to the poor. He was beaten and locked away for a time. Finally, after being released and selling more of his father's goods, he spent a month as a fugitive in a cave where he prayed for days in the darkness and isolation until he was suddenly filled with joy and confidence. He boldly went back to the city, but his old life was forever over.²

Francis' experience led him to devote his time to the rebuilding of decayed chapels, an activity which seems to have grown out of a sense of the deteriorating condition of the Church. He soon became engaged in the care of the poor and sick—especially the lepers in the environs of Assisi. These activities resulted in his being disinherited by his father in 1206-7, and Francis, now a poor man, placed himself under the protection of the bishop. The imitation of Christ—in poverty, preaching, and aiding—became the life programme of Francis, who was joined in his vocation by some companions from Assisi. Two-by-two, Francis and his community went throughout the cities and countryside, preaching the Gospel.³

The bishops met Francis' movement with reserve and he realized that his community, so similar to the heretical Poor, could only be overcome by papal approval. In 1209 Pope Innocent approved

¹Ibid.

²Ibid., pp. 32-36.

³Jedin, p. 177.

Francis' rule for his followers after being encouraged in that action by the Bishop of Assisi and Cardinal John Colonna.¹ It is easily observed that Francis was a different sort of man from Peter Waldo. Francis was much more willing to exercise patience with and show dependence on the Curia for planning and organization, especially in the founding of his lay-oriented Third Order.² According to Jedin's History of the Church,

He was a mystic, poet, singer, man of prayer, but no canonist, theologian, or controversialist. Nor was he a fool, as has been supposed, but an intelligent, shrewd, and deeply religious man, who knew his limitations and hence so early desired the cooperation of the Curia.³

The significance of Francis' life is not found in the charm of his personality or his gentleness, but in the seriousness with which he viewed the Christ he saw pictured in the Gospels.⁴ Because of his influence the Church was able to do what the Waldensian heretics were doing in opposition to the Church. An elite group joined the Franciscan Order as wandering preachers, practising poverty and self-abnegation, thereby winning the devotion of the urban masses. At the same time, many of the townspeople joined the Third Orders, and, while living in secular society, rivalled the regular friars in asceticism. Thus the Church was able, for a time, to control and use the energy that was threatening its security.⁵ Giorgio Tourn very aptly summarizes the situation:

¹See Conal Condren, "Rhetoric, Historiography and Political Theory: Some Aspects of the Poverty Controversy Reconsidered," Journal of Religious History 13 (1984):16; and Jedin, pp. 177-78.

²See Jedin, pp. 178-79. ³Ibid., pp. 179-80.

⁴Lawrence S. Cunningham, "The Vitality of the Franciscan Spirit: Reflections on the 750th Anniversary of the Death of St. Francis," Christian Century 93 (1976):865-66.

⁵Cohn, p. 158.

People were thus convinced that they could be religiously abreast of the latest currents without becoming Cathari, . . . evangelical without making themselves into Waldensians. At a single stroke one could satisfy one's own need for commitment and renewal while at the same time doing battle for¹ the Church; all this without the danger of falling into heresy.

While it is clear that the Franciscans developed out of the same medieval milieu as the Waldensians, it is also important to note that the Franciscans would soon have a large role to play in the most tragic of medieval institutions—the Inquisition. The friars were to become specialists in tracking down and destroying heretical cells. Thus, history repeated itself: just as a previous promising Catholic movement (the Dominicans) became the police force of the Pope in the fight against Albigensianism, so too the Franciscan revival was diverted into the fight against the Waldensians.² But Francis and his Franciscans reveal a remarkable similarity to Waldo and his Waldensians. Both groups were basically Catholic renewal movements; one of which became "derailed" into separation from the Church.

Other Contemporary Waldensian Connections

As well as having philosophical and other connections with the Franciscans, the Waldensians came in contact with other groups outside of, or on the fringes of, the Church. While it is not possible in this study to examine all of those movements, it is essential that we consider the two which may have influenced the Waldensians the most—the Cathari and the Humiliati.

The Waldensians and Cathari were sometimes confused as being of the same group because they occupied the same territory, and because they held in common that the true faithful ones of Christ

¹Tourn, p. 28.

²Ibid., p. 29.

were those who followed his example in the renunciation of worldly power and possessions. Nevertheless, the two groups were unable to find agreement or fellowship because the foundations of their asceticism were so different.

The Waldensians were always ready to engage the Cathari in debate over doctrine. Daniel Walther notes that the main themes of their doctrinal controversies concerned the oneness of God, creation, the fall of the angels, the law of Moses, and the final resurrection.¹ It is quite clear that the Waldensians disagreed with the very basis of Albigensian theology--dualism. However, by 1184, when the Pope failed to approve of their Order, the Waldensians came under the influence of the Cathari. More and more the Waldensians tended to reject the Church's teaching authority; denounce hierarchy, traditions, the Sacraments, veneration of the Saints, images, and relics; cast aside indulgences, oaths, tithes, military service, and the death penalty; and divided their followers into two classes, the "perfect" and the "believers."²

No doubt the fact of their condemnation and separation from the Church pushed the Waldensians faster along the road to complete unorthodoxy, but Lambert considers that pressure from the Cathari would have been a major factor. The Waldensians could not afford to be seen as less faithful to Scripture than their Cathari counterparts, or they would be accused of collaboration with the Catholics.³

¹Walther, "Research on Albigensian Cathari," p. 148.

²Jedin, p. 101.

³See Lambert, Medieval Heresy, pp. 79-80, where he lists other reasons as well for increasing Waldensian unorthodoxy. These include an awareness of the moral condition of the Church, which led

In Languedoc, the Waldensians were seen as far less dangerous than the Cathari. The general inefficiency of the repression helped to preserve them, while the penalty of expulsion only served to extend their influence more widely. The population of the area approved of the moral life of the Waldensians, and some of the lower clergy were inclined to regard them as auxiliaries in their battle with Catharism.¹

While the Waldensians in France lived, worked, and suffered in the same environment as the Cathari, their Italian counterparts, the Poor of Lombardy, came in contact with the Humiliati.

The Humiliati were a penitential association, originating in Northern Italy, which aimed to lead a pure clerical life in accordance with the Gospels, without rejecting marriage. Their movement appears to have been a reaction to the commercial life of Italy. They rejected usury, and earned their livelihood in the towns and cities of Lombardy by simple manual work, especially in the wool industry. As a sign of humility they wore simple garments of undyed wool. They rejected oaths as well as the practice of litigation. They repudiated the accumulation of excessive wealth, and gave away their excess. In 1184, the Humiliati, along with the Waldensians, were condemned at the Council of Verona.²

to criticism of the clergy and rejection of their sacraments, a constant appeal to Scripture, leading to extreme biblicism, a stress on penance, which led to confessions to laymen. The fact that they administered the Eucharist in places where it was not readily available from the hands of a priest meant that they looked on themselves increasingly as a rival church; and the geographical distance from their original territory led them to more extreme positions as they found themselves in different situations.

¹Ibid., p. 73.

²Ibid., pp. 70-71.

About 1210-16, the Humiliati were condemned by a Catholic writer, who said that

. . . although they had no authorization or permission from prelates, thrust their sickle into the harvest of others, . . . preached to the people and often busied themselves with ordering their lives, hearing confessions, and disparaging the ministry of the priesthood. Out of a desire to rectify this situation, the lord pope established and confirmed the Order of Preachers. The former, who were indeed simple and unlearned folk, worked with their hands while preaching,¹ and received their support from those who believed in them.

It is obvious that the Humiliati, like the Waldensians, demanded the right to preach and minister to those they contacted.² But different from Peter Waldo's original followers, they were not wandering, beggar preachers.³ Jedin's History of the Church notes that the Humiliati had close ties with the Poor of Lombardy who had broken away from the Poor of Lyons. That contact may explain why the Italian Waldensians developed as communities of workers, but with a strong desire to preach.⁴

Giorgio Tourn maintains that it was in Lombardy that the Waldensians achieved organizational and theological maturity. There, they began to face the question as to who they really were as a Church in distinction from the Catholic Church. Though finally banished from the cities of Lombardy, the Poor Lombards were not to disappear completely, but were to maintain a presence in the

¹Wakefield and Evans, pp. 229-30. For the complete document, see Wakefield and Evans, pp. 228-30.

²See Bolton, "Paupertas Christi," p. 102.

³Lambert, Medieval Heresy, p. 70.

⁴Jedin, p. 209. Note that the Italian Waldensians went further than Waldo who affirmed in his Profession of Faith, "We believe [sic] one Church, Catholic, Holy, Apostolic and Immaculate, apart from which no one can be saved, and in the sacraments thereby administered" Tourn, pp. 13-14.

Piedmontese Alps for hundreds of years.¹ At least some of their vigour must be attributed to the influence of the Humiliati.

The Spread of the Waldensians

While the Poor of Lyons carried their message as far north as Alsace, it was the Poor of Lombardy who penetrated the heart of Europe.² That, in part, may have been due to the Lombards' borrowing of the Humiliati's model of the laity, for it was as artisans and merchants (and not just preachers) that the Waldensians scattered throughout the Empire. The records of the Catholic Inquisition tell the story—by 1266, there were forty Waldensian churches with their own bishop in lower Austria; in Neuhausen, the Waldensians maintained a leprosarium; at the beginning of the fourteenth century, eleven Waldensians were sentenced to death in Vienna; at the end of that century, Martin of Prague and Peter Zwicker held a trial of four hundred Waldensians; and in Bohemia, Waldensianism was eventually to influence the Hussite Reformation.³ But the latter is a story that is outside the scope of this research.

In Germany, the Waldensians were known as Runcarii, probably derived from John of Ronco, the first leader of the Poor Lombards after their break with Waldo. These German believers maintained some minor contact with the Waldensian bishops and believers of

¹Tourn, pp. 30-33. See also Jedin, p. 101, where mention is made of increasing anticlericalism among the Poor of Lombardy.

²Tourn, p. 35.

³See Tourn, pp. 57-60, and Jedin, pp. 12-13.

Italy, even sending them money at times.¹ It was the German Waldensians who reached into Bohemia, Poland, and Hungary. Thus, autonomous groups of believers sprang up around Europe at such a rate, that at times Catholic authorities failed to recognize them immediately as Waldensians.² But they were still a part of a movement that, though spread over a wide area, had the same philosophical roots. The Passau Anonymous, writing ca. 1260, said that they were free from pride in matters of attire; that their teachers engaged in weaving or shoemaking; that they avoided lying, swearing, and deceit; that they were content with the necessities of life; that they lived chastely and moderately; that they avoided frivolous pastimes; that they were always working, learning, and teaching; and that both men and women committed large portions of Scripture to memory, some even memorizing the entire New Testament.³

It must be admitted that in spite of different environments and times, such a description--all the more noteworthy because it comes from a Catholic writer--would have been almost entirely true for Peter Waldo and his first disciples. Though the Poor of Lombardy had split from Waldo, they and their followers were still truly Waldensians.

Evidence of Dualism

Henry Bettenson comments that the Church of the twelfth century was disturbed by various heresies, the most dangerous of which were the Albigensians and the Waldensians. He considers that

¹Jedin, pp. 208-209.

²Lambert, Medieval Heresy, p. 73.

³Albert H. Newman, A Manual of Church History, 2 vols. (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publications Society, 1933), 1:575.

the Albigensians were Manichaeism in theory and antinomian in practice, while the Waldensians, who began by trying to recapture apostolic purity, tended towards antinomianism and Manichaeism.¹ Bettenson claims that we cannot, at this distance, tell the real reason for Waldensian deterioration into Manichaeism, although it may have been either because of persecution or "because their teaching from the first implied a perversion which justified that persecution."² Were the Waldensians, in fact, either Manichaeism or antinomian? Their own writings and those of their opponents need to be examined in order to see if these charges can be sustained.

In Waldensian Writings

It seems impossible to find evidence of dualism in the Waldensian writings available to us today. In fact, the exact opposite appears to be true. For instance, Peter Waldo's Profession of Faith in 1180 nowhere denies the material reality of Jesus' humanity or the efficacy of real or actual sacraments, as was so commonly denied by dualists. Waldo says that

We firmly believe and explicitly declare that the incarnation of the Divinity did not take place in the Father and the Holy Spirit, but solely in the Son, so that He who was the divine Son of God the Father was also true man from His Mother.

We believe [sic] one Church, Catholic, Holy, Apostolic and Immaculate, apart from which no one can be saved, and in the sacraments therein administered through the invisible and incomprehensible power of the Holy Spirit, sacraments which may be rightly administered by a sinful priest.³

¹Henry Bettenson, *Documents of the Christian Church* (London: Oxford University Press, 1943), p. 185. In the same place, Bettenson also claims that the Lollards, the Beghards, the Fratricelli, and others started with apostolic simplicity and tended to Manichaeism.

²*Ibid.*, p. 185.

³See Tourn, pp. 13-14.

As well, nowhere in his Profession does Waldo intimate that the basis of his austerity was a result of an overarching rejection of the material. Rather, the basis of his call to poverty was couched completely in Gospel terms:

And since, according to the Apostle James, faith without works is dead, we have renounced this world and have distributed to the poor all that we possess, according to the will of God, and we have decided that we ourselves should be poor in a way as not to be careful for the morrow, and to accept from no one gold, silver, or anything else, with the exception of raiment and daily food. We have set before ourselves the objective of fulfilling the Gospel counsels as precepts.¹

Almost forty years later, the Waldensian position seems not to have changed. In 1218, a letter from the Poor of Lombardy to Waldensians in Germany states:

To the question they raised concerning baptism, we replied as follows: We affirm that no one can be saved who refuses the material water of baptism, and that unbaptised infants are not saved. This we called upon them to believe and profess.²

Again there seems to be an emphasis on the material. There is here no indication of the spiritual baptism of the laying on of hands that was so common in the dualistic sects. The same is true of the Waldensian discussion of the Eucharist. There is no question of material emblems being inappropriate, but rather the Poor of Lombardy appeared to be concerned with the subject of transubstantiation.³

While there may have been Waldensian writings that indicated a belief in dualism, they are not available to us today. And while

¹See *ibid.*, p. 14.

²*Ibid.*, p. 14.

³*Ibid.* It should be noted that most Protestant researchers are disappointed with the marked lack of "Protestantism" in the Waldensian writings. See, for instance, Donald Casebolt, "Ellen White, the Waldenses, and Historical Interpretation," Spectrum, February 1981, pp. 37-43.

some Waldensians may have held such beliefs, it is clear that that was not the case for the majority.

In Catholic Writings

In the writings of their Catholic opponents, the Waldensians are often treated separately from the Cathari. Salvo Burci, writing ca. 1235, comments concerning the Waldensians (and the Speronists):

. . . although you may not be in such profound heresy as the heretics who are called Cathars, heretics you are, nonetheless. For you are cut off from the Holy Roman Church, from which you received baptism and confirmation, those two sacraments by which man becomes Christian and receives the Holy Spirit. . . . against that Church they [the Cathars] make ever more blasphemous statements which arise from their fatuous discernment--whatever occurs to them--declaring the Church to be a harlot, a den of serpents, a beast. And you stupid people say the same things.¹

There is no doubt that the Waldensians were often condemned because of their associations with dualists. Many documents refer to the Albigensian Cathari and the Waldensians together;² both groups considered that the papacy was the Antichrist;³ and both groups engaged in outwardly similar ascetic life-styles.

Perhaps the Tractate of David of Augsburg, written ca. 1260, is the best evidence for dualism that is available in the Catholic writings. David, an opponent, said that "The Old Testament they do not receive for believing, but only to learn some things from it in order therewith to attack us or to defend themselves."⁴ It should be remembered that the Cathari were also accused of rejecting the

¹Cited in Wakefield and Evans, p. 271.

²Walther, "Were the Albigenses and Waldenses Forerunners?" p. 192.

³Ibid. See also Froom, p. 879.

⁴Cited in Newman, p. 577.

Old Testament. They believed that a malevolent God could be seen in it, and had in fact produced it. But Newman maintains that the Waldensians' use of the Old Testament was radically different from that of the Cathari in that it was by no means a real rejection of it. Rather, they rejected the use made of the Old Testament by the monks and clergy in their support of persecution of heretics, concubinage, sacerdotalism, and legalism.¹

It can be concluded that, in the light of presently available Catholic documents concerning the Waldensians, the accusations of dualism or Manichaeism are generally unfounded.

In Waldensian Organization and Practice

There are similarities between the Waldensians and the Albigensians in the area of church ritual that could be cited as evidence for dualism within the Waldensian movement. However, Wakefield and Evans note that the similarities were probably due to coincidence rather than imitation. They consider that the Waldensian ordination ceremonies, for instance, may have been as much inspired by the Catholic ceremonies, or a close attention to the Gospels and Acts, as by the Cathari consolamentum.²

The Lord's Supper was undoubtedly the high point of the Waldensian worship, and it shows no evidence of Catharist influence. The faithful gathered together on Holy Thursday before Easter to commemorate the institution of the Supper.³ In an inquisitor's report of the Waldensian Lord's Supper written ca. 1320, it is stated:

¹Ibid.

²Wakefield and Evans, p. 53.

³Tourn, p. 40.

He [the Waldensian elder under inquisition] had said previously that after nine o'clock on Holy Thursday, when the supper had been prepared, it is the maioralis who washes the feet of his companions and dries them with a towel which he wears as an apron. Having done this, the maioralis sits at table with others. Then, taking bread, fish and wine, he blesses them, not as an offering¹ or sacrifice, but as a remembrance of the first supper.

Nowhere here is evident the rejection of material elements in the sacrament as is seen in Catharism. Rather, while the Waldensians could be described as gradually becoming more and more anti-sacramental, their position is best seen as a reaction to the extreme sacerdotalism of the Catholic Church.

However, there does seem to have been a borrowing of Catharist terminology in reference to levels or classes of believers within the Waldensian movement. According to David of Augsburg, there were two classes among the Waldensians--the "perfect," who practised voluntary poverty and celibacy while devoting themselves to full-time religious work, and the "disciples," who ministered to the needs of the "perfect" and promoted the objectives of the sect.²

Again, like the Cathari, some of the "perfect" were elected as bishops; and women of holy life who lived in poverty were allowed full preaching authority.³ But in the Waldensian movement there was not the dramatic difference between the "perfect" and the "believer." Lambert states that like their preachers, the Bible

¹Cited in *ibid.*, p. 41. ²See Newman, p. 577.

³Lambert, Medieval Heresy, pp. 76-77, notes that the preachers were sometimes called Insabbatati, from the word sabot, which was used of the particular sandals they wore as a sign of their status. Others believe that the term was used because they did not observe the holy days of the Church, or because they kept the seventh-day Sabbath. See Froom, p. 836. Casebolt (pp. 40-41) disputes the idea that the Waldensians were Sabbath-keepers.

knowledge of the ordinary believers was often quite remarkable.¹

These believers were not the kind that admired the ethics of the "perfect" from afar. They were very much members of the Waldensian Church, with full standing, but with a different role to that of the preachers or "perfect."² So, while the Waldensians may have borrowed Cathari terminology, the meaning of the words were changed to suit a non-dualistic system.

Conclusion

This survey of Waldensianism has not aimed to cover the whole history of the movement. There are many other areas open to research including the Waldensian educational system; the movement from pacifism to armed defence against their Catholic persecutors; and revival movements within the Waldensian movement itself. Perhaps this chapter is best concluded with a statement from the present-day Waldensian historian, Giorgio Tourn:

We learn of them [the Waldensians] . . . as original Protestants three centuries before Martin Luther, evangelicals living clandestinely in Europe with their open Bibles and their itinerant preachers (whom they called uncle rather than father) . . . men and women who refused feudal oaths, and who struggled with issues of non-violence in the face of crusades, inquisitions, attacks by the militant wings of monastic orders and the medieval military establishment. The quiet movement which seeded the Reformation and then took part in it has survived and continued its Biblical witness in a Christian Church which still bears the name of its founder--a small, lively and winsome minority centered mostly in Alpine³ Italy but with a presence throughout that land and well beyond.

¹Lambert, Medieval Heresy, p. 77.

²Ralph Winter includes the Waldensians among other groups which based their organizational pattern on two structures--a congregational structure (a modality) and a mission structure (a sodality). See Ralph D. Winter, "The Two Structures of God's Redemptive Mission," Missiology: An International Review 2 (1974):127-30.

³Tourn, p. xv.

Were the Waldensians truly Protestant? How is the term "Protestant" to be understood? Should a true Protestant understand clearly the doctrine of salvation by faith? If that requirement is essential to Protestantism, then the Waldensians may not qualify, since in 1532 when they were preparing to join the Swiss Reformation at the Synod of Chanforan, they asked this question of the Reformers:

If we recognize that Christ is our sole justification, and that we are saved only through His name and not by our own works, how are we to read so many passages of the scripture which rate works so highly?¹

Daniel Walther works from a different definition of the term "Protestant." He senses that there has always been a "Protestant mood." He says that

Regardless of theological differences, the Albigensians and Waldenses are part of the Protestant lineage. There is a common denominator in refusing to accept the dogmatism of a church that has deviated, in their opinion, from the scriptural pattern; they aimed in their own way, to obey God rather than men.²

Many Protestants would object to Walther's wide definition of Protestantism because it allows quite overtly heretical groups like the Albigensians within the pale, while there is a widespread feeling that the Waldensians should never have been labelled as heretics, let alone as Manichaeans!

¹Comba, p. 295. For a discussion of the influence of Chanforan on the Waldensians, see Gabriel Audisio, "Chanforan 1532: Quel changement," Bollettino della Società di Studi Valdesi 154 (1984):25-38.

²Walther, "Were the Albigenses and Waldenses Forerunners?" p. 202.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

This historical study of cosmic dualism illustrates very well the intricacy of the historian's task. While there has been increased interest in the subject since Steven Runciman's The Medieval Manichee was first published in 1947, with large numbers of documents translated and analysed, it should not be forgotten that the historian will be gaining only a limited picture of the events of the past. Lynn White, Jr. believes that "history is a bag of tricks which the dead have played upon historians."¹ He considers that the written records will only provide a view of the past as seen through the eyes of a small minority and that

If historians are to attempt to write the history of mankind, and not simply the history of mankind as it was viewed by the small and specialized segments of our race which have had the habit of scribbling, they must take a fresh view of the records, ask new questions of them, and use all the resources of archaeology, iconography, and etymology to find answers when no answers can be discovered in contemporary writings.²

Because most of the sects and individuals under study in this research are part of a period when aristocrats, knights, merchants, and peasants were not speaking for themselves in written form, and what we do have usually reflects ecclesiastical attitudes, the researcher must be extremely careful in proposing conclusions.

¹Lynn White, Jr., Medieval Technology and Social Change (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), p. v.

²Ibid.

Whereas older works have concluded that the various dualistic sects had links with each other,¹ it is very difficult to trace with even a small degree of success a line of succession from Mani through to the so-called neo-Manichaeans of medieval times.² Therefore, it has been concluded that each sect is best understood in the terms of its own historical context. A notable exception seems to have been some well-documented contact between the Bogomil dualists of the East and the Cathari of the West, although there is no evidence that Bogomilism actually led to the rise of the Cathari. Rather, it seems that the Western Cathari had already gained many adherents before the Bogomils entered the picture and influenced them to accept a more absolute dualism.

There has not, as yet, been enough study done on what it was that led to the growth in popularity of the dualistic outlook. What was it in society and religion that made people feel that dualism constituted a better answer to their questions than orthodox Christianity? The best presently available explanation is that dualism was providing reasonable answers to the problem of evil and suffering in the world while the Church was ignoring (to some extent) those deep questions of mankind. But that idea does not seem to be expressed in the writings presently available.

Conclusions regarding the dualistic basis of individual movements and sects must also sometimes be tentative. There is no doubt that Gnosticism and Manichaeism were basically dualistic religions, although questions about their origins are far from

¹See, for instance, Runciman.

²It should be noted that the Protestant idea of "truth" being passed from one group to another down through the ages is just as hard to trace through history as well.

completely answered. Evidence regarding the Priscillianists of the fourth century and the Paulicians of the sixth century sometimes appears to be contradictory. Scholars still disagree as to whether or not Priscillian was a dualist at all, and Paulician studies are in state of flux with major disagreement over what constitutes genuine Paulician documents. A key factor in the riddle is that first-hand materials from Priscillian and Paulician writers are limited.

Evidence for the medieval sects--the Bogomils, the Albigensian Cathari, and the Waldensians--is much more readily available (even in English). Although the vast majority of the documents available are from the opponents of the various movements, it seems that these documents (even from the Inquisition) are generally accurate. This conclusion is reached after comparing writings from the sectarians themselves with Catholic writings. Some of the most explicitly dualistic material comes from medieval times, and it is small wonder that the Church condemned them as Manichaeism. Some of the medieval dualists had systems every bit as creative and complex as Mani's was.

Nevertheless, the medieval Church at times wrongly labelled some groups as dualistic, and at other times pushed movements, which could be described as only mildly dualistic, into complete opposition to the Church. There is no evidence of corporate dualism as far as the Waldensians were concerned. In fact, they are probably best understood in the light of similar Catholic movements like the Franciscans.

Many areas demand further study. The links between Western dualism and Eastern dualism (if any) are certainly not completely

clear. The whole problem of motivation on the part of the dissident groups and their Catholic opponents must be studied in more detail, since sectarian action and Catholic reaction were not always consistently exhibited. Another area of fruitful study is that of the interaction between political and ecclesiastical forces. For instance, the Albigensian Crusades are best understood in terms of the struggle towards the unification of France. No doubt the political factor was a powerful force in the rise, and persecution of heresy, but it is probably not correct to view all the sectarian movements as nationalistic.

A matter of great interest and importance, but which has not been approached to any great extent in this thesis, is that of the relationships between the medieval renewal movements and the sixteenth-century Reformation. There seem to be hints that the Waldensians, particularly, had some influence on the Hussite Reformation, and through that on Luther and Calvin; but more evidence is necessary before a definitive conclusion can be reached.

The subject of the Reformation opens up a completely different area in the study of heresy in general. Was there always a "Protestant mood" as Daniel Walther asserts?¹ And, were the dualistic movements (especially those of medieval times) part of that mood? That question, in fact, is probably invalid since it demonstrates a desire to be contemporary rather than historical.

The historian will probably never conclusively answer all of the remaining questions about dualism and dualistic groups, but it is clear that the past has left its mark indelibly on the Church

¹Walther, "Were the Albigensians and Waldenses Forerunners?" p. 202.

through monasticism and celibacy. Again, it is clear that twentieth-century society owes a debt of gratitude to past dissidents. A. S. Turberville's conclusion regarding heresy, written in the 1920s, is still valid today:

All who have died rather than be false to themselves and their vision of truth, thus demonstrating to the world their conviction that belief is worth dying for--whether Catholics or Protestants or the most erring of mediaeval heretics--have done service to the cause of human progress. For, if it be true that only through the tragic experience of religious persecution could mankind attain to the establishment of the principle of liberty of thought and conscience, then every one of us today who enjoys the benefits of such liberty owes a debt of gratitude to the men and women who for conscience' sake braved obloquy, torture-chamber and fire.¹

Perhaps it is best to judge the dualistic heretics of the past in that light, rather than by the "orthodoxy" of the present!

¹A. S. Turberville, Mediaeval Heresy and the Inquisition (n.p.: George Allen and Unwin, 1920; reprint ed., London: Archon Books, 1964), p. 243.

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