



International Journal of Religious Tourism and Pilgrimage

Volume 8
Issue 1 *Sacred Journeys* 6

Article 8


2020

Resurrection of a Heretic Religion Through Pilgrimage: the Cathar Case Study

Pierre Fournie

University of Paris-Est Marne-la-Vallée-France, pierre.fournie@u-pem.fr

Follow this and additional works at: <https://arrow.tudublin.ie/ijrtp>

 Part of the [Tourism and Travel Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Fournie, Pierre (2020) "Resurrection of a Heretic Religion Through Pilgrimage: the Cathar Case Study," *International Journal of Religious Tourism and Pilgrimage*: Vol. 8: Iss. 1, Article 8.

doi:<https://doi.org/10.21427/0jra-xw74>

Available at: <https://arrow.tudublin.ie/ijrtp/vol8/iss1/8>

Creative Commons License



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-Share Alike 4.0 License](#).



Resurrection of a Heretic Religion Through Pilgrimage: The Cathar Case Study

Fournié Pierre

University Paris-Est Marne-la-Vallée-Cité Descartes, France
pierre.fournie@u-pem.fr

Six hundred and ninety-eight years have passed since Guilhem Bélibaste, the last known *Perfect* or *Albigensian* was burned at the stake in Villerouge-Termenès. His execution, in 1321, ended the official presence of the Cathars – who preferred to call themselves Good-Men and Good-Women- in the South of France. The Catholic Church, feeling that the influence of this alleged heretic movement threatened its power, started procedures around 1147 to at first control the Cathars peacefully, but failing to do so, later felt it had to destroy them, by means of crusades and the Inquisition.

For many people, the intangible and tangible remains of Catharism are still part of their cultural and religious memory. Recently, a revival of the Cathar movement has emerged, resulting in religious tourism products, such as trails and pilgrimages. In parallel, some groups appear to be attracted to the alternative teaching which claim a Cathar legacy.

This article intends to investigate those pilgrimages and assesses the secular or religious motivations of the participants. It also examines whether these aspects are creating a new trend, reviving and strengthening interest in the once forbidden religion or resurrecting Catharism presence in the 21st century, an era in which many people are desperately looking for a sense of meaning.

Key Words: Cathars, pilgrimage; religious tourism; Competitive Intelligence, heresy, religion

Introduction

We ask forgiveness, first to our Lord, but also to all those who were persecuted at that time by members of our Church.

On October 16th, 2016, the Bishop of Pamiers, Couserans and Mirepoix, in front of several hundreds of people knelt before the altar of the small village of Montsegur, as a sign of repentance. There, at the foot of the feudal walls, on March 16th, 1244, two hundred and twenty-four Good-Men and Good-Women had been burnt at stake. Taking place during the year of mercy of Pope Francis, this initiative regarding Catharism, the first in 772 years, has been received with mixed emotions by historical and cultural associations, or by the ones claiming the Cathar tradition.

For centuries, traces of the disappeared religion have remained in the geography of the territories they used to live in: on the steep terrain, deep ravines, forests of Ariège and the fertile lands of Languedoc. Its vestige also lingered on the beauty of the Pyrenees' landscapes, punctuated by the ruins of castles, on headstones, such as the one of Montsegur, erected in

memory of the dead and burned Perfects, reading: 'To the Cathars, to the martyrs of pure Christian love - March 16th, 1244' (Figure 1). Cathar traces are also left on the architecture and names of cathedrals, monasteries and abbeys, the ultimate symbols of the presence and strength of the Catholic faith. Oral

Figure 1: Stele at Montsegur commemorating the Cathars from 16 March 1244



https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/7/7a/Monts%C3%A9gur_Monolit.jpg

traditions kept the memory and *memoria* alive in the minds of villagers, from one generation to the next. The Cathars and their stories certainly left their mark in the records of the Inquisition (Duvernoy 1965).

At present, a new generation of historians contests the research of those specialising in Catharism, introducing the idea that Cathars never existed. On the other hand, recently, Cathar trails, Spiritual tours and Cathar pilgrimages have emerged which present Montsegur as a holy mountain and Cathars as ‘pure Christians’. Additionally, others portray the alleged heresy as a form of Buddhism.

Catharism: a confusing terminology

As many other heresies, Catharism appeared in France and other parts of Europe around the Year One Thousand. Duvernoy (1992), across sources, traces them in the Rhineland, Flanders, the Champagne and Loire regions, in Perigord-Agenais, in Languedoc, in the Alps and the Rhone valley, Italy, Bosnia and the Byzantine world.

They are known under many different names. Eckbert von Schönau (1163), abbot of the Benedictine Monastery of Schönau, in his *Thirteen Sermons Against the Cathares*, mentions that they are called Cathares in Germany, Piphles in Flanders, Tisserands (weavers) in France. In other areas, Bougres, a word coming from Bulgarus (Bulgarian, in English derogative ‘bugger’), was equivalent to Albigenses. In Italy, except in Lombardy, where three schools of Catharism coexisted (Albanenses, from Concorezzo and from Bagnolo); they are called Patarins. In some confusing cases, their opponents also call them Manicheans, Bogomiles, or Arians (a reference to Arianism).

The same sources indicate that they had controversies or competed with other sects which Duvernoy identifies as the Vaudois and the Poor of Lyon. The Beguins and the Spirituals in Italy, also faced the wrath of the Catholic Church.

The heresy, or the religion, would last officially until the death of Guilhem Bélibaste in 1321. To survive, regional political support and religious transparency were mandatory, as was the case with the Comté of Toulouse and the Cathars in some parts of Italy. In both examples, rulers were strong and ready to oppose the Pope’s authority. The difficulties with the Cathars were of multiple natures. Identifying them from other

heretics, tracing their origins, understanding their religious dogma and uncovering their legacy, were but a few.

The lexical aspects are not the least of the problems, as the heretics never called themselves Cathares, Albigenses or Perfects. For Rigouste (2011) and Théry (2002), the later is an incorrect translation of *Hereticus Perfectus*, a name used by the Inquisitors. They themselves preferred to use the terms Christians, Citizen of the Christ or Christopolites, the Poor of the Christ, the Apostles. Their followers called them Good-Men and Good-Women (Brenon, 2013). The terminology is again questioned by Théry (2002), who wisely notes that *Boni Homines* or *Bones Homes* are commonly used in Languedoc as a mark of respect towards honourable people or individuals representing some authority. Thus, it could be a mode, for the Inquisition, by using a term known since Charlemagne, to designate esteemed and influential community leaders.

For Roquebert, Cathare was used at first by Alain de Lille, a Rhineland Cistercian monk in an anti-Cathar treaty. The word refers at the same time to Catharsis (purification) and the cat, a sign of the devil (Roquebert 2001). In reality, the term already appeared in the Council of Nicea, dated 325, which condemns both Cathares (the Pure), *i.e.* the Novatians as defined by Eusèbe de Césarée, who were detractors of the Lapsi that had abjured their faith once persecuted (starting in the year 250) by the emperor Decius, as well as the Lapsi themselves.

Their number never seemed to be extremely high. In Languedoc, during the Ramondine period (11th to mid 13th centuries), it decreased to around 15 at the beginning of the 14th century. In the end, the social origins of the Perfects also got modified with fewer individuals from noble origins and consequently fewer women (Poirier 2007: 11-12).

Sources, often in Latin or in the Occitan language, are not easily accessed. These are classified into four major categories:

- Communications between and within clerical brothers and the catholic hierarchy;
- The Inquisition archives and registers;
- Anti-Cathar treaties from Durand de Huesca (a Vaudois converted to Catholicism in 1207 who wrote the *Liber Contra Manicheos*), Moneta de Crémone (an inquisitor and his *Adversus Catharos*

et Valdenses Libri Quinque), and Rainier Sacconi (a former Cathare Bishop and then inquisitor in Lombardy, author of the *Summa de Catharis*) and;

- The so-called Cathars original documents.

The first three categories represent the largest volume and say more about the Catholic Church than about the heresy. It is not a surprise that few documents remain in the last category. Besides oral traditions and the troublesome conservation of original documents from the Middle Ages, the Catholic Church had destroyed most of them.

From the *Holocaust of the Cathar Books* (Calmette 1940), all that remains are:

- *A New Testament and a Cathar Ritual in Provençal language*, (Clédât 1887);
- *The Liber de Duobus Principiis* written by Giovanni de Lugio di Bergamo, mid-13th century and unveiled by Father A.Dondaine (1939);
- A fragment of Cathar ritual contained in a Vaudois manuscript and known as the *Dublin Collection* (Venkeleer 1960);
- An anonymous Cathar treaty inserted in a Vaudois refutation book (Thouzellier 1962);
- *The Interrogatio Johannis* or *The Secret Supper* (Bozoky 1976) also called by the inquisitors the *Apocrypha of the Heretics of Concorezzo*, which was probably brought from Bulgaria to the Cathar bishop (Duvernoy, 1992)
- Also available is a *Consolamentum for the Sick People*, extracted from the register of Jean Galand when appearing before the Inquisition in 1285.

The origin of the Cathars remains a subject of conjecture. In several parts of France and Europe, the clerics perceived danger, and the first Cathars were burned at the stake around 1020 in Toulouse and Orleans (Havet, 1880; Aubarbier 2011). Heretics are detected by Adhémar de Chabannes (988-1034) a monk from Angoulême, who calls attention to the *heretical plague*. In Italy, around 1034, several Cathars of Monteforte were burned or brought to Eribert, the archbishop of Milan. There, very few were willing to recant their faith, and many died voluntarily at the stake. In 1030, another Héribert, a monk from the Perigord, stressed the danger they represented and listed all their refusals: of baptism, the Eucharist, marriage as a sacred commitment, remission of sin, the Cross, the worship of saints, the sacred images, the churches as the sole consecrated buildings, the

ecclesiastical songs, handouts and alms, and of offerings for the deaths. They also refused to eat meat and other foods considered as impure (Jimenez-Sanchez 2015).

In many cases, the heretics are monks or members of the Church. Adhémar de Chabannes recalled that in the case of Orléans, ten canons were proved to be Manicheans and as they did not want to abandon their beliefs, the king ordered to burn them (Aubarbier, 2011). The danger was not only from outside but also largely coming from within the Catholic Church. As Héribert wrote in a circular letter, in the Périgord,

They have led many people into this heresy: not only lay people, who have abandoned all their property, but also clerics, priests, monks and nuns (Bordes 2011).

Manuscript 609 of the Municipal Bibliothèque of Toulouse presents the investigations of Bernard de Caux and Jean de Saint Pierre over the years 1245-1247, the register of Geoffroy D'Ablis in Carcassonne (1308-1309), the *Registrum Inquisitionis* (1318-1325) of Jacques Fournier in Pamiers and the Inquisition manuals of Bernard Gui, *Practica Inquisitionis hæreticæ pravitatis*, who was the inquisitor in Toulouse during the period 1307-1323. It furthermore contained the *Directorium inquisitionum* of 1376 by the Spanish Dominican Nicolas Eymerich which was later revisited by Francisco Pena (1578-1585). A few other documents provide understanding of the objectives, structure and process of the Inquisition.

Cunning is the best weapon of the inquisitor (Eymerich et Pena, 1376:164):

Whoever appears before the Inquisition Court as a suspect of heresy is not designated as such, but as a witness. He is a witness against himself. All that he keeps silent is considered false testimony and leads to an additional crime. To keep silent in front of the Inquisition court represents a confession (Laurendeau, 2008: 1).

In the case of the abovementioned manuscript 609, Albaret (2007) notes that the objective of the Inquisitors was purely quantitative and delivered therefore a poor result. About 75% of the witnesses declare they have never seen, believed or adored any heretic. On her detailed study of the registers of Jacques Fournier, Bishop of Pamiers, Mirepoix and Couserans, Laurendeau affirms that:

The information circulates at the bishopric, in the bishop's prison and travels to the village.

The protagonists, in a way we ignore partially, learned what was being said in the audience. Based on what the judge knows and what he does not know yet, that they also adjust the defence (Laurendeau 2008: 86-87).

As a consequence, the image of the heretics forged by the Inquisition needs to be interpreted with caution. How could the Poor of Christ described by the monk Héribert threaten the Catholic Church?

The false prophets who adhere to the new heresy ... they lead an apostolic life. They do not eat meat. They do not drink wine ... they make hundreds of genuflections. They do not accept money and distribute it decently. They hold Mass for nothing and teach that we should not receive communion. They adore neither the cross nor the statue of our Lord. There is no man, who, if he joins them ... does not become a scholar in letters, words and expression (Aubarbier 2011).

The upheaval of the year one thousand

Recent historical research disagrees with the common perception of the Medieval Ages as a period of ignorance, economic stagnation and intellectual regression. They are considered instead as a turning point, a period of deconstruction and reconstruction, namely deconstruction of the Roman Empire and reconstruction of a new world supported by contemporary social and political organisations, a time of prolific fusion between the worlds of the Romans and the Barbarians (Le Goff, 2008: 25).

The second and third centuries saw the collapse of an Empire because the absence of conquest also resulted in less income from plunder (Le Goff, 2008: 12). Consequently, the Roman Empire weakened, under the pressure of remote provinces and permanent attacks from Barbarians. Major developments in public law (Edict of Caracalla, 212) offered Roman citizenship to all, across the Empire. Double citizenship appeared, supported by the subtlety of the Roman law that distinguished between *Origo*, *Domicilium*, *Incola* (residence) but most of all *Patria Propria*, related to heredity and tribes, and *Patria Communis*, the common homeland of all citizens of the Empire (Thomas, 1996). Even the emperors came from the outer provinces. According to Le Goff (2008:11):

The masterpiece of permanence, of integrations that was Roman civilisation, is attacked ... by the erosion of forces of destruction and renewal ... The unity of the Roman World breaks up.

Shaken by conflicts between pretenders to the throne, heavy taxes, economic and social disorders, the *Pax Romana* represented by a federation of cities that enjoyed autonomy and protection from Rome, and the economic stability supported by an efficient trade between provinces, and marine traffic across the Mediterranean Sea, became memories of the past.

The partition by Diocletian (284-305) between Eastern (Byzantine) and Western empires could not stop the fall. A major change also affects beliefs and culture. Formerly persecuted, now the Christian religion and its bishops obtain the legacy of the Roman Empire, of the Greco-Roman culture. In Milan, the two emperors Constantine and Licinius recognised Christianity as the religion of the Empire in 313. Besides having reunified the Empire after a victory over Licinius in Andrianople in July 324, Constantine I (324-337) made Constantinople the new capital of the Empire, and offered freedom to Christians. He found a strong ally in Pope Silvester. This illustrates for the first time the theory of the Two Powers: Roman society offering a special place to the Catholic Church. Prerogatives included immunity of the clergy, recognition of episcopal jurisdiction, *Libertas Ecclesiae*, Sunday rest, and inheritance capacity of the churches (Gaudemet 1947).

With Theodosius I, Christianity becomes the state religion. In the Western Empire, the last Emperor Romulus Augustulus, a child, was forced to step down in 476, thus ending the fiction of the integration of German tribes within the Empire. Still, the Germans remained the heirs of the Roman Empire and adopted its culture and its new state religion, abandoning paganism, eventually reviving it as the Holy Roman Empire in 1254.

At first rooting in the cities, Christianity had initially been organised around the *Episcopos*, the overseer of the ecclesia, groups of believers, who was elected by the faithful. The Bishop of Rome, the successor of the Apostle Simon Peter, became, during the 4th century, the Pope (the Father: *papas*). With the increasing number of believers, the authority of the bishop is no longer limited to religion and the secular clergy was gradually incorporated into an adequate organisation. In parallel, influenced by the Eastern Empire, monachism starts spreading throughout Europe.

It was not surprising that in a Christian Empire, the Emperor attempted to dominate and direct the spiritual power. By calling the Council of Nicea (325),

Constantine I aimed at establishing religious peace and unity of the Church through this ecumenical synod, where some 300 bishops met. It was the first cycle of eight councils that took place between the 4th and 9th century. All attempted to answer Christological issues, such as establishing the consubstantiality of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit (that these were of the same essence), the dogma of the Trinity, the divinity of the Holy Spirit, the divine maternity of Mary and two natures in the unique person of Jesus (both perfect in his deity and in his humanness, one who is actually God and man). An attempt at defining a uniform doctrine or Nicene Creed, and the first statements of beliefs or canons were prepared during the first Council of Nicaea. Besides establishing what was acceptable, there was also during these councils, over the centuries, established what was unacceptable, thereafter condemned as heresies. Arianism, Pelagianism, Monoenergism and Monothelitism were considered heresies. Nestorius and his Nestorian doctrine of the Three Chapters were condemned, while Caelestius (follower of Pelagus), Eutyches and Monophysites were also rejected, branding their ideas as heretical. At Nicaea in 781, the holy images and icons banned by the Byzantine Emperor Constantine V in 754, were restored. Finally, at the last council in Constantinople (869-870), East and West were reconciled and the so-called Photian Schism came to an end.

It appears that the different councils all aimed at establishing one pure doctrine, transferrable across centuries of time and geographical spaces. It also implied a constant fight against alternative schools of thought, the heresies. Such alternative doctrines branded as heresies took place from the earliest period of Christianity onwards, either originating from currents of Jewish thought (Simon the Samaritan, Gnostic ideas) or from Christian sources (Three-theism, Modalism, Ebionism, Arianism, Macedonianism, Donatism, Nestorianism, Monophysitism), as well as initiated by individuals such as Marcion (144), Montan (156) and Pelagus (400-410). During the third century appears the phenomenon of Manichaeism, a syncretism between Mazdeism, Buddhism, Judaism and Gnosticism which teaches the existence of two worlds and two principles, teaching a dualistic view of Good and Evil. Asceticism, on the other hand, may allow the faithful to reach purification and avoid several reincarnations. In the fourth-century Arianism comes about, offering three schools of thought: the Anomeans for whom Christ is not God; the Homeans who recognise that Jesus is

similar to the Father and Homeousians who refuse the idea of the consubstantiality of the Father and the Son but declare Jesus to be similar in substance.

According to Le Goff (2008), from the 5th to the 8th century, the Church aims at controlling the state, while secular rulers, in turn, try to control the Church, but by the end of the 10th century, the doctrine of the church had stabilised. Furthermore, after conducting the evangelisation of the German tribes and kings, the church of the Western Empire progressively gained its independence from Constantinople. Its implication on the political side had strengthened its position. The conversion, inspired by Saint Clotilde, of Clovis, king and unifier of the Frankish tribes was the first step to religious unification across France, Belgium and Germany. It was reinforced during the reigns of Charles Martel (732-751), founder of the Carolingian Empire who defended Christian Europe against Muslim invaders. One of his sons, Pepin III (751-768), was crowned king by Pope Zachary, and Charlemagne (768-814) crowned himself Roman Emperor in 800. Disputes among heirs, attacks by Vikings and regional insurgencies led to the partition of the Empire into smaller kingdoms.

Iogna-Prat (2001) writes that during the Middle Ages, a variation of *Patria Propria* and *Patria Communis* occurred. The first one refers to the place of birth and residence, whereas the *Patria Communis* becomes the domain of Christianity (in Heaven and on Earth), of the Roman Church, of a territorial principality and constitutes the basis for a political structure during the Visigoth and Carolingian times. Consequently, the defence of the Christianised *Patria Communis* is considered a moral obligation.

Following the research of Dumézil (1938) on Indo-European deities, scholars have for long considered the organisation of the social order according to a tripartite scheme: religious and sacred, defence and warriors, production and fertility. In 1963, Batany, based on medieval sources of Aelfric (995 and 1006), Wulfstan (1010), Adalberon, bishop of Laon (1025-1027) and Gérard, bishop of Cambrai (1033), confirmed such a hypothesis. *Oratores*, *Bellatores* and *Laboratores* were the Three Orders coexisting (Rouche 1978). The territory is dominated by a powerful laity which obtained, through hereditary rights or fights, their domains. The Pope (even at a far distance) is extremely respected. The Church, in such a feudal system, is mainly controlled by the bishops, often very rich, bestowed with privileges and certainly not in

answering to the local or royal jurisdiction. These bishops mainly came from the nobility and had titles such as duke or count.

Reality and manipulation

The mystery around the Cathars comes from both their origin and their sudden disappearance. Nobody exactly knows from where the heresy comes. For Roquebert, Catharism is an itinerant dualistic preaching that is not Occitan by essence (Roquebert 2001: 41). Schmidt, a precursor on Cathar studies, conjectures on Slavic origins and elaborates a theory of dissemination through trade, and religious and political contacts of the sect across Europe, the Balkans and the Byzantine world (Schmidt 1849: 1-54). In several areas, the presence of pre-existing forms of dualism, such as Bogomilism, created a fertile land for heresy, which opinion was shared over a century by historians such as Arno Borst in his *Die Katharer* (1953). Cited by Théry, the work of M.G. Pegg, contests such a hypothesis; it is neither obvious nor irrefutable that such a link ever existed, although such a link between the two heresies has become a truism in almost all studies on medieval heterodoxy (Théry 2002: 77).

For Roquebert, the deconstructivism on Cathar studies introduces since the 1980s the idea that Catharism is a phenomenon endogenous to Christianity. Catharism would then be understood as a renovation of Christianity, between the 11th and 13th centuries. A Christianity that in its inner deviance had testified of the magnitude of the urge for evangelism. (Roquebert, 2005: 108). In such a way, the complete approach should be reconsidered, prompting the questioning raised by Monique Zener's *Inventing Heresy* in a collective book dated 1998 (Zerner, 1998) or by Brunn (2006).

Initial studies used the Inquisition and authorised sources to structure the history of Catharism in order to frame its dogma. Deconstructionism reconsidered all aspects and considered Catharism as an invention, as a manipulation of the Catholic Church. In a certain way, it is a renouncement of the 'orthodoxy' underlined by the historian Duby in the 1960s and its famous: *Le Catharisme? Un piège à c...* (Le Roy Ladurie 2000). Or in other words, Catharism? A trap for complete idiots.

The fight against the deliquescence of the Church, initiated by Leon IX and Nicolas II (that forbade Nicolaism in 1059 and condemned Simony), was strengthened by Popes Gregorius VII and Urban II. In

1075, Gregory VII, considering the papal supremacy and infallibility and reinforced the position of the Church with his *Dictatus Papae*, soon to become the cornerstone of the Gregorian reform.

The heresies appearing inside and outside the church took the form of benediction for a Roman Church willing to impose its dogma and reinforce its organisation.

By federating fictitiously all manifestations of dissent into a powerful against-church rising to the onslaught of Christianity, Rome created the opportunity and the means to define its own identity and to assert its power. Moreover, the more the threat was overestimated; the more likely it was to mobilise the Christians (Roquebert, 2005: 106).

The *Dictatus Papae* reconfirms the status of the Roman Pontiff, the only one that can with right be called universal (rule 2), use the imperial insignia (rule 8) and be named in churches (rule 10). The new law asserts his authority on bishops (rule 3, 4, 5, 13, 25), clerks (rule 14) and even rulers. Reconsidering the principle of the Two Powers, he may be permitted to depose emperors (rule 12). Moreover, he shall be the only one whom all princes shall kiss his feet (rule 9). No one can judge the Pope (rule 19) and is he infallible. He has the power to judge and forgive.

Figure 2: Expulsion of the inhabitants from Carcassonne in 1209. Image taken from *Grandes Chroniques de France*



https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/e/e4/Cathars_expelled.JPG

Table 1: Comparison between the Catholic Dogma, Mitigated Catharism (from Concorezzo) and Absolute Catharism (from Desenzano)

	Catholic Dogma	Mitigated Catharism	Absolute Catharism
Satan		Satan was initially good. The Bad Spirit seduced him	The nature of Satan is divine, just as the one of God
Creation	God is the unique creator and creates the World ex-nihilo	Creation is the opera of the Bad God. The Good God gave authorisation	
Lucifer	For Sainte Bonaventure, it is impossible that 'the bad angel be the opera of God'. Also, he might have sinned soon after being created	The creator of the sensible things, 'the Devil' is a creature of God. He only shaped a pre-existing material	The sensible things and the principle that gave them birth are not the creatures of God. They are nothingness
Adam	He was created perfect, with a free will. He had to go through a test	The soul of a man derives from the first soul incorporated by the Devil into the first man (Traducianism)	The soul of men felt from the sky invited by the Bad Principle. They will remain enclosed in bodies. The souls pass from one body to another by metempsychosis until their salvation.
The World	The World was a will of God. It is the place of interaction between God and his creature.		
Free will		No free will	No free will
Trinity	Holy Spirit and Trinity are similar to the Father in essence and divinity	Holy Spirit and Trinity are not similar to the Father neither in essence nor in divinity	Holy Spirit and Trinity are not similar to the Father neither in essence nor in divinity
Sources: Laurendeau (2008), Poirier (2008), Roquebert (2001)			

The two principles of Catharism

Scholars consider that two principles structured Catharism: a good and a bad one. Human beings are trapped between two worlds that coexist: one of visible things and one of invisible ones. Time passing does not corrupt the components of the latest. On the contrary, it deeply affects and damages visible and tangible realities, for example, the body. That is the domain of evil.

How could the same God create the Good and the Bad? It is contradictory. Such an assertion implies a dualism that already existed in early Christianity but had no relation with Manicheism (Roquebert, 2001:45). The bad principle has been called Bad God or Malicious God but, for the Cathars he is not God, as he does not possess God's attributes (Duvernoy, 1992: 44; Poirier, 2007: 53).

In reality, two approaches that discuss the essence of man and the nature of the Bad principle do coexist. They are called Mitigated Catharism and Absolute Catharism. The Cathar community of Concorezzo in Italy professes the first approach. The community of

Desenzano, and his Cathar Bishop, Jean de Lugio, famous for his *Liber de Duobus Principiis*, adopted Absolute Catharism. For long, historians have been considering that in the South of France, Cathars, following the coming of a Bogomile Pope (Papa Niquintas) in 1167 and a council that took place in Saint Felix de Caraman, had been adhering to the Absolute version of Catharism. A single document, *la Charte de Niquinta Antipape des Hérétiques Albigeois Contenant des Ordinations des Euesques de Sa Secte*, unveiled by G. Besse in 1660, supports such a position. Supporters and opponents of such a theory are still engaged in fierce discussions, whether the Besse manuscript is real or fake (Drakopoulos 2010: 106-157).

In both cases, Mitigated and Absolute Catharism, consider the body as impure. Only strict asceticism and sacrament by the imposition of hands (baptism by the Spirit) may save the soul. Engaging in sexual intercourse as well as eating meat products, are proscribed. Cathar society, governed by daily work, forbids several types of conduct, such as being violent, telling tales, taking an oath or making a solemn

affirmation (Roquebert, 2001: 41-48). Men and women are considered equal, and both can take part in the Cathar church activities. Fully immersed in their communities and villages, Good-Men and Good-Women peacefully spread their beliefs.

Being a Cathar in the 21st Century

The last Cathar (Guillaume Bélibaste), as mentioned earlier, disappeared in 1321. It is not until the religious wars of the 16th century that Cathar history reappears, in particular in Protestant books that provide parallel to their sufferings, and the reference to the *Bonshommes* - the Good-Men and the Good-Women.

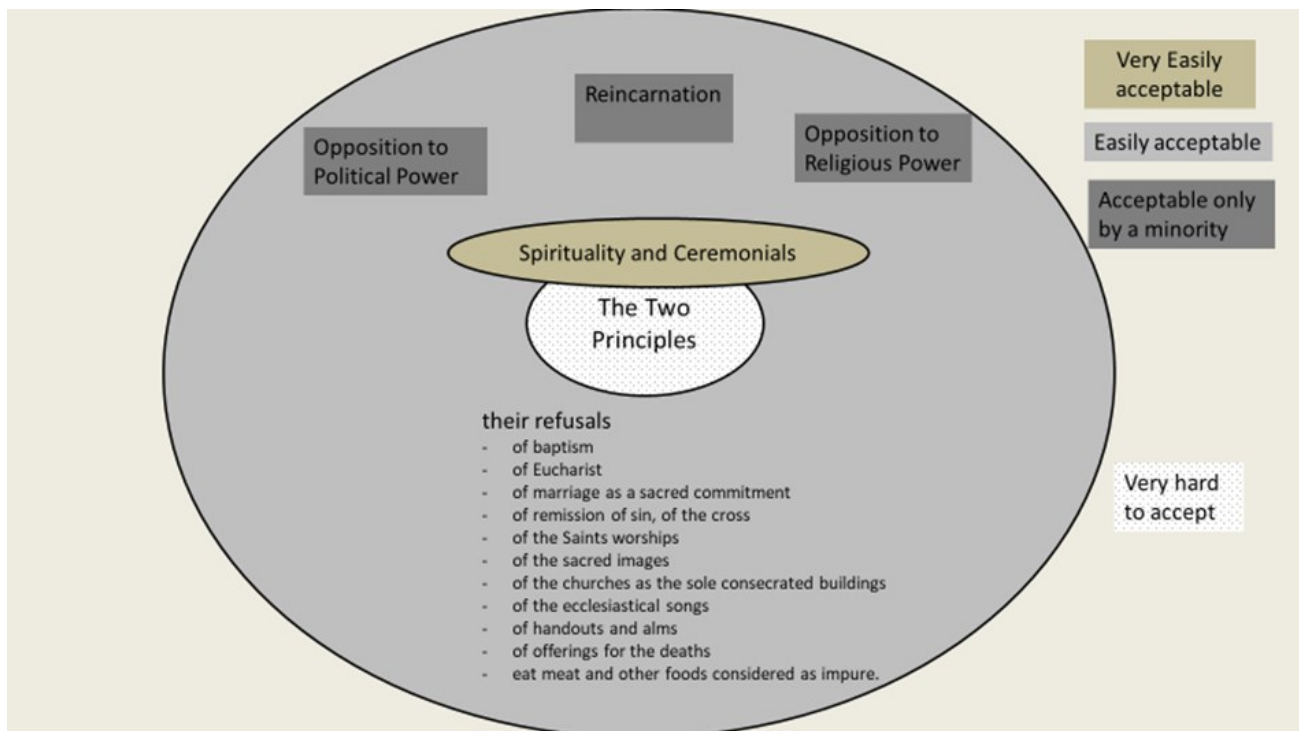
Progressively transformed into a myth between the 17th and 19th centuries by writers such as Napoleon Peyrat or Adolphe Garrigou, Catharism soon became a source of inspiration for religious, sectarian movements or adepts of occultism. On 1870, Jules Doisnel, also a freemason, created the *Eglise Gnostique Universelle (EGU)* which was condemned by the Vatican in 1891 after it was accused of spreading Manicheism in several countries. Intentionally, several symbols used by Doisnel created confusion: the EGU choose Monteseegur as its spiritual

centre and a major sacrament was called *Consolamentum*. The Eglise Gnostique Universelle still exists today. Several other churches - more or less inspired by Catharism were to follow - created by Peladan (the Kabbalistic Order of the Rose-Cross and the Order of the Rose-Cross Catholic and Esthetic of the Temple and Grail) or Papus, co-founder of Martinism (Rigouste,2001: 28-34).

The Cathars also inspired the research of the Nazi Otto Rahn who searched for the Grail in Montsegur (Bernadac, 1978). It also motivated strangers and outsiders looking for treasures, nature lovers imagining relationships between Catharism and Asian religions, adepts of mathematics keen to explore the geometry of Montsegur, and, of course, writers and filmmakers.

The 1960s to the 1980s corresponds to the advent of tourism. With the policy of decentralisation, the time came to explore the potential and originality of new territories and to take advantage of the treasures of cultural heritage. In terms of marketing, the names Cathar and Albigenses, are easily sellable and have the potential to attract tourists. The tourism industry, more particularly in the Languedoc-Roussillon region, mostly surviving on beach holidays, is now keen to

Figure 3: Acceptability of Characteristics of Catharism between 10th & 21st Centuries



Author's own Work

propose local and natural cultural heritage. It is a way to revive areas which suffer from a lack of industries and proper economies, and to empower and bring back pride to local people.

The departments of Aude and Ariège recently developed Cathar Trails. 224 km in length, the *Sentier des Bonshommes* (Good-Men trail) links Foix in Ariège to Berga in Catalogna (Spain) exploring valleys, mountains and castles. Other routes explore the Aude and reach the sea on the Languedoc-Roussillon coast.

Some travellers do have an interest in the cultural aspects of Catharism, while others prefer the spectacular landscape and nature of the Pyrenees and the excitement of the sportive challenge. Some even seek to join the communities that claim to be modern Cathars. However, when one claims in the 21st century to be a Cathar, the acceptance of the Two Principles and dualism is still a quality which is perhaps not so easy understood. Figure 3 compares and ranks the acceptable characteristics of Catharism in society between the 10th and the 21st century, whereby the 10th century is on the right (top), and the 21st below, ranging from very easily to very hard to accept.

The hypothesis is presented that only the Two Principles, meaning the acceptance of dualism, are very hard to accept. If we consider Catharism as a renovation of Christianity, it could be considered extremely attractive and could become popular again, given the torments the Catholic Church faces in France and elsewhere.

The Church's elder daughter has lost over 48% of her priests in 20 years. Most of them are over 65 years of age. Worse, only 4.5% of Catholics go to church at least once a month, compared to 20% in 1972. (Ouest France 2016). The cases of paedophilia, financial scandals, divisions within the Catholic Church's highest authorities, have all led to disenchantment. A Cathar church is home to all, and men and women are treated equally. Through this church, the spreading of anti-violent messages could become audible again, provided it abandons occultism and does not derive into a sectarian movement.

In territories that feel abandoned by central states, the opposition to Political Power or Religious Power could even be an incentive at a time when France suffers from a territorial fracture, while the Yellow Vest movement is active since November 2018. Rocked back and forth like a ship, facing the uncertainty of daily life, looking for new experiences in their quest for spirituality, some populations of undefined scale could adhere easily to the list of refusals drawn up by the Cathar faith, at least the ones presented by the registers of the Inquisition. Last but not least, tourism and pilgrimage may facilitate the rediscovery of the path and beliefs of the *Pure Christians*.

Conclusion

After centuries of research, specialists are still arguing who the Cathars really were, from whence they came and on many other aspects of their faith. The discovery of new documents, in particular in Spain, a country to which some Cathars may have escaped, would be welcome. The Cathar sources are so few, knowledge on their rituals so vague, that they open the door to (mis)interpretation of various kinds. To explore further the assertions of those who claim to follow the Cathar path, to be Cathars of the 21st century, would require much more fieldwork. Certainly, trails or even pilgrimages to Cathar sanctuaries would keep the memory of the religion alive and allow a boost in regional and cultural heritage tourism. In some territories, we may also wonder if rebirth of the heresy of the Year One Thousand could become a path to resilience.

References

- Albaret, Laurent. Le témoignage dans les procès d'Inquisition en France méridionale au XIII^{ème} siècle. Dans *Quête de soi, quête de vérité*, de Laurent Faggion et Laure Verdon, 27-43. Aix en Provence: Presses Universitaires de Provence, 2007.
- Aubarbier, Jean Luc. Les origines du catharisme. *Cadouin et l'hérésie cathare- XVIII^{ème} Conférence*. Cadouin: Les Amis de Cadouin, 2011: 4-8.
- Bernadac, Christian. *Le mystère Otto Rahn {Le Graal et Montségur}. Du catharisme au nazisme*. Paris: France-Empire, 1978.
- Bordes, Richard. L'Ordre cistercien et l'Affaire cathare. *Cadouin et l'hérésie cathare- XVIII^{ème} conférence*. Cadouin: Les Amis de Cadouin, 2011.
- Bozoky, E. Le livre secret des Cathares, Interrogatio Iohannis apocryphe d'origine bogomile. Thèse, Paris, 1976.
- Brenon, Anne. *Les Cathares*. Albin Michel, 2013.
- Brunn, Uwe. *Des contestataires aux Cathares*. Paris: Institut d'Etudes Augustiniennes, 2006.
- Calmette, Joseph. A. Dondaine, O. P. Un traité néo-manichéen du XIII^{ème} siècle. Le Liber de duobus principiis suivi d'un fragment de rituel cathare. (Institutum historicum PP. Praedicatorum Romae et S. Sabinae). Rome, Istituto storico domenicano. *Annales du Midi*, 1940: 211-213.
- Clédat, L. *Le Nouveau Testament traduit au XIII^{ème} siècle en langue provençale suivi d'un rituel cathare*. Reimp réimpr. Genève, Slatkine 1968. Paris: Nouveau Testament roman. Ms Palais des Arts 36 Bibl. mun. Lyon., 1887.
- Drakopoulos, Theofanis. L'unité de Bogomilo-Catharisme d'après quatre textes latins analysés à la lumière des sources byzantines. Thèse de doctorat: Univ. Genève, Genève, 2010.
- Duvernoy, Jean. *Le catharisme: la religion des Cathares*. Toulouse: Privat, 1992.
- Duvernoy, Jean.. *Le Catharisme en Languedoc in Poirier Sylvain, 2007, Le catharisme populaire selon le Registrum Inquisitionis de Jacques Fournier (1318-1325)*. s.d.
- Duvernoy, Jean.. *Le registre d'Inquisition de Jacques Fournier, évêque de Pamiers (1318-1325)*. Toulouse, 1965.
- Eymerich, N., et F Pena. *Le Manuel des Inquisiteurs*. 1376.
- Gaudemet, Jean. La législation religieuse de Constantin. *Revue d'histoire de l'Eglise de France*, 1947: 25-61.
- Havet, Julien. L'hérésie et le bras séculier au Moyen Âge jusqu'au treizième siècle. *Bibliothèque de l'école des chartes*, 1880: 570-607.
- Iogna-Prat, Dominique. Constructions Chrétiennes d'un Espace Politique. *Le Moyen Age*, 2001: 49-69.
- Jimenez-Sanchez, Pilar. *Les catharismes: Modèles dissidents du christianisme médiéval (XII^{ème}-XIII^{ème} siècles)*. Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2015.
- Laurendeau, Danielle. Cet évêque fait sortir la vérité même si cela ne plaît pas à ceux qui la dise: faire parler et savoir taire au tribunal d'Inquisition de Pamiers (1318-1325). Thèse, Montréal -Québec, 2008.
- Le Goff, Jacques. *La civilisation de l'Occident Médiéval*. Flammarion, 2008.
- Le Roy Ladurie, Emmanuel. Les Cathares, premiers chrétiens de gauche? <http://www.asmp.fr/>. 3rd August 2000. <https://academiciensciencesmoralesetpolitiques.files.wordpress.com/2018/07/10-030800.pdf> (accès le September 28th, 2019).
- Ouest France. L'église catholique : 15 000 prêtres, 30 000 religieux, 42 000 églises. <https://www.ouest-france.fr/>. 26th July 2016. <https://www.ouest-france.fr/faits-divers/attentat/leglise-catholique-15-000-pretres-30-000-religieux-42-000-eglises-4387930> (accès le December 31st, 2019).
- P. Dondaine, A. (*Jean de Lugio de Bergame*) *Un traité néo-manichéen du XIII^{ème} siècle, Le Liber de duobus principiis suivi d'un fragment de rituel cathare*. Rome: Istituto storico domenicano, 1939.
- Poirier, Sylvain. *Le Catharisme Populaire selon le Registrum Inquisitionis de Jacques Fournier (1318-1325)*. Thèse, Université de Montréal, 2007.
- Rigouste, Jean. La fantasmagorie cathare. *Cadouin et l'hérésie cathare- XX^{ème} colloque*. Cadouin: Association les Amis de Cadouin, 2001: 26-40.
- Roquebert, Michel. Le déconstructionnisme et les études cathares. Dans *Les Cathares devant l'Histoire*, de Martin Aurell, Anne Brenon et Christine Dieulafait, 105-133. Cahors: L'Hydre, 2005.
- Roquebert, Michel. Mouvement et doctrine cathares: L'exemplarité de Montségur (1204-1244). Dans *Religion et exclusion*, de Gabriel Audisio, 218. Aix en Provence: Presses Universitaires de Provence, 2001.
- Rouche, Michel. De l'Orient à l'Occident. Les origines de la tripartition fonctionnelle et les causes de son adoption par l'Europe chrétienne à la fin du Xe siècle. *Occident et Orient au Xe siècle*. Dijon: Actes des congrès de la Société des historiens médiévistes de l'enseignement supérieur, 1978. 31-49.
- Schmidt, C. *Histoire et doctrine de la secte des Cathares ou Albigeois*. Paris: J.Berluzier, 1849.
- Théry, Julien. L'hérésie des bons hommes. Comment nommer la dissidence religieuse non vaudoise ni béguine en Languedoc (XII^{ème}-début du XIV^{ème} siècle). *Heresis*, 2002: 75-117.
- Thomas, Yann. *Origine et Commune Patrie - Etude de droit public romain (89 av JC-212 ap JC)*. Rome: Ecole Française, 1996.
- Thouzellier, C. Un traité cathare inédit du début du XIII^{ème} siècle d'après le Liber contra manicheos de Durand de Huesca. *Cahiers d'Etudes Cathares*, 1962: 30-54.
- Venkeleer, T. Un recueil cathare, le manuscrit A 6 10 de la Collection vaudoise de Dublin. *Revue belge de philosophie et d'histoire*, 1960.
- Zerner, Monique. *Inventer l'hérésie*. Nice: CEM, 1998.