

ARTICLES

Concorezzo and Her Daughters: Some Cathar Churches of Northern Italy, their Doctrines, Myths and Organization

I. INTRODUCTION AND SCOPE OF THIS ARTICLE¹

By the end of the twelfth and the beginning of the thirteenth century, northern Italy was the *scene* of a well-organised movement affiliated to a larger spiritual movement which had spread across much of Europe. From Constantinople to León, from the Balkans to the Low Countries, there were dualist religionists called diversely 'Cathars', 'Bogomils', 'Paterenes' and 'Albigensians' who, despite diversities of teaching, ritual and internal organisation, constituted a network which, though loose, was coherent enough to be recognised as having a common basis for its many off-shoots.

This movement, although it was neither Orthodox nor Catholic, constituted a definable 'Alternative Church'. This Cathar ('pure') Church stood proudly aloof from the more accepted great bodies in communion with Rome or Constantinople. It tended

¹ This article substantially reproduces the author's thesis submitted (in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Masters of Letters) to the Department of History, Faculty of Arts, University of New England, Armidale, N.S.W., Australia in early 1986.

to be secretive even if its teaching was not precisely secret. It was thus not 'Gnostic', though its dualism and mythologies have affinities with more ancient movements so-called. It was not 'Manichaeism', for though its basic 'world view' was not unlike that of the followers of Mani (d.277), it differed in many details from theirs.² It did believe it had something exclusive to offer its followers which could bring them to true and eternal life, to what today we might call 'self-fulfilment'. Much of the teaching of these groups was based on a unique (and in some ways cleverly refreshing) interpretation of and gloss upon the New Testament *corpora* which bear the names of John and Paul. Much came from other sources, both biblical and extra-biblical. Some came from apocryphal books outside the canons of the Old and New Testaments. Much was philosophy and involved a fairly reasonable, logical exposition of principles, causes, effects and teleological consequences. And much was myth which involved elaborate and fantastic stories, sometimes featuring biblical personages in startling and novel roles.

Oldest and most consistent in prestige and numerical strength of these groups was the northern Italian Church of Concorezzo, a village near Monza, north-east of Milan. From her were founded all of the other Cathar Churches of Lombardy, Tuscany, Emilia and the Marches. She was the centre both of conflict and attempts to resolve it. She was the point of reference in doctrinal and disciplinary disputes and, though not always victorious in these internal Cathar hostilities, her staying power was great. And when persecution came she weathered the storm better than most of her daughters.

The medieval dualism held by *all Cathars* saw matter in general and the human body in particular as essentially *bad*, an outcome of the creative or manipulative process which featured Satan as its instigator and arch-fiend and certain 'fallen' angelic powers as his helpers. Matter proceeded from evil and progressed toward decay and (if clung to) damnation. Spirit, on the other hand, if linked to its source, the God on high or 'invisible Father',

² M. Loos, *Dualist Heresy in the Middle Ages* (F. Lewitowá, tr.), Prague, Academia, 1974, pp. 23-24; henceforth: *Loos, DHMA*.

was *good* in itself and could draw men and angels back to their true creature. However, for this process to be efficacious in the case of man a definitive, ascetic break with the material realm had to be made. This must involve a complete rejection of sexual pleasure, meat eating, swearing of oaths and physical violence. When this rejection had been made and ritually confirmed, full membership in the Alternative Church was effected and salvation after death attained. Jesus Christ, a purely spiritual being and son of the God who reigned above the highest heaven, came to earth to teach and demonstrate the means to the restored glory of the transformed and saved.

Preceding the various groups we call 'Cathars' were two Eastern movements, each quite distinct from the other, directly generative of the dualism just outlined. The Paulicians were an Armenian sect founded in the sixth century. They flourished in the easternmost parts of the Byzantine Empire until the ninth century. Many Paulicians were then forcibly resettled in Thrace and Macedonia. Doctrinally they were both dualists and iconoclasts.

The Paulicians rejected the hierarchy, sacraments, symbols and saints of the Eastern Orthodox Church and had a system of Church government based on the 'pastors and teachers' mentioned in the Epistle to the Ephesians.³ They were devoted to St. Paul, whose name they bore, and revered his writings above all others. Unlike other dualists, however, they made use of the matter they despised. They had no qualms about living a full, earthy life. Food, sexual commerce and self-preservation were their delights, and warfare their favourite game. They hated monasticism and poured scorn on celibacy, fasting, vigils and other rigours directed against the flesh by their Orthodox enemies.

As able and bellicose soldiers, the Paulicians not only fought to maintain their own freedom, they instigated discord between Christians and Muslims. The Byzantine authorities thought to put this fierceness to good use by transporting and resettling the Paulicians on the frontiers of Bulgaria. In all probability this

³ Eph. 4, 1.

Byzantine ruse merely resulted in contributing a further source of religious unrest to a troubled territory where another form of dualism was about to arise and flourish.⁴

Pop Bogomil (whose title and name mean simply 'priest' and 'beloved of God') sometime late in the ninth century, possibly among the Slavic elements of the Bulgarian population, founded a dualist Church which, while it admitted divine creation and oversight of the universe, stressed a great deal of diabolic manipulation of and dominance over things material.⁵ The teaching and followers of Bogomil spread from the Bulgarian domains of the south-east Balkans north and westward into Serbian territory and southward through Macedonia and Thrace to Constantinople and across the Bosphorus to Asia Minor. By the middle of the twelfth century the Bogomils constituted what was to become and remain the source and centre of the network of medieval dualism. Their loosely inter-related local communities had some divergence in doctrinal and mythological emphasis but common rites and a common sense of hostility towards the Orthodox Church. However, the *tactics* of Bogomil propagandists were strikingly different from the belligerence of the Paulicians or the secretiveness of the Cathars by now rising in the West. Bogomils often outwardly conformed with Orthodoxy. They entered monasteries, accepted sacramental ministrations of their foes and in general disguised themselves in order to further their own cause.⁶

In all probability dualist ideas, remotely Paulician and more proximately Bogomil in origin, were brought by Crusaders and merchants who had been in Byzantium, through Greece and the Balkans into northern Italy around the year 1150. Already the grave-digger Marco had had contact with dualism in the region of Naples. What he brought back to Concorezzo where he settled as Cathar Bishop in the 1160's was reinforced (and perhaps distorted) by an eminent emissary from Constantinople whose mysterious presence and re-ordering of the Italian and Languedocian groups was to cause confusion at the time and some perplexity ever since. This man should probably be called '*Niketas*' (he is

⁴ Loos, *DHMA*, pp. 32-39.

⁵ D. Obolensky, *The Bogomils*, Cambridge, University Press, 1948, praes. pp. 119-125; henceforth, Obolensky *B*.

⁶ Obolensky *B* p. 199. Cf. Loos, *DHMA* pp. 71 and 81.

styled variously 'Papa Nicetas' and 'Papaniquinta' in Latin documents), and he can be credited with introducing doubt, conflict and schism onto the northern Italian scene.

The disturbances which took place in the sixties and seventies of the twelfth century in regions as far apart as the Duchy of Milan and the County of Toulouse have to do with that elusive factor of dualist policy called *ordo*. *Ordo* can mean a scheme of government, a succession in ministry, a doctrinal stance or a regional grouping. It is in effect a western way of referring to an Eastern reality. Curiously the groups in the West have no reluctance in substituting the more ideologically manageable term 'Church' for themselves. The *ordines* of the Bogomils are described some sixty or more years later as those of Dragovitsa, Bulgaria and Sclavonia. When one was out of favour, another would be in, in northern Italy and provide a spiritual ancestry that bolstered the rivalry between the two principal Churches (Concorezzo and Desenzano) and made for dissension among all the others such as Spoleto, Florence, Verona, Bagnolo, Orvieto and the Marches.⁷

Part of the conflict was doctrinal; part of it was disciplinary. The doctrinal element centred around the difference between what have come to be called 'absolutist' and 'monarchist' dualisms. The 'absolute' school holds that *Good* and *Evil* are two eternal metaphysical principles both uncreated, each personified and claiming to be *God*. The 'monarchist' school holds to only one true God and sees a rival to him in a creature who can claim the highest angelic status and even divine sonship, Satan. But the Evil One is not coequal or even coeval with the Good. Whether or not the controversies and divisions caused by these differences of Cathar theological outlook were as grave as thirteenth century Catholic commentators and twentieth century scholars would have us believe is a question open to considerable discussion.

The difficulties of the two tendencies are not overcome but maybe to a certain extent side-stepped by an investigation of Cathar preaching. The greatest possibility of material to be found

⁷ A. Dondaine in *Archivum Fratrum Praedicatorum* (henceforth: AFP) XX (1950), p. 308. Cf. R. I. Moore *Origins of European Dissent*, London, Allen Lane, 1977, pp. 208-212; henceforth: Moore *OED*.

is contained in the long anti-heretical tract *Summa contra Haereticos* ascribed to Praepositinus of Cremona.⁸ Here are exposed an immense number of Cathar arguments on such varied subjects as the nature and person of Christ, the possibility of salvation, the evil character of the God of the Old Testament and multi-aspectual arguments on what was for Cathars the dichotomy of matter and spirit in the life of man. Each of these arguments is met with an attempted Catholic rejoinder which often misses the mark, because a metaphysical Cathar question is given a moral (or moralistic) Catholic answer or because objectivity is countered with subjectivity or vice versa. The curious and telling aspect of the entire process, however, is that the issues of 'absolute' versus 'monarchist' dualism are never raised. A partial conclusion to such an analysis must be that if what the *Summa* represents is a series of homiletic texts, the *public* preaching of Cathars in northern Italy, where the author (if he is Praepositinus) most probably heard the sermons, did not concern itself with the internal conflicts of the movement but with the attempts to make converts and give general instruction to adherents.

However much we might search out and discover the biblical texts of probable Praepositinus or any other source for light on the public stance of Cathar preachers, our view of Cathar teaching would be very incomplete without a look at Cathar myths. All religious and world views need a source of self-explanation which either transcends or in some lesser manner violates the rules of rational discourse and the would-be 'factual' presentation of general accepted truths. In the circle of initiates, Cathars sought far more than the doctrine offered by the textual manipulations, however quaint and exotic, on which popular preaching was based. If the sum total of mythological presentations still preserved for our perusal falls far short in verbal volume from that of the veritable plethora of scriptural texts in common Cathar use, it may not be wrong to surmise that the importance for instruction of the myths was in inverse proportion to their literary length.

To enter the world of myth is to enter a realm of symbol, a realm not concerned with time and space. This is a realm where

⁸ J. N. Garvin and J. A. Corbett, *The Summa contra Haereticos ascribed to Praepositinus of Cremona*. Notre Dame, University Press, 1958, henceforth: Garvin and Corbett *SCHPC*.

the bizarre, the miraculous, the awe-inspiring and the cataclysmic meet. The characters of myth range from the Almighty One himself to fecund serpents and include numerous varieties of angels, good and bad, strong and weak human beings, at one moment reduced to almost chthonic puppetry and the next recapturing by-gone glory with an ease that makes us wonder how it was ever lost. Four protagonists play the role found in all Cathar myths: God on high (the 'invisible Father'), Satan (sometimes the 'Elder Son') the Word of God (appearing in time as Jesus Christ, sometimes Satan's 'Younger Brother', always 'Son of God') and Man (whether male or female or androgynous, always fallen but ever capable of recapturing his or her original spiritual status). The battles of rejection and deception vary in the telling, but all imaginable creation becomes involved: heavens above (often seven in number), firmaments and oceans of water on earth and in the sky; sun and moon and stars; rain and sleet and morning dew; the lowest hells of ice and fire; ineffable cherubin and seraphim; paradises of fertility and deserts of bleakness; all making up a cosmos where the mythological characters can play their assigned parts. Yet this world of myth is not meant as the land of a far-off, arcane objectivity. Rather it is an inward landscape. It is the realm of self-discovery which explains to every Cathar familiar with it his or her origin, status, means of liberating release and final end.

Beyond Cathar doctrine as once publicly preached and Cathar myth as privately held and put to use lies another area that needs be seen for a right perception of Cathar life. This is the area of the hierarchical substructure in its probably gradual development. The government of Cathar Churches always remained local, but it is probable that it became more elaborate as time went on. Some of the models for this conjectured development bear superficial likeness to Catholic and Orthodox counterparts. Titles like 'bishop' and 'deacon' attest to this. However, on a deeper level we are dealing with something very different from any conventional Christian organisational paradigm, whether of medieval or other temporal manifestation. Inherent in the Cathar set-up is an elusive liturgical imperative which makes certain functions (perhaps obscurely based on Cathar myth or of utility in a scheme of

things approaching the esoteric) the viable means of reassuring a community that prides itself on its own peculiarity, its truly 'alternative' status.

The episcopal office among Cathars is not that of an isolated local bishop on his own, much less that of a member of a college of equals subordinated to Pope or Patriarch. It is rather a three-fold and yet self-perpetuating ministry. At the top is the bishop, locally supreme and unquestioned as pure, holy and authentic representative of an historic *ordo*. Directly below him is his successor-designate, somewhat like a Catholic bishop-coadjutor with right of succession. In the event of the death or falling away from Cathar purity or possible change of doctrinal stance of the bishop, this person will automatically succeed him. He bears the title of *filius major*, elder son. Under the *filius major* is his 'coadjutor with right of succession', the *filius minor*. There are no Cathar priests. There is nothing like a Chapter of Canons seated in a semi-circle round the bishop. But bishop and *fili major* and *minor* form both a sort of diocesan council and a court of appeal. And they are surrounded by a prelatial reverence reminiscent of their Catholic and Orthodox counterparts of such high rank.⁹

In the developed Catharism of Concorezzo and her daughters at the turn of the twelfth to the thirteenth century another ministerial function was needed. The Cathars had territorial local Churches but they had no church buildings. They met in various isolated groups within the area of the local church, ideally an area with 'boundaries' coinciding with those of the 'diocese' of Catholics or Orthodox in the same region. The bishop, *filius major* and *filius minor* though like all Cathars much given to travel -Cathar life was a state of incessant pilgrimage in search of the fellowship of believers and ministrations to would-be proselytes-could not visit all their flock with the frequency necessary if certain rites were to be performed according to periodic needs and demands. In Catharism as in Catholicism and Orthodoxy there were deacons, men of a lesser but essential hierarchic rank. The deacons were given to preaching popular sermons but were needed also for the monthly rites of confessing faults and asking pardon. It is not a question of the deacons pronouncing something

⁹ Loos, *DHMA*, pp. 267-268.

analogous to the sacramental absolution which priests among their rivals gave. It is rather one of their presiding over the prayers that asked for divine forgiveness. The effect of these prayers was considered to be limited as truly grave sins excluded those who committed them from Cathar membership altogether.

Lest it seem that there were four grades of Cathar 'clergy' and by implication all Cathars not in these grades were 'laity', it should be stressed that such a distinction is foreign to both the Cathar outlook and the set up of the Cathar Churches. Membership in these groups in the strict sense was limited to the initiated. Their initiation made this class the equivalent of clerics, something like monks or nuns. All who had received the *Consolamentum* were truly 'set apart' from the world at large and from mere seekers and believers in Cathar doctrine who had not yet acted fully on their belief.

As we have seen, to be a Cathar in the full and real sense was to have renounced marriage and all overt sexual expression and was to live an ascetic life of prayer and fasting, with total abstinence from meat. It was also to abstain from oath-taking and from all physical violence. To be an authentic Cathar probably involved for most concerned a balance life of solitude and seclusion for certain periods and (for male initiates at least) other times of wandering preaching, teaching, convert making and working for the final step of 'consoling' the believers who had contracted to become full members towards the end of their lives or on their death-beds. All 'consóled' men and women were capable of performing these ministrations and did so frequently. All of them likewise were objects of a veneration of their persons, through the profound bow or genuflection which was called the *meliormentum* (the 'bettering') and was at once a prayer for blessing and perseverance and an acknowledgment of the inherent good attained already by an authentic Cathar. All the bishops, *fili* and deacons had long since come to this initiation, and in many ways all who came to it were equal.

In what follows we shall attempt to see just what was the content of bible-based Cathar preaching, openly and boldly given to all who would accept it. We shall then try and show through

one specific myth, the so-called *Secret Supper*, how symbolism, imagination and interior endeavour blended in the Cathar struggle for transcendence and personal fulfilment, conceived of beyond time and this present life. Finally, looking more closely at the Cathar organisation, its officers, its members and the persons towards whom it reached out, we shall try to see how doctrine and myth when applied to life give a sense of stability and satisfaction, and how the failure in this attempt could make for fragmentation, disillusion and the need for fresh starts.

To attain to their goals and to bolster their hope, the Cathars of Concorezzo and elsewhere in northern Italy chose an 'alternative' way. It was a way of risk. It became in time a way of danger, through external persecution, and a way of bewilderment, through internal discord in a variety of options and reactions. Yet about this way for those who held to it there must have been something of great beauty and delight, something at once poetic and ontic, arabesque in flights of imagination but imbued with a deep force within. To put it in the argot of today's Black Americans, the Cathars had 'soul'!

II. SOME POSSIBLE CATHAR HOMILETIC TEXTS AND THEIR CATHOLIC CRITIQUE

The *Summa Contra Haereticos* is a work assigned by its most recent editors to the last years of the twelfth and the first years of the thirteenth century. It is a long, rambling disquisition often in the form of contrived debate directed against the well-known Cathars of the period (of no specified location) and the much more obscure 'Pasagini', a group of medieval neo-judaizers whose activities were restricted to Lombardy and a few other regions of northern Italy.¹⁰ Many scholars attribute this work to Praepositinus of Cremona, who in the 1190's engaged in preaching campaigns against the Cathars, possibly over an extensive area ranging from his native Italian City in the south as far north as Mainz, where he became Cathedral prebendary and master of the episcopal school in 1194. Praepositinus was a papal judge-delegate in the early years of the reign of Innocent III and served

¹⁰ Cf. Garvin and Corbett *SCHPC*, pp. xiii-xv.

as Chancellor of the University of Paris from 1206 to 1209. His authenticated works show a predilection for the title '*Summa*'. They include a *Summa de Officiis*, a *Summa super Psalterium* and even a *Summa Theologica*. He is utterly uninfluenced by neo-Aristotelianism, and as a scripture-quoting theological Augustinian, he had great influence on the early Franciscan school and its great masters, Alexander of Hales and St. Bonaventure.¹¹

There is good reason to believe that a person of Praepositinus' background and experience would not only write part of a *Summa* against the Cathars, but that he would base his arguments on his own preaching and that of his foes. It is far-fetched to imagine Cathars debating in the episcopal school at Mainz or the then newly-erected *aulae* of the University of Paris. It is not hard to imagine a middle-aged Italian secular priest of almost insatiable curiosity about all things scriptural and theological taking notes during public Cathar sermons in northern Italian or Franco-Provençal city squares or even in modest farm-villages and market towns. Nor is it hard to imagine this same man replying to a sermon heard with a sermon preached, in a desire to recover for the Catholic fold the sheep who had strayed towards what he must have considered the drooling jaw of the Cathars.

Certainly the work, though including much discussion at cross-purposes based on the sands of divergent hypotheses which result from two completely different sets of presuppositions, has about it a freshness and even a fairness, a willingness to listen and to fight back only on basis of what has been said, all of which are rare in medieval polemic. Where the work falls down is in its axe-grinding prolixity and in the rather naive assumption that a world-view as complex as that of late twelfth century Catharism can be refuted or even very much upset by quoting a few proof-texts from scripture or borrowing a random distinction from the lecture halls of scholastic philosophy.

The *Summa Contra Haereticos* is some twenty-seven uneven chapters long. Only five of these chapters deal with Catharism:

¹¹ Cf. F. L. Cross and E. A. Livingston, *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, Oxford, University Press 1977, p. 1114; vid. etiam J. N. Garvin in *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, New York, McGraw-Hill, 1966. Vol. XI, p. 680.

the first four and the fourteenth. The work abounds in quotations from scripture, over a thousand all told. Such an arsenal is formidable even by medieval standards, but it is by no means atypical. The way texts are placed in the course of the would-be polemic of proselytizing Cathars and defensive Catholics is, however, telling. It is more the array of the preacher engaged in an impassioned sacred rhetoric than that of the professor calmly instructing his circle of scholars. The author seems more interested in saving souls than in teaching minds.

As an author, 'presumed Praepositinus' is very sure of himself. Although he rambles somewhat from source and topic to topic, he never argues against anything but what he would claim Cathars have actually said. In this his whole approach is refreshingly different from that of the majority of Catholic apologists of his time and of subsequent periods. These tended, as did many an Inquisitor in grimmer contexts, to take for granted that the 'heresy' of the Cathars was to be equated on a one-to-one basis with the Manichaean errors refuted by St. Augustine eight hundred or more years before.¹² Our author is much more concerned to expose what Catharism is really about than what it might possibly be identified with, although he does state that those who were once called 'Manichees' are in his day called 'Cathars'.¹³

While the author 'starts off on the right foot' by showing Cathars to hold that the true, almighty and transcendent God created only things invisible and spiritual, and that a false 'god' of shadows (Satan) has created whatever is visible and corporeal, his difficulties arise when he tries to pin-point and argue against the 'good' of the first and the 'evil' of the second. For Cathars 'good and evil' are basic stances in the realm of being, qualities adhering to nature or, better, *natures* as such. Thus they can be 'principles', either adhered to or rejected, but self-subsistent regardless of creaturely whim. If, for instance, material creation is said to be 'bad' this does not imply for Cathar thinkers any wrong choice or false judgment. It means, rather, that matter proceeds from an evil source, that its bad nature is perceivable

¹² For an extensive and reasoned series of attacks on the glib methods of medieval heresy-hunters vid. Moore *OED*, pp. 30, 67-69, praes. 141-146, 179.

¹³ Garvin and Corbett *SCHPC*, p. 3.

in its ongoing use, and that as an end it cannot be good, for it remains opaque to goodness defined as spirit.

Throughout the five anti-Cathar chapters of his work, the author will consistently state or imply an altogether different analysis of good and evil, which he will ascribe to his own, Catholic, side of the argument. For the author, the goodness of the *nature of things* is taken for granted, for one God (who is not only good but goodness itself) created them all. There is, in other words, a 'metaphysical good' corresponding to that of the Cathars but much broader in its application. 'Evil' for the Catholic author is not looked upon (as it could be in a monist system) as the deprivation, limitation or frustration of the good. It is looked upon rather as the result of *free acts of choice* involving malice, misdirection, yielding to temptation and sin. In other words, throughout the work evil is not 'metaphysical' but 'moral'. Grace, then, a sort of 'booster' to lift above evil, can be applied and utilized when there is a change of will for the better. Sin (with its imputation of guilt) will always involve, on the contrary, a change of will for the worse.

In the first chapter the author will try to make clear that to distinguish two 'gods', the New Testament Father of Jesus as good and the Old Testament maker of matter as bad, is to distort the message and import of both Testaments and, importantly, to neglect the possibilities of option and change in analysing human conduct. The Cathar arguments will look at what Catholics call 'original sin', at the knowledge of good and evil, at the universal perversity of human thought and at the fickleness and inconstancy of the God presented in Genesis and Exodus and find all human troubles to be derived from the evil genius of the creator of matter, Satan, parading himself as God. Catholic replies will not only impute malice to man but, as it were, 'give the devil his due' in a three-tier analysis of the 'words': the first of which is sublime and transcendent, forever light, pure and beyond human experience; the second of which is subhuman, shadowy, catastrophic and dirty, layered with clouds and darkness; and the third of which is written in the heart of man who in his fallen state is a sinner given over to 'worldliness', clinging to the second and

third world because the first is for the moment unattainable. Satan is 'Prince' of the second and third worlds.¹⁴

Perhaps the most telling section in the early parts of the first chapter deals with the parable (or metaphor) of 'trees' in the classic text of Matthew 7, 18:

'Every good tree brings forth good fruit, and the evil tree brings forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can an evil tree bring forth good fruit.'

The Cathar interpretation is that it is the nature of good trees to bear good fruit. The just man is sinless for he is of the seed of God. Bad trees bear bad fruit. Sinners neither know nor see, much less love, God. They issue from bad seed. Theirs is a bad creator, someone other than God, namely, Satan. It is implied then that 'trees' are men, 'fruits' the outcome of their lives, 'seed' what causes men to resemble God or Satan.

The Catholic analysis of the same verse is very different. 'Tree' does not equal man, good or evil. 'Tree' is the tendency or direction of the human will. So the parable means: 'A good will is so directed towards a good end that nothing bad can result from it.' The motive force of goodness is charity, implanted by God. 'Tree' is a person only in light of his works not of his nature. A 'good tree' comes from good soil, 'faith in Christ'. The 'tree' planted in faith is preserved from sin. 'Evil tree' means 'evil intention', 'evil will' 'evil man' or simply vice.¹⁵

If we are dealing with two sermons here, both based on the same text, it must be admitted that the Cathar is better propounded, has more internal logic and comes to a neater conclusion. The Catholic reply, if it was preached, was probably given at a later date. It tries to outdo the Cathar arguments in hermeneutic skill (deft commentary and explanation) but so complicates itself in the interpretation of imagery as to leave us wondering to what or whom 'tree' refers. We are tempted to surmise: 'to anything other than what Cathars claim'!

¹⁴ Garvin and Corbett *SCHPC*, p. 16.

¹⁵ Garvin and Corbett *SCHPC*, p. 17.

As the chapter progresses, the author shows himself skillfully subtle while trying to expose his Cathar foe as obtuse. Phrases from scripture, easy on the ear, are given difficult and fortuous interpretations. 'Rebirth' in John's Gospel is subject, for instance, to a fivefold distinction there being three types of birth, 'birth *from* God': baptismal regeneration, secret inspiration and predestination; a 'birth *in* God' whose subject is fed by the milk of the Church; a 'birth *of* God' where partaking of the solid bread of doctrine is attained.¹⁶ 'Flesh' is seen two ways: Cathar 'body itself'; Catholic 'body subject to sin'. Other scriptural images are invoked to distinguish the 'blunt' cathar from the 'sharp' Catholic.

A second section of the first chapter consists of nearly thirty Catholic arguments against the Cathar denial of direct creation of material things ascribed by Catholics to God. Such diverse subjects as the nature and state of primordial matter, the devil's inability to turn stones to bread in Christ's temptation, the divine permission for sun to shine and rain to fall; the diversity of the sexes; Adam's filiation to God; the inside and outside of 'cups', symbolising man; the Word as maker of 'all'; knowing the invisible through the visible; God's intimate dealing with man; all foods as licit and, therefore, good; God as maker of all that is in the sky, on earth and sea and, therefore; of 'bodies'; heaven, God's throne, and earth; his footstool; and swearing by and giving adoration to God alone are dealt with on basis of a series of New Testament texts as Cathars are believed to reject the Old Testament *in toto*. This last statement is not precisely true, but they were most selective in their *use* of it and rejected more than they accepted.

The second chapter deals with two pre-christian themes. Cathars are intent on showing that by its nature and content the Law given to Moses and recorded in the first five books of the Bible is a gift of the Prince of Darkness and not of the true God. They also claim that no-one before Christ was saved. To bear out these contentions the Cathars point to the inherent cruelty of many Old Testament precepts, to things carnal as a constant and prime concern of the Law and to the spirit of spite and ven-

¹⁶ Garvin and Corbett *SCHPC*, p. 18.

geance with which it was given and proclaimed. They contrast this with the non-resistance to evil commanded by Christ, his injunction to love our enemies, his forbidding of divorce (which the Old Law permits) and various Pauline and Petrine quips on the darkness and unobservability of the Law of Moses. As to salvation, Cathars deny 'faith' (by which alone can anyone be saved) to John the Baptist, the last 'Old Testament' prophet. Man's zeal for the sake of God's kingdom is observable only after the Baptist's death. Christ founded his Church on Peter. Before that it did not exist. Jesus himself has called all of his predecessors liars and thieves. Paul explicitly states that no one can be saved by 'works of the Law' which have neither values for cleansing, according to the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, nor acceptance in the sight of God.

Each of these arguments receives a brief Catholic answer and the second part of the chapter gives lengthier and occasionally less direct Catholic replies. As the character, personality and role of John the Baptist are of great importance for medieval spirituality in general and the source of a great deal of Cathar rejection of the Catholic position, it is worthwhile looking at both the Cathar and Catholic arguments centered on him.

John the Baptist is the link accepted by Catholics and rejected by Cathars between the two Testaments. He also features in both Byzantine and Western spirituality as the idealised prototype of the Christian hermit, an ascetic of extreme severity of life and customs and a sharp critic of moral decadence at every social level. Following Luke's Gospel medieval Christians considered him to be not only the precursor but the close relative of Jesus. Scathing Cathar attacks on him as a representative of evil were subject to a reaction of dismay, distress and horror, for to attack the Baptist was to attack a member of the intimate entourage of Christ. He was the man who baptised the Lord, who pointed him out and who virtually handed over to Jesus a number of his first and foremost disciples.

The Cathars attack John the Baptist first for doubting, since from prison he sent a message to Jesus to ask if Jesus was the 'one to come' or had 'we' to wait for someone else.¹⁷ Now doubt-

¹⁷ Mt. 11, 2-3.

ing is displeasing to God for it is the opposite of believing, and only faith pleases him.¹⁸ Further, Jesus calls John less than the least in the Kingdom.¹⁹ It follows he is excluded from it. He is not a member of Christ, and so he is damned.

The Catholic reply is that John did not doubt. His disciples (the 'we' referred to) did. He sent his question to Christ to build up *their* faith. As he himself had pointed out Jesus as 'Lamb of God' and taker away of the world's sins, he must have believed in Jesus as Christ.²⁰ 'Less than the least' means as regards human opinion in the Church now, for Christ is 'greater' having 'increased' while John 'decreased'. On the other hand 'less' can mean 'humbler' or 'not as recent' or 'as compared with highest heaven' or 'not yet arrived', being still in this life of on-going misery. As can be seen, whatever is said for or against the Cathar argument, the Catholic reply with its contradictory options is hardly convincing. It is a good example, however, of how the author thinks that multiplying statements (regardless of what they mean) makes for a better proof.

The Cathars quote Jesus as saying that the Kingdom of Heaven has been taken by force from the days of John the Baptist until the (then) present.²¹ 'Merit' must have been initiated when this force availed. If there was no merit before, then neither was there any salvation. So the days of John the Baptist had to be over for anyone to be saved.

The Catholic reply to this argument is that the *greatest degree* of merit and force come after John the Baptist. There was *some* before him, but few and rare were those who from the vast multitude of humanity could attain it. Or we could say that the force to enter heaven was contemporaneous with both John and Christ, and at that time the door to the Kingdom of Heaven opened and people began to enter it.

As can be seen, this second chapter is one of the weakest in the work and the talking at cross-purposes of Cathars and Ca-

¹⁸ Heb. 11, 6.

¹⁹ Mt. 11, 11.

²⁰ Jn. 1, 29.

²¹ Mt. 11, 12.

tholic is acutely evident. However, if the material in question is truly homiletic, if we are dealing with what were originally sermon texts and elaborations based on them, the chapter makes more sense. The dogmatic stance of Cathars is clear: the Old Testament and all *in* and *of* it are bad and wrong. The Catholic author, realising a greater clarification and better 'proof' of his dogmatic attitude of the acceptance of both Testaments as canonical scripture and divine revelation, feels rightly compelled to write more. Thus he adds what follows on Christ's witness to his own acceptance of and fulfilment of the Old Testament seen, albeit, more in terms of prophecy than of Law. The section follows a few more short arguments mainly from Matthew and the Pauline corpus.²²

In arguing that Christ accepted the Old Testament, our author first shows him in numerous places to quote from it with obvious approval. In the Matthaean temptation narrative Jesus quotes Deuteronomy thrice. Questioned on the nature of salvation he quotes Exodus and Deuteronomy enumerating various of the commands of the Decalogue, all Old Law injunctions, and seen as reckoned good and holy by him. He surely would not thus approve of words of Satan, nor would he call anyone 'God' other than the good God. Therefore, the good God who is Christ's Father must be the author of the entire Law.

The author goes from this argument into one on the intimate but 'Old Testament' relatives of Jesus, Elizabeth and Zechariah and their son, John the Baptist, now looked at from the point of view of the texts relating to his conception and birth, texts sprinkled with adjectives and phrases such as 'holy', 'just', 'great', 'filled with the Holy Spirit'. Turning to the Virgin Mary, who scrupulously obeys the Old Law in the matter of the Presentation, and to Old Testament prophecy in the return to Galilee, the author argues this Law must be from the good God for the things in it are performed by the Mother of Christ.

Again and again Jesus talks fully approvingly of precepts of the Law, of the prophets and messengers, of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, even of 'Moses and the prophets' as rightful guides. He

²² Garvin and Corbett, *SCHPC*, pp. 23-26.

calls their God, 'God of the Living,' a term he would hardly apply to Satan, and it can be plainly deduced from these sayings of Christ that he held many characters of the Old Testament to be saved.²³

In John's Gospel, Jesus, speaking to the Jews, equates 'my Father' with 'he one you call your God'. Not only Jesus himself but his most admired follower in the eyes of the Cathars, Paul, approves of the Old Testament calling it 'Word of God' and Holy Scripture. Paul speaks of Abraham as 'justified', of the Law and its percepts as 'holy, just and good'²⁴ as 'spiritual.'²⁵ In the post-Pauline work associated with Paul's name in the middle ages, the Epistle to the Hebrews, Moses is called 'a faithful member of God's household'²⁶ and Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are described as 'faithful.'²⁷

In the Acts of the Apostles, the Christian proto-martyr Stephen calls the God who called Abraham 'God of Glory', no apt title for Satan.²⁸ In the same book, Paul replies to Jewish accusations by saying he retains his belief in the whole Law and the prophets,²⁹ something he could not be expected to say of a revelation of Satan. In the Epistle of Jude, Jesus is said to have saved the Israelites from Egypt in which case he is the very God of the Old as well as of the New Testament.³⁰

With a few more quotes from Revelation, James and Matthew, the author sums up his argument that Jesus both taught the Law of Moses to be from God, and that many Old Testament personages right down to John the Baptist were not only admirable but among the saved of the heavenly Kingdom. This latter part of chapter II constitutes one of the most skillfully written passages of the whole work attributed to Praepositinus. It is not hard to imagine it as the condensation of a series of anti-Cathar sermons which may have been successfully convincing.

²³ Lk. 20. 37-38 Cf. Ex. 3, 2.

²⁴ Rom. 7, 12.

²⁵ Rom. 7, 14.

²⁶ Heb. 3, 5-6.

²⁷ Heb. 11, 13.

²⁸ Acts 7, 2-3 Cf. Gen. 12, 1.

²⁹ Acts 24, 14.

³⁰ Jude 5-6.

In Chapter III the author turns to the ancient theological controversy occasioned by Docetism, the teaching that Christ merely 'appeared' to have a body and dwell in the material world as a member of it. After considering and briefly replying to each Cathar argument, the author has a lengthy two-fold section on the earthly risen body of Christ.

All the Cathar arguments turn on the dualist concept of spirit. In considering this we have to bear in mind a certain ambiguity in terminology which lends itself to varied and highly discrepant interpretations of 'spirit' and 'things spiritual'. 'Spirit' in the intertestamentary era and in the Pharisaic tradition of late Judaism, as well as in the Pauline tradition of early Christianity, can often be assumed as a synonym for 'reality' especially in the sense of something lasting or transcendent. When all else is gone or shorn away, 'spirit' remains. By the thirteenth century, however Christian thinkers tended to think in terms of the dichotomy which became sacrosanct with the Cathars; that of 'spirit/matter'. The implications of this sharply defined differentiation of exclusive categories are very much in contrast (and possible conflict) with the earlier 'spirit/flesh' distinction which reduces itself easily to an appraisal of contrary realities of 'lasting/transient' or, more sublimely 'eternal/temporal' categories, at most contrary and far from being exclusive, admirable in many natural and supernatural composites including the being of man.

Cathar arguments will use any New Testament text utilising the word 'spirit' (however far-fetched the context may be for their purpose) to 'prove' Christ was 'spiritual' and, therefore, devoid of matter. What was in Mary's womb was 'of the spirit',³¹ for instance, and thus not 'of the flesh'. Catholics 'solve' this by stating *in* and *of* are not the same. Christ was related to Mary in both ways, in the first *in* her womb by action of the Holy Spirit, secondly *from* her body in virtue of her bearing him forth in childbirth.³²

Taking scenes from the Gospels Cathars will deny Christ's acknowledgment of any filiation to Mary and affirm his ability

³¹ Mt. 1. 18.

³² Garvin and Corbett, *SCHPC*, p. 46.

to walk on water. They note his ability to pass through the hostile crowd at Nazareth unscathed and the alteration of his face in the Transfiguration, as well as the ability he exercised of vanishing at will after the Resurrection appearance. They make much of the Pauline vocabulary of 'likeness' and they end by saying, in effect, a physical body would have been unfitting for Jesus, since all things material are bad and of diabolic origin. Each of these arguments is countered by the author with Catholic distinctions, stressing, on the one hand, spiritual qualities in Christ's relationships with his mother and his disciples and, on the other, a certain domination over the transformation of matter by Christ in the events mentioned. The Catholic opponents rightly accuse the Cathars of a less-than-thorough reading and analysis of Paul for whom 'likeness' means 'sharing common qualities with' or even 'concretely identified with a thorough and rightly appraised manifestation' and, therefore, applied to 'flesh', 'being truly human in all dimensions universally proper to humanity: having a real body and real soul'.³³

The Catholic apology-at-length which follows leans heavily on texts from Matthew, Luke and John to show how throughout his life on earth and even after his Resurrection, Jesus was immersed in material surroundings and concerns which required truly physical presence for him to act. He fell asleep. He ate and drank. He died and rose again. Before any of this he was conceived, born, circumcised. He grew. All these things are bodily in purpose or scope. In his agony he sweated blood, a most physical thing. He was, moreover, 'Word made flesh' and referred to 'the Temple of his body'. The bread he gives is his flesh. His flesh and blood are food and drink. He was upset on occasion and wept at the death of his friend, Lazarus. At the Last Supper he was perturbed.³⁴ In all these Gospel occurrences Jesus is seen as having had and having been required to have true, bodily humanity, the reality of which was perceived by others enough commented on or alluded to by himself.

Nine Pauline and three Petrine quotations are used by Catholics in further reply. Jesus is described as 'of the seed of David',

³³ Garvin and Corbett *SCHPC* p. 50.

³⁴ Jn. 1, 14; 3, 6; 16, 28; 1, 10; 2, 19; 2, 21; 4, 6; 6, 51-56; 11, 33-35; 13, 21-22.

as 'dead', and 'risen', as 'justifying sinners by his blood', as 'Lord of the living and the dead' (in a sense that implies his having intimately participated in the status of both), as blessed 'according to the flesh' above all forever. His redeeming work is described as 'redemption through his blood', 'bringing the far-off close by his blood', 'reconciling in the flesh of his body through his death' those who were former enemies. All of these phrases³⁵ expressly point to physical being.

In the Epistle to the Hebrews we read that 'in the days of his flesh' Jesus was heard by God because in prayer he made himself known in 'loud cries and tears'. We read that 'a body was given to him', that he 'suffered in the flesh to remit sins on the cross' and that all he did for man's good was by means of the physical body he assumed.³⁶ To clinch his argument, the author quotes the First Letter of John to the effect that every spirit confessing Christ to have come 'in the flesh' is from God, all others being the 'seducer' or 'Anti-Christ'.³⁷

The second question in this anti-Cathar section of Chapter III is as to whether the body of the risen Christ is true flesh. Some eighteen New Testament texts³⁸ dealing with individuality, perceived experiences and groups of two or more who saw the risen Lord are employed, with emphasis placed on their having touched him, eaten with him and heard the words of his greeting. None of these things could have been accomplished by someone without a real body. Since they are believed by Catholics (and presumably by Cathars) to have happened, the risen Christ must have had such a body. Eyewitness accounts of the same person who died, rose and ascended, and the unbroken tradition of primitiae preaching attest to the same attitude towards Christ as risen. Peter, Paul, James, the eleven Apostles together and five hundred disciples are called to witness. Whatever magicians can do to make ghosts seem to speak and walk, they cannot make them

³⁵ Rom. 1, 1-3. Rom. 8, 34; 1Pet. 3, 18 Cf. Rom. 10, 9; 14, 9; 9, 3-6; Eph. 1, 3, 5, 7; 2, 13-14; 1, 21-22.

³⁶ Heb. 5, 7; 10, 4-5 Cf. 1Pet. 2, 23-24; 4, 1.

³⁷ 1 Jn. 7, 2-3 and 6.

³⁸ Mt. 28, 1, 5-6; 28, 8-9; Lk. 24, 30; 24, 36-44; 24, 46; 2, 4, 50; Jn. 20, 19-20, 20, 26-27. Acts 1, 1-4; 1, 9; 1, 21-22; 2, 22-27. Cf. Ps. 15, 10. Acts 2, 30-31; 13, 34-37; 4, 33.

eat. But the same Lord who resuscitated a little girl and told those present to give her something to eat, himself arose and ate as a sign that his body which had been crucified and dead was alive.³⁹

A third section now follows on how our own bodies will, according to Catholic doctrine, arise and remain true flesh. Seven quotations from Matthew, one from Mark, four from John and one each from Paul and James are employed in this argument.⁴⁰ All of the texts cited have to do with the dead rising on the last day, performing physical actions and being treated as persons with real bodies.

Almost as an appendix to Chapter III there is added a section with four quotations from Matthew, one from Luke and seven from John⁴¹ to prove that, contrary to Cathar teachings, Christ had a real human soul and that this was not something 'supplied' by his divinity but, like his body, integral and necessary to his human nature. Some of the texts quoted are merely places where the Vulgate uses the Latin word *anima*; others refer to the death of Christ as voluntary and truly accomplished and still others to his capacity for showing human emotion. All of these things, the author contends, pertain to created souls, and, since Christ did or allowed done to him these things, it follows he had a true human soul.

The fourth chapter of the *Summa Contra Haereticos* is about marriage. It begins with the Cathar contention that no married person exercising conjugal rights can be saved. The Gospels, Augustine and Paul are made to vie with one another to contend that the days of marriage are past, and continence is both a possibility and a demand. Catholics reply that all three are talking about counsels not precepts.

As to the Cathar contention that being pregnant and having children at the breast⁴² are evil cursed by Christ, Catholics main-

³⁹ Cf. Lk. 8, 55.

⁴⁰ Mt. 8, 11-12; 12, 41-42; 13, 40-43; 19, 27-28; 20, 13-15; 22, 2 and 11-12; 27, 50-53; Mk. 21, 24-25; Jn. 5, 28-29; 6, 39; 6, 40, 44, 54; 11, 21-24; 1Cor. 15, 35, 4-44; James, 3, 3.

⁴¹ Mt. 2, 20; 20, 28. Cf. Mk. 10, 45; Mt. 26, 38. Cf. Mk. 14, 34; Mt. 27, 50; Lk. 23, 46; Jn. 10, 11; 10, 15; 10, 17-18; 11, 33; 12, 27; 14, 21; 9, 30.

⁴² Mt. 24, 19.

tain they are rather temporal inconveniences. If Christ says his followers should hate their fathers and mothers, much more so their wives and others with whom intercourse ought be avoided. Total abstinence from sex is for the Cathars the only true way of obeying Christ and following him. Catholics argue this argument is specious as what is to be hated is anything contrary to God's will or standing in his place, not parents or wives as such. Cathars counter that in the resurrection there will be neither marriage nor giving in marriage⁴³ and so, even now, all should guard continence. The Catholic rejoinder is that neglecting the context (of a woman married to seven brothers) the Cathars miss the point. The teaching applies only to a future state.

In the series of arguments that follow, a great deal of confusion on time and eternity, sanctioned norms and pious recommendations and, finally, things exterior and interior, ensues with much quotation, both of scriptures⁴⁴ and from St. Gregory the Great, on both sides, with occasional snippets from Jerome and Augustine. The Catholic argument ends with a rather triumphal, if not altogether convincing, flourish to the effect of what is true for the whole Church is not necessarily applicable in detail to each of her members.⁴⁵ While all are bound to be chaste in mind and heart, some are counselled to be so in body. It is curious to note at this point that the sort of argumentation involved is what makes certain twentieth century theologisers scream: 'Manichean!' at their medieval ancestors-in-the-faith, with glib unawareness that the position they were attacking was considered in its day 'anti-dualist' and an acceptable (or even 'standard') Catholic approach.

Part two of Chapter IV is a more detailed Catholic reply to anti-matrimonial stance of the Cathars. In this part marriage is seen as a good in itself, and the dismissal of a wife, even for the sake of religion, is condemned. Citing Matthew, Mark and John the Catholic author shows clearly that Jesus opposes divorce adulterates the marital state and feasts at a wedding.⁴⁶ Luke sees

⁴³ Lk. 14, 26.

⁴⁴ Lk. 20, 34-35; 20, 36; Eccl. 3, 5; Gen. 1, 2; 8, 17; 9, 7; 1Cor. 7, 29.

⁴⁵ Garvin and Corbett *SCHPC*, p. 71 Cf. II Cor. 11, 2; 1Pet. 1, 22.

⁴⁶ Mt. 5, 31-32; 19, 4-6; Mk. 10, 6-9; Jn. 1, 6.

Zechariah and Elizabeth, a married couple, in terms of justice before God⁴⁷, and Paul goes so far as to justify marriage and condemn perpetual continence without mutual consent in terms of repulsing Satan and his temptations. Even in passages commending the single state, he allows the married as good.⁴⁸ He even counsel marriage in such strong terms as to verge on commanding it,⁴⁹ and he forbids divorce.⁵⁰ For Paul procreation atones for the female role in the drama of original sin,⁵¹ and he specifically condemns as erroneous, diabolic and hypocritical those who give a doctrinaire prohibition to marry 'in the last days'.⁵² Finally the Apostle Peter gives Abraham and Sarah as models of matrimony in terms of full approval. Here more than anywhere in his book the author feels confident of victory. His tone is like that of a preacher who has 'put over' his texts and convinced his congregation.

Catharism, beyond the four chapters we have examined, has two further mentions of unequal importance in the *Summa Contra Haereticos*. Chapter X is interrupted in its exposure of Pasa-ginian doctrine to condemn the Cathar teaching and practice on total abstinence from the eating of meat.

As previously, the Cathar position is first exposed, only to be answered at length by a Catholic reply to which is appended a short and somewhat droll section on whether or not Jesus ate the paschal lamb. The manuscript tradition in this section is not unanimous, but four variants of one sort and three of another offer no great doctrinal divergence.

The Cathars quote Jerome against Jovinianus to the effect that before the flood meat was not eaten⁵³ and Paul in writing that it is good neither to eat meat nor drink wine.⁵⁴ Catholics reply curtly that counsels and precepts should not be confused, and Paul is only speaking of acts which scandalise the weak. Ca-

⁴⁷ Lk. 2, 11.

⁴⁸ 1, Cor. 7, 1-5.

⁴⁹ 1 Cor. 7, 27-28; 7, 38.

⁵⁰ 1, Tim. 2, 14-15.

⁵¹ 1, Tim. 4, 1-3.

⁵² 1 Pet. 3, 1 and 6.

⁵³ Cf. Gen. 1, 29.

⁵⁴ Rom. 14, 21.

thars insist that in Matthew we are told to do penance. Abstinence from meat is such a work.⁵⁵ Catholics hold such penances to be but temporary counsels. Cathars say Jesus gave bread and *fish* to the crowds, never that he ate meat. Neither should we for animals live on the cursed earth and fish in the non-cursed water. Catholics reply we are never told Jesus ate or distributed beans or other vegetables so perhaps we should abstain from them and bread, too, for wheat grows out of the earth.⁵⁶

Pythagoras is now invoked by the Cathars and rejected by the Catholics as an inauthentic pagan. Catholics will allow that anyone wanting to be a vegetarian for right reasons should not be constrained to eat meat.⁵⁷ However, the Catholic position is plainly that all foods can be used indifferently as is now shown from sayings of Jesus in Matthew, Mark and Luke, in Paul's writings and the book of Acts⁵⁸ all of which add up to condemning Old Testament prohibitions regarding food on basis of the merely external nature of such Laws. The New Testament insists throughout that interior purity is of greater importance. What comes out from a man's mouth is more important than what he puts into it. Furthermore, in Paul's First Epistle to Timothy the forbidding of foods is as roundly condemned as the prohibition of marriage.⁵⁹

As to Jesus' eating the paschal lamb or not, the whole tenor of the Passion narrative indicates that he prepared to eat and ate the whole paschal banquet in celebrating the Passover, the central sacrificial dish of which was the paschal lamb.⁶⁰ Three manuscript traditions go so far as to state that since the Cathars are manifestly wrong about this, they can be accepted in nothing else. Jesus in fulfilling the Law must have eaten what other Jews ate.⁶¹

A second interruption to the author's exposition and countering of the Pasagini is the whole of Chapter XV of his work.

⁵⁵ Mt. 3, 2.

⁵⁶ Garvin and Corbett *SCPC*, p. 149.

⁵⁷ Garvin and Corbett *SCHPC*, p. 150.

⁵⁸ Mt. 15, 11 and 17; Mk. 7, 15; Lk. 10, 5-7; Rom. 14, 20; 1 Cor. 10, 25-28; Gal. 2, 14; Acts 10, 48.

⁵⁹ 1 Tim. 4, 1-5.

⁶⁰ Mt. 26, 17-18; Mk. 14, 12, Lk. 22, 7-8.

⁶¹ Cf. Mt. 5, 17.

Here the question is the Cathar claim that all rewards and punishments are equal. Some refreshingly clever ploys are involved in the argument, both on the Cathar and on the Catholic sides. The Cathars are adamant. The Catholics are flexible. But the talk is, as so often, at cross purposes. Cathars are talking about rewards and punishments *in themselves*, as what we have called above "metaphysical" goods and evils. Catholics are talking about the persons being rewarded and punished, their 'moral' relativity and the psychological appraisal of the states to which they have risen or fallen.

The Parables of Jesus in Matthew's Gospel contain a number of sayings the Cathars appropriate to their armoury. Wheat and tares grow together. In the end the tares are all thrown into a furnace.⁶² This will happen at the end to all 'tares'. On the other hand, the just will shine like the sun, all of them equally radiant. Catholics reply with a threefold distinction. Punishments are privative (a good is taken away), or either extrinsically or intrinsically positive, as in actively being cast into fire and passively bearing the pain and sorrow of being burnt there. This last way is unequal for the damned. Further, as different tares are in different bundles, so different sins will be punished differently. A similar analysis is given to the parables of the single wage and of the wedding guests.⁶³

Elsewhere Jesus sends the damned to eternal fire.⁶⁴ So they all have the same punishment according to the Cathars. Catholics reply that the punishment is perpetual and, thus, the same, but the intensity of it varies, for it will be 'worse' for some than others. The reward of knowing God, as equal to eternal life, will be also the same for all in its perfection and openness to view, but the transformation of the viewers, through the vision, will vary as will the weighing of their merits. In any case, no one could know God as well as God knows the one in question.

The Catholic section of lengthier replies revolves around a series of texts in which punishments of some (usually characters from the Old Testament) are said to be less than those of others

⁶² Mt. 13, 42.

⁶³ Mt. 20, 2-10; 22, 2-13.

⁶⁴ Mt. 25, 41.

(usually from the New). The arguments are on the whole weak and depend almost exclusively on the subjective appraisal of what happens, rather than on the happening as such. Once again, we get the impression that the author falls down through leaning too heavily on the tools he hopes will prop him up.

It can be seen in each and all of the passages examined that the author and his possible preacher-protagonists, both Cathar and Catholic, revelled in the use of whatever scripture they thought best suited to their purposes. Sometimes their arguments are tedious. Sometimes their attempted proofs are rather silly. Very often their manipulation of texts is too literally bound to the Latin Vulgate and its choice of words. Usually their exegesis, if not outright erroneous, is slightly off the point as regards the probable intention of the sacred writer quoted. Nonetheless, both sides show an admirable calm and internal consistency of argument. They certainly help us understand better how Cathars and Catholics of their day thought and probably spoke.

The material we have condensed here in all probability represents something far more expanded and extensive than what is found in the *Summa Contra Haereticos*. This in turn could well be a summary of notes taken from hundreds of Cathars and Catholic sermons. Only several years of observation of Catharism and the Catholic reaction to it, together with a meticulous sense of selectivity as regards exposition of central and favourite themes, could have produced our author's results. If across nearly eight centuries we have heard the authentic ring of a Cathar or Catholic voice, if we have come near the sidelines of their circle of open-air hearers and seen even a little of their outlook, with eyes adjusted to their bygone scenes, our patience in hearing them and him out is well rewarded.

III. THE SECRET SUPPER, A BOGOMIL MYTH USED AT CONCOREZZO

If the *Summa Contra Haereticos* considered above contains no references which can be considered temporal, geographical or personal, the work we are now to consider, the *Interrogatio Ioannis*

or *Secret Supper* can be 'located', if not in its origins, in its promulgation at least, in a fairly exact manner.

Fra Raniero Sacconi, O.P., tells us⁶⁵ that Nazario, the *filius major* of the Church of Concorezzo, brought the book back 'sixty years ago' from a trip to Bulgaria. It is generally believed that Sacconi, who had been some sort of Cathar official (possibly even *filius minor* of Concorezzo) before his conversion to Catholicism under the influence of Fra Pietro da Verona (St. Peter Martyr), wrote in *circa* 1250. That would date Nazario's trip in the 1190's. The purpose of the journey was to take part in the ordination of Garretto, long time Bishop-elect of Concorezzo, and renew ties with the *Ordo Bulgariae* broken by the earlier submission of all the northern Italian Cathars to the *Ordo Drugunthiae* during the visit of Niketas to the West. Whether Nazario translated the work into Latin himself or had someone else (certainly no great scholar) do it, and whether the *Secret Supper* was originally written in Byzantine Greek or Old Bulgarian, we do not know. Nor is it certain when this work was written, or how wide its Eastern distribution may have been. The manuscript tradition is completely Western (one copy in Vienna and two at disparate French locations) and notably non-Italian.⁶⁶

The importance of the *Secret Supper* is two-fold. It substantially confirms the doctrinal content of the anti-dualist critique of the Orthodox writer, Euthymius Zigabenus, in his *Panoplia Dogmatica* (early XIIIth century), thus showing a reliably Bogomil source⁶⁷, and it clarifies the extent to which a moderate dualism, couched in completely Christian terms, could be accepted into the libraries not only of late XIIIth century Cathars, like those of Concorezzo, but of XIIIth century supposed 'absolutists', like those of the Languedoc, for one of the extant manuscripts depends on an earlier lost one from the archives of the Carcassonne Inquisition.⁶⁸

⁶⁵ Dondaine, *AFP* IX (1939), p. 77.

⁶⁶ Dondaine, *AFP* XVII (1947), p. 95. The manuscripts extant are *Doat* 36 and *Dôle* 109, dependent on the Carcassonne Inquisition manuscript now lost. They are found in the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris. A variant recension is found in the National Library of Vienna, catalogued as ms. 1137.

⁶⁷ Obolensky *B* pp. 219-219.

⁶⁸ W. L. Wakefield and A. P. Evans, tras. and eds., *Heresies of the High Middle Ages*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1969, pp. 768-769 n. 9; henceforth: Wakefield and Evans *HHMA*.

The common acceptance of the *Secret Supper* is a positive indication that doctrinal difference among Cathars may well have been of less importance to them than to their critics and persecutors of Roman allegiance. What seems to have been of greatest importance to all Cathars, whatever their doctrinal views and differences, was a vision of the world and of reality that could be held as a viable alternative to what their more orthodox neighbours 'imagined' (for we are dealing with myth) to be true.

The *genre* of myth is one of symbolic narrative. It never more than pretends to be the narrative of facts or events as *they happened*. It has, of course, to pretend this to convey its message intelligibly, but it assumes a discerning and, indeed, sophisticated reader rather more eager for the 'inside story' than for a would-be 'scientific' account of cosmology or anything else. There are, and always have been on the fringes of monotheism, a number of apocryphal myths which circulate among believers and gain a fair amount of credence. The views of the 'after-life' held by most reasonably orthodox Christian today, for instance, are more based on popularised mythology than on canonical scripture. Heavens above with winged angels floating by on clouds and demons below with horned-heads, tails and pitch-forks populate just such mythological realms, poorly defined though they be in contrast as do the protagonists of the *Secret Supper*.

The *Secret Supper* is a series of twelve questions and answers. The questions are asked by John the Apostle and Evangelist, 'leaning on the breast of Jesus Christ our Lord'⁶⁹ who gives the answers. Though the 'Secret Supper' is the 'Last Supper', it does not take place in time but 'in the Kingdom of Heaven'. John is the visionary of Patmos in this myth. Jesus is the Son of the 'invisible Father' and the eye-witness knower of the secrets which concern how the world is governed and by whom, and who and what Adam and all human beings are. The *Secret Supper* presupposes a nine-tiered cosmos of seven heavens, an earth and an

⁶⁹ Wakefield and Evans *HHMA* p. 458; the best Latin edition of the *Coena secreta* is in Richard Retzenstein, *Die Vorgeschichte des christlichen Tranfe*, Leipzig and Berlin, Teuber, 1929, pp. 297-311, quoted in part by H. Söderberg, *La Religion des Cathars*, Uppsala, Almqvist and Wiskells, 1949, pp. 96-100.

underworld. It presupposes that all enduring reality is 'spiritual' (meaning effectively either divine or angelic) and that matter on all levels is a permitted evil, a passing adjunct to spiritual beings and part of the deceptive, diabolic plot, the knowledge of which leads to its undoing.

The twelve questions of the *Secret Supper* receive answers of unequal length and importance. Some pairs of question and answer are of exoteric obviousness and require little comment. Other pairs are esoteric almost to the extent of being bizarre and require a great deal of speculation, founded on traditional dualistic symbolism, for the sake of unravelling them. It is not difficult to imagine that the Cathars who promulgated this elaborate myth took great delight in explaining it. We can, of course, only conjecture as to the nature of the audience or reapers involved. However, it seems probable that it would have been somewhat different from that towards which the texts and teachings we have considered above were addressed. Catharism, before the great inquisitorial persecutions of the 1220's and beyond, was not a 'secret' religion. However, there is good reason to believe that local Cathar preachers kept their public sermons to anti-Catholic topics: the moral laxity and venality of the Catholic clergy, the grossness in Cathar eyes of Catholic sacraments and their 'semi-magical' effects, the need for greater concentration on the 'things of the spirit' and less of 'those of the flesh' and like topics. In smaller groups, behind closed doors, seekers and believers were instructed on such topics as the true nature of man, evil and its consequences, myths of creation and salvation, how to break with matter and attain to eternal life, the rules of conduct for interrelating with fellow Cathars and Catholics and the like. To this latter, more initiated group, we can conjecture the contents of the *Secret Supper* would have been taught. How these contents fell *in toto* into the hands of the Inquisition, and exactly why the Inquisitors bothered to copy them down, we do not know. But we can be grateful to have what Obolensky calls a 'document of considerable importance' that takes us closer than much else to the psychology of the Cathars, as formed by the inner workings of the Bogomil mind.

The first of the twelve questions seems irrelevant to the whole work. However, its real message may be: 'read on, Christian reader, this work is merely reiterating what the Gospel says'. The question and answer slightly paraphrase the text of John 13, 25-26, on the betrayer of Jesus, the one who dips his hand into the dish to whom Satan comes.

Satan having been mentioned, the rest of the questions and answers will deal with him. According to Obolensky calling the devil 'Satan' is a bit of Byzantine sophistication new to Bogomilism in documents of the eleventh and twelfth century⁷⁰, the devil is called Satanael (and in virtue of Christ's victory loses the suffix 'el') in other dualist sources.⁷¹ However, whatever emphasis is placed on Satan and his role in the creation of the world and the, as seen by Cathars, misfortunes of embodied man, what we are dealing with is no mere fantasy of medieval demonology. Nor is it a study in gloom. It is rather an internally consistent, if professedly mythological, account of how all things material came to be. It is also an optimistic account of how they will end. If anything will rule out the verdict of Runciman and others⁷², that inherent negativity is the source of the failure of medieval dualism, the *Secret Supper* will. Its tone throughout is hopeful and positive as, we have every reason to believe, was the religious psychology of the Church of Concorezzo. The second question asks in what the splendour of Satan consisted before his fall. The answer is that he was 'regulator' of the spiritual universe and sat with Christ's Father when not on his frequent 'tours of inspection'.⁷³ He wanted a throne of his own, however, and tempted the spirits of water, air and fire to cooperate with him.⁷⁴ Because of their lack of density these elements were not considered as 'material' as earth which Satan will create.

In order to understand the Satanic journeyings described in the *Secret Supper*, we must look at the 'sacred cosmography' accepted by its author and dating back to Jewish and Christian apo-

⁷⁰ Obolensky, *B*, p. 227 n. 1.

⁷¹ Obolensky op. cit. loc. cit.

⁷² S. Runciman, *The Medieval Manichee*, Cambridge, University Press, 1960, pp. 179-180; henceforth: Runciman *MM*.

⁷³ Cf. Job 1, 6-8.

⁷⁴ Cf. Is. 14, 12-14.

cryphal writings, most notably the Book of the *Secrets of Enoch* found in Ethiopic and Old Slavonic versions.⁷⁵ Many rabbinical and patristic writers (and less certainly, but possibly, one or two New Testament hagiographers) use this system of 'seven heavens,' an earthy realm and an infernal one, to 'map' the universe. It should be kept in mind that 'heavens' are not so much places of reward, for the good who have died, as layered skies, one above another, the abodes on high of spirits, forces and luminary bodies, which variously depend on God or rebel against him, but (more importantly) exercise a fairly inevitable control over events and person on earth.

The 'first heaven' is that nearest to earth. It is the 'lower air', what we should call 'the atmosphere'. Above it is the 'firmament', a circular border of water. The first heaven is the gateway to the spiritual realms. In it reside the stellar ruler and two hundred subordinate angels, custodians of the stars, who fly about on wings. Here too dwell the many angels charged with the storehouse of snow, ice, clouds and dew (this last being kept in flowers saturated in olive oil). The 'second heaven' is above the firmament. It is a place wreathed in darkness, where the souls of sinners are suspended awaiting their final doom. They weep incessantly and are guarded over by angels described as 'powers of darkness'. The third heaven is basically Paradise, the place where God, when he comes calling, has a rest 'neath the shade of the Tree of Life, Perfumed and filled with a profusion of plant life, this zone hangs between corruptibility and incorruptibility. Its northern-side however, is Gehenna, a terrible realm of fire and ice, prepared for the eventual punishment of unrepentant sinners. In the third heaven dwell three hundred 'angels of light' some of whom tend the Garden of Eden, others of whom stoke the fires and keep frozen the ice of hell.

The 'fourth heaven' is a storeroom (or garage) for the chariots on which sun, moon and stars ride across the sky of the first heaven, some in the fiery form of the self-resuscitating Phoenix,

⁷⁵ R. C. Charles, tr. *The Apocrypha and Pseudopigrapha of the Old Testament in English*, Oxford, University Press, 1913. pp. 425-469. For purposes of clarity we have compared this work with P. L. Wilson, *Angels*, London, Thames and Hudson, 1980, p. 74, and conflated our findings.

others in that of a bronze serpent with many lions' heads. The 'fifth heaven' is as bad for angels as the second is for men, for in the fifth heaven languish the fallen angels trapped in their rebellion, awaiting their predestined punishment at the end of time.

The 'sixth heaven' by contrast is a happy place. It is the Abraham's bosom of Luke's Gospel.⁷⁶ In this sixth heaven are seven radiant cherubim and a host of other 'angels of light' who control astral influences. Here, too, are the angels of time who watch over the seasons, years and ages, the seas and rivers on earth, the fruits of the earth and the incarnate souls of mankind. These are the 'Holy Guardian Angels' of Catholic lore.

At the end of time the souls of the just will be gathered to the seventh heaven to live forever, near enough to God's presence to enjoy it. This seventh heaven is the realm of ineffable and unapproachable light. Here the archangels, cherubim and seraphim as well as the ophanim⁷⁷ (who make up the throne and its wheels) attend upon the divine majesty and serve God without ceasing. God himself sits enthroned above this highest heaven but his omnipresence reaches out to all the heavens and every level of material creation, the earth being the highest. Flying forth on the wings of a mounted cherubim God visits to whole of creation each day and returns to his throne on high at dusk, borne aloft on the 'wings of the wind'.

For the readers of the *Secret Supper* who took such a *cosmos* for granted, nothing could be very surprising in the marvellous meandering of Satan or the wonders in store for the redeemed followers of Christ. We do well to recall with Moore that writings such as we are examining 'are the products of a world of ideas which no modern mind can inhabit without a struggle',⁷⁸ but hopefully the struggle will not be altogether unrewarding.

The second and third questions of the *Secret Supper* require the longest answers. They tell, in effect, how Satan came to fall,

⁷⁶ Cf. LK. 16, 19-31.

⁷⁷ Cf. Ez. 1, 15-21.

⁷⁸ R. I. Moore, *The Birth of Popular Heresy*, London, Edward Arnold, 1975, p. 4; henceforth: Moore *BPH*.

and what he did as a result of his loss of primordial power as steward of the most high. Their telling is very colourful and sprinkled with quotations from, and allusions to, the canonical scriptures, especially the New Testament and its parables. The mind of the author is doubly 'symbolic': he both shows forth what his reader will recognise, and he hides what he wants to keep from the uninitiated, in imagery almost too obscure to decipher.

John asks Jesus in the second question what was Satan's splendour before he fell. Jesus replies that it was that of one seated with the Father, but that, in the course of transversing the spiritual realms, Satan thought to imitate or usurp the power of God, by setting up a throne and a creation of his own. Having descended to the first heaven Satan commanded the angel of the lower air to open its portals to him. He gave the same command concerning the realm of water which covered the earth. He was thus able to descend under the water and discover two gigantic fish, holding up the still submerged land. He descended further into the region of fire, but it was too hot for him to cope with, so he arose from its depths and set to work.

Satan, now decided on his rebellious course, on his way upward seduced the angels of air and water, gaining their cooperation in the separation of dry land for sea, and insuring their acquiescence to his Lordship in return for rewards of subordinate rule and shared 'glory'. As Satan continued to mount upward, he arrived at the third heaven (the potential Paradise and Gehenna). He recounted the Lucan parable of the unjust steward,⁷⁹ applying it to himself and, telling the angels to lie about their gains, seduced many to join him. At this point the voice of the invisible Father was heard, accusing Satan of treachery and depriving all who followed him of garments, thrones and crowns, and so Satan fell from glory into exile, from light into darkness.

The third question is where Satan lived after he fell. The answer is oblique, but from what follows, it seems probable he was banished to those areas below the third heaven, where his seduced followers already had their abode. He was deprived of his glory and given a red-hot iron mask like a human countenance.

⁷⁹ Lk. 16, 1-8.

His figure was now like a man's, but he had seven tails — representing lying, adultery, greed, theft, blasphemy, envy and discord — which he employed to sweep a third part of the choirs of angels into his sway, drawing them thus away from God. The invisible Father then gave Satan six days to do as he would on earth until the seventh day. Satan enthroned himself above the firmament in the second heaven from which, as a sort of 'pseudo-God', he formed the earth, separating it from the seas. He took the air-angel's crown, and from half of it erected a throne. From half of the water-angel's crown he made the sun and from the other half, the moon. From the jewels of their crowns he made fire, and from the fire all the hosts of heaven and the stars, thunder, rain, hail and snow (the contents of the first heaven) and certain ministering angels. Then Satan commanded the earth to bring forth living things: animals, trees and herbs. He commanded the sea to bring forth fish and the air, birds.

Now Satan was ready to create man. He took clay and molded it into an image of himself. To animate the clay he enticed an angel of the second heaven to enter into it. This is the origin of the human 'soul' according to the *Secret Supper*: a gloom-ridden imprisoned angel further imprisoned in dirty matter. At this point Satan decided to introduce sexuality and all its evils into his creation. Having imprisoned an angel of the second heaven in a body, he took from the male body some formed clay and further formed it into a female counter-part, the soul of which came from the first heaven. Now, when the bodies came to life, the angels wept to find their forms were mortal and sexually differentiated. Satan now commanded the man and woman to 'perform the work of the flesh', but they did not know how to have sexual commerce.

Satan created a garden and in its midst put a reedy swamp. Into the swamp he placed a serpent fashioned from his own spittle. He then poured lustful desire onto the head of Eve who in her passion allowed the serpent, into which Satan entered personally, to violate and impregnate her. The children born of this union are thus 'sons and daughters of Satan' not 'children of God' and 'they will fulfill the lusts of their father till the end of time'.⁸⁰

⁸⁰ Wakefield and Evans, *HHMA*, p. 460 Cf. Jn. 47.

Then, Satan poured out lust on Adam's head, and, so, children, the result of debauchery, will continue being conceived till the end of time.

Four rather simple questions follow, and their answers are not as prolix as those of the second and third question. John asks, in effect, why the story in Genesis is so different, together with its explanation of the fall as disobedience. Jesus replies that his father would not sink to forming bodies of clay, but the Holy Spirit has made all the virtues of heaven. Because these virtues allied themselves with Satan, they fell and were imprisoned in bodies and condemned to death. John asks how persons of spiritual origin can be encased in a carnal body. The answer in effect is through the lust of the first woman. Nonetheless, her descendents are 'spiritual' because of their heavenly origin. Thus John's Gospel can be quoted 'What is born of spirit is spirit, what is born of flesh is flesh'.⁸¹

John then asks how long this state of affairs will prevail. He is told for seven days or, in other words, seven ages. He asks what these ages are. Jesus begins to tell him but gets side-tracked into an explanation of *the Secret Books of Enoch*, the grandson of Adam and Eve, whom Satan befriended and for whom he wrote them. These books are the source of a diabolical pseudo-monotheism and of the rites of Old Testament sacrifice.

The invisible Father now decided to send Christ his son into the world. Meanwhile Satan gave Moses two pieces of wood on which to crucify the Son of God, as well as the Law, after leading him across the Red Sea dry-shod. Jesus entered the head of the angel Mary, through her ear, from which, in time, he was born into the world. Satan prepared for Christ's coming by getting Elijah to return as John the Baptist and warning him how to recognise Christ, on whom will descend the Spirit in dove-like form, and who will baptise in the Holy Spirit.⁸²

John asks if John the Baptist's 'Water-Baptism' is efficacious for salvation, and is told it is not. Only the baptism of Christ

⁸¹ Jn. 3, 6.

⁸² Jn. 1, 33. For conception and birth through the ear in Byzantine iconography. Cf. Obolensky *B. p.* 211 n. 1.

brings remission of sins, and without it no one can be saved. The reason for this is that Jesus is the bread of life, which has come down from the seventh heaven, and whose flesh must be eaten and blood drunk by those who would be children of God.⁸³ All this sounds more straight-forward than it is. To 'eat flesh' may mean to accept the four Gospels and to 'drink blood' may mean to accept the book of Acts,⁸⁴ and, then again, it may not. For the next question asks the meaning of this much disputed phrase. The answer is obscure enough to seem astounding. It reads like a *Zen Koan*. Jesus tells John, in reply to his query on the meaning of 'flesh' and 'blood', that, before the fall of the angels, they had glorified the Father with the Lord's Prayer, but afterwards they could not! One of the favourite petitions of the Lord's Prayer (the *only* real Cathar prayer) was the Cathar version of the asking for bread: give us today our 'supersubstantial' bread. In an anonymous gloss on the Our Father we learn that this bread is Christ as perfection and charity, the very things lost by the angels in their fall.⁸⁵ If man, by Cathar influence, can be given back the prayer of adoration, he will attain to this perfection and unifying divine love anew, and, thus, 'eat the flesh and drink the blood' of the Son of God.

The tenth and eleventh questions have to do with the efficacy of John the Baptist's baptism and the wisdom of celibacy. The answers have in both cases to do with marriage. To John's question as to why everyone accepts John the Baptist's rite and not all that of Jesus, Jesus replies that those whose works are evil do not come into the light⁸⁶ He then explains and clarifies this by noting that whereas the followers of John marry and are given in marriage, his own disciples are never married but remain like the angels of God in heaven.⁸⁷ John replies by asking, given

⁸³ Cf. Jn. 6, 51-53.

⁸⁴ Obolensky, B, p. 131 n. 5. citing M. G. Popruzhenko, *Kozma Presbyter*, Sofia, 1936, p. 32.

⁸⁵ Wakefield and Evans *HHMA* p. 607 sq., praes. pp. 618-620.

⁸⁶ Jn. 3, 19-20.

⁸⁷ This is a strange reference to Lk. 20. 34-37 where the contrast is between the 'children of this world' at the present time and the future state of the redeemed in the eternal presence of God either after death or the consummation of time.

the evil involved in 'the knowledge of woman', whether it is wise to marry at all. Christ rejoins, that some can take this word. Others cannot. And he gives the three classes of eunuchs listed in Matthew's Gospel⁶⁸ to sum up Cathar anti-matrimonial teaching.

The twelfth and last question is as bold as its answer is complex. John questions Christ about the Day of Judgement and the sign of Christ's coming. An intricate and graphic reply ensues. Satan will be loosed from his prison (below the third heaven) when the number of the just equals the number of the formerly crowned, in other words when all the fallen angels have not only become incarnate but have accepted the saving work of Christ and turned against Satan. God will then loosen Satan, and a war will ensue. The archangel will blow the apocalyptic trumpet which will sound to the depths of the underworld. The light of sun and moon having failed, the stars will fall from the sky. The four great winds (stored in the fourth heaven) will be let loose, representing Gog, Magog, Cush and Put.⁸⁹ Earth, sea, mountains and hills will quake together at the sign of the Son of Man. All tribes on earth will see it and mourn. The first heaven will tremble and be darkened save for the light of the sun which will shine till the ninth hour. Finally Christ with this retinue of saints and angels will appear seated on glorious thrones.⁹⁰ Two books will be opened, and all peoples on earth judged.⁹¹ The just will receive a glorious reward, but those still aligned with Satan will be temporarily bound in Hell under the earth, Satan himself in a lake of fire. But the invisible Father will at last relent, and the sound of the voice of the Son will recall all creation to unity. A glorious restoration will take place. The just will enter the choirs of angels once more, be clothed with imperishable raiment, be crowned with unfading crowns and enthroned on immovable thrones. So will they reign with the Father forever.

It is thought that the Dominican Inquisitor, Anselm of Alessandria, added to the book what has come down in the manuscript tradition:

⁸⁸ Mt. 19, 12.

⁸⁹ Ez. 38, 18.

⁹⁰ Rev. 20, 12.

⁹¹ Mt. 25, 31 Cf. Mt. 19, 28.

'This is the Secret of the heretics of Concorezzo brought from Bulgaria by Nazario their bishop. It is full of errors.'⁹²

Full of errors, whether in Christian doctrine or in Latin style,⁹³ though the *Secret Supper* may be, like all mythological literature it is full of possibilities of interpretation and application to life, both by those who accept it and those who reject it. Taken literally, as a myth never should be, it is simply bad cosmology, a hodge-podge of the apocryphal and the bizarre with little relevance outside the communities who derived a deluded view of the physical universe from it. Taken in more exact theological or philosophical terms, as regards dogma or metaphysics, it shows possibilities of a consistent analysis of reality, however fantastic, at least up to the twelfth question, where the overly sanguine eschatology tends to weaken the impact of an otherwise well thought out presentation of God as good and Satan as evil, in the sense of that merely being *how they are*. In a moral sense the document is not directly conducive to conversion (which it probably presupposes) or to day-to-day choices for good (which it does not address). At best, it gives some teleological incentive for being hopeful. If the reader accepts the presuppositions, the analysis and the unspecified 'Baptism in the Holy Spirit,' *glory* is certainly in store, according to the mind of the author.

There is, however, another way of looking at myths in general and the *Secret Supper* in particular, that is, both as a statement of and a plan for, realising the *psychology* of the writer and the reader who accepts his work. In the *Secret Supper* there is a plan for human fulfilment, disguised as a chronology of fall and redemption. There is a speaking to the soul, the 'interiority' if you will, of the Cathar adept and a reassurance that the path Cathars travel is right, because it coincides with the fulfilment of psychological needs which make up, as it were, the innate program for self-realisation or salvation found in every human being. However, to understand the *Secret Supper* in this applied sense, we must at least imagine how Cathars feel and think, imagine what it meant to them to think of themselves as fallen angels, impri-

⁹² Wakefield and Evans *HHMA* p. 776 n. 79.

⁹³ Wakefield and Evans *HHMA* loc. cit.

soned in a hostile environment by an enemy so like themselves that they can readily identify with him. We must imagine their far-off 'invisible Father' whose concern for them (even if half-forgotten) prompts them to long for a restoration to a state, once lost, but always nostalgically longed for. We must imagine the possibility of an intervention on the part of that Father's Son, which they believe can and will restore them to his presence.

Equipped with this imagined outlook, we can hopefully find more in the *Secret Supper* than met our eye in the mere statement and analysis of its content in which we have engaged thus far. Both the Cathar Church and the Cathar individual have, like Satan in the myth, 'come down from heaven'. Once responsible stewards of the Father on high, they have had to take air for breath and atmosphere, in order to enter into an increasingly better perceived matrix of human and earthly endeavour. The 'portals of air' open as we begin to breathe and as our community finds any existence at all. The 'portals of water' sustain, nourish and cleanse us early in our existence and become a primordial and never to be rejected catalyst for our eventual dealing with the rigidity and impenetrability of 'earth', a reality at early stages too 'concrete' for us to deal with, but what will become the ground on which the individual and the group will stand, the *terra firma* of our 'locus'.

Little children must not play with fire, and so the individual and committed community at an early stage find areas both of speculation and of practical interaction that are 'too hot' for them, as are the subterranean regions for Satan in the myth. However, in order to continue life, definite differentiations of 'water and earth' must take place, and, for this, both individual and community must find resources beyond themselves and commandeer resource-persons to aid them. The individual must gain friends, and the community must make converts, but, because there is a definite disorder in the attempt to construct a new order of their own in rebellion against the divine order from which they descended and which they have rejected, a fatal attempt at manipulation of others ensues. The order beyond them intervenes. They are, in terms of the *Secret Supper*, forbidden further scope for self-aggrandise.

ment or proselytising, checked at the lower limits of the third heaven. Like Satan in the myth, they (each of them and their group) accept the limitation. It seems they 'fall to earth', enthralled by their own creativity, into a state inevitably 'less' than what Cathars think they should enjoy.

Having thus fallen, they must think of something with which to occupy themselves. They have lost any explicit contract with the creative and sustaining aspects of the divine ordering of things. And so they must, again like Satan in the *Secret Supper*, become creative in their own right. Despite having lost the glory of another, they begin a process of self-projection which will give them something beyond and outside themselves (but somehow *like* themselves) in which they can now glory. Curiously this decision to enter into a creative, reordering process, however low and inchoate its level, is the beginning of the *reditus*, the redemptive return to their source. Both the individual and the group, the Cathar and his Church, begin to cope and find a basic, stable reality: 'earth' on which to put 'animals, herbs and trees,' creatures. These will grow and amuse the initiates and can be put to service as beasts of burden, food and fuel. Marine waves and torrents of rain may surprise the believer from time to time. But fish are good to eat and born of water and keep the dualist diet from being vegetarian without tempting adepts to descend to the horror of cheating animal meat! As for the air, it is the most fleeting of all things, as hard to keep track of as the breathing itself. Nonetheless, let Cathars inhabit it with 'birds', beautiful to behold and a somewhat capricious reminder of mankind's creativity. We apply this allegory to Cathar doctrine as the solid earth, its tenets as animals and plants. We could compare Cathar myth with water, elusive but with nourishment (fish), for those able to catch it. Cathar ritual could be compared with air. It came and went with a certain ungraspable fluidity, and, yet, was as necessary as breath to sustain Cathar life. It was ornate with the 'many-plumed birds' of genuflections and impositions of books, the laying on of hands and breaking of bread, the incessant 'Our Fathers' and the penances for faults.

Just as Satan was discontent until, like God, he became somehow 'Father,' so the Cathar person and the Cathar Church must

'make man in their own image' through the process of preaching, conversion, teaching seekers and initiating new members. Like Satan, however they would find this process tentative and incomplete, their communities would waver and wane through lust and avarice (the very things they accuse their Catholic enemies of most often and most loudly), unless there were an *intervention* from on high. Already on their way up through the constancy of their own creative and reordering processes, the presence of the Son, spirit like themselves, but never fallen, pretending to acclimatise himself to their world but never really part of it, adds messianic purposefulness to their endeavours. Gaining through Gospel teaching and a life based on Acts new insights onto the now more remembered will of God and the other verities spoken of in the 'Our Father', they 'eat the flesh and drink the blood' of the emissary of the Father. On basis of this new-found nourishment both believer and community turn further away from earthly concerns, from the 'toys' of their own making. Their nostalgia for the original state of stewardship becomes more pronounced and better defined through their adherence to the true meaning of parable and miracle, of sign and wonder, and of pneumatic power from on high. Thus they increase their knowledge and status, through contact with Christ and his Apostles, in their reading and imitation of the Gospels and Acts.

If, however, they decide to reject their bonds, they run the danger of unleashing diabolic fury, for all their reliance since the fall has been on the realities of the second heaven and below. They struggle upwards but must put their hopes now no longer in their own abilities or the chimeras which surround them. God must intervene definitely, not just teaching and giving an example, not just showing the initiatory steps of a 'way out' but with trumpet blast and open books, with inescapable and final judgment. Although at this judgment some things will come to the light and remain there unscathed, others must fall under condemnation and punishment.

For glory to enter the life of individual or group, whatever opposes it must be repressed. However, our Cathars see this as only a temporary measure. In the end all will be well. Everything and everybody (and with special prominence they themselves and

their Church)' will be exalted anew and restored to the seventh heaven. There they will worship the Father, to whom all things are reconciled and who, though remaining invisible, because pure spirit, is now 'seen' as he sees and loved as he loves.

Exotic as such an interpretation of the *Secret Supper* may seem, something like it must have gone on in the psyche of each Cathar and formed the *esprit de corps* of the Church of Concorezzo. As can be seen, such a process has very little negativity and gloom about it. From their history, their methods of internal discipline and organisation and what we can read of them from their own pens, there is nothing to indicate that the Cathars were sad at all. Nor can they be stereotyped as of but one rigid mentality, any more than can the readers of science fiction or those who delight in the literature of fantasy today. Such people can hardly be written off as 'other worldly dreamers'. We surely must reject the judgment of M.D. Lambert who tries to 'reconstruct the characteristic temperament' of the Cathar initiate:

'What merges is the character of a tense, rather literal-minded perfectionist with a strong determination, imaginative rather than logical power, perhaps with a tendency to organic disgust, anti-intellectual and not strongly religiously educated.'⁹⁴

Rather, we can see the visionary zealot who roamed the Lombard countryside, a man with definite beliefs and a program for putting them into practice, a very humane human being who found in the Church of Concorezzo a haven, albeit alternative to and different from what nearly everyone around him thought right and proper, where his own psychological and spiritual needs were met and where a 'history of salvation', backed up by teaching, myth and rite, unfolded before him.

IV. ROLES, DUTIES AND CHRONOLOGY

The principal and most copied source for the study of Cathar structures, rites and organisation is the *Summa de Catharis et*

⁹⁴ M. D. Lambert, 'The Motives of Cathars: Some Reflections' in D. Baker, *Religious Motivations: Biographical and Sociological Problems for the Church Historian*, Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1978, pp. 54-55.

*Pauperibus de Lugdono*⁹⁵ written by Fra Raniero Sacconi sometime near 1250. At the time, the author, a convert from some Cathar Church (very likely from the Church of Concorezzo) had been a Catholic for at most five years. He was, however, already a Dominican friar and an ordained priest. His work, better than any other Western medieval source, tells the dualist story from the 'inside'. What exactly was the function or role of Sacconi as a Cathar is uncertain. He describes himself early in the work as *olim heresiarcha* (once a leader of heresy). On basis of what he says about his relationship with Nazario, known fourth Bishop of Concorezzo from 1195 to 1234⁹⁶, to whom he refers as '*antiquissimus eorum*' ('the eldest of them', perhaps an honorific for 'leader of their elders'), it can be conjectured that he was possibly *filius minor* or even *filius major* of Concorezzo sometime after 1225 and before the death of Nazario ten years later. However, there is no direct documentary evidence to prove this.

Although Sacconi has definite doctrinal interests at heart in his anti-Cathar comments, he has a pronounced concern to convey to the reader an accurate view of Cathar organisation and internal discipline. *Ordo* for Sacconi is not the complex ecclesial reality described above in our introductory remarks. It is a 'sacrament', however false, stupid, illegal and sacrilegious,⁹⁷ (together with the three other Cathar sacraments he names: laying-on-of-hands, breaking of bread and penance) for the conferring of what he calls 'office'. The four orders and offices are those Bishop, *filius major*, *filius minor*, and deacon. Other Cathars, he notes, are simply called 'Christians' in the masculine or feminine. It is noteworthy that neither Sacconi nor any other source with real Cathar points of reference ever calls adepts or initiates '*perfecti*' or '*perfectae*' which terms were probable sarcastic Catholic slurs.

⁹⁵ A Latin text was published in *toto* in A. Dondaine *Un Traité Neo-Manichéen du XIIIe Siècle Le Liber de Duobus Principiis, suivie d'un Fragment de Rituel Cathare* Rome, Istituto Storico Domenicano, 1939, pp. 64-78; henceforth: Dondaine LDP, pp. 64-78; A more definitive edition is found in F. Sajek *AFP* XLIV (74), pp. 42-62.

⁹⁶ A. Borst *Les Cathares* (C. Roy, tr.) Paris, Payot, 1978, p. 201, henceforth: Borst, C.

⁹⁷ Dondaine LDP p. 65. The description is more devastating in context, for Cathars imitating Catholics are compared with 'monkeys imitating men'.

Bishops, according to Sacconi, preside in all that is done in Cathar circles, whether it be the laying-on-of-hands in the initiatory *Consolamentum*, the simple breaking of bread at any daily meal or the intoning of any Cathar prayer, where they are present. This precedence and presiding role pass to the *filius major*, in the absence of the Bishop and to the *filius minor* in the absence of the *filius major*. The prelatial status of all three of those individuals is thus evident. Their prelacy includes both the dignity of their office and its ritual utility. However, it would be wrong to surmise that these officials lived in any sort of grandeur vaguely comparable to that of their contemporary Catholic counterparts in analogous positions. All Cathar initiates lived in great self-deprivation with fasting, wandering and uncertainty as to where to lay their heads, almost daily.

Sacconi mentions the 'absence' of the bishop specifying its purpose.⁹⁸ Turning to the *fili major* and *minor* he specifically states that they separately go on constant 'walk about' for the purpose of visiting (by application) very scattered flock. As no 'diocesan' boundaries are drawn in northern Italian documents, we may assume that the Church of Concorezzo at times had adherents throughout the Po Valley, all the way to the Adriatic south of the Alps and north of Tuscany, Emilia and the Marches. The region of influence, if not of jurisdiction, may have extended much further to the south and across the whole east-west width of the Italian peninsula. Whatever system of visitation was adopted, it proved to be inadequate for the tasks that needed to be performed.

Thus it was that a good share of day-to-day ministry fell the lot of the deacons. Under strict obedience to the bishop and the *fili*, these men seem to have had a more stable residence, 'each city having a single deacon.'⁹⁹ 'City' can probably be taken rather loosely to mean 'inhabited place' of whatever size. The importance of having a deacon in a place was so that local Cathars, of a number sufficient to warrant his presence, would receive the benefit of his ministry. This ministry, as has already been mentioned was not one corresponding to the ministry of Catholic dea-

⁹⁸ Dondaine, *LDP*, p. 69.

⁹⁹ Dondaine, *op. cit.*, loc. cit.

cons. These latter (Francis of Assisi is traditionally counted in their number) were clerics in Major Order, obliged to celibacy and capable of bearing the duties and obligations of 'canonical residence' in endowed churches. Their ritual actions were limited to the singing of the Gospel at Solemn Masses, the proximate preparation of the bread and wine used eucharistically and assistance in the distribution of Holy Communion. While they occasionally baptised and sometimes preached under special mandate from the bishop, they never presided over the confecting or conferring of any other Catholic sacraments. Their functions were completely secondary and normally presupposed the presiding presence of a priest or bishop. Not so was the role of a Cathar deacon. Sacconi tells us that besides 'holding the fort' in local Cathar communities, the deacon heard the confessions of the forgivable faults 'of his subjects'. He evidently prayed a prayer of deprecatory absolution over the group who thus confessed once a month, and he imposed the rather 'heavy' penances of 'three days fasting or one hundred genuflections'. This function of the Cathar deacon is called his 'service'.

How and where the rather elaborate form of succession, adopted by the Cathars of Western Europe from Eastern sources, came about is unknown and beyond conjecture. *Why* it came about has to do with a factor reiterated by Sacconi: the overpowering Cathar fear of *invalidity* of the initiatory rite, the *Consolamentum*. Unless this was conferred by someone both authorised to do so and in a state of utmost purity, it might well be invalid. Thus, there had to evolve some system by which the succession of authorised persons could be maintained, and the doctrinally or morally 'impure' could be rejected from it with no considerable lapse of succession. The system was, unfortunately for the Cathars, both unwieldy and far from fool-proof. Loos points out that Eastern sources pay very little attention to organisation¹⁰⁰. A teacher like Basil, whom the Emperor Alexis Comnenus had burnt alive in the hypodrome of Constantinople in 1102, had a retinue of 'twelve apostles' and a large group of female 'companions'. Sacconi shows that *ultra mare*, in Bulgaria and the East in general, the system of episcopal succession was typical set off by the death or de-

¹⁰⁰ Loos, *DHMA*, p. 116.

fection of a bishop. A new bishop was then ordained by the already functioning *filius minor*, the sole possible candidate being the *filius major*. Once he had ordained his superior the *filius minor* became the *filius major* and the newly ordained bishop ordained a new *filius minor*.

In the West, (*Citra mare*) the ordination of 'father' by 'son' was thought to be 'incongruous'. Therefore, the system was adopted by which the bishop, still alive and in office, ordained as bishop *filius major*. On the death of a bishop, the *filius minor* was ordained by the then still *major*, and a new *filius minor* was ordained immediately.¹⁰¹ The Western system would secure immediate succession in case of the sudden death or removal of a bishop. Neither Eastern nor Western procedures guarded much against schism, and the consequent fragmentation of succession due to a multiplicity of candidates. Sacconi notes that all orders were given by the laying-on-of-hands, invocation of the Holy Spirit and imposition of the New Testament on the head of the ordinand, rites common enough to be 'immemorable' in an all Christian ordinations both Eastern and Western.

Doubt, being an internal disposition, can hardly be dealt with by ceremonies guaranteeing episcopal succession. Sacconi, who for seventeen years (probably 1228-1245) was a leading Cathar, speaks from experience when he talks of this doubt as 'the greatest' and making for 'peril of soul'. As we have seen above, moral subtlety was not, according to presumed Praepositinus, a Cathar strength. Whenever in the history of religion sacramental efficacy or assurance of salvation have depended on the worthiness of their ministers, interior uncertainty and administrative chaos have inevitably ensued. Sacconi notes that, with the exception of one or two local Cathar Churches, all Cathar groups advocate a second or third initiation or *Consolamentum* by imposition of hands for all their members, 'just in case' the first has been vitiated by some secret sin on the part of its minister.¹⁰²

Sacconi turns from his consideration of *ordines* to a list of sixteen Cathar Churches and, something rare for his times, a geo-

¹⁰¹ Dondaine *LDP* p. 69.

¹⁰² Dondaine *op. cit.*, p. 70.

graphical location for each, with statistics in rather round numbers. In order for us to understand these tables, something more detailed in way of Cathar history should be mentioned. We are immensely aided here by the ample research of Pere Antoine Dondaine and especially by two articles on the Cathar hierarchy in Italy published in the *Archivum Ordinis Praedicatorum* at Rome in 1949 and 1950.¹⁰³ The first of these articles treats of the anonymous *De haeresi catharorum in Lombardia*, written in the first quarter of the XIIIth century, and the *Brevis summula contra errores notatos haereticorum*. The first he appends in a critical edition. Both he compares with Sacconi, Moneta of Cremona (a later Dominican author) and other works of the general period. In the second article, Dondaine devotes his painstaking critical skill to the *Tractatus de hereticis* written by Anselm of Alessandria sometime between 1260 and 1280.¹⁰⁴

In these articles, Dondaine traces the colourful but sad history of the Italian Cathar Churches, six in all, from the late 1150's to sometime a little over a century later. We have condensed the story somewhat below, but it is impossible to avoid all of its intricacies and give a truthful picture. The story begins with a then insignificant grave-digger named Marco who worked in the hamlet of Cologno near Concorezzo. It progresses, through journeys from and to the Balkans, to a veritable web of episcopal successions and disparate doctrinal stances and on to a time of persecution and uncertainty when several Cathar leaders revert to Catholicism.

Anselm in the *Tractatus* tells the story in a somewhat fuller form than that of the *De Haeresi* and so we shall extract his salient points.¹⁰⁵ Marco was met at Concorezzo by a French notary who professed Catharism. The unnamed man converted Marco who, in turn, converted Giovanni the Jew and Guiseppe. The three newly 'consoled' Cathars went to Milan and converted Aldrico da Bondo. The four went to Roccavione near Cuneo in search of a French Cathar bishop, said to be there. Told he was

¹⁰³ Dondaine, *AFP* XIX (49) pp. 280-312 and *AFP* XX (50), pp. 234-324.

¹⁰⁴ Dondaine, *AFP* XX (50), p. 260.

¹⁰⁵ For a full treatment of these issues Cf. Dondaine *AFP* XXIX (49), pp. 284-286 (based on *De Haeresi*) and *AFP* XX (50), pp. 240-245 (based on, but adding considerable comment to, the *Tractatus of Anselm*).

in Naples, the four neophytes ventured southward. Marco was ordained a Cathar deacon by this unnamed prelate and came back to Concorezzo with his companions. Their teaching spread rapidly throughout Lombardy, the Marches and Tuscany. All this took place in the late 1150's or early 1160's.

All seemed to be going well when the redoubtable Niketas appeared on the scene. He claimed to be no less than Bishop of Constantinople of the Dragovitsan Ordo of Bogomils. His teaching was absolutist, that both Good and Evil were eternal and irreconcilable principles. He reconsoled Marco and his followers. He then took Marco with him to St. Félix-de-Caraman, where in 1167 a council of Cathars re-constituted the 'dioceses' of the Country of Toulouse and adjoining territories. Niketas then left Italy for parts unknown.

Unfortunately, sometime in the late 1160's word got to the northern Italian Cathars that Simon, the Bishop of Dragovitsa who had ordained Niketas, had been discovered 'with a woman' and that Niketas himself had 'made a bad end', died outside Cathar purity.¹⁰⁶ Marco decided to go to Bulgaria himself and be reconsoled and re-ordained. He got as far as Calabria where Ilario, a Cathar deacon, informed him that the trip would be impossible. At Argentano in the province of Cosenza, Marco was imprisoned. He fell ill and sent a message to Giovanni the Jew, asking him to call the Lombard Cathars together for the election of a new bishop. Before this could take place, Marco was released and began his journey northward. He died on the way. The year 1174. From this point onwards, the histories of the Church of Concorezzo and her daughter Churches are rather complex. Personal ambition, doctrinal divergence and mistrust of validity enter into this complexity and make for the splitting up of the one rather large 'diocese' founded by Marco into six Churches.

The Cathars of Concorezzo remained loyal to Giovanni the Jew and elected him their bishop. They reverted at the same time to the *Ordo Bulgariae*, doctrinally mitigated in its dualism. The Church of Desenzano, eldest daughter and greatest rival of

¹⁰⁶ Dondaine *AFP* XIX (49) p. 284 and n. 9; Cf. *AFP* XX (50) p. 241.

Concorezzo, remained absolutist in dualism and retained the *Ordo Drugunthiae*. The Church of Bagnolo near Mantua adopted a third *Ordo*, that of Sclavonia (probably Dalmatia), and elected Coloiano bishop. The Church of Vicenza and the March of Trevisio followed the same pattern and elected Nicolo, a trouble-maker who had set himself against Giovanni the Jew after Marco's death. The two Tuscan Churches of Florence and the Valley of Spoleto elected Peter of Florence, who was a quarrelsome 'stirrer' at the Council of Mossio, held ca. 1175 to resolve conflicts, as Bishop of Florence and Giovanni the Judge as Bishops of Spoleto.¹⁰⁷

The story is much confused, because neither Giovanni the Jew nor Giuseppe of Concorezzo (Marco's original companions) wanted to rule the Mother Church. Garretto who had been elected was rejected as unacceptable because two witnesses had seen him alone in the company of a woman. What is amazing is that from this welter of elections and options, some notable people emerged. In 1190 Nazario, who was to succeed him, accompanied Garretto, who had, at last, succeeded Giuseppe in the bishopric of Concorezzo. to Bulgaria. Shortly thereafter, Nazario became bishop, having brought the *Secret Supper* home with him. He auled for another thirty years, until ca. 1235. A later bishop of Concorezzo, Daniele da Giussano, became a Catholic in the 1280's and joined the Dominican Order. Bishops of Desenzano, Bagnolo and Vicenza also embraced Catholicism at various times in the course of the thirteenth century, by the end of which only the Churches of Concorezzo and Desenzano seem to have had a remnant of followers. Catharism virtually disappeared from the Italian scene early in the fourteenth century¹⁰⁸, though it lingered on across the Adriatic for another two centuries, albeit in very modified form and cramped circumstances.

Sacconi, who tells the story of the schism in part, is more interested in doctrinal divergence than in the personalities or the 'canonical' situations involved. He makes clear, probably as an eyewitness, that the teachings of the six Churches named by

¹⁰⁷ Cf. Dondaine AFP (50) table in Latin on p. 306.

¹⁰⁸ Loos, *DHMA*, pp. 287-288. -The last Italian Cathars were burnt at the stake at Chieri near Turin in 1382; for an account of the last days of Bosnian dualism vid. Loos, *DHMA*, pp. 292-321.

Dondaine and of some of their notable leaders involved variants on the Cathar theme. These same differences are brought out in *De Haeresi* and by Anselm of Alessandria,¹⁰⁹ who are in substantial agreement with Sacconi.

Briefly, the differences are these: the Church of Concorezzo held a very conservative mitigated dualism. These Cathars acknowledged one God but denied the Trinity. They saw Satan acting with divine permission, all men as fallen angels and the cosmology of the Secret Supper as a basis for their world vision.¹¹⁰ The Church of Desenzano held a radical dualism, but by 1250 had two schools of thought. The first is headed by Balasinara da Verona, their bishop, who taught subordination of Son and Spirit in the Trinity; good and bad angels as created separately by God and Satan; a complex transmigration of angelic 'souls' through animals and men; rejection of the Old Testament except for some of the Prophets, Psalms and Wisdom literature; docetism as regards Christ whose mother was an angel; an endless material world; no future judgment; hell on earth. These things were once held by all *Albanenses*, as Cathars of Desenzano are sometimes called, except for the 'simple' to whom they were not taught.

In the Church of Desenzano of Sacconi's day, one of the greatest Cathar teachers and innovators flourished. He is probably author of the very substantial treatise, *De Duobus Principiis* together with which Dondaine has bound Sacconi's own work¹¹¹. He is known to history as Giovanni da Lugio. Without denying the Trinity in a Catholic sense, this author holds there are two principles, the bad one identified with evil qualities and sins which are its 'name' and seen through allegorical and metaphorical interpretations of scripture. He sees creation in a context of pre-existent matter passing by action of the Son, from bad to good. Some creation, however, is from bad to worse depending on how close it is to Satan, who created *this* world. God has another parallel world and not being almighty, He 'slips up' quite a bit and 'allows' all sorts of 'mistakes'. Giovanni holds a real incarnation of Christ, and sees him working real miracles, but nothing

¹⁰⁹ Cf. Dondaine *AFP* XIX (49), pp. 308-311 and *AFP* (50), pp. 281-285.

¹¹⁰ Dondaine, *LDP*, p. 76.

¹¹¹ Dondaine, *LDP*, pp. 81-147.

in this world as quite as real as in the other. The other Cathar Churches believe things very similar to those held by the Church of Concorezzo with slight variations as regards original sin (Bag-nolo) and radical dualism (all the Churches of Languedoc). Sacconi has nothing to say about the beliefs of the Greek, Bulgarian and Bosnian Churches known in some cases to vacillate between modified and absolute dualism.¹¹²

The rough statistics given by Sacconi reflect the state of Catharism in the West and Bogomilism in the East by the mid-thirteenth century. Numbers he cites are, of course, only of initiated adepts and not of hearers, seekers, believers, people with 'death-bed contracts' or other hangers-on. He gives Concorezzo fifteen hundred or more members and the other Lombard Churches all together only two hundred. In the Marches he counts no Italian members in Verona and only a hundred elsewhere. However, he notes the "French" colonies in Verona and Lombardy (probably exiles from the Albigensian Crusade and subsequent persecutions) number one hundred and fifty. The Tuscan Churches of Florence and the Valley of Spoleto are taken together reduced to a mere hundred. Looking beyond Italy, he notes the Churches of Languedoc (once four powerful 'dioceses') are almost destroyed and down in numbers to two hundred, all told. His figures for the Eastern Bogomils are incredibly low and his sources here more subject to question. Sacconi maintains there are only thirty-odd Latin adherents in the Imperial Capital. In the Greek and Slavic churches in Constantinople and mainland Greece, Asia Minor and the whole Balkan peninsula a number approaching five hundred is all that can be found. His 'parting shot' in this section is to state that in the whole world there are less than four thousand Cathars. He implies that in his younger days there were many more.¹¹³

The general impression Sacconi wants to convey is not just of a waning but of a defeated movement. Certainly Catharism was on its way out, even as early as the time at which he wrote. Often this has been blamed on its external persecution imposed

¹¹² Obolensky, *B*, pp. 160-163. Professor Obolensky insists throughout his work that Paulician and earlier Massalian influence bore heavily upon Bogomil doctrine, a position Hamilton, among others, rejects, *Vid. B. Hamilton, Monastic Reform, Catharism and the Crusades* (900-1300), London, Variorum Reprints, 1979.

¹¹³ Dondaine *LDP*, p. 70.

by the Inquisition, with the connivance of the Holy Roman Emperors. We have seen, however, that the seeds of dissension were sown a good eighty years before Sacconi wrote. A loose federation of local Churches may be an attractive 'Alternative' to an increasingly centralised papal or patriarchal body, but it was not, by the end the twelfth century, a very viable one. Catharism in northern Italy waned, as drastically as it did, precisely because it alternated too much. Two tendencies or groupings may be able to compete and even interact for one another's good. Six, however widely distributed geographically, simply cannot.

Differences of doctrine, differences of myth, and finally a phenomenon like Giovanni da Lugio and his work of allegorical 'liberalism', combining as they did with endless organisational squabbles and fears of invalidity, tolled the death of a short-lived but intriguing curious movement.

The heritage of Catharism came not in overt survival but in a re-emphasis of spiritual and other worldly values within the opposing Catholic camp. Men and women continued to struggle with matter, as if it were inherently evil, even when in theory they rejected its being a creation of Satan. Men and women might deny their being angels, but in many a religious house of Piedmont, Lombardy, the Marches and Tuscany they would attempt to live as if they were. Men and women might return to the stable organisation of a stratified 'Great Church', but a nostalgia for the 'little flock' would remain and express itself in a host of confraternities and pious societies where something analogous to Cathar initiation and succession to office could be contained.¹¹⁴ The Cathar identity was finally suppressed. But as friars roamed the highways and lanes of the Valley of the Po, some even in the guise of dreaded Inquisitors, much of the spirit of Catharism remained. Purified of its 'metaphysical rigidity' and more exotic flights of fancy, it may well be with us still!

IV. CATHAR RITUAL AND SOME CONCLUSIONS

The path we have trod in our attempt to discern something of the life and times, the thought and fancy, the organisation and

¹¹⁴ Cf. G. G. Meersseman, *AFP* XX (50), pp. 5-113 for a study of this phenomenon as encouraged by the Order of Preachers.

techniques of the Cathars of Concorezzo and her daughter-Churches has often been beset with obscurity. This has come in part from lack of documentation, but also it has come from our necessary selectivity as regards sources. In some ways our consideration of Cathar as against Catholic doctrine has taken us down into a dark cave. Here and there we found signs indicating side passages, leading off into a nowhere of bad gloss on scripture and dull reasoning in philosophy. But the author we have presumed to be Praepositinus of Cremona has led us forward in such a way that no main Cathar doctrine known to him was utterly neglected, and no cogent Catholic reply unheard.

From dark, subterranean passages we emerged into the great wall-painted chamber of the *Secret Supper*. We may still have been underground, but light filtered in and gave us a vision of seven heavens, of the flights of angels (both good and bad) and of a struggle that would have a happy ending. In the source of the myth, the whole universe and every internal sentiment of man were challenged and accounted for, even if not very conclusively explained. By entering into their mythology, we hopefully obtained a certain empathy with the northern Italian Cathars. We began to weigh things on their scales, and to decipher some of their hidden needs and goals.

By turning to the ex-Cathar Sacconi, we were introduced to the more 'institutional' side of Cathar history and life. We felt some of the doubt, the mutual mistrust, the helplessness before a great world, the barriers of which, mountains and seas, the Alps and the Adriatic, *could* be surmounted. Men from the East (not always very 'wise') entered onto our Lombard scene and brought to Concorezzo and Desenzano as well to Verona and to Florence, Treviso, Spoleto and Mantua, not just myths to believe; but positions to vie for and loyalties to be strained.

There remains, however, a great step not yet taken, and so in these concluding pages we ask: *how* and *why* did northern Italians, mostly of rather humble background, though some were of mercantile class and a few from even higher strata of society, embrace the strange religion that came out of the Balkans and set them apart from their fellow citizens in the countryside and city?

We believe the answer lies in the rite of initiation itself and its meaning for Cathars. As early as 1939, Dondaine published fragments of a Cathar *Rituale* which have, together with a great deal more in way of documentation, been examined since by Christine Thouzellier and others.¹¹⁵ Thouzellier highly commends the translation by Wakefield and Evans from the Latin and Provençal source as '*entièrement fidèle au texte*'. We here rely heavily on their work,¹¹⁶ comparing it, in the case of the Latin text with what Dondaine published in 1939. The texts hold certain surprises and require some degree of interpretation from other sources.¹¹⁷

In medieval dualist circles, the transition from being a 'believer' to being a 'Christian' was preceded by fasting and other penances and effected by the ceremony called in the East *Te-leiosis* and in the West by a Latin term, translated from Occitan, *Consolamentum*.¹¹⁸ This ceremony was always preceded, sometimes with an internal, sometimes in a continuous rite, by the 'Ministration of the Holy Prayer' in which the candidate was taught phrase by phrase, the Latin version of the Lord's Prayer in Cathar used with its petition '*panem nostrum supersubstantialem da nobis hodie*' and its doxology '*quoniam tuum est regnum et virtus et gloria in saecula, Amen.*' Dondaine notes that the opening words of this rite are missing in the fragment of the Latin ritual he publishes.¹¹⁹ This rite of 'ministering the Prayer' takes place in the context of a stylised discourse on the content of the 'Our Father' and ends with the usual *meliormenta* or 'reverences'. If the *Consolamentum* does not follow immediately, the *servitium* of forgiveness and the Sign of Peace do.¹²⁰

The ceremony for giving the *Consolamentum* begins with three 'reverences' on the part of the 'believer' to be received. These are given to the elder of the house. The ceremony proceeds with seven prayers by all 'Christians' present, including one of pardon for their possible sins and a sort of deprecative

¹¹⁵ C. Thouzellier, *Rituel Cathare*, Paris. Editions du Cerf, 1977, passim; vid. praes. her extensive bibliography pp. 293-326, henceforth: Thouzellier *RC*.

¹¹⁶ Ibid. p. 9 Cf. Wakefield and Evans *HHMA* pp. 486-488.

¹¹⁷ Dondaine *LDP* 'Fragmentum ritualis', pp. 151-165.

¹¹⁸ Vid. Moore *OED* p. 26; for the vernacular source of the term Cf. Wakefield and Evans *HHMA*, p. 467 n. 3 (p. 776).

¹¹⁹ Dondaine *LDP* p. 151.

¹²⁰ Wakefield and Evans *HHMA* p. 473 Cf. Dondaine *LDP* p. 151.

absolution which is repeated twice with three 'reverences' interspersed. Then the 'book' (of the Gospels) is put into the believer's hands. The believer makes three 'reverences' and the stylised sermon on the 'Baptism in the Holy Spirit' follows. Nothing in this sermon as recorded in the Latin text would cause the slightest twinge from the most orthodox anti-Cathar. This is a salient feature of Cathar ritual. It defies the adage, '*lex orandi est lex credendi*', there being no seeming connection between what is said and what is believed, except perhaps in the collective interpretative mind of speaker and hearer.

When the sermon ends, the officiant takes back the book from the candidate, asks him if he wishes "to receive this holy baptism of Jesus Christ as it has been explained and to hold it in purity of heart and mind", without fail, for life. The candidate gives an affirmative reply, praying to the good Lord for grace. A blessing follows and a further 'reverence'. The candidate then prays aloud for pardon and mercy, and the officiant prays that the candidate may have it. The candidate then places his hands on the table in front of the officiant who in turn places the book on the candidate's head. All the *ordines et Christiani* (ordained persons and 'Christians') present now lay their right hands on the candidate. The officiant pronounces the usual Trinitarian invocation: 'In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit', the candidate says, 'Amen' and after a lengthy introduction the 'Our Father' is repeated five times. The Cathar 'let us adore the Father, Son and Holy Spirit' is repeated three times, followed by another 'Our Father' and three more 'let us adores'. Then the Prologue to John's Gospel is read, followed by three 'let us adores' and one 'Our Father', three more 'let us adores' and the 'grace' to rise. The candidate kisses the book, makes three 'reverences' and pronounces a short prayer for blessing. The *Servitium* or the monthly public prayer for forgiveness then follows.¹²¹

This whole ceremony of simple dignity exists in a quite different "order of liturgy" in the Provencal variant. The Johannine Prologue and the *Servitium* come early on, the questions are inter-

¹²¹ Wakefield and Evans *HHMA* pp. 480-483 Cf. Dondaine *LDP* pp. 162-165

persed in the sermon, the number and order of prayers is different and more emphasis is put on the Kiss of Peace than on the imposition of hands, though it is still prominent and, indeed, essential.¹²²

Apart from these slight variants of rite, which can in no way change its purpose, we must now come to the central quandry of our consideration of the *Consolamentum*. What does the ceremony mean and what effect has it in the life of the new Cathar? The answers to these questions are found by implication, rather than in ways of explicit explanation, in the anonymous *De Haeresi Catharorum in Lombardia*, a late twelfth century work critically edited by Dondaine in 1949¹²³. Here we are informed as to the teaching of Marchisio da Sojano, second Bishop of the Cathar Church of Desenzano, like all of that group an absolute dualist. This prelate who held sway in 1185¹²⁴, taught that those fallen angels who became men were by their very nature a three-fold composite of heavenly body, heavenly soul and heavenly spirit. When Satan swept their souls to earth, their listless heavenly bodies remained on high, being the 'dry bones' referred to by the Prophet Ezekiel.¹²⁵ Their spirits also remained in the sky. Their stolen souls were 'incorporated' into corruptible and reproducible flesh of earthly sort by Satan. Thus incarnate in this world, they would continue on an endless round of imprisonment. Christ, the Son of the Good God, descended from heaven to give these earth-bound souls an escape from their Satan-made bodies. Christ's redeeming work consists, for Marchisio, precisely in reuniting the heavenly elements of the human composite. To achieve this restored and fulfilled personhood, Christ's 'baptism' must be undergone, with prayer and penance. This is the *Consolamentum* rightly administered. Its effect is described by Paul in the First Epistle to the Thessalonians when he prays: 'May the God of Peace make you perfect and holy, and may you all be kept safe and blameless, spirit, soul and body for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ'.¹²⁶

¹²² Wakefield and Evans *HHMA* pp. 483-491, the Provençal text is appended.

¹²³ The text is given in full in Dondaine *AFP* XIX (49) pp. 309-sq.

¹²⁴ Borst *C*, p. 201.

¹²⁵ Ez. 37, 4.

¹²⁶ Thes. 5, 23.

In light of this identification of *Consolamentum* and heavenly restoration, we can see how important it was for northern Italian (and all other) Cathars to be certain of the validity of their *ordines* and the unquestionable purity of their ministers. The *Consolamentum* is, in effect, the way out of the cave and into the open air. The greatest Cathar fear was that this liberation might not be effected. The greatest Cathar hope was that, once this 'release of the spirit' had taken place, its effect might not be lost by subsequent sin. Any grave sin could be disastrous, for, from swallowing a morsel of chicken to fornication, from an idle oath to inflicting violent death on an enemy, *all* had the same consequence for the initiated: loss of 'eternal life'.

Here, of course, we return to one of the most salient points of our earlier remarks. Cathars do not distinguish degrees of evil or, for that matter, of good. All is black and white. A person *is* a Christian (consoled, restored, baptised in spirit) or he or she *is not*. This same inflexibility of mental stance carries over into the realm of Cathar myth. The hearer either intuitively identifies him or herself with the things and states of being described in such a myth as the *Secret Supper* and such an analysis as that ascribed to Marchisio da Sojano above, or he or she does not. There is no middle ground. Finally, in selecting an *ordo* to follow and prelates within it to obey, a Cathar cannot opt except for a specific loyalty. He or she may borrow at will from the history, doctrine and myth of an 'alternative alternative' but each member can, in effect, only belong to *one* local Church.

Catharism might well have been a workable system if the doctrinal stances taken on however rigid dualist lines had been modified by a morality that allowed more for human vagaries and put more emphasis on isolated options, a mythology more susceptible to multiple interpretation and rites whose efficacy depended less on the worthiness of their ministers. Local Churches such as Concorezzo could have endured with real autonomy if their doctrinal stance and moral integrity had transcended the whimsical potential for misdirection or radical change found in their leaders at any given time. However, the Church of Concorezzo at the end of the twelfth and the beginning of the thirteenth century was, with her five daughters and several affiliates to the

East and to the West, in the Balkans and the Languedoc, already headed for a dissolution, which was as much the result of internal rigidity as of the blows of external persecution.

It would be quite wrong, nonetheless, to evaluate the Cathar experience in northern Italy (or anywhere else) as a mere waste of time. By struggling, however badly, with the interpretation of scripture, Cathars led Catholics (such as presumed Praepositinus) to look more closely at scripture and find things hitherto neglected there. By telling their stories of how the world came to be and of what man truly might be, the Cathars indirectly instigated further investigation in the fields of a more sober, less exotic, cosmology and a less colourful, but perhaps more probing, psychology. To what extent Catharism on a popular level was contributory or analogous to the neo-Aristotelianism of the emerging schools on a more elite level, is beyond our ability to judge, merely on basis of the research contained above. That both Catharism and Scholasticism were symptomatic parts of the fresh 'novelty' of the High Middle Ages can, however, be stated without reservation.

A deeper and more far-reaching consideration needs to be made. The humble, unfettered, pure and candid approach of the Cathars and other 'dissident' movements arising after the mid-twelfth century created an atmosphere from which the friars' movement with its mendicant Orders could emerge in the thirteenth. Dondaine stresses the effect on one of the friars' founders, Dominic de Guzmán, whose first contact with Cathars in the County to Toulouse was to give a 'new and definitive orientation' to Dominic's own soul¹²⁷ and give his sons and daughters, in time, a concern that would produce Inquisitors and theologians, preachers and contemplatives, commentators and even converts from dualism whose concern with Catharism would 'slant' the Order of Preachers, which Dominic founded in 1216, in the direction of an apologetic monism and an intellectually based incarnationalism that would be its characteristics for centuries to come.

More than any of these effects on its times and its detractors and the reactions they caused, Catharism offered a timeless value which transcends all our previous considerations. Catharism is

¹²⁷ Dondaine, *AFP*, XIX (49), p. 280.

a radical insistence upon the truly spiritual nature of man. Though it may exaggerate this nature at the expense of what it considers 'lesser realities', Catharism never loses sight of human life as struggle, an attempt at 'beyondness' which requires from all following its program both direction from without and applied effort from within. In this struggle Catharism is rigorously demanding in its techniques, but while it often failed in its practical results it still holds out, some eight centuries after its heyday, an ideal and a hope for those who value light above darkness, the subtle over the gross, spirit as the one thing that *is* beyond the multiplicity of distorted matter which *seems* to be.

Well could the Cathars have agreed with Plato who has Socrates say in *Phaedo*:

'... while we live we shall, I think, be nearest to Knowledge when we avoid, so far as possible, intercourse and communion with the body, except what is absolutely necessary, and are not filled with its nature, but keep ourselves pure from it until God himself sets us free. And in this way, freeing ourselves from the foolishness of the body and being pure, we shall, I think, be with the pure and shall know of ourselves all that is pure — and that is, perhaps, the truth. For it cannot be that the impure attain the pure'.¹²⁸

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¹²⁸ 'Phaedo' foglio 67B in M. N. Fowler, tr. *Plato*. London, William Heinemann, 1913, pp. 231-232.

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