

LECTURE # 5

DUELISTIC HERESIES

Generally speaking, dualism refers to any of several religious philosophical positions that see the universe as made up of two incompatible principles, such as Spirit/Matter, Good/evil, The Gnostics, discussed last week, generally fall into this category. This week we will talk in depth about groups that made it a complete way of faith: We will begin with the MANICHAEANS, and then move to their spinoffs, the BOGOMILS, AND THE ALBIGENSIANS or CATHARI.

Greek Religion and Philosophy were perceived as more concerned with the fundamental gap between the spiritual and material worlds whereas the notion of the universe as the battleground of good and evil cosmic principles was Persian, growing out of Zoroastrian thought. Inevitably, the two forms of dualism became commingled.

Several centuries before Plato (@ 6th cent BCE), the ORPHIC MYSTERY cult of Greece taught that humanity's goodness lay in its spiritual component which was imprisoned in the material body and had to be liberated. Over and over, this doctrine would be used as a justification for various ascetic doctrines, including the monastic movement in Christianity.

Dualistic tendencies have always posed a problem for Christianity, particularly when reform is sought over/against a lax or corrupt church. The ideas that the body is a temple, rather than a prison, of the spirit and God approves of creation can easily be shifted into dualist oppositions between spirit and flesh and between God's kingdom and the kingdom of this world.

Because gentile Christianity (and some Jewish sects, such as the Essenes) grew up in an environment influenced by both Greek and Persian dualism, this thinking has frequently crept in, especially in the area of Gender and sexuality.

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MANI AND THE MANICHANS

At the beginning of the 3rd century the church at Rome was generally regarded as the center from which accepted interpretations of doctrine and forms of teaching should be given. But it was not until the formulation of Pope Leo I in the fifth century that the Pope's authority was said to rest on the papal succession from St. Peter.

Before this happened, many theological controversies had and were taking place within the church. Manichaeism was closely connected to Gnosticism with 'hierarchies', and with the way in which 'searchers after truth' thought they should or should not live.

Manichaeism is not a 'heresy' in the strict meaning of the term, since the Manichees did not consider themselves to be Christians. However, their connection with and influence on Christian doctrines, both 'heretical' and 'orthodox' and because of the effect it had on Christians contemporary with it and their descendants makes it very important.

MANI (216-?) Mani was born in Persia and was said to come from a well to do Persian family. About the year 280 he moved into the eastern provinces of the Greco Roman empire to teach and spread his religious ideas.

He had studied Persian Magism, had been to India and had heard a little about Buddhism. What he knew of Christianity came from a Gnostic sect and the Marcionite Churches. What we know of him comes from fourth century Roman documents and from Moslem historians of the 10th century.

His system and mythology were based on a dualistic conception of the Universe in accordance with Zoroastrian teaching. The world is clearly full of terrifying contradictions,, and, for the Manichees, the only possible explanation for this lies in the existence of two separate cosmic kingdoms --the one of Light, the other of Darkness.

In the Manichean system, the physical and the ethical are not distinguished one from the other. Light and goodness are the same, as are Evil and Darkness.

There are two Rulers in the Universe. The kingdom of light is ruled by the Good, primal God. The kingdom of darkness is another spiritual kingdom and Satan and the demons are born from it. These 2 kingdoms are opposed for all eternity.

According to the Manichean myth, Satan invaded the Kingdom of light. To fight him, God created primal man who was an Archetype--an original ideal pattern, not the first human.

Satan overcame his opponent and, although rescued by God, Satan robbed him of some particles of light and mingled these with the five elements of the dark world. Out of these mixed elements God formed the visible world in order to deliver the imprisoned light. Primal man and his helping spirits dwell in the Sun, and the twelve constellations collect any particles of light

set free and pour them into the Sun. Here they are purified and can attain to God.

Satan created Adam and drove the particles of stolen light into him so as to dominate these sparks more securely. Eve was also created with light, but smaller one. The heavenly spirits took the humans under their care and sent aeons (spiritual powers) to help them. These took the form of visible prophets and their purpose was to instruct humanity as to its TRUE nature.

These were sometimes named Adam, Noah, Abraham, Zoroaster, Buddha, Jesus, Paul and the last and greatest, Mani. They could only save man and set free the light within by imparting true gnoseis of his nature and his forces. The light set free would ascend to God.

If man is not redeemed in this lifetime, then he must go thru further cycles of life after death to purify himself. When all the light is united with God the angels will withdraw from the world. A huge conflagration will destroy the material universe, and again there will be complete separation of the two spiritual kingdoms.

Only thru Mani , who was continuing the work of the helpers from Heaven, could the separation of light from darkness be completed, only thru him and his imitators, --the elect.

As in the gnostic system, there were different grades of people, but none were hopeless. The lowest grades had a hope of reincarnation, & in a new cycle of life, could look for liberation,

There were five grades of Manichees, The first three included the teachers, or 'Sons of Meekness'. They were the Perficti or the Electi.

Then came the administrators, the 'sons of knowledge and discernment' enlightened by the sun. These were bishops and priests.

The last grade were made up of the Elders, the 'sons of understanding or Intelligence', who were the presbyters. The administrators and elders together were called the Auditori--the hearers. Augustine spent 9 years as an auditori.

Because of their dualism, they were strict ascetics. They could not eat flesh, marriage and procreation were condemned since this would engender more trapped souls. However, it was only the Electi who were held strictly to this.

The Auditori had fewer demands. They were not to lye, committ adultery, murder, doubt and were to keep a certain number of fasts. They were to show great respect to the electi since they were the redeemers and only they had full knowledge of religious truths and could intercede for others.

Manichaeism spread rapidly thurout the Roman Empire and into Asia. By the beginning of the 4th century, it began to appear as one of the great religions claiming adherence. There was a single head over the five grades of belivers--the Manichaeen Pope--who for many centuries lived in Babylon. By the end of the 3rd century, most the surviving Marcionite churches were incorporated into the Manichaeen community.

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BOGIMILS

The invasion of North Africa by the Vandals in the 5th century saw the end of Manichaeism there but Manichaean communities continued to exist in the Byzantine Empire in the East. Many settle in Bulgaria and Armenia.

It is probable that the 5th century Paulicians and Bogomiles of those regions, who were thought of as heretical Christians, were these same Manichaean sects under different names, since they too had the perfecti and Auditori, believed in a Docetic Christ and in the evil of matter.

The 11th century crusaders found Paulician sects in Syria and Palestine, and there were still Bogomils in Russia in the 19th century.

the PAULICANS began with the idea that Jesus was adopted by God at his baptism at age 30. In later years some moved toward an extreme dualist position, rejecting the idea of Christ's humanity and treating the material world as having been created by Satan, who was equated with the God of the Jews.

Many historians believe they provided the seed of the later bogimil dualist heresy among the Bulgarians. They lived in the mountains of Armenia and some took refuge among the Arabs.

The BOGIMIL heresy began in the Balkans around 930 CE and was the first large-scale dualist movement of the middle ages. Bogimil missionaries traveled to Italy and Provence (southern France) and perhaps other parts of Western Europe, seeding their doctrine and

contributing to the later rise of the Albigensian heresy, also known as the Cathars.

The founder was Bogomil (meaning "beloved of God" in the slavonic language. He was a village priest and began to teach a dualist doctrine that God had two sons, Christ and Satanael. Satan, identified in typical dualist fashion with the God of the O. T., had created the material world. The eastern Orthodox church together with its icons, sacraments, and hierarchy were under Satanael's control.

He taught that the only valid prayer was the Lord's prayer, that the true believers should not eat meat or drink wine, and that marriage and procreation were to be avoided. Bogimil congregations had no priesthood or hierarchy; men and women confessed their sins to one another and gave one another absolution.

The spread of his teachings has been explained as a peasant religious uprising masking Slavonic-speaking peasants' resentment of the Byzantine Greek rulers in Constantinople (modern Istanbul). This pitted the Slavic peasantry against the Greek overlords, and the Orthodox church against the Slavic village priests.

Scholars remain divided about whether there might be a secret doctrine passed on from century to century or whether certain ideas reoccur over and over because of Christianity's own internal tensions over the world and the degree to which believers must be separated from it.

By the early 9th century, anti-dualistic works were being translated from Greek into Bulgarian showing the Eastern

Churche's campaign against the heresy. Nevertheless, Bogomil ideas spread into Constantinople itself after the conquest of Bulgaria in 1018 by the Byzantine Emperor Basil III. The ideas were among both monks and the nobility. They met in secret while openly pretending to be Orthodox believers.

Bogimil believers fell into two groups. The Church of Dragovitsa (after a village in Macedonia), whose members were absolute dualists, maintaining that Satan was a cosmic power equal to God; and the Bulgars, or old Bogomils, who considered Satan to be God's fallen brother.

The two tolerated each other, but the absolutists drifted further away from Christianity. It was the absolute dualists who carried their ideas West, influencing the spread of Cathar ideas in Italy and France.

When areas of the Balkans were conquered by the Ottoman Turks in the 15th century, many Bogomils embraced Islam. The capture of Constantinople by the Turks in 1453 sealed the end of organized Bogomilism in the east, tho traces of their ideas persisted in Balkan folktales @ how God and the devil created the universe together.

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ALBIGENSIANS or CATHERS

The word cathari was thought to derive from Katharos, the greek word for 'pure' and the term was used by the church to describe a variety of heretical movements between the third and thirteenth centuries. However, it is more likely that the word 'ketter' from the German which means heretic is where it originated. It is a play on the german word for Cat 'katte' (Ketzer in modern German).

Many sects were lumped under the term Cathari, these were Paulicans, Novatians, Bogomils, Albaneses, concorezanes, patarni, Albigensians and Waldensians. These groups generally repudiated the church hierarchy, having thier own bishops and deacons and advocated an ascetic life style that might include celibacy, vegetarianism and even ritual suicide.

Usually adherents were divided into groups, an inner group of 'perfects' who took the strictest vows and an outer group of 'believers' or 'herarers' who lived more worldly lives but followed the perfects teaching otherwise.

Thus, the term Cather became a generic term for heretic. What I want to deal with here is specifically the group which arose in Northern Italy and Southern France and Spain in the 12th and 13th centuries, and against which a crusade was called in 1209 by Pope Innocent III.

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CATHERS IN FRANCE

It is unlikely that the Manichean heresy was directly transmitted to the cathars, for that matter, the Bogomils. However, what does seem reasonably certain is that Bulgarian Bogomilism of the 11th century and the Catharism that the west knew from the 12th to the 14th centuries were one and the same religion. Besides a bogomil "pope" from Constantinople, Nicetas, presided at the Cathar Council in 1167 which was held in Saint-Felix-de-Caraman near Toulouse.

The Cathars called themselves "Christian" but especially "Friends of God", a term frequently witnessed in the Languedoc in the 13th century and which is the literal translation of the Slav "bogo-mil" so in both slavonic and in the west it should be called "Church of the Friends of God."

The name Albigensian, which they were also called, comes from the area of France most associated with them, Albi. However, for our purposes we will call them Cathars, their more common name.

CATHAR DUELISM

There are two creations and the only one that is forever is the Kingdom of the Good God. They paraphrased Paul's letter to the Corinthians, w/o charity (equated with God) I am nothingness.

This referred to the idea that w/o the divine spark which is love I am reduced to corruptible and vain flesh and blood which only belongs to the World and is consequently Nothingness.

Their main argument is that to believe that an infinitely good God could have created conditions which allowed Evil to

exist, that is, matter and time, is impossible.

thus there has to be another creator principle of the world where evil happens. This principle is not created and is co-eternal with the good God but he is not "true God." He doesn't have absolute existence which belongs only to the True God. He "invents" matter so as , by attracting it, he makes the Spirit fall: faced with eternity he "invents" time so that everything is tainted throughout duration. In brief, his aim is that the Kingdom be destroyed and annihilated in the World.

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MYTH OF THE FALL

Through ones soul, humans have characteristics of the Kingdom of the spirit. thur the body, humans partake of the world, of the evil creation. Each soul, even tho they forget their origins, left with God its spiritual double, to which the Cathers retain the name of Spirit. Salvation was obtained by the reunion of the soul and the spirit.

When it came to the Fall, the Cathers had certain divergences. Some believed the Devil acted w/o God being aware, this is absolute dualism. For others he acted with God's knowledge, this is mitigated dualaism. Most were absolute dualists, especially in the Languedoc region.

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REDEEMING KNOWLEDGE

Death would not automatically free the soul from the body for a Judgement, which in any case, they didn't believe in. There is no hell other than earth here below. The soul will not

take its place with God again unless it succeeds in recognizing its divine nature. Only the Christ and the baptism founded by him would allow one to gain this knowledge.

If one had not received baptism or was insufficiently prepared, people would see their soul pass into another body. This transmigration of souls extended to animals: the Cathers believed that the animal body was also a prison for a fallen celestial spirit; and the human soul could very well be reincarnated in it.

Redeeming knowledge can only come from the Holy Spirit. The Cathers say in their Ritual that they receive it from Christ himself with no mediation on the part of the Apostles. It is transmitted by the laying on of hands. Infusion of the Spirit by those who already possess it because they themselves have received it is, for the Cathers, the only true baptism.

This was called the consolament or consolamentum in Latin, because it was the Paraclete of Holy Spirit Comforter that infused knowledge, the understanding of Good.

Thus, a spiritual marriage exists, the mystical reunion of the imprisoned soul in the body with its Spirit remaining in "heaven". The soul 'receives' its 'Spirit.'

The Spirit comes to seek out its soul, or at least to reveal to it the path it must take to re-join it. If Evil triumphs in Time, only Goodness is able to triumph in Eternity: Every soul will free itself, and the whole of the Good creation will be saved.

CHRIST THE MESSENGER: it is obvious that the Christ of the Cathers is quite different from the catholic Christ. He was the heavenly revealer come to convey a message, not redeem by his death.

the Cathers proved to be somewhat uncertain about his status. Sometimes they would call him God, sometimes Gods creature, begotten or adopted Son, but inferior to the father. In brief, they hesitated over the mystery of the Trinity.

The Cathers are docetic in their tendency, saying Christ had only a 'fantastic body' He did not really die upon the Cross and yet they nevertheless respected his apparent Passion, an historical accident, Evil's temporary victory, in Time only but not eternity. They avoid worshipping the cross saying: 'if they had hanged your father would you worship the rope which brought about his death?'

the Miracles were seen as purely spiritual, the blind received "spiritual insight" not physical. The Wine and bread of the last supper were to be understood in a purely spiritual sense, not literal. They dismiss the Eucharist as being immature idolatry. They do break bread in memory of Christ, but as an act of homage, not communion in the catholic sense.

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PARFAITS AND BELIEVERS

Spiritual baptism by the laying on of hands, the "consolament" is the Cather's only sacrament. It could only be given to adults, because faith, free choice, clear, conscious, formulated consent, were all necessary: Baptism of Children was

dismissed as a deviation.

There were, as in catholicism itself, different levels of understanding. The Believers (heretical believers, as the inquisition called them). But it was the ministers, the members of the Cahhar clergy who alone had the right to be called Christian, Good men, or Friends of God. It is they who were called "Parfaits" or "Parfaites" in the case of women. The word is useful, but the cathars never applied it to themselves.

The simple believer never received consolation except as last rites, or order to make a "good end." It was essential that believers be prepared for it and still had the use of language to respond to the minister. Exceptions were made when persecution or war presented the risk of violent sudden death.

The consolation was also the sacrament of ordination, when a believer wished to become a Parfait by vocation and not wait till death's door, he entered a 3 year novitiate in a community of Parfaits. It was a spiritual initiation, an acquisition of dogmatic instruction and a practical preparation for the very restrictive life-style to which he would be subjected after ordination.

If a simple believer who had been 'consoled' because of being extremely ill who then revived, ought not to return to his former state but continue life as a parfait. However, they were not forced and if they returned to life as a simple believer they were consoled again at death.

A few cases are known where 'consoled' ones let themselves die of starvation if they felt they were getting better.

However, it was not a ritual suicide and never was imposed by the Cather church contrary to what the inquisition said.

The Inquisition made no distinction between the consoled and the ordained. Whoever had received consolation was, in its eyes, "hereticus perfectus" and, by virtue of this, perished at the stake--unless they recanted.

THE LITURGY OF CONSOLATION - The officiating person had to be a Parfait, since one had to have received consolation in order to administer it. This took place in the presence of other Parfaits as well as of parents and friends of the recipient, male or female.

There would be questions and he or she would take the vow to follow "the rule of justice and truth:" and to "give themselves to God and to the Church of the Good Christians" If married, the spouse would consent by absolving him/her from all conjugal ties.

the candidate could then accept the 'tradition' (new test), the laying on of hands by all the Parfaits present with various prayers and readings. This was modified when a sick person, or death was immanent from persecution. From 1230 onward for a century, the consolation was given clandestinely in the presence of only two Parfaits, and at night.

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THE RULE OF JUSTICE AND TRUTH-

once ordained, the person was obliged to follow the Gospel teachings to the letter with no exception whatsoever. Like George Fox and the Quakers a few centuries later, they were not to swear at all.

There was to be no lying, even to the Inquisition, tho evasive language and half truths could and were used. Murder was prohibited, even in self defense, and even animals, who had souls, except fish and crustaceans. Refusal to bleed chickens in front of the Inquisitor led many a Parfaite to the stake.

The Cathars refused secular justice (judge not that you be not judged) and they were defenders of non-violence and against the death penalty. The believer, guilty of a crime, was ordered, by way of penitence, to let himself be ordained as a Parfait.

This was the case of Belibaste, the last known Languedoc Parfait burnt by the Inquisition in 1321. Whenever conflict arose, it was settled by a Parfait not by a secular court.

Any deviation from the rule was serious because, freed from evil by the consolation, the Parfait was totally responsible. If he or she sinned one could not obtain forgiveness except at the end of a long and difficult penitence, and another consolation.

The simple believer was in the clutches of evil and it was the devil sinning within him. These were not regulated like the Parfaits. They could have children, eat meat, go to war, etc. but they had to have faith and believe what the parfaits preached, seek after virtue, and prepare for the consolation received on ones deathbed.

The believers had obligations toward the church, respect for the parfait, attendance at church, listening to sermons, and share the parfaits meal and the bread of the communion.

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WORK AND ASCETICISM

The rules obliged Parfaits, male and female, to work and make a living based on Paul's commandment: "if you don't work, you don't eat" they did all manner of trades, including doctors.

They had to live and go about in twos as a minimum. They dressed in black or dark blue once ordained. Their asceticism looks like the most rigorous monastic rules. But contrary to what happens in Catholicism, it had a metaphysical value and found its justification in dualism itself.

Parfaits were obliged to undergo three periods of abstinence each year, before Palm Sunday, after Pentacost, and before Christmas. all thru the year they would fast on Monday, Wednesday and Fridays on bread and water.

finally, there was an absolute obligation for continence, not just celibacy, but since sex was a wicked invention to trap souls, carnal union was evil. 'This rule was so strict that a Parfait or Parfaite was not allowed to touch, and even had to avoid brushing against anyone of the opposite sex.

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THE CHURCH AND CATHAR SOCIETY

The church was divided into dioceses, four in France, six in Northern Italy and 4 in the Balkens. The Deacons, dignitaries (80) and on the local level the Parfaits and Parfaites (seperated, of course). These provided professional training as well as moral and dogmatic education.

Preaching mainly came from John's gospel and the book of Revelation. Every month the community would perform the rite of

"service" in which the Parfaits and Parfaites would perform an act of submission and confess before the visiting deacon. This would be followed by a sermon and ended with the kiss of peace.

This was the opposite of the monastic orders, as contact with the mass of the believers was the main work. The Parfaits lived modestly, but the Cathar church was wealthy. The Church used this money to establish houses or lend at interest. During the crusade against them, they used the money for armed escorts.

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THE REPRESSION; CRUSADE AND INQUISITION

The Church at Rome alerted the secular authorities about the rise of the Cathars because the Cathars did not pay tithes to the "Devil's Church" for Rome was worshiping the evil God, in their opinion.

Where the authorities were hand in glove with Rome, repression was terrible. But where feudalism and urban consulates refused to associate themselves with repression, Catharism developed freely, and institutionalized itself. This was true in the Lombardy towns as well as the Languedoc. In these areas, there was a real counter-church which was openly opposed to Rome. It was a whole new system which threatened to replace the established order.

The repression of Catharism in the Languedoc was a great tragedy: it had political repercussions because this area was more naturally drawn towards Barcelona than Paris. Pope Innocent III had wanted a crusade against them since 1198 but the "Crusade against the Albigeois" set out in 1209.

For 9 years the Northern Barons led by Simon De Montfort ravaged the country "by fire and sword" burning Parfaits and Parfaites at the stake and massacring populations without discrimination of religion, confiscating the conquered lands for their own ends. When Peter II, King of Aragon, count of Barcelona intervened he was killed in 1213 and Simon de Montfort was proclaimed count of Toulouse by Rome.

From 1216 to 1224 the Languedoc overlords fought a war of liberation and took back all their lands. Catharism returned to its former state. However, Louis VIII's crusade in 1226 brought irreversable defeat and in 1229 the treaty of Paris sanctioned the conquest and annexation.

The Inquisition took over tracking down, captureing and putting to death the Parfaits and Parfaites.. It required a whole century to dismantle the church, eradicate from hearts and minds the Cathar religion.

By this time the Catholic church had two orders who could offere an apostolic life style, these were the mendicant (wandering) orders of the Dominicans and the Franciscans. Thus people could "make a good end" w/o leaving the Roman Catholic church.

In Italy Catharism ended by dying out in the 14th century due to the combined efforts of the Inquisition and the attraction of the Friars Minor (Franciscans).

Tho this church was ver exacting and very hard as well as to pessimistic to have had any real chance of susrvival, it was a great message of love, and on many counts, of tolerance and

freedom. It is not just by chance that the world of today bows down with such strong emotion before the ashes of this martyred religion.

With the suppression of the Albigensians in the 14th century, Manichaeism finally vanished, but its major tenet has not. There remains the perennial problem of Good and Evil in the universe. The simplistic Manichaean solution--the opposing Kingdoms of Light and Darkness--is still the belief of many, although they may not, perhaps, consciously realize it. It is certainly not "orthodox" Christian doctrine. Has the church ever completely erased the influence of the Manichees?

The Inquisition that developed out of the suppression of the Cathars is a good example of the distortions which Christianity--called the religion of resplendent Love--has suffered throughout its history.

Thus we must ask: How was it possible for the church to live through such an episode and maintain such an institution and yet for Christianity still to survive? Could it be that without the suppression of these divisive and anti-sacerdotal sects an institutional Church would have disappeared? But, even were that so, did these distortions of the Christian religion mean that its future development might be impaired?

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