

12th Century European Heresies

Historical Theology
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Tim Hendricks

INTRODUCTION: HOW TO RECOGNIZE A HERETIC

In the 12th Century theology was ruled by the Roman Church in the West and the Eastern Church in the East. Because of their hierarchical differences only the Roman Church was really capable of condemning a set of theological beliefs as heresy.

*Why would the Roman Church be more capable of condemning a heresy or heretic than the Eastern Church?

*What is Proto-Protestantism, and who were the Proto-Protestants?

*Was the Roman Church ever correct in condemning these heresies and heretics? Are there situations where we would agree with the Roman clergy?

*A NOTE ON NAMING GROUPS:

1 Corinthians 3:3-9

I. DISSECTING A HERESY

"Although Europe was nominally orthodox Christian throughout the Middle Ages, there were a number of movements which questioned the Church's teachings and sought to establish their own version of Christianity or, as in the case of the Paulicians, Bogomils, and Cathars, a kind of sister-religion which drew on the tenets of Persian Manichaeism, Greek Gnosticism, and Christianity. These movements were condemned as heresies and were ruthlessly crushed by the medieval Catholic Church in order to maintain its hold on power." (Mark, 2019)

A. DEVIATION FROM OFFICIAL DOCTRINE

Since Roman Catholicism was the established religion at the time their leaders got to determine what doctrines we're most important. Following are three primary areas where people the Catholics deemed to be heretics frequently deviated from official doctrine.

1. SACRAMENTS

There were seven at this time in history. They are:

- Baptism
- Confirmation
- Communion
- Penance
- Marriage
- Holy Orders
- Anointing the sick or Last Rites

2. SCRIPTURE

The Romans controlled this too. They used the Latin Vulgate translated by Jerome. Latin was essentially only used by the church. A few nobles may have been educated in Latin and basically none of the common people were educated at all. This also reduced the likelihood of anyone challenging church traditions based on scripture since very few people could study scripture to prepare to challenge church tradition.

3. DEITY

There were also frequent varying themes on the Trinity. Especially on Jesus' status and role as a member of the Trinity, and similar questions about the Holy Spirit.

II. PAULICIANS, BOGOMILS & CATHARS (ALBIGENSIANS)

These are listed together and first because they form a loose succession starting in the 7th century and continuing to the 13th.

A. PAULICIANS (AKA GOOD CHRISTIANS)

1. FOUNDING

Founded by Constantine-Silvanus who died in 684.

This group sought to return to the simplicity of Christian life they found in the writings of the Apostle Paul, especially direct communion with God through prayer. .

2. BELIEFS AND EXPRESSION

- a. Dualism
- b. Rejected sacraments, hierarchy of the Church & veneration of Mary
- c. Rejected sacerdotalism
- d. Rejected Christ's Divinity

3. Ending

Constantine-Silvanus was ordered to be stoned. His successor and some other followers were burned alive, and still others were deported. The group went through various internal upheavals before splitting into several different smaller sects.

B. BOGOMILS (AKA THOSE DEAR TO GOD)

1. FOUNDING

Possibly an off shoot from the Paulicians during the 11th century.

2. BELIEFS AND EXPRESSION

a. Dualism

More developed than Paulicians. Bogomils believed the world belonged to the evil deity and life's purpose is to overcome temptations and the constraints of this body.

b. Rejected sacraments and church hierarchy

c. Rejected Christ's Divinity

d. Included additional elements from Manichaenism and Gnosticism.

B. CATHARS (AKA, ALBIGENSIANS, PURE ONES)

1. FOUNDING

Started in Southern France around the town of Albi in the 11th Century. They further developed the ideas of the Paulicians and Bogomils.

2. BELIEFS AND EXPRESSION

a. Dualism

b. Gnosticism

c. Venerated Sophia (Greek for Wisdom)

d. Continued rejecting those things which the above groups rejected.

3. ENDING

These were eventually suppressed by the Church during the Albigensian Crusade under Pope Innocent III.

III. PETROBRUSSIANS & HENRICIANS

A. PETROBRUSSIANS

1. FOUNDING

Around 1118 a monk named Peter of Bruis (sometimes spelled Bruys) left his position and began teaching in Aries.

2. BELIEFS

a. Rejected paedobaptism

b. Rejected altars and churches and taught that they should be destroyed

c. Rejected the sacrifice of the mass and the eucharist

d. Rejected prayers and suffrages for the dead

e. Prohibited veneration of the cross

3. EXPRESSION

Some try to make him a Manichaen, but he baptized with water, ate meat and used the Old and New Testaments. He did, however give fiery sermons and burn crosses. In one instance it is said that on Good Friday in the town of St. Giles he actually caused the people to build a bonfire and make a feast by roasting meat in the flames.

4. DEATH OF PETER OF BRUIS

Some reports say that the people became angry with his impious treatment of the cross and cast him into the flames at this or another similar bonfire. Although at least one source says he was arrested by the Archbishop of Arles who sentenced him to be burned alive.

B. HENRICIANS

1. FOUNDING

Following Peter's burning another monk named Henry carried on Peter's work. He is accused of increasing the numbers and errors of the group.

2. BELIEFS

a. Continued the same as the Petrobrussians, but more boldly.

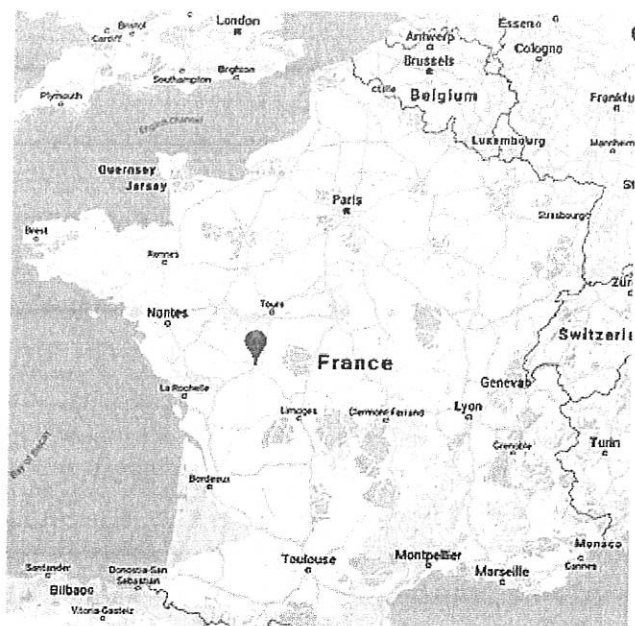
3. EXPRESSION

Henry built up the fervor about what he saw as the errors of the Church and especially the hypocrisy of the Catholic Priesthood that the people of Man's revolted under his leadership and began attacking the priests. They burned the priests homes, stole their personal property and were working at stoning the priests when the local nobility intervened, and banished Henry. Henry then traveled to Poitiers and then Toulouse where he increased his following

4. St. BERNARD & ALBERIC OPPOSE THE HENRICIANS

St. Bernard sent a description of the goings on at Toulouse to Pope, Eugene III. He complained that the priests, churches, festivals, sacraments and all holy things were treated contemptuously; people died without confession and the Viaticum, and children were not baptized. He also accused Henry of spending his entire income on gambling and prostitution.

The Pope responded by sending Cardinal Bishop of Ostia as Legate, accompanied by Godfrey Bishop of Chartes and St. Bernard. St. Bernard is said to have brought many people to repentance by miracles and preaching. Alberic threatened excommunication for anyone who would have anything to do with Henry or his followers. In turn, St. Bernard offered safety to Henry if he would repent and submit to life as a monk under St. Bernard. Henry refused until his eventual capture when he was sentenced to perpetual imprisonment around 1147.



St. Francis. Retrieved

from <https://sensusfidelium.com/apologetics/history-of-heresies-their-refutation-st-alphonsus/>

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