

The Cathar Heresy

A Short History of Catharism and its Origins

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The Albigensian heretics of southern France are generally referred to as Cathars, Cathares or Cathari, and in Italy as Patarines. Most texts describe them as an offshoot of the Bogomils, a religious sect that flourished in the Balkans between the 10th and 15th centuries. Although doctrinally related to the Bogomils, it might be more accurate to say that they were a revival of earlier heterodox opinion, and that the Bogomils were the conduit through which those opinions flowed. With connections to both the Bogomils and the Paulicians of Armenia and Asia Minor, the Cathars' rejection of Roman theology can be interpreted as an overdue response to that Church's expulsion of radical-minded Christians in the early centuries.¹ As from the middle of the 12th century an evolving Bogomilism directly influenced Cathar doctrine, and by the 13th the communities of southern Europe seem to have achieved some level of doctrinal uniformity in alignment with developed Bogomil thinking.

Prior to this standardisation of belief, the Cathars constituted a diverse body of doctrine and belief, sections of the heresy often having their own independent leader. Sometimes labelled Arian or Marcionite as well as Manichaeian, they had teachers of both genders called Parfait (perfected ones), and preached a doctrine centred on reincarnation and the importance of the feminine principle. They claimed that a direct knowledge of God was possible, and saw any form of clerical intervention as superfluous. But change was in the offing. They eventually exchanged a mild form of dualism for absolute dualism, their notion of cosmic forces in opposition for a fixed length of time being transformed into opposing forces irreconcilable for all eternity.

But it was their notion of the Church being irrelevant to salvation that eventually set in motion the forces of genocidal destruction. As a community of heretics with a principality, culture

and language of their own, the Cathars constituted a threat to just about everything the Roman Church stood for. Singled out for special treatment, their Languedoc homeland was ravaged by sword and fire as a result of the Albigensian Crusade. Outside of Byzantium, the Cathar homeland was the most advanced and sophisticated in Christendom. Well ahead of its time, the Languedoc housed a rich merchant and professional class, skilled tradesmen and a ruling elite. Infecting the bourgeoisie with anticlerical ideas, this elite encouraged multiracial co-operation in literature, music and medicine, so making it possible for Arab and Jewish poets, writers, physicians and musicians to ply their art. In alignment with this relaxed policy, women were admitted to the highest ranks of the priesthood and recognised as equal to men, and Jews, regarded elsewhere in Europe as morally and spiritually inferior to Christians, were employed at the court of Raymond the Sixth of Toulouse and allowed to have Christians as house servants, an unthinkable privilege beyond the borders of the Midi.

The Languedoc had a tradition of heresy and was situated in the foothills of the Pyrenees. The Visigoths had settled there, the Priscillian heresy had flourished there, the antipapal Petrobusians had fumed against the Papacy there. The reason for this influx of untoward thinkers was that the Languedoc had a city civilisation like that of Asia Minor, a strong Roman tradition, and constant contact with the Eastern Empire. Narbonne had fallen to Moslem invaders in the 8th century and remained in their hands for a full forty years. A prosperous city prior to the coming of Julius Caesar, Narbonne became a hot bed of heretical activity in the 13th. Marseilles, at the time of the Republic, had been visited by vessels from Constantinople, Carthage and the Near East. Even during the so-called Dark Ages, the Languedoc's Mediterranean trade is known to have remained steady.

During the 13th century the chief magistrates of Toulouse were still being referred to as "consuls", trade with Constantinople and the Syrian ports of the Eastern Empire helping to consolidate contact with Baghdad and Damascus. As a result, the glories of Byzantine and Oriental civilisation came on tap to the southern nobles. By the time of the First Crusade, the Languedoc was

considered the most cultured part of Europe, its close affinity with Moslem Spain resuscitating the elsewhere flagging study of philosophy, medicine and science. Students flocked to the Midi from all over Europe. The close, indeed intimate, relationship between Moslem and Christian populations in Spain also had an effect, for from this centre of Western culture percolated the forbidden knowledge of the East. The result was a circulation of great learning by the Arab and Jewish doctors, and an alliance by marriage between the Spanish houses of Aragon and Castile with the families of the Moorish kings at an early date.

The Manichaeic Background

The Cathar heresy was thought to have sprung out of Manichaeism. In his study of the Inquisition, A L Maycock reveals that Roger of Chalons and Abbot Guibert of Nogent in the 11th century, the Council of Rheims in the 12th, Moneta of Cremona, Luke of Tuy, Stephen of Borbon and Innocent III in the 13th, and Bernard Gui in the 14th century refer to the Cathar heretics as modern Manichees.² Thomas Aquinas agreed. In his book *The Gnostics*, however, Tobias Churton questions this belief and suggests that the Cathars, although sharing certain characteristics of Manichaeism, did not think of themselves as offering, as the Manichees did, a new revelation. They were, in their own estimation, good Christians in possession of "true" Christianity.³

The French historian of Catharism, Michel Roquebert, says that Catharism was a Gnostic form of Christianity with its origins in primitive Christianity. This coincides with the fact that Mani, the founder of Manichaeism, was brought up in a Elchasaite-Nazarene community in Babylonia, so making Manichaeism, like Catharism, an offshoot of the Jerusalem-based Nazarene party which, in spite of being classed as "Jewish Christians" by scholars, was in fact *not* Christian in the sense used later to describe Paul's scattered assemblies. This is to say that primitive Christianity was neither primitive nor Christian in any sense that makes sense, but actually "Jewish sectarian" prior to *and* after the emergence of Paul's Christian communities. The word "Christian" was a Greek term of

abuse hurled at Paul's Jewish-pagan converts, no such term being used by the Nazarenes to define their Messiah's character or mission. Elements of Zoroastrianism, Zurvanitism, Mitharaism and Eastern Gnosticism are also detectable in the Manichaeian mix, but that does not mean that Manichaeism was divorced from Christianity's "Jewish" past, just that it repudiated the Roman Church's self-serving version of that past.

The Paulician/Bogomil Connection

It is to the Paulicians of Armenia that we must now turn if we are to understand the origins of Catharism, for it is in the history, beliefs and practices of this unusual Christian sect that the Manichaeian/Bogomil background of Catharism can be clearly detected. Spreading over Asia Minor and Armenia in the 5th century, the evangelical Paulician Christian Church met ineffectual resistance in the 6th from Nerses, the Patriarch of Armenia, and by the 9th was being written about by Georgius Monachus in his Greek *Chronicon* as "Manichaeian" in origin. Said to have based their teachings on the Gospels and the Epistles of Paul, the Paulicians rejected all other scriptures, and from the 5th century carried on a powerful missionary propaganda which, in the 9th and 10th, brought them into armed conflict with the Byzantine Empire. Writing of these conflicts in the 9th century, Petrus Siculus not only equates the Paulicians with the Manicheans, he also dedicates his *History of the Manicheans* to the Archbishop of Bulgaria because Bulgaria had become the target of Paulician missionaries. At the same time, a writer by the name of Photius supplemented knowledge of the Paulicians by direct inquiry in Constantinople, and in his *Historia Manicheorum* confirms that the Paulicians were Manichaeian in origin. By successfully evangelising Bulgaria in the 10th century, the Paulician hold on Armenia is said to have revived, and in the 11th the first crusaders are recorded as having encountered them throughout Syria and Palestine.

The Bulgarian connection is important because it is in Bulgaria that the Bogomil heresy erupted between the 10th and 15th centuries, and as the connection between Paulician and

Bogomil systems is now fully acknowledged, and the Cathar connection to the Bogomil priesthood is certain, then the influence of Paulician doctrine, and therefore of Manichean, or neo-Manichean doctrine on the Cathars, is pretty certain. And that in spite of the Paulicians having anathematised the founder of Manicheanism. Rejecting Mani, they nevertheless accepted the system he spawned, the major tenets they inherited being due to their close association with the Bogomils. In fact the Bogomils and the Cathari were fundamentally one and same sect, this offshoot of Bogomilism receiving the name "Cathari" in 1163.

From the middle of the 12th century the Cathar Church had its own hierarchy, liturgy and system of doctrine, but the authority of its first bishop in the north of France, and subsequently of those at Albi and Lombardy, was only confirmed by a visit from the Bogomil bishop Nicetas in 1167. Holding councils and establishing new bishoprics, Papa Nicetas gave his blessing to the movement. By the turn of the century there were four Cathar bishoprics in the south of France, one in the north and six in Italy. But change was in the air. The southern Cathari abandoned soft dualism, the Church fell into schism and the Roman Church launched its infamous Albigensian crusade against the hardliners.

Like the Manichaeans, the Paulicians and the Bogomils, the Cathars rejected the principle doctrines of Catholicism and the priests and bishops who tried to enforce them. Not that this was difficult to do in southern France at the height of Cathar influence; the Roman clergy were in such a degenerate state that hardly anyone took them seriously. The historical record shows that Mass had not been said in some of the churches for thirty years, that the Archbishop of Narbonne hardly ever set foot in his diocese, and that Catholic priests were utterly neglectful of their spiritual duties. By contrast, the Cathar priesthood, like its Bogomil precursor, was highly thought of, its dedication to the people, its high level of morality and its rejection of Catholic doctrine attracting large numbers of common folk to its ranks. Having dispensed with Christ as the Redeemer, the Cathars refocused the historical lens and came up with a son of God whom they described as a very special *man*. The Cross and the crucifixion had no spiritual significance,

they said, the idea that salvation had come into the world by such means a lie.

The Cathari also rejected the efficacy of the sacraments and denied baptism a place of any importance. But it was in relation to the Catholic Church itself that they hit perhaps the rawest of nerves, for they were of the opinion that the Great Church was a fraud, that its popes were the successors of the Emperor Constantine and not Peter, and that Peter had in fact never set foot in Rome. A set of complex dualistic doctrines clearly reflecting Manichaeism and ancient Zoroastrian influences were offered instead, the Church's hierarchy, the grandeur of its buildings and its claim to be a divinely appointed intercessor between man and God firmly rejected. Claiming to possess "true Christianity", the Cathars spurned the cross, denied the incarnation and rejected the idea of miracles. Faith in Catholic dogma was secondhand spirituality, they said, and in saying this they raised the spectre of Gnostic independence and threatened Catholic authority by their very existence. Teaching that goodness belonged to the spiritual world alone, they believed the material world to have been evil from the moment of creation. The good God had had no hand in the formation or development of the world. Man was sandwiched between good and evil, pulled this way and that by forces of darkness and light, a captive of the god, or king of this world, whom they named "Rex Mundi".

In his detailed study of the Inquisition, A L Maycock describes Catharism as an extraordinary agglomeration of pagan dualism, distorted Gospel teaching and nauseously antisocial ethics which, proclaiming itself to be a return to the pure Christianity of the early Church, entered Europe through Bulgaria and Lombardy. Catharism is said to have spread all over Northern Italy, Languedoc and Aragon and swept northwards through France, Belgium and Germany to the shores of the Baltic.⁴ Contemptuous of just about everything the Cathars believed, Maycock insists that we view these heretics as mad, bad and dangerous, and with one sweeping statement after another dismisses them as spiritually irrelevant.

The question is: Why did the Cathars think of themselves as having access to a more authentic version of Christianity than that offered by the Roman Church? What did they know of Christianity's early history to make them so sure that Rome's doctrinal stance was a misrepresentation of that history? This seems to have been their attitude in spite of centuries of Church teaching. Ignoring the cross, baptism, the sacraments, miracles, the divinity of Jesus and the doctrine of grace, they presented what they believed to be the original beliefs of Christianity to the world. From where had this come from, one has to ask? From where had their belief that a pure life and not a blind acceptance of dogma or ritualistic practices was what got one into heaven? Or their belief in reincarnation? Or their insistence that the sacraments constituted nothing more than a reliance on magic and superstition? Or their notion that time could be stopped in its tracks and that "resurrection" was something to be experienced here and now? These were grave divergences from orthodoxy, yet the Cathars argued for their approach being nearer to the original vision of the Apostles than that of the ruling Christian elite - in fact they claimed to be in possession of Christ's original message.

In Cathar terms, Christ's original message had to do with experiencing God in a personal manner, of knowing God, not as some monarchical figure distantly apprehended, but as a mysterious presence deep in the human heart. The Church's approach was to say that human beings could only access God through the Church and its doctrines. Only faith in the Christ of theology and a full acceptance of Rome's doctrinal system could save the thirsting soul from damnation. The Cathar claim that God could be known outside of the Catholic faith was an insult to everything the Church deemed to be holy and sacred.

In Cathar terms it was the Church's approach that constituted the problem; it had sacrificed the possibility of contemplative insight and relegated the bulk of its flock to the merry-go-round of unfounded religious certainties. Weighed down by leaden doctrines and an inbred fear of hell, the aspirant was propelled by means of emotional projection into what was believed to be the presence of Jesus and left to sink or swim. Few

managed to swim. Tumbling about inside a religiously circumscribed bubble of belief the faithful reinforced the Church's vision by producing visions of their own, projections of belief molded by belief that held them enthralled.

The difference between Catholicism and Catharism was one of emphasis and focus. The same truths and historical intuitions were in daily use by the Cathar hierarchy, but they were so infused with Gnostic elements that they were all but unrecognisable. Holding to the fact that Jesus had been a human being, they elevated Paul's 'Christ' to the level of a being separate from Jesus and changed Messiahship into a form of possession. In their reading of the New Testament, Jesus the man was taken over by the "Christ" at his baptism and abandoned while on the cross. This was to say that no resurrection had taken place and that the Jesus who appeared later was not Jesus but the "Christ" who had spoken through him. It therefore stood to reason that the sacraments were spurious, for their efficacy hinged on the idea of Jesus being divine. As the physical Jesus had not been divine, merely the instrument of the divine, and had admitted while on the cross to being forsaken by God, the sacraments bound to his flesh and blood reality were without spiritual basis.

Sex, Marriage and Desire

A L Maycock's study of the Cathars allows us to perceive these sectaries through the Church's eyes, and what a dastardly bunch they turn out to be. The high standard of Parfait purity is made to count for nothing, blamelessness of life glossed over in favour of a Church gifted with the right to confer grace by sacrament, the question of sexual relations being denied to ordinary folk a point of no return. The Parfait advocated celibacy for everyone, a demand rejected by the Roman Church because it disallowed God's good creation and made this world into a kind of hell. According to the Cathars, the God who created this world was Satan, not Jehovah, so the problem facing all of us was not one of "belief", but of waking up to the fact that physical matter had a strange, diabolical hold on us. The words "Without whom was

nothing made" did not signify, for the Cathar, that God had made everything, but that everything had been made *without* God's co-operation.

On being ordained, Catholic priests assumed that they had been given the right to issue passports to salvation. Armed with the ability to slam the gates of heaven shut against heretics and the unbaptised, the hierarchy dismissed a faith that dismissed them as spiritually obsolete. Cathars beliefs were viewed with the pessimism believed to infest their system, the fact that those who responded to that system belonged to a region of Europe more sophisticated and skeptical than almost any other conveniently ignored. Flourishing, incongruously, in those very areas where the "Courts of Love" were strongest, Cathars preached what most of the peasants already knew to be true - that this world was a kind of hell - and with a tolerance for human weakness seldom exhibited by the Church, nurtured their communities towards the view that this earth, and the kind of consciousness it helped generate, was the lowest level possible. Confused as to what these Parfait were trying to say, the Cathar priesthood was accused of being both pathologically ascetic as well as hopelessly depraved.

Basically, the Cathars had a very healthy approach to sex and marriage; in fact their approach was ultra-modern. They rejected the Church's sacrament of marriage, but accepted the necessity for the institution of marriage. They practiced birth control (references by the Inquisition to "unnatural practices" are probably connected to this fact) and did not view sex before marriage as sinful. In support of this contention, Abbot Guibert of Nogent (1064-1125) speaks in his memoirs of "men living with women without the name of husband and wife".⁵ As most Cathars were in fact married in Catholic Churches, the idea that they were somehow against the institution of marriage is incorrect. Couples living together were quite acceptable, a form of civil marriage introduced to bless such unions, the women in such unions viewed by the Roman authorities as no better than concubines.

The Living Alphabet of Dualism

This brings us to the vexed question of "dualism", the ancient philosophy of opposites and the possibility of transcendence underlying Cathar, Bogomil, Paulician, Manichaeism and Elchasaite thought. Believing that the world was a battleground between good and evil, the leaders of these communities instructed their followers in a philosophy of life which interpreted good and evil as products of a lost harmony; that is, that good and evil are not primary forces in their own right. This is to say that goodness, too, is a by-product, not a primary condition, for goodness can only come into existence when measured against lack of goodness. Hence the continual possibility of evil resulting from good, and good from evil, for in relation to life and living, these forces are not mutually exclusive. Shading into one another in the most unexpected of ways, they produce hybrid moral situations that all but defy definition. Fundamentally, however, the idea of good and evil is a reflection of our primitive ancestors' experience of light and darkness, terms used to describe good and evil throughout the ages by all dualists, and by the Roman Church itself.

Catholicism rests on an ethical dualism, Catharism on a cosmological dualism. The first manifests itself through human beings, the second pervades the cosmos. The purpose of life for some Cathars was to transcend matter; for others to reclaim, redeem or spiritualise it. In Manichaean belief there was a divine, luminous substance in matter that had to be released; a belief transferred to the Cathars via the Bogomils in a slightly different form. Rejecting Catholic ritual as disguised magic, the Parfait introduced their communities to contemplative practices that allowed for a more direct interaction with the spiritual world. Intermediaries were out; contemplative competence was in if you had the capacity to discipline yourself.

What is often overlooked is that the dualism of the Cathars was not a belief in irreconcilable opposites; it was the belief that such opposites could be transcended. In Cathar terms, Catholic teaching was inadequate on this score. Due to the nature of human perception there appeared to be an unbridgeable gap between "self" and "other", but that was an illusionary condition of mind that only contemplative practice could deal with.

Contemplative practice bridged this gap and enticed the ancient symbols of dualism to appear. Arising spontaneously in consciousness, such symbols silently instructed the seeker in everything he or she needed to know, the experience itself being so powerful that it constituted a life-transforming glimpse into the eternal.

The Cathar rendition of dualist philosophy was not intellectual (a complaint often made against the early Gnostics by the Church Fathers); it was a refinement of perception. Their form of dualism was neither pessimistic nor puritanical; it was (like its Manichaeic precursor) a radical change in perception capable of holding sense of self and world in one frame of reference. The realm of subject and object could be transcended if conscious distraction could be annulled.

Spiritual Baptism

Henri-Charles Puech touches upon the Cathar system of wholeness in relation to the Manichaeic, Valentinian, Marcionite and Bogomil heresies, and reveals an underlying continuity between these groups.⁶ In particular, he homes in on what he terms the "spiritual baptism" of the medieval Catharists (the *Consolamentum*), and likens this rite to the Manichaeic *Bema* and the Valentinian or Marcionite *apolutrosis*. Describing the Cathar version of this rite as probably modelled on an earlier Bogomil version, he tells us that such rites signified "prefigurations of the souls' return to their transcendent home and of their heavenly marriage with their angel or true 'self', their eternal prototype."⁷ These words are reminiscent of Sufi teaching and link us to a stream of ideas ancient in origin and reflective of what Judaism, Christianity and Islam seem to carry at their core - a transformative vision allied to the self and its divine counterpart. For in the Gnostic scheme of things, according to Puech, "eschatological events are turned inward"; that is, the end is already accomplished in the person of the Gnostic as Perfect Man. As Perfect Man the Gnostic attained what belonged to the End Time; which throws the idea of an End Time into a different perspective. In this sense the "End Time" becomes, for the

successful practitioner, an experience of the *end of time*. Experiencing a cessation of the flow of time, and a revelation due to the disruption and recalibration of the senses, the Gnostic underwent a "resurrection" and was never the same again.

Deep psychological territory looms at this point; we are challenged to understand what happens when someone touches the baseline of being and short-circuits the mind's constructions of reality. This was what the Cathar Parfaits attempted to do; they were preoccupied with the forces of nature, and with the nature of the primary forces which resulted in good and evil. Convinced that there was an underlying harmony to the universe, they perceived this harmony as primordial (prior to good and evil), and defined the basic truths of life as fundamentally aesthetic.

An underlying harmony to the universe is easy to postulate; in itself it does not require contemplative or meditative experience. What is not so easy is comprehending the good that can become evil, or the evil that can become good. Affectively involved in the process of life as it moves towards death, we swing from one extreme to another with extraordinary rapidity. Applauded one minute for our insight, our patience and our compassion, we are the next derided for our stupidity, our impatience and our intolerance. Sensitive to the feelings of others one minute, we are, in a blink, oblivious to their needs. Unreliable and at the mercy of our natures, we stumble from one crisis to another trying to find a solution to our mutually recognised and often lamented dilemma. To what or whom should we turn to overcome the discrepancies which shame us? To what or whom should we give allegiance in the hope of stabilising our unpredictable natures? Such questions bothered the brightest minds in every century, and the Church's answer was ever the same: submit to God through the auspices of the Church. Catholicism was God's revealed truth on earth and it could not be side-stepped; only the Catholic rule of law could hold society and the lives of individuals steady. Other religions were fakes specifically designed by Satan to lead the soul astray. Believe that human beings could arrive at the truth of God without the Church, and you were guilty of heresy.

So taught the Holy Roman Catholic Church, and in spite of many a doubt, the Western world went along with this extraordinary idea as if it were true. By early in the 4th century the Church was in a position to enforce such opinions on the general populous, by the 12th so successful most were too afraid to consider answering back. Human nature was a headache and the teachings of Jesus did seem to offer some kind of respite; but who could live like Jesus? The Church did hold things together; but the priesthood was corrupt, most of the popes not far behind. Backed by the military power of the aristocracy, the Church could not be challenged, the aristocracy itself supportive of the Church because it was strong enough to depose emperors.

Brought up to believe that this Church, in spite of its obvious dilapidation, was God's appointed instrument since the days of the Apostles, ordinary men and women of the 12th century had no alternative but to kneel and obey. But not in the Languedoc. In the Languedoc they joined forces with a sophisticated aristocracy and challenged just about everything the Church stood for.

In possession of texts and traditions that spoke a quite different language about God, the people of southern France began to build a tolerant, multi-racial society that became the envy of the known world. Liberated from their fear of hell, the peasantry were introduced to a more optimistic creed and began to act accordingly. This world was hell, they were taught, and no one felt inclined to disagree. Supervising workshops in leather-craft, paper-making and textiles, the Parfait helped establish a class of skilled tradesmen to which they passed on some of their erudition. Widespread in the towns and cities, Catharism was also strongly represented in the country, the Inquisition recording that whole villages were contaminated by this heresy. Backed by the poetic intransigence of the Troubadours, the working classes learned anticlerical ditties and came to understand that women were spiritually important. This is to describe a revolution in attitudes and the growth of a large and vibrant community who eventually attracted the attention and chagrin of the papacy. It is not known how much of their spiritual teaching the Parfaits passed on to the common people, but if their willingness to ease their social plight

is anything to go by, then it can be assumed that something of their contemplative techniques were communicated to those capable of appreciating them.

The Story of the Two Fishes

According to Emma Jung, the Christian era started at the same time as the astrological age of the Fishes, and is characterised by the dualistic problem of Christ and Antichrist, by light and darkness, and by good and evil.⁸ In psychological terms, the problem that arose for Christianity was that the natural symbols of the self, those of "wholeness", could not properly integrate with the imagined figure of the "Christ" because Jesus the "man" had been robbed of his humanity. Changed into a spiritual paragon lacking a shadowy side, Jesus had split into "Christ" (light) and "Antichrist" (darkness), so polarising the forces of his personality and identity. The symbolic language of the self which, for the Cathars, rose spontaneously from within, could not find a niche in Christian dogma due to theological manipulation and the distortions of history. This resulted in a religious system lacking a creative centre, Catholicism's belief that its revelation was complete and beyond criticism a fact of everyday life.

The story of the two fishes is found in the Revelation of John, an apocryphal book used by the Cathars. Visiting earth, Satan is described as descending into the primal waters where he finds two fishes yoked together like oxen for ploughing.⁹ This is a telling image. Emma Jung interprets it as representing Christ and Antichrist; Carl Jung adds the idea in *Aion* of "ruling powers" yoked together. Linking this image to both Bogomil and early Ebionite beliefs, the conclusion reached by the Jung's is that the two fishes refer to two sons of God, brothers in a sense, who must finally work together side by side. And yet one is the reverse of everything Christ stood for, and is to be equated with Satan, the loathed being of destructive power expected to appear in the End Time as the Antichrist.

Straightforward as this interpretation seems to be, and correct as it is in general terms, the fact that the Jung's equate the

two fishes with "sons" or "brothers" may house a more prosaic meaning that Carl Jung all but states when he notes that Augustine's interpretation of the two fishes in the miraculous feeding of the five thousand represent "kingly" and "priestly" attributes; indeed, that the two fishes refer to two persons or powers. Presuming that the two fishes represent Christ alone in the role of king and priest, the Junges overlooked what might be a more direct meaning, namely, that the text refers to Jesus and his brother James. For when one remembers that the Cathars were in receipt of teachings stemming from the Ebionites and Elchasaite of the 2nd and 3rd century, and that the Ebionites were a sectarian wing of the Jerusalem Nazarenes of the 1st century, then the more literal interpretation of the two persons or powers being "brothers" completes the reference's multi-levelled meaning.

This is particularly so when we learn that the Ebionites believed in a double son ship, one son being Christ, the other son being the devil, or Satan, and that Irenaeus, referring to the Gnostics in general, states that this other son is the younger brother of Christ, meaning *James*. As the Ebionites are known to have rejected the idea of Jesus being divine, and virtually worshipped Jesus' brother James who was also their leader, the connection between the mythological and historical levels becomes evident. This strongly suggests that the story of the two fishes harbours not only a mythology concerning Christ and Antichrist, but that it is also the reason for Cathar, Bogomil, Manachaeon, Elchasaite and Ebionite rejection of Jesus as a divine being. Carl Jung adds fuel to the fire when he says that the aeon of the fishes is ruled by the archetypal motif of the hostile brothers.¹⁰

The problematic reference in Ebonite teaching to Christ and Antichrist being yoked together is solved if the Antichrist reference refers to Rome's Jesus having turned into a species of Antichrist. Rome, it could be said, had created the Antichrist through the presentation of a Christ figure who was the direct antithesis of the Gospel Jesus. As the Mandeans are known to have rejected Rome's version of Jesus for this very reason, and the Mandaeans were part of "the Way" subscribed to by all of the sectarian groups (Hugh Schonfield saw the term "Mandean" as a cover name for all

of the groups associated with "the Way"), then the incongruities and contradictions inherent in the story of the two fishes have perhaps been ironed out.

The rejection of the Rome's Jesus by the Nazarenes and the Nazarene-associated groups could be said to hinge on Rome's replacement of the monarchical episcopate of the Nazarenes with its own *forced* succession of bishops stemming from the Apostle Peter. With this suspect link in place, the Roman Church annulled Nazarene authority and claimed that authority for itself. And that in spite of the fact that the Apostle Peter was not a blood relative of Jesus', and therefore not part of the Nazarene succession. Hence the Church's elevation of Peter *over* Jesus' brother James, and its centuries-long tendency to ignore the fact that James, and not Peter, was the rightful leader of the early so-called "church" in Jerusalem.

References:

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- 2) Maycock, A. L., *The Inquisition*, Constable & Company, Ltd., 1928, p. 38.
- 3) Churton, Tobias, *The Gnostics*, Weidenfeld and Nicholson, p. 68.
- 4) Benton, John F., (editor) *Self and Society in Medieval France*, Harper Torchbooks, 1970, p. 212.
- 5) Maycock, A. L., *The Inquisition*, (as above) p. 270.
- 6) Puech, Henri-Charles, 'The Concept of Redemption in Manichaeism', papers from the Eranos Yearbook, Bollingen Series XXX vol 6 of *The Mystic Vision*, p. 247.
- 7) *Ibid*, p. 82.
- 8) Jung, Emma, *The Grail Legend*, Princeton University Press, 1998, p. 102.
- 9) Jung, Cark, *Aion*, Picador 1978, para. 225.
- 10) *Ibid*, para 142.