

PROJECT DEMONSTRATING EXCELLENCE

The Cathars of Languedoc as Heretics:
From the Perspectives of Five Contemporary Scholars

by

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this dissertation is to demonstrate that the Cathar community of Languedoc, far from being heretics as is generally thought, practiced an early form of Christianity. A few scholars have suggested this interpretation of the Cathar beliefs, but none have pursued it critically. In this paper I use two approaches. First, this study will examine the arguments of five contemporary English language scholars who have dominated the field of Cathar research in both Britain and the United States over the last thirty years, and their views have greatly influenced the study of the Cathars. Each historian represents a different approach to Cathar research, such as religious studies, political history, etc.; so their research exemplifies a broad spectrum of historical and religious ideas. This is a unique opportunity to examine a body of scholarly work that has had an impact on this area of history. Four of these scholars view the Cathars as heretics. One of the five, an American scholar, has formulated a new approach which argues that the phenomenon of “good men” and “good women” (as the Cathars were known locally) was local only, and has no important effect on European history. It is my argument that these five historians’ conclusions prevent them from asking the questions that would have led to a more fair and accurate assessment of the Cathars and their place in history.

The second approach is to examine two ritual texts used by the Cathars of Languedoc – *The Vision of Isaiah* and the *consolamentum* – that demonstrate their roots in early Christianity. *The Vision of Isaiah* was their meditative ascension text for the living, and the *consolamentum* was their ritual ascension text for helping those who were dying. This analysis shows that the Cathars incorporated the ascent practice in their belief system. Ascension, which is a process whereby a visionary would ascend to the heavenly

realms and return with messages from the journey, was used not only in the Judaic tradition but also in early Christianity, and later emerged in mystical Christianity. These rituals are examined by taking a phenomenological approach within the context of religious studies. When the Cathars are viewed within the sociological and historical framework of Languedoc in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, what emerges is that the troubadours and the Kabbalists were also using the ascent practice, in a form that incorporated the divine feminine. And Bernard of Clairvaux, taking as his text the Song of Songs, was reintroducing the ascent practice into the Christian mystical community. The use of this practice was possible because a cultural renaissance was in progress in Languedoc that created an unusually open atmosphere at that time in the Middle Ages.

By moving beyond the arguments of these five scholars, a more inclusive world view of the Cathars emerges through the phenomenological approach of examining them from within their ritual practices and in the context of the culture of Languedoc. This community made an important contribution to mystical Christianity through their revival of the ascent practice.

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I would like to make a brief acknowledgment of Union's policy of using non-sexist language in all our work. I have been very conscious of my use of language in this paper; however, some of the references in the quotations I have used do not employ non-sexist language. It is difficult when writing about certain institutions in the Middle Ages to attempt to be more creative with one's use of words.

All the French texts quoted in this PDE have been translated by me.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

What is the importance of the Cathars to medieval religious history? What is their significance for our contemporary understanding of their religious impact? The Cathars made significant contributions to Western civilization and Christianity that need to be reexamined from an inclusive perspective. For many historians, the Cathars are seen as interlopers and heretics on the religious landscape of Europe, which made their elimination inevitable. I refer to the alternative view as the new lens or perspective through which the Cathars need to be understood, and there are many historians who have begun to recognize their importance, both as antagonists to the Church of Rome and as carriers of an earlier Christian tradition. It is as if the Church decided to remove the traces of Christianity's roots, particularly through the Cathars because they were dualists (among other accusations) and therefore heretics. The Cathars were Christians and practiced an early form of Christianity that the Church of Rome chose to ignore along its path to power.

How did the Cathars enter into my life and why have they become such a passion that I am now writing a dissertation on them? It was through my studies as a historian that I first heard of the Cathars, though it was not in the United States. I was working on a B.A. in history and French at the University of Arizona and spent my junior year at a university in Aix-en-Provence. It was the professor of my Medieval history class who first introduced the Cathars into my historical perspective, which was forever changed by that tutorial. It was a shock because in my historical studies in the U. S. the subject of this religious movement that had impacted not just Languedoc but Italy and parts of northern

Europe was never mentioned. What intrigued me the most at that time was that the Cathars were vibrantly involved in Languedoc and then the Church of Rome stepped in and exterminated them, which seemed to be the end of the story. I never read anything beyond their extirpation. I suppose it was the idea that the first Christian European genocide had taken place and no one spoke of it in those terms, at that time. What happens to the historical memory of a movement like that, and their ideas, once they have been deleted from the map of history? Can ideas and beliefs be extinguished as well? These were some of the thoughts that haunted me as I attempted to find out more about the Cathars.

In France it seemed as though everyone was aware of the Cathars and their devastating demise, whereas in America, there was nothing in the history books of that time. From my year of study in France, I needed to know more about this so called “heretical” movement and why its adherents had to be killed off. My M.A. in Education was another opportunity to focus on European history and the religious studies aspect of the Cathars. This ignited my desire to travel to Languedoc, to do some research on my own and to see this region that had been devastated by a crusade and the Inquisition in the thirteenth century.

Can the land tell a story? Actually, I believe this to be true, and there are many authors and painters whose work can attest to this. After each of my eight trips to the region of Languedoc, something kept pulling me back. There is a haunting quality to the land that suggested an untold story. History and legends abound and judging from those who have written about the area, this quality keeps people returning to uncover

something new. A visit to the walled city of Carcassonne can easily transport you back to a time when armored knights dashed about on horseback. There are twenty-eight turrets on the walls surrounding the city and they are reminiscent of something you see in a fairytale. One author was reminded of a similar castle in the Caucasus region, and he learned that the Visigoths who built the original castle that became Carcassonne (in the sixth century) were from that area.¹ Much was transported from the East to the West so I was to learn as my research advanced.

Another memory from my travels to that mysterious land was of the city of Albi. There, I found a beautiful Catholic Church built on the very square where the Cathars of that city had been burned alive as heretics. It is a bit ironic to have such a beautiful place of worship erected over a killing field. I was reminded that the victors in history have the opportunity to change the landscape as well as the lens through which one views the past in the hope that we will forget what actually occurred there. Fortunately, not everyone has forgotten the Albigensian Crusade.

Montségur was another place that stands out in my memory as haunting and unforgettable. Here was the Cathar castle that became the place of their “last stand” in 1244. Five hundred people were held in a siege against the crusading troops for ten months. It is difficult to comprehend so many people in such a small castle. Now, all that remains are some tumbling down walls on top of a steep hilltop, or “*pog*” as it is locally called. The hike to get to the top is difficult, but once there, you are rewarded with panoramic views of the surrounding countryside and the Pyrenees to the south. However, once you settle into a spot at the top, and think about what took place there, the horror

sets in. How did they survive? They must have wanted to be there and their beliefs drove them to this castle for safety from the troops of the King of France. When the Cathars eventually surrendered, two hundred and ten people were burned alive in the field below. The “*Prat dels Cramats*” or “Field of the Burned,” as the spot is now called, boasts a plaque commemorating what took place.² Seen from the field at the castle ruins with its steep, rocky inclines, the place looks like a fortress; yet, four people escaped the night before the surrender, and they are said to have carried with them the Cathar treasure, whatever that may have been.

There are many legends and much history in Languedoc about Mary Magdalene, the Cathars, and the Knights Templar. Local people who have lived in the region for generations know the land and tell these stories from the past. To judge by the economy of Languedoc today it is not the flourishing region it once was during the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Most of the towns and villages are dependent on tourism and living off their past, which is rich enough. One cannot help but wonder what it would be like in Languedoc if the Cathars had been allowed to continue with their beliefs and lifestyle. If the Albigensian Crusade had not occurred, how would Western civilization be different? Such thoughts are beyond the boundaries of this present study. However, I intend to show in this paper that the Cathars must be viewed through a more positive lens of history and not just as “heretics” who were extirpated.

Since 1982 and the publication in the United States of the book, *Holy Blood, Holy Grail* by Michael Baigent, Richard Leigh, and Henry Lincoln, there has been a tremendous upsurge of interest in the Cathars, the Knights Templar, and Mary

Magdalene. When I read this book, I was quite surprised by much of what the authors proposed in their study. However, I was inspired to continue with my own research on the Cathars and on several other aspects that the authors of this book presented. *Holy Blood, Holy Grail* provided a metaphysical approach to the history of the Cathars and their connections to the Western mystery tradition.

There has been much independent scholarship since the publication of *Holy Blood, Holy Grail*, mostly British, which emphasizes the mystical tradition in the West. The Cathars clearly have a place in this tradition as well as practicing an early form of Christian worship. This view has been lacking in the scholarly research on the Cathars.³

In the following PDE, my thesis will be as follows: The Cathars have been called “The Great Heresy” of the West as defined through the lens of the Roman Church. In this dissertation, I assert that labeling the Cathars as “heretics” and creating an image of “us vs. them” has prevented historians from seeing the positive contributions the Cathars have made within the European context of Christian historical discourse and to the Christian mystical tradition. The field of inquiry requires a new perspective that is more inclusive of who the Cathars were, with their roots in the early Christian tradition and the practices they incorporated into their belief system that are Christian. By using the arguments of five contemporary historians as a framework for contemporary Cathar research, I intend to demonstrate where their research stops and my research continues. I will focus on the Cathar use of ascension literature, notably *The Vision of Isaiah*, and their central ritual, the *consolamentum*, as illustrating their roots in the early Christian tradition. The connection between these two texts is that the former was used for

ascension for the living, and the latter was a ritual ascension process for the dying.

The five contemporary historians are Mark Pegg and Walter Wakefield from the United States and Bernard Hamilton, Malcolm Barber, and Malcolm Lambert from Britain. These historians were chosen because they represent the contemporary scholarly research on the Cathars in the English-speaking world. Their work is the most cited and the most accessible to those seeking research in English. In particular, Malcolm Barber, Malcolm Lambert, and Mark Pegg have published the most current work on the Cathars, all within the last six years. Walter Wakefield and Bernard Hamilton began publishing their work in the 1970's, and their research provides the foundation for the three scholars who followed. These five scholars also represent a broad spectrum of approaches to Cathar research: Bernard Hamilton through religious history; Walter Wakefield through a sociological approach that is echoed in a different way by Malcolm Lambert; and Malcolm Barber through a political view of Languedoc, used as a means to illustrate the history of the Cathars.

Of the five scholars, Mark Pegg has taken a new approach to the Cathars by adhering strictly to the records of the Inquisition and his critique of other historians is that they have incorporated an "intellectual bias" while viewing the Cathars. The other four historians have all used the records of the inquisitors so it is important to note the divergence of opinion and yet there is a limited view of the Cathars within each approach. That limitation will be examined within this dissertation and the work of these five scholars provides the framework for my new approach to the Cathars by viewing their early Christian roots through two ritual texts. This is a larger world picture from a

religious studies perspective which yields a rich matrix of beliefs. This approach to the Cathars goes into new territory by examining them from within both their ritual of ascent and within their cultural context that reveals a similar phenomenon of the ascent practice being used by other groups.

In order to understand the Cathars and their place in history, it is important to give a brief overview of Cathar roots in early Christianity. Several of the early dissenting groups within the Christian tradition were silenced by what was to become the Church of Rome, an institution that would eventually advocate the extirpation of the “heretics” in Languedoc. However, the Cathars emerged with some similar beliefs from these early dissenting groups which is why it is important to examine this period of Christian history. What is illustrated here is that on the path to empire, the Church of Rome came to refine the meaning of heresy and this included how the ecclesiastical authorities would deal with those dissenting voices or groups who disagreed with the Church’s view and practice of Christianity. As American scholar Walter Wakefield notes:

Long before the twelfth century Christians were using the word [heresy] to designate wrong choice, a personal and willful contradiction of common and necessary beliefs. Obedience thus became a crucial issue. The heretic was one who was declared to be such because he did not choose to accept correction from ecclesiastical authority in a certain time and place.⁴

Those “common and necessary beliefs” were those that had been outlined by the Church of Rome. What was true, according to the early founders of the Church, was the teachings of Jesus through the words of Peter and Paul, and this was what eventually developed into the Church canon. With a unified Church, orthodoxy, or “right opinion,”⁵ would dictate who was a heretic and who was a member of the fold of true believers.

What were some of the developments within the history of the Church of Rome that led to dissent and what were some of the Cathar roots in the Christian tradition? An examination of some Church history and how some of the doctrines and heretical groups that evolved within early Christianity were rejected will help to illuminate the path that led to the elimination of the Cathars. The focus will then turn to a brief overview of Languedoc and how the Cathars came to dominate that region. Some of their foundational beliefs will be examined so that the reader will be able to understand Cathar history and their beliefs.

CATHAR ROOTS IN EARLY CHRISTIANITY

In 311 C.E., Constantine the Great (285–337) was converted to Christianity as a result of a dream. His vision of the cross guided him to victory at the battle of Milvian Bridge in Italy, and this became a major turning point for Christianity. Constantine, as emperor, made Christianity the religion of the Roman Empire. It was this relationship between church and state that would develop over time and give the Church of Rome the power, through the pope, to influence the creation of European states and kings.

In 325, the Council of Nicaea was convened by Constantine in order to coalesce and formulate one unified doctrine for the Church and one voice for the early Christians. It was Constantine's belief that having one state religion would help to unify his empire and he wanted to bring all the bishops together and create a more streamlined doctrine of faith. It was at this Council that the doctrine of the Trinity and the idea of Jesus as being equal to God proved to be contentious and yet this belief became a foundation of the Church.

According to the Nicene Creed, Jesus was to be viewed as the Son of God. God and Son were to be of “the same substance.” The word *homoousios*, meaning “consubstantial” or “of one essence,”⁶ was used in reference to the idea that God and Jesus were one. The Arians⁷ rebelled against this doctrine and advocated using the term *homoiousios*, meaning “like the Father,” for the Nicene Creed. While it was decided at Nicaea that Jesus was embodied as the Son of God, the Arian controversy continued well into the sixth century. The Goths and the Visigoths reintroduced the Arian belief in the West when they conquered territories in Italy, Gaul, and Spain in the fifth and sixth centuries. The Cathars did not accept the Church doctrine of Jesus being the “Son of God.” They believed that Jesus was not embodied in the human form but an angel (Docetic Christology), which echoed back to the Arian controversy.

It was also at Nicaea that the Apostolic Order was established where the bishops were considered to be descendents of the Apostles and were empowered to preach the word of Jesus Christ. No one else, unless given this authority by the powers of the Church, could preach. This gave the Church ultimate control over who preached and what was being professed as the “word of God.” This would become an important issue in the eleventh and twelfth centuries because the Cathars claimed to hold the true apostolic tradition and that the Church of Rome was a false interloper and that their doctrines were lies.

The Council of Chalcedon in 451 finally reconciled the dissent over the divinity of Christ. The early Church needed the doctrine of the Trinity with Jesus being of “the same substance” as God because this was Christianity’s path to salvation. By asserting

Christ's divinity, the Church could assure their followers of salvation through the sacraments as administered by their priests and that they would be resurrected on Judgment Day. The Council "asserted once and for all the orthodox doctrine concerning the nature of Christ, namely that he is one Person with two distinct natures, divine and human; it brought to an end the furious debate and controversy that had raged for much of the fifth century."⁸ John Henderson writes of the Council of Chalcedon:

The Council of Chalcedon is often taken as the point of culmination and closure in the establishment of orthodoxy on the crucial Christological and Trinitarian questions; there would always be dissenting voices. Moreover, some of the major ideas condemned as heretical in antiquity, such as those of the Gnostics, seem to have quite a perennial appeal. They have reemerged repeatedly in Christian history, showing surprising resilience in the face of repeated orthodox efforts to suppress them.⁹

While Church Councils decided on a unified doctrine for the emerging foundation of the early Church, actions were also taken to eradicate such dissenting voices such as those of the Gnostics and the Manichaeans. It was during this time that books no longer in the emerging catholic canon were burned or concealed. "Ideas acceptable to the bishops and to approved theologians were defined as orthodox (correct teaching) and catholic (universally held)."¹⁰ The Gnostics proved to be worthy opponents for some of the early Church writers to refute and it is important to note that they incorporated the ascent practice into their belief systems and the Cathars would continue with this practice in the eleventh and twelfth centuries.

Gnosticism

The Gnostics, who had a strong presence in Alexandria and elsewhere in the East from the second through the third century, advocated knowledge of God (gnosis) through

one's own revelations. There were different schools of Gnosticism that held beliefs contrary to the emerging Church's policy of needing both a priest and faith in the Church sacraments for salvation.¹¹ Many Gnostic groups believed that the material world was evil and had been created by the Demiurge. The body was a prison for the soul in this material realm. It was through self-revelation (gnosis) and ascetic practices (for some groups) that the soul of the believer was able to escape this world. This was their more individual, personal, and direct path to God.

Often *Sophia* (Wisdom) or the divine feminine played a role in assisting the soul along the path to redemption. The ascension process of moving through the higher realms and accessing this inner knowledge was essential for redemption to occur and wisdom was required to accomplish the task. "Anthropologically speaking, the ascent resolves the tension between heaven and earth, or finitude and immortality, by giving the adept a kind of 'sneak preview' of life everlasting, paradise to come."¹² Gnosticism itself was based not on a singular experience but rather on a complex cosmological picture that evolved as a result of the revelations that emerged from ontological questions that were being explored. Many of these ideas of the Gnostics had been taught for centuries, as Yuri Stoyanov explains:

A dualist spirit-matter opposition along with a rigorous asceticism was cultivated in the esoteric-initiatory trends of Orphism and Pythagoreanism in antiquity. The Orphic-Pythagorean teaching which explains the physical body as a tomb for the divine and immortal soul is shared in the Gnostic type of religiosity with its implicit focus on the rescue of the 'divine spark' in man from the bodily prison in which it is trapped by the Demiurge – a preoccupation shared by the medieval Bogomil and Cathar heresies.¹³

The Gnostic idea of a resurrection of the spirit was the process by which one

could escape the prison of the body in which the spirit was trapped. This was contrary to Church doctrine whereby Christ's bodily resurrection was promised to those who faithfully followed their sacraments. According to many Gnostic systems, the resurrected spirit would merge with the soul and be reincarnated to complete the soul's journey. "The aim of Gnostic sacraments is to prepare the ascension of the soul."¹⁴

An example of this idea of ascent and the resurrection of the spirit was found in Valentinus' (c. 100–175) school located in Alexandria. One of the central tenets in his system of gnosis was the belief in the sacred marriage between soul and spirit, which would benefit the individual before death so there would not be confusion upon being reincarnated. In other words, through the sacred process of ascent, knowledge of these two parts of oneself would serve the individual in the next life. As Peter Novak points out regarding this teaching:

This Sacred Marriage, or *hieros gamos*, was a fundamental tenet of the Valentinian school of Christian Gnosticism. Valentinus, the second century Gnostic who almost became pope, taught that salvation required both halves of one's spiritual being to join permanently. Valentinus' powerful teaching about the Sacred Marriage between soul and spirit were transformed into today's legend of Saint Valentine, the patron saint of romantic love.¹⁵

This was the process by which Valentinians found redemption in this life. *Sophia* was important in this process because the spiritual path of ascension required the presence of Wisdom as one's guide. The idea of the Sacred Marriage has been a part of Christianity as seen in Saint Augustine's (354–430) meditations on the Song of Songs and also found in Saint Bernard of Clairvaux's (1090–1153) sermons on *The Canticle of Canticles*.

Gnosticism also attempted to explain evil in this world in a way that challenged

the early Church. Gnostics questioned how God, who is good and all knowing, could allow evil to exist in this world. Stoyanov writes of this doctrinal conflict:

The early Church Fathers had vigorously to defend their orthodox tenets of evil as a privation of good and Godness against the more radical, dualist solutions of the origins of evil which were advanced in the Gnostic schools of the second and third centuries. Despite the evident dualism of spirit and flesh in early Christianity, which was inevitably associated with the Devil's status in the New Testament as the 'ruler of this world of matter and bodies', the world was viewed as a creation of the benevolent God-Creator and was not evil by nature. Though defiled by Satan and his evil spirits, it would ultimately be redeemed and purified by the Second Coming of Christ.¹⁶

Gnosticism presented a danger to the emerging Church because of the many doctrinal differences that these independent schools presented to their communities of followers. The early Church writers such as Irenaeus (c. 130–c. 200), bishop of Lyons, were very effective in silencing the Gnostics. Irenaeus' *Adversus omnes Haereses* (Against All Heresies) was one of the many volumes written that pointed out the errors of dissenters and coalesced the voice of Christianity. However some of the practices of the Gnostics would reemerge with the Cathars.¹⁷

Manichaeism

Manichaeism was another religion that was perceived as a threat to Christianity because of its popularity. It spread rapidly by means of missionary efforts throughout the East, from Persia to India, and in the West into Spain and southern Gaul. Mani (216–277) was the founder of this religion of light that incorporated Christian, Gnostic, Zoroastrian, and Buddhist ideas. He was known as the "Apostle of Light," and he considered himself to be one of the many prophets in the line of Buddha, Zoroaster, and Jesus. He grew up

among the Elkesaites, a Christian, baptizing sect, who were located in southern Mesopotamia, near Seleucia-Ctesiphon in Syria. Mani received his first vision when he was twelve and at the age of twenty-four he received further instructions from visions to leave his community and establish his own following.

Mani was influenced by the Christian philosopher Bardaisan (also known as Bardesanes in Greek) of Edessa (154–222) and Marcion (d.c.166), a Christian Gnostic also teaching in Edessa. From these teachers Mani developed his cosmological beliefs of the principles of Light and Dark and the necessity of the Light to cleanse the world of darkness. F. C. Burkitt writes of Manichaeism:

The message that Mani announced was, in brief, that there are two eternal sources or principles, Light and Dark; that by the regrettable mixture of Dark with Light this visible and tangible Universe has come into being; and that the aim and object of those who are children of Light is not the improvement of this world, for that is impossible, but its gradual extinction, by the separation of the Light particles from the Dark substance with which they have been mixed.¹⁸

One can read in this description of Mani's theology a need for strict asceticism and a deep-seated moral clarity in order to be able to carry out the transmutation of Light from the Dark. The redemption of Light was the main purpose for the "elect," those who had undergone rigorous training to be carriers of the Light, to be present in this material realm. The "believers" were those who were followers of the teachings of the "elect" and they took care of the basic needs of the "elect" such as food preparation, clothing, and alms collecting.

Both men and women could become "elect." In this respect, Manichaeism was similar to many of the Gnostic schools where women held teaching positions. Gnosis as a

means of redemption was central to following the Light on the Manichaean path to ascending beyond this world of darkness and suffering. The ascent process was used to access the realms of Light. The ascent practice was an ancient technique that allowed an individual to transcend the material world and visit the heavenly realms; to sit with God. Morton Smith comments on this process that was practiced in Judaism, Christianity, Gnosticism, and other heterodox religious groups:

In the eastern Mediterranean world the notion [of ascent] had early appeared in two forms not always separate, but roughly distinguishable. One was that of the soul's ascent into the heavens after death. The other, that of ascent by living individuals either carried aloft bodily or in dreams or ecstasy leaving their bodies below and returning to them later.¹⁹

This process enlightened the “elect” to the dualism present in this life and how that enlightenment could be used to transform the Darkness into the Light. Knowledge of the duality of the world and cosmos was important to the “elect” in order to carry on their work. In the early eleventh century, several European bishops wrote of the re-appearance of Manichaeism within the heretical groups who were beginning to appear on the horizon of dissent within the Church at that time. The bishops made this claim because they had all read Augustine's polemic against the Manichaeans and based their accusations on what Augustine wrote of his experience with that group. The Cathars of Languedoc did incorporate some similar ideas as the Manichaeans such as purity and asceticism for their “elect” and they had a division between believers and their “*perfecti*.” These similarities do not indicate that the Manichaean beliefs were continued through the Cathars; rather, it is important to note the reappearance of some practices and beliefs.

Augustine of Hippo (354–430) became a “believer” within Manichaeism for nine

years before converting to Christianity in 387. He went on to become one of the most influential writers and philosophers of the Christian Church. It was his polemics *De Manichaeis* against the Manichaeans that so influenced members of the clergy in the eleventh and twelfth centuries when heretical groups would be labeled “Manichaean” for any belief that did not correspond to the doctrines of the Church of Rome.²⁰

While Augustine attempted to distance himself from Manichaeism, dualism and pessimism pervaded his work with such ideas as Original Sin and the belief that salvation was to be found in the world to come. This, in part, comes from his book, *The City of God*, which shows the sins of this earthly world and the promise of the heavenly, perfected realm, a place close to God. This was a highly influential book that has enjoyed a wide audience of Christian readers over the centuries. Augustine held a firm belief that it was through the Church and her sacraments that one could find hope for humanity’s fallen nature. This material realm offered too many temptations. There was pessimism in this vision of life that pervaded Christianity and created splits between sexuality and celibacy and between the body, the soul, and the spirit. Peter Brown writes of Augustine’s imprint upon the Christian tradition:

A fear that the body’s pleasures might weaken the resolve of the public man added a peculiarly rigid note to Augustine’s evocation of human beings forever exposed to a merciless concupiscence. He created a darkened humanism that linked the pre-Christian past to the Christian present in a common distrust of sexual pleasure. It was a heavy legacy to bequeath to later ages.²¹

At the same time, Augustine used the ascent literature of the Song of Songs to evoke his love of God and the journey of the soul to the divine. He studied the use of allegorical interpretation of this biblical text in particular, from his teacher, Ambrose of

Milan (c. 340–397). “Perhaps no other work in the scriptures captured the allegorical imagination of early Christian thinkers as the Song of Songs.”²² Clearly, Augustine made a contribution to the early Christian ascent process that was to outline this love between God and members of the Church that was to inform those who followed him such as Bernard of Clairvaux.

Augustine also saw the advantage of an alliance between Church and State and he advocated a policy of military force against heretical groups such as the Manichaeans and the Donatist Christians (who were outspoken against the Church and State working together). It was this policy of using the army of the empire against heretics that would be incorporated into Church law in the thirteenth century against the Cathars.²³ How did the Church gain political ascendancy in Europe?

This idea of the State being dependent on the Church was inaugurated with the coronation of Charlemagne (742–814) in 800 in Rome. He became king of the Franks in 768 as a member of the Carolingian dynasty. Charlemagne was committed to bringing Christianity to his kingdoms with the help of the Church and this alliance served him well as he went on to conquer most of Germany and Italy. Pope Leo III (795–816) believed that a public ceremony of the crowning Charlemagne would demonstrate that all power comes from God’s representative on earth. This was to become an historical precedent that changed not only the physical map of Europe but also the spiritual map as well. Europe was becoming Christianized with renewed force. Will Durant summarizes this event:

The coronation had results for a thousand years. It strengthened the papacy and the bishops by making civil authority derive from ecclesiastical

conferment; Gregory VII and Innocent III would build a mightier Church on the events of 800 in Rome. It strengthened Charlemagne against baronial and other disaffection by making him a very vicar of God; it vastly advanced the theory of the divine right of kings. It contributed to the schism of Greek from Latin Christianity; the Greek Church did not relish subordination to a Roman Church allied with an empire rival to Byzantium.²⁴

Despite the fact that Charlemagne's empire was divided between his sons in 814, the Church maintained its control over the kings of these newly created realms. In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, this relationship between king and pope would play an important role in the history of the Cathars.

The consolidation of the Roman Church's power had begun with Constantine and his adoption of Christianity as the religion of the Roman Empire and as a result, doctrinal uniformity became a continual process through successive Church councils. The concept of heresy, in particular, was to change and evolve over time. When dissension arose, it became Church policy to try and get the dissenting party to recant their beliefs and come back to Church doctrine. If this method failed then they would be excommunicated from the body of the Church as a method of silencing them. Excommunication could be a harsh sentence for the individual or group, because they would be shunned in their community. This could mean the loss of home and business. Early on it was an effective method of dealing with heretics. However, by the eleventh and twelfth centuries, the Church was forced to reevaluate its position regarding heretics.

There were several treaties and councils that took place in the eleventh and twelfth centuries that refined Church law and doctrine regarding dissent. The Church and State would be responsible for the prosecution of heresy.²⁵ The Treaty of Venice in 1177

between Pope Alexander III (1159–1181) and Emperor Frederick I joined the Church and the Holy Roman Empire against heresy.²⁶ By this time, heretical groups and individuals were being identified in France and Germany with alarming regularity. The pope was receiving numerous reports from his bishops about these disturbing events and he quickly took action to attempt to stem the threatening tide of dissent.

Pope Alexander III convened the Third Lateran Council in 1179, and it was here that the Cathars were singled out as heretics who needed to be punished. Jeffrey Russell describes the importance of this council and subsequent councils regarding heresy:

This council issued definitions of heresy, orders for the excommunication of heretics, and rewards for those who struggled against them. But Verona was the first explicit general condemnation of heresy in Christendom by both temporal and spiritual authorities since the Theodosian Code. It deliberately and explicitly brought the secular and temporal powers together as joint defenders of orthodoxy. It became the model for the crushing prohibition of heresy issued by the fourth Lateran Council under Innocent III in 1215.²⁷

By the time the Fourth Lateran Council was convened in 1215, the Albigensian Crusade, as it was called, was already underway as of 1209. In 1215, Pope Innocent III (1198–1216) condemned the Cathars and the Waldensians as heretics.²⁸ The pope had a very clear standing now in western Christendom as he declared himself “Vicar of Christ” which placed him between God and humanity. With this new authority, the Fourth Lateran Council outlined many of the reforms that the monks and bishops had been advocating since the reforms of Gregory VII (1073–1085) and this included annual confession.

Who were the Cathars and where did they come from? While the review of the five contemporary scholars’ work will reveal much of this history, it is important to give

a brief background to this religious group. In order to understand the development of heresy in the region of Languedoc, a brief historical overview is necessary.

LANGUEDOC: A BRIEF OVERVIEW

Languedoc was originally known as southern Gaul from Roman times c. 200 BCE through the Carolingian dynasty, 751–987, and thereafter it was through linguistic distinction that the area was referred to as Languedoc. This region encompassed the lands from Carcassonne north to Rodez, towards the west and Agen, and then south to the Pyrenees.²⁹ This area of southern Gaul also had a well-established Jewish settlement known as Septimania, originating from the early Roman occupation. This area included the lands that hugged the Mediterranean coast from just north of Béziers and south to Barcelona. Narbonne, a coastal port within Septimania, became a very active trading center. Many Jews emigrated to southern Gaul after the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 CE as there were many opportunities for merchants and traders. Septimania's designation remained independent until the early tenth century when the region was absorbed by the local nobility and became a part of Languedoc.

The Visigoths eventually took over the region of Gaul in the fifth century as the Roman Empire began to crumble. They were Arians who believed that Jesus was of a different nature than God. He was not of the same substance as God as the Church had proclaimed at the Council of Nicaea in 325. However, in 589, Reccared, who was the ruler of the Visigoths in Spain and southern Gaul, decided to align himself with the Church of Rome and renounced his Arian views. It is important to note that in the eighth century, Doceticism (the belief that Jesus was not embodied but a spirit) was still being

practiced in southern Gaul (Languedoc) and areas of Spain. The Council of Frankfort in 794 addressed the issue and condemned the belief as being heretical. However, Doceticism would arise again in the eleventh and twelfth centuries with the Cathars in Languedoc. Does this indicate that this was part of a local belief system in the region?

The idea of a local belief system in Languedoc arises several times in this and other chapters. It is important to note that as certain groups with beliefs such as the Visigoths with their Arian views, the Gnostics, with their use of ascension, and the Manichaeans with their divisions of believers and followers, and some dualistic beliefs, were all present in Languedoc at different periods and will be discussed below. The Cathars incorporated some of these beliefs and others that were unique to that region. There is no proof as to whether or not these beliefs came directly from the aforementioned groups but it is interesting to note.³⁰

It was also at this time that laws were written against the Jews in the lands ruled by the Visigoths, although, as Arthur Zuckerman notes, the Jews of Septimania did not suffer the same restrictive laws:

The Jews of Septimania must have come to play an important role in the Visigothic Empire. Although residing within the same realm and subject to the same sovereigns, the Jews in Septimania appear not to have been victimized to the same extent as their co-religionists south of the Pyrenees. The Jews of these lands [Septimania] continued to be owners of estates.³¹

The reference to Jews owning estates in this area was the subject of bitter controversy between the popes of Rome and the various rulers of this region. Pepin the Short (crowned 751) of the Carolingian dynasty (751–987) made land grants to the Jews of Septimania who came to his aid in reconquering the city of Narbonne from the Muslims

in 759.

There is no specific date as to when the area known as Languedoc came to be. It evolved over time, the result of the extensive trading activity through which local lords came to dominate the cities, towns, and countryside. In the north of France, Paris was the capital and feudalism had developed within the confines of a strict code of military duty and seigniorial rights controlled by the nobility and ultimately the king. Whereas in the south, because of its close ties to the culture of Moslem Spain, these lands and people developed commercially and agriculturally more rapidly and used their trading position with the Mediterranean ports to their utmost potential. Prosperity through trade contributed to the development of a middle class who would come to dominate city politics in the late eleventh and twelfth centuries. The regional distinction associated with the name Languedoc came into use after the Albigensian Crusade (ended 1229). Jack Lindsay writes of the use of this term:

The term Languedoc came into use only at the end of the thirteenth century when officials of the French king needed to define the area they administered, in fact an area smaller than that covered by the speech. Soon afterwards Dante used it. The name Provence came from the Roman Provincia Narbonnense, but the region thus called was only one part of Languedoc; and the use of the term Provençal in a wide general way dates from the sixteenth century. The southerners considered that they spoke roman, the term for the vernacular as opposed to Latin.³²

Languedoc, also known as Occitan, Occitania, or the Midi, was a reference to the language of the south or *langue d'oc*, with *oc* meaning yes. As Lindsay notes, southerners called their language *roman* and it was linguistically closer to Catalan than to the language of northern France or *langue d'oïl*.³³ Joseph Strayer describes the difference:

The southern tongue is very close to Catalan, fairly close to Castilian, and

quite remote from French. A merchant from Narbonne would have been easily understood in Barcelona, while he would have needed an interpreter in Paris. Now a language barrier is not an impossible obstacle, but it is a real one, and it is the kind of barrier that creates misunderstandings and suspicions.³⁴

With the rise of the merchant class and greater wealth in the region, the separation between northern and southern France became more pronounced. Additionally, Languedoc was not ruled by a king but was divided up between wealthy families whose landholdings were carved up over time because marriage alliances and inheritance. Toulouse was the largest city, located on the Garonne River. The Count of Toulouse was the largest landholder although he made his court at St. Gilles to the east of Toulouse. The Trencavel family, the second largest landholder, held the cities of Carcassonne and Narbonne and the surrounding lands between them. The count of Foix owned territory to the west of Carcassonne and south to the Pyrenees that included the city of Foix. The king of Aragon ruled Roussillon and parts of Provence though successive kings would continually fight the count of Toulouse for all of Provence. His family would eventually inherit Provence through marriage only to lose the region during the Albigensian Crusade. All of these families would be involved in the Crusade because it was a fight for lands and titles that were traditionally handed down to family members over generations.

What added to the independent nature of Languedoc was the fact that the Church of Rome did not dominate the region. There was no alliance between Church and State.

This marked another difference between the north and south of France and Jacques

Maduale comments on this difference:

Northern France for long remained a model, unparalleled in Europe, of harmony between Church and State, with both equally concerned for the

general well-being, and both acting together against the prevailing anarchy. Any victory for the Church was a victory for the king, and vice versa. Whereas in the South there was a marked separation between the two powers without, however, the Church having greater independence.³⁵

Since the nobility ruled certain towns and regions in Languedoc, there was no systematic relationship between the local bishops and the landowners. Also the bishops were landowners themselves. They were given land and houses or estates as gifts from grateful families. Quite often the bishops had children and the land would be redistributed amongst their heirs. "Many bishops and abbots held seignorial powers and were concerned only for their own interests; they were often embroiled with lay lords in property disputes."³⁶ This situation exacerbated the movements towards anticlericalism that were to develop during the eleventh and twelfth centuries and contributed to a general disregard for the Church, which in spite of the bishops, did not have a strong presence in this region.

Clearly, Languedoc society was different from the rest of Europe. There had always been a culture that was influenced by many different religions over time. The Gnostics and Manichaeans were in the region during the time of the Roman Empire. The Visigoths conquered the lands of the Empire and brought their Arian views of Jesus with them. The Moors held a presence in the south from 720 until they were pushed out of Narbonne by Pepin the Short in 759. Islamic cities and towns in Spain became important trading partners with industrial regions in Languedoc during the time of the eleventh century in particular when the local economy expanded with the influx of trade in items that were locally produced such as cloth and leather. The Jews, too, had maintained a

presence in Languedoc since the Roman Empire and this confluence of Christians, Muslims, and Jews was an accepted aspect of Languedoc culture.

Women, too, had more freedom in Languedoc than elsewhere in Europe. They were able to own property and often inherited estates when there were no sons.³⁷ Troubadour poets wrote their songs of love addressed to certain women within the nobility and this added to the mystique of women in the south. Also, women worked within certain trades of the thriving Languedoc economy. “Many women practiced trades in towns, especially among the artisan classes, the skills women brought to the family business made them a driving force once their husbands were dead.”³⁸

Indeed, the concept of being widowed changed with the rise of the Cathars. Many women became Cathars if they were widowed or once they had seen their children grown and married. At that time, they would become a believer (*credente*) of the faith providing shelter for the Cathar *perfecti* (those trained to be a spiritual vessel for the Holy Spirit) and/or economic support. Women could become *perfectae* in Catharism and they made a contribution to maintaining the beliefs of the Cathars over generations by teaching their children and extended family members the tenets of their faith. Linda Paterson notes the position of women in Languedoc at this time:

Heresy offered women not only an alternative framework of religious beliefs to that of the established Church, but also the possibility of active participation in religious ministry. Moreover, Cathar houses or hospices provided a home for some unmarried or widowed women. Catharism was therefore potentially attractive to women who sought an active role in religious ministry, a means of challenging existing orthodoxies, a refuge from marriage, family or poverty.³⁹

It was not Catholic doctrine that drew women in Languedoc. But the institutional

openness of Catharism provided an opening for women to explore their leadership and spirituality in a way that was not available to them through orthodox Christianity.

It was during the eleventh century that so much of Europe was undergoing great changes within society. “The eleventh century saw the beginning of one of the formative periods of European development, at a time whose transformations left nothing untouched.”⁴⁰ The social structures of the past did not serve the rise of cities with a new class of moneyed merchants who often had more wealth than the landed nobility. This was very evident in Languedoc where trade dominated the economic picture and had created a middle class. There were those who exemplified the new middle class; there were others who were searching for a more simplified life. Whether it was as a result of the millennium, the horror of the amount of luxuries that money could buy while so many were destitute, or an anticlericalism that arose because of the power of the Roman Church that seemed out of touch with the laity, itinerant preachers and heretical groups were on the rise much to the surprise and horror of the local bishops and clergy.

Some historians have pointed to the Crusades and the opening of trade routes as a possible avenue for heretical groups and ideas to have infiltrated into the West. Pope Urban II (1088–1099) called the First Crusade in 1095 and Jerusalem was captured in 1099. This opening of the East and trade routes included both shipping and overland avenues for goods and ideas to flow into the West. Christine Thouzellier points out:

*La grand épopée des croisades va accentuer le mouvement, intensifier les relations entre le bogomilisme bulgare-grec et les centres hérétiques de plus vivaces d'Occident.*⁴¹

(The great epoch of the crusades accentuates the movement, intensifying the relations between the Bulgarian-Greek Bogomils and the heretical

centers most active in the Occident.)

Anne Brenon in her article, “Les Heresies de l’An Mil: Nouvelles Perspectives sur les Origines du Catharisme,” believes that much of the dissent and the heretical groups that arose at this time were precursors to the Cathars.⁴² She takes a dim view of outside influences and there is much evidence that supports her views. What was emerging in western Europe, at this time in history in the form of dissent, was a desire to return to greater simplicity, purity, and asceticism. The apostolic way of life (*vita apostolica*) was advocated as a way to not participate in the luxuries of the material world: a world that the Church of Rome seemed to represent.

One of the itinerant preachers who seemed to pave the way for the Cathars was Henry of Lausanne (d.c. 1145, also known as Henry the Monk). He was originally a monk who decided to go out on his own preaching mission. He eventually ended up in Toulouse and Bernard of Clairvaux was sent to the region on a preaching mission in 1145 to assess the damage of Henry’s and another itinerant preacher, Peter of Bruys (d. 1140), both of whom advocated individual salvation. Jeffrey Russell describes some of what Henry preached that caused such popular followings:

Henry claimed to be responsible directly to God. It is unclear whether he rejected Apostolic Succession; he did not deny the priesthood but argued that only worthy priests could consecrate the Eucharist. He denied that marriage was a sacrament needing clerical blessing and dismissed the need to confess to a priest, and he rejected the baptism of infants, reserving that sacrament to those old enough to know what responsibility they were assuming.⁴³

Many of the beliefs that Henry espoused had already begun to appear among dissenting groups in northern France and Germany. The pope, Eugenius III (1145–1153), was aware

of the problems that these itinerant preachers were causing and Bernard of Clairvaux served as the eyes and ears for the pontiff. The following is an excerpt from Bernard's observations:

A ravening wolf in sheep's clothing is abroad in your land, but as the Lord has shown, we know him by his fruits. The churches are without congregations, congregations are without priests, priests are without proper reverence, and finally, Christians are without Christ. Churches are looked upon as synagogues; it is denied that God's sanctuary is holy; sacraments are not deemed sacred; solemn feast days are stultified. Men die in their sins.⁴⁴

Clearly, the situation was alarming for the Church. It is interesting to note that Bernard's secretary, who wrote Bernard's reports, made a reference to the "weavers whom they call Ariani, who fled the city at Bernard's approach."⁴⁵ This reference to the Arians centuries later, perhaps a remnant of the Visigoths, points to the possibility of an indigenous belief system that was already in place.

Bernard observed that it was amongst the weavers that the heresy spread. It was true that weavers had to travel where work was available and there were many Cathars who were weavers in both the north and the south. The flourishing cloth trade in Languedoc would provide plenty of work. It is important to remember that the Cathar beliefs spread within every social class of the culture of Languedoc, not only in the cities but also in the countryside. This religion held an appeal to the populace and was able to survive into the early fourteenth century.

POSSIBLE ORIGINS OF THE CATHARS OF LANGUEDOC

It is important to give an overview of some possible origins of the Cathars of

Languedoc because in the next chapter, the review of the work of the five scholars will plunge the reader into this historical debate. “Much scholarly blood has been spilt in the debate over the extent to which the continuity of labels is indicative of the continuity of traditions.”⁴⁶ With this in mind, the following comments will be as brief as possible.

The Council of St. Félix-de-Caramen, c. 1172, is considered to be a critical moment in Cathar history because it demonstrates for many historians the date for the arrival of Bogomilism and absolute dualism in Languedoc.⁴⁷ St. Félix is located just south of Toulouse in Languedoc. It was at this meeting that Cathar churches were reconsecrated to absolute dualism from mitigated dualism. Bernard Hamilton has done the research into this document and it will be discussed in the next chapter with his work.⁴⁸ There are only a few historians who have not accepted the belief that this council was important. Mark Pegg in his book, *Corruption of Angels*, is not convinced that the document demonstrates that the Council was held is real.⁴⁹ Anne Brenon in her work believes that the Council was important for “ecclesiastical organization” but had no effect on the doctrines of the Cathars.⁵⁰ Jean Duvernoy has demonstrated through his research that the Cathars were a Christian church. They had their own organization, liturgy, and sacraments, all of which were based on the New Testament and the life of the Apostles.⁵¹

Another historical reference point is that the Cathars did not refer to themselves as “Cathars,” but as *bons homes [sic]* or *bonnes femmes* as indicated in the records of the inquisitors. This point is made very clearly in Mark Peggs’s work.⁵² The first use of this term *Cathari* was by Eckbert of Schonau when he described the heretics of Cologne in 1163. He also wrote about them in his *Sermones contra Catharos*.⁵³ Eckbert reports that

this group of heretics “taught dissenting evangelical beliefs, while an inner circle of adepts had a secret doctrine which included belief in a Docetic Christology, transmigration of souls, and the creation of the world by an evil god.”⁵⁴ Eckbert also noted the ceremony of the adepts whereby they used a laying on of hands that would indicate the *consolamentum* (the central ritual of sacrament for the Cathars). He also refers to them as “weavers” as it was believed that weaving was a trade that aided in the spread of heresy.⁵⁵ Eckbert also mentioned that these heretics said that their teachings came from Greece and historians conclude that this is a reference to the Bogomils and their teachings.

Who were the Bogomils? How did they come to the West? They originated in the Balkans in the tenth century but in order to understand them, the Paulicians must be discussed first because some historians believe that the Paulicians influenced the Bogomils.⁵⁶

The Paulicians

The Paulicians were first located in Armenia. The Armenian Church broke away from the Byzantine Church after the Council of Chalcedon in 451. The first reports of the Paulicians were in the eighth century. It is uncertain as to where their name came from as they called themselves Christian.⁵⁷ “The most likely origin of the name is that it comes from the Paulician leader Paul, who took his followers back to Armenia in the early eighth century and refounded the sect.”⁵⁸ They were absolute dualists who believed that the evil principle was the creator of this material world. They did not believe in the Old

Testament. Their tradition embraced a Docetic Christology which meant that Jesus was a spiritual being and therefore, Mary was not his mother. She, too, was a spiritual being. They did not venerate the cross nor did they believe in the sacraments of the Church and this included saints and icons. Their practices did not include asceticism nor did they follow any dietary restrictions. The Byzantine Army used them because the Paulicians maintained a strong reputation as good fighters.

In the tenth century, the Byzantine emperor, John I Tzimisces (969–976) relocated a large number of the Paulician population to the Balkans to help to defend the empire. Yuri Stoyanov comments on the Balkan region:

The expansion of the pagan Bulgarian empire in the eastern Balkans was bound to precipitate a revitalization of pagan residues in its newly conquered lands but also led to an increasing Christian presence in its sphere of control. But whatever the strength of Christianity in the eastern Balkans, without proper institutions and ecclesiastical control, it was certainly exposed to pagan and heretical influences.⁵⁹

The Paulicians were missionaries and worked to convert the local population in their new territory.

The Bogomils

A new heresy appeared in Bulgaria in the tenth century and Cosmas the Priest documented what he observed in his territory. According to Cosmas, Bogomil (Greek meaning Beloved of God) or *pop* (father) Bogomil was a priest in a small village in Bulgaria. He describes the followers of *pop* Bogomil:

Indeed externally the heretics appear sheep: they are gentle and humble and quiet. They seem pale from their hypocritical fasts, they do not utter vain words, they do not laugh out loud, they take care not to be noticeable

and to do everything externally so that they may not be told apart from orthodox Christians. Inside they are ravening wolves. People who see this great humility of theirs, who think that they are good Christians and able to direct them to salvation, approach them and take their advice about their soul's salvation.⁶⁰

It is believed that Bogomilism was well established by 950. While they rejected the Old Testament; they used the Old Slavonic text of the New Testament for their teachings.⁶¹ They embraced a moderate dualism which was "a belief in one God who had two sons: the elder was Christ, the younger, the devil; and the devil had fashioned the phenomenal universe."⁶² They were ascetic, unlike the Paulicians, and had strict dietary rules such as not eating meat or any dairy products that were produced through coition. They did not drink wine, nor did they believe in marriage. The Orthodox Church was not the true church as its sacraments were based on the material world. Theirs was a Docetic Christology whereby Jesus was born through Mary's ear. Steven Runciman writes of this belief:

The doctrine of Christ's entry into the Virgin through her ear is often found in early Christian writers and is depicted on many Eastern icons. Originally it was a symbolic doctrine, the ear being the natural entrance for the Word, but the average Bogomil probably took it literally.⁶³

The Bogomils were effective missionaries and they spread their beliefs throughout the Byzantine empire and to the West. In order to transmit their teachings, they had to have been well educated and had knowledge of the Biblical scriptures. They were first noticed in Constantinople in 1045 by Euthymius of the Periblepton monastery who found them in his monastery. He observed the Bogomils initiating a candidate into their inner circle by placing the Gospel on the candidate's head and singing a hymn.

“Euthymius is the earliest witness to the use by the Bogomils of a *Ritual*, closely related to the Cathar *Ritual*, and the Bosnian *Ritual* of Radoslav.”⁶⁴ The Bosnian *Ritual* of Radoslav is the only extant text we have of the Bogomil Ritual. In the West there were two copies of the Cathar Ritual: one is in Latin and the other is in Provençal. These texts are important to the understanding of the Cathars and the Bogomils because they represent the most important practice in their faith: the spiritual baptism.

For the Cathars in the West, this was known as the *consolamentum* and it was the central sacrament of salvation for those who would enter into the world of the *perfecti* or *perfectae*; these were the teachers of the faith who had been trained to spread their beliefs to those willing to listen. The believers, or *credentes*, would give support to the *perfecti* but they did not have to live their lives in strict asceticism. Many would receive the *consolamentum* on their deathbeds, and this ceremony of salvation meant that the perfected soul would enter the Kingdom of Heaven and not be reborn. This process of deathbed salvation allowed believers to carry on a regular life if they so desired, even though they supported and believed in Cathar doctrines. They admired the apostolic path of the *perfecti* with their life of fasting, prayer, and asceticism. This was in sharp contrast to the luxuries and power that the Church of Rome had acquired over the centuries and the priests and bishops who could not seem to hold their congregations together in Languedoc.

The *melioramentum* was a greeting the *credentes* would perform if their path happened to cross with that of a *perfectus* or a *perfecta* as a way of honoring and acknowledging them. The *credente* would genuflect and say with each bow or prostration

three times, “Bless us, have mercy upon us,” as a greeting.⁶⁵ The *perfectus* or a *perfecta* would respond with, “God be prayed that God will make you a good Christian and lead you to a good end.”⁶⁶

Once a month, the *perfecti* would gather for the *apparallamentum* that was a group confession of sins that a deacon would conduct. A deacon was a *perfectus* who was responsible for a regional district. This particular ceremony was an opportunity to clear one’s soul from contact with the material world and to be renewed in one’s conviction to carry on with the work as a vessel for the Holy Spirit. Malcolm Barber comments on this ritual:

The rite concludes with a powerful plea, unmistakably Cathar, ‘Lord, judge and condemn the imperfections of the flesh. Have no pity on the flesh, born of corruption, but show meaning to the spirit, which is imprisoned. Direct for us the days, the hours, the obeisances, the fasts, the prayers, and the preachings as is the custom of good Christians, that we be not judged or condemned among felons at the Day of Judgement.’⁶⁷

This ritual was similar to a group confession, always held out in an open field. It was a public ceremony whereby *credentes* could be present.

The *perfecti* and the *perfectae* would live communally in order to give one another support in their ascetic lifestyle. They would often be referred to as the “garbed heretics” by inquisitors because they wore black, until such an outward habit made them easy targets for the Inquisition. For the *perfecti* and the *perfectae*, their system of sharing households eventually created a “network of communities” from town to town and village to village throughout Languedoc.⁶⁸ They were involved in teaching people to read

as well as translating texts such as the Bible into Provençal.⁶⁹ Such a system lasted for generations until the Inquisition infiltrated and extirpated the heretics.⁷⁰

THE ALBIGENSIAN CRUSADE AND THE INQUISITION

The presence of the Cathars in Languedoc was more than problematic for the Church of Rome. They saw this heretical group as a threat to their hegemony and they made every attempt to try and bring the heretics back into the fold of orthodox beliefs. One of the negotiating areas for Pope Innocent III (1198–1216) was through Count Raymond VI (inherited title in 1194). However, Raymond VI was not an effective ruler because his allegiance fluctuated between pacifying the Church's demands to deal with the heretics and his own personal view, which was colored by the fact that he had been raised by Cathars. He had a *perfectus* with him wherever he traveled so that he could receive the *consolamentum* if something should ever happen to him. This was a problem in Languedoc for the nobility; many had family members who were Cathars. William of Puylaurens, a priest who was from the region near Toulouse, relayed a statement from a local lord: "We cannot [expel the heretics]; we were brought up with them, there are many of our relatives amongst them, and we can see that their way of life is a virtuous one."⁷¹

In 1203, Innocent III nominated Peter of Caslenau as the papal legate who was to travel to Languedoc and force Raymond VI to either work with the Pope or be excommunicated. Arnould-Amaury, abbot of Cîteaux, was to accompany Peter on this journey as Arnould had always lived in the south and was well aware of the extent of the

power of the Cathars. Meanwhile the Pope wrote to Philip II, the king of France (1180–1223), to enlist his consent to lead a campaign against the heretics in Languedoc; this included those among the southern nobility who protected them. The king was busy preparing to launch a military expedition against England's King John and he could not be bothered with the pope's petition. This was in 1205.

The fatal blow came in January of 1209 when Peter of Castlenau was murdered on his way back to Rome after having negotiated with Raymond VI. Apparently a guard in Raymond's entourage committed the murder but there was never an investigation into the crime. Innocent III convened a council in March and sent Arnould-Amaury with another petition to King Philip II. Though he was still involved with the English, he gave his consent to have his barons in northern France take the cross for the Crusade. The duke of Burgundy, the count of Nevers, and other lesser nobles consented to join the papal army even though it was not a popular cause. The idea of joining a crusade against other Christians was a new concept. Perhaps that is why this crusade was never numbered as the others were. It should have been the Fifth Crusade following the Fourth Crusade and the sacking of Constantinople in 1204.

Innocent III was able to gather an army of 20,000 and he gave the usual conditions for this crusade as for those in the past: absolution of sins, keeping any confiscated property which included the family title (as in count or viscount, etc.), and the soldiers were forgiven any debts as long as they served forty days. The army gathered in Lyon in June of 1209. At the last moment Raymond VI took the cross. He believed he would lead an army against his old enemy, Raymond-Roger Trencavel, viscount of

Béziers, and take his lands.⁷² This proved to be delusional thinking on Raymond VI's part. Once the papal army was in motion there was nothing to stop it and Raymond had no authority in the campaign. The devastation to Languedoc would be brutal and the northern army would remove many safe towns that had been sanctuaries to the Cathars as the victors assumed control of conquered areas.

Days before 22 July 1209, the crusaders had gathered around the city of Béziers and were preparing for a siege. Raymond-Roger had forewarned his people within the city walls that there would be a siege and preparations were made to fortify the city to that end. Believing that there was enough food and water for the people to survive within the walled city, Raymond-Roger took the entire Jewish community with him to Carcassonne where he made ready to meet the papal army.⁷³ "The Jewish communities of the southern cities were too valuable a source of taxes and administrators to be left to the mercy of the crusaders. Raymond-Roger, in common with most seigneurs of the province, protected them jealously."⁷⁴

On 22 July 1209, some messages were passed between the crusading army and the citizens ensconced behind the walls of Béziers. A gate to the city was accidentally left open and the crusaders were able to enter. Arnaul-Armaury was designated as the commander for the army and when he was asked how the soldiers would know Christians from heretics, he replied, "Kill them all, God will know his own."⁷⁵ The twenty-second of July was the feast day for Mary Magdalene. Many people in the city had gathered in the Church of the Madeleine for protection and the soldiers burned the church to the ground.⁷⁶ The streets were awash with blood as anywhere from 15,000 to 20,000 people

were killed. This was a very tragic beginning and marked the end of the independence of Languedoc.

Simon de Montfort became the leader of the papal army and he continued the successes of the campaign by taking Carcassonne and eventually, during the siege of Toulouse in 1218, he was killed. French royal troops under the command of Louis VIII in 1224 overwhelmed the southern army, and a peace was sought in 1229. There had been much at stake for the southern nobility during this crusade and they fought against the northerners whether they supported the Cathars or not. It had become a political battle where the titles, land, and independence were at stake for Languedoc. However, with the monarchy involved, the stakes were too high for the king to lose. "Louis VIII saw that the new opportunities for the Capetian monarch would lie not in the north but in the Midi [Languedoc], with its commercial wealth and political weakness, and a strategic position which would one day enable his successors" to regain Aquitaine and northern coastal areas that the English had held since the eleventh century.⁷⁷

It was under Louis IX (1226–1270) that the conditions for peace were established at the Treaty of Paris with Raymond VII (Raymond VI's son who succeeded him in 1222) losing control of most of his lands. The French monarchy established a seneschal or military governor in Carcassonne and later in such cities as Nîmes, Toulouse, Narbonne, and Montpellier who would work with the local bishop in rounding-up heretics. All the nobility were required to swear an oath of loyalty to the king. The *faidit*, who were members of the nobility who had lost their lands but still fought with the southern army, were treated leniently in the peace as long as they swore loyalty to the

king and were not heretics.

There remained a deep resentment among the southerners at their loss of independence and they would not lay down their arms so easily. There were several attempts to regain lost land but the monarchy was successful in quelling any resurgence of independence in Languedoc. Montségur remained as one of the last Cathar strongholds and that, too, was easily taken in a siege in 1244. The Inquisition that was officially commissioned by Pope Gregory IX (1227–1241) in 1233 also had its effects on the region and the Cathars were forced to move to more remote mountainous areas. Their days of freely moving about in cities and towns were over and they had lost their ability to have formal meetings so there was no organization to the group.

The Inquisition was very effective in routing out the heretics and creating an atmosphere of fear and distrust in Languedoc. The stakes were too high for those who had helped the Cathar *perfecti* in the past. James Given writes of the ability of the inquisitors to tear apart the social fabric of the local society:

The inquisitors' techniques were designed to break existing social relations among men and women; they did not form new ties or reorganize old ones so they could be used to serve the interests of their rulers. The inquisitors incapacitated individuals by cutting them out of social networks in which they were embedded.⁷⁸

There was a brief revival of Catharism in the late thirteenth century in the region of the Sabartès Mountains, located near the Pyrenees. However this was easily subdued as the abilities of the inquisitors and their power had become refined over the decades and they had many resources to draw upon in order to achieve their success against heretics.

CONCLUSION

This brief overview of some of the roots of the Cathars within early Christianity and the formation of the region that became Languedoc has been an attempt to introduce the reader to some of the background of the Cathars and why the Church was compelled to launch a crusade against this group of Christians. Much of the history that has been discussed here will be recapitulated to a certain degree in the next chapter with the review of the work of the five contemporary scholars.

The Christian Church has always had dissenters within and yet as the power of the Church of Rome grew and they formulated a concerted effort with monarchs in Europe to work for the hegemony of the Church. With this type of political power, dissent could be rapidly stopped. The region that became Languedoc would prove to be a different kind of problem for the Church that had developed its power but had lost some of its spiritual message along the way. The rise of heresy in the eleventh century was a wake-up call for the Church to begin instituting changes that would address some of the needs of the laity.

The rise of the Cathars of Languedoc was, in part, due to the unusual nature of the region that was not ruled by a king and had been dominated by people of various cultural and religious beliefs. It was also a region that was known for its tolerance of difference and it was a center for trade beginning in the eleventh century. The Church did not have a strong presence here because it did not have the cooperation of the local authorities and many of the bishops had become more involved in their estates than in the needs of their parishioners. This created a situation that was open to diverging and dissenting beliefs

taking hold and spreading throughout the society of Languedoc. The arguments of the five contemporary scholars will address some of these issues and elaborate on how and why the Cathars of Languedoc had to be extirpated.

Endnotes

¹ Paul Kriwaczek, *In Search of Zarathustra: Across Iran and Central Asia to Find the World's First Prophet* (New York: Vintage Books, 2002), 79. I am indebted to the author for a reminder of what Carcassonne looks like, as I had forgotten my first impressions. The fortress has been rebuilt; it is the towers around the city that stand as reminders to Visigothic architecture.

² Michèle Aué, *Cathar Country*, trans. Simon Pleasance (Vic-en-Bogorre: MSM, 1992), 48.

³ Some of the independent historians include: Morris Berman, *Coming To Our Senses: Body and Spirit in the Hidden History of the West* (New York: Bantam Books, 1989); Stephen O'Shea, *The Perfect Heresy: The Revolutionary Life and Death of the Medieval Cathars* (New York: Walker & Company, 2000); Lynn Picknett, *Mary Magdalene: Christianity's Hidden Goddess* (New York: Carroll & Graf Publishers, 2003); Margaret Starbird, *The Woman with the Alabaster Jar: Mary Magdalene and the Holy Grail* (Santa Fe: Bear & Company Publishing, 1993); and Starbird, *Mary Magdalene: Bride in Exile* (Rochester, Vt.: Bear & Company, 2005); and Jay Weidner and Vincent Bridges, *The Mysteries of the Great Cross of Hendaye: Alchemy and the End of Time* (Rochester, Vt.: Destiny Books, 2003).

⁴ Walter L. Wakefield, *Heresy, Crusade and Inquisition in Southern France, 1100–1250* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1974), 6.

⁵ Jean Guitton, *Great Heresies and Church Councils* (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1965), 27.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 84.

⁷ Arianism was named after Arius (260–336), who was bishop of Alexandria and had a following who believed that Christ was a man, not “of the same substance” as God.

⁸ Matthew Bunson, D. Min., *OSV's Catholic Encyclopedia*, revised ed. (Huntington, Ind.: Our Sunday Visitor Publishing Division, 2004), 209–210.

⁹ John B. Henderson, *The Construction of Orthodoxy and Heresy: Neo-Confucian, Islamic, Jewish, and Early Christian Patterns* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998), 43.

¹⁰ Jeffery Burton Russel, *Dissent and Order in the Middle Ages: The Search for Legitimate Authority* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1992), 2.

¹¹ The Nag Hammadi Texts, discovered in 1945 in Egypt, have aided historians in their understanding of Gnosticism and Gnostic practices. Many of these texts are examples of the ascent process. See *The Nag Hammadi Library*, ed. James M. Robinson. (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1990).

¹² Morris Berman, *Coming To Our Senses: Body and Spirit in the Hidden History of the West* (New York: Bantam, 1989), 160.

¹³ Yuri Stoyanov, *The Other God: Dualist Religions from Antiquity to the Cathar Heresy* (New Haven: Yale U P, 2000), 5.

¹⁴ Ioan Petru Culianu, *Psychanodia I: A Survey of the Evidence Concerning the Ascension of the Soul and its Relevance*. (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1983), 12.

¹⁵ Peter Novak, *Original Christianity: A New Key to Understanding the Gospel of Thomas and Other Lost Scriptures* (Charlottesville, Va.: Hampton Roads Publishing Company, Inc., 2005), 197–198.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 86–87.

¹⁷ For more commentary on the connection between Gnostic beliefs and the Cathars, see: Hans Soderberg, *La Religion Des Cathares: Etudes sur le Gnosticisme de la Basse Antiquité et du Moyen Age*. Thèse pour le Doctorat. Reprint of 1949 edition, Uppsala (New York: AMS Press, Inc.) and Roelof van den Broek, “The Cathars: Medieval Gnostics?” in *Gnosis and Hermeticism: From Antiquity to Modern Times*, eds. Roelof van den Broek and Wouter J. Hanegraaff (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998), 87–108.

¹⁸ F. C. Burkitt, *The Religion of the Manichees: Donnellan Lectures for 1924* (Cambridge: U P, 1925), 4.

¹⁹ Morton Smith, *Clement of Alexandria and a Secret Doctrine of Mark* (Cambridge: Harvard U P, 1973), 238.

²⁰ Claire Taylor in her article, “Letter to Héribert of Périgord as a Source for Dualist Heresy in the Society of Eleventh Century Aquitaine,” *Journal of Medieval History*, 26, #4 (2000): 313–349, believes that the clergy in the eleventh century was aware of calling some of these groups “Manichees” and were in fact identifying some specific correlations to Manichaeism, 318.

²¹ Peter Brown, *The Body and Society: Men, Women, and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity, Lectures on the History of Religions*, vol XIII (New York: Columbia U P, 1988), 426.

²² F. B. A. Asiedu, “The Song of Songs and The Ascent of the Soul: Ambrose, Augustine, and the Language of Mysticism,” *Vigilae Christianae*, 55:3 (2001): 299.

²³ Malcolm Barber, *The Cathars: Dualist Heretics in Languedoc in the High Middle Ages* (Essex: Pearson Education Unlimited, 2000), 107.

²⁴ Will Durant, *The Age of Faith: A History of Medieval Civilization – Christian, Islamic, and Judaic – From Constantine to Dante: A.D. 325–1300*, vol. IV of *The Story of Civilization* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1950), 473.

²⁵ Jeffrey Russell, *Dissent and Order in the Middle Ages: The Search for Legitimate Authority* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1992), 47.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 47. Russell incorrectly identifies the pope who presided over the Treaty of Venice as Hadrian VI. However, Hadrian died in 1159. It was Pope Alexander III (1159–81) who was present.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 47. Russell notes that at “the Council of Verona in 1184 the *ad abolendam* was issued which was the first clear definition of heresy as a legal offense.”

²⁸ In the 1170’s, Peter Waldo, a wealthy merchant in Lyons, renounced his wealth (after a conversion experience) and gathered a following, called “The Poor Men of Lyons,” who followed a path of poverty and austerity and preached the Gospel wherever they went. They were also known as the Waldensians. In 1184 the Church condemned them for preaching without the permission of the local clergy.

²⁹ See maps in appendix I for reference.

³⁰ There is room for further research into this area of Languedoc history, such as what were the Celtic influences and did any of those ideas survive into the time of the Cathars.

³¹ Arthur J. Zuckerman, *A Jewish Princedom in Feudal France, 768–900* (New York: Columbia U P, 1972), 8.

³² Jack Lindsay, *The Troubadours and Their World of the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries* (London:

Frederick Muller Limited, 1976), 73.

³³ Ibid., 73.

³⁴ Joseph Strayer, *The Albigensian Crusades* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1992), 3.

³⁵ Jacques Madaule, *The Albigensian Crusade: An Historical Essay*, trans. Barbara Wall (London: Burns & Oates, 1967), 23.

³⁶ Lindsay, *The Troubadours*, 77.

³⁷ Bernard Hamilton, *The Albigensian Crusade* (London: The Historical Association G. 85, 1974), 11.

³⁸ Michael Costen, *The Cathars and the Albigensian Crusade* (Manchester: Manchester U P, 1997), 49.

³⁹ Linda M. Paterson, *The World of the Troubadours: Medieval Occitan Society, c. 1100–c.1300* (Cambridge: Cambridge U P, 1995), 249–250. Also see the article by R. Abels and E. Harrison, “The Participation of Women in Languedocian Catharism,” *Medieval Society* 41 (1979): 215–251. In particular see page 250 where the authors dispute the number of women involved in Catharism. Also see Malcolm Barber, “Women and Catharism,” in *Crusaders and Heretics: Twelfth to Fourteenth Centuries, Collected Studies Series C S 498* (Brookfield, Vt.: Ashgate Publishing Co., 1995), 45–59. Also, Barber, *The Cathars*, 35–36 and 39–41. Malcolm Lambert, *The Cathars* (Malden, Ma.: Blackwell Publishers, 1998), 75–79. Walter Wakefield, “The Family of Niort in the Albigensian Crusade Before the Inquisition,” *Names* 18:2 and 18:4 (1970): 97–117 and 286–303, respectively. Also see Anne Brenon’s *Les femmes Cathares* (Paris: Perrin, 1992), for an in–depth description of the role of the family in spreading Cathar beliefs and the place of women in that dynamic of family and society.

⁴⁰ R. I. Moore, *The Origins of European Dissent* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1977), 44.

⁴¹ Christine Thouzellier, “Hérésie et croisade au XIII siècle,” *Revue d’Histoire Ecclesiastique* XLIX (1954): 857. Some historians have doubted this connection between the Crusades and the influence of the Bogomils. See Malcolm Lambert, *Medieval Popular Movements from the Gregorian Reform to the Reformation*, second edition (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1992), 39 and Moore, *Origins of European Dissent*, 172–173.

⁴² Brenon, “Les Heresies de l’An Mil: Nouvelles Perspectives sur les Origines du Catharisme,” *Heresis*, 25 (1995): 21–36. It is Brenon’s view that the Cathars exemplified an early form of Christianity and the idea of dualism (which so many historians point to as the beginning of Catharism in the West as imported from the Bogomils) is secondary in the definition of heresy. See page 23.

⁴³ Russell, *Dissent and Order*, 33.

⁴⁴ Walter L. Wakefield and Austin P. Evans, eds. and trans., *Heresies of the High Middle Ages* (New York: Columbia U P, 1991), 122–123.

⁴⁵ Frederick Cheyette, *Ermengard of Narbonne and the World of the Troubadours* (Ithica: Cornell U P, 2001), 295.

⁴⁶ Moore, *The Origins of European Dissent*, 147.

⁴⁷ Mitigated dualism, for the Cathars, was the belief in the idea that one creator had two secondary principles, those of good and evil (Jesus Christ and Satan), who do battle for dominance. Absolute dualism was the belief in two independent, co–eternal principles, good and evil, who do battle for eternity.

⁴⁸ Bernard Hamilton, “Cathar Council of Saint–Felix Reconsidered,” *Archivum Fratorum Praedicatorum* 48 (1978): 23–53.

⁴⁹ Mark Gregory Pegg, *The Corruption of Angels: The Great Inquisition of 1245–1246* (Princeton: Princeton U P, 2001), 146, n. 14. However, also see Lambert, *The Cathars*, 45–59, for his support of this Council, as well as, Malcom Barber, *The Cathars*, 20–23 and Walter L. Wakefield, *Heresy, Crusade and*

Inquisition in Southern France, 1100–1250 (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1974), 31.

⁵⁰ Brenon, “Le Faux Problème du Dualism Absolu,” *Heresis* 21 (1993): 61–74, see 63. Also see, Brenon, *Le Vrai Visage du Catharisme* (Portet–Sur–Garonne: Editions Loubatières, 1989), 100–103, 122–128.

⁵¹ See Jean Duvernoy’s comments on the Council of St. Félix in, *Le Catharisme: L’Histoire des Cathares*, vol. II (Toulouse: Privat, 1979), 215–219. Also see Duvernoy’s *Le Catharisme: La Religion des Cathares*, vol. I (Toulouse: Private, 1976), 97–98, 105–107.

⁵² Pegg, *Corruption of Angels*, 17–19.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 17 and Wakefield and Evans, *Heresies of the High Middle Ages*, 243. Heinrich Fichtenau in *Heretics and Scholars in the Middle Ages, 1000–1200*, trans. Denise A. Kaiser (University Park, Pa.: The Pennsylvania State U P, 1992), 87., points to Eckbert’s reference to “*cathari*” as a connection to the followers of Novatian, or the *katharoi*, as they called themselves, because they believed that their path was to be purity, perfection, and sinlessness. This was in the middle of the third century.

⁵⁴ Lambert, *Medieval Heresy*, 58.

⁵⁵ Fichtenau, *Heretics and Scholars*, 84.

⁵⁶ Bernard Hamilton is the historian who has researched this topic in-depth. Though there is no conclusive evidence of a connection between the two groups, Hamilton’s work presents some convincing arguments. His work will be reviewed in the next chapter. Mark Pegg does not believe there is a connection between the two groups and he disagrees with Hamilton’s assessment. See “Historiographical Essay: One Cathars, Albigenses and Good Men ...,” *Journal of Medieval History* XXVII (2001): 181–195, in particular 188 n. 15.

⁵⁷ Nina G. Garsoian, *The Paulician Heresy: A Study of the Origin and Development of Paulicianism in Armenia and the Eastern Provinces of the Byzantine Empire* (The Hague: Mouton & Co., 1967), 115–120. Also see Steven Runciman, *The Medieval Manichee: Study of Christian Dualist Heresy* (Cambridge: Cambridge U P, 1996), who points to several sources, 35 and 47.

⁵⁸ Janet and Bernard Hamilton, eds. and annotated, *Christian Dualist Heresies in the Byzantine World c. 65–c. 1450*, trans. of Old Slavonic texts by Yuri Stoyanov (Manchester: St. Martin’s Press, 1998), 7.

⁵⁹ Yuri Stoyanov, *The Other God: Dualist Religions From Antiquity to the Cathar Heresy* (New Haven: Yale U P, 2000), 149.

⁶⁰ Hamilton and Hamilton, *Christian Dualist Heresies*, 116.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 31.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 27.

⁶³ Runciman, *The Medieval Manichee*, 76, n. 4.

⁶⁴ Hamilton and Hamilton, *Christian Dualist Heresies*, 33.

⁶⁵ Wakefield and Evans, eds., *Heresies of the High Middle Ages*, 467.

⁶⁶ Lambert, *The Cathars*, 142.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 142–143.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 79.

⁶⁹ See Bernard Hamilton’s essay, “Wisdom From the East: The Reception by the Cathars of Eastern Dualist Texts,” *Heresy and Literacy, 1000–1530*, eds. Peter Biller and Anne Hudson, *Cambridge Studies in Medieval Literature* 23 (Cambridge: Cambridge U P, 1994), 38–60.

⁷⁰ See Emmanuel LeRoy Ladurie's *Montaillou: The Promised Land of Error*, trans. Barbara Bray (New York: Vintage Books, 1979) for an in-depth study of Catharism and its imprint on the village of Montaillou in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries.

⁷¹ *The Chronicle of William of Puylaurens: The Albigensian Crusade and its Aftermath*, trans. with introduction, notes, and appendices by W.A. Sibly and M.D. Sibly. (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2003), 25.

⁷² Jonathan Sumption, *The Albigensian Crusade* (London: Faber and Faber, 1999), 84. For a complete history of the crusade, 77–225.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 89.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 90.

⁷⁵ Peter les Vaux-de-Cernay, *History of the Albigensian Crusade*, see appendix B, 289-293, for an historical explanation of the massacre and Armaury's famous words. Also see *The Chronicle of William of Puylaurens*, xiii. These are two contemporary accounts of some of the battles of the crusade.

⁷⁶ Lynn Picknett, *Mary Magdalene: Christianity's Hidden Goddess* (New York: Carroll & Graf Publishers, 2003), 31. The Church of the Madeleine is the Church of Mary Magdalene.

⁷⁷ Sumption, *The Albigensian Crusade*, 212.

⁷⁸ James B. Given, *Inquisition and Medieval Society: Power, Discipline and Resistance in Languedoc* (Ithaca: Cornell U P, 1997), 216.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

The following literature review will examine the contributions of scholars in the field of heresy and the Cathars. The subject of heresy is vast even when it is narrowed down to the Middle Ages. One of the central questions for historians who write about the Cathars and other marginalized groups is, When did heresy in the West arise and how did it arise?

Most historians who write about the Cathars believe that the Bogomils, a Christian heretical group from the Balkans and Constantinople, brought their beliefs to the West through their missionary work in the eleventh century and greatly influenced the Cathars of Languedoc. Several independent historians, such as Laurence Gardner, Lynn Picknett, and Margaret Starbird, and several contemporary Cathar scholars, such as Jean Duvernoy and Anne Brenon, do not entirely agree. The focus is on a pre-existing belief system in Languedoc and the fact that the Cathars were Christians. Of the five scholars whose work provides the framework for this dissertation, four accept the view of Bogomil influence: Bernard Hamilton, Malcolm Barber, Walter Wakefield, and Malcolm Lambert. The fifth scholar, Mark Pegg, provides a new view of the Cathars from his epistemological approach through the use of inquisitional records. In addition to these five scholars, the work of other Cathar historians is reviewed in order to demonstrate some of the different views among scholars.

This literature review is organized by several historical themes in order to include those scholars who have contributed to Cathar research. Those sections are: “The

Cathars, the Albigensian Crusade, and the Inquisition”; “Did the Bogomils Bring Dualism to the West?”; “A Closer Look at Heresy, the Cathars, and Languedoc”; “A Primary Source Most Commonly Used by Scholars: Manuscript 609 of the Bibliothèque municipale of Toulouse”; and “General History of Heresy, the Church, and the Cathars.”

The literature review also includes a small section on Mary Magdalene and the Cathars, and some literature on ascension within the Christian tradition. Much of the research on Mary Magdalene and the Cathars comes from independent historians, because this area that has not been explored in-depth. There are several citations of her presence within Cathar rituals from inquisitional registers, but more research is needed in this field.

The section on ascension literature is included because this is important to my contribution to the studies of the Cathars. Both of these sections are brief, because the focus of one part of this dissertation is the work of the five scholars. The last two sections, “Mary Magdalene and the Cathars” and “Ascension in the Christian Tradition,” give examples of some of the literature used in this dissertation to demonstrate that the Cathars were practicing an early form of Christianity through the ascension process.

THE CATHARS, THE ALBIGENSIAN CRUSADE, AND THE INQUISITION

This section is broad in scope because there are several historians who have written comprehensive studies on the Cathars; those studies include other heretical groups in Europe and a thorough discussion of the Bogomils, their origins, and their influence on the Cathars. The scholars whose work is reviewed in this section are:

Bernard Hamilton, Malcolm Barber, Walter Wakefield, Malcolm Lambert, Jonathan Sumption, and Jean Duvernoy.

A thorough study of the cause and effects of the Albigensian Crusade from a religious history point of view is presented in Bernard Hamilton's *The Albigensian Crusade*, (1974). After examining the Cathars of Languedoc and their origins, Hamilton outlines his arguments as to why the Church led a crusade in 1209 to eradicate the heresy. He claims that the origins of Cathar beliefs in the West came from the Bogomils. The Bogomils, primarily missionaries from Constantinople, spread their religion effectively after the First Crusade in 1099. He points out the many instances of heresy in the West beginning in the eleventh century. However, according to Hamilton, it was the Council of St. Félix-de-Caraman, a town south of Toulouse in Languedoc, that resulted in the conversion of the Cathars to absolute dualism. It was at this time as well that *pop*¹ Nicetas of Constantinople organized the Cathar churches in Languedoc. The estimated date of this council is 1172.

Once the Cathars embraced absolute dualism, they became another religion, according to Hamilton, and yet having made this statement, he does not develop this idea any further. He believes that the Church was provoked by the Cathar church's outspoken attacks on the Catholic Church.

Hamilton argues that the Church was justified in launching the crusade and the Inquisition because the Cathars not only posed a threat to their hegemony, but were heretics. He believes that "the extinction of Catharism is an enigma,"² and recognizes the effectiveness of the Inquisition. Though Hamilton uses primary sources for his evidence,

he acknowledges that these sources are limited because they are based largely on inquisitional records, which usually do not go into areas of the Cathars' beliefs or their spirituality.

By focusing on the Cathars as heretics and absolute dualists, Hamilton misses some of the more intricate ways in which these beliefs (an attempt to understand good and evil in the world) pervaded in this region where the Church had little power. Though he does impart a basic understanding of Cathar beliefs, Hamilton glosses over the question why Languedoc had become so receptive to the *perfecti* and their apostolic and ascetic lifestyle. His analysis leads to an understanding of the Cathars from the perspective of medieval Christianity.

Another point of view regarding the history of heresy and the results of the Crusade and the Inquisition in Languedoc can be found in *Heresy, Crusade and Inquisition in Southern France, 1100–1250*, by Walter L. Wakefield, (1974). He argues the idea that the region was ripe for heresy to flourish because of the history of independence from a king in the South and the fact that the Church did not have control over the nobles: there was no cooperation between secular authorities and the Church. Wakefield also argues that the rise of dissent within Christianity in the eleventh century also contributed to the acceptance of heretical views such as those espoused by the many itinerant preachers who were wandering about the countryside. The questions around the existence of evil that orthodox Christianity did not seem to be able to answer also opened the door to alternative beliefs that might provide satisfactory answers. As Wakefield

points out, “The disposition to impose puritanical restraints on the flesh was always present among advocates of rigorous moral reform. By their criticism of the clergy and the discredit they cast on the authority of the Church, new heresies flourished.”³ As evidence for his arguments, he cites both primary texts and secondary sources.

The Bogomils ultimately formed the Cathars and their church in Languedoc, according to Wakefield, but both mitigated and absolute dualism prevailed. The Crusade and the Inquisition were instrumental in ending Catharism in the region by the early fourteenth century. The effects of the Crusade on the ruling nobility - their losses of title and property- ended the possibility of protecting the Cathars. The author writes: “There may have been 1,000–1,500 perfected Cathars in thirteenth century Languedoc,”⁴ but those numbers rapidly decreased with the fall of Montségur in 1244 and Quercy in 1253.

Ultimately, the region was devastated. Wakefield argues that the Church won, but at a cost: “The defeat of heresies was not an unqualified triumph for the Church, for in part the victory was bought at the cost of centralizing authority, loss of flexibility, unwillingness to absorb innovative movements but willingness to use force against dissent.”⁵ He believes that the Protestant revolution of the sixteenth century was the result of the inflexibility of the Church as a consequence of the Inquisition.

Le catharisme: l’histoire des cathares, by Jean Duvernoy (1979) provides a slightly different perspective on the Cathars and their history in that he views them as a Christian group rather than heretics. This is a divergence from the beliefs of Bernard Hamilton and Walter Wakefield. He gives a thorough history of the origins of the

Cathars, beginning with the rise of the Bogomils in the East in the tenth century, and describes other groups, such as the Paulicians, who influenced the Bogomils. The author admits that the history of the Cathars is difficult to trace because so many documents were burned during the Inquisition.⁶ However, he relies on inquisitional records, along with the testimonies of local people and inquisitors, to add greater depth to the historical facts. He argues that the Cathars practiced a form of early Christianity, as evidenced by their use of Christian texts, ceremonies, and beliefs that resemble Christian practices predating the formation of the Church of Rome. His work is similar to Walter Wakefield's in its scope; however Duvernoy goes into greater depth regarding the rise of heresies throughout Europe during the eleventh century and compares those regions to the Cathars of Languedoc.

Duvernoy believes that Languedoc was a unique region because of its diversity, tolerance, and independence, and therefore the Cathars were accepted by the local population. It was also their ascetic lifestyle, that of the *perfecti* and *perfectae*, that impressed the people of a region where the influence of the Church of Rome was weak. The Cathars were also effectively involved in educating the people within their communities: teaching them how to read and discussing the New Testament.

The Council of St. Félix, c. 1172, was a turning point for the organization of the Cathar church, and this indicated the strength of the Cathars in Languedoc. However, unlike Bernard Hamilton, who places great emphasis on this meeting, Duvernoy views it as more of an organizational meeting than a transitional moment for Cathar doctrine.

Ultimately, the Cathars were extirpated by the Crusade and the Inquisition, which

brought an end to the flourishing society of Languedoc. The author states: “il existait bien un sentiment national des méridionaux contre l’ordre imposé par l’Eglise and la France du nord.”⁷ This implies that there were political as well as religious reasons for the demise of the Cathars, and that the wounds of the ferocious assault on Languedoc have never been healed.

A political historian’s view is provided in *The Albigensian Crusade*, by Jonathan Sumption (1979). Here, the author argues that it was “one of the most savage of all mediaeval [sic] wars.”⁸ While he gives space to the Cathars and their origins, it is the politics of the region that dominate this work. Sumption argues that the culture of Languedoc was destroyed forever by the Crusade and the Inquisition, and he agrees with Duvernoy that a unique region was absorbed into the kingdom of France.

Sumption treats the Cathars only briefly in this work. He observes that family connections were extremely important in Languedoc, and that powerful princes of the region provided protection for the Cathars. He notes that many of the leading *perfecti* and *perfectae* came from prominent families, indicating the interweaving of this religious group into the fabric of society. He also cites the fall of Montségur in 1244 as the turning point for the nobility’s support of the Cathars. It was after this time that the Cathar church lost its organization and those who continued to practice the religion went into isolation, seeking refuge in remote mountain villages.

Ultimately, Sumption believes, the Cathars were successfully extirpated from the landscape of Languedoc and he does not see any connection between Catharism and the

Protestant revolution of the sixteenth century. Sumption does not raise any new arguments around the Cathars; rather he contributes to the political history of that time.

The Inquisition had its roots in Languedoc and was a response by the Church to eradicate heresy. *The Medieval Inquisition* by Bernard Hamilton (1981) gives a thorough examination of the reasons why the Church established the Inquisition. Hamilton's argument is that the Inquisition was a natural response of the Church. This view is similar to Wakefield's, although Wakefield's approach within a social context yields a larger perspective of what was occurring in the region at that time. Hamilton goes to great lengths to demonstrate the humane way in which inquisitors worked in the early years of the formation of this arm of the Church. He says: "The moral revulsion which is frequently expressed about the Inquisition and its methods is often misplaced in emphasis."⁹

It is Hamilton's argument that the Inquisition, at that time, was not an institution, as many historians seem to believe, but that each inquisitor, as a representative of the Pope, was answerable only to him. Gregory IX (1227–1241) was responsible for creating the office of the Inquisition in 1232, and he made the Dominicans (established by St. Dominic and recognized in 1216) his primary representatives. Hamilton writes, "The Inquisition was unique among the institutions of the medieval Western Church in that it did not become uniformly established in all parts of Catholic Christendom."¹⁰ The initiation of the Inquisition in the early years focused on the Cathars in Languedoc.

It is puzzling that Hamilton wonders why Catharism died out in the region in the early fourteenth century. He does not believe that the Albigensian Crusade and the Inquisition were effective in bringing about the end of this heresy. This obscures the historical consequences of these two very successful campaigns by the Church. In justifying the Inquisition, he does not consider its effectiveness at instilling fear within the local citizenry. Because Hamilton has concentrated his research on the religious aspects of heresy, he does not consider the earlier cultural contexts that developed outside of the Bogomil influence, and therefore he overlooks some of the reasons why Catharism died out.

A comprehensive study of the Catharism is presented in *The Cathars*, by Malcolm Lambert (1998). This is the first new study of this kind since Walter Wakefield's *Heresy, Crusade, and Inquisition in Southern France: 1100–1250* (1974). The focus of Lambert's research is similar to Wakefield's in that he incorporates much of the social history of that time, but he also includes the Cathars of Italy. This perspective creates a larger picture of the societies in southern France and Italy; yet the framework for the Cathars in Lambert's work is to compare them to the Church of Rome. Here his conclusions echo some of Hamilton's. Lambert's study attempts to answer the question, "What was the motivation of the Cathar elite and why were they initially so successful?" The Bogomils and the Cathars are linked, and he points out the differences in their beliefs. Ultimately, he believes, the Cathars, though aware of the Eastern origins of beliefs they received from the Bogomils, westernized them and created a church and a

hierarchy based on the Roman Church.

Lambert argues that the Italian Cathars were more literate than those of Languedoc and that because of their proximity to the East and their influential trade agreements there, they experienced more doctrinal disputes amongst themselves, which fractured their power to pose a threat to the Church. According to Lambert, the situation was different in Languedoc because the nobility gave refuge to the Cathars in the towns and out in the countryside in remote *castra*.¹¹ Heretical beliefs passed on through families in this region, and some villages contained more Cathar believers than Catholics. “Whatever the importance of anti-clericalism in providing an ambience in which heresy could thrive in Languedoc, at the heart of the earliest recollections of the Cathars who came before the inquisitors in the 1240’s are the perfect, men and women, instructing, praying, receiving the *melioramentum*, giving hospitality.”¹² Lambert takes primary sources as his evidence, and also considers secondary sources that outline opposing opinions.

By focusing on the Cathars as absolute dualists who interpreted the New Testament to fit their own beliefs, Lambert misses the significance of dualist thought within the Christian tradition. He gives an in-depth study of this heretical sect by examining the Cathars’ beliefs, and practices, and some literature, but his focus on the exotic nature of absolute dualism obscures the Christian roots Catharism. Yet he provides new research on the Cathars in Italy that is important to Cathar research.

A more recent political history of the region of Languedoc is presented by

Malcolm Barber, in *The Cathars* (2000). In this study, Barber argues that Catharism, which had a well-developed theology, posed the greatest threat to the Catholic Church in medieval Europe. Like Bernard Hamilton and Walter Wakefield, he provides an overview of the Paulicians and the Bogomils as two dualist groups who influenced the Cathars, an influence that culminated when the Bogomils converted them to absolute dualism at the Council of St. Félix in 1172. However, Barber believes that mitigated dualism was still present among believers after that council. “It is probable that Nicetas’s absolute dualism was comprehended more fully among the leaders of the Cathars in southern France than it was by the majority of the believers.”¹³

As evidence, Barber cites eyewitness accounts and inquisitional records, and he gives ample space to secondary sources. Through his secondary sources, he demonstrates the variety of opinions and arguments posed by historians on a variety of subjects involving the Cathars and heresy. Also, he incorporates a sociological history of the region in support of his argument that Languedoc was open ground for the growth of heresy because of the independence of the nobility and the lack of support for the Church.

Barber believes that the Albigensian Crusade and the subsequent Inquisition were instrumental in the defeat of Catharism. By crippling the nobility who protected the Cathars, the Church and the King of France effectively subdued the region. “By the 1270’s, the pressures brought to bear by the inquisitors, the monarchy, and the new count [of Toulouse], the king’s brother, Alphonse of Poitiers, combined with a series of failed attempts at resistance, had largely broken-up the Cathar hierarchy in Languedoc.”¹⁴ The author writes of the Autier revival of Catharism in the early fourteenth century in the

Ariège region of the Pyrenees, but that was brought to a halt with Peter Autier's arrest in 1309.

By focusing on the Cathars as heretics and on the view that the Church had to end the heresy forcefully, Barber misses the significance of the Cathars' contribution to Christianity. He notes the attitude of the Church: "Repression of Catharism was not therefore a question of choice, nor was there any option of toleration, for it was a positive obligation upon those charged by God to lead His Church on earth."¹⁵

DID THE BOGOMILS BRING DUALISM TO THE WEST?

There is a division among historians as to when heresy and dualism arose in the West. Most scholars believe that the Bogomils brought dualism to the West through their missionary efforts in the eleventh century. The following authors have made contributions to this debate that has created a renewed interest in heresy: Bernard Hamilton, Guy Lubrichon, Michael Frassetto, Claire Taylor, Roelof van den Broek, and Heinrich Fichtenau.

In "The Origins of the Dualist Church of Drugunthia," *Eastern Churches Review*, 1974, Bernard Hamilton briefly analyzes the origins of the Bogomils' absolute dualism. Hamilton's research on the Bogomils and their influence in the West has dominated research on the Cathars. The Bogomils were originally mitigated dualists and the *Ecclesia* (or *ordo*) *Bulgariae*, represented the beliefs of this branch of the Bogomils. However, they were great missionaries and they spread their religion throughout the Byzantine Empire and to the West. Once the Bogomils infiltrated Constantinople, there emerged the *Ecclesia* (or *ordo*) Drugunthia, which represented the absolute dualists.

Hamilton uses the work of Demitri Obolensky, *The Bogomils*, as background to his argument that this heretical sect infiltrated the West and influenced the Cathars.

There is evidence to support the foundation of the *Ordo Bulgariae*, which came from the group's founder, Bogomil, and represented mitigated dualism. However there is little evidence from the East that demonstrates the origins of the absolute dualists of the *Ordo Drugunthia*, which surfaced at the Council of St. Félix-de-Caramen c. 1172. It was at this time that *pop* Nicetas, bishop of the *Ordo Drugunthia* in Constantinople, came to the West to reconsecrate the Cathar churches in the West to absolute dualism. This Council was a conclave of Cathar bishops from Italy and northern and southern France held in Languedoc. At this time, according to Hamilton, the Cathar churches were organized with a structure very similar to that of the Catholic Church, with bishops presiding over dioceses and deacons who were to preach within specific regions. The Cathars in Languedoc used the Catholic divisions of dioceses in Languedoc to create their own dioceses.

Despite Obolensky's contention that the Bogomils adopted absolute dualism once they came into contact with the intellectual community of Constantinople, Hamilton believes that the Bogomils were influenced by the absolute dualism of the Paulicians. Although he acknowledges that there is scant evidence to support this idea, he continues to hold this view. "Western sources suggest that no simple equation can be made between the absolute dualists of Drugunthia and the Paulicians."¹⁶

Hamilton acknowledges that the Cathar *Ritual*, or the *consolamentum*, their central sacrament for salvation, had its roots in early Christianity. The *Ritual* does not

espouse either mitigated or absolute dualism. By focusing on the issue of whether the Cathars of Languedoc were absolute dualists, Hamilton misses a closer examination of the Christian foundations of the Cathars and this *Ritual*. He gives little evidence about what generated the overwhelming local support of both the Bogomils and the Cathars in their respective regions. Hamilton mentions a possibility of “an indigenous Western heresy”¹⁷ in Languedoc before 1172, but he then moves on to his argument that the Bogomils created the absolute dualist churches of the Cathars.

A thorough history and review of the Council of Saint-Félix is presented by Bernard Hamilton in “The Cathar Council of Saint-Félix Reconsidered,” *Archivum fratrum praedicatorum*, 1978. Hamilton puts forward his thesis that this council was the turning point for Catharism in the West. At this time, the Cathars became organized into a church that posed a threat to the Catholic Church. His research into the document that testifies to the council meeting, c. 1172, has convinced most historians that the council was a historical fact. Until Hamilton did this research, there was doubt as to the authenticity of this document, and there had been much continued scholarly debate around the issue. However, as he points out, most scholars now agree with his finding, that the Bogomils influenced the Cathars in the West.

The document in question was published in 1660 by Sieur Guillaume Besse, a well-known forger. Whatever Besse based his work on was never found. There was no paper trail. Some scholars have believed that what Besse produced was a forgery. Antoine Dondaine, who in the 1940’s found several documents that supported Besse’s

find, believed the work to be genuine.

According to Hamilton, Besse worked from copy of the original made in 1232 by Peter Isarn, a Cathar bishop of Carcassonne. Though some of Besse's dates were wrong, Hamilton asserts that the council did indeed take place and that Besse's work is a genuine document. The importance of this council, according to Hamilton, is that it was the first time a Bogomil leader, *pop* Nicetas, came to the West and reconsecrated the Cathars to absolute dualism. On his trip to Languedoc, *pop* Nicetas stopped in Italy and reconsecrated the Cathars of Lombardy to absolute dualism; Mark became their bishop. Inquisitional records in Italy confirm the occasion.

St. Félix-de-Caraman is south of Toulouse. At this meeting there were Cathar representatives from northern France, Italy, and Languedoc. Not only did *pop* Nicetas reconsecrate the *perfecti* present to the *Ordo* of Drugunthia; he also set up dioceses within Languedoc. At the time of this meeting, there was only one Cathar bishop in the region, Sicard Allarerier of Albi. This is verified in the chronicles written by William of Puylaurens, a Catholic priest who lived in the region during the thirteenth century.

It is Hamilton's claim that the Cathars of Languedoc remained absolute dualists, but several churches in Italy reverted to moderate dualism. "To judge from the silence of later sources the moderate dualist schism in Languedoc did not last beyond the death of Bartholomew [bishop] of Carcassonne c. 1227."¹⁸ Hamilton provides sources to back up this claim.

Focusing on the argument about when absolute dualism arrived in Languedoc from the East, Hamilton ignores what was going on in the region before the arrival of *pop*

Nicetas, and why this area was fertile ground for diverse beliefs.

A comprehensive study of heresies in Europe and how Cathar beliefs arose in Languedoc, northern France, Germany, and Italy is presented by Heinrich Fichtenau in *Heretics and Scholars in the Middle Ages, 1000-1200* (1992). According to Fichtenau, the Bogomil influence on the Cathars is undeniable. He compares the mythology and cosmology of both groups to demonstrate his argument. Throughout his research, he incorporates the findings of other scholars in the field of heresy to give the reader a wide perspective of opinions.

Fichtenau also argues that there was a Gnostic influence on the Cathar belief system. He admits that there is little evidence to support this claim but he sees similarities between these two groups. Fichtenau writes about the Cathars, "Indeed, this religion was not concerned with redemption, but with liberation through knowledge and conduct in the form of gnosis."¹⁹ Few scholars are willing to admit any connection between the Cathars and the Gnostics, because the Gnostics died out in the fourth century.

Another historian who agrees with Fichtenau's findings of a correlation between the Cathars and the Gnostics is Roelof van den Broek. In his essay, "The Cathars: Medieval Gnostics?" on *Gnosis and Hermeticism: From Antiquity to Modern Times*, (1998), which he edited with Wouter J. Hanegraaff, he dissects Cathar beliefs by describing some of their practices and the texts they used. For example, he discusses their Docetic Christology, which posits that Christ was an angel and was born through Mary's

ear. This, in turn, makes Mary a spirit, or an angel. This belief can be traced to the Bogomil text called *Interrogatio Johannis*, or *The Secret Supper of John*. Here, John the Evangelist is in heaven with Christ, who explains to him the origins of the world. Van den Broek believes that these doctrines of Doceticism came from the Gnostics to the Bogomils and then to the Cathars.

Van den Broek also attributes Cathar dualism to Gnosticism. "Because of their dualism, i.e., their doctrine of two creators and two worlds, the Cathars can, at least phenomenologically, be called 'Gnostics'."²⁰ This statement was made with some major qualifications such as the fact that the Cathars did not have the elaborate mythology that the Gnostics incorporated into their cosmology. Van den Broek's position also excludes the moderate dualists who were also present among the Cathars of Languedoc.

Another important point that van den Broek makes is that the *consolamentum*, the central ceremony of the Cathars whereby the initiate becomes a pure vessel for the Holy Spirit, is reminiscent of Syriac Christianity. "The Holy spirit as the Third Person of the Trinity is at the same time the collective of all heavenly spirits and the individual spirit. It is in the *consolamentum* that one receives one's heavenly spirit, the custodian that originally had been united with the soul before the fall."²¹ These ideas come from the Messalians, an eastern Christian group from the fourth century, who believed that "salvation is only possible if one has been baptized by the Holy Spirit and it was baptism by prayer, not water."²² Hamilton, like most other historians, does not accept this assessment that there was any connection between the Messalians and the Cathars.

The research around when heresy arose in the West is an ongoing issue among historians. In “The Chiaroscuro of Heresy: Early Eleventh-Century Aquitaine as Seen From Auxerre,”²³ Guy Lubrichon sheds new light on the time when heresy and dualism arose in the West. Lubrichon found a letter written by Héribert, a monk in the Périgord at the time of the millennium, who wanted to warn other members of the clergy about the type of heresy he was witnessing at that time. The first copy of this letter was dated c.1168; however, Lubrichon found another copy with an earlier date of c.1050.

Héribert notes in his letter that the heretics used the Eastern version of the doxology. They did not believe in the cross, or the sacraments of the Church. Lubrichon believes that the evidence is clear that there was heresy in the region of the Périgord but he also states that the letter reflects an internal argument between the Cluniac monks and their rivals. Michael Frassetto and Claire Taylor disagree with this assessment. They both believe that Héribert saw a Bogomil influence with the heretics he encountered because the monk wrote that they used the Eastern form of the doxology and followed the tradition of constant prayer and genuflecting while they prayed. Clearly, Lubrichon’s find created renewed interest in research about when heresy arose in the West.

Michael Frassetto’s doctoral dissertation, *The Sermons of Adémar of Chabannes and the Origins of Medieval Heresy* (1993), has become a very important part of the dialogue about the subject of heresy in the West. Frassetto disagrees with Lubrichon’s interpretation of Héribert’s letter. He demonstrates some possible origins of the heresy controversy as revealed through the sermons of Adémar of Chabannes in Aquitaine (989-

1034). These sermons and Frassetto's research bring new light to this contentious issue of when heresy and dualism appeared in the West.

Frassetto believes that the rise of heretical movements in the eleventh century was significant and should not be viewed as isolated incidents. He traces similarities among heretical groups in the Aquitaine region and parts of northern France. He disagrees with those historians, such as R. I. Moore, who view heresy in the West as dissent within the Church and who see no outside infiltration of beliefs.

The author's most compelling argument is his comparison of Héribert's observations with Adémar's, which is that the heretics in both regions of the Périgord and Aquitaine were using the Eastern form of the doxology. "Instead of 'Glory to the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit,' they say 'For Yours is the kingdom and You shall rule forever and ever. Amen.'"²⁴ This was what the Bogomils used.

Claire Taylor is another historian who supports Michael Frassetto's contention that Héribert's letter indicates a Bogomil presence in Aquitaine in the early eleventh century. Her article, "Letter of Héribert of Périgord as a Source for Dualist Heresy in the Society of Eleventh Century Aquitaine," in *Journal of Medieval History* (2000), and her book, *Heresy in Medieval France: Dualism in Aquitaine and the Agenais, 1000-1249* (2005), both give more evidence on this subject. Taylor also emphasizes the millennium as a time of social disorder that gave heretical groups a greater voice within the society of Aquitaine. There was a greater disparity between the nobility and the peasants and those who preached a message of salvation that differed from that of the Church were able to

reach those who were seeking answers to their spiritual and societal fears.

Taylor speaks of this societal disorder in her article: “Dualism, it is therefore argued, thrived in Aquitaine in the context of increased social oppression and resultant dissent on the part of the simple laity and clergy, addressing many of their specific concerns, for example about the questions of private property and sexual purity.”²⁵ It is Taylor’s argument that the Bogomils followed the trade routes that were heavily traveled by the cloth merchants from the East. The cloth industry was one of the industries that contributed the most to the growth of Languedoc and Aquitaine.

Taylor’s work is very important to the dialogue as to when heresy arose in the West. She believes, like Michael Frassetto, that Adémar of Chabannes was well informed about the nature of the heretical groups he observed. Though he had read Augustine’s work on the Manichaeans, he drew his own conclusions about his observations. Taylor points out that Adémar was not the only well informed member of the clergy. “Such associations between various incidents of heresy have been too easily dismissed. Indeed, they are evidence that the eleventh-century churchmen saw the heresy as dualist, labeling it Manichaean, as internationally organized, and as originating in the East.”²⁶

Most historians agree that the region of Languedoc was highly literate because of a growing economy that supported a strong middle class. In “Wisdom from the East: the Reception by the Cathars of Eastern Dualist Texts,” in *Heresy and Literacy, 1000–1530* (1994), Bernard Hamilton explores Bogomil literature, what the Cathars in the West

adopted from the Bogomils, and what they wrote for their own use. The Bogomils in Bulgaria and the Balkans used only the New Testament translated into Old Slavonic. Apparently the Eastern Orthodox Church permitted the use of vernacular translations in this region. The Bogomils of Constantinople developed their own literature in Greek; it included the Psalter and the Prophets of the Old Testament.

There are only two known copies of the Cathar *Ritual*. One is an incomplete Latin text known as the *Ritual* of Florence, written in Italy, c. 1235–1250; the other, known as the Provençal *Ritual*, is located in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Lyons and dates c. 1250–1280. What is interesting is that this latter Ritual was found bound within a copy of the New Testament that had also been translated into Provençal. This is known as Ms. PA 36, and is also in the library at Lyons. Hamilton believes that the Cathars would bind the *Ritual* with the New Testament and that originally there were many copies available but most were either lost or burned. No one has edited this Provençal New Testament, and Hamilton argues that it must be edited in order to establish whether there are passages in the translation that diverge from the Vulgate Bible, standard at the time. He also notes that within this copy is the apocryphal Pauline Epistle to the Laodiceans, which is also found in the Vulgate tradition of the New Testament. He links this Epistle to the Paulicians, who used it, and then questions whether there was Paulician influence in the West. Hamilton also points out that within the Provençal Ritual, the Lord's Prayer and the prologue to St. John's Gospel are in Latin, which is how they were read during the actual ceremony.

Hamilton refers to other literature, such as *The Vision of Isaiah* (a Greek, Gnostic

text from the first century), which all Cathars used, and also *The Book of St. John*, which illustrates the cosmology of moderate dualists. *The Book of St. John*, or *Le Livre Secret*, was found in an incomplete version in Vienna and in a complete version in the archives of the Inquisition at Carcassonne. He argues that this text was not used in Languedoc because all Cathars were absolute dualists.

Bernard and Janet Hamilton's book, *Christian Dualist Heresies in the Byzantine World, c. 650–c. 1450* (1998), considered a primary text, is included here because their historical introduction is important to Bernard Hamilton's argument that the Bogomils brought dualism to the West and the Cathars were their Western counterparts.

The Hamiltons' approach to their argument that the Bogomils brought dualism to the West is to review the history of the possible origins of the Paulicians and how they might have influenced the Bogomils. Both groups denied that an omnipotent, all-powerful God could have created the material world that is evil. Both embraced Docetic Christology, whereby Jesus was a spiritual being. They also rejected the Old Testament, and denied the sacraments of the Eastern Orthodox Church.²⁷ The Hamiltons suggest that the Paulicians at Philippopolis may have converted to Bogomilism and helped to change their beliefs to absolute dualism. The *ordo* Drugunthia, near Philippopolis, was the gathering place of absolute dualists, whereas the *ordo* Bulgaria represented the mitigated dualists.

It was the *ordo* Drugunthia, with *pop* Nicetas as representative, who came to the West for the Council of St. Félix, and created the Cathar church in Languedoc. After this

time, the Cathars in that region were absolute dualists. However, the Hamiltons refer to a schism in the 1220's in Carcassonne between mitigated and absolute dualists. The absolute dualists won this battle.

Focusing on the connections between the Paulicians and the Bogomils, the Hamiltons do not explore some of the roots of Christian dualism in the East. They mention that the moderate dualism of the *ordo* Bugarae closely resembled "Zurvanism, a form of Zoroastrianism, which postulates the existence of a High God, Zurvan, who is the father both of Ohrmazd, the God of Light, and of Ahriman, the God of Darkness. This belief was present in Bulgaria before the rise of Bogomilism."²⁸ They also note that Persia ruled half of Armenia until 640 and that this could be a possible source for Christian dualism. They acknowledge that: "The Christian dualists were not an alien graft on a Christian stock, but dissenters who had broken away from the Orthodox Church and interpreted the Christian faith in an exceptionally radical way."²⁹ Does this point to an indigenous Christian tradition? This line of investigation is not pursued. The Hamiltons use many of the primary sources printed in *Christian Dualist Heresies* to back up their evidence.

Bernard Hamilton's central argument is that the Bogomils influenced the Cathars, and in his article, "The Cathars and the Seven Churches of Asia," in *Crusades, Cathars, and Holy Places* (1999), he demonstrates some of the origins of Cathar beliefs, including their links to the Bogomils and the Paulicians. Hamilton argues that the Cathars claimed that their church was the true church, following the teachings of Jesus, whereas the

Church of Rome had diverged from those teachings and was false. Hamilton notes that: “Catholic theologians went to great lengths to refute doctrinal criticisms which the Cathars made of the Roman church and to defend the Petrine claims of the Holy See, but they did not make the obvious retort and ask the Cathars for proofs of their own apostolic descent.”³⁰ Therefore it is difficult to know the origins of Catharism.

To demonstrate his argument, Hamilton refers to three pieces of evidence. Those are the writings of inquisitors Moneta of Cremona (d.c.1250) and Rainier Sacconi (wrote in 1250’s), a former Cathar himself. Hamilton admits that these works by the inquisitors might be flawed. Also he writes that these records only reflect attempts by the inquisitors to get current information about what the witnesses knew or saw, not about Cathar history or their origins. The inquisitional records of Anselm of Alessandria are also used in this argument. Anselm, who was in Lombardy in 1260–70, and who did write detailed accounts of the Cathars and their history in that region, did not include Languedoc in his work. Hamilton therefore uses the Council of St. Félix document to account for Cathar activity in that region in the 1270’s.

Hamilton argues for a connection between the Bogomils and the Paulicians, both groups that influenced the Cathars. He states: “It is impossible to determine whether the Paulicians had any part in shaping primitive Bogomilism, but it is certain that both movements shared a common belief that the phenomenal world was not the creation of the good God.”³¹ He goes on to argue that the Paulicians influenced the Bogomils because of the Paulician converts to Bogomilism. These converts helped to create the *ordo* of Drugunthia, which embraced absolute dualism. Hamilton believes that “the

evidence suggests that all Bogomil churches were in some measure open to Paulician influence and that Paulician converts were able to give the Bogomils an historical respectability which the Bogomils themselves lacked.”³²

Pop Nicetas, in his speech at the Council of St. Félix, refers to “the seven churches of Asia,” and Hamilton connects this reference to the fact that the Paulicians had seven churches. In support of this belief, he refers to a passage by Peter of Sicily (who wrote in the late ninth century, and whose accounts are all we have for the history of the Paulicians), who names the seven churches that Hamilton believes gives historical continuity to the Bogomils and the Cathars. At the same time, Hamilton notes that Nina Garsoian, the leading historian on the Paulicians, questions the accounts by Peter of Sicily as a primary source.

Hamilton also cites the fact that the Paulicians used the apocryphal Pauline text, the Epistle to the Laodiceans. This Epistle is found in the Provençal translation of the New Testament that the Cathars used; he takes it as evidence of a connection between the Paulicians and the Cathars.

Hamilton connects the Novatians of the third century, referred to as *Katharoi*, to the Cathars of Languedoc, and he believes that this term was transmitted by the Paulicians to the Bogomils. He claims it was the Novatians who gave the ritual of the *consolamentum* to the Paulicians, who then passed it on to the Bogomils and then the Cathars. “The orthodox and the archaic nature of the *Ritual* certainly suggests a Novatian provenance,”³³ which would link the Cathars to the time of the apostles.

In “Catholic Perceptions of East European Dualism in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries,” in *Crusades, Cathars and the Holy Places* (1999), Bernard Hamilton argues that Catharism was the Western branch of Bogomilism although there is no clear evidence as to when the Bogomil missionaries reached the West. He uses the writings of Anselm of Alessandria, an inquisitor in Lombardy in the mid-thirteenth century, to demonstrate that the Cathars originated with the Bogomils. Eberwin of Steinfeld documented the first Cathar bishop in 1143 in Cologne, although this group was of moderate dualist beliefs. Eberwin writes that these heretics traced their origins to Greece. According to Hamilton, the Council of St. Félix in c. 1172 converted the Cathars to absolute dualism. Again, he believes that the Paulicians influenced the Bogomils towards absolute dualism. To support this, he points out that the Paulicians were in Philippopolis and the *ordo* Dragunthia, the center for Bogomil absolute dualists, was near there.

Innocent III (1198–1216) wrote of heresy in Bosnia and Bulgaria, but because he was in the midst of launching a crusade in Languedoc in 1209, nothing was done in the East. Gregory IX (1227–1241) accused the Catholic bishop of Bosnia of not persecuting heretics in his region; but after c.1232, papal influence ended there and the focus was on dealing with heretics remaining in the West. Hamilton points out that during the Crusade and the Inquisition in Languedoc, many Cathars fled to Italy and on to Bosnia, but there is no documentation as to how many did so.

A CLOSER LOOK AT HERESY, THE CATHARS, AND LANGUEDOC

This section will focus on the region of Languedoc and how the Cathars were

interwoven into this unique society. Some scholars hold that closer examination of Cathar beliefs will reveal their Christian roots; and others view them as heretics and dualists who had to be eradicated by the Church. The effects of the Crusade and the Inquisition will also be included in this discussion. The authors included are Walter L. Wakefield, Bernard Hamilton, Jean Duvernoy, Anne Brenon, and James B. Given.

The approach used by Walter L. Wakefield in his article, "Friar Ferrier, Inquisition at Caunes, and Escapes from Prison at Carcassonne," in *The Catholic Historical Review* (1972), is to reveal the activities and fate of twelve men who were imprisoned by inquisitors for heresy in Carcassonne and escaped sometime between 1237 and 1240. He uses this small episode to illustrate the continued struggle of the Languedocians against the king of France and the inquisitors. After the Peace of 1229 ended the Albigensian Crusade, the king controlled the region, and the inquisitors began their intense search for heretics. It is important to note that Wakefield uses inquisitorial records for much of his research into the Cathars, yet his work stands in contrast to that of Mark Pegg, who provides a new approach based on some similar transcripts. His views will be examined later in this chapter.

Wakefield suggests that these twelve escapees could well have joined the forces of the former landowner Raymond Trencavel in his attempt to recapture his former territory, Carcassonne, in 1240. Trencavel's siege lasted a mere month before the French army arrived and forced his retreat. Wakefield argues that this incident demonstrates the southerners' resentment of the northern occupation of their lands.

According to Wakefield, the Inquisition was also viewed as an occupying force.

Friar Ferrier, initially an inquisitor in Narbonne, caused a riot there in 1234 as a result of his prosecution of some citizens, and it took another three years before peace could be restored. In 1237, Friar Ferrier moved to Caunes, outside of Carcassonne, and it was here that he arrested the twelve men who later escaped from prison.

Wakefield points out that the inquisitional records from 1237 to 1241 in Carcassonne were burned, and he had to piece his evidence together from the 1258–1261 records of inquiry created at the request of Louis IX, who wanted to answer the requests of southern nobles who had petitioned him for the return of their property. It is from these royal records of 1258–1261 that the author traced the fate of the twelve men. These records also indicate that “the Dominican inquisitor Ferrier continued to be active in prosecutions for heresy at a time when his colleagues elsewhere in Languedoc were held in check.”³⁴

Wakefield also argues that the first ten years of the Inquisition were not entirely successful in prosecuting heretics, because the local citizens reacted with resistance and, at times, violence against the Dominicans. He believes that Raymond Trencavel’s “rash invasion” of Carcassonne enabled the king to punish the nobles where the Church had not been successful.

This article demonstrates that the ravages of the Albigensian Crusade did not subdue the society of Languedoc. The nobility were accustomed to their independence, and their allegiance to the crown was not easily won. Because Wakefield focuses on the fate of these twelve men and the inquisitional career of Friar Ferrier, his arguments become hard to follow. However, the article does provide a glimpse of the independent

nature of the people of that region.

In "Some Unorthodox Popular Ideas of the Thirteenth Century," in *Medievalia et humanistica* (1973), Wakefield examines the statements of six witnesses who appeared before inquisitors Ranulph of Plassac and Pons of Parnac, in Toulouse between 1270 and 1273. These six witnesses were called for depositions because they had been reported as having spoken of beliefs that were unorthodox. Wakefield notes that these two inquisitors asked unusually detailed questions, perhaps because the witnesses denied any connections to the Cathars.

The central question posed is: "Were the attitudes thus disclosed in the 1270's the product of Catharist propaganda, as has usually been assumed? Or, were they, perhaps, indicative of popular unorthodoxy?"³⁵ Wakefield uses the inquisitional records of the proceedings, as well as some secondary sources, to examine the possible origins of some of the beliefs these witnesses expressed. For example, one deponent had "ridiculed the mass as a profit-making invention of priests,"³⁶ which was a common expression of anticlericalism.

Another idea examined in this article is whether there was "a place of rest for souls before the Day of Judgement."³⁷ This belief had first appeared in the ninth century, according to Wakefield, and was also commonly expressed among the Cathars. As he points out, it is not always possible to ascribe a certain belief to any one heterodox group. Wakefield also writes that the belief that Christ's body could not exist in the host "anticipates the materialistic-rationalistic theme in the discussion of the Eucharist in the

following years.”³⁸

A different view of the Cathars is presented by Jean Duvernoy’s work, *Le catharisme: la religion des cathares* (1976). His key argument is that the Cathars practiced an early form of Christianity, and he believes that their dualistic beliefs came from their interpretation of the New Testament. “Le dualisme est ainsi, non point un point de départ mais l’aboutissement d’un raisonnement, un résidu d’analyse scripturaire.”³⁹ The Cathar claim of being direct descendents of the apostolic tradition can be seen in their use of baptism by the Holy Spirit in the *consolamentum* and the laying on of hands, as well as their reliance on the New Testament for their teachings. In particular he writes of the mystical marriage of the soul and spirit that occurs in the ceremony of the *consolamentum* and how this marriage was recognized by one of the inquisitors as having its roots in early Christianity.⁴⁰

Duvernoy demonstrates the span of Cathar influence in areas of Europe, and he does see a correlation of beliefs between the Cathars and the Bogomils. He explores some of those similarities by examining the Bogomils in the Balkans, Greece, Bulgaria, Constantinople, and Asia Minor. His discussion of both Catharism and Bogomilism in these various regions, gives a greater understanding of the origins of some of their beliefs. Duvernoy uses primary sources, including some of the texts used by the Cathars. For example, he points to the *Vision of Isaiah* as demonstrating Christ’s docetic nature because he is sent to earth as an angel. This idea will be explored in greater depth in Chapter Four.

Duvernoy discusses the importance of the Cathars in Languedoc society as seen through the testimonies of local people in the Inquisitional records. He mentions that there were several troubadours who were Cathars, but he does not see the connection between these two groups. However, this work contrasts with Hamilton's because of Duvernoy's argument that the Cathars were Christians.

Anne Brenon's research follows Jean Duvernoy's argument that the Cathars were Christians practicing an early form of Christianity. Her book, *Le Vrai Visage du Catharisme*, (1989), and her articles, "L'Eglise de l'Esprit Saint (Etude sur la Notion d'Esprit dans la Théologie Cathare)" (1991), "Le Faux Problème du Dualisme Absolu," (1993), and "Les Hérésies de l'An Mil: Nouvelles Perspectives sur les Origines du Catharisme" (1995), all support her argument that once the mystery of the Cathars is cleared away, what the researcher finds is their "true face," which is that they were Christians. Brenon believes that while there were Cathars located around Europe, the Cathars of Languedoc were unique in that they flourished there and posed the greatest threat to the Church because their teachings resonated with the people. Not only did the Cathar *perfecti* and *perfectae* educate people within their communities, but they also worked for a living, and the locals admired them for their stamina and asceticism. They were called the "Good Christians" or "Bons Hommes" and "Bonnes Femmes."

Brenon focuses on pointing out many of the early Christian roots that are found in Cathar beliefs and practices. The Cathars believed in the transmission of the Holy Spirit through the laying on of hands (as used in the ceremony of the *consolamentum*), which is

found in Act.6:, Act. 8:17, and 1 Tim. 4:14.⁴¹ “C’était donc manifestement avec les plus claires légitimations scripturaires que les Bons Hommes cathares pouvaient affirmer devant le peuple chrétien qu’ils étaient le vrai Eglise du Christ, celle qui avait le pouvoir de pardonner les péchés at de sauver les âmes.”⁴² She uses the New Testament and Cathar rituals throughout to demonstrate the connection between early Christianity and the Cathars.

Brenon also argues that the Cathar church had a message that addressed the spiritual fears of their believers, which the Church of Rome did not have. There was no eternal damnation; at the end of time, all souls would return to heaven. By receiving the sacrament of spiritual grace (the *consolamentum*) on their deathbed, one was assured that one’s soul would return to its celestial origins and one would not have to be reincarnated into this material realm where Satan was the prince. But ultimately, all souls would have the opportunity to return to the Kingdom of Heaven.

There was a sense of communal activity in the Cathar ritual of blessing the bread before a meal that might include a family and others from the town. Here, the *perfecti* or *perfectae* would bless the bread with the Lord’s Prayer, and all those present would receive a morsel. This is in contrast to the ritual of the Eucharist which the Cathars did not believe in because Christ was not embodied. Brenon demonstrates the importance of communal activity throughout her work, and this, in turn, shows the depth to which the Cathars were interwoven into Languedoc society.

In a brief article, “Burial of Heretics in the Middle Ages,” in *Heresis* (1985),

Walter L. Wakefield argues that the Cathars were concerned with burying their dead. He uses inquisitional records to track down where these burials occurred. Before the Albigensian Crusade, Cathars were buried in orthodox cemeteries or in their own privately designated cemeteries. As Wakefield points out, "It is commonly supposed that because they [the Cathars] denied the resurrection of bodies and scorned the services of the Church and the use of consecrated ground, they were indifferent to the fate of human remains."⁴³ The author dispels this belief with his research.

With the peace Treaty of Paris of 1229, which concluded the Albigensian Crusade, and before the Inquisition was officially underway, Dominican friars were busy tracking down heretics who had been buried in consecrated ground. In Toulouse in 1231, Roland of Cremona, a Dominican friar, disinterred two men and burned their remains. According to Wakefield, these actions led to riots in Albi in 1234 and in Toulouse in 1235.

From 1231 on, greater secrecy was necessary for the burial of Cathars. Wakefield notes that open fields, old pits, or the land of noble sympathizers sufficed, and burial occurred at night without a ceremony. These practices continued until the fourteenth century and the end of Catharism.

This article demonstrates that the Cathars did respect the remains of their dead, and their use of orthodox cemeteries leaves the reader with questions about why they might use that land, since the Church was considered the enemy. More research needs to be done in this area.

In "Friar Ferrier, Inquisitor," in *Heresis* (1986), Wakefield recounts the life of the Dominican inquisitor, Friar Ferrier. He relies on the inquisitional registers to retrace the friar's activities from his appointment to inquisitor in 1229 to his last recorded presence as a witness to an interrogation in Pamiers in March 1246.

Wakefield's argument is that Friar Ferrier, the first Dominican inquisitor in Languedoc, was very effective and persistent in tracking down heretics and prosecuting them. Early in Ferrier's career, "he was accused of being unfair and harsh."⁴⁴ The Dominican caused a riot in Narbonne in 1234 because of his prosecutions, and these reactions on the part of the local citizens continued until 1237. Ferrier moved to Caunes, near Carcassonne, and continued his work until 1240.

Wakefield notes that Ferrier was involved in excommunicating Count Raymond VII of Toulouse in 1242, after the murder in Avignonet of two inquisitors, Guillaume Arnaud and Etienne de Saint-Thibéry. Raymond VII had no part in these murders, but his excommunication suggested his complicity in this act.

It is argued that Ferrier's depositions demonstrate that he was not concerned with heretical dogma or beliefs: "He saw his task to be to obtain evidence of guilty acts by the witnesses or others."⁴⁵ Apparently, Ferrier left no model of interrogation, although his questions were similar to what other inquisitors used.

Wakefield questions whether Ferrier was particularly severe in his sentencing. He cites some light punishment that Ferrier imposed, and mentions that he even allowed some who were imprisoned to be released. However, Wakefield includes this observance by Bernard Gui, an inquisitor in the 1320's: "Even today his name resounds in the ears of

heretics like a sword.”⁴⁶ The article demonstrates what one inquisitor was able to accomplish in a small region and some of the effect his actions had, for better or worse, on the local people.

Much of the information available to historians about the Cathars is found in inquisitional records. In “Heretics and Inquisitors: Some Notes on Antiheretical Writings of the Thirteenth Century,” in *The Journal of Medieval History* (1986), Wakefield argues that the polemics against heretics written in the thirteenth century were not always original. By examining many of these antiheretical texts, he surmises that these sources cannot always be trusted to be original, because some writers copied from earlier texts, or much was lost through scribal transcription. Wakefield bases his work on several of the primary sources he examines, and he uses some secondary sources to back up his conclusions.

Wakefield’s central question is: Can these primary sources be trusted for the information they provide on the heretical sects of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries such as the Cathars and the Waldensians? One text the author examines is Alain de Lille’s *Summa quadripartite*, written around the end of the twelfth century. Alain’s work became an example for later polemics against heretics. The pattern Alain followed was to present heretical doctrine and then rebut it with orthodox views supported with scriptural references. Wakefield finds that Alain’s work combines Cathar and Waldensian beliefs, “without distinguishing the sects.”⁴⁷ This probably occurred through scribal transcription, and yet most scholars rely on these texts.

Wakefield examines several other primary sources and compares them to find the similarities. Is it possible that the information within was copied? The article emphasizes how the inquisitors' thirteenth-century treatises borrowed information on heretics from earlier sources. "The *Practica inquisitionis* of Bernard Gui, completed about 1323–24, rightly acclaimed as the best work of its kind, shows the wide variety of sources that inquisitional archives provided for authors."⁴⁸

Clearly more research needs to be done on many of these documents to establish whether they are accurate. The article gives clear examples of those works that were sections copied from other works. As Wakefield points out, "The argument that concordance of testimony of various writers about heresy is proof of their accuracy can only be employed when one is reasonably assured that the argument is that of independent witnesses."⁴⁹

A closer examination of the Inquisition is presented in the work of James B. Given in *Inquisition and Medieval Society: Power, Discipline, and Resistance in Languedoc* (2001). This work stands in contrast to Bernard Hamilton's work on the Inquisition, which was discussed in the first section of this chapter. Given's argument is that the power of the Inquisition over the people in Languedoc was the key to its success. His work illustrates the nature of political power in medieval society: "Power is a fundamental aspect of human social relationships, yet it is a phenomenon that is hard to define in a satisfactory fashion."⁵⁰ Given also argues that the inquisitors sought to have control over the behavior of individuals who appeared before them, and they were

successful.

Given's study focuses on the years from 1275 to 1325, because this period offers the greatest amount of documentation about the development of procedures used to get witnesses to confess. Bernard Gui, inquisitor 1308-1325 in Toulouse, wrote the foremost manual on procedures, *Practica inquisitionis heretice pravitatis*, in 1323. Ultimately, Gui believed that if he could get a Cathar "good man" to convert, this was a victory for the Church.

Given points to the cultural and political autonomy of Languedoc that provided fertile ground for the rise of the Cathar religion. By stigmatizing individuals whom they found guilty with the yellow star of a heretic, the inquisitors were able to ostracize "heretics" and create divisiveness within communities. Fear was the inquisitors' ultimate weapon. Given stresses the success of the inquisitors in dismantling the nobility's support of the Cathars, and the effect of their power on family connections. This study stands in contrast to Bernard Hamilton's work which argued that the power of the Inquisition was "overstated."

In "Catharism and the Occitan Nobility: The Lordships of Cabaret, Minerve and Termes," in *Crusaders and Heretics of the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries* (1999), Malcolm Barber, argues that the socio-political conditions in Languedoc were such that the region was fertile ground for heresy to take root and grow. His approach is to examine the lordships of Cabaret, Minerve, and Termes, and he demonstrates not only the independence of these three nobles but also their willing involvement in protecting the

Cathars. As evidence for his arguments, Barber takes the eyewitness accounts of Peter les Vaux-de-Cernay, the *Chanson de la Croisade Albigeoise*, and William of Puylaurens, as well as some inquisitional records. Barber writes, “The Cathars thrived when their organization was underpinned by the powerful network of interlinked family structures of the Occitan nobility.”⁵¹

The castles of the lordships of Cabaret, Minerve, and Termes were typical of the region situated on rocky mountain peaks, seemingly unconquerable. The author notes: “The political, social and religious characteristics of this region owe much to the spectacular topography.”⁵² Though each of these lords was in essence under obligation to his overlords, either the Trencavels of Carcassonne or Count Raymond of Toulouse, all three maintained their independence and kept the profits from their lands. The Church had little authority in the region, because there was no secular support for them to rely on. The nobility sometimes attacked Church land in an attempt to add it to their fiefdoms.

Barber demonstrates the importance of the family network, the intermarriage of the nobility, and the predominance of the Cathars within these social networks. The Albigensian Crusade was effective in capturing many of these strongholds and thus removing the protection offered to the Cathars. As Barber notes: “It was only when the secular lords who tolerated the Cathars were either removed and replaced or coerced into acceptance of orthodoxy that dualism was overcome.”⁵³ By focusing on the Cathars as heretics and dualists, Barber misses the significance of the depth of these family networks and the Cathar contribution to these family ties.

Women held a significant position in Languedoc, partly because of the region's independence, and Catharism gave women a role in their religion. In "Women and Catharism," in *Crusaders and Heretics of the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries* (1999), Malcolm Barber argues that women in Languedoc maintained an active position in the rise and spread of Catharism. He outlines a variety of women and their involvement with Catharism, using the evidence in inquisitional records. He also argues that women held greater rights in this region than elsewhere in medieval society. Both Malcolm Lambert and Walter Wakefield have mentioned this aspect of the Cathar society, and Barber's work adds to this area of research.

The laws of inheritance in Languedoc were such that women often inherited land and were made co-seigneurs, particularly if they had not married. "The role of women as land-holders remained important and consequently their social influence was considerable."⁵⁴ Also, the Cathars accepted women as *perfectae* and thus opened a new avenue of expression to women from all strata of society. Barber notes that mothers who were believers or *perfectae* often brought their children up with the Cathar teachings. Not all young women who were raised this way would become *perfectae* themselves. "A social structure which permitted strong feminine influence also offered examples of determined women who were prepared to defy their families, either by joining the Cathars, or by refusing to participate in heretical practices."⁵⁵

The article points to the fact that Languedoc was a region that had prospered from trade and that textile manufacturing was a principal industry. Women participated in this trade, and it is documented in the guild records of Toulouse. Trade was the most

important key to the region's wealth, and along with trade came ideas from different areas around the Mediterranean. Barber argues that Catharism was not based entirely on imported ideas. "Dualism was latent in Languedoc in the first place."⁵⁶ Barber misses the opportunity to elaborate on this observance.

As the inquisitional records bear witness, the family network had deep roots in Catharism. Deponents often describe their exposure to Catharism by mothers, grandmothers, and extended relatives. Along with these family connections came protection from family members who were not Cathars but were willing to help the heretics. Ultimately, Barber writes, "The weakness of the feudal hierarchy and the corruption of the Church in the south left a vacuum which could be filled by heretical ideas, and it is not difficult to see the attraction to women as an expression of discontent against masculine domination."⁵⁷

Another view on women and Catharism is provided by Anne Brenon in her work, *Les femmes cathares* (1992). In contrast to Barber, Brenon's basic argument is that the Cathars were Christians practicing an early form of Christianity in which women played a vital role in disseminating the word of Jesus. She relies on the testimonies of women from inquisitional records to demonstrate the important position women held in Languedoc society and as *perfectae* in Catharism. The culture of this region had always given women greater freedoms than elsewhere in Europe due to the laws of inheritance.

Brenon begins her study with the foundation of the Fontevrault Abbey in Aquitaine c. 1110 as the beginning of a change for women that was taking place as a

result of the Gregorian reforms instituted by the Church of Rome. Robert of Abrissel founded the abbey that housed both men and women but was always to be run by an abbess. Brenon also argues that the troubadours, who originated in Aquitaine and moved south to the independent courts of Languedoc, played a significant role in the changing attitudes towards women. Their poems speaking of a spiritual love for a woman resonated with the devotional path of the Cathar *perfecti* and *perfectae* in their own connection to the perfected Kingdom of Heaven. The fact that women could become *perfectae* within Catharism and could preach, teach, and give the *consolamentum* at death created new models of social relations with Languedoc. The idea of women carrying on the apostolic tradition had its roots in early Christianity.

Brenon demonstrates that most women became *perfectae* later in life, after having children or being widowed, and often their houses became Cathar houses, similar to a convent, where other *perfectae* could live and practice their faith. These Cathar houses would also serve their communities, because all *perfecti* and *perfectae* had to work. The family network was very important in the spread of Catharism and in the protection of *perfectae*. Oftentimes, a family member would provide a safe house for *perfectae*. Ultimately, the author makes a convincing argument that women played an important role in this religion.

In “The State of Research: The Legacy of Charles Schmidt to the Study of Christian Dualism,” *Journal of Medieval History* (1998), Bernard Hamilton argues that Charles Schmidt’s *Histoire et doctrine des Cathares* (1848–49) shows some of the same

views as Hamilton on the Cathars, and that Schmidt seems to agree with much of what European scholars are writing today. In particular, Schmidt asserted that Catharism was a “false religion.” However, one hundred and fifty years ago Schmidt did not have access to much of the Cathar literature and some primary texts that have been found since that time. Schmidt wrote that the western Cathars and the Byzantine Bogomils were of the same sect and that the Paulicians influenced the Bogomils. Both Schmidt and Hamilton admit that there is no conclusive evidence to support this link between the Paulicians and the Bogomils. Moreover, Schmidt rejects any connection between Cathar dualism and the dualism of the Manichaeans.

Hamilton cites current work that has taken Cathar research into more depth. For example, he cites the work of Yuri Stoyanov, who has written of possible connections between Christian dualism and the ideas of good and evil found in Zoroastrianism and the Greek cult of Orphism. The author notes that Stoyanov is “the first serious modern scholar to examine the claims made by the Bogomils and the Cathars to represent the true Christian tradition.”⁵⁸ More research needs to be done in this area.

Hamilton also uses the views of contemporary European scholars to demonstrate how far the research into the Cathars and the region of Languedoc has come since Schmidt wrote. Knowledge about such areas as the role of women in Catharism and Cathar practices has been greatly expanded since Schmidt’s work was published. He points out that through the discovery of such literature as the *Gloss on the Lord’s Prayer*, we have been able to learn more about Cathar spirituality. More research is needed in this area.

Hamilton reviews Schmidt's treatment of the Albigensian Crusade and the Inquisition, and shows that it anticipates his own. For example, Schmidt concludes that it was not persecution that ended Catharism, but the fact that the Cathars could not deal with society's acceptance of the Mendicant orders⁵⁹ that arose to counter Catharism. This view overlooks the effects on Languedoc of the Crusade and the Inquisition, both of which, for a number of reasons, were effective in ending Catharism. Most modern scholars hold this view, though Hamilton does not.

The article attempts to show Hamilton's sharing of Schmidt's views, and his belief that Schmidt's work has withstood the test of time. Both Hamilton and Schmidt suggest that since absolute dualism came from the Bogomils as an Eastern phenomenon, there is no need to investigate the historical roots of Christian dualism. Hamilton proclaims that since Schmidt was a Lutheran minister, he had an open mind towards the Cathars and their history.

In "The Cathars and Christian Perfection," in *The Medieval Church: Universities, Heresy, and the Religious Life*, (1999), Hamilton examines the issue of why the Cathars considered themselves the "good men." According to Hamilton, this is the first study of Cathar spirituality. He wants to understand why the Cathar "perfect" were willing to die for their beliefs. Hamilton uses some Cathar literature to focus his work on their spirituality, especially the works that to Hamilton represent the absolute dualism of the Cathars.

Hamilton's central argument is that the Cathars did not fear death, but did fear

life. Citing the beliefs of absolute dualism, he attempts to demonstrate that the good God created a parallel “Land of the Living,” whereas the evil God created the phenomenal world. By the Cathars’ reading of St. John’s Revelation 12:7–8, the evil God was cast down from heaven to earth. Only the souls who were cast down to this world were embodied, and they were forced to inhabit the evil world. Their salvation lay in becoming consoled through the *consolamentum*, the ritual of salvation given to the Cathars by Jesus through the apostolic tradition. The very act of being consoled released the soul to its spirit in the “Land of the Living,” and the cycle of reincarnation was ended. Hamilton attributes the strict ascetic lifestyle required of the *perfecti*, and their having to live in this evil world, as evidence that they feared life itself. He uses comparisons with Roman Christianity’s monasticism, but does not include the fear of the material world that those living the monastic life felt, or the fact that the *perfecti* lived this strict ascetic life in the material world, not behind the protective walls of a monastery.

In another comparison with Christianity, Hamilton wonders, for example, why the Cathars did not produce a written tradition “in the cultivation of the spiritual life.”⁶⁰ His focus on these comparisons obscures the argument about why the *perfecti* were willing to die for their beliefs. Hamilton’s belief that the Cathars viewed the body as evil is a possible reason why death would be preferable to life. Yet, as Hamilton admits, “The vocation of the perfect was to remain in this world and carry on the redeeming work of Christ by ministering to their fellow man.”⁶¹

Ultimately, Hamilton recognizes the willingness of the *perfecti* to die for their faith as a pathway to freedom for the soul from its bodily imprisonment. It was a

testimony to the strength of their conviction that they were carrying on a tradition that had great meaning to them. “Divine love was central to the Cathar religion: the *consolamentum* was intended to restore the believer to God’s love, and the fullest exposition of the Cathar understanding of the way in which God’s love operated is found in the *Gloss on the Lord’s Prayer*.”⁶²

***THE PRIMARY SOURCE MOST COMMONLY USED BY SCHOLARS:
MANUSCRIPT 609 OF THE BIBLIOTHÈQUE MUNICIPALE OF
TOULOUSE***

Manuscript 609 of the Bibliothèque Municipale of Toulouse, referred to as MS. 609, represents the testimony of over five thousand six hundred witnesses who were called before two inquisitors, Bernard Caux and Jean Saint Pierre. This was a tremendous amount of information to be transcribed from 1245-1246 in Toulouse. What is important to note in this section is that several historians have relied on this manuscript, and yet their conclusions show different views of the Cathars and the societal matrix from which they emerged. The authors reviewed in this section are: Walter Wakefield, Mark Pegg, Richard Abels, and Ellen Harrison.

Family relations were very important to the spread of Catharism. Walter L. Wakefield’s article, “The Family of Niort in the Albigensian Crusade before the Inquisition,” which appeared in two parts in *Names*, (1970), examines the history of the family of William of Niort: their relationship to Catharism, and what befell them during the Crusade. He provides a bird’s-eye view of the fate of this family in the midst of a crucial time in Languedoc history. Taking Manuscript 609 and other sources as evidence,

Wakefield points out that it was difficult to follow the family because the scribes often used only initials and there were several children named William in the family.

William of Niort, whose family had been prominent in the southwestern region of Languedoc since the early eleventh century, had married Esclarmonde of Laurac, whose family had been involved in Catharism. William's family was not involved with the heretics until his marriage to Esclarmonde. According to Wakefield, though William was not interested in religion, his children became involved in protecting Cathars, because of their mother's influence.

The Albigensian Crusade was, for the Niorts, about fighting for their titles and land against the incursion of the crusaders from the north. They reflected the views of the other landowners and titled nobility in Languedoc. As Wakefield observes: "Even a cursory survey indicates that family ties, residence, and shared experience, as in the Crusade, deeply affected the persistence of Catharism."⁶³

William Niort's family lost their titles and property as a result of the Crusade and the Inquisition, which uncovered the family's ties with the heretics. Several of the sons petitioned the king of France, Louis IX, to have their lands and titles restored to them.

Wakefield's research focuses on the fate of a family who had title and property and who, when these were confiscated, could petition the king to have their inheritance restored to them. The king was willing to hear these petitions; he wanted to appease the local nobility of Languedoc in order to have their allegiance. This focus obscures the fate of the hundreds of citizens who were imprisoned by the Inquisition in Toulouse, Albi, and Carcassonne and had no recourse to petition anyone to help them get out of prison

and have their property restored to them. As Wakefield points out, "Execution, imprisonment, flight, or, as in the case of the Niorts, confiscation of property and a kind of exile, broke the power of the seigneurs against whom the inquisitors had faltered."⁶⁴ Wakefield argues that it was by crippling the nobility, and thus removing safe havens and protection for the Cathars, that the Crusade and the Inquisition in Languedoc were successful in extirpating the heretics.

Another view of women and their participation in Catharism is provided by Richard Abels and Ellen Harrison in "The Participation of Women in Languedocian Catharism," *Medieval Studies* (1979). They base their conclusions about the position of women in Catharism on a statistical analysis of the evidence in MS. 609. Their research presents a different view from those of Anne Brenon, Jean Duvernoy, and Malcolm Barber.

Abels and Harrison argue that the *perfectae* (those women who had received the *consolamentum* as an initiation), though theoretically they had equal status with their male counterparts, had a role very similar to that of Catholic women. The statistics presented from the inquisitional records demonstrate that "of the 719 heretical ministers named in MS. 609, 318, or slightly less than 45%, were women."⁶⁵ This percentage seems high, but the fact is that *perfectae* were not seen out in society and therefore were less active in administering the sacraments, which was really the role of *perfecti*. The statistics cannot be denied; however, what is not detailed here is what roles the *perfectae* played in their safe houses. Did they administer sacraments there?

Abels and Harrison note that though Cathar houses for women were led by an “abbess,” these houses were visited by male Cathar deacons who heard confessions (the *apparellamentum*) and led the rituals and prayers. This indicates that women were treated the same in Catharism as in Catholicism. What the statistics miss is that there was a psychological factor that drew women into Catharism because they had a voice within that church that did not exist for women in the Church of Rome. Anne Brenon, Jean Duvernoy, Malcolm Barber, and Walter Wakefield have all pointed to the importance of women within Catharism, and though *perfectae* were not able to hold positions in the church hierarchy, inside the Cathar houses they had an important role significant in educating and administering to those within their communities. Abels and Harrison provide some good statistical information for future research, but other scholars would argue with their conclusions.

In “Heretics and Physicians,” a brief article in *Speculum* (1982), Wakefield examines the idea that there were Cathar and Waldensian physicians in Languedoc. The author cites the inquisitional records in which witnesses talk about being treated by heretic physicians. In particular, he examines the records referred to as “MS. 609 and volumes XXI–XXVI of the Collection Doat of the Bibliothèque nationale, in Paris.”⁶⁶

Wakefield argues that several known Cathars served as physicians. Unfortunately, the actual names of only a few of them are referred to. Often Cathars were thought to be physicians because they were called to the bedside of a seriously ill believer to perform the *consolamentum*. Several physicians who were successful in treating those who were

ill are mentioned. One such physician carried his medical book with him. Also, according to Wakefield, several Cathar women served as nurses.

Clearly, more research needs to be done in this area in order to have a better understanding of this issue. Many historians believe that the Cathars hated the body because it was part of the material world. Wakefield does not subscribe to this belief. More research into those Cathars who were physicians or healers would help to dispel this misconception.

In a continued study of the relationship between inquisitors and the witnesses who appeared before the Inquisition, Wakefield's "Heretics and Inquisitors: The Case of Le Mas-Saintes-Puelles," in *The Catholic Historical Review* (1983), focuses on the village Le Mas-Saintes-Puelles. The purpose of the interrogation was to determine who knew or associated with heretics and to have the guilty witnesses abjure and be sentenced later. Over five thousand witnesses were questioned and four hundred and twenty of those came from the village Le Mas-Saintes-Puelles, thirty miles southeast of Toulouse in the Lauragais region.

The name of the ruling family, according to Wakefield, was Aribert, and there were five brothers who were knights. Their mother and a sister had been burned as heretics some years before these depositions were taken. Wakefield points to the deep roots of Catharism in Le Mas. "The witnesses of 1245–1246 gave the names of seventy-one persons who had become perfected heretics by receiving the heretical baptism in sickness or in health during the past sixty years."⁶⁷

Though the Albigensian Crusade did not disturb the village, a dozen witnesses recalled seeing heretics coming and going. Once the fighting was over, the heretics had more freedom to travel, according to the author, until the Inquisition began to close in on those who aided, had seen, or knew of any heretics.

Wakefield writes of a second generation of believers found in the village of Le Mas. "It is quite clear that among some of the villages heretical sympathies passed from parents to children and affected marriage alliances as well."⁶⁸ Families were connected through marriage by the fact that they were believers or that they gave protection to the heretics.

Through the study of the effects of the inquisition on one village, this article provides a small view of the effects Catharism had on both village and family life. Wakefield notes that this same village became involved with Protestantism three hundred years later, though he does not mention any connection between Catharism and the Huguenots.

In "Heretics and Inquisitors: The Case of Auriac and Cambiac," in *Journal of Medieval History* (1986), Wakefield examines the effects of the Inquisition on two small villages in Languedoc between 1243 and 1246. He points out that the answers to the inquisitors' questions reveal little about the Cathars: "The intent was to obtain evidence of guilty acts, not to discover the nature of the heresies, about which the inquisitors no doubt felt themselves to be fully informed."⁶⁹ The word "*heretic*" in the records refers to the *perfecti*, or the "garbed heretics," those who had been consoled.

Auriac-sur-Vendinelle is a village just east of Toulouse, and Cambiac is south of Auriac. "Nine out of every ten of the witnesses from Auriac and, in their first appearance, those who came from Cambiac insisted that they had no knowledge of heretics or Waldenses other than that they had seen them in the past when they lived openly in the land or more recently as captives."⁷⁰ Wakefield notes that in spite of the lack of details, it is evident that heresy had deep roots in this area. Several Cathar deacons passed through these towns, and there were gatherings of believers at the households that were sympathetic to the heretics.

Wakefield argues that after the murder of the inquisitors William Arnald and Stephen of Saint-Thibéry in May 1242 at Avignonet, near Toulouse, the atmosphere in the region changed perceptibly. Friar Ferrier intensified his pursuit of heretics as well as Count Raymond VII's excommunication. He required Raymond VII to prove that he would cooperate with the Church. "The evidence suggests that it was less implacable severity on the part of the judges than the perseverance of Ferrier, Bernard of Caux, and John of Saint-Pierre, which, together with the harsh cooperation of lay officials, extended into the countryside the success against heresy which had already been achieved by William Arnald and Stephen of Saint-Thibéry."⁷¹

Examples are given to provide a glimpse of some of the terror of those times with the fear of the Inquisition in the forefront of the minds of those who wanted to help the heretics but dared not do so. Others were willing to risk their lives or livelihood. These two towns represent a microcosm of what was occurring throughout Languedoc during the years of the Inquisition, and serve as examples of the effect of the interrogation on

people's lives.

In, "Inquisitor's Assistants: Witness to Confessions in Manuscript 609," in *Heresis* (1993), Wakefield examines those who witnessed the confessions made to the inquisitors during 1245–1246 in Toulouse. In order for procedures to be carried out by the inquisitors, a scribe and two witnesses had to be present. Wakefield outlines some of the line of questioning pursued: "All deponents, after taking an oath to tell the truth about themselves and others, were required to answer a series of questions designed to elicit whether they had ever seen heretics and if so, who else was present."⁷² The questions dealt with actions and not with beliefs.

Wakefield notes that when there was a group of "negative confessions," witnesses were needed to observe the guilty ones take the oath to "abjure heresy." Often the local parish priest would accompany his parishioners to the hearings and served as a witness. Sometimes the priest would give testimony against his parishioners. An example was, "The priest Martin of Asalles, who was not a witness to confessions made by others but made a sworn statement of his own incriminating most of the inhabitants of Auriac."⁷³

Wakefield provides a small view of the inquisitional proceedings that occurred during this two hundred and one days of questioning by Bernard of Caux and Jean de Saint-Pierre, and also describes the purpose and function of a witness.

A new approach to the Cathars is presented in *The Corruption of Angels: The Great Inquisition of 1245–1246* (2001) by Mark Pegg. He demonstrates some of the

beliefs of the local population as they are uncovered through the investigations of Bernart de Caux and Jean de Saint-Pierre⁷⁴ and presents witnesses' answers without analysis. The author carefully deconstructs the process of these two inquisitors and the recorded statements of over five thousand witnesses. Pegg does not deviate from the evidence of the register, nor does he draw conclusions from the accounts. He says, "This inquisition into heretical depravity in the Lauragais was, without a doubt, the single largest investigation, in the shortest possible time [201 days], in the entire Middle Ages."⁷⁵

Pegg's approach to this manuscript is new in that he relies on an epistemological aspect of the text that provides a different view of the relationship between the inquisitors and those witnesses who testified. He examines how the inquisitors' questions affected the responses given by the witnesses. Since Pegg marks a new generation of research into the Cathars, his work is very important to the historical dialogue and to future historians.

Pegg provides the testimony of a wide variety of people, including both nobles and peasants, to illustrate what the *bons homes* [sic] and *bonnes femmes* exemplified to the local populace and why some of the witnesses had become *crezens* [believers]. According to the register of confessions, there was no mention of the term "Cathar" or of a "Cathar Church." The *bons homes* and *bonnes femmes* exemplified the simplicity of the apostles: they lived what they preached.

Pegg is exacting in his use of language, and gives the reader a detailed view of the inquisitional process. "No relationship, action, or thought could ever be contingent or accidental."⁷⁶ The inquisitors had a very clear "spiritual mission," and they had "a deep, penitential impulse to punish justly."⁷⁷

As presented by Pegg, this view through the words of witnesses enables the reader to understand that no systematic belief system was expressed. There was no hierarchical church in place. Pegg focuses on the words of the deponents only, drawing no conclusions from his research. This leaves the reader wondering what the author's arguments are regarding these accounts. The author sees no connection between the *bons homes* and *bonnes femmes* and Christianity. This work stands in stark contrast to all past approaches to the Cathars and perhaps will create more discussion around this form of research.

In "Questions About Questions: Toulouse 609 and the Great Inquisition of 1245–46," in *Texts and the Repression of Medieval Heresy* (2003), Pegg deconstructs the manner in which Bernart de Caux and Joan [*sic*] de Sant-Peire [the author uses the Occitan spelling in this article] asked questions of the five thousand six hundred people they interviewed from the Lauragais [the region around Toulouse]. Ms. 609 is used along with some secondary sources that provide a variety of scholarly opinions. As Pegg points out, those who were interrogated were asked about their lives in such a way that their past, present, and future were brought into question. "The questions utilized at Saint-Sernin, in and of themselves, justified the deductive methods, the principles of analysis, the system of classification, by which Bernard de Caux and Joan de Sant-Peire formulated the past, present, and the future of heresy in the Lauragais."⁷⁸ These two Dominicans were adept at the process of finding the right questions to elicit answers. They produced a pamphlet, *formula interrogatorii*, that outlined their system of

questioning.

Pegg argues that those who were interrogated were changed by the process: this confessional model, he says, “profoundly transformed how the men and women of the Lauragais thought about themselves, each other, and heresy.”⁷⁹ But Pegg never makes clear how people’s lives were changed.

Bernard de Caux and Joan de Sant-Piere were very methodical in their process of ferreting out what a suspected heretic might have done. With Bernard Gui, the procedure changed. According to Pegg, Gui, who was in Toulouse in 1307–1324, was interested in what the heretic thought. Pegg does not delve into this change of venue, and so it is not clear what this new process of questioning revealed, or whether it helped the inquisitors in gathering information on the heretics.

GENERAL HISTORY OF HERESY, THE CHURCH, AND THE CATHARS

This section addresses some general issues of heresy and its roots in Europe in the eleventh century. The authors provide some different opinions as to the origins of heresy and the role of the Church in the rise of dissenting voices within Christianity. This section discusses the work of R. I. Moore, Malcolm Lambert, Walter L. Wakefield, Austin Evans, Mark Pegg, and Bernard Hamilton.

The question as to why heresy arose within Christianity is, as has been demonstrated, a contentious issue. R. I. Moore adds his voice to this discussion in *The Origins of European Dissent* (1977). Moore views the rise of heresy in the West from the

eleventh century on as a natural development for humanity. The Church was unable to adequately address the changes that had occurred in Western society over the centuries. "We are bound to ask whether the first popular rejection of the authority of the Western church did not imply some changes in the nature of the society which that church had done so much to form."⁸⁰

Moore emphasizes the differences between the heretical groups rather than their similarities; however, he does believe that anti-clericalism and questioning the Church's sacraments played a significant role in the rise of heresies. He discusses the origins of some of the Cathar beliefs as having their origins in Bogomil and Paulician movements from the East. He also argues that the weavers were important in the spread of Catharism. Trade between the East and West was crucial to the spread of heresies.

Ultimately, Moore believes that by the eleventh century the Church had become overly institutionalized and was not addressing the spiritual needs of its adherents. He points to the "heightened sense of evil in the eleventh century which produced a horror of worldly satisfaction and drove the individual to rely more on one's own knowledge of the good."⁸¹ By pointing to the differences within heretical movements, Moore's work provides a different insight into the causes of the rise of heresy in the West.

In *Medieval Heresy: Popular Movements from the Gregorian Reform to the Reformation*, (second edition, 1992), Malcolm Lambert approaches heresy by examining orthodoxy so that the reader can understand how and why groups deviated from the Church. Some of the issues the author raises in his arguments as to why heresies arose are

“the rise of papal power, the growth of canon law, the emergence of religious orders, and the development of the crusading ideal.”⁸² His particular focus is on the Cathars, the Waldensians, and the Lollards.⁸³

It is Lambert’s opinion that Catharism posed the greatest threat to the Church in the thirteenth century. He asserts that the early motives for heretics was that they sought salvation in a more personal way and that there was a general belief in the eleventh and twelfth centuries that the Church had corrupted the teachings of Jesus. Lambert supports his argument chiefly by reference to secondary sources; he also makes some use of polemic treatises, which, as he cautions the reader, may be biased.

The major question that Lambert poses is, “Why, having once challenged authority, were these heretics severally unable to maintain the independence of their beliefs?”⁸⁴ He answers his own question by demonstrating the power of the Church to respond to heretics, in particular to Catharism, by organizing the Albigensian Crusade and the Inquisition. Lambert also points to the reforms that the Church made – in particular the mendicant orders that began to preach like the Cathars, traveling from town to town and adopting an ascetic lifestyle. Of the three major heretical groups he examines, only the Waldensians survived into the Reformation: they were absorbed into Calvinism.

Though he states that “anti-clericalism was generally the stimulus for heresy, as well as being its protector,”⁸⁵ Lambert maintains that Languedoc was particularly receptive to heresy because of the independent landowners who were not under the direct rule of a king. Their independence from a king also led to the failure of a concerted effort

through secular and religious authorities to repress dissent. Lambert believes that the Crusade and the Inquisition succeeded in destroying Catharism because when the nobility began losing their titles and lands, they withdrew their support for the heretics.

By focusing on both the religious and sociological factors involved in the rise of heretical movements, Lambert gives the reader a broad context to understand the arguments presented. However, he misses the greater significance of his reference to anti-clericalism as the root of heresy by focusing on dissent as outside Christianity. In particular, he refers to the Cathars, being inspired by the Bogomils, as “the exotic intruder in the Western tradition.”⁸⁶

In the “Historical Sketch,” the introduction to *Heresies of the High Middle Ages*, Walter L. Wakefield and Austin Evans, examine the rise of heresies in the West, focusing mainly on the Cathars and the Waldensians. They approach the subject of heresy by questioning the origins of dualism in the West. They examine the possibility of this idea by giving a historical overview of dualism in Christian thought. Wakefield and Evans find that “Through Augustine and other Christian thinkers, Neo-Platonism profoundly influenced Christian philosophy over succeeding centuries and its influence may have paved the way for more radical dualistic concepts.”⁸⁷ They observe in this introduction that mitigated dualism was present in Languedoc until the Bogomils brought the doctrine of absolute dualism at the time of the Council of St. Félix in 1172, and yet moderate dualism still existed in Languedoc after that council. This is in contrast to Bernard Hamilton and Malcolm Lambert’s work that argues that after this Council, only absolute

dualism existed in the region.

Wakefield and Evans use both primary and secondary sources as evidence for their argument that religious dissent was an important factor in the rise of heresy as well as the later influence of the Bogomils. They describe the rise of the Paulicians and the Bogomils in the East, and state their opinion that “The nature of the relationship between the Paulicians and the Bogomils in the Balkans is not explained with precision.”⁸⁸

Wakefield and Evans address some of the problems posed by relying on polemical treatises for sources regarding Cathar beliefs and practices. For example, they believe that the act of the *melioramentum*, whereby a believer, upon meeting a perfect, would bow and ask for a blessing, was in fact an “engagement to seek baptism before the believer died,” not a form of adoration as described by the sources.⁸⁹ They also comment on the confusion of Cathar and Waldensian beliefs in some of the polemical texts.

The reader is given a broad sociological and religious context in order to begin to understand how and why heresies arose in the West. However, by focusing on the heresies themselves, Wakefield and Evans miss the opportunity to examine more closely their belief in the fact that Languedoc had an indigenous belief system.

In “Historiographical Essay: On Cathars, Albigenses and Good Men,” in *Journal of Medieval History*, (2001), Mark Pegg sketches the historiography on the Cathars over the last one hundred years. It is the argument of the author that the Cathars, or “good men” as he calls them, have been viewed with an intellectual bias and therefore are not seen for who they truly were. Intellectual theories about heretics generalize and

homogenize religious beliefs over time and space. “The intellectualist bias takes it for granted that worlds are made from theories, that cultures are hammered together for discourses, and that the elaboration of a philosophy is all the explanation a scholar need ever give.”⁹⁰

The approach Pegg uses in this article is to carefully outline the views of historians and their work on heretics, the Cathars in particular. He asserts that only by studying the individual testimonies of the inquisitional records of those who lived at that time can the historian begin to understand the interweaving of thoughts and actions among the local populace.

Because Pegg focuses on what he perceives to be the misconceptions of historians regarding the “good men,” he gives little evidence that religious dissent in Languedoc may have been more localized and not homogeneous as most scholars seem to believe. Pegg suggests that the stories that unfold within the inquisitional register need to be viewed individually, not as a part of Bogomil ideas reorganized into a Western interpretation. He points out that there is no mention of Bogomils in these registers. The reader is not given the benefit of the author’s conclusions regarding his research on the “good men.”

Bernard Hamilton’s book, *Religion in the Medieval West*, Second Edition (2003), is an overview of the history of the medieval Church for the general reader. He does not present arguments, but sketches how the Church was organized and what the Christian faith encompassed from 500 to 1500. “The Church bore witness to the Incarnation of God

the Word in Jesus of Nazareth;”⁹¹ it was the duty of the followers of Jesus to spread the faith. The Church was successful in this quest, because it ruled Europe in the Middle Ages. “The Church sought to train its members to lead the life of perfection and to live in harmony with God.”⁹² The hierarchy of the Church claimed to have received its right to teach Christianity as a part of the apostolic succession.

Hamilton points out that the Church had to “formulate a logically coherent doctrine of evil,”⁹³ because the Cathars confronted the question of evil in a way that was easily accepted by the people of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. The Cathars were popular because their answer to the problem of evil was: “God is very good. In this world nothing is good. It therefore follows that God did not make anything which is in this world.”⁹⁴ Catholic and Cathar theologians debated the idea of evil, and these debates helped the Church to clarify its own stance on the subject.

In this overview, Hamilton discusses some aspects of the Eastern Orthodox Church and why it split with the Western Church in 1054. He points to general disputes about beliefs and practices, but ultimately he believes the problem came down to papal authority over the Eastern Church.

MARY MAGDALENE AND THE CATHARS

This section is a very brief introduction into some of the research about Mary Magdalene and the Cathars of Languedoc. Mary Magdalene is not referred to in any of the Bogomil or Paulician beliefs. There are two references to her being a part of a Cathar belief in primary sources, but there has been little research into what these references

might mean. I refer to these primary sources and Mary Magdalene in Chapter Four. These references are critical because they demonstrate a belief that was unique to the Cathars of Languedoc and point to a pre-existing belief system in place before the Cathars became an organized group. Walter Wakefield and Bernard Hamilton raise the question of a pre-existing belief system in Languedoc without reference to Mary Magdalene. Yuri Stoyanov is the one scholar who has incorporated the references to Mary Magdalene and the Cathars into his research. His two books, *The Other God* (2000), and *The Hidden Tradition in Europe* (1994), refer to the Cathar belief, which was part of their esoteric teachings, that Jesus and Mary were husband and wife. As the author indicates, more research needs to be done in this area of Cathar cosmology. Stoyanov mentions the importance of Mary Magdalene in the Gnostic texts, where she is portrayed as a visionary and the disciple who was closest to Jesus.

The contribution of independent scholars to the research on Mary Magdalene and her relationship to Jesus has been important to further our understanding of the Cathars and their beliefs. Since the publication in 1982 of *Holy Blood, Holy Grail* (mentioned in the introduction), interest in this subject has increased and important questions have been raised that need to be addressed. The central questions are: Were Jesus and Mary Magdalene married? Why do they surface in Cathar cosmology? What is their connection to early Christianity? Laurence Gardner has published several volumes on the Knights Templar that include research into Jesus and Mary Magdalene and the Cathars. In *The Magdalene Legacy* (2005), he writes of Mary Magdalene's history and legends in the south of France. The author raises some serious questions about the lack of academic

contributions to this area of Cathar history. He includes an interesting quotation from Père Dondaine, a Dominican priest and one of the leading Cathar historians of the 1930's and 40's. Gardner writes, "In discussing the Middle Ages historical records of the sect of the Cathars in southern France, Dondaine related that they believed 'Mary Magdalene was in reality the wife of Christ.'"⁹⁵ This suggests that we need to view the Cathars in a wider perspective, as practitioners of a form of early Christianity, in order to comprehend their contribution to Christian mysticism that still informs Christianity today.

Another independent scholar is the Catholic theologian, Margaret Starbird, who originally wanted to refute the findings of *Holy Blood, Holy Grail*, and instead, found confirmation through biblical study of the fact that Jesus and Mary Magdalene were married. She has written several books on this subject, including *The Woman With the Alabaster Jar* (1993), and *Mary Magdalene: Bride in Exile* (2005), and has made a significant contribution to this particular field of study with the hopes of restoring Mary Magdalene to her proper place in history. She uses her knowledge of Greek and the scriptures to reveal a portrait of Jesus and Mary Magdalene that is inclusive and informative. She also uses *gematria* to demonstrate the special relationship these two historical figures shared in the New Testament scriptures, and the important place they held within the Cathars' belief system.

Lynn Picknett and co-author Clive Prince have written several books on the Knights Templar, the Cathars, and the history of Languedoc. Picknett also wrote *Mary Magdalene: Christianity's Hidden Goddess* (2003) which explores the history of Magdalene's possible origins, the fact that she was referred to as the "apostle of

apostles,” and the belief that she may have influenced Jesus and his followers through her knowledge of mystery traditions from other cultures. The author uses the Gnostic texts to support the connections between the early Christians and the Cathars, and this research widens the possibilities of connections between these two groups. The contributions of independent historians in this field of inquiry cannot be ignored, because their research and the questions they raise deepen our understanding.

Jane Schaberg’s *The Resurrection of Mary Magdalene: The Search for Legitimate Authority* (2004) and Susan Haskins’ *Mary Magdalene: Myth and Metaphor* (1993) both offer a wealth of current research into this important historical and biblical figure. They distinguish some of the myths and legends surrounding Mary Magdalene from the known facts, and find evidence in the New Testament and Gnostic texts to emphasize her importance in the apostolic tradition. Schaberg and Haskins include in their research the use of the Song of Songs by several early Christian founders, and references there to Mary Magdalene as the “bride” in this important text. They also discuss the fact that Bernard of Clairvaux renewed the practice of ascent through the Song of Songs. Neither of these scholars mentions the Cathars, though they both discuss Mary’s appearance in the legends that have her arriving in Provence.

ASCENSION WITHIN THE CHRISTIAN TRADITION

It is my argument in this dissertation that the Cathars used the ascent practice, as demonstrated by two of their ritual texts, and that this connects them to early Christianity. This is new territory in the field of Cathar research. Because this premise goes beyond the

work of the five scholars, it is important to mention some of the texts used to support this theory.

I. P. Couliano's *Out of This World: Other Worldly Journeys from Gilgamesh to Albert Einstein* (1991), is a comprehensive study of the history of ascension and its effects on Western civilization. Using examples from the time of Gilgamesh to the present, Couliano effectively demonstrates that this process was and is important to religious and mystical traditions as a way for groups or individuals to maintain a connection to God or the heavenly realms. In *Psychoanodia I: A Survey of Evidence Concerning the Ascension of the Soul and Its Relevance* (1983), he offers a critical examination of the documentation of ascension and outlines some of the psychological and physical effects of this process. Couliano's work is critical to the study of ascension. John Collins and Michael Fishbane published *Death, Ecstasy, and Other Worldly Journeys* (1995), a compendium of essays on ascension, that is dedicated to the memory of I. P. Couliano.

Several scholars have documented the ascent process within Judaism and early Christianity. Alan F. Segal's work, "Heavenly Ascent in Hellenistic Judaism, Early Christianity and their Environment" (1980), and *Life After Death: A History of the Afterlife in Western Religion* (2004), both provide comprehensive historical reviews of ascension in Judaism and early Christianity. Segal uses the *Ascension of Isaiah* as an example of this process. Morton Smith, in *Clement of Alexandria and a Secret Gospel of Mark* (1973), demonstrates that Jesus taught ascension and that this was one of the core tenets of his teachings. Smith uses as evidence Mark's secret gospel, which he discovered

in a monastery in Israel. His discovery created renewed interest in the ascension practice. Smith's article, "Ascent to the Heavens and Beginnings of Christianity," (1981), uses the *Ascension of Isaiah* to demonstrate that this text influenced the early Christian community and spread into the Gnostic groups in third-century Alexandria. Moshe Idel's *Ascension on High in Jewish Mysticism: Pillars, Lines, Ladders* (2005), outlines the history of ascension in the Judaic tradition, demonstrating the various pathways this process followed. His study includes an examination of some of the Hellenistic influences that were incorporated into mystical ascent in Judaism. Martha Himmelfarb's *Ascent to Heaven in Jewish and Christian Apocalypses* (1993), cites eight Jewish and Christian apocalypses in her outline of the changes that occurred from the Jewish to the Christian tradition as early Christianity used ascension as a part of its practices. Himmelfarb uses the *Ascension of Isaiah* as an example of how Christianity transformed some Jewish ascent literature to address its own tradition that incorporated Jesus. She stresses that an individual who ascends to have a vision of God is transformed and returns to the community with important messages. Joseph Schultz's article, "The Four Who Entered Pardes: A Contemporary Interpretation" (2003), demonstrates this psychological transformation. He uses the four who entered *pardes* as the framework to exemplify a more contemporary, psychological process that the ascent process demands of the visionary during this experience. There is much contemporary documentation comparing this process of transcendence to near-death and out-of-body experiences.

The above literature has been part of the center of my argument that the Cathars used the ascent process, which was integral to early Christianity. This supports the

evidence that they practiced an early form of Christianity that the medieval Church deemed heretical. Ascension is well documented in the Judaic and Christian traditions, and has informed the mystical beliefs of both. The Cathars, as Christians who continued this practice, benefited from the ascension literature of the Bogomils and used *The Vision of Isaiah* as the centerpiece of their visionary journeys. The Bogomils also used *2 Enoch*, which exists in Slavonic translation, but there is no evidence that this text ever came to the Cathars of Languedoc. The Enochic literature is important to ascension (because *I Enoch* dates from 300 BCE), but the examination of this text is beyond the scope of this present work. It is important to note that it was used by the Bogomils, and more research needs to be done in this area to examine their use of ascension practices.

CONCLUSION

This literature review has examined the work of contemporary historians on several issues regarding the Cathars and Languedoc. The work of five of these historians was chosen to provide the framework for this dissertation. They are Bernard Hamilton, Professor Emeritus of Crusading History at the University of Nottingham, U.K.; Malcolm Lambert, retired Reader in Medieval History at the University of Bristol, U.K.; Malcolm Barber, Professor of History at the University of Reading, U. K.; Walter L. Wakefield, Professor of History at State University College in Potsdam, N.Y., U.S.; and Mark Gregory Pegg, Associate Professor of History at Washington University in St. Louis, Mo., U. S. They represent several approaches within the historical perspective, such as religious studies, political history, and cultural history. Four of them view the Cathars as

heretics; Pegg provides a new approach to Cathar research through epistemology.

These five historians represent trends in contemporary Cathar scholarship in the English-speaking world. Their importance in the history of the Cathars is critical, because their beliefs demonstrate how the Cathars are viewed from the perspective of the English-speaking world. Three of these scholars have published within the last six years: Pegg, Lambert, and Barber. Wakefield, Hamilton, Barber, and Lambert agree that the Cathars were heretics and that the Church was justified in extirpating them. Pegg has emerged with a view new to Cathar research, which incorporates an epistemological approach through the use of inquisitional records; yet he limits himself by not incorporating the “good men” and “good women” into the continuum of Christian history. Further, he believes that there is a “historical bias” among Cathar historians that creates a false image of who they were. Because he removes the Cathars from Christianity and the continuum of history, his research becomes too narrow to serve as the basis for formulating an idea as to who the “good men” and “good women” were that the Church chose to focus the Inquisition upon.

Though they acknowledge that the Cathars revolted against the over-bureaucratization of the Church of Rome and the abuses it spawned, Hamilton, Wakefield, Barber, and Lambert do not examine the Cathars in detail or their beliefs and practices and their connection to early Christianity. Although these historians are aware of the particular environment of Languedoc that contributed to the rise of Catharism, they do not expand on the social, cultural, and intellectual currents that influenced the Cathars. There is no discussion of the mentions of Mary Magdalene in the Cathar rituals or their

cosmology, even though this is documented in the inquisitional registers. There is a general support and justification for the Crusade and Inquisition because they accept the view that the Cathars were heretics. Again, Mark Pegg's work moves in a new direction.

Because of the great complexity of research into the Cathars and the many aspects of their experience, a more refined focus is needed in order to understand why the Cathars are viewed as "The Great Heresy." It is my contribution to go beyond this view by using the work of these five scholars as a framework and then presenting a new perspective on the Cathars from a phenomenological approach within the context of religious studies.

It is important to view the Cathars in the context of religious studies in order to observe who they were through their rituals and beliefs. Of the five scholars, Bernard Hamilton used religion as a means to examine who the Cathars were, but by focusing on a comparison to medieval Christianity, he misses their connection to early Christianity. His work, centered on the Cathar connection to the Bogomils, is important and has yielded much new historical information, but he still views both groups as heretical. Walter Wakefield examines some of the important social aspects of the Cathars in the context of Languedoc, but he does not go into greater depth in order to bring to light any connections between the troubadours, the Kabbalists, and Christian mysticism. Malcolm Lambert and Malcolm Barber approach the Cathars through social and political history, yet their view of them as heretics limits the research. Mark Pegg attempts to view the *bons homes* and *bonnes femmes* of Languedoc on their own terms, but does not make any connections to their practices and beliefs and Christianity.

By not viewing the Cathars as “heretics,” and by examining more fully their vertical connection to Gnosticism and early Christianity and their horizontal connection to the wider influences of the medieval world of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries particularly in southern France, I hope to offer a more comprehensive and empathetic framework for understanding this much maligned religious community.

Endnotes

¹ The word *pop* is an Eastern Orthodox reference to “father.”

² Bernard Hamilton, *The Albigensian Crusade* (London: The Historical Association G85, 1974), 30.

³ Walter Wakefield, *Heresy, Crusade, and Inquisition in Southern France, 1100–1250* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1974), 30.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 70.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 190.

⁶ Jean Duvernoy, *Le catharisme: l’histoire des cathars*, vol. II (Toulouse: Privat, 1979), 7.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 279.

⁸ Jonathan Sumption, *The Albigensian Crusade* (London: Faber and Faber, 1979), 16.

⁹ Hamilton, *The Medieval Inquisition* (New York: Holmes & Meir Publishers, Inc., 1981), 44.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 72.

¹¹ *Castra* is a reference to a castle with a town around or a village or town within the castle walls. It is a regional distinction in Languedoc.

¹² Malcolm Lambert, *The Cathars* (Malden, Ma.: Blackwell Publishers Ltd., 1998), 75.

¹³ Malcolm Barber, *The Cathars: Dualist Heretics in Languedoc in the High Middle Ages* (Essex: Pearson Education Limited, 2000), 96.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 99.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 2.

¹⁶ Hamilton, “The Origins of the Dualist Church of Drugunthia,” *Eastern Churches Review* 6 (1974): 116.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 115 n. 2.

¹⁸ Hamilton, “Cathar Council of Saint-Félix Reconsidered,” *Archivum Fratrum Praedicatorum* 48 (1978): 47.

¹⁹ Heinrich Fichtenau, *Heretics and Scholars in the Middle Ages, 1000–1200*, trans. Denise A. Kaiser (University Park, Pa.: The Pennsylvania State U P, 1992), 160.

²⁰ Roelof van den Broek, “The Cathars: Medieval Gnostics?,” *Gnosis and Hermeticism: From*

Antiquity to Modern Times (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998), 88.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 98.

²² *Ibid.*, 99.

²³ Guy Lubrichon, "The Chiaroscuro of Heresy: Early Eleventh-Century Aquitaine as Seen from Auxerre," in *Peace of God: Social Violence and Religious Response in France Around the Year 1000*, eds. Thomas Head and Richard Landes (Ithaca: Cornell U P, 1992).

²⁴ Michael Frassetto, *The Sermons of Adémar of Chabannes and the Origins of Medieval Heresy*, dissertation submitted to University of Delaware (Ann Arbor, Mi.: UMI, 1993), 79.

²⁵ Claire Taylor, "Letter of Héribert of Périgord as a Source for Dualist Heresy in the Society of Eleventh Century Aquitaine," *Journal of Medieval History* 26 (2000), 313.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 347.

²⁷ Bernard and Janet Hamilton, eds., *Christian Dualist Heresies in the Byzantine World c. 650–c. 1450*, trans. of Old Slavonic texts by Yuri Stoyanov (Manchester & New York: St. Martin's Press), 29.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 29.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 3.

³⁰ Hamilton, "The Cathars and the Seven Churches of Asia," *Crusaders, Cathars, and the Holy Places*, Variorum Collected Studies Series: CS 656 (Brookfield, Vt.: Ashgate Publishing Co., 1999), 270.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 281.

³² *Ibid.*, 283.

³³ *Ibid.*, 295.

³⁴ Walter Wakefield, "Friar Ferrier, Inquisition at Caunes, and Escapes from Prison at Carcassonne," *The Catholic Historical Review* 58 (1972): 221.

³⁵ Wakefield, "Some Unpopular Ideas of the Thirteenth Century," *Medievalia et humanistica* 4 (1973): 26.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 28.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 30.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 131.

³⁹ Jean Duvernoy, *Le catharisme: la religion des cathares*, vol. I (Toulouse: Privat, 1976), 42. "Dualism is thus not a point of departure but the culmination of reasoning, a residue of scriptural analysis."

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 97.

⁴¹ Anne Brenon, "L'Eglise de l'Esprit Saint (Etude sur la Notion d'Esprit dans la Théologie Cathare)," *Heresis* 17 (1991), 29.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 31. "This was therefore expressed with the most clear legitimate scriptural authority that the Cathar "Good Men" were able to assert in front of the Christian people that they were the true Church of Christ, they were the ones who had the power to pardon sins and save souls." This was in reference to the use of laying on of hands. Also see *Le Vrai Visage du Catharisme* (Portet-Sur-Garonne: Editions Loubatières, 1989), 63.

⁴³ Wakefield, "Burial of Heretics in the Middle Ages," *Heresis* 5 (1985): 30.

⁴⁴ Wakefield, "Friar Ferrier, Inquisitor," *Heresis* 7 (1986): 33.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 37.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 38.

⁴⁷ Wakefield, "Notes on Some Antiheteretical Writings of the Thirteenth Century," *Journal of Medieval History* 12 (1986): 287.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 318.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 320.

⁵⁰ James B. Given, *Inquisition and Medieval Society: Power, Discipline, and Resistance in Languedoc* (Ithaca: Cornell U P, 2001), 3.

⁵¹ Barber, "Catharism and the Occitan Nobility: The Lordships of Cabaret, Minerve and Termes," *Crusaders and Heretics in the Twelfth-Fourteenth Centuries*, Variorum Collected Studies Series CS 498 (Brookfield, Vt.: Ashgate Publishing Co., 1995), 3.

⁵² Ibid., 8.

⁵³ Ibid., 19.

⁵⁴ Barber, "Women and Catharism," *Crusaders and Heretics in the Twelfth-Fourteenth Centuries*, Variorum Studies Series CS 498 (Brookfield, Vt.: Ashgate Publishing Co., 1009), 52.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 55.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 55.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 57.

⁵⁸ Hamilton, "The State of Research: The Legacy of Charles Schmidt to the Study of Christian Dualism," *Journal of Medieval History* 24 (1998): 195.

⁵⁹ The Mendicant orders originated in the twelfth century and embraced poverty, renunciation of worldly goods, and a willingness to beg or work for food. The Dominicans (founded by St. Dominic 1170-1221) and the Franciscans (founded by St. Francis (1181-1226) were at the forefront of a change within the Church as a response to the corruption and materialism that predominated in the society of that time.

⁶⁰ Hamilton, "The Cathars and Christian Perfection," *The Medieval Church: Universities, Heresy, and the Religious Life: Essays in Honor of Gordon Leff*, ed. Peter Biller and Barrie Dobson, The Ecclesiastical History Society (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1999), 15.

⁶¹ Ibid., 14.

⁶² Ibid., 18.

⁶³ Wakefield, "Family of Niort in the Albigensian Crusade and Before the Inquisition," *Names* 18:4 (1970): 299.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 303.

⁶⁵ Richard Abels and Ellen Harrison, "The Participation of Women in Languedocian Catharism," *Medieval Studies* 4 (1979), 225.

⁶⁶ Wakefield, "Heretics as Physicians in the Thirteenth Century," *Speculum* 572 (1982): 328, n. 3.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 212.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 218.

⁶⁹ Wakefield, "Heretics and Inquisitors: The Case of Auriac and Cambaic," *Journal of Medieval History* 12 (1986): 225.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 226.

⁷¹ Ibid., 234.

⁷² Wakefield, "Inquisitor's Assistants: Witness to Confessions in Manuscript 609," *Heresis* 20 (1993): 59.

⁷³ Ibid., 61.

⁷⁴ Note that Pegg uses the Provençal spelling of these names as well as *bons homes* or *bons omes* rather than *bons hommes*.

⁷⁵ Mark Pegg, *The Corruption of Angels: The Great Inquisition of 1245–1246* (Princeton: Princeton U P, 2001), 3.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 51.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 51.

⁷⁸ Pegg, "Questions About Questions: Toulouse 609 and the Great Inquisition of 1245–46," *Texts and Repression of Medieval Heresy*, ed., Caterina Bruschi and Peter Biller, York Studies in Medieval Theology IV (Woodbridge, U.K.: York Medieval Press, Rochester, N.Y.: Boydell & Brewer, 2003), 112.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 111.

⁸⁰ R. I. Moore, *The Origins of European Dissent* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1977), 20.

⁸¹ Ibid., 164.

⁸² Malcolm Lambert, *Medieval Heresy: Popular Movements from the Gregorian Reform to the Reformation*, reprint of 1972 edition (New York: Barnes & Noble Books, 1992), 5.

⁸³ The Lollards were in England in the fourteenth century and were followers of John Wyclif (d. 1384), who believed in individual interpretation of scripture. The term was also used in German-speaking lands to describe "men leading a religious life without rules or vows." Lambert, *Medieval Heresies*, 398–399.

⁸⁴ Lambert, *Medieval Heresy*, 6.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 86.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 391.

⁸⁷ Walter Wakefield and Austin Evans., eds. and trans., *Heresies of the High Middle Ages* (New York: Columbia U P, 1991), 10.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 18.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 46.

⁹⁰ Pegg, "Historiographical Essay: On Cathars, Albigenses and Good Men of Languedoc," *Journal of Medieval History* XXVII (2001): 183.

⁹¹ Hamilton, *Religion in the Medieval West*, second edition [I deleted a comma here] (London: Hodder Arnold, 2003), 22.

⁹² Ibid., 22.

⁹³ Ibid., 121.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 120.

⁹⁵ Laurence Gardner, *The Magdalene Legacy: The Jesus and Mary Bloodline* (London: Element, 2005), 110. Also see the reference itself on p. 317, n. 19.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

The methodology in this PDE includes two approaches: one to present the arguments of the five scholars and demonstrate how my thesis goes beyond their research, and the second is to outline an argument based on the phenomenological approach. Having reviewed the work of the five scholars whose arguments form the framework for this study of the Cathars, the individual focus of each author will be reviewed below, because their arguments create the foundation for this dissertation. The precedent for using the arguments of scholars as a method in a dissertation is to be found in the work by Hugo Mantel, *Studies in the History of the Sanhedrin*.¹ Mantel used the arguments of scholars who had contributed to the research into the history of the sanhedrin and then demonstrated how his thesis went beyond their work.

It is not within the scope of this work to compare the arguments of all those who have written about the Cathars. The focus of this work is to use the research of Bernard Hamilton, Malcolm Lambert, Malcolm Barber, Walter Wakefield and Mark Pegg as a foundation for the background of the Cathars and demonstrate how my thesis goes beyond their work and adds to the body of knowledge we currently have on the Cathars. These scholars were chosen because they are contemporary and they have dominated the field of Cathar research over the last thirty-five years in the English speaking world. They also represent a variety of approaches to the Cathars as reviewed in the last chapter. This is a brief recapitulation of these scholars' arguments, to give the reader a better understanding of how the phenomenological approach I use will go beyond the work of these scholars.

Bernard Hamilton has done the most research into the Eastern origins of the Cathars through the Bogomils. The impression given to the reader from this view is that the Bogomils, in effect, created the Cathars. Although there are many similarities between these two groups, and the Bogomils did influence the dissent movement in Languedoc as was made clear by the Council of St. Félix, Hamilton presents little information to demonstrate that there was an indigenous belief system in place in Languedoc that the Bogomils strengthened. Hamilton alludes to the possibility of a “Western indigenous heresy” in his article, “The Origins of the Dualist Church of Drugunthia,” but this idea is relegated to a footnote and not mentioned again. Though Hamilton has contributed much to our knowledge of the Bogomils, his focus on the Bogomils as the root of the Cathar heresy leads to a conception of the Cathars as an “Eastern problem” that the Church of Rome had to stop. He acknowledges in his book, *The Albigensian Crusade*, that Innocent III was well aware of the problem of the Bogomil heresy in the East and that the Bogomils were very active in Languedoc. The Pope could do nothing about the heretics in the East, but he could and did extirpate them in the West.

Oddly enough, Hamilton does not seem to understand the effect that the Crusade and the Inquisition had on the region of Languedoc and the Cathars. He believes that the “end of Catharism is an enigma,” and yet we have evidence from the inquisitional records that demonstrate the effects of the Inquisition on the local population. The Albigensian Crusade was also systematic in taking control of conquered towns and villages and stripping the local nobility of their inheritance and titles. By focusing on outside events, Hamilton has overlooked that Languedoc had a very independent culture that Catharism

was intricately woven was into the fabric of family life.

The Cathars were Christians, and they viewed themselves as such. Hamilton recognizes this to some degree, but he becomes lost in the labeling of the Cathars of Languedoc as absolute dualists. He uses this argument as a reason for the Church to enact a crusade against these heretics. He writes:

Moderate dualism might properly be regarded as a Christian heresy, but absolute dualism, which denied the first article of the Christian Creed, the belief in God as 'Maker of all things visible and invisible,' was effectively a new religion, even though its adherents sincerely claimed to represent the true Christian tradition.²

This claim gives no indication of what "new religion" Hamilton might be referring to. He focuses on the idea that the Cathars were absolute dualists, but more research into the origins of Christian dualism and its development during the eleventh and twelfth centuries is needed. Hamilton's research centers on religion, but one cannot ignore the uniqueness of the culture that allowed the rise of alternative beliefs that culminated in the Cathars.

Malcolm Lambert's work has centered on heretical movements in Europe with a particular focus on the Cathars, who were perhaps the largest heretical group in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. His approach to understanding heresy is to examine orthodoxy, which illustrates the historical trends toward dissent. It was through the inability of the Church to make ecclesiastical changes that dissent arose. Lambert's book on the Cathars is comprehensive in that it includes the Italian Cathars as well. He recognizes the importance of the culture of Languedoc that helped to support and foster the Cathars and the role of women and the family in spreading their beliefs. According to Lambert, Catharism was an absolute dualist religion that distorted the Christian tradition.

However, he realizes the importance of the ascetic lifestyle of the *perfecti* and the ethical appeal of many of the Cathar beliefs, which stood in sharp contrast to the luxurious lifestyle of the bishops in Languedoc.

Lambert views the Cathars as a “protest movement rejecting the Western Church.” The reader becomes lost in the absolute dualist argument that makes the Cathars another religion. Ultimately, according to Lambert, the Church was able to create a counteroffensive message through its mendicant orders that led people to believe that the true way was through the Church. This idea takes the focus away from the effectiveness of the crusade and the Inquisition. At the same time, the author emphasizes the authority the Church had to extirpate the heretics.

Barber argues that the Cathars were well organized and had a well-developed theology and therefore posed a threat to the Church. His more political view makes it more difficult to understand who the Cathars were. He recognizes the importance of the independent society in Languedoc and the family network that was instrumental in spreading Cathar beliefs, but for Barber, the Church still held a strong presence in the south.

Barber also argues that *The Book of Two Principles*, a treatise written in the 1240's by an Italian Cathar that supports absolute dualism, is evidence that the Cathars of Languedoc held absolute dualist beliefs. The focus on this text, which other scholars have used, is odd because the treatise was written at a time when the Cathars of Languedoc were being extirpated, the crusade was over, and the Inquisition was underway. No copies of this text have ever been found in the region. The text that was found in

Carcassonne and in possession of the inquisitors was *The Secret Supper*, also known as *Interrogatio Johannis*, brought to the West by the Bogomils early on. This text supports mitigated dualism that was obviously present in Languedoc but most scholars believe that absolute dualism was the systematic belief in the region.

Barber argues that the Albigensian Crusade and the Inquisition were instrumental in ending Catharism. According to the author, the brief revival of Catharism in the early fourteenth century demonstrates that the tactics of the Inquisition had been successful and that the people no longer were drawn to Catharism.

Walter Wakefield argues that the Cathars were firmly embedded within the social fabric of Languedoc. His research into Ms. 609 and other inquisitional records, following families' fates during the Crusade and the Inquisition, has supported this view. He recognizes that the Cathars were dualists and heretics. However, he assumes that there must have been an indigenous belief system in place for Catharism to have been accepted by all strata of society in that region. Wakefield, in his description of Languedoc culture, also points to the Jewish presence there and the kabbalistic practices that were flourishing at the same time as the Cathars. He wonders whether there could have been a connection between the two groups, but does not explore this possibility further.

Wakefield believes that the Crusade and the Inquisition were considered necessary evils not only by the Church, to bring an end to heresy, but also by the French crown, which was able to incorporate the south under its territorial authority. Hamilton, Barber, and Lambert agree on this point.

Mark Pegg's argument centers on the idea that what we know of any heresy in the

region of Toulouse is illustrated in Ms. 609. There is no reference to “Cathars,” only *bons homes* (sic), *bonnes femmes*, and Good Christians. According to Pegg, there was no systematic belief system in place, there is no mention of the Bogomils in the inquisitorial records and therefore we must accept the confessions as evidence, without subjecting them to interpretation. Pegg believes that intellectual bias by scholars has interfered with our understanding of the Cathars. Though he does not speculate about the heresy that was identified in the region of Toulouse, he does believe that many of the confessions of witnesses demonstrate that the beliefs in the area were malleable and changed from place to place, and that they were not greatly different from orthodoxy. He mentions a “cultural determinism” but does not discuss what this might mean. Pegg’s reliance on an epistemological approach to the inquisitorial records marks a new direction for Cathar research and one that, it is hoped will provide new insights into who this group was.

Pegg also argues that the inquisitors’ questions made the witnesses self-conscious about who they were and what their place was in their world. Did the inquisitors also know more about the heresy being described by the witnesses than they allowed to be inscribed in their registers? The research into these records indicates that the inquisitors never bothered to ask about the “Cathar” beliefs and rituals, because they were more interested in who the witnesses associated with, whether they were heretics, and so on. It would add another dimension to Cathar research to have more of Pegg’s ideas on what the heresy was about and what the inquisitors knew of their beliefs. Were they perhaps too similar to orthodox Christianity?

Having reviewed the arguments of the five scholars’, we must now discuss what my research is intended to add to what is already known about the Cathars. To that end, I

will draw on the insights and methods of phenomenologists of religion to highlight the evidence that will help to illustrate how we can view the Cathars in a new light. Why this particular method? It allows for a larger, more objective perspective for viewing the belief system of the Cathars, because the observer does not get caught in the debate itself when viewing the issues from the inside. By using the ritual texts of *The Vision of Isaiah* and the *consolamentum* as a means of examining the beliefs of the Cathars from within their community, phenomenology enables me to draw from a variety of disciplines to point out what historians have overlooked.

By this method, the researcher is the participant observer, with empathy for the religious tradition or culture being studied or looked at from the inside. The scholar must bring an entire toolkit of approaches for evaluating a phenomenon. The toolkit includes the use of history, sociology, theology, psychology of religion, philosophy, and anthropology, all are synthesized in the treatment of the culture or religious tradition being observed. There is a fine line in the phenomenological approach that the researcher must walk. Too much participation and the researcher becomes a native or a convert. Too much observation, and the researcher remains an outsider, who therefore cannot understand the culture from within. Two of the leaders in this approach to studying religious traditions are Mircea Eliade and Rudolph Otto who will be discussed below.

For example, in viewing the rise of the Church of Rome and the various Christian groups who did not accept their doctrines, one is outside the polarities of orthodoxy versus heterodoxy and in the process of presenting the various religious phenomena as viewed within the groups the researcher is studying. "More than any other approach within the modern study of religion, phenomenology of religion has insisted that

investigators approach religious data as phenomena that are fundamentally and irreducibly religious.”³

Having a wider lens, one can draw on other disciplines to help complete the picture: disciplines such as history, sociology, and psychology. By this approach the researcher does not become fused with the point of view: there is a distance to allow for careful observation. This does not presume that the researcher is unbiased. However, there is a greater opportunity for more points of view to enter into the discussion thereby opening up the debate for the reader to better understand the scope of the issue.

The modern study of religion began as a result of the Enlightenment and its emphasis on a more rational and scientific approach. Objectivity was of primary importance as a method of moving away from pure theology. As the *Encyclopedia of Religion* states:

F. Max Muller (1823–1900) was the first scholar to emerge within *Religionwissenschaft* (History of Religions) who intended the discipline to be a descriptive, objective science that was free from the normative nature of theological and philosophical studies of religion.⁴

Religionwissenschaft developed first within the German scholarly tradition, as, Mircea Eliade points out:

Since *Religionwissenschaft* is not easily translatable into English, we are obliged to use ‘history of religions’ in the broadest sense of the term, including not only history properly speaking but also the comparative study of religions and religious morphology and phenomenology.”⁵

Mircea Eliade (1907–1986) emerged as the leading proponent in the twentieth century of both the discipline of religious studies and the method of the phenomenological approach to the sacred. He edited the multi-volume *Encyclopedia of*

Religion and, wrote many books on the history of religions. His volume, *The Quest*, outlines in detail the phenomenological approach to religion. We are greatly indebted to him for his research and written material on the various religions of the world and their roots in earlier cultures. For example, he wrote the book *Yoga, Immortality and Freedom* after immersing himself in the Hindu religious tradition and the Indian culture for many years. His research has brought a new perspective and understanding to Hinduism. I have used his *Encyclopedia* and *The Quest* for my own research into this methodology.

Religious experience is not something that can be reduced to rational terminology as a way of unraveling the sacred. Rather, it should be viewed within the context of its own cultural and historical time. This again refers to using other disciplines and synthesizing the information into a coherent picture of the sacred within a religious tradition. This approach is exemplified by Rudolph Otto's (1869–1937) use of the word "numinous" in his, *The Idea of the Holy*, which describes a deeply felt religious experience. It is a feeling or a quality that emerges from within the individual or group; it cannot be examined outside of its own context, or it will not be understood. These experiences of the transcendent realms must not be measured or judged; rather, each must be viewed within its own matrix. As was mentioned earlier, Rudolph Otto is one of the leaders in phenomenology. He conceived of his classic work, *The Idea of the Holy*, after attending a Yom Kippur service at a Moroccan synagogue, where he was deeply moved by his experience of the sacred at that moment of worship. He also traveled around the world to visit and experience other religious traditions, and this gave him insights into the commonality of the religious psyche.

Phenomenology in a religious studies context is different from phenomenology in

a philosophical context in that religious studies relies on other disciplines, such as history, sociology, and anthropology, to provide a more inclusive view of the subject being studied. How can the observer go inside a religious group that is no longer living? Once again, the observer uses the toolkit of other disciplines to immerse himself or herself in that religious tradition or culture to gain an understanding of what is being studied. Within a religious tradition, for example, there is an emphasis on the sacred and the belief system that has affected those who follow this system. Geo Widengren describes phenomenology as follows:

the phenomenology of religion aims at a coherent account of all the various phenomena, and this is thus the systematic complement of the history of religion. 'The historical approach provides an historical analysis of the development of separate religions; phenomenology provides 'the systematic synthesis.'⁶

As Widengren stated, the use of phenomenology allows the researcher to “synthesize” the material at hand rather than “analyze” it which is more inclusive of all the data presented.⁷ Analysis tends to use a more rationalistic approach to the subject matter; it is a process of taking something apart in order to understand it better. Synthesis uses a wider perspective, beyond the researcher’s preconceived ideas and beliefs, which inevitably influences their interpretation of the data. It is the process of combining ideas or beliefs into a coherent picture.

Henry Corbin is an excellent example of a scholar of religions who uses phenomenology as a means of writing about his material. He wrote many books on Islam and its mystical roots, which included works on Ibn Arabi, Avicenna, and the Ismailis, to name but a few of his subjects. Corbin’s research has done much to inform the West about the debt we owe to the Arab East. In his book, *Alone with the Alone*, Corbin writes

of the use of the phenomenological approach in his work:

Today, with the help of phenomenology, we are able to examine the way in which man experiences his relationship to the world without reducing the objective data of this experience to data of sense perception or limiting the field of true and meaningful knowledge to the mere operation of rational understanding. Freed from the old impasse, we have learned to register and to make use of the intentions implicit in all the acts of consciousness or transconsciousness.⁸

Earlier, I mentioned Mircea Eliade as the modern spokesperson for not only religious studies, but also for the methodology of phenomenology. His use of this method informed much of his work. In his book, *Shamanism: Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy*, Eliade examines different phenomena that emerge within shamanistic traditions from around the world. He explains many of these manifestations as “communications with the spirit world” and illustrates their differences within various cultural contexts. According to Eliade, “the phenomenologist works with historical documents expressing hierophanies, or manifestation of the sacred and attempts to decipher the existential situation and religious meaning expressed through the data.”⁹ In his book, *The Quest*, he continues this explanation:

It is not enough to grasp the meaning of a religious phenomenon in a certain culture and, consequently, to decipher its ‘message’ (for every religious phenomenon constitutes a ‘cipher’); it is also necessary to study and understand its ‘history’; that is, to unravel its changes and modifications and, ultimately, to elucidate its contribution to the entire culture.¹⁰

In essence, this is why I have chosen this methodology to study the Cathars, precisely because it is inclusive of the history, sociology, and geography of the area of Languedoc. It is important to know that there were Cathars in Germany, northern France, and northern Italy, yet there were some beliefs that were specific to the Cathars in

Languedoc and the culture there was unusual and different from those of the other regions. Therefore, studying the Cathars in the context of the culture of Languedoc will help to illustrate the beliefs that were unique to their land and people. For example, only in Languedoc is Mary Magdalene mentioned in primary sources as important in Cathar beliefs. Does this indicate an indigenous belief system already in place? What are the implications of the ascension practice that was being used by the Cathars (in *The Vision of Isaiah*), the Kabbalists, and the troubadours? The psychological effects of ascension will be explored.

I intend to show that the Cathars were Christians using ascension literature, as it was common at that time in Christian mysticism and also among the troubadours and the Jewish kabbalists in Languedoc. The Cathars' central ritual, known as the *consolamentum*, contains no reference to dualism, but is a ritual from early Christianity. Why then are the Cathars considered dualists and therefore heretics? With the research of the five contemporary scholars as a framework, the use of the phenomenological approach will illustrate several new approaches to viewing the Cathars as Christians first, through their use of the *Vision of Isaiah* and the *consolamentum*.

R.I. Moore, in *The Origins of European Dissent*, wrote the following in an effort to open up the field of inquiry of heresy beyond the confines of orthodox definitions, which is what I, too, am attempting to do.

Orthodox Christians, and orthodox historians, have always assumed and frequently asserted that heresy is unnatural, and therefore requires not only correction but explanation. Whether that is so in the moral sense, that it is contrary to the nature of good men, is a theological question, but historically it is false: in the West orthodoxy – any orthodoxy – has reigned unchallenged only in exceptional periods and circumstances. Hence in exploring the appearance of unorthodox beliefs and practices in

the eleventh and twelfth centuries which became a regular feature of European life ever since, we must approach it not in the spirit of alienists (whether charitable or severe) patiently accounting for irrational deviations from normality, but as historians observing the emergence of a natural, and even an essential ingredient of human development, at least as we have known it in Europe.¹¹

Moore is quoted at length because he has encapsulated the need to use a more inclusive perspective when viewing heresy. With this in mind, it is important to turn to the region of Languedoc and review what it was about this culture that would allow “The Great Heresy” to arise.

Endnotes

¹ Hugo Mantel, *Studies in the History of the Sanhedrin* (Cambridge, Ma: Harvard U P, 1965). I thank Rabbi Schultz for bringing this work to my attention.

² Hamilton, *The Albigensian Crusade*, 5.

³ *Encyclopedia of Religion*, vol. II, ed. in chief, Mircea Eliade (New York: MacMillan Publishing Company, 1987), 280.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 276.

⁵ Mircea Eliade, *The Quest: History and Meaning in Religion* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 1 n. 2.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 276.

⁷ This is the approach that the authors of *Holy Blood, Holy Grail* used as their method of studying the evidence.

⁸ Henry Corbin, *Alone with the Alone: Creative Imagination in the Sufism of Ibn 'Arabi*, Bollingen Series XCI (Princeton: Princeton U P, 1997) 3.

⁹ *Encyclopedia of Religion*, vol. II, 279.

¹⁰ Eliade, *The Quest*, 8.

¹¹ R.I. Moore, *Origins of European Dissent* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1977), 3.

CHAPTER FOUR: LANGUEDOC: FERTILE GROUND

The eleventh century was a pivotal time for change in European society. As a European historian has pointed out, “The eleventh century saw the beginning of one of the formative periods of European development, at a time whose transformations left nothing untouched.”¹ A new class of moneyed merchants, more wealthy than the landed nobility, emerged. This was very evident in Languedoc where trade dominated the economic picture and had created a middle class. Along with trade, there was the scholarly enterprise of translations in which Muslims, Jews, and Christians worked together. Benjamin of Tudela writes of what he saw in Lunel in Languedoc, during this renaissance:

Translators abound in Provence, because it is here that the Greek sciences of the Mohammedans are translated for dissemination in Europe, to aid Christians in discovering and understanding the thoughts of the ancients. Here, Jews do the translating, then it's left to the Christian scholars to compile, summarize, and write commentaries on these works. Meanwhile, more often than not, it is Jewish traders who carry Arab ideas and techniques to the north.²

While all this growth and activity provided the matrix for material wealth, there was another, more spiritual aspect to this society in which many were searching for a simpler life. It is difficult to pinpoint a reason for the rise of itinerant preachers and heretical groups in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Returning to the apostolic way of life seemed to be an alternative path for those who found the luxuries and power of the Church to be far removed from the message of Jesus Christ.

Languedoc itself is the framework for this chapter because it was here that the

ascension process was evidenced through several traditions beginning in the eleventh century: the troubadours, the Cathars, and the revival of the teachings of the Kabbalah. St. Bernard was at the forefront of reawakening the ascension tradition within Christian mysticism as well through his meditations on the Song of Songs. Although there is no evidence of connection between any of these groups, what is remarkable is that the ascent practice was being revived. It was a simultaneous phenomenon that cannot be ignored. Does this point to a possible local belief system? I suggest that it does and both Bernard Hamilton and Walter Wakefield have suggested this very idea.³ There is no doubt, that the unique culture of Languedoc provided a hospitable climate for mystical experience of which ascension was an integral part. Though Lambert, Barber, and Wakefield underscore the multicultural environment of Languedoc, neither they nor others of the five scholars I discussed earlier treat the mystical dimension in this culture. This is my focus now in examining the heavenly ascent in the traditions of the troubadours, the Cathars, the Kabbalists, and the Christian mystics, beginning with a brief examination of the psychological aspects of the phenomenon of ascension.

ASCENSION AS A PSYCHOLOGICAL PHENOMENON

Much contemporary research has been written about ascension as a psychological process that visionaries go through while visiting the heavenly realms and how they return to their community with messages from these otherworldly realms. What emerges in the ascent literature of the Judaic and Christian tradition is that the visionaries are transformed while on the journey and what they undergo is something similar to an out-

of-body or near-death experience, a psychological phenomenon that has been studied and documented by contemporary psychologists.⁴

The ascent practice was mentioned briefly in the introduction as it related to the Gnostics, who incorporated this process within their belief system. Ascension is a practice common to the mystical or religious domains of many different cultures. It has been documented by such scholars of religion as Mircea Eliade.⁵ The heavenly journey is a process whereby the hero or heroine or visionary within a community transcends the physical world and experiences other realms in order to return with a message or a description of what they saw or heard. What is essential to this study is the ascent practice as it emerged within the early Christian tradition and later, within the Cathar community. Joseph Schultz encapsulates the central theme of this journey:

The motifs of the heavenly ascent common to many of the religious traditions of antiquity in the Near East are all variations of a central theme whose features are threefold: a deity or deities who live in a perfect realm usually called heaven; human beings who live in an extremely imperfect realm most often referred to as earth; virtual impossibility of communication between the two realms which can be accomplished, if at all, through the movement of a mediator.⁶

This pattern emerges for the Cathars in their belief that heaven was the perfected realm where Jesus and God resided, as described in *The Vision of Isaiah*. The earth or the material world where humans existed was considered imperfect, and the *perfecti* and the *perfectae* (the spiritual leaders of the Cathars) were the mediators between these realms because of their initiation through the *consolamentum*. The troubadours used this process as a means of access to those realms where their Beloved resided, and returned inspired to sing of their journeys. The Kabbalists reintroduced ascension to their tradition, as is

shown by the literature of that time such as the *Bahir* and the *Zohar*.

What scholarly research points to is that the heavenly journey or ascension is a “religiously interpreted state of consciousness”⁷ induced through meditation, dreams, the hypnagogic state, or fasting, whereby the visionary has an out-of-body or near-death experience.⁸ These mystical experiences are a part of every religion but the focus here is Judaism, Christianity, and Islam; such experiences continue to inform these traditions today. Examples from each of these religious traditions in Languedoc that will be explored here.

Many examples of the heavenly journey are found in the Old Testament, such as those of Ezekiel, Enoch, and Jacob. In Islam, there is Mohammed’s “night journey” that is not documented in the Koran yet the Muslims built a temple in Jerusalem on the site of his ascension. In the New Testament, the Gospel of John and Revelation used ascension motifs, and Paul’s reference in II Cor. 12:2–7 of his journey through the third heaven is one of the demonstrations of ascent more commonly referred to in Christianity. Alan Segal comments on Paul’s journey: “Paul’s inability to decide whether the voyage took place in the body or out of the body is firm evidence of a mystical ascent and shows that the voyage has not been clearly interiorized as a journey into the self, which later becomes common in Kabbalah.”⁹ This journey was transformational for Paul; he used his experience to help to build the foundations of early Christianity.

This brief analysis of ascension is to demonstrate that this powerful mystical experience had psychological dimensions that are being documented today. Such journeys, in which the visionary has an experience of rapture upon seeing the heavenly

realms has informed the mystical traditions of all religions. The following examples of some of these ascent practices that were being used in Languedoc at the time of the Cathars will elaborate upon the importance of this tradition in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

THE TROUBADOURS

The rise of the troubadours in southern France (this includes Aquitaine, Provence and Languedoc) was an indication of the tremendous change that was taking place in that society during the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Many historians have written of a twelfth century renaissance because of increased trade and prosperity, diverse ethnic and religious groups, and a flourishing culture with new ideas owing to the translations of many Greek texts from the libraries of Muslim Spain that began to be absorbed into the many courts of this region.¹⁰ The courts of the south were independent and as money from trade helped to create new lifestyles, there was a search for a more refined way of life that would reflect this new economic wealth. The old themes of the literature of the *chanson de geste* that expressed a heroic way of life (as in the *Song of Roland* c. 1080) were losing their hold on the imagination of this new moneyed class.

There was a movement in Languedoc, as elsewhere in Europe, toward a mystical and individual experience of the Divine. This movement was reflected in society's need for spiritual answers that were not provided by the Church. For example, the desire and need for individual expression evolved over time into the songs of the troubadours which expressed the idealized and interiorization of love between the poet and the married

woman (hence, unattainable) or ultimately, between the poet and the divine feminine. Their language was the vernacular, *langue d'oc* or occitan, and these courts of love, as they came to be known, thrived within this new atmosphere of intrigue and mystery. Morris Berman explains this sense of “interiority” that had emerged at this time in history.

The point is that the cosmopolitanism of the south left it open to mystical influences; that Sufis and Cathars alike talked in terms of a yearning for the Godhead; that the heretical Islamic tradition involved the same mind/body duality that the heretical Christian tradition did, and it was an influence on Provençal poetry, this was only because the Midi was already susceptible to such an influence.¹¹

This idea of unrequited love created quite a stir in these courts of love in the South. Marriage had always been considered a business of property transactions between families, but now, suddenly, someone was paying attention to the wife or *dompna*, as she was referred to in troubadour style.

Where did this revolutionary change in attitudes and values come from? “The name *troubadour* is probably from the Roman word *trobar*, to find or invent, but some would take it from the Arabic *tarraba*, to sing.”¹² Languedoc’s neighbors to the south are certainly one source for the evolution of troubadour poems, which were always sung usually with accompaniment of an instrument. William VIII of Aquitaine, who had gone to Spain to help capture Barbastro from the Muslims in 1064, returned with female singers, called *qiyan*. Maria Menocal writes the following description of the *qiyan*:

The art of singing, and especially the art of singing songs of love, was the great vogue among the Andalusians. And after Barbastro, they were being sung by *qiyan* on both side of the Pyrenees – *qiyan* whose mother tongue was most likely Mozarabic and for whom the language of *oc* was as kissing cousins to their own form of Romance.¹³

A Mozarab was a Christian who spoke Arabic in Muslim Spain. However, this form of Arabic became enmeshed with Latin and reflected a romance language similar to *langue d'oc*. There were Muslims, Jews, and Christians who were qiyān and they made their way from the courts of Aquitaine to other courts in Languedoc as this new form of entertainment became popular.

William IX of Aquitaine, count of Poitou (1071–1126) had grown up listening to the qiyān at his father's court. This experience obviously had quite an effect upon him; he became known as "the first troubadour." He spoke several languages, including Hebrew and Arabic (as did his father, William VIII); so learning was an important element in his life. In 1101, he led an army to fight in the First Crusade but was stopped at Antioch. He apparently spent a year there, perhaps absorbing the culture. Jack Lindsay writes of William's time in Antioch:

In fact he was never captured but spent a year amidst the pleasures of Antioch as the host of Tancred; he may then have learned something of the Arabic songs in Syria. He seems to have been well read; we hear of his father collecting a large library of manuscripts.¹⁴

Upon his return to Aquitaine, he led several forces to the south to help with the *reconquista* effort in Spain. He wrote extensively of love and his conquests of both women and armies. His style went on to ignite the courts in Languedoc and his legacy of poems was as large as the legacy of his life. He left Aquitaine to his granddaughter, Eleanor (1122–1204), who in turn, supported the troubadours at her court as did her daughter, Marie de Champagne, (1145–1198), who helped Chretien de Troyes write several books on the Grail under her patronage at her court in Champagne.

This new language of love fed the stream of what was to become European

literature. It was during the time of the troubadours that Chrétien de Troyes was writing of the Holy Grail and the Arthurian romances of Britain were influencing the writing in northern France. It is important to note that the troubadours also influenced similar groups, such as the minnesingers in Germany and the troubadour style was used in Italy as well. During the Albigensian Crusade in 1209 and thereafter, many troubadours fled to Italy. Dante (1265–1321) was considered the last of the troubadours, and he so admired them that he wrote some of the *Divine Comedy* in Provençal.

Troubadour poetry was also inspired by Sufi mysticism from Spain. This connection of poetry of the heart (not necessarily exemplified by William IX) and Sufism emerged through the development of the theme of a mystical union with the Beloved on earth and with the deity in heaven. René Nelli points to the influence of Ibn Arabi's (1165–1240) stages of love:¹⁵

a) a divine love, which is on the one hand the love of the Creator for the creature in which He creates Himself, and on the other hand the love of that creature for his Creator, b) a spiritual love, situated in the creature who is always in quest of the being whose Image he discovers in himself, and c) the natural love which desires to possess and seeks the satisfaction of its own desires without concern for the satisfaction of the Beloved.¹⁶

These three stages could be referred to as the love of God or Creator, spiritual love as that which is imagined to be true, and love of another being in the material world. This is the ladder of ascent whereby the poet is seeking union with the Divine. However, there are stages through which the seeker must ascend in order to reach the ultimate goal. For many poets, spiritual love was the ultimate quest of the troubadours; the aspirations of their hearts were focused on married women, who could not be touched but could be revered from afar. This was not always the case; salvation was often the initial goal for

the poet. Often enough, a wealthy patron's husband could throw out a poet who was believed to have crossed an ethical barrier.

Having a troubadour in one's court was a style of the times in twelfth- and thirteenth-century Languedoc. It was the troubadour's job to entertain with the jongleurs and play music and sing the poems for the audience. Because patrons grew tired of a poet after a while, the troubadours led a very peripatetic life. Their visions of divine union, along with their images that fired the imagination, became widespread in secular society.

The troubadours originated in Gascony and Poitou (the court of Eleanor of Aquitaine and Henry II) and eventually made their way to the courts of Languedoc. This idealized love of the feminine had many forms of expression. The poets themselves came from various backgrounds, from both wealth and poverty, but they received training from those whom they admired. The poet's focus of love for his lady had different forms as a reference to the style of poem that was being used. There was *fin amor* which was the idea of "pure love" representing Sophiology (Wisdom and Truth) with its roots in the neoplatonic thought found in the writings of the Gnostics of the second and third centuries. Be it an interiorization or an external form for that love, the ideal quest was ultimately the experience of the ascent process. Mark Mirsky elaborates on this "platonic ladder of ascension" used by the troubadours:

the love of a woman, according to the troubadours, had a spiritualizing effect and acted as a ladder on which the lover could ascend to Heaven. It was a form of education in which woman reflected the light of a heavenly idea. The troubadours seeing that the more difficult love was to attain, the farther off the beloved, the higher, more valuable that love.¹⁷

This idealization of love, a mirror for spiritual perfection, now had a language to express those feelings and a path to follow no matter how fraught with pain,

disappointment, or joy. This was the expression of Neoplatonism that had resurfaced among the Sufis in Spain. The society of Languedoc looked to the south for its connections rather than to the north where language differences prevented easy communication.

Ibn Arabi's three stages of love can be found in many of the troubadours' poems. The focus here is on Jaufre Rudel (d. 1167) because he exemplifies in his poems the ascent process through his desire and yearning for a "distant love" or *amor de lonh*.¹⁸ He came from Blaye, a town on the Garonne River, near Bordeaux and traveled on the Second Crusade with Eleanor of Aquitaine and Louis VII.¹⁹ Apparently it was Rudel's love for the Countess of Tripoli, whom he had never seen, that caused him to take the journey to Tripoli, and it was this love that helped him to write his poetry. Many of his poems demonstrate the ideal quest of a mystical journey to unknown realms. For him, that journey was, in part, his voyage to the East in search of his Beloved. An example of his poetry that uses the three stages of ascent is found in "A Love Afar."²⁰

When days grow long and warm with May,
How sweet the bird's song sounds afar
Though, long exiled and far away,
They call to mind my love afar.
 Bent to eclipse by dark desire,
 No sweet birds' song, no flowering briar
 Content me more than winter's chill.

My lord keeps faith, so I believe
That I shall see my love afar;
 Ay! If I visited that shrine
 My Pilgrim's staff and cloak might shine
 Reflected in her eyes' clear rill.

By God's own love, what joys must lie
Within love's citadel, afar.

If she'd consent, I'd lodge nearby
Who now must lie alone afar.
 Never on earth shall speech seem dear
 As when this far-off love comes near
 To give joy and to take its fill.

Leaving her must seem sad and sweet
When once I've met my love afar,
Yet how we'll ever come to meet
I know not since her land's so far.
 Such tracks and trails, such land and sea,
 Lie still between my love and me
 That all must in God's good will.

No joy in love shall e'er be mine
Until I see my love afar;
Above all worth her beauties shine,
Above all others, near and far.
 Gladly I'd lie, at her command,
 A captive in a Moorish land
 Her precious bidding to fulfill.

Dear Lord who formed this world entire
And shaped for me my love afar,
Pray grant the power I most desire:
To witness soon my love afar.
 Where I shall meet that glorious face,
 In chamber in garden place,
 That spot shall be my palace still.

That man speaks true who'd say I burn
For naught else but my love afar;
Now for no other end I yearn—
Only to know my love afar.
 Yet as my fates lie still athwart,
 My curse fall on that godsire's heart
 Who's cursed me so my love runs ill.

Rudel sees himself as a pilgrim on a journey to know his Beloved, and gives no indication of whether or not this is in the material, physical realm, or in the spiritual realm. Yet the desire and yearning are there to see “that glorious face” which is the

central goal of the ascent process: to be in the presence of the Divine. There is a sense of being close and yet far from his quest of knowing this “love from afar.” “The movement of love is towards knowledge of the other and of oneself. But with each deepening of consciousness there is a simultaneous opposition and union; new dimensions of closeness and distance open up.”²¹ The troubadours were able to utilize the mystical symbolism of love for the Beloved and transform and translate those ideals into many realms of the imagination. Their ideal of pure love or *fin ‘amor* was an expression similar to that of the Cathars and their desire for purity, as evidenced in the *perfecti* and the *perfectae*. Linda Paterson comments on the idea of *fin ‘amor*:

But perhaps *fin ‘amor* was a primarily spiritual affair? Its language permits considerable moral ambiguity, so that at extreme ends of the scholarly spectrum, *fin ‘amor* has been perceived on the one hand as a cover for the sexual license of the upper classes, and on the other as a spiritual phenomenon, in which erotic language conveys mystical emotion or even encrypts heretical dogma. Jaufré Rudel’s *amor de lonh*, for example, has given rise to mystical or religious interpretations.²²

Rudel’s *amor de lonh* is defined as love from a distance, whether that be a measurable distance or a spiritual concept depends upon the poem.²³ Just as the spiritual content of the poem had to be concealed, so did the mystery of who “Our Lady” was. Zoé

Oldenbourg writes about the symbolism of the Lady:

Some commentators have gone so far as to claim that the Lady was purely symbolic; and represented either the Cathar Church or some esoteric revelation; and it is true that the poems of certain troubadour poets bear considerable resemblance, in style and tone, to those of the Arab mystics.

Nevertheless it remains true that troubadour verse appears to deal primarily, not with love itself, so much as with a method of attaining moral and spiritual perfection through love’s agency.²⁴

In their more than two-hundred-year history, troubadour poems cannot be

categorized into any one particular vein of thought or writing tradition, although their work did contribute to the European literature that was to follow. The troubadours were able to give voice to the journey of the heart, whether through satire, bawdiness, irony, or a more idealized spiritual language of the ascent to the Divine through their idealized female counterpart. This new language of expression of erotic for the Beloved was surfacing within Christian mysticism as well; Bernard of Clairvaux was the prime mover.

Susan Haskins comments on the idea of erotic love and mysticism:

Erotic love has often been the vehicle used to express mystical experiences, perhaps most notably in that great epithalamium, the *Canticle of Canticles*, or *Song of Songs*, which describes in the most sensual and voluptuous imagery what the rabbis were to read as an allegory of Yahweh's love for Israel, and early Christian commentators to interpret as Christ's love for the church, for the Christian soul – sometimes in the person of Mary Magdalene – and for the Virgin Mary.²⁵

ST. BERNARD, THE SONG OF SONGS, AND MARY MAGDALENE

Bernard of Clairvaux (1091–1153), a Cistercian monk and the most influential religious leader of his time, revived the early Christian tradition of mystical ascent through the Song of Songs. His predecessors such as Hippolytus (c. 170–236), Origen of Alexandria (c. 185–254), Augustine of Hippo (354–430), and Pope Gregory I (590–604) all used this text to explore the mystical relationship of the Bride and Bridegroom, *hieros gamos* or mystical marriage, within Christianity. Bernard's eighty-six sermons on the *Canticles of Canticles* illustrate his experiences of his love for the Bride and the Bridegroom, and these sermons exhibit an expression of emotion that is very moving. Jack Lindsay writes of the correspondence between St. Bernard and the troubadours:

If we look at the system of mystical experience set out by St. Bernard we

come much closer to the Troubadours, for he is trying to use the psychology of love to clarify what he considers the ascent to God. Here God, so to speak, becomes simultaneously a symbol of the self in its fulfillment and a symbol of the beloved, insofar as each penetration into her being brings about a sense of new unknown regions to be explored.²⁶

St. Bernard provided a doorway for those seeking a mystical experience with the Godhead, and his language served as the steps for the heart to take along this difficult but rewarding journey. In the following passage he describes some of his experience:

If thou dost now experience a sudden and unusual expansion of mind, with an infusion of heavenly light, which illumines thine intellect and gives it either an understanding of the Scriptures for the instruction of other, or a knowledge of secrets for thine own consolation, here, beyond a doubt, is the Bridegroom's Eye looking in through thy window, 'and bringing forth thy justice as the light, and thy judgment as the noon-day.'²⁷

The Christian mystical tradition reflects this trend that Bernard brought into his sermons and writings: the use of feelings and emotion. "Bernard's mysticism draws its power from his understanding of man's affective depths: only there is a man deeply engaged."²⁸

The idea of *hieros gamos*, or mystical marriage, was an ancient tradition that had roots in Judaism, and the Song of Songs was used allegorically to exemplify this process.²⁹ "The Song of Songs is a collection of ancient love poetry found in the Bible, connected to King Solomon and his beloved although he did not write the poems."³⁰ The poems were almost excluded from the Bible because they were considered too erotic. Two copies of the poems were found with the Dead Sea Scrolls; so it is known that the Essenes used them and they were in use during the time of Jesus.³¹

However, it was through the Song of Songs, in early Christianity, that a tradition arose around Jesus and Mary Magdalene as the bride and bridegroom. "Hippolytus of Rome identified the woman called Magdalene with the sister of Martha and Lazarus. In

his commentary on the *Song of Songs*, Hippolytus also associated Mary of Bethany with the bride from the Canticle.³² According to Haskins, "Hippolytus' association of the Bride of the Canticles with Mary Magdalen [*sic*] was forged in the third century, and has lasted until today."³³ Bernard drew the same allegorical conclusion when, in Sermon LVII, he refers to the three at Bethany, Martha, Lazarus, and Mary:

Mary, who sat at His Feet; she watches the ways for the appearance of her Bridegroom, so that she can tell exactly when and with what haste He is approaching; and is so keenly on the alert that by no suddenness of change can she be so surprised and taken unawares as not to know when He is far from her, when near, and when actually present.³⁴

Another significant tradition for the Church was to read from the Song of Songs on Mary Magdalene's feast day, 22 July. "For centuries the official liturgical Scripture passage of the Roman Catholic Church on the feast day of Mary Magdalene was read from the Canticle of Canticles, which by association equated the Magdalene with the black bride described in the Song."³⁵

Whereas the Church attempted to use the Song of Songs as an allegory for Jesus' love for the Church, there was already an association which had continued through the Gnostic tradition, of Mary Magdalene as Sophia, the epitome of Wisdom and Truth. This is witnessed in the *Gospels of Philip, Thomas, the Pistis Sophia*, and the *Gospel of Mary*. Mary Magdalene was the first to see the arisen Jesus, and she was given special teachings that she attempted to convey to the other disciples.³⁶ This analysis of the tradition of the Song of Songs and its association during this period of the twelfth century demonstrate the Cathars' belief in a relationship between Mary Magdalene and Jesus. Perhaps this was one of the local beliefs in Languedoc; it was unique to the Cathars.

There are two references to this relationship in the primary sources: one is in a manuscript possibly written by Ermengaud of Béziers, where Mary Magdalene was the wife of Christ;³⁷ and the other comes from the account of Peter of les Vaux-de-Cernay, in which he comments that the Cathars believed Mary Magdalene was the concubine of Christ.³⁸ There is also the legend as recounted in Jacobus de Voragine's *The Golden Legend* (written c. 1260) that Mary Magdalene fled to southern Gaul after Jesus' crucifixion.³⁹ It is interesting to note that Jacobus de Voragine was a Dominican. By the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, the Dominicans were the inquisitors. In 1295, the Dominicans demanded the removal of Mary Magdalene's relics from Vézelay (the Inquisition being in full force) to be reburied at their consecrated site in Saint-Maximin near Aix-en-Provence. Mary Magdalene had become the patron saint of the Dominicans, who were formally sanctified as an order in 1216.⁴⁰ Did the Dominicans want to take over the image of the Magdalene in order to bring her closer into the folds of the traditional Church? If there was a local tradition that involved Mary Magdalene in Languedoc, it was eradicated with the Cathars. The Bogomils did not have this belief in their tradition. More research on this subject is needed.

The images of Mary Magdalene and the Virgin Mary were conflated in the Middle Ages, but by the fourteenth century the Virgin Mary became the dominant female saint. It was safe to worship the Virgin Mary: she was not considered a goddess or a wife.⁴¹ Even the troubadours who had escaped the gaze of the Inquisition began to incorporate the Virgin into their poetry.

THE JEWISH TRADITION OF THE KABBALAH

And what is the reason that you said that the Song of Songs is beautiful?

Yes, it is the most beautiful of all the Holy Scriptures.

Rabbi Yochanan thus said: All Scripture is holy, and all the Torah is holy, but the Song of Songs is the Holy of Holies.

What is the meaning of Holy Of Holies? It means that it is holy for the Holy Ones.⁴²

The Judaic culture in Languedoc had a history that went back to the Roman empire. As a result of the tolerance in the region, not only did Jews contribute to the twelfth century renaissance but the mystical tradition of the Kabbalah had begun to flourish in both southern France and northern Spain. Benjamin of Tudela comments on one particular town, Lunel in Languedoc, that was a center for study:

This town is the place of residence of celebrated rabbis, among them R. Asher, an ascetic, who does not attend to any worldly business but studies day and night, keeps fasts, and never eats meat. He possesses an extraordinary degree of knowledge of everything relating to Talmudic learning.⁴³

Benjamin Tudela commented on the tolerance of the culture in Languedoc that allowed religious freedom to be expressed throughout the Jewish communities in that region.

The Kabbalists were those in the Jewish tradition who practiced a mystical path in order to understand their own ontology and their relationship to their Creator. The ascent process, as discussed earlier, was used as a pathway to form a deeper relationship with God. Although there is no historical proof that there was any correspondence between the Cathars and the Jews in Languedoc, it must be noted that there was a concomitant arising of new thoughts in these two different religious traditions that were exploring their relationship to God, the nature of the Creator, and the material world. Wakefield is the one scholar who mentions the possibility of a connection between the Cathars and Jews:

Within other Jewish communities, notably at Narbonne, there developed the mystical strain of thought that produced the Kabbala, as well as tendencies towards asceticism which paralleled the practices of the Cathars. There may, indeed, have been interchanges of influence between the Jews and the heretics.⁴⁴

Unfortunately, no further research has been conducted in this area.

The *Sephir ha Bahir*, or *Book of Brilliance* (published sometime between 1150 and 1200), seems to be the culmination of Kabbalistic study that had been going on within certain southern communities for quite some time.⁴⁵ Such towns as Montpellier, Narbonne, Lunel, and Béziers were centers for Kabbalistic study and mystical speculation.⁴⁶ Gershom Scholem writes about the *Bahir* and the Kabbalah:

The encounter between the Gnostic tradition contained in the *Bahir* and the neoplatonic ideas concerning God, His emanation, and man's place in the world, was extremely fruitful, leading to the deep penetration of the ideas into earlier mystical theories. The Kabbalah, in its historical significance, can be defined as the product of the interpenetration of Jewish Gnosticism and neoplatonism.⁴⁷

It is important to observe that the *Bahir* incorporated the feminine aspect of God, his Shekhinah; and this was at the time when the divine feminine was emerging in the writings of St. Bernard and the troubadours. "This discovery of a feminine element in God, which the Kabbalists tried to justify by Gnostic exegesis, is of course one of the most significant steps they took."⁴⁸ With no significant Church presence in Languedoc, Jewish communities had more freedom than elsewhere in Europe, and this seems to have provided them with the opportunity to explore the supernal realms through the ascent practice.

The Kabbalists of Languedoc were deeply influenced by the Merkabah mystical tradition that had its roots in the first century BCE and mystical explorations through the

first chapter of Ezekiel and *The Book of Enoch*. “The prophet Ezekiel supplied the Merkavah tradition with some of its key notions and visual concepts, and his influence prevailed in the literary history of Jewish mysticism for a long time.”⁴⁹ These visionary experiences underwent a radical change with the new energy of rabbis of Languedoc and their contribution to visionary ascent. These Kabbalists used their own visionary journeys through the ten sefirot of the Tree of Life as outlined in the *Bahir*:

And through its unique biblical interpretations, mystical parables, and vivid juxtaposition of images, the *Sefer Bahir* offers a powerful, Jewish alternative to the mystical speculation of the Cathari. Its image of the Tree of Life extending between earth and the heavens showed that the material and spiritual worlds – the realms of the here and the realm of the hereafter – were not opposites or opponents but were both part of the unity of God.⁵⁰

A confluence of ideas with their roots in the mystical traditions of all three of the monotheistic religions permeated the culture of Languedoc. Mystical realms were being explored by Muslims, Jews, and Christians, and what emerged within these groups indicates a desire for interiority of experience and an experience of God that seemed to be endemic to that time and place in history. Neil Silberman comments on the Muslim influence within Languedoc:

immigrants from Muslim Spain, now being slowly overrun by the rough-and-tumble Christian forces, made their way northward. They brought with them the tenets and texts of neoplatonic philosophy, in which God’s energy was seen as a series of light emanations, cascading down to earth and becoming more material as it descended through the heavenly spheres.⁵¹

There is evidence that the troubadour tradition came from the Muslims in Spain. Their Neoplatonic ideas permeated troubadour poetry and, through the translation of Greek and Arabic texts, spread throughout western Christendom.

The divine feminine was a part of the mysticism that was emerging. The Shekinah was very much a part of what was resurfacing with the Kabbalists as a part of their mystical journeys to other realms. Sophia as divine Wisdom, embodied in Mary Magdalene and the Virgin Mary, became the unreachable feminine presence in the quest for ultimate love in troubadour poetry. The twelfth-century renaissance in Languedoc was a dynamic time, as shown by the spiritual search and longing of the troubadours, the Kabbalists, and the Christian mystics. The Cathars were using the ascent process through *The Vision of Isaiah*. With an examination of the research and some parts of the text, the Cathar contribution to this practice will be illustrated.

THE VISION OF ISAIAH

The Vision of Isaiah is an apocryphal work that was written in the late first century, whose author was probably Christian. It was a central part of the library of Catharism. *The Vision* is a part of *The Ascension of Isaiah*, which has three parts:

The Martyrdom of Isaiah, a Jewish work, perhaps pre-Christian; and *The Testament of Hezekiah*, which like *The Vision of Isaiah* is of Christian origin. The whole work appears to have been combined in its present form by a Christian editor, some time in the second century A.D. The entire book is extant in an Ethiopic version, and fragments of it exist in Greek, Latin, and Slavonic. The original language in which the work was composed was certainly Greek for the two Christian parts, and probably also for the Jewish part (*The Martyrdom*), though this last may depend ultimately upon a Hebrew or Aramaic prototype.⁵²

Ioan Couliano and other scholars argue that there are Christian, Jewish, and Gnostic elements in *The Vision of Isaiah* as well as within *The Ascension of Isaiah*, and that “the matrix of early Christian apocalyptic is undeniably Jewish.”⁵³ Wakefield and

Evans agree with that assessment and believe that *The Vision of Isaiah* that was brought to the West by the Bogomils in the twelfth century was in Latin.⁵⁴ Hamilton, Barber, Lambert, and Wakefield all argue that it was an important text that all the Cathars had read and used.⁵⁵ Each of the four scholars also writes that *The Vision* supported the Cathar dualistic beliefs in both mitigated and absolute dualism while ignoring the fact that this work is an ascension text. *The Vision*, as an apocryphal work, “represents a drastic shift from the dominant biblical point of view. It is the human who takes the initiative for an encounter with the divine, and the divine realm itself – not an elevated mountain – is the scene of the mystical revelation.”⁵⁶ The voyage of the prophet (in this case, Isaiah) is an attempt to answer questions about death, the afterlife, injustice in the world, and to reassure the righteous of their place in heaven. This ascension text would help the Cathars to explain their central sacrament of salvation, the *consolamentum*, because *The Vision of Isaiah* describes the place in the seventh heaven for the righteous dead, which would be all those who had received the *consolamentum*. *The Vision of Isaiah* represents the vehicle for visionary ascent for those who were living (*perfecti* and *perfectae*) to return from the heavenly realms with messages of hope that there was a place for those who experienced the *consolamentum* at death (*credentes*); they would find their place in the heavenly realms along with Jesus and God. This text, along with the *consolamentum*, exemplifies the Cathar world view as the framework for their beliefs. Perhaps this is one of the reasons why they were so popular with the people of Languedoc. Not only were the *perfecti* and the *perfectae* living examples of ascetism as demonstrated by the way they lived, but they also were practitioners of ascension and gave

the *credentes* hope for the afterlife.

The Vision of Isaiah recounts how Isaiah was transported in spirit through the seven realms, with an angel as his guide, to reach the glory of God. “Then he was speaking words of truth; the Holy Spirit came upon him and all saw and heard the words of the Holy Spirit” (I: 6). Thus Isaiah begins his journey of revelation, and many have gathered to hear what he sees and hears on this ascent to heaven. He first comes to the firmament that separates earth from the upper realms. It is here that Isaiah sees the battle between Satan and those who are loyal followers of God. “For just as it is on earth, so also is it in the firmament, because replicas of what are in the firmament are on earth” (II: 11). Isaiah witnessed the battle between the forces of good and evil that are reflected on earth as well. In the first heaven Isaiah is told that the song of the angels is raised to, “the great glory of God, who is above the seventh heaven, and to His beloved Son, from whom I was sent to thee” (II: 18). The angel who guides Isaiah is the mediator for the Beloved, or the Son, and it is this idea of sending heavenly help to guide those on earth that reflects the possibilities of salvation within this text.

This first part of the journey, emphasizing “as above, so below,” would have given hope to the Cathar community and explained the presence of evil in their world. If battles between Satan and God were going on in the heavenly realms, then the Church of Rome and its wrong views would represent the earthly Satan for the Cathars. The Cathars believed that they held the true apostolic tradition, and their use of ascension would have helped to support that view for the *credentes*. Their belief in salvation in the afterlife was actively experienced in the journeys of the *perfecti* and the *perfectae* during their ascent,

as illustrated in the text, and these experiences could be shared with their community upon their return. Perhaps these messages from the other realms helped the *credentes* to make sense of their present-day reality. The correspondences between what was seen in the heavenly realms and what could happen on earth revealed a pattern of hope: transcendence from one world to another added a new dimension to the imagination of those who lived in the Cathar communities. This may have also been one of the reasons why, during the Albigensian Crusade and the Inquisition, when Cathars were consigned to the flames, they went willingly.

In the second heaven, Isaiah is so overcome with what he sees and hears that he falls on his face to adore the angel on the throne, but his guide warns him not to adore the angel or the throne of that heaven (II: 22). “Adore Him only of whom I will tell you, and in like fashion adore Him who is (22) above all angels, above thrones, and above the garments and crowns which you shall see hereafter” (23). Each succeeding heaven is more glorious than the previous one, and Isaiah is filled with joy. In the sixth heaven, Isaiah is told that no one has seen what he has seen, and he is promised his place in the seventh heaven upon his death, when he will receive his garment and will be equal to the angels (III: 16). Isaiah does not want to return to the material world of darkness, but his guide tells him that the light of the seventh heaven is far greater and that it is not Isaiah’s time to take his place in the seventh heaven.

In the seventh heaven, Isaiah sees “certain of the righteous who, stripped of fleshy robes, were in heavenly robes and standing in great glory,” (IV: 10), but he questions why they have no crowns of glory and are not seated on their thrones. His guide’s

response is that such an event will not occur until the Son returns from his descent. The garments that Isaiah refers to have been associated with spiritual bodies.⁵⁷ This idea of a spiritual garment matches the Cathar cosmology of the ascent of the soul at death to meet with its spiritual counterpart in heaven. Isaiah, himself, has donned the garments of the seventh heaven upon his entry. It is here that Isaiah is told:

the prince of that world will stretch forth his hand upon the Son of God and will kill Him and hang Him on a tree, and he will kill Him not knowing who He is (IV: 15). And He will descend into hell and will lay it waste, with all the phantoms of hell (16). And He will seize the prince of death and despoil him, and crush all his powers, and will rise again on the third day, (17), having with him certain of the righteous. And He will send His preachers into the whole world, and will ascend into heaven (18).

This last sentence of “sending His preachers into the whole world” could be a reference to the apostolic tradition that the Cathars believed they had inherited. Robert Hall also argues that the descent and ascent of the Beloved “establishes it as the doctrine of the apostles. Those who reject the vision reject the heavenly robes promised in the vision in favor of worldly goods.”⁵⁸ Hall also establishes “Isaiah as a senior prophet who is not only the chief speaker but also imparts the spirit of prophecy by the laying on of his hands.”⁵⁹ According to Hall, this text is representative of a community or an early Christian prophetic school. The fact that this community was at war with other, similar Christian prophetic schools⁶⁰ is consonant with the Cathars being at war with the Church of Rome. Both the community behind the *Ascension of Isaiah* (which included *The Vision*) and the Cathars’ claim to apostolic succession in opposition to the Church is reflected in this ascension text.

In the seventh heaven, Isaiah hears the “voice of the Eternal saying to the Lord

[His] Son (V: 8): Go forth and descend from all the heavens and be in the world, and go even to the angel who is in hell (9); transfiguring thyself into their forms (11). And neither the angels nor the princes of that world shall know thee” (12). This is the descent and ascent, known as *katabasis* and *anabasis*, respectively, in apocalyptic literature. The Beloved is making his descent or *katabasis*. In the fifth heaven, “there at once He was transfigured into the form of those angels and they did not sing to Him or adore Him, for He was of a form like theirs (VI: 21). And when the Beloved reached the world Isaiah saw the Son of Man dwelling with men and in the world (19). And they did not recognize Him” (23). The Cathar belief in Docetic Christology, which views Jesus as an angel, could very well have its roots in this statement from *The Vision of Isaiah*: “the son of Man dwelling with men in the world.”⁶¹ Margaret Barker has the following comment regarding this belief:

For the first three centuries many Christians thought of Jesus as an angel figure, leading the great battle against evil. The Shepherd of Hermas describes Jesus as a holy and venerable angel. The Ebionites, one of the groups within Jewish Christianity, said that Christ had been created like the archangels, but greater.⁶²

Upon the Beloved’s return to the seventh heaven, Isaiah is told to return to the world until it is his time: “Return in your robe until the time of your days shall be fulfilled and then you shall come here” (VI: 36). Isaiah then shares his vision with King Hezekiah and those present, and he admonishes them: “And thus be you also in the Holy Spirit, so that you may receive your robes and thrones and crowns of glory placed in the heavens” (VI: 41). The idea of “being in the Holy Spirit,” for the Cathars, is a reference to the *perfecti* and the *perfectae* who, upon receiving the *consolamentum*, became living vessels of the Holy Spirit. The seven heavens represented in this text demonstrate the

connection to early Jewish *hekhaloth* (palaces) literature, which dates from the first and second century. Again, this points to the use of an early Christian text by the Cathars.

Ioan Culiano cites the reference to the battle that was going on in the firmament that mirrors what was occurring on earth as a reference in keeping with the esoteric principle “as above so below.” Culiano believes that this battle dates *The Vision* to sometime between the fall of the Second Temple 70 CE and 135 CE, when the revolt led by Bar Kochba against the Romans was defeated in Palestine.⁶³ This battle with Rome that is reflected in *The Vision* would reflect the Cathar battle with the authority of the Church of Rome.

What is clearly revealed in this ascension text is that the journey to heaven is the path to salvation and there is a place for the righteous in the seventh heaven. This practice was a part of the Judaic tradition and was passed on to early Christianity. Gershom Scholem refers to Paul’s journey up to the third heaven as an example of this practice continuing into Christianity,⁶⁴ and Morton Smith points to the teachings of Christ as being based on the ascension tradition that was passed on to other heterodox Christian groups.⁶⁵ “In *The Vision*, salvation is heavenly ascent to put on a glorious robe and crown and to sit on a throne in the presence of the Great Glory.”⁶⁶

Alan Segal makes a significant observation regarding the communities that wrote the early Christian apocalyptic literature and their relationship to what was becoming the orthodox Christian Church. These communities were both Gnostic and Christian, and Segal points out that the argument against the Jews and the Old Testament God “may be aimed not directly at the Jews themselves but against orthodox Christians who were using

Old Testament references against the Gnostics.”⁶⁷ This is a different view that sheds light on the Cathars and their denial of the Old Testament. If this denial of the Old Testament refers to the orthodox Christians of that time, what then was the relationship between the Cathars and the Jews of Languedoc, both of whom were using ascent practices at the same time? Again, more research on the Cathars’ use of early Christian ascent practices is needed. *The Vision of Isaiah*, dating from the second century, needs to be seen as an ascension text that the Cathars incorporated into their spiritual lives. Martha Himmelfarb makes a similar point about apocalyptic literature as a whole:

The standard assessment of the apocalypses as dualistic, pessimistic, and despairing of this world needs to be revised in light of the value the ascent apocalypses place on human beings. The examples of the heroes of the ascent apocalypses teach their readers to live the life of this world with awareness of the possibility of transcendence.⁶⁸

The Cathars have often been accused of having a pessimistic view of this world and yet the ascension practice, as represented by *The Vision of Isaiah*, was an affirmation of what would happen upon their death; they could don the spiritual garments (no longer obliged to wear their black robe) of their heavenly bodies and they would be seated near God. By following the teachings of Jesus in this life, they had the promise of an exalted place in heaven. This would have affected the way the *perfecti* and the *perfectae* were viewed in the communities of Languedoc and perhaps explains, in part, why they were able to attain so many followers. Theirs was a living message of what was offered at death, and at the same time there was hope expressed through the visionary ascent for the communities who received these messages from other realms. Their lives had meaning when viewed in this way. Margaret Barker makes an observation about apocalyptic literature (which *The*

Vision is a part of) and early Christianity:

If we force ourselves back to the integrated world-view of the apocalyptists and the first Christians, we find that eternal life is earthly life already linked to and intersected with, the other dimension, allowing what is beyond to suffuse and transform what is here. We find that the human body is the vehicle and channel of the Spirit of God, the means by which we give and receive love, and exercise our functions as incarnate sons of God, renewing the creation. The New Testament tells us that the body is the temple, and the temple was the place between heaven and earth where God was present. Our bodies are the bridge between the two creations.⁶⁹

The *perfecti* and the *perfectae* through their extreme asceticism, exemplified this vessel for the Spirit of God. We know that Cathar communities honored those who chose such a lifestyle, because it was true renunciation, a precept the Church of Rome had lost until the rise of the Dominicans and papal reforms in the twelfth century.

CONCLUSION

The fertile ground that became Languedoc evolved over the centuries of having diverse people come and conquer or inhabit the land, bringing with them their beliefs and remnants from their own cultural milieux. By the eleventh and twelfth centuries the region was a crossroads for Muslims, Jews, and Christians, who were actively involved in trading not only goods but also ideas. The resulting cultural diversity added to an unusually independent atmosphere, which fostered a flowering of creativity in many areas of society that included spiritual development, because of religious tolerance. The troubadours, the Kabbalists, and the Cathars were all using ascension practices, and Bernard of Clairvaux renewed the Christian mystical practice of ascent through the Song

of Songs. Ascension was an opportunity for spiritual leaders in a community to have a visionary experience and share that experience with others. This practice gave hope that humans would one day have a place with the angels and God in heaven. Although there is no evidence of connection between any of these groups, it is important to understand that these mystical practices were occurring at the same time in Languedoc. When *The Vision* is viewed as ascension literature, the Cathars must be seen as holders of an early Christian tradition of ascent that had its roots in Judaism. *The Vision of Isaiah* was a ritual text used by the living, and the *consolamentum*, an ascent text used for those who were dying, was another part of Cathar practice that connects them to early Christianity and needs to be understood in a new light.

Endnotes

¹ Moore, *The Origins of European Dissent*, 44.

² Sandra Benjamin, *The World of Benjamin of Tudela: A Medieval Mediterranean Travelogue* (Madison & Teaneck: Fairleigh Dickinson U P, 1995), 68-69. Benjamin Tudela was a twelfth century Jewish traveler who took notes of his observations.

³ Hamilton, *The Albigensian Crusade*, 5; and Wakefield and Evans, *Heresies of the High Middle Ages*, 19.

⁴ See Carol Zaleski, *Otherworld Journeys: Accounts of Near-death Experience in Medieval and Modern Times* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 119-135, and Alan F. Segal, *Life After Death: A History of the Afterlife in Western Religion* (New York: Doubleday, 2004), 322-350.

⁵ See Mircea Eliade, *Shamanism: Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy*, trans. Willard R. Trask (Princeton: Princeton University Press, Bollingen Series LXXXVI, 1964).

⁶ Joseph Schultz, "The Four Who Entered Pardes: A Contemporary Interpretation," *Australian Journal of Jewish Studies* XVII (2003); 169.

⁷ Segal, *Life After Death*, 322.

⁸ See *Ibid.*, 328; Schultz, "The Four Who Entered Paradise," 173; and Gertrude Himmelfarb, *Ascent to Heaven in Jewish and Christian Apocalypses* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 107.

⁹ Alan F. Segal, "Paul and the Beginning of Jewish Mysticism," in *Death, Ecstasy, and Other Worldly Journeys*, ed. John J. Collins and Michael Fishbane (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), 109.

¹⁰ For more information on the twelfth century renaissance, see the works of: Robert L. Benson, Giles

Constable, eds., with Carol D. Lanham, *Renaissance and Renewal in the Twelfth Century* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999); and Charles Homer Haskins, *The Renaissance of the Twelfth Century* (Cambridge, Ma. & London: Harvard U P, 1955). Also see M.-D. Chenu, *Nature, Man, and Society in the Twelfth Century: Essays on New Theological Perspectives in the Latin West*, trans. and ed. Jerome Taylor and Lester K. Little (Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press, 1968), for the fascinating changes that were occurring within Christian philosophy and religious thought.

¹¹ Berman, *Coming To Our Senses*, 213.

¹² Durant, *The Age of Faith*. 1037.

¹³ Menocal, *The Ornament of the World*, 124. Also see René Nelli, *L'Erotique des Troubadours: Contribution Ethno-Sociologique à L'Etude des Origines Sociales du Sentiment et de l'Idée d'Amour*. Thèse Principale (Toulouse: Edouard Privat, 1963), 45, for further discussion of the qiyān and the troubadours.

¹⁴ Lindsay, *The Troubadours*. 4.

¹⁵ Nelli, *L'Erotique des Troubadours*, 53-54. I have taken the three stages of love of Ibn Arabi's directly from Henry Corbin's work (listed below in note 25) and as listed in Nelli, 54 n. 86.

¹⁶ Henry Corbin, *Alone with the Alone: Creative Imagination in the Sufism of Ibn Arabi*, Bollingen Series XCI (Princeton: Princeton U P, 1997), 149.

¹⁷ Mirsky, *Dante, Eros and Kabbalah* (Syracuse: Syracuse U P, 2003), 20.

¹⁸ Nelli, *The Troubadours*, 142.

¹⁹ Robert Kehew, ed. *Lark in the Morning: The Verses of the Troubadours*, A Bilingual Edition, trans. by Ezra Pound, W.D. Snodgrass, & Robert Kehew (Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 60.

²⁰ Kehew, *Lark in the Morning*, 63-65. For the Provençal version from which the above was translated, see Appendix II.

²¹ Lindsay, *The Troubadours*, 69.

²² Paterson, *The World of The Troubadours*, 36.

²³ *Ibid.*, 37.

²⁴ Zoé Oldenbourg, *Massacre at Montségur: A History of the Albigensian Crusade*, trans. Peter Green (New York: Dorset Press, 1990), 26.

²⁵ Susan Haskins, *Mary Magdalene: Myth and Metaphor* (New York: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1993), 40.

²⁶ Lindsay, *The Troubadours*, 70.

²⁷ *St. Bernard's Sermons on the Canticle of Canticles*, trans. from original Latine [sic] by a priest of Mount Melleray, vol. II (Dublin: Browne and Nolan, Limited, 1920), 151.

²⁸ Benedicta Ward, ed., *The Influence of Saint Bernard: Anglican Essays* (Oxford: S.L.G. Press, 1976), 8.

²⁹ See Soderberg, *La Religion des Cathares*, 248-249, where the author points to the early Christian roots of this tradition.

³⁰ Marcia Falk, *The Song of Songs: Love Lyrics from the Bible*. A new translation. (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1993), xii-xiv. It is according to contemporary biblical scholars that Solomon did not write the poems himself.

³¹ Geza Vermes, *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English* (New York: Penguin Books, 1998), 609. The Dead Sea Scrolls were found in 1947 near Qumran on the Dead Sea.

³² Margaret Starbird, *Mary Magdalene: Bride in Exile* (Rochester, Vt.: Bear & Company, 2005), 40. Also see similar commentary on Mary Magdalene's place in the Song of Songs in Jane Schaberg, *The Resurrection of Mary Magdalene: Legends, Apocrypha, and the Christian Testament* (New York & London: Continuum, 2004), 35; and Haskins, *Mary Magdalene*, 66.

³³ Haskins, *Mary Magdalene*, 65-66.

³⁴ *St. Bernard's Sermons*, LVII, 154.

³⁵ Starbird, *The Woman With the Alabaster Jar*, 28-29. Also see Picknett, *Mary Magdalene*, 134-135 and Haskins, *Mary Magdalene*, 66.

³⁶ See the work of Jean-Yves Leloup as listed in the bibliography. In particular, *The Sacred Embrace of Jesus and Mary: The Sexual Mystery at the Heart of the Christian Tradition*, trans. Joseph Rowe (Rochester, Vt.: Inner Traditions, 2006).

³⁷ Wakefield and Evans, *Heresies of the High Middle Ages*, 234.

³⁸ Peter of les Vaux-de-Cernay, *History of the Albigensian Crusade*, 11.

³⁹ Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend*, trans. William Granger Ryan vol. I (Princeton: Princeton U P, 1993), 374-383.

⁴⁰ Picknett, *Mary Magdalene*, 99-100.

⁴¹ Marina Warner in her book, *Alone of All Her Sex: The Myth and Cult of the Virgin Mary* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1976) 122-123, equated the Shulamite with the Virgin Mary, hence she was the bride of Christ. This is part of the conflation of images of the Virgin Mary and Mary Magdalene.

⁴² *The Bahir*, trans., commentary, and introduction by Aryeh Kaplan (Boston & New York: Weiser Books, 1979), 67. "The Bahir is attributed to Rabbi Nehunia ben haKana, master of the first century esoteric school." See Kaplan, *The Bahir*, 200, n. 196, on the identity of Rabbi haKana.

⁴³ Benjamin, *The World of Benjamin of Tudela*, 68.

⁴⁴ Wakefield, *Heresy, Crusade and Inquisition*, 61.

⁴⁵ Gershom Scholem, *Kabbalah: A Definitive History of the Evolution, Ideas, Leading Figures and Extraordinary Influence of Jewish Mysticism* (New York: Meridian, 1978), 42. On page 45 some similarities are drawn between the Cathars and the Kabbalists. Also see Scholem's *Origins of the Kabbalah*, ed. R.J. Zwi Werblowsky and trans. Allan Arkush, Jewish Publication Society (Princeton: Princeton U P, 1987), for further discussions of the Cathars and the Jews, 12-18. Ultimately, Scholem does not see that there is much of a connection between the two groups. Clearly, there needs to be more research into the Jews of Languedoc and the Cathars. For another very interesting interpretation of the *Bahir* and its historical importance to Languedoc, see Jay Weidner and Vincent Bridges, *The Mysteries of the Great Cross of Hendaye: Alchemy and the End of Time* (Rochester, Vt.: Destiny Books, 2003), 178-188. Also see Moshe Idel, *Studies in Ecstatic Kabbalah* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1988), "Was Abraham Abulafia Influenced by the Cathars?" 33-44.

⁴⁶ Scholem, *Kabbalah*, 43.

⁴⁷ Scholem, *Kabbalah*, 45.

⁴⁸ Gershom Scholem, *On the Kabbalah and its Symbolism*, tran. Ralph Manheim (New York: Schocken Books, 1996), 105.

⁴⁹ Ithamar Gruenwald, *Apocalyptic and Merkavah Mysticism*, (Leiden/Koln: E.J. Brill, 1980), vii-viii.

⁵⁰ Neil Asher Silberman, *Heavenly Powers: Unraveling the Secret History of the Kabbalah* (New York: Grosset/Putnam, 1998), 64.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 66.

⁵² G. H. Box, ed. *The Apocalypse of Abraham*, with translation from Slavonic text and notes with J.I. Landsmens, Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (London & New York: MacMillan Co., 1919), vii-viii. *The Ascension of Isaiah* is included in this text.

⁵³ I. P. Culiano, *Out of This World: Otherworldly Journeys from Gilgamesh to Albert Einstein* (Boston & London: Shambala, 1991), 163; Robert G. Hall, "Isaiah's Ascent to See the Beloved: An Ancient Jewish Source for The Ascension of Isaiah?" *Journal of Biblical Literature* 113 (1994), 468; Alan F. Segal, "Heavenly Ascent in Hellenistic Judaism, Early Christianity and Their Environment," *Aufstieg und Niedergang der Romischen Welt* 23:2 (1980), 1378; and Martha Himmelfarb, *Tours of Hell: An Apocalyptic Form in Jewish and Christian Literature* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1983), 156 n. 56.

⁵⁴ Wakefield and Evans, *Heresies of the High Middle Ages*, 447.

⁵⁵ Hamilton, "Wisdom from the East," *Heresy and Literacy, 1000-1530*, 52; Lambert, *The Cathars*, 223 & 246; Malcolm Barber, *The Cathars*, 83 & 86-88; and Wakefield, *Heresy, Crusade, and Inquisition*, 35.

⁵⁶ Moshe Idel, *Ascensions on High in Jewish Mysticism: Pillars, Lines, Ladders* (Budapest: Central European U P, 2005), 29.

⁵⁷ Himmelfarb, *Tours of Hell*, 156.

⁵⁸ Robert G. Hall, "The Ascension of Isaiah: Community Situation, Date, and Place in Early Christianity," *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 109:2 (1990): 291.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 293.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 306. Hall asserts that "the doctrine of the Beloved's descent and ascent was rejected by many church leaders and probably by rival prophetic groups but became the center of right belief for the prophetic school behind the Ascension of Isaiah," 299.

⁶¹ George Box writes that the reference in the *Ascension of Isaiah* to Christ's birth as a Virgin-Birth was omitted from the Latin and Slavonic versions and "the elimination of all reference to the circumstances of the Birth may easily be explained as due to dogmatic reasons in the interests of a Docetic view of Christ." *Apocalypse of Abraham*, xxiv-xxv. Wakefield and Evans comment on this omission as well, in *Heresies of the High Middle Ages*, 772, n. 47.

⁶² Margaret Barker, *The Lost Prophet: The Book of Enoch and its Influence on Christianity* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1988), 46.

⁶³ Culiano, *Out of This World*, 164.

⁶⁴ Gershom Scholem, *Jewish Gnosticism, Merkabah Mysticism, and Talmudic Tradition: Based on the Israel Goldstein Lectures, Delivered at the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, New York* (New York: The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1965), chapter three, 14-19.

⁶⁵ Smith, *Clement of Alexandria and the Secret Gospel of Mark*, 237-243.

⁶⁶ Robert Hall, "Isaiah's Ascent to see the Beloved," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 113 (1994): 478.

⁶⁷ Alan F. Segal, "Heavenly Ascent," *Aufstieg und Niedergang der Romischen Welt*, 1387.

⁶⁸ Martha Himmelfarb, *Ascent to Heaven in Jewish and Christian Apocalypses* (New York & Oxford: Oxford U P, 1993), 71.

⁶⁹ Barker, *The Lost Prophet*, 75.

CHAPTER FIVE: THE *CONSOLAMENTUM*: A CHRISTIAN RITUAL

As we saw in the Literature Review, Bernard Hamilton has argued that the *consolamentum* had its roots in Christian ritual from the first centuries CE. As we shall presently see, the French historian, Jean Guiraud, makes a similar point. The *consolamentum* was the central sacramental ritual for the Cathars. It was the baptism administered by the laying on of hands that conferred on the recipient the sanctity of the Holy Spirit. Once this rite had been experienced, the candidate became a *perfectus* or *perfecta* who could then go out and teach others in the community. They were the living examples of the life of perfection. The candidate for the *consolamentum* was prepared for the ceremony by several years of training and teaching. Safe houses in the villages and towns of Languedoc served as sanctuaries for the training of potential *perfecti* and *perfectae*. For those who were “consoled,” the belief was that their souls would be released at death from the material world and would be rejoined with their ascended heavenly Spirit.¹

To achieve this station in Cathar beliefs, the *perfecti* and *perfectae* had to lead an extremely ascetic lifestyle, which was, in part, why they were held in such reverence by the general population in the region. The *consolamentum* could be administered only by *perfecti* and *perfectae* and they administered this rite for *credentes* on their deathbeds. Thus, the *credentes* did not have to live a life of such extreme asceticism, and yet they could be assured of their place in the seventh heaven with the righteous dead. Through this ritual they participated in the ascension process at death. This assurance of an

individual's place in heaven was part of the Cathars' belief in salvation that *The Vision of Isaiah* gave to the community. It was such a powerful belief that many princes in Languedoc had their own *perfectus* follow them wherever they traveled so that in case of death, they would be administered the *consolamentum* and their place in the heavenly realms would be assured. Their soul would be reunited with their heavenly Spirit and they would not have to return to the earthly realm. This central ritual of baptism was popular perhaps because of the visionary element to the ritual that held out hope for the one who was dying. The *perfecti* and the *perfectae* had such a profound effect on the people of Languedoc, as evidenced in the inquisitional records because they were seen to be holy. They were able to provide people with hope through the ritual of the deathbed *consolamentum*. Mark Pegg comments on the power conveyed by this ceremony:

The notion that holiness was something that all men and women could, and would, one day experience suffused the expectation, and the performance, of this necessary ritual. The *consolamen* [*sic*] also assumed that the sensation of sanctity lay outside the visible restriction of time and space, in that being made a good man in the last moment of life was exactly the same as having lived ten, twenty, thirty years as a *bon ome* [*sic*].²

The *perfecti* and the *perfectae* were referred to as "friends of God" or *amicx de Dieu*. They were thought to have the power to be the vehicle for the *credentes* to reach their place in heaven; that made the dying person turn to them for help in that last step of life.

Certain highlights of the *consolamentum* will be reviewed to illustrate its connections to the New Testament and early Christianity.

According to Bernard Hamilton, who traces the *consolamentum* to the Byzantine Bogomils, "the Cathar *Ritual* is not the work of a medieval dualist sect."³ Jean Guiraud

examined the *Ritual* and points out similarities between it and early Christian rites.⁴

Hamilton observes that Guiraud: “analysed the *Ritual* in detail and concluded that almost all its elements were adaptations of a very ancient orthodox Christian liturgy and that parts of it were in origin pre-Nicene, and a similar conclusion was reached by Frère Dondaine who edited the Latin text of the *Ritual*.”⁵ Hamilton also comments:

Cathar worship was regulated by the Ritual, a vernacular service-book which was very archaic in form, closely liturgical formulae, as both Guiraud and Dondaine observed, are orthodox in language and very archaic in form, closely resembling the rites described by St. Hippolytus [*sic*] of Rome.⁶

Malcolm Lambert also believes that the ceremony of the *consolamentum* was a part of orthodox Christianity.⁷ He points out that it contains no references to dualism. Walter

Wakefield writes about the *Ritual*:

The ritual in Provençal reminds the believer that the church he was about to join comprised the heavenly people of God, who by deception had been separated from their Holy Father, but were to be restored by Jesus Christ. In the church he would receive the Holy Spirit, just as Christ and Paul had promised.⁸

The “church” is not a reference to actual buildings. This is how the Cathars came to define their hierarchy. Usually, each diocese was organized along the lines of the Church of Rome. A bishop was designated for each major diocese. A Cathar bishop had an “elder son” and a “younger son” to succeed him in that order. This was similar to the Bogomil practice of having a *filius maior* and a *filius minor*. Bernard and Janet Hamilton comment on this practice:

the Bogomils adopted a distinctive form of episcopal government, in which each diocesan bishop was assisted by two coadjutors, known as his elder and younger sons, who had rights of succession. This system closely resembles the Bogomil teaching about God and his two sons.⁹

Bernard Hamilton believes that the hierarchy of the Cathar church came to the West as a result of the Council of St. Félix, c.1172.¹⁰ It was after this time that there are references to regional dioceses and bishops. However, it is significant that early Christianity began to organize a hierarchy that sounds similar. Harold W. Attridge comments on the structure of this hierarchy as developed by Paul's disciples:

The Christian community soon formalized the ways in which it worshiped. As it did so, a leadership structure evolved in which authority was increasingly vested in functionaries of local communities – first in boards of elders, later in individual bishops. There was a hierarchical arrangement consisting of an apostolic figure with regional authority (1 Timothy 3:1–13) – as well as an order of “widows” (1 Timothy 5:1–16). The latter were apparently real widows who both received support from the Church and assisted its leaders.¹¹

This hierarchy, as attested to in several New Testament books (the Pastoral Epistles, 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, and Titus),¹² was very similar to that of the Cathars, even with the need for leaders to be of good standing. It is highly significant that the Cathar term *bons hommes* is an exact derivative of the phrase used in 1 Timothy, which literally means good men in their communities and the fact that, for example, Paul's community at Corinth met in houses of patrons.¹³ The Cathar *perfecti* and *perfectae* used safe houses, which were usually those belonging to wealthy families who supported them, to teach initiates and have meals with *credentes* and talk about their beliefs and practices.

To return to the *consolamentum*, it was either the bishop or a deacon who would carry out this ceremony with other *perfecti/perfectae* present to serve as witnesses and to welcome the new initiate into their circle. “They would impose their hands on the body of the initiate while the Gospel was held over his head, their prayers were believed to win

him forgiveness for the sin committed at the fall from heaven, as well as for his transgressions in this earthly life.”¹⁴ Once someone had been consoled, it was imperative that they keep their vows of purity; otherwise they would have to be reconsoled. “The *perfecti* acted as the focal point for believers still living in the material world, for they could make intercessory prayers to God (which could not be done by anyone who had not taken the *consolamentum*)”¹⁵; the *perfecti* and *perfectae* were the vessels for the Holy Spirit. The *perfecti* (it was not safe for women to travel about) traveled in pairs to carry out their ministry. This practice was based on Jesus’s teachings: “For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.”¹⁶

We are very fortunate to have a copy of the Cathar *Ritual* in Provençal that is known as the Lyon manuscript. Bernard Hamilton believes that this text was written in the second half of the thirteenth century and was translated from the Latin.¹⁷ There is another copy of the *Ritual* in Florence, which is in Latin.¹⁸ According to Hamilton, the text itself came from the Bogomils, although there is no complete Bogomil text; “the Radoslav manuscript preserves a part of the Bogomil Ritual, and the Ritual was translated in its entirety into Latin in the twelfth century for the use of Western converts.”¹⁹ Hamilton also notes that: “the Cathars of Languedoc were innovators in adopting a vernacular liturgy.”²⁰ This was another way in which the *perfecti* and the *perfectae* were able to influence Languedoc society: they taught in the vernacular and taught the local people to read through their translated texts. As one villager commented to her inquisitors: “The Cathar bible was composed by God in Heaven.”²¹

To begin the ritual, the candidate would go through a preliminary ceremony of the

melioramentum, which was also a form of greeting used by *credentes* when they would meet a *perfectus* or a *perfecta*. Here it was used in the opening of the *consolamentum* and the closing of the ritual. The candidate genuflected three times, and said each time, ‘Bless us, have mercy upon us,’²² as a greeting. The elder leading the ceremony responded at the end with, “God be prayed that God will make you a good Christian and lead you to a good end.”²³ The candidate was led through a series of prayers for pardon and penance, and then the opening of the Gospel of John (1:1–17) was read in Latin. Then the elder gave a thorough discourse on the Lord’s Prayer, which formed the central prayer for all *perfecti* and *perfectae* during the day, before a meal, or at any other time.

This part of the ceremony was based on the Cathar “Gloss on the Lord’s Prayer.”²⁴ In the prayer, they used “supersubstantial bread” rather than “daily bread.” This was a reference to the laws of Jesus Christ or the spiritual doctrine of charity and it is found in the Vulgate in Mark 6:11.²⁵ This concept is further elaborated on in the Lord’s Prayer that comes from I Corinthians 13: 4,7:

But when this living bread, one bread and one body, descends from heaven and is given to this people, aforesaid, He teaches them to seek still other bread from the Father, the supersubstantial bread, which is charity. For charity is called supersubstantial bread because it is above all other substances, that is above visitation, spirit, life, soul, heart, body.²⁶

The Cathars believed that the teachings of Jesus were the spiritual food that gave them the strength to carry out His command of charity in this world. They rejected the Roman Church’s belief in the literal use of bread as representing His body. Malcolm Barber comments on this part of the ceremony with a discourse on the Lord’s Prayer:

In Latin, this takes the form of a line-by-line interpretation of the meaning of the Lord’s Prayer, which included the use of the phrase

‘supersubstantial bread’ rather than ‘daily bread’, meaning, according to the Ritual, ‘the law of Christ’, but apparently regarded by orthodox commentators as evidence of heresy. In Occitan, there are a series of Scriptural injunctions intended to demonstrate how ‘the presentation which you make before the sons of Jesus Christ confirms the faith and preaching of the Church of God as Holy Scriptures give us to understand it.’²⁷

It is an interesting note that the use of supersubstantial bread was to become a mark of heresy for the Cathars according to the inquisitors, and yet it was a part of the Eastern Orthodox tradition.

Another indicator for heresy was the doxology of the Eastern Church that the Cathars used in “the Kingdom, the Power, and the Glory, for ever and ever” at the end of this prayer which according to Steven Runciman, is found in the Greek version of the Gospel of Matthew. This version was accepted by the Eastern Orthodox Church and was also used in the Slavonic translations of the Bible. However, it was not in the Vulgate.²⁸ It would appear that the Cathars learned the Lord’s Prayer from Greek sources.²⁹

Wakefield and Evans indicate that “the three substances of spirits, lives, and souls are symbolized by ‘the kingdom, the power, and the glory’ of the doxology, they [the Cathars] acknowledge that these substances belong to God the Father, although they are held captive by evil.”³⁰ The body in this material realm holds the soul and the spirit. The spirit maintains the divine spark of God, the Creator, and upon death the body dies but the soul, if an individual has been consoled, will be reunited with its heavenly spirit in the seventh heaven, also known as the Kingdom of God.

To return to the ceremony, having been given a discourse on the Lord’s Prayer the candidate was led through the *consolamentum*, which began with a justification for the

use of laying on of hands rather than baptism by water. The candidate knelt before the elder:

This holy baptism with the imposition of hands was instituted by Jesus Christ, according to that which St. Luke recounts, and He says that His friends shall perform it, as St. Mark relates, 'They shall lay their hands upon the sick and they shall recover.' This holy baptism, by which the Holy Spirit is given, the Church of God has preserved from the apostles until this time and it has passed from Good Men to Good Men until the present moment, and it will continue to do so until the end of the world.³¹

Christine Thouzellier comments on the connection between early Christianity and the baptism of spirit:

En Syrie, la *Didascalie* écrite en grec par un évêque d'origine juive, dans la première moitié du III siècle, nous est parvenue à travers deux traductions syriaque et latine. Ce recueil pénitential, muet sur l'ordination, établit cependant un parallèle entre le baptême et l'imposition des mains qui, l'un ou l'autre, transmet le Saint-Esprit au pénitent.³²

(In Syria, the *Didascalie* which was written in Greek by a bishop who had been Jewish, in the first part of the third century, has come down to us in two translations, Syriac and Latin. This collection of penances, which is silent on ordination, established a parallel between baptism and the imposition of the hands whereby one or the other transmits the Holy Spirit to the penitent.)

Upon being told of the duties expected of a *perfectus*, as designated through scripture, the candidate is told:

And if you have the will to receive this strength and power, you must keep all the commandments of Christ and of the New Testament to the utmost of your ability. Know that He had commanded that a man should not commit adultery, or kill, or lie; should swear no oath, nor pilfer or steal; he should not do to others that which he would not wish done to himself.³³

Each and every line or exhortation was backed up by a scriptural reference. The candidates were told that they should:

hate this world and its works and the things that are of this world. For St. John says in his Epistle: ‘Dearly beloved, love not the world, nor the things which are in the world. If any man love the world, the charity of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world is the concupiscence of the flesh, and the concupiscence of the eyes, and the pride of life, which is not of the Father, but is of the world.’³⁴

The candidate would then be “consoled” with the Book on their head, and the other *perfecti* and *perfectae* present would place their right hands on the candidate.

The ceremony concluded in the way customary with the Cathars, with mutual requests for forgiveness of sins known as the Pardon, and the Act of Peace in which the men embraced and kissed each other on the cheek and the women kissed each other and the Gospel.³⁵

The kiss is known as the “kiss of peace,” and this is reminiscent of the “agape” teachings of early Christianity. Christine Thouzellier remarks about this part of the ritual: “Les deux cérémonies du baptême et de l’ordination s’achèvent, dans l’Eglise primitive, par le baiser de paix que, après le consolamentum, révèle seul le Rituel provençal.”³⁶ That is, in this ceremony the Cathars maintained the “kiss of peace,” a practice of early Christianity.

During this ceremony, the candidate had to recognize and accept the inherent threat of evil of the material world, even while the Cathar scriptures and practices show the importance they placed on the body-soul path in this material realm. The Cathars cared for the sick and educated the local population, demonstrating that they were concerned with people and could not have despised the body or the material world. The world was an evil trap, filled with temptations but charity in this lifetime was the will of God. If they did their work in this lifetime, they would not have to return to the physical realm.

Through the spiritual cleansing of the *consolamentum*, the *perfecti* were obliged

to use that purity of spirit as a guide for others. As Wakefield and Evans point out in their summary of this ritual:

Thereafter, the Christian renounced the material world and accepted a strict moral and ethical code. His life was to be spent in imitation of the apostles. He was to return good for evil in every circumstance and suffer without retaliation the persecution which must be endured by every true follower of Christ. To kill, to lie, to take an oath was to commit mortal sin. Sexual relationships which would reproduce the bodies of this world were forbidden. Meat, eggs, and cheese, as products of coition, must not be used. Obeying these injunctions, the Cathar was assured that on the death of his body his soul would be released from its material prison and would find salvation.³⁷

These vows are similar to what any renunciate takes in order to enter into the Catholic monastic tradition. What is different here is that the Cathar *perfecti* and the *perfectae* lived and taught in the world. They were held in reverence by the local people, who greeted them with the *melioramentum*. The opportunity to eat a meal with them was recognized to be a special occasion. "Participation with the *perfecti* was an act of experiencing moments of being in contact with the divine."³⁸

Salvation was found in the fact that the soul would not be reincarnated. Yuri Stoyanov comments on this belief:

Crucially, the *consolamentum* was intended to secure the reunification of the soul with its heavenly spirit, restoring its heavenly status before the Fall, notions transmitted somehow to the medieval dualist from early eastern, probably Syrian Christianity.³⁹

The Church of Rome supported the doctrine that faith in Jesus' Incarnation, Passion, and Resurrection was all that was needed for salvation. This belief in the Resurrection does not support reincarnation, a belief that had been present in early Christianity and Gnostic groups as well. The Gospels do allude to John the Baptist and possibly Jesus as reincarnations of Elijah and Jeremiah; see Matthew 16:14; Mark 6:15; and Luke 9:8.⁴⁰

As stated earlier, it was the duty of the *perfecti* and the *perfectae* to conduct the *consolamentum* at the time of a *credente*'s death. The deathbed consolation was a way for *credentes* to avoid having to observe the strict asceticism of a *perfectus*. "The transformation of a person into a *bon ome* [*sic*] or *bona femna* [*sic*] on his or her deathbed consciously attempted to create profoundly new relations, deep intimacies, unlike anything in life, in short, a friendship with God."⁴¹ This service to the dying was another way for the *perfecti* and the *perfectae* to demonstrate their charity to the *credentes*. At the height of the Inquisition, the performance of this rite was conducted in secrecy and under the cover of those who were willing to help the Cathars, despite the threat of torture or death by an inquisitor.

Another agreement between the *credentes* and the *perfecti*, called the *convenza*, meant that even someone who could no longer speak could be consoled.⁴² These agreements were to ensure a pure Cathar death, which meant that the spirit would be free of the material world and salvation was ensured. Walter Wakefield comments on the Cathars' view of death and how the Church distorted this view:

A great deal has also been written, some of it little short of nonsense, about the supposed hatred of Cathars for human life. They astonished observers by their calm acceptance of death. However, to attribute to them a hatred for all life and the wish to see it extinguished is grossly to exaggerate the Cathars' conviction, shared by the orthodox Christians, that this world is only a temporary abode of the soul.⁴³

The Cathars were revered in Languedoc for their apostolic lifestyle that incorporated a simple approach to God and life. It appealed to so many people that the Church of Rome had to bring an end to the heretics.

Another demonstration of the importance for the Cathars and *credentes* to be able

to die on their own terms, was the *endura*. Often, someone who was ill and had received the *consolamentum*, would simply stop eating to ensure that their perfected state would remain intact.⁴⁴ If the *perfecti* were too ill to say the Lord's Prayer before taking sustenance, they chose not to eat, because to eat without saying the Lord's Prayer before hand would adversely affect their perfected state. These specific rituals and agreements point to the importance the Cathars placed on the transition between the material world and the journey to heaven.

Most historians assert that this practice was not used until the Inquisition was underway when the Cathars were being hunted down and the *credentes* could not always get the *perfecti* to come and administer the *consolamentum* before death.⁴⁵ Often during these times of the Inquisition, a priest would be sent around to the house of one who was dying to administer the last rites according to the Church of Rome.

As outlined in the *consolamentum* ceremony, the Lord's Prayer was repeated throughout the day by the *perfecti*, and during the blessing of their one meal a day. Their meal might be taken with *credentes* who would have provided the food, and the bread would be blessed at that time. The *perfecti* fasted forty times a year and three times a week, yet they were constantly on the road preaching and teaching to all who would listen. Alan Segal points to fasting as one of the methods used in the ascension process and comments as follows:

Fasting is a well understood technique for achieving changes in consciousness and was practiced frequently by the heavenly journeyers; in some sense it does not matter whether the culture chooses to mark the activity as directly related to the vision or merely one of the preparations, like obtaining ritual purity.⁴⁶

The *perfecti* and the *perfectae* were distinguishable because of their pallor from

refraining from food so much of the year and this was a reminder that their bodies were the pure vessels for the Holy Spirit.

Once a month, the *perfecti* and the *perfectae* would gather for the *apparallamentum*, which was a group confession of sins, led by a deacon. Malcolm Barber comments on this ritual:

The rite concludes with a powerful plea, unmistakably Cathar, 'Lord, judge and condemn the imperfections of the flesh. Have no pity on the flesh, born of corruption, but show meaning to the spirit, which is imprisoned. Direct for us the days, the hours, the obeisances, the fasts, the prayers, and the preachings as is the custom of good Christians, that we be not judged or condemned among felons at the Day of Judgement.'⁴⁷

This was an opportunity to clear one's soul of contact with the material world and be renewed in one's conviction to carry on with the work as a perfected individual.

Credientes could be present to observe this meeting or ritual; it was an opportunity for them to be present during an intimate moment of confessions and reaffirmation of vows.

Mark Pegg writes the following observation of the importance of this meeting:

This union, this coming together of *crezens* [*sic*] around some good men, usually once a month, was about the precise and regulated activation of that shimmering connection with the divine that truly made some humans, especially some men, into the 'friends of God.' All those adoring village courtesies which momentarily proved that the holy could be glimpsed in ordinary rituals of respect found final proof in the vibrant excitable atmosphere of the *aparelhamen* [*sic*].⁴⁸

The *perfecti* used the vernacular when preaching which enabled them to connect on a more personal level with the local people.⁴⁹ Their prayers were not just for Sundays, but for everyday. They prayed constantly, as they believed themselves to be the perfected vessels of the Holy Spirit. They lived their lives as such. It is clear that Cathar rituals and prayer imbued life with meaning; otherwise there would not have been such a following

of *credentes*. The cosmology of the Cathars, deriving from ancient apocalyptic and pseudepigraphic sources of ancient Judaism in the intertestamental period, and from early Christian apocalypses such as the *Vision of Isaiah*, was reflected in their practices. These practices and their ideational associations provided a framework that gave an individual a sense of place in the universe. Such observations can be made through the reading of the Cathar texts and by the testimony of the adherents of this religion as witnessed by the inquisitors' records. The *perfecti* and the *perfectae* were held in great esteem for the ascetic life they led: they were holy people who were "friends of God." A woman who appeared before the inquisitors encapsulated the regional feeling for the Cathars: "When you have heard the goodmen speak, you can no longer do without them, you are theirs forever."⁵⁰

One of the keys to the success of the Cathars was that they supported a literate society that was also imbued with the mystical *fin amor* poetry of the troubadours. Moreover, they encouraged followers to decide for themselves what the correct approach to God might be. Through their dedication to teaching people to read and translating their texts into the vernacular (including the Bible), people could at least begin to find their own meanings in scripture. The Church's policy of keeping the Bible from the people had backfired in Languedoc, where there was a greater sense of the need for a more personal relationship to God.

CONCLUSION

The Cathars were interwoven into Languedoc society, and their rituals and

simplicity of life provided an example for many people, who held them in a place of adoration and respect. The *consolamentum* was the centerpiece of ritual observance for the Cathars. It was the means through which one's spirit was perfected and could return to the Kingdom of God. This was also the ritual that the *perfecti* and the *perfectae* performed for the *credentes* on their deathbeds so that they could be saved in this life and find their place near to God in heaven. It represented the ascension process for the dying, while *The Vision of Isaiah* was a preparatory text of ascension for the living. The *consolamentum*, as a baptism of spirit, which used the laying on of hands, incorporated an earlier Christian form of initiation.⁵¹ In comparing the Latin and Provençal version of the Cathar ritual, Père Dondaine notes: "La comparaison de ses cérémonies avec celles des anciens monuments de la liturgie catholique a révélé l'origine chrétienne du culte cathare, et plus spécialement de ses rites de la tradition de l'oraison et du consolamentum."⁵²

Throughout the ceremony of the *consolamentum*, there was a scriptural reasoning for all that they performed. Roelof van den Broek also points to this ceremony as having early Christian roots:

They came not merely spontaneously, by their close reading of the Bible, to a form of Christianity that resembled that of the primitive Church; they were also the heirs of eastern Christians who had themselves preserved ideas and practices which had been current in the first centuries.⁵³

It would appear, from the evidence, that the Cathars maintained a strong presence in Languedoc society until the Church decided to intervene and end "The Great Heresy."

In this analysis of the *consolamentum*, I have sought to show the Christian roots of the Cathar faith. These early Christian traditions were skillfully distorted by the Church and Inquisition to discredit the Cathars and make them seem to be a heretical

sect. For example, the Cathar use of supersubstantial bread in the Lord's Prayer, which exists in the Greek version, was considered heretical. Their refusal to take an oath – because they believed that they were to make an oath with God not with people – this came to be taken as an indicator of heresy. Their use of baptism with their hands rather than with water was considered a heresy, yet the practice is mentioned in several areas of the New Testament. The *endura* was considered a heresy because it permitted one to die in peace. This demonstrates the importance of a more personal approach to God that was contrary to policies of the Church of Rome. The Cathars served their communities by teaching people to read the Bible and discussing scripture, which was not permitted by the Church. At a time when people were seeking a closer relationship and understanding of God and one's place in the world, the Cathars provided a very Christian approach to those who wanted to learn.

Endnotes

¹ Peter of les Vaux-de-Cernay, *The History of the Albigensian Crusade*, 12 n. 39.

² Pegg, *The Corruption of Angels*, 104

³ Hamilton, "Origins of the Dualist Church of Drugunthia," *Eastern Churches Review* #6 (1974): 115-24, the quotation comes from 118.

⁴ Jean Guiraud, "Le Consolamentum Cathare," *Révue des Questions Historiques* LXXV (1904): 74-112.

⁵ Hamilton, "Origins of the Dualist Church of Drugunthia," 118.

⁶ Hamilton, *The Albigensian Crusade*, 9. Hippolytus lived 170-236.

⁷ Lambert, *The Cathars*, 76. Barber describes some of the *consolamentum* in, *The Cathars*, 76-81; and Mark Pegg finds the *consolamentum* referred to in Ms. 609 and points out the references in, *The Corruption of Angels*, 54, 61, 101, 104-105.

⁸ Wakefield, *Heresy, Crusade and Inquisition*, 37.

⁹ Hamilton and Hamilton, *Christian Dualist Heresies*, 44.

¹⁰ Hamilton, "The Cathar Council of St. Felix," 33-36.; Barber, *The Cathars*, 21; Lambert, *The Cathars*, 47-48. Pegg disagrees in, *The Corruption of Angels*, 145-146, n.14.

¹¹ Harold W. Attridge, "Christianity From the Destruction of Jerusalem to Constantine's Adoption of the New Religion: 70-312 C.E.," *Christianity and Rabbinic Judaism*, ed. Hershel Shanks (Washington, D.C.: Biblical Archaeological Society, 1992), 155-156.

- ¹² Ibid., 156.
- ¹³ Ibid., 155.
- ¹⁴ Wakefield and Evans, *Heresies of the High Middle Ages*, 465.
- ¹⁵ Barber, *The Cathars*, 79.
- ¹⁶ Matt. 18, 20: Hamilton "The Cathars and Christian Perfection," *The Medieval Religious Church: Universities, Heresy, and the Religious Life: Essays in Honor of Gordon Leff*, eds. Peter Biller and Barrie Dobson, (Woodbridge, U.K., 1999), 16 n. 55.
- ¹⁷ Bernard Hamilton, "Wisdom from the East," 48, in *Heresy and Literacy, 1000-1530*, eds. Peter Biller and Anne Hudson, Cambridge Studies in Medieval Literature #23 (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 1994).
- ¹⁸ Ibid., 48. Both texts are in René Nelli, *Écritures Cathares: La Cène Secrète, Le Livre des Deux Principes, Traité Cathare, Le Rituel Occitan, Le Rituel Latin: Textes Précathares et Cathares*, (Paris: Editions Planète, 1968), 207-225 and 226-247, respectively. Also in English, Wakefield and Evans, *Heresies of the High Middle Ages*, 465-493.
- ¹⁹ Ibid., 49. Radoslav indicates that its origin is Bosnian, 49.
- ²⁰ Ibid., 49.
- ²¹ Ladurie, *Montaillou*, 235.
- ²² Wakefield and Evans, *Heresies of the High Middle Ages*, 467.
- ²³ Lambert, *The Cathars*, 142.
- ²⁴ Wakefield and Evans, *Heresies of the High Middle Ages*, 485-488.
- ²⁵ Ibid., 778 n. 8.
- ²⁶ Ibid., 618.
- ²⁷ Barber, *The Cathars*, 77-78.
- ²⁸ Runciman, *Medieval Manichee*, 166.
- ²⁹ Ibid., 166.
- ³⁰ Wakefield and Evans, *Heresies of the High Middle Ages*, 594.
- ³¹ Ibid., 488, Mark 16:18. A complete translation of the *consolamentum* is found in Appendix II.
- ³² Christine Thouzellier, *Rituel Cathare*, introduction, traduction, texte critique, et notes (Paris: Les Editions du Cerf, 1977), 105. Also see 96 for New Testament references to the laying on of hands. The *Didascalia Apostolorum*, a third-century text that took the *Didache* as its model, it describes the duties of the followers of Christ.
- ³³ Wakefield and Evans, *Heresies of the High Middle Ages*, 489-490.
- ³⁴ Ibid., 490.
- ³⁵ Ibid., 78. Also see Brenon, *Le Vrai Visage*, 77.
- ³⁶ *Rituel Cathare*, Thouzellier, 103. "The two ceremonies of baptism and ordination were concluded, in the early Church, by the kiss of peace which according to the *consolamentum* were revived only in the Ritual provençal."
- ³⁷ Wakefield and Evans, eds., *Heresies of the High Middle Ages*, 465.

³⁸ Pegg, *The Corruption of Angels*, 98.

³⁹ Stoyanov, *The Other God*, 195.

⁴⁰ Elizabeth Clare Prophet and Erin L. Prophet, *Reincarnation: The Missing Link in Christianity* (Corwin Springs, Mt.: Summit U P, 1997), 346, n. 2.

⁴¹ Pegg, *The Corruption of Angels*, 105.

⁴² Barber, *The Cathars*, 79.

⁴³ Wakefield, *Heresy, Crusade and Inquisition*, 40.

⁴⁴ See Duvernoy, *Le Catharisme*, vol 1, 164-170; Barber, *The Cathars*, 103-104; Wakefield, *Heresy, Crusade and Inquisition*, 40-41; Oldenbourg, *Massacre at Montségur*, 51; and Lambert, *The Cathars*, 240-244.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Segal, *Life After Death: A History of the Afterlife in Western Religion* (New York: Doubleday, 2004), 332.

⁴⁷ Lambert, *The Cathars*, 142-143.

⁴⁸ Pegg, *The Corruption of Angels*, 98.

⁴⁹ Hamilton, "Wisdom from the East," 58.

⁵⁰ Ladurie, *Montaillou*, 240.

⁵¹ An area for further research would be to explore the evolution of the idea of the use of laying on of hands within the Christian tradition up to the present day.

⁵² A. Dondaine, O.P, *Un Traité Néo-Manichéen du XIII Siècle: Le Liber de Duobus Principiis, Suivi d'un Fragment de Rituel Cathare*, (Rome: Instituto Storico Domenicano, 1939), 35." The comparison of these two ceremonies with those of early testimonies of catholic liturgy revealed the Christian origins of the cult of the cathars."

⁵³ Roelof van den Broek, "The Cathars: Medieval Gnostics?" in *Gnosis and Hermeticism: From Antiquity to Modern Times*, eds. Roelof van den Broek and Wouter J. Hanegraaff (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998), 88.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION

We can clearly see how the Cathars became “The Great Heresy.” By viewing them as heretics who practiced a religion that was outside the bounds of later Roman Christianity, scholars have biased our ability to view them as a part of a vital Christian tradition. The five contemporary scholars whose research provides the framework for what we know of the Cathars have mentioned the Christian roots of this group, but they are viewed as heretics just the same. This PDE demonstrates that the Cathars did use practices that had their genesis in early Christianity, and that therefore they should be viewed as serious Christians.

The Cathars’ use of *The Vision of Isaiah*, an ascension text for the living and the central sacrament of the *consolamentum*, (ascension at death), makes it evident that the Cathars were Christians practicing an earlier form of Christian ritual. Though historians agree with this assessment, they have so far refrained from investigating in detail what these roots or connections might be. They have described Catharism as Bogomilism, as a dissenting Christian sect, or as a medieval form of Gnosticism. Though many of these elements are present in Cathar doctrine and practice, they do not represent the unique dynamic exemplified by this highly creative and devout religious group. By viewing the Cathars as practitioners of an early form of Christianity, perhaps the present research will move in a new direction that will reveal more questions about those connections. For example, since the Bogomils brought *The Vision of Isaiah* to the West, what were some of the sources for that text, and what was the Bogomil experience of ascension?

Another missing piece to the Cathar picture that is not treated by the five

historians on whom I have focused is the silence about Mary Magdalene. She is mentioned in the primary texts as being incorporated into certain Cathar practices and yet no further research has been done in this area. The veil over Mary Magdalene needs to be lifted in order to gain a better understanding of both traditional Christianity and Catharism. Did the troubadours, Muslims, and Kabbalists as well as Christian mystics contribute a powerful strand of the divine feminine to Cathar mysticism? I have suggested that they did.

The possibility of a kabbalistic-Cathar connection stems from the reality that the Jews had been a part of the cultural mix of Languedoc since the time of the Roman Empire and the fall of the Second Temple. The area around Narbonne, which would become known as Septimania, was their central region. The twelfth-century renaissance in Languedoc was an expansive time because of the blossoming of ideas and the translations being made from Greek texts that had been in the Muslim libraries in Spain. The Jewish scholars and rabbis were also in the midst of a great mystical shift; theirs incorporated the *Bahir* with the study of the Kabbalah. Was there any direct interaction between the Jews and the Cathars? There is no evidence of this, and yet the two traditions show similar strands of ideas, particularly the practice of ascension and the feminine element in divinity. The troubadours need to be a part of the investigation into the ascension practice, as was demonstrated in chapter four. The view of Languedoc and its history needs to expand to take in more of what was actually happening during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, and more research needs to be done with this view in mind.

It was the diversity of culture in Languedoc that allowed a confluence of beliefs in this region, and each group made a major contribution to the renaissance. This window of light, religious tolerance, prosperity, and cultural renaissance was forcibly shut by the extirpation of the Cathars through the Albigensian Crusade and the Inquisition, and yet it is important to move beyond the destruction of a culture and examine what streams of thoughts and ideas emerged from that time.

Can “heretics” ever be completely extinguished? I do not believe that they can be. Though Catharism was extirpated in Languedoc and Europe, the Cathars’ ideas were not. Some of these ideas resurfaced with the rise of Protestantism, in the beliefs of the Quakers, and the Western esoteric tradition, to name but a few. Certainly the Protestant revolution that arose in the sixteenth century exemplified the desire to return to simpler form of worship, like that found in early Christianity. Walter Wakefield alludes to the idea that there might have been a link between Cathar ideas and the Protestant tradition, but more research must be done to verify the connection. The Cathars’ idea of an individual path to God, enriched by the ascent practice and, outside of the confines of a religious institution, became part of the more radical sects of the Reformation, and continues to flourish in society in our time. Future research will also no doubt shed light on the Cathars as a link in the chain connecting Western Christendom to the Eastern Orthodox Church.

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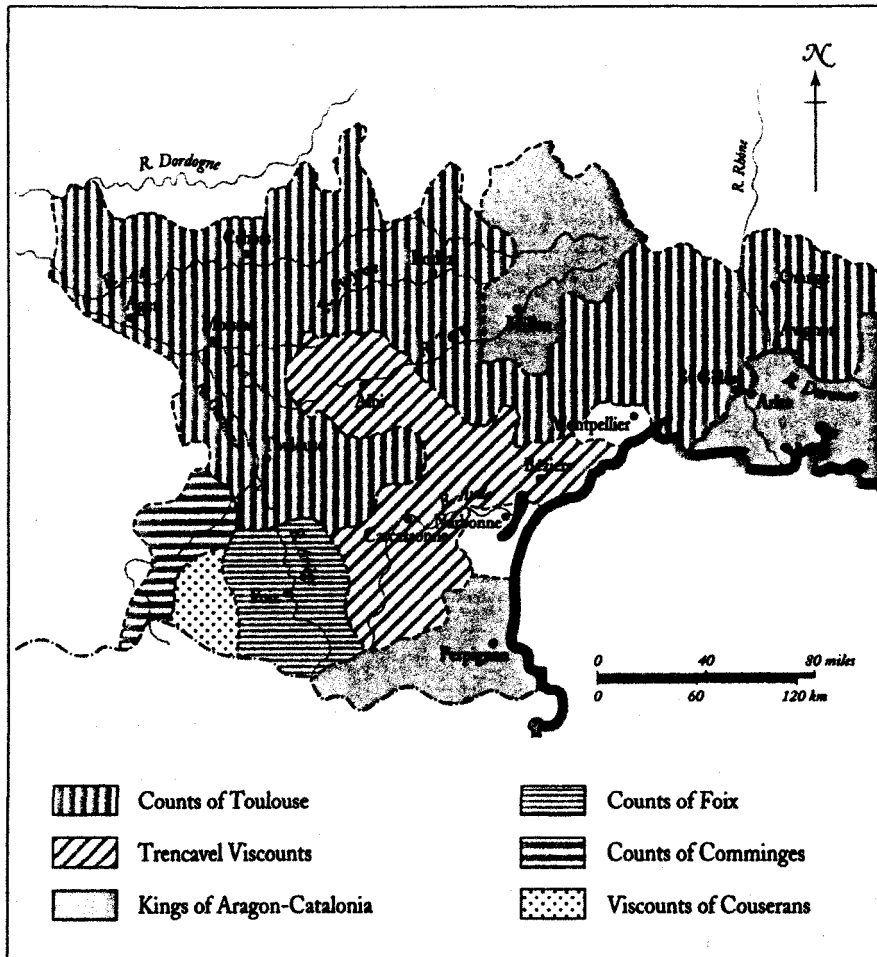
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APPENDIX I



The political structure of Languedoc before the Albigensian Crusades

Malcolm Barber, *The Cathars*, 261.



The Bogomils in the Byzantine Empire

Malcolm Barber, The Cathars, 260.

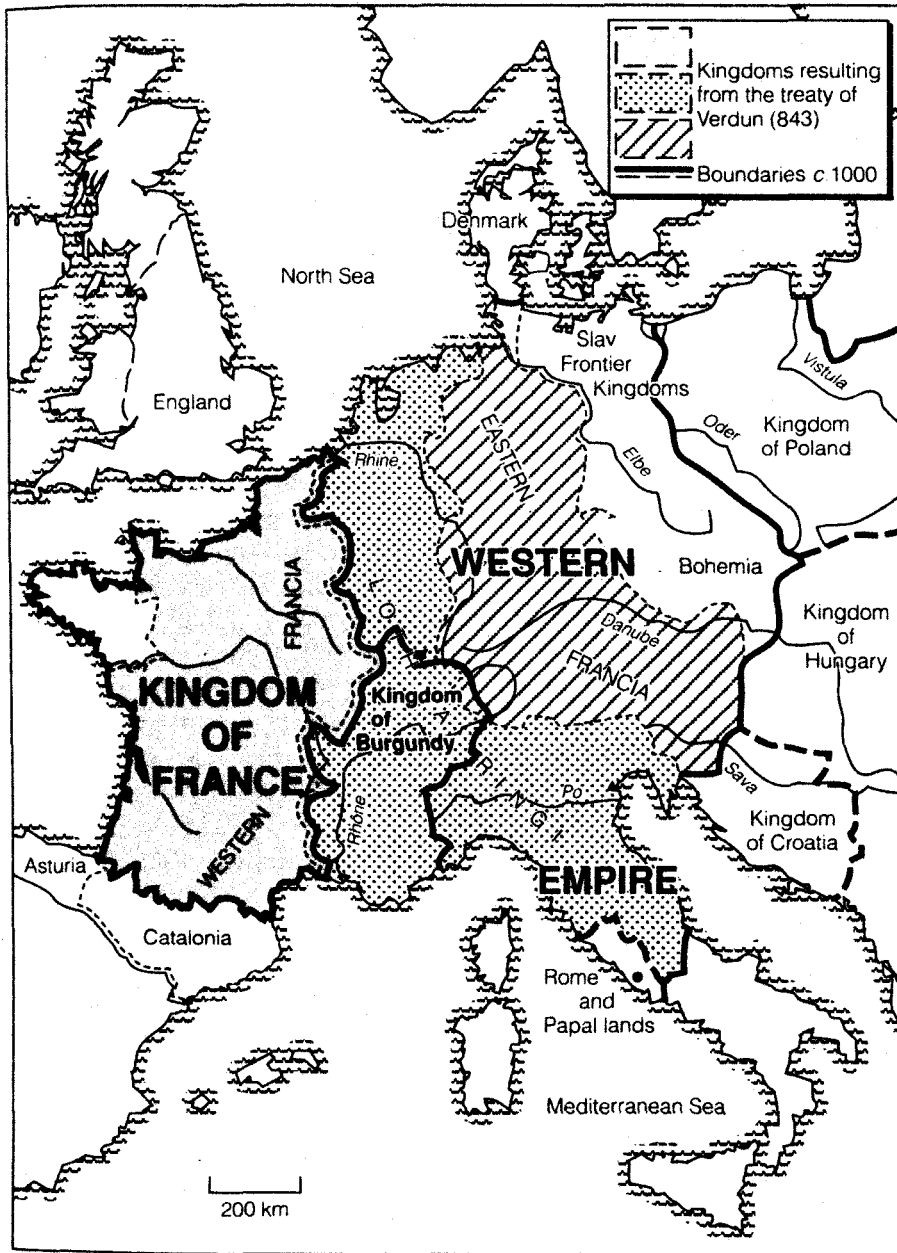
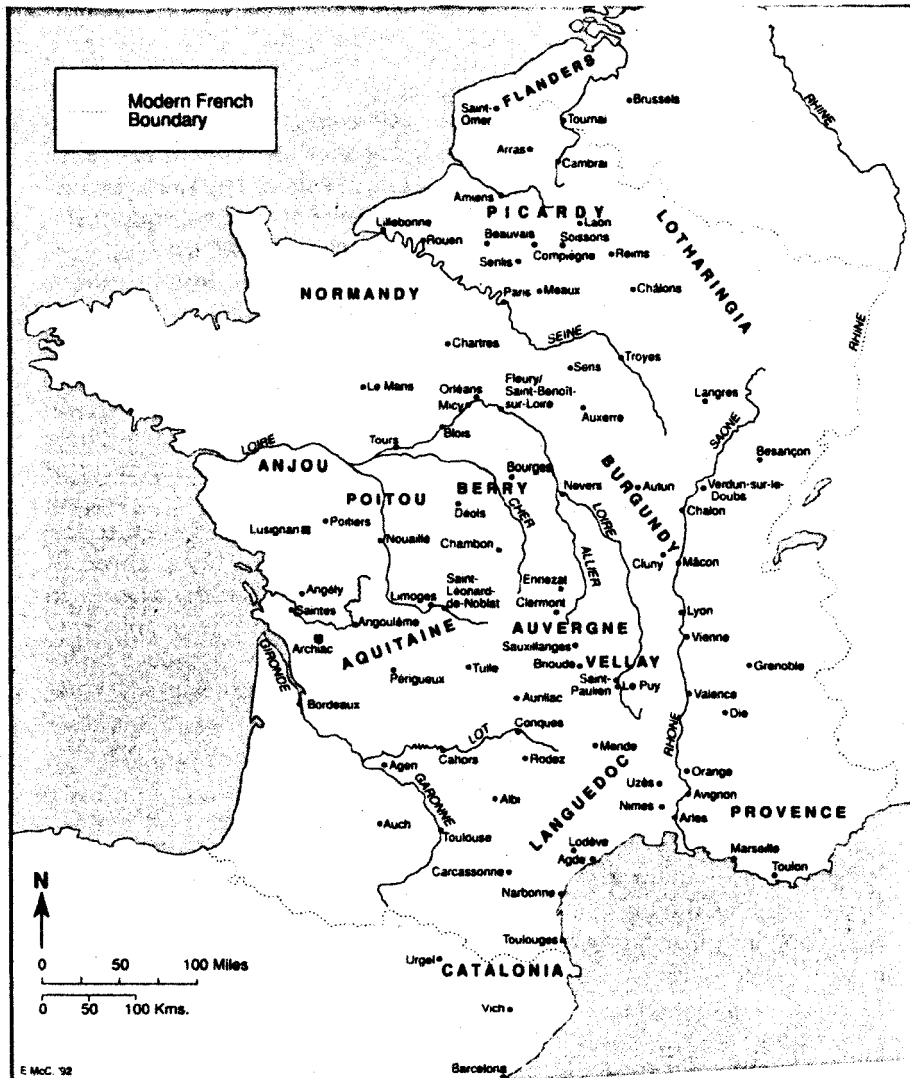


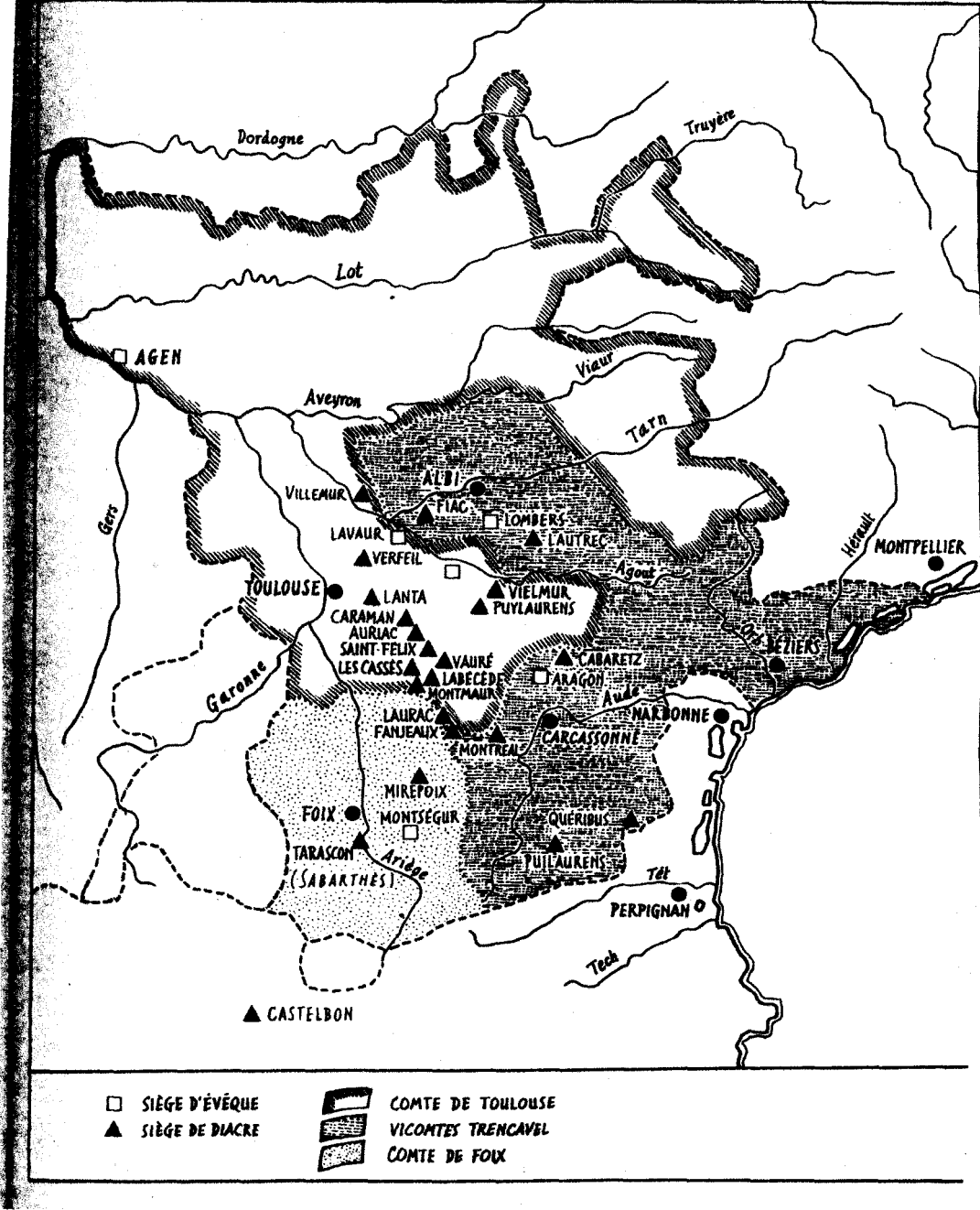
Figure 1 Europe c. 1000.

Georges Duby, *France in the Middle Ages, 987-1460*, trans. Juliet Vale (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd., 1999), 11.

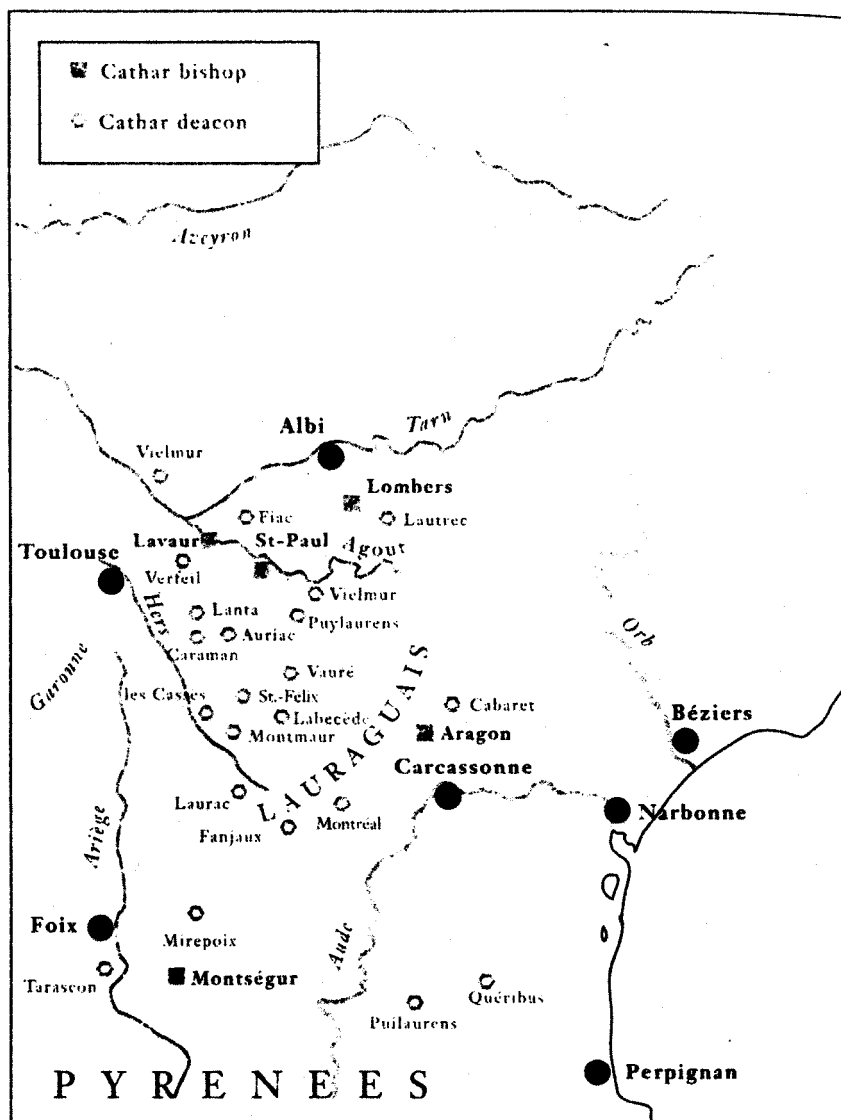


Head and Landes, eds. Peace of God, 5.

LES ÉGLISES CATHARES OCCITANES
FIN XII^e SIÈCLE ET PREMIÈRE MOITIÉ DU XIII^e SIÈCLE



Brenon, *Le Vrai Visage*, 113.



Cathar hierarchy in the early thirteenth century, according to inquisitors' records from mid-century.

Cheyette, Ermengard of Narbonne, 328.

APPENDIX II

Lanquan li jorn¹

Jaufre Rudel

Lanquan li jorn son lonc en may
M'es belhs dous chans d'auzelh de lonh,
E quan mi suy partitz de lay
Remembra-m d'un' amor de lonh:
Vauc, de talan embroncs e clis
Si que chans ni flors d'albispis
No-m platz plus que l'yverns gelatz.

Be tenc lo senhor per veray
Per qu'ieu veirai l amor de lonh;
Mas per un ben que m'en eschay
N'ai dos mals, quar tan m'es de lonh.
Ai! Car me fos lai pelegris,
Si que mos fustz e mos tapis
Fos pels sieus belhs huelhs remiratz!

Be-m parra joys quan li querry,
Per amor Dieu, l'amor de lonh:
E, s'a lieys, si be-m suy de lonh:
Adoncs parra-l parlamens fis
Quan drutz lonhdas er tan vezis
Qu'ab bels digz jauzirai solatz.

Iratz e gauzens m'en partray,
Quan veirai cest amor de lonh:
Mas non sai quoras le veyrai,
Car trop son nostras terras honh:
Assatz hi a pas e camis,
E per aisso no-n suy devis...
Mas tot sia cum a Dieu platz!

Ja mais d'amor no-m jauziray
Si no-m jau d'est' amor de lonh,
Que gensor ni melhor no-n sai
Vas nulha part, ni pres ni lonh'

Tant es sos pretz verais e fis
Que lay el reng dels Sarrazis
Fos ieu per lieys chaitius clamatz!

Dieus que fetz tot quant ve ni vai
E formet sest' amor de lonh
Mi don poder, que-l cor ieu n'ai,
Qu'ieu veyà sest' amor de lonh,
Verayamen, en luecs aizis,
Si que la cambra e-l jardis
Mi resembles tos temps palatz!

Ver ditz qui m'apella lechay
Ni deziran d'amor de lonh,
Car nulhs autres joys tan no-m play
Cum jauzimens d'amor de lonh.
Mas so qu'ieu vuoill m'es tant ahis,
Qu'enaissi-m fadet mos pairis
Qu'ieu ames e nos fos amatz.

Mas so q'ieu vuoill m'es tant ahis.
Tots sai mauditz lo pairis
Qe-m fadet q'ieu non fos amatz!

The Vision of Isaiah²

Chapter I

(1) The vision which Isaiah, the son of Amos, saw in the twentieth year of the reign of Hezekiah, king of Judah: Isaiah the prophet, son of Amos, came to Hezekiah in Jerusalem; (2) and after he had come in, he sat down upon the king's couch. (3) And all the princes of Israel and the councilors of the king and the eunuchs stood before him. (3-4) And the prophets and the sons of prophets came

from the villages and the fields and the mountains to salute him, when they learned that Isaiah had come from Gilgal, (5) and to announce to him those things that were to come. (6) Then he was speaking words of truth; the Holy Spirit came upon him and all saw and heard the words of the Holy Spirit. (7) The king summoned the prophets, and all entered together, as many as were found there. Now there were the aged Micah and Ananiah, Joel, and as many of them as were found there, on his right hand and on the left. (8) However, when they heard the voice of the Holy Spirit they fell to their knees and sang to the Highest God, who rests among the holy ones. (9) Who bestowed such power of words in the world. (10) Now, as he was speaking in the Holy Spirit in the hearing of all, he fell silent, and thereupon they saw one standing before him. (11) His [Isaiah's] eyes were open, yet his mouth was closed, (12) but the inspiration of the Spirit was with him. (14) And they did not think that Isaiah had been exalted, but the prophets recognized that this was a revelation. (15) The vision which he saw was not of this world but of what is hidden from all flesh. (16) And when he ceased to behold the vision, he returned to himself and recounted the vision to Hezekiah and his son Nason,

Chapter II

(1) and to Micah and the other prophets, saying, (2) "When I prophesied what you heard, which you witnessed, I saw an angel, glorious not with the glory of the angels whom I have always seen, but having a particular great glory and a light which I cannot describe. (3) Taking me by the hand he led me on high, and I said,

‘Who are you, and what is your name, and why are you lifting me like a bird?’ – for the ability to speak to him was given to me. (4) Then in answer he said to me, ‘When I shall bear you on high I will show you the vision which is the purpose for which I have been sent; then you will know who I am, but my name you do not know, (5) because you wish to return again to your body. And when I raise you on high hereafter you will see.’ (6) And I rejoiced because he answered me softly. (7) And he said to me, ‘You have rejoiced because I replied gently to you, and you will see one greater than I am wishing to speak to thee; one gentler and wiser, (8) better and sweeter; for to this end was I sent, to explain all things to thee.’ (9) And we ascended, he and I, upon the firmament, and there I saw the great battle of Satan and his might opposing the loyal followers (*honorantiae*) of God, and one surpassed the other in envy. (10) For just as it is on earth, so also is it on the firmament, because replicas of what are in the firmament are on earth. (11) And I said to the angel, ‘What is this war and envy and struggle?’ (12) And in reply he said to me, ‘This is the devil’s war and he will not rest until He whom you wish to see comes to slay him with the spirit of His virtue. (13) Thereafter, he raised me into that which is above the firmament, which is the first heaven. (14) And I saw in the midst thereof a throne on which an angel was seated in great glory, and they sang with one voice; and those who were on the left sang after them, but their song was not like that of the ones on the right. (16) And I questioned the angel who conducted me: ‘To whom is this song raised?’ (17) And in reply he said to me, ‘To the great glory of God, who is above the seventh

heaven, and to His beloved Son, from whom I was sent to thee.’ (18) And again he raised me up, into the second heaven; its height was the same as that of the first heaven above earth. (19) And I saw there, just as in the first angels and their song were superior to those of the first heaven. (21) And I fell on my face to adore him, and the angel who guided me said to me, ‘Adore not the angel nor the throne of this heaven. This is the reason why I was sent to guide you; adore Him only of whom I will tell you, and in like fashion adore Him who is (22) above all angels, above thrones, and above the garments and crowns which you shall see hereafter.’ (23) And I rejoiced with exceeding great joy, for such is the consummation for those who know the Most High and Eternal and His beloved Son, because they ascend to Them as by the angel of the Holy Spirit. (24) And he raised me above the third heaven and in like manner I saw a small throne and angels on the right and the left. But the glory of my spirit was undergoing a transformation as I ascended into heaven and I said, ‘Nothing of that world is given a name here.’ (26) And in reply the angel said to me, ‘Nothing is given a name on account of its weakness and nothing is hidden of the things which are done there.’ (27) And they sang a song and glorified him who was enthroned, and this angel was greater than the second angel. (28) And again he raised me, unto the fourth heaven. The height from the third to the fourth was even greater. (29) And I saw a throne and angels on the right hand and on the left. (31) But the glory of him who was enthroned was greater than that of the angels on the right hand and their glory likewise surpassed the glory of those who were below. (32) And I ascended into

the fifth heaven, (33) and there I saw innumerable angels (34) and their glory, (36) and their song was more glorious than that of the fourth heaven. (37) And I marveled, beholding such a multitude of angels arrayed in the ranks of their diverse goodnesses; each, having his own glory, glorified Him who is on high (Whose name is not revealed to all flesh), because He gave so much glory to the angels who are above each heaven. But in reply the angel said to me, 'Why are you astonished that they are not all of one appearance? You have not yet seen the insuperable virtues and the thousands and thousands and thousands of angels.'

Chapter III

(1) "And thereafter he raised me into the air of the sixth heaven and I saw there a great glory which I had not seen in the fifth heaven. (2) And I beheld angels in great glory. (3) And the deeds of the virtues were honorable and pre-eminent; their song was holy and wonderful. (4) And I said to the angel who guided me, 'I what is it I see, my lord?' (5) And he said to me, 'I am not your lord but your counselor.' (7) And he spoke to me about the sixth heaven. Herein are neither throne nor angels on the left, but they receive their direction from the virtue of the seventh heaven, where dwells the mighty Son of God. (8) And all the heavens and His angels hearken to Him, and I have been sent to bring you hither, so that you may see this glory (9) and the Lord of all the heavens and His angels and virtues. (11) Therefore, I say to you, Isaiah, no one who desires to return to the flesh of that world has seen what you see nor is able to see what you have seen; (12) because it is your lot in the Lord to come here.' (13) And I magnified the Lord in

song because thus I go into His lot. (14) And he [the angel] said to me, 'When you shall have returned here through the will of the Father, then you will receive your garment, and then you will be equal to the angels who are in the seventh heaven. (16) And he led me into the sixth heaven, and neither thrones nor angels on the right and the left were there, but all had one appearance and identical song. (17) And it was given me to sing with them; and the angel who was with me and I, myself, were even as their glory, and their glory was one. (18) And they glorified the Father of all and His beloved Son and the Holy Spirit; all with one voice (19) they sang, but not with a voice such as that of the fifth heaven, (20) but with a different voice. And there was a great light there. (21) And when I was in the sixth heaven I thought the light of the fifth heaven to be as darkness. (22) I rejoiced greatly and sang to Him who gave such joy to those who received His mercy. (23) And I begged the angel who guided me nevermore to return into that carnal world. (24) Moreover, I say unto you that there is much darkness. (25) But the angel who guided me said to me, 'Since you rejoice in this light, how much more will you rejoice and exult when you see the light of the seventh heaven, in which sits the Heavenly Father with His only begotten Son; (26) where lie the vestments and the thrones and the crowns of the righteous. (27) And as to your plea not to return into your flesh, the time is not yet fulfilled for your coming here.' (28) And I sorrowed greatly at hearing these words.

Chapter IV

(1) "And he raised me up into the air of the seventh heaven and I heard a voice

saying to me, 'Why do you who desire to live in the flesh come here?' And I was very much afraid and trembled. (2) Again, I heard another voice saying, 'Forbid him not to come in, since he is worthy of the glory of God, for here is his robe. (3) And I questioned the angel who was with me, 'Who is he who forbids me, and who is he who bids me come up?' (4) And he said to me, 'The one who forbids is he, the angel who is above the angels singing in the sixth heaven; (5) and He who commands is the Son of God, and His name you may not hear until you have departed the flesh.' (6) When we ascended into the seventh heaven I saw there an astounding and indescribable light and innumerable angels. (7) And I saw certain of the righteous (9) who, stripped of fleshy robes, were in heavenly robes and standing in great glory. (10) But they sat not on their thrones; moreover, their crowns of glory were not upon them. (11) And I questioned the angel, saying, 'Why have they received robes, and why have they not received thrones of glory?' (12-13) And he said to me, 'Now they receive them not, until the Son first brings here those thrones and crowns, when He shall be in your likeness.' (14) And the prince of that world will stretch forth his hand upon the Son of God and will kill Him and hang Him on a tree, and he will kill Him not knowing who He is. (15) And He will descend into hell and will lay it waste, with all the phantoms of hell. (16) And He will seize the prince of death and despoil him, and crush his powers, and will rise again on the third day; (17) having with him certain of the righteous. And He will send His preachers into the whole world, and will ascend into heaven. (18) Then these will receive their thrones and crowns.' (19) And

after [he said] these words, I said to him, 'In regard to that which I asked you in the first heaven, (20) show me, for this you promised.' (21) And as I was addressing him, there was among those standing about us one angel, more glorious than he who conducted me and than all angels. (22) And he showed me a book, and opening it, gave it to me; and I saw writing which was not like that of this world. And I read it, and lo, there were the deeds of Jerusalem recorded there, and the works of all men were there, among whom also was I. (23) I saw in truth that nothing which was done in the world was hidden in the seventh heaven. And I questioned the angel, 'Who is this who is pre-eminent over all the angels in his glory?' And in reply to me he said, 'He is the great angel, Michael, who prays constantly for humanity and humility. (24) And I said to the angel, 'For whom are these robes and crowns and thrones reserved?' (26) And he said to me, 'Many of that world lost these crowns, who are believers in the world of Him of whom I have spoken to you.' (27) And, turning about, I saw the Lord in great glory and I was most sorely afraid. (28) And all the righteous approached Him and adored Him singing with one voice and [my] voice was like unto theirs. (29) And Michael, approaching Him, adored and together with him all the angels adored and sang. (30) The angel who conducted me said to me 'Adore Him and sing.' And I adored Him and sang. (32) And the angel who conducted me said to me, 'He is the Lord of all the glories which you have seen.' (33) And I saw another most glorious one, like unto Him in all things, and the righteous approached Him and adored Him, and sang, and I sang with them and I was not transfigured in

their aspect. (34) And the angels came with them and adored Him, and I adored Him and sang. (35) And again, I saw the other in great glory. And while walking, I questioned the angel, 'Who is he?' And he said to me, 'Adore Him, for he is the angel of the Holy Spirit, who speaks in you and in all the righteous.' (37) And after that, another indescribable and ineffable glory was revealed which I could not behold with the opened eyes of my spirit, nor could the angel who conducted me nor all the angels whom I saw adoring the Lord. (38) But I saw the righteous only in great glory beholding [His] glory. (39) And my Lord approached first and then the angel of the Holy Spirit (*angelus spiritualis*). (40) Then all the righteous adored Him and the two sang together. (41) Then all the righteous adored Him, (42) and with them Michael and all the angels adored and sang.

Chapter V

Thereafter I heard a voice there and the song which I heard in the six heavens rose up and was heard in the seventh heaven. (2) And all glorified Him whose glory I could not behold. (5) And the song of all six heavens was not only heard but seen. (6) And the angel said to me, 'He is the One Living Eternal, living in the highest eternity and resting among the holy ones; we cannot endure to name or to see Him who is praised by the Holy Spirit in the mouths of the holy [and] righteous. (7) And after that, I heard the voice of the Eternal saying to the Lord's [His] Son: (8) 'Go forth and descend from all the heavens and be in the world, and go even to the angel who is in hell; (9) transfiguring thyself into their form. (11) And neither the angels nor the princes of that world shall know thee. (12) And thou shalt judge

the prince of that world and his angels, and the rulers of the world, (13) because they have denied me and said, “We are and without us there is no one.” (14) Thereafter, thou shalt not transfigure thyself as thou ascendest through the heavens in great glory, and thou wilt sit at my right hand. (15) Then the princes and the virtues and all the angels and all the principalities of the heavens and of the earth and of the lower regions will adore thee. (16) And I heard the Great Glory commanding my Lord. (17) And then the Lord went out from the seventh heaven and descended into the sixth heaven. (18) And the angel who guided me said to me, ‘Understand and see the manner of His transfiguration and descent.’ (19) When the angels saw Him, they praised and glorified Him, for He was not transfigured into their image, and I sang with them. (20) When He had descended into the fifth heaven, there at once He was transfigured into the form of those angels and they did not sing to Him or adore Him, for He was of a form like theirs. (21) And He descended into the fourth heaven and appeared to them in their form. (22) And they did not sing to Him for He was of a form like theirs. (23) Moreover, He came into the third heaven, (25–28) and into the second and the first, transfiguring Himself in each of them. Consequently, they did not sing to Him or adore Him, for He appeared to them in [a form] like theirs. And He showed them a sign (*characterem*). (29) Moreover, He descended into the firmament and there gave the signs (*signa*) and His form was like unto theirs, and they did not glorify Him and they did not sing to Him. (30) And He descended to the angels who were in this air as though He were one of them. (31) And He gave

them no sign, nor did they sing to Him.

Chapter VI

(1) "And after these things, the angel said to me, "Know, Isaiah, son of Amos, this is why I was sent by God to show you all things. For no one before you has seen nor can anyone after you see what you have seen and heard.' And I saw one like the Son of Man dwelling with men and in the world. (19) And they did not recognize Him. (23) And I saw Him ascending into the firmament and He was not transfigured into [their] form. And all the angels who were above the firmament were struck with fear at the sight and adoring, (24) they said, 'How didst Thou descend into our midst, Lord, and we did not recognize the King of Glory?' (25) And He ascended into the first heaven more gloriously and did not transfigure Himself. The all the angels (26) adored and sang, saying, 'How didst Thou pass through our midst, Lord, and we did not see or adore Thee?' (27-30) Thus He ascended into the second heaven and into the third and into the fourth and into the fifth and into the sixth, (31) even to all the heavens, and His glories increased. (32) When He ascended into the seventh heaven, all the righteous sang to him, and all the angels and virtues whom I could not see. (33) I saw a wonderful angel sit at His left hand, (34) who said to me, 'This suffices you, Isaiah, for you have seen what no other son of the flesh has seen, which eyes cannot see nor ears hear, nor can it rise in the heart of man, how much God has prepared for all who love Him.' (35) And he said to me, "Return in your robe until the time of your days shall be fulfilled and then you shall come here.'" (36) Having seen these things,

Isaiah spoke to those standing about him; and, hearing these wonders, all sang and glorified the Lord, who gave such grace to men. And he said to Hezekiah the king, (37) “The consummation of this world (38) and works will be fulfilled in the last generations.” (39) And he forbade them to proclaim these words to the children of Israel or to give them to any man to be recorded. (40) But how many things will be understood by the king and by the utterances in the prophets! And thus be you also in the Holy Spirit, so that you may receive your robes and thrones and crowns of glory placed in the heavens. He ceased then to speak and went out from King Hezekiah.

The Ministration of the Consolamentum³

If he is to receive the consolamentum forthwith, let him perform his melioramentum and take the Book from the hand of the elder. And let the elder exhort him and preach to him with suitable scriptural verses and in such words as are proper for the consolamentum. Let him speak thus:

Peter, you wish to receive the spiritual baptism by which the Holy Spirit is given in the Church of God, together with the Holy Prayer and the imposition of hands by Good Men. Of this baptism our Lord Jesus Christ says in the Gospel of St. Matthew to His disciples: ‘Going therefore, teach ye all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and behold, I am with you all days, even to the consummation of

the world.' And in the Gospel of St. Mark, He says: 'Go ye into the whole world and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be condemned.' And in the Gospel of St. John, He says to Nicodemus: 'Amen, amen, I say to thee, unless a man be born again of water and the Holy Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.' And John the Baptist spoke of this baptism when he said, 'I baptize you in the Holy Spirit and fire.' And Jesus says in the Acts of the Apostles, 'For John indeed baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit.'

"This holy baptism with the imposition of hands was instituted by Jesus Christ, according to that which St. Luke recounts, and He says that His friends shall perform it, as St. Mark relates, 'They shall lay their hands upon the sick and they shall recover.' Ananias administered this baptism to St. Paul when the latter was converted and afterward Paul and Barnabas administered it in many places. And St. Peter and St. John administered it to the Samaritans, as St. Luke tells in the Acts of the Apostles: 'Now when the apostles, who were in Jerusalem, had heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John, who, when they were come, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Spirit. For He was not as yet come upon any of them. Then they laid their hands upon them and they received the Holy Spirit.' This holy baptism, by which the Holy Spirit is given, the Church of God has preserved from the apostles until this time and it has passed from Good Men to Good Men unto the present moment, and it will continue to do so until the end of the world.

"And you must understand that the power given to the Church of God to bind and

to loose, to pardon sins and to retain them, as Christ says in the Gospel of St. John: ‘ “As the Father hath sent me, I also send you.” When he had said this, he breathed on them, and he said to them, “Receive ye the Holy Spirit. Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them; and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained.”’ And in the Gospel of St. Matthew, He says to Simon Peter: ‘And I say to thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give to thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt bind upon earth, it shall be bound also in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth, it shall be loosened also in heaven.’ And ‘Again I say to you, that if two of you shall consent upon earth concerning anything whatsoever they shall ask, it shall be done to them by my Father who is in heaven. For where there are two or three gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.’ And in another place He says, ‘Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out devils.’ And in the Gospel of St. John, He says, ‘He that believeth in me, the works that I do he also shall do.’ And in the Gospel of St. Mark, He says: ‘These signs shall follow them that believe: In my name they shall cast out devils; they shall speak in new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they shall drink any deadly thing it shall not hurt them; they shall lay their hands upon the sick, and they shall recover.’ And in the Gospel of S. Luke, He says, ‘Behold, I have given you power to tread upon serpents and scorpions and upon all the power of the enemy; and nothing shall hurt you.’

“And if you have the will to receive this strength and power, you must keep all the commandments of Christ and of the New Testament to the utmost of your ability.

Know that He has commanded that a man should not commit adultery, or kill, or lie; should swear no oath, nor pilfer or steal; he should not do to others that which he would not wish done to himself; he should forgive one who does evil to him and love his enemies; he should bless and pray for those who persecute and calumniate him; and if anyone strike him on one cheek, he should offer the other to him also; if anyone take away his coat (*la gonela*), he should let go unto him also his cloak; he should judge not nor condemn. And with these are many other commandments which are laid down for His Church by the Lord.

“And likewise, you must hate this world and its works and the things which are of this world. For St. John says in his Epistle: ‘Dearly beloved, love not the world, nor the things which are in the world. If any man love the world, the charity of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world is the concupiscence of the flesh, and the concupiscence of the eyes, the pride of life, which is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the concupiscence thereof; but he that doth the will of God abideth forever.’ And Christ says to the nations: ‘The world cannot hate you, but me it hateth because I give testimony of it, that the works thereof are evil.’ And in the book of Solomon is it written, ‘I have seen all the things which are done under the sun; and they are vanities and torments of the spirit.’ And Jude the brother of James, says for our instruction in his Epistle, ‘Hating also the spotted garment which is carnal.’ Heeding these scriptural verses and many others, you must keep the commandments of God and hate this world. And if you do well to the end, we have hope that your soul will have eternal life.”

And let the believer say; "I have this will. Pray God for me to give me His strength."

Then let one of the Good Men make his melioramentum with the believer before the elder and say; "*Have mercy upon us.* Good Christians, we pray you for the love of God to grant this good which God has given you unto this our friend."

Then let the believer make this melioramentum and say: "*Have mercy upon us.* For all the sins which I have done, in word, thought, or deed, I ask forgiveness from God, from the Church, and from you all."

Let the Christians say: "May they be forgiven you by God, by us, and by the Church; we pray God to forgive you."

And then let them give him the consolamentum. Let the elder take the Book and place it on the believer's head, and the other Good Men Place each his right hand on him. Then let them say the Pardon and the *Let us adore* thrice, and then, *Holy Father, receive Thy servant in Thy righteousness and bestow Thy grace and Thy Holy Spirit upon him.*

Then let them pray to God with the Prayer and let him who conducts the service say the Six in a low voice. When the Six is finished, let him say *Let us adore* thrice, the Prayer once in full voice, and then the Gospel. When the Gospel has been read, let them say *Let us adore thrice*, the Grace, and the Pardon. Then they should perform the Act of Peace with each other and with the Book. If there be believers present, let them perform the Act of Peace also. Let women believers, if there are any present, perform the Act of Peace with the Book and with each other. And then let them pray to God with a Double, with obeisances. And thus they will have administered [the consolamentum].

¹ Kehew, *Lark in the Morning*, 62–64.

² Wakefield and Evans, *Heresies of the High Middle Ages*, 449–456.

³ *Ibid.*, 488–490.