

BOUNDARIES OF CHRISTIANITY:
HETERODOXY AND ORTHODOXY
FROM ANTIQUITY TO THE MODERN
WORLD

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For almost two thousand years, within Christianity two traditions have survived. Often intertwined, these traditions came to Europe from southwest Asia. At any given moment and place during the two millennia, the dominant strain -- the one succeeding in crushing the other -- can be labeled “orthodox,” which means simply that it is the rule or the norm. The other tradition is called “heterodox,” a word indicating that it is different from the rule or norm, but not indicating how it differs. “Heretical,” “heretic,” and “heresy” refer to a heterodoxy which a group officially proscribes or declares to be erroneous. In the course of this study we shall see how heterodox sometimes becomes heretical.

The weaker or heterodox tradition appears in various guises and places, under various names, generally tending to be *gnostic* and *dualistic*. In general, ‘gnostics’ believe they can achieve salvation through knowing a secret truth, while ‘dualists’ regard the power of evil to be as great as the power of good.

Looking at the chronological development of Christianity we find that

As opposed to the traditional picture of a development of orthodoxy from the beginning of Christianity, with heresies springing up at the fringes Bauer suggested that the situation as late as the 2nd century was fluid and that in most cases heterodoxy preceded orthodoxy, which was only imposed later by the church at Rome. (Yamauchi 1973, 88, referring to Bauer 1971)

While overall the gnostic/dualist tradition (GDT) was suppressed by the orthodox one, many of its characteristics have remained throughout the centuries. In tracing these common GDT characteristics, we can show that they still have a presence in modern Christian ‘orthodox’ religion and culture. Such are an ultimate distant, incomprehensible

divinity, a savior figure, and a compassionate mother figure acting as an intermediary between humanity and God.

It is fairly certain that much of the GDT “rose (or at least made its documentary appearance) in the borderland between the two great civilizations of the late classical period, the Hellenistic and the Persian...this borderland stretching roughly from Egypt to Armenia.” (Obolensky 1948, 9) Some documents testifying to the religious beliefs and practices of these places and times have been familiar to Western scholars continuously through the millennia, and modern scholarship has brought to us an abundance of new finds. Best known of these latter are the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Nag Hammadi Library. The Bible, having been in continuous use from those times, is, of course, necessarily a pivot upon which many historical reconstructions turn. Scholarly analysis of biblical texts and archeological finds in biblical lands have clarified the testimony of the Bible.

From the beginning of the Christian church there was a fear of divisions within it. Writing to the community at Corinth, the Apostle Paul exclaimed, “Indeed, there have to be factions among you, for only so will it become clear who among you are genuine.” (1 Corinthians 11:19, Revised Standard Version) For “factions” the King James Version has “heresies,” an anachronistic use of the term “heresy,” which only acquired its current meaning more than a century later with the writings of Irenaeus of Lyons. Aside from semantics, the sensitivity of church authorities toward division served to give deviant ideas a lasting presence among them; when a continuous tradition linking the heterodox sects occasionally weakened, the orthodox churches themselves supplied a linkage by continuing to denounce the dead or dormant heresy. Thus the public at large were made aware of those very concepts and symbols which orthodoxy found offensive--symbols and concepts readily taken up not only by surviving heretics, but by the socially dissatisfied.

After the early Christian centuries there were documented periods of heterodox activity and other periods for which we have little evidence of any but strictly orthodox Christian life. There are, however, some archeological and folkloristic traces of the alternate tradition, a fact which can be plausibly explained by the far greater power of the institutional church to represent itself in word and structure and to suppress its enemies and obliterate physical traces of them. The prime example of such a period is the long span from roughly 500 A.D. to about 1100 A.D., from the subsidence of the Dualist Manichees in Europe to the appearance of Dualist Patarenes in Northern Italy. Even during those centuries, however, and unknown to the generality of European Christians, Dualism was working its way westward through the Balkans.

Despite obstacles, there is the extreme durability of religious traits. Religions seem to die a slow death; each leaves a cultural residue, as shown by the francophone Italians of Calabria. A continuity is often maintained in folklore, custom, and socio-political attitudes, as in southern France, where the Huguenots of the sixteenth century showed themselves to be the heirs of the thirteenth century Cathars.

INTRODUCTION

Tutwiler

The ebook *Santa Cruz Spirituality* is about the groups, Christian and other, which have embodied any form of spirituality over the years in Santa Cruz County, California. Completed in 2005 as *Santa Cruz California – History – Spirituality – Associations*, and updated with current information through 2010, this work lists 502 associations, 335 of which were dedicated primarily to worship. In addition to the list, *Santa Cruz Spirituality* came to include essays about some types of spirituality, specifically, Hindu, Buddhist, Confucian/Taoist, Romani, Ohlone, and Spiritualist, as well as Christian Evangelical, Fundamentalist, and Pentecostal,.

In assembling the information it seemed to me that I did not need to explain the differences between Methodists and Presbyterians, between Catholics and Orthodox, and the like. Neither did I say anything about the fundamental meaning of Christianity in general, as I had done for the other religions. Are Mormons and Theosophists Christians? Where do the Holy Grail Foundation and the Gnostic Home Temple fit in? What about Unitarian Universalists? *Boundaries of Christianity* attempts to explain the the basic requirements for being called Christian.

To illustrate the difficulty one has in discerning the essence of Christianity I offer my own experience in learning about Christian doctrine and history. From 1951 to 1955 I studied theology in a graduate program which prepared me for ordination as a Catholic priest. My undergraduate studies, from three Catholic institutions, had embodied the typical liberal arts curriculum expected of a candidate for the priesthood, with a major in the scholastic philosophy approved by the Catholic Church. I also had quite a few more credits in mathematics and science than was normal for candidates for the priesthood.

The goal of the graduate curriculum was to enable me to be a spiritual leader of people in the Catholic Church. How I could contribute to making them good Catholics or better

Catholics and, in some cases, even become Catholics, that is, join the Catholic Church, required me to spend four years in graduate school learning what the Catholic Church deemed useful for the purpose. The core of the curriculum, if I remember correctly, consisted of eight semesters of *dogmatic* (doctrinal) *theology*, eight semesters of *holy scripture*, six semesters of *moral theology*, and six semesters of *church history*

Topics merely touched upon were Protestant confessions of faith and the vicissitudes of the Orthodox churches. Among the topics which were not covered at all were Protestant mysticism and the churches which were one step farther removed from the Catholicism than mainstream Protestants, such as Mormon, Christian Scientist, and all non-Christian religions. At that time, too, there was still an Index of Prohibited Books which contained almost all the interesting and ground-breaking books of the world's patrimony of philosophy and theology. We were learning catholicism under the assumption that the Catholic Church is the one, true Christian Church and the one place to learn what Christianity signifies and entails, the one place to learn how to be a Christian.

Were we therefore taught that Catholic = Christian? No, not even the narrow-minded curriculum of 60 years ago pretended that only Catholics are Christians. It did not even teach that only Catholics could go to heaven, although it was hard-pressed to explain how others could get there. *Christian*, it taught, was broader than *Catholic*, but I do not remember hearing that being a non-Catholic Christian gave one a head start at getting to heaven over total non-Christians, except, perhaps, that "Protestant" sounded better than "heathen" or "Jew."

Years later I read the results of a poll which reported that many born-again Christians did not think that Catholics were Christians, to say nothing of being members of the one, true Christian Church. The fact that one significant non-Evangelical American Protestant denomination calls itself the "Christian Church," whereas the "Christian Reformed Church in North America" is an Evangelical denomination perhaps confuses this issue. There is also a popular wisdom which asserts that to be a Christian is not so much a

matter of what you believe, but, rather, of how you act: there are moral norms to put into practice if you are to merit being called a Christian. Properly speaking, however, living up to these expectations would mean that you are a *good* Christian.

Closer to a possibly generally acceptable notion of what constitutes a Christian is that the person has Christian belief, which is “(1) an act of faith (2) in the historical Jesus (3) as the manifestation of God.” (Crossan 1994, 200) A more detailed statement of the elements included in the Christian faith is that of the Five Fundamentals, “the inspiration of the Bible, the depravity of man, redemption through Christ’s blood, the true church as a body composed of all believers, and the coming of Jesus to establish his reign.” (Melton 1987, 73) A complete collection of variants used to describe “Christian” would have to include many creeds, confessions, and other, more detailed, expositions.

Before I got around to thinking more about this, however, I began to exchange ideas with Roy Gordon, whose manuscript *Heterodox Religions from Antiquity to the Modern World* had been forty years in the making. Around 1970 Burton Leroy “Roy” Gordon, young scientist, researcher in ecology before it was a familiar term, was traveling in Europe, broadening his perspectives on natural history and human influences on it. In southern Italy he found a village where the dialect of Piedmont was spoken. It had been brought there by Waldenses, followers of Waldo, a “Poor Man of Lyon,” who separated from the dominant Christian Church in the fourteenth century, somewhat in anticipation of the Protestant Reformation, which was not to take place for two hundred years.

Why Waldo’s group went its way and how it has persisted through the centuries until the present were matters which stimulated Gordon to consider religious *heterodoxy*: any form of faith that deviates from the generally accepted norms enough to be repugnant to the mass of believers, but not enough to be anathema to them. For nearly 50 years, in which Gordon was known for his research and teaching in environmental science, he applied himself on the side to a study of heterodoxy. At length, in the first decade of the twenty-

first century, he published his scientific study *Chemical Arts and Technologies of Indigenous Americans* and also entrusted his material on heterodoxy to me, his friend.

When Gordon turned over to me his carefully researched notes, I saw in them many facts useful for expanding the essay I had in mind to become more than an introduction to the Christian churches of today. Gordon was, in effect, describing the historical process which had gradually defined Christian doctrine. In the resulting work we devote the first chapter to preliminaries, that is the conceptual elements, such as Gnosticism and Dualism, and the historical religious attitudes of Europe and Western Asia, which entered into the formation of Christianity. Following that is a three chapter survey of how these antecedents continued to be present in Christianity or along its fringes down to the present. These four chapters, the meat of this study, represent the work of both of us. Three appendices, case studies, two by Gordon and one by Tutwiler, complete the presentation.

The bibliography ranges through numerous ancient authors to contemporary histories and compendia relating to the topics included in our theme. These matters have been studied exhaustively in recent years, and an enormous abundance of information, trustworthy and not trustworthy, is readily available to everyone on the internet. The contribution we are attempting to make is a readable guide, a fresh, clear pathway toward the understanding of a huge and complex subject.

CHAPTER ONE. CONCEPTUAL AND RELIGIOUS BACKGROUND

To begin the task of showing how the evolving worldwide Christian Church dealt with its fundamental issues we must consider first its background: the world in which Jesus and his followers lived. Politically what we know as the Western World was united as the great Roman Empire, with one law and one militia from the Atlantic Ocean to the Levant and even past that to the Caspian Sea and the Persian Gulf. Socially it was divided into tribes, villages, and contrasting regions. Similar divisions existed also in cultural life, but civilization as we know it was evolving in art, literature, and knowledge of physical sciences. The *Axial age* of several hundred years earlier, when the advanced ideas of philosophy and religion had appeared in Europe (Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle) and Western Asia (Zoroaster and Second Isaiah) as well as Southern Asia (Buddha and Mahavira) and Eastern Asia (Confucius and Lao Tsu), had enriched the repertoire of the human mind and imagination. (Plott 1963. Karl Jaspers introduced the now widely used concept of the Axial Age in the 1940s.) This intellectual (and emotional) ferment was now being spread throughout its respective areas, especially, in the West, by the Roman soldier and the commercial trader.

It had become possible for the thinking inhabitants of the Roman Empire to question local myths about gods and goddesses, to doubt stories about the personification of the forces of nature, and to look for something more intellectually satisfying. The present study is intended to show how this large scale movement was permeated and shaped by three fundamental lines of religious thinking, *monotheism*, *dualism*, *gnosticism*. To understand the historical development of Christianity it is important to understand these three terms.

I. MONOTHEISM

According to a recent study of the responses of over 3,000 people of mixed religious membership (although presumably the great majority were Christians) to a questionnaire and, in addition, to interviews with 70 similar individuals, ninety-five percent of

Americans are not *Atheists*. They are *Theists*, who answer in the affirmative to the question, “Do you believe in God?” (Froese and Baker 2010) It turns out, however, that their concepts of the one God are not uniform, a fact which needs some explanation.

Asked what they thought about God’s dealings with us humans, 85 percent of the total of the respondents said that the term “loving” describes God well. In addition to this conception of God, however, the 95% of respondents who were Theists gave answers that fell into four categories, which are that God is primarily:

31% authoritative, a father who acts for his children, but also punishes them.

24% benevolent, a father who comforts his children.

16% critical, a task master and disciplinarian

24% distant, an impersonal, disinterested force.

The four categories are so distinct that the authors entitled their report *America’s Four Gods*.

The object of the survey was to ascertain what people think about the ways God acts in our regard and not about the nature or person of God. One interview question, however, focused on God rather than on us, “Please describe God as best you can. [Is God a ‘he’ or a ‘she’? What does God look like? Can you describe God’s personality?]” Fifty-three percent of those surveyed thought that “God is a ‘cosmic force,’ and “tend to dismiss the idea that God has any physical appearance.” Still, “47% described God as ‘he,’ 33% were undecided about God’s gender, and 20% replied that God is sexless.” Eighty-one percent of the respondents thought that God works miracles. In other words, God is a spirit to a slim majority and a very powerful agent to a large majority.

All the survey questions and all the answers to them imply that God, whatever God looks like or however we should address God, is an individual, a person who acts somewhat like we do, but is truly unique, unlike any other being. This is the God of *Monotheism*. People of Western cultures in our times take it for granted that there is one and only one God. *Polytheism*, the belief that there are many gods (and goddesses), has been left behind in

the march of civilization. *Pantheism*, which holds that everything *is* God, and *Panentheism*, which maintains that God *is in* everything, have appealed to many Christians as well as others throughout the centuries, but the traditional way of speaking of God in Western cultures emphasizes God's individuality.

Much has been said and written about the nature or the person of God. God is not just very powerful, but all-powerful; not just wise, but all-knowing; not just timeless, but eternal. God created the world out of nothing; God is totally distinct from the world and yet present to all of it. These and similar concepts of strict *monotheism* come to us through three sources, biblical, theological, and philosophical.

The biblical source is the understanding the faithful, first Jews and then Christians, have had of the Scriptures, starting with the book of Genesis. About three and a half thousand years ago Moses rallied the Hebrew people around a most high God who cared for them and guided them to a new place, Palestine, and – unlike other Gods who were being worshipped around them – had actually created the whole world. It now seems to scholars that Moses and the ancient Hebrews scarcely realized that they had come upon monotheism in the strict sense that we use. Scholars point out that a clear understanding of their monotheism came to the Jews after their captivity in Babylon and is first recorded in the latter half of the book of the prophet Isaiah.

The second source of Christians' conception of God is the intellectual activity of theologians, scholars of the basic Christian message and its implications. If God created the world, for instance, then one can hold that God is both outside it and is all powerful in its regard; whatever the ultimate fate of human beings might be, it is in accordance with some plan of God, and so on. It is the task of Christian theologians to explain how Jesus could be God along with his Father and the Holy Spirit, and yet there is one and only one God.. In the early centuries of the Christian Church the primary theologians were the bishops, who defined the elements of Christian doctrine in the General Councils of the

Church. Since the Middle Ages the theologians have mainly been university level professors, authorities in their field.

The third avenue Christians have for thinking about the attributes and actions of their singular God is a process of reasoning from empirical data about the world. This philosophical exercise has been called *Natural Theology*, but it is also understood simply to be one topic of *Christian Apologetics*, the rational defense of the faith. Every person who, to use a venerable comparison, reasons that if a object as complicated as a watch timepiece can exist only because it was designed and made by somebody, then the world, which is immeasurably more complex than a watch, was surely designed and made by somebody. This line of reasoning, called “argument from design,” is one of the classical proofs for the existence of God. The most renowned proof for the existence of God is called the “ontological argument,” which in essence claims that since God is understood to be all-perfect, then if God did not exist, God would not be all-perfect; therefore God must exist.

Proofs for the existence of God were developed with great precision of thinking in the late Middle Ages by Christian theologians such as Thomas Aquinas. Later philosophers from Descartes to Spinoza have followed different lines of reasoning to arrive at the same conclusion. In our day theologians like John Cobb (Cobb 1965) and Wolfhart Pannenberg (Pannenberg 1990)have proposed still other ways to arrive at knowledge about the existence, attributes, and actions of God. None of the “proofs for the existence of God” has ever succeeded in convincing all serious scholars of its validity, but they describe many attributes of God *if* God exists.

II. DUALISM

Americans, as shown above, believe God is loving and just, in other words, that God is *good*. They wrestle with the obvious presence of evil in the world, speculating on how the good God puts up with it or even causes it. Puzzling of this sort has a long history. The simple dichotomy of views on the matter is that either God causes evil along with good or

there are two Gods, one Who causes good and one Who causes evil. If the former is the case, then God is to be feared and shunned as well as loved; if the latter, then most of us would prefer to avoid the God who causes evil - but can we?

At first thought, a satisfactory answer is that God causes good, whereas evil comes about by rebellion against this good God. Unfortunately for the theory of monotheism, according to which God is the source of *everything*, evil *has to* be traced back to God. Various solutions have been proposed to this dilemma. One is to limit the appellation *evil* to *moral evil*, which can be defined precisely as rebellion against God made possible by *free will*. Theologically this assertion can be made and believed, but philosophically one must explain how God is not the source of free will. Furthermore, the world contains a great deal of violence for which our free will is clearly not responsible, and it seems proper to speak of this as evil.

It seems conceptually simpler to suppose that there is a good God and an evil one. This, however, raises the question of how the two Gods relate to one another, and how their relationship affects the world. Evidently there is a world-struggle between good and evil, and, we ask, which will win? Should we be optimists or pessimists? Another good God/evil God possibility which has appealed to the philosophical mind of India is that neither will win, and the struggle will go on forever. Still one more ingenious possibility is that the good God gives rise (by some process) to one or more lesser deities, Who give rise to still lesser beings, and so on down a ladder of power and goodness until evil enters at some remote level, and then we humans enter at a level still farther down from the original good God. Philosophically developed, this structure prevails in Neo-Platonism, and a mythical version of it is typical of Gnosticism.

The term *dualism* has several meanings, all of which speak of a pair of opposites of some kind. There are, for instance, philosophical meanings of the word, such as the mind-body dualism of Descartes and a general spirit/matter dualism of other philosophers and many theologians. In the present work we use the word to denote the relationship between good

and evil, and, in connection with that, the relationship between a good creation and a bad one, as well as that between a good God and a bad God.

III. GNOSTICISM

In the introduction we observed that “In general, ‘gnostics’ believe they can achieve salvation through knowing a secret.” The *Gnostic* is literally a “knower,” but the knowledge involved is religious. *Salvation*, in fact, is a religious concept; being saved is a greater achievement than merely being initiated into a group by being told its secrets. It is clear that in the early centuries of the Christian religion many people who considered themselves Christian had a gnostic point of view. It is also clear that these people and their particular congregations never coalesced to become a large scale, focused movement. Yet, they played a significant role in the Christian Church’s process of defining itself.

In one of the most recent expert expositions of Gnosticism, *The Gnostic discoveries: the impact of the Nag Hammadi library*, (Meyer 2005) Marvin Meyer describes Gnosticism as follows. (The separation of the clauses is mine.)

Gnostic religion is a religious tradition that emphasizes the primary place of *gnosis*, or mystical knowledge,

understood through aspects of wisdom, often personified wisdom,

presented in creation stories, particularly stories based on the Genesis accounts,

and interpreted by means of a variety of religious and philosophical traditions including Platonism

in order to proclaim a radically enlightened way and life of knowledge. (Meyer 2005, 42)

At the heart of Gnosticism is mystical or secret knowledge; the Gnostic becomes free from ignorance about people and the world and comes to know the truth about them. “To know” in the gnostic sense signifies more than having an intellectual grasp of the truth. Gnostic knowing involves a change in the very status of the individual, who by knowing the secrets already participates in a higher level of existence. It is this dynamism in gnostic experience that attracts people, somewhat as the experience of the Holy Spirit by Pentecostals is felt to change them.

Scholars of the history of religion used to suppose that the gnostic movement was principally a distortion of Christianity. This interpretation seemed reasonable because most of what they knew about it came from refutations of it in the writings of the Fathers of the Church. Archeological findings of the mid-twentieth century, however, including invaluable treasures of gnostic and other writings, Christian and non-Christian, have added immensely to our understanding of Gnosticism. The most widely known of the findings are the *Dead Sea Scrolls*, which especially enriched our knowledge of the Jewish Essene sect. It is strikingly clear now, for instance, that Christian Gnosticism’s immediate parent was Judaism, which had developed an elaborate description of God’s dealings with the world that only certain Jews were allowed to know. This elite had to learn, for instance, that angels, good and bad, had more active roles than the text of the Scriptures indicate. (Grant 1966, 1-36)

More significant for our understanding of the breadth of Gnosticism is the *Nag Hammadi* library of hundreds of diverse Gnostic texts which were found in 1945 in Egypt. Far from being secret knowledge now, the Nag Hammadi books in translation, such as *The Nag Hammadi Library*, (Robinson 1990) are readily available in libraries and from book sellers. Many of these texts relate directly to Christianity, and, in fact, some, including *The Gospel of Thomas* and *The Gospel of Mary*, have been popularized by such fiction as *The Da Vinci Code*. Many of them, however, derive from ancient Indo-Persian beliefs and legends which passed into Christianity by way of Judaism. Characteristic of the legends and of Gnosticism is the figure of the *Demiurge*, a low level God who creates our world and

erroneously thinks he is the High God Who created him, the Demiurge. A great part of the ancient world, including Persians, Jews, and Greeks was familiar with the role of the Demiurge. In many traditions, the role included a rebellion against the higher God, and thus was evil, but this was not always the case. (Williams 1996, 51-53) Readers of Plato, for instance, are familiar with his mythic figure the Demiurge, who creates order in the world, and is not a rebel. Philosophically speaking Plato, like his contemporaries in the West, had no notion of creation of our world out of nothing.

Scholars of what is still being termed Gnosticism are currently tending to view it not as a unit or species of religion that existed side by side with Judaism and the dominant stream of Christianity, but as a conceptual umbrella for a number of lateral streams that mixed various ideas about secret knowledge, the demiurge, the reality of evil, and the figure of Christ. Thus it has responsibly been suggested that the term itself is inaccurate and misleading and might better be considered a category with a name something like “biblical demiurgical,” (Williams 1996, 214-219) which means that it is based on a demiurgic interpretation of the creative work of God described in the Hebrew Scriptures.

At this point our investigation into the background of Christian orthodoxy and heterodoxy leaves the definitions of terms and begins to look at the particular religions which preceded Christianity. We enter the confusing and often misleading world of historical “influences” and “effects.” Which living pre-Christian religions had an influence on nascent Christianity or, to put it another way, contributed to the formation of Christianity?

IV. ZOROASTRIANISM

Zoroaster, also known as Zarathustra, lived and taught in Persia. He may have lived close to the time of Moses, nearly three thousand years ago, but scholars generally hold it more likely that he lived much later than that, about two and one-half thousand years ago, probably in the sixth century BC, the Axial age. He is known as the founder of Dualism,

but in fact he drew upon the understandings and the myths of the pre-Persian and pre-Hindu peoples to explain the origin of evil.

An acute concern about the presence of evil in the world and belief in cosmic scale warfare between good and evil was a characteristic of the ancient Indo-Iranian worldview. In the basic Zoroastrian scriptures, the *Avesta*, *Ahura Mazda* is the principle of all good, and *Ahriman*, the principle of all evil. Ultimately Ahriman will be defeated and the good will reign supreme in all the world. Ahura Mazda, in his supremacy, has generally been understood to be a monotheistic God. Zoroaster's monotheism, however, has always been accompanied by the problem of how Ahura Mazda and Ahriman relate to each other. It is clear that Ahriman's limits are known through his ultimate defeat. (Nigosian 1993, 89) We could have wished Zoroaster to have given a clearer explanation of his monotheism in the *Avesta*, but, "... Zoroaster's theological interest was subordinated to his preoccupation with the existential reality of evil, its threat to the quality of life, and the inescapability of struggle if evil was to be overcome by good." (Pangborn 1983, 17) Humans, furthermore, are actively engaged in the cosmic struggle between good and evil through free will. (Nigosian 1993, 90-91) This struggle then in fact became a central element in the religions to the west of Persia.

Whether or not Ahura Mazda created the world as Hebrews and Christians believe God to have done does not enter into the *Avesta*. Later theologians, not being able to pass over in silence the question of how the world happens to exist, proposed that Ahriman and the reality of evil resulted from rebellion against Ahura Mazda, a rebellion rendered possible by free will, a power that in itself is good. Thus in the end freely willed good derived from Ahura Mazda will overcome evil. Furthermore, the Zoroastrian dualism of good and evil is not an opposition between the soul and the body; it does not equate the body with evil. And so, being positive, and not negative in its orientation, "Zoroastrianism remained essentially a life-affirming and active religion." (Stoyanov 2000, 28)

From the sixth century BC, for more than a thousand years Zoroastrianism was the predominant, for the most part official, religion of Persia and the lands under its dominion, which at one time or another extended from Europe to China. The rise of Islam in the seventh century A.D. put an end to the world-scale dimensions of Zoroastrianism, which is found now among the small numbers of the Parsees (anciently displaced *Persians*) in India and in small Indian emigrant colonies such as can be found in the San Jose, California

In their Babylonian Exile the Hebrews encountered Zoroastrianism, and subsequent Judaism had strong elements of it. (Boyce 1979, 77) We must cautiously not overestimate this influence, but it is hard to avoid thinking that some elements of the Judaism and Christianity have a common source in Zoroastrianism. Such are the battles between Satan (the Adversary) and God's good angels, the extreme opposition between heaven and hell, and the apocalyptic events at the end of the world. It is thought by many scriptural scholars that much of the Christ narrative, especially the infancy story, had its origin in Zoroastrianism. The virgin birth of a savior, the star of Bethlehem, the angels on high, and the three Wise Men from the East all echo Zoroastrian beliefs. The resurrection of the savior along with the resurrection of our own bodies and life everlasting also are reminiscent of Zoroastrianism. However that may be, Zoroastrianism was not to enter the institutional development of Christianity as a body, but rather as a stream that colored the Christian attitude toward evil and morals, especially in tandem with Gnosticism.

Two specific forms of Zoroastrianism which were to come into tangential contact with Christianity were *Zurvanism* and *Mithraism*.

In its early centuries Zoroastrianism engendered an extreme form called Zurvanism, (or Zarvanism or Zervanism) according to which Ahura-Mazda and Ahriman were brothers, born of one father, Zurvan (Time). The battle between the two powerful brothers accentuated and personified for us the perpetual struggle between good and evil. Thus,

... the Zervanite passages of texts [related] how the evil principle Ahriman (Ahra Mainyu in the Avesta) made an assault on the highest realms of light where the good principle, Ohrmazd (Ahura Mazda) had his residence, but was repulsed and hurled back into the lowest regions of darkness, his own abode. This story of the attack of the Evil Principle before the creation of the actual world constitutes the background of the corresponding Manichaeian description of the battle of the Two Principles [which did enter into a variety of Christianity]. (Widengren 1969, 181)

Furthermore, “These tendencies in Zurvanism gave rise to extreme, fatalist Zurvanite circles, whose focus on the all-pervading dominance Time-Destiny was clearly in sharp contrast to the ethos of Zoroastrianism as of free will,” (Stoyanov 2000, 47) and “Among the Gnostics, as with the Zervanists, God is transcendent, beyond human comprehension. (van Baren 1967, 67-68)

For additional information about Zurvanism, in addition to the sources on Zoroastrianism noted in the introduction, see www.cais-soas.com, the website of the Circle of Ancient Iranian Studies.

In Mithraism the principal divinity was the god of the Invincible Sun. The emphasis on light can be termed obsessive in spite of the fact that Mithraic ceremonial places tended to be dark, cave-like structures. When the Persian empire collapsed, in 330 B.C., this religion spread to the world that was to become Roman. Carried mainly along the East-West route of the Danube, and especially by Roman legion soldiers, it was to be found throughout the Roman Empire by the 2nd century A.D. The locations of 35 Mithraic ceremonial structures in Rome alone are known; although six of these are still accessible, only one is open to the public. Each site was, in addition to being a place of worship, also a school in which the mysteries were taught to the initiates. (*The Oxford Classical Dictionary*, Oxford University Press, 2003, 991; and Carlo Pavani, 1998, 95-142) Despite Mithraism’s physical and chronological coexistence with early Christianity it did not appreciably influence the development of the latter.

V. ORTHODOX JUDAISM

For nearly two thousand years Christians of all varieties have considered themselves the successors and heirs to the covenant between the people of Moses and their God. The creator God who retains interest in his creation and the people, endowed with free will, who turn to or away from him are the key elements of the Judaic legacy to them as seen by Christians. There was, nevertheless, in Judaism from the sixth century B.C. on an incorporation of Persian influences, due principally to the Babylonian Captivity of 597-538 B.C. This would include some interest in astrology: "For if many Jews frowned on astrology, others, such as the Hellenistic Jewish writer Eupolemus..." approved of it. (Vermes 1975, 269) A more significant Persian influence concerned Satan. "In the Old Testament Satan has not yet become the Devil. The figure of the Devil entered Judaism from Iranian sources..." (Bultmann 1948, 217) Also, Orthodox Jews resembled the Muslims and Dualists in their attitude toward iconoclasm: "they kept no pictures, images or statues in their synagogues." (Epstein 1959, 201)

After the return of a body of Jews to Palestine in 538 B.C. there was no temple in Jerusalem and no priest to perform the ancient sacrifices. The subsequent period, until the establishment of Roman rule in 63 BC, is known for the nationalistic fervor which, in the second century BC, produced autonomy for the Jews under their own Maccabee family. It was also a time of the production of Jewish literary works, particularly the *wisdom literature*, which was closely affine to the dualistic wisdom literature of Persia. These works, the Jewish *Apocrypha*, (writings of doubtful authorship or authenticity) which the Jews did not hold to be on a level with the *Torah*, were not adopted as revelation by all the Christians as they assembled their Bible, although they commanded great respect and came to be included in the Bible used by the Catholic Church. Passages in the *Book of Wisdom (Wisdom of Solomon)* include references to the symbolism of light, to the baneful influence of matter on spirit, and to the transmigration of souls. (Goodspeed 1959, 182-195)

VI. GREEK MYSTERY CULTS

From the age of Homer to the Axial age, two to three hundred years later, Greek civilization evolved into a whole in which politics, art, and philosophy established the pattern for the future of the Western World. The Greek discovery at that time of the individual, it is argued, freed intellectual and artistic leaders from the tribe mentality, opened the question of possible individual immortality, and laid the foundation for rational inquiry by the individual observer. (For this broad statement we refer to Snell 1982, Chapter 3, “The Rise of the Individual in the Early Greek Lyric,” and Burkert 1985, Chapter VI, “Mysteries and Asceticism.” The rest of this section derives from Burkert’s same chapter except where otherwise noted.)

The *mystery* of Greek cults referred literally to initiation, a ceremony of acceptance into the group. Secrets were always part of the group’s story, but knowledge of the secrets as such was not supposed to save the devotees from the fate of the common folk, as did later the knowledge imparted by Gnosticism. Rather, observance of the things learned through initiation qualified the individual for a better life, even immortality.

There were various mystery cults in this period, but pertinent to our narrative is Orphism, which arose in Greece in about the sixth century B.C. and spread throughout southern Italy and Sicily. Based on the myth of Orpheus, who dared enter the underworld but was torn to pieces for his efforts, Orphism was the polar opposite to Bacchic and Dionysiac mysteries and their orgies. “A distinct dualism between the soul and the body was to become the core of the religiosity of Orphism.” (Stoyanov 2000, 28). Thus, “Only the initiated who lead a righteous life and observe a diet free from meat (vegetarianism) find salvation, while the impious are condemned to the eternal transmigration of the souls and punishments of hell.” (Rudolph 1983, 286)

Toward the end of the time between Homer and the Axial period came Pythagoras, an historic figure (unlike Orpheus) in the development of intellectual thought. Best known as a founder of mathematics, Pythagoras was also said to have been a proponent of sacred numerology. He is known to have taught the “opposition between the common, despicable world and the special, self-chosen life.” (Burkert 1985, 299) Furthermore, “The Pythagoreans share with the Orphics the view that life is trouble and punishment.” (Burkert, *op cit*, 303)

Pythagorean communities, which we might now term *puritan*, were the object of hatred in southern Italy around the year 450 BC. Some were burned and “Pythagoreans were massacred in large numbers. Civil war was no rarity in Greek cities; yet here for the first time it seems to have led to a kind of pogrom, the persecution of those who were different from others in their way of life and disposition.” (Burkert, *op cit*, 304).

From the time of Pythagoras and the other so-called Pre-Socratic philosophers through the Axial Age there was a shift in worldview that was critical for the evolution of religious thought in Europe. Before then the Greeks expressed in poetry the view that there was, coexistent with our world, an unseen, privileged, divine world inhabited by the gods. The Pre-Socratic philosopher/scientists, however, introduced a nuanced map of the whole world, the cosmos, according to which the earth was at the center, surrounded by celestial spheres, the lowest of which was that of the moon. Known as the Ptolemaic view, it was to prevail in Western thinking until the age of Copernicus, two thousand years later. The realm of the *divine* in it was beyond the outermost visible sphere, and the *divine* itself was a power which propelled the world, producing order in it. Educated Greeks and later, Romans, called this power *God*, and were aware that their understanding of it transcended the folk religion of the worship of the gods. Their God, particularly as given form by Plato, was an historical step on the way to Christian monotheism. (adapted from Burkert, 1985, 317-321)

VII. PLATO'S THOUGHT AND INFLUENCE

Born Athenian about 428 BC, Athenian until his death eighty years later, Plato asked the questions upon which Western philosophy is built. Although not associated with gnosticism, he is nevertheless sometimes called the "Patriarch of the Gnostics" because of his "strongly philosophically oriented dualism." (Rudolph 1983, 59-60)

The dualism which Plato introduced into philosophy is that of the world of ideas or forms versus the world of appearances. The forms, beginning with the highest, that of the Good, are spiritual and real. They are the objects of our understanding. We live among the appearances, which we readily grasp; too readily, in fact, for they tend to command us and lead us to ignore the good world of the forms. The world of appearances presents itself to us under the guise of *matter*, but Plato's *matter* is not of itself evil, as gnostic matter is. Rather, Plato's *evil*, as he has Socrates explain in the dialog *Phaedo*, consists of our allowing our soul, which is spiritual, to be led astray by the force of matter; it lies in our thinking and acting as if appearances were the real world. If we insist on living this way until we die, then our soul, instead of taking its place in the spiritual world of forms, is condemned to be born again as a human; we have created our own prison. In response to the question, "What is this greatest evil?" Plato has Socrates answer, It is this, that no man's soul can feel intense pleasure or pain in anything without also at the same time believing that the chief object of these his emotions is transparently clear and utterly real, though in fact it is not; this is especially the case with visible objects

Continuing to explain to his interlocutor. Cebes, the dire consequences of the deception, Socrates proceeds,

Every pain and pleasure drives as it were a rivet into the soul, pinning it down to the body and so assimilating it thereto that it believes evrything to be real which the body declares so to be. Indeed it seems to me an inevitable result of sharing the body's beliefs and joys that the soul should adopt its habits and upbringing, and so be destined never to reach Hades in a pure condition, but always to depart with much taint of the body, and therefore to fall back again soon into another body, like a seed replanted in new soil; a fate which

denies it all converse with that which is divine and pure and single of form. (*Phaedo*, 83, c-d, R. Hackforth's translation)

Plato exerted enormous influence over Greek and Roman philosophers and over Christians' theological interpretation of their faith. Platonic tenets incorporated into Christian theology began with his affirmation of a supreme good, God, and of the immateriality of the human soul. From these flowed the primacy of spiritual values over material ones and the reality of the afterlife with its rewards and punishments.

It was also possible for Christians to misinterpret Plato. One way was to confuse his Supreme Good with the personal, interactive God of Jesus. Another was to see matter not as the *source* of evil for us, but as evil in itself: to regard Plato as dualistic. Third was gnostic, to suppose that mere knowledge of the truth about evil could save us from its power.

Plato also has a great deal to say about the genesis of this defective and illusory world of ours in the *Timaeus* and the *Laws* as well as the *Phaedo*. He emphasizes the role of the *demiurge*, which resembles that of the *gnostic demiurge*, but which he extracts from popular mythology and applies to his philosophical system. It is not clear from his huge corpus of dialogs if the *demiurge* who is responsible for the world's existence is really the Good, the World-soul or is a lesser power.

As a final observation in this section on the influence the Greeks had on Christianity we must not overlook the physical fact of the creation of the Hellenistic world through the conquests of Alexander the Great (356-323 B.C.) Student of Aristotle, Alexander was a man of action rather than thought, but his conquests brought about the interpenetration of intellectual cultures, principally Greek and Persian, throughout the length and breadth of the known (to Westerners) world.

VIII. HETERODOX JUDAISM:

The Jewish sect of Essenes, and in particular the Qumran community and their famous Dead Sea Scrolls, were, in some way, precursors of the earliest Christian communities in Palestine. The Essenes lived a closely knit, ascetic community life according to ideals which resembled those that were adopted at one time or another by strict Christian communities. They shared their possessions and earnings; they provided for the sick and the aged; they generally restricted membership to mature persons who would be able to maintain sexual abstinence. Cleansing with water was one of their regular daily rituals in a regime we could describe as monastic.

According to Josephus, "These Essenes reject pleasure as an evil." Not holding matter itself to be evil, but considering it to be a prison for the soul, they believed that bodies are corruptible, and that the matter they are made of is not permanent; but the souls are immortal, and continue forever...and are united to their bodies as in prisons, into which they are drawn by a certain natural enticement; but that when they are set free from the bonds of the flesh, they then, as released from a long bondage, rejoice and mount upward. (Josephus Flavius, *War of the Jews*, Book II, Ch. 8)

The Essenes did not believe in the resurrection of the body as the Pharisees did, but they believed in the immortality of the soul. They thought that man's final state is predetermined by fate. In particular the members of the Qumran community held that "the names of the elect are fixed from all eternity." (Rabin 1975, 121) Josephus's *War of the Jews* and *Antiquities of the Jews* and Philo of Alexandria's, *Apologia pro Judaeis* and *Quod omnis probus liber sit* are the primary ancient sources of information on the Essenes. Since the discovery of the Qumran scrolls enormous scholarly activity with a huge bibliography has been brought to bear on the Essenes in general as well as on the Qumran community.

Another brief observation about the Essenes is that they shared some beliefs with the early Gnostics. Such are, as Kurt Rudolph points out, that "men are divided into sons of

light and sons of darkness, or of wickedness. The former are initiated, or wise, or prudent, the elect; the latter are the foolish, the men of lies and of evil...The design for the world and the salvation of the elect are determined by God...Thus Qumran offers a certain link on the fringe of Judaism for the illumination of the origin of gnostic ideas.” (Rudolph 1983, 280)

IX. MANDAEANS

The Mandaeans may have originated as a community in the northern sector of the Tigris-Euphrates region, but they have been associated with the lower end of the rivers since antiquity. Their extensive scriptures, which were written in a dialect of Aramaic, have received little attention from scholars, who are only now analyzing them sufficiently to date them. The evidence is that they were composed toward the end of the first century AD or the early part of the second, although subsequent versions reflected Christian and Islamic influences. (Haeberl 2012, 264)

Mandaean accounts of the origin of the world are Gnostic and Dualist. Particular characteristics of Mandaean belief have to do with light and with initiation into the body of believers. Light is sacred; they worship the "King of Light" in opposition to the "King of Darkness." "The world of darkness (located in the south) stands opposite the world of light (located in the north); each is led by a ruler." (Rudolph 1983, 357)

Initiation into the community is accomplished by a baptism of water in a ceremony "[which] consists of a threefold complete immersion in the white sacral robe, threefold 'signing' of the forehead with water, a threefold draught of water...and laying on of hands, all administered by the priest." (Ibid, 361) The importance of baptism in Mandaean life corresponds to the prominence in Mandaean scriptures of John the Baptist. In one of the few Mandaean works available in English, the *Doctrine of John*, or the *John-Book*, the history and the key role of the Baptizer, John, is treated at length. (Mead 1924) In the present state of scholarship it is not clear at what historical point the teachings about

John entered, although it is not necessary to suppose that they are dependent on earlier Christian or Islamic texts. (Haeberl 2012, 265)

In their baptismal ceremony the Mandaeans gave the initiate a religious name written in a special alphabet which they considered to be both magical and sacred. Each letter in it had “a power of life and light.” (Drower 1962, 240 and 244) For the ceremony the priests, in accordance with Mesopotamian custom, consulted an astrological *Book of Signs of the Zodiac*, “which served the priests for horoscopes and for giving of names.” (Rudolph 1983, 340)

The scant attention paid to the Mandaeans belies their historical importance, which is that they are the only Gnostic body that has persevered from antiquity to the present day. Some are to be found in New York, Detroit, San Diego, and Sweden, and Australia. (King 2003, 298) In the 1980s about 15,000 were living in their traditional home, southern Iraq. (Rudolph 1983, 343) More recently it is estimated that 5,000 still live in Iraq, and that their total world population, including refugees from Iraq in Arab countries, is about 70,000. (“Iraq’s Mandaeans ‘face extinction.’” Angus Crawford, BBC News, March 4, 2007)

CHAPTER TWO. DEVELOPMENT OF THE HETERODOX AND ORTHODOX TRADITIONS IN THE CLASSICAL AND LATE CLASSICAL PERIOD, CENTURIES 1-7

I. JESUS

About 2100 years ago there was a man from Galilee named Jesus. Although the very existence of this man has been called into question, the overwhelming consensus of scholars is that he was real and that he stood out among his peers. He said comforting things about God, he inspired the common folk with hope of a better world to come, and he was unjustly put to death. People who knew him did not agree on what to think about him. In the analysis of John Dominic Crosson, we can classify the opinion of contemporaries of Jesus, different observers, all of whom have heard and seen exactly the same phenomena in the life of Jesus:

He's dumb, let's ignore him.

He's lost, let's leave him.

He's dangerous, let's fight him.

He's criminal, let's execute him.

He's divine, let's worship him.

The last response represents the Christian faith, which was there as soon as the phrase was uttered or carried out—before any death or resurrection just as well as after it.

Christian belief is (1) an act of faith (2) in the historical Jesus (3) as the manifestation of God. (Crosson 1994, 198-199)

The questions, "What do we know about Jesus?" and "What was his message?" were answered by oral transmission for a number of decades after his death. Gradually, especially in the course of the second century A.D., the collection of works we call the New Testament took shape. Most Christians agree on a list of 27 writings, which include Gospels, Epistles, Historical and Prophetic works. There is also a long list of pseudo gospels, epistles and the like which date back to the same era, but which were not

accepted as authentic by the mainstream of Christians. Some of the rejected works, it is now clear, contain valuable insights into early Christian thinking about Jesus, some contain little that is useful, and others contradict the New Testament writings. All three categories are found in the Nag Hammadi collection of more than fifty short texts.

Until the Nag Hammadi Library and the Dead Sea Scrolls were found in the mid twentieth century the primary source of information about the theological shaping of the message of Jesus in the first centuries after his death consisted of the writings of several early theologians known as the Fathers of the Church. Irenaeus, Bishop of Lyons, wrote in about 180 A.D. a multi volume work to refute the errors, as he saw them, of many Christian groups. This influential writing, *Refutation and Overthrow of Knowledge falsely so-called*, is known as *Against Heresies*, or in Latin, *Adversus Haereses*. There were other Fathers of the Church, such as Clement of Alexandria and Tertullian of Carthage, but Irenaeus's *Adversus Haereses* was the richest source of documentation on early non-orthodox Christian teachings until the twentieth century. Although he is still acknowledged to be a trustworthy recorder of his sources, his grouping of sects, it is now realized, led later scholars and historians to classify as Gnostic some which were neither Gnostic nor orthodox.

II. EARLIEST HETERODOXIES

Gnostic Simon. In the first centuries of the Christian community a strong faction of the followers of Jesus saw him as a redeemer who saves the world described to us by Gnosticism. He saves us from a world which has been created not by the good God, but by inferior powers who worked to separate us from our true spiritual condition. Jesus was not literally a human being, but was a higher power of God who freed us by bringing us the true knowledge of what has happened and what we should be. The Gnosticism which grew out of Jewish traditions involved two key elements: 1) secret knowledge of an explanation of God's relation to the world through embellishment of the Jewish creation stories, and 2) the expectation of a Messiah, the savior or liberator who had to sacrifice himself as the

price of liberation. The actions and the fate of Jesus were explicable to Gnostic Christians because they divided his person into a plain man who suffered and a supernatural being who did not and could not suffer

Gnostics in the early Christian centuries found some support for their beliefs in abstruse passages of the Gospel according to John and in the Book of Apocalypse/Revelation. One of the earliest Gnostic groups we know about was evidently named after a New Testament figure, Simon, who, as related in Chapter 8 of the Acts of the Apostles, tried in vain to buy from the Apostles Peter and John the power of invoking the Holy Spirit. This Gnostic Simon had a Gnostic partner, the heavenly Helen, who embodied the female force in the Gnostic worldview. The Pauline Epistles too, point to an early Gnostic element in the Christian community, because "the people who denied the resurrection whom Paul is combating in I Cor. 15:12 are clearly Gnosticizing Christians." (Bultmann 1956, 230)

Docetism and Marcionism. The name *Docetist* is used to denote those early Christians who believed that Christ did not suffer on the cross, but only appeared to do so. The main reason for believing so was that if Jesus was God it would not be possible for him to suffer. At its most extreme Docetism held that Jesus had no body at all, that his corporeal body was an illusion. Hints of Docetism appeared already in New Testament epistles, and more developed forms of it were incorporated into various Gnostic belief systems. Docetism survived antiquity in connection with later gnostic systems of belief in spite of the fact that theology, as we shall see, developed a way acceptable to Christians of interpreting the relation between Jesus's divinity and humanity.

Marcion, a native of Pontus in Asia Minor, a Christian thinker and leader from Asia Minor, flourished in the middle decades of the second century. He adopted some of the Gnostic stories about God, the world, and Christ and created a following that would last several centuries. His teachings are rather well known because Tertullian wrote a long refutation of them around the year 200. The specific and key elements in Marcion's view were that the world we live in and we ourselves are the impure creations of a demiurge,

and we can be rescued from the evil in us and around us only by the spiritual Jesus, who was sent by the good God and bore no relationship at all to the promised Messiah of the Jews.

Valentinianism. The Alexandrian theologian Valentinus founded a school in Rome about 140 AD. He also had a distinct following in Anatolia of Asia Minor. According to what we know of his doctrine through his disciple Ptolemy, Valentinus's Gnosticism began with a qualified Dualism, the premise that all things, good and bad, originated in the one good divine principle. This combination is identified as Syrian-Egyptian or Western Gnosticism. It led, in the case of Valentinus, to a more cheerful outlook than that of Eastern, or Persian Dualism. Recently one of the Nag Hammadi papyri, *The Gospel of Truth*, has been identified as representing Valentinian thought. *The Gospel of Truth* enriches our understanding of a doctrine that starts out, "The gospel of truth is joy... ." Valentinus, through the numerous disciples of his school, was probably the most influential of the Gnostic teachers, and he had followers for several centuries.

III. THE PRINCIPAL LATE CLASSICAL HETERODOXIES

A. Arianism

Although Gnosticism and Dualism appeared early in Christian Church history, their impact on the christianization of the West was small. The first movement that divided the Church in a massive way was Arianism. Until the early fourth century there was still room for doubt among Christians concerning Jesus: was he really God or not? The generality of bishops - the local teachers of the Church East and West - seem to have held that he was truly God, but they did not possess a clearcut, official statement of this position. The need was brought acutely into focus when Arius, a priest of Alexandria around 320, led a movement which denied flatly that Jesus was God. Arius's view spread quickly throughout the greater Christian community, leading to confusion among the faithful and division among bishops as believers and as church administrators. This

division had political implications also, since the Emperor Constantine, who ruled the Roman world from 312 to 337 A.D., wanted harmony in the new state religion. He therefore convened, with the approval of the Bishop of Rome and other important churches, a general council, that is, meeting of the bishops, the first in Christian history, which was held in Nicaea, near Constantinople, in 325. The council produced the Nicene Creed, which stated unequivocally that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are God. This made Arius the first formal heresiarch, founder of movement officially declared by the Church to be heretical.

Although the matter of divinity was settled by the council, there was throughout the Christian world still a great following for Arius's position, and many bishops and their flocks continued to agree with him. It was said that at one time there were more Arian churches than non-Arian. Generally, however, the local churches - that is, their bishops - taught the Nicene doctrine, and Arianism shriveled away, although it took over two hundred years before it entirely disappeared.

B. Nestorianism

The greater Christian community having agreed that Jesus, the Christ, was truly God, the question arose, how to express the union of divine and human in the one person? The basic possibilities are:

1. The divinity and the humanity are distinct and separate,
2. they are neither distinct nor separate,
3. they are distinct but not separate.

The first of these possibilities was, in one way or another, the view of all the heterodoxies we have seen so far, from the Gnostic Simon to Arius. The last of these, Arianism, as we have seen, was the first to be declared heretical by a church general council, that of Nicaea. In fact, however, it took the second general council, which was the first council of Constantinople, to put Arianism to rest satisfactorily in 389.

After that, there was yet to be one more way of teaching the first possibility that the Church would condemn. Bothered by the thought that Mary the mother of Christ's humanity could not be the mother of his divinity, Nestorius, the patriarch of Constantinople, held that she was the Mother of Christ, and no more than that. The great majority of bishops did not agree with this separation of Christ's humanity and divinity. They insisted that she was the Mother of God as well as the mother of a man, and so defined it in the third general council, held in Ephesus in 431. A large number of bishops and their congregations sided with Nestorius even after his condemnation. For this reason Nestorianism spread far and wide; its churches were later to be found in the seventh century as far from Constantinople as China.

C. Monophysitism

If Mary was the Mother of God, then would it not be consistent to hold that Jesus was the God-Man in whom there was neither separation nor distinction between him as God and as Man? Some Eastern Christians came to hold this view, which spread sufficiently in the fifth century to arouse the serious attention of the bishops, who held it to be contrary to the relationships in the Holy Trinity of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. *Monophysitism*, a term which emphasizes the union of God and man in Jesus, was the name given to this view, which was condemned by the fourth general council, held in Chalcedon in 451. Some Eastern Christian Churches, notably those of Egypt (Copts) and Armenia, objecting to the council's wording of the condemnation, rejected it. For this reason the Western Church and most of the Eastern Churches have considered them to be monophysite. The official position of both Copts and Armenians, however, is that they do not identify the human with the divine in Jesus, but are misunderstood by the other Churches. An account of the misunderstandings at the Council of Chalcedon is given in *The Coptic Orthodox Church as a church of erudition & theology* by Tadros Malaty. (Malaty 1986, 127-146)

With that, the orthodox Christian understanding, possibility number three, that Christ's divinity and humanity are distinct but not separate, was firmly established. Ever since then Christians have said that there was one person, but two natures, one divine, the other human, in Christ.

It is noteworthy that it took four General Councils of the Church and a span of one hundred twenty-six years, from 389 to 451, to define the orthodox faith about Jesus and to declare the opposed views to be heresies. Equally noteworthy is that these councils, and all the early General Councils of the Church, took place in the eastern remnant of the Roman Empire. At that time there was far more intellectual life, including theological analysis, in the eastern part of the Empire than there was in the western part. The Bishops of Rome sent delegates to the councils and agreed with the decisions, to be sure, but had little to do with formulating them.

D. Manichaeism

The most widespread and long lasting of all Christian Dualisms, Manichaeism, originated with Mani, who was born in Babylon about 216 and died there around 276. He traveled widely, reaching Turkestan and India, where, it is suggested, Buddhism may have influenced his thinking. (Chadwick 1967, 169) His followers spread his religion as far as Spain on the west China on the east. There is evidence that it persevered in China in a form affected by the major Chinese religions, Taoism and Buddhism, down to the twentieth century. (www.cais-soas.com [2012]) In the west, however, the Manichee community faded away with the classical world by the sixth century. Its name, however, never died out on the Christian West. When heterodoxies arose that put "stress on flight from the world, a will to purity, a positive repugnance for the material and for human flesh and its desires" they were labelled Manichaeism. (Lambert 2002, 38)

The Manichaeism worldview was of mythic Dualism and its two opposed Gods. Like the Mandaeans of the previous chapter, the Manichaeans strongly emphasised the contrast

between light and darkness, between “The ruler of the realm of light, which is located in the North... [and] Darkness or Hylē (matter), which is located in the South... .” (Rudolph 1983, 336) "... the domain of Light extended infinitely upward; that of Darkness, infinitely downward." (Jackson 1931, 8) When the practice of Mithraism was condemned in the Christianized empire, its sun-worshippers often became Manichees, for this enabled them to maintain their Mithraic light worship.

Mani, like other Dualists, did not accept the Hebrew Scriptures' account of history, and he denied that Jesus died on the cross. He preached a rigid asceticism, including condemnation of marriage, but only the minority of elect people were held to the strict standards. On the whole his teaching was like that of the Zoroastrians, who nevertheless attacked the Manicheans “for their condemnation of material property, agriculture and cattle-raising.” (Obolensky 1948, 13)

Augustine of Hippo; Manichees, Donatist, Pelagians. Many, many descriptions of Manichee beliefs and practices can be found in the works of their archenemy, Augustine, Bishop of Hippo in North Africa. In his *Confessions* he tells us that he followed the Manichaeans from his nineteenth to his twenty-eighth year. The *Confessions*, as well as the volumes *Of the Morals of the Catholic Church*, *Of the Morals of the Manichaeans*, *Against the Epistle of Manichaeus Called Fundamental*, *Reply to Faustus the Manichaean*, *Concerning the Nature of Good: Against the Manichaeans*, and chapter 46 of *De Haeresibus*, furnish as much information about fifth century Manichaeans as one might desire, although he wrote about them rhetorically, as a polemicist, not as an historian.

Endowed with a powerful intellect and great facility with language, Augustine fought not only Manichaeans, but also Donatists and Pelagians. The controversy with Donatists, who maintained that the sacraments of the Church could not be validly administered by sinful clergy, was more social than doctrinal in nature, and need not concern us here, but the matter contended with Pelagius touched upon Dualism. Pelagius, a monk from the Britain, contemporary of Augustine, maintained that human nature was essentially good

in spite of Bible indications that it is corrupt (“original sin”). According to Pelagius, we humans are not born with original sin, we do not need to be baptized, and we are able to be moral and act morally without the “push” from God that we call “grace.” Pelagius’s teachings were condemned by the Council of Carthage in 418, to a great extent through the efforts of Augustine. In the same year Pope Zosimus ratified the council’s definitions and sent copies out to the bishops everywhere, imposing the definitions as dogma. In our day they are still part of the common patrimony of Christianity held by both Catholics and Protestants.

Although the doctrine that Augustine asserted and which became official in the Church is far from any of the types of Dualism we have seen above, it is not above being accused of having a touch of Dualism in it. In Augustine’s case it appears that there remained in him something of the Manichee, for his confidence in human nature was very low.

The same pessimism shows in Augustine’s treatment of the topic of predestination. And so,” ...though he broke with the Manichaeans... [Augustine] retained their underlying conviction that a very few were elected to salvation, whereas the great mass of people were destined for eternal damnation.” (Lee 1987, 162) He believed in an Elect, people chosen by God in a "predestination which is antecedent to all differences of merit." (Chadwick 1967, 232) Predestination and its gloomy consequences were to remain topics for Christians to consider long after Augustine was gone.

E. Minor groups

As Christianity gained in strength, becoming not only the official religion of the Roman Empire, but also the totally predominant one in the Western world, many aberrations from the generally accepted norms occurred here and there. A couple of examples will be sufficient to illustrate the phenomenon.

Priscillians In the fourth century Priscillian, a priest, then bishop, in Spain led a deviant Christian church there. He taught a rigid asceticism and his followers refrained from marriage and meat-eating. Although it is clear that he was condemned as a Gnostic and Manichaean and put to death, exasperatingly few facts are known about him. His church survived him into the next century.

Euchites or Messalians These extreme ascetics originated in Mesopotamia in the fourth century and spread west into Asia Minor. "The Euchites were wandering 'holy men'...and [professed] an antinomianism [libertism, amoralism] that often expressed itself in anarchic eroticism." (Cohn 1970, 151) They rejected the sacraments, and "disbelieved in the Real Presence in the Eucharist." (Obolensky 1948, 49) In place of the sacrament of baptism with water, they spoke of a kind of spiritual baptism which was required for salvation, and they "selected the Lord's Prayer, which they recited ceaselessly to the point of vertigo and even unconsciousness..." (Lacarrière 1977, 108) "For those of them, however, who had succeeded in finally driving out the demon, sin was no longer possible...Extreme asceticism and extreme immorality thus appear as equally characteristic of the behaviour of these heretics." (Obolensky 1948, 50) They were condemned by the Council of Ephesus, but they did not disappear completely until the seventh century.

CHAPTER THREE. MEDIEVAL AND EARLY MODERN VARIETIES OF CHRISTIANITY

I INTRODUCTION

In moving his capital from Rome to his city Constantinople, the Emperor Constantine shifted more than the empire's political center. Along with that went the arts and intellectual life of Christendom. Western Europe, even Rome, became a semi-barbaric, mainly illiterate backwater of civilization. The first eight general councils of the Church, through the year 869, were held in the East. The theologians of the East, as we have seen in Chapter Two, developed and refined points of doctrine that marked the boundaries between the main body of Christianity and heterodox bodies such as the Arian and the Nestorian. Manichaeism, which fell to the pen of Augustine, a North African, was an exception, but its greatest and most enduring success as an institution was in Asia.

The mainstream, embodied especially in the church of Rome and the Church of Constantinople, remained of one mind about doctrine until there arose the dispute which proved to be the shibboleth dividing East and West: that of the *Filioque*, the relations between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit of the Triune God, the Holy Trinity. The Church of Rome insisted that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Son as well as Father, while the Churches of Constantinople, Antioch, Ephesus, and the rest of the East maintained that the Spirit proceeds only from the Father.

It is hard for us in our day to understand why this matter was so important that it drove the Church to split into East and West in 1054 with a rift that remains a thousand years later. Perhaps, however, the theological dispute was only the face of the true problem, which was the great difference between the two halves of Christianity. There was the cultivated East, which retained political independence as an empire in its own right as it gradually lost ground (literally) to Islam after the seventh century and bowed to the

Crescent definitively when Constantinople fell, in 1453. Then there was the West, which in the early Middle Ages, was culturally backwards and politically fragmented. The West, however, contained the city which prided itself on being the final resting place of the Apostles Peter and Paul and which was gradually becoming a place of pilgrimage and of political clout for a civilization on the ascendancy. Eventually the relationship would reverse itself. As the Eastern Empire gradually yielded land and power to Islam, its Christian churches became conservative, doing their best to maintain their very existence. The inventive theological spark was gone from them. Only one heterodox movement sufficiently notable for inclusion in this study guide arose among them: the “Old Believers” of the Russian Church, whom we shall treat in their proper chronological place. Heterodoxy as a facet of the dynamic evolution of Christianity becomes a European phenomenon as Europe rises in the Middle Ages.

By the end of the late classical period, roughly the sixth century, the western European lands of the now dismembered Roman empire were divided by any number of factors, especially race, popular language, and political structure. They were, however, spiritually united by the Christian Church that everywhere in Europe looked to its one Patriarch, the Pope of Rome. There was also a powerful yearning for a supreme power able to wield political and military force if necessary. Although only the Church was sufficiently widespread and well enough organized to play that role, it took centuries to do so, and it never did become a political theocracy, with the exception of the so-called Papal States in Italy. In the meanwhile, beginning with Charlemagne in the eighth century, the Holy Roman Empire evolved in central Europe. With the Empire came a vision of a genuine union, but its reality was merely that of a large force, accorded legitimacy by the Church, a first among the political units within and around it.

No wonder, then, that the institutional Church, the organization recognizable by its bishops, its parishes, its monasteries and the acknowledged spiritual power emanating from the only place that had ever been center to all of Europe, Rome, proclaimed, upheld, and was orthodoxy. However much local populations here and there might have their

idiosyncracies, the Councils of the Church, the example of the monks, and the collegial vigilance of the bishops made it clear to them what it meant to be a Christian.

Nevertheless, heterodoxy coexisted with orthodoxy. The growth of heterodoxy in medieval western Europe was fostered by

(A), three external sources:

- (1) Gnostic-Dualist customs established in western Europe during the early centuries of the Church had never totally put to rest.
- (2) Gnostic-Dualist doctrine spread from Asia Minor by way of the Balkans
- (3) Gnostic-Dualist traits in Islam affected Sicily and Spain

(B), two internal sources:

- (1) Discontent with the institutional Christian Church.
- (2) The revival of intellectual life, especially through the newly established universities

The effects of these five sources will be the topic of the next nine sections of this chapter.

II. THE FIRST POST-CLASSICAL HETERODOXY: PAULICIANISM

In the mid-seventh century the first dualism of post-classical Christian origin appeared. An Armenian named Constantine preached with great force the view that an evil God created the material world, from which the good God rescues our souls through the mission of Jesus. He rejected the Old Testament because it chronicled the works of the evil God. Christianity itself he stripped of sacraments, institutional organization, and images, reducing it to a doctrine and simple practice that he claimed were its original, authentic form. Whether or not his followers were ascetics seems not to be clear. Although there is credible evidence that they held to strict morals for initiates and total moral freedom for the adepts, they may historically be confused with contemporary lingering Messalians and Euchites. (Obolensky 1948, Runciman 1982)

Historians puzzle over the name Paulician. One contemporary source says it expresses Constantine's particular adherence to the teachings of the Apostle Paul; another denies this but does not present compelling evidence that it has any other meaning.

The Paulician Church spread through Armenia and beyond that, as far west as the Bosphorus. Labelled heretical by some emperors and church patriarchs but accepted as orthodox by others, the group persisted to a great extent by its military victories. It was weak by the ninth century, and could not stand up to the might of the Saracens. In the eleventh century, which was the period of the Christianization of Russia, it expanded into that country. It was to be found there as late as the early nineteenth century. It also spread west into Thrace, now Bulgaria and part of Greece, but for a different reason. Large numbers of Paulicians, at times when they were considered the heretical enemies of the Church, were moved bodily into those places. (Dawson 1956, 254) Specifically, in the eighth century the "Empire had consigned whole communities of heretics to its frontiers: a legion of Paulicians among others." (Guerdan 1957, 51) It is the general opinion of the historians of Dualism that when the Paulicians introduced their Armenian Dualism into Europe they served as the main institutional bridge for the Eastern Dualist teachings to enter Europe.

III. BOGOMILS

In the tenth century a community of believers known as Bogomils arose in Thrace. The name came from its founder, the priest Bogomil, and the inspiration came from the Paulicians who had been exiled to the area. Bogomils doctrine contained all the elements of what we might term Classical Dualism. Particular beliefs, which they shared with some Dualists, however, were the view that Christ and Satan are the sons of the one God, that the Old Testament is not to be rejected entirely, that in the New Testament only the Gospel According to John is true revelation, and that the only prayer of the Church they should retain is the Lord's Prayer

About two hundred years later the Bogomils began to spread, reaching the lands that are now Serbia, Bosnia, Herzegovina, and Dalmatia, although they suffered persecution at the hands of the Christians of the Eastern Empire. When the Turks and Islam conquered the area in the fifteenth century they found the populations of the places where the Bogomil Church had been suppressed to be more receptive to conversion to Islam than other Balkan peoples. This is attributed to the persecution of the Bogomils by the Christians. (Bihalji-Merin 1962, 10)

Historians agree that the Bogomils exerted great influence on European Christianity because the Dualist/Gnostic religion that had entered the Balkans as Paulicianism was expanded and moved westward as far as France as Bogomilism. Jews, many of whom had some interest in Dualism and who were less fixed in the land than Christians, may have contributed to this movement. (Warner 1928, 2:59 and 117). Although the Bogomils are scarcely known in the West, they have been the topic of much recent scholarly research. See Bihalji-Merin 1962, Runciman 1930, Obolensky 1948, and Hamilton and Hamilton 1998.

IV. CATHARS-ALBIGENSIANS

The best known heterodox movement of Western Europe in the Middle Ages is that of the Cathars, who were to be found here and there in Northern Italy and Southern France from the eleventh century to the fourteenth. Material on the Cathars abounds in books and Internet studies; used in the preparation of the present account are Lambert 2002, Lansing 1988, Peters 1980 and 1988, Warner 1922 and 1928.

Cathars were known as the “Pure Ones,” and the name “Cathar” is, in fact, the Greek adjective for ‘clean’ (‘Katharós’). Although this derivation is plausible, there is insufficient evidence to prove it.

There has been historical speculation that the Catharism of Southern France evolved out of the remnants of persistent ancient Manichaeism. (Anichkov 1928) In fact, the eleventh century monk Adhémar of Chabannes wrote in his chronicle for 1018 that "Manichaeans appeared in Aquitaine...they denied baptism, the cross...and pretended to be celibate...They were messengers of Antichrist." (Peters 1980, 61) Despite Adhémar's account, historians generally agree that the main source of Catharism was Bogomilism spreading its influence westward.

Most famous among the Cathars were the Albigenses of Southern France. For their location see the map at <http://www.santacruzspirituality.net/cathars.png>. In 1206 the Church launched against them a military force known as the Albigensian Crusade, as furious a military action as were the contemporary Crusades against the Saracens. The southern French town of Albi, although only one of a number of affected communities, gave its name to the whole Cathar movement and *Albigensian* is frequently used as synonymous with Cathar. The war went on until the crusaders' victory of 1229, although some military action persisted until 1255.

In the next century Catharism appeared again in the same area. This time it was eradicated because its people were denounced to Church courts known as Inquisitions, which condemned large numbers of them, confiscated the property of many, and had a number put to death by fire. The story of some of these Cathars and their fate is told in Appendix A.

Italian Cathars could be found in the northern cities, Verona, Bologna, Florence, and the central Italian city, Orvieto, in the early and middle years of the thirteenth century. A hundred and fifty years earlier there had been *Patarini* (*Patarnes* in English), citizens of Milan who stood up for church reform, but did not subscribe to Dualist beliefs. Their movement became embroiled in struggles over civil and religious authority in Milan, and died out within a few decades. To the confusion of later scholars, the name Patarini came to be applied to Italian Cathars, possibly because of the phonetic similarity between

“catari” and “patari(ni).” (www.eresie.it/it/Patarini.htm [2012], website of the *Dizionario del pensiero cristiano alternativo*)

The French and the Italian Cathar movements, like that of the Patarenes, involved both a political and a religious dissension. The Albigensian Crusade served as a step toward the creation of the French nation, as King Louis IX's forces put an end to the movement by wresting control of the region from the nobles of southern France. In Italy the appearance of Cathars coincided with that of independent cities which claimed and fought for independence from both the Emperor and the Pope. In all cases the Church looked for, and found, people who could be labelled as heretics and thus could be suppressed, or worse.

The watershed of the struggle between the Church and the people it considered enemies came in 1215, with the Fourth Lateran Council. By this time the Western Church was holding what it considered general councils with or without representation from the Eastern Church. The council of 1215 reiterated Church doctrine in Canon (Decree) One. Matters of faith, the canon explained, were not only God, Christ, the Holy Trinity, and proper living in this life and life in the world to come, but also the role and authority of the institutional Church, headed by the Pope. Canon Two singled out for censure the Abbott Joachim of Fiore, who maintained an unacceptable understanding of the Holy Trinity. The third Canon expressed horror at the heresies which were current in Europe and detailed the process for Inquisitions to deal with them. Denying the authority of the Church was as heretical as believing in a bad God as well as a good God. Unlike Canon Two, Canon Three does not name anyone. Rather, it states, “We excommunicate and anathematize every heresy that raises [*sic*] against the holy, orthodox and Catholic faith which we have above explained, condemning all heretics under whatever names they may be known, for while they have different faces they are nevertheless bound to each other by their tails, since in all of them vanity is a common element.” (translation in www.intratext.com) With this broom the Church was set to sweep up Cathars, Bogomils, stray Manichees, and the Waldenses who would soon appear. They were all the same – enemies of the Church, and

Inquisitions that searched diligently were apt to find that the accused had said at least something the Church did not like.

Cathar doctrine intertwined several strands. One was disappointment at the lack of spirituality in the organization of the established Church and its practices, including the sacraments. Another was mistrust toward a local clergy perceived to be ignorant as well as worldly. There was also a deep, basic, Christian feeling that the good God could not be responsible for evil. The Church told them that Satan was the source of evil, and it was not a great leap of thought to equate Satan with the evil God of Dualism. The popular superstitions about witches, spells, amulets, and the like, which arose from misunderstanding and ignorance of the powers of nature, added an emotional dimension to the perception of evil in the world.

In the everyday world of Cathar regions there were no clear theological or even psychological boundaries to divide the Christian sheep from the Christian goats. “Cathar beliefs are better understood not as a pessimistic anomaly but within a more general climate of religious doubt. It is useful to think not in terms of sharp division between two camps, Cathar and orthodox believers, but of a broad spectrum of beliefs and concerns, with Cathar perfects [holy people] taking one cluster of positions.” (Lansing 1998, 10) Rather than repeat here a catalog of tenets which we, in our sophisticated thinking, recognize to be heterodox, we present in the Appendix a case study of the French Cathar community of Montailou.

V WALDENSES

Dissatisfaction with that Pan-European institution, the Western Orthodox, or Roman Church, has already been cited in these pages as a factor in the transmission of Dualism from East to West. The original impetus for the Dualist worldview was, indeed, from outside the Christian community, but it touched a sore spot in the Christian worldview: the problem of the origin of evil. In addition to this, however, a new problem for Christians

came to the fore in the Middle Ages. By the late eleventh century, eight hundred years into the official dominance of Christianity in Europe, affairs of Church and State had become confusingly mixed, more to the detriment of the Church than that of the State. Reform started on high with Pope Gregory VII toward the end of the eleventh century as the Church started to free itself from the power of civil authorities to appoint bishops. (The Pope was aided militarily and financially by one of the most powerful women of the Middle Ages, Countess Matilda of Tuscany, whose story is told as an essay on the website www.santacruzspirituality.net/countess.htm.) Reform of clergy was still needed, as was a general return to the ideals of the Church as a spiritual institution.

In the the twelfth and thirteenth centuries numerous Western European spiritual leaders undertook to steer the Western Church away from defects it had accumulated over the centuries. Best known of these persons were Francis of Assisi and Dominic de Guzman of Castile, both of whom were born toward the end of the twelfth and became active in the early years of the thirteenth. They established religious communities which were called "mendicant" ("begging"), because, unlike the monastic orders, they were not to possess property, even in common. Some other leaders started as staunch churchmen, but went beyond the limits of orthodoxy. Such was Valdes, or Waldo, of Lyons.

In 1173, Waldo, a wealthy Lyonese merchant, experienced a religious conversion. He seems to have acted on the admonition of Jesus, "If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell what thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come and follow me." (Matthew 19:21) Because Waldo and his followers gave up their property (Waldo separated from his wife and disposed of his belongings), they became known either as the "Poor Men of Lyons" or, from the name from their leader, "Waldenses."

Suspected of preaching a heretical doctrine, Waldo was called to task by the Church in the Third Lateran Council of 1179, but he satisfied the Pope that he was quite orthodox. Back in France, however, Waldo began to preach far and wide a doctrine that condemned the Church roundly for all its sins and challenged the Church's authority. Ultimately he

rejected virtually all tenets and practices of the Church. Although his message and his way of thinking reached and could be found for a while as far from Lyons as Germany, Austria, and Bohemia, the Waldensian Church has been most notable, even lasting to the present, in Piedmont, in the northwest of Italy. The Waldenses suffered their share of persecution, and that is why, beginning in the fourteenth century, some of them migrated from Piedmont to southern Italy, and even there they were not safe. Their vicissitudes in Calabria and Puglia will be shown in the Appendix as the second of three case studies.

Whether as wandering holy men and women or in settled congregations, the Waldenses resembled the Protestants of the future in their thinking rather more than the Dualists of the past, although they were not quite either. Waldenses, for instance, "were required to commit to memory the Gospels of St. Matthew and St. John, the general epistles, and a part of those of St. Luke." (Reaman 1963, 22) Although the Paulicians and Bogomils had "a profound acquaintance with the Scriptures," (Obolensky 1948, 194) Cathars, unlike Waldenses, rejected the Old and New Testament almost entirely. Albigenses and Waldenses alike took a dim view of the Sacraments; the Albigenses mainly because they thought that priests had to be free of mortal sin in order to confer them validly. The Waldenses simply held that there were only three sacraments, and instead of a caste of priests to administer them, all members were priests, capable of doing this. One regard on which the two churches were similar is that each had a caste of Holy People, called "Perfects" or "Good Men." In general Waldenses were much milder reformers than Cathars, but in view of confusingly similar traits it is no wonder that the Western Church was unable to make a clear distinction between the Waldenses and the Albigenses, and even the Bogomils. Four of the five people burned at the stake as heretics in Cathar Montailou were understood to be Waldenses. (Ladurie 1978, xvii) Waldenses were also lumped together with Cathars and Bogomils in the decrees of the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215.

The Waldensian communities of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries clung to each other and hid in the valleys of Piedmont and Southern Italy. In 1532 they were incorporated into the Reformed Church, a Calvinistic branch of Protestantism, an action that was in

accord with their theological leanings. In spite of this they continued to look different and to remain in their mountain villages, with the result that they suffered violent massacres in France, Piedmont, and Calabria. (Lambert 2002, 384-392) Ineradicable, they finally came into their own in 1848, when the Kingdom of Piedmont-Sardinia granted them civil status. They grouped as the *Waldensian Evangelical Church*, which still exists in Italy as a variant of Presbyterianism. In 2012 Waldensian-Presbyterian congregations are known to exist in Italy, the United States, Canada, and South America. (The Wikipedia website in 2012 provides excellent, well researched information on Waldensian history since the sixteenth century.)

VI. SPIRITUAL WANDERERS

In the Europe of the twelfth century numbers of Christians expressed their discontent with the institutional Church by being *Spirituals*, living in a non-worldly or spiritual way, in voluntary poverty, rejecting bodily comforts, including even the comfort of fixed habitations. Although they maintained distance from Church authority, they were seen by the Church to be just a nuisance and not a threat to the religion of the masses. In the thirteenth century, as their numbers grew greatly, they became a movement, the spiritual wanderers, some of whom were declared by the Church to be heretical.

Brethren of the Free Spirit: The title “Brethren of the Free Spirit” refers to groups of people who went about Europe begging for the basics of life. Although they existed only as a movement of like-minded, unorganized small groups, they were given a name and treated as an organized religious sect in 1312 by the fifteenth general council of the Church, the Council of Vienne.

Graphically put by Norman Cohn, these people “... frequented towns and ranged through the streets in noisy groups, shouting for alms...They wore costumes rather like those of the friars, yet especially designed to differ from these in certain details. Sometimes the robe was red, sometimes it was split from the waist down; to emphasize the profession of

poverty the hood was small and covered with patches.” (Cohn 1970, 159). At the same time that they showed themselves in this way, they proclaimed that true religion consisted of turning away from the pleasures and certainties of life. They also proclaimed the realization that all life, and more than that, all the world, is sacred.

In addition to their being accused of subversion of the religious and social order and of being grossly immoral, they were also denounced for introducing Pantheism as a new kind of heresy. We noted in Chapter One that the Judaeo-Christian conception of God rules out the idea that everything in the world *is* God. Nevertheless, Christians and non-Christians alike who have a strong sense of *the sacred* are drawn to feel that everything about them is a manifestation of God. For many non-Christians it is a short step from this to concluding that everything *is* God. Christians, however, can within the boundaries of their faith hold that God *is in* everything (panentheism). Although evidence is lacking that these free spirited religious people had crossed over into non-Christian Pantheism, the Council of Vienne condemned them as though they had been guilty of it. From the statements of some individual religious enthusiasts, the council drew up a list of errors imputed to the generality of the spirituals, including the belief that they were mystically united with God and that they were no longer capable of sinning. These propositions and the supposed sect which espoused them were declared to be heretical. After that, Church tribunals used these propositions as the measuring stick for judging the guilt of people accused of heresy. (Lambert, 202, 199-207)

Beghards and Beguines: Beghards, men, and Beguines, women, were spirituals who had a degree of local organization. Having their roots as far back as the twelfth century, both existed as communities, mainly in the Low Countries and Germany, both were known for their good works, their extreme poverty, and their high moral standards. Both, in spite of their virtues, did not acquiesce to the supervision of the Church, and so, along with the more generic spirituals, they were declared heretical in the fourteenth century. Their heterodox movement, in spite of condemnations, lasted into the next century. As time went on some settled groups of Beguines began to be accepted by the Church in the Low

Countries, where they persevered for hundreds of years in a form of life much like that of modern convents of religious sisters.

Fraticelli: In Central and southern Italy some men took it upon themselves to live in poverty like Franciscan Friars. In fact they maintained a Franciscan-like style of living, but they did it their way, rejecting the supervision of the Church, and so, they were declared heretical in 1296. The movement nevertheless continued well into the next century.

VII. JOHN WYCLIFFE AND THE LOLLARDS

With John Wycliffe we encounter the power of the universities to challenge the boundaries of the Western Christian Church and ultimately lead to a complete rethinking of them. European universities began to take shape in the early twelfth century, especially in France and Italy; the first one in the British Isles was the cluster of faculty and students in Oxford, in the latter half of the century. Among the faculties of the universities were the theologians, who were not quite as closely controlled by the Church as the theologians of strictly religious schools in their strictly religious environments. We see now that it was only a matter of time until challenges to the teachings of the Church would arise from the academic faculties of theology and related disciplines, such as philosophy.

By 1378 the allegation that one of the Oxford faculty, Wycliffe, was teaching errors about the Church precipitated a letter of admonition from the Pope. Wycliffe's tart letter of response brought no condemnation, and the priest-professor died peacefully in 1384. His memory was not to remain undisturbed. As his influence spread posthumously, his teachings began to appear as a threat to the Church. The Council of Constance, the sixteenth general council, in 1415 condemned Wycliffe and his views, and had his body exhumed and burned as the body of a heretic.

Like many before him, Wycliffe argued against what he considered the Western Church's deviations from proper Christianity. His condemnation of the papacy, however, was particularly harsh: he called the Pope the Anti-Christ and the Church the Synagogue of Satan. He held that the entire clerical system of the Church was wrong and that there was a kind of universal priesthood of the faithful. Perhaps his most notable contribution to the evolution of Christianity was his contention that the Bible ought to be available to the mass of the faithful in their language and not only through the interpretation of those who could read it in Latin. Apparently translating some parts of the Bible himself, he championed the use by the laity of the whole of it in their language.

In a short time the professor's opinion of the Church spread to a general following of Englishmen known as Lollards ("mumblers" literally). They were also called "The Bible Men" because of their knowledge of the Scriptures. They differed on some points among themselves and from Wycliffe, but in the main they condemned the use of images in churches, the decoration of churches, the practice of pilgrimages to the tombs of saints, the temporal lordship of the clergy, the hierarchical organization and papal authority of the Church, the religious orders, the ceremony of the mass, the doctrine of transubstantiation, the waging of wars, and the practice of capital punishment.

In 1413 a Lollard leader, Sir John Oldcastle, was arrested, brought to trial, and condemned as a heretic. Escaping from the Tower of London, he led a Lollard revolt. Quickly put down, the revolt was the last notable appearance of Lollardy. The Lollard attitude, however, of disdain for the Church hierarchy, scepticism of its rites, and appeal to the Bible rather than the Church as the ultimate religious authority, remained and fermented during the hundred years that were to pass before the establishment of Protestantism in England. (Lambert 2002, 266-305)

VIII. JOHN HUS AND THE TABORITES

The Bohemian, John Hus (c1370-1415), a university man a generation removed from John Wycliffe, was Rector of the University of Prague early in the fifteenth century. Hus was a great admirer of Wycliffe, whose ideas he proclaimed eloquently and with great effect. Like Wycliffe he gave his name to a translation of the Bible into the local vernacular, in this case the Czech language. It is also supposed that he was affected by the Waldenses, who were settled in the area. Condemned, like Wycliffe, by the Council of Constance, he was burned at the stake as a heretic before the Council was over.

Hus's more radical followers, termed Taborites because of their fortified center, Mount Tabor, which they themselves had named, defied the church and civil authorities militarily. One crusade after another was sent against them, until they were defeated in battle in 1434. Even then their strength was so great that two years later they negotiated a general reconciliation with the Church and civil authorities. One of the religious practices of both radical and moderate Hussites, that of letting the laity partake of the Eucharist both by eating the host and drinking from the chalice, was highly unorthodox in the Church at that time. The Church, however, sanctioned it for Bohemia as a concession. (Lambert 2002, 306-382)

To Bohemians John Hus was a national hero; to others, in Europe and elsewhere, he was a Christian leader instrumental in spreading Wycliffe's vision of a restored Christian Church.

With Wycliffe and Hus the elements are present for a new era in Western Christian religion. Dissatisfaction with many points of the organization, operations, and teachings of the Western Christian Church could be kept in check for a while. An increasingly educated population, however, due especially to the adoption and spread of printing, spread knowledge beyond the universities, stimulating the exchange of ideas. One hundred and two years would pass between the death of John Hus and Martin Luther's posting of the 95 Theses on the door of the castle church in Wittenberg.

IX. FIFTEENTH CENTURY HETERODOXY

In the fifteenth century, Western Europe, hemmed in on the south and east by Islam and on the west and north by water and ice, was indisputably the land of the Church of Rome. There was virtually no question of which Church one belonged to: there was only one Church. European Christians took for granted the presence - no! more than that - the absolute necessity of the religion which permeated the human environment.

Within that Church, it is true, there were regional and local differences, such as those based on pre-Christian customs of solar, lunar, and harvest festivals. More disconcerting to us, Spain and Germany distinguished themselves by anti-Semitism. At the individual level there was diversity in attitude toward this all-embracing Church and its requirements. There were peasants who couldn't really believe that God would punish them for the hardships and sacrifices of their lives, and there were popes who expected to get away with gross immorality because their last minute repentance would be rewarded by the good God. Also, undercurrents of doubting discontent and of heterodoxy did not totally die with the last of the Pyrenees Cathars.

Here and there the Church continued to find and prosecute people accused of being Cathars, Waldenses, Lollards, and Hussites. Such people and others accused of serious deviations from the general uniformity were dealt with by *inquisitions*, which were not one, far reaching organization, but which were Church courts. Some inquisitions were under the authority of the local bishop, others under regional authority, and there was also the papal inquisition. (Information on inquisitions can be found in Baigent and Leigh 1999, Haliczer 1987, Peters 1988, and Monter 1984.)

Church teaching in the fifteenth century underwent an increasing concern with Satan and witches. The idea that Satan, God's adversary, was active and ready to tempt Christians goes back to the beginning of the Christian community. The correlative to this, that Satan would possess people and cause them to act in bizarre ways was equally ancient. As the Church spread north in the post-

classical period the earlier folk religions added the belief that people could assent to possession and use the power of Satan to harm others. Such people, almost always women, were what we know as witches. Through the Middle Ages witchcraft was considered evil, and women found guilty of it were punished, but the dramatic turn in the treatment of witches came in 1484, when the Pope declared that allowing oneself to act with the power of Satan was placing Satan above God and the Church, and was, therefore, heresy. At that time it became easy to accuse women considered “strange” of being heretics and to burn them at the stake like other people condemned as heretics

Mysticism, direct personal communication with God, with or without visions and paranormal phenomena, is conceptually the opposite of diabolic possession. Mysticism had begun to appear in Europe in the Middle Ages. Widely reputed to be mystics, some cloistered nuns were not perceived to be deviating from the Christian faith. Gradually, however, Church authorities increased their scrutiny of mysticism for two serious problems they saw in it. Suspicion of Pantheism was a problem because mystics can experience oneness with God and a feeling that God is not only everywhere, but is everything. The other problem was that the mystic listens to God directly and not through the Church. This is an intolerable insult to the heart of the institutional Church’s understanding of its role.

The first mystic who stood out and was understood to challenge the Church was the German born theologian Johannes Eckhart, who died in 1327 or 1328. Meister Eckhart, as he is known, was convicted posthumously in 1329 of 17 propositions of heresy or suspected heresy. On a larger scale in the sixteenth century there was, mainly in Spain, a movement of mysticism notorious enough to be formally condemned. Known as the *Alumbrados* or *Illuminati*, these people were not organized as a group, but “The Spanish Inquisition was particularly severe with Alumbrados. All Alumbrado writings were placed on the Index. In 1578, the Inquisition modified its official declaration of faith in order to label a number of Alumbrado assertions as heresy and theological error.” (Baigent and Leigh 1999, 152)

As the Middle Ages came to a close the Western Church sharpened its statement about *purgatory*. The belief that prayers for the dead could benefit them can be traced back to the early centuries of the Church. Gradually the implication of this belief, that there is a place where the souls of the dead are held before they are ready to enter heaven, was realized. Given a name, purgatory, the existence of the place was first formally defined to be Christian doctrine by the General Council of Florence in 1438. The Council of Constance, a few years earlier, had crystallized the Church's teaching that the Pope had the authority to shorten a soul's stay in purgatory by granting an *indulgence*, which was an early release from purgatory. The Popes then used this authority lavishly and, as many dissenters maintained, scandalously. Early in the sixteenth century, as we shall see, it became a key issue in the Protestant Reformation.

CHAPTER FOUR HETERODOXY IN TODAY'S CHRISTIANITY

Tutwiler

I. THE DISSOLUTION IN THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY

In 1500 the European world was beginning to see social, political, and scientific revolutions that wrought radical transformations. Besides the factors we have already mentioned, such as the power of the printing press and the learning of the Renaissance, there was even the discovery of new continents to explore, conquer, civilize, and evangelize.

The single event which marked the beginning of a new, and still current, era in the history of Christianity and, to a great extent, of the entire world was Martin Luther's posting of his 95 Theses in 1517. The Protestant movement within the Christian Church was at least as profound and extensive as any split that took place in Christianity before the sixteenth century. It quickly had world-wide repercussions, whereas the split between the Eastern churches and the Western, or Roman, churches had affected but one continent. The variety of doctrines and practices in the earlier division was small compared with that of the second.

We must, however, not forget the Christian Church's struggles of the first fourteen centuries to define orthodoxy. The defeated Gnosticism and Dualism were complex; they rested on philosophical and historical foundations from numerous diverse European and Asian cultures, but they were effectively gone from the scene by Martin Luther's time. At this point the evolution of the Christian religion, and in particular the Western Church, had been like a multi-strand rope. Before the sixteenth century many of the strands had withered away or had been cut off, so that there remained only one. In the sixteenth century, however, the rope again became multi-strand.

The initial challenge of the Protestant Reformation, the theme of the 95 Theses posted on the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg for disputation, was the *sale of indulgences*.

Entrepreneurial clerics obtained from the pope indulgences as if they were commodities, and distributed them throughout Christian lands for a price. Without, at that time, calling for revolution, Luther complained vigorously about the pope's handling of the matter. The lively imagery of Thesis 27, however, "They preach only human doctrines who say that as soon as the money clinks into the money chest, the soul flies out of purgatory," indicates that there were weightier matters at stake. The accusation that the Church of Rome did, indeed, preach human doctrine, soon expanded far beyond the matter of indulgences. And so it was that only 13 years later, in 1530, the German states were divided from one another, and most of them were separated from Rome; by 1534 Henry VIII had made himself the head of the Christian Church in England; and by 1536 John Calvin had published the *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. Consensus on religious matters was blown away. "The Reformation," writes Thomas Max Safley, "included a cacophony of voices and a multitude of texts that questioned and addressed the entire range of Christian teaching and life ... It seemed that the entire Christian religion had come suddenly under assault, or, viewed from the perspective of those seeking change, opened finally to renewal." (Safley 2011, 3)

It is not the task of the present study to pursue the historical unfolding of the new era in Western Christianity; rather, our question is, what was orthodox, what was heterodox, and what was heretical in this movement? In consequence of the movement, what do virtually all Christians of the Western tradition believe? What significant variations are there among Western Christians regarding these beliefs? and what beliefs are there among people of Western traditions that cannot be called Christian, although some, or even many, aspects of them are Christian? To answer these questions it helps to know the differences between a *creed*, which is a statement of the basic Christian belief, common to virtually all Christians, a *confession*, which is a statement of the interpretation of the creed shared by segment of the Christian population, and a *denomination*, which is an organizational unit of congregations that share a confession.

In the second chapter of this work we observed that the early councils of the Christian Church settled basic matters about God, about Jesus, and about our relationship to God. These decisions were worked into creeds, the first of which, that of the Council of Nicea in 325, slightly revised by Second Council of Constantinople in 381. Termed the *Nicene Creed* it has been adopted by virtually all Christian bodies, West and East, ever since. If there is any basic statement of the Christian faith, it is this, although one of its assertions, that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Son as well as the Father, was, as we noted earlier, a problem. We place here for reference a copy of the English translation of it found in the *Lutheran Book of Worship* and the *Episcopal Book of Common Prayer*, courtesy of www.creeds.net.

We believe in one God,
The Father, the Almighty,
Maker of heaven and earth,
Of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,
the only Son of God,
Eternally begotten of the Father,
God from God, Light from Light,
True God from true God,
Begotten, not made,
Of one Being with the Father.

Through him all things were made.
For us and for our salvation
He came down from heaven:
By the power of the Holy Spirit
He became incarnate from the Virgin Mary,
And was made man.
For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;
He suffered death and was buried.
On the third day he rose again
In accordance with the Scriptures;
He ascended into heaven
And is seated at the righthand of the Father.

He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,
And his kingdom will have no end.
We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,

Who proceeds from the Father and the Son.
 With the Father and the Son he is worshiped and glorified.
 He has spoken through the Prophets.
 We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.
 We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.
 We look for the resurrection of the dead,
 And the life of the world to come. Amen.

The degree of adherence of Americans to the Nicene Creed is shown by recent studies:

In the 2008-2009 wave of the U. S. Congregational Life Survey, 94 percent of evangelicals, 91 percent of Catholics and 78 percent of mainline Protestants said Jesus was raised bodily from the dead after his crucifixion.

Jesus' resurrection from the dead was an actual event, said three-quarters of the more than 25,000 respondents to congregational surveys offered by the Hartford Institute for Religion Research from 2004 to 2010. Most of the participants were mainline Protestants.

More than two-thirds of Christian respondents, including 84 percent of black and evangelical respondents, strongly agreed with the statement, "Jesus Christ physically rose from the dead," According to the *Portraits of American Life Study*. ("Knowing where they stand: Belief in resurrection central to religious identity across Christian landscape." By David Briggs in www.thearda.com, April 5, 2012.)

Certain basic doctrines were shared by virtually all Protestants in the beginning (and still are shared by them): 1. Justification by faith, 2. the priesthood of all believers [as opposed to an institutional hierarchy of clergy], and 3. the Bible as the final standard of faith.

There were, however, three broad groups of sixteenth century Protestants: 1. Lutheran, 2. Reformed (Zwingli and Calvin), 3. Anabaptist, as well as the anomalous Church of England. (Norwood 1956, 66-68) The *Augsburg Confession* of 1530 states the Lutheran position. The *Canons of Dordt*, promulgated by the Synod of Dordrecht in 1618-1619, contain the confession of the Calvinistic branch of Protestantism. The Swiss Brethren's *Schleitheim Confession* of 1527 speaks for Anabaptists. The *39 Articles of the Church of England*, first set forth in 1562, serve as the confession of this church

Within the framework of the general confessional groups, the fractionalization of Christianity resulted quickly in a multitude of particular confessions. In fact, "No 16th-

century confession, from the briefest to the longest, addressed only one or two points of doctrine, and no 16th-century confession diverged from other confessions on only one or two points of doctrine. Their differences were as numerous as the points of doctrine they addressed.” (Safley 2011, 34)

The denominations arose as as one group of individual congregations split institutionally from another of the same confession. Whereas confessions are statements of what congregants believe, denominations are the names of the administrative groups to which the congregants adhere. Some local churches belong to no denomination at all, but they follow some tradition or lineage, which derives ultimately from one of the confessions.

Various attempts have been made to categorize the denominations based on doctrines and on historical lineages. Under the heading “The range of associations” in Chapter 1 of *Santa Cruz Spirituality*, I noted some of them. In organizing *Santa Cruz Spirituality* I adopted the widely used approach of J. Gordon Melton, who divided Christian congregations into “families.” The coherence of each family stems from similarities in confession, in denomination, and in history. Melton’s Christian families are:

- Western Liturgical (Anglican Communion and Roman Catholic)
- Eastern Liturgical (the “Orthodox” churches)
- Lutheran
- Reformed—Presbyterian
- Pietist-Methodist
- Holiness
- Pentecostal
- European Free-Church
- Baptist
- Independent Fundamentalist
- Adventist

And, in addition to these the controversial “families,”

- Liberal (such as Unitarian-Universalist)
- Latter-Day Saints
- Christian Science and Metaphysical

It should be clear from consideration of what is not expressed in the Nicene Creed that all the main points shared by sixteenth century Protestants, that is, justification by faith, the

priesthood of all believers, and adherence to the Bible as the final standard of faith, are matters of confessions, and not of creeds. An objective observer can conclude that all Christians who profess the Nicene Creed are fundamentally non-heretical. Denominations, singly or individually, can declare members to be heretics because of some particular belief which they have or do not have.

To the Roman, or Catholic, Church of the sixteenth century all the Protestants were heretics. Even now, although the Catholic Church has softened its language since the Second Vatican Council of the 1960s, calling Protestants “separated brethren,” its official position is that they teach false doctrine. On the opposite side of the question many Protestants consider their form of Christianity to be so much truer than the Catholic form, that Catholics are heretics..

Before and after the time of Martin Luther the Catholic Church has promulgated as articles of faith a number of statements which others can interpret as confessional, rather than creedal, thus affording some hope that the common faith will at some time in the future be regarded as more important than the differences. Even the Catholic and the Protestant understandings of justification by faith could be reconciled according to “Are Protestants Heretics?” a study by Edward T. Oakes, a Jesuit scholar. (Oakes, 2007)

A declaration by one Christian group that another group or an individual is heretical does not imply that the rest of Christians agree with the accusation of heresy. In fact to people outside the denominations involved, these accusations of heresy can better be interpreted as deviations from orthodoxy, that is, heterodoxy. Heterodox might also be used to represent the fact that much of the doctrine of any Christian Church is different in some respects from the doctrine of any or all the rest of them.

Since the sixteenth century the greatest impulse for Western Christian religious leaders to found new denominations has not been a matter of creed or confession, but has been the desire to return to the primitive simplicity of the Christian Church. The back-to-the-

origins movement has been very conspicuous in the United States, where not only the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), but Methodist, Baptist, and Pentecostal congregations have embraced it to the extent of dropping their original denominational affiliation.

In current American society, interchurch religious dialog has less to do with either creedal or confessional tenets than it does with shared *spirituality*. I have treated the meaning of spirituality at length in the fifth chapter of the ebook *Santa Cruz Spirituality*. I add here that when spirituality is cultivated by members of various religious traditions, this does not mean that “traditional issues of religious dialog are about to be replaced by the emergence of a vague, unbounded spirituality; rather it suggests that spiritual seeking is elevated as a prominent religious theme and can itself be a creative, revitalizing experience, even a venue to transforming the meaning of the religious life itself.” (Taylor 2007, 75)

II. GNOSTIC/DUALIST TRADITION WITHIN CHRISTIANITY SINCE THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY

We do not have to look far to see traces of Gnosticism and Dualism in modern Christianity. The more apparent of the two is Dualism, which can be found in the doctrine of original sin and in the perception of the powerful Satan. The more subtle Christian Gnosticism involves the secret knowledge of faith and the superhuman power of grace

Dualism The doctrine of *original sin* or *human depravity*, which is not mentioned in the creed, goes deeper into human nature than the Old Testament’s expulsion from the Garden of Eden., Martin Luther’s Ninety-five Theses, the first blast of Protestantism, were concerned strictly with the Church and indulgences, but soon strong statements about human evil appeared. An early Lutheran statement, the Augsburg Confession of 1530, asserted, “... since the fall of Adam all men begotten in the natural way are born with sin, that is, *without the fear of God, without trust in God, ...*” (italics mine)

Soon after that John Calvin explained that

This is the hereditary corruption to which early Christian writers gave the name of Original Sin, meaning by the term the depravation [depravity] of a nature formerly good and pure. The subject gave rise to much discussion, there being nothing more remote from common apprehension, than that the fault of one should render all guilty, and so become a common sin. This seems to be the reason why the oldest doctors of the church only glance obscurely at the point, or, at least, do not explain it so clearly as it required. This timidity, however, could not prevent the rise of a Pelagius with his profane fiction--that Adam sinned only to his own hurt, but did no hurt to his posterity. (*Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 1559 text, the last by Calvin himself, Book 2, Chapter 1. Section 5)

Then there are the 1619 *Canons of Dordt*, which reflect the Reformed, or gloomy side of Calvinism; Article 1 of the "First Main Point of Doctrine" is entitled "God's Right to Condemn all People."

The doctrine of original sin presents an extreme view of the extent and depth of evil that arises from the action of one person. Adam's disobedience affects all the billions of humans and makes all of them not just inclined to evil, but despicably depraved. Moreover, the depravity of the human race results not from human free will, nor from the intention of Adam, who certainly did not foresee and will it, but from the free will of God. This, of course, leads back to the weakness of monotheistic explanations of evil.

Apart from the question of the cause of human depravity, the doctrine of original sin at least reflects a fundamentally negative attitude toward self. At most it is taken to its extreme logical consequence, that all humans are damned except the few chosen by God. While no church holds that evil is stronger than the redemptive action of Christ, many have taught that this redemption applies only to a chosen group. John Calvin presented a grim picture:

Still the observation of Augustine is true, that all who are strangers to the true God, however excellent they may be deemed on account of their virtues are more deserving of punishment than of reward, because, by the pollution of their heart, they contaminate the pure gifts of God (August. contra Julia. Lib. 4). For though

they are instruments of God to preserve human society by justice, continence, friendship, temperance, fortitude, and prudence, yet they execute these good works of God in the worst manner, because they are kept from acting ill, not by a sincere love of goodness, but merely by ambition or self-love, or some other sinister affection. Seeing then that these actions are polluted as in their very source, by impurity of heart, they have no better title to be classed among virtues than vices, which impose upon us by their affinity or resemblance to virtue. In short, when we remember that the object at which righteousness always aims is the service of God, whatever is of a different tendency deservedly forfeits the name. Hence, as they have no regard to the end which the divine wisdom prescribes, although from the performance the act seems good, yet from the perverse motive it is sin. Augustine, therefore, concludes that all the Fabriciuses, the Scipios, and Catos, in their illustrious deeds, sinned in this, that, wanting the light of faith, they did not refer them to the proper end, and that, therefore, there was no true righteousness in them, because duties are estimated not by acts but by motives. (*Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 1559 text, Book 3, Chapter 14. Section 3)

The attitude of today's American Protestants toward the likelihood of their damnation is drastically different from that of Augustine, Calvin, and the proverbial fire and brimstone preachers of Puritan and frontier America. In a 2007 survey conducted by Baylor University, when asked "How certain are you that you will get into heaven?" 60% of the Protestant respondents answered "Quite certain" or "Very certain." Of Catholics, only 35% answered similarly, and overall, 36% answered in the same way. Eleven percent of the respondents, including 3% of the Protestants and 5% of the Catholics, did not believe there is a heaven. (www.thearda.com/quickstats/qs_155_p.asp)

Another dualistic feature in Christian doctrine on evil is the figure of Satan, or the Devil, as an explanation of particular instances of evil action. Satan in the apocalyptic writings, including even those in the approved canon of the New Testament, is God's powerful adversary. John Calvin wrote,

But as the devil was created by God, we must remember that this malice which we attribute to his nature is not from creation, but from depravation. Every thing damnable in him he brought upon himself, by his revolt and fall. Of this Scripture reminds us, lest, by believing that he was so created at first, we should ascribe to God what is most foreign to his nature. (*Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Book 1, Chapter 14, Section 16)

Not only is Satan himself bad, but he leads people to oppose God. Accounts of people's yielding to the power of Satan and doing his will abounded in the Middle Ages and have continued to this day.

The casting out of devils through exorcisms is still taken very seriously by the Catholic Church. *Exorcism*, the action by which the Church combats Satan in the individual, is performed by clergy who are designated for this by the hierarchy.

Gnosticism Perhaps more foreign to the general tenor of Christianity are the vestiges of Gnosticism in it. The general attitude of Christian congregations of all denominations is to be open to outsiders, to proclaim their beliefs to them, and to hide nothing from them. The import of the message stated in the Nicene Creed is that it is for everyone, everywhere. Nevertheless, by looking closely at the Christian *faith* that all are supposed to have, one finds it to be *knowledge that one cannot acquire by the exercise of human power*. It is acquired not in a secret ceremony with symbols that only the initiated know, but in an open and public way, ordinarily a ceremony. Coming forward in the midst of the congregation to "confess Jesus" or similar protestations is one way. Another is the reception of sacraments, especially Baptism, but also Confirmation.

A forceful variant is found in the modern Pentecostal movement, which proposes that the Holy Spirit enables the worshippers in a congregation to speak in languages, make prophetic statements, heal the sick, and perform miracles. As in Gnosticism, initiation (by the Holy Spirit in this case) is required in order to possess these *gifts*. Speaking in unknown languages and prophesying are manifestations of hidden knowledge, whereas healing and performing miracles involve special powers given the individual. Simon Magus, as we have seen, according to the *Acts of the Apostles* became a Gnostic upon being refused the Holy Spirit. By one route or another he was determined to have superhuman powers.

While many scholars have been elucidating the true nature of Gnosticism as revealed by the finds in Qumran and Nag Hammadi, a thought-provoking study by Phipp J. Lee brings out many Gnostic tendencies in contemporary Protestantism. Lee echoes Hans Jonas's view that the secrecy and elitism of ancient Gnosticism were nurtured by a perception of the alienation of man like that proclaimed by modern Existentialism. Now a strong current among Protestants emphasizes individualism and the sense of one's own religion being not only private, but even secret. In its attempt to cure Existentialism Christianity has been infected by it. (Lee 1987, most strongly expressed on pages 192 and 193)

Modern Catholicism, as defined sharply since the sixteenth century Counter Reformation, retains the doctrine of original sin, which is cleansed from the individual by *baptism*. Catholics believe that baptism works an inner change in the recipient, who is no longer fundamentally depraved. Similarly, they believe that the sacraments of confirmation and holy orders make an indelible mark on the soul. The Catholic Church explains the meaning of indelible mark on the soul in terms furnished by Scholastic Philosophy.

The doctrine of *grace*, the conferral of God's favor on a person, either to do good or to be good, is scarcely to be confused with Gnosticism. Still, the idea that the means of the salvation of a person, of the lifting of a person to a spiritual status, come from outside the person paints a picture of a very different world from that of a world in which humans, for better or worse, are completely responsible for their individual and collective fate.

III. GNOSTIC/DUALIST TRADITION ALONG THE BOUNDARY OF CHRISTIANITY SINCE THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY

Along the boundary of the Christian religion lie three religions which have arisen from Christianity and share many elements of doctrine and practice with Protestants and Catholics. They do not, however, subscribe to the Nicene Creed. It seems fair and proper to term them *heterodox Christians*. Then we shall consider *Modern Gnostic* and *Dualistic*

religions which are rooted in Christianity and share Christian culture, but diverge significantly from Christianity in many significant respects.

Not meant to be adequate treatments of the beliefs and practices of these groups, the observations made here pick out from them their threads of Dualism and Gnosticism. The selection of these religions by no means exhausts the list of such organizations, but represents those which, as far as I know, are familiar to the Americans who are most apt to read this material.

A. ON THE BOUNDARY

Church of Christ, Scientist. *Santa Cruz Spirituality*, in its preface to the list of Christian Science churches in Santa Cruz County, notes that

Mary Baker Eddy experienced spiritual enlightenment as a consciousness that only the spirit is real and sin and evil are a deviation from spirit. Sin and evil are not illusions; neither are they powers in themselves, but with the guidance of Christ Scientist we free ourselves from them. The ability to heal ourselves of what we call physical ailments is the form of this creed which attracts the greatest attention. The Church of Christ, Scientist was founded in 1879 in Boston, and within a few years [in 1897] it had spread all the way to Santa Cruz.

Mrs. Eddy's central position is Platonist, in that to her the world of our senses is real in one way and not real in another. It is not pantheistic any more than Plato's world is, as she makes clear by the **Scientific Statement of Being**:

There is no life, truth, intelligence, nor substance in matter.
 All is infinite Mind and its infinite manifestation, for God is All-in-all.
 Spirit is immortal Truth; matter is mortal error.
 Spirit is the real and eternal; matter is the unreal and temporal.
 Spirit is God, and man is His image and likeness.
 Therefore man is not material; he is spiritual. (*Science & Health: with key to the Scriptures*. Eddy 1910, 468)

Evil enters into Mrs. Eddy's world as error; it is not imaginary or merely in the mind, neither does it have a real force to it; rather evil has no existence of its own:

Mind is God. The exterminator of error is the great truth that God, good, is the *only* Mind, and that the supposititious opposite of infinite Mind – called *devil* or evil – is

not Mind, is not Truth, but error, without intelligence or reality. There can be but one Mind, because there is but one God; and if mortals claimed no other Mind and accepted no other, sin would be unknown. We can have but one Mind, if that one is infinite. We bury the sense of infinitude, when we admit that, although God is infinite evil has a place in this infinity, for evil can have no place, where all space is filled with God.

We lose the high signification of omnipotence, when after admitting that God, or good, is omnipresent and has all-power, we still believe there is another power, named *evil*. This belief that there is more than one mind is as pernicious to divine theology as are ancient mythology and pagan idolatry. (ibid, 469)

Mrs. Eddy explicitly disavows any creed, although there are certain “tenets” including acceptance of the “inspired Word of the Bible as our sufficient guide to eternal life,” and belief in God’s “Son, one Christ,” and the “Holy Ghost or divine Comforter.” (ibid, 497)

As to the figure of Jesus, she sees him in a very particular way, reminiscent of Docetism:

Jesus called himself “the Son of man,” but not the son of Joseph. As woman is but a species of the genera, he was literally the Son of Man. Jesus was the highest human concept of the perfect man. He was inseparable from Christ, the Messiah, — the divine idea of God outside the flesh. This enabled Jesus to demonstrate his control over matter. Angels announced to the Wisemen of old this dual appearing, and angels whisper it, through faith, to the hungering heart in every age. (ibid, 482)

Although its view of Jesus is Gnostic to a degree, Mrs. Eddy’s Christian Science is totally devoid of the pessimism of Gnosticism. Its goal is to free us from error, not to free us from an evil world. Furthermore, unlike the Gnostics, who considered themselves a special people, an elite, Mrs. Eddy’s followers are plain people. The fact is, however, that they look a little different to other “ordinary” people because they do not agree with the normal human perceptions of sickness and illness, of evil and good.

Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. “Once upon a time people everywhere said we are not Christians. They have come to recognize that we are and that we have very vital and dynamic religion based on the teachings of Jesus Christ.” So answered Gordon B. Hinckley, prior president of the Mormon Church, to the question, “Are Mormons Christians?” (<http://mormon.org/fac>)

Examination of the *Thirteen Articles of Faith*, written by the founder, Joseph Smith, (<http://mormon.org>) indeed shows so many points shared with Protestant and Catholic Christians that Mormons certainly form part of the Christian community at least in a broad sense. Thus, Articles 1 and 3 through 7 are incontrovertibly Christian:

1. We believe in God, the Eternal Father, and in His Son, Jesus Christ, and in the Holy Ghost.
3. We believe that through the Atonement of Christ, all mankind may be saved, by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the Gospel.
4. We believe that the first principles and ordinances of the Gospel are: first, Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; second, Repentance; third, Baptism by immersion for the remission of sins; fourth, Laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost.
5. We believe that a man must be called of God, by prophecy, and by the laying on of hands by those who are in authority, to preach the Gospel and administer in the ordinances thereof.
6. We believe in the same organization that existed in the Primitive Church, namely, apostles, prophets, pastors, teachers, evangelists, and so forth.
7. We believe in the gift of tongues, prophecy, revelation, visions, healing, interpretation of tongues, and so forth.

Articles 11, 12, and 13 refer to practicalities of relationships with people and civil authority.

The rest of the articles express beliefs that set Mormons off from Christians:

2. We believe that men will be punished for their own sins, and not for Adam's transgression.
8. We believe the Bible to be the word of God as far as it is translated correctly; we also believe the Book of Mormon to be the word of God.

9. We believe all that God has revealed, all that He does now reveal, and we believe that He will yet reveal many great and important things pertaining to the Kingdom of God.

10. We believe in the literal gathering of Israel and in the restoration of the Ten Tribes; that Zion (the New Jerusalem) will be built upon the American continent; that Christ will reign personally upon the earth; and, that the earth will be renewed and receive its paradisiacal glory.

Further examination of Article 1 reveals an explanation of the Holy Trinity at variance with that of the General Councils of the Church:

I think it is accurate to say we believe They are one in every significant and eternal aspect imaginable except believing Them to be three persons combined in one substance, a Trinitarian notion never set forth in the scriptures because it is not true. (Jeffrey Holland in www.lds.org/general-conference-2007 [2012])

Clearly there is nothing dualistic or gnostic about Mormon belief, but one who examines the following statements in Dr. Holland's 2007 address, finds the ancient Monophysitism brought back to life:

I testify that Jesus Christ is the literal, living Son of our literal, living God.
I testify that He had power over death because He was divine but that He willingly subjected Himself to death for our sake because for a period of time He was also mortal.
Any who dismiss the concept of an embodied God dismiss both the mortal and the resurrected Christ,

In the final analysis, are the Latter-day Saints, who look like Christians and have a Christian worldview, but reject the fundamental Christian understanding of God, an understanding that was clarified through the efforts of Christian leaders over hundreds of years, Christians or not? I submit that the notion of boundaries fits well here.

Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations. *Santa Cruz Spirituality* prefaces its account of Unitarian Universalist (UU) Churches in Santa Cruz County with this information:

The American Unitarian Church grew mainly as a doctrinally liberal wing of Congregationalism, becoming an independent group in the early 19th century in the East. Totally Christian in spirit, it nevertheless insisted that no one should be bound to adhere to a definitive set of Christian doctrines. The Universalist Church in America, which stressed the equality of peoples and the availability of salvation for all people, was founded in 1793, and the two at length united in 1961 as the Unitarian Universalist Church.

The earliest direct ancestor of Unitarian Universalism was *Antitrinitarianism*, or rejection of the historic Christian definition of the Holy Trinity. An Anabaptist belief, it appeared in various places in the newly Protestant areas of Europe. The skepticism inherent in Antitrinitarianism broadened in the following two centuries, partly because of the new variety of interpretations of the Bible and partly on account of philosophical trends, especially the effort to counteract Immanuel Kant's critique of the validity of human knowledge. In the British Isles, where the movement achieved notable strength in the eighteenth century, it became known as *Unitarianism*. Then, quite independently from the British group, some American Congregationalists developed their own form of Unitarian faith. The key to the process was *Transcendentalism*, an intellectual movement which arose in the 1830s and flourished in the next decade as an attempt to establish rational faith that was not bound by the doctrines of the Christian Church or any other religious body. (See Transcendentalism under the *Liberal Family* in *Santa Cruz Spirituality*.)

Basic positions of today's American Unitarians are:

1. "Today Unitarian Universalism is a non-creedal faith which allows individual Unitarian Universalists the freedom to search for truth on many paths," and
2. "While our congregations hold shared principles, individual Unitarian Universalists may discern their own beliefs about spiritual, ethical, and theological issues."
3. Of the "seven principles which Unitarian Universalist congregations affirm and promote," only principle number three, "Acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations," refers directly to religion or spirituality.

(Unitarian-Universalist website, www.uua.org [2012])

The website contains a large amount of certified Unitarian Universalist teaching through its “Tapestry of Faith Curriculum” of education regarding UU for people of all ages, including adults. The course “Faith Like a River: Themes from Unitarian Universalist History” contains a small proportion of content regarding the development of the Nicene Creed and other issues of the early centuries of Christianity. It devotes somewhat more ample space to the Protestant Reformation. The course “What Moves Us: Unitarian Universalist Theology,” on the contrary, devotes a great deal of time to the American Transcendentalists and to modern *Liberal Theology*, which seeks to reconcile the tenets of Christian faith with progress in society and the insights of science is to be found among the theologians of many Christian churches. It is clearly congenial to the Unitarian Universalist view of religion. The interests of Unitarian Universalists, in other words, do not lie with the theological definitions which are of great importance to Christians, but with contemporary views of the truth and value of religion.

The broad UU purview affords ample room too, for people with interests in Dualism and Gnosticism. More still, in UU we seem to find an ultimate eclecticism which is willing to embrace all religions without incorporating any of them. However that may be, I include the Unitarian Universalist church on the boundary of the Christianity from which it arose, and to which it is culturally bound..

B. OUTSIDE BUT CLOSE TO THE BOUNDARY

Modern gnosticism. To understand modern Gnosticism one has to be first aware of its context. First, the Renaissance, which had revived and spread throughout Europe far more knowledge about ancient times than had been available to scholars in the Middle Ages. The Protestant Reformation then unleashed new approaches to the history and philosophical background of the Christian message. Finally, in the eighteenth century the Enlightenment and the stirrings of modern science cut away all restraints on the intellectual curiosity of many scholars. Small wonder, then, that Mystics, Neo-Platonists, Alchemists, and Deists, people out of the religious mainstream, people who spanned the

spectrum from deeply religious to not religious at all, appeared and left a mark on European culture.

Secrecy could be found everywhere. Alchemists needed secrecy to guard their findings, some scientists needed it lest they startle authorities, ecclesiastical and civil, and some mystics, philosophers, and Deists shielded themselves from popular ignorance by sharing their radical ideas only with intimates. Many secret societies were founded, including the *Masonic Order*, which did not substitute itself for the churches, and the *Rosicrucian Order* and the *Theosophical Society*, which did that. Freemasonry is a fraternal organization. It is said that it imparts to its members some knowledge of long-lost ancient knowledge. Rosicrucians and Theosophists, on the contrary, are less fraternal than they are ideological, built on knowledge that is purported to be ancient.

Rosicrucian literature presents the order, “The Order of the Rosy Cross,” as having ancient roots and having acquired an institutional structure in Europe in the sixteenth century. The American body, the Rosicrucian Order AMORC, was founded in 1915 by H. Spencer Lewis, who had been initiated in France in 1909. The ancient roots to which the literature refers consist of a history of the basics of Gnosticism: the secret knowledge that frees us from the forces of this world. There are in this exposition numerous references to Christianity, but the order does not purport to be of Christian inspiration. (www.rosicrucians.org is a good starting place for information on the order.)

Emanuel Swedenborg, Swedish scientist and mystic who died in 1772, was convinced that spirits from the Himalayas, “Greater Tartary,” as he called it came to him to explain that the ancient and true religion had been lost in most of the world, but maintained in their redout. Swedenborg wrote about this at length and so impressed his followers that they founded “The Church of the New Jerusalem” also called simply “The New Church.” His thesis was not that the ancient revelations should supersede Christianity, but that they should enrich it. A hundred years later Helena Blavatsky had a similar experience, but her teachings did not have the Christian potential that Swedenborg’s had, so the religion

she founded, *Theosophy*, lies outside Christianity. Theosophy also had some elements in common with Gnosticism, such as graphic descriptions of the descendingly spiritual layers of beings between God and humans. It became the main bridge by which modern Gnosticism entered the world.

Contemporary Gnosticism, cast adrift from any historical social continuity with Bogomils and Cathars, still borrows generously from Christianity. There are contemporary religious organizations which arise out of Christian inspiration and explicitly incorporate elements of gnosticism. Although they can be found in many countries, there is no large worldwide organization for them. We can examine as examples, however, several American Gnostic churches.

Herman Spruit was a member of the *American Catholic Church*, which was founded in 1915 as a separatist Catholic group. By 1965 the American Catholic Church, in spite of its name had been strongly influenced by Theosophy, considered itself Gnostic, and had divided into several separate churches. Spruit, already consecrated (annointed) bishop, left the American Catholic Church and in 1965 founded the *Church of Antioch* in Mountain View, California.

Spruit, in turn, consecrated Lewis S. Keizer as an Independent Bishop in 1975. Keizer founded in Santa Cruz *The Garden*, which has a regular service entitled “Gnostic Mass” in Santa Cruz. The earliest trace I found of The Garden in local sources was in 2000. Since 2004 the organizational headquarters for The Garden have been in the village of Aromas, California, near Watsonville, under the title *Home Temple*. Besides offering a “Gnostic-Kabbalistic Mass,” the Home Temple is a center for teaching “Christian Gnosticism” and for a distance learning course leading to ordination to the Gnostic priesthood.

The Roman Catholic Church’s definition of papal infallibility in 1870 was rejected by a number of clergy and scholars who founded several northern European churches which were known as the *Old Catholic Church*. One distinct group that evolved out of this from a

strict Catholic position (except for papal infallibility) and became deeply affected by Theosophy was the *Liberal Catholic Church*. Organized in England in 1916, and coming to the U. S. only a year after that, the Liberal Catholic Church had a short existence in Santa Cruz, 1963-1965 according to documents I could find. (further information about the American Catholic Church, The Garden, the Home Temple, and the Liberal Catholic Church in Santa Cruz can be found in *Santa Cruz Spirituality*)

Theosophy certainly opened the way for Gnosticism in the above groups, but other Gnostic Church founders arrived at their worldviews and doctrines through the study of mysticism, occultism, and other esoteric teachings. As an example, one early group originating in Catholicism, but eventually becoming Gnostic, was the *Universal Catholic Gnostic Church*, founded in 1890 by the French Spiritualist Jules Doinel. Having, he said, contacted the spirits of ancient Gnostics, Bogomils, and Cathars, he founded a church based on theological points derived from them. The Universal Catholic Gnostic Church, to my knowledge, had no congregation in California, but the *Ecclesia Gnostica*, another non-Theosophical Gnostic Church, was headquartered in Los Angeles. It was founded by Stephan Hoeller out of the English group, the *Pre-Nicene Gnostic Catholic Church*.

In addition to *Santa Cruz Spirituality* sources for the above information on contemporary Gnostic churches include Melton 1987, 611-617; A.P. Smith 2008, 212-216; and Stephan Hoeller's , "Wandering Bishops: Not All Roads Lead to Rome." Also, from Hoeller, "A Gnostic Catechism" in www.gnosis.org. Some other Internet sources are www.liberalcatholic.org; <http://TheLiberalCatholicChurch.org>; and www.thelcc.org.

Finally, Beyond these people and others like them, however, "Scores of writers and thinkers of the centuries have been [putatively] labeled Gnostic--Goethe, Schleiermacher, Blake, Hegel, Schelling, Byron, Shelley, Emerson, Marx, Melville, Conrad, Nietzsche, Yeats, Hesse, Schweitzer, Tillich, Toynbee, Heidegger, Sartre, Simone Weil, Wallace Stevens, Doris Lessing, I.B.Singer, Walker Percy, Jack Kerouac, and Thomas Pynchon among them." (Segal 1995, 2-3). Of this broad group – certainly too broad to be based on

the understanding of Gnosticism that we have seen in this essay – perhaps only J. W. Goethe and William Blake merit the title of genuine Gnostic. (A. P. Smith 1988, 204, Grimstad 2002)

Dualism: contemporary satanism Although the figure of Satan, the fallen angel and adversary of God, is still powerful to many Christians, the ancient, literal Dualism has not notably persevered in Western society. There are, it is true, satanic religions. Two that were founded in California are the *Church of Satan* and the *Temple of Set*. The former, which is adamantly anti-Christian, was founded in 1966 in San Francisco. It does not follow a supreme or even almost-all-powerful evil divinity, but sees Satan as a human personification of the great force of evil in the world. The *Temple of Set*, which is an offshoot of the Church of Satan, was also founded in San Francisco, in 1975. It “seems to take the figure of Set/Satan far more seriously than the Church of Satan.” The Church of Satan was represented in Santa Cruz for at least one year by the *Karnak Grotto of the Church of Satan*. (*Santa Cruz Spirituality*)

The goal of these chapters has been to present the broad lines of the intertwining of heterodoxy and orthodoxy, the core of the interplay of the understanding of who Jesus was with Gnosticism, Dualism, and the Christian community’s conception of itself. We have found the topic to be captivating and we hope that it will stimulate readers to choose some of its innumerable details for further study.

APPENDIX A. CATHAR PRESENCE IN MONTAILLOU

In the French Pyrenees, 25 miles north of the border with Spain, 50 miles directly inland from the Mediterranean Sea, lies the village of Montailou and its neighborhood, where Catharism was dealt its death blow. Seventy-five miles north of there is Albi, the place that gave its name to the crusade to end Catharism. In 1318, however, about 65 years after the Albigensian Crusade seemed definitively to have achieved its goal, Jacques Fournier, the bishop of the Montailou area, opened an Inquisition into the orthodoxy of the local population. During the seven years of the Inquisition it considered 98 cases of suspected heresy. In the end, five of the accused were burned at the stake as heretics, and a number of others were penalized, especially by the confiscation of their goods. In the course of the proceedings the court obtained detailed testimony from 28 townspeople of Montailou and its immediate neighborhood. The meticulously recorded and carefully preserved statements of these 28 provide two kinds of information. One is, of course, a description of the beliefs and practices of Catharism; the other is a view of the people themselves, of their occupations, their family relationships, and their village life. The court record is thus a rich source of insight into life in the 14th century.

Montailou: the promised land of error by Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie, professor of history at the Collège de France tells the story of the Cathars of Montailou and surroundings. (Ladurie, 1978) This prize winning study of social life in a medieval village as well as a look at the religion of the people draws copiously from the court records. All that follows in this appendix is taken from Ladurie. The references to the original records are included here along with references to Ladurie's text.

Spread of cathar beliefs in Montailou

The Authié brothers, Pierre and Guillaume, were wealthy notaries in a village close to Montailou. One time Pierre was reading a book which prompted him to say to Guillaume,

“How does it strike you, brother?” And Guillaume answered: ‘It seems to me that we have lost our souls.’ And Pierre concluded: ‘Let us go, brother; let us go in search of our souls’ salvation.’ So they got rid of all their possessions and went to Lombardy, where they became good Christians; there they received the power of saving the souls of others.” (p. 234) Returning in the year 1300, they acted as missionaries in Montailou. Through family ties they influenced a number of households, some of which were already inclined to Catharism, or, perhaps more exactly, had not lost their feeling for it in spite of its supposed eradication by the Albigensian Crusade. A revealing conversation between two townswomen is:

‘Cousin, do you know that the Authiés are back?’

And I answered: ‘But where have they been?’

‘In Lombardy,’ she said. ‘They spent everything they had there and became heretics.’

‘And what are these heretics like?’

‘They are good and holy men.’

‘In the name of God,’ said I, ‘perhaps it is a good thing!’

And I went away. (p. 253, i, 318)

Within a decade of the arrival of Pierre and Guillaume Authié there were twice as many Cathar households in Montailou as there were Western Christian households, and out of a total of approximately forty households in the village only two were completely free of Catharism. (pp. 28-30) Not all the Cathars were in Montailou; a few were in nearby villages, but Montailou was the only village that was mostly Cathar. The Spanish border, as mentioned above, was only 25 miles (in a straight line) from Montailou, a convenient distance for persons exiled for one reason or another. Several shepherds had gone there, including one Guillaume Bélibaste, a Cathar who “settled down as a prophet to a little Albigensian colony in Catalonia.” (p.70) Eventually Guillaume was captured by the Inquisition and burned at the stake. (p. 218) Shepherding was a common occupation in the Pyrenees, and the role shepherds played in keeping Catharism alive is significant. Away

from the villages and people of the lower lands during the summers, shepherd men and boys could meditate on the ancient Cathar traditions, handing them down to new generations. (p. 110)

Nature of Montaillou Catharism

The structure of Ladurie's study is based on the environment and human social relations within it. Although religion, both orthodox and heterodox, permeates it, there is no central statement of Cathar beliefs, no Cathar creed or confession by which the reader can compare the heterodoxy of this small mountain area with Catharism in general, or even the Catharism of the earlier Albigensians, let alone that of the Cathars of Lombardy or the Waldenses of Piedmont. We shall summarize points Ladurie makes about the villager's religion in Part Two. "An archaeology of Montaillou."

Since the fundamental difference between Cathars and the other Christians lies in their understanding of evil and evil's origin, the first observation to make about Montaillou Cathars is that they did not hold the good God responsible for evil in the world. As the priest and Cathar Bernard Franca put it, "On the one hand there are the works of the good God, Heaven, the earth, the water, fire, the air and the animals useful to men for food, for carrying, for work or for clothing; including edible fish! On the other hand the bad God has made devils and harmful animals, such as wolves, snakes, toads, flies and all harmful and poisonous beasts" (pp. 291-292; i,358)

The following testimony of the *parfait* ("perfect," or "good man") Guillaume Bélibaste illustrates several facets of Cathar thinking about evil: that evil is all around us, that evil can overpower us, that there is a way to escape from being evil, but if we do not escape it the evil in us when we die must enter some human or animal (the doctrine of *metempsychosis*):

‘When a man steals away someone else’s possessions or commits evil, that man is none other than an evil spirit which enters into him: this spirit makes him commit sins and makes him abandon the good life for the wicked. Everything is full of souls. All the air is full of good and evil spirits. Except when a spirit has been dwelling in the body of a dead person who when he was alive was just and good, the spirit which has just escaped from a dead body is always anxious to be reincarnated. For the evil spirits in the air burn that spirit when it is among them; so they force it to enter into some body of flesh, whether of man or of beast; because as long as a spirit is at rest in a body of flesh, the evil spirits in the air cannot burn it or torment it.’ (p. 288; iii,179)

At the same time that these uncultured people believed that the air was full of supernatural spirits, they distinguished magic powers from religious powers. Magic and superstitious attribution of power to incantations, spells, and the like were real to them. In some cases the distinction was lost. Such was the belief that “baptism prevented a man from being drowned or being eaten by wolves.” (p. 296)

The notion of “unclean” which figured in their religion was not at all a matter of sanitation or of cleansing rituals, but of abhorrence of flesh. One did not know what evil spirits, as mentioned above, might be in meat. And so, “When Guillaume Bélibaste has touched meat with his hands, he washes them three times before eating or drinking.” (p. 142, ii,31; i,325)

Regardless of their religious orientation, the people of the region had a very relaxed attitude toward sex. Homosexuality was to them a condescension to the natural passions, but they held rape to be wrong. The faithful of the Roman Church did not consider consensual sex between man and woman, including fornication with prostitutes who enjoyed it, to be sinful. (pp. 148-152) To the Cathars all sex was fundamentally sinful, but in practice, fornication and adultery were no worse than marital sex and just as acceptable as long as they were for pleasure. Graziade Rives, a longtime mistress of the village priest,

Pierre Clergue, both before and after her marriage, testified that “A lady who sleeps with a true lover is purified of all sins... the joy of love makes the act innocent, for it proceeds from a pure heart.” “With Pierre Clergue, I liked it. And so it could not displease God. It was not a sin.”(p. 159, i, 302-4)

The underlying Cathar attitude toward sex, their aversion toward it, shows in the morals expected of the *goodmen*, the *parfait*. “The duty of barrenness was incumbent only on the goodmen, not on mere ‘believers.’” (p. 207)

In the general culture of the region the prime religious question was not theological, “Does God exist? What does he expect of me?” It was practical, “Will I be saved?” Religion, to the medieval European mind, was less a matter of one’s personal relationship with God than it was a possibility of a better life. Suffering, exemplified by that of Jesus, would end with death and happiness if the individual soul, who, by himself or herself was a sinner, was forwarded by the community of believers. In the Roman Church the priest and the sacraments acted in the name of the Christian community to cleanse the dying sinner and send him or her to a better life. For this function the Cathars had the *goodmen*, who functioned as spiritual leaders, the *consolamentum*, a near-death ceremony of liberation from this world administered by the goodmen, and the *endura*, a final death fast after the *consolamentum*. (pp. 223-230)

It was not only on the deathbed that Cathar and orthodox practices were parallel or similar. There were Cathar sympathizers who were known to attend (Catholic) Mass often and “By a kind of dual belief which was not then regarded as shocking, they even showed a special Catholic piety to some particular saint, Béatrice offering coloured candles at the altar of the Virgin and Pierre Maury donating fleeces to the altar of Saint Anthony.” (p.

265) All but the leading Cathar figures appeared in the parish church from time to time for baptisms, mass and communion, and other standard religious practices. (pp. 319-314)

Some of Montaillou's rejection of Catholic beliefs and practices arose simply as logical consequences of their basic beliefs. For instance, they abhorred crosses in spite of their veneration of the Christ who suffered on a cross. The reason was that the cross was evil, it was the instrument of suffering. (p. 302) Similarly they held the administration of the sacraments by priests to be ineffective because the Church was immoral and the priests were personally immoral. The goodman Guillaume Authié claimed that "We goodmen can absolve anyone of his sins. Our power of absolution is equal to that of the Apostles Peter and Paul. Whereas the Catholic Church does not possess this power, because it is a bawd and a whore." (p. 297, i, 282-3)

Particularly abhorrent to the Cathars was the way the Church dealt in indulgences. (According to Catholic belief an indulgence is a shortening of the time a soul must spend in Purgatory for not being good enough at death to go directly to heaven.)

Bélibaste had no words strong enough to attack the retailers of indulgences who went from door to door with their wares, taking one farthing's profit for themselves for every thousand pardons, which they had bought wholesale in Rome, where the Pope would sell a few tens of thousands of days of indulgence for 10 to 20 *livres tournois*, half the price of a house. (p. 334, ii, 24-6)

In the final analysis the strength of the Montaillou Cathars lay not in their theoretical understanding of, but in the belief that their Catharism was true Christianity, practiced at some sacrifice in the face of a religious institution that had gone wrong.(p. 325) Or, as Guillimette Argelliers put it, "Those goodmen are good Christians. They keep the Roman faith which was kept by the Apostles Peter, Paul and John, and so on." (p. 254, iii, 103)

Source for Appendix A

LeRoy Ladurie. *Montaillou: The Promised Land of Error*. New York: George Braziller, 1978.

APPENDIX B. A STUDY OF THE SOUTHERN ITALIAN WALDENSES

In chapter 3 we saw who the Waldenses were and the role they played in history. Here we take a close look at one Waldensian settlement which Roy Gordon visited..

General History

Although it is clear that the Waldensian settlements in Calabria were made in the fourteenth century by Waldenses moving down the Italian peninsula from Piedmont in the northwest, their dates and order of founding are uncertain. According to one account (Comba 1889), the first settlement in Calabria was near the town of Montealto, where the Waldenses built the village Borgo degli Oltremontani, literally, “Town of People from Across the Mountains.” Later another village, San Sisto dei Valdesi, was built about a mile away. The most widely-known Waldensian church in southern Italy was that of San Sisto. Later Vaccarizzo, Argentina, and San Vincenzo were built; and, finally, the walled town of Guardia Piemontese. Another account (Cantú 1865-1866) adds a town by the name of Rose. Still another account (Lea 1887-1888) names an eighth Waldensian town, La Rocca, and differs in other details; e.g. it notes Guardia as the first Waldensian settlement, and gives the name Borgo d'Oltremontani as a synonym for Guardia.

The Waldensian communities in Puglia lay in the mountains of the Italian peninsula's central ridge, a little over one hundred miles north of the Waldensian communities in Calabria. According to Waldensian tradition the first colonies in Puglia were settled indirectly from French Provence, rather than from the secondary parent community in the Alps between France and Italy. Waldenses who fled Provence in the time of Pope Boniface IX (in the late 14th century when the papacy was seated in Avignon) moved briefly to Piedmont, where they were joined by other Waldenses. They then moved south to Puglia, where they founded four exclusively Waldensian villages: Monteleone, Faito (southwest of Lucera), La Cella (Celle) and Montecorvino (near Ariano). Around 1500, more Waldenses came to Puglia from Piedmont and settled in another town, Volturara (west or southwest of Lucera), not far from the first four.

The number of Waldenses in Calabria in the early 16th century is quite uncertain. One authority (Gay 1912) says that, in all, several thousands had moved southward into Calabria since settlement began there. But this is over a period of some two centuries. Another authority gives an estimate of ten thousand for the Waldensian population there in the year 1530. (Lea 1887-1888) Still another writer, himself a Waldensian, gives the number as only four thousand at the time of the Reformation. Guardia is said to have had fifteen hundred inhabitants around the mid-16th century (Cantú 1865-1866). The present population of Guardia (1960s) is a little over eleven hundred.

There are no estimates of the total Waldensian population in Puglia. But by the 16th century they were numerous enough that that province was regarded as the southern headquarters of the sect.

Persecutions

While the Waldenses in the parent community in the Alps were frequently persecuted, those of Calabria and Puglia lived peacefully as agriculturists for over two hundred years, until the mid-16th century. In the second half of the century, however, there were violent persecutions of the south Italian Waldenses. In 1560, an inquisitor arrived at the nearby city of Cosenza, and toured Guardia and the neighboring Waldensian towns of Montealto and San Sisto. In 1561, Guardia and San Sisto were razed and burned, and at an auto-da-fé sixteen hundred survivors were killed. (Lea 1887-1888) The Waldenses in Puglia were not treated so harshly as those in Calabria, but, after seeing the example of Guardia, most of them became Catholics.

Description of Guardia Piemontese

This town which Roy Gordon visited lies close to the sea about 150 miles south of Naples on the western slope of the central mountainous ridge of the Italian peninsula. The name Guardia Piemontese itself means 'Piedmontese fortress' in obvious reference to the immigration of Waldenses from Piedmont.

Records for the town being scanty, parts of its history can only be reconstructed from non-written sources: oral tradition, local customs, distinctive dialect, and the ruins of structures.

Viewed from the coast the rebuilt present day town is impressively situated on a hill rising steeply from the sea to an elevation of about 1700 feet. Slopes fall away on all sides, and are especially sharp toward the north and west. To the south, a deep valley separates Guardia from Fuscaldo, a neighboring historically Italian speaking town. To the east the slope is less steep and fields extend across a shallow valley and upward toward the crest of an inland range, the Catena Costera. Guardia is reached by a steep road that winds upward through olive orchards and chestnut and oak groves from Guardia Piemontese Marina, which is a beach resort maintained by the people in Guardia itself. This marina is a major source of Guardia's income; agriculture is another.

At Guardia parts of a main gate and the ruins of a tower (the *castello*), are all that remain of the old fortifications. A low retaining wall surrounds the town as a protection from erosion of its surface down the surrounding slopes. The remnants of the old wall rise about fourteen feet above present street level and as much as forty feet above the outside ground level. Rising to these heights and made of stone and mortar six or seven feet thick, the old wall was obviously built by people anticipating trouble beyond the attacks of local brigands. The many fragments of roof tile which are mixed with the mortar in the old wall suggest that it was built after the town had been already in existence for some time.

On the northwest edge, or higher part of the town a tower was built; also, according to townspeople, the old Waldensian church. The outline of surviving stretches of the old wall indicate that the size of the old Waldensian town was about the same as that of modern Guardia Piemontese. The distance from the ruins of the tower in the north to the southernmost fragments of the old wall is about two hundred and fifty yards. The tower rises about fifty feet above street level, it is about thirty-five feet in diameter and is octagonal in cross-section. Most of the structure is intact, although pieces have fallen away

and its base is overgrown with sage and fennel. Sections of the old wall near the tower rise as much as twenty-five feet above street level.

Although the tower was once the tallest structure in the town, a metal water tank built in recent years just to the north now rises above it--rather spoiling the appearance of the town as seen from the coast. I was told that government workmen preparing the site for this tank destroyed an old inscription on the rocks, written in the French dialect, which translated read: "Here lie a Valdensian mother and child who died of hunger".

Townpeople say that there were originally four gates for entering the town but only one, the main gate, called Port du Sang, facing eastward at the end of Via dei Valdesi, still exists--and it has been largely rebuilt. It is called Port du Sang because, it is said, when Guardia fell the slaughter was so great that blood ran down the streets and through this gate. The oldest and narrowest street in town is Via Pascali, named for a Waldensian leader, martyred in Calabria. After its conquest the town was rebuilt and its streets broadened. Via Pascali, however, is said to be much as it was.

Apparently the old Waldensian church was demolished when Guardia fell, but in 1962 the outline of the floor plan, located in a slight depression near the base of the tower, could still be seen. The site was being prepared for a new building. Recently some human bones have been unearthed in its foundations.

Fate of the population

Until the military suppression of 1561 the Waldenses had been attempting to preserve their faith by isolating themselves culturally from the surrounding population: They "...strictly prohibited marriage with the natives; they used their own language and their faith was kept pure by biennial visits from the *barbes* or travelling pastors of the sect." (Lea 1887-1888) When Guardia fell survivors were commanded to give up their native tongue for Italian. (Lea 1887-1888) It was also "prescribed that all should wear the yellow *habitillo* with the red cross", identifying themselves as heretics.

When Guardia fell, a large number of survivors were killed, as mentioned above, or forcibly converted to Catholicism. Others were imprisoned, and a price put on the heads of any who escaped. Children were scattered among Catholic families living at least eight miles from the Waldensian settlement.

To further suppress Waldensian doctrines, survivors were forced to marry outside the community. People say at Guardia that, because there was no marrying within the town, it came to be known as “the place where love is illegal.” Despite all such regulations, a distinctive Gallo-Italian dialect, known locally as 'Guardiolo,' survives. A number of Guardiolo poems and songs have been recorded; for instance, *La Pioveo la Faie Suleigl*. Even today, the pre-school children of Guardia do not learn Calabrese, the local Italian dialect, but communicate with the people of neighboring towns in standard Italian, learned in the public schools. Most French surnames disappeared, but this is not surprising if the larger part of the male population was slain or dispersed when Guardia fell.

When they were permitted to give up the "yellow *habitrillo*," the women returned to their original Waldensian costume. This style, identified by skirts of red cloth, sleeves of black velvet, and hair plaited with black ribbons, is said to have been brought from the Valley of Angrogna in Piedmont. (Cantú 1865-1866) It is, however, quite different from those I saw around Torre Pellice, also in Piedmont. One especially interesting feature of the women's dress is that they wear bows of coarse rope over their heads and across their breasts. They claim that the wearing of these ropes, by which they could be led about, was required after the fall of Guardia as a penance for being Waldensian, and as a symbol of bondage. But, they add, they gradually worked the rope strands into their headdresses and clothing; and so, in time, these pieces of rope came to be a decorative part of local costume. Until around 1935, marriages were performed with the women wearing that local costume. In fact, women are said before that time to have refused to marry in other dress. Now only a few old women wear the costume, but many insist on being married in it.

The relations between Guardia and the nearby Catholic town of Fuscaldo remain strained after all these centuries because in Guardia people claim that the taking of their town was made easier by treachery. At midday, they say, when many of the men were away working in the fields, a detachment of troops came to Guardia accompanied by a group of people who were supposedly prisoners taken into custody during a disturbance at Fuscaldo. The captain of the troops, claiming there was no jail space at Fuscaldo itself, asked leave to imprison his “captives” temporarily at Guardia. Once inside the town walls, the “prisoners” broke loose and, although even the Waldensian women joined in the fighting, the town was soon captured. This explains how we know that the walls and buildings were not knocked down in the taking of the town, but later were razed.

In discussing their history, the townspeople of Guardia reveal a curious ambivalence. I was told on several occasions, "We are Catholics, and really not interested in religious disputes." On the other hand, although Catholic now (there are two Catholic churches within the town's narrow confines), they are proud of, or at least speak most sympathetically of, their Waldensian forbearers. Although the historical details they recount may be inaccurate, they discuss them without reserve. Why do they still cherish these stories of the town's defense, the costumes with penitents' ropes, such street names as Via Valdesi, their distinctive dialect, and so on? Despite the shortage of space, the tower and the old wall fragments are left standing, although there is a faction that wants to tear the tower down, claiming that it is unsafe.

In recent years, Waldensians have come again from Piedmont and established a missionary church at nearby Entabula. But their ministers are said to get a cool reception in Guardia, and all but two or three families remain Catholic.

Provençal language

Although the Provençal language is preserved only at Guardia Piemontese (strangely, as that is the settlement that suffered the most), words similar to those used in Guardia

appear in an Italian dialect spoken at Mormanno and Laino, in the northern extremity of Calabria, about thirty miles from Guardia. (Rohlf's 1952) At Faito, too, there is still a strong Provençal influence. Thus Waldenses may have settled other sites in the area not noted in available historical sources. Or, perhaps, refugees from Guardia spread their language to those towns. On the other hand, Rohlf's states that in 1921 when he visited the towns of San Sisto and San Vincenzo, which were once definitely Waldensian, not a trace of the Provençal language remained. (Rohlf's 1952) It has also been claimed that two of the towns listed as Waldensian, La Cella and Faito, already existed as French settlements in the 12th century, and were occupied not by Waldenses but by other Provençal-speaking colonists brought here by Charles of Anjou. (Morosi 1890)

Today, in spite of roads, communications, and public schools, which have drawn the small Calabrian towns closer together, especially by propagating a standard Italian language, many neighboring towns have surprisingly little contact. One unifying factor consists of the young people's meeting and working together in the numerous marinas along the coast. The effect is to link the hill towns above the coast, and even some distance inland, as they have never in the past been linked. Old people and the centers of conservatism, are still in the hill towns. Like other Italian communities, Guardia has its little group of old men who have worked for years in the U. S., returned to their native home, and speak English. On the other hand, the driver of the bus going to Guardia spoke German, and having fought with the Germans during World War II, railed against this 'Old Guard' of repatriots from America who lived high on their American pensions.

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APPENDIX C. RUSSIAN OLD BELIEVERS

This appendix was enriched by information from R. Robson's Old Believers in Modern Russia in February, 2013.

In 1997 Roy Gordon and his son, Robin A. Gordon visited a settlement of Russian Old Believers in Woodburn, Oregon, between Salem and Portland in the Willamette River Valley “The men,” Roy observed, “were wearing beards and the women were wearing old Russian costumes: skirts and scarves.” The casual observer might mistake them for the better known Amish or Mennonites, not only for their appearance but also for their obvious intention of living a traditional and communal life. Their traditions, however, as well as their geographic origin, and their practice of the Christian religion, were very different from those of the Amish and Mennonites.

Bogomil influence

The story of the Russian Old Believers begins with the Bogomils, who were the principal link in the perpetuation of Gnostic Dualism in medieval Europe. Originating in Thrace (Bulgaria) in the tenth century, the Bogomils spread west in the twelfth century. Their faith was copied by the Cathars, who kept it alive for two hundred more years. (See Chapter 3.) The tenth century also saw the conversion to Christianity of the Slavic peoples north and east of Bulgaria. Elements of Bogomil Gnostic Dualism followed into Slavic lands, but they did not give rise to a distinct church. Rather, the Christian faith of the people here and there came to contain traces of it, such as creation stories that added Gnostic legends to Genesis, and legends based on the power of Satan. Of greater significance, the people of these Slavic lands were prone to Gnostic and Dualist views, such as the body's being the prison of the soul. Some asserted that we not only receive Christ, but we become Christ. In so doing we become God and therefore incapable of committing sin. (Obolensky 1948, Runciman 1947, Haxthausen 1972, Miliukov 1942)

Ferment in the Russian Church

As the Middle Ages came to an end, the Christian Church in Russia carried a great burden of history. When the Western or Latin Church and Eastern or Greek Church formally split, in 1054, the Eastern Church ceased to acknowledge Rome as the center of Christianity and the center of empire. In the view of the Eastern Church Constantinople, its religious and political center, became the “Second Rome.” In 1453, when Constantinople fell to the Turks, it was no longer the center of a Christian empire, and it could no longer function as the center of the Church. Accordingly, from the Russian point of view Moscow, the only free Christian capital, acquired the mantle of being the “Third Rome.” Clergy and laity alike felt strongly about their unique lineage from the ancient Church.

While the Russian Church was basking in its sense of importance, it had severe problems in maintaining order and decorum. Festivals for Christian celebrations, contained practices of drinking, dancing, entertaining, and abandonment of social restraint that remained from pre-Christian days. The clergy, furthermore, became known for worldliness and laxity. Beside accusations of immorality and laziness, they were observed to take it upon themselves to take shortcuts in the long liturgy. By the eighteenth century the Russian faithful were suffering from some of the stresses that had brought about the Protestant Reformation in the West two hundred years earlier. This was compounded by seeing the world from a pessimistic Dualist point of view along with Gnostic searching for the religious knowledge that was missing in the Church.

The Nikon Affair

In the mid-seventeenth century there was a reform movement, known as the *Zealots of Piety*, among the Russian clergy. Although the reform was favored by Aleksei Mikhailovich, Tsar from 1645 to 1676, (Crummey 2011, 33-38) it did not immediately

stimulate revolt in the Russian Church. That changed after Bishop *Nikon* became the Patriarch of Moscow, the head, the *Patriarch*, of the Russian Church.

Elevated to the Patriarchate in 1652, Nikon was eager to reform the Church. Supported by the Tsar, he launched decrees aimed at correcting the lives of the clergy and obtaining more revenue from them. These actions alone earned him the dissatisfaction of some of the clergy. He also had the text of the liturgical books revised in accord with contemporary scholarship. He changed some practices of worship, including the way in which Russians were to hold their hand as they made the sign of the cross to bless themselves. The “new” way, holding out three fingers of the right hand rather than two, was in reality the older, standard practice of the Eastern Church. Another return to true old tradition was in the style of liturgical vestments. In addition, Nikon also ordered many icons to be removed from churches. The icons affected were, he judged, of inferior quality, and his goal was to replace them with better ones, but they were what clergy and people were used to and venerated.

The liturgical reform decrees, like the clerical reforms, were met with resistance that grew quickly under the autocratic Patriarch Nikon. Within six years he had created so many enemies that he was deposed.

On the one hand, his reforms survived him; they became the standard of the Church in Russia. On the other hand, in less than twenty years the animosity toward him of a substantial minority of clergy and lay people turned into a secession from the Church of the people called, ever since, the *Old Believers*.

Recent scholarship has brought to light some confusion in the use of term “Old Believer.” The word is properly used to translate the Russian *Staroobriadchestvo*, which applies to those who reacted to Nikon’s reforms. The term *Raskol*, which means “separatist” or “schismatic,” refers to the *Staroobriadchestvo* as well as other Russian groups that separated from the Russian Church for other reasons. “*Raskol*,” is the more general term.

(These distinctions are explained in Michels 1999, 21-64 and 106-120; Crummey 2011, 5-16; and Conybeare 1962, 5-9.)

The Staroobriadchestvo rebels came within a decade of Nikon's death to populate the area around Moscow and as far north as the White Sea. Some of them, named *Popovsty*, "Priested", retained the Church's institutional structure, especially notable in their retention of clergy. After an initial period of separation a portion, but only a portion of the *Popovsty* were absorbed back into orthodoxy,

The more radical of the rebels, the *Bespopovsty* ("Priestless"), distanced themselves from the clergy, and worshipped without them. They "... repudiated the priesthood, the sacraments and divine service, ceased the worshiping of icons, celebrating the order of marriage, the baptism of children, and the burial of the dead according to church rituals." (Miliukov 1942, I, 75) They did, however, have monasteries with monks who were not priests. After the Nikon storm had passed by they remained permanently estranged from the Russian Church.

Members of a third group of rebels were called *Stranniki*, or "Wanderers," although "Fugitives" is also an apt translation, because they were extremists who created many enemies. They were "the most militant in their rejection of the government, the established Orthodox Church, and all their works" (Crummey 2011, 24) They were also known for being great ascetics who abstained from alcohol, tobacco, coffee, and tea, expected absolute chastity of the members, and wore only sandals made of bark. (Conybeare 1962 and Chrysostomus 1972)

During the remainder of the seventeenth century the Staroobriadchestvo were bitterly and bloodily put down by the Tsar's forces. The main reason was not what they believed, but their rebellion: they rejected the good order, spiritual and civic, of Russia. To the persecuted, however, it was a matter of suffering for a cause, an act of religious martyrdom.

Other Old Believer movements rooted in the north

Nikon's reforms were a catalyst for the malcontents in the Russian Church. There was, for instance, a group called the *Khlysty*, whose beliefs and usages point to their being descendants of the Bogomils. The history of the Khlysty can be traced back to the fourteenth century, where they were already in the Russian North. In addition to their Gnostic/Dualist characteristics they carried asceticism to its limits. In particular they were so averse to sex that they they would not eat meat because it is the product of copulation. (Conybeare 1962, 339-361) They taught, too, that the Holy Spirit entered them, spoke in tongues, and caused them to dance wildly until they were in a trance.

Still more extreme were the *Skoptsy*, an offshoot of the Khlysty in the middle of the 18th century. To the common Gnostic beliefs about Jesus the Skoptsy added details taught them by their founder Selivanov: "Christ is not dead and never died. He wanders the earth in the form of a sexless being and is today incarnate in Peter III, who did not die as is recorded in history. The body placed in the tomb was not his, but that of a soldier who resembled him." (Haxthausen 1972, 129) The Skoptsi are most known for their defining act of worship, castration of themselves and others as a means of ensuring celibacy.

Another group that carried their zeal to extraordinary lengths was the *Morelshchiki* of northwestern Russia, who interpreted the New Testament statement about "baptism by fire" so literally that they practiced group self-immolation not only as a way of fleeing murderous persecution, but as an annual ritual. A German traveler in the 1840s was informed of a case of Morelshchiki mass suicide that had occurred "several years ago." Adding that earlier travelers wrote about instances of this macabre rite, he described it without mentioning the source of the report:

Accompanied by special ceremonies, a large deep pit is dug and surrounded with straw, wood, and other combustible materials. A small community of these fanatics, numbering twenty, thirty, fifty, or even one hundred individuals, gather in the

middle of the pit, ignite the pyre, while breaking into savage song, and cremate themselves with stoic indifference. Sometimes they assemble in a house which they have surrounded with piles of straw and then set fire to it. The neighbors gather around without disturbing them, for they are holy and are 'receiving the baptism of fire.' (Haxthausen 1972, 128)

Spread of Old Believers throughout Russia

When the Patriarch Nikon imposed his reforms on Russia, the country extended north and east of Moscow, but the lands to the south and west of Moscow belonged to the Polish-Ukrainian Commonwealth. In 1667, nine years after Nikon was deposed, the Commonwealth lost the Ukraine by treaty to Russia. Thus the impact of Nikon's reforms was not as immediate in the south as it was in Moscow and north. Still, because there was discontent with the laxity of the Church, the movement to resist the reforms and retain the old practices gained adherents, more Old Believers or Raskol in the newly annexed areas. The principal groups in question were the *Dukhobortsy* and the *Molokanye*, both of which eventually spread throughout Russia.

The Dukhobors, whose documented existence dates from about 1785, were not Gnostics, but they were strongly Dualist. Their asceticism went beyond abstemiousness to include turning away from the enjoyment of the beauties of nature. (Conybeare 1962, Haxthausen 1972, Miliukov 1942)

The Dukhobor way of life was too rigid and harsh to attract large numbers of people. Their impact on Russia religious life became great around 1860 through the related group, the Molokanye, which had been founded about the same time as the Dukhobors and whose beliefs were similar, except for a more Gnostic view of Christ, who, according to them, did not in reality suffer on the cross. Molokanye practices, while also similar, were less rigorous, and can be described as puritanical. They took their very name, which meant "Milk Drinkers," from the Russian word for milk (moloko), which they drank during Lent

because they did not observe the customary Lenten fast. (Conybeare 1962, Haxthausen 1972, Runciman 1982, Hardwick 1993)

Persecution of Old Believers

All sources of Old Believer history concur that there were many and vicious tsarist government persecutions of them, starting with Tsar Aleksei Mikhailovich at the time of the reactions to Nikon's reforms. At times when Peter I, the Great, tsar from 1682 to 1725, saw them as threats to the national unity he was building, he was harsh on them. Most tsars that followed him treated the dissidents mercilessly, but Catherine II, the Great, Tsarina from 1762 to 1796, was indulgent toward them. The tsars who followed Catherine were generally displeased with the Old Believers, but only Nicholas I (1825-1855) hounded them and punished them severely.

“Harshness” toward the dissidents sometimes meant torture and death. For example, in an inquisition held in Moscow from 1745 to 1752

Victims [the Khlysty] were racked every day, searing with hot irons being the most approved method of torture. Five were burnt alive in public, 26 condemned to death, the rest to the knout, deprivation of their noses, exile, etc. (Conybeare 1962, 361)

From Tsar Peter the Great through Nicholas I, the periods of persecution also signified the physical destruction of Old Believer churches and monasteries. Repressive taxes were often used in an effort to bring them back into the Russian Church. (Crummey 2011, 161-164)

Modern status of the Old Believers

In spite of the efforts of various tsars to eliminate them, or at least to keep their numbers down by repressive measures, the Old Believers multiplied in the nineteenth century. Estimates of their numbers vary widely, but it appears that a reasonable count of them around 1850 was ten million out of a total population of about sixty million. By 1880, when there may have been thirteen million of them, the Russian Ministry of the Interior listed the Bespopovsty as the largest component, at 55%. The next largest group was the

Popovsty, 28%. The Dukhobors and Molokanye were not listed by name, but were either among the 16 ½% “unascertained” or among the Bespopovsty. The Khlysty accounted for a mere one half of one percent. (Conybeare 1962, 239-249)

Recent studies, based on more complete documentation, calculate the number of nineteenth century Old Believers at ten percent of all Russians. A greater proportion of the local population in the outlying areas of the empire consisted of Old Believers who had gone there to escape persecution, but also to live a more Christian life, away from the loose religiosity of the cities. The faithful of the periphery tended to be the priestless Old Believers, whereas the congregations that maintained a clergy were more to be found in central Russia. Among the differences between the latter and the Russian Orthodox Church was their belief that their less centralized relation of parish to ecclesiastical region carried on the good tradition of the Church, which had been corrupted by the reforms of Nikon. (Robson 1995, pp. 20-39)

The 1905 Act of Toleration in Russia allowed the Old Believers to organize and hold regional and national conferences. Their staunch religiosity, however, served them poorly under the Communist regime after 1917. Emigration had already begun at least a hundred years earlier, when some found haven in Turkey and its tolerant policies toward non-Muslim faiths. Heading east, and finding Siberia not a safe refuge, a contingent went to the Harbin area of Manchuria (China). Eventually Communist China no longer welcomed the Russians, so they migrated from there to Brazil and to Canada. (Colfer 1985, 5-8)

After World War II some of the Brazilian and some of the Turkish Old Believers found their way to Oregon with the help of the U. S. government and the Tolstoy Foundation. These are the ones Roy Gordon found in 1997. Although some of those who came from Brazil moved to Alaska, where they could more easily live their traditional lifestyle, it was estimated in 2000 that there were about 10,000 Old Believers in Oregon, the largest concentration in the United States. (Kramer 2001)

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<http://ebible.org>. Has many versions of the Jewish and Christian scriptures.

<http://mormon.org>.

<http://TheLiberalCatholicChurch.org>.

orthodoxwiki.org.

www.cais-soas.com. This, the website of the Circle of Ancient Iranian Studies, contains thorough, scholarly articles on Zoroastrianism and Mithraism.

www.christianscience.com.

www.comparativereligion.com. Has some good comparisons.

www.creeds.net.

www.earlychristianhistory.info/index.html. Website of Burton L. Mack.

www.eric-geoffroy.net/A-Clash-of-Civilizations-The. Conference on Sufism at Columbia University.

www.gnosis.org. Vehicle of the Ecclesia Gnostica, containing extensive bibliography.

www.interfaith.org/christianity/apocrypha-gospel-of-thomas.

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www.liberalcatholic.org.

www.philtar.ac.uk/encyclopedia/introd.html.

www.religionfacts.com.

www.religion-online.org. Broad range of articles from Christian perspective.

www.thearda.com. The *Association of Religion Data Archives* is a vast assemblage of information, including comprehensive statistics, on religion in the United States.

www.theism.info. Broad, not deep.

www.thelcc.org.

www.uaa.org. The website of the Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations.

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www.wikipedia.org. Often valuable for beginning a search.

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