

**Review: Sean Martin, *The Cathars: Rise and Fall of the Great Heresy*,
Pocket Essentials, Harpenden, UK, 2005 (2014 edn.)**

Pages: 192

Cathar Libel

This is a fascinating but seriously flawed history of the Cathars; the first reason being the sources available are few, hostile, and Roman Catholic, which the author by and large takes as true. Secondly, and related to the first, is he is obviously not born again and so cannot interpret this biased history through the lens of scripture.

The above being said, enough information is provided for the Christian reader to discern how evil Rome was in its religicide of Christians for no other reason than refusal to submit to Papal authority. Cathars under various epithets and titles were hunted in France, Italy, Bulgaria, and how many other locations only God knows.

Despite sporadic revivals, Rome was always able to quench the faith through her inquisitions.

Papal crusades lasted over a hundred years, beginning with the terrible massacre at Béziers in 1209. However, they were never truly extinguished, since when remote fortresses of Montsegur and Sirmione fell, the inaccessible Alps were haven to this precious faith, just as Revelation 12.6 prophesied:

“And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, hat they should feed her there a thousand two hundred *and* threescore days.”

Prologue: Béziers (pp. 1-13)

On the Feast Day of Mary Magdalene, 722/1209, the French Army under

legate Arnold Amaury was camped outside the town.

The Waldensians are claimed to have been Dualists. They were implacable towards the Church of Rome as the Church of Satan.

In 1204 under the Fourth Crusade, Innocent III sacked Constantinople.

At least 8,000 were killed at Béziers, which started the Albigensian Crusade.

I) Heresy and Orthodoxy (pp. 14-38)

Mitigated Dualism holds evil as a secondary lesser power, Absolute Dualism as the equal of good.

Zoroaster was also known as Zarathustra.

The author claims Satan went from an accusing angel to adversary of both God and man.

The Cathars claimed descendancy from the Apostles apart from Rome. The Bogomils were their forerunners.

Docetism claims Jesus' passion and resurrection were spiritual rather than physical.

Mani (AD 216-275) lived in Babylon.

Justinian (527-65) decreed the death penalty for Manichaeans by burning them alive. "Maniac" derives from them.

Adoptionists believe Christ was born human and only became divine at his baptism.

The pagan Bulgarian Empire (681-1018) was a thorn in Constantinople's side.

The Bogomils rejected icons and relics, saw Rome in league with the devil, and the latter actually created the world and was Christ's brother.

Bogomil Basil the Physician was burnt at the stake by Alexius Comnenus (1081-1118).

II) The Foxes in the Vineyard of the Lord (pp. 39-65)

11thC Orléans heretics were accused of worshipping the devil in the form of an Ethiopian (a byword for blackness and evil). They were accused of nocturnal orgies, child sacrifice, and magical flight.

Gregory VII (1073-85) had claimed Rome was the only means by which one could come to God.

The Cathars are dated from 1143. They had three levels of leadership: Elect (or Perfect), Believers, and Listeners.

Weaving was forbidden for Roman clergy as it was seen to be associated with heresy and magic.

Cathars believed Church buildings were not holy in themselves, and preferred to meet in people's homes instead.

Thrice each year the Perfect were expected to undertake 40-day fasts, paralleling Jesus' temptation in the wilderness.

III) The Albigensian Crusade: The Languedoc at the Turn of the Thirteenth Century (pp. 67-98)

Women were made equal with men and could also become Perfect.

Arnaud of Amaury was Abbot of Cîteaux.

Peter of Castelnau was a trained lawyer, and Brother Ralph a Cistercian.

At Carcassonne 1204, 13 Cathars and 13 Catholics debated.

Innocent II wanted action against the Cathars, while Raymond IV to be free of Roman influence.

On 1/13/1208, Peter Castelnau was assassinated leaving Raymond's castle

for Rome.

Innocent promised crusaders full indulgences, debt cancellation, and booty. They arrived in droves.

After Béziers, Arnaud wrote to Innocent III: “the workings of divine vengeance have been wondrous”. [p81]

On 8/15/1205, Carcassone fell, and Raymond Roger was imprisoned and his lands given to Simon de Montfort.

On 1/17/1213, Rome paused the Albigensian Crusade.

In 1226, crusaders besieged Avignon, which by 1228 became a scorched earth policy. On 4/12/1229, Raymond VIII signed the Peace of Paris ending the crusade after complete religicide of the Albigensians.

IV) The Inquisition (pp. 99-114)

Inquisitors would give a sermon in the local church demanding profession of faith for all males over 14 and females over 12. The congregation were also obliged to swear an oath against heresy and to attend confession thrice a year. Anyone with a Bible was a suspect.

Perfect would travel in male and female pairs under the guise of husband and wife.

There was a hold out Cathar stronghold at Montségur. In 1243, Hugh of Arcis besieged it and captured 200 Perfect. These would not repent so were burnt, along with 21 last-minute converts, in the Field of the Cremated under the watchful eye of the Archbishop of Narbonne.

In 1247, Peter Garcias declared Rome as the “harlot who gives poison” and was taken by the Inquisition.

After Montségur, the Languedoc became a Stalinesque inquisitorial region.

One final Cathar fortress was at Quéribus, which fell in August 1255, which drove the Cathars permanently underground.

V) The Autier Revival (pp. 115-129)

The remaining Perfect sought refuge in the mountains.

Peter Autier was born 1240 at Ax-les-Thermes. He supposedly believed Mary was a non-physical being, and that in order for women to enter heaven they would first have to be changed into men. He was the second last Perfect and was burnt at the stake in Toulouse, 4/9/1310.

Piedmont had been a Cathar sanctuary since the mid-13thC.

The *endura* was cold water only till death; the longest was twelve weeks.

VI) Italy and Bosnia: Thirteenth 'Century Italian Catharism (pp. 130-143)

Concorezzo and Desezano were Cathar cities in north-west Italy.

In Verona, August 1233, 200 Cathars and Waldensians were burnt.

In the Bogomil *Secret Supper*, Satan is cast out of heaven for wanting to exceed God, who forgives him, and lets him create the world of matter.

There is also the Cathar *Book of the Two Principles* (c1240) and *The Vindication of the Church of God*.

Sirmione was the Italian Montsegur, in February 1278, all 200 Sirmionese Perfect were burnt in the amphitheatre at Verona.

By 1342, the only Cathars remaining lived in secretive Alps communities.

In 1232, Gregory IX appointed the King of Hungary to crusade against Bosnian heretics from 1234-1246.

Italian Cathars were *Patarenes*.

Increasing Ottoman threats led Bosnian king Stephen Thomas (1443-61) to convert to Catholicism. As a price, he had to persecute the Bosnian church

had had them exiled or converted.

VII) The Cathar Treasure (pp. 144-154)

The most enduring myth is the Cathars possessed the Holy Grail.

Wolfram' grail in *Parzival* is said to be a stone. Another suggestion is the Grail is Mary's womb.

The Magdalene hypothesis rests on a language change from *san graal* ("Holy Grail") to *sang real* ("holy blood", or the offspring of Mary and Jesus).

The Troubadours were itinerant poets in Occitan in the 11-13thC.

It is said the Templars welcomed Cathars.

Priest Napoleon Peyrat (1809-91) wrote *History of the Albigensians* in the 1870s.

Maurice Magre (1877-1941) called the Perfect "Buddhists of the West".

End notes (pp155-)

The Cathars did not celebrate Easter.

Consolamentum was a baptismal rite which elevated Believer to Perfect. Many took this rite on their deathbed.

Nestorius (386-451) was a patriarch of Constantinople who held Christ had two separate beings, human and divine.

Conclusion (pp. 100-101)