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CATHARISM AS A COUNTER-CHURCH

It should not come as a surprise that the anti-Cathar polemicists focused particularly on the issues mentioned above, which they perceived as deterrent and contrary to their own religious models. This partially clarifies why Catharism is considered to be a semi-anarchistic popular movement which has arisen merely spontaneously, while there is far less emphasis on the pure theological views of this religion. However, if one takes Catharism solely for which it stands, meaning its basic doctrine of the popular experience of a transparent daily spirituality, dissociated from imposed dogmas and Roman Catholic behavioural patterns, a completely different viewpoint emerges. In this context, we must focus on the importance of dualism within Catharism in particular.

If one approaches the history of religions from a sheer functionalist sociological viewpoint, it becomes clear that the major traditional religions are comprised of a conception of natural and human laws, which are interconnected (for instance, the terms *rita* in India, *artha* in Persia and *maat* in Egypt can all be defined as 'rite'). Such similarities, between natural and human laws, are at the core of the majority of the world religions. It legitimises the laws of society, the social structures and the notions of oppression and exploitation. In this context, the laws of society are divine and therefore impossible to alter. At the same time, they are intrinsically good: not to accept them equals being opposed to the gods.

According to the dominant medieval Roman Catholic Church, religion legitimises the social structure of society. Contrary to this is Catharism, which confirms that human laws are not divine, that social laws are not originally good and that the aim of social structures is solely to oppress people. The obvious outcome of this opinion is the denial of the fact that God created this world, because the first blueprint of Creation includes only natural and social laws. The Cathars did not believe that they could change the world and introduce fair and good social laws either. Their environment was too hostile for that.

The fundamental structure of feudal society is based on oath swearing and loyalty. Swearing oaths equalled taking part in the existing feudal structures. When the Cathars propagandised that one should never swear oaths, because Jesus himself had said to never do so, it had massive political and revolutionary implications concerning the temporal power and spiritual power. Indeed, it is a complete rejection of that feudal structure. The Cathar prohibition to kill, both humans and animals, was even more burdensome in the perspective of the prevailing criminal law and warfare of that time.

Even worse was the opposition of Catharism towards the dominant Church of Rome. In this regard, the rejection of the crucifix, for the Cathars the symbol of evil and therefore perceived as negative, is significant.

The medieval orthodox and Catholic polemicists considered Catharism as a protest movement, a popular opposition which arose from a grouping of various sects. Unfortunately, for many people today this medieval viewpoint is still appropriate. Erroneously, Catharism is still often seen today as merely an opposition and its intrinsic true spiritual message is overlooked. Oftentimes, one does not see the comprehensive spiritual inspiration that Catharism offers, and likewise overlook the parallels with the authentic and primitive apostolic church. In perusing church history throughout the ages one can conclude that the primordial primitive church is not an immutable, unchangeable dogmatic institution, but on the contrary, very transparent, flexible and comprising enormous internal spiritual wealth, which, at the same time, evolved rapidly.

• CATHARISM AND THE PRIMITIVE CHURCH:

It is particularly interesting that the moral conception, the cult and the Christian life of the Cathars conform to the pattern of the primitive church. From the moment onwards that the formerly prosecuted church becomes persecutor itself, numerous Cathar tracts, which originated from the primitive church, are being excluded and condemned as heretical. The early Christian initiation rite, the organisation of the church, the position of women within the church, the ceremony of the *agape* (also known as the rite of the *panis fractionis* or the breaking of the bread among Cathars), which later became the Eucharist, the significance of reciting the Lord's Prayer several times per day by baptised Christians, asceticism, the denial of power structures and, on a

theological level the most important viewpoint, the belief in the pre-existence of the human soul, are the best examples which are connected with the pattern of the apostolic primitive church.¹

The Cathars themselves were also convinced that the Christians of the primitive apostolic church were their predecessors. The letter of Everwin of Steinfeld to Bernard of Clairvaux in 1143 evidently shows this: “To defend and legitimise their heresy they [the Cathars] say that their religion has been hidden from the time of the apostles until today in Greece and several other countries...” (my translation).² In this fashion, the Cathars are the ones who continued the tradition of Jesus Christ and the primitive church. According to the Cathars, their church is the only church of God and Jesus Christ, the *sancta gleisa de Christ*. The Roman Catholic Church, which is not based on the four Gospels and the Lord’s Prayer, is, on the contrary, the *la gleisa maligna romana* or the wicked Roman Church. The Catholic Church is a reversal of the primitive church; a reversal accomplished and confirmed by Emperor Constantine and Pope Sylvester. The tract *Adversus catharos et valdenses* by Moneta of Cremona evidently shows: “... we also know that the heretics say that the church of God [the Roman Catholic Church], from the time of Pope Sylvester onwards, became decadent when Emperor Constantine received his wealth and secular power...” (my translation).

We can also pinpoint that from a sociological perspective the term ‘heretic’ has no specific value at all as long as one does not examine who is right and who is wrong, for there are only certain viewpoints and different ideologies.

The term ‘heretic’ in this context solely means that someone has the opportunity to use that term to blacken a person, which can lead to prosecutions. This was the case during the Inquisition. From a Cathar point of view the orthodox and Catholics were the heretics who formed a counter-church and counter movement.

The organisation of the primitive apostolic church is comparable to the Cathar church. Within the primitive church, the bishops played a prominent role. Every episcopate had their own church, but at the same time, it was part of the totality of the universal church. In the end, there

¹ Ylva Hagman, *Catharism: a medieval echo of Manichaeism or of primitive Christianity ?* (Lund 1988);

² Evervini Steinfeldensis, *Epistula ad Sanct Bernardum*, 182, col. 679, (Patrologia Latinae).

is a similar distinction between sympathisers, laity, and initiated believers within Catharism and the primitive church.

• THE RULE OF THE CATHARS:

To become a Christian within the Cathar church it is necessary to complete a trial period in which one is initiated into the Christian doctrine according to the rule of God and the Gospels. The neophyte walks an ascetic path to become and remain a Christian. In the *Rituel Cathare Occitan of Lyon* this ascetic path is explicitly stipulated: "...and if you want to receive the power and strength, you have to keep the commandments of Christ and the New Testament, according to the offered opportunities. And be aware that He commanded that no single human may kill a living creature, nor commit adultery, nor lie, nor swear oaths and may not do unto another that the other does not want for himself, and that one must forgive the one who harmed you and must pray for the ones who prosecuted and condemned you and you are not allowed to judge or condemn, that which was dedicated by God and his Church" (my translation).³

Furthermore, the *Rituel Cathare Latin* gives a description of the Cathar food restrictions: "...make your vows to God to never, whether forced or voluntary, eat cheese or dairy, nor eggs or related products, nor other meat of animals that are prohibited by the Church of God. There is even more, it is also necessary to suffer hunger, thirst, scandals, prosecution and even death. All this you will endure and undergo for the love of God and your own salvation" (my translation).⁴

In this context, the importance between the duality of the visible and invisible world is evident. Becoming a Christian means escaping the prince of this world; not to submit to the devil. To make this possible one has to become detached from this world by practicing severe asceticism. A daily spiritual practice based on this asceticism gives the Cathar the strength to live according to the imposed values. The starting point of this spiritual lifestyle is the laws of Christ and his apostles, whereby prayer is crucial. This is evidently shown in the statement of the converted parfait Arnaud de Bretos given to Inquisitor Ferrier on 19 May 1299: "I was a member of that heretical sect, praying and fasting,

³ Ylva Hagman, *Le rite d'initiation chrétienne chez les Cathares et les Bogomiles*, in *Hérésis* 20, 1993, 13-31;

⁴ Christine Thouzellier, *Le Rituel Cathare Latin*, (Paris 1977), 194-261;

conforming to the life of the parfaits, blessing the bread and engaging in all the remainder that the parfaits undertake. And this during a time period of three and a half year” (my translation).⁵

• THE CATHAR SERVICE:

In the *Tractatus de hereticis* by Inquisitor Anselmus of Alexandria, published in 1271 in Lombardy, one can read a detailed description of daily life within a Cathar community. Anselmus describes the course of the fifteen daily services, among other things. The pinnacle of every service is the recurrent tripartite repetitions of the Cathar doxology “*adoremus patrem et filium et spiritum sanctum,*” and also the recitation of the Pater Noster eighteen times according to the version of the biblical tradition which translates the Greek word ‘*epiousion*’ as ‘super-substantialem’ instead of ‘quotidianum.’ The super-substantial bread is more in line with the spiritual attitude of the Cathars.

How should one interpret this practice of repetitive prayer? The Cathar doxology is recited daily 172 times and the Lord’s Prayer 270 times during the services. The doxology and the Lord’s Prayer are also recited during the ceremony of the *consolamentum* and the ceremony of the *panis fractionis*, or the breaking of the bread, at the start of the daily meals. The Pater Noster also plays a central role during the *consolamentum*, such as it can be determined for the Albigensians, who, according to Rainerius Sacconi, think that it is sufficient to recite this Holy Prayer to make the *consolamentum* efficient. Therefore, the Cathar religious life is very similar to the life of nuns, but not in a closed community but rather within an open structure towards society.⁶

Concerning the meaning of the recurrent prayer, this is partly answered in the *Panoplia dogmatica*⁷ in which Bogomil prayer was repetitive and at the same time purgative. The Messalians have an anthropological conception in which humanity is considered as parasitized or possessed by the devil. Here, prayer is a means to exorcise the devil and to deliver from his power. This conception seems applicable to the Oriental and Western Cathars. Indeed, in the *Rituel*

⁵ Jean Duvernoy, *Le dossier de Montségur: interrogatoires d’Inquisition (1242-1247)*, (Périgrinateur 1998), 271.

⁶ Michel Gybels, *Ketterijen in Middeleeuws Europa - de strijd voor een eigen religieuze identiteit*, (Free Musketeers Zoetermeer 2011);

⁷ Euthymius Zigabenus, *Panoplia Dogmatica*.

Cathare Occitan of Lyon the following is stated on the public and collective confession: "...because our sins are numerous with which we burden God, every day and night, in words and deeds, consciously and unconsciously, but more consciously than unconsciously in which the evil spirits tempt us in the flesh in which we are created."

Seen in this context, the prayers certainly are purgative. The collective prayer, recited within the heart of the Cathar church, is most effective for salvation, which is also shown in this quote of the *Rituel Cathare Latin*: "May God be with you when you receive this prayer for his honour and your salvation" (my translation).

During the triumphal period of Catharism, at the time when it was not prosecuted, one was able to lead a spiritual life that is comparable to monastic life. A life regulated by religious offices, the daily *agape* (the *panis fractionis* or the breaking of the bread), the collective public confession, the fasting, prayer and the artisan work.

Based on different details of the regulations one can follow a geographic evolution from East to West and at the same time a chronological evolution, from Bogomilism in the tenth and eleventh century until Catharism in the thirteenth century.

The conclusion that comes to light is that Eastern Catharism, Bogomilism, is characterised by a more direct religious lifestyle in accordance to the regulations of a traditional monastic life, and rather in a monastic or religious order than in an ecclesial concept. Moreover, it is also a fact that one can encounter the image of the Cathars as "monks dressed in black habits" mostly in Greek and Slavic sources.

• THE CATHAR CHURCHES

"In the month May of the year 1167, a large number of men and women of the Cathar church of Toulouse gather in the *castrum* of Saint Félix-de-Lauragais. The camister Nicétas, who resides there on request of the church of Toulouse, gives everyone the *consolamentum*" (my translation). In this fashion the famous "Charte de Niquinta" begins, which has oftentimes been considered as forgery, but is nowadays considered as authentic.

Halfway in the document there is a passage in which the church of Toulouse asks the question if "the composition of the primitive church was light or heavy." Nicétas answers this by referring to the seven churches of Asia Minor, to the names of the five Byzantine churches which he describes as "diuisas et terminates," or rejected and cancelled.

The nine Cathar churches mentioned by Nicéas are comparable to the fourteen that are cited by Inquisitor Rainerius Sacconi. Neither Nicéas nor Sacconi make a distinction between the Roman and Byzantine churches. Sacconi even calls all of them explicitly “Cathar.”

That tradition, contrary to Sacconi and Nicéas, prescribes that Catharism and Bogomilism are concerned as separate movements, that there were Cathars and Patarenes, Bogomils and Foundagiagites, which is a source and cause of confusion. One can state that this distinction is due to two kinds of sources: the Latin and Occitan sources in which one makes a distinction within western Catharism (Cathars and Patarenes) and the Greek and Slavic sources, in which one speaks of Oriental or Byzantine Cathars (Bogomils and Foundagiagites). One can even specify the name of the original church and the competent bishop.

• THE VARIOUS CATHAR MOVEMENTS:

Did various Cathar movements with divergent doctrines exist? Why did Nicéas consolidate the parfaits and bishops that were present at the Council of Saint Félix? Why did the Church of Toulouse feel the need to question the structure of the primitive church? What is the historical significance of the official report of that Council?

From a traditional point of view, the Council of Saint Félix is the outcome of a rivalry between two sects with two divergent doctrinal systems. After the studies of Schmidt considering Catharism and its appearance (1848-1850) it is custom to speak of a moderate and absolute dualism to name the two different doctrines. In this context, we can quote Antoine Dondaine, who states that “in a certain manner, the Council of Saint Félix has hierarchically arranged and doctrinally unified Latin Catharism. This doctrinal unification emerged due to its protection by adherents of absolute dualism” (my translation).

In Occitany, the influence of Nicéas has been determinative for the further development of Catharism. Christine Thouzellier is also formal in this area when she states that Nicéas tried to exterminate the roots of the Bulgarian heresy in the Languedoc as quickly as possible to substitute it for absolute dualism.

The most important difference between the Bulgarian order (moderate dualism) and the order of Dragovitsa (absolute dualism) is the idea of the pre-existence of the soul. According to the Albigenians or Albanians (*Ordo Dragovitzae*) the individual souls are pre-existent.

These are astral souls (individual angels) who have fallen from the realm of God and are trapped in a physical body.

According to Cathar mythology from Concorrezzo in Italy (*Ordo Bulgariae*), based on the apocryphal *Interrogatio Ioannis*, the soul (or two souls) are pre-existent and collectively trapped in the body of Adam (or of Adam and Eve).

Returning to classical times, we notice the existence of moderate dualists (the Gnostics), who, for the majority, believe in the pre-existence of individual souls, while the absolute dualists (the Manicheans) believe in the pre-existence of the collective soul. This collective soul is fragmented and diffused within humanity and nature. This is exactly the opposite of what is usually claimed considering this subject.

It is from a very detailed description, generalised from the Italian situation prior to 1241, that the common scheme for the description of Catharism emerged. However, it is essential to move away from this Italian interpretation, which is strongly influenced by Moneta of Cremona, and to examine the conclusions within a global context of available sources, if one would like to speak of Catharism in a correct manner.

Considering the repeatedly administering of the *consolamentum*, as we have seen at the Council of Saint Félix in 1167, such is done out of fear for the bishop who gave it and who might have committed a deadly sin, which makes the *consolamentum* worthless. For this reason, the bishops and parfaits were consolidated more than once. Rainerius Sacconi states the following considering this problem for the Cathars: “all Cathars suffer because of the great uncertainty and a great danger for their souls. If one of their prelates, and a bishop in particular, commits a deadly sin in secret, which happened often, all who received the *consolamentum* administered by him also relapsed into sin and would be doomed if they died in this state. To safeguard oneself against this the Cathar churches administered the *consolamentum* to their adherents repeatedly” (my translation).⁸

However, according to the *Tractatus de Hereticis* by Anselmus of Alexandria, written in 1271 in Lombardy, the Cathar reconciliations are no custom or routine, but essential due to the doubt considering the sacramental capacity of a certain individual. *Inter alia*, the text describes the way Marcus, the first bishop of the Lombard Cathars, becomes consolidated by Nicétas himself. However, Marcus later learned that

⁸ Rainerius Sacconi, *Summa de Catharis*, 49;

Nicétas had committed a “mala morte,” a deadly sin, due to which he lost his salvation and sacramental power.⁹

The problem of the sacramental authority is even more obvious in the literary and poetic debate between the Cathar bishop Isarn and the inquisitor Sicart Figueras. In a thrilling dialogue, the Cathar bishop Isarn explains his dilemma to the inquisitor:

*Qu’ieu ai be v.c. homes d’aquestas mas salvatz
E mes en paradis, mai fui bisbes levatz
Sim soi partitz (de lor) els ai desamparatz
Trastotz aquels v.c. auria dessalvatz
E lieuratz als diables per far lor voluntatz
En las penas d’ifern casutz e condampnatz
Que jamai j. d’aquels non seria salvatz....*

I tell you that I have sent more than five hundred people to paradise with my own hands, since I was consecrated as a Cathar bishop.

If I would turn my back on them and leave them, it would terminate their salvation and it would hand them over to the devils who can do with them whatever they want, and drown them in the abyss of the hell, whereupon they are condemned without any hope for salvation ever again... (my translation).

All these testimonies are from the opponents, the Roman Catholic Church, which means that one should be very cautious with drawing conclusions. There simply were various Cathar communities, but their differences emerged out of the problem of the sacramental authority and not from a doctrinal problem. A Cathar did not question which mythology pleased him/her best, but which community is the best keeper of the continuous apostolic lineage of the religion. Which one kept the value of the baptism with the spirit, handed down from *bons hommes* to *bons hommes*? And above all, who has the ability to save my soul?

We can only examine this Cathar dilemma by means of the arguments within the heart of Catharism itself. The question implies that the problem of the Cathar authority is not connected with their conception of the Cathar church as a set of saved souls. This church

⁹ Anselmus of Alexandria, *Tractatus de Hereticis*, 309-312.

surely is the church of Christ in which one takes part after receiving the *consolamentum*.

The lasting support of the fact that there are two rival tendencies within Catharism (moderate and absolute dualism) is artificial. Most significant for Cathars was not the mythology, but the sacramental power of the apostolic tradition. All Cathars share the same cult, the same spiritual life and the same ethics within the same organisation.

The core doctrine is the existence of two worlds, that God is a good God, et cetera... Within Cathar mythology, the Cathar church is central: it demonstrates in everything that their church is the true church of God and of Jesus Christ, the only institute that intrinsically carries the true apostolic tradition, which carries the true sacramental power, the power to save, to bind and dissolve. A Cathar is obligated to believe that his/her church is the only way to salvation. In such an interpretation, Catharism is composed of certain authoritative orders. It is, as Cathars state themselves according to Everwin of Steinfeld, as guardians of the heritage of Christ himself that has only survived within their communities, because they are the only legitimate continuers of the apostolic life: "*Haec est haerisis illorum. Dicunt apud se tantum Ecclesiam esse, eo quod ipsi soli vestigiis Christi inhaereant; et apostolicae vitae veri sectatores permaneant...*"¹⁰

• ORIGIN AND EXPANSION OF THE CATHARISMS:

What is commonly known by the term 'Catharism' is a dissident Christian movement in society, which arose during the twelfth century in the medieval West. The adherents of this movement are specifically named after the areas of Christendom in which they are located: Cathars and Manicheans in Germany, Patarenes and Cathars in Italy, Piffles in Flanders, Bougres in Bourgogne and Champagne and Albigensians in the southern parts of France.

They define themselves as good men/women or good Christians and they are noticed everywhere due to their virulent criticism against the Roman Catholic Church and its hierarchy, which they consider as unworthy because they betrayed the ideals of Christ and His apostles.

Inspired by the models of the first Christian churches, the good men/women consider themselves as the true Christians, because they practice spiritual baptism, the baptism of Christ by the laying on of

¹⁰ Evervini Steinfeldensis, *Epistula ad Sanct Bernardum*, op. cit., 677.

hands called the *consolamentum*. In their view, this kind of baptism is the only possible consolation, the salvation through the Holy Spirit, which was descended by Jesus on His apostles during Pentecost. On this sacrament and the rigorous practice of asceticism this dissident concept of their Church and its sacraments are build, by which they contest the efficiency of the Catholic sacraments (baptism by water, the Eucharist and marriage).

Filled with monastic spirituality that dominated past centuries and the contempt of the world in which they live, they also go to the extreme considering some parts of the New Testament in which the existence of two opposite worlds are confirmed, a good spiritual and an evil material, the world of the here and now. The latter is ruled by the devil, the 'prince of this world,' as it is called in the Gospel of John. Therefore, the Cathars consider this world as the work of the devil, in which God is only responsible for the spiritual creation. According to the Cathar interpretation of the Isaiah prophecy (14, 13-14), Lucifer sinned, a divine being, originally because of his pride by equating himself with God, who casted him out of His realm. Becoming the Devil, he created the carnal casings, the bodies of flesh and bones, in which he imprisoned the divine angels who were cast out of heaven with him. In this manner the devil created the visible world out of primordial elements which were created by God (earth, fire, water, air), the only entity able to create.

To give the fallen angels the opportunity to return to the 'forgotten kingdom,' of the Father, God sent his son Jesus. In a simulated material body, He came to redeem the souls (the fallen angels) from their material bodies by bringing them salvation by means of the *consolamentum*, which eventually leads to a return to the divine realm.

The idea that the Cathar concept of evil, the source of evil and also of sin, is a consequence of the controversial debates between numerous Latin theologians since Carolingian times, is in the course of the ninth century assuredly justifiable. It is indeed the period of the rise of the first disputes considering the sacraments such as baptism and the Eucharist. In the course of the tenth century in the medieval West, burning questions arose within academic circles about evil, the sin committed by the devil and its origin, but also questions about themes such as the humanity and incarnation of the Son of God and the equality of the persons of the Trinity. It is therefore within these scholastic milieus and the wish to take part in the process of rationalisation and doctrinal formulations, abundantly current in Western Christendom from the first

part of the ninth century onwards, that we can situate the birth of the Cathar dissidence in the first decade of the twelfth century in the West. Encouraged by Gregorian reformers, led by popes during the eleventh century, the Cathar dissidence sets itself above other contemporary protest movements who blame the papacy for using the reformatory ideals in their own favour. The Cathar movement could in a more or less steadfast manner settle in various areas of the Western Empire (what is now known as Germany and Belgium), in cities such as Cologne, Bonn and Liège, but also in duchies in the north of France, such as Champagne, Bourgogne and Flanders and after that Italy and mainly in the south of France.

Various testimonies show a great diversity of forms and models of dissidence depending on the area, diverse on both the level of doctrine and the field of liturgical practices of its adherents. This certainly justifies the thesis to speak of Catharisms in plural to consider and determine the identity of 'heretics' objectively, which has been mapped since the first decade of the twelfth century.

Indeed, the first testimonies originating from countries of the Empire between 1140 and 1160 do not permit to recognise heresy, not in the way it appeared in the south of France or Italy later on, areas in which it established itself in a more sustaining manner. In the urban milieus of the northern areas during the period of the first applications of the Roman reformation within the context of this religious crisis, which was also one of major intellectual flourishing, training schools arose which could play a major role as laboratories of religious dissidence. The immediate organisation of the present repressions and the triumph of Roman politics during the second part of the twelfth century explain the difficulties that the dissident movements encountered to settle deeply in those territories.

In the course of the next period, around 1160-1170, it is particularly the southern parts, mainly the Languedoc and north and central Italy, that support and favour the establishment of the dissidents who, just like the movements in the north, have broken away from Roman politics. The dissidents benefit from the reasonably quiet situation to evolve in the areas, considering both their organisation and the doctrinal and liturgical practices. We can also state that, for instance, in the urban areas of the Empire and the north of the French kingdom in the middle of the twelfth century, we encounter here, in the beginning of the thirteenth century on Italian territory, training schools which vary greatly in terms of questions considering themes such as creation, evil,

humanity, salvation and the hereafter. In this manner, these schools participate in the medieval reflection of these fundamental questions, which were heavily debated in the West during that time, whereby Giovanni de Lugio formulated the most radical answers around 1230. Being the master of the school of Desenzano, in the north of Italy at the Lake Garda, he is author of the *Book of Two Principles*, in which he confirms the existence of two opposite and eternal principles, one Good and one Evil, each the source of the two creations, the spiritual and visible.

• CONCLUSION:

Based on the answers that arose during the process of rationalisation, fuelled by dissident Cathars within their schools, one can deduce that the dualism of the opposite principles were not the primary issue, nor imported from the East as has often been the traditional opinion since the Middle Ages. As proposed by the Roman Catholic cleric and subsequently by inquisitors in the twelfth and thirteen century, the Manichean connection and the Bogomil-Oriental origin of the Cathar 'heresy' was the result of a construction of some eight hundred years earlier (about the year 300 of the common era). These contacts and exchanges between the various Eastern (Bogomils) and Western dissidents (Cathars) were being confirmed by twelfth and thirteenth century documents, which are not evidence for independence, which has been assumed for a long time, of one movement in the presence of the other.

Especially due to their textual exchanges, the contact between Bogomil and Cathar communities undertook rationalisation processes by fuelling these dissidents. They therefore bear witness of a mutual recognition of these Christian dissident movements and of the respective struggle against their own Church: the Bogomils against the Oriental or Byzantine church, the Cathars against the Western or Roman Catholic Church.

Michel GYBELS

CATHARISM AS A COUNTER-CHURCH

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From a sociological point of view, Catharism is perceived as a protest movement, which attacked the established values and habits defended by the Roman Catholic Church and worldly power. In conformity with this approach, it is necessary to pay special attention to the explicit values of Catharism, which are contrary to Roman Catholicism. For instance, the rejection of marriage, the outright prohibition on killing living beings, the rejection of the crucifix and the ecclesiastical hierarchy, the ban on swearing oaths, the Eucharist, baptism by water and the belief in God as creator of the material world.