

Sunday, February 20, 2011—Grace Life School of Theology—*Church History: A Tale of Two Churches*—Lesson 23 The “Christian” Middle Ages: Bogomils, Cathars and the Silver Line of Truth, Part 2

### **Bogomils in the Balkans**

- “About the middle of the eighth century Constantine, surnamed Copronymus, either by favor as a punishment, transplanted a great number of the Paulicians into Thrace, an outpost of the empire; and there they acted as a religious mission.” (Miller, 359)
- “By this emigration their doctrines were introduced and diffused in Europe. They seem to have labored with great success amongst the Bulgarians . . . Their history after this period is European. They were favored with a free toleration in the land of their exile, which greatly softened their condition and strengthened their community.” (Miller, 359)
- The Paulician immigrants from Asia Minor made converts and founded churches which spread rapidly. In Slavic regions they came to be called Bogomili, a Slav name meaning “Friends of God,” derived from the phrase, *bogu mili*, those dear or acceptable to God. (Broadbent, 78)
- “From these Bulgarian settlements their way was opened into Western Europe. Many native Bulgarians associated with them; hence the name of Bulgarians, in a course or corrupted form; is one of the appellations of hatred, which clung to the Paulicians in all quarters.”
- Miller states, “As to the subsequent religious history of these interesting people historians are greatly divided. Nothing is known of them but from the writings of their enemies. . . One thing however is certain; they protested against the saint and image-worship of the Catholics, and the legitimacy of the priesthood by which idolatry was upheld. They also protested against many things in the doctrines, the discipline, and the assumed authority of the Church of Rome.” (Miller, 359)
- As we saw last week, Catholic writers consistently label these believers as Manicheans. (Miller, 359)
- “Cosmas, a Bulgarian Presbyter, writing at the end of the tenth century, describes the Bogomils as ‘worse and more horrible than demons,’ denies their belief in the Old Testament or the Gospels, says they pay no honor to the Mother of God nor to the cross, they revile the ceremonies of the Church and all Church dignitaries, call orthodox priests ‘blind Pharisees,’ and say that the Lord’s Supper is not kept according to God’s commandment, and that the bread is not the body of God but ordinary bread.” (Broadbent, 80)
- “Byzantine persecution drove many of the believers westward into Serbia, and the strength of the Orthodox Church in Serbia pushed them further into Bosnia. They continued active on eastern side of the Peninsula and in Asia Minor.” (Broadbent, 81)
- “In 1140, supposed Bogomil error was found in the writings of Constantine Chrysomalus and condemned at a synod held in Constantinople. The teachings object to was that Church baptism is not efficacious, that nothing done by unconverted persons, though

- baptized, is of any value, that God's grace is received by the laying on of hands, but only in accordance with the measure of faith. "In 1143, a synod at Constantinople deposed to Cappadocian bishops on the charge of being Bogomils, . . ." (Broadbent, 81)
- Due to incessant persecution eventually many of the saints in Bulgaria put themselves under the protection of the Catholic Church. However, the saints in Bosnia and Herzegovinian fared much better. (Broadbent, 81-82)
  - By the 12<sup>th</sup> century there were already many Bogomils living within the borders of Catholic Bosnia. In 1180 the Kulin Ban (title of Bosnia rulers) was addressed by the pope as a faithful adherent of the Church but by 1199 it was widely known that he and his family along with 10,000 Bosnians had joined the Bogomil church within Bosnia. (Broadbent, 81-82)
  - "Minoslav, Prince of Herzegovina, took the same stand; as did also the Roman Catholic bishop of Bosnia. The country ceased to be Catholic and experienced a time of prosperity that has remained proverbial ever since. There were no priests; or rather the priesthood of all believers was acknowledged. The churches were guided by elders who were chosen by lot, several in each church, and an overseer, . . ." (Broadbent, 82)
  - Pope Innocent III, with the help of the king of Hungary, brought such pressure to bear on Kulin Ban, that at a meeting (1203) between the Pope's envoys and the Ban, . . . the Bosnian leaders agreed to submit to the Roman Church, promised never again to relapse into heresy, but to erect an altar and a cross in each other places of worship, and to have priests who should read the mass and listen to confession, and administer the sacraments twice a year." (Broadbent, 82)
  - "Though under pressure of the threat of war the Ban and rulers of the country made such an agreement, the people entirely refused to accept it or be bound by it in any way. . . The peace which Kulin Ban purchased by yielding to Rome was not of long duration, for he could not compel his people to observe its terms. On his death (1216) the pope appointed a Roman Catholic Ban, and sent a mission to convert the Bosnians. The churches of the country, however, increased the more, and spread into Croatia, Dalmatia, Istria, Corniola, and Slovenia." (Broadbent, 82-83)
  - "Some six years later the pope, despairing of converting the Bosnians by other than forcible methods, and encouraged by the success of this crusade in Provence, ordered the king of Hungary to invade Bosnia. The Bosnians deposed their Roman Catholic Ban and elected a Bogomil, Ninoslav." (Broadbent, 83)
  - "Meanwhile, the constant pressure of Islam was becoming an increasing danger to Europe, and Hungary was in the forefront of the fight; yet this did not awaken the Catholic countries to see the folly of destroying a barrier between them and their most dangerous foe. . . The struggle between Christendom and Islam swayed to and fro on its long battlefield. But whenever the papal party prevailed, persecution in Bosnia began afresh, so that (1450) some 40,000 Bogomils, with their leaders crossed the frontier into Herzegovinian, where Prince Stefan Vuktchitch protected them." (Broadbent, 83-85)
  - Once again the believers threw in their lot with the Muslims for a time due to the ferocity of the persecutions leveled against them by the Catholics. (Broadbent, 84)

- “Brethren in Bosnia had contact with their fellow believers in Italy, in the south of France, in Bohemia, on the Rhine, and in other parts, reaching even to Flanders and England.” (Broadbent, 82)
- “These *Friends of God* in Bosnia have left little literature behind, so that there remains much to be discovered of their doctrines and practices. . . But it is evident that they made a vigorous protest against the prevailing evils in Christendom, and endeavored with the utmost energy to hold fast to the teachings and example of the primitive churches as portrayed in Scripture.” (Broadbent, 85)
- “Their relations with the older churches in Armenia and Asia Minor, the Albigenses in France, Waldenses and others in Italy, and Hussites in Bohemia, show that there was a common ground of faith and practice which united them. The heroic stand for four centuries against overwhelming adversity, though unrecorded, must have yielded examples of faith and courage, of love unto death, second to none the world’s histories. They formed a link connecting the primitive church in the Taurus Mountains of Asia Minor with similar ones in the Alps of Italy and France. Their land and nation were lost to Christendom because of the inveterate persecution to which they were subjected.” (Broadbent, 85)

### **Bogomil Beliefs**

- The Bogomils like the Paulicians are depicted as heretics in the most church history books.
- Jonathan Hill, author of *Zondervan Handbook to the History of Christianity* makes the following accusations regarding the beliefs of the Bogomils:
  - They were dualists, believing in good principle and an evil one, and identify the physical world as the work of the latter.
  - Vegetarians
  - Rejected the use of anything martial in the church (icons, relics, bread, wine, and so on)
  - Rejected Marriage
  - Saints, priests, and sacraments had no role in their religion.
  - Inspired by Paulician refugees. (Hill, 150)
- While commenting on the Cathars in another chapter Hill writes, “The Cathar movement was something of a mixed bag, containing a number of different elements, but it was essentially a development of Bogolism, the Gnostic heresy in Eastern Europe that we saw in Chapter 5. . . From the Bogomils, they (Cathars) inherited a belief in two great opposed principals of good and evil.” (Hill, 211)
- Kenneth Scott Latourette, author of *A History of Christianity: Beginnings to 1500* once again echoes the standard party line regarding the Bogomils. Latourette makes the following statements regarding the Bogomils:
  - “The Bulgarian Church was also troubled by a religious movement which we know as Bogomilism. This seems to have arisen in the tenth century. . . It is also

declared to have been indebted to the Paulicians an even to have been a continuation of them—that set of sturdy religious groups whom we meet earlier in (Chapter 11) and who were condemned by the Orthodox as heretics. There had been active Paulician settlements in the Balkan Peninsula from at least the eighth century and contagion from them is quite within the range of possibility.” (Latourette, 576-577)

- “Bogomilism had in it Christian elements which were set in a basic context of dualism such as we have repeatedly seen in our story. It rejected the Old Testament, fro the latter told of the creation of this present evil world by God. It accepted the New Testament, but rejected the miracles of healing by Christ since these had to do with the flesh, and held them to be parables of healing from sin. The Bogomils maintained that all branches of the Christian Church were in error and would have nothing to do with their doctrine, rites, sacraments, orders, holy days, crosses, icons, and saints.” (Latourette, 577)
- Numerous Catholic Sources online report the following regarding the Bogomils view of baptism, “Baptism was only to be practiced on grown men and women. The Bogomils repudiated infant baptism, and considered the baptismal rite to be of a spiritual character neither by water nor by oil but by self-abnegation, prayers and chanting of hymns.” (<http://www.fact-index.com/b/bo/bogomils.html>)
- “Now, because the Bogomils believed all physical matter was evil, they denied the miracles that Jesus performed, including the multiplication of the loaves and the physical healing ministry. They rejected the Old Testament and gave priority to the Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles. They rejected infant baptism, not because of some complex justification and grace theology, but because they denied ALL water baptism (water, being a physical substance, was evil). In fact, Lambert describes that any previously baptized person who left the Orthodox Church for the Bogomils were required to undergo a purification ceremony to reverse the "evil effects" of water baptism (Medieval Heresy: Popular Movements from Bogomil to Hus, London: Edward Arnold, 1977; 20).” (<http://www.angelfire.com/ok3/apologia/bogomils.html>)
- According to Philip Schaff, the Bogomils “held to the Sabellian Trinity, rejected the Eucharist, and substituted for baptism with water a ritual of prayer and the imposition of hands. Marriage they pronounced an unclean relationship. The worship of images and the use of the cross were discarded.” (Schaff, Volume V [http://www.ccel.org/s/schaff/history/5\\_ch10.htm](http://www.ccel.org/s/schaff/history/5_ch10.htm))
- “The Bogomils were anit-Catholic; in church history those who are anit-Catholic have to be either heathen or heretics because most church histories are written by people who major in anti-church history. Throughout the entire aniti-church history of Catholicism, every group who believed what the Bogomils believed was called Arian, Manichean, Dualistic, or Gnostic. They appear manly in northern Italy and southern France, and when they do, their name has been changed against in order to cut off from history any Biblical succession which would connect them with the New Testament.” (Ruckman, 381)

### The Cathari throughout Europe

- “In France and Italy they are called Cathari. . . In Southern France these Cathari were called Albigenses, and in the Balkans they were called Bulgarians. The trick in every case was to produce the impression that true New Testament succession was Catholic because the godless reprobates in that political organization had stuck to one name since they adopted it while the other groups couldn’t possibly prove New Testament succession because their names changed. By changing the names of anti-Catholic Bible believers constantly you could prove that your church (Catholic) was the one true church.” (Ruckman, 381-382)
- According to the Catholic Dominican Rainerius at the time of the Crusades there were 4,000,000 Cathari spread throughout Europe. (Ruckman, 383)
- Once again Schaff articulates the standard party line regarding the Cathari. Consider the following quotes:
  - “The most widely distributed of the heretical sects were the Cathari. The term comes from the Greek katharos, meaning pure, and has given to the German its word for heretic, Ketzer. It was first used by the Cathari themselves. A grotesque derivation, invented by their enemies, associated the sect with the cat, whose form it was the pleasure of the devil to assume. From their dualistic tenets they were called New Manichaeans. From the quarter they inhabited in Milan, called Pataria, or the abode of the junk dealers, they received the name Patarenes.” (Volume V)
  - “In Southern France they were called Albigenses, from the town of Albi, one of the centres of their strength. From the territory in Eastern Europe, whence their theological tenets were drawn, they were known as Bulgari, Bugares, or Bugres. Other titles were given to them in France, such as Tassarants, Textores, from their strength among the weavers and industrial classes, or Publicani and Poplicani, a corruption of Paulicians.” (Volume V)
  - “It was the general belief of the age that the Cathari derived their doctrinal views from heretical sects of Eastern Europe and the Orient, such as the Paulicians and Bogomili. This was brought out in the testimony of members of the sect at their trials, and it has in its favor the official recognition which leaders from Eastern Europe, Bosnia, and Constantinople gave to the Western heretics.” (Volume V)
  - “The Cathari agreed—to use the expression of their opponents—in vituperating the established Church and in calling its adherents Romanists. There are two Churches, they held,—one of the wicked and one of the righteous. They themselves constituted the Church of the righteous, outside of which there is no salvation, having received the imposition of hands and done penance according to the teaching of Christ and the Apostles. Its fruits proved that the established Church was not the true Church. The true Church endures persecution, does not prescribe it. The Roman Church sits in the place of rule and is clothed in purple and fine linen. The true Church teaches first. The Roman Church baptizes first. The true Church has no dignitaries, prelates, cardinals, archdeacons, or monks.

The Roman Church is the woman of the Apocalypse, a harlot, and the pope anti-Christ.” (Volume V)

- “renunciation of the seven sacraments. Baptism with water was pronounced a material and corruptible thing, the work of the evil god. Even little children were not saved who received absolution and imposition of bands. The baptism of the established Church was the baptism of John the Baptist, and John’s baptism was an invention of the devil. Christ made a clear distinction between baptism with water and the baptism of power, Acts 1:5. The latter he promised to the Church.” (Volume V)
- Bruce L Shelly follows Schaff in repudiating the Cathari as Gnostic and dualistic. “Like the Gnostics in the early church, the Cathari held that the universe is the scene of an eternal conflict between two powers, the one good, the other evil. Matter, including the human body, is the work of this evil power, the god of the Old Testament. He had, they claimed, imprisoned the human soul in its earthly body.” (Shelley, 209)
- “The Cathari were an immense peril to the Roman church. Not only had they revived the ancient dualist heresy, by 1200 they had gained the protection of the prince of Toulouse, a cultural area in southern France, and were spreading at an alarming rate. Three weapons were at the Catholic church’s disposal: preaching to return them to the truth, a crusade to crush all hardened resistance, and the Inquisition to uproot heresy completely.” (Shelley, 210)

### **Concluding Remarks**

- Latourette’s comments on the Cathari (as well as others) establish a clear connection between the Cathari, Bogomils, and Paulicians. All three groups are called dualists, Manicheans, believing in two churches, as well as being accused of rejecting the Old Testament. (Latourette, 453-455)
- We must always remember who is labeling these saints as heretics. We have already demonstrated in great detail the anti-Scriptural nature of the Catholic Church. In addition, we have demonstrated how the organized church sought to remove all memory of these believers from history. They have not been allowed to speak for themselves and the testimony of their accusers cannot be trusted. We have already seen in multiple cases where the church manufactured lies (Priscillian, St. Patrick) to justify their harsh treatment of Bible believing Christians.
- This is why I titled this class “Church History: A Tale of Two Churches.” Standard church histories are written from a Catholic perspective which labels all those who dissented as heretics who needed to be destroyed.
- Schaff, Latourette, Shelley, Hill, and their troop have abounded God’s word as their final authority when studying church history. This is why we spent so much time at the beginning of this class tracing the true nature of the church and its early removal from the authority of Paul. Without a Biblical perspective true church history is impossible. The failure of church historians to judge church history through the prism of God’s Word rightly divided relegates much of their work to the category of historical fiction at best.

One cannot call the history of the Roman Catholicism church history unless they have discarded the New Testament before attempting to write.

- Next week we will look at two more members of the Pilgrim Church: the Waldenses and Albigenses

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