

# OpenTheo

## The Persecuted Non-Conformists (Part 1)



### Church History - Steve Gregg

In this talk, Steve Gregg discusses a category of persecuted non-conformists during the Middle Ages. He explains that during this time, those who publicly preached against the Roman Catholic Church were considered dangerous and faced persecution. Gregg focuses on the Paulicians, a group who believed in a dualistic view of God and Manichean beliefs. He also touches on the Cathars, a group who believed in a cycle of reincarnation and rejected the meat and wine often found in religious practices. Gregg notes that some of these teachings are not supported by the Bible, and that the sources of information on these movements can be confusing.

### Transcript

Tonight and next time, we will be talking about the persecuted non-conformists in the Middle Ages. I categorize these into two overall categories, and they basically, the categories are somewhat chronological also. The first category, and that which we'll talk about tonight, would be those movements that were denounced by the official Church as being Manichean in their belief system.

And if you don't remember what Manicheanism was from when we studied that a long time ago, I'll remind you as we go along here. And there were three groups, essentially, that fall into that category. The Politians, the Bogomils, and the Cathars, which in France, the Cathars were called the Albigensians.

Then the other category, and these we will wait until next time to discuss, would be those who seem to have had a direct influence on the emerging Reformation. These were movements that were there before the Reformation, individuals and movements. And those would be Peter Waldo and the Waldensians, as they're sometimes called, John Wycliffe, John Huss, Savannah Rolla, and the Brethren of the Common Life.

These movements preceded the Reformation, but had a lot of things like the Reformers in their distinctives. None of them had the ability, however, to bring about the massive changes in European religion that the Reformation did, but we could see these as precursors. Now, all these movements that I've just mentioned arose within the period

that we'd call the Middle Ages, and that period is roughly from about 600 A.D. to approximately 1500 or so A.D., or maybe even up into 1600 a little bit.

And so today I want to talk about the first category of these. And you'll recall that during the Middle Ages, the official church in Western Europe, at least, was by this time fully developed Roman Catholicism. And whatever you might find objectionable in Roman Catholicism today was pretty much in place during the Middle Ages.

Now, that's not necessarily true of the centuries before that. Many of what we Protestants would consider objectionable aspects of the Roman Catholic system were not fully developed and official until the establishment of the Papacy. And in the Middle Ages, really, most of the things that we object to as Protestants were there.

And not the least of which, at least from my point of view, not only as a Protestant but as a radical, is just the fact that the church was institutionalized to a very large degree, and that Christianity was defined in terms of creedalism and sacramentalism. That would be if people held to the basic creeds of the ecumenical councils and were regularly participating in the sacraments, they were considered to be Christian. And while many people today would still consider it to be a good definition of Christian, my own understanding is that a Christian is somebody who is personally repentant of sin and lives trusting in Jesus Christ day by day and seeking to follow him.

And that would not necessarily be true of every person who is regular at the sacraments or who has the ability to honestly sign on to the creeds. Of course, a person might well be a true Christian and also fit that description, but it's easy for people to fit that description and not be a true Christian. And so I believe that by this time, and even before this time, Christianity had come to be defined differently than Jesus and his immediate disciples had understood it.

And yet there were movements that were not willing to be within the scope of that definition, and yet were not entirely willing to be godless or Christless. There were movements that were not quite like the Reformation in that it would appear that they didn't have quite as developed a biblical theology against some of the abuses of the Roman Catholic Church. But there were movements that definitely were standing up against the Roman Catholic Church, even at a time where that was a very, very dangerous thing to do.

Even later in Martin Luther's day, that was a dangerous thing to do. But he lived at a time where there was a greater sympathy in certain whole countries were resisting the Roman Catholic Church, Germany for example. And it was possible for him to gain asylum.

In a day in the Middle Ages where really all the countries were kind of more or less under the dominion of the Pope, it was a very dangerous thing to stand up publicly and preach

contrary to the Roman Church. And so it is during that period of time that these movements that we're going to be looking at tonight and next time arose. And I find them extremely fascinating because my general outlook most of my life growing up was that the Middle Ages was simply a time of no Christianity at all and no opposition to the Roman Church until the Reformation.

Of course, I've known for some years that that isn't quite a true characterization, but I believe that many Christians still think that way. Now the groups we're going to talk about tonight are very hard for me, at least, to categorize. On the one hand, in preparation for tonight, I've studied what we might call the mainstream church historians as well as the Encyclopedia Britannica and the Encyclopedia Americana on these movements to gain the information that I've gotten.

And all of these seem to have the same party line, say, about the Paulicians and the Bogomils and the Cathars or the Albigensians. And that is that these were Manichean heresies. And certainly if the views that are attributed to them were really taught by them, then we'd have to agree with this.

These were heresies. These were not Christians. These were more like, well, seemingly, the heretic Mani and the Manicheans that we talked about before.

The Manicheans believed in a Gnostic sort of dualism. They believed there were two gods, one good and one evil. These different groups had almost the same beliefs as each other on these points, though none of them were exactly like the Manichean system.

But they had the basic Manichean idea that there were two gods, a good god and an evil god. The evil god might be called the Demiurge in one system and Satanel, which is like Satan with A-E-L at the end of the name, in another system. And yet it was still the case that there was a good god and a bad god.

And the radical dualism of Manicheism and of Gnosticism in general is that matter, the material world in general, is evil. And the spiritual realm is good. And therefore it was believed by all Manicheans, pretty much, that the good god is the creator only of the spiritual realm.

And that the Demiurge or the Satanel or the bad god is the creator of the physical realm. Because the physical realm is evil by virtue of it simply being physical. It is a part of Greek philosophy, of Greek dualism, and therefore of Gnosticism and Manicheism and the views attributed to these groups that this is so.

And although all of these groups had theologies that incorporated the Bible and Jesus into them, if the mainstream historians are correctly representing the viewpoints of these people, these people would not be in any sense orthodox, at least by my understanding, of Christianity. Now on the other hand, I would just go along with this

assessment without question, except that I've also read another viewpoint, and what I'm going to do is I want to do more study on this. This is a very confusing matter.

And just today, Ken brought me a book called The Ecclesiastical History of the Ancient Churches of Piedmont and the Albigensian. And that looks like a rare book. Is it rare? In the 1600s.

Okay, I don't think I'll be able to read the whole book, but I'm eager to read more about it because these groups, just studying them this week has really pricked my interest in them. However, let me just say that these groups, if you read the encyclopedias, if you read the church histories, you'll get the same kind of stuff from them as what I'm going to present first. After that, I want to read you just an alternative viewpoint, and I'm not going to tell you which is correct because I don't know.

Let's talk first about the Paulicians. These men are named, at least the movement has as the root of its name Paul, P-A-U-L. The Paulicians are believed or said to have been founded by a man named Constantine Silvanus around 653 or so A.D. and he is usually said to be the founder, although apparently the Paulicians themselves said that their movement existed before the time of Constantine and therefore to say that he was their founder might just be a historian's way of trying to find some human founder for something that may have been more grassroots or maybe more sovereign, who knows, in its founding.

He developed a community in Kielbasa in Armenia and Armenia became the principal location where the Paulicians were most densely found. They spread throughout other regions because they were very missionary oriented, but the largest number of them seemed always to be in Armenia. They rejected the Orthodox state church and of course by rejecting the Orthodox state church in their theology, they would of course be branded as heretics and they were among those that would be persecuted by the Inquisition and so forth.

They also rejected the practices in the state church of veneration of Mary and of the saints and of the practice of the sacraments. Remember the Roman Catholic Church has seven sacraments. It was believed that the sacraments actually conferred grace and salvation and that if a person were excommunicated, for example, from the mass, from the sacrament of the mass, that person would simply be separated from life because outside of the church there is no salvation.

It's what the Catholic Church has always taught and the church alone, the official church, could administer the sacraments. So these people rejected that concept and this Constantine Silvanus claimed to base all of his teachings on the written word of God alone, although actually he only accepted, it would appear, the Gospels and the writings of Paul. In that respect, he was a little bit like the Marcionites.

Marcion, the guy from whom we talked about him in the earlier lectures, he accepted pretty much only the Gospel of Luke and I think Acts and some of Paul's epistles. I don't even believe he accepted the pastoral epistles of Paul, but he was very radically a follower of what he regarded to be Paul's teachings. Now these people were not Marcionite, they just had that in common with him and that might be why they were called Paulicians, although there is another theory about that.

The book of their movement was called The Key of Truth and this book apparently still exists. Ken has seen a copy and he said he can borrow a copy for me, which I'm looking forward to because I have never seen it before. I'm interested in seeing its contents only because I've heard two contrasting things about what it contains.

One thing I've read said that it was written by one of the Paulicians between the 7th and the 9th century and that it emphasizes principally two things. Number one, reading the scripture in prayer and number two, holiness of life consistent with God's word. Now that sounds pretty okay to me, you know.

It also denounces infant baptism, which of course would put it at odds with the established church of the time, and it taught that baptism should be administered only to those who request it. The church, however, is to pray for the children of believers and the elders are to exhort Christian parents to bring their children up in holiness and to know the Lord and his word. This is what I've read is contained in The Key of Truth.

Now again, I haven't read The Key of Truth. I'm only reading what someone who I presume has read it says is in there. It's a big book and apparently it would say a lot more besides that.

The Paulicians are said to have taught dualism, that there's an evil God or Demiurge. He created the world of matter and the good God hates all material things and sent an angel, Jesus, to save mankind. Now obviously, if they accepted the book of Hebrews, they would not tend to see Jesus as an angel, although of course that can be misunderstood.

The word angel in the Greek can simply mean a messenger and Jesus can be regarded as an angel in that sense. In the Old Testament, Malachi, he is called the messenger of the covenant. The word messenger there is the Hebrew word for angel.

So it's not impossible that Jesus could come under the general term an angel if he's used in the broader sense of a messenger. Some other Christians I have encountered believe he's Michael the archangel, although of course they would say that he's no ordinary angel or that he's not a created being even. But that Michael the archangel is just a symbolic way of speaking about Jesus.

I actually encountered some evangelical commentaries on Revelation when I was

studying. According to my research, the Paulicians taught that the Old Testament and the state church were both produced by the evil God, the Demiurge, the Sataniel. And they also believe that Peter was a messenger of this evil God since the state church appealed to his authority.

Now before I go any further here, if I found these things to be written in the Keys of Truth book, which was their official book, I could say with certainty that this is what they taught, but I haven't seen it with my own eyes. I know this, that much of what we know about the Paulicians and the Bogomils and the Cathars is largely taken from the testimony of their enemy. These people under Inquisition were made to confess to believe all kinds of things, and it's really hard to get the straight scoop unless you go to their actual documents themselves.

That's why I'm so eager, so far I make up my mind about this, to actually read their own document about it. But these are some of the things that they said they believed. This man, Constantine Silvanus, his name was really Constantine originally, but he changed his name to Silvanus.

And the leaders of the movement often changed their names into the names of biblical friends of Paul's. His successor called himself Titus, and other leaders named themselves Timothy and Tychicus. This attempt to associate themselves with Paul, along with their Marcionite fetish for the writings of the Apostles, may have been the reason for them being called Paulicians, although some scholars believe that the name Paulicians originated by association with Paul of Sonnysoa, which is maybe more likely.

He was a third century heterodox teacher. His views were condemned in the mid-third century by the church. The state church persecuted the Paulicians up until about the 8th century, where they did experience a bit of a reprieve during that time because of the controversy over iconoclasm, especially in the Byzantine church.

There was the insistence that images not be used in worship, and there was a strong iconoclastic move there. And therefore, the Paulicians, who were also very much against images, were not as fiercely persecuted during that time. In fact, it is thought that one of the emperors, Constantine Copronimus, may have himself been a Paulician.

I don't know if that's theory merely or what, but that's how it was written in one of the books I was reading today. During the 9th century, Paulicians were very missionary-minded, and as we shall see, they had apparently an influence on the Bogomils in Bulgaria and also on the Cathars in all likelihood. In fact, so much so that one could consider the Bogomils and the Cathars in some sense just continuations of the movement in other geographical areas, though some details would differ in their belief systems, but the core beliefs would appear to be very much the same.

The Empress Theodora actually revived the persecution of the Paulicians. She ordered

the massacre of tens of thousands of them, and in order to respond to persecution, the Paulicians did, I think they made a mistake. They organized armies to protect themselves against persecutors.

Now this, of course, Paul and the Apostles never did, although they were persecuted just as badly. They just never saw it as an appropriate thing to take up the sword against the persecutors. But the Paulicians, I mean, if we were there, who knows what we would have done.

I mean, when you're under pressure, it's really hard to know. It's easy for us to sit here in peace and say, well, that was really a bad thing for them to do. I personally think, objectively as I can be, that it was not a right thing to do, but it's a little hard to condemn people who actually have the sword to the throat, you know, and it's hard to say what we would do in our weakness.

But I do believe it was a mistake on their part to do that. They became very skilled fighters, so much so that some of the emperors actually sent them to defend the empire. They sent them to the Balkans from their native Armenia, modern Bulgaria, and there were Slavs and Bulgars that the empire needed to be defended against, but the Paulicians actually had more of an influence on the Bulgars, not through fighting them, but through religious influence, because it was among the Bulgars that many of the Paulicians' beliefs seemed to have been adopted, and it was in that region that the Bogomils arose, having very similar, if not identical, doctrines to the Paulicians.

The Paulicians were known to be in Armenia until the 19th century, and they had the book called The Key of Truth. Now, Kenneth told us he actually has met them now. They're Molokans, or what they go by now.

The historians lost track of them, it would appear, in the 19th century, but the Russian Paulicians are now called the Molokans, and they still have the book, and none of the sources I read were aware of this. Now, that's interesting, because that maybe raises possibilities that the contents of the book as it exists now might not be identical to the one that existed in the 7th or 8th century. Now, the Bogomils is the second group, and these were located largely in Bulgaria, in the Balkans generally.

They are named after a man who is believed to be their founder, whose name is Bogomil. He was a priest, and they flourished in the Balkans from the 10th century to the 15th century, and they seem to have adopted the neo-Manichean views of the Paulicians. Now, most of the information known about the Bogomils to historians comes from the writings of treatises refuting their errors written by Roman Catholic officials.

A priest named Cosmas, in 972, very early in the movement's history, and then later on in the 12th century, a guy named Euthymius Zygadenus also wrote against them, and the works of men like this are the repositories, pretty much, of what is known about the

Bogomils' teaching at that time, and, of course, we need to remember that those men were hostile to them. It's difficult to know exactly how fair they were in representing them. These people rejected the sacraments and the whole organization of the institutional church.

They also taught dualism, and because they taught dualism, just like the Gnostics in general, they rejected the doctrine of the incarnation and of the crucifixion of Christ and the bodily resurrection of Christ. They taught that the firstborn son of God was sucked in the elf, and that because of his pride he was expelled from heaven, and after that he created the physical realm, and he also made Adam and Eve. He also had sexual relations with Eve, according to this view, and Cain was the result, and Cain is the originator of all wickedness among mankind today.

Now, I think last week or the week before, we mentioned something about the serpent seed doctrine, which existed and still exists in some sects today. You'll find it among many of the racist sects, people like the white racist kind of people, the Aryan Nations type people. There's a movement called Christian Identity that teaches this doctrine, but in Pentecostal circles 40, 50 years ago, William Branham was teaching this doctrine, the serpent seed doctrine, as it's called.

According to this view, the Jewish people are descendants of Cain, and Cain is himself a product of a union between Eve and Satan in the garden. This is, of course, a really bizarre teaching, but it's been around a long time, a very anti-Semitic kind of a teaching, and in my opinion, not only does the teaching not have any biblical support, but I think it's biblically impossible, because even if, for the sake of argument, we allowed this basic proposition to be true, which I do not, it would seem in the flood that no descendants of Satan would remain unless one of Noah's wives was descended from Cain. I mean, Noah's son's wife.

So he took two of them on the Ark? Oh, is that right? Is that what the Christian Identity people say? I think I have read somewhere that. I see. Okay.

So they were regarded as beasts, so they were taken on the Ark as animals, huh? Interesting. Well, to tell you the truth, this is a Satanic doctrine, if there ever was one. Anyway, it is attributed to the Bogomils that they taught this.

They believed also that Moses and John the Baptist were servants of Sataniel, but the Logos, which is, of course, the Greek word for word, which Jesus is called by that name in John's Gospel and in the Revelation, he was God's second son, Sataniel being the first, and he was sent by God to save mankind. He died, but he didn't physically rise again. He rose in a spirit body, and he defeated the Sataniel that way.

In Bogomil religion, belief, it is believed there were two classes, and this would be true through the entire spectrum of these three groups, two classes of practitioners. One



would be the perfects, and these would have undergone an initiation that others had not. The ordinary ones who were not perfects were simply called believers.

And the perfects, I've got it wrong here, I say the latter, but it should have been the former. The perfects lived a very ascetic life. They renounced marriage, and they would not eat meat, and they would not drink wine.

They renounced all those basic pleasures in order to live morally pure, as they would understand it. Even their fiercest opponents acknowledged their moral austerity. The Bogomil belief spread over many European and Asian countries in the Byzantine Empire in the 11th and 12th centuries.

The leader in Constantinople of this movement was named Basil, and he was publicly burned around the year 1100. In the 12th century, the movement spread westward, and in the early 13th century, dualistic communities, Bogomil, Polissian, and Cathar, formed a network across Europe and Western Asia. So the continent was largely shot through with these movements.

According to historians, the Bogomils disappeared into obscurity in the 15th century when the Ottoman Turks destroyed the Bulgarian Empire. But, of course, as Ken said, he has evidence that they actually just relocated. That's right, Lover of God.

Yeah, right. The name Bogomil means a lover of God or a friend of God. Yeah, right.

I read that. And now let's talk about the third group, and then I want to, just for the sake of confusion, read an alternative view about these groups. The Cathars were named after the Greek word *katharoi*, which means Puritans, and they taught the same dualism as the Polissians and the Bogomils.

A good god created the invisible spiritual world. A bad god created the material world and is identified with the god of the Old Testament. Now, you know, years ago I heard that there's a guy who owns a Christian bookstore.

I won't mention on the tape what city it's in, but it's not far from here. And some people who had visited there brought me some literature this guy had written. Are you familiar with this guy? He's about 15 miles from here.

There's a bookstore, and in his literature he was saying that the god of the Old Testament is Satan. And I'd never heard anything like that before. This was years ago, and I thought, what in the world? Where'd he get that? But as I was studying about these groups, I wonder if he's of this group or if he's just kind of a nutty guy or whatever.

But, I mean, that sure sounds strange to us who are not acquainted with this teaching, that the god of the Old Testament is actually the evil god. And that's because he created the world, and that's material. And the material world is evil according to Gnosticism.

They taught reincarnation. They taught that after you die, you may come back as an animal or as another person. They taught that Christ was the son of the good god, and he was a life-giving spirit who only appeared to be in a human body.

And he was sent to reveal to man the way of breaking free from the miserable cycle of reincarnation. These people accepted the New Testament but rejected the Incarnation and the Sacraments. Now, I can see how people can accept the New Testament and reject the Sacraments.

I'm not sure how they can accept the New Testament and reject the Incarnation. But that is what my sources indicated in my research on this. The Catholics accepted one ritual, however, although they didn't believe in the Sacraments of the Church.

They did believe in something called the consulamentum, which was a spiritual baptism administered by the laying on of hands. According to their beliefs, this ritual removed original sin from the person who had it done to them and enabled him upon death to enter the pure world of spirit in union with the good god. Those who received the consulamentum were called perfects, just as in the Bogomil religion, and the others were called believers.

The perfects lived a life of poverty and asceticism involving chastity, frequent fasting, and vegetarianism. So you can see there's very little difference between the Cathars and these other groups, and that's why it's not unreasonable to suggest these are just the same movement in a sense in different geographical areas and different periods of the Middle Ages. The believers who wanted to, of course, enter into the spirit world after they died, would want to become perfects, but they often would put it off until they were near death, as they thought, because they didn't want to live celibate lives, and they didn't want to avoid meat and wine and things like that.

And to be a perfect, you had to be able to pay the price, and they didn't mind doing that if it didn't have to last too long. So when they believed that death was imminent, then they would receive the consulamentum and try to become perfects so that they could be ushered into a better eternity. This movement spread through Western Europe after 1140, and it became strongest and was most represented in Northern Italy and in Southern France.

And it was in Southern France especially that they were most numerous in the district of Albi, and therefore were called Albigensians. They were protected in France from anti-church sentiments of certain nobles, like the Count of Toulouse. He is one of the ones who protected them from the church and persecution, so that France really became densely populated with Albigensians by about the year 1200.

In 1208, however, Pope Innocent, as we saw in an earlier lecture, launched a crusade against the Albigensians in Southern France, and he destroyed the Cathar political power

by the year 1250. He did this, by the way, by ruining the entire civilization in the process. Also, of course, we study before the Inquisitions, and the Inquisition was originally established to root out heresies, and Catharism was certainly one of the main ones.

Also, they wanted to get rid of Waldensians and some others too, which we haven't studied yet. Catharism is said to have disappeared from Italy late in the 14th century, and again, the historians don't know very much about what happened to it after that. But as seems evident, these movements, the Paulicians, the Bogomils, and the Cathars, apparently are all really one movement with slight variations, and apparently continue to this day as the Molokans from Russia.

And so they really haven't disappeared at all, although the historical works often say they did. Now, I want to give you an entirely different view. I'm not here to tell you this other view is correct.

It's just different. And until I read the documents myself, which I really hope I may, I will really not be in a position to say yea or nay to one of these two views. But here's an entirely different approach.

This comes from a book called *The Torch of the Testimony*. Are you familiar with that book? John W. Kennedy, a missionary in India for many years. Interesting guy.

I don't agree with everything he says, and I'm not sure I can agree with what he says here. His point in his book is to try to show that even in the worst of times in church history, the torch of the Christian gospel testimony was passed consistently, and there never really was a time where the true witness of Christianity died out, notwithstanding what many people seem to view certain parts of church history like. And he takes a very positive view of the Paulicians and the Bogomils and the Cathars.

His position is that these guys have received a bad rap from the institutional church, and that these people were just basically true Christians. He seems to even, my impression is that he doesn't accept the fact, or the alleged fact, that they believed in Manichean doctrine. That all this dualism and all these points I just described to you, he doesn't appear to believe that.

And I don't know how he can not believe it if it's well established in their literature. But let me just read to you, because although he does say some things throughout his book, I find his book very intriguing. He says many things in his book that I cannot substantiate, and he doesn't give his sources, he doesn't say where he got the information.

Therefore it's hard for me to know whether he really has authoritative sources for everything he says. But I have found that things that can be substantiated, let me put it

this way, he does agree in great detail with other historical sources I've looked at on many, many, many things. And of course his purpose in writing the book was to put his own spin on everything, just as probably all historians tend to do, but he does maybe more than most.

And therefore I want to read some passages to you from his work, because it really gives a totally different picture. I read this without endorsement or condemnation of it, just to give you another angle. This is John W. Kennedy from India writing this.

He says, There were groups of believers who among themselves, owning only the name of Christian or brethren, stood out strongly against the idolatry, sacramentalism, and other prevailing errors of the Catholic Church. They appear on the historical scene in the middle of the 7th century as Paulicians in the region of Mesopotamia. Why they were named Paulicians is not exactly known.

It may simply have been because of their respect for the Apostle Paul and his writing. The Catholic Church ascribed to them all sorts of erroneous doctrines, if we can believe those whose lives denied the truth they professed, for to them practical holiness was of little account and truth was turned into error. Whatever opinions may be held about the Paulicians, it is generally conceded that they had a particular respect for the authority of the Bible, advocated a life of simplicity, were devout and earnest people, and bore a strong witness against the unsavory practices of the Catholic Church.

Their enemies testified against them, but their lives testified of Christ. They claimed simply that they were in the succession of those people who still held to the teaching of the Apostles, and with every scriptural justification they denied the right of the ecclesiastical systems of Christendom to own the name of churches because of their degeneracy. In assessing the character of the Paulicians and other groups which have appeared down through the centuries, historians have tended too readily to accept uncritically what has been said and written against them by their enemies.

The history of the Roman Church in its dealings with those who refused to bow to its dominion is a sordid tale of pillage and persecution. Not only did it seek to destroy the persons of those who opposed it, but also to bring the very memory of their names into ignominy by the most gross accusations and obliterate what they themselves wrote or anything written about them in their favor. I'm skipping over paragraphs at a time here.

The Paulicians accepted no central authority to rule over the scattered assemblies. The local churches looked to God as their head, and they were built up and strengthened spiritually by teachers who moved from place to place to minister in their midst in a manner similar to that of Paul in the other New Testament times and others in the New Testament times. They did not draw up any code of doctrine to which they had commonly to subscribe as a basis of unity, and since different groups came into being through the ministry of different people, they no doubt differed somewhat from one

another, both in form and in emphasis.

Their spiritual unity lay in the life which they had in Christ, a life which manifested itself in their daily walk and witness. They owned a profound respect for the Word of God, which they accepted as their guide and basis of spiritual growth. An Arminian book written somewhere between the 7th and 9th centuries with the title of The Key of Truth gives an account of foundational beliefs and practice as it existed widely among the Paulicians of the time.

The author was himself one of the Brethren, but his name is unknown. Two things are particularly emphasized in regard to various practices which are enumerated. First, the reading of the Scriptures and prayer, and secondly, holiness of life in consistency with God's Word.

Paulicians and others were charged by the Romans with being Manichaeism, but it is extremely difficult to understand how any could hold Manichaeism views who so honored the Word of God. To uphold the teachings of Mani, much of the Scripture would either have to be repudiated or changed. Skip over some more here.

They also laid stress on the holy character, not only of the person who was being baptized, but also of the baptizer. On the question of setting apart elders, the writer emphasized the conditions laid down in Scripture and exhorts that great care be taken to see that these conditions are observed. A brother accepting the office of an elder had to be willing to brave the dangers which his position invited and to be ready to suffer for his Lord.

The Paulicians attracted men who had a passionate devotion to Christ. In the few facts concerning them already mentioned, we can see the simple order and holy life of the earliest churches. Of those of their number whose lives are dedicated to the ministry of the Word of God in their midst, we find men of humility and apostolic spirit who poured out their lives in the proclamation of the truth and died rather than deny their Lord.

Now, this author himself would be against Manichaeism, but he simply rejects the claim that they are Manichaeism. And I don't know how he can do this, honestly. I don't know where he's getting this information.

Ostensibly, he acts as if he's presenting what's found in their book of truth. He doesn't give sources, and that's why I'm so eager to read the book itself. Here's what he says about Constantine Silvanus.

He says, Prominent among these men was Constantine Silvanus. He has been suggested as the founder of the Paulicians, but according to the testimony of the Paulicians themselves, they existed long before Constantine Silvanus' time. Constantine, a man of distinctive ability, was influenced by the gospel about the year 653 through an Armenian

traveler whom he had graciously entertained at his home.

This man was a true believer in Christ, and recognizing that God had led him to someone of more than ordinary capacity, he left his host what must have been a very valuable gift. A manuscript contained the four gospels and Paul's epistles. And then he goes on to talk about how this man went around and preached it and started communities and so forth.

And, of course, we already talked about Constantine Silvanus. Let me just say this. He says similar things about the Bogomils and the Capets.

I won't read it all because it takes so long. But he makes no bones about the fact that they were called Manichean and that they were accused of having Manichean doctrines. But he seems to, you know, Ken, I think you may be right.

It sounds like he may be just so anti-Roman Catholic that he'd reject the testimony of any Catholic sources. That's true. The Mormons, on the same basis, would probably be accepted by him, it would seem.

The hardest thing for me, until I actually get a chance to read their own materials, is to know how to assess these moments. On the one hand, as a non-Roman Catholic, as a Protestant with Protestant sentiments, you know, we almost want to applaud them for rejecting certain things. On the other hand, of course, if the doctrines that are attributed to them really were held by them, then they were as cultic as can be and as heretical as can be.

And therefore it's very hard to know what to think about them. And it's possible that there are many things about them that we may never know for sure. But to get a hold of their actual book, The Key of Truth, seems to me... It's not called that now? They call it Light and Darkness now? Okay, well, the book... Yeah, I read from several sources that they had a book back then that was called The Keys of Truth, and that in the 19th century, the Polishans in Russia had a book by that name.

They've changed the name, or is it just a different book with a different name? Anyway, needless to say, I'm very curious. On the one hand, we have this book from them themselves, and then we have the writings of their opponents against them. And I guess it's really hard to assess... You see, what really is probably the case, what I think really happened probably, is that these Manichean views were held in these areas by groups that had these names, but that there were other people who were probably not Manichean, who probably were true Christians, who the Roman Catholic Churches labeled as Polishans or Bogomils or Cathars because they rejected the Roman Catholic Church too, and it's possible that this is the cause of the confusion.

I think that that's my tentative conclusion about it, is that there were these genuinely

heretical views out here under these names, and then there were people in the same regions who rejected much of the institutional church and its practices as these groups did, and just came to be lumped together in history and called by that name. So that's the groups of that one category. Now, as it turns out, I would have had time to go a little further, but I wouldn't have had enough time to talk about all those of the other category, which are, of course, those that seem to be almost a direct line toward the Reformation, it seems to me, and that would be the Waldensys, Wycliffe, Huss, Girolamo Savonarola, and the Brethren of the Common Life.

Frankly, I'm much less confused about these groups because I think that the information about them is fairly voluminous, and their writings in many cases are with us still. So we'll be able to have a little more certainty, I think, when we come to those men and those movements. But rather than get into that category and go only a little way into it and be interrupted by the end of this session, I'd like to take all of them together next time.

So we'll make this a short session.