

HISTORY OF THE PAULICIAN ICONOCLASTS

Part 1: The Iconoclast Controversy and the Paulicians

"They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service."

By Rand Winburn

We begin a look into the deep, dark past of Christianity. What we have found after years of intense research is chilling, but nonetheless true.

There has been a systematic, willful, and largely successful attempt, by Church leadership, to suppress, cover-up, and ignore Church history. By ignoring the past, the average Christian views the Word from a myopic perspective, thereby losing profound doctrinal and prophetic truths. Anyone familiar with the beliefs of Christians over the past centuries will readily admit new, errant teachings have, like leaven, permeated the Church. Other teachings, such as Pelagian - Arminianism have now become the norm, rather than the abnormal. It is the mission of this ministry to alert the sleeping Body of the misinformation and partial truths which have too long been a part of Church teaching regarding the interpretation of the prophetic Scriptures. Along these lines, it is imperative for a right understanding of the Revelation that Christians learn the truths of history. By retelling certain portions of Church history, a history which the average Christian has never been told, we pray that eyes are opened and that lives are changed as a result of these startling and disturbing revelations - revelations which include the profoundly depressed state of the professing Church and its innumerable drunken, sleeping shepherds. We encourage our readers to do their own personal investigations into these histories, to not just accept our word as authoritative. To facilitate the diligent readers' inquiries, we will footnote all sources.

History of Idolatry in the Church -- A Thumbnail Sketch

To give the uninitiated an unprejudiced view of the rise of idolatry in the Church we will quote from several well known authorities. Our first is Dr. Adolph

Harnack's *History of Dogma*.¹ He relates that the worship of angels and saints progressed to the worship of relics and images, culminating in the Nicene II decree legalizing the making and venerating (i.e., worshipping) of icons: "Christianity had originally resisted this impulse [of desiring relics and images of venerated beings], so far as anything connected with the deity was concerned, in order not to fall into idolatry. There was less repugnance, however, to it, when it dealt with Christ, and almost none from the first in the case of martyrs and heroic characters. From this point the veneration of relics and pictures slowly crept in again. But from the fifth century it was greatly strengthened, and received a support unheard of in antiquity, through the dogma of the incarnation and the corresponding treatment of the Eucharist....Pictures of Christ, Mary and the saints, had been already worshipped from the fourth and fifth centuries with greetings, kisses, prostration, a renewal of ancient pagan practices. In the naive and confident conviction that Christians no longer ran any risk of idolatry, the Church not only tolerated, but promoted, the entrance of paganism....'Authentic' pictures were in existence, and numberless copies were made from them. By their means, monkish piety, engaged in a stupid staring at sacred things, ruled the people, and dragged Christianity down to deeper and deeper depths."

To this summary we add that of Edward Gibbon, the brilliant, acerbic English historian, whose work, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, was placed under the ban by the Roman Catholic Church:

"The first introduction of a symbolic worship [into the Christian Church] was in the veneration of the cross and relics....At first the experiment was made with caution and scruple; and the venerable pictures were discreetly allowed to

¹ German theologian and professor of Church history at numerous universities (d. 1930), Eng. transl. by Neil Buchanan, Little, Brown & Co., 1898, Vol. 4, p. 318 ff.

instruct the ignorant, to awaken the cold, and to gratify the prejudices of the heathen proselytes. By a slow though inevitable progression the honours of the original were transferred to the copy: the devout Christian prayed before the image of a saint; and the Pagan rites of genuflexion, luminaries and incense again stole into the Catholic church. The scruples of reason or piety were silenced by the strong evidence of visions and miracles; and the pictures which speak, and move, and bleed, must be endowed with a divine energy, and may be considered as the proper objects of religious adoration....The use, and even the worship, of images was firmly established before the end of the sixth century."²

The discerning reader will immediately be struck by two points of interest: that the command to make an image to the beast, (Rev.13:14), and the power to give life to that image, (verse 15), is beginning to have its fulfillment in the early history of the Church. Let us continue with our overview of the origin of idolatry in the ancient Church by citing the Church of England's summary in its classic Reformation homily, *Against Peril of Idolatry*:³ "Thus far I have rehearsed Eusebius' words. Where note ye, that both St. Jerome and he agree herein, that these images came in amongst Christian men by such as were Gentiles, and accustomed to idols, and, being converted to the faith of Christ, retained yet some remnants of Gentility, not thoroughly purged: for St. Jerome calleth it an error manifestly. And the like example we see in the Acts of the Apostles, of the Jews; who, when they were converted to Christ, would have brought in their circumcision, whereunto they were so long accustomed, with them, into Christ's religion...But [the reintroduction] of circumcision was less marvel, for That it came first in by God's ordinance and commandment. A man may most justly wonder of images, so directly against God's holy word and strict commandment,

² Original publication, 1788. We quote the 1952 Britannica edition, Vol.2, pp. 195-96.

³ Original publication, 1562. We quote the 1823 Baltimore edition, p. 179 ff.

how they should enter in. But images were not yet worshipped in Eusebius' time, nor publicly set up in churches and temples; and they who privately had them did err of a certain zeal, and not by malice; but afterwards crept out of private houses into churches, and so bred first superstition, and last of all idolatry, amongst Christians....First, men used privately stories in tables, cloths, and walls. Afterwards gross and embossed images privately in their own houses. Then afterwards, pictures first, and after them, embossed images began to creep into the churches; learned and godly men ever speaking against them. Then by use it was openly maintained, that they might be in churches; but yet forbidden that they should be worshipped."

The Rise of Idolatry and the Rise of Antichrist Synchronous

Do not think for one minute that God left the Church without prophets to expose the corrupt condition into which it had fallen. 18th century Church historian and theologian, Rev. Joseph Milner of the Church of England endeavored to write a history of the true Church, that elect remnant whom the Lord promised to keep despite the attempts of the gates of Hell to destroy it. In the Preface of his 3rd volume, comprising the history of the sixth through twelfth centuries, he states plainly, "[When] general idolatry takes place, the system then becomes too corrupt to deserve the name of the Church of Christ. I have marked this limit to the best of my judgment in the course of this History, [and] have exhibited THE MAN OF SIN matured in all his gigantic horrors, and from that epoch I despair of discovering the Church in the collective body of nominal Christians. Every reader will observe the various features of Antichrist described in this volume, and some may perhaps be enabled to form a more distinct and adequate conception of the nature of Popery, than they had before acquired." ⁴

⁴ *The History of the Church of Christ*, 2nd Edition, Revised by Rev. Isaac Milner, London, 1810.

The reader should note well that the good reverend includes the rise and reign of the papal Antichrist, that Man of Sin, in his history. He correlates the rise of idolatry with the rise of Antichrist in the Church. We continue to quote Milner: "It was not until the knowledge of the Gospel itself was darkened and adulterated, that the miserable spirits of men had recourse to such vain refuges, and that the mind, no longer under the influence of the Holy Spirit, betook itself to the arts of sculpture and painting, in order to inflame its affections, and to kindle a false fire of devotion. [True] Christians then worshipped the true God with the [mind through] understanding, and whoever was converted to the faith, ceased from idolatry."⁵ Rev. Milner then cites the *Homilies Against Peril of Idolatry* to the effect that early church Fathers, such as Origin, Athanasius, Lactantius, Epiphanius, Jerome, Augustine and the Emperor Theodosius, all denounced image-worship, proving that the true Christians of the first four centuries never accepted such practices. In a telling footnote, Milner exhorts his readers: "It seems proper that every Protestant divine should acquaint himself with the fundamentals of the controversy, and be able satisfactorily to convince himself, that popery is not what it pretends to be, [for it is not] founded on the precedents of Christian antiquity."

He continues his history,".....As the ignorance increased, these historical paintings and images increased also....Thus, six hundred years after Christ, images had begun to appear in churches, but still without idolatry. The authority of [Pope] Gregory, however, had evil consequences: the spirit of idolatry grew stronger, as real spiritual knowledge decayed; and men, having now, in a great measure, lost the divine way of applying to God through Christ, by faith, for the relief of their consciences, became still more prone to rely on idols. So closely connected is the doctrine of justification with purity of worship. In

⁵ Ibid., pp. 151-52.

this respect the Roman church advanced in corruption more rapidly than the Eastern [church]. And Grecian emperors employed themselves in destroying images and pictures, while in Italy they were held in idolatrous admiration....Yet were men's opinions divided both in the east and the west; and, at length, the crisis arose, when the Christian world was formally broken into two parties on this question....The open avowal, however, of idolatry, was reserved for [Pope] Gregory II., and from this time I look on the bishops of Rome as Antichrist.”⁶

For his portrayal and exposure of the Roman Antichrist, Milner was vilified by his enemies, not the least of which was Dr. S. R. Maitland, librarian to the Archbishop of Canterbury, infamous for his propagation of tracts sympathetic to the Church of Rome, her exploits during the Inquisition, and her Jesuit Futurist interpretation of the Revelation, all of which were intended to undermine the Historicist Protestant view of the Revelation, misdirecting naïve persons from identifying the reigning Pope as the Antichrist.

The Greek Iconoclast Council of 754: No Latins Present

God's people refused to be silenced. Emperor Leo III. the Isaurian, who ruled the Empire, (717-731), hated images, determining to end idolatry in the kingdom. "By a second edict he proscribed the existence as well as the use of religious pictures," Gibbon tells us. "The churches of Constantinople and the provinces were cleansed from idolatry; the images of Christ, the Virgin, and the saints were demolished, or a smooth surface of plaster was spread over the walls of the edifice. The sect of the Iconoclasts was supported by the zeal and despotism of six emperors, and the East and West were involved in a noisy conflict of one hundred and twenty years." ⁷ By now the rebellious and idolatrous Pope of Rome, Gregory II., had withdrawn the western churches under his

⁶ Ibid., pp. 153-57.

⁷ Op. cit., p. 198.

jurisdiction from communion with the Iconoclastic emperor and his sympathizers. We excerpt two outraged letters of his written to the image-breaker, Leo:

"You accuse Catholics of idolatry; and by the accusation, you betray your own impiety and ignorance...You assault us, O tyrant! With a carnal and military hand: unarmed and naked we can only implore the Christ, the prince of the heavenly host, that he will send unto you a devil for the destruction of your body and the salvation of your soul. You declare with foolish arrogance, 'I will dispatch my orders to Rome: I will break in pieces the images of St. Peter; and Gregory, like his predecessor, Martin, shall be transported in chains and in exile to the foot of the imperial throne'....Are you ignorant that the popes are the bond of union, the mediators of peace between the East and West? The eyes of the nations are fixed on our humility; and they revere, as a God upon earth, the apostle St. Peter, whose image you threaten to destroy...." ⁸

It was to be the Christian duty of his son, Constantine V. Copronymus, to call a seventh general council for the purpose of denouncing idolatry, a council which the Roman Catholic and Eastern orthodox churches repudiate to this day. In A. D. 754 the council convened outside Constantinople, consisting of 338 Eastern bishops, for a three month duration. Let us now tear down the veil of secrecy which has surrounded this council and epoch by enlightening the reader as to its uncompromising stand for scriptural truth:

"Satan misguided men, so that they worshipped the creature instead of the Creator. The Mosaic law and the prophets cooperated to undo this ruin; but in order to save mankind thoroughly, God sent his own Son, who turned us away from error and the worshipping of idols, and taught us the worshipping of God in spirit and truth. As messengers of his saving doctrine, he left us his Apostles and disciples, and these adorned the Church, his

⁸ Ibid., p. 200

Bride, with his glorious doctrines. This ornament of the Church the holy Fathers and the six Ecumenical Councils have preserved inviolate. But the before mentioned demiurgos ⁹ of wickedness could not endure the sight of this adornment, and gradually brought back idolatry under the appearance of Christianity. As then Christ armed his Apostles against the ancient idolatry with the power of the Holy Spirit, and sent them out into all the world, so has he awakened against the new idolatry his servants our faithful Emperors, and endowed them with the same wisdom of the Holy Spirit.....Christianity has rejected the whole of heathenism, and so not merely heathen sacrifices, but also the heathen worship of images. The Saints live on eternally with God, although they have died. If anyone thinks to call them back to life by a dead art, discovered by the heathen, he makes himself guilty of blasphemy....It is not permitted to Christians, who have the hope of the resurrection, to imitate the customs of demon-worshippers, and to insult the Saints, who shine in so great glory, by common dead matter.Supported by the Holy Scriptures and the Fathers, we declare unanimously, in the name of the Holy Trinity, that there shall be rejected and removed and cursed out of the Christian Church every likeness which is made out of any material and colour whatever by the evil art of painters." ¹⁰

It was through the genius of the new Patriarch of Constantinople, Tarasius, and the cunning wiles of the wife of deceased Leo IV., the Empress

⁹ I.e., evil spirits subordinate to Satan.

¹⁰ *Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers*, Ed. By Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, Hendrickson Publishers reprint, 1995.

Irene, that image worship once more emerged in the East. "And as soon as she reigned in her own name and that of her son, [Constantine VI.], Irene more seriously undertook the ruin of the Iconoclasts...In the restoration of the monks a thousand images were exposed to the public veneration; a thousand legends were invented of their sufferings and miracles," Gibbon informs us. ¹¹

Council of Nicene II, A. D. 787: Latins and Greeks Vote in Idolatry

To this Eastern council, also called the 7th Ecumenical Council, Pope Hadrian willingly sent legates as his official representatives, making the number of bishops and patriarchs swell to 350. "They unanimously pronounced that the worship of images is agreeable to Scripture and reason, to the Fathers and councils of the church....Of this second Nicene Council the acts are still extant: a curious monument of superstition and ignorance, of falsehood and folly." ¹² We offer the reader a few choice tidbits, a summary of its decrees written to Irene, by Patriarch and Council President, Tarasius:

"Certain men rose up, having the form of godliness, inasmuch as they were clothed with the dignity of the priesthood, but denying the power thereof; and thus deserving for themselves the charge of being but priests of Babylon. Of such the word of prophecy had before declared that 'lawlessness went forth from the priests of Babylon'....With a slanderous tongue and a pen of a like character...they devised marvelous tales, and then proceeded to stigmatize as idolaters the royal priesthood and the holy nation, even those who had put on Christ, and by his grace had been kept safe from the folly of idols. And having a mind set upon evil, they

¹¹ Op. cit., p. 207.

¹² Gibbon, loc. cit.

took in hand unlawful deeds, thinking to suppress altogether the depicting of the venerable images. Accordingly, as many icons as were set in mosaic work they dug out, and those which were in painted waxwork, they scraped away; thus turning the comely beauty of the sacred temples into complete disorder. Among doings of this sort, it is to be specially noted that the pictures set up on tablets in memory of Christ our God and of his Saints, they gave over to the flames. Finally, in a word, having desecrated our churches, they reduced them to utter confusion.....[Having now] altogether wiped out with the sponge of the divine dogmas the newly devised heresy, well worthy to be classed with those just mentioned, which springing up after them, uttered such empty nonsense about the sacred icons. And the contrivers of this vain, but revolutionary babbling we have cast forth far from the Church's precincts.....

".....[W]e have received the grace and strength of the Spirit, and having also the assistance and cooperation of your royal authority, have with one voice declared as piety and proclaimed as truth: that the sacred icons of our Lord Jesus Christ are to be had and retained, inasmuch as he was very man...and those which represent our undefiled Lady, the holy Mother of God; and likewise those of the Holy Angels (for they have manifested themselves in human form to those who were counted worthy of the vision of them), or any of the Saints....[We have likewise decreed] that these images are to be revered [*proskunein* = worshipped], that is, salutations are to be offered to them.....

".....And if anyone does not so believe, but undertakes to debate the matter further and is evil affected with regard to the veneration due the sacred images, such a one our holy ecumenical council

(fortified by the inward working of the Spirit of God,¹³ and by the traditions of the Fathers and of the Church) anathematizes. Now anathema is nothing less than complete separation from God."¹⁴

Emperor Charlemagne Refutes 2nd Nicene Council by publishing his *Four Caroline Books*, A. D. 790¹⁵

"[Charlemagne] calls it absurd and foolish to maintain, as had been done at the second Nicene council, that images visibly exhibited the walk and conversation of the saints, [i.e., their piety and godliness], when in fact their virtues and merits were sealed in the soul, and could not be represented in visible materials and colors. They could not be made objects perceived by the senses. *Can anything be known*, Charlemagne asks, *about their wisdom, their eloquence, their profound knowledge by the outward sense of sight?* Those who condoned the use of images reasoned that they were necessary to perpetuate the memory of holy deeds. Charlemagne censured the image worshippers for ascribing to images so much importance, for to do so was in direct contradiction to the spiritual nature of Christianity. Those who excused images as enhancements to memory were themselves admitting to poor memory and a weak mind, unable to raise the mind's eye to the spiritual above without the help of the material creation below. It is the height of madness to affirm that the Spirit of Christ needs a memento in order not to forget Him. Such a need for images reflects the faith of the unregenerate man, not the faith of the true Christian.

".....God, who fills all things, is not to be adored or sought after in material images, but should be ever present to the pure heart. [It is an] *unhappy*

¹³ Let the reader note: this is blasphemy against the Holy Spirit: attributing to the Holy Spirit an evil work in the name of holiness.

¹⁴ *Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers*, op. cit., pp. 571-73. [Special thanks to Rick Hutson for photocopy.]

¹⁵ Dr. Augustus Neander, *General History of the Christian Religion and Church*; Transl. Joeseeph Torrey, Volume 5, (London: Henry Bohn), 1851; pp. 324-335.

memory, says Charlemagne, which, in order to think of Christ, who should never be absent from the good man's heart, needs the presence of an image, and which can enjoy the presence of Christ only by seeing His image painted on a wall or on some visible manmade material.....Such people must fear the loss of their eyesight, or by some accident be deprived of their image, for then they would utterly forget that Savior whose memory ought to be present always in their minds. We Christians, who, with open face beholding the glory of God, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, are no longer bound to seek the truth in images and pictures; for we, who, through faith, hope and charity have attained, by His own help, to the truth which is in Christ.

“In answering the charge that Old Testament images were lawful, i.e., Cherubim and the tables of the Law, and thus images are lawful in the New Testament dispensation, Charlemagne responded, We, who follow not the letter which killeth, but the Spirit which maketh alive; who are not the fleshly, but the spiritual Israel; we, who look not at the things which are seen, but fix our minds upon those which are unseen; rejoice to have received from the Lord not only mysteries greater than images – which contain no mysteries at all – but even greater and more sublime than the cherubim and the tables of the law, for the latter were antitypes of things future, but we possess truly and spiritually what had been prefigured by these symbols.....

“With regard to the nice distinctions by which it was sought to justify or palliate the worship of images for what they represent and not the images themselves, Charlemagne says this might be true enough among the educated and learned, but it would serve no good purpose for the rude and uncultivated common people who revered and worshipped only what they saw. And if our Savior denounces so heavy a curse upon him who should offend one of these little ones, how much heavier must this curse fall on him who either forced a large portion of the Church into image worship, or threatened anathema against them who rejected it.

“In refutation of the appeal to miracles said to have been wrought by images, the Emperor remarks: *It was not clear from unimpeachable testimony that such miracles had actually been wrought, perhaps the whole was a mere fiction. Or if such things had actually happened, they might only be works of the evil spirit, who by his deceptive arts sought to beguile men into that which is forbidden. Even if we were bound to recognize in these cases wonderful works proceeding from God Himself, this would not suffice to set the propriety of image worship beyond question. For if God wrought miracles by means of visible things to soften the hearts of men, He did not intend to convert those visible things into objects of worship, as might be shown by many examples of miracles from the Old Testament.*

“Nor would the Emperor allow that any weight was to be given to the evidence of a vision of angels in a dream, to which one member of the Nicene Council had appealed. No doubtful matter could be settled by a dream; for it was impossible, by any evidence, for one man to prove to another that he had actually seen what he pretended. Therefore, dreams and visions ought to be carefully sifted. Dreams inspired by the divine Spirit did, indeed, occur in the sacred Scriptures. These, however, were individual, unique cases. Men’s dreams needed to be distinguished in respect to their origin. Regarding the question of whether they proceeded from divine revelation, or from the person’s own thoughts, or from temptations of the evil spirit, it is most likely they are deceptive. And concerning the vision of an angel, even though it actually occurred, it behooves us to follow the direction of St. Paul, and try the spirits, whether they were from God. And this fact was to be known from their fruits, according to the instruction of our Lord. Therefore, since image worship is an ungodly thing, it could not have been a good spirit from whom the exhortation to such worship proceeded.

“The Nicene Council is again censured for having allowed themselves to be guided and instructed by a woman, the Empress Irene. For having suffered a woman to take part in their meetings, though in direct contrariety to the nature

and purpose of the female sex, and to the law given by the Apostle Paul commanding that women should be silent in the church assemblies. The woman was to teach and admonish only in the family circle. To this alone the passage in Titus 3 referred.”¹⁶

The Lord Raises up the Paulicians in the East to Engage the Gates of Hell

One of the enemy's more ingenious ploys is to suppress critical knowledge of the past. This would include knowledge of our Protestant forefathers -- men and women who died protesting Satan's lies, holding to sola Scriptura and sola fide. In order to taint the witness of these Christians, Satan has planted seeds of doubt as to their orthodoxy. These same seeds of doubt, planted by our adversary centuries ago, are still taught and believed today. The truth can often times be difficult to assess, due to the fact that the enemy has taken great pains to destroy the original writings of those who oppose. Thus, we are often left with the difficult task of discerning fact from fiction, truth from lies, as stated in the only surviving biased records of the enemy.¹⁷ Let us compare two views to

¹⁶ Charlemagne's refutation of the Second Council of Nicea was delivered to Pope Hadrian, who responded against the books. Hadrian's points of contention were debated at an assembly of bishops held at Frankfort-on-the-Main in A. D. 794, in the presence of papal legates. The conclusion of this council was seen in its Second Canon, where the adoration of images was condemned.

¹⁷ "The fact that the Catholic Church system became the dominant one puts us in possession of a great body of its literature, while the literature of those who differed from it has been suppressed, and they are chiefly known to us by what may be gleaned from the writings directed against them.....The true histories of [dissenting Christians] have been obliterated as far as possible; their writings, sharing the fate of the writers, have been destroyed to the full extent of the power allowed to their persecutors. Not only so, but histories of them have been promulgated by those whose interest it was to disseminate the worst inventions against them in order to justify their own cruelties. In such accounts they are depicted as heretics, and evil doctrines are ascribed to them which they repudiated. They are called 'sects,' and labels are attached to them which they themselves would not acknowledge. They usually called themselves Christians, or 'Brethren,' but numerous names were given to them by others in order to create the impression that they represented many new, strange, and unconnected sects, opprobrious epithets being applied to them to bring them into disrepute. It is therefore difficult to trace their history; what their adversaries have written of them must be suspected; words from their own lips wrung out by torture are valueless. There is, however, in spite of these hindrances, a large body of trustworthy evidence, continually being added to by further investigation, which shows what they were or did, what they believed and taught; and these their own records afford a safe guide to their faith and

determine the orthodoxy of the Paulicians. First we will examine the view of the adversary, one which deems them heretics. Our first citation is that of Roman Catholic theologian, the Rev. John Dowling, who reproduces translations of 9th century histories written by opponents of the Paulicians: ¹⁸

"Petrus Siculus [i.e., Peter of Sicily] addresses his history to the archbishop of the Bulgarians....These Paulicians, he says, '*are the same as the [heretical] Manichæans, whose impurities they disclaim, but whose doctrines they carefully hold and defend.*'....He states the principal heads of the heresy of the Paulicians in six particulars:

- 1- They asserted that there are two principles of things, and that the Maker and Governor of this world is not the same as the Maker and Governor of the world to come.
- 2- They denied that honour is due to the Virgin, as Christ was not born of her, but brought his body down from heaven.
- 3- They rejected the Eucharist.
- 4- They dishonoured the cross.
- 5- They rejected the Old Testament, and called the prophets deceivers and robbers....
- 6- They refused to allow the ministry and priesthood of the [Catholic] church.

In contradistinction to this translation by a foe of the Paulicians, Dowling gives the Protestant translation of the same history, by the Rev. Blair:

- 1- That there is one supreme God, and another God who introduced sin.

practice." *The Pilgrim Church*, by E. H. Broadbent, (London: Pickering & Inglis, c. 1945), pp. 11 & 42.

¹⁸ *A Letter to the Rev. S. R. Maitland on the Opinions of the Paulicians*, (London, 1835).

- 2- That the Virgin Mary does not deserve divine adoration.
- 3- That there are three persons in One God, and that Jesus became incarnate. They believe the other Christian doctrines, but refuse [to believe] the conversion of the bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ [i.e., transubstantiation].....
- 4- That the sign of the cross is to be contemned, and is a ground for their separation.
- 5- That the Scriptures are to be read,¹⁹ and the Pope is not supreme. They did not deny, though they might possess the Old Testament.
- 6- That there is no ground for the different orders of clergy in the Roman Church, and that pastors are fellow-pilgrims.²⁰

To this account of the Paulicians, the *Encyclopedia Britannica* makes these observations:

They denied Jesus was made of the Mary's flesh, they smashed up crosses when they could, they repudiated Peter, calling him a denier of Christ, the garbs of monks originated from the mind of the devil, and that they, the Paulicians, were the universal church, not buildings of wood and stone.²¹

This present writer wishes to make a few comments on interpreting these alleged doctrines. First, if the Paulicians held to the sin nature of Mary, which the Bible teaches and the Roman Catholics and Greek Orthodox repudiate, it would seem that Christ could not have partaken of that aspect of her, thus making His

¹⁹ I.e., by the laity, which the 9th century Greeks forbade.

²⁰ *History of the Waldenses*, pp. 169-70.

²¹ 1959 edition, article, *Paulicians*.

flesh of a significantly different and higher order than hers. Second, because the Roman Pontiff falsely claims apostolic descent from Peter, the alleged 'first pope', it could be seen by Catholics that rejection of the Papacy constituted rejection of Peter. We know the Papal Antichrist denies Christ, so it would be correct to cite Peter's dark side as describing the inherited nature of Christ-denying popes. Third, it was not the garb of the monks which the Paulicians denounced, but the orders themselves, as originating from Satan, not from Scripture. Fourth, the original meaning of the Greek noun, 'church' is 'called out ones.' The Paulicians were simply stating their separation from the idolatrous apostates, claiming God's people did not constitute literal buildings or cathedrals, but rather faithful humans.

Rev. E. B. Elliott, renowned author of the unequalled 19th century commentary on the Revelation, gives a synopsis of Paulician history:

"It was about the middle of the seventh century that the Paulikian ²² sect had its rise. At that time, as I have already elsewhere shown, the most grievous corruptions were not only admitted into, but enforced in, both the doctrine and the worship of the Catholic Church, as it was called, in Greek Christendom. The images of saints suspended on the church walls, and the votive offerings beneath them, the glare of lamps and the fumes of incense, told everywhere to the eye, too clearly to be mistaken, of the almost universal departure from the simplicity and the spirit of the Gospel. Other mediators (the Virgin Mary more especially) had been substituted for the one and only true Mediator between God and men, the God-man Christ Jesus; and other protectors, like the old pagan tutelary deities, [were substituted] for His Almighty protectorship.....The very

²² Elliott prefers to use this term to distance it from the slang, *Publicans*, used by their opponents.

principle of salvation, simply by faith in the dying and ascended Saviour, was so obscured as to be almost lost." ²³

Elliott traces the origin of the Paulicians through one Constantine, in A. D. 654, not Paul of Samosata, the heretical Manichæan Bishop, as their enemies held. Rather, the Paulicians derived their name from the great teacher of election by grace, the Apostle Paul.

Constantine, founder of the Paulicians, Stoned to Death for Heresy, His Disciples Burned Alive By Eastern Orthodox 'Christians'

Citing the hostile testimony of historian, Peter of Sicily, Elliott details the martyrdom of Constantine and his Christian followers: "...an edict of persecution was issued against him and his Paulikian congregations by the Greek government...the penalty of death was declared against both teacher and disciples, such as might persist obstinately in heresy, but with the injunction of mercy to such as might recant...The result was that Constantine himself at least was theron stoned to death...The report of the revival of heresy reached the ears of a neighboring Bishop, after three years...and Simeon [the new Paulician leader], and a large number of his followers...were all thrown on [a vast funeral pile]; and burnt alive." ²⁴

Elliott then proceeds with their history down to the time of two great Paulician leaders, Gegnæsius and Joseph, whose ministries paralleled the rise of Iconoclasm, 'that grand movement against image-worship.' Elliott postulates this movement against images to have originated with the Paulicians themselves, citing the hostile history of Georgius Hamartolus: "...the Iconoclasts were the

²³ *Horæ Apocalypticæ*, (London: 1863), vol.2, p. 249 ff.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 254-55.

protectors of the abominable and demoniacal worship of the Manichæns, from whom in fact they derived their origin."²⁵ In other words, the Paulicians, who were accused of the Manichæen heresy, were the very Iconoclasts who originated the movement against image-worship in the Eastern empire.

Both Elliott and Milner View the Paulicians as One of the Two Witnesses of Rev.11:

They Take the Historicist View of Revelation

Let us resume our investigation into the history of the persecuted Paulicians by quoting Milner once more:

"The reigning powers, both in the east and the west, were overgrown with false worship:[and by] the submission of all the European Churches to the domination of the Roman See. There the seat of Antichrist was firmly fixed.....From the year 727, to about the year 2000, we have the dominion of the Beast;²⁶ and the prophesying of the witnesses in sackcloth, which was to continue 1260 days, or forty and two months, that is for 1260 years.²⁷ We must now look for the real Church, either, in distinct individual saints, who, in the midst of Popery, were preserved by effectual grace in vital union with the Son of God, or, in associations of true Christians, formed in different regions, which were in a state of persecution and much affliction. Where then was the Church in the eighth century? She still subsisted; and the opposition made to idolatry...demonstrates her existence.....

²⁵ Ibid. p. 256. Elliott cites Dowling, op. cit., p. 42.

²⁶ Milner cites Rev. 11 & 13 as his authority.

²⁷ Milner utilizes the Protestant Year-Day Principle: one year for each prophetic day.

"The enemies of the Paulicians give them the name from some unknown teacher; but there seems scarce a doubt, that they took the name from St. Paul himself. For Constantine gave himself the name of Sylvanus; his disciples were called Titus, Timothy, Tychicus, the names of the Apostle's fellow-labourers...Their enemies called them Gnostics or Manichees; and confounded them with those sectaries...We know nothing of these men but from the pens of their enemies. Their writings, and the lives of their eminent teachers are totally lost...This people also were perfectly free from the image-worship, which more and more pervaded the east. They were simply scriptural in the use of the sacraments: they disregarded relics...and they knew of no other Mediator but the Lord Jesus Christ....'*To their other excellent deeds,*' says the bigoted Peter, the Sicilian, '*the divine and orthodox emperors added this virtue, that they ordered the Montanists and Manichæns [i.e., Paulicians] to be capitally punished; and their books, wherever found, to be committed to the flames; also, that if any person was found to have secreted them, he was to be put to death, and his goods to be confiscated.*'²⁸For a hundred and fifty years these servants of Christ underwent the horrors of persecution, with Christian patience and meekness; and if the acts of their martyrdom, their preaching, and their lives were distinctly recorded, there seems no doubt, but this people would appear to have resembled those, whom the Church justly reveres as having suffered in the behalf of Christ during the three first centuries....The blood of the martyrs was, in this case, as formerly, the seed of the Church: a succession of teachers and congregations arose, and a person named Sergius, who laboured among them thirty-three years, is confessed by the bigoted historians to have been a man of extraordinary virtue. The persecution had, however, some intermissions,

²⁸ The Inquisition was already in place in the first millennium.

till at length Theodora,²⁹ the same empress who fully established image-worship, exerted herself beyond any of her predecessors against them. Her inquisitors ransacked the lesser Asia, in search of these sectaries; and she is computed to have killed by the gibbet, by fire, and by sword, a hundred thousand persons."³⁰

The Key of Truth Delineates Paulician Teachings

A late 19th century find by the Rev. Fred Conybeare, of Oxford, *The Key of Truth* purports to be an ancient manuscript of Paulician doctrines.³¹ Citing an excerpt from the record of an 1837 Inquisition of Armenian Paulicians, we find that these 'heretics' *rebaptized all whose foreheads the sacred oil of the wild beast is laid, and that on their faces they make no sign of the cross.*³² In his summary of the ancient tenets of the Paulicians, Conybeare gives the following principles:

- They called themselves the true Church, the Elect.
- They repudiated infant baptism.
- The Virgin Mary is no longer a virgin, nor does she intercede for us.
- Purgatory is a falsehood.

²⁹ Eastern Orthodox Empress, A. D. 842-55.

³⁰ Loc. cit., pp. 204-8.

³¹ Oxford: 1898. All subsequent writers on the Paulicians quote this source as authoritative.

³² Ibid., pp. xxiv-v. This 'heretical' doctrine follows, exactly, prophetic wisdom which warns against taking such a mark of the beast (Rev. 14:9).

- Images, pictures, holy crosses, incense, candles are all to be condemned as idolatrous, alien to the teaching of Christ.
- The Paulicians were not dualists [i.e., Manichæen].
- Denied confession to a priest.
- Their canon contained the entire New testament, nor did they reject the Old Testament.
- The false priests deceive the simple-minded with mere bread. The devil's favorite disguise is that of a monk.
- The Scriptures and a knowledge of divine truth are not to remain the exclusive possession of the Orthodox priests.

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