

Ancient and Medieval Dissenters

Sources

James McGoldrick, *Baptist Successionism: A Crucial Question in Baptist History* (1994)

Steven Runciman, *The Medieval Manichee* (1955)

Walter L. Wakefield and Austin P. Evans, ed., *Heresies of the High Middle Ages* (1991)

Euan Cameron, *Waldenses: Rejections of Holy Church in Medieval Europe* (2000)

I. Introduction

A. General Nature of Groups

1. Not Catholic or Orthodox
2. Wide variety in practice, worship, etc. → Generalizations difficult

B. Application

1. Used as evidence by successionists
2. A place to look for the remnant
3. Not to be accepted uncritically or rejected completely

II. Ritualistic Churches

A. Arian churches

1. Thrived among barbarians
2. No significant contribution
3. Eliminated by Trinitarian kingdoms & Muslim conquest

B. Monophysite churches

1. Nature
 - a. Central Doctrine: Christ has one mostly divine nature
 - b. Rejected the Chalcedonian Formula (“Non-Chalcedonian”)
 - c. Generally located in Middle East
2. Typical Examples
 - a. Coptic Church in Egypt
 - b. Armenian Apostolic Church
 - c. Ethiopian Orthodox Church
3. Later History
 - a. Most subsumed by Islam
 - b. Generally functioned as minority faiths
 - c. Still exist today

C. Nestorian Church

1. A.k.a. Assyrian Church, Church of the East
2. Centered in Persia
3. Pre-dated Nestorius → “Nestorianism” debated
4. A minority faith → Persecuted by Zoroastrians, Muslims
5. Flourished under Mongol rule
6. Mission to China
 - a. Missionary: Alopen (600s)
 - b. Memorial: Nestorian Stele (781)
 - c. Died out w/ T’ang Dynasty
7. Severely reduced at end of Middle Ages

D. Challenge: No different from Catholic/Orthodox

III. Rigorists

A. Nature

1. Groups calling for tighter church discipline
2. Emphasized need for purity

B. Examples

1. Montanists: A call for stricter discipline before Constantine
2. Donatists

C. Challenge: Too extreme in standards

IV. Dissent Within the Church

A. Celtic churches

1. Separate development but not consciously separatist
2. Founder: Patrick of Ireland
3. No hierarchy, simpler worship, dominance by monks
4. Synod of Whitby (664): Brought under Roman discipline

B. Claude of Turin

1. Worked in ninth-century Italy
 - a. Part of Carolingian Renaissance
 - b. Western iconoclast
 - c. Criticized papacy
2. Significance
 - a. Dissent w/in the church
 - b. RCC not yet monolithic

C. Challenge: Not consciously separate

V. Dualistic Groups

A. Nature

1. “Manichean” (Gnostic-like)
 - a. Matter is evil
 - b. Ascetic: No marriage, vegetarian
2. Appeal to higher standard of morality

B. Examples

1. Paulicians (7th cent., eastern Byzantine Empire)
2. Bogomils (12th cent., Balkans—western Byzantine Empire)
3. Albigensians (13th cent., western Europe—France)

C. Challenge: Extremely deviant doctrinally

VI. Waldensians

A. Founder: Waldo of Lyons

1. Rich merchant who embraced poverty
2. Formed Poor Men of Lyons
3. Rejected by papacy

B. Practices

1. Live the Sermon on the Mount
2. Translated Bible
3. Attacked corruption of the church & denied some teachings (e.g., purgatory)

C. Later History

1. Reformation: Joined w/ Reformed of Switzerland
2. Suffered great persecution

3. Remained in the Alps (esp. Italy)
 4. Exist today
- D. Challenge: Not really “Protestant” until the Reformation

Conclusion: Dissent an aspect of medieval history to be appreciated