



Bible Student's Notebook™

The Herald of His Grace

Presenting *every man* perfect in Christ Jesus. Colossians 1:28

Volume IX
Issue 217

The Story of the Paulicians

Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr., Editor

The Paulicians were believers who lived outside of the religious system. They were called “Paulicians” by their adversaries due to their emphasis upon Paul’s epistles. They were one of the greatest preserved testimonies of history, even though it was their enemies who preserved that history. Theirs was a testimony that spanned six centuries of human history.

I first began searching for the record of their testimony more than 25 years ago. I have only been able to find bits and pieces along the way. But it is an amazing patchwork of testimony.

Their enemies told many lies about them, and accused them of many things. When the dust settles from all of the historical rhetoric, we can see a composite picture of saints who followed Paul as their apostle, lived as the church (rather than “going to church”), rejected religious tradition and ordinances, and believed in the ultimate salvation of all.

What follows here is a collection of quotations that bring these saints into some historical light.
– CLP, Jr.

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All through the ages God has had His people, who cherished His truth and witnessed for Him. Known by different names at different times and in different places: scattered abroad singly, in small companies, or in communities, they kept

the faith.

One of the most noted examples of those who struggled against the advancing heathen darkness as it gradually overspread the Church is found in the people known as the “Paulicians.” ...

By whatever name we may be called or known, we are, in witnessing for the teaching of God in the Pauline Epistles, the true successors of the Ancient Paulicians: holding aloft the banner; holding forth the same Word; and holding fast the same truth.

E.W. Bullinger

The Paulicians: A Lesson From the Past Things to Come, October 1901

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There was not lacking a spiritual resistance to these evils ... There were believers who ... 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 seventh century as “Paulicians” in the region of Mesopotamia. Why they were named “Paulicians” is not exactly known, but it may simply have been because of their

(see **PAULICIANS**, page 2075)

The Story of the Paulicians2073
The Structure of the Books of the Old Testament According to the Hebrew Canon2080

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This weekly publication (52 times a year) is dedicated to:

- the proclamation of the riches of God's abundant, exceeding grace (Romans 5:20; 11:6; Ephesians 1:7)
- the affirmation of God's purpose to save all mankind through the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ (I Timothy 2:3, 4; 4:10; Titus 2:11)
- the "preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began" (Romans 16:25)
- true freedom and liberty apart from law (Galatians 5:1)
- the organic nature of the church, the Body of Christ (I Corinthians 12)
- the distinct message and ministry of Paul, the apostle to the nations (Romans 11:13)
- the importance of receiving all whom Christ has received (Romans 14-15)
- the recovery of rich Biblical truth that has too long remained hidden under the veils of traditionalism, prejudice, misunderstanding, and fear (Mark 7:7, 13).
- the completeness of the believer in Christ (Colossians 2:10), with
 - ... total forgiveness of sins (Colossians 1:14)
 - identity in His death, burial, and resurrection (Romans 6)
 - adult sonship position (Galatians 4)

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PAULICIANS (continued from page 2073)

respect for the apostle Paul and his writings. The Catholic Church ascribed to them all sorts of erroneous doctrines, if we can believe those whose lives denied the truths they professed ...

Most of what has reached us has come down from their [the Paulicians] critics.

Kenneth Latourette
A History of Christianity, p. 318
1975

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Whatever opinions may be held about the Paulicians, it is generally conceded that they had a particular respect for the authority of the Bible ... for the apostle Paul and his writings ... were a 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 ...

In assessing the character of the Paulicians ... 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 ... those who opposed it, but also to bring the very memory of their names into ignominy by the most gross accusations, and to obliterate what they themselves wrote or anything written about them in their favor. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that much more literature survives which condemns than commends them.

The great struggle of later centuries to produce the Scriptures in the languages of the ordinary people illustrates most aptly the methods which Rome employed to maintain her authority over the souls of men. Copies of the Scripture were hunted out and consigned to the flames, and along with them those who were responsible for their publication and dissemination, if they

refused to recant from the "sin" of having sought to spread the Word of God. These same methods were generously employed in the days of the Paulicians.

The Paulicians accepted no central authority ... [they] 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 ... a manner similar to Paul ... They did not draw up any code of doctrine to which they had commonly to subscribe as a basis of unity ... 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 professed respect for the Word of God, which they accepted as their guide.

John W. Kennedy
Torch of the Testimony, pp. 109-110
1983

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[To the Paulicians] baptism means only the baptism of the Spirit; the communion with the body and blood of Christ is only a communion with His Word and doctrine.

Philip Schaff
History of the Christian Church, Vol. 4, p. 577
1910

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The Paulicians equally denied the name of "church" to buildings of wood or stone.

Encyclopedia Britannica
Paulicians
1959

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The [Paulicians] had no order of clergymen ... nor had they councils, or any other institutions ... Their teachers ... were all equals in rank; and were distinguished ... by no rights, or ►

prerogatives, or insignia ...

John L. Von Mosheim
Institutes of Ecclesiastical History, Ancient and Modern, Vol. 2, p. 103
1869

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Paulicians, named probably from a high regard for the Apostle Paul ... opposed the formalism of the Greek Church and the prelatic [cleric] system: rejected images, crosses, relics, fasts, monasticism, priesthood, outward observance of the two sacraments and saint worship; ... [they] were severely persecuted; many scattered through all Southern Europe, and received various new names.

W.M. Blackburn
History of the Christian Church, p. 332
1879

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E.B. Elliott ... author of the ... 19th century commentary on the Revelation [*Horæ Apocalypticæ*, (London: 1863)], gives a synopsis of Paulician history ... Elliott traces the origin of the Paulicians through one Constantine [not to be confused with the Roman Emperor, Constantine the Great], 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.

Randy Winburn
History of the Paulician Iconoclasts,¹ p. 18

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[The Paulicians] rejected all outward means of grace, such as baptism and the Lord's Supper,

1. Iconoclasts – "Somebody who challenges or overturns traditional beliefs, customs, and values" (Encarta Dictionary).

and especially the later developments of sacramentarianism.

John Moncrief
A Short History of the Christian Church, p. 183
1908

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They came to be called Paulicians because of the emphasis they laid on the Pauline Epistles instead of the "Hebrew Christian" Epistles. After 325 A.D., they viewed the Roman Catholic church and the Greek Orthodox church as Satanic, and they refused to tolerate images of any kind ... However, the most significant thing about them was their wholesale rejection of the educated scholars ... The Paulicians rejected the Catholic priesthood, the Catholic sacraments, the worship of relics and crosses, and they thought the "one baptism" of Ephesians four was the Holy Spirit putting the believer into Christ: they were the Stamites and Bullingerites of their day ... Under severe persecution they moved into Bulgaria and the Balkan mountains and from thence to north Italy and Yugoslavia to produce Christians called Waldenses and Albigenses ...

The Paulicians in Italy were called Paterini or Cathari; in France they were called Bulgarians, Publicans and Albigenses.

Peter S. Ruckman
The History of the New Testament Church, Vol. I, pp. 61, 234-235
1984

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The doctrines, character, and history of the Paulicians have been subjects of great controversy; but they have not been allowed to speak for themselves to posterity. Their writings were carefully destroyed by the Catholics, and they are known to us only through the reports

of bitter enemies who brand them as heretics ...

It is generally agreed that the word Paulician is formed from the name of the great apostle of the Gentiles ...

They had preached against images, relics, and the rotten wood of the cross. They were not fit to live. The Catholics gained their object! An edict was issued under the regency of Theodora [A.D. 842], which decreed that the Paulicians should be exterminated by fire and sword ... Her inquisitors explored the cities and mountains of the lesser Asia, and executed their commission in the most cruel manner ... It is affirmed by both civil and ecclesiastical historians, that, in a short reign, one hundred thousand Paulicians were put to death.

Andrew Miller
Short Papers on Church History, pp. 253-256
1874

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[The Paulicians were] greatly interested by the Pauline Epistles and resolved ... to secure a restoration of Christianity to its primitive Pauline form ...

A.H. Newman
A Manual of Church History, pp. 379, 384
1899

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Constantine's Edict Against the Paulicians:

“Understand now, by this present statute, you Novatians, Valentinians, Marcionites, Paulicians, and Montanists, and all the rest of you who devise and support heresies by means of your private assemblies ... that your offenses are so hateful and altogether atrocious that a single day would be insufficient to tolerate your deadly errors, we hereby give you

warning that none of you are to meet together hereafter. We have therefore ordered that your meeting places be taken from you. And you are expressly forbidden to hold your superstitions and senseless meetings, not only in public, but also in private homes, or any other place.”

Eusebius' *Constantine*, bk. 3 chapters 64, 65
cited by David Bercot, *Will the Real Heretics Please Stand Up*, p. 137
1989

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Not less than one hundred thousand of them [Paulicians] were put to death in Grecian Armenia ... Of the tenets of this sect we have no knowledge except from their enemies ...

George Fisher
History of the Christian Church, p. 162
1887

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Paul had spent his strength in planting and watching over the churches in Asia Minor. His toil was neither fruitless nor forgotten. Paul-like men, who were hailed as such by their contemporaries, and named *Paulikoi*, were stirred amid the growing need to imitate the Apostle to the Gentiles in his zeal and self-sacrifice for threatened truth and endangered souls. They wrote out and multiplied copies of the Scriptures, especially of the Pauline Epistles. They spoke to loiterers in the market place, to travelers by the way, to all men wherever and whenever they had the opportunity. The people listened, were converted, and swept back the invading darkness ...

The movement swept over the cities and over the provinces, and alarmed the ecclesiastics and the statesmen even of distant Constantinople. It speedily received a name. The followers of these *Paulikoi* were called *Paulikianoi*, and ►

the Paulicians have taken their place in history, written by their ecclesiastical enemies and traducers [slanderers]. Armies were sent against them; and where the arguments of a heathenised Christianity were powerless to convince, the sword tried to terrify.

But the fleshly arm could not stay the truth. The harassed believers were refreshed by tokens that God was with them. One general, for instance, who knew nothing of the people or their beliefs till he was charged by the Emperors with their suppression, found, when he returned to Constantinople, that he had no rest till he laid down his appointment, forsook everything, and joined the people whom he had been sent to persecute ...

They were banished from Asia Minor, and leaving their fatherland forever, passed over into Europe. They traveled along valleys and rivers of their new world, and settled in quietness here and there, taking with them, as their choicest treasure, the Word of God and the simplicity of worship for which their fathers died. The historian meets them again in communities and peoples that lived apart, and which Rome stamps out one by one. But the truth they preserved lived on, and burst forth at last in the splendor of the Reformation.

John Urquhart
The Inspiration and Accuracy of the Holy Scriptures, Book II, Chapter 1, pp. 101-103
1895

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Possibly a primitive form of Christianity cut off from later developments by geographic location, they are first heard of early in the second half of the seventh century on the eastern borders of the Empire, south of Armenia. They called themselves simply Christians and the designation Paulicians was given them by their enemies ...

The Paulicians rejected the honors paid by Catholics to the Virgin Mary, the invocation of

saints, icons, incense, candles, and all material symbols ...

Most of that which has reached us [concerning them] has come down from their critics.

K.S. Latourette
A History of Christianity, pp. 299, 318
1953

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They [the Paulicians] abhorred the use of images, of relics, pompous ceremonies, and ecclesiastical domination; and they dispensed with even the rites of water baptism and the Lord's supper. Their preachers were distinguished by no title from their brethren; and no superiority was allowed ...

Their [the Paulicians] total disrespect of images and relics, their contempt of all those artifices by which the craft got their living, kindled against them the most implacable hatred; and the orthodox emperors of the East resolved on their complete extermination. ...

They [the Paulicians] sustained a bloody persecution, with a patience and inoffensive meekness that converted some even of their executioners. But all human endurance may at length be overcome; and when that sanguinary zealot, the empress Theodora, succeeded to the regency of the East, during her son's minority, she drove them beyond the bounds of forbearance. In those parts of Asia Minor where they abounded, and in Armenia, she confiscated their goods, and put to death by the sword, the gibbet and the flames, more than a hundred thousand of their number, making them expire slowly by a variety of the most excruciating torments...

Towards the close of the century, the power of the Paulicians was effectually broken, and they were obliged to seek security in the fastnesses of the Armenian mountains.

But they had already obtained a permanent footing in Europe ... under the name of Albanenses, Albigenses, Cathari, and, perhaps, Waldenses. This mongrel race, it is well known, spread through Italy, France and Germany; and for a long period suffered from the Church all the cruelty that cunning could devise and power inflict.

[The Paulicians] disclaim[ed] all tyranny over the consciences of men ...

[The Paulicians] rejected the Jewish [books], as they called the Old Testament; but the New Testament, which in the orthodox church had almost disappeared from the laity, they received as the inestimable and only volume of sacred Scripture, and enjoined its diligent perusal on all the people. It is probable; however, that they “disowned” the two Epistles of St. Peter, and the Revelation of St. John; and it is certain that their favorite books were the writings of St. Paul: from whom they, perhaps, took their name of Paulicians.

Hosea Ballou
The Ancient History of Universalism, pp. 306-313
1829

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It is probable that many of them held, in some form, the doctrine of the salvation of all souls; for of this they are accused by the Catholic writers, who also assert that they denied a future judgment and future punishment.

Hosea Ballou
The Ancient History of Universalism, p. 313
1829

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In France they [the Paulicians] were called Weavers, Poor of Lyons, Waldenses, and Albigenses; in Flanders, Piphles; and in Germany, Cathari. They were at Bonn, and in the diocese of Cologne; they abounded near the Alps and

Pyrenees; they were greatly diffused through Provence and in Tholouse; they existed in Spain; and they spread through Lombardy to Padua and Florence, and some had even entered Naples.

Sharon Turner
The History of England, Vol. II, pp. 381-382
1815

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One group which struggled against the gathering heathen darkness that was gathering was called the Paulicians by their contemporaries. They were very zealous and they copied Paul's writings and distributed them ...

Oscar Baker
Truth for Today, Volume 9, Number 6
1957

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WHATEVER HAPPENED TO THE PAULICIANS?

The Paulicians covered many countries of Europe and Asia Minor. They endured severe persecution with remarkable growth. We can trace many other groups of believers directly to their faithfulness. Yet whatever became of them? Where did they go? What happened to them?

After some 600 years, according to E.W. Bullinger, they lost their perspective as to their purpose and function on earth. He tells us that “the Paulicians were unconquerable 'til, goaded by ages of injustice, they betook themselves to the sword. From that day their strength decayed until they were finally overpowered.”

E.W. Bullinger
The Paulicians A Lesson From the Past
Things To Come
October, 1901

The Structure of the Books of the Old Testament According to the Hebrew Canon

Companion Bible, Appendix 1

E.W. Bullinger

I. THE LAW (*Tōrāh*)

- A. | GENESIS. The beginning. All produced by the Word of God (Gen 1:3). Israel as a “family” (Gen 15:1)
- B. | EXODUS. History. Israel emerging from Families and Tribes to a Nation. Called “Hebrews” according to their “tongue.”
- C. | LEVITICUS. Worship. Jehovah in the midst. He, Israel’s God; and they, His People.
- B. | NUMBERS. History. Israel, now a “Nation,” numbered, and blessed as such (23, 24).
- A. | DEUTERONOMY. The end. All depending on the Word of Jehovah. Israel regarded as in the “Land.”

II. THE PROPHETS (*Nēbī’īm*)

The Former Prophets: (Zechariah 7:7)

- A. | JOSHUA. “The Lord of all the earth” giving possession of the Land. Government under Priests.
- B. | JUDGES. Israel forsaking and returning to God; losing and regaining their position in the Land. “No king.” Bethlehem. Failure under Priests.
- C. | SAMUEL. Man’s king “rejected”; God’s king (David) “established.”
- D. | KINGS. Decline and Fall under the kings.

The Latter Prophets:

- D. | ISAIAH. Final blessing under God’s King.
- C. | JEREMIAH. Human kings “rejected.” David’s “righteous Branch” “raised up.”
- B. | EZEKIEL. God forsaking Israel, and returning in glory, to say for ever of His Land and city “Jehovah-Shammah.”
- A. | MINOR PROPHETS. “The Lord of all the earth” giving restored possession of the Land, and foretelling final and unending possession.

III. THE PSALMS (*Kēthūbīm, Writings*).

- A. | PSALMS. *Tēhilim*. “Praises.” God’s purposes and counsels as to His doings in the future.
- B. | PROVERBS, i.e. Rules: Words which govern or rule man’s life. God’s moral government set forth.
- C. | JOB. “The end of the Lord” shown in Satan’s defeat, and the saints deliverance from tribulation.
- D. | CANTICLES. Virtue rewarded. Read by the Jews at the Passover: the Feast which commemorates the deliverance from Pharaoh, the Jews’ oppressor.
- E. | RUTH. The stranger gathered in to hear of, and share in, God’s goodness in Redemption. Read at Pentecost, which commemorates God’s goodness in the Land.
- F. | LAMENTATIONS. “Alas!” The record of Israel’s woes. Read at the Fast of the ninth of Abib.
- E. | ECCLESIASTES. “The Preacher.” The People collected to hear of man’s vanity. Read at the Feast of Tabernacles, which commemorates God’s goodness in the wilderness.
- D. | ESTHER. Virtue rewarded. Read at the Feast of Purim, which commemorates the deliverance from Haman, “the Jews’ enemy.”
- C. | DANIEL. “God’s judgment.” Here are shown the final defeat of Antichrist, and the deliverance out of “the Great Tribulation.”
- B. | EZRA-NEHEMIAH. Men who governed and ruled God’s People in their resettlement in the Land.
- A. | CHRONICLES. *Dibrae hayyamim*. “Words of the Days”; or, God’s purposes and counsels as to Israel’s doings in the past, and until the time of the end.

The five Mēgillōth

