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Waldensians: Latter Works of Thyatira Era

When Jesus Christ described this era of his church to Apostle John in Revelation, he said, “I know your works, love, service, faith, and your patience; and as for your works, the last are more than the first” (Rev. 2:19 *NKJ*).

The Church of God had received new life under Peter de Bruys and Henry. The Gospel had been preached throughout northern Italy, Spain, France, Germany and England. But now a greater work was about to begin!

1160 The Calling of Peter Waldo

About 1160, the doctrine of transubstantiation was required by the court of Rome to be acknowledged by all people. This led to idolatry for Catholics worshipped the bread and wine as if it were God. “The impiety of this abomination shocked the minds of all men who were not dead to a sense of true religion” (Townsend’s *Abridgement* as quoted by Dugger and Dodd, p. 137).

One man shocked by this action was a wealthy, successful merchant in Lyons, France, named Peter Waldo. Barely in his 20s, Waldo was called by God to preach the truth as it became revealed to him a little at

a time.

“The mind of Peter Waldo was aroused to oppose the abomination, and to strive for reformation. A fear of God, in union with an alarming sense of the wickedness of the times, led him to conduct with courage in opposing the dangerous corruptions of the [Catholic] hierarchy” (Dugger and Dodd, p. 137).

About the time Waldo was 33, a religious experience changed his life. In 1173, a close friend and prominent man died unexpectedly. Waldo was shocked into seriously considering the meaning of life. He wondered what would happen to him if he died.

He asked a theologian, “What is the perfect way?” The reply, quoted from Scripture, was, “If thou wilt be perfect, go, sell all that thou hast and take to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and take up thy cross and follow me” (Fletcher, p. 160).

“A secular man like Waldo needed instruction. But where could it be found, at a time of such general ignorance and declension? He knew that the Scriptures were given by infallible guides, and thirsted for those sources of instruction, which, at that time, were in great measure a sealed book in

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the Christian world. To men who understood the Latin tongue, they were accessible. But how few were those compared to the bulk of mankind! The Latin Vulgate Bible was the only edition of the sacred book at that time in Europe: and the languages then in common use, the French and others, however, mixed with Latin, were, properly speaking, by this time separate and distinct from it. It appears that the Christian world under providence, was indebted to Waldo, for the first translation of the Bible into a modern tongue..." (Townsend, as quoted by Dugger and Dodd, p. 138).

Waldo made a contract with two priests, agreeing to pay them well if they would translate several of the Bible books into the common language of the people.

"The more he read the Gospels, the more keenly Waldus [Waldo] felt his spiritual crisis. His sore spot was his dealings in money, and the harsh words of Jesus concerning God and Mammon touched him to the quick.... The longer he read the Bible, the more he felt that Christianity and luxury were irreconcilably opposed. At first he tried to appease his conscience by generous works of charity; during a bad famine he distributed free food to the needy three times every week. But such measures did not assuage the disquiet in his soul. Charity alone, he recognized, was not sufficient for the true early-Christian life; far more than that was demanded of a man" (Nigg, pp. 193-194).

Waldo abandoned his mercantile occupation and distributed his wealth to the poor, who flocked to him to share his alms, received the best instruction he was capable of communicating... while the great and the rich both hated and despised him" (Dugger and Dodd, pp. 137-138).

Walter Nigg, who calls Waldo "Petrus Waldus," describes this moment in Waldo's life:

"He transferred all his land to his wife and set aside suitable dowries for his two unmarried daughters. This done, he followed the example of the publican Zachaeus who directed that his fortune be given back to those from whom he had acquired his wealth.

He went out into the streets and threw all his gold down into the dust of the road, announcing: 'Friends, fellow townsmen, I am not out of my mind, as you may think. Rather I am avenging myself upon these enemies of my life who have enslaved me, so that I cared more for gold pieces than for God and served the creature more than the Creator.' Man, Waldus proclaimed in the words of Jesus, could not serve two masters" (Nigg, p. 194).

This act, of course, created quite a stir in the streets of Lyons!

Waldo "next felt called upon to emulate the apostolic life as it is described in the Gospels. The pattern set by the Apostles had wholly vanished from Christianity, Waldus lamented; God, he felt, had called upon him to restore it. With feverish excitement he read the instructions Jesus had given the disciples as they set forth upon their mission. As if scales had fallen from his eyes, he recognized the binding character of this portion of the Gospel. Waldus took the words literally" (Nigg, p. 195).

"As Waldo grew more acquainted with the Scriptures, he saw that the general practice of nominal Christians was totally abhorrent from the doctrines of the New Testament: and in particular, that a number of customs, which all the world regarded with reverence, had not only no foundation in divine oracles, but were even condemned by them. Inflamed with equal zeal and charity, he boldly condemned the reigning vices, and the arrogance of the pope. He did more: as he advanced in the knowledge of the true faith and love of Christ, he taught his neighbors the principles of practical godliness, and encouraged them to seek salvation by Jesus Christ" (Townsend, as quoted by Dugger and Dodd, pp. 137-139).

Waldo's Family Deserts Him

Waldo's Catholic wife and two daughters thought he had gone crazy. Why had this wealthy, successful merchant suddenly given up everything, given away everything, and taken up some "nutty" religion? They sepa-

rated from him. Waldo's wife received the deed to his house and one daughter joined a convent.

Waldo put God before family, and apparently after a time, he and his wife re-joined and she helped support him with the money he had given her (*Correspondence Course*, Lesson 51, p. 6; *Encyc. Brit.*, "Waldo, Peter," p. 275).

Church Grows

Preaching was "more or less a forgotten thing" in Waldo's time, since much of the Catholic clergy was debased. But preaching was an important part of the apostles' lives—those lives which Waldo sought to emulate. So he went into the streets and began preaching.

"His preaching was free of rhetorical flourishes. In Biblical phrases he condemned his own sins and those of others. And because of his directness and sincerity, what he said had a startling effect. The poorer classes of the population in particular, who were not caught in the same toils as the wealthy, responded with enthusiasm. The things that Waldo quoted from the Scriptures were largely unknown at the time and their effect was striking" (Nigg, p. 195).

In a parallel occurrence, seven and a half centuries later, God would again call a wealthy business man to do his great work. After taking away his riches, God would inspire that man to use Scripture in a powerful way—shocking his radio audience with the good news of the world tomorrow and the need to recognize sin and to repent. But more on that later.

Waldo's headquarters were in Lyons, in southern France. But his preachings were not limited to that city. We have a record dating back to 1228 that indicates the Church of God grew in France in the year 1174:

"Ralph of Coggeshall, in his chronicle, writes that in the year 1174 the pernicious heresy of the Publicani [Paulicians] arose in France. It was thus agreed on by all hands that the centre of the diffusion of the heresy was in France and in Gascony. That the

heresy mentioned by these writers was akin to Paulicianism is certain" (Conybeare, p. cxl).

"Waldo brought the same practical common sense that made him a successful businessman to the organization and Work of the Church. He had the education and experience which so few in God's Church had (1 Cor. 1:26). Jesus Christ probably guided that experience, unknown to Waldo, long before his conversion.

"As he preached, others united themselves and their efforts to his. They became, as it is said, 'as many co-workers for him.' They dedicated their lives and their property to the spread of Christ's Gospel.

"This little group became known as the 'Poor Men of Lyons.' But that was not the name of the Church. They called themselves the Church of God, or simply Christians" (*Correspondence Course*, Lesson 51, p. 6).

These evangelists traveled in pairs and preached informally, reciting from memory passages of scripture in the common language. In 1176, Archbishop Guichard of Lyons forbade their preaching. But Waldo continued it, saying he would obey God rather than man (*Encyc. Brit.*, "Waldo," p. 275; *Correspondence Course*, Lesson 51, p. 7).

"On this, the bishop endeavored to apprehend him. But the great affection of Waldo's friends, the influence of his relations, who were men of rank, the universal regard paid to his probity and piety, and the conviction which, no doubt many felt, that the extraordinary circumstances justified his assumption of the pastoral character; all things operated so strongly in his favor, that he lived concealed at Lyons three years" (Townsend, as quoted by Dugger and Dodd, p. 139).

When the preaching of Waldo and his evangelists continued, they were cited to appear before Pope Alexander III. "Now it was no longer just a question of preaching at Lyons. The issue at stake was whether God's Work anywhere could continue. For archbishops and popes exercised civil power in that age.

"Striving to be wise as serpents yet harm-

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less as doves, Waldo himself went boldly to Rome in late 1178. He put forward the Bible translated into Provençal—which could be understood all over southern France and adjoining parts of Italy and Spain—and urged the common people’s need for it. Doctrine was kept in the background.

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“The pope appeared willing at first to accede to Waldo’s demands, but left the decision to the Lateran Council in 1179. Two of Waldo’s associates appeared before the council. They were virtually condemned. ‘You can preach,’ they were told, ‘but only if the local priest asks you to!’ The reason given? *‘The Roman Church cannot endure your preaching!’*”

“Their reply, paraphrased, was: ‘Christ sent us. If you were *His Church*, you would not hinder us.’ And they continued to preach wherever they went. It took the archbishop five and a half years, and new pope, and a new bull anathematizing Waldo and all his followers, to finally drive them from Lyons” (*Correspondence Course*, Lesson 51, p. 7).

Nigg describes the confrontation thus: “A commission was appointed to examine the matter [of the Waldenses]. It was headed by Walter Map, the author of the *Quest of the Holy Grail* and the friend of Henry II of England and Thomas à Becket. Map, a learned, proud man, and considered one of the greatest English writers (although he wrote in French and Latin), despised the simple followers of the Waldus as blockheads. He made a travesty of the discussions, entangling the Waldensians in the snare of scholastic theology and exposing their ignorance of [Catholic] dogma, until the pilgrims from the Rhone Valley fled from the session, humiliated and downcast.

“The fact was that these lay preachers were an affront to Map’s pride in being one of the priesthood. He disdainfully compared them to birds who would flutter about everywhere, defiling the most sacred things. As he saw it, to proclaim the word of God should be a monopoly of the priests. ‘Shall the Church give pearls to the swine, leave the Word to idiots whom we know to be incapable of receiving it?... Water ought to be drawn

from the well and not from puddles in the street.’ Map seemed to regard the whole affair only in terms of rivalry. ‘They now begin with extraordinary humility because they have not yet found a firm footing,’ he warned. ‘But if we let them in, they will throw us out.’”

In the pope’s eyes, the Waldenses “were fools, but not heretics. He therefore commended their profession of poverty, but bade them cease their missionary activities until they were asked to preach” (Nigg, pp. 197-198).

Not only was the Church of God known as the Waldenses condemned at the Lateran Council of 1179, but other groups as well. “...1179, the Publicani were condemned by name in the third Council of the Lateran, Can. 27. In this they were identified with the Cathari and the Patrini” (Conybeare, p. cxi).

Another group prevented from preaching by the Lateran Council of 1179 was an ascetic sect of the Catholic Church called the “Humiliated.” Based in Lombardy, Italy, they had been a widespread movement among Catholics since about A.D. 1000.

Disappointed by the decision, they defied the Roman Church and asked Peter Waldo to become their leader. So Waldo traveled 200 miles across the Alps to teach them. Thus, a second branch of the Waldenses became established in Italy (*Correspondence Course*, Lesson 51, p. 7).

Evangelizing Northern Europe

The Waldenses also spread north—into Picardy in northern France and to Flanders in the Netherlands—their translation of the Bible always with them. “As early as 1182, their doctrine had gained many adherents in Holland. Prominent among these were *weavers*. Picards, as the Waldenses were called, ultimately spread as far as eastern Germany, Poland and especially Bohemia” (*Correspondence Course*, Lesson 51, p. 6).

A College is Founded

“The Work now grew rapidly. Soon a college

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was founded to train qualified laborers. Three small stone buildings in the Angrogna Valley of the Cottian Alps provided classrooms. The College and the town of La Torre, located where the Angrogna valley meets the Lucerna (*the valley of Light*), became the new headquarters of the Work and the growing Church of God.

“At the College, articles and small booklets were written and multiple copies were produced. There were no printing presses in those days. All had to be laboriously copied by hand, keeping many busy in the headquarters area. Literature was given *free* to those who were interested (Mt. 10:8). Tithes and offerings from many countries paid the cost, and the cost of operating the College.

“As the Work expanded into foreign countries, the Bible was translated into different languages. These people took the Bible *literally*. One unusual version, in Low German, was all in rhyme to make memorization easier....

“Why do we today call a written or printed word a *text*? Because so many *weavers* (*textors*) spread their written material throughout Europe in this period.

“Mature men of about age 25 were chosen for students. They attended classes during the winter months for three or four years before going full-time into the Work. After further testing when necessary, if their fruits showed Jesus Christ had called them into the ministry, they were ordained by the laying on of hands.

“Biblical offices in Christ’s ministry were restored. The fruits show us that Waldo occupied the office of *apostle*. Though he refused to call himself anything greater than *chief elder*, Catholics used against him the actual title. Many additional *elders* as well as *deacons* were ordained. Some—called by Catholics ‘bishops,’ but by themselves simply *elders*—directed the work of others. Some served as *pastors* of churches. Some, as *evangelists*, carried the true gospel into foreign countries.

“Waldensian ministers later came to be called ‘barbes’ (uncles) to conceal their identity. In those dangerous later times, most

were continually on the go, on evangelistic journeys, in visiting scattered brethren. Even those given stationary assignments in old age rotated every two or three years.

“It was because they would not expose wives and children to these hard perpetual journeys that few married. But they deplored and condemned the celibacy rule imposed on Roman priests (See 1 Cor. 7:25-26; 1 Tim. 4:1, 3).

“They always traveled in pairs—a younger with an older (Mark 6:7; Luke 10:1; Acts 15:39-40). Thus the younger man received an opportunity to profit by the older man’s experience.

“Because of scarcity of Bibles and imminent danger to both Bible and person carrying one, every potential minister had to memorize a large amount of Scripture, besides being able to explain it. Most learned to speak at least three languages.

“Each also learned a trade, to be able if necessary to earn his own living. Consider the apostle Paul’s example (Acts 18:3; 1 Cor. 4:12; 2 Cor. 11:7). Many were specially trained in matters of physical health (see Col. 4:14), for the world’s ways, then as now, were diametrically opposite to God’s ways, including dietary laws He set in motion...” (*Correspondence Course*, Lesson 51, pp. 7, 9-10).

Waldensian Way of Life

“The early Waldenses practiced overcoming and education in every walk of life.

“They were obedient, clean, honest. Even their enemies acknowledged they could find no fault with their lives. They would not lie or swear (Mat. 5:34), nor do anything to others they would not have done to themselves (Mat. 7:12). They dressed and acted modestly (1 Tim. 2:9, 1 Pet. 3:3). They were chaste, temperate in all things, in control of their emotions, diligent, continually keeping busy, founding their whole teaching on the Bible. Their enemies marvelled” (*Correspondence Course*, Lesson 51, p. 10).

Waldo desired nothing but to live by the Bible. Writes Nigg, “He was cast out of the

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[Catholic] Church for being true to primitive Christianity” (p. 200).

His followers also lived by the Bible. “[T]he Waldensians felt that the Bible set a standard by which they could act. The blinding light of Jesus had dawned upon them anew.

“In their rapture over the treasure they had discovered, the Waldensians often learned whole Gospels by heart, and there were many among them who could recite the entire New Testament word for word. The Old Testament took a secondary place in their thinking, although they by no means rejected it...

“The Waldensians demanded a strict adherence to the behests of the Sermon on the Mount. Swearing was strictly forbidden. They also insisted on an unconditional clinging to the truth. Lies were abhorred. ...they forbade killing.... So strict was the Waldensian manner of life that even their opponents could find nothing to say against it. Here were people who worked hard, kept away from taverns, and withdrew from all public activities. In their fidelity to the Law of Christ, the Waldensians exemplified that folly which puts to shame the wisdom of the world” (pp. 200, 202).

The Waldenses had a complete educational system. Their men, women and children all made it their business to learn a little more each day, according to the individual’s ability.

They “declared themselves to be resolved, with the Lord’s help, to embrace, so far as their minds were capable of bearing it, the truth of Christ and of his bride, small as their knowledge of it might be. If to any more man knowledge of the truth was given, then, they more humbly desired to be taught by him, and to be corrected of their mistakes” (Neander’s *Church History*, Vol. 8, as quoted in *Correspondence Course*, Lesson 51, p. 10).

Co-educational elementary and high schools were later established. Small children learned to memorize and recite whole chapters of the Bible. These schools were first established in Lombardy, but quickly spread.

Waldo Continues Preaching

Waldo and his followers had been forbidden to preach by the Lateran Council of 1179. But Waldo once again decided, “We must obey God rather than men” (Nigg, p. 198).

Waldo fled from Lyons and preached in territories to the north. Many of his disciples went along, and the Gospel was thereby spread throughout Europe (Dugger and Dodd, pp. 139-140).

Waldo also apparently sent Arnold Hot to pastor the Church of God at Albi, where Henry had preached. From this Arnold the church became nicknamed Arnoldists, as recorded in accounts from 1184 and 1224.

Two other ministers, Joseph and Esperon, were sent into the regions of Dauphiny and Provence, where Peter de Bruys had preached 75 years earlier. Followers of these ministers were called Josephists and Esperonists by the world (*Correspondence Course*, Lesson 51, p. 11).

Pope Lucius III Persecutes Church

In 1184, Pope Lucius III anathematized congregations of the Church of God that were known by various names, opening the door for persecution.

From his Bull (papal declaration) we read:

“Wherefore we being supported by the presence and power of... Frederick, the most illustrious Emperor of the Romans... with the common advice and counsel of our brethren, and other Patriarchs, Archbishops, and many princes, who from several parts of the world are met together, do set ourselves against these heretics, who have got different names from the several false doctrines they profess...

“More particularly we declare all Cathari, Paterines, and those who call themselves the Humble, or poor of Lyons, Passagines, Josephines, Arnoldists, to lie under a perpetual anathema...

“And because some under a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof, as the apostle saith, assume to themselves the au-

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thority of preaching... we therefore conclude under the same sentence of anathema, all those who either being forbid or not sent, do... preach publicly or privately, without... authority... from the apostolic see, or from the bishops of their respective dioceses: as likewise all those who are not afraid to hold or teach any opinions concerning the sacrament of the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, baptism, the remission of sins, matrimony, or any other sacraments of the Church, differing from what the Holy Church of Rome doth preach and observe... And we likewise declare all entertainers and defenders of the said heretics and those that have shewed any favor, or giving countenance to them, thereby strengthening them in their heresy, whether they be called Comforted, Believers, or Perfect, or with whatever superstitious names they dignify themselves, to be liable to the same sentence.

“Whosoever shall be... convicted of these errors, if a clergyman... he shall be immediately deprived of all prerogative of the church-orders... and... be delivered... to the secular power, to be punished according to demerit, unless immediately upon being detected, he voluntarily returned to the truth of the Catholic faith, and submits publicly to adjure his errors.... And as for a layman who shall be found guilty either publicly or privately of any of the aforesaid crimes, unless... he immediately returns to the orthodox faith; we declare him to be left to the sentence of the secular judge, to receive condign punishment, according to the quality of his offense. As for those who are taken notice of by the church as suspected of heresy, except at the bishop’s command they shall give full evidence of their innocence according to the degree of suspicion against them, and the quality of their persons, they shall be liable to the same sentence.

“But those who after having abjured their errors, or cleared themselves upon examination, to their bishop, shall be found to have relapsed into their abjured heresy; we decree, that without any further hearing they be forthwith delivered up to the secular

power, and their goods be confiscated to the use of the church....

“Furthermore... we do add, that every archbishop or bishop, either in his own person, shall once or twice in the year visit the parish in which it is reported that heretics dwell, and there cause two or three men of good credit, or if need be, the whole neighborhood, to swear, that if they know any of the heretics there, or any frequent private meetings, or differ from the common conversation [conduct] of mankind, either in life or manners, they will signify the same to the bishop or the archdeacon. This bishop also or archdeacon shall summon before them the parties accused who... shall be punished at the bishop’s discretion.

“And if any of them, by a damnable superstition shall refuse to swear, that alone shall suffice to make them heretics convict, and liable to the punishments.

“We ordain further, that all Earls, Barons, Governors, or consuls of cities... shall promise upon oath, that in all these particulars, whenever they are to be required, they will powerfully and effectually assist the church against heretics... But if any of them shall refuse to observe this, they shall be deprived of their honors and charges... and their goods be confiscated to the use of the church” (*Correspondence Course*, Lesson 51, p. 8).

Later in 1184, Emperor Frederick I, influenced by this papal Bull, passed a law to check the spread of heresy in Lombardy in southern France. The law permitted the Catholic Church to impose secular punishment on “heretics.” The Catholic Church could then confiscate their property, ban them from trading and disperse their congregations (Hroch & Skybová, p. 37).

In spite of these Roman Catholic decrees of persecution, the Waldenses continued to spread.

Waldo in Dauphiny

After fleeing Lyons in 1179, Waldo settled in Dauphiny, a region in southeastern France that was part of the Holy Roman Empire at

that time. The truth of God took a deep and lasting root in this area. Some of Waldo's people probably joined the Vaudois of the Piedmont Valley but Waldo himself seems never to have been among them. His new translation of the Bible was undoubtedly a rich treasure for the Piedmont valley-dwellers.

1184 Waldo in Picardy

Persecution followed Waldo and he fled to Picardy, a region in northern France that had previously been evangelized by his ministers.

"Phillip Augustus [1180-1223], one of the most prudent and sagacious princes that Flanders ever saw, was enslaved by the god of this world. He took up arms against the Waldenses of Picardy [1215], pulled down 300 houses belonging to those who supported their party, destroyed some walled towns, and drove the inhabitants into Flanders [a Medieval country in western Europe that is now part of western Belgium, northwestern France and southwestern Netherlands]. Not content with this, he pursued them thither, and caused many of them to be burned. It appears that, at this time, Waldo fled into Germany, and at last settled in Bohemia..." (Townsend, as quoted by Dugger and Dodd, p. 140).

Waldensian Ministers

Waldensian ministers received special training and had many responsibilities. A book about Waldensian pastors described these:

"All who are to be ordained as pastors among us, while they are yet at home, entreat us to receive them into the ministry, and desire that we would pray to God, that they may be rendered capable of so great a charge. They are to learn by heart all the chapters of St. Matthew and St. John, all the canonical epistles, and a good part of the writings of Solomon, David, and the prophets. Afterwards, having exhibited proper testimonials of their learning and conversation, they are admitted as pastors by the

imposition of hands. The junior pastors must do nothing without the license of the seniors; nor are the seniors to undertake anything without the approbation of their colleagues, that everything must be done among us in order. We pastors meet together once every year, to settle our affairs in a general synod. Those whom we teach, afford us food and raiment with good will, and without compulsion. The money given us by the people is carried to the general synod, is there received by the elders, and is applied partly to the supply of travelers, and partly to the relief of the indigent. If a pastor among us shall fall into gross sin, he is ejected from the community, and debarred from the function of preaching" (Townsend, as quoted by Dugger and Dodd, pp. 153-154).

One important aspect of the job of Waldensian minister was to preach the Gospel.

"The Waldensian missionaries set forth in pairs, wearing the simplest clothes: woolen robes girded around the waist, and sandals. They were easily recognized by their garments, and when the Inquisition began to persecute them they abandoned this costume and went about disguised, making themselves known to fellow believers by secret codes. In later times they often traveled by night, when it was safer. Stay-at-home Waldensians called these itinerant preachers simply 'brethren.' In keeping with Jesus' instructions, these missionaries refused to earn their livelihoods by their own labor; their followers provided for their needs" (Nigg, p. 201).

In addition to preaching the Gospel, ministers were required to "feed the flock"—i.e., tend to the spiritual needs of church members.

"The pastors not only preached the gospel, but they visited the sick, catechized the children, admonished the erring, and labored to settle disputes and promote harmony and brotherly love. In times of peace they were sustained by freewill offerings of the people; but, like Paul the tentmaker, each learned some trade or profession by which, if necessary, to provide for his own support" (*The Great Controversy* by Ellen G.

White, p. 68).

Ministerial assignments (usually lasting two years) were made at the annual fall conference. Some ministers received their two-year assignment one year; the others received their assignment the following year.

This conference most likely coincided with the keeping of the Feast of Tabernacles.

“The Waldenses recognized that they were the successors of the apostolic church. They kept the *Sabbath*, also the yearly *Passover*. And each September or October (in God’s seventh month—see Lev. 23), they held at the headquarters church a great ‘conference.’ As many as 700 persons attended from afar. New students were chosen, ministerial assignments were made, and crowds gathered daily to listen to sermons. What could this gathering have been but the Feast of Tabernacles!

“Under the name of Passagini, we have the clearest sort of statement that these people, about 1,200, observed the whole Old Testament law, including the Sabbath and festivals!

“People called Cathars at Cologne, Germany, kept a fall festival, called Malilosa, even before Waldo began to preach. Compare this unexplained name with the Hebrew melilah (a harvested ear of grain—*Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance*) and the Biblical title ‘Feast of Ingathering’ (Ex. 23:16).

“How much more we might have known about these Middle Ages’ Feast of Tabernacles had not the Inquisitors so zealously burned the records!

“The three part division of tithes paid the Waldensian Church is significant. Even in the 1500s the same division continued. “The money given us by the people is carried to the afore-said general council, and is delivered in the presence of all, and there is received by the most ancient [the elders], and part thereof is given to those that are wayfaring men, according to their necessities, and part unto the poor’ (George Morel, Waldensian elder, quoted by Lennard, *History of the Waldensians*....

“Most authors have *assumed* the ‘wayfaring men’ were the traveling ‘*barbes*.’ But *their* expenses would have been paid from the money given to the elders, at *every* time of year, for the direct conduct of the Work—‘first’ tithe and offerings. Notice that in Numbers 18:21. What Morel then mentions is a ‘second’ tithe, for those traveling to and from the festivals—wayfaring men; and following it, the ‘third’ to the poor. See the explanation in Deut. 14. Feast-goers who had more ‘second tithe’ than they needed shared their excess with those who had need, even as they do today!” (*Correspondence Course*, Lesson 51, p. 11).

Waldensian Children

The Waldenses took great care in training their youth. We already have mentioned the schools which were established for them, from grade school through college.

“The Waldenses took special care for the religious instruction of their children, by catechetical and expository tracts, adapted to the plainest understandings. These formed a very salutary body of instruction, and early taught the youth the great things which pertained to life and godliness” (Townsend, as quoted by Dugger and Dodd, pp. 154-155). This instruction was quite similar to the Youth Educational Services God would use in his church in the late 20th century! And like the modern counterparts, these Waldensian children had “memory work” too:

“From their pastors the youth received instruction. While attention was given to branches of general learning, the Bible was made the chief study. The Gospels of Matthew and John were committed to memory, with many of the Epistles” (White, p. 68).

Waldensian Women

Waldensian women were not neglected. They also received special training and good upbringing to help them build godly character.

“In like manner, also, their women are modest, avoiding backbiting, foolish jesting, and levity of speech, especially abstaining

from lies or swearing, not so much as making use of the common asseveration, 'in truth,' 'for certain,' or the like, because they regard these as oaths, contenting themselves with simply answering 'yes' or 'no'" (*Jones' Church History*, p. 259, as quoted by Fletcher, p. 164).

1190 Church Leader Meets King Richard I

Jesus Christ sent his apostles to preach to people everywhere, including before kings. And Paul, specifically, was sent before kings (Mat. 28:19; Luke 21:12; Acts 9:15).

In the late 12th century, the leader of the Waldenses and Albigenses was continuing this mission. In 1190, Arder Joachim of Calabria conversed with King Richard I of England about events that would take place in the end time. Arder Joachim told Richard the Lion-Hearted, "Certain wicked nations called 'Gog' and 'Magog' shall rise up to destroy the Church of God and shall subvert the race of Christians, and then shall be the day of judgment. He says John speaks of the church, that woman fled into the wilderness, where she had a place prepared of God that he should feed her there a thousand, two hundred and sixty days" (*Jones' History of the Church*, Vol. 2, Chap. 5, p. 266, as quoted by Dugger and Dodd, pp. 145-146).

It is quite possible that the Waldenses, like Paul, and the other apostles at one time, felt they were living in the last days, just before Christ's return.

The disciples had asked Christ in Matthew 24 when He would return. Christ had replied that certain things would happen first—false ministers would arise and there would be wars, famines, earthquakes and persecution.

"And the Good News about the Kingdom will be preached in all the world, for a witness to mankind—and then will come the end," Christ concluded (Mat. 24:14).

False ministers, wars, famines and persecution were all part of medieval life. And the Church of God—known to the world as Waldenses, Albigenses, Cathars, Paulicians, etc.—had been preaching the Gospel into all

the known world at that time. Surely, these must have seemed like the last days.

"They believed that the end of all things was not far distant, and as they studied the Bible with prayer and tears they were more deeply impressed with its precious utterances and with their duty to make known to others its saving truths" (White, p. 72).

King of Spain Persecutes Waldenses

The Waldenses strove to live righteous lives. The more they let their light shine, the more wickedness they revealed among false Christianity. This led to bitter persecution.

"The very existence of this people, holding the faith of this ancient church, was a constant testimony to Rome's apostasy, and therefore excited the most bitter hatred and persecution. Their refusal to surrender the Scriptures was also an offense that Rome could not tolerate" (White, p. 76).

Encyclopedia Metropolitana, on p. 653, speaking of heretics, says, "Of all the sects in this century (the twelfth), the one which by the purity of its doctrine, and by the ability of its leaders, there were none that surpassed the Waldenses" (Dugger and Dodd, p. 146).

Yet persecution dogged the heels of the Waldenses as they fled from one city to another, from one region to another, and from one nation to another. Anathema of pope and edicts of kings were used to stamp out the Church of God.

In 1194 the king of one region in Spain issued an edict against the church: "...in 1194, Alphonse, King of Aragon, Barcelona and Provence decreed these 'Waldenses, Zapatati, or Inzabbati [keepers of God's Sabbath]' who otherwise are called the *Poor Men of Lyons* are worthy of any punishment short of death or mutilation. They were to leave his dominions immediately. Anyone who even listened to them was to have his property seized!" (*Correspondence Course*, Lesson 51, p. 11).

The following is part of the edict: "Forasmuch as it has pleased God to set us (the

Roman church) over his people... we... do command and charge that the Waldenses, Inzabbati, who otherwise are called 'the poor of Lyons,' and all other heretics who cannot be numbered, being excommunicated from the holy church... to depart out of our kingdom and all our dominions. Whosoever, therefore, from this day forward, shall presume to receive the said Waldenses and Inzabbati, or any other heretics of whatever profession, into their houses, or to be present at their pernicious sermons, or to afford them meat, or any favor, shall thereby incur the indignation of Almighty God" (Pegna's *Directory of the Inquisitions in Jone's Church History*, p. 237, as quoted by Dugger and Dodd, p. 147).

1197

Three years later, in 1197, the successor to the Spanish throne added to this edict that every Waldensian taken should be burned. Those who had fled to Castile were relentlessly tracked down.

1200

Persecution In France

Catholic persecution was growing in other regions as well by the time the 13th century (1201-1300) began.

"Already by 1200, a group reading the Bible in the Gallic tongue to large numbers of people in Metz were dispersed by a delegation of abbots from Rome, and their Bibles burned" (*Correspondence Course*, Lesson 51, p. 12).

1201

Pope Recognizes 'Humiliati'

Early in the 13th century Pope Innocent began trying new ways to counteract the fruits of God's true church. One means was to give official recognition to the *Humiliati* who had remained in the Catholic Church (*Correspondence Course*, Lesson 51, p. 12).

The Humble, or Humiliati of Lombardy in northern Italy were "a loosely organized lay brotherhood of pious workingmen dedicated to a simple life in common, in accordance with their understanding of the Gospel precepts. For the clergy, they advocated a return to apostolic poverty. In 1201 Inno-

cent III recognized the *Humiliati* as a religious order and confirmed their way of life. Some of the more extreme groups of the *Humiliati* broke away from the approved order and joined other 'underground' pietistic sects that had heterodox [unorthodox] tendencies, such as the Arnoldists (as Arnold of Brescia's later followers were called) and local groups known as Poor Men, who rejected the authority of the Church" (Hoyt, p. 366).

In other words, there was a brotherhood of Catholic workingmen called the *Humiliati*. The Pope had rejected this group earlier but now recognized them as true Catholics. Some members of this group left the Catholic Church and joined the true Church of God.

Who Was Jezebel?

Jesus Christ prophesied that this era of God's church would have problems with "Jezebel." Notice his warning:

"But here is what I have against you: you tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a messenger from God. She teaches and misleads my servants into committing immorality and eating food that has been offered to idols. I have given her time to turn from her sins, but she does not wish to turn from her immorality. Therefore I will throw her on a bed where she and those who committed adultery with her will suffer terribly. I will do this now, unless they repent from the wicked things they did with her. I will also kill her children, and then all the churches will know that I am he who knows men's thoughts and wishes. I will repay each one of you according to what you have done.

"But the rest of you in Thyatira have not followed this evil teaching; you have not learned what the others call 'the deep secrets of Satan.' I say to you that I will not put any other burden on you. But you must hold firmly to what you have until I come" (Rev. 2:20-25).

Who was this Jezebel?

The original Jezebel was a Gentile woman who represented a false Gentile religion (1 Kings 16:31). She was utterly selfish,

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grasping and destructive. She acted deceitfully when it served her purpose. And she dominated over her husband—King Ahab—a man who should have been her master. She also used her power to control other kings (1 Kings 21; 2 Kings 9:22, 30). And the original Jezebel martyred the true servants of God (1 Kings 18:4; 19:2-3).

The original Jezebel was a type of the “Jezebel” in Revelation 2, who made deals with and ruled over the kings of Europe during the Middle Ages.

The whole world was drunk on the false doctrines of this Medieval Jezebel—the Roman Catholic Church—and she was drunk on the blood of God’s servants (Rev. 17:2, 6).

“In the Middle Ages, this [Catholic] church sank to its lowest *depths* (Rev. 2:24). Careful, reputable, scholarly historians bear unanimous witness of her scandal and sin which *blasphemed God’s name*. Her ‘celibate’ priests begat numerous offspring. Popes filled their palaces with harlots and thieves. Vicious females actually ruled the church, elevating their lovers to the papal throne—murdering them later to elevate others!...

“In the Middle Ages, the false church—the antitypical ‘Jezebel’—strove similarly to bring the Thyatira members into her communion. She too claimed to be Christian. Some of the *Humiliated Waldenses*, not having individually repented when their group came out of the Catholic Church, were disposed to listen to her. Others were coerced by fear of persecution into following her ways—committing spiritual fornication with the world (1 John 2:15-18). They allowed ‘Jezebel’s’ priests to ‘baptize’ their infant children as demanded by civil and ecclesiastical law, gradually took part in her *Sunday worship*, and ate the ‘sacrifice of the Mass’” (Correspondence Course, Lesson 51, p. 13).

“As Waldensianism spread, the [Catholic] Church was forced to take measures. It began, as usual, by tirades against the heretics. The first indictment was simple: since the movement initiated by Petrus Waldus was of recent date, it could not be the true church of God which had been founded by Christ. When polemic proved of no avail, the

authorities had recourse to more militant forms. They began exterminating the heretics, as far as this was possible” (Nigg, p. 204).

The Roman Catholic Church, acting the part of Jezebel, worked feverishly to destroy the Church of God. She tried to persuade members to leave the church and join her. If they would not heed, she had them tortured and martyred. She would soon resort to the Inquisition.

Some withstood the pressure of Rome. Some gave in. In 1205 there was a split in the Waldensian movement and a few of the “Poor Men of Lyons” went back to Catholicism (Hoyt, p. 366).

Satan used counterfeit ministers to deceive the Waldenses (2 Cor. 11:13-15). As early as 1206, Pope Innocent III began sending out his own proven men by twos, poorly clad and living austere, to counteract the Waldensian *barbes* by their own methods.

That same year a Spanish Waldensian named Durand of Huesca submitted to the pope in the region of Languedoc. He would be used by the pope three years later in another of the pope’s deceitful plans (*Correspondence Course*, Lesson 51, p. 12).

Debate of 1206

“When the Waldenses knew that the design of the pope was to gain the reputation of having used gentle and reasonable methods of persuasion, they agreed among themselves, to undertake the open defense of their principles. They, therefore, gave the bishops to understand, that their pastors, or some of them in the name of the rest, were ready to prove their religion to be truly Scriptural, in an open conference, provided it might be conducted with propriety. They explained their ideas of propriety by desiring that there might be moderators on both sides, who should be vested with full authority to prevent all tumult and violence; that the conference should be held at some place, to which all parties might have free and safe access; and that some one subject should be chosen, with the common consent of the

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disputants, which should be steadily prosecuted, till it was fully discussed and determined; and that he who could not maintain it by the Word of God, the only decisive rule of Christians, should own himself confuted.

“This was perfectly equitable and judicious, and the bishop could not with decency refuse to accept the terms. The places of discussion agreed on was Montréal, near Carcassonne, in the year 1206. The umpires on the one side were the bishops of Villeneuve and Auxere; on the other R. de Bot, and Anthony Riviere.

“Several pastors were deputed to manage the debate for the Waldenses, of whom Arnold Hot was the principal. He arrived first at the time and place mentioned. A bishop named Dusus, came afterwards on the side of the papacy, accompanied by the monk Dominic, two of the pope’s legates, and several other priests and monks. The points undertaken to be proved by Arnold were, that the Mass and transubstantiation were idolatrous, and unscriptural; that the church of Rome was not the spouse of Christ, and that its polity was bad and unholy. Arnold sent those propositions to the bishop, who required fifteen days to answer him, which were granted. At the day appointed, the bishop appeared bringing with him a large manuscript, which was read in the conference. Arnold desired to be heard by the word of mouth, only entreating their patience, if

he took a considerable time in answering so prolix a writing. He discoursed for the space of four days with great fluency and readiness, and with such order, perspicuity, and strength of argument, that a powerful impression was made on the audience.

“At length Arnold desired, that the bishop and monks would undertake to vindicate the Mass and transubstantiation by the Word of God. What they said on the occasion we are not informed; but the cause of the abrupt conclusion of the conference showed which party had the advantage. While the two delegates were disputing with Arnold, the bishop of Villeneuve, the umpire of the papal party, declared that nothing could be determined because of the coming of the crusaders. What he asserted was too true; the papal armies advanced, and, by fire and faggots, soon decided all controversies” (Townsend, as quoted by Dugger and Dodd, pp. 164-166).

The Roman church could win no arguments for beliefs based on the Bible. So, like any bully who is frustrated and at a loss for words, she turned to force. A fierce inquisition began in 1206. God’s people among the Waldenses and Albigenses suffered terribly as the Roman beast crushed them with her huge iron teeth and then trampled on them (Dan. 7:7)!

In our next chapter we will discuss this persecution against the Waldenses and the Albigensian Crusades.

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The Albigensian Crusade

1206 In the early part of the 13th century, heresy flourished in the region of Languedoc, which is now southern France. At that time Languedoc was not part of France but was nestled between British-controlled French territories on the west, Aragon (Spain) on the south and the Roman Empire on the east.

Languedoc was ruled by the Count of Toulouse, Raymond VI. He was a just ruler and allowed much freedom of religion. Churches which this world called “Cathars” or “Albigenses” enjoyed tremendous growth in this free environment.

God’s church, which also needed religious freedom to flourish, was very likely among this group. We cannot say for certain that the Cathars (or Albigenses) were the Church of God. There are many things written about this group that would indicate they were not the true church. But there also is much written about them—including fragments of their own writings which remain to this day—that indicate they may have been part of the Church of God, or the Church of God, living among them, may have been confused with them.

A fascinating book about the Albigensian

Crusade shines a lot of light on this people. Its author, Zoé Oldenbourg, was Russian-born but moved to France at age 9 and has written several works in French. She has a genius for scholarship and a deep feeling for the Middle Ages. Her work, *Massacre At Montségur: A History of the Albigensian Crusade*, was translated from the French by Peter Green and published by Dorset Press in 1990.

A Description of the Cathars

The Cathars never claimed to be dissident Catholics. They belonged to “a faith that had never seen eye to eye with Catholicism, and was more ancient than the [Catholic] Church itself” (*Massacre at Montségur* by Zoé Oldenbourg, p. 29).

Notice this statement, which indicates the Church of God was among these “heretics”: “We should not, however, lose sight of one important fact. Very many of the heretics, both in Italy and in Languedoc, were not Cathars: they belonged to various ‘reforming’ sects, such as the Waldensian, which the [Catholic] Church would have almost certainly contrived, in the long run, to draw

within her orbit by means of a more liberal and comprehensive policy” (Oldenbourg, p. 29). Catholic records often combined heretical groups together!

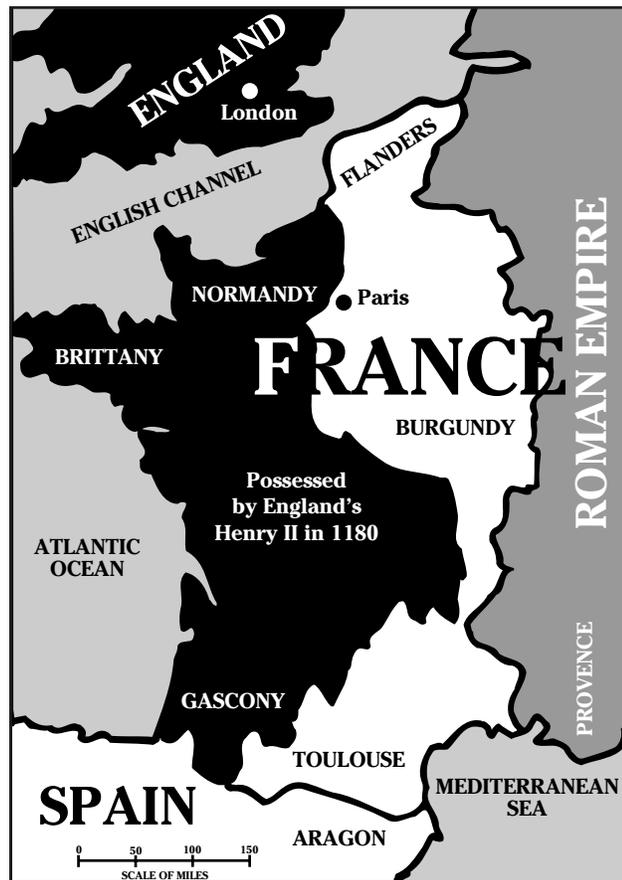
The religion of the Cathars (which means “pure ones”) came from the east. Most historians claim they were followers of Mani or were Arians but the heretics themselves never claimed any connection with Mani. They did have origins which could be traced to the Paulicians of Armenia and the Bogomils of the Balkans. In 1167 the Bulgarian Bogomil bishop Nikita (or Nicetas) went to Constantinople to confirm the young churches of Languedoc in true Bogomil tradition. He also called a council of Cathar bishops and ministers at Saint-Félix de Caraman, near Toulouse. The group called Cathars became very popular in the Toulouse region.

Most of what we know about the Cathars comes from Catholic (enemy) sources. Certain specific items of Catharist doctrine remain obscure because Catholic Inquisitors never thought to interrogate any heretic on these matters (such as fasting and feast days).

The cornerstone of Catharist beliefs, according to her enemies, was that the world, with all its evil, was not created by God but by Satan. If they believed Satan created the physical world, their beliefs were anti-Biblical and they probably were not the Church of God. However, it may be that they were misunderstood. For God’s true church today believes this is Satan’s world! Satan didn’t create this world but he is the ruler of it and the cause of its evils. This belief is grounded in Scripture (2 Cor. 4: 4; Mat. 4:8-9; 1 John 2: 15).

Cathars were very anti-Catholic. Notice what they felt about the Roman church and its beliefs:

“But the Devil, the Prince of this world, showed great skill in leading men astray. He



France in the early 1200s was divided into three main parts. King Henry II of England had conquered the western regions by 1180. Eastern France was part of the Holy Roman Empire. Toulouse, home to the Cathars (Albigenses) and probably the Church of God, was nestled between these two major powers.

destroyed Jesus’ work in a most complete and diabolical fashion, by substituting a false church for the true one. This false church claimed the title of ‘Christian,’ but it was in fact the church of the Devil, and taught doctrines diametrically opposed to those of Jesus. The authentic Christian church, the repository of the Holy Spirit, was that of the Cathars. The church of Rome, then, figured as the Great Beast, the Whore of Babylon.... The Host [bread used in Mass] could not be the body of Christ.... The Cross, they claimed, should not be an object of veneration. On the contrary, it should inspire horror, since it had formed the instrument of Jesus’ humiliation.... Holy images

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were no more than idols, and relics were worse still—mere bits of crumbling bone, wooden splinters or scraps of cloth being picked up any old where, and passed off by a pack of plausible rogues as parts of saint's bodies or other venerable objects" (Oldenbourg, pp. 34, 36-37).

Cathars were forbidden to carry arms and were not to lie or utter oaths. They understood that becoming a member of the church required a laying on of hands by a minister. They did not believe hell existed spatially. They believed in the end, the tangible world would vanish, the sun and stars would be extinguished, fire and water would destroy all the earth. The souls of "demons" would perish and nothing would remain but eternal joy in God.

The Cathar church treated women better than the Catholic Church, which viewed them as the Devil's eternal lure, leading men astray.

Cathars did not believe in the Trinity. But they did believe in Christ and the Gospel:

"In point of fact the Catharist dogma which Catholics found absolutely inadmissible was the denial of the Catholic Church itself... what this faith [Catharism] had to offer was, quite simply, Christ and the Gospel. The Book, the one and only true Book, the Book that took the place both of the Cross and of the Chalice, was the Gospel—a Gospel read in the vernacular, available to young and old alike, brought home all the closer to them by constant preaching and discussion....

"What was more, the Cathars declared themselves the heirs of a tradition that was older than that held by the Church of Rome—and, by implication, both less contaminated and nearer to the spirit to the Apostolic tradition. They claimed to be the only persons who kept and cherished the Holy Spirit which Christ had bestowed upon His Church; and it looks as though this claim was at least partially justified" (Oldenbourg, pp. 38-42).

The Cathars were connected with the Paulicians and Bogomils and strove to live life as the early Christians did:

"They also drew a distinction between good and evil forces, preached a concept of God radically different from that currently taught [Trinity], propagated a different understanding of the sacraments, and preached other ideas that make it rather difficult to classify them as a simple heretical movement. The roots of these teachings almost certainly go back into the development of thought not only in European antiquity... but also in Eastern teachings, such as those of the Paulicians and the Bogomils.... Their impact among the common poor people was linked to their desire to return to the lifestyle and ideals of the Early Church" (Hroch and Skybová, p. 13).

The Cathar Ritual

The Cathars rejected the Catholic infant baptism and granted baptism only to adults in full possession of their faculties.

Catholic Inquisitors were struck by the number of Christian observances in the heretical church and assumed the baptism ritual was a parody of Catholic baptism.

"Today we are better informed than they were concerning the practices of the Early Church, and have to admit that the Cathars merely followed a tradition somewhat more ancient than that of the [Catholic] Church herself. It was with some appearance of reason that they claimed Rome as the party guilty of 'heresy' through her falling-off from that original purity which had characterized the Church of the Apostles.

"The very text of the Ritual [to become a church member] as we possess it today certainly goes back to an extremely early date, even though the two versions which survive, one in Occitan [the language of Toulouse] and the other in Latin, can be attributed to the thirteenth century....

"It consists for the most part of quotations from the Gospels and Epistles, with brief commentaries. There are constant references to the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, and to various episodes in the Gospels themselves; any good Catholic could have read it approvingly and, as he perused

its text, have got the impression that he was savouring the full flavour and vigour of primitive Christianity, rather than the theological speculations of a sect that was credited with the most highly unorthodox doctrines....

“When we find nothing in it that could suggest, even remotely, any tinge of Manichaean dualism or the theory of metempsychosis, any denial of the incarnation and the Eucharist; when we even come upon statements that run contrary to Catharist doctrine as we know it on baptism by water—.... The Ritual which so miraculously escaped destruction is of infinitely greater weight than all the sworn testimony of the Cathars’ adversaries, and every word that has been written or spoken about them through the centuries” (Oldenbourg, pp. 43-44).

This Ritual also is recorded in the Manual of the Waldenses, the *Key of Truth* (*Key of Truth*, pp. 165-170).

The Ritual required a *credens*—that is, a prospective member of the church—to fulfill a probationary period. When the Christians (as the *perfecti* called themselves) agreed to grant the *credens*’ prayerful request for baptism, they all washed their hands. The *bons hommes*—ministers under the elder—did obeisance to the Elder and prepared a table with a table cloth. The elder then spoke the Latin words, “*Benedicite parcite nobis.*” The prospective member genuflected, requested a blessing and took the book from the elder’s hand. The elder then read “fitting words of Scripture to him for his admonishment.”

Next, the elder said the Lord’s Prayer and the prospective member repeated it after him. Then the elder said to the *credens*, “We entrust this holy prayer into your keeping; receive it then, from God and us and the whole Church; may you have the strength to say it all the days of your life, night and day, alone or in company; may you never eat or drink without first uttering it. And if you fail all of this, you must needs do penance therefore.” And the *credens* replied, “I do accept it from God, and you, and the Church” (Oldenbourg, p. 368).

Following this part of the Ritual came

the Baptism discourse. Here is the discourse which was addressed to the new believer by the elder:

“Peter [fictitious postulant’s name], you wish to receive that spiritual Baptism which comes from the Holy Spirit into the *Church of God*, together with the holy Lord’s Prayer, and the laying on of hands by the *bons hommes*.

“Of this baptism our Lord Jesus Christ says, in the Gospel according to St. Matthew [28:19-20]: ‘Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.’ And in the Gospel according to St. Mark [16:15] He says: ‘Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.’ And in the Gospel according to St. John [3:5] He says to Nicodemus: ‘Verily, verily I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.’

“And St. John the Baptist spoke of this Baptism when he said [John 1:26-27; Mat. 3:11]: ‘I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire.’ And Christ Jesus says, in the Acts of the Apostles [1:5]: ‘For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost.’

“Holy Baptism by the laying on of hands was instituted by Christ Jesus, according to St. Luke’s testimony; and as St. Mark testifies [16:18] He said that his disciples would do so: ‘They shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.’

“Further, Ananias [Acts 9:17-18] bestowed this Baptism upon St. Paul at his conversion. And afterwards Paul and Barnabas did the like in many places. And St. Peter and St. John did the same for the Samaritans. For St. Luke writes as much in the Acts of the Apostles [8:14-17]: ‘Now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard

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that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John: who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost: (for as yet [it] was fallen upon none of them...). Then they laid their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost.'

"From the time of the Apostles to this present the *Church of God* has preserved this holy Baptism by means of which the Holy Spirit is bestowed; it has been passed from one generation of *bons hommes* to the next, and so it will continue until the end of time."

The discourse then describes the church's ability to loose and bind, to pardon sins or retain them, based on John 20:21-23 and Mat. 16:18-20.

It continued: "and in yet another passage [Mat. 10:8] He said: 'Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils.' And in the Gospel according to St. John [14:12] He said: 'He that believes on me, the works that I do shall he do also.' And in the Gospel according to St. Mark [16:17-18] He said: 'And these signs shall surely follow them that believe; In thy name they shall cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it will not hurt them; they shall lay hands upon the sick, and they shall recover.' And in the Gospel according to St. Luke [10:19] He said, 'Behold, I give unto you the power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you.'

"And if you wish to receive this power and strength, you must *keep the commandments* of Christ and the New Testament so far as in you lies. And you know that his commandments forbid a man to lie, or to kill, or to commit adultery; or to swear any oath; or to take or steal; or to do unto others what he would not wish done unto himself. He must pardon those who harm him, love his enemies, pray for those who slander or accuse him, and give them his blessing. If he is struck on the one cheek, let him turn the other; and if a man takes his coat, let him

give up his cloak also; and let him neither judge nor condemn. All these commandments, and many others ordained by our Lord and his church, you must needs observe.

"You must, besides, hate this world and all its works and everything in it. For St. John writes in his First Epistle General [2:15-17]: 'My little children... love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever.' And in the book of Solomon [Eccles. 1:14] it is written: 'I have seen all the works that are done under the sun; and behold, all is vanity and vexation of the spirit.' Jude the brother of James also spoke for our enlightenment in his Epistle General [v. 23] of 'hating even the garment spotted by the flesh.' From this and much other testimony you must *learn to abide by God's commandments* and hate the world. And if you do so steadfastly to the end, we have hope that your soul will *attain everlasting life*" (Oldenbourg, pp. 373-375).

Before we go on with the remainder of the Cathar Ritual for a new believer, notice these common points of belief between the Cathars and the Church of God today, which are found in the baptism discourse we have just finished:

1. The church is named "Church of God."
2. Baptism is for adults.
3. Holy Spirit is given through the laying on of hands by God's ministers.
4. Sins are forgiven at baptism.
5. Church is commissioned to preach the Gospel and heal the sick of both physical and spiritual sickness.
6. Church members are to keep God's commandments by the letter and spirit of the law.
7. The church hates the worldly society around it.
8. Beliefs are based on Scripture, not empty church traditions.

9. Both Old and New Testaments are used.

10. Doctrine of eternal soul is rejected—eternal life is something to attain.

In the remainder of the ritual, the prospective member begs forgiveness of sins from God, the church, and all people present. There also are several repetitions of the Lord's Prayer (Oldenbourg, p. 369).

The Cathars believed baptism and receiving the Holy Spirit through the laying on of hands were absolutely necessary to become a Christian. After receiving the Holy Spirit he or she became "a new creature" (Oldenbourg, pp. 44-45). Baptism was not administered until after a year or two of "probation."

Cathar Meeting Halls

Cathars had no temples or cathedrals. They conducted their services and rites in private houses. In towns, houses were set aside specially for services, doctrinal instruction and caring for the sick.

"The room where the faithful assembled for prayer contained no outward sign of their cult. The walls had to be bare, and were usually whitewashed. The furnishings, too, were as simple as possible: some benches, and a table covered in spotlessly white linen, on which lay the Book, that is, a text of the Gospels. This table, which served in lieu of an altar, would also have on it several napkins, again of the purest white; and on a side table or chest there stood a ewer and basin for the washing of hands. The only decoration in this austere chamber took the form of countless white candles, their flames symbolizing the Holy Spirit as it descended in tongues of fire at Pentecost upon the Apostles" (Oldenbourg, p. 46).

During the rituals, the ministers wore long black robes which symbolized withdrawal from the world.

Church Organization

In Languedoc, every province had its Catharist bishop together with two assistants,

known as the bishop's *filius maior* (elder son) and *filius minor* (younger son). Before the bishop died, he named his *filius maior* as his successor. The younger son then also moved up one step and a new *filius minor* was elected from the congregation.

Each important locality had its own deacon, assisted by numerous *credentes*, or believers. The financial and administrative side of the church was in the hands of the *credentes*—not the ministers. These *credentes* ranged from rich merchants to common folk.

Cathars provided emergency relief for the poor and needy and maintained communal houses which served as schools, monasteries and hospitals. Funds for these projects came from the *perfecti* and the *credens* who often willed their property to the church when they died. The *perfecti* (ministers) did not become rich—they kept their vows of poverty and used the money for the best interest of the church. By the close of the 12th century the Catharist community had "considerable resources" at its disposal (Oldenbourg, pp. 49, 57, 59).

Cathars believed men and women were equal but women were not allowed to become bishops or deacons. Women tended to come into the faith sooner and accept it stronger than men: "...frequently it was they who dragged a more cautious or less enthusiastic husband along in the wake" (Oldenbourg, pp. 60, 61).

The Ministers

The ministers (*perfecti*) were courageous and often led a vagabond life. But it was not their courage that won them admiration from nonbelievers. "What their adversaries unanimously admitted was the purity of their moral lives.... hearts were not won by sitting still; and the *perfecti* were, above all, famous for their charitable works" (Oldenbourg, pp. 50, 51).

The *bons hommes* (local elders) were staunch believers in the faith. They "would actually rather die than swallow so much as a crumb of any food forbidden by their reli-

1206

gion” (Oldenbourg, p. 50).

The ministers—*perfecti*—were also skilled in medicine, which is a paradox if Cathars despised the body as is commonly believed (Oldenbourg, p. 52).

Cathar ministers, unlike their Roman Catholic counterparts, were close to their congregations. They were easily approachable. “Catharist ministers stood far closer to their flock than any Catholic priest did” (Oldenbourg, p. 56).

No wonder the Cathar church grew so rapidly. The Catholic Church appeared dead, corrupt and decadent. The Catharist church in Languedoc “offered greater unity, a richer spiritual life, and more inner life than Catholicism” (Oldenbourg, p. 57).

The People

The believers also were a very moral lot for this time period. Some writers claim the Cathars did not believe in marriage. This was not true: “...there is not a vestige of evidence that this religion attempted, in any way whatsoever, to undermine family life by condemning marriage or procreation. On the contrary: the social edifice of the Catharist Church depended in great measure precisely on these great families, with their traditions handed down unbroken from father to son....

“Neither the Cathars in Languedoc nor the Vaudois sect [Waldenses] (whose morality was closely akin to that of the Cathars) had ever shown any revolutionary tendencies, such as characterized the Bogomils” (Oldenbourg, pp. 66-67).

The Cathars were excellent citizens but they performed their civic duties realizing the kingdoms of this world were secondary to the Kingdom of God.

They did celebrate “various feast days” but we don’t know if these were the ones God commanded and his early church kept [see Leviticus 23] (Oldenbourg, p. 69).

The Cathars and Waldenses were intertwined. “The truth of the matter is that, in Languedoc at least, these two heretical movements... were often so hopelessly mixed up

that it is hard for us to determine just which heretics the authorities in such-and-such a place were dealing with—at any rate so far as ordinary rank-and-file believers were concerned....

“To take a random example: on the list of two hundred and twenty-two heretics who were arraigned at Béziers in 1209, a mere dozen names are accompanied by the phrase *val*—that is, *Valdenses*. ...the ensuing war was to bind them still closer together in a common martyrdom” (Oldenbourg, pp. 79, 80).

Pope Moves to Wipe Out Heresy

Every single district throughout the Count of Toulouse’s domains was a hotbed of heresy. Pope Innocent III sent his ambassador—or Papal Legate—to Toulouse to fight heresy. His name was Peter of Castelnau.

“Finally, towards the end of 1207, Peter of Castelnau managed to establish a league of Southern barons, the purpose of which was to hunt down heretics. When Raymond VI (Count of Toulouse) was asked to join this league, he refused.... The following morning, just as the Papal party was about to cross the Rhône, an officer in the count’s service flung himself upon the Legate and ran him through with his sword.

“...The murder of an Ambassador from the Holy See [pope] was the last drop that made the cup brim over. Innocent III had long been contemplating the idea of a Crusade against this heresy-tainted land. He only needed one solid, explosive incident, something that would fire the public imagination and justify a declaration of war” (Oldenbourg, p. 5).

Throughout the year 1208 the pope dispatched letters and gathered soldiers from all over France. They came from Normandy, Champagne, Anjou, Flanders, Picardy and Limousin. The army of the Crusaders was composed of knights, peasants, burghers and mercenary soldiers. With the exception of the mercenaries, these warriors were not all fired up with “Christian” zeal to eliminate heresy. They simply were donating 40

1207

1208

days of their time in exchange for forgiveness of their sins and a chance to acquire fame and fortune. Those Crusaders who fought in the Holy Land also had opportunity to receive forgiveness, fame and fortune; but now the Crusaders could acquire these without traveling far from home!

“The indulgences promised in respect of this Crusade were comparable to those that had been bestowed on Crusaders in the Holy Land—and the effort involved was considerably less. Furthermore, to go on a Crusade was a very handy way of holding up the payments of one’s debts, and keeping one’s property clear of any ultimate claims that might be made upon it, since a Crusader’s goods were declared sacrosanct for the whole period of his absence” (Oldenbourg, p. 8).

In February 1209, military detachments were gathering throughout every province. Contributions were pouring in. Leaders were preparing for the great day of departure. Pope Innocent III wrote to King Philip II of France, asking him to lead the Crusade. “...But the Crusade remained what in sober fact it was, a war launched by the [Catholic] Church itself” (Oldenbourg, p. 12).

“This Albigensian Crusade set a precedent for using the Crusade as a weapon against papal enemies in Europe, whether they were heretics or political opponents” (Hoyt, p. 369).

Army of the Crusade

During the winter of 1208-1209 the people of Toulouse did not appear to have taken the threat of danger very seriously and neglected to organize any real defense system.

On June 24, 1209, the papal army was ready at Lyons and now marched toward Toulouse. We don’t know how big the army was. A medieval army of 20,000 men was a very large army. The army in this first Albigensian Crusade could have been this large but may well have been smaller.

Armies were judged by how many knights they had, not by the total number of soldiers. The knight was the only soldier who really mattered. His heavy army pro-

tected him from arrows, sword-strokes and even spear-thrusts.

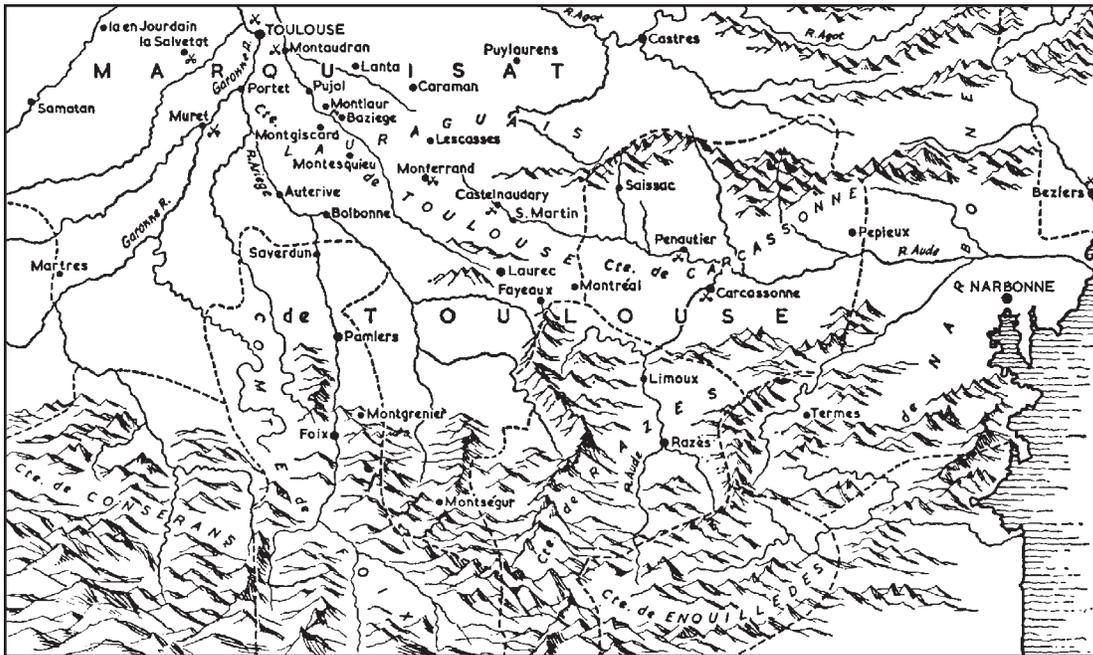
“Though a battle caused comparatively few fatal casualties among the knights, or indeed their mounted retainers, for the bulk of the army—the mere anonymous fighter, sergeant or varlet—it was a different matter. Every battlefield was strewn with their corpses, and they lay thick outside the walls of every besieged town” (Oldenbourg, p. 105).

The most feared warrior was the soldier-for-hire, the mercenaries, or, as called by the French, the *routiers*.

“The *routiers* were poorly armed, and frequently thread-bare. They went barefooted, without any order or discipline, and they would only obey their own officers.... They were desperate fellows, with nothing to lose, and therefore would plunge on through thick or thin regardless: nothing could hold up their mad advance.... They formed a series of shock battalions.... The most important thing about them was the terror they inspired in the civilian population. They had no respect for God, so they held orgies in the churches and mutilated sacred images. Not content with mere pillage and rape, they indulged in massacre or torture for the sheer fun of the thing, roasting children over slow fires and chopping men into small pieces” (Oldenbourg, p. 106).

When country folk spotted an army advancing, they fled to the safety of the château (castle) or fortified town. When the enemy besieged a town, the people behind the walls were apt to suffer from famine and disease in the overcrowded conditions. The invaders made matters worse by ravaging the countryside—destroying crops and fruit trees, and poisoning wells. Famine and disease usually killed more people in medieval wars than battle did. This is significant because God’s church would not participate in battle but it could be harmed by famine and disease.

War was common in the Middle Ages. One count was continually battling another in small skirmishes. Perhaps this is why the people of Toulouse did not defend themselves against the Crusaders. They expected



Map shows area of the Albigensian Crusade which began with a massacre at Béziers (far right) and ended with one at Montségur (lower left). This area is now part of southern France.

1209

an ordinary military expedition which could be defended by ordinary means.

But in July 1209, when news of the advancing Crusaders reached this region, it was obvious the army was “something quite out of the ordinary.... The chronicler’s description suggests that the spectacle of this armed multitude coming down the Rhône Valley positively stupefied those who witnessed it. There was something monstrous about it, something unnatural” (Oldenbourg, pp. 108-109).

The Crusade Begins

Under the leadership of Papal Legate Milo, the Crusaders made a rapid advance. They set out from Lyons in the beginning of July and reached Montelimar by July 12. The armies took the town of Casseneuil and several heretics were burned at the stake.

The next target was the town of Béziers, which had long been regarded as “heretic’s land” *par excellence*. The viscount of Béziers and Carcassonne, Raymond-Roger Trencavel, was awed by the size of the Crusader

army and attempted to negotiate for peace. The Legate refused to listen to him.

The viscount could not allow himself to be shut up in Béziers during the siege. He promised the town consuls he would send reinforcements. He then went off to organize the defenses of his capital city, Carcassonne. He took with him a few known heretics and all Jewish residents. Could Church of God members have been among this group?

On July 21, the Crusaders halted outside Béziers and pitched camp on the left bank of the Orb River. The city’s deputy suzerain again attempted to negotiate peace before war broke out. “He returned from the Crusaders’ camp with the proposal that Béziers should be spared—provided that the Catholic residents were willing to hand over their heretical brethren to the Legates, according to a list which the Bishop had himself had drawn up. This list has survived. It contains two hundred and twenty-two names, some of which are marked with the abbreviation *val* (for *Valdensis* [Waldenses]). All the evidence suggests that these 222 persons or families were either *perfecti* or

else at least lay leaders of the sect, rich and well-known burghers” (Oldenbourg, p. 11).

The viscount told the inhabitants of Béziers that they could obtain no mercy unless the Cathars would abjure their religion and conform to Roman Catholicism.

“The Roman Catholics pressed the Albigenses [Cathars] to comply with the request; but the Albigenses nobly answered, that they would not forsake their religion for the base price of a frail life: that God was able, if he pleased, to defend them; but if he would be glorified by the confession of their faith unto death, it would be a great honour for them to die for his sake. They added, that they had rather displease the pope, who could kill their bodies, than God, who could cast both body and soul into hell” (King, pp. 46-47).

The townspeople held a meeting and refused to hand over their fellow citizens.

On July 22, both the besieged and the besiegers were in a casual mood, feeling that war would not actually begin for days or weeks later. But a group of civilians left Béziers on a reconnaissance mission that was not a “*bone fide* military operation but a piece of exhibitionism designed to annoy the enemy and make him look silly” (Oldenbourg, p. 113).

The mercenary soldiers used this opportunity to attack and made their way into the walled city through the door the reconnaissance group used.

The city had no chance. There was no escape and no defense for anyone, whether Catholic or Cathar. Those in the Church of God who were in Béziers at the time died with the rest: “The city was, in a manner of speaking, stormed before actually being taken, for while the troops were still locked in combat on the ramparts, panic and frenzy reigned in the streets, where the mercenaries were now in complete control. This fact made the garrison’s continued resistance quite pointless.... The extreme violence of the assault transformed a comparatively peaceful town into a city of the damned, all in a few moments” (Oldenbourg, p. 115).

Everyone, Catholic and heretic alike,

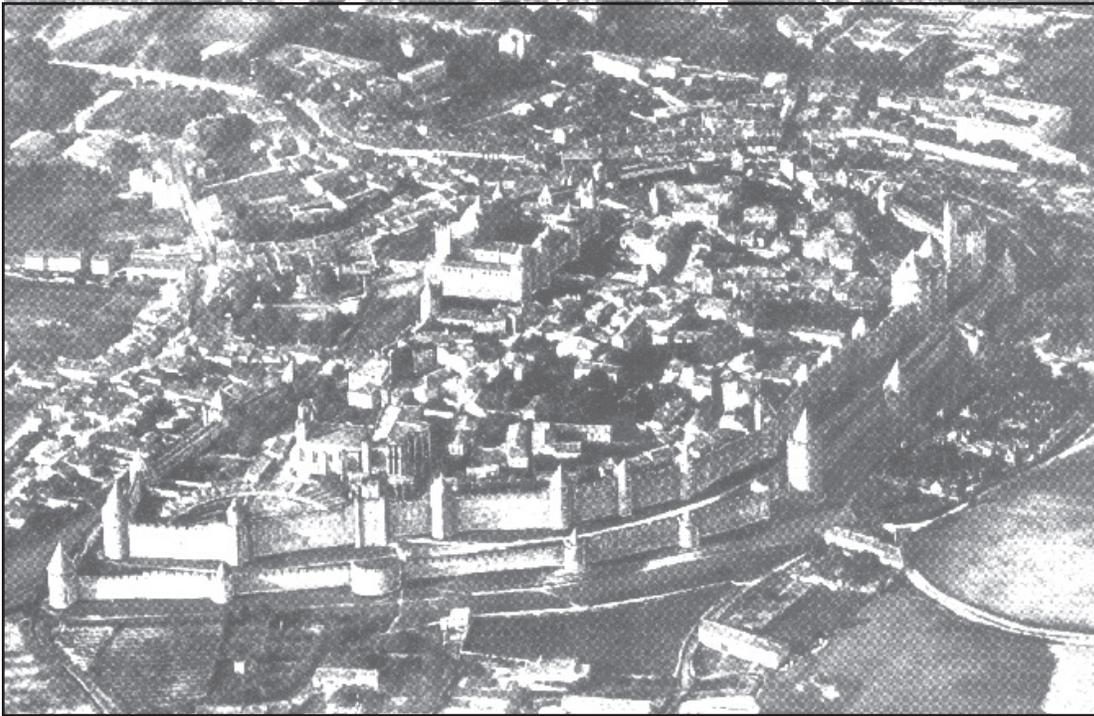
searched for a place of refuge and raced to the churches. Surely they would be safe in these Catholic “houses of God”! But they were wrong. “The mercenaries ‘were already breaking into private houses, according to their fancy; there was a wide choice open to them, and each man took whatever he wanted, and plenty of it. The mercenaries were fierce for plunder, and had no fear of death; they cut the throats of any who stood in their way.’... The doors of the churches were forced open, the place of refuge was revealed as a trap. All inside were slaughtered wholesale—women, invalids, babies, and priests, the latter clasping the chalice or holding aloft a crucifix....

“In a few short hours the wealthy city of Béziers was a city of bleeding mutilated corpses, and nothing else. Its houses, streets and churches were now occupied by brigands, who went stamping through the blood they had spilt, dividing up and arguing over the vast spoils that these multitudinous death had bequeathed to them” (Oldenbourg, pp. 115-116).

The soldiers became angry with the mercenaries when they saw them absconding with the plunder. (Isn’t it amazing how the murder of thousands of innocent people did not raise their ire?) The soldiers chased off the mercenaries. “The main object was to save their precious booty. The army needed it to continue the campaign; besides, it was a golden opportunity for lining one’s pockets, and the knight could do with impugny what was forbidden to the mercenary. So the soldiers of fortune were stripped of their newly acquired possessions, and in a fit of more than understandable pique, set fire to the town” (Oldenbourg, pp. 118-119).

“Thus the beautiful city of Béziers was reduced to a heap of ruins; and 60,000 persons of different ages and both sexes were murdered” (King, p. 47).

It turns out that no one was a winner at Béziers. The townspeople were massacred—Christians, Catholics and heretics alike. Neither the mercenaries nor the soldiers acquired any plunder—it was all torched. But this blow did one thing for the Crusade:



The fortress and town of Carcassonne were a major center for the southern French Cathars in 1209. During the Albigensian Crusade the inhabitants were allowed to leave unharmed but the castle fell into the hands of the Crusaders who used it as their headquarters for the ongoing Crusade.

1209

it paralyzed the will to resist of its opponents. It spread terror throughout Languedoc.

The Crusaders had barely left Béziers when they met a deputation from Narbonne at Capeatang. “The burghers of Narbonne promised full and complete submission to the Church, and severe repressive measures against their heretics.

“The army resumed its triumphal march. It took the Crusaders no more than six days to get from Capeatang to the walls of Carcassonne, and the *seigneurs* of the district came flocking in to hand over their châteaux and make formal submission to the Church. Others left home and fled to the mountains or forests with their families and vassals. Thus in a few days the Crusaders had won something like a hundred châteaux without a blow being struck” (Oldenbourg, p. 121).

Things were looking bleak for members of God’s church and other “heretics.” A country that once allowed and encouraged reli-

gious freedom was now forcing everyone to become Catholic or be turned over to the Crusaders!

Attack on Carcassonne

Raymond-Roger of Trencavel, the viscount of Béziers and Carcassonne, attempted to defend Carcassonne, which was the stronger of the two fortresses. People from all over flocked behind the city walls for protection from the Crusaders. In August 1209, 30,000 to 40,000 people were packed into 9,000 square yards. During the first week of August, the Crusaders camped against the walls of Carcassonne, taking over the suburbs, or the cities outside the walls.

Carcassonne was not short of supplies but it very soon ran out of water. The Crusaders cut off their water supplies and in the hot August sun their wells dried up. Raymond-Roger left the city to meet with the Crusaders and seek terms of peace. They

would not allow him to return to the city. Carcassonne, without its leader, was forced to surrender.

“In striking contrast to what happened in Béziers, the inhabitants were able to leave the city safe and unharmed.... The condition for the surrender of the city, then, must have been this: the inhabitants’ lives would be spared *if they left all their riches behind*.... We may note there were a great many declared heretics living in Carcassonne; it is odd that the commanders of a Crusade launched for the extermination of heretics did not profit by so excellent an opportunity, and lay hands upon them” (Oldenbourg, p. 124).

Is it possible that a few faithful members of the Church of God prayed for deliverance of their lives following the massacre at Béziers—and God granted them their desire?

Or could it be that the Cathars had all escaped and there was no one left to martyr? One source says there was an underground passage that led from Carcassonne to the castle of Camaret, about nine miles away. The evening after the count had been captured, the Cathars escaped via this passage to Aragon, Catalonia and other secure places (King, pp. 48-49).

The Crusaders did gain from the surrender of Carcassonne. They amassed a great haul of booty, which was urgently needed. And the fortress which fell into their hands almost intact, served as a wonderful permanent headquarters for them.

Now that the Crusaders controlled a piece of Languedoc, they named a new *Catholic* ruler over the entire region. Simon de Montfort was nominated for that position by a commission of two Catholic bishops and four Catholic knights.

Simon came to power and moved fast. The towns of Fanjeaux, Limoux, Alzonne, Montréal and Lombers were occupied. Castres surrendered its heretics.

Simon, however, soon found himself without an army. Shortly after he took control his armies left. Their 40 days of duty was enough to gain them pardon and the Cru-

saders went home. In September 1209 Simon was left with only 26 knights.

“The situation in which Simon found himself (not wholly through his own fault) was desperate indeed; so desperate that one feels almost inclined to forgive him of the crimes he afterwards committed.... Simon de Montfort not only survived but actively triumphed in a country which was fiercely hostile to him; a country where he was condemned to rule through fear alone” (Oldenbourg, p. 131).

Once again the Church of God had to go into hiding to survive. “Catharist ministers went to ground in various sure hiding places; the *perfecti* put aside their black robes, and dressed themselves as burghers or artisans; the local *seigneurs* either protested their loyalty to the Catholic Faith, or else vanished into the mountains” (Oldenbourg, p. 132).

Pope Authorizes Rival Religious Groups

In addition to the Crusade, Pope Innocent III also authorized a rival religious movement to sway the Waldenses.

“In 1209 he authorized a rival ‘Waldensian’ movement into which he hoped to entice many of the members of God’s Church. It was an official organ of the Catholic Church, headed by Durand of Huesca, a Spanish ex-Waldense who had submitted to the pope in 1206 at one of the meetings in Languedoc. A similar arm called ‘Poor Catholics’ was founded in Lombardy by Bernard Primo, another ex-Waldensian” (*Correspondence Course*, Lesson 51, p. 12).

Simon Continues the Crusade

In 1210 Simon de Montfort resumed the Crusade against the Albigensian Cathars and captured Bram. The city resisted for three days. Simon seized the garrison (the military unit responsible for protecting the city) which had over 100 men. “He had their eyes gouged out and their noses and upper lips cut off. Only one man was left with a

1210



The burning of 180 Albigenses in the year 1210. This engraving is by Jan Luyken, 17th century. It is from Moravská galerie in Brno, Czechoslovakia.

1210

single eye; and Simon gave him the task of leading his blinded comrades to Cabaret, in order to create panic among those defending the château. ...to mutilate prisoners was a sure method of terrifying ones adversary.... to behave in such a fashion, De Montfort must have been a deeply cruel man by nature.... Rapine, fire, slaughter, systematic destruction of crops, vines, and cattle—such military tactics are as old as time; but Simon de Montfort applied them on a vast scale, and in a country which, theoretically, he regarded as his own domain” (Oldenbourg, pp. 136, 138, 139).

The former viscount, Raymond-Roger, had died Nov. 10, 1209, after three months of captivity. He may have been poisoned. Numerous vassals were horrified by the news of his death and revolted. By the early

months of 1210, more than 40 castles had successfully rebelled against Simon de Montfort.

Reinforcements came to Simon in March. He attacked Minerve in June. He reduced the garrison by starving them out and cutting off their water supply.

“Minerve surrendered unconditionally, with a promise that those who submitted to the [Catholic] Church would have their lives spared. The heretics, in other words, had to choose between recantation and death” (Oldenbourg, p. 141). A Catholic priest and Simon made every effort to convert the condemned Cathars to Catholicism but to no avail. So Simon “had them brought forth from the château; and a great fire having been got ready, more than one hundred and forty of these heretical *perfecti* were flung

thereon at one time.... Three women however were spared... and reconciled with the Holy Roman Church” (Oldenbourg, p. 141).

The martyrs “died triumphant, praising God that he had counted them worthy to suffer for the sake of Christ. They opposed the legate to his face and told Simon, that on the last day when the books should be opened, he would meet with the just judgment for all his cruelties” (Townsend, as quoted by Dugger and Dodd, pp. 168-169).

“So it was that Minerve witnessed the first great burning of heretics. And yet, though this war was specifically directed against heresy, heretics themselves seemed to play no specific part in it. All we learn is that such-and-such a château contained a great number of them, and that, if taken, they were burned at the stake. We are clearly only concerned with the *perfecti*—that is, men and women who had already made a solemn abjuration of the Catholic Faith... Nevertheless these mass executions, done with the will and approval of the Church, remained most summary acts of justice, without trial or sentence, and beyond a doubt due to the presence of a fanatical and victorious army” (Oldenbourg, p. 142).

In the fall of 1210, after a three-month siege, the bastioned Châteaux de Termes fell. “ ‘This place,’ said Simon, ‘is of all others the most execrable, because no mass has been sung in it for 30 years’ ” (Townsend, as quoted by Dugger and Dodd, p. 169). The inhabitants of Termes escaped Simon’s cruelties when they fled the city by night.

In 1211 Cabaret surrendered before being besieged and Simon de Montfort took the fortified town of Lavaur in May after a two-month siege.

“In the town of Lavaur there were four hundred *perfecti*, both men and women—at least, so we may assume from the fact that four hundred persons were burnt as heretics when the Crusaders entered the gates...

“The four hundred heretics were led into the meadow outside the château, where a zealous crowd of pilgrims had quickly reared a gigantic pyre. These four hundred persons were burnt... displaying a courage which

the executioners attributed to their incredible obduracy in crime. This was the largest single holocaust during the entire Crusade. After Lavaur (May 1211) and the capture of Cassès the following month, when sixty heretics were burnt, the *perfecti* sought other refuges than fortresses in their flight from persecution” (Oldenbourg, p. 149).

Attitude of the Cathars

These very religious people did not show suicidal tendencies or desire martyrdom as did some of the martyrs we have discussed earlier. Their attitudes were what one would expect to find among members of the Church of God:

“We should note that these men, who went to the stake with a serenity that would have shaken the faith of less fanatical adversaries, never sought any kind of martyrdom, and indeed did their utmost to escape death. We do not find them begging their executioners to torture and mutilate them, as St. Dominic hoped might happen to him; they were not quixotic hotheads avid for a martyr’s crown, but fighters who clung to life that they might continue their apostolate. It was only when they fell into enemy hands, and were called upon to choose between recantation and death, that they kept, steadfastly, the promise they had given on the day of their admission into the Catharist Church. Besides, as we shall see, they were extraordinarily skillful at concealing themselves, and in shaking off pursuers—which suggests that those who accused them of suicidal tendencies are wrong. The Crusade offered them a splendid opportunity for self-destruction, and they entirely ignored it... We never find a *perfectus* playing even the most unobtrusive part in any of the countless rebellions that constantly flared up all over Languedoc.... Their strength, they knew, was not of this world” (Oldenbourg, pp. 149, 151).

The top leaders of the church did not take refuge in fortresses and castles during the Crusade. They too often became traps with no escape.

1211

1211

1211

One minister, Guilhabert de Castres, who was based in Toulouse, continued to visit every part of his diocese, preaching and ordaining new *perfecti*, throughout the years of the Crusade. (More about him later.) Other less-known ministers had even more freedom of movement. “They were never betrayed. The local nobility regarded it as an honour to escort and protect them; burghers concealed them in their houses; working-class men and women served them devotedly as messengers, maintaining contact between the faithful everywhere” (Oldenbourg, p. 151).

Strasbourg Group Recants

Pope Innocent III was not content with battling the Church of God only by Crusade. While the Crusade was in progress in southern France, he attacked Waldenses in other parts of Europe.

In 1211, over 400 Waldenses from a group in Strasbourg, a fortified city in northeast France, were forced to recant and surrender their books. Not all recanted. About 80 remained steadfast to the church. Their fate was the same as their brethren in Lavour, Cassès and other towns in Languedoc—they were burned! (*Correspondence Course*, Lesson 51, p. 12; Oldenbourg, p. 392).

Simon Attacks Toulouse Region

In June 1211 Simon de Montfort crossed into the Toulouse region. He conquered Cassès and burned 60 heretics.

He laid siege against Toulouse. The Catholic bishop inside the city was strongly allied with the Crusaders. He instituted a brotherhood of militant Catholics called the “White Brotherhood” because its members wore a white cross sewn on their chests. They undertook terrorist activities, attacking Jews and other heretics, plundering and destroying their homes.

Raymond, the Count of Toulouse, finally ordered Bishop Foulques “to clear out of Toulouse at once, and from all territory

dependent thereon.” Foulques left Toulouse at once and joined the Crusaders.

Simon broke camp and left Toulouse after only 12 days. The Crusaders’ 40-day stint was nearly over and the army was short of provisions. Because he failed to take Toulouse, Simon lost a lot of prestige and was no longer able to pick off one castle after another. In fact, his enemies often attacked him and his armies.

The Catholic monk, Dominic, was a bitter enemy of God’s people. It was his duty to convict heretics or to reconcile them back into the Catholic Church. When heretics returned to the Catholic Church, they were issued certificates. Only one such certificate remains to this day. But there is evidence of other people who fell away from the Cathar religion and rejoined Catholicism in 1211 and 1214, especially in the Fanjeaux area (Oldenbourg, p. 238).

In the spring of 1212 Simon received new drafts of Crusaders from the north. He regained the advantage and won back all the castles he had lost. Toulouse had not been taken that year but Simon made plans to do so in 1213. The gains from victories in 1212 “were so substantial that Simon was able to regard himself as master of all Languedoc: he swept the country clear of his enemies” (Oldenbourg, p. 157).

In September 1212, the pope saw that armed resistance to the Crusaders had been stamped out and he lost interest in the whole affair. He declared the Crusade over for the time being.

Waldensians Still Reject Infant Baptism

We pause momentarily from the Crusade to note a record from 1212 stating Waldenses rejected Catholic belief in infant baptism.

“The Waldenses, who must not be confused with the Albigeois, seem, from the testimony of Ebrardus, A.D. 1212, to have also rejected infant baptism. It is possible, however, that Ebrardus confused the Waldenses with the Albigeois” (Conybeare, p. cxlii).

1212

Peter Auterius

One of the important leaders of the Albigenses during this time was Peter Auterius. Note these comments from *The Key of Truth*:

“Peter Auterius, the great heresiarch [a leader in heresy] of those parts [Toulouse] in the early thirteenth century, and probably one of the greatest religious teachers and reformers that France has ever seen, taught that the baptism of the Roman Church is of no avail to children” (Conybeare, p. cxlii).

Enemies of the church claimed the elect of the Albigenses were celibate. But Peter Auterius was living proof they were wrong. “For Peter Auterius, their leader in Toulouse, had a son, James, of whom the records of the inquisition make frequent mention” (Conybeare, p. cxliv).

1213

Toulouse Taken

In 1213, the king of Aragon (Spain) took up the cause of helping downtrodden Languedoc. But the king was killed in battle and his superior forces were defeated by Simon’s army. This put an end to the war for a year and a half.

1214

In April 1214, various leaders of castles and towns came to Narbonne and offered their absolute submission to the Catholic Church, swearing to do penance, to fight heresies in their territories and to refrain from attacking lands conquered by Crusaders. One of these leaders was Count Raymond of Toulouse.

1215

In May 1215, Simon de Montfort and Prince Louis, the papal legate, entered Toulouse. They gained in peace what they could not take in war. Simon ordered the city’s moats filled and its towers, walls and other fortifications to be razed.

Fourth Lateran Council

In November 1215 Pope Innocent III assembled an international conference consisting of two patriarchs, 71 archbishops, 410 bishops, 800 abbots and numerous other ambassadors and delegates for the Fourth

Council of the Lateran. Its main object was not to settle the Albigensian question. But the problem of heresy had a burning immediacy and was discussed. The result was not good for the Church of God!

“Heretics, whether Cathars or Waldensians, from Languedoc, Italy, the Balkans, and other countries where they had smaller influence, were unconditionally condemned and anathematized. The sanctions to be taken against them were confirmed and redefined; and the Church laid upon secular authority the duty, under pain of excommunication, of fighting heresy” (Oldenbourg, p. 177).

Even at this time, the official Catholic Church position on heresy did not require the death penalty for heretics. There had been many examples of heretics having been burned but these were done under *secular* authority, not *papal* authority. This would change after Pope Innocent III’s death in 1216 (Hoyt, p. 372).

Waldenses of La Guardia Persecuted

The Roman church proceeded to persecute not only the heretics of Languedoc but in other areas as well. One group was the Waldenses of La Guardia.

“Enticing the inhabitants outside the gates, and placing soldiers in ambush, they succeeded in getting into their power upwards of sixteen hundred persons. Of these, seventy were... tortured, in the hope of compelling them to accuse themselves of practicing shameful crimes in their religious assemblies. No such confession, however, could the most prolonged tortures wring from them. ‘Stefano Carlino,’ says M’Crie, ‘was tortured till his bowels gushed out;’ and another prisoner, named Verminel, ‘was kept eight hours on a horrid instrument called hell, but persisted in denying the atrocious calumny,’ Some were thrown from the tops of towers, or precipitated over cliffs; others were torn with iron whips, and finally beaten to death with fiery brands, and others smeared with pitch, were burned alive” (*History of the*

1215

Waldenses by Wylie, p. 115, as quoted by Dugger and Dodd, pp. 128-129).

1215 The Crusade Continues

During the years of 1215 and 1216 war continued in the area of Languedoc. What had begun principally as a war on heresy evolved slowly into political battles as the king of France looked at adding Languedoc to his territories. The politics affected the Church of God because the French king was Catholic and the religious freedom church members had experienced under their local rulers would come to an end.

Castles and territories switched hands between the Crusaders of Simon de Montfort and his son, Guy, and the liberating forces of the former Count of Toulouse, Raymond VI, and his son, Raymond VII.

In 1216 Pope Innocent III died and Pope Honorius III preached one Crusade after another to help Simon de Montfort. He started a new propaganda campaign against heresy. He also authorized persecution against heretics at Cambrai (Oldenbourg, pp. 182, 196, 393).

1217 Simon de Montfort found himself battling the former count of Toulouse, Raymond VI, for the control of that city in October 1217. The siege he laid in October lasted eight months. At Pentecost the young count arrived with fresh reinforcements for his father's battle against Simon. They rode into town right under the besiegers' very noses.

"One side [that of Raymond VI] knew exactly why they were fighting and for whom; the other was merely trying to hold on to half-conquered loot that had already begun to slip through their grasp....

"The gallant Catholic gentleman [Simon] whom the [Catholic] Church had honored so highly (granting him domains larger even than those of the king of France) and who enjoyed the aid of the troops that the Church had been sending him for years, now suddenly revealed himself to be incapable of storming an ill-fortified town, defended by men whom he had whipped many times

before" (Oldenbourg, pp. 197, 198).

Simon's son, Guy, was guarding a siege engine when he was wounded by an arrow fired from the ramparts. Simon hurried to him, lamenting loudly, and was struck on the head by a stone gun fired by a woman and young girls. The shot was fatal; Simon's head was smashed to pieces.

Guy de Montfort received his father's titles from the papal legate and continued the siege. He attempted to set fire to Toulouse but failed. A month after his father's death he raised the siege. Toulouse had triumphed.

Without Simon de Montfort to lead them, the Crusaders had no direction. The areas Simon had won for the Catholic Church now were won back by young Raymond VII.

"The [Catholic] Church may have been practically powerless during the years of liberation, but she did not remain inactive. The Order of the Preaching Friars, created by St. Dominic and recognized on 11th February, 1218, by Honorius III, had taken root in the Toulouse area under Foulque's patronage. It was not yet an independent monastic Order, but simply a community of monks whose particular object was to fight heresy" (Oldenbourg, p. 236).

Massacre at Marmande

The pope needed someone powerful to complete Simon's work. He turned to the king of France (Oldenbourg, pp. 197, 199). Prince Louis, the king's son, went to Languedoc in 1219 with 20 bishops, 30 counts, 600 knights and 10,000 archers. He joined forces with troops from Amaury de Montfort (Simon's son) at Marmande and captured that town. The garrison was saved but all 5,000 townspeople were killed in a massacre not unlike the one at Béziers.

"They hurried into the town, waving sharp swords, and it was now that the massacre and fearful butchery began. Men and women, barons, ladies, babes in arms, were all stripped and despoiled and put to the sword. The ground was littered with blood, brains, fragments of flesh, limbless trunks,

1218

1219

hacked off arms and legs, bodies ripped up or stove in, livers and hearts that had been chopped to pieces or ground into mash. It was as though they had rained down from the sky. The whole place ran with blood—streets, fields, river-bank. Neither man nor woman, young or old, survived; not a single person escaped unless they remained in hiding. The town was destroyed also; fire consumed it” (*Chanson de la Croisade* 212.9306-21, as quoted by Oldenbourg, p. 202).

The intent was to spread terror and cause many castles to surrender. But Languedoc had been at war for 10 years and the weary inhabitants took care not to react as they had 10 years earlier after Béziers. There were no mass capitulations.

1219 The Crusaders again laid siege to Toulouse June 16, 1219. But the 40 days of statutory service for the Crusaders was over in July and the siege was raised. Prince Louis left Toulouse, leaving behind his siege engines.

1220 A year later, in 1220, heretics in Troyes became the target for persecution (Oldenbourg, p. 482).

In spite of all that had happened in the previous 15 years—war which had devastated the countryside and massacres at Béziers, Minerve, Lavaur and Marmande, “the various Cathar churches kept up their activities, and were as well organized in 1225 as they had been before the Crusade. In that year there were four such churches (or rather, dioceses) in Languedoc—those of Albi, Toulouse, Carcassonne, and Agen....

“About this time many heretics, fearing that persecutions might return, began to arrange places of refuge for themselves in less disturbed provinces, where the Church remained comparatively untouched—Lombardy, for instance, or countries still further east” (Oldenbourg, pp. 232, 233).

1223 The French suffered one defeat after another in the following months and years. In addition to gaining its freedom again, Languedoc acquired a sort of national unity it had never known before the Crusade. A truce was made in May 1223 between Amaury de Montfort and Raymond VII. A

pact was signed between the counts of Toulouse and Foix and Amaury on Jan. 14, 1224.

“...[F]ifteen years after the massacre of Béziers, Languedoc had its own former *seigneurs* (or at least their sons) restored to it. The people could, for a brief moment, fancy themselves back in the good old days of their independence.... But it all meant nothing. The independence was a mere phantom. ...it was challenged both by the Church and the Capetian dynasty of France” (Oldenbourg, p. 207)

Beginning in 1225, Pope Honorius III energetically pressed the king of France to undertake another Crusade. But there was no action taken that year.

Wandering Ministry of Guilhabert de Castres

One Cathar bishop whose light shone during this dark period was Guilhabert de Castres. This energetic minister had held his own in a 1207 debate with the Catholic monk Dominic at Montréal.

Guilhabert was about 60 years old in 1220, when he was in charge of communities at Fanjeaux, Laurae, Castelnaudary, Montségur, Mirepoix and Toulouse. “Between 1220 and 1240 traces of his comings and goings can be found in most of the towns and châteaux around Toulouse, Carcassonne, and the Country of Foix. He was in Castelnaudary during Amaury de Montfort’s siege of the town in 1222; and later, when the Cathars were again victims of persecution, it was he who asked Raymond de Perella, the *seigneur* of Montségur, to place his fortress at the church’s disposal, and to organize the Cathar resistance movements headquartered there. The date and circumstance of his death remain unknown.” His successor was Bertrand Marty (Oldenbourg, pp. 235, 236).

Languedoc Becomes Part of France

On Jan. 28, 1226, the Catholic Church excommunicated (or reconfirmed the excommunication of) Raymond VII, count of Foix

1224**1225****1226**

and viscount of Béziers. At the same time Amaury de Montfort sold his rights and titles to the king of France. The king now became legitimate overlord of Languedoc. This was a major political move which helped unite France into the country it is today. But before the king could unite the two countries he had to conquer this heresy-infested land. He immediately announced his Crusade and the army was on the march in June.

Bernard de la Mothe Burned

While the French marched on their newly acquired territory, a Cathar bishop was martyred. Bernard de la Mothe, of Carcassonne, had escaped death when his castle was defeated in 1209. But he was burned at the stake in 1226 (Oldenbourg, p. 236).

Castles Surrender

The people of Languedoc loathed the French and jealously guarded their independence. But they feared another massacre, so one by one they surrendered without a fight. Only one castle—Avignon—held out against the Crusaders for three months before being taken.

Toulouse, the capital of Languedoc, also refused to submit. By October 1226 the Crusaders had neither strength nor desire to take Toulouse. They were discouraged, exhausted and had suffered terrible losses through disease and casualties. The army returned to France. The king died on the road soon after leaving Languedoc.

Some French troops were left behind. During the winter of 1226-1227, the counts of Toulouse and Foix won back some castles.

'Witch hunt' begins

A heretical "witch hunt" began in 1227. The bishop of Carcassonne had been martyred in 1226. His replacement, Pierre Isarn, was burnt at Caunes in 1227. The deacon Gérard de la Mothe also was burned at the stake after the capture of La Bessède (Oldenbourg, p. 239).

Peace Treaty Signed

Meanwhile, the throne of France was in the hands of an 11-year-old boy. His mother, widow of Louis VIII, was a staunch Catholic and possessed more energy and ambition than her husband or son ever had. The pope constantly urged her to wage afresh the holy war on heresy.

The army strove not for military victories but to destroy the countryside, preventing local people from defending themselves.

The Count of Toulouse realized his people were weary of war and needed respite. He signed a peace treaty in 1229 with the king of France. And though he was never conquered, Raymond was saddled with conditions no monarch would dream of imposing on his enemy—even after a most shattering victory.

Languedoc, which at one time had been a rich, wealthy trading center, was now in economic straits and physical ruin. Famine spread across the land as it so often does following war.

The wars had not stamped out heresy. The Waldensian church grew during this period as did the Cathars. "Those who were seeking God (and in these troubled times there must have been many of them) turned towards the Cathar rather than the Catholic Church" (Oldenbourg, p. 231).

As part of his treaty with France, Raymond "formally agreed to combat heretics, and have them hunted out by his bailiffs; to pay two silver marks to any person responsible for the capture of a heretic; to confiscate the goods of all excommunicate persons who had not made peace with the Church after a year's delay; to refrain from giving public office to any Jew or any person suspected of heresy; and to fight all those who refused to submit to this treaty, the Count of Foix in particular" (Oldenbourg, p. 247).

Romanus Attacks Church of God

The suppression of heresy—and thus the Church of God—became obligatory by com-

1229

1227

mon law. Heretics were to be hunted down like animals. Note these points from a decree of papal legate Romanus of S. Angelo:

“In each parish the [Catholic] archbishops and bishops are to nominate a priest, and two or three lay persons of good repute, to visit each house, and all suspect localities, such as caves, barns, and so on—anywhere, in fact, that might serve as hiding place for heretics. If they find any heretics during their search, they are to notify the Bishop, the *seigneur* of the area, and the bailiffs, that the law may take its course. Similar searches are to be carried out by the *seigneurs* and abbots, in houses, towns, and especially forests.

“Whosoever shall be convicted of having allowed a heretic to live within his domain shall lose the said domain, and himself be handed over for summary justice to his own *seigneur*. If any heretics be found on his land, he is still liable under this law, even though his connivance with heretics remain unproven. The house in which a heretic is discovered shall be burnt, and the property upon which it stands shall be forfeit.

“Any bailiff who shows himself negligent in the pursuit of heretics shall lose both his goods and the post he holds....

“Every male aged fourteen and upwards, and every female over twelve years, shall abjure heresy, swear loyalty to the [Catholic] orthodox Faith, and promise both to search out heretics and to denounce any such that are known to them. The names of every person dwelling in the parish shall be recorded, and they shall swear this oath before the bishop or his deputy; absentees shall do so within fifteen days of their return. Those failing to take the oath (and their names shall be ascertained from an inspection of lists) shall be treated as heretical suspects. The oath must be renewed every two years.

“Every person, of either sex, once having attained the age of reason, must confess to the parish priest... thrice yearly.... Priests are to seek out any who fail to attend Holy Communion, and thereby incur suspicion of heretical beliefs.

“All heads of household are obliged to attend Mass on Sundays and feast days....

“No person shall possess either an Old or a New Testament; exception may be made in the cases of the Psalter, the Breviary, or Our Lady’s Book of Hours, though these shall be in Latin only.

“No person under suspicion of heresy shall practice as a doctor...

“It is forbidden for any *seigneur*, baron, knight, castellan, or other such person to entrust the administration of his estates to a heretic or heretical believer” (Oldenbourg, pp. 269-271).

The only bright spot in all this was that it would require a vast number of people to effectively enforce these rules. It is doubtful that the count and his vassals could be counted on to do the church’s dirty work. Even the king’s own officers were too busy with their own duties to tackle this new work load.

Papal legate Romanus S. Angelo wanted more than just to make decrees. Before leaving Toulouse, he put on trial two famous *perfecti* of the Cathar church. The first, named William, has been called the Albigensian pope or apostle. He was burned to death in the faith as Romanus looked on. The other man, William de Solier, was converted to the Catholic faith. He denounced many people he knew in the Cathar church. Because of his high office in the church, he was able to tell the Catholic authorities about secret identities, hideouts and other meeting places.

Next Romanus summoned a number of faithful Catholics and asked for evidence against any heretics they knew. Then, those suspects were rounded up and brought before him. When questioned, the suspects refused to answer. Some bolder suspects asked to know the names of their accusers. But the Catholics could not allow this basic right—or they could not get Catholics to make accusations again for fear of reprisal.

Romanus tricked them. He showed them a list of all who had been cited to give preliminary evidence. But he did not tell the suspects who had testified and who had not

yet been before him. Romanus asked them to pick out their personal enemies. But they dared not name anyone because that person may not have testified at all, or may have testified in their favor. The suspects could do nothing but throw themselves on his mercy.

Shortly after this, Foulques, Catholic bishop of Toulouse, became responsible for imposing penances on the accused. Romanus returned to Rome and was later nominated by the pope to be bishop of Oporto.

Foulques was so unpopular that he dared not travel without armed escorts. Old and weary, he retired to a monastery and composed hymns until he died in 1231.

The decrees of Romanus went pretty much unfulfilled. In fact, local authorities continued protecting heretics (Oldenbourg, pp. 272-274).

The Cathar deacon Arnold Hot was residing in Cabaret along with French troops in 1229. In 1231, the château became a meeting place for all the heretics in the area. "The Cathars, deacons and perfecti alike, travelled the countryside without even attempting to conceal themselves: bestowing the *consolamentum* [laying on of hands], preaching, and, indeed, exercising their ministry in more or less normal fashion. We find the perfectus Vigoros de Baconia covering the whole Toulouse and Ariege regions this way: indeed, he obviously had no need to hide himself, since at the news of his arrival, the faithful flocked in from all the surrounding villages to listen to his preaching and good counsel" (Oldenbourg, p. 275).

Persecution in Italy, Germany

Persecution against heretics in Italy was stepped up in the early 1230s. In 1231, Brescia became the first Italian city to adopt a law on the burning of heretics. In 1233, 60 people—men and women—were burned in Verona while heretics died at the stake in Milan (Hroch and Skybová, p. 43).

Church of God members in Germany did not escape persecution. Konrad Von Marburg led the Catholic attack on heretics. "He was hard and uncompromising, a model for

his future colleagues in the Inquisition. He had no mercy on suspects nor did he hesitate in condemning an innocent man, saying that God knew whether in fact he was guilty or innocent and would himself decide on how he would spend eternity. Thus it is hardly surprising that Von Marburg and his companions were murdered in 1233" (Hroch and Skybová, pp. 43-44).

Decree of 1233

The pope threatened Raymond VII, count of Toulouse, with the possibility of renewed war with France if he did not do something about the heresy in his district. On April 20, 1233, he promulgated a new decree against heresy, based on the same lines as the decree of Romanus in 1229. And it had about the same amount of enforcement.

Trial of Lords of Niort

Two of the lords of Niort, Bernard-Otho and William, were called before a tribunal by William Arnald. They refused to answer questions and walked out. The next day they were arrested and imprisoned. The two were accused of heretical leanings.

Many witnesses testified against them. "Various priests and clerks came forward and declared Bernard-Otho de Niort not only publicly entertained heretics in his house, but also debarred from his lands those persons who came to seek out heretics..." (Oldenbourg, p. 280).

But just as many witnesses testified to their Catholic orthodoxy. Bernard-Otho had apparently adopted a thorough double-bluff stance.

"Despite such cumulative testimony in his favour, Bernard-Otho was pronounced a heretic, and condemned to death for his stubborn persistence in refusing to confess anything throughout the proceedings. His brother William and his son Bernard, who had in the end confessed, were condemned to life imprisonment. The sentence of death was not carried out.... In any case Bernard-Otho and William regained their freedom

1231

1233

shortly afterwards, since three years later they were condemned all over again, Bernard-Otho *in absentia* (Oldenbourg, p. 281).

Though Bernard-Otho had several times come to terms with the French and even had fought beside Simon de Montfort, he remained a loyal servant of the Catharist church. His turncoat ways apparently were meant to deceive the Crusaders and thus allow him more freedom to help the Cathars.

End of Crusade

The Crusades had come to an end. The political goals had been achieved. Languedoc was now French territory. But the Catho-

lic goal of eradicating heresy was incomplete. Of course its mission was impossible. Christ said his church—which the Catholics called heresy—would withstand the gates of hell.

In 1227 Gregory IX had become pope. Now, six years later, he wanted to continue the battle against heresy but could hardly appeal for a fresh Crusade in territory that now belonged to France. The king's mother was not anxious to resume a long and costly war.

So the pope decided to entrust the suppression of heresy to a special organization of professional "Inquisitors." The Inquisition is the subject of our next chapter.

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The Medieval Inquisition

1233

On April 13, 1233, Satan began a new phase of attack on God's church. Pope Gregory IX granted to a special group of monks—the Dominicans—the power to suppress heresy. Their purpose was not merely to assist the overworked Catholic bishops, for they did not report to the bishops but directly to the pope. They were Gregory's own "hit squad." The Inquisition which followed was "an instrument of terrorization. Otherwise it had no reason to exist.

"For the first time, however, Gregory IX now envisaged the creation of church dignitaries whose sole function should be to conduct Inquisitions, who should have the official title of 'Inquisitor,' and who, in their Inquisitorial capacity, should be responsible to the Pope personally, and not subject to the Bishop's authority....

"If the Pope entrusted this Order [the Dominicans] with the suppression of heresy, that was, surely, because he knew he could find men in it who would, within very wide limits, stop at nothing" (Oldenbourg, pp. 284, 285).

The Catholic Church would stop at nothing to destroy the Church of God—God's

holy people.

"The very existence of this people, holding the faith of the ancient church, was a constant testimony to Rome's apostasy, and therefore excited the most bitter hatred and persecution. Their refusal to surrender the Scriptures was also an offense Rome could not tolerate. She determined to blot them from the earth. Now began the most terrible crusades against God's people in their mountain homes. Inquisitors were put on their track, and the scene of innocent Abel falling before the murderous Cain was often repeated.

"Again and again were their fertile lands laid waste, their dwellings and chapels swept away, so that where once were flourishing fields and the homes of an innocent, industrious people, there remained only a desert. As the ravenous beast is rendered more furious by the taste of blood, so the rage of the papists was kindled to greater intensity by the sufferings of their victims. Many of these witnesses for a pure faith were pursued across the mountains and hunted down in the valleys where they were hidden, shut in by mighty forests and pinnacles of rock.

"No charge could be brought against the

moral character of this proscribed class. Even their enemies declared them to be a peaceable, quiet, pious people. Their grand offense was that they would not worship God according to the will of the pope. For this crime every humiliation, insult, and torture that men or devils could invent was heaped upon them" (White, pp. 76-77).

"The Albigensian Crusade was followed in southern France and elsewhere by the *Inquisition*. Heretics were hunted and brought to trial. The inquisitors were harsh in their methods, as were most persons engaged in the punishment of crime, secular or religious, during the Middle Ages. After a time they resorted to torture, if necessary, in order that the accused person might be forced to recant. Even those that recanted were punished severely, and those who refused, being turned over to the civil authorities, frequently were burned at the stake.

"In southern France the work of suppressing heresy was undertaken chiefly by the new order of black friars. This order had just been founded by St. Dominic, a learned and devout Spaniard of noble birth. Dominic's followers were stern, dogmatic, wandering preachers to whom heresy was especially offensive" (Ashley, pp. 419-420).

Inquisition Begins

On July 27, 1233, Pope Gregory IX nominated Stephen de Burnin as his papal legate for the area of southern France and gave him a special mission to extirpate heresy from that region. It was through Stephen de Burnin that two Dominican brothers from the Toulouse area had their powers confirmed: Peter Seila and William Arnald. They were the first inquisitors.

"These men were granted full authority to proceed against heresy, without being responsible to either episcopal or civil justice, and the powers they held were valid throughout the dioceses of Albi and Toulouse" (Oldenbourg, p. 286).

These inquisitors did not travel alone. Usually three inquisitors went together, accompanied by "a proctor fiscal, two secre-

taries, a magistrate, a messenger, a receiver, a gaoler (jailer), an agent of confiscated possessions and several assessors, counsellors, executioners, physicians, surgeons, doorkeepers, familiars, and visitors, who are all sworn to profound secrecy" (King, p. 59).

Their first action was to remove the head of the Catharist church. They captured Vigoros de Baconia, who was regarded as the leading heretic in Toulouse. "Vigoros was tried, condemned, and executed almost immediately. By depriving the Catharist church of one of its most dynamic leaders, the new Inquisitors had inaugurated their campaign with a masterly gambit.

"While Peter Seila stayed behind in Toulouse, William Arnald left on a grand Inquisitorial tour of the entire province" (Oldenbourg, p. 268).

Their actions so disturbed the count that he wrote a complaint to the pope later in 1233. "These Inquisitors," he alleged, "ignored all proper legal procedure, interrogated suspects behind closed doors, denied accused persons the assistance of a lawyer, and generally provoked the most acute terror. Some of those summoned before them were so scared that they denounced innocent people, while others took advantage of the secret conditions under which testimony was given, and charged their private enemies with heretical beliefs" (Oldenbourg, p. 287).

These men, filled with dynamic energy, spread a wave of terror throughout Languedoc for the next two years.

The Inquisition Procedure

"A regular procedure was followed. When the inquisitors arrived at the locality to which they had been called or sent, they preached a sermon in the most public place, such as the square of the largest town. At the end of the sermon a period of grace was set, during which all persons who came forward to confess their lapse from orthodoxy [Catholicism] would be received back and treated leniently. On the expiration of the period of grace, the judges began to collect evidence

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consisting of the testimony of witnesses sworn to answer truly to questions put to them. From this procedure by sworn inquest the Inquisition received its name. On the basis of this evidence all persons accused of heresy were summoned and interrogated. If the interrogation resulted in an admission of heresy and a desire for reconciliation, then the Inquisition received confession from the penitent, granted absolution, and assigned the appropriate penance. The majority of cases ended at this stage. The few persons against whom the sworn testimony of witnesses was conclusive and who, in addition, refused to admit heresy or recant heretical beliefs of which they were aware, were judged by the Inquisition to be guilty of obdurate heresy. The final act of the ecclesiastical tribunal was then to deliver such persons to the secular authority for sentence and punishment, that is, burning at the stake.

“Under this procedure it was almost impossible for the accused to prove himself innocent. He was not allowed to see the testimony against him nor to learn the names of his accusers. This secrecy was necessary to protect witnesses from recrimination, but it also encouraged false accusations. The accused was not allowed counsel, nor was he allowed to witness in his own behalf. The Inquisition did permit the accused to name his enemies, and the testimony of these known enemies was nullified. But this provision rarely helped very much, for the testimony of only two witnesses was sufficient for conviction” (Hoyt, pp. 372-373).

“The inquisitor could have a deputy appointed by the pope and qualified to carry out his duties. He also had available the services of a notary and of consultants (mostly theologians) to advise him. But the inquisitor was under no obligation to consider their advice. Finally, he had a number of officials directly beneath him, who presented cases and did other work on his behalf. These included prison governors and the inspectors who took charge of confiscated property and money. The officials in charge of confiscated property kept a record of costs and

would sell off part of it if necessary to cover the expenses incurred by the accused in meeting the cost of imprisonment and trial...

“Their [the Inquisition courts] primary function was to demonstrate and prove heresy and to distinguish between blasphemy, abuse of the sacraments, and false teaching on baptism, on the Eucharist or on consecration” (Hroch and Skybová, p. 38). Members of the Church of God could have been found guilty by Catholic Inquisitors on all counts!

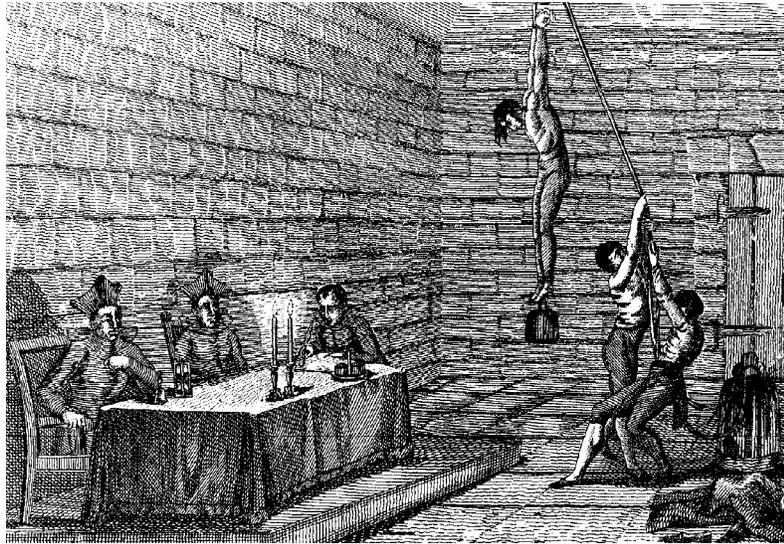
“In addition, the courts could prosecute anyone who had been excommunicated for more than a year [such as new converts to the Church of God] or anyone who possessed, read or propagated banned books. [This, of course, included the Church of God, which provided Bibles in the common language of the people and other literature banned by Catholics!] If it could be proved that a person had attended a burial or any other Christian ceremony held for a heretic, then that person could be summoned before the Inquisition, as could those who had neglected religious duties.”

If someone accused of heresy brought witnesses for his or her defense, those witnesses immediately were suspected of heresy too. This made it harder to prove innocence or to escape the grasp of the inquisitors (Hroch and Skybová, pp. 38-39).

During the 13th century, another procedure was introduced. Its purpose was to promote fairness but, unfortunately, its results were just the opposite. All written evidence was reviewed by a panel of legal experts before the court passed judgment. But when the case was stripped of its personalities, motivation and extenuating circumstances, it was easy for this panel to see deviation from orthodox Catholic behavior and recommend condemnation.

The courts also used torture, not to punish, but to extract information from a witness or to force a suspect to admit heresy. The popes forbade using torture for longer than half an hour at a time. But that did not prevent torturers from giving many half-hour periods of torture with small breaks between them.

Tortures that were used included burning the feet with hot coals, the rack and the strap-pado. The strap-pado was a favorite torture of the Inquisition. "...The accused was allowed to fall from a height of several feet against a rope binding his wrists behind his back. If done with skill, this could be kept up for many half-hour periods of excruciating pain before the defendant's shoulders were dislocated" (Hoyt, pp. 373-374).



The strap-pado was a favorite form of torture used during the Inquisition. Drawing by Theodor Goetz.

When heresy, either private or public, could be proved, the accused person usually was put to death.

"It was not long before these medieval executions of heretics became monstrous public spectacles. The convicted prisoners, wearing the heretic's robes of shame, would be led through the streets or brought on a cart to the place of execution as a public warning, amid mocking and jeers....

"...The practice of the Inquisition incorporated the view that heresy could not be eliminated until the heretics themselves were destroyed and that the heretics would not be completely wiped out until all those who had supported and sympathized with them were also eradicated" (Hroch and Skybová, pp. 39, 40).

The 'In Coena Domini' Bull

Sometime during the beginning of the Inquisition, the *In Coena Domini* Bull was first published by the pope. While its origins are unclear, the writ clearly became one of the most important bulls of the Catholic Church. It was read every Maundy Thursday (the Thursday before Easter) by the pope for centuries. The bull addressed the issue of heretics and named a number of groups,

including the Cathari and Waldenses.

"It provided for public identification of guilty parties, both groups and individuals, excluding them from society by excommunicating them, freed their servants from submission and forced the State to prosecute the guilty parties."

Later, during the Reformation, instructions would be added that would ban reading and disseminating heretical books. The reading of books not approved by the pope was forbidden.

The *Coena Domini* Bull affected not just heretics. "It also excommunicated all those who could be shown to be acting against the church and who represented a threat to the dominance of the church and the curia in Rome" (Hroch and Skybová, pp. 63-64).

Inquisition of 1235

Following Good Friday of 1235, there was a General Inquisition in Toulouse. There were mass confessions and many arrests. A man named Doumenge failed to come forward. He was arrested and threatened with execution. But Doumenge won his freedom by turning in others of his faith. He took the city magistrate and Catholic abbot to Cassès

and showed them where 10 perfecti were hiding. Three perfecti managed to escape. The other seven were burned at the stake.

That same year Raymond VII sent soldiers to Montségur. They seized a deacon named Jean Cambiaire (or Cambitor) and three perfecti. They were brought to Toulouse and burned.

Seila and Arnald went into the Quercy district and held a number of trials at Cahors for people who already had died. They condemned them and had their corpses dug up and burned. In Moissac, 210 people were found guilty of heresy and they were burned too.

On Aug. 4, 1235, the Catholic bishop Raymond du Fauga was about to enter Mass on the feast day of St. Dominic when he learned that a certain elderly lady had just gone through the Cathar *consolamentum* ritual in a nearby house. Raymond took several leading Catholic men to her house. The lady was seriously ill and perhaps about to die. She assumed this Catholic bishop was a bishop of the Cathar church and he tricked her into professing her “heresy.” Raymond summoned the magistrate. The woman was too ill to walk, so she was carried on her bed to “Count’s Field” and burned at the stake. Raymond and the monks cheerfully returned to the Mass and feasted.

The attitude of Raymond and the Dominican monks resembled that of the Ku Klux Klan (Oldenbourg, pp. 290-291).

1236 Atmosphere of Terror

In 1236 The inquisitors returned to Toulouse. Trials began again with more violence. A former Cathar perfectus, Raymond Gros, fell away to Catholicism and denounced a large number of people.

1237

Cemeteries were searched thoroughly in September 1237. The graves of about 20 of the most highly respected people in Toulouse were violated; their bones and rotting bodies were dragged through the streets. About a dozen live people were burned at the stake (Oldenbourg, pp. 294-295).

Women tended to be captured more of-

ten than men. Perhaps it was because they were more active than men, or perhaps they felt less threatened and therefore took fewer precautions than men did.

One man that was arrested in 1237 was the Cathar bishop Bertrand Marty, along with three *perfecti*. But the bailiff of Fanjeaux released his prisoners when they bribed him with 300 soustoulas (Oldenbourg, pp. 313, 315).

Public morale sank among those who did not flee.

“...In five years the Inquisitors managed to establish such an atmosphere of terror in Languedoc that they obtained a large number of voluntary submissions—mostly from people who had done no more than display some sympathy with heretical beliefs. ...the Inquisitors did not practice the kind of summary justice which the Crusade had made possible at Lavaur and Minerve: on the contrary, they took great care to keep a record of all their investigations. They were all the more concerned to do so since the main objective of such interrogations was to obtain names, and the minutes taken during each case could be utilized as damning evidence against a thousand suspects....

“It shook public confidence and undermined public morale; it bred an atmosphere of permanent anxiety throughout the country....

“In this way, an entire population, or the greater part of it, was systematically watched, spied upon, and harassed by every kind of irksome restriction. Attendance at Mass and partaking of the Blessed Sacrament became duties imposed by an omniscient network of police spies, and failure to conform brought down completely arbitrary official sanctions upon the offender” (Oldenbourg, pp. 296, 297, 306).

God’s Church Driven Underground

The Church of God could not exist well in this atmosphere of distrust and hatred. The church went into hiding.

“The most notorious heretics in Toulouse now left the country under the protec-

tion of the authorities, seeking refuge either in secret hiding places unknown to the Inquisitors, or else in the fortress of Montségur. The last was a more or less impregnable retreat, which became the official headquarters of the Catharist resistance movement” (Oldenbourg, p. 295).

1240

From 1230 to 1240 “very many” Cathars emigrated to Lombardy.

“The more Catharist life was driven underground, the greater its intensity and enthusiasm. Lukewarm believers, or those who had become heretics out of self-interest, or in conformity with the prevalent fashion (as was the case before 1209, and even after the reconquest of Languedoc by the Count) were gradually weeded out of the community. But the numbers who attended heretical religious meetings did not shrink: their ranks were swelled by all those who disliked the new régime, and saw that the heretical churches offered the only genuine, organized resistance movement. The Waldenses were now more active and powerful than they had been during the Crusade, the Churches, formerly rivals, now made a common front, and we find from the records that many Waldensian *perfecti* came to preach in Languedoc, especially in the Ariège district” (Oldenbourg, p. 311).

A Waldensian named DeVaux and a Cathar named William of Ayros traveled from village to village, and castle to castle, healing the sick and preaching sermons, much like Peter did in the early years of the church.

Because the church was outlawed, it required financial gifts to keep going. These came in steadily, and helped to purchase and distribute sacred texts and church literature. Funds also were used to organize meetings, pay for traveling ministers’ expenses, support needy believers, and occasionally to bribe some official to keep his mouth shut (Oldenbourg, p. 315).

If God’s church was indeed among the Cathars in earlier years, it most likely separated itself from these heretics at this time. The Cathars became a militant group which included knights and soldiers, some of whom

were used to protect their secret meetings in the woods outside of towns.

At one time the Cathars were opposed to killing. Now they used as an excuse that certain people were “direct incarnations of the Power of Evil” and it was no sin to kill them (Oldenbourg, p. 310).

Fall of Montségur

Many Cathars sought refuge in the secluded mountain fortress of Montségur. This became the “capital” of the Catharist movement in Languedoc. It protected the ministers and the church’s treasure, which consisted of money, sacred books, ancient manuscripts and church literature. Church literature was abundant at this time. The fortress came to be considered a holy place.

Raymond VII attempted one last time to free Languedoc from French occupation, beginning with uprisings in April 1240. But by Oct. 30, 1242, he was forced to submit and signed a peace treaty at Lorris.

The next spring a council was held at Béziers to decide how to exterminate the remaining heresy. The inquisitor William Arnald had been murdered during the rebellion and the murderers were hiding in Montségur. The Catholic officials decided to deal a death blow to the heart of the Cathar religion and use Montségur as a symbol for all resistance in the area.

In May 1243 the French army camped below Montségur. The fortress contained hundreds of people, including a garrison of 100-150 soldiers, their families, and about 200 “heretics.” A few leaders of the Cathar movement were there: Raymond de Saint-Martin, Bishop Bertrand Marty and Raymond Aiguilher (who had debated with Dominic nearly 40 years earlier).

With the exception of these men, “none of the major figures of the Catharist Church were actually present at Montségur during the siege. Most of them were dead, or continuing their apostolic work clandestinely, in ever-increasingly dangerous conditions. Montségur was not the Catharist Church’s last bastion, or indeed its last hope, but it

1242**1243**

did, as far as the great mass of *credentes* (believers) was concerned, symbolize that Church's continuing life" (Oldenbourg, pp. 323-347).

Montségur held out throughout the summer and expected relief as winter approached. Bad weather comes as early as October in the mountains. But the besieging army was reinforced by a detachment of hardy mountaineer mercenaries who did not let the climate or terrain stop them.

About the end of December the attackers finally made their way across a land bridge less than six feet wide to reach the base of Montségur. Shortly after this, two heretics, Matheus and Peter Bonnet, left the fortress and escaped through enemy lines with a great quantity of money, including gold and silver bullion. The remaining inhabitants realized they were doomed.

In January 1244 all access to Montségur from the outside world was severed. Continual battles took place between the defending garrison and the besiegers.

On March 1, 1244, after a nine-month siege, Montségur surrendered. The fortress was granted a 15-day truce during which enemy forces were not allowed to enter, even though it had already surrendered. The 15 days were spent in religious ceremonies, prayer, and private farewells.

"...It is very likely that Bishop Bertrand Marty and his companions wanted, before they died, to celebrate for the last time the feast which, in their ritual, corresponded to Easter. We know that the Cathars did observe such a festival, since one of their major

fasting-periods came immediately before Easter" (Oldenbourg, p. 385). Could it be that they celebrated Passover and Days of Unleavened Bread, as God's church had in the days of the apostles?

Why all this concern with death? Because one of the conditions of the surrender was that heretics would recant to the inquisitors or be burnt at the stake (Oldenbourg, p. 356).

During the night of March 16th, Pierre-Roger had ropes let down the west face of the rock, and allowed four men to escape. Three were known heretics named Amiel Aircart, Hugo and Poitvin. The fourth person's name is unrecorded. He may have been a mountain guide. "The escape plan seems to have been completely successful, since neither the four *haeretici* nor the treasure ever fell into the hands of the authorities" (Oldenbourg, p. 361).

Between 200 and 215 heretics were burned March 16, 1244. They were fettered and dragged roughly down the slopes from Montségur to where a pyre had been prepared. A giant palisade had been built, and a giant pile of sticks, hay and pitch were inside. When all 200-plus heretics were shut up inside the walls, they were put to the torch. The fire burned all day, filling the mountain air with acrid, sickening smoke from burning flesh (Oldenbourg, p. 363).

The Cathar church never recovered from the blow she suffered at Montségur. Though persecutions continued, God's church continued to survive among the scattered Cathari and among the Waldenses.

35

Persecution Grows Throughout Europe

1244 **T**he “Cathar Church”—as the world recognized the organization—had been dealt a bitter blow with the massacre at Montségur March 16, 1244. But God’s people—the Church of God—survived. Members fled into the mountains. Others could still be counted among the Waldenses. Persecution of followers of God did not stop at Montségur.

The very year Montségur fell, Roman Emperor Frederick II, who declared himself to be protector of all inquisitors, published two cruel edicts. One called for all heretics to be burned. The other ordered those who recanted and rejoined Catholicism to be imprisoned for life (King, pp. 58-59).

1249 **Count Burns 80 Heretics**

Just five years later, in 1249, Raymond VII, Count of Toulouse, burned 80 people suspected of heresy at Agen. The count died Sept. 27, 1249, a few months later (Oldenbourg, p. 365).

1254 **Saccho Describes Cathar History**

About 1254, Reinerius Saccho stated the

Cathar churches in Europe originated from two churches, one in Bulgaria (we know the Bogomils were there), the other in Dugranicia.

He listed the churches as “The Church of the Albigenses of Sansano, of Contorezo, of Bagnolo, of Vicenza, of Florence, of Spoleto, of France, of Toulouse, of Cahors, of Albi, of Slavonia, of the Latins at Constantinople, of the Greeks in the same city” (Conybeare, p. cxlviii).

Saccho’s statement tells us the churches were still going strong more than a decade after the fall of Montségur. But there were divisions within the church and brethren fell away.

“Reinerius, the Judas Iscariot of the Albigensian Church, himself testifies that the Cathars were divided among themselves into many shades of opinion, some being more dualistic or Manichean than others (Maitland, p. 429); he also attests that as early as the year 1223 the opinions and observances of some of them had undergone important changes” (Conybeare, p. cxlviii). We have already mentioned how the Cathar Church seems to have forgotten its spiritual roots during the Inquisition.

1254

Waldenses Grow, Spread Gospel

Saccho also wrote about the Waldenses. He called them Leonists, named after Leo, one of their leaders in the fourth century: "There is no sect so dangerous as Leonists, for three reasons: first, it is the most ancient; some say it is as old as Sylvester, others, as the apostles themselves. Secondly, it is very generally disseminated; there is no country where it has not gained some footing. Third, while other sects are profane and blasphemous, this retains the utmost show of piety; they live justly before men, and believe nothing concerning God which is not good" (Dugger and Dodd, pp. 224-225).

The Waldenses, who had been going strong, also felt pressure from papal forces. About 1260 the Inquisition discovered Waldensian schools in 42 Catholic parishes in Austria. The Church of God had been continuing to teach its young to live in the way of God. But one by one the Inquisition shut down the church's schools and meeting

places. Some of the Waldenses, too, were forced to flee into mountain valleys, where they could practice their religion openly (*Correspondence Course*, Lesson 51, pp. 11, 15).

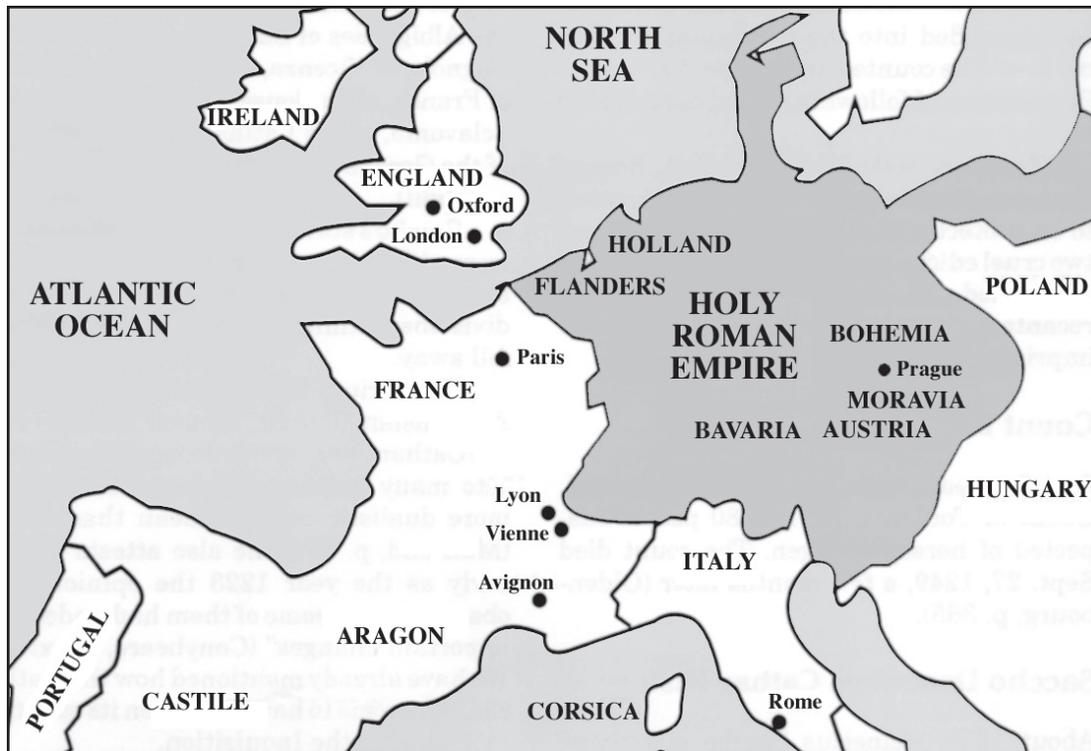
Not all Waldenses were hiding in the mountains at this time! "By the end of the 13th century, Waldenses were to be found not only in the inaccessible mountain regions but also in all the major towns of central Europe" (Hroch and Skybová, p. 14).

During the 1300s, some 80,000 Waldenses lived in the Austrian Empire (Fletcher, p. 164). Benedict, in his *History of Baptists*, claimed these 80,000 Waldenses were in Bohemia in the year 1315. Bohemia, later part of Czechoslovakia, was part of the Austrian Empire in the 1300s (Dugger and Dodd, p. 176).

The major work of God's church during this entire Thyatira era was to translate, copy, and make known God's word. That was the purpose for the schools, the memorization of Scriptures, and the translation of the Bible into common languages which was

1260

1300



During the 1300s there were 80,000 Waldenses in Bohemia, which was part of the Austrian (Roman) Empire.

1309

done by the Waldenses. Waldensian ministers, called “wandering and hypocritical fellows” by their enemies, could be found in Holland as early as 1309.

In Holland, the Waldenses became known as Lollards, “from a Flemish word, *lollen* or *lullen*, meaning to sing or speak softly, or to mumble—because of their practice of memorizing the Scripture, in the vernacular, by mumbling it to themselves or to one another.... The word came to be applied to *all* so-called ‘heretics’” (*Correspondence Course*, Lesson 52, pp. 3-4).

1310

Echard Persecutes in Germany

From 1310 to 1330 the Waldenses in Germany were persecuted, mostly by an ambitious inquisitor named Echard, a Jacobin monk. He, like Saul of the first century, went from town to town and martyred members of the Church of God and other heretics (*Correspondence Course*, Lesson 51, p. 16). More about Echard later!

1315

The Church of God in France

A royal ordinance made in 1315 by King Louis X of France applied rulings of the Roman Emperor Frederick II to *all* of France. It “was probably *the most effective* measure taken by the State of France against heretics. Thus the net of the Inquisition was drawn even tighter, and for the next hundred years *all categories* of heretics were tried and persecuted continually” (Hroch and Skybová, p. 41, emphasis added). This undoubtedly included Church of God members.

Sometime between 1315 and 1347, Waldenses moved from the Piedmont Valley to Merindol in France. These Waldenses were described as a laboring people who “had much improved the country by their industry; that their manners were most excellent; that they were honest, liberal, hospitable and human; that they were distinct from others in this, that they could not bear the sound of blasphemy, or the naming of the devil, or any oaths, except on solemn occa-

sions; and that if they ever fell into company where blasphemy or lewdness formed the substance of the discourse, they instantly withdrew themselves. Such were the testimonies to the character of this people from enemies!” (Dugger and Dodd, pp. 150-151).

God Calls Walter the Lollard

About this time God began using a Waldensian minister named Walter the Lollard. He was German. He and his brother, Raymond, took the truth of God westward through Holland and then across the North Sea into the British Isles (Hoeh, *A True History*, p. 23; Fletcher, p. 164).

“A bold and intrepid teacher was raised up among the B[e]ghards, or Picards, in 1315, in the person of Walter Lollard, who became an eminent barb[e] or pastor among them, and from whom the Waldenses were called Lollards... Moreland asserts he was in great reputation with the Waldenses, for having conveyed their doctrines into England, where they prevailed over the kingdom... Walter was in unity of views in doctrine and practice with the Waldenses” (Orchard, *Baptist History*, as quoted by Dugger and Dodd, p. 175).

Walter also preached throughout the Alpine valleys of northern Italy “for a length of time with great success” (Par Bresse, *Authentic Details of the Valdenses*, ed. 1827, as quoted by Fletcher, p. 164).

Beginning in 1319, Catholic armies began to invade the Waldensian valleys on a regular basis, martyring a great number of the Waldenses who had not fled to France and other places (*Correspondence Course*, Lesson 51, p. 15).

In 1322, Walter the Lollard was captured by Catholic Church officials in Cologne, Germany. He was burned at the stake (*Correspondence Course*, Lesson 52, p. 4; Fletcher, p. 165).

One authority reports that the death of Walter was “highly detrimental” to the work of God. But God’s church prevailed once again against the gates of hell. The church in England prospered as did the church in

1319**1322**

Germany (Fletcher, p. 165; Dugger and Dodd, p. 175).

Inquisition Handbook Written

When the Inquisition on the continent of Europe had been in force for nearly a century, the Inquisitor of Toulouse, Bernard Gui, wrote a handbook. It was titled, *Practica inquisitionis haereticae pravitatis*, and was based mainly on the experiences of Gui in southern France.

“Gui names among the worst heretics of the time the Cathari, the Waldenses, false apostles, Beghards, Jews, witches and clairvoyants, providing documentation on each and setting out how their trial should proceed. Included is his portrait of an ideal inquisitor, and it is anything but an attractive one” (Hroch and Skybová, p. 40).

1330

Echard the Monk Converted

In 1330, as the Church of God in Germany was harassed and oppressed grievously by that Jacobin monk inquisitor named Echard, a miracle took place. In a story similar to that of Paul’s in the first century, this attacker of God’s church became a pillar.

“After inflicting cruelties for some time upon these people, he was induced to investigate the causes and reasons of the separation from the church of Rome. The force of truth ultimately prevailed over all his prejudices. His own conscience attested that many of the errors and corruptions which they [Waldenses] charged on that apostate [Catholic] church really existed; and finding himself unable to disprove the articles of their [Waldensian] faith by the Word of God, he confessed that the truth had overcome him, gave glory to God, entered into the communion of the Waldensian churches, which he had been engaged in persecuting even to death. The news of his conversion aroused the ire of the inquisitors. Emissaries were dispatched in pursuit of him, he was at length apprehended and conveyed to Heidelberg, where he was committed to the flames” Orchard, pp. 333, 334, as quoted by

Dugger and Dodd, p. 176).

Echard, like Paul, preached the very Gospel he had tried to stamp out in earlier years. And, like Paul, he met a violent death for his conversion and strongly held beliefs (*Correspondence Course*, Lesson 51, p. 16).

The ‘14th-Century Languedoc’

During the 1300s, heresy, as the Catholics called it, grew rapidly throughout Bohemia. In fact, Bohemia has been called the “14th-century Languedoc.” We know heresy was widespread from fragments of records of the Inquisition there.

“The records of Inquisitor Havel Jindrlichuv Hradec between 1335 and 1355 showed that he alone tried in excess of 4,400 people during that period. About one in twenty was condemned to be burned. Virtually the whole of Bohemia was affected: Prague, Neuhaus, Budweis, Saaz, Königsgrätz and Brünn.

“Those involved were mostly property owners from the towns and the country; only a very few came from the patrician class. Most of those affected were Germans, the descendents of immigrants to Bohemia in the previous century” (Hroch and Skybová, p. 44).

Meanwhile, heresy (including, perhaps, the Church of God) persisted in the area of the Balkans, Hungary, and in Spain and Portugal, unhindered by the Inquisition (Hroch and Skybová, p. 45).

Who Was John Wycliffe?

John Wycliffe had been born about 1324. In his early years he spoke out boldly against the pope’s demand that England pay dues to the Vatican. His discontent with the Catholic Church began over money but he soon realized the Roman church had been unfaithful to its mission for a long time.

In the early 1370s Wycliffe was led to seek a new church. There is no evidence to show he ever came in contact with God’s true church. But he did believe in many things that members of the Church of God believed.

1335

1370



John Wycliffe translated the Bible into English, which helped the Church of God to grow in England. While he held to many of the truths which God's Church had, it is not clear that he was ever a member of the Church of God.

Wycliffe rejected the pope's authority, calling his office a "blasphemous institution" and labeled the man himself as the "man of sin" which Paul had described, that is, the Antichrist.

"The Pope became the embodiment of Anti-Christ; the incarnation of the whole body of the damned and the visible leader of the battle against the true and invisible Church of the saved" (*Heresy and Politics in the Reign of Henry IV: The Burning of John Badby* by Peter McNiven, p. 23).

Transubstantiation, the Mass and monkhood were all rejected by Wycliffe. He realized "the monks were no longer God-seekers who had fled the world. The mendicant orders in particular had become the fighting troops of the papacy and were sent to the front whenever the vicar of Christ wished to press his claims" (Nigg, pp. 261-265).

Wycliffe believed excommunication by

priests was only effective if it happened to coincide with true excommunication by God. Confession, as done by Catholics, was unscriptural. Absolution by priests and transubstantiation were blasphemy (McNiven, pp. 23-27).

Wycliffe thought all people could interpret the Scriptures correctly. They did not need Catholic priests to lead them. "The Christian's first duty to himself was to know the holy texts; his foremost duty to his fellows was to preach the Gospel which these texts contained." He believed people had a direct link with God and did not need priests as go-betweens (McNiven, pp. 14-16).

Wycliffe rejected the Catholics' rich priests and saw in their place ministers poor in worldly goods and dedicated to serving people. He equated "true apostleship with the rejection of material wealth and worldly concerns" (McNiven, p. 15).

"In all likelihood he hit upon this idea without any knowledge of the Waldensians—nor did he develop it to the extent that they had done. Wycliffe put this ideal into practice by sending forth itinerant preachers, to whom he gave the name of 'evangelical men.' 'These men walked barefoot, dressed in long red garments of coarse woolen material, a staff in their hands to signify that their travels were a kind of pilgrimage and they themselves pilgrims. The coarse cloth of their dress was a sign of poverty and humility. Thus they wandered from village to village, from city to city, from one country to the next, never resting, and preaching, teaching, admonishing whenever they found willing listeners, sometimes in a church or chapel, sometimes in the churchyard, sometimes in the marketplace' (F. Böhringer: *Die Kirche Christi und ihre Zeugen, Johannes von Wycliffe* (1878), pp. 85, 86" (Nigg, p. 266).

While it seems unlikely Wycliffe was associated with the Church of God, it is a possibility. Even if he was not a member, his work had a great impact on the church. He was the first to translate the Bible into English. It was easier for the Church of God in England to do its work now that its members had a Bible in their common language,

just as Waldo, the Waldenses and the Cathars had advanced the church's cause with their translations.

1375**Persecution Continues**

The Waldenses were persecuted in the latter part of the 14th century. There was a great persecution about 1375 (*Correspondence Course*, Lesson 51, p. 16).

1377

In 1377, the pope issued five decrees condemning Wycliffe and ordering his imprisonment. But the English government refused to comply (*World Book Encyclopedia*, "Wycliffe, John," Vol. 18, p. 8937).

1380**Persecution by Francis Boralli**

In 1380 the Waldenses suffered under the inquisitor Francis Boralli. He received a commission from Pope Clement VII to search for and punish Waldenses in Aix, Ambrone, Geneva, Savoy, Orange, Arles, Vienna, Venice and Avignon.

He went to Ambrone and summoned all inhabitants to appear before him. Those found to be Waldenses were turned over to the government and burned. Those who did not appear before Boralli were excommunicated for stubborn rebelliousness. All their belongings were confiscated. The church took two-thirds or more of the spoils and the civil government received less than a third and sometimes next to nothing.

Waldenses in other towns Boralli visited suffered the same fate (King, pp. 41-42).

Some of the Waldenses gave up their love of peace and moved their trust from God to weapons. But when they took up arms to repel invading inquisitors in 1380, God stopped protecting them (*Correspondence Course*, Lesson 51, p. 15).

The Later Lollards

A group in England at this time followed John Wycliffe. These followers were called "Lollards" but they were not the same Lollards as those of the 1320s.

"Because of this confusion, the later his-

tory of the original Lollards becomes somewhat obscure.

"A large number of sympathizers joined themselves to the Lollard cause, but it would appear that the objective of most of these people was to introduce reforms into the Catholic Church, rather than to come to personal repentance and to assist in the preaching of the true gospel" (Fletcher, p. 165).

People nicknamed the latter Lollards "Poor Priests." They wore long russet gowns and carried staffs as they traveled about the small English villages. "They preached simplicity of worship and denounced the Mass, papal authority, and other basic doctrines of the Catholic faith. Oxford was their headquarters" (*World Book Encyclopedia*, "Lollard," vol. 10, p. 4564). This is similar to the description of Wycliffe's followers which we read earlier.

The Lollards were not one united group. This made it quite possible that Church of God members could have been found among them: "The men and women who attracted the epithet 'Lollard' were far from being members of an organized sect with the power or the will to impose uniformity of religious belief. Among those who involved themselves with dissenting opinions, there was a considerable range of attitudes and personal creeds" (McNiven, p. 42).

"The Lollards... were charged with the task of sowing the seed of the divine Word. Their sermons dealt with moral rather than dogmatic matters, and by the simplicity of their style stirred the consciences of the people" (Nigg, p. 267).

Church and state united against the Lollards in a 1382 measure called "De excommunicato capiendo." Once a person had been excommunicated by a Catholic Church court, the bishop could order the local sheriff to arrest and jail the offender until he recanted.

The preamble claimed the followers of Wycliffe were preaching without a license. And their preaching caused commotion among the people. Bishops therefore could have any such preachers imprisoned by the

1382

sheriff (McNiven, pp. 40-41).

1384**Wycliffe Dies**

John Wycliffe died in 1384 while attending his own church services (Nigg, p. 268).

God's People Flee

During the 1380s there was a great Bohemian Inquisition. Many people were martyred and others scattered as far as Transylvania and Hungary, several hundred miles to the south and east of Bohemia. (Transylvania had been a place of refuge years before for Paulicians fleeing from persecution—Conybeare, p. CL.)

Roman Emperor Ferdinand had “unlimited” hatred for non-Catholics. After Polish armies had prevailed against the Protestants at Cuttenburgh, Ferdinand decided to establish his own Inquisition force “... upon the plan of the Inquisition, with this difference, that the reformers were to remove from place to place, and always be attended by a body of troops. The greater part of this court consisted of Jesuits, from whose decision was no appeal. The bloody court, attended by its military guard, made the tour of Bohemia, and seldom examined or saw a prisoner; but suffered the soldiers to murder the Protestants as they pleased, and then to report the matter in their own fashion” (King, p. 95).

Several of the nobles beheaded in Bohemia were Lord Schilik, Viscount Wincelous, Lord Harant, Lord Henry Otto, Sir Gasper Kaplitz and Christopher Choher. Two other men, Simon Sussickey and Nathaniel Wodnianskey, were not of noble birth and so were hanged instead of beheaded. There is no indication any of these men were members of the Church of God. But they were martyred for their unorthodox anti-Catholic beliefs. Each would rather die than recant and join the Roman church (King, pp. 96-98).

1388

On March 30, 1388, English lay people were given commissions to seek out and suppress the writings of Lollard teachers,

especially those of Wycliffe and Nicholas Hereford. These investigators had the power to imprison anyone dealing in the forbidden literature or teaching Lollard doctrines. On August 10 of that same year the Bishop of Worcester banned five Lollards from preaching in his jurisdiction. They were Hereford, William Swinderby, John Purvey, John Astin and John Parker. The order was framed to include any other teachers of forbidden opinions, including the Church of God (McNiven, p. 53).

Separate and distinct societies of Lollards kept the Sabbath as early as 1389 (Benedict, *History of Baptists*, p. 308, as quoted by Dugger and Dodd, p. 177).

In 1390 disciples of Bohemian teachers were found in Saxony and Pomerania. So Church of God members also sought refuge in what is now northern Germany on the North and Baltic seas. Waldenses fled from Picardy in northern France to Poland (*Correspondence Course*, Lesson 51, p. 16).

In January 1395, some Lollards tacked articles of their faith to the doors of Westminster Hall and St. Paul's Cathedral in England. This notice attacked Catholic beliefs of “feigned miracle of the sacrament of the bread,” pilgrimages, prayers to crosses, roods and images, absolution, efficacy of indulgences, exorcisms and benedictions, special prayers for individuals, monastic life, and vows of chastity by women. It claimed the Catholic priesthood “was not ‘that priesthood which Christ ordained to the Apostles.’ ” And it condemned the killing of fellow human beings “in war or law” (McNiven, p. 58).

Parliament met for the first time after this event in January 1397 in Westminster. “In this assembly the bishops asked the king and the Lords to ordain that the ultimate penalty for heresy should henceforth be death.... They claimed that the danger from Lollardy was increasing, and drew attention to the law in other Christian countries” (McNiven, p. 61, 67).

Persecution did not end with the coming of the 1400s. It was in the winter of 1400 when Waldenses who lived in the valley of Pragelas were attacked by troops. Some

1389**1390****1395****1397****1400**

1400

priests were behind the attack. The troops swooped down unexpectedly on the Waldenses, murdering them and plundering their houses. Many were driven up into the Alps where great numbers froze (King, p. 42).

“It was in midwinter... and the inhabitants dreaded no attack, believing, themselves sufficiently protected by the snow which then lay deep upon their mountains. They were destined to experience the bitter fact that the rigors of the season had not quenched the fire of their persecutor’s malice. Borelli, at the head of an armed troop, broke suddenly into Pragelas, meditating the entire extinction of its population.

“The miserable inhabitants fled in haste to the mountains, carrying on their shoulders their old men, their sick, and their infants, knowing what fate awaited them should they leave them behind. In their flight a great many were overtaken and slain. Nightfall brought them deliverance from pursuit, but no deliverance from the horrors not less dreadful... without shelter, without food, and frozen snow around them, the winter’s sky overhead, their sufferings were inexpressibly great. When morning broke, what a heart-rending spectacle did day disclose! Some of the miserable group lost their hands and feet from frostbite; while others were stretched out in the snow, stiffened corpses. Fifty young children, some say eighty, were found dead from cold, some lying on bare ice, others locked in the frozen arms of their mothers, who had perished on that dreadful night along with their babes” (Wylie, pp. 30, 31, as quoted by Dugger and Dodd, pp. 129-130).

Church in England Keeps Passover, Baptism

The Church of God had become established in England with Water the Lollard. The church kept Passover on the 14th of Nisan and believed in baptizing only mature people, not infants (Conybeare, p. clxxix).

Lollards were commanded not to preach by measures which originated with Catholic bishops. In May 1400, writs were sent to all

sheriffs in England ordering them to proclaim that no one should preach without proper license from their bishops, except the parish priests who could preach in their own churches. Men who had recently preached without license had spread heretical doctrines, it was claimed (McNiven, p. 78).

The Canterbury Convocation of January 29, 1401 specifically attacked the problem of heresy. “It will have become increasingly obvious that February 1401 was not a propitious time for religious dissidents, especially individuals whose dissent was not backed by the slightest degree of political or economic leverage” (McNiven p. 80, 81).

One of the first Lollards to die for his beliefs during the Canterbury Convocation was William Sawtre. On Feb. 28, John Purvey, Wycliffe’s amanuensis, was brought before the Convocation. Like Nicholas Hereford, he had been “grievously tormented” in prison. He recanted and rejoined the Catholic faith (McNiven p. 88, 89-91).

“The conclusion of the parliament on 10 March brought with it the statutory enactment of the principle upon which Sawtre’s premature sentence had been founded. The Church and its lay supporters were now armed with their long-anticipated ultimate weapon against heresy” (McNiven, p. 92).

The famous statute, *De Haeretico Comburendo*, was passed which outlawed the “new doctrines” of the Lollards. Faced with fines, imprisonment and death, many Lollards recanted and rejoined the Catholic Church. True Lollards remained faithful to the Church of God. Several of these were hunted down and martyred (Fletcher, p. 165; *Correspondence Course*, Lesson 52, p. 5).

“The greater part of the new legislation was aimed at the threat to both Church and state allegedly posed not simply by the preaching of Lollard opinions, but by the growth of a network of alternate theological education. After reiterating that no-one, with certain conventionally recognised exceptions, was to preach without ecclesiastical license, the statute laid down that no one was to produce any book which contradicted the Catholic faith or ‘the determination of the

1401

Holy Church,' or to set up unauthorised schools or 'coventicles' through which they might expound 'their most wicked doctrines and opinions.' No-one, declared the statute in the most vague and sweeping terms, was to have anything to do with those who were involved in such activities, and all books of suspect orthodoxy were to be surrendered to the nearest bishop after forty days notice" (McNiven, p. 93).

People caught violating the new law were cast into the bishop's prison and could be held captive there "so long as his discretion shall seem expedient." In other words, there was no time limit. Any amount of fine could also be levied.

Within a year of Purvey's recantation, a knight named Sir Lewis Clifford also submitted to the Catholic Church after flirting with heresy for 21 years. The old man gave the Catholic archbishop Arundel a list of Lollard beliefs and a list of people who still believed in Lollardism.

His list of beliefs were similar to those already discussed but had some additions: The Catholic Church was "the synagogue of Satan," Mass was "the pinnacle of antichrist," Purgatory did not exist, penance was unnecessary, there was nothing especially holy about Sunday and a true believer may work, eat and drink with a clear conscience on every day God had given. Virginity and celibacy did not impress God (McNiven, pp. 94-95).

Five years after *De Haeretico Comburendo*, the Lollards were accused of being enemies of the people: "For years the Lollards had been accused, to all appearances falsely, of plotting and fomenting lay sedition.... In the parliament of 1406, Lollards were implicitly accused of being enemies of the Crown as well as of the Church..." (McNiven, p. 225).

On April 28, 1407, commissions ordered the prior of St. Mary's Coventry, and others, to "arrest anyone preaching, publishing, or teaching in 'schools' any doctrine 'contrary to the Catholic faith and the sacraments of the Church'" (McNiven, p. 105).

In August of that year Arundel interro-

gated the Lollard William Thorpe. Thorpe was accused of preaching in Shrewsbury "that the sacrament of the altar, after consecration, was material bread; that images were not to be worshipped; that men ought not to undertake pilgrimages; that priests had no right to tithes; and that it was not lawful to swear oaths." Thorpe also called images in Church a distraction and claimed confession to priests was wrong; only God could grant forgiveness (McNiven, pp. 105-111).

It is not known what happened to Thorpe. It would be unusual if he had been martyred and there was no record of it, since there is a very lengthy record of his trial. One thing the trial did was convince Arundel that an organized heretical movement was still in existence. It was also clear that at least one adherent of this sect had a considerable knowledge of the Bible and theology at his fingertips.

Arundel was determined to stamp out heresy in England. He did not realize Christ would not let him stamp out the true church. In measures to accomplish his goal, Arundel tried to prevent the propagation of non-Catholic views and he brought Oxford University under the jurisdiction of the Catholic Church. (Oxford had been a hotbed for heresy.) Arundel produced 13 constitutions which again prevented people—preachers and teachers—from preaching or teaching anything contrary to the Catholic faith. He tried censorship. No works of Wycliffe or anyone else could be read in schools, halls, hospitals or other places unless they were deemed orthodox. No one was to make any English translations of the Bible or to read any existing translation (McNiven, pp. 114-116).

"Under oppression, Lollards—God's people and those who helped them—spread to new parts of England and to Scotland. Local priests were often in sympathy and omitted Catholic rites.

"But the Wycliffite movement was mainly secular. In a few years it became involved in a political scheme which was badly defeated, and its leaders executed"

1407

1406

1407

(*Correspondence Course*, Lesson 52, p. 6).

Though many writs had been made against Lollardy, they were not actively enforced away from the population centers in England. Thus God's people found refuge in remote parts of the country: "Despite the pronouncements of the Church since 1382, there is little reason to believe that Lollards were pursued with any consistent vigour in these relatively remote parts, or that those who held proscribed views lived in daily fear of active persecution" (McNiven, p. 199).

1409

That is why the trial of John Badby is so curious. He was not a preacher but a layman. And he came from the provincial obscurity of Worcestershire. Why did he attract national attention and eventually die for his Lollard beliefs?

In January 1409 this educated craftsman was brought before local Catholic officials to answer accusations of his heretical teachings. He had attacked transubstantiation and had uttered many words totally contrary to Catholicism. He was most likely imprisoned in a church prison until February 1410 when he was brought before the assembled leaders of the English Church.

1410

Badby, a layman, would not have aroused national attention. But Archbishop Arundel decided to use him to show the nation the evils of Lollardy. In the presence of virtually every spiritual lord in England, Badby defended his beliefs. He said the bread on the altar remained bread; it was not transformed into the actual flesh of Christ, though it did symbolize his body. He said if the bread were changed into God then there must be 20,000 gods in England and he believed in only one. Badby rejected the organization of the Catholic Church and its priesthood.

When the convocation reconvened March 5, Badby was declared a heretic and handed over to the lay power. Arundel recommended that Badby be burned to death.

As soon as the flames began to take effect, Badby cried out from the stake. The Prince ordered the burning halted and offered Badby a chance to change his mind. Badby reaffirmed his determination to stand by his convictions and the prince ordered the

burning to be resumed (McNiven, pp. 199-218).

Sir John Oldcastle

1413

At the beginning of Henry V's reign, about 1413, the Catholic clergy became especially angry with the Lollards and made a false report of a conspiracy among them and their leader, Sir John Oldcastle.

Oldcastle, a member of English nobility, had many talents. He was "proficient in literature, of a ready wit, and skilled in affairs in the cabinet or in the field. In his love of philosophy, he had perused the writings of Wycliffe..." (King, p. 136).

"There is no proof that Oldcastle held unorthodox opinions in 1410; it is beyond dispute, however, that he did so only three years later. His earlier association with known Lollard sympathizers reinforces the case for maintaining that he came to the parliament [in 1413] as a fully fledged heretic" (McNiven, p. 190).

Oldcastle became a zealous follower of Wycliffe. He transcribed his works, supported various preachers (perhaps he was a co-worker for the Church of God), and he became the acknowledged leader of the rising Reformation.

The Catholic clergy persuaded King Henry V to organize persecution against the Lollards. They told the king a vicious rumor: that the Lollards intended to murder the king, his royal family, and most of the lords. They claimed Oldcastle had secretly collected 20,000 men in Giles-in-the-Fields—a place covered with bushes and undergrowth.

Henry V went there at midnight and found 80 people who had gathered for religious worship. The royal troops inhumanely slaughtered many of them. Others were arrested, and when tortured on the rack, "admitted" that the rumor was true and Oldcastle was their ringleader. A price of a thousand marks was placed on his head. Any town that would turn in Oldcastle would have its taxes returned to it.

Oldcastle was captured [in 1413—McNiven] and imprisoned in the Tower of

London. He escaped but was recaptured four years later. He was condemned to death. It was a horrible death—he was suspended from a gallows by chains and a fire was set under him. He was slowly roasted to death while priests and monks looked on (King, p. 137).

“Not satisfied with his death, the clergy got the parliament to make fresh statutes against the Lollards. It was enacted, among other things, that whoever read the scriptures in English should forfeit land, chattels, goods, and life; and be condemned as heretics to God, enemies to the crown, and traitors to the kingdom; that they should not have sanctuary; and that, if they continued obstinate, or relapsed after being pardoned, they should first be hanged for treason against the king, and then burned for heresy against God. This act was no sooner passed, than a violent persecution was raised against the Lollards. Several were burnt alive, some escaped from the kingdom, and others abjured rather than suffer the horrible torments prepared for them by popish intolerance and cruelty” (King, pp. 137-138).

Most of Wycliffe’s followers recanted when they faced martyrdom. But later, many people, “more influenced by the Bible and the true Lollards who constituted a part of the Church of God, were steadfast even to death. There is evidence that scattered true followers of Christ survived for two centuries in all corners of England, although they were never again prominent after the fall of the Wycliffites (See Thomsen, *The Later Lollards*).

“They were constantly hunted and oppressed by the established church, and only survived by remaining under cover as much as possible. Our only source of information about them is that which was brought out in the trials of those who were caught.

“They maintained that the papacy was a ‘beast’ (Rev. 13) and anti-Christ, and that it had never been given any authority by Jesus’ apostle Peter. Some of them, on the other hand, clearly stated that its spiritual character was that of Simon Magus! (Acts 8).

“A man ought not to be baptized, they

said, until mature, and the True Church was *not* ‘universal’ but, in this age, was limited to a few. They maintained that the sacraments of the false church were blasphemous, leading men to damnation. The relics of saints, and the miracles claimed to have been performed by them, were nothing but fakes and impositions” (*Correspondence Course*, Lesson 52, p. 6).

Many people who were labeled “Lollards” were sympathizers but were not actually members of the Church of God. Many listened to the real Lollards but their interests were not in spreading the true Gospel but in reforming the Catholic Church. “They were not converted members of God’s spiritual congregation. Some of those labeled ‘Lollards’ by the prosecutors were indeed heretics, and even atheists” (*Correspondence Course*, Lesson 52, pp. 6-7).

While the Church of God grew slowly in England, it also continued to grow on the continent of Europe.

Pope Martin’s Crusade

1427

In June 1427, Pope Martin organized a great crusade to wipe out God’s truth in Bohemia. The “heretics” were protected by a small army of Hussites led by Ziska the “one-eyed.” This defending army was vastly outnumbered when it met the crusaders face-to-face across the river that flows past Meiss.

But the crusaders did not charge ahead and make short work of their battle. They silently contemplated the defending army and suddenly fell into a great panic. They turned and fled in great confusion (*History of Protestantism*, Book 3, Ch. 17, as quoted by Dugger and Dodd, p. 183).

Second Bohemian Crusade

1431

An even greater crusade was carried out in 1431 at the urging of the pope. The crusaders chanted “triumph” as they marched. They made an impressive sight: “this great army of many nationalities, with its waving banners, its mail-clad knights, its helmeted cavalry, its long lines of wagons, and its

numerous artillery” (Dugger and Dodd, pp. 183-184).

Once again, the attackers fell into panic. Soldiers threw down their armor and scattered in every direction. The wagoners emptied their loads and took off across the plains at full gallop.

God’s people were again spared by what appears to have been a divine miracle.

1460 Persecution in Dauphiné

God’s people among the Waldenses in south-eastern France suffered persecution from 1460 to 1487. The archbishop of Ambrone employed a monk named John Vayleti to cruelly treat “heretics” in the region of Dauphiné (or Dauphiny).

“...This monk proceeded with such violence, that not only the Waldenses, but even many papists were sufferers: for if any of them expressed compassion or pity for the unoffending people, who were so cruelly treated, they were sure to be accused of partiality to heretics, and to share their fate. At length Vayleti’s proceedings became so intolerable, that a great number of papists, themselves signed a petition against him to Louis XI, king of France, who granted the request of the petitioners, and sent an order to the governor of Dauphiny to stop the persecution. Vayleti, however, by order of the archbishop, still continued it; for taking advantage of the last clause of the edict, he pretended that he did nothing contrary to the king’s precept, who had ordered punishment to such as affirmed anything against the holy Catholic faith. This persecution at length concluded with the death of the archbishop, which happened in 1487” (King, p. 42).

1467 Hussites Converted

Following the Hussite wars in Bohemia, a group of people rejected the errors of the Hussites and the Catholic Church. In 1467 they sent emissaries to visit the Waldenses elsewhere in the Austrian Empire. This new group of Christians and the Waldenses rec-

ognized each other as “brethren.”

But at this time these Waldenses were spiritually dead through intercourse with the Catholic Church. “In the interchange of letters which followed, the Bohemians reproached the Waldenses for frequenting the Pope’s churches, and for too much zeal in heaping up money for use in times of persecution!”

Many of the Waldenses returned to their first love. They gave up their evil ways as a result of contact with the Bohemians when persecution drove them from their homes into Bohemia and Moravia. Many perished from the cold and lack of necessities. Others scattered to the areas of Brandenburg and Transylvania.

Later, the Bohemian brethren split. The larger group adopted a modified, easier religion which was more accepted by the world. They denied that they were Picards—remnants of the Church of God. The smaller group disappeared from history (*Correspondence Course*, Lesson 52, p. 10).

Sabbath Kept in Russia

God’s church was a scattered church, with pockets of light shining throughout Europe in a world of darkness.

One little-known Sabbath-keeping group existed in Russia from 1470 to 1503. We will discuss this group when we get to the next century.

Spanish Inquisition

Satan reached into his quiver and pulled out an evil arrow again—the Inquisition—in 1478.

“The Spanish Inquisition, estab. 1478 by Ferdinand and Isabella, and first headed by Tomás de Torquemada, was independent of the medieval Inquisition and was controlled by the Spanish kings. Originally supposed to spy out converted Jews and Moors who were insincere, it soon evolved into a form of thought police from which no Spaniard was safe. It was far better organized, harsher, and freer with the death

1470

1478

sentence than the medieval Inquisition” (*Viking desk Encyclopedia*, “Inquisition,” p. 599).

Thomás Torquemada became the Grand Inquisitor when he was 18. About 100,000 people were sentenced under his jurisdiction during the Spanish Inquisition. Not all of these victims were martyred but many were (Hroch and Skybová, p. 47).

Some may have been members of the Church of God. *Foxe’s Book of Martyrs* tells the story of several men it calls “Protestants.” We have no real indication any of these were church members.

Dr. Aegidio studied theology at the University of Alcalá. When the theology professor died, Aegidio replaced him. His teachings were “consonant with true religion” according to most people in Seville and of those of the bishopric of Dordrecht. But his enemies complained to the Inquisitors, who had Aegidio imprisoned for most of the rest of his life. He fell sick and died at an extremely old age shortly after his release from prison. The Inquisitors had his body exhumed and burned.

Dr. Constantine was a close friend of Aegidio. “When fully confirmed in Protestantism by Dr. Aegidio, he preached only such doctrines as were agreeable to Gospel purity; and uncontaminated by the errors which had from time to time crept into the Roman church. For these reasons he had many enemies among the Roman Catholics, who were determined on his ruin.” He was imprisoned for two years and died of disease. His body was burned.

Nicholas Burton was a merchant of London who did business in Spain. (Remember, the core of God’s true church was in England at this time.) But while trading in Cadiz, Spain, Burton was questioned by agents of the Inquisition and arrested the next day. Though he denied making negative remarks toward Catholicism, saying “he was sensible, in whatever country we were, respect ought to be paid to its established religion,” he was tortured and burned at the stake. Several other Englishmen were put to death in Spain about the same time. They included John Baker, William Burgate and William

Burgess, who were burned; and William Hooker, who was stoned to death.

William Gardner was born in Bristol, England, but worked under an eminent merchant and was sent to Lisbon, Portugal, at age 26. He attended a Mass and was shocked by the superstitions. On the next Sunday he attended Mass again. But as the Catholics were about to adore the wafer, Gardner sprung forward, grabbed it from the priest, and trampled it underfoot. A member of the congregation then stabbed Gardner in the shoulder and he was taken for questioning and torturing. Though he claimed to have acted on his own, out of his own conscience (and he was most likely not called by God into his church), other Englishmen were arrested and tortured, to see if they knew anything of the matter. After Gardner was slowly roasted to death, the other Englishmen were released (King, pp. 75-78).

King of France Investigates Waldenses

1462

Louis XII reigned as king of France from 1462 to 1515. During his reign he sent investigators to study the Waldenses in his country. “They had visited all the parishes where they (Waldenses) dwelt, and had inspected their places of worship, but they found no images, nor signs of the ornaments belonging to the mass, nor any of the ceremonies of the Roman church; much less could they discover any traces of those crimes with which they were charged. On the contrary, they kept the Sabbath day, observed the ordinance of baptism according to the primitive church, instructed their children in the articles of the Christian faith and the commandments of God” (*Jone’s Church History*, p. 260, as quoted by Dugger and Dodd, p. 125).

Pope’s Edict Against Waldenses

1487

Though the King of France found nothing terribly wrong with the Waldenses, Pope Innocent VIII did. In 1487 he issued a bull condemning Waldenses as heretics and de-

1487

livering them to slaughter.

“They were not accused as idlers, or dishonest, or disorderly, but it was declared that they had an appearance of piety and sanctity that seduced ‘the sheep of the true fold.’ Therefore the pope ordered ‘that malicious and abominable sect of malignants,’ if they ‘refuse to abjure, to be crushed like venomous snakes’—Wylie, b. 16, Ch. I. Did this haughty potentate expect to meet those words again?...

“This bull called upon all members of the [Catholic] church to join the crusade against the heretics. As an incentive to engage in this cruel work, it ‘absolved from all ecclesiastical pains and penalties, general and particular; it released all who joined the crusade from any oaths they might have taken; it legitimized their title to any property they might have illegally acquired; and promised remission of all their sins to such as would kill any heretic. It annulled all contracts made in favor of Vaudois, ordered their domestics to abandon them, forbade all persons to give them any aid whatever, and empowered all persons to take possession of their property.’—Wylie, b. 16, Ch. I. This document clearly reveals the master spirit behind the scenes. It is the roar of the dragon, and not the voice of Christ, that is heard therein” (White, p. 77).

The Inquisition had not been allowed into the Piedmont Valleys of Italy, where the Waldenses resided. The Waldenses had taken up arms and turned back the papal agents by force.

Pope Innocent VIII’s decree in 1487 called for the total destruction of the Waldenses.

Thousands of troops, including 18,000 regulars of France and Piedmont, amassed themselves in Crusade-like fashion against the Waldenses. They attacked the valley of Angrogna first, and began breaking through the Waldensian line of defense. When the women and children behind the lines saw their defenders yield, they fell to their knees and fervently cried, ‘O Die ajjutaci! O Lord help us! O my God, save us! The attacking army laughed at their prayers and hastened their advance.

One of their chiefs, named “The Blace of Mondovi,” raised the visor of his helmet to show that he was not afraid of the poor people he was insulting. “But at that moment a steel-pointed arrow, let fly by a young man of Angrogna, named Peter Revel, struck this new Goliath with such violence that it penetrated into his skull, between his eyes, and laid him dead. His troop, struck with terror, fell back in disorder; a panic seized them; the Vaudois [Waldenses] took advantage of the moment, and impetuously rushed forward, hurling their adversaries before them, and, eagerly continuing the pursuit, swept them into the plain, where they left them vanquished and dispersed. Then, reascending to their families so miraculously delivered, they likewise flung themselves upon their knees, and all together gave thanks to the God of armies for the victory which they had gained” (Mauston, *History of the Waldenses*, Vol. I, pp. 33, 34, as quoted by Dugger and Dodd, pp. 185-187).

The next day, the armies returned with vengeance. But God saved the Waldenses by causing a cloud to descend from the mountain top and trap them. While they were unable to see, the Waldenses climbed to the cliffs above and rolled boulders upon them. Some Waldenses took sword in hand and attacked the army. The invaders again panicked and fled down the mountain paths in the fog. More died from falling off cliffs and being trampled in flight than from wounds at the hands of the Waldenses (Wylie, *History of the Waldenses*, Ch. 5, as quoted by Dugger and Dodd, pp. 187-189).

These stories are reminiscent of Old Testament battles. But would the New Testament Church of God have been involved in this bloodletting? The apostles set no such example of self-defense. As we have seen earlier, the Waldenses turned violent to protect themselves in these later centuries. If God’s church had been among this group in the Piedmont Valleys, they either had grown spiritually weak and relied on weapons instead of God, or God’s people had already fled to other areas. We know that members were already active in England. We must

remember that while God's church may have been among the Waldenses, *not all Waldenses were members of God's church.*

In spite of these early victories against the Pope's armies, the Waldenses of the Piedmont Valley became all but exterminated. "While the Reformation was spreading in Northern Europe, the papal forces visited the Vaudois villages with fire and sword. The remnant, driven out, had found refuge in Switzerland and southern Germany" (*History of Protestantism*, Book 16, Ch. 15, as quoted by Dugger and Dodd, pp. 189-190).

1488

In 1488, Pope Innocent VIII continued his extermination of the Waldenses. He sent to France Albert de Capitaneis, Archdeacon of Cremona. The archdeacon arrived in Dauphiné and asked help from the king's lieutenant to exterminate the Waldenses from the Valley of Loysel.

"The lieutenant readily granted his assistance, and marched a body of troops to the place; but when they arrived in the valley, they found that it had been deserted by the inhabitants, who had retired to the mountains, and hid themselves in the dens and caves of the earth. The archdeacon and lieutenant immediately followed them with their troops, and catching many, cast them headlong from precipices, by which they were dashed to pieces. Several, however, retired to the innermost parts of the caverns, and knowing the intricacies, were able to conceal themselves. The archdeacon and lieutenant not being capable of finding them, ordered the mouths of the caves to be filled with faggots, which being lighted, those within were suffocated" (King, pp. 42-43).

These Waldenses responded to attack in a more Christian manner; perhaps Christian influence remained stronger in Loysel.

The continued persecution of the Waldenses must have worn many down until they finally gave up their religious truths. As we study the 1500s, we will see that many Waldenses gave up Sabbath-keeping. Meanwhile, the nucleus of God's church was sinking roots deep into the soil of the British Isles. As we conclude our discussion of the

1400s, the name "Lollard" pops up again.

Lollards tried in Scotland

1494

"As late as 1494 a group of thirty people known as 'the Lollards of Kyle' were tried for 'heresy' in Scotland. They were fortunate in that they escaped execution" (Fletcher, p. 165).

Religious War in Ethiopia

About the time this was going on in Scotland, the remnant of God's people in Ethiopia were being persecuted by the government under Catholic influence.

Have you ever wondered what became of the Ethiopian eunuch baptized by Philip in the early days of the Church of God? An interesting account in *Foxe's Book of Martyrs* may give us a clue:

"About the end of the fifteenth century, some [Catholic] Portuguese missionaries made voyage to Abyssinia [Ethiopia], and began to propagate their Roman Catholic doctrines among the Abyssinians, who professed Christianity before the arrival of the missionaries.

"The priests gained such influence at court, that the emperor consented to abolish the established rites of the Ethiopian church, and to admit those of Rome, and soon after consented to receive a patriarch from the pope, and to acknowledge his supremacy. This innovation, however, did not take place without great opposition. Several of the most powerful lords, and a majority of the people who professed the primitive Christianity, as at first established in Abyssinia, took up arms against the emperor. Thus, by the artifices of the court of Rome and its emissaries, the whole empire was thrown into commotion, and a war commenced which was carried on through the reign of many emperors, and which ceased not for above a century. All this time the Roman Catholics were strengthened by the power of the court, by means of which union the primitive Christians of Abyssinia were severely persecuted, and multitudes perished" (King, p. 108).

Usually, the term “primitive Christianity” refers to the time of God’s church when the Apostles lived. There were Christians living in Ethiopia at the end of the 1400s who believed the same as the apostles—and believed differently from the Catholic missionaries. Where did these Christians come from? Could they have been a body of believers begun by the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8) when he returned home from Jerusalem?

1500 New Century, New Hope

The new century, the 1500s, would bring

new hope to a persecuted church. The Protestant Reformation will begin early in the century but that will not help. On the contrary, it will present even more persecution.

Satan will use every method available to extinguish the Church of God from existence. But, of course, Christ won’t allow his church to be crushed. Just as the church is about to be destroyed through persecution and spiritual fornication, Christ will pave the way for new growth! The 1,260 years of hiding in the wilderness will come to an end, and the church will experience new growth. We will discuss these events in the next chapter.

36

The Church Nears Destruction

1500 Satan has been bent on destroying the Church of God since the time Jesus Christ established it. Satan used persecutions, martyrdoms and spiritual fornication—a mixing of true and false doctrines—to achieve his goal. But in spite of all this, Christ kept his church going. He kept at least a few true Christians alive and unspotted by the world.

Several biblical prophecies describe the tough times which lay ahead for the true church. We already have discussed Christ's message to the seven eras of the church in Revelation chapters 2 and 3. Let's briefly look at others.

1,260 Years

In Revelation 12, Christ, in vision to John, described Satan falling from heaven and making war on the Church of God (vv. 1-6). But God promised to protect his sheep by bringing them into the wilderness for 1,260 "days." Prophetic "days" often are symbols to mean "years."

For 1,260 years God protected the church in the wilderness. When did the church flee there?

The Jerusalem church fled that city A.D. 69, just before Jerusalem was besieged by Roman armies. The true Christians fled across the Jordan River to Pella. But the church as a whole did not flee at that time.

It was not until A.D. 325 that Emperor Constantine's decree made true Christianity illegal throughout the Empire! It is from this date that the 1,260 years in the wilderness must be figured. The 1,260-year time period ended in 1585—in the century we are about to begin studying!

Persecution Prophesied

When the 1,260 years were completed, the church was again allowed to grow and do a great work. But by the time 1585 arrived, true Sabbath-keeping Christians were nearly extinct! Why? Satan had tried to destroy the church while it was in the wilderness prior to the completion of the 1260 years.

The prophet Daniel foretold trials would come upon the medieval Church of God. Daniel began his discussion by describing the early church and its miracles, and then moved through history to the time of the end:

1500

“...The people who know their God shall be strong, and carry out many exploits [miracles]. And those of the people who understand shall instruct many; yet for many days they shall fall by the sword and flame, by captivity and plundering. Now when they fall, they will be aided with a little help; but many shall join with them by intrigue [or slipperiness, flattery—(margin)]. And some of those of understanding shall fall, to refine them, purge them, and make them white, until the time of the end; because it is still for the appointed time” (Dan. 11: 32-35, *NKJ*).

God, through Daniel, promised “a little help” to the suffering Christians. That help was having the Bible in their own language, readily available. The Waldenses and Cathars memorized much of the Bible and hand-printed many copies in the language of the people. (The Catholic Church allowed only Latin versions of the Bible.) But it was after moveable type was invented about 1450 by Johann Gutenberg that the Bible became readily available. Mass-produced Bibles found their way into common people’s homes and were no longer limited to churches and synagogues.

“It was not accidental that the famous Gutenberg *Bible* was one of the first books to be printed. From there [Germany], printing spread to Holland, England and all over Europe, wherever God’s people were found.

“The first edition of the Bible in the vernacular of the people was the German translation of 1466. Between the first edition and 1518 (the time of Luther) 14 editions of the Bible in German and four in Dutch were printed. Others appeared in England, Bohemia, Italy and other countries” (*Correspondence Course*, Lesson 52, p. 7).

In addition to providing the Bible, Christ also provided spiritual help to the brethren in the Middle Ages (just as he did in Old Testament times (2 Chron. 14:11; Ps. 27: 1, 28:7, 68:35; Isa. 40: 29, 31).

1503

Russian Sabbath-Keepers Killed

Persecution against God’s Church did not

let up as the 16th century (1501-1600) began.

The Sabbath-keeping group which had existed in Russia since 1470 was destroyed in 1503. “It was crushed with great cruelty by government and church, many being burned in cages (*Jewish Encyclopedia*, article ‘Judaizing Heresy,’)” (*Correspondence Course*, Lesson 52, p. 10).

Books Need Catholic Approval

It was difficult in 1515 to own literature of the true Church of God. The Catholic Church would certainly condemn true literature as “heretical.”

“In 1515 Pope Leo X, in agreement with the Fifth Lateran Council, issued another bull relating to book censorship.... No book was to be published without the approval signature of the local bishop or of a person authorized by him or of the local inquisitor. There were heavy penalties for publishing and owning or reading heretical literature. The *Coena Domini* Bull was to intimidate the masses” (Hroch and Skybová, p. 213).

Character of Waldenses Supported

During the reign of Francis I (1515-1547), inquiry was made concerning the Waldenses living in Merindol and other neighboring places.

It was reported that the Waldenses had lived in the area for 200 years, having moved there from Piedmont. They were a laboring people who “had much improved the country by their industry;... their manners were most excellent;... they were honest, liberal, hospitable, and human;... they were distinct from others in this, that they could not bear the sound of blasphemy, or the naming of the devil, or any oaths, except on solemn occasions; and... if they ever fell into company where blasphemy or lewdness formed the substance of the discourse, they instantly withdrew themselves. Such were the testimonies to the character of this people from enemies!” (*Townsend’s Abridgement*, as quoted by Dugger and Dodd, pp. 150-151).

1515

1524 The Work of John Clerk

John Clerk was a man who opposed the Catholic Church in the French town of Melden. He may have been part of the Church of God but there is no evidence to connect him, save his opposition to the pope and to Catholic images.

In 1524 Clerk affixed on the church door a bill which called the pope Anti-Christ. Clerk was arrested, repeatedly whipped and branded on the forehead. His mother, upon seeing his punishment, cried, "Blessed be Christ, and welcome these marks for His sake."

Clerk then traveled to the town of Metz in Lorraine and demolished some Catholic images. Again, he was arrested. But this time his punishment was to have his right hand and nose cut off, and his arms and breasts torn by pincers. During his torture, he sang Psalm 115, which forbids superstition. After he concluded the psalm, he was thrown into a fire and burned to ashes.

"About the same time several persons of the reformed persuasion were beaten, racked, scourged and burnt to death, in several parts of France; but particularly at Paris, Limosin, and Malda" (King, p. 55).

Peace and Persecution in Piedmont

Because of persecutions in various parts of France, Waldenses fled to other parts of the world. Many "sought an asylum in the valleys of Piedmont [in northern Italy], where they increased and flourished for a considerable time.

"Notwithstanding their harmless behaviour, and their payment of tithes to the Romish clergy, the latter could not remain contented, but sought to disturb them, and accordingly complained to the Archbishop of Turin, that the Waldenses of the valleys of Piedmont were heretics. They alleged the following reasons: that they did not believe in the doctrines of the Church of Rome; that they made no offerings for the dead; that they did not go to mass; that they neither

confessed nor received absolution; that they did not believe in purgatory, nor pay money to get the souls of their friends released. Upon these charges the archbishop ordered a persecution to be commenced" (King, p. 114).

The peace at Piedmont was short-lived.

Catelin Girard was to be burned at the stake in Revel. He asked his executioner for a rock but was refused. The executioner feared Girard would throw it at someone. When Girard assured him he had no such intentions, the executioner gave him a rock. Girard looked earnestly at it and said, "When it is in the power of a man to eat and digest this solid stone, the religion for which I am about to suffer shall have an end, and not before." He then threw down the stone and submitted cheerfully to the flames.

Many more Waldenses were persecuted and put to death until, wearied with their sufferings, they formed their own armies to defend themselves. The archbishop of Turin was angered by this and sent troops to Piedmont to battle the Waldenses. In most of the skirmishes, the Waldenses won (King, p. 114).

Once again, we see Waldenses giving up Christian principles, neglecting God's protection and taking matters of defense into their own hands.

Philip VII, duke of Savoy and lord of Piedmont, tried to stop the bloody battles being fought in his kingdom. He sent messages to the pope and archbishop of Turin saying he could no longer sit idly by while his dominion was being overrun with troops commanded by religious leaders instead of generals. Neither would he suffer his country to be depopulated while he had not even been consulted.

Perhaps this strong stance was the result of fervent prayer by God's people. Perhaps they followed Paul's admonition to Timothy: "First of all, then, I urge that petitions and prayers, requests and thanksgivings be offered to God for all men; for kings and all others who are in authority, that we may live a quiet and peaceful life, in entire godliness and proper conduct" (2 Tim. 2:1-2).

1524

1524

Notice what happened next:

The priests tried to prejudice Philip's mind against the Waldenses. The duke responded that he was not acquainted with the religious tenets of these people, yet he had always found them "quiet, faithful, and obedient." Therefore, he was determined to end the persecution.

The priests tried to persuade Philip he was wrong. The Waldenses were slandered as a "wicked set of people, and addicted to intemperance, uncleanness, blasphemy, adultery, and many abominable crimes." Philip could not be persuaded. To learn the truth, he sent 12 learned gentlemen to Piedmont to examine the Waldensian character.

After traveling through all the towns and villages of the Waldenses, these gentlemen returned to the duke and gave a favorable report before him and the priests. The Waldenses were "harmless, loyal, friendly, industrious, and pious: they abhorred the crimes of which they were accused; and that, should an individual, through his depravity, fall into any of those crimes, he would, by their laws, be punished in the most exemplary manner.

"'And to convince your highness of what we have said,' continued one of the gentlemen, 'we have brought twelve of the principal inhabitants, who are come to ask pardon in the name of the rest, for having taken up arms without your leave, though in their own defense, and to preserve their lives from their merciless enemies. We have likewise brought several women, with children of various ages, that your highness may have an opportunity of judging for yourself.'"

The duke accepted the apology of the 12 and graciously dismissed them from the court. He then commanded the priests to leave and gave strict orders that the persecution must stop (King, p. 115).

During Duke Philip VII's reign, the Waldenses of Piedmont enjoyed peace. But when he died, he was succeeded by a bigoted papist and persecution prevailed again.

About this time the Waldenses determined their clergy should preach in public so everyone could know the purity of their

religion. Up to this time, their services had been private. This upset the new duke, who ordered troops into Piedmont, trying to force the Waldenses to conform to the Catholic faith. But the commander of the troops soon saw it was impractical to conquer the many Waldenses with his few troops. The Waldenses were more familiar with the mountains and were willing to defend themselves. So the duke ordered his troops to return. The duke then offered rewards for the capture of any Waldensian who was found straying from their places of security. When these few were apprehended, they were either flayed alive or burned (King, p. 116).

Bible Translated into English

In the late 1520s—some sources say 1526, some 1527, and others 1529—the Bible was translated into English by William Tyndale. Tyndale was a former Catholic priest from Wales, whose eyes were opened to the reality of the false church. He came to believe the pope was the Anti-Christ of the Bible and was disgusted by the wealth and pompous attitudes of the priests.

"He perceived that the cause of the people's blindness, and of the errors and superstitions of the Church, was ignorance of the Scriptures. The truth was entombed in the sepulchre of a dead language [the only authorized version of the Bible was in Latin]; the efforts of the priests were directed to keep men from enquiring of the oracles of God; and when reference was ever made to the sacred text, these doctors of the law did what they could to perplex the inquirers, wresting the Scriptures to suit their own purposes. From these considerations Tyndale felt moved, by the Spirit of God, to translate the Scriptures into his mother tongue [English], for the benefit of the simple people of England. He first began with the New Testament, which he translated about the year 1527, prefixing a short preface to every book, after which, in like manner, he translated the five books of Moses, and wrote sundry other godly works. His books were published [in Germany where he was living] and sent

1527

over to England, and became like holy fire from the altar, to give light in the night season” (King, p. 170).

Tyndale was condemned as a heretic, strangled, and his body was burned in 1536.

There is no conclusive evidence tying Tyndale to the Church of God. But his Bible was a tool which made the work of God in England easier. The common people were getting more access to the Holy Bible in their own tongue.

1529

Sabbath Kept in 1529

In the year 1529, a Sabbath-keeper was executed in East Friesland, a part of the Netherlands on the North Sea. Meanwhile, in France to the south, books were published defending the Sabbath (*Correspondence Course*, Lesson 52, p. 10).

About this time Erasmus (1466-1536) wrote about Sabbatarians in Bohemia: “Descendants of the Waldenses in Bohemia and Holland formed material for Sabbath-keeping churches, which appeared with the dawn of the Reformation” (*History* by Lewis, pp. 317-320, as quoted by Dugger and Dodd, p. 196).

1530

In 1530 there were three groups in Moravia (just east of Bohemia) who baptized only adults and were called by the world “Anabaptists.” One of these groups also kept the Sabbath and could well have been a congregation of the Church of God (*History of Baptists* by Armitage, as quoted by *Correspondence Course*, Lesson 52, p. 10).

The Church in Moravia

“...A large emigration, numbering some thousands of the persecuted of the Tyrol, Switzerland, Austria, Styria, and Bavaria, took place about the year 1530, under the guidance of Jacob Hutter. The exiles found refuge in Moravia [the land east of Bohemia]. Soon after their settlement, King Frederick ordered their expulsion; but by the persuasion of the marshal, and from the expressed resolution of the people to make common cause with the refugees, the edict was with-

drawn. Places of worship were now erected, farms purchased, the mutual advantages of commerce enjoyed, and families bound together by the closest and most enduring ties. Their numbers multiplied. The oppressed of many lands sought refuge and liberty of conscience in this land of peace.

“Again, an edict was issued for their expulsion, and its command sustained by military force. Time was, however, allowed for the removal of property; but no entreaties prevailed to obtain permission for them to inhabit the villages they had built, or to reap the fruits of the harvest they had sown. They offered to pay tribute for their possessions, and for the enjoyment of liberty to worship God; but the offer was rejected, and they were mercilessly driven away” (*Martyrology* by George Van of London, as quoted by Dugger and Dodd, p. 199).

The church fled to the dense forests of Moravia, where they found abundant hiding places. Here, Hutter exhorted them, “Be ye thankful unto God that ye are counted to suffer persecutions and cruel exile for his name. These are the rewards of the elect in the prison-house of this world, the proofs of your heavenly father’s approbation. Thus did his people Israel suffer in Egypt, in exile, and in persecutions: some in torments, in sufferings, and in martyrdoms, enjoyed the favor of their Lord. Sadness be far from you; put aside all grief and sorrow, reflect how great the rewards awaiting you for the afflictions ye now endure” (London, as quoted by Dugger and Dodd, p. 200).

Hutter also wrote again to the marshal of Moravia. He described his followers and himself as “We brethren— who love God and his word, the true witnesses of our Lord Jesus Christ, banished from many countries for the name of God and for the cause of divine truth.”

Hutter explained how his group came to Moravia under God’s protection. But now the marshal’s officers had come and forced the brethren to flee their homes.

He then compared their character to that of King Ferdinand: “We believe in Almighty God, and in his Son our Lord Jesus

1530

1530

Christ, who will protect us henceforth and forever in every peril, and to whom we have dedicated our entire lives, and all that we possess, *to keep his commandments*, and to *forsake all unrighteousness and sin*, Therefore we are persecuted and despised by the world, and robbed of all our property, as was done aforetime to the holy prophets, and even to Christ himself. By King Ferdinand, the prince of darkness, that cruel tyrant and enemy of divine truth and righteousness, many of our brethren have been slaughtered and put to death without mercy, our property seized, our fields and homes laid waste, ourselves driven into exile, and most fearfully persecuted.”

Hutter told how the brethren had lived quiet lives in Moravia under the marshal’s rule until they were driven away with his permission. Hutter warned the marshal that God would require at his hands the innocent blood that was shed and God will vindicate the sufferings of his saints.

Finally, Hutter explained why the church would not leave Moravia even though ordered to do so. His reply contains the words of a true Christian:

“We know not any place where we may securely live; nor can we longer dare here to remain for hunger and fear. If we return to the territories of this or that sovereign, everywhere we find an enemy. If we go forward we fall into the jaws of tyrants and robbers, like sheep before ravening wolf and raging lion. With us are many widows, and babes in their cradle, whose parents that most cruel tyrant and enemy of the divine righteousness, Ferdinand, gave to the slaughter, and whose property he seized. These widows and orphans, and sick children, committed to our charge by God [see James 1:27], and whom the Almighty hath commanded us to feed, clothe, to cherish, and to supply all their needs, who cannot journey with us, nor, unless otherwise provided for, can long live—these, we dare not abandon. *We may not overthrow God’s law to observe man’s law although it cost gold, and body and life.* On their account we cannot depart; but rather than they should suffer injury we will en-

sure extremity, even to the shedding of our blood. Besides, here we have houses and farms, the property that we have gained by the sweat of our brow. ...to sell them we need time and delay. Of this property we have urgent need in order to support our wives, widows, orphans, and children, of whom we have great number, lest they die of hunger. Now we lie in the broad forest, and if God will, without hurt. Let but our own be restored to us, and we will live as we have hither done, in peace and tranquility. We desire to molest no one; nor to prejudice our foes, not even Ferdinand the king. Our manner of life, our customs and conversation, are known everywhere to all. *Rather than wrong any man of a single penny, we would suffer the loss of a hundred gulden;* and sooner than strike our enemy with the hand, much less with spear, or halbert, as the world does, we would die and surrender life. *We carry no weapon,* neither spear nor gun, as clear as the open day; and they who say we have gone forth by thousands to fight, they lie and impiously traduce us to our rulers. ...we would that all were as we are, and that we could bring and convert all men to the same belief, then should all war and unrighteousness have an end” (*Martyrology*, London, as quoted by Dugger and Dodd, pp. 200-203).

Waldensian Beliefs Watered Down

As the Protestant Reformation grew in 1530, the much-persecuted Waldenses opted to join them. They gave up much of the truth they had known. A few people did remain true to God and continued God’s church through this period of religious confusion.

George Morel was a Waldensian pastor. In 1530 he published a memoir of his church, stating there were 800,000 members at that time (*Jones’ Church History*, p. 440, as quoted by Dugger and Dodd, p. 196).

Martin Luther wrote of the Waldenses early in the Reformation: “that among them he had found one thing worthy of admiration, a thing unheard of in the popish church, that, laying aside the doctrines of men, they

meditated in the law of God day and night, and that they were expert, and even well versed, in the knowledge of Scriptures” (*Jones’ Church History*, p. 263, as quoted by Dugger and Dodd, p. 195).

Luther, who admitted he was once prejudiced against Waldenses, later said he understood from Waldensian confessions and writings that they were the only group who had expertly used the Scriptures for ages. But he acknowledged a merging of the Waldensian and reformed churches:

“He rejoiced and gave thanks to God, that he had enabled the reformed and the Waldenses, to see and own each other as brethren. By the general confession of the Romanists, it appears, that the Protestants and the Waldenses, were looked on as holding the same principles. The churches of Piedmont were, however, on account of their superior antiquity, regarded as guides of the rest” (*Townsend’s Abridgement*, as quoted by Dugger and Dodd, p. 151).

Many of the more than 800,000 Waldenses had remained faithful to God’s truth throughout the years. Unfortunately, as the Protestant Reformation grew, many Waldenses joined these Protestant groups and adulterated what true beliefs they had held.

The Baptist Cyclopedia (1881) states: “In 1530, according to Du Pin, the Waldenses united with the Reformers, and were persuaded to renounce certain peculiarities which here to fore they held, and to receive doctrines which till then had been foreign to their creed. This new arrangement harmonized the reformations of the twelfth and sixteenth centuries” (Dugger and Dodd, p. 197).

Many Waldenses “left the main tenets of the faith held so dear by the Waldensian churches” (Dugger and Dodd, p. 197).

“Remember, the original Waldenses before they became corrupted were in no way Protestant. The doctrine of salvation by ‘faith alone’ cannot be found among the original Waldenses. The spirit of Protestantism was utterly foreign to them, as to God’s Church in all ages...

“In 1530, *all but a handful* of the survi-

vors in the valleys officially adhered to the Swiss Reformation” (*Correspondence Course*, Lesson 51, p. 16).

The true Church of God did not join the Reformation. Though scattered among the Waldenses on the European continent and among the Lollards on the British Isles, the church remained true to the faith once delivered.

Satan continued to try to stamp out the truth wherever it went.

Martyrdom of Thomas Bilney

Meanwhile, in England, a man named Thomas Bilney from Cambridge preached boldly against the pride and insolence of the Catholic clergy. Cardinal Wolsey had Bilney imprisoned. Bilney became afraid and abjured his “heretical” beliefs. He was pardoned and returned to Cambridge in 1530.

But he felt great shame for returning to Catholicism. He repented again and decided to make a public statement of his beliefs. To prepare for this statement, he delved deeply into the Scriptures for two years. It is possible that God called him at this time. After his two years of study, Bilney left the university, went to Norfolk and preached against idolatry and superstition. He exhorted the people to live well, to give much alms, to believe in Christ, and to offer up their souls and wills to him in the sacrament.

Bilney was soon apprehended by the Catholic bishop’s officer. He was burned at the stake November 10, after reciting the Creed, as proof he was a true Christian (King, pp. 139-140).

Bilney’s martyrdom inspired others. A man named Byfield was arrested for dispersing Tyndale’s books. He and a man named Tewkesbury were condemned to the stake. Another man, Bainham, was whipped and racked, but could not be forced to accuse anyone else of “heresy.” He did abjure his “heretical” beliefs, however, out of fear. Later, his conscience bothered him so he went to church and confessed his sins. He was arrested for teaching against transubstantiation and burned to death (King, pp. 140-141).

1532 Some Waldenses Swear, Keep Sunday

As these martyrdoms were carried out in England, the Waldenses were slipping further from the truth which Christ had given his church. Jesus had taught his followers to swear not at all (Mat. 5: 33-37) and to keep the Sabbath (Mark 1:21; 23-28; 6:2). But in 1532 the Waldenses were prepared to give up both of these truths and accept lies from the Reformers.

“Although the first Waldenses had obeyed the command of Christ to ‘swear not at all’ (Mt. 5:34-37), by the time of the Synod of Angrogna in 1532 they had departed so far from their earlier true doctrines that they now held ‘that a Christian may swear by the name of God.’

“The Sabbath seems to have been rejected by the Waldenses at about this date, or perhaps even earlier. One of the seventeen articles of their faith written in 1532 states ‘that on Sundays we ought to cease from our earthly labours.’

“At the Synod of Angrogna the Waldenses declared their solidarity with the Swiss Calvinists and Protestant Reformation. From this time they copied more and more of the ways of the Protestant churches” (Fletcher, p. 166).

John Calvin himself was influenced by Waldenses. He had access to four Bibles produced under Waldensian influence: a Greek, a French, an Italian and a Waldensian Vernacular. And it was a Waldensian named Olivetan who started Calvin on his reformation work in 1532 or 1533 (*Our Authorized Bible Vindicated* by Wilkinson, p. 37, as quoted by Dugger and Dodd, p. 195).

Waldenses Severely Persecuted

From 1532 until 1686, the Waldenses underwent severe persecution. “This period must surely be ranked as one of the blackest episodes in the entire history of man’s inhumanity to his fellow human beings. God appears to have permitted the mass slaughter of multitudes of these people, perhaps in

order to induce them, by means of these severe trials, to repent and return to their former doctrines and godly way of life” (Fletcher, p. 166).

Entire communities were massacred until it was said that the valleys ran red with the blood of men, women and children. Babies were torn from their mother’s breast, held by their feet and dashed against rocks. More than 3,000 Waldenses, including 400 infants, suffocated in a cave when attackers built a fire at its entrance.

One young man was tied to an olive tree and was used for target practice by soldiers until the fifth bullet ended his sufferings. Another man named Daniel Revelli had his mouth filled with gunpowder. When the powder was lighted, his head was blown to pieces. Another martyr, Mazzone, was stripped naked and beaten with iron whips. Once his flesh was shredded, he was beaten to death with lighted brands.

A group of women were surprised in church. They were stripped naked and “subjected to indescribable outrages.” They were then compelled to hold hands and walk up the castlerock to a point where they were thrown into an abyss.

Occasionally, the Waldenses were sold as slaves. Men were sent to ship owners to serve as galley slaves. Girls were sold to the highest bidders (Fletcher, pp. 166-167). “I speak not of the young women and girls who were seized and taken into these dens of iniquity; the atrocious outrages to which they were subjected may not be described” (*Israel of the Alps* by A. Muston, p. 74, as quoted by Fletcher, p. 167).

Many Waldenses tried to flee higher into the mountains. Instead of death by sword they died from cold and hunger.

Frith Martyred

There was a young man in England in the 1530s who wrote against the Catholic belief of transubstantiation. His name was Frith. He may have been part of the Church of God in England, for his beliefs were considered heretical by the Roman church.

1533

Frith was apprehended in May 1533 and brought before Stokesly, Gardiner and Longland, three Catholic bishops. They accused Frith of not believing in transubstantiation and purgatory. He was found guilty and sentenced to burn.

“Frith, with a fellow-martyr, one Hewitt, were brought to the stake at Smithfield on the 4th of July, 1533. On arriving there, Frith expressed great joy, and hugged the faggots with transport. The fire was then kindled, and consumed the martyrs to ashes.

“This was the last martyrdom which occurred for some time, as an act was passed soon afterwards, which diminished the power of the priests” (King, p. 142).

Another man, Phillips, was accused of heresy and was arrested. He appealed his case to the king and was released until his case was heard. It is not known if his appeal ever made it to the king.

The king united himself with the German princes for political reasons. As a part of their treaty, a deal was struck whereby people would not be “persecuted for their religious opinions” (King, p. 142).

Servetus Understands Truth

Perhaps the greatest heretic of Spanish origin was a physician (like Luke) and a prominent theologian. His name was Miguel Serveto (or Michael Servetus). He was born in 1511 in Spain but left that country early in his life and never returned for fear of the Inquisition (*Viking Desk Encyclopedia*, “Servetus, Michael,” p. 1154).

“Servetus was a gaunt man of medium height with lively, melancholy eyes. He came from a prosperous Spanish family. In temperament he was typical Spaniard, proud and passionate, restless and enterprising.... Servetus himself was no saint, but a highly emotional man, of uncommonly rich endowments, possessed of more than a touch of genius, equipped with sparkling wit, indomitable energy, and an extraordinary imagination. It was said he had something of the Don Quixote about him. Certainly there was a fantastical side to his character;

he was convinced, for instance, that by virtue of his first name he was called to be one of the greatest fellow warriors of the archangel Michael” (Nigg, p. 323).

Servetus left Spain, studied jurisprudence in Toulouse, and then turned to medicine. He discovered the circulation of blood long before William Harvey did, but his discovery had no consequences for medical science. His treatise on digestion, however, did attract a lot of attention.

Religious matters deeply concerned him. He was a zealous Catholic youth. But he began to study the Bible and the writings of the Reformers, and was transformed into an opponent of the papacy, which he regarded as an anti-Christian institution. Servetus hailed Christ as his sole master. He enjoined Christians to forget the Christ of dogma and return to the Christ of the Bible. He became a passionate antagonist of the Trinity doctrine. He said such a belief led to polytheism and was therefore a “diabolic delusion.”

Christianity has to be set back on track, Servetus believed. In 1533 he wrote *Christianism restituito*, or *The Restoration of Christianity*. “Christianity, he believed, had to retrace its way back to the primitive church. This was the only hope for preserving the unity of the church. The structure of the church must be built anew, from the foundation.... He was completely serious about this; it was no idle notion. He believed God had appointed him for this mission, and he would risk God’s wrath to neglect it. He gave up his whole life to this high calling—and did so with premonitions of his early, violent death” (Nigg, p. 325).

Protestantism was as wrong as Catholicism, Servetus argued. He claimed Protestants had built their beliefs on dogmas which had formed during the first three centuries of the Catholic church. They should have gone back further—to the Bible. Servetus was somewhat partial to Tertullian and Irenaeus but was opposed to applying philosophical notions to religion. Servetus based his beliefs on the Bible, not on philosophy. And the Bible, he pointed out, says nothing of a Trinity (Nigg, p. 325).

1533

1534 Pope Persecutes Waldenses in Piedmont

Religious freedom was forming in Britain but there was no such freedom on the continent of Europe. In 1534 Pope Paul III became pope. He was a “furious bigot” and “immediately solicited the Parliament of Turin to prosecute the Waldenses, as the most pernicious of heretics” (King, p. 116).

The Parliament met and decided to send deputies to the valleys of Piedmont with the following demands:

1. If the Waldenses would “return to the bosom of the church of Rome” they could enjoy their homes, properties, lands and families without any molestation.

2. To prove their obedience they should send their 12 leaders and all their ministers and schoolmasters to Turin, “to be dealt with at discretion.”

3. This proposition of the Parliament of Turin has the support and the authorization of the pope, the king of France and the duke of Savoy.

4. If the Waldenses reject this proposition they would be persecuted and killed.

The Waldenses responded to the hostile propositions in a nobler manner:

1. No consideration whatever should make them renounce their religion.

2. They would never consent to entrust their best and most respectable friends to the custody and discretion of their worst enemies.

3. They valued the approval of the King of kings over that of earthly rulers.

4. Their souls were more precious than their bodies.

This reply greatly grieved the Parliament of Turin. They responded by zealously kidnapping any Waldensian they could find and putting him or her to death. Jeffrey Varnagle was a minister of Angrogna until he was captured. He was tried as a heretic and condemned to burn.

The Parliament next asked the king of France for troops to wipe out the Waldenses from the Piedmont valleys. But just as the troops were about to march, the king re-

ceived word that the German princes planned to send troops to assist the Waldenses. The king did not want to go to war, so he informed the Parliament of Turin that he could not spare troops to act in Piedmont at that time. A few years of tranquility followed (King, pp. 116-117).

Complete English Bible Printed

In the following year, 1535, the first complete Bible was printed in English. (Tyndale’s Bible contained only sections of the Bible.) This Bible was called the Coverdale Bible (Halley, p. 634). It was translated by Miles Coverdale (1488-1569), who later became bishop of Exeter (1551-1553) (*Viking Desk Encyclopedia*, “Coverdale, Miles,” p. 297).

“The translation of the Bible into English was completed in this year. It was sent first to Paris to be printed, the English workmen not being sufficiently skilled for the work. On the remonstrance of the French clergy, the printing was stopped, and most of the copies confiscated. It was then brought to England and finished by Grafton” (King, p. 144).

Servetus Seeks to Flee

Both Catholics and Protestants sought to end the work of Michael Servetus and take his life. He had thoughts of fleeing to some island—or possibly to the Americas—but felt Christ wanted him to remain where he was, doing the work:

“As early as 1535 heretic Michael Servetus, already on the run from Catholics and Protestants alike, wished he could flee with Jonah into the sea or ‘into some new island,’ for which read America, according to Roland Bainton. Servetus took his case of persecution to Christ, who bade him to stick it out at home and do his duty” (*Religious Enthusiasm in the New World* by David S. Lovejoy, p. 7).

Anabaptists Flee to England

In 1535 two shiploads of “Anabaptists” fled

1535

Holland for England. Anglicans and Presbyterians in England did not approve of these “heretics” because their preachers were not from the upper class. They allowed cobblers and felt-makers to preach. They were accused of allowing women to preach. Because they often met at night (most likely to avoid persecution), rumors spread that they worshiped in the nude, men and women together, and advocated a community of wives and goods (Lovejoy, p. 52).

Jan Everts Martyred

Not all true Christians fled Holland. Some were martyred. The truth of God had been in Holland for many years when a man named Jan Everts recognized the error of the Roman way.

“Jan Everts of Deventer was put to death at Middelburg, in the year 1535. He had been baptized at Hague by Meynart, a teacher of the church. He further confessed that his wife had been baptized at Delft, by Obbo of Leeuwarden; that for four years he had not gone to the sacrament of confession; that he did not believe God was himself present in the sacrament of the altar, but that it was only useful as a memorial of the sufferings and death of our Lord. The customs and institutions of the church of Rome he did not esteem; and those of his fellow believers whom he had seen put to death at Amsterdam, he held to be Christians, and as Christians had died. When promised forgiveness if he would repent, he steadfastly refused. Thus another witness of the truth was added to the martyred host of the Lamb” (*Martyrology*, London, as quoted by Dugger and Dodd, pp. 198-199).

Other English Martyrs

Foxe’s Book of Martyrs describes the martyrdom of several Englishmen who preached against Catholic beliefs at this time. There is no indication that these men were part of the true church, though that possibility exists. It is much more likely that these “heretics” were Protestants.

John Lambert attended a sermon preached by Dr. Taylor in 1538. Afterwards, Lambert argued the point that transubstantiation is not supported by the Bible. He was eventually brought before the king of England where he stood by his beliefs. He was condemned to the fire.

Dr. Robert Barnes was an instructor at Cambridge University. He began instructing students in the ancient classics, and read openly from the Epistles of Paul. This opened his eyes to the hypocrisy in the Catholic Church and he preached openly against it. When this was brought to the attention of Cardinal Wolsey, he ordered Barnes to recant. Barnes refused and was arrested.

Prior to one of Barnes’ examinations by the Catholic bishops, the bishops had questioned some men about Lollardism: “At the same time there were five Still Yardmen to be examined about Luther’s book and Lollardism; who, after they were examined, were all committed to the Fleet [Prison].” When Barnes would not give up his beliefs, he too was sent to Fleet Prison in London. On June 30, Barnes and two others, Jerome and Garrett, were committed to the flames.

From their statements which they made prior to being burned, we learn of the mixed beliefs of these three men.

Before being martyred, Barnes defended his beliefs. One belief he held erroneously was the Trinity myth.

Jerome spoke of being bought by God, not with gold or silver, but with the precious price of the blood of his Son. “Be not unthankful, therefore, to him again, but fulfil his commandments—that is, love your brethren,” he exhorted. Jerome stressed salvation by grace, not works: “Now therefore, let all Christians put no trust or confidence in their works, but in the blood of Christ...” Jerome, however, believed in the original sin of Adam and felt Christ’s sacrifice was needed to remove it.

Garrett, the third martyr, apologized for any errors he may have accidentally taught: “I also detest all errors, and if I have taught any, I am sorry for it, and ask God’s mercy.... Notwithstanding, to my remembrance, I have

1538

never preached anything against God's holy Word; but have endeavored, with my little learning and wit, to set forth the honour of God and the right obedience to his laws, and also the king's accordingly."

All three were burned at the stake (King, pp. 145-154).

Piedmont Persecuted Again

The Waldenses in the valleys of Piedmont again were persecuted about 1538. They had enjoyed peace for a few years after German princes had threatened to send troops to defend them against the army of the king of France.

But trouble was stirred up when the pope's diplomatic representative came to Turin for business with the Duke of Savoy. The nuncio told the duke "he was astonished he had not either rooted out the Waldenses from the valleys of Piedmont nor yet compelled them to return to the Church of Rome: that such conduct in him awakened suspicion, and that he really thought him a favourer of those heretics, and should accordingly report the affair to the pope" (King, p. 117).

Fearful of being misrepresented to the pope, the duke "resolved to let loose the reins of cruelty on the unoffending Waldenses." He ordered everyone in his jurisdiction to attend Mass. The Waldenses refused, so the duke gathered a great army and began a "furious persecution, in which great numbers were hanged, drowned, tied to trees, pierced with prongs, thrown from the precipices, burnt, stabbed, racked to death, worried by dogs, and crucified with their heads downwards" (King, pp. 117-118).

If some of the Waldenses' faith wavered, they were not killed but sent to the galleys in hope that the hardship aboard ships would convert them to Catholicism.

Catholic inhabitants of the valley of St. Martin did all they could to persecute their neighboring Waldenses. "They destroyed their churches, burnt their houses, seized their properties, stole their cattle, converted their lands to their own use, committed their

ministers to the flames; and drove the people to the woods, where they had nothing to subsist on but wild fruits and the bark or root of trees" (King, p. 118).

Monks of Pignerol and ruffians attached to the monks got into the act, kidnapping and murdering Waldensian ministers and their families.

The duke of Savoy next augmented his troops with criminals freed from prison. They were freed on condition they would take up arms against the Waldenses. As soon as the Waldenses learned of this, they left their towns in the valleys of Piedmont and sought refuge among the caves and rocks of the higher Alps. The duke's armies plundered and burned the towns but could not get at the Waldenses, who expertly defended the mountain passes to their hide-outs.

Seeking to repel the duke's armies before winter arrived, the Waldenses entered into a league with the Protestant powers of Germany and with the Reformed of Dauphiné and Pragelas.

The duke was tired of war and its expense. He also became sick. Before he died, he entreated his son, Charles Emmanuel, who would succeed him, to ratify the peace he sought with the Waldenses. His son obeyed (King, pp. 118-119).

In spite of persecution, in the year 1539 there were still more than 800,000 Waldenses in Europe (*Townsend's Abridgement*, as quoted by Dugger and Dodd, p. 164).

1539

More English Bibles Printed

Bibles were becoming more and more accessible to the English common people, allowing God's truth to grow in that country. The "Great Bible" was published in 1539 and Cranmer's Bible a year later ("Coverdale, Miles," *The Columbia Viking Desk Encyclopedia*, Vol. 1., p. 297).

1540

Great Persecution in France

A great persecution took place in 1540 against the Waldenses in Merindol and Provence (a region of France between Dauphiné and the

Mediterranean). The Catholic bishop of Cavillon sent a teaching monk to convince Waldenses of their errors. But the monk returned from the conference totally confused. He told the bishop he had never in his whole life known so much of the Scriptures as he had learned during those few days with the Waldenses.

Not to be defeated, the bishop next sent among the Waldenses a number of young men who had recently received theology doctorates from Sorbonne University in Paris. But they also returned having learned more from the Waldenses than from their classes. "One of them openly owned, that he had understood more of the doctrine of salvation from the answers of the little children in their catechism, than by all the disputations which he had ever heard" (*Townsend's Abridgement*, as quoted by Dugger and Dodd, pp. 148-149).

1542 Pope Paul III Attacks Heresy

Pope Paul III issued his *Licet ab initio* Bull on June 21, 1542. This bull announced the establishment of the Inquisition in Rome as a central authority for all countries who were battling heresy. The pope established a commission of six cardinals to administer the Inquisition.

"The commission rapidly acquired a range of privileges and powers; its main task was to flush out heretics, carry out their trials and punish all those who had committed offenses against the Catholic faith.... The papal bull also laid down penalties for heresy, ranging from prison sentences to death" (Hroch and Skybová, pp. 53-54).

1543 More Martyrs Under Henry VIII

In 1543, King Henry VIII of England appeared in public following his marriage to Catharine Parr. It was about this time that three men were arrested and jailed at Windsor for speaking reproachfully of the Catholic sacrament of the altar. Their names were Anthony Pearson, Henry Filmer and Testwood. The jury was composed of papists

and the three were condemned to the flames. They cheerfully met their doom.

Another man to follow in the steps of these martyrs was George Bucher, who was commonly called Adam Damlip. He was a strong Catholic, serving as chaplain to Fisher, bishop of Rochester. But after the bishop's death, he traveled as far as Rome and was horrified by the state of the people who were supposed to be the leaders of the church!

He decided to return to England. At the town of Calais, France, across the English Channel from his native land, Damlip found others who were tired and disgusted with Catholicism. At their request, he promised to stay there and preach to them. Calais was under English rule at this time.

"Lodgings were accordingly provided for him in the house of William Stevens, one of the men who had been instrumental in detaining him in Calais. For nearly a month he continued to labour earnestly, preaching strongly against the errors of popery, especially against transubstantiation and the sacrifice of the mass. His listeners increased so much that the chapter-house of the White Friars was no longer able to contain them; and he therefore began to preach in the public meeting-place, in front of the Town Hall. The anger of the priests was soon awakened, and a prior of the White Friars, in concert with Lord Lisle's chaplain, began to write against him to the clergy of England; in consequence of which, Damlip received an order to appear before the Archbishop of Canterbury, and answer the charges made against him. He immediately obeyed the summons, and replied to the accusations made against him with such skill and boldness that the bishops who heard him were both astonished at his wisdom and enraged at their own inability to cope with his arguments" (King, pp. 154-155).

Damlip was dismissed and was ordered to appear again the next day. But Archbishop Cranmer told him privately that if he appeared he would be condemned to death. So Damlip fled and lived for two years in

1543

other parts of the country.

1544

Persecution in Netherlands

While Damlip was hiding out (1543-1544), persecution raged in Flanders, a region of the Netherlands.

This area was ruled by Charles V, a Holy Roman emperor. He ruled over what later became Germany, Netherlands, Spain and its American kingdoms, Naples and Sicily. He “laboured vigorously to uproot heresy, and his efforts formed a bloody prelude to the more systematic onslaught of Alva and the Inquisition, under the reign of his son and successor, Philip II. Many of the reformed faith were sentenced to imprisonment or banishment for life; but the general-ity were martyred, by being [hanged], drowned, burned, racked, or buried alive” (King, p. 105).

1545

Damlip Condemned

In 1545 Adam Damlip was again arrested and sent to Calais to be tried. An act of Parliament had been passed to prevent meting out the death penalty for religious belief, so Damlip’s persecutors did not charge him with heresy. Instead, they charged him with treason, using as meager evidence the fact he had accepted French money from Cardinal Pole to pay for traveling expenses.

Damlip was condemned to be hanged, drawn and quartered (King, p. 156).

Council of Trent Redefines Heresy

At the time of the Protestant Reformation, half of Europe had turned away from the Catholic Church. The Council of Trent (1545-1563) set as one of its top priorities the definition of heresy and devising new ways to combat it.

“Heretics weren’t unbelievers, but were sinning against the [Catholic] faith, this misbelief came under the jurisdiction of the Church which was entitled to punish them. A heretic was not someone who held views different from the teachings of the Church

but rather someone who rejected church teachings and insisted on his own mistaken views. ...heretics... were regarded as servants of the devil” (Hroch and Skybová), p. 64).

Persecution in France

The Catholic Church continued persecuting people it called heretics in France.

Aymond de Lavoy was a minister in Bordeaux. He had a complaint lodged against him by the Catholic clergy there. His friends told him to flee but he refused and spent nine months in prison on information alone. After his trial he was racked. While suffering from extreme pain he comforted himself with this thought: “This body must once die, but the soul shall live; for the kingdom of God endureth forever.” He finally fainted because of the pain. When he recovered, he prayed for his tormenters.

De Lavoy was asked if he would embrace Roman Catholicism. He refused and was condemned to die. At his place of execution he said to those in the crowd who attended his sermons, “My friends, I exhort you to study and learn the Gospel, for the word of God abideth for ever: labour to know the will of God, and fear not them that kill the body, but have no power over the soul.” He was then strangled and his body was burned (King, p. 56).

James Cobard was a schoolmaster in the city of St. Michael. He taught Mass was useless and absurd, and was burned in 1545.

About the same time 14 men were burned in Malda while their wives were forced to watch.

Peter Chapott brought a number of French-language Bibles to France and sold them publicly. For this he was condemned to the flames in 1546.

Two others were burned for their religion soon after Chapott. They were a crippled schoolmaster named Stephen Polliot from Meaux, a city in northern France on the Marne River, and man named John English.

Michael Micelot was told to recant and be spared or to remain in his religion and be

1546

burned. He chose the latter, saying, “God has given me grace not to deny the truth; and he will give me the strength to endure the fire.”

1547

In 1547 an artisan was arrested for working on a saint’s day. When asked why he so offended the Catholic religion, the man replied, “I am a poor man, and have nothing but my labour to depend upon; necessity requires that I should be industrious, and my conscience tells me there is no day but the Sabbath which I ought to keep sacred from labour.” The artisan was imprisoned and later burned (King, pp. 55-57).

We have no evidence connecting these martyrs to the Church of God. If they were not members, we can look at their sufferings as examples of what some members of God’s church may have been going through at this time. It is not impossible that some members of the Church of God in France in the 1450s suffered similar trials and martyrdoms.

1550

Truth Spreads in England

At this time the truth of God continued to spread in England. There were Sabbath-keepers in England under the reign of Edward VI (1547-1553), according to Thomas Bampfield, a Church of God minister who lived in the 1600s (Fletcher, p. 169).

“Harassment of Protestants in France and Holland led to the migration of a good many refugees to England in the 1550s. Hospitable Englishmen under Elizabeth welcomed the stream, and the newcomers spread out, mostly in the Southeast—Norwich, Colchester, Sandwich, and Canterbury, but also in London, Maidstone, and Southampton—where they settled down peaceably to their callings and were left alone. It was not long, however, before Church and State realized that hospitality might have been tempered with closer scrutiny, for among the persecuted Continentals were several ‘Anabaptists also and Sectaries, holding Heretical and ill Opinions,’ who accepted asylum under pretense of orthodoxy but brought with them a number of

disturbing ideas” (Lovejoy, p. 23).

Some of these “heretical and ill opinions” and “disturbing ideas” could very well have been the truth of God, brought to England by fleeing church members.

1550

Groups Separate from Church of England

As early as 1550-51 there is evidence of a religious movement called Separatism. They were people who separated from the Anglican Church in England. Perhaps some members of the true church were counted among their numbers.

“All enthusiasts were Separatists in one way or another. This was true chiefly because they were radicals who wished to *pull away from establishments* in order to *preserve their purity* from corruption—usually to return to what they called the *primitive church and its practices...* they were all reformers at heart, believing their way was the *true way* which others eventually would recognize” (Lovejoy, p. 29, emphasis added).

Separatism meant what it says: “That a true visible Church of Christ, is a company of faithful people, called out by the word of God, and separated from the world, and the false waies thereof, gathered and joyned together in the fellowship of the Gospell, by a voluntary profession of the faith and obedience of Christ” (*A New Life of Virginea*, in *MHS Collections*, 2d Ser., Vol. 8, p. 218).

Indeed, some Separatists traced their origins back to the Lollards. Early Separatism was not very consistent—the groups varied in their beliefs—until the late 1500s under Robert Browne.

Separatists denied the false beliefs of heaven and hell. They believed they were “called out by the word of God.” Instead of grand public worship in large churches, Separatists met in “private coventicles” and were “teaching in corners.” They believed in faith healing and anointing the sick. Their preachers were called from among the common people. They had been artisans and working-class people. (The mainstream religions had ministers from the upper class who

prided themselves on their intellectual level.)

Separatists advocated a separation of church and state and taught that all church members were equal among themselves (Gal. 3:26-29).

Of course not all these sects known as Separatists or enthusiasts were part of the Church of God. Some encouraged women preachers, which were explicitly forbidden in the Bible (1 Cor. 14:34-35) (Lovejoy, pp. 33-35).

In spite of religious persecution, the Sabbath was still kept in the 1550s.

1552

The Sabbath Recorder, June 11, 1868, tells of Sabbath-keepers in England: "In 1552 many in England were known as Sabbarians" (Dugger and Dodd, p. 196).

1553

Servetus Martyred

Meanwhile, back on the continent of Europe, Michael Servetus, the famous Spanish heretic and anti-Trinitarian, tried to avoid capture by publishing his works under an assumed name. But word got out and the Catholic Inquisition arrested him in Vienne, where he had been serving as a personal physician to that city's archbishop. When he was interrogated, Servetus denied being the one they sought and was released. He fled to Geneva where he stayed briefly. There, he made a mistake. He attended a sermon given by Calvin. He was recognized and arrested after services. Calvinists were stronger believers in the Trinity than Catholics were.

Servetus was sent to prison where he was mistreated. The Geneva Council solicited opinions from other Swiss churches concerning Servetus. All condemned him and branded his views as error contrary to Scripture. The 42-year-old heretic was burned to death Oct. 27, 1553 (Nigg, pp. 325-326).

But his beliefs lived on. "They were taken up by Lelio and Fausto Sozzini and carried further. The Sozzinis, uncle and nephew, did not have the Spaniard's speculative fervor. They were more sober and above all more rationalistic. But through their activities, Antitrinitarianism became, along with

Anabaptism, the second great heretical movement of the age of the Reformation. It has entered history under the name of Socianism... Like all offshoots of Protestantism, the movement had to endure severe persecutions. Nevertheless, the Socianists have persisted down to the present day under the name of Unitarians" (Nigg, p. 329).

More on European Sabbath-Keepers

1554

In Finland, hard times had fallen. The common people there were persuaded that the bad times were caused by "NOT OBSERVING THE SEVENTH DAY CALLED SATURDAY." These common people kept the Sabbath though others around them did not. In 1554, King Gustav Vasa I, a strong Lutheran, wrote them a letter ordering them to "forsake the way leading to damnation at once!"

There were two groups of Sabbath-keepers in Sweden at this time. One was called an "anti-church party" because it was non-Catholic and non-Lutheran. It taught the truth. Another group kept Saturday and Sunday. They did not separate themselves from the Lutheran Church. This nominal Sabbath-keeping existed until 1618 (Anjou's *Swedish Church History*, as quoted by *Correspondence Course*, Lesson 52, pp. 10-11).

Death of a French Family

1556

On Saturday, March 6, 1556, at about 10 p.m., the provost of the eastern French city of Lisle and his sergeants walked the streets, searching for Protestants gathered in homes for religious services. He didn't find any. But they came to the house of Robert Oguier, where rich and poor were known to gather for instruction in the Scriptures.

The provost and his sergeants found certain books which they confiscated. They did not find Oguier, because he was reading the Bible to brethren in their homes. When Oguier and his elder son, Baudicon, returned home, they were arrested, along with his wife and younger son, Martin. They all were sent to separate prison cells.

Several days later the family was brought before the magistrate who declared, "It is told us that you never come to Mass, yea, and also dissuade others from coming thereto; we are further informed that you maintain coventicles in your house, causing erroneous doctrines to be preached there, contrary to the ordinance of our holy mother the Church, whereby you have transgressed the laws of his imperial majesty."

Robert Oguier replied that he did not go to Mass because the real meaning of Christ's sacrifice was "trodden underfoot" by the false ritual. He added, "For do we read in all the Scriptures that either the prophets, Christ, or any of the apostles, ever said Mass? They knew not what it meant. Christ indeed instituted the holy supper, in which all Christians communicate together, but they sacrifice not. If you please to read the Bible over, you will never find the Mass once mentioned therein; therefore it is the mere invention of men."

"As for the second accusation, I will not deny but there have met together in my house honest people fearing God; I assure you, not with intention to wrong any, but rather for the advancement of God's glory and the good of many. I knew, indeed, that the emperor had forbidden it, but what then? I knew also that Christ, in his Gospel, had commanded it. 'Where two or three (saith he) are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.' Thus, you see, I could not well obey the emperor but I must disobey Christ. In this case, then, I chose to obey my God rather than man."

When asked what they did in their meetings, Baudicon replied, "When we meet together in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, to hear the word of God, we first of all prostrate upon our knees before God, and in the humility of our spirits do make a confession of our sins before His Divine Majesty. Then we pray that the word of God may be rightly divided, and purely preached; we also pray for our sovereign lord the emperor and for all his counsellors [that] the commonwealth may be peaceably governed to the glory of God."

The family was tortured and brought before the judges again. When asked if they would submit to the will of the magistrate, Roger and Baudicon said yes and were burnt to ashes. The younger son and his mother were returned to prison.

Popish rabble went to work on these two, trying to get them to leave the truth and join the Catholic Church. After a time the mother's faith wavered and she let go of her first faith. "At this their enemies rejoiced, whilst the little flock of Christ, hearing such sad news, were in perplexity..."

The monks persuaded the woman to try to dissuade her son, Martin. But when they were reunited at last, Martin, with tears, brought his mother back into the truth. They were both burned at the stake (King, pp. 86-91).

More Sabbath Keeping

As the decade of the 1550s drew to a close, there was another record of Sabbath-keeping in England, this time from *Chambers' Cyclopaedia*: "Many conscientious and independent thinkers in the reign of Elizabeth (1558-1603) advocated the seventh-day" (Dugger and Dodd, p. 196).

Piedmont Waldenses Defend Their Religion

By the year 1559, peace had perished in Piedmont and persecution prevailed once again. The Waldenses there made an appeal to their sovereign for mercy from their persecutors.

"They implored his highness to consider that their religious profession was not a thing of yesterday, as their adversaries falsely reported, but had been the profession of their fathers, grandfathers, and great-grandfathers, yea, of their predecessors of still more ancient times, even of the martyrs, confessors, apostles, and prophets; and they called upon their adversaries to prove the contrary if they were able. Persuaded, therefore, as they were, that their religion was not a human invention, but founded

1558

1559

upon the Word of God, which shall remain forever, they were confident that no human force would be able to extinguish it" (*Jone's Church History*, ed. 1837, p. 354, as quoted by Dugger and Dodd, p. 195).

1560

Persecution in Calabria

We have already discussed the fact that many Waldenses had fled Pragelas and Dauphiné to settle in the region of Calabria, in the Italian bootheel, in about the 14th century. They lived there peaceably until Pope Pius IV learned of their existence about 1560. He became determined to exterminate them without delay.

Cardinal Alexandrino and two monks were sent to accomplish this purpose. The cardinal was a "furious bigot" with a violent temper. When the trio arrived in the Waldensian town of St. Xist, they assembled the people and told them no harm would come if they accepted the pope's preachers. But if not, they would lose their property and their lives. They all were ordered to attend public Mass that afternoon. Instead of attending, the townspeople fled into the woods.

Alexandrino and the two monks then went to the other Waldensian town, La Garde. This time, he ordered all the gates locked and all approaches to the town guarded. He made the same proposal to the inhabitants of this town but he added a lie. He told them the inhabitants of St. Xist had accepted the popish preachers. The simple people of La Garde believed the cardinal and said they would follow the example of their brethren.

Cardinal Alexandrino then sent for two companies of soldiers to massacre the people of St. Xist. The soldiers searched the woods for Waldenses and killed all they found. Many Waldenses fought back, forcing the troops to retreat. Alexandrino became enraged. He wrote the viceroy of Naples for reinforcements. The viceroy sent him light companies made up of deserters, outlaws, and others who were promised pardon in exchange for exterminating the people of St. Xist. This bloody band succeeded in its task.

Alexandrino then turned his attention to La Garde. He ordered the people to renounce their religion and embrace Roman Catholicism. They refused. He put 30 people on the rack but this terror persuaded no one to recant. He next ordered several Waldensians to be stripped naked and beaten to death with iron rods. Some were hacked to pieces with large knives. Some were thrown to the ground from a high tower. And others were smeared with pitch and burned alive. The four principal men of La Garde were hanged and the clergyman was thrown from the top of his church steeple.

At length, the viceroy returned to Naples and the cardinal was recalled to Rome. The marquis of Butian was commissioned to complete the job. He acted with such barbarous rigor that not a single Waldensian remained in all of Calabria (King, pp. 111-114).

Jacob Palaiolog Converted

Jacob Palaiolog holds a unique position among victims of the papal Inquisition. He was born in 1520 on the Isle of Chios. He was brought up a Catholic but the island also was influenced by the eastern orthodox religion, Islam and Judaism.

When Palaiolog was in his mid-30s, Catholic Inquisitors were sent to Chios to eliminate "unfavorable conditions." They acted as if they were still in Italy. This angered the Ottomans who ruled the island and the Inquisitors were thrown off Chios. Palaiolog also had been incensed by the Inquisition. He sought to reconcile Christianity, Judaism and Islam, not incite fighting among the religions.

Palaiolog's views got him in trouble more than once with his orthodox Catholic church. In 1557 he was arrested and freed by Inquisitors. A year later he was back in prison but friends arranged his escape in October 1558. He fled to Venice but was too well-known to escape detection. He was arrested Nov. 2 on an anonymous tip that he was hiding in a merchant's house. The charge against him proved false and he was released. He was not free long. In December he

was arrested again in Venice and transported to Rome to face the Inquisition.

Palaiolog's life story is one of capture and release. He wrote two anti-Catholic polemics, one against the primacy of the pope and one against Pope Paul IV himself.

When Pope Paul IV died, the prison doors were broken open during riots and Palaiolog escaped. In 1561 he turned up in France.

1561
1562

In 1562 Palaiolog moved to Prague, the capital of the kingdom of Bohemia. While in Prague he became involved with a religious faction known as Utraquists. This group consisted of moderate Hussites. He married into this group and found a brief period of family happiness and material security.

"His stay in Prague marked the beginning of the second phase of Palaiolog's life, the phase in which he was to break finally and definitely with the church.... During his stay there, he had grown so close to the Utraquists in Bohemia that some of them even considered electing him as their archbishop. In fact he had not only contacts with just this group, who were successors to the Hussites; he also had acquainted himself with the thinking of more radical groups that focused on anti-trinitarianism" (Hroch and Skybová, pp. 102-105). One of these anti-Trinitarian groups very likely was the Church of God.

1563

Spanish Persecution of Judaists

The Council of Trent concluded in 1563. By this time the last vestiges of major heretical groups had been stamped out in the lands controlled by the Spanish king. These included the Lutherans in Seville and Valladolid in the late 1550s and the Waldenses in Calabria in the early 1560s. "The Inquisition was to focus its attention on the suspicious Moriscoes and the clandestine Judaists.... Persecution of unorthodox believers in the Netherlands assumed brutal proportions under Philip II and culminated in the terror of the Duke of Alba" (Hroch and Skybová, p. 201). Could not the Church of God have been included among these "Judaists"?



Pope Pius V saw himself as a true successor to Paul V and sought to follow in his inquisitorial methods. Engraving by Giovanni Batista Rossi.

Church Youth Excluded from Catholic Universities

1564

Pope Pius IV issued a bull Nov. 13, 1564. This papal pronouncement required students who applied to attend Catholic universities to confess the Tridentine Creed. All students with unorthodox beliefs—including those of the Church of God—were excluded from Catholic universities (Hroch and Skybová, p. 161).

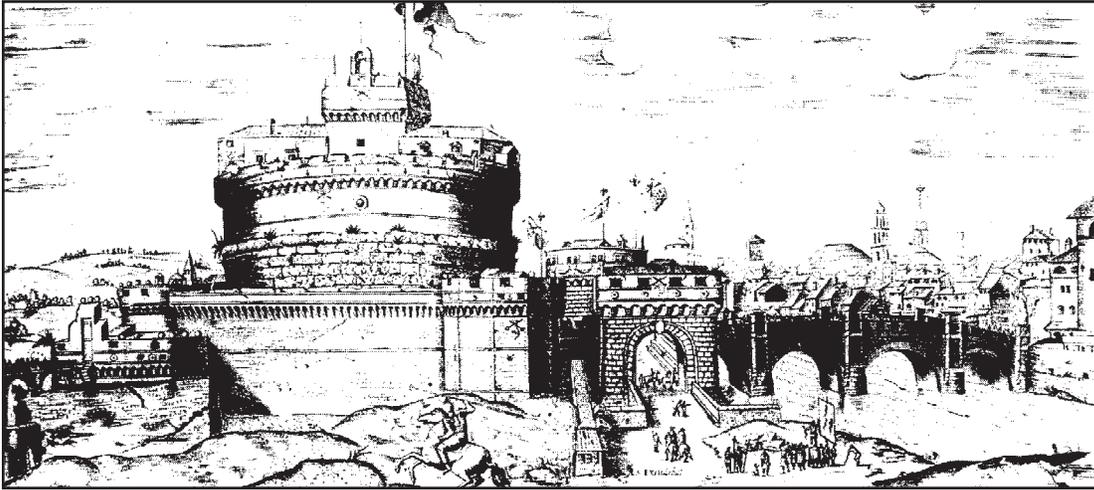
Francis David Preaches Truth

1566

In 1566 an ex-Catholic priest named Francis David founded the first Unitarian (more properly anti-Trinitarian) congregation in Transylvania (now part of Romania).

He had left the Catholic faith and tried Lutheranism (1540), Calvinism (1559) and the popish baptist religion called Unitarianism. But none of these groups had offered the true religion he was seeking.

"Continual study led him to ever more understanding. He was soon branded by his co-religionists as an unscrupulous innovator" (*Correspondence Course*, Lesson 52, p. 12).



The Castel Sant' Angelo in Rome was the prison of the Inquisition for several hundred years. Many heretics were executed on the small square in front of the main gate.

Pope Pius V Revives Inquisition

In January 1566, the Grand Inquisitor became Pope Pius V and renewed efforts to stamp out heresy.

Under his rule Inquisitors were permitted to torture anyone suspected of heresy. Prisoners were not permitted to talk to each other. They were kept in virtual solitary confinement until their trial. They were not permitted to read or write.

“The number of those accused [of heresy] varied—sometimes barely ten and at other times more than twenty—but one of the accused was always hanged and usually one or more burned on the fires lit in the square in front of the Castel Sant' Angelo or on the Campo de' fiori. Sometimes the bodies of those already hanged or beheaded were burned, but sometimes there was also the gruesome spectacle of the burning of live prisoners” (Hroch and Skybová, pp. 89-91).

In 1567 the duke of Alba headed the Spanish occupying army and invaded the Netherlands.

He gave the Inquisition the support of the army. “They made a major, if not decisive, contribution to the total of eight thousand people who fell victim to the Inquisition within a few years” (Hroch and Skybová, p. 132).



Anabaptists were hanged in Amsterdam. This watercolor drawing is by Barend Dirchs and is from the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam.

1567

1568 Doña Elvira del Campo Tortured

One victim of the Spanish Inquisition who may have been a member of the Church of God was Doña Elvira del Campo. She was from Toledo in central Spain. She was accused of refusing to eat pork and to change her bed linen on Saturday. These were “proofs” she was a Judaizing heretic. She was tortured in 1568.

The following is a description of her torture:

“She was taken into the torture chamber and told to speak the truth; she answered merely that she had nothing to say. The inquisitors ordered to have her undressed, she was cautioned again but would not speak. Once her clothes had been removed, she said, ‘My Lords, I have done everything that is said about me and am bearing false witness against myself, for I cannot bear to see myself in this state—I swear to God that I have done nothing.’ She was told that she was not to lie, but to tell the truth. They began to bind her arms, whereupon she said: ‘I have told the truth—what more can I say?’ A rope was tied around her arms and she was admonished again to tell the truth, but she still insisted that she had nothing to say. She then screamed, and said: ‘I have done everything that is said about me.’ Challenged to explain exactly what she had done, she answered: ‘I have already told you the whole truth!’ She then screamed and cried: ‘Tell me what you want, I don’t know what to say!’ After a further turn, she said, ‘Loose me a little so that I can think about what to say to you. I don’t know what I’ve done; I refused to eat pork because it makes me ill. I’ve done everything, let me go and I will tell the truth.’ She was told to speak and said: ‘I didn’t eat it, I don’t know why.’ She was then threatened again, and said: ‘Lord, I didn’t eat it because I don’t like it, let me go and I’ll tell you.’ She was challenged to admit that she had acted in conflict with the teachings and faith of the Catholic Church. She said: ‘Take me away from here and tell me what to say—you’re hurting me—on, my arms, my arms...’ and repeated it over and over again.

The ropes were pulled tighter and she said: ‘Lords, have you no compassion on a poor and sinful woman?’ They told her that they would have compassion on her if she only told the truth. She replied: ‘Lord, tell me, tell me.’ She was told to give details, to which she replied again: ‘I don’t know what I should say, Lord, I just don’t know.’ Then the ropes were loosened and counted; there had been sixteen turns of the screw and the rope had broken on the last one.”

The water torture was used next:

“She was told that if she wanted, she could confess before the water torture was inflicted. Then the linen was put in her mouth, and she screamed: ‘No, take it away, I’ll suffocate, and my stomach hurts.’ A jug of water was fetched and she was told to tell the truth. She screamed for the last rites and that she was going to die, but they told her that she would go on being tortured until she told the truth. She failed to answer any questions, and when the inquisitor found she was exhausted, he had the torture stopped.”

Four days later del Campo was tortured again, which shows that the principle of torturing a prisoner only once was not always followed. Her statements became more and more desperate. Finally she confessed and repented of secret Judaism (Hroch and Skybová, pp. 146-147).

Was Doña Elvira del Campo a member of the Church of God? It is difficult to tell. But the account of her torture sheds light on what probably happened to some church members during the Inquisition.

Prison Conditions

Prison life was no picnic for Church of God members and other “heretics” during this time. Prison cells were unfurnished. Prisoners supplied their own beds and linen. Food was provided by the Inquisition but was paid for by the prisoners from their confiscated assets. Wealthy prisoners could choose their own menus, the poor risked starvation and hoped for charity from the Inquisition.

The Roman Inquisition had a barber

1568

1568

regularly visit the prisoners to shave them and cut their hair at the prisoners' expense.

Prisoners could leave their cells under guard but their feet were bound in chains to prevent escape. In the Spanish prisons the toilet facilities were outside.

Prisoners were totally isolated from the outside world in prisons of the Inquisition. They were denied contact and letters from friends and families. Occasionally prisoners did establish some contact with the outside world by bribing guards or other prison workers.

As time went on, the state, and later the Catholic Church, became more responsible for the prisoners. Prisoners could no longer pay for their own food and clothing. When this happened, conditions worsened until prisons became the stinking cells of the 1700s with straw for beds and only bread and water for nourishment.

Most of the victims of the Inquisition came from the wealthy classes. Little attention was paid to the heretic among the common people. There was no advantage to imprisoning the poor—they could not pay the cost of their interrogation. Sentencing the wealthy served two purposes. Their sentencing served as a broader deterrent than sentencing a common person. But also it served as a valuable source of income for the Inquisition.

Not all heretics were captured, of course. Most of those accused remained to be questioned—they may not have wanted to start a new life somewhere else, or, perhaps, they wanted to clear their name and prove loyalty to the Catholic Church. But many escaped—including members of the Church of God.

“Those who did flee did so for the most part because they realized they had split completely with the [Catholic] Church and had no intention of being reconciled with it, since they had in any case lost all belief in an effective church reform. It is no coincidence that the Italian emigrés north of the Alps included the followers of those with explicitly reform tendencies—most notably Calvinists—and also of the radical anti-trinitarian movements” (Hroch and Skybová,

pp. 148-151).

Inquisition Continues

Another area of persecution lay about 80 miles south of the Spanish Netherlands. It was in Franche Comté, a region of France under Spanish control. This area lay between France on the west and the Holy Roman Empire on the east. It was just north of the city of Geneva and the Alps. In 1570 the Grand Inquisitor appointed two new inquisitors for this region and instructed them to “persecute heretics of all kinds” (Hroch and Skybová, p. 131).

Also in 1570, true Christians and other heretics were persecuted in southwest Germany, near the Rhine River. “Persecution was directed first and foremost against the Anabaptists and anti-trinitarians. When they had been expelled from Palatinate (region of southwest Germany), the spirit of visitation became more moderate...” (Hroch and Skybová, p. 203).

Calvanists and Anabaptists often were expelled from German lands. Executions of members of these two groups were not common there. Executions were reserved mostly for anti-trinitarians (among whom we would find the Church of God).

“A number of Italian anti-trinitarians also came before the courts and were sometimes put to death in Geneva or other Swiss towns. The numbers affected were usually fairly small....

“The Elector Frederick III set up a trial in 1570 against two well-known anti-trinitarians who had initially found refuge with, and a friendly reception from, one of the elector's councillors. The trial ended in the passing of a death sentence, but this was carried out in only one of the cases, for the other prisoner managed to escape. The decisive factor in this harsh sentencing was a political one. Frederick III wanted to demonstrate his religious zeal in the struggle against heretics, and to take the wind out of the sails of his Lutheran critics” (Hroch and Skybová, p. 207).

Now, we travel from Germany 375 miles

1570

east to Prague, where we continue the story of Jacob Palaiolog.

1571

Palaiolog Becomes More Involved

On March 30, 1571, Palaiolog was arrested in Prague. He was expelled from Bohemia. On Sept. 15, he and his family moved to Cracow. During his first three months there, he published three major theological and philosophical works. He met with anti-trinitarians in Poland and Transylvania. We have been following the progress of a branch of the Church of God which called Transylvania home. It could be that Palaiolog met with these people!

1572

In the fall of 1572, Palaiolog began a journey back to Chios. He spent some time with anti-trinitarians in Klausenburg, writing several tracts and pamphlets which mirrored their beliefs. After visiting his home island, he returned to Transylvania and lived there until 1575.

He later fled to Cracow to avoid persecution, and then to Moravia. All this time he remained in close contact with anti-trinitarians, possibly of the Church of God.

“Although his association with anti-trinitarians had not been without problems, it had acquainted Palaiolog with the workings of this religious group. The isolated and persecuted seeker after truth had become a member and even a worker of an organized religious movement where he found friends, helpers, and admirers” (Hroch and Skybová, pp. 102-105).

French Massacre of 1572

A great persecution was brought against the French Calvinist group called Huguenots in 1572. It is reported that in one month 60,000 Protestants were killed in France. Reports of slaughter come from many cities: 2,000 in one day in Poitiers, 200 people cut to pieces in Meldis, 1,000 men, women and children slain at Orléans, 200 people murdered at Toulouse, just to name a few (King, pp. 82-86).

The Church of God was by no means the

only religious group persecuted or martyred. Protestants also found life very hard in the early days of the Protestant Reformation. One wonders if so great a massacre as this may have included some members of the true church. To a loyal Catholic, the Church of God could easily have been lumped together with churches of the Protestant faith.

Anabaptists Martyred

1573

“A larger portion of Anabaptists were martyred for their faith than any other Christian group in history—including even the early Christians on whom they modelled themselves. In the seventeenth century their stories were gathered together into an anthology, known as *The Martyrs’ Mirror*. To their contemporaries they appeared a threat to the very fabric of society. To us they seem to have a more simple demand: a man’s rights to his own beliefs. In their quiet pursuit of that right a voice was heard which had been silent in recent centuries: the voice of ordinary men and women, prepared to assert themselves against all authority for conscience’s sake. It is heard at its most moving in a letter which a young Anabaptist woman wrote in 1573, in Antwerp gaol [jail], to her daughter of a few days old. The father had already been executed as an Anabaptist: the mother had been reprieved only long enough to give birth to her child. Her voice might have been that of any good townswoman in a Flemish painting of the period, as she writes to tell her daughter not to grow up ashamed that both her parents were burnt:

“My dearest child, the true love of God strengthen you in virtue, you who are yet so young, and whom I must leave in this wicked, evil, perverse world.

“Oh that it had pleased the Lord that I might have brought you up, but it seems that it was not the Lord’s will. Even so it has now gone with your father and myself. We were so well joined that we would not have forsaken each other for the whole world, and yet we had to leave each other for the Lord’s sake. We were permitted to live together

only half a year, after which we were apprehended because we sought the salvation of our souls. Be not ashamed of us; it is the way which the prophets and apostles went. Your dear father demonstrated with his blood that it is the genuine truth, and I also hope to attest the same with my blood, though flesh and blood must remain on the posts and on the stake, well knowing that we shall meet hereafter.

“Hence, my dear Janneken, do not accustom your mouth to filthy talk, nor to ugly lies, and do not run in the street as other bad children do, rather take up a book and learn to seek there that which concerns salvation. And now, Janneken, my dear lamb, who are yet very little and young, I leave you this letter, together with a gold *real* which I had with me in prison, and this I leave you for a perpetual adieu, and for a testament. Read it, when you have understanding, and keep it as long as you live in remembrance of me and your father. Be not ashamed to confess our faith, since it is the true evangelical faith, another than which shall never be found’ ” (*The Christians* by Bamber Gascoigne, pp. 202-203).

1578**Francis David Martyred**

More and more Francis David, the former Catholic priest in Transylvania, drew attention to himself and his non-traditional religious beliefs. Finally, in 1578, he was proven to be unmovable in his convictions. He was condemned as a heretic and sent to prison (*Correspondence Course*, Lesson 52, p. 12).

1579

He was burned at the stake in November 1579.

During his lifetime, Francis David had become a friend of Jacob Palaiolog. “Palaiolog immediately wrote a passionate defense of his friend and an accusation of the judges concerned, which he published in Basle in 1581” (Hroch and Skybová, p. 105).

1580**Religious Separatists Questioned**

Meanwhile, in England, Queen Elizabeth’s proclamation in 1580 ordered bishops in

likely places to work with ministers and justices of the peace to root out the heresy of “Family of Love”—a group similar to the “Anabaptists.”

Could the Church of God have been among this religious sect? Some of their beliefs match those of the true church. Some traits are questionable.

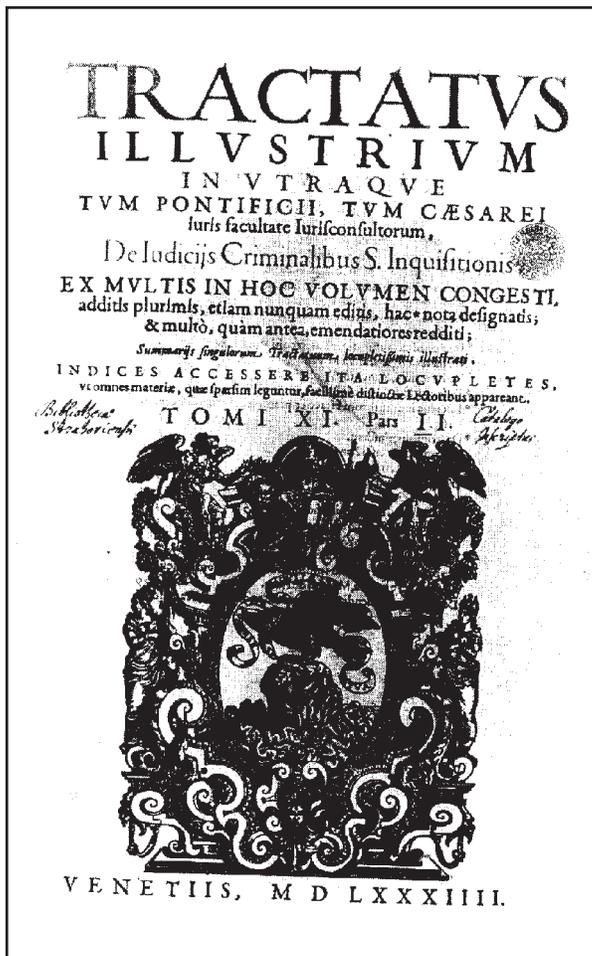
First, the similarities: The Family of Love rejected infant baptism. They baptized their children when they reached the age of discretion. They believed they were God’s chosen—the only ones offered salvation at that time. But they were willing to get along with everyone—they lived peaceably under all types of government. They emphasized purity, integrity, and a deep, inward faith.

“Familists at heart were Separatists [they separated themselves from mainstream religious groups (Rev. 18:4)], convinced of being God’s chosen. They believed, according to [Hendrik Niclae]’s teachings—which they equated with Scripture—that there was no salvation outside the Family, and that those who opposed them were already lost. Yet to add to what seems sharp contradiction, there was throughout the flock an overriding spirit of charity, meekness and love” (Lovejoy, p. 26).

Now notice these dissimilarities: The Familists believed an “inward light” took precedence over Scripture. They believed it was possible to achieve the innocence of Adam before his fall (a true belief—at baptism all sins are washed away) and once in this state of perfection there was no need for a resurrection of the body after death, for it had already occurred. The Familists, while trying to please the non-believers around them, attended parish churches and borrowed doctrine from a variety of places.

Chester Vitell, a disciple of Niclaes, had brought Familism to England in the early 1550s. In 1574-5 he distributed 15 Familist tracts, including translated works of Niclaes.

It was this sect Queen Elizabeth sought to root out. Her proclamation in 1580 may have affected the Church of God in England at that time. Certainly, if the Familists were part of the church, there was an effect. But



Cover of the juridicial manual for the proceedings in Inquisition trials from the year 1584.

even if this group was not part of the church, to an outsider, God's true church may have been confused with the Familists—their doctrines being similar. Some of those who were arrested for being Familists were not really members of that sect: "A number of suspects whose secret coventicles punctuated the landscape were rounded up. Some denied Familist belief and claimed no revelations but Scripture for their inspiration" (Lovejoy, p. 28). Perhaps this latter group consisted of members of the Church of God!

Waldenses in Valleys Killed

During the 1580s, most of the Waldenses in

their mountain valleys were destroyed, including those who joined the Calvinists in their Protestant Reformation (*Correspondence Course*, Lesson 51, p. 16).

Inquisition Manual Published

We can learn more about what occurred during the Inquisition from a manual published in 1584. It was a judicial manual for proceedings in Inquisition trials.

Unlike modern courts, the Inquisition did not presume innocence until guilt could be proven. If guilt could not be fully proved, the accused was still required to repent and pay a fine.

Heretics were not permitted to face the witnesses who had brought the accusation. Two methods were used to extract confessions: psychological pressure during questioning and physical torture.

Some simple tricks were described in a classical 14th-century work—*Directorium inquisitorium* by Nicholas Eymeric. These methods were used against the Albigenses and Waldenses in earlier ages and were now being used against God's people and other heretics in the 16th century. Eymeric

wrote:

"The inquisitor should behave in a friendly manner and act as if he already knows the whole story. He should glance at his papers and say, 'It's quite clear you are not telling the truth' or should pick up a document and look surprised, saying, 'How can you lie to me like this when what I've got written down here contradicts everything you've told me?' He should then continue: 'Just confess—you can see that I know the whole story already.'"

Eymeric gave other methods of applying pressure. An Inquisitor could claim to be going on a long journey. If the prisoner did not confess immediately, he would have to

1584

remain in chains until the Inquisitor returned. Long intervals between questionings were common.

Another method was to send secret agents posing as heretics into the prison cells. While witnesses listened behind the door with a notary to validate what was heard, the spy tried to get the “heretic” to make incriminating statements.

Even though both victim and witness had sworn oaths to tell the truth, a witness’ statement was considered over that of the accused.

Torture also was used—not as punishment—but to extract confessions.

“...The torture chambers of the Inquisition have... acquired a particularly gruesome place in history, not only because of the level of pain experienced by the victims and the variety of torment inflicted, but because of the purpose of the torture—a confession, not of crimes committed, but of religious views and actions or with the result to betray friends.”

Three common methods of torture during the Spanish Inquisition were the *garrucha*, the rope torture and water torture.

In the *garrucha*, the victims’ hands were tied behind their backs and they were lifted off the ground by ropes attached to their wrists.

The rope torture meant putting heretics on a rack, tying their limbs with rope and slowly stretching them.

In water torture, victims were put on the rack with their heads lower than their feet. A fine piece of linen was placed over their mouths and water was dripped on the linen, risking suffocation (Hroch and Skybová, pp. 140-146).

Sabbath Supported

Occasionally during this period of time—the latter part of the 1500s—we see the word “Sabbath” being used by writers. Some Protestants may have used the word incorrectly in reference to the first day of the week. Other writers were definitely discussing God’s seventh-day Sabbath.

In 1584 John Stockwood wrote: “A great diversity of opinion among vulgar people and simple sort, concerning the Sabbath day, and the right use of the same.”

Another writer, Gilfillan, added, “Some maintaining the unchanged and unchangeable obligations of the seventh-day Sabbath.”

J. N. Andrews, in his *History of the Sabbath*, wrote, “At what time the seventh-day baptists began to form churches in this kingdom does not appear; but probably it was an early period; and although their churches have never been numerous, yet there has been among them almost for two hundred years past, some very eminent men” (Fletcher, pp. 169-170).

It is possible that it was during the 1580s that a long-standing Church of God congregation began in England. This group was called the “Mill Yard” congregation. We shall hear more of this group later (*Correspondence Course*, Lesson 53, p. 5).

1260 Years End

Jesus Christ had prophesied that the Church of God would be in hiding for 1,260 years (Rev. 12:6).

“Waldenses, Cathars and others in the Middle Ages were in unanimous agreement in stating that the True Church became an outcast and fled into the wilderness. They began it with the agreement between Emperor Constantine and Pope Sylvester. There is no mistaking this time.

“From Constantine’s decree in 325... and the consequent initiation of persecution on non-Catholics, 1,260 years brings us to the time immediately following 1585.

“Did you notice, in the section on scattered Sabbath-keepers, how they were either completely extinct or insignificant about this time?

“At this time, the hand of God is again clearly seen in events. The living Jesus Christ moved to make it possible for His Church to GROW AGAIN, and for His Work to be done!” (*Correspondence Course*, Lesson 52, p. 12).

We will discuss the miracles which occurred and the growth of the Church of God in our next chapter.

1585