

STUDY PAK 6

THE WALDENSES

A Remarkable Incident.

“Geo. T. Williams, a Baptist physician from Crawfordsville, Indiana, was with the American troops in Paris during 1914-1918. The doctor and his regimental chaplain, a priest, were dining with a wealthy, educated Roman Catholic lady one day, when the lady, who spoke English perfectly, said: “By the way doctor, I have not asked you what your religion is.” The doctor replied in perfect good humor: “The church that always opposed yours.” Quick as a flash the lady replied in equal good humor, “The Old Baptists.”

~ ~ taken from *Baptist History*, by Barney E. Antrolus, p. 3 ~ ~

I THE ORIGIN OF THE WALDENSES.

- A. The Waldensian churches claim to be _____. A Waldensian pastor (Albert Garrold) writes:

“Rome at the time of Paul was the center of the universe. The road from Rome into Gaul and Spain led through these valleys, and it is believed that some of the hearers of the apostles and early disciples of Christianity came to these valleys and planted the Gospel there.

Maybe Paul himself, if we believe the tradition that says that he went as far as Spain to preach the Gospel, had passed through these valleys and announced the good tidings there.

It is also believed that some of the Christians who were driven out of Rome by the persecutions of Nero, fled to this remote section for refuge and that thus this heroic church had its beginning.

At any rate, the old writers of the Waldensian church have always laid claim to _____.”

- B. Another ancient history of the Waldenses relates that they were organized as a distinct Christian group during the time of Emperor Constantine. A preacher named _____; affiliated with the Novatians led them in rejecting the new state church. (For more information see *Baptist History* by Dr. L.L. Glover, pp. 300-304). In the early Centuries, the Waldenses were sometimes called _____.

II. THEIR HISTORY.

- A. Testimony of Sacchoni.

Rainerio Sacchoni was for 17 years one of the _____ of the Cathary, or the Waldenses of Lombardy; at length he joined the _____ and became _____ of the Waldenses. The Pope made him inquisitor of Lombardy. The following is with regard to the inquisitors in the Diocese of Pass au about the year 1260:

“Among all the sects there is no one more pernicious to the church than that of the Lyonists of Lyons, France (Waldenses), and for three reasons: in the first place, because it is the most ancient; for some say that it dates back to the time of Sylvester, A.D. 325, others, to the time of the Apostles. In the second place, because it is the most widespread. There is hardly a country where it does not exist. In the third place, because of other sects striking with horror those who listen to them, the Lyonists, on the contrary, possess a great outward appearance of piety. As a matter of fact, they lead irreproachable lives before men, and as regards their faith and the articles of their creed, they are orthodox. Their one fault is that they blaspheme against the church and the clergy, points to which laymen in general are known to be too easily led away.”

~~ (Gretsch, *Contra Waldenses*, Vol. IV) ~~

- B. Waldensian Claims.

It was the received opinion among the Waldenses that they were of _____ and _____. “They call themselves,” says David of Augsburg, “successors of the apostles and say that they are in possession of the apostolic authority and of the keys to bind and unbind.”

C. A Waldensian Document.

A statement of Waldenses themselves is at hand. In a Waldensian document, which some have dated as early as the year 1100, in a manuscript copy which dates from 1404, may be found _____ on the subject _____.
_____. “The Noble Lessons,” as it is called, says, “We do not find anywhere in the writings of the Old Testament that the light of truth and holiness was at any time completely extinguished. There have always been men who have walked faithfully in the paths of righteousness. Their number has been at times reduced to few, but has never been altogether lost. We believe that the same has been the case from the time of Jesus Christ until now, and that it will be so until the end, for if the cause of Christ, of God were founded, it was in order that it might remain until the end of time. She preserved for a long time the virtue of holy religion, and according to ancient history, her directors lived in poverty and in humility for about three centuries; that is to say, down to the time of Constantine.”

C. Waldensian Perpetuity.

“Such was the tradition and such was the opinion of the Waldenses in regard to their origin. They held to a secret perpetuity during the Middle Ages vying with the Catholic perpetuity” (Michael en, *History of France*, Vol. II, 402, Paris, 1833).

“The Henricians and Petrobrusians seemed to have been absorbed into the body known as Waldenses, and do not long maintain a separate name and existence.”

E. Peter Waldo.

Peter Waldo was a _____ and _____ in Lyons, France in the Twelfth Century. From some of the independent church people in the mountains, he received a copy of the _____. He soon contrasted that with the _____ he had been hearing. He _____ into the local language and began to distribute copies. This led to the formation of a _____ in his home.

Waldo and others trusted Christ as Saviour, and Waldo (and others) sold their property and gave the proceeds to the poor.

Waldo and his followers began _____ in Lyons and took _____ to nearby cities. They usually traveled _____ after the pattern of the New Testament. They went throughout France, Switzerland, and northern Italy. Those preachers were often called “_____.” They were ordered to quit preaching, but they refused. Their Bibles were pitched into the flames, and 80 of their preachers were _____ in Strasbourg. They were driven out into Austria, Swabia, Poland, Bavaria, Bohemia, and other areas. Waldo fled for his life, ending up in Bavaria.

F. Centuries of Persecutions.

Thirty-six times, Roman Catholic armies invaded the Alps Mountains on campaigns to _____. Many thousands were killed over the centuries. _____ became known as the _____. It was routinely taught to Waldensian children.

III. THE DOCTRINE OF THE WALDENSES.

A. The testimony of their enemies. The former Waldensian Rainerio Sacchoni described their “heresies” this way.

Regarding the Scriptures—“They assert that the doctrine of Christ and the apostles, without the decrees of the church, suffices for salvation. They know by heart the New Testament and most of the Old Testament in the vulgar tongue. They oppose the mystical sense in the Scriptures. The Waldenses accepted the whole Bible and received it as authoritative.”

Regarding Baptism—“They say that a man is then truly for the first time baptized when he is brought into their heresy. But some say that baptism does not profit

little children, because they are never able actually to believe.”

“One argument of their error is, that they say baptism does not profit little children to salvation, who have neither the motive nor the act of faith, because as it is said in the latter part of Mark, ‘He who will not believe that the catechism is of no value ... That the washing given to infants does not profit ... “

Concerning the Church—“They say that the Roman Church is not the church of Jesus Christ, but is a church of wicked ones, and it (that is, the true church) ceased to exist under Sylvester, when the poison of temporal things was infused into the church. All approved customs of the church of which they do not read in the Gospels they despise, as the feast of candles, of palms, the reconciliation of penitents, adoration of the cross, the feast of Easter, and they spurn the feasts of the saints on account of the multiplication of saints. They say the Roman Church is the harlot of Babylon, and all who obey it are condemned ... They affirmed that they alone were the church of Christ and the disciples of Christ. That they are the successors of the apostles and have apostolic authority ... “

Concerning Purgatory—“They say there is no purgatory, but all dying immediately go either to heaven or to hell. They assert that prayers offered by the church for the dead do not avail; for those in heaven do not need them, and those in hell are not at all assisted.”

Regarding the Mass—“They do not believe it to be really the body and blood of Christ, but only bread blessed, which by a certain figure is said to be the body of Christ; as it is said, ‘But the rock was Christ,’ and similar passages.”

B. Others’ statements about Waldensian doctrines.

“One of the first things that they (the Czech Brethren) did was to baptize those present, for the baptism of believers by immersion was common to the Waldenses and to most of the brethren in different parts, though it had been interrupted by

pressure of persecution.”

~ ~ E. H. Broadbent, *The Pilgrim Church*, p. 130 ~ ~

Many Roman Catholic councils condemned the Waldenses for rejecting infant baptism.

IV. ATTEMPTS BY THE WALDENSES AT PEACE.

The Waldenses were careful to try to work out _____ with the governments near them. They were very careful about paying their taxes—even paying them during times when they were being persecuted. They held numerous meetings with government and church officials to _____. They often allowed Roman Catholic priests to come into areas they controlled and preach to them (in the name of _____). There is not one record of a Roman Catholic priest having any substantial success on one of those missions. They finally had to cease those practices because the priests often served as _____ for persecuting military forces. The Waldenses published statements clearly explaining their positions

For all their effort to get along with local government, they usually were not successful. When they were ordered to stop preaching, _____. When their church buildings were destroyed, they _____, _____, and _____. When they were ordered to stop distributing the Scriptures, they continued anyway. The Waldenses translated the Scriptures into at least _____ and spread copies throughout _____. Other Baptist groups such as the Albigenses and the Petrobrusians often used translations provided by the Waldenses. When the Waldenses were ordered to baptize their infants, they _____ from the surrounding church states.

The Waldenses attracted special persecution because of their _____. They believed that all education _____ and they had the responsibility to _____. In many areas there were no schools or very weak schools. They were determined that their children should _____ so

they could _____ for themselves. Because of this, most Waldenses _____ during a time when few could read. They even taught their women to read at a time when this was unheard of in society at large.

Their enemies often said that the most important verse to the Waldenses was, “We ought to obey God rather than man.” Their doctrines of separation of church and state, sole authority of Scripture, and soul liberty forced them _____ when it tried to interfere with _____.

V. THE TESTIMONY OF THE WALDENSES.

The Waldenses were especially noted for _____ than the inhabitants of the regions where they lived. Even their staunchest enemies acknowledged their Godly personal behavior. Many Roman Catholic priests and learned doctors of theology attempted to convert the Waldenses. Some admitted that the average Waldensian church member _____ than they did. One Roman Catholic priest, returning from a mission to the Waldenses, stated that he had learned more Scriptures conversing with them than he had in his _____. Theological professors from the University at Sorbonne acknowledged that the children of the Waldenses were better trained in the Scriptures than they were!

VI. THE WALDENSES AND THE BIBLE TRANSLATION.

According to the introduction to the Olivetan Bible (which was financed by the Waldenses), the Waldenses knew that the Catholic Latin Bible _____. They believed that they had always had manuscripts that went accurately back _____. The Waldenses were dedicated to Bible translation because of their belief in the _____ of Scripture and the _____.

VII. WALDENSES AND THE MODERN ERA.

The Waldenses faced their most vicious persecutions during the Seventeenth Century. Thousands were killed. Many were tortured in fashion too cruel to describe. Most fled to the Swiss Alps. This account of one of the tortures was written by Samuel Morland:

“Jacobo di Rone, a schoolmaster of Roras, being stripped stark naked, after that they had torn off his nails with pincers, and made a thousand holes in his hands with a dagger's point, was dragged by a cord that was fastened about his middle, through the burg of Lucerna, and every step as he marched along, one of the soldiers on one side cut off a piece of his flesh with a fauchion, and another on the other side gave him a great blow with a staff, crying in the following words ... “Well! what sayest thou now Barbet, will thou yet go to Mass?” “To which the poor creature with incredible constancy, as long as he was able to speak, made answer ... Much rather death, than the Mass! Dispatch me quickly for the love of God!”

~~ *The Waldenses Were Independent Baptists*, pp. 28-29 ~~

Some returned and fought the Catholics for control of their beloved mountain valleys. They finally were granted religious liberty in the Nineteenth Century.

Many of the Waldenses eventually merged with various _____ groups. Others joined the _____. Some still survive as distinct Waldensian groups. Modern Waldensians are more similar to Bible Presbyterians than Baptists.

Waldensian settlements have been established in Brazil, Russia and the United States (North Carolina and New York).

VIII. RECOMMENDED READING ABOUT THE WALDENSES.

Stanley Faber, *History of the Ancient Vallenses and Albigenses*.

L. L. Glover, *Baptist History*.

Antoine Monastier, *A History of the Vaudois Church*.

Samuel Morland, *The History of the Evangelical Churches of the Valleys of Piedmont*

Thomas Williamson, *The Waldenses Were Independent Baptists*.

J. C. Wylie, *A History of the Waldenses*.