

## Church History (Part 3) A.D. 1161-1585

**History of the True Church**

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The intention of this CHURCH HISTORY series is to point out the highlights of both the good points and problems that the church has had. It is in no way been meant to be a comprehensive coverage of the history of the true church, but only a summary. One man e-mailed me this week and said that another minister, who is in another group, had given three sermons on just the Waldensians alone. Well, it's possible to give ten sermons on the Waldensians alone.

But that's not my intent (to go through in a thorough way the history of God's church), but to pick the highlights and things that I feel are very important for us to learn. There are many, many lessons that can be learned from church history and what the churches have gone through. But I hope that I am picking out some of the essential aspects of how the church throughout the ages has had a serious problem continuing with the doctrine of Jesus Christ.

For example, Ephesus lacked diligence and love for the doctrine of Christ. That was the problem that was pointed out to them. Smyrna was sorely tested in their appreciation for the doctrine of Christ, with all those persecutions. Pergamos compromised the doctrine of Christ. And now Thyatira (which we began last time) was guilty of spiritual adultery; and many stayed within the Catholic Church, while they themselves secretly kept God's truth. So they undervalued the holiness of the doctrine of Christ.

So, as we go through here, we are just hitting the highlights. And so we'll leap right in, because today we are going to be covering 1161 A.D. to 1585 A.D. Although it's only about a 400-year period, there is a lot packed into it. Up to this point in this summary of the history of the true Church of God, we have seen the least of the Thyatira Era's works. Now we will see the last works of their works, which were more than the first. As you know, Revelation 2 and 3 give the seven eras of God's church. We'll read Revelation 2, verses 19 and 26.

Revelation 2:19 "I know your works, love, service, faith, and your patience; and as for your works, the last are more than the first."

Revelation 2:26 "And he who overcomes, and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give power over the nations."

The authority of Jesus Christ Himself—the very "Power over the nations" which Jezebel sought by harlotry—will be given to the few elect of the Thyatira Era, who learned by repentance and long-suffering to show love and mercy and to be faithful to the doctrine of Christ.

As always, the resurgence of the work of the Church of God began again in a very small way. The world scarcely noticed that Peter Waldo began to preach in 1161. Yet the three Catholic writers, who attempt to explain the origin of his work, know nothing about the first twelve to

fifteen years. By that time, a notable work was being done. They do relate that a friend's sudden death at Waldo's side shocked him into serious consideration of the meaning of life, which spurred him to look more deeply into God's truth.

Seeking completely to follow Christ, Waldo began to give away the bulk of his money. He said it was his enemy, which had kept him from God. But with a portion of his money he had a translation made of the Scriptures into the language of the local area that he lived in, and he himself began diligently to study God's Word. His Catholic wife and two daughters thought that he was out of his mind. One daughter entered a convent. His wife apparently later reconciled with him, and came back and lived with him, and actually supported him with the money that he had given her when he gave up all of his money.

As Waldo preached, others united themselves and their efforts to his; and they dedicated their lives and their property to the spread of the doctrine of Christ. This little group became known [to the world] as the *Poor Men of Lyons*; but they called themselves *the Church of God*, or simply *Christians*.

Jesus Christ, who built His church, promised He would be in the midst of even a few who come together to worship the Father and His Son. In Matthew 18, we'll read verses 19-20; and please notice especially the last part of verse 20.

Matthew 18:19-20 "Again I say to you that if two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven. For where two or three [Or, in a sense, you could say "the few." Where the few...] are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them."

This is encouraging to us today—to know that Christ is in our midst, intimately involved in each and every one of our lives, just as He was at that time. But by about 1176 A.D., persecution was promoted by the archbishop of Lyons. He forbade the "Poor Men" to preach, but they replied to him with the words the apostles had used 1100 years earlier. They said, "We must obey God rather than men." So they stood up for God's truth. When the "Poor Men of Lyons" persisted, 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 could continue anywhere, since archbishops and popes exercised civil power at that time over everyone throughout Europe.

Waldo himself went boldly to Rome in late 1178. He showed them the Bible translated into Provincial, which could be understood over all of southern France and adjoining parts of Italy and Spain. He urged the dominant Roman Catholic Church to let the common people read it. But Waldo kept doctrine in the background in his request to the Pope. At that time, he didn't want to muddy the waters (so to speak) with confusing the issue.

The Pope appeared willing, at first, to agree with Waldo's demands; but he left the decision to the Lateran Council in 1179 A.D. 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 was given—" *The Roman Church cannot endure your preaching.*" So what the Roman Catholic Church was saying at that time was " *We cannot endure the doctrine of Christ—the true Word of God.*" And a paraphrase of their reply is: " *Christ sent us. If you were His church, you would not hinder us.*" Thus, they continued to preach wherever they went. And it took the archbishop five and one half years, a new Pope, and a new bull (or, proclamation) anathematizing Waldo and all his followers to finally drive them from Lyons.

At the same Lateran Council, members of the ascetic association from Lombardy had also sought the right to preach. They were a section of the "Humiliated," as they were called. Since about 1000 A.D., they were a widespread movement within the Catholic Church; and their request to preach freely was denied also. In disappointment but apparent sincerity, they defied the Roman Church and asked Peter Waldo to become their leader. Waldo crossed the Alps to teach them. Thus, a second branch of Waldenses was established in Italy. Waldenses or Waldensians has often been attributed to Peter Waldo—which very well may be possible. But *Wald* in German also means "forest." So Waldenses means "those who live in forests." So it could have either origin. No one can pinpoint which is the correct one.

The work now grew rapidly. Soon a college was founded to train qualified workers. At the college, articles and small booklets were laboriously copied by hand, and multiple copies were produced. Literature was given free—paid for by the tithes and the offerings of the members of the church. God was giving His church strength to do His work. You'll probably remember what David wrote in Psalms 68: 35:

Psalms 68: 35 O God, You are more awesome than Your holy places.  
The God of Israel is He who gives strength and power to His people.  
Blessed be God!

So God gives the strength that His people need. He gives us strength today to go through what we need to go through; and He gave them strength at that time—the strength that they needed to begin doing a work that was more noticeable.

As the work expanded into foreign countries, the Bible was translated into different languages. And keep in mind that this was before the printing press was invented, and so everything had to be hand-written. One unusual version—in Low German—was all in rhyme to make the Bible easier to memorize. (That would have been interesting to hear. But they were diligent.) Others, such as the Cathars, also had their *focal translations*, but these were filled with apocryphal eastern legends, uninspired additions, and other perversions of the text. So just as always, if God has *His version* of something, Satan will always come up with *his perversion* of it.

Biblical offices in Christ's ministry were restored. Waldo called himself the "chief elder." Many additional elders, as well as deacons, were ordained. Some served as pastors of church; but others were assigned to go and, in a sense, evangelize through different countries from a headquarters there in France.

Waldensian ministers later came to be called barbes. That just means "uncles." So they were known as "uncles" wherever they went. This lasted for quite a few years, actually I think close

to a hundred years. They used this, of course, to conceal their identity from the Roman Catholic Church out to destroy them. In those dangerous times, most were continually on the go—on evangelistic journeys and visiting scattered brethren.

It was because they would not expose wives and children to these hard perpetual journeys that few of the ministers who went out at that time married. But they absolutely did not agree with—they deplored and condemned—the celibacy of the Roman Catholic Church. So it was nothing of that sort. It was just out of necessity that they could not maintain families at that time, under that persecution.

Many were specially trained in matters of physical health—since the world's ways (then, as also now) were perverted and diametrically opposite to God's ways—including the dietary laws. They had a lot of knowledge in that area. God set in motion, from the beginning, those laws of health. When God's people are given God's truth, then they also receive the dietary laws as well. They understood that our healing is made possible by Christ's broken body, for which they took the unleavened bread in the yearly Passover. In I Corinthians 10: 32, Paul admonished:

I Corinthians 10: 32 Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.

So keeping the dietary laws, spelled out in Leviticus, are also essential to God's people; and the Waldensians realized this. The early Waldenses practiced overcoming and education in every walk of life, and every area of life. They were a very well educated people. They were obedient, clean, and honest. Even their enemies acknowledged they could find no fault with their lives. So they did set a *good witness*—and a good example—to the rest of society. They would not lie or swear, and they dressed and acted modestly.

They were known to be faithful and full of self-control in all things—including their emotions. They were diligent, active, and dedicated to God's truth. Their enemies marveled and were jealous at the same time, and from this jealousy came much persecution. They made no public show of prayer, like those who wasted endless hours uselessly repeating meaningless words. But they did teach and practice earnest, fruitful prayer in a private place. So again we see the opposite keeping of God's requirement of prayer, than what the Catholic Church had encouraged with the openness of their prayers.

Meander's Church History, volume 8, states that 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 man more knowledge of the truth was given, then, they more humbly desired to be taught by him, and to be corrected of their mistakes.*" So we can see why God speaks so highly of them in Revelation 2: 19. They were a very humble people—people that could be taught.

Below the college level, a system of elementary schools was later established. Both boys and girls attended. Even small children learned to memorize and recite whole chapters of Scripture. These people were very diligent at learning God's way of life. These schools were first founded in Lombardy, but rapidly spread. In about 1260 A.D., the Catholic Inquisition found Waldensian

schools in 42 parishes in Austria alone. So the extent of their work was all over Europe, and they had a huge impact.

The Waldenses recognized that they were the true successors of the apostolic church. They kept the Sabbath and also the yearly Passover. Each fall they held, at the headquarters' church, a large conference—and as many as 700 people attended from far-flung places. New students were chosen and ministerial assignments were given at this time, and crowds gathered daily to listen to sermons. With it being in the fall, it very probably (although there is no proof) was the Feast of Tabernacles.

In about 1200 A.D., under the name of *Passagini*, we have a very clear picture that these people observed the whole Old Testament law—including the Sabbath and festivals—even though the Catholic Inquisitors zealously burned the records about anyone living God's way of life at that time! (That's one thing to be said for the Roman Catholic Church: It is very diligent at certain things. The problem is that it's in the wrong direction, and we suffer for it.)

The membership paid a three-part division of tithes to God through the ministry of the Waldensian church. Even in the 1500's, the same division [of tithing] still continued among the Waldensians. In his book, *History of the Waldenses*, the author (Leonard) quoted George Morel, a Waldensian elder, as saying: "*The money given us by the people is carried to the aforesaid general council, and is delivered in the presence of all, and there it is received by the most ancients*[that is, the elders], *and part thereof is given to those that are wayfaring men, according to their necessities, and part unto the poor.*"

So George Morel actually mentions a "second tithe," apparently for those traveling to and from the festivals; and following it, [he mentions] the "third tithe," which goes to the poor. Feast goers who had more "second tithe" than they needed shared their excess with those in need at that time as well. So we see there that they had not just a little bit of God's truth, but quite a bit—probably most of God's truth, as we have it today.

Besides the well-known Waldensians, other names referencing God's church in various areas during the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries were *Arnoldists*, *Josephists*, and *Esperonists*. (All of these sermons are transcribed. So they will eventually be on the web site for you to look at. One man complained to me that he couldn't keep up with all the numbers and names. Not to worry—it will eventually be there.) The details aren't as important as getting an overall picture of what the people were going through, and their diligence.

Pope Lucius' proclamation of 1184 A.D. anathematized believers of God's truth throughout France, Italy, Germany, and elsewhere through Europe; but the southern Waldenses continued to multiply and spread—because they were unhindered at that time. But in 1194, Alphonse (king of Aragon, Barcelona, and Provence) decreed that these "*Waldenses, Zapatati or Inzabbati* [translated: "keepers of God's Sabbath"] *who otherwise are called the Poor Men of Lyons*" were 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. His successor, in 1197, added that every Waldensian that was taken should be burned.

Those who had fled to Castile were relentlessly tracked down. Catholic writers lumped the Waldensians and other groups all together as *Albigenses*, from a great conference and

profession of faith held in 1176 in Albi. So the Catholic Church's name for God's people at that time (lumped all together, and any Sabbath keepers at all) was Albigenses. In 1207, a chief spokesman for all the Albigenses, Arnold Hot (the leader of what had been called the Arnoldists) preached that the Roman Catholic Church was antichrist and that Christ did NOT establish the Mass. Not many years after, holding firmly to their faith, Arnold and several associates were burned at the stake. So, throughout this time period, this was very commonly done—where they were burned at the stake. What an awful way to go.

Rome had first tried military action against Cathars as early as 1180. But the people (impressed by the asceticism and dedication of the Cathar perfects) and the local nobility and civil rulers (who were jealous and antagonistic toward the grasping corrupt Catholic clergy) protected the [so-called] "*heretics*." This "unacceptable situation"—according to the Catholic Church—led Innocent III (and you'll find that name was anything but 'innocent') in 1208 to proclaim a "holy war," which history calls the Albigensian Crusade.

This was the first crusade to start; and, interestingly enough, it was against true Christians (but not directly). Pope and clergy, backed by all the power of northern France, were arrayed against the people of the south. This crusade was more because the people of the region were rejecting the civil domination of Rome than it was of religion. But, as the Roman Catholic Church has shown throughout history, they took this opportunity to go against God's people.

When the war began, in 1209, the Provincial civilization was the most brilliant in Europe. When it was over, after twenty bitter years, that civilization had been completely destroyed. South France had become a backward region completely subject to Paris and Rome. And the reason why it was considered, in history, as such a brilliant area (meaning, having brilliant minds) is because so many of God's people were there. Because of God's truth, His people are given an advantage when it comes to not necessarily "brilliance" but understanding of truth.

The infamous Catholic Inquisition was then set up to complete the job by eliminating religious objections. Papal bull, or proclamations, decreed severe punishment against any person suspected of even sympathizing with what they called *heretics*. Confiscation, imprisonment, burnings, and every imaginable form of persecution continued for more than a hundred years. Thousands died! In the city of Montsegur alone, two hundred people were burned in one day. So these weren't isolated incidents. These were incidences that not only Europe saw, but the entire world heard of.

While the Albigensian Crusade was in progress, Innocent III (one of the most energetic and forceful popes in history) had persecuted the Waldenses elsewhere as well. Already by 1200 A.D., a group reading the Bible in the Gaelic tongue (to large numbers of people in Metz) were dispersed by a delegation of abbots from Rome; and their Bibles were burned. In 1211, over four hundred people of a group in Strasbourg were forced to recant and surrender their books. The rest (about eighty people) were burned. And so, along with the word *heretic* at this time, also came the word *burned*—the association was so close, and the martyrdoms were so consistent.

As early as 1206, Innocent III had begun to send out his own proven men by twos—poorly clad and living austerely—to counteract the Waldensian barbes (or, "uncles") by their own methods.

He also gave official standing to the group called the "Humiliated," who had remained within the Catholic Church. Thus, the "Humiliated" were to infiltrate God's church as well as 'the secret service' of the Vatican. Later on, that was organized in a more organized fashion and became the Jesuits that we know today.

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-Waldensian 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 Prime, another ex-Waldensian. So we see that, at this period of time, what was happening was that the Roman Catholic Church was pulling people out who were very familiar with the Waldensians—who had been part of them, and who were traders. They were sending them back to infiltrate them and to destroy them from within—and also to report on them as to where they were.

Outwardly the Pope's measures had little success against God's church; but within the body they fostered an increasing spiritual sickness. Not only did these infiltrators go in to point out who the members were, but they also went in to introduce strange and foreign doctrine.

Revelation 2:20-23 Nevertheless I have a few things against you, because you allow that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, to teach and seduce [beguile] My servants to commit sexual immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols. And I gave her time to repent of her sexual immorality, and she did not repent. Indeed I will cast her into a sickbed, and those who commit [spiritual] adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of their deeds. I will kill her children with death, and all the churches shall know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts. And I will give to each one of you according to your works.

That's very important to recognize there—that they were given their rewards according to their works. (1) The elect were given their rewards; (2) and those who were called, who didn't make their calling and election sure, were given their rewards. But actually there's a finality in what's said here. This is talking more about the reward that they are given when they become spirit beings, rather than now. But the dual meaning certainly fits.

We see here, in verse 20, that the Thyatira church was prophesied to have internal problems with the false doctrines of a false teacher. But why was she called *Jezebel*? We've heard this name many times. The original Jezebel is spoken of in I Kings 16:31. We won't turn there, but she was a Gentile woman whom Ahab married; and she enticed him to worship and serve Baal. *Jezebel* represents a false Gentile religion. This is an extreme contrast to the true spiritual Israel—the Church of God.

The original Jezebel's character was completely selfish, grasping, and destructive. She was willfully deceitful, when it served her purpose; and she was domineering. She also martyred the true servants of God (as recorded in I Kings 18:4). In all of these things, she was the type

of *Jezebel* of Revelation 2—who made deals with, and ruled over, the kings of Europe during the Middle Ages.

In another vision, the apostle John saw a great fallen "woman" of exactly Jezebel's character in Revelation 17: 1-6 and also in Revelation 18: 3-7. As you well know, this great whore of the book of Revelation is a *great false church*—dominating over the nations, and having a spiritually fornicating relationship with the governments of the earth (and especially of Europe, at this time). While the whole world was 'drunk' on her false doctrine and *Jezebel* herself was drunk on the blood of God's servants, the persecuted suffering true "church in the wilderness" saw her clearly revealed for all her spiritual filthiness.

In the Middle Ages, this abominable Catholic Church sank to its lowest depths. Careful, reputable, scholarly historians bear unanimous witness of her scandals and sins that blasphemed God's name. Her 'celibate' priests had numerous children. Popes filled their palaces with harlots and thieves. Vicious women actually ruled that church—elevating their lovers to the papal throne and murdering them later to elevate others!

God called such a "woman" *Jezebel* because—like the ancient Gentile Jezebel, ruling as an Israelite queen—this *Jezebel* of the Middle Ages was a Gentile church having the same old pagan mystery religion, while masquerading as God's church (spiritual Israel) and calling herself "Christian." Here is merely a later form of the same universal paganism that had earlier falsely claimed to be "Jewish," but actually was the synagogue of Satan.

She calls herself a prophetess—authorizing herself the authority to teach and to rule over Christians, as Revelation 2: 20 mentions. The apostle John marveled at the splendor of her outward appearance. Even in the 'wilderness' of the Middle Ages, many were deceived into hearing and heeding her false doctrine because, to them, she was so impressive. The Roman Catholic Church was impressive, and powerful, and forceful; and anyone who went against her was either martyred, or had to flee into the wilderness.

On the Waldensian emblem there were seven stars—apparently of Revelation 1: 20, which says:

Revelation 1:20 The mystery of the seven stars which you saw in My right hand, and the seven golden lampstands: The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands which you saw are the seven churches.

Directly below and pointing at the fourth star was a *lighted lamp* representing *the then active fourth era of God's church—Thyatira* This was actually on the Thyatiran emblem. Around the rim was the Latin motto "LUX LUCET IN TENEBRIS"—which meant "A LIGHT SHINES IN DARKNESS"—reflecting the thought of Matthew 5.

Matthew 5:14-16 "You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven."

At that time, that was what these poor Waldensians were trying to do—and they were doing a good job of it. It appears that God's people knew they were the Thyatira Church! They must also have known who *Jezebel* was. One of their oldest surviving books—the Book of Antichrist—equates *the Roman papacy and priests* with Babylon, the whore of Revelation 17-18, the man of sin, the son of perdition of II Thessalonians 2, false prophets, lying teachers, spirit of error, ministers of darkness, Egyptians, and Balaamites! They associated all of those together, and they also associated all of those with the Roman Catholic Church at that time.

[In Revelation 2] half of Jesus' message to Thyatira (the longest message of the seven) is devoted to warning against *Jezebel*. Yet, in spite of the warning, many did fall into her trap. With such a warning, how could these Thyatiran Christians have been seduced by "*Jezebel*"—that is, by *the Roman Catholic Church*? It seems so obvious in Scripture who He was warning against.

In the Middle Ages, Satan's counterfeit Roman Catholic Church strove to bring the Thyatira members into her close association. She too claimed to be "Christian." Some of the ex-Waldenses called the "Humiliated," not having individually repented when their group came out of the Catholic Church, were willing to listen to her once again. Others were coerced by fear of persecution into following the ways of the Roman Catholic Church, and committing spiritual fornication with her and with the world. They allowed "Jezebel's" priests to baptize their infant children, as demanded by civil and ecclesiastical law. The professing Christians also gradually took part in her Sunday worship and ate 'the sacrifice of the Mass.' Remember that Revelation 2: 20 says:

Revelation 2:20 "Nevertheless I have a few things against you [speaking to the Thyatiran church], because you allow that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, to teach and seduce My servants to commit sexual immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols."

So what does God say about this idolatry? He commented about it, through the apostle Paul.

I Corinthians 10:20 Rather, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice they sacrifice to demons and not to God, and I do not want you to have fellowship with demons.

So we are told there: "*Don't have fellowship with other churches.*" That is, churches that are not Churches of God.

I Corinthians 10:21 You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; you cannot partake of the Lord's table and of the table of demons.

But this is exactly what many of the Waldensians did. They began attending services with the

Catholic Church, and tried to hide some of their beliefs from being outwardly noticed.

The Greek word for sacrifice here does not specify animal sacrifice. It refers to *reverence* or *homage* to anything—that is, respect, reverence, service, honor, or worship of anything at all. Most of the Waldenses eventually came to believe that these ceremonies and sacraments of the Catholic Church were meaningless, and therefore harmless to them. Therefore, in clean conscience in their own minds, they were able to attend the Masses with ease. We've seen the same thing happen in the Worldwide Church of God. As it changed the true doctrines of God's church, people continued to attend—even to this day, where many have changed to Sunday.

Of course, Christ says otherwise! This *coexistence with evil* cost following generations the understanding of real repentance, true baptism, and even of the true Creator God. Association with worldly customs and beliefs will eventually entice a person to stray from God's truth. And that's exactly what happened to the Waldensians because of this.

Psalms 106: 35-43 But they [the Israelites] mingled with the Gentiles and learned their works. They served their idols, which became a snare to them. They even sacrificed their sons and their daughters to demons, and shed innocent blood, the blood of their sons and daughters, whom they sacrificed to the idols of Canaan; and the land was polluted with blood. Thus they were defiled by their own works, and played the harlot by their own deeds. Therefore the wrath of the LORD was kindled against His people, so that He abhorred His own inheritance. And He gave them into the hand of the Gentiles, and those who hated them ruled over them. Their enemies also oppressed them, and they were brought into subjection under their hand. Many times He delivered them; but they rebelled in their counsel, and were brought low for their iniquity.

Verse 43 does not mean that they gave counsel, or advice, to God; but it refers to the counsel that they took among themselves, in the plans that they formed. The plans were based on advice from sources opposed to God, so it was offensive to Him. They would rather take the foolish advice of the world than God's counsel—thereby showing their rebelliousness towards the Almighty God. And that's exactly what they did—not only with the world, but with the Roman Catholic Church as well. They would rather take the advice and the doctrine of the Roman Catholic Church than take God's commands on how to follow Him.

In the city of Thyatira, the weavers and other laborers were organized into craft guilds. Their meetings were religious and social gatherings, where the food served has been dedicated to the accepted local idols in whose honor they sometimes became mere pagan sexual orgies. These things were a 'type' for the Thyatira Church [Era]. Those things happened physically in the city of Thyatira, but they happened spiritually to the Church of God of the Thyatiran Era.

In the Middle Ages, the Lombard Waldenses in Italy also had laborers' associations by which former Catholic attitudes, activities, and abuses continued to infiltrate God's church. Waldo demanded the dissolution of these associations, but some members disagreed. As a result of

this and other disagreements, in 1210 the Lombard Waldenses rejected Waldo and chose Giovanni di Ronco to lead them. So they ousted the leader that had been their leader for so many years. (In a sense, that would be like the Worldwide Church of God throwing Herbert Armstrong out of the church before he died.)

According to tradition, Waldo spent his later years preaching in Germany and Bohemia, barely escaping capture in Strasbourg in 1211. Waldenses taken at that time reported their three chief leaders and centers were in Strasbourg, Milan, and Bohemia—where Waldo died. All agree he was dead by 1217 A.D. So it appears he only lived another six years after being thrown out of the physical organization that appeared to be God's church.

Most of the French Waldenses had already joining the Italians in the valleys of the Alps. More than a century of persecution by the Inquisition destroyed or dispersed the remainder of the Waldenses. In the mid-thirteenth century they had already adopted the name of *Vallenses*, which means "people of the valleys," because (as they said) they dwelt in a vale of tears. Later they regarded it as equivalent to Waldenses. By this time they had forgotten the connection with Waldo's name previously used by the world.

This is similar to what we see happening today, where more and more people are forgetting that Herbert Armstrong's name is even attached to God's truth—as many of these groups try to eradicate it, and erase it, from off the face of the earth. That's the same thing that happened to the Waldenses—or, at least, the Peter Waldo name.

The name Church of God was all but forgotten. But in the valleys they practiced their religion openly; and though often threatened, they were divinely protected. Jesus Christ gave those who remained free from "Jezebel's" ceremonies and practices the assurance that He would put no other burden on them.

Revelation 2:24-25 "Now to you I say, and to the rest in Thyatira, as many as do not have this doctrine, who have not known the depths [that is, the mysteries] of Satan, as they say, I will put on you no other burden. But hold fast what you have till I come."

So what God did at this point is that He protected the true Church of God—the small few who had fled to the valleys. He granted them protection and didn't put such a harsh burden of the persecution, as it was, on them. They weren't given any additional work to do—nothing additional to endure—other than to withstand that false Babylonian Mystery system masquerading as the Roman Catholic Church.

The prevailing doctrine became, in time, no more than a form of puritanical Catholicism. They began to claim the Ninth Century bishop Claude and other early dissenting Catholics as their spiritual ancestors. So we see there, in history, God's church losing their direction and their origin. Actually, it wasn't God's church. It wasn't any of the organizations that had contained God's church—because God's true church always knew where their origins were and what the doctrines of Christ were.

And when, in 1380, many of them took up arms to repel the invading Inquisitors, God's

protection ceased. Earlier—from 1319—their valleys were invaded repeatedly, until they were decimated. So we see there that, at least what history shows, when they began to protect themselves in their own minds (or when they took on that attitude)—rather than relying on Jesus Christ—that's when God took His protection away from them. They made the first move, and then the protection was gone. And, of course, those who fought and took up arms weren't really part of God's true elect (the few).

Elsewhere, too, Waldenses were greatly persecuted from about 1310-1330, and again in about 1375. In the earlier period, Erhard martyred many in town after town in Germany. Some time later, he was overcome by the truth and converted. He began to teach the same gospel he once hated. Like many others, he too—in the end—was hunted down and burned. So we see there that quite often God raised up men who had been persecuting the church, just like He did Paul.

About this time others were martyred, driven into hiding, or scattered as far as Hungary and Transylvania by a Bohemian Inquisition. Many disciples of Bohemian teachers were discovered in Saxony and Pomerania about 1390 A.D. Waldenses from Picardy in France fled into Poland. So we see a history of God's church fleeing, fleeing, fleeing throughout this persecution—throughout the Middle Ages.

During the Fourteenth Century, the scattered groups lost contact with [those in] the valleys. Many individuals professing to be true Christians attended Catholic Mass—pretending in every way to be "good Catholics," while continuing to teach their children what remained of their own Waldensian, or Vallensian, doctrine. After the Reformation in every area, where such Waldenses had been known previously to exist, growing numbers of Baptists suddenly appeared.

Now, just quickly, I'd like to add something that Cathy Benedetto brought to my mind just before services. Here in North Carolina there is a town called Valdese. In an advertisement to retired people, it says: *"Spend the day with Dr. Luther Wade as he leads us on a trip into Valdese—home of the Waldensians—this unique town in North Carolina, home of the remnant of the proto-Protestant movement that originated almost four hundred years before the Reformation. We will visit the Waldensian Presbyterian Church, museum, Trail of Faith, and the winery, which showcases traditional wine making."*

The reason I mention that to you is because I wanted to show you that the Waldensians that know of themselves as "Waldensians" today do not have any clue that there was any origin to these original Waldensians that were God's true church—but they associate themselves with the Waldensians that were more known and seen in history later on, who were part of the Catholic Church. And so we see here some of these traditions of some of the churches that had flowed in and out of, so to speak, God's true church. [Traditions] carried down all the way through history. You never know where they are going to pop up. But they are NOT God's true church. They are Protestants.

Remember that the original Waldenses, before they became corrupted, were in no way Protestant. The Protestant doctrine of salvation by faith alone cannot be found among the original Waldenses teachings. By this time, the true Church of God had been a more than a "centuries-long" witness to Catholicism. The major labor of God's church in the Thyatira Era was to translate, copy, and make the Scriptures known to the people of Europe. Yet, for all the

effort, the truth remained virtually unknown to the broad masses.

In a sense, you could say that about what has happened over the last fifty years—when Mr. Armstrong did so much to present the Plain Truth magazines, the telecasts, and things like that. Still, when you went into society, very often people had never heard of it and didn't know of God's truth. So even with all the effort that is made, still the major part of the world just does not get it—or isn't interested in even hearing it.

All Scripture manuscripts the authorities could lay their hands on were confiscated or kept out of circulation. It is a little known fact that even most manuscripts that came to be stored away in Catholic monasteries and cathedrals are ultimately traceable to the work of God's church! You see few scholars in the Middle Ages had the ability to read or translate from the original Hebrew or Greek. This was done by members of God's church, who were very well educated. So, as their main source, they used the Waldensian version—originally translated into the Provincial language from an early form of the Vulgate! (This information is according to Deanesly, author of *The Lollard Bible*.)

Meanwhile, in the Netherlands, Waldensians had become known by their enemies as *Lollards*—from a Flemish word (*lollen*, or *lullen*) meaning "to sing or speak softly" or "to mumble." This was because, in order to memorize the Scriptures, what they would do was that they would mumble them to themselves constantly, wherever they went. Also they would sing the Scriptures. Their enemies called them "wandering and hypocritical fellows," and they were noted in Holland as early as 1309 A.D. In 1315, Walter the Lollard (a chief Waldensian minister)—along with his brother, Raymond—carried the doctrine of Christ to England. He is said to have spread the Waldensian doctrine all over England before he himself was seized and burned in Cologne, Germany in 1322.

The name Lollard sprang into great prominence in England a few years before 1400 A.D. It was a result of the studies and writings of John Wycliffe, a man whom it seems Jesus Christ used. Wycliffe may have never been a member of God's church—and most probably wasn't—because he apparently lived and died within the Catholic communion. But Wycliffe was a theologian and professor at Oxford. He became increasingly aware of the abuses and blasphemies committed and condoned by the priests and prelates of the Middle Ages. He began to write and distribute tracts concerning these abuses. Immediately he was surrounded by enemies and was branded a "Lollard"—the name commonly applied to God's people in Western Europe in the 1300s. So the name "Lollard" was a nasty name, rather than one that God's people chose to be under.

Wycliffe responded by speaking out more freely—even declaring that the Catholic priesthood was in communion with Rome, and NOT with the ministry of Christ. And so many—even Oxford scholars and teachers—began to follow him as he began to teach some (very little, though) of God's truth. Sympathizers and co-workers became very numerous for a while.

In the words of a contemporary of John Wycliffe, the sect of the Wycliffites (as they were called) was "*held in such great honor in these days, and has so multiplied, that you can hardly see two men passing in the road, but one of them shall be a disciple of Wycliffe.*" So you can see there that it was just a movement in the world at that time, that everyone was attaching themselves to. And history loses sight of the original "Lollards" as a separate people, as a result

of this movement.

So it happened as God's people, again, were such a small and few group that they were lost sight of as these Lollards and these followers of the Wycliffes became *Wycliffites*. Some of these later Lollards—both of Wycliffe's scholarly associates and others—called public attention to grievances against the religious authorities and gave the people supplementary instruction.

In 1401, the famous statute called *De Heretico Comburendo* was advocated against all Lollards. It forbade preaching without a license, teaching "new doctrines" contrary to Satan's counterfeit church, or favoring those who taught any "new doctrines" contrary to the Catholic Church. It provided that those who did so would be imprisoned or fined. And, as the name implies, if obstinate or relapsed after once renouncing their "errors," they were to be burned to death. So step one, you were to give it up. Step two, if you didn't, you were burned to death.

They were constantly hunted and oppressed by the Roman Catholic Church, and only survived by God's grace and remaining under cover as much as possible. The only source of information about them is that which was brought out in the trials of those who were caught. It was the enemies that carried the history of these people. These people maintained that the papacy was 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 the papacy's spiritual character was that of Simon Magus (of Acts 8). This is what came out of some of the trials.

It's important to realize that most of those who were stigmatized as "Lollards"—and who were persecuted, and even executed—were only *sympathizers*. Many people listened to the few real Lollards, who constituted the true Church of God. But those who listened were usually interested in "purifying" the established Catholic church—restoring it to what they supposed was its original condition, while remaining in it.

I can give you a modern day example of this very thing—of this type of an approach and the diligent efforts that were made. Malachi Martin is an author, and he is a Catholic priest. He writes very derogatory things about the Catholic Church—scathing books such as *The Keys of This Blood* and *Wind Swept House*—to expose the errors and hypocrisy of the Roman Catholic Church. But he himself remains in the Catholic Church, knowing its corruption. He believes that he is actually doing a service to God by trying to rid [it]—what he believes is the true church of God (but is the Roman Church)—of its false doctrine and decadent ways.

As late as the year 1494, thirty people—called the Lollards of Kyle—were accused before the king of Ayrshire in Scotland. Every item on the list of their alleged "*heresies*" is truth! It exposes the Mystery Babylon Religion of Rome. This group of Christians escaped execution. So see, they maintained the truth. They were not hiding or timid of telling their accusers that they believed in the truth, and they stood by it. And God had mercy on them and He was able to free them.

But in the meantime, God's people continued to exist on the mainland of Europe. About 1450 A.D., Christ caused the art of printing by movable type to be developed in Germany. It was not accidental that the famous *Gutenberg Bible* was one of the first books to be printed. So we see here God's hand as He began a movement to increase the knowledge of His Word. From there, printing spread to Holland, England, and all over Europe. Wherever God's people were found,

there you would find the printed Word of God the Father and Jesus Christ. Obviously, the impulse to spread the Word of God did NOT originate with Protestantism. (That began sixty-seven years later, in 1517 A.D.!) It was God's people who began promoting God's Word throughout Europe—not Protestantism! They came much later.

All efforts of the Roman Catholic Church to prevent the Word of God from reaching the people failed. Confiscation and burning of Bibles was practiced freely, but to no avail. An attempt was made to remove the source of [so-called] "*heresy*" by buying up and destroying the complete volumes and output of an edition of the Bible that was printed in Holland and imported to England. The result of it backfired on the Catholic Church.

The more they bought the Bibles from the printer, the more the printer was able to afford to make; and so they were able to double their production—thankfully because of the Roman Catholic Church, who didn't know that they were contributing to getting it out. But it is interesting how, through history, one of the Roman Catholic Church's main goals was to destroy the Word of God in written form so that the people of the world do not know what the truth is—because it [the Bible] is so directly against the Roman Catholic Church and the Babylonian Mystery Religion.

Jesus Christ had begun to supply the means by which His church could—and ultimately would—reach all the world by His gospel. Not only could the Bible be printed and multiplied, but it could also be explained by means of the *printed* word. So many tracts were sent out—many printings. You'll remember that the Waldensians *hand wrote* the Bible and hand wrote their literature. But this could be mass-produced. The One who became Jesus Christ revealed Himself even in the Old Testament as the Source that replenishes the spiritual strength of His people, in addition to giving His physical help.

Isaiah 40:29-31 He gives power to the weak, and to those who have no might He increases strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall. But those who wait on the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.

So God would raise people up and give them the strength needed to go through persecuting times, as He promises in the New Testament as well. Most of the Lollards were not really converted. Many meant well humanly, but lacked the Holy Spirit. When real danger drew near, they recanted and became part of the Catholic Church (and then, later, of Protestantism). Everywhere, at this time in the Fifteenth Century, the traces of the true church reveal its shattered condition. But, at this time, we still find Saturday Sabbath keepers spread throughout all of Europe.

Andrews, in his book *History of the Sabbath*, says that records of the Catholic Church in Norway mention *obstinate keepers of the Sabbath* at Bergen and at Oslo about 1435. Apparently these people followed the same pattern of sitting among the Sunday congregations at Mass but privately keeping the true Sabbath, as well as other true doctrines.

A little-known Sabbath group existed in Russia from about 1470 to 1503, and then they were lost sight of. Even in Finland—where the Swedish king (Gustav Vasa I) ruled and introduced the Lutheran Reformation—many of the common people believed that the reason hard times had come upon them was for *"not observing the seventh day called Saturday."* So many Finnish believed this, that a letter from the king in 1554 A.D. ordered them to *"forsake this way leading to damnation at once."* That was written to those who believed they should keep the seventh day Sabbath on Saturday.

Anjou's Swedish Church History speaks of the source of this seventh-day teaching as an "antichurch party." It was a separate non-Catholic, non-Lutheran, group that taught the truth! He writes: *"Entirely distinct from this antichurch party of Sabbath keepers were the rest who kept Saturday holy, abstaining from all work on it, but who did not separate themselves from the [Lutheran] church."*

So we see there *two different Sabbath groups* in this area. (1) One who kept the Sabbath secretly and went to the Catholic Church Mass. And (2) the others who kept the Sabbath and did NOT go to the Catholic Church Mass. Obviously, you know which one was the true church.

The group that was observing Mass and the Sabbath too were following the practice that the Waldenses had begun three hundred years before. This *nominal Sabbath keeping* was not finally stamped out until the beginning of the Thirty Years' War in 1618. (That is, where people kept the true Sabbath and also went to the Sunday Mass. That wasn't stamped out until 1618.) And we see, in history, the same Sabbath keeping church throughout Scandinavia. It too was involved in spiritual fornication, as many were in Europe—illicit relationships with Satan's established Roman Catholic churches, and its 'daughter' Protestant churches.

Now we draw near to the end of the 1260 years of persecution. Daniel prophesied that the papacy—that is, the "little horn"—would be allowed by God to "wear out the saints."

Daniel 7:8 I was considering the horns, and there was another horn, a little one, coming up among them, before whom three of the first horns were plucked out by the roots. And there, in this horn, were eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking pompous words.

Daniel 7:21 I was watching; and the same horn was making war against the saints, and prevailing against them.

Daniel 7:25 He shall speak pompous words against the Most High, and shall persecute the saints of the Most High, and shall intend to change times and law. Then the saints shall be given into his hand for a time and times and half a time.

That's 3 1/2 years, which is 1260 days. And we know prophetically that to be *1260 years*. So we see here the 1260 years of persecution that God's church had to go through. The Waldenses were completely worn out. When Luther appeared, only a few scattered Sabbath keepers remained. Even those people NOT in God's church—known as Anabaptists (that is, re-baptizers)—were *weary* with persecution and ready to surrender completely to the Roman

Catholic Church. So even though there were very few Sabbath keepers, even of those Sabbath keepers, many were just worn out and did not have God's Holy Spirit to maintain them; and they went into the Catholic Church and into Protestantism.

The Anabaptists had very little truth, but clung stubbornly to the idea of adult faith baptism—although they often performed that by just pouring or sprinkling water on a person. Among them were still to be found many of the traditions of the Cathars, the "heretics" who in earlier times associated with God's people. Hearing of Luther's success, they came out openly for their beliefs; but when Luther absolutely demanded they give up even their re-baptizing of adults, many complied. You see, in the Catholic Church it was the teaching to baptize infants. But these individuals didn't agree with that. So they re-baptized those who had been in the Catholic Church and had been baptized as infants.

The rest found Rome was not the only persecutor. More people were martyred after the success of Luther and Calvin than ever before. Worst of all in their persecution of Anabaptists were the Calvinists. The Sixteenth Century was a time of great intolerance and cruelty, and this was especially true for about two generations following the Protestant Reformation. One did not have to be right—but only to differ—to be martyred.

The true church that Jesus built was reduced until it was almost nonexistent—that is, all but dead—at the end of this 1260-year period of persecution. But, once again, we remember that Jesus said it could never die. He promised in His prophecy in Matthew 16:

Matthew 16:18 "I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it."

Just a side note (commenting about this 1260 years): This period of 1260 years of flight from Satan's anger should NOT be confused with another 1260-year period mentioned in Revelation 13: 5. They are different. This other 1260-year period took place from 554 to 1814 A.D.—during which revivals of the old Roman Empire were dominated politically by the papacy.

Waldenses, Cathars, and others during the Middle Ages were in unanimous agreement in stating the time when God's true church first became an outcast and fled to "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 A.D.* and the consequent initiation of persecution of non-Catholics, 1260 years brings us to the time immediately following *1585 A.D.* At this time, the hand of God is again clearly seen in events. Jesus Christ moved to make it possible for His church to grow again.

In 1586-1587, the conviction and execution for conspiracy of Mary, Queen of Scots, removed for the last time the threat to Protestant Britain of a renewal of Catholic domination by way of the throne. There were other Catholic monarchs later, but they had no opportunity to restore Catholic power. The people absolutely would not allow it!

In the following year, as the supposed 'invincible' Spanish Armada approached Britain to attack, it was utterly overwhelmed by a great storm at sea. Not only was England enabled to remain politically free, she was encouraged to stay non-Catholic. The magnitude of this defeat made

Europe's strongest Catholic power second-rate. Israelite Britain became supreme! And in the political and moral climate of a freedom-loving Protestant Britain, God's work could again develop.

But just as at the beginning of the 1260 years it had taken the true church a few years to be completely removed and re-established elsewhere, now it took the true church (that had been brought down to almost nothing) a few years to revive and again become significant in its witness. So, at this point we end the Thyatira era, as best we know. From here begins the story of the Sardis Era of the Church of God, in England and America. So next time we will continue here, with the history of the one true church.