

WERE THE WALDENSES  
A PART OF GOD'S CHURCH?

The Waldenses are certainly one of the most interesting of the non-Catholic groups--the so-called heresies--which arose in the Middle Ages. Whereas many of the non-Catholics were stamped out, the Waldenses survived to the Reformation and on beyond to the present day.

Nevertheless, the fact that the Waldenses were a "heresy" or that they survived does not prove they were a part of God's True Church. After all, many groups declared heresies by the Catholics were indeed heresies by the biblical criteria. So we cannot automatically assume that the Waldenses were part of God's Church; instead, we have to examine them in the light of the true marks or signs of God's Church.

The Bible makes it clear that God's Church would survive through the ages. Jesus Christ himself stated, "I will build my Church and the gates of the grave (Greek hades) will not win the victory over it"<sup>1</sup> (Mat. 16:18). Also, as Mr. Armstrong has strongly reaffirmed, Revelation 2 and 3 give an outline of the history of God's Church through the ages.

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<sup>1</sup>Unless otherwise indicated, all translations from original sources are my own.

Yet the Bible nowhere mentions Waldo or the Waldenses. The Bible speaks of the Thyatira Era but nowhere states it was to be identified with the Waldenses. To the best of my knowledge, Mr. Armstrong has never been dogmatic about the historical identification of the Church eras with specific groups or times. This makes it a matter of historical research, not one of Church doctrine.

The purpose of this paper is to look at the Waldenses in the light of some important doctrines of the Church today to see whether they really meet the right criteria. In doing this, it is important to obtain the best historical information from the best experts and sources. This has always been Mr. Armstrong's policy, and I intend to follow it to the best of my ability here.

THE PROBLEM OF SOURCES

There are a number of difficulties to researching the history and beliefs of the Waldenses, especially for someone who is not a medieval specialist. The writings of the Waldenses and their contemporaries in the Middle Ages are mostly in Latin and often have not been translated into English.

The best up-to-date studies by modern scholars are also not in English but usually in French or German. Although a few brief treatments are available in English,<sup>2</sup> the only detailed reliable work in English is quite old. It is E. Comba's, The Waldenses in Italy, published back in 1887. Other works in English are generally quite old and unreliable.

Therefore, my study here is based on the original Waldensee and other medieval records and on the best recent studies by Waldensian experts such as G. Gonnet, C. Thouzellier, A. Molnàr, K.-V. Selge, and A. Dondaine.<sup>3</sup> Not as many Waldensee documents have survived as we would like, but there are a number.

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<sup>2</sup>For example, Malcolm Lambert, Medieval Heresy (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1976) chapters 6 and 9, is especially good.

<sup>3</sup>G. Gonnet and A. Molnàr, Les Vaudois au Moyen Age (Torino: Claudiana, 1974); K.-V. Selge, Die ersten Waldenser (2 vols.; Arbeiten zur Kirchengeschichte 37; Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1967); C. Thouzellier, Catharisme et valdèisme en Languedoc (2nd ed.; Paris: Beatrice-Nauwelaerts, 1969); a number of A. Dondaine's articles are given in the notes below.

Other sources include a couple of chronicles, which give versions of Waldo's conversion and various descriptions, edicts, and treatises by Catholic writers.<sup>4</sup> Naturally, these have to be used with care since they often contain distortions, misunderstandings, and even slanderous lies. Yet a number of these were written by individuals who lived in Waldo's own lifetime and who got their information directly from Waldense members. Also, the Catholic sources are valuable for what they do not say. That is, if they do not accuse the Waldenses of certain non-Catholic beliefs, it is likely the Waldenses did not hold such beliefs.

EARLY HISTORY OF THE WALDENSES IN BRIEF<sup>5</sup>

We have only two or three accounts of Waldo's conversion. One of the main ones is the Lyons Chronicle. It states for the year 1173 that a wealthy citizen by the name of Valdes (English Waldo) heard a minstrel telling tales one

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<sup>4</sup>The major collections for original documents are G. Gonnet (ed.), Enchiridion fontium valdensium (Collana della Facolta Valdese di Teologia; Rome: Claudiana, 1958), abbreviated below as EFV, and A. Patschovsky and K.-V. Selge, Quellen zur Geschichte der Waldenser (Texte zur Kirchen- und Theologiegeschichte 18; Gütersloh: Gerd Mohn, 1973), abbreviated below as Patschovsky/Selge. I. von Döllinger, Beiträge zur Sektengeschichte des Mittelalters (1889; reprinted New York: Burt Franklin, 1970) is an older collection but has a number of items not found in EFV and Patschovsky/Selge. Also other writers, such as C. Thouzellier, cite from the original sources in the footnotes.

<sup>5</sup>An account of the early history of the Waldenses is found in most of the works cited in note 3 above. Perhaps the most recent scholarly work on Waldo's life is Walter Mohr, Waldes von seiner Berufung bis zu seinem Tode (Horn: Ferdinand Berger, 1970).

Sunday. He took the minstrel to his home to give him hospitality and to hear more from him. Waldo was especially impressed by an old pious tale about a man who left his newly wedded wife to become a wandering monk living in poverty.

The next day Waldo went to a local theological school and asked about the most perfect way of God. He was told to sell all he had. He returned home and offered his wife half their property. He sold the rest, restored some to people he may have cheated in his business, gave some to a nunnery to which he also committed his two daughters, and much of the rest he distributed to the poor. His goal was to live in poverty and to preach.

However, he soon ran into trouble with the local clergy and was forbidden to preach by the archbishop of Lyons.<sup>6</sup> Finally, Waldo took his case to the pope at the Lateran Council in 1179. According to the Lyons Chronicle, he was embraced by the pope and given permission to preach but only if the local clergy allowed. In 1180 or 1181 Waldo also came before a council in Lyons to declare his loyalty to the Catholic church. At that time he made a profession of faith which is still extant. It is orthodox Catholic.

But Waldo ran into the same difficulties he had had before with the local clergy. Finally, he declared he would obey God rather than men and preach without permission. This eventually led to the Waldenses being declared heretics.

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<sup>6</sup>Stephen of Bourbon (Patschovsky/Selge, 15-18).

One of Waldo's closest associates was Durand de Huesca. Durand was a well-educated man and wrote a treatise against the Cathars in 1192. In it he defended Waldense doctrine as well as attacking the Cathars, but most of his explanations are not different from those of the Catholics. In 1205 there was a schism between the Waldenses of Italy (often called the "Lombards") and those of France. Although it is not certain that Waldo was dead by this time, it is generally thought that he must have been.

Only a few years after this, two groups of Waldenses became reconciled with the Catholic church. One was led by Durand de Huesca and another by an individual named Bernard Prim. In 1218 a meeting took place between the Lombards and the French Waldenses to try to effect a reconciliation. A document is still preserved which outlines their doctrinal agreements and the doctrinal differences which they continued to have.

Gradually, certain of the Waldenses took on doctrines which differed from the Catholic church. But the first half century or so of the movement is one of being basically like the Catholics except for preaching without permission. We have no evidence that Waldo differed from the Catholics except in the matter of preaching. One recent work notes that Waldo was not a radical or violent opponent of Catholicism but that his "own influence was always exerted in favour of moderation, with an eye to the ultimate reconciliation with Rome that he seems never finally to have ruled out."<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>Lambert, Medieval Heresy, 78.

The basic agreement of the Waldenses with the Catholics is made clear by the Catholic writer Peter of Vaux-de-Cernay who wrote about 1213, during the early period of the Waldenses. Peter is highly accurate on the whole where he can be checked. He notes there were a number of minor disagreements with the Catholics, but only four major ones:

Moreover, there were other heretics called Waldenses. . . These are bad, but compared with the other heretics they are much less bad. Indeed, in many doctrines they agree with us, in others they disagree. However, if we overlook a number of their unbeliefs, their error consists primarily of four things: (1) in wearing sandals after the manner of the apostles; (2) they will neither swear nor (3) take human life; (4) they assert that whenever necessary one of their own, as long as he is a "sandal-wearer" (minister), may consecrate the body of Christ (bread and wine).<sup>8</sup>

Similar statements can be found in other early writings such as the work of 1235 attributed to Peter Martyr.<sup>9</sup>

The early history of the Waldenses, then, is one of a Catholic group who emphasized preaching even for laymen. After they were excommunicated for preaching without a license

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<sup>8</sup>"Erant preterea alii heretici, qui Valdenses dicebantur a quodam, Valdio nomine, cive Lugdunensi. Hi quidem mali erant, set comparatione aliorum hereticorum longe minus perversi: in multis enim nobiscum conveniebant, in aliquibus dissentiebant. Ut autem plurima de infidelitatibus eorum omittamus, in quatuor precipue consistebat error eorum: in portandis scilicet sandaliis more apostolorum et in eo quod dicebant nulla ratione jurandum vel occidendum, in hoc etiam quod asserebant quemlibet eorum in necessitate, dummodo haberet sandalia, absque ordinibus ab episcopo acceptis posse conficere corpus Christi" (EFV 168).

<sup>9</sup>See Thomas Käppeli, "Une Somme contre les hérétiques de S. Pierre Martyr?" Archivum fratrum praedicatorum 17 (1947) 295-355.

and after Waldo's death, a good deal of disunity developed in the movement. Some groups added a number of non-Catholic doctrines, some of which are closer to the truth of the Bible. But on most major points the Waldenses maintained the same basic stance as the Catholics around them.

#### Non-Decisive Beliefs

We must be careful not to draw wrong conclusions from certain superficial resemblances between beliefs of the Waldenses and God's Church today. For example, opposition to the Catholic church is of no significance since many groups opposed the Catholics and even identified Catholicism with the harlot of Revelation.

In fact, certain beliefs tended to be held in common by most of the so-called heretical groups, as also by the later Protestants. Most emphasized preaching and spreading a gospel message--as they understood it--to the public. Many opposed the use of images in worship and even the erection of church buildings or meeting in them. Quite a few groups argued that Christianity should come from the Bible, not the teachings of the Catholic church. Other beliefs held in common by a variety of groups were opposition to swearing and taking oaths and to war and fighting. A number did not believe in infant baptism.

Thus, certain beliefs held by the Waldenses prove nothing one way or the other. After all, God's Church today has certain beliefs in common with the Jehovah's Witnesses,



Seventh-Day Adventists, and even the Baptists, Episcopalians, and Catholics. We can draw conclusions only on the basis of certain unique doctrines of God's Church or on doctrines held by other churches which are anathema to the Church of God.

It is now time to look at certain doctrines on which the question of the Waldenses can and should be decided.

### Sabbath Observance

There is absolutely no evidence that any of the Waldenses at any time kept the seventh-day Sabbath. None of the Waldense sources give even a hint of this. The Catholic sources are equally silent on the subject. The Waldenses are never accused of Judaizing by their opponents, a quite likely accusation if they had kept the Sabbath.

To me, it is inconceivable that the Waldenses could have kept the Sabbath without its being mentioned in any of our extant sources. Even though our knowledge of the Waldenses is not as extensive as we would like, we have too much preserved from the Waldenses themselves and from their Catholic opponents not to have some statement if they had observed the seventh day. A thousand years from now, could any researcher doubt that the Worldwide Church of God kept the Sabbath, even if all he had was a few scurrilous attacks on us? This is one of the most obvious features of God's Church today and a belief which is almost always mentioned whenever our doctrines are discussed in even the most superficial way.

Furthermore, the only statements we have on the subject tell us that the Waldenses observed Sunday. Nothing is said one way or the other about Waldo or the very earliest decades of the Waldense movement. But Bernard Gui, who wrote no later than 1325 and drew on earlier sources, made the following statement: "among themselves the perfected of this sect believe this: . . . non-observance of festivals except for Sunday and the festivals of the blessed Virgin Mary, though others add the festivals of the apostles and evangelists."<sup>10</sup>

Waldense documents from a slightly later time also make it clear that they kept Sunday. One writing is the Treasure and Light of Faith (Tresor e lume de fe), compiled about 1500 from some earlier documents, including an exposition of the Ten Commandments. On the Fourth Commandment, it states: "Those who want to keep and observe the Sabbath of the Christians, that is to say, to keep holy the Day of the Lord, need to take care regarding four things. . . ."<sup>11</sup>

There are a number of other documents from about the same time or shortly afterward which show Sunday observance. And of course the modern Waldensians are a Sunday-keeping group, not differing from the Protestants generally in this. The evidence is plain. There is no indication of seventh-day

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<sup>10</sup>"haec tamen non manifestant indifferenter credentibus suis, sed inter se perfecti hujus sectae sic tenent, et de suffragiis eorum non implorandis, et de festis non celebrandis praeter diem dominicum et festa beatae Mariae Virginis, et aliqui addunt apostolorum et evangelistarum" (Döllinger, Beiträge, 2.9).

<sup>11</sup>"Ceux qui veulent garder & observer le Sabath des Chrétiens, c'est à dire, Sanctifier le jour du Dimanche, ont besoin de prendre garde à quatre choses" (Léger, Histoire, 1.53).

observance by any of the Waldenses at any time. What evidence there is available all shows Sunday observance. The silence of all our early sources in question indicates that the Waldenses did not differ from the Catholics in their regard for Sunday. It was only many of the other Catholic festivals which they rejected, not the observance of Sunday.

The question is, then, Why can one find statements in various late secondary sources to the effect that the Waldenses were a Sabbath-keeping group? The answer is simple. The works which claim this are all written by sabbatarian writers--Seventh-day Baptists or Seventh-day Adventists--who had an axe to grind. They wanted to find groups who kept the Sabbath and were willing to grab whatever piece of information came their way without bothering to examine it carefully. In some cases, the misstatements are so blatant as to suggest intellectual dishonesty. The arguments used can be divided into two major categories: (1) the name Sabatati or Insabatati, and (2) misquotations and misunderstandings of authorities quoted with regard to the Waldenses.

#### The Name Sabatati/Insabatati

The Waldenses were called by a variety of names, such as "Poor of Lyons." The name which is relevant here appeared in several forms: Sabatati, Insabbatatos, Insabatati, Xabatenses, and other slight spelling variations. Some writers have "supposed" that this name and its variants had something

to do with the Sabbath.<sup>12</sup> But there is no need for supposition or theorizing or guessing; our early sources tell us quite plainly the origin of the name and it had nothing to do with the Sabbath.

We first hear of this name only a few years after Waldo's movement began. In 1192 Alphonso II of Aragon referred to them as Insabbatatos as well as "the poor of Lyons."<sup>13</sup> Only a few years later, in 1197, the next ruler of Aragon, Peter II, called them Sabatati.<sup>14</sup>

Only a few years later Ebrard de Bethune (about 1210) discusses various of the names by which the Waldenses were known. Although he makes puns on these names, he also gives us the important information that they were sometimes named for their common footwear which was sandals: "They are called . . . Xabatenses from Xabata (sandal). . . They crucify their sandals when they ought rather to crucify their members. They crown their footwear but not their heads."<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Quite typical of this unnecessary and erroneous speculation is Lewis, Sabbath and Sunday 216, who quotes an earlier writer named Benedict: "We find that the Waldenses were sometimes called Insabbathos, that is regardless of Sabbaths. Mr. Milner supposes this name was given to them because they observed not the Romish festivals and rested from their ordinary occupations only on Sundays. A Sabbatarian would suppose that it was because they met for worship on the seventh day, and did not regard the first day sabbath."

<sup>13</sup> "Valdenses videlicet sive Insabbatatos, qui alio nomine se vocant Pauperes de Lugduno" (EFV 92).

<sup>14</sup> "Valdenses videlicet, qui vulgariter dicebantur Sabatati, sive Pauperes de Lugduno" (EFV 94).

<sup>15</sup> "Quidam autem, qui Vallenses se appellant, eo quod in Valle lacrymarum maneant. . . ; et etiam Xabatenses a Xabata potius quam Christiani a Christo se volunt appellari. Sotulares cruciant, cum membra potius debeant cruciare. Calceamenta coronant, caput autem non coronant" (EFV 144).

Ebrard was not the first source to tell us that the Waldense preachers commonly wore sandals. In 1208, when the Waldense minister Durand de Huesca asked to be received back into the Catholic church, he requested permission to maintain his Waldense style of dress with only slight modifications: "We have decided to wear the modest religious habit which we have been accustomed to wear: shoes open at the top but with a sign special in arrangement and variation so that we will be openly and clearly recognized to be, as in heart so also in outward appearance, separated from the Lyonist Waldenses, both now and forever."<sup>16</sup>

But soon there were complaints that these "Reconciled Poor" as they were called still dressed like Waldenses. This led Pope Innocent III to write in 1209 that their mode of dress was causing scandal, especially the Waldense style of sandals which they wore: "we exhort. . .you not to bind yourselves to the resolution of wearing sandals cut away at the top nor to use any such sandals so that the scandal may thus disappear completely."<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup>"Religiosum et modestum habitum ferre decrevimus, qualem consuevimus deportare, calceamentis desuper apertis ita speciali signo compositis et variatis ut aperte et lucide cognoscatur nos esse, sicut corde, sic et corpore, a Lugdunensibus et nunc et in perpetuum segregatos, nisi reconcilientur catholicae unitati" (EFV 133).

<sup>17</sup>"Habitum etiam pristinae superstitionis scandalum apud Catholicos generantem in nullo vos penitus immutasse testantur. . .hortamur ut ii qui de vobis nondum signum hujus modi acceperunt, vel qui vobis fuerint associandi de caetero, non se astringant proposito utendi sandaliis desuper perforatis, neque talibus calceamentis utantur, ut sic scandalum penitus evanescat" (from Thouzellier, Catharisme 229, n. 57).

An anonymous work, Contra haereticos (probably by Ermengaud of Beziers), was written before 1213. It mentions a number of names given to the Waldenses: Lyonists (from the town Lyons), Waldenses, the Poor, and "the Sandal-shod, because they wear open footwear."<sup>18</sup>

A number of writers mention that a common name for the Waldense clergy was "sandal-wearer" because this was their normal mode of dress, at least among the Waldenses themselves. Anselm of Alessandria (c. 1266) writes as follows: "The Ultramontane (French) Waldense does not work. . . He is a 'sandal-wearer' and carries his clerical office above the foot, that is, shoes cut away at the top. . . The women do the same, with the exception of wearing sandal-type shoes. But the Lombard Waldenses also have 'sandal-wearers.'" Anselm goes on to write about the account of the Lombards or Italian Waldenses given by another source: "The 'sandal-wearers' among them, called by them priests, wear only one cloak and go around either barefooted or wear shoes cut away at the top."<sup>19</sup>

One final statement comes from Bernard Gui who wrote an inquisitor's manual about 1325 which drew on earlier sources:

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<sup>18</sup>" . . . dessotulati, quia pertusos stoulares ferunt" (from Thouzellier, Catharisme 289, n. 72).

<sup>19</sup>"Item utramontanus. . . est sandaliatus et portat clericatam super subtelliariibus, sive calceos incisos desuper . . . Idem faciunt mulieros, excepto quod non portant calceos sandaliatos. Sed et lonbardi habent sandaliatos. . . Item sandaliati inter istos, quos vocant sacerdotes, portant tantum unam tunicam et vadunt vel discalciati vel portant soleas vel calceos apertos desuper" (A. Dondaine, "La hiérarchie cathare en Italie," Archivum fratrum praedicatorum 20 (1950) 318-19.

"They were called the Insabbatati ('Sandal-shod') because from the beginning the Waldense 'perfect' bore a special sign shaped something like a shield on the tops of their sandals. By this sign they distinguished themselves from the rest of their co-workers and believers."<sup>20</sup>

It is true that the Waldense ministers in later times sometimes adopted disguises to avoid detection by the Inquisition.<sup>21</sup> But our sources show they did not do this initially and even later were apparently not always consistent in this, especially among their own group, and probably at other times when they felt reasonably safe. Their sandals and single garment was the sign of their "apostolic mission" and was what made people listen to them in the new areas they came to preach in.

Thus, it is clear from the Waldense sources themselves and from sources contemporary with them that:

a. The Waldense ministers had a special type of dress, especially a type of open sandal rather than the shoe commonly worn at that time.

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<sup>20</sup>"Insabbatati autem dicti sunt quia olim a principio sui valdenses perfecti speciale signum in modum quasi scuti in parte superiori sotularium deferebant, in quo signo ab aliis suis complicibus et credentibus differebant" (Thouzellier, Catharisme 174 n. 59).

<sup>21</sup>"veritatem autem ejus non habentes, tanto periculosiores quanto occulciores, se sub diversis hominum habitibus et artificiis transfigurantes. Aliquando quidam maximus inter eos fuit captus, qui secum ferebat multorum artificiorum indicia, in que quasi Proteus se transfigurabat" (Stephen of Bourbon; text from Patschovsky/Selge 17).

b. The Waldenses were given a variety of names which had to do with these sandals: Xabatenses, Sotulares, Sandaliati, Insabatati, Sabatati.

These sources plus a study of Romance etymologies make it clear that the names Sabatati, Insabatati, and the other variations derive from the Medieval Latin word sabatum which designated a particular type of sandal or shoe. The primary lexicon for Medieval and Late Latin states this about the word:

Sabatati, Insabatati, followers and sectarians of the heretic Waldo, so called not because they Judaized in keeping the Sabbath--because they observed no Sabbath except the Lord's day-- . . . but because those among them who were the "perfect" were accustomed to wearing a certain sign on the upper part of their sandals which they called sabatum.<sup>22</sup>

Under the word sabatum, this same lexicon gives the definition "shoe" (calceus) and lists a number of later Romance words derived from the Latin,<sup>23</sup>

Anyone who has taken one of the modern Romance languages knows that the word for shoe is in many cases a cognate of this word. Note the following list:

French: sabot, savate

Spanish: zapato

Portuguese: sapata

Italian: ciabatta

Provincial: sabata

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<sup>22</sup>"Sabatati, Insabatati, Haeretici Valdensium asseclae et sectarii, dicti, non quod in Sabbato judaizarent, ut volunt quidam, aut quod nullum Sabbathum observarent, sed solum diem Dominicum, ut Vignerius ann. 1159. et Perrinus: verum ut Prateolus, quod qui inter eos perfectiores erant, signum quoddam in superiore parte sui sotularis, quod Sabbathem appellabant, deferre solerent" (D. du Cange, Glossarium mediae et infimae latinitatis, 7.247; italics in original).

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., 7.248.



Therefore, we can only conclude from the historical sources (both Waldense and Catholic) and from the modern study of Romance etymology that the name '(In)sabatati' derived from footwear and had nothing to do with Sabbath keeping one way or the other.

### Mistatements and Misunderstandings of Sabbatarian Writers

The two major works which have claimed the Waldenses kept the Sabbath are A.H. Lewis, A Critical History of the Sabbath and the Sunday, and J.N. Andrews, History of the Sabbath and the First Day of the Week. Both the writers have a sectarian bias and are trying to find Sabbath observance wherever they can. In some cases, they have dug out some correct and useful information. At other times they have invented Sabbath observance where it simply did not exist.

The simple truth is that they cannot be taken at face value. Each statement must be investigated; they are not trustworthy. In fact, it is interesting to note that the latest edition of Andrews' work (revised by L.R. Conradi in 1912) has all the Waldense material taken out. No statement is made as to why this was done, but it's clear that it was simply erroneous. So the reviser took the opportunity to quietly excise this incorrect material and replace it with other material which says nothing about the Waldenses.

Perhaps one of the clearest examples of plain misstatement or misrepresentation is found in Lewis (p. 216-17):

From a historical work of the early part of the seventeenth century, entitled "Purchase's Pilgrimages," a sort of universal history, we learn that the Waldenses, in different localities,

"Keep Saturday holy, nor esteem Saturday fasts lawful. But on Easter, even, they have solemn services on Saturdays, eat flesh, and feast it bravely, like the Jews."

I have found a copy of the work referred to: Hakluytus Posthumus or Purchas His Pilgrimes (London, 1625). In vol. 2, p. 1269 (the reference given by Lewis), the following occurs:

The Surians and Greekes admit not fourth Marriages. Their Priests marry not after their Orders, but use their wives which before they married. They account not Subdeaconship in holy Orders. Their simple Priests confirme with Chrisme, which with the Latines is not lawfull but to Bishops. They keepe Saturday holy, nor esteeme Saturday Fast lawfull but on Easter Eeven. They have soleme Service on Saturdayes, eate flesh, and feast it bravely like the Jewes.

When one reads the context, it is very clear that Purchas is not referring to Waldenses at all. He is speaking of the Eastern Orthodox church, specifically the Greek and Syrian Orthodox, who to this day still have certain special observances connected with Saturday. This goes back to a very early period when Catholics of Asia Minor and Syria kept both Saturday and Sunday. Purchas is not talking about the Waldenses, nor is he speaking of a group which keeps Saturday as the Sabbath. This is plain when one simply reads the context. Lewis' quotation was completely misleading. No, actually, it wasn't just misleading. It was downright wrong.

A second example in Lewis is a quotation from the scholar Erasmus on Sabbath keepers in Bohemia (pp. 212-13).

Lewis implies that Erasmus is referring to Waldenses. Such is not the case. Erasmus indeed refers to Sabbath keepers but he in no way associates them with the Waldenses. If anything, his statement indicates these Sabbatarians are of recent origin: "Now we hear that in Bohemia a new type of Jews has sprung up, called Sabbatoarii, who observe the Sabbath with such superstition that if something falls into the eye on that day, they will not remove it. . . ."24

Another frequent error made by Lewis and others is to misread their sources and assume that "Sabbath" means "Saturday," when in fact it was common to designate Sunday in this way at that time. Since Lewis' sources are often English translations of works from French or other languages, it is possible to go back to the originals and determine exactly which day was really meant. One blatant example is found in Lewis, pp. 214-15:

In section four of the same chapter, Jones quotes from book first, chapter five, of Perrin's History of the Vaudois, as follows: . . . "Louis XII, king of France, being informed by the enemies of the Waldenses, inhabiting a part of the province of Provence, that several heinous crimes were laid to their account, sent the Master of Requests, and a certain doctor of the Sorbonne, who was confessor to his majesty, to make inquiry into this matter. On their return, they reported that they had visited all the parishes where they dwelt, had inspected their places of worship, but that they had found there no images. . . . On the contrary, they kept the Sabbath-day. . . ." (Italics in Lewis' quote.)

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24 "Nunc audimus apud Bohemos exoriri novum Judaeorum genus Sabbatoarios appellant, qui tanta superstitione servant Sabbatum, ut si quid eo die inciderit in oculum, nolint eximere; quasi non sufficiat eis pro Sabbato Dies Dominicus qui Apostolis etiam erat sacer, aut quasi Christus non satis expresserit quantum tribuendum sit Sabbati" (Erasmus, "Amabili ecclesiae concordia," Opera Omnia, 5.505-6).

Now, first of all, you should note that Lewis has not tried to check the original. Rather, he has quoted Jones who in turn quoted from an English translation of Perrin. Thus, Lewis gives us only a quote of a quote itself translated from a work in another language. But we can easily check the original (in the Ambassador College collection) of Perrin's statement, the relevant part of which is this: ". . . they observed Sundays. . ."25

The fact is that the English translators of Perrin translated the French "Sunday" by English "Sabbath" simply because it was customary at that time among Protestants to refer to Sunday as the "Sabbath." This led both Jones and Lewis astray, though they have no excuse since they should have checked their sources. For example, in another passage an English translation of Perrin reads as follows:

In the yeere one thousand foure hundred ninety foure, Anthony Fabri Doctor and Canon of Ambrun, and Christopher de Salliens Canon Vicar, and Officiall of the Bishop of Valence, had Commission from the Pope to commence suit against the Waldenses in Dauphine. . . and one Gobandi Notary of Ambrun. . . carried to Ambrun a certaine indictment framed against Peironette of Beauregard in Valentinois, the widdow of one Peter Berand. . . Being therefore demanded whether shee had seen, or understood of any of the Pastors of the Waldenses, shee answered at the first, that she had not. . . who being threatened to be further urged touching the question, confessed that about

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25 "Le Roy Loys douziesme ayant esté informé par les enemis des Vaudois (habités en Prouence) de plusieurs crimes atroces qu'ils leur imposoyent, enuoya pour en faire enqueste sur les lieux, le Sieur Adam Fumee Maistre de ses Requestes, & un Docteur de Sorbonne nommé Parui, lequel estoit son Confesseur: ils visiterent toutes les Parroisses & Temples d'iceux, & n'y trouuerent aucunes images. . . ains qu'ils gardoyent les dimanches" (Jean Paul Perrin, Histoire des Vaudois (Geneva: Pierre & Iaques Chouet, 1619) 1.41-2,

some twenty five yeeres since, there were two men clothed in gray, that came to her husbands house. . . Againe, that among other things he told her, that we ought not to doe anything to another, which wee would not have done unto our selves; That wee are to worship one onely God. . . , That we are to keep faith in marriage, and to keepe holy the Sabbath day, but that there was no necessity of observing other Feasts.<sup>26</sup>

The original French of Perrin's book actually says, "that we should observe the day of Sunday," not "Sabbath" as translated.<sup>27</sup>

Finally, I want to look at the only study in our own literature which attempted to address the question of whether Waldo kept the Sabbath. This was the article, "Did Peter Waldo Keep God's Sabbath?" by Lawson C. Briggs,<sup>28</sup> Mr. Briggs quite rightly rejected the idea that the name Sabatati (and its variants) had anything to do with the matter. But he does attempt to prove it from other sources. For example, he states:

An inquisitorial record of 1391 states of the Waldenses in Poland, that they "prayed on the seventh day" (Gordon Leff, Heresy in the Later Middle Ages, vol. 2, p. 464). Obviously this was a special observance of the day, for there would have been no reason for recording the fact of simple ordinary prayer.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> J.P. Perrin, The Bloudy Race of that great Antichrist of Rome and his superstitious adherents, against the true Church of Christ declared at large in the Historie of the Waldenses and Albingenses (translated out of French by Samson Lennard, 1624) 1.36-8.

<sup>27</sup> "Item, qu'il lui auoit dit entre plusieurs autres choses, qu'il ne faloit point faire à autrui ce que nous ne voulons point nous estre fait a nous mesmes: qu'il faut adorer un seul Dieu. . . : qu'il faloit obseruer le iour du Dimanche" (Perrin, *ibid.*, 1.136).

<sup>28</sup> Lawson C. Briggs, "Did Peter Waldo Keep God's Sabbath?" The Bulletin 2:8 (July 30, 1974) 377-79.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 379.

First of all, the work by Leff in no way suggests that the Waldenses kept the seventh-day Sabbath. Secondly, as Mr. Briggs notes, prayer by itself would not be in any way remarkable. And a check of the original source which Leff cites shows that the reference is to frequent daily prayer and has nothing to do with the seventh day: "They pray seven times a day."<sup>30</sup> This is a case of a simple mis-translation of the Latin text.

Mr. Briggs also cites Newman's Jewish Influence on Christian Reform Movements (p. 403) as if it supports the idea of Waldense Sabbath keeping. But Newman himself clearly states that "there is, moreover, no evidence as to any Seventh-day Sabbath observance among medieval Waldenses" (p. 213).

Thus, all the alleged proofs of Waldense seventh-day Sabbath keeping evaporate under investigation. What information we do have all shows they kept Sunday, not Saturday.

### Trinity

Very little is said in our sources about how the Waldenses looked at the Godhead. But the silence is itself significant as has already been pointed out. That is, when the Catholics do not accuse the Waldenses of heresy in an area, it is usually because they believed the same as the

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<sup>30</sup>"Habent autem talem vitam & conversationem: primo jejunant tres vel quatuor dies in hebdomada una in aqua et pane, nisi sint in gravi itinere vel labore constituti, et hoc faciunt inter suos subditos ut coram eis appareant sanctiores. Item septies in die orant" (Döllinger, Beiträge, 2,367).

Catholics. What mention there is about God shows that the Waldenses believed in the Trinity. The general silence otherwise confirms that the Waldenses were not generally considered unorthodox in this area by the Catholics.

Our earliest source is Waldo's confession of faith made about 1180. Right at the beginning of the document, Waldo states: "we believe in the heart, know by faith, confess by mouth, and affirm in plain words that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are three persons, one God complete in divinity, a Trinity coessential, cosubstantial, coeternal, coomnipotent, and each individual person in the Trinity is fully God, and all three persons are one God."<sup>31</sup>

Similarly, when Durand wrote as a loyal Waldense in 1192, he also gave his belief in the Trinity in his treatise against the Cathars. He put Waldo's confession as a preface to the work, including its trinitarian profession, and made a discussion of the Trinity the first item in his treatise. Durand speaks of God as "in truth three in persons but one God in majesty from the first."<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>31</sup>"corde credimus, fide intelligimus, ore confitemur et simplicibus verbis affirmamus patrem et filium et spiritum sanctum tres personas esse, unum deum totamque deitatis trinitatem coessentialem et consubstantialem et coeternalem et coomnipotentem et singulas quas que in trinitate personas plenum deum, et totas tres personas unum deum" (EFV 32).

<sup>32</sup>"Et quia trinitatis confessio prior habetur in articulis, de illo digestim hauriamur efflagitantes, qui profert de tesoro suo nova et vetera. Quod vero trinus in personis et unus sit deus in magestate primitus audiamus" (Selge, Waldenser, 2.12).

He describes the Holy Spirit as one of the persons of the Trinity, "one God with the Father and the Son."<sup>33</sup>

Finally, the Waldense catechism from about 1500 makes the Trinity a part of the confession of faith for Waldense children being instructed in doctrine. It is given in question and answer form: "Pastor: Do you believe in the Holy Spirit? Response: I believe this. For the Holy Spirit proceeding from the Father and the Son is one person of the Trinity and is equal in divinity to the Father and the Son."<sup>34</sup>

#### Women Preaching

The main feature of the Waldense movement was preaching and poverty. Women participated in both these things from the very beginning. All our early sources state that women as well as men preached.

Stephen of Bourbon, one of our sources for Waldo's conversion, states that Waldo sent "both men and women, illiterate and uneducated, who passed through the villages and entered into the houses and preached in the squares and

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<sup>33</sup>"De paraclito autem, quod unus sit deus cum patre et filio, testatur ipsius domini consobrinus" (ibid., 2.13).

<sup>34</sup>"D. Cres tu al Sanct Esperit? R. Yo y creo. Car lo Sanct Esperit procedent del Paire & del Filli es una persona de la Trinita, & second la Divinita, es aigal al Paire & al Filli" (quoted in Perrin, ibid., 2.162).



even in the churches, and called others to the same life."<sup>35</sup>

About 1190 there was a debate between the Waldenses and Catholics, recorded by Bernard of Fontcaude. One of the areas in which the Catholics argued against the Waldenses was in regard to women preaching: "Chap.8 Against the statement that women are able to preach. I. . . . they err gravely in that they permit women admitted to their company to teach when this is contrary to apostolic doctrine."<sup>36</sup>

Only a few years later Joachim of Fiore wrote his De articulis fidei (1193-94). The statements made about the new sect of the Waldenses include some about preaching: "It is not permitted for everyone who speaks well to preach at services. It is plain that some women can speak well but according to the apostle Paul they are not allowed to preach in church or to teach. . . . The Catholic Church anathematizes the Lyonist Waldense heretics of whom both men and women not only preach but also adulterate the Word of God, indifferently

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<sup>35</sup>"evangelia et ea que corde retinuerat per vicos et plateas predicando, multos homines et mulieres ad idem faciendum ad se convocando, firmans eis evangelia. Quos etiam per villas circumjacentes mittebat ad predicandum, vilissimorum quorumcunque officiorum. Qui etiam, tam homines quam mulieres, idiote et illiterati, per villas discurrentes et domos penetrantes et in plateis predicantes et etiam in ecclesiis, ad idem alios provocabant" (Patschovsky/Selge, 16).

<sup>36</sup>"Chap. VIII: Contra hoc quod mulieres praedicare posse dicunt: I. Praeter errores jam dictos, graviter errant, quia feminas, quas suo consortio admittunt, docere permittunt, cum hoc sit apostolicae doctrinae contrarium" (EFV 80).

and indiscriminately, without doctrine, without grace, without order. . ."<sup>37</sup>

Alain of Lille, writing about 1200, states: "These same people oppose the apostle Paul in this that they take women with them and let them preach in the meetings of the faithful."<sup>38</sup>

Richard of Poitiers stated in his Life of Pope Alexander III (written about 1216) the following in regard to the origin and beliefs of the Waldenses: "And he (Waldo) presumed to preach the Gospel in the streets and squares, and he made many men and women his accomplices in this same presumption, whom he sent out preaching as disciples."<sup>39</sup>

Just a few years earlier when Bernard Prim returned to the Catholic Church, he and his followers were required to swear that they would not allow women to preach.<sup>40</sup>

The inquisitor Anselm of Alessandria wrote a

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<sup>37</sup>"Quod autem omnibus quibus licet bona loqui non liceat sollempniter predicare, manifestum est quia mulieribus quibus licet bona loqui, secundum apostolum predicare in ecclesia aut docere non licet. . . merito anathematizat Ecclesia lugdunenses hereticos, qui indifferenter et indiscrete, tam viri quam mulieres, sine doctrina, sine gratia, sine ordine, non tam annuntiant quam adulterant verbum Dei" (EFV 99-100).

<sup>38</sup>"Ipsi etiam obviant Apostolo in hoc quod mulierculas secum ducunt et eas in conventu fidelium praedicare faciunt" (EFV 104).

<sup>39</sup>"atque praesumpsit, per vicos et plateas Evangelia praedicando, multosque homines et mulieres ad similem praesumptionem complices sibi fecit, quos ad praedicandum tamquam discipulos emittebat" (EFV 165).

<sup>40</sup>"illud inficientes omnino quod videlicet mulieribus Evangelium in Ecclesia licitum esse docere" (EFV 139).

handbook for other inquisitors about 1270. This was not a polemic in which he tried to prove the "heretics" wrong but a reference work which was meant to provide accurate information for fellow clerics. Research has shown that his information was based on personal experience or reliable sources. He states that he learned the following from an individual by the name Louis who was an Italian Waldense: "Women are not ordained but they preach; yet they may not impose penance. . . These believe that no one other than a priest ordained by them is able to consecrate (the bread and wine); a woman is not permitted to do so."<sup>41</sup>

Anselm lets us know that women were still permitted to preach in his time but were restricted in other ministerial duties. Other sources show that about this time, there was a gradual trend to make women less visible in services. A. Patschovsky and K.-V. Selge, modern Waldensian scholars, make the following point about a document from the year 1240: "This writing and the following selections are interesting in that they show that in the 1230's women still belonged to the Waldense community and played an important role, whereas according to the statement of Raymond of Costa. . . by about

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<sup>41</sup>"Nec mulieres ordinantur, sed predicant; penitentiam tamen non dant. . . Isti credunt quod nullus possit consecrare nisi sit sacerdos ab eis ordinatus, nec mulier possit" (Dondaine, "La hiérarchie Cathare en Italie," Archivum fratrum praedicatorum 20, 1950, 319).

1300, women were no longer taken into the community."<sup>42</sup>

Another modern scholar who devoted a full study to the participation of women in various heretical movements of the Middle Ages concludes as follows about the Waldenses:

With the beginning of the 14th century important changes came about among the Waldenses with regard to the role of women in the sect. In the role of "perfect," women receded more and more into the background. This development was generally not as straightforward as among the Cathars. So women Waldense preachers were still evident at the beginning of the 15th century. . . . Already by 1270 a differentiation was found within the ranks of the "perfect": women were no longer ordained among the Lombard Waldenses. at this time though they still had permission to preach: among the French Waldenses the women were not allowed to wear sandals, as opposed to the men.<sup>43</sup>

Thus, the picture that emerges is the following:

When Waldo began his mission, he allowed all converts to preach,

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<sup>42</sup>"Dieses und die folgenden Stücke sind darum interessant, weil sie zeigen, dass noch in den dreissiger Jahren Frauen zur Waldensergemeinschaft gehörten und eine bedeutende Rolle spielten, während nach der Aussage des Raymundus de Costa, die freilich noch weiterer Untersuchung in geschichtlichem Zusammenhang bedarf, um 1300 keine Frauen mehr in die Gemeinschaft aufgenommen wurden" (Patschovsky/Selge, 58 n. 1).

<sup>43</sup>"Mit dem Beginn des 14. Jh. lassen sich auch bei den Waldensern bedeutsame Wandlungen hinsichtlich der Rolle der Frau in der Sekte feststellen. Als perfecta trat sie auch hier immer mehr in den Hintergrund. Diese Entwicklung war allerdings noch uneinheitlicher als innerhalb des Katharismus. So lassen sich noch am Anfang des 15. Jh. predigende mulieres valdenses nachweisen. . . . Schon um 1270 findet sich innerhalb der Vollendeten eine Differenzierung: die mulieres wurden zu dieser Zeit bei den Lombardischen Armen nicht mehr ordiniert, sie hatten aber noch die Erlaubnis zur Predigt; bei den französischen Waldensern durften die Frauen im Gegensatz zu den männlichen Sektenmitgliedern keine Sandalen tragen" (Gottfried Koch, Frauenfrage und Ketzertum im Mittelalter [Forschungen zur mittelalterlichen Geschichte 9; Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1962] 168, 170.

both men and women. This practice continued after Waldo's death, with women even being ordained. But as time passed, women began to play a smaller and smaller role in the Waldense ministry. The change in attitude did not progress at a uniform rate among all the Waldense groups, but by about 1300 women generally did not take an active part in services or the ministry. Yet there were still exceptions to this into the next century or so.

### Baptism

Our information on the Waldense belief in regard to baptism is somewhat fragmentary and not always easy to interpret. Nevertheless, the information we have indicates that the original practice was to follow the Catholics, including infant baptism. Only gradually was infant baptism rejected and replaced by adult baptism only.

Waldo's confession of faith made in 1180 quite clearly states his belief in infant baptism: "We approve of the baptism of infants so that if they perish after baptism but before they commit sin, we declare and believe them to be saved."<sup>44</sup>

Similarly, Durand de Huesca wrote as Waldo's follower in 1192: "There are some who make baptism in actual water of no importance and assert that it is not sufficient for the salvation of children. Against them we present a

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<sup>44</sup>"Approbamus ergo baptismum infancium, ut, si defuncti fuerint post baptismum antequam peccata comitant, fatemus eos salvari et credimus" (EFV 34).

number of sacred witnesses."<sup>45</sup> Durand goes on to use a number of arguments to support infant baptism, such as Jesus' statement, "Let little children come to me," and the analogy of circumcision on the eighth day.

The statement of reconciliation between the French and Italian Waldenses (1218) discusses the question of baptism: "Passing on to their question about baptism, we gave this response: 'We say that no one is able to be saved who has refused be baptized in actual water, much less do we believe that unbaptized children are saved?'"<sup>46</sup> It is important to notice that infant baptism was a doctrine accepted by both Italian and French Waldenses, even though they differed on certain other beliefs.

Yet when the inquisitor Rainerius Sacconi wrote a description of Waldense beliefs about 1250, he stated, "They also say that infants will be saved without baptism."<sup>47</sup>

When we put the various statements together, we again see a development as time passed. The original Waldense

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<sup>45</sup>"Sunt nonnulli, qui baptismum in aqua visibili factum floccipendunt, et infantibus non sufficere ad salvationem contendunt. Contra quos aliquot divina testimonia proferamus" (Selge, Waldenser, 2.43).

<sup>46</sup>"Praeterea ad quandam questionem suam super baptizmate talem responsionem dedimus: Decimus quod nemo aque materialis baptismum respuens potest salvari, parvulos vero non baptizatos minime credimus salvari et hoc oramus eos credere et fateri" (EFV 174).

<sup>47</sup>"Item dicunt quod infantes salvantur sine baptismo" (Dondaine, "La hiérarchie," 317).

movement accepted Catholic baptism including the baptism of infants. The doctrine of infant baptism was still maintained by both of the major branches of Waldenses in 1218. Yet by the year 1250 at least some Waldenses did not consider infant baptism necessary. It has been suggested that this "ana-baptism" (adult baptism) came about through influences from other religious movements contemporary with the Waldenses.<sup>48</sup> But regardless of its cause, adult baptism was a later development. The Waldenses in their early period, including the time during Waldo's lifetime, believed in and practiced infant baptism.

#### Summary

It has not been my purpose to give a complete history of the Waldenses or a thorough examination of all their doctrines. Instead, I have limited my investigation to those factors which bear on our central question: Were the Waldenses a part of God's Church?

The examination of the early history of the Waldenses has brought out some significant points. As we saw, Waldo's original intent was not to break off from the Catholic Church. Rather, his concern was with the two items of poverty and preaching. There is no evidence that he differed from the

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<sup>48</sup>Selge, Waldenser, 1.163-66.

Catholics in matters of belief or doctrine. He attempted to obtain permission from the pope to preach. When he and his followers were finally excommunicated, it was not because of supposed heretical doctrine but simply because of preaching without permission.

There is no evidence that Waldo ever gave up hope of eventual reconciliation with the Catholic Church. In fact, one of Waldo's closest associates, Durand of Huesca, did return to the Catholic Church with many of his associates, apparently after Waldo's death.

It is certainly true that the Waldenses of a later time had a number of doctrines different from the Catholics. Interestingly, though, most of these differences did not exist in the beginning and only later developed. Thus, rather than a church which began as true Christians and only later fell away, we see the Waldenses as a group which began simply as a preaching movement within the Catholic Church and only gradually moved away from it on the doctrinal level. The Waldense movement itself also fragmented, with doctrinal differences between the various factions, as time went on.

The exact Waldense belief on many issues is not clear. On other issues we can be fairly certain but a measure of doubt remains. Nevertheless, enough is clear about such beliefs as the Sabbath that we can say the Waldenses were not a part of God's Church by the criteria we have always considered essential.



This does not mean that God's Church had died out. We know it existed. But the Bible does not promise we would always be able to find it in history. At certain periods it must have been small and obscure, so that silence in our historical sources would not be unusual. The important thing is that it did exist through the Middle Ages--whether we can find it or not--and it re-emerged after the Reformation when the preserved historical sources once more bring it into view. That is all that matters.