

Checkin' Out My Walk
#14 - Thyatira - Dark Ages - Part II - 800 AD -1517 AD

When Constantine married paganism and Christianity, the door was opened for false doctrines to creep into the early Christian Church, and they were gradually introduced into the system. The Church became divided into the Catholic Church who accepted the pagan doctrines, and the true Christian Church who resisted Constantine's indoctrination. These pagan practices are symbols of apostasy against God. The *Twentieth Century Encyclopedia of Catholicism* says the following: "The missionary history of the [Catholic] Church clearly shows her adaptability to all races, all continents, all nations. In her liturgy and her art, in her tradition and the forming of her doctrine, naturally enough she includes Jewish elements, but also elements of pagan origin. In her laws, her ceremonies, her festivals and her devotions, she makes use of local customs after purifying them and 'baptizing' them."

The Papacy claims: Our system of worship has been handed down through tradition. They are absolutely correct. But these are not the teachings of Jesus, but rather the traditions of Babylon. Roman Catholic doctrines such as infant baptism, sprinkling during baptism, tonsured and celibate priests with power over the dead, teachings on death and immortality, prayers to the dead and to relics, repetitive prayers with the use of beads, doctrines on forgiveness of sins, teachings on hell, and the mass are doctrines actually derived directly from ancient Babylon, not the Bible. Mark 7:9 He said to them, "All too well you reject the commandment of God, that you may keep your tradition."

The Medieval Muddle - 800 AD - 1073 AD The Corrupt & Divided Church

"It is amazing the true church survived during this period, for the professing, external church (Roman Catholic Church) was sick, corrupt and ungodly. This is a period in church history all church historians would like to strike from the pages of history." Church historian Philip Schaff says, "No church or sect in Christendom ever sank so low as the Latin church in the tenth century."

I. Forgeries

A. The Isidorian Decretals In the mid-800s documents called the (Pseudo) *Isidorian Decretals* appeared in Europe. They consisted of 115 documents and decrees which were supposedly written by Roman bishops since apostolic times. They were determined to be a complete fabrication of church history.

Purpose of Isidorian Decretals

1. Enable the Church to be independent of secular power

2. Prevent the Laity from ruling the Church
3. Exalt the power of the Pope
4. Stamp the Papacy with authority of antiquity, ante-dating his power by 5 centuries
5. Make it appear the popes had always exercised sovereign dominion and had ultimate authority even over Church Councils.

They claimed:

1. Absolute supremacy of the pope over all church leaders
2. Total freedom of the Roman church from state control
3. Exempt the clergy from trial in secular courts.

B. The Donation of Constantine - This was a forged Roman imperial decree by which emperor Constantine I supposedly transferred authority over Rome and the western part of the Roman Empire to the Pope. This elevated the Pope to an absolute monarch. He used it to claim authority in secular matters.

II. The Practice of Simony

A. Simony, the sinful practice of giving or obtaining an appointment to a church office in exchange for money, was a common practice, even in the obtaining of the office of pope.

Ex.: The Tuscan family appointed as pope in 1033, Benedict IX (12 years old) who turned out to be one of the worst characters ever to occupy the papal seat. St. Peter Damian, for one, called him a "demon from hell in the disguise of a priest."

The Crescenzo family were able to drive Benedict from Rome in 1045 and appoint Sylvester III as pope. Benedict came back into power, but soon grew tired of his office and sold it for 1,000 pounds of silver to a man named Gregory VI. Later, Benedict refused to surrender the papal office which he had sold. There were then three men all claiming to be the pope: Benedict IX, Sylvester III and Gregory VI. What a tragic situation!

III. Papal Corruption

A. From 867 to 1049 the papacy degenerated to its lowest point.

1. More than 40 persons occupied the papal throne.
2. As various noblemen seized church positions for their sons or relatives, organized Christendom became infested with corrupt, immoral bishops and popes who knew no theology.
3. Several popes were assassinated by their successors.
4. Some had mistresses. One fathered an illegitimate son who later became pope.
5. Another worshiped pagan gods and turned the papal palace into a house of prostitution.
6. One sold the papacy for money.
7. Pope Leo IX finally ended this corruption in 1049 A.D.

B. In the 10th century, the papacy of the Roman Catholic Church fell under the influence of harlots in an era termed Pornocracy or the Rule of the Prostitutes/Rules of the Harlots.

These years were characterized by corruption, licentiousness and venality.
From 904-963 ten popes turned the papacy into a den of robbers, illegitimate children, etc.

C. Lewdness and Luxury at the Vatican - The Lombard historian, Bishop Liuprand of Cremona wrote a history of the papacy from 886 to 950AD. "They hunted on horses with gold trappings, had rich banquets with dancing girls when the hunt was over and retired with (their) whores to beds with silk sheets and gold embroidered covers."

D. It began in 904 AD with the installation of Pope Sergius III.

1. He has the dubious distinction of being the only Pope to order another Pope's death: in 904, Antipope Christopher is believed to have been strangled to death on the order of Sergius III — who then took control of the papacy. His shady doings didn't end there.
2. Theophylactus was a powerful count who helped the Pope expand into more territory.
3. The Pope was completely under the control of Theodora, the beautiful wife of Roman consul Theophylactus, who used sex to wield power.
4. Theodora's 15-year-old daughter Morazia became the concubine of Pope Sergius III. Their son later became Pope John XI - the only illegitimate son of a Pope who later became Pope himself.
5. The era of Pornocracy ended with Pope John XII (the grandson of Marozia) in 963. He was so immoral that the Basilica of Rome was said to be converted into a brothel under his rule.

IV. "Trials?"

Pope Stephen VI served from 896-897 AD. He so despised his predecessor, Pope Formosus, that even his death did not satisfy him. In the Cadaver Synod — what has been called "the strangest and most terrible trial in human history" and "one of the grisliest events in papal history" — Stephen VI had Formosus' rotting nine-month-old corpse dug up, redressed in his papal vestments and seated on the throne so he could be tried and found guilty. As punishment, three of Formosus' fingers were cut off (the three fingers on the right hand used to give blessings). The corpse was then stripped of his sacred vestments, dressed as a layman, dragged through the streets and dumped in the Tiber River — where he was finally able to rest in peace. After the Synod, public opinion turned against Stephen. He was deposed in an uprising and strangled to death.

Golden Age of Papal Power - 1049-1294

Gregory VII- 1073-1085 held that, as vicar of Christ and representative of Peter, he could give or take empires. Everyone from the lowest peasant to the highest ruler was to recognize him as Christ's representative on earth and supreme ruler over all religious and political matters.

Innocent III - 1198-1216

1. Most powerful of all the Popes > He claimed to be the "Vicar of Christ," and the "Supreme

Sovereign over the Church and the World."

2. All the monarchs in Europe obeyed his will, including the Byzantine Empire.
3. He ordered 2 crusades, condemned the Magna Carta, forbade the reading of the Bible in the vernacular, declared the infallibility of the pope and instituted the inquisition which for 500 years was the most diabolical thing in human history.

The spread of other movements from the 12th century can be seen at least in part as a reaction to the increasing moral corruption of the clergy, which included illegal marriages and the possession of extreme wealth. In the Middle Ages, the Inquisition's main focus was to eradicate these new sects.

1. Everyone is required to inform against heretics.
2. Suspects are liable to torture.
3. You would not know the name of your accuser; proceedings were done in secret.
4. The inquisitor pronounced sentence.
5. Victim was turned over to civil authorities to be imprisoned for life or to be burned.
6. Victim's property was confiscated and divided between the church and state.

Result: The Inquisitions claimed vast multitudes of victims in Spain, Italy, Germany and the Netherlands.

Note: When a papal inquisition arrived at a town it had a set of procedures and rules to identify likely heretics. Legally, there had to be at least two witnesses.

Near the end of the Middle Ages, corruption in the Catholic Church was a serious dilemma. Many priests were illiterate and barely knew how to perform common religious services. priest and nuns in spite of taking vows of chastity engaged in sexual relationships. Even the popes fathered and raised children. Many of the clergy exploited their positions to lead lives of luxury and leisure.

The cardinals of Rome lived in magnificent palaces and wore jewel-encrusted gold robes. Pope Boniface VIII (1294-1303), said, "We declare, state, define and pronounce that for every human creature to be subject to the Roman pope is altogether necessary for salvation" (Caper, *The Church in History*). He was so corrupt Dante called the Vatican a "sewer of corruption," and assigned the Pope and others to the lowest part of Hell.

Question: What about the true Church - Believers Who Stood For Truth?

"For at least a thousand years before the Reformation the true church was composed of multitudes of simple Christians who were not part of the Roman system. That such believers existed, refused to be called 'Catholics,' and worshiped independently of the Roman hierarchy is history. It is a fact that they were pursued to imprisonment and death since at least the end of the fourth century." (A Woman Rides the Beast by Dave Hunt, p. 254)

Hunt's reference to the 4th century is significant, because it was in that century that Roman Catholicism was established, beginning with Constantine the Great who legalized Christianity, causing it to eventually become the state religion. From that time forward, the pagan traditions of Rome were blended with Christian names, titles and doctrines. This is the origin of Roman Catholicism or "Roman Universalism."

Foxe's Book Of Martyrs: Persecution, under the guise of Christianity, committed more enormities than ever disgraced the annals of paganism. Disregarding the maxims and the spirit of the Gospel, the papal Church, arming herself with the power of the sword, vexed the Church of God and wasted it for several centuries, a period most appropriately termed in history, the "dark ages." The kings of the earth, gave their power to the "Beast," and submitted to be trodden on by the miserable vermin that often filled the papal chair, as in the case of Henry, emperor of Germany. The storm of papal persecution first burst upon the Waldenses in France.

"A Lamp in the Dark," contains information concerning those who are called "The Pilgrim Church." This term refers to the whole body of Bible believing Christians through the centuries who were never a part of the Roman Catholic system. The two chief groups were the Waldenses and the Albigenses. Rome waged the most dreadful and bloody persecutions against these Bible believers for centuries, almost completely wiping them out; but not before they had powerfully influenced the Reformers.

These non-Catholic groups have been a thorn in the flesh of the Papacy for more than a thousand years. They have stood as a continual witness against Rome, exposing her as an apostate, blood drunken harlot, who has falsified the Gospel, bowed herself to idols, and continually exalted a mere man (the Pope) in place of God and Christ Himself.

The Waldenses were a Christian movement and religious group which started in Lyon, France in the late 1170s and declared heretical by Pope Innocent III in 1215. There is good historical evidence of their existence as simple, Bible-believing Christians in the Piedmont region in the 2nd century (several centuries prior to the official establishment of the hierarchical Roman Catholic Church)! *The Reformers held: the Waldensian Church was formed about 120 A.D., from which date on, they passed down from father to son the teachings.*

Truths they held from the Bible included:

1. The atoning death and justifying righteousness of Christ
2. The Godhead
3. The incarnation of The Son
4. The fall of man
5. Valued Voluntary Poverty
6. A denial of purgatory as the "invention of the Antichrist"
7. Temporal offices and dignities were not meant for preachers of the Gospel
8. Relics were simply rotten bones
9. To go on pilgrimage served no end, save to empty one's purse

10. Holy water was not a whit more efficacious than rain water

11. Prayer in a barn was just as effectual as if offered in a church.

They were accused of having scoffed at the doctrine of transubstantiation, and of having spoken blasphemously of the Roman Catholic Church as the harlot of the apocalypse.

They repelled the idolatry of the Roman Catholic Church and considered the Papacy as the Antichrist of Rome.

Noteworthy Facts: In 1211 more than 80 Waldensians were burned as heretics at Strasbourg.

2. The French Bible (1535) was based in part on a New Testament in the Waldensian vernacular. The cost of its publication was defrayed by the churches in Waldensia who collected the sum of 1500 gold crowns for this purpose.

3. The Massacre of Mérimondol took place in 1545, when Francis I of France ordered the Waldensians of the city of Mérimondol to be punished for dissident religious activities. Provençal and Papal soldiers killed hundreds to thousands and destroyed between 22-28 villages.

4. Piedmont Easter - 1655 - Duke of Savoy issues a command to the Waldenses:

Attend Mass or remove to the upper valleys of their homeland, giving them twenty days in which to sell their lands. Although it is the middle of winter, the bulk of them abandoned their homes and lands in the lower valleys and journeyed to the upper valleys.

These targets of persecution, including old men, women, little children and the sick "waded through the icy waters, climbed the frozen peaks, and at length reached the homes of their impoverished brethren of the upper Valleys, where they were warmly received."

By mid-April, when it became clear the Duke's efforts to force them to conform to Catholicism had failed, he tried another approach. Under the guise of false reports of Waldenses uprisings, the Duke sent troops into the upper valleys to quell the local populace. He required the local populace quarter the troops in their homes. But the quartering order was a ruse to allow the troops easy access to the populace.

On 24 April 1655, at 4 a.m., the signal was given for a general massacre.

The Catholic forces did not simply slaughter the inhabitants. They are reported to have unleashed an unprovoked campaign of looting, rape, torture, and murder.

Estimate of about 1,700 Waldensians were slaughtered; the massacre was so brutal it aroused indignation throughout Europe.

Results of Indignation:

1. Protestant rulers in northern Europe offered sanctuary to the remaining Waldensians.

2. Oliver Cromwell, then ruler in England, began petitioning on behalf of the Waldensians; wrote letters, raised contributions, threatened to send military forces to the rescue and called a general fast in England

3. John Milton wrote a famous poem on the Waldenses, "On the Late Massacre in Piedmont".

*"Avenge, O Lord, thy slaughtered saints, whose bones
Lie scattered on the Alpine mountains cold;*

*Even them who kept thy truth so pure of old,
When all our fathers worshiped stocks and stones ..."*

4. Swiss and Dutch Calvinists set up an 'underground railroad' to bring many of the survivors north to Switzerland and even as far as the Dutch Republic.

5. Amsterdam's city officials chartered three ships to take some 167 Waldensians to their City Colony in the New World (Delaware) on Christmas Day 1656.

"... while midnight darkness sat enthroned over almost every portion of the globe the Waldenses preserved the gospel among them in its native purity, and rejoiced in its glorious light." (Jones, "The History of the Christian Church," p. 467)

Note: Between 1540-1570, there were no fewer than 900,000 Protestants put to death by the Pope's war for the extermination of the Waldenses.

THE ALBIGENSES

The Albigenses were a people of the reformed religion, who inhabited the area of Albi in southern France. Beliefs:

1. Preached against the immoralities of the priesthood, the worship of saints and images.
2. They completely rejected the clergy and its claims.
3. They used the Scriptures, lived self-denying lives with a great zeal for moral purity.

They were condemned on the matter of religion in the Council of Lateran, by order of Pope Alexander III. Nevertheless, they increased so prodigiously, that many cities were inhabited by persons only of their persuasion, and several eminent noblemen (Earl of Toulouse) embraced their doctrines.

A friar, named Peter, was murdered in the dominions of the earl of Toulouse.

The pope made the murder a pretense to persecute that nobleman and his subjects.

The Pope sent people throughout Europe, in order to raise forces to act coercively against the Albigenses. The pope promised paradise to all who would come to this war, a Holy War, and bear arms for forty days.

The brave earl defended Toulouse. The king of France, the queen mother, and three archbishops raised another formidable army. They persuaded the earl of Toulouse to come to a conference. He was treacherously seized upon, made a prisoner, forced to appear barefooted and bareheaded before his enemies, and compelled to subscribe an abject recantation.

This was followed by a severe persecution against the Albigenses.

Express orders: the laity cannot read the sacred Scriptures.

1208-1226 Alarmed at the rapid growth of these Bible-believing Christians, Pope Innocent III ordered a bloody war of extermination which utterly wiped out town after town until all of the Albigenses were gone. ... *"Their disappearance as a social group was carefully planned and executed with persistent cruelty."*

Reasons the Roman Catholic Church commanded and supported these brutal, genocidal wars against the Albigensian and Waldensian Christians: (1) The Bible-believing Albigensian and Waldensian Christians refused to recognize and submit to Papal authority. (2) They refused to obey "commands" from the Papacy to turn in their Holy Bibles to Roman Catholic authorities. (3) Some of their preachers identified Papal Rome as the "Antichrist" and religious harlot described on the pages of Holy Scripture, and preached sermons to that effect. (4) When many of the Roman Catholics who lived with or near these Bible-believing Christians saw the moral, industrious lives these Bible believers lived - and compared these Bible believers with the corrupt, immoral Roman Catholic priesthood, they began to leave the Roman Catholic Church in droves!

How many others were a lamp in the darkness?

Heb. 11:32; 35-40 And what more shall I say? For the time would fail me to tell of...

John Huss was branded as a heretic and burned at the stake. He said, on one occasion, "I will obey the Pope so far as his commands agree with the doctrine of Jesus Christ, but when I see otherwise, I will not obey the Pope, even though you burn my body." The Catholic Church said, good idea, and did so!

Savonarola, in the 1400's, preached against the evils of the Catholic Church in cathedrals that were full to overflowing. For his stand he was imprisoned, hanged, and his body was burned in the city square of Florence as a warning and deterrent to others.

Jesus said, speaking of those exceptions, "I know thy faith..."

John Wycliffe spoke out against the Pope that he was not infallible. After his death, the church actually dug up his bones and burned them, and most of his followers were extinguished by the church.

Others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection. ³⁶ Still others had trial of mockings and scourgings, yes, and of chains and imprisonment. ³⁷ They were stoned, they were sawn in two, were tempted, were slain with the sword. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented— ³⁸ of whom the world was not worthy. They wandered in deserts and mountains, *in dens and caves of the earth.* ³⁹ And all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise, ⁴⁰ God having provided something better for us, that they should not be made perfect apart from us.

Heb. 12:1-2 Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares *us*, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, ² looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of *our* faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Ps. 108:12-13 Give us help from trouble, for the help of man is useless.

¹³ Through *God* we will do valiantly, For *it is He who* shall tread down our enemies.

Rom. 15:13 Now may the *God of hope* fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.