

## CHAPTER 12

“Look at those towering alps,” Jeremy sucked in his breath. “Wouldn't it be awesome to backpack in *those* mountains!”

“You better get yourself into shape and find a good paying job,” teased Jay.

“Today we are going to read the first of several chapters about the Waldenses,” explained Mr. Dell. “I thought you would enjoy seeing some pictures of the beautiful refuge God prepared for those 'Heroes of the Cross'.

“In Isaiah 33:16 we are told that the righteous, the fair and honest and those who refrain from evil 'shall dwell on high: his place of defence shall be the munitions of rocks: bread shall be given him; his water shall be sure.' This mountain in the Waldensian Valleys certainly looks like 'the munitions of rocks', doesn't it?”

The class murmured in agreement.

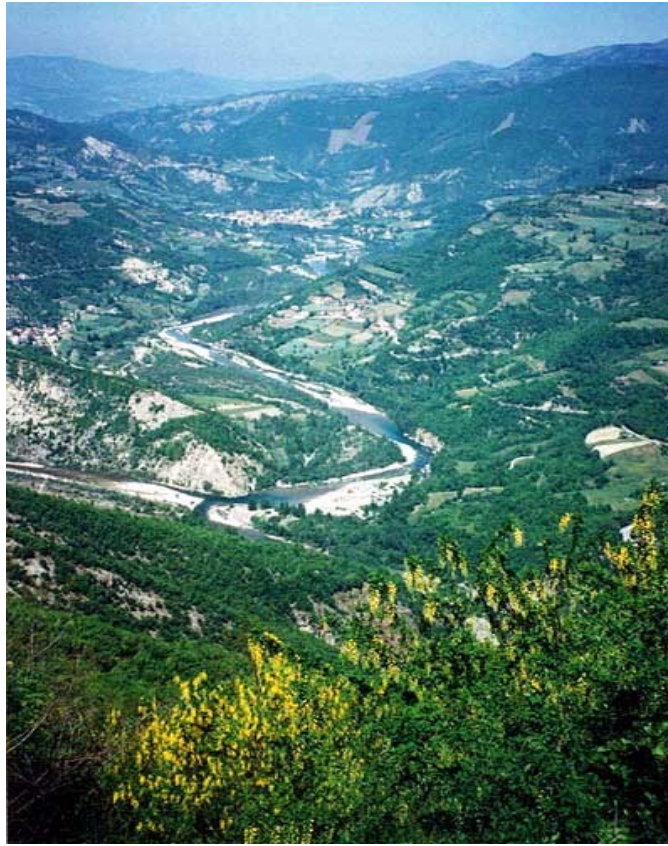


[http://www.via-alpina.org/uploads/cache/c4450a2a8b1921ef76a967dba1507c9a\\_w400.JPG](http://www.via-alpina.org/uploads/cache/c4450a2a8b1921ef76a967dba1507c9a_w400.JPG)

“Who remembers the name of the last school Columbanus built?” questioned their teacher.

“I know,” Aaron waved his hand. “It was Bobbio”

“Right. Bobbio is located in a beautiful valley. Let me show you some pictures of what it looks like today” said Mr. Dell. “Check out this magnificent valley with the meandering Trebbia River. Didn't Columbanus receive a beautiful place to establish a training school?”



[http://www.giorgiozanetti.ca/vallipc/piacenza\\_foto\\_album.html](http://www.giorgiozanetti.ca/vallipc/piacenza_foto_album.html)

“If you are fortunate enough to visit the Waldensian Valleys, I'm sure you will want to make a stop at Bobbio. This picture was taken from the Ponte Gobbo – the span bridge crossing the river. Visitors find numerous 'postcard – perfect' settings like this as they explore these famous mountains..



[http://www.giorgiozanetti.ca/vallipc/piacenza\\_foto\\_album.html](http://www.giorgiozanetti.ca/vallipc/piacenza_foto_album.html)

“For instance, check out this wild stretch of the Trebbia River as it cuts through the lush vegetation and foams over the rocks in the river. It is easy to see why the Waldenses felt so close to God way up there in the mountains. You can see His creative power and love for beauty wherever you look.



[http://www.giorgiozanetti.ca/vallipc/piacenza\\_foto\\_album.html](http://www.giorgiozanetti.ca/vallipc/piacenza_foto_album.html)

“Another special tourist spot is the 'College of the Barbs' located high in the mountain valley of Angrogna.”

“Who were the Barbs?” Hannah asked.

“The word means 'uncle', Hannah. They were men chosen to train as pastors. Their textbook was the Bible and before they graduated they were required to memorize vast portions of Scripture. It is said that many of Waldensian pastors memorized the entire Bible from Genesis to Revelation. Although we don't know that for a fact, be assured they knew their Bibles well! Here is an old stone table thought to be an original study desk used by the early barbs.



[http://www.alpinewstart.com/sl\\_18.html](http://www.alpinewstart.com/sl_18.html)

“This picture is a fine example of the buildings that composed the 'College of the Barbs'. Notice they are made entirely of stone. You can imagine how cold they would get in the winter, especially since the men never lit a fire for fear that the Roman authorities would discover their secret school. Often animals were kept in the house and believe it or not, the students would sleep with them just to keep warm at night.”

“Wow, no pampered life for those Waldenses I see,” commented Cory as others nodded in agreement.

“No, they certainly knew all about sacrifice, self-denial and hardship,” agreed Mr. Dell.



<http://historical.benabraham.com/assets/images/1Walden4.jpg>

“Here is your map showing the Waldensian territory marked in green. Our stories for the next several days will come from this area,” Mr. Dell said as he passed out the sheets of paper.



<http://www.scrollpublishing.com/store/media/Waldensian-Territory.jpg>

Picking up his book, Mr. Dell read:

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## **GOD'S CHURCH FLEES TO THE WILDERNESS**

Many times towering mountain peaks and hidden valleys have provided refuge for God's people during times of danger. Lot and his daughters escaped Sodom's destruction by fleeing to the hills surrounding their wicked city and you've no doubt read the suspenseful stories of David and his men hiding in desert caves from the murderous King Saul and his army. The gospels tell us that Jesus sometimes spent whole nights in the mountains petitioning His Father for victory over Satan's temptations.

After Christ returned to heaven His people again required the protection of the hills. Revelation warned that God's church – symbolized by a pure woman dressed in white - would have to flee into the wilderness where God would prepare a place to keep her safe from the dragon, better known as Satan. "And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and threescore days" (Revelation 12:6). That prophecy warned that for 1260 years God's faithful followers would be subjected to the devil's unrelenting persecutions.

As we survey the terrain of Europe we see special places of refuge God prepared for the safety of His people. In northwestern Italy, southeastern France and northern Spain mighty mountain ranges provided a vast wall of protection for those who chose to follow God. In quiet valleys, snuggled between lofty mountains, were the homes of those we will call the Church in the Wilderness. For hundreds of years these people kept alive the genuine worship of God and protected the Holy Scriptures from the corruptions found in the Latin Vulgate.

Their flight to the mountains began early in the fourth century. In AD 321 Constantine declared that all Christian churches must recognize the authority of the Church of Rome by resting on "the Venerable Day of the Sun." A few years later in AD 365 there was a Synod of Laodicea at which the strengthening Roman Church commanded, "Christians must not Judaize by resting on the Sabbath, but must work on that day."

There followed a terrible struggle between those who obeyed God's Word and those who followed man-made traditions. The Church in the Wilderness was known by many names but we most often refer to them as the Waldenses, or "men of the valleys". The "brothers" of the Waldenses were known as Albegenses, Vaudois, Leonists, and Lollards.

Their history is very ancient. Some mistakenly believe that Peter Waldo started the Waldenses, but he cannot accept that accolade. Although Waldo was a wonderful Christian who gave his fortune to help the poor and spread the gospel, he was not the founder of the Waldenses. That honor goes to Vigilantius – the man who spoke against the heathen practices introduced by Jerome and other early Roman leaders. The Waldenses upheld God's Word during Europe's many years of spiritual darkness. As Rome got bolder in apostasy the Waldenses resolved to more firmly uphold the truths of the Bible.

The college at Bobbio trained powerful evangelists who brought the gospel to those living in superstition and ignorance. Early Waldenses bravely spoke out against the changes being brought into Christianity by the leaders of the Roman Church. At the Council of Frankfort in AD 794 the Waldensian pastors refused to obey Rome's decree to worship images. By publicly rejected the authority of the strengthening papacy the Waldenses made themselves the enemies of Rome.

Like the early Apostolic church, God blessed the Waldenses with strong leadership. Perhaps the biographies of a few Waldensian heroes will help you better understand their beliefs and the courage it took to uphold them. One of their early heroes was Claude of Turin [800s]. The prince of Turin heard of Claude's deep spirituality and invited him to be his bishop, or head pastor.

Claude arrived to find the city of Turin full of shocking evils. Stealing, image worship, superstition, and other wrong practices were found everywhere. Claude immediately began a reformation among his parishioners. When discussing idol worship he said, "If a man ought not to worship the works of God, much less should he worship and reverence the works of men." He condemned reverence for the cross by preaching, "God has commanded us to bear the cross; not to pray to it" (*Truth Triumphant* p. 223). Claude showed how foolish it was for Christians to adore the cross and yet not also worship the manger, fishing boats, trees, thorns and lances - all of which were connected to Christ. He also spoke out against pilgrimages, which were starting to gain prominence as people sought human ways to gain favor with God. Claude's straightforward sermons helped people see the danger in blindly following tradition.

Another Waldensian hero was Henry of Lausanne, who died around 1148. He taught Scripture in a simple and powerful way that brought conviction of sin. Henry wrote a book that exposed many false doctrines coming into the Roman Church. That little volume caused an uproar in Rome. The pope quickly enlisted the help of a trusted warrior for the papacy, Bernard of Clairvaux (1090 – 1153).

Years earlier, Bernard of Clairvaux had earned the confidence of Rome by working to disrupt the Celtic Church. His strategy back then had been to indoctrinate Irishmen with Romish doctrine then send them home to their native Ireland to confuse and interrupt the work done by the followers of Patrick. Now the Catholic Church hoped Bernard would again use his cunning to undermine the Waldensian Christians.

Under the direction of Bernard it was arranged to put Henry of Lausanne to death. Here, in Bernard's own words, were the reasons this godly man should die: "How great are the evils which I have heard and known that the heretic Henry has done and is daily doing in the church of God! A ravening wolf in sheep's clothing is busy in your land, but by our Lord's direction I know him by his fruits. ... Churches are regarded as synagogues, the sanctuary of God is said to have no sanctity, the sacraments are not thought to be sacred, feast days are deprived of their wonted solemnities. ... The voice of one heretic has put to silence all the prophets and apostles" (*Truth Triumphant* 240).

Doesn't that sound like the same line of reasoning that the High Priest used against Jesus? The Jewish leaders had no reason to put Jesus to death so they accuse Him of disregarding their rituals and man-made laws. Because He would not accept their traditions and authority the Sanhedrin demanded Christ's death. Caiaphas is quoted in John 11:50 as saying, "It is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not."

Bernard of Clairvaux also worked to silence the faithful voice of Arnold of Brescia (c 1100 – 1155). A deeply spiritual man, he preached in Switzerland, Germany, France and southern Italy opposing transubstantiation, infant baptism and prayers for the dead. Although he was a vocal supporter of a democratic style of ministry he vehemently attacked the union of church and state. Many wealthy and influential men heard Arnold's teachings and gladly supported him. The Roman Church became alarmed at their diminishing influence. Bernard demanded that Arnold's books be burned. However, the majority of people ignored Clairvaux's order.

Emboldened by the teachings of Arnold of Brescia, the citizens of Rome demanded change. They called for a return to civil government with elected rulers who answered to the people rather than being controlled by the dictates of the pope. In the ensuing tumult the pope, fearing for his safety, fled Rome in 1146.

During the resulting political instability Arnold arrived in Rome. The people warmly welcomed Arnold and applauded as he took over the leadership of the government. He immediately separated church affairs from civil business and re-established the Roman senate as the ruling power.

Arnold, from his position of influence, had the opportunity to instruct the people in Biblical truth. He opened the scriptures and showed the contrast between loyalty to God's Word and obedience to the traditions of men. As truth illuminated darkened minds people joined God's true church in great numbers. However, truth's triumph didn't last long. Soon the exiled pope and the emperor joined forces to unseat Arnold and regain control of Rome. Eventually Arnold was burned at the stake and his ashes were thrown into the Tiber River. However, the Roman Church did not find it as easy to get rid of his influence. Today the Waldenses hold Arnold in high esteem and attribute Switzerland's independent spirit to his religious and political teachings.

Peter Waldo was another well-known hero of the Church in the Wilderness. He was a wealthy merchant from Lyon, France. As he preached the Word of God he dreamed of bringing the Bible to the common people in their language. Around 1160 or 1170 he translated the New Testament into French, then used his considerable wealth to place it in the hands of ordinary citizens. This was something unheard of. The people had been taught that the Bible was only for the priests and educated men. They now eagerly welcomed the chance to read the Scriptures for themselves.

The manuscripts Peter Waldo translated were based on the Latin Itala rather than the Latin Vulgate. Those who read Waldo's uncorrupted Bible were protected from the errors of the papacy. And there was another far-reaching effect. Many years later great reformers like Wycliffe, Martin Luther, William Tyndale and others were inspired to translate the Bible into their common languages. People around the world now read the Holy Scriptures in their own languages thanks to the farsightedness of the Waldensian hero, Peter Waldo.

Not only did Peter Waldo's Bible translation anger the Roman Church, but he further infuriated the papacy by identifying it as the "man of sin" and the "beast" of the Apocalypse. Waldo's adherence to the unvarnished truth brought swift reaction from Rome. He was forced to flee relentless enemies who pursued him from Lyons to northern France and eventually into Bohemia. While exiled in Bohemia he won many converts to Christ. When Roman armies pursued the faithful Bohemian Christians, they fled to the valleys of northern Italy and joined the Church in the Wilderness. There, amid the protection of towering mountains, they worked to spread and preserve truth.

During Reformation times the French reformer, William Farel, visited the Waldensian valleys. There he was shown hand-copied Bibles based on Waldo's translation. Delighted, he persuaded the Waldenses to translate the whole Bible into French and give it as a gift to the fledgling Reformation church in France. Just as Noah's ark preserved his family through a world-wide flood, God used the Waldensian people to protect the Holy Scriptures through all the persecutions of the Dark Ages.

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“And speaking of Bible translations,” Mr. Dell laid down his book, “I just watched an excellent documentary by Adullam Films. It was entitled “A Lamp In The Dark: The Untold History of the Bible”. It highlights the individuals who were instrumental in preserving our Bible as we now have it. Since *Heroes of the Faith* doesn't deal with very much Reformation history, you will find it an important chronicle of how God kept a pure Scripture to this day.”

“I'm learning lots of new things,” commented Hannah. “I'm really glad you are our teacher this quarter.”

“The pleasure is all mine, I can assure you,” Mr. Dell gave a formal bow to his class as he dismissed them.

B.G. Wilkinson, *Truth Triumphant: The Church in the Wilderness* (Teach Services, Brushton, New York, 1994) Chapter 15, 16

J.A. Wylie, *History of the Waldenses* (Pacific Press Publishing Assoc., Mountain View, California, 1977)

Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy* (Pacific Press Publishing Association, Nampa, ID, 1971) Chapter 4

*A Lamp In The Dark: The Untold History of the Bible* (<http://www.adullamfilms.com>)

Daniel Foucachon's paper on the Waldenses. On pages 21, 22 he gives a quote of Inquisitor Reinerus Sacco writing to the pope about Waldensian heresy in which he says the Waldenses' history is much more ancient than Peter Waldo. ([http://www.fouchachon.com/Huguenots\\_Waldensians.pdf](http://www.fouchachon.com/Huguenots_Waldensians.pdf))