

WHO WERE THESE "TERRIBLE HERETICS"?

Waldensians (Latin: Waldenses) – a heretical group of traveling Christians in the eyes of the Catholic Church a movement of preachers that originated in southern France in the 12th century and spread to northern Italy, Germany, the Czech Republic, and Spain, although persecuted by the Inquisition, he achieved even Hungary and Poland. It is an awakening, many of whose ideas were only realized by the Reformation.

The city of Lyon, the ancient and wealthy capital of Gaul, occupied an important position in the early Middle Ages. place on the map of Western Europe. It was one of the most important stages on the road leading from the northern lands to the Mediterranean ports and Italian cities. Crowds of pilgrims passed through it to Rome or Jerusalem. In addition, the city was one of the centers for organizing the Crusades. Namely In Lyon lived a wealthy merchant named Peter Waldo, who left a bright trace in the dark Middle Ages. in the panorama of Christianity.

Knowledge about this personality is so scarce that it is impossible to write a detailed biography.

Valdo left no manuscripts, no portrait of himself, nor do we know the place and time of his birth and death, nor do we know anything about his education, character, and almost nothing about his family.

Even his surname is not entirely clear. Latin sources call him Valdo, Valdesius, Valdensis.

According to one source, he was married, had two daughters, lived a quiet life, and no one even suspected that he would become the initiator and leader of one of the greatest "heresies" of the Middle Ages. A turning point that radically changed his life, took place between 1170 and 1173. Once, while listening to passages from the Holy Scriptures being read in church, he wanted to get to know the truths of the Gospel better and turned to two priests, Stephen Anza and Bernard Idros, to have them translate the Bible for him into an understandable, native language.

language. Priests translated the Gospels and fragments from the church fathers for a considerable sum of money writings. It is believed that Waldo was converted while listening to a biblical story read in church about a rich young man whom Jesus called to follow. The words "distribute to the poor all that you have"

"If you have, you will have treasure in heaven, then come and follow me," he understood directly. Valdo sold out his estate, leaving only a small part to his wife and daughters, whom he entrusted to the monastery.

Interestingly, Valdo did not follow the traditional path — he did not close himself in a monastery or retreat to quiet life in the countryside, but remained in the city. The basis of the change of government was not the pursuit of ascetic perfection, but obedience to the words of the Gospel. For the Waldenses, poverty was not an end in itself, they simply wanted to demonstrate to the local clergy that their

The Christianity represented, based on the riches of this world, is not in line with the teachings of Jesus and the Bible.

In the first weeks after Valdas's conversion, his neighbors thought he had gone mad. One of the documents records Valdas's words: "You think I have gone mad, but I am not. As the Gospel says, it is impossible to serve God and Mammon, and today I have been freed from

"The power of Mammon." When he began to openly distribute alms to the poor and sell his house

household items, his wife complained to the local bishop. He ordered Valdo to eat with his wife every day. However, day after day, the reborn merchant "destroyed" his property. Historical sources testify that in 1173. from May 27 to June 22. twice a week he distributed the money he received to the poor, and on August 15. Valdo no longer had any property.

Then he gathered

a group of like-minded people and friends who traveled two by two throughout France, preaching the Gospel.

At first, the Waldenses did not even consider separating from the church; on the contrary, they wanted to unite in spiritual society that would serve the church. The preaching of Waldo and his followers was the main reason for their separation from Rome, because the Catholic clergy, of course,

could not allow the Gospel to be freely preached by the lips of the laity. The preaching of the Gospel was essential to them. They believed that only the "poor in spirit" had the right to proclaim salvation in Christ to the world. Neither the vestments of a bishop, nor the ordinations of the clergy, nor scientific theological speculations, in their opinion, gave authority to carry out the apostolic ministry.

mission. The Archbishop of Lyons forbade Waldo from reading and explaining the Holy Scriptures in public. However the Waldenses continued to preach, believing that God himself had called them to do so and that they should listen to Him rather than to men. Waldo had to choose between—or openly confront the church, or to receive permission to preach from the Pope himself.

He sent a messenger to the Pope, giving him a copy of the Gospel, which had just been translated into the Romance language, and a request to be allowed to preach. The Pope appointed a special commission to investigate the matter. It decided that the Waldenses were too straightforward and uneducated a people to be allowed to read and interpret the Holy Scriptures freely.

In 1176, at the Third Lateran Council, Pope Alexander III praised Waldo's vow of poverty (this is how the pope understood the principles of poverty promoted by the Waldenses), but limited the preaching of the Word: Waldo could preach only with the permission of the local clergy. At the Lateran Council of 1179, a group of Waldo's disciples were received and heard. The English bishop Walter Mapp, who had been in contact with a meeting with the Waldenses, recorded these meetings in his travel notes, entitled "On the Arbitrariness of the Palace": "<.>The presiding officer ordered me to put a question. I addressed them (i.e. the Waldenses) with the traditional question: 'Do you believe in God the Father?' – 'We believe'. – 'And God the Son?' – 'We believe'. – 'Do you believe in the Holy Spirit?' – 'We believe'. Then I asked: 'Do you believe in the Mother of Christ?' They answered: 'We believe', and the whole group began to laugh." The council called them heretics, and the pope expelled them home, forbidding them to preach without the bishop's permission.

In 1180, at the Synod of the Bishop of Lyon, in the presence of papal legates, Waldo was required to sign the so-called Confession of Faith, i.e., a declaration of obedience to the church.

The document. Waldo signed the formal document, but added his own words to the prepared text: "We have distributed all our possessions to the poor, that we may become poor, <.> we have promised to observe the teachings of the Gospel as commandments." In 1184, the Waldenses were viewed as heretics, and the Inquisition began to persecute them. In the documents of the latter we read: "Full of pride, they dare to preach the Gospel in the streets and squares, relying on the many companions they send there." The Waldenses themselves spoke differently about themselves: "So that our thoughts may not be ruled by love wealth, by the grace of God we seek to devote ourselves to prayer and preaching; according to the Lord's command, as laborers sent to gather the harvest, or as preachers sent among the people, we want to attract and bring people back to repentance, continuing the work that the Lord gave to the 70 students".

Waldo and his followers were not theologians and did not seek to comment on biblical texts, they simply told people about their experiences and invited them to follow in their footsteps. The conviction,

That men and even women without education could apostolate was revolutionary in those days.

By asserting that the word of God and the Holy Spirit could work through every believer, Waldo broke with the traditional view that only bishops could preach. The official church could not criticize the content of the Waldensian sermons, but opposed their very right to act, stating that laymen could not preach. Laymen could only work and pay

The church tithe. Waldo finally severed ties with the church, and was therefore cursed by the bishop, and later by Pope Lucius III, and expelled from the city along with other preachers of poverty. The street where Waldo's family house was located was soon called The Cursed Street.

The further fate of Peter Waldo remains a mystery. In 1215, the Fourth Lateran Council condemned the Waldensian teachings. However, the movement grew and expanded rapidly. XII – XIII

In the 16th century, the number of Waldensian followers reached several tens, or perhaps several hundred thousand, and this was a huge number, considering that Europe at that time was not densely populated. Another thing that was completely new for that time was the first attempt to in the history of the church to translate the Holy Scriptures into the native language. Peter Waldo translated the Bible (the entire The Waldenses, adhering to the principle that the Holy Scriptures could be interpreted completely freely and independently of any authority, rejected everything that did not follow directly from the words of the Savior, and even paid little attention to

The books of the Old Testament. **The words of the Gospels, taken literally, were the only guide for their spiritual and moral life.** Of the Waldensian works that have survived to our days, two stand out: "On the Antichrist" and "On the Differences between the Old and New Testaments."

The first action of the antichrist includes any turning people away from the Savior, their attraction to church rituals, etc. (e.g., infant baptism). In the second work

The advantage of the New Covenant over the previous one is emphasized: "The Old Law brings a curse on every barren womb, while the New advises, as far as possible, to preserve virginity. The Old Law forbids false oaths, while the New stands against any oath in general."

Based on the surviving sermons and the protocols of the inquisitors, the essential theses of the Waldensian teaching can be identified:

- 1. The Bible is the only authority for faith and hearts;**
- 2. services must be held in the native language;**
- 3. The sacrifice of the mass has no value in the eyes of God, He hates it;**
- 4. indulgences are nonsense and have no basis in Holy Scripture;**
5. prayers in a foreign language (i.e. Latin) are meaningless to many;
- 6. The veneration of saints canonized by the Pope is idolatry; they must be removed from altars;**

- 7. The supreme bishop is Christ. The Roman Church is not the Church of Christ. It must be distinguished from the papacy. Rome is Babylon, drunk with the blood of martyrs;**
- 8. all Christians can preach the Gospel;**
- 9. Masses for the dead are disgusting nonsense;**
- 10. Children who die unbaptized are not condemned;**
- 11. The mass is a blasphemy that has taken the place of the Lord's Supper;**
- 12. Sins must be confessed to God. One can also confess them to a layperson who has such a the same power of pardon as the Pope; <**
- 13. All believers are priests and kings and participate in the government of the church.**

The Waldenses were particularly close in spirit to the Reformation, for they sought to know the truth from its very source and to separate the teaching of Christ from human traditions. They inevitably encountered opposition from Roman Catholicism, for they revealed that the fundamental principles of the latter were as far from the teaching of the Savior as the scribes and Pharisees were from Christ. A century later

The Waldensian movement was still active, and in the 13th and 14th centuries the inquisitors were not always able to distinguish them from the Albigenses (or Cathars), another powerful medieval sect. reformist movement.