

Faith of Our Fathers

I. Introduction

The Church in the Wilderness is the connecting link between apostolic Christianity and God's people today. There were Christian people in many places during this long period of history who possessed churches, colleges, mission stations, and theological schools; who followed closely and adhered steadfastly to the beliefs and practices delivered by the apostles to the saints; and who possessed and preserved the original Scriptures given to the church in the first century. These people constitute the Church in the Wilderness. This is a conception which is not generally



held. The title, Church in the Wilderness, is taken from the Bible prophecy of Revelation 12 describing the woman who fled into the wilderness. The woman is the church. The title clearly shows that it was not the popular or predominant church. These faithful believers held high the banner of truth, and withstood the encroachments of apostasy. Their fortunes varied, for at times they possessed many churches, famous schools, and distant mission stations, while in other ages they suffered from poverty and dire persecution. The great missionary work of this church is little known, its sufferings have been overlooked, and its heroes unsung. In this article is presented a short summary of the most fundamental doctrines they held in common, the precious heritage which it has bequeathed to modern times. For a much more in depth study, we recommend you read "Truth Triumphant" available on-line in pdf format at historyinfo.net.

Let it be known that we do not present this material to you as proof for or against any doctrine. The Word of God is the only infallible guide, but rather we present this that it will awaken in you a desire to earnestly search out these subjects from the scriptures to know just what is truth.

II. Goths

The Goths were foreseen in prophecy, symbolized by one of the "three horns" of Daniel 7 that were to be plucked up by the roots. Ulfilas (311-383) was the missionary to the Goths (Visigoths in the West, Ostrogoths- in the East).

1. Held the Scriptures as the Only Infallible Authority

Truth Triumphant 141.0

Since the Goths had no written language, Ulfilas was compelled to invent an alphabet. He reduced Gothic sounds to writing. The first great piece of literature which the people of these vast nations, lying north of the empires frontiers, looked upon was the Bible.

Truth Triumphant by B.G. Wilkinson 143.1

Ulphilas was called to take his choice. He decided not to walk with the allegorizers. The Gothic Bible which he gave to the nations he converted follows in the main the received text transmitted to us by the learned Lucian.

Note: The Church in the Wilderness, like the Protestants of the time of the Reformation rejected the corrupted, Jerome's Latin Vulgate, and translated into their own tongues the "Received Text" (Representing 99% of all Greek texts)

2. Were non-Trinitarian & Stigmatized "Arians"

Truth Triumphant 142.3

Because Ulphilas belonged to the church which had refused to accept the extreme speculations concerning the trinity, there was a gulf between his converts and those who followed Rome.

Truth Triumphant 141.3

Although the Goths refused to believe as the church at Rome did and as a consequence have been branded as Arians, Romanism actually meant little to them. In fact, it meant little to Ulphilas, their great leader. The Goths refused to go along with the mounting innovations being introduced into the church of the Caesars, which church quickly branded any competitor as Arian.

Truth Triumphant 92.0

An erroneous charge was circulated that all who were called Arians believed that Christ was a created being.

Truth Triumphant 92.footnote

It is doubtful if many believed Christ to be a created being. Generally, those evangelical bodies who opposed the papacy and who were branded as Arians confessed both the divinity of Christ and that He was begotten, not created, by the Father. They recoiled from other extreme deductions and speculations concerning the Godhead.

3. Sabbath-keepers

Truth Triumphant 143.2, 3

Like Patrick, and Columba, Ulphilas and the Gothic nation, including the great Theodoric (AD 454-526) observed the 7th Day Sabbath.

4. Believed in Separation of Church and State & Liberty of Conscience

The Two Republics by A.T. Jones p. 537 (Theodoric was king of Italy, an Ostrogoth, from A.D. 493-526.) (Taken from Milman's 'History of Latin Christianity,' book 3, chap. 3, par. 8 from the end)

In a letter to the emperor Justin, A.D. 524, Theodoric announced the genuine principle of the rights of conscience, and the relationship that should exist between religion and the State, in the following words, worthy to be graven in letters of gold:

To pretend to a dominion over the conscience, is to usurp the prerogative of God. By the nature of things, the power of sovereigns is confined to political government. They have no right of punishment but over those who disturb the public peace. The most dangerous heresy is that of a sovereign who separates himself from part of his subjects because they believe not according to his belief.

5. Sub-Summary

- Maintained the authority of the true Bible
- They were Non-Trinitarian
- Kept the Sabbath (& Commandments of God)
- They believed in separation of Church & State and Liberty of Conscience

These people, stigmatized in history as "Arians", because they were non-trinitarians, were the ones with the pure Bible. They also were the people who kept the commandments of God. They were the True Church.

III Celtic Churches

Patrick (360/389?- 461?) was a missionary to Ireland
Columba (521-597) was an Irish missionary to Scotland

1. Held the Scriptures as the Only Infallible Authority

They held to the authority of the Scriptures above any earthly authority as can be seen from their observance of the Seventh Day Sabbath and rejection of the non scriptural theory of the trinity.

The Bible text used was the "Itala", which predated the corrupted Latin text of Jerome. Truth Triumphant 28

2. Non - Trinitarian

Truth Triumphant 93.0 (Stokes, Ireland and the Celtic Church, p. 12)

Usually when controversy rages, there are three parties. In this instance there were the two extremes, one of which was led by the papacy, the second by the Arians, and the third party was the middle of the road believers whose viewpoint was the same as Patrick's." (Catholics falsely claim Patrick as theirs and that he believed in the trinity)

3. Sabbath Keeping-Churches

General Distribution of Sabbath Keeping Churches (Christian Churches of God) Web article
The Catholic historian Bellesheim (*History of the Catholic Church in Scotland*, Vol. 1, p 86) comments regarding the Sabbath in Scotland.

We seem to see here an allusion to the custom observed in the early monastic Church of Ireland, of keeping the day of rest on Saturday, or the Sabbath.

James C. Moffatt (*The Church in Scotland*, p. 140) says that:

It seems to have been customary in the Celtic churches of early times, in Ireland as well as Scotland, to keep Saturday, the Jewish Sabbath, as a day of rest from labour. They obeyed the fourth commandment literally upon the seventh day of the week.

Flick (*The Rise of the Mediæval Church*, p. 237) says that:

The Celts used a Latin Bible unlike the Vulgate (R.C.) and kept Saturday as a day of rest, with special religious services on Sunday.'

In Scotland until the tenth and eleventh century it was asserted that:

They worked on Sunday but kept Saturday in a Sabbatical manner ... These things Margaret abolished.' (Andrew Lang *A History of Scotland from the Roman Occupation*, Vol. I, p. 96; see also *Celtic Scotland*, Vol. 2, p. 350).

The Scots were Sabbath-keepers up until Queen Margaret, according to Turgot (*Life of Saint Margaret*, p. 49)

It was another custom of theirs to neglect the reverence due to the Lord's day, by devoting themselves to every kind of worldly business upon it, just as they did upon other days. That this was contrary to the law, she (Queen Margaret) proved to them as well by reason as by authority. 'Let us venerate the Lord's day,' said she, 'because of the resurrection of our Lord, which happened on that day, and let us no longer do servile works upon it; bearing in mind that upon this day we were redeemed from the slavery of the devil.' The blessed Pope Gregory affirms the same.'

Skene also comments (*Celtic Scotland*, Vol. 2, p. 349) regarding Queen Margaret and her activities against Sabbath-keeping in Scotland:

Her next point was that they did not duly reverence the Lord's day, but in this latter instance they seemed to have followed a custom of which we find traces in the early Church of Ireland, by which they held Saturday to be the Sabbath on which they rested from all their labours.'

Lewis (*Seventh Day Baptists in Europe and America*, Vol. 1, p. 29) says:

There is much evidence that the Sabbath prevailed in Wales universally until AD 1115, when the first Roman bishop was seated at St. David's. The old Welsh Sabbath-keeping churches did not then altogether bow the knee to Rome, but fled to their hiding places.'

Sabbath-keeping enjoyed a revival in Elizabethan England.

In the reign of Elizabeth, it occurred to many conscientious and independent thinkers (as it previously had done to some protestants in Bohemia) that the fourth commandment required of them the observance, not of the first, but of the specified 'seventh' day of the week. ' (Chambers *Cyclopedia*, article Sabbath, Vol. 8, 1837, p. 498; quotation blurred).''

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IV. *The Inhabitants of the Valleys, and Passes*

Vigilantes (364-408) was a missionary to the people later known as the "Inhabitants of the Valleys", Vaudois, Waldenses, Albigenses, etc.

Great Controversy 64.2

The faith which for centuries was held and taught by the Waldensian Christians was in marked contrast to the false doctrines put forth from Rome. Their religious belief was founded upon the written word of God, the true system of Christianity. But those humble peasants, in their obscure retreats, shut away from the world, and bound to daily toil among their flocks and their vineyards, had not by themselves arrived at the truth in opposition to the dogmas and heresies of the apostate church. Theirs was not a faith newly received. Their religious belief was their inheritance from their fathers. They contended for the faith of the apostolic church,--"the faith which was once delivered unto the saints." Jude 3. "The church in the wilderness," and not the proud hierarchy enthroned in the world's great capital, was the true church of Christ, the guardian of the treasures of truth which God has committed to His people to be given to the world.

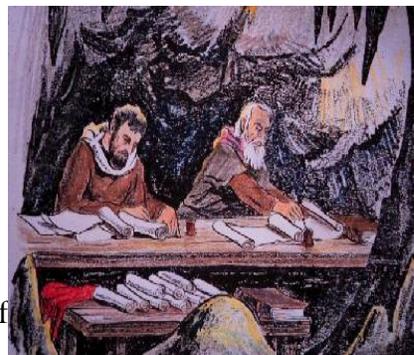
1. Held the Scriptures as the Only Infallible Authority

Truth Triumphant 70

The Bible text used was the "Itala", which predated the corrupted Latin text of Jerome.

Great Controversy 68.1

The Vaudois churches, in their purity and simplicity, resembled the church of apostolic times. ***Rejecting the supremacy of pope and prelate, they held the Bible as the only supreme, infallible authority.*** Their pastors, unlike the lordly priests of Rome, followed the example of their Master, who "came not to be ministered unto, but to minister." They fed the flock of God, leading them to the green pastures and living fountains of his holy Word. Far from the monuments of human pomp and pride, the people assembled, not in magnificent churches or grand cathedrals, but beneath the shadow of the mountains, in the Alpine valleys, or, in time of danger, in some rocky stronghold, to listen to the words of truth from the servants of Christ. The pastors not only preached the gospel, but they visited the sick, catechized the children, admonished the erring, and labored to settle disputes and promote harmony and brotherly love. In times of peace they were sustained by the free-will offerings of



the people; but, like Paul the tent-maker, each learned some trade or profession by which, if necessary, to provide for his own support.

2. Two Distinguishing Religious Tenets – Sabbath Keeping & Non Trinitarian

General Distribution of Sabbath Keeping Churches (Christian Churches of God) Web article
Thus the establishment of the Waldensian college in Milan, is a natural extension of this orientation. Dugger and Dodd go on to quote Mosheim as saying:

In Lombardy, which was the principle residence of the Italian heretics, there sprung up a singular sect, known, for what reason I cannot tell, by the denomination Passaginians. ... Like the other sects already mentioned, they had the utmost aversion to the discipline and dominion of the Church of Rome; but they were at the same time distinguished by two religious tenets which were peculiar to themselves.

*The first was a notion that the observance of the Law of Moses, in everything except the offering of sacrifices, was obligatory upon Christians; in consequence of which they ... Abstained from those meats, the use of which was prohibited under the Mosaic economy, and celebrated the Jewish Sabbath. The second tenet that distinguished this sect was advanced in **opposition to the doctrine of three persons in the divine nature.*** (Eccl. Hist., Cent 12, Part 2, Ch. 5, Sec. 14, p. 127: as quoted by Dugger and Dodd, emphasis retained).

Often the only record we have of God's faithful people and what they believed is from the record of the accusations of their enemies. This record is often exaggerated and written in such a way as to prejudice the reader.

Dugger and Dodd go on to say:

That the Cathari did retain and observe the ancient Sabbath, is certified by Romish adversaries. Dr. Allix quotes a Roman Catholic author of the twelfth century, concerning three sorts of heretics - the Cathari, the Passaginians, and the Arnoldistae. Allix says of this Romish writer that

*He lays it down also as one of their opinions, 'that the law of Moses is to be kept according to the letter, and that the **keeping of the Sabbath ... and other legal observances, ought to take place. They hold also that Christ, the Son of God, is not equal with the Father, and that the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, these three ... are not one God and one substance; and as a surplus, to these errors, they judge and condemn all the doctors of the Church and universally the whole Roman Church .**' ... (Eccl. Hist. of the Ancient Churches of Piedmont, pp. 168-169, cf. Dugger and Dodd, pp. 227-228).*

The Patarines (named thus after a place called Patara), Berengarians, Subalpini, Petrobrusians, Henrician, Arnoldists, Cathari, Waldensians (inhabitants of the valleys), Insabbatati (called that because they kept the Sabbath), Passaginians (inhabitants of the passes), Albigenses, Paulicians, etc. were different branches of the one Church in the Wilderness. Truth Triumphant p. 234, 247, 260, 263,

3. Sub-Summary

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V. *Seventh Day Adventists*

By the time of the great Protestant Reformation, these groups that kept the Sabbath and rejected the idea of a trinity were close to annihilation. It would be expected that there would be some group though small and insignificant, that would take the reformation far enough to go back to the foundation of the great apostasy that developed the mammoth system of deception, the Catholic Church. For the purpose of bringing to light and restoring the truth after the dark ages, to prepare a people to stand in the time of trouble and be ready for Jesus to come, God raised up the Seventh Day Adventist people.

1. *Held the Scriptures as the Only Infallible Authority*

Youth's Instructor July 24, 1902 "Search the Scriptures." This is the word that comes to us from Christ. Had it been essential for us to search the Fathers, he would have told us to do so. But the Fathers do not all speak the same thing. Which of them should we chose as a guide? There is no need for us to trust to such uncertainty. We pass by the Fathers to learn of God out of his word. This is life eternal, to know God. O, how thankful we should be that the Bible is the inspired word of God! Holy men of old wrote this word as they were moved by the Spirit.

The commentaries written about the word do not all agree. God does not ask us to be guided by them. It is his word with which we have to deal. All can search this word for themselves, knowing that the teaching of this precious book is unchangeable. The opinions of human beings differ, but the Bible always says the same thing. The word of God is from everlasting to everlasting.

God did not leave his word to be preserved in the memory of men, and handed down from generation to generation by oral transmission and traditional unfolding. Had he done this, the word would gradually have been added to by men, and we should have been asked to receive the teachings of men. Let us thank God for his written word.

The Bible was not given for ministers and learned men only. The poor man needs it as much as the rich man, the unlearned as much as the learned. Every person, young and old alike, should read the Bible for himself. Do not depend on the minister to read it for you. The Bible is God's word to you. And Christ has made this word so plain that in reading it no one need stumble. Let the humble cottager read and understand the word given by the wisest Teacher the world has ever known; for among kings, governors, statesmen, and the world's most highly educated men, there is none greater than he.

Search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life." To search means to look diligently for something which has been lost. Search for the hidden treasures in God's word.

You can not afford to be without them. Study the difficult passages, comparing verse with verse, and you will find that scripture is the key which unlocks scripture. Those who prayerfully study the Bible go from each search wiser than they were before. Some of their difficulties have been solved; for the Holy Spirit has done the work spoken of in the fourteenth chapter of John: "The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.

2. They Became Non-Trinitarian

Review and Herald, March 6, 1855 J.N. Andrews

The doctrine of the Trinity was established in the church by the Council of Nicea, AD 325. This doctrine destroys the personality of God, and His Son Jesus Christ our Lord. The infamous, measures by which it was forced upon the church which appear upon the pages of ecclesiastical history might well cause every believer in that doctrine to blush.

Review and Herald December 11, 1855 James White

Here we might mention the Trinity, which does away the personality of God, and of his Son Jesus Christ, and of sprinkling or pouring instead of being "buried with Christ in baptism," "planted in the likeness of his death." But we pass from these fables to notice one that is held sacred by nearly all professed Christians, both Catholic and Protestant. It is, the change of Sabbath of the fourth commandment from the seventh to the first day of the week.", , ,

For further documentation see "What did the Pioneers Believe? By Lynnford Beachy

What did they understand to be the definition of the Trinity? Although there are as many descriptions of this strange doctrine as there are individuals that believe it, the dictionary of their day defines it thus:

American Dictionary of the English Language - Noah Webster 1828

Trinity – In Theology, the union of three persons in one Godhead, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

3. Sabbath Keepers

For bible studies showing on this vital topic, see under the heading bible studies link on historyinfo.net.

4. Separation of Church and State & Liberty of Conscience

Desire of Ages 550.6

In matters of conscience the soul must be left untrammelled. No one is to control another's mind, to judge for another, or to prescribe his duty. God gives to every soul freedom to think, and to follow his own convictions. "Every one of us shall give account of himself to God." No one has a right to merge his own individuality in that of another. In all matters where principle is involved, "let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind." Rom. 14:12, 5. In Christ's kingdom there is no lordly oppression, no compulsion of manner. The angels of heaven do not

come to the earth to rule, and to exact homage, but as messengers of mercy, to co-operate with men in uplifting humanity.

VI. *Appeal*

Great Controversy 45, 46

“But there is no union between the Prince of light and the prince of darkness, and there can be no union between their followers. When Christians consented to unite with those who were but half converted from paganism, they entered upon a path which led further and further from the truth. Satan exulted that he had succeeded in deceiving so large a number of the followers of Christ. He then brought his power to bear more fully upon these, and inspired them to *persecute* those who remained true to God. None understood so well how to oppose the true Christian faith as did those who had once been its defenders; and these apostate Christians, uniting with their half-pagan companions, directed their warfare against the most essential features of the doctrines of Christ.

“It required a desperate struggle for those who would be faithful to stand firm against the deceptions and abominations which were disguised in sacerdotal garments and introduced into the church. The **Bible** was not accepted as the standard of faith. The doctrine of *religious freedom* was termed heresy, and its upholders were hated and proscribed.

“After a long and severe conflict, the faithful few decided to dissolve all union with the apostate church if she still refused to free herself from falsehood and idolatry. They saw that separation was an absolute necessity if they would obey the word of God. They dared not tolerate errors fatal to their own souls, and set an example which would imperil the faith of their children and children's children. To secure peace and unity they were ready to make any concession consistent with fidelity to God; but they felt that even peace would be too dearly purchased at the sacrifice of principle. If unity could be secured only by the compromise of truth and righteousness, then let there be difference, and even war.

“Well would it be for the church and the world if the principles that actuated those steadfast souls were revived in the hearts of God's professed people. There is an *alarming indifference in regard to the doctrines which are the pillars of the Christian faith. The opinion is gaining ground, that, after all, these are not of vital importance.* This degeneracy is strengthening the hands of the agents of Satan, so that false theories and fatal delusions which the faithful in ages past imperiled their lives to resist and expose, are now regarded with favor by thousands who claim to be followers of Christ.”

Jude 1:3

Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.