

# (Christian History) 8. the Need for Reformation & the Pilgrim Church

by David Guzik

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*The sermon discusses the need for reformation in the Roman Catholic Church, highlighting the corruption, nepotism, and immorality of the Popes, as well as the abuse of power and torture used by the Inquisition.*

**Scripture:** Acts 10:34

**Topics:** "Church Reformation", "Biblical Authority"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the need for the Reformation and the problems within the Roman Catholic Church. He emphasizes the importance of the Bible in transforming lives, using the example of Constantine who had a life-changing experience after receiving a copy of the four gospels and the letters of Paul. The speaker also mentions the existence of pockets of true believers throughout history, known as the Pilgrim Church, who held onto their faith despite the dominance of the institutional church. The sermon highlights the seriousness with which people in the past viewed heaven and hell, as well as the brutal methods used by the Roman Catholic Church to enforce their beliefs.

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## Transcript

In this lecture, we're going to discuss two very important things. One, that will sort of set more of the foundation for our future sessions in discussing the Reformation. We're going to talk about the need for the Reformation, especially as it related to problems in the structure and in the sort of living out of the Roman Catholic Church and system.

Secondly, in this lecture, we're going to talk about what I call the Pilgrim Church. As for where were pockets and areas of true believers throughout the history of church, especially during these periods when the institutional church, which, let's just be honest, it was the Roman Catholic Church, would have been very strong and dominant. Were there true believers anywhere? Well, so first we're going to talk about the need for Reformation.

And this brings us back to the idea of the Great Schism. The Great Schism describes that period of time when the papacy was in exile, right? The papal offices and the Pope himself actually moved from Rome to Avignon, France. And this period lasted from 1378 to 1417.

And that business of moving the papal headquarters from Rome to Avignon, during this time, different political factions, backed by the kings of different nations, recognized first two popes, then three different popes at the same time, as I said before, all excommunicating each other. The Roman faction supported Pope Urban VI. And this was backed by the German emperor, by England, by Hungary, and by Scandinavia.

The Avignon faction supported Clement VII, backed by France and Naples and Scotland and Spain and Sicily. So you can see what a significant division there was in the Christian world. You can just imagine, for this period of time, for what was it, some 40 years, there were essentially these two different popes ruling over these two different factions in the Christian world.

It was a time of great, well, sort of great disgrace for the Roman Catholic Church. I don't think there's any other way you can describe it. So they had these two lines, and then actually a third line was suggested to eliminate the two competitors.

So at one time, there were actually three supposed popes, all at the same time, over the Roman Catholic Church. Well, finally, they called together a council, the Council of Contents. In the year 1414 to 1418, it ended the controversy by deposing all three of the popes.

Each one of the three popes were all deposed, and they elected a new pope, Martin V. The Council of Contents also tried to assert the authority of councils over the pope, and tried to establish regular intervals for the meeting of councils. But its ruling was pretty much ignored by the popes. They were still in charge over the church.

You know, this is a very interesting movement within the church of the medieval times, what's known as the councillor movement. Now, there had been at times certain great church council, right? Such as what? What's the one we talked about so glowingly a few lectures ago? The Council of Nicaea, right? There was really no pope prominent at the Council of Nicaea. This was just sort of a congress of godly church leaders from all over the church getting together and deciding certain issues.

Well, when people saw the disgrace of the papacy, with first the pope moving from Rome to Avignon, and then a second pope, and then on top of that a third pope, they said, listen, the problem is that there's too much power within this one man, the pope, what we need to do is periodically have church councils like they had at Nicaea, and we need to put the pope under the councils. So actually it was a council that solved the Council of Constance, spelled correctly here and not up there on the top, the Council of Constance was actually the one that solved the Great Schism, but as soon as Martin V came up and became the new pope, do you think he submitted himself to the councils? Absolutely not, right? That's just not the way that the popes worked. So this Great Schism showed several things that are important at this stage of the Middle Ages.

It showed, first of all, the absolutely political nature of the office of pope, right? When you have the pope moving the office from one place to another, when you have a second pope, and then a third pope, and the political wrangling back and forth, there's no doubt that it's essentially a political office, and that was widely understood. Secondly, it showed the corruption of the papal office. I mean, how much more could you say that it's absolutely corrupt? The Germans and the English resented it because there was a French pope, because they knew that the pope was in the pocket of the king of France.

Well, why do you think that the other ones didn't like the pope that the English and the Germans put forward? Because they knew that they were in their pockets, right? They knew that it was just a political arrangement. Thirdly, though, it showed the strength of the popes over the councils, and sometimes even over kings, right? In the struggle between pope and councils, the councils never really had much of a chance, because the popes, whenever they could, used their authority to demonstrate that they were higher and had greater authority than the councils themselves. Now, another thing that sort of demonstrated - by the way, wouldn't you agree that this whole mess with the Great Schism, this shows real problems within the institutional Roman Catholic Church.

It's like a warning sign. It's like a flashing light. We need reform.

We need reform. We need reform. Well, then there was a second thing, the establishment of the Inquisition in the year 1478.

Now, it actually began much earlier than that. In the year 1184, Pope Lucius III was concerned about heresy, and he required all bishops to inquire into the beliefs of their people. If a man was found guilty of heresy, he was excommunicated.

It was hoped that he would retract his heresy and return to the church and the church's beliefs. This ended up being the beginning, at least philosophically, for the Inquisition. At the Fourth Lateran Council, Pope Innocent III provided for the state's punishing of heretics and the confiscation of their property.

If the state's police didn't fulfill this role, they could be excommunicated themselves. So, in other words, this is how it would work. The church, such as a bishop or maybe the pope himself, would declare somebody to be a heretic, right? They would examine their beliefs, declare them to be a heretic.

That person would be dealt with, and they would command the civil authorities, you know, the police, the army, whatever. They would command the civil authorities, you go deal with this person, arrest him, put him into jail, give him whatever punishment we see fit, and take all of his property. Now, believe it or not, probably the most damaging part of that-- I shouldn't say the most damaging.

One of the most damaging parts of that whole equation was the take all their property business. Because where do you think the property went when they took it? Well, part of it went to the church itself, right? The other part of it went to those who had a vested interest in prosecuting these cases. If you could be made rich by finding heretics and convicting them, isn't that a pretty good incentive to find heretics and to convict them? Even if they're not such heretics.

Later on at the Synod of Toulouse in 1229, Pope Gregory IX was even more concerned about the rise of heresy, and so they forbade lay people to possess the scriptures. And they began a systematic attack against what they thought was heresy. The investigators and prosecutors were the Dominican friars.

They took a whole section of monks and made them prosecutors and investigators. Prosecutors and investigators--well, persecutors, in fact. They were leaders of the monastic movement that answered directly to the Pope.

So in 1252, Pope Innocent IV authorized torture as a means of gathering information or confessions from suspected heretics. The church would torture but would not execute. For executions, they had to turn those over--they declared guilty--over to the state for execution.

Do you understand what's going on here? They're saying that it's good and it's lawful for the church to actually take people who are suspected of heresy or suspected of some kind of crime against the church and to actually torture them into confessing their crime or revealing their associates. And the church would do this. Now, the church would not execute them.

The church would turn them over to civil authorities for execution. We listen to this and it almost sounds unbelievable to our ears, doesn't it? We wonder, how could such a thing ever happen? But you have to understand, as much as we think it's crazy, this was a world that really believed in heaven and hell. That really believed that as bad as it could be for a person on this earth, it would be far worse for them to go to hell and to take other people with them.

Therefore, that thinking in their mind justified saying, yes, we're going to torture and destroy your body, but we might save your soul from hell in doing it. You know, it's amazing to consider how seriously people took heaven and hell in this day and age. I read a book called *A Distant Mirror* by Barbara Tuchman.

In it, she describes what life was like in Europe in the 14th century, I believe it was. The 1300s, either the 13th or the 14th century. And in her description of what life was like in Europe at that time, she describes what armies would do when they weren't fighting wars.

What an army would do, because there weren't really nation-states so much, right? There were small principalities and dukedoms, the feudal sort of mindset. And so what armies would do when they weren't fighting wars is they would basically go around and pillage and steal and rob towns. And this is what they would do.

They would ride up to a town and they would basically say, OK, here we are, you know, we're an army, we're not doing anything. We're going to come in and steal everything you have and rape all your women and sell some of your children into slavery and kill a lot of your men, unless you guys give us money. And they would go back and forth and negotiate with the leaders of the city for how much money.

They might say, well, you know, we want a thousand pieces of silver. And the leaders of the city would say, oh, we can't give you a thousand pieces of silver. We can give you a hundred.

And the robbers say, well, a hundred, that's out of the question. You know, we'll give you 800. They go back and forth and barter back and forth until they decided on a price.

If they didn't decide on a price, then they would go in there and rape and pillage the town. Now, they have the documents from some of these negotiations preserved, right? They've been preserved in some sort of archive somewhere. And one of the ones that the author in this book, *A Distant Mirror*, called to mind was the negotiation between one of these plundering, non-working armies that was outside of a monastic community.

You know, and basically the demands that were negotiated and that were decided upon was that the monastic community would give them this much money and this many sheep and this many, you know, tunics or whatever. But what they also included in there, and this is what I find absolutely fascinating, every one of those robbers, every one of those, you know, mercenary soldiers, they wanted a letter from the leader of the monastic community absolving them of all of their sins. Now look, here's a group of men who make their living on murder, theft, and rape.

That's what they do for a living. And yet they were concerned about having their sins forgiven and going to heaven. I'm just a way to put it.

They really believed it in that day and age. They really did. And because they believed it so strongly, they justified in their minds, wrongly we would say, absolutely wrongly, they justified in their minds torturing people because they said, Listen, I may torture you and it may be horrible for you.

It may be absolute exquisite torture. But what's better for you, for me to torture your body for five days or for you to be an instrument in sending other people to hell for eternity? You see how they would do the equation? And that's how they justified it in their mind. Anyway, in the year 1478, King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella of Spain asked the Pope for the authority to establish the Inquisition in Spain.

You see, in Spain there were many Jews and Muslims who made half-hearted conversions to Christianity. So in 1492 they expelled all the Jews and Muslims from Spain, but the half-hearted converts remained. The Inquisitor General of Spain was Thomas de Torquemada, a Dominican friar.

His campaign of torture, confiscation, rewards for informants, and execution became infamous. This is what you've got to understand. The Inquisition was not practiced against pagans.

It wasn't practiced against unbelievers. It was practiced against those who at least claimed to be Christians. What made it so horrific in Spain was because there were so many people who just converted out of convenience and they were horribly treated and tortured and it was an awful, awful thing.

Well, that was the Inquisition. Then you move on. Again, another flashing red light that says, Reform.

Reform needed. The other thing that was really necessary was this idea of papal corruption and what you might call the imperial papacy. You know, the Pope acting like an emperor himself.

You see, the Pope soon asserted their authority over any sort of council and began to do what they pleased with their total authority. Pope Pius II issued a papal decree, again, a papal bull, an official document. He issued a papal decree that forbade any sort of appeal to a papal decision and said that the Pope's decisions were final.

The decree was titled Ex Acrobalus and it asserted the Pope's position as the Vicar of Christ. Again, we made the distinction, right? Vicar of Peter, Vicar of Christ, a much more radical thing to claim to be the Vicar of Christ. They said he was the Vicar of Christ who had the power to bind and loose both in heaven and on earth.

The decree also declared that anyone who appealed a papal decision was cursed to hell and could not be helped by anyone except by the Pope himself and that only on his deathbed. So this was one of the strongest statements or declarations of papal authority and power. Let me say that again.

Anybody who doubted or appealed a papal decision was automatically cursed to hell and the only one who could save you from a sure destiny in hell was the Pope himself. You know, the man who wrote this papal bull, Pope Pius II, his career was interesting as an example of the depravity of the Popes in that day. He was born in the year 1405 as one of 18 children to a family that was poor but of noble rank.

He was educated and began working as an assistant to various bishops and cardinals. He had a good instinct for politics and so he was able to side with whoever was in power at the time and he knew how to

ingratiate himself with the church bureaucracy. Though he was eventually appointed a bishop, then he was appointed a cardinal and when he was 53 years old he was selected among the cardinals as Pope.

His sexual immorality was well known. He fathered at least two children and he had many, many mistresses. He openly liked to brag about his ability to seduce women.

He said that his sexual appetite was an old vice and he said, listen, I can't be wiser than Solomon or holier than David so I'll indulge myself with women. He even wrote and published erotic stories and taught young men how to seduce women. He appointed a nephew of his, a cardinal, when he was only 23 and later on he appointed a family friend to the same office of cardinal when the boy was only 17.

Once Pope Pius II excommunicated a man for keeping his hat on in the presence of the Pope. On another time he visited Siena and he met a man named Rodrigo Borgia who even Pius rebuked for his immorality. And notice this man Borgia was so wicked that Pius rebuked him for his immorality.

This man Borgia would give immoral and licentious banquets where women were invited to attend without their husbands. Borgia went on to become Pope Alexander VI who ruled immorally but he was the same Pope who commissioned Michelangelo to sculpt the Pieta. Now again, I want you to get this picture right? Corruption, immorality but yet great artistic accomplishments, right? It's very interesting.

You go to the Vatican today and you see the amazing sculptures. You stare at Michelangelo's Pieta and you say, wow, what an amazing work of art. But then to realize that it was commissioned by a Pope who was so immoral that even Pope Pius II who was immoral himself thought he was off the wall.

And this was really remarkable. In the year 1458 Pius attempted to call another crusade but he had trouble raising the money among the kings of Europe. The Germans opposed his attempt to raise money by establishing what they called a crusade tax.

And when they issued their opposition they pointed out Pius' past of notorious sin. Pius responded with this papal bull Exsacrabalus which condemned any authority a council might claim over a Pope. In the year 1464 he personally led a crusading army against the Turks and he was stricken with fever and he died while he was on the crusade.

Pius wasn't much of a spiritual leader but he was a very cultured man and a good writer. He wrote recognized works of poetry, history, fiction and speeches. One series of his Latin poems is noticed for its influence on 15th century English satire.

In the year 1462 Pius II gave an elaborate celebration to commemorate the coming to Rome of what was said to be the skull of the Apostle Andrew. He fell down prostrate before the relic and he congratulated the skull for coming out of its grave to the remains of its brother apostles. Some of his last words were Pray for me for I am a sinner.

And by the way Pius II is recognized historically as one of the great Popes of the Roman Catholic Church. Pius II asserted that he was the single monarch over all Christians. He said that he received his authority directly from Jesus and all other Christians received their authority from Jesus through the Pope.

He declared himself the prince of all bishops and the heir of the apostles. Well this is an example of the kind of low status. You can see this other flashing light, right? Corruption, reform needed.

And listen, all of Europe saw this. All of Europe knew of the corruption of the Popes. From the year 1415 to the year 1517 when Martin Luther made his famous, you know, nailing of the 95 Theses on the door of Wittenberg, the church door there, there were 10 Popes and most of them were exceedingly corrupt men far more interested in political power than in anything spiritual.

They did nothing for the cause of Christianity except perhaps to propose a crusade to take back the city of Constantinople from the Muslims but even that was motivated by almost pure greed. The nepotism of those times was unbelievable. These men who were supposed to be celibate priests freely had mistresses and wives and their illegitimate offspring were acknowledged without a blush.

They would often make a good place for their sons and nephews by appointing them as cardinals who are second only to the Pope in their office in the church. A church council tried to curb the practice by saying, no, you can only make somebody a cardinal if they're 30 years old, but that was ignored by the Pope. Teenagers were routinely appointed as cardinals and there are even some cases of an 8-year-old and a 7-year-old being appointed as a cardinal.

Now why would they do it? Why would you appoint an 8-year-old as cardinal? Remember what I told you before about the money attached to each office? Well listen, if a bishop's office had money attached to it you can only imagine the money that was attached to a cardinal's office. And so a Pope would appoint his illegitimate 8-year-old son as a cardinal because the money that would come into the office would go to the Pope. You see, like a multi-level scheme a cardinal was appointed over a certain territory and he received a cut of all the contributions essentially they were church taxes that came into his region.

The dollar value of the offices of cardinal and bishop meant that they were offices that would be bought and sold. Routinely the office of bishop was sold to the highest bidder and he would use the income of that office as a means to pay off the purchase price of the office. They say by the time of the Reformation the first thing that the Pope would do every day was call in his financial advisor and decide what church offices they would sell that day.

The Vatican became a place where art and entertainment ruled where popes and cardinals were wealthy and cultured patrons of the arts they entertained prostitutes with banquets and immoral comedies. If you want a good example of the difficulties of those times I want you to look at three notable pre-Reformation popes. These are the three popes that did any amount of ruling.

There were some popes who ruled for very brief periods within this time but these three popes did any amount of ruling before the Reformation. Look at their names. Alexander VI, Julius II, and Leo X. Now what do you notice about these names? These are the kinds of names that emperors would have, right? Alexander the Great, Julius Caesar, Leo like a lion, right? Where are the biblical names? Where are the spiritual names? They're out the window.

Now popes began to see themselves as spiritual emperors but not just spiritual emperors, economic emperors, political emperors. There was tremendous problem and corruption within the papal office. Again, it was like a flashing light that said, Reform, Reform, Reform.

Now that's a pretty dark picture of how the church was, right? So it's fair to ask ourselves where was the true church during these times of great corruption? And the answer is this. There has always existed a church that was outside the official and recognized church. What you might call a believer's church or what some people call a pilgrim church.

And I think it's important for us to consider this. This is taken from that great book by Broadman, I think his name escapes me just at the moment, called *The Pilgrim Church*. And this is what he says.

He says, The true histories of these, he means these true believers outside the formal church, the true histories of these have been obliterated as far as possible. Their writings sharing the fate of the writers have been destroyed to the full extent of the power allowed to their persecutors. Not only so, but the histories of them have been promulgated by those whose interest it was to disseminate the worst inventions against them in order to justify their own cruelties.

In such accounts they are depicted as heretics and evil doctrines are ascribed to them which they repudiated. I want you to notice this. You know, when you go through the history of the church and read about this heretical group or that heretical group, you can't always believe what the official line is.

Right? Some of these groups were right on believers who were slandered and lied about because they didn't fit into the institutional church. Other times, maybe they were sincere true believers that had a few beliefs that were strange or aberrant, sort of like that we saw in the Montanists, but they in no way deserve the scorn and the hatred that the institutional church put upon them. He goes on to say they are called sects and labels are attached to them which they themselves would not acknowledge.

They usually called themselves Christians or Brethren, but numerous names were given to them by others in order to create the impression that they represented many new strange and unconnected sects. It is therefore difficult to trace their history. What their adversaries have written of them must be suspected.

Words from their own lips wrung out by torture are valueless. So again, we have to understand that even in the first three centuries there were numerous bodies of Christians who protested against the growing laxity and worldliness of the church and against this departure from the teachings of Scripture. For example, there were some who were wrongly associated with cults like the Manichaeans.

There were also those who were called Polikins, those who were called Thonrax, those who were called Bogomils or Bulgarians, those who were called Albengenses. These people are examples of groups that were probably right on. It's a little hard to tell from a historical perspective because it was only their victors who were able to write the histories.

But we know some things about some of these movements. For example, in the year 653, a man named Constantine received a man on a journey, an Armenian man who was captured by the Saracens, the Muslims, and was released and was on his way back home. As they spent time together, it was apparent that the Armenian visitor had something precious that he was very excited about.

He had a manuscript with him that contained the four Gospels and the letters of Paul. He ended up leaving those manuscripts with Constantine, who made these writings the focus of his continued study. His life was radically changed by the Scriptures, and he changed his name to Silvanus, who was the companion of the Apostle Paul.

Silas, he said, I want to be like that. So he connected with other believers who didn't like the icon worship and the superstitious nature of the Eastern or the Byzantine church, and therefore he became the target of persecution. For about 30 years, he worked in Armenia and traveled all around the region doing ministry.

By the year 684, his ministry was so effective that the emperor issued a decree against the congregations of believers and against Silvanus himself. The emperor sent a special aide named Simeon to get Silvanus,

and when he found him, he gathered men of his followers, gave them rocks, and commanded them to stone Silvanus to death. When they refused, and again, you refuse to order like that at the risk of your own life, he found one man named Justice, who had been brought up by Silvanus as an adopted son and who had received special kindness from him, and Justice was willing to execute Silvanus, and he did.

Simeon was so affected by this and by the whole scene that he converted and became a follower of Jesus Christ. Now listen, you've got to say, this is just one small story that we know about, but again, what was the key for this man Constantine and what changed his life? It was getting the Bible, right? When he received that copy of the four Gospels and the letters of Paul, it turned his life around. And herein we see one of the greatest crimes of the medieval church was keeping the Bible from the people.

Constantine was different. He got the Bible, he loved it, he taught it, and you can just imagine how many times this same scene was repeated over and over again in the history of the church. There was another leader that we can talk about, a guy named Sergius.

In Armenian he was known as Sarkis. He said of his ministry of 34 years, from the year 800 to 834, he said, I have run from east to west and from north to south preaching the gospel of Christ until my knees are weary. He worked as a carpenter, but he traveled widely preaching, healing divisions, and just plain sharing God's love.

They say that his conversion came about through his being persuaded to read the Scriptures. A believing woman came and asked him, why don't you read the divine Gospels? He said, well listen, only the priests are allowed to do that, not common people like me. She said, listen, God is no respecter of persons, but he desires that everyone be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth.

And he said, listen, or the woman said to him, it's just a trick of the priest to deprive the people of their share in the Gospels. So he read, he believed, and he had a long and effective ministry for Jesus Christ. His letters were widely circulated and greatly valued, and the only way they could stop him was by killing him, and he ended up being cut in two by an axe by his persecutors.

And so again, these men, over and over again, are the testimony of them, and maybe hundreds, I don't know, maybe thousands of them like them, who are unknown to history, appear time and time again in the history of the church. You know, it's claimed that between the years 842 and 867, the zeal of Theodora, this was the wife of the emperor at that time, or the empress as they called her, they said that her zeal and the zeal of her inquisitors brought about the death of a hundred thousand believers who were outside the institutional church. Some of these groups were called the Polychens.

This is an interesting statement. They were prepared to die for their beliefs. This is the baptismal statement of the Polychens.

They would ask them before they're baptized, Art thou then able to drink the cup which I am about to drink, or to be baptized with the baptism which I am about to be baptized? Because they knew something. You see, let's face it, every one of these people were baptized as babies, right? But the Polychens recognized that baptism isn't good enough. I want to be baptized by my own free choice as a sign of my own commitment in following Jesus Christ.

But before they would allow such ones to be baptized, they would ask them this question, Are you ready? Are you prepared? And this would be the reply they would be required to give. They would say, I take on

myself scourgings, imprisonment, tortures, reproaches, crosses, blows, tribulations, and all temptations of the world which our Lord and Intercessor in the Universal and Apostolic Holy Church took upon themselves and lovingly accepted them. So even do I, an unworthy servant of Jesus Christ, with great love and ready will, take upon myself all these until the hour of my death.

Do you understand what a heavy thing it was to be baptized as a Polychen in these days when the institutional church was so strong and so oppressive? Well, later on, you could talk about in the 9th century in Bulgaria, there was a group of people called the Bogomils, a Slav name meaning the friends of God. These people were, again, radical followers of Jesus Christ. One of these leaders was a guy named Basil who through his continuing practice as a physician, ministering to people, earning his living that way, he set a good example and by that he rebuked the lazy lives of so many priests.

Basil was invited to speak to the emperor about these things and when he was alone with the emperor, he spoke to him very freely and passionately about Jesus and about the Christian life. Suddenly the emperor opened a curtain and revealed a scribe that had written down every word that Basil had just said and they used his words as evidence against him. They threw him into prison where he stayed for 8 years refusing to deny the truths that he had told the emperor.

Then he was publicly burnt at the Hippodrome in Constantinople. The emperor's daughter described all of these events with satisfaction. She said that Basil was a lanky man with a sparse beard tall and thin and she said, oh, how the fire crackled when Basil burned and when he turned his eyes from the sight of the flames and how he shook when they took him to the fire.

You see, in those persecutions that followed after the Bogomils, the princes laughed at their low origins and how they looked like peasants and commoners and how they had the habit of bowing their heads and mumbling something with their lips before they would die. Well, of course, they were praying. They were seeking God in their great hour of need.

One of these, a guy named Cosmas, this Bulgarian presbyter, writing at the end of the 10th century, he describes Bogomils as worse than horrible demons and he denied their belief in the Old Testament or the Gospels and said they prayed no honor to the mother of God nor to the cross. They reviled the ceremonies of the church and all church dignitaries and they call orthodox priests blind Pharisees, say that the Lord's Supper is not kept according to God's commandment and that the bread is not the body of God but ordinary bread. And to most of that, we say, right on.

This business about not believing in the Old Testament or the Gospels is probably bogus, right? But everything else on the list is probably true. They pay no honor to the mother of God. They were disgusted by the Mary worship of their times nor to the cross.

They were disgusted by this veneration of the crucifix and how people worshipped it in an idolatrous way. They reviled the ceremonies of the church and all church dignitaries. They call orthodox priests blind Pharisees.

Well, they were probably right. They say that the Lord's Supper is not kept according to God's commandment and that the bread is not the body of God but ordinary bread. Yeah, right on! They didn't believe in transubstantiation or other such strange doctrines.

You see, these people, though they were criticized, they were godly, godly people. Then there were other people such as Nestorians. The Nestorians were Eastern Christians who were apart from the Eastern Orthodox Church.

They were basically orthodox in their belief but they did differ over how the human and divine natures of Jesus combined. We wouldn't agree with Nestorian theology on that point. But listen, I think that as much as I can tell, they were real believers.

Real believers with a little bit of a goofy doctrine. But what really got them into trouble was not their strange belief about how the human and divine natures of Jesus combined. What got them into trouble was that they wanted to swim outside of the stream of the institutional church.

But they had a very, very broad missionary work reaching indeed all the way to China. They were a radical, radical group of people. Matter of fact, when Robert Morrison in the 1900s was learning Chinese in London before going out for the London Missionary Society for his great work of translating the Bible into Chinese, he was shown and studied a Chinese manuscript that had been found in the British Museum and that had contained a harmony of the Gospels, the Book of Acts, the Pauline Epistles, and a Latin-Chinese dictionary, supposedly the work of an unknown Roman Catholic missionary of the 16th century.

In the Chinese annuals, after a long description of the Ming Dynasty, this comment is made, a native from the great western ocean came to the capital who said that the Lord of Heaven, Jesus, was born in Judea and is identical with the old country of Caesar in Rome, that this country is known to the historical books that have existed since the creation of the world for the last 6,000 years, that this is beyond the dispute of the sacred ground of history and the origin of all worldly affairs. This stuff came from the Nestorian missionary work in China so many hundreds of years ago. So there arose movements of genuine Christians in Europe.

Sometimes they were influenced by one another, sometimes they were influenced by earlier groups, sometimes they arose from within the Roman Catholic Church as people got right with God. Prominent among such teachers were guys like Pierre de Bruys and Henry, and then another group known as the Albigensians. The Albigensians were very, very wonderful believers.

Among the people they called the Albigensians the good men. And there's general testimony to the fact that their manner of life was an example to everybody, especially in they lived in the same kind of way that Francis of Assisi did, with simplicity and godliness, and it was a real contrast to the self-indulgent lives of the clergy. They were called the Albigensians because the name was taken from the region of Albi, a district where many of them, but not all of them, came from.

These people were inquired by Pope Innocent III, and then another one, Raymond VI, who ruled in province, and of the other rulers and prelates of the south of France, that they were heretics that should be banished. They were reluctant to do so, but eventually the Pope declared a crusade against heretics of religion in 1209. For example, this is how they carried out the persecution against people like the Albigensians.

They said, after the capture of another place, La Miniver, about 140 believers were found, women in one house, men in another, engaged in prayer as they awaited their doom. De Montfort had a great pile of wood prepared and told them to be converted to the Catholic faith or mount the pile. They answered that they owed to papal or priestly authority only that to Christ and His Word.

They owed nothing to papal or priestly authority, only that to Christ and His Word. The fire was lighted, and the confessors, without hesitation, went into the flames. Now, is that radical? But again, this is what I want you to know.

Even though it is not commonly known, even though it's not commonly talked about, even though it's oftentimes lost to history, there were true believers, existing, living, loving God, spreading the gospel, and very, very often suffering death for their faith throughout this time when it seems so dark in the medieval church. One of the men, an inquisitor named Renanerus, he died in 1259. This is the record he left of his investigation of these kind of sects.

He said, Concerning the sects of the ancient heretics, observe that there have been more than 70, all of which, except for the sects of the Manicheans and the Arians and the Runcarians and the Leonists, which have infected Germany, have, through the favor of God, been destroyed. Do you see what he says? There's been all of these ones, and almost all of them have been destroyed. Among all these sects, which either still exist or have formerly existed, there is not one more pernicious to the church than the Leonists.

And this is for three reasons. He's going to describe to you the reasons why the Leonists were so dangerous, so bad, and so worthy of destruction. Okay? What are the three reasons? Number one, the first reason is because it has been of longer continuance, for some say that it's lasted from the time of Sylvester, other from the time of the apostles.

Well, I imagine it probably lasted from the time of the apostles, right? I mean, so that's his first argument. It's been around a long time, which isn't really an argument at all. Secondly, the second reason, because it is more general, for there is scarcely any land in which this sect does not exist.

Do you see how widespread they were? You see, there were true believers all over the place, but they're basically lost to history. And the third reason? The third reason is because while all other sects, through the enormity of their blasphemies against God, strike horror into their hearers, this of the Leonists has a great semblance of piety, inasmuch as they live justly before men and believe every point well, respecting God together with all the articles contained in the Creed, only they blaspheme the Roman church and the clergy, to which the multitude of the laity are ready enough to give credence. Do you see what he's saying? He's saying there's nothing wrong with their doctrine, they just don't like the institutional Roman Catholic church, and that is why they must be destroyed.

You know, the more you study it, the more you look at it, you just realize what an amazing thing it was to have this pilgrim church throughout the centuries. And you have other groups, you have the Waldensians and their great works, you have works all over Europe where they did their great work and where they honored God. Again, for the most part, lost to history.

So we really can't give a proper history of these movements and oftentimes the only thing we have to say about them we know from their accusers. But we know enough to say that God's genuine witness, that God's church did not perish from the earth, even in the days when the Roman Catholic church looked so corrupt. I mean, of course we know that there must have been some true believers within the Roman Catholic church.

But there were probably, by far, many, many more true believers in these groups outside of the Roman Catholic church in what we might call the believer's church or the pilgrim church. It's a wonderful testimony to us about how God keeps His witness alive and what Jesus said was true, that He would build His

church and that the gates of hell would not prevail against it.

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