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### The Albigenses of Southern France

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# REVIEW and Herald

★ Facing Your Fears

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★ A Layman's Thousandth  
Convert

—Page 14

*Among those who bore witness to their convictions  
in the dim light of medieval times were*

## The Albigenses of Southern France

By DANIEL WALTHER

*Professor of Church History, Andrews University*

WITHIN the past 25 years a number of important documents written by the Albigenses have been found. Specialists in medieval history and many others seem fascinated by these discoveries, which have been mentioned in the daily press and over television.

For Seventh-day Adventists the Albigenses have a particular interest. They are referred to on several occasions in *The Great Controversy*, along with their contemporaries the Waldenses, though the two groups were not in doctrinal agreement. Waldenses and Albigenses often debated on basic concepts. Yet both belonged to the underground "church of the wilderness"; Rome accused both of heresy; both considered Rome as the foe of true Christianity. They were under constant scrutiny by the Inquisition, which flourished almost 800 years ago. The Albigenses were most conspicuous of the numerous sects of that time. The politically astute Pope Innocent III used various methods to meet the distressing and menacing onslaught of these heterodox groups.

In their first and most dramatic phase the Albigenses of southern France had a brief existence, from about 1160 to 1244. They were contemporaries of the famed troubadours, some of whom may have been at least sympathetic to Albigensian beliefs. The troubadours were the singing minstrels of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, who went from castle to castle to entertain the aristocracy. Several troubadours criticized the Catholic Church and were,

for that reason at least, considered in sympathy with unorthodox ideas.

The locale of the Albigensian episode was Occitania, in southwest France. Later on, this area was termed Languedoc, the "language of Oc" (*oc* meaning "yes"). The area, called Midi ("the south"), was graced by a charming civilization whose intellectual and political center was Toulouse. Incidentally, southwestern France was not part of the kingdom of France at that time.

### Sources of Information

Much of the information concerning the Albigenses came, of course,

from their foes. Their views were often described by the Inquisition in a hostile manner, and some of their practices were presented in a distorted way. For this reason the reports of what they believed and practiced are not always reliable. Though many of their writings were destroyed by the Inquisition, some have been preserved.

In the nineteenth century only a few Albigensian documents were available. Some important fragments of their writings were published by Von Döllinger. We also have several apocryphal writings which they used

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Several hundred Albigenses held out in the castle of Montségur for nearly a year. Its eventual fall marked the end of effective resistance on the part of the Albigenses.

human vitality and energy is basically aggressive energy. As Christians, our task is to see that the love of God directs this energy along noble lines.

Luther's friend and colleague, Melancthon, fell desperately ill. He had grown despondent over a decision he and Luther had been forced to make. Upon visiting his friend, Luther found him in a semiconscious condition and unable to take food. It looked as if this were the end. After praying, Luther turned to his friend and taking his hand said, "Be of good cheer, Philip, you will not die. Give no place to the spirit of sorrow, and be not your own executioner, but trust in the Lord, who can slay and make alive again, can wound and bind up, can smite and heal again." From that point on, Melancthon began to recover.

When we face our fears courageously we find protection against our frustrations. How often men stand starved and shamefully alone, and become their own executioners while they let the love of God pass by! Each

of us is a candidate for God's help, but how often we go carelessly on without accepting His abundance of love and grace. "For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind" (2 Tim. 1:7).

When Christianity is the center of the life, it provides love, power, and a sound mind to help a person stand up under the wear and tear of everyday living. To conquer the fear of defeat and inner conflict, avail yourself of the positive force of love. It can eliminate the fear of rejection, ego collapse, or sense of guilt. Why struggle to conquer your fears one at a time? Wrote the psalmist, "I sought the Lord, and he heard me, and delivered me from all my fears" (Ps. 34:4).

The answer is simple, "Perfect love casteth out fear" (1 John 4:18). There is no room for it because love crowds it out.

Are there ever any shadows at night? The long shadows of fear are everywhere, but they are quickly dispelled by the light of love.

jects of his particular concern. Even with them, however, the pope at first used mild means, such as persuasion and preaching. Then he sent able legates, one of whom—Peter de Castelnau—was assassinated, allegedly by heretics or their sympathizers. Finally he ordered the crusade of 1209 against them.

At that time the south of France, with its brilliant Provençal civilization and prosperous economy, was independent of the king of France. It was mostly under the control of local counts of Toulouse and Carcassonne. The king of France, who for a long time had wanted to annex that region, sent a ruthless soldier, Simon de Montfort, allegedly to root out the heresy, but really to conquer the area. By 1229 the king of France had gained a victory of sorts, but the heresy was far from extinguished. It was the Inquisition, instituted at that time and entrusted to Dominic, that eventually liquidated the Albigenses.

The most dramatic event, which ended the first and most important phase, was the fall of the castle of Montségur. That castle, spectacularly situated on a high, rocky peak, belonged to the Count of Foix, a protector of the "heretics" whose daughter had recently been made "perfect." Several hundred of the leading Albigenses held out in that stronghold for almost a year. They were finally betrayed, and on March 16, 1244, these leaders—about 200 of them—were massacred in a huge fire. This episode has been described in scores of recently published essays.

After the fall of Montségur the Albigensian movement lost much of its momentum. Scattered groups here and there went underground and witnessed in the secrecy of their homes or workshops. There were local resurgences, especially at the beginning of the fourteenth century. That particular episode is recounted by a lengthy text now preserved in the Vatican library and published in three volumes in 1965.

#### Albigensian Teachings

The teachings of Catharism were mainly concerned with the problem of evil. Since its beginning the Christian church has endeavored to solve this distressing problem. To the orthodox Christian the existence of evil and its origin cannot easily be explained. One of the rational methods that has appealed to some is to solve the question of evil by a dualistic concept.

Dualism interprets the universe by postulating the existence of two prin-

## THE ALBIGENSES OF SOUTHERN FRANCE

(Continued from page 1)

and which have recently been re-examined. The most complete of the Albigensian sources available in the nineteenth century was a New Testament version in the local Provençal language. There was also a *Ritual* in the local language of Provence, published at the same time as the New Testament. This *Ritual* described basic church practices, such as the period of examination of conscience and the most important institution in Albigensian worship, the *consolamentum*. This consisted of a laying on of hands by means of which the Holy Spirit was presumably conferred upon a "perfect" one.

Basic sources contain the actual interrogations in court trials, questions the Inquisitors asked, and answers given by the suspects. One of these collections, containing 250 volumes, is in the manuscript division of the National Library in Paris.

Since 1939 a number of Albigensian writings have been discovered. By 1965, 14 basic documents had been published, and hundreds of essays written about them. The most important Albigensian document, written by one of their bishops and found in 1939, is entitled *Book of Two Principles*. The manuscript, which dates from about 1250, was

found in the library of Florence. It describes the basic teachings of the Albigenses, how they explained the origin of evil, why the Christian should reject this material world, and how they attempt to prove the existence of two eternal and opposing principles.

Soon after A.D. 1000, groups known as Cathari ("pure ones") appeared in various parts of Western Europe, notably in France. It was especially in southwestern France (the Languedoc) that the Cathari had their strongest roots. The Albigenses were the Cathari of southern France. They resided primarily in important cities such as Toulouse, Carcassonne, and Albi, which possibly gave its name to the Albigenses, the Cathari of that area.

Almost from its inception the movement found sympathetic endorsement by the nobility. The *bons hommes* ("good men" as they were often called) impressed also the masses. The rapid spread of the movement alarmed Pope Innocent III, who took every conceivable means to quell the rapid spread of the Albigenses and other sects.

He treated the Waldenses rather mildly, but the Albigenses, whom he considered most dangerous, were ob-

ciples such as light and darkness, spirit and matter, good and evil, God and Satan. Philosophical dualism holds that mind and matter are distinct. Metaphysical dualism teaches that good and evil are the outcome of separate first causes. Theological dualists hold, as in the early church, that in the incarnate Christ there were not only two natures, but two persons.

Theological dualism was partly of non-Christian origin and infiltrated Christian thinking almost from its beginning. Its best-known form is found in the ancient Persian religion, especially in its later form known as Zoroastrianism. That system conceived of an eternal opposition between the principles of good, personified by Ormazd, and the principle of evil, by Ahriman.

Under the influence of Persian teaching some dualistic elements found their way into Jewish apocalyptic writing. The Qumrân texts refer to the "sons of light" as opposed to the "sons of darkness."

The best known of all dualistic systems that have appeared in the Christian church was Manicheism, one of the most persistent heresies. Early influential leaders, such as St. Augustine at first, were Manicheans. The Manicheans did not—any more than the Persians—believe that there were two separate gods. They believed, rather, in two basic principles irreconcilably opposed to each other. From the Manicheans of the third century, dualism went through successive phases until it reached the Albigenses of southern France, the Paulicians in the eighth century and the Bogomils of the tenth century forming two of the links.

All dualists agreed that the creation of this world could not have been the work of the good God, who is "spirit." The true God has revealed Himself through Jesus Christ, who was considered the principal link between the God of spirit and man. Dualism is not easy to define, even though numerous essays continue to be published about it. That the Albigenses were dualists is not in doubt; the question is, To what degree?

In an endeavor to unite the various schools of thought among the Albigenses a council was held at Toulouse in 1167. At that council a bishop who had come from the Balkans united the believers in teaching and organization.

The Albigenses were divided into two main groups, the *credentes*, or believers, and the *perfecti*, or perfect. In order to become "perfect" a believer had to remain under observation for some time and to receive instruction on the meaning of the basic

rites. If acceptable, he was received among the "perfect" ones by the imposition of hands, the *consolamentum*, by which the Holy Spirit was imparted. From that moment on the "perfect" one had to abstain from eating flesh in all its forms, including eggs, milk, and cheese. Fish was not considered meat, and there was no prohibition to partaking of wine. The "perfect" ones had to live in absolute chastity. The disdain of the world was so great that some of them practiced suicide. The so-called *endura* consisted in prolonged fasting, which often caused death.

From a doctrinal standpoint the Albigenses were not considered orthodox either by Protestants or Catholics. Yet Protestants have often considered the Albigenses among their spiritual ancestors, as an important link in the "church in the wilderness."

The question is sometimes asked, How can we accord the Albigenses a place among evangelical Christians

since they were dualists? It should be remembered that many persons and movements of the past whom we honor as heroes of the faith were not theologically correct on every point. This is true even of the great leaders of the Protestant Reformation. We honor them because in a time of relative darkness they found and were loyal to certain great principles of truth. No, the Albigenses did not teach what we believe. But they carried out their God-appointed task at a time when the Church of Rome was endeavoring ruthlessly to impose its system of error. Like the Waldenses, the Albigenses opposed Rome by espousing a way of life they believed to be right.

In spite of their erroneous views with regard to Creation and the problem of evil, the Albigenses deserve a place in God's great "cloud of witnesses" who gave their lives so that the Word of God might shine forth in liberty and glory.



## The Unfinished Ride

Part 2

By HELEN KELLY

WHEN THE motor of the car began to hum, Jim studied the dashboard, planning his next move. At a safe distance from the automobile, Jim's classmates were lined up like a row of spectators at a parade.

He would probably have time to go around the block before mom came out. That would prove the point he was trying to make anyway, even if he didn't come back with the bread. He knew how to handle a car. Nothing to it.

Placing his foot hard on the brake pedal, Jim released the emergency brake. Now into "drive," he reminded himself. He didn't dare check to see whether the boys were still gawking. He must think only of his driving.

He pulled himself up so his back was as straight as a rod. Then he could see over the steering wheel. His foot came off the brake pedal and pressed down on the accelerator. Easy now, he steadied himself.

The car pulled away from the curb and started slowly down Arlis Drive. Jim smiled as he pushed down harder on the gas. Like a horse that had been spurred, the car quickly responded, picking up speed. Those fellows will really have something to talk about now, he thought.

Grasping the steering wheel tightly with both hands, Jim moved it back and forth, trying to keep the car on a straight

course. Houses and trees whizzed by. Lake-wood Avenue was just ahead. This was where he wanted to turn.

He jerked the wheel harder. Obedient to his steering directions, the vehicle veered toward the curb and headed for a tree near the corner of Arlis and Lake-wood.

"The brakes! The brakes!" Jim screamed, slamming his foot on the pedal. The car came to a jarring halt with the frightening sound of crushing metal and shattering glass.

"Just lie still, boy; you'll be all right." The man who leaned over him patted his arm lightly. Jim moaned. His head and chest ached so. Where was he anyway?

From where he lay on the sidewalk he could see flames licking up from the horribly smashed front end of what must be the car. Then he realized what had happened.

He heard a siren's wail coming closer. His lips felt as puffy as grapefruit halves. No one had to tell him what the salty-flavored substance in his mouth was.

Within minutes he was on a stretcher in the back of a police ambulance. At the hospital his banged-up face was cleaned and stitched. His head and chest were X-rayed. Later in the day the doctor said that after a few days in the hospital and a few more resting at home, Jim should be able to return to school.

"He's lucky to be alive," was the traffic officer's comment.

Mom made an appointment with the dentist, for now Jim had several missing teeth. And then there was the matter of the tickets charging him with reckless driving and driving without a license.

Meanwhile, the demolished car had been towed to the junkyard. Never again would it take Jim to school—or to the store for a loaf of bread.

(Concluded)