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Christian History Made Easy Participant Guide

12. Session 6: God's Work Goes On (AD 500–1300)

The medieval church was full of corruption, making it easy to assume the gospel was lost. This session argues the opposite: God kept working through missionaries, renewed monastic orders, street-preaching mendicants, and Scholastic scholars. No age is too dark for God to preserve and spread his Word.

Key takeaways

- Missionaries like Boniface, Lioba, Cyril, and Methodius carried the gospel to unreached Germanic and Slavic peoples.
- Monastic orders were renewed when reformers pushed back against wealth—Cistercians even refused to dye their robes to avoid any show of riches.
- Mendicants (traveling 'beggar' preachers who owned nothing) moved preaching from the pulpit to the streets and into the common language.
- Peter Waldo and his 'Poor Folk of Lyons' (Waldensians) kept preaching Scripture without church permission; declared heretics, many were burned, beginning centuries of persecution.

- Scholasticism tried to reconcile Christian theology with Greek philosophy. Thomas Aquinas, its greatest figure, leaned on Aristotle but kept his thinking anchored to Scripture and church tradition.
- God's orderly creation can be recognized even by non-believers, but pagan philosophy alone cannot lead anyone to know God fully.

Passages worth keeping

"We must obey God rather than men."

Peter Waldo's reply when threatened with excommunication for preaching Scripture.

"All that I have written seems to me nothing but straw, compared to what I have seen."

Aquinas after a worship experience—learning matters, but knowing God surpasses it.

How it connects

The persecuted Waldensians and the martyr Boniface both show a calling to proclaim Christ valued above life itself—echoed centuries later in missionaries like Jim Elliot.

Scripture referenced

- **John 5:17** -- The Father is always working, even when rejected—God works in dark ages too.

- **Acts 5:29** -- Waldo's defense for preaching without church authorization.
- **Romans 10:14-17** -- Faith comes by hearing; why proclaiming Scripture matters.
- **2 Timothy 3:16-4:2** -- Inspiration of Scripture tied directly to faithful preaching.
- **Colossians 1:15-17** -- Christ holds all creation together, grounding the world's orderliness.