

Dr. Kevin E. Frederick, Waldensians, Session 11, The Lord Protector – Oliver Cromwell (1640-1658) Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Briefing Document, 4) Study Guide, and 5) FAQs

1. Abstract of Frederick, Waldensians, Session 11, The Lord Protector – Oliver Cromwell, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

This lecture by Dr. Kevin Frederick explores **Oliver Cromwell's significant role in the history of the Waldensians** during the mid-17th century. It details **Cromwell's rise to power as Lord Protector of England** and his deep Puritan faith, which fueled his response to the **massacre of the Waldensians in 1655**. The lecture outlines how **Cromwell, influenced by John Milton**, utilized diplomatic pressure and rallied Protestant Europe to advocate for the persecuted Waldensians against the Duke of Savoy. Ultimately, it argues that **Cromwell's intervention, driven by his religious convictions, was crucial for the Waldensians' survival** during a period of intense persecution.

2. 13 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Frederick, Waldensians, Session 11 – Double click icon to play in Windows media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link there (Church History → Waldensians).



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3. Briefing Document: Frederick, Waldensians, Session 11, The Lord Protector – Oliver Cromwell

Briefing Document: Oliver Cromwell and the Waldensians

Executive Summary:

This briefing document summarizes Dr. Kevin Frederick's lecture on the pivotal role of Oliver Cromwell, the Lord Protector of England, and his secretary John Milton in the preservation of the Waldensian people during the severe persecution they faced in the mid-17th century. The lecture highlights Cromwell's rise to power, his strong Protestant convictions, and his decisive intervention following the 1655 Easter Massacre of the Waldensians by the Duke of Savoy. Driven by his belief that the Waldensians represented the true ancient Christian church, Cromwell, with the intellectual and rhetorical support of Milton, galvanized Protestant Europe to exert diplomatic pressure on the Duke of Savoy, ultimately contributing to the Waldensians' survival. The lecture also provides context on the English Civil War, the Counter-Reformation, and the contrasting aspects of Cromwell's leadership.

Main Themes and Important Ideas:

1. Oliver Cromwell's Rise to Power and Character:

- Cromwell was a powerful military and political leader, becoming Lord Protector of England in 1653 after leading Protestant forces to victory in the English Civil War against King Charles I.
- His personality was complex, exhibiting both "cruelty and benevolence." He was a brilliant military strategist and ruthlessly suppressed Catholics in Ireland, yet he also advocated for religious tolerance for dissenting Protestants later in his rule.
- He was a devout Calvinist and imposed strict Puritanical discipline on his army.
- Despite being urged to take the crown, he repeatedly refused, emphasizing his commitment to democratic principles and Puritanism.
- Frederick describes him as "the single most remarkable man" responsible for the execution of Charles I, a "single most remarkable event in the course of English history."

1. The Persecution of the Waldensians in the Mid-17th Century:

- Following the Black Plague and leadership vacuum, Swiss Reformed pastors from Geneva revitalized the Waldensian communities, leading to increased tensions with the Catholic Duke of Savoy.
- The Duke of Savoy increasingly suppressed Waldensian freedoms granted by the Treaty of Cavour (1561).
- In the early 1650s, Waldensians were forced into a "Waldensian Ghetto."
- The 1655 Easter Massacre: 4,000 Savoyard troops, including Irish Catholic soldiers seeking revenge against Cromwell, infiltrated Waldensian homes under false pretenses and, on April 12, 1655, brutally slaughtered thousands of Waldensian men, women, and children.
- The report submitted to Cromwell detailed horrific atrocities, including burning people alive, mutilation, rape, impalement, and throwing babies from mountains.

1. Cromwell and Milton's Response to the Massacre:

- Upon receiving news of the massacre, Cromwell and his secretary, John Milton, acted swiftly.
- Milton, who had studied the Waldensians and believed they represented the "ancientest of Reformed churches," played a crucial role in shaping the Protestant response.
- Milton wrote strongly worded decrees to Protestant leaders across Europe (Sweden, Denmark, Holland, Switzerland, Transylvania), urging them to provide moral and material support and apply diplomatic pressure on the House of Savoy.
- He also penned a "stinging and vitriolic indictment" against the Duke of Savoy and the famous sonnet on the massacre in Piedmont: *"Avenge, O Lord, thy slaughtered saints whose bones lie scattered on the Alpine mountains cold."*

1. Diplomatic and Political Intervention:

- Cromwell dispatched Sir Samuel Moreland as a special envoy to the Duke of Savoy.
- He ordered the report detailing the massacre, *"The Collection of Papers Sent to His Highness, the Lord Protector of the Commonwealth of England..."*, to be disseminated and read in every Protestant parish and shared with European

leaders. This, along with Milton's sonnet, unified Protestant Europe's condemnation.

- Cromwell declared a day of fast, humiliation, and prayer for the Waldensian victims and called for financial relief.
- Milton prepared a powerful Latin speech for Moreland to deliver to the Duke of Savoy, filled with outrage and vivid descriptions of the atrocities: *"Oh, the fired houses which are yet smoking, the torn limbs, the ground defiled with blood. Angels shudder with horror. Men are astounded. Heaven itself seems astonished at the cries of dying men and the very earth to blush."*
- Even France was pressured by England to urge a settlement.

1. **The Outcome of Cromwell's Intervention:**

- The unified and vigorous response from Protestant Europe surprised the House of Savoy.
- While the Duke of Savoy initially delayed negotiations, the intense diplomatic pressure eventually led to a truce in late August 1655. However, Protestant diplomats deemed the truce unsatisfactory for the Waldensians.
- Cromwell, frustrated by the diplomatic limitations, offered the Waldensian refugees resettlement in Ireland, but they refused to leave their homelands.

1. **Motivations and Beliefs:**

- Cromwell and Milton firmly believed that the Waldensians were the "true church" with ancient origins, possibly tracing back to the fourth century AD and the Donation of Constantine (as suggested by Pierre Giles's history).
- They viewed the defense of the Waldensians as the defense of the "true Christian faith itself" and an attack on them as "an attack on the body of Christ itself."
- This deep conviction fueled their passionate and decisive intervention.

1. **Significance and Legacy:**

- Cromwell's forceful leadership and Milton's influential writings created unprecedented Protestant diplomatic unity in defense of the Waldensians.
- Their actions significantly raised the profile of the persecution and the Waldensian cause in Protestant Europe during the Counter-Reformation.

- Frederick concludes that "Without Cromwell and Milton serving as international Protestant advocates for the Waldensians in the late 1650s, their survival as a people would have faced a far more perilous future."
- The lecture also notes the inconsistencies in Cromwell's character, highlighting his brutality towards Catholics while advocating for religious freedom for some Protestants and intervening for the Waldensians. Frederick contextualizes this within the violent backdrop of the Counter-Reformation.

Quotes from the Source:

- "During the brief five years of his tenure as Lord Protector, Cromwell led England towards embracing democratic principles that favored the common person."
- "Cromwell was one of the most remarkable rulers in modern European history, partly due to the fact that he was a powerful military and political leader and partly due to the coercive forcefulness of his personality that created contradictions in his leadership style, which, when carried out, wavered between cruelty and benevolence."
- "No distinction was given to age or gender, not even if there were children... Some hanged from their feet, others torn to pieces. Some slashed and cut, and then salt and pepper poured into their wounds..." (Describing the atrocities of the Easter Massacre).
- "Avenge, O Lord, thy slaughtered saints whose bones lie scattered on the Alpine mountains cold." (Milton's sonnet).
- "Oh, the fired houses which are yet smoking, the torn limbs, the ground defiled with blood. Angels shudder with horror. Men are astounded. Heaven itself seems astonished at the cries of dying men and the very earth to blush." (Excerpt from Milton's speech to the Duke of Savoy).
- "Milton and Cromwell both firmly believed that the Waldensians were the true church, with their origins in ancient times."
- "It was widely believed in their day and time that an attack on the Waldensians was an attack on the body of Christ itself."
- "In its day and time, this level of Protestant diplomatic unity was unprecedented in European history."

- "Without Cromwell and Milton serving as international Protestant advocates for the Waldensians in the late 1650s, their survival as a people would have faced a far more perilous future."

Conclusion:

Dr. Frederick's lecture effectively portrays Oliver Cromwell as a complex and influential figure whose actions, driven by deep religious conviction and the persuasive advocacy of John Milton, played a crucial role in the survival of the Waldensian people during a period of intense persecution. The lecture underscores the historical context of the Counter-Reformation and the significance of this intervention in fostering unprecedented unity among Protestant European nations. While acknowledging the contradictions in Cromwell's character, the lecture ultimately highlights his decisive impact as a "Lord Protector" not only of England but also, in a critical moment, of the vulnerable Waldensian communities.

4. Study Guide: Frederick, Waldensians, Session 11, The Lord Protector – Oliver Cromwell

Study Guide: Cromwell and the Waldensians

Key Concepts and Themes:

- **Oliver Cromwell's Rise to Power:** Understand the key events of the English Civil War, Cromwell's role in the New Model Army, the execution of Charles I, and the establishment of the Commonwealth and Protectorate.
- **Cromwell's Religious Beliefs and Policies:** Analyze Cromwell's Puritanism, his views on religious tolerance (specifically for dissenting Protestants), and his intolerance towards Catholicism.
- **The Waldensians:** Identify who the Waldensians were, their historical context, and their relationship with the Duke of Savoy.
- **The Easter Massacre of 1655:** Detail the events of the massacre, its causes (including tensions with the Duke of Savoy), and the brutality inflicted upon the Waldensians.
- **Cromwell's and Milton's Response:** Examine the immediate reaction of Cromwell and his secretary John Milton to the news of the massacre, including diplomatic efforts, letters, and public pronouncements.
- **International Protestant Response:** Understand how Cromwell and Milton galvanized Protestant Europe to condemn the actions of the Duke of Savoy and offer support to the Waldensians.
- **The Significance of Cromwell's Intervention:** Evaluate the impact of Cromwell's actions on the survival of the Waldensians and the broader context of Protestant-Catholic relations during the Counter-Reformation.
- **Contradictions in Cromwell's Leadership:** Analyze the seemingly contradictory aspects of Cromwell's character and actions, such as his brutality towards Catholics in Ireland versus his advocacy for the Waldensians.

Quiz:

1. What position did Oliver Cromwell hold in England starting in 1653, and what were some general characteristics of his rule?

2. Describe the historical context of the Counter-Reformation and its relevance to the tensions between Protestants and Catholics in Europe, including England.
3. What were the key factors that led to the English Civil War in 1642, and what was Oliver Cromwell's role in the conflict?
4. Explain the events of the Easter Massacre of 1655 that targeted the Waldensians, including the role of the Savoyard troops.
5. How did John Milton, Cromwell's secretary, contribute to the response against the persecution of the Waldensians?
6. What specific actions did Cromwell take in response to the news of the Waldensian massacre, both domestically and internationally?
7. How did Cromwell and Milton view the Waldensians, and why did this perspective motivate their efforts on their behalf?
8. What was the outcome of Cromwell's diplomatic efforts regarding the Waldensians, and what alternative did he offer them?
9. Identify one example of the seemingly contradictory nature of Cromwell's leadership as discussed in the source material.
10. According to the lecture, what lasting impact did Cromwell and Milton have on the Waldensians and the broader European context of the Counter-Reformation?

Answer Key:

1. Oliver Cromwell became Lord Protector of England in 1653. His rule was marked by a move towards democratic principles favoring the common person, but also by a strict Puritanical influence and periods of both benevolence and forceful control.
2. The Counter-Reformation was the Roman Catholic Church's response to the Protestant Reformation, involving internal reforms and efforts to regain lost converts. This period was also marked by military actions and persecution against Protestants by Catholic powers across Europe.
3. The English Civil War erupted due to fundamental disagreements over how England should be ruled, with King Charles I advocating for heavy-handed Catholic rule and facing opposition from the Protestant-controlled Parliament. Cromwell was the primary military leader of the Protestant army.

4. The Easter Massacre of 1655 involved Savoyard troops, including some Irish Catholics seeking revenge, who were quartered in Waldensian homes and then ordered to slaughter the inhabitants on Easter morning, leading to weeks of terror and thousands of deaths.
5. John Milton, a poet and writer, served as Cromwell's secretary and used his skills to write strongly worded letters to Protestant leaders across Europe, rallying support against the Duke of Savoy. He also penned a detailed account of the atrocities and the famous sonnet on the massacre.
6. Cromwell ordered a full report on the massacre, disseminated it across Protestant Europe, dispatched a special envoy to the Duke of Savoy, and called for a day of fasting, prayer, and collection for the Waldensian refugees in England.
7. Cromwell and Milton believed that the Waldensians were the true, ancient church, tracing their origins back to early Christianity. This belief, rooted in their Puritan faith, fueled their conviction that defending the Waldensians was defending true Christianity.
8. Cromwell's diplomatic efforts were ultimately outmaneuvered by the Duke of Savoy, who delayed negotiations. Frustrated, Cromwell offered the Waldensian refugees resettlement in Ireland, though they declined due to their attachment to their homeland.
9. One contradiction in Cromwell's leadership was his brutal suppression of Catholics in Ireland, including massacres, contrasted with his passionate advocacy and support for the persecuted Protestant Waldensians in Italy.
10. Cromwell and Milton significantly raised the profile of the persecution against the Waldensians in Protestant Europe, fostering unprecedented diplomatic unity in their defense. This intervention was crucial for the Waldensians' survival during the height of the Counter-Reformation.

Essay Format Questions:

1. Analyze the key factors that contributed to Oliver Cromwell's rise to power in England and discuss how his personal beliefs and experiences shaped his response to the persecution of the Waldensians.
2. Compare and contrast the motivations and methods employed by the Duke of Savoy in persecuting the Waldensians with Oliver Cromwell's motivations and methods in advocating for them.
3. Evaluate the effectiveness of Cromwell's intervention in the Easter Massacre of 1655. To what extent did his actions provide tangible and lasting benefits for the Waldensian community?
4. Discuss the role of John Milton in shaping the European Protestant response to the Waldensian massacre. How did his writings and diplomatic efforts contribute to the pressure placed on the Duke of Savoy?
5. Examine the complexities and apparent contradictions in Oliver Cromwell's religious and political actions, using his involvement with both the Irish Catholics and the Waldensians as case studies.

Glossary of Key Terms:

- **Lord Protector:** The title held by Oliver Cromwell from 1653 to 1658, serving as the head of state of the English Commonwealth.
- **Puritanism:** A religious reform movement in England that sought to purify the Church of England of Catholic practices and emphasized strict Calvinist principles.
- **English Civil War:** A series of conflicts (1642-1651) between the Parliamentarians (Roundheads) and Royalists (Cavaliers) over the governance of England.
- **New Model Army:** The Parliamentary army during the English Civil War, known for its discipline, religious fervor, and effectiveness, led by figures like Cromwell.
- **Roundheads:** A derogatory term for the Parliamentarians during the English Civil War, often referring to their short haircuts.
- **Cavaliers:** A term initially used pejoratively by Parliamentarians for the Royalist forces, but later adopted as a title of pride by King Charles I's supporters.
- **Counter-Reformation:** The Roman Catholic Church's response to the Protestant Reformation, characterized by internal reforms and efforts to combat the spread of Protestantism.
- **Waldensians:** A Christian religious movement originating in the 12th century in the Cottian Alps, facing periods of persecution due to their theological differences with the Catholic Church.
- **Duke of Savoy:** The ruler of the Duchy of Savoy, which included the region where the Waldensians resided, and who was responsible for the persecution in 1655.
- **Easter Massacre of 1655:** A brutal attack on the Waldensian communities in the Piedmont valleys by the Savoyard troops, resulting in the deaths of thousands.
- **Commonwealth of England:** The republican government established in England after the execution of King Charles I in 1649, lasting until the restoration of the monarchy in 1660.
- **Treaty of Cavour (1561):** A treaty that granted the Waldensians certain freedoms and rights in their region.
- **Huguenots:** French Protestants in the 16th and 17th centuries who faced persecution in Catholic France.

5. FAQs on Frederick, Waldensians, Session 11, The Lord Protector – Oliver Cromwell, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

Frequently Asked Questions: Oliver Cromwell and the Waldensians

1. Who was Oliver Cromwell and what was his significance in 17th-century England?

Oliver Cromwell was a pivotal figure in 17th-century England, rising to become the Lord Protector of the Commonwealth of England in 1653 after leading Parliament's Protestant army to victory in the English Civil War against King Charles I. He was a powerful military and political leader, characterized by his strict Puritanical beliefs and a complex leadership style that blended benevolence towards fellow Protestants with harshness towards his political and religious adversaries, particularly Catholics. His actions led to the unprecedented execution of an English monarch and the establishment of a republic, albeit a short-lived one under his rule.

2. What were the Waldensians and why were they facing persecution in the mid-17th century?

The Waldensians were a Protestant religious group with historical roots predating the Reformation, often considered one of the oldest Reformed churches. In the mid-17th century, they resided in the Cottian Alps under the sovereignty of the Catholic Duke of Savoy. Despite previous periods of relative tolerance, the Duke's policies became increasingly suppressive, influenced by the Counter-Reformation's efforts to eradicate Protestant influence. This culminated in the Duke ordering the restriction of Waldensians to a smaller geographical area and eventually, a brutal military action aimed at their complete removal and the repopulation of their lands with Catholics.

3. What was the "Easter Massacre" of 1655 and how did it impact the Waldensians?

The "Easter Massacre" occurred on April 12, 1655, when Savoyard troops, under the leadership of the Marquis de Pienaise, carried out a pre-planned attack on the Waldensian communities in the Lucerna Valley. This brutal campaign extended for three weeks, resulting in the slaughter of thousands of Waldensian men, women, and children. The atrocities committed were horrific, including burning homes with people inside, impalement, rape, and the murder of infants. This massacre devastated the Waldensian population and threatened their very existence in their ancestral homelands.

4. How did Oliver Cromwell and John Milton become aware of the Waldensian massacre? News of the Easter Massacre reached Geneva, and within three weeks, it had spread to England and Oliver Cromwell. Cromwell, upon hearing of the atrocities, immediately ordered a full written report detailing the events. His personal secretary, the renowned poet John Milton, had already been studying the Waldensians and believed them to be connected to the ancient true church. Eyewitness accounts of the massacre further solidified their conviction and spurred their response.

5. What actions did Cromwell and Milton take in response to the Waldensian massacre? Cromwell and Milton responded swiftly and forcefully. Cromwell dispatched a special envoy, Sir Samuel Moreland, to the Duke of Savoy to protest the atrocities. He also wrote strongly worded decrees to Protestant leaders across Europe, urging them to rally moral and material support and apply diplomatic pressure on the House of Savoy. Milton penned a scathing indictment against the Duke's actions and his famous sonnet, "On the Late Massacre in Piedmont," which galvanized public opinion. Cromwell also ordered a day of fasting, humiliation, and prayer in England to remember the victims and initiated a collection for the relief of the surviving Waldensians.

6. What was the significance of Cromwell and Milton's belief that the Waldensians represented the "true church"? Cromwell and Milton's deep Puritanical faith led them to believe that the Waldensians were not just another persecuted Protestant group but were the direct descendants of the ancient, pure Christian church. This conviction fueled their passionate defense of the Waldensians, as they saw the persecution as an attack on the very essence of Christianity itself. This belief was instrumental in motivating their strong political and diplomatic actions and in rallying wider Protestant European support for the Waldensian cause.

7. What was the outcome of Cromwell's intervention and diplomatic efforts regarding the Waldensians? While Cromwell's initial diplomatic efforts did not immediately result in a fully satisfactory resolution for the Waldensians, his strong stance and the unified pressure from Protestant Europe, largely orchestrated by Cromwell and influenced by Milton's writings, caught the Duke of Savoy off guard. Although the Duke initially delayed negotiations, the sustained pressure eventually led to a truce, though considered inadequate by Protestant diplomats. Despite being outmaneuvered diplomatically in the short term, Cromwell's actions significantly raised the profile of the Waldensian persecution and their cause across Europe, providing them with crucial international advocacy at a critical juncture in their history.

8. How does the story of Cromwell and the Waldensians reflect broader themes of the 17th century? The story of Cromwell and the Waldensians encapsulates several key themes of the 17th century, including the intense religious conflicts between Protestants and Catholics during the Counter-Reformation, the rise of powerful Protestant leaders and nations, and the evolving concepts of religious tolerance and persecution. Cromwell's actions highlight the complex interplay of religious conviction, political power, and international relations in a period marked by significant religious strife and the struggle for religious freedom. His intervention, driven by his Puritanical beliefs and facilitated by his political influence, underscores the vital role that international advocacy played in the survival of religious minorities during this era.