

March 16th

Memory verse

There is no God like thee, in heaven above or on earth beneath. I Kings 8:23

These are the words of Solomon, the wisest man who ever lived,¹ and they are worth learning. Very small children can learn the words in bold and understand that “thee” is like the word “you” but only means one person, never more than one.

Map work

Did you read about the map made by Martin Waldseemüller (c. 1470 – 1520) in the lesson for 9th? This was the first map to call the New World “America” after the explorer Amerigo Vespucci (1451-1512). Martin Waldseemüller died on **16th of March** 1520 but what happened to his wonderful map?

It was completely lost! Even though it had been printed there were no copies anywhere...

Then one day in 1901 a German **cartographer**, Joseph Fischer, was working in the castle library at Wolfegg in Ravensburg. His special interest was in the **Vikings** and their voyages to America and he was actually hoping to find any maps they might have left of their travels. You can see the castle in the picture. He did not find any Viking maps but he did find not one but two copies of Martin Waldseemüller's map that had been bound in one volume by a globe-maker and mathematician from Nuremberg. They had been in the library unrecognised for some 300 years!



You can imagine that this find caused a lot of interest in the USA. Here was the first mention of the word “America” rediscovered. The Americans called Waldseemüller's map their “Birth Certificate”! In 2003 the American Library of Congress was able to buy the volume from Prince Johannes Waldburg-Wolfegg, the owner of the castle, and it is now in the USA.

Watch out for more exciting finds in old libraries coming up in the lessons for 20th and 25th April and 4th September.

Can you draw a map of the world yourself? Try it out now. Get a piece of plain paper and use a pencil to see if you can outline the continents and position them in roughly the correct places without looking in an atlas first. Then check your work against your atlas. It is not at all easy – how near did you get?

Something to read from science history²



On **March 16th**, 1926, in Auburn, Massachusetts, USA, under a cold, grey, snow-laden sky, Robert H. Goddard, a professor of physics, launched the first rocket in the world to be fired by a liquid propellant. This made Goddard's rocket different from the sort you have in your garden fireworks on 5th November. These are powered by a powder which has been known about since ancient times by the Chinese and in Europe since the middle ages.

There was a loud report, flames shot earthwards and a cloud of smoke hid the rocket from view. Then the machine suddenly lifted itself from its stand, seemed to hang still for a moment, and shot with a roar into the air. It rose jerkily, levelled off, and dived to the earth about 60 yards distant, having been in the air for 2.5 seconds with an average speed of 50

¹ Apart from the Lord Jesus Christ himself, of course.

² Adapted from Owen, Evan, *What Happened Today?* Book 1 available on the *Mothers' Companion* flashdrive <https://motherscompanion.weebly.com/>

mph.

Over four years passed before Goddard was ready for his second launching. This time his invention climbed to over 600 metres and reached a speed of 500 mph. The rocket age had begun! For more about Goddard and his rocket see the lesson for 9th June.

A sad tale from history



The words on this monument read: *als catars, als martirs del pur amor crestian.* 16 de març 1244³ What do they mean and where is it?

March 16th 1244 was a sad day for France. Over 210 people were put to death in a massacre that was part of a long campaign or crusade against believers who would not bow to the Catholic Church but wanted to worship, as far as we can tell, in a more biblical way. They are said to have walked quietly to their deaths, needing no stakes or chains to hold them in the huge fire that had been prepared.

These people were Christians who, though they lived in the south of France had had some sort of contact with the Bogomils of the Balkans⁴ and so had heard the gospel – and believed it. They were called Albigenses or Cathars but they never used these words about themselves. They called themselves just “Friends of God.” If you read about them in history books – even most church history books – today you will find them called “dualists” and deniers of the doctrine of the trinity.⁵ It is possible that some of them were. However, we should bear in mind that the way that the Catholic church dealt with any threat to its power was to falsely accuse the dissenters of exactly these heresies and then destroy all their writings. This is what happened to Priscillian⁶ (c.340-c.385) and those who thought as he did. For hundreds of years he was considered to have been a heretic. Then an old document discovered in the late nineteenth century proved that he was not. He was a Christian, he had died for his faith and he had been lied about by his enemies who had destroyed everything he wrote – or so they thought! The Bogomils were treated in the same way much later on and it seems probable that the Albigenses were similarly lied about by their enemies.



This is what John Foxe (1516-1587) in his *Book of Martyrs* says about the Albigenses or Cathars who lived in the part of Southern France call Languedoc:

The Albigenses were a people of the reformed religion.... They were condemned on the score of religion, in the council of Lateran, by order of Pope Alexander III. Nevertheless, they increased so prodigiously, that many cities were inhabited by persons only of their persuasion, and several eminent noblemen embraced their doctrines. Among the latter were Raymond Earl of Toulouse, Raymond earl of Foix, the Earl of Beziers, &c.

A friar, named Peter, having been murdered in the dominions of the Earl of Toulouse, the pope made the murder a pretence to persecute that nobleman and his subjects. To effect this, he sent persons throughout all Europe, in order to raise forces to act coercively against the Albigenses, and promised paradise to all that would come to this war, which he termed a Holy War, and bear arms for forty days. The same indulgences were likewise held out to all who entered themselves for the

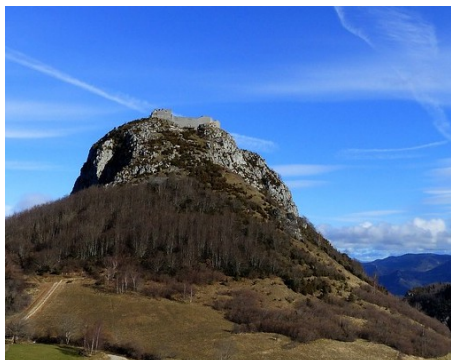
3 Image: By Yeza - Fotografia propia escanjada, CC BY-SA 3.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=2278656>

4 See the lesson for 28th June.

5 See the lesson for 7th November.

6 See the lesson for 4th September.

purpose as to such as engaged in **crusades** to the Holy Land. The brave earl defended Toulouse and other places with the most heroic bravery and various success against the pope's **legates** and Simon earl of Montfort, a bigoted catholic nobleman. Unable to subdue the earl of Toulouse openly, the king of France, and queen mother, and three archbishops, raised another formidable army, and had the art to persuade the earl of Toulouse to come to a conference, when he was treacherously seized upon, made a prisoner, forced to appear bare-footed and bare-headed before his enemies, and compelled to **subscribe an abject recantation**. This was followed by a severe persecution against the



Albigenses; and express orders that the **laity** should not be permitted to read the sacred scriptures.

Fox is here describing the “Crusade” against the Albigenses which the pope **instigated**. They resisted the forces sent against them and continued as best they could without the military protection of the humiliated Raymond. All over the Languedoc the **inquisition** was doing its terrible work of hunting down those considered “heretics”. This included not only the Albigenses but also many Waldensian⁷ Christians who were living in the area, whether as missionaries (many of them were **medical doctors**) or because they had fled persecution in their

homelands. The lord of Château de **Montségur** allowed the Albigenses to make his mountain top fortress their headquarters. You can see where it was perched on a high dome of rock in the picture. But the ruined castle that you can see on the top is not the one which the Albigenses defended. It is the ruin of a later fortress built by those that defeated them.

A royal military expedition to eliminate the Albigensian fortress was sent out with the pope's blessing and the siege began. At first things went well for the Albigenses. In May 1243, the **seneschal**, Hugues des Arcis, led the besiegers. He had about 10,000 royal troops. Inside the fortress were about 100 fighters as well as civilians and refugees. Many of the refugees lived in huts and caves outside the castle on the mountain. The besiegers hoped that water and food would run out but local people helped keep open the supply lines. Reinforcements began to arrive too and were able to get through to the fortress.

The besiegers saw that their tactics were failing and so decided to go for a direct attack. With great difficulty a catapult – some say more than one – was brought up to bombard the fortress. Now those living outside had to flee into the fortress making things inside much more difficult and crowded.

With the aid of the catapults, the massive gatehouse of the fortress came under attack and fell to the besiegers. This enabled them to move the catapults up still nearer and now the fortress was under constant bombardment day and night. Things inside became desperate. The besieged made a final attempt to dislodge the invaders who had got control of the gatehouse but they failed.

The Albigenses surrendered and asked for terms with the enemy. They were told that anyone who wished would be allowed to leave freely – so long as they **renounced** their beliefs. There were 210 who would not do this. They were allowed to have a few days “truce” in which to prepare themselves and they spent these in prayer and fasting. Then when the day arrived, **March 16th**, they walked out freely to their deaths.

Did the truth die with them? No! For years afterwards the inquisition was still finding “outbreaks” of what it called Catharism although the people they put to death called themselves just “brothers” or “friends of God”. On and on it went here, there and everywhere until the dawn of the Reformation in Europe.

7 See the lesson for September 12th for information about the Waldensians.

H E Broadbent⁸ lists some of the instances of this persecution in his history book *The Pilgrim Church* and continues:

These scattered notices, taken from among many, are sufficient to show that primitive churches were widespread in Europe in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, that in some parts they were so numerous and influential as to have a large measure of liberty, though elsewhere they were subjected to the most cruel persecution, and that, although many names were given to them, and there must have been variety of view among so many, yet they were essentially one, and had constant communication and fellowship with one another.

If you read popular literature and websites about the Cathars or Albigenses you will still find that they are imagined to have held the strange doctrines of which they were accused by their enemies. Some people even praise them for having such “wonderful” ideas. But now in the 21st century some secular historians are at last suggesting that the Cathars may have been what we would call just ordinary Christians “friends of God” in fact. *Als catars, als martirs del pur amor crestian*, reads the monument at Montségur, which means in Occitan, the language the Cathars spoke, “The Cathars, martyrs of pure Christian love.”

8 E H Broadbent, *The Pilgrim Church* (1931).