

*George Raphael*  
**HISTORY** *1847.*

OF THE  
**ANCIENT CHRISTIANS**

INHABITING  
**THE VALLEYS OF THE ALPS.**

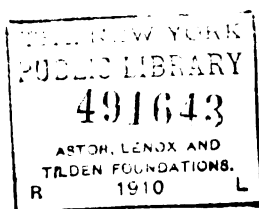
- I. THE WALDENSES.
- II. THE ALBIGENSES.
- III. THE VAUDOIS.

WITH  
AN ESSAY ON THEIR PRESENT CONDITION,  
By REV. ROBERT BAIRD, D.D.

AND  
A RECOMMENDATORY LETTER FROM  
Rev. SAMUEL MILLER, D.D.  
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SEMINARY, PRINCETON, NEW JERSEY.

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1. Waldensian Hist.
2. Albigenses —



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**HISTORY**  
**OF THE**  
**OLD WALDENSES**

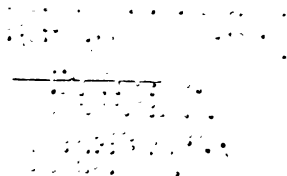
**ANTERIOR TO THE REFORMATION.**

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**By Jean Paul Perrin.**  
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**WITH ILLUSTRATIVE NOTES,**

**FROM MODERN**

**HISTORIANS AND THEOLOGIAN.**



**PHILADELPHIA:**  
**GRIFFITH & SIMON, 114 NORTH THIRD STREET.**

\* REV. G. L. EDDY  
24 APR 1840

THE  
MODERN VAUDOIS.

BY

REV. ROBERT BAIRD, D.D.

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IN the foregoing pages, the reader has witnessed the wonderful dealings of God with His ancient and faithful people, and their remarkable preservation in the return to their valleys. He has been conducted through an expedition perhaps unequalled in ancient or modern history, for the chivalrous spirit displayed by its leaders, as well as for the almost miraculous manner in which their covenant God led His people with a strong arm through the midst of their enemies. We have now seen them resting from the toil of their journey, restored to their beloved country, and permitted, for a season at least, to enjoy unmolested the fruits of their labours.

There are indeed things in the account of this "Glorious return" which seem inconsistent with the spirit of the gospel. In perusing it the reader often needs to take into consideration the circumstances in which these noble men were placed—the age in which they lived—and the unequalled provocations which they had so long endured. Yet it is impossible to review their history, and especially that part which we have just gone over, without being convinced that it was by the guidance of their Heavenly Leader, who, "with a mighty hand, and an outstretched arm, and with great terribleness, brought them into their land," that they were enabled to overcome every obstacle.

Those who are fond of tracing analogies between the ancient and the modern history of the people of God, have noted several singular coincidences between the preceding narration and that of the conquest of the Israelites by Antiochus Epiphanes. Both the Vaudois and the ancient Jews were expelled from their native land, and remained *three years and a half* in the "wilderness," preserving their attachment to their former faith; and both returned after that time and took possession of their country. At both periods the enemies of the Truth were influenced by a desire to establish the abominations of idolatry in the place of a pure religion; and finally, both violently persecuted the children of God.

Analogies no less remarkable are found by others between the events we have witnessed and the prophecy of the Two Witnesses, spoken of in the book of Revelations. These witnesses prophesied for a long period in sackcloth, were slain, and lay dead for three days and a half. They are supposed to have prefigured the Waldenses or Vaudois, and the Albigenes, a great number of whom took refuge in the valleys of Piedmont, in consequence of the persecutions which they endured in the thirteenth

century. Whatever degree of probability may be attached to these parallels, it is certain that the analogies referred to are very striking.

Honourable mention is made in history of the services rendered by the Vaudois to their prince, Victor Amadeus, in his battles against the French, not long after their return. They were formed into a separate military body, and officers of their own religion were appointed over them. Particular notice should be taken of their successes in the valley of Pragela, which were among the most striking scenes of the campaign of 1694, when a regiment was given to Henri Arnaud. In 1706, when the French, under the Duke of Orleans, were in possession of Turin, Victor Amadeus, driven from his capital, took refuge among his Waldensian subjects in the valley of Rora, where he was nobly defended by the inhabitants of that valley; and as a token of his gratitude, he presented, on his departure, a silver goblet to the family of Durand-Canton, by whom he had been received in the kindest and most hospitable manner.\* It was in this valley of Rora that, about fifty years before, a most shameful persecution of its pious inhabitants took place.

It might be supposed that, after having undergone such protracted persecutions—which they had repaid with kindness and loyal fidelity—the Vaudois would have been suffered to enjoy in peace the home which they had so dearly won, at least during the reign of Victor Amadeus. This would seem the more likely, since a treaty was made in 1704 between the King of Sardinia and Queen Anne, of England, stipulating that the inhabitants of the valley of Pragela in particular should be left in the free exercise of their religion. But it was not so. Although in 1726, about two years before his abdication, Victor Amadeus directed the governor of Pignerol to receive the oath of allegiance from the Waldenses, promising them at the same time that they would be left in the tranquil possession of their valleys: yet at the same time he caused the extent of their country to be diminished, by depriving them of the valley of Pragela, and by banishing all not born in the other valleys. In consequence of this unjust decree, which was an evident infraction of the treaty above alluded to, about three thousand Protestants, natives of France and Switzerland, were forced to leave the country. Many of them retired to Germany, and settled in the duchies of Baden and Hesse Darmstadt, as well as in the kingdom of Wurtemberg.†

But little can be said respecting the history of the Vaudois from this period to the year 1796, when Piedmont was conquered by the French. Oppressed by their rulers, and constantly suffering from their tyrannical conduct, they remained steadfast in the truth, and endured with patience the trials by which they were surrounded.

Few more striking instances of loyalty have occurred in modern history, than the conduct of the Vaudois on the usurpation of Piedmont by France. In spite of the treatment they had for four centuries received from the Sardinian government, they remained steadfast to it till the last moment.

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\* This cup was handed down from father to son for several generations.

† Traces of these emigrants from the valleys were for a long time to be found in those portions of Germany. Indeed a Synod, having about fifteen of their churches under its care, many of whose pastors were supported by the British and Dutch governments, existed there for some time. To this day many inhabitants of Germany trace their origin back to these fugitives, who were driven from Piedmont without even the means of subsistence.

While under the sway of Napoleon, they were put in possession of all their rights; and for awhile prosperity shone upon them. The taxes formerly exacted from them for the support of Romish priests were abolished, and the money which had been thus collected was applied to the use of the Protestant ministers. At the same time, the pastors were united with the body of the French clergy, and a piece of land yielding fourteen hundred francs (about \$260) annually, was given to each.

In 1796, when fort Mirabouc was treacherously given up to the French by its commanding officer, the Vaudois were falsely accused by the Romish curate of La Tour of having caused the surrender. This accusation was credited by the Papists, although there was but one Vaudois at the time in the garrison; and he, as it afterwards appeared, endeavoured to prevent the surrender. Glad to seize upon any pretext for an attack upon the families of these brave men, most of whom were at that time defending their country at the frontiers, eight hundred Romanists engaged to murder those who remained at home. The plan was to have been put in execution on the night of the 16th of May. But as soon as the news of this plot reached the ears of M. Brianza, the Roman Catholic curate of Lusern, he resolved to prevent it if possible; and accordingly, on the morning, of the very day fixed for the massacre, he sent a warning to the inhabitants of the devoted villages. At the same time, Captain Adetti, a Roman Catholic, on being informed of the intentions of the conspirators, went to La Tour and pledged himself to defend its inhabitants. The arrival of General Godin, commander of the army on the frontier, prevented the execution of this infamous deed, which, however, remained unpunished.

When their country was overrun by the Austrian and French armies, the Vaudois gained high praise for their kind treatment to the wounded of both nations. On the battle of the 24th of December, 1799, they carried on their shoulders three hundred wounded French soldiers, from Bobi to Briançon, in litters, in the middle of winter, on account of the want of provisions for the sustenance of these wounded soldiers. Yet this generous conduct, which induced General Suchet, in one of his bulletins, to mention them in terms of the highest praise, was construed, by their enemies in Piedmont, as a proof of their partiality to the French!

When, in 1814, the reign of Napoleon ceased, and the King of Sardinia regained his throne, Piedmont was restored to him; and although he was welcomed with great joy by his Waldensian subjects, who nevertheless had good reason to fear the change, yet he annulled all the beneficent laws instituted by Napoleon, and withdrew their privileges. In vain they implored his protection; no provisions had been made for them by the Congress of Vienna, and they were destined again to suffer under the oppression of the ancient dynasty. The Emperor Alexander of Russia, however, showed much sympathy for the Vaudois, and, unrestrained by religious differences and prejudices, sent them a present of 12,000 francs, for the erection of a hospital and the rebuilding of a decayed church.

Since that time, no open persecution can be said to have taken place in the valleys; yet their inhabitants have been subjected to almost constant oppression. By a number of unjust prohibitions and restrictions, the bigotry of their rulers is displayed. The following is a summary of these oppressive laws, as they now exist.

The Vaudois are not suffered to acquire or possess any property beyond the ancient limits of their valleys. They are prohibited from becoming physicians, surgeons, and advocates, though they are allowed to be apothecaries.

caries and counsellors within their own territory. Though they are obliged to perform military duty (about forty of their young men annually enter the army) they may not rise above the grade of sergeant. They are not permitted to work on the holidays of the Roman Catholic Church. The salary of their pastors, instead of being fifteen hundred francs, as in the days of Napoleon, is but five hundred, and that sum is raised by a tax imposed on their own people. That tax is nominally far beyond the amount really given to the pastors; but the government keeps the residue! They are not suffered to build churches or parsonages without special permission from the government, which it is frequently difficult to obtain. They are not allowed to have a printing press in their valleys, or to print any thing within the kingdom. The duties on books published in other countries are enormous. They may not prevent a Romish priest from entering into their houses and endeavouring to convert their children, provided the boys have reached the age of twelve, and the girls of ten. They may not buy land from a Romanist residing among them, although a Romanist may buy theirs. They are punished with death if they attempt to proselyte a Romanist, although every inducement is offered for their conversion to Popery. Finally, they are not permitted to intermarry with Roman Catholics.

Such are some of the unjust regulations from which the Vaudois suffer at present. Their state was long apparently lost sight of by Protestant christendom. It is comparatively recently that the interest formerly felt in these "elder sisters" of the Reformed Church has been revived. Of late, a number of distinguished and excellent Christians have visited the valleys of Piedmont, and several of them have by their writings turned the attention of the benevolent in all countries to the condition of their inhabitants. We will only mention the names of the Rev. Dr. Gilly, Rev. Mr. Sims, and Sir Hugh Dyke Acland. The first named gentleman has published two interesting volumes relating to the Vaudois. These and other writers have awakened deep interest in behalf of this people, and the consequence has been that considerable sums of money have been raised to assist them.

The reader will remember that a large amount of money was sent by the direction of Oliver Cromwell, in the year 1655-58, to assist the Vaudois after the horrible persecution to which they had just been subjected. The remainder of the sum left by him as a fund for the use of the Vaudois in future, was shamefully spent by Charles II. for his private gratification. To replace this money, Queen Mary, consort of William III., granted an annual sum of £425, during her life; but it was discontinued upon her death. Finally, it was again sent by order of Queen Anne, at the instance of Archbishop Sharpe, and was increased to £500: this sum was continued, under the name of royal bounty, till the year 1797. After that time it was, for various reasons, discontinued. At the instance of the Rev. Dr. Gilly, the amount of £277 was sent in 1827, and has been sent regularly, we believe, ever since. This amounts to only one hundred dollars for each of the thirteen pastors, who, however, have refused to accept more than sixty dollars each, and have devoted the remaining sum to the support of two more pastors, and the assistance of disabled ministers and widows of ministers.

The result of the interest awakened in behalf of the Vaudois by various writers has been the collecting of about twenty thousand five hundred dollars in France, Switzerland, Denmark, Sweden, and a part of Germany, which has been devoted, with the exception of eight thousand francs (\$420), to ob-



taining the ground, erecting and furnishing a hospital, at La Tour, and a dispensary at Pomaret. In England, seven thousand three hundred pounds sterling have been raised, for the erection of the hospital and dispensary, the education of young men for the ministry, and the support of girls' schools. The money raised in Holland and Prussia has been invested in the public funds, and the interest, amounting to one hundred and fifty pounds, is yearly sent to the Vaudois. The efforts of Mr. Sims have resulted in the collection of a considerable amount for the establishment of girls' schools, and those of Dr. Gilly in the collection of five thousand pounds, with the promise of more, to found a college.

It is interesting to find that so much sympathy has been shown by the Protestant churches for this persecuted race. It is probable that, since the seventeenth century, about seventy-five thousand pounds have been raised in Great Britain alone, and at least twenty-five thousand pounds in other Protestant countries in Europe, for the assistance of the Vaudois. Considerable interest has also been awakened of late in their behalf in this country. It is but fitting that Protestant Christendom should thus testify a sense of its obligations to this ancient people, who,

“When all our fathers worshipped stocks and stones,”

preserved the truth in its purity.

The reader has now contemplated the history of the Vaudois down to the present day. He has witnessed the persecutions to which they have from time to time been subjected;—persecutions of a nature so appalling as to elicit the sympathy of every Christian. Besides the vexations which they have endured from time immemorial, they have sustained no less than thirty-three distinct wars. Yet the efforts of their enemies to extirpate them have hitherto been frustrated; and they still remain, to testify concerning the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We will now close this history with a glance at their present condition.

There are at present eighteen pastors and ministers in the Piedmontese valleys, including the professors in the college at La Tour, the chaplain at Turin, and the regent of the grammar school at La Tour. Respecting the characters of these ministers, we may assert that they are all evangelical men, in their doctrines, and preach the pure gospel, as they have received it from its martyrs and confessors in their midst. Their education is perhaps as good as that of the majority of French and Swiss ministers; and for intelligence and general information, they are probably equal to the generality of our pastors. It is to be remembered that their constant and arduous labours leave them little or no time for study, and that they are almost wholly debarred, on account of their isolation and their poverty, from obtaining the books necessary for prosecuting such studies.

The time was when the Vaudois were accustomed to send forth missionaries into various countries in Europe, to preach the gospel. This is no longer done. For centuries, these disciples of Christ have been shut up within their valleys, and have been prevented from spreading the light of truth upon the nations around them. Indeed, since the Reformation spread over a large portion of Europe, they seemed scarcely called upon to prosecute these missionary labours, while there remained so great a work to perform at home, in resisting the progress of antichrist.

But though the Vaudois pastors do not now go forth as labourers in foreign fields, still their work is a great and difficult one. The most un-

wearied watchfulness is required on their part, in preserving the ground they already possess. The hardships, the anxiety, and the fatigue which these few servants of God are obliged to endure, far exceed any thing that our own pastors have to bear. Not a few of them have the care of much larger parishes than they can readily look after. It is too much for one man to watch over fifteen hundred or a thousand souls, in such a region as that. Even in the parishes of St. Jean, Prarustin, and La Tour, where the land is much more level and thickly inhabited than in the others, it is difficult for a pastor to take proper care of a thousand souls even. But in other parishes, where a population of five hundred souls is scattered over the steep sides of lofty mountains, in small hamlets, or isolated cottages, it requires such constant labour and such unwearied zeal to look after these people, amid the severity of an Alpine winter, as few ministers can long undergo. And even during the warm summer months, when the herdsmen and shepherds who, in winter, are often prevented by the snow from leaving their homes, lead their flocks and droves up to seek pasture on the mountain-tops, the labours of the Vaudois pastor are not much lightened. It is thus that large numbers of the inhabitants are employed from June till October.

Travellers describe the dwellings of the Vaudois as being far from comfortable. Situated far up on the sides of the mountains, these *châlets* or cottages are generally built of stone, and are small and rude. The windows, frequently destitute of glazing, are about the size of a common pane of glass. Generally, there are several buildings together; one is used for a sleeping-room, another as a stable, and a third as a kitchen. Each commonly contains but one apartment, which is dark and gloomy. Yet in spite of this apparent want of comfort, the inhabitants seem cheerful, and always show much pleasure in seeing strangers, to whom they immediately offer such fare as they may have. Thus situated, frequently at a great distance from any church, they are often deprived for a long time of the ordinary means of grace.

To these small cottages the Vaudois *barbes*, or pastors, are obliged to go, and gather together those of their flocks who live in the vicinity, for the purpose of preaching the gospel to them. Often have the rocks, and the caves, and the small ravines of this mountainous country been the scenes of the labours of these faithful men, who thus go about from hamlet to hamlet, and from mountain to mountain, to deliver their welcome message to their simple-hearted and pious brethren.

Their mode of preaching is very affectionate and persuasive; but little excitement is produced, and great simplicity of faith is displayed by the preacher as well as his hearers. When they officiate in the churches, they generally write their discourses and commit them to memory. As for reading from the pulpit, the people have a great aversion to the practice; and it is never done in the Valleys.

With regard to the mode of conducting public worship, and the government of the Church in the Valleys, a few remarks may be deemed necessary.

About half an hour is usually spent in the churches in reading the Scriptures, together with the comments contained in the folio edition of the translation (Ostervald's) used by the Vaudois. This introductory service is performed by the regent, or teacher of the school which is held in the parish. This over, the pastor ascends the pulpit, and, after the invocation, "Our help is in the name of the Lord, maker of heaven and earth," he

invites the people to listen with attention and reverence to the Ten Commandments. Then follows the Confession of Sins, taken from the Liturgy of the Vaudois Church; a prayer which is used also in the French and Swiss Churches. After the singing of a psalm, in which all who are present unite, a prayer of some length, either extemporaneous or taken from the Liturgy, is offered up. This is followed by the sermon, after which a hymn is sung. The concluding prayer, to which are appended the Lord's Prayer and the Apostles' Creed, is taken from the Liturgy, and is composed of petitions in behalf of their own Church, their poor and afflicted, the Church Universal, the king and royal family, and others in authority. The service is closed with the singing of another hymn and the Aaronic benediction.

The celebration of the Lord's Supper is made in the most simple and primitive manner. After the sermon, which has reference to the sacrament, the minister reads the account of the institution given by St. Paul, and then exhorts those who are about to partake of the elements, to examine themselves. At the same time he describes the character of those who cannot worthily unite in the participation, and warns them of their crime if they approach the table. A prayer is then offered up, and the people unite in singing a hymn. After this a short exhortation is made, followed by another hymn, when the pastor descends from the pulpit, reads a prayer from the Liturgy, and proceeds to partake of the bread and wine and distribute them to the elders, who are seated around him, in the large pew in front of the pulpit. The members of the church then approach the table, first the men and afterwards the women, two by two. While the communicants are partaking of the elements, the pastor repeats to them appropriate passages from the Scripture, and the rest of the congregation sing hymns adapted to the occasion. A collection is then taken up in behalf of the poor. The pastor then returns to the pulpit, and closes the service by another exhortation, a prayer of thanksgiving, and the benediction.

Until the year 1839, no particular Liturgy had been adopted by the Vaudois Church; those of Geneva, Lausanne and Neuchâtel being used equally by the pastors. But though these different liturgies closely resemble one another, serious inconvenience resulted from this want of uniformity; and the Synod were led to frame a new Liturgy, composed mainly of selections from the three formerly used. It embraces public and private forms of worship, family prayers and thanksgivings, and the Confession of Faith adopted by the Vaudois Church in the year 1655. It is very simple in all its services, and leaves room, in the public services, for extemporaneous prayers—a provision which, in our opinion, greatly enhances its value. It is highly probable that the Waldensian Church used a Liturgy of its own from an early period. It is said that a copy of this form of worship still exists in the Library of Geneva.

The circumstances in which they have been placed have tended to produce relations of intimacy between the Vaudois churches and the Protestant churches of Switzerland. During more than three centuries after the Reformation, they were obliged to send their youth to the seminaries of Geneva and Lausanne, to complete their theological education, as they themselves had no such institutions. This intimacy was greatly strengthened in the year 1630, when the plague, which devastated their country, swept away thirteen out of the fifteen pastors; and the Vaudois were obliged to depend upon their French and Swiss brethren for men to fill the vacancies thus created. Since that time, the French language has taken the

place of the dialect formerly spoken and used in their religious services. We cannot better close these observations on the public worship of the Vaudois churches, than by quoting the remarks of an eminent writer who has lately visited them.\*

"The first thing that strikes a stranger on entering the temples of the Vaudois, is the perfect contrast which their services present to those of the Church of Rome. Here are no visible objects of worship, no mediating priests, no splendid vestments, no gaudy or childish ceremonies, no pompous processions, no trumpery relics of paganism,—but all is simplicity, decency, and order. The pastor and the reader are the only persons who officiate in the congregation, and contribute to their edification. Instead of a magnificent altar, decked with gold and silver and precious stones, towards which the worshippers are to turn, or before which they are to prostrate themselves, there is only a plain table in the pew before the pulpit, from which the elements of the Lord's Supper are dispensed to the communicants. Instead of mass-books in an unknown tongue, is the Bible, in a language which all understand, and of which copious portions are read at each service. Instead of chanting priests, singing boys, pealing orchestras, and ignorant multitudes gazing and looking with superstitious admiration, we find the whole congregation celebrating, in full and intelligent chorus, the praises of Jehovah. And this simple worship, which reminds us of that of the primitive Christians, before the fathers broke in upon its integrity by the addition of rites and ceremonies of their own invention, there is every reason to believe, is pretty much the same that has obtained in the valleys of Piedmont from ancient times. Accustomed, as the Vaudois were, to assemble in the houses of their barbes, in caves, under the shade of their wide-spreading chestnuts, or on the verdant sides of their Alpine mountains, they could have nothing to tempt the introduction of any rites inconsistent with the noble simplicity of their institutions. The main ground which they had all along occupied in opposition to Rome, consisted in their refusing to receive any doctrine or usage that did not possess the sanction of the word of God.

"From what we know of the religious practices of the Cathari, and other reformers in different parts of the north of Italy, it is natural to conclude, that the ancient Vaudois, if they had not a regularly organized Church Constitution, derived from Apostolic times, (as some are inclined to believe,) were originally accustomed to meet, in the simple capacity of Christians, for the worship of God, and mutual edification, much in the same way as those in the present day, who have their 'réunions,' or prayer-meetings, in addition to the public services in the churches. By degrees, as they became better acquainted with each other, and had opportunity of ascertaining which of them were specially endowed with gifts for edification, they would devolve upon such the prominent parts of the service; and at length regard them as their stated leaders, pastors, or spiritual rulers. In some instances, it is more than probable, they enjoyed the instructions of those who had been priests in the Roman Church, but whose eyes God had opened to discover her abominations, and whom He had induced to come out of her, lest they should be partakers of her plagues.

"Of Apostolical succession, in the way of a regular sacerdotal line of descent, they had no conception. They would have scouted the idea, as tending to reduce them to the yoke of bondage to human institutions, from

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\* The Rev. Dr. Henderson. See *the Vaudois*, pp. 205–208.

which it was their privilege and their duty to be free. To Apostolical succession they did, indeed, pretend; but it was a succession, not of men, but of doctrine—a succession, not in the shape of a mystical, undefinable, intangible something, attaching to priestly virtue and authority; but in the solid, substantial, and reasonable faith of a living Christianity. It was not a transmission of something called grace, lodged in and derivable only from an episcopate; but of the divine principles of the gospel, which teach the only true and saving grace of God, as deposited in the one glorious Mediator, and derivable from Him, upon all believers. They never dreamed that union with a certain order of men, and reception of the ordinances of Christianity at their hands, were essential to salvation; but taught, that the only things essentially requisite to this all-important result, were, acceptance with God, through the propitiatory sacrifice of His Son, and the renewal of the soul into His sacred image, by the regenerating influences of the Holy Ghost.

“That the Vaudois ever had bishops, in the popish or prelatical acceptance of the term, does not appear. No trace of an episcopal hierarchy is to be found in any of their ancient documents. Their Church polity has all along been essentially popular. *See ministres mayores e menores* (the existence of higher and lower orders of ministers) is regarded as one of the marks of Antichrist, in the ‘Book of Antichrist,’ bearing date 1120.”

A few words respecting the *government* of the EVANGELICAL CHURCH OF THE VALLEYS—for such is the title claimed by the Vaudois.\*

Like the Presbyterian order, which it resembles in more than one point, the Vaudois Church is governed by three courts. Of these, the lowest, is composed of the pastor, elders and deacons of each particular church, and is called the *Consistory*. It answers to the *Session* of the Presbyterian Church. A legal adviser is generally present when this court is assembled. The elders, whose duty it is, as in our own churches, to assist the pastor in his labours, by visiting families, providing for the poor, &c., are elected in public by the parishioners; and the Consistory chooses out of the number thus nominated, as many as are needed. No one can become an elder who is a tavern-keeper by profession. The form by which they are installed is given in the Liturgy of the Church.

Superior to this court is the *Table*, or Board, which consists of the Moderator, Moderator-adjunct, and the Secretary of the Synod, as well as two laymen elected by the Synod. The work of this body is one of much importance, and it possesses great powers. Its duty is to superintend the churches and schools, watching over the pastors and teachers; to fulfil the decisions of the Synod, when the latter body is not in session; to suspend pastors or teachers whom it thinks unworthy, to decide whatever difficulties may occur between the congregations and their pastors, &c. Besides this work of supervision, it examines and ordains candidates for the ministry, whose studies and conduct it looks after, carries on foreign and domestic correspondence, and appoints the deputations to other countries. The expenses of its members during its sessions, are defrayed. This court is, in fact, a *standing committee* of the Synod.

The *Synod* is the highest ecclesiastical body among the Vaudois. It is composed of all the ministers belonging to their Church: including the chaplain at Turin, and the clerical professors in the college. Each parish,

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\* They very properly reject the name of *Protestant*; saying that as they never belonged to the Church of Rome, they cannot be said to have seceded from it.

besides, sends two elders as deputies to the Synod; but the two can give but one vote. Candidates for the ministry may also attend, and take part in the deliberations, but cannot vote.

The large number of laymen sent to this assembly is accounted for by the fact that the Synod is not merely a spiritual court, but is also in some measure secular; since it attends to the education of the people, the care of the poor, the erection of churches and school-houses, and other matters of a similar nature. Indeed it was formerly the supreme civil, as well as ecclesiastical court. At its sessions, after a prayer by the Moderator of the last assembly, a new Moderator, Moderator-adjunct and Secretary for the ensuing term, are chosen, together with two elders, to attend the meetings of the new *Table*. It then proceeds with its ordinary business, which is generally of great importance, and relates to the supervision of the churches and schools, the enforcing of discipline, fixing the salaries of ministers and teachers, &c.

In former days the Synod met once a year, generally in the autumn; in times of persecution, during the winter. For many years, however, it has met only once in five years. This is on account of the difficulty and expense of obtaining permission from the government to hold its meetings; a permission which costs them about two hundred and forty dollars each session. Such a tax is deeply felt by so poor a people. The Synod is always attended by the Intendant of Pignerol and his secretary, whose duty it is to watch lest any decision be made which may prove injurious to the interests of Romanism, as well as to see that no subjects are treated of beside those mentioned in the petition addressed to the government, to obtain permission to hold the meeting.

The Vaudois have nothing in the organization of their churches that resembles prelacy. The Moderator, or President of the Synod and the *Table* possesses no extraordinary authority, and performs only those duties which generally devolve upon those holding such offices. It has been said by some, that he is like the bishops of the Episcopal Church, an inherent right of ordination. This is not so. Nor, if we believe the declarations of the Vaudois themselves, has episcopacy ever existed in their valleys. Their historians constantly speak of the *barbes* as their religious instructors; but the word bishop is used but rarely, and always signifies, in the opinion of the Vaudois of the present day, the ordinary pastors.

In the former part of this work, the theological opinions and doctrines of the Vaudois have been fully noticed. It has been seen that they have always harmonized, in their belief, with the orthodox churches of the Reformation in other parts of the world. Few even of their enemies have been able to accuse them of any greater heresy than the rejection of the papal supremacy, and the other peculiar dogmas of the apostate Church of Rome. And this faith has been preserved in its purity and perfection to the present day. It is true that, towards the end of the last century, there was some reason to fear lest the Socinian character of the Genevan school of theology might extend to the valleys. For it is a lamentable fact that, for many years a spirit of cold Rationalism pervaded the Church, not only at Geneva, but also at Lausanne; both of which places have for centuries been the resort of young Vaudois, either preparing for the ministry, or pursuing other studies than that of theology. The influence of this spirit could not but be felt in the valleys. But at present, thanks be to God! the danger is past. Although the Academy of Geneva, founded by Calvin, and which provides for the education of two Waldensian students,

as well as the Academy of Lausanne, which educates five youth from the valleys in a similar way, has fallen away from the truth of the gospel; yet God has, by His merciful direction, provided for the wants of His faithful people. There is at present, in Geneva, a thoroughly evangelical Seminary, over which the celebrated Merle d'Aubigné presides, and where six young Vaudois are now preparing for the ministry.

One interesting fruit of the piety of the Vaudois has always been, their anxiety for the promotion of education in their midst. Such was their state of destitution, however, for several centuries, that it was with great difficulty that they could obtain books; and but few, comparatively, knew more than how to read and write. The liberality of the Christian world has, we are happy to say, greatly altered the state of things within a quarter of a century. Through the efforts of the Rev. Dr. Gilly, much interest was excited in the year 1823, in their behalf in England. Not only was provision made for the erection of a hospital, but a large amount of money was collected for the education of the youth. The sum of five thousand pounds was given for the building of the *College of the Trinity*, as it is called; an institution founded in the neighbourhood of La Tour. It is a stone building, three stories high, and nearly one hundred feet long; containing a library, chapel, several recitation rooms, etc. It has three professors, who are all excellent men, and about fifty students, including the elementary classes in Latin. Such, however, is the anxiety of the Sardinian government, lest the Vaudois should possess the rights secured to its other subjects, that it forbids that more than fifteen students should belong to the college proper at one time! Besides the College of the Trinity, there is a very good grammar-school, at Pomaret, where about a dozen boys are pursuing mathematical and classical studies, under an able instructor.

But, although there are about sixty-five youth at present prosecuting some of the higher branches of study in the valleys, still, all who wish to pursue a theological course, or engage in professional studies, must go to Switzerland or Germany in order to do so. Few, indeed, of those who obtain a collegiate education remain in the valleys; and the field of usefulness for such being wholly limited to the work of the ministry or of teaching.

We cannot take leave of this subject, without some notice of a man who has done more than any other for the promotion of education in the valleys. We allude to the excellent and well-known *Colonel Beckwith*. This benefactor of the Vaudois was an officer in the British army; from which he retired, with a large income, after the battle of Waterloo, where he lost a leg. About twenty years ago, he was induced to visit the valleys. He became deeply interested in the condition of the Vaudois, and since then has spent all his time in their midst, with the exception of a few months every summer, when he returns to visit his mother and sisters in England. Having no family, he has been able to employ the greater part of a large income in assisting the people in whom he has taken such interest. And well has he used the means intrusted to him by his Master. It is probable that he has, during his residence among the Vaudois, spent not less than thirty thousand dollars, of his own property, in advancing their interests. He has furnished the money for the erection of ten or fifteen large and commodious parish school-houses, several of which have ample room for one hundred to one hundred and fifty scholars. He also in a great measure supports the teachers of all these schools. In addition to this, he has caused small but substantial school-houses to be built in a large number of

hamlets. There are at present no less than one hundred and fifty schools, of different grades, male and female, in the valleys. Provision has been made for the education of every Vaudois child. There are, indeed, hindrances to the fulfilment of this object; for the boys and girls who are old enough to work, can attend school only during two or three winter months. Yet this is generally sufficient for them to obtain the knowledge of the primary and most important branches of education.

In addition to his efforts for the promotion of the moral welfare of the Vaudois, Colonel Beckwith is constantly endeavouring to improve their temporal state. He assists them by his counsels and his gifts in the improvement of their mode of cultivation, the construction of bridges and roads, etc. This good man has not lost his reward, in the gratitude of those who have been the objects of his kindness. No man is so greatly beloved by the Vaudois. His lithographed portrait may be found in many of their cottages; and whenever he visits them, he is welcomed with the greatest affection. One of the school-houses in the parish of St. Jean bears an inscription to this effect: "Whosoever passes this way, let him bless the name of Colonel Beckwith." This mutual affection is the more striking from the fact that this benefactor is a member of the Church of England, whilst the Vaudois are staunch Presbyterians. This is indeed a touching instance of Christian benevolence. Would that there were many such devoted servants of Christ as this veteran soldier!

With regard to the state of morals among the Vaudois at the present time, we do not hesitate to say, that there are few countries, the inhabitants of which are equally virtuous. In the days of Bonaparte, much injury was done to the morals of the people by the frequent visits of soldiery to the valleys, as well as by the habits which many of the Vaudois themselves brought back from the army, which they had entered as conscripts. But these pernicious effects had passed away, and the ancient purity of manners for which their forefathers were so justly praised, even by their enemies, has been in a great measure revived. Intoxication, licentiousness and profanity are scarcely known among them. A spirit of harmony and brotherly affection seems to pervade the valleys. The difficulties which sometimes occur in their midst, generally relate to their property. The sick and distressed are peculiarly the objects of their sympathy. They are always visited, supplied with whatever they may need, and assisted, if retarded in their labours. This spirit of benevolence is also indicated by the collections which they make every year to send the gospel to the destitute in France and among the heathen. They have always manifested deep sympathy in the afflictions of others. In 1825, when a dreadful inundation reduced many families, in Holland, to absolute poverty, the Vaudois sent the sum of three thousand francs for their relief. In raising this amount, *every inhabitant of the valleys* contributed according to his ability.

With regard to the state of morals among the Vaudois in ancient times, we have the following testimony from one of their most bitter enemies, Claude Scyssel, Archbishop of Turin in the 16th century: "They live a life of greater purity than other Christians. They do not take an oath unless required to do so, and it is seldom that they take the name of God in vain. They fulfil their promises with good faith, and though the greater part of them are living in poverty, they maintain that they alone have preserved the apostolical life and doctrine. On this account they affirm that the authority of the Church resides in them, as innocent and true disciples of



Christ; for the sake of whose faith and religion they consider it honourable and glorious to live in want, and to suffer persecution from us.”\*

We have also the following acknowledgment from the Roman Catholic historian De Thou: “Chastity is held in high honour among the Waldenses; so much so that their neighbours, although differing from them greatly in religion, when they would consult for the virtue of their daughters, through fear of violence from the licentious military, have committed them to the care and fidelity of the Waldenses.”†

The influence of the Roman Catholics, possessed as they are of every advantage, in the protection of the government and the abundance of funds which are at their disposal, cannot but be felt in the valleys. They are constantly erecting churches, and are always on the alert, to buy up the lands which the indigent Vaudois may be desirous of selling, by which means they are gradually obtaining possession of the best of the lands. It is to be hoped, however, that, by the liberality of their friends in Protestant countries, the Vaudois will seldom, henceforth, be thus forced by poverty to yield their native soil into the hands of the Romanists.

It is evident that Rome is about greatly increasing her efforts for the conversion of these people, after having spent centuries in the vain effort to destroy them by the sword. A strong proselyting spirit is spreading among the Roman Catholics, at the instigation of their priests. Even strangers are frequently the objects of their wiles. A large monastic establishment has been created recently at La Tour, the purpose of which is, to educate missionaries for visiting and endeavouring to convert the Vaudois to Romanism. This establishment has been very liberally endowed, and is now maintained by two monastic orders. We shall look with interest for the result of these efforts. Whatever it may be, “the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth;” and we doubt not that His Spirit will now preserve His people from the snares of the adversary, as it did in ancient times from his fiery persecutions.

It would not be astonishing if, from time to time, they should fall under the constant temptations by which they are surrounded. The Vaudois pastors meet with the greatest obstacles in endeavouring to preserve their people steadfast in the truth. If a member of their flocks be induced to visit a Roman Catholic priest, for the purpose of conferring with him on becoming a Romanist, it is forbidden, on pain of death, that any one, whether minister or layman, should endeavour to dissuade him from taking such a step!

In spite of all that the Vaudois have had to contend with, it is the universal testimony of those who have visited them, that pure religion has been advancing during the last twenty-five years throughout the valleys. This state of things is in some measure owing, under God, to the visit made in 1823, by that excellent and devoted servant of Christ, Felix Neff. And though there still remains much to be done, for the awakening of a spirit of true piety among the Vaudois, yet there is great reason to rejoice, in the progress already made. It is gratifying to know that prayer-meetings have been established in many of the villages, and are held on Sabbath afternoons, as well, in many cases, during the week. “We were often pleased,” says a recent traveller, “with the singing of sweet hymns, which we heard

\* Claude Scyssel, *Adv. error, et sect. Valdenses*, fol. 9. lib. XXVII. tom. II. p. 19.

† Thuani *Historia*.

in our strolls through the valleys. We have witnessed few scenes more enchanting, than when passing through the deep glens and valleys of that wonderful country, as the sun on a fine summer's day was fast descending to the western horizon. Ever and anon, we heard the bleating of the flocks, as they were driven home for the night, and the psalms that were sung by girls and boys who attended them, echoed and re-echoed from the rocks and ravines of the mountain barriers which surrounded us."

How similar to such a scene was that so beautifully described by a writer in the primitive days of the Church, when speaking of the peasants in the neighbourhood of Bethlehem: "In every direction where there is a sound of human voices, it is the voice of psalmody. If it be the ploughman guiding his plough, his song is, Hallelujah! If it be the shepherd tending his flock, the reaper gathering his corn, or the vine-dresser pruning the tendrils, his chant is the same; it is some song of David that he sings. Here all poetry is sacred poetry, and every feeling of the heart finds utterance in the language of the Psalmist."\*

We must here close this account of the present state of the Vaudois. And in concluding the History of the Ancient Christians, we cannot but exclaim: Truly, happy is that people whose God is the Lord! Happy, though the storms of persecution may for century after century pour down upon it; though the rage of its foes may beat against it with unrelenting violence. A monument of God's goodness and man's impotence, it shall stand for ages to come, as it has stood for ages past. "For behold! the bush burned with fire; and the bush was not consumed."

"Blind must he be, who does not discern the finger of God in the preservation of the Vaudois. There is nothing like it in the history of man. The tempest of persecution has raged against them for seven hundred years, and yet it has not swept them away, but there they are in the land of their forefathers; because the Most High gave unto the men of the valleys stout hearts and a resolute spirit;—because He made them patient of hunger and thirst, and of all manner of affliction."

Let all the disciples of Christ unite in the prayer that the day may speedily arrive, when there shall be "heard a loud voice, saying in heaven: Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of Christ: for the Accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night. And they overcame him, by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death."†

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\* *Letter of Paula and Eustochium to Marcella*; quoted in Dr. Gilly's *Vigilantius*.

† Rev. xii. 10–11.