

THE BIBLICAL RECORDER.

"RIGHTEOUSNESS, TEMPERANCE, AND JUDGEMENT TO COME."

EDITED BY T. MEREDITH.

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TERMS.

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THE WALDENSES.

THE WALDENSES, VALDENSES, VAUDOIS, or people of the *calices*, were the most celebrated body of Protestant Dissenters during the middle ages. The history of these churches of persecuted saints, these meek "confessors," this "noble army of martyrs," this "most ancient stock of religion," to use the words of Milton, is a topic which, of late, has been rising in popularity and interest every year. No writer appears to have laid before the public an account so thoroughly digested, accurate, and comprehensive, as Mr. Jones, whose History of the Christian Church, the second volume of which is almost wholly devoted to this subject, has already gone through eight or ten editions. We have endeavored, however, to collect every ray of light from other quarters in making out the following summary view of their history.

ORIGIN OF THE WALDENSES.

It seems to be a serious mistake into which some popular writers have fallen, who represent the Waldenses as originating in France about the year 1170, and deriving their name from the celebrated Peter Waldo. The evidence is now ample; that so far from being a new sect, at that period, they had existed, under various names, as a distinct class of dissenters from the established churches of Greece and Rome in the earliest ages.

It is, indeed, an egregious error to suppose that when Christianity was taken into alliance with the state, by the emperor Constantine, in the beginning of the fourth century, all the orthodox churches were so ignorant of the genius of their religion as to consent to the corruption of a worldly establishment. Of the Waldenses, Crantz (in the History of the United Brethren) says, "These ancient Christians, who, besides the several names of reproach given them, were at length denominated Waldenses, from one of the most eminent teachers, Peter Waldo, date their origin from the beginning of the fourth century; when one Leo, at the great revolution in religion under Constantine the Great, opposed the innovation of Sylvester, bishop of Rome."

The Cathari, or Puritan churches of the Novatians also, had at that very period been flourishing as a distinct communion for more than seventy years all over the empire; maintaining by the acknowledgement even of their enemies, the self-styled Catholics, the integrity of the true faith, together with the purity of discipline and the power of godliness, which had generally disappeared from the Catholic churches. These Puritans being exposed to severe and sanguinary persecutions for dissent, from age to age were compelled to shelter themselves from the desolating storm in retirement; and when in intervals they re-appear on the page of contemporary history, and their principles are propagated with new boldness and success, they are styled a new sect, and receive a new name, though in reality they are the same people.

The same great principles of attachment to the word of God, and determined adherence to the simplicity of its doctrine, discipline, institutions, and worship, in opposition to the innovations of a secular spirit and policy on the one hand, and of false philosophy or of pretended apostolic traditions on the other, may be traced under the name of Novatians, Donatists, Luciferians, and Ariens, from the third to the seventh centuries. They re-appear in the Paulicians, who have been falsely accused of Manichæism, but who, from the middle of the seventh, to the end of the ninth century, worthily sustained by their preaching, their lives, and their martyrdoms, their claims of being the genuine descendants of the primitive churches. From Asia Minor they spread themselves over Europe, through Thrace, Macedonia, Epirus, Bulgaria, Slavonia, Sicily, Lombardy, Liguria, and Milan; whence, about the beginning of the eleventh century, they entered into France. The first discovery of a congregation of this kind in that country, was at Orleans, A. D. 1019. A Catholic council was immediately convened, and the Paulician missionaries, with their converts, among whom were many respectable citizens and several of the regular clergy, were all burnt alive. Other advocates of the doctrine were discovered in Languedoc, others in Picardy, and Sabia. They were called, in France, Bogues or Bulgarians, Tisserands or Weavers, Bos Homos, or Good Men.

They soon spread through Germany, where they were called by the old name of Cathari, or by corruption Gazar. In Italy the same people were called Paterines, Josephists, Anoldists, and Fratricelli. As early as the year 1100, it is certain they began to be called Waldenses—sixty years before Peter Waldo. Their principles were powerfully advocated, and extended among the most intelligent classes in Languedoc and Provence, from 1110 to 1168, by the celebrated Peter de Bruys, and Henery, his successor; from whom they received the name of Petrobrusians and Henricians. From the places where they flourished, they were called Toulousians, Albigenes, and afterwards, Poor Men of Lyons, and Leonists. They were condemned by a council at Toulouse in 1119, and again, by the great Lateran council at Rome, in 1139. In 1160, some of them crossed from Gascony to England, where they were called Popheicians and Publicians, corruptions of the original name, Paulicians. About

this time, arose the celebrated Peter Waldo, of Lyons, whose labors, learning, zeal and liberality greatly extended their principles; in consequence of which, many writers, both Catholic and Protestant, have most erroneously regarded him as the parent and founder of the proper Waldenses. Mr. Robinson, however, has shown that this name has a much earlier origin; that it signifies "inhabitants of the valleys," and that it was applied to the persecuted people of whom we have spoken, simply for the reason that great multitudes of them made their residence in the valleys of the Pyrenees and of the Alps, where, age after age, they found an asylum from the tyranny of the church of Rome. This view of the matter, also, is supported by the testimony of their own historians, Pierre Gillys Perrin Leger, Sir Samuel Morland, and Dr. Allix. The names imposed on them by their adversaries, they say, have been intended to vilify and ridicule them, or to represent them as new and different sects.

Their enemies confirm their great antiquity. Reinerus Saccho, the inquisitor, admits, that the Waldenses flourished five hundred years before Peter Waldo. This carries us back to the year 660, the time of the appearance of the Paulicians, or rather of their great revival and increase under the labor of Constantine Sylvanus. Indeed, there is not wanting evidence to show that churches of the Puritan order existed at that time, in the West as well as East. In the year 553, nine bishops of Italy and Switzerland openly refused communion with the pope of Rome, and the churches under their care persisted in the dissent. To say nothing of the labors of those noble reformers in the bosom of the Catholic church, Paulinus of Aquileia, in the century, Claude of Turin, in the ninth, the council of Rheims, in the tenth, and of Berengarius, archdeacon of Angers, in the eleventh which yet exerted a powerful influence in opening the eyes of men to the corruption of that false church; if we will believe the testimony of the suffering Waldenses themselves, their doctrine and discipline had been preserved in all its purity and efficacy from the days of the primitive martyrs, in Spain, France, Germany, Italy, and especially in the valleys of Piedmont.

The learned Dr. Allix, in his "History of the Churches of Piedmont," gives this account:—"That for three hundred years, or more, the bishop of Rome attempted to subjugate the church of Milan under his jurisdiction; and at last, the interests of Rome grew too potent for the church of Milan, planted by one of his disciples; inasmuch that the bishop and the people, rather than own their jurisdiction, retired to the valleys of Lucerne and Angrogne and thence were called Waldenses, Waldenses, or People of the Valleys."

M. Sismondi, in his late History of the Crusades against the Albigenses says, "Those very persons who punished the sectaries with frightful torments, have alone taken it up themselves, to make us acquainted with their opinions; allowing at the same time, that they had been transmitted in Gaul, from generation to generation, almost from the origin of Christianity. We cannot, therefore, be astonished if they have represented them to us with all those characters which might render them the most monstrous, mingled with all the fables which would serve to irritate the minds of the people against those who professed them. Nevertheless, amidst many puerile and calumnious tales, it is still easy to recognise the principles of the Reformation of the sixteenth century among the heretics who are designated by the name of *Naudois* or *Albigens*."

Dr. Allix, speaking of the Paterines, some of whom, disciples of Gundulph, one of their teachers, went from Italy to the Netherlands, where they were thrown into prison, says, "Here, then, we have found a body of men in Italy before the year 1026, five hundred years before the Reformation, who believed contrary to the opinions of the church of Rome, and who highly condemned her errors." Mr. Jones adds, "Atto, bishop of Verceil, had complained of such people eighty years before, and so had others before him, and there is the greatest reason to believe they had always existed in Italy. It is observable that those alluded to by Dr. Allix, were brought to light by mere accident. About the year 1040, the Paterines had become very numerous at Milan, which was their principal residence; & in 1259, some of their churches in other Italian cities, were informed by Reinerus, the inquisitor, contained fifteen hundred members. The churches were organized into sixteen compartments, or associations. They had no connexion with the Catholic church which they regarded as Antichrist from the time of pope Sylvester. Now, when we reflect that the Paterines, both in principles and practice, were the same people as the Waldenses, or Poor Men of Lyons, we shall not wonder at the remarkable words of Reinerus, himself a Catholic, concerning the latter.

"Of all the sects, which have been, or now exist," says this inquisitor, "none are more injurious to the Church, (i. e. of Rome,) for three reasons:—1. Because it is more ancient. Some aver their existence from the time of Sylvester; others, from the time of the apostles. 2. Because it is so universal. There is scarcely any country into which this sect has not crept. And, 3. Because all other heretics excite horror by the greatness of their blasphemies against God; but these have a great appearance of piety, as they live justly before men, believe rightly all things concerning God, and confess all the articles which are contained in the creed; only they hate and revile the Pope of Rome, and in their accusations are easily believed by the people."

Such a concession, from such a source, speaks volumes. Here there is a succession of faithful men, whose apostolic origin, perpetuity, though often hidden, diffusion, general orthodoxy, evangelical simplicity, and sanctity of character, is admitted by the church of Rome herself; a succession of faithful men, organized into Christian churches, claiming to be the true successors of the apostles, protesting against all the corruptions of the patriarchs and the papacy, and for this reason, subject to persecution from both, through the hands of the secular powers to which they are allied; a church, built not on St. Peter

alone, but on the entire "foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone," and against which the gates of hell have not been able to prevail. May we not say then, in the language of Revelation, "Here is the patience of the saints! These are they, who keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus?" Rev. xiv. 12.

It also appears that the recesses of the Alps and the Pyrenees were distinguished retreats of these persecuted Christians in the darkest ages of the church. Or, as Mr. Robinson observes, in his Ecclesiastical researches, "Greece was the parent, Spain and Navarre, the nurses, France, the step-mother, and Savoy, (i. e. Piedmont,) the jailer, of the class of Christians called Waldenses."

PRINCIPLES OF THE WALDENSES.

Hence it is hardly to be wondered at, that the Waldenses, like the Scriptures, have been resorted to by all parties of the Protestants, in defence of their peculiar sentiments. The Papists accused the Protestants of being a new sect, whose principles had no existence till the days of Luther. This charge they all denied, and each party sought to find predecessors, and to trace a line of succession up to the apostles. The perversions of heresy on the one hand, and the corruptions of popery on the other, left no alternative but to find that succession among the Waldenses. The researches of learned men of different communities, induced by this circumstance, have furnished much important evidence that might otherwise have been lost in oblivion. But the natural consequence has been, that all have been tempted to mould the character of the Waldenses to the support of their own particular views, instead of collecting into one point all the light of history, and calmly abiding the issue. For, after all, an uninterrupted succession, however gratifying it may be to be able to trace it, is necessary only to a church which regulates its practice by tradition, and not by the pure word of God.—Such was the doctrine of the Waldenses, in the times of their ancient purity.

It is necessary here that we distinguish between the ancient and modern Waldenses. It appears from all the accounts we gather of them before the Reformation, that their principles and practice were more pure and scriptural than since that period. History assigns reasons for this. From the united attestation of their enemies, and from their own confession of faith, we learn that the ancient Waldenses were distinguished chiefly by the following points:—

1. *Their supreme attachment to the Scriptures.* They held that the Holy Scriptures are the only source of faith and religion, without regard to the authority of the fathers and traditions. Although they principally use the New Testament, yet, as Fisher proves, they regarded the Old also as canonical Scripture. "They translated the Old and New Testament," says Reinerus, "into the vulgar tongue, and spoke and taught according to them." From their greater use of the New Testament, however, as Venema observes, their adversaries took occasion to charge them with despising the Old. "Hence whatever a doctor of the church teaches," says Reinerus, "which he does not prove from the New Testament, they consider it as entirely fabulous—contrary to the doctrine of the church." He adds, I have heard and seen a certain unlearned rustic, who recited the book of Job, word by word, and many who perfectly knew the New Testament." How noble!

2. *Their Scriptural simplicity, and soundness of belief.* Their adversaries frequently acknowledged this: see the testimony of the inquisitor above. It is amply confirmed also by their own authentic monument and confessions of faith, of which several are printed at length in Jones' History of the Church.

From a confession of their faith, in 1120, we extract the following particulars:—(1.) That the Scriptures teach that there is one God, almighty, all-wise, all-good, who made all things by his goodness; for he formed Adam in his own image and likeness; but that by the envy of the devil sin entered into the world, and that we are sinners in and by Adam. (2.) That Christ was promised to our fathers, who received the law; that so, knowing by the law, their unrighteousness and insufficiency they might desire the coming of Christ to satisfy for their sins, and accomplish the law by himself. (3.) That Christ was born in the time appointed by God the Father; that is to say, in the time when all iniquity abounded, that he might show us grace and mercy, as being faithful. (4.) That Christ is our life, truth, peace, and righteousness; as also our pastor, advocate, and priest, who died for the salvation of all who believe, and is risen for our justification. (5.) That there is no mediator and advocate with God the Father, save Jesus Christ. (6.) That after this life there are only two places, the one for the saved, and the other for the damned. (7.) That we ought to honor the secular powers by subjection, ready obedience, and paying of tribute.—What could be more evangelical.

3. *Their purity and excellence of life and manners.*—Though often accused of the most abominable crimes, the whole evidence goes to show that these accusations were vile calumnies, invented for party purposes by their malignant enemies, the papal priests. Indeed, an ancient inquisitor confesses that "these heretics are known by their manners and conversation, for they are orderly and modest in their behavior and deportment.—They avoid all appearance of pride in their dress; they neither indulge in finery, nor are they mean and ragged. They avoid commerce, that they may be free from deceit and falsehood. They get their livelihood by manual industry. They are not anxious about amassing riches, but content themselves with the necessities of life.—They are chaste, temperate, and sober. They abstain from anger. Even when they work, they either learn or teach &c." Seisselius archbishop of Turin, also admits, "Their heresy excepted, they generally live a purer life than other Christians." Mark this!

4. *Their religious fervor, courage, and zeal.* Reinerus assigns as one cause of their great increase, their great zeal. "All of them, men and

women, night and day, never cease from teaching and learning. The first lesson," he adds, "which the Waldenses teach those whom they bring over to their party, is to instruct them what manner of persons the disciples of Christ ought to be; and this they do by the doctrine of the evangelists and apostles, saying that those only are the followers of the apostles who imitate their manner of life." Mark this! Hence,

5. *Their steady opposition to all corruptions and antichristian usurpations.*—"The first error of the Waldenses," says an ancient inquisitor, "is, that they affirm that the church of Rome is not the church of Jesus Christ, but an assembly of ungodly men, and that she has ceased from being the true church from the time of pope Sylvester, at which time the poison of temporal advantages was cast into the church." They rejected images, crosses, relics, legends, traditions, auricular confessors, indulgences, absolutions, clerical celibacy, orders, titles, vestments, monkery, masses, and prayers for the dead, purgatory, invocation of saints, and of the virgin Mary, holy water, festivals, processions, pilgrimages, vigils, Lent, pretended miracles, exorcisms, consecrations, confirmations, extreme unction, and the like. They condemned the use of liturgies, especially in an unknown tongue. They condemned the mystical or allegorical interpretations of the Scripture. Most of all, they condemned, the wicked lives of both people and clergy in that worldly communion. Do we wonder they were persecuted?

6. *Their enlightened views of liberty of conscience.*—"They affirm," says the inquisitor, "that no man ought to be forcibly compelled in matters of faith."—On this point, as also on the next, they were far in advance of the reformers, Luther and Calvin.

7. *Their just ideas of the nature and character of a church of Christ.*—"That is the church of Christ which hears the pure doctrine of Christ, and observes the ordinances instituted by him, in whatever place it exists."—"The sacrament of the church of Christ are two, baptism and the Lord's supper; and in the latter Christ has instituted the receiving in both kinds, both for priests and people."—"We consider the sacraments as signs of holy things, or as the visible emblems of invisible blessings. We regard it as proper, and even necessary, that believers use these symbols when it can be done. Notwithstanding which we maintain that believers may be saved without these signs, when they have neither place nor opportunity of observing them." Hence Seisselius remarks, "They say that they alone observe the evangelical and apostolic doctrine, on which account, by an intolerable impudence, they usurp the name of the Church of Christ!" Reinerus also observes, "They declare themselves to be the apostles' successors, to have apostolical authority, and the keys of binding and loosing.—They say a man is then first baptized, when he is received into their community. Some of them hold that baptism is of no advantage to infants, they cannot actually believe. On the whole it is evident, that they were, and that too on principle, dissenters, not from the church of Rome only, but from all national established churches.—Their church officers, Reinerus says, were bishops, elders, and deacons; but the distinction between their bishops and other elders seems to have been only, that the former were the official pastors of the churches.

That they understood and practised immersion as baptism is evident, but whether they generally practised infant baptism has been long a matter of dispute. The words of Reinerus seemed to apply that in his time, (1260) they were of different opinions on this point. The modern Waldenses in the valleys of Piedmont, do practise it; but they have so changed in many points since their amalgamation with the Calvinists at the Reformation, having also received their pastors from them since 1603, that nothing decisive can be hence inferred. Dr. Murdock thinks that the followers of Peter Waldo universally practised infant baptism; but he gives us no authority for this opinion. The only one of their ancient writings which sanctions it is the *Spiritual Calendar*; but this, if genuine, is of doubtful date. On the contrary, all their other writings, from the Noble Lesson, in 1100, down to their Confession of Faith, 1565, Dr. Gill affirms to be in favor of the baptism of believers only. It is at least certain, that the Cathari, the Paterines, the Henricians, the Arnoldists, Petrobrusians, and Henricians, i. e. the earlier Waldenses, as far as history testifies, vehemently opposed infant baptism. That there were, on the other hand many among them in after years who adopted the practice, is, in view of all the facts, highly probable. Mr. Jones, in his preface to the fifth edition of his History, says, that the Waldenses were *Anti-pedobaptists*, i. e. Baptists. Mr. Milner, after saying, "I cannot find any satisfactory proofs that the Waldenses were in judgment Anti-pedobaptists strictly," concludes, thus:—"I lay no great stress on the subject; for the Waldenses might have been a faithful, humble, and spiritual people, as I believe they were, if they had differed from the general body of Christians on this article."

However this point may be decided, it is now generally acknowledged that the Waldenses were the "witnesses for the truth" in the dark ages, and that they gave the first impulse to a reform of the whole Christian church, so called.

PERSECUTIONS, ETC.

For bearing their noble testimony against the church of Rome, these pious people were for many centuries the subjects of most cruel persecutions; and in the thirteenth century the Pope instituted a crusade against them, and they were slaughtered with a fury perfectly diabolical.—Their principles, however, continued unsubdued, and at the Reformation their descendants, in number eight hundred thousand, were reckoned among the protestants, with whom they were in doctrine so congenial.

Some united with the Lutherans, others with Calvinists, and others still with the Anabaptists of the better sort, afterwards called Mennonites. "The modern Mennonites," says Mosheim, "not only consider themselves as the descendants of the

Waldenses; who were so grievously oppressed and persecuted by the despotic heads of the Romish church, but pretend, moreover, to be the purest offspring of those respectable sufferers."—Mosheim partially concedes this claim, though Dr. Murdock contests it, by some bold, and we think unwarrantable assertions. On this point see Ward's Letters, where the descent of the Mennonites from the ancient evangelical Waldenses, is fully acknowledged by the highest living authority in the Reformed church of Holland.

In the seventeenth century, the flames of persecution were kindled against them in Piedmont, by the cruelty of Louis XIV., 1655 and 1685.—In the last, at the revocation of the edict of Nantz, about fifteen thousand perished in the prisons of Pignerol, besides great numbers who perished among the mountains. They received afterwards, the powerful protection and support of England, under William III. Still the house of Saxony continued to treat them as heretics, and they were oppressed by a variety of cruel edicts. But we have not space here to enter into the heart-rending particulars, nor into the details of their subsequent history, their expulsion, return, changes, declension.

When Piedmont was subjected to France, in 1800, the French government (Bonaparte being first consul) placed them on the same footing of toleration with the rest of France; but on the return of the king of Sardinia to Genoa, notwithstanding the intercession of lord William Bentinck, the old persecuting edicts were revived in the end of 1814; and though they have not been subjected to fire and fagot, as aforesaid, their worship has been restrained, and they were not only stripped of all employments, but by a most providential circumstance only saved from a general massacre. Since then they have been visited by some pious and benevolent individuals; and the number of the Waldenses (or Vaudois) has been taken at nineteen thousand seven hundred and ten, besides about fifty families residing at Turin; in all twenty thousand. But, alas, "how has the gold become dim!"

The reader who wishes to enter more fully into the history and principles of this interesting people, in addition to Jones' judicious and valuable history—which is the safest as well as the most complete account of the ancient Waldenses,—may consult the following works: Maclaine's and Murdock's Mosheim; Milner's History of the Crusades against the Albigenses; Ivimey's History of the Baptist; Benedict's do; Gill's works; Ward's Farewell Letters, History of the United Brethren; Jackson's Narrative; Dwight's Travels in Germany; and the Encyclopaedia Americana. The last six works are chiefly valuable in reference to the modern Waldenses; from whom, in consequence of their connexion with the churches of France and Geneva, much of the glory of their earlier days of scriptural simplicity is departed. Their declension is no more strange and melancholy, however, than that which occurred in the primitive churches within two hundred years after the APOSTLES, and among the Dutch Baptists, within two hundred years after the death of Menno. O for another PETER DE BRUYS.

Let the Baptists of this age take warning, and cleave to the word of God alone forever and ever.—*Amer. Bapt. Mag.*

INDIAN IMPROVEMENT.

The following article was written by a young Chippeway Indian, and delivered at the late exhibition of the students of the Onieda Conference Seminary.—*Mon. Rep.*

Missionary Enterprise.

The missionary efforts are the most successful of all the benevolent enterprises that have been put into operation for the spread of Christianity and civilization in the world. When the night of barbarism and superstition covered the whole face of the continent of America, the poor and degraded inhabitant made the sun and the moon the objects of his adoration. True, he had heard his forefathers speak of the Great Spirit, who presided over all, and created all, and required the adoration of all. But he knew not how to fulfil this requirement; and though he never bowed himself before an idol, nor offered himself as a sacrifice to appease the anger of his gods, yet he never heard the Divine revelation of God's holy word till in the course of events another race of men from an unknown land appeared on his native coasts, bearing to him, as has been truly said, "the seeds of life and death." Many efforts were made by pious and Christian people for the preservation of the Indian race; but in vain, still they were disappearing from the limits of civilized society. At length the voice of humanity prevailed in every heart of philanthropy, and now at the present day a unanimous chord of sentiment is vibrating in the Christian and civilized world, to meliorate the condition of the human race. Already has the community enlisted its combined efforts in favor of the missionary cause. Already have men turned their attention to the dark places of the earth, and even to the distant islands of the sea, there to plant the standard of Christianity, the Gospel of the great Redeemer; to those regions where ignorance and idolatry are still swaying their brutalizing influences over the mind of man; to Asia, where the demon of idolatry exults in the misery of the wretched inhabitant, where its despotic tyranny has rent from the human heart all that is endearing in life, and has taught the mother to tear away from her bosom her infant, and offer it to contend with her alligator, and the widow to ascend the funeral pile of her husband; and to Africa, which appears the blackest in the catalogue of human misery, where the people are still bowing themselves down in the most revolting idolatry, and wasting away as though a mighty pestilence were making its dreadful ravages and depopulating her sultry shores—where the people of other lands are capturing with cruel hands her defenceless sons, and consigning them to the chains of slavery.

The great object of this benevolent enterprise is, the general diffusion of Christianity, and the purification of the whole world from the abomi-