

chaos of spiritual darkness points of light began to appear in England, in Bohemia, in Germany, Switzerland and France. The rays flashed from peak to peak and began to unite. The lonely, suffering hearts in the valleys of Piedmont plucked up courage. Help at last! Communications were interchanged. Messengers went back and forth, and on Sept. 12, 1532, at the Synod of Chanforans in the valley of Angrogna, Farel and Saunier from Geneva were present, and the little Waldensian church became an active partner in the religious reformations of the centuries to follow.

As may be conjectured, this final and public committal of the persecuted Vaudois to the new doctrines began a new era of horrors. Exterminating edicts, indiscriminate slaughter, overflowing prisons, agonizing cries for help at last aroused the attention of Protestant Europe. In 1655 the Duke of Savoy commanded the Waldensians to return to the Church of Rome on pain of death. They refused. The terrible work began. Under the Marquis di Pianezza 15,000 troops marched to the valley of Lucerne, and butchery scattered the flock far and wide upon the mountains. It was at this point that the voice of blind Milton sent a thrill throughout Protestant Europe :

“Avenge, O Lord, thy slaughter’d saints, whose bones
Lie scatter’d on the Alpine mountains cold;
E’en them who kept thy truth so pure of old,
When all our fathers worship’d stocks and stones.
Forget not: in thy book record their groans
Who were thy sheep, and in their ancient fold
Slain by the bloody Piedmontese that roll’d
Mother with infant down the rock. Their moans
The vales redouble to the hills, and they
To Heav’n. Their martyr’d blood and ashes sow
O’er all th’ Italian fields, where still doth sway
The triple tyrant; that from these may grow
A hundred fold, who having learn’d thy way
Early may fly the Babylonian woe.”

Cromwell flew to the rescue, raising £40,000 for the wretched outlaws. Switzerland interfered; the King of Sweden, the Elector of Palatine and the Landgrave of Hesse Castle interceded. Sir Samuel Moreland was dispatched from England as Envoy Extraordinary to France and Turin, and the dogs of war and persecution were called off and sent skulking to their kennels.

It was evident that this forced peace could not last. The great Cromwell was dead, and Milton’s tongue was forever silent. Europe plunged into an era of spiritual indifference. The revocation of the Edict of Nantes reawakened the spirit of persecution. Church influence at Turin at once aroused the temporal authorities, and the decree of submission or death once more went forth. In 1686 the prisons of Piedmont contained 15,000 unoffending victims, only 3,000 of whom ever came out alive. Again Europe interfered enough to com-