

Pellice (La Tour). How early the Waldensians settled in these valleys of rushing streams and wooded hillsides history cannot definitely inform us. This venerable church probably took its rise at Lyons on the Rhone in the twelfth century and its name from Peter Waldo, that ancient Count Tolstoi, who disposed of his property that he might give himself to the special work of his Master. Banished from Lyons at length, during the crusade against the Albigenses the new sect betook itself to the mountain retreats south and east, and finally settled in Piedmont, among the beautiful valleys under Monte Viso.

The Waldensians (Vaudois as they call themselves) were not long left undisturbed in their new home. Clinging to the pure and simple Word of God and rejecting churchly authority, it was certain that the vials of wrath from Papal Consistory and royal throne must be poured out sooner or later. It is not our purpose to trace the long story of horrors that gathers headway during six centuries of persecution before the heroic event we celebrate. Denounced and ex-communicated by papal bulls, exiled by temporal rulers, their homes and villages reduced to ashes, harried by mercenary troops, wandering up the mountains, living in caves, wasting away in deathly prisons, and burned at the stake, the devout Waldensians, without a ray of hope coming to them from any quarter of the world, clung to their simple faith desperately and successfully. "For us," they said, "we hold to the doctrine of Christ and his Apostles, while we ignore the statutes of the church. Everything that cannot be found in the gospel ought to be repudiated. To be legitimate the ordinances of the church must date back at least to the date of our Lord's ascension; otherwise they should be regarded as non-existent."

They left little record of themselves during these centuries of persecution, and we must seek their history in the bloody records of the Inquisition. Listen to the testimony of one of their bitterest enemies—the inquisitor of Passan :

"They must be recognized," he writes, "by their manners and discourse. They are sober and modest; they avoid pride in their dress, which is composed of materials neither valuable nor worthless. They have nothing to do with trade, as they do not wish to expose themselves to the necessity of lying, swearing or cheating. They live by the work of their hands as journeymen. Their very teachers are weavers and shoemakers. They do not accumulate wealth, but are content with what is needful for this life. They are chaste, the Leonists especially, and moderate at their meals. They frequent neither tavern nor ball-room, not being fond of that species of vanity. They refrain from anger; although always at work, they find means to study or teach. . . . They are also known by their discourse, which is both sober and modest. They avoid speaking evil of any one and abstain from all foolish or idle conversation, as from lying. They do not swear; they do not even use the expressions 'verily' or 'certainly,' or anything of the kind, for, in their estimation, such are equivalent to swearing."

At last after weary centuries the Reformation dawned. In the vast