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ORIGIN AND EARLY TEACHINGS OF THE WAL- DENSES, ACCORDING TO ROMAN CATHOLIC WRITERS OF THE THIRTEENTH CENTURY.

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THERE is a large literature of the sect known as the Waldenses, much of it in English, still more in French and German, but it has one defect that is at once curious and inexplicable. Few of those who have written on the subject show any acquaintance with our earliest sources of knowledge regarding the origin and primitive teachings of this interesting people. And even from books that contain some reference to these sources little is to be learned of their actual content. Certainly, in no work accessible to English readers is there an adequate account of the early Waldensians, based upon this material. It will not be a work of supererogation, therefore, to set forth somewhat in detail the considerable body of testimony regarding the beginnings of this sect—material which, though long known to a few scholars, has been so generally disregarded by those who have produced the bulk of the literature of the subject.

Properly to estimate the value of testimony, we must know something regarding the intelligence, industry, and honesty of

the witnesses. None of our testimony comes directly from the Waldenses. Our witnesses are all Roman Catholics, men of learning and ability, but as deeply prejudiced against a heretic as men could possibly be. This establishes at the outset a presumption against the trustworthiness of their testimony, and is a warning to us that we must weigh it most carefully, and scrutinize every detail before receiving it. But, on the other hand, our witnesses were men who had extraordinary opportunities for discovering the facts; some were inquisitors for years, and give us the results of interrogating a large number of persons. One at least was in his early life a member of the Waldensian sect, and obtained his knowledge from within. And it should also seem that our witnesses had no motive to misstate facts, but rather the contrary. Our documents, with a single exception, are not polemic, not intended for the general public, but composed for the information and direction of fellow-inquisitors and administrators. Evidently, the writers did not knowingly set down that which would mislead those whom they were trying to assist. They may have misunderstood, they did not deliberately lie—such is the inevitable conclusion from a careful study of the writings. And when we come to combine and compare the statements, the agreement is so remarkable on all matters of importance as to compel the conviction that the testimony is substantially correct. Where there is error in the accounts it is comparatively easy to detect and correct it. And of one thing we may be certain: any evidence that is to the credit of the sect may be accepted as worthy of implicit faith.

The documents from which quotations will be made, with few exceptions, are believed by the most competent scholars to have been composed by the year 1250 A. D., several of them before the year 1225. As the beginning of the events related by them cannot be placed earlier than the year 1170, it is evident that we have in this case as nearly contemporary accounts as could well be expected.

Probably the earliest mention of the Waldenses is that which occurs in a decree of Pope Lucius III., issued in 1181, in which he says:

We decree to put under a perpetual anathema the Cathari and Patarini and those who falsely call themselves Humiliati or Poor of Lyons, the Pasagini, Josephini, Arnaldistae.¹

There seems to be no room for doubt that the name "Poor of Lyons" (*pauperes de Lugduno*) is intended in this decree to describe those heretics known to us as Waldenses, since this was one of the earliest and most common names of the sect. This decree is chiefly valuable as affording us a date (approximate) for the origin of the sect; it cannot, of course, be placed later than this; apparently it need not be placed many years earlier. From this time onward mention of these heretics, under a great variety of names, becomes more and more frequent in the official documents of the church,² but from these sources we obtain few facts regarding their origin and teachings. We must go to private writings for fuller information.

The first witness to be called is a writer named Alanus. The name was not an uncommon one, and the treatise *Contra Haereticos* has been assigned by scholars to different men bearing that name. The general opinion is, however, that its author was a highly esteemed monk of the Cistercian order, a voluminous writer, whose learning and abilities gained for him the surname of *Universalis*. He died in 1202.³ His treatise is supposed to

¹MANSI, *Conciliorum nova et amplissima collectio*, Vol. XXII, p. 476. This decree was confirmed by the council of Verona; *ibid.*, p. 488.

²For example, the synodal statutes of Odo, bishop of Toul, 1192: "Concerning heretics who are called Wadoys, we order all the faithful, both clerics and laymen, for the remission of their sins, that whosoever shall find them shall keep them bound with chains and bring them to the see of Toul to be punished." Alphonso, king of Aragon, in 1194 issued this perpetual decree: "We command that the Waldenses or Insabati, who call themselves by another name, Poor of Lyons, and all other heretics, of whom there is no number, anathematized by the holy church, to depart and flee from our entire kingdom and domain, as enemies of the cross of Christ, violators of the Christian religion, public enemies of ourselves and of the kingdom. If anyone therefore, from this day forth, shall presume to receive into his house the aforesaid Waldenses and other heretics, of whatever profession they may be, or to listen to their deadly preaching in any place, or to give them food, or any other aid, let him know that he will incur the wrath of Almighty God and ours; and his goods shall be confiscated without remedy of appeal, and he shall be punished just as for the crime of treason." For these and other like documents see D'ARGENTRÉ, *Collectio Judiciarum de novis erroribus*, Paris, 1728, Vol. I, pp. 83 f.

³This we know from the "Chronica Albrici Monachi Trium Fontium," in PERTZ, *Monumenta Germ. Hist.*, Vol. XXIII, p. 881: "Anno 1202. Apud Cistercium mortuus est hoc anno magister Alanus de Insulis, doctor ille famosus," etc. It is explained by some that he received his surname, *de Insulis*, because of his birth at Lille, Flanders.

have been written not long before his death, and thus belongs to the opening of the thirteenth century. In the second book of this writing, devoted especially to the Waldenses, he says :

There are certain heretics who feign themselves righteous when they are wolves in sheep's clothing, concerning whom the Lord speaks in the gospel, "Beware of false prophets," etc., Matt. 7 : 15. These are called Waldenses, from their heresiarch, who was called Waldus ; who, led by his own spirit, not sent by God, invented a new sect, that is, without the authority of a prelate, without divine inspiration, without knowledge, without learning, he presumed to preach. Without reason a philosopher, without vision a prophet, without being sent an apostle, without instructor a teacher ; whose disciples, rather mousetraps,⁴ in various parts of the world, seduce the simple, turn them away from the truth, do not turn them to the truth ; who to satisfy the belly rather than the mind presume to preach.⁵

Our next witness is Bernard, in his treatise *Adversus Waldensium Sectam*, written about 1209, it is supposed. This is neither the famous Bernard of Clairvaux nor the less famous Bernard of Clugny, but a comparatively unknown man, chiefly distinguished as the abbot of a monastery of the Premonstrants or White Canons, known as *Fons Callidus* or Hot Spring, in the diocese of Narbonne. He says :

Under Lucius [III.], of renowned memory, the presiding lord of the Holy Roman church, suddenly new heretics raised their heads, who, by a certain presage of things to be, received a name and were called Waldenses, that is, from a dark valley (*a valle densa*),⁶ because they are involved in the profound and dense darkness of errors. These, though condemned by the aforesaid pope, by bold daring spewed out far and wide over the world the poison of their falsehood.⁷

Our next witness is one Peter, described as *Monachus vallium Carnati*, or Vaux Sernai, in the diocese of Paris, who wrote a

⁴ The pun in Latin, *discipuli* — *muscipuli*, is feeble, even for a mediæval monk, and fortunately cannot be imitated in English.

⁵ MIGNE, *Patrol. Lat.*, Vol. CCX, pp. 306 f.

⁶ The names and doctrines of the heretical sects afforded Roman writers endless opportunities for the making of vile puns. I have met with one even worse than the above : "But certain ones are called Waldenses, because they remain in the valley of tears." This is the handiwork of Ebrard Bethunensis, of Flanders, in his *Liber anti-hæresis*, cap. 25 ; *Bib. Max.*, PP. Vol. XXIV, pp. 1525 f.

⁷ MIGNE, *Patrol. Lat.*, Vol. CCIV, p. 793 ; also GALLANDI, *Vet. Pat. Bib.*, Vol. XIV, pp. 520 f.

Historia Albigensium covering the years 1206–17, supposed to have been completed not later than 1218. He refers briefly, but quite significantly, to this sect :

There were besides other heretics who were called Waldenses, from a certain Lyonese, Waldius by name. These indeed were wicked, but in comparison with other heretics were far less perverse. For in many things they agreed with us, but in many things they differed.⁸

One of the most valuable accounts among all those available is that of Stephen de Bourbon, also known as Stephen de bella villa. He was a member of the Dominican order, spent much of his life in the very region where the Waldenses had their origin, personally knew many of the chief actors, and died at Lyons in 1261. Part of his materials were thus gathered at first hand; the rest he obtained as an inquisitor—“as I know and have found out by many inquisitions and confessions of theirs under trial,” he tells us, “as well of the perfect as of the believers, written down from their mouths and received from many witnesses against them.” This use by Stephen of the terms *perfecti* and *credentes*, as applied to Waldenses, affords ground for suspicion that he, as well as other writers of the period, did not clearly discriminate between Waldenses and Albigenses. Stephen’s chief work, *De Septem Donis Spiritus Sancti*, composed about 1225, has never been published in full, and still exists only in a MS. in the library of the Sorbonne; but the part relating to the Waldenses has been printed. The author says :

Fourthly, we must speak of the heretics of our time, namely, the Waldenses and Albigenses The Waldenses are named from the first author of that heresy, who was named Waldensis. They are also called the Poor of Lyons, because there they began with the profession of poverty. But they call themselves the poor in spirit, because the Lord says, Matt. 5 : 3, “Blessed are the poor in spirit.” And truly they are poor in spirit, in spiritual goods and in the Holy Spirit. However, this sect began after this manner, as I have heard from many who seemed to be chief among them, and from that priest who was greatly honored and rich in the city of Lyons (and a friend of our Brothers) who was called Bernard Ydros. Who, when he was a youth and a scribe, wrote for the aforesaid Waldensis for money the first books that they had in Romance (a certain Stephen de Ansa translating and dictating to him); who, after he had received a benefice in the greater church at Lyons,

⁸ D'ARGENTRÉ, Vol. I, p. 92; MIGNE, Vol. CCXIII, p. 548.

was promoted to the priesthood, and, falling from the balcony of a house he built, ended his life by a sudden death — whom I have often seen.

A certain rich man in the aforesaid city, called Waldensis, hearing the gospels, as he was not very literate, and being curious to understand what they said, made a bargain with the aforesaid priests — with one that he would translate them for him into the vernacular (*in vulgari*), with the other that he should write what the former would dictate, which they did. They also wrote many books of the Bible, and many extracts (*auctoritates*) from the saints, arranged by title, which they called sentences. When the aforesaid citizen had often read these and learned them by heart, he purposed to keep evangelical perfection as the apostles kept it. Having sold all his goods, and in contempt of the world cast his money in the mire to the poor, he usurped the office of the apostles, and presumed by preaching through the streets and squares the gospels and those things that he retained in his heart. And calling many men and women to him to do the same, confirming the gospels in them, he also sent them through the surrounding towns to preach in the meanest possible manner. These, men and women equally, entering houses and preaching in the streets and even in the churches, incited others to do the same.

But, since they through boldness and ignorance spread abroad many errors and scandals, they were cited by the archbishop of Lyons, whose name was John, who prohibited them from expounding the Scriptures or preaching. But they took refuge in the response of the apostles, Acts 5:29. Their leader usurping the office of Peter, as he replied to the chief priest, said, “‘One must obey God rather than man;’ God commanded the apostles in the last of Mark, ‘Preach the gospel to every creature.’” As if God said this to them that he said to the apostles; who nevertheless would not have presumed to preach, had they not been endued with power from on high, had they not been most perfectly and fully illumined with knowledge and received the gift of all tongues.

They therefore, that is, Waldensis and his people, in consequence of presumption and usurpation of the apostolic office, at first fell into disobedience, then into contumacy, but last under sentence of excommunication. Afterward, driven from that land, being cited to the council held at Rome before the Lateran,⁹ and proving persistent, they were afterward adjudged schismatics. Later, in the land of Provence and Lombardy, mingling with other heretics and imbibing their errors, and sowing them, they were adjudged the most pestilent heretics, the most corrupt (*infectissimi*, most deeply dyed) and dangerous, running everywhere and feigning a likeness of holiness and

⁹“The Lateran council,” without further qualification, would mean to every reader at the time these words were written the great council of 1215, under Innocent III. The one before that would, of course, be the third Lateran, of 1179. This agrees perfectly with the statements of other authorities quoted or to be quoted.

faith, but not having the reality — the most dangerous because hidden, changing their appearance by various dresses and trades.

Sometimes a great one among them was taken who bore about with him the tokens (*indicia*) of many trades, by which like Proteus he was accustomed to change his appearance (*se transfigurabat*). If he was sought for under one disguise, and he became aware of it, he chose another. Sometimes he bore the dress and signs of a pilgrim; sometimes the staff and iron implements (*ferramenta*) of a penitent. Sometimes he pretended to be a shoemaker, a barber, a reaper, etc. Others do the like.

This sect began about the year 1170 from the incarnation of the Lord, under John, called Bolesmanis, archbishop of Lyons.¹⁰

Another witness of almost equal value has until recently been identified with Reinerus Sachonus Placentius, a learned writer who was in youth a member of the Cathari or Waldenses,¹¹ but afterward became a Catholic. He entered the Dominican order and became one of the most zealous persecutors of his former associates, being for some years an inquisitor in Lombardy. His *Summa de Catharis et Leonistis* is not a polemic, but a treatise for the information of other inquisitors. What he writes is therefore not only founded on knowledge of the most accurate kind, but is evidently honest in intent, and from it we gain valuable information regarding the Waldensian teachings. It was until lately supposed that, having written this treatise in the year 1230, Reinerus added to it certain other things about the Waldenses about 1250. Gieseler was the first to point out¹² that this second part was by another writer altogether, whom he called pseudo-Reinerus. Dr. Preger¹³ has since made it clear

¹⁰ D'ARGENTRÉ, Vol. I, pp. 87–9. The surname Bolesmanis, given by Stephen to Archbishop John of Lyons, is a corruption of his true title, *de bellis manibus*.

¹¹ Our only information is a sentence in the *Summa*: "*Ego autem frater Ranerius olim haeresirarcha.*" He is speaking at the time of the Cathari, but it is by no means plain to me that he intended to distinguish clearly between them and the Poor of Lyons.

¹² *De Rainerii Summa Commentatio critica*, Göttingen, 1834.

¹³ *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Waldesier im Mittelalter, Abhandlungen der königl. bayer. Akademie der Wissenschaften*, III. Classe, XIII. Bd., 1. Abth.; also separately, München, 1875. The pseudo-Reinerus or Passau anonymous document in its original form is the third in his collection. But I have called by the same name, in default of a better, the extracts made by Gretser and copied by D'Argentré, though some are from other sources.

that the original document was compiled by an ecclesiastic, evidently an inquisitor, in the diocese of Passau, whom he named the Passau anonymous; and by that title the author is likely henceforth to be known, unless his true name transpires. On the origin of the sect he writes as follows:

Observe that the sect of the Poor of Lyons, who are also called Leonistae, arose after this manner. When some of the chief citizens were together in Lyons, it happened that one of them died suddenly before them. On which account one of them was so greatly terrified that he immediately spent a great treasure on the poor, and on account of this a very great multitude of the poor flocked to him. These he taught to maintain voluntary poverty, and to be imitators of Christ and the apostles. But since he had little knowledge of letters, he taught them the text of the New Testament in the vernacular (*vulgariter*). When he was reproved for this temerity, he despised [reproof] and began to insist upon his doctrine, saying to his disciples that the clergy, since they were of evil life, hated their holy life and doctrine. But when the pope pronounced sentence of excommunication upon them, he persistently despised it. And so to this day in all those lands their doctrine and rancor increases.

Our next witness is a chronicle of the period that ends abruptly with the year 1219, and gives every indication in its contents that its compilation was finished at about that time. Nothing is known of its author, except that he was a citizen of Lodi, but the chronicle gives internal evidence of his diligence and usual accuracy. What he says about the Waldenses has at least this significance: it gives the account that was current in his day of the origin of the sect; beyond this he may or may not have had access to first-hand sources of information:

In the same year (1173) of our Lord's incarnation there was at Lyons, in Gaul, a certain citizen, Valdesius by name, who through the wickedness of usury had accumulated great wealth. He on a certain Sunday, when he was turning away from a crowd that he saw gathered about a jester (*joculatorem*), was pricked by his words, and, bringing him to his house, was solicitous to hear him carefully. For there was a passage in his story in which the blessed Alexis rested at his happy end in the house of his father. When it was morning, the citizen hastened to the celebrated schools of theology, to seek counsel for his soul; and, being taught about many ways of going to God, inquired of the master which of all the ways is surer and more perfect. To whom the master returned our Lord's saying: "If thou wouldst be perfect, go and sell all thou hast," etc. And coming to his wife, he gave

her the option whether from all his property—on land and sea, groves, meadows, houses, revenues, vineyards, as well as millhouses, and bakeries—she would choose to keep the real or personal estate. She, although very sad that it was needful to do this, kept the real estate. He indeed from the personal property made restitution to those he had wronged, but a great part of his money he gave to his two little girls, whom he transferred without their mother's knowledge to the Abbey of Fontevrault (*Fons-Evrardus*); but a great part he expended for the use of the poor. For a mighty famine was then moving through all Gaul and Germany. But the celebrated citizen Valdesius gave bountifully, from Pentecost to the [feast of the] chains of St. Peter,¹⁴ to all who came to him, bread and a portion of flesh. On the Assumption of the blessed Virgin he distributed a certain sum of money through the streets among the poor, and called aloud, saying: "No one can serve two masters, God and mammon." Then the citizens, running together, thought he had lost his reason. And ascending into a higher place, he says: "O citizens and friends of mine! I am not insane, as you think, but I am avenged upon these my enemies, who have made me their slave, since always I have been more anxious about money than about God, and have served the creature rather than the creator. I know that most blame me because I have done this openly. But I have done it for my own sake and for you: for myself, in order that they who may see me hereafter possess money may say that I am mad; but also for your sake in part have I done this, that you may learn to put your trust in God and not trust in riches."

But on the following day, returning from church, he begged a certain citizen, a former associate of his, for the sake of God to give him something to eat. The latter brought him to his guest-chamber, and said: "As long as I live, I grant you the necessaries" [of life]. When this affair came to the notice of his wife, she was not a little grieved, but as one distracted she ran to the archbishop of the city and lamented that her husband should beg bread from another than her. Which thing moved to tears all who were present, with the prelate himself. Then, in accordance with the command of the prelate, the burgher brought his guest with him to the presence of the prelate. But the woman, seizing her husband by the coat, says: "Man, is it not better that I should atone for my sins by charity to thee, than a stranger?" And from then it was not permitted him, by command of the archbishop in that city, to take food with others than his wife.¹⁵

¹⁴ A feast celebrated at Rome August 1, and in the West generally. The eastern church has a different date, owing to the use of the Julian calendar. The Assumption is celebrated August 15. For the origin of these feasts and the ideas connected with them see ADDIS and WRIGHT'S *Catholic Dictionary*.

¹⁵ *Ex Chronico universalis anonymi Laudensis*, in PERTZ, *Mon. Germ. Hist.*, Vol. XXVI, pp. 447 f.

The last witness we shall call¹⁶ is the author of the *Tractatus de inquisitione Haereticorum*. This was formerly supposed to be the work of a Dominican friar and inquisitor, named Yvonetus, of whom little else was known. Of the three MSS. of the writing known to exist, one in Stuttgart ascribes the tract to David of Augsburg, a Franciscan. Drs. Pfeiffer and Preger have now established the authorship of David beyond reasonable doubt, and the latter scholar has published a critical text of the tract.¹⁷ In the text as hitherto printed there is a paragraph prefixed, which internal evidence shows clearly enough to be no part of the document itself; and it is so nearly verbally identical with the account by Stephen of Bourbon as to be almost certainly derived from that source.¹⁸ The genuine account of David begins thus:

The rise of this sect, which is called *Pover de Leun*, or *Pauperes de Lugduno* (as I have heard from several sources, also from some of them who seem to have returned to the faith, for I was present at their examinations), is said to have been on this wise: At Lyons there were certain simple laymen who, inflamed by a certain spirit and setting themselves above others, boasted that they wished to live altogether according to gospel doctrine and to keep it to the very letter. They demanded from the lord pope, Innocent [III.], that this mode of life should be confirmed to them and their followers by his authority, until this time acknowledging that the primacy of apostolic power resided with him. Afterward they began of themselves—that they might show themselves more fully as disciples of Christ and successors of the

¹⁶ This is not, however, for lack of further material. D'Argentré gives a number of similar accounts by other writers, mostly later than 1250. For example: Guido de Perpiniano, a Carmelite, who wrote about 1342; Eymericus, in his *Directorio Inquisitorum*, about 1376; Robertus Gaguinus in his *Historia Francorum*. As many more names might be added. None of these writers can be said to contribute anything to what is already recorded; the few additional particulars in their accounts are probably false; some are certainly so, as when Guido charges promiscuous immorality against the Waldenses. On the testimony of Moneta see note 20, below.

¹⁷ *Der Tractat des David von Augsburg über die Waldesier*, von DR. W. PREGER, in the *Abhandlungen der k. bayer. Akademie der Wiss.*, III. Cl., XIV. Bd., 2. Abth., pp. 183–235. Also separately, München, 1878.

¹⁸ It will be found in MARTÈNE and DURAND'S *Thesaurus novus Anecdotorum*, Vol. V, pp. 1777 f., printed as an inseparable part of the document attributed by the editors to Yvonetus. On grounds of internal evidence alone one would be inclined to agree with Dr. Preger that this is an error; but when this paragraph is missing from the three extant MSS. of the tractate, there is no case left to be argued.

apostles—boastfully to take to themselves even the office of preaching, saying that Christ commanded his disciples to preach the gospel. And because they set themselves up to interpret the words of the gospel in the proper signification, seeing no others keeping the gospel according to the letter, as they boasted they wished to do, they said that they alone were true imitators of Christ. When the church saw them usurp the office of preaching, which had not been committed to them, since they were uneducated and laymen, she prohibited them, as was fitting, and excommunicated them when unwilling to obey. But they despised in this the keys of the church, saying that the clergy did this through envy, because they saw them (Waldenses) to be better than themselves, and to teach better, and in consequence of this to have greater favor with the people. For a good and perfect work, such as teaching the faith and doctrine of Christ, no one should or can be excommunicated, and against the doctrine of Christ no one ought by any means to obey anyone prohibiting such a good work. That excommunication they thought to be an eternal benediction for them, and gloried that they were successors of the apostles; that as they (the apostles) were put out of the synagogue by scribes and Pharisees for the teaching of the gospel, and were under their curse and persecution, so they also suffered similar things from the clergy. Thus haughty presumption in the garb and pretext of sanctity brought in the blindness of peculiar heretical wickedness. For evangelical perfection would rather teach to obey humbly the teachers and rulers of the church than to separate from Catholic unity through the pride of singularity.

From these accounts we gather certain facts that may be regarded as certainly established. The sect known as Waldenses, or Poor of Lyons, originated about the year 1170, in consequence of the teachings of a citizen of Lyons, whose name was probably Waldo.¹⁹ The traditions of an earlier origin, stretching back even to the days of the apostles, are mere fables.²⁰

¹⁹ It is noteworthy that the name Peter is not given by any of the earlier authorities. It is not found, in fact, until the beginning of the fifteenth century. But it is traditional among the Waldenses as the real name of their founder, and the tradition may be accepted without much question.

²⁰ This conclusion from the documents already examined is strongly confirmed by the polemics of Moneta of Cremona, a Dominican inquisitor, in a treatise *Contra Catharos et Valdenses*, Romae, 1743, pp. 402 f. He says: "That the aggregate of the Poor of Lyons is not the church of God will be plain if its origin is considered. For it was not long ago that they began, since, as it appears, they take their rise from Valdesius, a citizen of Lyons, who began this way. They have been in existence not more than eighty years (if so many, rather less than more). Therefore they are not the successors of the primitive church; therefore they are not the church of God. But if they say that their way existed before Valdensis, let them show it by some proof, which they are not in the least able to do. . . . In the fourth place, the same appears

Not only are they utterly at variance with the unanimous testimony of the writers above quoted, but the one Waldensian document that can fairly claim an equal antiquity with these sources is equally clear in ascribing the origin of the sect to Waldo.²¹ There is more than a possibility that some of the groups into which the sect was divided have an origin prior to ecclesiastical orders, which they admit to be at least threefold, to wit, bishops, presbyters, and deacons. Without these threefold orders the church of God cannot and should not exist, as they themselves witness. Let us then say to them: If there is no church of God without these orders, your origin is certainly without them; therefore you are not the church of God. But if one says, Our origin had those orders, I ask from whom it had them, for who is your bishop? If they say, such a man, tell us who ordained him. If they say, a certain man, I ask also who ordained that other one, and so ascending they are compelled to come to Valdesius. Then let it be asked whence he had his orders. If they say, from himself, it is evident that if this is so it is opposed to the apostle, Heb. 5:4. But if Valdesius has his order from himself, he has called himself to be high priest. He was, therefore, Antichrist, that is, opposed to Christ and his church. If they say that he had his order directly from God, they are able to offer no proof from Scripture; for by the same reasoning anybody pretending to be a good man might say the same, and so lead a sect of perdition. . . . But it should be known that some say that Valdesius had his orders from the whole of his brethren. But of those who have said this the chief was a certain heresiarch of the Lombard Poor, a perverted doctor named Thomas. He attempted to prove it thus: Anyone of that congregation could give Valdesius his right, to wit, to rule himself; and so the whole congregation could confer and did confer on Valdesius the rule of all, and so they created him high priest and prelate of all. But if that heresiarch had understood how foolish that is, he would never have let it come from his mouth. For every pontificate is a rule, but not every rule is a pontificate; whence then it follows they were able to give him the rule of themselves, but a pontificate —? Does it follow because I can give you one thing I can give you another? Not at all. . . . Fifthly, it appears that they are not the church of God, through the lack of preaching. For just as it was proved that they lack orders, so also it can be proved that they lack the office of preaching. By the word of the apostle, Rom. 10:15, 'How shall they preach unless they are sent?' But they cannot show that they were sent by anyone having authority to send. At the last we come again to Valdesius who was the first of them. Concerning whom it is not known by whom he was sent, unless by the pope. They are not, therefore, the church of God, which has orders and the office of preaching, while they have neither.²² Moneta, who wrote about 1250, is perhaps of less value as an original authority than the other writers cited; we know little of his means of informing himself accurately, and his work is of a different character from those cited above. But his challenge indicates that the Waldenses themselves had little confidence in the validity of their claims of antiquity.

²¹The *Rescriptum Heresiarcharum Lombardie ad Pauperes de Lugduno, qui sunt in Alemania*, first published in the *Beiträge* of Preger. We owe the preservation of this document to the zeal of the Passau anonymous against the Waldenses.

Waldo. For myself, I regard it as satisfactorily established that the Poor of Lombardy, commonly identified with the Waldenses, had an independent origin, and were descended from that more or less evangelical party in Italy which, under the various titles of Humiliati, Arnoldistæ, Paterini, Pauliciani, existed several centuries prior to the time of Waldo. In southern France itself it is demonstrable that the Petrobrusians, who preceded the Waldensians by a half century, were even more evangelical than the followers of Waldo. My own conclusion from all the facts thus far established is that the Waldenses absorbed and gave their name to preëxisting sects of evangelical believers, like the Petrobrusians, and that thus, and thus only, can we satisfactorily account for the rapid growth and wide diffusion of the Waldenses and their teachings in the thirteenth century. Many bits of scattered evidence confirm this view, but there is no space for further discussion in this article.²²

It is plain also that in the beginning of his work, at least, Waldo had no idea that he was a heretic, and no intention of causing a schism. He was not guilty of any offense in having the Scriptures translated or in repeating and explaining them to others. It was not until the synod of Toulouse, in 1229, that the Roman church, taught by its experience with the Waldenses the danger of letting the common people have the Scriptures in the vernacular, forbade laymen to have either the Old or the New Testament, save such portions as might be contained in the ordinary books of devotion.²³ The synod of Tarragon, 1234, followed up this prohibition by forbidding even priests to have the Scriptures in the vernacular and commanding all who owned

²² For example, see the letter of Evervinus Steinfeldensis to Bernard of Clairvaux in D'ARGENTRÉ, Vol. I, p. 33, and note how the errors of these "new heretics" therein described conform to those of the Waldenses. Compare also their examination (as related in D'ARGENTRÉ, Vol. I, pp. 65 f.) held at Narbonne in 1165 (especially at the top of p. 66).

²³ *Concilium Tolosanum*, Anno 1229, Cap. XIV: "*Prohibemus etiam, ne libros veteris testamenti aut novi, laici permittantur habere: nisi forte psalterium, vel brevarium pro Divinis officiis, aut horas beatae Mariae aliquis ex devotione habere velit. Sed ne praemissos libros habeant in vulgari translato, arctissime inhibemus.*" (MANSI, Vol. XXII, p. 196.)

copies to bring them to their bishop to be burned.²⁴ But no such *ex post facto* law of the church can be conceived to apply to Waldo. None of the accounts charge Waldo with teaching any false doctrine at first. The whole gravamen of the charges against him is that, being an ignorant layman, he presumed to preach. Everything points to the conclusion, as already hinted, that this preaching consisted in little or nothing more than the repetition of the words of Scripture to those who would hear. The story of the Lodi chronicler already related throws light in this matter. Waldo was first awakened, he tells us, by hearing a traveling "jester" (query, does not the *joculator* of the chronicler simply mean the *jongleur*, who in mediæval times combined minstrelsy with juggling?) recite the story of Saint Alexis—a story that is extant in the French of that period. It was easy for one who could recite such tales to gather a crowd about him, and Waldo found it equally easy, no doubt, to induce men to stop in the streets and hear the stories about Jesus that he had learned by heart from the gospels. This the jealous clergy construed as "preaching," and they hastened to put a stop to this trespassing upon their prerogative.

It was at this point that John *de bellis manibus*, archbishop of Lyons, interfered with the work of Waldo and his followers. There was then no other ground whatever for interference, as all the narratives agree. For the other features of the Waldensian manners were quite regular, and such as the church then and always approved. The vow of poverty, the going forth two by two, the black garb, the discarding of shoes in favor of sandals—these were then, had long been, and long continued to be, the common features of religious orders established under church patronage and receiving the highest approval of prelates of every rank. The Waldenses were treated as offenders only because they threatened collision with the priesthood and its prerogatives. Here was something that the church hated as much as any heresy.

²⁴ *Conventus Tarraconensis*, Anno 1234, Canon ii: "*Item, statuitur, ne aliquis libros veteris vel novi testamenti in Romanico habeat, infra octo dies post publicationem hujusmodi constitutionis a tempore sententiæ, tradat eos loci episcopo comburendos, quod nisi fecerit, sive clericus fuerit, sive laicus, tamquam suspectus de hæresi, quousque se purgaverit, habeatur.*" (MANSI, Vol. XXIII, p. 329.)

It was built on a theory of salvation through certain sacraments, dispensed through a sacred priesthood, upon whom power to do this was conferred by "orders" sacramentally transmitted from the apostles. Permit a mere layman, to whom no sacred chrism had given this mysterious power of administering the sacraments, to engage in the almost sacramental work of preaching! It was not for a moment to be considered possible.

It is not fanciful to trace an exact parallel, to this point, between Waldo and Francis of Assisi. Francis was arrested in the midst of a frivolous career by the grace of God, and made a new creature. He like Waldo began to tell to others in a simple way, mostly in private conversation, what had been wrought in him by the power of God—taking the vow of poverty, clad in a simple robe girt with a rope, wearing sandals or going with bare feet. Francis had also gathered about him a few friends—twelve in all there are said to have been—and in his case also the jealousy of priests and prelates was aroused, and his work was in imminent danger of being laid under the ban of the church. The parallel is perfect, deed for deed, and that without any straining of the facts.

Waldo determined to appeal from Archbishop John to the pope. At this point the accounts that have thus far been cited fail us, whether from lack of knowledge on the part of the writers, or unwillingness to tell the facts, can only be conjectured. But we have from a very different source a full account of what occurred. Walter Mapes, or Map, an English delegate to the Lateran council of 1179, has described the appearance of the Waldenses in this body:

I saw in the Roman Council under the renowned pope, Alexander III.,²⁵ Waldenses, ignorant and unlettered, named from their chief, Valdis, who was a citizen of Lyons on the Rhone. They presented to the lord pope a book written in the Gallic tongue, in which was contained the Psalter and most of

²⁵ DIECKHOFF (*Die Waldenser im Mittelalter*, Göttingen, 1851, pp. 343 f.) argues that for Alexander III. in the above we must read Innocent III., and that the year of the council was 1210. This is an arbitrary change, for which no good reason is assigned, and makes necessary a chronology of early Waldensian history that is, to put it mildly, extremely improbable. Such handling of historical documents, though proposed in the name of critical scholarship, is a defiance of all genuinely critical treatment of sources.

the books of both laws, and a glossary. These people were asking with much insistence that their right to preach should be confirmed, because they considered themselves worthy, though they were mere dunces (*vix sciolii*). I, the least of the many thousands summoned, was laughing at them, because any consideration or delay was given to their petition; and being called by a certain great prelate to whom the pope committed the care of confessions, I took my seat prepared for the contest. And many who were learned in the canon law and wise being associated [with me], there were brought before me two Waldenses who seemed to be chiefs in their sect, to dispute with me concerning the faith, not for love of seeking truth, but that being refuted my mouth might be closed as hostile to the truth. I acknowledge I took my seat with perturbation, lest for my sins the grace of speech should be denied me in so grand a council. But the pontiff directed me to question them, which I was ready to do. I commenced with the easiest questions, of which nobody should be ignorant, knowing that when an ass is eating oats he does not disdain lettuce. "Do you believe in God the Father?" They answered: "We believe." "And in the Son?" They answered: "We believe." "And in the Holy Ghost?" They answered: "We believe." "And in the mother of Christ?" And they again: "We believe." At this the whole assembly burst out laughing.²⁶ Our friends retired in confusion, and properly; because they are ruled by no one and long to be rulers, resembling Phaëton, who did not even know the names of his horses. These people have no fixed abodes; they go about two by two, barefooted with a woolen tunic, possessing nothing, having all things in common like the apostles; poor themselves, they follow a Christ who is poor. They begin now in a most humble way, because they hardly know how to lift the foot; if we admit them, we shall be turned out.²⁷

This account does not mention Waldo by name; indeed, it rather implies that he was not present. Another informant, the chronicler of Lodi from whom we have already quoted, tells us that Waldo went to Rome in person, and gives this account of the matter:

In the year of grace 1178. The Lateran council was summoned by pope Alexander, the third of that name. . . . This council condemned heresy and all promoters of heresy as well as defenders. Waldesius was embraced by

²⁶ The exquisiteness of this joke depends on the fact that the Waldenses should have replied: "No, we believe *on* the mother of Christ." *Credere in* is properly applied only to the three persons of the Trinity. That these Waldenses should be ignorant of a distinction by no means always observed even by trained Roman theologians is not surprising.

²⁷ MAPES, *De nugis curialium*, edited by Wright, "Camden Society Publications," 1850. Also quoted, as to the above passage, by USSHER, *De Christianum Ecclesiarum Successione et Statu, Works*, Dublin ed., Vol. II, pp. 244, 245.

the pope, who approved the vow of poverty he had voluntarily made, but commanded him that neither he himself nor his associates should assume the office of preaching, except at the request of the priests. Which precept they observed for a short time; but afterward becoming disobedient it resulted in scandal to many and to him in a threat [of excommunication?].

This does not claim to be the testimony of an eyewitness, but, as it does not positively contradict anything said by Mapes, it may be true, though it must be received with some dubiety.

So much for the testimony of contemporary (or nearly contemporary) documents to the facts regarding the origin of the Waldenses. The agreement of the sources is not less striking and instructive when we come to inquire of them what were the distinctive teachings of the sect in its early years. There are, to be sure, variations, but these mostly concern unimportant details, and are no greater than we should expect from independent witnesses. The variations are, in fact, such as to establish the good faith, independence, and general trustworthiness of the testimony. The documents are too long, and contain too many unimportant particulars, to render it advisable to print them here in full; but the more significant statements of the writers already quoted, and a few others, regarding the Waldensian teachings are summarized under a few heads. I have taken great pains fairly to represent, not only the general agreement, but the variations, in the testimony:

The Scriptures.—Everything preached that is not proved by the text of the Bible they hold to be fable. . . . They know by heart the New Testament and most of the Old Testament in the vulgar tongue. . . . They assert that the doctrine of Christ and the apostles, without the decrees of the church, suffices for salvation. . . . They oppose the mystical sense in the Scriptures. (Passau anonymous.)

They do not receive the Old Testament for believing, but teach only a few things from that source, in order that they may attack us and defend themselves; saying that when the gospel came all old things passed away. So also they select the words of the saints, Augustine, Jerome, Gregory, Ambrose, John Chrysostom, Isidore, and mutilated extracts (*auctoritates*) from their books, that by these they may fortify their inventions and withstand us, or more easily lead astray the simple, coloring sacrilegious teaching with the beautiful sentences of the saints. But those opinions of the saints that they see to be contrary to them, by which their error is destroyed, they pass by in silence. . . . They have also made some verses (*rithmos*) which they call the thirty steps of St. Augustine, in which they teach how virtue should be followed and vice detested, and cleverly insert their rites and heresies, so that they may be the better drawn to saying them, and fix them the

more strongly in the memory — just as we give to the laity the creed and the Lord's prayer — and they have for this purpose compiled other beautiful hymns (*carmina*). (David of Augsburg.)

Salvation, purgatory.— God alone can absolve from sin; God alone can excommunicate. . . . It suffices for salvation to confess to God alone and not to men; and external penances are not necessary to salvation; but whenever any sinner repents, however great and many the sins he has committed, if he dies he immediately rises (*statim evolat, i. e.*, to heaven). . . . They assert that there is no purgatorial punishment save in the present, nor do the prayers of the church profit the dead, nor does anything done for them. (Stephen of Bourbon.)

They say there is no purgatory, but all, when they die, immediately go either to heaven or to hell. Wherefore prayers offered by the church for the dead, they assert, do not avail; since those in heaven do not need them, and those in hell are not at all assisted. They say also that the saints in heaven do not hear the prayers of the faithful, nor the praises by which we honor them. They argue that since the bodies of the saints lie here dead, and their spirits are so far removed from us in heaven, they can by no means hear our prayers; because, absorbed in heavenly joy, they cannot take heed of us, or care for anything else. (David of Augsburg.)

They blaspheme those that dwell in heaven when they say that apostles, martyrs, and the citizens of heaven cannot aid those who pray. . . . There are, indeed, some heretics that say souls separated from the body at once ascend to heaven or descend into the punishment of hell. . . . There are, on the other hand, those that say souls cannot enter either heaven or hell before judgment. But the souls of the just are kept in pleasant refuges (*receptacula*), while the spirits of the wicked are in places of punishment. The refuges of the pious are called paradise, while the places of punishment of the evil are called hell. But after the judgment the elect will possess heavenly mansions, and the wicked will be tormented with the tortures of hell. (Bernard.)²⁸

Prayers and alms cannot profit the dead, to remission of sins; nor do indulgences given by our lord the pope, or by other prelates, profit anyone. (*De Modo Procedendū*.)²⁹

They deny purgatory, saying there are only two ways, namely, one of the elect to heaven, the other of the damned to hell. (Passau anonymous.)

The church.— They say that the Roman church is not the church of Jesus Christ, but is a church of wicked men (*malignantium*), and the true church ceased to exist under Sylvester, when the poison of temporal things was infused into the church. And they say that they themselves are the church of Christ, because in word and act they observe the teaching of Christ, the gospels and apostles. . . . All approved customs of the church that they do not read in the gospel they despise, as the feast of candles, of

²⁸The treatise of Bernard is founded on an older document, a report of a disputation between Catholics and Waldenses at Narbonne, about 1190, under the presidency of the priest Raymond de Daventer. The original may be found in the *Max. Bib.*, PP. Vol. XXIV, and a quite full translation of it is given in COMBA, *History of the Waldenses of Italy* (London, 1889), pp. 47 f.

²⁹Dieckhoff puts the date of this document in the time of Gregory X. (1271–6), but without assigning any satisfactory reason. It is quite as likely to be older. Dieckhoff is much inclined to adopt the latest possible date for a Waldensian document as the only tenable one.

pains, the reconciliation of penitents, adoration of the cross,³⁰ the feast of Easter; and they spurn the feasts of the saints on account of the multiplication of saints. And they say that one day is just like another, therefore they secretly work on feast days. (Passau anonymous.)

Error 33. That no one is saved except in their sect. (Reinerus.)

Especially they argue concerning disobedience: since they do not obey the Roman church, which has the fulness of power to bind and loose, and the authority to direct other churches. . . . Besides, they submit neither to bishops nor to priests. . . . Obedience should not be rendered to bishops, priests, nor, horrible to tell, to the Holy Roman church. (Bernard.)

They affirmed that they alone are the church of Christ and the disciples of Christ. They say that they are the successors of the apostles, and have apostolic authority, and the keys of binding and loosing. . . . The Roman church is the harlot of Babylon, and all who obey it are damned. . . . All laws of the church since the ascension of Christ they say are not to be obeyed, nor are they of any value whatever. Feasts, fast days, orders, benedictions, offices of the church, and similar things they altogether reject. . . . On feast days, where they can do it secretly, they work, arguing that, since it is a good thing to work, it cannot be bad to work on a good day. In Lent and on other fast days of the church they do not fast, but eat flesh where they dare, saying that God is not pleased by the afflictions of his friends, but is able to save them without these things. . . . In consequence of the same dissimulation they frequent with us the churches, they are present at divine service, they offer at the altar, they receive the sacraments, they confess to the priests, they keep the fasts of the church and observe the feasts, and bending their heads receive the benedictions of the priests, when nevertheless they laugh at these and all other similar institutions of the church, and pronounce them profane and condemnable — just as sometimes a wolf covers himself with a sheepskin, that the wolf may not be known from the sheep. (David of Augsburg.)

The mass.—The body and blood of Christ they do not believe to be really such, but only bread blessed, which by a certain figure is said to be the body of Christ; as it is said, "But the rock was Christ," and the like. But this [blessing] some say can only be performed by the good, but others [say] by all who know the words of consecration. They observe this in their conventicles, reciting those words of the gospels at their table, and participating together as in the supper of Christ. (David of Augsburg.)

Concerning the sacrament of the eucharist they say that priests in mortal sin cannot make [the body of Christ]. . . . They say that transubstantiation does not take place in the hands of the unworthy maker, but in the mouth of the worthy receiver, and can be made at a common table. . . . They say that transubstantiation takes place by words in the vernacular. . . . They

³⁰"Neither the body of Christ, nor any other creature, such as images and crosses, is to be adored and worshiped with any sort of adoration, without idolatry." (*Disputatio inter Catholicum et Paterinum Haeticum*, MARTÈNE and DURAND, Vol. V, pp. 1727 f.) This is repeated, word for word, by Reinerus. His treatise appears to be, in fact, wholly founded on this report of the disputation, which is said to have occurred under Archbishop Bernard of Narbonne, known to have held the office from 1181 to 1191. This brings the testimony of Reinerus very close to the origin of the sect. Compare with the above teaching the third error attributed by Peter the Venerable to the Petrobrusians. MIGNE, Vol. CLXXXIX, p. 762.

say that the church singing is infernal clamor. . . . They say that the oblation made by the priest in the mass is of no value, and does not profit. . . . They say that the Holy Scripture has the same effect in the vulgar tongue as in the Latin,³¹ whence they make in the vernacular and give the sacraments. (Passau anonymous.)

They say that in the sacrament of the altar the bread and wine after consecration are not made the body and blood of Christ, if the priest is a sinner; and they hold everybody to be a sinner unless he is of their sect. Again, that the consecration of the body and blood of Christ can be accomplished by any good man, even a layman, provided he be of their sect, although he has not been ordained presbyter by a Catholic bishop. (*De Modo Procedendi*.)

Besides, they asserted that when there was necessity, any one of them, if only he wore sandals, without accepting ordination from the bishop, could make the body of Christ. (Peter of Vaux Sernai.)

They believe firmly and confess that this is the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, and if anything remains of the sacrifice they keep it till Easter and then consume it all. . . . The aforesaid Poor of Lyons consecrate only once a year, that is to say, in the supper of the Lord, and then almost by night. He who is chief among them, if he is a priest, calls all of his family of both sexes, and causes a bench or single stool to be placed before them, and puts upon it a clean cloth, and afterward one good goblet of good and pure wine, and one unleavened loaf (*fugaziam azymam*). And after a while he who presides says to those standing by, Let us ask our Lord that he will forgive us our sins and offenses, because of his mercy, and those things that we ask worthily he should fulfil because of his mercy. And let us say seven times Our Father, to the honor of God and the sacred Trinity, as he himself does this. And then on bended knees all say seven times Our Father. Afterward they rise, and then he who consecrates shows the bread and cup, and having broken the bread gives his portion to each of those standing by, and after that gives to all to drink from the cup; and stands all the time on his feet, and so finishes the sacrifice. (Reinerus.)

Baptism.—They say that a man is then truly for the first time baptized, when he is brought into their heresy. But some say that baptism does not profit little children because they are not yet able to believe. (David of Augsburg.)

One statement of their error is, because they say that baptism does not profit little children to salvation, who have neither the motive nor the act of faith, because as it is said in the latter part of Mark, "He that will not believe will be condemned." . . . The heretic asserts that without the baptism of fire there is no salvation, Luke 3, "He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire." Wherefore they place the believers by themselves in some secret place, with lighted candles on every side of them, and some prayers, rather execrations, are spoken by the heresiarch, the other believers standing by. (Stephen).³²

³¹ Compare Reinerus, Error 19: "That prayers in Latin profit nothing, because they are not understood."

³² This account is so fantastic that one is at first inclined to disbelieve it altogether; but, on the other hand, it is not likely to have been invented by Stephen. It was, perhaps, some ceremony in which the enlightenment of the believer by the Holy Spirit was symbolically represented. But compare the more simple and probable account by Peter of Vaux Sernai.

Concerning baptism they say that the catechizing is of no value. Again, that the washing that is given to infants does not profit. Again, that the sponsors do not understand what they answer to the priest. (Passau anonymous).³³

The aforesaid heretics oppose the sacraments of the church: for they say baptism does not avail before years of discretion. But on this article of heresy there are different opinions among the heretics. For some say little children have no sin, and so baptism is not necessary for little children. Others say that little children have sin, but cannot have remission of sins or the virtue of baptism without faith. . . . Others of the heretics say that little children have sin, but baptism does not avail them before years of discretion, because they have not faith. . . . Without baptism faith avails not, nor faith without baptism. . . . There are those who say the sacrament of baptism that is celebrated in the church of God has no efficacy, either as to little children or adults. . . . He who comes to baptism either repents or does not. If he does not repent, baptism does not profit him; if he repents, he is already justified, and all his sin is remitted. Therefore baptism has no power of remitting sin for him, and water baptism is not at all necessary for remission of sins. . . . Others said baptism does not avail without imposition of hands. (Alanus.)

When anyone betakes himself to the heretics, he who receives him says: "Friend, if you would be one of us, you must renounce the entire faith that the Roman church holds." He answers: "I renounce it." "Then receive the Holy Spirit from the good men" (then he breathes upon his face seven times). Again he says: "Do you renounce that cross which the priest made on you in baptism, on breast and shoulders and head, with oil and chrism?" He answers: "I renounce it." "Do you believe that water secures your salvation?" He answers: "I do not believe it." "Do you renounce that veil that the priest put on your head when you were baptized?" He answers: "I renounce it." So he receives the baptism of the heretics and denies that of the Roman church. Then all place their hands upon his head, and kiss him, and clothe him with a black garment; and from that hour he is as one of them. (Peter.)

Other sacraments.—Some assert that no penance avails for remission of sin. Which they try to prove thus: God remits sins freely, therefore not for good works, therefore not through penance. (Alanus.)

Concerning penance they say that which the priest enjoins is nothing, and they assert that confession is not to be made to them, but only that confession is to be made which God enjoins in Mark, chap. 1; Acts, chap. 3. Yet the good priest, which the heretic says he is, can pray for a sinner, James, chap. 5. Let the priest pray for him, and if he is in sins they shall be forgiven him. (Stephen.)

Concerning the sacrament of penance they say that no one can be absolved by a bad priest. . . . That a good layman has the power of absolving; that they themselves by the imposition of hands remit sins and give the Holy Spirit; that one ought to be confessed by a good layman rather than by a bad priest. Again they say that no severe penance is to be imposed, after the example of Christ, "Go and sin no more." Again, they condemn public penances, as with chains, especially for women. (Passau anonymous.)

³³ Compare Reinerus also, who testifies that the Poor of Lombardy say infants are saved without baptism; while both branches of the Waldenses hold that children baptized by priests of the Roman church are not saved [by the baptism?].

The pope is the head of all errors. . . . Prelates are scribes and religious Pharisees. . . . We must not obey prelates, but God alone. . . . They reprobate the names of prelates, such as pope, bishops, etc. They spurn councils, synods, and conventions. . . . They say that every good layman may be a priest, an apostle; the apostles were laymen. Again, that the prayer of a bad priest avails nothing. Again, they deride clerical tonsure. Again, they say that every layman, and even a woman, ought to preach. (*Ibid.*)

They reject the sacrament of confirmation, but their chief men lay hands on their disciples, in place of that sacrament. (David.)

They all preach everywhere, and without distinction of condition, age, or sex. (Bernard.)

They say that all good men are priests. (Stephen.)

Error 16. That all places are equally blessed. . . . Error 22. That all good men are priests and ordained by God, and can bind and loose and hear confessions and confess. (Reinerus.)

Oaths.—They say that every oath is unlawful, even to the truth, and indeed a mortal sin. But they nevertheless dispense with this, so that one may swear to evade death or not to betray others, or not to reveal the secret of his perfidy. (David.)

Every lie and oath is a mortal sin, and an oath likewise. Though others of them say, as I have heard from them, that in fear of death it is permitted those who are not perfect to lie and swear. They themselves both lie and commit perjury, nor do they believe this to be sin, because even their lies they excuse and becloud by wiles and sophistries. (Stephen.)

For no reason should one slay or swear. (Peter.)

In no case, for whatsoever necessity, or reason, should one swear. (*De Modo Procedendi.*)

These testimonies speak for themselves so fully and so plainly that few remarks upon them are necessary. The general evangelical character of the teachings thus attributed to the Waldenses is as impressive as the substantial unanimity of the witnesses. There are but two cases in which there seems to be a serious lack of agreement among the witnesses, and one of these ceases to be serious the moment it is examined. This is the apparent contradiction between David of Augsburg and Stephen of Bourbon, on the one hand, and the other writers, concerning the Waldensian attitude toward lying and judicial oaths. But it is quite plain that there is no real contradiction. All four of the testimonies cited agree as to the formal teaching of the Waldenses; so exactly, in fact, that they use almost identical words in setting forth the matter. But David and Stephen go a step farther, and accuse the Waldenses of a practice that differed glaringly from their teaching. How far this accusation is just is the only question for solution. Nobody can read David's tract without tracing in almost every paragraph a hatred of the Waldenses

that can only be called malignant. He repeats the most horrible slanders of them,³⁴ adding, to be sure, that he does not himself believe these things, but evidently wishing that he could. He does not deliberately misrepresent them—that would defeat his object, which is to furnish information that would guide his fellow-inquisitors in the work of suppressing them. But his hatred is too violent to be controlled; and besides, lying and deceit are safe things to be attributed to any enemies of the church—even by an inquisitor who on the next page advises his fellows to deceive the heretics, if by that means confession may be extorted from them! There is less bitterness in the writing of Stephen, but is it not edifying, in view of all that we know of Roman casuistry and of the methods of the inquisition, to read this author's complaint about the sophistries and lies of heretics? We may safely rule out both these testimonies, therefore, except to this extent: probably some of the Waldenses were persuaded, by forms of "encouragement" well known to students of the inquisition, to lay aside their scruples and take a judicial oath at their examination. Let him who is perfectly certain his own fortitude would be proof against the encouraging power of the thumbscrew, boot, and rack cast the first stone at the Waldenses.

The other case is the testimony about the Waldensian teaching concerning the mass. David of Augsburg seems to be opposed explicitly by four other witnesses, one of whom had been a leader among the heretics. There are at least two ways of accounting for this conflict of evidence. One possible hypothesis is that all the witnesses speak the truth, not merely in intent, but in fact; that all are equally accurate, as well as equally honest; and that the different groups of the Waldenses did not agree in their teachings. Nearly all of our authorities recognize at least two such groups (thus Reinerus speaks of *Pauperes Ultramontani* and *Pauperes Lombardi*); some speak of a larger number. There is another hypothesis possible, namely, that the

³⁴A single example: "They for the most part attend their conventicles by night, that they may practice the mysteries of iniquity while others sleep. But that which is said of them—that they kiss cats or frogs there, or see the devil, or turn out the lights and practice promiscuous fornication—I do not think is true of that sect, nor have I truly learned any such thing from those to whom I have given credit."

teaching of the Waldenses was uniform, and that David has stated it correctly, while the others have misapprehended it. To a Roman priest, bred in a full belief in transubstantiation, the evangelical language of the Waldenses might well be incomprehensible. When they said, "A wicked priest is unfit to administer the Lord's supper," his mind unconsciously translated it into, "A wicked priest cannot make," and so on. Note how this hypothesis is confirmed by the words of Reinerus. He indeed says categorically, "They firmly believe and confess that this is the body and blood of Christ;" but then, in another section of his treatise, he describes an actual celebration of the Lords supper in such terms as to make it absolutely plain that transubstantiation was not in the thoughts of celebrant or communicant. On the whole, therefore, I incline to this latter hypothesis, as the one that best accounts for all the facts; since the former fails to account for the inconsistency of Reinerus. And this circumstance also should have some weight: the other teachings attributed to the Waldenses are so evangelical as to make it improbable that they held the Roman doctrine, of the whole sacramental system the most fundamental.

It is almost superfluous to point out the striking agreement between these teachings of the Waldenses and the sixteenth-century Anabaptists. The testimony is unanimous that the Waldenses rejected infant baptism. It is less certain, though most probable, that they rebaptized adults on profession of faith.³⁵

Such was the origin and such were the teachings of the Waldenses, according to Roman Catholic witnesses of the generation succeeding Waldo. There is but one Waldensian document contemporary with these witnesses, a comparatively recent discovery—the already noted rescript of the conference of Bergamo, in the year 1218. There representatives of the Poor of Lyons (the original Waldenses, as I believe) and the Poor of

³⁵ There could be no question at all, if we could accept the testimony of Peter of Vaux Sernai as applying to the whole sect. Yet, in the face of this unanimous witness to the contrary, almost every writer on the Waldenses (Professor Comba dodges the subject and takes refuge in silence) makes them Pedobaptists from the beginning! Pedobaptists they certainly became, but in the earlier years of the sect they rejected infant baptism, or there is no such thing as historical proof of any fact.

Lombardy (an older sect that had come to bear the same name) discussed their differences. This document differs in many particulars from the conclusions to which we have now come through study of the Roman Catholic sources. These differences raise a very pretty historical problem, to the solution of which I may address myself at some future time.