BOOK III.

THE VALLENSES.

## CHAPTER L.

PRELIMINARY STATEMENT OF THE TESTIMONY OF REINERIUS RESPECTING THE ANTIQUITY OF THE VALLENSES, WITH REMARKS ON THEIR DIALECT AND THEIR OWN CONCURRING TRADITIONS.

But it is time, that I should leave the much persecuted and calumniated Albigenses, to introduce a pure and never-reformed Church still older than that of the Paulicians.

The Church, to which I allude, is that of the Vallenses of Piedmont: and, in order to my purpose of connecting the Churches of the Reformation with the Church of the Primitive Ages, the two points of its Remote Antiquity and of its Evangelical Purity must be successively considered.

Agreeably, then, to the present arrangement, the point of its *Remote Antiquity* will first come under discussion.

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This topic requires the production of a continued line of witnesses through the whole period of what are usually called the Middle Ages. But, before I enter directly upon such a production, the decisive general testimony of Reinerius Sacco a well-informed Inquisitor who flourished during the earlier part of the thirteenth century, associated with the dialect and traditions of the Vallenses themselves, may, under the aspect of preliminary matter, be usefully and properly brought forward.

I. The following is the testimony of Reinerius. Concerning the sects of ancient heretics, observe, that there have been more than seventy: all of which, except the sects of the Manicheans and the Arians and the Runcarians and the Leonists which have infected Germany, have, through the favour of God, been destroyed. Among all these sects, which either still exist or which have formerly existed, there is not one more pernicious to the Church than that of the Leonists : and this, for three reasons. The first reason is; because It has been of longer continuance: for some say, that it has lasted from the time of Sylvester; others, from the time of the Aposties. The second reason is; because, It is more general: for there is scarcely any land, in which this sect exists not. The third reason is; because, While all other sects, through the immanity of their blasphemies against God, strike horror into the hearers, this of the Leonists

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has a great semblance of piety; inasmuch as they live justly before men, and believe, together with all the Articles contained in the Creed, every point well respecting the Deity: only they blaspheme the Roman Church and Clergy; to which the multitude of the Laity are ready enough to give credence.\*

\* De sectis antiquorum hæreticorum nota: quod sectæ hæreticorum fuerunt plures quam septuaginta; quæ omnes, per Dei gratiam, deletæ sunt, præter sectas Manichæorum, Arianorum, Runcariorum, et Leonistarum, quæ Alemanniam infecerunt. Inter omnes has sectas, quæ adhuc sunt vel fuerunt, non est perniciosior Ecclesiæ, quam Leonistarum : et hoc, tribus de causis. Prima est; Quia est diuturnior: aliqui enim dicunt, quod duraverit a tempore Sylvestri; aliqui, a tempore Apostolorum. Secunda; Quia est generalior: fere enim nulla est terra, in qua hæc secta non sit. Tertia; Quia, cum omnes aliæ sectæ; immanitate blasphemiarum in Deum, audientibus horrorem inducant, hæc, scilicet Leonistarum, magnam habet speciem pietatis; eo quod, coram hominibus, justè vivant, et bene omnia de Deo credant et omnes articulos qui in Symbolo continentur. solummodo Romanam Ecclesiam blasphemant et Clerum; cu multitudo Laicorum facilis est ad credendum. hæret, c. iv. in Biblioth. Patr, vol. xiii. p. 209.

Respecting the Church of the comparatively modern French Leonists or Poor Men of Lyons, which was founded in the twelfth century by Peter the Valdès, and which is fully described by Reinerius in the fifth or immediately following chapter of his Tractate, see below, book iii, chap. 8. § II. and book iii, chap. 12. § I. 2.

Speaking of these French Valdenses, whose founder is recorded to have been an Italian Valdensis, and who thus through him stand connected as an offshoot with the remotely ancient 074

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1. I have adduced this passage for the purpose of exhibiting Reinerius, as attesting the remote antiquity of the Vallenses of Piedmont. Yet, by name, he mentions not, in it, the Vallenses: he speaks only of a body of contemporary religionists, whom he denominates Leonists. These, in regard to the origin of the sect, he carries back to a very distant period: and, at the same time, he broadly distinguishes them from the Albigenses or Cathari, whom he here simply alludes to under the names of Manichèans and Runcarians, but whom he afterward fully describes under the systematic charge of being deeply tainted with the Manichèan Heresy. Hence, to make his attestation at all available to my purpose, I have to shew: that the Leonists, whom he thus characterises, were the Vallenses or Valdenses or Vaudois of Piedmont.

My proof, then, runs in manner following.
Reinerius, a writer of the thirteenth century,
tells us: that, In the judgment of some inquirers,

Vallensic or Leonistic Church of Piedmont, Moneta, the contemporary of Reinerius, says, no doubt, with much truth:

Non multum temporis est quod esse cœperunt; quoniam, sicut patet, a Valdesio cive Lugdunensi exordium acceperunt; qui hanc viam incepit, non plures sunt quam octoginta anni. Monet, adv. Cathar, et Valdens, lib. v. c. 1, § 1V. p. 402.

A good deal of confusion has sometimes arisen from want of attention to the accurate distinction which Reinerius makes between the ANCIENT Leonists and the MODERN Leonists.

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the Leonists had existed from the time of Pope Sylvester.

Pilichdorf, another writer of the thirteenth century, tells us: that The persons, who claimed to have thus existed from the time of Pope Sylvester, were the Valdenses \*.

And Claude Scyssel, who was Archbishop of Turin at the latter end of the fifteenth and at the beginning of the sixteenth centuries, who lived in the immediate neighbourhood of the Valdenses of Piedmont, and who in fact comprehended them within the geographical limits of his province, tells us: that The Valdenses of Piedmont derived themselves from a person named Leo; who, in the time of the Emperor Constantine, execrating the avarice of Pope Sylvester and the immoderate endocment of the Roman Church, seceded from that communion, and drew after him all those who

\* Dicentes (scil. Valdenses): Sectam eorum durasse a temporibus Sylvestri Papæ. Pilich. cont, Valdens. c. i. in Biblioth. Patr. vol. xiii. p. 312.

I ascribe Pilichdorf to the thirteenth century, on the authority of the Editors of the Cologne Bibliotheca Patrum. See the Catalogue prefixed to Bibl. Patr. Colon. vol. xiii. Bossuet, on what authority I know not, places him a century later. See Hist. des Variat. livr. xi. § 95. So far as concerns my own use of this author here and elsewhere, it is a matter of no great consequence, whether he belonged to the one century or to the other.

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entertained right sentiments concerning the Christian Religion\*.

Thus we have the Valdenses of Piedmont standing in direct connection, not only with the tradition respecting Sylvester, but likewise with an individual from whose name the title of *Leonists* has plainly and almost avowedly been deduced.

Such a combination of circumstances evidently brings out the result: that The Valdenses and the Leonists were the same.

\* Nonnulli hæresis hujus assertores, ad adblandiendum apud vulgares et historiarum ignaros favorem, hane eorum Sectam, Constantini Maximi temporibus, a Leone quodam religiosissimo initium sumpsisse fabulantur: qui, execrata Sylvestri Romanæ Urbis tunc Pontificis avaritia et Constautini ipsius immoderata largitione, paupertatem in fidei simplicitate sequi maluit, quam, cum Sylvestro, pingui opulentoque sacerdotio contaminari, Cui cum omnes, qui de Christiana Religione rectè sentiebant, adhæsissent, sub Apostolorum regula viventes, hanc per manus ad posteros veræ religionis normam transmiserunt. Claud. Seyssel. Taurin. adv. error, et sect. Valdens, fol. 5, 6.

I suppose it will be allowed, that the well-informed Reinerius could scarcely, for the sake of currying favour with the vulgar and the ignorant on behalf of the Valdenses, have described them as being the oldest of all sects: older, as he distinctly specifies, than the Arians who sprang up in the fourth century, and the Manicheans who succeeded the Gnostics in the third century. This, at all events, he could not have done from a wish to promote the respectability and interest of the Valdenses. Therefore we may safely conclude, that his statement was extorted from him simply by the irresistible force of overwhelming evidence.

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Whence, of course, it follows: that, In ascribing a most remote antiquity to the Leonists, Reinerius, in fact, ascribes it to the Valdenses.

2. Since, then, the Valdenses were occasionally denominated *Leonists* from an individual named *Leo*, who must have lived in a far distant age because some traditions made him even a contemporary of Sylvester and Constantine: an inquiry, as to *Who this Leo was*, will at least afford a subject for a somewhat curious investigation.

On that subject, I purpose now to enter: and it will probably be found to bear not a little closely upon a matter of testimony which will be the topic of a future discussion.

That any Leo was the founder of the Vallensic Church, as Claude not quite accurately (I suspect) reports the tradition, cannot be allowed : for the tradition, thus reported, agrees not with the standing belief of the Vaudois, that their Communion descends in a direct unbroken line from the Apostles. But, that, at some remote period, they had among them an eminent teacher, who was distinguished by the appellation of Leo, and from whom they themselves were sometimes denominated Leonists, is a matter so highly probable, that I can see no reason why we should hastily reject such a supposition. At all events, we seem by chronology itself prohibited from deriving, as some have done, the name of Leonists from the town of Lyons on the Rhone: that is to say, if,

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for such derivation, we take the specific ground: that Peter of Lyons, in the twelfth century, communicated, from the town, the name of Leonists to to his own peculiar disciples. For, according to the plain and natural import of the language used by Reinerius, the very ancient Vallenses were already called Leonists long before the time of Peter of Lyons: inasmuch as he intimates, that Peter's disciples, the Poor Men of Lyons, were also, as well as the ancient sect of which they were a branch and respecting which he had treated in the immediately preceding section of his Work, denominated Leonists\*.

Yet, though I think it clear that the Valdenses could not have been called Leonists from the Lyons of the opulent merchant Peter, that is to say, from the Lyons which is seated upon the Rhone: I am not without a strong suspicion, that, ultimately, and through an entirely different channel, the title may have been borrowed from another Lyons; from Lyons, to wit, in Aquitaine, upon the borders of the Pyrenees; from the Lugdunum Convenarum, I mean, which now bears the name of St. Bertrand, and which is situated in what (from Convenae) is styled the Pays de Cominges †.

<sup>\*</sup> De sectis modernorum hæreticorum, nota, quod secta Pauperum de Lugduno, qui etiam *Leonistæ* dicuntur, tali modo orta est. Reiner de hæret. c. v. p. 300. He then sets forth their foundation by Peter.

<sup>+</sup> D'Anville's Anc. Geog. vol. i. p. 74.

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280 THE VALLENSES [BOOK III. but from the Lyons of Aquitaine, or the Lugdunum Convenarum of the Pyrenees.

3. The importance of the testimony of Reinerius, to the apostolically remote antiquity of the Piedmontese Vallenses, is so great, that we shall not wonder at the circumstance of its being made the subject of a quibble on the part of the Jesuit Gretser.

He remarks: that Reinerius, not on the authority of his own careful inquiries or pursuant to his own well-founded conviction, but purely on the hearsay statements of other persons, ascribes to the Leonists an antiquity, which reaches to the time of Sylvester or even to the time of the Apostles themselves \*

So far as it extends, this observation, no doubt is true. But Gretser took good care to stop short where he did, cautiously eschewing all notice of what Reinerius says in his own person; and thence plainly omitting the whole of what he says, as the result of his own inquiries and as the amount of his own conviction.

\* Frustra autem est Plessæus, cum fictitiæ Valdensium antiquitati advocatum adsciscit Reinerium. Non, enim, ex sua, sed ex aliorum sententia, cap. iv, ait: sectam Valdensium, a temporibus S. Sylvestri Papa vel etiam ipsorum Apostolorum, durásse. Gretser. Prolegom. in Scriptor, cont. sect. Valdens. Bibl. Patr. vol. xiii. p. 296.

It may be doubted, whether Du Plessay was quite so much frustra, as Gretser alleges.

My conjecture is: that the traditional Leo of the Valdenses, however his history may have been circumstantially distorted and chronologically

circumstantially distorted and chronologically misplaced, is no other than the famous Vigilantius; of whom, in immediate connection with the primitive Christians of the Valleys at the beginning of the fifth century, we shall presently hear again.

This holy man, as we fortunately learn from the very scurrility of Jerome, was actually born in the precise town of Lyons or Convenæ in Aquitaine \*. Whence, from the place of his nativity, he would obviously be called, among his hosts of the valleys, Vigilantius Leo or Vigilantius the Leonist. His proper local appellation he communicated, if I mistake not, to his congenial friends, the Vallenses of Piedmont; and his memory, as we see, was affectionately cherished by them, down even to the time of Claude Scyssel.

Thus ultimately, I apprehend, the name of Leonist was derived from Lyons: not, indeed, from the more celebrated Lyons on the Rhone;

\* Nimirum respondet generi suo; ut qui de latronum et convenarum natus est senine: quos Cneius Pompeius, edonita Hispania, et ad triumpham redire festinans, de Pyrenæi jugis deposuit, et in unum oppidum congregavit. Unde et Convenarum urbs nomen accepit. Hieron. adv. Vigilant. c. ii, Oper. vol. ii. p. 159.

Quia ad radices Pyrenæi habitas, vicinusque es Iberiæ. Ibid, p. 159.

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The direct and positive testimony, then, of Reinerius, speaking in his own person and not merely reciting the opinions of others, runs to the following effect.

He assures us: that The Leonists were, as a sect, older, than either the Manicheans or the Arians or the Runcarians or any one of the more than seventy sects of heretics that had once existed. And he assigns this, their undoubted high antiquity, as the first and foremost of the three special reasons why they were so injurious to the Church of Rome.

Now the Manichèans, even if we say nothing of the allied sects of the Gnostics and the Docetæ and the Valentinians and the Marcionites, were certainly as early as the third century.

Therefore the Leonists, inasmuch as Reinerius pronounces them to be still older than the Manichèans, must, according to the result of his inquiries and the sum of his conviction, inevitably be viewed, as running up to an antiquity not less than that of the third and second centuries: a circumstance, which at once places them in the times of the Primitive Church\*.

\* Claude Scyssel of Turin, who mentions (as we have seen) that the old tradition respecting Leo still existed in Piedmont at the beginning of the sixteenth century, speaks, with curious inconsistency, respecting the origination of the Vallensie Church and Creed.

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II. Agreeably to this conclusion, the very necessity of their ancient dialect, corroborated as the evidence is by their own unvarying tradition,

He would have us believe, that, about three centuries and a half before the time when he wrote, Peter Valdo of Lyons was the first author of the contagions pestilence: and yet he speaks of what by his own account was a mere upstart invention of yesterday, as being all the while a most ancient heresy.

Valdensis quippe, ut aiunt, appellabatur; et Lugdunensis urbis municeps fuit: unde et prima hujus pestis contagio pullulavit. Claud. Scyssel. adv. Valdens. fol. 5. In spem maximam eliminendæ hæresis hujus antiquissimæ erecti proculdubio sumus. Ibid. fol. 3.

His ascription of it to Valdo clearly enough sprang from the circumstance of many of the French Valdenses having taken permanent refuge from persecution among their elder brethren of the Cottian Alps; an emigration, which he places about two hundred years before his own time: but nothing can be more amusing than his demonstration, that no primeval individual named Leo, could have been concerned with this most ancient heresy. Even those retired anchorites, he remarks, Antony and Hilary, are duly mentioned by ecclesiastical writers: but, respecting Leo, all such writers are silent. Ibid. fol. 2, 6.

We shall perhaps find, in the sequel, that the true Leo or Leonist of Valdensic Tradition is noticed most abundantly and most vituperatively by the angry bigots of the day. In the humble friends and followers of this distinguished individual, the poor Vallenses of Piedmont, the theological perspicacity of of Scyssel detects, both the apocalyptic harlot, and the ten horns of the seven-headed wild beast. Synagogam Sathanæ, Ecclesiam Malignantum, et Scortum vilissimum Meretricemque omni turpitudine infamem, vel Bestiam ascendentem de mari habentem capita septem et cornua decem. Ibid. fol. 39. Truly, the Archbishop well repays the heretics in their own current coin.

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throws back their original retirement into the Valleys of Piedmont, exactly to the period marked out by the personal inquiries of Reinerius.

Scyssel charges the Valdenses with dissembling or concealing their doctrine: and professes to think, that, on their principles, Peter's denial of the Lord might be excused. But his own statement of their language evidently shows their sole offence to have been, that they were not forward in disputing with those whose minds they perceived to be impenetrably hardened against conviction.

Hi perditi hypocritæ illam Salvatoris sententiam, in suam excusationem, adducunt; Non est bonum sanctum dare canibus, neque sunt inter porcos seminandæ margaritæ: quasi vero nos incapaces sumus veritatis evangelicæ. Ibid. fol. 47.

In his time, it seems, they claimed to themselves exclusively the title of *The Catholic Church*: thus asserting their true prophetic character of the Communion, in which the two promises of Christ should be fulfilled.

Se solos evangelicam atque apostolicam doctrinam servare profitentur: ob eamque maximè causam, Ecclesiæ Catholicæ nomen, intoleranda impudentia, sibi usurpant. Ibid. fol. 46.

Scyssel, however, somewhat heretically, himself pronounces the Rock, upon which Christ would found his Church, to be, not Peter, but Peter's Confession or (what is equivalent) Christ himself. How his peace was made at Rome for such a slip, I know not.

Petro dixit: Tu es Petrus; et super hanc Petram ædificabo Ecclesiam meam, Non super ipsum Petrum ædificaturum se Ecclesiam intellexit; sed super seipsum, qui est vera Petra, sicut dicit Paulus. Petra, inquit, erat Christus: et Lapis angularis, et Petra scandali, sicut dicit Petrus. Ibid. fol. 25.

Dungal gives the same interpretation in the ninth century. Dung, adv. Claud, Taurin, in Bibl. Patr. vol. ix. par. post, p. 391. 284 THE VALLENSES BOOK III.

1. I should not have ventured to hazard such a remark on my own authority: but I certainly may lay some considerable stress upon the decision of a scientific inquirer into the *Monuments of the Roman Tongue*, who had no object to serve beyond the general objects of perfectly independent literature.

The dialect of the Vaudois, as we are assured by Raynouard, is an intermediate idiom, between the decomposition of the tongue spoken by the Romans, and the establishment of a new grammatical system. It must, therefore, be philologically viewed, as a primitively derivative language: that is to say, it must be viewed, as a language, derived, without any intervention of an older derivative language, from the decomposed stock of its parent Latin.

On this principle, when speaking of the Noble Lesson which bears in its text the date of the year 1100 and which thence is more ancient than the greater part of the writings of the Troubadours, he says: The language seems to me to be of an epoch already far separated from its original formation; inasmuch as we may remark the suppression of some final consonants: a peculiarity, which announces, that the words of the long-spoken dialect had already lost some portion of their primitive terminations.

\* M. Raynouard, a la page 137 de ses Monumens de la

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Circumstances of this nature plainly refer the formation of the Vaude from the Latin to a period of most remote antiquity: and thus, by a necessary consequence, refer also the settlement of the Vaudois themselves to the same remote period; forbidding the supposition, that they might have retired to their Alpine Valleys, after what Raynouard calls the establishment of a new grammatical system, and after the origination of a language derived only at second hand from the Latin

Hence, the primevally Latin Vaudois must have retired, from the lowlands of Italy to the valleys of Piedmont, in the very days of primitive Christianity and before the breaking up of the Roman Empire by the persevering incursions of the Teutonic Nations.

Langue Romane (Choix des poésies originales des troubadours, tom. ii.), appelle le vaudois Une Langue Romane primitive, idiome intermédiaire entre la décomposition de la langue des Romains et l'établissement d'une vouveau système grammatical; circonstance, qui atteste la haute antiquité de cet idiome dans le pays que ce peuple habitait. Et, dans le lettre de lui, parlant de la Nobla Leyçon, qui montre pourtant la date assez ancienne de l'an 1100, et qui par cela même doit être antérieure à la plupart des écrits des troubadours, il s'exprime de la sorte: Le langage m'en parait être d'une epoque déjà cloignée de sa formation: ou y remarque la suppression de quelques consennes finales; ce, qui annonce que les mots de la langue parlée depuis long-temps, avaient déjà perdu quelque chose de leurs désinences primitives. Muston. Hist. des Vaudois, livr. ii. note iii. vol. i, p. 361, 362.

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But it is scarcely probable, that men would leave their homes, the fair and warm and fertile country of Italy, for the wildness of desolate mountains and for the squalidity of neglected valleys; valleys, which would require all the severe labour of assiduous cultivation; and mountains, which no labour could make productive: unless some very paramount and overbearing cause had constrained them to undertake such an emigration.

Now a cause, precisely of this description, we have in the persecutions, which, during the second and third and fourth centuries, occurred under the Emperors Marcus Aurelius and Maximin and Decius and Valerian and Diocletian.

Therefore, both from the philological necessity of their language, and from the tenacity with which they have always maintained their primeval religion, we can scarcely doubt, that the Christians, who fled from persecution during those centuries, were the true ancestors of the Vaudois.

- 2. This opinion, accordingly, has ever prevailed among themselves, down, as we may say, even to the present time.
- (1.) To such a purpose, for instance, speaks the celebrated Henry Arnold: who, in the emergency of the period, half clerk and half soldier, superintended the glorious re-entrance of the Vaudois into their native country during the year 1689

THE VALLENSES CHAP, I. AND ALBIGENSES. воок пт. selves speak collectively in the Confession, which That their religion is as primitive as their name they presented to Francis I. of France in the is venerable, is attested even by their adversaries. year 1544. Reinerius the Inquisitor, in a report made by him to the Pope on the subject of their faith, expresses This Confession is that, which we have received himself in these words: that They have existed from our ancestors, even from hand to hand, according as their predecessors, in all times and in every from time immemorial. It would not be difficult to age, have taught and delivered \*. prove, that this poor band of the faithful were in the (4.) Still, moreover, to the same purpose, they Valleys of Piedmont more than four centuries before the appearance of those extraordinary personspeak in the year 1559, when they delivered their supplication to Emmanuel Philibert of Savoy. ages, Luther and Calvin and the subsequent lights of the Reformation. Neither has their Church been ever reformed: whence arises its title of Let your highness consider, that this religion, in which we live, is not merely our religion of the EVANGELIC. The Vaudois are, in fact, descended present day or a religion discovered for the first from those refugees from Italy : who, after St. Paul time only a few years ago, as our enemies falsely pretend: but it is the religion of our fathers and of had there preached the Gospel, abandoned their beautiful country; and fled, like the woman mentioned our grandfathers, yea of our forefathers and of our in the Apocalypse, to these wild mountains, where predecessors still more remote. It is the religion they have, to this day, handed down the Gospel, of the Saints and of the Martyrs, of the Confessors from father to son, in the same purity and simand of the Apostles. plicity as it was preached by St. Paul \* (5.) So again, when addressing themselves to (2.) To the same purpose, likewise, speaks their the Reformers of the sixteenth century, they still harmoniously put forth the same traditional asserhistorian Boyer. O marvellous! God, through his wise providence, tion of an apostolical antiquity: while, in point of knowledge and attainments, poor and secluded as has preserved the purity of the Gospel in the Valleys of Piedmont, from the time of the Apostles down to they had long been, they modestly confess their own inferiority to the well-instructed teachers (3.) To the same purpose, again, they themwhose notice and assistance they solicit. Our ancestors have often recounted to us, that \* Arnold's Preface to Glorious Recov. p. 13, 14, translated and edited by Acland. + Boyer. Abregê de l'Hist. des Vaudois. p. 23. \* Leger. Hist. des Vaud. par. i. p. 163. 289 CHAP. I. AND ALBIGENSES. we have existed from the time of the Apostles. In all matters, nevertheless, we agree with you: and, thinking as you think, from the very days of the Apostles themselves we have ever been concordant respecting the faith. In this particular only, we may be said to differ from you; that, through our own fault, and the slowness of our genius, we do not understand the sacred writers with such strict correctness as yourselves (6.) Finally, it is remarked by Leger: that, when, to the Princes of the House of Savoy, they perpetually asserted the uniformity of their faith, from father to son, through time immemorial, even from the very age of the Apostles; those sovereigns always maintained a profound silence respecting such an allegation: a circumstance, which, as he reasonably enough observes, sufficiently indicates their internal consciousness of its accuracy \*. \* Muston, Hist. des Vaud, livr, ii, note 101, Scultet, Annal, Evangel. Renovat. in A.D. 1530. p. 163. Leger. Hist. des Vaud. par. i. p. 164. Gilly's Waldens. Research. p. 40.