

Lesson 2.

1888

Peter Waldo was a very wealthy merchant, who lived in the city of Lyons in the Rhone Valley. One day in the year 1170 Waldo was attending a meeting of citizens of Lyons. During the meeting one of the men dropped , right in the room where the men were sitting. This made a very great impression on Waldo, and he determined to devote his life to a study of religion, and the teaching of his fellow citizens.

He disposed of all his wealth, giving it to the poor, just as the New Testament said he should do. Then he caused the Bible, or portions of it to be translated from the Latin into the language which the people used every day. Then he went about teaching the people what he found in the Bible. A number of men soon joined him in this work. These men in time came to be known as the Poor Men of Lyons, because they had given away all their property, and lived on what they could earn and what they had given to them

An English Franciscan Monk, Walter de Mapes, said of them,-

"They go about barefoot, two by two, in woolen garments, possessing nothing, but like the apostles, having all things in common,-- following him who had not where to lay his head."

They said that it was wrong for the priests of the Church to have so much wealth, and to live in luxury and selfishness. So they organized little societies of their own, and began to study about religion without asking permission of the Church. In these societies they taught the simple truths about religion. They helped each other in business and farming, and all the cares of life. They were very poor people, and became very good neighbors to each other.

But the great Catholic Church persecuted them, and many of them were killed by the church because they had these little societies. But these people who came to be known as Waldenses, were true to their own teachings all through the 800 years, and there is still in the Rhone Valley a Waldensian Church.

The study and the translation of the Bible about four years after Peter Waldo died was one of the great things that the people of the Protestant Reformation did. So Peter Waldo and the Poor men of Lyons were beginners of the Protestant Reformation.