

APPENDIX B

CHILDREN OF THE VALLEYS

(The following is a transcript of the sound track of an 8mm documentary motion picture made and narrated by Marriner Cardon and Stephen Cardon for presentation at the Louis Paul Cardon family reunion, November 25, 1977)

North of the warm Mediterranean Riviera the Maritime Alps rise abruptly, part of a vast semi-circular mountain chain. Beyond them lie the Cottian Alps, named for an ancient kingdom with which Julius Caesar established alliances. Our interest lies in an area stretching from Monte Viso, where Hannibal struggled with his elephants in 218 B.C. northward to Montgenevre pass, the ancient route from Rome to Gaul.

Within an area smaller than present-day Mesa, Arizona, are several noteworthy valleys: The Valley of Luserna or Val Pellice as it is now called, with Rora Valley branching into it from the south; Angrogna, sometimes called the "Valley of Groans" -- and at its head, accessible only through a narrow gorge, a high mountain-rimmed meadow -- Pra del Tor; eastward, toward the broad Piedmont plains the Valley of Roccopiatta with the remains of Cardon homes still overlooking it; the Valley of the Germanasca River and Promollo, an ancestral home, and finally the wide Valley of the Chisone--once occupied by French Waldensians, but after centuries of struggle given over to Catholic invaders. The principal city of this area is Torre Pellice, also called "La Tour."

The present boundaries of France and Italy follow the highest crests of the Cottian Alps, but in the times of our interest, sovereignty over these valleys shifted many times--from Roman and Holy Roman Emperors to Italian Princes to French Kings to Italian Dukes to French Emperor and then to Sardinian King.

The inhabitants of these valleys speak their own dialect of mixed French and Italian. They are called by themselves the "Vaudois," an old French term meaning those who dwell in the valleys. By the English-speaking world they are called Waldensians, some say after a French religious reformer who fled to them for refuge in the 12th century. But Peter Waldo may have taken his name from his protectors, as writings from before Waldo's time call them the "Valdese" or Waldensians.

The unique history of these valleys is almost as ancient as the Christian religion itself. Through Montgenevre Pass at the head of Chisone Valley, Christian missionaries crossed the Alps on their way to Gaul in the 1st century. If the Apostle Paul ever journeyed to Gaul and Spain as some traditions suggest, he may well have come this way. These earliest missionaries left the beginnings of a church organization. Roman Christians, fleeing from Nero's and later persecutions added to this nucleus--and started a tradition of seeking refuge here which lasted for over a thousand years.

To this wide valley, at the end of the 12th century, came the reformer, Peter of Lyons, France, and his band of refugees, fleeing from the inquisition. Since the family name "Cardon" existed in Lyons, perhaps our ancestors were among them. For 500 years this was an almost exclusively protestant area. But this was the most exposed and most difficult to defend of the Vaudois

valleys. Centuries of Catholic inquisitions and crusades drove the Vaudois that dwelt here into exile and converted their churches into Catholic places of worship. Those that did not leave had to conform to Catholicism or face imprisonment, servitude as galley slaves or death.

After the arrival of Peter of Lyons, or Peter Waldo as he came to be known, the Vaudois began to actively proselyte outside their own areas. Unlike their orthodox neighbors who were generally illiterate, the Vaudois youth were taught to read the Bible. In this mountain stronghold they held what they called the "School of the Prophets." Here the young men often memorized the entire new testament. Then they were sent forth, two by two, as itinerant missionaries, usually disguised as peddlers. Waldensian branches sprang up in many parts of Europe. They translated the Bible from Latin into the common Romance tongue-- the first Bible translation available for popular use. Knowledge of the Bible was supremely important to these people and one who knew the Scriptures was presumed to be a Vaudois. Destruction of confiscated Bibles became a common Catholic weapon for combating the Vaudois Heresy.

In 1487 Pope Innocent the 8th issued a mandate that the Vaudois should be "crushed like venomous snakes." He promised the French and Savoie troops who would join his legate Cataneo in killing the heretics remission of their sins and good title to any property they might seize.

As Cataneo's troops approached the valleys the women and children fled for safety to Pra del Tor. The men took their stand near the entry to Angrogna Valley; farmers with rocks, slings and a few bows against armour-clad knights and foot soldiers.

As the advance guard neared the entry to the Pra, a thick mist settled over and into the gorge, halting and bewildering the Pope's soldiers. The Vaudois interpreted this as a divine intervention on their behalf. Shortly, Cataneo's troops heard, crashing down from the fogbound heights above them, great boulders torn loose by the Vaudois defenders. A few made their way back to report to Cataneo. Similar successful defenses against overwhelming odds occurred in other Vaudois communities, and it is estimated that a large portion of the Catholic troops enlisted for this crusade met their ends in these valleys.

Almost all Vaudois services were held in caverns, on hillsides, or in the humble homes of the members until the 16th century. From 1536 to 1559 sovereignty over this area passed to the King of France, and these were peaceful years.

One of their oldest churches, which the Vaudois call temples, is in the town of Angrogna San Lorenzo where certainly many of our ancestors worshipped.

As their gift to the Reformation Movement, the Vaudois commissioned a translation of the Bible into French which was completed in 1535 and was the popular version for French speaking people until modern times.

In 1560 an inquisition was appointed by the Catholic authorities and persecutions commenced anew. In November of that year, an army appeared on the banks of the Pellice, prepared to enforce conversion to Catholicism.

Against this army, the Vaudois could array only 1200 men of a total population of 18,000. These men, after fasting and partaking of communion, prepared to defend their homes.

As night encampments were being made, the sound of a child beating a drum in a hamlet on the hillside--perhaps one of our ancestors in nearby Les Malan--led the Popes' troops to believe they were under attack. Their movements to meet this imagined threat were misinterpreted by the Vaudois as the beginnings of a sneak attack on their own positions. The Vaudois rushed forth in counterattack and the confused Catholics retreated.

In January, 1561 They were ordered to attend mass within 24 hours or suffer death. That night the Vaudois men gathered on a low hill and each accepted this oath:

"We promise to maintain the Bible, whole and without admixture, according to the usage of the true Apostolic Church, perservering in this holy religion, though it be at the peril of our life, in order that we may transmit it to our children, intact and pure, as we received it from our fathers."

The next day, pretending to comply with the Count's order, the men attended their churches which had been taken over by the Catholics. At a signal, the crucifix, images, candles and other paraphernalia of Roman worship were ripped down and trampled and the Priests driven out. Then, issuing forth from their churches the Vaudois began the long, hard task of expelling the invaders.

During this war one of our ancestral families, the Malans, lived in this hamlet on the hillside overlooking Angrogna Valley. The Stalles probably lived nearby.

While no organized crusade struck at the valleys for many years, sporadic persecutions continued and in 1599, the 14-year old son of our ancestor, Bernadin Jahier, was captured and put to death for refusing to attend mass.

In 1630 a French army moved into the valleys and brought with it the plague. Before the snows brought relief all but three of the Vaudois pastors had fallen its victims. In the family records of our ancestors the year 1630 appears with unusual frequency as the date of death. The Vaudois sought additional pastors from Switzerland and those that responded spoke French. From that time forward their church services were in French rather than in a mixture of that language and Italian.

In 1655, the Piedmontese governor ordered all Vaudois families in this area of the Luserna Valley--where many of our ancestral families then lived--to convert to Catholicism or move from their homes within three days. In the dead of winter they picked up what belongings they could carry and sought refuge with Vaudois families in the higher valleys. The governor offered peace if the other settlements would only quarter a regiment of troops in each for a few days as a token of loyalty. For two days the Catholic soldiers were quartered in the Vaudois homes and ate and slept with the families.

At 4 a.m. on the third day--the Saturday before Easter of 1655-- a

cannon boomed from this tower situated on a hillside overlooking Torre Pellice. At this secretly awaited signal, the soldiers sprang upon their sleeping hosts. No age was spared, babies were slung against rocks; men were tied into balls and rolled down mountainside; every atrocity, mutilation and horror known to man was perpetrated and counted a virtue, because the victims were deemed heretics. This was the great massacre of 1655 about which the English poet, Milton, wrote:

Avenge, O Lord, thy slaughtered saints, whose bones
Lie scatter'd on the Alpine mountains cold;
Even them who kept thy truth so pure of old,
When all our fathers worshiped stocks and stones,
Forget not. In thy book record their groans
Who are thy sheep, and in their ancient fold
Slain by the bloody Piedmontese, that rolled
Mother with infant down the rocks. Their moans
The vales redoubled to the hills, and they
To heaven. They martyred blood and ashes now
O'er all the Italian fields, where still doth sway
The triple tyrant; that from those may grow
A Hundred-fold, who have learnt thy way
Early may fly the Babylonian woe.

These engravings, published in 1669, depict these events and include this representation of the death of our ancestral relative, Daniel Cardon, at the hands of the Catholic soldiers.

Gianavello and our distant great uncle, Bartalemy Jahier, led a guerilla war against the occupying army. After Bartalemy's death in an ambush, his brother, our ancestor Jacques Jahier, took his place as leader of the defenders. Political pressure from France and England led to a negotiated peace but left Catholic forts overshadowing the Vaudois villages.

Thirty years later Louis XIV of France sought his confessor's advice on what he might do to assure his welcome in heaven. The reply was: exterminate the Protestants of France and the Alpine Valleys. A treaty was made with the Duke of Savoy and in January 1686 this decree was issued:

"The Vaudois are forbidden to have religious meetings under pain of death and confiscation of their goods. All children of Protestant parents shall be compulsorily trained up as Roman Catholics. Every newborn child shall, within a week of birth be brought to the Priest to be admitted to the Roman Catholic Church under paid, on the part of the mother of being publicly whipped, and on the part of the father of laboring 5 years in the galleys."

Shortly thereafter, the records indicate, a number of Cardon children from three families, Jean, Daniel, Madeline, Marie and Piacenza, were taken from their widowed mothers and lodged with Catholic families in nearby areas. Later that year many of the Vaudois, including a number of our ancestral families, fled into exile in Switzerland. For three years the valleys were nearly deserted.

Then in 1688, the Vaudois Soldier-Pastor Henri Arnaud, and 800 fighting men crossed Lake Geneva and marched southward to reclaim their ancient homeland. After defeating a much larger French force sent to divert them, they entered the valleys and scourged the Piedmontese troops garrisoned there--striking quickly and then dissolving back into the hills.

In the backcountry hamlet at this battleground there is a small museum which contains a list of 128 names known of those who accompanied Arnaud. Of these, four were Cardons, one likely our direct ancestor, Jean Cardon. Other direct ancestors were Phillipe Roman and Bartalemy Malan. Among the remainder are over a dozen with our ancestral names, Gaudin, Bonnet, Rostagn, Gardiol, Mondon, Coisson, Robert, Forneron, Peyrot and Pons.

Successful at last in reaching Pra del Tor where they hoped to make a final stand, Arnaud and his men were surprised to be met by emissaries from the Duke of Savoy who offered favorable peace terms. After a three year exile, the Vaudois were restored to their homeland in what they call "the Glorious Return."

There were two characteristics of their religious devotion that were frequently noted. The first was their knowledge of the scriptures. All classes studied the Bible, which from the 12th century onward they had in their popular tongue. Many, both men and women, could recite complete books of the Bible. Their pastors and missionaries often memorized both the Old and New Testaments.

Their second notable characteristic was the singing of biblical psalms. So common was it for the Vaudois to entertain themselves by singing psalms while working in the fields or about their homes that anyone found to be so engaged was presumed to be a Vaudois.

In 1848 their then ruler, King Carlo Alberto of Sardinia, revoked all of the ancient edicts against the Vaudois and granted complete freedom of religion, restoring to them all the civil and political rights accorded to his other subjects.

What was the nature of these people--their personal lives--that they should be so hated of those that dwelt around them? What distinguished them from other people of their times? One of the Catholic Inquisitors, Rainier, in his writings against them, noted: "The heretics may be known by their manners and by their language; for they are well ordered and modest in their manners; they avoid pride in their dress, the materials of which are neither expensive or mean...."

From another Catholic Inquisitor, DeSychel: "They are such scrupulous observers of honor and chastity, that their neighbors, though of a contrary faith, entrusted to them their wives and daughters, to preserve them from the insolence of the soldiery. They are temperate in eating and drinking...they do not frequent taverns or dances...They are on their guard against the indulgence of anger. They may be known also by their concise and modest discourse; they guard against indulgence in jesting, slander or profanity."

This is a copy of a Valdese song taken from a song book entitled: INNARIO CRISTIANO Nuova Edizione 1969. Editrice Claudiana - Torino.

The English translation of the first paragraph of the Preface of this book:
 "In presenting to the community, families and believers this new hymn book, we would like to acknowledge the hand of the Lord which assisted us during our work, inasmuch as he inspired the most ancient singers (song writers) to his praises."

"Ascolta, popolo mio!,"
 (Salmo 50:7)

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Antica Complainte Valdese

♩ = 112 - 120

1. A - scol - ta - mi, po - po - lo mi - o,
 2. Ri - cor - da: al mio san - to co - spet - to
 3. Il No - me di Dio glo - ri - o - so

con gran ti - mor, con u - mil - tà:
 al - tro si - gnor non a - do - rar!
 in - va - no mai non pro - nun - ziar.

Io so - no il so - lo, e - ter - no Id - di - o;
 Non in - chi - nar - ti con ri - spet - to
 Cè - le - bra il gior - no del ri - po - so:

io t'ho gui - da - to a li - ber - tà.
 d'i - do - li va - ni al mu - to al - tar.
 a Dio lo de - vi con - sa - crar.

4. Dovrai degnamente onorare
 i genitor che Iddio ti dà;
 sangue fraterno non versare;
 fuggi lussuria e impurità.

5. Non devi rubar nè mentire,
 devi aborrire la falsità;
 i beni altrui non concupire.
 Questa è di Dio la volontà.

In October 1849, in a mountain valley halfway around the world, 35 year old Apostle Lorenzo Snow was called to establish a mission of the Latter-Day Saints Church in Italy. After an overland journey of six months he left New York for England and in June of 1850 he arrived in Genoa, Italy, to take up his assigned responsibilities. Lorenzo became very depressed with the prospect of proselyting in Catholic Genoa, but from an Englishman he encountered he learned of the Protestant valleys in the Piedmont region. He sent his companions, Elders Toronto and Stenhouse to learn more of the area. On July 1, 1850, he noted in his journal:

"I have received a letter from Elders Stenhouse and Toronto. I have felt an intense desire to know the state of that province to which I had given them an appointment, as I felt assured it would be the field of my mission. Now with a heart full of gladness, I find an opening is presented in the valleys of Piedmont, when all other parts of Italy are closed against our efforts. I believe that the Lord has there hidden up a people amid the Alpine mountains, and it is the voice of the Spirit that I shall commence something of importance in that part of this dark nation."

Several stories are told concerning incidents which occurred at the time the Cardons accepted the gospel, each branch of the family treasuring it's own version. The story in Thomas' family is that one night Philippe had a dream in which he saw two messengers bringing a book to him. The next day while he was building a chimney for a neighbor, he felt impelled to quit his work and return home in the middle of the morning. His surprised wife asked, "Why are you home at this hour?" And he replied, "I can see two strangers coming up the mountains bringing us a message concerning the gospel. I must dress in my best clothes and go down to welcome them." He met them and brought them to his home.

Marie Madeleine, Philippe's daughter, said that she too had a dream several years before the coming of the elders. She dreamed about two young men bringing them a book with a wonderful message, and had told her father about it then. She then recognized the elders when Philippe brought them to their home.

So unusual was the word which the missionaries carried that the men stayed up all night learning of the newly-revealed truths. These messengers had come two and two, just as their own Vaudois missionaries had gone forth through the centuries to keep alive in other nations the word of the Lord.

Philippe and his family, except for one married daughter, were among the first to accept baptism into the Mormon Church in Italy. After the conversion of Philippe's family, Mormon meetings were often held in his home, and in summer in a large bowery which he and his sons constructed nearby. He had a large and prosperous farm and often, Marie reports, a full miller's bag of flour would be baked into bread on Saturday to feed everyone who came from all over the mountains to hear the Mormons preach on Sunday.

In 1854 the Church authorities advised the Cardons to sell their property and emigrate to Utah. Philippe gave his daughter Anne a large segment of the farm and then sold the remainder for enough to comfortably pay passage to the United States for his family and for five other Church

members. They left Prarostino in early February and sailed to Liverpool where they embarked on the ship "John M. Woods" bound for New Orleans.

President Richards wrote to Jean Pierre Stalle and advised him to emigrate. In December 1855, Jean Pierre, his wife and four children sailed from Liverpool on the ship "John J. Boyd." They reached Florence, Nebraska, in time to join the first handcart company for the trek to Utah. The journal of the company contains this entry for August 17, 1856; "Along the Sweetwater River. Peter Staley died today. He was from Italy."

After reaching Utah, Jean Pierre's widow married Philippe Cardon. His daughter Suzette married Philippe's son Louis Philip. Most of the Cardons in the southwestern states are descended from Louis Philip and Suzette and therefore have a double portion of Vaudois ancestry in their genealogies.

When President Snow first visited the Vaudois valleys he encountered one of their hymns which forceably impressed him with its aptness to the circumstances of both the Vaudois and the Mormon pioneers in their mountain homelands. He translated the words into English and upon his return to Utah hummed the tune to Evan Stevens who arranged the music as we now know it. (13)

Coming from a background of persecution and being driven from their homes by the Catholics, their Vaudois hymn has greater meaning and emotion for the descendants of the ancestral families of the Piedmont Valleys.

For the strength of the hills we bless Thee,
Our God, our father's God.
Thou has made Thy children mighty
By the touch of the mountain sod.
Thous has fixed our ark of refuge
Where the spoiler's foot ne'er trod.
For the strength of the hills we bless Thee,
Our God, our father's God.

We are watchers of a beacon,
Whose light must never die;
We are guardians of an altar
"Midst the silence of the sky."
The rocks yield founts of courage,
Struck forth as by Thy rod.
For the strength of the hills we bless Thee,
Our God, our father's God.

For the dark resounding caverns,
Where Thy still, small voice is heard;
For the strong tall pines of the forests,
That by thy breath are stirred;
For the storm, on whose free pinions,
Thy Spirit walks abroad;
For the strength of the hills we bless Thee
Our God, our father's God.

The royal eagle darteth
O'er his quarry from the heights,
And the stag, that knows no master
Seeks here his wild delights;
But we, for Thy communion,
Have sought the mountain sod.
For the strength of the hills we bless Thee,
Our God, our father's God.

The banner of the chieftain,
Far, far below us waives;
The war-horse of the spearman
Cannot reach our lofty caves.
The dark clouds wrap the threshold
Of freedom's last abode
For the strength of the hills we bless Thee,
Our God, our father's God.

For the shadow of Thy presence
Round our camp of rock outspread;
For the stern defiles of battle,
Bearing record of our dead;
For the snows and for the torrents,
For the free hearts burial sod;
For the strength of the hills we bless Thee,
Our God, our father's God.