

Topic Page: [Waldenses](#)

Definition: **Waldenses** from *Collins English Dictionary*

pl n

1 the members of a small sect founded as a reform movement within the Roman Catholic Church by Peter Waldo, a merchant of Lyons in the late 12th century, which in the 16th century joined the Reformation movement Also called: **Vaudois**

> Waldensian (wɒl'dɛnsɪən) *n, adj*

Summary Article: **Waldenses**

From *The Columbia Encyclopedia*

(wôldĕn'sĕz) or Waldensians, Protestant religious group of medieval origin, called in French *Vaudois*. They originated in the late 12th cent. as the Poor Men of Lyons, a band organized by Peter Waldo, a wealthy merchant of Lyons, who gave away his property (c.1176) and went about preaching apostolic poverty as the way to perfection. Being laymen, they were forbidden to preach. They went to Rome, where Pope Alexander III blessed their life but forbade preaching (1179) without authorization from the local clergy. They disobeyed and began to teach unorthodox doctrines; they were formally declared heretics by Pope Lucius III in 1184 and by the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215. In 1211 more than 80 were burned as heretics at Strasbourg, beginning several centuries of persecution.

The Waldenses proclaimed the Bible as the sole rule of life and faith. They rejected the papacy, purgatory, indulgences, and the mass, and laid great stress on gospel simplicity. Worship services consisted of readings from the Bible, the Lord's Prayer, and sermons, which they believed could be preached by all Christians as depositaries of the Holy Spirit. Their distinctive pre-Reformation doctrines are set forth in the Waldensian Catechism (c.1489). They had contact with other similar groups, especially the Humiliati.

The Waldenses were most successful in Dauphiné and Piedmont and had permanent communities in the Cottian Alps SW of Turin. In 1487 at the instance of Pope Innocent VIII a persecution overwhelmed the Dauphiné Waldenses, but those in Piedmont defended themselves successfully. In 1532 they met with German and Swiss Protestants and ultimately adapted their beliefs to those of the Reformed Church. In 1655 the French and Charles Emmanuel II of Savoy began a campaign against them. Oliver Cromwell sent a mission of protest; that occasion also prompted John Milton's famous poem on the Waldenses. At the time of the revocation of the Edict of Nantes (1685), the Waldensian leader, Henri Arnaud, led a band into Switzerland; he later led them back to their valleys.

After the French Revolution the Waldenses of Piedmont were assured liberty of conscience, and in 1848, King Charles Albert of Savoy granted them full religious and civil rights. A group of Waldensians settled in the United States at Valdese, N.C. The Waldensian Church is included in the Alliance of Reformed Churches of the Presbyterian Order. The principal Waldensian writer was Arnaud.

See study by E. Cameron (1984).

APA

Chicago

Harvard

MLA

Waldenses. (2018). In P. Lagasse, & Columbia University, *The Columbia encyclopedia* (8th ed.). New York, NY: Columbia University Press. Retrieved from <https://search.credoreference.com/content/topic/waldenses>



The Columbia Encyclopedia, © Columbia University Press 2018



The Columbia Encyclopedia, © Columbia University Press 2018

APA

Waldenses. (2018). In P. Lagasse, & Columbia University, *The Columbia encyclopedia* (8th ed.). New York, NY: Columbia University Press. Retrieved from <https://search.credoreference.com/content/topic/waldenses>

Chicago

"Waldenses." In *The Columbia Encyclopedia*, by Paul Lagasse, and Columbia University. 8th ed. Columbia University Press, 2018. <https://search.credoreference.com/content/topic/waldenses>

Harvard

Waldenses. (2018). In P. Lagasse & Columbia University, *The Columbia encyclopedia*. (8th ed.). [Online]. New York: Columbia University Press. Available from: <https://search.credoreference.com/content/topic/waldenses> [Accessed 17 October 2019].

MLA

"Waldenses." *The Columbia Encyclopedia*, Paul Lagasse, and Columbia University, Columbia University Press, 8th edition, 2018. *Credo Reference*, <https://search.credoreference.com/content/topic/waldenses>. Accessed 17 Oct. 2019.