The *third* is the age immediatialy before that of Valdo. The authorities to be consulted for the religious opinions of the Valdenses at these periods, are, 1. the public acts of synod, and the liturgy of the Valdensian church, as it now exists ; 2. the account given of the Valdenses by Claude Seyssel, archbishop of Turin, after his visitation of the diocese in 1517 ; and, 3. that admirable monument of faith, hope, and charity, called the *Nobla Leyczon,* al­leged to have been written in the year 1100. These re­present the Valdenses as rejecting image worship, the invocation of saints, the necessity of auricular confession, the obligations to celibacy, papal supremacy and infallibility, and the doctrine of purgatory ; as professing to take scrip­ture for the only rule of faith ; and believing in the holy Trinity, in original sin, in the atonement and mediation of Christ alone, in justification by faith, in the two sacraments of baptism and the Lord’s Supper, and in the apostolical ordinance of holy orders.

The misrepresentations of friends and enemies, and the destruction of their documents in the course of number­less persecutions, render it a hard task to disentangle Valdensian history from the confusion under which it lies. Notwithstanding all that has been written on the subject, we still want evidence of a more convincing and irresistible nature, as to their origin,@@1 succession, and pro­gress. There are provoking uncertainties attending the inquiry ; but amidst all the clouds in which it is involv­ed, one bright truth gleams strongly out of the darkness, even from the time when the Valdenses came first into notoriety and conflict. The little Christian flock has been indestructible, in defiance of those who strove to be its destroyers, and, like the flaming bush. It has burn­ed, but has not been consumed. Neither executions nor arguments, neither violence nor calumnies, have prevailed for its extinction. To what can this be attributed ? Not to the protection of situation only, not to accidental causes, but, under the divine blessing, to the stronghold which the sanctity of truth lias upon the sympathies of men, in spite of their angry passions. The Valdenses found favour with their sovereigns, and obtained immunities, privileges, and pledges of security from time to time, which could not have been forced from the strong by the weak, and never would have been conceded to fanatical or rebellious sub­jects. The very fact of their existence is an attestation to the purity of their faith and conduct, and a refutation of those who reproached them with gross errors. He who has made darkness his secret place, has mysteriously preserved them ; and astonished the pride of Christian orthodoxy, by making a fold, for these few sheep in the wilderness, from whence they might rebuke error, and bear witness to the truth.

The history of Piedmont, and of all the states subject to the house of Savoy, whether in the Cottian Alps, or else­where, has hitherto been a sealed book, in consequence of the reluctance of the dukes of Savoy and kings of Sardinia, to permit the family and state documents to be brought to light. Muratori confessed that he despaired of illustrating the history of Piedmont@@8 Giannone relinquished in disgust his intended history of the country, because the archives of Turin were not more freely opened to him. Hallam@@3 says that the history of Piedmont is far less elucidated by an­cient

and modem writers than that of any other part of Italy; and Dal Pozzo, a native writer, has declared,@@4 in a very learned work, that in no region of Europe has the truth of history been so concealed.

Another circumstance which has contributed to darken Valdensian history, is the doubtful line of separation between kingdom and kingdom, diocese and diocese, during the middle ages, and the frequent transfers from one authority to another. The bishops of Turin and Embrun sometimes exercised jurisdiction almost indiscriminately on each side of the Cottian Alps ; and in many of the old documents, when we read of the valleys of Fraissiniere, Pragela, Clusone, and others. It is difficult to understand to what lo­calities or people they refer. Need it therefore occasion surprise, if many links are found to be wanting, in the chain of documentary evidence necessary to unite the present with the past, in the annals of an obscure district, belonging to a realm whose entire history is wrapt in mystery?

In a few years, perhaps. It will be more easy to give a satisfactory account of the Valdenses, because the present king of Sardinia is permitting the ancient records of his states to be examined and published ; and an historical commission at Turin, has already sent many important do­cuments to press, which throw light on subalpine affairs.@@®

It is in vain to pretend to reduce the annals of the Val­densian church to any thing like connected history, till we descend to the period when persecution brought it into notice. We may. It is true, pick up a few materials relating to the country, and to the general aspect of religion, from the early documents which have come down to us, but these are scanty and unsatisfactory. For example, we learn that the Cottian Alps received the gospel in the second century, and that Irenæus, bishop of Lyon, made himself master of the Celtic language, that he might minister among the mountaineers ; that facilities of intercourse between the subalpines and the inhabitants of the plain, were secured by good roads lead­ing through the centre of the valleys now called Protestant, in the direction of Mount Genevre, Oulx and Fenestrelle; that the village of St Secondo, in the valley of the Clusone, is so called from a martyr of that name in the year 120 ; that Crisolo, near Rora in Val Lucerna, was the place of St Geoffrey’s concealment, before his martyrdom in 297; and that, during the persecution of Diocletian, many Christians of the Theban legion found refuge in these regions.@@® We know that a hundred years afterwards, Ambrose of Milan, whose diocese extended to the Alps, complained of his mountain clergy refusing to become celibates, on the plea of ancient custom;@@7 and that Vigilantius made the Cottian Alps the place of his sojournment,@@8 when he op­posed himself to the errors of the church ; because there he was received with kindness by professors of Christi­anity, who refused to adopt the observances of *Monachism,* prayers for the dead, saint and relic worship, and other superstitions, which were creeping into practice.@@9 Again, after an interval of more than 400 years, we find, that doc­trines, called by Jonas of Orleans and Dungalus,@@1 *the heresy of Vigilantius,* were still cherished here, and that Claude, bishop of Turin, “ that bright and golden ring in the chain of Cisalpine Protestantism,” gave the sanction of his episcopal authority to opinions, which the Gallic re­former of the fourth century had been reviled by Jerom

@@@1 On the origin of the Valdenses, some curious materials for conjecture will be found in the history of the Gothic Christians of the fifth century, and their relics in France and Italy. Salvianus de Gub. Dei, 1. 7, Alcuin in bis Epistles, and Theodolphus, three hundred years later, speak of the purity of their lives, while they allude to the imperfections of their notions in relation to church observances.

@@@i Muratori Rer. Ital. Scrip, vol. xi. preefat- ad Chron. Aβt.

@@@3 Hallam's Europe in the Middle Ages, vol. i. p. 376.

@@@4 Essai sur les Anciennes Assemblées Nationales de la Savoye et du Piemont, pp. xx. xxi.

@@@’ These publications appear in folio volumes, under the title “ Historiæ Patrite Monumenta." The first was printed at Turin in 1836.

@@@\* See “ Storia, delle Alpi Marittime." published in Hist. Patr. Mon.

@@@’ De Officiis, lib. i. cap. 50.

@@@" Hieron. Opera, vol. iv. p. 279. Epist. 37, aliter 53.

@@@’ Mr Faber (see his very learned Inquiry into the History of the Vallenses, p. 227) thinks the Valdenses may have been called Leon- ists from this Vigilantius, the *Ironist* or native of *Lugdunum Convenarum.*

*@@@10 See* Dungali Episr. adv. Claud, and Jonæ Aur. Episc. Epist. adv. Claud, in Bib. Pat. vol. iv. p. 536. and vol. v. pp. 153-163.