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**«THE BLOOD OF OUR FATHERS
DRIPS FROM THESE PAGES».
CHRONICLE AND HISTORIOGRAPHY
OF THE CALABRIAN-VALDESIAN MASSACRES (1561).
BETWEEN RELIGIOUS FREEDOM AND REPRESSION**

Abstract: This contribution wants to reconsider the massacre of the Waldensians of Calabria in 1561. Therefore, the chronicles following the successive dramatic events (16th and 17th centuries) constitute a useful premise to introduce the political use that the historiography of the 19th century made of a particularly complex argument. Focusing on the different declinations concerning the concept of social, cultural and religious freedom, we decided to select the works of Filippo de Boni and the research of Luigi Amabile.

Key words: Filippo De Boni, Luigi Amabile, Calabrian-Waldesian, Inquisition, Waldesian massacre, religious freedom.

**Introduction: the echo of the Waldensian
massacres before the 19th century**

Since the 1940's, several scholars have conducted an exhaustive investigation of the Calabrian-Waldensian extermination. At the same time, these historians have clarified the effective involvement of the Spanish Crown in the fight against the Provençal communities that had settled in Calabria. In this context, Ernesto Pontieri considered the desire of “religious freedom”

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in the southern territories, as hardly adhering to the rigid policy of “internal and external” balance and to the “criterion of authority” demanded by the viceroy Pietro di Toledo and by his successor Don Perafàn de Ribera. Principles that were opposed to any form of “deviance or heterodoxy” but were, at the same time, considered essential elements for the peace and religious unity of the Iberian Peninsula and its domains (Pontieri, 1939; Scaduto, 1946; Pontieri, 1966; Scaduto, 1966; Mariotti, 1988; Monteleone, 1990, Intrieri, 1997; Scaramella, 1999; Intrieri, 2013). A few years after the event, the Calabrian-Waldensian massacres became a subject of disclosure by a specific Protestant propaganda. The extent of the massacre was of considerable importance within and beyond European borders. In fact, several characters of the reformed faith began to earnestly narrate the cruel martyrdom suffered by the Calabrian brothers (Foxe, 1563; Perrin, 1618; Crespin, 1619; Gilles, 1881; Lentolo, 1906)¹. In fact, in chapter XXIX of the *Histoire Ecclésiastique Des Églises Vaudoises* [...], Pierre Gilles did not fail to emphasize the purposes that led him to retrace the dramatic story of the Waldensian massacres in Calabria, i.e. return a “catalogue [...] des person-

¹ We must remember how Perrin wrote his work on behalf of the reformed synod of the Dauphiné. He is among the main chroniclers to reflect on the Waldensian migration from the Alps in search of new lands. His story is particularly important as it also details the relationships between the Waldensians who arrived in Calabria with the feudal lords and the local clergy. These, according to Gilles, stood out for their industriousness obtaining numerous benefits from the local lords. Gilles’ work offers a much more detailed and in-depth insight into southern Waldensianism. According to the latter, the Waldensian settlements date back to the second twenty years of the fifteenth century. An entire section of Gilles’ work concerns the privileges granted by Ferdinand of Aragon (i.e. Ferrante II). Furthermore, the author also proposes, in his volume, the origin of San Sisto (destroyed during the massacre of 1561), which became a village only in the early 1500s; as far as the propaganda of the Calabrian-Waldensian massacres is concerned, in addition to the texts cited, we should keep in mind J. Crespin, J. Foxe and S. Lentolo. Lentolo’s work is indispensable and not only for the precise references on the martyrs and on the persecution against the Waldensians of Calabria. The Neapolitan minister considers the pre-existing settlements of the terrible massacre and specifies the condition of “dissimulation” in which the Waldensians lived in San Sisto and Guardia Piemontese. Also, Jean Crispin, in the eighth book of the *Histoire de martyrs*, dealing with the profile of Giovan Luigi Pascale, introduces the terrible story of the Calabrian Waldensian massacres by referring to the geographical area in which the Alpine community had settled. Subsequently, the Waldensian pastor emphasised how these people, who “habitent es extremités d’Italie, prochains de la Sicilie & suiet du Roi d’Espagne”, had felt the need to know the “vraye Religion”. It was precisely this sought-after cultic freedom that would be at the root of the cruel persecutions launched against them by the Spanish Crown (Crespin, Lib. 8, p. 555).

nes particulières cruellement tormntées, selon le tesmognage bien vérifié que nous en ont rendu des personnes honorables, qui Dieu conservoit sur les lieu enc e temps là pour tesmoins oculaires, et auxquelles Dieu à fait la grâce après de se retirer és églises des valées de Piedmont, et ailleurs, et rendre fidèle tesmognage de ce qu'ils avoyent veut et oui” (Gilles, 1881).

On the other hand, some of these sources, as in the case of *Historia delle grandi e crudeli persecuzioni fatte ai tempi nostri contro il popolo che chiamano valdese* by Scipione Lentolo, often resorted to anonymous works and writings – re-written by the authors themselves – and to the direct testimonies of those who managed to escape persecution. Precisely Lentolo’s work, during the long drafting process, underwent considerable alterations, thus presenting a heterogeneity of style and content. If Euan Cameron has brought to light an unpublished copy of the work preserved in the Bodleian Library in Oxford, dating back to the seventeenth century, Jean François Gilmont is responsible for a systematic study of the composition of the reformed pastor (Comba, 1897; Gilmont, 1982; Gonnet, 1988; Zuliani, 2017)². Lentolo’s work was followed by the chronicles of Jean Paul Perrin and Pierre Gilles, to which the works of Matteo Flacio Illirico and Gerolamo Miolo³ are linked (Miolo, 1971; Tortora, 2004). These are sources which, produced in different historical phases, are nonetheless relevant for the study of the presence of Alpine communities in Calabria. Lothar Vogel has accurately expressed himself on this documentary support, considering the Waldensian chronicles a first form of «sixteenth-century historiography for Calabria». It is certainly a complicated subject, and it seems that Vogel does not want to renounce the existence of a “Waldensian memory of southern origin” (Vogel, 2012). However, the historian underlines how the annihilation perpetrated by Spain against these communities probably led to the dispersion and destruction of the southern documentary heritage (Gregory, 1999; De Lange, 2009; De Lange, 2012; Vogel 2012). Contextually,

² Zuliani states that Gilmont’s merit was to deal with the editorial events that characterized the work of Scipione Lentolo. Zuliani’s work is very useful for his analysis of the extrinsic characters relating to the Bernese edition of the work in question and on the various editorial states of the *Historia*.

³ Miolo’s work, with twenty questions, also focuses on the themes of Calabrian Waldensianism. Calabria is indicated as a land where the Waldensians arrived. In the work, we also find a list of the “barba” (those present and those who have disappeared). Therefore, Miolo’s work is very useful because it refers to the path taken by the “barba” towards the Calabrian territories. As for the list of the “barba” (p. 107 e ss.).

a crucial point arises around the problem of oral tradition. It is undoubtedly a recurring method in the transmission of information which converged in the sixteenth-seventeenth-century Waldensian chronicles are therefore subjected to continuous modifications and re-elaborations. The protestant-style production was counterbalanced by the works of the Catholics Tommaso Costo⁴ and Colanello Pacca (Giannone, 1760; Giannone, 1970; Vivanti, 1974). As highlighted by Luigi Amabile, Pacca's approach was oriented towards an exquisitely Catholic interpretation⁵. The Neapolitan doctor and lecturer emphasised, in fact, how the Waldensians of Calabria preferred "being obstinate, they preferred to die in their perfidy. In fact, many of them went out into the countryside, made squads and tried to resist the soldiers sent by the court, but in the end, they were all extinguished, so that in a single day about one hundred and eighty died, and Spinello, as a Christian and a Catholic, was more content to have his lands almost deserted than to endure such a plague. The belongings of those, then brought to Naples, were sold at the court's request for a good sum of money" (Amabile, 1892).

Linked to this catholic production is the work of the Capuchin Father Giovanni Fiore, who in the volume *Della Calabria Illustrata. Opera Varia Istorica*, attributed to Father Giovanni Antonio Anania of Taverna, chaplain of Spinelli, the merit of having discovered that «nascent infection» (Fiore, 1691). Consolidated in the binomial "religious freedom and martyrdom" this specific production came to the attention of Pietro Giannone

⁴ In Amabile's study on the exact geographical location of the Waldensians in Calabria and Apulia, the research of Pietro Giannone, Baldacchini and Cantù is mentioned. However, they had proceeded with an erroneous analysis while, faithfully following Amabile's text, Costo was able to enumerate the lands infected by the heresy, also indicating their location and even the lords who owned them: "It was the Guardia of Salvatore Spinello who was then Marquis of Fuscaldò and San Sisto of the Duke of Montalto" [...], p. 238, n. 2; Remember also what Father Fiore wrote in 1691 about the Waldensian presence in Calabria. The Waldensians, defined as 'heretics and Lutherans', were considered guilty of spreading a new and nascent infection with the germ of heresy. They were discovered by a religious man named Giovanni Antonio Ananias, who warned Rome of this dangerous presence.

⁵ It is an important work that demonstrates Pietro Giannone's interest, not only in the Calabrian Waldensian massacres but also in the history of medieval Waldensians. Scaramella recalls how Tommaso Costo and Colonnello Pacca had described the Waldensian massacres of Calabria underlining their obstinacy during the executions. A different vision will come from the sources of Paolo Sarpi and Jacques Auguste de Thou. Both will overcome Protestant apologetics and treaties of Catholic origin, see. P. Sarpi, *Historia del Concilio Tridentino*, (curated by) C. Vivanti, Torino, 1974, pp. 676–678; on Thou's source, instead, refer to the bibliography proposed by Scaramella.

during the 18th century. However, the analysis proposed by Giannone was moving towards a profound and reasoned criticism of what happened in the towns of Guardia, San Sisto, Vaccarizzo and Montalto. Furthermore, coerced repeatedly by the grip of the Inquisition, the philosopher of Ischitella signed an abjuration in 1738 which didn't convince the judges of the faith⁶ very much. (Merlotti, 2000; Imbruglia, 2013; Lavenia, 2015). In the document, the seventeenth-century libertine (Bertelli, Ricuperati, 1977), and exponent of pre-enlightenments, stated about the *Istoria Civile del Regno di Napoli*, that “Intorno alla Storia Civile del Regno di Napoli non ebbi altra mira se non dichiarare la politica, e le leggi di quel Regno; e poiché non potea nettamente concepirla, se non con il dar un'idea dell'Ordine Ecclesiastico, che occupa la maggior parte di questo, mi convenne trattar delli ordini Religiosi, e con tal occasione delli abusi. Se ho ecceduto narrandoli, come ora me ne accordo, intendo ritrattarmene, e se potessi, vorrei fossero annullate tali stampe, affinché non si apporti per quelle scandalo alli altri, e danno alla Chiesa, con che li condanno e ritratto”⁷ (ADDF, S.O, I 5 d 23).

Luigi Amabile's archival approach. The Spanish policy against the Waldensians of Calabria

The story of the Waldensian massacres in Calabria constitutes a focal point of the work *Il Sant' Ufficio dell' Inquisizione in Napoli* by Luigi Amabile (1828–1892). In the first volume, the historian considers the previously mentioned Protestant chronicles (Scaramella, 1999). Amabile's text contains precious references on Gilles' journey to the colonies of Calabria, i.e., in

⁶ Both Merlotti and Imbruglia carefully described the life and cultural, political and social formation of Pietro Giannone. Although decidedly 'cosmopolitan', the training of the philosopher from Ischitella was influenced by the socio-cultural ferments that agitated Naples in the late 17th century. Giannone, in fact, found himself involved in the bitter controversy concerning 'ecclesiastical feudality'. Moreover, in his *Istoria Civile*, the philosopher questioned papal authority, thus creating a deep rift that would lead him to the Inquisition.

⁷ «As for the Civil History of the Kingdom of Naples, I had no other aim but to declare the politics and laws of that Kingdom; and since I could not clearly conceive it, except by giving an idea of the Ecclesiastical Order, which occupies the greater part of it, it was appropriate for me to deal with the Religious Orders, and on this occasion with the abuses. If I have gone too far in narrating them, as I now agree to do, I intend to retract myself from them, and if I could, I would like to have them annulled, so that they do not bring scandal to others, and damage to the Church, with which I condemn them and retract».

the second volume of the *Histoire Ecclésiastique des Églises Vaudoises* where the chronicler mentions the ultramontane settlements present in the south. However, the rigor imposed by the positivist current urged the historian from Avellino to make a necessary comparison with the documents that dealt with the Waldensian massacres. A large part of this documentation was recovered from numerous national and international archival sites. The papers, which Amabile was able to effectively exploit, confirmed the role of Spain in the destruction of the historical memory pertaining to the Waldensian communities of Calabria. This was achieved through a massive intervention by the vice-regal militia (Coniglio, 1978; Gonnet, 1983; Lopez, 1984; Gonnet, 1989; Scaramella, 1999; Cameron, 2002; Stancati, 2008)⁸. During his narration, however, the former deputy insisted on the crucial causes that had led to Spain's intervention. The massacres were in fact to be considered as the inevitable consequence of the religious and cultural freedom demanded by the Calabrian-Waldensians during the 1560s (Scaramella, 1999; Benedict, Seidel Menchi, Taillon, 2007; Peyronel Rambaldi, Fratini, 2011; Ciaccio, 2014; De Leo, 2014; Tortora, 2019; Tortora 2020). A summary of the extent of the repression perpetrated by the Spanish Crown against the Waldensian community of Calabria, in which Ascanio Caracciolo and the Marquis of Bucchianico played a decisive role, can be found in the *Relacion de las cartas del Duque de Alcala* [...] dating back to July 1561. The report, kept in the General Archives of Simancas, explains “que para solicitar la execution del castigo de los herejes que se levantaron en la tierra de la Guarda y Santo Sisto en las provincias de Calabria avia enviado Ascanio Caraccolo, con la infanteria necesaria y orden que qualquier persona pueda matar sni pena al hereje que se defenderie, y a todos los que

⁸ We must recall how Scaramella's analysis focused above all on the militias employed by the viceroy. It is an element that greatly fuelled the historiographical debate, and which was joining the phenomenon of brigandage present in Calabria; on this issue see also the works by E. Stancati, *Gli Ultramontani*. Storia dei Valdesi di Calabria, Cosenza, Pellegrini Editore, 2008; we must recall what Coniglio wrote about the elimination of the Waldensians in Calabria. Coniglio argued that the persecutions of the Jews and the slaughter of the Calabrian-Waldensians (“hardworking rural populations”) had political roots. Don Perafan de Rivera, using the arm of the Marquis of Bucchianico, promoted a crusade aimed at eradicating the new ideas that were circulating in the South by re-establishing, once and for all, the unitary model established by the Counter-Reformation. Cameron's work intervenes on myths and stereotypes concerning the history of the Waldensians. The historian wonders about the ways in which the Church had initiated the persecution against these people, about the relative fusion with the Swiss-Strasbourg reform and about the practices they officiated.

tomare defendiendose se les proponga la confesion, y en confesandose los ahorquen, y lo mismo se haga delos que no quisieren confessar, excepto los que fuere de XVII anos abaso, que assi mismo se proceda contra las mujeres fuere relassas, y se queme las casas, y allanar las possessiones de todos los herejes. Tambien se ha pugonado que qualquiera persona que traxere vivo alguno de los dichos predicadores se le daran X ducatos, y XX por qualquiera de los herejes particulares, y X ducatos trayendole muerto, con otras prevenciones per particularidades, que se pone en la Institution del Domino Caraccolo y cartas de marques de Buccianico governatore dela provincia” (AGS, SSP Leg, 1, 38; cfr. Stancati, 2008).

Amabile, who had the opportunity to visit the rooms of the Simancas Archive for his research on Tommaso Campanella, added, as strongly indicative, the story of the risky proselytism carried out by Giovan Luigi Pascale⁹. The intervention of the reformed minister was one of the triggers for the massacre, precisely because it brought about the end of that practice oriented towards studied caution and, especially for Calabrian villages, in «not making one’s religious beliefs public» (Scaramella, 2009)¹⁰. This tendency towards nicodemism seems to continue in the territories of San Sisto and Vaccarizzo during the 17th century. The detailed report of the archbishop of Cosenza relating to the places where the Calabrian-Waldensian massacres had taken place, underlines how a good part of the citizens of San Sisto and Vaccarizzo «pretend to be Catholics but that intrinsically and as far as they can discover each other they still remain in their ancient errors» (ADDF, L7c – ff. 15r ss, 1600; Scaramella, 1999; Stancati, 2008). Returning to Giovan Luigi Pascale, recent studies have carefully analysed the impact that the advent of the reformed minister had on these territories. Antonino De Pasquale considered him as the supreme bearer of a “noble testimony of freedom and faith, not extinguished by the stake [...] and which reaches

⁹ On the proselytism of Giovan Luigi Pascale one should also consult the already mentioned work by Scipione Lentolo and the eighth book of *Histoire Des Martyrs [...]* by Jean Crispin. Crispin recalls that, as soon as he arrived in Calabria, Pascale began «incontinent à prescher la doctrine de l’Evangile aux povres fideles, qui estoyent affamez de ceste pasture de vie», p. 556.

¹⁰ Scaramella underlines how the Waldensians preserved their prerogatives and traditional lifestyles. These, as confirmed by a specific historiography, enjoyed the protection of the local feudal lords, who had requested their transfer to those places. Preserving these communities from the intervention of the Inquisition, before 1561 and prior to the provisions sanctioned by the Swiss-Strasburg Reform, was the lack of interest in any form of proselytism and, at the same time, the endogamous marriage system.

contemporary times, vibrant and triumphant” (De Pasquale; Gay, 1906; Muston, 1926; Gilmont, 2009; Tortora, 2017)¹¹. On the other hand, Amabile suggested a greater care towards the recovery and analysis of the procedural detail through which previous historiography had recounted the burning of the Waldensian minister. With the great care that always distinguished the doctor from Irpinia, he re-read the sources that told of the Cuneo *relapse* as directly “burned alive” (note 1, p. 242). Although loyal to the truth of the facts, Amabile seized the opportunity, studying these details, to strike at the Church of the Counter-Reformation and at the Church of his time (Amabile, 1882).

«A common enemy for social and religious freedom».
The use of the Waldensians massacres
in De Boni’s historiography

In the same years as Amabile, Giovenale Vegezzi Ruscalla and Filippo De Boni adhered more radically to the principles of nineteenth-century liberalism and anti-clericalism. The research of both, during the 1860s, contain – through the study of the persecutions perpetuated by the Catholic Church – continuous references to the anti-unification action perpetrated by the Catholic Church in the History of Italy (Tedesco, 2020; Del Col, 2021). This is described, above all by De Boni through a reasoned apology for the crimes committed during the years of the Counter-Reformation (Sestan, 1987; Biasuz, 1949). From this period, De Boni again highlighted the profound “religious intolerance” and the suffocation of all individual and collective freedom (Mattioli, Pancrazi, Schiaffini, 1951; Mikoletzky, 1965; Antoniucci, 1974; Proto, 1996; Mozzarelli, 2009). This interpretation became the cornerstone on which the entire work on the history of the Waldensians of Calabria was based. In the edgy introduction, which did not hide the liberal and anti-clerical orientation of the journalist and writer from Caupo, which had already emerged a few years earlier in the polemical writing addressed to the papal curia and to Pope Pius IX, a reasoned admonition to the Italian people was reported (De Boni, 1849). The latter was in fact accused of hav-

¹¹ De Pasquale especially highlights the heroism of Giovan Luigi Pascale by specifying some anecdotes about his life before the mission to Calabria. In these pages a great deal is dedicated to the imprisonment of the Waldensian minister, to his sufferings in the prisons of Cosenza, up to the stake in front of Castel Sant’Angelo.

ing forgotten the blood shed by the “jealous wrath of Rome” (De Boni, 1864). The heartfelt appeal to cultural and cultural freedom was needed by the historian of Belluno to denounce every form of tyranny suffered, over the centuries, by the Italian people. However, this specific narration was the setting of the diversity (social and religious) which, after the laws of 1860, continued to perpetuate and characterize specific areas of the peninsular geography. In his study, De Boni also draws a parallel on the concepts of «race» and «nation». The question is addressed above all to the character of the Anglo-Saxons (who were able to find their own way towards freedom) and subsequently to the Latin nations. He believes that in the latter the power of the Church has manifested itself in a radical way. Its power had, in fact, the consequence of censoring every form of ingenuity by handing down a profound form of terror to the different generations. De Boni’s analysis was not exemplified in the exclusive appeal of Italian citizens – considered as “a people characterized by general indifference” – to the new principles of the freedom of the nation and of its liberation from the dominion of the Church. Many other topics were chosen, amplified by the historian from Belluno and placed as a historical-ethnographic introduction to the massacres of Calabria. These are themes which, closely linked to the principles of religious independence, but also oriented towards greater “social and political freedom”, included an accurate examination of the characteristics of the “Latin and Anglo-Saxon nation”. Precisely on this comparison, De Boni proved to be a sensitive scholar¹². In the parallel between the two national identities, it inevitably emerged how the territories subjected to Spanish hegemony had suffered “from the terror and suffocation of individual and collective freedom”. On the other hand, these were precisely the feelings generated by the persecution against every cultural and cultic form considered by Roman dogmatism – on which De Boni expressed himself repeatedly – as bordering on orthodoxy (De Boni, 1866). De Boni offered an exquisitely political reading of that very painful history of prisons, stakes and martyrs. The philological analysis of the crimes that had crossed the history of Italy, confident of the support of the positivist method, introduced the historian

¹² De Boni also draws a parallel between the concepts of «race» and «nation». The issue is addressed above all to the character of the Anglo-Saxons (who were able to find their own way towards freedom) and subsequently to the Latin nations. He believes that in the latter the power of the Church has manifested itself in a radical way. His power had in fact the consequence of censoring every form of ingenuity by handing down a profound form of terror to the different generations.

from Belluno to the maturation of an indispensable historiographical process. That is, to retrace the history of the Calabrian-Waldensians, creating a real “martyrology of the Italian conscience”, to encourage the people of the Unification to re-appropriate the values that have now disappeared due to the ecclesiastical interference inflicted, perceived as very up to date by the historian (De Boni, 1864). On the other hand, De Boni wrote that “where there is no freedom, fraternity is a word devoid of meaning” and, with reference to the curial circles, he admitted to “fighting the tyranny of the soul [...] root of all the others” and that he deliberately chose to “leave the very narrow circle of the papacy”. Against the latter, the historian of Caupo considered it necessary “to wage war in order to truly live in the ecumenical council of humanity”. The oppression of the Curia was then, for De Boni, in the persistent superstitions among the multitude of the southern countryside. Even on this issue the acrid pen of the historian of Caupo left precise references. In fact, the peasant world presented itself as that part of society over which Rome, since the Council of Trento, had tried to exercise personal control. It is an indisputably delicate topic on which, in addition to the studies of the historian from Belluno, much has been written since the last century (Scirocco, 1963; D’Azzeglio, 1963; De Rosa, 1971; De Rosa, 1976; Villari, 1977; Pellegrino, 1979; Fiorelli, 2006; De Spirito, 2008)¹³. De Boni’s thoughts on the role played by the papal curia, especially during the 16th and 17th centuries, took on clearer contours in the celebration of those characters who, riding the wave of reformed turmoil, chose to oppose papal tyranny. In these examples of constancy, freedom of faith and martyrdom, the historian came to perceive a “first Italian Risorgimento” capable of spreading the «precious seed of freedom» (De Boni, 1864). If the privileged centre was established precisely in the Alps – mentioned to introduce the origins and history of the medieval and modern Waldensians – there is no lack of references to the reformed principles of which, in the Kingdom of Naples, Juan De Valdés was the promoter (Firpo, 2016). The story of the Spanish nobleman constituted only the first of the nodal points of the long narration of the historian from Belluno. Shortly afterwards, the latter re-

¹³ ADS, Capitolo Metropolitan, b. 91, V. Carezza, *Il Colmo della Superstizione*, in «La Civiltà Evangelica. Sveglia Contemporanea. Periodico Mensile del Movimento Religioso in Italia», Anno X, N.4, Napoli, 1898. For the Lamb Ritual in Todi see Arnaldo, *Che bravi preti!*, in «L’Evangelista», Anno X, N.12, Roma, 1898; ADS, Capitolo Metropolitan, b.91, *Notizie Cattoliche. Propaganda Malefica*, in «La Civiltà Evangelica. Sveglia Contemporanea. Periodico Mensile del Movimento Religioso in Italia», Anno X, N. 4, Napoli, 1898.

viewed the deeds of those who, opposing the claimed hegemony of Rome, were forced into exile, perpetual prison or abandonment to the secular arm¹⁴. On the other hand, an example in this regard comes precisely from the narration of Bernardino Ochino's flight to Geneva and his persistence in corresponding with his Italian brothers so that they would rebel against the oppression of Rome (Benrath, 1876; Nicolini, 1935; Bainton, 1940; Nicolini, 1970; Prosperi, 2003; Cantimori, 2009; Prosperi, 2010; Felici, 2016; Camaiori, 2019). Examples that De Boni needed – who also considered the influence of the Church during his years – to introduce the effects that the inquisition had on the people of sixteenth and seventeenth-century Italy. The initial dismay sown by persecutions and public executions, both dictated by what the historian from Belluno defines as “the religion of force”, was transformed for most citizens into a dangerous customary practice, which fire and censorship deeply consolidated. The Waldensian massacres of Calabria took place precisely in this historical setting. De Boni dedicated the second part of his work on the Calabrian-Waldensians to the event. Unquestionably, in addition to the Protestant chronicle to which he resorted, the agile volume by Vegezzi Ruscalla, dedicated to the origins and end of the Piedmontese colony of Calabria, was very valid for its linguistic references and for the reconstruction of the geography of Calabria. De Boni began his study by going back to the origins and persecutions which, since the early Middle Ages, were carried out by the Roman Curia against the Alpine communities (De Boni, 1864; Comba, 1880; Maisonneuve, 1942; Benedetti, 1999; Merlo, 2000; Tourn, 2008; Merlo, 2008; Merlo, 2010; Biller, 2000; Biller, 2016). The historian highlighted his pride for having “abhorred and resisted the idolatry of the Roman curia”. Pride that intensified with the advent of the Swiss-Strasbourg Reform, to which the Alpine Waldensians adhered in 1532, and which prompted the members of the Calabrian community to abandon dissimulation, demonstrating, instead, a certain propensity in the decision to freely officiate their cult (Audisio & Ronchi, 1979; Audisio & Cameron, 1979; Hugon, 1984; Tedeschi & Biondi, 1987; Audisio, 2000; Audisio, 2001; De Lange, 2009; Tortora, 2013; Tortora, 2017; Peyronel Ram-

¹⁴ Starting from the edict of Charles V, De Boni introduces the painful story of Bernardino Ochino and Mollio. Furthermore, in dealing with Valdés and Ochino, he did not spare precise accusations against the Popes Paul III and Gian Pietro Carafa. Referring to his notions on the “Latin nation”, De Boni also recalled the support given by Spain in the crusade against the new heretics; it is worth considering *Scrittori politici dell'Ottocento. Giuseppe Mazzini e i democratici*, (curated by) F. Della Peruta, vol. 1, Milano – Napoli, 1969, p. 961–995.

baldi, 2017). This passage, which due to its importance has found, up to the present day, the support of a robust historiography, introduced De Boni's narration to the profiles of Stefano Negrino and the already mentioned Giovan Luigi Pascale. Compared to the first, it was the reformed minister from Cuneo who distinguished himself as an "ardent soul of the temper of apostles and confessors" and who, despite personal ties, chose to "pursue the office of martyrs". The intransigent profile of Cardinal Ghislieri (the future Pius V) was therefore set against the latter. His inquisitorial zeal prompted the historian from Belluno to call him a "revived Dominican" in his writings. But he too was responsible for having eradicated any possibility of free thought and free study in the Italy of the second half of the sixteenth century. Both therefore paved the way for the story of the Waldensian massacres of Calabria. The detailed analysis of the tortures to which the citizens of La Guardia, San Sisto and Vaccarizzo were destined, assumes considerable relevance if one understands the purpose for which these massacres are listed and underlined in the narration of the historian from Belluno. The blood stoically shed by the Calabrian-Waldensians, for which the intellectual believed the Church of Rome responsible, was to be understood as a "guarantee for the evils to come" and as a "medicine for sick souls" (De Boni, 1864). With a different approach from that of Luigi Amabile, but at the same time similar for the numerical analysis of the victims produced by the armed intervention, Filippo De Boni was however respectful of the historiographical tradition preceding him and of the archival documentation. Elements to which an ethnographic study was added, conducted in Calabria and which, in fact, brought him very close to the method used by Vegezzi Ruscalla. Wishing above all to «unearth the bones of those martyrs» (De Boni, 1864) – an attempt pursued years later by the Presbyterian James Gibson to give the Waldensians a prominent place in history, then in a more meticulous way by Emilio Comba (Comba, 1901; Vinay, 1980; Biagetti, 1989)¹⁵ – De

¹⁵ Gibson's aim was to transfer the historical memory of the Waldensians and, at the same time, illustrate their function in the process of Italian evangelization over the centuries. The Presbyterian underlined how the history of the Waldensians was configured as a history of martyrs and heroes. Both were elements through which the people of the Alps demonstrated the truthfulness of their faith despite the conditions of persecution and clandestinity. The years of Gibson were also those in which Emilio Comba worked. Towards the end of the 19th century, the Waldensian historian and pastor proceeded with the recovery of archival data to free the history of the Waldensians from distinct apologetic orientations and give that story of martyrs and heroes a precise historiographical and historical collocation.

Boni interrogated the historical memory of the citizens of La Guardia. The result, recalling the premise of this chapter, was extremely disappointing for him, even though he understood the causes. The latter returned from his stay at La Guardia stating that among those men interviewed “some were able to tell me nothing, some very little. And it’s not their fault, since at that time, along with the men, the municipal archives were also destroyed. And no one is unaware that the Inquisition through which everything passes erases and even hides the documents of its deeds, almost as if, out of intimate and unconfessed conscience of what is right, they were ashamed. Therefore, the memories of those disasters have fallen, just as the Waldensian faith was extinguished in those districts” (De Boni, 1864).

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