CHAPTER FOUR

THE TIME OF THE BARBES

*Truly ye bear witness.*

Luke 11, 48

So far our study has evoked the Waldensian diaspora in general, its origins, the source material we can draw on, and the manner of organisation, focusing on the eastern Brothers to avoid overlooking an essential, international dimension of the movement. I now invite my reader to turn with me to the Waldensians’ western preachers, whose lives and beliefs are far better known than those of their eastern counterparts.

The documents we can draw on to explore the community in the west are first and foremost the records from the many judicial proceedings in the Dauphiné in 1487 and 1488 during which the believers spoke at length about their preachers. In 1488, for example, Pons Brunet, François and Jean Bret, and Jean Anthoard, all four from Freissinières, were cross-examined. A collection of other records from Waldensian trials or interrogations, admittedly less localised, have also survived. Among those most likely to interest us here, where mention is made of their preachers, we find the following: first, the cross-examination of Philippe Regis in 1451, more unusual because he was a lieutenant or deputy of sorts. Pierre Valoy, from Saint-André near Embrun in the Dauphiné, questioned in 1489, speaks of the preachers. The Valentinois region, around Valence, equally in the Dauphiné, provides some information, such as the cross-examinations of Monet Rey, from Saint-Mamans, and of Peyronette, from Beauregard, in 1494. In 1526, Jacques Ressent, a Waldensian from Bec Dauphin, near Perosa, in the Chisone valley in Piedmont, was taken in for questioning. Meanwhile, Jean de Roma’s anti-Waldensian treatise written in 1533 is particularly well-documented because the inquisitor had officiated against the Provençal communities and had himself interrogated two preachers; he therefore had direct experience of the cases he was investigating. He gives detailed accounts of the eight sessions during which he interrogated Pierre Griot. Besides

An Authorised Testimony

Even such a brief outline of the types of document we can draw on to glean information about the preachers makes it clear that one source in particular is of special interest. It will not have escaped the reader that all except one of the testimonies mentioned emanate from the Waldensians’ persecutors, by which I mean that they were elicited by the civil or religious authorities hunting down the heretics. One document, however, was actually written by the Waldensians, and even better as far as we are concerned, by the preachers themselves. This is the Morel and Masson report, which for this reason alone, deserves to be considered separately.