

## THE NOBLA LECON

(Noble Lesson)

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The "Noble Lesson" written in the Language of the ancient inhabitants of the Valleys (The Waldenses); in the Year 1100. Extracted out of a most authentic manuscript, the true original whereof is to be seen in the public library of the famous University of Cambridge. "The History of the Evangelical Churches of the Valleys of Piemont." by Samuel Morland. 1658. CHRAA. 1982. p.99

"O Brethren, give ear to a noble lesson.  
We ought always to watch and pray,  
For we see the world nigh to a conclusion.  
We ought to strive to do good works,  
Seeing that the end of this world approacheth.  
There are already a thousand and one hundred years fully accomplished,  
Since it was written thus, for we are in the last time.  
We ought to covet little, for we are at what remains, viz. at the later end.

We see daily the Signs to be accomplished,  
And that in the increase of evil, and decrease of good.  
These are the perils which the scripture mentioneth,  
In the Gospels and St. Paul's Writings:  
As also, that no man living can know the end.

And therefore we ought the more to fear, as not being certain,  
Whether we shall die to day or tomorrow.  
But when the day of judgement shall come,  
Every one shall receive their full reward.  
Those that shall have done either well or ill.

Now the Scripture saith, and we ought to believe it,  
That all men shall pass two ways.  
The good to glory, and the wicked to torment.  
But he that shall not believe this departure,  
Let him search the Scripture from the very beginning,  
Since Adam was formed until this present time,  
There he shall find, if he has understanding,  
That few are the saved in comparison of the rest.

Wherefore every one that will do good works,  
The honour of God the Father ought to be his first moving principle.  
He ought likewise to implore the aid of His glorious Son, the dear Son of the Virgin Mary,  
And the Holy Ghost which lightens us in the true way.  
These three (the holy Trinity) as being but one God, ought to be called upon,  
Full of power wisdom and goodness.  
This we ought often to beg and pray for,  
That He would enable us to encounter our enemies,  
And overcome them before our end,  
Which are the world, the Devil, and the flesh:  
And that He would give us wisdom accompanied with goodness,  
That we may know the way of life,  
And keep pure that Soul and Body in way of charity,  
So as we love the holy Trinity,  
And our neighbour, for God hath commanded it.  
Not only those that do us good, but those also which harm us.  
Having hope in the King of Heaven,

That in the end He may receive us into His glorious habitation.

Now we who shall not do what is contained in this Lesson,  
Shall never enter into this house.

Though it be never so hard to be received by the wicked,  
Which love Gold and Silver,  
Which have the promises of God in contempt,  
Who neither keep His Law and Commandments,  
Nor suffer those who would to keep them,  
But rather hinder them to the utmost of their power.

How came this evil to enter into mankind?  
Because Adam sinned at the first beginning,  
By eating of the forbidden Apple.  
And thus the grain of evil seed taking root in others,  
He brought Death to himself and all his Posterity;  
Well may we say, this was an evil morsel;  
However Christ has redeemed the good by his death and passion.  
But alas we find in this Lesson,  
that Adam believed not God his Creator,  
Yea and we may see likewise, that nowadays  
Men forsake God the Father Almighty,  
And believe in Idols to their own Destruction.  
That which the Law forbids,  
which was from the beginning,  
Called the Law of Nature, common to all sorts,  
Which God put into the heart of that man whom he first formed.  
Giving him a power of doing good or evil,  
But commanding him to do the good, and eschew the evil.  
And this you may see was ill observed,  
For that we have left the good, and done the evil,  
As did Cain the eldest son of Adam,  
who killed his brother Abel without any cause,  
Save only for that he was good,  
And had his hope in the Lord, and not in any Creature.

Here we may take an example of the Law of Nature,  
Which we have broken and transgressed,  
We have sinned against the Creator, and offended the creature.  
It was a noble Law that was given us by God,  
And written in the heart of every man,  
That he may there read it and keep, and teach righteousness,  
And love God in his heart above every Creature,  
And that he might fear and serve Him without any reserve,  
There being none to be found in the holy Scriptures.  
That he might likewise keep firm the marriage tie, that noble accord and contract,  
And have peace with his Brethren, and love all other persons.  
That he might hate Pride, and love Humility,  
And do to others as he would be done by,  
And if he did the contrary, that he should be punished.

Now few they were which kept well this Law,  
And more were they who broke it,  
Who forsook the Lord, not honouring Him,  
But believed the Devil and his temptation,  
Who loved too much the world, and too little the things of Heaven,

And served the Body more than the Spirit.  
Wherefore we find that many have perished.

Here everyone may be reprehended that saith,  
That God created not man to suffer him to perish,  
But let everyone take heed, that it happeneth to him, as it did to them.  
For the Deluge came and destroyed the wicked,  
But God caused an Ark to be made, in which He saved the good.  
So were the bad increased, and the good diminished,  
That in all the world there were saved but eight persons.

We may be instructed hereby  
To keep ourselves from evil, and that all ought to repent.  
For Jesus Christ has said it, and in St. Luke it is written,  
That all those shall perish that shall not do so.

Now to those which escaped, God made a Promise,  
That the world should nevermore perish by water;  
and they believing it were multiplied.  
But that good which God did them they soon forgot,  
Being men of little faith, and so great fear,  
That they did not thoroughly believe the Words of the Lord.  
But they believed that the Waters should again trouble the world,  
And thought of building a tower to retire into,  
Yea and they began it (as it is written)  
Intending to make it so large, so high, and so great,  
That the top thereof might reach to Heaven,  
but alas they could not accomplish their design.  
For they displeased God thereby,  
the which also He then demonstrated.  
This great City was called Babylon,  
And now it is called confusion, by reason of its ruinous condition.

There was then but one only Language amongst men,  
But that they might not understand each other, God made a division  
That so they might not finish what they had began.  
The which Languages then spread throughout all the World.

After this they sinned grievously, renouncing the Law, viz. that of Nature.  
For the scripture saith, and it may be evidently proved,  
That five Cities perished which did evil,  
Being sentenced by God, to fire and brimstone.  
Be destroyed the wicked, and the good He delivered,  
Viz. Lot and his family, which the Angel brought out,  
They were four, but one was condemned,  
For the Woman looked back, breaking the command.  
Here's now an Example for all Mankind,  
That they ought to take heed of that which God forbids.

In those days lived Abraham a man well pleasing God,  
Who begat a Patriarch of whom came the Jews,  
And these were a noble People in the fear of the Lord,  
Who lived in Egypt, amongst other wicked people,  
Where they were oppressed and straightened a long time,  
And but crying unto the Lord He sent unto them Moses,  
And delivered His People and destroyed the other Nations.

They passed through the Red Sea, as through a dry and pleasant place,  
But their enemies who persecuted them, perished all in the waters,  
Many other signs did God then give to His People;  
Feeding them forty years in the wilderness, and giving them the Law,  
In two tables of stone, which He sent by Moses,  
Which they found written, and nobly ordained.  
This demonstrated that there was a Lord of all men,  
Whom they ought to believe, and love with all their heart,  
as likewise to fear and serve Him to the end,  
And that everyone should love his Neighbour as himself:  
That they should give counsel to Widows, and defend the fatherless,  
That they should receive the poor into their houses, & clothe the naked,  
That they should feed the hungry, and conduct the Traveller;  
And in sum keep carefully this his Law,  
Promising to those that kept it, the heavenly Kingdom.

He forbad service unto Idols,  
Homicide, Adultery, and all sorts of whoredom,  
Lying, Purjery, and false Witness,  
Usury, Rapine, and evil Coveting,  
As also Avarice, and all wickedness,

To the good He promised Life, but threatened Death to the wicked;  
Then were they clothed in their principality:  
But those who sinned and did wickedly  
They died and were destroyed without remission:  
For the Scripture says, and it is manifest enough,  
That thirty thousand were left in the Wilderness,  
Thirty thousand and more (as the Law saith)  
Died by the sword, by fire, and serpents;  
And many others were destroyed in another manner,  
The Earth opening and hell receiving them.  
And here we may have matter of reprovng ourselves very seasonably,  
But those which did the will of the Lord, inherited the Land of Promise;

Now there were in those days many Worthies,  
As David, and Solomon the King,  
Isaiah, Jeremy, and many others,  
Which fought for the faith, and defended the same.  
There was one only People chosen by God out of all the World.  
The Enemies were in great number round about which persecuted them:

We have many things worth our learning and imitation in this Lesson:  
When they kept the Law and the Commandments,  
God fought for them against the other nations;  
But when they sinned and did wickedly,  
They died, were destroyed, and taken Captives by those other Nations.  
But so enlarged were these people, and so abounding in riches,  
That they kicked against the Lord,

Wherefore we find in this Lesson,  
That the King of Babylon put them into prison,  
Where they were oppressed and straightened a long time;  
Then they cried to the Lord with a repentant heart;  
And he restored them to Jerusalem,

but few there were that were obedient and kept the Law,  
And that feared to offend their King.  
Yea some there were, men full of deceit and falsehood,  
viz. the Pharisees and others who were versed in Scripture,  
These kept the Law, (as plainly appears)  
Only that the World might see it, and to be the more honoured.  
But little worth is this honour which soon vanisheth.

Then were the Saints persecuted, and those that were just and good;  
Then they prayed unto the Lord with cries and tears,  
That He would come down on earth and save this World:  
For all mankind was in the way of perdition.  
Then sent God the Angel to the noble Virgin of royal Descent,  
Who sweetly saluted her according to the command of Him that sent him,  
And after said unto her, fear not Marie,  
For the Holy Ghost shall overshadow thee;  
Thou shalt bear a Son whom thou shalt call Jesus,  
He shall save his People from their sins.

Nine months the glorious Virgin bare him in her womb,  
But that she might not be made a publick example, she was espoused by Joseph;  
Pure was this Virgin and Joseph also.  
But this we ought to believe, for the Scripture saith it,  
That they put the Infant in the manger when it was born,  
They wrapt Him in swaddling clothes, and lodg'd Him but very meanly.  
Here may be reprehended those covetous and avaricious men,  
Which never cease to heap up Riches together.

Now there were many Miracles wrought when the Lord was born:  
In the East appeared a Star to the three Wise Men.  
Glory was given to God on high, and on earth peace to the good.  
Afterwards the little Childe suffered Persecution,  
But the Infant increased in grace and age,  
And in divine wisdom, in which he was instructed,  
And called the twelve Apostles, which were rightly so named,  
And would change the Law which He gave before;  
He changed it not, that it should be abandoned,  
But renewed it that it might be better kept;  
He received Baptism for to give Salvation,  
And commanded the Apostles to baptise the Nations,  
(For then began the Renewing)

The ancient Law forbid fornication and adultery,  
But the new reprehends looking and lusting after a Woman;

The old Law had power to make null marriage,  
and that Bills of Divorcement might be given,  
But the new faith, Thou shalt not marry her that is put away,  
And what God hath joined let no man separate.

The old Law cursed the barren womb,  
But the new counselleth to keep virginity,

The old Law forbiddeth only to forswear;  
But the new faith, Swear not at all;

And that thy speech be no more than yea and Nay.

The old Law biddeth to fight against Enemies, and render evil for evil,  
But the new one saith, Avenge not thyself,  
But leave thy vengeance to thy heavenly King.  
And let those live in peace which do thee hurt,  
And then shalt thou find pardon with the heavenly King.

The old Law saith, Thou shalt love thy Friend, and hate thine Enemy,  
But the new one saith, Thou shalt do no more so,  
But ye shall love your Enemies, and do good to them that hate you,  
And pray for them that persecute you, and seek for occasion against you,  
That ye may be the Children of your Father which is in Heaven.

The old Law saith, punish Malefactors,  
But the new saith, Pardon all sorts of people,  
And thou shalt find pardon with the Father Almighty,  
For if thou dost not pardon, thou shalt not be saved.  
None ought to kill or hate any person,  
Much less ought we to mock either simple or poor men,  
Nor despise the stranger which cometh from far.  
For in this World we are all Pilgrims.  
Thus all we that are Brethren ought to serve God.  
And this is the new Law which Jesus Christ saith we ought to keep.

And he called the Apostles and commanded them  
To go through the World, and teach all Nations,  
To preach to Jews and Greeks, and all mankind,  
And he gave them power over Serpents,  
To drive away Devils, and heal the sick,  
To raise the Dead, and cleanse the Lepers,  
And to do to others as he had done to them;  
To possess neither Gold nor Silver,  
But to be content with Food and Raiment.  
To love one another, and to be at peace.

Then he promised them the heavenly Kingdom,  
And to those which were spiritually poor:  
But he that should know who they are, would quickly number those,  
That would be poor of their own accord;  
Then he told them what should happen,  
How he ought to die, and afterward rise again.  
And he told them the Signs and Wonders  
Which ought to happen before the end.  
Many excellent Parables he spoke to them and the People,  
Which were written in the New Testament.

But if we will love Christ, and know his Doctrine,  
We ought to watch, and read the Scripture,  
Where we may find when we shall read,  
That only for doing well, Christ was persecuted;  
He raised the Dead by Divine Power,  
He made the blind to see, which never had seen,  
He cleansed the Lepers, and made the Deaf to hear,  
He cast out Devils, working many Miracles;  
And by how much the more he did good, so much the more was he persecuted.

The Pharisees were they which persecuted him;  
And the People of Herod, and others, viz. them of the Clergy:  
For they envied him, because he was followed by the People;  
Because they believed in him and his Commandments,  
They sought how they might torment him and put him to death,  
And for this reason spoke to Judas and made an agreement with him,  
To deliver him for thirty Pieces of Silver.

Now Judas being covetous wrought the Treason,  
And betrayed his Lord to those wicked men,  
The Jews were they which crucified him,  
Nailing fast his Feet and his Hands,  
And putting a Crown of Thorns on his Head,  
And speaking many Reproaches, they blasphemed him;  
And when he said, he was thirsty,  
they likewise gave him Gall and Vinegar to drink.

The Torments were so bitter and painfull,  
That the Soul parted from the Body to save Sinners.  
The Body having Suffered this, hung there upon the Cross  
In the midst of two Thieves; they gave him four Wounds, besides other Blows.  
And after that, the fifth, to accomplish the matter;  
For, one of the Soldiers came and opened his Side,  
And immediately there issued out Water and Blood mixed together,  
Whereupon all the Apostles fled, but one returned,  
And was there with two Women near unto the Cross,  
All were very sorry, chiefly his Mother,  
When she saw her Son dead and naked, fastened upon the Cross,

He was buried by the good, and watched by the wicked.  
He rose out of the Grave the third Day,  
And appeared to his Disciples, as he had said unto them;  
Then were they possessed with great joy, when they saw the Lord,  
And were confirmed, for before they feared greatly;  
And he conversed with them until the Day of Ascension;  
Then our Saviour ascended into Glory,  
And said to his Disciples and other Followers,  
That to the End of the World he would be with them.

But at the Feast of Pentecost he remembered them,  
And sent them the Holy Ghost, which is the Comforter,  
And taught the Apostles by Divine Doctrine,  
And they understood the Languages and the holy Scripture,  
And then they remembered what he had said.  
They spoke without fear, of the Doctrine of Christ,  
They preached to Jews and Greeks, working many Miracles;  
And baptized those who believed in the Name of Jesus Christ.

Then was there a People new converted;  
They were called Christians, for they believed in Christ.  
But we find here that the Scripture saith,  
That the Jews and Saracens persecuted them grievously.  
But the Apostles were so fortified in the fear of the Lord,  
And the Men and Women which were with them.  
That for all that, they left neither speaking nor doing,

Whatsoever should come of it, so that they might have Jesus Christ.

The Torments were great, according to what is written,  
Onely because they taught the way of Jesus Christ.  
But as for the Persecutors we need not so much wonder,  
For, they had not the Faith of our Lord Jesus Christ,  
Like those who now seek occasion to persecute the Saints;  
Which men ought to be Christians, but appear not to be such.  
And in this they are to be blamed, for that they persecute and imprison the good;  
For, it is not found any where,  
That the Saints persecuted or imprisoned any.

Now after the Apostles, were certain Teachers,  
Who taught the way of Jesus Christ our Saviour.  
And these are found even at this present Day,  
But they are known to very few,  
Who have a great desire to teach the way of Jesus Christ,  
But they are so persecuted, that they are able to do but little,  
So much are the false Christians blinded with Error,  
And more than the rest they that are Pastors,  
For they persecute and hate those who are better than themselves,  
And let those live quietly who are false Deceivers.  
But by this we may know that they are not good Pastors,  
For they love not the Sheep, but only for their Fleeces.

The Scripture saith, and it is evident,  
That if any man love those who are good,  
he must needs love God, and Jesus Christ.  
Such an one will neither curse, swear, nor lye,  
He will neither commit Adultery, nor kill;  
he will neither defraud his Neighbour,  
Nor avenge himself of his Enemies,  
Now such an one is termed a Waldensian, and worthy to be punished,  
And they finde occasion by lyes and by Deceit,  
To take from him that which he has gotten by his just labour.  
However, he that's thus persecuted for the fear of the Lord, strengthens himself greatly,  
By this consideration, that the Kingdom of Heaven shall be given him at the end of the World.  
Then he shall have a weight of glory in recompence for all such dishonour.

But herein is clearly manifest the malice of those men,  
That they which will curse, lye, and swear,  
He that will frequently put his Money to Usury, kill, and whore,  
And avenge himself on those which hurt him;  
This they say is a good man, and to be accounted faithfull.  
But let him take heed he be not deceived at the end,  
When he has received the stroke of Death, and when Death seizes on him,  
and he becomes almost speechless,  
Then he desires the Priest to confess him:  
But according to the Scriptures he has delayed too long, for that commands us  
To repent while we have time, and not to put it off till the last:  
The Priest asketh him if he hath any sin,  
He answers two or three words, and soon has done;  
The Priest tells him he cannot be forgiven,  
If he do not restore, and examine well his Faults:  
When he hears this, he's very much troubled,  
And thinks with himself, if he restore entirely,



What shall he leave his Children, and what will the World say?  
Then he commandeth his Children to examine their faults,  
And buyeth of the Priest his Absolution;

Though he hath a thousand Lives of another and a better Penny,  
Yet the Priest acquits him for a hundred Pence,  
And sometimes for less when he can get no more,  
Telling him a large Story, and promising him Pardon,  
That he'll say Mass for him, and for his Ancestours;  
And thus he pardons them be they righteous or wicked,  
Laying his Hand upon their Heads,  
(But when he leaves them, he maketh the better chear)  
And telling him that he is very well absolved.  
But alas they are but sadly confessed who are thus faulty,  
And will certainly be deceived in such an Absolution,  
And he that maketh him believe it sinneth mortally.

For, I dare say, and it is very true,  
That all the Popes which have been from Silvester to this present,  
And all Cardinals, Bishops, Abbots, and the like,  
Have no power to absolve or pardon,  
Any creature so much as one mortal sin;  
'Tis God alone who pardons, and no other.  
But this ought they to do who are Pastours,  
They ought to preach to the People, and pray with them,  
And feed them often with divine Doctrine;  
And chastise the Sinners with Discipline,  
Viz. by declaring that they ought to repent.  
First, that they confess their sins freely and fully,  
And that they repent in this present life,  
That they fast and give Alms, and pray with a fervent heart,  
For, by these things the Soul findes Salvation:

Wherefore we Christians which have sinned  
And forsaken the Law of Jesus Christ,  
Having neither Fear, Faith, nor Love,  
We must confess our sins without any delay,  
We must amend with weeping and repentance,  
The offences which we have committed, & for those three mortal sins,  
To wit, for the Lust of the Eye, the Lusts of the Flesh, and the Pride of Life,  
through which we have done evil;  
We must keep this way.

If we will love and follow Jesus Christ,  
We must have spiritual poverty of heart,  
And love Charity, and serve God humbly,  
For, so we may follow the way of Jesus Christ,  
And thus we may overcome our Enemies.

There is a brief Rehearsal in this Lesson,  
Of three laws which God gave to the World;  
The first Law directeth men who have judgment and reason,  
Viz. to know God, and to pray to his Creatour.  
For he that hath judgment, may well think with himself,  
That he formed not himself, nor anything else:  
Then here he who hath judgment and reason may know,

That there's one Lord God who created all the World,  
And knowing him, he ought much to honour him;  
For, they were damned that would not do it.

The second Law which God gave to Moses,  
Teacheth us to fear God, and to serve him with all our strength;  
For he condemneth and punisheth every one that offends.

But the third Law which is at this present time,  
Teacheth us to love God, and serve him purely:  
For he waiteth for the Sinner, and giveth him time,  
That he may repent in this present life.

As for any other Law to come after we shall have none.  
Save onely to imitate Jesus Christ, and to do his will,  
And keep fast that which he commands us,  
And to be well forewarned when Antichrist shall come.  
That we may believe neither to his words nor to his works,

Now according to the Scripture, there are already many Antichrists.  
For, all those which are contrary to Christ, are Antichrists.  
Many Signs and great Wonders Shall be from this time forward untill the Day of Judgment,  
The Heaven and the Earth shall burn, and all the Living die.  
After which all shall arise to everlasting Life,  
And all Buildings shall be laid flat.

Then shall be the last Judgment,  
When God shall separate his People, according as it is written,  
To the wicked he shall say, Depart ye from me into Hell Fire, which never shall be quenched;  
With grievous Punishments there to be straitened;  
By multitude of Pains, and sharp torment:  
For you shall be damned without remedy.  
From which God delivered us, if it be his blessed will,  
And give us to hear that which he shall say to his Elect without delay;  
Come hither ye blessed of my Father,  
Inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the beginning of the World,  
Where you shall have Pleasure, Riches and Honour.

May it please the Lord which formed the World,  
That we may be of the number of his Elect to dwell in his Court for ever.

Praised be God. Amen.