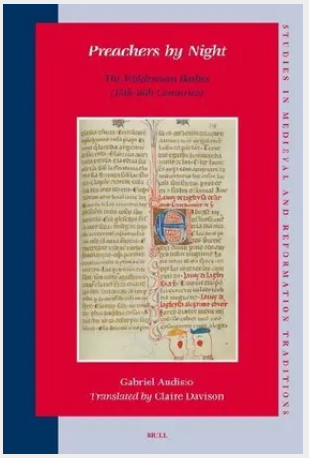
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Preachers by Night

The Waldensian Barbes (15th-16th Centuries)

First inspired by Vaudes in around 1170, the Waldensians formed a religious dissent which survived into the sixteenth century. Respecting the Gospel to the letter, their rejection of oaths, falsehood, the death penalty, purgatory and the intercession of saints marginalized them in the society of the times. Their survival depended on their will to adapt. Organisation became necessary to withstand the pressures of time and space as their community extended across Europe (France, Italy, Switzerland, Germany, Bohemia, Poland). Preachers, called "barbes" in the diaspora's Romance wing, embodied the ideal lifestyle and unity of their community. This is the story and history of those preachers - celibate, arduous, pious men whose itinerant mission it was to maintain a clandestine but vehement faith.

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