

**PAPAL
PERSECUTION
IN FRANCE**

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Papal persecution in France by Isaac Jaquelot

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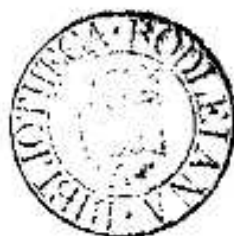
**PAPAL
PERSECUTION
IN FRANCE**

PAPAL PERSECUTION

IN

FRANCE;

OR,



MEMOIRS OF MAROLLES AND LE FEVRE,
TWO FRENCH PROTESTANTS.

WITH NOTES

SENTENCED TO THE GALLEYS, AND DIED IN DUNGEONS
AT MARSEILLES.

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PAPAL PERSECUTION IN FRANCE.

It may not be generally known, that the revival of the purity of Christian doctrine and worship took place even earlier in the French dominions than in our own land. Those celebrated witnesses for the truth, the Waldenses, who deserve the grateful remembrance of every lover of Christian liberty, owe their origin to a French reformer. Peter Waldo, from whom they derive their name, was a native of Lyons. He was an opulent merchant of that city, residing there about the middle of the twelfth century. Religious impressions appear to have been first made on his mind, as on the mind of Luther, by a solemn providential visitation which he witnessed. Being assembled with some of his friends in a house, and after supper conversing and refreshing himself among them, one of the company suddenly fell down dead on the ground, to the great amazement of all who were present. From that moment it pleased God that Waldo should become a serious inquirer after Divine truth. As his concern increased, he became solicitous for the salvation of the souls of others; and a door of usefulness seeming to open to him, he at length abandoned his mercantile occupation, distributed his wealth to the poor, and gave himself to the instruction of his neighbours.

The immediate occasion of his separation from the Romish church was the horror with which he was

struck at the bold promulgation by the ecclesiastics of his day of the doctrine of the mass, and the requisition made by them that the host should be worshipped. Being aroused, by what he considered the impiety of this requisition, from his confidence in the soundness of the instruction given by the Romish priesthood, he began to examine the Scriptures for himself, and by this means, obtained gradually a further insight into the abominations of the popedom. Waldo, being deeply impressed with the importance of scriptural knowledge, set himself to procure a translation of the New Testament into the French language. He succeeded in this undertaking; and to his honour it should be mentioned, that this was the first translation made from the Bible into a modern tongue, since the Latin had ceased to be a living language. Such zeal, however, drew upon him a violent storm of opposition from the Romish hierarchy. Through the persecutions of the archbishop of Lyons and others, he was obliged to withdraw into Dauphiny, and afterwards into Picardy. Subsequently, he retired into Bohemia, where he died about the year 1179.

His followers from the first were very numerous, and, notwithstanding fierce persecution both from the ecclesiastical and secular authorities, continued to increase. In Alsace, particularly, and along the whole territory of the Rhine, his doctrines spread rapidly. At the beginning of the fourteenth century, the Waldenses computed their numbers at eighty thousand. Their chief settlements were in the mountainous districts in the south of France, and in the valleys on either side of the Alps, where they became eventually assimilated and blended with the Vaudois, with whom, however, they are not to be confounded.

Their separation from the Romish communion, and marked purity of faith and worship, excited against them, in various instances, the most violent opposition. Calumnies of the most odious kind were invented, and circulated to their prejudice, and reproachful names fixed on them. Thus they were called 'Turlupins, Cutpurses, Insabathas, Arians, Manichees, and Ribalds. Most of these names had either reference to their condition, or were borrowed from some peculiarities in their practice which were misunderstood. Thus the name 'Turlupins, which means, inhabitants with wolves, was given them because they were often obliged to dwell in woods and deserts. The imputation of Arianism rested on their denying the consecrated host to be God; of Manicheism, on their assertion of the independency of the temporal on the spiritual power; and they were termed Insabathas, (regardless of sabbaths,) because they observed not the appointed festivals of the church, but rested from their ordinary occupations only on Sundays. The authentic testimony of history deposes decisively to the general integrity of their lives. A chief tenet which they held was, the sufficiency of the Scripture as a rule of faith; and they altogether repudiated the doctrines of purgatory and of human mediators. They were the first objects of the terrible Inquisition, when it was established by Innocent III. in 1206. That ambitious pope authorized certain monks to proceed among them, and deliver all convicted heretics to the secular power; and in the beginning of the thirteenth century thousands of persons were hanged or burned by this diabolical device, because they trusted only in Jesus Christ for salvation, and renounced all the vain hopes of self-righteous idolatry and superstition.

In spite, however, of all these severities, it was with the Waldenses as with the Israelites. The more they were afflicted, the more they multiplied and grew. About the year 1530, the era of the Reformation, there were not fewer than eight hundred thousand of them scattered throughout Europe.

The effects of the latter important event were scarcely less signal in France than in Germany. Not only did the French Huguenots (the appellation given to the French Reformed) reckon their numbers by millions, but many of the nobles espoused their principles and cause; and once or twice the kingdom seemed to be, as it were, in a state of equilibrium, ready to change its dominant religion. In connexion with the progress of Protestant opinions in France, the name of Calvin will at once occur to every reader. This distinguished reformer was a native of Noyon, in Picardy, and in his youth was a student at the Sorbonne in Paris. He was originally brought up for the law. His relinquishment of this profession for the Christian ministry, and his adhesion to the principles and party of the reformed, was determined by his careful study of the sacred Scriptures. To the defence and propagation of the articles of saving knowledge which he drew from this source, he devoted his whole powers, during the remainder of his life. Being persecuted by Francis I., he fled into Switzerland, and then to the city where he afterwards resided, and soon became a centre of evangelical light and influence.

Another place, scarcely less serviceable afterwards to the Protestant cause, was Rochelle. This place was fortified, and, on account of its security, was chosen by the Protestants as the depository of their archives and records. In the year 1572—1573, it

opposed nearly the whole force of France for seven months; during the siege one hundred and thirty-two captains perished, and a proportionate number of regiments. A subsequent siege of it by Richelieu, in 1624, was more successful; but even this employed all his resources and skill for a whole year. The church in this town was founded in the year 1558. The Protestants at this time enjoyed comparative liberty of worship. The nobility openly patronised the reformed clergy, and sanctioned their meetings without the walls of Paris, where they preached in the open air. On these occasions there were sometimes forty thousand persons assembled, divided into three companies; the women in the middle, surrounded by men on foot, and the latter by men on horseback. During the sermon, the governor of Paris placed soldiers to guard the avenues, and to prevent disturbance. A spirit of tolerance also began to prevail in other parts; and in many places the Reformed and the Roman Catholics lived in such friendship together that they alternately worshipped under the same roof.

This calm unhappily proved a treacherous one. At the very season we have glanced at, the Protestants were secretly the objects of the court's most intense enmity; and ten years afterwards they were made the victims of one of the most foul and bloody conspiracies which history has to record. We allude to the too notorious massacre of St. Bartholomew's day. By hypocritical professions of friendship, Charles ix., the then reigning monarch, had succeeded in enticing the principal Protestants of the kingdom to the capital, when all at once, without the slightest intimation, they were made the subjects of wholesale murder. The details are too