

George Roskell
HISTORY

1847.

OF THE

ANCIENT CHRISTIANS

INHABITING

THE VALLEYS OF THE ALPS.

- I. THE WALDENSES.
- II. THE ALBIGENSES.
- III. THE VAUDOIS.

WITH

AN ESSAY ON THEIR PRESENT CONDITION,

By REV. ROBERT BAIRD, D.D.

AND

A RECOMMENDATORY LETTER FROM

Rev. SAMUEL MILLER, D.D.

PROFESSOR OF ECCLESIASTICAL HISTORY AND CHURCH GOVERNMENT IN THE THEOLOGICAL
SEMINARY, PRINCETON, NEW JERSEY.

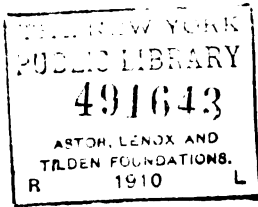
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HISTORY
OF THE
OLD WALDENSES

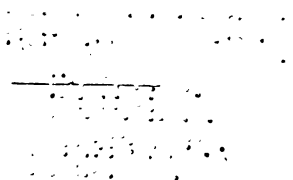
ANTERIOR TO THE REFORMATION.

By Jean Paul Perrin.

WITH ILLUSTRATIVE NOTES,

FROM MODERN

HISTORIANS AND THEOLOGIAN.



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★ REV. G. I. EDDY
24 APR 1840

RECOMMENDATORY LETTER,

ADDRESSED TO THE PUBLISHERS :

BY SAMUEL MILLER, D. D.,

PROFESSOR OF ECCLESIASTICAL HISTORY AND CHURCH GOVERNMENT IN THE
THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY AT PRINCETON.

GENTLEMEN,—

It has given me no small pleasure to learn that you are engaged in publishing an American edition of the REV. JEAN PAUL PERRIN'S "*History of the Old Waldenses, anterior to the Reformation.*" In the execution of this undertaking, you are undoubtedly rendering an important service to the cause of evangelical truth and order. It is indeed wonderful that a work so interesting, and so truly instructive and valuable, which has been more than two centuries before the public, and which was translated into the English language more than a hundred years ago, should never have been given from the press on this side of the Atlantic:—a work, too, so often inquired after, so frequently quoted, and deemed of such high authority in the department to which it belongs. I cannot help hoping and believing that your enterprize will be favorably received, and suitably rewarded. Such a work ought, undoubtedly, to be within the reach of all who are disposed to inquire what the Church of God has been in its best days since the Apostolic age.

The promise of the Saviour to his apostles was, that the gates of hell should never prevail against his church. This promise seems to secure to his people that there shall be, in all ages, and in the worst of times, a true and substantially pure Church; that is, that there shall always be a body of people, more or less numerous, who shall hold fast the doctrines and order of Christ's house, in some good degree, in conformity with the model of the primitive Church. Accordingly, it is not difficult to show that, ever since the rise of the "Man of Sin," there has been a succession of those whom the Scriptures style, "Witnesses for God"—"Witnesses for the truth;" who have kept alive "the faith once delivered to the saints;" and have, in some good degree of faithfulness, maintained the ordinances and discipline which the inspired apostles, in the Master's name, committed to the keeping of the Church.

Among these Witnesses, the first that we distinctly read of were the *Paulicians*. They rose about A. D. 660. A very interesting account of these pious people is given in MILNER'S Ecclesiastical History of the seventh century; and a still more extended and distinct account, in the REV. ADAM BLAIR'S *History of the Waldenses*, Book I. chapter I.

While the *Paulicians* were still maintaining their faithful testimony, the *Waldenses* arose; or, rather more probably, these two denominations had a *common origin*, and a *common faith*. The name *Waldenses*, the most common and popular one of those humble and devoted people, was evidently derived—not from *Peter Waldo*, but from the *place of their abode*. The following statement of the learned and ingenious *Robert Robinson*, a divine of Cambridge, in England, who died more than half a century ago, places the origin of this name in what I suppose to be the true light.

“ From the Latin, *Vallis*, came the English, *valley*; the French and Spanish, *vallé*; the Italian, *valdesi*; the Low Dutch, *valleje*; the Provençal, *vauz, vaudais*; the ecclesiastical *Vallenses, Valdenses, Ualdenses, and Waldenses*. The words simply signify *vallies*,—the inhabitants of vallies, and no more. It happened that the inhabitants of the Pyrenees did not profess the Catholic faith. It fell out also that the inhabitants of the vallies about the Alps did not embrace that faith. It happened, moreover, in the ninth century, that one *Valdo*, a friend and counsellor of *Berengarius*, and a man of eminence, who had many followers, did not approve of the Papal discipline and doctrine. And it came to pass, about an hundred and thirty years after, that a rich merchant of Lyons, who was called *Valdus*, because he received his religious opinions from the inhabitants of the vallies, openly disavowed the Roman religion, supported many to teach the doctrines believed in the vallies, and became the instrument of the conversion of great numbers. All these people were called **WALDENSES.**”*

The same people, that is, a people who substantially agreed in faith and practice, were called by different names derived from their places of residence; from the names of distinguished leaders; and from a variety of minor peculiarities:—as *Albigenses*, from their principal seat being in the neighborhood of *Alby*, in France; *Bohemian Brethren*, from their being found in large numbers, in *Bohemia*; *Cathari*, or *Puritans*, from their opposition to the corruptions of the Papacy; *Leonists*, or *Poor men of Lyons*, from their chief residence in the city of *Lyons*; *Petrobrossians, Arnoldists, and Henricians*, from the names of distinguished ministers and leaders; and a variety of other appellations, familiar to the students of ecclesiastical history. These names, however, will be found so fully enumerated and explained in the History itself, which I here recommend, that further remark upon them here is altogether unnecessary.

It would not be strictly accurate to say, that among the large body of churches bearing the general name of *Waldenses*, there were no diversities of opinion in regard to any points; still it may be said, with entire confidence and safety, that, on all leading points, there was a great uniformity of practice. Their own Confessions of Faith, drawn up and published at different times, nay the very accusations and calumnies of their enemies leave us at no loss in regard to this matter.

The following statement may be considered as a fair and impartial *Synopsis* of their religious principles and practices. These, indeed, may all be gathered from the pages of the ensuing history; but it is judged best to exhibit a summary of them in this place, for the purpose of exciting the attention, and directing the inquiries of those who shall undertake to examine for themselves the numerous and diversified documents which are embraced in this volume.

They zealously contended for the doctrine of the Trinity—the Divinity of

* ROBINSON'S *Ecclesiastical Researches*, chapter x. p. 302, 303.

Christ—the fall of our race in and by the first sin of Adam—the entire depravity of human nature—the vicarious nature of the atonement—the sovereign, unconditional election of all who are saved, before the foundation of the world—justification by the imputed righteousness of Christ—the necessity of regeneration and continued sanctification by the power of the Holy Spirit—the perseverance of the saints—and the endless punishment of the finally impenitent. In regard to all these points they adopted what we are accustomed, in later times, to denominate *Calvinism*, with scarcely a single deviation.

But that which attracted most attention in their day, and created most enmity against them in the dominant Church, was their adoption and publication of the following opinions and practices bearing on the system of Romanism.

They renounced the Church of Rome as mystical Babylon, abhorred the Pope as the “Man of Sin,” and rejected all the traditions of the Papacy as of no authority among Christians. They held that there were only *two* sacraments, Baptism and the Lord’s Supper; that the other *five*, so named by the Romanists, have no just title to be called sacraments; and that of the five, *three*, viz. confirmation, penance, and extreme unction, have no foundation whatever in the word of God. That all *God-fathers*, and *God-mothers*, in the baptism of infants, are to be rejected, excepting the *parents*, who alone ought to present their children, if they are living, and of a suitable character. But that if the parents are dead, or destitute of Christian character, then the children ought to be presented by any who are willing to become responsible for their Christian education. That fasts and festival days, and saints’ days, have no authority in Scripture, and ought not to be observed. That no day ought to be kept holy but the Lord’s day. That the true Church consists of all those who have knowledge of the Gospel, and walk according to its principles and rules. That purgatory, transubstantiation, prayers for the dead, and to saints, auricular confession, and all image worship, were all departures from primitive purity and simplicity, and ought all to be rejected with abhorrence. They pronounced the consecration of churches, churchyards, church bells, and all things of a similar nature, to be superstitious, and the invention of covetous priests to increase their gains, by extorting from the people, fees and oblations. They maintained the doctrine of Presbyterian parity among their clergy; rejecting all diversity of rank and order in the priesthood. They had also Ruling Elders in their churches, and conducted their ecclesiastical affairs by a Synod,—in which pastors and elders came together to deliberate and decide on all their affairs. In regard to *dress*, their ministers were content with a *simple black coat*, instead of the pompous vestments of the Romish clergy. Contrary to the assertions of some,* it is perfectly plain, from their Confession of Faith, that they practised infant baptism, and that they baptized by sprinkling or affusion. They taught that the clergy were allowed to marry, and that the doctrine of the celibacy of the clergy was a doctrine of devils, leading to enormous moral mischief. They were charged by their enemies with denying the lawfulness of defensive war, of capital punishments; of taking oaths, even in judicial process; and of exercising the office of the civil magistrate. All these charges, however, they solemnly

* WILLIAM JONES, an eminent Baptist, in his “History of the Waldenses,” has so mutilated and perverted the plainest documents of those pious Witnesses of the truth, in order to make them speak the language of anti-pedobaptists, as to place his character as an honest historian in a most undesirable position.

denied, and declared that they were mere slanders. They taught that the sacraments, though appointed by Christ, and though binding on all Christians, were yet not necessary to salvation; that is, that all sincere believers in Christ, who had no opportunity of attending on those ordinances, or who were prevented by any mistake from attending on them, would still certainly be saved.

Most of these statements are confirmed by the adversaries of the Waldenses, who, with no view to do them honor, represent them as holding the opinions just mentioned, as evidences of enormous and even damnable heresies. A few specimens of this testimony will appear to the impartial reader perfectly conclusive.

Lindanus, a Roman Catholic bishop of the see of Ghent, who wrote in defence of the tenets of the Church of Rome, about the year 1560, represents *John Calvin* as the inheritor of the doctrine of the Waldenses.*

Mezeray, the learned historiographer of France, in his Abridgment of Chronology, speaking of the Waldenses, says, "They held nearly the same opinions as those who are now called *Calvinists*."†

Gualter, a Jesuitical monk, in his chronological tables, drew up a catalogue, consisting of seven and twenty particulars, in which he shows that the principles of the Waldenses, and those of the *Calvinists*, coincided with each other.‡

Eckius reproached Luther, that he had only renewed the heresies of the Waldenses and Albigenses, of Wickliff and of John Huss, which had been long ago condemned.

Bellarmino asserts, that the identical belief which was publicly taught and professed in the vallies of Piedmont, in the year 820, and onwards, was the very same which is at this day professed and owned by the Reformed Churches.§

Genebrard, a Benedictine monk, born in 1537, in the third book of his *Chronicles*, calls the doctrine of *Claude* and his followers, in rejecting the traditions of Rome, *Calvinistic* doctrines; and denominates the Waldenses, *Calvinists*.

These simple hearted pious people little imagined, three hundred years ago, when they were execrated with so much bitterness, and persecuted with so much cruelty, that the time would ever come, when their opinions and practices would be regarded as a model; and an alliance with them claimed as a precious privilege! Yet so it has happened in the allwise providence of God. There is hardly a Protestant denomination of Christians which has not set them up as a kind of exemplar of primitive purity, and boasted of a conformity to their ecclesiastical character. Yet how often, to this hour, have their opinions been mistaken, and grievously misrepresented! The friends of Prelacy have often confidently claimed them as their spiritual ancestors; when nothing can be plainer, from their Confessions of Faith, and their whole history taken together, than that Presbyterian parity, and the government of the Church by Ruling Elders, and by ecclesiastical courts of review and control, were the uniform principle and practice of this remarkable community. Some short passages, which seem to speak a different language, may be easily explained in full consistency with the foregoing statement, by appealing to the most authentic historians.||

* *JONES's History of the Waldenses*, Vol. II. p. 87.

† *Ibid.*

‡ *Ibid.*

§ *Leger*, part I. p. 174.

|| See *BLAIR's Waldenses*, I. 506. See also *SCOTT's* continuation of *Milner's Ecclesiastical History*, I. 139, and *all* the *Creeeds* and *Confessions* of the *Waldenses*. An almost countless number of *Episcopal* writers confess the same thing.

Our anti-pedobaptist brethren also lay claim to the Waldenses as the advocates of their creed, both as to the subjects and the mode of Baptism. The most cursory perusal of the ensuing volume will convince every impartial reader that there is no foundation whatever for this claim.

But there is one notorious, unquestionable fact, which is sufficient, of itself, to refute the allegation, both of Prelatists and anti-pedobaptists, in regard to the Waldenses; and that is, that after the Reformation on the continent of Europe, and the organization of the Reformed Churches, on the Presbyterian plan, in France, Switzerland, Germany, &c., the Waldenses acknowledged them as true churches; held communion with them; received ministers from them, and in every variety of way, manifested that they recognized their regular Christian character, and the validity of their ministry. This, surely, could never have been done, if the Waldenses had maintained the divine right of Prelacy, or the obligation of the anti-pedobaptist system.

I could wish that another work, which has been highly interesting to me, were more familiar to the religious public than I suppose it to be. I mean the History of the Waldenses, and an exhibition of their Creeds and Confessions, by Sir SAMUEL MORLAND, an English gentleman, who was sent, by the English government, nearly two centuries ago, on an embassy to that people. The occasion of his embassy was a remarkable one, and attended with very remarkable circumstances. In 1655 the Waldenses of Piedmont, under the sanguinary policy of the Duke of Savoy, in whose territory they resided, were persecuted in the most cruel and ferocious manner. Impelled by the pitiless bigotry of the Romish clergy, the Duke ordered his emissaries to go round to the villages of these pious, devoted people, and to inform every family, that they must either conform to the Church of Rome, or depart in three days from his dominions, under the penalty of death, and the confiscation of all their property!

It is difficult to conceive of the distress occasioned by this proclamation. It was now in the middle of a very severe winter. Thousands of families were compelled immediately to abandon all their domestic abodes and comforts. The aged, the sick, the mother advanced in pregnancy, the mother recently confined, and not yet risen from the bed of maternal confinement, the delicate female, the helpless children and young people, were all compelled to surrender every comfort, to encounter frost and snow, and almost impassable roads, in the midst of an uncommonly severe season, and to go, they knew not where.

The poor persecuted sufferers begged and prayed—that if they *must* leave their homes, they might be favored with the respite of a few weeks, until the rigor of winter should be over. But all in vain. They were compelled to go at once. No sooner had they quitted their houses, than armed soldiers, with unfeeling violence, broke into them, plundering and bearing away whatever of value had been left behind. These ferocious wretches next proceeded to level their habitations to the ground; to cut down the trees and all the improvements which surrounded them; and to burn and destroy what they could not carry away. Not content even with this, they pursued the fugitives, and massacred them in the most inhuman manner. The order had been to quit the country unless they would consent to go to mass. But even this was cruelly prevented. They tortured the women and children by every device that cruelty could suggest;—chopping off the heads of some; dashing out the brains of others against the rocks; nailing some to the trees, with their heads down, leaving

them to perish by slow tortures. They violated the younger women with every circumstance of brutality ; and with respect to the men whom they took prisoners, young and old, they mutilated and tortured them in a manner which beggars all description, and which, if it could be described, ought not on the score of decency, to be clothed in language.

The account given of this massacre by Sir *Samuel Morland*, and also by *Leger*, in his *General History of the Churches of Piedmont*, really almost transcends belief, and could hardly, indeed, be credited, were it not attested by so many unimpeachable witnesses. In fact, it would be scarcely too severe to say, that if all the demons of the pit had been let loose upon the vallies of Piedmont, we could scarcely have expected the perpetration of greater enormities than were now exhibited by the emissaries of Rome. The report of these enormities by indistinct rumor, spread amazement and horror, through all the Protestant states of Europe ; and the principal actors in this awful tragedy, we are assured, soon found it convenient, for the sake of their own reputation, to deny their agency in this horrid work, and to shift off the blame, as far as possible, on others.

When the news of this awful massacre reached England, *Oliver Cromwell*, who was then at the head of the government in that country, immediately determined to interpose, and, as far as possible, to prevent the continuance, and, at any rate, to obviate the progress of such enormous iniquity. Whatever faults may be ascribed to that extraordinary man, we must certainly award to him the praise of great talents ; wonderful energy ; inflexible opposition to Popery ; and indefatigable zeal in promoting what he considered as the real interests of religion.

Cromwell immediately determined to interfere, and, as far as he could, not only to arrest these diabolical proceedings, but, if possible, to turn against them the withering odium of the Protestant world, and to cover with shame the wretched actors in the scene. He, accordingly, forthwith, appointed a day of humiliation, fasting and prayer, to humble the nation before God, in the view of such atrocious wickedness. He next set on foot a subscription for the relief of the impoverished sufferers on this occasion ; subscribed himself a very large sum ; and secured the transmission to them of very efficient pecuniary aid. Nor did he content himself with these measures. He sent an ambassador to visit the poor oppressed sufferers, and express to them his tender regard and sympathy. He transmitted also, by that ambassador, letters couched in very spirited and solemn language, to the Duke of Savoy, who was principally responsible for what had been done ; to the king of France, some of whose troops had been implicated in the execution of these nefarious acts ; and to several of the Protestant potentates of Europe. It is refreshing to the admirers of Christian heroism, at the present day, to read these letters, so full of correct opinions, of elevated sentiments, and of laudable, sublime decision.

The immortal poet, MILTON, at that time the Latin Secretary of Cromwell, was the penman of these letters, which are an imperishable monument to the honor of him who ordered, as well as of him who executed them. The fact, that the author of *Paradise Lost*, approved the opinions, and warmly sympathized with the character and sufferings of the Waldenses, carries with it the evidence of a volume in their favor, and against their cruel persecutors.

The ambassador sent to execute the benevolent purposes of Cromwell, was Sir

Samuel Morland, whose mission led to the production of one of the best histories of the Waldenses, and of their opinions and practices, that was ever published. Sir Samuel Morland's history has the advantage, in some respects, even of Perrin's work; but it is much larger, and is accompanied too, with plates and cuts, which would render an American reprint very expensive. By and by, when the public taste becomes improved, as I hope, before long it will be, I am confident Morland's history will be called for, and an American edition of it amply warranted.

In the meantime, let Perrin's volume be extensively circulated. Try to place a copy of it in every Christian family in the United States; and there will be an end of the delusion which has so long prevailed concerning the real tenets and character of the Waldenses, that remarkable people, whom almost all Protestants are fond of praising, and claiming an alliance with, but whose example few seem really to understand or to imitate.

Some advocates of the Papacy have been so audacious and reckless as to assert, that the Church of Rome was never a persecuting church; that all the bloody persecution which has been charged against her, has been the work, strictly speaking, of secular powers, and was never justly imputable to the Church as such. It appears to me that the most cursory perusal of Perrin's History is quite sufficient to refute this strange allegation. He who can doubt, after reading this, and some similar works, that the *INQUISITION*, that far-famed instrument of sanguinary cruelty, was primarily and essentially an *ecclesiastical* agent for crushing the alleged errors of the Waldenses; and that the secular power, instead of being dominant in these bloody proceedings, was every where the dupe and the slave of the Church, and simply the servile instrument for executing her bigoted and tyrannical orders, must be strangely blind to the most unquestionable testimony. It appears to me that the volume which you propose to republish, if it serve no other purpose, cannot fail to open the eyes of many who have listened with credulity to the misrepresentations of Papists on this subject. And, while it does this, it will exhibit, in their appropriate character, a body of Witnesses for the truth, who shone brightly in a dark age, and whose true glory was set in a stronger light by the blindness, the unfeeling bigotry, and immeasurable ferocity of a body, boasting itself as the exclusive Church, and given up to the belief, that, in robbing, imprisoning, and butchering without mercy, millions of the best people in the world, they were "doing God service!"

Those who are instrumental in sending forth a good book into society, adapted to enlighten the public mind on such a subject as this, are surely benefactors of their generation.

May the great Head of the Church give prosperity to your enterprize, and crown it with a rich blessing!

I am, gentlemen, with much respect,

Your friend and obedient servant,

SAMUEL MILLER.

PRINCETON, Feb. 24, 1815.