



P R E F A C E.

IT was on the 30th April of last year, that in a leading article of a London newspaper (the "Daily Telegraph," 30th April, 1868), I read the following expressions relating to the Waldenses of Piemont. "For sixteen hundred years, at least, the Waldenses have guarded the pure and primitive Christianity of the Apostles. . . No one knows when or how the faith was first delivered to these mountaineers. . . Irenæus, Bishop of Lyons, in the second century found them a church. . . . These gallant hill-men have kept the tradition of the Gospel committed to them as pure and inviolate as the snow upon their own Alps. . . . They have maintained an Evangelical form of Christianity from the very first, rejecting image worship, invocation of saints, auricular confession, celibacy, papal supremacy or infallibility, and the dogma of purgatory; taking the Scripture as the rule of life, and admitting no sacraments but Baptism and the Lord's Supper . . . No bloodier cruelty disgraces the records of the Papacy than the persecutions endured by the ancestors of the twenty thousand Waldenses now surviving. . . . Never did men suffer more for their belief. . . ."

The quoted expressions not being in accordance with

my former knowledge of the Waldensian history, I imposed upon myself the task of collecting as many books bearing on the subject as I could find, in order to ascertain whether my old impressions were wrong, or the greatest part of the above assertions unfounded.

The following are the principal books I have read through relating to this object: Jean Paul Perrin, "Histoire des Vaudois," Geneve, 1619; Alexander Ross, "ΠΑΝΣΕΒΕΙΑ," London, 1653; Samuel Morland, "The History of the Evangelical Churches of the Valleys of Piemont," London, 1658; Jean Leger, Pasteur, &c., "Histoire Generale des Eglises Evangeliques de Piemont," Amsterdam, 1680; P. Allix, D.D., "History of the ancient Churches of Piedmont," London, 1690; William Jones, "History of the Waldenses," London, 1812; Jean Rodolphe Peyran, Pastor, with appendices by Rev. Thomas Sims, M.A., "An Historical Defence of the Waldenses or Vaudois," London, 1826; Rev. J. L. Jackson, M.A., "Remarks on the Vaudois of Piemont," London, 1826; William Stephen Gilly, M.A., "Narrative of an Excursion to the Mountains of Piemont," London, 1827; "Recherches Historiques sur la veritable Origine des Vaudois, par Monseigneur Charvaz," Paris et Lyon, 1836; Robert Baird, D.D., "Sketches of Protestantism in Italy," New York—British edition, London, 1847; Antoine Monastier, "A History of the Vaudois, translated from the French," London, 1848; Alberto Bert, Ministro, "J. Valdesi, ovvero i Cristiani Cattolici secondo la Chiesa Primitiva," Torino, 1849; Alexis Muston, D.D., Pastor, "The Israel of the Alps," the Vaudois of Piemont," translated by Montgomery, A.M., Glasgow, 1857; E. Enderson, D.D., "The Vaudois, &c., Observations," London, 1858; F. M. "The Israel of the Alps: a History of the Waldenses," London, 1863.

Beside these works, I have consulted some of the known dictionaries and encyclopedias, viz., "Le grand Dictionnaire Historique ou Melange curieux de l'Histoire, sacre et profane," par M. Louis Moreri, tom. viii. p. 47-8, à Amsterdam, 1780; "Encyclopedie methodique, par une Societé de gens de lettres, de savans, d'artistes, &c., Histoire," tome cinquieme, Paris, 1791; "The Cabinet Cyclopedia," History, by the Rev. Henry Stebbing, A.M., vol. ii., London, 1834; "The Encyclopædia Metropolitana, or Universal Dictionary of Knowledge," vol. xi.; "History and Biography," vol. iii., London, 1845; "The English Cyclopedia," conducted by Charles Knight, Biography, vol. v., London, 1857; "Dizionario di Erudizione Ecclesiastica," del Cav^{ro} Gaetano Moroni, vol. lxxxvii., Venezia, 1858, p. 212; and "The Popular Encyclopeda, or Conversation Lexicon," new and revised edition, vol. vi., London, Glasgow, and Edinburgh, 1862; and other dictionaries and biographies. I have also read on the subject many writers on Ecclesiastical history, both Catholic and Protestant.

However, before assenting to the statements of the above writers, I undertook another and much more troublesome labour; namely, that of consulting the principal authors quoted by them, and of reading their original works. And, as I could not obtain all of them in England, I went to Italy, and was fortunate enough to find them partly in the Roman libraries, but principally in the King's library of Turin; where I was allowed, by that learned and courteous librarian, Commendatore Proni, to make extracts from some authentic, but not yet published, manuscripts bearing upon the Waldensian history.

But what induced me more than anything else to publish, not all, but the most clear and undoubtedly genuine

documents so collected, was the precious little work of Professor James Henthorn Todd, senior Fellow of Trinity College, Dublin, entitled "The Book of the Vaudois: the Waldesian Manuscripts," London and Cambridge, 1865; and the notice given there of the long lost Morland manuscripts, lately discovered by Mr. Henry Bradshaw, M.A., Fellow of King's College, Cambridge, and librarian of that University.

Upon my return from Italy, towards the end of last year, I was introduced by a friend to Mr. Bradshaw, who kindly showed me the Waldensian manuscripts, which, by the same acute and fortunate discoverer, are truly called "the oldest extant relics of the Vaudois literature," and I must add, "the most important documents relating to their history."

I have thought it necessary to say all these things, to show to the learned reader the full reliance which is to be placed on the Documents, which I have with some labour extracted from the originals, and which I now present faithfully to the public in relation to *the Origin, the Persecutions, and the Doctrines* of the Waldenses in the Valleys of Piemont.

If, from the evidence of the Documents, there should follow a conclusion contrary to the assertions of writers till now considered of authority, I beg the reader to bear in mind, with the old Christian philosopher and martyr, Justin, that "Reason commands those, who are truly good and lovers of wisdom, to cultivate and love truth alone, casting aside the opinions of their ancestors, if they are wrong;" and that "We are not allowed to honour men more than truth."*

* *Præscribit ratio ut qui vere pii et philosophi sunt, verum unice colant et diligant, recusantes majorum opiniones sequi, si pravæ sint* (Apologia I. ad Antoninum Pium, § VII.)

Plus honoris non est habendum homini quam veritati (Apologia II. pro Christianis, from Socrates).

I conclude by saying with another glorious martyr, Irænaeus, Bishop of Lyons, "That from me, while writing in a tongue very different from my native language, nobody must expect graces of style which I have not acquired, or force of expressions which I cannot pretend to, nor a choice of words and eloquence which I do not possess; I only wish that the Documents which, with a simple translation and some not unnecessary remarks and comments, I publish for love of truth, be read and accepted in the same spirit."*

P. MELIA.

14, Gray's Inn Square,

November 1st, 1869.

* *Non autem requires a nobis qui apud Celtas commoramus . . . orationis artem quam non didicimus, neque vim conscriptionis quam non affectamus, neque ornatum verborum atque suadelam quam nescimus, sed simpliciter et vere et idiotice, quæ tibi cum dilectione scripta sunt, cum dilectione percipias.* (In Præfatione, Adversus Hæreses.)

