

CHAPTER V.

THE ANTIQUITY OF THE VALLENSES SHOWN FROM
THE LANGUAGE OF ATTO OF VERCELLI.

ABOUT a century after the time of Claude, we again find the Alpine Vallenses presented, with a sufficient measure of distinctness, to our observation.

Vercelli is a city of Piedmont, not very far distant from Turin to the eastward: and it constitutes the ecclesiastical metropolis of an immediately contiguous diocese or province. Of this district, in the year 945, Atto was Bishop or Archbishop. Hence, from the mere circumstance of locality, he must have been fully aware of what was passing, both in his own province, and in his own close vicinity.

I. Now two of his Epistles, by describing and censuring what he deemed the errors of certain neighbouring religionists, who had penetrated into his diocese of Vercelli and who had there success-

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fully laboured to make proselytes, establish alike both the prolonged existence of the Vallenses and their steady adherence to the system of doctrine which had distinguished them in the time of Claude of Turin.

1. The former of these two Epistles is couched in terms following.

Atto, by the grace of God, a humble Bishop, health and joy to all the faithful who reside in our diocese.

Lately, on the eve of the Octave of the Lord, we preached, God permitting, to those who were present a certain discourse, which we judge it necessary to direct to yourselves also.

In your parts, alas, there are many persons, who despise the divine services of the Church. These apply themselves to auguries or to signs of the heavens or to vain precantations, fearing not that which the Lord says concerning the Jews. A generation, incredulous and perverse, seeketh a sign. Paul likewise, the blessed Apostle, exclaims: Beware, lest any one seduce you through philosophy and vain deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the elements of the world, and not according to Christ. And elsewhere: Why turn ye again to weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage? The Psalmist, moreover, says; Ye Sons of men how long will you be heavy in heart, and love vanity, and seek after a lie?" And again: Blessed is the man, whose hope is

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in the name of the Lord, and who has not looked to vanities and insane falsehoods. Farewell in the Lord.*

2. The latter of the two Epistles speaks the same language, and plainly refers to the same subject.

Atto, through the mercy of Christ, a humble Bishop, to all the people of our diocese of the holy mother Church of Vercelli.

Know ye, that, both through Christ himself and through the holy Apostles or Prophets and through the other holy Teachers, we have heard: that numerous false prophets will come, who, what is most

* Atto, gratia Dei, humilis Episcopus, cunctis fidelibus in nostra parochia consistentibus, salutem et gaudium.

Nuper in vigilia Octavæ Domini, quemdam sermonem, his qui præsentés erant, Deo donante, retulimus: quem vobis dirigere necessarium æstimamus. Heu! quia sunt multi in vestris partibus, qui divina servitia contemnunt, et auguria vel cæli signa seu vanas præcantationes intendunt, nec metuunt illud quod Dominus de Judeis ait: O generatio incredula et perversa, signum quærit. Beatus quoque Paulus clamat Apostolus: Videte, ne quis vos reducat, per philosophiam et inanem fallaciam, secundum traditiones hominum, secundum elementa mundi, et non secundum Christum. Et alibi: Quomodo convertimini iterum ad infirma et egena elementa, quibus denuo servire vultis? Psalmista quippe dicit: Filii hominum, usquequo graves corde; ut quid diligitis vanitatem, et quæritis mendacium? Et iterum: Beatus vir, cuius est nomen Domini spes ejus; et non reperit in vanitates et insanias falsas. Valet in Domino. Atton. Vercell. Epist. ii. in Dacher. Spicil. vol. viii. p. 110, 111.

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grievous, will study to turn many aside from the way of truth, so as to lead them into destruction, inasmuch as they shall have given credit to their pretensions. Whence the heart is not so easily preserved in righteousness, but that ye may hasten to believe even some persons who utter only words of brute ignorance and simplicity: inasmuch that (alas, most unhappy men!), being deceived by diabolical error, and forsaking your holy mother the Church or the Priests through whom ye ought to come to eternal salvation, you even distinguish those individuals by the name of Prophets.

Wherefore, when this letter shall have been seen or heard or known, if, by chance, any one of you (which God forbid!) shall hereafter perpetrate wickedness of such a description: let him learn, that he is altogether to be condemned, and that he has no licence either to drink wine or to eat any thing cooked save bread alone, until he shall come to his holy mother the Church of Vercelli and into our presence, in order that he may be adjudged to make satisfaction and to exhibit the true humility of penitence.

But, if any one, inflated by pride, shall attempt to act against this our behest, let him know: that he is to be driven from the threshold of the Church, an alien from the holy communion; and that he is to be abominated by all the faithful, until he shall have submitted to the correction of the Holy Church, as well himself, as all those who shall have asso-

<p>334 THE VALLENTSES [BOOK III.</p> <p>ciated with him after they have learned his character.</p> <p>If, moreover, any one of the Priests (which God avert!) shall peradventure have been polluted with such an abomination: let him not dare usurpatively to administer any divine sacrament, until he shall have made satisfaction in our judgment worthy of God*.</p> <p>II. Thus run two of the Epistles of Atto: and,</p> <p>* Atto, Christi misericordia, humilis Episcopus, cuncto populo nostrae diocesis sanctae matris Vercellensis Ecclesiae.</p> <p>Noveritis igitur, quia, et per ipsum Christum Dominum atque sanctos Apostolos seu Prophetas sive sanctos reliquos Doctores, audivimus, plurimos venturos esse pseudo-prophetas, qui, quod gravissimum est, subvertere a via veritatis multos studebunt, ita ut eos in perniciem perducant, qui illis crediderint. Unde—non tam facile justum habetur cor, ut etiam quibusdam, simplicitate atque bruta referentibus tantummodo verba, credere omnino festinetis; eosque, heu miserrimi, diabolico errore decepti, prophetas nominetis; relinquentes sanctam matrem vestram Ecclesiam seu Sacerdotes per quos ad aeternam pervenire debetis salutem.</p> <p>Quocirca, his visis litteris auditis vel cognitis, si quis vestrum forte, quod absit, deinceps hujusmodi nefas perpetraverit, sciat se omnimodis damnamum, et non habeat licentiam manducandi quid coctum nisi panem nec bibendi vinum, quousque ad suam sanctam matrem scilicet Vercellensem Ecclesiam nostramque presentiam, ad satisfactionem veramque penitentiae humilitatem, judicandus adveniat.</p> <p>Si quis autem, superbia inflatus, contra hoc agere tentaverit, sciat se ab Ecclesiae liminibus pellendum et a sancta communione extraneum omnibusque fidelibus abominandum, donec Sanctae Ecclesiae susceperit correctionem, tam ipse, quam</p>		<p>CHAP. V.] AND ALBIGENSES. 335</p> <p>in each of them, the Bishop is obviously speaking of one and the same body of individuals, whatever precise individuals may be intended.</p> <p>omnes qui ipsi communicant postquam eum talem cognoverint.</p> <p>Sacerdotum vero, siquis fortasse, quod Deus avertat, tali abominatione pollutus fuerit: nullam divinum audeat usurpare mysterium, donec dignam Deo, nostro judicio, persolvat satisfactionem. Atton. Vercell. Epist. iii. in Dacher. Spicil. vol. viii. p. 111, 112.</p> <p>The next Epistle, which it is superfluous to quote at length, indicates: that these perverse religionists, somewhat after the manner of the Petrobrusians, turned Good Friday into a festival, because the Romanists observed it as a fast. Epist. iv. p. 112, 113. They refused, I suppose, to acknowledge the scriptural obligation of its observance, because their opponents enjoined such observance as divinely binding upon the conscience.</p> <p>Though not immediately to the present purpose, it is worthy of note, that Atto adopts the primitive interpretation of the Rock upon which Christ promises to build his Church. He rightly pronounces it to be the Faithful Confession of St. Peter.</p> <p>Cujus institutionis exordium in beatissimi Petri fidei confessione credimus fundatum, cum ait ad Dominum: Tu es Christus Filius Dei vivi. Pro qua etiam remuneratione audire inter caetera meruit: Et ego dico tibi, quia tu es Petrus; et super hanc petram aedificabo Ecclesiam meam, et portae inferi non prevalebunt adversus eam. Aedificata est ergo sancta Ecclesia supra petram in soliditate Apostolicae Fidei, per fidem et dilectionem Christi, et perceptionem sacramentorum, et observantiam mandatorum ejus. Att. Vercell. Libell. de pressur. ecclesiast. par. i. in Dacher. Spicil. vol. viii. p. 45.</p> <p>We have already seen, that Dungal and Claude Scyssel do the very same. Certainly it is somewhat remarkable, that,</p>	
<p>336 THE VALLENTSES [BOOK III.</p> <p>The following are the several marked characteristics which he ascribes to them.</p> <p>They lived in his own immediate neighbourhood: they despised the divine services of the dominant Church: they uttered, what Atto deemed, words of brute ignorance and simplicity: they deceived, by diabolical error, their proselytes: they induced them to forsake their holy mother the Church: they taught them to desert the Priests, through whom they ought to come to eternal salvation: and, from the nature of their ministrations, they were distinguished, among the people, by the name of <i>Prophets</i> or <i>Religious Instructors</i>; insomuch that the Bishop supposed them to be those numerous predicted false prophets, who should come and study to turn aside many from the way of truth.</p> <p>Such is Atto's account of his troublesome neighbours: and, when the several points of vicinage and numbers and interference for the purpose of proselytism are considered, it is difficult to specify what persons can have been intended by the description, save the contiguous Vallenses of the Cottian Alps. But, if their identity with the Vallenses be admitted: then we have a full attestation to the still continued existence of the Val-</p> <p>even within the pale of the Romish Church, the ancient interpretation should have so long struggled with the favourite new-fangled gloss of the Papacy.</p>		<p>CHAP. V.] AND ALBIGENSES. 337</p> <p>lenses, locally and theologically unchanged, in the middle of the tenth century.</p> <p>It will be said, that I have pretermitted one, and that not the least extraordinary, of the characteristics which are ascribed by Atto to the individuals in question: he represents them as being sorcerers who dealt in the impious vanity of magical incantations.</p> <p>To this it might be sufficient to reply: that falsehood is ever inconsistent with itself; and (agreeably to the axiom) that the very incongruity of the present charge demonstrates it to be nothing more than a malignant calumny fabricated by their inveterate and unscrupulous enemies the Romish Priesthood. Mere sorcerers, or mere pretenders to diabolical potency, would never, we may be quite sure, have troubled themselves with teaching their silly customers to despise the services of the ruling Church, or with injecting religious doubts into their minds as to the security of their immortal souls in the hands of the Romish Priesthood. Such are not the arts or habits of reputed or stimulated wizards and witches and votaries of Satan. They clearly appertain to persons of widely different principles and character.</p> <p>But I may safely advance beyond this sufficiently-obvious argument. The charge, preferred against the neighbours of Atto, was that of sorcery. Now this identical charge was actually preferred against his alpine neighbours the Val-</p> <p style="text-align: center;">z</p>	

lenses. Hence, the very fact of the charge having been preferred against the neighbours of Atto, serves only to confirm and establish the position, that the Vallenses were those neighbouring proselytisers who made such provoking theological inroads into the diocese of Vercelli.

Through all the middle ages, the Vallenses of Piedmont were confidently reported to be an unclean race of impious magicians.

This prevalent notion of their sorcery was often of considerable use to them in their battles with their enemies. It was devoutly believed, that, through special favour of the devil, they were proof against musquetry: and it was even asserted with an oath, that their Barbes or Clergy, after an action, gathered up the balls in their shirts by handfuls, without their having received the slightest scratch. The approved mode of shooting Satan's pupils with silver bullets was, I suppose, either then unknown, or on trial had been found to be too expensive*.

In a similar spirit of voracious credulity, a popish wiseacre, in the year 1488, gravely assured Duke Philip of Burgundy: that the children of the terrific Vaudois were invariably born, with hairy throats, with four rows of awfully black teeth in their heads, and (like the cyclopean

* See Muston's Hist. des Vaud. vol. i. p. 515, 516.

Their faith rested upon the credible report of a shuddering Inquisitor: and who shall doubt an Inquisitor's veracity, when he is dealing with an obstinate Heretic? But let us hear the report, that nought may be extenuated and nought set down in malice.

When they wish to go to the said Vaulderie, they anoint themselves with an ointment which the devil has given them. They then rub it with a very small rod of wood: and, with palms in their hands, they place the rod between their legs. Thus prepared and equipped, they fly away wherever they please: and the devil carries them to the place, where they ought to hold the said assembly. In that place, they find tables ready set out, charged with wine and victuals: and a devil gives them the meeting, in the shape of a he-goat, with the tail of an ape, or in some form of a man. There, to the said devil,

tolorum in mundo de loco ad locum ambulare, prædicare, et confessiones audire? Modus examini, hæret. in Biblioth. Patr. vol. xiii. p. 342.

Interrogavit Episcopus, quid vellet fieri de seipso? An in cœnobio Galliæ, an Candelii, an in ecclesia Albiensi, eligeret sepeliri? Qui respondit: Non oportet Episcopum curam habere super his; cum ipse deliberasset, quid esset facturum. Episcopus nihilominus insistebat, quo trium istorum locorum eligeret sepeliri. Ille tandem respondit, se velle ad Bonomios deportari. Pontifice vero in contrarium asserente, quod super hoc licentiam non haberet: ille inquit; Non ad hoc laboretis, quoniam, si secus non possem, ad eos reptando quadrupedaliter festinarem. Bertrand. de gest. Tholosan. fol. 31.

brethren of old) with a single eye in the middle of their foreheads*.

Such sagacious individuals were indisputably of the same school as those writers, upon whose credit we have been more than once exhorted (for it were unfair to lay the whole burden of the kindly exhortation upon the single back of Bossuet) to believe all the Manichæan Diaboliads ascribed to the old Paulicians and the later Albigenes. Yet, in regard to the concernments of the Vaudois with the Evil One, so firmly persuaded was each miserable dupe of the Romish Priesthood, that the very term *Vaulderie* came to denote *Witchcraft*†.

* Muston's Hist. des Vaud. vol. i. p. 509, 510.

† From *Vaulderie*, I conclude, and thence ultimately from *Vauldois*, we must derive *Boulder*; one of the regular official names of a witch's black grimalkin: just as *Boggard*, a northern provincial appellation of a foul fiend, evidently resolves itself into *Bulgard* or *Bulgarian*, a very common designation of the Albigenes whose Manicheism and dealings with Satan are notorious to all persons of an easy faith. I may add, while on the subject of etymology, that many family names in this country clearly indicate the descent of their possessors from those Valdenses and Albigenes whom persecution served only to scatter all over Europe. Such, for instance, are *Pickard*, *Cotterel*, *Waldy*, *Humble*, *Perfect*, and *Bonomi*: derived severally from *Picardi*, *Cotterelli*, *Valdenses*, *Humiliati*, *Perfecti*, and *Boni Homines*. In forming the last name, *Boni Homines* passed into *Bonomii*. This is evident from the two following citations.

Quotiens es tu confessus hæresiarchis, id est, illis *Bonis Hominibus*, qui ad te venerunt occulte dicentes, se loco Apos-

they offer oblation and homage:—and there they commit crimes so fetid and enormous, as well against God as against nature, that the said Inquisitor declared that he did not dare to name them.*

The result of the investigation will readily be anticipated: but, as to the poor victims of popish intolerance themselves, when they were brought out to be burned, they declared, that they had never had any thing to do with *Vaulderie*, and that they did not even know what idea was annexed to the term. Nevertheless, the districts in France, through which these reputed sorcerers were scattered, acquired so evil an odour, that merchants scarcely dared to visit them, lest they should be branded with the hateful name of *Vauldois*†.

III. Among the people of Vercelli and its diocese, the great success of the Vallensic Missionaries may be readily gathered from the very lamentations of Atto: and his angry *peradventure*, in regard to the possibility of some even among his Clergy adopting their theological sentiments, shews not obscurely, that many of the Priesthood were already in that unsatisfactory predicament.

* Mémoires de Jacques Du-Clercq, in suppl. vol. ix. de la Collection des mémoires relatifs à l'histoire de France, cited by Muston. Hist. des Vaud. vol. i. p. 507, 508. This Jacques Du-Clercq was born in the year 1424.

† Mémoires de Jacques Du-Clercq, in Muston's Hist. des Vaud. vol. i. p. 509.

<div data-bbox="279 291 686 313"><p>342 THE VALLENSES [BOOK III.</p></div> <div data-bbox="279 329 686 492"><p>These were, I suppose, the most exemplary, the most religiously disposed, and the best informed, of the Order: and it is highly probable, that the notorious profligacy and the gross ignorance of their brethren may have led them to seek pure faith and consistent practice among the despised and hated Vallenses.</p></div> <div data-bbox="279 495 686 777"><p>Accordingly, on the one hand, a chapter of Atto's own <i>Capitularè</i> strictly inhibits, under pain of an anathema, all his Suffragan Bishops and Priests and Deacons and Clerks of every description, from resorting to those whom he stigmatises under the aspect of sorcerers and magicians: while, on the other hand, he addresses two admonitory Epistles to his Clergy on the fruitful subject of their scandalous concubinage, which led them rapaciously to rob the Church in order to decorate and enrich their spurious offspring and their acknowledged harlots*.</p></div> <div data-bbox="279 792 686 1037"><p>* Si quis Episcopus aut Presbyter sive Diaconus, vel quilibet ex Ordine Clericorum, magos, aut aruspices, aut ariolos, aut certè augures, vel sortilegos, vel eos qui profitentur artem magicam, aut aliquos eorum similia exercentes, consuluisse fuerit deprehensus: ab honore dignitatis suæ depositus, monasterium ingressus, penam accipiat; ibique, perpetuæ poenitentiae deditus, scelus admissum sacrilegii solvat. Item: si quis, post hanc cognitionem, ecclesiasticam contemnens doctrinam, ad prophetas aut angelos vel aliquos sanctorum defunctorum quos <i>equivocos</i> falso vocant abierit, eorumque pravis doctrinis inhaerit, anathema sit. Atton. Vercell. Capitular. c. 48. in Dacher. Spicil. vol. viii. p. 18, 19. Vide etiam</p></div>			<div data-bbox="941 291 1348 313"><p>CHAP. V.] AND ALBIGENSES. 343</p></div> <div data-bbox="941 329 1348 374"><p>The reprehensions of the Bishop are just and praiseworthy: but what must have been the state</p></div> <div data-bbox="941 392 1348 452"><p>Atton. Vercell. Epist. ix., x. in Dacher. Spicil. vol. viii. p. 126—132. I subjoin a brief extract, that the Bishop may speak in his own proper person.</p></div> <div data-bbox="941 454 1348 893"><p>Præterea, quod dicere pudet, tacere autem periculum, quidam in tantum libidini municipantur, ut obscenas meretriculas sua simul in domo secum habitare, una cibum sumere ac publicè degere, permittant.—Ecclesiæ gremio sunt recepti. Inde quidquid postmodum subtrahere valent, ipsis non desinunt erogare. Et unde meretrices ornantur, Ecclesiæ vastantur, pauperes tribulantur. Hac occasione Publicani Clericorum domos irrumunt: non ipsos, sed commanentes mulieres, cum ipsis quos genuerant spurii, quasi sibi commissos, extrahere simulant. Id trepidant miseri, et munera quæque promittunt: et, qui adorari poterant, cunctos adorare coguntur; et, qui omnium viriliter vitia declamare debuerant, de suis apud judicem quærant licentiam. Sic sacræ ædes publicantur, et a vulgo deridentur: et nomen Domini blasphematur. Solent etiam, tali pro scelere, vicinorum vicinarumque odium incurere. Quoties namque hujuscemodi mulieres vel earum spurii cum aliquibus litigant, ipsi, abjecta omni sacerdotali reverentia, sese opponunt: injurias et contumelias, quas possunt, inferre, et deteriora, minantur. Insuper, ut talis ditetur familia, ipsi cupidi, rapaces, usurarii, avari, et invidi, ac fraudulenti, efficiuntur. Unde non modicum Christi Ecclesia patitur detrimentum. Atton. Vercell. Epist. ix. in Dacher. Spicil. vol. viii. p. 127, 128.</p></div> <div data-bbox="941 896 1348 1032"><p>Let not the incautious reader imagine, that the <i>Publicans</i>, mentioned in this passage, were those persecuted Publicans or Paulicians whom their immaculate enemies charged with Manichæism and with every evil word and work. As Dacherius justly observes, they were either the public judges themselves or else their sergeants. Publicani hic, aut judices publici, aut certè eorum ministri vulgo <i>sercientes</i> dicti.</p></div>
<div data-bbox="279 1189 686 1211"><p>344 THE VALLENSES AND ALBIGENSES. [BOOK III.</p></div> <div data-bbox="279 1227 686 1440"><p>of the Priesthood to require them? Atto admits: that, through the vices of the Clerical Order, the derision of the vulgar was excited and the name of the Lord was blasphemed; for these depraved men were actually not ashamed to play the part of judicial bullies on behalf of their strumpets and bastards*. Yet does he complain: that the Vallenses taught his flock to doubt, whether <i>such</i> pastors were the surest guides to eternal salvation!</p></div> <div data-bbox="399 1458 563 1478"><p>* See the preceding note.</p></div>			