

**THE PASTOR OF THE DESERT AND
HIS MARTYR COLLEAGUES,
SKETCHES OF P. RABAUT. AND
THE FRENCH PROTESTANTS OF
THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY**

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The Pastor of the Desert and His Martyr Colleagues, Sketches of P. Rabaut. And the French Protestants of the Eighteenth Century by Paul Rabaut

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PAUL RABAUT

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THE PASTOR OF THE DESERT

And his Martyr Colleagues :

SKETCHES OF PAUL RABAUT

AND THE FRENCH PROTESTANTS OF THE
EIGHTEENTH CENTURY.

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH OF

M. BRIDEL, PASTEUR,

LAUSANNE.

WITH AN APPENDIX CONTAINING PORTIONS OF PAUL RABAUT'S
WRITINGS, NOW FIRST PUBLISHED.

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TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE.

THE following little work is a translation of "Trois Séances sur Paul Rabaut et les Protestants Français au XVIII^{me} Siècle," by M. Louis Bridel, Pasteur, Lausanne. It was prepared at the request of the Young Men's Christian Association in that city, and the first reading attracted an attention which led to repetition and publication. The few paragraphs that bear the impress of having been written in Switzerland will not on that account be less interesting to English readers, feeling as we may that our own nation shares with the Swiss the honour of offering a refuge to the oppressed and persecuted Protestants of France.

Should any one ask what is to be understood by "the Desert," an explanation shall be given in the words of a French Pastor on trial for the capital crime of exercising his ministry, as recorded in the minutes of his examination:—

“Questioned in what place he had baptized and administered the communion.

“Answered that it was in the open country, or in the desert.

“We called on the accused to tell us what he meant by the desert.

“The accused said that he meant by the desert lonely and uninhabited places where he assembled the faithful; sometimes in the neighbourhood of Alais, of Sauve, &c.”*

Whatever difference of opinion may prevail among Christians as to the splendid yet mysterious prophecy of the resurrection of the martyrs in Rev. xx. 4, † on one point there is little room for controversy. The blood shed and the sufferings endured in past ages for God and a pure gospel are not “water spilt on the ground,” even though success did not crown the heroic confessors and their cause for the time seemed lost. The thrones and dominions in the hearts and minds of men

* See “Histoire des Eglises du Désert,” by M. Charles Coquerel, 1841. Tome 1^{re}, p. 230.

† “And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.”

are yet for them, for the doctrines they preached, the truths for which they made so brave a stand, and which they grasped so firmly in death. And if happier generations see the triumph and reign of those truths, will not the heroism and faith and patience of the men who waited and suffered for this end have a resurrection too, and form part of the character of the church in its best and brightest days to which we are looking forward? By the labours of historians and Christian biographers, many a noble character has been disinterred from the oblivion or misconception of ages and has risen again into the activity of a glorious example. The past has treasures of faith and fortitude yet to be unveiled: and amidst the fulness of gospel light and religious liberty granted to us, we may be stimulated to greater Christian devotedness, to higher and more unworldly aims, by communion with the self-renouncing and martyr spirits who have left their seal on the history of the church and the world.

It is as an humble contribution to this object that the Translator presents the following Sketches in their English garb. They are taken from the closing period of European martyrology, a decadent age, yet destined to usher in that series of

changes which we hope is preparing the way for the true freedom and regeneration of the human race. The Sermon of Paul Rabaut, inserted in the Appendix, will be found a valuable addition to the narrative. Readers who bring to its perusal associations of the lightness and frivolity usually attributed to the French character, may be struck with its adaptation to meet those tendencies in the people to whom it was addressed, by the earnest and perhaps rather sombre views of religious truth which it presents. The comprehensiveness of the discourse must have been a special necessity for times when opportunities for hearing were few and uncertain; and the brief summary of the Christian evidences indicates that the preacher was not unobservant of the advancing infidelity, which forty years later was to achieve a temporary triumph over all forms of religion in the land.

We must go a long way back in the history of our own country to find the period of martyrdom and proscription on the express ground of religious belief, but in France a single century will suffice to place us in the presence of the gallows and the block encountered for that cause alone. The knowledge of this fact, and others of a similar nature, has tended to produce discouragement in