

formation respecting them is scanty, and mostly derived from the testimony of their enemies, but enough is known to justify us in asserting that they belonged to the genuine apostolic succession, inasmuch as they loved the truth, practised holiness, and "suffered the loss of all things" for Christ.

The thirteenth century was an age of great activity. The friends of the gospel laboured with extraordinary zeal, and were abundantly rewarded.

In the south of France, in Italy, and in many parts of Germany, Christian communities existed in great numbers, exerting a beneficial influence all around them. Their members were honest, industrious, upright, contributing largely to the prosperity of the neighbourhoods in which they lived; their instructive teaching and blameless lives attracted disciples; very many forsook the profitless ceremonies of Rome, and the dissidents were in some places more numerous than the adherents of the established system. We need not wonder at the results. Papal indignation was roused. Crusades against the heretics were proclaimed, and those who enlisted for this unholy warfare received the same indulgences as if they had gone to the Holy Land. During the first thirty years of the thirteenth century, Antichrist was busily engaged in ceaseless endeavors to "wear out the saints of the Lord." Horrible barbarities were perpetrated by the crusading forces in Southern France. Towns were sacked, and the inhabitants indiscriminately massacred; hundreds perished in the flames rather than deny the faith; and in the Province of Languedoc the number of prisoners was so great, that all the places of confinement were filled, the erection of additional buildings being prevented by the consideration of the enormous sums that would be required for the purpose.

During this time the Inquisition was established, and in active operation.

John Wiclif died in 1384. — Strange to say, he died in his bed. Protected by the powerful, he fearlessly uttered his denunciations against the abominable and grievous exactions of Rome, and the soul-destructive heresies propagated by the mendicant orders, careless alike of human applause or censure. His translation of the Scriptures was the best gift he could bestow on his country. It was sowing "good seed," which sprung up and produced a glorious harvest.

But though Wiclif died in his bed, a very different end awaited many of his disciples. Animated by holy zeal, they traversed the land in every direction, proclaiming the gospel, and exhorting the people to place their sole confidence in Christ. Great success attended their efforts; it was calculated that nearly one-fourth of the inhabitants of England had embraced the sentiments of the Lollards, as they were called, or favoured them. The influence of the priesthood was rapidly declining, and they knew of only one method by which it might be restored. Unable to meet the Reformers in the field of fair argument, they determined to call in the aid of the civil power in order to crush them. The Statute-book of England was disgraced, in 1400, by the publication of the act *De hæretico comburendo*, consigning alleged heretics to the flames. It was not intended to be a dead letter. William Sawtree, parish priest of St. Osyth's, London, was the first victim: he was burnt alive, in 1401; the principal article of accusation being that "he would not worship the cross on which Christ suffered, but only Christ that suffered upon the cross." John Badby, and many more, were put to death in the same manner: William Thorpe died in prison: great numbers suffered various minor punishments; but the most illustrious martyr of that period