

Dialogue between a Salzburg Religious Refugee and a Waldensian (1732)

Abstract

The Salzburg Archbishop Leopold Anton von Firmian was behind the so-called Emigration Edict of 1731, according to which the non-Catholic population of Salzburg had to leave by a certain deadline. Most of the non-Catholics in the archdiocese were Protestants, about 20,000 people. The Electoral Prince of Brandenburg, Friedrich Wilhelm I, sought to bring the Salzburg Protestants to his country by means of the Immigration Patent issued in 1732. The description of the expulsion from Salzburg and immigration to Brandenburg, presented in dialogue form, connects the fate of the Salzburg expellees to that of the Waldensians (Huguenots), who had to leave France after the Edict of Fontainebleau.

Source

Waldensian: Tell me, dear brother, how long have you now been away from your fatherland, and what is the world saying about everything that is happening in your country?

Salzburg refugee: Quite a few months have now passed since I had to leave my fatherland, where I was born and raised. I was one of the first who had to leave at the end of last year in December at a very harsh and inopportune time. In the meantime, the Salzburg Archbishopric is now the place about which all the newspapers are reporting, and which is causing most of the talk that is going on in the world. The matter is such that it deserves particular attention, for the circumstances that we are encountering here cannot be conveniently ignored. The situation shows how the Roman Catholics in Salzburg feel about us Protestants, and what we have to expect from them. The religious peace that was agreed to in Augsburg in 1555 and the Westphalian peace treaty have up to now been the two supports upon which the unity of the Imperial estates and the welfare of the entire Roman-German Empire are based. Both are being rendered shaky. And that is happening, as all the Protestants say, because of the actions of a religious prince who should set a good example for others and hold to sworn treaties all the more. It is happening because of the actions of a minor lord whose territory does not even extend very far, if it is compared to the lands of other Imperial princes, and who does not usually maintain a large army. It has been going on for so long that three years have already passed since we Lutherans were pressured, persecuted, and chased out. We were driven out before the set deadline that is defined for us in no uncertain terms in Imperial law. We were not allowed to take along the property that belonged to us. We were not even allowed to take our justified complaints to higher places and to appeal to the legitimate authorities for justice. All the passes are occupied so that no one can go out or in. All letters are opened at the borders that lead out or in. Anyone who wants to seek help in other places is arrested and viewed as a rebel; the emigrants are encumbered in hundreds of ways. All of this is against Imperial law. The Protestants plead for us, but they do not even receive an answer. They make the most concise presentations possible, and put the clearest words of the basic law right in front of the appropriate eyes, but those words are not even looked at. They threaten the reprisals that justice commands them to use, but no one pays attention. Almost all of Europe bestirs itself and does not intend to tolerate the unfairness, but no one asks about it. A local commission to investigate everything thoroughly and to bring the truth to light is fervently requested, but not even this can be accomplished. The envoys have reported to their principals that, if they did not want to take action against these unmistakable violations of the so costly sworn peace agreements, then it is inevitable that the enemies of the Protestant religion will go further and throw everything into disarray. No one knows what

they will decide on next. And this is now, my dear brother, the judgment that is generally being made about us from the Protestant side: whether we will gladly endure injustice no matter how it affects our people and never repay viciousness with viciousness, even in our speech.

Source: *Die Seufftzende Saltzburger/ Oder Besondere Unterredung Im Reiche der Lebendigen, Zwischen einem der Religion halben aus dem Lande emigrirenden Saltzburger Und einem gleichfalls wegen des Glaubens aus Italiänischen und Frantzösischen Gräntzen vertriebenen Waldenser/ Darinnen beyder Schicksale und Verfolgungen, insonderheit aber die Historie der emigrirenden Saltzburger vollständig beschrieben wird.*

Magdeburg, 1732, p. 5f. Available online at:

http://digital.onb.ac.at/OnbViewer/viewer.faces?doc=ABO_%2BZ184239803

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