

Document: "Philip Augustus Orders Jews Out of France"

Long the object of Christian controversy, hated as moneylenders by ordinary people, and feared by the clergy as successful competitors with Christianity, Jews became easy scapegoats for rulers who wished to exploit fear and prejudice. In 1182, Philip II Augustus, eyeing the wealthy Jews of Paris, ordered all non-converting Jews out of France and confiscated their property and possessions.



[When Philip became king] a great multitude of Jews had been dwelling in France for a long time...[In Paris] they grew so rich that they claimed as their own almost half of the whole city, and they had Christians in their houses as menservants and maidservants, who were backsliders from the faith of Jesus Christ and judaized with the Jews....

And whereas the Lord had said...in Deuteronomy [23:19-20]: "thou shall not lend upon usury to thy brother, but to the stranger," the Jews...understood by "stranger" every Christian, and they took from the Christians their money at usury. And so heavily burdened in this wise were citizens and soldiers and peasants...that many of them were constrained to part with their possessions. Others were bound under oath in houses of the Jews in Paris, held as if captives in prison.

The most Christian King Philip hearing of these things...released all Christians of his kingdom from their debts to the Jews, and kept a fifth part of the whole amount for himself...[Then in] 1182, in the month of April...an edict went forth from...the king...that all the Jews of his kingdom should be prepared to go forth by the coming feast of St. John the Baptist. And the king gave them leave to sell each his movable goods before the time fixed.

When faithless Jews heard this edict some of them...converted to the Lord [Jesus Christ, and] to them the king, out of regard for the Christian religion, restored all their possessions...and gave them perpetual liberty. Others were blinded by their ancient error and persisted in their perfidy¹...The infidel Jews...astonished and stupefied by the strength of mind of Philip the king and his constancy in the Lord...prepared to sell all their household goods. The time was now at hand when the king ordered them to leave France....Then did the Jews sell all their movable possessions in great haste, while their landed property reverted to the crown. Thus the Jews, having sold their goods and taken the price for the expenses of their journey, departed with their wives and children and all their households in the...year of the Lord 1182.

¹ violation of a promise or oath.