

LIGHT FROM OLD TIMES;

OR,

Protestant Facts and Men.

WITH AN INTRODUCTION FOR OUR OWN DAYS.

BY THE LATE BISHOP

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“EXPOSITORY THOUGHTS ON THE GOSPELS,” “KNOTS UNTIED,” ETC., ETC.

“If the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle!”—1 Cor. xiv. 8.

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JOHN BRADFORD: MARTYR.

JOHN BRADFORD, the famous English Reformer, who was burned at Smithfield for Christ's truth, in Queen Mary's days, is far better known as a martyr than as a writer. The splendour of his death has eclipsed the work of his pen. Few perhaps have the least idea what a rich treasure of English theology is laid up in his literary remains.

This ought not so to be. Among the many goodly volumes published by the Parker Society, not a few, I suspect, sleep quietly on library shelves, unopened and uncut. Like ancient weapons of war, they are too ponderous for the taste of our day. Like guns and shells in Woolwich Arsenal, they are regarded as stores to be only used in special times of need. Yet some of these volumes will richly repay an attentive perusal, even in the nineteenth century. Latimer, Hooper, and Jewell should never be neglected. Side-by-side with these three men I am disposed to rank the two volumes of Bradford's Works and Remains, from which I propose to make some selections at the conclusion of this paper.

Some account of Bradford's life and death will prove a suitable preface to the extracts I shall give from his writings. It is to many an old story, and well known; yet in days like these it is well to stir up men's minds by putting them in remembrance of the champions of the English Reformation. For a large portion of the information I give, I am indebted to a biography of Bradford, written by the Rev. Aubrey Townsend, and prefixed to the Parker Society's edition of Bradford's works.

John Bradford, Prebendary of St. Paul's and Chaplain to Bishop Ridley, was born at Blackley, near Manchester, about the year 1520, and educated first at Manchester Grammar School. Fox records that he was "brought up in virtue and good learning even from his very childhood and, among other fruits of his good education, he obtained as a chief gift the cunning and readiness of writing, which knowledge was not only an ornament unto him, but also a help to the necessary sustentation of his living.' Baines, the historian of the county of Lancaster, also observes that Bradford, having received a liberal education at the free grammar school in Manchester, founded by Bishop Oldham, who died in 1519, attained there a considerable proficiency in Latin and arithmetic.

"To this early period of his life Bradford, writing from prison in the days of Mary, feelingly adverts:—

"I cannot but say that I have most cause to thank thee for my parents, schoolmasters, and others, under whose tuition thou hast put me. No pen is able to write the particular benefits, which I have already received in my infancy, childhood, youth, middle age, and always hitherto. . . . I could reckon innumerable behind me, and but few before me, so much made of and cared for as I have been hitherto.'

“Fox records that Bradford, at a later period, ‘became servant to Sir John Harrington, Knight, of Exton, in Rutlandshire, who, in the great affairs of Henry the Eighth, and King Edward the Sixth, which he had in hand when he was treasurer of the King’s camps and buildings, at divers times, in Boulogne, had such experience of Bradford’s activity in writing, of his expertness in the art of auditors, and also of his faithful trustiness, that, not only in those affairs, but in many other of his private business, he trusted Bradford in such sort, that above all others he used his faithful service.’ At the siege of Montreuil in particular, conducted by the English army under the Duke of Norfolk in the year 1544, Bradford discharged, under Sir John Harrington, the office of paymaster.

“Three years later, not long after the accession of Edward VI., on the 8th April, 1547, Bradford entered the Inner Temple as a student of common law. His character then underwent a complete change. Twenty-seven years later, Sampson, his friend and fellow-student at the Temple, and who, it has been said, was the human means, under a higher power, of that great transformation, writes, in his preface to Bradford’s works: ‘I did know when, and partly how, it pleased God, by effectual calling, to turn his heart unto the true knowledge and obedience of the most holy Gospel of Christ our Saviour; of which God did give him such an heavenly hold and lively feeling, that, as he did then know that many sins were forgiven him, so surely he declared by deeds that he “loved much.” For, where he had both gifts and calling to have employed himself in civil and worldly affairs profitably, such was his love of Christ and zeal to the promoting of His glorious Gospel, that he changed not only the course of his former life, as the woman did (Luke vii.), but even his former study, as Paul did change his former profession and study.

“Touching the first, after that God touched his heart with that holy and effectual calling, he sold his chains, rings, brooches and jewels of gold, which before he used to wear, and did bestow the price of this his former vanity in the necessary relief of Christ’s poor members, which he could hear of or find lying sick or pining in poverty. Touching the second, he so declared his great zeal and love to promote the glory of the Lord Jesus, whose goodness and saving health he had tasted, that,’ ‘with marvellous favour to further the kingdom of God by the ministry of His Holy Word, he gave himself wholly to the study of the Holy Scriptures. The which his purpose to accomplish the better, he departed from the Temple at London, where the temporal law is studied, and went to the University of Cambridge, to learn, by God’s law, how to further the building of the Lord’s temple.’

“An incident occurred, while he was in London, which occasioned him deep anxiety. He ‘heard a sermon which that notable preacher, Master Latimer, made before King Edward the Sixth, in which he did earnestly speak of restitution to be made of things falsely gotten.’ This ‘did so strike him to the heart’ on account of a fraud, committed by his master, Sir John

Harrington, which ‘was to the deceiving of the King,’ and which it would seem Bradford had concealed, ‘that he could never be quiet till by the advice of the same Master Latimer a restitution was made.’ That he had not been an interested party to this fraud would appear from his words to Bishop Gardiner, January 30th, 1555: ‘My lord, I set my foot to his foot, whosoever he be, that can come forth, and justly vouch to my face that ever I deceived my master: and, as you are chief justice by office in England, I desire justice upon them that so slander me, because they cannot prove it.’ This was a challenge, which he could scarcely have ventured to make, if he had himself defrauded the government. It was through his firmness, in fact, that Sir John Harrington was compelled to make restitution to the King of the sums falsely obtained, in the two successive years, 1549 and 1550.”

In the year 1548 Bradford became a student at Cambridge, first at Catharine Hall, and afterwards at Pembroke Hall, where he became a Fellow. His letter describing his Fellowship is curious and interesting. “‘I am now a Fellow of Pembroke Hall, of the which I nor any other for me did ever make any suit; yea, there was a contention betwixt the Master of Catharine’s Hall (Sandys) and the Bishop of Rochester, who is Master of Pembroke Hall, whether should have me. . . . My Fellowship here is worth seven pounds a year; for I have allowed me eighteen-pence a week, and as good as thirty-three shillings four pence a year in money, besides my chamber, launder, barber, &c.; and I am bound to nothing but once or twice a year to keep a problem. Thus you see what a good Lord God is unto me.’

“His friend Sampson graphically depicts Bradford’s holy walk with God at this period: ‘His manner was, to make to himself a catalogue of all the grossest and most enorm sins, which in his life of ignorance he had committed; and to lay the same before his eyes when he went to private prayer, that by the sight and remembrance of them he might be stirred up to offer to God the sacrifice of a contrite heart, seek assurance of salvation in Christ by faith, thank God for his calling from the ways of wickedness, and pray for increase of grace to be conducted in holy life acceptable and pleasing to God. Such a continual exercise of conscience he had in private prayer, that he did not count himself to have prayed to his content, unless in it he had felt inwardly some smiting of heart for sin, and some healing of that wound by faith, feeling the saving health of Christ, with some change of mind into the detestation of sin, and love of obeying the good will of God. . . . Without such an inward exercise of prayer our Bradford did not pray to his full content, as appeared by this: he used in the morning to go to the common prayer in the college where he was, and after that he used to make some prayer with his pupils in his chamber: but not content with this, he then repaired to his own secret prayer and exercise in prayer by himself, as one that had not yet prayed to his own mind; for he was wont to say to his familiars, “I have prayed with my pupils, but I have not yet prayed with

myself.”

“Another of his exercises was this: he used to make unto himself an ephemeris or a journal, in which he used to write all such notable things as either he did see or hear each day that passed. But, whatsoever he did hear or see, he did so pen it that a man might see in that book the signs of his smitten heart. For, if he did see or hear any good in any man, by that sight he found and noted the want thereof in himself, and added a short prayer, craving mercy and grace to amend. If he did hear or see any plague or misery, he noted it as a thing procured by his own sins, and still added, *Domine miserere mei*, “Lord, have mercy upon me.” He used in the same book to note such evil thoughts as did rise in him; as of envying the good of other men, thoughts of unthankfulness, of not considering God in his works, of hardness and insensibleness of heart when he did see other moved and affected. And thus he made to himself and of himself a book of daily practices of repentance.”

At Cambridge, Bradford became intimate with Bucer, Sandys, and Ridley, and was tutor to Whitgift, afterwards Archbishop of Canterbury. He was ordained by Ridley in 1550, and strongly recommended to King Edward the Sixth, on account of his high talents and piety. Shortly afterwards, by Ridley’s advice, the King appointed him to be one of the six royal chaplains who were sent about England, with a kind of roving commission, to preach up the doctrines of the Reformation. Bradford’s commission was to preach in Lancashire and Cheshire, being connected with those counties; and he seems to have performed his duty with singular ability and success. He preached constantly in Manchester, Liverpool, Bolton, Bury, Wigan, Ashton, Stockport, Middleton, and Chester, with great benefit to the cause of Protestantism, and with great effect on men’s souls.

“At the close of 1552, when Bradford was at Manchester, he ‘treated of Noe’s flood,’ and often forewarned the people of ‘those plagues’ which would be ‘brought to pass.’ And on the twenty-sixth of December, St. Stephen’s Day, ‘the last time that he was with them,’ he preached a remarkable sermon from the twenty-third chapter of St. Matthew. The last six verses, the gospel for the day, was the text, no doubt, he selected on that occasion,—a passage eminently suggestive of that solemn and prophetic warning which he then delivered. Local tradition even yet points to the spot in Blackley, where the country people say that Bradford, during that last visit to Manchester, knelt down and made solemn supplication to Almighty God. His request at the throne of grace was, that the everlasting Gospel might be preached in Blackley, to the end of time, by ministers divinely taught to feed the flock with wisdom and knowledge. The martyr’s prayer, it is alleged, has been answered in the continuance, with scarcely an exception, of faithful men in that place.

“Sampson informs us, that ‘besides often preaching in London and at Paul’s Cross, and sundry places in the country, and especially in Lancashire,

Bradford preached before King Edward the Sixth, in the Lent, the last year of his reign, upon the second Psalm; and there in one sermon, showing the tokens of God's judgment at hand for the contempt of the Gospel, as that certain gentlemen upon the Sabbath Day going in a wherry to Paris Garden, to the bear-baiting, were drowned, and that a dog was met at Ludgate carrying a piece of a dead child in his mouth, he with a mighty and prophetic spirit said, "I summon you all, even every mother's child of you, to the judgment of God, for it is at hand:" as it followed shortly after in the death of King Edward.' This was, perhaps, the occasion which John Knox so well describes in his 'Godly Letter,' 1554: 'Master Bradford . . . spared not the proudest, but boldly declared that God's vengeance shortly should strike those that then were in authority, because they loathed and abhorred the true Word of the everlasting God; and amongst many other willed them to take ensample by the late Duke of Somerset, who became so cold in hearing God's Word, that, the year before his last apprehension, he would go to visit his masons, and would not dingy himself from his gallery to go to his hall for hearing of a sermon. "God punished him," said that godly preacher, "and that suddenly: and shall He spare you that be double more wicked? No, He shall not. Will ye, or will ye not, ye shall drink the cup of the Lord's wrath. *Judicium Domini, judicium Domini!* The judgment of the Lord, the judgment of the Lord!" lamentably cried he with a lamentable voice and weeping tears.'

"Bishop Ridley, writing from prison in the reign of Mary, speaking of Bradford, Latimer, Lever, and Knox, bears the strongest testimony to the boldness and faithfulness with which they addressed the courtiers of Edward: 'Their tongues were so sharp, they ripped in so deep in their galled backs, to have purged them, no doubt, of that filthy matter that was festered, in their hearts of insatiable covetousness, of filthy carnality and voluptuousness, of intolerable ambition and pride, of ungodly loathsomeness to hear poor men's causes and to hear God's Word, that these men of all other these magistrates then could never abide.'

"Sampson represents forcibly Bradford's habits in private life:—

"They which were familiar with him might see how he, being in their company, used to fall often into a sudden and deep meditation, in which he would sit with fixed countenance and spirit moved, yet speaking nothing a good space. And sometimes in this silent sitting plenty of tears should trickle down his cheeks; sometime he would sit in it and come out of it with a smiling countenance. Oftentimes have I sitten at dinner and supper with him, in the house of that godly harbourer of many preachers and servants of the Lord Jesus, I mean Master Elsyng, when, either by occasion of talk had, or some view of God's benefits present, or some inward cogitation and thought of his own, he hath fallen into these deep cogitations: and he would tell me in the end such discourses of them, that I did perceive that sometimes his

tears trickled out of his eyes, as well for joy as for sorrow. Neither was he only such a practiser of repentance in himself, but a continual provoker of others thereunto, not only in public preaching, but also in private conference and company. For in all companies where he did come he would freely reprove any sin, and misbehaviour which appeared in any person, especially swearers, filthy talkers, and Popish praters. Such never departed out of his company unreprieved. And this he did with such a Divine grace and Christian majesty, that ever he stopped the mouths of the gainsayers. For he spoke with power and yet so sweetly, that they might see their evil to be evil and hurtful unto them, and understand that it was good indeed to the which he laboured to draw them in God.”

The consequences of Bradford’s zeal for the principle of the Reformation, as soon as Edward the Sixth died, were precisely what might have been expected. Within a month of Queen Mary’s accession he was put into prison, like Cranmer, Ridley, Latimer, and Hooper, and never left it until he was burned. His youth, his singular holiness, and his great reputation as a preacher, made him an object of great interest during his imprisonment, and immense efforts were made to reason him out of his Protestantism, and pervert him to the Romish Church. All these efforts, however, were in vain. As he lived, so he died.

Sentence of condemnation was passed, January 31, 1555. It was at first intended to deliver him forthwith to the Earl of Derby, to be conveyed into Lancashire, and there to be burned in the town of Manchester, where he was born. The original purpose was subsequently abandoned. The Romish bishops, whether from secret fear of Bradford’s friends (for Bradford was in favour among his own people), or from some more secret confidence of overcoming his opinion, retained him at London for some months, assailing him during that time with frequent conferences and embassies. And it appears from some pages, first reprinted in the former volume of his works from his Examinations, that the Earl of Derby took great interest in his case, and (it was alleged) obtained from the Queen the concession, that he should ‘have his books, and time enough to peruse them.’ On the day of Bradford’s execution he was led out from Newgate to Smithfield about nine o’clock in the morning of July 1, 1555, amidst such a crowd of people as was never seen either before or after. A certain Mrs. Honywood, who lived to the age of ninety-six, and died about 1620, often told her friends that she remembered going to see him burned, and her shoes being trodden off by the crowd, so that she had to walk barefoot to Ludgate Hill.

The account of his martyrdom, as described by Fox, is so touching that I shall give it in the Martyrologist’s own words. In the afternoon of June 30th, “Suddenly the keeper’s wife came up, as one half amazed, and seeming much troubled, being almost windless, said, “O Master Bradford, I come to bring you heavy news.”—“What is that?” said he. “Marry,” quoth she,

“tomorrow you must be burned, and your chain is now a-buying, and soon you must go to Newgate.” With that Master Bradford put off his cap, and lifting up his eyes to heaven said, “I thank God for it; I have looked for the same a long time, and therefore it cometh not now to me suddenly, but as a thing waited for every day and hour; the Lord make me worthy thereof:” and so, thanking her for her gentleness, departed up into his chamber, and called his friend with him, who when he came thither, he went secretly himself alone a long time, and prayed. Which done, he came again to him that was in his chamber, and took him divers writings and papers, and showed him his mind in those things, what he would have done; and, after they had spent the afternoon till night in many and sundry such things, at last came to him half a dozen of his friends more, with whom all the evening he spent the time in prayer and other good exercises, so wonderfully that it was marvellous to hear and see his doings.

“A little before he went out of the Compter, he made a notable prayer of his farewell, with such plenty of tears, and abundant spirit of prayer, that it ravished the minds of the hearers. Also when he shifted himself with a clean shirt, that was made for his burning (by one Master Walter Marlar’s wife, who was a good nurse unto him, and his very good friend), he made such a prayer of the wedding garment, that some of those that were present were in such great admiration, that their eyes were as thoroughly occupied in looking on him, as their ears gave place to bear his prayer. At his departing out of the chamber, he made likewise a prayer, and gave money to every servant and officer of the house, with exhortation to them to fear and serve God, continually labouring to eschew all manner of evil. That done, he turned him to the wall, and prayed vehemently, that his words might not be spoken in vain, but that the Lord would work the same in them effectually, for his Christ’s sake. Then being beneath in the court all the prisoners cried out to him, and bid him farewell, as the rest of the house had done before with weeping tears.

“The time they carried him to Newgate was about eleven or twelve o’clock in the night, when it was thought none would be stirring abroad; and yet, contrary to their expectation in that behalf, was there in Cheapside, and other places between the Compter and Newgate, a great multitude of people that came to see him, which most gently bade him farewell, praying for him with most lamentable and pitiful tears; and he again as gently bade them farewell, praying most heartily for them and their welfare. Now whether it were a commandment from the Queen and her council, or from Bonner and his adherents, or whether it were merely devised of the Lord Mayor, Alderman, and Sheriffs of London, or no, I cannot tell; but a great noise there was overnight about the city by divers, that Bradford should be burnt the next day in Smithfield, by four of the clock in the morning, before it should be greatly known to any . . . But . . . the people prevented the device suspected:

for the next day,' Monday, July 1, 'at the said hour of four o'clock in the morning, there was in Smithfield such a multitude of men and women, that many being in admiration thereof thought it was not possible that they could have warning of his death, being so great a number in so short a time, unless it were by the singular providence of Almighty God.

“Well, this took not effect as the people thought; for that morning it was nine o'clock of the day before Master Bradford was brought into Smithfield; which, in going through Newgate thitherward, spied a friend of his whom he loved, standing on the one side [of] the way to the keeper's houseward, unto whom he reached his hand over the people, and plucked him to him, and delivered to him from his head his velvet night-cap, and also his handkerchief, with other things besides.. .. After a little secret talk with him, and each of them parting from other, immediately came to him a brother-in-law of his, called Roger Beswick, which, as soon as he had taken the said Bradford by the hand, one of the Sheriffs of London, called Woodrofe, came with his staff, and brake the said Roger's head, that the blood ran about his shoulders; which sight Bradford beholding with grief bade his brother farewell, willing [him] to commend him to his mother and the rest of his friends, and to get him to some surgeon betimes: and so they, departing, had little or no talk at all together. Then was he led forth to Smithfield with a great company of weaponed men, to conduct him thither, as the like was not seen at no man's burning: for in every corner of Smithfield there were some, besides those which stood about the stake. Bradford then, being come to the place, fell flat to the ground, secretly making his prayers to Almighty God.' And he 'lying prostrate on the one side of the stake,' and a young man, an apprentice, John Leaf, who suffered with him 'on the other side, they lay flat on their faces, praying to themselves the space of a minute of an hour. Then one of the Sheriffs said to Master Bradford, "Arise, and make an end; for the press of the people is great."

“At that word they both stood up upon their feet; and then Master Bradford took a faggot in his hand, and kissed it, and so likewise the stake. And, when he had so done, he desired of the Sheriffs that his servant might have his raiment; "for," said he, "I have nothing else to give him, and besides that he is a poor man." And the Sheriff said he should have it. And so forthwith Master Bradford did put off his raiment, and went to the stake; and, holding up his hands, and casting his countenance up to heaven, he said thus, "O England, England, repent thee of thy sins, repent thee of thy sins. Beware of idolatry, beware of false antichrists: take heed they do not deceive you." And, as he was speaking these words, the Sheriff bade tie his hands, if he would not be quiet. "O Master Sheriff," said Master Bradford, "I am quiet: God forgive you this, Master Sheriff." And one of the officers which made the fire, hearing Master Bradford so speaking to the Sheriff, said, "If you have no better learning than that, you are but a fool, and were best to hold

your peace.” To the which words Master Bradford gave no answer, but asked all the world forgiveness, and forgave all the world, and prayed the people to pray for him, and turned his head unto the young man that suffered with him, and said, “Be of good comfort, brother; for we shall have a merry supper with the Lord this night;” and so spake no more words that any man did hear, but embracing the reeds said thus: “Strait is the way, and narrow is the gate, that leadeth to eternal salvation, and few there be that find it.””

There seems to have been something peculiarly beautiful and attractive in Bradford’s character, exceeding that of any of the Reformers. “Fuller remarks: ‘It is a demonstration to me that he was of a sweet temper, because Parsons, who will hardly afford a good word to a Protestant, saith “that he seemed to be of a more soft and mild nature than many of his fellows.”’ Indeed he was a most holy and mortified man, who secretly in his closet would so weep for his sins, one would have thought he would never have smiled again; and then, appearing in public, he would be so harmlessly pleasant, one would think he had never wept before.’

“The familiar story, that, on seeing evil-doers taken to the place of execution, he was wont to exclaim, ‘But for the grace of God there goes John Bradford,’ is a universal tradition, which has overcome the lapse of time. And Venning, writing in 1653, desirous to show that, ‘by the sight of others’ sins, men may learn to bewail their own sinfulness and heart of corruption,’ instances the case of Bradford, who, ‘when he saw any drunk or heard any swear, &c., would railingly complain, “Lord, I have a drunken head; Lord, I have a swearing heart.”’

“His personal appearance and daily habits are graphically described by Fox. ‘He was, of person, a tall man, slender, spare of body, somewhat a faint sanguine colour, with an auburn beard. He slept not commonly above four hours a night; and in his bed, till sleep came, his book went not out of his hand. . . . His painful diligence, reading, and prayer, I might almost account it his whole life. He did not eat above one meal a day, which was but very little when he took it; and his continual study was upon his knees. In the midst of dinner he used oftentimes to muse with himself, having his hat over his eyes, from whence came commonly plenty of tears, dropping on his trencher. Very gentle he was to man and child. . . . His chief recreation was, in no gaming or other pastime, but only in honest company and comely talk, wherein he would spend a little leisure after dinner at the board, and so to prayer and his book again. He counted that hour not well-spent, wherein he did not some good, either with his pen, study, or exhortation to others.’”

Mr. Townsend concludes his excellent biography with the following passage, which is so true and good that I give it in its entirety. “He may be said to have lived a long life in a short space of time. From his ordination as deacon to the hour of martyrdom he was only permitted to exercise the ministerial office for five years, of which no fewer than two were passed in

prison. Until the great day, when the secrets of all hearts shall be revealed, it cannot be fully known to what extent England has been indebted to the labours and the prayers of this devoted man. ‘Certainly he was neither the least able nor the least learned’ of the fathers of the English Church. He happily combined judgment with ‘learning, elocution, sweetness of temper, and profound devotion toward God: . . . and of his worth the Papists themselves were so sensible, that they took more pains to bring him off from the profession of religion than any other.’ Had Edward longer occupied the English throne Bradford would have been raised to the episcopal bench. He obtained from the great Bishop of souls a higher promotion. By the holiness of his life and the testimony of his writings ‘he yet speaketh.’ By the flames of martyrdom ‘Bradford and Latimer, Cranmer and Ridley, four prime pillars of the Reformed Church of England,’ have, through the grace of God, lighted such a candle in this country as shall never be extinguished.”

Bradford’s literary remains occupy about 1100 pages, and fill two 8vo volumes of the Parker Society’s series. They consist chiefly of Sermons, short treatises, meditations, prayers, declarations, exhortations, and letters. All are good, and all deserve reading. If I must pick out any of his writings as specially good, I would name his controversial treatises, entitled, “A Confutation of a few Romish Doctrines,” and “The Hurt of Hearing Mass;” his sermons on repentance and the Lord’s Supper; his treatises against the fear of death; and his Farewells to London, Cambridge, Lancashire, Cheshire, etc. Above all, I commend his 100 letters to friends. He that can read any of the above-mentioned writings without feeling his soul stirred within him, must be in an unsatisfactory condition. To my mind, there is not only Scriptural soundness in all that Bradford writes, but a peculiar fire, unction, warmth, and directness, which entitle him to a very high rank among Christian authors. Had he lived longer and written more, one fancies it would have been an immense blessing to the Church.

My first extract shall be taken from Bradford’s “Treatise against the Fear of Death.” (Vol. 1., page 342, Parker Society’s edition.)

“Some man will say, O Sir, if I were certain that I should depart from this miserable life into that so great felicity, then could I be right glad, and rejoice as you will me, and bid death welcome. But I am a sinner; I have grievously transgressed and broken God’s will; and therefore I am afraid I shall be sent into eternal woe, perdition, and misery.

“Here, my brother, thou dost well that thou dost acknowledge thyself a sinner, and to have deserved eternal death; for, doubtless, ‘if we say we have no sin, we are liars, and the truth is not in us.’ A child of a night’s birth is not pure in God’s sight. In sin were we born, and ‘by birth (or nature) we are the children of wrath’ and firebrands of hell: therefore, confess ourselves to be sinners we needs must; for ‘if the Lord will observe any man’s iniquities, none shall be able to abide it:’ yea, we must needs all cry, ‘Enter not into

judgment, O Lord; for in Thy sight no flesh or man living can be saved.' In this point, therefore, thou hast done well to confess thyself a sinner.

"But now when thou standest in doubt of pardon of thy sins, and thereby art afraid of damnation, my dear brother, I would have thee answer me one question,—that is, 'Whether thou desirest pardon or no; whether thou dost repent or no; whether thou dost unfeignedly purpose, if thou shouldest live, to amend thy life or no?' If thou dost, even before God, so purpose, so desirest His mercy, then hearken, my good brother, what the Lord saith unto thee:—

"'I am He, that for mine own sake will do away thine offences.' 'If thy sins be as red as scarlet, they shall be made as white as snow;' for 'I have no pleasure in the death of a sinner.' 'As surely as I live, I will not thy death; but rather that thou shouldest live and be converted.' I 'have so loved the world,' that I would not spare my dearly beloved Son, the image of my substance and brightness of my glory, 'by whom all things are made,' by whom all things were given; but gave Him for thee, not only to be man, but also to take thy nature, and to purge it from mortality, sin, and all corruption, and to adorn and endue it with immortality and eternal glory, not only in His own person, but also in thee and for thee: whereof now by faith I would have thee certain, as in very deed thou shalt at length feel and fully enjoy for ever. This my Son I have given to the death, and that a most shameful death, 'even of the cross,' for thee 'to destroy death,' to satisfy my justice for thy sins; therefore 'believe,' and 'according to thy faith, so be it unto thee.'

"Hearken what my Son Himself saith to thee: 'Come unto Me all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you;' 'I came not into the world to damn the world, but to save it.' 'I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.' 'I pray not,' saith He, 'for these mine Apostles only, but also for all them that by their preaching shall believe in Me.' Now what prayed He for such? 'Father,' saith He, 'I will that where I am they may also be, that they may see and enjoy the glory I have, and always had with Thee. Father, save them and keep them in Thy truth.' 'Father,' saith He, 'I sanctify myself, and offer up myself for them.' Lo, thus thou hearest how my Son prayeth for thee.

"Mark now what my Apostle Paul saith: 'We know,' saith he, 'that our Saviour Christ's prayers were heard;' also, 'This is a true saying, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners.' Hearken what he saith to the jailer, 'Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved;' for He, by His own self, hath 'made purgation for our sins.' 'To Him,' saith Peter, 'bear all the prophets witness, that whosoever believeth in His name shall receive remission of their sins.' 'Believe,' man. Pray, 'Lord, help mine unbelief;' 'Lord, increase my faith.' 'Ask, and thou shalt have.' Hearken what St. John saith: 'If we confess our sins, God is righteous to forgive us all our iniquities; and the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ shall cleanse us from all our sins;' for,

‘if we sin, we have an Advocate,’ saith he, ‘with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, and He is the propitiation for our sins.’ Harken what Christ is called: ‘Call His name Jesus,’ saith the angel; ‘for He shall save His people from their sins:’ so that ‘where abundance of sin is, there is abundance of grace.’

“Say, therefore, ‘Who shall lay anything to my charge? It is God that absolveth me, Who then shall condemn me? It is Christ which is dead for my sins, yea, which is risen for my righteousness, and sitteth on the right hand of the Father, and prayeth for me.’ Be certain, therefore, and sure of pardon of thy sins; be certain and sure of everlasting life. Do not say in thy heart, ‘Who shall descend into the deep?’ that is, doubt not of pardon of thy sins, for that is to fetch up Christ. Neither say thou, ‘Who shall ascend up into heaven?’ that is, doubt not of eternal bliss, for that is to put Christ out of heaven. But mark what the Lord saith unto thee, ‘The Word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth and in thy heart; and this is the word of faith which we preach: If thou confess with thy mouth that Jesus Christ is the Lord, and believe with thy heart that God raised Him up from the dead, thou shalt be safe.’ If thou ‘believe that Jesus Christ died and rose again,’ even so shalt thou be assured, saith the Lord God, that ‘dying with Christ, I will bring thee again with Him.’

“Thus, dear brother, I thought good to write to thee, in the name of the Lord, that thou, fearing death for nothing else but because of thy sins, mightest be assured of pardon of them; and so embrace death as a dear friend, and insult against his terror, sting, and power; saying, ‘Death, where is thy sting? Hell, where is thy victory?’ Nothing in all the world so displeaseth the Lord as to doubt His mercy. In the mouth of two or three witnesses we should be content; therefore, in that thou hast heard so many witnesses, how that indeed desiring mercy with the Lord, thou art not sent empty away, give credit thereto, and say with the good Virgin Mary, ‘Behold Thy servant, O Lord; be it unto me according to Thy word.’”

My second extract shall be taken from Bradford’s “Farewell to Lancashire and Cheshire.” (Vol. 1., p. 449.)

“When I consider the cause of my condemnation, I cannot but lament that I do no more rejoice than I do, for it is God’s verity and truth. The condemnation is not a condemnation of Bradford simply, but rather a condemnation of Christ and His truth. Bradford is nothing else but an instrument, in whom Christ and His doctrine are condemned; and, therefore, my dearly beloved, rejoice, rejoice, and give thanks, with me, and for me, that ever God did vouchsafe so great a benefit to our country, as to choose the most unworthy (I mean myself) to be one in whom it would please Him to suffer any kind of affliction, much more this violent kind of death, which I perceive is prepared for me with you for His sake. All glory and praise be given unto God our Father for this His exceeding great mercy towards me,

through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

“But perchance you will say unto me, ‘What is the cause for the which you are condemned? We hear say that ye deny all presence of Christ in His holy Supper, and so make it a bare sign and common bread, and nothing else.’ My dearly beloved, what is said of me, and will be, I cannot tell. It is told me that Master Pendleton is gone down to preach to you, not as he once recanted (for you all know how he hath preached contrary to that he was wont to preach afore I came amongst you), but to recant that which he hath recanted. How he will speak of me, and report before I come, when I come, and when I am burned, I much pass not; for he that is so uncertain, and will speak so often against himself, I cannot think he will speak well of me, except it make for his purpose and profit: but of this enough.

“Indeed, the chief thing I am condemned for as an heretic is, because I deny the sacrament of the altar, which is not Christ’s Supper, but a plain perverting of it (being used, as the Papists now use it, to be a real, natural, and corporal presence of Christ’s body and blood, under the forms and accidents of bread and wine): that is, because I deny transubstantiation, which is the darling of the devil, and daughter and heir to Antichrist’s religion, whereby the Mass is maintained, Christ’s Supper perverted, the ministry taken away, repentance repelled, and all true godliness abandoned.

“In the Supper of our Lord, or sacrament of Christ’s body and blood, I confess and believe that there is a true and very presence of whole Christ, God and Man, to the faith of the receiver (but not of the stander by or looker on), as there is a very true presence of bread and wine to the senses of him that is partaker thereof. This faith, this doctrine, which consenteth with the Word of God, and with the true testimony of Christ’s Church, which the Popish Church doth persecute, will I not forsake; and therefore am I condemned as a heretic, and shall be burned.

“But, my dearly beloved, this truth (which I have taught and you have received, I believed and do believe, and therein give my life), I hope in God, shall never be burned, bound, nor overcome, but shall triumph, have victory, and be at liberty, maugre [notwithstanding] the head of all God’s adversaries. For there is no counsel against the Lord, nor no device of man can be able to defeat the verity in any other than in such as be ‘children of unbelief,’ which have no ‘love to the truth,’ and, therefore, are given up to believe lies. From which plague the Lord of mercies deliver you and all this realm, my dear hearts in the Lord, I humbly beseech His mercy. Amen.”

My third and last extract shall be taken from a letter written by Bradford to Francis Russell, Earl of Bedford, in the year 1551. (Bradford’s Works, Vol. 2., p. 79.)

“You have cause, my good lord, to be thankful. For look upon your vocation, I pray you, and tell me how many noblemen, earls’ sons, lords, knights, and men of estimation hath God in this realm of England dealt thus

withal. I daresay you think not you have deserved this. Only God's mercy in Christ hath wrought this on you, as He did in Jeremy's time on Ebedmelech, in Ahab's time on Obadiah, in Christ's time on Joseph of Arimathea, in the Apostles' time on Sergius Paulus and the Queen Candace's chamberlain. Only now be thankful, and continue, continue, continue, my good lord, continue to confess Christ. Be not ashamed of Him before men, for then will not He be ashamed of you. Now will He try you: stick fast unto Him, and He will stick fast by you; He will be with you in trouble and deliver you. But then you must cry unto Him, for so it proceedeth: 'He cried unto Me, and I heard: I was with him in trouble.'

"Remember Lot's wife, which looked back; remember Francis Spira; remember that 'none is crowned, except he strive lawfully.' Remember that all you have is at Christ's commandment. Remember He lost more for you than you can lose for Him. Remember you lose not that which is lost for His sake, for you shall find much more here and elsewhere. Remember you shall die; and when and where and how you cannot tell. Remember the death of sinners is most terrible. Remember the death of God's saints is precious in His sight. Remember the multitude goeth the wide way which windeth to woe. Remember the strait gate which leadeth to glory hath but few travellers. Remember Christ biddeth you strive to enter in thereat. Remember he that trusteth in the Lord shall receive strength to stand against all the assaults of his enemies.

"Be certain all the hairs of your head are numbered. Be certain your good Father hath appointed bounds, on the which the devil dares not look. Commit yourself to Him; He is, hath been, and will be your keeper; cast your care on Him, and He will care for you. Let Christ be your scope and mark to prick at; let Him be your pattern to work by; let Him be your example to follow: give Him as your heart so your hand, as your mind so your tongue, as your faith so your feet; and let His Word be your candle to go before you in all matters of religion.

"Blessed is he that walketh not to these Popish prayers, nor standeth at them, nor sitteth at them. Glorify God both in soul and body. He that gathereth not with Christ scattereth abroad. Use prayer; look for God's help, which is at hand to them that ask and hope thereafter assuredly. In which prayer I heartily desire your lordship to remember us, who as we are going with you right gladly, God be praised, so we look to go before you, hoping that you will follow us if God so will."

Comment upon these extracts, I think my readers will agree, is needless. They speak for themselves. Scores of similar passages might easily be selected, if space permitted. But enough is as good as a feast. Enough, perhaps, has been quoted to prove that Bradford's literary remains are well worth reading.

Let us thank God that the foundations of the Reformed Church of

England were laid by such men as John Bradford. Let us clearly understand what kind of men our martyred Reformers were, what kind of doctrines they held, and what kind of lives they lived. Let us pray that the work they did for the Church of England may never be despised or underrated. Above all, let us pray that there never may be wanting among us a continual succession of English clergy, who shall keep the martyrs' candle burning brightly, and shall hand down true Reformation principles to our children's children.