

BISHOPS AND CLERGY OF OTHER DAYS.

OR,

THE LIVES OF TWO REFORMERS AND
THREE PURITANS.

BY THE

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PREFACE.

THE volume now in the reader's hands requires a few prefatory words of explanation. It contains the lives of five eminent English ministers: Hooper, Latimer, Ward, Baxter, and Gurnall. Of these the two first were Bishops, leaders in the noble army of our Protestant Reformers, and martyrs at the stake in the reign of Queen Mary. The three last were famous Puritan divines, who lived and died in the seventeenth century.

Of course I have chosen these five men as subjects of biographies, deliberately, purposely, and with special reasons. What those reasons are I will proceed to explain.

(1) I hold, then, that the lives, deaths, and opinions of the leading English Reformers demand special investigation in the present day. The Church of England as it now is, was in great measure the work of their hands. To them, with a few trifling exceptions, we owe our present Articles, Liturgy, and Homilies. That great Ecclesiastical machinery, whose centre is at Lambeth Palace, and whose influence is more or less felt throughout the world wherever the British flag waves, was purified, remoulded, and recast in its present form by their instrumentality. Can any one doubt that it is of the utmost importance to ascertain what they thought and did, and in defence of what opinions they lived and died?—Surely common sense points out that if we want to know who is a true “Churchman,” we should find out what manner of men the first Churchmen were. The natural way to ascertain what views of religion are “Church views,” is to inquire what kind of views were held by our Church Reformers in the sixteenth century. In matters of doctrine, are we of one mind with Cranmer, Ridley, Hooper, and Latimer? If not, we may be sure that our “Churchmanship” is of a very equivocal kind. It cannot be the true Churchmanship of the Reformed Church of England.

Holding these opinions, I have endeavoured to produce a correct sketch of two of the leading champions of the English Reformation. The two I have chosen, undoubtedly, were in some respects not equal to Cranmer or Ridley. In popular talent, however, and general influence with their countrymen, they were probably second to none. I venture the conjecture that the middle classes and lower orders of Englishmen in the sixteenth century were more familiar with the names of Hooper and Latimer than of any of the Reformers. None, I suspect, left so deep a mark on the minds of their generation, none were so often talked of round English firesides, as the two whose lives are found in this volume. None, I am firmly persuaded, so thoroughly deserve to be had in honour. They were men of whom the Church of England may well be proud. She may reckon among her sons some perhaps who were their equals; but none, I am sure, who are their su-

periors. For abounding usefulness in life and noble courage in death, the two Bishops I have tried to photograph in this volume were never surpassed.

Certain modern Churchmen, I am well aware, have tried hard to depreciate the value of the English Reformation, and to vilify the character of the English Reformers. One writer in particular, who occupies no mean position among the champions of the Ritualistic or Catholic School, has not scrupled to put in print the following sentences:—

“Robespierre, Danton, Marat, St. Just, Couthon, and the like, merit quite as much admiration and respect as Cranmer, Ridley, Latimer, Hooper, and the others who happened to have the ill luck to be worsted in a struggle wherein they meant to serve their adversaries as they were served themselves.”—

“It has been brought as a serious charge against men of my school, that we should have been safe under Queen Mary. But we should have been burnt for refusing a new and immoral creed, if that young tiger-cub Edward VI. had lived, and Cranmer had not been arrested in his wicked career by Divine vengeance. Of the depth of infamy into which this wretched man descended as the unscrupulous tool of the tyrant Henry and his minion, Thomas Cromwell, I have no leisure to speak now.”—

“If history were honestly written, Latimer would change places with Bonner, and appear in true colours as the coarse, profane, unscrupulous, persecuting bully which the other prelate is usually called, and with the special brand of cowardice besides, of which no man can accuse Bonner.”—

“Latimer was a coward.”—

“Latimer was perjured and unscrupulous.”—

“Latimer’s coarseness and profanity are not left to conjecture, nor to the bias of partisans. He has given ample proof of them under his own hand in his still extant sermons.”—

(See “Innovations: “a Lecture by Dr. Littledale, priest of the Church of England. Delivered at Liverpool, April 23, 1868. Pages 15, 16, 17, 44, 45.)

Violent language like this injures nobody but the man who uses it. It utterly defeats its own object. It proves far too much, if it proves anything at all. How any set of men so bad as Dr. Littledale paints the Reformers, could have obtained the influence they undoubtedly obtained, and swayed public opinion as they undoubtedly swayed it, is “a little difficulty” which this gentleman has not thought fit to explain. If our ancestors allowed the Reformation to be carried on by men of such wretched characters as Dr. Littledale attributes to the English Reformers, the Englishmen of that day must have been idiots and fools. It is clear as daylight to my mind, even if there were no historical evidence on the subject, that the generation which

really knew Cranmer, Ridley, Latimer, and Hooper, thought far more highly of them than Dr. Littledale does. If they had been the bad, worthless men that he represents them, they would never have left such a deep mark on the religious character of England as they certainly did.

But after all, what proof does Dr. Littledale give that his low estimate of the English Reformers is correct? I answer unhesitatingly, None that will satisfy any impartial judge of evidence. The testimony of Fox, the Martyrologist, stands in the way, and how does he get over it? He simply abuses him, or in plain English calls him a liar. He says that he is a “a mendacious partisan.” He styles the “Acts and Monuments of Fox” “a magazine of lying bigotry: a book which no educated man now living, possessed of any self-respect or honesty, does otherwise than repudiate with contempt and aversion.” (See lecture on “Innovations,” already quoted.)

Attacks such as these are very ancient things. From the day that the good old “Book of Martyrs” first appeared, it has been assailed and abused more violently by the advocates of Popery than any uninspired book that ever was printed. Dr. Littledale is only walking in the steps of Harpsfield, Parsons, Laud, Heylin, the Roman Catholic, Dr. Milner, and others. The objections of these writers will be found fully examined in the preface to Canon Townshend’s edition of Fox. That preface is a document which is far too little known. It deserves an attentive perusal.

My own opinion of Fox’s great work differs widely from that of Dr. Littledale. That he never erred I do not pretend to say. He was no more infallible than the Pope. But that he is generally accurate in his statement of facts, and generally trustworthy in his estimate of character, I am thoroughly persuaded. In this opinion the following extracts from the prospectus of a new issue of Canon Townshend’s edition of Fox’s “Acts and Monuments” will prove that I do not stand alone:—

“The three Archbishops of Canterbury of Fox’s own day bore the strongest testimony to his integrity. Archbishop Parker, in the Canons of 1571, ordered all bishops and other dignitaries to have in their hall or public dining room, the Bible and Fox’s great work. Archbishop Grindall was Fox’s main assistant in the compilation; and Archbishop Whitgift speaks of Fox as ‘that worthy man who hath deserved so well of the Church of England.’

“Leaving his own times, we come to Fuller, the Church historian, who says of Fox: ‘His industry hath starved the endeavours of such as shall succeed him, leaving nothing for their pains to feed upon. ‘For what can the man do that cometh after the king.’—Strype styles him ‘A most painstaking searcher into records and archives; and one who, as he hath been found most diligent, so most strictly true and faithful.’—And Bishop Burnet adds, ‘Having compared Fox’s book with the records, I have never been able to

discover any errors or prevarications in them, but the utmost fidelity and exactness.'

"Coming down to our own times, we find every competent judge agreeing, both as to the great value of Fox's collection, and as to its entire faithfulness. Foremost among these is Mr. Prebendary Soames, himself an historian of no mean rank, who says: 'The first portion of this important work, which is principally an historical exposure of the Papacy, was originally printed in Latin on the Continent, whither the author had fled from the Marian prosecution. Having arrived at home soon after Elizabeth's accession, Fox was encouraged by various members of the hierarchy to crown his former labours, by adding to them copious accounts of those who had perished as religious delinquents under the late Queen. Every facility was afforded to him for the completion of this task in the most satisfactory manner; and he shows himself fully worthy of the confidence reposed in him. Invariable accuracy is not to be expected in any historical work of such extent; but it may be truly said of England's venerable Martyrologist, that his relations are more than ordinarily worthy of reliance. His principal object being, indeed, to leave behind him a mass of authentic information relating to those miserable times which it had been his lot to witness, he printed a vast mass of original letters, records of judicial processes, and other documentary evidence. The result of this judicious policy was a work which has highly gratified the friends of Protestantism, and successfully defied its enemies. Numerous attacks have been levelled at the honest chronicles of Rome's intolerance, but they have ever 'fallen harmless from the assailant's hand.'

"The late Dr. Wordsworth (Master of Trinity College, Cambridge) says: 'I am not ignorant of what has been said by Milner, and by his predecessors, Harpsfield, Parsons, and others. But neither his writings nor theirs have proved, and it never will be proved, that John Fox is not one of the most faithful and authentic of all historians. We know too much of the strength of Fox's book, and of the weakness of those of his adversaries, to be further moved by Dr. John Milner's censures than to charge them with falsehood. All the many researches and discoveries of later times, in regard to historical documents, have only contributed to place the general fidelity and truth of Fox's narrative on a rock which cannot be shaken.'

"Dr. Jenkyns (the Editor of *Archbishop Cranmer's Remains*) says: 'I had occasion to compare several of the papers printed by Fox with the original documents, and I had good reason to be satisfied with the Martyrologist's fidelity and accuracy.'

"Mr. Froude, who has carefully gone over the whole Tudor period, adds: 'I trust Fox when he produces documentary evidence, because I have invariably found his documents accurate?'

“Dr. Southey wrote: ‘I have always intended to write the life of John Fox for the *Quarterly Review*, wherein I might render due honour to a man for whom I have a great veneration.’

“Archbishop Howley wrote: ‘I am glad you intend to re-publish the great work of the Martyrology, and willingly consent to its being dedicated to myself.’”

After all, the “animus” of most modern attacks on the English Reformers is too transparently clear to be mistaken. The writers who make them dislike Protestantism most cordially, and want the Church of England to be Romanized once more. The writings and opinions of the Reformers stand sadly in their way! How can they possibly get over this barrier? They try to damage their character, and so to impair the value of their testimony. I predict they will not succeed. I believe that, like the viper biting the file, they are only labouring in vain and hurting themselves. I am not afraid of the result of any amount of examination that can be applied to such men as Hooper and Latimer. Let men turn on them all the light they please, so long as it is fairly and honestly turned on. They will stand any properly conducted investigation. They will come out unscathed from the ordeal of any just inquiry. In a word, their names will live and be honoured when their assailants are clean forgotten.

(2) With regard to the Puritans, of whom I have brought forward three specimens in this volume, I believe that they deserve as much attention in the present day as the Reformers. I want to promote acquaintance with them in the minds of all students of English Church history. Never, I believe, were men so little understood and so absurdly maligned as the Puritans. On no subject perhaps are English Churchmen so much in the dark, and require such thorough enlightening. If the biographies of Ward, Baxter, and Gurnall only help to make my readers understand what “a Puritan” really was, I shall feel I have done the cause of truth some service.

The common impression of most English Churchmen about the Puritans is, that they were ignorant fanatical dissenters, who troubled England in the seventeenth century,—that they hated the Monarchical form of government and cut off Charles the First’s head,—that they hated the Church of England and caused its destruction,—and that they were unlearned enthusiasts who despised knowledge and study, and regarded all forms of worship as Popery. There are living Ecclesiastical orators of high rank and brilliant reputation, who are never weary of flinging the epithet “Puritani- cal” at Evangelical Churchmen, as the hardest word of scorn that they can employ. Let no Churchman’s heart fail when he hears himself stigmatized as “a Puritan.” The man who tells the world that there is any disgrace in being “a Puritan” is only exposing his own ignorance of plain facts, or shamefully presuming on that wide-spread ignorance of English Church

history which marks the nineteenth century. The Puritans were not faultless, I freely admit. They said, did, and wrote many things which cannot be commended. Some of them, no doubt, were violent, fierce, narrow-minded sectarians. Yet even then great allowance ought to be made for the trying circumstances in which they were placed, and the incessant irritating persecution to which they were exposed. With all their faults the leaders of the party were great and good men. With all their defects, the Puritans, as a body, were not the men that High Church writers and orators in the present day are fond of representing them to have been.

The Puritans were not enemies to the Monarchy. It is simply false to say that they were. The great majority of them protested strongly against the execution of Charles I., and were active agents in bringing back Charles II. to England, and placing the crown on his head after Oliver Cromwell's death. The base ingratitude with which they were afterwards treated in 1662, by the very Monarch whom they helped to restore, is one of the most shameful pages in the history of the Stuarts.

The Puritans were not enemies to the Church of England. They would gladly have seen her government and ceremonial improved, and more liberty allowed to her ministers in the conduct of public worship. And they were quite right! But the bulk of them were originally ordained by Bishops, and had no special objection either to Episcopacy or a Liturgy. Baxter, one of their leaders, expressly testifies, that a very few concessions in 1662 would have retained in the Church of England *sixteen hundred* out of the two thousand who were driven out by the Act of Uniformity on Bartholomew's Day.

The Puritans were not unlearned and ignorant men. The great majority of them were Oxford and Cambridge graduates, many of them Fellows of Colleges, some of them Heads and Principals of the best Houses in the two Universities. In knowledge of Hebrew, Greek, and Latin, in power as preachers, expositors, writers, and critics, the Puritans in their day were second to none. Their works still speak for them on the shelves of every well-furnished theological library. Those who hold them up to scorn in the present day as shallow illiterate men, are only exhibiting their own lamentable shallowness, their own ignorance of historical facts, and the extremely superficial character of their own reading.

The Puritans, as a body, have done more to elevate the national character than any class of Englishmen that ever lived. Mighty at the council board, and no less mighty in the battle field,—feared abroad throughout Europe, and invincible at home while united,—great with their pens, and great with their swords,—they were a generation of men who have never received from their countrymen the honour that they deserve. The body of which Milton, Selden, Blake, Cromwell, Owen, Manton, Baxter, and Char-

nock were members, is a body of which no well-informed Englishman should ever speak with disrespect. Lord Macaulay, no mean authority in matters of history, might well say, in his essay on Milton, "We do not hesitate to pronounce the Puritans a brave, a wise, an honest, and a useful body." Unhappily, when they passed away, they were followed by a generation of profligates, triflers, and sceptics, and their reputations have suffered accordingly, in passing through prejudiced hands. But judged with "righteous judgment," they will be found men "of whom the world was not worthy." The more they are really known, the more they will be esteemed.

Does any reader wonder that such men as the Puritans should be so bitterly hated in the present day? Does any one ask how it is that certain Ecclesiastical pulpit orators and platform-speakers never lose an opportunity of having a fling at them, and mentioning them with scorn? I will answer these questions without hesitation. *They are hated because they were thoroughly Protestant and thoroughly Evangelical!* Against Popery in every shape and form they were always protesting. Against sacramental justification, formalism, ceremonialism, baptismal regeneration, mystical views of the Lord's Supper, they were always lifting up a warning voice. No wonder that Ritualists, Tractarians, Romanizers, and their companions, loathe the very name of the Puritans, and labour in every way to damage their authority. You might as well expect Gardiner to praise the works of Cranmer, Harding to recommend the study of Jewell, and Cardinal Bellarmine to urge the perusal of Whittaker, as expect Ritualists and High Churchmen to speak well of the Puritans! So long as English Churchmen dislike Protestant and Evangelical opinions, so long they are sure to dislike the Puritans.

For myself I can only say, that the very reason why many in this day dislike the Puritans, is the very reason why I love them and delight to do honour to their names. I love their bold and outspoken *Protestantism*. I love their clear, sharply cut, distinct *Evangelicalism*. I want to see their writings more widely read, and their conduct more duly appreciated by English Churchmen. If a perusal of the three biographies I have compiled helps to make them better known and better understood, I shall feel that this volume has not been issued in vain.

I now send forth the volume with an earnest prayer that God may be pleased to use it for His own glory, and for the good of souls.

J. C. RYLE.

*Stradbroke Vicarage,
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