

THE COLONIAL CHURCHMAN.

"BUILT UPON THE FOUNDATION OF THE APOSTLES AND PROPHETS, JESUS CHRIST HIMSELF BEING THE CHIEF CORNER STONE. Eph. 2 c. 20 v.

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RETROSPECTIVE REVIEW.

The Life and Times of WILLIAM LAUD, D. D. and Archbishop of Canterbury. By John P. Lawson, M. A. published in 1829.

Continued.

But to return:—Laud had his faults doubtless; but he was on the whole a great and a good man. It has been well remarked in Grant's Summary of the History of the English Church, vol. II. 232—"A man's private journal is a window to his soul. Laud kept a diary, and according to the most entertaining of all writers, that man cannot be a bad regulator of his affairs, who casts up his receipts and expenses every night; and a soul either is, or seeks to be, good, which enters into a scrutiny of her actions." The gross injustice done to Laud appears in nothing more notorious, than, first, in the utter impossibility, on the part of his enemies, in the space of two years and a half, to find out evidence to prove their accusation of his endeavouring to introduce popery and arbitrary government; and secondly, in the eagerness with which they seized upon his papers prepared for his defence, his diary, book of private devotion, &c. &c.: thirdly, in the committing the execution of this order to his most inveterate enemy, William Payne; and, fourthly, in abetting the malice of this most wild and fanatical zealot, who actually employed such of the Archbishop's private papers as might seem to be rendered prejudicial to him,—suppressed those that might be advantageous to him,—published many for the sake of exciting and keeping alive public prejudice against him,—embezzled some and garbled the whole, so as to give the colour of his own malice to that which was not only innocent but praiseworthy. While the persecuted primate's courage and confidence in the hour of death,—a courage which was modest, and a confidence which was christian, free from every tincture of presumption and enthusiasm,—must be considered in the judgment of every impartial person, as marking a conscience perfectly at ease,—at peace with God and man: and will compel every feeling mind to concur in the hope which he expressed on the scaffold—"that his cause in heaven will look of another dye than the colour that is put upon it here." He who, in sober seriousness, appeals with christian confidence, from the judgment of fallible men to the tribunal of Almighty God, and who in the habitual prospect of that tribunal, holds constant communion with heaven, may still have faults; but they will never be in any moral respect, grievous faults: and if he shall indeed pay the debt of nature by a violent death, it will be much more true, and therefore much more philosophical to conclude that he was conducted to the scaffold by his virtues than by his vices; and that his condition is much more enviable, when thus enduring the last stroke of popular injustice, than that of his persecutors at the time, or than that of their apologists in after times. Laud's diary, which was happily recovered, and published, 1695, by Henry Wharton, under the title of "*The History of the troubles and trial of the most Rev. &c. William Laud, &c.*" furnishes irrefragable proof that he meant in all things to do right to the best of his capacity; and that he subjected himself in all circumstances to such consideration as was much more likely to lead him right than wrong upon the whole. Besides, his *Daily office of a Christian* published in 1688, including his speech on the scaffold, exhibits at once the language and the practice, and the prospects of the christian life, as

they formed the constant current of his thoughts, and the uniform guide of his conduct; and yet this venerable christian prelate is libelled with extreme violence by a late biographer of Milton, himself a clergyman* of the same church, and a graduate of the same university, over each of which the proscribed primate most worthily presided, and to each of which he was a bountiful benefactor. And yet he is the common object of reproach and calumny among that large list of hereditary grumblers, who give free currency and permanent credit to the malicious insinuations and the envious falsehoods, which were forged by the faction and credited by the fanaticism of that unhappy age, which involved the monarchy, the legislature, the church, and universities of England, in one common ruin.

"William Laud," Mr Lawson informs us, "was born on the 7th day of October, 1573, in the parish of St. Lawrence, Reading, a town of considerable importance in Berkshire, pleasantly situated on the river Kennet, and famous for its magnificent Abbey, now in ruins, founded by Henry I. in 1126, and dedicated to St. James the Apostle. He was the only son of William Laud, by profession a clothier, and Lucy Webb, sister to Sir William Webb, of the same county, of an ancient and respectable family, who filled the office of Lord Mayor of London, 1591."

It would be inconsistent with the short sketch of this eminent prelate's life which our limits compel us to give, to follow the able author before us in every particular which he relates concerning the position of parties and the line of policy which the Archbishop pursued. We must rest content with noticing the date and the nature of his several gradations from the time he entered the Grammar School, until he assumed the Archi-episcopal mitre; accompanying the detail with such passing remarks as the subject seems to demand, and concluding with a short review of the manner in which he performed the arduous duties, occasionally attached to that exalted station.

He was educated at the free Grammar School of Reading, his native place; and was admitted a commoner of St. John's College Oxford in July 1589. He was elevated to a scholarship in 1590, and to a fellowship in 1593; though he did not take his degree till 1594. He proceeded master of arts in July 1598, and was grammar reader that year. He was admitted into deacon's orders in 1600, and into priest's orders in 1601, by Dr. Young, Bishop of Rochester. He does not appear, on his promotion to the priesthood, to have had any spiritual charge. He remained within the walls of his college, devoting his active and energetic mind to pursuits of literature and theology, and preparing himself by every means in his power for the prominent part which he afterwards took in the measures of the nation.

At this period, the University of Oxford seems to have been distracted by polemical discussions and controversies, which were conducted in any spirit but that of the Gospel. The reformation had taken place some time previously, and many errors and abuses, introduced and countenanced by the Church of Rome, had been entirely abolished, both in the universities and Church of England. The divines of the day seem to have put forth great zeal and much energy of purpose in eradicating from the minds of the people, every degree of veneration or respect for the prescription of the Roman Missal and the dogmatism of the Roman priesthood. Their success was what might have been anticipated from the operation of so mighty a

*The Rev. Dr. Charles Symmons.

cause. The spiritual ascendancy of the see of Rome was thus hopelessly crushed, and an impetus given to the public mind, which was in danger of proceeding in its heedless career to the opposite extreme. In many parts of the land the cry became general, that every vestige of the Romish Church,—every precept and practice which flowed from that source, whether in conformity with scripture or not, should be swept away; and, what they called a purer fabric, erected on its ruins. These sentiments were entertained by the popular party, or those who mustered most numbers, and exerted most influence over the opinions of the multitude; and were grounded chiefly on those dogmas about predestination which were introduced into the theology of the day by the celebrated Calvin.—The chief patrons of these doctrines at the university were *Lawrence Humphrey*, senior professor of Divinity, and *John Reynolds*, president of Corpus Christi.

The party which opposed that just described were very powerful at Court; because the sentiments which they entertained of Church government, and on subjects connected with general politics, and the immediate government of the nation, were generally favourable to the extension and full exertion of the royal authority. They engaged heartily in the protestant cause; but from motives of prudence and consideration, did not join in the general cry against all church government and discipline, because those of Rome happened to be corrupt. Their general aim appears to have arisen from a desire to retain all that was useful and solid of the old superstructure; to take away its tinsel ornaments and its gaudy appearance—to renovate, purify, invigorate, the whole edifice; and to render it an efficient and strong member of the state. It was their object to stem, if possible, the torrent of popular clamour, regardless alike of its threats or its power, and to fix the goodly edifice of the English Church upon the sure foundation of the Law, the Prophets, and Apostles. Hence arose the origin of that bitter enmity and party spirit, which not only caused the overthrow of the establishment, but involved the nation in civil strife, whose consequences were felt for many a day, not only by individuals immediately interested, but by every subject within the realm.

Between these two contending factions, Laud took a middle course. Whilst principle deterred him from taking part with the violent amongst those who were calumniated as Papists, a commendable sense of prudence prevented him from espousing the cause of those, who pleaded for Calvinistic doctrines, and a new form of church government. His studies in divinity were firmly founded on the Holy scriptures, according to the glosses of the ancient fathers; for which he had the countenance and direction of a canon made in convocation in 1571, by which it was declared, that, in interpreting the Scriptures, no other doctrines were to be raised from them than what had been collected thence, from the ancient fathers, and other godly Bishops of primitive times. Here then we shall leave Laud at present, quietly pursuing his studies at the university; and will take the earliest convenient opportunity of resuming the subject of this article.

CRITO.

CHRIST has reconciled God to us, and he would now reconcile us to God.

God will give us nothing for our own sake, but he will deny us nothing for Christ's sake.