

John Foxe and his Book of Martyrs

John Foxe 1516 - 1587

Our subject this afternoon is John Foxe the author of the Acts and Monuments, better known as Foxe's Book of Martyrs.

He was born in 1516, the same year in which Luther affixed his famous 95 Theses to the door of the Cathedral in Wittenberg. The year of his death, 1587, was the year of the execution of Mary Queen of Scots.

John Foxe was one of the great figures of the English Reformation. A quiet and scholarly man, though exceedingly well known and respected, entering into correspondence with John Calvin in Geneva and an associate of John Knox of Scotland, amongst many others. He enjoyed the friendship of Francis Drake, Sir Thomas Gresham, Lord Burleigh, Queen Elizabeth's trusted advisor, and Queen Elizabeth I herself who always called him, Father Foxe.

He played no small part in the matters of State at that time, and though as noted naturally retiring, literary, and academic by nature, he was at the same time a popular and likable individual.

Prof. Trevelyan the noted historian puts Foxe's Martyrology alongside Hakulyt's Voyages as being the most influential books of the age of Shakespeare. That is of course the Bible apart.

Queen Elizabeth I gave order that Foxe's Martyrs be set up and chained next to the Great Bible of 1540, in every parish church, halls of hospitals, colleges, schools and other public institutions. In some parish churches it remains to this day. The incumbent of Holy Trinity, Old Hill, is presented with a copy of Foxe's Martyrs on the day of his induction.

In 1613 it was one of the source books used by William Shakespeare for his "Life of King Henry VIII".

John Foxe was born in Boston, Lincolnshire. The biography written by his son, Simeon states that Foxe's father and mother...

"Were of the commonality of the town, well reported and of good estate."

According to the old traditions of the town of Boston, Foxe was born in

a house at the end of the marketplace, within a stone's throw of the parish church, with its famous "Boston stump" tower. Later this house was turned into *The Bell Inn*. This was subsequently demolished in the 19th century, and replaced by another rather unsightly building, still a public house, which now stands on the same site, and is known as *The Rum Puncheon*. A tablet on its wall records it as the birthplace John Foxe the Martyrologist.

The tablet states that Foxe's family: *was both ancient and renowned, though latterly obscured, and that it's number formerly included Bishops Richard and Edward Foxe amongst its scions;*

In an earlier note by Foxe's son Simeon, he had written that whilst his father was of the plebeian class, his mother was of higher rank.

We also know that while John Foxe was still very young, his father died, and his mother married again. The family went to live in the house of her new husband, Foxe tells us that his stepfather's name was Richard Melton, this is recorded in a tract dedicated to him by Foxe about 1548.

The second edition of this tract (1579) gives the following further detail. It says "*For a dear father of mine, one Richard Melton..., to recompense him with some fruit of my studies for the charge which he, more like a natural than stepfather, bestowed upon me in sending me to school.*"

We also know that Foxe was a studious child from his earliest years. Whilst others went out to play he could not be found amongst them, but either spent his time in the church at his prayers or with his head deep in a book. His character and his intelligence won him wide approval and admiration and in due course, when he had scarce past boyhood, he was sent to Oxford.

This was not done without outside help. It is certain that John Hawarden, originally from Lancashire, who was also sometimes referred to as John Harding, a fellow and afterwards principle of Brazenose College, Oxford paved the way for him to enter university.

In later life Foxe wrote to John Hawarden, whom he calls his patron, these words of appreciation:

I shall never forget how much I owe to the Lord through you, and to you in the Lord, for your old services to me. Nor do I think it fitting that when as a boy I

was first drawn to these university studies by divine providence, through you and by your influence with my father in law (this is often thought to be Foxe's way of describing his stepfather), I should, now that I am grown up, be slower in thanking than I seemed in accepting the benefit.

John Hawarden before becoming principal of Brasenose College, was the incumbent of Coningsby a large village near Boston, Lincolnshire. Incidentally John Hawarden was something of a pluralist, because the record show that he remained Rector of Coningsby all the time he was principal of Brasenose, and not only so but that he also held the living of Steeple Aston, and the living of Tackley both in Oxfordshire, at the same time.

Foxe later married Agnes Randal of Coventry. Because Foxe often use the term father-in-law to describe his stepfather, there is still some historical confusion as to whether his stepfather Richard Melton, or his father-in-law Mr. Randall of Coventry paid for his early university education.

However, John Foxe went to the University of Oxford, first it seems to Brasenose College at 16 years of age and then on to Magdalen College. Here he became a friendly with Alexander Nowell who afterwards became Dean of St. Paul's, and a strong adherent of the Reformed faith.

In 1539 Foxe was elected a Fellow of Magdalene College, a distinction which sufficiently proved the high reputation for scholarship which he had already gained.

The nine or ten years between Fox's matriculation and his election to the Fellowship were among the most eventful years in the history of the Reformation. In 1534 the Parliament of England renounced the Papal Supremacy. In the years following the first complete English Bible was published by Myles Coverdale, followed two years later by a further revision of Coverdale's work, "The Great Bible," the use of which was made available to all English churches, ie. the famous Chained Bible, referred to earlier.

This was a complex period in English Church history, whilst Henry VIII was severing the ties with Rome, he was also seeking to follow the course of an independent English church still embracing Roman Catholic doctrine. In 1539 the *Act of the Six Articles* was passed which

made the denial of Transubstantiation an offense punishable by death at the stake. At this time to affirm the papal supremacy was treason, whilst to deny papal doctrines was heresy. Such contradictions could not but help to stir to reflection the minds of many serious and thoughtful individuals. One of these undoubtedly was John Foxe. It led him to look into the history of the Church both ancient and modern and to understand what it believed and practiced at the beginning. Such was the seriousness and diligence with which he undertook this task that by the time he was 30 years of age he had read through all the writings of the Greek and Latin Fathers, together with all the writings of the Medieval Schoolmen and on top of this he had mastered the Hebrew language.

These studies engrossed the days and nights of the future writer of the Martyrology. In the grounds of Magdalene College, he would spend many evenings pacing to and fro, kneeling in prayer and pouring out his soul to God. His fellow students marvelled at his desire to find out the truth.

It was also noted that at this time he failed to attend the services of the Church. He was soon called to account by the authorities of the college and directed to attend the services. He confessed that in many things he was not of one mind with the church's teaching; the authorities could have disciplined him for this breach of what was required, and for his challenge to the teachings of the Roman Church. Perhaps because he had already achieved such distinction as a scholar or because of his excellent character or because they had some sympathy with his views he was not called to account, but voluntarily resigned from his Fellowship in 1545.

Leaving Oxford, he became tutor to the children of Sir Thomas Lucy, at Charlecote, Warwickshire.

S.G. Green writes;

His eldest pupil would no doubt be the Thomas Lucy whom Shakespeare (who was born 19 years after Foxe became tutor at Charlecote) has depicted for the laughter of all time as Mr. Justice Shallow. The fact is that this country Knight was a sturdy, inflexible Puritan, with little mercy on the poet's youthful escapades; and Shakespeare revenged himself by the caricature.

Something of the stern Protestantism of the Warwickshire Squire may

have been traceable to the influence of his old tutor Foxe. Foxe only remained at Charlecote for about one year. However, it was here that he met his future wife Agnes Randall who was visiting from Coventry. For a short time after this he lived in Coventry with his wife's family.

As an indication of the fact that he was now a marked man, we can note that he wrote to his stepfather in Boston proposing to visit and spend some time in the town. The answer was a grudging permission, warning Foxe that he had committed a capital offense, i.e. in his criticism of Roman Catholic doctrine, and should be aware of the hazards he was exposing himself and his family to in returning to a small town such as Boston, where everyone knew each other's movements and opinions. He did return to Boston for a short time but soon moved to London where he considered himself to be safer, it more easy to become anonymous in a bustling city.

His financial situation at this time was exceedingly difficult, as because of his opinions it was difficult to get work. One day he was sitting despondent in St. Paul's Cathedral. His resources were so exhausted that he couldn't even buy food. Suddenly an unknown person took a seat by his side and told him to be of good cheer, at the same time thrusting a purse of gold into his hand and then disappearing. Who this benefactor was Foxe never learned. But, three days later he was sent for by the Duchess of Richmond, and requested to take up the post of tutor to three children to whom as their aunt, she was guardian.

The father of these children, the Earl of Surrey, was in prison in the Tower of London, with his father the old Duke of Norfolk, and was soon after beheaded on a charge of high treason, the Duke being detained in captivity for some years longer. The young Howard's, that is the children to whom Foxe was tutor, were Thomas Howard, afterwards Duke of Norfolk, Henry Howard who became the Earl of Northampton, and Jane Howard who afterwards became the Countess of Westmoreland.

When Henry VIII died in January 1547 and was succeeded by his son the young Edward VI, life became much easier for Protestants, and Foxe was now safe. He moved with his young wife to the Surrey village of Reigate and continued instructing his young pupils. Lady Jane Howard, became the friend of the renowned Lady Jane Grey. Of both these young women it was said that they were "*not unworthy of*

comparison with the most learned men of that time for the praise of elegance in learning."

Whilst at Reigate Foxe was ordained deacon by Bishop Nicholas Ridley. Foxe began to preach against the idolatrous symbols of Rome. He was busy in writing, including a treatise on Church discipline, and also a paper called, *An Address to Parliament*, warning of the dangers of a return to the doctrines of the Church of Rome.

Part of the irony of this situation in which Foxe now found himself is that he was the tutor to the grand-children of the Duke of Norfolk who was a devout Roman Catholic. On the accession of Queen Mary, the imprisoned Duke was released from the tower, and promptly dismissed Foxe as the tutor of his grandchildren. However Foxe remained close to the Howard children, and one of them, Thomas Howard in the later years of Foxe's life granting him a pension.

Foxe was now being closely watched, and found it necessary to flee to the Continent. He crossed the country to Ipswich, where he immediately set sail for Antwerp, unfortunately the ship encountered bad weather in the North Sea (the German Ocean as it was called in those days) and had to put back into the shelter of the River Orwell. Unknown to Foxe, Bishop Gardiner had sent his commissioners to apprehend and arrest Foxe and take him to Winchester for trial. They arrived in Ipswich but a few hours after the ship had re-embarked. After the stormy passage the vessel reached Nieuport in Holland where Foxe and his wife were now safe.

He eventually met up with Edmund Grindal (later to become Archbishop of Canterbury in Elizabeth's reign.) in Strasburg. It was here that the first draft of the famous Book of Martyrs was written. It was about 400 pages long and bore the title;

Commentaries on the affairs of the Church and an account of the chief persecutions in all Europe from the days of Wycliffe to the present time. First Book, by John Foxe, Englishman.

Soon after the publication of this book we find Foxe at Frankfurt, where a small company of refugees from Great Britain gathered, including John Knox, William Whittingham, brother-in-law to Calvin, and afterwards Dean of Durham: with William Kethe, to whom English-speaking

Christians are under lasting obligation for his version of the Hundredth Psalm.

All people left on earth do dwell

Here they formed a little Protestant English congregation, and worship harmoniously together, until troubles arose when Dr. Cox arrived from England and insisted on the exclusive use of the Prayer Book of Edward VI.

A division and separation arose, and some say this incident characterized the subsequent difference between Anglicans and Puritan's in the succeeding century.

After this John Knox moved to Geneva, John Foxe and others found employment in Basel, Switzerland. Foxe worked for the famous printer Oporinus, as a corrector of the press and general editor of his publications. Though the pay was scanty it allowed him time to continue his work on the Martyrology.

Accounts of the fierce persecutions taking place back at home in England under Queen Mary were passed on via Grindal still at Strasburg, to Foxe in Basel, and carefully recorded.

Foxe was extremely well-informed on the state of affairs back at home. So much so that one Sunday morning whilst preaching to the English exiles he suddenly encouraged them to be of good cheer, adding, "*for now was the time come for their return to England,*" he was reproved by the more sober amongst them for his outrageous, unfounded and dangerous comments. However, it was later found that Queen Mary had died the day before the sermon was preached and that Queen Elizabeth had now been designated as a successor. Foxe's intelligence gathering network was second to none.

Foxe was not quick to return to England as he now had two children, a boy and a girl to support, he needed to continue in his livelihood, as also he was keen to see the next phase of his book through the press.

He did however write to the Queen, and again proving how well known and respected he was, was so bold as to offer her some advice, on how she should proceed as Queen. As it had come from her old friend "Father Foxe, " she received it in a good spirit.

On his return to England he was looked after by his old pupil Thomas Howard, now the Duke of Norfolk. He received various benefices in the Church of England. He was invited to speak at St. Paul's Cross but was somewhat apprehensive.

He said to Grindal;

Who could have instigated you, thus to think of crucifying me at Paul's Cross? There never was an ass or mule so weighed down by burdens as I have been by literary labours. I am almost worn out by that toils, and by my ill health. Yet I am summoned to the celebrated pulpit, where, like an ape among Cardinals, I shall be received with derision or driven away by the hisses of the auditory!

To which Grindal Replied

Forget self and preach Christ and Him crucified.

At this time in order to complete his great work Foxe left the mansion of the now Duke of Norfolk, (Thomas Howard) and took up lodgings in Grub Street, near Cripplegate, at that time the favourite residence of authors, in order to finish his great work. He laboured unremittingly and brought out his first English edition in 1563. Further editions followed in 1570, in 1576 and 1583. The first two editions of the Acts and Monuments were produced in Latin on the Continent whilst he was in exile during Queen Mary's reign ie. the Strasbourg Edition 1554 and the Basel Edition of 1559. Many further editions of The Book were produced by others, some with extra information and others severely cut down in size during the subsequent centuries to the present day. The 1550 Edition was dedicated to his former pupil Henry Howard, Duke of Norfolk.

We might try to picture him week by week walking to the printing offices of John Day (a man of like-minded with Foxe) in Aldersgate Street. Many would know him and greet him on his journey, a well-

known figure with a faraway look, an emaciated form, sunken cheeks and neglected garb. Carrying his precious manuscripts under his arm.

The Book of Martyrs was very well received by the public, many of the accounts in it had been witnessed by people that were still living. Others had ties of family or friendship to those who were described in its pages.

Queen Elizabeth gave command after the second edition to place a copy in all the parish churches and public institutions.

Part II.

We turn now to consider what was John Foxe's purpose and aim in producing the Martyrology.

Firstly, we may need to note that the 16th century was a period when educated people were acutely aware of the past. This was partly because of the Renaissance or the revival of learning. The motto *Ad Fontes*, back to the sources had a vital impact on all areas of study.

A second a very important reason for this interest in the past, was the need to refute the charge that the Reformation, was a new thing, an innovation, and novelty. What Foxe and other set out to do was to prove that the Reformation in England was a return to the purer Church of the past. The Church that had existed in these islands before Papal dominance and the accretions and distortions of medieval Catholicism had engulfed it like the ivy on an ancient building.

This same spirit prevailed in some of the Protestant countries on the Continent. Foxe's work was to some extent paralleled by similar works produced on the Continent such as, *The Magdeburg Centuries* or *Jean Crispin's Martyrology*.

Foxe himself sets out his purpose in the various prefaces to the various editions of his work.

1. His first preface is addressed to our Saviour in the form of a thanksgiving that the work is done, and an acknowledgment that it is only through his strength that it has been achieved and completed.

2. The Second Preface is dedicated to:

To the right virtuous, most excellent, and noble Princess Elizabeth, our peaceful Salome. He apologizes to the Queen that he has written in English, but explains that he has not had her and learned people in mind, but the unlearned. For they have lived in ignorance, especially of God's Word, but also of Church history, with the result that they have in the past been imposed upon by the Papists with their biased and fraudulent histories. The knowledge of the Gospel is necessary to any nation and this is why he has written his Church history, which is, after all, not something separate from the Gospel.

3. The Third Preface is addressed to, *The Persecutors of God's truth.*

Reminding them that on the Last Day they will be charged with the blood of so many martyrs.

4. The Fourth Preface is addressed to, *The True and Faithful Congregation.* Here he explains his purpose in writing the Acts and Monuments in this way.

First, to see the simple flock of Christ, especially the unlearned sort, so miserably abused and all for ignorance of history, not knowing the course of times and true descent of the Church, it pitied me that part of diligent so long to have been unsupplied in this my country, Church of England.

What makes it worse is that the multitude of Chronicles and story writers have been monks, who have handled the stories partially. This partial dealing and corrupt handling of histories, when I considered, I thought with myself nothing more lacking in the Church than a full and complete story.... That all studious readers, beholding as in a glass the state, course, and alterations of religion, decay of doctrine, and the controversies of the Church, might disown the better between antiquity and novelty.

It is certain that Foxe saw all history as under the control of divine Providence. He looked on the Reformation as the ending of a period comparable to the 70 years of the Babylonian captivity.

5. Similar statements are made in the Fifth Preface.

6. In the Sixth Preface he relates another important purpose of his work.

He says the martyrs deserve to be remembered. What is more, there is great usefulness in reading about them for they not only serve as examples and encouragements, but their history shows God at work: by reading their story we may learn a lively testimony of God's mighty working in the life of man, contrary to the opinion of atheists, and all the whole nest of Epicureans.

He didn't believe that those who sacrificed so much in the cause of God and truth should be easily forgotten. The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church. This book was intended to serve as an inspiration, and example to his own and future generations.

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We may continue to consider the purpose of the Book of Martyrs.

J.F.Mozley in his, *John Foxe and his Book*, rightly draws attention to Foxe's humanitarianism. Foxe strongly protests against men and women being put to death for their beliefs, and especially the practice of burning alive, this is seen in his endeavours to save Joan Boucher, the Anabaptist, in 1550, and the Flemish Anabaptists in 1575. When he wrote to the Queen on their behalf, he told that even to pass a butcher's slaughterhouse, he found upsetting. We shall not be fanciful if we see the Acts and Monuments as a manifesto directed against brutal forms of punishment directed against those who may hold beliefs contrary to ours.

There is even evidence that Foxe even sought to save the life of the Roman Catholic, Edmund Campion and his fellow conspirators in 1581.

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T.H.L. Parker in his *English Reformers* gives us four points he believes that Foxe was trying to emphasize in the production of this great work.

First point

Concerned the matter of the Reformation being described by its opponents as an innovation, this is a point we have already touched on, but we look at in further detail here.

It was a belief, of the Reformers that they had on their side not only the Bible but also, on the major dogmas at issue, the Church fathers. It was not they who were the innovators; it was the Roman Catholics. Unfortunately, they had a difficult battle to fight here, for all the evidence seemed to the contrary. And in England they had the stubborn conservatism of their countrymen to contend against (and that meant the majority of Englishmen). Innovation covered anything that had not been done "in my time, or my father's time, or my grandfather's time" – in other words since about 1490. For the learned Reformers, however, "modern" meant the Lateran Council of 1215.

It was precisely this problem that Foxe had in mind. The "ignorant folk" had been accustomed to late medieval Christianity. No one could point to a great upheaval when this brand of religion had come about, because it had very slowly evolved. For them this was Christianity and they could imagine no other sort. The history books themselves had sprung from this religion and naturally, treated it as the true faith.

Foxe knew that the first need was for Bibles; but he believed that the second need was for history books that would put a different slant on things. To the Queen he speaks of the "ignorant flock of Christ committed to your government in this realm of England; who, as they have been long lead in ignorance, and wrapped in blindness, for lack especially of God's Word, and partly also for wanting the

light of history, I thought pity but that such should be helped, and their ignorance relieved, and simplicity instructed. What was needed was a full and complete story.

The Second of Parker's points is:

That the purpose of Foxes Acts and Monuments is to trace out the pedigree of the Church of England or the English Church.

The Reformation Church was no new-fangled invention; nor was it simply the resurrection of the Church of former centuries, but in fact God had never left himself without a Church in England, though very often this Church was hard to discern. There was a Church before 1517. Foxe is concerned to show the continuity of the Reformed Church with the past, and to this end provides a pedigree for the Church of England.

This pedigree traces back by way of "*faithful witnesses*" in the 15th century, Wickliffe, Thorp, White, Lord Cobham, even including Geoffrey Chaucer in the list.

He then traces these "*faithful witnesses*" back through the centuries to the Venerable Bede, and right back to the saints of Roman Britain.

He says in those times the doctrine of faith without men's traditions was sincerely preached as it had been received from the Apostles and Christ. He even makes use of the early stories of Joseph of Arimathea bringing the Gospel to Glastonbury, and those stories which suggest that the Apostle Paul and other of the Apostles, perhaps Peter visited these Islands. Foxe proclaims that the Church of England stands in the line of apostolic succession and was joined, not by manual ordination, but by the transmission of the apostolic doctrine.

The third purpose of Foxe's Martyrs as set out by Parker is to show the mighty works of God in history.

The Reformers were faced with a practical atheism of some of the Renaissance teachers. The teaching that God is not concerned with the affairs of man. To this the Reformation teachers opposed the Biblical doctrine of the Providence of God. That is the teaching that God continues to work in the world to the same purpose and in the same spirit as he created the world, preserving, upholding, guiding, overruling in the lives of men and of nations.

Foxe traces the hand of divine Providence in bringing the Reformation and preserving his Church through the centuries.

Fourthly Foxe's purpose is to communicate an apocalyptic understanding of time.

Foxe interprets history in the light of Biblical apocalyptic. The Acts and Monuments divides Church history into five periods: the age of persecution, lasting for about 300 years, and followed by "the flourishing time of the Church" for another 300 years. Then came the "declining and backsliding of the Church" over yet another 300 years. Fourthly, followed the time of Antichrist, (which he calculated to have been about the year 1000) or the loosing of Satan and the desolation of the Church, which occupied 400 years - and this brings us to the 14th century and the time of Wickliffe. Finally, there has come the time of the Reformation and purging, while Antichrist is being unmasked and has steadily lost ground to the true Church. So far this age has lasted around 280 years, and how long it shall continue more, the Lord and Governor of all times, he alone knoweth.

What we mean by all this is that Foxe understood history in terms of the final coming in all its glory, of the kingdom of God. Professor Haller's thesis that Foxe's martyrs was simply trying to convey the idea that England was the chosen nation of God above all the others, does not bear close scrutiny. It is true that Foxe emphasized God's favour over many years to these Islands and he could not fail to wonder at the glories and blessings God poured upon this nation during the reign of the Virgin Queen Elizabeth and all the blessings which flow out of the Reformation.

But his eye was chiefly set on the Second Coming of Christ. He believed that the time of the Reformation, the time in which he and his countrymen were living was decisive in the bringing about of this glorious Second Coming and therefore his purpose was to urge his readers to a sense of the significance and urgency of their lives in this world, to live by the help of God's grace to the glory of the coming kingdom.

The enemies of Foxe's Book of Martyrs

It was natural that such a book should awakened fierce opposition. Roman Catholics called it "Master Foxe's Golden Legend," and denounced it as a mass of inventions and inaccuracies.

Others have spoken of Foxe as a one-sided, and inaccurate historian. Modern writers have come to the conclusion that Foxe was an historian of high integrity.

In the wake of the Oxford Movement of the early 19th century several learned articles were published criticizing the accuracy of Foxe's accounts. The first of these was from the pen of S. R. Maitland, the Librarian of Lambeth Palace, who attacked the integrity, truthfulness and reliability of Foxe. It had great initial success and at the same time exposed the fact that many who claimed to admire Foxe's work had little read it and had little appreciation of its true meaning.

An anti-Fox tradition once launched had a long run, and other critics included J. S. Brewer and James Gardiner all highly respected Victorian historians joined in the criticism.

The High Anglican historian R. W. Dixon however was the first to challenge these attacks on Foxe and subsequently the tide began to turn once again in support of Foxe's accuracy and integrity.

The mid-20th century, brought the invaluable study by Mr. J.F. Mosley, which still remains the standard textbook on Foxe, and throws considerable light on the greatness of this most excellent individual.

Two other classic testimonies to the integrity of Foxe might appropriately be stated at this point. The first from the great 17th century historian Bishop Francis Burnet.

In some private passages which were brought to him upon flying reports, Foxe made a few mistakes, being too credulous; but in the account he gives from records or papers he is a most exact and faithful writer; so that I could never find him in any prevarication or so much as a designed concealment. He tells the good and the bad, the weakness and the passion, as well as the constancy and patience, of those good men who sealed their faith with their blood.

The second from the famous Bishop of Lincoln, Dr. Christopher Wordsworth.

I am not ignorant of what has been said by critics of Foxe, but neither his writings nor theirs have proved, and it never will be proved, that John Foxe is not one of the most faithful and authentic of all historians. All the many researches and discoveries of latter times in regard to historical documents have only contributed to place the general fidelity and truth of Foxe's narrative, on a rock which cannot be shaken.

Taken from *Champions of the Truth*, ed. A. R. Buckland p.150

Some further insights into the character of Foxe as we draw to a close.

In 1572, Foxe's long-standing benefactor and former pupil, Thomas Howard, now the Duke of Norfolk was brought to trial for being part of a conspiracy to put Mary Queen of Scots on the throne of England. He was tried for high treason and condemned to be hanged. Foxe did not desert him but went so far as to accompany him to the scaffold together with Dean Nowell (his old friend Alexander Nowell). The two sought to comfort the Duke and later bore testimony to the fact that he had died

penitent and in the Protestant faith. The Duke of Norfolk left Foxe a small pension in his will, which in fact put Foxe beyond the reach of want for the rest of his life.

Another fact that we may note is that though Foxe was ordained an Anglican minister in 1560, soon after he returned from Switzerland, he nevertheless later refused all Church offices because of his increasing Puritan views. He did, however continue to preach and publish sermons.

Although as we noted earlier he had the nature of a recluse, and the vast amount of study and literary work he undertook required him more so to be alone with his books. Nevertheless, the company and wise council of Foxe were continually sought after.

It was said of him:

There repaired unto him both citizens and strangers, noblemen and common people of all degrees, and almost all for the same cause, to seek some salve for a wounded conscience.

Champions of Truth p.155

Many of his letters of spiritual counsel have been preserved – some of them dealing with very personal matters. Among his correspondence preserved in the British Museum is a letter sent to him "*from one on the temptation to blaspheme, requesting counsel.*" Several letters to persons with concern about their spiritual state, whom with loving council he exhorts to seek their rest in Christ. One of them is to a young lady whom he advises to marry a certain youth. Whether she took his advice we do not know.

He had kind sense of humour and occasionally a caustic tongue. On one occasion he met a woman that he knew, who, pulled a book from under her arm, waved it at him and said, "see I'm going to hear a sermon". He replied: "if you will be ruled by me, go home, you will do little good

in Church today." And when she asked, "at what time did he counsel her to go to Church?" He replied: "when you tell nobody before-hand."

Foxe's good heartedness is illustrated by the fact that when in 1563 plague broke out in London he was amongst the few ministers who remained in the city to support and care for the beleaguered population. Not only so but he wrote to those ministers who had fled appealing to them to at least send money to help the bereaved and penny-less. them.....

Foxe's death

Foxe died, worn out by incessant labour of the age of 70. In the year of his death the great Armada was threatening England. To the last, though he never claimed to be a prophet, he was constantly reassuring his friends that the attempt would result in failure.

He was buried in the chancel of St. Giles Church Cripplegate April 18th, 1587. It is said that the whole City turned out to lament him.

His monument in St. Giles Church bears an inscription in Latin written by his son Samuel. It reads in English: To John Foxe, most faithful Martyrologist of the English Church, most sagacious explorer of historical antiquity, most valiant defender of evangelical truth: and admirable thaumaturge, who was brought again as living from their ashes, like the Phoenixes, the Marion martyrs: Samuel Foxe his first born has, with dutiful affection and tears, erected this monument. He died, April 18 th A.D. 15 87, at the age of 70. "*Life's duration is mortal, it's hope immortal.*"

J. F. Mosley in his book quoted above, *John Foxe and his Book* concludes with these words:

In reading Foxe's Book, then, we learn, or should learn, to respect and admire him. We respect him for his zeal and earnestness for his enormous pains-taking. We thank him for the historic knowledge which he has preserved from destruction. We are touched by his devotion to the Martyrs, by his

championship of the poor and downtrodden, by his hatred of cruelty. If he was a partisan he was no more so than Sir Thomas More, whom the present day finds no difficulty in taking to its bosom. And then there's this to be said, Foxe's fierce words spring not from attachment to a set of theological dogmas or ecclesiastical systems, but from deep and spontaneous human sympathy; he sees men suffer, and his soul rebels.

The great humanity and sympathy of Foxe is an important aspect of his attractive character and must not be overlooked.

However, we must not forget his great love for the doctrines of the Reformation, and beyond that of course his love for Christ.

Neither must we forget the inspirational and soul strengthening value of the reading of this volume with understanding. Sir Francis Drake read it aloud to his little company at sea as they nosed their anxious way into unknown waters on that desperate adventure of sailing around the world. John Wesley chose it as the first of the Christian Classics, to be woven into his famous *Christian Library*, to be foremost in the preparation and edification of his Preachers, because it set before their eyes the noble army of martyrs, and the need to continue the blessed warfare of the Church militant here on earth, in the anticipation of the glorious of the City of God beyond this scene.

Let me close with the words of John Foxe himself, taken from the end of his book, *To the True and Faithful Congregation*, the work that really formed the introduction to his Martyrology.

He concluded by saying:

The God of peace, who hath power both of land and sea, reach forth his merciful hand to help them up that sink, to keep up them that stand..... that we, professing one Christ, may, in one unity of doctrine, gather ourselves into one Ark of the true Church together; where we, continuing steadfast in faith may at the last, prosperously be conducted, to the joyful port of our desired landing

place, by his heavenly grace. To whom, both in heaven and earth, be all power and glory, with his Father and the Holy Ghost, forever. Amen.

From English Reformers T.H.L Parker p.86

Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us,

Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Hebrews 12:1, 2.

The noble Army, men and boys,
The matron and the maid,
Around the Saviour's throne rejoice,
In robes of lights arrayed;
They climbed the steep ascent of heaven,
Through peril, toil, and pain:
O God to us may grace be given
To follow in that train.

Reginald Heber, 1783 – 1826

(from the hymn 'The Son of God goes forth to war'. M.H.B. 816)