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outlines of right and wrong with which the human conscience has been furnished by its Maker. We shall never "believe because it is impossible." Where things seem impossible, we shall understand that there is some mistake either in our interpretation of Scripture or Creed, or of our own thought, and, humbly on our knees, as believers that God has revealed Himself, we shall seek the truth.



Dr. Gairdner on Lollardy.

By G. G. COULTON, M.A.

DR. GAIRDNER, after a long and distinguished career as public archivist, has earned the respect even of those who least agree with him by a series of learned and suggestive pleas at the bar of history. In a review of the first two volumes of his "Lollardy and the Reformation" (CHURCHMAN, April, 1909), we spoke plainly of what seemed to us the author's bias, and have therefore the greater pleasure in acknowledging a feature which lends special interest to the third volume. The author not only begins with a very full introduction in defence of his general point of view (to which we shall presently recur), but has published a long list of errata and cancel pages for his first two volumes, thus creating a precedent of a kind only too rare in the annals of English history. Even Macaulay paid far too little attention to very important rectifications of detail which his "History" called forth; and Froude, though he set an admirable example by depositing much of his MS. material in the British Museum, was undoubtedly loath to confess publicly certain errors which he could not have undertaken to justify in the face of later evidence. More than one Roman Catholic, while daily casting his little stone at Froude, is even less willing to withdraw misstatements than he. We do not happen to know of any English historian who has published so frank and prompt a series of *retractationes* as Dr. Gairdner, and we

cannot help thinking that his courage is here thrice blessed. He has earned the personal respect of every honest reader ; his third volume must now command even more serious attention than its two predecessors ; and (most important of all) he has set an example which should bear as precious and as lasting fruits in English history as Anglo-American arbitration seems destined to bear in world-politics. Nor do we here applaud Dr. Gairdner merely as an indirect way of exalting our own party opinions against his. He holds his ground firmly on all essential points, as those who least agree with him will admit that he had a right to hold it in the present state of historical controversy. But from under these, his main opinions, he has fearlessly cut away more than one prop which criticism had shown to be unsafe ; and most readers will, like ourselves, feel at once rebuked and cheered by this proof of moral courage. Here and there (to express a personal opinion) we might have wished that the changes had been greater. We cannot help feeling, for instance, that on p. 370 of vol. i. Dr. Gairdner still leaves his readers under an impression most unfair to Wycliffe and to Tyndale ; for the translation "*Search ye* the Scriptures" (as opposed to "*Ye search*") has not only the authority of Augustine, but that of the Roman Catholic (Douay) version and of Cornelius à Lapide, the standard Roman Catholic commentator of the seventeenth century ; it seems, therefore, quite gratuitous to charge its adoption by our Authorized Version to the account of Lollardy. But we gladly refrain from looking Dr. Gairdner's gift-horse too closely in the mouth, and congratulate him whole-heartedly upon the example he has set to future historians.

His personal *apologia*, also, is most interesting. "For myself," he writes (p. xi), "I was brought up outside of all the orthodoxies, and for half my life what I now feel to be the vital doctrines of Christianity, acknowledged all the world over, were certainly quite unintelligible to me, and accordingly incredible." From this state of mind, Dr. Gairdner has gradually moved into, and settled in, the High Anglican

position. He has every right, therefore, to emphasize the important fact that his present views are the fruit neither of conservatism nor of deference to current fashion, but of mature thought. Moreover, attentive readers will probably concede his plea that many passages of his writings which have commonly been taken to betray a leaning towards Romanism do, in fact, show no more than his anxiety to do even justice. He believes that the Romanist view, resting as it does upon a long tradition, lends itself more than the Protestant view to misconception by readers who have never studied the medieval mind—that is, to what must necessarily be the large majority of English readers. He therefore constantly says in effect: “Before you condemn this word or that action, try to put yourself into the speaker’s or doer’s point of view. I myself hold, with the ordinary Englishman, that the Reformation was in the long-run rather a success than a failure. But, in order to judge this fairly, we must ask ourselves how far the men of the sixteenth century could be expected to foresee, even dimly, that which we see clearly enough when we look back. More may have judged rightly *for his time*, and Tyndale wrongly, even on those points where the reading and thinking world agrees now with Tyndale.” All this is very true, up to a certain point; yet, at best, it is only a half-truth, and Dr. Gairdner seems to exalt it into a whole truth. It is roughly true of persons, but not of institutions. In judging between More and Tyndale, personally considered, we can scarcely help deciding that the Romanist was, on the whole, a greater and better man than the Protestant. We might here and there go further than this, and grant that More sometimes showed wise conservatism in rejecting innovations where Tyndale was rash in accepting them, even though time has abundantly justified such innovations—in other words, that Tyndale beat More on these points merely by a lucky fluke. But the argument fails us when we come to compare two conflicting ideals of ecclesiastical policy, over a period of more than five centuries. So wide a generalization permits the accidents on either side to neutralize each

other; the ideal which has come definitely to the front after five centuries is the ideal which was originally and essentially superior—or, at least, the burden of proof weighs very heavily against anybody who would maintain the contrary. And we think that Dr. Gairdner is unintentionally unjust to the Reformers' ideal. We willingly grant what he says on p. xlii, that the doctrine of Justification by Faith, in the narrow sense given to it under stress of controversy by most of the first Reformers, probably finds as few hearty believers nowadays as the scholastic doctrine of Transubstantiation. But the new doctrines had an elasticity denied to the old traditions; and, when we penetrate down to the core of this theory of Justification, we shall find in it that strong conviction of the soul's *direct* responsibility to its Maker which has been the inward strength and the outward weakness of Protestantism. It has given free play to the sectarian spirit; but it has given equally free play to the undying spirit of all true religion. Dr. Gairdner very justly repudiates the sectarian spirit; we gladly admit that his is essentially a Catholic mind, in the sense of the Apostles' Creed; yet we feel that, in all this matter, his judgment has been warped by circumstances.

This comes out most clearly in his definition of *heresy* and his use of that word. The late Canon Bigg, among others, complained of his employing it habitually as it was used in the Middle Ages and the sixteenth century. To this Dr. Gairdner now replies (Introd., p. xiii) that he and Canon Dixon "agree in the use of the word 'heretic' in its strictly historical sense; that is to say, we call those persons heretics who were called heretics by their contemporaries." And he takes Canon Bigg to task for speaking of the word as a "nickname," seeing that it was first used by St. Paul. Yet surely we can only get at the "historical sense" of a word by observing how it has been used through *all* periods of history, and especially at the time when it was first introduced. The context in St. Paul's Epistle to Titus distinctly implies that he connected the word with factiousness and contentiousness about small things; there is

nothing there to show that he conceived of a body of Orthodox from whom none but heretics presumed to differ. On the other hand, as time went on, it was inevitable that the Orthodox should take this or some similar word for a party catchword, just as the Greek saved himself a great deal of trouble by lumping all non-Greeks under the general name of "barbarians." Few words have had a more tainted history than "heresy," if it is to history that we must look. Several propositions advanced by St. Thomas Aquinas were formally and officially condemned as heretical after his death. St. Vincent Ferrer taught publicly and daily that all were heretics who adhered to a different anti-Pope from his own—a condemnation which included his far greater sister-saint, Catharine of Siena. Franciscans were officially condemned as heretics, and burned in due course, for adhering too closely to the original rule of St. Francis, after the majority had drifted into laxer ways. Long before Wycliffe's time "heretic" had become in fact, as Canon Bigg contends, a nickname; and Dr. Gairdner has scarcely more "historical" support for calling Tyndale a heretic than for calling the ancient Egyptian writers and artists barbarians. The Greeks, who are our chief masters in the history of those times, did indeed call them so; but why should we wilfully adopt their narrow outlook, even if the word had not changed its connotation since then?

Nor does it seem possible to maintain his repudiation of the term for himself. It is true that no sensible English Roman Catholic would publicly apply such a name to Dr. Gairdner if he could help it; but foreign Romanists, who are the overwhelming majority, might not be so squeamish, and even the Englishman might be driven in logic to call our author by the same plain name which is applied to Tyndale throughout this learned work. They might distinguish (as they often do) between *formal* and *material* heresy; but even this distinction would not really avail. Dr. Gairdner is evidently misled here, as in other places, by the pleas of modern Romanist apologists. "I am happy to say," he writes, "I know several Roman

Catholics, some of them even divines of high standing, who, I think, value my friendship as I do theirs. They do not avoid my company as they ought to do if they considered me a heretic in the same sense as Bilney was. . . . My Roman Catholic friends may indeed consider my opinions heretical. . . . But that is something different from looking upon me as a heretic, which I trust I am not." This trust, we fear, would be as dismally disappointed in any time of real stress as was Mr. Lacey's naïve hope that Rome would face facts in the matter of Anglican Orders. Some at least of the Roman Catholic divines of high standing who, in friendly intercourse, had encouraged their Anglican friends in such hopes proved, at the pinch, as impenetrable to fact and logic as the rest. Even Father Rickaby, the authorized apologist of the Catholic Truth Society, when stripped of his pleasant phrases, gives Dr. Gairdner but cold comfort. He would place him among Jews and Infidels ("Persecution," p. 4; "Oxford Conferences," p. 7). In this inferior class, Dr. Gairdner's legal privileges before a Roman tribunal would be in inverse proportion to his religious dignity. Before God, indeed, he would have no hope of salvation; even his good works would not avail him without the Orthodox Faith. But before the human tribunal he would be comparatively safe. Never having known the truth, he could not be burnt as a rebel against it; nor would it be just, according to St. Thomas Aquinas, to force him into the true fold by torture or fear of death (though accredited casuists of the seventeenth century would decide otherwise). But even St. Thomas would not allow Dr. Gairdner to hire an Orthodox servant, or rise to rule over a Roman Catholic in the Record Office; "for this would result in scandal and peril to the Faith" (*Secunda Secunda*, Q. VIII., Art. X.). The Church, standing towards him in the position of master to slave, might, without injustice, dispose of his property (*ibid.*). He might be silenced by brute force, lest he should shake the faith of true Catholics (*ibid.*, Art. VIII.). According to a constitution re-enacted by the Ecumenical Council of Basle, he would be compelled, by pecuniary fines or

more forcible means, to attend, with other *infideles*, the annual sermon preached for his conversion. All these things were once commonplaces of Roman Catholic discipline; they have never been officially retracted, and there is nothing but the sense of expediency to prevent Dr. Gairdner's friends from reviving this legislation at any time, just as they revived obsolete errors about Anglican Orders when the conjuncture was felt to require such a resurrection.

Moreover, even Father Rickaby's pleasant assurance, upon which we have hitherto built, is not true. Dr. Gairdner has not even the comfort that, being for Church disciplinary purposes a Jew or Infidel, he therefore cannot be condemned of formal heresy unless he invents or follows some religious faction which will make him a heretic even within his own sect. Father Rickaby, though he has published a translation of St. Thomas Aquinas and bases his apology upon St. Thomas, yet forgets a great deal of St. Thomas in his apologetic pamphlet. For the saint, in a later section of the same discussion (only a few pages after the passage quoted by Father Rickaby), proceeds to an exposition which cuts the Jesuit's ground from under his feet. (*loc. cit.*, Q. XI., Arts. I., II.). Aquinas plainly treats *all baptized Christians* as distinct from Jews and Infidels, and therefore as amenable to Roman Catholic penal jurisdiction. All such may pardonably err on a minor point of faith until they have been told that this point has been finally decided by the Church—that is, of course, by the Roman Church. When once they have been told of the Church's decision, then they must accept it without demur; henceforward he who rejects is a formal heretic. Therefore Dr. Gairdner, as a baptized Christian, who knows perfectly well the decrees of the Immaculate Conception and Papal Infallibility, who has heard a good deal of the arguments upon which those decrees were based, and who yet persistently rejects them, can find no real excuse in St. Thomas, who says distinctly: "After [any doctrine, though once indeterminate,] had been decided by the authority of the Universal Church, then whosoever should pertinaciously

contend against such a decision would be counted as a heretic." Nor can we plead that St. Thomas could not be expected to foresee a state of society in which baptized Christians would be born and brought up in unorthodoxy, and therefore (as Father Rickaby puts it) "no sons of hers [the Roman Church] nor subjects, in any external, visible order." Hundreds of the slaughtered Albigensians must have been born in unorthodoxy, and sucked in anti-Romanist doctrines with their mothers' milk; therefore the "born heretic" as opposed to the "born Catholic" existed in Christendom under St. Thomas's eyes; yet the saint, with all his meticulous distinctions and subtle refinements, has not a word to say in favour of such persons. Moreover, it may be pretty safely asserted that, for at least a couple of centuries after the Reformation, no orthodox theologian of mark ever ventured to interpret Aquinas in the sense in which Father Rickaby, for very shame of modern civilization, must needs attempt to interpret him nowadays. Bishop Simancas of Zamorra published in 1569 a "Handbook for Judges" in cases of heresy, which became a standard work, and was reprinted under the patronage of Cardinal Chigi at least as late as 1692. The book swarms with references to children of heretics, but (we believe) without a single hint that such could claim impunity from the Inquisition. On the contrary, he says: "It will afford a presumption [of heresy] against the son of a heretic, that he was brought up in his father's house;" and below: "A still stronger presumption is taken from his education, which doubtless fashioneth men's manners; for if anyone have been educated with heretics, it will be strange if he have not been defiled by them" (edit. 1692, p. 496). He constantly refers to Lutherans, but gives no hint of any such exception in their favour as Father Rickaby vainly imagines. He would very likely have given Dr. Gairdner a fair hearing, and then patiently explained the true Catholic doctrine; but next must have come the plain question: "Will you now recant?" A steady refusal at this point would have left the just judge no alternative but to condemn his prisoner as a pertinacious heretic.

Dr. Gairdner would vainly plead, in the words of his Introduction, "I protest that in mind I am not at all sectarian, if I know myself truly. And if my sole object is to seek for truth so far as my limitations will permit me, then I am not a heretic at all, but a real Catholic, refusing to be bound by any school." Words as true and as earnest as these have been pleaded over and over again by men who have yet gone to the stake. No official decree of the Pope or of the Congregations has ever retracted the horrible doctrines of medieval intolerance; even within our own memory the Roman Catholic Primate of England could write that an appeal from Rome to History was a treason and a heresy; Dr. Gairdner's very protest stamps him as a Protestant.

We have dwelt at this length upon a single point because it seems to us a principal and essential part of Dr. Gairdner's historical creed. His life's work of calendaring sixteenth-century State Papers has familiarized him more than any living man with the seamy side of Protestantism at its most troublous period. On the other hand, his impressions of Romanism seem to have been derived less from medieval sources than from personal intercourse with prominent modern Romanists, who have grown up in ignorance of much that still remains the unrepealed law of their Church, and who naturally keep in the background a great deal even of that which they know. In modern England and America we see the religion of External Authority under its mildest and most civilized forms, as the State Papers of the sixteenth century show the religion of Private Judgment in its most rudimentary and barbarous condition. We feel that Dr. Gairdner still recognizes this distinction but imperfectly, and therefore that his essential honesty of purpose fails to save him from a strong historical bias. But in this third volume Dr. Gairdner is far more upon his own ground than in the first two; and for this reason, if for no other, we have read him with far greater pleasure.

