
A table of contents for *The Expository Times* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_expository-times_01.php

pdfs are named: [Volume]_[Issue]_[1st page of article].pdf

and works through them elaborately and unsparingly. He sees no way with the standing still of the sun and moon in the Book of Joshua except to regard it as either a historical scientific fact or a deliberate deception. His standard commentary is the Student's, which was published in the seventies and was then only an abridgment of an older work. When he wants an example of teaching on everlasting punishment he goes back to Bishop Beveridge for it—almost a hundred years before even he himself was born. The title is *Faith in Fetters* (Fisher Unwin; 6s. net).

The Bookshelf by the Fire.

By the Rev. George Jackson, B.A., Professor of Pastoral Theology, Didsbury College, Manchester.

IX.

Archbishop Leighton.

Rarely if ever has it been given to any man to play so large a part in the ecclesiastical affairs of his country, least of all in the ecclesiastical affairs of Scotland, and yet to secure in such large measure the suffrages of good men of all parties, as to Robert Leighton, Bishop of Dunblane and Archbishop of Glasgow. Gilbert Burnet, who was his intimate friend and younger contemporary, and to whom we owe what is still our best portrait of him, counted his friendship as amongst the greatest blessings of his life.[1] Scotsmen have naturally been of different minds as to the course Leighton followed at the Restoration, but few of them would wish to dispute Professor Flint's judgment, that 'a purer, humbler, holier spirit never tabernacled in Scottish clay.'[2] The fiercest duel in modern Scottish ecclesiastical history was fought by Dean Stanley and Principal Rainy, but each man lowered his sword at once at the mention of the name of Leighton. He was, says Stanley, who devotes to him some ten pages of eulogy, 'the one saint common both to the Presbyterian and the Episcopalian Church.'[3] Rainy's touching tribute I give in a footnote.[4] Scottish men of letters are of the same opinion: 'Ian Maclaren' calls him 'the most gracious character in Scots Church history,'[5] and Dr. Walter Smith, 'our Scottish Fénelon,' 'as beautiful a spirit as ever lighted on this earth.'[6] Nor does the stream of tribute slacken when we cross the Tweed. Stanley's judgment has already been recorded. It was Leighton's torch that kindled to a flame the soul of Henry Martyn.[7] Samuel Taylor Coleridge has told to all the world how great was his debt to him;[8] and still more recently, Lord Morley has described him as 'one of the few wholly attractive characters of those bitter-flavoured times.'[9]

It is surely worth considering what it was in Leighton that has called forth notes of praise so loud and clear as these.

I.

Leighton's place in history, it seems clear, is not to be accounted for by his published writings. They have, it is true, been rated very high by men

[1] *History of Our Own Times.*

[2] St. Giles' Lectures, First Series, p. 204.

[3] *Lectures on the History of the Church of Scotland*, pp. 105–114.

[4] 'Leighton's character and writings have been habitually cherished by those in Scotland who are most averse to moderatism, and who recognize in him the very spirit which moderatism lacked. Among my own very earliest recollections are those of an aged lady, very dear to me, whose life was one continued strain of overflowing piety—a long pilgrimage of faith rising at last into an unbroken Beulah of praise and prayer. It was piety nursed under the purest Scottish and Presbyterian influences. But my impressions of Leighton were formed first by the delight I used to see her take in perusing and re-perusing "that blessed Exposition"' (*Three Lectures on the Church of Scotland*, p. 67). The reference is to Rainy's grandmother (see his *Life*, vol. i. p. 25); the 'Exposition' is of course the famous *Commentary on St. Peter.*

[5] *The Scot of the Eighteenth Century*, p. 288.

[6] Preface to *The Bishop's Walk* by 'Orwell,' pp. xiii, xv.

[7] See Alex. Smellie's *Men of the Covenant*, p. 187.

[8] See following section of this paper.

[9] *Oliver Cromwell*, p. 95.

whose praise is praise indeed. In all the devotional literature of Scotland, Professor Flint says, there is nothing nearly equal to them; they 'are worth many times over all the writings of all his Scottish contemporaries.' Coleridge goes still further: 'Surely,' he says, 'if ever work not in the sacred Canon might suggest a belief of inspiration, of something more than human, it is Leighton's Commentary on the First Epistle of St. Peter.'[1] The *Aids to Reflection* is largely based on Leighton, and Coleridge's original intention was to make the work a mere selection from the writings of the Archbishop, 'with a few notes and a biographical preface by the Selector.'[2] Wholly devoid though he was of any literary ambition—he published nothing himself—Leighton appears, in comparison with his uncouth Presbyterian contemporaries, a graceful and accomplished man of letters. His years of residence abroad (1631–1641), his contact with the Jansenists, his knowledge of French literature, his admiration for writers like Thomas à Kempis and George Herbert, all wrought in him a freer spirit and a wider culture, which give him in the Scotland of the seventeenth century a place apart, 'like a fair flower of Paradise dropped amidst the thorns and thistles on some bleak mountain-side.' And while, with hardly an exception, the dust lies thick and undisturbed on the Covenanting writers of that day, Leighton has continued for two centuries to charm and edify one generation after another of English and Scottish readers.

Nevertheless, it would seem that now even Leighton's day as a writer is past. He lives, in so far as he lives at all, by his *Commentary on St. Peter*. But of this, if I mistake not, the last edition was West's, published nearly fifty years ago, and eventually sold out as a 'remainder.' It may be thought, perhaps, that Coleridge's commendation and quotations will still avail a while longer to keep Leighton in life—that the pedestal will still make the statue visible. But what if the pedestal itself is crumbling? Coleridge the poet the world will always remember; Coleridge the metaphysician it seems resolved to forget. The Highgate shrine is forsaken; we seek our 'aids' at other doors.

[1] *Notes on English Divines*, vol. ii. p. 120.

[2] Coleridge's advertisement to the first edition of 1825. It is to this, I suppose, that Lamb refers in one of his letters: 'Coleridge's book is in good part printed, but sticks a little for *more copy*. It bears an unsaleable title, "Extracts from Bishop Leighton"; but I am confident there will be plenty of good notes in it, more of Bishop Coleridge than of Leighton, I hope; for what is Leighton?' Except in the heat of contemporary conflicts, this is the only depreciatory reference to Leighton that I remember to have come across.

II.

If Leighton does not owe his high place to his books, still less does he owe it to the part which he played in the strange drama of seventeenth-century ecclesiastical history. And here it will be well to record a few of the leading facts in his personal history.

Robert Leighton was the son of that Alexander Leighton whose barbarous treatment at the hands of the infamous Star Chamber is one of the worst blots on the memory of Laud.[3] His father was still in prison when, at the age of twenty, young Leighton left England for his ten years' sojourn on the Continent. On his return in 1641, he was ordained to the ministry of the Church of Scotland, and settled at Newbattle, near Edinburgh. Two years later he put his hand to the Solemn League and Covenant, by which he swore to do all that in him lay to extirpate Popery and Prelacy, and to make Presbytery supreme alike in Scotland and in England. In 1653 he resigned his charge at Newbattle to become Principal of Edinburgh University. A few years more and then came, in quick succession, the death of Cromwell, the downfall of Puritanism, and the return of the Stuarts. For Leighton these things brought first the Bishopric of Dunblane, and afterwards (in 1671) the Archbishopric of Glasgow, and with them for us one of the most tangled problems that a good man's life ever set posterity trying to unravel.

On one point, happily, there is no controversy. It is no longer necessary to defend Leighton's sincerity and single-mindedness. No one—no one at least who is not blinded by party passion—

[3] His offence was the publication of a fierce treatise against prelacy; this was the penalty: 'To be committed to the Fleet during life, fined £10,000, referred to the High Commission to be degraded; that done, to be brought to the pillory at Westminster and there whipped; and after whipping to be set in the pillory, have one of his ears cut off, one side of his nose slit, and be branded on one cheek with the letters S.S. for a sower of sedition; and another day be brought on a market-day to the pillory in Cheapside, there likewise whipped, and have his other ear cut off, and the other side of his nose slit.' The second part of this savage sentence appears to have been remitted; all the rest was duly inflicted.

believes that in turning Episcopalian he had any petty ends to serve. If, amid the sordid self-seeking and vaulting ambitions of those turbulent times, purity of motive and singleness of aim were anywhere to be found, it was in Robert Leighton. He, a Presbyterian and Covenanter, consented to become first Bishop and then Archbishop because, rightly or not, he did honestly believe that by so doing he could best serve his distracted Church and nation.

Nevertheless, the problem still remains, how a son of Alexander Leighton, a minister of the Kirk, a sworn ally of the Covenant, could bring himself, not only to submit to re-ordination, but to serve in the company of worldly self-seeking prelates like James Sharp, and at the bidding of a monarch like Charles II. 'Here was a servant of God who found himself strangely ranged on the devil's side in the great conflict of the age, though fully minded all the while to fight the battle of the Lord.' As Dr. Walter Smith says, that is the problem, settle it as we may. Nor can we get rid of the difficulty by simply throwing the blame on the Covenanters. It is always easy, at our safe distance, to see the mistakes of the men who won the liberties which we enjoy, easy to say that if only all men had been as reasonable and peace-loving as Leighton, all would have been well. Perhaps so, but when you have Laud and the Stuarts on one side, then, if liberty in Church and State is to be saved, they must be met by the rude strength of Cromwell and the Covenanters on the other. The apostles of sweet reasonableness — Erasmus, Falkland, Leighton—always win our admiration; they seem such kindly, gracious figures beside their rougher comrades; nevertheless, it was not Erasmus who gave us the Reformation, nor Falkland and Leighton our civil and religious liberties. Laud had made Scotland's problem impossible of solution on Leighton's lines, and in the end Leighton himself abandoned the attempt in despair.

III.

No, it is neither Leighton's plans nor his books that have set his name on high; it is the sweetness, the purity, the nobility of his character. Leighton the writer we forget, Leighton the ecclesiastic we debate, Leighton the saint we reverence and love. What Falkland had been a few years before in the harsh din of English politics, such was Leighton amid the much fiercer fervours of Scotland. Clarendon's famous passage concerning the former might serve almost equally well to describe the latter's longing for peace. 'Sitting among his friends, often, after a deep silence and frequent sighs, he would with a shrill and sad accent ingeminate the word *Peace, Peace*; and would passionately profess that the very agony of the war, and the view of the calamities and desolation the kingdom did and must endure, took his sleep from him, and would shortly break his heart.' Readers of Matthew Arnold, who are also admirers of Leighton, may sometimes have wondered how it came to pass that one who had so sincere an admiration for Falkland, and devoted to him one of the best of his essays, should be so silent concerning the one man in Scotland who so completely fulfilled his own ideal of sweetness and light.

It was an age when all manner of unclean ambitions were in the saddle, careful only of their own ends, and ready to ride down every obstacle in the path; yet, far as he went, and high as he rose, no one now dare say that Leighton was ambitious. Humility and a merciless self-effacement, which perplexed alike his friends and his foes, marked his whole life. When reluctantly convinced that it was his duty to accept a bishopric, he bargained for the see of Dunblane, as one of the smallest and most obscure. After his consecration he went down to Scotland, Burnet tells us, in the same coach with the other bishops. But their company proved a sore trial, and when Leighton found that they were intending to enter Edinburgh in pomp, he parted from them at Morpeth, and completed the journey alone. 'He would not have the title of "Lord,"' Burnet says, 'given him by his friends, and was not easy when others forced it on him.' It is said, moreover, that in only one of his extant letters, does he sign himself 'R. Dunblane.' Elsewhere invariably, and contrary to the custom of his colleagues, the signature is simply 'Robert Leighton.'[1] It is a small matter, but it helps to show what manner of man Leighton was.

Again, in an age in which fanaticism and intolerance had, as Professor Flint says, converted the whole land into a well of Marah, Leighton's one aim was the healing of the bitter waters. The spirit of controversy, as he saw it at work on every side, seemed to him nothing but evil; the disputatious skill which passed in many for acuteness and

[1] Butler's *Life and Letters of Robert Leighton*, p. 415.

erudition, he boldly declared to be 'the mark of a mean understanding,' and he bade his Edinburgh students avoid it as they would the plague. His ten years on the Continent had strengthened still further a certain constitutional unwillingness to draw ecclesiastical boundary lines with the sharpness and rigidity of most of his contemporaries. Were men's opinions in these things, he asked, so mathematically certain that they could not dispense with any part of them, for the peace of the Church, and for the saving of souls? As for many of their controversies, they seemed to him no better than 'a drunken scuffle in the dark,' in which Christian charity 'so much more worth than all that was contended about,' was often wounded and slain. 'If,' he said, 'I had one of the loudest, as I have one of the lowest voices, yea, were it as loud as a trumpet, I would employ it to sound a retreat to all our unnatural and irreligious debates about religion, and to persuade men to follow the meek and lowly Jesus.'

It is but another way of saying the same thing to say that to Leighton it was given to see things in a truer perspective than most of those about him. He cared so supremely for the first things that, in his thinking, secondary things never usurped the first place. 'Some truths,' he said, 'are of so little evidence and importance that he who errs in them charitably, meekly, and calmly may be both a wiser man and a better Christian than he who is furiously, stormily, and uncharitably orthodox.' He would rather, he declared, convince a man that he has a soul to save, and induce him to live up to that belief, than bring him over to any opinions in whatsoever else beside; he would rather be instrumental in persuading one man to be serious in religion than the whole nation to be Conformists.

IV.

Seventeenth-century Scotland, it is evident, was no place for a man like Robert Leighton. High-flying Presbyterians on the one hand, wily, worldly prelates on the other, what had he to do with either? He was a dove among lions and serpents, a child in the hands of sharpers. Once, when his brother-in-law chided him for his lack of prudence in a matter of business, he answered half sadly: 'I am not easily taught that lesson. I confess it is the wiser way to trust nobody; but there is so much of the fool in my nature as carries me rather to the other extreme, to trust everybody.' Such a man was obviously no match for the cunning and bigotry that were arrayed against him, and at last, as I have said, he quitted the field in despair. Defeated in the noble designs on which he had set his heart, suspected and hated by Episcopalian and Presbyterian alike, he resolved, as Burnet says, 'to retire from all public employments, and to spend the rest of his days in a corner, far from noise and business, and to give himself wholly to prayer and meditation.' His married sister and her husband, Edward Lightmaker, were at that time living at Broadhurst Manor, near Horsted Keynes, in Sussex, and thither, in or about 1674, he withdrew, and there the remaining years of his life were spent;[1] there he is buried, and there to the infrequent visitor his tomb tells how 'in an age of religious strife he adorned the doctrine of God his Saviour, by a holy life, and by the meek and loving spirit which breathes throughout his writings.'

There is no period of Leighton's life over which one would choose more to linger than this long and quiet evening amid the deep peace of the pleasant Sussex country. Unfortunately, our knowledge of these closing years is very slight. We have Burnet's delightful page and practically nothing more. A certain Giles Moore was rector here during Leighton's time, and his diary, under the title of *A Clergyman's Diary of the Seventeenth Century*, has been given to the world; but, curiously enough, Leighton is not even named in it. What is even more surprising, Mr. E. V. Lucas writes a whole volume on Sussex,[2] gives two pages to Horsted Keynes and Giles Moore, but not a syllable to our saintly Archbishop. We must therefore fall back on Burnet once more: Leighton 'had lived,' he says, 'ten years in Sussex, in great privacy, dividing his time wholly between study and retirement, and the doing of good: for in the parish where he lived, and in the parishes round about, he was always employed in preaching, and in reading prayers. He distributed all he had in charities, choosing rather to have it go through other people's hands than his own. . . . He lamented oft to me the stupidity that he observed among the commons of England, who seemed to be much more insensible in the matters of religion

[1] It was to his brother-in-law that Leighton wrote one of the most beautiful of his letters; see Butler's *Life*, p. 398.

[2] In the beautiful 'Highways and Byways' series.

than the commons of Scotland were.[1] He retained still a peculiar inclination to Scotland; and if he had seen any prospect of doing good there, he would have gone and lived and died among them.' What grieved him most was the prevailing temper of the Christian Church. Even the Church of England, which seemed to him in many ways 'the best constituted Church in the world,' showed in his eyes but as 'a fair carcase of a body without a spirit; without that zeal, that strictness of life, and that laboriousness in the clergy, that became us.'

Burnet, too, shall paint for us the last scene of all: 'There were two remarkable circumstances in his death. He used often to say, that if he were to choose a place to die in, it should be in an inn; it looked like a pilgrim's going home, to whom this world was all as an inn, and who was weary of the noise and confusion in it. He added, that the officious tenderness and care of friends was an entanglement to a dying man; and that the unconcerned attendance of those that could be procured in such a place would give less disturbance. And he obtained what he desired; for he died at the Bell Inn in Warwick Lane [London]. Another circumstance was, that while he was Bishop in Scotland, he took what his tenants were pleased to pay him: so that there was a great arrear due, which was raised slowly by one whom he left in trust with his affairs there: and the last payment that he could expect from thence was returned up to him about six weeks before his death, so that his provision and journey failed both at once.'

[1] F. W. Robertson, it may be remembered, thought the Sussex peasantry 'very bucolic' (see F. Arnold's *Robertson of Brighton*, p. 200).

V.

I have said enough, I hope, to show that Leighton's is a name on which it is good to dwell in the fireside hour. What books about him we should keep for our fireside shelf, it is not so easy to say. His story deserves a better record than it has yet received. His latest biographer (Rev. Dr. D. Butler) has made all lovers of Leighton his debtors by his careful and painstaking inquiries, but his book is needlessly long, and somehow lacks inspiration. Other books are referred to in the foregoing footnotes. On the whole, next to Burnet, I should be disposed to suggest the little volume of selections edited, with a short biography, by Dr. W. Blair, and Dr. Walter C. Smith's poem, *The Bishop's Walk*. These, if they leave much unsaid, may yet suffice to fill the whole house with the fragrance of a life as fair and sweet as ever grew in Scottish soil.

In the Study.

THE CHRISTIAN YEAR.

Quinquagesima.

Pleasing God.

'Without faith it is impossible to please him.'—He 11^{6}.

There are three things necessary to the pleasing of God—knowledge of God, service for God, likeness to God. Man is made to know as much as possible, to do as much as possible, and to be as good as possible. In the sphere of knowledge, in the sphere of action, in the sphere of character, faith is the one element that gives life and power to please God.

1. Look first at the sphere of knowledge, the understanding of the world and of life. We stand in a strange and mysterious universe, with certain faculties to help us to a comprehension of it. First, we have the senses, and they tell us how things look, and taste, and sound, and feel. Then we have the reasoning powers, and they enable us to discover how things are related to each other, how causes are followed by effects, how great laws control their action and reaction. But is there not something beyond this, a depth below the deep and a height beyond the height? Every instinct of our nature assures us that there must be. The lesson of modern thought is the limitation of science and philosophy. But outside of this narrow circle lie the truths that we most desire and need to know. In that unexplained world dwells God. Why should we hesitate to confess that we must have another and a higher faculty of knowledge? The astronomer has keen