

# Theology on the Web.org.uk

*Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible*

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

[PayPal](#)

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

---

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

[https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles\\_churchman\\_os.php](https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_churchman_os.php)

doms, might possibly have presented some difficulties to the surveyor analogous, perhaps, to those which would have beset Mr. Cecil Rhodes had he, between the period of the Jameson Raid and that of the declaration of war between the Boers and this country, undertaken a careful topographical survey of the Transvaal. The only rational inference is that this part of Joshua is ancient and authentic. Yet Professor Driver, following his authorities, completes *his* survey of the topographical portion of the Book of Joshua, assigning passages at will to "JE" and "P," without having directed us to any sources from which these writers could possibly have obtained their remarkably accurate information. Can this sort of *ex cathedrâ* utterance, without explanation or argument, be dignified with the name of scientific criticism?

J. J. LIAS.

(*To be continued.*)



## ART. II.—THE ARCHBISHOPS OF CANTERBURY SINCE THE RESTORATION.

JOHN TILLOTSON.

“**V**ICTRIX causa diis placuit, sed victa Catoni.” Though this could never be Sancroft’s motto—for till the last hour of his life he prayed God that the cause for which he was a confessor would yet be triumphant—it is the verdict which history has passed upon the Revolution of 1688. That event was almost as important an epoch in English political history as was the Reformation in ecclesiastical. It was the final rejection by the nation of the Tudor and Stuart theory of government—that of an irresponsible monarchy. Both politicians and ecclesiastics had still much to learn, of course; new ideas, however sound and good, always run into excesses and mistakes, but it is the part of our faith to look to the good hand of the living God to correct these, and still to lead us on.

Tillotson was probably as good a representative as could have been found of the new doctrine of government. There is deep pathos in the story of the fall of the Stuarts, even in the eyes of those who believed that it was a necessity. The nation had never lost the sense of penitence for the death of Charles I.; the nobleness of his devotion to the Church was tardily recognised, and the cause for which he died, and the beauty of the English Liturgy, had never been more appreciated than now. And thus it was that, though the people were resolute to defend their faith, they were tender to the king who sought to supplant it, and bent on preserving, as far as was compatible with national rights, the hereditary succession. And

it will be seen that the appointment of Tillotson to the Primacy of the Church was another evidence of the same spirit.

John Tillotson was descended from an old Cheshire county family. The name was originally Tilston, which was changed to Tillotson by Thomas, the Archbishop's great-grandfather, of Carlton-in-Craven. His grandson Robert was the eldest of three sons—the other two being named Joshua and Israel—and he was a prosperous cloth-worker of Sowerby in the parish of Halifax; by his wife Mary, daughter of Thomas Dobson of that place, he had four sons, of whom the future Archbishop was the second. He was baptized in the parish church, October 10, 1630, but his father in 1645 joined a Congregational Church founded by one Henry Root. He had always been attached to Puritan principles, and one of the babe's god-fathers was Henry Witton, afterwards an ejected minister. Robert Tillotson was a religious man, but a zealous Calvinist, and before Root's death appears to have become an Anabaptist. He lived to see his son Dean of Canterbury, and seems to have stuck to his Calvinism, though he had conformed to the Church for some years previously. He gave his son a good education, placing him in his tenth year at a grammar school, and in his seventeenth at Clare Hall, Cambridge. In his fourth year there he fell into a sickness so severe as to endanger his life, and it was followed by an intermittent delirium, from which he recovered but slowly. His mother in her latter days became insane. He took his B.A. degree in 1650, and M.A. in 1654, having been elected Fellow of his college in 1651. His surroundings, and naturally his prejudices at this time, were strongly Puritan. His tutor, David Clarkson, afterwards wrote a book entitled, "No Evidence of Diocesan Episcopacy in the Primitive Times," in answer to Stillingfleet. It was a moderate work, and of considerable learning. He was ejected from the living of Mortlake in 1662. The friendship of tutor and pupil remained steadfast through all changes until Clarkson's death, in 1686. There were two other Non-conformist ministers with whom also Tillotson at this time was in affectionate intercourse. He did not take to the head of his college, Ralph Cudworth, nor to the other Cambridge platonists, until he met with Chillingworth's famous book. That work opened his mind greatly, and did much to clear it from Calvinistic bitterness and narrowness.<sup>1</sup> All this while he was most strict in his religious life. He used to hear four sermons on Sunday and one on Wednesday during his tutorial

---

<sup>1</sup> "The Religion of Protestants a Safe Way to Salvation." Published in 1637. See an excellent account of it in Hallam's "Literature of Europe," vol. ii., pp. 421-426.

life, and is said to have shown great gift of extemporary prayer. After reading Chillingworth, he drew nearer than before to the Liturgy of the Church. Chillingworth's opinions as to private judgment would hardly be accepted by English Churchmen now, but it should be remembered that he was the friend of Laud, who never lost confidence in him.

Tillotson was now moving in a Church groove, though he abated nothing of his tenderness for his old companions, and his influence, from his known piety and earnestness, was probably greater than any man's in reconciling the Independents to the use of the Liturgy. There were certainly churches where it was in use in the years immediately preceding the Restoration. But it is impossible to say whether he actually took part in them. It was now, after his Chillingworth reading, that he entered into close friendship with Whichcot and Henry More, the Platonists, and yet more with Dr. John Wilkins, afterwards Bishop of Chester. These two men had great influence over each other for good. Wilkins was a "good all-round" man, and possessed great energy; Tillotson was better read in theology, and of singularly winning, gentle, persuasive manner.<sup>1</sup>

At the end of 1656 he left Cambridge, and went to Ford Abbey in Devon as tutor to the son of Mr. Edmund Prideaux, who held the office of Attorney-General to the Commonwealth. He does not seem to have held the post very long. Hickes says that he acted as chaplain to the family, which we may accept as fact, as also the probability that he used the Church of England Liturgy.<sup>2</sup> He was in London when Cromwell died—September 3, 1658—and a week afterwards went out of curiosity to a fast-day at Whitehall, when the new Protector was present, and some of the most eminent Puritan preachers of the day—Owen, Goodwin, Caryl, Sterry among them. We can imagine the disgust with which their frantic enthusiasm was witnessed by the calm and placid Tillotson. Thus, Dr. Goodwin, who had assured the dying Protector in the

---

<sup>1</sup> It may be well to note here that as Tillotson became, in the natural course of things, particularly obnoxious to the Nonjurors, multitudes of slanders have been hurled at him. A hot-headed fanatic in Westminster Abbey, sailing as near the wind as he dared, spoke of "so-called Fathers of our Church who are not even her sons," meaning the King and the Archbishop, who (so he intended to insinuate) had never been baptized. Dr. Hickes, one of the most eminent of the Nonjurors, afterwards declared that after the Battle of Worcester Tillotson got the tablet containing the college grace, and after the thanksgiving for benefactors, "*Te laudamus pro benefactoribus nostris,*" added, "*presertim pro nupera victoriâ contra Carolum Stuartum in agro Wigornensi deportatâ.*" This was absolutely disproved.

<sup>2</sup> Wharton says so in his MS. Collections at Lambeth.

form of a prayer that God would soon restore him to health, now addressed God with the words: "Thou hast deceived us, and we were deceived." And Sterry prayed on behalf of poor Dick Cromwell in his presence: "Make him the brightness of his father's glory, the express image of his person."

He is said to have received Holy Orders from the hands of Dr. Thomas Sydserf, Bishop of Galloway. The registers are not forthcoming, as is the case with very many others, but the validity of his Orders was never questioned when the Church was re-established in England. And no sooner was he at work as a recognised minister of the Church than he began to make his mark as one of the most popular of London preachers. His first printed sermon was preached at St. Giles's, Cripplegate, on Matthew vii. 12, on the theme: "Wherein lies that exact righteousness which is required between man and man." It was one of a series arranged for on "Cases of Conscience," and was preached in 1661.

Tillotson must be pronounced, if not the father, at any rate one of the fathers, of the English pulpit. The few splendid sermons of Hooker, and the earnest and devout discourses of Andrewes, are not sermons according to our modern ideas. They are learned and philosophic essays and doctrinal treatises. So are the works of the eminent Puritan divines of the Commonwealth. Some are certainly learned, full of quotations from all manner of languages, of controversy, of queer conceits, and of rhetoric. In times further back Latimer had been run after, and no wonder, for his sermons are full of point and energy; but their levity and piquant stories would not be tolerated now. They were anything but calm and persuasive religious exhortations. The "Homilies" were intended for addresses suitable to the common people; but a preacher who should try the experiment of reading them to his congregation would soon empty his church. Even Jeremy Taylor, grand as his eloquence is, would not fare much better if read from a pulpit to-day. He is delightful to read, but certainly could not be preached.

Tillotson started on a good foundation. He had been for years a diligent reader of the Scriptures. He also read the Fathers assiduously, especially Chrysostom, and, in conjunction with Dr. Wilkins, spent much time in the study of rhetoric and exactness of language. Young preachers, though they have the advantage of helps and lights from great Biblical students which Tillotson never had, may learn much, very much, from studying his style, so clear and limpid and full. It is not mean and poor, but neither is it ornamental. The sentences are short, and never involved. He knows what he wants to say, and so says it, without any torturing of texts,

or parade of learning. In fact, this may be taken as the first axiom in the composition of a good sermon—total absence of display. One of the most delightful and effective preachers of our time was Dr. C. J. Vaughan, the late Dean of Llandaff. He was senior classic of his year, and continued his learned pursuits all his life. Yet let the student of sermons search diligently through his many volumes—not a word of Greek or Latin, not a quotation from the poets or even allusion to them. It is a positive marvel, the rich use of learning and the total absence of all parade of it. Anyone reading Tillotson's sermons to-day will no doubt feel them somewhat antiquated in style, and possibly not abstruse in thought, but will, I think, pronounce them real, genuine, earnest, impressive. He will shut up the book and feel the better for what he has read. They are all carefully written. He is said to have bungled and hesitated when he attempted extempore preaching.

At the Restoration he became curate at Cheshunt, his vicar being Dr. Thomas Hacket. This was within easy distance of London, and his reputation had the effect of his receiving many invitations to preach in the City. Some of his printed sermons are annotated as having been preached in London churches in 1661 and 1662. After the Act of Uniformity, in 1662, Calamy being deprived of St. Mary, Aldermanbury, the parishioners elected Tillotson, but he declined the offer. However, in June, next year, when he was presented under like circumstances to Ketton, in Suffolk, he accepted the cure on the entreaty of the ejected rector. But he did not starve long, for the Benchers of Lincoln's Inn elected him their preacher in November, 1663. The income for this was £100 a year, with rooms and commons for himself and servant, and allowance of £24 for vacation commons. He was not required under this appointment to give up Ketton, but he did so, feeling that the work of pastoral care called for the sacrifice. Next year he was appointed by the trustees to the Tuesday Lecture at St. Lawrence, Jewry, by Elizabeth, Viscountess Cambden. It became a fashionable resort at once.

It is impossible, within our limits, to follow his sermons in detail, but there is a thread of unity observable. He gave himself much to protesting against the immorality and the atheism of the time, and he believed that much of it arose from the encouragement of Popery. Men were holding, he said, that there was no morality and no certainty unless in an infallible Church, and on this rock souls were being torn to pieces. The superstition of Rome, in his eyes, was the bitter enemy of piety and earnest morality, and its cruelty a contradiction to the meekness and gentleness of Christ. Conse-

quently, whilst he continued to preach the plain and simple Gospel to his congregation, he entered into controversy with Roman propagandists, and published several pamphlets against them. His enemies cried out against him that he was cold-hearted and Laodicean, and that his desire to make friends with the Dissenters was a betrayal of the faith. But, as a matter of fact, he seems to have had a wonderful influence in London in drawing the citizens to a hearty love for the Church.

In 1663 he proposed marriage to Elizabeth French, the daughter of Dr. French, Canon of Christ Church, Oxford, and Robina, sister of Oliver Cromwell. Dr. French had died, and his widow had married Dr. John Wilkins, then Rector of St. Lawrence, Jewry. The young lady "desired to be excused" from the match, but Wilkins urged it. "Betty," said he, "you must have him; he is the best divine this day in England." And she consented. Five years later, during which interval he was still growing in popularity, he preached the sermon at the consecration of Wilkins as Bishop of Chester. Next year he was presented by Charles II. to a stall in Canterbury Cathedral, and in 1672 to the deanery thereof. To this was added, four years later, a Residential Canonry in St. Paul's. He owed this last preferment to a curious accident. His brother Joshua was a drysalter in London, and had business relations with a Mr. Thomas Sharp, of the same business in Yorkshire. His son happened to meet the Dean at his uncle's house in London, and Tillotson took a liking for young Sharp, and gave him a general invitation to come and visit him. The invitation was accepted, and a close friendship grew up between them. Sharp spoke very highly of his friend to Heneage Finch, Lord High Chancellor, who thereupon gave him the preferment we have named. Sharp became Archbishop of York in 1691.

Charles II. did not like Tillotson, but he respected good men, and was no bad judge of character. He took their advice when it did not interfere with his own viciousness. But his brother was bent on restoring the Roman Catholic faith, and he himself was hesitating between James's pressure and his conviction of the loyalty of his clergy to himself. We have had to do in the preceding life with his attempt to set aside the religious penal laws. The Bishops were alarmed; Humphrey Henchman, Bishop of London, charged his clergy to preach against Popery; the King complained to Archbishop Sheldon of this, and Sheldon called some of the prominent clergy together to advise what answer he should give to the King. Tillotson's advice was that the Archbishop should respectfully reply that since his Majesty pro-

fessed the Protestant religion, it would be a thing without precedent for him to forbid his clergy to preach in defence of it. This seemed unanswerable, and Sheldon was prepared to follow the advice, but Charles gave up his attempt.

But Tillotson was now bent on going further. He looked for a closer union of the various Protestant congregations, and by concessions bringing them into the Church. He joined with Stillington, Dean of St. Paul's, and Hezekiah Burton, in a treaty proposed by Sir Orlando Bridgeman, Lord-Keeper of the Seal, and agreed to by the great and good judge, Sir Matthew Hale; it was a comprehensive scheme, in which Baxter and Manton, on the part of the dissenters, were invited to co-operate. They agreed, on the question of reordination, that men already in Presbyterian Orders should be allowed, after imposition of hands, accompanied with certain words, to minister in the church. But as soon as this treaty became known a clamour was immediately raised, especially by the friends of the Earl of Clarendon, who was now in banishment, and when the Bill which Hale had drawn up was presented to Parliament, a resolution was passed condemning any such attempt.

The same two Deans made another attempt in 1674, and invited some leading Nonconformists to a fresh conference. Baxter met them, and many proposals were made in turn. At length one was agreed to, and Baxter laid it before some leading Nonconformists, who agreed. But the Bishops were not equally complaisant, and again the attempt failed. Baxter asked Tillotson if he might publish the history of the negotiation, and so show how far they were agreed and how anxious they were for a peaceable settlement. Tillotson replied (April 11, 1675) that he had consulted the Bishop of Salisbury (Seth Ward), who had promised, on his part, to confer with the Bishop of Chester (Pearson), but that he foresaw that prejudice was strong against the arrangements proposed, and that the King would make much opposition. And so for the time this good hope came to an end.

Meanwhile other matters of interest came up. In 1672 Bishop Wilkins died at Tillotson's residence in Chancery Lane, and bequeathed to him all his papers, leaving it to his discretion whether to publish them, or any of them. Tillotson at once took in hand the "Principles of Natural Religion." The author had completed the first twelve chapters for the press, his executor finished the work from the Bishop's private papers, and published it in 1675 with a very able and wise preface of his own.

Next year his old friend Sir Matthew Hale died. He had been a judge in the Common Pleas under Cromwell, Chief



Baron of the Exchequer, and Lord Chief Justice of the King's Bench after the Restoration. He was a man of high and noble character; resigned the last office, in consequence of failing health, early in the year, and died on Christmas Day, in his sixty-seventh year. He had written a book in defence of Revealed Religion, and sent it to Bishop Wilkins by an unknown hand, merely telling him that the writer was not a clergyman. Wilkins read it and sent it to Tillotson, neither of them having any clue to the authorship; but the latter, after reading it, declared that the calmness, skill, and penetration of the argument, as well as the variety of learning, convinced him that the author must be Hale.

One incident of the year 1677 was important in its consequences, though there is doubt about some of the details. The Duke of York's daughter, Mary, married William, Prince of Orange. The Duke disliked the match very cordially, nor was the King very favourable, though the nation was. They started for the Hague by way of Canterbury and Margate. At Canterbury they attended the Cathedral on Sunday, November 25, and heard Tillotson preach, and, according to Echard ("History of England"), the Corporation churlishly refused them the use of plate and other necessaries, whereupon Tillotson sent them abundance. Next day they went to Margate, and the accommodation which the Dean had so obligingly offered was not forgotten. The same year died an author whose works have secured a greater and more permanent position in our religious literature than those of Wilkins or Hale, namely, Isaac Barrow. He died on May 5, leaving his manuscripts to Tillotson, and in 1680 the latter published the imperishable "Treatise on the Pope's Supremacy," with a preface of his own, in which he observes that whosoever shall carefully peruse it "will find that this point of the Pope's supremacy (upon which Bellarmin hath the confidence to say the whole of Christianity depends) is not only an indefensible, but an impudent, cause as ever was undertaken by mortal man."

Of the "Popish Plot" and the frightful perjuries of Titus Oates we have previously had occasion to speak, and we only note now that when, as Macaulay says, "the whole nation went mad with hatred and fear," Tillotson was called on to preach before the House of Commons, and though he, like the rest of the world, believed in the story, it is characteristic of him that he very earnestly pleaded for moderation and charity, and for care lest the innocent should be confounded with the guilty. There is a very admirable letter written by him to Charles, Earl of Shrewsbury, who, after hesitating awhile between Romanism and Protestantism, was persuaded by

Tillotson to accept the latter, and remained firm in his faith to the end. Tillotson heard that he had given utterance to loose views on morality, which led to the letter we refer to. It ends, after some very unshrinking warnings, with the words: "I have only to beg of your lordship to believe that I have not written this to satisfy the formality of my profession, but that it proceeds from the truest affection and goodwill that one man can possibly bear to another. I pray God every day with the same constancy and fervour as for myself, and do most earnestly beg that this counsel may be acceptable and effectual."

Gilbert Burnet, who had come for a few weeks to London from his native Edinburgh, in his twentieth year, in 1663, made acquaintance with Tillotson, and their affectionate friendship was only ended by death. Burnet had his faults, certainly, but it is impossible to read his very interesting life without the conviction that he was a sincere and earnest man. All through the reign of Charles II. he was constantly endeavouring to promote goodwill and religious moderation, and he did not lose his head over the Popish plot. But his attachment to the principles in which he had been brought up remained the same all his life. His father was always a member of the Scottish Episcopal Church, and he had been obliged to leave the country for refusing the Covenant; but he belonged to the moderate party, and his wife was a Presbyterian. And this was the education of their son. He was an honest believer in Episcopacy, but his heart went forth towards the Dissenters and yearned for union, and he was strongly hostile to Popery. He wrote many pamphlets, but in January, 1678, he showed Tillotson his "History of the Reformation," and in 1679 published the first volume by his friend's advice. It came opportunely, and was welcomed by the nation, though not at Court. But in his enthusiasm, at this juncture, Tillotson preached a sermon before the King which brought him, not unreasonably, under sharp criticism. He was summoned unexpectedly to Whitehall on April 2, 1680, and being full of apprehension at the Duke of York's undisguised schemes of proselytizing, he preached, from Josh. xxiv. 15, a sermon which he entitled "The Protestant Religion vindicated from the Charge of Singularity and Novelty." And this was one of the paragraphs in a sermon which in its argumentative portion is wise and reasonable enough: "I cannot think (until I be better informed, which I am always ready to be) that any pretence of conscience warrants any man, that is not extraordinarily commissioned as the Apostles and first publishers of the Gospel were, and cannot justify that commission by miracles, as they did, to affront the established religion of a nation, though it be false,

and openly to draw men off from the profession of it, in contempt of the magistrate and the law. All that persons of a different religion can in such a case reasonably pretend to, is to enjoy the private liberty and exercise of their own conscience and religion, for which they ought to be very thankful, and to forbear the open making of proselytes to their own religion (though they be never so sure that they are in the right), till they have either an extraordinary commission from God to that purpose, or the providence of God make way for it by the permission of the magistrate."

Here was an assertion of the divine right of the King which Hobbes of Malmesbury could not have stated more uncompromisingly.<sup>1</sup> It might be applied, no doubt, to the Duke of York now, or to the Nonconformists, but it would absolutely condemn the Reformers of Henry VIII.'s days. And it is no wonder that it gave great offence to the Dissenters. Calamy tells a ludicrous story about it. He says that Charles II. was asleep all the sermon-time, and that afterwards a courtier said to him: "'Tis a pity your Majesty slept, for we had the rarest piece of Hobbism I ever heard in my life." "Ods fish!" replied the King, "he shall print it, then"; and immediately sent the Dean, by the Lord Chamberlain, an order to print his sermon. The Dean sent copies, as usual, to some of his Nonconformist friends, among them to Howe, who had been Cromwell's chaplain, who acknowledged it in the severest terms, pointing out to him that "Luther and Calvin, thank God, were of another mind." Calamy continues that Howe himself carried his answer to the Dean, and read it to him, that at length the Dean wept freely, and said that this was the most unhappy thing that had for a long time befallen him, and that he saw that what he had offered could not be maintained; and, further, he excused himself by saying that he was called on unexpectedly to preach, and that the King's commandment took away his power to alter the sermon afterwards. A counter discourse was written and sent to him by Baxter. He replied that he was sorry that he had been misunderstood, that he disclaimed any sympathy with "the odious principles of Spinoza and Hobbes," and that the publication of this discourse would be considered as a personal attack on him. The result was that it was not published. It was not fair of the nonjuror Hickes afterwards, when fiercely attacking Tillotson, to accuse him of truckling to the Dissenters in this matter, and of "crying *peccavi* to Baxter in this letter."

This incident led to the beginning of a long and interesting correspondence, branching off into many subjects, between the

<sup>1</sup> See Hallam's "Literature of Europe," iii. 171.

Dean and the saintly Robert Nelson, whose "Companion to the Fasts and Festivals" is still deservedly held in honour in our religious literature. He was a young man of four-and-twenty when Tillotson's sermon was published, they were already in close friendship, and Tillotson's first letter to him is one of regret that "there should be so much talk and noise" about his sermon. It is followed by another on the death and repentance of the well-known Wilmot, Earl of Rochester. He thanks Nelson for a very affectionate letter which he had written about the Dean's part in his conversion. The friendship of the two men remained, apparently, unbroken to the very end, as we shall see hereafter, though Nelson became a non-juror. It is curious that one of the Dean's letters is in answer to a request of Nelson for a vacant living, in the gift of the Dean and Chapter, for Mr. Richard Kidder, the same who afterwards supplanted Ken at Bath and Wells. Kidder was a divine of much repute, and Tillotson wrote to Nelson that he was very sorry, but that he was already pledged to another man. At another time he writes to reassure Nelson that he is not intending to make any alterations in Canterbury Cathedral, somebody having told Nelson that Tillotson was going to remove some of the old decorations and ornaments. There are also two very interesting letters about Halley's comet, the great astronomer being a common friend of the two men.

Heavy affliction fell on Tillotson in the year that followed. The Exclusion Bill, to which he was favourable, failed, and the failure was followed by the Rye House Plot and the trial and execution of Lord William Russell and Algernon Sidney. Tillotson was called as a witness to character at Russell's trial, and after his condemnation wrote him a letter, intended to be private, in which he exhorted him to retract the opinion he had expressed on the lawfulness of resistance. It is a very tender and wise letter, and the spirit of it was expressed in the expression which he used in his prayer with the dying man when he attended him to the scaffold: "Grant that all we who survive may learn our duty to God and the King." It was a grief to Tillotson that his letter got into the King's hands and was afterwards published.

There were yet two other subjects which kindled Tillotson's zeal against Romanism. One was the perversion of Nelson's wife, Lady Theophila Lucy, to the great grief of her husband, the other was the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes. Things, in the Dean's opinion, were looking very gloomy as regarded the religion of the nation, when Charles II. was suddenly seized with apoplexy, and died on February 5, 1685.

W. BENHAM.

*(To be continued.)*