

Editorial

EVER since its first appearance in the sixteenth century John Foxe's celebrated *Book of Martyrs*, or, to give it the title under which it was published, *Acts and Monuments of these latter and perilous days, touching matters of the Church*, has been a target of abuse and vilification. Throughout the years, however, it has never lacked able defenders, and it is only in our own twentieth century that its immense popularity has waned, so much so that what was for so long one of the best known and loved of all religious works is now suffering an unmerited neglect. Martyrdom has ceased to be an acceptable subject in these days when strong religious convictions are frowned on. This is the new intolerance of our age, which otherwise is happy to have been delivered from the barbarities and persecutions which marred the record of the Church in darker times. Yet our day is far from being without its martyrs, for men and women still witness and suffer and die for their faith behind iron and bamboo curtains and under the fanatical savagery of the new nationalisms. They pass from this earthly scene without the pen of a John Foxe to make known to the world the heroism of their faithfulness unto death. They are "unknown, and yet well known" (2 Cor. 6 : 9). They, in company with Christ's martyrs of every age, know *the cost* of true discipleship in a way that we who are at ease in the pseudo-Christianity of ecclesiastical affluence and respectability do not. To read about the martyrs of the Church of Christ is, indeed, a very necessary exercise for us, for it is they, more than any others, who remind us what Christianity is all about, and there is no literature more moving and inspiring to the soul than that in which their constancy is chronicled. It is gratifying, therefore, to be able to welcome the publication of a new edition of Foxe's *Acts and Monuments* in eight volumes by the AMS Press of New York. This is, in fact, a reproduction of the London edition of 1843 together with a *Life of Foxe* by George Townsend. The massive character of Foxe's achievement may be gauged from the fact that there are some six thousand pages in all, or upwards of three million words. The reprinting of this truly *magnum opus* is a notable venture and an important service to the world of scholarship as well as to the cause of spiritual religion. There are but two complaints : firstly, that this new edition has not been enhanced, as it might well have been, by the inclusion of a critical assessment of the significance of Foxe's work for the student of the English Reformation by a contemporary scholar of standing ; and, secondly, that the price of this set (\$197. 50) is so high as to place it beyond the means of the great majority of readers. Custodians of both public and institutional libraries, however, should be urged to purchase these eight volumes both for the benefit of their clientèle and also to make good what is otherwise a serious deficiency on their shelves.

Foxe's great work was originally written in Latin and published at Strasbourg in 1554 at a time when, with so many other notable men, he had sought refuge on the Continent following Mary's accession to the

throne. It was presented as a chronicle of the Church (*Chronicon Ecclesiae*) covering the two hundred years from Wycliffe to Foxe's own day, with special reference to the persecutions of that period. The *Acts and Monuments* was, however, Foxe's life-work. Year after year he laboured strenuously at its expansion and improvement, eagerly searching out original documents and authentic records and, where the most recent events were concerned, consulting eye-witnesses and others who in one way or another had been involved. The commencement of the Elizabethan era saw the return of Foxe to England and the first English edition of the *Acts and Monuments* was published by John Day in London in 1563. In a letter addressed to the president and fellows of Magdalen College (his own college, "the foremost and noblest in the University of Oxford") he expressed his regret that the work was not in Latin, as he himself would have preferred, but explained that concern for the edification of their common fatherland and of the multitude had dictated its publication in English. (The 1554 Strasbourg edition had been presented in Latin because at that time it was reasonable to expect a readership on the Continent rather than in England; though Strype tells us that an English edition was also planned then.) Assailants of the work were not slow in coming forward. The enemies of the Reformation mocked it as "Foxe's Golden Legend" and the wild charge was made that the author had even destroyed and defaced important records. Strype, however, is a weighty defender of the martyrologist: "Foxe", he says, "was an indefatigable searcher into old registers, and left them as he found them, after he had made his collections and transcriptions out of them. Many whereof I have seen, and do possess. And it was his interest that they should remain to be seen by posterity. And therefore we frequently find references thereunto in the margins of his book. Many have diligently compared his books with registers, and council books, and have always found him faithful" (*Annals*, I, 21). Similarly, Strype's contemporary and distinguished fellow-historian Bishop Gilbert Burnet, after observing that Foxe's work "can by no means be called a complete history of these times", adds that, "having compared his Acts and Monuments with the records, I have never been able to discover any errors or prevarications in them, but the utmost fidelity and exactness" (*The History of the Reformation of the Church of England*, 1865 edition, Preface, p. 5).

Foxe's hopes were not disappointed, for his labours were crowned with success in his own lifetime. His book received an enthusiastic welcome and for long enjoyed a popularity second only to that of the English Bible. To quote Strype again: "This history of the Church was of such value and esteem for the use of it to Christian readers and the service of our Religion Reformed, that it was in the days of Queen Elizabeth enjoined to be set up in some convenient place in all the parish churches, together with the Bible and Bishop Jewel's *Defence of the Apology of the Church of England*, to be read at all suitable times by the people, before or after service". Strype also speaks of the respect and affection in which Foxe was held by Archbishop Whitgift (*Annals*, II, 14). There were three further editions, in 1571, 1576, and 1582, prior to Foxe's death, which took place in 1587, and in the last of these

the work had reached its final form, covering the history of persecutions from the post-apostolic age onwards. The line of calumniators of the *Acts and Monuments* stretches from Foxe's contemporary Nicholas Harnpsfield to the present day, though it is no longer wise to suggest that Foxe wrote as many lies as there are lines in his work. Assailants must now content themselves with the charge that Foxe was governed by extreme prejudice and credulity and with the perpetuation of the taunt of a Protestant "Golden Legend" (see, for example, *The Reformation in England*, revised edition, 1963, p. 238, by the Roman Catholic author Philip Hughes—not to be confused with your Editor any more than Fisher the Jesuit is to be confused with the present Archbishop of Canterbury's predecessor in that high office!). In our day, however, Foxe is coming into his own again. Historians of unquestionable stature speak appreciatively of the value of his work. Thus, for example, Professor Owen Chadwick, of the University of Cambridge, declares that the *Acts and Monuments* is "a great book in its own right" which contains "much material still indispensable to the historian of the age" (*The Reformation*, 1964, p. 175); Professor William Clebsch, of Stanford University, who describes Foxe as "usually a careful narrator who exercised critical judgment on his sources", draws attention to the fact that in J. F. Mozley's *John Foxe and His Book* (London, 1940) "a long tradition of impugning Foxe's accuracy has been corrected and grievances against him redressed" (*England's Earliest Protestants*, 1964, pp. 279, 280); and Professor A. G. Dickens, of the University of London, in a context concerning the survival of Lollardy in England, gives the following estimate of Foxe:

The martyrologist, who was a large-scale compiler rather than a fastidious historian, showed immense industry in amassing documentary information even if his standards of accuracy are not those of modern scholarship. When all due reservations have been made, it cannot sanely be maintained that Foxe fabricated this mass of detailed and circumstantial information about early Tudor Lollardy. To have done so would have required diabolical inventive powers and erudition, including a study of the parish registers of Buckinghamshire, in which a large proportion of the surnames and several of the actual persons occur. Such wholesale forgery would also have been highly foolish at a date (Foxe was collecting these materials from about 1552 onwards) when so many of the people and the events remained well within living memory. Again, no forger would have given, as Foxe gives, a host of precise references to episcopal records. In some cases he receives detailed support from surviving documents; in others his sources have clearly been lost. . . . Our complaint against Foxe should not be one of exaggeration but one of incompleteness (*The English Reformation*, 1964, pp. 26f.).

But there is something more to be said in favour of John Foxe, namely, that these evaluations of the intrinsic worth of his writings are supported by what we know of his personal character. Not only was he a man of studious temper, incessantly striving after accurate information regarding the persons and events which it was his purpose to commemorate, but he was also one whose disposition was singularly free from rancour and vindictiveness. Indeed, he was a true pioneer in the long struggle for mildness and toleration in the treatment of

religious adversaries. In the biography written by his son Foxe's aversion to cruelty is described, and his moderation towards even those with whose opinions he was in total disagreement. The son states that he could produce letters in which his father sought to persuade those in authority not to inflict capital punishment on Campion and his fellow-conspirators or any other offenders; and in fact the text of a letter is still extant which he addressed to the lords spiritual and temporal during Mary's reign, protesting against the barbarous manner in which adherents of the Reformed faith were being hunted and made to endure cruel deaths, Englishmen at the hands of Englishmen, and Christians at the hands of Christians. (The Latin text is given in the Appendix to Strype's *Memorials of Archbishop Cranmer*, Number LXXXV.) Foxe's son tells us, moreover, that he hoped that the day would come when the members of the Church of Rome would "not be ashamed to confess their error, to amend their faults, to reconsider their discipline, and be willing to part with their usurped supremacy, to procure the peace of the whole world; and the repose of the churches of the holy catholic Church of Christ". In a Church so reconstituted he was even willing to envisage the Bishop of Rome as the presiding figure.

John Foxe died in London on 18 April 1587 at the age of seventy. The popular esteem in which he was held was demonstrated by the large crowds which assembled for the funeral to honour his name. He was buried in the chancel of Cripplegate church. The Latin inscription composed by his son Samuel and engraved on the stone beneath which he was interred describes him as "a most faithful martyrologist of the Anglican church, most sagacious student of antiquity, most ardent champion of evangelical truth, and admirable thaumaturge who displayed the Marian martyrs revived, like phoenixes, from the ashes". In the next century another great Englishman was buried by his side in the same church—John Milton. And there the two lie together until the day of resurrection.

* * * *

Another significant publishing venture which is making available valuable material of the sixteenth century is the production by the Neukirchener Verlag in Germany of a large number of sermons of John Calvin which have never hitherto been in print. This is being done with the co-operation of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches under the general title of *Supplementa Calviniana*. These sermons do indeed constitute a most important supplement to the writings of Calvin which are contained in the *Corpus Reformatorum*. They fill out, in effect, the commentaries on the various books of the Bible, which are of course, as written exegesis, much more concise and less discursive than the sermons, as spoken exegesis, and in some cases even fill in gaps in exegesis, as with the sermons on 2 Samuel on which Calvin left no commentary.

It is due to the unflagging industry of one man in particular, Denis Raguénier, that these sermons were committed to the written page. For a period of some twelve years, from 1549 until his death, Raguénier, one of the many Frenchmen who found in Geneva a refuge from persecution in those days, devoted himself to the task of recording

Calvin's sermons precisely, word for word, as they were preached. Calvin's share in the preaching which was required by the ecclesiastical ordinances of Geneva was not slight. Ten times every fortnight he was in the pulpit expounding the Word of God : twice every Sunday in St. Pierre and once every weekday on alternate weeks. He preached his way systematically through one book after another of the Old and New Testaments, and he did it extemporaneously, so that unless someone were to write down his words as he uttered them the sermons would have had a life no longer than the preaching of them. Raguénier was employed by the Compagnie des Etrangers in Geneva to make *verbatim* copies of Calvin's sermons as they were preached, and he fulfilled this assignment with the greatest possible diligence. Using a shorthand of his own devising he faithfully recorded every word of each sermon, and then, the sermon over, transcribed his work into longhand. As different hands are readily discernible in the manuscript copies, it is evident that in the performance of the latter task Raguénier had the assistance of other scribes to whom he dictated the text of the sermons from his stenographic original. After his death, which took place in 1560 or 1561, the work was carried on by other stenographers for the remaining three or four years of Calvin's life.

The story of the preparation of these manuscripts and of their subsequent fortunes, or misfortunes, is admirably told by Professor Bernard Gagnebin in an essay prefixed to the volume of sermons on Isaiah 13-29. We do not propose to recount the details here, interesting though they are. Suffice it to say that the manuscript sermons, well over two thousand of them all told, were bound together in 48 volumes ; in 1613 the deacons of the Bourse des Pauvres Etrangers handed them over to the Library of Geneva for safe-keeping ; during the next two centuries several of the volumes seem to have disappeared or at least there is no account of them in the catalogues of the period that have been preserved ; then early in the nineteenth century the calamitous decision was made to sell off the volumes by weight, together with other surplus material from the library, as unimportant lumber, though one volume was kept by the library as a sort of sample. During the past century and a half, at different times and in a variety of circumstances, seventeen of these volumes (in some cases copies) have been recovered, the most recent discovery, in 1962, being that of the manuscript volume of sermons on Genesis, preached by Calvin in Geneva in 1559 and 1560, and evidently in the hand of Raguénier himself, in the Library of Lambeth Palace (see our Editorial of March 1964). The majority are thus still missing, and the question is whether they are still in existence or have by one means or another suffered destruction. As it is, the editing and preparation for the press of the available sermons is in itself an ambitious enough project which will not soon be brought to completion. Meanwhile it can be stated that those volumes which have so far appeared—on 2 Samuel (xliv + 788pp., 98.40 DM) ; on Isaiah 13-29 (xxviii + 664pp., 120.00 DM) ; and on Micah (xvi + 264pp., 75.00 DM)—give ample attestation to the wholly admirable standard of production and the meticulous care in editing with which this exacting task is being carried through.

It is naturally a matter of gratification to us that the Marcham Manor Press should have wished to republish between the covers of one volume a number of the important essays which have appeared in *The Churchman* during recent years. The book (which was reviewed in our last issue) is entitled *Churchmen Speak* and the authors represented—the Archbishop of York, J. B. Phillips, Bishop Stephen Neill, C. S. Lewis, Geoffrey Lampe, James Packer, Gervase Duffield, Geoffrey Bromiley, Donald Robinson, and Graham Windsor—do indeed speak effectively to the contemporary situation in the Church (as *The Churchman* itself always endeavours to do). We hope that this book will be made widely known by our readers, and at the same time we take this opportunity to encourage our readers to be our collaborators also by constantly trying to find new subscribers, clerical and lay, to *The Churchman*.

With reference to the present issue, we acknowledge with thanks our indebtedness to Messrs. Hodder and Stoughton for permission to publish in advance the essay by the Rev. John Cockerton, which virtually constitutes the opening chapter of his forthcoming book *To Be Sure* in the *Christian Foundations* series currently being produced under the auspices of the Evangelical Fellowship in the Anglican Communion. The other three articles are concerned with the assessment of the charismatic movement, and more particularly with the phenomenon of speaking in tongues, which is gaining so many adherents in the Church at the present time. The order in which they are placed is not of course in any way intended to reflect on their respective merits; they are simply placed in what seems to us to be the most suitable sequence. Speaking somewhat generally, it may be said that the first is *pro* and the second *contra*, while the third defines a position that is both critical and mediating.

P.E.H.
