

THE BARTHOLOMEW LEGACY

Remembering the Martyrs

But, as he who was born according to the flesh then persecuted him who was born according to the Spirit, even so it is now.

(Galatians 4: 29)

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Introduction

No, this is not about Bartholomew's maps, nor about Barts Hospital in London. Neither can we aim to provide a biblical character study about the Apostle Bartholomew. Indeed, nothing at all is said about him in the New Testament apart from listing him among the apostles. Yet, during the early twentieth century, his name was known outside the circles of cartographers, tourists and medics.

One can imagine a scenario somewhere in the West of England in 1923, where a Sunday school teacher tried to introduce his or her pupils to the twelve apostles. On declaring that the Bible tells us absolutely nothing about Bartholomew, an observant lad interjected with "I saw *Saint Bartholomew* a few days ago!" "Oh where?" To which the lad replied to the startled teacher, "*Saint Bartholomew* came through with the *Cheltenham Flyer* express" [the GWR's new prestige train]. Our young train-spotting scholar then added excitedly, "I got the number - 2915!"

Yes, we know more about G. J. Churchward's famous Great Western Railway 2-cylinder, 4-6-0 Saint Class steam locomotives than we know for sure about the 'saint' himself. (Incidentally, 2914 was *Saint Augustine* and 2917 was *Saint Bernard*, not to ignore that 2923, 2913, 2920 and 2927 were *Saints George, Andrew, David and Patrick* respectively). Sadly, the superstition of 'patron saints' survives long after the last of these engines were scrapped in 1953. For the record (with *some* thematic link to our subject), Saint class 2903 *Lady of Lyons* (built in 1907) is credited with an unconfirmed 120 mph on a trial run. (One wonders if the current rebuild of a Saint at the GWR centre at Didcot might lead to a challenge to *Mallard's* 1938 world speed record for steam of 126 mph). Whether or not the actual 'Lady of Lyons' was a saint (unlike 2904 *Lady Godiva*), the city of Lyons is associated with early persecution of Christians (177 AD) and later martyrdoms of Huguenots (1553, 1572).

Apart from legends about his mission to India and Armenia, and his eventual horrific martyrdom (it is said he was flayed alive before being beheaded, miraculous healing properties being later claimed for his skin, hence the link with medicine), nothing is known for sure about the Apostle Bartholomew. Not to forget that imperial Rome was sacked by Alaric the Goth on 24 August 410, the medieval Roman Church appointed this calendar day for the Festival of St Bartholomew. Ironically, it was the later persecuting activities of the Roman Catholic Church that associated St Bartholomew with a most appalling atrocity that bears his name.

TWO BLACK BARTHOLOMEWS

During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, following the Protestant Reformation, two outrages were committed against good and faithful Christian people on 24 August. The first - in 1572 - was against French Huguenots (Reformed Christians, Calvinists), thousands of whom were butchered by Roman Catholics in Paris and beyond. This terrible event is known as the St Bartholomew Massacre. Queen Elizabeth I went white as she heard the news.

The second - in 1662 - was against English Puritans or Nonconformists (Reformed Christians, Calvinists), when around 2,000 godly pastors were ejected from their churches by the then recently-restored Church of England. Queen Elizabeth's church (in the hands of 'secret Catholic' King Charles II) repeated the intolerance of the Pope's church. Both atrocities led to much suffering and injustice.

These two expressions of 'politically-correct' religious tyranny (Roman Catholic and Anglican) reveal the darker side of Christian history. In the long battle between the Light and darkness, it has always been 'right forever on the scaffold, wrong forever on the throne'. Yet, in His sovereign wisdom and providence, Almighty God uses such atrocities to promote His everlasting kingdom, as surely as the sacrifice of His only-begotten Son brought salvation to the world.

THE FRENCH BARTHOLOMEW

First, the facts:

1. The spread of the Reformation in France saw numerous conversions among the nobility as well as the general population. Among John Calvin's numerous correspondents was Gaspard de Coligny, Admiral of France.
2. After a decade of religious war (following the massacre of a Reformed congregation near Vassy by soldiers of the Catholic Duke of Guise), a peace-promoting marriage between the Protestant Henry of Navarre (the future Henry IV of France) and Margaret of Valois, sister of King Charles IX took place at Notre-Dame, Paris on 18 August 1572.
3. The Protestant aristocracy were invited for the occasion, including Admiral Coligny. Much admired by the young Charles IX, he proposed policies which advanced the interests of both the French monarchy and the French Reformed Church.
4. Jealous and fearful of this influence, the Duke of Guise and the queen mother Catherine de Medici hired an assassin to kill Coligny. An attempt while the Protestant leader was walking the streets of Paris failed, only leaving him wounded. Gravely concerned, Charles IX promised an investigation and punishment for the plotters.
5. The king's sympathy created panic among the Catholics, who did all they could to counter Coligny's influence. Catherine, the Duke and Henri de Anjou (later Henri III) managed - after prolonged psychological pressure - to persuade the feeble-minded monarch that Coligny was really a threat to royal power. On Saturday evening, 23 August, confused Charles lost his temper: "If you want to kill Coligny, I agree, but then kill all the other

Huguenots, so that no one will be able to blame me on account of his death!”

6. At 3 am, the Duke and his men surprised and assassinated Admiral Coligny at his lodging. Mortally wounded, he was thrown from his window, his head being kicked on the ground by the Duke. All the other Protestant leaders were killed by the royal guard. Sadly, the young Henry of Navarre instantly professed to be a Catholic to avoid death. While returning to the Reformed party soon afterwards (his evangelical convictions yet doubtful), this was sadly a ‘conversion’ he repeated in later years to gain the crown of France.

7. Urged on by priests and nuns, the Paris mob attacked Huguenots in their homes for three consecutive days. In the ensuing horror, it is estimated that at least ten thousand lost their lives in the city. The streets flowed with blood and dead bodies were thrown into the Seine. Urged on by Charles and Catherine, the atrocity spread to the provinces. The total number of victims is hard to estimate accurately - 30, 000 might be a conservative figure. It should be said that the Bishop of Lisieux forbade such killing in his diocese. But he was a rare exception.

Second, who were the guilty?

Charles IX surely. He was no match for all the intrigue surrounding him. Yet clearly overwhelmed with remorse, this weak individual suffered acutely. Two years later he died in agony, seeing blood everywhere. Refusing to see his mother at his death bed, he found a measure of comfort through his faithful Huguenot nurse. Catherine herself, a political schemer, had been married to an unfaithful Henri II. An Italian Catholic, and disciple of Machiavelli, she ruthlessly retained her influence. She hated Henri of Navarre and the Protestants, yet died unhappy and almost unnoticed in 1589. Providing the real dynamic behind the Bartholomew massacre, the Duke of Guise was a fanatical Catholic. His partner in the crime, Henri de Anjou, later Henri III, eventually turned against the Duke, having him assassinated at Blois in 1587. Then there’s the Paris mob. Hating their Protestant neighbours for their godly and prosperous life-style, they were stirred up by fanatical priests to kill and plunder. With all restraint gone, the basest human instincts took over.

The Roman Catholic hierarchy was the chief culprit in the atrocity. Always in favour of persecution, the Vatican viewed religious toleration as an unpardonable sin. Pope Pius V had written accordingly to King Charles IX in 1569:

Your majesty must consider as certain that this (namely the restoration of public order) will never take place, as long as the whole kingdom will not accept unanimously and keep faithfully the one and same Catholic religion. In order to reach that goal with God’s help, it is necessary that Your Majesty act without mercy against God’s enemies, his own rebellious subjects, and punish them with the rightful pains and torments stated by the law (cited in Jules M. Nicole, ‘Black Bartholomew’, *Christian Graduate*, December 1972 (25: 4), 111).

Although Pope Pius V had died by the time of the Bartholomew massacre,

his successor Gregory XIII welcomed news of the event, ordering Te Deums to be sung in all the churches. He also had an infamous medal struck to commemorate the Church's triumph over 'heresy'.

Naturally, King Philip II of Spain rejoiced that Protestantism had been thus suppressed in France. His own scheme to humble Queen Elizabeth I and Protestant England found eventual fruition in the Spanish Armada of 1588, a scheme which, in the merciful providence of Almighty God, ended in ruin.

Not all Catholic princes rejoiced. The Emperor Maximilian II, Charles IX's father-in-law expressed deep sorrow over the cruelty displayed. Even Charles' wife, daughter of the emperor, the devoutly-Catholic Elizabeth of Austria pleaded tearfully with her husband that some Protestants who had taken refuge in her room might be spared. The liberal and tolerant Chancellor of France, Michel de l'Hospital was so overwhelmed with grief that he died shortly after the massacre.

Third, what effect did the massacre have on the Lord's Reformed people in France?

Having observed that over many years the French Reformed churches had provided 'a vast multitude of most zealous and faithful martyrs, far more in number and quality of sufferers for the Gospel, than in any one of the Reformed Christian nations in Europe', the English Presbyterian historian of the Huguenots, John Quick (1636-1706) provides a judicious and moving assessment of the aftermath:

The churches after the Parisian massacre were at a stand. That deluge of Protestant blood, which was then shed had exhausted their best spirits. Multitudes were frightened out of their native land, ... and others were frightened out of their religion. In such a dreadful hurricane as that was, no wonder if some leaves, unripe fruit, and rotten withered branches fell to the earth, and were lost irrecoverably. However, a remnant escaped, and, which was no less than a miracle, generally the ministers, God reserving them to gather in another harvest. And the churches in many places revived. God staying the rough wind in the day of His east wind, and giving them a breathing time, a little reviving under their hard bondage (*Synodicon in Gallia Reformata*, 1692, i, p. lx).

John Quick goes on to outline the sad effects of Henri of Navarre's 'Paris is worth a mass' apostasy by which he obtained the throne of France as Henri IV in 1593 . Yet never entirely forgetting his former Protestant friends, he granted them the tolerant provisions of the Edict of Nantes in April 1598. In the decades that followed, the Reformed churches of France flourished until further persecution descended on them during the reign of King Louis XIV. However, we may conclude that this history assures us beyond all doubt the truth of our Saviour's words that, despite all the persecution of all the ages, 'the gates of hell will never prevail against His Church' (see *Matt. 16: 18*), the true Church of the Reformation and all who faithfully profess the pure truth of the everlasting Gospel.

THE ENGLISH BARTHOLOMEW

Following the end of the Cromwellian era, pent up resentment and revenge

burst on the heads of the Puritans. Their attempts to complete the English Reformation proved a disappointment. The restoration of Church and Monarchy prompted appallingly brutal persecution. The regicides were arrested and disembowelled. The *Act of Uniformity*, coming into force on St Bartholomew's Day, 24 August 1662, drove around two-thousand puritan clergy from their livings. Many were to experience imprisonment. The day was known as 'Black Bartholomew'. Clearly the date was deliberately chosen, an intimidating reminder of the French Bartholomew massacre ninety years earlier. J. C. Ryle said of the *Act of Uniformity*:

Taking all things into consideration, a more impolitic and disgraceful deed never disfigured the annals of a Protestant Church. ... To show the spirit of the ruling party in the Church, they actually added to the number of apocryphal lessons in the Prayerbook calendar at this time. They made it a matter of congratulation among themselves that they had thrust out the Puritans, and got in Bel and the Dragon ('Richard Baxter' in *Light from Old Times*, 1890, 1902 rep. 316-7).

Led by Richard Baxter and others, the Presbyterians made up around two-thirds of this godly company. They were the 'cheated party'. Being honourable monarchists and moderate revolutionaries did not shield them from the wrath of King and Bishop. They had the misfortune to trust the word of a King who had few of his father's virtues but several of his vices. Having promised 'liberty to tender consciences' at Breda in 1660, Charles soon forgot such seeming magnanimity by the time he reached London. However, with the Restoration, the fruits of the Puritan Revolution were not entirely lost. The new monarchy was never to have the power of the old. The Star Chamber and the High Commission were never revived. Taxation was never again levied without parliamentary consent.

If England was safe from anarchy, she was not secure from the relentless intrigue of the Roman Catholic Church. While Puritans suffered for nearly thirty years, England's Protestantism remained threatened. However, even the Cavalier Parliament was too strongly Protestant for King Charles II whose sympathies for popery were known. Indeed, in 1670, the King entered into a treaty with Louis XIV of France to curb the aspirations of the Dutch Calvinist, William of Orange.

Unknown to Charles' protestant ministers, the secret clause of the shameful *Treaty of Dover* (1670) was signed by the Catholic members of the Cabal, Lords Arlington and Clifford. Louis hereby promised to supply Charles with French troops and money if, at an opportune time, Charles would declare himself a Roman Catholic. The article's chilling words actually read: 'The King of Great Britain being convinced of the truth of the Catholic Faith, is determined to declare himself a Catholic...as soon as the welfare of his realm will permit.'

CONCLUSION

If Englishmen had retreated from the anarchy and repression of the revolutionary era, they were not about to forget the danger of Romanism. Parliament maintained the necessity of a protestant church and a protestant monarchy. Roman Catholic influence in the persons of Charles II and James II - the sons of Henrietta Maria - was firmly checked. After the failure of the

ill-fated Monmouth rebellion of 1685, it was the 'Glorious Revolution' of 1688 that finally ensured a protestant constitution and succession when William and Mary ascended the throne. Constitutional monarchy thus replaced Stuart absolutism. Protestant safeguards were enshrined in the *Bill of Rights* (1689) and later in the *Act of Settlement* (1701). With the passing of the *Toleration Act* (1689), persecuted Nonconformists became legally-worshipping Protestant Dissenters.

With the aid of Huguenot regiments formed from refugees driven out of France at the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes (1685), William of Orange finally rescued this country from the popish menace when he defeated James II at the battle of the Boyne in 1690. During the eighteenth century, England's Protestantism was reinforced by the Methodist Revival. Until the *Catholic Emancipation Act* of 1829 and the restoration of the Roman Catholic hierarchy in England and Wales in 1850 (after which Cardinal Manning effectively declared war on protestant England), one may say that the zealous Protestantism of Puritan England continued to exert its liberating power.

Three centuries later, in an age of ecumenical and multi-faith apostasy, we must ensure by God's grace that the essential protestant legacy of the puritan period is maintained. We dare not imagine that the Church of Rome has changed: as surely as she meddled in British politics in the seventeenth century, so she is active in the heart of Europe today. In view of the UK visit of Pope Benedict XVI in 2010, we cannot deny that these dark forces are still at work. Let us never forget the significance of 24 August. May all who name Christ as Lord and Saviour (and others who value religious liberty) be careful to honour His godly servants of the Reformation era, determined still to 'contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints' (*Jude 3*).

POSTSCRIPT

Dr Edmund Calamy (1671-1732) published *An Abridgement of Mr Baxter's History of His Life and Times with An account of the Ministers...who were Ejected after the Restoration of King Charles II* (1702). Integral with his ministry, Calamy clearly felt called of God to transmit the heroic faith of Baxter and his brethren: "To let the Memory of these Men Dye is injurious to Posterity". His *Abridgement* involved great courage, and it provoked a storm. At a time of continuing Anglican-inspired hostility to the heirs of the Puritans, this inspiring material marked out Edmund Calamy as 'the Champion of Nonconformity'.

Apart from modest attention from nonconformist scholars, Dr Calamy is a largely unsung hero of a depressing period in English church history. While he never had the impact of his hero Richard Baxter (and how many could claim that until George Whitefield appeared in 1735?), Calamy shared most of Baxter's convictions, a good deal of his piety and an equally-strong pastoral and evangelistic commitment. In addition, besides documenting the sacrifice of the ejected ministers of 1662, he perhaps more than any other preacher and theologian transmitted Baxter's wonderful legacy to the eighteenth century and beyond.