

**AGNES DE TRACY; A TALE
OF THE TIMES OF S.
THOMAS OF CANTERBURY**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649040148

Agnes De Tracy; A Tale of the Times of S. Thomas of Canterbury by J. M. Neale

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Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

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J. M. NEALE

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Agnes de Tracy ;
A TALE OF THE TIMES

OF

S. Thomas of Canterbury.

BY THE

REV. J. M. NEALE, B.A.

LATE SCHOLAR OF TRINITY COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE;
AUTHOR OF "HERBERT VERHAM."

Ye goes to Canterbury : God you spede ;
The Blisful Martyr quide you your mede !
Prof. Cant. Tales.

Cambridge :
THOMAS STEVENSON.
LONDON : J. G. F. AND J. RIVINGTON.
MDCCKXLIII.



P R E F A C E.

ONE of the unhappy effects which were naturally, though not necessarily, produced by the Reformation of the English Church, is the gulf which seems to be fixed between those who are now her sons, and the Saints and Martyrs of her earlier times. Even those whose names still appear in our Calendar produce, except as a testimony of the wishes of those who constructed the Prayer-Book, little practical effect; and we look on the days sacred to the memories of S. Augustine, and S. Elphege, and S. Dunstan, and S. Edmund, without venerating the Founders, and the Martyrs, and Confessors of Her who has been made, by God's good Providence, our nursing mother.

If such be our apathy towards those whom she commemorates, there is little need for wonder that one, whose name has, from unhappy circumstances,

been struck out of her Records, should not only be considered as unworthy of remembrance, but, in this Erastian age, become the subject of hatred and scorn. The very name of S. Thomas of Canterbury has become associated, even from our childhood, with all that was intolerant, and superstitious, and bigoted: our infidel and schismatical historians fostered the impression; and those who ought to have removed it have, in too many cases, feared to incur the odium of defending one against whom popular opinion was so decidedly expressed. Indeed, the silence with which he is treated by most of our standard Divines is a curious subject of remark.

The Becket papers in the remains of Mr. Froude were a noble and successful attempt to vindicate for the Saint the honour due to a Martyr; and if the following pages are at all serviceable in conducting towards the same end, my task will have been well undertaken. I have endeavoured in them to relate things as they really were; not claiming for the Prelate the glory of a perfect character, nor hiding what may be justly considered the abuses of the age in which he lived. Neither have I thought it necessary to remark on these in the course of the tale; since I am not writing for Romanists, but for

Anglicans; and the latter will probably be quick-sighted enough on these points.

A curious and instructive comparison ought to be drawn between S. Thomas of Canterbury and Archbishop Laud. The former, in opposing Erastianism and a Monarch, courted perhaps too much the favour of the people; the latter, in opposing the frenzy of the rabble, leant perhaps too much on the favour of a King. But who would seek for the faults, when he may contemplate the glorious actions of these two blessed Martyrs?

It is sometimes said, that granting S. Thomas to have been all that we assert he was, it can only be dangerous to exhibit him so, since thereby we seem enticing people to Romanism. But, not to mention that truth need never fear truth, the case is not so. Whatever Romanists may assert as to their retaining the same principles which S. Thomas held, one thing is certain, that they can in no sense be called members of the same Church. That Church, for which he contended during all his Episcopate and at last shed his blood, either exists in us, or not at all. And so it may be said of all our early Martyrs and Confessors. We are joined with them, on all essential points, in doctrine; to succession from

them, we alone have any claim. The more affectionate reverence we bear them, the more unwilling surely shall we be to leave their Church.

In the mean time we shall best follow their example by striving and praying for that Unity of the Church which they enjoyed. And while we think, in reference to our present dissensions, of Archbishop Laud's words, uttered as on this day, "Now it is in a storm itself, and God only knows whether or how it shall get out; and which is worse than a storm from without, it is become like an oak cleft to shivers with wedges made out of its own body;" we shall also remember how dear in the sight of the Lord is the death of His Saints; and how powerful is the protection of the blood of Martyrs. Surely, if lately the Church in Man was preserved by the remembrance of one Prelate, the Church in England, with her thousand Confessors, will not be permitted finally to fall.

PENZANCE, 1843.

BOOK I.

S. Thomas a Confessor.

BEATI PATRIS MERITA JAM IN TUTO POSITA SECURI
MAGNIFICEMUS; QUI GOVERNACULUM FIDEI VIRILITER
TENENS, ANCHORA SPEI TRANQUILLA JAM IN STATIONE
COMPOSUIT: QUI CONTRA OMNES ADVERSARIOS SCUTUM
TIMORIS DEI TANDIUM INFATIGABILITER TENUIT, DONEC
AD VICTORIAM PERVENIRET. QUID ENIM FUIT TOTUS
VITA ILLIUS CURSUS NISI UNUS CUM VIGILI HOSTE CON-
FLICTUS?—S. MAXIMUS, *Hom. LIX. de S. Eusebio.*