

THE STUDY OF ECCLESIASTICAL HISTORY

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The study of Ecclesiastical history by William Edward Collins

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WILLIAM EDWARD COLLINS

**THE STUDY OF
ECCLESIASTICAL
HISTORY**

Handbooks for the Clergy

EDITED BY

ARTHUR W. ROBINSON, B.D.

VICAR OF ALLHALLOWS BARKING
BY THE TOWER

THE STUDY OF
ECCLESIASTICAL HISTORY

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THE STUDY OF ECCLESIASTICAL HISTORY

BY

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1903

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TO
MY PUPILS
AT
KING'S COLLEGE LONDON
1893-1903
DISCIPULUS CONDISCIPULIS

PREFACE

THIS little book is the realisation, all too unworthy as I know well, of a plan which has been long in my mind. Having had to teach ecclesiastical history continuously for some twelve years, I have endeavoured again and again, as doubtless other teachers have, to say something in lecture as to the methods of study to be used. But whilst lecturing is the ideal method of imparting some kinds of knowledge, it is ill fitted for the communication of such guidance as this; and I have felt increasingly the need of a book which could be placed in the hands of students at our colleges, and of those who, being already at work in their parishes, desire to continue their historical studies. It is for these two classes (they are really one) that I have written; and the book is not intended primarily as a manual for the professed student of history. Nevertheless I venture to hope that some of these may find it useful.

It may be noticed that I have spoken throughout of "ecclesiastical history" rather than of "Church history." I have done so of set purpose; and the reason will be obvious to anybody who will read the first chapter of this book. In point

of fact there may be nothing to choose between the two phrases; and rightly understood, Church history is as wide a definition as one could wish for. But as long as people will go on thinking that Church history is concerned only with one class of acts, or one sect of mankind (even though it be the sect "of Paul," or "of Apollos," or "of Cephas," or "of Christ"), so long will it seem desirable to use any variant that serves to guard against such an idea, even though it be identical in meaning.

I am sensible that the list of books in the last chapter is open to the criticism of being somewhat unsystematic and capricious: the books are not graduated in any way, and no attempt is made to arrange them so as to form a consecutive course of reading. But I have adopted this plan on purpose. Those for whom the book is intended will not be likely to enter upon a systematic course of study on these lines, nor is it to be desired that they should do so. And I hope that the list may be more useful by way of suggestion because it contains books of all kinds arranged in this apparently unstudied order. It might, of course, have been prolonged indefinitely; but it did not seem wise to occupy more of the space at my disposal in this way.

Some students, and especially such as are quite new to the study of ecclesiastical history, may find it advisable to pass on directly from the first chapter to the fifth and those which follow it,

returning afterwards to chapters ii-iv, which they will then be in a better position to appreciate. But I greatly hope that they will not omit these last-mentioned chapters, under the impression that for the elementary student they are irrelevant. Nothing could really be further from the truth.

I have made use, in writing this book, of the notes of several addresses which I have given in different places, and in one or two cases of what I have said elsewhere in writing; but it has not seemed necessary in such cases to give references. And I trust that in the strictures which I have felt bound to make upon certain books, chosen in illustration of particular kinds of errors, there may be nothing which passes the bounds of charity or of courtesy.

W. E. COLLINS.

✓ ST NINIAN'S HOUSE, PERTH,
Feast of St Augustine of Hippo, MCMIII.

