

LEADING PERSONS AND PERIODS IN ENGLISH CHURCH HISTORY

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Leading Persons and Periods in English Church History by Davis Sessums

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DAVIS SESSUMS

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English Church History

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Rev. Francis L. Palmer

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INTRODUCTION.

THE lectures in this volume were delivered during the past winter and spring, under the auspices of the Church Club of the Diocese of Minnesota, in Christ Church, St. Paul, and in Gethsemane Church, Minneapolis. They are designed to cover certain important epochs in the history of the Anglo-American Church which mark its most important and significant experiences.

This object, as will be seen by their perusal, has been most satisfactorily accomplished.

They were received with marked acceptance by the large congregations which greeted the distinguished lecturers.

The Church Club feels that their benefits should be bestowed upon a larger audience than the people of St. Paul and Minneapolis, and with this end in view, herewith presents them in convenient form for general circulation.

It is quite within the bounds of truth to say that a more valuable or helpful course of historical papers has never been presented in the American Church. They will, wherever read, aid materially toward the elucidation of the facts of history, and the removal of erroneous impressions prevailing so universally regarding the realization and development of the independent organic life of the Church.

In view of the almost invincible ignorance prevailing, not only outside the Church, but too often within, as to the actual movement and meaning of the Reformation, the

truth regarding it cannot be too freely or too publicly proclaimed.

The Church simply asks for a fair and impartial hearing; she has nothing to conceal, she has no facts of history to distort; clearly, unequivocally, she proclaims her unbroken organic continuity, and appeals to the bar of history for confirmation. It sometimes appears as if, in trying to prove the independence of the early British Church, and the continuity of our succession therefrom, we have unconsciously lost sight of the value and competency of that succession which comes through Augustine, and which produced the real organism of the Church of England; an organism never willingly subject to the domination of Rome, but always asserting its right to be free.

From Wycliffe to Pusey is a great cycle of history, and it is full of lessons and incidents which mean mighty things to the English-speaking race.

No one can read these lectures without an increase of loyal devotion to the Church of our fathers, and the settled conviction that this Church which has preserved her character through such times of storm and stress, which has been the mother of such noble sons, which has shown her capacity to revive new spiritual energies at critical periods, which, with a marvellous adaptability and vitality, has been transplanted to almost every land—is the Church for America and for the world.

WYCLIF AND THE PRE-REFORMATION PERIOD.

RT. REV. DAVIS SSSSOME, D.D.,
Bishop of Louisiana.

AN essential preliminary in any study of special periods of Church History is an assertion, however brief, of the original unity of the Christian Church; a unity which realized the essential ideal of Christ and enabled the Church in its early days to fulfil its mission of bearing the Gospel to the uttermost parts of the world.

How that unity came to be broken, and how in consequence of its rupture Christianity came to be so corrupted as in later ages to require fundamental Reformation, is a familiar story. Yet to offset popular errors, to recall actual history as to the relations between the Latin and the English branches of the Catholic Church, and to indicate the state of corruption which obtained in the fourteenth century as causing and justifying the recoil initiated by Wyclif and consummated by his successors of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, it