

**THE EPISTLE  
(SEPTEMBER-  
NOVEMBER 1588)**

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The Epistle (September-November 1588) by Martin Marprelate & Edward Arber

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**MARTIN MARPRELATE & EDWARD ARBER**

**THE EPISTLE  
(SEPTEMBER-  
NOVEMBER 1588)**



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MARTIN MARPRELATE

The Epistle

[September—November 1588]

EDITED BY

EDWARD ARBER

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LONDON

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CONTENTS.



	PAGE
Bibliography ... ..	VI
INTRODUCTION ... ..	vii-xi
Title of the ground-work Book of the Controversy ...	xii
<i>Controversiæ Personæ</i> ... ..	xiii-xiv

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<i>The Epistle</i> ... ..	I
<i>To the right puisante   and terrible Priests, &amp;c.</i> ...	3-34, 36-49
<i>Conditions of Peace to be inuiolabile kept for ever  </i> <i>betweene the reuerend and worthy Master</i> <i>MARTIN MARPRELATE gentleman on the one</i> <i>partie   and the reuerend fathers his bretheren  </i> <i>the Lord bishops of this lande</i> ... ..	35. 36



## BIBLIOGRAPHY.



### ISSUES IN THE AUTHORS' LIFETIME.

- 1 [Sept.-Nov. 1588. East Molesey, Surrey.] See *p.* 1.

### ISSUES SINCE THEIR DEATH.

2. 1842. 71, Chancery Lane, London. 8vo. *Puritan Discipline Traced*  
The Epistle to the terrible Priests &c. [Edited by JOHN PETHERAM]  
A second edition in 1843.
3. 2 August, 1880. Willesden, London, N.W. The present impression

*∴ All as separate publications.*





## INTRODUCTION.



WE HAVE seen in the *Introductory Sketch*, &c. (No. 8 of this Series), *pp.* 195, that this *Epistle* was the production of JOHN PENRY, assisted by JOB THROCKMORTON : and that they made use of some *memoranda* which Rev. JOHN UDALL, Preacher at Kingston, had made and which he had shewn in his study to the Vicar of that place, the Rev. STEPHEN CHATFIELD so far back as Michaelmas, 1587. *pp.* 83, 90, 171. But UDALL ever repudiated the mocking method of the presenting those facts which is adopted in the present Text. *p.* 118.

This *Epistle* was secretly printed in the "Dutch Letter," *p.* 114, by ROBERT WALDEGRAVE and JOHN PENRY in Mistress CRANE's country house at East Molesey in Surrey about Michaelmas, 1588; and came forth into furtive circulation from hand to hand, in the first days of the following November : previous to which date, neither the name nor the conception of MARTIN MARPRELATE (or as it was often, afterwards, for brevity's sake, reduced to, MARTIN) existed in English Literature.

Though PENRY alleged some previous similar works on the Continent (*Introductory Sketch*, *p.* 97) : the character of "the reverend and worthie MARTIN MARPRELATE, gentleman," was quite an original one. On its surface, there was the coolest assurance in hobnobbing with their "venerable masterdomes"; the assumed testy merry wit, with the endless punning of DICK TARLETON; all intermixed with the strongest possible home-thrusts and the most serious charges : while, beneath all this, there was the most earnest purpose of an outraged human nature, which considered it had found the Divine Messengers, in the most precious and sacred things of this mortal life, to be as "salt which had lost its savour"; and therefore only "fit to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men."



So the entire method of the Martinist issues is to try the Teachers of Religion at the bar of a Morality expressing simply the innate rights of Human Nature as such. And this was done with great daring; and was, the times considered, utterly unexpected and strange: so that we cannot point to any attack on ELIZABETH's Privy Council for their secular transactions, comparable to that here made upon the members of her High Commission, for their ecclesiastical abuses.

Individual Bishops, like BONNER, had been reprehended before; but, never, since AUGUSTINE the monk landed on the Isle of Thanet, had Bishops, as a class, been branded as "unlawful" or forbidden. So the *Demonstration* and the *Epistle* must have come on the Bishops like two bombshells; and they, no doubt, occasioned inextinguishable merriment among the Puritan laity at the Court, and in the great cities of England.

Three times in modern English history, have the bulk of the clergy, as a class, been corrupt and rotten. In HENRY VIII.'s reign; when the remedy came by the Reformation and the dissolution of the monasteries. In WHITGIFT's primacy; when it came through the rise of the Puritans. In Queen ANNE's reign; when it came through the lay-Reformers, the Moral Teachers, DEFOE, STEELE, and ADDISON, in their penny folio Half-Sheets, the *Review*, the *Tatler*, the *Spectator*, the *Guardian*, &c.

In 1588, a small minority of the Clergy, for the most part at work in towns, were intensely earnest, thoroughly pious and spiritually minded men: but with a narrowness of view, and no great learning, and consequently with little general culture. It was of their successors in the pulpit, the men who in the next generation became Scholars, that even their antagonist SELDEN said, about 1635, "All Confess there never was a more Learned Clergy, no Man taxes them with Ignorance" [*Table Talk*, s. v. *Clergy*]. But at this time, the Bishops were thrusting hundreds of men into the ministry of the Church, who were utterly unfit for their work.

With this active Clerical Remnant, went the best, the most cultured of the lay inhabitants of the towns, especially those near the South East seacoast. The Puritan Clergy and Laity together, were the Hope of the national life. In their long sufferance, integrity, prudence, and courage lay, potentially, all the possibilities of England. From them, we are

On the other hand, their repression for a time, gave us our best Poetry and Drama; which they would have thought it to be doing GOD service to have crushed: not recognizing the artistic faculty (the sense of form and beauty, colour and tone) to be an integral part of our nature; and failing to acknowledge that fitness, suppleness, delicacy, subtlety, and finish are also among the blessed endowments of mankind. A rugged strength for right satisfied them, in the presence of so much wrongdoing.

## II.

**T**HE Martinist issues, and the similar rejoinders they provoked, are the chief Prose Satires of the Elizabethan Age. They approach to the nature of, but are not really lampoons; such as may be seen in [ANDREW MARVELL's] *Advices to a Painter*, in SAMUEL BUTLER's *Posthumous Works*, and in DANIEL DEFOE's *Hymn to the Pillory*. A Lampon is an attack on the private life of a man: but MARTIN MARPRELATE says, before his *Conditions of Peace*—

But you see my worshipfull priestes of this crue to whom I write / what a perilous fellow M. Marprelate is: he vnderstands of all your knauerie / and it may be he keepes a register of them: vnlesse you amend / they shall al come into the light one day. And you brethren bishops / take this warning from me. If you doe not leaue your persecuting of godly christians and good subiectes / that seeke to liue vprightly in the feare of God / and the obedience of her Maiestie / all your dealing shalbe made known vnto the world. And ise be sure to make you an example to all posterities. You see I haue taken some paynes with you already / and I will owe you a better turne / and pay it you with aduauntage / at the least thirteene to the dozen / vnles you obserue these conditions of peace which I drawe betweene me and you. For I assure you I make not your doings known for anie mallice that I beare vnto you / but the hurt that you doe vnto Gods Church / leaue you your wickednesse / and ile leaue the reuealing of your knaueries.

p. 34.

and after them he adds—

These be the conditions / which you brethren bishops / shalbe bound to keepe inuiolably on your behalfe. And I your brother Martin on the other side / do faithfully promise vpon the performaunce of the premisses by you / neuer to make any more of your knauery knowne vnto the worlde. And howbeit that I haue before threatened my brother Bridges / in the cause of his superior priest / and your Antichristian callings: notwithstanding / I will write no more of your dealings / vnles you violate the former conditions. The conditions you see / are so reasonable / I might binde you to giue ouer your places which are Antichristian: but I doe not / lest men shoulde thinke me to quarrell / and seeke occasions

for the nonce to fall out with my brethren. Therefore I require no more but such things as all the worlde will thinke you vnworthy to liue / if you grant them not. And this I doe the rather / because you should not / according to your olde fashion / say yat my worship doth for mallice lay open your infirmities: nay I haue published not one of your secret falts / what you haue not blushed to commit in the face of the sun / and in the iust[i]fying wherof you yet stand / these things onely haue I published. The best seruants of God I know / haue their infirmities. But none of them will stand in the maintenance of their corruptions as you do / and that to the dishonour of God and the ruine of his Church. You must either amend / or shortly you will bring our church to ruine : therfore it is time that your dealings were better looked vnto. p. 36.

Thus *MARTIN* affirms his honesty of purpose and good intentions. But what extraordinary, and according to our present experience incredible things we find in this *Epistle*, may be gathered from pp. 7, 8.

## III.

**I**F THE nineteen Prelates named on those pages, most of them were born before the Reformation began in England with the arrival of *TYNDALE's New Testament* in 1526; and almost all of them were born before *HENRY VIII's* death. They were therefore brought up in Roman Catholic times.

On the other hand, *PENRY, UDALL*, and their colleagues, were for the most part, young men; the children of the Elizabethan Age. So that the Martinist attack was the New School of young Radicals attacking the Old School of aged Conservatives. And this partly explains why there was no compromise sought out by the Bishops. They were too old to change: so they stood stiffly to their legal rights, and contemned anything like public opinion.

## IV.

**S**AD to relate. For the series of works, of which the *Epistle* was the first; *JOHN PENRY* was hanged, suddenly for fear of tumult, on the 29th of May, 1593, not far short of five years after their first appearance: which act was the expression of the Bishops' sense of his share in their production.