

**MAXIMS OF PIETY  
AND OF  
CHRISTIANITY**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649005895

Maxims of piety and of Christianity by Thomas Wilson & Frederic Relton

Except for use in any review, the reproduction or utilisation of this work in whole or in part in any form by any electronic, mechanical or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including xerography, photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, is forbidden without the permission of the publisher, Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd, PO Box 1576 Collingwood, Victoria 3066 Australia.

All rights reserved.

Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.  
Cover @ 2017

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form or binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

[www.triestepublishing.com](http://www.triestepublishing.com)

**THOMAS WILSON & FREDERIC RELTON**

**MAXIMS OF PIETY  
AND OF  
CHRISTIANITY**



## GENERAL INTRODUCTION

THEOLOGY is concerned with setting forth the truth of God as He has revealed it in His Word to His Church. This truth needs new application to the conditions and circumstances—intellectual and social—of each generation. As various problems arise in the world of man, various aspects of God's truth receive additional emphasis and explanation. Theology grows according to the growth of human knowledge. It brings out of the treasure-house of Scripture "things new and old."

A student of theology who wishes to gain accurate knowledge on any particular point, must refer to the time when that point was forced into prominence by some movement or tendency of thought. At such times men's minds, with the full force of their intelligence and their learning, were directed to the full investigation of a question which pressed for immediate solution. At such periods a subject was fully studied and thought out. It is only when we are in contact with minds to which these subjects were of vital importance that we feel their full significance.

Broad lines were laid down, after full discussion, and large principles emerged. These have become permanent possessions, and are even regarded as commonplaces. But we do not feel their force when we read them in a compendium. We only lay hold of ideas as we lend ourselves, in some degree, to the process by which they were acquired. It is for this reason that text-books can never be quite satisfactory. They need to be vitalized by some knowledge, however slight, of the original writers whose thoughts they summarise.

It is the object of the "English Theological Library" to select works of the chief English theologians which may serve to illustrate their methods, and represent the chief ideas which they enforced. It is inevitable that many of these works are of a controversial nature. It is scarcely too much to say that most men have become theologians in spite of themselves. They have read, and meditated, and taught, till some tendency of popular thought ran counter to their ideas. They were bound to face this fact, to penetrate more deeply into the foundations of their own belief, and then to state their results and give their reasons at every stage. They had to make good their own position against opponents who often owed their importance merely to the fact that they had a strong body of floating opinion behind them. One part—often an ungrateful part—of their work was to clear away partial conceptions which rested on no solid basis. They had to destroy before they could begin to build. Even in our own day we

have need to learn the temper and method in which a controversy may be conducted so as to substitute accurate thinking for vague opinions, or prejudices which have their root in the desire to maintain an existing system rather than to seek for the truth.

The "English Theological Library," as it advances, will not only put forth standard works of English theology, but will illustrate the history of the great crises of the English Church. In many cases it is difficult to select, among the voluminous writings of a theologian, a particular work which adequately expresses his ideas. But a collection of detached passages is dangerous, as it necessarily depends upon the opinion of him who makes the extracts, and reduces formulated results and *obiter dicta* to the same proportions. It is better to read one complete treatise than a number of quotations. It is only so that it is possible to gain a knowledge of the writer and of his method. In theology, above all other subjects, it is the intellectual temper of the writer which inspires confidence in his conclusions.

English theology is penetrated by the same spirit as distinguishes the English character in other branches of literature. It is strong in sound and massive learning, and has never had reason to separate itself from other departments of English thought. It has no style of its own, and is not expressed in technical language, nor clothed in special phraseology. Its great products rank among the noblest specimens of English prose.

and its literary merits are of a very high order. It may be read by readers of every class. Doubtless the forms of appeal to the popular consciousness vary in every age, and methods which once were powerful soon grow antiquated. But pulpit oratory, after all, lasts longer than other forms of oratory, and the roll of English preachers has produced finer examples of eloquence than exist elsewhere.

The strenuous pursuit of truth, sobriety, high thoughts, commanding power of expression—these are great qualities. They are all to be found in the books which are to be issued in this series. Introductions and notes will serve to bridge over the gulf which must always to some degree separate the thought of the past from the thought of the present. It is better to read one great book than a series of little books. It is better to seek for the truth where its issues were most seriously felt, than to rest content with tabulated arguments in its favour. Theological students will profit by contact with great minds. It is for their guidance especially that this series is designed. They would gain in power to face the problems of our own time if they were better acquainted with the great heritage of the past, and were animated by the same spirit as their predecessors, whose lot was cast in no less difficult days.

M. LONDON.



## PREFACE TO BISHOP WILSON'S MAXIMS.

### I.

To do justice to the life of Bishop Wilson would exceed the limits of a preface, and I am, therefore, content to refer the reader to the life by Mr. Keble, in the *Anglo-Catholic Library* edition of the works. It is in two large octavo volumes, and contains a great deal of new and original matter. There is also a life by Clement Cruttwell, the first editor of the collected works, and a close personal friend of Bishop Wilson, prefixed to the folio and quarto editions. Reference may also be made to the vivid sketch by Canon (now Dean) Farrar, "Wilson, the Saintly Preacher," in the *Classic Preachers of the English Church* (First Series, 1877); and to the equally vivid sketch of the religious and social condition of the Isle of Man, of the Bishop's Palace (with its dungeon, among other things), and of the relations between the spiritual and secular power, in Mr. Hall Caine's *Deemster* (the *Manxman* I have not seen).

The following brief summary of the life of Bishop Wilson will put the student in possession of the salient facts and dates. Thomas Wilson was born at Burton, near Neston, in Cheshire, in 1663, was educated at Chester, and afterwards at Trinity College, Dublin, which he entered in 1682 as a sizar, having Jonathan Swift as a contemporary there. In 1686, on St. Peter's day, he was ordained deacon by the Bishop of Kildare (Moreton), and in 1689 priest by the Bishop of Chester (Stratford). Leaving Ireland, he took the curacy of Newchurch, in Winwick, under

Dr. Sherlock, the rector. In 1692 he became chaplain to Lord Derby, and tutor to his son, Lord Strange, and thus began his long intimacy with the family at Knowsley. In 1697 Lord Derby<sup>1</sup> gained for him the nomination to the bishopric of Sodor and Man—indeed, forced him to take it. The see had been vacant for four years, and the king insisted upon Lord Derby filling it up, since the nomination rested with him. The Archbishop (Tenison) gave him the degree of Doctor of Laws; he was consecrated early in 1697; refused to hold an English living *in commendam*, as was only too common then, and even down to the early years of the present century; and sailed for his island diocese, there to remain till his death, fifty-eight years later.

The record of the episcopate is a very full and long one. The diocese had been neglected, and there were arrears to be made up. The Episcopal house was in a state of great dilapidation. But there was the work to be done, and he did it. "There he married,<sup>2</sup> there his children<sup>3</sup> were born, and there he lived for fifty years a widower. He threw himself with love and diligence into all his duties. He preached, he visited, he practised a free and genial hospitality; he indulged his benevolent heart in the largest charity; he built, he planted, he restored churches; he improved the agriculture of the island; he promoted parochial libraries; he made efforts to found colleges, and to elevate the theological standard of his clergy; he drew up the *Principles and Duties of Christianity*, the first book in the Manx language; he laboured in season and out of season, and won the love of all good and honest men" (Farrar, *loc. cit.*, p. 115 *sq.*).

<sup>1</sup>The Knowsley family have always been closely associated with the Isle of Man.

<sup>2</sup>He married Mary Patten, of Warrington, in 1698. It is probably one of her sisters that is referred to as "Sister Patten" on p. 110. Mrs. Wilson died 1704.

<sup>3</sup>Of his four children one only lived to grow up, Thomas, born in 1703 (the *second* Thomas, for the eldest son also bore this name), who married his cousin, and became rector of St. Stephen's, Wallbrook, prebendary of Westminster, and sub-almoner to the king (George II.).

The record of his episcopate is not an eventful one, in the ordinary sense of the term. In its way it was stormy. Church discipline was a very real thing in the Isle of Man in those days, as the readers of Mr. Hall Caine's books will remember. All kinds of offences against the laws of God and man were visited with punishment in the form of warnings, penances, and excommunications. Not going to church, sleeping in church, shaving during church time, playing with a dog in church, swimming a duck and a spaniel on Sunday evening, playing the fiddle on Saturday evening, as well as darker and coarser sins and crimes, were all dealt with. The number of cases of immorality that came before the Bishop was very large. They were troublesome too, involving sometimes a conflict between the spiritual and the local quasi-independent temporal power, until at last the Bishop's enforcement of spiritual discipline resulted, as it did in the case of Calvin's rule in Geneva, in an organized opposition, culminating in the imprisonment of the Bishop. The whole story is miserable, and throws a flood of light upon some of the *Maxims* dealing with affliction, trial, suffering, conflict of authority, fidelity of allegiance to righteousness, etc. These were evidently wrung out of a much tried and sensitive spirit, consoled, however, by the consciousness of duty done, and of loyalty that could not, and did not, fail to meet with its reward. Castle Rushen, which still stands, with the cell in which Bishop Wilson was imprisoned, was, however, to him no "Doubting Castle." In that dark and dank dungeon he was treated like a felon, his very letters being stopped; yet he spent his time in prayer for those who were thus despitefully treating him, and in making his translation of the Bible into the Manx language. After this time of storm and stress, the sunshine once again cheered him, and he died in 1755, in a good old age, full of years and honour, though not of riches. He thrice declined an English bishopric, saying to the Queen on the last occasion, "I will not leave my wife [*i.e.* his see] in my old age because she is poor."