

Oliver Cromwell

by Ian Paisley

Ian Paisley's sermon on Oliver Cromwell explores his complex legacy as a defender of Protestantism amidst the challenges of his time.

Scripture: 2 Chronicles 7:14, Psalm 27:1, Psalm 75:6, Ephesians 6:12, 1 Timothy 6:12

Topics: "God's Sovereignty", "Protestant Reformation"

Description

Ian Paisley preaches about the Divine intervention in nations' history, particularly during crises when God's sovereignty is concealed but later manifested beyond natural explanation. He highlights the historical events of Oliver Cromwell's life, emphasizing the battle against the Papacy and the resurgence of Popery in Europe. Paisley draws parallels between Cromwell's time and the present, warning about the political-religious structures seeking to grasp control. He delves into Cromwell's character, defending him against the slander and portraying him as a man of prayer, faith, and a defender of the Protestant faith amidst opposition and persecution.

Transcript

In any great crisis in a nation's history, oftentimes for a time, the evidence of the sovereignty and supremacy of Almighty God is concealed.

However, when a demonstration of power is manifested, a demonstration which is beyond natural explanation, then acknowledgement of Divine intervention has to be made.

In human history, of all the occasions which demonstrate Divine intervention more readily, are those when the settling or pulling down of governments is at stake. So distinct have been such interventions that the blindest of eyes have been opened. Such events are displayed in the life and times of Oliver Cromwell.

The Jesuits, the shock troops of the Vatican, directed across Europe in the middle of the seventeenth century, brought a resurgence of Popery, recovering part of the ground lost at the Reformation. In Germany, France, the Low Countries, Spain and even Italy the Counter-Reformation of Rome gained or regained ground. It was imagined that the Protestant faith would be overthrown in the British Isles, and the liberties of the Reformation would be lost forever. Europe became awash with priests, Jesuits, friars and monks. The fight in Cromwell's day was the battle against the Papacy. The Royal House of the Stuarts sided with Rome and was broken in the conflict.

The same is happening in our nation today, and every effort is being made by the political-religious structure of Rome to grasp that which was denied to Popery in Cromwell's day. Cardinal Hume rejoiced at the divisions of the Church of England over the ordination of women, and saw it as the way Mary's Dowry of England would return to Romish control.

That great historian Guizot, commenting on what led up to the Cromwellian era, said: "The time has now come when good and evil, salvation and peril, are so obscurely confounded and intermixed, that the firmest minds, incapable of disentangling them, have become mere instruments in the hand of providence, who alternately chastise kings by their people, and people by their kings."

Rome always blackens those employed in the furtherance of Heaven's purpose against her. Hence Rome's attempts and successes in utterly crucifying the character of God's instruments. This she does in order to give coming generations the most bigoted, malicious and outrageous views of the faith and character, methods and attainment of those very instruments so signally used and honoured by God.

No one has suffered more by such diabolical treatment than Oliver Cromwell. At the beginning of the seventeenth century our nation was on a steep decline which it seemed would inevitably plunge her into the overwhelming gulf of Rome. The Stuart monarchs were the leaders in that apostasy. Charles I (1625) was more opposed to the Bible and more inclined to tradition and hierarchy than James I (1603), Charles II more so than Charles I, while James I surpassed all his predecessors.

The years between 1642 and 1669 demonstrated that the alarms of the Puritans were solidly based. Charles II, who, as his mother Henrietta Maria declared to Louis XIV, "had abjured the heresy of his education, and was reconciled to the church of Rome", composed a treatise to prove that there could be but one Church of Christ upon earth, and that that was the Church of Rome. Charles II acknowledged to his brother, the Duke of York, that he also was attracted to the mother-church. Charles II sounded his ministers on their intentions with regard to Popery, and prepared to follow the Duke's advice by a plain and public declaration of Romanism, if he had not been checked by the prudent counsel of Louis XIV. Charles II refused on his deathbed the sacrament from the Protestant Bishop of Bath, replying to his brother, who proposed in a whisper to send him a Romish priest: "Do so, for the love of God!" confessing to the missionary Huddleston, declaring his wish to become reconciled to the Roman Church, and receiving from him absolution, the host, and even extreme unction. Those most assuredly were not phantoms!

Yes, and those of us who in our day see the similar Rome-inspired forces seeking to destroy the Williamite Revolution Settlement in the Coronation Oath, the Protestant Succession and the Protestantism of the National Church and forcing upon us the alien and Romish judicial system of Europe, are not dealing with phantoms either, but hard and fearful facts.

After his death and the return of the perfidious Stuarts, Oliver Cromwell was blackened beyond recognition. The Roman Church in Ireland furnished the tarring and feathering process. Even today in the public mind he is often painted as the vilest of the vile, the persecutor of the people of God, a reprobate and hypocrite of the lowest order; but those who have studied the evidence and examined the well-established historical facts, even though their background was deeply prejudicial, have had to admit that the Cromwell of his detractors was not the Cromwell of real life. That it was a colossal slander of the true Oliver Cromwell.

When Thomas Carlyle produced his monumental work *The Letters and Speeches of Oliver Cromwell*, a distinguished critic, writing in the premier *Blackwood Magazine*, stated: "If there is anyone who still

believes that Cromwell was a thorough hypocrite, that his religion was a systematic deception to cover his ambitious designs, the perusal of these volumes will entirely enlighten him to the contrary. We look upon this hypothesis, the Machiavellian explanation of Cromwell's character, as henceforth entirely dismissed from all candid and intelligent minds. Cromwell was a genuine Puritan. There is no doubt about that."

In reviewing Lady Antonia Fraser's Cromwell, Our Chief of Men, the Times Educational Supplement says: "Lady Antonia Fraser has sought to 'humanise' Cromwell, to bring out the 'nature of the man himself' rather than seeking to relate him to the 'political and social trends of the age'. Partly as a result, Cromwell's family plays a far greater role in this life than hitherto, and this, it seems to me, is both justifiable and successful. The most notable achievement of this biography is its absolute fairness. Lady Antonia is at her best in the detailed analyses of particular, critical episodes, especially Cromwell's massacre of the Irish Catholics at Drogheda and Wexford in 1649. There is a real attempt to present the man, warts and all, and to judge him by his own values and those of his day. Readers of Cromwell will be rewarded with a book that is clear, scholarly and fair. This book should finally destroy any lingering stereotyped view of Cromwell as the 'dissembling perjured villain', cold, scheming and hypocritical."

The Sunday Times says: "Lady Antonia wishes us to show that Cromwell was no tyrant, was not ambitious, had a bursting conscience, and was civilised. The evidence she has assembled is overwhelming."

The Sunday Telegraph says: "Lady Antonia sees, better than anyone has, the complexities of his character, the different strains in it. The author puts forward a cool, and convincing, defence of Cromwell in Ireland, which will be a surprise to Irish readers brought up on the legend rather than the facts."

Need we say anything further about the lies that have been peddled against Cromwell by his enemies? What Cromwell himself said to Col. Norton on March 28, 1648, has more than come true: "I know God has been above all ill reports and will in His own time vindicate me."

We will take three looks at Cromwell in this address:

I. CROMWELL, THE CHIEFEST OF SINNERS - His own testimony.

II. CROMWELL, THE CHIEFEST OF MEN - John Milton's testimony.

III. CROMWELL, THE CHIEFEST OF PROTESTANTS - History's testimony.

I. CROMWELL - THE CHIEFEST OF SINNERS - His own testimony

The Protestant interest was ill-served by the Stuart kings. They deserted the Reformation principles and gave up their stations as defenders of the Protestant faith. They refused to confront the fanaticism of Most Catholic Spain and they made a bigoted French Princess a royal consort placing her on the Queen's throne of England. By seeking to build the Pope's house in Protestant England they destroyed their own house.

On 25th April, 1599, while Shakespeare was still living and Good Queen Bess yet reigned, the wife of one Robert Cromwell bore her husband a son. Robert Cromwell was the nephew of the Earl of Essex, at one time one of Queen Elizabeth's favourites. Cromwell was christened on 29th April. His family possessed lands round Huntingdon.

When he was a boy of four, James VI on his way from Scotland to take the throne of England as James I, visited Oliver's uncle's stately mansion at Hinchinbrook. The story that Oliver had a punch up with young Prince Charles is probably apocryphal. As Oliver grew up he learned of the intrigues of the Jesuits, the treachery to Rome of many within the Church of England and the move of the King to a government of tyranny and arbitrary power. In 1616 Oliver became a student at Cambridge University. He was entered at the Sidney Sussex College. With the death of both his grandfather and father he moved home to help his mother with the task of bringing up six daughters. He was her only son. A year after returning home he left for London to obtain knowledge of the law. Claims that he lived a dissolute life in London are lies. In London he became acquainted with the Bouchier family and on 22nd August, 1620 aged 21 he married Elizabeth Bouchier in St Giles Church, Coplegate.

The next ten years he passed in seclusion. He busied himself in family and in industrial and social duties as his father did before him. It was during this period that he was arrested powerfully by the working of the Spirit of the living God upon his conscience and inmost soul. He was given a vision of his depraved and corrupted heart as a law work of conviction of sin was done in his inner being by the Holy Ghost. He saw his lost, ruined and undone sinful condition. He cried out that he was the chief of sinners. With Paul he confessed: 'O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?'

Thomas Carlyle states: "It is therefore in these years that we must place what Oliver, with unspeakable joy, would name his Conversion - his deliverance from the pains of eternal death." Oliver was from henceforth "a Christian man, not on Sunday only but in all days, all places and in all cases". Having moved to St. Ives, Oliver developed in his spiritual life. John Milton wrote of him: "Being now arrived at a mature and ripe age, all which time he spent as a private person, noted for nothing so much as the culture of a pure religion and an integrity of life, he had grown rich at home, and had enlarged his hopes, relying upon God and great soul in a quiet bosom for any the most exalted times." The Bible was his life's book. His Psalter was his prayer book and his Throne of Grace was where he daily met with his God, and obtained the required mercy and found help in the time of need.

In all he had five sons and four daughters. These were as follows: Robert, his first born, baptised 13th October, 1621. Oliver, baptised 6th February, 1628. He was killed in battle early in the civil war. The Protector alluded to him on his death bed: "It went to my heart like a dagger; indeed it did." Bridget, baptised 4th August, 1624. She was married to Ireton, and after Ireton's death to Fleetwood, and died at Stoke Newington, near London in 1681. Richard, born 4th October, 1626. Him Carlyle calls "a poor idle triviality". Henry, baptised 20th July 1620. Elizabeth, baptised 2nd July, 1629. All the above children were born at Huntingdon; the following at St Ives and Ely: James, baptised 8th January, 1631; died next day. Mary, baptised at Huntingdon, 3rd February, 1639. Francis, baptised at Ely, 6th December, 1638. Conversing there, praying there, he passed his days solacing persecuted ministers, and sighings in the bitterness of his soul.

In all, five sons and four daughters; of whom three sons, and all the daughters, came to maturity at Ely; for about 1638 Cromwell probably removed to Ely. His uncle, Sir Thomas, resided there. His mother's relatives - those of them who were left - were there; and now his mother herself removed there, probably with the idea of there terminating her days in the presence of first impressions and associations. The time draws nigh for Oliver to leave his silence, his lonely wanderings to and fro, his plannings, and his doubtings. The storm is up in England, and Oliver has become a marked man; he probably knows that he will have to take a prominent part in the affairs of the kingdom.

Let us halt awhile to reflect on this. This obscure man, a lone English farmer, untitled, unwealthy, with no grace of manner to introduce himself, ungainly in speech and in action, unskilled in war, unused to the arts of courts and the cabals of senates and legislators - this man whose life had been passed altogether with farmers and religious-minded men - was, at almost a bound, to leap to the highest place in the people's army, grasping the baton of the marshal. This man was to strike the successful blows on the field, shivering to pieces the kingly power in the land; was himself to assume the truncheon of the Dictator; was to sketch the outline of laws, of home and foreign policy, which all succeeding legislators were to attempt to embody and imitate; was to wring concessions to his power from the most haughty monarchies of ancient feudal Europe, and to bear up, in arms, England, fast dwindling into contempt, to the very foremost place among the nations; was to produce throughout the world homage to the Protestant religion, making before his name the fame and terror of Gustavus, or Henry IV, of Zisca, to dwindle and look pale - this with no prestige of birth or education. Is it too much, then, to call him the most royal actor England, if not the world, has produced?

Notice, also, that when he was at Cambridge he won some money at gambling: £20, £50, £100. All these sums now were returned as money upon no principle, his own. Here too, is a letter of this Huntingdon time, just before the busy world called him away, giving a glimpse of the man:

"To my beloved cousin, Mrs. St. John, at William Masham, his house, called Otes, in Essex - Present these.

"Ely, 13th October, 1638.

"Dear Cousin,

"I thankfully acknowledge your love in your kind remembrance of me upon this opportunity. Alas! you too highly prize my lines and my company. I may be ashamed to own your expressions, considering how unprofitable I am, and the mean improvement of my talent.

"Yet to honour my God by declaring what He hath done for my soul, in this I am confident, and I will be so. Truly, then, this I find, that He giveth springs in a dry, barren wilderness, where no water is. I live, you know where - in Meshee, which they say means prolonging - in Kedar, which signifies blackness; yet the Lord forsaketh me not. Though He do prolong, yet He will, I trust, bring me to His tabernacle, to His resting-place. My soul is with the congregation of the first-born; my body rests in hope; and if here I may honour my God, either by doing or by suffering, I shall be most glad.

"Truly no poor creature hath more cause to put himself forth in the cause of God than I. I have had plentiful wages before hand; and I am sure I shall never earn the least mite. The Lord accept me in His Son, and give me to walk in the light, as He is the light! He it is that enlighteneth our blackness, our darkness. I dare not say He hideth His face from me. He giveth me to see light in His light. One beam in a dark place hath exceeding much refreshment in it. Blessed be His name for shining upon so dark a heart as mine! You know what my manner of life hath been. Oh, I lived in, and loved darkness, and hated light! I was a chief, the chief of sinners. This is true; I hated godliness, yet God had mercy on me. Oh, the richness of His mercy! Praise Him for me - pray for me, that He who hath begun a good work would perfect it in the day of Christ.

"Farewell. The Lord be with you; so prayeth

"Your truly loving Cousin,

"Oliver Cromwell."

II. CROMWELL - THE CHIEFEST OF MEN - John Milton's Testimony

The manliness of Cromwell shines throughout his whole career. He was a man's man, a manly man, every inch a man and still a man "for augh that". No wonder Milton penned the words "Cromwell our chief of men".

To Oliver Cromwell

Cromwell, our chief of men, who through a cloud

Not of war only, but distractions rude,

Guided by faith and matchless fortitude,

To peace and truth thy glorious way hast plough'd,

And on the neck of crowned fortune proud

Hast rear'd God's trophies, and his work pursued.

While Darwen stream with blood of Scots imbrued,

And Dunbar field resound thy praises loud,

And Worcester's laureat wreath. Yet much remains

To conquer still; peace hath her victories

No less renown'd than war: New foes arise

Threatening to bind our souls with secular chains:

Help us to save free conscience from the paw

Of hireling wolves, whose Gospel is their maw.

The chief of men indeed!

Elected to Parliament for Huntingdon on 17th March, 1628 - a Parliament quickly prorogued - Cromwell returned to St Stephens in January 1629. On the 11th February, 1629, he made his maiden speech. Cromwell's appearance in the Commons and his maiden speech were graphically described by Sir Philip Warwick in his Memoirs thus:

"He was thirty years of age. All eyes were turned towards him with attention. He wore a plain cloth suit, which seemed to have been made by a bad country tailor; his linen was not of the purest white; his ruffles were old fashioned; his hat was without a band; his sword stuck close to his side; his countenance was swollen and reddish; his voice sharp and untunable; but his delivery was warm and emanated; his frame, although exceeding middle height, strong and well proportioned; he had a manly air, a stern look, a bright

and sparkling eye."

Certain ecclesiastics were then gaining notoriety by their zeal in forwarding, within the pale of the church, the power of the King and the doctrines of Rome. Cromwell complained that the bishops permitted and even recommended the preaching of "flat Popery". "If these are the steps to church preferment," exclaimed he, "what are we to expect?" - "What are we to expect?" asked Oliver; and this was in truth the great question of the age. The re-establishment of Popery was the object of the seventeenth century, and Cromwell's first public words were against it. He then set up the landmark which determined and marked out the course he had resolved to follow until his death. Even Hume, generally so hostile to him, is struck by seeing his first words correspond so exactly to his character. Cromwell, indeed, was from the beginning to the end of his life quite consistent; he was faithful to the one idea, which he proclaimed upon the housetops; and it is this man, so decided, so open, who had been termed a hypocrite! History was never guilty of a greater error.

Charles I sought to rule without a Parliament. His acts filled the hearts of honest and loyal Englishmen with shame. In Scotland he sought to destroy Presbyterianism altogether and establish the Romanising liturgy of Laud as the sane way to restore the Papacy. At the first service in St. Giles' Cathedral in Edinburgh, when the Dean attempted to read the same, an uproar erupted with Jenny Geddes crying out: "Do you dare to say the mass at my lug?" as she threw her stool at the Romaniser.

A new Parliament was elected and met on 13th April, 1650 to the overwhelming joy of the people. Charles had to bow and sign the death warrant of his former minister, the traitor Stafford. In August Charles returned to Scotland. His mission was an evil one. He was seeking the correspondence between the Covenanters and the Parliament in order to brand both parties as being guilty of high treason. In the midst of the agitation and rumour and counter rumour the news of the Irish massacre of 1641 broke in London. Fear and the fear of terror filled the country. The leaders of the Parliament called for a Remonstrance to the King as the nation looked on him as the real enemy of the nation. On 22nd November, 1641 by a majority of eleven votes the Remonstrance was endorsed by the House of Commons. Cromwell stated that if it had not succeeded, he would have "sold everything I possess and never seen England again"; but it was not Cromwell who was forced to quit - it was Charles and his treacherous brood.

There was a great work to be accomplished. Where was the man great enough for the colossal task in that hour of England's peril? The chiefest of men was there. During one of the debates in the House of Commons a member rose and in an abrupt and flaming tone addressed the members. Lord Digby leaned forward and with astonishment enquired of Hampden the Speaker's name. Hampden answered with a smile: "That sloven whom you see before you hath no ornament in his speech: that sloven, I say, if we should ever come to a breach with the King (which God forbid) - in such a case, I say, that sloven will be the greatest man in England - the chiefest of men."

Yes, he was to be all that John Milton witnessed he would be and John Hampden foresaw he would be.

On 22 August, 1642, at six o'clock in the evening the King set up the Royal Standard in Nottingham and called his subjects to fight his Parliament. Cromwell would brook no half-heartedness, no double dealing, no hypocrisy. He knew the time-serving members of Parliament, he saw through their cowardice and weakness, he hated with a holy hatred their lukewarmness. Clarendon recounts that Cromwell said: "If the King were in front of me, I would as soon shoot him as another; if your conscience does not allow you to do as much, go and serve elsewhere".

Cromwell knew that only godly men could meet and thrash the foe. He said to Hampden: "How can we be otherwise than beaten? Your troops are old, decayed serving men and tapsters and such kind of fellows; and there are gentlemens' sons, younger sons, and persons of quality; but I will remedy that. I will raise men who will have the fear of God before their eyes and will bring some conscience to what they do, and I promise you they shall not be beaten."

Hence the New Model for the Parliamentary Army was brought into being. That New Model beat the Cavaliers onto their faces. In the four countries of these Isles - England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland - they totally prevailed. Charles had a terrible reaping for his abominable sowing. God arose and His enemies were indeed scattered. After one of his great victories Cromwell wrote to the Speaker of the House of Commons thus:

"For the Honourable William Lenthall, Speaker of the Commons House of Parliament: These

"I have given you a true, but not a full account of this great business; wherein he that runs may read. That this is none other than the work of God. He must be a very Atheist that doth not acknowledge it.

"It may be thought that some praises are due to those gallant men, of whose valour so much mention is made: - their humble suit to you and all that have an interest in this blessing, is that in the remembrance of God's praises they be forgotten. It's their joy that they are instruments of God's glory, and their country's good. It's their honour that God vouchsafes to use them. Sir, they that have been employed in this service know that faith and prayer obtained this City for you: I do not say ours only, but of the people of God with you and all England over, who have wrested with God for a blessing in this very thing. Our desires are, that God may be glorified by the same spirit of faith by which we ask all of our sufficiency, and have received it. It is meet that He have all the praise.

"Presbyterians, Independents, all have here the same spirit of faith and prayer: the same presence and answer; they agree here, have no names of difference: pity it is it should be otherwise anywhere! All that believe have the real unity, which is most glorious: because inward, and spiritual in the Body [which is the true Church], and to the Head [which is Jesus Christ]. For being united in forms, commonly called Uniformity, every Christian will for peace-sake study and do as far as conscience will permit. And for brethren, in things of the mind we look for no compulsion, but that of light and reason. In other things, God hath put the sword in the Parliament's hands - for the terror of evil-doers, and the praise of them that do well. If any plead exemption from that - he knows not the Gospel: if any would wring that out of your hands, or steal it from you, under what pretence soever, I hope they shall do it without effect. That God may maintain it in your hands, and direct you in the use thereof, is the prayer of

Your humble servant,

"Oliver Cromwell."The power of Papal propaganda has maligned Cromwell and made him the monster he never was as far as Ireland is concerned. I would suggest that those who want to study Cromwell in Ireland should read Antonia Fraser's Cromwell: The Chief of Men on this episode of Cromwell's life. "She puts forward a cool and convincing defence of Cromwell in Ireland, which will be a surprise to Irish readers brought up on legend rather than facts." - Sunday Telegraph.

Professor Gardiner remarks that Cromwell was probably the only man in the victorious army who imagined that this signal punishment required any excuse at all. That is the great distinction of Cromwell. In the callousness of a prolonged civil war, and in the suppression of these gratuitous rebellions against

the sovereignty of England and of the People, he preserved the self-control, and even the compassion, which few of us maintain unimpaired through our own quiet lives. The terrible severity at Drogheda was not the result of passion, but the calculated sternness of a judge who hoped by a striking example to prevent future delinquencies. The day after Drogheda was taken he hastened to use the fact as a warning to the garrison of Dundalk: "If you, being warned thereby, shall surrender your garrison to the use of the Parliament of England, which by this I summon you to do, you may thereby prevent effusion of blood." Days later, writing to the Council of State from Dublin, he expresses the conviction that the enemy being filled with terror will be prevented from a useless resistance, and thus "this bitterness will save much effusion of blood, through the goodness of God". This expectation was justified. For Dundalk at once submitted without bloodshed, and when Trim was summoned "upon the news of Tredah (Drogheda) some Scots companies, brought to assist the Lord of Ormond, ran away, leaving their great guns behind them, which also we have possessed." In his account to Parliament of the storming he says, evidently with deep conviction: "I am persuaded that this is a righteous judgment of God upon these barbarous wretches who have imbued their hands in so much innocent blood, and that it will tend to prevent the effusion of blood for the future, which are the satisfactory grounds to such actions, which otherwise cannot but work remorse and regret."

However Cromwell's action may strike us in gentler times and under quieter conditions, it is quite certain that he himself had no qualms of conscience upon the subject. As a man, as a Christian, as a singularly sensitive and tender heart, he grieved over the "cruel necessities" of his hard day's work, but he never questioned that he was doing God's bidding. A judge may have troubled dreams the night after he has passed the death sentence on a criminal, but he does not question that he has done his duty - and this is just the spirit which breathes in all the despatches from Ireland.

III. CROMWELL - THE CHIEFEST OF PROTESTANTS - History's Testimony

Since the time of the glorious Protestant Reformation, in days of spiritual decline, God has raised up single champions to call the nation back to the old paths of truth and righteousness when the darkness of apostasy has invaded the Church and State. God has not left Himself without a witness. Such a one was Oliver Cromwell.

Oliver Cromwell was a Christian, a Protestant Christian. We have already noted his conversion to God. Conversion teaches a man to pray, and Cromwell's life was a life of prayer. He did not pray as with the Prayer Book. He had an intimate knowledge of God in the person of His Son the Lord Jesus and addressed a reconciled God face to face as a man speaks to his friend.

Let me give you one example of this. Outside this House of Commons there is a monument to Cromwell. That monument was not erected there without opposition. It was unveiled by the Rt. Hon. the Earl of Roseberry K.G., K.T. The noble Lord mentioned in his address the opposition, pointing out that it came chiefly from the House of Lords. He castigated the Government of the day for placing a bust of Cromwell inside the House of Commons itself and then opposed the erection of his statue outside the House; but here is what Roseberry said in his address about Cromwell's prayer life. He called it A New Story of the Protector:

"Let me tell you another little story you have not heard before. It is not much in itself, but it is curious for the directness with which it comes. It was told me by a friend of mine, who is a bishop of the Established Church, and by no means one of the oldest of the bishops. But it is curious. He was told this by a

gentleman who had it from a doctor. The doctor had heard it from the Sir Charles Slingsby of his day, who had heard it from the nurse. Well, five people is not a long time, and I trust you will all live long enough to be carried over an equal period of the coming age. He heard it from his nurse, who was the girl mentioned in the story. The day before Marston Moor, Cromwell rode in with his staff to Knaresborough to dine, and when at Knaresborough he disappeared, and they searched for him for two hours. When they failed altogether to find him, this little girl, who afterwards became the nurse, remembered a lonely room at the top of the tower, which no one ever went to, and it was the only possible place where the Protector could be found; and there, looking through the keyhole - for the door was locked - they saw the Protector on his knees before his Bible, wrestling, as he would have said himself, in prayer, as he had already for the two hours he had spent in Knaresborough.

"Was there anything to be gained by that? Was there any effect to lock himself into a ruined and deserted chamber in order that he might implore the blessing of the God of battles on the contest he was to engage in next day? I can see, at any rate, nothing to be gained by it and I think those who know that story must either regard him as no hypocrite at all, or as so consummate a hypocrite that his hypocrisy had become as much a part of his being as the air which he breathed. But, sir, I will give a reason, a more practical reason, for my belief that Cromwell was not a hypocrite. Had he been a hypocrite, he could not have been an enormous success, or wielded the enormous forces that he did. I believe that, had Cromwell been a hypocrite, he would have been found out, and he could not have formed that army which he commanded, which was indubitably the greatest army in Europe at the time. He became early aware of the immense force of that religious fervour that came to his army, but he did not utilise this discovery by making hypocrites of his army. He utilised it by selecting those men who he knew were of good repute with their neighbours, earnest, steady, God-fearing men, who would be able to sustain the onslaught of the brilliant army commanded by the king and his cousin."

Cromwell was the Great Defender of the Protestant Faith. He saw what was happening. He saw what the end would be if Popery triumphed. He saw the future of the nation under what he himself called the Man of Sin and he determined by God's help to save the nation from such a destiny.

When he had gained that victory for his own nation he became the Defender of the Faith throughout all Europe. He was the greatest Protestant to appear in Europe since Luther and Calvin. He was much more than the champion of an outward and official Protestantism. None perhaps compromise true Protestantism so greatly as those who set aside its essential spiritual nature as it manifested itself in the 16th century and reduce it to a mere political system. The Protestantism of the Reformers was the evangelism of Christ and His apostles, not in any way reduced nor in any way enlarged.

We must beware of making Protestantism a mongrel existence, half spiritual, half secular. Cromwell, as J.H Merle D'Aubigne points out in his great book on Cromwell entitled *The Protector - a Vindication* was motivated "in the fact that in his own soul the truth of this scripture: Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.

"The ancient religious life of the Reformation was lost: it had been replaced by an attachment to forms. Men carefully inquired whether there was or was not apostolic succession; they examined whether the prayers, the sacraments, and the worship were in conformity with the canons and with the liturgy; they placed their hands everywhere to try all things - everywhere except on their own heart - to feel if it still beat. They were earnestly occupied with conformities; but they forgot one - that which renders man comfortable to Jesus Christ.

"A religious revival took place; truth and the Christian life reappeared. A dry orthodoxy, a clerical system, was followed by a Christianity as fruitful as it was sincere. Oliver is one of those in whom this spiritual revolution was the most striking. In every page of his history we meet with proofs of his faith. Rarely has there appeared in the world a heart that beat so strongly for everlasting truth.

"This faith, of which Oliver constituted himself the defender, cannot perish. It may be covered and hidden, at one time by the arid sands of infidelity, and at another by the tumultuous waves of human passions, or by the images, surplises, and relics of superstition - but it always revives, lifts up its head, and reappears. The revelations of God are for all times, and they have in all ages the same eternal truth, the same eternal beauty."

When persecuting Roman Catholic royal tyrants started the "religious cleansing" of their kingdoms from Protestants, it was Cromwell's threat that made them immediately desist. Not a potentate in Europe was so bold as to dare to expose himself to Cromwell's displeasure. It was in one such instance that Milton wrote his great eulogy to Cromwell:

Avenge, O Lord, thy slaughter'd saints whose bones

Lie scatter'd on the Alpine mountains cold;

Even them who kept thy truth so pure of old,

When all our fathers worshipt stocks and stones,

Forget not: in thy book record their groans,

Who were thy sheep, and in their ancient fold

Slain by the bloody Piedmontese that roll'd

Mother with infant down the rocks. Their moans

The vales redoubled to the hills, and they

To heaven. Their martyr'd blood and ashes sow

O'er all the Italian fields, where still doth sway

The triple tyrant; that from these may grow

A hundredfold, who, having learn'd thy way,

Early may fly the Babylonian woe.

Cromwell knew what the Papacy really was about and was prepared to expose it and depose it at every turn. To his Vice Admiral Goodson, Cromwell wrote in October 1655 as he engaged in war with Most Catholic Spain:

"The Lord Himself hath a controversy with your enemies; even with that Roman Babylon, of which the Spaniard is the great under-propper. In that respect, we fight the Lord's battles; and in this the Scriptures are most plain. The Lord therefore strengthen you with faith, and cleanse you from all evil: and doubt not

but He is able, and I trust as willing, to give you as signal success as He gave your enemies against you. Only the Covenant-fear of the Lord be upon you."

The language of Cromwell today is branded as prejudice and bigotry. Severe lessons will teach us to our cost who is right, the modern leaders in the church and state or the Puritan Colossus of the 17th century.

Maligned in life, Cromwell was maligned in death. The awful storm which marked the time of his departure from this world was painted to as the displeasure of God with Cromwell. His final prayer speaks for itself and makes us say: 'Let me die the death of Cromwell; let my last end be like his':

"Lord, though I am a miserable and wretched creature, I am in covenant with Thee through grace. And I may, I will come to Thee for thy people. Thou hast made me, though very unworthy, a mean instrument to do them some good, and Thee service; and many of them have set too high a value upon me, though others wish and would be glad of my death; Lord, however Thou do dispose of me, continue and go on to do good for them. Pardon Thy foolish people! Forgive their sins, and do not forsake them, but love and bless them. Give them consistency of judgment, one heart, and mutual love; and go on to deliver them, and with the work of reformation; and make the name of Christ glorious in the world. Teach those who look too much on Thy instruments, to depend more upon Thyself. Pardon such as desire to trample upon the dust of a poor worm; for they are Thy people too. And pardon the folly of this short prayer. And give me rest for Jesus Christ's sake, to whom, with Thee and Thy Holy Spirit, be all honour and glory, now and for ever! Amen."

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/ian-paisley/oliver-cromwell/>

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