

Anderson , Sir Robert Bio

by John Bjorlie

Sir Robert Anderson was a Christian leader who served as the director of Scotland Yard and was known for his work in crime detection and prison reform, while also being a prolific writer on Christian topics.

Scripture: Proverbs 16:7, Matthew 5:16, Romans 1:16, 1 Corinthians 15:58, 1 Peter 3:15

Topics: "Faith And Integrity", "Gospel Ministry"

Description

John Bjorlie preaches about the remarkable life of Sir Robert Anderson, a man of faith and integrity who faced controversy with grace and conviction. Anderson's journey from doubt to faith, his impactful role in the Irish revival, and his distinguished career in law enforcement while remaining dedicated to sharing the Gospel, exemplify a life lived in service to God. His commitment to prison reform and his influential writings on eternal truths continue to inspire and bear fruit, reflecting a deep reverence for God and a passion for defending biblical doctrines.

Transcript

Then said Great-Heart to Mr. Valiant-for-Truth: "Thou hast worthily behaved thyself. Let me see thy sword." So he showed it to him. When he had taken it in his hand and looked thereon a while, he said, "Ha! it is a right Jerusalem blade." -- The Pilgrim's Progress

Sir Robert Anderson (1841-1918) was one of the few who could engage in controversy without being contentious. Many wish they could "convince the gainsayer" but, unable to keep a cool head, they instead confirm the gainsayers in their heresies. The homey saying remains true, "If you can't take the heat, get out of the kitchen." Robert Anderson was one of those rare Christians who did not become blistered under attack.

He called himself "an anglicized Irishman of Scottish extraction." Born in Dublin, Anderson, as a youth, learned that no one who has not been converted can be a child of God. He wrote, "As time went by, my conviction deepened that I had not been 'converted.' But owing to my early experience and to the restraints of a Christian home, I continued to lead 'a religious life.'"

The year 1860 saw sweeping revival in Northern Ireland. New spiritual longings were awakened by the conversion of one of his sisters through attending meetings which J. Denham Smith was holding in Dublin. "The fact of my sister's conversion still held me, and I cherished the thought that the next Sunday services in the kirk might bring me blessing. But the morning service left me more discouraged than ever; and I

made up my mind that if the evening one brought no relief I would give up the quest, and seek to enjoy life again as best I could.

"The evening preacher was John Hall. He boldly proclaimed forgiveness of sins and eternal life as God's gift in grace, unconditional, to be received as we sat in the pews. His sermon thrilled me. Yet I deemed his doctrine unscriptural, so I waylaid him as he left the vestry and on our homeward walk tackled him about his 'heresies.'"

Hall met Anderson's challenges by quoting Scripture. Having answered every question, he faced Anderson on the pavement and solemnly repeated his appeal: "I tell you as a minister of Christ and in His Name that there is life for you here and now if you will accept Him. Will you accept Christ or will you reject Him?" Anderson later said, "After a pause, I exclaimed, 'In God's Name I will accept Christ.' Not another word passed between us, but after another pause he wrung my hand and left me. And I turned homeward with the peace of God filling my heart."

Anderson was soon preaching the Gospel himself. The revival spread to Sligo, and when George Trench went there to carry on the work, he asked Anderson to join him. The clergy were unsympathetic and the evangelists were treated to a crusade of ridicule in a local newspaper which accused them of being impostors, preaching for filthy lucre's sake and getting their salaries from a committee in London. One issue published a letter (said to have been picked up on the road), in which they were taken to task for embezzling the contents of their money boxes! Worse still, there appeared a seemingly genuine account of their getting drunk at a picnic! When Trench had to return home owing to ill health, some doggerel verses described the quarrel which led "the Trencher" to desert his pal, "Handy Andy." The attacks only advertised the meetings. Many attended out of curiosity or looking for amusement, and spiritual power was continually manifested in conversions.

Around this time, Anderson was called to the Irish Bar but was soon redirected into secret service work in connection with the "Fenian" terrorists. This led to his crossing to England. First in the Home Office, then at Scotland Yard, and finally in retirement, he remained a Londoner for the rest of his life.

Duty made him a relentless tracker of criminals. But "the dynamiters" would have been more than surprised had they known that the man who hunted them down was author of many books on the Bible and the Christian life. No less amazed would have been many a burglar had he come upon the Central Intelligence Department (CID) Chief giving a Gospel appeal in some mission.

Anderson became the director of Scotland Yard just as the "Jack the Ripper" murders were taking place. Sir John Moylan in his Scotland Yard and the Metropolitan Police states that "the period 1890 to 1900 proved to be one during which there was an almost continuous decrease in crime . . . By signal successes in sensational murder cases such as that of Neil Cream, the poisoner, and Milsom and Fowler, the Muswell Hill murderers, and by steady achievement in the less advertized, everyday business of dealing with rogues in general, the CID built up in the 'nineties' a world-wide reputation for efficiency in crime detection . . . Crime reached a low watermark in 1899." The period of Sir Robert Anderson's service as Chief of the CID was 1888 to 1901.

Anderson was deeply concerned about prison evangelism, and was considered an authority on prison reform. Up to that time, most prisons followed the dungeon pattern -- thick, iron bars, slits of windows, faulty ventilation and semi-darkness in the cells. As is still true, the prisons created far more criminals than they cured. One bit of Anderson's sage advice was this: "The restitution of stolen property ought to be

insisted on. A burglar should not be set at liberty until he had disclosed what he had done with his booty. This would go far to abolish the market for stolen property and even put an end to stealing. If necessary, the thief should compensate the individual robbed by work done and paid for in prison."

Some of his books such as *Criminals and Crime*, *The Lighter Side of My Official Life*, and *Sidelights on the Home Rule Movement* may never be reprinted. But his writing on things eternal continue to bear fruit. C. H. Spurgeon said the book, *Human Destiny*, was "the most valuable contribution on the subject I have seen." This volume deals with denials of the biblical doctrine of eternal punishment, important because currently certain evangelical leaders have adopted these denials.

His book, *The Silence of God*, was a great comfort to perplexed souls, especially during the First World War. *The Coming Prince* contains one of the clearest studies available dealing with the seventy weeks of Daniel's prophecy. Others of his books are, *In Defence*, *Daniel in the Critics' Den*, *The Hebrews Epistle*, *The Honour of His Name*, *The Bible and Modern Criticism*, *The Entail of the Covenant*, *Misunderstood Texts*, *The Lord from Heaven*, *Forgotten Truths*, and *Redemption Truths*.

He enjoyed warm fellowship with such eminent servants of Christ as Horatius Bonar, James Gray, A. C. Dixon, and C. I. Scofield.

Anderson abhorred irreverence and levity in the things of God. He wrote, "We may come down to our own level, as it were, when reasoning with others about their conduct or their attitude to the dread solemnities of life. But no one of a reverent spirit can fail to be distressed by the flippant language in which 'the glorious Gospel of the blessed God' (2 Cor. 2:17 , Weymouth) is sometimes 'huckstered.'"

A friend described Sir Robert Anderson this way: "On the platform, he appeared warrior-like; in conversation, he was professor-like; in friendly intercourse, brother-like. Throughout his life, he bore the true test of Christian manhood: the better known, the better loved."

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