

**LADY DEBORAH MOODY: A
DISCOURSE DELIVERED BEFORE
THE NEW YORK HISTORICAL
SOCIETY, MAY 1880**

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Lady Deborah Moody: A Discourse Delivered Before the New York Historical Society, May 1880 by James W. Gerard

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JAMES W. GERARD

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A DISCOURSE

DELIVERED BEFORE

The New York Historical Society,

MAY, 1880,

BY

JAMES W. GERARD.

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LADY DEBORAH MOODY.

THE ENGLISH REFORMATION AND TOLERATION.

Mere difference of opinion has ever been a fruitful source of strife.

Especially have those cherishing religious dogmas entertained feelings of hostility towards those who would not be convinced.

Even men wise and humane will join in a bitter hue and cry, on questions the truth or falsity of which is not susceptible of proof, and the truth or falsity of which is of no real concern to humanity.

There is no injustice so great, no prejudice so bitter, no hate so lasting, no enmity so unrelenting as that which has its foundation in sectarian opposition.

No deeds have been so bloody, no persecutions so cruel, no wars so terrible, as those instigated by differences of religious credence; and, it may be said, that no acts have been more shameful to humanity than those that make the ecclesiastical history of civilized Europe.

Races, nations and individuals resolved theological questions by mutual slaughter.

The Christian dove, surviving the attacks of Paganism, as it sailed down the tide of centuries, became as a vulture, smeared with gore.

The blood of Christian sectaries flowed from wounds mutually inflicted as deep as those ever made by a Nero or a Diocletian.

During the great thirty years' religious war on the Continent, so late as the seventeenth century, the enmity

between Lutheran and Calvinist equalled their mutual hate for the Romanist.

Incendiarism, robbery and slaughter were the only arguments thought of. Religion was used as the cloak for ambition and rapine, and in its name all Germany was laid waste. "Soldiers," says a contemporary, "treated men and women as none but the vilest of mankind would now treat brute beasts." "Outrages of unspeakable atrocity were committed everywhere; their flesh pierced with needles or cut to the bone with saws. Others were scalded with boiling water, or hunted with dogs."

The New World, from its earliest infancy, became a battleground for sectarianism.

More than eighty years before the landing at Plymouth, when the French Huguenots had established themselves on the Florida coast, and thought to have acquired a peaceful home, they were slaughtered by the Spaniards under Melendez. On landing with his force of Spanish cutthroats, this apostle of propagandism said, in answer to a summons as to his business there, "I am Melendez of Spain, sent with strict orders from my king to hunt and behead all the Protestants in these regions." He obeyed his orders. A cross was raised over the scene of carnage—a solemn mass was said—and the smell of blood and of smoking ruins went up to the Throne of Grace with the incense of the altar.

"I massacre these people," said Melendez, "not as Frenchmen, but as Lutherans."

Three years afterwards retribution came, and the wolves in their turn were hung to trees by de Gourges, the Gascon Huguenot.

The history of the origin and progress of the Reformed religion in England is not grateful to the Christian mind. Religion was enlisted, in turns by king, prelate and zealot, as an auxiliary to gratify lust, ambition, hate or revenge; and as an instrument to grasp or strengthen political power.

The despotic monarchs, Henry the Eighth, Mary, Elizabeth, James and Charles; ambitious prelates like Woolsey and Pole; obsequious tools of tyranny, like Cromwell under Henry, and Strafford under Charles; despotic primates like Cranmer and Laud; bloody prelates like Gardiner and Bonner; unseated abbots, unfrocked priests, deprived curates and the martyred laity—Romanist and Protestant, Conformist, and Dissenter, Puritan and Malignant—pass along the tide of history the actors in a great drama of blood.

The true essence of religion was lost sight of in the sectarian hate and zeal that claimed to sustain it.

The Reformed Prelacy became a mere part of State machinery, of which the Crown was the head; and any question of the King's spiritual, as well as civil supremacy was visited as a felony. Religious opinion became not a matter of faith, but of treason or allegiance.

Men had to believe by prescription; and religious creeds were imposed, not as a subject of conviction, but of ecclesiastical direction. Not only were outward acts criminal, but the conscience was dug out and shackled. Even silence became a crime, and oaths were applied to test those who maintained their opinions in secret.

Religion wore a motley garb. She varied not only her forms, but her doctrines, as this or that prelate came into office, or this or that State assassin could direct the myrmidons of the High Commission or the Star Chamber, or play upon the fantasies or weakness of royalty.

The most grievous part of the history of the Reformation is that such a reprobate as Henry the Eighth should have been selected as the instrument to bring it about. The immediate cause, too, was contemptible.

Its institution was not in the service of God, nor for the spiritual welfare of the English people. Anna Boleyn's charms were the motive power.

To these and to Pope Clement's opposition to the divorce

from stale Queen Katherine are we indebted for this holy work in England.

Theretofores, dubbed "Defensor Ecclesie," as a faithful son of Rome, little was required to change the creed of the vacillating tyrant, since upheld by history to the scorn and contempt of posterity.

As a curious illustration of this monarch's reformatory views, at about the time that he was excommunicated by a bull from St. Peter's, we read of his commencing the spiritual amelioration of his people by burning two men in London for denying transubstantiation.

Ann Ascough, John Lambert and scores of others were subsequently tortured and burned for entertaining similar views.

Under this spiritual Autocrat, too, was enacted the "Bloody statute," or the "whip with six strings," as it was called. "Each one," says Thomas Fuller, "as heavily laid on, fetching blood from the backs of Protestants." This statute embraced six articles of spiritual dogma. Opposition to the first of the articles, on the Eucharist, was punished with death; opposition, even by word, to the other spiritual abstractions was visited by scourging and imprisonment.

And so bluff King Hal went on with the Reform, using the axe and the faggot, now against Catholic, and now against Protestant.

Martyrdom was the doom for opposition to the King's doctrines, or question of his spiritual as well as temporary supremacy.

The horrible incidents of the succeeding reign are familiar. In the three years of Mary's persecution we are told that three hundred victims perished at the stake. Archbishop and bishop, priest and layman, lordly prelate and humble worshipper, men stout of heart and limb, who cursed the she-devil as they died, and trembling women and harmless boys—all alike yielded their lives at the mandate of this royal Moloch, whose commission for the

suppression of heresy made short work of those who did not bend to her relentless fanaticism.

The diocese of London, under the religious assassin, Bishop Bonner, was headquarters for the bloody work. Old Thomas Fuller, the learned prebendary of Sarum, says, in his Church History, that "lion, tiger, wolf, bear, yea, a whole forest of wild beasts, were centered in him, killing two hundred in the compass of three years. No sex, quality or age escaped him, whose fury reached from John Felty, a lad of eight years old, by him scourged to death, even unto Hugh Laverock, a cripple, sixty years old, whom he caused to be burned. Yea, sometimes he made cruel additions of his own invention, as when he caused a faggot to be tossed in the face of Mr. Denlie, the martyr, when he was ready to be burned."

Good Queen Bess used also to hang people for their religious abstractions, 'even although unimpeachable in their loyalty.

Barrow and Greenwood, hung at Tyburn, were specimens of her reformatory handiwork.

Under the tender reign of this virgin monarch, the Duke of Exeter's daughter and the Scavenger's daughter, and the five other deadly racks, were kept busy in the Tower.

John Lewes was burned for his Arian views on the Trinity; and Penry and Udall, men of blameless life, for circulating pamphlets, not heterodox in doctrine, but criticizing ecclesiastical courts and ceremonies.

Under this "glorious reign" the Inquisitorial Court of the High Commission was created; and arbitrary conviction and punishment was enforced by compelling an oath to be taken by parties suspected of so-called heresy.

When the pedant James, the lauded translator of the Bible, became King, he illustrated some of its principles in this wise, when speaking of his Puritan subjects: "*I will*

make them conform, or I will harry them out of the land—or else, worse, I will only hang them ; that's all."

He burned Edward Wightman and Bartholomew Legate for upholding Unitarian ideas. The opinions of the latter, the royal buffoon tried to overcome by argument, but, being worsted therein, issued against his opponent the writ "*de hæretico comburendo*," which closed the argument at the stake. Even worthy Thomas Fuller, in his history, exults over this performance, and claims that it was quite a different thing from the burning of the Protestant martyrs in the days of Bloody Mary. He blasphemously says, "God seemed well pleased with this seasonable severity."

Under Charles I., Prynne, Bostwick, and Burton—men of high social standing and culture—had their ears cut off at the public pillory ; and Prynne was branded on both cheeks, for what were called libels on the established discipline of the Church of England.

This monarch's savage primate of Canterbury, Laud, was as great a tyrant over the mind and conscience as was his master over the civil rights of his subjects.

"Under Laud's direction," writes Macaulay, "every corner of the realm was subject to a constant and minute inspection. Every little congregation of Separatists was tracked out and broken up. Even the devotion of private families could not escape the vigilance of his spies."

Another annalist of these times remarks: "Laud and his prelates were abject in their dependence upon the Crown. They erected the most dangerous pretensions of the monarchy into religious dogmas. Their model, Bishop Andrews, had declared James to have been inspired by God. They preached passive obedience to the worst tyranny. They declared the person and goods of the subject to be at the King's absolute disposal, and turned religion into a systematic attack on English liberty."

During this comparatively modern reign, the Courts of High Commission and the Star Chamber were used as a standing means of attack against Puritan ministers ; and