

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-01773-2 - Lollardy and the Reformation in England: An Historical Survey, Volume 3

James Gairdner

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

CAMBRIDGE LIBRARY COLLECTION

Books of enduring scholarly value

History

The books reissued in this series include accounts of historical events and movements by eye-witnesses and contemporaries, as well as landmark studies that assembled significant source materials or developed new historiographical methods. The series includes work in social, political and military history on a wide range of periods and regions, giving modern scholars ready access to influential publications of the past.

Lollardy and the Reformation in England

James Gairdner (1828–1912) was one of the foremost authorities of his day on the Tudor period. This magisterial four-volume survey (originally published 1908–1913) argues that the impetus for the English Reformation came from the Lollard movement of the late fourteenth century. A prolific researcher and editor, Gairdner devoted his career to English history, and his study is both meticulous and factually sound. His critics, however, were quick to observe that the Lollard hypothesis was tenuous, and this mature work is most valuable today to those interested in the history of Reformation scholarship. First published in 1911, Volume 3 focuses on the reign of Edward VI, the progress of ‘Lollard’ ideas into power, and the bishops’ objections to the reforms implemented after the death of Henry VIII. It also includes a substantial introduction, and corrections to the two earlier volumes.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-01773-2 - Lollardy and the Reformation in England: An Historical Survey, Volume 3

James Gairdner

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Cambridge University Press has long been a pioneer in the reissuing of out-of-print titles from its own backlist, producing digital reprints of books that are still sought after by scholars and students but could not be reprinted economically using traditional technology. The Cambridge Library Collection extends this activity to a wider range of books which are still of importance to researchers and professionals, either for the source material they contain, or as landmarks in the history of their academic discipline.

Drawing from the world-renowned collections in the Cambridge University Library, and guided by the advice of experts in each subject area, Cambridge University Press is using state-of-the-art scanning machines in its own Printing House to capture the content of each book selected for inclusion. The files are processed to give a consistently clear, crisp image, and the books finished to the high quality standard for which the Press is recognised around the world. The latest print-on-demand technology ensures that the books will remain available indefinitely, and that orders for single or multiple copies can quickly be supplied.

The Cambridge Library Collection will bring back to life books of enduring scholarly value (including out-of-copyright works originally issued by other publishers) across a wide range of disciplines in the humanities and social sciences and in science and technology.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-01773-2 - Lollardy and the Reformation in England: An Historical Survey, Volume 3

James Gairdner

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Lollardy and the Reformation in England

An Historical Survey

VOLUME 3

JAMES GAIRDNER



CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge University Press
978-1-108-01773-2 - Lollardy and the Reformation in England: An Historical
Survey, Volume 3
James Gairdner
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town, Singapore,
São Paulo, Delhi, Dubai, Tokyo

Published in the United States of America by Cambridge University Press, New York

www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781108017732

© in this compilation Cambridge University Press 2010

This edition first published 1911

This digitally printed version 2010

ISBN 978-1-108-01773-2 Paperback

This book reproduces the text of the original edition. The content and language reflect the beliefs, practices and terminology of their time, and have not been updated.

Cambridge University Press wishes to make clear that the book, unless originally published by Cambridge, is not being republished by, in association or collaboration with, or with the endorsement or approval of, the original publisher or its successors in title.

Cambridge University Press
978-1-108-01773-2 - Lollardy and the Reformation in England: An Historical
Survey, Volume 3
James Gairdner
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

Lollardy and the Reformation in England

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-01773-2 - Lollardy and the Reformation in England: An Historical Survey, Volume 3

James Gairdner

Frontmatter

[More information](#)



MACMILLAN AND CO., LIMITED

LONDON · BOMBAY · CALCUTTA
MELBOURNE

THE MACMILLAN COMPANY

NEW YORK · BOSTON · CHICAGO
ATLANTA · SAN FRANCISCO

THE MACMILLAN CO. OF CANADA, LTD.

TORONTO

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-01773-2 - Lollardy and the Reformation in England: An Historical Survey, Volume 3

James Gairdner

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Lollardy and the Reformation in England

An Historical Survey

BY

JAMES GAIRDNER, C.B.

LL.D., D.LITT.

VOL. III

MACMILLAN AND CO., LIMITED
ST. MARTIN'S STREET, LONDON

1911

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-01773-2 - Lollardy and the Reformation in England: An Historical Survey, Volume 3

James Gairdner

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	PAGE vii
------------------------	-------------

BOOK V

JUVENILE SUPREMACY

CHAPTER I

BEGINNING OF THE PROTECTORATE	3
---	---

CHAPTER II

THE PROGRESS OF INNOVATION	64
--------------------------------------	----

CHAPTER III

ENGLAND, TRENT, AND THE 'INTERIM'	106
---	-----

BOOK VI

LOLLARDY IN POWER

CHAPTER I

WARWICK, GARDINER, AND CRANMER	169
--	-----

Cambridge University Press
 978-1-108-01773-2 - Lollardy and the Reformation in England: An Historical
 Survey, Volume 3
 James Gairdner
 Frontmatter
[More information](#)

vi LOLLARDY AND THE REFORMATION

CHAPTER II

	PAGE
THE EPISCOPAL REVOLUTION AND BISHOP HOOPER	246

CHAPTER III

DESTROYING 'THE ALTARS OF BAAL'	292
---	-----

CHAPTER IV

THE GREAT CONSPIRACY	357
--------------------------------	-----

INDEX	403
-----------------	-----

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-01773-2 - Lollardy and the Reformation in England: An Historical Survey, Volume 3

James Gairdner

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

INTRODUCTION

IN continuing this Work on Lollardy and the Reformation I feel that its scope and object now deserve fuller explanation, first of all—though there are other reasons—because we seldom hear historians speak of Lollardy after Henry VIII.'s time. And they are right in not using a term which was no longer much used by contemporaries; for, as I have shown already, it was unbecoming to talk of Lollards, or Lollardy, when the spirit of Lollardy had grown so influential and so useful to those in power. A new name had been invented for what was essentially an old thing. "The New Learning," indeed, was a name that even its votaries did not at first accept quite readily;¹ but they soon acquiesced in the use

¹ "Who is there," said George Constantyne in 1539, "who is there, almost, that will have a Bible but he must be compelled thereto? How loth be our priests to teach the Commandments, the Articles of the Faith and the *Paternoster* in English? Again, how unwilling be the people to learn it! Yea, they jest at it, calling it the new *Paternoster* and the New Learning" (*L. P.*, xiv. ii. p. 140). So, also, Latimer resents the expression: "But ye say it is new learning. Now I tell you it is the old learning. Ye say, it is old heresy new scoured. Nay, I tell you, it is old truth, long rusted with your canker, and now new made bright and scoured."—Latimer's *Sermons* (Parker Soc.), p. 30. Many other examples of the expression might be given. But perhaps the most significant are those which occur in Cranmer's letter of reproof to an influential justice of Kent (perhaps Sir Thomas Cheyney, Warden of the Cinque Ports) who disliked the new school, and claimed the newly published *Institution of a Christian Man* as a rebuke to the innovators. Cranmer had heard that he had said of it, "It alloweth all the old fashion and putteth all the knaves of the new learning to silence." He had thus, Cranmer tells him, discouraged "the teachers of the New Testament," and had led his servant to say to them, "My master and divers other could have favored you much better, saving that you smelled of the new learning."—Cranmer's *Letters* (Parker Soc.), pp. 350-51.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-01773-2 - Lollardy and the Reformation in England: An Historical Survey, Volume 3

James Gairdner

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

viii LOLLARDY AND THE REFORMATION

of a term which Cranmer himself could not help employing to denote what were both his principles and theirs. Old Lollardy, in short, having helped Henry VIII. to put down the Pope, and having been unmuzzled for that very purpose, could not but get its own way in some things with the King's powerful protection. But it must not be called Lollardy or heresy any longer; it was a New Learning, different from that of the Schools, for which the King and Cranmer bespoke a fair hearing. Under Edward VI., therefore, and also under Elizabeth, we have to see how this New Learning comported itself, having authority so much in its favour.

To make this apparent is the task that lies before me; and I must own it is a formidable one, for the demands it makes upon my poor energies. Moreover, when I look back on the work already accomplished, I am almost disheartened by a sense of its defects. Of these, indeed, in some ways, I felt conscious beforehand. But I must frankly own that—detached and fragmentary as its very plan was—there is a good deal in the execution of my work that requires apology. Not only are large subjects slightly treated, but there is a larger crop of errors than I like the look of. Nor am I desirous that what I have already written should be more highly esteemed than it deserves. For I find that my very errors, when pointed out—as some of them have been—were real hindrances to my general aim; while, on the other hand, there are popular but misdirected criticisms which require a word or two in explanation.

If, indeed, any one were to accuse me of great presumption in having attempted to grapple with so large a subject at all, I might well feel at a loss to answer him; for I knew from the first that I laboured under no small disadvantage for one who would fain have treated as a whole a subject of such magnitude

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-01773-2 - Lollardy and the Reformation in England: An Historical Survey, Volume 3

James Gairdner

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

INTRODUCTION

ix

with so many ramifications. I was a mere retired archivist, most of whose official time had been occupied in endeavouring to chronologise and arrange matter for real historians to utilise. But I felt, at the same time, that my somewhat special experience, not due to my own particular choice, had given me the command of what I certainly consider the most important aspect of that great political and religious crisis which we are in the habit of calling the Reformation; and that to estimate its historical significance aright requires a good deal more than the whole-hearted devotion which many can give to a very good cause, even when that devotion is animated by the utmost desire to be impartial. For it requires, first, a clearer apprehension than it is easy to form in these days of the political status of the Church in pre-Reformation times; and, secondly, a no less clear appreciation of the political legacy of thoughts and feelings bequeathed to both parties by the pre-Reformation philosophy. From these factors, indeed, emerged that contest between High and Low Church principles, and ultimately with the principles of Dissent, which have troubled the Church of England from the Reformation to the present day. A full treatment of all this vast subject is, I confess, altogether beyond me. Indeed, I never pretended to consider, or wished the reader to consider, my "Historical Survey" as a full Church History of any period. But I have done what I could hitherto, merely in the way of sketches, to illuminate the main conditions under which the Reformation was evolved; and I am anxious, if possible, to continue the story still in the same fashion, to the time when something like a settled basis was attained—that is to say, when, liberated from serious external danger, the Reformed Church had really become the Church of the people at large.

Now, what is the problem to be faced? Let any

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-01773-2 - Lollardy and the Reformation in England: An Historical Survey, Volume 3

James Gairdner

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

x LOLLARDY AND THE REFORMATION

intelligent man ask himself one question. Is there not something yet to be explained as to the actual cause, or causes, of the Reformation? Of its significance no one can entertain a doubt. Whether looked upon as a good or evil thing for religion, all must confess that it was a very great thing. Some mighty power shook the heavens and the earth, and it is hardly possible for us now to picture to our imaginations the heavens and the earth that passed away centuries ago. History has become vivid since then: before the sixteenth century we see it as in a glass darkly. Surely this is a problem for an historian—if, indeed, any of us who have all our ingrained prejudices can but lift himself, even for a moment, out of the narrowing tendencies of the school in which he has been brought up. Yet the world is so divided now into different schools and different communions that it is no wonder if some great thinkers, and even historians, have sought impartiality in unbelief and rejected Christianity altogether from inability to see it as a whole. For no doubt there is a sort of impartiality in paganism, though it persecuted Christianity itself in days of old. But it is a strange thing to make oneself a pagan now after centuries of Christian teaching. It does not help us to understand what life is that a man should have an intellect cold as a glacier. We are affected by Christianity whether we will or no. There is no resisting the power which carries on the work of civilisation. Yet we do not to this day see it clearly, and cold intellects are no great help. Often where there is least of dogma, there is most of heart, and the heart is wiser than the head.

For my own part, if I have my prejudices, I do not think they are such as some of my readers imagine. I have never felt the least personal inclination towards the Church of Rome, though I confess I have always desired to understand it. But I have

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-01773-2 - Lollardy and the Reformation in England: An Historical Survey, Volume 3

James Gairdner

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

INTRODUCTION

xi

always desired to understand other religions also. For I myself was brought up outside of all the orthodoxies, and for half my life, what I now feel to be the vital doctrines of Christianity, acknowledged all the world over, were certainly quite unintelligible to me, and accordingly incredible. Moreover, when in former days I read discussions between orthodox Protestants and Romanists, I must confess that, as one outside either community, I almost always felt that the Romanist had the better of his antagonist in point of logic. Nevertheless, Rome was further removed from me a great deal than Protestantism; and if, as some critics have pointed out to me, I have done the Roman cause, historically, rather more than justice, it has really arisen from a desire to be fair in matters easily exaggerated by our modern prejudices.

But on this subject I will say a few words by and by. For criticisms of another kind must first be disposed of, especially as they are criticisms which have a deeper root in popular feeling. Indeed, they are founded on views so specious that they completely obscure, to my mind, the real story of the English Reformation; and it is the one great object which I proposed to myself when I began the present work, to ascertain, as far as possible, the essential principles of that mighty movement which has given it such permanence and strength. Of course, many will say that these were theological principles, such as justification by faith, or the negation of purgatory and transubstantiation. I am the last man to deny the importance—the supreme importance, I would say, to each one of us—of having a true, and not a false, theology to guide him, without which the individual soul must inevitably be “perishing everlastingly.” But the individual is not a Church to himself—when it comes to that, of course, he can do without any Church at all in a

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-01773-2 - Lollardy and the Reformation in England: An Historical Survey, Volume 3

James Gairdner

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

xii LOLLARDY AND THE REFORMATION

land of perfect toleration ; for, in fact, he has then no real religion whatever, and does not want any. Real religion should draw men into social unity—how can it otherwise when men feel that they have one common Master? And the question always has been, both before the Reformation and since, how to preserve that social unity—formed not by political or human power, but by God's own Spirit in our hearts—with all due, but not overdue, submission to “the powers that be.”

Opinions differ. No doubt they will, as they always have done. But if there be anything in one's opinion at all, is it the better for being segregated or confined to a few who claim the right of worshipping by themselves? Whatever the errors of our ancestors, and their ways were certainly too forcible, they never imagined that. The individual, or the sect, must be unfruitful in the nature of things until he or they take part somehow in the spiritual life of those about them; and how far the prejudices of Society will admit of that is doubtless a troublesome question. Far easier it seems to most of us to say, “Leave me alone and I will leave you alone.” Nay, if the principle of division is held sacred, we must say so sometimes in our own defence. But is it not a miserable thing that Christianity should be walled up in compartments thus? We are very liberal in these days towards sects—not merely to the men who belong to sects but to the sects themselves. Churchmen are often anxious to recognise these bodies as separate bodies from themselves, having just as much a right to exist—not merely a legal right, which is conceded, but a moral and spiritual right, to be separate communities. But this claim is fatal to the essence of Christianity itself. We are liberal enough, in a sort of way. Among our intimate friends we have Churchmen, Roman Catholics, Dissenters, Agnostics, Jews and perhaps Mohammedans. We walk with them, talk

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-01773-2 - Lollardy and the Reformation in England: An Historical Survey, Volume 3

James Gairdner

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

INTRODUCTION

xiii

with them, eat with them, drink with them. There is only one common table to which we cannot come, even those of us who profess Christianity, and that is the Lord's table. We must tolerate differences, and I do not deny that we are right in doing so. But how do differences come? Surely because we are, as St. Paul said, "carnal," that is to say, not entirely Christian; otherwise we might confer together on these matters in a spirit of unity, just as we do in secular matters.

But present-day problems do not appeal to us here. The question is how to look at matters of the sixteenth century. The late Canon Bigg, in his *Wayside Sketches in Ecclesiastical History*, expresses his regret that I and the late Canon Dixon agree in the use of the word "heretic" in its strictly historical sense; that is to say, we call those persons heretics who were called heretics by their contemporaries. Well, I should say, for my part, that if we wish to understand past ages we must learn a little of the language of past ages, and try and understand what it means. We shall never appreciate truly the ideas of our ancestors if we do not weigh their words; and I do not see how we are to understand their words if we presume that they continually misapplied them. They surely had some reason for calling heresy that which they did call heresy. And though, of course, as compared with ourselves they were very ignorant in many things, yet on the whole they knew what they meant by the words they used just as well as we do. But it is true that a great change of feeling has taken place with regard to heresy, and that we regard it now as something very harmless. This is sufficiently manifest in the way that Canon Bigg condemns my use of the language of ancient times. "If everybody is to bear the name which his contemporaries give him," he remarks, "Canon Dixon was, and Mr. Gairdner is, a heretic, anathematised as such by the majority of the

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-01773-2 - Lollardy and the Reformation in England: An Historical Survey, Volume 3

James Gairdner

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

xiv LOLLARDY AND THE REFORMATION

Christian world. They would have found themselves burnt alive by the same men who sent Thomas Bilney to the stake. . . . These early English Protestants did not hold one single belief which is not held or regarded as tenable amongst us at the present day. Further, it is not the wont of history to fix upon parties the nicknames by which they have been branded by theological or political hatred.”¹

Nicknames! The word heretic occurs in the New Testament. Did St. Paul use it as a nickname? “A man that is an heretic, after the first and second admonition reject” (Titus iii. 10). Perhaps the meaning is rather better expressed in the Vulgate in which the text was read long ago: “Haereticum hominem post unam et secundam correptionem devita.” After two separate admonitions to the heretic, avoid his company, says St. Paul, giving a reason for this advice in the next verse: “knowing that he that is such is subverted and sinneth, being condemned of himself” (*i.e.* he is a perverse man and stands self-condemned as a wrong-doer). Now this is just what heretics were considered to be in the Middle Ages; and even if popular opinion was to some extent affected by prejudice, mediæval Christians acted just as St. Paul advised. They avoided the company of men marked as heretics whenever it was found that they could not be affected by admonitions; and the Church, when it failed to reconcile them, cast them off by excommunication that they might not contaminate others. That was the utmost that the Church could do to them; and no one could treat another as an irreclaimable heretic until the Church had pronounced judgment upon him to that effect.

Unhappily, matters did not stop there, and it is difficult to see in rough times how they could have stopped there. No one will think of justifying nowadays such a penalty as burning for heresy; and

¹ *Wayside Sketches*, pp. 157-8.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-01773-2 - Lollardy and the Reformation in England: An Historical Survey, Volume 3

James Gairdner

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

INTRODUCTION

xv

certainly it was a most objectionable thing. But it is easy to be censorious when we have lost all sense that the maintenance of social order depends on respect being paid to Church authority, no less than on loyalty to the laws of the land. Tell a man now that sedition, privy conspiracy, and rebellion, in the secular world, are but the offspring and the counterparts of false doctrine, heresy, and schism in the spiritual, and he will not believe you. The secular order of things is sacred to most of us, the spiritual order is not sacred at all. No one can call another to account for false doctrine or heresy, and therefore it is supposed that they do no mischief. If they do, at all events, the evil must be allowed to cure itself. Yet surely it was something in the rough ages long ago that there was a spiritual authority generally respected in all countries much more than that of the secular prince, who might be, in fact, a tyrant, or the laws of any particular kingdom, which might be, in fact, very barbarous.

For it should be remembered that this higher spiritual authority was recognised by the laws of all Christian countries that were under the Roman obedience; and when once, after much forbearance (which was always shown as regards mere speculative error, or what was so considered, affecting the doctrines of the Church), a Church tribunal had definitely pronounced a man a heretic, and he refused to recant or bow to the opinion of trained judges, who presumably understood such questions better than himself—what was this but contempt of court? We do not now recognise the decisions of any Church court amenable to Rome, and the most of us are not greatly interested in the decisions of other Church courts. But is contempt of any jurisdiction to be tolerated while we still profess to accept that jurisdiction as right? In matter of mere secular law, contempt of court cannot be suffered without injury to all law and order what-

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-01773-2 - Lollardy and the Reformation in England: An Historical Survey, Volume 3

James Gairdner

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

xvi LOLLARDY AND THE REFORMATION

ever. And it was the same in those ages when temporal law itself was held of inferior dignity to the law of the Universal Church. Therefore I think we really have some justification historically for calling mediæval heretics heretics, seeing that they were found to be so by law, and were so, indeed, as a matter of fact.

As to the penalty inflicted, that is a different question. Heresy being accounted a social danger, the penalty was a question that concerned civil order rather than ecclesiastical. Burning for heresy, in truth, was not instituted by the Church, though the odium of it, in later times, was generally thrown upon the bishops. Bishops may, no doubt, have approved of it as a painful necessity, just as at the present day they may approve of capital punishment for murder. In the twelfth century it would seem that bishops sometimes protected heretics from popular fury, and sometimes were unable to protect them.¹ But while Bishops certainly always did regard heresy as a crime against Society, the Church could do nothing more than excommunicate a very perverse heretic. What was to be done with him if the Church declared him a man whose company was by all means to be avoided was naturally a difficult question; and burning was generally agreed upon. As to the origin of the fiery penalty, writers differ. One modern scholar contends that till the end of the tenth century heretics were subject only to ecclesiastical jurisdiction and ecclesiastical penalties. But when the world did not come to its expected end in the year 1000 there was much religious excitement. The heresy of the Cathari made its appearance in the West, and was not easily kept within bounds. Afterwards a policy of coercion sprang up, and was even urged upon princes by a Council held at Toulouse in 1119. Such is the

¹ See Tanon's *Histoire des Tribunaux de l'Inquisition en France*, p. 15.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-01773-2 - Lollardy and the Reformation in England: An Historical Survey, Volume 3

James Gairdner

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

INTRODUCTION

xvii

view of the late M. Julien Havet.¹ Since his day I rather think burning for heresy has been traced further back. Yet till the thirteenth century it seems to have prevailed little in some countries, and the late Mr. H. C. Lea, who has devoted so much labour to the investigation of this and cognate subjects, expresses his conviction "that the number of victims who actually perished at the stake is considerably less than has ordinarily been imagined."² Minor penalties at first were generally found sufficient. In Germany the practice arose without any legal sanction, and what sort of sanction it obtained in England before Henry IV.'s time it is not easy to ascertain. Apparently at common law heretics had no more claim to toleration than vermin, and men could be burned at once whenever they were judged to be heretics. But burning was not always the rule. Under Henry II. some thirty heretics who came from Germany were judged by a Council at Oxford in 1166, but were not condemned to be burned. The King ordered that they should be branded in the face (their leader both in the face and chin) and whipped out of the town in the bitterness of winter, further orders being added that no man should offer them food or shelter. And this severity was said at the time to have purged England completely of that alien pest.³

Then we have in 1222 the famous case of the Deacon and the Jewess which is the subject of one of Maitland's essays.⁴ But at the end of the thirteenth century, even in England, we hear of inquiry touching felonies to be punished by burning, including the practices of sorcerers, Sodomites, and

¹ See his article in the *Bibliothèque de l'École des Chartes*, entitled "L'Hérésie et le bras séculier au moyen âge jusqu'au treizième siècle" (Paris, 1881).

² *A History of the Inquisition of the Middle Ages*, p. 549.

³ See William of Newburgh's "History" in *Chronicles*, edited by R. Howlett (Rolls Series), i. 131-4.

⁴ *Canon Law in the Church of England*, chap. vi.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-01773-2 - Lollardy and the Reformation in England: An Historical Survey, Volume 3

James Gairdner

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

xviii LOLLARDY AND THE REFORMATION

unbelievers “openly attainted.” Yet of actual burnings in England during the next century we have no record at all; and quite lately it was commonly believed that there were none till the statute *de haeretico comburendo* was passed. It is remarkable, however, that William Sawtré, or Chatrys, the first heretic in England known to have undergone such a fate since A.D. 1222, was burned by an order of the King in Council, issued just before the Act in question was passed. And it seems further beyond doubt that although no positive case of it was known, burning for heresy had been put in practice in England before then, or at all events was looked upon as something perfectly warrantable.¹

Wycliffe himself was not burned as a heretic; but then he was not found to be one by any conclusive judgment till long after his death. In his day a new state of matters had arisen; and to men not versed in theology the case was very confusing. Great persons, like John of Gaunt and Sir Henry Percy, only sought to secure a fair trial to one who was undoubtedly a learned doctor. The power of his followers was much diminished when they were no longer supported by knights with armed retinues; and few among them had scholastic minds or training equal to his. The later Lollardy consequently was unable to hold its ground; it had neither much learning nor critical acumen to support it. Resting only on crude inferences from Scripture, it was arrogant and offensive; and its adherents truly deserved the name of heretics, opprobrious though that name was.

But Canon Bigg, who objects to the use of this word as applied to them, suggests that I myself am a

¹ This was shown by Thomas Arnold in his Introduction to his *Select English Works of J. Wyclif*, pp. viii-xi. I called the attention of the late Prof. Maitland to these evidences, and he confessed that he did not see by what authority the execution could have been done. There could have been no civil process, but burning a proved heretic must have been considered justifiable by common law. No actual cases, however, are known. See *Stubbs*, iii. 381-2.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-01773-2 - Lollardy and the Reformation in England: An Historical Survey, Volume 3

James Gairdner

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

INTRODUCTION

xix

heretic by the same rule that Thomas Bilney¹ and others were called heretics in the sixteenth century. Who is it that thinks me so? If any one, I suppose it should be a sound Roman Catholic, especially a Roman Catholic divine. Well, I am happy to say, I know several Roman Catholics, some of them even divines of high standing, who, I think, value my friendship as I do theirs. They do not avoid my company as they ought to do if they considered me a heretic in the same sense as Bilney was. But am I really so? Or is it only laxity of principle on their part not to shun me? I am inclined to think that they feel no compunction about it, and that there is no protest raised within the Church of Rome itself against such intercourse of Romanists with Protestants, except in the case of mixed marriages—a thing which, I daresay, we too think unadvisable for the most part. My Roman Catholic friends may indeed consider my opinions heretical; that is to say, sectarian, or such as would tend to split up the Church into sects if it were not split up already. But that is something different from looking upon me as a heretic, which I trust I am not. For I protest that in mind I am not at all sectarian, if I know myself truly. And if my sole object is to seek for truth so far as my limitations permit me, then I am not a heretic at all but a real Catholic, refusing to be bound by any school. I do not reject absolutely even the doctrine of Transubstantiation if it can be shown to be reasonable. But as yet I cannot say that I see it in that light; and if I am asked to subject my own reason to the Church, I am ready to do so—to a Church that is really universal.

Mere opinions, in truth, do not constitute heresy

¹ Canon Bigg, of course, takes the ordinary view of Bilney, that he was a Protestant heretic, which I have shown is not the case. See Vol. I. 393, 400. Bilney believed in the mass all his life, and got leave to partake in it before he suffered, penitently acknowledging that he had been a great offender in other ways. In fact, he was a real *haereticus homo* in St. Paul's sense without being very much of a heretic in point of doctrine.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-01773-2 - Lollardy and the Reformation in England: An Historical Survey, Volume 3

James Gairdner

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

xx LOLLARDY AND THE REFORMATION

in any man; and it is even true that the heresies of the Middle Ages are not heresies now, just because they do not tend in honest men to break up further the unity and social life of Christianity. The heretical spirit now is nothing like what it used to be. Truth, no doubt, is eternal. What is true now was true always, and what was true in the Middle Ages is true now in matters of faith. But is any tribunal on earth infallible? That is the question between us and Rome. There is one sense in which I myself would confess that the Church cannot err. For if there be a divine Revelation at all—if our Lord Himself was right in saying that He came to bring Truth into the world, and that after His death the Holy Spirit would guide His followers into the whole Truth—then, undoubtedly, His followers do possess among them, taken as a whole, a fund of truth which cannot possibly be diminished or weakened as we go on. But that Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church must embrace all real Christians whatsoever. Sects here and there may err; but surely it cannot be that whole nations, calling themselves Christians, and accepting expressly, or even by implication, all that is written in the three Catholic Creeds, can deviate, otherwise than accidentally and for a time, from the original deposit of the Faith.

Here, however, comes in the question of authority; for we are bound to admit and respect authority of some sort. Those who believe in no revelation find the only “seat of authority” in these matters in their own individual judgments, which, of course, tend naturally to diversity, just because there is no external guidance. In science individual judgments tend towards unity because there is such guidance; but in religion, if you shut out the light of revelation and historical experience you have none. Such an individual position was maintained in his latest book by one of the most sincere and greatest thinkers of

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-01773-2 - Lollardy and the Reformation in England: An Historical Survey, Volume 3

James Gairdner

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

INTRODUCTION

xxi

the last generation, the late Dr. Martineau. But independence like this is not really possible. For such is human nature that we are none of us entirely satisfied with our own individual judgments until we have compared notes with others; and I doubt if Dr. Martineau himself was as little influenced by judgments differing from his own as his theory would naturally imply. Moreover, I am sure that there are many Rationalists among us who lean on Dr. Martineau himself as an authority more than they trust their own individual judgments.

The real question is how much deference we ought in reason to pay to an alien authority from whom we can learn something that we could not have found out ourselves. I think we can only receive the views of others in a tentative way. If we accept truth upon authority it will grow within us by further thought and experience, and we know that our authority has been a true guide, for it has helped us on our path. Our eyesight has been gradually educated to see plainly what was at one time dark to us. But if we accept error on an authority which is merely plausible, it also grows within us, bringing on results which we shall find ultimately to be pernicious—unless we go on “perishing everlastingly” in new sophistries; for error has no life in itself, and can only maintain itself by more and more negations. Is it not well, then, that they who believe in a Revelation should feel themselves to be one body, giving strength and life to each other in that belief which is common to them all? For they are indeed one body, working out a common harmony.

But it was necessary for the Christian world for a long time, if the truth of Christian Revelation, with the careful inferences drawn from it by divines and schoolmen, was not to be eternally persecuted, that the faith should be protected by princes and rulers who professed Christianity themselves. Christian

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-01773-2 - Lollardy and the Reformation in England: An Historical Survey, Volume 3

James Gairdner

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

xxii LOLLARDY AND THE REFORMATION

truth, therefore, having been laid down by authority, disturbers, or heretics, had to be removed, somehow or other, after repeated unavailing admonitions. No one really disputed the necessity—not even heretics themselves, who generally maintained that they were not heretics, and that it was their own dogmas that ought to be supported against assailants. But they seldom really had the courage of their opinions; for they were not straightforward. They would deny their own words, change their names, recant with deliberate purpose to preach again what they recanted, and escape from diocese to diocese, so that they should not be recognised in new places as men who had been convicted and done penance for trying to shake the faith of their neighbours.

It cost some trouble to deal with such men, even before the days of printing, and before they received underhand encouragement from a King who had his own reasons for making the Church's task as difficult as possible. But when the printing press came to the aid of heresy, as we have seen already, the task of suppressing poisonous literature was particularly embarrassing, and the encouragement given to it by the King made it naturally much more so. At last his open breach with Rome made Henry himself a heretic in the eyes of all Europe.

But when it came to this, an entirely new chapter was opened up in the history of Christianity. How was it possible now to shun the company of heretics when the King himself was one? His subjects bewailed the fact, and were glad when an Act like that of the Six Articles seemed likely to put down irreverence and blasphemy. But irreverence and blasphemy went on, and good men avoided the Court, as Sir Thomas More, even in earlier days when he wrote his *Utopia*, had sought to avoid it as much as possible. That was all that could be done even by the best of Henry's subjects. Some check might still

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-01773-2 - Lollardy and the Reformation in England: An Historical Survey, Volume 3

James Gairdner

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

INTRODUCTION

xxiii

have been put upon royal wickedness if foreign princes could only have been persuaded to stop commercial intercourse with a country governed by such a king. But this the two most powerful foreign princes declined to do. Each, indeed, would have been willing enough to do it if supported by the other, for Henry was loved by neither of them; but if either had acted alone, he knew well that the other would have been glad of England's assistance against himself. And then, as to heresy, Henry himself always denied the imputation. He had only rejected the Pope's jurisdiction and treated him as a foreign bishop. In religion he professed to keep what was strictly lawful, and to be governed by the best advice that he could get from his own clergy.

Nevertheless Lollardy had gained no small hold on the kingdom, even in his day, and it affected the Church more and more after his death. For as soon as Lollard opinions obtained favour at Court, and especially when any such opinions were definitely recognised, they were supported by that Royal Supremacy which was, as I have shown, the first moving cause of the Reformation. And yet there was no real gain for the principle of religious toleration. How could there be when Heresy insisted that old Orthodoxy was wrong and only desired to take her place? While papal authority was still upheld, heretics had been maintaining that their principles were those of the true Church, and that the "Visible Church" was an usurper.¹ Under Edward VI. there was a good deal of consultation with foreign divines as to what the principles of the true Church were; but a solution independent of Rome was very much facilitated by shutting up in prison, one after another, every bishop who showed himself at all favourable to Roman doctrine; and at the close of the reign no

¹ See More's *Dialogue*, book ii. ch. i., of which an abstract will be found in this work, Vol. I. p. 567. Foxe's contention was the same all through.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-01773-2 - Lollardy and the Reformation in England: An Historical Survey, Volume 3

James Gairdner

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

xxiv LOLLARDY AND THE REFORMATION

less than five were in custody under the most pitiful pretence of law.

Coercion and deposition of bishops were carried even further under Elizabeth. Yet undoubtedly those conferences of foreign and English divines within the kingdom had already led to the laying of very broad foundations, and the faith of all Christendom was cleared of doctrines which were merely scholastic and nowise essential to the Gospel set forth from the beginning. Unhappily the broad basis gave little satisfaction for a long time. Roman Catholics were persecuted, and Lollards or Puritans were anxious to persecute them even more. But these latter Lollards were revolting from the Reformed Church with as great or greater vehemence than their predecessors had done from the Church of Rome. There was a spirit of revolt in other nations as well, and a uniform national religion could not be established anywhere. Adherents of the old Faith were disturbed by Huguenots in France not less than by Lutherans in Germany and Calvinists almost everywhere. Civil war broke out in France as it had done in Germany. The Netherlands revolted from Spanish rule. No theory of religion suggested toleration, because the civil ruler must have a religion of his own to go by, and must therefore impose it upon all his subjects.¹ The theory that Protestantism was more tolerant than Romanism will not bear investigation.²

It was policy, rather than humanity or even Christian feeling, that first suggested the necessity of toleration. The tolerant party in France were actually called *Politiques*—men who felt that it had become a political necessity in Government to allow some

¹ That was the principle even of the peace of Westphalia in 1648.

² Even the Middle Ages can hardly show a case of persecution so atrocious as that of the young man Aikenhead, who, having rashly denied the Trinity and repented it, was done to death at the end of the seventeenth century to please the Edinburgh clergy. See Macaulay, iv. 781-4.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-01773-2 - Lollardy and the Reformation in England: An Historical Survey, Volume 3

James Gairdner

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

INTRODUCTION

xxv

indulgence to heresy. But in England the battle had to be fought out, heresy actually taking the place of orthodoxy under Oliver Cromwell, and suppressing the Church of England for a time. Then, when after the Restoration the Church of England had its own again, those who could not agree with it seceded. The theory that Government and people should be of one religion could no longer be maintained intact, and it was certainly time to arrive at some understanding with the malcontents. Religious toleration, in fact, was first attempted, as a matter of sheer policy, by the last Stuart kings, Charles II. and James II., and they each met with a severe rebuke for attempting it. Yet it was under James II. that the first Dissenting chapels were built. For it was natural enough that a convinced Roman Catholic king should consider other heresies really less dangerous than the heresy of a State Church independent of Rome; and he probably believed that equal tolerance for all would eventually win the day for his own religion. But he was not allowed to carry the experiment very far; for the nation at large was far more opposed to a return to Rome than inclined to indulgence, even of Protestant Dissent.

A great change, however, has taken place since the days of the Revolution, and the spirit of tolerance is now so general that the present generation is at a loss to understand the principles really at stake when nations were first cut off, or shook themselves free, from the spiritual dominion of Rome. Old things have passed away completely, and we really cannot picture to ourselves nations under such tutelage at all. Least of all can we think of the question as one vitally affecting spiritual and social order. But Henry VIII. put the matter plainly when it first suited him to make known what he was driving at. On the 11th May 1532 he called before him the Speaker and twelve members of the House of

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-01773-2 - Lollardy and the Reformation in England: An Historical Survey, Volume 3

James Gairdner

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

xxvi LOLLARDY AND THE REFORMATION

Commons, and, having eight Lords with him, he said to them : “ We thought that the clergy of our Realm had been our subjects wholly ; but now we have well perceived that they be but half our subjects. For all the prelates, at their consecration, make an oath to the Pope clean contrary to the oath that they make to us ; so that they seem to be his subjects and not ours.”¹ As a matter of fact, the bishops swore obedience to the Pope on receiving their spiritual charges, and then swore allegiance to the King that their temporalities might be restored to them, declaring in the latter oath that nothing in the former would interfere with perfect loyalty to their Sovereign, from whom alone they could hold the lands of their bishoprics, to enable them to discharge their secular duties. This arrangement had been understood for centuries, and it was mere affectation on Henry’s part to pretend that he had not been aware of it. For it was nothing but a natural and essential part of the twofold government in Church and State with which all the world was then familiar. The clergy, indeed, were no subjects of the King in spiritual matters—nay, the humblest sexton or church officer was not subject to the King’s law but to the law of the Church, as regards his performance of his duty. And even the laity were amenable to Church law, as I have already shown. It was, in truth, a jurisdiction to which the King himself was amenable, and he would willingly have remained so if the Church, as he at first hoped, would only have released him from the bondage of a marriage of which he had grown tired. Thwarted of his aim at Rome, he at once set agoing a revolution of which even he could not foresee the ultimate results.

So far, then, I consider that some criticisms on my past writings are unfounded. But I now proceed to the confession of errors in the present work, the

¹ Hall’s *Chronicle*, p. 788.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-01773-2 - Lollardy and the Reformation in England: An Historical Survey, Volume 3

James Gairdner

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

INTRODUCTION

xxvii

chief of which relate to the condition of the monasteries.

As long ago as the year 1887, when editing the Tenth Volume of the *Letters and Papers of Henry VIII.*, I felt it incumbent upon me to investigate and form as careful a judgment as I could upon the dreadful reports of the state of the monasteries drawn up by the King's visitors in 1536. As editor of a Government publication I would gladly have avoided expressing any opinion whatever on a subject which afforded so much room for controversy; and, in point of fact, I did not in my Preface so much express an opinion as simply set forth the kind of evidence which a critical examination of details, where possible, together with a general survey of facts, brought to bear on the credibility of those reports. Nor do I think, looking back on that Preface, that there is anything stated there as a matter of opinion that cannot be justified. But the impression which I then received as to the utter worthlessness of the testimony of the Royal Visitors, true as I think it still, has, I fear, since inclined me too much to minimise other evidences of monastic depravity, especially in certain cases where the things insinuated were not exactly clear. I never, certainly, intended to suggest that impurity did not exist in some monasteries. There had even been gross and notorious cases like that of St. Albans in the days of Henry VII., which it was impossible to overlook. That abuses in monasteries—especially in a house exempt from episcopal jurisdiction—should have become serious in times of civil war and disorder seemed to me not unnatural; but I saw no reason to doubt that in quieter times of energetic rule they were considerably abated. So I was prepared to believe that under Henry VIII., although there was no doubt still much laxity of discipline in some Orders and in some houses, good rule prevailed on the whole.