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978-1-108-03956-7 - Memoir of the Life and Episcopate of George Augustus Selwyn, D.D.: Volume 1

H. W. Tucker

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Memoir of the Life and Episcopate of George Augustus Selwyn, D.D.

This two-volume biography of George Augustus Selwyn (1809–78), the first Anglican bishop of New Zealand, after whom Selwyn College, Cambridge, was later named, was published in 1879. Selwyn was ordained in 1834 and served as curate at Windsor while tutoring at Eton; in 1840, when New Zealand was declared an independent British colony, he was chosen as first bishop of the newly established diocese. The declared aim was to develop an Anglican organisation for the growing European settlement, while resisting too much state control, and by 1857 Selwyn had drafted a constitution for the Church of New Zealand which led eventually to disestablishment. A staunch defender of indigenous rights, he travelled widely throughout New Zealand and the Pacific islands, and subsequently played a leading role in the first Lambeth Conference. In Volume 1, his former chaplain, H. W. Tucker, describes Selwyn's early life, ordination and first decade in New Zealand.

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VOLUME 1

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OF

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BISHOP OF NEW ZEALAND, 1841—1869;

BISHOP OF LICHFIELD, 1867—1878.

VOL. I

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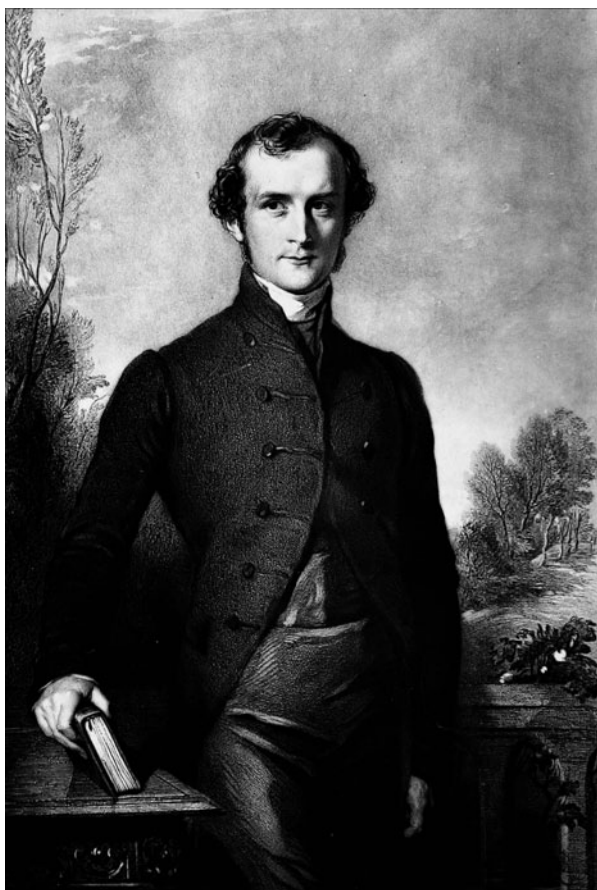
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*Yours very faithfully,
G. A. Selwyn*

*Richmond.
D. Dec. 1841*

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BY THE

REV. H. W. TUCKER, M.A.,

AUTHOR OF "UNDER HIS BANNER," "MEMOIR OF BISHOP FEILD," ETC., ETC.

WITH TWO PORTRAITS, LITHOGRAPHS, AND MAPS.

"IMPLESTI MERITIS SOLIS UTFAMQUE DOMUM."

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“ Oh I have seen, nor hope perhaps in vain,
Ere life go down, to see such sights again :
A Veteran Warrior in the Christian field,
Who never saw the Sword he could not wield ;
Grave without dulness, learned without pride,
Exact, yet not precise, though meek, keen-eyed.

* * * * *

Who, when occasion justified its use,
Had wit as bright as ready to produce :
Could fetch from records of an earlier age,
Or from Philosophy’s enlightened page,
His rich materials, and regale your ear
With strains it was a privilege to hear :
Yet above all, his luxury supreme
And his chief glory was the Gospel Theme.”

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TO HER,
WHO FOR FORTY YEARS
ENCOURAGED AND SHARED HER HUSBAND'S LABOURS,
THESE VOLUMES,
WRITTEN AT HER REQUEST, ARE RESPECTFULLY
Dedicated.

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PREFACE.

“How should a great man’s life be written?” “How for example should you wish your own life to be written if it ever were written?”

These two questions were put to the subject of this Biography not many months before his death. He paused for a minute, repeated the second question, and then said, “Tell first all my faults, and then tell whatever the grace of God has enabled me to do in spite of them.”

I am quite conscious of having failed to comply with both of these conditions: indeed I have not attempted to do so. As to the first, I know that it is often objected to Biographies of Christian men that they portray a perfect character, and thus defeat one of the great objects of such memoirs: that instead of inciting readers to imitate a bright example, they discourage by descriptions of holiness which are felt at once to be ordinarily unattainable. It is said, and with truth, that Holy Scripture never conceals the faults or the sins of the greatest saints, whose examples are thereby more valuable, inasmuch as we recognise common infirmities of mankind: but I think that there is a flaw in this argument. Inspired records are not to be compared with other books:

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the pages which reveal the sins and errors of Saints and Apostles are written by HIM, “unto whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid:” it is not the duty of a biographer to assume the place of a judge: censure and panegyric are alike to be avoided by him. If therefore any one wishes to know what were the sins and infirmities of him whose career is chronicled in these volumes, I have helped him in the search only so far that I suppress nothing: to “draw his frailties from their dread abode,” I have considered to be no more my function than to insult his saintly memory by feeble words of praise. A long series of noble works, humbly commenced and patiently carried on for God’s glory, I have indeed chronicled; they do not exhaust the list; and such as they are I leave them to win their way to the hearts of my readers. The great task which, however imperfectly, is now completed, was not sought by me; it was not undertaken willingly: there were others more qualified both by personal acquaintance and by literary ability—and to whom leisure is a less rare possession than it is to myself—who, as I had hoped and expected, would have given to the Church a Biography more worthy of the great subject than these pages can pretend to be: but to those whose wish in this matter commanded obedience it seemed otherwise, and when I was invited, and even urged, to accept a trust so onerous and so honourable, I had nothing to do but to comply.

I wish it to be understood that these pages pretend to be nothing more than a compilation. My duty has

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been to study and carefully to analyse many hundreds of letters and documents which have been placed in my hands. I considered that I should discharge my task the better, just in proportion as I brought into greater prominence the very words and letters of my subject, and as illustrating these, the testimony of his friends and colleagues, and kept myself and my own opinions in the background. My aim therefore has been rather to arrange the materials at my disposal in due relation and proportion, than to write an original monologue.

If I had desired to paint an ideal picture, or to adjust my materials so as to fulfil my own conceptions, or to meet possibly my prejudices of the noble life which for many months has been my daily and nightly study, it would have been easy to have done so: but I can truly affirm that I have suppressed nothing, coloured nothing, distorted nothing.

I have been freely entrusted with all papers and letters in the possession of the family of the late bishop which could assist me in my work: indeed I regard myself as little more than the amanuensis of those at whose request I have written these volumes; but it is right to add that I have been perfectly unfettered in my labours, and for the use made of the materials at my disposal I alone am responsible.

I have to express my thanks and obligations to many persons who were connected with the late bishop by ties of friendship only: the amount of service rendered to me differs probably in each case, but to all alike I desire to offer an expression of gratitude for the ready help which I have received on all occasions, whether offered voluntarily

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or extended in answer to my application. It is impossible to give the names of all whom, mentioned or unmentioned in these pages, I heartily thank; but especially I must record the benefit which these volumes have received from the assistance and co-operation of Bishop Abraham and Bishop Hobhouse; the Most Rev. the Primate of New Zealand; the Bishops of Quebec and Wellington; the Right Hon. the Earl of Powis; Sir W. Martin, late Chief Justice of New Zealand; the Rev. Edward Coleridge, Fellow of Eton College, the unfailing friend of Bishop Selwyn, and the unwearied supporter of the Colonial Church generally; the Rev. C. B. Dalton, the Rev. E. J. Edwards, and the Venerable Sir Lovelace Stamer, Bart., Archdeacon of Stoke.

My obligations to the admirable work on New Zealand by Mr. Swainson, late Attorney-General of that colony, are acknowledged elsewhere. I must further thank my friend J. E. Gorst, Esq., Q.C., M.P., for valuable advice and information, and for use freely made of his outspoken book *The Maori King*.

LONDON, *Lent*, 1879.

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