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MEMORIALS OF DR JOHN OLDE, THE REFORMER.

By WILLIAM WATKINS OLD, Esq., F.R.H.S.

IN 1863 a correspondent in *Notes and Queries* inserted the following entry from "Mr James Haig's List of Books published in England prior to the year M.D.C., in the Library of the King's Inns, Dublin, 1858, p. 14:"—

"Olde, John. The acquital or purgation of the most Catholycke Christen Prince Edward the VI., King of Englande, Fraunce, and Ireland, etc., and of the Church of England reformed and gouerned vnder hym, agaynst al suche as blasphemously and traitorously infame hym or the sayd Church of heresie or sedecion (by John Olde), imprinted at Waterford, the 7th day of Nouember 1555, 8vo."

And the correspondent proceeded to request information respecting the volume, which, he observed, was stated in "Lowndes' Bibliographer's Manual" to be the work of John Bale, and supposed to be the second book printed in Ireland.

In reply there was a short notice of the book, with a few remarks upon the author.

"John Olde," it said, "was presented by the Duchess of Somerset to the vicarage of Cubington, co. Warwick, and was a prebendary of Lichfield. In the reign of Queen Mary he became an exile for religion."

A very brief memoir, the above! And, after ten years of inquiry and research, I fear I am not able to add much to what is here stated. Nevertheless, I think it may not be uninteresting or useless to record the result of my examinations, as far as they go: and, by throwing a little more light upon the history of one of the pillars of our English Reformation, I may perhaps be the means of drawing the attention

of others to the matter, and may thus evoke that direct information respecting this worthy member of the family of Old which I myself, in all my genealogical collections, have failed to obtain.

That the friend of Latimer should have no biography beyond a few detached sentences in the pages of Strype, that the name of the translator of considerable portions of the New Testament (the *collaborateur* of Miles Coverdale) should scarcely find a place in any English Biographical Dictionary, seems to call for the aid of such a Society as the Royal Historical, one of whose main objects is to rescue from oblivion the memories of lesser celebrities, and to illustrate the half-explored paths of national and provincial history.

Dr John Old, the Reformer, was born about the commencement of the sixteenth century. His name does not appear in the family pedigree, but I have reason to believe he was a son of John Olde of Sheriffhales, in Shropshire, which had been the family residence for over a hundred and fifty years, having been purchased by Roger Old in the twenty-fifth year of Edward III.

I do not know the Rev. William Cole's authority for placing John Old in his "Alphabetical Collection for an Athenæ Cantabrigienses" (Add. MSS. 5877, p. 10, British Museum), but I suppose there is no doubt he studied at Cambridge. I understand there are no early lists of Cambridge graduates, and those of Oxford do not begin till 1561. It was probably at Cambridge that Old made the acquaintance of Hugh Latimer, Thomas Becon, and other of his associates.

It is not before 1540 that I meet with direct notices of Dr John Old. It would appear he was then in priest's orders, living in the county of Stafford. Sheriffhales, it should be remembered, is in the two counties of Salop and Stafford. From the writings of Thomas Becon we learn that he and Robert Wisdome, and others of the early Reformers, were in the habit of staying at the house of John Old. And from the glimpses they afford us of his character, he would seem to have been a man of great amiability and much influence.

“For I found him in the house of a certain faithful brother, called John Old,” says Becon in his “Jewel of Joy,”—“a man old in name, notwithstanding young in years, and yet ancient in true godliness and Christian life.”

In the memoir of Thomas Becon prefixed to his works, published by the Parker Society, Cambridge, 1843, we read in reference to the above passage—

“While in the Peak, Becon learned that Robert Wisdome was in Staffordshire. It was in the house of John Old, a faithful brother, that Wisdome was, and with equal hospitality and good-will did Old entertain Becon.”

The following year, 1542, John Old had removed into Warwickshire, as we gather from Becon’s “Jewel of Joy.”

“After I had consumed a year in that country, I departed into Warwickshire, where, in like manner as afore, I freely enjoyed the liberality of my most sweet and dear friend John Olde, which, impelled by urgent causes, departed into that country for to inhabit.”

And in the above-mentioned memoir—

“Becon afterwards removed into Warwickshire, where he was employed as a tutor to gentlemen’s sons, and also again participated in the hospitality of John Old, who was a resident in this county.”

From the preface to John Old’s “Confession of the most Auncient and True Christian Catholicke Olde Beliefe,” published in 1556, we learn it was in the town of Coventry that Old was situated at this period.

In Strype’s “Memorials of Archbishop Cranmer,” vol. i., p. 397, the following characteristic passages occur, touching on the above:—

“The fourth was Robert Wisdome. There, in Staffordshire, he was one of those who were entertained by John Old, a pious professor and harbourer of good men. And Thomas Becon was another, who was taken up with Bradford in the beginning of Queen Mary’s reign, and committed to the Tower. Of this Old, the said Becon, in a treatise of his (“The Jewel of Joy”) printed in Edward VI.’s reign, gives this character: ‘That he was to him and Wisdome as Jason

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was to Paul and Silas. He received us joyfully into his house, and liberally, for the Lord's sake, ministered all good things to our necessities. And as he began, so did he continue, a right hearty friend and dearly loving brother, so long as we remained in the country.'"

It is almost strange that Strype does not give us more information respecting John Old. He remarks ("Memorials Ecclesiastical," vol. ii., part i., p. 47) that Old "seems to have been a teacher of youth as well as a teacher of the Gospel," but he adds very little to the history of the man.

In 1546 (old style) a royal visitation was ordered, and John Old was nominated registrar of the diocese of Lichfield in connection with it. We may infer, therefore, he returned into Staffordshire, or rather, perhaps, was moving about from place to place, as Bishop Tanner, in his "*Bibliotheca Britannico Hibernica*," London, 1748, fol., states:—

"Fuit unus ex prædicatoribus itinerantibus et comitatus est regio visitatores in agrum *Lincoln*,"

which last word is, I fancy, a slip for *Lichfield*.

Strype, speaking of this king's visitation, remarks ("Life of Archbishop Cranmer," vol. i., p. 208):—

"The persons nominated for this present employment were three as I find them set down in a MS., formerly belonging to Archbishop Parker, but now in the Benet College Library, where you may observe the visitors were divided into six sets, and to each set were apportioned particular episcopal sees, and a preacher and a register in this exact manner following."

In the list of names he records—

"John Old, Register, Lichfield."

From the fact of his being thus chosen immediately on the accession of Edward VI., when the Protestant party were making renewed efforts to establish their cause, there can be little doubt that Old had already, during the reign of Henry VIII., distinguished himself on behalf of the Reformed faith, and was known beyond the circle of his social influence as one of the leaders in the great religious movement of the day.

In 1548 Anne Duchess of Somerset presented Old to the vicarage of Cubbington, in Warwickshire, at the request of Bishop Latimer. This is a parish near Leamington, and about seven miles from Coventry, where Old had lately been residing. In the list of incumbents of Cubbington in Dugdale's "Antiquities of Warwickshire" is the entry of Old's appointment:—

"Edw. VI. Rex Angl. Magr. John Olde xxii Martii 1548, v. p. m. Thom. Stevynson."

The same year "the first tome" of the paraphrase of Erasmus upon the Epistles and other parts of the New Testament, by Miles Coverdale, J. O. (John Old), and others, folio, was published. The following year, 1549, the second volume, which was almost entirely the work of John Old, came out. In the preface to the Christian reader, dated 15th July 1549, before the Epistle to the Ephesians, addressed to Anne Duchess of Somerset, Old thanks her Grace for preferring him lately to the vicarage of Cubbington, in Warwickshire, at the suit of his "singular friend," Dr Hugh Latimer. The Duchess was the second wife of Edward Seymour the Protector, and daughter and heiress of Sir Edward Stanhope, Knt., of Shelford, co. Notts, by Elizabeth his wife, great-grand-daughter of William Boucher, Earl of Ewe, in Normandy.

In Strype's "Memorials Ecclesiastical," vol. ii., part i., p. 47, he notices Old's work of translating, and his presentation to a living.

"John Old, who also seems to have been a teacher of youth as well as a teacher of the Gospel, was preferred to the vicarage of Cobington, in Warwickshire, by the Duchess of Somerset, at the suit of Hugh Latymer, translated the paraphrase upon all the canonical Epistles, and dedicated them to the said Duchess, anno 1549. Beside these, he translated also seven of St Paul's Epistles, thus paraphrased, namely, to the Ephesians, the Philippians, both to the Thessalonians, both to Timothy, and to Philemon, which he did at the solicitation of Edward Whitchurch, an eminent printer of church books in this time, who came to him, and told him that none were yet appointed to translate those epistles, and that it was necessary the whole volume should be finished and printed off by such a time (which drew on),

according to the King's injunctions, which enjoined every priest, under such a degree in the schools, to read them. Before the Epistle to the Ephesians, the translator hath a prologue to the reader."

Erasmus' paraphrase was to be found in almost every church library of this date. In the book of extracts from the parish records of Great St Mary's, Cambridge (Cole MSS., vol. xlvii., Brit. Museum), is the entry, under the date 1550:—

"Item for ye Paraffrys of Erasmus, 6s. 6d.,"

and I have met with similar notices in various registers in the south-west of England.

Bale, in his "Troubles of Frankfort," and Tanner, in his "Bibliotheca Britannico Hibernica," both state that John Old also translated the paraphrase on the Epistles to the Colossians, to Titus, and the Hebrews. That to Titus, however, as Oldys, the antiquary, has pointed out, was the work of Leonard Coxe, who, in his preface, speaks of John Old as "a man of right good learning."

In 1551 Old was granted the Dernford prebendal stall in Lichfield Cathedral, notice of which appears in Harwood's "History of Lichfield," ed. 1806, p. 225:—

"Dernford.—John Old, August 19, 1551, Vicar of Cubington. He was deprived in 1554."

The following year he received commission to a canonship of Hereford Cathedral, noticed by Strype in his "Memorials Ecclesiastical," vol. ii., part i., p. 47:—

"This man, being a Doctor of Divinity, got a prebend in the church of Hereford, but not before 1552."

And further on, vol. ii., part ii., p. 273:—

"A grant to John Old, D.D., for life, of the canonship or prebend in the cathedral church of Hereford, void by the death of Anthony Bellasis, and in the King's gift, by vacation of the said bishopric. Dated in September, and sealed October 4, 1552."

Among the Cotton MSS., British Museum (Julius, b. 9, fol. 87), is a book of patents, headed, "Vicesimo secundo die mens

Decemb^r a^o dni. milesimo qungentesimo qunquagesimo primo a^o quinto serenissimi Regis nri. Anglie, Edwardi sexti," etc. And from it I extract the grant itself :—

"A patent granted to Jo. Olde, clerk, doctor of divinitie, of the canonshipp or prebend in the cathedral church of hereford now voyd, now voyd by the deth of Anthonie Bellaisis, & in the King's mai^{es} gift by the vacancy of the Busshoprick of hereford. Sigill. in Octobr^r A^o R. R. E. VI^o."

In the list of patents of Edward VI. at the Record Office, are also two notices of this presentation (o. A^o 6, Nos. 85 and 89) :—

"85. K. iiij die Octobris: Dom. John Olde prebend in ecclesia collegia heref^d. ad vitam suam."

"95. P. v die Octobris dom. John Olde pband. in eccles. de heref. ad vit."

The Rev. Francis Havergal, of Hereford, author of "*Fasti Herefordenses*," in which work he records the above grant in a foot-note (p. 91), informs me he can find no trace of Dr John Old in the chapter act books or other documents of Hereford Cathedral, and he is of opinion that Old was never installed. At the same time he observes the stall might have been held by him together with Dernford, as in olden times such plurality was not uncommon.

It is curious also that the name of Anthonie Bellaisis (incorrectly entered by Mr Havergal in the above-mentioned foot-note as "Anthonne Bellows") does not occur in the Hereford records. Bellaisis held the stall of Timberscomb in Wells Cathedral in 1546; and the word "Hereford," one might think, may have crept in by mistake for Wells, but for the repetition, and the mention of the vacancy caused by the death of Bishop Skip, March 30, 1552.

I have caused inquiries to be instituted as to whether any memorials of Old's connection with the parish of Cubbington are to be found there. But it appears the first vicar's name entered in the church register occurs thirty or forty years after the period in question, nor is there any entry of the name of

Old, nor any monuments of so early an epoch as the sixteenth century.

Within one month of Queen Mary's accession to the throne in 1553, Old's friends and party began to feel the weight of her displeasure.

Saturday, August the 5th, his commender, Dr Leonard Coxe, was committed to the Marshalsea. The following Thursday, the 10th (we read in Foxe's "Acts and Monuments," vol. vi. p. 538, etc.), "the Duchess of Somerset was delivered from the Tower." The following Wednesday, the 16th, "Master Bradford, Master Beacon, and Master Veron were committed to the Tower." On the 29th, Mary appointed the Commissioners of Convocation. Married priests were then ordered to leave their wives or their benefices. According to Froude, "Bishop Scory had already been disposed of." September the 4th, Old's "singular friend," Dr Hugh Latimer, was arrested; and henceforth persecution and trouble must have stared him in the face. Among the list of the refugees in 1553 (Strype's "Memorials of Cranmer," vol. iii. p. 39) we find the names of—

Dr John Olde.

Dr Edwin Sands.

Dr Scory, Bishop of Chichester.

But inasmuch as Old was not deprived of his canonship at Lichfield before the following year, and the date of his successor's appointment to the vicarage of Cubbington is 19th November 1554, I am inclined to think he was not driven into exile quite so early as the others; while, from the fact of his retaining his incumbency after the promulgation of the orders of Convocation respecting married priests, it would appear he had no wife. The appointment of his successor appears in Dugdale's "Antiquities of Warwickshire:"

"D. Will Ludmans XIX., Nov. 1554 v.p.v."

According to Oldys, the antiquary, Old was imprisoned at Waterford with Dr Scory, but I rather fancy he made his escape to Ireland, and remained there free. He could

scarcely have been a prisoner when, in 1555, he published his famous work, "The Acquital, or Purgation," which was a bold defence of the Reformed Catholic Faith, and a defiance of Queen Mary and the Papists.

This little volume has been said by some to be the first, by others the second, book printed in Ireland. Dr Cotton ("Typog. Gazetteer," ed. 1831, p. 21) doubts if printing was exercised at Waterford so early as 1555; but the colophon of the book in question is, I should imagine, conclusive testimony.

"'Truthe hathe the victorie.'—3 ESDRAS 4.

"'This is the victorie that overcomethe the worlde, even our faithe.'—1 Jo. 5.

" Emprinted at Vaterford the 7 daye of November 1555."

It is not at all improbable that Old himself may have carried over to Ireland a printing-press and type, supplied by Edward Whitchurch. An 8vo edition is mentioned, but I have never met with any other than a small 16mo black-letter volume, plainly bound in calf. There are two cōpies in the library of the British Museum, one bearing the contemporary autograph of

Thomas Stanton,

formerly in the library of George Chalmers, Esq., whose book-plate is within the cover: the other, bearing the arms of Sykes, and within the inscription, in a modern hand—

"The first book printed in Ireland."

This copy has bound up with it an "Epistle to the Faithful," by John Scory, late Bishop of Chichester, 1555. This epistle incites Scory's fellow exiles and sufferers from Popish tyranny to bear up under their trials, and to endure to the end.

According to a writer in *Notes and Queries* (2d Series, vii. 48), the first book printed in Ireland was the "Boke of Common Prayer," imprinted by Humphrey Powell, 1531.

I will not indulge in any extended criticism on the literary abilities of Dr John Old, although the subject is a tempting

one. This, his best-known production, exhibits most of his faults of style, as well as his merits. It was struck off probably in hot haste, and it glows with a stinging sense of the religious warfare then raging throughout England, and sounds like the agonised cry of one who sees his best and dearest hopes attacked and in extremity. When he rails against his adversaries as "lying wretches," "the locusts of Englande," "scolding, roaring, and railing the poison of Antichrist's traditions," and talks of "shaping those wicked wormes a reasonable answer,"—when he inveighs against that "infernal father, the abiured antichrist of Rome," we must make allowance for the circumstances and the manners of the age; we must remember his bosom friend, Latimer, only one month before the publication of this book, was burnt at the stake; that Old himself was, in his own words, "barred out of place and tyme as an abjecte out of my natural country." If his expressions are not always parliamentary, they are to the purpose. The book is not merely scholar-like, it is full of clear-sighted ability; and, in my opinion, it might be reprinted with advantage at the present day, so closely do many of the arguments fit the antagonistic sections of our Anglican Church—so earnestly and beautifully does he plead the cause of that true Gospel-Church which he trusts, in spite of all, is "surely planted in wooful Englande,"—so brave is the heart with which he faces the sea of troubles before him, insisting that as "Germany was tryed as golde in the fyre, euen so is Englande by martires' blood."

In 1556 was published "A Confession of ye most Auntient and True Christian Catholicke Olde Belefe, according to ye order of ye 12 articles of our Common Crede," by J. O., Sothewarke, 8vo, 1556. Although this volume was printed in England, there is no evidence of Old's return. It has a preface addressed to "my most lovyng friends and brethren," in which he alludes to his former labours in the Gospel at Lichfield and Coventry. According to Tanner, this book was said to have been printed by royal license, although it contained much contrary to the Romish faith, then flourishing in England.

"Hic liber dictum impressus esse cum privilegio regali attamen multa continet fidæi Romanæ tunc temporis in Angliâ florente contraria."—*Bibliotheca Britannico Hibernica*.

Old now appears to have devoted himself to the publication of polemical works. In the same year, 1556, appeared "Conferences between Nicholas Ridley and Latymer, with a pious preface and conclusion by J. O." 24mo, commencing, "Grace and peace to the good Christian reader;" and another work, "Rod Gualteri Homelias de Antichristo," lib. i., Southwarke, MDLVI, 8vo, which translation is mentioned by Cranmer in his "Confutatio Veritatum." Old is also said to have been the author of Stephen Gardner's book on "True and False Obedience," but this is contradicted by Tanner:—

"Non scripsit Gardeneri de vera Obedientia, lib. i."

Bibliotheca Britannico Hibernica.

According to Bishop Tanner, who quotes Bale, Old fled into Germany early in Queen Mary's reign, and was living in exile in 1557. Had he survived the accession of Elizabeth, we may presume he would certainly have returned at once to England, and would have been reinstated at Cubbington. His companion in exile, Bishop Scory, came back immediately upon the demise of Mary, and was one of the clergy, together with Leonard Coxe, chosen to argue with the Roman Catholics at Queen Elizabeth's theological controversy, held at Westminster, March 31, 1559. Had Dr John Old then been living, he would, I fancy, unquestionably have occupied an important position in the Church for which he had done and suffered so much.

In a list of ancient wills at the Exeter Court of Probate is that of

"John Olde of St Clether, clerk, 1595."

I have sought to obtain a sight of this will, inasmuch as it is just possible it might be that of the Reformer. The early wills, however, have never been removed to Exeter, and are said to remain at some local office, and I have not yet succeeded in lighting upon it. I do not, however, imagine it to

be the one I seek. The Devonshire and Shropshire branches of the family were closely connected; but one can see no reason for Dr John Old's settling in the west when his brother William Olde and his family were still in Sheriffhales. It is more probable that Old's remains lie buried at Marburg or Strasburg, where the refugees are said to have dwelt. But I have not been able to meet with any record of the death of Dr John Old, the Reformer.

Our English biographical dictionaries pass over the name of Old, but there are notices of him in several foreign ones. That from Zedler's "Universal Lexicon" (Leipsic, 1741), one of the finest dictionaries of its class, runs as follows:—

"Oldus Johann. Ein gelehrter Engelländer ans andern Halffte des 16 Jahrhunderts, hat 'Confessionem Antiquæ Fidœi' und anders mehr geschrieben, auch vieler andern schrifften in Englische ubersetzt, als,"—(followed by a list of his writings.)

It only remains to notice the blunder mentioned at the beginning of this paper—the statement from Lowndes' "Bibliographer's Manual," that "The Acquitall, or Purgation," was the work of John Bale.

This error may perhaps be traced to a mistake in the already quoted Cole MS. (Add. MSS. 5877, British Museum), page 10 of the "Alphabetical Collection for an Athenæ Cantab."

"Olde, John, qu., if not a feigned name for Bale?"

And it arose, probably, from Bale being the fountain-head from which most of the information concerning John Old was derived.

Oldys, the antiquary, in his memoirs of the Oldys family (No. 4240, Birch MSS., British Museum), commits another similar blunder in trying to graft the Reformer into his father's pedigree.

"Though I have observed before that our name has often been corruptly called and written Olds and Olde, yet I am not certain, whatever may have been suggested, that we should therefore incorporate that John Olde, or Oldus, as Bishop Bale calls him, of the

family, who, as I compute, was born about the latter end of King Henry VII., and by his learned writings appears to have been an eminent champion for the Reformation in the days of King Edward VI., as also by his exile a confessor for the same in the reign of Queen Mary ; though the unsettled orthography of those days might countenance such a syncope. Not but there are instances of greater liberties than this taken by learned men with their names. 'Tis certain there was one John Olds or Oldis of our family buried at Eatminster aforesaid in the 4th of Queen Elizabeth, but I cannot say it was the same person with that confessor."

It is astonishing that able antiquaries should have suggested such blunders ; and I may here, perhaps, as a member of the Old family, as well as of the Royal Historical Society, be allowed the honour of correcting both MSS.

Of the identity of Dr John Old, there can be no longer any question ; and with respect to the families of Old and Oldys, I may state, in conclusion, the names are quite distinct, my own patronymic being by far the more ancient of the two. I have never met with the name of Oldys prior to the sixteenth century, and it is evident it is more likely to have been a corruption of Old, than that this name (which has remained unaltered from at least the thirteenth century) should have been a contraction of the other. Oldys, in fact, knew nothing of the family of Old. His suggestion that the Oldys family took their name from the manor of Old Sock, or, as he calls it, Oldisoke, in the county of Somerset, is utterly fallacious. I have been informed the manor of Old Sock anciently belonged to the Courtenays, and was not possessed by our family before the end of the seventeenth or the beginning of the eighteenth century, whence it passed into the family of Goodford of Chilton Cantelo in 1739, on the marriage of Samuel Goodford, Esq., with Mary, only daughter of John Old, Esq. of Yeovil. (*Vide* Burke's "History of Commoners," &c.)