

SUMMARY: Dedicatory epistle to Oxford in Arthur Golding's *The Psalms of David and others, with M. John Calvin's Commentaries*, a translation from Calvin's Latin commentaries on the Psalms, *In librum Psalmorum, Johannis Calvini commentarius*, published in Geneva in 1557 by Robert Estienne. Arthur Golding was Oxford's maternal uncle, and his Calvinistic leanings may have been shared by Oxford's mother, Marjory Golding. In the dedication Golding stresses the duty of a nobleman like Oxford to be a religious example to others ('I beseech your Lordship, consider how God hath placed you upon a high stage in the eyes of all men as a guide, pattern, ensample and leader unto others'), and Oxford's soon-to-be father-in-law, Sir William Cecil, is alluded to as the person most responsible for his religious training ('I assure your Lordship I write not these things as though I suspected you to be digressed from that soundness and sincerity wherein you were continually trained and traded under that vigilant Ulysses of our commonwealth, sometime your Lordship's careful Chiron or Phoenix, and now your faithful Patroclus'). Golding later alludes to Cecil as a 'long-experienced Nestor' who can serve as a guide to Oxford, and offer him counsel. Golding concludes the epistle by wishing happiness to Oxford and his future bride, Anne Cecil, whom he calls Oxford's 'spouse' even though the epistle was written on 20 October 1571, two months before the marriage took place.

To the right honourable and his very good Lord, Edward de Vere, Earl of Oxenford, Lord Great Chamberlain of England, Viscount Bulbeck etc., Arthur Golding wisheth increase of godly knowledge with health, honour and prosperity

It may peradventure be thought, in respect of the matter whereof this work treateth, that it ought rather to have been dedicated to some of my very good Lords, the Lords Spiritual, or to some of the clergy, as to whom such things seem to pertain more peculiarly by reason of their charge and calling, which opinion, as I purpose not to encounter, but rather most willingly submit myself and my doings to the judgment & reformation of such reverend fathers and learned men as God hath put in trust with the care of his flock and the charge of his church within this realm, even so, forasmuch as the things which the Holy Ghost uttereth in the sacred scriptures belong indifferently unto all men of what estate, degree, sex, age or calling soever they be without exception, I have at this time set all other respects and considerations aside, & only had an eye to my duty towards your Lordship.

And because my continual troubles and suits in the law (as yet unended after more than three years' travail) have bereft me of the greatest part of my time so as I could not dispatch things with such expedition as otherwise I might have done, my care and endeavour hath been to recompense mine overlong silence with goodness of matter that might redound to the furtherance of our Christian commonweal, and also be meet for your Lordship to look upon.

But you, perchance, according to the noble courage and disposition of your years, do look I should present unto you some history of the conquests and affairs of mighty princes, some treatise of the government of commonweals, some description of the plat of the whole earth, or some discourse of chivalry and feats of arms. These things are indeed meet studies for a nobleman, and in their season right necessary for the commonwealth, but as now I present unto your Honour much greater things, that is, to wit, true religion, true godliness, true virtue, without the which neither force, policy nor friendship are of any value, neither can any commonweal, any city, any household or any company be well governed or have any stable and long continuance. These be the things wherein your Lordship may do God, your prince and your country best service, and which do give true nobility, or rather are the very nobility itself.

The greater that you are of birth and calling, the more do these things belong unto you. The greater gifts of nature, the mo graces of mind, the mo worldly benefits that God hath bestowed upon you, the more are you bound to be thankful unto him. But thankful you cannot be without the true knowledge of him, neither can you know him rightly but by his word, for his word is the lantern of your feet and the light of your steps. Whosoever walketh without it, walketh but in darkness, though he were otherwise as sharp-sighted as Lynceus or Argus, and had all the sciences, arts, cunning, eloquence and wisdom of the world. No sound and substantial truth is to be found anywhere else save only there. And therefore the Holy Ghost by the mouth of Moses willeth you that the law of God (that is to say, his word and doctrine) should not depart from your mouth, but that you should bind it about your wrists, embroider it upon your garments, engrave it upon the posts of your house, and write it in the tables of your heart. And David, speaking by the same spirit, exhorteth you by his own example to set your whole delight in it, to occupy yourself in it day and night, to lay it up in your heart, to set more store by it than by riches, to be mindful of it, to make it your counsellor, to stick to it, to talk of it afore kings and great men, to love it, to make your songs of it, to remember it night and day, to count it sweeter than honey, to take it as an heritage, and to make it the joy of your heart. Neither is it without cause that God calleth so oft upon magistrates and noblemen by name, that they should be diligent in his word. For look how much the greater burthen and charge lieth upon their shoulders and the greater account they have to make afore him, so much the greater wisdom and knowledge have they need of, which are not to be attained elsewhere than in his law.

I beseech your Lordship, consider how God hath placed you upon a high stage in the eyes of all men as a guide, pattern, ensample and leader unto others. If your virtues be uncounterfeited, if your religion be sound and pure, if your doings be according to true godliness, you shall be a stay to your country, a comfort to good men, a bridle to evil men, a joy to your friends, a corsie to your enemies, and an increase of honour to your own house. But if you should become either a counterfeit protestant, or a perverse papist, or a cold and careless neuter (which God forbid), the harm could not be expressed which you should do to your native country. For as Cicero no less truly than wisely affirmeth, and as the sorrowful doings of our present days do too certainly avouch, great men hurt not the commonweal so much by being evil in respect of themselves as by drawing others unto evil by their evil example.

I assure your Lordship I write not these things as though I suspected you to be digressed from that soundness and sincerity wherein you were continually trained and traded under that vigilant Ulysses of our commonwealth, sometime your Lordship's careful Chiron or Phoenix, and now your faithful Patroclus, or as though I mistrusted your Lordship to be degenerated from the excellent towardness which by forward proof hath given glad foretokens and (I trust also) lucky hansels of an honourable age to ensue, but because the love that I owe to God and his religion, the care that I have of the church and my native country, the duty wherein nature hath bound me to your Lordship, and (which is an occasion to make all good and honest men look about them) the perilousness of this present time wherein all means possible are practiced to overthrow Christ's kingdom and to abolish all faithfulness from among men make me to fear and forecast not so much what is true as what may be noisome and hurtful, and therefore I seek rather to profit by wholesome admonition than to delight by pleasant speeches.

These be no days of dalliance, for Satan, the work-master of all mischief, being grieved that his own kingdom draweth to an end, not only goeth about like a roaring lion to devour folk by open force, but also like a sly serpent setteth snares and pitfalls innumerable to entrap men and bring them to destruction by policy, laying wait for all men but specially for such as are of high estate, as who always carry greatest numbers with them which way soever they incline. He turneth himself into mo shapes than ever did Proteus, and such as himself is, such are his ministers. First and foremost the obstinate and stubborn-hearted papists, the sworn enemies of God, the pestilent poison of mankind, and the very well-springs of all error, hypocrisy and ungraciousness (who, while they bear sway be more cruel than bears, wolves and tigers, and when they be kept under, more deceitful than cerastes and crocodiles, and at all times more mischievous than the devil himself) labour with tooth and nail to wind their own trash into credit with all men, and to bring the heavenly doctrine of the gospel in hatred.

Again the atheists which say in their hearts there is no God, and the epicures which deprive God of his providence in governing the world as though he either understood not what is done upon earth or else cared not for men's affairs, seek they not by all means possible to weed all religion, all fear of God, all remorse of conscience out of men's hearts? Out of these roots spring other imps no less pernicious than the stocks of which they come, men of all religions, shipmen that can sail with all weathers, carpenters that can hew with both hands, lads that can hold with the hare and hunt with the hound, and (as the scripture termeth them) time-servers and men-pleasers. Of which sort be the pickthank priests of Hammon, who with the venomous blast of their filthy flattery corrupt the well-instructed minds of our Alexanders (that is to say, of our noblemen) by bearing them in hand that they be the sons of Jupiter, and making them believe themselves to be gods, yea, sometimes before they be scarce men. These, after the manner of panthers and mermaids, astone the senses with a deadly sweetness, & work destruction by delighting. Moreover, to the further withdrawing of men's minds from the estimation of the sound religion, it falleth out that even in the outward face of the church there be many hypocrites, many loose livers, many sectaries and many wranglers, which pretending the countenance of Christ's flock, but being indeed the devil's hirelings, confessing God with

their mouth but denying him in their works, cause his holy, pure and reverend doctrine to be slandered and ill-spoken of among the gentiles (that is, to wit, among the papist[s] and worldlings), and so alienate men from Christ.

The ignorant sort also, deeming things untowardly by the outward show, charge the gospel with the faults of men which it reproveth and bringeth to light, as who would say that he which bewrayeth a murderer or rebuketh an adulterer were to be counted an offender in the same cases because he discovereth their wickedness to the intent to have it punished or redressed. And these are stumbling-blocks common to all sorts of men, but more peculiar to great men are those that I spake of in the third place, and also these ensuing, namely nobleness of birth, renown of ancestors, favour of their prince, friendship of their peers, awe of their inferiors, great alliances, great retinues depending upon them, liberty above the common rate, wealth, honour, riches, ease, sumptuous fare, costly apparel, gorgeous buildings, attendance of servants and such other like, which as they be the singular good gifts and benefits of God bestowed upon them for their comfort to the end they should the more love him and embrace his truth, so Satan, abusing the infirmity and corruption of man's nature, doth in many men wrest them all to a contrary end, namely to the proud contempt and impugning, or at leastwise to the careless neglecting, of God's true religion and service.

As for the frailness of youth itself, the open menaces and privy practices of Antichrist, the common hatred and disdain of the world against the sincere worshippers of God, the hardness and adversities which they endure in this life, and infinite other by-matters which are no small hindrances to the proceeding of the gospel, I will not stand to entreat of them. For doubtless although Antichrist were abolished, although Satan were asleep, although the world were at one with us, although wicked counsel were utterly put to silence, although no evil example were given us, although no outward stumbling-block were cast in our way, yet have we one thing in ourselves and of ourselves (even original sin, concupiscence or lust) which never ceaseth to egg us and allure us from God, and to stain us with all kind of uncleanness, according as Saint James saith: Every man is tempted of his own lust. This is the breath of the venomous cockatrice which hath infected the whole offspring of Adam. This is the sting of that old serpent whose wounds neither Chiron, Aesculapius nor Apollo can heal, no, nor any wight in heaven or earth save only God. This is the bitter fountain Exampeus, which with his brackishness marreth the sweet river Hypanis, that is to say, the flowing stream of all God's graces, benefits and gifts in us.

Good cause have we therefore to be forewarned and continually admonished to beware of the mischief that is armed with so many weapons and policies to annoy, specially considering how the operation thereof is to slay both body and soul and to drown them together into endless damnation. For this I dare be bold to say upon the warrant of assured truth, that whosoever is but lightly blasted with the poison of papistry is the unapter to all the duties of true virtue and godliness, like as a cripple or lame man is the unmeeter and unabler for the affairs of this life. But as for him that is throughly saped in it, & hath digested it into his bowels, and hath settled the roots of it in the bottom of his heart, depending upon the Antichrist of Rome as upon the mouth of God, he can neither

be the faithful servant of God nor a hearty subject to his prince nor a good and sound member of the commonwealth until he have done as the snake doth when he cometh to engender with the lamprey.

For the better manifestation of all the which things I beseech your good Lordship to peruse this present book, which doubtless for the excellency thereof not only deserveth more singular commendation than man's wit is able to yield, but also is worthy to be had continually in all men's hands, or rather to be printed in their hearts. For if you have an eye to the authors, it was written by prophets, priests and kings inspired with the Holy Ghost, the fountain of all understanding, wisdom and truth, and avouched unto us by Christ, the Son of the everlasting God. Or if you have an eye to the matter, it containeth a treatise of the doctrine of life and everlasting salvation, the particulars whereof are as many as are the points of true religion and holiness to Godward, or the points of faithful meaning and honest dealing to manward.

And these things are common to it with the residue of holy scripture. The thing that is peculiar to it is the manner of the handling of the matters whereof it treateth. For whereas other parts of holy writ (whether they be historical, moral, judicial, ceremonial or prophetic) do commonly set down their treatises in open and plain declarations, this part consisting of them all, wrappeth up things in types & figures, describing them under borrowed personages, & oftentimes winding in matters by prevention, speaking of things to come as if they were past or present, and of things past as if they were in doing, and every man is made a bewrayer of the secrets of his own heart. And forasmuch as it consisteth chiefly of prayer and thanksgiving, or (which comprehendeth them both) of invocation, which is a communication with God and requireth rather an earnest and devout lifting up of the mind than a loud or curious utterance of the voice, there be many unperfect sentences, many broken speeches and many displaced words, according as the voice of the party that prayed was either prevented with the swiftness of his thoughts, or interrupted with vehemency of joy or grief, or forced to surcease through infirmity that he might recover new strength and cheerfulness by interminding God's former promises and benefits. Notwithstanding, the obscurity of those places is not so great but that it may be easily overcome by such as, when they pray, do utterly sequester their minds from all earthly imaginations and fleshly conceits, and after a sort forsaking their bodies for the time, do mount up above the world by faith and present themselves before the heavenly throne of grace to seek the unspeakable and inestimable comfort of their souls.

Such are the contents and such is the manner or disposition of the groundwork of this book, that is to say, of the Psalms themselves. Whereunto (for the better understanding of them) here is added an exposition or commentary written in Latin by that learned clerk and faithful minister of Christ in the church of Geneva, Master John Calvin, whose worthy praise and commendation his own manifold works, most painfully, sincerely and soundly set forth to the great furtherance and profit of the whole Christian commonweal, do better declare than my pen can utter or my wit devise. And among the rest of them, it is thought of most learned men that next unto his *Institutions* this present volume beareth the bell both for variety of matter, substantialness of doctrine, depth of judgment and perfectness of penning. For it is not puffed up with vain sound of empty words nor with

rhetorical enlarging of painted sentences, but it is stuffed with pithy and grounded matter such as plainly showeth him to have been a man indued with the spirit of God and also well practised and tried in the affairs and troubles of this world.

What is to be thought of the translation of it, that I remit to your Lordship's favourable acceptation, under whose antesigne it is my desire that it may fight in the defence and maintenance of the true religion against Antichrist and his wicked members. Only thus much I may safely say of it, that in all points (to the uttermost of my power, and according to the ability which God hath given me to edify withal) I have sincerely performed the duty of a faithful interpreter, rather endeavouring to lay forth things plainly (yea, and sometimes also homely and grossly) to the understanding of many than to indite things curiously to the pleasing of a few. For in this and such other works the rude and ignorant have more interest than the learned and skilful. If anything be amiss (as I dare not presume to uphold that nothing hath escaped me in so great a work), my hearty desire is that the same may be amended by such as are of sound judgment & knowledge in God's word, so as no inconvenience may ensue of it to the church of Christ. And look what I request in the behalf of this present book, the same do I request for all other books which I have or (by God's grace and permission) shall hereafter put forth for the edifying of Christ's flock, for I know how such things are the work of God and not of man.

What remaineth then but that your Lordship, framing yourself according to the rule of God's most holy word, should hie you apace to the attainment of the true honour and immortal glory by subduing sin, the world and the devil, the Hectors that cannot be vanquished but by a Christian Achilles, and by your good guiding bring many unto Christ, that in the end you may receive the reward of true and perfect blessedness, even the everlasting salvation of the soul, which is the fair Helen for whose safety it behoveth all good men to endure, not ten years' war, but continual war all their life long. To the furtherance whereof God hath by household alliance linked unto your Lordship a long-experienced Nestor, whose counsel and footsteps if you follow, no doubt but you shall be both happy in yourself and singularly profitable to your commonwealth, and moreover God shall bless you with plentiful and godly issue by your virtuous and dear-beloved spouse to continue the honour and renown of your noble house after the happy knitting up of both your years, which I pray God may be many in unseparable love, like the love of Ceyx and Alcyone, to the glory of God and the contentation of both your desires. Written at London, the 20 of October 1571.

Your good Lordship's most humble to command,
Arthur Golding