

A BRIEF VINDICATION OF OLIVER CROMWELL

by Nelson C. Turner

Oliver Cromwell is one of the most misrepresented and maligned individuals in the political and military history of the western world. While riding in a taxi cab in Ireland, I mentioned the name of Cromwell to the taxi driver. He immediately stated, "Old Oliver Plunkett, they have his head in a glass case somewhere up in the north part of the country." Cromwell is derisively called Plunkett by Catholic Irish, who seem to universally hate the name and memory of the man due to his invasion and subjugation of the country during the military operations of the New Model Army led by Cromwell in the second half of 1649 and the first half of 1650. Those that castigate the name of Cromwell and besmirch his memory claim that Cromwell was responsible for the deaths of 100,000 to 500,00 Irish men, women, and children, amounting to a "genocide." The actual circumstances of the events, eye witness accounts, and later histories of the invasion (this is the proper term) give widely varying reasons for what occurred, but evidence to substantiate claims of a "genocide" and barbarous behavior by the Puritan army is utterly lacking.

The men put to the sword at the garrison of Drogheda had been offered the opportunity to surrender their position and withdraw honorably from the fortress they manned. Their commander refused the terms of surrender, a siege was made, and the walls were breached in one place. The Parliamentary Army under Cromwell's command was initially repulsed, but after a further cannonade of the walls, Cromwell led in person the assault into the fortress and town. The majority of the men under arms, who continued resistance, were put to the sword. The Catholic priests found in the town were put to death, including Jesuit John Bathe, S.J., who is regarded by the Jesuit Order as a martyr. None of the Catholic priests encountered during the Irish Campaign were spared by the Parliamentary troops, as they had been instrumental in the Irish massacre of upwards of 150,00 male Protestants (unarmed men, women and children) in 1641. The Catholic priests involved in this mass murder kept records of the number killed as they urged on the bloody business of attempting to extirpate heresy from the Emerald Isle. While the killing was still in full swing, one priest stated that over 120,000 had been slain and that the people needed to continue the good work.

To form a correct understanding of Cromwell and his activities I encourage readers to read one or all of the following works:

CROMWELL, THE LORD PROTECTOR by Lady Antonia Fraser. Catholic author Fraser gives a dispassionate account and assessment of Cromwell, detailing the whole of his life, including his religious practice, political and military activities. The volume was published in England, as **CROMWELL, OUR CHIEF OF MEN**.

CROMWELL, AN HONOURABLE ENEMY, THE UNTOLD STORY OF THE CROMWELLIAN INVASION OF IRELAND by Tom Reilly. This Irish author, born in Drogheda in 1960, completely exonerates Cromwell of the charge of genocide and intentional wanton massacre of men, women and children. He has challenged all comers to prove him wrong concerning Cromwell, and to date no one has answered or refuted the facts presented in his book.

THE DEATH OF OLIVER CROMWELL by H.F. McMains. This volume, published in 2000, gives substantial and pretty much irrefutable evidence that Oliver Cromwell was murdered by his physician Dr. Bate, who administered to Cromwell the "poison cup" pursuant to the Extreme Oath of the Jesuit order. Bate confessed during an illness when he thought he was dying that he had killed Oliver, and after the restoration of the monarchy under Charles II, he received a yearly stipend from the king as the reward of treachery. Much circumstantial and forensic based evidence to prove that Cromwell was murdered by poisoning is provided by the author. He contends that the lead coffin of Cromwell burst open shortly after being sealed due to the effects of the poison on the body, creating pressure from the release of gases from Cromwell's poison ravaged body. He relates that the body of Oliver had a secret burial, and that the body later dug up and hung at Tyburn, was not that of Cromwell.

GOD'S ENGLISHMEN, OLIVER CROMWELL AND THE ENGLISH REVOLUTION by Christopher Hill. This volume is a good introductory biography coming in at 276 pages of well researched text.

CONSTITUTIONAL DOCUMENTS OF THE PURITAN REVOLUTION, 1625-1660 selected and edited by Samuel Rawson Gardiner. A compilation of the documents of the Revolutionary Period that includes the Grand Remonstrance and many other important state papers from the period. A reading of the Grand Remonstrance is highly recommended to the reader-many of the causes of distress and anger noted by the largely Puritan Parliament are identical to the current state of affairs in the United States today.

THE LETTERS AND SPEECHES OF OLIVER CROMWELL by Thomas Carlyle. The link for this work is on this website, under our essential readings section. To form an accurate estimation of the character and actions of Cromwell, one ought to hear the man himself. "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh," and the letters and speeches of Cromwell overflow with Bible phrases and Biblical imagery. Carlyle's work is the most important of all the Cromwell works-it contains the vast majority of the extant letters and speeches of the man, and allows the reader to hear for himself what those who knew Cromwell heard.

The Jesuit Order particularly abhors the name and memory of Cromwell, as evidenced by this memorial to Jesuit John Bathe from "The Jesuit Family Album." <http://www.faculty.fairfield.edu/jmac/jp/jpabe.htm>

"John Bathe, S.J. (Irish: ?-1649) worked at the Jesuit college in Drogheda until Cromwell's invasion when he was arrested, taken to the public square, beaten, then shot by Oliver Cromwell's soldiers. In September, 1649 Cromwell with 12,000 soldiers had surrounded the town of Drogheda and demanded that the Irish defenders surrender, promising that they would not be harmed. As soon as they put down their weapons all were killed by the British. Cromwell later justified the massacre of these 3,000 men on the grounds that this would strike terror into other Irish towns and would hasten future surrenders. He justified his further slaughter of the towns' non-combatants, women and children, in that they deserved to die because of past mob violence. Later another English patriot, Winston Churchill, no great friend of Ireland, had this to say about Cromwell's actions in Drogheda. (Ham, JLx, McR)

"There followed a massacre so all-effacing as to startle even the opinion of those fierce times. All were put to the sword. None escaped; every priest and friar was butchered. . . . Cromwell in Ireland, disposing of overwhelming strength and using it with merciless wickedness, debased the standards of human conduct and sensibly darkened the journey of mankind. . . . Upon all of us there still lies 'the curse of Cromwell'."