

"The blood of the martyrs is the seed of Church." This is a truly Catholic statement. This short book tells the moving story of five famous English martyrs. We hope that their testimony encourages you to live and die for Jesus Christ. We are very happy to publish them so that Chinese Christians can read for themselves this part of the history of the Reformation.

Bishop John Charles Ryle (1816-1900) was a very great Reformed Anglican. A summary of his life can be found in the Wikipedia. The last line of this summary is worth repeating:

Ryle combined his commanding presence and vigorous advocacy of his principles with graciousness and warmth in his personal relations. Vast numbers of working men and women attended his special preaching meetings, and many became Christians.

These chapters are taken from his "Light from Old Times: or Protestant Facts and Men", originally published in 1890. The Banner of Truth published these chapters as "Five English Martyrs" in 1960. We have translated them from the Banner of Truth 1981 edition.

To fully understand this book, we must look at it from three different time perspectives: the 16th century Reformation, the 19th century, and today.

In the 16th century (1553-1558), Queen Mary attempted to stamp out Protestantism in England with a bloody persecution. She burned to death about three hundred Protestants. They were publicly martyred before hundreds of witnesses. Robert Crowley published an account of their deaths in 1559. Four years later (1563), John Foxe published their stories in his famous book of Martyrs. Ryle's book gives us a summary of the facts as these and other eyewitnesses recorded them.

In 19th century England (during Ryle's lifetime), the Anglican-Catholic movement became very influential in the Anglican Church. This movement taught that the Anglican Church is *not* a Protestant church. It taught that the Roman Catholic Church, the Eastern Orthodox Church and the Anglican Church are the three great branches of Christianity. This movement promoted Roman Catholicism in the Church of England, including the Roman Catholic view of the Lord's Supper and many Roman Catholic rituals. They claimed that Protestants like Ryle had no place in the Church of England! John Newman is the most well known leader of the early Anglican-Catholic movement. In 1845 he converted to Roman Catholicism and later became a Roman Catholic Cardinal.

One of the purposes of Ryle's book is to show that the Anglican-Catholic movement completely ignores the facts. He shows that the founders of the English Church were Protestants. They opposed Roman Catholic

theology. They considered the Roman Catholic doctrine of the Lord's Supper to be blasphemous. When faced with a choice between death and the Roman Doctrine of the Mass, they chose death. This apologetic aim is evident throughout the book. The first paragraph of the first chapter begins:

There are certain facts of history which the world tries hard to forget or ignore. These facts get in the way of some of the world's favorite theories and are highly inconvenient. The consequence is that the world shuts its eyes against them.

Today, Ryle's work is still important and for the same reason. The movement towards union with Roman Catholicism continues to grow in the Anglican Church and in many other traditional Protestant churches. The Reformation is viewed as a tragic mistake. We are often told that the doctrinal differences between Protestantism and Roman Catholicism are not important and that Protestants should recognize Roman Catholicism as a legitimate form of Christianity. As in Ryle's day, the supporters of this view prefer to forget, ignore or criticize the views of our Protestant Reformers. Ryle is calling upon us to read the history of the Reformation, to appreciate that our Reformers were great men of God, and to define what it means to be a Protestant from a solid historical foundation.

A. McCafferty, April 2009