

John Foxcroft. 1594-1662.

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We believe that faithful biographical sketches are incentives and encouragements to the love and practice of pure scriptural faith, and the lives of faithful diligent ministers, glowing with christian zeal. Our desire being to exhibit faithful portraitures of those who have been eminently distinguished in their generation, by their laudable exertions in the cause of truth, and their piety toward God.

I. Emmanuel College, Cambridge.

John Foxcroft was the eldest son of George Foxcroft, of Sowerby, Halifax, born in January 1594, and admitted at Emmanuel College, Cambridge, 6th April, 1611, and graduated B.A. 1614-5. Sir Walter Mildmay, of Chelmsford, Essex, was the founder of Emmanuel College, 1585, and noted for attachment to Puritan principle. The number of leading divines of the seventeenth century educated at Emmanuel College, Cambridge, is extraordinary. The college was dedicated, not to legendary saints, but to the divine "*Emmanuel*, which being interpreted is, God with us." Matthew 1.23. Built in the pious hope that the gospel of the Son of God might never want an advocate while its foundation should endure. "Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his." 2 Tim. ii. 19. Anyone familiar with Puritan divinity, Covenant theology, and the doctrines of grace, is acquainted the number of leading divines; amongst whom were Thomas Shepard, John Preston, Thomas Watson, Stephen Charnock, William Bridge, William Gurnall. Vide "*Light from Old Times*," by J. C. Ryle, Fifth ed., 1924, pp. 325-355, all of whom passed through Emmanuel College.

Foxcroft graduated M.A. from Magdalen Hall, Oxford, 29th October, 1617, and became Rector of Gotham, some six miles west of Nottingham, situated on the south bank of the river Trent. Anthony Wood writes that here "he continued a puritanical preacher several years. At length closing with the presbyterians when they grew dominant in 1641."

II. Amicable friendship with Governor of Nottingham Castle.

Colonel John Hutchinson, of Puritan sentiments, was appointed Governor of Nottingham Castle in 1643, his father Sir Thomas Hutchinson, of Owthorpe, Nottinghamshire, his mother daughter of Sir John Byron, of Newstead, Nottinghamshire, an ancestor of John Byron, the poet. Colonel Hutchinson's father, possessed a valuable library of theological works, which passed into the hands of his son. "The result of John Hutchinson's studies was that he embraced what his wife calls 'the truth' which means the scriptural doctrine of Predestination." *Memoirs* by his wife Lucy, 1903 edition. Vide Romans 8: 28-30: ".....For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified," an unbreakable, golden chain of divine principles, which never can be broken, the work of the Triune Jehovah, and made known to the people of His choice. "*I will cause you to pass under the rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant*," Ez. 20.37, "the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded." Romans 11.7., "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, and *he will show them*

his covenant." Psalm 25.14. "The Memoirs" reveal the amicable friendship existing between the Huthinsons and Foxcroft in scriptural truths respecting the works of the Puritan ministers, John Tombs, 1603-1676; and Henry Denne, died 1660, evidently contained in Hutchinson's library.

III. Member of Westminster Assembly.

Upon the commencement of the civil war, he joined the parliament, and was much molested by the cavaliers, when he was engaged in the labours of his pastoral office at Gotham. In 1643, he was chosen one of the Assembly of Divines at Westminster, and constantly attended. Removing to London, he became a frequent preacher in the city, and he preached, by invitation, sometimes to the Parliament. The names of the members are truly illustrious, and worthy of being enrolled among the most celebrated of their age. Their lives and experiences, are excellent mirrors of instruction, highly beneficial to all succeeding generations. Some view of the lives and writings of those eminent divines, who met in the Assembly at Westminster; the constellation, which adorned that period of the Reformation, having served their own generation by the will of God, ought to be remembered.

IV. Extracts from sermon preached before the House of Commons.

"The Epistle Dedicatory" preceding the sermon is quoted from as follows.,
 "To the Honourable House of Commons, Assembled in Parliament. The confluence of so many new members (as doves to your windows,) occasioned thoughts of this subject; which now (in obedience to your order) are presented to your view, and the worlds: clean contrary to mine own resolution, and the genius of my spirit. I desired, in the delivery of them to your ears, to use all modesty becoming a minister of the gospel; partly from consciousness, of the tenuity of the man; of whom no other can easily entertain lower thoughts; than he desires to have of himself, partly of the matter, very capable of various interpretations.....Give me leave only to shed a few tears upon the neck of the bleeding county of Nottingham, my dear *Ithaca*, now as beloved as that which gave me breath, having been the place of my ministry the longer half of my life. From her the formality of this unhappy war took first date (that is, the erecting of the Standard, Charles I., 23rd. August, 1642) and ever hath suffered the inroads of all armies and parties passing between North, and South.....the Lord Almighty bless your counsels, and make you happy instruments to advance his glory, and the kingdom's peace....."

The title of the sermon preached, reads: "The Good of a good Government, and well grounded PEACE. opened in a sermon preached before the Honourable House of Commons, in Margaret's Church at Westminster, December 31, 1645, being the day of their monthly fast." The text being Isaiah 32.1-2: "Behold a King shall reign in righteousness, and princes shall rule in judgement. And a Man shall be as an hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest: as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land."

Extracts from a lengthy sermon are — "This chapter (as all Interpreters agree) is a prophecy of the Kingdom of Christ.....and (as very many) His Kingdom is shadowed under the type of Hezekiah's reign, and the good princes under him.....And our blessed Lord (the other Man my text looks upon; and indeed chiefly intends) was carried on with fervent affection to his Father's honour, in so high a degree, as we are never like to come near him; yet must set him before us for our imitation. Which appears both in that fact

of his, John 2.15-16. And his disciples remembered that it was written; "The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up." Wisdom, Solomon's happy choice, when free liberty was given him to ask what he would, 1 Kings 3.9. "Give therefore thy servant an understanding heart to judge thy people: that I may discern between good and bad, for who is able to judge this thy so great a people." Yea, so pleasing to God, that he not only bestowed, what Solomon begged, in a most plentiful manner; but over and above his asking, gave him riches and honour such as no other prince in the world then enjoyed.....Wherein, I beseech you (honourable and beloved) suffer a few words of exhortation: Strive you all to be a hiding place from wind, and tempests, and the means of sweetest refreshing to three poor shattered kingdoms; and let every one, that suffers pressure, or extremity, find in you something, at least to quench his thirst; if not to satisfy his appetiteso may Christ (the great Rock in my text) be a shelter for you in that day, when the tempest of the Lord's wrath shall fall upon the ungodly of the world..... Thus hath my text afforded bread for the day, the shortness thereof, and the sharpness of the season, gave not leave for a second view, which otherwise would have presented, the glorious excellences of the Kingdom of Christ; and the great good, accrues to us from thence."

IV. Return to Gotham.

John Foxcroft returned to Gotham, where he died in 1662, the year of the coming into force of the "Act of Uniformity," 24th August, often referred to as "Black Bartholomew," when some two thousand godly ministers were ejected from their livings. His son, Moses Foxcroft, succeeded him at Gotham in 1663, Moses was born at Gotham, 1627, and died in 1673.

John Foxcroft is one of the eminent divines whose name appears in "A Copy of the Certificate or Attestation, about the General desire in both Kingdoms (England and Scotland) to have the Belgick or Dutch Annotations upon the Bible (come forth first A.D. 1637.) Translated into English, by Theodore Haak. Printed London 1657."

The Certification or Attestation comprising a total thirty-five signatories, Puritans and Scots Worthies, among the latter being: Alexander Henderson, Samuel Rutherford, Robert Bayley, and George Gillespie.