

'WARTS, AND EVERYTHING'.

Without a doubt, Oliver Cromwell (1599-1658) is one of the most famous figures in British history.

Converted to Christ around the age of 30,¹ he was a patriotic soldier and politician, and the first commoner to become Head of State.

He led the Parliamentary forces in the two English Civil Wars and, although later refusing the title of 'king',² he took the title, 'Lord Protector of the Commonwealth'. When such, he raised the country's status to that of a leading European power and presided over the first government in British history to have a written constitution.³

When he became Lord Protector,⁴ he commissioned Sir Peter Levy, a famous artist of the day, to paint his portrait.⁵

It is reported⁶ that, while sitting for his portrait, he said, 'Mr Levy, I desire you would use all your skill to paint my picture truly like me, and not flatter me at all; but remark⁷ **all these roughnesses, pimples, warts, and everything**, otherwise I never will pay a farthing for it!⁸

Sir Peter did as he was told and his painting shows very clearly the big wart between the 'Lord Protector's' mouth and chin.⁹

The Holy Spirit has followed the same practice when recording the lives and exploits of the main characters in Scripture.

It has been well said, 'Let man narrate the life of his fellow man, he seeks to hide his failures, and why? Because he wishes to exalt the man. Let the Holy Spirit write the life of a saint, He records the sins and failures of that saint, and why? Because he exalts the grace of God'.¹⁰

We have only to recall:

- (i) Noah's drunkenness (Gen. 9. 21),
- (ii) Abraham's half-truths which he told in both Egypt and Gerar about his relationship to Sarah (Gen. 12. 13, 18-19; 20. 2, 12),
- (iii) Moses's loss of temper at the waters of Meribah (Num. 20. 7-12),
- (iv) Aaron's golden calf (Exod. 32. 1-6),
- (v) Gideon's golden ephod (Judg. 8. 24-27),
- (vi) David's adultery with Bathsheba and engineered murder of her husband (2 Sam. 11. 2-15),
- (vii) Elijah's despondency and flight from Jezebel (1 Kings 19. 3-14), and
- (viii) Simon Peter's denials of Jesus (Mark 14. 66-72).

Yes, indeed, the greatest men of Scripture were not short of moral 'warts' – some much larger than others.

But, by way of contrast, there was One (but only One) who displayed no moral 'roughnesses, pimples' or 'warts' ... One who was without sin, perfect in every way.

And our Lord's sinlessness fitted and qualified Him to be our Sin-bearer ... to suffer and die in the place of those with many moral 'warts'!

Ponder how three of His apostles link His sinlessness directly to His Cross:

Paul: 'For our sake He made Him to be sin who **knew no sin**' (2 Cor. 5. 21).

Peter: 'Christ also suffered for you ... He **committed no sin**' (1 Pet. 2. 21-22).

John: 'He appeared to take away sins, and **in Him there is no sin**' (1 John 3. 5).

Because the sinless Saviour died,
My sinful soul is counted free;
For God, the Just, is satisfied
To look on Him and pardon me.¹¹

Footnotes

¹ 'He does not appear to have experienced conversion until he was nearly 30; later he described to a cousin how he had emerged from darkness into light', quoted from: <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Oliver-Cromwell>.

'Undergoing a religious conversion in the 1630s', quoted from: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oliver_Cromwell.

² 'In the spring of 1657, Parliament voted to invite Cromwell to become king ... he hesitated for many weeks and then declined the title', quoted from:

<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Oliver-Cromwell/Administration-as-lord-protector>.

'On 8 May, he gave his final answer: "I cannot undertake this government with the title of king"', quoted from: https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Page:Dictionary_of_National_Biography_volume_13.djvu/184.

Cromwell's full speech to Parliament is given as Speech XIV in Thomas Carlyle's, 'Oliver Cromwell's letters and Speeches', pages 69-71, freely downloadable at:

<https://archive.org/details/olivercromwells05cromgoog/page/n74/mode/2up>.

³ 'The Protectorate over which Cromwell presided was the first government in British history to have a written constitution - indeed the first such document in a modern nation state - a document that set out the rules for how the country should be governed, and enshrined the principle of freedom of religious conscience', quoted from: <https://www.cromwellmuseum.org/cromwell/significance>.

⁴ 'Probably the most important phase in Cromwell's life was his appointment in **1653** as Lord Protector, the first person who was not a member of the Royal Family to be a head of state in Britain', quoted from:

<https://www.cromwellmuseum.org/cromwell/cromwell-the-man/lord-protector>.

⁵ The portrait was 'painted in **1654**', quoted from https://blog.nikonians.org/martin_turner/2009/02/oliver-cromwell-warts-and-all.html. 'In December 1653 ... he became Lord Protector', quoted from:

<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Oliver-Cromwell/Mediation-and-the-second-Civil-War>'.

⁶ Walpole's account of the conversation was published over 100 years after the reported event. 'Walpole included no evidence to support the attribution, nor any explanation of why no one else had mentioned the phrase in the preceding hundred years - this despite Cromwell's life being the subject of minutely detailed historical research and over 160 full-length biographies', quoted from:

<https://www.phrases.org.uk/meanings/warts-and-all.html>..

⁷ Old form of 'mark'.

⁸ Horace Walpole, '*Anecdotes of Painting in England*', 1762, page 226.

⁹ An image of the actual portrait can be seen at:

<https://www.npg.org.uk/collections/search/portrait/mw149390/Oliver-Cromwell>.

¹⁰ Anon., '*The Waters of Strife*', *The Christian's Friend* (1874), page 173.

¹¹ Charitie L. Bancroft, 'Before the Throne of God above', stanza 4.