

The primary reference on the life of the controversial prelate John Bramhall.

Berwick, Edward. *The Rawdon Papers: Consisting of letters on various subjects, literary, political, and ecclesiastical, to and from Dr. John Bramhall, primate of Ireland*. London: Printed by and for John Nichols and Son. Sold also by R. Milliken, Dublin, 1819. 8 5/8 inches (220 mm), 437 pp.

The Rawdon Papers is the chief printed sourcebook for the life and times of the 17th-century Irish primate John Bramhall (1594–1663). A Yorkshireman from Pontefract (famous for its licorice), he arrived in Ireland in troubled times, under Charles I, to take up the post of Treasurer of Christ Church, Dublin. Within a month, he was Archdeacon of Meath, and in another seven, Bishop of Derry. His zealous pursuit of new (or simply restored) sources of revenue for the Church of Ireland, allied to a prickly intolerance for Scottish Presbyterianism (which he believed had infected much of the Irish church), led to his being nicknamed by his enemies “Bishop Bramble.” Having alienated both Presbyterians and Roman Catholics, Bramhall was forced to leave Ireland for England; with the triumph of Cromwell, he was obliged to leave England for the European continent, where he spent all but a year of the interregnum. His many years of exile, combined with an active political, administrative, financial, and ecclesiastical career, inevitably involved a wide and vigorous correspondence with his great contemporaries.

Bramhall was also a doughty controversialist, and a stout defender of the Church of England and of Ireland. He published many polemical works, chiefly against the usual enemies, the Papacy and sectarian religion, including three items in a pamphlet-war in the 1650s with the philosopher Thomas Hobbes on liberty and necessity, or more precisely, on the freedom of the will and the relations between church and state. On the restoration of Charles II to the British throne, Bramhall was advanced to the Archbishopric of Armagh and the Primacy of All Ireland, but lived to enjoy the office for only three years.

T.S. Eliot, the modern champion of so much once (and often, still) neglected 17th-century divinity, was convinced that Bramhall had got the better of the loathsome upstart

Hobbes in their dispute. He praised his literary style, at least after a fashion, describing it as “great prose only in the sense that it is good prose of a great epoch ... But for *ordonnance*, logical arrangement, for mastery of every fact relevant to a thesis, Bramhall is surpassed only by Hooker.” He saw in him a link between the world of his beloved Launcelot Andrewes and that of Jeremy Taylor, a fellow Irish bishop, whose sermon at Bramhall’s funeral service firmly set the primate in the Grand Tradition of Anglicanism.

Bramhall’s papers descended through his eldest daughter to the Rawdon family. These two volumes draw from their archives to present a record not only of Bramhall’s affairs, but of those of contemporary Rawdons, including letters sent to the soldier, politician, agriculturist, and landowner Sir George Rawdon (1604–1684) and his sole surviving son Sir Arthur Rawdon (1662–1695), who married Bramhall’s granddaughter. Both father and son shared with the archbishop an enthusiasm for the established church and an antipathy to Presbyterianism, along with an extensive correspondence.

This volume is now in the Cecil H. Green Library, which comprises roughly a third of the Stanford University Libraries’ 8.5 million volumes. The Green Library houses special collections amounting to a quarter million rare volumes; among the rarities are an extensive collection of Aldine editions and numerous incunables.