

THE
CHRISTIAN LEADERS
OF
The Last Century;
OR,
ENGLAND A HUNDRED YEARS AGO.

By the
REV. J. C. RYLE, B.A.,
Christ Church, Oxford;
AUTHOR OF "EXPOSITORY THOUGHTS;" &c.

"Enquire, I pray thee, of the former age, and prepare thyself to the search of
their fathers."—JOB viii. 8.

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Preface.

THE volume now in the reader's hands requires a few prefatory sentences of explanation. I should be sorry if there was any mistake as to its nature and intention.

It consists of a series of biographical papers, contributed to a well-known and most valuable monthly periodical during the years 1866 and 1867.* My object in drawing up these papers was to bring before the public in a comprehensive form the lives, characters, and work of the leading ministers by whose agency God was pleased to revive Christianity in England a hundred years ago. I had long felt that these great men were not sufficiently known, and their merit in consequence not sufficiently recognized. I thought that the Church and the world ought to know something more than they seem to know about such men as Whitefield, Wesley, Romaine, Rowlands, Grimshaw, Berridge, Venn, Toplady, Hervey, Walker, and Fletcher. For twenty years I waited anxiously for some worthy account of these mighty spiritual heroes. At last I became weary of waiting, and resolved to take the pen in my own hand, and do what I could in the pages of a periodical. These papers, in compliance with the wishes of friends, are now brought together in a portable form.

How far my attempt has been successful, I must now leave the public to judge. To literary merits the volume can lay no claim. Its chapters were written from month to month in the midst of many ministerial engagements, under a pressure which none can understand but those who write for periodicals. To expect such a volume to be a model of finished composition would be absurd. I only lay claim to a tolerable degree of accuracy about historical facts. I have been careful to make no statement for which I could not find some authority.

The reader will soon discover that I am an enthusiastic admirer of the men whose pictures I have sketched in this volume. I confess it honestly. I am a thorough enthusiast about them. I believe firmly that, excepting Luther and his Continental contemporaries and our own martyred Reformers, the world has seen no such men since the days of the apostles. I believe there have been none who have preached so much clear scriptural truth, none who have lived such lives, none who have shown such courage in Christ's service, none who have suffered so much for the truth, none who have done so much good. If any one can name better men, he knows more than I do.

* The *Family Treasury*.

I now send forth this volume with an earnest prayer that God may pardon all its defects, use it for his own glory, and raise up in his Church men like those who are here described. Surely, when we look at the state of England, we may well say, "Where is the Lord God of Whitefield and of Rowlands, of Grimshaw and of Venn? O Lord, revive thy work!"

J. C. RYLE.

STRADBROKE VICARAGE, *August* 10, 1868.

P.S.—I think it right to say that the chief substance of the biography of "Whitefield," in this volume, was originally delivered as a lecture in London in 1852. It now appears remoulded and enlarged. The other ten biographies were prepared expressly for the *Family Treasury*.

ENGLAND A HUNDRED YEARS AGO.

I.

The Religious and Moral Condition of England

AT THE BEGINNING OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY.

Importance of the History of the Eighteenth Century—Political and Financial Position of England—Low State of Religion both in Churches and Chapels—Testimonies on the subject—Defects of Bishops and Clergy—Poverty of the Printed Theology—Wretched Condition of the Country as to Education, Morals, and popular Literature—The “Good Old Times” a mere Myth.

THE subject I propose to handle in this volume is partly historical and partly biographical. If any reader expects from the title a fictitious tale, or something partly drawn from my imagination, I fear he will be disappointed. Such writing is not in my province, and I have no leisure for it if it was. Facts, naked facts, and the stern realities of life, absorb all the time that I can spare for the press.

I trust, however, that with most readers the subject I have chosen is one that needs no apology. The man who feels no interest in the history and biography of his own country is surely a poor patriot and a worse philosopher.

“Patriot” he cannot be called. True patriotism will make an Englishman care for everything that concerns England. A true patriot will like to know something about every one who has left his mark on English character, from the Venerable Bede down to Hugh Stowell, from Alfred the Great down to Pounds, the originator of Ragged Schools.

“Philosopher” he certainly is not. What is philosophy but history teaching by examples? To know the steps by which England has reached her present position is essential to a right understanding both of our national privileges and our national dangers. To know the men whom God raised up to do his work in days gone by, will guide us in looking about for standard-bearers in our own days and days to come.

I venture to think that there is no period of English history which is so thoroughly instructive to a Christian as the middle of last century. It is the period of which we are feeling the influence at this very day. It is the period with which our grandfathers and great-grandfathers were immediately connected. It is a period, not least, from which we may draw most useful lessons for our own times.

Let me begin by trying to describe the actual condition of England a hundred years ago. A few simple facts will suffice to make this plain.

The reader will remember that I am not going to speak of our *political* condition. I might easily tell him that, in the days of Sir Robert Walpole, the Duke of Newcastle, and the elder Pitt, the position of England was very different from what it is now. Great statesmen and orators there were among us, no doubt. But our standing among the nations of the earth was comparatively poor, weak, and low. Our voice among the nations of the earth carried far less weight than it has since obtained. The foundation of our Indian Empire had hardly been laid. Our Australian possessions were a part of the world only just discovered, but not colonized. At home there was a strong party in the country which still longed for the restoration of the Stuarts. In 1745 the Pretender and a Highland army marched from Scotland to invade England, and got as far as Derby. Corruption, jobbing, and mismanagement in high places were the rule, and purity the exception. Civil and religious disabilities still abounded. The test and corporation Acts were still unrepealed. To be a Dissenter was to be regarded as only one degree better than being seditious and a rebel. Rotten boroughs flourished. Bribery among all classes was open, unblushing, and profuse. Such was England politically a hundred years ago.

The reader will remember, furthermore, that I am not going to speak of our condition in a *financial and economical* point of view. Our vast cotton, silk, and linen manufactures had hardly begun to exist. Our enormous mineral treasures of coal and iron were scarcely touched. We had no steamboats, no locomotive engines, no railways, no gas, no electric telegraph, no penny post, no scientific farming, no macadamized roads, no free-trade, no sanitary arrangements, and no police deserving the name. Let any Englishman imagine, if he can, his country without any of the things that I have just mentioned, and he will have some faint idea of the economical and financial condition of England a hundred years ago.

But I leave these things to the political economists and historians of this world. Interesting as they are, no doubt, they form no part of the subject that I want to dwell upon. I wish to treat that subject as a minister of Christ's gospel. It is the *religious and moral* condition of England a hundred years ago to which I shall confine my attention. Here is the point to which I wish to direct the reader's eye.

The state of this country in a religious and moral point of view in the middle of last century was so painfully unsatisfactory that it is difficult to convey any adequate idea of it. English people of the present day who have never been led to inquire into the subject, can have no conception of the darkness that prevailed. From the year 1700 till about the era of the French Revolution, England seemed barren of all that is really good. How such a

state of things can have arisen in a land of free Bibles and professing Protestantism is almost past comprehension. Christianity seemed to lie as one dead, insomuch that you might have said “she is dead.” Morality, however much exalted in pulpits, was thoroughly trampled under foot in the streets. There was darkness in high places and darkness in low places—darkness in the court, the camp, the Parliament, and the bar—darkness in country, and darkness in town—darkness among rich and darkness among poor—a gross, thick, religious and moral darkness—a darkness that might be felt.

Does any one ask what the churches were doing a hundred years ago? The answer is soon given. The Church of England existed in those days, with her admirable articles, her time-honoured liturgy, her parochial system, her Sunday services, and her ten thousand clergy. The Nonconformist body existed, with its hardly won liberty and its free pulpit. But one account unhappily may be given of both parties. They existed, but they could hardly be said to have lived. They did nothing; they were sound asleep. The curse of the Uniformity Act seemed to rest on the Church of England. The blight of ease and freedom from persecution seemed to rest upon the Dissenters. Natural theology, without a single distinctive doctrine of Christianity, cold morality, or barren orthodoxy, formed the staple teaching both in church and chapel. Sermons everywhere were little better than miserable moral essays, utterly devoid of anything likely to awaken, convert, or save souls. Both parties seemed at last agreed on one point, and that was to let the devil alone, and to do nothing for hearts and souls. And as for the weighty truths for which Hooper and Latimer had gone to the stake, and Baxter and scores of Puritans had gone to jail, they seemed clean forgotten and laid on the shelf.

When such was the state of things in churches and chapels, it can surprise no one to learn that the land was deluged with infidelity and scepticism. The prince of this world made good use of his opportunity. His agents were active and zealous in promulgating every kind of strange and blasphemous opinion. Collins and Tindal denounced Christianity as priestcraft. Whiston pronounced the miracles of the Bible to be grand impositions. Woolston declared them to be allegories. Arianism and Socinianism were openly taught by Clark and Priestly, and became fashionable among the intellectual part of the community. Of the utter incapacity of the pulpit to stem the progress of all this flood of evil, one single fact will give us some idea. The celebrated lawyer, Blackstone, had the curiosity, early in the reign of George III., to go from church to church and hear every clergyman of note in London. He says that he did not hear a single discourse which had more Christianity in it than the writings of Cicero, and that it would have been impossible for him to discover, from what he heard, whether the preacher were a follower of Confucius, of Mahomet, or of Christ!

Evidence about this painful subject is, unhappily, only too abundant. My difficulty is not so much to discover witnesses, as to select them. This was the period at which Archbishop Seeker said, in one of his charges, "In this we cannot be mistaken, that an open and professed disregard of religion is become, through a variety of unhappy causes, the distinguishing character of the age. Such are the dissoluteness and contempt of principle in the higher part of the world, and the profligacy, intemperance, and fearlessness of committing crimes in the lower part, as must, if the torrent of impiety stop not, become absolutely fatal. Christianity is ridiculed and railed at with very little reserve; and the teachers of it without any at all." This was the period when Bishop Butler, in his preface to the "Analogy," used the following remarkable words: "It has come to be taken for granted that Christianity is no longer a subject of inquiry; but that it is now at length discovered to be fictitious. And accordingly it is treated as if, in the present age, this were an agreed point among all persons of discernment, and nothing remained but to set it up as a principal subject for mirth and ridicule." Nor were such complaints as these confined to Churchmen. Dr. Watts declares that in his day "there was a general decay of vital religion in the hearts and lives of men, and that it was a general matter of mournful observation among all who lay the cause of God to heart." Dr. Guyse, another most respectable Nonconformist, says, "The religion of nature makes up the darling topic of our age; and the religion of Jesus is valued only for the sake of that, and only so far as it carries on the light of nature, and is a bare improvement of that kind of light. All that is distinctively Christian, or that is peculiar to Christ, everything concerning him that has not its apparent foundation in natural light, or that goes beyond its principles, is waived, and banished and despised." Testimony like this might easily be multiplied tenfold. But I spare the reader. Enough probably has been adduced to prove that when I speak of the moral and religious condition of England at the beginning of the eighteenth century as painfully unsatisfactory, I do not use the language of exaggeration.

What were the bishops of those days? Some of them were undoubtedly men of powerful intellect and learning, and of unblameable lives. But the best of them, like Seeker, and Butler, and Gibson, and Lowth, and Horn, seemed unable to do more than deplore the existence of evils which they saw but knew not how to remedy. Others, like Lavington and Warburton, fulminated fierce charges against enthusiasm and fanaticism, and appeared afraid of England becoming too religious! The majority of the bishops, to say the truth, were mere men of the world. They were unfit for their position. The prevailing tone of the Episcopal body may be estimated by the fact, that Archbishop Cornwallis gave balls and routs at Lambeth Palace

until the king himself interfered by letter and requested him to desist.* Let me also add, that when the occupants of the Episcopal bench were troubled by the rapid spread of Whitefield's influence, it was gravely suggested in high quarters that the best way to stop his influence was to make him a bishop.

What were the parochial clergy of those days? The vast majority of them were sunk in worldliness, and neither knew nor cared anything about their profession. They neither did good themselves, nor liked any one else to do it for them. They hunted, they shot, they farmed, they swore, they drank, they gambled. They seemed determined to know everything except Jesus Christ and him crucified. When they assembled it was generally to toast "Church and King," and to build one another up in earthly-mindedness, prejudice, ignorance, and formality. When they retired to their own homes, it was to do as little and preach as seldom as possible. And when they did preach, their sermons were so unspeakably and indescribably bad, that it is comforting to reflect they were generally preached to empty benches.

What sort of theological literature was a hundred years ago bequeathed to us? The poorest and weakest in the English language. This is the age to which we owe such divinity as that of the "Whole Duty of Man," and the sermons of Tillotson and Blair. Inquire at any old bookseller's shop, and you will find there is no theology so unsaleable as the sermons published about the middle and latter part of last century.

What sort of education had the lower orders a hundred years ago? In the greater part of parishes, and especially in rural districts, they had no education at all. Nearly all our rural schools have been built since 1800. So extreme was the ignorance, that a Methodist preacher in Somersetshire was

* The king's letter on this occasion is so curious, that I give it in its entirety, as I find it in that interesting though ill-arranged book, "The Life and Times of Lady Huntingdon." The letter was evidently written in consequence of an interview which Lady Huntingdon had with the king. A critical reader will remember that the king was probably more familiar with the German than the English language.

"MY GOOD LORD PRELATE,—I could not delay giving you the notification of the grief and concern with which my breast was affected at receiving authentic information that routs have made their way into your palace. At the same time, I must signify to you my sentiments on this subject, which hold these levities and vain dissipations as utterly inexpedient, if not unlawful, to pass in a residence for many centuries devoted to divine studies, religious retirement, and the extensive exercise of charity and benevolence; I add, in a place where so many of your predecessors have led their lives in such sanctity as has thrown lustre on the pure religion they professed and adorned. From the dissatisfaction with which you must perceive I behold these improprieties, not to speak in harsher terms, and on still more pious principles, I trust you will suppress them immediately; so that I may not have occasion to show any further marks of my displeasure, or to interpose in a different manner. May God take your grace into his almighty protection!—I remain, my Lord Primate, your gracious friend, G. R."

charged before the magistrates with swearing, because in preaching he quoted the text, "He that believeth not shall be damned!" While, not to be behind Somersetshire, Yorkshire furnished a constable who brought Charles Wesley before the magistrates as a favourer of the Pretender, because in public prayer he asked the Lord to "bring back his banished ones!" To cap all, the vice-chancellor of Oxford actually expelled six students from the University because "they held Methodistic tenets, and took on them to pray, read, and expound Scripture in private houses." To swear extempore, it was remarked by some, brought an Oxford student into no trouble; but to pray extempore was an offence not to be borne!

What were the morals of a hundred years ago? It may suffice to say that duelling, adultery, fornication, gambling, swearing, Sabbath-breaking and drunkenness were hardly regarded as vices at all. They were the fashionable practices of people in the highest ranks of society, and no one was thought the worse of for indulging in them. The best evidence of this point is to be found in Hogarth's pictures.

What was the popular literature of a hundred years ago? I pass over the fact that Bolingbroke, and Gibbon, and Hume the historian, were all deeply dyed with scepticism. I speak of the light reading which was most in vogue. Turn to the pages of Fielding, Smollett, Swift, and Sterne, and you have the answer. The cleverness of these writers is undeniable; but the indecency of many of their writings is so glaring and gross, that few people now-a-days would like to allow their works to be seen on their drawing-room table.

My picture, I fear, is a very dark and gloomy one. I wish it were in my power to throw a little more light into it. But facts are stubborn things, and specially facts about literature. The best literature of a hundred years ago is to be found in the moral writings of Addison, Johnson, and Steele. But the effects of such literature on the general public, it may be feared, was infinitesimally small. In fact, I believe that Johnson and the essayists had no more influence on the religion and morality of the masses than the broom of the renowned Mrs. Partington had on the waves of the Atlantic Ocean.

To sum up all, and bring this part of my subject to a conclusion, I ask my readers to remember that the good works with which every one is now familiar did not exist one hundred years ago. Wilberforce had not yet attacked the slave trade. Howard had not yet reformed prisons. Raikes had not established Sunday schools. We had no Bible Societies, no ragged schools, no city missions, no pastoral aid societies, no missions to the heathen. The spirit of slumber was over the land. In a religious and moral point of view, England was sound asleep.

I cannot help remarking, as I draw this chapter to a conclusion, that we ought to be more thankful for the times in which we live. I fear we are far too apt to look at the evils we see around us, and to forget how much worse

things were a hundred years ago. I have no faith, for my part, and I boldly avow it, in those “good old times” of which some delight to speak. I regard them as a mere fable and a myth. I believe that our own times are the best times that England has ever seen. I do not say this boastfully. I know we have many things to deplore; but I do say that we might be worse. I do say that we were much worse a hundred years ago. The general standard of religion and morality is undoubtedly far higher. At all events, in 1868, we are awake. We see and feel evils to which, a hundred years ago, men were insensible. We struggle to be free from these evils; we desire to amend. This is a vast improvement. With all our many faults we are not sound asleep. On every side there is stir, activity, movement, progress, and not stagnation. Bad as we are, we confess our badness; weak as we are, we acknowledge our failings; feeble as our efforts are, we strive to amend; little as we do for Christ, we do try to do something. Let us thank God for this! Things might be worse. Comparing our own days with the middle of last century, we have reason to thank God and take courage. England is in a better state than it was a hundred years ago.

II.

The Agency by which Christianity was revived in England IN THE MIDDLE OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY.

Improvement of England since middle of Eighteenth Century an undeniable Fact—Agents in effecting the Change a few isolated and humble Clergymen—Preaching the chief Instrument they employed—The Manner of their Preaching—The Substance of their Preaching.

THAT a great change for the better has come over England in the last hundred years is a fact which I suppose no well-informed person would ever attempt to deny. You might as well attempt to deny that there was a Protestant Reformation in the days of Luther, a Long Parliament in the time of Cromwell, or a French republic at the end of the last century. There has been a vast change for the better. Both in religion and morality the country has gone through a complete revolution. People neither think, nor talk, nor act as they did in 1750. It is a great fact, which the children of this world cannot deny, however they may attempt to explain it. They might as well try to persuade us that high-water and low-water at London Bridge are one and the same thing.

But by what agency was this great change effected? To whom are we indebted for the immense improvement in religion and morality which undoubtedly has come over the land? Who, in a word, were the instruments that God employed in bringing about the great English Reformation of the eighteenth century? This is the one point that I wish to examine generally in the present chapter. The names and biographies of the principal agents I shall reserve for future chapters.

The government of the country can lay no claim to the credit of the change. Morality cannot be called into being by penal enactments and statutes. People were never yet made religious by Acts of Parliament. At any rate, the Parliaments and administrations of last century did as little for religion and morality as any that ever existed in England.

Nor yet did the change come from the Church of England, as a body. The leaders of that venerable communion were utterly unequal to the times. Left to herself, the Church of England would probably have died of dignity, and sunk at her anchors.

Nor yet did the change come from the Dissenters. Content with their hardly-won triumphs, that worthy body of men seemed to rest upon their oars. In the plenary enjoyment of their rights of conscience, they forgot the great vital principles of their forefathers, and their own duties and responsibilities.

Who, then, were the reformers of the last century? To whom are we in-

debted, under God, for the change which took place?

The men who wrought deliverance for us, a hundred years ago, were a few individuals, most of them clergymen of the Established Church, whose hearts God touched about the same time in various parts of the country. They were not wealthy or highly connected. They had neither money to buy adherents, nor family influence to command attention and respect. They were not put forward by any Church, party, society, or institution. They were simply men whom God stirred up and brought out to do his work, without previous concert, scheme, or plan. They did his work in the old apostolic way, by becoming the evangelists of their day. They taught one set of truths. They taught them in the same way, with fire, reality, earnestness, as men fully convinced of what they taught. They taught them in the same spirit, always loving, compassionate, and, like Paul, even weeping, but always bold, unflinching, and not fearing the face of man. And they taught them on the same plan, always acting on the aggressive; not waiting for sinners to come to them, but going after, and seeking sinners; not sitting idle till sinners offered to repent, but assaulting the high places of ungodliness like men storming a breach, and giving sinners no rest so long as they stuck to their sins.

The movement of these gallant evangelists shook England from one end to another. At first people in high places affected to despise them. The men of letters sneered at them as fanatics; the wits cut jokes, and invented smart names for them; the Church shut her doors on them; the Dissenters turned the cold shoulder on them; the ignorant mob persecuted them. But the movement of these few evangelists went on, and made itself felt in every part of the land. Many were aroused and awakened to think about religion; many were shamed out of their sins; many were restrained and frightened at their own ungodliness; many were gathered together and induced to profess a decided hearty religion; many were converted; many who affected to dislike the movement were secretly provoked to emulation. The little sapling became a strong tree; the little rill became a deep, broad stream; the little spark became a steady burning flame. A candle was lighted, of which we are now enjoying the benefit. The feeling of all classes in the land about religion and morality gradually assumed a totally different complexion. And all this, under God, was effected by a few unpatronized, unpaid adventurers! When God takes a work in hand, nothing can stop it. When God is for us, none can be against us.

The instrumentality by which the spiritual reformers of the last century carried on their operations was of the simplest description. It was neither more nor less than the old apostolic weapon of *preaching*. The sword which St. Paul wielded with such mighty effect, when he assaulted the strongholds of heathenism eighteen hundred years ago, was the same sword by which

they won their victories. To say, as some have done, that they neglected education and schools, is totally incorrect. Wherever they gathered congregations, they cared for the children. To say, as others have done, that they neglected the sacraments, is simply false. Those who make that assertion only expose their entire ignorance of the religious history of England a hundred years ago. It would be easy to name men among the leading reformers of the last century whose communicants might be reckoned by hundreds, and who honoured the Lord's Supper more than forty-nine out of fifty clergymen in their day. But beyond doubt preaching was their favourite weapon. They wisely went back to first principles, and took up apostolic plans. They held, with St. Paul, that a minister's first work is "to preach the gospel."

They preached *everywhere*. If the pulpit of a parish church was open to them, they gladly availed themselves of it. If it could not be obtained, they were equally ready to preach in a barn. No place came amiss to them. In the field or by the road-side, on the village-green or in a market-place, in lanes or in alleys, in cellars or in garrets, on a tub or on a table, on a bench or on a horse-block, wherever hearers could be gathered, the spiritual reformers of the last century were ready to speak to them about their souls. They were instant in season and out of season in doing the fisherman's work, and compassed sea and land in carrying forward their Father's business. Now, all this was a new thing. Can we wonder that it produced a great effect?

They preached *simply*. They rightly concluded that the very first qualification to be aimed at in a sermon is to be understood. They saw clearly that thousands of able and well-composed sermons are utterly useless, because they are above the heads of the hearers. They strove to come down to the level of the people, and to speak what the poor could understand. To attain this they were not ashamed to crucify their style, and to sacrifice their reputation for learning. To attain this they used illustrations and anecdotes in abundance, and, like their divine Master, borrowed lessons from every object in nature. They carried out the maxim of Augustine,—“A wooden key is not so beautiful as a golden one, but if it can open the door when the golden one cannot, it is far more useful.” They revived the style of sermons in which Luther and Latimer used to be so eminently successful. In short, they saw the truth of what the great German reformer meant when he said, “No one can be a good preacher to the people who is not willing to preach in a manner that seems childish and vulgar to some.” Now, all this again was quite new a hundred years ago.

They preached *fervently and directly*. They cast aside that dull, cold, heavy, lifeless mode of delivery, which had long made sermons a very proverb for dullness. They proclaimed the words of faith with faith, and the story of life with life. They spoke with fiery zeal, like men who were thor-

oughly persuaded that what they said was true, and that it was of the utmost importance to your eternal interest to hear it. They spoke like men who had got a message from God to you, and must deliver it, and must have your attention while they delivered it. They threw heart and soul and feeling into their sermons, and sent their hearers home convinced, at any rate, that the preacher was sincere and wished them well. They believed that you must speak *from* the heart if you wish to speak *to* the heart, and that there must be unmistakable faith and conviction within the pulpit if there is to be faith and conviction among the pews. All this, I repeat, was a thing that had become almost obsolete a hundred years ago. Can we wonder that it took people by storm, and produced an immense effect?

But what was the substance and subject-matter of the preaching which produced such wonderful effect a hundred years ago? I will not insult my readers' common sense by only saying that it was "simple, earnest, fervent, real, genial, brave, life-like," and so forth; I would have it understood that it was eminently doctrinal, positive, dogmatical, and distinct. The strongholds of the last century's sins would never have been cast down by mere earnestness and negative teaching. The trumpets which blew down the walls of Jericho were trumpets which gave no uncertain sound. The English evangelists of last century were not men of an uncertain creed. But what was it that they proclaimed? A little information on this point may not be without use.

For one thing, then, the spiritual reformers of the last century taught constantly *the sufficiency and supremacy of Holy Scripture*. The Bible, whole and unmutilated, was their sole rule of faith and practice. They accepted all its statements without question or dispute. They knew nothing of any part of Scripture being uninspired. They never allowed that man has any "verifying faculty" within him, by which Scripture statements may be weighed, rejected, or received. They never flinched from asserting that there can be no error in the Word of God; and that when we cannot understand or reconcile some part of its contents, the fault is in the interpreter and not in the text. In all their preaching they were eminently men of one book. To that book they were content to pin their faith, and by it to stand or fall. This was one grand characteristic of their preaching. They honoured, they loved, they revered the Bible.

Furthermore, the reformers of the last century taught constantly the *total corruption of human nature*. They knew nothing of the modern notion that Christ is in every man, and that all possess something good within, which they have only to stir up and use in order to be saved. They never flattered men and women in this fashion. They told them plainly that they were dead, and must be made alive again; that they were guilty, lost, helpless, and hopeless, and in imminent danger of eternal ruin. Strange and par-

adoxical as it may seem to some, their first step towards making men good was to show them that they were utterly bad; and their primary argument in persuading men to do something for their souls was to convince them that they could do nothing at all.

Furthermore, the reformers of the last century taught constantly that *Christ's death upon the cross was the only satisfaction for man's sin*; and that, when Christ died, he died as our substitute—"the just for the unjust." This, in fact, was the cardinal point in almost all their sermons. They never taught the modern doctrine that Christ's death was only a great example of self-sacrifice. They saw in it something far higher, greater, deeper than this. They saw in it the payment of man's mighty debt to God. They loved Christ's person; they rejoiced in Christ's promises; they urged men to walk after Christ's example. But the one subject, above all others, concerning Christ, which they delighted to dwell on, was the atoning blood which Christ shed for us on the cross.

Furthermore, the reformers of the last century taught constantly the great doctrine of *justification by faith*. They told men that faith was the one thing needful in order to obtain an interest in Christ's work for their souls; that before we believe, we are dead, and have no interest in Christ; and that the moment we do believe, we live, and have a plenary title to all Christ's benefits. Justification by virtue of church membership—justification without believing or trusting—were notions to which they gave no countenance. Everything, if you will believe, and the moment you believe; nothing, if you do not believe,—was the very marrow of their preaching.

Furthermore, the reformers of the last century taught constantly the *universal necessity* of heart conversion and a new creation by the Holy Spirit. They proclaimed everywhere to the crowds whom they addressed, "Ye must be born again." Sonship to God by baptism—sonship to God while we do the will of the devil—such sonship they never admitted. The regeneration which they preached was no dormant, torpid, motionless thing. It was something that could be seen, discerned, and known by its effects.

Furthermore, the reformers of the last century taught constantly the inseparable *connection between true faith and personal holiness*. They never allowed for a moment that any church membership or religious profession was the least proof of a man being a true Christian if he lived an ungodly life. A true Christian, they maintained, must always be known by his fruits; and these fruits must be plainly manifest and unmistakable in all the relations of life. "No fruits, no grace," was the unvarying tenor of their preaching.

Finally, the reformers of the last century taught constantly, as doctrines both equally true, *God's eternal hatred against sin, and God's love towards sinners*. They knew nothing of a "love lower than hell," and a heaven

where holy and unholy are all at length to find admission. Both about heaven and hell they used the utmost plainness of speech. They never shrunk from declaring, in plainest terms, the certainty of God's judgment and of wrath to come, if men persisted in impenitence and unbelief; and yet they never ceased to magnify the riches of God's kindness and compassion, and to entreat all sinners to repent and turn to God before it was too late.

Such were the main truths which the English evangelists of last century were constantly preaching. These were the principal doctrines which they were always proclaiming, whether in town or in country, whether in church or in the open air, whether among rich or among poor. These were the doctrines by which they turned England upside down, made ploughmen and colliers weep till their dirty faces were seamed with tears, arrested the attention of peers and philosophers, stormed the strongholds of Satan, plucked thousands like brands from the burning, and altered the character of the age. Call them simple and elementary doctrines if you will. Say, if you please, that you see nothing grand, striking, new, peculiar about this list of truths. But the fact is undeniable, that God blessed these truths to the reformation of England a hundred years ago. What God has blessed it ill becomes man to despise.