

KNOTS UNTIED.

BEING
PLAIN STATEMENTS ON DISPUTED POINTS IN RELIGION
FROM THE
STANDPOINT OF AN EVANGELICAL CHURCHMAN.

BY
JOHN CHARLES RYLE, D.D.,
LORD BISHOP OF LIVERPOOL.
Author of "Expository Thoughts on the Gospels, etc.

Tenth Edition.
(*SPECIAL ISSUE.*)

LONDON:
WILLIAM HUNT AND COMPANY,
12 PATERNOSTER ROW.
1885.

PREFACE TO THE TENTH EDITION.

IN sending forth a tenth edition of this volume, I do not think it necessary to add anything to the original preface which I drew up when it first appeared.

The general principles which I asserted and maintained when I was much younger than I am now, I firmly assert and maintain in 1885. I find nothing to retract, cancel, or withdraw in the nineteen papers which compose the volume.

I frankly admit, after careful examination of "Knots Untied," that I observe in its pages occasional sharp and strong expressions which perhaps I should not use if I wrote the book over again in the present year. But I think it better to make no change, and to leave the original language alone. I wish my readers to understand that the views which I held as a presbyter I still hold as a bishop; and I fear that any alteration might lead to misconstruction and misrepresentation.

That God may continue to bless the book and make it useful is my earnest prayer.

J. C. LIVERPOOL.

PALACE, LIVERPOOL,
February 9, 1885.

PREFACE.

THE volume now in the reader's hands requires a few words of explanation. It consists of nineteen papers on subjects which are matters of dispute among English Churchmen in the present day, systematically arranged. A moment's glance at the table of contents will show that there is hardly any point of theological controversy belonging to this era, which is not discussed, with more or less fullness, in these papers.

The doctrinal tone of the volume will be found distinctly and decidedly "Evangelical." I avow that, without hesitation, at the outset. The opinions expressed and advocated about the matters discussed, are those of an Evangelical Churchman. What THAT means every intelligent Englishman knows, and it is mere affectation to profess ignorance about the point. They are not popular opinions, I am aware, and are only held, perhaps, by a minority of the English clergy. But they are the only opinions which I can find in Holy Scripture, in the Thirty-nine Articles, in the Prayer-book fairly interpreted, in the works of the Reformers, or in the writings of the pre-Caroline divines. In the faith of these opinions I have lived for thirty-five years, and have seen no reason to be ashamed of them, however rudely they may have been assailed.

The object of sending forth this volume is to meet the wants of those who may wish to see theological questions fully discussed and examined from an "Evangelical" standpoint, and complain that they cannot find a book that does this. There are hundreds of English Churchmen who will never look at *a tract* (though St. Paul's Epistles, when first sent forth, were only tracts), but are willing

to read a *volume*. To them I offer this volume, and respectfully invite their attention to its contents. If it does nothing else, I hope it may convince some readers that in the controversies of this day the reasonings and arguments are not all on one side.

The friendly readers of the many popular tracts which God has enabled me to write in the last twenty-five years, will not find in this volume much that is new to them. They will find some of their old acquaintances, though altered, remodelled, recast, and partially divested of their direct and familiar style. But they will find the same argument, the same matter, and the same substance, though presented in a new form, and adapted to the tastes of a different order of minds. I am sure they will agree with me, that it is well to use every means of doing good and, if possible, to meet the wants of every class of readers.

Whether the volume will do any good remains to be seen. At any rate it is an honest effort to untie some theological knots, and to supply some clear statements of truth from the standpoint of an Evangelical Churchman. That God may bless the effort, and make it useful to the cause of Christ and to the Church of England, is my earnest prayer.

J. C. RYLE

STRADBROKE VICARAGE.
1877.

XVI.

DIVERS AND STRANGE DOCTRINES.

“Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines. For it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace; not with meats, which have not profited them that have been occupied therein.”—HEB. xiii. 9.

THE text which heads this paper is an Apostolic caution against false doctrine. It forms part of a warning which St. Paul addressed to Hebrew Christians. It is a caution just as much needed now as it was eighteen hundred years ago. Never, I think, was it so important for Christian ministers to cry aloud continually, “Be not carried about.”

That old enemy of mankind, the devil, has no more subtle device for ruining souls than that of spreading false doctrine. “A murderer and a liar from the beginning,” he never ceases going to and fro in the earth, “seeking whom he may devour.”—Outside the Church he is ever persuading men to maintain barbarous customs and destructive superstitions. Human sacrifice to idols,—gross, revolting, cruel, disgusting worship of abominable false deities,—persecution, slavery, cannibalism, child-murder, devastating religious wars,—all these are a part of Satan’s handiwork, and the fruit of his suggestions. Like a pirate, his object is to “sink, burn, and destroy.”—Inside the Church he is ever labouring to sow heresies, to propagate errors, to foster departures from the faith. If he cannot prevent the waters flowing from the Fountain of Life, he tries hard to poison them. If he cannot destroy the medicine of the Gospel, he strives to adulterate and corrupt it. No wonder that he is called “Apollyon, the destroyer.”

The Divine Comforter of the Church, the Holy Ghost, has always employed one great agent to oppose Satan’s devices. That agent is the Word of God. The Word expounded and unfolded, the Word explained and opened up, the Word made clear to the head and applied to the heart,—the Word is the chosen weapon by which the devil must be confronted and confounded. The Word was the sword which the Lord Jesus wielded in the temptation. To every assault of the Tempter, He replied, “It is written.” The Word is the sword which His ministers must use in the present day, if they would successfully resist the devil. The Bible, faithfully and freely expounded, is the safeguard of Christ’s Church.

I desire to remember this lesson, and to invite attention to the text which stands at the head of this paper. We live in an age when men profess to dislike dogmas and creeds, and are filled with a morbid dislike to controversial theology. He who dares to say of one doctrine that “it is true,” and of another that “it is false,” must expect to be called narrow-minded and uncharitable, and to lose the praise of men. Nevertheless, the Scripture

was not written in vain. Let us examine the mighty lessons contained in St. Paul's words to the Hebrews. They are lessons for us as well as for them.

- I. First, we have here a *broad warning*: "Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines."
- II. Secondly, we have here a *valuable prescription*: "It is good that the heart be established with grace, not with meats."
- III. Lastly, we have here an *instructive fact*: Meats "have not profited them which have been occupied therein."

On each of these points I have somewhat to say. If we patiently plough up this field of truth, we shall find that there is precious treasure hidden in it.

I. First comes *the broad warning*: "Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines."

The meaning of these words is not a hard thing which we cannot understand. "Be not tossed to and fro," the Apostle seems to say, "by every blast of false teaching, like ships without compass or rudder. False doctrines will arise as long as the world lasts, in number many, in minor details varying, in one point alone always the same,—strange, new, foreign, and departing from the Gospel of Christ. They do exist now. They will always be found within the visible Church. Remember this, and be not carried away." Such is St. Paul's warning.

The Apostle's warning does not stand alone. Even in the midst of the Sermon on the Mount there fell from the loving lips of our Saviour a solemn caution: "Beware of false prophets, which come unto you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves." (Matt. vii. 15.) Even in St. Paul's last address to the Ephesian elders, though he finds no time to speak about the sacraments, he does find time to warn his friends against false doctrine: "Of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things to draw away disciples after them." (Acts xx. 30.) What says the Second Epistle to the Corinthians? "I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ." (2 Cor. xi. 3.) What says the Epistle to the Galatians? "I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another Gospel."—"Who hath bewitched you that ye should not obey the truth?"—"Having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh."—"How turn ye again to weak and beggarly elements?"—"Ye observe days, and months, and

times, and years. I am afraid of you.”—“Stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again in the yoke of bondage.” (Gal. i. 6; iii. 1, 3; iv. 9, 10, 11; v. 1.) What says the Epistle to the Ephesians? “Be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine.” (Eph. iv. 14.) What says the Epistle to the Colossians? “Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men.” (Col. ii. 8.) What says the First Epistle to Timothy? “The Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith.” (1 Tim. iv. 1.) What says the Second Epistle of Peter? “There shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies.” (2 Peter ii. 1.) What says the First Epistle of John? “Believe not every spirit. Many false prophets are gone out into the world.” (1 John iv. 1.) What says the Epistle of Jude? “Contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints. For there are certain men crept in unawares.” (Jude 3, 4.) Let us mark well these texts. These things were written for our learning.

What shall we say to these texts? How they may strike others I cannot say. I only know how they strike me. To tell us, as some do, in the face of these texts, that the early Churches were a model of perfection and purity, is absurd. Even in Apostolic days, it appears, there were abundant errors both in doctrine and practice.—To tell us, as others do, that clergymen ought never to handle controversial subjects, and never to warn their people against erroneous views, is senseless and unreasonable. At this rate we might neglect not a little of the New Testament. Surely the dumb dog and the sleeping shepherd are the best allies of the wolf, the thief, and the robber. It is not for nothing that St. Paul says, “If thou put the brethren in remembrance of these things, thou shalt be a good minister of Jesus Christ.” (1 Tim. iv. 5.)

A plain warning against false doctrine is specially needed in England in the present day. The school of the Pharisees, and the school of the Sadducees, those ancient mothers of all mischief, were never more active than they are now. Between men adding to the truth on one side, and men taking away from it on the other,—between those who bury truth under additions, and those who mutilate it by subtractions,—between superstition and infidelity,—between Romanism and Neology,—between Ritualism and Rationalism,—between these upper and nether mill-stones the Gospel is well-nigh crushed to death

Strange views are continually propounded by clergymen about subjects of the deepest importance. About the atonement, the divinity of Christ, the inspiration of the Bible, the reality of miracles, the eternity of future punishment,—about the Church, the ministerial office, the sacraments, the confessional, the honour due to the Virgin, prayers for the dead,—about

all these things there is nothing too monstrous to be taught by some English ministers in these latter days. By the pen and by the tongue, by the press and by the pulpit, the country is incessantly deluged with a flood of erroneous opinions. To ignore the fact is mere affectation. Others see it, if we pretend to be ignorant of it. The danger is real, great, and unmistakable. Never was it so needful to say, "Be not carried about."

Many things combine to make the present inroad of false doctrine peculiarly dangerous. There is an undeniable zeal in some of the teachers of error: their "earnestness" (to use an unhappy cant phrase) makes many think they must be right. There is a great appearance of learning and theological knowledge: many fancy that such clever and intellectual men must surely be safe guides. There is a general tendency to free-thought and free inquiry in these latter days: many like to prove their independence of judgment, by believing novelties. There is a wide-spread desire to appear charitable and liberal-minded: many seem half ashamed of saying that anybody can be in the wrong. There is a quantity of half-truth taught by the modern false teachers. They are incessantly using Scriptural terms and phrases in an unscriptural sense. There is a morbid craving in the public mind for a more sensuous, ceremonial, sensational, showy worship: men are impatient of inward, invisible heart-work. There is a silly readiness in every direction to believe everybody who talks cleverly, lovingly, and earnestly, and a determination to forget that Satan is often "transformed into an angel of light." (2 Cor. ii. 14.) There is a wide-spread "gullibility" among professing Christians. Every heretic who tells his story plausibly is sure to be believed, and everybody who doubts him is called a persecutor and a narrow-minded man. All these things are peculiar symptoms of our times. I defy any observing man to deny them. They tend to make the assaults of false doctrine in our day peculiarly dangerous. They make it more than ever needful to cry aloud, "Be not carried about."

Does anyone ask me, What is the best safeguard against false doctrine?—I answer in one word, "The Bible: the Bible regularly read, regularly prayed over, regularly studied." We must go back to the old prescription of our Master: "Search the Scriptures." (John v. 39.) If we want a weapon to wield against the devices of Satan, there is nothing like "the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God." But to wield it successfully, we must read it habitually, diligently, intelligently, and prayerfully. This is a point on which, I fear, many fail. In an age of hurry and bustle, few read their Bibles as much as they should. More books perhaps are read than ever, but less of the one Book which makes man wise unto salvation. Rome and Neology could never have made such havoc in the Church in the last fifty years, if there had not been a most superficial knowledge of the Scriptures throughout the land. A Bible-reading laity is the strength of

a Church.

“Search the Scriptures.” Mark how the Lord Jesus Christ and His Apostles continually refer to the Old Testament, as a document just as authoritative as the New. Mark how they quote texts from the Old Testament, as the voice of God, as if every word was given by inspiration. Mark how the greatest miracles in the Old Testament are all referred to in the New, as unquestioned and unquestionable facts. Mark how all the leading events in the Pentateuch are incessantly named as historical events, whose reality admits of no dispute. Mark how the atonement, and substitution, and sacrifice, run through the whole Bible from first to last, as essential doctrines of revelation. Mark how the resurrection of Christ, the greatest of all miracles, is proved by such an overwhelming mass of evidence, that he who disbelieves it may as well say he will believe no evidence at all. Mark all these things, and you will find it very hard to be a Rationalist! Great are the difficulties of infidelity. It requires more credulity to be an infidel than a Christian. But greater still are the difficulties of Rationalism. Free handling of Scripture,—results of modern criticism,—broad and liberal theology,—all these are fine, swelling, high-sounding phrases, which please some minds, and look very grand at a distance. But the man who looks below the surface of things will soon find that there is no sure standing-ground between ultra-Rationalism and Atheism.

“Search the Scriptures.” Mark what a conspicuous absence there is in the New Testament of what may be called the sacramental system, and the whole circle of Ritualistic theology. Mark how extremely little there is said about the effects of baptism. Mark how very seldom the Lord’s Supper is mentioned in the Epistles. Find, if you can, a single text in which New Testament ministers are called sacrificing priests,—or the Lord’s Supper is called a sacrifice,—or private confession to ministers is recommended and practised.—Turn, if you can, to one single verse in which sacrificial vestments are named as desirable,—or in which lighted candles and pots of flowers on the Lord’s Table,—or processions, and incense, and flags, and banners, and turning to the east, and bowing down to the bread and wine,—or prayer to the Virgin Mary and the angels,—are sanctioned. Mark these things well, and you will find it very hard to be a Ritualist! You may find your authority for Ritualism in garbled quotations from the Fathers,—in long extracts from monkish, mystical, or Popish writers; but you certainly will not find it in the Bible. Between the plain Bible, honestly and fairly interpreted, and extreme Ritualism, there is a gulf which cannot be passed.

If we would not be carried about by “divers and strange doctrines,” we must remember the words of our Lord Jesus Christ: “Search the Scriptures.” Ignorance of the Bible is the root of all error. Knowledge of the

Bible is the best antidote against modern heresies.

II. I now proceed to examine St. Paul's *valuable prescription*: "It is good that the heart be established with grace; not with meats."

There are two words in this prescription which require a little explanation. A right understanding of them is absolutely essential to a proper use of the Apostle's advice. One of these words is "meats," and the other is "grace."

To see the full force of the word "meats," we must remember the immense importance attached by many Jewish Christians to the distinctions of the ceremonial law about food. The flesh of some animals and birds, according to Leviticus, might be eaten, and that of others might not be eaten. Some meats were, consequently, called "clean," and others were called "unclean." To eat certain kinds of flesh made a Jew ceremonially unholy before God, and no strict Jew would touch and eat such food on any account.—Now were these distinctions still to be kept up after Christ ascended into heaven, or were they done away by the Gospel? Were heathen converts under any obligation to attend to the ceremonial of the Levitical law about food? Were Jewish Christians obliged to be as strict about the meats they ate as they were before Christ died, and the veil of the temple was rent in twain? Was the ceremonial law about meats entirely done away, or was it not? Was the conscience of a believer in the Lord Jesus to be troubled with fear lest his food should defile him?

Questions like these appear to have formed one of the great subjects of controversy in the Apostolic times. As is often the case, they assumed a place entirely out of proportion to their real importance. The Apostle Paul found it needful to handle the subject in no less than three of his Epistles to the Churches—"Meat," he says, "commends us not to God."—"The kingdom of God is not meat and drink."—"Let no man judge you in meat and drink." (1 Cor. viii. 8; Rom. xiv. 17; Col ii. 16.) Nothing shows the fallen nature of man so clearly as the readiness of morbid and scrupulous consciences to turn trifles into serious things. At last the controversy seems to have spread so far and obtained such dimensions, that "meats" became an expression to denote anything ceremonial added to the Gospel as a thing of primary importance, any Ritual trifle thrust out of its lawful place and magnified into an essential of religion. In this sense, I believe, the word must be taken in the text now before us. By "meats" St. Paul means ceremonial observances, either wholly invented by man, or else built on Mosaic precepts which have been abrogated and superseded by the Gospel. It is an expression which was well understood in the Apostolic days.

The word “grace,” on the other hand, seems to be employed as a comprehensive description of the whole Gospel of Jesus Christ. Of that glorious Gospel, grace is the main feature,—grace in the original scheme—grace in the execution—grace in the application to man’s soul. Grace is the fountain of life from which our salvation flows. Grace is the agency through which our spiritual life is kept up. Are we justified? it is by grace.—Are we called? it is by grace.—Have we forgiveness? it is through the riches of grace.—Have we good hope? it is through grace.—Do we believe? it is through grace.—Are we elect? it is by the election of grace.—Are we saved? it is by grace.—Why should I say more? The time would fail me to exhibit fully the part that grace does in the whole work of redemption. No wonder that St. Paul says to the Romans, “We are not under the law, but under grace;” and tells Titus, “The grace of God, which bringeth salvation, hath appeared unto all men.” (Rom. iii. 24; Gal. i. 15; Ephes. i. 7; 2 Thess. ii. 16; Acts xviii. 27; Rom. i. 5; Ephes. ii. 5; Rom. vi. 15; Titus ii. 11.)

Such are the two great principles which St. Paul puts in strong contrast in the prescription we are now considering. He places opposite to one another “meats” and “grace,”—Ceremonialism and the Gospel—Ritualism and the free love of God in Christ Jesus. And then he lays down the great principle that it is by “grace,” and “not meats,” that the heart must be established.

Now “establishment of heart” is one of the great wants of many professing Christians. Specially is it longed after by those whose knowledge is imperfect, and whose conscience is half enlightened. Such persons often feel in themselves much indwelling sin, and at the same time see very indistinctly God’s remedy and Christ’s fulness. Their faith is feeble, their hope dim, and their consolations small. They want to realize more sensible comfort. They fancy they ought to feel more and see more. They are not at ease. They cannot attain to joy and peace in believing. Whither shall they turn? What shall set their consciences at rest? Then comes the enemy of souls, and suggests some short-cut road to establishment. He hints at the value of some addition to the simple plan of the Gospel, some man-made device, some exaggeration of a truth, some flesh-satisfying invention, some improvement on the old path, and whispers, “Only use this, and you shall be established.” Plausible offers flow in at the same time from every quarter, like quack medicines. Each has its own patrons and advocates. On every side the poor unstable soul hears invitations to move in some particular direction, and then shall come perfect establishment.

“Come to us,” says the Roman Catholic. “Join the Catholic Church, the Church on the Rock, the one, true, holy Church; the Church that cannot err. Come to her bosom, and repose your soul on her protection. Come to

us, and you will find establishment.”

“Come to us,” says the extreme Ritualist. “You need higher and fuller views of the priesthood and the sacraments, of the Real Presence in the Lord’s Supper, of the soothing influence of daily service, daily masses, auricular confession, and priestly absolution. Come and take up sound Church views, and you will find establishment.”

“Come to us,” says the violent Liberationist. “Cast off the trammels and fetters of established Churches. Come out from all alliance with the State. Enjoy religious liberty. Throw away forms and Prayer-books. Use our shibboleth. Join our party. Cast in your lot with us, and you will soon be established.”

“Come to us,” say the Plymouth Brethren. “Shake off all the bondage of creeds and Churches and systems. We will soon show you higher, deeper, more exalting, more enlightened views of truth. Join the Brethren, and you will soon be established.”

“Come to us,” says the Rationalist. “Lay aside the old worn-out clothes of effete schemes of Christianity. Give your reason free scope and play. Begin a freer mode of handling Scripture. Be no more a slave to an ancient old-world book. Break your chains, and you shall be established.”

Every experienced Christian knows well that such appeals are constantly made to unsettled minds in the present day. Who has not seen that, when boldly and confidently made, they produce a painful effect on some people? Who has not observed that they often beguile unstable souls, and lead them into misery for years?

“What saith the Scripture?” This is the only sure guide. Hear what St. Paul says. Heart establishment is not to be obtained by joining this party or that. It comes “by grace, and not by meats.” Other things have a “show of wisdom,” perhaps, and give a temporary satisfaction “to the flesh.” (Col. ii. 23.) But they have no healing power about them in reality, and leave the unhappy man who trusts them nothing bettered, but rather worse.

A clearer knowledge of the Divine scheme of grace, its eternal purposes, its application to man by Christ’s redeeming work,—a firmer grasp of the doctrine of grace, of God’s free love in Christ, of Christ’s full and complete satisfaction for sin, of justification by simple faith,—a more intimate acquaintance with Christ the Giver and Fountain of grace, His offices, His sympathy, His power,—a more thorough experience of the inward work of grace in the heart,—this, this, this is the grand secret of heart-establishment. This is the old path of peace. This is the true panacea for restless consciences. It may seem at first too simple, too easy, too cheap, too commonplace, too plain. But all the wisdom of man will never show the heavy-laden a better road to heart-rest. Secret pride and self-righteousness, I fear, are too often the reason why this good old road is not used.

I believe there never was a time when it was more needful to uphold the old Apostolic prescription than it is in the present day. Never were there so many unestablished and unsettled Christians wandering about, and tossed to and fro, from want of knowledge. Never was it so important for faithful ministers to set the trumpet to their mouths and proclaim everywhere, “Grace, grace, grace, not meats, establishes the heart.”

From the days of the Apostles there have never been wanting quack spiritual doctors, who have professed to heal the wounds of conscience with man-made remedies. In our own beloved Church there have always been some who have in heart turned back to Egypt, and, not content with the simplicity of our worship, have hankered after the ceremonial fleshpots of the Church of Rome. Laud, of unhappy memory, did a little in this way; but his doings were nothing compared to those of some clergymen in the present day. To hear the sacraments incessantly exalted, and preaching cried down,—to see the Lord’s Supper turned into an idol under the specious pretext of making it more honourable,—to find plain Prayer-book worship overlaid with so many newfangled ornaments and ceremonies that its essentials are quite buried,—how common is all this! These things were once a pestilence that walked in darkness. They are now a destruction that wastes in noonday. They are the joy of our enemies, the sorrow of the Church’s best children, the damage of English Christianity, the plague of our times. And to what may they all be traced? To neglect or forgetfulness of St. Paul’s simple prescription: “Grace, and not meats, establishes the heart.”

Let us take heed that in our own personal religion, grace is all. Let us have clear systematic views of the Gospel of the grace of God. Nothing else will do good in the hour of sickness, in the day of trial, on the bed of death, and in the swellings of Jordan. Christ dwelling in our hearts by faith, Christ’s free grace the only foundation under the soles of our feet,—this alone will give peace. Once let in self, and forms, and man’s inventions, as a necessary part of our religion, and we are on a quicksand. We may be amused, excited, or kept quiet for a time, like children with toys, by a religion of “meats.” Such a religion has “a show of wisdom.” But unless our religion be one in which “grace” is all, we shall never feel established.

III. In the last place, I proceed to examine *the instructive fact* which St. Paul records. He says, “Meats have not profited them that have been occupied therein.”

We have no means of knowing whether the Apostle, in using this language, referred to any particular Churches or individuals. Of course it is

possible that he had in view the Judaizing Christians of Antioch and Galatia,—or the Ephesians of whom he speaks to Timothy in his pastoral Epistle,—or the Colossians who caused him so much inward conflict,—or the Hebrew believers in every Church, without exception. It seems to me far more probable, however, that he had no particular Church or Churches in view. I rather think that he makes a broad, general, sweeping statement about all who in any place had exalted ceremonial at the expense of the doctrines of “grace.” And he makes a wide declaration about them all. They have got no good from their favourite notions. They have not been more inwardly happy, more outwardly holy, or more generally useful. Their religion has been most unprofitable to them. Man-made alterations of God’s precious medicine for sinners,—man-made additions to Christ’s glorious Gospel,— however speciously defended and plausibly supported, do no real good to those that adopt them. They confer no increased inward comfort; they bring no growth of real holiness; they give no enlarged usefulness to the Church and the world. Calmly, quietly, and mildly, but firmly, decidedly, and unflinchingly, the assertion is made, “Meats have *not profited* them that have been occupied therein.”

The whole stream of Church history abundantly confirms the truth of the Apostle’s position. Who has not heard of the hermits and ascetics of the early centuries? Who has not heard of the monks and nuns and recluses of the Romish Church in the middle ages? Who has not heard of the burning zeal, the devoted self-denial, of Romanists like Xavier and Ignatius Loyola? The earnestness, the fervour, the self-sacrifice of all these classes, are matters beyond dispute. But none who read carefully and intelligently the records of their lives, yea, some of the best of them, can fail to see that they had no solid peace or inward rest of soul. Their very feverish restlessness is enough to show that their consciences were not at ease. None can fail to see that, with all their furious zeal and self-denial, they never did much good to the world. They gathered round themselves admiring partisans. They left a high reputation for self-denial and sincerity. They made men wonder at them while they lived, and sometimes canonize them when they died. But they did nothing to *convert souls*. And what is the reason of this? They attached an overweening importance to man-made ritual and ceremonial, and made less than they ought to have done of the Gospel of the grace of God. Their principle was to make much of “meats,” and little of “grace.” Hence they verified the words of St. Paul, “Meats do not profit them that are occupied therein.”

The very history of our own times bears a striking testimony to the truth of St. Paul’s assertion. In the last twenty-five years some scores of clergymen have seceded from the Church of England, and joined the Church of Rome. They wanted more of what they called Catholic doctrine and

Catholic ceremonial. They honestly acted up to their principles, and went over to Rome. They were not all weak, and illiterate, and second-rate, and inferior men; several of them were men of commanding talents, whose gifts would have won for them a high position in any profession. Yet what have they gained by the step they have taken? What profit have they found in leaving “grace” for “meats,” in exchanging Protestantism for Catholicism? Have they attained a higher standard of holiness? Have they procured for themselves a greater degree of usefulness?—Let one of themselves supply an answer. Mr. Ffoulkes, a leading man in the party, within the last few years has openly declared that the preaching of some of his fellow “perverts” is not so powerful as it was when they were English Churchmen, and that the highest degree of holy living he has ever seen is not within the pale of Rome, but in the quiet parsonages and unpretending family-life of godly English clergymen? Intentionally or not intentionally, wittingly or unwittingly, meaning it or not meaning it, nothing can be more striking than the testimony Mr. Ffoulkes bears to the truth of the Apostle’s assertion: “Meats do not profit” even those who make much ado about them. The religious system which exalts ceremonial and man-made ritual does no real good to its adherents, compared to the simple old Gospel of the grace of God.

Let us turn now, for a few moments, to the other side of the picture, and see what “grace” has done. Let us hear how profitable the doctrines of the Gospel have proved to those who have clung firmly to them, and have not tried to mend and improve and patch them up by adding, as essentials, the “meats” of man-made ceremonial.

It was “grace, and not meats,” that made Martin Luther do the work that he did in the world. The key to all his success was his constant declaration of justification by faith, without the deeds of the law. This was the truth which enabled him to break the chains of Rome, and let light into Europe.

It was “grace, and not meats,” that made our English martyrs, Latimer and Hooper, exercise so mighty an influence in life, and shine so brightly in death. They saw clearly, and taught plainly, the true priesthood of Christ, and salvation only by grace. They honoured God’s grace, and God put honour on them.

It was “grace, and not meats,” that made Romaine and Venn, and their companions, turn the world upside down in England, one hundred years ago. In themselves they were not men of extraordinary learning or intellectual power. But they revived and brought out again the real pure doctrines of grace.

It was “grace, and not meats,” that made Simeon and Bishop Daniel Wilson and Bickersteth such striking instruments of usefulness in the first half of the present century. God’s free grace was the great truth on which

they relied, and continually brought forward. For so doing God put honour on them. They made much of God's grace, and the God of grace made much of them.

The list of ministerial biographies tells a striking tale. Who are those who have shaken the world, and left their mark on their generation, and aroused consciences, and converted sinners, and edified saints? Not those who have made asceticism, and ceremonials, and sacraments, and services, and ordinances the main thing; but those who have made most of God's free grace! In a day of strife, and controversy, and doubt, and perplexity, men forget this. Facts are stubborn things. Let us look calmly at them, and be not moved by those who tell us that daily services, frequent communions, processions, incense, bowings, crossings, confessions, absolutions, and the like, are the secret of a prosperous Christianity. Let us look at plain facts. Facts in old history, and facts in modern days, facts in every part of England, support the assertion of St. Paul. The religion of "meats" does "not profit those that are occupied therein." It is the religion of grace that brings inward peace, outward holiness, and general usefulness.

Let me wind up this paper with a few words of practical application. We are living in an age of peculiar religious danger. I am quite sure that the advice I am going to offer deserves serious attention.

(1) In the first place, *let us not be surprised* at the rise and progress of false doctrine. It is a thing as old as the old Apostles. It began before they died. They predicted that there would be plenty of it before the end of the world. It is wisely ordered of God for the testing of our grace, and to prove who has real faith. If there were no such thing as false doctrine or heresy upon earth, I should begin to think the Bible was not true.

(2) In the next place, let us make up our minds *to resist false doctrine*, and not to be carried away by fashion and bad example. Let us not flinch because all around us, high and low, rich and poor, are swept away, like geese in a flood, before a torrent of semi-Popery. Let us be firm and stand our ground.

Let us resist false doctrine, and contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints. Let us not be ashamed of showing our colours and standing out for New Testament truth. Let us not be stopped by the cuckoo cry of "controversy." The thief likes dogs that do not bark, and watchmen that give no alarm. The devil is a thief and a robber. If we hold our peace, and do not resist false doctrine, we please him and displease God.

(3) In the next place, let us try *to preserve* the Old Protestant principles of the Church of England, and to hand them down uninjured to our children's children. Let us not listen to those faint-hearted Churchmen who

would have us forsake the ship, and desert the Church of England in her time of need.

The Church of England is worth fighting for. She has done good service in days gone by, and she may yet do more, if we can keep her free from Popery and infidelity. Once re-admit and sanction the Popish mass and auricular confession, and the Church of England will be ruined. Then let us fight hard for the Church of England being kept a Protestant Church. Let us read our Thirty-nine Articles every year with attention, and learn from these Articles what are real Church principles. Let us arm our memories with these Articles, and be able to quote them. Before the edge and point of these Articles, fairly interpreted, ultra-Ritualists and ultra-Rationalists can never stand.

(4) In the last place, *let us make sure work of our own personal salvation*. Let us seek to know and feel that we ourselves are “saved.”

The day of controversy is always a day of spiritual peril. Men are apt to confound orthodoxy with conversion, and to fancy that they must go to heaven if they know how to answer Papists. Yet mere earnestness without knowledge, and mere head-knowledge of Protestantism, alike save none. Let us never forget this.

Let us not rest till we feel the blood of Christ sprinkled on our consciences, and have the witness of the Spirit within us that we are born again. This is reality. This is true religion. This will last. This will never fail us. It is the possession of grace in the heart, and not the intellectual knowledge of it, that profits and saves the soul.