

HOLINESS.

ITS NATURE, HINDRANCES, DIFFICULTIES, AND ROOTS.

BEING

A SERIES OF PAPERS ON THE SUBJECT.

BY

JOHN CHARLES RYLE, D.D.,

LORD BISHOP OF LIVERPOOL;

Author of "Expository Thoughts on the Gospels," etc.

WITH PREFACE, INTRODUCTORY ESSAY, AND SUPPLEMENTARY EXTRACTS
FROM OLD WRITERS.

Third Enlarged Edition.

LONDON:
WILLIAM HUNT AND COMPANY,
12 PATERNOSTER ROW.

1887.

PREFACE TO ENLARGED EDITION.

THE volume now in the reader's hands is an enlarged edition of a small work which appeared several years ago, and has been kindly received by the Christian public. The present volume contains so much additional matter, that it is double the size of its predecessor. In fact, the work is half new.

I venture to think that the papers contained in this volume will be found helpful by all who take interest in the subject of Scriptural holiness. I am much mistaken if they do not throw broad light on the real nature of holiness, and the temptations and difficulties which all must expect who follow it. Above all, I hope they will help to bring forward the grand truth that union with Christ is the root of holiness, and will show young believers what immense encouragement Jesus Christ holds out to all who strive to be holy.

Concerning the present position of the whole subject of holiness among English Christians, I have little to add to the introductory essay which appeared in the original edition, and now follows this preface. The older I grow the more I am convinced that real practical holiness does not receive the attention it deserves, and that there is a most painfully low standard of living among many high professors of religion in the land. But, at the same time, I am increasingly convinced that the zealous efforts of some well-meaning persons to promote a higher standard of spiritual life are often not "according to knowledge," and are really calculated to do more harm than good. Let me explain what I mean.

It is easy to get crowds together for what are called "Higher life" and "Consecration" meetings. Any one knows that, who has watched human nature, and read descriptions of American camp-meetings, and studied the curious phenomena of the "Religious affections."* Sensational and exciting addresses by strange preachers or by women, loud singing, hot rooms, crowded tents, the constant sight of strong semi-religious feeling in the faces of all around you for several days, late hours, long protracted meetings, public profession of experience,—all this kind of thing is very interesting at the time, and seems to do good. But is the good real, deeply-rooted, solid, lasting? That is the point And I should like to ask a few questions about it

Do those who attend these meetings become more holy, meek, unselfish, kind, good tempered, self-denying, and Christ-like at home? Do they become more content with their position in life, and more free from restless craving after something different from that which God has given them? Do fathers, mothers, husbands, and other relatives and friends, find them more pleasant and easy to live with? Can they enjoy a quiet Sunday and quiet means of grace without noise, heat, and excitement? Above all, do they grow in charity, and especially in charity towards those who do not agree with them in every jot and tittle of their religion?

These are serious and searching questions, and deserve serious consideration. I hope I am as anxious to promote real practical holiness in the land as any one. I admire and willingly acknowledge the zeal and earnestness of many with whom I cannot co-operate who are trying to promote it. But I cannot withhold a growing

* See the work of President Edwards on this subject.

suspicion that the great “mass-meetings” of the present day, for the ostensible object of promoting spiritual life, do not tend to promote private home religion, private Bible-reading, private prayer, private usefulness, and private walking with God. If they are of any real value, they ought to make people better husbands, and wives, and fathers, and mothers, and sons, and daughters, and brothers, and sisters, and masters, and mistresses, and servants. But I should like to have clear proofs that they do. I only know it is far easier to be a Christian among singing, praying, sympathizing Christians in a public room, than to be a consistent Christian in a quiet, retired, out-of-the-way, uncongenial home. The first position is one in which there is a deal of *nature* to help us: the second is one which can not be well filled without *grace*. But, alas, many talk now-a-days about “*Consecration*,” who seem to be ignorant of the “first principles of the oracles of God” about “*Conversion*.”

I close this preface with the sorrowful feeling that probably some who read it will not agree with me. To the young especially I can see that the great gatherings of the so-called “spiritual life” movement are sure to be attractive. They naturally like zeal, and stir, and enthusiasm, and they say, “Where is the harm?” Be it so: we must agree to differ. When I was as young as they are, perhaps I should have thought as they do. When they are as old as I am, they will very likely agree with me.

To each and all of my readers, I say in conclusion, let us exercise charity in our judgments of one another. Towards those who think holiness is to be promoted by the modern, so-called “spiritual life” movement, I feel nothing but charity. If they do good, I am thankful. Towards myself and those who agree with me, I ask them to feel charity in return. The last day will show who is right and who is wrong. In the meantime, I am quite certain that to exhibit bitterness and coldness toward those who cannot conscientiously work with us, is to prove ourselves very ignorant of real holiness.

J. C. RYLE.

XIX.

WANTS OF THE TIMES*

“Men that had understanding of the times.”—1 CHRONICLES xii. 32.

THESE words were written about the tribe of Issachar, in the days when David first began to reign over Israel. It seems that after Saul’s unhappy death, some of the tribes of Israel were undecided what to do. “Under which king?” was the question of the day in Palestine. Men doubted whether they should cling to the family of Saul, or accept David as their king. Some hung back, and would not commit themselves; others came forward boldly, and declared for David. Among these last were many of the children of Issachar; and the Holy Ghost gives them a special word of praise. He says, “They were men that had understanding of the times.”

I cannot doubt that this sentence, like every sentence in Scripture, was written for our learning. These men of Issachar are set before us as a pattern to be imitated, and an example to be followed; for it is a most important thing to understand the *times* in which we live, and to know what those times require. The wise men in the court of Ahasuerus “knew the times.” (Esther i. 13.) Our Lord Jesus Christ blames the Jews, because they “knew not the time of their visitation,” and did not “discern the signs of the times.” (Matt. xvi. 3; Luke xix. 44.) Let us take heed lest we fall into the same sin. The man who is content to sit ignorantly by his own fireside, wrapped up in his own private affairs, and has no public eye for what is going on in the Church and the world, is a miserable patriot, and a poor style of Christian. Next to our Bibles and our own hearts, our Lord would have us study our own times.

Now I propose in this paper to consider what *our own times* require at our hands. All ages have their own peculiar dangers for professing Christians, and all consequently demand special attention to peculiar duties. I ask my readers to give me their minds for a few minutes, while I try to show them what the times require of English Christians, and particularly of English Churchmen. There are five points which I propose to bring before you, and I shall speak of them plainly and without reserve. “If the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle?” (1 Cor. xiv. 8.)

* This paper contains the substance of a sermon preached at St. Margaret’s Church, Ipswich, on June 11th, 1879, on the occasion of an aggregate meeting of Evangelical Clergymen residing in the Eastern Counties. It is now printed almost entirely as it was preached, with the addition of a few paragraphs on personal holiness, which want of time obliged me to omit.

I. First and foremost, the times require of us *a bold and unflinching maintenance of the entire truth of Christianity, and the Divine authority of the Bible.*

Our lot is cast in an age of abounding unbelief, scepticism, and, I fear I must add, infidelity. Never, perhaps, since the days of Celsus, Porphyry, and Julian, was the truth of revealed religion so openly and unblushingly assailed, and never was the assault so speciously and plausibly conducted. The words which Bishop Butler wrote in 1736 are curiously applicable to our own days:—"It is come to be taken for granted by many persons, that Christianity is not even a subject of inquiry; but that it is now at length discovered to be fictitious. And accordingly they treat it as if, in the present age, THIS was an agreed point among all people of discernment, and nothing remained but to set it up as a principal subject of mirth and ridicule, as it were by way of reprisals for its having so long interrupted the pleasures of the world." ("Butler's Analogy," Introduction.) I often wonder what the good Bishop would have now said, if he had lived in 1879.

In reviews, magazines, newspapers, lectures, essays, and sometimes even in sermons, scores of clever writers are incessantly waging war against the very foundations of Christianity. Reason, science, geology, anthropology, modern discoveries, free thought, are all boldly asserted to be on their side. No educated person, we are constantly told now-a-days, can really believe supernatural religion, or the plenary inspiration of the Bible, or the possibility of miracles. Such ancient doctrines as the Trinity, the deity of Christ, the personality of the Holy Spirit, the atonement, the obligation of the Sabbath, the necessity and efficacy of prayer, the existence of the devil, and the reality of future punishment, are quietly put on the shelf as useless old Almanacs, or contemptuously thrown overboard as lumber! And all this is done so cleverly, and with such an appearance of candour and liberality, and with such compliments to the capacity and nobility of human nature, that multitudes of unstable Christians are carried away as by a flood, and become partially unsettled, if they do not make complete shipwreck of faith.

The existence of this plague of unbelief must not *surprise* us for a moment. It is only an old enemy in a new dress, an old disease in a new form. Since the day when Adam and Eve fell, the devil has never ceased to tempt men not to believe God, and has said, directly or indirectly, "Ye shall not die even if you do not believe." In the latter days especially we have warrant of Scripture for expecting an abundant crop of unbelief:—"When the Son of man cometh, shall He find faith on the earth?"—"Evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse."—"There shall come in the last days scoffers." (Luke xviii. 8; 2 Tim. iii. 13; 2 Peter iii. 3.) Here in England scepticism is that natural rebound from semi-popery and superstition, which many wise men have

long predicted and expected. It is precisely that swing of the pendulum which far-sighted students of human nature looked for; and it has come.

But as I tell you not to be surprised at the wide-spread scepticism of the times, so also I must urge you not to be *shaken in mind by it*, or moved from your steadfastness. There is no real cause for alarm. The ark of God is not in danger, though the oxen seem to shake it. Christianity has survived the attacks of Hume and Hobbes and Tindal,—of Collins and Woolston and Bolingbroke and Chubb,— of Voltaire and Payne and Holyoake. These men made a great noise in their day, and frightened weak people; but they produced no more effect than idle travellers' produce by scratching their names on the great pyramid of Egypt. Depend on it, Christianity in like manner will survive the attacks of the clever writers of these times. The startling novelty of many modern objections to Revelation, no doubt, makes them seem more weighty than they really are. It does not follow, however, that hard knots cannot be untied because our fingers cannot untie them, or formidable difficulties cannot be explained because our eyes cannot see through or explain them. When you cannot answer a sceptic, be content to wait for more light; but never forsake a great principle. In religion, as in many scientific questions, said Faraday, "the highest philosophy is often a judicious suspense of judgment." He that believeth shall not make haste: he can afford to wait.

When sceptics and infidels have said all they can, we must not forget that there are three great broad facts which they have never explained away; and I am convinced they never can, and never will. Let me tell you briefly what they are. They are very simple facts, and any plain man can understand them.

(a) The first fact is *Jesus Christ Himself*. If Christianity is a mere invention of man, and the Bible is not from God, how can infidels explain Jesus Christ? His existence in history they cannot deny. How is it that without force or bribery, without arms or money, He has made such an immensely deep mark on the world, as He certainly has? Who was He? What was He? Where did He come from? How is it that there never has been one like Him, neither before nor after, since the beginning of historical times? They cannot explain it. Nothing can explain it but the great foundation principle of revealed religion, that Jesus Christ is God, and His Gospel is all true.

(b) The second fact is *the Bible itself*. If Christianity is a mere invention of man, and the Bible is of no more authority than any other uninspired volume, how is it that the Book is what it is? How is it that a Book written by a few Jews in a remote corner of the earth,—written at distant periods without consort or collusion among the writers,—written by members of a nation which, compared to Greeks and Romans, did nothing for literature,—how is it that this Book stands entirely alone, and there is nothing that even approaches it, for high views of God, for true views of man, for solemnity of thought, for grandeur of doctrine, and for purity of morality? What account

can the infidel give of this Book, so deep, so simple, so wise, so free from defects? He cannot explain its existence and nature on his principles. We only can do that who hold that the Book is Supernatural and of God.

(c) The third fact is *the effect which Christianity has produced on the world*. If Christianity is a mere invention of man, and not a supernatural, Divine revelation, how is it that it has wrought such a complete alteration in the state of mankind? Any well-read man knows that the moral difference between the condition of the world, before Christianity was planted, and since Christianity took root is the difference between night and day, the kingdom of heaven and the kingdom of the devil. At this very moment I defy anyone to look at the map of the world, and compare the countries where men are Christians with those where men are not Christians, and to deny that these countries are as different as light and darkness, black and white. How can any infidel explain this on his principles? He cannot do it. We only can who believe that Christianity came down from God, and is the only Divine religion, in the world.

Whenever you are tempted to be alarmed at the progress of infidelity, look at the three facts I have just mentioned, and cast your fears away. Take up your position boldly behind the ramparts of these three facts, and you may safely defy the utmost efforts of modern sceptics. They may often ask you a hundred questions you cannot answer, and start ingenious problems about various readings, or inspiration, or geology, or the origin of man, or the age of the world, which you cannot solve. They may vex and irritate you with wild speculations and theories, of which at the time you cannot prove the fallacy, though you feel it. But be calm and fear not. Remember the three great facts I have named, and boldly challenge sceptics to explain them away. The difficulties of Christianity no doubt are great; but, depend on it, they are nothing compared to the DIFFICULTIES OF INFIDELITY.

II. In the second place, the times require at our hands *distinct and decided views of Christian doctrine*.

I cannot withhold my conviction that the professing Church of the nineteenth century is as much damaged by laxity and indistinctness about matters of doctrine *within*, as it is by sceptics and unbelievers *without*. Myriads of professing Christians now-a-days seem utterly unable to distinguish things that differ. Like people afflicted with colour-blindness, they are incapable of discerning what is true and what is false, what is sound and what is unsound. If a preacher of religion is only clever and eloquent and earnest, they appear to think he is all right, however strange and heterogeneous his sermons may be. They are destitute of spiritual sense, apparently, and cannot detect error. Popery or Protestantism, an atonement or no atonement, a personal Holy Ghost or no Holy Ghost, future punishment or no future punishment, High

Church or Low Church or Broad Church, Trinitarianism, Arianism, or Unitarianism, nothing comes amiss to them: they can swallow all, if they cannot digest it! Carried away by a fancied liberality and charity, they seem to think everybody is right and nobody is wrong, every clergyman is sound and none are unsound, everybody is going to be saved and nobody going to be lost. Their religion is made up of negatives; and the only positive thing about them is, that they dislike *distinctness*, and think all extreme and decided and positive views are very naughty and very wrong!

These people live in a kind of mist or fog. They see nothing clearly, and do not know what they believe. They have not made up their minds about any great point in the Gospel, and seem content to be *honorary members of all schools of thought*. For their lives they could not tell you what they think is truth about justification, or regeneration, or sanctification, or the Lord's Supper, or baptism, or faith, or conversion, or inspiration, or the future state. They are eaten up with a morbid dread of CONTROVERSY and an ignorant dislike of PARTY SPIRIT; and yet they really cannot define what they mean by these phrases. The only point you can make out is that they admire earnestness and cleverness and charity, and cannot believe that any clever, earnest, charitable man can ever be in the wrong! And so they live on undecided; and too often undecided they drift down to the grave; without comfort in their religion, and, I am afraid, often without hope.

The explanation of this boneless, nerveless, jelly-fish condition of soul is not difficult to find. To begin with, the heart of man is naturally in the dark about religion,—has no intuitive sense of truth,—and really NEEDS instruction and illumination. Besides this, the natural heart in most men hates exertion in religion, and cordially dislikes patient painstaking inquiry. Above all, the natural heart generally likes the praise of others, shrinks from collision, and loves to be thought charitable and liberal. The whole result is that a kind of broad religious “agnosticism” just suits an immense number of people, and specially suits young persons. They are content to shovel aside all disputed points as rubbish, and if you charge them with indecision, they will tell you,—“I do not pretend to understand controversy; I decline to examine controverted points. I daresay it is all the same in the long run.”— Who does not know that such people swarm and abound everywhere?

Now I do beseech all who read this paper to beware of this undecided state of mind in religion. It is a pestilence which walketh in darkness, and a destruction that killeth in noon-day. It is a lazy, idle frame of soul, which, doubtless, saves men the trouble of thought and investigation; but it is a frame of soul for which there is no warrant in the Bible, nor yet in the Articles or Prayer-book of the Church of England. For your own soul's sake dare to make up your mind what you believe, and dare to have positive distinct views of truth and error. Never, never be afraid to hold decided doctrinal opinions;

and let no fear of man and no morbid dread of being thought party-spirited, narrow, or controversial, make you rest contented with a bloodless, boneless, tasteless, colourless, lukewarm, undogmatic Christianity.

Mark what I say. If you want to *do good* in these times, you must throw aside indecision, and take up a distinct, sharply-cut, doctrinal religion. If you believe little, those to whom you try to do good will believe nothing. The victories of Christianity, wherever they have been won, have been won by distinct doctrinal theology; by telling men roundly of Christ's vicarious death and sacrifice; by showing them Christ's substitution on the cross, and His precious blood; by teaching them justification by faith, and bidding them believe on a crucified Saviour; by preaching ruin by sin, redemption by Christ, regeneration by the Spirit; by lifting up the brazen serpent; by telling men to look and live,—to believe, repent, and be converted. This,—this is the only teaching which for eighteen centuries God has honoured with success, and is honouring at the present day both at home and abroad. Let the clever advocates of a broad and undogmatic theology,—the preachers of the Gospel of earnestness, and sincerity and cold morality,—let them, I say, show us at this day any English village or parish, or city, or town, or district, which has been evangelized without “dogma,” by their principles. They cannot do it, and they never will. Christianity without distinct doctrine is a powerless thing. It may be beautiful to some minds, but it is childless and barren. There is no getting over facts. The good that is done in the earth may be comparatively small. Evil may abound, and ignorant impatience may murmur, and cry out that Christianity has failed. But, depend on it, if we want to “do good” and shake the world, we must fight with the old apostolic weapons, and stick to “dogma.” No dogma, no fruits! No positive Evangelical doctrine, no evangelization!

Mark once more what I say. *The men who have done most for the Church of England*, and made the deepest mark on their day and generation have always been men of most decided and distinct doctrinal views. It is the bold, decided outspoken man, like Capel Molyneux, or our grand old Protestant champion Hugh McNeile, who makes a deep impression, and sets people thinking, and “turns the world upside down.” It was “dogma” in the apostolic ages which emptied the heathen temples, and shook Greece and Rome. It was “dogma” which awoke Christendom from its slumbers at the time of the Reformation, and spoiled the Pope of one third of his subjects. It was “dogma” which 100 years ago revived the Church of England in the days of Whitfield, Wesley, Venn, and Romaine, and blew up our dying Christianity into a burning flame. It is “dogma” at this moment which gives power to every successful mission, whether at home or abroad. It is doctrine,—doctrine, clear ringing doctrine,—which, like the ram's horns at Jericho, casts down the opposition of the devil and sin. Let us cling to decided doctrinal

views, whatever some may please to say in these times, and we shall do well for ourselves, well for others, well for the Church of England, and well for Christ's cause in the world.

III. In the third place, the times require of us an *awakened and livelier sense of the unscriptural and soul-ruining character of Romanism*.

This is a painful subject; but it imperatively demands some plain speaking.

The FACTS of the case are very simple. No intelligent observer can fail to see that the tone of public feeling in England about Romanism has undergone a great change in the last forty years. Father Oakley, the well-known pervert*, an ally of Cardinal Newman, asserts this triumphantly in a recent number of the *Contemporary Review*. And I am sorry to say that, in my judgment, he speaks the truth. There is no longer that general dislike, dread, and aversion to Popery, which was once almost universal in this realm. The edge of the old British feeling about Protestantism seems blunted and dull. Some profess to be tired of all religious controversy, and are ready to sacrifice God's truth for the sake of peace.—Some look on Romanism as simply one among many English forms of religion, and neither worse nor better than others.—Some try to persuade us that Romanism is changed, and not nearly so bad as it used to be.—Some boldly point to the faults of Protestants, and loudly cry that Romanists are quite as good as ourselves.—Some think it fine and liberal to maintain that we have no right to think any one wrong who is in earnest about his creed.—And yet the two great historical facts, (*a*) that ignorance, immorality, and superstition, reigned supreme in England 400 years ago under Popery, (*b*) that the Reformation was the greatest blessing God ever gave to this land,—both these are facts which no one but a Papist ever thought of disputing fifty years ago! In the present day, alas, it is convenient and fashionable to forget them! In short, at the rate we are going, I shall not be surprised if it is soon proposed to repeal the Act of Settlement, and to allow the Crown of England to be worn by a Papist.

The *causes* of this melancholy change of feeling are not hard to discover.

(*a*) It arises partly from the untiring zeal of the Romish Church herself. Her agents never slumber or sleep. They compass sea and land to make one proselyte. They creep in everywhere, like the Egyptian frogs, and leave no stone unturned, in the palace or the workhouse, to promote their cause, (*b*) It has been furthered immensely by the proceedings of the Ritualistic party in the Church of England. That energetic and active body has been vilifying the Reformation and sneering at Protestantism for many years, with only too much success. It has corrupted, leavened, blinded, and poisoned the minds

* [A Protestant minister who promotes the Roman Catholic Church. (ET Editor.)]

of many Churchmen, by incessant misrepresentation. It has gradually familiarized people with every distinctive doctrine and practice of Romanism,—the real presence,—the mass,—auricular confession and priestly absolution,—the sacerdotal character of the ministry,—the monastic system,—and a histrionic, sensuous, showy style of public worship;—and the natural result is, that many simple people see no mighty harm in downright genuine Popery! Last, but not least, the spurious liberality of the day we live in helps on the Romeward tendency. It is fashionable now to say that all sects should be equal,—that the State should have nothing to do with religion,—that all creeds should be regarded with equal favour and respect,—and that there is a substratum of common truth at the bottom of all kinds of religion, whether Buddhism, Mahometanism, or Christianity! The consequence is that myriads of ignorant folks begin to think there is nothing peculiarly dangerous in the tenets of Papists any more than in the tenets of Methodists, Independents, Presbyterians, or Baptists,—and that we ought to let Romanism alone, and never expose its unscriptural and Christ-dishonouring character.

The *consequences* of this changed tone of feeling, I am bold to say, will be most disastrous and mischievous, unless it can be checked. Once let Popery get her foot again on the neck of England, and there will be an end of all our national greatness. God will forsake us, and we shall sink to the level of Portugal and Spain. With Bible-reading discouraged,—with private judgment forbidden,—with the way to Christ's cross narrowed or blocked up,—with priestcraft re-established,—with auricular confession set up in every parish,—with monasteries and nunneries dotted over the land,—with women everywhere kneeling like serfs and slaves at the feet of clergymen,—with men casting off all faith, and becoming sceptics,—with schools and colleges made seminaries of Jesuitism,—with free thought denounced and anathematized,—with all these things the distinctive manliness and independence of the British character will gradually dwindle, wither, pine away, and be destroyed; and England will be ruined. And all these things, I firmly believe, will come, unless the old feeling about the value of Protestantism can be revived.

I warn all who read this paper, and I warn my fellow-churchmen in particular, that the times require you to awake and be on your guard. Beware of Romanism, and beware of any religious teaching which, wittingly or unwittingly, paves the way to it. I beseech you to realize the painful fact that the Protestantism of this country is gradually ebbing away, and I entreat you, as Christians and patriots to resist the growing tendency to forget the blessings of the English Reformation.

For Christ's sake, for the sake of the Church of England, for the sake of our country, for the sake of our children, let us not drift back to Romish ignorance, superstition, priestcraft, and immorality. Our fathers tried Popery

long ago, for centuries, and threw it off at last with disgust and indignation. Let us not put the clock back and return to Egypt. Let us have no peace with Rome till Rome abjures her errors, and is at peace with Christ. Till Rome does *that*, the vaunted re-union of Western Churches, which some talk of, and press upon our notice, is an insult to Christianity.

Read your Bibles and store your minds with Scriptural arguments. A Bible-reading laity is a nation's surest defence against error. I have no fear for English Protestantism if the English laity will only do their duty. Read your Thirty-nine Articles and "Jewell's Apology," and see how those neglected documents speak of Romish doctrines. We clergymen, I fear, are often sadly to blame. We break the first Canon, which bids us preach four times every year against the Pope's supremacy! Too often we behave as if "giant Pope" was dead and buried, and never name him. Too often, for fear of giving offence, we neglect to show our people the real nature and evil of Popery.

I entreat my readers, beside the Bible and Articles, to read history, and see what Rome did in days gone by. Read how she trampled on your country's liberties, plundered your forefathers' pockets, and kept the whole nation ignorant, superstitious, and immoral. Read how Archbishop Laud ruined Church and State, and brought himself and King Charles to the scaffold by his foolish, obstinate, and God-displeasing effort to unprotestantize the Church of England. Read how the last Popish King of England, James the second, lost his crown by his daring attempt to put down Protestantism and reintroduce Popery. And do not forget that Rome never changes. It is her boast and glory that she is infallible, and always the same.

Read facts, standing out at this minute on the face of the globe, if you will not read history. What has made Italy and Sicily what they were till very lately? *Popery*.—What has made the South American States what they are? *Popery*.—What has made Spain and Portugal what they are? *Popery*.—What has made Ireland what she is in Munster, Leinster, and Connaught? *Popery*.—What makes Scotland, the United States, and our own beloved England the powerful, prosperous countries they are, and I pray God they may long continue? I answer, unhesitatingly, Protestantism,—a free Bible and the principles of the Reformation. Oh, think twice before you cast aside the principles of the Reformation! Think twice before you give way to the prevailing tendency to favour Popery and go back to Rome.

The Reformation found Englishmen steeped in ignorance and left them in possession of knowledge,—found them without Bibles and placed a Bible in every parish,—found them in darkness and left them in comparative light,—found them priest-ridden and left them enjoying the liberty which Christ bestows,—found them strangers to the blood of atonement, to faith and grace and real holiness, and left them with the key to these things in their hands,—found them blind and left them seeing,—found them slaves and left

them free. For ever let us thank God for the Reformation! It lighted a candle which we ought never to allow to be extinguished or to bum dim. Surely I have a right to say that the times require of us a renewed sense of the evils of Romanism, and of the enormous value of the Protestant Reformation!

IV. In the fourth place, the times require of us *a higher standard of personal holiness, and an increased attention to practical religion in daily life.*

I must honestly declare my conviction that, since the days of the Reformation there never has been so much profession of religion without practice, so much talking about God without walking with Him, so much hearing God's words without doing them, as there is in England at this present date. Never were there so many empty tubs and tinkling cymbals! Never was there so much formality and so little reality. The whole tone of men's minds on what constitutes practical Christianity seems lowered. The old golden standard of the behaviour which becomes a Christian man or woman appears debased and degenerated. You may see scores of religious people (so-called) continually doing things which in days gone by would have been thought utterly inconsistent with vital religion. They see no harm in such things as cardplaying, theatre-going, dancing, incessant novel-reading, and Sunday-travelling, and they cannot in the least understand what you mean by objecting to them! The ancient tenderness of conscience about such things seems dying away and becoming extinct, like the dodo; and when you venture to remonstrate with young communicants who indulge in them, they only stare at you as an old-fashioned narrow-minded, fossilized person, and say, "Where is the harm?" In short, laxity of ideas among young men, and "fastness" and levity among young women, are only too common characteristics of the rising generation of Christian professors.

Now in saying all this I would not be mistaken. I disclaim the slightest wish to recommend an ascetic religion. Monasteries, nunneries, complete retirement from the world, and refusal to do our duty in it, all these I hold to be unscriptural and mischievous nostrums. Nor can I ever see my way clear to urging on men an ideal standard of *perfection* for which I find no warrant in God's Word, a standard which is unattainable in this life, and hands over the management of the affairs of society to the devil and the wicked. No: I always wish to promote a genial, cheerful, manly religion, such as men may carry everywhere, and yet glorify Christ.

The pathway to a higher standard of holiness, which I commend to the attention of my readers, is a very simple one, so simple that I can fancy many smiling at it with disdain. But, simple as it is, it is a path sadly neglected and overgrown with weeds, and it is high time to direct men into it. We need then to examine more closely our good old friends the *ten commandments*. Beaten out, and properly developed as they were by Bishop Andrews and the

Puritans, the two tables of God's law are a perfect mine of practical religion. I think it an evil sign of our day that many clergymen neglect to have the commandments put up in their new, or restored, churches, and coolly tell you "they are not wanted now!" I believe they never were wanted so much!— We need to examine more closely such portions of our Lord Jesus Christ's teaching as the *Sermon on the Mount*. How rich is that wonderful discourse in food for thought! What a striking sentence that is, "Except your righteousness exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter the kingdom of heaven." (Matt. v. 20.) Alas, that text is rarely used!— Last, but not least, we need to study more closely the *latter part of nearly all St. Paul's Epistles to the Churches*. They are far too much slurred over and neglected. Scores of Bible readers, I am afraid, are well acquainted with the first eleven chapters of the Epistle to the Romans, but know comparatively little of the five last. When Thomas Scott expounded the Epistle to the Ephesians at the old Lock Chapel, he remarked that the congregations became much smaller when he reached the practical part of that blessed book! Once more I say you may think my recommendations very simple. I do not hesitate to affirm that attention to them would, by God's blessing, be most useful to Christ's cause. I believe it would raise the standard of English Christianity, about such matters as home religion, separation from the world, diligence in the discharge of relative duties, unselfishness, good temper, and general spiritual-mindedness, to a pitch which it seldom attains now.

There is a common complaint in these latter days that there is a want of *power* in modern Christianity, and that the true Church of Christ, the body of which He is the Head, does not shake the world in the nineteenth century as it used to do in former years. Shall I tell you in plain words what is the reason? It is the low tone of *life* which is so sadly prevalent among professing believers. We want more men and women who walk with God and before God, like Enoch and Abraham. Though our numbers at this date far exceed those of our Evangelical forefathers, I believe we fall far short of them in our *standard* of Christian practice. Where is the self-denial, the redemption of time, the absence of luxury and self-indulgence, the unmistakable separation from earthly things, the manifest air of being always about our Master's business, the singleness of eye, the simplicity of home life, the high tone of conversation in society, the patience, the humility, the universal courtesy, which marked so many of our forerunners seventy or eighty years ago? Yes: where is it indeed? We have inherited their principles and we wear their armour, but I fear we have not inherited their *practice*. The Holy Ghost sees it, and is grieved; and the world sees it, and despises us. The world sees it, and cares little for our testimony. It is life, life,—a heavenly, godly, Christ-like life,—depend on it, which influences the world. Let us resolve, by God's blessing, to shake off this reproach. Let us awake to a clear view of what the times

require of us in this matter. Let us aim at a much higher standard of practice. Let the time past suffice us to have been content with a half-and-half holiness. For the time to come, let us endeavour to walk with God, to be “thorough” and unmistakable in our daily life, and to silence, if we cannot convert, a sneering world.

V. In the fifth and last place, the times require of us *more regular and steady perseverance in the old ways of getting good for our souls.*

I think no intelligent Englishman can fail to see that there has been of late years an immense increase of what I must call, for want of a better phrase, *public religion* in the land. Services of all sorts are strangely multiplied. Places of worship are thrown open for prayer and preaching and administration of the Lord’s Supper, at least ten times as much as they were fifty years ago. Services in cathedral naves, meetings in large public rooms like the Agricultural Hall and Mildmay Conference Building, Mission Services carried on day after day and evening after evening,—all these have become common and familiar things. They are, in fact, established institutions of the day, and the crowds who attend them supply plain proof that they are popular. In short, we find ourselves face to face with the undeniable fact that the last quarter of the nineteenth century is an age of an immense amount of *public religion.*

Now I am not going to find fault with this. Let no one suppose that for a moment. On the contrary, I thank God for the revival of the old apostolic plan of “aggressiveness” in religion, and the evident spread of a desire “by all means to save some.” (1 Cor. ix. 22.) I thank God for shortened services, home missions, and evangelistic movements like that of Moody and Sankey. Anything is better than torpor, apathy, and inaction. “If Christ is preached I rejoice, yea, and will rejoice.” (Phil, i. 18.) Prophets and righteous men in England once desired to see these things, and never saw them. If Whitfield and Wesley had been told in their day that a time would come when English Archbishops and Bishops would not only sanction mission services, but take an active part in them, I can hardly think they would have believed it. Rather, I suspect, they would have been tempted to say, like the Samaritan nobleman in Elisha’s time, “If the Lord would make windows in heaven, might this thing be.” (2 Kings vii. 2.)

But while we are thankful for the increase of *public religion*, we must never forget that, unless it is accompanied by *private religion*, it is of no real solid value, and may even produce most mischievous effects. Incessant running after sensational preachers, incessant attendance at hot crowded meetings, protracted to late hours, incessant craving after fresh excitement and highly-spiced pulpit novelties,—all this kind of thing is calculated to produce a very unhealthy style of Christianity; and, in many cases, I am afraid, the end is utter ruin of soul. For, unhappily, those who make *public religion*

everything, are often led away by mere temporary emotions, after some grand display of ecclesiastical oratory, into professing far more than they really feel. After this, they can only be kept up to the mark, which they imagine they have reached, by a constant succession of religious excitements. By and by, as with opium-eaters and dram-drinkers, there comes a time when their dose loses its power, and a feeling of exhaustion and discontent begins to creep over their minds. Too often, I fear, the conclusion of the whole matter is a relapse into utter deadness and unbelief, and a complete return to the world. And all results from having nothing but a *public* religion! Oh, that people would remember that it was not the wind, or the fire, or the earthquake, which showed Elijah the presence of God, but “the still small voice.” (1 Kings xix. 12.)

Now I desire to lift up a warning voice on this subject. I want to see no decrease of *public* religion, remember: but I do want to promote an increase of that religion which is private,—private between each man and his God. The root of a plant or tree makes no show above ground. If you dig down to it and examine it, it is a poor, dirty, coarse-looking thing, and not nearly so beautiful to the eye as the fruit, or leaf, or flower. But that despised root, nevertheless, is the true source of all the life, health, vigour, and fertility which your eyes see, and without it the plant or tree would soon die. Now private religion is the root of all vital Christianity. Without it we may make a brave show in the meeting or on the platform, and sing loud, and shed many tears, and have a name to live and the praise of man. But without it we have no wedding garment, and are “dead before God.” I tell my readers plainly that the times require of us all more attention to our private religion.

(a) Let us *pray more heartily in private*, and throw our whole souls more into our prayers. There are live prayers and there are dead prayers,—prayers that cost us nothing, and prayers which often cost us strong crying and tears. What are yours? When great professors backslide in public, and the Church is surprised and shocked, the truth is that they had long ago backslidden on their knees. They had neglected the throne of grace.

(b) Let us *read our Bibles in private more*, and with more pains and diligence. Ignorance of Scripture is the root of all error, and makes a man helpless in the hand of the devil. There is less private Bible-reading, I suspect, than there was fifty years ago. I never can believe that so many English men and women would have been “tossed to and fro with every wind of doctrine,” some falling into scepticism, some rushing into the wildest and narrowest fanaticism, and some going over to Rome, if there had not grown up a habit of lazy, superficial, careless, perfunctory reading of God’s Word. “Ye do err not knowing the Scriptures.” (Matt. xxii. 29.) The Bible in the pulpit must never supersede the Bible at home.

(c) Let us cultivate the habit of *keeping up more private meditation and communion with Christ*. Let us resolutely make time for getting alone occasionally, for talking with our own souls like David, for pouring out our hearts to our Great High Priest, Advocate, and Confessor at the right hand of God. We want more auricular confession: but not to man. The confessional we want is not a box in the vestry, but the throne of grace. I see some professing Christians always running about after spiritual food, always in public, and always out of breath and in a hurry, and never allowing themselves leisure to sit down quietly to digest, and take stock of their spiritual condition. I am never surprised if such Christians have a dwarfish, stunted religion, and do not grow, and if, like Pharaoh's lean kine, they look no better for their public religious feasting, but rather worse. Spiritual prosperity depends immensely on our private religion, and private religion cannot flourish unless we determine that by God's help we will make time, whatever trouble it may cost us, for thought, for prayer, for the Bible, and for private communion with Christ. Alas! That saying of our Master is sadly overlooked: "Enter into thy closet and shut the door." (Matt. vi. 6.)

Our Evangelical forefathers had far fewer means and opportunities than we have. Full religious meetings and crowds, except occasionally at a Church or in a field, when such men as Whitfield, or Wesley, or Rowlands preached, these were things of which they knew nothing. Their proceedings were neither fashionable nor popular, and often brought on them more persecution and abuse than praise. But the few weapons they used, they used well. With less noise and applause from man they made, I believe, a far deeper mark for God on their generation than we do, with all our Conferences, and Meetings, and Mission rooms, and Halls, and multiplied religious appliances. Their converts, I suspect, like the old fashioned cloths and linens, wore better, and lasted longer, and faded less, and kept colour, and were more stable, and rooted, and grounded than many of the new-born babes of this day. And what was the reason of all this? Simply, I believe, because they gave more attention to *private* religion than we generally do. They walked closely with God and honoured Him in private, and so He honoured them in public. Oh, let us follow them as they followed Christ! Let us go and do likewise.

Let me now conclude this paper with a few words of practical application.

(1) First of all, would you understand what the times require of you *in reference to your own soul*? Listen, and I will tell you. You live in times of peculiar spiritual danger. Never perhaps were there more traps and pitfalls in the way to heaven: never certainly were those traps so skilfully baited, and those pitfalls so ingeniously made. Mind what you are about. Look well to your goings. Ponder the paths of your feet. Take heed lest you come to eternal

grief, and ruin your own soul. Beware of practical infidelity under the specious name of *free thought*. Beware of a helpless state of indecision about doctrinal truth under the plausible idea of not being *party spirited*, and under the baneful influence of so-called liberality and charity. Beware of frittering away life in wishing, and meaning, and hoping for the day of decision, until the door is shut, and you are given over to a dead conscience, and die without hope. Awake to a sense of your danger. Arise, and give diligence to make your calling and election sure, whatever else you leave uncertain. The kingdom of God is very nigh. Christ the Almighty Saviour, Christ the sinner's Friend, Christ and eternal life, are ready for you if you will only come to Christ. Arise and cast away excuses: this very day Christ calleth you. Wait not for company if you cannot have it; wait for nobody. The times, I repeat, are desperately dangerous. If only few are in the narrow way of life, resolve that by God's help you at any rate will be among the few.

(2) In the next place, would you understand what the times require of all Christians *in reference to the souls of others*? Listen, and I will tell you. You live in times of great liberty and abounding opportunities of doing good. Never were there so many open doors of usefulness, so many fields white to the harvest. Mind that you use those open doors, and try to reap those fields. Try to do a little good before you die. Strive to be useful. Determine that, by God's help, you will leave the world a better world in the day of your burial than it was in the day you were born. Remember the souls of relatives, friends, and companions; remember that God often works by weak instruments, and try with holy ingenuity to lead them to Christ. The time is short: the sand is running out of the glass of this old world; then redeem the time, and endeavour not to go to heaven alone. No doubt you cannot command success. It IS NOT certain that your efforts to do good will always do good to others: but it is quite certain that they will always do good to yourself. Exercise, exercise, is one grand secret of health, both for body and soul. "He that watereth shall be watered himself." (Prov. ii. 25.) It is a deep and golden saying of our Master's, but seldom understood in its full meaning,—"It is more blessed to give than to receive." (Acts xx. 35.)

(3) In the last place, would you understand what the times require of you *in reference to the Church of England*? Listen to me, and I will tell you. No doubt you live in days when our time-honoured Church is in a very perilous, distressing, and critical position. Her rowers have brought her into troubled waters. Her very existence is endangered by Papists, Infidels, and Liberationists *without*. Her life-blood is drained away by the behaviour of traitors, false friends, and timid officers *within*. Nevertheless, so long as the Church of England sticks firmly to the Bible, the Articles, and the principles of the Protestant Reformation, so long I advise you strongly to stick to the Church. When the Articles are thrown overboard, and the old flag is hauled down,

then, and not till then, it will be time for you and me to launch the boats and quit the wreck. At present, let us stick to the old ship.

Why should we leave her now, like cowards, because she is in difficulties, and the truth cannot be maintained within her pale without trouble? How can we better ourselves? To whom can we go? Where shall we find better prayers? In what communion shall we find so much good being done, in spite of the existence of much evil? No doubt there is much to sadden us; but there is not a single visible Church on earth at this day doing better. There is not a single communion where there are no clouds, and all is serene. "The evil everywhere are mingled with the good:" the wheat never grows without tares. But for all that there is much to gladden us, more Evangelical preaching than there ever was before in the land, more work done both at home and abroad. If old William Romaine, of St. Anne's, Blackfriars, who stood alone with some half-a-dozen others in London last century, had lived to see what our eyes see, he would have sharply rebuked our faint-heartedness and unthankfulness. No! the battle of the Reformed Church of England is not yet lost, in spite of semi-popery and scepticism, whatever jealous onlookers without and melancholy grumblers within may please to say. As Napoleon said, at four o'clock, on the battlefield of Marengo, "there is yet time to win a victory." If the really loyal members of the Church will only stand by her boldly, and not look coolly at one another, and refuse to work the same fire-engine, or man the same life-boat,—if they will not squabble and quarrel and "fall out by the way," the Church of England will live and not die, and be a blessing to our children's children. Then, let us set our feet down firmly and stand fast in our position. Let us not be in a hurry to quit the ship because of a few leaks: let us rather man the pumps, and try to keep the good ship afloat. Let us work on, and fight on, and pray on, and stick to the Church of England. The Churchman who walks in these lines. I believe, is the Churchman who "understands the times."