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A LECTURE  
ON THE  
PROTESTANT  
REFORMATION  
IN ENGLAND  
IN THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY.

DELIVERED BY

ROBERT CHARLETON,

*In the FRIENDS' MEETING HOUSE, Bristol,  
on the 18th of 2nd Month, 1863.*

BRISTOL:  
PRINTED BY ACKLAND & SON, DOLPHIN STREET.

1863.

*Price Fourpence.*



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*July 9, 1935*

It will be seen, on a perusal of this Lecture, that, although it was delivered in the FRIENDS' MEETING HOUSE, the Author does not dwell on those views of religious truth which are peculiar to the Society of Friends; his object in inviting the company of our fellow christians of other denominations (a large number of whom were present) being to exhibit those aspects of the Reformation, in which all are equally interested.

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The information contained in this lecture has chiefly been derived from 'Anderson's History of the English Bible,' 'Fox's Book of Martyrs,' 'James Anderson's Ladies of the Reformation,' and 'D'Aubigne's History of the Reformation.' In stating the doctrinal views of the Reformers, I have also availed myself of a few of the extracts given in two valuable little books, price 6d. each, the one entitled 'Goodly Pearls,' published by the Religious Tract Society, and the other called 'The Blood of Jesus,' by Wm. Reed.—Nisbet.

## THE PROTESTANT REFORMATION.

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My object in this lecture, is to present to you some views on the great religious Reformation, which took place in this country in the 16th century. The limits of my paper will not admit of any survey of the doctrines and labours of John Wickliffe and other eminent advocates of gospel truth of an earlier date. Neither can I refer, more than very briefly, to that reformation on the continent which took place contemporaneously with the events in our own country which are to come under review.

But it is important to remark that this great work cannot be traced up, for its human origin to any one single mind. As has often been the case in religious revivals of more modern date, when the minds of many, remotely situated, and having no communication with each other, have been simultaneously visited by the awakening and converting power of the Holy Spirit: so in the case before us, it appears that Luther in Germany, Zwingli in Switzerland, and Bilney and others in England, were, about the same time, and quite unconsciously to each other, brought by the enlightening power of the same divine spirit, to a perception of the great fundamental truths of the Gospel.

The immediate results of this enlightenment were indeed widely different in Germany and in England. But the influence of Luther's powerful mind and amazing force of character, which so signally helped to fit him for the great work for which he was providentially raised up, combined with the fact, that the Teachers of the new doctrine, were protected and encouraged by several of the German Princes, whilst in England, they were denounced and persecuted from the very beginning, will go far to account for the earlier and more rapid development of the Reformation in Germany than in England.

In the providential chain of events which prepared the way for this Reformation, and which ushered it in, incomparably the most important was the circulation of the Holy Scriptures in print. It is true that, until the end of the first quarter of the 16th century, the Bible had not been printed in any of the modern languages of Europe. Yet by means of the rapid spread of the art of printing throughout Europe during the preceding half-century, there had been a large multiplication of editions of the Latin Vulgate; and in the year 1516 was published the Greek New Testament by Erasmus. By these means some knowledge of the truths of the gospel must have reached many among the learned, and been diffused through them, to however limited an extent, among the people. But this was small indeed, compared with what was produced by the printing of the sacred volume in our own language. For this inestimable boon we are mainly indebted, as is well known, to William Tyndale. I am not about to detain you with any narrative of the life and labours of this eminent man. Suffice it to say, that having been led by divine grace to form the noble resolution of giving to his country the printed scriptures in our own tongue, and having spent some time in vainly seeking to carry out his purpose in England, he went abroad in 1523, never more to return to his native land. His remaining years were spent on the continent, and devoted to the great work of his life; taking up his abode successively at Hamburgh, Cologne, Worms, Antwerp, and other places; when persecuted in one city fleeing to another; exposed often to dangers the most formidable, and encountering difficulties all but insurmountable; and finally, closing a life of self-sacrificing labour, by martyrdom, at Vilvorde in the year 1536.

The first edition of Tyndale's New Testament, was completed by the end of 1525, brought into London at the beginning of 1526, and quickly put into circulation in various parts of the country, including the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge. Notwithstanding the secrecy observed, the knowledge of what had been done, soon reached the ears of Henry VIII. and the Bishops, exciting

their alarm, and rousing them to violent opposition. The English Testament was denounced in royal and ecclesiastical proclamations, the reading of it strictly forbidden, and all who possessed copies of it were commanded, under severe penalties, to deliver them up. Such copies as could be found, were seized, and publicly burnt by royal authority, and there is distinct evidence of such burnings having taken place both in London and at Oxford as early as February, 1526.

But besides all this activity at home, the alarm was so great, that Warham, Archbishop of Canterbury, and Tonstall, Bishop of London, sent orders to the English Envoy in Flanders, to buy up and burn all that could be found of a considerable stock of Tyndale's Testaments at Antwerp, and places near it. There was no alternative but to *buy* them, as the laws of the free city of Antwerp would not allow of their being seized without payment. This transaction cost the Archbishop £66 : 9 : 4, a sum equivalent to more than £800, according to the present value of money. The Archbishop not thinking it fair that this burden should fall on himself alone, wrote to the Bishops in his province, inviting them to share it with him. And the following is extracted from the letter written by Richard Nix, the Bishop of Norwich, in reply to the Archbishop's appeal for help towards the cost of this buying up and burning the English Testaments.

"I lately received your letters by the which I do perceive that your Grace hath gotten into your hands all the books of the New Testament, translated into English and printed beyond the sea for the sum of £66 : 9 : 4. Surely in mine opinion you have done a gracious and a blessed deed, and God, I doubt not, shall highly reward you therefor. And when in your letters ye write that insomuch as this matter and the danger thereof, if remedy had not been provided, should have touched not only you, but all the Bishops within your province; and that it is not reason that the whole cost and charge thereof should rest only on you, but that they and every of them should contribute towards the same; pleaseth it you to understand that I am right well contented to give in this behalf *ten marks*, the which

sum I think sufficient for my part, if every Bishop within your province make like contribution, after the rate and substance of their benefices. Nevertheless if your Grace think this sum of *ten marks* not sufficient for my part in this matter; your further pleasure known, I shall be glad to conform myself thereunto. Your humble obediencer and bondman. Dated at Hoxne, Suffolk, 14th June, 1527."

But to return to what was going on in England. Notwithstanding the violent measures of the government, in order to prevent the importation of the New Testament, and to suppress its circulation when imported, it would appear that but few of those who possessed the precious treasure were induced to give it up. And the demand for it continued to be so great, that upwards of twenty editions (averaging probably some thousand copies each,) were printed during the succeeding ten years.

Some of the circumstances attending the progress of this work were strikingly providential. At one time, the prevalence in London of an infectious disease of a deadly character, had caused the chief persecutors to be out of the way, just at the time when a vessel with a supply of New Testaments arrived in the Thames, so that the landing and distribution of these was but little interrupted. A similar effect was produced on another critical occasion, by the absence from England of Cardinal Wolsey, Sir Thomas More, and the Bishop of London, who had been sent abroad by the King on some political intrigue on the continent. A still more remarkable case occurred in the year 1527. Owing to the great rains that fell in the sowing time, and the consequent failure of the crops, the price of wheat advanced to what, at the present value of money, would be over 35s. per bushel, and in many places it could not be bought at all. Multitudes would probably have perished from starvation, but for the timely arrival of supplies of grain from ports in Flanders, and elsewhere. With the corn on board these grain-laden vessels were brought over great numbers of New Testaments, which could not well have been otherwise conveyed to our shores. The number thus imported must have been very large, one individual having received 500 copies. In reference to this remarkable

event, Anderson justly observes that men are but too apt to overlook the footsteps of a particular providence, but the arrival of books through such a medium, and at such a period, was too remarkable an event to be passed over in silence. Could it fail to be observed with gratitude at the time? After a fruitful land had been turned into barrenness, and the people had been brought low through oppression, affliction and sorrow; with bread-corn came that blessed book which tells of the Bread from heaven. The bread that perisheth must rise in price and finally fail, to make way for the glad tidings of the Bread of Life. "Whoso is wise and will observe these things, even they shall understand the loving-kindness of the Lord." I think it must do us good to have our attention thoughtfully turned to this portion of the history of the English Bible. And it may perhaps be all the more seasonable now, on account of the attempts which are made, even in high quarters, to weaken the authority and disparage the value of the Sacred Records. The Bible is not, indeed, dealt with now, in the fashion that it was by the Romish Bishops of a former age. The modern mode of attack is somewhat different, but it will prove in the end equally futile.

But I shall presently have to direct your attention to another and yet more signal instance of the divine interposition in favor of the English Scriptures. It will be in your recollection that the first edition of the New Testament was received in this country at the beginning of 1526. The following ten years were employed by Tyndale, *partly* in bringing out fresh editions of it, with such corrections in the text as further study enabled him to make, and *partly* in proceeding with the translation of the Old Testament, which was already far advanced, when his career was stopped by imprisonment and martyrdom. The work was not however allowed to drop, but was taken up and completed by one well qualified for the task. This was John Rogers, a Cambridge scholar, who afterwards suffered martyrdom—the first who so suffered—in Mary's reign. He went to Antwerp, while Tyndale resided there, and became chaplain to the company of English merchants in that city. Becoming acquainted with Tyndale, he was

led to examine the Scriptures for himself, and to a great degree embraced Tyndale's views. He sat down to superintend the press during Tyndale's imprisonment, and availing himself chiefly of Miles Coverdale's translation, for that portion of the Old Testament which Tyndale had not completed, succeeded in bringing this great work to a close, in June or July, 1537. By the beginning of August the first printed copy was in the hands of Cranmer, now become Archbishop of Canterbury, and at Cranmer's request it was presented by Crumwell to the King, by whom permission was at once, and without difficulty granted for its free circulation throughout the realm. With reference to this joyful event, Cranmer wrote to Crumwell as follows, under date August 13th, 1537:—"Whereas I understand that your Lordship at my request, hath not only exhibited the Bible which I sent unto you, unto the King's majesty, but also hath obtained of his Grace that the same shall be allowed by his authority to be brought and read within this realm; my Lord, for your pains taken in this behalf, I give unto you my most hearty thanks, assuring your Lordship for the contentation of my mind, you have shewed me more pleasure herein, than if you had given me a thousand pounds."

This transaction remarkably verifies the scripture proverb, "The King's heart is in the hands of the Lord, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will." It was not merely that he who had put forth his royal power to suppress the sacred volume, cruelly persecuting those who dared to possess and read it, now freely sanctioned what he had before denounced. But his subsequent conduct clearly shews, that this was done without any change in his character. Indeed he gave this permission to his subjects, not as a thing belonging to them of right, but as a boon flowing from his royal prerogative, which he might revoke whenever he pleased. And he did, a few years afterwards largely revoke it, enjoining that "*no* women except noblewomen and gentlewomen, no certifiers, apprentices, journeymen, husbandmen, or labourers, were to read the Bible to themselves or to any other, openly or privately, on pain of one month's imprisonment." And only a few

months before the end of his reign he endeavoured, by proclamation, to consign to the flames above thirty editions of Tyndale's New Testament, denouncing the translation as "crafty, false, and untrue," though it was the very *same* with that which was included in the Bible he had sanctioned in 1537. It is true that by this time the scriptures had obtained such a footing in England, that Henry's later proclamations produced comparatively little effect. But I have given you these details in the history of the English Bible to shew that it was not to the goodwill of earthly monarchs, but to the favor of Him by whom princes reign, that we are indebted for the inestimable boon.

The character and policy of Henry VIII. so far as relates to its bearing on the Reformation, has been, I think accurately sketched by a living writer, who observes, that although contributing in various ways to the advancement of the Reformation, yet "he was no Reformer in the proper sense of the term. To speak of him as such is altogether to mistake his real character. While he denounced the papal supremacy and transferred it to himself, he still continued a Romanist in heart, and maintained the popish articles of faith, as ferociously as he had assailed the supremacy of the Pope. He was not less intolerant towards Protestants for denying the popish doctrines, especially the doctrine of transubstantiation, than towards Roman Catholics for maintaining, in opposition to his new claims, that the Pope was head of the universal church. Both were equally persecuted; they were confined in the same cells, and drawn on the same hurdle to Smithfield. The former were burned as heretics, and the latter hanged as traitors. He was not, as some have falsely asserted, the 'father of the Reformation in England,' he was its executioner. Yet it is never to be forgotten that some of this monarch's political measures had a powerful influence in promoting the Reformation. This is to be remembered not as putting any honour upon him, but to the praise of the Governor among the nations, who in his infinite wisdom and mercy renders the passions of men subservient to the accomplishment of his own great purposes."

In the year 1539, (two years after the king's sanction



had been given to the English Bible,) an act was passed (called the Act of the Six Articles) to enforce uniformity in religion, particularly with regard to the doctrine of transubstantiation. Concerning this, the first Article of the Six, it was declared "That in the most blessed sacrament of the altar, by the efficacy of Christ's mighty word spoken by the priest, there is present really under the form of bread and wine, the natural body and blood of our Saviour Jesus Christ, conceived of the Virgin Mary; and that after the consecration there remaineth no substance of bread or wine, or any other substance, but the substance of Christ, God and man." For enforcing this article it was enacted that "whosoever within the realm of England 'by word, writing, printing, or otherwise,' should 'preach, teach, affirm, or *hold* any opinion' contrary to that article, should be adjudged heretics, and should suffer death by burning. You will observe the sweeping character of this enactment. It included not only all who should "preach or teach," but all who should "*hold*" the opinions referred to; so that even in cases where there was no evidence of such views having been preached or taught, yet if by artful and ensnaring questions, any could be drawn into a confession of their disbelief in the doctrine of transubstantiation, they were equally exposed to the terrible penalty of being burnt at the stake.

This statute was repealed in the reign of Edward VI., but re-enacted by Mary, during four years of whose short but bloody reign, nearly 300 martyrs were burnt at the stake, the most frequent and most prominent ground of their condemnation being their denial or disbelief of the doctrine of transubstantiation. Perhaps a little reflection may help us to understand *why* so much importance is attached to this doctrine, and to see the fundamental place which it holds in the Romish system. For if it be admitted that the priests have power to perform the standing miracle of converting material bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ, will it not naturally follow that it must be for the purpose of its being offered up in what they call "propitiatory sacrifice of the mass?" and then, what can be more reasonable than that the sacrificing priest, whose

business it is thus to make expiation for the sins of the worshipper, and to pronounce absolution for them (after confession and penance,) should have a competent knowledge of the sins which are thus to be atoned for and forgiven? And what plan so fitted to give him this knowledge, as that of Auricular Confession? Thus we see the connexion and mutual dependance of the various parts of the Popish system, the place which transubstantiation holds among the rest, being like that of the keystone in an arch, or the foundation stone in a pillar; remove that, by denying the miraculous power of the Priesthood, and the entire structure falls into ruin.

But if this doctrine of transubstantiation was held and cherished by the Romish party, as the very keystone of their system, it was no less zealously repudiated by the enlightened Reformers of the 16th century, not only on account of its manifest absurdity, but also because it practically sets aside the one all-sufficient sacrifice for sin, offered by Christ Jesus on Calvary; in virtue of which alone it is, that God may be just and yet the justifier of all those who believe in his only begotten Son.

It appeared to me that in a Lecture on the Reformation, I could hardly avoid this brief notice (imperfect as it necessarily is) of the prevailing religious system of the time. But it forms no part of my plan to exhibit at length the errors of popery, neither is it my purpose to go further than has already been done, into a narrative of the great historical events of the successive reigns of Henry VIII., Edward VI., Mary, and Elizabeth, fraught as this period of our history is with materials of the richest interest. My object is, rather, to present to you such an account of the *principles* of the Reformation, as set forth in statements of christian doctrine, and illustrated by sketches of personal experience, as may enable you in some measure to enter into the spirit of this memorable time.

The history of the English Reformation is so interwoven with that of the English Bible, that we cannot do better than turn our attention to the memorable time when permission freely to read the Scriptures was first given to the people. The descriptions left us by historians of the time,

of the manner in which the boon was received, and of the scenes which were then witnessed throughout England, are deeply interesting. "It was wonderful" says one of them, "to see with what joy this book of God was received, not only among the learned sort, but generally all England over, among all the vulgar and common people; and with what greediness God's Word was read, and what resort to places where the reading of it was! Everybody that could, bought the book, or busily read it, or got others to read it to them, if they could not themselves. Divers more elderly people learned to read on purpose, and even little boys flocked, among the rest, to hear portions of the Holy Scriptures read." "I think," says THOMAS BECON, writing three or four years later, "I think there is no realm throughout Christendom that hath so many urgent and necessary causes to give thanks to God, as we Englishmen have at this present. What ignorance and blindness was in this realm concerning the true and christian knowledge! How many were there who savoured Christ aright? How many were those who believed Christ to be the alone Saviour? How many were those who felt the power and efficacy of the true and christian faith? But now Christ's death is believed to be a sufficient sacrifice for them that are sanctified. The most sacred Bible is freely permitted to be read of every man in the English tongue. Many savour Christ aright, and daily the number increaseth, thanks be to God! Christ is believed to be the alone Saviour, Christ is believed to be our sufficient Mediator and Advocate. The true and christian faith, which worketh by love, and is plenteous in good works, is now received to justify."

To enable us, in some measure, to enter into these feelings of gratitude and joy, let us try to picture to ourselves the state of religion which existed in this country before the Scriptures were known. For however congenial to the tastes of the unrenewed mind may be a system which practically delegates to another, the duty of caring for man's eternal interests, and which flatters whilst it deceives the soul into a deadly security, by substituting imposing ceremonies, and a round of outward observances,

for the renovating work of the Holy Spirit in the heart;— yet to a soul awakened to a sense of its guilt and danger, and brought earnestly to ask the all important question “what must I do to be saved?” how little has it to offer! In the absence of the Sacred Volume, the poor man, brought into such a condition of mind, would go for direction to his priest, and would have prescribed for him fastings, watchings, pilgrimages, and other penances, with the purchase of masses and pardons; with the prospect before him, if these things were diligently persevered in till the end of life, of passing at death into the torments of purgatory for an uncertain period, to be shortened it may be, by means of masses said or sung for the repose of the departed soul;—provided always the means were found of paying for such an alleviation. What a gloomy prospect must such a religion have held out to a soul brought into distress on account of sin! No escape from these conditions, excepting in the case of a favored few, including the Virgin Mary and the Saints, whose pity and intercession were therefore constantly invoked. Now imagine the wondering delight with which such an anxious and burdened soul would listen for the first time to the glad tidings of a free salvation through the blood of the Lamb! the gracious announcement on the sacred page being brought home to the heart by the quickening power of the Holy Spirit. To such an one the Gospel would be felt to be in very deed, what the angel from heaven declared it to be, when he said unto the shepherds at Bethlehem, “Fear not! for behold I bring you good tidings of great joy!” Yes, “*good tidings of great joy.*”

Long my imprison'd spirit lay  
 Fast bound in sin and nature's night;  
 Thine eye beamed forth a quickening ray:  
 I woke! the dungeon flamed with light.  
 My chains fell off, my heart was free,  
 I rose, went forth, and followed thee.

Such were the effects produced, when the Bible was first allowed to be openly read in England. But we cannot doubt that, even during the preceding years, when the Sacred Volume could be read only in secret places and by

stealth, the same blessed results often followed, and that in a multitude of cases which eternity alone can reveal, its divine teachings were even then made life and health to the sin-sick soul. This will explain the firm grasp with which the precious treasure was often held, at the risk of liberty and even life itself. One of the most interesting cases of the kind, as well as the earliest on record, is that of Thomas Bilney, a student in the University of Cambridge, who though still a young man, was become LL.D., having made great proficiency in the study of the Civil and Canon law, to which he intended to devote his life. But falling into great distress of mind, he applied to the priests who appointed for him fastings and watchings, with the purchase of masses and pardons; but after having spent almost his all on these physicians of no value, it had fared with him as with one of old, whose situation he compared with his own, for he was nothing better, but rather grew worse. At this period he met with a copy of Erasmus's Greek Testament, (containing the Latin and Greek in parallel columns) which had just been published, and the result will be best described in his own simple words. The case is the more interesting from its being one in which no human agent was employed to relieve him, but in which peace to his troubled conscience came with the reading, for the first time, of a single verse in the New Testament. "But at the last" says he, "I heard speak of Jesus, even then when the New Testament was first set forth by Erasmus. Which, when I understood to be eloquently done by him, being allured rather for the Latin than for the Word of God,—for at that time I knew not what it meant,—I bought it even by the providence of God, as I do now well understand and perceive. And; at the first reading, as I well remember, I chanced upon this sentence of St. Paul (O, most sweet and comfortable sentence to my soul!) in his first epistle to Timothy and first chapter, 'This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.' This one sentence, through God's instruction and inward teaching, which I did not then perceive, did so exhilarate my heart, being before wounded with the guilt of my sins, and being almost in despair, that

immediately I felt a marvellous comfort and quietness, insomuch that my bruised bones leapt for joy.

“After this the scripture began to be more pleasant to me than the honey or the honeycomb. Wherein I learned that all my pilgrimages, all my fasting and watching, all the redemption of masses and pardons, being done without truth in Christ, who alone saveth his people from their sins; these I say I learned to be nothing else but like to the vesture made of fig leaves, wherewith Adam and Eve went about in vain to cover themselves; and could never obtain quietness and rest, till they believed on the promise of God, that ‘Christ the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent’s head.’ Neither could I be relieved of the sharp stings and biting of my sins, before I was taught of God that lesson which Christ speaketh of in the third chapter of John, ‘And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish but have everlasting life.’

“As soon as I began to taste and savour of this heavenly lesson, which no man can teach, but only God, which revealed the same unto Peter, I desired the Lord to increase my faith; and at last I desired nothing more than that I, being so comforted by him, might be strengthened by his Holy Spirit and grace from above, that I might teach the wicked his ways, which are mercy and truth, and that the wicked might be converted unto him by me, who sometime was also wicked.”

This account of the conversion of Thomas Bilney closely resembles that given, more than three centuries afterwards, by Robert McChyne, of his own conversion, in the beautiful hymn entitled “Jehovah Tsidkenu,” (the Hebrew for the “Lord our Righteousness,” one of the prophetic names of our Saviour,)

When free grace awoke me, by light from on high,  
Then legal fears shook me, I trembled to die:  
No refuge, no safety in self could I see—  
Jehovah Tsidkenu my Saviour must be.

My terrors all vanished before the sweet name,  
My guilty fears banished, with boldness I came.  
To drink at the Fountain, lifegiving and free—  
Jehovah Tsidkenu is all things to me.

It is worthy of remark that Bilney's conversion through reading the Greek Testament, was about the year 1517, the same year in which Luther first quarrelled with the Pope, by denouncing the sale of indulgences, and posting up his ninety-five celebrated Theses on the church door at Wittenberg. Up to this time it is probable that Luther's name was little known beyond the monks of his own order. At all events there is no reason to suppose that it had reached the ear of Bilney, when, with whatever difference of administration, and by means of whatever diversity of gifts, the same Divine Spirit was working in both of them blessed effects.

Bilney's earnest desire that others might be brought, through him, to a saving knowledge of the truth, seems to have been remarkably granted. His preaching was followed by great and powerful effects: for among many others, John Lambert, and Hugh Latimer owed their conversion to him. With regard to these two eminent confessors and faithful martyrs, a few words must suffice. John Lambert was burnt at Smithfield by order of Henry VIII., in November, 1538. Concerning his death, Fox, the martyrologist, says, "The manner of his death was dreadful, for after his legs were nearly consumed, and his wretched tormentors had withdrawn the fire from him, then two, who stood on each side with their halberds pitched him from side to side as far as the chain would reach, whilst he, lifting up such hands as he had, cried unto the people in these words, '*None but Christ! None but Christ!*'" Hugh Latimer, the other eminent convert of Bilney's already referred to, suffered, as is well known, under Mary, in 1555. After saying to his fellow martyr, Ridley, while the faggots were being lighted, "Be of good comfort, Master Ridley, we shall this day, by God's grace, light such a candle in England, as I trust shall never be put out," Ridley exclaimed with a loud voice, as he saw the faggots flaming up towards him, "*Into thy hands, O Lord, I commit my spirit,*" whilst Latimer, on the other side, with equal fervency prayed, "*O Father of heaven, receive my soul.*"

But though these distinguished servants of Christ were thus strengthened by his grace to witness a good confession,

and to hold fast the beginning of their confidence steadfast unto the end, yet with Bilney himself, who had been the honored instrument of their conversion, the case was different. For years, indeed, he labored diligently, and in the face of many difficulties and perils, in spreading the glad tidings of the gospel; but when at length he was brought into circumstances in which there was no choice left him but either to renounce his profession, or else to suffer the terrible penalty of death by burning; in a moment of weakness he unhappily chose the former. His firmness seems to have been overcome by the entreaties of his affectionate though mistaken friends, who overwhelmed him with specious arguments, and conjured him with tears to have pity on himself, until he became ensnared by the delusion that he had found a compromise which would set his conscience at rest. "I will preserve my life," he said, "to dedicate it to the Lord." Scarcely had he yielded to this suggestion of the tempter, when he was plunged into the deepest distress. His agony of mind was so great that Latimer says, "His friends dared not suffer him to be alone day or night. They comforted him as they could, but no comforts would serve! And as for the comfortable places of Scripture, to bring them to him was as though a man should run him through the heart with a sword!" At last, however, his conscience was quieted by the same blood of atonement, which, at first had given him so much peace and joy. And determining no longer to conceal the truth, he bid farewell to his friends at Cambridge, and went into his native county of Norfolk, preaching first from house to house, and then in the open fields; making no secret of his sorrowful fall, but warning all to beware of following his example. Proceeding to Norwich, he was apprehended by the authority of the bishop, (the same man who had written the letter about the burning of the Testaments,) and was soon afterwards burnt at the stake in that city. He was the first victim consigned, during this period, to the flames. For though he had indeed fallen, and in his own apprehension past recovery, yet to him was now given the honour of leading the way in England, of "resistance unto blood striving against sin." The night before his execution, the



dying martyr, quite composed, resigned, and even cheerful, dwelt much on the gracious promise, "Fear not, for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name, thou art mine. When thou passeth through the waters I will be with thee, and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire thou shalt not be burned, neither shall the flames kindle upon thee." He expired in the flames on the 19th of August, 1531, seven years before the martyrdom of Lambert, and twenty-four years before that of Latimer.

The entire bible was not printed in English for several years after Bilney's death; but it is interesting to know that the identical copy of the Latin bible, once belonging to Bilney is said to be still in existence, and in one of the libraries at Cambridge. There are many notes in his own handwriting, and the passage in Isaiah, already quoted, and which consoled the owner of the book, when in the prospect of the flames, is particularly distinguished with a pen in the margin.

The burning of Bilney was, as I have said, the first conspicuous case of public martyrdom, at this period of our history. But other lives had been sacrificed a few years earlier, in the same cause, and though in a more private manner, yet still under circumstances of too specially interesting a character to be passed over without some notice. You will remember that when the first edition of Tyndale's New Testament was brought into England at the beginning of the year 1526, the circulation of it quickly extended to the University of Oxford, where, as well as in London, a number of copies were publicly burnt. At this time there was a splendid college, lately established there by Cardinal Wolsey, called after him "Cardinal College," and which, to gratify his own ambition, he designed to make, (to use his own words,) the "most glorious college in the world." A number of the students in the University, and particularly in Cardinal College, had bought copies of the New Testament, which they diligently studied, as well as other books setting forth the "new learning," as the doctrines of the Reformation were now begun to be called. This little band of pious young men soon became closely

united, feeling themselves to be all soldiers in the same army, travellers in the same company, brothers in the same family. Fraternal love has seldom shone more brightly than in these early days of the Reformation. "*Brethren,*" says one of them, "*we did not only call one another, but were in very deed one to another.*" And when the storm of persecution was seen to be about to burst forth upon them, each one seemed less anxious for his own safety than for that of his companions.

After an account given by one of these young men, named Anthony Delaber, of an interview between himself and Thomas Garrett, who at much personal risk, had brought a number of Testaments and other books from London, and to whom he was warmly and gratefully attached, Delaber adds; "When he was gone down the stairs, I straightways shut my chamber door, and went into my study, and took the New Testament in my hands, kneeled down on my knees, and with many a deep sigh and salt tear, I did, with much deliberation, read over the tenth chapter of St. Matthew's gospel; and when I had so done, I did with fervent prayer commit unto God our dearly beloved brother, Garrett, earnestly besecching him, for Jesus Christ's sake, that he would vouchsafe not only safely to keep our said dear brother from the hands of all his enemies; but also that he would endue his tender and lately born *little flock in Oxford*, with heavenly strength, by his Holy Spirit, that they might be able thereby valiantly to withstand, to his glory, all their fierce enemies, and also might, quietly, to their own salvation, with all godly patience, bear Christ's heavy cross; which I now saw was to be presently laid on their young and weak backs, unable to bear so huge a burden, without the great help of his Holy Spirit."

And Delaber's anticipations were soon realized. Wolsey, irritated by seeing his favourite college, which he had intended to be "the most glorious in the world," made the haunt of heresy, issued his orders without delay, and the university was filled with terror. Under Cardinal College there was a deep cellar sunk in the earth, in which the butler kept his salt fish. Into this hole, twenty-one of

these noble hearted young men, the very flower of England, were thrust, and detained there during the five months from March to August. It requires but a slight effort to picture to the mind the scenes which must have followed. The dampness and foul air of this close place, vitiated by the breathing of so many, and still further polluted by the fetid effluvia proceeding from the fish; together with the unwholesomeness of their diet, which is said to have been cruelly limited to salt fish alone; could not fail to tell upon them with fearful effect. The bloom of health faded from their cheeks, and their bodies wasted day by day, until as they paced up and down their gloomy prison, it was like shadow meeting shadow. Four of their number, consumed by fever, feebly crawled along, leaning against their dungeon wall, or lay stretched upon the damp floor, unable to move at all. The Cardinal, on being informed of this, ordered the four sick men to be released, and litters were accordingly brought, on which they were placed, and carried to their rooms and beds. But it was too late. The hand of death was already upon them, and not all the care and tenderness of their friends could recall them to life. Three out of the four died the same week, and the fourth followed close upon them. We have no detailed record of the feelings and experiences of these youthful sufferers, whilst, immured in their gloomy cell, they saw the pale messenger drawing nearer and nearer. But we may well believe it was given them to realize that which was the blessed experience of the Lord's servant of old, when, under similar circumstances, he was enabled to say, "I called upon thy name, O Lord, out of the low dungeon. Thou hast heard my voice; hide not thine ear at my breathing and my cry. Thou drewest near in the day that I called upon thee. Thou saidest, fear not."

With regard to the seventeen survivors, who were soon afterwards liberated, the grievous suffering they had passed through appears to have been overruled for their highest good, and to discipline them to endure hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ. All of them are said to have occupied positions of usefulness in the church of Christ, and at least two of the number sealed their testimony with

their blood. One of these was John Fryth, the intimate friend of Tyndale, who was burnt at Smithfield in 1533. The other was Robert Ferrar, who, after a long course of active service, suffered at the stake at Caermarthen in South Wales, in 1555. "Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried, and ye shall have tribulation ten days. Be ye faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life."\*

I have directed your attention to the affecting details of this history, not only on account of their deeply instructive character, but also because they strikingly show the close connexion which there was between the spread of the printed Scriptures, and that of the doctrines of the Reformation. Bilney reads a chapter in the Greek Testament, and all the plans and purposes of his life are at once changed. Tyndale's English Testament reaches Oxford, and the result you have just heard. It seems indeed to be a marked peculiarity of the Reformation in England, that *here*, much more than on the continent, it may be traced to the simple reading of the Bible itself. Whilst great effects were produced in Germany by the powerful preaching of Luther and his companions, as well as by the public discussions and disputations in which they were engaged; the severity of the persecution in England must have left comparatively little scope for the agency of the living voice. And among those who were instrumental in carrying on this great work in England, there were none possessed of resources of mental power at all comparable to those of Luther. This, however, may have been designed only the more clearly to show that the work was not of men but of God.

I do not like to pass away from this portion of the subject without briefly referring to the introduction of the English New Testament into Scotland, which seems to have taken place quite independantly of its introduction into England, though by similar means, and very nearly at the same time. The alarm excited among the authorities of the Scottish Metropolitan University of St. Andrews, seems to have been as great as that which had been felt

a few months earlier at Oxford. But these events are closely connected with the personal history of a youth, of a character as lovely as any that meets us during the entire period of the Reformation. His name was Patrick Hamilton. Though descended from noble ancestors, and connected by both his parents, with the royal family of Scotland, he seems to have early made the wise choice, like one of old, esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt. Designed for an ecclesiastic, and educated at St. Andrews, as soon as he had any knowledge of the saving truths of the Gospel, he could not conceal his sentiments, and thus became involved in trouble. He then went abroad and met with John Fryth, who was at that time with Tyndale on the continent, and with whom he formed a very intimate friendship. After remaining two years abroad, he returned to his native country, and began to preach the pure truths of the Gospel. He was soon apprehended, condemned as a heretic, and burnt at the stake, at St. Andrews, in February, 1528, at the early age of twenty-four years. The last words he uttered were those of the first martyr, Stephen, "Lord Jesus receive my Spirit." While on the continent, Patrick Hamilton committed to writing a statement of his doctrinal views, from which I have extracted a portion of what he says on the subject of "*Good Works*." The document was written by Hamilton himself in Latin, and translated into English by his friend, John Fryth, a man worthy of such a task and such a friend.

#### ON GOOD WORKS.

"Whosoever thinketh to be saved by his works denieth that Christ is his Saviour. For how is he thy Saviour, if thou mightest save thyself by thy works ?

"Thou wilt say then, shall we do no good works ? I answer, not so, but I say we should not do good works in order thereby to get remission of sin, or the inheritance of heaven. I condemn *not* good works, but the false trust in any works ; for all the works wherein a man putteth confidence, are therewith poisoned and become evil.

"Wherefore thou *must* do good works, but beware thou do them not so as to deserve any good through them ; for

if thou do, thou receivest the good, not as a free gift of God, but as a debt due to thee, and makest thyself fellow with God, because thou wilt take nothing of him for nought. And what needeth he anything of thine, seeing he giveth all things freely and is none the poorer. Therefore take freely of him, for he is a good and a gentle master, and with goodwill giveth us all we need. And he desireth nought of thee, but that thou wilt acknowledge what he hath done for thee, and bear it in mind, and help others for his sake, both in word and deed, even as he hath holpen thee, for nought, and without reward. O how ready should we be to help others, for his sake, if we knew his gentleness and goodness towards us! Let us, I beseech you, follow his footsteps, whom all the world ought to praise and to worship."

What a beautiful illustration is this of the words of the apostle John, "Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another." And how well does it harmonize with the touching appeal of another apostle, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, *by the mercies of God*, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." And how should it enhance our sense of the preciousness of that divine illumination which was vouchsafed to this youthful martyr, to reflect that this admirable exposition of Gospel truth was the production, not of an experienced christian in mature or advanced life, but of a youth of only twenty-three years of age; and that too, at a time, when the general mass of Christendom, even in the very highest seats of ecclesiastical learning, remained sunk in almost midnight darkness!

The narratives which I have given you relate chiefly to persons of the educated classes of society. But there is ample evidence of the principles of the Reformation having spread among all classes, from the highest to the lowest. The numbers who perished at the stake in Mary's reign, are said to include

5 Bishops  
21 Clergymen and other  
divines  
8 Gentlemen  
84 Artificers

100 Husbandmen, servants,  
and labourers  
26 Married women  
20 Widows  
9 Unmarried Women  
2 Boys

From this account, it would appear that among this noble army of Martyrs, by far the largest proportion were of the humbler classes, included under the heads "Artificers, husbandmen, servants and labourers." Considering the very narrow limits within which education was confined at this period of our history, it is reasonable to conclude, that among this number, poor indeed as to this world, but chosen of God and rich in faith, there were many who could not read. But though not possessing the outward privilege, now so commonly enjoyed, of reading for themselves of those things which make for peace and accompany salvation, yet the eyes of their understanding being enlightened to a knowledge of the mysteries of redeeming love, Christ was felt to be truly precious to their souls, and to them it was given not only to believe in his name, but to suffer, yea, joyfully to suffer for his sake.

It is especially grievous to think of the inhumanity which could consign to the flames so large a number of the gentler sex, not a few of whom displayed, in the last extremity, a holy constancy and fortitude, which shews indeed that God had chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things that are mighty. One of the most illustrious of these was Anne Askew, a young woman of only 24, who after enduring shocking barbarities, was burnt at Smithfield, a few months before king Henry's death. When fastened to the stake, with three others who were burnt with her, the Lord Chancellor sent to Anne Askew, offering to her the king's pardon, if she would recant; a letter said to be written by the king was put into her hand, but she, refusing to look upon it, said "I came not hither to deny my Lord and Master." Then, says Fox, "were letters likewise offered unto the others, who in like manner, following the constancy of the woman, refused to look upon them, continuing to cheer each other by the end of their sufferings and the glory they were about to enter." But notwithstanding the cruelty of her persecutors, it is delightful to witness the meekness of spirit she cherished towards them, earnestly praying for their forgiveness, and that their understanding might be enlightened and their hearts changed by divine grace; "O Lord," says she in a brief prayer

written when in prison, "I have more enemies now than there be hairs on my head, yet Lord let them never overcome me with vain words, but fight thou, Lord, in my stead, for on thee I cast my care. And, Lord, I heartily desire of thee that thou wilt, of thy most merciful goodness, forgive them that violence which they do, and have done unto me. Open thou also their blind hearts, that they may hereafter do that thing in thy sight which is only acceptable before thee! So be it, O Lord, so be it!"

But besides these female martyrs, there were burnt at the stake two boys. What were the names and ages of these two lads, and under what circumstances they suffered I am not aware that any record exists to inform us. But the history of the Reformation would seem to indicate that the Holy Spirit was poured out in a somewhat especial manner on the young;—on the *sons* and the *daughters*. Bilney at Cambridge, the youthful sufferers in the dungeon at Oxford, Patrick Hamilton in Scotland, and Anne Askew, are all beautiful examples of youthful devotedness to Christ. But even *children* were brought under the same gracious influence. How interesting is the account of the "little boys" who came flocking to hear the Bible read, when that was first allowed in England! And I have met with nothing more touchingly beautiful than an incident which is recorded by Fox, as having taken place at the burning of the martyr Lawrence at Colchester. The irons this good man had worn in prison had so injured his limbs, and his body was so reduced by want of food, that he was carried to the fire on a chair, and so sitting was burnt to ashes. Several young children, fearing (it seems) that through extreme bodily weakness he might falter at the last, came about the fire, and cried, as well as they could speak "Lord, strengthen thy servant and keep thy promise; strengthen thy servant according to thy promise." "God answered their prayer," says Fox, "for Mr. Lawrence died as calmly and firmly, as any one could wish to breathe his last."

Does not this narrative carry back our thoughts to the time when

Children a sweet hosanna sung  
And blest their Saviour's name.



and when our Lord being appealed to, to rebuke them, said, "Have ye never read, out of the mouths of babes and sucklings there hast perfected praise?" Does it not also remind us of the time when *children* were among the multitudes who followed our Lord even into a desert place, when after the five loaves and the two fishes had been blest and distributed among the people, it is added, "And they that had eaten were 5,000 men, besides women and *children*."

The remaining part of my paper will be occupied chiefly with remarks on the characteristic doctrines of the Reformers. These, indeed, have to some extent, been brought out incidentally, in the sketches which I have presented to you of their lives and sufferings. But it may be well for us to spend a few minutes in looking at them more directly. In the doctrinal statements put forth by these eminent men, we meet with two points of fundamental importance, and deserving especial notice. One of these is, that the divine offers of pardon and eternal life, through faith in a crucified Redeemer, are wholly free and gratuitous; as opposed to the Romish doctrine of salvation through the merit of good works. In stating this doctrine they were careful to explain that the faith by which we are justified, possesses nothing in the nature of a meritorious act:—that it is, in fact, simply the empty hand held out to receive the proffered boon. The other point is that this free and gratuitous offer of life and salvation is addressed equally to all; as opposed to the Romish doctrine that peculiar privileges in this respect were possessed by a favoured few, including the Virgin Mary and the Saints;—and that ordinary christians, far from aspiring to stand on the same level, must be content to solicit the benefit of their good offices, intercession, and superfluous merits. One of the prayers to the Virgin Mary, in common use at this period contains the following expressions, "Hail queen! mother of mercy, our life, our sweetness, our hope! O gate of glory, be for us a reconciliation unto the Father and the Son!" In opposition to this monstrous perversion of the plain teaching of the Bible, the Reformers maintained that our Lord Jesus Christ is our alone Mediator and Advocate

with the Father; and that in virtue of his all-sufficient atonement for the sins of mankind, every penitent sinner who believingly comes to him for grace and pardon, is accepted and placed on the very same footing with regard to salvation and eternal life, as the Virgin Mary herself.

With beautiful simplicity and clearness, Latimer wrote, "Like as when I owe unto a man a hundred pounds; I have it not, and for lack of it I am laid in prison. In such distress comes a good friend, and saith, 'Sir, be of good cheer I will pay thy debts'; and forthwith payeth the whole sum and setteth me at liberty. Such a friend is our Saviour; he has paid our debts, and set us at liberty. Therefore though our sins condemn us, yet when we allege Christ and believe in him, our sins shall not hurt us. For St. John saith, 'We have an Advocate with the Father Jesus Christ the righteous.' We have one Advocate, not many; neither saints nor anybody else, but only Him and no other, either in the way of mediation or redemption. Let us not withdraw from him his majesty, and give it to creatures, for he alone satisfies for the sins of the whole world. So that all who believe in Christ are clean from all the filthiness of their sins."

I have already mentioned the name of Thomas Becon, a young man for some time chaplain to Archbishop Cranmer, and who seems to have had peculiarly clear views of gospel truth. To these views he gives expression in the following passage:—"Here God, who is infinite and unspeakable, gives after such a manner as passeth all things. For that which he gives, he gives, not as the wages of desert, but of mere love. This sort of giving, which has its spring in love, makes the gift more excellent and precious. And as God, the giver, is exceedingly great, so is the gift which he giveth, which is his only Son. Let us understand that God is not said to be angry with the world, but to love it, in that he gave his Son for it. God is merciful to us and loveth us, and of very love gave his Son unto us, that we should not perish but have everlasting life. And as God giveth by love and mercy, so do we take and receive by faith and not otherwise. Faith only—that is trust in the mercy and grace of God,—is the very

hand by which we take this gift. And it is bestowed on the world, and the world signifies all mankind. Why shouldst thou not suffer thyself to be of this name, seeing that Christ, with plain words saith that God gave not his Son only for Mary, Peter, and Paul, but for the world, that all should receive him that are the sons of men. But thou wilt say, 'Why does he not show this to me alone, (that is to me individually,) then I would believe surely that it appertained to me.' But it is for a great consideration that God speaks here so generally, to the intent, verily, that none should think himself excluded from this promise and gift. We are saved then, only by the mercy of God; and we obtain this grace only by faith, without virtue, without merits, and without works. For the whole matter that is necessary to the getting of remission of sins and everlasting life, is altogether and fully comprehended in the love and mercy of God, through Jesus Christ."

But whilst in opposition to the teaching of Rome, the Reformers were thus earnest in ascribing our salvation to the free grace of God alone, and not, *either in whole or in part*, to our own virtue, merits, or works; whilst they maintained, with the apostle, that "not by works of righteousness, which we have done, but according to his *mercy* he saved us," they equally kept in view the no less important truth, that this great work is effected in us "by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost." Nor did they fail to maintain that if the tree be good, the fruit will be good also; that if our faith be sincere, it will be manifested by our works; and that we can have no scriptural ground for believing ourselves to be savingly interested in the Lord's forgiving mercy, further than as we are found endeavouring, in humble dependance on his grace, to bring forth fruit to his praise.

In proof of this you will remember the doctrinal statement of Patrick Hamilton, on "good works," already quoted:—and still more to the point is the assertion of Thomas Becon himself, (quoted in an earlier part of this paper,) that the faith by which we are justified, is a faith which worketh by love, and is, "*plenteous in good works.*"

Thus we see that the early Reformers were none the less steadfast in maintaining the Scripture doctrine of "good works," because of their carefulness not to obscure the gracious aspect of the gospel, by putting "works" in the wrong place. They regarded the performance of good works, not as a *condition to be fulfilled*, in order to our obtaining the pardon of sin; but as the FRUIT and RESULT of our having obtained it by free grace alone—"We do not," said another of these eminent men, "we do not work in order that we may be saved; but because we are saved, therefore we work."

I know of no more touching illustration of the clear gospel views of the Reformers, than is afforded by the prayer of Archbishop Cranmer, when about to suffer martyrdom. Through the fear of man he had denied his faith, but was notwithstanding burnt to death. At this season of extremity he knelt down and uttered the following prayer: "O Lord, have mercy on me, a most wretched caitiff and miserable sinner! I have offended both against heaven and earth more than my tongue can express! Whither then may I go, or whither shall I flee? To heaven I may be ashamed to lift up mine eyes, and on earth I find no place of refuge or succour. To *thee*, therefore, O Lord, do I run; to *thee* do I humble myself. O Lord, my God, my sins are great; but yet have mercy upon me for thy great mercy. The great mystery that God became man, was not wrought for small or few offences. Thou didst not give thy Son unto death for little sins only: but for all the greatest sins of the world, so that the sinner returns to thee with his whole heart; as I do here, at this present. Wherefore have mercy on me, O God, whose property is always to have mercy. Have mercy upon me, O Lord, for thy great mercy. O Lord, I crave nothing for my own merits, but for thy name's sake, that it might be hallowed thereby, and for thy dear Son, Jesus Christ's sake."

Sometimes we find them setting forth the dying love of Christ, with wonderful pathos and tenderness. "Jesus Christ," says the martyr, John Bradford, "gave his life for our sins, and by his death delivered us. Because he saw

that we should fall sorely, therefore he would suffer sorely. This death of Christ, therefore, look on as the very pledge of God's love to thee, whosoever thou art, and how deeply soever thou hast sinned." And then, as if beholding our divine Surety, as he hung expiring on the cross, he adds, "See, God's hands are nailed, they cannot strike thee; his feet also, they cannot run from thee; his arms are wide open to embrace thee; his head hangs down to kiss thee; his very heart is open, so that herein see, look, spy, behold, and thou shalt see nothing therein but love, love, love to thee: hide thee therefore, lay thy head there with the evangelist. This is the cleft of the rock where Elias stood. This is the pillow of down for all aching heads." And how soft to his own head must this pillow have been felt to be, when, in writing from prison a final farewell to his mother, he could say, in the near prospect of a cruel death; "My most dear mother, I heartily pray and beseech you to be thankful for me to God, who now taketh me to himself. I have nothing to give you, or to leave behind me for you; only I pray God, my Father, for Christ's sake, to bless you, and to keep you from all evil. May he make you patient and thankful that he takes your son to be a witness for his truth; wherein I confess to the whole world that I die, and depart this life in hope of a much better, which I look for at the hand of God, my Father, through the merits of his Son, Jesus Christ. Thus, my dear mother, I take my last farewell of you in this life, beseeching the Almighty Father, through Christ, to grant us to meet together in the life to come, where we shall give him continual thanks, and praise for ever and ever. Amen."

These illustrations are now brought to a close. I trust they may have served to present to you, with some degree of clearness, the most important aspects of that great work of the 16th century, which we have now been contemplating. I have confined myself to those views of religious truth, which enlightened Christians of all denominations are agreed in regarding as vital and fundamental. The purpose which I had in view did not lead me into a discussion of those matters, whether in doctrine or practice, by which Christians of one denomination are

distinguished from those of another. Not that I would be supposed to ignore or underrate the importance of these distinctions. With regard to them each one of us should seek to be fully persuaded in his own mind. And if, together with this persuasion, there be cherished in our minds a spirit of christian kindness towards those who differ from us, and of candour in judging of their motives and feelings; the benefit which we shall all derive from the mutual exercise of such a spirit and temper, will go far to counterbalance the disadvantages incidental to the present divided state of the christian church. These external divisions, though they may be the result of human infirmity, are very far from being an unmixed evil. They seem, indeed, in our present imperfect state of being, to be the natural, not to say the necessary result of that liberty of conscience,—of that freedom of thought and action, in religious matters, which, as Englishmen, it is our high privilege to enjoy.

But let us avoid exaggerated views on this subject. Whilst there exists between sincere christians of different denominations, a sufficient amount of diversity of sentiment to afford scope for the exercise of christian charity and mutual forbearance, we may well be thankful that there still prevails so much of substantial unity, in regard to those great cardinal truths of the gospel, which, after being buried in the darkness of succeeding ages of superstition and ignorance, were brought to light by the Reformation. And it is probable that, as we advance in christian knowledge and experience, the points on which we differ will be less dwelt on, than those in which we are agreed. The eminent John Newton, when in advanced life is reported to have said, "When I was young I knew many things in religion, there are only two things that I know *now*: one is that I am a miserable sinner, and the *other* is, that Jesus Christ is an all sufficient Saviour." And, truly, my dear friends, it is the gracious work of the Holy Spirit in the soul, first to reveal to us our need of such a Saviour, and then to reveal to us such a Saviour for our need. An experimental knowledge of this Saviour, is that without which all other knowledge is vain. "I determined," said

the Apostle, "to know nothing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified." "And this," said our Lord himself, "And this is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." And the time we have spent together this evening, will not have been spent in vain, if, whilst dwelling on the sufferings endured for the love of Christ, by so many noble confessors of his name in a former age, our hearts have been warmed by a more lively gratitude to our heavenly Father, for the blessings which he permits us to enjoy in these days of outward tranquility; and our souls quickened by his grace, to a more earnest and prayerful desire that we too may not be slothful, but followers of them, who, through faith and patience, inherit the promises.

















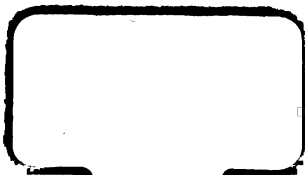












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