

# 'How the Past may Revolutionise your Future'

## The Reformation and what it Produced

### The Meaning of the Word 'Reformation'

The word 'Reformation' is a term referring to a movement which took place in Western Christendom beginning around 1500 and continuing into the 17th century. Its aim and purpose was to reform the church according to Biblical principles. We could also call it a religious revival, for the impetus to reform the church sprang from powerful spiritual awakenings in the lives of several spiritually minded and very able men at that time and amongst many in the wider population. It's antecedents stretch back into the 14th century and even earlier in some cases. Amongst its forerunners we could include here in England, Thomas Bradwardine 1290 -1349-clearly preaching the Gospel in his day. Made chaplain to Edward III, present at the capture of Calais, and preaching to the troops there. He was appointed Archbishop of Canterbury in 1348, but died of the Black Death, shortly after his appointment.

John Wickliffe, Morning Star of the Reformation 1324c-1384, the father of the Lollard movement, first translator of the whole Bible into English, and having a great influence on John Huss of Bohemia, ( via Anne of Bohemia wife of Richard II) who in turn greatly influenced Martin Luther. The reforming movement begun by Martin Luther (1483-1546) in Germany soon became a powerful movement throughout Europe.

### There were two essential elements in the Reformation

1. The assertion of the uniqueness and finality of the Scripture in all matters of faith and practice. The Reformers argued that the church was subject to the Scriptures; and that human reason was likewise to submit to the authority of Scripture. They argue that every man had the right to read the Bible for himself and to interpret it in the light of its own self evident testimony. This became known as "the right of private judgment". This further meant that the teachings and traditions of the church, however long they had been held, must finally be brought to the scrutiny and the test of

Scripture, and either received or rejected on that basis.

2. The Reformers emphasized, on the basis of the teaching of Scripture, the doctrine of salvation, by faith alone. They found that the Bible asked and answered two fundamental questions (a) what is a Christian? and (b). What is the church?

(a). In answering the first question, they saw that a Christian was not just someone who belonged to a Christian family, or was born in a Christian nation, but someone with a living, personal relationship with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Martin Luther, for several years, tried to answer this question for himself. He struggled to make himself right with God through his own religious exercises and duties, but he discovered he could not find peace with God through these disciplines. He could not find the answer by his own good works or by his own efforts. He came at last to realize that peace with God was through faith, that is trust in Christ is our only Saviour. Salvation was given not earned..... *By grace are ye saved through faith, not of works it is the gift of God.* Eph. 2:

(b). In answering the second question, they realize that the church was not simply a human organization or institution, made up of all those living in a particular area who had been baptized as infants or who were on the parish register. The church rather was a company of people who knew God, whose sins had been forgiven, and who have experienced the love and power of God in their lives. In other words they had been "born again". The church was made up of those who were spiritually alive. Individuals who rejoiced in the Person and Work of Jesus Christ the Son of God. It was these people who made up the Church, people who worshiped together prayed together; served God together and who organized themselves and governed themselves under the authority of God's Word and sought to make the Gospel known to others.

**a. The Reformation therefore was about, how a man or woman is saved, or made right with God,**

**b. The Reformation was about authority, where did the authority for**

**belief and practice lie? It was clearly not in the traditions of the Church, nor was it in fallible human reason, though the Reformers never despised reason nor for that matter the legitimate traditions of the Church.**

**The Reformers never made the modern, so-called liberal distinction, between God's Word, and Scripture, all Scripture is the Word of God. Luther said *I will not waste a word in arguing with one who does not consider the Scriptures are the Word of God.* This meant that the individual Christian and the Church are at all-time subject to the authority of God's Word.**

(I acknowledge reliance on the notes from my own teacher of Church History Mr. Andrew Davies for this introduction.)

### **Calvin and the Work of the Holy Spirit**

We can remind ourselves in this introduction as George Smeaton does in his classic work on the Doctrine of the Holy Spirit that the Reformation gave a new impetus to the study of the work of the Holy Spirit.

For instance, John Calvin's emphases on the doctrines of God's sovereignty and man's depravity demanded that at the same time there was a fresh focusing on the life giving and enabling, dynamic, work of the Holy Spirit, in his regenerating work, bringing conviction of sin and pointing us, and drawing us to Christ our Saviour. Moreover, the emphasis of the Reformation on *Sola Scriptura* led to a new emphasis on and understanding of the Spirit's work in inspiring and interpreting the Scriptures. Moreover, the Reformation saw a turning away from the Medieval misconception of the Church as a hierarchical, man centred organization to a spiritual Communion with Christ at the head and the Holy Spirit as the source of its beauty, strength and vitality.

Let us emphasize the fact that the doctrine of the Holy Spirit was one of the great doctrines recovered at the time of the Reformation.

B.B. Warfield in his Selected Shorter Writings comments:

The doctrine of the Holy Spirit was only slowly brought to the explicit consciousness of the Church, .... To be more specific, we shall need to note

that the early Church busied itself with the investigation of the doctrine of the Person of the Holy Spirit – his deity and personality – and of his one function to inspire the prophets and apostles, while the whole doctrine of the work of the Spirit at large is a gift to the Church from the Reformation.

*Indeed it is possible to be more precise still. The doctrine of the work of the Holy Spirit is a gift from John Calvin to the Church of Christ. He did not, of course, invent it. The whole of it lay spread out on the pages of Scripture with a clearness and fullness which one would think would secure that even he who ran should read it; and doubtless he who ran did read it, and it has fed the soul of true believers in all ages..... But it was Calvin who first gave them anything like systematic, adequate expression and it is through him that they have come to be the assured possession of the Church of Christ.*

B.B.Warfield, Selected Shorter Writings, pp.212-3

Yes, Calvin did speak to us of the sovereignty of God, of predestination, of salvation by grace alone, but we must not forget that he also enabled the church to see clearly the threefold office of Christ as Prophet, Priest and King, as he also gave the church at conception of what we might call and what Warfield calls science of Christian ethics. And in relation to the doctrine of the Holy Spirit it was Calvin was able to send out clearly the work of the Holy Spirit in regard to the doctrine of Common Grace, Regeneration, and the Witness of the Spirit.

### **The Reformation was part of the cycle of revivals that took place throughout the Christian Era.**

An overall view of English church history (and indeed that of all Christian nations), reveals a natural division into a series of cycles. These cycles may be compared to a succession of advancing and receding tides. They begin with awakening, lead to spiritual progress and prosperity, then terminate in declension and apostasy. The length of these periods may vary greatly, but the general features remain the same. (Martin Luther also said: *Histories are but the advertisement, memorial and token of the work and judgment of God, of the way in which He upholds, governs, hinders, advances, punishes and rewards the world and specially men as each may deserve, be it evil or good.*)

Here in our own country the first such cycle began with the introduction of Christianity into Britain in the first century. This cycle ended in the fifth century when the British church had become corrupted by Pelagianism and was fearfully judged by the invasion of the Saxons (A.D. 449). For the following 150 years the British church existed only in the Western extremities, which we now call Wales and in Ireland. This began to change when the Celtic missionaries, such as Aidan coming down from Columba's mission on the Island of Iona of the West Coast of Scotland began to evangelize Northumberland A.D. 635 - 651 and established the missionary outpost of Lindisfarne. Thus beginning a new period of spiritual prosperity. Another season of setback followed this at the time of the invasions of the Danes and Vikings A.D. 835 onwards, and the Norman conquest of 1066, which brought the English people for the first time under complete Papal domination.

In the 14th century revival of the truth seemed a forlorn hope, but this, in fact, proved to be the period when God began to prepare the nation for the great Reformation which was to come two centuries later. Already mentioned such men as Bradwardine, in the introduction, and of course John Wickliffe and before him, Robert Grosseteste and others such as Dean Colet were God's instruments in this preparation.

### **State of the Church in 1500**

The renowned Christian historian Kenneth Scott Latourette makes the following significant comment:

*As an aftermath of the previous recessions, in A.D. 1500 Christianity was confined mainly to Europe. In Asia and North Africa it was represented by static or dwindling remnants of churches which were encircled and being slowly stifled by a politically dominant Islam, or in South India, by the prevailing Hinduism. Only in Russia was Greek Orthodox Christianity the faith of the state. It was to Western Europe the previous losses had mainly constricted Christianity. Even here, in the second half of the 15th century Christianity face a future which seemed not too promising. It was threatened by internal decay and by the still aggressive Ottoman*

*Turks, loyal Muslims, who were more powerful than any single European state and against whom, in spite of the frantic efforts of the popes, discordant Western Europe would not unite. Until the amazing geographic discoveries of the closing decades of the 15th century, Western Europe seemed to have only a minor role in the human drama as a whole. In A.D. 1500, Islam, supported by the Turks and by various peoples of Central Asia; Confucianism, the system on which the Chinese Empire, largely and more populous and apparently more highly civilized than all of Western your, was based; Hinduism, the faith of the majority of the peoples of India, a subcontinent more varied racially and probably more populous and wealthier than 15th-century Western Europe; and Buddhism, with extensive followings in southern, central, and Eastern Asia, all loomed larger in human affairs than did Christianity.*

## **The Causes of the Reformation**

We need to be clear the outset that the Reformation was essentially a revival of true religion. The renowned Swiss historian, Merle D' Aubigne says;

*Salvation considered as coming from man is the creating principle of all error and all abuse. The excess produced by this fundamental error led to the Reformation and the profession of a contrary principle achieved it. This feature must stand prominently out in the introduction to the History of the Reformation.*

Certainly the Reformation occurred against a background of unrest and change.

**Other Secondary events need to be considered.**

### **1. The emergence of nation states, becoming increasingly dissatisfied and resistant to the political dominance and interference of the papacy**

**Note, the papacy had become the dominant political power at this time. The Church of Rome had become at this time an international state, with its monarch the pope, it's representative legislative assemblies, its laws and its penal codes. It kept prisons and passed sentences, even of death;**

**it was supported by involuntary contributions amassing enormous wealth. It no longer had the nature of a Church.**

To understand this more fully we must briefly return to the 11th century and to the time of Pope Gregory VII, commonly known as Hildebrand.

Hildebrand's vision and program was to make the papal church an independent and universal religious and political power.

First of all, came the claim of the Bishop of Rome to ecclesiastical and religious authority over all Christians. Secondly that claim developed into saying that the Pope had political authority over all governments and secular powers, and led to a situation where the papal hierarchy controlled all aspects of social life, economic, legal and intellectual.

At the root of these claims was a new interpretation of the famous passage in Matthew 16:18, 19.

*And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.*

*And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.*

This text does not teach that Peter is the primary foundation of the Church. Peter was not the Rock or foundation of the Church. **In the primary or basic sense of the term there is only one foundation of the Church, and that foundation is not Peter but Jesus Christ himself. (1 Cor. 3:11).**

*For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.*

- a. But in a secondly senses is entirely legitimate to speak of the apostles, including Peter, as the church's foundation, because these men were always pointing away from themselves to Jesus Christ as the one and only Saviour. (Hendriksen. Matt p.647).
- b. Some interpret it in regard to Peter's confession of faith in Christ as divine Saviour, i.e. the Church is built on faith in Christ as Saviour. We are

baptised on our profession of Christ as Saviour.

"The promise is made to Peter as confessing his faith, and also confessing it on behalf of the Twelve." Alfred Plummer Matthew. p. 229.

"This promise and the ministerial power of the keys is promised to the ministers of his kingdom, that is, the apostles and their successors in the pastoral charge in whose name Peter did speak to Christ, and in whose name he is spoken to by Christ. Such as have the office only from Christ, in whose name the keys are to be used, for he only is the giver of the keys. "

David Dickson Matthew. p. 226

*We are built upon the foundation of the apostles and the prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone.* Ephesians 2:20.

The new interpretation, however, urged that it was Peter himself who was made a cornerstone and authority for the church, and that when he died this authority was transmitted to the bishops of Rome in succession.

The 11th century witnessed a new determination to enforce the implications of this belief. Hildebrand set out to build an independent and self-governing ecclesiastical structure that would hold sway over all the states of Europe. For Hildebrand all authority was vested in the Pope and he had the key to all Kingdoms.

Hildebrand was well aware that some 500 years prior to this the invading barbarians had found that the bishops of Rome were the only public authorities left who had the resources of money, and ships, and with whom they could negotiate. Out of simple necessity these ecclesiastical figures became the heirs of the emperor's political authority in Italy.

### **The false Donation and Decretals**

Within a few centuries after this some obliging forgers with the aim of

buttressing this assumed political power producing documents purporting to record that such power had been given by Constantine to the popes and their successors, that is the power of political jurisdiction and authority in the West. These documents came to be called the donation of Constantine and seem to have appeared sometime in the eighth century.

Another similar collection of such documents appears between the year 800 and 845 in eastern France. They appear to have been published by one Autcar, or Otgar, Archbishop of Mainz. Autcar assumed the name of Isadore Mercator. Their aim was the same as that of the donation of Constantine, i.e. to advance the position of the pontiff higher than any other authority on earth.

It is interesting to note that when Martyn Luther threw the papal Bull that had been issued against him, as a result of nailing the 95 Thesis to the church door at Wittenberg, 1517, he first threw a copy of the Decretals into the fire as if to say letters now be governed by a genuine council, not by a papal dictatorship.

A few years after this, Reformation historians discovered that these Donations and Decretals were manifestly false and fabricated.

However, Hildebrand made use of these decretals and donations to establish the church of Rome with the Pope as its head over all aspects of European society.

*The medieval papacy paid a high price for its ambitions, however; especially his claim for political supremacy. In the desperate struggle to maintain or recover its political dominance over Europe, the papal monarchy sacrificed its religious authority and repetitively damaged its spiritual stature in the judgment of Christendom.*

*It was very difficult for spiritually minded individuals to challenge this corruption. It is said Pope Innocent III told Francis of Assisi on their first meeting to go back to the pigsty.*

*A century later a Pope who opposed the Franciscans to the extent of hunting them to death, was spending two thirds of the vast income that came to the Holy See on his military budget.*

*Before many centuries had passed, Roman bishops were performing precisely the*

*role in the councils of the church which the pagan Emperor of Rome had played before them. The papacy, as Hobbes remarked, appeared as the ghost of the Roman empire sitting crowned upon its grave. It was also said by the historian Lecky that the new papal Ceasardom shed more innocent blood than any other institution in human history.*

The Reformation Will Durant

As the Middle Ages went forward morality and spirituality were becoming ever more unusual amongst the hierarchy of the church. Sadly, the same could be said of many in the lower orders as well. One responsible Abbot complained that priests were generally ignorant, addicted to drinking and gambling and were more concerned to beget children than read books.

At the Council of Basle, the Bishop of Lubeck propose that priests be permitted to marry since not one priest and 1000 kept his vow of celibacy.

**A description of the times from The Reformation by Will Durant.**

**The enormous amount of land owned by the Church.**

a. Most of those who bequeath property left something to the church. Many who did so believed it would win them the favour of God in the next world. As the Church controlled the making and appropriating of wills that agents were in a position to encourage such legacies.

b. Since ecclesiastical property was safer than any other property from ravage by bandits, soldiers or governments, some people, for security reasons, deeded their lands to the church, held them as her vassals, and surrendered all right to them at death.

Others willed or part willed all of their property to the Church on condition that she should provide for them in sickness of old age; in this way the Church offered a kind of disability insurance.

c. Crusaders had sold – or mortgaged and forfeited – lands to ecclesiastical bodies to raise cash for their venture.

d. Land once acquired by the church was inalienable – could not be sold or given away by any of the personnel except through discouragingly complex means.

e. Church property was normally free from taxation by the state; occasionally, however, Kings reckless of damnation forced levies on clergy, or found legal dodges to confiscate some portion of ecclesiastical wealth. Many states were paralyzed by the fact that enormous wealth was being drained away from their countries into the coffers of Rome.

The Church, however, looked upon herself as the chief agent in maintaining morality, social order, education, literature, scholarship, and arts; the state relied upon her to fulfil these functions; and to perform this she needed an extensive and expensive organization; and to finance this she taxed and gathered fees. Many bishops were the civil as well as the ecclesiastical rulers of their regions; most of them were appointed by lay authorities, and came of patrician stock accustomed to easy morals and luxuries. They taxed and spent like princes; sometimes, in the performance of their multiple functions, they scandalized the saints by donning armour and lustily leading their troops in war.

Cardinals which chosen rarely for their piety, usually for their wealth or political connections or administrative capacity; they looked upon themselves, not as monks burdened with bows, but as senators and diplomats of the rich and powerful state; in many instances they were not priests; they did not let their red hat's impede their enjoyment of life. The Church forgot the policy of the Apostles in the needs and expenses of power.

Being worldly, the servants of the Church were often as venal as the officials of contemporary governments. Corruption was the mores of the time and in the nature of man; secular courts were notoriously amenable to the persuasiveness of money, and no papal election could rival in rivalry the election of Charles V as Emperor. This excepted, the fattest bribes in Europe were paid at the Roman court. From the moderate fee charged for priestly ordination to the enormous sums that many Cardinals paid for their elevation, nearly every appointment required the clandestine

lubrication of superiors. A favourite papal device for raising funds was to sell ecclesiastical offices. Pope Alexander VI created 80 new offices and received 760 ducats from each of the appointees. Pope Julius the second formed a bureau of 101 secretaries, who together paid and 74,000 ducats for the privilege.

Absentee bishops who hardly ever or never visited their benefices was a running scandal throughout the Middle Ages.

The Reformation Will Durant pp. 17 - 19.

Of course there were notable exceptions, some of whom we have already mentioned. No doubt there were also many pious men and women serving God and that own small corner and remaining faithful with what light they had in the midst of a corrupt and perverse generation.

**2. The revival of trade**, and a consciousness that the vast wealth, and land owned by the papacy was stifling growth and expansion.

### **3. The invention of printing**

It is said that printing was discovered by accident in the German town of Mainz in the year 1450 by a Goldsmith named John Faust, who was busy engraving letters of the alphabet in metal, when he had finished his work, he discovered that the impression of the letters remained on the faith that. He was intrigued to find out whether, and if these letters were arranged in words, because form sentences with them? His experiment was successful so he decided to consult his on how the idea might be developed. He took his idea to John Gutenberg and Peter Schoeffer, and they saw its potential and for about 10 years worked on the project to bring the idea to perfection. When all was complete they crossed the Alps, and took their newly discovered invention to Venice. Afterwards it spread down the Rhine to

Cologne and on to Flanders offensive England where the author printing was introduced into England by William Caxton (1415 – 1492) .

The Vicar of Croydon preached at St. Paul's cross in the days of Henry VIII that either the Roman church must abolish printing or printing would abolish her! (Foxy). In 1514, the Roman Catholic Church of that printing of books without her permission.

#### **4. The great Western Schism**

That which was called the great Weston Schism began in 1378, lasted until 1423. The Council of Constance in 1414 temporally healed the schism, but it broke out again and did not finally end until 1423. At one time, there were three popes each claiming to be the true successor of Peter. John Wycliffe, who lived at the beginning of the Schism, recognized it as a direct preparation for the overthrow of the authority of the papacy.

#### **5. The Renaissance or the revival of learning,**

The Renaissance stressed the importance of the individual. Its motto *Ad fontes* meaning "back to the sources" brought about the new interest in the Greek language. Stimulated by the many Greek manuscripts brought into Western Europe by Eastern scholars fleeing from the sack of Constantinople by the Muslim Turks in 1453.

The Renaissance had a positive side and a negative side.

It has been said of the Renaissance that it had nothing to say to the Church in its Italian home, there the of the Renaissance was a period when corruption, luxury, and all manner of evil were not only rampant in civil society, but were openly indulged in even as we have seen above by the heads of the Church.

James Blaikie in his, *the English Bible and it's Story* writes,

*'It seemed as though the leaders of Italy, civil and religious alike, had come to the conclusion that sin was no longer sin, so long as it was beautiful. This, therefore, was the period when, instead of witnessing the Reformation from within, for which*

*the best of men in the Church had long been crying and praying for, the chair of St. Peter was occupied by an unspeakable scoundrel and beast such as Alexander VI, and when Leo X, on his election to his sacred charge, could say – since God has given us the Papacy, let us enjoy it.'*

However, in the Northern nations of Europe the Renaissance took on a different form, something more worthy and more enduring than the beautiful and polished paganism of southern Europe. One of its greatest fruits, Erasmus of Rotterdam, now at Oxford University, 1516 published the first edition of his Greek New Testament. This publication now rendered the vernacular New Testament inevitable. This was the first printed edition of the Greek New Testament ever given to the world. It was now only a matter of time before the Bible in the English tongue would be in the hands ordinary men and women.

Martin Luther likened the Northern Renaissance to that John the Baptist preparing the way for Christ.

This awakening of the mind and the new emphasis on looking at what the Bible opened people's minds to the doctrinal errors, the superstitious practices, and the massive difference that had opened up between the Church as depicted in the Bible and the Church now represented by Rome.

## **6.Perhaps at this point here we should briefly mention Medieval Scholasticism.**

Scholasticism has been described as one of the most despised intellectual movements in human history. The English word "dunce" meaning fool, derives from the name of one of the greatest scholastic writers, Duns Scotus. Sometimes the **Scholastics** are referred to as the Schoolmen. They are often described as men who engage in pointless, arid, intellectual speculation over trivia. They are sometimes accused of debating earnestly about how many angels could dance on the head of a pin, though they probably never actually did this, it is an example of how many of them thought and spent their time.

Erasmus wrote a whole list of things he detested about Paris, and one of

them was scholasticism.

Scholasticism does not refer to a specific system of beliefs, but to a particular way of organizing theology. Its main aim was to systematize and to expand Christian theology and demonstrate the inherent rationality of Christian theology.

It did this a long lines of Aristotelian philosophy. The chief proponents of this approach was Thomas Aquinas and Duns Scotus. Some of Thomas Aquinas his famous "proofs" for the existence of God actually relied on principles of Aristotelian physics rather than any distinctively Christian insights. One could say although Aquinas recognized the need for revelation, in his attempt to prove that Christianity was not irrational, as indeed it is not irrational he emphasized the rational too much. His work has sometimes been called "the peak of rational reach", and one of the strange things about Aquinas is that he was also a mystic and it is sometimes said he was often so wrapped up in his divine meditations, that he levitated from the ground. His writings, and his most famous of course was called the *Summa Theologica*, have been likened to the Gothic architects who built their cathedrals higher and higher until the towers cracked and crashed to the earth.

Not everything about scholasticism was bad, it is possible to divide scholastics into two camps, one group that called itself the *Scholar Augustiniana Moderna* were trying to set out the teachings of Augustine in a full and comprehensive fashion, and it is that this school of thought in England influenced Thomas Bradwardine, and John Wickliffe.

Another form of scholasticism was simply called the *via moderna* and this very much represented the ideas of Gabriel Biel (just mentioned), which influenced Luther in his early life both positively and negatively, positively in that the *via moderna* developed by William of Occam argued that the authority of the Church is derived from Scripture, not the other way round. (Wycliffe and Hus were latter to argue that if the Church is at variance with Scripture it cannot be the true Church.) but negatively the *via moderna* held a concept of salvation by works dangerously close to Pelagianism. If you read the writings of Thomas Aquinas who represented the *via antiqua* side of Scholasticism he speaks much of salvation by the grace of God, but by

that he means the grace of God enabling us to perform good works whereby we are justified in his sight.

Interestingly it was the *via moderna* form of scholasticism, with its over emphasis upon human reason, with its over emphase or reliance upon the pagan thinking of Aristotle that was taught at the University of Erfurt in Germany when Martin Luther was taught.

See also The Reformation T.M. Lindsay pp. 53-57 vol. 1.. Also own Miscellany p. 161.

I have very much simplified all this.

**It is against this background that Martin Luther discovers the writings of the apostle Paul, when his great emphases upon justification by faith alone.**

**It is in this context that John Wickliffe is translated the Bible into English and sent his Bible men or Poor Preachers up and down the length of the land to read it to the common people and expound its message.**

**It is in this context that William Tyndale, takes the newly edited manuscripts of Erasmus printed 1615) and the traditional Masoretic text of the Old Testament which had been printed for the first time in 1488 begins to translate the English Bible from the original text of Hebrew and Greek.**

**Luther this same time began to translate the Old Testament and German from these recently printed Hebrew text based on the old Masoretic text.**

**Tyndale's Bible by a correct interpretation of the original Greek completely undermined the Roman system, based in many ways on the Jerome Latin version of the Bible.**

**He correctly translated congregation instead of church, elder instead of priests, repentance instead of, do penance, love instead of charity, i.e. works of charity, admit or acknowledge instead of confess.**

**Tyndale is emphasizing inward religion not the output structure of**

**Matthew church consisting of priests hence it is confessions and works of charity to earn our salvation.**

**See page 148 William Tyndale, biography, David Daniell.**

**Also Tyndale quoted the passage which had become the bedrock of papal authority, Matthew 16:18. That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church. Tyndale changed the word church for congregation, and at one stroke demolished the popes claim to be head of Christ's church, and brought into sharp focus the hypocrisy and contradictions of the papal system; it's love for wealth, power and prestige; it's customs, practices and superstition; friars, priests and bishops, and it's Pope in Rome.**

**7. This opening of Scripture and opening of the mind also caused people to be shocked by the superstitious childish practices tolerated by the Roman church, many of them for the purpose of making money out of incredulous individuals.**

Many of these are recorded in J.C. Ryle's, Light from Old Times.

*At Reading Abbey, in Berkshire, the following things among many others were exhibited by the monks on great occasions, and most religiously honoured by the people. An angel with one wing – the spear – head which had pierced our Saviour's side – two pieces of the holy cross, St. James's hand – St. Phillips stole – a bone of Mary Magdalene, and a bone of Salome.*

*At Bury St. Edmunds, in Suffolk, the priests exhibited the coals that roasted St. Lawrence, the parings of St. Edmunds toe nails, Thomas a Becket's penknife and boots, and as many pieces of our Saviour's cross as would have made, if joined together, one large whole cross. They also had relics whose help was invoked at times when there was an excessive growth of weeds, or heavy falls of rain!*

*At Maiden Bradley Priory, in Somerset amongst other things, one could see part of the bread used by Christ and the Apostles at the first Lord's supper.*

All this was part of an emphasis on the worship of the Saints which when

first introduced perhaps had the motive of being a stepping stone to higher things, but was now seen to be a stumbling block. This practice was now increasingly seen as a sort of polytheism. Erasmus rightly drew the parallel between the Saints and the heathen deities, and he and others scourged the grossly materialistic form which this worship often took. If we are to believe him, at these shrines fugitive nun's prayed for help in hiding their sin; merchants for a rich profit; gamblers for luck; and prostitutes for generous pay.

To this could be added the practice of the sale of indulgences, which at this time were being peddled extensively across Europe to raise money for the rebuilding of St. Peter's Rome.

**8. Also at this time many were growing dissatisfied with the Church of Rome's teachings, teachings that had wandered far away from the Gospel, and therefore failing to meet the spiritual needs of men and women.**

First and foremost, among these was the sacramental teaching of the Medieval Church. According to Roman Catholic doctrine grace is imparted to the believer by means of certain rites. Baptism, confirmation, the mass, penance, extreme unction, holy orders, and matrimony.

Baptism is the first requisite in order to enjoy all the others, the most excellent of the sacraments it was said and still is said, is the mass in which Christ is mysteriously sacrificed by the priest to the Father and his body and blood eaten and drunk by the worshipers. (Actually the ordinary people are not given the wine in case any of it is spilt this is a problem if you believe the wine becomes the actual blood of Christ).

Without these rites there is no salvation, and they act automatically (*ex-opera operato*) on the soul of the faithful who put no active hindrance in their way.

Importantly these rites could only be administered by priests, thereby giving the priests immense power. The priests were made the arbiters of each man's eternal destiny, and the priest's moral character had no more to do with their binding and loosing sentence than does the moral character

of the secular officer affect his official acts.

Not only so but through the system of confession to the priest, the priest held the knowledge of the most intimate details of the individual's private life.

.....

### **Looking now more specifically at the nature of the English Reformation**

It is sometimes said that the English Reformation had more to do with politics than religion, or to go further that it simply had to do with the lustful desires of King Henry VIII and his desire to have a son and heir. In many of the books about the Reformation here in England, the Reformation is seen simply in terms of an event in the political history of England.

For instance, one writer Sir Morris Powicke, said, in his, *The Reformation in England, The one definite thing which can be said about the Reformation in England is that it was an act of State.* Another professor, Owen Chadwick in his work, *The Reformation*, describes the Reformation as *emphatically a political revolution.*

The first of these Sir Morris Powicke says that he cannot understand the general acquiescence of Englishmen in the religious changes that took place and describes this as one of the most mysterious things in our history. He fails to notice that such a change could not take place in England, if that had not been and the lighting spiritual need of the people, and a great desire amongst these people, stimulated by the Spirit of God, through the distribution and preaching of His Word.

In the same way, Professor Chadwick in his *The English Reformation*, admits that he cannot understand why Queen Elizabeth I told a Spaniard that the Protestants had driven her further than she intended to go in Reformation, if there had not been this underlying widespread spiritual revival amongst the general population.

T.H. L. Parker comments in his *English Reformers*:

*The stubborn fact has to be explained that the church which emerged was the Church of the Reformation, believing in justification by faith alone, holding to the Scriptures as the supreme authority in matters of faith and practice, refusing the doctrine of transubstantiation.*

*It was not inevitable that the Church should take this course; other possibilities were open, including the most probable one of; a Catholicism without the Pope, (as Henry VIII would have liked and possibly Elizabeth I also.) If the Reformation is interpreted simply is an act of state, as emphatically a political revolution, this fact is inexplicable.*

p. XVII

Others have suggested that the Reformation in England was simply a revolt against the tyranny and corruption of the clergy, coupled with a desire to ride the church of the superstitious clutter of image and relics worship described above. As one called it, a spring clean of the village church.

In response to this all would agree that there were elements of the above affecting the Reformation in England. At times as T.H. L. Parker eloquently and perceptively comments, *there were not a few occasions when these are the only elements we can see, but shining through and in spite of these elements we see Tyndale's living sacrifice to give us the Bible in our own tongue, and others yielding up their lives for the truth of the Gospel.* We can add, the purity of the Gospel preached, souls saved the people spiritually nourished and a new spiritual and moral power evident in the land.

There are times when we can only see Henry's divorce proceedings, or the selfish ambitions of men like the Duke of Northumberland, Lord Dudley. At times only *confusio hominum non tollit confessionem Dei*. All of which reminds us that men are but "*poor sinners*". Even the greatest of them, Thomas Cranmer, Nicholas Ridley, John Foxe were not perfect in all their ways, the Reformation was not a perfect or sinless work, simply because human beings were the instruments of it, but over all this it was undoubtedly and manifestly a mighty work of God.

## Some key figures of the English Reformation (Thumb-nail Sketches)

### John Wycliffe c. 1320 - 1384 - The Morning Star of the Reformation

John Wycliffe (The name Wycliffe is known to have in the region of 16 different spellings) was born above the year 1324, in a village of the same name a few miles outside the town of Richmond in Yorkshire, which his ancestors had made their home from the time of the Norman Conquest. Wycliffe's ancestors were of Norman stock and had come over with the Conqueror. We know very little about his family background, and even less of a personal nature about the man himself. That which we do know of him comes through his writings. Here we see him as a man of clear understanding, vast knowledge and strong conviction.

His surname seems to be taken from his birthplace, as was often the case at that time. John of Gaunt was the feudal overlord of that part of the country, and it is not unlikely that though some connection between this fact and the fact that later, he became Wycliffe's patron. He early showed great academic prowess and in due time went up to Oxford to prepared to take holy orders.

*'John Wycliffe was born at a very important time in church history. England was emerging from the Middle Ages is a distinct nation. English-language was coming into general use that was widely understood. Oxford University at this period had come to surpass Paris, and was the leading university in Western Europe. There was great emphasis on academic qualifications. Wycliffe was to gain great respect throughout the country because of this tremendous learning, for learning was held in very high esteem. The Church was ruled by an aristocracy of university graduates, and these men were considered useful to the State. Many bishops were no more than Civil Servants, and often Royal servants were rewarded by being made bishops. Few men rose to the top through any Church or any Royal service*

*without a degree. Wycliffe was born into a society where academic attainment was more important than anything else, and having such a wonderful mind, it was in the providence of God that he would be able to use it to such good effect.'*

John Wycliffe David Fountain p. 3

Wycliffe grew up in a period when the power and influence of the Papacy was at its height. Everyone attended church services but none but the educated could understand, as the services were all in the Latin. The common peasant in attending church would not expect to hear any preaching from the resident priest. He would hear preaching from the travelling friar but this would hardly if ever be based on the text of Scripture. He would know something of the stories of the Bible from the painted frescos on the church walls. Is certainly never would have seen a Bible in English, and even if one could have come into his hands he would not have been able to read it.

*'The most disturbing feature about the life of the peasants, and the message that he was used to hearing, was that he was in bondage to the Church and its sacraments. Pardon for sin depended on the particular acts of the peasant. These were corporal penance, pilgrimage, besides the gift of money which could relieve him from penance, and the payment for special Masses for the dead. 'Penance' was at this time being replaced by 'payment'. The exploitation of sin under guilty conscience was the most terrifying corrupting aspect of the relationship between the priest and the poor peasant in Wycliffe day. In the hawking of pardons, the Church reached its lowest depth, and it was not only Wycliffe who attacked such corruption, but others before him and after. The best-known was Chaucer, the 'worldly wise man'. In his story of the pilgrims who journeyed to Canterbury (The Canterbury Tales) he describes the unprincipled reply of 'Mine Host' to the Pardoner when he tries to sell him his wares. Chaucer, who was a friend of Wycliffe's and thought highly of them while not agreeing with his theological opinions surprise us with a very clear picture of just how bad things were in Wycliffe's day.'*

Ibid p 4

The Papacy at this time had sunk to its lowest depth. In the 14<sup>th</sup> century the Pope was described as 'Our Lord God the Pope'. To make matters even worse the papacy had removed from Rome to Avignon in France, and this had a tremendous and detrimental effect on the attitude of English people towards the papacy because we were that time continue at war with the French. Vast sums of money that went to the Vatican to direct taxation and this to write to dispose of the offices of the church was especially irritating, when it was strongly suspected but the money helped to pay for the armies of France.

### **The Black Death**

In 1348 this fearful pestilence brought out. It was one of the most destructive in history. Appearing first in Asia, it came west, crossing Europe, 'with terror marching before it, and death following in its rear.' On the 1st of August the plague reached England. 'Beginning at Dorchester,' says Fox, 'every day twenty, some days forty, some fifty, and more, dead corpses were brought and laid together in one deep pit.' On 1<sup>st</sup> November it reached London,' where the vehemence rage thereof was so hot, and did increase so much, that from the first day of February until about the beginning of May, in a churchyard then newly made by Smithfield (Charterhouse), about two-hundred dead corpses every day were buried, besides those which in other churchyards of the city were laid also.' 'In those days,' says another, 'scarcely were there left living enough folk to bury honestly them that were dead.' One Hundred thousand died in London and half of the entire nation was struck no-where escaped. Animals were also affected and putrid carcasses covered the fields. Farm labourers stopped work; the law courts were closed, and Parliament too. Terror, mourning and death reigned.'

Ibid p 8

It would seem that this terrible plague was part of the means of John Wycliffe's conversion. D Aubigne speaks of this visitation of the Almighty 'sounding like the trumpet of the judgment day in the heart of Wycliffe.' It was through the reading of Bradwardine's works that he had first begun to read Scripture, but it was the plague that brought him to the Scriptures again and this for the first time with a real sense of spiritual need. Now he studied scripture not as a theologian but as a seeking soul.

### **The Teaching of John Wycliffe**

Wycliffe taught that there was a visible church and an invisible church. The invisible church was the true church. Members of the visible church may or may not be members of the invisible church. Wycliffe was in other words distinguishing between what he saw as the ideal and the real church, the eternal and spiritual church, from the material or outward church. He taught that the outward church could have no authority except that which could be derived from the spiritual church.

He taught the clergy could be dismissed from their positions if they were not in a state of grace. He further taught that the civil power had the authority to do this if necessary.

He appealed to the government to reform the whole order of the Church of England. He particularly denounced the irregularities of the Friars.

In relation to our Lord Jesus Christ Wycliffe believed him to be very God and very Man; the sole Mediator, Saviour, Leader and Head of the Christian Church.

His one standard of truth was the Bible. The Bible was the sole authority, to which ecclesiastical authorities had no right to add. He constantly appealed to the Scriptures as the only infallible rule for faith and life. Because of his

frequent writing and preaching from Scripture, and his knowledge of its teachings, he was called 'The Evangelical Doctor.' He was heart and soul set on reforming the Church on Biblical lines. He firmly believed that the source of all the troubles and evils that were afflicting the church resulted from a universal apostasy from Christ and his Word, and the only cure was a return to Him.

John Wycliffe also saw the truth of the doctrine of justification by faith in Christ alone. It may be argued that he did not see it so clearly as Martin Luther or John Calvin. We might note that in England others had seen this doctrine, men such as Anslem to some extent and also Occam and Bradwardine. Perhaps for this reason it was not so much a subject of controversy here in England. As we shall see at the time of the Reformation in England the great issue was the question of the nature of the Lord's Supper. The fact that Wycliffe trusted for salvation not in his own works, but in the merits of Christ might be seen by consideration of the following prayer of Wycliffe's:

*'Heal us, Lord, for nought not for our merits, but for thy mercy. Lord, not to our merits, but to thy mercy give the joy. Give us grace to know that all thy gifts be of thy goodness. Our flesh, though it be holy, yet it is not holy. We are all original sinners from our mother's womb. We cannot so much as think a good thought unless Jesus, the Angel of the great counsel, send it; nor perform a good work unless it be properly his good work. His mercy comes before us; that we receiving grace, he followeth us, helping and keeping us in grace.'*

Life of Wycliffe, Le Bas p 322 quoted in Story of the Light that Never Went Out. p.134

Earlier in his life Wycliffe believed in the doctrine of Purgatory, but in his later works he doubts it and then distinctly denies it.

His views of the Church were distinctly scriptural- we also see the influence of Augustine in this thinking here. For him the Church was not a distinct class called the clergy, but the whole number of the redeemed. 'And this church' he wrote 'is the mother to each man that shall be saved, and containeth no member, but only them that shall be saved.'

Wycliffe condemned the mendicant orders and indeed to him the whole monastic system was a canker, eating away the spiritual life of the church. On prelates he was no less severe. Their worldliness, love of money, manifest heresies, etc., were constant targets of his rebuke. These wicked prelates sell men's souls to Satan for money, for which souls Christ shed his precious heart's blood upon the cross; thus and almost all men are conquered to the fiend, and these prelates show themselves very Antichrists, from curators of Satan, and traitors to Jesus Christ and his people.'

The Pope was to Wycliffe, and to all the subsequent Reformers, not the divinely appointed representative of Christ on earth, but the Antichrist of prophecy.

The worship of images and the practice of going on of pilgrimages were also condemned by Wycliffe.

Only in question of Mariolatry did the reformer not appear to have received fullness of light. He continued in this error to the end.

*'Evidently he did not arrive, in this world, to the formation of the stature of Christ; nevertheless, in an age of spiritual pygmies, he, and many of his followers, were giants. Wycliffe is one of England's most important historical personages -*

## John Wycliffe as a Writer

Wycliffe was acknowledged the by friends and foe alike to be unequalled in learning and scholarship. In comparison with the elegant style of Erasmus and those who lived under the influence of the Renaissance Wycliffe's style was somewhat heavy and un-classical. He shared the faults that were characteristic of the scholars of his day; these were his constant repetitions, and his frequent digressions from the point under consideration. Nevertheless, his knowledge was manifold and his abilities varied. His acquaintance with science often provided him with some apt illustrations of spiritual matters. For example, the reader is led into the mysteries of chemical analysis to learn about the moral effect and consequence of sin upon the soul, separated from communion with God, like as the different elements of a compound body are detached from one another.

It still remains the case however that a complete catalogue of Wycliffe's writings has never been drawn up. The reason for this is that they have been scattered into various libraries such as the libraries of Vienna, Prague, Paris and Stockholm.

*'Wycliffe's influence on the continent is reasonably well known. While his books were being burnt in England they were being read in Bohemia. This came about in a wonderful way. When 'Christendom' was divided into two churches, under two popes, the Roman pope had the support of Bohemia. He was anxious to secure England against the French Pope and so encouraged the marriage between Anne of Bohemia and Richard II. This failed to secure an alliance to suit the Pope, but forged a spiritual link with Bohemia. Queen Anne was a godly woman who loved the Word of God, and through her influence, and contacts between the two royal courts, Wycliffe's works were taken to Bohemia. Wycliffe also influenced Bohemia through Jerome of Prague, who came to Oxford, became devoted to his doctrine, and took back his works to his native land.'*

*In a Bohemian Psalter of 1572 there appears a symbolic picture which shows Wycliffe striking a spark, Huss kindling the coals and Luther brandishing the lighted torch. It has been rightly said that Huss's works were paraphrases of Wycliffe's writings.*

*It is not surprising that the Council of Constance which condemned Huss and Jerome to death should also command Wycliffe's works to be burnt and his grave desecrated.*

*Wycliffe's influence extended through Huss to Luther and through Luther back to England. This has been known for many years, but his direct influence through his followers upon the English Reformation has been greatly underestimated. Even more significant is his influence upon English Puritanism and 17<sup>th</sup>-century Nonconformity.'*

John Wycliffe, David Fountain p 86

Some of Wycliffe's writings were transcribed into the Czechoslovak, Bohemian tongue by a Czech scribe at Kemerton near Evesham.

It cannot be denied that Wycliffe made a very great contribution to the development of Christianity in England and beyond. One of his themes was that of *dominium* or lordship, on which he wrote two treatises. The first dealt with the lordship of God himself, *De Dominio*; the second with the lordship as exercised by human beings., *De Civili Dominio*. These themes had already been explored by Archbishop Richard Fitzralph (mentioned above).

This is a very important theme because as soon as the Lordship of God is set forth, all human forms of lordship are relativized. The concept of the Lordship of God limits all other Lordships. It de-legitimizes dictatorships.

God is supreme Lord but he is also supreme reason, so his Lordship will be rational, not an arbitrary despotism. Furthermore, God's Lordship is not only above all others, it is also the measure or model for all other lordships.

The paradox of God's Lordship is that his service is perfect freedom. We find our true being in his services and discover as he says, *My yolk is easy and my burden is light.*

In the later part of this work Wycliffe deals with specific problems, such as, the limits of papal power, the conditions of a just war, and the power of the state in relation to the Church (especially in matters of property).

For Wycliffe God is no arbitrary monarch and is no oppressor, but one who works with and for his creatures.

We neglect these great theologians of the past at our peril, they have a massive amount to teach us today, and their neglect is an example of the shallowness and lack of depth so prevalent in so many aspects of modern life. As the American sociologist Peter Berger once remarked... *The denial of metaphysics may be identified with the triumph of triviality.* (A Rumour of Angels p.94 quoted by John Macquarrie Syubborn Theological Questions p.18).

### **Wycliffe condemned by the Council of Constance.**

Wycliffe though condemned by the Council of Constance was still able to continue his work because he was protected by John of Gaunt uncle to the King, and by the University of Oxford, and supported by many thinkers' eager to see reform. He escaped all punishment, and died in peace in his own parish of Lutterworth, on December 28th 1384.

Thirteen years after his death the papal authorities disinterred his body and burnt his remains and had them cast into the River Swift.

The following inscription is to be found on a tablet erected to the memory of Wycliffe in Lutterworth church:

**SACRED TO THE MEMORY OF JOHN WYCLIFFE**

The earliest champion of ecclesiastical reformation in England.

He was born in Yorkshire in the year 1324.

In the year 1375 he was presented to the rectory of Lutterworth:

Where he died on the 31<sup>st</sup> December 1384.

At Oxford he acquired not only the renown of a consummate schoolmen

But the far more glorious title of the evangelical doctor.

His whole life was one of perpetual struggle against the corruptions

And encroachment of the Papal Court.

And the impostures of its devoted auxiliaries, the mendicant fraternities.

His labours in the cause of Scriptural truth were crowned by one immortal Achievement, his translation of the Bible into the English tongue.

This mighty work drew on him, indeed, the bitter hatred of

All who were making merchandise of the popular credulity and ignorance.

But he found an abundant reward in the blessings of his countryman of

Every rank and age, to whom he enfolded the works of eternal life.

His mortal remains were interred near this spot; but they were not

Allowed to rest in peace. After the lapse of many years, his bones were

Dragged from the grave and consigned to the flames; and his ashes

Were cast into the waters of the adjoining stream.

The historian Fuller has said:

*'The little river conveyed Wycliffe's remains into the Avon,*

*The Avon into the Severn,*

*The Severn into the narrow seas,*

*And then into the main ocean.*

*And thus the ashes of Wycliffe are the emblems of his doctrine, which now is dispersed over all the world'.*

Another tribute comes from the poet William Wordsworth:

*'As thou these ashes, little brook! Wilt bear  
Into the Avon, Avon to the tide  
Of Severn, Severn to the narrow seas,  
Into main ocean they, this deed accurst  
An emblem yields to friends and enemies  
How the bold teacher's doctrine, sanctified  
By truths shall spread throughout the world dispersed.'*  
William Wordsworth – from the poem 'To Wycliffe'

During the time of Wycliffe two important acts were passed restricting the power of the Papacy in England, they were:

### **The Statute of Provisors 1351**

Throughout the 14<sup>th</sup> century there was a growing weariness in the country with the continual attempts of the Papacy to extract money or impose foreign clerics on the Church. Two more acts /statutes were passed to try and restrict this.

The Statute of Provisors attempted to prevent the Bishop of Rome nominating persons to fill the benefices of England. The first act was passed in 1351 and a more stringent version of the act passed in 1390.

*'The Statute of Provisors is one of the strongest bulwarks works against the Pope, directed by Parliament before the Reformation. The Magna Carta, the famous' bulwark of liberty', had a weak point. It allowed the Pope to nominate whom he liked to English church livings, without the authority of the King. Consequently, foreigners, mostly Italians, who did not even understand the English language, who lived abroad, and appointed some inferior person to perform their duties for small payment, while they took the revenues, occupied many benefices. Thus, immense sums were paid out of English pockets to enrich the Papacy. The Statute of Provisors was passed in order to remedy this grievance. It prohibited the Pope*

*from giving away the English church livings, or taking the incomes of monasteries or benefices.'*

Our Inheritance Magazine, Winter, 2006 p 36

### **The Statute of Praemunire 1393**

This was an act intended to prevent the Papal Court extraditing individuals out of the country to answer to church or Papal courts in Rome. Such appeals to the Pope undermined national laws and set aside the decisions of English courts and sovereigns. It was, in fact, making the Pope's authority and rule the first in England. The statute of Praemunire set out to underline the independence of the nation and was a statement to the effect that England could manage its own affairs without the advice or interference of Rome.

### **The Lollards**

Wycliffe's followers were called Lollards and it was nearly 30 years after his death before any of them were really persecuted by the authorities. Some of this came about because of the rebellion of Wat Tyler in 1381. The authorities saw Lollardy and social revolution as one and the same thing.

It is important however to note that when the labourers rose under Watt Tyler, John Wycliffe sided against them, as he proposed that confiscated church property be given rather to the upper classes than to the poor. The real principles of Wycliffe's reforms were but two: to abolish the temporal power of the Church, and a purge her of her immoral ministers. It was for this reason that he set up the authority of Scripture against that of tradition; it was for this that he doubted the efficacy of the sacraments administered by priests living in mortal sin; and it was for this that he denied the

necessity of auricular confession; it was for this that he would have placed the temporal power over the spiritual.

Amongst those who suffered in the wake of Wycliffe's teaching were men like William Sawtry the first to be punished under the Statute of Heretics 1401, followed by others such as John Badby, William Thorpe and Lord Cobham (i.e. Sir John Oldcastle). It was by this act that the burning of heretics was first carried out in England. While such punishments had been inflicted on the continent, England had so far resisted this kind of treatment of heretics. The act was under past because of a deeply laid plans on the part of the papal authorities to associate their religious opponents with disturbers of the public peace. The passing of this act was to disfigure our statute books for more than 250 years.

Another who suffered at this time was Bishop Pecock. This good man did not hunt out the Lollards for the purpose of bringing them to the stake. He rather sought them out to listen to their opinions and to learn from them way could and to correct or further instruct them where he thought they needed such instruction. For this highly reasonable approach he was hauled before the papal authorities, and condemned. Though he publicly apologised and insisted that he desired no breach with the Roman Catholic Church he was nevertheless banished to the solitary confinement of a monastic cell where he remained until his death.

*'The persecution of the godly called forth divine judgments upon the land, as will ever be the case when the Lord rises to defend his people. Civil war between the houses of Lancaster and York now occasioned great slaughter amongst the nobility of both sides. These Wars of the Roses as they are called commenced under Henry VI (1422 - 1461), and extended over a period of 30 years, while their effects in the despotic reigns which followed was felt for much longer period. Henry was deposed and succeeded by Edward IV (1461 - 1483) of the house of York, under whose reign parliament again became of little effect, the King having vast*

*possessions by confiscations made under the civil wars. A short reign of Richard III (1483 - 1485), whose death at the Battle of Boswell field ended the Wars of the Roses, and made way for the great Tudor line of monarchs, the first of who was Henry VII (1485 - 1509)*

The Story of the Gospel in England S. F. Paul p 78

### **William Tyndale 1484-1536**

William Tyndale was born into a good family (The name originally most likely derived from a dale of the Tyne in the north-east of England). William Tyndale however was born in the Cotswolds. The Gloucestershire villages of Stinchcomb, North Nibley and Slimbridge where the Cotswolds descend down into the Severn valley, all have claims to have associations with his origins.

These villages were at that time on the main road from the North and Midlands to the South West of England. They were connected with the ports of Bristol and Southampton, they had trade links with London and the continent and even as far as Africa. Much of the county's wealth came from wool, and the cloth industry involved almost all people, in one way or another. Merchants from Holland, France, Germany and beyond came to the neat little towns of the western Cotswolds to choose and buy fleeces and finished wool. Gloucestershire cloth men carried their trade to the craft halls of London, and deep into Europe. These contacts would greatly help Tyndale in later life as he had to flee to the Continent in order to complete his great work of translation.

From William Tyndale went up to Magdalene Hall, Oxford, in about 1506. In the University of Oxford at that time, the long Arts course consisted of (the trivium) grammar, rhetoric, and logic followed in the second part by the (quadrivium) study of arithmetic, music, geometry and astronomy. He took his BA in July. That is the best undisputed fact about him, although he appears on the records as William Hychyns, a name used by some of his family. After this he took his MA in philosophy.

Our chief source of information about William Tyndale is Foxe's famous Martyrology. The following summary is given by Ronald A. Bailey.

*'After leaving Cambridge (Fox is our source for believing that after Oxford, Tyndale went to Cambridge), in 1521 he entered into the service of Sir John Walsh as chaplain and tutor. The house was open and hospitality was extended to all and this brought Tyndale into contact with visiting clergy. There was considerable conversation and discussion between them which in time brought Tyndale into conflict with the authorities because of his strongly expressed views on the Scriptures and the Church. The result of these conversations showed him the need to translate the New Testament into English and in 1523 he applied to Cuthbert Tunstall Bishop of London for sanction and also for accommodation in the Episcopal palace. Tyndale was aware that no printer would undertake the work without such authority. Tunstall refused, but a rich London merchant, Humphrey Monmouth, gave Tyndale board and lodging. Here close to the Tower of London he began his work. Tyndale's resolve to make the Scriptures available to all is expressed in his words, 'I defy the Pope and all his laws. If God spares my life ere many years I will cause a boy that driveth the plough to know more of the Scriptures than thou dost.'*

*Finding publishing in England impossible, Tyndale went to Hamburg and also visited Luther at Wittenberg. In 1525 whilst engaged in printing a quarto edition of the New Testament at Peter Quentel's press in Cologne, he was stopped by John Cochlaeus, an enemy of the Reformation, who also warned Henry VIII and Wolsey. The English ports were watched that copies should not be brought into England.*

*The merchants who were friendly to Tyndale helped to get the New Testaments through the ports by hiding the copies among the merchandise. This circulation was soon discovered and as many copies as possible were collected and burnt at St Paul's Cross. Tyndale, learning of the destruction, said, 'they did none other thing than I looked to; no more shall they do if they burn me also.' (The burning of Bibles however produced financed for further printing of copies and completing the work.) In May 1535, whilst still engaged upon his self-appointed task, he was betrayed by Henry Phillip's who knavishly professed himself a student of the new faith and took mean advantage of the friendship extended to him by Tyndale.*

*Imprisoned in Vilvorde Castle about six miles from Brussels, Tyndale continued his work and translated the Old Testament up to Second Chronicles. On the 6th October 1536, Tyndale, whose last words were, 'Lord, open the King of England's eyes' was strangled and the burned at the stake.*

Our Heritage Ronald A. Bailey p 30

The prayer of Tyndale received a remarkable answer in the fact that Henry VIII was made instrumental in rejecting the Pope and the publishing of the Bible in English.

### **John Foxe 1517-1587**

### **The Protestant View of History**

Following note is taken from the Oxford martyrs by David Loads

*'In the autumn of 1838 a proposal was made to erect in Oxford a memorial to Cranmer, Ridley and Latimer, who died for their faith outside the city in 1555 and 1556. The proposal was almost certainly a protest against the recently published Remains of the Anglo - Catholic Divine, JH Froude. The memorial was to be a*

*gesture of support for the Protestant interpretation of the Reformation. In due course the memorial was built, but on a much more modest scale than the originators of the project had hoped. Edward Pusey, whose cooperation had been solicited, vigorously disassociated himself from it. On the 5th November he wrote to Benjamin Harrison, the Archbishop's chaplain and one of the instigators. 'The great mercy in our Reformation was that we had no human founder; we were not identified with men, or any set of men it was God's mercy that we had so little of human influence.' Pusey's reaction showed his awareness of one of fundamental problems of the reformed churches: the need to identify the true church with their own distinctive regiments, without appearing to rely upon recent human initiative. This was a dilemma which, in the conflicts of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, catholic writers were quick to see and seize upon. 'to know more manifestly the catholic church of Christ', wrote the author of the homily, *Of the nature of the Church*, set forth in 1555, 'we ought to consider what St Paul writeth of the foundation thereof. For all schismatical congregations, though they ground themselves apparently upon the Holy Scripture, yet have their profession, severally taken of some naughty man...' He went on to quote St Paul's Epistle to the Corinthians, and to add '... in this late time (we have seen) some saying in Germany, here is Christ, here is the Church; some in Helvetia, here is Christ, here is the church; others in Bohemia ... and we in England.'*

*The Protestants replied to such attacks partly by a priori reasoning, and partly by evolving a distinct philosophy of history. Drawing their ideas mainly from Eusebius and Augustine, they rejected the concept of the visible and historical church as the appointed vehicle for the transmission of truth. In its place they set the invisible church, the church of the elect the exact membership was known to God alone. This church was identified in the world not by historical continuity as an institution, but by faithfulness to the Word of God as set down in the Scriptures. Christian history was the record of God's purposes and their fulfilment, set down retrospectively and prophetically in the Old and New Testaments. The story God's people was thus seen as a constant process of falling away and renewal; of disobedience and corruption redeemed by the testimony of a chosen few. This was not, of course, a theory of evolution or of progress, but of the operation of divine grace. Human affairs were moving towards the consummation of Christ's second coming, but until that happened Gods will would continue to be proclaimed in the world by prophets, saints and martyrs, who by the nature of their calling would stand in constant danger from the worldly minded. Had not Christ himself*

*proclaimed the inviolable Word of God against the official guardians of the Covenant?*

*By this means the Protestants explained the fact that their doctrinal affiliations lay with those who had been condemned by the medieval church, such as Wycliffe and Huss, and armed themselves with a defence against Catholic charges of innovation and particularity. The visible church, far from being an infallible custodian of the truth, was itself a battlefield between the children of light and the children of darkness: as between the world and the kingdom of Christ there is a continual repugnance, so between the two parts of this visible church aforesaid groweth great variance and moral persecution, insomuch that sometimes the true church of Christ hath no greater enemies than those of its own profession and company.'*

*John Foxe Acts and Monuments I, 87-88*

*By proving to their own satisfaction that the Church of Rome had lapsed from the standard of the apostles and the primitive congregations, the reformers justified their repudiation of its authority. By the same token they represented themselves to be the faithful, and sought to demonstrate their historical connection with the early church by abandoning the accumulated traditions of Catholicism, and emphasising the scriptural simplicity of their worship.*

*It was natural zealous Protestants should hail so agreeable a king as Edward VI with enthusiasm, and in their apocalyptic writings he was greeted as Josiah, the ruler of God's chosen people. Without attempting to deny the elect status of their continental friends, the English reformers nevertheless began to review the history of their own country in the light of this new identification. The way had already been pointed by the royalist pamphleteers of the previous reign, who had used legends and traditions drawn from the medieval Chroniclers to prove to their own satisfaction that Britain had been evangelised directly by the apostles. In their hands this had been a negative argument to prove that the English church owed nothing to Rome. To the Protestants on the other hand it was a demonstration that the Reformation was not seeking to create a new church, but was rather 'the renewing of the old ancient church of Christ'. Again drawing to some extent on their predecessors, they saw the history of the English church as one in which*

*God's elect had struggled constantly against the superstitions and corruptions which increasingly poured out of the Roman curia.*

*It was in the light of God's dealings with his people Israel that the history of the English church was seen. This view was particularly worked out by John Fox in his Acts and Monuments, which was to be the classic statement of the ideology of the English Reformation. So we have England evangelised by Joseph of Arimathea, and the faith established under royal control by King Lucius. We have the British-born emperor Constantine bringing about the conversion of the Roman Empire; King John murdered for his defiance of a tyrannical pope; and John Wycliffe as the founding father of the Reformation, 'who begat Huss, who begat Luther, who begat truth.' It was quite consistent with this vision that the English church would have passed through periods of corruption and persecution. The sins denounced by Gildas had been visited with the miseries of the Saxon invasions; the persecution of Wycliffe and his followers by usurpation and civil war. The greed and rapacity which had accompanied the Reformation was expiated by the fierce persecution of Mary's reign. But always God in his mercy had preserved the remnants of the faithful, and raised up fresh agents to continue his work.'*

p 20 - 22, 29

## **JOHN FOXE 1517-87**

One of the fruits of the Oxford Movement was that it sharply criticized Foxe's interpretation of history, and began a reaction which still exists in our own day.

The attack on Foxe came in a series of learned articles by S.R. Maitland, the librarian of Lambeth Palace, who attacked the integrity, truthfulness and reliability of Foxe.

The anti-Foxe tradition once launched had a long run especially since it chimed in with the prejudices of such archivists and historians as J. S.

Brewer and James Gardner. Only the great High Anglican historian R.W. Dixon kept his head and appreciated the value and integrity of the author. In 1940 a careful and valuable study by Mr. J. S. Mosley began needful redressing the balance.

John Foxe was born in Boston in Lincolnshire in 1517, while he was young his father died and it fell to his stepfather, Richard Melton to arrange his schooling. He was a lonely and devout boy, preferring to be at his prayers or in church or reading a book rather than playing with his friends. This intensity of mind became a life-long trait.

It seems that a certain John Howarden or Harding of Brasenose College, Oxford became his patron, and he was able to enter Magdalene College in 1534 (B.A. 1537, M.A. 1543). He became a fellow in 1539, a teacher logic, and in his own studies one deeply learned in the Fathers and the linguistic tongues, a master of Latin and able to use Hebrew.

In June 1550 he was ordained deacon by Nicholas Ridley, in St. Paul's Cathedral on the first occasion when the new English ordinal was used. From the beginning he began to write and publish works, his first being a translation of the sermons of Martin Luther. He had a very compassionate trait that we shall see reappearing in his life, that is he wrote to a tract which was an argument against the death penalty being imposed upon those found guilty of the sin of adultery.

In the reign of Queen Mary Foxe became an exile in Frankfurt, Germany eventually moving to Basle where he found employment with a printer, he was reduced to great poverty living in only one room, and existed mainly on bread and water.

After the death of Mary and 1558 he returned eventually to England but was unable to travel straightaway because of shortage of money. In

England he found support from Thomas Howard, the fourth Duke of Norfolk. Again he became involved in publishing and began at this time his work on the Acts and Monuments.

In 1571 he edited an edition of the Anglo-Saxon Gospels in parallel with the Bishop's Bible translation, under the patronage of Archbishop Parker who was interested in Anglo-Saxon times, and whose chaplain, John Jocelyn was an Anglo-Saxon scholar. Foxe in his introduction to the Martyrology argues that the vernacular Scripture was an ancient custom in England.

Foxe as noted above was very bookish, and indeed ruined his health by his persistent study. Yet, the same time he had a "genius for friendship", was a much sought-after spiritual counsellor, and as well as being a man of prayer was a man of great generosity and kindness. Francis Drake credited his victory at it is, in part of Fox's prayers. As a result of Foxe's otherworldly character some claimed that he had prophetic powers and could heal the sick. He was a very able preacher, and once preached a sermon that it was said resulted in the conversion of a Spanish Jew. Sir Francis Walsingham, who was at that time sick in bed sent for him and ordered a repeats and private performance in his bedroom!

As noted above Foxe was a man of great humanity, who hated cruelty. We are often told that at that time there was little toleration amongst Protestants or Catholics. But Foxe is an outstanding exception to the general perception of the times. When Joan of Kent was to be burned in 1550 on the condemnation of Cranmer, for her denial of the divinity of Christ, Fox pleaded on her behalf.

Again in the time of Elizabeth I when a congregation of Anabaptists was discovered in London in 1575; twenty- seven were seized and five were imprisoned and threatened with death by burning.

Foxe wrote to the Queen a letter beginning:

*I defend them not: these errors should be repressed, and I rejoice that no Englishman is infected therewith. However, it is the manner of their punishment which shocks me... To burn up with fiery flame, blazing with pitch and sulphur the living bodies of men who through blindness of judgment is a hard thing and belongs more to the spirit of Rome than to the spirit of the Gospel.*

Also as a time when his own name stood on the black list at Rome of those marked out for execution, should the opportunity arise, Foxe (and this was strange indeed for a 16th century Protestant) interceded for the Jesuit, Campion, pleading that the sentence be commuted to some less dreadful end.

The Acts and Monuments went through three editions, the fourth and final edition in Foxe's lifetime published in 1583. (A posthumous edition was published in 1596). The fourth edition contained 2154 pages and was produced in two volumes. It was said to be the most physically imposing, complicated and technically demanding English book to appear during the first two or three centuries of English printing history. The third edition of this great work had already in 1571 been placed alongside a copy of the Bishops Bible in every Cathedral Church of the land.

In *The Acts and Monuments*, we clearly see in history a spiritual warfare raging between Christ and Antichrist. Gordon Rupp argues that Foxe in setting his Chronicles within a wider view of the whole sweep of Christian history has borrowed from the great German *Magdeburg Centuries* by Flaccius Illyricus, the view of history in terms the rise and overthrow of Antichrist, but giving it an English dress.

Foxe demonstrates that the first British church had its origin independent of Rome, and that over the centuries the medieval papacy had imported into it superstition, error and finally persecution. The recent reign Mary Tudor had demonstrated the agony and humiliation which had been the final outcome of this.

From a larger perspective the Acts and Monuments speaks of the militant character of the true Church. It puts the Martyrs in their real perspective and significance, as testifying beyond themselves to the power of evil in this present age and beyond this, yet more decisively to the victory of Christ, the conqueror of death and hell.

To quote Rupp again, his final comments are:

*To turn from Foxe's Book of Martyrs to such a modern volume as the anthology, edited by Helmuth Gollwitzer, Dying we Live; to those who died for their convictions under the Nazi regime is to move within the same world of crisis, conviction, and courage at the last. Here, in Foxe, is an Anne Askew, tortured on the rack in the Tower, manhandled by the Lord Chancellor himself, to make her confess the names of her friends, in an attempt to implicate ladies of the Court, and if possible the Queen Catherine Parr herself: so that her swollen body must be carried off in the chair to Smithfield at her execution. But she did not yield. In the modern anthology is the young French schoolteacher Anna Marie Colin, captured when trying to smuggle her children across the border, who wrote a poem on the eve of her execution,*

*I will betray tomorrow,  
But not today.*

*You may put beside it the verse which John Hooper wrote with coal on the window of the New Inn, Gloucester, before his burning.*

*Of earthly tyrant, have thou no dread.  
God's Word, which is thy compass,  
shall thee guide  
And the wind is fair.*

*The final contribution, therefore, of Foxe's book is not sectarian nor partisan. To an age which roughly and too hastily, perhaps, had rejected the massive solidarity of medieval commerce with heaven, with the church triumphant Foxe's book restored the dimensions of eternity, the eschatological horizon of decision, the life-and-death character of the Christian vocation. If Francis Drake read it aloud to his little company at sea as they nosed into unknown seas, on a desperate adventure: is Nicholas Gidding read it regularly to his quieter company in hardly more explored realms of the human spirit: if John Wesley chose it, first of all the Christian Classics, to be woven into that Christian Library which he prepared for the edification of his preachers, it is because it spoke beyond the limitations of any century or land., Of "the noble army of martyrs", and the continuing, blessed warfare of the Church militant here on earth, and the greatest of all solidarities, our companionship in that City of God which "is seated partly in the course of these decline times, but chiefly in that solid state of eternity".*

Six Makers of English Religion Gordon Rupp.

Perhaps we may add that no book besides the Holy Scriptures has been use to instruct the British people in the knowledge of God's high favour towards this nation; and at the same time to instil in the minds and hearts of the people a high, godly and moral purpose.

### **Was the Reformation a Mistake?**

The assumption behind this question is that the Reformation was a human movement, something man decided to do, and activity organized and directed by able people. But it is impossible to explain it in these terms

only. Certainly there was organization, and the leaders were all able men. But the historical context in which it occurred, the dynamic spiritual experience of Luther and others, and the astonishing growth and spread of the movement, can only be explained in terms of the mighty hand of God.

.....

### **The effects of the Reformation were enormous**

The great flood of pure, deep and practical religious life was set free-- which in turn went on to effect for good every aspect of everyday life.

### **The English Bible**

The Reformation began spiritually with the translation of Scripture, England through Wickliffe Tyndale, Myles Coverdale John Rogers etc.

Tyndale's 1525-6 New Testament, 1530 part of Old Testament

Coverdale's Bible published 1535

Cranmer's Bible (The Great Bible, sometimes known as the Chained Bible), 1537-38 made up largely of Tyndale's work and that of Miles Coverdale.

John Rogers, Matthews Bible 1537.

The Bishop's Bible 1568.

The Geneva Bible 1560.

The Welsh Bible.

The Authorized Version 1611.

J.C. Ryle rightly stated that the English Bible and the liberty and the right of every man, woman and child to read it, was the foremost blessing this

country owes to the Reformation.

*You might as well have tried to stop the tide rising at Chepstow, or prevent Jupiter's satellites revolving around him, as to stop the progress of the Protestant cause when the laity once began to read the Scriptures.*

### **Individual access to God**

This blessed road says Ryle had long been blocked up and made impassable by heaps of rubbish of man's invention. The people had been told that the only means of access to God was through priests, Saints, the Virgin Mary, masses, penances, confessions, absolutions and the like. With all these obstacles to overcome there might as well have not been a throne of grace.

The Reformation taught as Scripture taught, that there was but one means of access to God, open to all through faith and trust in Jesus Christ.

### **The Reformation taught the true idea of Christian worship**

*Ryle said: in the days when Romanism ruled England undisturbed, the service of God's house must've been the most Englishmen a mysterious performance, which left them entirely in the hands of the priests. If they were present at any Church service, they could only be present as sleeping partners, or passive, ignorant spectators. It was of mere formal, histrionic worship, to which the laity could only bring their bodies, but in which their minds, and reason, and spirit, and understanding could take no part at all.*

He quotes the 24th article of the Church of England which states:

*It is a thing plainly repugnant to the Word of God and the custom of the Primitive Church to have public prayer in the Church or the minister the sacraments in a tongue not understood of the people.*

### **The Reformation taught the true notion of the office of the Christian Minister**

Not a sacerdotal ministry like that of the Jews of the Old Testament. A

minister did not hold the keys of heaven, all to be practically the mediators between God and man. A minister of religion was to have as his chief business that of, preaching the Word, to be diligent in prayer and reading the Scriptures, and to lay aside the study of the world the flesh.

### **The Reformation taught a right standard of Christian holiness**

Not the monastic way of life or that of an imposed celibacy. Myriads of men and women will continually becoming monks and nuns, and of the vein idea of becoming, "religious."

The Reformers cut up by the roots this most fallacious idea. Henry VIII and the civil power dissolved the religious houses and dispersed that inhabitants. This thing was done roughly, and the property of the Abbeys and Monasteries in many cases fell into the hands of greedy individuals. Monasteries have begun well, as places of learning and training for the ministry, in the Middle Ages some of them had been the meaning the means of bringing about many inventions for the improvement of farming, and indeed of industrial production. In many cases they served as hospitals and hospices of their local region. However, they had become sadly corrupt and when they were dissolved few objected.

As Ryle further comments:

*The great scriptural principle was established, the true religion is to be seen, not in retiring into holes and corners, and fleeing from difficulties, but in doing our duty in every position to which God calls us, and manfully facing our foes. It is not by running away from the devil, and giving up the management of the world to him, but by manfully resisting the devil, and overcoming him, that true holiness is to be exhibited. The Reformers ordered The Ten Commandments to be set up in every parish church and taught to every child, and the duty towards God and our neighbour to be set forth in the old Catechism.*

**In these comments of J.C. Ryle** we see very much of the nature of Reformation Christianity. These distinctives are being slowly and purposefully eroded and removed from our nation by the so called liberal elite of today.

One modern writer has made these observations:

The traditional Protestant reserve – the personal, unostentatious relationship with God – has been junked for the emotionalism of public mourning, icons and even shrines. The popular expression of this in the country following the death of Princess Diana in 1997 was a long way from the quiet dignity that marked the passing of George VI and Winston Churchill. More prosaically, over the last 10 years Britain's roadsides have become marked by personalized shrines to killed loved ones, many of them thereby recognizing an ongoing relationship with the dead. So even while Protestantism remains the official British religion, its theological and moral impact on public life seems increasingly marginal.

Protestantism was always a religion of the Word rather than image. Luther had reworked his faith through the exacting text of Paul's Epistle to the Romans, and opening up the mistress of the Bible to the people has always been that the intellectual core of the Protestant faith. Unsurprisingly, Protestant communities – especially Puritan ones – were amongst the most literate and educated. Reading some Scripture were, parts of Protestant services. Reading and learning were central components of Protestant existence.

Protestants were always patriotic and saw Britain as particularly favoured of God. Foxe's Book of Martyrs emphasized this. The Spanish Armada destroyed by a *Protestant Wind, and the timely intervention of God*. He blew with His wind and they were scattered.

Another Protestant wind brought William of Orange as King in 1688, and with that of course, the Bill of Rights 1688, and the Act of Settlement, 1701, all of which our last two prime ministers have sought to destroyed. The strength of Protestant identity led to the Act of Union of 1707, the common Protestant identity underpinning what came to be called the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. All of which again under threat today. Protestantism also left its mark on our national art, literature and music, again a culture severely under attack today.

## The Reformation and the Rise of Modern Science

Undoubtedly Biblical Christianity is the mother of modern science because it insists that the God who created the universe has revealed himself in the Bible to be the kind of God he is. Consequently, there is a sufficient basis for science to study the universe. This must be emphasized, as much current popular opinion would hold that science grew thanks to the Classical, and in spite of the Biblical tradition. Much is made of the retarding influence of the medieval church on the development of science. The role-played by medieval Biblical exegesis in offering resistance to new scientific spirit on the movements of the earth and the planets has been emphasized again and again. In the first place we might say just as it would be wrong to blame Aristotle for all the prejudiced, dogmatic and even silly interpretations of his philosophy put forward by his medieval Scholastic followers, so it would be wrong to lay to the account of the Biblical authors the short sighted interpretations of those who used the Scriptures to oppose legitimate scientific opinions and discoveries.

**Herbert Butterfield, Regus Professor of History at Cambridge wrote in his, *The Origins of Modern Science*. That modern scientific investigation is firmly rooted in the Reformation. Scientific thinkers amongst the French Huguenots, the Dutch and English Protestants and the later Puritans believed that they should come to the book of God's works with the same reverence as they came to the book of God's words.**

**They believed that as God had made all things in order, so the natural laws of creation are orderly, and therefore the subject of scientific investigation**

**Just as God at the beginning of the Bible in Genesis caused Adam to**

**name the animals and creatures, so all living things can be classified and studied in an orderly fashion.**

**As in the Bible we see moral cause and effect: so the natural laws of creation can be studied as to their cause and effects.**

**As God has promised the stability of natural laws in his Word; Therefore, the natural laws are stable and can be the subjects of rational study.**

**Finally, God the Creator is revealed in Scripture as good, so the creation is for the benefit of mankind and we should learn therefore all we can about the laws of nature and use this knowledge for the good of man in his earthly condition.**

C.S. Lewis summed this up well when he said.

*Men became scientific because they expected Law in nature, and they expected Law in nature because they believe in a Legislator.*

Quoted by F.W. Prior *The Gospel in a Pagan Society*. Hodder and Stoughton p.77

It is of the utmost significance and to be well noted that the era of modern science coincided with the period of new translation of Scripture from the original tongues. Also the widespread reading and discussion of Scripture culminating in the translation of the Authorized Version.<sup>1</sup>

As R. Hooykaas observes:

---

*In the epoch when modern science arose, religion was one of the most powerful factors in cultural life. What people thought about God influenced their conception of nature, and this in turn influence their method of investigating nature, that is their science.*

Religion and the Rise of Modern Science p. XIII

The essential difference between the ancient Greek concepts of science which dominated the world up until the time of the Reformation was largely that scientific thinking was bound up within the confines of human reason. Whilst human reason plays an important part in scientific investigation the process of bringing all observations to the bar of human reason tended to put a straitjacket of traditional thinking and circularity on all scientific investigation.

Francis Bacon who is often called the father of modern science expressed this difficulty as follows.

In Bacon's opinion the root of all evil in science is the violation of the truth of nature by rationalistic prejudice.

*"We copy the sin of our first parents..... they wished to be like God, but their posterity wished to be even greater. For we create worlds, we direct and domineer over nature, we will have it that all things are as in our folly we think they should be, not as it seems fittest to the divine wisdom, or as they are found to be in fact.... we clearly impressed the stamp of our own image on the creatures and the works of God, instead of carefully examining and recognizing in them the stamp of the Creator Himself." Thus we lost our dominion over nature, "because we desire to be like God and to follow the dictates of our own reason". And then Bacon implores his readers to "discard these preposterous philosophies which have led millions*

*captive, and triumphed over the works of God; and to approach with humility and adoration" the works of God, to reverently un-rolle the volume of creation and read what it says. Bacon criticized the inadequate intellectual reasoning of the Greeks, their neglect of experiments and their premature construction of theories, as spinning out of laborious webs of learning upon a too narrow basis of facts.*

*This way of thinking exactly parallels the way that the Reformers looked upon God's revelation in Scripture. In true religion we are obliged to accept the way in which it pleased God to reveal himself, that is, in Jesus Christ, without whom no communion with God is possible. This way may not correspond to the ideas about the Godhead which human reason has produced but if we're ever to break free from the confines of our own fallen nature and limited powers of reason we must accept the authority of Scripture.*

Religion and the Rise of Modern Science. R. Hookaas p.39.

This was recognized by the English physicist Robert Boyle, founder of the Royal Society 1645.

*Boyle considered science to be an excellent school for religion. He pointed out that both science and religion are based on fundamentals that are incomprehensible, and that both are founded on facts "historical" rather than rationally cogent. The scientist finds much in nature that he does not thoroughly understand and he has therefore a special aptitude for accepting things that seem to be beyond belief to the "vulgar philosopher" - the man who thinks that he understands all things and that nothing which does not conform to his philosophy could be true. The scientist is prepared to learn even from unlearned people; just as it would be possible to learn more about the natural history of America from a companion of Columbus than*

*from a hundred Schoolmen, so too one could learn more about God from those unlearned men, the Apostles, who were in close contact with "Him who was at the heart of the Father", than from any philosopher.*

## Religion and the Rise of Modern Science R. Hooykaas.p.48

The fact that a Christian understanding of the world has made true scientific advance possible is well summed up as follows:

*Our Modern understanding of the structure of the physical world originates in the scientific revolution of the 17th century. It has been argued persuasively by Michael Foster and others that it was the Christian doctrine of creation which enabled this step to be taken in Western Europe, a step which had not proved possible in the equally technically advanced setting of, say, Chinese culture. To the Christian, God is reasonable and so the works of the Creator are intelligible and open to rational inspection. Yet, because God is free, there is a contingency in creation which means that its order cannot be determined by a priori thought but must be discerned through experimental observation. Torrance puts this very well when he says: "The intelligibility of the universe provides science with its confidence, but the contingency of the universe provides science with its challenge." The separation which Christian theology maintains between Creator and creation de- sacralises the world and so makes its contingency open to empirical inquiry, free from the danger of impiety. Because the universe is God's creation, it is a fit subject for study. Thus it was that in the 17th century Christian theology provided the ideological setting in which science could embark on its task of investigating the pattern and structure of the physical world.<sup>2</sup>*

---

<sup>2</sup> As people like Herbert Butterfield and A. N. Whitehead have shown convincingly,

---

science grew up within a Christian tradition: and for many years it was in no sense distinct or separate. The founder of science and Oxford, in the early 13<sup>th</sup> century, was Robert Grosseteste, author of a *Compendium Scientiarum* and later Bishop of Lincoln. He had no hesitation in saying that it was "impossible to understand Nature without experiment or described her without geometry." By this he clearly implies the unity of science and faith, just as much as his distinguished pupil, the Somerset friar Roger Bacon who in his *Opus Maius*, sought to show that the new knowledge, so far from being an enemy of Christian faith, was actually an aid, even in the business of evangelising mankind.

This same wholeness of outlook lasted well into the beginning of modern science. Our Royal Society was founded in 1645, and to its growth in importance much of the dissemination of knowledge without which science cannot live, is due. Among its members were John Wilkins and Seth Ward, both bishops; John Wallace Doctor of divinity and mathematician; Robert Boyle the chemist bequeath the sum of £50 a year to found a lectureship for "proving the Christian religion against notorious infidels, "and "chiefly recommending to his sister" ( his executor), believing of the greatest part of his estate for, Charter, the Fellows were commanded to direct their studies "to the glory of modern creator, and the advantage of the human race. "the advance or propagation of the Christian religion among infidels", John Rae, the founder of systematic botany and zoology, who great book *The Wisdom of God Manifested in the Works of Creation* exercised a profound influence among thinking people and was even used in a shortened form by John Wesley in training his travelling preachers; Christopher Wren, astronomer and architect of St Paul's Cathedral; as well as the greatest figure of them all, Isaac Newton, who claimed that his theological studies were at least as important as his strictly scientific ones. Strictly scientific ones. It may be true that religious discussions as such were not permitted at meetings of the Society, balanced in their second charter where the fellows were exhorted "to direct their studies to the glory of God the Creator and the advantage of the human race." Any doubts regarding the relation between the Society and Church was dispelled by its first historian, Sprat, who wrote:

I do here in the beginning most sincerely declare that this design (of a Royal Society) should in the least diminish the reverence that is due to the doctrine of Jesus Christ, it was so far from deserving protection that it ought to be abhorred by all the polite and prudent, as well as by the devout, part of Christendom.

C.A. Coulson *Science and Christian Belief* Fontana Books. pp. 22-23.

Creation and the Structure of the Physical World in Readings in Modern Theology Ed. Robin Gill, John Polkinghorn p.25<sup>3</sup>

We may also add the following:

**Adam was thought to have possessed a perfect knowledge of all sciences, a knowledge lost to posterity when he fell from grace and was expelled from the Garden of Eden. The goal of 17th century scientists such as Francis Bacon and his successors in the Royal Society, (founded 1660).**

### **The Reformation, the great Voyages of Discovery and the Beginnings of Colonization**

#### **The discourse of Sir Humphrey Gilbert about 1575**

Sir Humphrey Gilbert and Sir Walter Raleigh stirred by the spirit of this exciting age saw the need to expand the trade of Britain through the mastery of the seas. So Humphrey Gilbert, a Devonshire man who had a taste for learning and travel as well as skill in armed combat, had devoted himself to the study of geography and navigation. In 1565 he began to devise a scheme to search for a North West passage to the East, or as it was described in those days to Cathay. A few years later in 1575 he summed up his arguments for;

1. The practicality of the route.
2. It's political and commercial advantages to the State.

His work was entitled 'Discourse to prove a passage by the North - West to Cathay and the East Indies'.

Gilbert set himself to prove that such a route was possible. He also set out to show what he felt would be the advantages of opening up sea routes to the East.

These were as follows:

1. The discovery of a sea route free from interference of "any prince living, Christian or heathen," will enable England to secure a share of the infinite wealth of the East.
2. The North - West route from England to the East, being so much shorter than any open to other countries of Europe, will enable us not only to compete with the Portuguese or Spanish traders, but further...
3. We should be in a position to trade with regions not yet reached by Europeans.
4. Also we might inhabit part of those countries, and settle there such needy people of our country which now trouble the Commonwealth, and through want here at home are forced to commit outrageous offenses, whereby they are daily consumed with the gallows.
5. Such trade and settlement would be aided by the comparative nearness of these regions:
6. Which would provide a market for the launch production of English cloth, making us less dependent on the demand from European countries.

7. English shipping and seamanship will be greatly benefited to the advantage of national defence.

8. New industries may spring up at home to supply articles suitable to the needs of Easton nations and various peoples to be found on the voyage thither; thus providing employment "for vagabonds and such like idle persons."

Pecham, later, in 1583 also brought forward a scheme for developing an English colony in Newfoundland.

Also in 1583, Hayes brought forth a scheme for the colonization of the American continent north of Florida.

He argued his case on religious grounds saying: "*which must be the chief motive of such I shall make any attempt that way.*"

He urges that the obligation not less the privilege lies with England to colonize this part of the American continent, on grounds prior rights of discovery, of geographical situation, of the fitness of national character, arising from the oval plus of population due to long continued peace; "it seeming probable of the countries lying north of Florida God hath preserved to be reduced him to Christian civility by the English nation." He especially rebukes "the fault of foolish sloth in many of our nation choosing rather to live indirectly (i.e. dependent upon others) and very miserably to live and die within this realm has stood with inhabitants, and to adventure as become a man to obtain an habitation in those remote lands in which Nature very prodigally doth minister unto men's endeavours."

We may sum up the reasons set forth for the policy of settlement, or plantation, as it was then called, under the following headings.

First. *National policy.* This country by rights of discovery and geographical situation has a natural claim to the settlement of the temperate regions of the West, which are present un occupied by Europeans. Such possession will secure to England a counterpoise to the power of Spain; will tend to an increase in the number of mariners and ships, and to greater skill in seamanship; and further strengthen the nation by rendering is independent of European supplies of timber, cordage and all other raw materials of shipbuilding. So deeply is the conviction implanted the wealth of England and has safety must be sought upon the seas.

*Secondly: The economic condition of England.* A century of comparative peace attended to growth of population outstripping that of manufacture. And settlement will provide employment for the sons of well-to-do houses, as well as for peasantry and an increasing class of "sturdy" vagrants, paupers and even criminals.

*Thirdly. Commercial advantages.* All classes of the community will find plentiful occupation in a new home. A demand will spring up for English goods, notably for woollens, and the needs of native populations may even create new trades in the mother country, which will naturally retain the monopoly of such commerce. Precious metals may be confidently look for, of the store of gold and silver in the mother country increased rather than diminished. Articles such as hides, spices, silks and sugar now imported from our rivals may be produced by English subjects settled in English lands, while the produce of the Newfoundland fishery will be secured to English fishermen.

*Fourthly. Religious motive.* The "compassion of poor infidels," who should be brought to Christianity and settlement industry, was in this first age of colonize nation a more prominent motive than it was later. It was not less

necessary that the native should be saved from the errors of Rome, which would be his inevitable fate if England were forestalled by Spain.

## The Influence of the Reformation on British Character

### Sense of duty

Stanley Baldwin (1867-1947) three times Conservative Prime Minister between the wars writing in *British Life and Thought*... comments on the fact that leaving aside the many defects in our national character there is one notable and persistent and worthy characteristic i.e. the instinct of the English mind to find out what is unjust among us and undo it, to know what is our duty and to do it, as God's bidding. He traces some of its origins in Caedmon, "*For us it is very right that we praise with our words, love in our minds the Keeper of the Heavens, Glory King of Hosts.*" It was the same spirit that worked in Chaucer's time that worked in the Vision of Pier's Ploughman and spoke through the voice of Gower the poet and contemporary of Chaucer, who called him "*Gower the Moral, a voice crying in the wilderness, 'Prepare ye the way of the Lord.'*" It needed not in those days that a man should be a Wickliffite to see the griefs of the Church and people, and to trace them in their root to duties unperformed.

British Life and Thought p.442-3

See also p.245 England an Elegy.

This sense of duty manifested itself in many ways through literature and prose e.g. in Nelson's famous words at Trafalgar, "*England expects that every man will do his duty.*" We have it in Tennyson's, Ode on the death of the Duke of Wellington. *Not once nor twice in our rough Island's story the path*

*of duty has being the road to glory. Also in Wordsworth's Ode to Duty. In Mrs. Heman's famous, Casabianca, and in Baldwin's affirmation that where an Englishman sees his duty, he will follow to the gates of hell.*

*"It would hardly be too much to say," wrote W. MacNeil Dixon, "that into this one word, duty, the English have distilled the whole body of ethics." The merits of this notion, he argued, lies in its simplicity, it strikes no high-pitched or rhapsodical note; it applies as well to daily drudgery as to the heroism of war. It makes no claim at all for the person who obeys it, but on the contrary records his acts as something expected implying that anything else would be an aberration.*

### England an Elegy Roger Scruton p.56

The concept comes up time and again in the writings of the Puritans. Matthew Henry said, *We must do our duty and leave the rest to God.*

Arthur Bryant called Britain the *Protestant Island*.

*'During her first century as a fully committed Protestant Nation, out of the native stock, schooled by a thousand years of Catholic civilisation, England produced the world's greatest seamen, Drake, its greatest poet, Shakespeare, and its greatest scientist, Newton. Under a Queen descended on her father's side from a line of petty Welsh squires, and on her mother's side from East Anglian clothiers, her people laid the foundations of their future maritime ascendancy and, under her Stuart successors, founded beyond the Atlantic the 13 colonies which were to become the United States of America. What is remarkable is how much, with their material limitations, this little nation of 5 million's achieved.'*

p12 'Protestant Island'

At the time of the Reformation when the Scriptures were personally and individually taken to the hearts of ordinary people. In thousands of

homes where the Bible was read and re-read and great portions of it known by heart. Through this reading of the Scriptures and the hearing of them expounded, Britain's natural propensity towards Protestantism was re-born and strengthened and woven into the concept of nationhood and national identity.

*The Bible played a large part in moulding English nationalism, in asserting the supremacy of the English language in a society which from the 11th to the 14th century had been dominated by French speaking Normans. In the 17th century the Bible was central to all spheres of intellectual life....the Bible was foundational to all aspects of English culture.*

The English Bible and the 17th century Revolution. Christopher Hill p.7

### **The Reformation, political Liberty and Justice**

The Bible certainly played a gigantic part in securing the political liberty which has characterized these islands over the years. As men, women and children read the great themes of Scripture, Justice (Abraham at Sodom and Gomorrah, *let not the innocent be punished with the guilty*), liberty, (the Exodus), righteousness (the 10 Commandments) mercy, forgiveness, self-sacrifice, service, loyalty and many other great precepts were fixed in the hearts and consciences of the population.

### **A spirit of humility and dependence on God**

Bible reading produced a humble dependence on God and a humble obedience towards God.

*What was the effect of the Bible on the character of the Englishman? To us, looking back, it is not difficult to see. To those living in the 16th, 17th, and 18th centuries ignorant of what lay ahead, it was impossible to pierce through the mists. I should describe the effect on the common Englishman, as generation after*

*generation that amazing language of the Bible fell on his ears, Sunday after Sunday, was something like this. He became soaked unconsciously in the Hebrew tradition which in some strange way accorded with his native temper and disposition.*

*The Hebrew spirit was always conscious of the mystery of life, and of human weakness. From that consciousness necessarily arose the sense of dependence on a higher power, God, whose ways were past finding out. Given that attitude to a Creator, unless a man is completely indifferent, he seeks to reconcile his conduct to what he believes is the will of God; that is to reckon his conduct by a standard of right and wrong..... the generations which received this impress have long been dust, but consciously or unconsciously we of today are still their children and their heirs.*

Stanley Baldwin Conservative Premier 1923- writing in British Life and Thought. An Illustrated Survey by Various Contributors p.443<sup>4</sup>

### **A Sense of Personal Responsibility**

Built into this Biblical outlook on life was also the firm belief that individuals must take responsibility for their own lives and suffer the consequences of their actions. Staying on the right side of the Law was not merely a duty therefore; it was also a liberation. For it guaranteed that you were safe, that no busybody could give you orders or force you to comply with a routine that you had not chosen. The Law was there not to coerce you or to shape you into regiments obedient to the state. It was there to free you from the state and its officials, and to allow you to "get on with your own life" in private. Those who minded their own business and attended to their duties were rewarded with inalienable rights. The most

---

<sup>4</sup> Stanley Baldwin was Conservative P.M. 1923-24,1935-37. He was the Member of Parliament for Bewdley.

See Scrutton p.245-6

important of these was the right to do what you ought.

### **Freedom and Independence of Spirit**

The extraordinary result of this was that, while the English believed in law and authority, they despised officialdom and distrusted the state. English society was the creation of amateur initiatives; its most valuable institutions were the result either of private patronage or people making, common cause in clubbing together. Such networks of mutual self-help are natural, and are the fruit of the Christian conscience, they exist wherever the state does not extinguish them - as it extinguished them in Revolutionary France and later in Nazi Germany and Communist Russia. In England, however, private foundations, amateur circles, clubs and friendly societies sprang up not merely from the normal superfluity of social energy, but in response to social problems, calling upon the resources and consciences of Christian men and women to resolve them. It was not the state but Friendly Societies and Building Societies which provided industrial workers with housing. It was not the state but People's Dispensaries and Volunteer Hospitals which first brought the benefits of modern medicine to the poor. Schools, universities and colleges began as private foundations and, when it came to leisure, every village was a centre of spontaneous institution building, with its football club and cricket club, its Boy Scouts and Girl Guides, its Women's Institutes and its circles of amateurs devoted to needlework, music, photography, theatricals, brass bands, jam making etc. almost always centred on the village church. (Based on Scruton p. 58).

Bible reading made individuals sensible, concerned and active towards the needs of others i.e. The Good Samaritan.

Even Thomas Huxley the biologist and Darwinian evolutionist writing in his Educational Essays, 1874 draws attention to the part alone influence of the Bible on our national life.

*The great historical fact is that for three centuries this book has been woven into the life of all that is best and noblest in English history; that it is become a national epic of Britain, and is familiar to noble and simple, from John O'Groats to lands in; that it is written in the noblest and furious English, and abounds in exquisite beauties..... By the study of one of the book could children be so much humanized, and made to feel that each figure in the vast historical process fills, like themselves, but a momentary space in the interval between the eternities; and earns the blessings or curses of all time according to its effort to do good and hate evil.*

*The Bible was and is the Magna Carta of the poor and of the oppressed; down to modern times no state has had a constitution in which the interests of the people are so largely taken into account, in which the duties so much more than the privileges of the rulers are insisted upon, as that draw up for Israel in Deuteronomy and Leviticus; nowhere is the fundamental truth that the welfare of the state, in the long run, depends on the uprightness of the citizen so strongly lay down.*

Quoted by Gabriel Sivan. The Bible and Civilization p.77

John Milton said:

*There are no songs compatible to the songs of Zion; no orations equal to those of the prophets; and no politics like those which the Scriptures teach.*

### **The Reformation and Democracy.**

The translation of the Bible into English culminating as it did in the publication of the Authorized Version 1611 open in every way the minds of those who read it. It facilitated and enabled true debate and discussion of all manner of topics religious, political and sociological.

This undoubtedly helped laid the ground for democracy. Now that this book was widely available, argument and debate were licensed and legitimated. A sermon from the book of Judges or Kings might stimulate debate on good and bad government, or the beneficial effects of a good monarch or the tyranny and oppression of a bad one. One might theoretically plan a revolution through debate on the Sermon on the Mount, or out of a sermon on a chapter from the Old Testament prophets, speak of justice or oppression or the building of the New Jerusalem.

*In the English Civil War, a furnace of ideological conflict, Charles I was convinced that unrestricted access to the Bible, conjured up and enforced by his father, had nourished the discontent of the people. Throughout the Civil War, one extreme group after another sought and found the justification for its radical social views and political actions in the sacred pages of the King James Version.*

*Yet after the Civil War, this began to change and change quite rapidly. The King James Version was now seen as the bedrock of monarchy and Englishness. And so it remained for more than three hundred years until, in a misguided fit of mere modernising, it was "revised", that is to say adulterated, diminished, stripped of everything that had made it last and made it count.*

*It was a small step from the English Civil War to the American Civil Rights Movement; in both, the Bible was key as an inspiration against brutal and tyrannical authority. Yet in America, as in England three hundred years previously, once the blood was let, the King James Version reverted to its natural home, which is at the centre of a Christian state.<sup>5</sup>*

Twelve Books that Changed the World Melvin Bragg p. 283

---

<sup>5</sup> (See my p. 29 for further note on this.)

See The Case for Traditional Protestantism Terry Johnson pp.153-5

*The grip Protestantism has on the United States is strong and fundamentally influential in its political practices. The majesty of the language so transparently established in America's great public spoken moments, such as Lincoln's Gettysburg address, informs and is embraced by the leading democratic nation on the planet. Through this Bible the Protestant voice in English became the ruling tongue of two successive world empires. It also said to the world that Christianity was the leading faith the Christian God the one true God and Christ the true and only Redeemer. **This Bible has had more impact on the ideology of the last four centuries than any other creed, manifesto or dogma.***

ibid

p.282

It was in Protestant England that democratic theory was first put to the test and in time the results of that experiment rippled out to the margins of the globe. Through the influence of the modern missionary movements and the influence of the Bible Societies it is perfectly legitimate to speak of the Authorized Version of the Bible as the Book that Changed the World.

*Daniel Webster once remarked that the tavern was the headquarters of the American Revolution - meaning, in part, that ideas of self-determination could only emerge in a setting where free discussion naturally took place. That discussion was free because the English Reformation had established the right to it, by virtue of the place the English Bible had in people's lives.*

*Before the advent of the vernacular Bible, which was made available to the general public by printing, most people did not know what the Bible said. Thereafter, they could read it for themselves and decide, for themselves, what it meant. Their free discussions about the authority of the church and state fostered concepts of constitutional government in England, which in turn were the indispensable prerequisites for the American colonial revolt. Without the vernacular Bible- and the English Bible in particular, through its impact on the reformation of English politics- there could not have been democracy as we know it, or even what we call today the "Free World."*

The Making of the English Bible. Benson Bobrick. p. 277

This popular Bible reading marked the origin of a culture belonging to the man in the street which increasingly reached towards popular and democratic institutions. This awakening of the minds of ordinary people brought about in turn the birth of the popular press. The popular press first began to develop in London in September 1513. Between 1590 - 1610 at least 450 English news-books as they were first called appeared.

### **The Influence of the Reformation on the Moral Ethos of British Society**

Grotius the Dutch theologian after returning home from a visit to England in 1613 wrote: *theology rules there*. Casaubon (the Swiss scholar 1559-1614) made a similar report after his visit to the court of James I. This was a period when the nation was saturated with biblical truth.

This was to have an extraordinary moral affect. It certainly manifested itself in the literature of Jeremy Taylor, George Herbert, Milton and Bunyan and many others. It certainly lay behind the high moral tone of Cromwell and his parliament and the ministers of the English and Scottish Puritans. At that time, it was said that ordinary men took their Bibles with them to the marketplace and to the work shop, they bought and sold with its words on their lips and in their hearts. It was their guide in every part of their life; and when duty called them to take up arms they charged the enemy as it were with *the sword of the Lord and of Gideon in their hands, and David's psalms on their lips*. It made men like Faithful and Greatheart and Gaius, and women like Mercy and Christiana.

*From the very first the spread of the Authorized Version made for progress and freedom. It was the study of the English Bible which in a single generation raised so many in the 17th century from the puerilities, superstitions, and prejudices of the Middle Ages, and made them strong, far- seeing men; tender, and tender heroic women. It raised the nation at one bound to the foremost place among the nations*

*of Europe, and more than all else, kept it there. It taught us that the only enduring national prosperity is that which is based on loyalty and obedience to the Word of God. Piety which is nourished on manuals of devotion and the lives of the saints is of the hot house order. It is those alone who are nourished on the Bible who can stand the storm and flourish in the open-air. It is they who become explorers and reformers, colonists and pioneers of.....truth.*

Our Grand Old Bible. William Muir p. 178

It reappeared at the time of the 18th century revival.

It is well known that the Evangelical revival brought about a moral transformation of written and as we tend to forget many other countries also. Canon Overton wrote of its effects as follows:

*Of the faith which enabled a man to abandon the cherished habits of a lifetime and to go forth ready to spend and be spent in his Master's service; which nerved a man to overcome the natural fear of death, and, indeed, to welcome the last enemy as his best friend who would introduce him to the better land he had long been living for; which made the selfish man self-denying, the discontented happy, the worldling spiritually minded, the drunkard sober, the sensual chaste, the liar truthful, the thief honest, the proud humble, the thriftless thrifty and the godless godly.*

The Evangelical Revival of the 18th Century. p. 131

In the early and mid-Victorian era, the Reformation ethos held massive sway in our nation. On the Sunday of the 1851 census the records show that half the population were in church. On the same day over 2 million of the nation's children were in Sunday school and the figures for Sunday school attendance continued to rise throughout the century. From the 1850s the crime rate was also falling every year in spite of an increase in population.

Serious crime fell by 60% between 1850 and 1890. In 1888 three out of every

four children attended Sunday school. Illegitimacy fell by the end of the 19th century to 4%, divorce was almost unknown, and single parent families in the modern sense virtually unheard of. Drunkenness was a decreasing problem due to the influence of the Temperance Movement.

The virtues of self-control, self-help, self-discipline, hard work, independence, thrift, propriety, the concept of cleanliness is next to godliness, temperance, honesty, promptness, regularity etc. were held in the highest regard.

Margaret Thatcher reminiscing in 1983 summed this up when she spoke of the values (she ought to have said virtues) which made this country great.

*We were taught to work jolly hard. We were taught to prove yourself; we were taught self-reliance; we were taught to live within our income. We were taught that cleanliness is next to godliness. We were taught self-respect. We were taught always to give a hand to your neighbour. We were taught tremendous pride in our country.*

Evening Standard, April 15, 1983 quoted by Gertrude Himmelfarb, *The Demoralization of Society*. P.4

The way these precepts were worked out in everyday working-class Victorian homes has been described as follows.

*For men it meant having a job, however lowly and for women managing a clean, orderly, and thrifty household; for children, being obedient at home and school, doing chores and contributing, if possible to the family income. For the family as a whole, it meant staying out of the workhouse and off the dole, belonging to a burial club or Friendly Society so as to be spared the ignominy of a pauper's burial, having a clean paid up rent book, wearing clean even if threadbare clothes and, for special occasions, Sunday best, giving no cause for disgrace (such as being arrested for drunkenness or having an illegitimate child).*

Himmelfarb p.32.

It was said of England of that time, *"England is a domestic country, here the home is revered and the hearth is sacred."*

Good behaviour/ Christian behaviour was expected of high and low.

*We have come to regard the crown as the head of morality. The virtues of Queen Victoria or the virtues of George III have sunk deep into the popular heart. We have come to believe that it is natural to have a virtuous sovereign and that the domestic virtues are as likely to be found on the throne as they are in the humblest cottage.*

Karl Beckson, London in the 1890s, quoted by *ibid.* p. 55

It was to the eternal truths of God's Word and the unchanging law of righteousness that Arthur Mee turned the thoughts of his readers in the dark days of 1940. He wrote, *"If for one day the common people of these islands lose their faith in God the cause of freedom must perish."*

Our Finest Hour 1940 p.27

### **The Reformation and Revival**

As we saw at the beginning Latourette, the renowned church historian reminds us that for some time prior to the 16th century, Christianity had appeared to be on the wane. He writes:

*At the beginning of the 1500 the outlook for Christianity appeared unpromising. In many respects what remained of Christianity, seemed a diminishing force.*

*Was Western Europe shedding its Christianity? Christianity, although driven out of much of the Mediterranean world by Islam, had been a tutor to bring civilization to the barbarian peoples of Northern Europe. Were these peoples outgrowing their teacher? Now that they were coming to manhood's estate were these rude folk whom the Church had taught the rudiments of culture to regard Christianity is something out - worn, as swaddling clothes which should now be cast aside? Were a thousand years of certainty to be followed by centuries of decisive and final decay. As the world had witnessed the decline and fall of the Roman Empire, was it now to see the decline and disappearance of the faith with which the Roman Empire in its latter years had been so closely identified. The facts prove to be quite the opposite to the gloomy prognosis. Never had the influence of Christianity been so pronounced and widespread as it was after A.D 1500.<sup>6</sup>*

K.S. Latourette's History of the expansion of Christianity 1500-1800.  
Introduction

Clearly it was the translation of Scripture into the common tongues of the European people's that brought about the extensive revival and expansion of the Church in that period. We see here that the translation of the Authorized Version was one of the ripe fruits of that period of spiritual awakening. The widespread reading and the periods of the widespread preaching of the Authorized Version in the 17th 18th and 19th centuries again brought extensive revival of the Church.

**It is often remarked that this great era of Bible translation and the spiritual revival it produced also unlocked and stimulated all that was best and most noble in the human spirit. It was a revival of literature, science, of discovery and art and music etc. to a most remarkable degree.**

---

<sup>6</sup> See The Rise of Christian Europe H. Trevor Roper. pp. 14 - 15

This is summed up by Arthur Bryant as follows:

*In this period England produced the world's greatest seaman, Drake, the greatest poet Shakespeare, and its greatest scientist Newton. In this period the foundations of Britain's maritime ascendancy were laid. There were founded the thirteen colonies which were to become the United States of America. What is remarkable is how much, with their material limitations, this little nation of five millions achieved.*

*Like their Catholic ancestors the English of the first Protestant generations believed implicitly that the world was government by moral law. Released from the international bureaucracy and doctrinal strait-jacket of Roman orthodoxy, they differed, often violently to the character of that law, but they still believed that God, its embodiment and enforcer was all seeing, and that men and nations who transgressed it would be punished. The civil wars which convulsed England in the middle of the 17th century, with all their heroism, nobility and tragic waste, were a witness not only to their pugnacity and factiousness, but to the intensity of their religious feelings and striving for moral betterment. And when their fanatic enthusiasms in religion and politics provoked, as they were bound to do, a reaction, they embarked with equal enthusiasm on the task of making human existence more comfortable and intelligible. By their energy, curiosity and good sense they helped to lay the foundations of the modern world.*

Protestant Island Arthur Bryant p.12

### **The Reformation and subsequent long term Social Reform.**

It is not infrequently that we hear the charge levelled against Evangelicalism that it has no social concern and that its pursuit of the

salvation of souls excludes any interest in the everyday problems of society. Those who level such a charge only reveal their ignorance of history. It has been said that social reform in our own and other countries owes more to Biblical Christianity than to any other influence. Kathleen Heasman in her study *Evangelicals in Action, an Appraisal of their Social Work*, states that in the 19th century a good three quarters of the charitable and voluntary societies which were set up were evangelical in character. Many of the functions of the Welfare State were recognize and met, not by social economists and Socialists, but by practical and practicing Christians, whose action was characterized by an intensely personal concern for the individual and his family for prostitutes, cripples, drunkards, and even navvies and cabmen.

*It was John Wesley, William Wilberforce, Thomas Clarkson, Granville Sharp, Fowell Buxton, who fought the slave traffic, and they were all evangelicals.*

*It was John Howard and Elizabeth Fry, both evangelicals, who championed the cause of prison reform.*

*To the memory of the great reformer, Lord Shaftesbury, a pioneer emancipator of industrial England, and also an evangelical, stands the Eros monument in Piccadilly Circus, purchased with the pennies of the grateful poor.*

*It was John B. Gough, Frances Willard, Fred Charington and Sir Wilfrid Lawson - all evangelicals - who attacked the entrenched interests of the drink traffic, and whose labours resulted in many Temperance Societies for both old and young.*

It was Robert Raikes, an evangelical, who inaugurated Sunday Schools in this country, which, say's J.R. Green the historian, "were the beginnings of popular education."

It was Benjamin Waugh, George Muller, William Quarrier, C. H. Spurgeon, J.W.C. Fegan, and T.J. Barnado, all pronounced evangelicals, who espouse the cause of the children, and established orphanages in England and Scotland some of which continued to the present day.

It was William and Catherine Booth who brought into being the vast and worldwide organization of the Salvation Army. Sir George Williams originated the Young Men's Christian Association. Arthur Broome founded the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (R.S.P.C.A.); and Florence Nightingale was the great reformer of hospital nursing. All of these were deeply rooted believers in the Word God.

*What is not so often remembered is that particularly towards the end of the 19th century the individual churches and chapels engaged in a tremendous amount of social work in their immediate vicinities. A pamphlet published in 1883 by the Rev. W. C. Preston a Congregational minister entitled *The Bitter Cry of the Outcast Poor*, did a great deal to stimulate this work.*

*The publication of *The Bitter Cry* would probably have caused less concern had it not appeared at the time when the unemployment and under - employed of the 1870's was beginning to gain the attention of the public. Widespread discussion of social conditions was taking place both among the workers and the intellectuals, and socialist ideas were being revived. *The Bitter Cry* was the response of those evangelicals who appreciated the situation and who wished to apply similar remedies with an evangelical emphasis. This method of approach was quickly seized upon. Williams Stead made it the basis of an article in the *Pall Mall**

*Gazette, and it inspired the Liverpool Daily Press to publish some vivid accounts of "squalid Liverpool". It also suggested the lines which were followed in 1890 by William Booth's, In Darkest England and the Way Out - a book which was widely read in the last decade of the century and roused not only the Salvation Army, but other groups of evangelicals to recognise their social duties.*

Evangelicals in Action. Kathleen Heasman p.49

Notable amongst churches to take up this kind of direct social action was the Metropolitan Tabernacle London.<sup>7</sup>

Some of this work was very innovative for example the societies set up to rescue women from prostitution established by men such as the Rev. Baptist Noel and Theophilus Smith. The London Female Mission with a home in White Lion Square, London held periodic midnight mission meetings to which hundreds of prostitutes attended to hear the message of the Gospel and receive practical help.

If there had been no Word of God little of this work would have ever started. Britain would have remained in the condition it was in the early part of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century as described in great detail in Dr. Bready's famous book, England Before and After Wesley. See Baldwin's summary in footnote below. <sup>8</sup>

---

<sup>7</sup> See p. 50 Evangelicals in Action.

<sup>8</sup> *It's was just about 200 years ago that one of the great spiritual revivals of Christian history broke over England. Two men Whitfield and Wesley, devoted themselves to the evangelistic work. From early morning to late at night, in fields and byways, amongst crowds of miners, in the roughest quarters of our towns they preached and taught and organized. Their lives put an end to apathy, "it's used as a" had been liberated*

## Summary of benefits brought about by the Reformation

### A summary of the effects of the Reformation by Cunningham Geikie

It was the revolt of the human intellect and heart from mental and moral slavery. Christianity had brought such liberty at first; Protestantism was its

---

*and there was a stirring of the dry bones far beyond the bounds of the Societies which they founded, incalculable in its results.*

*When Wesley created the organisation which was to bind his followers together, he came to rely more and more on lay helpers for the day to day administration of that great body. The results of this was throughout the whole country there were found earnest and sincere men, many of them of the working classes, who were giving all their spare time and some all of their time to definitely Christian work among their fellows, I used the word "incalculable" of the results of this movement: incalculable indeed was the result of the example of such men in that rough industrial world that was so swiftly growing up.*

*In point of time I should perhaps have spoken of the religious revival of the 18th century before I sketched for you the development of co-operation in the industrial age, but I put it last so as to try to impress it on your mind, and will make clear what I meant by insisting on the use of the word "incalculable" with reference to that Revival. No one, a hundred and fifty years ago, could have foreseen the rapid development of democracy, the shifting, as it were, of the political sense of gravity, in democratic States: far less could anyone have foretold the political developments within the different countries during the last quarter of a century. But in all these movements that have grown up among the working classes you will find their foundations are laid on a Christian basis. Amongst these the Friendly and Co-operative Societies and the Trade Union Movement are the most conspicuous and successful examples self-help and self-government among the working classes. They embody and are naturally determined by the Christian social philosophy which prevailed throughout the greater part of the 19th century.*

*You will find amongst the creators of these organisations and amongst the workers in them, generation after generation, men who are themselves workers in the various Christian denominations to which they belong, men of markedly Christian lives, and their general aim, consciously or unconsciously, is to make life itself more worth living for themselves and for their fellows to build up rather than to pull pool down. It has been a revolutionary spirit more in the religious than in the political sense. Here in my view lies the profound difference between our outlook and that which governs some of the current movements on the Continent, and so long as that outlook, temper, tradition, or whatever you like to call it, remains in England, so long will the Englishman fight to the end any attempt to subject them to a way of life which to him is death.*

British Life and Thought    Article by Stanley Baldwin. (Written 1940) pp 454-5

resurrection, after priest-craft had slain it, as it had slain its Founder. It asserted triumphantly, once and for ever the absolute freedom of conscience in all our relations to our fellow men. Rome had demanded blind obedience to the Church, that is, in effect, to the individual priest, literally, on pain of hell. Protestantism, for "the Church," put God. It accepted no human Church or Church institution, as free from error or the possibility of it, either in itself, its acts, or its utterances.

It held up the Scriptures as the supreme rule of faith and practice, and put them in the hands of all, that they might follow them for themselves. It allowed no man to stand between the soul and its Maker. It held that salvation depends on no human mediation, or priestly acts, but flows directly from the self-revelation of God in His Word. It's all of the merits of the sacraments are dependent on no act of a priest, but on the direct communion of the soul with Christ.

It claimed the rights of private judgment in all demands on our belief, and thus made each man's conscience responsible only to God. While gratefully accepting all elites and ministrations to guide to a decision, that decision was reserved absolutely to the individual himself.

In the political sphere it imported the same grand principles. It demanded that no man should suffer for his religious opinions; (John Foxe in his Book of Martyrs, particularly believe this, and Fox and his famous Martyrology did a great deal in this country to teach the man should not be put to death because he holds a different religious opinion to ourselves. *My addition*) a principal long opposed, but now, at last, admitted to the full, in the rejection, by every English-speaking nation, of all religious disabilities. **Force cannot be used, and the Protestantism, to compel acceptance of opinions which conscience denies.**

**It secured protection to all in their fidelity to conscience. The rights of all was established to express freely their religious convictions, and to associate themselves with others in a public profession of these.**

Thus all men were made free to form themselves into new religious societies, so long as the opinions advanced were not clearly opposed to the public welfare. This principle also is recognized in all English-speaking nations.

It not only sanctioned but imposes as sacred duty, the frankest

investigation of all questions. Its unchanging motto walls and is "prove all things." It was henceforth impossible to in Protestant countries, to imprison a Galileo, or to keep an *Index Expurgatorius* and he became a religious duty to secure a sound education to the child of the poorest citizen. The very essence of Protestantism is to seek for more and more light.

It taught that men become true members of Christ, not by any priestly acts, or by mere outward connection with "the Church," or obedience to it, as the vital connection, but by a living an active faith in Christ, evidenced by a holy life. And since this faith, which alone justifies the soul, is a personal act between it and God alone the soul is responsible for its faith to no one but Him.

He proclaimed that all true believers, over the whole earth, form, as such, the one true invisible Church, whose members are known surely to God alone, and will in the end be acknowledged by Him at the Great Day.

As to the results of these great principles, to which more might be added, they are seen on every hand.

Further they have freed the land from monks and monkery, which even Romanists countries of since put down as an intolerable evil. There have abolished the most fruitful source of immorality, the celibacy of the clergy, and have made layman and ecclesiastic, alike, subject to the civil courts. They have exploded the doctrine of purgatory – the richest line of priestly wealth and popular superstition. They have removed from between the soul and God the priests, and saintly mediators, and taught men to go to Christ not to the Blessed Virgin, or to the glorified dead, but to the Head Jesus Christ.

They have dispelled the belief that a sinful man, who calls himself a priest, can judicially absolve a man from his sins. They have swept away from amongst us the hateful system of compulsory Secret Confession – have purified our churches from miracle – working pictures and images, and turned to ridicule the thousand inventions and postures by which Rome kept hold on the souls of men. They have given the spiritual communion with Christ in the ordinance, instead of the belief that a fragment of bread can be change by the priest into Christ Himself, and eaten as such. They have given us a pure and simple worship in our own

language, instead of the endless bowings and kneelings, vestments, incense, and lights, and a thousand ceremonies of Rome. They have given us the Bible, with its divine wealth of heavenly and earthly wisdom, in our own tongue. And to crown all, by securing for us the fullest civil and religious liberty, they have made England, near and over the world, wherever her institutions have gone, the envy of every nation.

### **A summary of the effects of the Reformation from Wylie's History of Protestantism**

In all the countries of the Reformation a great intellectual awakening was the immediate consequence of the introduction of Protestantism. Geneva and Zurich became centres of literary light and industrial activity; the Huguenots were the first soldiers, writers, merchants, and artisans of France. Holland became as renowned for letters and arts in the years that succeeded its great struggle, as it had been for arms when contending against Spain. But it was in England that the greatest intellectual outburst attendant on the Reformation culminated. Here mind opened out into an amplitude of faculty, a largeness of judgment, a strength and subtlety of reason, and a richness, boldness, and brilliancy of imagination, of which the world had seen no similar example, and which paled even the brightest era of classic times. By one quality were all the great thinkers and writers who illuminated the horizon of England in the Elizabethan age marked, namely, great creative power; and that eminently is the production of Protestantism. To it we owe our great thinkers and writers. Had not the Reformation gone before, Bacon would never open the path to true science; Shakespeare's mighty voice would have been dumb forever; Milton would never have written his epic; nor would Bunyan have told us his dream; Isaac Newton would never have discovered the law of gravitation; nor would Taylor, Baxter, Howe, and many more ever have discoursed; not one of these deathless names would have been known to us, nor would England or the world ever have possessed one of their immortal works.

T.H. L. Parker rightly insists that the Reformation in England was:

*The confession that Jesus Christ is the complete and only Mediator between God*

*and men, and who therefore endeavoured so to shape the doctrine and practice of the Church that her earthly existence should correspond to the truth of His existence. In this definition we place the Reformation within the sphere of faith in Jesus Christ, of repentance for sin, of love for our neighbour, of looking above the bewildering turmoil's of 16th century England, to the eternal and unchanging Kingdom of Heaven; within the sphere of the Church and of assembling together to worship God, and therefore of the ministry and of reading and expounding the Bible, and for this reason once again of faith, hope, and love; within the sphere of being baptized and of receiving the Holy Communion, of singing of psalms and hymns and of praying in private and in public; within the sphere of obedience to God's demands and commands, and of a rightly ordered moral life in private and in society.*