

## Preface

For more than a century, J. C. Ryle was best known for his plain and lively writings on practical and spiritual themes. His great aim in all his ministry, was to encourage strong and serious Christian living. But Ryle was not naive in his understanding of how this should be done. He recognized that, as a pastor of the flock of God, he had a responsibility to guard Christ's sheep and to warn them whenever he saw approaching dangers. His penetrating comments are as wise and relevant today as they were when he first wrote them. His sermons and other writings have been consistently recognized, and their usefulness and impact have continued to the present day, even in the outdated English of the author's own day.

Why then should expositions already so successful and of such stature and proven usefulness require adaptation, revision, rewrite or even editing? The answer is obvious. To increase its usefulness to today's reader, the language in which it was originally written needs updating.

Though his sermons have served other generations well, just as they came from the pen of the author in the nineteenth century, they still could be lost to present and future generations, simply because, to them, the language is neither readily nor fully understandable.

My goal, however, has not been to reduce the original writing to the vernacular of our day. It is designed primarily for you who desire to read and study comfortably and at ease in the language of our time. Only obviously archaic terminology and passages obscured by expressions not totally familiar in our day have been revised. However, neither Ryle's meaning nor intent have been tampered with.

Tony Capoccia

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## Warning #7 to the Church



### *Apostolic Fears*

by  
J. C. Ryle  
(1816-1900)

*I am afraid that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent's cunning, your minds may somehow be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ.*

The text which heads this page, contains one part of the experience of a very famous Christian. No servant of Christ perhaps has left such a mark for good on the world as the Apostle Paul. When he was born the whole Roman Empire, excepting one little corner, was sunk in the darkest heathenism; when he died the mighty fabric of heathenism was shaken to its very center and ready to fall. And none of the agents whom God used to produce this marvelous change did more than Saul of Tarsus, after his conversion. Yet even in the midst of his successes and usefulness we find him crying out, "I am afraid."

There is a melancholy ring about these words which demands our attention. They show a man of many cares and anxieties. He who supposes that Paul lived a life of ease, because he was a chosen Apostle, worked miracles, founded Churches, and wrote inspired Epistles, has yet much to learn. Nothing can be more unlike the truth! The eleventh chapter of the second Epistle to the Corinthians tells a very different tale. It is a chapter which deserves attentive study. Partly from the opposition of the heathen philosophers and priests, whose craft was in danger--partly from the bitter hatred of his own unbelieving countrymen--partly from false or weak brethren--partly from his own thorn

in the flesh--the great Apostle of the Gentiles was like his Master-- "*a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering*" (Isaiah 53:3).

But of all the burdens which Paul had to carry, none seems to have weighed him down so much as that to which he refers, when he writes to the Corinthians, "*my concern for all the churches*" (2 Corinthians 11:28). The scanty knowledge of many early Christians, their weak faith, their shallow experience, their dim hope, their low standard of holiness--all these things made them peculiarly liable to be led astray by false teachers, and to depart from the faith.

Like little children, hardly able to walk, they required to be treated with immense patience. Like exotic plants in a hothouse, they had to be watched with incessant care. Can we doubt that they kept their Apostolic founder in a state of constant tender anxiety? Can we wonder that he says to the Colossians, "*How much I am struggling for you,*" and to the Galatians, "*I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel.*" "*You foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you?*" (Colossians 2:1; Galatians 1:6; 3:1).

No attentive reader can study the Epistles without seeing this subject repeatedly cropping up. And the text I have placed at the head of this paper is a sample of what I mean: "*I am afraid that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent's cunning, your minds may somehow be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ.*" That text contains three important lessons, which I wish to press on the attention of all my readers. I believe in my conscience they are lessons for the times.

I. First, the text shows us a spiritual "disease to which we are all susceptible, and which we ought to fear." That disease is corruption of our minds: "I am afraid your minds may somehow be led astray."

II. Secondly, the text shows us an "example which we ought to remember, as a beacon:" "Eve was deceived by the serpent's cunning."

III. Thirdly, the text shows us "a point about which we ought to be especially on our guard." That point is being led astray "from sincere and pure devotion to Christ."

The text is a deep mine, and is not without difficulty. But let us go down into it boldly, and we shall find it contains much precious metal.

I. First, then, there is "a spiritual disease, which we ought to fear:" "Minds that are led astray."

I take "Minds that are led astray" to mean injury of our minds by the reception of false and unscriptural doctrines in religion. And I believe the sense of the Apostle to be, "I am afraid that your minds would partake of erroneous and unsound views of Christianity. I am afraid that you should receive as truths, principles which are not the truth. I am

afraid that you would depart from the faith once delivered to the saints, and embrace views which are intrinsically destructive of the Gospel of Christ."

The fear expressed by the Apostle is painfully instructive, and at first sight may create surprise. Who would have thought that under the very eyes of Christ's own chosen disciples--while the blood of Calvary was hardly yet dry, while the age of miracles had not yet passed away--who would have thought that in a day like this there was any danger of Christians departing from the faith? Yet nothing is more certain than that "the secret power of lawlessness" began already to work before the Apostles were dead (2 Thessalonians 2:7). "Even now," says John, "Many antichrists have come" (1 John 2:18). And no fact in Church history is more clearly proved than this--that false doctrine has never ceased to be the plague of Christendom for the last eighteen centuries. Looking forward with the eye of a prophet, Paul might well say "I am afraid:" "I am not only afraid of the corruption of your morals, but of your minds." The plain truth is that "false doctrine" has been the chosen device which Satan has employed in every age to stop the progress of the Gospel of Christ. Finding himself unable to prevent the Fountain of Life being opened, he has labored incessantly to poison the streams which flow from it. If he could not destroy it, he has too often neutralized its usefulness by addition, subtraction, or substitution. In a word he has "led astray men's minds."

(a) False doctrine soon spread throughout the Early Church after the death of the Apostles, despite what some may wish to say of the Early Church's purity. Partly by strange teaching about the Trinity and the Person of Christ, partly by an absurd multiplication of newfangled rituals, partly by the introduction of monasticism and a man-made asceticism, the light of the Church was soon dimmed and its usefulness destroyed. Even in Augustine's time rituals grew to such a number that the estate of Christian people was in a worse case concerning this matter than were the Jews. Here was the leading astray of men's minds.

(b) False doctrine in the middle ages so completely spread throughout the Church, that the truth as it is in Jesus was nearly buried or drowned. During the last three centuries before the Reformation, it is probable that very few Christians in Europe could have answered the question, "What must I do to be saved?" Popes and Cardinals, Archbishops and Bishops, Priests and Deacons, Monks and Nuns, were, with a few rare exceptions, steeped in ignorance and superstition. They were sunk into a deep sleep, from which they were only partially roused by the earthquake of the Reformation. Here, again, was the leading astray of men's minds.

(c) False doctrine, since the days of the Reformation, has continually been rising up again, and marring the work which the Reformers began. Neologianism in some districts of Europe, Socinianism in others, formalism and indifferentism in others, have withered blossoms which once promised to bear good fruit, and made Protestantism a mere barren form. Here, again, has been the "leading astray of the mind."

(d) False doctrine, even in our own day and under our own eyes, is eating out the heart of the Church and endangering her existence. One school of Christians does not hesitate to

avow its dislike to the principles of the Reformation, and travels over the sea and the land to Romanize the Establishment. Another school, with equal boldness, speaks lightly of inspiration, sneers at the very idea of a supernatural religion, and tries hard to cast overboard miracles as being useless extra weight. Another school proclaims liberty to every shade and form of religious opinion, and tells us that all teachers are equally deserving our confidence, however heterogeneous and contradictory their opinions, if they are only clever, earnest, and sincere. To each and all the same remark applies. They illustrate the "leading astray of men's minds."

In the face of such facts as these, we may well remember the words of the Apostle in the text which heads the paper. Like him we have abundant cause to feel afraid. Never, I think, was there such need for English Christians to stand on their guard. Never was there such need for faithful ministers to proclaim a loud warning. "If the trumpet does not sound a clear call, who will get ready for battle?" (1 Corinthians 14:8).

I charge every loyal member of the Church to open his eyes to the peril in which his own Church stands, and to beware lest it is damaged through apathy and a morbid love of peace. Controversy is an odious thing; but there are days when it is a positive element. Peace is an excellent thing; but, like gold, it may be considered too dear. Unity is a mighty blessing; but it is worthless if it is purchased at the cost of truth. Once more I say, Open your eyes and be on your guard.

The nation that rests satisfied with its commercial prosperity, and neglects its national defenses, because they are troublesome or expensive, is likely to become a prey to the first Napoleon, who chooses to attack it. The Church which is "rich; and has acquired wealth," may think it, "does not need a thing," because of its antiquity, traditions, and endowments. It may cry "Peace, peace," and flatter itself that it sees no evil. But if it is not careful about the maintenance of sound doctrine among its ministers and members, it may be surprised someday when its light is taken away.

I denounce, from the bottom of my heart, despondency or cowardice at this crisis. All I say is, let us exercise a godly fear. I do not see the slightest necessity for forsaking the old ship, and giving it up for lost. Bad as things look inside our ark, they are not one bit better outside. But I do protest against that careless spirit of slumber which seems to seal the eyes of many Christians, and to blind them to the enormous peril in which we are placed by the rise and progress of false doctrine in these days. I protest against the common notion so often proclaimed by men in high places, that "unity" is of more importance than sound doctrine, and peace more valuable than truth.

I call on every reader who really loves the Church to recognize the dangers of the times, and to do his duty, courageously and energetically, in resisting them by united action and by prayer. It was not for nothing that our Lord said, "If you don't have a sword, sell your cloak and buy one" (Luke 22:36). Let us not forget Paul's words, "Be on your guard; stand firm in the faith; be men of courage; be strong" (1 Corinthians 16:13). Our noble Reformers bought the truth at the price of their own blood, and handed it down to us. Let

us be careful that we do not cheaply sell it for some bread and stew, under the seeming names of unity and peace.

II. Secondly, the text shows us an "example we ought to remember, as a beacon:" "Eve was deceived by the serpent's cunning."

I need hardly remind my readers that Paul in this place refers to the story of the fall in the third chapter of Genesis, as a simple historical fact. He does not afford the least appearance to the modern notion that the book of Genesis is nothing more than a pleasing collection of myths and fables. He does not hint that there is no such being as the devil, and that there was not any literal eating of the forbidden fruit, and that it was not really in this way that sin entered into the world. On the contrary, he narrates the story of the third chapter of Genesis as a truthful history of a thing that really took place.

You should remember, also, that this reference does not stand alone. It is a noteworthy fact that several of the most remarkable histories and miracles of the Pentateuch are expressly mentioned in the New Testament, and always as historical facts. Cain and Abel, Noah's ark, the destruction of Sodom, Esau's selling his birthright, the destruction of the first-born in Egypt, the passage of the Red Sea, the brazen serpent, the manna, the water flowing from the rock, Balaam's donkey speaking--all these things are named by the writers of the New Testament, and named as matters of fact and not as fables. Let that never be forgotten. Those who are fond of pouring contempt on Old Testament miracles, and making light of the authority of the Pentateuch, would do well to consider whether they know better than our Lord Jesus Christ and the Apostles. To my mind, to talk of Genesis as a collection of myths and fables, in the face of such a text of Scripture as we have before us in this paper, is unreasonable and profane. Was Paul mistaken or not, when he narrated the story of the temptation and the fall? If he was, he was a weak-minded accepting person, and may have been mistaken on fifty other subjects. At this rate there is an end of all his authority as a writer! From such a monstrous conclusion we may well turn away with scorn. But it is well to remember that much infidelity begins with irreverent contempt of the Old Testament.

The point, after all, which the Apostle would have us mark in the history of Eve's fall, is the "cunning" with which the devil led her into sin. He did not tell her flatly that he wished to deceive her and do her harm. On the contrary, he told her that the thing forbidden was a thing that "was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom" (Genesis 3:6). He did not hesitate to assert that she could eat the forbidden fruit and yet "not die." He blinded her eyes to the sinfulness and danger of sin. He persuaded her to believe that to depart from God's plain command was for her benefit and not for her ruin. In short, "he deceived her by his cunningness."

Now this "cunningness," Paul tells us, is precisely what we have to fear in false doctrine. We are not to expect it to approach our minds in the garment of error, but in the form of truth. Counterfeit money would never become currency if it did not appear like the real thing. The wolf would seldom get into the fold if he did not enter it in sheep's clothing. Catholicism and liberalism would do little harm if they went about the world under their

true names. Satan is far too wise a general to manage a campaign in such a fashion as this. He employs fine words and high-sounding phrases, such as "Catholicity, Apostolicity, Unity, Church order, sound Church views, Ecumenicalism, free thought, broad sense, kindly judgment, liberal interpretation of Scripture," and the like, and thus effects a lodging place in unwary minds. And this is precisely the "cunningness" which Paul refers to in the text. We need not doubt that he had read his Master's solemn words in the Sermon on the mount: "Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves" (Matthew 7:15).

I ask your special attention to this point. Such is the simplicity and innocence of many Christians in this day, that they actually expect false doctrine to look false, and will not understand that the very essence of its mischievousness, as a rule, is its resemblance to God's truth. A young Christian, for instance, brought up from his cradle to hear nothing but Evangelical teaching, is suddenly invited some day to hear a sermon preached by some eminent teacher of semi-Catholic, or semi-skeptical opinions. He goes into the church, expecting in his simplicity to hear nothing but heresy from the beginning to the end. To his amazement he hears a clever, eloquent sermon, containing a vast amount of truth, and only a few drops of error. Too often a violent reaction takes place in his simple, innocent, unsuspecting mind. He begins to think his former teachers were narrow, and uncharitable, and his confidence in them is shaken, perhaps forever. Too often, it ends with his entire perversion, and at last he is enrolled in the ranks of the Legalist, Ritualists, or the liberal Christians! And what is the history of the whole case? Why, a foolish forgetfulness of the lesson Paul puts forward in this text. "As Eve was deceived by the serpent's cunning," so Satan charms unwary souls in our century by approaching them under the garb of truth.

I beg every reader of this paper to remember this part of my subject, and to stand on his guard. What is more common than to hear it said of some false teacher in this day, "He is so good, so devoted, so kind, so zealous, so laborious, so humble, so self-denying, so charitable, so earnest, so fervent, so clever, so evidently sincere, there can be no danger and no harm in hearing him. Besides he preaches such a real Gospel: no one can preach a better sermon than he does sometimes! I never can and never will believe he is unsound." Who does not hear continually such talk as this? What discerning eye can fail to see that Christians expect unsound teachers to be open vendors of poison, and cannot realize that they often appear as "angels of light," and are far too wise to be always saying all they think, and showing their whole hand and mind. But so it is. Never was it so needful to remember the words, "Eve was deceived by the serpent's cunning."

I leave this part of my subject with the sorrowful remark that we have fallen upon times when suspicion on the subject of sound doctrine is not only a duty but a virtue. It is not the avowed Pharisee and Sadducee that we have to fear, but the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees. It is the "show of wisdom" with which Ritualism is invested that makes it so dangerous to many minds (Colossians 2:23). It seems so good, and fair, and zealous, and holy, and reverential, and devout, and kind, that it carries away many well-meaning people like a flood. He that would be safe must cultivate the spirit of a sentinel at a critical post. He must not mind being laughed at and ridiculed, as one who "has a keen

nose for heresy." In days like these he must not be ashamed to suspect danger. And if any one scoffs at him for doing so, he may well be content to reply, "Eve was deceived by the serpent's cunning."

III. The third and last lesson of the text remains yet to be considered. It shows us "a point about which we ought to be especially on our guard." That point is being led astray from "Sincere and pure devotion to Christ."

Now the expression before us is somewhat remarkable, and stands alone in the New Testament. One thing at any rate is abundantly clear: the words "sincere and pure" means that which is single and unmixed, in contradistinction to that which is mixed and double. Following out that idea, some have held that the expression means "singleness of affection towards Christ;" we are to fear lest we should divide our affections between Christ and any other. This is no doubt very good theology; but I question whether it is the true sense of the text. I prefer the opinion that the expression means the simple, unmixed, unadulterated, unaltered doctrine of Christ--the simple "truth as it is in Jesus," on all points--without addition, subtraction, or substitution. Departure from the simple genuine prescription of the Gospel, either by leaving out any part or adding any part, was the thing Paul would have the Corinthians especially to fear. The expression is full of meaning, and seems especially written for our learning in these last days. We are to be ever jealously on our guard, lest we depart from and corrupt the simple Gospel which Christ once delivered to the saints.

The expression before us is exceedingly instructive. The principle it contains is of unspeakable importance. If we love our souls and would keep them in a healthy state, we must endeavor to adhere closely to the simple doctrine of Christ, in every jot, tittle, and particular. Once we add to it or take away anything from it, and we risk spoiling the Divine medicine, and may even turn it into poison. Let your ruling principle be, "No other doctrine but that of Christ, nothing less, and nothing more!" Lay firm hold on that principle, and never let it go. Write it on the tablet of your heart, and never forget it.

(1) Let us settle it, for example, firmly in our minds, that there is "no way of peace" but the simple way marked out by Christ. True rest of conscience and inward peace of soul will never come from anything but direct faith in Christ Himself and His finished work. Peace by confession to a priest, or bodily asceticism, or incessant attendance at Church services, or frequent reception of the Communion as a ritual, is a delusion and a snare. It is only by coming straight to Jesus Himself, laboring and heavy laden, and by believing, trusting communion with Him, that souls find rest. In this matter let us stand firm in "sincere and pure devotion to Christ."

(2) Let us settle it next in our minds that there is "no other priest" who can be in any way a mediator between yourself and God but Jesus Christ. He Himself has said, and His word shall not pass away, "No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6). No sinful child of Adam, whatever be his office, and however high his ecclesiastical title,

can ever occupy Christ's place, or do what Christ alone is appointed to do. The priesthood is Christ's peculiar office, and it is one which He has never delegated to another. In this matter also let us stand firm in "sincere and pure devotion to Christ."

(3) Let us settle it next in our minds that there is "no sacrifice for sin" except the one sacrifice of Christ upon the cross. Do not listen for a moment to those who tell you that there is any sacrifice in the Lord's Supper, any repetition of Christ's offering on the cross, or any oblation of His body and blood, under the form of consecrated bread and wine. The one sacrifice for sins which Christ offered was a perfect and complete sacrifice, and it is nothing short of blasphemy to attempt to repeat it. "By one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy" (Hebrews 10:14). In this matter also let us stand firm in the "sincere and pure devotion to Christ."

(4) Let us settle it next in our minds that there is "no other rule of faith," and judge of controversies, but that simple one to which Christ always referred--the written Word of God. Let no man disturb our souls by such vague expressions as "the voice of the Church, primitive antiquity, the judgment of the early Fathers," and the like tall talk. Let our only standard of truth be the Bible, God's Word written. "What does the Scripture say?" "What is written?" "To the law and to the testimony!" "Diligently study the Scriptures." (Romans 4:3; Luke 10:26; Isaiah 8:20; John 5:39). In this matter also let us stand firm in the "sincere and pure devotion to Christ."

(5) Let us settle it next in our minds that there are "no other means of grace" in the Church which have any binding authority, except those well known and simple ones which Christ and the Apostles have sanctioned. Let us regard with a jealous suspicion all ceremonies and forms of man's invention, when they are invested with such exaggerated importance as to thrust into the background God's own appointments. It is the invariable tendency of man's inventions to supersede God's ordinances. Let us beware of making the Word of God of none effect by human devices. In this matter also let us stand firm in the "sincere and pure devotion to Christ."

(6) Let us settle it next in our minds that "no teaching about the Ordinances" is sound which gives them a power of which Christ says nothing. Let us beware of admitting that either baptism or the Lord's Supper can confer grace "ex opere operato," that is, by their mere outward administration, independently of the state of heart of those who receive them. Let us remember that the only proof that baptized people and communicants have grace, is the exhibition of grace in their lives. The fruits of the Spirit are the only evidences that we are born of the Spirit and one with Christ, and not the mere reception of the Ordinances. In this matter also let us stand firm in the "sincere and pure devotion to Christ."

(7) Let us settle it next in our minds that "no teaching about the Holy Spirit" is safe which cannot be reconciled with the simple teaching of Christ. They are not to be heard who assert that the Holy Spirit actually dwells in all baptized people, without exception, by virtue of their baptism, and that this grace within such people only needs to be

"stirred up." The simple teaching of our Lord is, that He dwells only in those who are His believing disciples, and that "the world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him" (John 14:17). His indwelling is the special privilege of Christ's people, and where He is--He will be seen. On this point also let us stand firm in the "sincere and pure devotion to Christ."

(8) Finally let us settle it in our minds that no teaching can be thoroughly sound, in which truth is not set forth in "the proportion of Christ and the Apostles." Let us beware of any teaching in which the main thing is an incessant exaltation of the Church, the ministry, or the ordinances, while such grand truths as repentance, faith, conversion, holiness, are comparatively left in a subordinate and inferior place. Place such teaching side by side with the teaching of the Gospels, Acts, and Epistles. Count up texts. Make a calculation. Mark how "comparatively" little is said in the New Testament about baptism, the Lord's Supper, the Church, and the ministry; and then judge for yourself what is the proportion of truth. In this matter also, I say once more, let us stand firm in the "sincere and pure devotion to Christ."

The simple doctrine and rule of Christ, then--nothing added, nothing taken away, nothing substituted--this is the mark at which we ought to aim. This is the point from which departure ought to be dreaded. Can we improve on His teaching? Are we wiser than He? Can we suppose that He left anything of real vital importance unwritten, or liable to the vague reports of human traditions? Shall we take on ourselves to say that we can mend or change for the better any ordinance of His appointment? Can we doubt that in matters about which He is silent we have need to act very cautiously, very gently, very moderately, and must beware of pressing them on those who do not see with our eyes? Above all we must beware of asserting anything to be needful to salvation of which Christ has said nothing at all? I only see one answer to such questions as these. We must beware of anything which has even the appearance of departure from the "sincere and pure devotion to Christ."

The plain truth is that we cannot sufficiently exalt the Lord Jesus Christ as the great Head of the Church, and Lord of all ordinances, no less than as the Savior of sinners. I take it we all fail here. We do not realize how high and great and glorious a King the Son of God is, and what undivided loyalty we owe to One who has not delegated any of His offices, or given His glory to another. The solemn words which John Owen addressed to the House of Commons, in a sermon on the "Greatness of Christ," deserve to be remembered. I fear the House of Commons hears few such sermons in the present day.

**Christ is the "Way"**--men without Him are Cains, wanderers,  
vagabonds.

**His is the "Truth"**--men without Him are liars, like the  
devil of old.

**He is the "Life"**--men without Him are dead in trespasses and  
sins.

**He is the "Light"**--men without Him are in darkness, and do not know where they go.

**He is the "Vine"**--men that are not in Him are withered branches prepared for the fire.

**He is the "Rock"**--men not built on Him are carried away with a flood.

He is the "Alpha and Omega," the first and the last, the author and the One that ends, the founder and finisher of our salvation--he that does not have Him has neither the beginning of good nor shall have the end of misery.

Oh, blessed Jesus, how much better it would be not to exist than to exist without You! Never to be born than not to die in You! A thousand hells is nothing compared to eternally wanting Jesus Christ.

This witness is true. If we can say Amen to the spirit of this passage it will be well with our souls. And now let me conclude this paper by offering a few parting words of counsel to any one into whose hands it may fall. I offer them not as one who has any authority but one who is affectionately desirous to do good to his brethren. I offer them especially to all Christians. And I offer them as counsels which I find helpful to my own soul, and as such I venture to think they will be helpful to others.

(1) In the first place, if we would be kept from falling into false doctrine, "let us arm our minds with a thorough knowledge of God's Word." Let us read our Bibles from beginning to end with daily diligence, and constant prayer for the teaching of the Holy Spirit, and so strive to become thoroughly familiar with their contents. Ignorance of the Bible is the root of all error, and a superficial acquaintance with it accounts for many of the sad perversions and defections of the present day. In a hurrying age of travel and communication, I am firmly persuaded that many Christians do not give time enough to private reading of the Scriptures. I believe seriously that English people knew their Bibles better two hundred years ago than they do now. The consequence is, that they are "tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching," and fall an easy prey to the first clever teacher of error who tries to influence their minds. I entreat my readers to remember this counsel, and take heed to their ways.

It is as true now as ever, that the person who is versed in, or adheres strictly to, the text of the Bible, is the only good theologian, and that a familiarity with great Scriptures, is, as our Lord proved in the temptation, one of the best safeguards against error. Arm yourself then with the sword of the Spirit, and let your hand become used to it. I am well aware that there is no royal road to Bible-knowledge. Without diligence and pains no one ever becomes "mighty in the Scriptures." "Justification," said Charles Simeon, with his

characteristic quaintness, "is by faith, but knowledge of the Bible comes by works," But of one thing I am certain: there is no labor which will be so richly repaid as laborious regular daily study of God's Word.

(2) The second and last counsel which I venture to offer is this. "Let us make ourselves thoroughly acquainted with the history of the Reformation." My reason for offering this counsel is my firm conviction that this highly important part of history has of late years been undeservedly neglected. Thousands of Christians nowadays have a most inadequate notion of the amount of our debt to our martyred Reformers. They have no distinct conception of the state of darkness and superstition in which our fathers lived, and of the light and liberty which the Reformation brought in. And the consequence is that they see no great harm in the Roman Catholic movement of the present day, and have very indistinct ideas of the real nature and work of Catholicism. It is high time that a better state of things should begin. Of one thing I am thoroughly convinced: a vast amount of the prevailing apathy about the Romanizing movement of the day may be traced up to gross ignorance, both of the true nature of Catholicism and of the Protestant Reformation.

Ignorance, after all, is one of the best friends of false doctrine. More light is one of the great wants of the day, even in our century. Thousands are led astray by Catholicism or infidelity from sheer want of reading and information. Once more I repeat, if men would only study with attention the Bible and the History of the Reformation, I should have little fear of their "minds being led astray from their sincere and pure devotion to Christ."

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**Socinianism:** (1539-1604), original name Fausto Sozzini, nephew of Laelius, born in Siena and educated privately. In 1559 he was denounced by the Inquisition for holding heretical opinions and took refuge for three years outside Italy, visiting Zürich, Lyon, and Geneva. He returned to Italy about 1563 and for 12 years lived in Florence, conforming during that period with the regulations of the Roman Catholic church. In 1575 he settled at Basel and engaged in theological speculation and debates with Protestant leaders.

Under the influence of his uncle's writings, he developed a radical doctrinal system, named Socinianism after both theologians. This system substituted the Unitarian concept

of Jesus Christ as a man and as a deputy of God for the doctrine of Christ as divine and as a manifestation of a Trinitarian Godhead. Socinianism denied also the dogmas of the inborn total depravity of humankind and the atonement of Christ for the sins of people, the potency of the sacraments, and the possibility of damnation for eternity.

About 1579 Socinus went to Poland, where he spent the remainder of his life extending the influence of Socinian tenets through writing and participation in public debates. He also directed the policy of the anti-Trinitarian movement in Transylvania (now part of Romania), largely through correspondence. Although he avoided identifying himself with any particular sect and denied that his beliefs were heretical, he suffered persecution and in 1598 was driven out of Kraków, Poland, by a hostile mob. Many of his theological views reflected the influence of humanism in their emphasis on human reason and their repudiation of the supernatural.

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