

The book cover features a light beige background at the top, which transitions into a series of overlapping, curved bands in shades of green and yellow. These bands curve downwards from the top edge, creating a sense of depth and movement. The lower portion of the cover is a solid, dark green color.

J. C. Ryle

HOLINESS

HOLINESS

Holiness: Its Nature, Hindrances, Difficulties, and Root is perhaps J. C. Ryle's best-known and, arguably, best-loved book. Although many things have changed since 1877, when this book was first published, one thing remains the same: 'real practical holiness does not receive the attention it deserves.' It was to remedy this attention deficit, and to counter false teaching on this most important subject, that Ryle took up his pen.

The twenty-one chapters in this enlarged edition highlight:

- the real nature of holiness
- the temptations and difficulties which all must expect who pursue it
- the life-transforming truth that union with Christ is the root of holiness
- the immense encouragement Jesus Christ holds out to all who strive to be holy.

Holiness, as with all of Ryle's works, is clear and concise, penetrating and practical.

'... this book is simply the best of Ryle the Puritan-type pastor. Real Christians will find it a gold mine, a feast, a spur and a heart-warmer, food, drink, medicine, and a course of vitamins, all in one.'

—J. I. PACKER

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1

SIN

Sin is the transgression of the law—1 John 3:4.

HE that wishes to attain right views about Christian holiness, must begin by examining the vast and solemn subject of sin. He must dig down very low if he would build high. A mistake here is most mischievous. Wrong views about holiness are generally traceable to wrong views about human corruption. I make no apology for beginning this volume of papers about holiness by making some plain statements about sin.

The plain truth is that a right knowledge of sin lies at the root of all saving Christianity. Without it such doctrines as justification, conversion, sanctification, are 'words and names' which convey no meaning to the mind. The first thing, therefore, that God does when he makes anyone a new creature in Christ, is to send light into his heart, and show him that he is a guilty sinner. The material creation in Genesis began with 'light', and so also does the spiritual creation. God 'shines into our hearts' by the work of the Holy Ghost, and then spiritual life begins (2 Cor. 4:6).—Dim or indistinct views of sin are the origin of most of the errors, heresies, and false doctrines of the present day. If a man does not realize the dangerous nature of his soul's disease, you cannot wonder if he is content with false or imperfect remedies. I believe that one of the chief wants of the church

in the nineteenth century has been, and is, clearer, fuller teaching about sin.

(1) I shall begin the subject by supplying some DEFINITION of sin. We are all of course familiar with the terms 'sin' and 'sinners'. We talk frequently of 'sin' being in the world, and of men committing 'sins'. But what do we mean by these terms and phrases? Do we really know? I fear there is much mental confusion and haziness on this point. Let me try, as briefly as possible, to supply an answer.

I say, then, that 'sin', speaking generally, is, as the Ninth Article of our Church declares, 'the fault and corruption of the nature of every man that is naturally engendered of the offspring of Adam; whereby man is very far gone [*quam longissime* is the Latin] from original righteousness, and is of his own nature inclined to evil, so that the flesh lusteth always against the spirit; and, therefore, in every person born into the world, it deserveth God's wrath and damnation.' Sin, in short, is that vast moral disease which affects the whole human race, of every rank, and class, and name, and nation, and people, and tongue; a disease from which there never was but one born of woman that was free. Need I say that one was Christ Jesus the Lord?

I say, furthermore, that 'a sin', to speak more particularly, consists in doing, saying, thinking, or imagining, anything that is not in perfect conformity with the mind and law of God. 'Sin', in short, as the Scripture saith, is 'the transgression of the law' (*1 John 3:4*). The slightest outward or inward departure from absolute mathematical parallelism with God's revealed will and character constitutes a sin, and at once makes us guilty in God's sight.

Of course I need not tell anyone who reads his Bible with attention, that a man may break God's law in heart and thought, when there is no overt and visible act of wickedness. Our Lord has settled that point beyond dispute in the Sermon on the Mount (*Matt. 5:21-28*). Even a poet of our own has truly said, 'A man may smile and smile, and be a villain.'

Again, I need not tell a careful student of the New Testament, that there are sins of omission as well as commission, and that we sin, as our Prayer-book justly reminds us, by 'leaving undone the things we ought to do', as really as by 'doing the things we ought not to do'. The solemn words of our Master in the Gospel of St Matthew place this point also beyond dispute. It is there written, 'Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire:—for I was an hungered, and ye gave me no meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink' (Matt. 25:41, 42). It was a deep and thoughtful saying of holy Archbishop Usher, just before he died—'Lord, forgive me all my sins, and specially my sins of omission.'

But I do think it necessary in these times to remind my readers that a man may commit sin and yet be ignorant of it, and fancy himself innocent when he is guilty. I fail to see any scriptural warrant for the modern assertion that 'Sin is not sin to us until we discern it and are conscious of it.' On the contrary, in the 4th and 5th chapters of that unduly neglected book, Leviticus, and in the 15th of Numbers, I find Israel distinctly taught that there were sins of ignorance which rendered people unclean, and needed atonement (*Lev.* 4:1-35; 5:14-19; *Num.* 15:22-29). And I find our Lord expressly teaching that 'the servant who knew not his master's will and did it not', was not excused on account of his ignorance, but was 'beaten' or punished (*Luke* 12:48). We shall do well to remember, that when we make our own miserably imperfect knowledge and consciousness the measure of our sinfulness, we are on very dangerous ground. A deeper study of Leviticus might do us much good.

(2) Concerning the ORIGIN AND SOURCE of this vast moral disease called 'sin' I must say something. I fear the views of many professing Christians on this point are sadly defective and unsound. I dare not pass it by. Let us, then, have it fixed down in our minds that the sinfulness of man does not begin from without, but from within. It is not the result of bad training in early years. It is not picked up from bad companions and bad examples, as some

weak Christians are too fond of saying, No! it is a family disease, which we all inherit from our first parents, Adam and Eve, and with which we are born. Created 'in the image of God', innocent and righteous at first, our parents fell from original righteousness and became sinful and corrupt. And from that day to this all men and women are born in the image of fallen Adam and Eve, and inherit a heart and nature inclined to evil. By one man sin entered into the world.—'That which is born of the flesh is flesh.'—'We are by nature children of wrath.'—'The carnal mind is enmity against God.'—'Out of the heart [naturally as out of a fountain] proceed evil thoughts, adulteries', and the like (John 3:6; Eph. 2:3; Rom. 8:7; Mark 7:21). The fairest babe that has entered life this year, and become the sunbeam of a family, is not, as its mother perhaps fondly calls it, a little 'angel', or a little 'innocent', but a little 'sinner'. Alas! as it lies smiling and crowing in its cradle, that little creature carries in its heart the seeds of every kind of wickedness! Only watch it carefully, as it grows in stature and its mind develops, and you will soon detect in it an incessant tendency to that which is bad, and a backwardness to that which is good. You will see in it the buds and germs of deceit, evil temper, selfishness, self-will, obstinacy, greediness, envy, jealousy, passion—which, if indulged and let alone, will shoot up with painful rapidity. Who taught the child these things? Where did he learn them? The Bible alone can answer these questions!—Of all the foolish things that parents say about their children there is none worse than the common saying, 'My son has a good heart at the bottom. He is not what he ought to be; but he has fallen into bad hands. Public schools are bad places. The tutors neglect the boys. Yet he has a good heart at the bottom.'—The truth, unhappily, is diametrically the other way. The first cause of all sin lies in the natural corruption of the boy's own heart, and not in the school.

(3) Concerning the EXTENT of this vast moral disease of man called sin, let us beware that we make no mistake. The only safe ground is that which is laid for us in Scripture. 'Every

imagination of the thoughts of his heart' is by nature 'evil, and that continually'—'The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked' (Gen. 6:5; Jer. 17:9). Sin is a disease which pervades and runs through every part of our moral constitution and every faculty of our minds. The understanding, the affections, the reasoning powers, the will, are all more or less infected. Even the conscience is so blinded that it cannot be depended on as a sure guide, and is as likely to lead men wrong as right, unless it is enlightened by the Holy Ghost. In short, 'from the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness' about us (Isa. 1:6). The disease may be veiled under a thin covering of courtesy, politeness, good manners, and outward decorum; but it lies deep down in the constitution.

I admit fully that man has many grand and noble faculties left about him, and that in arts and sciences and literature he shows immense capacity. But the fact still remains that in spiritual things he is utterly 'dead', and has no natural knowledge, or love, or fear of God. His best things are so interwoven and intermingled with corruption, that the contrast only brings out into sharper relief the truth and extent of the *fall*. That one and the same creature should be in some things so high and in others so low—so great and yet so little—so noble and yet so mean—so grand in his conception and execution of material things, and yet so grovelling and debased in his affections—that he should be able to plan and erect buildings like those of Carnac and Luxor in Egypt, and the Parthenon at Athens, and yet worship vile gods and goddesses, and birds, and beasts, and creeping things—that he should be able to produce tragedies like those of *Æschylus* and *Sophocles*, and histories like that of *Thucydides*, and yet be a slave to abominable vices like those described in the first chapter of the *Epistle to the Romans*—all this is a sore puzzle to those who sneer at 'God's Word written', and scoff at us as 'Bibliolaters'. But it is a knot that we can untie with the Bible in our hands. We can acknowledge that man has all the marks of a majestic temple about him—a

temple in which God once dwelt, but a temple which is now in utter ruins—a temple in which a shattered window here, and a doorway there, and a column there, still give some faint idea of the magnificence of the original design, but a temple which from end to end has lost its glory and fallen from its high estate. And we say that nothing solves the complicated problem of man's condition but the doctrine of original or birth-sin and the crushing effects of the fall.

Let us remember, besides this, that every part of the world bears testimony to the fact that sin is the *universal disease of all mankind*. Search the globe from east to west and from pole to pole—search every nation of every clime in the four quarters of the earth—search every rank and class in our own country from the highest to the lowest—and under every circumstance and condition, the report will be always the same. The remotest islands in the Pacific Ocean, completely separate from Europe, Asia, Africa, and America, beyond the reach alike of oriental luxury and western arts and literature—*islands inhabited by people ignorant of books, money, steam, and gunpowder—uncontaminated by the vices of modern civilization—these very islands have always been found, when first discovered, the abode of the vilest forms of lust, cruelty, deceit, and superstition. If the inhabitants have known nothing else, they have always known how to sin! Everywhere the human heart is naturally 'deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked' (Jer. 17:9). For my part, I know no stronger proof of the inspiration of Genesis and the Mosaic account of the origin of man, than the power, extent, and universality of sin. Grant that mankind have all sprung from one pair, and that this pair fell (as Gen. 3 tells us), and the state of human nature everywhere is easily accounted for. Deny it, as many do, and you are at once involved in inexplicable difficulties. In a word, the uniformity and universality of human corruption supply one of the most unanswerable instances of the enormous 'difficulties of infidelity'.*

JOHN CHARLES RYLE 1816-1900

John Charles Ryle was born in Macclesfield, Cheshire and educated at Eton and Christ Church, Oxford. Graduating with a First in 'Greats' (Classics), his sporting prowess saw him represent the University at rowing and cricket.

A political career beckoned until his father's bank crashed in 1841. Instead he entered the Church of England ministry. Long afterwards he wrote, 'I have not the least doubt, it was all for the best. If I had not been ruined, I should never have been a clergyman, never have preached a sermon, or written a tract or book.'

Ryle served churches in Hampshire before moving to Helmingham, Suffolk, in 1844. It was here that he began to write popular tracts and his *Expository Thoughts on the Gospels*.

In 1861, Ryle became vicar of Stradbroke, Suffolk, where he became known for his plain preaching and firm defence of evangelical principles. He wrote several well-known books, many of them still in print today. It was at Stradbroke that he completed his *Expository Thoughts* series in 1873.

In 1880 Ryle became the first bishop of Liverpool. His episcopate was marked by efforts to build churches and mission halls to reach the rapidly expanding population of the city. Retiring in 1900 aged 83, Ryle died later the same year in Lowestoft, Suffolk. His successor in Liverpool described him as a 'man of granite with the heart of a child.'



I have no desire to make an idol of holiness. I do not wish to dethrone Christ, and put holiness in his place. But I must candidly say, I wish sanctification was more thought of in this day than it seems to be, and I therefore take occasion to press the subject on all believers into whose hands these pages may fall. I fear it is sometimes forgotten that God has married together justification and sanctification. They are distinct and different things, beyond question, but one is never found without the other. All justified people are sanctified, and all sanctified are justified. What God has joined together let no man dare to put asunder. Tell me not of your justification, unless you have also some marks of sanctification. Boast not of Christ's work *for* you, unless you can show us the Spirit's work *in* you. Think not that Christ and the Spirit can ever be divided. I doubt not that many believers know these things, but I think it good for us to be put in remembrance of them. Let us prove that we know them by our lives. Let us try to keep in view this text more continually: 'Follow holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.'

—J. C. RYLE, FROM THE CHAPTER ON 'HOLINESS'

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