

man wiser than ordinary perceived the truth, so familiar to us, that a King is merely a great officer appointed by the people to do certain work for them. There was a Glasgow professor who taught in those dark days that the authority of the King was derived from the people, and ought to be used for their good. Two of his pupils were John Knox the reformer, and George Buchanan the historian, by whom this doctrine, so great and yet so simple, was clearly perceived and firmly maintained. But to the great mass of mankind it seemed that the King had divine authority to dispose of his subjects and their property according to his pleasure. Poor patient humanity still bowed in lowly reverence before its Kings, and bore, without wondering or murmuring, all that it pleased them to inflict. No stranger superstition has ever possessed the human mind than this boundless mediæval veneration for the King—a veneration which follies the most abject, vices the most enormous, were not able to quench.

But as this unhappy century draws towards its close, the elements of a most benign change are plainly seen at work. The Bible has been largely read. The Bible is the book of all ages and of all circumstances. But never, surely, since its first gift to man was it more needful to any age than to that which now welcomed its restoration with wonder and delight. It took deep hold on the minds of men. It exercised a silent influence which gradually changed the aspect of society. The narrative portions of Scripture were especially acceptable to the untutored intellect of that time; and thus the Old Testament was preferred to the New. This preference led to some mistakes. Rules which had been given to an ancient Asiatic people were applied in circumstances for which they were never intended or fitted. It is easy to smile at these mistakes. But it is impossible to over-estimate the social and political good which we now enjoy as a result of this incessant reading of the Bible by the people of the sixteenth century.

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