

Fierce Convictions: The Extraordinary Life of Hannah More by Karen Swallow Prior (Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2014) (70 Quotes selected by Doug Nichols)

1. Cultural Pressure & Influence Vs. Political Pressure & Influence

One part of the tremendous importance of Karen Swallow Prior's resurrecting the great life of Hannah More into the popular consciousness is as a corrective to the idea that the only way to effect change in the world is via political action. Many have put all of their eggs in legislative baskets and the current awful state of things makes plain the mistake of that thinking. Although I tried to make it abundantly clear in my own book that Wilberforce and his co-laborers in Abolition—and in the many other reforms of that period—knew that cultural pressure and influence was as important as political pressure and influence. (Forward Page xiv-xv)

2. Hannah More Critical to the Cause

Just as More and the early advocates of Abolition knew that without a man in Parliament to champion their cause they were doomed to failure, so that man in Parliament knew that without Hannah More, he and their cause were doomed to failure. We should know it too, because it is true, and we are failing. If our generation could deliver one or more More's, we might see our Reformation of Manners and much besides. (Forward Page xv)

3. Twenty Shillings for an African Slave, a Guinea

Although slavery had been illegal within the borders of England and Wales since 1772, a "domestic servant" from Africa, such as this girl, was a common even if possessed of ambiguous legal status. The reward offered for the girl's return, one guinea, was the British coin minted by Bristol's Royal African Company as currency for trade in western Africa. In its original language, *guinea* meant "black person." The morning's worship was being interrupted by the offer of a guinea for a Guinea. Twenty shillings for a few stone of flesh. (Preface Page xvii)

4. Hanna Was a Born Writer

Here Hannah's love of language, her quick wit, and her keen observation of humanity are on full and easy display. A writer had been born. Hannah's request on every gift given occasion never deviated: paper, which was a commodity far more precious than today. She filled every scrap she could find with poems and essays, many pointing toward a moral lesion of some kind. As with her affinity for words and knowledge, this moral bent forward as much of Hannah's makeup as did her delicate health, flowing hair, impish smile, and sparkling eyes. (Page 4-5)

5. Wesley Spawned Evangelical Movement

This religion of the heart grew throughout England as a result of a spiritual revival in the late eighteenth century. In 1742, a few years before Hannah's birth, John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, preached a sermon that fueled a new religious fervor within the Church of England. In it Wesley proclaimed that the source of true religion lay not in "right opinions" but in "the understanding". Although someone "may be orthodox in every point" and may defend correct doctrine like a zealot, Wesley preached, one may yet be a "stranger" to "the religion of the heart." The revival spawned by John Wesley and his hymn-writing brother, Charles, along with George Whitefield, helped birth the evangelical movement in which Hannah would participate. (Page 5-6)

6. Well-Written Books Should Not Be by Critics

"In all well-written books, there is much that is good which is not dazzling; and these shallow critics should be taught, that it is for the embellishment of the more tame and uninteresting parts of his work, that the judicious poet commonly reserves those flowers, whose beauty is defaced when they are plucked from the garland into which he had so skillfully woven them." (Page 23)

7. Great Britain All Led Other Countries in Slave Trading

From the Middle Ages through the mid-eighteenth century, sea trade of various kinds generated Bristol's primary income. With the end of 1698 of the Crown (government) monopoly that had belonged to the Royal Africa Company, new opportunities for private industry in slave trading opened up, and merchants in Bristol and other port cities took full advantage of the free market. By 1730, Great Britain led all other countries in the slave trade. From 1690 to the end of Britain's slave trade 1807, at least 2.8 million African slaves were carried aboard British ships, 500,000 of them on Bristol's vessels. By 1737, Bristol had become England's busiest slave port. From 1698 to 1807, more than two thousand slave ships set out from Bristol, accounting for one-fifth of Britain's slave trade. (Page 28)

8. 18th Century Gardens in Britain

Gardening was a passion in eighteenth century Britain, the locus for the exercise, display, and judgment of taste; some would even have said character. The most favored gardens during this latter half of the century struck a balance between the highly cultured and artificial, neoclassical gardens of France and the wild untamed look that would characterize the romantic age to come. (Page 32-33)

9. The Making of a Female Pen

The work of artists often arises from suffering. More's love of writing stemmed, perhaps, from two sources of suffering: her own battle with numerous illnesses over the course of her life and the suffering around her that she sought to alleviate. (Page 39)

10. Stonhouse Lent More Oxford Educational Material

More's skill in writing and networking were making a way for her. Then came a strategic push from a longtime family friend, Sir. James Stonhouse. An Oxford educated clergyman and physician, Stonhouse had been a deist. Deism, a truly if controversial belief system of the century espoused belief in God but, in discounting mystery and the supernatural, reject the core tenets of Christianity. At some point, however, Stonhouse had become an evangelical and would become one of the most important early influences in More's life. Stonhouse lent her some of his Oxford education by guiding her study and readings in theology. It was Stonhouse, More later said, who awakened her religious sense. Close enough was their relationship that More wrote his epitaph in 1792. (Page 49)

11. In Hannah Wit, & Modesty Met

In Hannah charm, wit, and modesty met. How could the world help but notice? (Page 57)

12. Dr. Johnson Set the Literary Standard

For the literati, Dr. Jonson defined the age—quite literally. He was, after all, the author of the standard setting English language dictionary published in 1755. In addition to this pioneering work, Johnson wrote poetry, fiction, essays, biographies, and criticism. Even now, literary scholars refer to the latter half of the eighteenth century as the age of Johnson. (Page 57)

13. Second Marriage Complements the First Wife

In a more serious vein, however, when his biographer and constant and companion James Boswell, criticized an acquaintance for marrying a second time, saying to do so showed disrespect for his first wife, Johnson corrected his friend, "Not at all, Sir," he told Boswell. "On the contrary, were he not to marry again, it might be concluded that his first wife had given him a disgust to marriage; but by taking a second wife he pays the highest complement to the first, by showing that she made him so happy as a married man, that he wishes to be so a second time. (Page 60)

14. Present Mode of Dress like Small Pox

So she complied reluctantly to some degree of fashion, only to lament, after being dressed, “I absolutely blush at myself, and turn to the glass [mirror] with much caution as a vain beauty just risen from the small pox; which cannot be a more disfiguring disease than the present mode of dressing. (Page 66)

15. More Benefited Tremendously from City Life

Although she scorned the excesses of city life, More benefited tremendously there, both personally and professionally. In this cosmopolitan setting her talent as a writer was recognized and cultivated. (Page 66)

16. Education, To Make Women Companions for Their Husbands

By the twenty-first-century standards, More’s assumption that women’s roles were limited to those of “daughter, wives, mothers, and mistresses of families” is insupportable. But in the context of her time, More’s advocacy of a female education that would furnish women’s minds with “ideas and principles” and make them suitable “companions” for their husbands was markedly progressive. Indeed, the companionate marriage—rather than the politically or economically expedient one that had been the norm for all human history—was an idea advanced by evangelicals, including More, who understood marriage to be an institution established to advance the kingdom of God, not property. (Page 86)

17. More Wished the Bible to be in Fashion

But More had some years earlier, expressed the wise wish, “I hope the poets and painters will at last bring the Bible into fashion, and that people will get to like it from taste, though they are insensible to its spirit, and afraid of its doctrines.” She retold with horror that her friend Sir Joshua Reynolds had to identify the subject in his painting of Samuel from the Old Testament. “I love this great genius,” More said of Reynolds, “for not being ashamed to take his subjects from the most unfashionable of all books.” (Page 98)

18. More Wanted to Fit In

Yet she found herself a bit of the hypocrite, admitting that she needed to try to fit in at least enough not to appear singular. She protested, however, “I detest and avoid public places more than ever, and should make a miserably bad fine lady! What most people come to London *for* would keep me *from* it!” (Page 101)

19. She Pursued Her Lifelong Love of Gardening

So in 1785, following the death of her father in 1783 and that of Johnson the next year, More moved to Cowslip Green, a one-story, thatched cottage situated between the village of Blagdon and Wrington, across from the Mendip Hills in the country of Somerset in the west of England. In contrast to the luxury that seemed abundant in London, here More could fulfill her dream of living in a cottage “too low for a clock.” Here she could also pursue her lifelong love of gardening, something she spent several hours a day doing. Her labors yielded “pinks and roses” that she boasted of in one letter to a friend. In a letter to John Newton, she wrote about her beloved new home:

“God made the country, and manmade the town,” says the delightfully enthusiastic bard you are so near [William Cowper], a sentence to which my heart always makes an involuntary warm repose. I have been now some weeks in the quiet enjoyment of my beloved solitude, and the world is wiped out of my memory as with the sponge of oblivion. But, as I have observed to you before, so much do my gardening cares and pleasures occupy me, that the world is not half so formidable a rival to heaven in my heart as my garden. Page 103)

20. Faith to See

In 1780, during the height of her high-society years in London, More read a book that changed her life. *Cardiphonia*, sometimes translated by publishers as *The Utterance of the Heart* or *Voice of the Heart*, was a collection of letters penned by John Newton, author of the hymn “Amazing Grace.” As was common, Newton’s book was published pseudonymously. More was curious to know whom the author of this marvelous and moving book was. She wrote a letter to her friend Frances Boscawen, thanking her for introducing the work to her. “I liken it prodigiously,” she said. “It is full of vital, experimental religion.” Those words, within the context of the times, are telling. By *vital*, More meant “full of life,” so opposite the stale, dead religion found in many Churches of England members, wearied with centuries of religious conflict. The word *experimental* alluded to the growing emphasis during the eighteenth century on the importance of individual experience in religious practice, the need of each person to have an authentic and personal faith rather than simply to adhere to rote tradition. (Page 105)

21. Newton Pursues the Priesthood

Newton withdrew from the horrid business only gradually; his failing health was a greater cause for this, at first, then his developing convictions. As his faith matured, he decided to pursue the priesthood within the Church of England. Only when he was no longer immersed in the business could he truly see the slave trade for the evil it

was. Newton was ordained in 1764, appointed priest in the parish of Olney, and became rector of St. Mary Woolnoth in London in 1780. (Page 107)

22. A Significant Stone on Her Path to Evangelical Faith

More's meeting with Newton marked one more significant stone on her path toward an increasingly evangelical—and personal—faith. It was Newton—his writings, his sermons, and his friendship—who convinced More to devote her life to promoting spiritual education and reformation across British society. With Newton, in the words of his well-known hymn, More could say, I once “was blind, but now I see.” (Page 108)

23. Eighteenth –Century in Britain Did Not See Slavery as Evil

As a goldfish swimming in a bowl doesn't know what water is, so a person living in eighteenth-century Great Britain—immersed in an economic and social structure built on the slave trade—could not easily, if at all, see slavery for what it was. To do so required, it seemed a certain kind of perceptiveness of mind and spirit. Hannah More was one of the few who possessed it. (Page 108)

24. Emancipation Cost Britain Twenty Million Pounds

To be sure, when it finally came, the abolition of the slave trade required of the empire what has been called “econocide.” The direct cost of emancipation was twenty million pounds, the amount given as compensation to the masters whose slaves were freed according to the Emancipation Bill of 1833. Additional indirect costs included the higher prices paid for goods brought from the West Indies. (Page 109)

25. “How is it that we hear the loudest yelps for liberty among the drivers of negroes?”

More's friend Samuel Johnson proclaimed in his *Idler* essay 87, “Of black men the numbers are too grate who are now repining under English cruelty.” He hated the hypocrisy of American colonists who were chiming for political independence while keeping African slaves in chains: “How is it that we hear the loudest yelps for liberty among the drivers of negroes?” In 1774, John Wesley proclaimed of slavery, “I deny that villainy is ever necessary,” and the Methodist Conference decreed the freeing of slaves in the organization's mission outputs in 1780. Even so, Wesley never expected the trade to be abolished by law and appealed instead to individual conscience (Page 110)

26. Wilberforce Sought Newton's Counsel Not Wesley's

Wilberforce mistakenly thought that religious commitment and worldly affairs could not go well together. He thought that being a sincere Christian required withdrawing from corrupt corners of human business. Had he gone elsewhere of guidance, had he fallen, for example, under the sway of John Wesley, one nineteenth-century biographer speculated, Wilberforce likely would have followed his inclination to retreat from public life in favor of a course devoted to private piety. But he sought the counsel of Newton. Newton exhorted him to “stay at his post, and neither give up work, nor throw away wealth; wait and watch occasions, sure that He, who put him at his post, would find him work to do.” Newton convinced Wilberforce that he need not relinquish his place in government in order to serve God but could do so right where he was if only he set his mind on a worthy goal. From this advice came the course of life that Wilberforce set before himself. On April 14, 1786, Good Friday, Wilberforce attended church and took Communion for the first time. Neither the church nor England would be the same. (Page 113)

27. The Heroic Black Man & His Children

In another letter home in 1782, More relayed a disturbing tale she'd heard from a ship captain at a breakfast hosted by Middleton. “One day,” More reported to her sister,

the captain went out of his own ship to dine on board another; while he was there a storm arose, which in a short time made an entire wreck of his own ship, to which it was impossible for him to return. He had left on board two little boys, one four, the other five years old, under the care of a poor black servant; the people suggested to get out of the sinking ship into a large boat, and the poor black took his two little children, tied them into a bag, and put in a little pot of sweetmeats for them, slung them across his shoulder, and put them into the boat; the boat by this time was quite full; the black was stepping into it himself, but was told by the master there was no room for him, that either he or the children must perish, for the weight of both would sink the boat. The exalted heroic negro did not hesitate a moment; “Very well,” said he, “give my duty to my master, and tell him I beg pardon for all my faults.” And then,—guess the rest—plunged to the bottom never to rise again, till the sea gives up her dead.” (Page 114-115)

28. More Admired Wilberforce for Talent, Virtue & Piety

In the fall of 1787, More met Wilberforce in Bath. Shortly afterwards she gushed, “That young man's character is one of the most extra-ordinary I have ever known for talent, virtue, and piety. It is difficult not to grow better and wiser every time one converses with him.” (Page 115)

29. More's Relation with Wilberforce Was Long Lasting

More's relationship with Wilberforce would prove to be—apart from those with her sister—one of the longest lasting and dearest of her life. Their friendship lasted uninterrupted for forty-seven years. They died within weeks of each other, one before seeing the slaves set free, the other departing only weeks after the long-fought victory. And a long-fought battle it was. (Page 116)

30. Cruelty at Every Level of Slave Trade

The inhumanity of the slave trade was so systemic that its African captives, while subject to the cruelty, were not its sole victims. The industry was steeped in brutality at every level of execution. Slave ship captains were cruel to the sailors; many of these—as in John Newton's case—were taken into service by force and beaten, abused, abandoned, and sometimes sold into slavery. Thousands of British sailors died or were deserted in slave colonies each year. This pervasive cruelty of the entire slave industry helps explain why its inhumanity was so difficult for those living amid it to see it for what it was. (Page 118)

31. Clarkson Published a Pamphlet, An Essay On Slavery . . .

But out of each moral nearsightedness emerged some visionaries. One, Thomas Clarkson, won an essay contest on the topic of slavery while a student at Cambridge in 1785. After winning, Clarkson was convicted to take action on the principle espoused in his essay. He translated it from the Latin in which he'd originally written—customary universities at the time—and had it published in 1786 as a pamphlet, *An essay on the slavery and commerce of the human species, particularly the African, translated from a Latin Dissertation*. Then Clarkson helped found the Committee for the Abolition of the Slave Trade, begun in 1787. (Page 118)

32. God Almighty has set before me the suppression of the slave trade . . .

Their search for a sympathetic voice in Parliament to lead the campaign to outlaw the slave trade led directly to Wilberforce. In 1786, the Middletons met Wilberforce and persuaded him that it was time to act. Wilberforce sought the blessings of the prime minister and his good friend William Pitt. Once he received them, Wilberforce was resolved. On Sunday, October 28, 1787, Wilberforce wrote in his journal these famous words: "God Almighty has set before me two great objects, the suppression of the slave trade and the reformation of manners. (Page 119)

33. Modern Slavery Nothing Like Biblical Slavery

It was easy to imagine modern slavery as something similar to what existed in ancient Greek and Roman culture: a lifelong, human servitude into which one was born, not violently stolen into, the kind of slavery—the bond servanthood—the Bible talks about. Some people used biblical passages to justify slavery, not understanding the role of a bond servant described in the Bible, again, was nothing like the violent, forceful bondage of the modern slave trade. (Page 124)

34. Famous Medallion of Kneeling Slave

The year before, the Nonconformist Christian Josiah Wedgwood manufactured the famous jasper medallion topped with a relief of a kneeling slave in chains and emblazoned above him the phrase “Am I not a man and a brother?” The medallion was based on the design of the seal of the Committee for the Abolition of the Slave Trade, founded by Thomas Clarkson earlier that year. The imaged was imprinted across empire and could be found on plates, tea caddies, hairpins, bracelets, and snuffboxes. Wedgwood even sent one to Benjamin Franklin in America. (Page 128)

35. Campaign to Change the Minds of Parliament

It was a multifaceted campaign that enlisted preachers, poets, and parliamentarians. And it was brilliant strategy. “You know enough of life,” Wilberforce told More, “to be aware that in parliamentary measures of importance, more is to be done out of the House than in it.” In other words, changing the minds in Parliament would require changing the heart of the nation first. (Page 128)

36. Wesley Told Wilberforce, “If God Be For You, Who Can Be Against You?”

John Wesley had warned Wilberforce of the magnitude of the fight against “that execrable villainy, which is the scandal of religion, of England, and of human nature.” Wesley told him, “Unless God has raised you up for this very thing, you will be worn out by the opposition of men and devils. But if God be for you, who can be against you?” Wilberforce did face physical assaults—twice—as well as ostracism and hatred. It would be more than a dozen years before the British slave trade was abolished in 1807, just a few months before the death of John Newton. Hannah’s health was too frail for her to participate directly in the debate or celebration of a hard-won victory. But her wise words had been vindicated: “It should be held as an eternal truth, that what is morally wrong can never be politically right.” It would be decades before those in British chains would be set free in 1833.

On July 26, 1833, the Emancipation Bill passed in the House of Commons, decreeing that all slaves in the British Empire were to be freed within one year. Wilberforce died three days later. He was buried in Westminster Abbey near his friend William Pitt. One month later, the House of Lords passed the Slavery Abolition Act. More would die on September 6, two months after Wilberforce's death. For many years, the Church Missionary Society had a policy of naming orphaned African girls after More in honor of her work to abolish slavery. (Page 136)

37. The First Sunday Schools Were Not Church Related

The first of these new schools had been started a few years earlier by Robert Raikes in 1780. The first such Sunday schools had appeared as early as the seventeenth century, but Raikes began the Sunday School movement, thus earning him the appellation father of the Sunday school. Sarah Trimmer had followed Raikes's example, establishing the first of several Sunday schools for poor children in 1786. Trimmer, also a writer and publisher of an educational journal, encouraged others to use her model to open more schools. These early Sunday schools weren't then what is meant by the term today—instruction in Bible lessons held at church before or after the main service—but simply schools held on Sunday for poor children, who, at a time before publicly funded education, had no means of formal instruction. Sunday was the only day on which those lucky enough to have work didn't labor. (Page 141)

38. Schools for the Poor Would Upset the Apple Cart

He was "very much shocked" upon hearing their plans to open a school for the poor. He told them in no uncertain terms that "religion would be the ruin of agriculture; it was a very dangerous thing." After all, the members of the laboring class were seen as little more than slaves in these days. Any effort to introduce them to ideas or possibilities beyond their day-to-day work to survive would upset the apple cart of the social order. The farmer warned the sisters that the introduction of religion in another village had "produced much mischief." More said, "He begged I would not think of bringing any religion into the country; it was the worst thing in the world for the poor, for it made them lazy and useless." (Page 146)

39. Sunday School Educated the Poor Class

Part of the danger of Sunday schools would be that educating the lower class would, even if only to a small degree, narrow the gap between the rich and the poor. Some saw it as thwarting the will of God by upending a social hierarchy ordained by him. The wife of one local landowner declared that "the poor were intended to be servants and slaves. It is pre-ordained that they should be ignorant, she argued. "We cannot alter what is decreed. If a school were to be set up it would be all over with property and if property is not to rule what will become of us." (Page 147)

40. Sunday School, A Great Success For The Children

Just five weeks after school opened with Barber in charge, Hannah made a visit. Even after a short term, she found a striking transformation among the students. “Upwards of thirty said the Catechism perfectly, forty could sing three psalms, and several great girls were beginning to know something of the Scriptures,” she reported. Even “the face of the village much changed; not a child to be found on the cliffs on a Sunday; the church gradually filling.”

Initially, as planned, school was held only on Sunday, a true day of rest in those days because those in the laboring class, including the children, worked the other days of the week. Younger children worked at picking crops, scaring birds, and the like. By the age of twelve, children were considered old enough to do many tasks of the farmers and other laborers. In addition to reading, basic arithmetic, Bible lessons, and the catechism, knitting and spinning were taught to make the student more employable. Eventually, More worked with local manufacturers to adapt the skills taught to local needs and wages. (Page 149)

41. More Decided to Open Second School, 100+ Were Fitted for Domestic Service

Enrollment at the Cheddar school rapidly grew from one hundred forty to three hundred. The Mores decided to open a second school in Shipham. Soon after opening the first school, the two determined women trod on horseback and foot “over a tract of country of ten or twelve miles” to establish more schools in the Somerset region over the next ten years. They sought out the most suitable candidates for teachers they could find: one they tracked down and found milking a cow. Success bred success; each opening generally became easier than the last. By 1796, the schools had 1,600 to 1,700 students in ten parishes. By 1808, more than one hundred students from Cheddar had been “fitted” for domestic service. (Page 150)

42. Several Benefit Clubs for Women

About six months after opening the Cheddar school, the Mores had an idea of teaching the adults on Sunday evenings. In these meetings, a sermon and a chapter of the Bible were read, followed by a second song and prayer. The meetings were planned to last only an hour. Only four people attended the first week, but before long the number multiplied to sixty. They also created benefit clubs, or friendly societies, for women. Friendly societies were like local insurance collectives. Members paid a small fee, often on a quarterly basis, and in case of illness or unemployment received a set payment. Such societies already existed for male laborers but not for women. More opened several of these clubs for the impoverished women in the village. She tied the

women's society to work of the school: membership in the benefit club required certain obligations on the part of its members in support of the school. Members who paid the required dues were given financial payouts upon experiencing illness (three shillings a week) or childbirth (seven shilling, sixpence) as compensation for days spent unable to work. More was shocked when the women protested at one meeting that they preferred to reduce the compensation for a lying in (childbirth) to increase the amount allotted to funeral expenses. One woman explained, "What [does] a poor woman work hard for, but in hope she should be put out of the world in a tidy way?" Another rule stipulated that a girl who had been taught in the school and maintained a devout life and good character would be presented with "a pair of white worsted stockings, . . . five shillings, and a Bible." At this, More wrote, "a universal smile graced their ferocious countenances." (Page 152)

43. A Memorial Festival Feeding 517 Children & 300 Others

Another festive tradition that More began as both enticement and a reward for the children to learn in the school was a feast, complete with formal procession of all students, parents, servants, and teachers marching off after the blowing of a horn to a picturesque hillside where all were served gracious portions of roast beef, plum pudding and cake—"as much as their stomachs would hold." Following the meal, the students were given opportunity to show off the lessons they have learned by reciting the Bible chapters they had memorized, giving the catechism, and singing. One such feast fed 517 children, along with 300 others, and drew 4,000 spectators. No wonder some folks living in that region still talk of the festivities that took place on those lush green hills generations ago. (Page 154-155)

44. She Compares Her Criticism to Richard Baxter's

From 1803 to 1805, she underwent what came to be called her "great illness." On November 27, 1803, she wrote in a journal entry that after meditating on the writings of the seventeenth-century Puritan Richard Baxter, she couldn't help but compare the criticism he faced to hers. "I have to lament that though my want of his [Baxter's] faith and piety, they [the written 'attacks'] had nearly destroyed my life." She probably never fully recovered from the physical and mental toll. Years later, she would still decry strife within the church body, writing, "Oh, how I hate faction, division, and controversy in religion! (Page 156)

45. Don't Educate the Poor Beyond Their Social Station

Just as More's education by her father had gone only a little further than was considered proper for a girl, More did not believe in educating the poor children beyond their social station. For one thing, to do so would leave them unsatisfied and unhappy in a lot in life nearly impossible for them to escape. For another, the idea of

social mobility was still a developing idea. While fluidity was an increasing phenomenon for members of the growing middle class—such as More—the station of those on the very upper and lower echelons was still viewed as fixed. It would not be until the next century that the more radical concept of social mobility, as expressed in the American Dream would emerge. (Page 158)

46. God Determines Our Social Status

Her refusal to teach the poor to write demonstrated an adherence to contemporary belief regarding class—namely, that the status into which one was born was ordained by God—and is discomfiting by today’s standards. (Page 159)

47. More Believed Learning the Next Best Thing to Religion

More’s purpose in reform was, first and foremost, religious, not political. She believed that learning was “the next best thing to religion.” In the same letter in which she assured her supporter that she “allow[ed] of no writing,” More added, “I know of no way of teaching morals but by infusing principles of Christianity, nor of teaching Christianity without thorough knowledge of Scripture.” The belief in centrality of Scripture to be essence of Christian and incumbent necessity of teaching people to read has been at the heart of the Protestant Reformation Centuries later. More was getting the task accomplished. (Page 159-160)

48. More Helped Teach her Nation to Read.

More worked with Sunday schools for thirty years. In accordance with her will, the schools were to close six months following her death in 1833. Even so, some of the schools that had been most successful became the first National Schools, the basis for the very same public primary schools educating English children today. Historians estimated that by the 1850s three fourths of laboring-class children between the age of five and fifteen were enrolled in a Sunday school. The schools were credited by her contemporaries for having “changed the moral conduct of the laboring classes within their influence” and eradicating “prejudice against the religious education of the poor.” Years later, the novelist E. M. Foster said of More’s effort with the Sunday schools that “it was good if education is good. She taught the poor how to read and wash, observe Sunday and honor the King, and before her day no one had taught them anything.” More helped teach her nation to read. (Page 161-162)

49. The Clapham Sect Name Was a Misquotation & Editorial Mistake

The Clapham Sect wasn’t really a sect, not in the usual sense of the term, as all its members were respected and committed members of the Church of

England. Evangelicalism—whose distinctive tenets emphasize the centrality of the text of the Bible, salvation through the sacrifice of Christ, the need for personal conversion, and the outward expression of one’s conviction through the act of service—was by this time a moment occurring both within and outside the Established Church. The fervor of their faith was indisputably fueled by that movement to embrace a religion of the heart, but it was not advancement of evangelicalism that motivated the community at Clapham. Thus, some referred to the group as the Clapham Circle, the Clapham Party, (mockingly) the Clapham Saints, or the Claphamites. The name Clapham sect stuck only later when in 1844 the son of Claphamite James Stephen, Sir James Stephen, mistakenly thought that one of the group’s outspoken critics had referred to them as the Clapham Sect in a critical article. In responding to the article, Stephen used this term. His editor at the *Edinburg Review* was so taken with it that he used it in the story’s headline. Thus, “by misquotation and editorial headlining, the Clapham sect was created,” and Clapham Sect it has been called ever since. (Page 166)

50. The People at the Head of the Abolition Movement

If the old, nearly blind John Newton was the soul of the abolitionist movement, Wilberforce was its voice, and Hannah was its heart and hands, the Clapham community served its very body, and Battersea Rice was the cloak that offered protection and warmth. They operated as an intimate group that “planned and labored like a committee that was never dissolved” as they decided on projects and issues and mapped out their strategies for accomplishing the group’s goals. (Page 167)

51. More Was a Good Mixer

More was a woman of strong convictions, but she kept a plentiful table. She mixed comfortably and enthusiastically with rich and poor, churched and unchurched, and all in between. It was her habit to eat meals with the poor villagers during the years of the Sunday schools. (Page 167)

52. Make Goodness Fashionable

Today what is remembered and counted greatest among the accomplishments of the Clapham community is the abolition of the slave trade, but such a victory likely would not have been won without the group’s successful attempts at reformation of the entire society, from high to low, from Sabbath to Saturday. The effects of the Clapham community were three-pronged: they aimed at alleviating the suffering and oppression of the lower classes, reforming the excessive and negative behavior of the upper classes, and advancing Christianity at home and throughout the world.

The Claphamites’ campaign to reform the upper class was often described as one to “make goodness fashionable.” While their efforts to reform were aimed at every level of

society, they saw the greatest need for change among the “fashionable.” Their reformation would, in turn, affect reform of the lower order by both example and influence. (Page 173- 174)

53. Clapham Reform Was Not religious, But Moral, Social, & Political

Despite the devout personal faith of the Clapham members, their reformation campaign was not religious as much as it was moral, social, and political. Most of their strategies employed corresponding tactics. They developed “launches,” ways to turn discussion and social gatherings to serious topics. They conducted research, circulated petitions, undertook boycotts, and published pamphlets, treatises, and poems. Such efforts helped not only to accomplish their goals of reforming members of the upper classes but also to bring the support of the newly reformed to the other efforts at reform. (Page 174)

54. Prisons in England in 1800’s

If the justice of the duel seemed harsh, even more so did the rule of law, particularly for the poor and powerless. The society that countenanced human slavery did not treat its own citizens in persons much better. Prisons in eighteenth-century England were cruel and inhuman, to say the least. The most notorious prison in Great Britain was London’s Newgate. Here people having debt, those awaiting trial, and those facing execution were housed in tiny, crowded cells. Debtors were often accompanied by their family members. Prisoners slept on straw on the floor and had to pay for their bedding and clothing. The sanitary conditions were so bad in Newgate that the smell was often unbearable to passerby outside. Not surprisingly, dozens of prisoners died in Newgate every year. Before the end of the century, the prisons were so crowded that some prisoners were kept in old ships, called hulks—as famously depicted in the next century by Charles Dickens in *Great Expectations*. (Page 176-177)

55. Wilberforce Believed Education Necessary to Enjoy Freedom

In a speech before the House of Commons in 1819 advocating for more education for the poor, Wilberforce argued that “if people were destined to be free, they must be made fit to enjoy their freedom. (Page 178)

56. The Burning of a Woman Alive in India

More’s efforts soon produced petition in Bristol, Manchester, and elsewhere collected to bolster Wilberforce’s successful appeals in the House of Commons. In his speech on the East India bill, Wilberforce attached the account by a missionary to India of his witness of the burning of a woman alive along with the corps of her recently deceased husband. “It was a horrible sight. The most shocking indifference and levity appeared

among those who were present. I never saw anything more brutal than their behavior.” The account described in dreadful detail the agonizing slow burning of the woman over a small fire, how “the legs of the poor creature [were] hanging out of the fire while her body was in flames.” The spectators then beat her legs until they were broken and could be bent toward the fire. “Such were the confusion, the levity, the bursts of brutal laughter, while the poor woman was burning alive before their eyes,” the witness wrote, “that it seemed as if every spark of humanity was extinguished by the accursed superstition. The parliamentary decision in favor of the masonry clause went down in history as “the greatest evangelical vote on any single issue ever recorded in the House of Commons. (Page 180)

57. The Longest Project Was the Church Missionary Society (CMS)

The longest standing project of the Clapham Sect is perhaps the Church Mission Society (CMS), still in operation today. This evangelistic arm of the Anglican Church was founded in 1799 as the Society for Missions to Africa and the East by Wilberforce, Thornton, and Babington, among others. The mission work of the CMS began in Sierra Leone but extended across the globe as a marked presence throughout the colonial postcolonial ages. (Page 180)

58. Many Men Gave Large Amounts of Money to Missions

The Claphamites didn’t give just time and words toward missions and reform—they gave their money too. More’s Sunday schools were supported by monies from Claphamites. Until he married in 1796, Thornton gave an incredible six-sevenths of the income he had inherited from his father to charity. He was not unique among the members of the Clapham Sect. Zachary Macaulay gave away nearly all his wealth on behalf of African slaves. Wilberforce was involved in nearly seventy philanthropic societies, and one year, he gave away three thousand pounds more than he made. The Clapham Sect was also instrumental in founding or supporting countless philanthropic societies. Besides the Proclamation Society that began it all, others included the Church Missionary Society (mentioned above), the Anti-Slavery Society, the Abolition society (a largely Quaker effort), the Sunday School Society, the Bettering Society, the British and Foreign Bible Society, and the small Debt Society. No wonder Wilberforce, in a letter to Thomas Jefferson, called the generosity that characterized the Clapham Sect a “concert of Benevolence. (Page 180-181)

59. Hannah More, the First Victorian

Despite its shortcomings, “The silent revolution” begun by the Clapham Sect infused society with benevolence and compassion that had not before existed on such a scale. Indeed, “in proportion to numbers,” the Claphamites “achieved perhaps more than any other group in English history” by influencing British political and social

politics, particularly those that affected the poorest classes of people.” The reform they sought and achieved set the tone for the coming Victorian age with its emphases on religion, morality, family, and duty. Indeed, for her central role in this, Hannah More has been called “the first Victorian. (Page 182)

60. English Blood Sports

These blood sports, as they were called, were deeply woven into the fabric of English life, from high to low. Lacking land and horses with which to hunt in a more genteel manner, the rural villagers participated in blood sports that seemed particularly brutal, if differing only in degree. (Page 188)

61. Opposition to the Blood Sport

Efforts by Wilberforce, More, and the like-minded activists against animal cruelty were directly linked to their other efforts at social reform. Benevolence toward all lower creatures was a characteristic feature of the evangelical movement from its beginning, and Christians, including many clergymen, led the way in reforming and organizing opposition to the blood sports. (Page 193)

62. Wilberforce Was a Great Lover of Animals (Example Given)

Wilberforce, too, was a “great lover of animals.” In *A Practical View*, he described the blood sports, designed, he said, “to fill up the void of a listless and languid age.” He included bullbating among the “multiplied plagues sports” on England’s complexion, “sure indicatives” of a “falling state.” He and his friends were known for confronting animal cruelty when they encountered it. Once, in his late life, Wilberforce was walking with his young grandson on a hill near Bath when the two encountered a cart driver cruelly whipping his horse as the beast haltingly pulled a heavy load of stones up the hill. When Wilberforce intervened on the animal’s behalf, the carter swore and told him to mind his own business. But upon realizing who was before him, the man paused and said, “Are you Mr. Wilberforce? . . . Then I will never beat my horse again!” (Page 194)

63. Transformation Must Begin at the Top

More believed, as did her collaborators in Clapham, that social transformation had to begin at the top. “Reformation must begin with the GREAT, or it will never be effectual,” She argued. “There example is the foundation whence the vulgar draw their habits, actions, and characters. To expect to reform the poor while the opulent are corrupt is to throw odors into the stream while the springs are poisoned.” (Page 202)

64. More Could Make Appeal to the Fashionable for Religion

There was perhaps no one more able to make an appeal for religion to the fashionable than More. John Newton explained to her. “Zeal, perhaps, sufficient to attempt something in the same way might be found in many; but other requisites are waiting. If a prudent minister should attempt such an extensive inroad into the kingdom of darkness, he might expect such opposition as few could withstand. But your sex and your character afford you a peculiar protection. They who would try to trample one of *us* into the dust will be ashamed *openly* to oppose *you*.”

Newton’s analysis was accurate. More’s sex and character made room for her in places denied to others. A remark by Leslie Stephen in his biography of More seems inspired by this period of her writing. If she ‘showed a little self-complacency,’ he wrote, “the wonder is that her strong sense kept her from being spoilt by the uniform flattery poured upon her by her contemporaries.” (Page 208)

65. The Tract to Improve the Morals of Common People

In More’s words, the purpose of the tracts was to “improving the habits, and raise the principles of the common people, at a time when their temptations, moral and political, were multiplied beyond the example of any former period.” It would turn out to be one of the most successful projects of the Clapham Sect. Henry Thornton served as treasurer, and William Wilberforce provided finances. Although not a member of the sect, Bishop Porteus wholeheartedly lent moral support. According to the plan approved by Henry Thornton, the goal of the repository was “to supplant the corrupt and vicious little books and ballads” sold by hawkers everywhere. (Page 222)

66. The Power of a Novel

Realizing this pull, More could no longer deny the power a novel could hold over the imagination, a power that might just as well be harnessed for good rather than ill. (Page 231)

67. She Used Her Profits to Provide Monsey for Clergymen

Her philanthropy extended to young clergymen. She used the profits from her investments to provide books of religious instruction and general support to needy members of the clergy. She also served as an informed member to many of these young clergymen who sought out her advice and counsel. (Page 242)

68. Old Bishop in Petticoats

Not everyone was so kind. In 1817, the radical journalist William Cobbett, who traveled to America to bring back the remains of his deceased friend Thomas Pine, mockingly called the “old bishop in petticoats,” a remark that took hold among her enemies and was highly insulting in those days with its suggestion of behavior highly improper for a woman. Ironically, though, the term speaks highly of the strength of her character and convictions. Yet she was ever humble. Her piety and humanity are poignantly expressed in a letter to Wilberforce, written in the midst of a royal scandal involving Queen Caroline, cheating on the also unfaithful King George IV: the queen’s sins, she wrote regretfully, “occupy my thought more than my own. (Page 243)

69. “If We Meet at His Feet We Shall Be Equal!”

Despite the weakening and wandering of her mind and the loss of her taste and smell from a fever some years before, her bright eyes which she was so well known did not fail. She was able to read without spectacles until she read no more. Neither did her hearing falter much. One day, a servant asked to read a passage from the Bible to her. More asked, “What are you going to read?” When the servant replied that the passage would be on the resurrection of Christ, More exclaimed, “If we meet at his feet we shall be equal!” (Page 249)

70. Hannah Needed Only to be Known

Hannah need not have been placed on a pedestal to be appreciated. She needed only to be known. (Page 252)