

A. Welch

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Historical Address

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# Historical Address

BY

ASHBEL WELCH,

BEFORE THE

Hunterdon County Bible Society,

*AUGUST 31st, 1880.*

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# HISTORICAL ADDRESS

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ASHBEL WELCH,

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ON THE

### FIVE HUNDREDTH ANNIVERSARY

OF THE

## Translation of the Bible by Wycliffe,

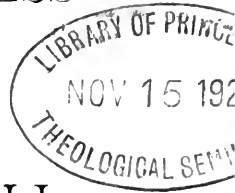
*AUGUST 31st, 1880.*

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PUBLISHED BY REQUEST OF THE SOCIETY.

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LAMBERTVILLE, N. J.:  
CLARK PIERSON, PRINTER. THE RECORD OFFICE.  
1880.





# ADDRESS.

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I propose to illustrate the value of the English Bible, by showing that it alone was the means of effecting the English Reformation, and so of giving us the Protestant religion; and that too, in spite of the opposition of the government, the church, and the most prominent of the so-called reformers; and against the whole public teachings heard by the people.

As we are Protestants, we may without offence to those who differ from us, assume that the Reformation was an invaluable blessing.

By the Reformation I mean, not the improvement in manners and spirituality that took place within the Roman Catholic Church itself, nor the mere secession of a part of that Church from the rest, with no radical change, except a new head for the separated fragment; but that all-important change in religious sentiment that involved the separation of the Protestants from the Roman Catholic Church.

By Protestant, I mean the positively religious class so-called in England and America, keeping out of view the etymology and the historical origin of the word, and not using it in its more extended continental sense; and I shall use the word Church only in its ecclesiastical sense of an organization.

To understand what the Reformation was, it is necessary to point out the cardinal principle on which the Roman Catholic and the Protestant differ. Both alike believe that all mankind are sinners exposed to punishment, and that Christ has effected salvation for sinners. Then comes in an irreconcilable difference. The Roman Catholic believes that Christ constituted a great corporation, perpetuated ever since by uninterrupted succession, calling itself "The Church," (or to distinguish it from other organizations, making the same claim, "the Roman Catholic Church,") and that it is this corporation which is called "the church" in the New Testament; and that through it alone salvation is conveyed from God to man, by means of certain forms and rites which are attended with spiritual and saving, and in some cases miraculous effects. On the other hand the

Protestant believes that each individual christian receives salvation direct from God, without any other intermediate channel than the Lord Jesus Christ.

The other differences flow from this. I point some of them out to be used hereafter in determining what was protestant and what was not.

The evangelical Protestant believes that salvation is gratuitous, only on condition of faith. The Roman Catholic, besides some other modifications, believes that it also requires the mediation of the church.

One of the supernatural effects claimed for one Roman Catholic rite is, that the bread used in the sacrament is converted into "the body and blood, soul and divinity" of Christ. This transmutation, or to speak technically transubstantiation, is of course denied by the Protestant. This doctrine is admitted on all hands to be a test tenet that distinguishes the two parties. We shall often have occasion to refer to it, as a test.

Many of the disputes about particular rites and tenets, frivolous and childish in themselves, with which history is so full, are rescued from contempt only by what they express or imply respecting the cardinal point already stated.

True, most Protestants believe that there are a few divinely appointed rites to be observed, but which are not essential to salvation. True there are those in some Protestant connections, whose views conform rather to the Roman Catholic than to the Protestant principle, but such do not like to be called Protestants.

One of the claims of this mighty organization, "the church," harmonizing with its claim of being the dispenser of salvation, is, that the word of God contained partly in the bible and partly in tradition outside the bible, is entrusted to it alone, to be by it given out to the people at its discretion, and interpreted by it alone under the infallible guidance of the Holy Spirit. All this the Protestant denies, believing that the word of God is contained only in the bible, and that, whatever helps he may use, each person must understand it for himself; and that this word is sent direct from God, like the rain from heaven, to every man, woman and child on the face of the earth.

When Wyckliffe, "the Morning Star of the Reformation," arose, five hundred years ago, this all-powerful corporation had been paramount for many centuries, and its teachings had been received as infallibly true throughout Christian Europe, except by the Greek Church in the far East. Its decrees had become



in most countries, including England, a part of the law of the land. Dissent it is true had arisen, but it had been put down by the strong arm. Only a few dissentient refugees survived, such as the handful of Waldenses among the recesses of the Cottian Alps.

The Reformation that ultimately succeeded in Europe, as far back as it can be distinctly traced, began in England, five hundred years ago, with Wycliffe, whose anniversary we now celebrate.

Five hundred years carries us back more than a century before the discovery of America, more than half a century before the invention of printing, centuries before the use of steam. Venice was one of the great powers of Europe, its commercial metropolis, and mistress of the sea. The Russians were of little more account in Europe than the Pottowattamie Indians are in America. Houses were commonly thatched with straw, and being without chimnies, the smoke found its way out as best it could. The floors of the mansions of the great were covered with rushes, among which the dogs hunted successfully for chicken bones.\*

We can best realize the changes of 500 years, by thinking over those of one-tenth part of that time, and within the memory of some of us. Fifty years ago there were no railroads, no telegraphs, no steamships.

Five hundred years carries back into the gloom of the dark ages, though not the darkest. Morals were at a low ebb. Religion among the people was very much a round of ceremonies. Divinity among the clergy was very much in the hands of the schoolmen, who are thus described by Pope :

“Once school divines this zealous isle o’erspread ;  
 “Who knew most sentences was deepest read ;  
 “Faith, gospel, all, seemed made to be disputed ;  
 “And none had sense enough to be confuted.”

John de Wycliffe was born in 1324. He studied at Oxford, where in 1360, when he was 36 years old, he became head of

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\*Chaucer, thus describes a fine lady of that period :

“At mete was she wely taught withalle ;  
 “She lette no morsel from hire lippes falle,  
 “Ne wette hire fingers in hire sauce depe,  
 “Wel coude she carie a morsel, and wel kepe,  
 “That no drope ne fell upon hire brest.”  
 “Hire over lippe wiped she so clene  
 “Thatte in hire cuppe was no ferthing sene  
 “Of grese, when she dronken hadde hire draught.”

That is, this elegant lady had such excellent table manners, that she didn't let the food “squash” out of her mouth, and fall into her lap, and when she picked out the cut up meat from the platter, she did not stick her fingers unnecessarily deep into the gravy, and did not smear the front of her dress with the drippings, and wiped her upper lip so clean, that when she drank, no grease flowed back from her lip into the cup.

one of the colleges. He also became one of the chaplains to the king. He was a powerful preacher and writer, and a man of extraordinary genius, activity, courage, piety and learning. He died in 1384, four years after completing his translation of the bible.

Few laymen at that time had ever seen a bible, and few priests had ever studied it. Wyckliffe however, like every other one of the reformers, and like every one of the English martyrs, with whose history I am acquainted, studied the scriptures thoroughly early in his career. He became convinced that they alone contain the word of God, and that they were intended to be read by, or to, all the people as well as the learned. He was also led by this study to deny all saving efficacy of sacraments, and of course rejected transubstantiation, and denied the necessity of baptism in order to salvation. He held to only two sacraments. He denied the authority of the church to make laws or interpret the scriptures. He denounced the hierarchy, pope, cardinals, bishops, and all, and held that no one was the better or the worse for their benedictions, or their maledictions; but that every one's standing before God depended only on his own spiritual condition. That is, he denied the distinctive doctrines of the Roman Catholic Church, and adopted those now called Protestant, going in some things further than most Protestants now go. Of course he held to the fundamental doctrines professed alike by both parties.

At that time half the land in England, and more than half the revenues, belonged to the church. Wyckliffe, "the Elijah of the Reformation," was disgusted by the wealth and luxury of the clergy, very much as the founders of the mendicant orders had previously been. He denounced not only that luxury, but all ecclesiastical endowments. To enforce his protest, and set an example (but not in the way of penance, which he denounced,) he and his "poor priests," as his followers were called, wore the coarsest garments, and went barefoot.

Confident that by his bible study he had arrived at God's truth, he taught it boldly, though he well knew that so many thousands had perished for lesser departures from the teachings of the church. Students came from all parts of Europe to hear him. But he could personally teach only for a limited time and over a limited space. He wished every one to hear God himself speak his own truth in his own word. So with great labor, doubtless extending though many years, and with some help, he

translated the bible into English, that by it God's word might be heard as far and as long as the language then in use should be spoken. It was finished in 1380, five hundred years ago. Wyckliffe was then fifty-six years old.

This translation was made from the Vulgate, itself a Latin translation made from the originals by St. Jerome, a thousand years before. As the Vulgate was held to be correct by the church, it was better to use it, even if Wyckliffe had understood the original languages, and had manuscripts in the original to translate from; for then the church could not deny that it was real scripture.

In his preface Wyckliffe says: "Cristen men and wymmen, "olde and yonge, shulden studie fast in the Newe Testament, "for it is of ful autorite aud opyn to understanding of simple "men as to the poyntis that be moost nedeful to salvacioun." This sentiment was the germ of the Reformation.

An extract from the writings of a contemporary priest, shows how this work was regarded by the clergy: "This Master "John Wyckliffe hath translated the gospel out of Latin into "English, which Christ had entrusted with the clergy and doc- "tors of the church, that they might minister it to the laity and "weaker sort, according to the state of the times, and the wants "of men; so that by this means the gospel is made vulgar, and "laid more open to the laity, even to women who can read, than "it used to be to the most learned of the clergy."

Among the people it was heartily welcomed, copies were multiplied and distributed with immense zeal and industry, and read with great avidity. The great Roman Catholic historian, Dr. Lingard, says that Wyckliffe made "a new translation, "multiplied the copies with the aid of transcribers, and by his "poor priests recommended it to the perusal of his hearers. "In their hands it became an engine of wonderful power. Men "were flattered with the appeal to their private judgments, the "new doctrines insensibly acquired partisans and protectors in "the higher circles, who alone were acquainted with the use of "letters; a spirit of enquiry was generated; and the seeds sown "of that religious revolution, which in little more than a "century, astonished and convulsed the nations of Europe."

Here we have the testimony of this distinguished historian, that the translation of the bible into English originated what we call the reformation, not only in England, but in Europe generally.

Lingard does not notice the important fact that, though the common people could seldom read, yet they were *read to*, especially by the "poor priests."

As printing was not invented till about half a century after Wyckliffe's time, and as then for a century more nobody dared to print his bible, and by the end of that time its language became obsolete, it was never printed till centuries afterwards. I suppose the cost of one of those manuscript bibles was as much as a laboring man could earn in excess of his board during his whole lifetime. Few men could have copies all their own. But they were widely scattered and read to the people in groups.

The eagerness to read this bible, doubtless stimulated the laymen of England to learn to read, for we soon after find them more educated than was common on this side of the Alps.

But this bible had to fight its way against seemingly insuperable obstacles. Both the Greek and Roman churches strictly forbade the reading of the scriptures by the laity, or their translation into any spoken language. The council of Thonlouse in 1229, decree as follows: "We forbid the laity to possess any of the books of the Old or New Testament, except perhaps the Psalter \* \* \* Having any of them translated into the vulgar tongue we strictly forbid." When Sir Thomas More, Chancellor of England, wished to read Tyndale's translation of the New Testament, in order to write against it, he first got permission of his bishop. It ought in fairness to be said that the church has since allowed the bible to be read by more enlightened generations.

Notwithstanding the opposition of the church, the bible and Wyckliffe's doctrines circulated more or less freely for nearly twenty years. The king, Edward 3d, refused to pay certain tribute demanded by the pope from England. Wyckliffe, denying the spiritual authority of the great corporation of which the pope was the head, of course denied his right to collect tribute from the nations of Christendom and wrote with great power against the payment. This secured for him the royal protection against the church. The victorious Edward 3d closed his splendid career in 1377. His eldest son, the Black Prince, the favorite hero of English history, had died the year before, leaving one son, a young boy, who now succeeded his grandfather as Richard 2d. One of the young king's uncles, a son of the late king, John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster, was a great friend and protector of Wyckliffe. The queen mother,

the widow of the Black Prince, was also a strong friend, and an earnest reader of the scriptures. Though Wyckliffe was repeatedly brought before ecclesiastical tribunals, though the pope interfered to effect his condemnation, their influence always got him off.

This princely protection would hardly have saved Wyckliffe, his followers and his bible from the flames, if it had not been for the great quarrel in the church itself. Each of the two great factions into which it had split, elected its own pope; and then each pope, claiming to be the vicegerent of heaven, officially sent the other one and all his followers to perdition. Neither of them could afford to quarrel with the king of England, even if he did protect heresy. Of course when the two infallible heads of the church were charging each other with falsehood, many people were led to doubt whether they should believe either of them. Thus it providentially occurred, that, until the accession of Henry 4th, in 1399, bibles were multiplied, and read, and listened to, all over England.

The seed of the word thus sown in the hearts of the people, rapidly bore fruit. It is estimated that before the close of the century, that is within twenty years after the translation was finished, one quarter of the nation, and almost a majority of the House of Commons, were converts to Wyckliffe's doctrines. One of Wyckliffe's admirers was his contemporary, Geoffrey Chaucer, the father of English poetry.

Among the strong friends of Wyckliffe, readers of his bible, and advocates of his cause, was Anne of Bohemia, Queen of Richard 2d, "the good Queen Anne," as the people lovingly called her. It was she who sent the seeds of the Reformation from England to her native Bohemia. Among the converts to Wyckliffe's doctrines there, were John Huss and Jerome of Prague. Those doctrines spread so wide, and took root so deep, and created so much alarm, that in 1410 the archbishop of Prague, publicly and officially burned Wyckliffe's writings; and a few years later the Council of Constance, which had burned the living Huss and Jerome, ordered the bones of the dead Wyckliffe to be dug up and burned. The Reformation in Bohemia could never be entirely stamped out, and was influential in promoting the great movement under Luther. So we see how the Reformation commenced with Wyckliffe's bible, and went from England to the Continent, a hundred years before Luther was born.

In 1399, Richard 2d having lost his guardian angel, the good Queen Anne, misbehaved himself, and was deposed. Henry of Bolingbroke, son of John of Gaunt, mounted the vacant throne, under title of Henry 4th, and was the ancestor of the kings of the house of Lancaster, whose badge was the red rose, passing over the rightful heir afterwards represented by the House of York, whose badge was the white rose. This afterwards led to the wars of the roses, which deluged England with blood for thirty years.

This usurpation of Henry 4th, as it turned out, kept back the Reformation more than a century. His title being bad, it was necessary to strengthen himself by alliance with the church. To please it, he tried to root out the doctrines sustained by the English bibles. Under him and his successor, acts of parliament were passed, enabling any bishop to burn any disciple of Wyckliffe's, and forbidding the reading of the bible in English on pain of death. A man was burned at Coventry for teaching his children the ten commandments and the Lord's Prayer in English. Many were burned, many recanted, many left the country and sowed the seeds of the Reformation in other countries, and a great but unknown number continued to read the English bible in secret, and in secret taught their children and neighbors the doctrines they thought, and we think, the bible teaches. History can give no particulars about them. They made few records, for records would bring exposure and death. The bible was concealed in boxes and jars in the ground, in chinks of walls and hollows of trees, and leaves of it in beds and cushions and chair bottoms. Of course there could be no public preaching, but for a century and a quarter, the secret reading of the English bible nourished and kept alive the roots of that mighty tree, which when it displayed itself, was called the Reformation.

Some Historians who see nothing till it takes a public and official shape, say the Wyckliffeites had become extinct before the reign of Henry 8th, because they had ceased to be a visible society. Such a historian is like a naturalist who should begin his history of the growth of a plant only when it comes up, and take no notice of the seed, and how it sprouted, how the roots reached out under ground, and how before anything was seen above ground the character was developed, that accounts for all that is in sight. The history of religion is very different from the history of the church ; one often has little to do with

the history of the world, the other is commonly mixed up with it.

In spite of the long continued efforts to destroy these bibles, and through their language becoming obsolete, they were superseded, and then little care was taken of them, a good many are still in existence.

We now come down to the second act in the great drama of the Reformation, in the days of Henry 8th. Constantinople had been taken by the Turks, and Greek scholars and Greek learning scattered thence all over Europe. Manuscripts of the bible in the original languages had been secured by the Universities. The English language had very much changed since Wyckliffe's time. A new translation was needed, and that direct from the original Hebrew and Greek, not second handed through the Latin.

To make this new translation, God raised up the illustrious Tyndale, whose devoted piety, industry, learning, and surpassing genius, enabled him to make a translation of the New Testament, which all the learning and talent of the three hundred and fifty years since, had not been able to supersede. We read it to-day substantially as he wrote it.

William Tyndale was borne in 1484, just one hundred years after the death of Wyckliffe, during the short and bloody reign of Richard 3d. He was almost exactly of the same age as Luther and Zuinglious, the great contemporary continental reformers. He studied first at Oxford, then at Cambridge, where he read Greek with the great Erasmus, and became a thorough Greek and Hebrew scholar. Very early he studied the bible in the original languages, and gave lectures upon it. Very early he arrived at those opinions we call protestant, probably before he ever heard of Luther.

The roots of the Reformation started to grow vigorously just about the same time in Germany, Switzerland and England, independently of each other, but in each case directly from the study of the bible. Luther had never seen a bible till he was a monk, and over twenty years old, when in rummaging through the library at Erfurth, he came across one. This he eagerly studied, and the result was the Reformation in Germany.

When about thirty-five years old, Tyndale left the University and became a tutor in the family of Sir John Walsh, (or Welch, as old John Fox writes the name) in Gloucestershire. Here his protestantism got him into disfavor with the clergy, and he left to avoid compromising his patron. It was there that

he said to a learned divine, "If God spares my life, ere many years, I will cause a boy that driveth the plow to know more of the scriptures than you do." And he kept his word. The intention thus expressed, and ever after acted on, was to make a translation for plain people. So he put it in good old home-spun English that goes right to the heart, and that still lives almost unchanged.

Tyndale went up to London, and in his inexperience and simplicity applied to the Bishop of London for facilities for translating. But a translation of the scriptures was exactly what the Bishop didn't want. After a year in London spent in hard study and unavailing effort for a chance to do his work, Tyndale says he found there was "no place to translate the bible in all England." So in 1523 he sailed to Hamburg and there went on with his work. The New Testament was printed in 1525; the printing began at Antwerp, and when he was driven from there continued at Cologne, and when driven from there finished at Worms. It was circulated in England as early as January, 1526, that season to the number of six thousand copies.

In his modest and touching preface, Tyndale beseeches the learned, that "If they perceive in any place that I have not attained the true sense of the tongue or meaning of the scripture, or have not given the right English word, that they put to their hands to amend it." He says he made his translation of the New Testament alone without help from any one, and that he imitated no other man's interpretation. He did not make use of Luther's translation as Coverdale afterwards did. The next year however, the learned and pious John Fryth joined him, and was of great service to him for the next five or six years. After that the noble martyr John Rodgers came to him, helped him to the end of his life, and after his death finished what Tyndale left incomplete.

We must now leave Tyndale, going on with translations, and look at the state of things in England.

King Henry 8th was, up to about the middle of his reign, highly popular, and so deposed himself, that if he had died then, no king would have stood fairer on the page of English history. The people were intensely loyal. The memory of the civil wars was so recent and so terrible, that rather than risk their recurrence by opposing the king, the nation were willing to submit to any amount of tyranny. Hence he was permitted



to cut off the heads of his wives when he got tired of them, send his nobles and his ministers to the block or to the Tower, and to burn anybody who refused to profess whatever he told them to believe.

Henry having quarreled with the pope, the submissive loyalty of the nation enabled him to withdraw himself and them from the jurisdiction of Rome, and to become himself practically the pope of England. This secession was not the Reformation. If you cut off a slice from an apple, the slice cut off is apple still, just as much as it was before, and just as much as the rest is. The difference between the seceded church and the residuary church, was, that the former had a new chief. We must be careful not to confound Henry's anti-protestant church with the Protestant Episcopal Church, afterwards established in England. Henry and his church retained up to the end of his life the same cardinal principles of salvation through a great corporation, and test tenets of transubstantiation, and many other such that they held before the secession.

The mysterious and awful powers claimed for his church, by Henry its absolute master, made it in his hands a tremendous engine of state. Men feared to offend or oppose the dreaded monarch, who could send not only their bodies to prison and to death, but through the machinery of his church their souls to hell, or at any rate to purgatory. His obsequious parliament passed an act declaring that he had charge of the souls, as well as the bodies, of his subjects. This claim he pertinaciously asserted to the end of his life.

Hence Henry and his church were, from first to last, bitterly opposed to the reformation. He often announced his hatred of Protestants in the most public manner, and emphasized it by burning them.

Henry asserted his power over religion by altering details, while adhering to the cardinal principles of the old faith—for instance he reduced the number of sacraments in his church to three. He might burn a Protestant one day for saying there were not seven sacraments, and a Catholic another day for saying there were more than three. On one occasion he sent six men to execution together, three Roman Catholics to be hanged for denying that he was head of the church, and three Protestants to be burnt for denying the doctrine of transubstantiation.

We can now understand why Tyndale was hated by the king,

his ministers and his bishops. In his notes he taught that in spiritual things men are accountable not to the king, but directly to God, and also, that the authority of kings was not unlimited. Besides, he had translated the bible without royal permission. Hence both under the Tudors and Stuarts, when they were compelled to adopt Tyndale's translation because nobody else could make one as good, they always called it after somebody else's name.

Henry's will begins, "In the name of God and of the Glorious and Blessed Virgin, our lady St. Mary, and of all the holy company of heaven." This don't sound as if he was the author of the Reformation, and yet many historians, and even the philosophic Guizot, confound the secession effected by Henry with the Reformation.

The government and the church, (or that branch of the government called the church), prohibited the circulation and reading of Tyndale's Testament, under penalty of the whip, the dungeon and the stake. Among those put to death for circulating these testaments was Richard Bayfield, in 1531, who after being put to the torture to make him tell who else was guilty of the same terrible crime, was slowly wasted to death by the bishop of London. He was in the fire half an hour before he died. The bishop said "these testaments in the English tongue" were "to the peril and danger" of his flock, "and the destruction of their souls." And yet during the whole twenty remaining years of Henry's life, during a considerable part of which time these penalties continued, Tyndale's Testaments and Bibles continued to pour into England in an ever increasing stream, and to be read with ever increasing avidity.

For translating the bible into English, and for expressing sentiments that it does not seem possible to us that anybody ever could have disputed, Tyndale was hunted down like a wild beast by Henry and his church, all the nine remaining years of his life. We have not time, if we had the information, to follow him from one hiding place to another; neither can we follow him minutely in his work, for it was all done in secret. We know that the five books of Moses were printed in 1529, and the book of Jonah in 1531. He finished, but did not himself print, the rest of the historical books of the Old Testament. How much of the rest was his work I do not know. During those nine years "in hunger and thirst and cold," in what he calls "bitter absence from friends," among "sharp fightings"

as he expresses it, in hourly danger of his life, this great and good man went on with his work, and gave us a translation of the greater part of the bible, which all the efforts of learning and talent since have never been able to supersede. What he wrote, we read to-day nearly as he wrote it. Unfortunately for himself he was some centuries ahead of his time.

From Henry's early reputation, and his break with Rome, Tyndale had formed great hopes of him, and had ventured to speak some plain truths intended for the royal ear. His loyal and sensitive heart was almost broken at their reception, and he mournfully says: "Very death were better to me than life, considering man's nature to be such that he can bear no truth."

In 1535 Tyndale was betrayed by a pretended friend sent from England, into the hands of the government of the Netherlands, and confined in the castle of Velvoorde, near Brussels, till the 6th of October, 1536. He then met the death he had so long been looking for. Crumwell and Cranmer, the so-called reformers, never lifted a finger to save him. The ministers of vengeance had the humanity to choke him to death before they lighted the fire that consumed him. So passed from sorrow and hatred and ignominy, to the realms of joy and love and glory, the noblest martyr since the days of the apostles.

Tyndale's last words were: "Lord open the eyes of the king of England." Like all prayers of faith, this was answered in effect, but as so often in other cases, not in form. God did open the eyes, not of the king, but what was much better, of the people of England, and that by the reading of the bible he had given them.

Next year, (1537), John Rodgers, who had been helping Tyndale towards the close of his life, published the first edition of the whole bible, under the assumed name of Thomas Matthew. Under that name it might not be so bitterly opposed by Henry and his church, as if it bore the name, so odious to them, of Tyndale.

Why did not Tyndale seek shelter among the Protestant princes of Germany? Henry, as we have seen, claimed the right to make his subjects profess what he told them to, and to punish those who refused. To a less degree, the same doctrine began to prevail among the Protestant princes, according to the celebrated maxim, "Whose the region, his the religion." Henry claimed the same right to say what religion should be professed by his subjects as to say what kind of coats should be

worn by the yeomen of his guard. He probably conceded the same rights to the Protestant princes. Hence we are not so much surprised to see him burning English Protestants at home, and protecting German Protestants abroad. Tyndale, an English subject, being a Protestant, was in Henry's eyes, and perhaps in those of the German princes, a criminal and an outlaw. Those princes wished Henry's alliance against the Emperor, and could hardly afford to give him mortal offence by harboring such outlaw.

The man who, more than any other, gets the credit of the English Reformation is Thomas Cranmer, Archbishop of Canterbury; notwithstanding the fact that up to the moment of Henry's death, he was, next to the king, first in dignity and power in a church and government that did its worst to crush out the Reformation. Whatever his private opinions or wishes may have been, his official actions and his professions were against the Protestant religion. This is best shown by an example.

The learned and pious John Fryth, the bosom friend and helper of Tyndale in revising the New Testament and translating the Pentateuch, was brought before a commission, of which Cranmer was chairman, charged with denying the doctrine of transubstantiation; that is, with being a Protestant. The commission turned him over to the Bishop of London, and he to the secular arm, each of which transfers meant death. Fryth was put into a dungeon in that grimmest of prisons Newgate, and loaded with irons, one of which was a ring round his neck, fastened to a post in such manner that he could neither stand straight up, sit, nor lie down. After two weeks he was taken to Smithfield, an irregular open space in London, then and still used as a cattle market, and there slowly roasted to death.

Cranmer writing to the English Ambassador at the Imperial Court, the most public place in Europe, after the condemnation, but before the execution, says, that Fryth denied that "the very corporal presence of Christ was in the host," that he had tried to get him to give up that imagination, meaning that silly fancy; and so he coolly adds, "Fryth looketh to the fire."

Another example will show that Henry the 8th's government was opposed to the Reformation to the very last. A few months before his death the heroic Anne Askew was charged with denying transubstantiation, and with saying "The most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands," meaning that

he could be worshipped any where else as well as in a Cathedral. She said, as so many other martyrs had said before, that she had learned her Protestant opinions from Tyndale's bible. She was put to the torture to make her tell what other heretics she knew ; which she refused to do. When almost torn limb from limb on the rack, and the Lieutenant of the Tower refused to pull any harder, the Lord High Chancellor of England stripped off his robes, and with his own hands gave another turn to the windlass, and I suppose had the pleasure of hearing more of her tendons and ligaments snap. She was carried to Smithfield in a chair ; (of course she could not walk,) and there, in the presence of the Lord High Chancellor of England, the Duke of Norfolk, first peer of the realm, the Lord Mayor of London, and other great dignitaries, the flames that consumed her lighted up the darkness of the night.

And yet on the death of Henry, in 1547, the nation, under the leadership of Cranmer, avowed itself Protestant. Though every officer of church and state had up that moment avowed hostility to Protestantism, though the council of regency after the king's death was itself divided on that question, though so many of the great and learned still adhered to the old faith, though there was no pressure in favor of Protestantism from abroad, though the new king, being a little boy, could give no royal prestige in favor of that belief, the nation avowed its belief in what Anne Askew had so lately been burned for believing.

There is but one possible explanation of this seemingly miraculous change ; the PEOPLE were secretly Protestant already. Not probably the majority in numbers, but an overwhelming majority of the intelligence and vigor of the nation. If it were not so, no sane man, however daring or determined, would have dared to undertake the change. The iron-nerved Bismark would have shrunk back in terror from such an attempt. And yet Cranmer, the most timid of men, going with the current, announced Protestantism as the religion of the nation, and its most daring and bitter opponents made little resistance.

Cranmer did not make the Reformation ; it made him. He only officially recognized, announced, expressed and organized what already existed. He expressed it nearly in the language of Geneva ; he organized it after the existing forms.

As in some region blest with abundant rains, little rills are formed in the secluded nooks of the hills, and flow together in

secrecy and silence to form larger streams, and they to form still larger, until some great obstruction holds them all back for awhile, and then when that obstruction is removed, the waters, unseen and unheard before, burst forth into a magnificent river flowing in full view across the plains; so watered by the word of God in the mother tongue, the English Reformation, originating at the fireside of castle and cottage, in the boudoir and by the wash tub, in the counting room and at the work bench, in the lawyer's chambers and in the curate's study, all in enforced secrecy and silence, as soon as Henry, the great obstruction, was removed, burst forth all at once and moved majestically on in the sight of all the world.

It is not material to the present question, whether Henry, by breaking the power of Rome in England, removed a greater obstruction than himself.

Let us look at some direct proofs of this growing Protestantism among the people.

In 1533, a preacher before the king said of it, "this abominable heresy do much prevail among us." In 1536 the lower House of Convocation of the archiepiscopal Province of Canterbury, complain that **THE PEOPLE** have come to the opinion that nothing is to be believed unless it can be proved by scripture, and then enumerating other distinctive Protestant doctrines, they say they are accepted by the people. The Bishop of Hereford laments on this wise: "The lay people do now know the holy scriptures better than many of us," and these testimonies multiply in subsequent years.

The ever increasing floods of Tyndale's bibles pouring into England, and the ever increasing eagerness with which they were read at the risk of liberty and life, prove the rapid, though silent, growth of Protestantism. Thousands on thousands continued to be imported every year, concealed in bags of grain or bales of cloth, for twenty years. Apprentices clubbed together to buy a testament. A contemporary writer says: "Every man has a bible."

The nation became Protestant by reading the English bible. It was not by public teaching; that was put down by the strong arm. Some that attempted it were sent to Smithfield, and went up in chariots of fire. Ridley languished in the Tower. Honest old Hugh Latimer, brave as he was, shrank back. It was not the writings of Luther that made England Protestant. They were prohibited, and there was no such eagerness for them as

to break through the prohibition. The distinctive doctrines of Luther did not prevail in England. The light that illuminated England was of a different color from that which shone out in Germany. The contemporary reformations in England, Switzerland and Germany, led by Tyndale, Zuinglius and Luther respectively, were quite independent of each other. Each started from the bible. In England it was carried on by the bible alone, without public teaching. In Switzerland and Germany it was by the bible and public teaching. As Luther and the German Reformation were most prominent, contemporary writers sometimes very incorrectly called all Protestants Lutherans.

A great ecclesiastical body in Henry's time bore witness that the people got their religion from the English bible, by calling it "that great book of heresy."

The character of the religion of the people after Henry's death, shows that it came direct from the bible; and they expressed it in bible language.

When the Reformation in England, which had been kept alive by Wyckliffe's bible, expanded under the influence of Tyndale's, it was at first especially among the people; not among the great and learned till afterwards. In 1529 the Convocation boasted, that "in the crime of heresy, thanked be God, there hath no notable person believed in our time." Plain people and the less learned inferior clergy, became Protestants sooner than those of greater pretensions like Cranmer, (who himself says, he wasted six years in scholastic divinity, and that he came to the truth slowly and little by little), because their heads were not so full of the rubbish of the dark ages and the quibbles of Scotists and Thomists. All got their instructions from the scriptures, but the scholars got it sooner than the teachers. The leaders were led. The English Reformation did not come from the people in power, but from the power of the people.

After Henry's death there were multitudes of Protestant congregations, and but few ministers able to preach to them. Hence the necessity for the Homilies and for a liturgy.

The real kingdom of God in England came not with observation. Its movements, as so often in other cases, had little to do with great men or governments or ecclesiastical organizations. It grew up in the hearts of the people from the seed of the word as found in the English bible, without external aid, except that it was warmed up by the fires of Smithfield,

and against the opposition of church and state, and of the most prominent of the so-called reformers, and of the whole public teachings of the time. For that bible in English they were indebted to John Wyckliffe and William Tyndale.

Justice requires a few words more about Tyndale. Badly as his enemies treated him in his lifetime, they have done but little worse than his friends, the Protestants, since his death. He expressed or implied opinions universally received among us now, but distasteful to the rulers of that time, both in church and state. Hence Crumwell and Cranmer denounced him, and Sir Thomas More, Chancellor of England, wrote a big book against him. And when Cranmer afterwards superintended the issue of bibles, and adopted Tyndale's with a few alterations, because he could get nothing else as good, those bibles were always called by somebody else's name.

It was the same way with King James 1st. The divine right and unlimited power of kings, and their right to control the religion of their subjects, were fundamental principles, dear to the heart of "the Lord's Anointed," as James loved to be called. It was for attempting to enforce the first of these, that his son Charles 1st lost his head, and for asserting the second, that his grandson James 2d lost his crown. Of course James and his flatterers, in and out of the church, could not abide Tyndale, for he had dared to speak for freedom. So when great and learned men were appointed by James to make a new translation of the scriptures, they were cautioned to have as little to do with Tyndale as possible.

But, with the advantage of all the new light that had shone out in the eighty years since Tyndale's death, with the benefit of other modern translations, with every facility such as the libraries of all Europe, and under the sunshine of royal favor, those great and learned men were unable to make a translation of the New Testament as good as poor, destitute, hunted down, Tyndale had made, and so they properly adopted Tyndale's translation. That was all right; the wrong was that they gave him no credit for it. It is true they did really retranslate some parts of the Old Testament, and they made some verbal alterations in Tyndale's translation, sometimes for the better, sometimes for the worse. And James really did a great service by establishing a standard version.

The men who from Coverdale and Cranmer down to King James, have adopted Tyndale's translation, altered a few words,



and then called it by their own names, have done it, not, I suppose, to steal the credit of his work, but to disconnect it from a name odious to despotic ears. But the sentiments that made his name odious being axioms among us, and dear to our hearts, we should undo the wrong, which for three centuries and a half has been doing to the author of this incomparable translation, and the champion of civil and religious freedom. Instead of that, in our popular accounts of the English bible, Tyndale's work is ignored, or only mentioned as one of several superseded translations, and the whole credit of our present English bible is given to King James' revisers. We speak of King James' translation of the New Testament, made two and a half centuries ago, instead of King James' revised edition of Tyndale's translation, made three and a half centuries ago. When false phases get into history, they continue to be repeated long after their falsehood is exposed.

The estimate of Tyndale commonly presented now, even in Protestant and Republican America, is that handed down from Henry and James and their satellites. Good and just men among us, speak as if they too were in the plot to blot Tyndale's name from the page of history. It is as if we should take our estimate of the Apostle Paul from the High Priest and the Sanhedrim.

To show that our present New Testament is really Tyndale's, it is only necessary to compare this old book (Tyndale's edition of 1549, edited by John Rogers), with this pulpit copy. The New Testament is substantially the same in each. One word is sometimes substituted for another, but James' revisers seldom recast a sentence.

A distinguished Roman Catholic author says: "The uncommon beauty and marvelous English of the Protestant bible is one of the great strongholds of heresy," (*i. e.*, Protestantism) "in this country. It lives on the ear like music that can never be forgotten." That music is Tyndale's. The tone, the pathos, the rhythm and ring, are his.

How closely they followed Tyndale is best shown by an example. In the last verse of the third chapter of Philippians, Tyndale has the clause, "change our vile body," meaning our lowly body; vile expressing the very humble condition of a villien, that is of a kind of bondman, who tilled the land. But in King James' time villienage had almost ceased, and villien had come to mean not a bondman, but a detestable scamp, and is

constantly so used by Shakespeare just before James' time; and vile had come to mean, not humble, but, as now, detestable. Nevertheless the revisers copied the clause just as it stood in Tyndale, including the word vile, and thus made the passage mean something at which the Apostle Paul, the writer of the original, would have been shocked. The clause is not a literal translation; that would be, "transform the body of our humiliation," or as the Rhiems (Roman Catholic) Testament has it, "Reform the body of our lowness." They did not adopt any one of the many phrases that would have expressed the meaning, but copied a phrase which had come to mean something very different. It is certain that in this case they did not translate, but only copied. And so we might cite many other cases where they copied words whose meaning had changed, or which had become obsolete.

In many cases king James' revisers have substituted words of Latin origin for Tyndale's Saxon words, intended for the plough boy. For example, "convenient," meaning becoming, is substituted for Tyndale's "comly;" "communicate," meaning partícipate, for "have part"; "mystery," meaning something unknown, for "secret"; and "prevent," meaning to precede, for "come before." Tyndale's Saxon continues to mean what he meant by it, and is still a correct translation of the original. James' words of Latin origin mean something very different from what they did in his time.

The most remarkable case of this kind is the substitution of the word "charity" for Tyndale's word "love," especially in the thirteenth chapter of First Corinthians. It is said that this change was made by James' express order. Now whatever the Latin word anglicised into charity may mean, charity in its modern sense does not express the idea intended at all. Our present Revisers will doubtless restore the language as Tyndale left it, and instead of charity, (cold as the proverb makes it,) they will give us back again the dear old English word love.

I ought to say here, that the two words, vile and charity, are the only ones I know of where the inaccuracy affects the truth of the teaching.

We might go on all day, showing that the New Testament was not retranslated, and then when alterations were made, they were often for the worse. How often have I been surprised at the wonderful genius and accuracy of Tyndale, when I have heard pointed out from this very pulpit, failures in King James'

version to express some niceties of meaning of the original, and then found on consulting this old book, that Tyndale had it precisely as our learned pastor said it ought to be.

We have seen how, by the genius and labors of Wycliffe, our English ancestors had the unprinted bible from 1380 till 1526; then that they had the printed bible of Tyndale and others from that time to this. We have seen how the bible in our own language, in spite of the opposition of the authorities of church and state, and with no help from those afterwards called reformers, wrought that mighty change we call the English Reformation. What is the moral of this history?

It teaches us our present duty, to read, to study, to get our instruction directly from this wondrous bible.

We admire the bible, we comment on it, we prove it to be true, we print and circulate it, we translate it into many languages and send it all over the world; we do everything but read it. With all its circulation, though there is a copy in almost every room in our houses, we read it far less than our fathers did. Good men and women who used to read the bible on Sundays, now read big religious newspapers. Good boys and girls who used to learn verses and chapters by heart, now read religious novels. From the printing press has flowed a great stream of bibles, but there has also gone forth from it a deluge of other things, which have covered up the bible almost out of sight.

What is to be done about it?

Would it be asking too much to ask every man and woman, and especially every Christian, to spend one hour at least every Sunday in a careful study of the bible itself, and to ask that every child should learn by heart a few verses, not scattered helter-skelter over the bible, as if the verses were disconnected proverbs, but consecutive, say beginning with the book of John?

People are interested in sermons and get good out of them, very much as they are familiar with the bible. Sermons I mean such as we hear in this county, whose real text is from the bible, not from the *New York Herald*, or from somebody's poems. And I suppose all ministers and observant Christians will agree with Mr. Moody when he says that conversions are reliable very much in proportion to the converts' acquaintance with the bible.

While we are attempting to draw instruction for the present from the history of the past, let us be duly grateful not only to the Father of all mercies, but also to our benefactors seen in

history ; and let the illustrious names of Wyckliffe and Tyn-  
dale be held in everlasting remembrance.





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