THE REVIVAL OF THE CHURCH

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Chapter 1

Four reforming Powers

It was within the province of four powers in the sixteenth century to effect a reformation of the church: these were the papacy, the episcopate, the monarchy, and Holy Scripture.

The Reformation in England was essentially the work of Scripture.

The only true Reformation is that which emanates from the word of God.

The Holy Scriptures, by bearing witness to the incarnation, death, and resurrection of the Son of God, create in man by the Holy Ghost a faith which justifies him. That faith, which produces in him a new life, unites him to Christ, without his requiring a chain of bishops or a Roman mediator, who would separate him from the Savior instead of drawing him nearer. This Reformation by the word restores that spiritual Christianity which the

outward and hierarchical religion had destroyed; and from the regeneration of individuals naturally results the regeneration of the church.

The Reformation of England, perhaps to a greater extent than that of the continent, was effected by the word of God. This statement may appear paradoxical, but it is not the less true. Those great individualities we meet with in Germany, Switzerland, and France — men like Luther, Zwingle, and Calvin — do not appear in England; but Holy Scripture is widely circulated. What brought light into the British isles subsequently to the year 1517, and on a more extended scale after the year 1526, was the word — the invisible power of the invisible God. The religion of the Anglo-Saxon race — a race called more than any other to circulate the oracles of God throughout the world — is particularly distinguished by its biblical character.

The Reformation of England could not be papal. No reform can be hoped from that which ought to be not only reformed, but abolished; and

besides, no monarch dethrones himself. We may even affirm that the popedom had always felt a peculiar affection for its conquests in Britain, and that they would have been the last it would have renounced. A serious voice had declared in the middle of the fifteenth century: “A reform is neither in the will nor in the power of the popes.” The Reformation of England was not episcopal. Roman hierarchism will never be abolished by Roman bishops. An episcopal assembly may perhaps, as at Constance, depose three competing popes, but then it will be to save the papacy. And if the bishops could not abolish the papacy, still less could they reform themselves. The then existing episcopal power, being at enmity with the word of God, and the slave of its own abuses, was incapable of renovating the church. On the contrary, it exerted all its influence to prevent such a renovation.

The Reformation in England was not royal. Samuel, David, and Josiah were able to do something for the raising up of the church, when God again turned his face towards it; but a king

cannot rob his people of their religion, and still less can he give them one. It has often been repeated that “the English Reformation derives its origin from the monarch;” but the assertion is incorrect. The work of God, here as elsewhere, cannot be put in comparison with the work of the king; and if the latter was infinitely surpassed in importance, it was also preceded in time by many years. The monarch was still keeping up a vigorous resistance behind his intrenchments, when God had already decided the victory along the whole line of operations.

Shall we be told that a reform effected by any other principle than the established authorities, both in church and state, would have been a revolution? But has God, the lawful sovereign of the church, forbidden all revolution in a sinful world? A revolution is not a revolt. The fall of the first man was a great revolution: the restoration of man by Jesus Christ was a counter-revolution. The corruption occasioned by popery was allied to the fall: the reformation accomplished in the sixteenth century was connected therefore with the restoration. There will no doubt be other

interventions of the Deity, which will be revolutions in the same direction as the Reformation. When God creates a new heaven and a new earth, will not that be one of the most glorious of revolutions? The Reformation by the word alone gives truth, alone gives unity; but more than that, it alone bears the marks of true legitimacy; for the church belongs not unto men, even though they be priests. God along is its lawful sovereign.

And yet the human elements which we have enumerated were not wholly foreign to the work that was accomplishing in England. Besides the word of God, other principles were in operation, and although less radical and less primitive, they still retain the sympathy of eminent men of that nation.

And in the first place, the intervention of the king’s authority was necessary to a certain point. Since the supremacy of Rome had been established in England by several usages which had the force of law, the intervention of the temporal power was

necessary to break the bonds which it had previously sanctioned. But it was requisite for the monarchy, while adopting a negative and political action, to leave the positive, doctrinal, and creative action to the word of God.

Besides the Reformation in the name of the Scriptures, there was then in England another in the name of the king. The word of God began, the kingly power followed; and ever since, these two forces have sometimes gone together against the authority of the Roman pontiffs — sometimes in opposition to each other, like those troops which march side by side in the same army, against the same enemy, and which have occasionally been seen, even on the field of battle, to turn their swords against each other.

Finally, the episcopate which had begun by opposing the Reformation, was compelled to accept it in despite of its convictions. The majority of the bishops were opposed to it; but the better portion were found to incline, some to the side of outward reform, of which separation from the

papacy was the very essence, and others to the side of internal reform, whose mainspring was union with Jesus Christ. Lastly, the episcopate took up its ground on its own account, and soon two great parties alone existed in England: the scriptural party and the clerical party.

These two parties have survived even to our days, and their colors are still distinguishable in the river of the church, like the muddy Arve and the limpid Rhone after their confluence. The royal supremacy, from which many Christians, preferring the paths of independence, have withdrawn since the end of the 16th century, is recognized by both parties in the establishment, with some few exceptions. But while the High Church is essentially hierarchical, the Low Church is essentially biblical. In the one, the Church is above the Word below; in the other, the Church is below and the Word above. These two principles, evangelism and hierarchism, are found in the Christianity of the first centuries, but with a signal difference.

Hierarchism then almost entirely effaced evangelism; in the age of protestantism, on the contrary, evangelism continued to exist by the side of Hierarchism, and it has remained de jure, if not always de facto, the only legitimate opinion of the church.

Thus there is in England a complication of influences and contests, which render the work more difficult to describe; but it is on that very account more worthy the attention of the philosopher and the Christian.

Great events had just occurred in Europe. Francis I had crossed the Alps, gained a signal victory at Marignano, and conquered the north of Italy. The affrighted Maximilian knew of none who could save him but Henry VIII.

“I will adopt you; you shall be my successor in the empire,” he intimated to him in May 1516. “Your army shall invade France; and then we will march together to Rome, where the sovereign pontiff shall crown you king of the Romans.” The

king of France, anxious to effect a diversion, had formed a league with Denmark and Scotland, and had made preparations for invading England to place on the throne the “white rose,” — the pretender Pole, heir to the claims of the house of York. Henry now showed his prudence; he declined Maximilian’s offer, and turned his whole attention to the security of his kingdom. But while he refused to bear arms in France and Italy, a war of quite another kind broke out in England.

The great work of the 16th century was about to begin. A volume fresh from the presses of Basle had just crossed the channel. Being transmitted to London, Oxford, and Cambridge, this book, the fruit of Erasmus’s vigils, soon found its way wherever there were friends of learning. It was the New Testament of our Lord Jesus Christ, published for the first time in Greek with a new Latin translation — an event more important for the world than would have been the landing of the pretender in England, or the appearance of the chief of the Tudors in Italy. This book in which God has deposited for man’s salvation the seeds of

life, was about to effect alone, without patrons and without interpreters, the most astonishing revolution in Britain.

When Erasmus published this work, at the dawn, so to say, of modern times, he did not see all its scope. Had he foreseen it, he would perhaps have recoiled in alarm. He saw indeed that there was a great work to be done, but he believed that all good men would unite to do it with common accord. “A spiritual temple must be raised in desolated Christendom,” said he. “The mighty of this world will contribute towards it their marble, their ivory, and their gold; I who am poor and humble offer the foundation stone,” and he laid down before the world his edition of the Greek Testament. Then glancing disdainfully at the traditions of men, he said: “It is not from human reservoirs, fetid with stagnant waters, that we should draw the doctrine of salvation; but from the pure and abundant streams that flow from the heart of God.” And when some of his suspicious friends spoke to him of the difficulties of the times, he replied: “If the ship of the church is to be saved

from being swallowed up by the tempest, there is only one anchor that can save it: it is the heavenly word, which, issuing from the bosom of the Father, lives, speaks, and works still in the gospel." These noble sentiments served as an introduction to those blessed pages which were to reform England. Erasmus like Caiaphas, prophesied without being aware of it.

The New Testament in Greek and Latin had hardly appeared when it was received by all men of upright mind with unprecedented enthusiasm. Never had any book produced such a sensation. It was in every hand: men struggled to procure it, read it eagerly, and would even kiss it. The words it contained enlightened every heart. But a reaction soon took place.

Traditional catholicism uttered a cry from the depths of its noisome pools (to use Erasmus's figure). Franciscans and Dominicans, priests and bishops, not daring to attack the educated and well-born, went among the ignorant populace, and endeavored by their tales and clamors to stir up

susceptible women and credulous men. “Here are horrible heresies,” they exclaimed, “here are frightful antichrists! If this book be tolerated it will be the death of the papacy!” — “We must drive this man from the university,” said one. “We must turn him out of the church,” added another. “The public places reechoed with their howlings,” said Erasmus.

The firebrands tossed by their furious hands were raising fires in every quarter; and the flames kindled in a few obscure convents threatened to spread over the whole country.

This irritation was not without a cause. The book, indeed, contained nothing but Latin and Greek; but this first step seemed to augur another — the translation of the Bible into the vulgar tongue. Erasmus loudly called for it. “Perhaps it may be necessary to conceal the secrets of kings,” he remarked, “but we must publish the mysteries of Christ. The Holy Scriptures, translated into all languages, should be read not only by the Scotch and Irish, but even by Turks and Saracens. The

husbandman should sing them as he holds the handle of his plough, the weaver repeat them as he plies his shuttle, and the wearied traveler, halting on his journey, refresh him under some shady tree by these godly narratives." These words prefigured a golden age after the iron age of popery. A number of Christian families in Britain and on the continent were soon to realize these evangelical forebodings, and England after three centuries was to endeavor to carry them out for the benefit of all the nations on the face of the earth.

The priests saw the danger, and by a skillful manoeuvre, instead of finding fault with the Greek Testament, attacked the translation and the translator.

"He has corrected the Vulgate," they said, "and puts himself in the place of Saint Jerome. He sets aside a work authorized by the consent of ages and inspired by the Holy Ghost. What audacity!" and then, turning over the pages, they pointed out the most odious passages: "Look here! this book calls upon men to repent, instead of requiring them, as

the Vulgate does, to do penance!” (Matthew 4:17.) The priests thundered against him from their pulpits: “This man has committed the unpardonable sin,” they asserted; “for he maintains that there is nothing in common between the Holy Ghost and the monks — that they are logs rather than men!” These simple remarks were received with a general laugh, but the priests, in no wise disconcerted, cried out all the louder: “He’s a heretic, an heresiarch, a forger! he’s a goose .....what do I say? he’s a very antichrist!” It was not sufficient for the papal janissaries to make war in the plain, they must carry it to the higher ground. Was not the king a friend of Erasmus? If he should declare himself a patron of the Greek and Latin Testament, what an awful calamity!.....After having agitated the cloisters, towns, and universities, they resolved to protest against it boldly, even in Henry’s presence. They thought: “If he is won, all is won.” It happened one day that a certain theologian (whose name is not given) having to preach in his turn before the king, he declaimed violently against the Greek language and its new interpreters. Pace, the king’s secretary,

was present, and turning his eyes on Henry, observed him smiling good humoredly. On leaving the church, every one began to exclaim against the preacher.

“Bring the priest to me,” said the king; and then turning to More, he added: “You shall defend the Greek cause against him, and I will listen to the disputation.” The literary tribunal was soon formed, but the sovereign’s order had taken away all the priest’s courage. He came froward trembling, fell on his knees, and with clasped hands exclaimed: “I know not what spirit impelled me.” — “A spirit of madness,” said the king, “and not the spirit of Jesus Christ.” He then added: “Have you ever read Erasmus?” — “No, Sire.” — “Away with you then, you are a blockhead.” — “And yet,” said the preacher in confusion, “I remember to have read something about Moria,” (Erasmus’s treatise on Folly.) — “A subject, your majesty, that ought to be very familiar to him,” wickedly interrupted Pace. The obscurant could say nothing in his justification. “I am not altogether opposed to the Greek,” he added at last, “seeing

that it is derived from the Hebrew." This was greeted with a general laugh, and the king impatiently ordered the monk to leave the room, and never appear before him again.

Erasmus was astonished at these discussions. He had imagined the season to be most favorable. "Everything looks peaceful," he had said to himself; "now is the time to launch my Greek Testament into the learned world." As well might the sun rise upon the earth, and no one see it! At that very hour God was raising up a monk at Wittenberg who would lift the trumpet to his lips, and proclaim the new day. "Wretch that I am!" exclaimed the timid scholar, beating his breast, "who could have foreseen this horrible tempest!" Nothing was more important at the dawn of the Reformation than the publication of the Testament of Jesus Christ in the original language. Never had Erasmus worked so carefully. "If I told what sweat it cost me, no one would believe me." He had collated many Greek M.S.S. of the New Testament, and was surrounded by all the commentaries and translations, by the writings of Origen, Cyprian,

Ambrose, Basil, Chrysostom, Cyril, Jerome, and Augustine. Hic sum in campo meo! he exclaimed as he sat in the midst of his books. He had investigated the texts according to the principles of sacred criticism. When a knowledge of Hebrew was necessary, he had consulted Capito, and more particularly Oecolampadius. Nothing without Theseus, said he of the latter, making use of a Greek proverb. He had corrected the amphibologies, obscurities, hebraisms, and barbarisms, of the Vulgate; and had caused a list to be printed of the errors in that version.

“We must restore the pure text of the word of God,” he had said; and when he heard the maledictions of the priests, he had exclaimed: “I call God to witness I thought I was doing a work acceptable to the Lord and necessary to the cause of Christ.” Nor in this was he deceived.

At the head of his adversaries was Edward Lee, successively king’s almoner, archdeacon of Colchester, and archbishop of York. Lee, at that time but little known, was a man of talent and

activity, but also vain and loquacious, and determined to make his way at any cost. Even when a schoolboy, he looked down on all his companions. As child, youth, man, and in mature years, he was always the same, Erasmus tells us; that is to say, vain, envious, jealous, boasting, passionate, and revengeful.

We must bear in mind, however, that when Erasmus describes the character of his opponents, he is far from being an impartial judge. In the bosom of Roman-catholicism, there have always existed wellmeaning, though ill-informed men, who, not knowing the interior power of the word of God, have thought that if its authority were substituted for that of the Romish church, the only foundation of truth and of christian society would be shaken. Yet while we judge Lee less severely than Erasmus does, we cannot close our eyes to his faults. His memory was richly furnished, but his heart was a stranger to divine truth: he was a schoolman and not a believer. He wanted the people to obey the church and not trouble themselves about the Scriptures. He was the Doctor

Eck of England, but with more of outward appearance and morality than Luther's adversary.

Yet he was by no means a rigid moralist. On one occasion, when preaching at the palace, he introduced ballads into his sermon, one of which began thus: — "Pass time with good company." And the other: — "I love unloved." We are indebted to Secretary Pace for this characteristic trait. During the sojourn of Erasmus in England, Lee, observing his influence, had sought his friendship, and Erasmus, with his usual courtesy, had solicited his advice upon his work. But Lee, jealous of his great reputation, only waited for an opportunity to injure it, which he seized upon as soon as it occurred. The New Testament had not been long published, when Lee turned round abruptly, and from being Erasmus's friend became his implacable adversary. "If we do not stop this leak," said he when he heard of the New Testament, "it will sink the ship." Nothing terrifies the defenders of the human traditions so much as the word of God.

Lee immediately leagued himself with all those in England who abhorred the study of Scripture, says Erasmus. Although exceedingly conceited, he showed himself the most amiable of men, in order to accomplish his designs. He invited Englishmen to his house, welcomed strangers, and gained many recruits by the excellence of his dinners. While seated at table among his guests, he hinted perfidious charges against Erasmus, and his company left him “there are three hundred dangerous, frightful passages.....three hundred did I say?.....there are more than a thousand!” Not satisfied with using his tongue, Lee wrote scores of letters, and employed several secretaries. Was there any convent in the odor of sanctity, he “forwarded to it instantly wine, choice viands, and other presents.” To each one he assigned his part, and over all England they were rehearsing what Erasmus calls Lee’s tragedy. In this manner they were preparing the catastrophe; a prison for Erasmus, the fire for the Holy Scriptures.

When all was arranged, Lee issued his manifesto. Although a poor Greek scholar, he drew

up some Annotations on Erasmus' book, which the latter called "mere abuse and blasphemy;" but which the members of the league regarded as oracles. They passed them secretly from hand to hand, and these obscure sheets, by many indirect channels, found their way into every part of England, and met with numerous readers. There was to be no publication — such was the watchword; Lee was too much afraid.

"Why did you not publish your work?" asked Erasmus, with cutting irony "Who knows whether the holy father, appointing you the Aristarchus of letters, might not have sent you a birch to keep the whole world in order!" The Annotations having triumphed in the convents, the conspiracy took a new flight. In every place of public resort, at fairs and markets, at the dinner-table and in the councilchamber, in shops, and taverns, and houses of ill-fame, in churches and in the universities, in cottages and in palaces, the league blattered against Erasmus and the Greek Testament. Carmelites, Dominicans, and Sophists, invoked heaven and conjured hell.

What need was there of Scripture? Had they not the apostolical succession of the clergy? No hostile landing in England could, in their eyes, be more fatal than that of the New Testament. The whole nation must rise to repel this impudent invasion. There is, perhaps, no country in Europe, where the Reformation was received by so unexpected a storm.

Chapter 2

Effects of the New Testament in the Universities

While this rude blast was rushing over England, and roaring in the long galleries of its convents, the still small voice of the Word was making its way into the peaceful homes of praying men and the ancient halls of Oxford and Cambridge. In private chambers, in the lecture-rooms and refectories, students and even masters of arts, were to be seen reading the Greek and Latin Testament. Animated groups were discussing the principles of the Reformation. When Christ came on earth (said some) He gave the Word, and when He ascended up into heaven He gave the Holy Spirit. These are the two forces which created the church — and these are the forces that must regenerate it. — No (replied the partisans of Rome), it was the teaching of the apostles at first, and it is the teaching of the priests now. — The apostles (rejoined the friends of the Testament of

Erasmus) — yes, it is true — the apostles were during their ministry a living scripture; but their oral teaching would infallibly have been altered by passing from mouth to mouth. God willed, therefore, that these precious lessons should be preserved to us in their writings, and thus become the ever undefiled source of truth and salvation. To set the Scriptures in the foremost place, as your pretended reformers are doing, replied the schoolmen of Oxford and Cambridge, is to propagate heresy! And what are the reformers doing (asked their apologists) except what Christ did before them? The sayings of the prophets existed in the time of Jesus only as Scripture, and it was to this written Word that our Lord appealed when he founded his kingdom. And now in like manner the teaching of the apostles exists only as Scripture, and it is to this written word that we appeal in order to re-establish the kingdom of our Lord in its primitive condition. The night is far spent, the day is at hand; all is in motion — in the lofty halls of our colleges, in the mansions of the rich and noble, and in the lowly dwellings of the poor. If we want to scatter the darkness, must we

light the shrivelled wick of some old lamp? Ought we not rather to open the doors and shutters, and admit freely into the house the great light which God has placed in the heavens?

There was in Trinity Hall, Cambridge, a young doctor, much given to the study of the canon law, of serious turn of mind and bashful disposition, and whose tender conscience strove, although ineffectually, to fulfill the commandments of God. Anxious about his salvation, Thomas Bilney applied to the priests, whom he looked upon as physicians of the soul.

Kneeling before his confessor, with humble look and pale face, he told him all his sins, and even those of which he doubted. The priest prescribed at one time fasting, at another prolonged vigils, and then masses and indulgences which cost him dearly. The poor doctor went through all these practices with great devotion, but found no consolation in them.

Being weak and slender, his body wasted away

by degrees, his understanding grew weaker, his imagination faded, and his purse became empty. “Alas!” said he with anguish, “my last state is worse than the first.” From time to time an idea crossed his mind: “May not the priests be seeking their own interest, and not the salvation of my soul?” But immediately rejecting the rash doubt, he fell back under the iron hand of the clergy.

One day Bilney heard his friends talking about a new book: it was the Greek Testament printed with a translation which was highly praised for its elegant latinity. Attracted by the beauty of the style rather than by the divinity of the subject, he stretched out his hand; but just as he was going to take the volume, fear came upon him and he withdrew it hastily. In fact the confessors strictly prohibited Greek and Hebrew books, “the sources of all heresies;” and Erasmus’s Testament was particularly forbidden. Yet Bilney regretted so great a sacrifice; was it not the Testament of Jesus Christ? Might not God have placed therein some word which perhaps might heal his soul? He stepped forward, and then again shrank back.....At

last he took courage. Urged, said he, by the hand of God, he walked out of the college, slipped into the house where the volume was sold in secret, bought it with fear and trembling, and then hastened back and shut himself up in his room. He opened it — his eyes caught these words: This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief. He laid down the book, and meditated on the astonishing declaration. “What! St. Paul the chief of sinners, and yet St. Paul is sure of being saved!” He read the verse again and again. “O assertion of St. Paul, how sweet art thou to my soul!” he exclaimed. This declaration continually haunted him, and in this manner God instructed him in the secret of his heart. He could not tell what had happened to him; it seemed as if a refreshing wind were blowing over his soul, or as if a rich treasure had been placed in his hands. The Holy Spirit took what was Christ’s, and announced it to him. “I also am like Paul,” exclaimed he with emotion, “and more than Paul, the greatest of sinners!.....But Christ saves sinners. At last I have heard of Jesus.” His doubts were ended — he was

saved. Then took place in him a wonderful transformation. An unknown joy pervaded him; his conscience, until then sore with the wounds of sin, was healed; instead of despair he felt an inward peace passing all understanding. “Jesus Christ,” exclaimed he; “yes, Jesus Christ saves!”.....Such is the character of the Reformation: it is Jesus Christ who saves, and not the church. “I see it all,” said Bilney; “my vigils, my fasts, my pilgrimages, my purchase of masses and indulgences were destroying instead of saving me. All these efforts were, as St. Augustine says, a hasty running out of the right way.” Bilney never grew tired of reading his New Testament. He no longer lent an attentive ear to the teaching of the schoolmen: he heard Jesus at Capernaum, Peter in the temple, Paul on Mars’ hill, and felt within himself that Christ possesses the words of eternal life. A witness to Jesus Christ had just been born by the same power which had transformed Paul, Apollos, and Timothy. The Reformation of England was beginning. Bilney was united to the Son of God, not by a remote succession, but by an immediate generation. Leaving to the disciples of the pope the

entangled chain of their imaginary succession, whose links it is impossible to disengage, he attached himself closely to Christ. The word of the first century gave birth to the sixteenth. Protestantism does not descend from the gospel in the fiftieth generation like the Romish church of the Council of Trent, or in the sixtieth like some modern doctors: it is the direct legitimate son — the son of the master.

God’s action was not limited to one spot. The first rays of the sun from on high gilded with their fires at once the gothic colleges of Oxford and the antique schools of Cambridge.

Along the banks of the Severn extends a picturesque country, bounded by the forest of Dean, and sprinkled with villages, steeples, and ancient castles. In the sixteenth century it was particularly admired by priests and friars, and a familiar oath among them was: “As sure as God’s in Glo’ster!” The papal birds of prey had swooped upon it. For fifty years, from 1484 to, four Italian bishops, placed in succession over the diocese, had

surrendered it to the pope, to the monks, and to immorality.

Thieves in particular were the objects of the tenderest favors of the hierarchy. John de Giglis, collector of the apostolical chamber, had received from the sovereign pontiff authority to pardon murder and theft, on condition that the criminal shared his profits with the pontifical commissioners. In this valley, at the foot of Stinchcomb hill, to the southwest of Gloucester, there dwelt, during the latter half of the fifteenth century, a family which had taken refuge there during the wars of the Roses, and assumed the name of Hutchins. In the reign of Henry VII the Lancasterian party having the upper hand, they resumed their name of Tyndale, which had been borne of your by many noble barons. In 1484, about a year after the birth of Luther, and about the time that Zwingle first saw light in the mountains of the Tockenburg, these partisans of the red rose were blessed with a son, whom they called William. His youth was passed in the fields surrounding his native village of North Nibley,

beneath the shadows of Berkeley Castle, or beside the rapid waters of the Severn, and in the midst of friars and pontifical collectors. He was sent very early to Oxford, where he learnt grammar and philosophy in the school of St.

Mary Magdalene, adjoining the college of that name. He made rapid progress, particularly in languages, under the first classical scholars in England — Grocyn, W. Latimer, and Linacre - and took his degrees. A more excellent master than these doctors - the Holy Spirit speaking in Scripture — was soon to teach him a science which it is not in the power of man to impart.

Oxford, where Erasmus had so many friends, was the city in which his New Testament met with the warmest welcome. The young Gloucestershire student, inwardly impelled towards the study of sacred literature, read the celebrated book which was then attracting the attention of Christendom. At first he regarded it only as a work of learning, or at most as a manual of piety, whose beauties were calculated to excite religious feelings; but erelong

he found it to be something more. The more he read it, the more was he struck by the truth and energy of the word.

This strange book spoke to him of God, of Christ, and of regeneration, with a simplicity and authority which completely subdued him. William had found a master whom he had not sought at Oxford — this was God himself. The pages he held in his hand were the divine revelation so long mislaid. Possessing a noble soul, a bold spirit, and indefatigable activity, he did not keep this treasure to himself. He uttered that cry, more suited to a Christian than to Archimedes: eureka, I have found it. It was not long before several of the younger members of the university, attracted by the purity of his life and the charms of his conversation, gathered round him, and read with him the Greek and Latin gospels of Erasmus. “A certain well-informed young man,” wrote Erasmus in a letter wherein he speaks of the publication of his New Testament, “began to lecture with success on Greek literature at Oxford.” He was probably speaking of Tyndale.

The monks took the alarm. “A barbarian,” continues Erasmus, “entered the pulpit and violently abused the Greek language.” — “These folk,” said Tyndale, “wished to extinguish the light which exposed their trickery, and they have been laying their plans these dozen years.” This observation was made in 1531, and refers therefore to the proceedings of 1517.

Germany and England were beginning the struggle at nearly the same time, and Oxford perhaps before Wittenberg. Tyndale, bearing in mind the injunction: “When they persecute you in one city, flee ye into another,” left Oxford and proceeded to Cambridge. It must needs be that souls whom God has brought to his knowledge should meet and enlighten one another: live coals, when separated, go out; when gathered together, they brighten up, so as even to purify silver and gold. The Romish hierarchy, not 1737 knowing what they did, were collecting the scattered brands of the Reformation.

Bilney was not inactive at Cambridge. Not long had the “sublime lesson of Jesus Christ” filled him with joy, before he fell on his knees and exclaimed: “O Thou who art the truth, give me strength that I may teach it: and convert the ungodly by means of one who has been ungodly himself,” After this prayer his eyes gleamed with new fire; he had assembled his friends, and opening Erasmus’s Testament, had placed his finger on the words that had reached his soul, and these words had touched many. The arrival of Tyndale gave him fresh courage, and the light burnt brighter in Cambridge.

John Fryth, a young man of eighteen, the son of an inn-keeper of Sevenoaks in Kent, was distinguished among the students of King’s College by the promptitude of his understanding and the integrity of his life. He was as deeply read in the mathematics as Tyndale in the classics and Bilney in canon law. Although of an exact turn of mind, yet his soul was elevated, and he recognized in Holy Scripture a learning of a new kind.

“These things are not demonstrated like a

proposition of Euclid," he said; "mere study is sufficient to impress the theories of mathematics on our minds; but this science of God meets with a resistance in man that necessitates the intervention of a divine power. Christianity is a regeneration." The heavenly seed soon grew up in Fryth's heart. These three young scholars set to work with enthusiasm. They declared that neither priestly absolution nor any other religious rite could give remission of sins; that the assurance of pardon is obtained by faith alone; and that faith purifies the heart. Then they addressed to all men that saying of Christ's at which the monks were so offended: Repent and be converted!

Ideas so new produced a great clamor. A famous orator undertook one day at Cambridge to show that it was useless to preach conversion to the sinner. "Thou who, for sixty years past," said he, "hast wallowed in thy lusts, like a sow in her mire, dost thou think that thou canst in one year take as many steps towards heaven, and that in thine age, as thou hast done towards hell?" Bilney left the church with indignation. "Is that preaching

repentance in the name of Jesus?" he asked. "Does not this 1738 priest tell us: Christ will not save thee. Alas! for so many years that this deadly doctrine has been taught in Christendom, not one man has dared open his mouth against it!" Many of the Cambridge fellows were scandalized at Bilney's language: was not the preacher whose teaching he condemned duly ordained by the bishop? He replied: "What would be the use of being a hundred times consecrated, were it even by a thousand papal bulls, if the inward calling is wanting? To no purpose hath the bishop breathed on our heads if we have never felt the breath of the Holy Ghost in our hearts?" Thus, at the very beginning of the Reformation, England, rejecting the Romish superstitions, discerned with extreme nicety what constitute the essence of consecration to the service of the Lord.

After pronouncing these noble words, Bilney, who longed for an outpouring of the Holy Ghost, shut himself up in his room, fell on his knees, and called upon God to come to the assistance of his church. Then rising up, he exclaimed, as if

animated by a prophetic spirit: “A new time is beginning. The Christian assembly is about to be renewed.....Some one is coming unto us, I see him, I hear him — it is Jesus Christ. ....He is the king, and it is he who will call the true ministers commissioned to evangelize his people.” Tyndale, full of the same hopes as Bilney, left Cambridge in the course of the year 1519.

Thus the English Reformation began independently of those of Luther and Zwingle — deriving its origin from God alone. In every province of Christendom there was a simultaneous action of the divine word. The principle of the Reformation at Oxford, Cambridge, and London was the Greek New Testament, published by Erasmus. England, in-course of time, learnt to be proud of this origin of its Reformation.

Chapter 3

Alarm of the Clergy

Thus revival caused great alarm throughout the Roman hierarchy. Content with the baptism they administered, they feared the baptism of the Holy Ghost perfected by faith in the word of God. Some of the clergy, who were full of zeal, but of zeal without knowledge, prepared for the struggle, and the cries raised by the prelates were repeated by all the inferior orders.

The first blows did not fall on the members of the universities, but on those humble Christians, the relics of Wickliffe’s ministry, to whom the reform movement among the learned had imparted a new life. The awakening of the fourteenth century was about to be succeeded by that of the sixteenth, and the last gleams of the closing day were almost lost in the first rays of that which was commencing. The young doctors of Oxford and Cambridge aroused the attention of the alarmed hierarchy, and attracted their eyes to the humble

Lollards, who here and there still recalled the days of Wickliffe.

An artisan named Thomas Man, sometimes called Doctor Man, from his knowledge of Holy Scripture, had been imprisoned for his faith in the priory of Frideswide at Oxford. (1511 A.D.) Tormented by the remembrance of a recantation which had been extorted from him, he had escaped from this monastery and fled into the eastern parts of England, where he had preached the Word, supplying his daily wants by the labor of his hands. This “champion of God” afterwards drew near the capital, and assisted by his wife, the new Priscilla of this new Aquila, he proclaimed the doctrine of Christ to the crowd collected around him in some “upper chamber” of London, or in some lonely meadow watered by the Thames, or under the aged oaks of Windsor Forest. He thought with Chrysostom of old, that “all priests are not saints, but all saints are priests.” “He that receiveth the word of God,” said he, “receiveth God himself; that is the true real presence. The vendors of masses are not the high-priests of this mystery; but

the men whom God hath anointed with his Spirit to be kings and priests.” From six to seven hundred persons were converted by his preaching. The monks, who dared not as yet attack the universities, resolved to fall upon those preachers who made their temple on the banks of the Thames, or in some remote corner of the city. Man was seized, condemned, and burnt alive on the 29th March 1519.

And this was not all. There lived at Coventry a little band of serious Christians — four shoemakers, a glover, a hosier, and a widow named Smith — who gave their children a pious education. The Franciscans were annoyed that laymen, and even a woman, should dare meddle with religious instruction. On Ash Wednesday (1519), Simon Morton, the bishop’s sumner, apprehended them all, men, women, and children. On the following Friday, the parents were taken to the abbey of Mackstock, about six miles from Coventry, and the children to the Greyfriars’ convent.

“Let us see what heresies you have been taught?” said Friar Stafford to the intimidated little ones. The poor children confessed they had been taught in English the Lord’s prayer, the apostles’ creed, and the ten commandments. On hearing this, Stafford told them angrily: “I forbid you (unless you wish to be burnt as your parents will be) to have anything to do with the Pater, the credo, or the ten commandments in English.” Five weeks after this, the men were condemned to be burnt alive; but the judges had compassion on the widow because of her young family (for she was their only support), and let her go. It was night: Morton offered to see Dame Smith home; she took his arm, and they threaded the dark and narrow streets of Coventry. “Eh! eh!” said the apparitor on a sudden, “what have we here?” He heard in fact the noise of paper rubbing against something. “What have you got there?” he continued, dropping her arm, and putting his hand up her sleeve, from which he drew out a parchment.

Approaching a window whence issued the faint rays of a lamp, he examined the mysterious scroll,

and found it to contain the Lord’s prayer, the apostles’ creed, and the ten commandments in English. “Oh, oh! sirrah!” said he; “come along. As good now as another time!” Then seizing the poor widow by the arm, he dragged her before the bishop.

Sentence of death was immediately pronounced on her; and on the 4th of April, Dame Smith, Robert Hatchets, Archer, Hawkins, Thomas Bond, Wrigsham, and Landsdale, were burnt alive at Coventry in the Little Park, for the crime of teaching their children the Lord’s prayer, the apostles’ creed, and the commandments of God.

But what availed it to silence these obscure lips, so long as the Testament of Erasmus could speak? Lee’s conspiracy must be revived. Standish, bishop of St. Asaph, was a narrow-minded man, rather fanatical, but probably sincere, of great courage, and not without some degree of piety.

This prelate, being determined to preach a crusade against the New Testament, began at

London, in St. Paul's cathedral, before the mayor and corporation. "Away with these new translations," he said, "or else the religion of Jesus Christ is threatened with utter ruin." But Standish was deficient in tact, and instead of confining himself to general statements, like most of his party, he endeavored to show how far Erasmus had corrupted the gospel, and continued thus in a whining voice: "Must I who for so many years have been a doctor of the Holy Scriptures, and who have always read in my Bible: In principio erat VERBUM — must I now be obliged to read: In principio erat SERMO?" for thus had Erasmus translated the opening words of St. John's Gospel. Risum teneatis, whispered one to another, when they heard this puerile charge: "My lord," proceeded the bishop, turning to the mayor, "magistrates of the city, and citizens all, fly to the succor of religion!" Standish continued his pathetic appeals, but his oratory was all in vain; some stood unmoved, others shrugged their shoulders, and others grew impatient. The citizens of London seemed determined to support liberty and the Bible.

Standish, seeing the failure of his attack in the city, sighed and groaned and prayed, and repeated mass against the so much dreaded book. But he also made up his mind to do more. One day, during the rejoicings at court for the betrothal of the Princess Mary, then two years old, with a French prince who was just born, St. Asaph, absorbed and absent in the midst of the gay crowd, and threw himself at the feet of the king and queen. All were thunderstruck, and asked one another what the old bishop could mean.

“Great king,” said he, “your ancestors, who have reigned over this island, — and yours, O great queen, who have governed Aragon, were always distinguished by their zeal for the church. Show yourselves worthy of your fore-fathers. Times full of danger are come upon us, a book has just appeared, and been published too by Erasmus! It is such a book that, if you close not your kingdom against it, it is all over with the religion of Christ among us.” The bishop ceased, and a dead silence ensued. The devout Standish, fearing lest Henry’s

well-known love of learning should be an obstacle to his prayer, raised his eyes and his hands toward heaven, and, kneeling in the midst of the courtly assembly, exclaimed in a sorrowful tone: “O Christ! O Son of God! saver thy spouse!.....for no man cometh to her help.” Having thus spoken, the prelate, whose courage was worthy of a better cause, rose up and waited. Every one strove to guess at the king’s thoughts. Sir Thomas More was present, and he could not forsake his friend Erasmus. “What are the heresies this book is likely to engender?” he inquired. After the sublime came the ridiculous. With the forefinger of his right hand, touching successively the fingers of his left, Standish replied: “First, this book destroys the resurrection; secondly, it annuls the sacrament of marriage; thirdly, it abolishes the mass.” Then uplifting his thumb and two fingers, he showed them to the assembly with a look of triumph. The bigoted Catherine shuddered as she saw Standish’s three fingers, — signs of the three heresies of Erasmus; and Henry himself, an admirer of Aquinas, was embarrassed. It was a critical moment: the Greek Testament was on the point of

being banished from England. “The proof, the proof,” exclaimed the friends of literature. “I will give it,” rejoined the impetuous Standish, and then once more touching his left thumb: “Firstly,” he said,.....But he brought forward such foolish reasons, that even the women and the unlearned were ashamed of them. The more he endeavored to justify his assertions, the more confused he became: he affirmed among other things that the Epistles of St. Paul were written in Hebrew, “There is not a schoolboy that does not know that Paul’s epistles were written in Greek,” said a doctor of divinity, kneeling before the king.

Henry, blushing for the bishop, turned the conversation, and Standish, ashamed at having made a Greek write to the Greeks in Hebrew, would have withdrawn unobserved. “The beetle must not attack the eagle,” was whispered in his ear. Thus did the book of God remain in England the standard of a faithful band, who found in its pages the motto, which the church of Rome had usurped: The truth is in me alone.

A more formidable adversary than Standish aspired to combat the Reformation, not only in England, but in all the West. One of those ambitious designs, which easily germinate in the human heart, developed itself in the soul of the chief minister of Henry VIII; and if this project succeeded, it promised to secure for ever the empire of the papacy on the banks of the Thames, and perhaps in the whole of Christendom.

Wolsey, as chancellor and legate, governed both in state and in church, and could, without an untruth, utter his famous Ego et rex meus. Having reached so great a height, he desired to soar still higher. The favorite of Henry VIII almost his master, treated as a brother by the emperor, by the king of France, and by other crowned heads, invested with the title of Majesty, the peculiar property of sovereigns, the cardinal, sincere in his faith in the popedom, aspired to fill the throne of the pontiffs, and thus become Deus in terris. He thought, that if God permitted a Luther to appear in the world, it was because he had a Wolsey to oppose to him.

It would be difficult to fix the precise moment when this immoderate desire entered his mind: it was about the end of 1518 that it began to show itself. The bishop of Ely, ambassador at the court of Francis I, being in conference with that prince on the 18th of December in that year, said to him mysteriously: “The cardinal has an idea in his mind.....on which he can unbosom himself to nobody.....except it be to your majesty.” Francis understood him.

An event occurred to facilitate the cardinal’s plans. If Wolsey desired to be the first priest, Henry desired to be the first king. The imperial crown, vacant by the death of Maximilian, was sought by two princes: — by Charles of Austria, a cold and calculating man, caring little about the pleasures and even the pomp of power, but forming great designs, and knowing how to pursue them with energy; and by Francis I, a man of less penetrating glance and less indefatigable activity, but more daring and impetuous. Henry VIII, inferior to both, passionate, capricious, and selfish,

thought himself strong enough to contend with such puissant competitors, and secretly strove to win “the monarchy of all Christendom.” Wolsey flattered himself that, hidden under the cloak of his master’s ambition, he might satisfy his own. If he procured the crown of the Caesars for Henry, he might easily obtain the tiara of the popes for himself; if he failed, the least that could be done to compensate England for the loss of the empire, would be to give the sovereignty of the church to her prime minister.

Henry first sounded the king of France. Sir Thomas Boleyn appeared one day before Francis I just as the latter was returning from mass. The king, desirous to anticipate a confidence that might be embarrassing, took the ambassador aside to the window and whispered to him: “Some of the electors have offered me the empire; I hope your master will be favorable to me.” Sir Thomas, in confusion, made some vague reply, and the chivalrous king, following up his idea, took, the ambassador firmly by one had, and laying the other on his breast, exclaimed: “By my faith, if I become

emperor, in three years I shall be in Constantinople, or I shall die on the road!" This was not what Henry wanted; but dissembling his wishes, he took care to inform Francis that he would support his candidature. Upon hearing this Francis raised his hat and exclaimed: "I desire to see the king of England; I will see him, I tell you, even if I go to London with only one page and one lackey." Francis was well aware that if he threatened the king's ambition, he must flatter the minister's, and recollecting the hint given by the bishop of Ely, he said one day to Boleyn: "It seems to me that my brother of England and I could do, indeed ought to do.....something for the cardinal. He was prepared by God for the good of Christendom.....one of the greatest men in the church.....and on the word of a king, if he consents, I will do it." A few minutes after he continued: "Write and tell the cardinal, that if he aspires to be the head of the church, and if anything should happen to the reigning pope, I will promise him fourteen cardinals on my part. Let us only act in concert, your master and me, and I promise you, Master Ambassador, that neither pope nor emperor

shall be created in Europe without our consent." But Henry did not act in concert with the king of France. At Wolsey's instigation he supported three candidates at once: at Paris he was for Francis I; at Madrid for Charles V; and at Frankfort for himself. The kings of France and England failed, and on the 10th August, Pace, Henry's envoy at Frankfort, having returned to England, desired to console the king by mentioning the sums of money which Charles had spent. "By the mass!" exclaimed the king, congratulating himself at not having obtained the crown at so dear a rate. Wolsey proposed to sing a Te Deum in St. Paul's, and bonfires were lighted in the city.

The cardinal's rejoicings were not misplaced. Charles had scarcely ascended the imperial throne, in despite of the king of France, when these two princes swore eternal hatred of each other, and each was anxious to win over Henry VIII. At one time Charles, under the pretense of seeing his uncle and aunt, visited England; at another, Francis had an interview with the king in the neighborhood of Calais. The cardinal shared in the flattering

attentions of the two monarchs. “It is easy for the king of Spain, who has become the head of the empire, to raise whomsoever he pleases to the supreme pontificate,” said the young emperor to him; and at these words the ambitious cardinal surrendered himself to Maximilian’s successor. But erelong Francis I flattered him in his turn, and Wolsey replied also to his advances. The king of France gave Henry tournaments and banquets of Asiatic luxury; and Wolsey, whose countenance yet bore the marks of the graceful smile with which he had taken leave of Charles, smiled also on Francis, and sang mass in his honor. He engaged the hand of the Princess Mary to the dauphin of France and to Charles V, leaving the care of unravelling the matter to futurity. Then, proud of his skillful practices, he returned to London full of hope. By walking in falsehood he hoped to attain the tiara: and if it was yet too far above him, there were certain gospellers in England who might serve as a ladder to reach it. Murder might serve as the complement to fraud.

Chapter 4

Tyndale

While this ambitious prelate was thinking of nothing but his own glory and that of the Roman pontificate, a great desire, but of a very different nature, was springing up in the heart of one of the humble “gospellers” of England.

If Wolsey had his eyes fixed on the throne of the popedom in order to seat himself there, Tyndale thought of raising up the true throne of the church by re-establishing the legitimate sovereignty of the word of God. The Greek Testament of Erasmus had been one step; and it now became necessary to place before the simple what the king of the schools had given to the learned. This idea, which pursued the young Oxford doctor everywhere, was to be the mighty mainspring of the English Reformation.

On the slope of Sodbury hill there stood a plain but large mansion, commanding an extensive view

over the beautiful vale of the Severn, where Tyndale was born. It was inhabited by a family of gentle birth: Sir John Walsh had shone in the tournaments of the court, and by this means conciliated the favor of his prince. He kept open table; and gentlemen, deans, abbots, archdeacons, doctors of divinity, and fat rectors, charmed by Sir John's cordial welcome and by his good dinners, were ever at his house. The former brother-at-arms of Henry VIII felt an interest in the questions then discussing throughout Christendom. Lady Walsh, herself a sensible and generous woman, lost not a word of the animated conversation of her guests, and discreetly tried to incline the balance to the side of truth. Tyndale, after leaving Oxford and Cambridge, had returned to the home of his fathers. Sir John had requested him to educate his children, and he had accepted. William was then in the prime of life (he was about thirty-six), well instructed in Scripture, and full of desire to show forth the light which God had given him. Opportunities were not wanting. Seated at table with all the doctors welcomed by Sir John, Tyndale entered into conversation with them. They talked

of the learned men of the day — of Erasmus much, and sometimes of Luther, who was beginning to astonish England. They discussed several questions touching the Holy Scriptures, and sundry points of theology. Tyndale expressed his convictions with admirable clearness, supported them with great learning, and kept his ground against all with unbending courage. These animated conversations in the vale of the Severn are one of the essential features of the picture presented by the Reformation in this country. The historians of antiquity invented the speeches which they have put into the mouths of their heroes. In our times history, without inventing, should make us acquainted with the sentiments of the persons of whom it treats. It is sufficient to read Tyndale's works to form some idea of these conversations. It is from his writings that the following discussion has been drawn.

In the dining-room of the old hall a varied group was assembled round the hospitable table. There were Sir John and Lady Walsh, a few gentlemen of the neighborhood, with several

abbots, deans, monks, and doctors, in their respective costumes. Tyndale occupied the humblest place, and generally kept Erasmus's New Testament within reach in order to prove what he advanced. Numerous domestics were moving about engaged in waiting on the guests; and at length the conversation, after wandering a little, took a more precise direction. The priests grew impatient when they saw the terrible volume appear. "Your Scriptures only serve to make heretics," they exclaimed. "On the contrary," replied Tyndale, "the source of all heresies is pride; now the word of God strips man of everything and leaves him as bare as Job." — "The word of God! why even we don't understand your word, how can the vulgar understand it?" — "You do not understand it," rejoined Tyndale, "because you look into it only for foolish questions, as you would into our Lady's Matins or Merlin's Prophecies.

Now the Scriptures are a clue which we must follow, without turning aside, until we arrive at Christ; for Christ is the end." — "And I tell you," shouted out a priest, "that the Scriptures are a

Daedalian labyrinth, rather than Ariadne's clue — a conjuring book wherein everybody finds what he wants." — "Alas!" replied Tyndale; "you read them without Jesus Christ; that's why they are an obscure book to you. What do I say? a den of thorns where you only escape from the friars to be caught by the brambles." "No!" exclaimed another clerk, heedless of contradicting his colleague, "nothing is obscure to us; it is we who give the Scriptures, and we who explain them to you." — "You would lose both your time and your trouble," said Tyndale; "do you know who taught the eagles to find their prey? Well, that same God teaches his hungry children to find their Father in his word. Far from having given us the Scriptures, it is you who have hidden them from us; it is you who burn those who teach them and if you could, you would burn the Scriptures themselves." Tyndale was not satisfied with merely laying down the great principles of faith: he always sought after what he calls "the sweet marrow within;" but to the divine unction he added no little humor, and unmercifully ridiculed the superstitions of his adversaries. "You set candles before images," he said to them; "and

since you give them light, why don’t you give them food? Why don’t you make their bellies hollow, and put victuals and drink inside? To serve God by such mummeries is treating him like a spoilt child, whom you pacify with a toy or with a horse made of a stick.” But the learned Christian soon returned to more serious thoughts; and when his adversaries extolled the papacy as the power that would save the church in the tempest, he replied: “Let us only take on board the anchor of faith, after having dipped it in the blood of Christ, (Tyndale’s Expositions (Park. Soc.), p. 15.) and when the storm bursts upon us, let us boldly cast the anchor into the sea; then you may be sure the ship will remain safe on the great waters.” And, in fine, if his opponents rejected any doctrine of the truth, Tyndale (says the chronicler) opening his Testament would set his finger on the verse which refuted the Romish error, and exclaim: “Look and read.”(And lay plainly before them the open and manifest places of the Scriptures, to confute their errors and confirm his sayings. Foxe, Acts, 5 p. 115.) The beginnings of the English Reformation are not to be found, as we have seen, in a material

ecclesiasticism, which has been decorated with the name of English Catholicism: they are essentially spiritual. The Divine Word, the creator of the new life in the individual, is also the founder and reformer of the church. The reformed churches, and particularly the reformed churches of Great Britain, belong to evangelism.

The contemplation of God’s works refreshed Tyndale after the discussions he had to maintain at his patron’s table. He would often ramble to the top of Sodbury hill, and there repose amidst the ruins of an ancient Roman camp which crowned the summit. It was there that Queen Margaret of Anjou halted; and here too rested Edward IV, who pursued her, before the fatal battle of Tewkesbury, which caused this princess to fall into the hands of the White Rose. Amidst these ruins, monuments of the Roman invasion and of the civil dissensions of England, Tyndale meditated upon other battles, which were to restore liberty and truth to Christendom. Then rousing himself he would descend the hill, and courageously resume his task.

Behind the mansion stood a little church, overshadowed by two large yew trees, and dedicated to St. Adeline. On Sundays, Tyndale used to preach there, Sir John and Lady Walsh, with the eldest of the children, occupying the manorial pew. This humble sanctuary was filled by their household and tenantry, listening attentively to the words of their teacher, which fell from his lips like the waters of Shiloah that go softly. Tyndale was very lively in conversation; but he explained the Scriptures with so much unction, says the chronicler, “that his hearers thought they heard St. John himself.” If he resembled John in the mildness of his language, he resemble Paul in the strength of his doctrine. “According to the pope,” he said, “we must first be good after his doctrine, and compel God to be good again for our goodness. Nay, verily, God’s goodness is the root of all goodness.

Antichrist turneth the tree of salvation topsy-turvy: (Antichrist turneth the roots of the trees upward. Tyndale, Doctrinal Treatises (Park. Soc.), p. 295.) he planteth the branches, and setteth the

roots upwards. We must put it straight.....As the husband marrieth the wife, before he can have any lawful children by her; even so faith justifieth us to make us fruitful in good works. But neither the one nor the other should remain barren.

Faith is the holy candle wherewith we must bless ourselves at the last hour; without it, you will go astray in the valley of the shadow of death, though you had a thousand tapers lighted around you bed." The priests, irritated at such observations, determined to ruin Tyndale, and some of them invited Sir John and his lady to an entertainment, at which he was not present. During dinner, they so abused the young doctor and his New Testament, that his patrons retired greatly annoyed that their tutor should have made so many enemies. They told him all they had heard, and Tyndale successfully refuted his adversaries arguments.

"What!" exclaimed Lady Walsh, "there are some of these doctors worth one hundred, some two hundred, and some three hundred pounds,

.....and were it reason, think you, Master William, that we should believe you before them?" Tyndale, opening the New Testament, replied: "No! it is not me you should believe. That is what the priests have told you; but look here, St. Peter, St. Paul, and the Lord himself say quite the contrary." The word of God was there, positive and supreme: the sword of the spirit cut the difficulty.

Before long the manor-house and St. Adeline's church became too narrow for Tyndale's zeal. He preached every Sunday, sometimes in a village, sometimes in a town. The inhabitants of Bristol assembled to hear him in a large meadow, called St. Austin's Green. But no sooner had he preached in any place than the priests hastened thither, tore up what he had planted, called him a heretic, and threatened to expel from the church every one who dared listen to him. When Tyndale returned he found the field laid waste by the enemy; and looking sadly upon it, as the husbandman who sees his corn beaten down by the hail, and his rich furrows turned into a barren waste, he exclaimed: "What is to be done?

While I am sowing in one place, the enemy ravages the field I have just left.

I cannot be everywhere. Oh! if Christians possessed the Holy Scriptures in their own tongue, they could of themselves withstand these sophists.

Without the Bible it is impossible to establish the laity in the truth." Then a great idea sprang up in Tyndale's heart: "It was in the language of Israel," said he, "that the Psalms were sung in the temple of Jehovah; and shall not the gospel speak the language of England among us?.....Ought the church to have less light at noonday than at the dawn?.....Christians must read the New Testament in their mother-tongue." Tyndale believed that this idea proceeded from God. The new sun would lead to the discovery of a new world, and the infallible rule would make all human diversities give way to a divine unity. "One holdeth this doctor, another that," said Tyndale; "one followeth Duns Scotus, another St. Thomas, another Bonaventure, Alexander Hales, Raymond of Penaford, Lyra,

Gorram, Hugh de Sancto Victore, and so many others besides.....Now, each of these authors contradicts the other. How then can we distinguish him who says right from him who says wrong?.....How?.....Verily, by God's word." Tyndale hesitated no longer.....While Wolsey sought to win the papal tiara, the humble tutor of Sodbury undertook to place the torch of heaven in the midst of his fellow-countrymen. The translation of the Bible shall be the work of his life.

The first triumph of the word was a revolution in the manor-house. In proportion as Sir John and Lady Walsh acquired a taste for the gospel, they became disgusted with the priests. The clergy were not so often invited to Sodbury, nor did they meet with the same welcome. They soon discontinued their visits, and thought of nothing but how they could drive Tyndale from the mansion and from the diocese.

Unwilling to compromise themselves in this warfare, they sent forward some of those light troops which the church has always at her disposal.

Mendicant friars and poor curates, who could hardly understand their missal, and the most learned of whom made Albertus de secretis mulierum their habitual study, fell upon Tyndale like a pack of hungry hounds. They trooped to the alehouses, and calling for a jug of beer, took their seats, one at one table, another at another. They invited the peasantry to drink with them, and entering into conversation with them, poured forth a thousand curses upon the daring reformer: “He’s a hypocrite,” said one; “he’s a heretic,” said another. The most skillful among them would mount upon a stool, and turning the tavern into a temple, deliver, for the first time in his life, an extemporaneous discourse. They reported words that Tyndale had never uttered, and actions that he had never committed. Rushing upon the poor tutor (he himself informs us) “like unclean swine that follow their carnal lusts,” they tore his good name to very tatters, and shared the spoil among them; while the audience, excited by their calumnies and heated by the beer, departed overflowing with rage and hatred against the heretic of Sodbury.

After the monks came the dignitaries. The deans and abbots, Sir John's former guests, accused Tyndale to the chancellor of the diocese, and the storm which had begun in the tavern burst forth in the episcopal palace.

The titular bishop of Worcester (an appanage of the Italian prelates) was Giulio de' Medici, a learned man, great politician, and crafty priest, who already governed the popedom without being pope. Wolsey, who administered the diocese for his absent colleague, had appointed Thomas Parker chancellor, a man devoted to the Roman church. It was to him the churchmen made their complaint. A judicial inquiry had its difficulties; the king's companion-at-arms was the patron of the pretended heretic, and Sir Anthony Poyntz, Lady Walsh's brother, was sheriff of the county. The chancellor was therefore content to convoke a general conference of the clergy. Tyndale obeyed the summons, but foreseeing what awaited him, he cried heartily to God, as he pursued his way up the banks of the Severn, "to give him strength to stand

fast in the truth of his word." When they were assembled, the abbots and deans, and other ecclesiastics of the diocese, with haughty heads and threatening looks, crowded round the humble but unbending Tyndale. When his turn arrived, he stood forward, and the chancellor administered him a sever reprimand, to which he made a calm reply. This so exasperated the chancellor, that, giving way to his passion, he treated Tyndale as if he had been a dog. "Where are your witnesses?" demanded the latter. "Let them come forward, and I will answer them." Not one of them dared support the charge — they looked another way. The chancellor waited, one witness at least he must have, but he could not get that. Annoyed at this desertion of the priests, the representative of the Medici became more equitable, and let the accusation drop. Tyndale quietly returned to Sodbury, blessing God who had saved him from the cruel hands of his adversaries, and entertaining nothing but the tenderest charity towards them. "Take away my goods," he said to them one day, "take away my good name! yet so long as Christ dwelleth in my heart, so long shall I love you not a

whit the less.” Here indeed is the St. John to whom Tyndale has been compared.

In this violent warfare, however, he could not fail to receive some heavy blows; and where could he find consolation? Fryth and Bilney were far from him. Tyndale recollected an aged doctor who lived near Sodbury, and who had shown him great affection. He went to see him, and opened his heart to him. The old man looked at him for a while as if he hesitated to disclose some great mystery. “Do you not know,” said he, lowering his voice, “that the pope is very Antichrist, whom the Scripture speaketh of?.....But beware what you say.....That knowledge may cost you your life.” This doctrine of Antichrist, which Luther was at that moment enunciating so boldly, struck Tyndale. Strengthened by it, as was the Saxon reformer, he felt fresh energy in his heart, and the aged doctor was to him what the aged friar had been to Luther.

When the priests saw that their plot had failed, they commissioned a celebrated divine to undertake his conversion. The reformer replied

with his Greek Testament to the schoolman's arguments. The theologian was speechless: at last he exclaimed! "Well then! it were better to be without God's laws than the pope's." Tyndale, who did not expect so plain and blasphemous a confession, made answer: "And I defy the pope and all his laws!" and then, as if unable to keep his secret, he added: "If God spares my life, I will take care that a ploughboy shall know more of the Scriptures than you do." All his thoughts were now directed to the means of carrying out his plans; and, desirous of avoiding conversations that might compromise them, he thenceforth passed the greater portion of his time in the library. He prayed, he read, he began his translation of the Bible, and in all probability communicated portions of it to Sir John and Lady Walsh.

All his precautions were useless: the scholastic divine had betrayed him, and the priests had sworn to stop him in his translation of the Bible. One day he fell in with a troop of monks and curates, who abused him in the grossest manner. "It's the favor of the gentry of the county that makes you so

proud," said they; "but notwithstanding your patrons, there will be a talk about you before long, and in a pretty fashion too!.....You shall not always live in a manor-house!" — "Banish me to the obscurest corner of England," replied Tyndale; "provided you will permit me to teach children and preach the gospel, and give me ten pounds a-year for my support .....I shall be satisfied!" The priests left him, but with the intention of preparing him a very different fate.

Tyndale indulged in his pleasant dreams no longer. He saw that he was on the point of being arrested, condemned, and interrupted in his great work.

He must seek a retreat where he can discharge in peace the task God has allotted him. "You cannot save me from the hands of the priests," said he to Sir John, "and God knows to what troubles you would expose yourself by keeping me in your family. Permit me to leave you." Having said this, he gathered up his papers, took his Testament, pressed the hands of his benefactors, kissed the

children, and then descending the hill, bade farewell to the smiling banks of the Severn, and departed alone — alone with his faith. What shall he do? What will become of him? Where shall he go? He went forth like Abraham, one thing alone engrossing his mind: — the Scriptures shall be translated into the vulgar tongue, and he will deposit the oracles of God in the midst of his countrymen.

Chapter 5

Luther’s Works in England

While a plain minister was commencing the Reformation in a tranquil valley in the west of England, powerful reinforcements were landing on the shores of Kent. The writings and actions of Luther excited a lively sensation in Great Britain. His appearance before the diet of Worms was a common subject of conversation. Ships from the harbors of the Low Countries brought his books to London, and the German printers had made answer to the nuncio Aleander, who was prohibiting the Lutheran works in the empire: “Very well! we shall send them to England!” One might almost say that England was destined to be the asylum of truth. And in fact, the Theses of 1517, the Explanation of the Lord’s Prayer, the books against Emser, against the papacy of Rome, against the bull of Antichrist, the Epistle to the Galatians, the Appeal to the German nobility, and above all, the Babylonish Captivity of the Church — all crossed the sea, were translated, and circulated throughout the kingdom.

The German and English nations, having a common origin and being sufficiently alike at that time in character and civilization, the works intended for one might be read by the other with advantage. The monk in his cell, the country gentleman in his hall, the doctor in his college, the tradesman in his shop, and even the bishop in his palace, studied these extraordinary writings. The laity in particular, who had been prepared by Wickliffe and disgusted by the avarice and disorderly lives of the priests, read with enthusiasm the eloquent pages of the Saxon monk. They strengthened all hearts.

The papacy was not inactive in presence of all these efforts. The times of Gregory VII and of Innocent III, it is true, were past; and weakness and irresolution had succeeded to the former energy and activity of the Roman pontificate. The spiritual power had resigned the dominion of Europe to the secular powers, and it was doubtful whether faith in the papacy could be found in the papacy itself. Yet a German (Dr. Eck) by the most indefatigable

exertions had extorted a bull from the profane Leo X, and this bull had just reached England. The pope himself sent it to Henry, calling upon him to extirpate the Lutheran heresy. The king handed it to Wolsey, and the latter transmitted it to the bishops, who, after reading the heretic's books, met together to discuss the matter. There was more Romish faith in London than in the Vatican. "This false friar," exclaimed Wolsey, "attacks submission to the clergy — that fountain of all virtues." The humanist prelates were the most annoyed; the road they had taken ended in an abyss, and they shrank back in alarm. Tonstall, the friend of Erasmus, afterwards bishop of London, and who had just returned from his embassy to Germany where Luther had been painted to him in the darkest colors, was particularly violent: "This monk is a Proteus.....I mean an atheist. If you allow the heresies to grow up which he is scattering with both hands, they will choke the faith and the church will perish. Had we not enough of the Wickliffites? — here are new legions of the same kind!.....Today Luther calls for the abolition of the mass; tomorrow he will ask for the abolition of

Jesus Christ. He rejects everything, and puts nothing in its place. What! if barbarians plunder our frontiers, we punish them.....and shall we bear with heretics who plunder our altars?.....No! by the mortal agony that Christ endured, I entreat you.....What am I saying? the whole church conjures you to combat against this devouring dragon.....to punish this hell-dog, to silence his sinister howlings, and to drive him shamefully back into his den." Thus spoke the eloquent Tonstall; nor was Wolsey far behind him. The only attachment at all respectable in this man was that which he entertained for the church; it may perhaps be called respectable, for it was the only one that did not exclusively regard himself. On the 14th May 1521, this English pope, in imitation of the Italian pope, issued his bull against Luther.

It was read (probably on the first Sunday in June) in all the churches during high mass, when the congregation was most numerous. A priest exclaimed: "For every book of Martin Luther's found in your possession within fifteen days after this injunction, you will incur the greater

excommunication.” Then a public notary, holding the pope’s bull in his hand, with a description of Luther’s perverse opinions, proceeded towards the principal door of the church and fastened up the document. The people gathered round it; the most competent person read it aloud, while the rest listened; and the following are some of the sentences which, by the pope’s order, resounded in the porches of all the cathedral, conventual, collegiate, and parish churches of every county in England:

“11. Sins are not pardoned to any, unless, the priest remitting them, he believe they are remitted to him.

“13. If by reason of some impossibility, the contrite be not confessed, or the priest absolve him, not in earnest, but in jest; yet if he believe that he is absolved, he is most truly absolved.

“14. In the sacrament of penance and the remission of a fault, the pope or bishop doth not more than the lowest priest; yea, where there is not

a priest, then any Christian will do; yea, if it were a woman or a child.

“26. The pope, the successor of Peter, is not Christ’s vicar.

“28. It is not at all in the hand of the church or the pope to decree articles of faith, no, nor to decree the laws of manners or of good works.” The cardinal-legate, accompanied by the nuncio, by the ambassador of Charles V, and by several bishops, proceeded in great pomp to St. Paul’s, where the bishop of Rochester preached, and Wolsey burnt Luther’s books. But they were hardly reduced to ashes before sarcasms and jests were heard in every direction. “Fire is not a theological argument,” said one. “The papists, who accuse Martin Luther of slaying and murdering Christians,” added another, “are like the pickpocket, who began to cry stop thief as soon as he saw himself in danger of being caught.” — “The bishop of Rochester,” said a third, “concludes that because Luther has thrown the pope’s decretals into the fire, he would throw in the pope

himself.....We may hence deduce another syllogism quite as sound: The popes have burnt the New Testament, therefore, if they could, they would burn Christ himself.” These jests were rapidly circulated from mouth to mouth. It was not enough that Luther’s writings were in England, they must needs be known, and the priests took upon themselves to advertise them. The Reformation was advancing, and Rome herself pushed behind the car.

The cardinal saw that something more was required than these paper autos-da-fe, and the activity he displayed may indicate what he would have done in Europe if ever he had reached the pontifical chair. “The spirit of Satan left him no repose,” says the papist Sanders. Some action out of the ordinary course is needful, thought Wolsey. Kings have hitherto been the enemies of the popes: a king shall now undertake their defense.

Princes are not very anxious about learning, a prince shall publish a book!.....”Sire,” said he to the king, to get Henry in the vein, “you ought to

write to the princes of Germany on the subject of this heresy." He did so. Writing to the Archduke Palatine, he said, "This fire, which has been kindled by Luther, and fanned by the arts of the devil, is raging everywhere, If Luther does not repent, deliver him and his audacious treatises to the flames. I offer you my royal co-operation, and even, if necessary, my life." This was the first time Henry showed that cruel thirst which was in after-days to be quenched in the blood of his wives and friends.

The king having taken the first step, it was not difficult for Wolsey to induce him to take another. To defend the honor of Thomas Aquinas, to stand forward as the champion of the church, and to obtain from the pope a title equivalent to that of Christianissimus, most Christian king, were more than sufficient motives to induce Henry to break a lance with Luther.

"I will combat with the pen this Cerberus, sprung from the depths of hell," said he, "and if he refuses to retract, the fire shall consume the heretic

and his heresies together.” The king shut himself up in his library: all the scholastic tastes with which his youth had been imbued were revived; he worked as if he were archbishop of Canterbury, and not king of England; with the pope’s permission he read Luther’s writings; he ransacked Thomas Aquinas; forged, with infinite labor, the arrows with which he hoped to pierce the heretic; called several learned men to his aid, and at last published his book.

His first words were a cry of alarm. “Beware of the track of this serpent,” said he to his Christian readers; “walk on tiptoe; fear the thickets and caves in which he lies concealed, and whence he will dart his poison on you. If he licks you, be careful! the cunning viper caresses only that he may bite!” After that Henry sounded a charge: “Be of good cheer!

Filled with the same valor that you would display against Turks, Saracens, and other infidels, march now against this little friar, — a fellow apparently weak, but more formidable through the

spirit that animates him than all infidels, Saracens, and Turks put together.” Thus did Henry VIII, the Peter the Hermit of the sixteenth century, preach a crusade against Luther, in order to save the papacy.

He had skillfully chosen the ground on which he gave battle: sacramentalism and tradition are in fact the two essential features of the papal religion; just as a lively faith and Holy Scripture are of the religion of the gospel. Henry did a service to the Reformation, by pointing out the principles it would mainly have to combat; and by furnishing Luther with an opportunity of establishing the authority of the Bible, he made him take a most important step in the path of reform. “If a teaching is opposed to Scripture,” said the Reformer, “whatever be its origin — traditions, custom, kings, Thomists, sophists, Satan, or even an angel from heaven, — all from whom it proceeds must be accursed. Nothing can exist contrary to Scripture, and everything must exist for it.” Henry’s book being terminated by the aid of the bishop of Rochester, the king showed it to Sir THomas More, who begged him to pronounce less

decidedly in favor of the papal supremacy. “I will not change a word,” replied the king, full of servile devotion to the popedom. “Besides, I have my reasons,” and he whispered them in More’s ear.

Doctor Clarke, ambassador from England at the court of Rome, was commissioned to present the pope with a magnificently bound copy of the king’s work. “The glory of England,” said he, “is to be in the foremost rank among the nations in obedience to the papacy.” Happily Britain was erelong to know a glory of a very different kind. The ambassador added, that his master, after having refuted Luther’s errors with the pen, was ready to combat his adherents with the sword. The pope, touched with this offer, gave him his foot, and then his cheek to kiss, and said to him: “I will do for your master’s book as much as the church has done for the works of St. Jerome and St. Augustine.” The enfeebled papacy had neither the power of intelligence, nor even of fanaticism. It still maintained its pretensions and its pomp, but it resembled the corpses of the mighty ones of the earth that lie in state, clad in their most magnificent

robes: splendor above, death and corruption below. The thunderbolts of a Hildebrand ceasing to produce their effect, Rome gratefully accepted the defense of laymen, such as Henry VIII and Sir Thomas More, without disdaining their judicial sentences and their scaffolds. “We must honor those noble champions,” said the pope to his cardinals, “who show themselves prepared to cut off with the sword the rotten members of Jesus Christ. What title shall we give to the virtuous king of England?” — Protector of the Roman church, suggested one; Apostolic king, said another; and finally, but not without some opposition, Henry VIII was proclaimed Defender of the Faith. At the same time the pope promised ten years indulgence to all readers of the king’s book. This was a lure after the fashion of the middle ages, and which never failed in its effect. The clergy compared its author to the wisest of kings; and the book, of which many thousand copies were printed, filled the Christian world (Cochlaeus tell us) with admiration and delight.

Nothing could equal Henry’s joy. “His

majesty," said the vicar of Croydon, "would not exchange that name for all London and twenty miles round." The king's fool, entering the room just as his master had received the bull, asked him the cause of his transports. "The pope has just named me Defender of the faith!" — "Ho, ho! good Harry," replied the fool, "let you and me defend one another; but.....take my word for it.....let the faith alone to defend itself." An entire modern system was found in those words. In the midst of the general intoxication, the fool was the only sensible person. But Henry could listen to nothing. Seated on an elevated throne, with the cardinal at his right hand, he caused the pope's letter to be read in public. The trumpets sounded: Wolsey said mass; the king and his court took their seats around a sumptuous table, and the heralds at arms proclaimed: Henricus Dei gratia Rex Angliae et Franciae, Defensor Fidei et Dominus Hiberniae!

Thus was the king of England more than ever united to the pope: whoever brings the Holy Scriptures into his kingdom shall there encounter that material sword, ferrum et materialem gladium,

in which the papacy so much delighted.

Chapter 6

Wolsey’s Machinations to obtain the Tiara

One thing only was wanting to check more surely the progress of the gospel: Wolsey’s accession to the pontifical throne. Consumed by the desire of reaching “the summit of sacerdotal unity,” he formed, to attain this end, one of the most perfidious schemes ambition ever engendered. He thought with others: “The end justifies the means.” The cardinal could only attain the popedom through the emperor or the king of France; for then, as now, it was the secular powers that really elected the chief of catholicity. After carefully weighing the influence of these two princes, Wolsey found that the balance inclined to the side of Charles, and his choice was made. A close intimacy of long standing united him to Francis I, but that mattered little; he must betray his friend to gain his friend’s rival.

But this was no easy matter. Henry was dissatisfied with Charles the Fifth. Wolsey was therefore obliged to employ every imaginable delicacy in his manoeuvres. First he sent Sir Richard Wingfield to the emperor; then he wrote a flattering letter in Henry's name to the princessregent of the Low Countries. The difficulty was to get the king to sign it.

"Have the goodness to put your name," said Wolsey, "even if it should annoy you Highness.....You know very well.....that women like to be pleased." This argument prevailed with the king, who still possessed a spirit of gallantry. Lastly, Wolsey being named arbitrator between Charles and Francis, resolved to depart for Calais, apparently to hear the complaints of the two princes; but in reality to betray one of them.

Wolsey felt as much pleasure in such practices, as Francis in giving battle.

The king of France rejected his arbitration: he had a sharp eye, and his mother one still sharper.

“Your master loves me not,” said he to Charles’s ambassador, “and I do not love him any more, and am determined to be his enemy.” It was impossible to speak more plainly. Far from imitating this frankness, the politic Charles endeavored to gain Wolsey, and Wolsey, who was eager to sell himself, adroitly hinted at what price he might be bought. “If the king of England sides with me,” Charles informed the cardinal, “you shall be elected pope at the death of Leo X.” Francis, betrayed by Wolsey, abandoned by the pope, and threatened by the emperor, determined at last to accept Henry’s mediation.

But Charles was now thinking of very different matters. Instead of a mediation, he demanded of the king of England 4000 of his famous bowmen. Henry smiled as he read the despatch, and looking at Pace his secretary, and Marney the captain of his guards, he said: “Beati qui audiunt et non intelligunt!” thus forbidding them to understand, and above all to bruit abroad this strange request. It was agreed to raise the number of archers to 6000; and the cardinal, having the tiara continually before

his eyes, departed to perform at Calais the odious comedy of a hypocritical arbitration. Being detained at Dover by contrary winds, the mediator took advantage of this delay to draw up a list of the 6000 archers and their captains, not forgetting to insert in it, “certain obstinate deer,” as Henry had said, “that must of necessity be hunted down.” These were some gentlemen whom the king desired to get rid of.

While the ambassadors of the king of France were received at Calais on the 4th of August with great honors, by the lord high chamberlain of England, the cardinal signed a convention with Charles’s ministers that Henry should withdraw his promise of the Princess Mary’s hand to the dauphin, and give her to the emperor. At the same time he issued orders to destroy the French navy, and to invade France. And, finally, he procured, by way of compensating England for the pension of 16,000 pounds hitherto received from the court of St. Germains, that the emperor should pay henceforward the annual sum of 40,000 marks. Without ready money the bargain would not have

been a good one.

This was not all. While Wolsey was waiting to be elected pope, he conceived the idea of becoming a soldier. A commander was wanted for the 6000 archers Henry was sending against the king of France; and why should he not be the cardinal himself? He immediately intrigued to get the noblemen set aside who had been proposed as generals in chief.

“Shrewsbury,” he said to the king, “is wanted for Scotland — Worcester by his experience is worthy that.....you should keep him near you. As for Dorset.....he will be very dear.” Then the priest added: “Sire, if during my sojourn on the other side of the sea, you have good reason to send your archers.....I hasten to inform you that whenever the emperor takes the command of his soldiers, I am ready, although an ecclesiastic, to put myself at the head of yours.” What devotedness! Wolsey would cause his cross of cardinal a latere to be carried before him (he said); and neither Francis nor Bayard would be able to resist him. To command

at the same time the state, the church, and the army, while awaiting the tiara, — to surround his head with laurels: such was this man’s ambition.

Unfortunately for him, they were not of that opinion at court. The king made the earl of Essex commander-in-chief.

As Wolsey could not be general, he turned to diplomacy. He hastened to Bruges; and as he entered at the emperor’s side, a voice was heard above the crowd, exclaiming, Salve, Rex regis tui atque regni sui! — a sound most pleasing to his ears. People were very much astonished at Bruges by the intimacy existing between the cardinal and the emperor. “There is some mystery beneath it all,” they said. Wolsey desired to place the crown of France on Henry’s head, and the tiara on his own. Such was the mystery, which was well worth a few civilities to the mighty Charles V.

The alliance was concluded, and the contracting parties agreed “to avenge the insults offered to the throne of Jesus Christ,” or in other

words, to the popedom.

Wolsey, in order to drag Henry into the intrigues which were to procure him the tiara, had reminded him that he was king of France, and the suggestion had been eagerly caught at. At midnight, on the 7th of August, the king dictated to his secretary a letter for Wolsey containing this strange expression: Si ibitis parare regi locum in regno ejus hereditario, Majestas ejus quum tempus erit opportunum, sequetur. The theologian who had corrected the famous latin book of the king's against Luther most certainly had not revised this phrase. According to Henry, France was his hereditary kingdom, and Wolsey was going to prepare the throne for him.....The king could not restrain his joy at the mere idea, and already he surpassed in imagination both Edward III and the Black Prince. "I am about to attain a glory superior to that which my ancestors have gained by so many wars and battles." Wolsey traced out for him the road to his palace on the banks of the Seine: "Mezieres is about to fall; afterwards there is only Rheims, which is not a strong city; and thus your

grace will very easily reach Paris.” Henry followed on the map the route he would have to take: “Affairs are going on well,” wrote the cardinal, “the Lord be praised.” In him this Christian language was a mere official formality.

Wolsey was mistaken: things were going on badly. On the 20th of October 1522, Francis I whom so much perfidy had been unable to deceive, — Francis, ambitious and turbulent, but honest in this matter at least, and confiding in the strength of his arms, had suddenly appeared between Cambray and Valenciennes. The emperor fled to Flanders in alarm, and Wolsey, instead of putting himself at the head of the army, had shielded himself under his arbitrator’s cloak. Writing to Henry, who, a fortnight before, had by his advice excited Charles to attack France, he said: “I am confident that your virtuous mediation will greatly increase your reputation and honor throughout Christendom.” Francis rejected Wolsey’s offers, but the object of the latter was attained. The negotiations had gained time for Charles, and bad weather soon stopped the French army. Wolsey returned satisfied to London

about the middle of December.

It was true that Henry’s triumphant entry into Paris became very difficult; but the cardinal was sure of the emperor’s favor, and through it (he imagined) of the tiara. Wolsey had done, therefore, what he desired. He had hardly arrived in England when there came news which raised him to the height of happiness: Leo X was dead. His joy surpassed what Henry had felt at the thought of his hereditary kingdom. Protected by the powerful Charles V, to whom he had sacrificed everything, the English cardinal was at last on the point of receiving that pontifical crown which would permit him to crush heresy, and which was, in his eyes, the just reward of so many infamous transactions.

Chapter 7

The Just Men of Lincolnshire

Wolsey did not stay until he was pope, before persecuting the disciples of the word of God. Desirous of carrying out the stipulations of the convention at Bruges, he had broken out against “the king’s subjects who disturbed the apostolic see.” Henry had to vindicate the title conferred on him by the pope; the cardinal had to gain the popedom; and both could satisfy their desires by the erection of a few scaffolds.

In the county of Lincoln on the shores of the North Sea, along the fertile banks of the Humber, Trent, and Witham, and on the slopes of the smiling hills, dwelt many peaceful Christians — laborers, artificers, and shepherds — who spent their days in toil, in keeping their flocks, in doing good, and in reading the Bible. The more the gospel-light increased in England, the greater was the increase in the number of these children of peace. These, “just men,” as they were called, were

devoid of human knowledge, but they thirsted for the knowledge of God. Thinking they were alone the true disciples of the Lord, they married only among themselves. They appeared occasionally at church; but instead of repeating their prayers like the rest, they sat, said their enemies, “mum like beasts.” On Sundays and holidays, they assembled in each other’s houses, and sometimes passed a whole night in reading a portion of Scripture. If there chanced to be few books among them, one of the brethren, who had learnt by heart the epistle of St. James, the beginning of St. Luke’s gospel, the sermon on the mount, or an epistle of St. Paul’s, would recite a few verses in a loud and calm voice; then all would piously converse about the holy truths of the faith, and exhort one another to put them in practice. But if any person joined their meetings, who did not belong to their body, they would all keep silent. Speaking much among each other, they were speechless before those from without: fear of the priests and of the fagot made them dumb. There was no family rejoicing without the Scriptures. At the marriage of a daughter of the aged Durdant, one of their patriarchs, the wedding

party met secretly in a barn, and read the whole of one of St.

Paul’s epistles. Marriages, are rarely celebrated with such pastimes as this!

Although they were dumb before enemies or suspected persons, these poor people did not keep silence in the presence of the humble; a glowing proselytism characterized them all. “Come to my house,” said the pious Agnes Ashford to James Morden, “and I will teach you some verses of Scripture.” Agnes was an educated woman; she could read; Morden came, and the poor woman’s chamber was transformed into a school of theology.

Agnes began: “Ye are the salt of the earth,” and then recited the following verses. Five times did Morden return to Agnes before he knew that beautiful discourse. “We are spread like salt over the various parts of the kingdom,” said this Christian woman to the neophyte, “in order that we may check the progress of superstition by our

doctrine and our life. But," added she in alarm, "keep this secret in your heart, as a man would keep a thief in prison." As books were rare, these pious Christians had established a kind of itinerant library, and one John Scrivener was continually engaged in carrying the precious volumes from one to another. But at times, as he was proceeding along the banks of the river, or through the forest glades, he observed that he was followed. He would quicken his pace and run into some barn, where the friendly peasants promptly hid him beneath the straw, or, like the spies of Israel, under the stalks of flax. The bloodhounds arrived, sought and found nothing; and more than once those who so generously harbored these evangelists cruelly expiated the crime of charity.

The disappointed officers had scarcely retired from the neighborhood when these friends of the word of God came out of their hiding-place, and profited by the moment of liberty to assemble the brethren. The persecutions they suffered irritated them against the priests. They worshipped God, read and sang with a low voice; but when the

conversation became general, they gave free course to their indignation.

“Would you know the use of the pope’s pardons?” said one of them; “they are to blind the eyes and empty the purse.” — “True pilgrimages,” said the tailor Geoffrey of Uxbridge, “consist in visiting the poor and sick — barefoot, if so it please you — for these are the little ones that are God’s true image.” — “Money spent in pilgrimages,” added a third, “serves only to maintain thieves and harlots.” The women were often the most animated in the controversy. “What need is there to go to the feet,” said Agnes Ward, who disbelieved in saints, “when we may go to the head?” “The clergy of the good old times,” said the wife of David Lewis, “used to lead the people as a hen leadeth her chickens; but now if our priests lead their flocks anywhere, it is to the devil assuredly.” Erelong there was a general panic throughout this district. The king’s confessor John Longland was bishop of Lincoln. This fanatic priest, Wolsey’s creature, took, advantage of his position to petition Henry for a severe persecution:

this was the ordinary use in England, France, and elsewhere, of the confessors of princes. It was unfortunate that among these pious disciples of the word men of a cynical turn were now and then met with, whose biting sarcasms went beyond all bounds. Wolsey and Longland knew how to employ these expressions in arousing the king's anger. "As one of these fellows," they said, "was busy beating out his corn in his barn, a man chanced to pass by. 'Good morrow, neighbor,' (said the latter), 'you are hard at it!' — 'Yes,' replied the old heretic, thinking of transubstantiation, 'I am thrashing the corn out of which the priest make God Almighty.'" Henry hesitated no longer.

On the 20th October 1521, nine days after the bull on the Defender of the Faith had been signed at Rome, the king, who was at Windsor, summoned his secretary, and dictated an order commanding all his subjects to assist the bishop of Lincoln against the heretics. "You will obey it at the peril of your lives," added he. The order was transmitted to Longland, and the bishop immediately issued his

warrants, and his officers spread terror far and wide. When they beheld them, these peaceful but timid Christians were troubled. Isabella Bartlet, hearing them approach her cottage, screamed out to her husband: “You are a lost man! and I am a dead woman!” This cry was re-echoed from all the cottages of Lincolnshire.

The bishop, on his judgment-seat, skillfully played upon these poor unhappy beings to make them accuse one another. Alas! according to the ancient prophecy: “the brother delivered up the brother to death.” Robert Bartlet deposed against his brother Richard and his own wife; Jane Bernard accused her own father, and Tredway his mother. It was not until after the most cruel anguish that these poor creatures were driven to such frightful extremities; but the bishop and death terrified them: a small number alone remained firm. As regards heroism, Wickliffe’s Reformation brought but a feeble aid to the Reformation of the sixteenth century; still if it did not furnish many heroes, it prepared the English people to love God’s word above all things. Of these humble people, some

were condemned to do penance in different monasteries; others to carry a fagot on their shoulders thrice round the marketplace, and then to stand some time exposed to the jeers of the populace; others were fastened to a post while the executioner branded them on the check with a red-hot iron. They also had their martyrs. Wickliffe's revival had never been without them. Four of these brethren were chosen to be put to death, and among them the pious evangelical colporteur Scrivener. By burning him to ashes the clergy desired to make sure that he would no longer circulate the word of God; and by a horrible refinement of cruelty his children were compelled to set fire to the pile that was to consume their father. They stretched forth their trembling hands, held in the strong grasp of the executioners.....Poor children!.....But it is easier to burn the limbs of Christians than to quench the Spirit of Heaven. These cruel fires could not destroy among the Lincolnshire peasantry that love of the Bible, which in all ages has been England's strength, far more than the wisdom of her senators or the bravery of her generals.

Having by these exploits gained indisputable claims to the tiara, Wolsey turned his efforts towards Rome. Leo X, as we have seen, was just dead (1522). The cardinal sent Pace to Rome, instructing him to “represent to the cardinals that by choosing a partisan of Charles or Francis they will incur the enmity of one or the other of these princes, and that if they elect some feeble Italian priest, the apostolical see must become the prey of the strongest. Luther’s revolt and the emperor’s ambition endanger the papacy. There is only one means of preventing the threatening dangers.....It is to choose me.....Now, go and exert yourself.” The conclave opened at Rome on the 27th December, and Wolsey was proposed; but the cardinals were not generally favorable to his election.

“He is too young,” said one; “too firm,” said another. “He will fix the seat of the papacy in England and not in Rome,” urged many. He did not receive twenty votes. “The cardinals,” wrote the English ambassador, “snarled and quarrelled with

each other; and their bad faith and hatred increased every day.” On the sixth day, only one dish was sent them; and then in despair they chose Adrian, who had been tutor to the emperor, and the cry was raised: Papam habemus!

During all this time Wolsey was in London, consumed by ambition, and counting the days and hours. At length a despatch from Ghent, dated the 22nd January, reached him with these words: “On the 9th of January, the cardinal of Tortosa was elected!”.....Wolsey was almost distracted. To gain Charles, he had sacrificed the alliance of Francis I; there was no stratagem that he had not employed, and yet Charles, in spite of his engagements, had procured the election of his tutor!.....The emperor knew what must be the cardinal’s anger, and endeavored to appease it: “The new pope,” he wrote, “is old and sickly; he cannot hold his office long.....Beg the cardinal of York for my sake to take great care of his health.” Charles did more than this: he visited London in person, under pretense of his betrothal with Mary of England, and, in the treaty then drawn up, he consented to

the insertion of an article by virtue of which Henry VIII and the mighty emperor bound themselves, if either should infringe the treaty, to appear before Wolsey and to submit to his decisions. The cardinal, gratified by such condescension, grew calm; and at the same time he was soothed with the most flattering hopes. “Charles’s imbecile preceptor,” they told him, “has arrived at the Vatican, attended only by his female cook; you shall soon make your entrance there surrounded by all your grandeur.” To be certain of his game, Wolsey made secret approaches to Francis I, and then waited for the death of the pope. 1770

Chapter 8

Character of Tyndale

While the cardinal was intriguing to attain his selfish ends, Tyndale was humbly carrying out the great idea of giving the Scriptures of God to England.

After bidding a sad farewell to the manor-house of Sodbury, the learned tutor had departed for London. This occurred about the end of 1522 or the beginning of 1523. He had left the university — he had forsaken the house of his protector; his wandering career was about to commence, but a thick veil hid from him all its sorrows. Tyndale, a man simple in his habits, sober, daring, and generous, fearing neither fatigue nor danger, inflexible in his duty, anointed with the Spirit of God, overflowing with love for his brethren, emancipated from human traditions, the servant of God alone, and loving nought but Jesus Christ, imaginative, quick at repartee, and of touching eloquence — such a man might have shone in the

foremost ranks; but he preferred a retired life in some poor corner, provided he could give his countrymen the Scriptures of God. Where could he find this calm retreat? was the question he put to himself as he was making his solitary way to London. The metropolitan see was then filled by Cuthbert Tonstall, who was more of a statesman and a scholar than of a churchman, “the first of English men in Greek and Latin literature,” said Erasmus. This eulogy of the learned Dutchman occurred to Tyndale’s memory. It was the Greek Testament of Erasmus that led me to Christ, said he to himself; why should not the house of Erasmus’s friend offer me a shelter that I may translate it.....At last he reached London, and, a stranger in that crowded city, he wandered along the streets, a prey by turns to hope and fear.

Being recommended by Sir John Walsh to Sir Harry Guildford, the king’s comptroller, and by him to several priests, Tyndale began to preach almost immediately, especially at St. Dunstan’s, and bore into the heart of the capital the truth which had been banished from the banks of the

Severn.

The word of God was with him the basis of salvation, and the grace of God its essence. His inventive mind presented the truths he proclaimed in a striking manner. He said on one occasion: “It is the blood of Christ that opens the gates of heaven, and not thy works. I am wrong.....Yes, if thou wilt have it so, by thy good words shalt thou be saved. — Yet, understand me well, — not by those which thou hast done, but by those which Christ has done for thee. Christ is in thee and thou in him, knit together inseparably. Thou canst not be damned, except Christ be damned with thee; neither can Christ be saved except thou be saved with him.” This lucid view of justification by faith places Tyndale among the reformers. He did not take his seat on a bishop’s throne, or wear a silken cope; but he mounted the scaffold, and was clothed with a garment of flames. In the service of a crucified Savior this latter distinction is higher than the former.

Yet the translation was his chief business; he

spoke to his acquaintances about it, and some of them opposed his project. “The teachings of the doctors,” said some of the city tradesmen, “can alone make us understand Scripture.” “That is to say,” replied Tyndale, “I must measure the yard by the cloth. Look here,” continued he, using a practical argument, “here are in your shop twenty pieces of stuff of different lengths.....Do you measure the yard by these pieces, or the pieces by the yard?.....The universal standard is Scripture.” This comparison was easily fixed in the minds of the petty tradesmen of the capital.

Desirous of carrying out his project, Tyndale aspired to become the bishop’s chaplain; his ambition was more modest than Wolsey’s. The Hellenist possessed qualities which could not fail to please the most learned of English-men in Greek literature: Tonstall and Tyndale both liked and read the same authors. The ex-tutor determined to plead his cause through the elegant and harmonious disciple of Radicus and Gorgias: “Here is one of Isocrates orations that I have translated into Latin,” said he to Sir Harry Guildford; “I should be pleased

to chaplain to his lordship the bishop of London; will you beg him to accept this trifle. Isocrates ought to be an excellent recommendation to a scholar; will you be good enough to add yours." Guildford spoke to the bishop, placed the translation in his hands, and Tonstall replied with that benevolence which he showed to every one. "Your business is in a fair way," said the comptroller to Tyndale; "write a letter to his lordship, and deliver it yourself." Tyndale's hopes now began to be realized. He wrote his letter in the best style, and then, commending himself to God, proceeded to the episcopal palace. He fortunately knew one of the bishop's officers, William Hebilthwayte, to whom he gave the letter. Hebilthwayte carried it to his lordship, while Tyndale waited. His heart throbbed with anxiety: shall he find at last the long hoped for asylum? The bishop's answer might decide the whole course of his life. If the door is opened, — if the translator of the Scriptures should be settled in the episcopal palace, why should not his London patron receive the truth like his patron at Sodbury? and, in that case, what a future for the church and for the

kingdom!.....The Reformation was knocking at the door of the hierarchy of England, and the latter was about to utter its yea or its nay. After a few moments' absence Hebilthwayte returned: "I am going to conduct you to his lordship." Tyndale fancied himself that he had attained his wishes.

The bishop was too kind-hearted to refuse an audience to a man who called upon him with the triple recommendation of Isocrates, of the comptroller, and of the king's old companion in arms. He received Tyndale with kindness, a little tempered however with coldness, as if he were a man whose acquaintanceship might compromise him. Tyndale having made known his wishes, the bishop hastened to reply: "Alas! my house is full; I have now more people than I can employ." Tyndale was discomfited by this answer. The bishop of London was a learned man, but wanting in courage and consistency; he gave his right hand to the friends of letters and of the gospel, and his left hand to the friends of the priests; and then endeavored to walk with both. But when he had to choose between the two parties, clerical interests

prevailed. There was no lack of bishops, priests, and laymen about him, who intimidated him by their clamors.

After taking a few steps forward, he suddenly recoiled. Still Tyndale ventured to hazard a word; but the prelate was cold as before. The humanists, who laughed at the ignorance of the monks, hesitated to touch an ecclesiastical system which lavished on them such rich sinecures. They accepted the new ideas in theory, but not in practice. They were very willing to discuss them at table, but not to proclaim them from the pulpit; and covering the Greek Testament with applause, they tore it in pieces when rendered into the vulgar tongue. “If you will look well about London,” said Tonstall coldly to the poor priest, “you will not fail to meet with some suitable employment.” This was all Tyndale could obtain.

Hebilthwayte waited on him to the door, and the Hellenist departed sad and desponding.

His expectations were disappointed. Driven

from the banks of the Severn, without a home in the capital, what would become of the translation of the Scriptures? “Alas!” he said; “I was deceived..... there is nothing to be looked for from the bishops.....Christ was smitten on the cheek before the bishop, Paul was buffeted before the bishop .....and a bishop has just turned me away.” His dejection did not last long: there was an elastic principle in his soul. “I hunger for the word of God,” said he, “I will translate it, whatever they may say or do. God will not suffer me to perish. He never made a mouth but he made food for it, nor a body, but he made raiment also.” This trustfulness was not misplaced. It was the privilege of a layman to give what the bishop refused. Among Tyndale’s hearers at St. Dunstan’s was a rich merchant named Humphrey Monmouth, who had visited Rome, and to whom (as well as to his companions) the pope had been so kind as to give certain Roman curiosities, such as indulgences, a culpa et a poena.

Ships laden with his manufactures every year quitted London for foreign countries. He had formerly attended Colet’s preaching at St. Paul’s,

and from the year 1515 he had known the word of God. He was one of the gentlest and most obliging men in England; he kept open house for the friends of learning and of the gospel, and his library contained the newest publications. In putting on Jesus Christ, Monmouth had particularly striven to put on his character; he helped generously with his purse both priests and men of letters; he gave forty pounds sterling to the chaplain of the bishop of London, the same to the king's, to the provincial of the Augustines, and to others besides. Latimer, who sometimes dined with him, once related in the pulpit an anecdote characteristic of the friends of the Reformation in England. Among the regular guests at Monmouth's table was one of his poorest neighbors, a zealous Romanist, to whom his generous host often used to lend money. One day when the pious merchant was extolling Scripture and blaming popery, his neighbor turned pale, rose from the table, and left the room. "I will never set foot in his house again," he said to his friends, "and I will never borrow another shilling of him." He next went to the bishop and laid an information against his benefactor. Monmouth forgave him,

and tried to bring him back; but the neighbor constantly turned out of his way. Once, however, they met in a street so narrow that he could not escape. “I will pass by without looking at him,” said the Romanist turning away his head. But Monmouth went straight to him, took him by the hand, and said affectionately: “Neighbor, what wrong have I done you?” and he continued to speak to him with so much love, that the poor man fell on his knees, burst into tears, and begged his forgiveness. Such was the spirit which, at the very outset, animated the work of the Reformation in England: it was acceptable to God, and found favor with the people.

Monmouth being edified by Tyndale’s sermons, inquired into his means of living. “I have none,” replied he, “but I hope to enter into the bishop’s service.” This was before his visit to Tonstall. When Tyndale saw all his hopes frustrated, he went to Monmouth and told him everything. “Come and live with me,” said the wealthy merchant, “and there labor.” God did to Tyndale according to his faith. Simple, frugal,

devoted to work, he studied night and day; and wishing to guard his mind against “being overcharged with surfeiting,” he refused the delicacies of his patron’s table, and would take nothing but sodden meat and small beer. It would even seem that he carried simplicity in dress almost too far. By his conversation and his works, he shed over the house of his patron the mild light of the Christian virtues, and Monmouth loved him more and more every day.

Tyndale was advancing in his work when John Fryth, the mathematician of King’s College, Cambridge, arrived in London. It is probable that Tyndale, feeling the want of an associate, had invited him. United like Luther and Melancthon, the two friends held many precious conversations together. “I will consecrate my life wholly to the church of Jesus Christ,” said Fryth. “To be a good man, you must give great part of yourself to your parents, a greater part to your country; but the greatest of all to the church of the Lord.” “The people should know the word of God,” they said both. “The interpretation of the gospel, without the

intervention of councils or popes, is sufficient to create a saving faith in the heart.” They shut themselves up in the little room in Monmouth’s house, and translated chapter after chapter from the Greek into plain English. The bishop of London knew nothing of the work going on a few yards from him, and everything was succeeding to Tyndale’s wishes when it was interrupted by an unforeseen circumstance.

Longland, the persecutor of the Lincolnshire Christians, did not confine his activity within the limits of his diocese; he besieged the king, the cardinal, and the queen with his cruel importunities, using Wolsey’s influence with Henry, and Henry’s with Wolsey. “His majesty,” he wrote to the cardinal, “shows in this holy dispute as much goodness as zeal.....yet, be pleased to urge him to overthrow God’s enemies.” And then turning to the king, the confessor said, to spur him on: “The cardinal is about to fulminate the greater excommunication against all who possess Luther’s works or hold his opinions, and to make the booksellers sign a bond before the

magistrates, not to sell heretical books." "Wonderful!" replied Henry with a sneer, "they will fear the magisterial bond, I think, more than the clerical excommunication." And yet the consequences of the "clerical" excommunication were to be very positive; whosoever persevered in his offense was to be pursued by the law ad ignem, even to the fire. At last the confessor applied to the queen: "We cannot be sure of restraining the press," he said to her. "These wretched books come to us from Germany, France, and the Low Countries; and are even printed in the very midst of us. Madam, we must train and prepare skillful men, such as are able to discuss the controverted points, so that the laity, struck on the one hand by well developed arguments, and frightened by the fear of punishment on the other, may be kept in obedience." In the bishop's system, "fire" was to be the complement of Roman learning. The essential idea of Jesuitism is already visible in this conception of Henry the Eighth's confessor. That system is the natural development of Romanism.

Tonstall, urged forward by Longland, and

desirous of showing himself as holy a churchman as he had once been a skillful statesman and elegant scholar — Tonstall, the friend of Erasmus, began to persecute. He would have feared to shed blood, like Longland; but there are measures which torture the mind and not the body, and which the most moderate men fear not to make use of. John Higgins, Henry Chambers, Thomas Eaglestone, a priest named Edmund Spilman, and some other Christians in London, used to meet and read portions of the Bible in English, and even asserted publicly that “Luther had more learning in his little finger than all the doctors in England.” The bishop ordered these rebels to be arrested: he flattered and alarmed them, threatening them with a cruel death (which he would hardly have inflicted on them), and by these skillful practices reduced them to silence.

Tyndale, who witnessed this persecution, feared lest the stake should interrupt his labor. If those who read a few fragments of Scripture are threatened with death, what will he not have to endure who is translating the whole? His friends

entreated him to withdraw from the bishop's pursuit. "Alas!" he exclaimed, "is there then no place where I can translate the Bible?.....It is not the bishop's house alone that is closed against me, but all England." He then made a great sacrifice. Since there is no place in his own country where he can translate the word of God, he will go and seek one among the nations of the continent. It is true the people are unknown to him; he is without resources; perhaps persecution and even death await him there.....It matters not! some time must elapse before it is known what he is doing, and perhaps he will have been able to translate the Bible. He turned his eyes towards Germany. "God does not destine us to a quiet life here below," he said. "If he calls us to peace on the part of Jesus Christ, he calls us to war on the part of the world." There lay at that moment in the river Thames a vessel loading for Hamburg. Monmouth gave Tyndale ten pounds sterling for his voyage, and other friends contributed a like amount. He left the half of this sum in the hands of his benefactor to provide for his future wants, and prepared to quit London, where he had spent a year. Rejected by his

fellowcountrymen, persecuted by the clergy, and carrying with him only his New Testament and his ten pounds, he went on board the ship, shaking off the dust of his feet, according to his Master's precept, and that dust fell back on the priests of England. He was indignant (says the chronicler) against those coarse monks, covetous priests, and pompous prelates, who were waging an impious war against God. "What a trade is that of the priests!" he said in one of his later writings; "they want money for 1777 everything: money for baptism, money for churchings, for weddings, for buryings, for images, brotherhoods, penances, soul-masses, bells, organs, chalices, copes, surplices, ewers, censers, and all manner of ornaments.

Poor sheep! The parson shears, the vicar shaves, the parish priest polls, the friar scrapes, the indulgence seller pares.....all that you want is a butcher to flay you and take away your skin. He will not leave you long. Why are your prelates dressed in red? Because they are ready to shed the blood of whomsoever seeketh the word of God. Scourge of states, devastators of kingdoms, the

priests take away not only Holy Scripture, but also prosperity and peace; but of their councils is no layman: reigning over all, they obey nobody; and making all concur to their own greatness, they conspire against every kingdom." No kingdom was to be more familiar than England with the conspiracies of the papacy of which Tyndale spoke; and yet none was to free itself more irrevocably from the power of Rome.

Yet Tyndale was leaving the shores of his native land, and as he turned his eyes towards the new countries, hope revived in his heart. He was going to be free, and he would use his liberty to deliver the word of God, so long held captive. "The priests," he said one day, "when they had slain Christ, set poleaxes to keep him in his sepulcher, that he should not rise again; even so have our priests buried the Testament of God, and all their study is to keep it down, that it rise not again. But the hour of the Lord is come, and nothing can hinder the word of God, as nothing could hinder Jesus Christ of old from issuing from the tomb." Indeed that poor man, then sailing towards

Germany, was to send back, even from the banks of the Elbe, the eternal gospel to his countrymen.

Chapter 9

Bilney at Cambridge

This ship did not bear away all the hopes of England. A society of Christians had been formed at Cambridge, of which Bilney was the center.

He now knew no other canon law than Scripture, and had found a new master, “the Holy Spirit of Christ,” says an historian. Although he was naturally timid, and often suffered from the exhaustion brought on by his fasts and vigils, there was in his language a life, liberty, and strength, strikingly in contrast with his sickly appearance. He desired to draw to the knowledge of God, all who came nigh him; and by degrees, the rays of the gospel sun, which was then rising in the firmament of Christendom, pierced the ancient windows of the colleges, and illuminated the solitary chambers of certain of the masters and fellows. Master Arthur, Master Thistle of Pembroke Hall, and master Stafford, were among the first to join Bilney. George Stafford, professor of divinity, was

a man of deep learning and holy life, clear and precise in his teaching. He was admired by every one in Cambridge, so that his conversion, like that of his friends, spread alarm among the partisans of the schoolmen. But a conversion still more striking than this was destined to give the English Reformation a champion more illustrious than either Stafford or Bilney.

There was in Cambridge, at that time, a priest notorious for his ardent fanaticism. In the processions, amidst the pomp, prayers, and chanting of the train, none could fail to notice a master-of-arts, about thirty years of age, who, with erect head, carried proudly the university cross. Hugh Latimer, for such was his name, combined a biting humor with an impetuous disposition and indefatigable zeal, and was very quick in ridiculing the faults of his adversaries. There was more wit and raillery in his fanaticism than can often be found in such characters. He followed the friends of the word of God into the colleges and houses where they used to meet, debated with them, and pressed them to abandon their faith. He was a

second Saul, and was soon to resemble the apostle of the Gentiles in another respect.

He first saw light in the year 1491, in the county of Leicester. Hugh’s father was an honest yeoman; and, accompanied by one of his six sisters, the little boy had often tended in the pastures the five score sheep belonging to the farm, or driven home to his mother the thirty cows it was her business to milk. In 1497, the Cornish rebels, under Lord Audley, having encamped at Blackheath, our farmer had donned his rusty armor, and, mounting his horse, responded to the summons of the crown. Hugh, then only six years old, was present at his departure, and as if he had wished to take his little part in the battle, he had buckled the straps of his father’s armor. Fifty-two years afterwards he recalled this circumstance to mind in a sermon preached before King Edward. His father’s house was always open to the neighbors; and no poor man ever turned away from the door without having received alms. The old man brought up his family in the love of men and in the fear of God, and having remarked with joy

the precocious understanding of his son, he had him educated in the country schools, and then sent to Cambridge at the age of fourteen. This was in 1505, just as Luther was entering the Augustine convent.

The son of the Leicestershire yeoman was lively, fond of pleasure, and of cheerful conversation, and mingled frequently in the amusements of his fellow-students. One day, as they were dining together, one of the party exclaimed: Nil melius quam laetari et facere bene! — “There is nothing better than to be merry and to do well.” — “A vengeance on that bene!” replied a monk of impudent mien; “I wish it were beyond the sea; it mars all the rest.” Young Latimer was much surprised at the remark: “I understand it now,” said he; “that will be a heavy bene to these monks when they have to render God an account of their lives.” Latimer having become more serious, threw himself heart and soul into the practices of superstition, and a very bigoted old cousin undertook to instruct him in them. One day, when one of their relations lay dead, she said to him:

“Now we must drive out the devil. Take this holy taper, my child, and pass it over the body, first longways and then athwart, so as always to make the sign of the cross.” But the scholar performing this exorcism very awkwardly, his aged cousin snatched the candle from his hand, exclaiming angrily: “It’s a great pity your father spends so much money on your studies: he will never make anything of you.” This prophecy was not fulfilled. He became Fellow of Clare Hall in 1509, and took his master’s degree in. His classical studies being ended, he began to study divinity. Duns Scotus, Aquinas, and Hugo de Sancto Victore were his favorite authors. The practical side of things, however, engaged him more than the speculative; and he was more distinguished in Cambridge for his asceticism and enthusiasm than for his learning. He attached importance to the merest trifles. As the missal directs that water should be mingled with the sacramental wine, often while saying mass he would be troubled in his conscience for fear he had not put sufficient water. This remorse never left him a moment’s tranquillity during the service. In him, as in many others, attachment to puerile

ordinances occupied in his heart the place of faith in the great truths. With him, the cause of the church was the cause of God, and he respected Thomas A.

Becket at least as much as St. Paul. “I was then,” said he, “as obstinate a papist as any in England.” Luther said the same thing of himself.

The fervent Latimer soon observed that everybody around him was not equally zealous with himself for the ceremonies of the church. He watched with surprise certain young members of the university who, forsaking the doctors of the School, met daily to read and search into the Holy Scriptures. People sneered at them in Cambridge: “It is only the sophists,” was the cry; but raillery was not enough for Latimer. One day he entered the room where these sophists were assembled, and begged them to cease studying the Bible. All his entreaties were useless. Can we be astonished at it? said Latimer to himself. Don’t we see even the tutors setting an example to these stray sheep? There is Master Stafford, the most illustrious

professor in English universities, devoting his time ad Biblia, like Luther at Wittenberg, and explaining the Scriptures according to the Hebrew and Greek texts! and the delighted students celebrate in bad verse the doctor, Qui Paulum explicuit rite et evangelium. That young people should occupy themselves with these new doctrines was conceivable, but that a doctor of divinity should do so — what a disgrace! Latimer therefore determined to attack Stafford. He insulted him; he entreated the youth of Cambridge to abandon the professor and his heretical teaching; he attended the hall in which the doctor taught, made signs of impatience during the lesson, and cavilled at it after leaving the school. He even preached in public against the learned doctor. But it seemed to him that Cambridge and England were struck blind: true, the clergy approved of Latimer's proceedings — nay, praised them; and yet they did nothing. To console him, however, he was named cross-bearer to the university, and we have already seen him discharging this duty.

Latimer desired to show himself worthy of such

an honor. He had left the students to attack Stafford; and he now left Stafford for a more illustrious adversary. But this attack led him to some one that was stronger than he.

At the occasion of receiving the degree of bachelor of divinity he had to deliver a Latin discourse in the presence of the university; Latimer chose for his subject Philip Melancthon and his doctrines. Had not this daring heretic presumed to say quite recently that the fathers of the church have altered the sense of Scripture? Had he not asserted that, like those rocks whose various colors are imparted to the polypus which clings to them, so the doctors of the church give each their own opinion in the passages they explain? And, finally, had he not discovered a new touchstone (it is thus he styles the Holy Scripture) by which we must test the sentences even of St. Thomas?

Latimer’s discourse made a great impression. At last (said his hearers) England, nay Cambridge, will furnish a champion for the church that will confront the Wittenberg doctors, and save the

vessel of our Lord. But very different was to be the result. There was among the hearers one man almost hidden through his small stature: it was Bilney. For some time he had been watching Latimer's movements, and his zeal interested him, though it was a zeal without knowledge. His energy was not great, but he possessed a delicate tact, a skillful discernment of character which enabled him to distinguish error, and to select the fittest method for combating it.

Accordingly, a chronicler styles him "a trier of Satan's subtleties, appointed by God to detect the bad money that the enemy was circulating throughout the church." Bilney easily detected Latimer's sophism, but at the same time loved his person, and conceived the design of winning him to the gospel. But how to manage it? The prejudiced Latimer would not even listen to the evangelical Bilney. The latter reflected, prayed, and at last planned a very candid and very strange plot, which led to one of the most astonishing conversions recorded in history.

He went to the college where Latimer resided. “For the love of God,” he said to him, “be pleased to hear my confession.” The heretic prayed to make confession to the catholic: what a singular fact! My discourse against Melancthon has no doubt converted him, said Latimer to himself. Had not Bilney once been among the number of the most pious zealots? His pale face, his wasted frame, and his humble look are clear signs that he ought to belong to the ascetics of catholicism. If he turns back, all will turn back with him, and the reaction will be complete at Cambridge. The ardent Latimer eagerly yielded to Bilney’s request, and the latter, kneeling before the cross-bearer, related to him with touching simplicity the anguish he had once felt in his soul, the efforts he had made to remove it, their unprofitableness so long as he determined to follow the precepts of the church, and, lastly, the peace he had felt when he believed that Jesus Christ is the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world. He described to Latimer the spirit of adoption he had received, and the happiness he experienced in being able now to call God his father.....Latimer, who expected to receive a

confession, listened without mistrust. His heart was opened, and the voice of the pious Bilney penetrated it without obstacle. From time to time the confessor would have chased away the new thoughts which came crowding into his bosom; but the penitent continued. His language, at once so simple and so lively, entered like a two-edged sword. Bilney was not without assistance in his work. A new, a strange witness, — the Holy Ghost, — was speaking in Latimer's soul. He learned from God to know God: he received a new heart. At length grace prevailed: the penitent rose up, but Latimer remained seated, absorbed in thought. The strong cross-bearer contended in vain against the words of the feeble Bilney. Like Saul on the way to Damascus, he was conquered, and his conversion, like the apostle's, was instantaneous. He stammered out a few words; Bilney drew near him with love, and God scattered the darkness which still obscured his mind. He saw Jesus Christ as the only Savior given to man: he contemplated and adored him. "I learned more by this confession," he said afterwards, "than by much reading and in many years before .....I now tasted the word of

God, and forsook the doctors of the school and all their fooleries." It was not the penitent but the confessor who received absolution.

Latimer viewed with horror the obstinate war he had waged against God; he wept bitterly; but Bilney consoled him. "Brother," said he, "though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow." These two young men, then locked in their solitary chamber at Cambridge, were one day to mount the scaffold for that divine Master whose spirit was teaching them.

But one of them before going to the stake was first to sit on an episcopal throne.

Latimer was changed. The energy of his character was tempered by a divine unction. Becoming a believer, he had ceased to be superstitious.

Instead of persecuting Jesus Christ, he became a zealous seeker after him.

Instead of cavilling and railing, he showed himself meek and gentle; instead of frequenting company, he sought solitude, studying the Scriptures and advancing in true theology. He threw off the old man and put on the new. He waited upon Stafford, begged forgiveness for the insult he had offered him, and then regularly attended his lectures, being subjugated more by this doctor's angelic conversation than by his learning. But it was Bilney's society Latimer cultivated most. They conversed together daily, took frequent walks together into the country, and occasionally rested at a place, long known as "the heretic's hill." So striking a conversion gave fresh vigor to the evangelical movement.

Hitherto Bilney and Latimer had been the most zealous champions of the two opposite causes; the one despised, the other honored; the weak man had conquered the strong. This action of the Spirit of God was not thrown away upon Cambridge. Latimer's conversion, as of old the miracles of the apostles, struck men's minds; and was it not in truth a miracle? All the youth of the university ran

to hear Bilney preach. He proclaimed “Jesus Christ as He who, having tasted death, has delivered his people from the penalty of sin.” While the doctors of the school (even the most pious of them) laid most stress upon man’s part in the work of redemption, Bilney on the contrary emphasized the other term, namely, God’s part.

This doctrine of grace, said his adversaries, annuls the sacraments, and contradicts baptismal regeneration. The selfishness which forms the essence of fallen humanity rejected the evangelical doctrine, and felt that to accept it was to be lost. “Many listened with the left ear,” to use an expression of Bilney’s; “like Malchus, having their right ear cut off;” and they filled the university with their complaints.

But Bilney did not allow himself to be stopped. The idea of eternity had seized on his mind, and perhaps he still retained some feeble relic of the exaggerations of asceticism. He condemned every kind of recreation, even when innocent. Music in the churches seemed to him a mockery of God; and

when Thurlby, who was afterwards a bishop, and who lived at Cambridge in the room below his, used to begin playing on the recorder, Bilney would fall on his knees and pour out his soul in prayer: to him prayer was the sweetest melody. He prayed that the lively faith of the children of God might in all England be substituted for the vanity and pride of the priests. He believed — -he prayed — he waited His waiting was not to be in vain.

Latimer trod in his footsteps: the transformation of his soul was going on; and the more fanaticism he had shown for the sacerdotal system, which places salvation in the hands of the priests, the more zeal he now showed for the evangelical system, which placed it in the hands of Christ. He saw that if the churches must needs have ministers, it is not because they require a human mediation, but from the necessity of a regular preaching of the gospel and a steady direction of the flock; and accordingly he would have wished to call the servant of the Lord minister (Huperetes or diachons Tou Logou), and not priest (Hiereus or sacerdos). In his view, it was not the imposition of

hands by the bishop that gave grace, but grace which authorized the imposition of hands. He considered activity to be one of the essential features of the gospel ministry. “Would you know,” said he, “why the Lord chose fishermen to be his apostles?.....See how they watch day and night at their nets to take all such fishes that they can get and come in their way.....So all our bishops, and curates, and vicars should be as painful in casting their nets, that is to say, in preaching God’s word.” He regarded all confidence in human strength as a remnant of paganism. “Let us not do,” he said, “as the haughty Ajax, who said to his father as he went to battle: Without the help of God I am able to fight, and I will get the victory with mine own strength.” The Reformation had gained in Latimer a very different man from Bilney.

He had not so much discernment and prudence, perhaps, but he had more energy and eloquence. What Tyndale was to be for England by his writings, Latimer was to be by his discourses. The tenderness of his conscience, the warmth of his

zeal, and the vivacity of his understanding, were enlisted in the service of Jesus Christ; and if at times he was carried too far by the liveliness of his wit, it only shows that the reformers were not saints, but sanctified men. “He was one of the first,” says an historian, “who, in the days of King Henry VIII, set himself to preach the gospel in the truth and simplicity of it.” He preached in Latin ad clerum, and in English ad populum. He boldly placed the law with its curses before his hearers, and then conjured them to flee towards the Savior of the world.

The same zeal which he had employed in saying mass, he now employed in preaching the true sacrifice of Christ. He said one day: — “If one man had committed all the sins since Adam, you may be sure he should be punished with the same horror of death, in such a sort as all men in the world should have suffered.....Such was the pain Christ endured.....If our Savior had committed all the sins of the world; all that I for my part have done, all that you for your part have done, and that any man else hath done; if he had done all this

himself, his agony that he suffered should have been no greater or grievouser than it was.....Believe in Jesus Christ, and you shall overcome death.....But, alas!" said he at another time, "the devil, by the help of that Italian bishop, his chaplain, has labored by all means that he might frustrate the death of Christ and the merits of his passion." Thus began in British Christendom the preaching of the Cross. The Reformation was not the substitution of the catholicism of the first ages for the popery of the middle ages: it was a revival of the preaching of St.

Paul, and thus it was that on hearing Latimer every one exclaimed with rapture: "Of a Saul, God has made him a very Paul." To the inward power of faith the Cambridge evangelists added the outward power of the life. Saul become Paul, the strong, the ardent Latimer, had need of action; and Bilney, the weak and humble Bilney, in delicate health, observing a severe diet, taking ordinarily but one meal a-day, and never sleeping more than four hours, absorbed in prayer and in the study of the word, displayed at that time all the energy of

charity. These two friends devoted themselves not merely to the easy labors of Christian beneficence; but, caring little for that formal Christianity so often met with among the easy classes, they explored the gloomy cells of the madhouse to bear the sweet and subtle voice of the gospel to the infuriate maniacs. They visited the miserable lazar-house without the town, in which several poor lepers were dwelling; they carefully tended them, wrapped them in clean sheets, and wooed them to be converted to Christ. The gates of the jail at Cambridge were opened to them, and they announced to the poor prisoners that word which giveth liberty. Some were converted by it, and longed for the day of their execution. Latimer, afterwards bishop of Worcester, was one of the most beautiful types of the Reformation in England.

He was opposed by numerous adversaries. In the front rank were the priests, who spared no endeavors to retain souls. “Beware,” said Latimer to the new converts, “lest robbers overtake you, and plunge you into the pope’s prison of

purgatory.” After these came the sons and favorites of the aristocracy, worldly and frivolous students, who felt little disposition to listen to the gospel. “By yeomen’s sons the faith of Christ is and hath been chiefly maintained in the church,” said Latimer. “Is this realm taught by rich men’s sons? No, no; read the chronicles; ye shall find sometime noblemen’s sons which have been unpreaching bishops and prelates, but ye shall find none of them learned men.” He would have desired a mode of election which placed in the Christian pulpit, not the richest and most fashionable men, but the ablest and most pious. This important reform was reserved for other days. Lastly, the evangelists of Cambridge came into collision with the brutality of many, to use Latimer’s own expression. “What need have we of universities and schools?” said the students of this class. The Holy Ghost “will give us always what to say.” — “We must trust in the Holy Ghost,” replied Latimer, “but not presume on it. If you will not maintain universities, you shall have a brutality.” In this manner the Reformation restored to Cambridge gravity and knowledge, along with truth and charity.

Yet Bilney and Latimer often turned their eyes towards Oxford, and wondered how the light would be able to penetrate there. Wolsey provided for that. A Cambridge master-of-arts, John Clark, a conscientious man, of tender heart, great prudence, and unbounded devotion to his duty, had been enlightened by the word of God. Wolsey, who since 1523 had been seeking everywhere for distinguished scholars to adorn his new college, invited Clark among the first. This doctor, desirous of bearing to Oxford the light which God had given Cambridge, immediately began to deliver a course of divinity lectures, to hold conferences, and to preach in his eloquent manner. He taught every day. Among the graduates and students who followed him was Anthony Dalaber, a young man of simple but profound feeling, who while listening to him had experienced in his heart the regenerating power of the gospel. Overflowing with the happiness which the knowledge of Jesus Christ imparted to him, he went to the cardinal's college, knocked at Clark's door, and said: "Father, allow me never to quit you more!" The teacher,

beholding the young disciple’s enthusiasm, loved him, but thought it his duty to try him: “Anthony,” said he, “you know not what you ask. My teaching is now pleasant to you, but the time will come when God will lay the cross of persecution on you; you will be dragged before bishops; your name will be covered with shame in the world, and all who love you will be heartbroken on account of you.....Then, my friend, you will regret that you ever knew me.” Anthony believing himself rejected, and unable to bear the idea of returning to the barren instructions of the priests, fell on his knees, and weeping bitterly, exclaimed: “For the tender mercy of God, turn me not away!” Touched by his sorrow, Clark folded him in his arms, kissed him, and with tears in his eyes exclaimed: “The Lord give thee what thou askest!.....Take me for thy father, I take thee for my son.” From that hour Anthony, all joy, was like Timothy at the feet of Paul. He united a quick understanding with tender affections. When any of the students had not attended Clark’s conferences, the master commissioned his disciple to visit them, to inquire into their doubts, and to impart to them his

instructions. “This exercise did me much good,” said Dalaber, “and I made great progress in the knowledge of Scripture.” Thus the kingdom of God, which consists not in forms, but in the power of the Spirit, was set up in Cambridge and Oxford.

The alarmed schoolmen, beholding their most pious scholars escaping one after another from their teaching, called the bishops to their aid, and the latter determined to send agents to Cambridge, the focus of the heresy, to apprehend the leaders. This took place in 1523 or the beginning of 1524.

The episcopal officers had arrived, and were proceeding to business. The most timid began to feel alarm, but Latimer was full of courage; when suddenly the agents of the clergy were forbidden to go on, and this prohibition, strange to say, originated with Wolsey; “upon what ground I cannot imagine,” says Burnet. Certain events were taking place at Rome of a nature to exercise great influence over the priestly councils, and which may perhaps explain what Burnet could not understand.

Chapter 10

Wolsey seeks the Tiara

Adrian VI died on the 14th September 1523, before the end of the second year of his pontificate. Wolsey thought himself pope. At length he would no longer be the favorite only, but the arbiter of the kings of the earth; and his genius, for which England was too narrow, would have Europe and the world for its stage. Already revolving gigantic projects in his mind, the future pope dreamed of the destruction of heresy in the west, and in the east the cessation of the Greek schism, and new crusades to replant the cross on the walls of Constantinople. There is nothing that Wolsey would not have dared undertake when once seated on the throne of catholicism, and the pontificates of Gregory VII and Innocent III would have been eclipsed by that of the Ipswich butcher’s son. The cardinal reminded Henry of his promise, and the very next day the king signed a letter addressed to Charles the Fifth.

Believing himself sure of the emperor, Wolsey turned all his exertions to the side of Rome. “The legate of England,” said Henry’s ambassadors to the cardinals, “is the very man for the present time. He is the only one thoroughly acquainted with the interests and wants of Christendom, and strong enough to provide for them. He is all kindness, and will share his dignities and wealth among all the prelates who support him.” But Julio de’ Medici himself aspired to the papacy, and as eighteen cardinals were devoted to him, the election could not take place without his support. “Rather than yield,” said he in the conclave, “I would die in this prison.” A month passed away, and nothing was done. New intrigues were then resorted to: there were cabals for Wolsey, cabals for Medici.

The cardinals were besieged: Into their midst, by many a secret path, Creeps sly intrigue. At length, on the 19th November 1523, the people collected under their windows, shouting: “No foreign pope.” After forty-nine days’ debating, Julio was elected, and according to his own expression, “bent his head beneath the yoke of

apostolic servitude.” He took the name of Clement VII.

Wolsey was exasperated. It was in vain that he presented himself before St. Peter’s chair at each vacancy: a more active or more fortunate rival always reached it before him. Master of England, and the most influential of European diplomatists, he saw men preferred to him who were his inferiors. This election was an event for the Reformation. Wolsey as pope would, humanly speaking, have tightened the cords which already bound England so closely to Rome; but Wolsey, rejected, could hardly fail to throw himself into tortuous paths which would perhaps contribute to the emancipation of the Church. He became more crafty than ever; declared to Henry that the new election was quite in conformity with his wishes, and hastened to congratulate the new pope. He wrote to his agents at Rome: “This election, I assure you, is as much to the king’s and my rejoicing, consolation, and gladness, as possibly may be devised or imagined.....Ye shall show unto his holiness what joy, comfort, and gladness it is

both to the king’s highness and me to perceive that once in our lives it hath pleased God of his great goodness to provide such a pastor unto his church, as his grace and I have long inwardly desired; who for his virtue, wisdom, and other high and notable qualities, we have always reputed the most able and worthy person to be called to that dignity.” But the pope, divining his competitor’s vexation, sent the king a golden rose, and a ring to Wolsey. “I am sorry,” he said as he drew it from his finger, “that I cannot present it to his eminence in person.” Clement moreover conferred on him the quality of legate for life — an office which had hitherto been temporary only. Thus the popedom and England embraced each other, and nothing appeared more distant than that Christian revolution which was destined very shortly to emancipate Britain from the tutelage of the Vatican.

Wolsey’s disappointed ambition made him suspend the proceedings of the clergy at Cambridge. He had revenge in his heart, and cared not to persecute his fellow-countrymen merely to please his rival; and besides, like several popes, he

had a certain fondness for learning. To send a few Lollards to prison was a matter of no difficulty; but learned doctors.....this required a closer examination. Hence he gave Rome a sign of independence.

And yet it was not specially against the pope that he began to entertain sinister designs: Clement had been more fortunate than himself; but that was no reason why he should be angry with him.....Charles V was the offender, and Wolsey swore a deadly hatred against him. Resolved to strike, he sought only the place where he could inflict the severest blow.

To obtain his end, he resolved to dissemble his passion, and to distil drop by drop into Henry’s mind that mortal hatred against Charles, which gave fresh energy to his activity.

Charles discovered the indignation that lay hid under Wolsey’s apparent mildness, and wishing to retain Henry’s alliance, he made more pressing advances to the king. Having deprived the minister

of a tiara, he resolved to offer the king a crown: this was, indeed, a noble compensation! “You are king of France,” the emperor said, “and I undertake to win your kingdom for you. Only send an ambassador to Italy to negotiate the matter.” Wolsey, who could hardly contain his vexation, was forced to comply, in appearance at least, with the emperor’s views. The king, indeed, seemed to think of nothing but his arrival at St. Germain’s, and commissioned Pace to visit Italy for this important business. Wolsey hoped that he would be unable to execute his commission; it was impossible to cross the Alps, for the French troops blockaded every passage. But Pace, who was one of those adventurous characters whom nothing can stop, spurred on by the thought that the king himself had sent him, determined to cross the Col di Tenda. On the 27th July, he entered the mountains, traversed precipitous passes, sometimes climbing them on all-fours, and often falling during the descent. In some places he could ride on horseback; “but in the most part thereof I durst not either turn my horse traverse (he wrote to the king) for all the worldly riches, nor in manner look on

my left hand, for the pronite and deepness to the valley.” After this passage, which lasted six days, Pace arrived in Italy worn out by fatigue. “If the king of England will enter France immediately by way of Normandy,” said the constable of Bourbon to him, “I will give him leave to pluck out both my eyes if he is not master of Paris before All-Saints; and when Paris is taken, he will be master of the whole kingdom.” But Wolsey, to whom these remarks were transmitted by the ambassador, slighted them, delayed furnishing the subsidies, and required certain conditions which were calculated to thwart the project. Pace, who was ardent and ever imprudent, but plain and straightforward, forgot himself, and in a moment of vexation wrote to Wolsey: “To speak frankly, if you do not attend to these things, I shall impute to your grace the loss of the crown of France.” These words ruined Henry’s envoy in the cardinal’s mind. Was this man, who owed everything to him, trying to supplant him?.....Pace in vain assured Wolsey that he should not take seriously what he had said; but the bolt had hit. Pace was associated with Charles in the cruel enmity of the minister, and he

was one day to feel its terrible effects. It was not long before Wolsey was able to satisfy himself that the service Charles had desired to render the king of England was beyond the emperor’s strength.

No sooner at ease on one side, than Wolsey found himself attacked on another. This man, the most powerful among king’s favorites, felt at this time the first breath of disfavor blow over him. On the pontifical throne, he would no doubt have attempted a reform after the manner of Sixtus V; and wishing to rehearse on a smaller stage, and regenerate after his own fashion the catholic church in England, he submitted the monasteries to a strict inquisition, patronized the instruction of youth, and was the first to set a great example, by suppressing certain religious houses, whose revenues he applied to his college in Oxford. Thomas Cromwell, his solicitor, displayed much skill and industry in this business, and thus, under the orders of a cardinal of the Roman church, made his first campaign in a war of which he was in later days to hold the chief command. Wolsey and Cromwell, by their reforms, drew down the hatred of certain monks, priests,

and noblemen, always the very humble servants of the clerical party. The latter accused the cardinal of not having estimated the monasteries at their just value, and having, in certain cases, encroached on the royal jurisdiction. Henry, whom the loss of the crown of France had put in a bad humor, resolved, for the first time, not to spare his minister: “There are loud murmurs throughout this kingdom,” he said to him; “it is asserted that your new college at Oxford is only a convenient cloak to hide you malversations.” “God forbid,” replied the cardinal, “that this virtuous foundation at Oxford, undertaken for the good of my poor soul, 1793 should be raised ex rapinis! But, above all, God forbid that I should ever encroach upon your royal authority.” He then cunningly insinuated, that by his will he left all his property to the king. Henry was satisfied: he had a share in the business.

Events of very different importance drew the king’s attention to another quarter. The two armies, of the empire and of France, were in presence before Pavia. Wolsey, who openly gave his right hand to Charles V, and secretly his left to Francis,

repeated to his master: “If the emperor gains the victory, are you not his ally? and if Francis, am I not in secret communication with him?” “Thus,” added the cardinal, “whatever happens, your Highness will have great cause to give thanks to Almighty God.” On the 24th of February 1525, the battle of Pavia was fought, and the imperialists found in the French king’s tent several of Wolsey’s letters, and in his military chest and in the pockets of his soldiers the cardinal’s corrupting gold. This alliance had been contrived by Giovanni Gioacchino, a Genoese master of the household to Louisa, regent of France, who passed for a merchant of Bologna, and lived in concealment at Blackfriars.

Charles now saw what he had to trust to; but the news of the battle of Pavia had scarcely reached England, when faithful in perfidy, Wolsey gave utterance to a feigned pleasure. The people rejoiced also, but they were in earnest. Bonfires were lighted in the streets of London; the fountains ran wine, and the lord-mayor, attended by the aldermen, passed through the city on horseback to

the sound of the trumpet.

The cardinal’s joy was not altogether false. He would have been pleased at his enemy’s defeat; but his victory was perhaps still more useful to him.

He said to Henry: “The emperor is a liar, observing neither faith nor promise: the Archduchess Margaret is a woman of evil life; Don Ferdinand is a child, and Bourbon a traitor. Sire, you have other things to do with your money than to squander it on these four individuals. Charles is aiming at universal monarchy; Pavia is the first step of this throne, and if England does to oppose him, he will attain it.” Joachim having come privily to London, Wolsey prevailed upon Henry to conclude between England and France an “indissoluble peace by land and sea.” At last then he was in a position to prove to Charles that it is a dangerous thing to oppose the ambition of a priest.

This was not the only advantage Wolsey derived from the triumph of his enemy. The citizens of London imagined that the king of

England would be in a few weeks in Paris; Wolsey, rancorous and grasping, determined to make them pay dearly for their enthusiasm. “You desire to conquer France,” said he; “you are right. Give me then for that purpose the sixth part of your property; that is a trifle to gratify so noble an inclination.” England did not think so; this illegal demand aroused universal complaint.

“We are English and not French, freemen and not slaves,” was the universal cry. Henry might tyrannize over his court, but not lay hands on his subjects’ property.

The eastern counties rose in insurrection: four thousand men were under arms in a moment; and Henry was guarded in his own palace by only a few servants. It was necessary to break down the bridges to stop the insurgents. The courtiers complained to the king; the king threw the blame on the cardinal; the cardinal laid it on the clergy, who had encouraged him to impose this tax by quoting to him the example of Joseph demanding of the Egyptians the fifth part of their goods; and

the clergy in their turn ascribed the insurrection to the gospellers, who (said they) were stirring up a peasant war in England, as they had done in Germany. Reformation produces revolution: this is the favorite text of the followers of the pope.

Violent hands must be laid upon the heretics. Non pluit Deus, duc ad christianos. The charge of the priests was absurd; but the people are blind whenever the gospel is concerned, and occasionally the governors are blind also.

Serious reasoning was not necessary to confute this invention. “Here, by the way, I will tell you a merry toy,” said Latimer one day in the pulpit.

“Master More was once sent in commission into Kent to help to try out, if it might be, what was the cause of Goodwin Sands and the shelf that stopped up Sandwich haven. He calleth the country afore him, such as were thought to be men of experience, and among others came in an old man with a white head, and one that was thought to be little less than one hundred years old. So Master

More called the old aged man unto him, and said: Father, tell me, if you can, what is the cause of this great arising of 1795 the sands and shelves hereabout, that stop up Sandwich haven? Forsooth, Sir, (quoth he) I am an old man, for I am well-nigh an hundred, and I think that Tenterden steeple is the cause of the Goodwin Sands. For I am an old man, Sir, and I may remember the building of Tenterden steeple, and before that steeple was in building, there was no manner of flats or sands." After relating this anecdote, Latimer slyly added: "Even so, to my purpose, is preaching of God's word the cause of rebellion, as Tenterden steeple was the cause Sandwich haven is decayed." There was no persecution: there was something else to be done. Wolsey, feeling certain that Charles had obstructed his accession to the popedom, thought only in what manner he might take his revenge. But during this time Tyndale also was pursuing his aim; and the year 1525, memorable for the battle of Pavia, was destined to be no less so in the British isles, by a still more important victory.

Chapter 11

Tyndale at Hamburg

The ship which carried Tyndale and his M.S.S. cast anchor at Hamburg, where, since the year 1521, the gospel had counted numerous friends.

Encouraged by the presence of his brethren, the Oxford fellow had taken a quiet lodging in one of the narrow winding streets of that old city, and had immediately resumed his task. A secretary, whom he terms his “faithful companion,” aided him in collating texts; but it was not long before this brother, whose name is unknown to us, thinking himself called to preach Christ in places where He had as yet never been proclaimed, left Tyndale. A former friar-observant of the Franciscan order at Greenwich, having abandoned the cloister, and being at this time without resources, offered his services to the Hellenist. William Roye was one of those men (and they are always pretty numerous) whom impatience of the yoke alienates from Rome without their being attracted by the Spirit of God to

Christ. Acute, insinuating, crafty, and yet of pleasing manners, he charmed all those who had mere casual relations with him. Tyndale, banished to the distant shores of the Elbe, surrounded by strange customs, and hearing only a foreign tongue, often thought of England, and was impatient that his country should enjoy the result of his labors: he accepted Roye's aid. The Gospels of Matthew and Mark, translated and printed at Hamburg, became, it would seem, the first fruits to England of his great task.

But Tyndale was soon overwhelmed by annoyances. Roye, who was pretty manageable while he had no money, had become intractable now that his purse was less empty. What was to be done? The reformer having spent the ten pounds he had brought from England, could not satisfy the demands of his assistant, pay his own debts, and remove to another city. He became still more sparing and economical. The Wartburg, in which Luther had translated the new Testament, was a palace in comparison with the lodging in which the reformer of wealthy England endured hunger and

cold, while toiling day and night to give the gospel to the English Christians.

About the end of 1524, Tyndale sent the two Gospels to Monmouth; and a merchant named John Collenbeke, having brought him the ten pounds he had left in the hands of his old patron, he prepared to depart immediately.

Where should he go? Not to England; he must complete his task before all things. Could he be in Luther's neighborhood and not desire to see him? He needed not the Saxon reformer either to find the truth, which he had already known at Oxford, or to undertake the translation of the Scriptures, which he had already begun in the vale of the Severn. But did not all evangelical foreigners flock to Wittenberg? To remove all doubt as to the interview of the reformers, it would be desirable perhaps to find some trace at Wittenberg, either in the university registers or in the writings of the Saxon reformers. Yet several contemporaneous testimonies seem to give a sufficient degree of probability to this conference. Foxe tells us: "He

had an interview with Luther and other learned men of that country." This must have been in the spring of 1525.

Tyndale, desirous of drawing nearer to his native country, turned his eyes towards the Rhine. There were at Cologne some celebrated printers well known in England, and among others Quentel and the Byrckmans. Francis Byrckman had warehouses in St. Paul's churchyard in London, — a circumstance that might facilitate the introduction and sale of the Testament printed on the banks of the Rhine. This providential circumstance decided Tyndale in favor of Cologne, and thither he repaired with Roye and his M.S.S. Arrived in the gloomy streets of the city of Agrippina, he contemplated its innumerable churches, and above all its ancient cathedral re-echoing to the voices of its canons, and was oppressed with sorrow as he beheld the priests and monks and mendicants and pilgrims who, from all parts of Europe, poured in to adore the pretended relics of the three wise men and of the eleven thousand virgins. And then Tyndale asked himself whether it was really in this

superstitious city that the New Testament was to be printed in English. This was not all. The reform movement then at work in Germany had broken out at Cologne during the feast of Whitsuntide, and the archbishop had just forbidden all evangelical worship. Yet Tyndale persevered, and submitting to the most minute precautions, not to compromise his work, he took an obscure lodging where he kept himself closely hidden.

Soon however, trusting in God, he called on the printer, presented his manuscripts to him, ordered six thousand copies, and then, upon reflection, sank down to three thousand for fear of a seizure. The printing went on; one sheet followed another; gradually the gospel unfolded its mysteries in the English tongue, and Tyndale could not contain himself for very joy. He saw in his mind's eye the triumphs of the Scriptures over all the kingdom, and exclaimed with transport: "Whether the king wills it or not, erelong all the people of England, enlightened by the New Testament, will obey the gospel." But on a sudden that sun whose earliest beams he had hailed with songs of joy, was hidden

by thick clouds. One day, just as the tenth sheet had been thrown off, the printer hastened to Tyndale, and informed him that the senate of Cologne forbade him to continue the work. Everything was discovered then. No doubt Henry VIII, who has burnt Luther's books, wishes to burn the New Testament also, to destroy Tyndale's manuscripts, and deliver him up to death. Who had betrayed him? He was lost in unavailing conjectures, and one thing only appeared certain: alas! his vessel, which was moving onwards in full sail, had struck upon a reef! The following is the explanation of this unexpected incident.

A man whom we have often met with in the course of this history, one of the most violent enemies of the Reformation — we mean Cochlaeus — had arrived in Cologne. The wave of popular agitation which had stirred this city during the Whitsuntide holidays, had previously swept over Frankfort during the festival of Easter; and the dean of Notre-Dame, taking advantage of a moment when the gates of the city were open, had escaped a few minutes before the burghers entered

his house to arrest him. On arriving at Cologne, where he hoped to live unknown under the shadow of the powerful elector, he had gone to lodge with George Lauer, a canon in the church of the Apostles.

By a singular destiny the two most opposite men, Tyndale and Cochlaeus, were in hiding in the same city; they could not long remain there without coming into collision.

On the right bank of the Rhine, and opposite Cologne, stood the monastery of Deutz, one of whose abbots, Rupert, who lived in the twelfth century, had said: “To be ignorant of Scripture is to be ignorant of Jesus Christ. This is the scripture of nations! This book of God, which is not pompous in words and poor in meaning like Plato, ought to be set before every people, and to proclaim aloud to the whole world the salvation of all.” One day, when Cochlaeus and his host were talking of Rupert, the canon informed the dean that the heretic Osiander of Nuremberg was in treaty with the abbot of Deutz about publishing the writings of

this ancient doctor. Cochlaeus guessed that Osiander was desirous of bringing forward the contemporary of St. Bernard as a witness in defense of the Reformation. Hastening to the monastery he alarmed the abbot: “Intrust to me the manuscripts of your celebrated predecessor,” he said; “I will undertake to print them and prove that he was one of us.” The monks placed them in his hands, stipulating for an early publication, from which they expected no little renown. Cochlaeus immediately went to Peter Quentel and Arnold Byrckman to make the necessary arrangements.

They were Tyndale’s printers.

There Cochlaeus made a more important discovery than that of Rupert’s manuscripts. Byrckman and Quentel having invited him one day to meet several of their colleagues at dinner, a printer, somewhat elevated by wine, declared in his cups (to borrow the words of Cochlaeus): “Whether the king and the cardinal of York wish it or not, all England will soon be Lutheran.” Cochlaeus listened and grew alarmed; he made

inquiry, and was informed that two Englishmen, learned men and skilled in the languages, were concealed at Cologne. But all his efforts to discover more proved unavailing.

There was no more repose for the dean of Frankfort; his imagination fermented, his mind became alarmed. “What,” said he, “shall England, that faithful servant of the popedom, be perverted like Germany? Shall the English, the most religious people of Christendom, and whose king once ennobled himself by writing against Luther, — shall they be invaded by heresy?.....Shall the mighty cardinal-legate of York be compelled to flee from his palace, as I was from Frankfort?” Cochlaeus continued his search; he paid frequent visits to the printers, spoke to them in a friendly tone, flattered them, invited them to visit him at the canon’s; but as yet he dared not hazard the important question; it was sufficient for the moment to have won the good graces of the depositaries of the secret. He soon took a new step; he was careful not to question them before one another; but he procured a private interview with

one of them, and supplied him plentifully with Rhine wine: — he himself is our informant. Artful questions embarrassed the unwary printer, and at last the secret was disclosed. “The New Testament,” Cochlaeus learnt, “is translated into English; three thousand copies are in the press; fourscore pages in quarto are ready; the expense is fully supplied by English merchants, who are secretly to convey the work when printed, and to disperse it widely through all England, before the king or the cardinal can discover or prohibit it. ....Thus will Britain be converted to the opinions of Luther.” The surprise of Cochlaeus equalled his alarm; he dissembled; he wished to learn, however, where the two Englishmen lay concealed; but all his exertions proved ineffectual, and he returned to his lodgings filled with emotion. The danger was very great. A stranger and an exile, what can he do to oppose this impious undertaking? Where shall he find a friend to England, prepared to show his zeal in warding off the threatened blow?.....He was bewildered.

A flash of light suddenly dispelled the

darkness. A person of some consequence at Cologne, Herman Rincke, a patrician and imperial councillor, had been sent on important business by the Emperor Maximilian to Henry VII, and from that time he had always shown a great attachment to England. Cochlaeus determined to reveal the fatal secret to him; but, being still alarmed by the scenes at Frankfort, he was afraid to conspire openly against the Reformation. He had left an aged mother and a little niece at home, and was unwilling to do anything which might compromise them. He therefore crept stealthily towards Rincke's house (as he tells us himself), slipped in secretly and unfolded the whole matter to him. Rincke could not believe that the New Testament in English was printing at Cologne; however, he sent a confidential person to make inquiries, who reported to him that Cochlaeus's information was correct, and that he had found in the printing office a large supply of paper intended for the edition. The patrician immediately proceeded to the senate, and spoke of Wolsey, of Henry VIII, and of the preservation of the Romish church in England; and that body which, under the influence of the

archbishop, had long since forgotten the rights of liberty, forbade the printer to continue the work. Thus, then, there were to be no New Testaments for England! A practiced hand had warded off the blow aimed at Roman-catholicism; Tyndale would perhaps be thrown into prison, and Cochlaeus enjoy a complete triumph.

Tyndale was at first confounded. Were so many years of toil lost, then, for ever? His trial seemed beyond his strength. “They are ravening wolves,” he exclaimed, “they preach to others, Steal not, and yet they have robbed the soul of man of the bread of life, and fed her with the shales [shells?] and cods of the hope in their merits and confidence in their good works.” Yet Tyndale did not long remain cast down; for his faith was of that kind which would remove mountains. Is it not the word of God that is imperilled? If he does not abandon himself, God will not abandon him. He must anticipate the senate of Cologne. Daring and prompt in all his movements, Tyndale bade Roye follow him, hastened to the printing office, collected the sheets, jumped into a boat, and

rapidly ascended the river, carrying with him the hope of England. When Cochlaeus and Rincke, accompanied by the officers of the senate, reached the printing office, they were surprised beyond measure. The apostate had secured the abominable papers!.....Their enemy had escaped like a bird from the net of the fowler. Where was he to be found now? He would no doubt go and place himself under the protection of some Lutheran prince, whither Cochlaeus would take good care not to pursue him; but there was one resource left. These English books can do no harm in Germany; they must be prevented reaching London. He wrote to Henry VIII, to Wolsey, and to the bishop of Rochester. “Two Englishmen,” said he to the king, “like the two eunuchs who desired to lay hands on Ahasuerus, are plotting wickedly against the peace of your kingdom; but I, like the faithful Mordecai, will lay open their designs to you. They wish to send the New Testament in English to your people. Give orders at every seaport to prevent the introduction of this most baneful merchandise.” Such was the name given by this zealous follower of the pope to the word of God. An unexpected ally

soon restored peace to the soul of Cochlaeus. The celebrated Dr. Eck, a champion of popery far more formidable than he was, had arrived at Cologne on his way to London, and he undertook to arouse the anger of the bishops and of the king. The eyes of the greatest opponents of the Reformation seemed now to be fixed on England. Eck, who boasted of having gained the most signal triumphs over Luther, would easily get the better of the humble tutor and his New Testament.

During this time Tyndale, guarding his precious bales, ascended the rapid river as quickly as he could. He passed before the antique cities and the smiling villages scattered along the banks of the Rhine amidst scenes of picturesque beauty. The mountains, glens, and rocks, the dark forests, the ruined fortresses, the gothic churches, the boats that passed and repassed each other, the birds of prey that soared over his head, as if they bore a mission from Cochlaeus — nothing could turn his eyes from the treasure he was carrying with him. At last, after a voyage of five or six days, he reached Worms, where Luther, four years before,

had exclaimed: “Here I stand, I can do no other; may God help me!” These words of the German reformer, so well known to Tyndale, were the star that had guided him to Worms. He knew that the gospel was preached in that ancient city.

“The citizens are subject to fits of Lutheranism,” said Cochlaeus. Tyndale arrived there, not as Luther did, surrounded by an immense crowd, but unknown, and imagining himself pursued by the myrmidons of Charles and of Henry. As he landed from the boat he cast an uneasy glance around him, and laid down his precious burden on the bank of the river.

He had had time to reflect on the dangers which threatened his work. As his enemies would have marked the edition, some few sheets of it having fallen into their hands, he took steps to mislead the inquisitors, and began a new edition, striking out the prologue and the notes, and substituting the more portable octavo form for the original quarto. Peter Schoeffer, the grandson of Fust, one of the inventors of printing, lent his presses for this

important work. The two editions were quietly completed about the end of the year 1525. Thus were the wicked deceived: they would have deprived the English people of the oracles of God, and two editions were now ready to enter England. “Give diligence,” said Tyndale to his fellow-countrymen, as he sent from Worms the Testament he had just translated, “unto the words of eternal life, by the which, if we repent and believe them, we are born anew, created afresh, and enjoy the fruits of the blood of Christ.” In the beginning of 1526, these books crossed the sea by way of Antwerp or Rotterdam. Tyndale was happy; but he knew that the unction of the Holy Ghost alone could enable the people of England to understand these sacred pages; and accordingly he followed them night and day with his prayers.

“The scribes and pharisees,” said he, “had thrust up the sword of the word of God in a scabbard or sheath of glosses, and therein had knit it fast, so that it could neither stick nor cut. Now, O God, draw this sharp sword from the scabbard. Strike, wound, cut asunder, the soul and the flesh,

so that man being divide in two, and set at variance with himself, may be in peace with thee to all eternity!” 1804

Chapter 12

Worms and Cambridge

While these works were accomplishing at Cologne and Worms, others were going on at Cambridge and Oxford. On the banks of the Rhine they were preparing the seed; in England they were drawing the furrows to receive it.

The gospel produced a great agitation at Cambridge. Bilney, whom we may call the father of the English Reformation, since, being the first converted by the New Testament, he had brought to the knowledge of God the energetic Latimer, and so many other witnesses of the truth, — Bilney did not at that time put himself forward, like many of those who had listened to him: his vocation was prayer. Timid before men, he was full of boldness before God, and day and night called upon him for souls. But while he was kneeling in his closet, others were at work in the world. Among these Stafford was particularly remarkable. “Paul is risen from the dead,” said many as they heard him. And

in fact Stafford explained with so much life the true meaning of the words of the apostle and of the four evangelists, that these holy men, whose faces had been so long hidden under the dense traditions of the schools, reappeared before the youth of the university such as the apostolic times had beheld them. But it was not only their persons (for that would have been a trifling matter), it was their doctrine which Stafford laid before his hearers. While the schoolmen of Cambridge were declaring to their pupils a reconciliation which was not yet worked out, and telling them that pardon must be purchased by the works prescribed by the church, Stafford taught that redemption was accomplished, that the satisfaction offered by Jesus Christ was perfect; and he added, that popery having revived the kingdom of the law, God, by the Reformation, was now reviving the kingdom of grace. The Cambridge students, charmed by their master's teaching, greeted him with applause, and, indulging a little too far in their enthusiasm, said to one another as they left the lecture-room: "Which is the most indebted to the other?

Stafford to Paul, who left him the holy epistles; or Paul to Stafford, who has resuscitated that apostle and his holy doctrines, which the middle ages had obscured?" Above Bilney and Stafford rose Latimer, who, by the power of the Holy Ghost, transfused into other hearts the learned lessons of his master. Being informed of the work that Tyndale was preparing, he maintained from the Cambridge pulpits that the Bible ought to be read in the vulgar tongue. "The author of Holy Scripture," said he, "is the Mighty One, the Everlasting.....God himself!.....and this Scripture partakes of the might and eternity of its author. There is neither king nor emperor that is not bound to obey it. Let us beware of those bypaths of human tradition, filled of stones, brambles, and uprooted trees. Let us follow the straight road of the word. It does not concern us what the Fathers have done, but what they should have done." A numerous congregation crowded to Latimer's preaching, and his hearers hung listening to his lips. One in particular attracted attention. He was a Norfolk youth, sixteen years of age, whose features were lighted up with understanding and piety. This

poor scholar had received with eagerness the truth announced by the former cross-bearer. He did not miss one of his sermons; with a sheet of paper on his knees, and a pencil in his hand, he took down part of the discourse, trusting the remainder to his memory.

This was Thomas Becon, afterwards chaplain to Cranmer, archbishop of Canterbury. “If I possess the knowledge of God,” said he, “I owe it (under God) to Latimer.” Latimer had hearers of many sorts. By the side of those who gave way to their enthusiasm stood men “swelling, blown full, and puffed up like unto Esop’s frog, with envy and malice against him,” said Becon; these were the partisans of traditional catholicism, whom curiosity had attracted, or whom their evangelical friends had dragged to the church. But as Latimer spoke, a marvelous transformation was worked in them; by degrees their angry features relaxed, their fierce looks grew softer; and, if these friends of the priests were asked, after their return home, what they thought of the heretic preacher, they replied, in the exaggeration of their surprise and rapture:

“Nunquam sic locutus est homo, sicut hic homo!” (John 7:46) When he descended from the pulpit, Latimer hastened to practice what he had taught. He visited the narrow chambers of the poor scholars, and the dark rooms of the working classes: “he watered with good deeds whatsoever he had before planted with godly words,” said the student who collected his discourses. The disciples conversed together with joy and simplicity of heart; everywhere the breath of a new life was felt; as yet no external reforms had been effected, and yet the spiritual church of the gospel and of the Reformation was already there. And thus the recollection of these happy times was long commemorated in the adage: When Master Stafford read, And Master Latimer preached, Then was Cambridge blessed. The priests could not remain inactive: they heard speak of grace and liberty, and would have nothing to do with either. If grace is tolerated, will it not take from the hands of the clergy the manipulation of salvation, indulgences, penance, and all the rubrics of the canon law? If liberty is conceded, will not the hierarchy, with all its degrees, pomps, violence,

and scaffolds, be shaken? Rome desires no other liberty than that of free-will, which, exalting the natural strength of fallen man, dries up as regards mankind the springs of divine life, withers Christianity, and changes that heavenly religion into a human moralism and legal observances.

The friends of popery, therefore, collected their forces to oppose the new religion. “Satan, who never sleeps,” says the simple chronicler, “called up his familiar spirits, and sent them forth against the reformers.” Meetings were held in the convents, but particularly in that belonging to the Greyfriars. They mustered all their forces. An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth, said they. Latimer extols in his sermons the blessings of Scripture; we must deliver a sermon also to show its dangers. But where was the orator to be found who could cope with him? This was a very embarrassing question to the clerical party. Among the Greyfriars there was a haughty monk, adroit and skillful in little matters, and full at once of ignorance and pride: it was the prior Buckingham. No one had shown more hatred against the

evangelical Christians, and no one was in truth a greater stranger to the gospel. This was the man commissioned to set forth the dangers of the word of God. He was by no means familiar with the New Testament; he opened it however, picked out a few passages here and there which seemed to favor his thesis, and then, arrayed in his costliest robes, with head erect and solemn step already sure of victory, he went into the pulpit, combated the heretic, and with pompous voice stormed against the reading of the Bible; it was in his eyes the fountain of all heresies and misfortunes. “If that heresy should prevail,” he exclaimed, “there will be an end of everything useful among us. The ploughman, reading in the gospel that no man having put his hand to the plough should look back, would soon lay aside his labor.....The baker, reading that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump, will in future make us nothing but very insipid bread; and the simple man finding himself commanded to pluck out the right eye and cast it from thee, England, after a few years, will be a frightful spectacle; it will be little better than a nation of blind and oneeyed men, sadly begging their bread

from door to door.” This discourse moved that part of the audience for which it was intended.

“The heretic is silenced,” said the monks and clerks; but sensible people smiled, and Latimer was delighted that they had given him such an adversary. Being of a lively disposition and inclined to irony, he resolved to lash the platitudes of the pompous friar. There are some absurdities, he thought, which can only be refuted by showing how foolish they are. Does not even the grave Tertullian speak of things which are only to be laughed at, for fear of giving them importance by a serious refutation? “Next Sunday I will reply to him,” said Latimer.

The church was crowded when Buckingham, with the hood of St. Francis on his shoulders and with a vain-glorious air, took his place solemnly in front of the preacher. Latimer began by recapitulating the least weak of his adversary’s arguments; then taking them up one by one, he turned them over and over, and pointed out all their absurdity with so much wit that the poor prior was

buried in his own nonsense. Then turning towards the listening crowd, he exclaimed with warmth: “This is how your skillful guides abuse your understanding. They look upon you as children that must be for ever kept in leading-strings. Now, the hour of your majority has arrived; boldly examine the Scriptures, and you will easily discover the absurdity of the teaching of your doctors.” And then desirous, as Solomon has it, of answering a fool according to his folly, he added: “As for the comparisons drawn from the plough, the leaven, and the eye, of which the reverend prior has made so singular a use, is it necessary to justify these passages of Scripture? Must I tell you what plough, what leaven, what eye is hear meant? Is not our Lord’s teaching distinguished by those expressions which, under a popular form, conceal a spiritual and profound meaning? Do not we know that in all languages and in all speeches, it is not on the image that we must fix our eyes, but on the thing which the image represents?.....For instance,” he continued, and as he said these words he cast a piercing glance on the prior, “if we see a fox painted preaching in a friar’s hood, nobody

imagines that a fox is meant, but that craft and hypocrisy are described, which are so often found disguised in that garb." At these words the poor prior, on whom the eyes of all the congregation were turned, rose and left the church hastily, and ran off to his convent to hide his rage and confusion among his brethren. The monks and their creatures uttered loud cries against Latimer. It was unpardonable (they said) to have been thus wanting in respect to the cowl of St. Francis.

But his friends replied: "Do we not whip children? and he who treats Scripture worse than a child, does he not deserve to be well flogged?" The Romish party did not consider themselves beaten. The heads of colleges and the priests held frequent conferences. The professors were desired to watch carefully over their pupils, and to lead them back to the teaching of the church by flattery and by threats. "We are putting our lance in rest," they told the students; "if you become evangelicals, your advancement is at an end." But these open-hearted generous youths loved rather to be poor with Christ, than rich with the priests. Stafford

continued to teach, Latimer to preach, and Bilney to visit the poor: the doctrine of Christ ceased not to be spread abroad, and souls to be converted.

One weapon only was left to the schoolmen; this was persecution, the favorite arm of Rome. “Our enterprise has not succeeded,” said they; “Buckingham is a fool. The best way of answering these gospellers is to prevent their speaking.” Dr. West, bishop of Ely, was ordinary of Cambridge; they called for his intervention, and he ordered one of the doctors to inform him the next time Latimer was to preach; “but,” added he, “do not say a word to any one. I wish to come without being expected.” One day as Latimer was preaching in Latin ad clerum, the bishop suddenly entered the university church, attended by a number of priests. Latimer stopped, waiting respectfully until West and his train had taken their places. “A new audience,” thought he; “and besides an audience worthy of greater honor calls for a new theme. Leaving, therefore, the subject I had proposed, I will take up one that relates to the episcopal charge, and will preach on these words: Christus

existens Pontifex futurorum bonorum." (Hebrews 9:11.) Then describing Jesus Christ, Latimer represented him as the "true and perfect pattern unto all other bishops." There was not a single virtue pointed out in the divine bishop that did not correspond with some defect in the Romish bishops. Latimer's caustic wit had a free course at their expense; but there was so much gravity in his sallies, and so lively a Christianity in his descriptions, that every one must have felt them to be the cries of a Christian conscience rather than the sarcasms of an ill-natured disposition. Never had bishop been taught by one of his priests like this man. "Alas!" said many, "our bishops are not of that breed: they are descended from Annas and Caiaphas." West was not more at his ease than Buckingham had been formerly. He stifled his anger, however; and after the sermon, said to Latimer with a gracious accent: "You have excellent talents, and if you would do one thing I should be ready to kiss your feet." .....What humility in a bishop!....."Preach in this same church," continued West, "a sermon.....against Martin Luther. That is the best way of checking

heresy.” Latimer understood the prelate’s meaning, and replied calmly: “If Luther preaches the word of God, I cannot oppose him. But if he teaches the contrary, I am ready to attack him.” — “Well, well, Master Latimer,” exclaimed the bishop, “I perceive that you smell somewhat of the pan. ....One day or another you will repent of that merchandise.” West having left Cambridge in great irritation against that rebellious clerk, hastened to convoke his chapter, and forbade Latimer to preach either in the university or in the diocese. “All that will live godly shall suffer persecution,” St. Paul had said; Latimer was now experiencing the truth of the saying. It was not enough that the name of heretic had been given him by the priests and their friends, and that the passers-by insulted him in the streets;.....the work of God was violently checked. “Behold then,” he exclaimed with a bitter sigh, “the use of the episcopal office.....to hinder the preaching of Jesus Christ!” Some few years later he sketched, with his usual caustic irony, the portrait of a certain bishop, of whom Luther also used frequently to speak: “Do you know,” said Latimer, “who is the most diligentest bishop and

prelate in all England?.....I see you listening and hearkening that I should name him.....I will tell you.....It is the devil. He is never out of his diocese; ye shall never find him out of the way; call for him when you will, he’s ever at home. He is ever at his plough. Ye shall never find him idle, I warrant you. Where the devil is resident — there away with books and up with candles; away with bibles and up with beads; away with the light of the gospel and up with the light of candles, yea at noondays; down with Christ’s cross, up with purgatory pickpurse; away with clothing the naked, the poor, and impotent, up with decking of images and gay garnishing of stocks and stones; down with God’s traditions and his most holy word.....Oh! that our prelates would be as diligent to sow the corn of good doctrine as Satan is to sow cockle and darnel!” Truly may it be said, “There was never such a preacher in “England as he is.” The reformer was not satisfied with merely speaking: he acted. “Neither the menacing words of his adversaries nor their cruel imprisonments,” says one of his contemporaries, “could hinder him from proclaiming God’s truth.” Forbidden to preach in

the churches, he went about from house to house. He longed for a pulpit, however, and this he obtained. A haughty prelate had in vain interdicted his preaching; Jesus Christ, who is above all bishops, is able, when one door is shut, to open another. Instead of one great preacher there were soon two at Cambridge.

An Augustine monk named Robert Barnes, a native of the county of Norfolk, and a great scholar, had gone to Louvain to prosecute his studies.

Here he received the degree of doctor of divinity, and having returned to Cambridge, was nominated prior of his monastery in 1523. It was his fortune to reconcile learning and the gospel in the university; but by leaning too much to learning he diminished the force of the word of God. A great crowd collected every day in the Augustine convent to hear his lectures upon Terence, and in particular upon Cicero. Many of those who were offended by the simple Christianity of Bilney and Latimer, were attracted by this reformer of another

kind. Coleman, Coverdale, Field, Cambridge, Barley, and many other young men of the university, gathered round Barnes and proclaimed him “the restorer of letters.” But the classics were only a preparatory teaching. The masterpieces of antiquity having aided Barnes to clear the soil, he opened before his class the epistles of St. Paul. He did not understand their divine depth, like Stafford; he was not, like him, anointed with the Holy Ghost; he differed from him on several of the apostle’s doctrines, on justification by faith, and on the new creature; but Barnes was an enlightened and liberal man, not without some degree of piety, and desirous, like Stafford, of substituting the teaching of Scripture for the barren disputations of the school. But they soon came into collision, and Cambridge long remembered that celebrated discussion in which Barnes and Stafford contended with so much renown, employing no other weapons than the word of God, to the great astonishment of the blind doctors, and the great joy of the clearsighted, says the chronicler. Barnes was not as yet thoroughly enlightened, and the friends of the gospel were astonished that a man, a stranger

to the truth, should deal such heavy blows against error. Bilney, whom we continually meet with when any secret work, a work of irresistible charity, is in hand, — Bilney, who had converted Latimer, undertook to convert Barnes; and Stafford, Arthur, Thistel of Pembroke, and Fooke of Benet's, earnestly prayed God to grant his assistance. The experiment was difficult: Barnes had reached that juste milieu, that "golden mean" of the humanists, that intoxication of learning and glory, which render conversion more difficult. Besides, could a man like Bilney really dare to instruct the restorer of antiquity? But the humble bachelor of arts, so simple in appearance, knew, like David of old, a secret power by which the Goliath of the university might be vanquished. He passed days and nights in prayer; and then urged Barnes openly to manifest his convictions without fearing the reproaches of the world. After many conversations and prayers, Barnes was converted to the gospel of Jesus Christ. Still, the prior retained something undecided in his character, and only half relinquished that middle state with which he had begun. For instance, he appears to have always

believed in the efficacy of sacerdotal consecration to transform the bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ. His eye was not single, and his mind was often agitated and driven to and fro by contrary thoughts: “Alas!” said this divided character one day, “I confess that my cogitations be innumerable.” Barnes, having come to a knowledge of the truth, immediately displayed a zeal that was somewhat imprudent. Men of the least decided character, and even those who are destined to make a signal fall, are often those who begin their course with the greatest ardor. Barnes seemed prepared at this time to withstand all England. Being now united to Latimer by a tender Christian affection, he was indignant that the powerful voice of his friend should be lost to the church. “The bishop has forbidden you to preach,” he said to him, “but my monastery is not under episcopal jurisdiction. You can preach there.” Latimer went into the pulpit at the Augustines’, and the church could not contain the crowd that flocked to it. At Cambridge, as at Wittenberg, the chapel of the Augustine monks was used for the first struggles of the gospel. It was here that Latimer

delivered some of his best sermons.

A very different man from Latimer, and particularly from Barnes, was daily growing in influence among the English reformers: this was Fryth. No one was more humble than he, and on that very account no one was stronger. He was less brilliant than Barnes, but more solid. He might have penetrated into the highest departments of science, but he was drawn away by the deep mysteries of God's word; the call of conscience prevailed over that of the understanding. He did not devote the energy of his soul to difficult questions; he thirsted for God, for his truth, and for his love. Instead of propagating his particular opinions and forming divisions, he clung only to the faith which saves, and advanced the dominion of true unity. This is the mark of the great servants of God.

Humble before the Lord, mild before men, and even in appearance somewhat timid, Fryth in the face of danger displayed an intrepid courage.

"My learning is small," he said, "but the little I

have I am determined to give to Jesus Christ for the building of his temple." Latimer's sermons, Barnes's ardor, and Fryth's firmness, excited fresh zeal at Cambridge. They knew what was going on in Germany and Switzerland; shall the English, ever in front, now remain in the rear? Shall not Latimer, Bilney, Stafford, Barnes, and Fryth do what the servants of God are doing in other places?

A secret ferment announced an approaching crisis: every one expected some change for better or for worse. The evangelicals, confident in the truth, and thinking themselves sure of victory, resolved to fall upon the enemy simultaneously on several points. The Sunday before Christmas, in the year 1525, was chosen for this great attack. While Latimer should address the crowds that continued to fill the Augustine chapel, and other were preaching in other places, Barnes was to deliver a sermon in one of the churches in the town. But nothing compromises the gospel so much as a disposition turned towards outward things. God, who grants his blessing only to undivided hearts, permitted this general assault, of which Barnes was

to be the hero, to be marked by a defeat. The prior, as he went into the pulpit, thought only of Wolsey. As the representative of the popedom in England, the cardinal was the great obstacle to the Reformation. Barnes preached from the epistle for the day: Rejoice in the Lord alway. But instead of announcing Christ and the joy of the Christian, he imprudently declaimed against the luxury, pride, and diversions of the churchmen, and everybody understood that he aimed at the cardinal. He described those magnificent palaces, that brilliant suite, those scarlet robes, and pearls, and gold, and precious stones, and all the prelate's ostentation, so little in keeping (said he) with the stable of Bethlehem. Two fellows of King's College, Robert Ridley and Walter Preston, relations of Tonstall, bishop of London, who were intentionally among the congregation, noted down in their tablets the prior's imprudent expressions.

The sermon was scarcely over when the storm broke out. "These people are not satisfied with propagating monstrous heresies," exclaimed their enemies, "but they must find fault with the powers

that be. Today they attack the cardinal, tomorrow they will attack the king!" Ridley and Preston accused Barnes to the vice-chancellor. All Cambridge was in commotion. What! Barnes the Augustine prior, the restorer of letters, accused as a Lollard!.....The gospel was threatened with a danger more formidable than a prison or a scaffold. The friends of the priests, knowing Barnes's weakness, and even his vanity, hoped to obtain of him a disavowal that would cover the evangelical party with shame. "What!" said these dangerous counsellors to him, "the noblest career was open to you, and would you close it?.....Do, pray, explain away your sermon." They alarmed, they flattered him; and the poor prior was near yielding to their solicitations. "Next Sunday you will read this declaration," they said to him. Barnes ran over the paper put into his hands, and saw no great harm in it. However he desired to show it to Bilney and Stafford. "Beware of such weakness," said these faithful men. Barnes then recalled his promise, and for a season the enemies of the gospel were silent.

Its friends worked with increased energy. The

fall from which one of their companions had so narrowly escaped inspired them with fresh zeal. The more indecision and weakness Barnes had shown, the more did his brethren flee to God for courage and firmness. It was reported, moreover, that a powerful ally was coming across the sea, and that the Holy Scriptures, translated into the vulgar tongue, were at last to be given to the people. Wherever the word was preached, there the congregation was largest. It was the seed-time of the church: all were busy in the fields to prepare the soil and trace the furrows. Seven colleges at least were in full ferment: Pembroke, St. John's, Queens', King's, Caius, Benet's, and Peterhouse. The gospel was preached at the Augustines', at Saint Mary's (the University church,) and in other places, and when the bells rang to prayers, the streets were alive with students issuing from the colleges, and hastening to the sermon. There was at Cambridge a house called the White Horse, so situated as to permit the most timid members of King's, Queens', and St. John's Colleges, to enter at the rear without being perceived. In every age Nicodemus has had his followers. Here those

persons used to assemble who desired to read the Bible and the works of the German reformers. The priests, looking upon Wittenberg as the focus of the Reformation, named this house Germany: the people will always have their bywords. At first the frequenters of the White Horse were called Sophists; and now, whenever a group of “fellows” was seen walking in that direction, the cry was, “There are the Germans going to Germany.” — “We are not Germans,” was the reply, “neither are we Romans.” The Greek New Testament had made them Christians. The gospel-meetings had never been more fervent. Some attended them to communicate the new life they possessed; others to receive what God had given to the more advanced brethren. The Holy Spirit united them all, and thus, by the fellowship of the saints, were real churches created. To these young Christians the word of God was the source of so much light, that they imagined themselves transported to that heavenly city of which the Scriptures speak, which had no need of the sun, for the glory of God did lighten it. “So oft as I was in the company of these brethren,” said a youthful student of St. John’s, “me thought I was

quietly placed in the new glorious Jerusalem." Similar things were taking place at Oxford. In 1524 and 1525, Wolsey had successively invited thither several Cambridge fellows, and although only seeking the most able, he found that he had taken some of the most pious.

Besides John Clark, there were Richard Cox, John Fryer, Godfrey Harman, W. Betts, Henry Sumner, W. Baily, Michael Drumm, Th. Lawny, and, lastly, the excellent John Fryth. These Christians, associating with Clark, with his faithful Dalaber, and with other evangelicals of Oxford, held meetings, like their Cambridge brethren, at which God manifested his presence. The bishops made war upon the gospel; the king supported them with all his power; but the word had gained the victory; there was no longer any doubt. The church was born again in England.

The great movement of the sixteenth century had begun more particularly among the younger doctors and students at Oxford and Cambridge. From them it was necessary that it should be

extended to the people, and for that end the New Testament, hitherto read in Latin and in Greek, must be circulated in English. The voices of these youthful evangelists were heard, indeed, in London and in the provinces, but their exhortations would have been insufficient, if the mighty hand which directs all things had not made this Christian activity coincide with that holy work for which it had set Tyndale apart. While all was agitation in England, the waves of ocean were bearing from the continent to the banks of the Thames those Scriptures of God, which, three centuries later, multiplied by thousands and by millions, and, translated into a hundred and fifty tongues, were to be wafted from the same banks to the ends of the world. If in the fifteenth century, and even in the early years of the sixteenth, the English New Testament had been brought to London, it would only have fallen into the hands of a few Lollards. Now, in every place, in the parsonages, the universities, and the palaces, as well as in the cottages of the husbandmen and the shops of the tradesmen, there was an ardent desire to possess the Holy Scriptures. The fiat lux was about to be

uttered over the chaos of the church, and light to be separated from darkness by the word of God.