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**The First English Printed Protestant
Bible and Its Significance**

By

JOHN M. LENHART, O.M.Cap.

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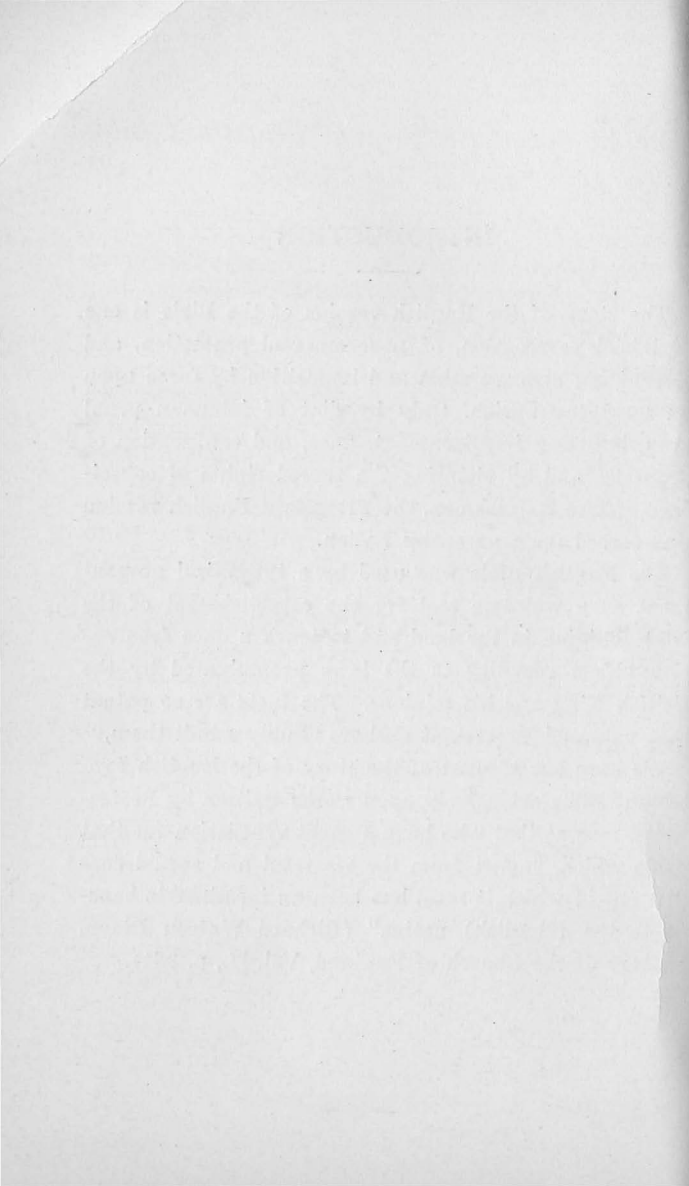
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INTRODUCTION

The story of the English version of the Bible is one of initial persecution, of governmental protection, and alternating strangulation and imposition by force upon an unwilling nation. Only by dint of inhuman penal laws, inflicting imprisonment, fines, and confiscation of property, and by violating the sacred rights of conscience of free Englishmen, the Protestant English version was forced upon an entire nation.

The English Bible was used by a tyrannical government as a welcome tool for the establishment of the New Religion in the land and to teach a once free nation abject servility to the laws promulgated by the British King and his minions. The facts are so patent that unbiased Protestant authors readily admit them.

We base our account of the story of the English Protestant Bible exclusively upon works written by Protestants, men at that who have a great veneration for that Bible which, "apart from the wasteful and sordid conflict out of which it rose, has been an inestimable benefit to the (English) nation" (Richard Watson Dixon, *History of the Church of England*, Vol. II., p. 364).



The First English Printed Protestant Bible and Its Significance

The University of Missouri News Service on July 13, announced Dean Walter Williams, since deceased, had accepted "appointment as member of the Western Regional Committee which will plan commemoration of the 400th anniversary of the printed English Bible." "On Oct. 4th, 1535," he is quoted as having said, "there came from an unknown press the final sheets of the first printed English Bible, in the text prepared by Myles Coverdale. The event referred to is to be celebrated all over the country, and a National Committee is preparing for the event."

The English edition of the Bible prepared by Myles Coverdale is the first complete Protestant English version, printed very probably by the Protestant printer Christopher Froschauer at Zurich in Switzerland. The printed sheets were sent for binding and distribution to James Nicolson, printer at Southwark, London. This Bible is a small folio in black letter, embellished by woodcuts and initials and bearing the title: "Biblia, the Bible, that is, the Holy Scripture of the Olde and New Testament, faithfully and truly translated out of Douche [German] and Latyn into Englishe." A second edition appeared in the same year, 1535; a third bears the date 1536. In 1537 Nicolson printed two editions in English, one in folio, the other in quarto. On the title-page of the latter appeared the

significant words, "set forth with the Kynges most gracious license."

The English Bible in pre-Reformation Times

There exists no divine injunction to write, read or distribute the Bible. Yet we find that the Scriptures were translated into all European languages in pre-Reformation times, were read, studied by clergy as well as laity, and, what is more, were constantly used as the book of prayer and meditation. The conversion of the pagan nations of Europe is synchronous with the first attempts at rendering the Bible into the vernacular language of the newly converted people. Accordingly, we find that in England, from the seventh century onward, the Bible was translated, throughout eight centuries, into various English dialects. This fact is so well known that our Protestant English encyclopedias give us very detailed information on the subject. As a matter of fact, we are indebted mostly to Protestant scholars for their painstaking researches on the wide circulation of the English Bible in pre-Reformation times. Coverdale's Bible was the first printed English Bible, but not the first English translation of the Bible.

Latin Bible was the Household Bible of Catholic and Protestant Europe and America

George Haven Putnam, a Protestant author with an anti-Catholic bias, tells us that up to the year 1500 "Latin was universally accepted as the language not only of scholarship but practically of all literature."¹⁾ During the

¹⁾ Books and Their Makers, vol. I., p. 318.

Reformation and long after, in the latter part of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Putnam states, "as far as literature and learning were concerned, there was but one language for Europe, namely Latin. In the universities, in the workroom of the scholar, in the composing-room of the printing-office we find that for nineteen twentieths of the books that were being put into shape, the text was Latin. Theological works were in Latin. The works in jurisprudence were, with hardly an exception, printed in Latin text, and the same was the case with works of medicine and natural science. The fact that in all the great universities of Europe, during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the larger proportion of the lectures in these several departments were given in Latin served, of course, to maintain and to extend this universality of learning, of literature, and of science."²) Macaulay stated the same fact in his wonted style: "In the time of Henry VIII. and Edward VI., a person who did not read Greek and Latin could read nothing, or next to nothing. The Latin was in the sixteenth century the language of courts as well as of the schools. It was the language of diplomacy; it was the language of theological and political controversy. A person who was ignorant of it was shut out from all acquaintances, not merely with Cicero and Virgil, not merely with heavy treatises on canon-law and school-divinity, but with the most interesting memoirs, state-papers, and pamphlets of his own time, nay even with the most admired poetry and the most popular squibs, which appeared on the fleeting

²) Ibid. vol. II., pp. 501-2.

topics of the day,"³⁾ since all these literary productions could be read only in Latin.

Accordingly the books printed and read by Catholics as well as Protestants during the Reformation and long after were preponderantly Latin books. In England as well as on the continent, during the lifetime of Henry VIII, Luther and other Reformers, more Latin books were printed, bought and read than books in the vernacular languages. Naturally Latin Bibles were also in demand by Catholics as well as Protestants, by the clergy as well as the educated laity.

This was the natural result of the educational system of Catholic and Protestant countries. As a matter of fact, the common schools of Europe and New England were Latin schools. The study of Latin was the chief subject pursued by the children in these schools. Luther decreed in 1538 that "the schoolmasters shall zealously endeavor that all children [of common schools] learn Latin and nothing but Latin, not German or Greek or Hebrew, as some have done up to now, and in the higher class only Latin should be spoken with the boys." In many Protestant high-schools of Germany Latin was the medium of instruction and the scholars were compelled to speak only Latin in conversation.⁴⁾

Naturally the Bible studied in these schools was the Latin Bible. Protestant as well as Catholic children were compelled to learn long portions of the Latin Bible by heart, and the

³⁾ Essay on Lord Bacon.

⁴⁾ Janssen, J., *Geschichte des deutschen Volkes*, Freiburg, 1893, vol. VIII., pp. 38-43.

first lessons in Bible study were always spelling from the Latin Bible in Catholic as well as Protestant schools. "A German Bible," writes K. J. Loeschke, "was a rarity in the Protestant schools of Germany during the sixteenth century. A German Bible in Latin schools, where pupils were punished for speaking German among themselves: what an anomaly would that have been! A German Bible lacked the ancient garb which alone was respected."⁵)

The high-schools and grammar schools in New England laid especial stress on the study of Latin to qualify their pupils for university studies at Harvard and Yale. Harvard College announced in 1642 that only those students who could speak Latin in poetry and prose and could decline Greek words and conjugate Greek verbs would be permitted to apply for entrance into the college. Moreover, Latin was the medium of instruction, and the college rules likewise stipulated the use of Latin for all conversation among students and professors within the walls of the college. Similarly the requirement of speaking Latin was upheld for admission to Yale College. It was only about the year 1790 that Harvard College relaxed somewhat the stringent requirements, substituting translation from the Latin for speaking Latin. Yale followed suit a few years later. Knowledge of English as a requirement for entrance into the universities was first demanded by Princeton in 1819, by Yale in 1822, Columbia in 1860, and by Harvard only as late as 1866. Accordingly,

⁵) Religiöse Bildung der Jugend im sechszenten Jahrhundert. Breslau, 1846, quoted by Janssen, op. cit., vol. VI., p. 575.

the students in New England colleges and high schools did not study the English but the Latin Bible. The English Bible was not even read at those colleges and high schools. At Harvard it was customary from the very beginning to read a chapter out of the Hebrew original in the College Hall every morning, and at night a chapter of the Greek text. In 1643 and for a long time after a requirement for the bachelor's degree at Harvard was to translate texts from the Hebrew and Greek Bible into the Latin tongue and to resolve them logically.⁶⁾

Education in Protestant New England as well as in Protestant and Catholic Europe was classical, and every educated man and woman was able to read, think, converse and write in Latin up to the Eighteenth century. Queen Elizabeth of England delivered Latin and Greek speeches on her visits to the universities of Oxford and Cambridge. When the French auxiliary army camped in Rhode Island in 1780 and 1781, the French officers conversed in Latin with the educated American men until they had learned English. The creeds of the various Protestant sects were originally composed in Latin, as were also the peace-treaties of the European powers, during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The Protestant catechisms for children, intended for use in school, were invariably issued in Latin. Milton, the greatest English Protestant poet, wrote better Latin than English verses; his "Paradise Lost", with its long,

6) Wright, Th. G., *Literary Culture in New England*, New Haven, 1920, p. 19; *Catholic Historical Review*, July, 1921, p. 262; *Collect. Massachusetts Historical Society*, vol. XXI., p. 100.

involved sentences, betrays such a strong influence of Latin diction that his English style is rightly called "latinized English."

The educated Protestant lay people, who had become familiar with the Latin Bible in school, naturally preferred the Scriptures in Latin to translations in the vernacular. The educated Protestant gentlemen and ladies demanded Latin Bibles just as the educated Catholic laity demanded them before and after the Reformation. Accordingly Protestant scholars busied themselves from the very first years of the Reformation with editions of Latin Bibles for the use of their co-religionists, and Protestant printers published Latin Bibles, simultaneously with Bibles in the vernacular for their Protestant patrons.

On September 21, 1522, Luther brought from the press the first part of the German Bible, namely the New Testament, and twelve years later, in 1534, the complete German Bible appeared in print for the first time. Luther's German Bible was the first Protestant vernacular Bible version printed in any country. In the same year in which his New Testament appeared in print, the Lutheran theologian Andreas Osiander published at Basle the first Protestant Latin Bible in two volumes. The second Protestant Latin Bible was printed at Zurich in 1524. Both are editions of the complete Bible. In 1529 the third Protestant Latin Bible was printed at Wittenberg, with Luther's cooperation; however, this Bible is not complete, since several books are missing. The copy of this Latin Bible, now preserved at the Bodleian Library at Oxford, was owned in 1529 by

George Esslinger; it contains on the interleaved pages handwritten copies of letters of Luther, Melanchthon and other Lutheran celebrities. The fourth Protestant Latin Bible was printed in nine folios at Zurich between 1532 and 1540. The fifth Protestant Latin Bible came from the press of Berthelet at London in 1535, containing, however, only the New Testament and about half of the Old Testament. After this year editions of Protestant Latin Bibles became more numerous, and the Protestant printers at Zurich, Geneva, Basle, Wittenberg, Strassburg, London, Frankfort, Herborn and other Protestant centers found it a paying business to publish Latin Bibles for their Protestant customers. The Protestant Latin Bible published by Tremellius and Junius at London in 1580 later passed through eighty-eight editions.

Yet more numerous than the editions of complete Protestant Latin Bibles are those of parts of the Bible in Latin which were published by Protestants during the sixteenth and succeeding centuries. Luther, Melanchthon, Brentius, Drach and others published editions of separate books in Latin with Latin commentaries. Beza's New Testament in Latin, published first at Geneva in 1556, passed through no less than one hundred editions. Moreover the number of Latin commentaries on the Bible, written and published by Protestant authors, is simply immense.

These countless Protestant Latin Bibles and Latin commentaries to the Bible were intended for Protestant ministers and educated Protestant lay folk. Protestant divines preferred

Latin Bibles to the vernacular. We have a most striking proof of this fact in the chained library at Wimborne Minster, near London. This library was established in 1686 by two Anglican Ministers for the use of clergymen of their persuasion and was increased up to 1725. The library is still in the same condition in which it was then, containing about 240 works, none of them printed later than the year named, most of the books still being chained to the desks. Naturally a large proportion of the works is in Latin. Although works on divinity and sermon-books abound, the library is rather poor in Bibles. The Greek Septuagint, a Hebrew Old Testament of 1635, Walton's Polyglot Bible of 1657, a Protestant Latin Bible of 1617, and the English Bishops' Bible of 1595 form the entire Bible collection. This is a fair type of ministers' libraries prior to the nineteenth century.

The ministers of New England showed no greater love for the English Bible. John Harvard, the first minister to die in New England (d. 1638), bequeathed his library to the institution which was to take his name. His collection of books comprised 250 works in 358 volumes. The majority of them, 155 works in 248 volumes, were in Latin, 89 works in 101 volumes were in English, 3 works in Greek, one in Hebrew, besides two whose nature cannot be determined. Latin commentaries on the Bible, more than 80 in number, comprise the main stock of this collection. Most of these Latin commentaries were written by Calvinist theologians, chiefly Piscator and Pareus; others are the work of Lutheran theologians, and sixteen volumes contain Latin commentaries by the

Catholic theologians Cardinal Bellarmine, Cornelius a Lapide, Conrad of Halberstadt, Feu-ardentius, Royard, and Ferus. In the department of philosophy Catholic authors were represented by Latin works of St. Thomas Aquinas, Duns Scotus, Aegidius Romanus, Bannes, and pseudo-Beda. Harvard's Bible collection was likewise rather poor in Bibles. A Latin Bible issued by Tremellius-Junius, a Greek-Latin New Testament by Beza, a Latin Psalterium by Cornerius, a Latin New Testament, a Greek New Testament, and the Gospel of St. Luke in English make up the collection.⁷⁾

How little the well-known Puritan divine Cotton Mather (d. 1728) valued the English Bible may be inferred from the following entry in his diary. On May 24, 1724, he writes: "It is an unspeakable advantage that I find by having my eye on the Hebrew Psalter, while I am with the people of God praising Him in the congregations. I am led by the language of the Holy Spirit there, into sentiments that are very curious and sublime, and mysteries that perhaps were never discovered there before."⁸⁾ The same Cotton Mather informs us that the children in the New England schools studied the rudiments of Faith in Latin. On May 18, 1716, he entered in his diary: "To the Grammar-School (i. e. Latin school) in my neighborhood, I would send a version of the Ten Commandments in Latin to be recited by the scholars."⁹⁾

7) The list of Harvard's books is printed in Th. G. Wright, *Literary Culture, etc.*, already quoted; pp. 265-272.

8) *Collect. Mass. Hist. Soc., Ser. VII., Vol. VIII., Boston, 1912*, pp. 578, 702, 728.

9) *Op. cit.*, p. 352.

The Protestant Latin Bibles were also printed for the use of educated lay persons. Samuel Sewall (d. 1730), the foremost jurist of colonial New England, shows us by his example to what extent educated Puritan lay people preferred the Latin Bible to the English version as late as the eighteenth century. On August 9, 1711, he notes in his Memoranda: "Sent to Mr. Love for the Books following: Junius and Tremellius, a fair print to carry to Church, etc."¹⁰) This book was the famous Protestant Latin Bible edited by the Calvinist scholars Emanuel Tremellius and Francis Junius. The remark that the Latin Bible was ordered to be used in church shows also that he must have availed himself of the cumbersome edition of this Latin Bible at home. The earlier editions of the Tremellius-Junius Latin Bible were surely too large to be carried to church. Sewall likewise studied the Protestant Latin commentaries on the Bible. In the above mentioned order he had also included besides the Latin Bible the *Adversaria* of Pareus and Lightfoot's *Opera omnia*. In 1700 he had bought Poole's *Synopsis Criticorum*, which was sent later to Yale College for use there.¹¹) These three works comprised eight folios, all in Latin. Some specimens of Latin poetry composed by Sewall are printed in the Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society.¹²)

These few instances represent typical cases which could be augmented by many others of

¹⁰) Coll. Mass. Hist. Soc., Ser. VI., Vol. I., Boston, 1886, p. 411.

¹¹) *Op. cit.*, pp. 226, 354, 411.

¹²) Ser. VI., Vol. I., Boston, 1886, pp. 314-318, 399-400.

a similar nature. The large libraries of Europe and America are stocked with Protestant Latin Bibles and Latin commentaries on the Bible printed prior to the nineteenth century. Certainly these Latin tomes must have been in demand; otherwise no printer would have ventured to place them on the market. Latin was the language of educated Protestants as much in post-Reformation times as it had been the literary language of educated Catholic lay persons before and after the Reformation. Up to the eighteenth century educated Protestant lay persons did not use the Latin Bible in any other way than educated Catholic lay persons had been using the Latin Bible during the Middle Ages and long after.

Influence of the Latin Bible

It is well known that the Latin Bible exerted a strong influence upon the formation of modern European languages. Regarding the English language in particular, syntax and the meaning of words are traceable in many instances to the Latin Bible. Even after the various vernacular dialects had developed into fixed languages within modern times, the Latin Bible still retained some formative influence upon them, sometimes exerted directly through latinized translations or through writings inspired by Biblical thoughts. In view of these facts it is a gross error to attribute to any of the vernacular Bibles the rôle of having been the mold-er of any European language. The influence of Luther's German Bible upon German and of the English Bible upon present-day English must be regarded as insignificant when compared

with the tremendous influence of the Latin Bible upon these two languages.

Yet the Latin Bible has rendered still more valuable service to the European nations. "To the Latin Bible we owe our Christianity in England," justly declared the well-known Protestant scholar Fred. G. Kenyon.¹³⁾ The translations made into English and other European languages during the Middle Ages and the early part of the Reformation were made from the Latin Bible. Luther used the Latin Bible extensively in producing his German Bible, and Coverdale tells us, on the title-page of his Bible, that the first Protestant English Bible was translated from the Latin text to some extent. Truly the Latin Bible, and not the Scriptures in the vernacular, has been the teacher of Western Christianity and the molder of European nations and languages.

The textbooks of histories of English literature used in schools systematically ignore the Latin literature produced in Catholic and Protestant England up to the eighteenth century and create the impression that the English Bible and English works were the only literature worth while. Yet the people of culture living in those centuries thought differently; Latin books were regarded as the real literature and English works as not much better than trash. Caxton and the early English printers did not print Chaucer's and similar English works for educated lay persons; they had nothing but contempt for the vernacular productions. When in 1545 the Protestant bibliographer Conrad Ges-

¹³⁾ Our Bible and the Ancient Manuscripts. 3. ed., London, 1898, p. 175.

ner published the first bibliography, he told his readers he considered only works in Latin, Greek, and Hebrew as literature and passed over vernacular works as falling beneath the standard of literature. When in 1687 the Protestant scholar Daniel George Morhof published the first history of literature of European nations, he produced it in Latin for the use of German universities. This work, used in these institutions for over sixty years, describes on more than one thousand quarto pages what was written by authors of various nations in Latin on every branch of knowledge, law, medicine and the natural sciences included. As late as 1748 the ponderous history of literature of Great Britain written in Latin by the Anglican bishop of St. Asaph, Thomas Tanner (d. 1735), was published at Oxford in three folios.

The narrow nationalism of modern times caused people to forget that culture up to the eighteenth century was classical, Latin and Greek, in Protestant England as well as in Catholic Italy and Spain. This broad fact should warn us against over-stating the influence of the English or German or any other vernacular Bible or work of vernacular literature. The Latin Bible was the favorite of Protestant divines as well as Protestant educated lay persons for two hundred and more years after the Reformation.

F. G. Kenyon states in all fairness that the English people had never been without an English Bible during the Middle Ages. "Latin," he writes, "was the literary language of our own [English] forefathers, and the Latin Bible was for nearly a thousand years, from the landing

of Augustine to the Reformation, the official Bible, so to speak the Bible of the Church services and of monastic usage. But although the monks and clergy learnt Latin, and a knowledge of Latin was the most essential element of an educated man's culture, it was never the language of the common people. To them the Bible, if it came at all, must come in English, and from almost the earliest times there were churchmen and statesmen whose care it was that, whether by reading it for themselves, if they were able, or by hearing it read to them, the common people should have at least the more important parts of the Bible accessible to them in their own language. For twelve hundred years one may fairly say that the English people have never been entirely without an English Bible. It was in the year 597 that Augustine landed in Kent. Yet it was not long before the story of the Bible made its appearance in English literature. Caedmon's Bible paraphrase was written about 670, and another generation had not passed away before part of the Bible had been actually translated into English. Aldhelm, who died in 709, translated the Psalms, and thereby holds the honor of having been the first translator of the Bible into our native tongue."¹⁴)

The Purpose of Vernacular Bibles

These English translations of the Bible were intended for the use of semi-illiterates, men and women who had only a smattering of Latin, inadequate for an understanding of the Latin Bible, and only a superficial education which was

¹⁴) L. c., pp. 166, 189, 190.

often equally inadequate to enable them to grasp the sense of the English translation. The author of the preface to the German Bible printed at Cologne in 1480, three years before Luther's birth, tells us plainly that his German Bible was not intended for the educated lay people who could read the Latin Bible. "The educated people," he writes, "may read Jerome's Vulgate (i. e. Latin Bible), but the unlearned and simple folk of the clergy (i. e. married clerics in Minor Orders, nuns and lay-brothers of Religious Orders) and the laity should use this edition which is in good German."

An almost complete separation between the cultured classes and the common people may be observed on the eve of the Reformation. The former thought and spoke and wrote in Latin and deemed it beneath their dignity to use the vernacular. We meet a somewhat similar condition today. The cultured people who speak correct English disdain to use the slang of the street and even the somewhat more polished diction of the newspapers and cheap novels. The cultured people who now speak a refined and polished English would have spoken Latin on the eve of the Reformation. The present-day author, whose aim is to write an elegant and graceful English, would have aimed on the eve of the Reformation to write classical Latin to insure the success of his book, which was to circulate throughout all European countries and to be read by a cosmopolitan society transcending all racial, political and linguistic barriers. The professional classes, who write English tolerably well in their business transactions, would also have written Latin tolerably well if

they had lived at that time, when every teacher in the common schools, every clerk in the city hall and court house, as well as every clerk in the large business-houses was obliged to write Latin letters and Latin documents as part of his daily work. Cultured persons, who now have an abhorrence for slang, would have objected to the use of the vernacular tongue, as did the famous humanist Francesco Philephus. In a letter dated Milan, February 1477, he declares: "I will answer you, not in the vulgar language, but in Latin, our own true speech; for I have ever had an abhorrence for the talk of grooms and servants, equal to my detestation of their life and manners. I employ only Tuscan [i. e. Italian] for such matters as I do not choose to transmit to posterity. Moreover, even that Tuscan idiom is hardly current throughout Italy, while Latin is far and wide diffused throughout the habitable world."¹⁵⁾ The educated classes who despised the vernacular language naturally would not read the vernacular Bible; they were willing to use the Latin Bible which has never been prohibited to lay people to this day. Everyone who could read Latin enjoyed unrestricted liberty to read the Latin Bible.

The English Bible was intended for the semi-illiterates. The masses, who now read the newspapers but hardly understand them, would have demanded an English Bible at the end of the 15th and the beginning of the 16th century. The masses who have learnt just enough to read and uncritically swallow whatever is spread out

¹⁵⁾ Quoted by Symonds: Renaissance in Italy: Italian Literature, Vol. I., 1888, p. 236.

before them in the printed sheets would have called for an English Bible at the time of Henry VIII. The masses who are able only to read a misleading advertisement, but lack the critical acumen to detect its deceitful character, would have been the very people to feel the need of an English Bible. The fathers and mothers who write the frightfully misspelt excuses for Tommy's non-attendance at school, would have preferred an English Bible in 1532. The masses of semi-illiterates who use their partial ability to read to skim through the pages of the latest novel without sufficient intelligence to criticize and evaluate the doctrines preached in it, would have read an English Bible. The masses of lettered illiterates, whose knowledge of letters leads them ultimately to acquire invincible ignorance in religious matters, so that they would be better off if they remained unable to read, would have swelled the crowds requesting an English Bible at the beginning of the 16th century. The individuals who are now beguiled by the latest philosophy they read in books would have been captivated by the demand for an English Bible four hundred years ago. The masses, who by indiscriminate and undigested reading are daily blunting their understanding, would have been the very people who would have become soaked in disastrous ignorance at the time of the Reformation, so that they would have been unable to discern the pernicious tendency of the demand for an English Bible.

In the hands of those semi-illiterates the vernacular Bible became a dangerous book. In pre-Reformation times German Bibles were circulating freely in Germany, both in manuscript

and print. More than ten thousand German Bibles were printed and sold prior to the Reformation without encountering much opposition on the part of the Church authorities. But this freely circulating German Bible was grossly misread by the semi-illiterates. They concluded from it that every man was a priest, that they no longer needed the Church, the Pope and the hierarchy, since the Bible showed them the road to Heaven, that they could interpret it as well as the priests, and that no man, be he Pope or emperor, had a right to impose an obligation on a free Christian man or woman. Luther later merely put into forceful language what these people had read out of the Book, and modelled his own German translation so that these Bible-readers could find in Scripture other doctrines of a similar nature. Clear-sighted theologians like Geiler saw the dangers and warned the people against the misinterpretations disseminated by self-constituted lay exponents of Scripture. Yet despite the gross abuses of the Bible by some lay persons, no theologian of Germany advocated the complete suppression of the vernacular Bible.

Little Need for an English Bible

Protestant historians overlook this revolutionary tendency on the part of readers of the German Bible on the eve of the Reformation when they blame some German bishops for having introduced preventive censorship in their dioceses. In fact this measure was first resorted to in 1479 to check the circulation of Latin tracts advocating the spoliation of the rich German Church. In 1486 the same measure

was employed to stop circulation of German tracts exploiting the Bible as a source of pernicious errors. But the Catholic Church placed no restriction on the reading of the vernacular Bible before the year 1564. Up to that year the Church authorities demanded that no Bible should be printed in the vernacular and sold without previous permission, which measure was later adopted by the English government with respect to Protestant English Bibles.

J. R. Dore, an Anglican scholar, tells us that "as the Latin tongue had become the universal ecclesiastical language, and all who could read were familiar with Latin, there was at that time [in the Middle Ages] little need of an English Bible. After the invention of printing, Bibles began to be printed in almost all languages except English. In the year 1483 Caxton printed at Westminster [London] an English translation of the Golden Legend. This contained most of the five books of Moses and the Gospels. This book may be considered the first printed English Bible. About the same time Fisher, the sainted Bishop of Rochester (who afterwards approached the block with the New Testament in his hands, and opening it read aloud the words: This is life eternal, to know Thee, the only true God), translated the seven penitential Psalms, many editions of which were printed by R. Pynson, Wynken de Worde, and others. Soon after this Bishop Gardyner, of Winchester, was engaged in the work of Bible translation,"¹⁶⁾ but none of his manuscripts was published. Fisher's transla-

¹⁶⁾ Old Bibles: An Account of the Early Versions of the English Bible. 2. ed., London, 1888, pp. 3, 11, 12.

tion, just mentioned, is accompanied by a commentary and divided into seven sermons. It is entitled: "Treatise concernynge the fruytfull saynges of David the Kynge in the seven penitential Psalms", and was printed at London in 1508, 1509 (3rd edit.), 1510, 1525, 1529, and 1555, achieving a total of 8 editions.

William Tyndale had gone to Germany in 1524 to have his English translation of the Bible printed there. In 1525 he ordered his English translation of the New Testament published at Cologne by Peter Quentel, the foremost Catholic printer of that city. The work, however, was stopped by the authorities, when it had progressed to page forty. Tyndale fled to Worms, and the first edition of the New Testament ever printed came from the press of another Catholic printer, Peter Schoeffer, of that city. Two impressions, the unfinished Quentel edition having possibly been completed by Schoeffer, were brought to England secretly early in the summer of 1526. Such rigorous measures of suppression, however, were adopted at once that of one edition only a fragment remains, and only one perfect and one imperfect copy of the other. It is strange that a Catholic printer like Quentel, who published nothing but soundly Catholic books, should have been persuaded to print the first English Protestant part of the Bible.

Between 1525 and 1566 no less than forty editions of Tyndale's New Testament were printed. Tyndale continued his labors by translating parts of the Old Testament. In 1530 the Five Books of Moses were printed in Marburg, Germany, by the Lutheran printer Hans Luft,

and the next year the Book of Jonah followed. The remaining books were never translated by Tyndale.

Official Opposition in England

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primates and other divines, and it was thought unnecessary by all of them that the Scriptures should be in the hands of the common people. The translation of the Scriptures would rather be the occasion of an increase of error among the people than of any good to their souls. But if his people utterly abandoned all perverse and seditious opinions, and all the corrupt translations were exterminated, His Highness intended to provide that the Holy Scriptures should be translated into the English tongue by learned and Catholic persons. The condemned heretical books of the English heretics, and others of continental reformers, were books filled with general charges against the existing system of church and state, which were written with incredible scurrility and ribaldry and were found vile and injurious by statesmen and prelates alike. All who bore public responsibility could not but abhor them. The royal proclamations against heresy urged upon the bishops and clergy to destroy the condemned heretical books and English Bibles and to imprison heretics; they were to be assisted by sheriffs, mayors, bailiffs, and constables.¹⁷⁾ This was the reception accorded to the First English Bible by church and state in England.

The clergy sensed the dangers involved in the clamor for an English Bible. The Convocation of the clergy met at Canterbury January 21, 1531, and declared that "there was a hypocritical pretence of religion and following of the Gospel, but the real design was to pull down the

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Church and seize her possessions." Nevertheless J. R. Dore deplotes the decision of the clergy of May 1530 against translation of the Bible into English. "The postponement," he writes,¹⁸⁾ "of the issue of an English Bible, translated by competent men, under the authority of the Church, was a most unfortunate event, although it was decided on after calm deliberation by the best and wisest men in the land, as it led to versions being published containing bitter glosses, which caused contentions, and wranglings in alehouses and other places, and the irreverent use of God's Holy Word. While giving Archbishop Warham and the Council full credit for being influenced by conscientious motives alone, we cannot but deeply lament this error of judgment. Those who were living at the time, and cognizant of all the circumstances of the case, imputed no blame to them." In Germany the multiplicity of German versions did not stop Luther's German Bible from coming into existence, and an authorized English version would not have prevented apostate priests and Friars like Tyndale and Coverdale from surreptitiously sending their English versions from over-sea. On April 15, 1532, the Bishops state that "no notable person" had fallen into heresy; that only "certain apostates, friars, monks, lewd priests, bankrupt merchants, vagabonds, and lewd idle fellows of corrupt intent had embraced the abominable opinions lately sprung up in Germany."¹⁹⁾ Such persons would never have been satisfied with an authorized English Bible.

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In November 1534, Parliament declared that the King is "Supreme Head of the Church of England." At the same time the clergy of southern England met in Convocation and requested Thomas Cranmer, Archbishop of Canterbury, to make instance with the King that he would order all heretical books (including Tyndale's English versions of the Bible) to be delivered up within three months, to prohibit his lay subjects from publicly and contentiously disputing on the Catholic Faith, and that he would appoint fit persons to translate the Holy Scriptures into the vulgar tongue, and to allow them to the people according to their learning.²⁰) Yet no action was taken by the King in the matter of translating the Bible.

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"There was little desire in England for a Bible in English," declares J. R. Dore,²²⁾ "and Nicolson, who sold Coverdale's Bible, had great difficulty in disposing of it. In order to get the edition off his hands, he removed Coverdale's original title page and substituted a new one, Nicolson's second issue of 1537." The same Anglican scholar writes again²³⁾: "We must remember that the universal desire for a Bible in England we read so much of in most works on

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the subject, existed only in the imagination of the writers. So far from England then being a 'Bible-thirsty land', there was no anxiety whatever for an English version at that time, excepting among a small minority of the people. There was no general desire for a vernacular Bible in England. Evidence is George Constantyne. George Constantyne, Vicar of Llanhuadaine, Registrar of St. David's, says: How mercifully, how plentifully and purely hath God sent His Word to us here in England. Again how unthankfully, how rebelliously, how carnally, and unwillingly do we receive it. Who is there among us that will have a Bible, but he must be compelled thereto.—Much more evidence could be adduced from sermons printed at the time, but the fact that the same edition of the Bible was often re-issued with fresh titles and preliminary matter, is sufficient to prove that there was no general demand for Bibles from the millions of people living in Great Britain. Even the clergy were not enthusiastic on the subject. Hugh Latimer almost entirely ignored the English Bible, and always took his text from the Latin Vulgate. The statement made by Foxe that 'it was wonderful to see with what joy this book of God was received, not only among the learned sort, and those that were noted for lovers of the reformation, but generally all England over among all the vulgar common people' is not more true than are many other statements made in the 'Acts and Monuments'; it is untruthful. If the people all England over were so anxious to possess the new translation, what need was there of so many penal enactments to force it

into circulation, and of Royal proclamations threatening with the King's displeasure those who neglected to purchase copies. We have documentary evidence that the inhabitants of Cornwall and Devonshire unanimously objected to the new translation, and during 'the pilgrimage of grace' in the north of England (Oct.-Nov., 1536) the Protestant English Bible in Durham Cathedral was destroyed. It is strange that this statement of Foxe should have been so often quoted by writers who must have known it to be exaggerated."

These words were written by a man who had a great veneration for the Protestant English Bible. Immediately following the frank disavowal of Foxe's mendacious statement Dore writes: "We have cause for deep thankfulness that each new version of Holy Writ is an improvement on its predecessor. While preserving all the beauties of that Past Master in the art of writing pleasant English, William Tyndale, blemishes have been removed, and our translation of the Bible is worthy of the throne it occupies in the hearts of all true Englishmen."

Translators Proscribed in England

The translators of the English Protestant Bible were just as violently proscribed by Henry VIII. as their English Bibles. William Tyndale had continued to send his Bibles and seditious tracts surreptitiously into England from a safe distance beyond the seas until Henry VIII. demanded the surrender of Tyndale from the emperor Charles V. as one who spread sedition in England. Apprised of the

danger, Tyndale left Antwerp in 1531, hiding in other places. In 1533, however, he returned to Antwerp to revise his translations. He had been living in hiding for two years, when in 1535 he was arrested by the imperial officers; he was kept in prison for a year and three months, and finally, on August 6, 1536, was strangled at the stake as a heretic.

At the time Tyndale was executed in Belgium, the government of Henry VIII. began to change its hostile attitude towards the English Bible. In August, 1536, Cromwell, as the King's vicar-general, or vicegerent in spiritual matters, issued under the well-known name of Injunctions a set of stringent regulations to be observed by the deans and clergy charged with the cure of souls. The clergy were to enjoin parents and others to teach the children the Pater Noster, the Articles of Faith and the Ten Commandments in English, and in their sermons they were to recite the same little by little, till the whole was learned, giving the texts in writing to those who could read, or telling them where to obtain printed copies. Among other regulations Cromwell ordered that "before the feast of St. Peter ad Vincula next coming (August 1, 1537) every parson or proprietary of any parish church within this realme" should provide and place in the choir a whole Bible in Latin and also in English for any one to read, and that they "shall discourage no man from reading any part of the Bible either in Latin or English, but rather comfort, exhort, and admonish every man to read the same, whereby they may the better know their duties to God, to their sovereign Lord the King,

and their neighbor: ever gently and charitably exhorting them that in the reading and inquisition of the true sense of the same, they do in no wise stiffly contend with one another about the same, but refer the declaration of those places that be in controversy to the judgment of them that are better learned." As no English version of the Bible had as yet been printed, with the exception of Coverdale's Bible of the year before, and as Cromwell had once known and patronized Coverdale, Dixon thinks Cromwell by this injunction sought to promote the sale of Coverdale's Bible, which was still under the ban. "In so doing," this scholar remarks, "he made a compromise between the opposite principles of authority and private enterprise in the matter of translating the Bible: and this kind of compromise was repeated afterwards in the Reformation." James Gairdner is inclined to believe that this injunction about the Bible was withdrawn soon afterwards; otherwise it must appear Cromwell had changed his mind continually. At any rate, says Dixon,²⁴) the injunction regarding the Bible remained a dead letter for the time being.

For more than eleven years the English Bibles had been denounced, searched out and burnt until Cromwell, at least covertly, granted approbation to one of them: Coverdale's Bible. Apparently the opposition to the English Bibles

²⁴) Dixon, L. c., Vol. I., pp. 444-8, 455; Gairdner, James, *The English Church in the Sixteenth Century, from the Accession of Henry VIII. to the Death of Mary*. London, 1903. pp. 177-8, 191-2. Gairdner thinks it probable that Cromwell intended to promote the sale of Coverdale's Bible.

was too strong even for Cromwell to overcome and the difficulty of enforcing compliance with his injunction induced him to revoke it.

Meanwhile a movement was made by the clergy to have learned men appointed to prepare and publish an authorized version of the Bible in order to counteract those gotten out by individual heretics. The King was petitioned more than once to have the committee appointed for the work but he never acted on the request. The Primate Cranmer on his own responsibility, undertook an authorized version which did not, however, progress farther than the New Testament, and was never published. The work of the bishops was brought to a halt by Cromwell's patronaging Coverdale's Bible and his injunction of August, 1536, to have the Bible, both in Latin and English, forthwith provided in every church.

Finally, in August, 1537, the first licensed English Protestant Bible made its appearance. Cromwell's patronage of Coverdale's Bible was weakened by the appearance of the new edition of the whole English Bible, published under the name of Thomas Matthew by the two London printers Grafton and Whitchurch. Through Cromwell's influence this Bible was authorized by King Henry VIII., being "set forth with the kinge's most gracyous lycence." This was the first Protestant English Bible printed in England. About the same time Nicolson brought out also Coverdale's Bible in 1537 "with the Kynges moost gracious licence," and Protestant England had thus two licensed Bibles in the same year.

Matthew's Bible is a compilation from Tyndale's and Coverdale's versions. The Five Books of Moses and the New Testament were reprinted from Tyndale's editions of 1530 and 1535, with very slight variations; the rest is taken from Coverdale and, probably, in part from some unpublished versions by Tyndale. Thus the King gave his license to works which he had condemned to the flames by his former Proclamations.

Matthew's Bible was published as a bookseller's speculation. The printers had invested five hundred pounds, some of it borrowed, in the venture. The speculation would have failed if Cromwell had not come to the rescue. The printer Grafton wrote to Cromwell a few months after publication of the Bible to ask that he might either have the privilege that no other person should print the book for three years, or that the King would command every curate to procure one copy, and every abbey six, adding that he would have compelled only the "papistical sort" to buy them. In the diocese of London alone, he said, enough of the papistical sort would be found to dispose of a great part of the stock of fifteen hundred copies.

Cromwell acted upon these suggestions of the speculative printer. In the summer of 1538 he sent the privileged printer Grafton and Coverdale to Paris to prepare a new and improved edition of the English Bible. It was believed printing could be done better in Paris than in England. The publication was halted in Paris by the authorities, and the work was finished in London in April, 1539. That was the "Great Bible," or "Bible of the largest volume."

Cromwell's and Elizabeth's Injunctions

Meanwhile, on September 30th and the first days of October, 1538, Cromwell had issued the second series of his Injunctions to the clergy. One of them ordered the clergy that one book of the whole Bible of the largest volume be provided in every church at the joint and equally divided cost of the parson and the parishioners, and be set up, where it could be read most conveniently. At the same time the parson was warned in strong language not to discourage the reading of the Bible thus provided, but to "exhort every person to read the same, admonishing them to avoid contentious altercations and refer the explication of obscure passages to men of higher judgment in Scripture." Gairdner²⁵⁾ says that "the order for setting up a large Bible in every church was, no doubt, issued to satisfy in some measure the desire of the printer Grafton who had petitioned Cromwell a year before that every parson and abbey might be compelled to take copies of the Matthew Bible." Dixon, however, thinks the order was intended for the Great Bible and had become premature on account of the delay in the publication of this Bible. "In this manner, the patron of Grafton and Coverdale for the second time sought to impose their industry upon the realm: and his admonition remained, as it will be seen, for the second time almost a dead letter."²⁶⁾ Nevertheless, the publication of the Bible was a financial success. Gairdner says²⁷⁾ :

25) L. c., p. 202.

26) Dixon, L. c., Vol. I., pp. 453-5, 519-21; Vol. II., 1887, pp. 72-9; Gairdner, L. c., pp. 202, 223.

27) L. c., p. 223.

“The Great Bible was an enterprise of Cromwell’s which no doubt was profitable, as the churches were compelled to purchase copies.” Dore, however, was cautious against placing too much confidence in the array of editions. “When the printers,” he says, “had a large remainder of Bibles they added a new title-page and fresh preliminary matter, and tried to sell the book as a newly revised and corrected edition, as Bibles and Testaments did not meet with so ready a sale in the sixteenth century as writers on the subject have represented. Title-pages cannot be relied on; in some cases the title-page was composed in order to sell the book, without any regard to truth.”²⁸⁾

The Injunctions of Cromwell became the model of the more celebrated Injunctions of Edward VI. and Elizabeth, which finally foisted the Protestant English Bible on the nation. Meanwhile, however, the English Bible was obliged to weather some rough tempests.

“Great efforts were made,” writes Dore, “to induce the people of England to accept the Great Bible, for the majority were hostile to a vernacular Bible, hence the number of injunctions and even penal laws that were required to force it into circulation.”²⁹⁾ In the “Act of Proclamation for Uniformity of Religion,” issued in the middle of 1539, Henry VIII. laments the audacity of the other party in wresting Scripture and subverting the authority of princes. He declares his indulgence in allowing the Bible had been abused. He was not com-

28) L. c., pp. 56, 65.

29) L. c., p. 155.

pelled by God's Word, he states, to set forth the Scriptures in English: he had done it of his own liberality and goodness, to bring his subjects from their old ignorance: but instead of reading them decently, they read them with loud and high voices in churches and chapels, especially during the divine service. He, therefore, desired that none but curates, or licensed preachers should expound the mysteries of the Old or New Testament. And he adds pains and penalties for offenses. Reading of the vernacular Bible had indeed, as Henry states, brought about wresting Scripture and subverting the authority of princes and magistrates, of laws and common justice; these same effects were brought about by medieval heretics time and again; and it was to restrain the audacity of such Bible-readers that the Church had, in some places, forbidden the reading of the vernacular Bible, the reason being the same as that which impelled the first Protestant English king.

In a Royal Injunction issued after April, 1539, King Henry forbade anyone to print or sell any manner of English books without special license "on pain of losing all his goods, and suffering imprisonment at His Majesty's pleasure." No Catholic emperor or king ever issued such an unqualified indictment against vernacular books; these rulers tried to suppress heretical and seditious literature but did not hamper the printing and selling of other good literature. By the same Royal Injunction printers were forbidden to publish any English version of the Scriptures, unless it had been admitted by the

King, one of his council, or one of the bishops whose name had to be printed thereon, on pain of the King's most high displeasure or loss of goods, and imprisonment at the pleasure of the King. The Royal control of the Bible was extended at the same time by another mandate for checking the production of new translations. Such strangulation of the vernacular Bible was unknown to the Middle Ages. Cromwell was appointed by a Royal Mandate of November 14, 1539, to the charge of absolute censor: no English Bible should be printed except such as he had overseen and approved. Cromwell declared the Great Bible, which was issued in numerous editions, the standard version, and set the price for it (November 1539).

Seven editions came from the press during the two years from April 1539 to December 1541. On April 12, 1540, Cromwell declared in Parliament: After the King, of his benignity, had granted that the Bible might be read in the vernacular, that privilege had been and was wretchedly abused, some turning it to the support of heresies and some of superstitions. The King was, therefore, determined to promote true doctrine and to prevent abuses; "he studied to draw Englishmen of all conditions from the impious and irreverent use of the Bible, from their shameful twistings and audacious interpretations by heavy penalties." On July 28, 1540, Cromwell, the great patron of the Great Bible, was executed. Thereupon Coverdale, the literary editor of the Great Bible, fled to Germany; he lived at Bergzabern in the Bavarian Palatinate in 1545, where he married, although

tion, just mentioned, is accompanied by a commentary and divided into seven sermons. It is entitled: "Treatise concernynge the fruytfull saynges of David the Kynge in the seven penitential Psalms", and was printed at London in 1508, 1509 (3rd edit.), 1510, 1525, 1529, and 1555, achieving a total of 8 editions.

William Tyndale had gone to Germany in 1524 to have his English translation of the Bible printed there. In 1525 he ordered his English translation of the New Testament published at Cologne by Peter Quentel, the foremost Catholic printer of that city. The work, however, was stopped by the authorities, when it had progressed to page forty. Tyndale fled to Worms, and the first edition of the New Testament ever printed came from the press of another Catholic printer, Peter Schoeffer, of that city. Two impressions, the unfinished Quentel edition having possibly been completed by Schoeffer, were brought to England secretly early in the summer of 1526. Such rigorous measures of suppression, however, were adopted at once that of one edition only a fragment remains, and only one perfect and one imperfect copy of the other. It is strange that a Catholic printer like Quentel, who published nothing but soundly Catholic books, should have been persuaded to print the first English Protestant part of the Bible.

Between 1525 and 1566 no less than forty editions of Tyndale's New Testament were printed. Tyndale continued his labors by translating parts of the Old Testament. In 1530 the Five Books of Moses were printed in Marburg, Germany, by the Lutheran printer Hans Luft,

and the next year the Book of Jonah followed. The remaining books were never translated by Tyndale.

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Translators Proscribed in England

The translators of the English Protestant Bible were just as violently proscribed by Henry VIII. as their English Bibles. William Tyndale had continued to send his Bibles and seditious tracts surreptitiously into England from a safe distance beyond the seas until Henry VIII. demanded the surrender of Tyndale from the emperor Charles V. as one who spread sedition in England. Apprised of the

danger, Tyndale left Antwerp in 1531, hiding in other places. In 1533, however, he returned to Antwerp to revise his translations. He had been living in hiding for two years, when in 1535 he was arrested by the imperial officers; he was kept in prison for a year and three months, and finally, on August 6, 1536, was strangled at the stake as a heretic.

At the time Tyndale was executed in Belgium, the government of Henry VIII. began to change its hostile attitude towards the English Bible. In August, 1536, Cromwell, as the King's vicar-general, or vicegerent in spiritual matters, issued under the well-known name of Injunctions a set of stringent regulations to be observed by the deans and clergy charged with the cure of souls. The clergy were to enjoin parents and others to teach the children the Pater Noster, the Articles of Faith and the Ten Commandments in English, and in their sermons they were to recite the same little by little, till the whole was learned, giving the texts in writing to those who could read, or telling them where to obtain printed copies. Among other regulations Cromwell ordered that "before the feast of St. Peter ad Vincula next coming (August 1, 1537) every parson or proprietary of any parish church within this realme" should provide and place in the choir a whole Bible in Latin and also in English for any one to read, and that they "shall discourage no man from reading any part of the Bible either in Latin or English, but rather comfort, exhort, and admonish every man to read the same, whereby they may the better know their duties to God, to their sovereign Lord the King,

and their neighbor: ever gently and charitably exhorting them that in the reading and inquisition of the true sense of the same, they do in no wise stiffly contend with one another about the same, but refer the declaration of those places that be in controversy to the judgment of them that are better learned." As no English version of the Bible had as yet been printed, with the exception of Coverdale's Bible of the year before, and as Cromwell had once known and patronized Coverdale, Dixon thinks Cromwell by this injunction sought to promote the sale of Coverdale's Bible, which was still under the ban. "In so doing," this scholar remarks, "he made a compromise between the opposite principles of authority and private enterprise in the matter of translating the Bible: and this kind of compromise was repeated afterwards in the Reformation." James Gairdner is inclined to believe that this injunction about the Bible was withdrawn soon afterwards; otherwise it must appear Cromwell had changed his mind continually. At any rate, says Dixon,²⁴) the injunction regarding the Bible remained a dead letter for the time being.

For more than eleven years the English Bibles had been denounced, searched out and burnt until Cromwell, at least covertly, granted approbation to one of them: Coverdale's Bible. Apparently the opposition to the English Bibles

²⁴) Dixon, L. c., Vol. I., pp. 444-8, 455; Gairdner, James, *The English Church in the Sixteenth Century, from the Accession of Henry VIII. to the Death of Mary.* London, 1903. pp. 177-8, 191-2. Gairdner thinks it probable that Cromwell intended to promote the sale of Coverdale's Bible.

was too strong even for Cromwell to overcome and the difficulty of enforcing compliance with his injunction induced him to revoke it.

Meanwhile a movement was made by the clergy to have learned men appointed to prepare and publish an authorized version of the Bible in order to counteract those gotten out by individual heretics. The King was petitioned more than once to have the committee appointed for the work but he never acted on the request. The Primate Cranmer on his own responsibility, undertook an authorized version which did not, however, progress farther than the New Testament, and was never published. The work of the bishops was brought to a halt by Cromwell's patronaging Coverdale's Bible and his injunction of August, 1536, to have the Bible, both in Latin and English, forthwith provided in every church.

Finally, in August, 1537, the first licensed English Protestant Bible made its appearance. Cromwell's patronage of Coverdale's Bible was weakened by the appearance of the new edition of the whole English Bible, published under the name of Thomas Matthew by the two London printers Grafton and Whitchurch. Through Cromwell's influence this Bible was authorized by King Henry VIII., being "set forth with the kinge's most gracyous lycence." This was the first Protestant English Bible printed in England. About the same time Nicolson brought out also Coverdale's Bible in 1537 "with the Kynges moost gracious licence," and Protestant England had thus two licensed Bibles in the same year.

Matthew's Bible is a compilation from Tyndale's and Coverdale's versions. The Five Books of Moses and the New Testament were reprinted from Tyndale's editions of 1530 and 1535, with very slight variations; the rest is taken from Coverdale and, probably, in part from some unpublished versions by Tyndale. Thus the King gave his license to works which he had condemned to the flames by his former Proclamations.

Matthew's Bible was published as a bookseller's speculation. The printers had invested five hundred pounds, some of it borrowed, in the venture. The speculation would have failed if Cromwell had not come to the rescue. The printer Grafton wrote to Cromwell a few months after publication of the Bible to ask that he might either have the privilege that no other person should print the book for three years, or that the King would command every curate to procure one copy, and every abbey six, adding that he would have compelled only the "papistical sort" to buy them. In the diocese of London alone, he said, enough of the papistical sort would be found to dispose of a great part of the stock of fifteen hundred copies.

Cromwell acted upon these suggestions of the speculative printer. In the summer of 1538 he sent the privileged printer Grafton and Coverdale to Paris to prepare a new and improved edition of the English Bible. It was believed printing could be done better in Paris than in England. The publication was halted in Paris by the authorities, and the work was finished in London in April, 1539. That was the "Great Bible," or "Bible of the largest volume."

Cromwell's and Elizabeth's Injunctions

Meanwhile, on September 30th and the first days of October, 1538, Cromwell had issued the second series of his Injunctions to the clergy. One of them ordered the clergy that one book of the whole Bible of the largest volume be provided in every church at the joint and equally divided cost of the parson and the parishioners, and be set up, where it could be read most conveniently. At the same time the parson was warned in strong language not to discourage the reading of the Bible thus provided, but to "exhort every person to read the same, admonishing them to avoid contentious altercations and refer the explication of obscure passages to men of higher judgment in Scripture." Gairdner²⁵⁾ says that "the order for setting up a large Bible in every church was, no doubt, issued to satisfy in some measure the desire of the printer Grafton who had petitioned Cromwell a year before that every parson and abbey might be compelled to take copies of the Matthew Bible." Dixon, however, thinks the order was intended for the Great Bible and had become premature on account of the delay in the publication of this Bible. "In this manner, the patron of Grafton and Coverdale for the second time sought to impose their industry upon the realm: and his admonition remained, as it will be seen, for the second time almost a dead letter."²⁶⁾ Nevertheless, the publication of the Bible was a financial success. Gairdner says²⁷⁾ :

²⁵⁾ L. c., p. 202.

²⁶⁾ Dixon, L. c., Vol. I., pp. 453-5, 519-21; Vol. II., 1887, pp. 72-9; Gairdner, L. c., pp. 202, 223.

²⁷⁾ L. c., p. 223.

"The Great Bible was an enterprise of Cromwell's which no doubt was profitable, as the churches were compelled to purchase copies." Dore, however, was cautious against placing too much confidence in the array of editions. "When the printers," he says, "had a large remainder of Bibles they added a new title-page and fresh preliminary matter, and tried to sell the book as a newly revised and corrected edition, as Bibles and Testaments did not meet with so ready a sale in the sixteenth century as writers on the subject have represented. Title-pages cannot be relied on; in some cases the title-page was composed in order to sell the book, without any regard to truth."²⁸⁾

The Injunctions of Cromwell became the model of the more celebrated Injunctions of Edward VI. and Elizabeth, which finally foisted the Protestant English Bible on the nation. Meanwhile, however, the English Bible was obliged to weather some rough tempests.

"Great efforts were made," writes Dore, "to induce the people of England to accept the Great Bible, for the majority were hostile to a vernacular Bible, hence the number of injunctions and even penal laws that were required to force it into circulation."²⁹⁾ In the "Act of Proclamation for Uniformity of Religion," issued in the middle of 1539, Henry VIII. laments the audacity of the other party in wresting Scripture and subverting the authority of princes. He declares his indulgence in allowing the Bible had been abused. He was not com-

²⁸⁾ L. c., pp. 56, 65.

²⁹⁾ L. c., p. 155.

pelled by God's Word, he states, to set forth the Scriptures in English: he had done it of his own liberality and goodness, to bring his subjects from their old ignorance: but instead of reading them decently, they read them with loud and high voices in churches and chapels, especially during the divine service. He, therefore, desired that none but curates, or licensed preachers should expound the mysteries of the Old or New Testament. And he adds pains and penalties for offenses. Reading of the vernacular Bible had indeed, as Henry states, brought about wresting Scripture and subverting the authority of princes and magistrates, of laws and common justice; these same effects were brought about by medieval heretics time and again; and it was to restrain the audacity of such Bible-readers that the Church had, in some places, forbidden the reading of the vernacular Bible, the reason being the same as that which impelled the first Protestant English king.

In a Royal Injunction issued after April, 1539, King Henry forbade anyone to print or sell any manner of English books without special license "on pain of losing all his goods, and suffering imprisonment at His Majesty's pleasure." No Catholic emperor or king ever issued such an unqualified indictment against vernacular books; these rulers tried to suppress heretical and seditious literature but did not hamper the printing and selling of other good literature. By the same Royal Injunction printers were forbidden to publish any English version of the Scriptures, unless it had been admitted by the

King, one of his council, or one of the bishops whose name had to be printed thereon, on pain of the King's most high displeasure or loss of goods, and imprisonment at the pleasure of the King. The Royal control of the Bible was extended at the same time by another mandate for checking the production of new translations. Such strangulation of the vernacular Bible was unknown to the Middle Ages. Cromwell was appointed by a Royal Mandate of November 14, 1539, to the charge of absolute censor: no English Bible should be printed except such as he had overseen and approved. Cromwell declared the Great Bible, which was issued in numerous editions, the standard version, and set the price for it (November 1539).

Seven editions came from the press during the two years from April 1539 to December 1541. On April 12, 1540, Cromwell declared in Parliament: After the King, of his benignity, had granted that the Bible might be read in the vernacular, that privilege had been and was wretchedly abused, some turning it to the support of heresies and some of superstitions. The King was, therefore, determined to promote true doctrine and to prevent abuses; "he studied to draw Englishmen of all conditions from the impious and irreverent use of the Bible, from their shameful twistings and audacious interpretations by heavy penalties." On July 28, 1540, Cromwell, the great patron of the Great Bible, was executed. Thereupon Coverdale, the literary editor of the Great Bible, fled to Germany; he lived at Bergzabern in the Bavarian Palatinate in 1545, where he married, although

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