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## TUDOR BIBLES.

BY THE REV. W. T. WHITLEY, LL.D., F.R.HIST.S.

WHEN Harri Tudor brought the Welsh dragon to support the arms of England, Welsh and English alike knew the Bible only by a few of its stories : when his granddaughter bequeathed the throne to James Stuart of Scotland, even Ireland had the whole scriptures in print, with their law, their poetry, their teaching. The common people had at best seen in their church windows pictures of Jonah and Daniel and local knights ; or had bowed before statues of heroes from John of Patmos to Richard of Chichester ; they had expressed themselves, and accommodated sacred events to their own secular life, in pageants where tragedy jostled comedy : the Tudor period widened their horizon, unveiled the goodly fellowship of the prophets, revealed the glorious company of the apostles, taught them to compare spiritual things with spiritual, enabled them to pray with understanding. The Bible had been only in a tongue not known even to all priests, and in written copies beyond the means of many : it was now printed in every tongue spoken in these islands, read at every church service, enjoined on every kirk and in every home whither Margaret Tudor had gone, pored over in many a home where Elizabeth Tudor was loved. Consider how it was that the five Tudors saw such great change, then in a few words what happened in each generation.

In the days of the Plantagenets, Oxford scholars had written out for the multitude all the scriptures ; the Red Rose had seen a fiery discouragement of their use ; the White Rose had fostered a printing-press in monastery cloisters, whence the Golden Legend showed to all English readers heroes of many nations and ages, beginning with the Hebrews of the Bible. A new birth of learning drew attention to their languages, in Palestine and in Egypt ; a Dutch scholar patronised by the Lady Margaret Tudor offered a Testament in Ciceronian Latin, side by side with Pauline Greek, and he urged that in every land there be a translation for weaver to con, for ploughman to croon. Margaret's grandson was a fine scholar like Henry Beauclerc, determined to rule in his realm like Henry of Anjou ; he trusted his people, as they admired him, so adopting the freewill offering of an English Bible, he handed it down for clergy and laity to read as they would. His daughter Mary translated one of the Paraphrases of Erasmus, that anyone might understand easily what was the meaning of the deep words in John's Gospel. In the short reign of his son Edward, books of prayer were put forth, not for cloistered men of religion, but for the commonalty ; they provided, twice daily, reading of three portions of scripture. His daughter Elizabeth began her reign with public acceptance of the Gospels, and soon gave leave for a Family Bible to be imported and reprinted. All these advances may now be traced more fully.

William Tyndale led the way. Using the Testament which Erasmus had prepared at Cambridge, he put it into nervous English, the speech of the ordinary man. Little as he thought that the apostles spoke the tongue of the unlearned, being no orators like Isocrates, it was a true instinct that led him to follow the counsel of the Dutchman and put the words of Jewish fisherman and tent-maker into the words of English ploughman and weaver. Priest as he was, he trod in the steps of Jeremiah to be prophet as well. Exciting the wrath of the high priests, he gave his own testimony, which was rejected and burned; bearing the cross of Jeremiah, in an alien land he was betrayed and slain. But he had lit a flame like the bush on Sinai; it glowed ever more brightly without being consumed, and in its light his nation has walked ever since.

Myles Coverdale soon followed his example. No scholar he, to profit by Hellenists of Cambridge and Rabbis of Worms; but a friar with a ministry to the people. If Tyndale was the Moffat of that age, giving the scripture in the ordinary language of the people, Coverdale was the Weymouth, comparing the best that specialists had done, and at secondhand providing more than Tyndale had lived to finish.

These men sprang from the ranks of the clergy, vowed to give their lives to the service of God. Next came the turn of laymen. King Henry gave a doctrinal lead with his Ten Articles, accepted by Convocation. They set forth a standard of orthodoxy, the Bible and the three creeds. Clearly then the Bible deserved study.

A student of Wycliffe's work had long guided a circle of humble readers, for "hidden springs of lollardy still formed oases in English religious life." Thomas Matthew, councillor at Colchester, bearing the name of two apostles, followed the craft of four others and was a fishmonger; yet neither unlearned nor ignorant, but keeping records in Latin, and accustomed to do business with foreigners. At Antwerp a man was reprinting Tyndale's Testament, of which his circle bought many copies; there too the Emperor's Printer was putting forth Bibles in French and Latin; within the English Merchants' House there, whence Tyndale had been enticed, he might safely continue that pioneer's work, visiting him in prison and bringing away more translation; at Zurich a ripe scholar was publishing commentaries on scripture in the vein of Colet and Erasmus. Thomas Matthew was able in a year's absence from Colchester to piece out Tyndale's work with Coverdale's, to write his own notes, expository and devotional, to gather much material from excellent Bibles in other tongues, to employ a good printer, and to provide a good corrector of the press in one John Rogers, to dispose of the edition to two London merchants, to dedicate the book to the King, and boldly to avow himself the editor of the whole fine work. Matthew returned, to be honoured speedily in true Biblical fashion, as Chamberlain of his town; his Bible was at once provided with the King's most gracious licence, was patronised by both Cromwell the Vicar-General and Cranmer the Archbishop; it was reprinted

twice, and his fame was good enough for his name to be retained for a revision by another man.

So far, all had been private ventures. Tudors were not averse to patronise such, but they liked also to lead. So the King's Vicar-General engaged Coverdale to work in Paris with the printer who had long supplied the English service-books, and revise Matthew's Bible, with orders to drop all notes. When the French Inquisition stopped the work, the King's Printer in London saw his opportunity; the Vicar-General engaged a second reviser, a layman like himself, Richard Taverner of Oxford. Soon both revisions of Matthew were on the market, the promoters came to terms, Coverdale's work was preferred, Cranmer wrote a preface, Bishops Tunstall and Heath fathered a further slight revision, Cromwell ordered every parish to buy a copy and place it in the church that anyone might read it. And thus the first act closed, with the Great Bible authorised and appointed for general reading.

For the last six years of Henry's reign there was a lull. Under his young son, the printers began again, for there was an advance upon casual reading in church by all comers. A Book of Common Prayer ordered official Lessons in the course of public service. Ministers were bidden study the scriptures and preach from them. Every parish had to place in its church a translation of the Paraphrases by Erasmus, for general reading and study. The Great Bible was reprinted twice, Taverner's once, Matthew's thrice, all in large Church size. In handier quarto, such as a study circle might use, Tyndale's Testament came out in four editions, Coverdale's Bible in two, the Great in three, besides a Testament. Octavos were produced, such as a family might need; Tyndale, Coverdale, Taverner, the Great, were all made available. Even 16mo pocket Testaments were printed. There was a call for Helps to study; the organist at Windsor compiled a concordance, illustrations were cut for Juge's revision of Tyndale, and used in several editions.

Thus within six years, forty impressions of Bible or Testament bore witness to a popular demand. From the parish church, the printed word had made its way into many a home. So large was the market that London presses could not cope with it. At Worcester, a Welshman catered for a diocese which knew the activities of Latimer and Hooper. And Zurich, where perhaps Coverdale had led the way, now reprinted him in quarto for a wider circle.

This activity came abruptly to an end with the death of Edward. Some Bibles in the hands of the printers seem to have been confiscated and destroyed; but it was too late to suppress the knowledge that had penetrated into thousands of homes, or to slake the thirst for more.

The wheel had turned full circle; once again scholars betook themselves abroad and devoted themselves to Bible translation. A new centre had become important, Geneva, where had gathered such leaders as Farel, Calvin, Coverdale, Knox. Hither came William Whittingham, borderer, soldier, ambassador. He under-

took a fresh New Testament, which made a triple appeal. It was in roman type, for the general reader, who found summaries of every book and chapter. It showed diversities of reading, and the new verse-division recently invented by a Frenchman; thus it catered for scholars, who found also elaborate tables. At all hard places were annotations, profitable for simple men who wanted light and aids to devotion. The Testament was quickly followed by a Psalter, which had the same practical end in view.

Indeed, as England was so musical, some of the finest psalms had already been put into English verse, that they might be sung at home and abroad; courtiers had begun, Whittingham carried further. Geneva had a rich collection of tunes from many sources for the French to sing psalms, and the English exiles learned the songs of Zion in a strange land.

Thus closed the second act, in which the Bible had secured not only a precarious footing in the parish churches, but a home in the hearts of the people.

The third act shows no longer individual translators, but groups; of exiles at Geneva, of bishops in England, of exiles at Rheims. Of these, far the most important was the little company at Geneva.

They based their version on Whittingham and on the Great Old Testament, improving by comparison with recent Latin and French. Its importance was not in the mere translation, but in the abundance of material added. Summaries of the books and the chapters, maps, illustrations, cross-references, marginal notes, made it far the most attractive edition yet published. It made a double appeal, loyalty to Queen Elizabeth, religiously to the brethren of England, Scotland, Ireland, etc. There was the double response, for Elizabeth gave copyright for seven years, so that soon a fine folio for church use came out at Geneva, while the people bought edition after edition.

One result deserves especial notice, the doctrine ingrained into all readers. John Calvin had wrought out a full and coherent scheme of thought, which was fascinating all Protestants outside Germany; his ideas filled the minds of all at Geneva, and were transferred in notes at every possible place in this edition, also were gathered up in a full index. The result was that all readers of this Genevan Version became soaked in Calvin's doctrines; King James of Scotland, the bishops in England, down to the humblest students. Britain became Calvinist, owing to the notes in this popular Bible.

This was the more important, as the Church of Rome was summarising its traditional theology, and declaring itself on new issues, as a consequence of the Council of Trent. The result was that two massive systems of doctrine were presented to thinkers; and they were practically obliged to attend to them, and to choose. In France, Switzerland, Holland, Britain, all divines and most religious people ranged themselves under the banner of Geneva or of Trent; they followed either Calvin or Pope Pius IV. This was no narrow national issue, but international. Men passed freely from land to

land, and found friends of their own way of thinking. As late as 1619, James of Scotland and England sent divines of both countries to the Calvinist Synod of Dort in Holland; and this was largely due to the influence of the Anglo-Genevan Bible.

In England there was a cross-current. For centuries the bishops had been accustomed to lead in all religious matters, and to rule. In the matter of Bible-translation they had often asserted themselves. Courtenay had taken the lead in forbidding the general use of the Wycliffite Bible, or any other translation not authorised by bishops. Great opposition had been made to the unauthorised versions by Tyndale and Coverdale. The King had agreed so far that he assumed the right of licensing, while he deputed it to his vicar-general, the layman Thomas Cromwell. As no second vicar-general was appointed, the bishops began to reassert themselves. When they were all deprived under Elizabeth, and a new staff of bishops was appointed, of very different theological leanings, the new bishops claimed all the disciplinary powers of their predecessors. Richard Coxe, Richard Davies, Edmund Grindal, Robert Horne, Edwin Sandys, had been on the continent, were well acquainted with Calvin's views, and largely adopted his doctrines; but they were as resolved as Matthew Parker and their Romanist ancestors to uphold their episcopal authority. So the authorised Great Bible, which at least professed to have been corrected by two bishops, was now carefully revised by bishops and canons and the archdeacon of Wilts, then it came forth as the "Bishops' Bible" in 1568. It was the most handsome yet issued, and the most expensive, thirteen times the cost of a good recent Testament. Elizabeth refused to authorise it, but the Southern Convocation approved it; and so long as Parker lived, he practically secured it a monopoly.

Directly he died, the Genevan was reprinted in England. It was soon improved by a revision of the Testament, executed by Laurence Tomson, an Oxford layman patronised by Secretary Walsingham; he wrote new notes based on those by Beza, the Genevan scholar. Presently a fresh version of the Revelation was substituted, by the Frenchman Junius. Before Elizabeth's reign ended, more than a hundred editions, in all sizes from folio to 32mo, were eagerly absorbed both sides of the Tweed, while only about seven of the Bishops' Bible were taken up, despite all the attempts to force it on the parishes.

Cambridge indeed entered the field with Genevan Bible and Testament, perhaps at the instigation of the earl of Leicester. But far more important was the action of the Church of Scotland, which ordered every parish to subscribe £4 13s. 4d. Scots for a fine edition of the Genevan. This was executed at Edinburgh, and then an act of the Scottish Parliament bade every substantial householder to buy a copy. On the title-page of this Scottish Authorised Version appear the arms of James VI, supported by two unicorns.

So evident was it that the Bible had taken its place in the hearts of the people, that Roman Catholic exiles set themselves to prepare an edition; it followed the pattern popularised by the Genevan,

while its notes of course followed the Tridentine theology. As the Latin Vulgate had been decreed authoritative, this was taken as the immediate source, Greek and Hebrew being treated rather as secondary. The English was based largely on the versions of Coverdale and Taverner. Three scholars of Oxford spent years on the work, completing it all in this reign. The New Testament was published in 1582 at Rheims. It received close attention from scholars at home, who printed its text side by side with the Bishops' to show its errors; the Catholic scholars retorted with a second edition in 1600 at Douay. The result was to encourage close comparison with all the sources, so that popular demand and ecclesiastical rivalry both played their part in careful study, by populace and scholars.

Wales was the home of the Tudors. Even in the reign of Henry VIII the ordinary readings from the epistles and gospels were put into Welsh, while under his daughter there followed the Prayer-book, a Testament, the Bible, and the Psalter. Indeed, as metrical psalms were beloved by the Calvinists, a captain of the royal navy turned the psalms into Welsh verse of national style.

Ireland again was remembered, and Elizabeth's reign closed with a Testament in the old Erse language and character.

Scotland gave a new lead at the end. The Genevan Bible, the Authorised Version of the northern realm, was now forty years old. It had been improved twice, but was substantially the work of Englishmen. The Church of Scotland wished to mark the new century with a new revision and took steps to that end. Happily the project met the approval of the King, and when the Puritans in England put forward the same request, the way was clear for action. This replaced the Great, authorised in England, and the Genevan, authorised in Scotland; it was dedicated to James, king of both countries, whose Scotch unicorn ousted the Welsh dragon as a mate for the English lion; for the demand came from two nations, trained in Tudor times to love the Bible, to seek accuracy, to produce scores of competent scholars.

The Tudors reigned 118 years. Those four generations saw vast changes political, social, religious; in many of them the royal house played a great part. The Lady Margaret planted the New Learning at both universities, and also patronised Caxton, first to print Bible stories in his English version of the Golden Legend. In her son's day, men like Colet taught Oxford and London to delve below the mere facts of Bible story to the teaching of thinkers like Paul. Her Reader Erasmus, a pupil of Colet, called the effective attention of Europe to the Greek Testament, urging that in every land it be made available to the humblest workman. Her grandson saw four men carry out this hope. A priest translated the Testament of Erasmus, a friar compared five versions and put out a whole Bible, a merchant edited with the best continental helps and secured the King's licence for general circulation, a lawyer was employed by the King's vicar-general to revise for official use; till Church and State combined to authorise the Great Bible for public reading by all.

The old forms of religion were no longer satisfying the cravings of devout men. Convents whither men and women retreated to be in fellowship with God, had been losing their attraction and their vitality, and they fell in a storm. Henceforth religion was the concern of the common man, and it was nurtured on the Word of God. The ecclesiastical revolutions under the three children of Henry illustrated in many ways how devotion was rooted now in the Bible. Scholars, clerics, laymen, all played their part in improving the versions. English, Scottish, Welsh and Irish, all received the Word in their own tongues. The universities reorganised their studies, turning from the thinkers of the Middle Ages to those of the apostolic age; the churches shifted the centre of their worship to a Common Prayer inspired by and incorporating much scripture; the homes of the people prized the Family Bible, which altered the thought of the nation and built up its character. Under the last of the Tudors, the Bible not only became the best-known book, it began to mould the literature and the life of two nations.

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E. F. T.

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