

The Reformation, as was naturally to be expected, directed men's attention earnestly and successfully to the Scriptures, as the foundation and sole rule of faith; and every exertion was used by learned men that translations of them should become every where accessible.

The praise-worthy labours of Luther, in this particular, soon found imitators in England; and the first who distinguished himself in this field, and who afterwards fell a victim to the tyranny and revenge of Rome, was William Tyndale, a native of Wales, educated at the university of Oxford, where a portrait of him is still preserved. Tyndale determined to furnish his countrymen with a modern version of the New Testament. The former English translations mentioned above had been made from the Latin Vulgate; but Tyndale wisely resolved to go to the fountain-head, and to translate from the original Greek. His New Testament was first printed abroad in the year 1526, the state of religious feeling in England not then permitting the publication of such a work in this country! So little liberty then had the press! [This first edition is so rare, that only one copy and part of a second are known to be existing.] The book was most eagerly received by the people; which, when Tonstall, Bishop of London, heard, he issued severe orders (then obeyed) to call in all the copies and deliver them to him; he himself bought up very many, and caused them to be publicly burned in London. This decree, however, of the Bishop, only turned to his own confusion; for the very money which he paid for the copies so eagerly sought after, enabled Tyndale to prepare and circulate a revised and more correct edition.

In 1530, Tyndale published a version of the Five Books of Moses; and in 1531, the prophecy of Jonah, with a preface against the pope. In 1535, appeared the *Whole Bible*, translated by Miles Coverdale, who subsequently became Bishop of Exeter, but at this time was abroad, through fear of persecution for holding Protestant tenets. His bible was not printed in England, (but either at Antwerp or Hamburg) though it was dedicated to King Henry the Eighth. Shortly afterwards, in 1536 or 1537, through the influence of Thomas Cromwell, Lord Privy Seal, the King's Vicegerent in Ecclesiastical affairs, and a warm favourer of the Reformation, an injunction was obtained that every parish church should be provided with a large bible, to be openly exposed in the choir for public use.

Two years after the former, there appeared a second translation of the Bible, in folio, under the name of *Matthew's*; consisting partly of Tyndale's version, and partly of Coverdale's, with several corrections. In 1539 came forth the *Great Bible* or *Cramer's Bible*, that Archbishop being known for a special favourer of so good a work. This was a large and handsome folio volume, fit for the public use of churches; it was chiefly a correction of Matthew's Bible. From it is taken that version of the Psalms which is still retained and used in our Prayer books. In the same year, 1539, appeared another corrected edition, by Richard Taverner: in 1540 and 1541, reimpressions of the *Great Bible*, with a prologue by Cramer: and in this last year the King decreed that a copy of this Bible in the great volume, should be set up in every parish church in England.

But soon afterwards Henry's religious views were turned into another direction; and, by the continual urgent exertions of the popish party among the Bishops, an Act of Parliament was passed, restricting closely the liberty, formerly enjoyed, of possessing and reading the Scriptures. This Act contains several curious clauses: namely, all translations are allowed, *except Tyndale's* (the one most in use); but all preambles or notes are ordered to be cut away or blotted out, from Bibles and Testaments of every translation whatsoever. [This clause may account for the mutilated state in which copies of our early editions of the Scriptures are most frequently found.] No person, unless appointed thereto by the King or the Ordinary, may read to others any

part of the Scripture in English, on pain of a month's imprisonment. But the Lord Chancellor, Captains of the wars, the Judges, Recorders of cities, and the Speaker of the House of Commons, 'which heretofore have been accustomed to declare or teach any good, virtuous or godly exhortations in any assemblies,' may use any part of Scripture as they have been wont. Likewise, every nobleman or gentleman, being a householder, may read, or cause to be read by any of his family servants, and to his own family, any text of the Bible or New Testament: and every merchant, being a householder, and any other persons, except women and apprentices, might read the Bible *privately to themselves*. But no women (except noblemen and gentlemen, who might read to themselves, but to none others,) artificers, apprentices, journeymen, husbandmen, or labourers, were permitted to read the Bible or New Testament in English, either privately or openly, to themselves or to others, under pain of a month's imprisonment. From this period nothing more was done towards the circulation of the Bible during the remainder of Henry's reign: but on the contrary, a still more strict proclamation came forth in his last year, 1546, prohibiting even the possession of either Tyndale's or Coverdale's translation.

His son, King Edward the Sixth, like a prince of true piety and enlightened understanding, speedily removed these obstructions, and gave every encouragement to the diffusion of the Holy Scriptures among all his subjects. He issued orders, that a copy of the Bible should be open in every parish church, to which persons of every class might have unrestrained access, and they were exhorted to make good use of the privilege. Every clergyman was ordered to possess himself of the New Testament, and of Erasmus's paraphrase on it.

During this king's reign our Liturgy was formed, with great care and deliberation; and the year 1549 saw the first appearance of the "Book of Common Prayer;" which at once superseded the various Romish formularies, under the names of *Missals, Breviaries, Graduals, Hours, Processionals, Manuals, Offices, Pontificals, &c.* Several impressions of both the Bible and New Testament were published; but though many of these underwent a "recognition" or revision, no new translation of Scripture appeared during Edward's reign.

Upon his death, and the accession of Queen Mary, who by education, and in feeling, was a bigoted Romanist, all those happy beginnings received an abrupt overthrow. Mary, through her agents, Bishop Bonner and Cardinal Pole, carried back every thing once more to the darkness of Popery; issuing orders even that the sentences of Scripture, which were inscribed on the walls of many churches, should be obliterated, as "opening doors to every kind of vice!" but Providence mercifully interposed, and prevented her power from becoming equal to her will, in this respect: for the good seed had now been sown in men's hearts, and the light of the Gospel could no more be quenched. During her reign, as might be expected, no step was taken towards diffusing a knowledge of the Bible; but the old Romish Primer of Salisbury was reprinted.

The persecution to which every leading Protestant was now either actually subjected, or felt himself to be at every moment liable, induced several of the clergy to withdraw themselves for security into foreign countries. And some of these, establishing themselves at Geneva, where Calvin was then flourishing in the plenitude of his fame, undertook the formation of a new version of the Bible. They first published the *New Testament* in the year 1557, and three years afterwards the entire *Bible*, accompanied by a profusion of notes.

But though this version was immediately brought into England, and circulated with no small industry, Elizabeth being now queen, it failed to give general satisfaction; and critical scholars pointed out faults and errors in every one of