

confession. "The hearing whereof," says Fuller, "(improved by God's Spirit) so wrought on *Latimer*, that of almost a *Persecutour*, he became a zealous *Promoter* of the Truth."¹ His "blunt preaching," as Fuller characterizes it, was remarkable for its plainness and simplicity in matter, and seriousness and fervency in manner. Dr. Robert Barnes was another one of the converts of Bilney. After Barnes returned from the continent he introduced a higher standard of learning at the University, "where by his readings, disputations and preaching, he became famous and mighty in the Scriptures, preaching ever against Bishops and Hypocrites; and yet did not see . . . his outward idolatry . . . till that good Master Bilney . . . converted him wholly unto Christ."

These brethren were inspired with a true evangelical spirit. Not only did they preach to the students and those who flocked to hear them, but carried the Gospel into prisons and lazar houses of the city. Not only so, but leaving the town they traveled from place to place, preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom. Thus began a revival of true religion and Apostolical preaching. And from what we learn of the times, such revival was sadly needed. The discourses pronounced by the monks and friars, says Burnet, "on the Holy-days, were rather Panagyrics on the Saint, or the vain magnifying of some of their Reliques. . . . In Lent there was a more solemn and serious way of Preaching. . . . Yet these (discourses) generally tended to raise the value of some of the Laws of the Church, such as Abstinence at that time, Confession, with other Corporal Severities; or some of the little devices, that both inflamed a blind Devotion, and drew Money; such as Indulgences, Pilgrimages, or the enriching the Shrines, and Reliques of the Saints. . . . And the design of their Sermons was rather to raise a present heat, which they knew afterwards how to manage, than to work a real Reformation on their Hearers."² But the

¹ *Church History of Britain. The History of the University of Cambridge*, p. 102. London, 1655. Also *Foxe's Acts and Monuments*, p. 1903.

² *History of the Reformation*, I., 313, 317. London, 1681.

true preaching of the Gospel prevailed, and societies of "Christian Broders" were formed in London, Cambridge, Oxford, and other places. Bible readers and lay preachers also, to the great horror of the spirituality, greatly aided in the spread of the New opinions. Too little is known of the labors of such men as "Old Father Hacker," who to the service of Bible reader afterwards added that of New Testament distributor. The particulars of his labors as he went from house to house, reading and expounding the Scriptures, must be left to easy conjecture, while history relates the facts of his arrest, examination, and persecution by the bishop of London.¹ The Church in the house had existed secretly among the Lollards for more than a century, but now it began to seek a more open expression and recognition. At first these Christian brethren, like the Lollards, met in secret for conference, prayer, and reading the Scriptures, but as their numbers increased, and persecution abated, they grew more hopeful and bold.

In the mean time the work received a new impetus from the introduction of Tyndale's translation of the New Testament. These newly-printed Testaments were scattered broadcast, and the people gathered them up gladly, for they contained the word of God in their own tongue. This English Testament of Tyndale did for the common people what the Greek Testament of Erasmus had done for the Cambridge doctors. The tree of learning is now bearing its legitimate fruit. Tyndale's purpose is realized in that the people with the New Testament in their own language may read and judge for themselves as to the truth or error of what is preached to them. Arthur and Bilney not only go from place to place preaching, but they distribute these Testaments; while Hugh Latimer maintains publicly from the pulpit in Cambridge: "That the Holy Scriptures ought to be read in the *English* Tongue of all Christen People, whether they were Priests or Lay-men."²

¹ D'Aubigne's *Hist. of Ref.*, V., 384. Also pages 104, 105, above.

² Strype's *Memorials of Archbishop Cranmer*, B. III., Ch. XVIII., p. 369. London, 1694.

Whereupon the papists said: "If Latimer so extol the blessings of Scripture, we must by a sermon show its dangers." The adroit Prior Buckingham is chosen to combat from the pulpit the heresy of reading the Scriptures in English. But listen to his arguments, and mark his folly. Imitating Latimer's celebrated Card Sermon, and "thinkyng to make a great hand agaynst M. Latymer, . . . brought out his Christenmas dice. Castyng there to his audience, cinque and quater; meanyng by the cinque fiue places in the new Testament, and the foure Doctours by the quater, by which his cinque quater, he would proue that it was not expedient the Scripture to be in Englishe, lest the ignoraunt and vulgare sort through the occasion thereof, might happely be brought in daunger to leaue their vocation, or else to runne into some inconuenience: As for example the Plowman when he heareth this in the Gospel; *No man that layth his hand on the plough, and looketh backe, is meete for the kingdome of God*, might peradventure hearyng this, cease from his plough. Likewise the Baker when he heareth that *a litle leauen corrupteth a whole lump of dow*, may percase leaue our bread unleavened, and so our bodyes shalbe unseasoned. Also the simple man, when he heareth in the Gospell: *If thyne eye offende thee, plucke it out, and cast it from thee*, may make him selfe blind, and so fill the world full of beggars. These with other mo, this Clerkely Friar brought out to the number of fiue, to prone his purpose."¹

In the afternoon of the same day, an eager throng "as well of the Uniuersitie as of the town, both Doctors and other graduates," gathered in the church to hear the reply of Latimer. In the course of his sermon Latimer so ridiculed the friar's "bold reasons" drawn from the improbable actions of ploughmen, bakers, and "simple men," should they be permitted to read the Scriptures, that "the vanitie of the Frier might to all men appeare." Then taking up the subject of figurative language he explained its use not only in Scripture but in common speech, adding that "euery speech hath his Metaphors

¹ Foxe's *Acts and Monuments*, p. 1904. 1596.

and lyke figurative significations, so common and vulgar to all men that the very Paynters do paynt them in walles and in houses; As for example (saith he, looking towards the Friar that sat ouer agaynst hym) when they paynt a foxe preaching out of a Friars coule, none is so mad to take this to be a foxe that preacheth, but know well enough the meanyge of the matter, which is to paynt out vnto vs, what hypocrisie, craft, and subtile dissimulation lyeth hyd many times in these friers coules, willyng vs therby to beware of them. In fine, Friar Buckingham with this Sermon was so bashed, that neuer after he durst peepe out of the Pulpit agaynst M. Latymer."¹ This took place in the winter of 1529. The friars and monks were elated by Buckingham's sermon. They said: "These heretics are silenced." But after Latimer had replied, the bishops said: "We must cease to reason and apply authority. The best way to answer these Gospellers is to prevent their speaking." This counsel prevailed, and soon after Latimer was silenced by his bishop, and persecution on account of religious opinion began afresh.

During these years there was a quiet student at Cambridge who was the pupil of Friar Barnes. He was carried away, as were others, with the eloquence of Latimer and Bilney. He belonged to the brotherhood of the Augustines, but was in sympathy with the reformers, and attended the assemblies at the "White Horse," where the Gospellers met for mutual help and instruction.² This friend and pupil of Barnes was Myles Coverdale. Very little is known of his early life. The year 1488 is put down by his biographers as the date of his birth.³ He was educated at Cambridge in the house of the Augustine friars, and assumed priest's orders about the year 1514. When Dr. Barnes was arrested and taken to London to answer before Cardinal Wolsey, at the close of the year 1526, Coverdale ac-

¹ Foxe's *Acts and Monuments*, p. 1904.

² In mockery these friends of the Gospel were styled *Germans*, stigmatizing them as followers of Luther.

³ *Memorials of Myles Coverdale*, p. 1. London, 1838.

accompanied him. By the decision of the Cardinal the only alternative left to Barnes was either "to abjure or burn." Strongly urged by his friends he chose the former, and by the injunction laid upon him performed a most humiliating penance at St. Paul's, at which the Cardinal and his retinue attended in great pomp. The master fallen, the scholar took warning. It is recorded of Coverdale that from this time "he gave himself wholly up to propagating the truth of the gospel."¹ Cromwell was a friend and patron of Coverdale. As early as 1527 they met at the house of Sir Thomas More, when Cromwell advised him to enter upon the study of sacred learning; but warned him against a too open expression of his evangelical sentiments. For, though Cromwell was in sympathy with the New opinions, yet he was shrewd and politic. Coverdale, acting upon the advice of his friend, gave himself to study; but his sympathy with Bilney and Latimer in their work of preaching the Gospel, together with a report of a religious meeting held in the county of Essex, drew him from his retreat. For five or six years the leaven of the Gospel had been working among the people, and with the circulation of Tyndale's translation of the New Testament the spirit of inquiry was increased, resulting in a genuine revival of religion.

In 1527, John Tyball, of Bumstede, in Essex, according to his own deposition, visited Friar Barnes in London,² and obtained from him a New Testament in English. He and Thomas Hilles had sought the acquaintance of Barnes, because they heard that he was a good man, and "wold have his counsel in the New Testament." Further they showed the said Barnes, that "one Sir Richard Fox, curate of Bumstede, by ther means was wel entred into ther lernyng; & sayd, that they thowghte to gett hym hole in shorte space." Whereupon they desired Barnes that he would write a letter

¹ *Memorials of My'es Coverdale*, pp. 11, 12.

² Barnes, after his humiliation, was sent to the Fleet, where he was confined for six months; but afterwards he was made a free prisoner at the Augustine Friars, in London, where he received visits from his brethren.

to the curate exhorting him, "that he wold continew in that he had begon."¹ The curate did so continue and with him also a grey friar of Colchester, who was another one of Tyball's converts. At this same Colchester, which was in the county of Essex, there lived a worthy man named John Pykas. He had received a manuscript copy of Paul's Epistles from his mother, with this advice: "lyve after the maner and way of the said Epistoles and Gospels, and not after the way that the church doth teche." Afterward he bought in Colchester a New Testament in English, and "payd for it foure shillings,² he kept and read it thorowghly many tymes." Having himself accepted the truth of the Gospel, he began to teach it to others, affirming: that "there is no baptyism, but of the Holy Ghost," that confession must needs be made to God, and not "made to a pryst," and that men "should pray only to God and to no saints." After hearing Bilney preach at Ipswich, he pronounced the sermon "most goostly and made best for his purpose and opinions, as any that ever he herd in his lyef."³

It was this revival at Bumstede that attracted Coverdale, and he preached there in the spring of 1528. Among his hearers was an Augustine monk named Topley, who was supplying the place of Friar Fox in his absence. Topley had recently read Wycliffe's Wicket, a book belonging to Fox, and his mind was sore troubled. But through the public preaching and private instruction of Coverdale he found peace in believing in Jesus as his only Saviour. These "brothren in Christ," as they called themselves, held frequent Gospel meetings in private houses, also in the halls of great mansions. These Gospellers were characterized by their boldness and self assertion. They already claimed to be a Church because "we pray in common . . . and that constitutes a Church." Latimer, Coverdale and Bilney, willingly

¹ Strype's *Ecclesiastical Memorials*, V., App. 368, 369.

² Equal in modern values to about \$15.00.

³ Strype's *Ecclesiastical Memorials*, I., 123, 124.

recognized these incomplete societies in which the members met simply as disciples.¹

The Romish bishops watched this religious movement with great uneasiness; and they determined to check it. Public visitations were appointed; and the suspected and accused were severely dealt with. Among others Coverdale was accused before the bishop of London. In a quiet way, however, he was withdrawn from public notice. Possibly this was done through the intervention of his patron, both for the sake of safety and for his appointed work of translating the Scriptures. The whereabouts of Coverdale from 1528 to 1536, is left almost entirely to conjecture. According to Foxe, he went at the close of 1528 to Hamburgh, by appointment, to aid Tyndale in translating the Pentateuch. Though the story of Foxe enters into particulars and would seem to have had some foundation, yet so far as the laboring together of Coverdale and Tyndale is concerned, the probabilities are against it. The patronage of Cromwell is against any such prearrangement. Coverdale was doubtless in sympathy with Tyndale in his work, but he was more, though not altogether, in sympathy with Cromwell and the moderate party, who favored the Bible in English, but wished the translation from the Latin to be in Romish phrase. Constitutionally and practically Coverdale was a compromiser, and his "special translacyon" was undertaken as a compromise. However, "Not as a checker," he says, "not as a reprobuer, or despyser of other mens translacyons."² Coverdale sets forth the spirit of his undertaking, when he says: "Be not thou offended therefore (good Reader) though one call a scribe, that another calleth a lawyer; or elders, that another calleth father and mother; or repentaunce, that another calleth pennaunce or amendment. For yf thou be not disceaueed by

¹ D'Aubigne's *History of the Reformation*, V., 384. Am. Tr. Soc. edition, N. D.

² *Prologue*, Coverdale's *Bible*, p. 2. Bagster's Reprint, London, N. D.