

THOMAS BILNEY AND HIS RELATIONS WITH SIR THOMAS MORE

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THOMAS BILNEY was the first Protestant martyr in England. There had been many Lollard martyrs, some in East Anglia, but more in the dioceses of London and Lincoln (which then was very large, stretching from the Humber to the Thames.) And the Marian Martyrs were to be mainly Lollards.¹ But Bilney was the first to be burned for ideas which came to him from Erasmus' new Latin translation of the New Testament and from Germany.

The date of his birth is not definitely known,² but is thought to be about 1495, from the facts that he was made a priest in 1519 and that his parents were still alive in 1531. He was certainly born in Norfolk, but whether in or near Norwich or in one of the villages from which he takes his name is doubtful. He was well known and liked in Norwich, as is clear from the sympathy and support he received there during his final trial and execution.

According to Foxe³ he was brought up at Cambridge "even from a child," and in the sixteenth century fourteen and fifteen were quite usual ages to go up to the University.⁴ He probably went from the Norwich Grammar School,⁵ which, with Ely and Bury St. Edmunds, sent more boys to Cambridge than any other schools in East Anglia.⁶ They went mainly to the three colleges of Gonville and Caius, Corpus Christi and Trinity Hall, which were almost East Anglian preserves. If he was born at East Bilney,⁷ he may have gone to the school at East Dereham, which was pulled down in 1662.

A boy of fourteen or fifteen would have had to get his B.A.⁸ before becoming a scholar on the foundation of Trinity Hall. This would take him four to five years. If his parents could not afford to keep him during this time, he could be a sizar,⁹ assigned to a Master or Fellow to act as his valet and wait in Hall. In this way he could get board, lodging and education almost for nothing. Trinity Hall, to which Bilney went, had been founded in 1350 by Bateman,¹⁰ Bishop of Norwich, for a master, twenty fellows and certain scholars for the study of Canon and Civil Law. It was the first of its kind in Cambridge and, compared to other colleges at the time, was well endowed. The fellows had a good allowance and there was a steward, a baker, a cook, assistant baker and assistant cook. However, for more than a hundred years after its foundation, funds were insufficient to provide for more than three fellows and three scholars. As soon as Bilney had taken his B.A. and become a scholar on the foundation, he would be amply provided for; better, probably, than Archbishop Parker's scholars from the Norwich Free School¹¹ at Corpus Christi fifty years later, who each received 53/4 "and their chamber wasshing, Barboe & Bedyng freely."

Boy undergraduates suffered birching on occasion¹²—specifically for shooting at game. Other forbidden sports were bathing, possibly on grounds of danger, bull and bear baiting and catchball or football outside the college precincts. But the strangest occasion for birching occurred about the middle of the century, in 1542, when Stephen Gardiner was Chancellor of Cambridge¹³ and the new pronunciation of Greek, advocated by Erasmus, was all the rage. The undergraduates were threatened by Gardiner with a beating if they persisted in using it.

On the eve of his execution in 1531, when he was in his thirties, Bilney accuses himself in a letter to his father and mother¹⁴ of having deserved to be burned "for my neglygent and reklouse life and especiall in my youth when I neyther knew God nor myself." He may have been thinking of peccadilloes committed at this time, for his conscience was very active and tender as appears later. At any rate this period of his life, from fourteen to eighteen or fifteen to nineteen, was probably the most free of cares and responsibilities. As a candidate for a degree in Canon Law,¹⁵ he would later automatically become a priest.

Cambridge, at the time when Bilney was growing up in it,¹⁶ in the first quarter of the sixteenth century, was both more imbued with the new learning and with reforming ideas than Oxford. Erasmus was there¹⁷ from 1511 to 1513 as lady Margaret Professor of Divinity, and taught Greek as well as Divinity. He probably went to Cambridge rather than Oxford because of his friend and patron Fisher, Bishop of Rochester, who was Chancellor of the University. His pupils were very small in number and there is no evidence that Bilney was one of them. After Tyndale had taken his M.A. at Oxford,¹⁸ he removed to Cambridge, probably attracted by its reputation for Greek learning. He was there for five or six years up to 1521 and he and Bilney may well have met. Had he yet made up his mind to translate the Bible into English from the original Greek? At any rate he was an admirer of Erasmus,¹⁹ for shortly after leaving Cambridge he translated his *Enchiridion* into English.

It is remarkable how many Norfolk men beside Bilney were of the reforming band at Cambridge.²⁰ Norfolk had a fairly long history of Lollardy. Lollards were being burnt or made to abjure in Norwich all through the fifteenth century.²¹ "It is," wrote Bishop Tunstal to Erasmus of the reforming ideas from Germany in 1523, "no question of pernicious novelty, it is only that new arms are being added to the great band of Wycliffite heretics." And these new arms were spreading rapidly in Norfolk, as well as in London, through the ports, to which the writings of Luther were brought in vessels of merchants of the Hanse towns,²² who had factories at London, Lynn, Ipswich and Boston.²³ Bishop Nix of Norwich, the blind bishop who lived to be ninety, said in 1530 that the gentlemen and commonalty in his diocese²⁴ were not much infected by reforming doctrines but only the merchants and those who lived near the sea. He might have added to these the Norfolk students at Cambridge, and he did refer to "a college called Gunwell Haule²⁵ [Gonville and Caius] "founded by a bishop of Norwich," saying that he heard of "no clerk who had lately come out of it but "savoureth of the frying-pan, although he speak never so holily." It was the

close connection between East Anglia²⁶ and the three colleges of Trinity Hall, Gonville and Caius and Corpus Christi that gave reforming ideas such a hold in Cambridge. Gonville and Caius was a kind of sister college to Trinity Hall.²⁷ Gonville, the founder, a Norfolk parish priest, was a friend of Bishop Bateman, and when the former died in 1351 he left the completion of the foundation in the hands of the Bishop, who promptly made it, like his own foundation, Trinity Hall, into a college mainly for the study of civil and canon law.²⁸ There was a league of amity between the two colleges and they undertook to consult together in weighty matters. At one time seven-eighths of the fellows and scholars of Gonville and Caius were from East Anglia.

In 1516 Erasmus published a new edition of the New Testament in Greek with his own Latin translation and notes. This was a world-shaking event, because the only form in which the New Testament had been current in Europe for centuries was the Latin Vulgate,²⁹ mainly the work of St. Jerome in the fourth century, though the Vulgate of the Middle Ages does not coincide with the complete Latin Bible of St. Jerome. A new edition of the New Testament by the most learned man in Europe, at a time when the new learning had made far more sources available than ever before and when Europe was seething with new ideas, was awaited by scholars and reformers with intense interest.

Some ten or twelve years later, when he was on trial in London as a heretic, Bilney writes in a letter to his judge,³⁰ Bishop Tunstal, of how his sense of sin had made him try many "physicians" but all in vain—"so that there was but small force of strength left in me (who of nature was but weak) small store of money, and very little wit or understanding; for they appointed me fastings, watching, buying of pardons and masses; in all which things (as I now understand) they sought rather their own gain, than the salvation of my sick and languishing soul. . . . But at last I heard speak of Jesus, even then when the New Testament was first set forth by Erasmus, which when I understood to be eloquently done by him, being allured rather by the Latin than by the word of God (for at that time I knew not what it meant) I bought even by the providence of God, as I do now well understand and perceive; and at the first reading (as I well remember) I chanced upon this sentence of St. Paul (O most sweet and comfortable sentence to my soul) in I Timothy i—'It is a true saying, and worthy of all men to be embraced that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the chief and Principal.' This one sentence through God's instruction and inward working, which I did not then perceive, did so exhilarate my heart, being before wounded with the guilt of my sins, and being almost in despair, that immediately I felt a marvellous comfort and quietness insomuch 'that my bruised bones leaped for joy.'" [Psalm I, i].

So Bilney's purchase of Erasmus' New Testament, in 1516 or soon after, was the turning-point of his life. He now joined a group of like-minded University men³¹ who met at the White Horse Inn and discussed events and ideas in Germany, for which reason the inn came to be called "Little Germany."

Two of those who came to the White Horse Inn³² were later to be pillars of Henry VIII's compromise state, in which men who believed in the Pope as head of the Church, or did not believe in transubstantiation, were sometimes executed

on the same day. The two who frequented the inn were Edward Foxe, who became Bishop of Hereford and acted as intermediary for Henry VIII with foreign Protestants; and Stephen Gardiner, later Bishop of Winchester and ambassador at the French and Imperial courts, who represented the other end from Cranmer in Henry's complicated ecclesiastical see-saw. They both left Cambridge in 1524³³ to enter Wolsey's service and start their diplomatic careers, but in the next year Gardiner was elected Master of Trinity Hall, and in that capacity must have been concerned later with Bilney's heresies.

Of the others who frequented the White Horse Inn, many were Bilney's converts, of whom one of the most important was Dr. Barnes,³⁴ the head of the Austin Friary at Cambridge. He, too, was a Norfolk man. He was somewhat of a firebrand, and his Christmas Eve sermon of 1525,³⁵ attacking the whole bench of bishops and Wolsey in particular, sparked off the persecution of reformers in Cambridge. After many vicissitudes and several recantations he was burned as a heretic in 1539.³⁶ Other Norfolk men who came to the White Horse Inn were Thomas Arthur, who was tried with Bilney for heresy in 1528, John Lambert, a fellow of Queens and a Greek scholar, Matthew Parker, the future Archbishop of Canterbury under Elizabeth, Nicholas Shaxton, Bishop of Salisbury under Henry VIII, who finally returned to the Catholic faith, and William Warner, later Rector of Winterton in Norfolk, whom Bilney chose as his spiritual father to accompany him to execution. It is likely that Bilney's influence on all these men was great.

But Bilney's greatest conquest was Hugh Latimer.³⁷ The latter was older than he and the cross-bearer of the University in processions, which meant that he was considered by the authorities to be an outstandingly reliable and trustworthy person. In 1524 Latimer was still a staunch Catholic and, for his B.D. thesis, gave a fierce oration against Melancthon. What followed is told in one of Latimer's sermons³⁸ many years later:—"Bilney sought me out, and he came to me afterwards in my study and desired me for God's sake to hear his confession; and to say the truth, by his confession I learned more than afore in many years. So from this time forward I began to smell the word of God and forsook the school doctors and all such fooleries." When, thirty years later, Latimer was in the Tower with Ridley, each encouraging the other to be staunch in the matter of "turn or burn," he remembered again that fateful interview with Bilney and said to Ridley:—"Sir, I begin now to smell what you mean; by travelling thus with me, you use me as Bilney did once when he converted me. Pretending as though he would be taught of me, he sought ways and means to teach me; and so do you."

This conversion was the beginning of a great friendship between the two men, who must have been an extreme contrast mentally and probably also physically. Bilney was small and slight,⁴⁰ Latimer appears to have been strong if not tall. Bilney loved peace and reconciliation, Latimer was a harsh and outspoken critic. But of Bilney he writes:—"I have known hitherto few such, so prompt and ready to do every man good after his power, both friend and foe . . . and towards his enemy so charitable, so seeking to reconcile them as he did, I have known yet not many."⁴¹ Latimer, on the other hand,

usually hit the nail on the head in pungent terms, but was occasionally guilty of exaggeration and abuse. For instance :—" On Sunday last the Bishop of Worcester [Latimer] preached at Paul's Cross and he said that bishops, abbots, priors, parsons, canons, resident priests and all were strong thieves, yea dukes, lords and all. The King, quoth he, made a marvellous good act of parliament that certain men should sow every of them two acres of hemp, but it were all too little even if so much more to hang the thieves that be in England."⁴²

It seems that after the revelation,⁴³ as it were, of St. Paul's words in Erasmus' translation of the New Testament, Bilney decided to interrupt his study of civil and canon law and study theology. He did, however, take his LL.B.⁴⁴ and become a fellow of his college some time in the fifteen-twenties, certainly after he had been made a priest in 1519, since there is no mention that he was either of these things on that occasion.

It should be emphasised that neither as an "artist," i.e. as a student studying for his B.A., nor as a post-graduate student of civil and canon law, would it have been Bilney's business to study the Bible. That was left to the theologians. And now that his intense emotional and intellectual interest had been aroused by St. Paul's words, probably read by him for the first time, he felt that, even to the detriment of his study of the law, he must know more about theology. Sir Thomas More says that :—" He fell from the study of the law, wherein he was a proctor and partly well learned, into the study of Scripture."⁴⁶ No doubt, before his purchase of Erasmus' Bible, he had intended to become LL.D., like his friend Warner, later Rector of Winterton, who was a few years younger than himself, or his fellow student and later master of his college, Stephen Gardiner.

Not only did he study theology, he visited the prisons and hospitals of Cambridge. This is how Foxe describes his doings :—" This godly man, being a bachelor of law, was but of little stature and very slender of body, and of a strict and temperate diet, given to good letters and very fervent and studious in the Scriptures, as appeared by his sermons ; his converting of sinners : his preaching at the lazar cots, wrapping them in sheets, helping them to what they wanted, if they would convert to Christ ; laborious and painful to the desperates ; a preacher to the prisoners and comfortless ; a great doer in Cambridge, and a great preacher in Suffolk and Norfolk. . . . Concerning his diet which we spoke of, it was so strait, that for the space of a year and a half he took commonly but one meal a day ; so that if he were disposed to sup, he would keep his commons ; and likewise his supper, if he were disposed to dine ; and would bear it to some prison, where he used commonly to frequent, and to exhort such as were infamed or imprisoned for evil life. . . . His scholar, who had daily conversation with him, told us that to his thinking, no night he slept above four hours. . . ."⁴⁷

In this ascetic and devoted life, Bilney was, after 1525, accompanied and assisted by Latimer, who, he too, was a "great doer" and "preacher" rather than a scholar, and none the less potent on that account in the life of Reformation England.

Foxe continues in his account of Bilney :—" He could abide no swearing nor singing. Coming from the church where singing was, he would lament to his scholars the curiosity of their dainty singing, which he called rather a mocking with God, than otherwise. And when Dr. Thurlby, afterwards bishop, then a scholar living in the chamber underneath him, would play upon his recorder (as he would often do), he would resort straight to his prayer."⁴⁸

This objection to music has been taken to indicate some eccentricity on Bilney's part. It is interesting to find that his views on the way music was performed in church were shared by Starkey, a good Henrician and middle-of-the-road man, who, in his *England in Henry VIII's Time* writes :—" Wherefore let us without fear confesse this to be a grete fawte . . . that we have our service sayd in a straunge tong, of the pepul not understood ; and much more the maner of syngyng, wych al holly doctors reprovyd in theyr time, when hyt was not so curyouse as hyt ys now. Dow no more but thynke yf Saynt Augustyn, Jerome or Ambrose herd our curyouse dyscantyng and cantenyng in churchys, what they wold say. Surely they wold cry out upon them, and dryve them out of churchys to tavernys, comedys and commyn plays and say these were no thyng mete to kindyl and styr Chrystyan hertys to devotyon and love of celesyaly thyngys, but rather to ster wanton myndys to veyn pleasure amd worldley pastyme with vanyte."⁴⁹

It was perhaps natural for a man like Bilney, believing intensely in the inwardness of religion, to resent the enormous place given to music in church services of the time. Maybe King's College Chapel, then a-building, was as famous for its singing in those days as it is now. It is interesting to know that :—" . . . in the Tudor period the English people were more musical than they have ever been."⁵⁰ The Venetian, Giustiniani, wrote in 1515 that :—" . . . the king's choristers are really divine rather than human . . . as for the counter-bass voices, I do not think that they have their equal in the world."⁵¹ Wolsey was thought to have even a finer choir. And, to show the musicality of ordinary people, Elizabethan barber-surgeons used to " provide citherns for the use of waiting clients, who are nowadays supplied with illustrated papers."⁵²

Whilst Bilney was occupied with evangelical works, religious controversy in Cambridge and in England generally was becoming more embittered.

In 1521 there was a bonfire of heretical books⁵³ in the heart of Cambridge. In the same year one Peter Valence, a Norman student, imitated Luther by fastening a defiant notice against the Proclamation of Indulgences affixed to the gate of Schools. The perpetrator of this deed was not found out until he himself confessed much later. At this time George Stafford⁵⁴ was lecturing to crowds of students on the text of the Bible, and especially St. Paul's Epistles, which, as we have seen in the case of Bilney, could be highly inflammatory. His lectures were condemned by many of the orthodox, including Latimer.⁵⁵ In 1523 Wolsey definitely refused to lead a heresy hunt at Cambridge, and Stafford was allowed to continue his lectures with a little advice from Stephen Gardiner.⁵⁶ In 1525, the year of his conversion by Bilney, Latimer got into the bad books of Bishop West of Ely⁵⁷ and was refused a licence to preach in the diocese. This may have been partly the consequence of a famous sermon he preached before

the Bishop, altered at the last moment, when the Bishop entered the Church, to treat of the duties of bishops. Bilney, on the other hand, retained his licence to preach.

On Christmas Eve 1525 Dr. Barnes,⁵⁸ the head of the Austin Friars and a prominent member of "Little Germany," preached a "railing" sermon, in which he attacked the whole bench of bishops and Wolsey with especial virulence. He is described by Gardiner as:—"a trim minion friar Augustine, one of a merry scoffing wit, friarlike, and, as a good fellow in company was beloved by many."⁵⁹ Wolsey could not overlook this, but he treated the personalities against him without heat. Barnes was summoned to London and recanted, in company with two men of the Steelyard⁶⁰ accused of smuggling heretical books into England. In 1526 copies of Tyndale's New Testament⁶¹ began to be brought secretly into England from Antwerp, and, in spite of a plea for toleration from Wolsey, the conclave of bishops decided that they should be burnt. Anyone found with a copy in his possession was to be excommunicated. A little later Tunstall, Bishop of London,⁶² in his zeal, bought up a large number of New Testaments at Antwerp through a London merchant, Augustine Packington, with intent to burn them. The money for this transaction came into the hands of Tyndale and tided him over a difficult period.

At last Wolsey was won over to joining in persecution, and at the beginning of 1527 he summoned Bilney and Latimer before him.⁶³ He seems to have thought more highly of the latter than the former. Latimer was given licence to preach throughout the kingdom, but Bilney, though dismissed and given his expenses, had to take an oath not to preach Lutheran doctrine. Sir Thomas More says that Wolsey "for his tender favour borne to the University, did not proceed far in the matter against him [Bilney]."⁶⁴

This interview with Wolsey must have taken place early in the year, for Bilney was preaching at the parish church of St. Magnus, near London Bridge, in Whitsun week.⁶⁵ This was part of a preaching tour in East Anglia and London undertaken by Bilney and his friend Arthur, in the course of which, according to witnesses who deposed against him at his subsequent trial, he was twice pulled out of the pulpit for his heretical utterances. He and Arthur may have been arrested then or later, but by November of the same year they were both imprisoned in the Tower on a charge of heresy.

The trial began on 27 November 1527 in the Chapter-House at Westminster⁶⁶ before Wolsey, Archbishop Warham, and the Bishops of London and Ely, and lasted ten days. At first Wolsey presided, but later Tunstall, Bishop of London, one of the most learned and conscientious bishops of the day and the friend of Sir Thomas More and Erasmus, took charge of the case.

Before proceeding to an account of the trial, so vitally important to Bilney's career, there are various things to note. Bilney wrote three letters⁶⁷ to his chief judge, Bishop Tunstall, extolling, as well he might, his learning and integrity; but in one of these letters he asked that he might be brought "before the tribunal seat of my Lord Cardinal, before whom I had rather stand than before any of his deputies." It seems impossible that Bilney could have

esteemed Wolsey, as he no doubt esteemed Tunstall, but he had been before Wolsey earlier in the year and knew that he was a lenient judge. It is also important to note that Sir Thomas More,⁶⁸ though not one of the judges, was present during a great part of the trial and wrote about it at length in his "Dialogue concerning Tyndale."

According to More,⁶⁹ the judges treated Bilney most leniently and "showed him great favour in that they received him to penance without the confession of his fault." More admits that none of the witnesses whom Bilney had collected to speak in his favour was heard. Twenty witnesses spoke to his having uttered heresies in the pulpit. But—"It were a strange thing," writes More "if the law should—in such a matter as this is, after the witnesses once published, and thereby the matter well proved—then examine other witnesses afresh upon the principal point." And he added that—"Himself Bilney was well learned in the law, and never could say that he was denied any favour that the law would grant."⁷⁰ It looks, therefore, on More's evidence, as if the trial were a fair one by the standard of those days.

In the first place, while Wolsey was still in charge of proceedings, he enquired of Bilney—"Whether he had not once made an oath before that he would not preach, rehearse or defend any of Luther's opinions."⁷¹ To which Bilney answered that he had made such an oath, but not "judicially," i.e. the oath was made in a private interrogatory and not publicly in a law-court. It must be remembered that Bilney was a specialist in civil and canon law and knew how to take advantage of every loophole which could be used to his benefit. He was then asked by Wolsey—"Whether he had privately or publicly preached or taught to the people the opinions of Luther or any other condemned by the Church?"⁷² And to this he answered that wittingly he had not. If this was said in good faith, and it may have been, the only explanation is that he had avoided citing Luther's beliefs on his preaching tour and had confined himself to those which he had worked out for himself. He did not go so far as Luther and was still perfectly orthodox as to the Mass.

The main points testified against him by the hostile witnesses⁷³ who had been present at his sermons were:—

1. The inefficacy of saints as mediators between God and man. "Our Saviour Christ is our mediator between us and the Father. What should we need then to seek to any saint for remedy?" As a corollary to this, the futility of being buried in St. Francis' cowl.

2. That man is so imperfect in himself that he can in no wise merit by his own deeds.

3. That it was a great folly to go on pilgrimage.

4. That the miracles done at Walsingham, Canterbury, Ipswich, etc. were done by the devil through the sufferance of God to blind the poor people.

5. That the Pope hath not the keys that Peter had, except he follow Peter in his living.

6. Christian people should set up no lights before the images of saints, and kings and princes should destroy and burn the images set up in churches.

From the beginning, and consistently to the very end of his trial,⁷⁴ Bilney admitted that these beliefs of which he was accused were heresies, and declared that he had not said them, and that he could produce witnesses who would corroborate that he had not said them. Sir Thomas More was obviously shocked that the judges allowed him to recant, whilst he still denied that these were his beliefs:—"His abjuration was such, that he therein abjured and forswore all heresies, knowledging himself lawfully convict. But whereas they be wont to confess in their own abjuration that they have holden such heresies and be guilty thereof, that would he do in no wise, but as clearly as his fault was proved, and by as many, yet would he not to die therefore confess himself faulty, but always stood still upon it in virtue of his oath that all they belied him."⁷⁵

As for the letters written by Bilney to his judge, Bishop Tunstall, More had read these letters and said of them that they were—"sounding to mine ears to as evil heresies as those were that he was detected of. Which letters were never laid into the court till that, after the proofs published and read, he appeared obstinate, standing still in the denial, and proudly refusing to submit himself to his abjuration. For then said the judge to whom they were written, that since he refused to be reconciled with the church, he would keep no counsel of his. And therewith brought in those records and filed them among the records of the court."⁷⁶

The letters contain no specific mention of saints, the Pope, or false miracles, but the so-called "voluntary" works are shown to be susceptible of abuses:—" . . . chosen works, as pilgrimages, buying of pardons, offering of candles, elect and chosen fasts, and oftentimes superstitious; . . . Therefore, I say, oftentimes I have spoken of those works, not condemning them (as I take God to my witness) but reproving their abuse; making the lawful use of them manifest even unto children; exhorting all men not so to cleave unto them, that they, being satisfied therewith, should loathe or wax weary of Christ, as many do."⁷⁷

And he expresses the central tenet of his faith in these words:—"The righteousness of God, by faith in Jesus Christ, is upon all them which believe in him; for there is no difference: all have sinned, and lack the glory of God and are justified freely through his grace, by the redemption which is in Jesus Christ, which whosoever doth hunger and thirst for, without doubt they shall at length so be satisfied, that they shall not hunger and thirst for ever."⁷⁸

The question arises whether Bilney was lying on principle when he denied the evidence of the witnesses against him. Sir Thomas More thought so:—"And surely this that I shall tell you have I heard reported, howbeit I will not warrant it for truth. But yet have I, as I say, heard it reported right credibly that the man we speak of [Bilney], which was abjured, used among some of that sect to say—'Let us preach and set forth our way. And if we be accused, let us say we said not so, and yet some of them shall we win alway the while.'⁷⁹

There is some slight evidence that this might be so in the notes which Bilney wrote in his Vulgate (now in Corpus Christi College Library), which have been examined by J. Y. Batley.⁸⁰ There are two notes or "adversaria" which imply that Bilney thought that some lies were justified.

1. Against I Kings (I Samuel) XIX. Mentitur Mychal uxor Davyd innoxie. Mychal, David's wife, practices deceit blamelessly.

2. Against Jeremiah XXVIII. Hieremiae pium mendacium. Jeremiah's pious lie.

On the other hand Bilney's first letter to Bishop Tunstall bears the unmistakable stamp of truth and sincerity. According to Tunstall and More, these letters contained heresies no less flagrant than those witnessed to in his sermons. Surely, therefore, he would not have written them if he had made up his mind to fight for his life by denying the evidence of the hostile witnesses.

There is no doubt that Bilney repented bitterly afterwards that he had recanted, which must mean that in the spirit, if not in the letter, he agreed with those heresies of which he was accused. Nevertheless, he may well have thought that the witnesses who testified against him were not reporting him correctly, that they did not understand that it was the abuses of "voluntary works," rather than the "voluntary works" themselves, which he was attacking.

It must be remembered that Bilney had spent all his adult life at Cambridge, where more licence for discussion was allowed among the learned than in the world outside. Wolsey had declined to institute a heresy hunt there in 1522. Possibly Bilney was not aware that ideas which were rife at Cambridge would excite fury when preached in sermons throughout the country. There is some reason to think that he was taken by surprise when he was accused of heresy. His thirty witnesses, who were to confute the twenty arrayed against him, came too late, after the publication of the hostile depositions. Twice, when called upon to recant, he "trusted that he was not separate from the Church."

Finally, after thrice refusing to recant,⁸¹ he asked for time to consult two friends, Farman and Doncaster, and was granted two nights in which to do so. The result was a foregone conclusion. He consented to abjure the heresies which he still declared he did not hold. He was sentenced to the usual punishment—to carry a fagot on the next Sunday, listen to the sermon at St. Paul's Cross, and remain in prison as long as his judges thought fit.

Latimer⁸² as usual has something pregnant to say on Bilney's mistake, for so he certainly considered it:—"Here is a goodly lesson for you, my friends; if ever you come in danger, in durance, in prison for God's quarrel and his sake (as he [Bilney] did for purgatory matters, and put to bear a fagot for preaching the true word of God against pilgrimage and such-like matters), I will advise you, first and above all things, to abjure all your friends, all your friendships, leave not one unabjured; it is they that shall undo you and not your enemies. It was his very friends that brought Bilney to it." This was written more than twenty years later, when Latimer still revered Bilney's name, for in one of his sermons he calls him "St. Bilney."⁸³

Four years after Bilney's abjuration,⁸⁴ in 1532, Latimer himself was abjuring his own words on "voluntary" works before Convocation.

If nearly every Protestant heretic recanted at least once before holding firm, the reason was not only fear of the fire. Each was feeling his way against the

great army of authority, hoping that the Church would follow him in the reformation of abuses, surprised and disappointed when she threatened to cast him out of her midst.

Sir Thomas More was probably a shrewd judge of character. He had much to do with men and affairs as Under Sheriff of London, member of the King's Council and Speaker of the House of Commons.⁸⁵ The drawings by Holbein in Windsor Castle shows this side of him very clearly. Therefore it is perhaps worth quoting his opinion of Bilney as a man :—" . . . he was, as I say, very fearful and scrupulous ; and began at the first to fall into such a scrupulous holiness, that he reckoned himself bounden so straitly to keep and observe the words of Christ after the very letter that, because our Lord biddeth us when we will pray enter into our chamber and shut the door to us, he thought it therefore sin to say his service abroad, and alway would be sure to have his chamber door shut unto him, while he said his matins. Which thing I indeed heard him once deny in an honourable presence. But I heard again another man more credible than twain of him—and if I had said, than such ten, I think I lied not—and one of his best proved friends, avow it in his face for truth. Howbeit, I tell you not this thing for any great hurt in the man. For it was more peevish and painful than evil and sinful. But surely men say that in conclusion with the weariness of that superstitious fear and servile dread, he fell as far to the contrary, and under pretext of love and liberty waxed so drunk of the new must of lewd lightness of mind and vain gladness of heart, which he took for spiritual consolation, that, whatsoever himself listed to take for good, that thought he forthwith approved by God. And so framed himself a faith, framed himself a conscience, framed himself a devotion wherein him list, and wherein him liked, he set himself at liberty."⁸⁶

In More's estimation Bilney was, apparently, thoroughly unreliable and unbalanced, almost, in modern parlance, a psychological case. Bilney's deep sense of sin, which swung him from one extreme to the other, was foreign to More's nature. It is tempting to wonder if the "more credible" witness were Latimer, and if More had been at that earlier interview when Wolsey ("the honourable presence") summoned Bilney and Latimer before him. But this is mere conjecture.

Actually Bilney's beliefs went little farther than those of two friends of More's—Colet and Erasmus. The first was accused of heresy by Stokesley, Bishop of London,⁸⁷ who was jealous of him. He was saved by his well-known piety and learning, and by the good sense of Warham, Archbishop of Canterbury. The second would have been accused of heresy if he had not been Erasmus, the most learned man in Europe, and if he had not taken the precaution of living in the free city of Basle, which became Protestant.⁸⁸ Both Erasmus and Colet were extremely sceptical of the uses of pilgrimages and the so-called miracles they were shown at the shrines.⁸⁹ Again, the exaggerations of saint worship are made fun of by Erasmus in one of his Colloquies,⁹⁰ where he describes a shipwreck in which each of the passengers calls on his favourite saint for help and none on God or Christ. But Erasmus refused to substitute Luther's dogma for the

dogma of the Catholic Church, and here Bilney went farther. He had found for himself in the words of St. Paul, in Erasmus' translation of the New Testament, the central tenet of the new Protestant Church—justification by faith.

Bilney remained in the Tower for over a year.⁹¹ In 1529 he was released and went back to Cambridge, where he spent a miserable two years. He was of course forbidden to preach, but probably continued to teach civil and canon law.

Latimer describes his state of mind :—" Little Bilney, that blessed martyr of God, what time he had borne his faggot and had come again to Cambridge, had such conflicts within himself beholding the image of death, that his friends were afraid to let him alone ; they were fain to be with him day and night and comforted him as they could, but no comfort would serve. As for the comfortable places of scripture, to bring them unto him it was as though a man would run him through the heart with a sword."⁹²

And again :—" Now when that same Bilney came to Cambridge again, a whole year after [his abjuration], he was in such an anguish and agony so that nothing did him good, neither eating nor drinking, nor any other communication of God's word ; for he thought that all the whole Scriptures were against him and sounded to his condemnation. So that I many a time communed with him, for I was familiarly acquainted with him ; but all things whatsoever any man could allege to his comfort seemed unto him to make against him."⁹³

It seems clear that Bilney had returned to Cambridge a broken man, having lost all confidence in himself and power to help others. Once, in spite of the prohibition against his preaching, he did preach in a very poor church, which could get no preachers.⁹⁴ He confessed this as a sin before his execution. If he continued to visit the prisons and lazar houses, it was now as one much more miserable than the inmates, tortured by remorse and unable to bring comfort. At last he could bear it no longer.⁹⁵ In the summer of 1531, he collected his friends at Trinity Hall one night and told them that " he would go to Jerusalem." He set out to walk to Norwich, preaching in the fields by the way. He had two books with him—Tyndale's New Testament and his *Obedience of a Christian Man*.⁹⁶ Both, as he must have known, were proscribed books, for the possession of which he could be arrested. He wanted to undo the thing he had done two and a half years before, and regain his peace of mind.

He reached Norwich and gave the anchoress of Norwich,⁹⁷ a recluse who lived in a cell of the Black Friars, his two books. Soon after he was arrested by the officers of Bishop Nix and brought before Dr. Pellis, the Bishop's Chancellor. He was lodged in an underground cell in the Guildhall and had a short and summary trial. As he was a relapsed heretic, there was never much doubt about the outcome.

Unlike the trial in London, there seem to be no records existing of the trial in Norwich.⁹⁸ The facts have to be pieced together from the Interrogatory, which Edward Reed, Mayor of Norwich, answered when he went up to London in Michaelmas 1531, some months after Bilney's execution.

From this Interrogatory it appears that Bilney appealed to the King.⁹⁹ This appeal came to nothing, perhaps because the title of "Supreme Head of the Church,"¹⁰⁰ which had been bestowed on the King by Convocation in February of that year, 1531, had not yet been confirmed by Parliament; perhaps because the Mayor shifted the question of the appeal on to Dr. Pellis. But the Interrogatory is interesting enough on this point to quote.

The Mayor, who was making his deposition before the then Lord Chancellor,¹⁰¹ Sir Thomas More, was asked:—"Whether the said Thomas Bilney then in court appealed to the King's Highness, saying—'I appele unto ye Kyng's grace. And Mr. Mayer I charge you y^t you take me away from the Judge that I may prosecute Myn Appele w^t all lybertie afore ye Kyngs grace.'" To which the Mayor answered in the affirmative. He was further asked:—"Whether he publicly said to the Judge sitting in court—'Sur me thynke I am now charged w^t hym."¹⁰² And me thynke now I must nedes take hym from you.'" "

This the Mayor denied, saying—"that he said this or words of lyke effect—'Maister Doctor ye know that the Kynge hath a new tytyle given him by the clergy and ye were at the grauntyng of it, of what effect it is I know not but ye knowe. And therefore ordre yor selfe so that ye may be my discharge and yo^r owne to. I am content to take hym if he owght to be the Kyng's prisoner.'" ¹⁰³

This looks as if the Mayor had nervously passed on the decision to Dr. Pellis, who would most certainly keep the matter in clerical hands if possible.

It is worth noting that the Mayor was asked:—"Whether certain light people then in the court called out—'Maister Mayor, you are bownd to take hym away.'" ¹⁰⁴ But this the Mayor discreetly could not remember. He could not remember either whether Bilney had said openly in court to Dr. Pellis:—"Sur do you y^r office. I am content. And I will be more rewled by you than by all this hole company because you have trewly handeled me.'" ¹⁰⁵

It is quite likely, though there is no evidence for this, that the appeal to the King was suggested to Bilney by one of the Aldermen, Thomas Necton, who was his personal friend. The Mayor, too, was obviously his well-wisher, and it is clear that there was a good deal of friction between the former and Dr. Pellis. This appears in the course of the Interrogatory, when the Mayor was asked:—"Whether he [the Mayor] got up and publicly said to the Judge sitting in Tribunal these words or words to this effect—'Sur me thynke you do him wrong or ether you do not well w^t hym y^t you will not admitte hys answere as he dothe speke or make unto you.'" To whom the Judge answered—'Maist Mayer, yor wyll nor hys wyll may not Rewle ye wyll of ye lawe. But the wyll of ye lawe must Rewle yor wyll and his wyll bothe. And the wyll of the lawe is y^t he must make certum Responsum. And not equivocum et ambiguum.'" ¹⁰⁶

It is evident that there was a party in Norwich, of whom the Mayor and his "brethren" formed an important section, which was in sympathy with Bilney. He was probably well-known and respected in the City. Apart from this, however, there was certainly widespread anti-clerical feeling in Norwich as in London.¹⁰⁷ There, at the time of the Hunne incident, in 1514, Fitzjames,

Bishop of London, wrote to Wolsey—"that any twelve men in London . . . will cast and condempne any clerk though he were as innocent as Abel." Bilney's exculpation of the friars of Norwich for the responsibility for his death, in his farewell speech,¹⁰⁸ indicates this anti-clericalism.

The Interrogatory also raises an important question. Did Bilney confess his errors and recant in the course of his trial? The Mayor was asked whether—"Bilney immediately after his degradation in the presence of all the people in a loud voice abjured his errors. . . . And whether then and there, bending his knees, in the presence of all the people, he asked for absolution and the annulment of the sentence of excommunication?"¹⁰⁹

To this the Mayor returned no very clear answer. He remembered—"that Bilney did kneel down and humbly desyre absolution." But he did not remember—"that Bilney did then revoke his errors nor that he did exhorte the people to obey God, the ministres of the Church and the ministres of the lawe."

In view of what Bilney wrote in his last letter to his father and mother on the eve of his execution, it is very unlikely that he did recant in the course of his trial or afterwards. He believed himself to be very wicked but not guilty of "any heresy or errowe."¹¹⁰ It was probably the sense of sin alone that made him kneel down after his degradation and ask for absolution. The question will be discussed more fully in connection with the scene at his execution.

On the day before Bilney's execution,¹¹¹ several friends gathered in his prison at the Guildhall and found him consuming an ale-brew (bread and beer) with evident enjoyment. One of them said he was glad to see him refresh himself so well. To which Bilney answered:—"Oh, I follow the example of the husbandmen of the country, who, having a ruinous house to dwell in, yet bestow cost so long as they may, to hold it up; so do I now with this ruinous house of my body, and with God's creatures, in thanks to him, refresh the same as you see."

One of these visitors may have been Bilney's friend, Matthew Parker (also a native of Norwich), who came up from Cambridge¹¹² to see him, and was certainly present at his execution.

According to Latimer's testimony, Bilney had not been able to enjoy food during all his dark period of contrition at Cambridge. Now, on the eve of his death, he could savour food again, and seems to have been at peace with all the world. In the letter to his father and mother,¹¹³ which was probably written that very night, he says:—" . . . at ye wrytyng of y^s byll (thanks be to God) I was as heyle and mery as ever I was in my lyff. And so I have been contynually both daye and night (lauded be Jesus Chryst) ever synst y^e begynnynge of my Joyful vexation and mery trouble. Insomuch that I never slept soundlye than I did in the mydes of my busyness. . . . In the whyche fyere of troble he [God] hath hitherto so preservyd me only of his pure mercy w^out my deservynge and so quenched thys fyere w^t the dewe of hys grace y^t it hath not skorkled one her of my hede but hath reyther kyndled such an het in my cold hert that I cannot chose but love God better yⁿ I ever dyd except I wyll be wonderfully unkynd unto such a kynd father."

Bilney's enemy, Sir Thomas More, had much the same experience when he in his turn was in prison awaiting death three years later. He writes :—" God maketh me a wanton, and setteth me on his lap and dandleth me."¹¹⁴

The next morning Dr. Pellis gave his consent,¹¹⁵ though with a good deal of hesitation, to Bilney's hearing mass and receiving the sacraments in the chapel in the Guildhall. It must be remembered that Bilney¹¹⁶ was still a perfectly orthodox Catholic as to the mass. Dr. Pellis brought with him that morning, when he came to see Bilney, a document which was apparently a form of abjuration. He showed it to Bilney, according to Alderman Curatt, who begged Dr. Pellis to persuade him to read it at his execution. There is no evidence that Bilney signed it. He may have promised to urge the people in his farewell speech to preserve the unity of the Church. After hearing mass, he set out for the place of execution—the Lollards Pit just outside the City.

He had chosen as his ghostly father to accompany him to execution his former fellow student, Dr. Warner, Rector of Winterton in Norfolk.¹¹⁷ The Mayor, Aldermen and Elders of the City (not including Thomas Necton) probably headed the procession. During the half hour's walk from the Guildhall, past the Cathedral and over the Bishop's Bridge, a friend of Bilney's distributed alms to the poor on his behalf, the normal procedure on such occasions. Talking to his friends on the way, Bilney said :—" Ye see when the mariner is entered his ship to sail on a troublous sea, how he for a while is tossed on the billows of the same, but yet in hope that he shall once come to the quiet haven, he beareth in better comfort the perils which he feeleth ; so am I now, towards this sailing, and whatsoever storms I shall feel, yet shortly after my ship shall be in the haven, as I doubt not thereof by the grace of God, desiring you to help me with your prayers to the same effect."¹¹⁸

A large crowd was assembled on that windy August day (19 August 1531) to see the burning.¹¹⁹ Probably that crowd was mainly sympathetic to Bilney. The Mayor, as appears in his Interrogatory,¹²⁰ had been asked by Dr. Pellis to speak at the execution for the purpose of admonishing the heretic and drawing away the people from his evil influence. He did not do so, nor, rather surprisingly, does Dr. Pellis or any other cleric appear to have preached a sermon, which was the usual custom before the burning of a heretic. Was he afraid of a bad reception from the people ?

After taking leave of his spiritual father, Dr. Warner,¹²¹ who departed from the place of execution in tears, Bilney knelt down and prayed on the narrow wooden erection where he would soon stand amid the reeds and fagots. When he got up Dr. Pellis came to him and presented him with the abjuration, saying :—" Thomas, you have seen this before." Bilney took it and read it, whether aloud or softly, i.e. to himself, there was afterwards much controversy.¹²² He then spoke to the people, a "godly exhortation" as the Mayor said. He exculpated the friars from all blame for his death, and the Anchoress, to whom he had given the heretical books, from all taint of heresy. He confessed that he had preached once in a church without licence to do so and asked forgiveness for it. He raised the question of the marriage of priests and said that others wiser

than himself must decide it after he was dead. He praised chastity and fasting, and urged everyone to obey Mother Church and fear the decrees of Pope and King. He repeated many times in a loud voice—"Credo Ecclesiam Catholicam," and declared that he had always believed in her as now used, if he might have been heard to the end.

He made no mention of the voluntary works—pilgrimages, candles and vows to saints, the abuse of which he had spoken against in his first trial. His audience might well have wondered what he was dying for. Many of them knew him to be a good man, and all saw the bravery with which he faced death.¹²³ In his own estimation he was no heretic, but a true son of the Church, who had in reality never left the fold and was safely in it at his death.

The flames burnt up around him, and the high wind blew them thrice against his face and thrice away from it, so that his face was disfigured. Mercifully he did not live long.¹²⁴

The friction between Dr. Pellis and the Mayor continued after Bilney's death.¹²⁵ Dr. Pellis brought Rede the bill of revocation, which he said Bilney had read aloud at his execution, and asked him to have it exemplified under the Town Seal. This Rede would not do until he had talked with the Aldermen and Elders of the City, who, all but one, agreed that the bill did not tally with their remembrance of what Bilney had said at his execution. This one man was John Curatt, who maintained that he had heard Bilney read out loud the bill of revocation (or abjuration), instead of "softly," to himself, as the others said.

About Michaelmas the Mayor had to go up to London,¹²⁶ and told the Aldermen and Elders that he was sure he would be questioned on this matter. He wrote out his version of what Bilney had said at his execution, with which all the others, except John Curatt, agreed.

It is noteworthy that John Curatt went to London too,¹²⁷ and managed to get his deposition taken by the Lord Chancellor, Sir Thomas More, more than a fortnight before the Mayor made his. He also did his best to get the Mayor into trouble by informing against him that he insisted on taking from Dr. Pellis certain "books" which Bilney had written in prison. These "books" each consist of a page or two of Biblical quotations, and are not important. The Mayor sent them to the Duke of Norfolk, who had asked for them.¹²⁸

After hearing the two depositions, the Chancellor came to the conclusion that Bilney had recanted a second time:—"That not only at the fire, as well in words as in writing, but also many days before at his trial he [Bilney] had revoked, abhorred and detested such heresies as he before had holden."¹²⁹

He added severely that:—"There lacked not some that were very sorry for it, of whom some said and some wrote out of Norwich to London that he had not revoked his heresies at all but still had abiden by them. And such as were not ashamed thus to say and write, being afterwards examined thereupon, saw the contrary so plainly proved in their faces by such as at his execution stood by him while he read his revocation himself, that they had in conclusion nothing else to say, but that he read his revocation so softly that they could not hear it."¹³⁰

That seems a cogent enough reason for denying the revocation, considering that the Mayor in his Interrogatory declares that he—"stood very nere him, being and standing wthin a person or two of the same Bilney."¹³¹ He heard, apparently, the whole of the farewell sermon, which he wrote down.

In spite of Sir Thomas More's judgement (and anyone who has read his account of the Hunne trial will not think him incapable of bias), in spite of Bilney's orthodox speech at his execution, one must agree with the angry Foxe that it is highly improbable that he did recant. Foxe writes:—"First, if Thomas Bilney was assoiled from excommunication at his trial and after that heard his mass so devoutly, and at the end of mass was confessed, and consequently after confession was houseled, and, lastly, asked mercy for contemning of the church, as Master More doth bear us in hand (to see how this tale hangeth together), why then did the Chancellor [Dr. Pellis] stick so greatly to give him the sacrament of the altar, whom he himself had assoiled and received to the sacrament of penance before—which is plainly against the canon law."¹³²

But it is the evidence from Bilney's last letter to his father and mother, written shortly before his execution, which seems to clinch the matter. This letter is full of his belief in the saving power of Christ's passion to all sinners "be ther synnes never so gret and never so many."¹³³ And he asserts his great wickedness as well as his complete innocence of heresy:—"But I wold not, good father and mother, y^t ye showld thynke y^t I am put into the fyer of trybulation w^tout my deservyng, I have deservyd thys and moch more, for althowe I am not fawty (as I take god and my conscyens to recorde) in any heresy or errowe that I have ben accused of and don penance for or ever prechyd or favoryd privily or apertly eny opinyon contrery un to ye determination & techyng of our mother holy church (as I wyl answer at the daye of doom), yet for my neglygent and reklouse lyff and especyall in my youth when I neyter knew god nor myself I knowleg my sylf to have deservyd moch more payne and troble than thys, and am redye by y^e grace of god (w^tout ye wyche we can do nothing) to suffere moch more yff yt be hys plesur."¹³⁴

That deep sense of sin which had induced him as a young man to consult "ignorant physicians," which had been banished not by fasts and pardons and pilgrimages but by the words of St. Paul; which had seized him again and made him doubly miserable after his abjuration in 1528, was now lightened by the knowledge that he no longer dreaded the fire and was sure of the saving power of Christ.

His differences with the Church about voluntary works now seemed small and insignificant, not worth insisting on to the detriment of that unity for which he longed.

And so he died, holding on firmly with one hand to the orthodox Ecclesiam Catholicam, and with the other to the central belief of the new Protestant church coming into being—justification by faith. In spite of his desire to sink his differences with the former, to remain within the fold, he had chosen otherwise—by his life and by his death—and was to go down to history as a Protestant martyr.

- ¹*Pre-Reformation England*, H. Maynard Smith, p. 290.
²*Dictionary of National Biography* (D.N.B.), Thomas Bilney.
³Foxe. *Acts and Monuments*, Ed. Pratt, Vol. IV, p. 620.
⁴John Venn. *Early Collegiate Life*, p. 112.
⁵*ibid.*, p. 135.
⁶*Victoria County History of Norfolk*, Vol. II. "Ecclesiastical Hist.," p. 253.
⁷Blomefield. *Norfolk*, Vol. X, p. 218.
⁸Rashdall. *Medieval Universities*, Vol. III, p. 309.
⁹John Venn. *Early Collegiate Life*, p. 131.
¹⁰H. E. Malden. *Trinity Hall*, pp. 14-16.
¹¹Saunders. *History of Norwich Grammar School*, p. 169. It is not clear whether the scholars mentioned are B.As or no.
¹²John Venn. *Early Collegiate Life*, pp. 121-3.
¹³J. A. Muller. *Life of Stephen Gardiner*, p. 122.
¹⁴Foxe. *Acts and Monuments*. Ed. Pratt. Appendix. Bilney's letter to his father and mother.
¹⁵H. E. Malden. *Trinity Hall*, p. 16.
¹⁶*Victoria County History of Norfolk*, Vol. II. "Ecclesiastical Hist.," p. 253.
¹⁷*ibid.*
¹⁸*ibid.*
¹⁹D.N.B. Tyndale.
²⁰*Victoria County History of Norfolk*, Vol. II. "Ecclesiastical Hist.," pp. 247-8.
²¹*Encyclopædia Britannica*, 1947 ed. Lollards.
²²*Victoria County History of Norfolk*, Vol. II. "Ecclesiastical Hist.," p. 253.
²³Power and Postan. *Studies in English Trade in the fifteenth century*, p. 148.
²⁴*Victoria County History of Norfolk*, Vol. II. "Ecclesiastical Hist.," p. 253.
²⁵*ibid.*
²⁶*ibid.*
²⁷John Venn. *Gonville and Caius*, Vol. III, pp. 3 and 7.
²⁸*ibid.*
²⁹*Encyclopædia Britannica*, 1947 ed. "The Bible, St. Jerome."
³⁰Foxe. *Acts and Monuments*, Vol. IV. Ed. Pratt. Letter to Bp. Tunstal, p. 685.
³¹Marcus Loane. *Masters of the English Reformation*, pp. 9-10.
³²H. Maynard Smith. *Henry VIII and the Reformation*, p. 253.
³³*ibid.*, p. 254.
³⁴J. Y. Batley. *On a Reformer's Latin Bible*, p. 2.
³⁵*ibid.*, p. 8.
³⁶D.N.B. *Bilney*.
³⁷D.N.B. *Hugh Latimer*.
³⁸*Latimer's Sermons*, p. 278.
³⁹*Works of Bp. Ridley*. Ed. for Parker Society by H. Christmas, p. 118.
⁴⁰Foxe. *Acts and Monuments*. Ed. Pratt, Vol. IV, p. 620.
⁴¹Latimer. *Remains*. Letter to Sir Edward Baynton, p. 330.
⁴²*State Papers*. L. & P. 462. Letter of Thomas Dorset, Curate of St. Margaret's Lothbury to the Mayor of Plymouth, March 13th 1536.
⁴³Foxe. *Acts and Monuments*. Ed. Pratt, Vol. IV, p. 620.
⁴⁴D.N.B. *Bilney*.
⁴⁵Deanesley, Margaret. *The Lollard Bible*, pp. 162, 330.
⁴⁶Sir Thomas More. Dialogue concerning Tyndale. Book III, Chapt. 2, p. 184.
⁴⁷Foxe. *Acts and Monuments*. Ed. Pratt, Vol. IV, p. 620.
⁴⁸*ibid.*, p. 621.
⁴⁹Starkey. *England in Henry VIII's Time*, p. 137.
⁵⁰Charles Morris. *The Tudors*, p. 16.
⁵¹H. Maynard Smith. *Pre-Reformation England*, pp. 233-4. Note.
⁵²Charles Morris. *The Tudors*, p. 16.
⁵³Marcus Loane. *Masters of the English Reformation*, p. 4.
⁵⁴*ibid.*, p. 10.
⁵⁵*ibid.*, p. 11.
⁵⁶Muller. *Life of Stephen Gardiner*, p. 18.
⁵⁷Harold S. Darby. *Hugh Latimer*, p. 29.
⁵⁸Muller. *Life of Stephen Gardiner*, p. 14.
⁵⁹*ibid.*, p. 14.
⁶⁰"Steelyard" was the name given to the "factory" or centre of the Hanse towns in London.
⁶¹D.N.B. Tyndale.
⁶²*ibid.*
⁶³Marcus Loane. *Masters of the English Reformation*, p. 16.
⁶⁴Sir Thomas More. Dialogue concerning Tyndale, Book III, Chapt. IV, p. 193.
⁶⁵Foxe. *Acts and Monuments*, Vol. IV. Ed. Pratt, p. 627.
⁶⁶*ibid.*, p. 621.
⁶⁷*ibid.*, pp. 633-41.
⁶⁸Sir Thomas More. Dialogue concerning Tyndale, Book III, Chapt. 2-7.
⁶⁹*ibid.*, Chapt. V, p. 202.
⁷⁰*ibid.*, Chapt. IV, p. 191.
⁷¹Foxe. *Acts and Monuments*. Ed. Pratt, Vol. IV, p. 622.
⁷²*ibid.*
⁷³*ibid.*, p. 627.
⁷⁴Sir Thomas More. Dialogue concerning Tyndale, Book III, Chapt. 2, p. 184.
⁷⁵*ibid.*, Book III, Chapt. V, p. 196.
⁷⁶*ibid.*, Book III, Chapt. IV, p. 193.

- ⁷⁷Foxe. *Acts and Monuments*. Ed. Pratt, Vol. IV. First letter to Bishop Tunstall, p. 636.
⁷⁸*ibid.*
⁷⁹Sir Thomas More. Dialogue concerning Tyndale, Book III, Chapt. 2, p. 184.
⁸⁰J. Y. Batley. *On a Reformer's Latin Bible*, pp. 47-8.
⁸¹Foxe. *Acts and Monuments*. Ed. Pratt, Vol. IV, p. 632.
⁸²Latimer. *Sermons*, p. 191.
⁸³*ibid.*, p. 278.
⁸⁴Marcus Loane. *Masters of the Reformation*. Latimer, p. 105.
⁸⁵R. W. Chambers. *Sir Thomas More*, pp. 103, 171, 200.
⁸⁶Sir Thomas More. Dialogue concerning Tyndale, Book III, Chapt. 2, pp. 184-5.
⁸⁷J. A. R. Marriott. *Life of John Colet*, pp. 161-4.
⁸⁸E. Emerton. *Erasmus*, pp. 441-3, 457.
⁸⁹Erasmus. *Pilgrimages to Walsingham and Canterbury*.
⁹⁰Erasmus. *Colloquies*. "The Shipwreck."
⁹¹Bilney. D.N.B.
⁹²Latimer. *Sermons*, p. 191.
⁹³Latimer. *Sermons and Remains*. Ed. George Elwes Corrie, p. 51.
⁹⁴Foxe. *Acts and Monuments*. Ed. Pratt, Vol. IV, App. III.
⁹⁵*ibid.*, p. 642.
⁹⁶*ibid.*
⁹⁷R. N. Clay. *Hermits and Anchorites of England*, p. 184.
⁹⁸Foxe. *Acts and Monuments*. Ed. Pratt, Vol. IV, App. No. 1886.
⁹⁹*ibid.*
¹⁰⁰Gairdner. *Lollardy and the Reformation*, Vol. I, p. 401.
¹⁰¹Foxe. *Acts and Monuments*. Ed. Pratt, Vol. IV, App. No. 1886.
¹⁰²*ibid.*
¹⁰³*ibid.*
¹⁰⁴*ibid.*
¹⁰⁵*ibid.*
¹⁰⁶*ibid.*
¹⁰⁷H. Maynard Smith. *Pre-Reformation England*, pp. 85-6.
¹⁰⁸Foxe. *Acts and Monuments*. Ed. Pratt, Vol. IV, App. No. III.
¹⁰⁹*ibid.*, No. 1886.
¹¹⁰*ibid.*, App. Bilney's Letter to his father and mother.
¹¹¹*ibid.*, p. 653.
¹¹²*ibid.*, p. 652.
¹¹³*ibid.*, App. Bilney's letter to his father and mother.
¹¹⁴R. W. Chambers. *Sir Thomas More*, p. 307.
¹¹⁵Foxe. *Acts and Monuments*. Ed. Pratt, Vol. IV, p. 648.
¹¹⁶*ibid.*, App. IV.
¹¹⁷*ibid.*, Vol. IV, p. 654.
¹¹⁸*ibid.*
¹¹⁹D.N.B. Bilney.
¹²⁰Foxe. *Acts and Monuments*. Ed. Pratt, Vol. IV, App. No. 1886.
¹²¹*ibid.*, Vol. IV, p. 655.
¹²²*ibid.*, App. V.
¹²³*ibid.*, Vol. IV. App. Bilney's letter to his father and mother.
¹²⁴*ibid.*, p. 655.
¹²⁵*ibid.*, App. No. V.
¹²⁶*ibid.*
¹²⁷*ibid.*, Vol. IV, App. No. IV.
¹²⁸*ibid.*, App. No. V.
¹²⁹Sir Thomas More. Preface to the Confutation of Tyndale's Answer 349 Sir Thomas More's Works 1557.
¹³⁰*ibid.*
¹³¹Foxe. *Acts and Monuments*. Ed. Pratt, Vol. IV, App. V.
¹³²*ibid.*, pp. 647-8.
¹³³*ibid.*, Vol. IV, App. Bilney's letter to his father and mother.
¹³⁴*ibid.*