

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTICE

Taken from Tyndale, *Doctrinal Treatises* (Parker Society, Cambridge, ed. Rev. Henry Walter, 1848)

*Modernized, formatted, and annotated (in blue)
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The Life of William Tyndale.

WILLIAM TYNDALE, the man chosen of God to be one of his chief instruments in the blessed work of restoring the knowledge of the way of salvation among the inhabitants of our island, was fitted for this work by being endowed with such ability and learning as enabled him to lay the foundation of our authorised version of the scriptures; and his life was not taken away till he had more than half completed that English Bible, which has been one of God's best gifts to the nations speaking the English tongue.

There are probable, though not indisputable, grounds for believing, that he was descended from forefathers who were barons of Tyndale in Northumberland, till their title passed by an heiress into the family of Bolteby, in the thirteenth century, and eventually to the Percies.¹ This descent is unhesitatingly claimed for himself by a Thomas Tyndale, of Kington St Michael, near Caine, in a letter written, February 3rd, 1663, to a namesake, whom he addresses as his cousin, and whose father was a grandson of the reformer's elder brother. "The first of your family," says the letter-writer, "came out of the north, in the times of the wars between the houses of York and Lancaster, at what time many of good sort (their side going down) fled for refuge where they could find it. Coming into Gloucestershire, and changing his name to that of Hutchins, he afterwards married there, and so having children, before his death, he declared his right name, and from where and for what reason he came there; and so taking his own name, left it to his children, who have since continued it, as it was fit they should. This I have heard from your good father himself."²

xiv [1484-1520]

It seems to have been in the village of Stinchcombe, near Dursley, that Hugh Tyndale, the refugee spoken of above, found the concealment he thus sought. His grandson Thomas married Alicia, sole heiress of Thomas Hunt of Huntscourt, in the neighbouring village of North Nibley, and appears to have had five sons by her. William was the second of these; but in which of the two villages he was born, or in what year, cannot be stated with certainty. The probability is, however, that he was born in North Nibley, in the year 1484.³ Of his course of life, from infancy till he must have been about thirty-six years of age, we still know no more than is told in the following brief extract from Foxe's *Acts and Monuments*.

"Touching the birth and parentage of this blessed martyr of Christ, he was born about the borders of Wales, and brought up from a child in the University of Oxford. There, by long continuance, he grew and increased as well in the knowledge of tongues and other liberal arts, as specially in the knowledge of the scriptures, to which his mind was singularly addicted – insomuch that, lying there in Magdalen hall, he read privily to certain students and fellows of Magdalen college some parcel of divinity, instructing them in the knowledge and truth of the scriptures. His manners and conversation, correspondingly, were such that all those who knew him reputed and esteemed him to be a man of most virtuous disposition, and unspotted life. Thus increasing more and more in learning in the university of Oxford,

¹ Anderson's *Annals of the Eng. Bible*, B. I. § 1. pp. 17-20: and Camden's *Britannia*, col. 853. Gibson's ed. 1695.

² From a copy of this letter, communicated to the editor by John Roberts, Esq., a descendant from the sister of that Thomas Tyndale to whom it was addressed.

³ Anderson, as above, p. 18-22.

and proceeding in degrees of the schools, spying his time, he removed from there to the university of Cambridge. After he had likewise made his abode a certain space there, and being now further ripened in the knowledge of God's word, he left that university also, he resorted to one master Welsh, a knight of Gloucestershire. There he was school-master to his children, and in very good favour with his master.”¹

xv [1503-1514]

In his endeavour to glean some addition to this scanty information, Mr Offor has discovered that a William Tyndale was ordained priest in 1503; and that a person of the same name made his profession in the monastery of the Observants in Greenwich, in 1508. But if 1503 were not too early a date for the reformer's admission into the priesthood, the person ordained is described as properly belonging to the diocese of Carlisle. Everything else would lead us to conclude that our William was neither a native, nor brought up within its jurisdiction.² On the other hand, it is quite incredible that the William Tyndale who took monastic vows at Greenwich should have been the same person as the reformer. For that noted monastery was contiguous to a favorite residence of Henry VIII, so that our Tyndale's keen adversary, sir Thomas More, could not but have known the fact, if he had been chargeable with deserting it. But while More does not fail to call Luther and Oeolampadius friars, from time to time, and scarcely ever speaks of Jerome and Roye, who had quit that very monastery, without calling them either friars or apostates, to induce his readers to look upon Tyndale as the disciple and associate of perjured deserters from the monastic profession, he calls Tyndale himself simply Tyndale, or Hychins, or sir William; which last was then the usual way of designating a priest. All that we can add therefore to Foxe's account of Tyndale's academic life, is that his removing to Cambridge was probably for the purpose of profiting by Erasmus' lectures, who taught Greek there from 1509 till the beginning of 1514; for there was no regular Greek lectureship founded in Oxford till about 1517.³

xvi [1517-1520]

Of his removal into Gloucestershire we can say with more precision that its date could not have been earlier than 1520, when he was about thirty-four years of age; and that the person who had the sagacity to select him for the instruction of his children, was sir John Walsh, at one time an acceptable frequenter of the court, but now living as a country gentleman in his manor-house at Little Sodbury.

“This gentleman,” proceeds Foxe, “as he commonly kept a very good ordinary at his table, many times sundry abbots, deans, archdeacons, with other diverse doctors and great beneficed men, resorted to him there. Together with M. Tyndale, sitting at the same table, many times they used to enter communication, and talk of learned men such as Luther and Erasmus. Also they spoke about diverse other controversies and questions upon the scripture. Then Master Tyndale, as he was learned and well-practised in God's matters, did not spare to show them simply and plainly his judgment in matters, as he thought. And when as they at any⁴ time varied from Tyndale in opinions and judgment, he would show

¹ From the edition of 1597, compared with the extracted life in Day's edition of Tyndale's works.

² *Ordines generaliter celebrat. in ecclesia conventuali dom^es sive prioratus Sancti Barthi in Smythfelde Londin. per Rev. prem. Dmn. Thoma Dei gratia Pavaden. epm aucte Rev. Pris Domini Willem permissione divina Londin. die sabbati iiii^{or} temporum, viz. undecimo die mensis Martii Ann. Dom. Millmo Quingentesimo secundo. Presbri. Willms Tindale Carlii Dioc, p. II. di. ad t^{is}m domus monialium de Lambley.* Extract from the London episcopal registers, communicated to the editor by G. Offor, Esq.; and see Offor's *Life of Tyndale*, p. 7. As the nunnery of Lambley was in the diocese of Durham, though on the borders of Cumberland, the abbreviation for the diocese of Carlisle must refer to the man, and not to the benefice accepted as his title for orders.

³ Hallam, *Introduction to the Literature of Europe*, ch. IV. § 30. London, 1837.

⁴ So it reads in the large black letter folio; but in the Life prefixed to Tyndale's works, Day's ed. of 1574, Foxe has used the word *that* instead of *any*.

them in the book, and lay plainly before them the open and manifest places of the scriptures, to confute their errors and confirm his sayings. And thus they continued for a certain season, reasoning and contending together diverse and sundry times, till at length they waxed weary and bore a secret grudge in their hearts against him."

"Not long after this it happened that certain of these great doctors had invited Master Welsh and his wife¹ to a banquet; there they would talk at their will and pleasure, uttering their blindness and ignorance without any resistance or gainsaying.² Then M. Welsh and his wife, coming home and calling for M. Tyndale, began to reason with him about those matters of which the priests had talked before at their banquet.

xvii [1520-1523]

M. Tyndale, answering by scriptures, maintained the truth, and reproved their false opinions. Then said the lady Welsh, a stout and a wise woman (as Tyndale reported), 'Well, there was such a doctor, who may spend £100, another £200, and another £300. And what would you think the reason is that we should believe you before them?' Master Tyndale gave her no answer at that time, nor also after that (because he saw it would not avail); he talked but little in those matters."

"At that time he was about the translation of a book called *Enchiridion militis Christiani*,³ which being translated, he delivered to his master and lady. After they had read and well-perused it, the doctorly prelates were no longer so often called to the house, nor did they have the cheer and countenance when they came, as they had before. They marked and well-perceived this, and supposing no less but that it came by means of Master Tyndale, they refrained themselves, and at last utterly withdrew themselves, and came there no more."

"As this grew on, the priests of the country, clustering together, began to grudge and storm against Tyndale, railing against him in alehouses and other places. Of whom Tyndale himself, in his prologue before the first book of Moses, reports that they affirmed his sayings were heresy; adding moreover to his sayings, out of their own heads, more than he ever spoke. And so they accused him secretly to the chancellor and other of the bishop's officers."⁴

"It followed not long after this that there was a sitting of the bishop's chancellor appointed, and warning was given to the priests to appear; among whom M. Tyndale was also warned to be there. And whether he had any misdoubt by their threatenings, or knowledge given to him that they would lay something to his charge, is uncertain. But this is certain, as he himself declared, that he suspected their privy accusations – so that he, by the wayside, in going there, cried in his mind heartily to God, to give him strength to stand fast in the truth of his word."

xviii

The county of Gloucester was as yet "included in the diocese of Worcester; which was then so rich a see that it had attracted the notice of the papal court; and four Italian priests had managed to get possession of it in succession. In 1521, Pope Leo X gave it to Giulio de Medici, a base-born son of one of his own relations, who was at the same time Arch-bishop of Florence in Italy, and

¹ Sir John Walsh had married Anne daughter of Sir Robert Poyntz, of Iron Acton, and of Margaret his wife, whose father was the accomplished Antony Woodville, earl of Rivers, beheaded at Pontefract by order of Richard III.

² *Gainsaying* – i.e. without challenge or refutation.

³ *The Manual of a Christian Soldier*; a work of Erasmus. There is an abridged translation of it in the Parker Society edition of Coverdale.

⁴ See p. 394 where the passage quoted by Foxe is greater in length than it has been thought necessary to introduce here.

of Narbonne in France, and became Pope Clement VII before the close of 1523. Leo's claim to the right of disposing of this see to whomever he would, arose out of the fact that the previous Italian Bishop of Worcester, Sylvestro de Gigli, had died at Rome; and his claim had been made palatable to Henry VIII by the pope's empowering Cardinal Wolsey to exercise the patronage and receive the revenues of the bishoprick for its Italian incumbent, who would not be strict in scrutinising the accounts of such a steward. As to the care of the dock, these Italian bishops left that to officers who could better act the despot from the circumstance that their lord was far away. It seems to have been while Giulio de Medici was the absentee bishop, that Tyndale received a summons to appear before his chancellor, who acted as governor of the diocese. That chancellor was a Dr. Parker, who had the boldness, ten years later, to execute the sentence of the convocation which had voted that the body of William Tracy, Esq., a Gloucestershire gentleman, should be turned out of its grave and burned for heresy; because Mr. Tracy had declared in his will that "he would bestow no part of his goods" to procure anything "that anyone would say or do to help his soul."¹

The offence which Tyndale had given to the priests by making them unacceptable guests, where they had been in the habit of finding honour and a loaded table, was now aggravated by his having become a zealous preacher in the country, "around the town of Bristol, and also in the common place of that town, called St Austin's Green."² We may well therefore believe Tyndale's account, who says, "When I came before the chancellor, he threatened me grievously, and reviled me, and berated me as though I had been a dog; and laid to my charge things for which no accuser could be brought forth; and yet all the priests of the country were there the same day."³

xix [1523]

For what followed we return to Foxe's narrative.

"Thus M. Tyndale, after those examinations, escaping out of their hands, departed home and returned to his master again. There dwelt not far off a certain doctor, that had been an old chancellor before to a bishop, who had been an old familiar acquaintance with M. Tyndale, and also favoured him well, to whom M. Tyndale went and opened his mind about diverse questions of the scripture; for he dared to boldly disclose his heart to him. This doctor said to him, 'Do you not know that the pope is the very antichrist whom the scripture speaks of? But beware what you say; for if you are perceived to be of that opinion, it will cost you your life.' He said, moreover, 'I have been an officer of his; but I have given it up, and I defy him and all his works.'

"It was not long after that M. Tyndale happened to be in the company of a certain divine who was considered a learned man; and in communing and disputing with him, he drove him to that issue, so that the said great doctor burst out into these blasphemous words and said, 'We would be better to be without God's laws than the pope's.' Master Tyndale hearing this, full of godly zeal, and not bearing that blasphemous saying, replied again, and said, 'I defy the pope and all his laws:' and further added that if God spared him his life, then before many years had passed, he would cause a boy that drives the plough to know more of the scripture than he did."

The words he had uttered were not likely to be kept secret by the priest to whom they were spoken; and Foxe accordingly proceeds to say, "After this, the grudge of the priests increasing still more and more against Tyndale, they never ceased barking at and berating him, and laid

¹ That is, he would not leave money in his will to procure a prayer for the dead (himself).

² Foxe.

³ Preface to Five Books of Moses, p. 395.

many serious things to his charge, saying that he was a heretic in sophistry, a heretic in logic, and a heretic in divinity; and moreover they said to him that he may bare himself boldly around the gentlemen there in that country, but notwithstanding, shortly he would be otherwise talked with." But Tyndale let them know that his confidence was not built upon his influence or connection with the gentlemen of Gloucestershire. He answered them, "That he was contented they should bring him into any country in all England, giving him ten pounds a year to live with, and binding him to no more but to teach children and to preach [to them]."

xx [1523]

From his reflections on their opposition, however, he providentially learned another lesson. "I perceived," he says, "how it was impossible to establish the lay-people in any truth, unless the scriptures were plainly laid before their eyes in their mother tongue, so that they might see the process, order, and meaning of the text. For otherwise, whatever truth is taught them, these enemies of all truth quench it again, partly with the smoke of their bottomless pit (that is, with apparent reasons from sophistry and from traditions of their own making, founded outside the ground of scripture); and partly in juggling with the text, expounding it in such a sense that is impossible to gather from the text itself – if you see the process, order, and meaning of it." Of the conviction at which he had thus arrived, he says, "This thing only moved me to translate the New Testament."¹

Wycliffe had done this a hundred and fifty years before; but as his version had never been printed, it had never been procurable at a price that was not out of the reach of the poor; and even those yeomen who were persecuted for reading or possessing it, appear from the records of their examinations to have been rarely possessors of more than a single gospel, or of one or two epistles. Wycliffe's version also had this considerable defect, that whereas there was no one in Oxford in his days who knew anything of Greek, he could only translate from the Latin Vulgate; and consequently he had incorporated all of its erroneous renderings into his text. But besides this, the unsettled state of language, in our illiterate nation, had already made Wycliffe's English among the things which were passing away. 'The ghiftis and the clepyng of God ben without forthynkyng,' or 'He made us saaf bi waishchyng of aghenbigetyng and aghen newing,' (Wycliffe's version of Rom. 11.29, and Tit. 3.5), would scarcely have been intelligible to Tyndale's contemporaries, and would have sounded painfully uncouth to the next generation. As a man therefore who knew, and was determined to increase his knowledge of tongues which had been out of Wycliffe's reach, Tyndale resolved to make a version of his own; and to begin a work whose least merit is that it has given the English tongue a fixedness that is not unlikely without precedent among the languages of the earth.

xxi [1523]

With this resolution, Tyndale resigned his post in the family of Sir John Walsh; saying to him, "Sir, I perceive I shall not be allowed to wait long in this country, neither shall you be able, though you would, to keep me out of the bands of the spirituality;² and also what displeasure might thereby grow in you by keeping me, God knows, for which I should be right sorry."³ His patron seems to have acquiesced in this "view of the case; and as Tyndale had given such credit to Erasmus' flattering description of the learning and liberality of Tonstal, then bishop of London, as to believe that he would not be unwilling to patronise a laborious scholar, and might even sanction his translating the scriptures, it was agreed between them that Tyndale should repair to London; and that sir John should give him a letter of introduction to his friend sir Henry Guildford, controller of the royal household and known to be in great favour with the

¹ Preface to Pentateuch, p. 304.

² "Spirituality" (sic) refers to all those of religious orders and spiritual authority; the religious establishment.

³ Foxe.

king, so that he might be recommended to the bishop's patronage from an influential quarter. To London he went accordingly; and he carried with him an oration of Isocrates, which, he says, "I had translated out of Greek into English," as undeniable evidence of his having made such progress in scholarship as was still exceedingly rare.

xxii [1523-1528]

The courtier received the simple-hearted scholar with kindness; and after speaking for him to the bishop of London at his request, sir Henry advised him to write a letter in his own name to the bishop, and to be himself the bearer of it. He complied with this advice, and found an old acquaintance in the bishop's household; so that everything seemed to conspire, thus far, to his obtaining the patronage he desired. "But God," says Tyndale, "who knows what is within hypocrites, saw that I was beguiled, and that that counsel was not the nearest path to my purpose; and therefore he got me no favour in my lord's sight. Whereupon my lord answered me, *His house was full; he had more than he could provide for*; and advised me to *seek in London*, where, he said, *I could not lack a service*. And so I stayed in London almost a year; and marked the course of the world; and heard our praters (I would say our preachers) how they boasted of themselves and their high authority; and beheld the pomp of our prelates; and understood at the last not only that there was no room in my lord of London's palace to translate the New Testament, but also that there was no place to do it in all England, as experience now openly declares."

In this statement, which Tyndale made public in 1530, by introducing it into the preface to his translation of the Pentateuch, he took care to say nothing about the generous merchant, Humfrey Munmouth, in whose sight the Lord had given him favour in the hour of his need; for he well knew that were he then to express his obligation to that liberal patron of poor scholars, he should be furnishing the popish party with fresh motives and grounds for doing his benefactor still further injury. In 1523 Tyndale could sojourn in London, seeking for a source of maintenance which would not interfere with his proposed task, and at the same time administering the bread of life from parochial pulpits. But by the spring of 1528 his name had become so odious to men whose eyes could not bear that great light which his labours were pouring in upon a people who had long walked in darkness, that the suspicion of befriending him had subjected Munmouth's papers to an inquisitorial search, and Munmouth himself to imprisonment in the Tower, as well as to an unrighteous attempt to make him incriminate himself by his answers to interrogatories extending beyond what his accusers knew of what they would account his guilt.

According to a document first published by Strype from Foxe's MSS., "twenty-four articles were ministered against Munmouth," containing the following accusations: "That you have favoured, helped, and given exhibitions¹ to such persons as went about to translate into English, or to make erroneous books out of holy scripture: and chiefly to sir William Hochin, otherwise called sir William Tyndal, priest, and to friar Roye, sometime Observant and now in apostasy, or to either of them." "Item, That you were privy and of counsel that the said sir W. Hochin, otherwise called Tyndal, and friar Roye, or either of them, went into Almayne to Luther, there to study and learn his sect; and helped them with money at their departing from here, or since."

xxiii [1524-1528.]

Item, That you were privy and of counsel, or have given help, so that the New Testament was translated into English by sir William Hochin or Tyndal, and friar Roye, and printed and brought into this realm, with glosses as well as without glosses. Item, That after they were openly forbidden, as being full of errors, you have had, read, and kept them. Item, That you have

¹ A pension contributed toward any person's maintenance.

had, and still have, certain other works full of errors, translated into English, sent to you, by the said sir W. Tyndal, or Hochin.”¹

Under these charges, the charitable merchant was prepared to beg forgiveness and mercy in very humble terms; and to indite a petition from his prison to cardinal Wolsey, and the king’s other counsellors, in which he tells his tale as follows.

“The fourteenth day of May, [1528] sir Thomas More, knight, and sir William Kingston, knight,² of the king’s noble council, sent for me to sir John Danncy’s; and there they examined me, asking, ‘What letters and books I received lately from beyond the seas;’ and I said, ‘None,’ and truly never had. And, ‘What exhibition did I give to anybody beyond the seas?’ I said, ‘None, in three years past.’ And they asked me, ‘Whether I was acquainted with many persons;’ I was acquainted with none of them to my knowledge and remembrance. I told them, ‘In four years past I did give to a priest called Sir William Tyndal, otherwise called Hotchens.’ And then sir Thomas More and Sir William Kingston had me go home to my house, and they searched it; and saw all the letters and books in my house: and there they found no letters that they regarded, nor English books, but five or six printed, which they did not regard; and they left them with me as they found them. From there I went again to sir John Danncy’s, my special good master; he brought me the same day to the Tower of London, and delivered me to sir Edmonde Walsyngham, knight, and lieutenant of the Tower.”

[1524-1528]

“Over four and a half years ago, I heard the foresaid sir William preach two or three sermons at St Dunstan’s in the west, in London; and after that I chanced to meet with him, and after talking with him, I asked what living he had. He said, ‘he had none at all; but he trusted to be with my lord of London, in his service.’ And therefore I had the better fantasy to him. Afterward he went to my lord and spoke to him, as he told me, and my lord answered him, ‘That he had chaplains enough;’ and he said to him, ‘That he would have no more at that time.’ And so the priest came to me again, and sought my help, and so I took him into my house half a year; and there he lived like a good priest, as I thought. He studied most of the day and night at his book; and he would eat only soppy meat, by his good will, nor would he drink but a small single beer. I never saw him wear linen around him during the time he was with me. I promised him ten pounds sterling, to pray for my father and mother, their souls, and all Christian souls. I paid it to him when he made his exchange to Hamburg. Afterward he got, from some other men, ten pounds sterling more, which he left with me. And within a year after, he sent to me for his ten pounds from Hamburg, and I sent it to him there by one Hans Collenbeke. I have never since sent him the value of one penny, nor will I ever. I have given more exhibitions to scholars in my days, than to that priest. Doctor Royston, chaplain to my lord of London, has cost me more than forty or fifty pounds sterling. The foresaid sir William left me an English book, called *Enchiridion*. Also I had a little treatise that the priest sent me, when he sent for his money. When I heard my lord of London preach at Paul’s Cross, that sir William Tyndale had translated the New Testament in English, and it was wickedly translated, that was the first time I ever suspected or knew of any evil by him. And shortly after, I burned in my house all the letters and treatises that he sent me, with diverse copies of books that my servant wrote, and the sermons that the priest made at St Dunstan’s. He that wrote them saw it. I burned them for fear of the translator, more than for

¹ Strype’s *Eccles. Memorials*, ch. xli. Vol. I. page 489. Clarendon Press, 1822.

² Subsequently Constable of the Tower, and the unshrinking executor of every tyrannical command; whose appearance made Wolsey shudder; and who watched as a spy over Anne Boleyn, in her hour of distress.

any ill that I knew by them." Subscribed, "Your poor prisoner and beedman,¹ at your grace's pleasure. Humfrye Munmouthe, draper of London."²

[1524]

It is from the date of this petition, and the period of time mentioned in it, corrected by Tyndale's mention of the time he passed in London, that his biographers have been led to fix upon the autumn of 1523 as the date of his application for Tonstal's patronage;³ and that of 1524, when he was about forty years of age, as the time of his quitting England for Hamburgh to see his beloved native land no more.

At Hamburgh Tyndale would find that the burghers had recently resolved to renounce the pope's authority; and that one Kempe, previously a Franciscan friar, had been invited from Rostoe to preach the gospel to them. He would also find that, whereas the Jews had been expelled from England so long ago as 1279, they were numerous enough in that free commercial city, to have some among them well-versed in their ancient tongue. These circumstances had probably induced him to direct his course there. For while there is no trustworthy evidence that either of the English universities contained any person capable of giving him any instruction in Hebrew, when he was studying within their precincts, we discover from his 'Mammon,' that three years had not elapsed from his reaching Hamburgh, before he could make such remarks as prove that he had by that time acquired a considerable insight into some remarkable peculiarities in the Hebrew language.

Foxe says, that at Tyndale's "first departing out of the realm, he took his journey into the farther parts of Germany, as into Saxony, where he conferred with Luther, and other learned men in those quarters. After he continued a certain season there, he came down into the Netherlands, having his longest stay in the town of Antwerp, until the time of his apprehension." But by this very meagre sketch the worthy martyrologist only shows what scanty information he had received respecting Tyndale's proceedings abroad.

[1524-1525]

His belief that Tyndale sought out Luther, probably had no better ground than that he was unaware of any reason for discrediting sir Thomas More. It was boldly affirmed in his Dialogue, and probably introduced into the charges against Munmouth, to raise greater prejudice against Tyndale. It was to disparage his New Testament that sir Thomas said, "at the time of this translation Hychens was with Luther in Wittenberg, and set certain glosses in the margin, framed for setting forth that ungracious sect." "The confederacy between Luther and him is a thing well known, and plainly confessed by such as have been taken, and convicted here of heresy, coming from them."⁴ But we shall see, in Tyndale's answer, that he replies, speaking of the confederacy, "This is not truth;" and while nothing drops from him indicative of his having ever seen Luther, the language of Munmouth makes it more reasonable to conclude that he "abode in Hamburgh" till he had exhausted Munmouth's gift of ten pounds (a sum equivalent to £150 at present), and had received his second supply.

It is also observable that, when Tyndale sent for this last sum, he transmitted to Munmouth "a little treatise," which his kind patron was afterwards afraid to keep, and took good care not to

¹ *Beedman* – a poor man supported in a beadhouse, and required to pray for the soul of its founder; a beggar.

² App. to Strype's Ecc. Mem. No. 89. Vol. n. p. 363.

³ If the record of the death of Sir John Walsh's son Maurice, in 1556, has enabled Mr Anderson to ascertain (Ann. of Engl. Bible, Vol. I. p. 37, n. 28.) that Tyndale's eldest pupil was only seven years of age when he left Sodbury for London, we cannot suppose that Tyndale's services would have been wanted at Sodbury to take charge of the boy before he was five years of age, that is, certainly not earlier than 1520.

⁴ Dial. B. III. ch. viii.

name. This ‘little treatise’ was very probably ‘The examination of William Thorpe before Archbishop Arundel,’ of which Foxe has said: “This history was first set forth and corrected by M. William Tyndale, who did somewhat alter and amend the English of it, and frame it after our manner, yet not fully in all words, but something did remain savouring the old speech of that time,” viz. about 1407. “For the more credit of the matter,” adds Foxe, “I rather wished it in his own natural speech, in which it was first written.” But though unable to procure the use of a copy “in its own old English,” for insertion in his ‘Acts and Monuments,’ he says, “Master Whitehead, yet alive, had seen the true ancient copy in the hands of George Constantine.” The value of this publication, as an exposure of the weakness of the usual arguments in defence of popery, is attested by Sir Thomas More’s giving it a place in his list of the “abominable books of Tyndale and his fellows, brought into this realm, and kept in huker muker,¹ by some shrewd masters that keep them for no good.”²

xxvii [1524-1525]

At any rate, nothing is known of any other treatise, either composed or prepared for the press by Tyndale during his sojourn in Hamburg; but we have good ground for believing that there he completed what was of more value than any treatise – namely, the first portion of God’s own holy word that had ever passed through the press in the English tongue. For Tyndale had printed, and put into circulation, his version of St Matthew’s gospel, and after it his version of Mark, before printing his entire New Testament, which was last in the press in 1525; this may be gathered from the joint testimonies of a friend and an enemy. In Foxe’s account of Frith, he has said that “William Tyndale, placing himself in Germany, first translated there the gospel of St Matthew into English, and after that the whole New Testament.” And Robert Ridley, uncle to the martyr, but a bitter enemy of the reformation, writing in Feb. 1527 to Henry Golde, a chaplain of Abp. Warham, twice mentions, with strong expressions of abhorrence, “the first print of Matthew and Mark,” as translated by Tyndale.³

xxviii [1525]

And lastly a humble reader of the scriptures, being examined before Bishop Tonstal in 1528, was brought to confess that he had been in possession, two years before, of “the gospel of Matthew and Mark in English, and certain of Paul’s epistles after the old translation;”⁴ by which epithet he would be understood to mean that the epistles were of Wycliffe’s version, though the two gospels were of that more recent version which everyone, by that time, knew that Tyndale had made.

The next place in which we have undeniable evidence of Tyndale’s sojourning is Cologne; where he would know that there were enterprising printers accustomed to prepare publications for the

¹ In secret. From Saxon *hoga*, fear, carefulness proceeding from fear; and *muckel*, great, much.

² Preface to ‘Confutacion of Tyndale’s answers,’ 1532. More says, ‘The eumination of Thorpe was put forth, as it is said by George Constantine;’ and we see from Foxe how such a report may have originated. There is, however, a peculiarity in Thorpe’s altered language, which marks Tyndale as its corrector, and gives probability to his making the changes which Foxe disliked, when hot upon his Hebrew studies. For Tyndale was evidently so much struck with the advantage possessed by the Hebrew tongue, in having a causal voice to its verbs, as to make a systematic endeavour to introduce the same into his native language. It was already not without examples of the kind; such as to *strengthen*, for *to give strength*; to *humble*, for *to make humble*; and as if he despaired of inducing his countrymen to accept a set of new verbs, formed after the model of *strengthen*, he adopted the simpler method. Hence the reader of this volume will find Tyndale using to *able*, to *fear*, to *meek*, to *knowledge*, to *strength*; for to enable, to *cause to fear* or *terrify*, to *render meek*, to *give knowledge* or *acknowledge*, to *give strength*. A comparison of Tyndale’s edition of Thorpe, as reprinted by Foxe, with the prose of Chaucer, who must have been Thorpe’s contemporary during part of his life, will show that one of the most obvious differences between them consists in the employment of *knowledge*, and *able* as verbs in the Tantalized Thorpe.

³ The greater part of his letter is printed in Anderson’s *Annals of the English Bible*, B. I. Vol. I. p. 153.

⁴ Id. p. 183.

English market.¹ To the same city came John Cochlaeus, an indefatigable assailant of Luther, who had recently been compelled for that reason to quit Frankfort, where he had possessed a benefice. It is from a controversial pamphlet of this champion of popery, published some years later, that we gain the following account of his discovering Tyndale and an associate² in Cologne, in 1525; and how they were employed. He says,

"Two English apostates, who had been some while at Wittenberg, were in hopes that all the people of England would shortly become Lutherans, with or without the king's consent, through the instrumentality of Luther's New Testament, which they had translated into English. They had already come to Cologne, that they might secretly transmit their so translated testament from there into England, under cover of other goods, as soon as the printers had multiplied it into many thousands of copies. Such was their confidence of success, that they had begun by asking the printers to strike off an impression of 6,000 copies; but the printers, rather fearing that they might be subjected to a very heavy loss if anything should turn out unfavourably, had only put 3,000 to the press.

xxix [1525]

At this time, Cochlaeus having become better known to the Cologne printers, and more familiar with them, he sometimes heard them boast over their cups, in a confident manner, that whether the king and cardinal of England might wish it or not, all England would shortly be Lutheran. He heard also that there were two Englishmen lurking there, learned men, skilful in languages and fluent. However he could never see nor converse with them. Having, therefore, invited certain printers to his inn, one of them revealed to him in more private discourse, after they were treated with wine, the secret method by which England was to be drawn over to the side of Luther: namely, that three thousand copies of the Lutheran New Testament were in the press, and were already advanced as far as the letter K, in the signature of the sheets;³ and that ample payment was supplied by English merchants, who were to carry off the work secretly, as soon as it was printed, and would clandestinely disperse it through all England, before the king or the cardinal could discover or prohibit it. Cochlaeus, being inwardly affected by fear and wonder, disguised his grief under the appearance of admiration. But afterwards, considering the magnitude of the grievous danger, he cast in his mind by what method he might speedily obstruct these very wicked attempts. He went, therefore, secretly to Herman Rincke, a patrician of Cologne and knight, familiar both with the emperor and the king of England, and a councilor; he disclosed to him the whole affair, as by the good help of the wine it had become known to him. That all these things might be better proved, Rincke sent another person to search the house where the work was printing, according to Cochlaeus' information. When he had ascertained from that man that the matter was true, and that there was a vast quantity of paper there, he went to the senate of the city and procured a prohibition against the printer's proceeding any further in that work. Upon this, the two English apostates fled, carrying off in haste the *quarto* sheets already printed, and sailed up the Rhine to Worms, where the people were in the full fury of Lutheranism, so that what had been begun might be completed there by the help of another printer. Rincke and Cochlaeus, however, immediately sent advice by letter to the king, the cardinal, and the bishop of Rochester [Fisher], that they might make provision with

¹ Quentel, who printed for Tyndale, was connected with Francis Byrekman, whose brothers, Arnold and John, had book-shops both in Paris and London. Anderson, B. I. pp. 55-6.

² Generally supposed to be William Roye, of whom see more in pp.37-9.

³ In ordine quaternionum.

greater diligence, lest that most pernicious article of merchandise should be conveyed into all the ports of England.”¹

xxx [1525-1526]

Cochlaeus’ assertions respecting the previous sojourn of these two Englishmen at Wittenberg, and their hope to see their countrymen become Lutherans, and also that the New Testament which they were printing was a translation from Luther’s, cannot reasonably pass for anything more than artful figures of speech, suited to the purpose of a writer whose express object, in the work from which the above is an extract, was to make out that everything tending to be injurious to his church might be traced to Luther as its odious source. On the other hand, considering that Cochlæus says the Englishmen were spoken of as skilful in languages, we are enabled to add a specification of the languages known by Tyndale at this time; for this extent of knowledge is only affirmed of one of the two by our next witness, who tells what he heard from a friendly quarter about twelve months later.

The following entry occurs in the diary of Spalatinus, the secretary of Frederic, elector of Saxony and the friend of Luther:

“Busche² told us that six thousand copies of the new Testament in the English tongue had been printed at Worms; and that this translation had been made by an Englishman, sojourning there with two other natives of Britain, who was so skilled in seven languages, Hebrew, Greek, Latin, Italian, Spanish, English,³ and Dutch, that whichever he might be speaking, you would think it to be his native tongue.”⁴

xxxi [1526]

It would appear that Tyndale either expected or heard, that the steps taken by Cochlæus would make it peculiarly difficult to effect the introduction of his New Testament into the English ports, if it should be seen at once to answer to the description of the volume he had been detected in preparing at Cologne. For when he got to Worms, he suspended the completion of that edition, which was in 4to,⁵ with a doctrinal preface⁶ and instructive marginal notes, and took himself to printing his version anew in a much smaller form, containing nothing but the inspired text, except that a short address to the reader was appended to its close, without giving the translator’s name. The English merchants and other friends were consequently enabled to fulfil their promises, of importing it and procuring its circulation; and its sale seems to have been such that it encouraged the printers to undertake the completion of the 4to edition without further delay.

Such a flowing in of the word of God, in a tongue understood by the people, could not however be long concealed from its enemies. On Sunday the 11th of February, 1526, cardinal Wolsey went to St Paul’s, attended by thirty-six bishops, abbots, and priors, to see great baskets full of books thrown into a fire, before the large crucifix at its northern gate, while bishop Fisher preached his

¹ The foregoing is from *Cochlaei Com. de actis et scriptis Mart. Lutheri. Mogunt. 1549.* (Anderson’s *Annals*, B. I. Vol. I. p. 58.)

² Herman von Busche had been a pupil of Reuchlin, the earliest Gorman Hebraist; and had himself such a “love of literature as to become” teacher in the schools, being the first nobleman who dared to take a step so degrading in the estimation of his order.

³ In the original *Britannicae*; but doubtless English was meant thereby.

⁴ *Schelhomii Amoenitates Literariae*, Tom. IV. p. 431. *Excerpta quaedam e diario Geor. Apalatini.* The immediately preceding date in the diary is in August 1526. About September of that year Tyndale was joined by John Frith.

⁵ Abbreviation of *quarto*, a paper size. (printing)

⁶ See *Introduction to the Pathway into the Holy Scripture*, p. 4.

noted sermon on the occasion; and Tyndale tells us, that in this fire they burned copies of his version of the word of God.

As the year advanced, Luther's letter of apology, for his previous rough reply to the king's book against him, provoked Henry to a rejoinder, in which he said to his subjects that Luther:

"fell in device with one or two lewd persons, born in this our realm, for translating the new Testament into English, with many corruptions of that holy text, as well as certain prefaces and other pestilent glosses in the margins, for the advancement and setting forth of his abominable heresies, intending to abuse the good minds and devotion that you, our dearly beloved people, bear toward the holy Scripture; and to infect you with the deadly corruption and contagious odour of his pestilent errors. In avoiding this, out of our special tender zeal towards you, we have, with the deliberate advice of the most reverend father in God, Thomas, lord cardinal, legate *a latere* of the apostolic see, archbishop of York, primate, and our chancellor of this realm, and other reverend fathers of the spirituality, determined that the untrue translations be burned, with further sharp correction and punishment against the keepers and readers of them."

xxxii [1526]

The ready reception and the influence of Tyndale's testaments are distinctly declared in a charge addressed by Cuthbert Tonstal, then bishop of London, to his archdeacons, in which he says: "Maintainers of Luther's sect, blinded through extreme wickedness, wandering from the way of truth and the catholic faith, have translated the New Testament into our English tongue, intermingling with it many heretical articles and erroneous opinions, pernicious and offensive, seducing the simple people. There are many books imprinted of this translation, some with glosses and some without, containing in the English tongue that pestiferous and most pernicious poison, dispersed throughout our diocese in great number. Therefore we, Cuthbert, willing to withstand the craft and subtlety of the ancient enemy and his ministers, straitly command you to warn all dwelling within your archdeaconries, that under pain of excommunication and incurring the suspicion of heresy, they bring in and deliver up all and singular such books that contain the translation of the New Testament in the English tongue!"¹ On the 3rd of November, Archbishop Warham issued a mandate of similar tenor; so that by that date all authority in England, both lay and spiritual, was publicly committed to oppose the circulation of the New Testament as translated by Tyndale.

All that could be done at home seemed, however, insufficient to Wolsey; and under his guidance Henry sent letters to the princess-regent of the Netherlands, and to the governor of the English merchants at Antwerp; and the cardinal wrote by the same messenger to Sir John Hackett, the king's agent at the regent's court, urging all these parties to concur in taking measures for the destruction of books intended to poison the king's subjects.

xxxiii [1526-1527]

Hackett presented the king's letter to the regent on the 17th of November, and assured the cardinal that his desire should be accomplished: but when he had discovered that English testaments not only passed through Antwerp for exportation, but were actually printed there, as a commercial speculation, by one Christopher Endhoven, the burgesses of that free city stood upon their privileges, and refused to consider Endhoven's publication as heretical. Hackett tells Wolsey all this, in a letter written in January 1527; and confesses at its close, that if the cardinal would have Tyndale's testaments burned, it might be necessary to commission someone to buy them. The cardinal was too shrewd to do this; but archbishop Warham informed his suffragans,

¹ The document may be read in Foxe, Vol. IV. p. 666, or in Anderson's *Annals*, p.118. Mr Anderson has ascertained the date to be Oct. 24th, 1526, from the episcopal register of London.

by letters dated May 26, 1527, that he "had lately gotten into his hands all the books of the New Testament, translated into English and printed beyond the seas," at the cost of £66. 9s. 4d.,¹ a sum equivalent to nearly £1000 at the present time. The consequence was, that before the end of the summer another Antwerp printer, Christopher Van Ruremund,² had struck off a fourth edition of Tyndale's New Testament; and a dearth of corn in England, compelling the cardinal to remove all restraints on the importation of corn from Flanders, facilitated the clandestine introduction of the bread of life.

By this time Tyndale had published that *Prologue to the Epistle to the Romans*, which will be found in his works, but which came forth anonymously; while his next work, the *Treatise on the Parable of the Wicked Mammon*, was accompanied with an avowal, that he was both its author and the translator of the proscribed testaments. The *Treatise on the Obedience of a Christian Man* speedily followed.³

xxxiv [1527-1528]

Having done so much to expose himself to the rage of the dominant church, Tyndale seems to have thought it prudent to dwell no longer in that great commercial thoroughfare, the valley of the Rhine. He therefore quit Worms for the secluded town of Marburg in Hesse, where his admirer, Von Busche, had just accepted a professorship under the patronage of the protestant landgrave.⁴

In so doing, we can now see that he was led aright; for what was secretly devised in the chambers of princes has now been, as it were, proclaimed on housetops by the recent publication of state papers, and the facility or access allowed to what is yet unprinted. From such documents, Mr Anderson has produced evidence, under their own signatures, that Wolsey was directing Hackett to request the regent of the Netherlands to deliver Tyndale and Roye into his hands; and that this obsequious agent was suggesting to the cardinal to lay the charge of treason against an English merchant, Richard Harman, who was only guilty of transmitting Tyndale's testaments from Antwerp. Though the charge was false, the lords of Antwerp might hold themselves bound by treaty to surrender any person thus charged to the king of England. Providentially, Wolsey's double-dealing had at this time given such cause of offence to the emperor, that his requests had no influence with him, nor with his aunt the princess-regent. But he is found employing another agency: sending John West, an Observant of Greenwich, to hunt out Roye, once a friar in the same monastery, with whom he supposed Tyndale to still be associated; and writing to Herman Rincke to search for the men who had once fled before him, and for the books whose issue from the press he had stopped for a while. West and Hackett travelled here and there, only to be disappointed and chargeable to their employer; while Rincke searched the commercial cities, and though he found some of the proscribed books, could gain no tidings of the place of Tyndale's retreat. He says in his reply to Cardinal Wolsey:

"The letters of your grace were sent to me from Cologne to Frankfort, respecting buying up, everywhere, books printed in the English language, and the apprehension of Roye and Hutchyns: but neither they nor their accomplices have been at the fairs of Frankfort since Easter. Nor has their printer, Schott of Strasburgh, confessed that he knows where they have vanished.

¹ [66 pounds 9 shillings and 4 pence] The reply of Richard Nixe, bishop of Norwich, is now in the British Museum, MS. Cotton. Vitellius, B. ix. fol. 117, b. and contains the above statement. He assures the archbishop of his readiness to pay ten marks, as his contribution to the expense incurred. Anderson, B. i. §4. p. 158.

² The John Raimund of Foxe, Vol. v. p. 27.

³ See the editor's introductions to those two treatises; where he regrets having transposed their titles in p. 31. 1. 14.

⁴ *Landgrave*: A count who had jurisdiction over a large territory in medieval Germany.

xxxv [1528]

Since receiving your commands, I have spared neither my person, money, nor diligence. By using a licence formerly obtained from the emperor, and by gifts and presents, I have gained over the Frankfort consuls, and some senators and judges, so that in three or four places I was enabled to collect and pack up all the books. The printed books are still in my possession, except two copies, which I gave to your diligent and faithful agent, John West, for the use of the king's grace and yours. If I had not found these books and interfered, they would have been pressed together in paper packages, and enclosed in ten sacks craftily covered over with flax; and thus unsuspected, they would have been sent across the seas into Scotland and England, and would have been sold as if they were but clean paper. But I think that very few or none of them have been carried away or sold. I shall also take most diligent care as to the foresaid Roye and Hutchyns, both as to apprehending them, and detecting the places they frequent. I lately brought the printer Schott before the consuls, senators, and judges of Frankfort; and I compelled him on his oath to confess how many such books he had printed in the English language, German, or any other. Being thus put to his oath, he said that in the English tongue he had printed only one thousand of six sheets folded in quartos, and besides one thousand of nine sheets folded likewise;¹ and this by the order of Roye and Hutchyns who, lacking money, were not able to pay for the books printed, much less for printing them in other languages. Therefore I have purchased almost all of them, and now have them in my house at Cologne."

This zealous promoter of the cardinal's views takes care to suggest in the same letter, that such a diploma as would authorise him to act more efficiently, both in the king's cause and his own, should be obtained from the emperor Charles V.; and that

"Roye, Tyndale, and Jerome Barlow and their adherents, ought to be apprehended, punished, and carried off, to destroy the Lutheran heresy, and to confirm the Christian faith."²

But while these toils and projects of rulers and of the children of this world could effect so little of what they desired, their own language tells how the benefits of this faithful servant's labour of love were extending beyond the bounds of his native land.

xxxvi [1527-1528]

We have just seen Rincke declaring that if he had not bribed the magistrates of Frankfort, and by their means compelled a printer to let him purchase what remained in his hands of Tyndale's works, they would have been sent to purchasers in Scotland, as well as in England. And in an earlier letter from Hackett to cardinal Wolsey, dated from Mechlin, Feb. 20, 1526-7, he tells him that he had advertised the king's secretary, Mr Brian Tuke, that "there were diverse merchants of Scotland that bought many of such similar books" (and the books he is speaking of are Tyndale's New Testament), "and took them into Scotland; a part to Edinburgh, and the most part to the town of St Andrew's. For which cause," says Hackett, "when I was at Barrow, being notified that the Scottish ships were in Zealand (for the said books were loaded there), I immediately went there, thinking that if I had found such stuff there, that I would cause as good a fire to be made of them as there has been of the remnant in Brabant; but fortune would not have [me arrive] in time, for the foresaid ships departed a day before my coming."

¹ *Sex quaternionum et novem quindecimorum.*

² This letter is given at greater length in Anderson, B. i. § IS. p. 202-4; but some expressions have been altered in the above extract, after a comparison with the original in the Cotten MSS. Vitellius, B. xxi. fol. 43. Brit. Mus. It is dated Cologne, Oct. 7, 1528. The name of Roye is put foremost, because of the personal offence he had given Wolsey by his satire. See Tyndale's *Preface to the Mammon*, p. 39.

In March, 1528, bishop Tonstal had granted to Sir Thomas More a licence to have and to use these heretical books, as he was pleased to style them, which being in the English tongue had been imported into the realm, so that he might “get himself an immortal name and eternal glory in heaven,” by exposing “the crafty malice” of their authors; and that, as one able to “play the Demosthenes in the English tongue,” he might make the prelates “more prompt against those wicked supplanters of the church.”¹ Thus eulogised and summoned into the field by his diocesan, More commenced a series of controversial attacks against Tyndale, which he was tempted to continue till they filled several hundred folio pages.

xxxvii [1528-1529]

Tyndale himself meanwhile was labouring at his translation of the books of Moses from the Hebrew, though he is also supposed to have printed a tract “On Matrimony” about this period. And he is now reputed to be the author of an “Exposition of 1Cor.7.” The printer’s colophon² is said to end as follows, “at Malborowe, in the land of Hesse, 1529, 20th day of June, by me, Hans Loft.” As the same printer finished an edition of “The Revelation of Antichrist” for Tyndale’s associate Frith on the 12th of the following month, it is probable that they were both still at Marburg³ in July. By that time Sir Thomas More, bishop Tonstal, and Hackett, had taken their place among the diplomats assembled at Cambray; where the princess-regent of the Netherlands and the mother of Francis I were met to arrange the terms of a peace between the French monarch and emperor Charles V. Our king’s envoys were not forgetting Tyndale there. The treaty between the two contending potentates was signed on the 5th of August. And then the Englishmen induced the princess-regent to consent to a treaty with Henry VIII, by which the two contracting parties bound themselves, among other things, to prohibit printing or selling “any Lutheran books” (as they styled every anti-papal publication) within their respective territories.⁴

On their way home from Cambray, the English ministers found in Antwerp a London merchant named Augustine Packington, a favourer of Tyndale, but one who took care to conceal that inclination from the ruling powers. According to the current tale, adopted by Foxe and the contemporary chronicler Hall, bishop Tonstal talked with this merchant about the New Testaments, and said how he would gladly buy up all the copies – to which Packington replied, that if his lordship would indeed be responsible for the price, he would himself lay down the necessary sum; and would assure him of getting every copy into his hands, as far as they were yet unsold. The tale proceeds to state, that the bishop gladly commissioned him to do so; and that Packington quickly went to Tyndale, who was then also in Antwerp, and said to him,

“William, I know you are a poor man, and have a heap of New Testaments and books by you, for which you have both endangered your friends and beggared yourself; and I have now gotten you a merchant who, with ready money, shall purchase all that you have, if you think it profitable. The merchant is the bishop of London.”

xxxviii [1529-1530]

Tyndale is then represented as saying that he was glad of this, as the burning of his Testaments would only bring odium⁵ on the person who could throw the scriptures into the fire; while the price would relieve his wants, and enable him to bring out a more correct edition; “and so, upon the compact made between them, the bishop of London had the books, Packington had the

¹ The licence is printed in Foxe, Vol. IV. p. 697: the date of it appears from the Register to be March 7th, 1528.

² A publisher's emblem printed in a book (usually on the title page)

³ See p. 129, n. 2.

⁴ Lord Herbert's Hen. VIII., p. 316. Lond. 1672.

⁵ *Odium: a state of disgrace resulting from detestable behavior.*

thanks, and Tyndale had the money." These last are Foxe's words; he presently adds that at a subsequent examination of George Constantine, who was charged with promoting the sale of heretical books, More learned from him that the bishop of London's money had been a "succour and comfort" to more than one of Tyndale's abettors;¹ and that More then remarked, "By my oath, I think the same; for I told the bishop as much before he went about it."

Strange as it seems that Tonstal would have spent money on a repetition of archbishop Warham's unwise expedient for the suppression of a publication, which the press could speedily re-issue, the above account receives confirmation from Hall's chronicle of the following year. There he tells how "the bishop of London caused all his New Testaments which he had bought, with many other books, to be burned openly in St Paul's church-yard in the month of May."² And because the date of the treaty of Cambray proves that the negotiators could not have left that city till some days after the 5th of August (which allows time for Tyndale to remove himself from Marburg to Antwerp, before they would reach the latter city on their way to England), there were contemporary transactions which would doubtless dispose Tyndale to quit Marburg about that time. For in August the Landgrave of Hesse was urging Luther and Zwingli to meet at Marburg³ for the purpose of discussing their different views respecting the manner of the presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper; and we shall find Tyndale expressing to Frith, at a later date, his anxiety not to intermeddle with that controversy unnecessarily.⁴

xxxix [1529-1530]

Foxe has given his readers this anecdote as a digression from his narrative of other matters. He makes no reference to it in his subsequent professed account of the life of Tyndale – where indeed not an event is related about what really befell him, from the mention of his first arrival in Germany, till we come to the following:

"At which time Tyndale had translated the fifth book of Moses, called Deuteronomium. Having a mind to print it at Hamburg, he sailed there. On the way, he was shipwrecked on the coast of Holland, by which he lost all his books, writings, and copies. And so he was compelled to begin all anew, to his hindrance and doubling of his labours. Thus having lost by that ship both money, his copies, and his time, he came in another ship to Hamburg, where at his appointment master Coverdale waited for him, and helped him in translating the whole five books of Moses, from Easter till December, in the house of a worshipful widow, Mrs Margaret Van Emmerson, anno 1529, there being a great sweating sickness in the town at the time. So having dispatched his business at Hamburg, he returned afterward to Antwerp again."

As Foxe and Coverdale were contemporary London clergy for nearly ten years, in the reign of Elizabeth, Foxe had doubtless heard this account from Coverdale; but with that great liability to a mistake about dates, which necessarily attends any recital from memory of things long past. The date assigned to Tyndale's second sojourn at Hamburg should have been 1530. After visiting Antwerp at the close of the summer of 1529, he had returned to Marburg; and on the 17th of January, 1530, Hans Luft completed for him the printing of his translation of Genesis. It was from the press of the same Marburg printer that his polemic treatise, entitled 'The Practice of Prelates,' came forth shortly after. In the meanwhile, the risk of sending packages of

¹ *Abettor: someone who helps, encourages, or incites another to do something.*

² At that date Tonstal had been translated to Durham, but was still acting as bishop of London for his successor Stokesley, who was abroad in the king's service.

³ On the 31st of August Zwingli quit Zurich to proceed toward Marburg; but they did not meet there till Sept. 30th. Merle D'Aubigne, Hist. of Reform. Vol. IV. pp. 92-5. Edinb. 1846.

⁴ *Calvin and Zwingli met at Zurich in 1549 to resolve their differences concerning the Lord's Supper, which resulted in the Consensus Tigurinus.*

proscribed books down the Rhine for exportation to England, had been greatly increased by the severity of the emperor's edict against the favourers of heresy in any part of his hereditary dominions.¹ It might be expected that this would not prevent Tyndale from endeavouring to send off some copies of his *Genesis* without delay; and we accordingly find his enemies soon declaring that such copies had reached England.²

xl [1529-1530]

But in his new difficulty he would naturally remember Hamburgh, a sea-port, where he could have the help of learned Jews in proceeding with the Old Testament, and where Bugenhagius of Pomerania, whose address to the faithful in England was joined in the same prohibitory list with his own works, had recently accepted an invitation to instruct its citizens. There was time enough for communicating with Coverdale, and for the events mentioned by Foxe, between his quitting Marburg and Easter Sunday, which in 1530 was as late as April 17th. His first work on reaching Hamburgh would have been the printing of *Deuteronomy*. To retranslate and then print it seems still to have been his first work there. For after a convocation which closed December 24th, 1529, the bishops procured from Henry a proclamation enjoining the chief officers of state and all magistrates to do their part towards bringing to punishment the writers, printers, importers, distributors, and possessors of any book then made, or which should thereafter be made, against the catholic faith. The list of such books, which was appended to that proclamation a few months later, enumerates among others, *The Practice of Prelates*, *Genesis*, and *Deuteronomy*; the other portions of Tyndale's translation of the Pentateuch do not seem to be noticed in any hostile document before the summer of 1531.

But further, when all the portions of the Pentateuch were put into circulation, there was a striking peculiarity in the typography of the volume. For while *Genesis* is in black letter, *Exodus* and *Leviticus* are in Roman characters; the book of *Numbers* is again in the same black letter type as *Genesis*; and lastly, *Deuteronomy* is once more in the same Roman character as *Exodus*. Not one of these portions contains any notice of when, where, or by whom, it was printed, except the book of *Genesis*; at the end of which is the colophon already mentioned as to its date; viz. "Imprinted at Marlborow in the land of Hesse by me, Hans Luft, the year of our Lord 1530, the 17 days of January."³

xli [1530]

The simplest way of accounting for this irregularity leads us to the inference that when Tyndale quit Marburg with some uncertainty as to whether he would find it expedient to sojourn long at Hamburgh, he left behind copies of *Genesis* printed there, and perhaps *Numbers* still in the press, taking away with him only those books and manuscripts that were to aid him in continuing his work. All he took away with him he lost by the shipwreck. But when he settled at Hamburgh, he sent for *Genesis* and *Numbers*, and bound them along with those other books of the Pentateuch which he got printed at the Hamburgh press.

Tyndale's 'Practice of Prelates' is a continual setting forth of reasons and motives which should induce princes to resume authority over ecclesiastics, and to humble the usurping hierarchy. As

¹ See Anderson's *Annals*, Vol. I. pp. 232-5.

² There is a copy of the *Genesis* in the Bodleian [Library at Oxford], as originally published alone.

³ The only known complete copy of this volume forms part of Mr Grenville's bequest to the British Museum. Mr Andenon has called this Marburg *Genesis* a second edition; supposing that January 1530 ought to be understood to mean what we now call January 1531. But though a legal or official document signed between the 1st of January and the 25th of March, 1531, would have been dated 1530, this was not usual in dating unofficial letters, nor in historical works; and it is not likely to have been common with publishers. In the *Zurich Letters*, edited by the Parker Society, there are abundant instances of commencing the date of the year from January 1st. Buchanan and De Thou may be seen to have done so regularly.

Cromwell¹ was now gaining influence with Henry VIII by suggesting means of replenishing the royal treasury (which the prelates must be expected to thwart, unless their power were broken down), he would doubtless take care that the king should see this treatise, as he had soon done; and he expressed a momentary approval of what was said on the same subject in Tyndale's treatise on *The Obedience of a Christian Man*.² We accordingly find that the king became bent on ascertaining whether the hope of being permitted to return to England in safety, and perhaps with honour, might not induce Tyndale to write as he should wish against the pope's supremacy, and on the duty of suppressing monasteries; and to write what he would wish to write on other topics. It is probable that Coverdale, who looked up to Cromwell as a patron, had been directed by that rising statesman to put himself in communication with Tyndale for a similar purpose.³

xlii [1530-1531]

And now Mr Stephen Vaughan, a new envoy to the princess-regent of the Netherlands, selected by Cromwell, was instructed by the king not to attempt procuring the seizure of Tyndale, like his predecessors [had requested], but to employ promises of some kind or other, to persuade him to throw himself on the king's mercy. This appears in Vaughan's letter to the king, dated Barrugh,⁴ Jan. 26, 1530.⁵ In this letter he says, "I have written three sundry letters to William Tyndale, and sent the same for greater safety to three sundry places, to Frankfort, Hamburgh, and Marburg. I was not assured then in which of these [cities] he was." He proceeds to say, "I had very good hope that, upon the promise of your majesty and of your most gracious safe conduct, he would be content to repair and come into England." The sentence goes on with such inextricable confusion as sufficiently indicates the embarrassment of the writer in coming to an avowal of a fear likely to offend his wilful sovereign. He at last states this fear as follows, "that now the bruit⁶ and fame of such things as, since my writing to him has chanced within your realm, shall provoke the man not only to be minded to the contrary of what I had thought without difficulty to have easily brought him, but also to suspect my persuasions to be made to his greater peril and danger than, as I think, if he were placed before you, he would ever have needed to fear." The things which had chanced within the realm were doubtless the arrest of John Tyndale, and the heavy fine laid on him for sending five marks to his brother William, beyond the sea, and for receiving and keeping certain letters from his brother.⁷

xliii [1531]

It appears from the same letter of Vaughan to the king, that he had previously informed Henry of Tyndale's having prepared for the press an Answer to Sir Thomas More's Dialogue. Vaughan at the same time sent Cromwell a copy of Tyndale's reply to his letter, and said to his patron confidentially, "The man has a greater knowledge than the king's highness takes him for, which well appears by his works. Would GOD he were in England!"⁸

¹ Thomas Cromwell, 1st Earl of Essex (c. 1485–1540); English statesman who served as confidential advisor to Cardinal Wolsey, and later as chief minister to King Henry VIII of England (1532–1540). A strong supporter of the Reformation. After arranging the king's disastrous marriage to Anne of Cleves, and being accused by his enemies of competing with the king for power, Henry had Cromwell executed for treason (though later regretting it).

² See p. 130.

³ See Anderson's *Annals*, B. I. § v. p. 186, and § vi. p. 239.

⁴ That is, Bergen-op-Zoom, a port city in the Netherlands.

⁵ Which date, as the letter was official, means 1531.

⁶ *Bruit*: rumors or unofficial publicity.

⁷ Foxe, Vol. v. p. 29. Vaughan's letter may be seen entire in Anderson, B. I. §8, from the Cotton MSS. in the Brit. Museum, Galba. B. x. fol. 42. The original has been examined for the editor.

⁸ Anderson, *Ibid.* p. 271.

Three more months had not passed before this envoy of the king of England had a conversation with Tyndale, who appeared before him as unexpectedly as Elijah showed himself to Obadiah. The account of their interview is given by Vaughan in a letter to the king, in which he says,

"The day before the date of this [letter], I spoke with Tyndale outside the town of Antwerp, and did so by this means: he sent a certain person to seek me, whom he had advised to say that a certain friend of mine, unknown to the messenger, was very desirous to speak with me – asking me to take pains to go to him, to such place as he would bring me. Then I said to the messenger, 'What is your friend, and where is he?' 'His name I do not know,' he said; 'but if it is your pleasure to go where he is, I will be glad to bring you there.' Thus, doubtful what this matter meant, I decided to go with him, and followed him till he brought me outside the gates of Antwerp, into a field lying near the one where this said Tyndale was awaiting me. At our meeting, this Tyndale said, 'Do you not know me?' 'I do not well remember you,' I said to him. 'My name,' he said, 'is Tyndale.' 'But Tyndale,' I said, 'our meeting is fortunate.' Then Tyndale, 'Sir, I have been exceedingly desirous to speak with you.' 'And I with you; what is on your mind?' 'Sir,' he said, 'I am informed that the king's grace takes great displeasure with me for putting forth certain books, which I lately made in these parts; but especially for the book named the *Practice of Prelates*. I have no little marvel at this, considering that in it I merely warned his grace of the subtle demeanour of the clergy of his realm towards his person, and of the shameful abuses practised by them, that not a little threaten the displeasure of his grace and the wealth of his realm. In doing this, I showed and declared the heart of a true subject; I sought the safeguard of his royal person and the wealth of his commons, with the intent that his grace, warned of it, might in due time prepare his remedy against their subtle schemes.'

xliv [1531]

If it is for my pains taken in this, if for my poverty, my exile out of my natural country and the bitter absence from my friends; if it is for my hunger, thirst, cold, and the great danger with which I am everywhere encompassed; and finally, if it is for innumerable other hard and sharp fightings which I endure – yet not feeling their asperity¹ because I hoped with my labours to honour God, give true service to my prince, and give pleasure to his commons – how is it that his grace, considering this, may either think by himself, or be brought to think by the persuasions of others, that in doing this I would not show a pure mind, or true and incorrupt zeal and affection for his grace? Was there in me any such mind when I warned his grace to beware of his cardinal, whose iniquity he shortly after proved according to my writing? Does this deserve hatred? Again, may his grace, being a Christian prince, be so unkind to God, who has commanded his word to be spread throughout the world, to give more faith to the wicked persuasions of men, which presuming above God's wisdom, and contrary to what Christ expressly commands in his testament, dare say that it is not lawful for the people to have his word in a tongue that they understand; because the purity of it should open men's eyes to see their wickedness? Is there more danger in the king's subjects than in the subjects of all other princes, which have his word in every one of their tongues, under privilege of their sufferance? As I am now, even death would be more pleasant to me than life, considering that man's nature can bear no truth.'

Thus, after a long conversation between us, for my part answering as my wit would serve me (which would be too long to write), I tested him with gentle persuasions, to know whether he would come into England; assuring him that means would be made if he were minded to; that he might do so without his peril or danger; and that what surety he would devise for that purpose, would, by labour of friends, be obtained from your majesty. But to this he

¹ *Asperity*: hard to endure, uninviting or formidable.

answered that he neither would nor dared come into England, even though your grace would promise him ever so much surety; fearing lest, as he has written before, your promise would shortly be broken by the persuasion of the clergy, which would affirm that promises made with heretics ought not to be kept."

xlv [1531]

"After this, he told me how he had finished a work against my lord chancellor's book, and would not put it in print till such time as your grace had seen it; because he perceives your displeasure towards him, for hastily putting forth his other work, and because it would appear that he is not of so obstinate a mind as he thinks he is reported to your grace. This is the substance of his communication with me, which as he spoke I have written to your grace, word for word, as near as I could by any possible means bring to remembrance. My trust therefore is that your grace will but take my labours in the best part I thought necessary to be written to your grace. After these words, being somewhat fearful of me lest I pursue him, and drawing also towards night, he then took his leave of me and departed *from* the town, and I *toward* the town, saying, 'I would perhaps see him again shortly, or if not, hear from him.' Be that as it may, I suppose he afterward returned to the town by another way; for there is no likelihood that he would lodge outside the town. I was not hasty to pursue him, because in some likelihood I was to speak with him again shortly; and in pursuing him I might perhaps have failed in my purpose, and put myself in danger."

"To declare to your majesty what, in my poor judgment, I think of the man, I assure your grace, I have not communed with a man..."

What followed has been torn off; but secretary Cromwell's reply shows that the opinion which Vaughan was evidently about to state about Tyndale's character and attainments, was so favourable as to rouse the king's anger. So it would seem as if he thought it desirable to preserve the rest of the letter for his minister's inspection and guidance in replying. But the impatient monarch had hastily torn away that honest verdict, which favoured the man whose works he had publicly styled as detestable; this told his conscience that he had been an iniquitous judge. The reply alluded to began as follows:

"Stephen Vaughan, I command me to you; and have received your letters, dated at Antwerpe, the 18th day of April, along with that part of Tyndale's book enclosed in leather, which you directed to the king's highness with your letters; after the receipt of them I repaired to the court, and there presented the same to his royal majesty. He made me answer, for that time, that his highness at his opportune leisure would read the contents of your letters as well as the said book. And at my next repair there, it pleased his highness to call for me, declaring to me the contents of your letters, as well as much contained in the said book of Tyndale."

xlii [1531]

Here this document becomes peculiarly interesting; for the king would seem to have been so dissatisfied with that portion of it which was to appear to express the writer's opinion of Tyndale, that Cromwell found it necessary either to proffer or to admit interlineated substitutions for what the king had written, which make the letter a decisive evidence of the perils Tyndale was exposing himself to by his faithfulness. The power and the unflinching boldness, with which he had rebuked More's advocacy of opinions, held as obstinately by the king as by his chancellor, had doubtless added to the anger which Tyndale's calm objections to the repudiation of Catharine must have roused in Henry's breast. And that anger may be

distinctly traced in several of those interlineations,¹ by comparing them with the language for which they were substituted in what follows of this dispatch; it shall be given in its old heedless spelling.²

"Even though I might well perceive that his Majesty was right well pleased, and right acceptably considered your diligence and pains taken in writing and sending the book, as also in persuading and exhorting Tyndall to repair into this realm; *yet his Highness liked nothing of the said book, it being filled with seditious, slanderous lies, and fantastic opinions, showing therein neither learning nor truth; and further, communing with his grace, I might well mind and conjecture that he thought you bear*³

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much affection towards the said Tyndall, whom in his manners and *knowledge* in *worldly* things⁴ you undoubtedly in *your letters* do much allow and commend; whose works *being replete with so abominable slanders and lies*, imagined and *only* fained to infect the people, *declares him both to lack grace, virtue, learning, discretion and all other good qualities, nothing else pretending in all his work but to seduce ... dis-save* (that you in such wise by *your letters, praise, set forth and advance him which pretends nothing else*) *and sow sedition among the people of this realm. The King highness therfore*⁵ has commanded me to *advise you that his pleasure is* that you should desist and cease any further to persuade or tempt *the said Tyndall to come into this realm*; alleging that, he perceiving the malicious, perverse, uncharitable, and *indurate*⁶ *mind of the said Tyndall, is a man without hope of reconciliation in him, and is very joyous to have his realm destitute of such a person*, rather than have him return into the realm to manifest his errors and seditious opinions. Being out of the realm by his most uncharitable, venomous, and pestilent book, crafty and false persuasions, he has partly done this all ready; for his highness right prudently considers if he were present, by all likelihood he would shortly (which God defend) do as much as it were in him, to infect and corrupt the whole realm to the great inquietude and hurt of the commonwealth. Therefore, Stephen, I heartily pray you, in all your doing, proceeding, and writing to the King's highness, you justly, truly, and unfainedly, *without dissimulation, show yourself his true, loving, and obedient subject*, bearing no manner of favor, love, or affection⁷ to the said Tyndale, nor to his work, in any way; but utterly to contemn and abhor it, assuring you that in so doing you shall

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not only cause the King's royal majesty, whose goodness at this time is so benignly and graciously minded towards you, as by your good diligence and industry to be used to serve his Highness, and extewing and avoiding... favor, and allow the said Tyndale his erroneous

¹ The interlineations were supposed by Mr Offor, who first gave this document to the public, to be by the king's pen; but Sir Henry Ellis confirms Mr Anderson's opinion, that they are not in Henry's hand-writing, though they may have been inserted at his dictation.

² For purposes of this modernized version, the 'heedless spelling' here has been modernized as well.

³ The words in italics are those introduced by the interlineator, instead of the following: 'in the accomplishment of his high pleasure and commandment. Yet I might conjecture by the further declaration of his high pleasure, which said to me that by your writing, it manifestly appeared how much affection and zeal you bear.'

⁴ Substituted for – modestie and symplycitee.

⁵ As this passage stood at first, the writer of the dispatch had said, 'Tyndale assuredly shows himself in my opinion rather to be replete with venomous envy, rancour and malice, then with any good learning, virtue, knowledge or discretion;' and for this the inter-lineator had substituted, 'declares himself to be envious, malicious, slanderous and willful, and not to be learned;' but this interlineation is erased, to make room for what is printed above.

⁶ *Indurate*: emotionally hardened.

⁷ Instead of 'to show yourself to be no fautor.'

work and opinions so to set you forwards, as all your lovers and friends shall have great consolation of the same; and by *doing the contrary*, you shall acquire the indignation of God, displeasure of your sovereign lord, and by the same *cause your* good friends which have been ever glad, prone, and ready to *bring* you into his gracious favours, to lament and sorrow that their suit in that behalf should be *frustrated and* not take effect, according to their good intent and purpose.”

After a little more to the same effect, Cromwell proceeds to mention Frith, and says that the king, “hearing tell of his towardness in good letters and learning, much lament that he should apply his learning to maintaining, bolstering, and advancing the venomous and pestiferous works, erroneous and seditious opinions of Tyndale;” and that Vaughan was to counsel Frith, by the king’s desire, to withdraw from Tyndale’s society, and to return to his native country. And lastly he exhorts Vaughan himself, “for his love of God, utterly to forsake, leave, and withdraw his affection from the said Tyndale, and all his sect.”¹

It appears, however, that after using all this language, to comply with his sovereign’s humour, Mr Secretary Cromwell “entured to add a clause, directly contradicting the king’s declared wish, that Vaughan should desist from urging Tyndale to return to England. This clause Vaughan took care to introduce into his next letter to the king; that, if his acting in accordance with it should irritate his majesty, he might see by whose directions his conduct had been governed.

The dispatch of which we are now to speak, is dated May 20, 1531. And in it Vaughan says,

“It pleases your royal majesty to be advised how upon the receipt of certain instructions lately sent to me from my master, Mr Cromwell, at the commandment of your majesty, I immediately endeavoured to learn such things as were contained in the said instructions – I have again been in hand to persuade Tyndale.

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And to draw him rather to favour my persuasions, and not to think them feigned, I showed him a clause contained in master Cromwell’s letter containing the following words: *And notwithstanding other the premises, in this my letter contained, if it were possible, by good and wholesome exhortations, to reconcile and convert the said Tyndale from the train and affection which he now is in, and to excerpt and take away the opinions sorely rooted in him, I doubt not but the king’s highness would be much joyous of his conversion and amendment; and so being converted, if then he would return into his realm, undoubtedly the king’s royal majesty is so inclined to mercy, pity, and compassion, that he refuses none which he sees to submit themselves to the obedience and good order of the world.* In these words I thought to be such sweetness and virtue as were able to pierce the hardest heart of the world; and, as I thought, so it came to pass. For after sight of it I perceived the man to be exceedingly altered, and to take the same very near to his heart, in such a way that water stood in his eyes; and he answered,

‘What gracious words are these! I assure you,’ he said, ‘if it would stand with the king’s most gracious pleasure to grant only a bare text of the scripture to be put forth among his people, as it is put forth among the subjects of the emperor in these parts, and of other Christian princes, be it the translation of whatever person shall please his majesty, I shall immediately make faithful promise never to write more, nor abide two days in these parts afterward; but immediately repair into his realm, and there most humbly submit myself at the feet of his royal majesty, offering my body to suffer what pain or torture, yes, what death his grace will, so that this will be obtained. And till that time I will abide the asperity of all chances,

¹ The quotations from this dispatch have been transcribed from the original, in the Brit. Museum, MSS. Cotton, Galba. B. x. fol. 338.

whatever shall come, and endure my life in as much pains as it is able to bear and suffer. And as concerning my reconciliation, his grace may be assured, that whatever I may have said or written in all my life against the honour of God's word, and so proved, I shall utterly renounce and forsake it before his majesty and all the world; and with most humble and meek mind embrace the truth, abhorring all error whatsoever, at the most gracious and benign request of his royal majesty, of whose wisdom, prudence and learning I bear more great praise and commendation, than of any creature living. But if those things which I have written are true and stand with God's word, why should his majesty, having so excellent a gift of knowledge in the scriptures, move me to do anything against my conscience?

l [1531-1532]

— with many other words which are too long to write. I have some good hope in the man; and would not doubt to bring him to some good point, were it that something, now and then, might proceed from your majesty towards me, whereby the man might take better comfort from my persuasions. I advise this Tyndale that he should not put forth the book, till your most gracious pleasure were known: to which he answered, ‘my advise came too late; for he feared lest one that had his copy would very shortly put it in print, which he would let if he could; if not, there is no remedy.’ I will stay it as much as I can; as yet it has not come forth; nor will not in awhile, by what I perceive.”¹

It was so customary for the correspondents of sovereigns to seek to make their reports acceptable, by the introduction of flattery, that Vaughan may reasonably be supposed to have added to Tyndale's words, where he makes him give the king excessive praise. But the book, which Vaughan wished Tyndale to defer publishing, was obviously Tyndale's *Answer to Sir Thomas More's Dialogue*; and that copies of it had already got abroad in MS., has appeared from Vaughan's success in procuring one. Their temporary associate, George Joye, has said that Frith had printed it at Amsterdam.² On the 20th of November in this year, the dissemination of copies of Tyndale's *Answer to Sir Thomas More* was mentioned in the sentence by which Stokesley, bishop of London, delivered over a monk of Bury, named Richard Bayfield,³ to the civil power, as one of the crimes for which he was to be cursed by the church and burned in the fire.⁴ And while the arduous duties attached to the post of lord chancellor did not prevent More from composing a folio of 326 pages, as his ‘Confutation of Tyndale's Answer,’ he was also using the authority of his office to extort such statements from persons under suspicion of heresy, as might enable him to convince the king that Vaughan was secretly a disciple of Tyndale, and that his favourable mention of Tyndale was part of a conspiracy to deceive his majesty.⁵

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The endeavours made under Cromwell's influence to persuade Tyndale to come home upon conditions, were consequently brought altogether to a close; and the king resumed his previous purpose of procuring the reformer's arrest. As for Tyndale himself, he had again shrunk into concealment; and he was again supplying his countrymen with valuable instruction, in the shape of a *Prologue to the prophet Jonas*, accompanied perhaps by a translation of that prophet; besides publishing ‘An exposition of the first epistle of St John.’

¹ Offor's Mem. of Tyndale, pp. 67-9. Anderson, pp. 277-9. The original is in the British Museum, Cotton. MSS. Galba. B. x. ol. 5, 6.

² Anderson, Vol. I. p. 279.

³ See pp. 33-4.

⁴ Foxe, Acts and Mon. Vol. iv. p. 685.

⁵ Vaughan's Letter to Cromwell, Dec. 9, 1531; in Anderson, B. I. § 8. Vol. I. pp. 309, 13.

It was Sir Thomas Elyot, a practised diplomatist and an accomplished scholar, who had now consented to be employed in the mean work of trepanning¹ Tyndale, to gratify the king's evil passions; while in the sight of the world he had the honourable employment of representing the English sovereign at the imperial court. On the 14th of March, 1532, he wrote from Ratisbon to the duke of Norfolk, then lord high treasurer, expressing his wish to be allowed to return to England; and he adds,

"Even though the king wills me, by his grace's letters, to remain at Brussels for some space of time, for the apprehension of Tyndale, which somewhat diminishes my hope of a quick return; considering that just as he is unmovable in wit, similarly his person is uncertain to come by: and, as far as I can perceive, hearing of the king's diligence in the apprehension of him, he withdraws himself into such places where he thinks to be farthest out of danger. There shall lack no endeavour in me."²

Such was the labour which the worldling had in view; and which was to be in vain. Tyndale also kept his labour in view; but his was the service of the King of kings, and his object was to deliver captives from their bondage. While Sir Thomas Elyot mocked at his being obliged to move from place to place, he was continuing the work of translating the Hebrew Scriptures; and also composing and printing an exposition of Matthew, chapters 5, 6, and 7; or, in other words, *Lectures On Our Lord's Sermon On The Mount*.

Iii [1532]

Nor was Tyndale's labour in vain; for we find an unwilling witness, Sir Thomas More, giving the following testimony to the extensive circulation of Tyndale's writings, at this time, in his native country, and of the zeal with which his labours were seconded.

"There are fled out of this realm for heresy," he says, "a few ungracious folk; what manner of folk, their writing and their living shows. For the captains are priests, monks, and friars, that neither say mass nor matins, nor ever come to church; still talking of faith, and full of false heresies; they would seem to be Christ's apostles, and yet play the devil's dicers; speaking much of the Spirit, with no more devotion than dogs; diverse of them priests, monks, and friars, not allowed to wed harlots, but then call them wives. And when they have once villained the sacrament of matrimony, then they would make us violate the sacrament of the altar too, telling us, as Tyndale does, that it is sin to do any honour or reverence to the blessed body of Christ in that sacrament, but only take it for a token. These fellows, that had nothing here, and therefore carried nothing from here, nor finding nothing there to live on, are yet sustained and maintained with money sent to them there by some evil-disposed persons out of this realm, and for no other intent but to make them sit and seek out heresies, and speedily send them here. Which books, even though they can neither be printed there without great cost, nor sold here without great adventure and peril – yet they do not cease, with money sent from here, to print them there, and send them here by whole vats full at once; and in some places, looking for no money, they throw them abroad by night – so great a pestilent pleasure have some devilish people caught, with the labour, travail, cost, charge, peril, harm and hurt of themselves, to seek the destruction of others. As the devil has a deadly delight to beguile good people, and bring their souls into everlasting torment without winning in any manner, and not without the final increase of his own eternal pain; so do these heretics, the devil's disciples, by setting their whole pleasure and study, to their own final damnation, in the training of simple souls to hell by their devilish heresies."³

¹ *Trepan*: to trick; ensnare; seduce.

² Brit. Museum, Cotton MSS. Vitello B. XXI. fol. 64. Cited in Anderson, Vol. I. p. 323.

³ Preface to Sir Thomas More's *Confutation of Tyndale's Answer*. Lond. Printed by W. Rastell, 1532. Verso of Sign. Bb. ii.

liii [1532-1533]

It was in this same year that Tyndale lost the aid and society of Frith, who had been to him as Timothy was to Paul. "As a son with the father, he had served with him in the gospel;" [Phil 2.22](#) and we shall find Tyndale saying of him that he had no associate "like-minded." Now as Tychicus was sent by Paul, [2Tim 4.12](#) so Frith seems to have been sent by Tyndale, that *he might know the estate of* certain brethren in England, and *comfort their hearts*. His proceedings in England were however betrayed to More and to Stokesley, bishop of London. When he had withdrawn to the coast of Essex, to seek the means of returning to the continent and to Tyndale, he was seized near Milton and committed to the Tower. Before the sad tidings of his being thus fallen into the hands of his enemies had reached Tyndale, he had written the following letter to Frith; addressing him by the name of Jacob, which Frith had probably assumed to avoid being known:

"The grace of our Saviour Jesus, his patience, meekness, humbleness, circumspection, and wisdom, be with your heart. Amen.

"Dearly beloved brother Jacob, my heart's desire in our Saviour Jesus is that you arm yourself with patience, and be cold, sober, wise, and circumspect, and that you keep yourself low to the ground, avoiding high questions that pass the common capacity. But expound the law truly, and open the veil of Moses to condemn all flesh, and prove all men sinners, and all deeds under the law, before mercy has taken away the condemnation of it, to be sin and damnable. And then, as a faithful minister, set abroad the mercy of our Lord Jesus. And let the wounded consciences drink of the water of him. And then shall your preaching be with power, and not as the doctrine of the hypocrites; and the Spirit of God shall work with you, and all consciences shall bear record of you, and feel that it is so. And all doctrine that casts a mist on those two, to shadow and hide them, I mean the law of God and the mercy of Christ, resist with all your power. Refuse sacraments without signification. If they put significations to them, receive them, if you see it may help, though it is not necessary.

"Of the presence of Christ's body in the sacrament, meddle as little as you can, so that there appears no division among us. Barnes will be hot against you. The Saxons are sore on

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the affirmative; whether constant or obstinate, I remit it to God. Philip Melanthon is said to be with the French king. There are those in Antwerp that say they saw him come into Paris with a hundred and fifty horses; and that they spoke with him. If the Frenchmen receive the word of God, he will plant the affirmative in them. George Joye would have put forth a treatise on the matter, but I have stopped him as yet: what he will do if he gets money, I know not. I believe he would make many reasons, little serving the purpose. My mind is that nothing be put forth, till we hear how you shall have sped. I would have the right use preached, and the presence to be an indifferent thing, till the matter might be reasoned in peace at the leisure of both parties. If you are required, show the phrases of the scripture, and let them talk what they will. For to believe that God is everywhere, hurts no man that worships him nowhere but within the heart, in spirit and verity. Even so, to believe that the body of Christ is everywhere, though it cannot be proved, hurts no man that worships him nowhere save in the faith of his gospel. You perceive my mind. However, if God shows you otherwise, it is free for you to do as he moves you.

"I guessed long ago, that God would send a dazing into the head of the spirituality, to be caught themselves in their own subtlety; and I trust it has come to pass. And now I think I smell a council is to be taken, little for their profits in time to come. But you must understand that it is not of a pure heart, and for love of the truth; but to avenge themselves, and to eat the whore's flesh, and to suck the marrow of her bones. Therefore cleave fast to the rock of the help of God, and commit the end of all things to him: and if God shall call

you, that you may then use the wisdom of the worldly, as far as you perceive the glory of God may come of it, do not refuse it. And ever among, thrust in, that the scripture may be in the mother tongue, and learning set up in the universities. But and if anything is required contrary to the glory of God and his Christ, then stand fast, and commit yourself to God; and do not be overcome by men's persuasions, which perhaps shall say we see no other way to bring in the truth.

lv [1533]

"Brother Jacob, beloved in my heart, none lives in whom I have such good hope and trust, and in whom my heart rejoices, and my soul comforts herself, as in you, not the thousandth part so much for your learning and what other gifts you have, as that you will creep low by the ground, and walk in those things that the conscience may feel, and not in the imaginations of the brain: in fear, and not in boldness; in open necessary things, and not to pronounce or define hidden secrets, or things that neither help nor hinder, whether they are so or not; in unity, and not in seditious opinions; insomuch that if you are sure you know, yet in things that may bide their time, you will defer, or say (till others agree with you), 'I think the text requires this sense or understanding.' Yes, and that if you are sure that your part is good, and another holds the contrary, yet if it is a thing that makes no matter, you will laugh and let it pass, and refer the thing to other men; but stick stiffly and stubbornly in earnest and necessary things. And I trust you are persuaded even so of me. For I call God to record against the day we shall appear before our Lord Jesus, to give a reckoning of our doings, that I never altered one syllable of God's word against my conscience, nor would I this day, if all that is in the earth, whether it is pleasure, honour, or riches, might be given me. Moreover, I take God to record to my conscience, that I desire from God for myself in this world, no more than that without which I cannot keep his laws.

"Finally, if there were any gift in me that could keep at hand, and aid you if need required, I promise you I would not be far off, and commit the end to God. My soul is not faint, though my body is weary. But God has made me evil-favoured in this world, and without grace in the sight of men, speechless and rude, dull and slow-witted. Your part shall be to supply what lacks in me, remembering that as lowness of heart shall make you high with God, even so meekness of words shall make you sink into the hearts of men. Nature gives age authority; but meekness is the glory of youth, and gives them honour. Abundance of love makes me exceed in babbling.

"Sir, as concerning purgatory, and many other things, if you are demanded, you may say, if you err, the spirituality has so led you; and that they have taught you to believe as you do. For they preached you all such things out of God's word, and alleged a thousand texts; by reason of which texts you believed as they taught you.

lvi [1533]

But now you find them liars, and that the texts mean no such things, and therefore you can believe them no longer; but as you were before they taught you, and believe no such thing. However, you are ready to believe, if they have any other way to prove it; for without proof you cannot believe them, when you have found them with so many lies, &c. If you perceive in what we may help, either in being still, or doing something, let us have word, and I will do my uttermost.

"My lord of London has a servant called John Tisen, with a red beard, and a black reddish head, and was once my scholar; he was seen in Antwerp, but did not come among the Englishmen. Where he has gone, a secret ambassador, I know not.

"The mighty God of Jacob be with you to supplant his enemies, and give you the favour of Joseph; and the wisdom and the spirit of Stephen be with your heart and with your

mouth, and teach your lips what they shall say, and how to answer to all things. He is our God, if we despair in ourselves, and trust in him; and his is the glory. Amen.

WILLIAM TYNDALE.

I hope our redemption is nigh."

The above letter is undated; but it reached Frith in his prison. And in the ‘Book made by John Frith, prisoner in the Tower,’ in answer to Sir Thomas More’s attack upon him as a teacher of the poison, which Tyndale and Luther, and “other beasts” had previously taught, he says: “Tyndale, I trust, lives well content with such a poor apostle’s life as God gave his Son Christ and his faithful ministers in this world, which is not sure of so many mites as you are yearly of pounds;¹ although I am sure that, for his learning and judgment in scripture, he were more worthy to be promoted than all the bishops in England. I received a letter from him, which was written since Christmas, in which, among other matters, he writes thus, *‘I call God to record, against the day we shall appear.’*” – And continuing his quotation to the words ‘his laws,’ Frith then says: “Judge, Christian reader, whether these words are not spoken by a faithful, clear, and innocent heart. And as for him, his behaviour is such, that I am sure no man can reprove him of any sin; however, no man is innocent before God, who beholds the heart.”²

lvii [1533]

In a preceding paragraph Frith had reminded More of the offer which we have seen that Tyndale had made to Vaughan; and he had again pledged Tyndale and himself to the same. “This,” he said, “has been offered, is offered, and shall be offered to you. Grant that the word of God (I mean the text of scripture) may go abroad in our English tongue, as other nations have it in their tongues; and my brother William Tyndale and I are done, and will promise you to write no more. If you will not grant this condition, then will we be doing it while we have breath, and show in few words what the scripture does in many, and so at least save some.”

While Frith in his prison was thus boldly bearing testimony to the character, learning, and purposes of Tyndale, the latter in his exile continued to make common cause with his beloved fellow-labourer. After writing the above letter, he seems to have quit Antwerp for Nuremberg in central Germany, to take advantage of the printing presses in that free city for the publication of an exposition of “The supper of the Lord, after the true meaning of John 6 and of 1Cor. 11;” in which, “incidently,” to use Foxe’s expression, “is confuted the letter of Master More against John Frith.”³ It was issued without the author’s name, from the press of Nicholas Twonson, April 5, 1533; but at its close he says, “As for Master More, whom the verity⁴ most offends, he knows my name well enough.”

Returning once more to Antwerp, which had now become a very perilous place of abode for any known abettor of the reformation, Tyndale heard that Frith was in the hands of his enemies, and that to deny the truth, or to suffer in the fire for it, was the alternative likely to be presented to him soon, if not already forced upon his choice. And with the spirit of a martyr, he wrote and sent the following “Letter from William Tyndale to John Frith, being prisoner in the Tower of London,”

“THE grace and peace of God our Father, and of Jesus Christ our Lord, be with you. Amen. Dearly beloved brother John, I have heard say how the hypocrites, now that they have

¹ In British coinage, mites are 1/8 a penny, and there are 240 pennies to a pound. That is, faithful ministers live poorly by comparison to their clerical persecutors, but that is no cause for shame in the eyes of Christ.

² Frith’s *Works* in Day’s ed. of 1573. p. 118.

³ Title in Day’s edition.

⁴ *Verity*: truth.

overcome that great business which drove them, or at least brought it to stay, they return to their old nature again. The will of God be fulfilled, and what he has ordained to be, before the world was made, may that come, and his glory reign over all.

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“Dearly beloved, however the matter is, commit yourself wholly and only to your most loving Father and most kind Lord, and do not fear men that threaten, nor trust men that speak fairly. But trust him that is true of promise, and able to make his word good. Your cause is Christ’s gospel, a light that must be fed with the blood of faith. The lamp must be dressed and snuffed daily, and that oil poured in every evening and morning, so that the light will not go out. Though we are sinners, yet the cause is right. If, when we are buffeted for well-doing, we suffer patiently and endure, that is acceptable to God; for to that end we are called. For Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example that we should follow his steps, who did no sin. Hereby we have perceived love, that he laid down his life for us. Therefore we ought also to lay down our lives for the brethren. Rejoice and be glad, for great is your reward in heaven. For we suffer with him, that we may also be glorified with him: who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like his glorious body, according to the working by which he is able even to subject all things to himself.

“Dearly beloved, be of good courage, and comfort your soul with the hope of this high reward, and bear the image of Christ in your mortal body, that it may at his coming be made like his immortal body. And follow the example of all your other dear brethren, which chose to suffer in hope of a better resurrection. Keep your conscience pure and undefiled, and say nothing against that. Stick to necessary things; and remember the blasphemies of the enemies of Christ, saying, ‘They find only those who will abjure¹ rather than suffer the extremity.’² Moreover, the death of them that come again after they have once denied, though it is accepted with God and all that believe, yet is it not glorious; for the hypocrites say, ‘He must die; denying does not help: but might it have helped, they would have denied five hundred times. But seeing it would not help them, therefore of pure pride, together with mere malice, they spoke with their mouths what their conscience knew was false.’ If you give yourself, cast yourself, yield yourself, commit yourself wholly and only to your loving Father; then his power shall be in you and make you strong,

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and that so strong, that you shall feel no pain, which would be present death to another. And his Spirit shall speak in you, and teach you what to answer, according to his promise. He shall set out his truth by you wonderfully, and work for you above all that your heart can imagine. Yes, and you are not yet dead; though the hypocrites all, with all that they can make, have sworn your death. *Una salus victis nullam sperare salute.*³ To look for no man’s help brings the help of God to those who seem to be overcome in the eyes of the hypocrites. Yes, it shall make God carry you through thick and thin for his truth’s sake, in spite of all the enemies of his truth. Not a hair falls till his hour has come: and when his hour has come, necessity carries us from here, though we are not willing. But if we are willing, then have we a reward and thanks.

“Do not fear the threatening, therefore, nor be overcome by sweet words with which two things the hypocrites will assail you. Nor let the persuasions of worldly wisdom bear rule in your heart; no, though they are your friends that counsel you. Let Bilney be a warning to you.

¹ Formally reject or disavow a formerly held belief, usually under pressure

² *Extremity:* that is, death.

³ The only safe way for the vanquished is to hope for no safety.

Do not let their vizor beguile your eyes. Let not your body faint. He that endures to the end shall be saved. If the pain is above your strength, remember, ‘Whatsoever you shall ask in my name, I will give it you.’ And pray to your Father in that name, and he shall cease your pain, or shorten it. The Lord of peace, of hope, and of faith, be with you. Amen.

“WILLIAM TYNDALE.

“Two have suffered in Antwerp, *in die sanctum crucis*,¹ to the great glory of the gospel: four at Riselles in Flanders; and at Luke one at least has suffered there, and all the same day. They persecute at Roan in France; and at Paris five doctors are taken for the gospel. See, you are not alone. Be cheerful; and remember that among the hard-hearted in England there is a number reserved by grace: for whose sakes, if need be, you must be ready to suffer. Sir, if you may write, however short it is, do not forget it; that we may know how it goes with you, for our hearts’ ease.

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The Lord be yet again with you, with all his plenteousness, and fill you so that you overflow. Amen.

“If, when you have read this, you may send it to Adrian,² do, I pray you, so that he may know how our heart is with you.

“George Joye at Candlemas, being at Barrow, printed two leaves of Genesis in a great form, and sent one copy to the king and another to the new queen, with a letter to N. to deliver them, and to purchase licence that he might so go through all the bible. Out of this has sprung the noise of the new bible; and out of that is the great seeking for English books at all printers and bookbinders in Antwerp, and for an English priest that would print [it].

“This chanced the 9th day of May.

“Sir, your wife is well-content with the will of God, and would not, for her sake, have the glory of God hindered.

WILLIAM TYNDALE”

This seasonable letter could not have reached Frith more than a very few weeks, perhaps but a few days, before his martyrdom; and as he was advised in this letter to do, so by the grace of God he did to the last.

Thus was Tyndale bereaved of the friend of whom he had fondly said, “It shall be your part to supply what lacks in me.” But in his season of great affliction, the Lord seems to have given him special favour in the eyes of his countrymen, the English merchants dwelling at Antwerp. For it must have been at this period of Tyndale’s sojourn in that city, that Foxe heard what he has related of his manner of life there: how being,

“a great student and earnest labourer, namely in setting forth the scriptures of God, he reserved or hallowed to himself two days in the week, which he named his days of pastime; and those days were Monday the first day in the week, and Saturday the last day in the week. On the Monday he visited all the poor men and women that had fled out of England into Antwerp by reason of persecution; and those, well-understanding their good exercises and qualities, he very liberally comforted and relieved; and in a similar manner, he provided for the sick and diseased persons.

¹ On holy-rood day, or Sept. 14th – [the Exaltation of the Holy Cross](#).

² “John Byrte, otherwise calling himself Adrian, otherwise John Bookbinder; and yet otherwise I cannot tell what,” So speaks Sir Thos. More, to make this friend of the reformer’s contemptible.

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On the Saturday he walked round about the town in Antwerp, seeking out every corner and hole, where he suspected any poor person to dwell; and where he found any to be well-occupied, and yet overburdened with children, or else were aged or weak, those also he plentifully relieved. And thus he spent his two days of pastime, as he called them. And truly his alms were very large and great: and so it might well be; for his exhibition, that he had yearly from the English merchants, was very much; and that for the most part he bestowed upon the poor, as said before. The rest of the days in the week he gave him wholly to his book, wherein most diligently he travailed. When the Sunday came, then went he to some one merchant's chamber or other, to which came many other merchants: and to them he would read some one parcel of scripture, either out of the Old Testament or out of the New. This proceeded so fruitfully, sweetly, and gently from him (much like the writings of St John the evangelist), that it was a heavenly comfort and joy to the audience to hear him read the scripture; and likewise, after dinner, he spent an hour in the aforesaid manner.”¹

In 1534 the demand for Tyndale's New Testaments had so much increased as to induce the Antwerp printers to issue no less than four new editions of them.² But while Tyndale was taking time to give his translation a careful revision, and before he could complete it, he had the mortification of discovering that one of these printers had been employing George Joye to correct the sheets of a surreptitious edition. Without consulting Tyndale, he had ventured to make such alterations in the language as nothing but ignorance of the Greek original could have led him to suppose allowable.³ This could only tend to make Tyndale's readers distrust the accuracy of his version, especially as they would see that Joye's edition corresponded more closely with the Latin Vulgate, to which he had in fact looked for guidance in most of the changes he had introduced. Hence Tyndale rebuked him sharply.

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Joye's reply, published under the title of *An Apology*,⁴ has eventually supplied a direct proof to satisfy those who might still think it was needed, of Tyndale's knowledge of both the languages of the inspired. original text of the scriptures. For Joye has said there, “I am not afraid to answer Master Tyndale in this matter, for all his high learning in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin.”⁵ On the other hand, Tyndale himself seems to have felt that it was needed, so that he would satisfy his contemporaries respecting his opinions about the condition of those who have departed this life in the faith of Christ. He therefore introduced the following protest, or solemn attestation⁶ of his belief on this topic, into the preface of his own revised version of the New Testament, sent forth this year, printed at Antwerp by Marten Emperowr.

“A protestation made by Williard Tyndale, touching the resurrection of the bodies, and the state of the souls after this life. Abstracted out of a preface of his that he made to the New Testament which he set forth in the year 1534.”⁷

¹ Foxe's *Life of Tyndale*, prefixed to Day's edition of his works

² Anderson, B. 1. § 11. Vol. 1. p. 392, and Vol. II. ap. p. viii.

³ The only known copy of the edition corrected by Joye is in Mr Grenville's bequest to the British Museum.

⁴ Dated Feb. 28, 1535.

⁵ Quoted in Anderson, *Annals of Eng. Bible*, Vol. I. p. 397.

⁶ The word *protestation* is Foxe's, as editor for Day of Tyndale's works, where he has placed this document as their introduction. Tyndale uses the word *protest* as was then customary, in the Latin sense, for ‘I declare before the world.’

⁷ Such is Foxe's heading to this document. In the Bristol copy of the New Testament, with which Day's reprint has been collated, there are two addresses to the reader; and this protest occurs in the second, which is thus headed: “William Tyndale yet once more to the Christian reader.”

“Concerning the resurrection, I protest before God and our Saviour Jesus Christ, and before the universal congregation that believes in him, that I believe, according to the open and manifest scriptures and catholic faith, that Christ is risen again in the flesh which he received of his mother the blessed virgin Mary, and the body in which he died; and that we shall all, both good and bad, rise both flesh and body, and appear together before the judgment-seat of Christ, to receive every man according to his deeds; and that the bodies of all that believe, and continue in the true faith of Christ, shall be endued with the same immortality and glory as the body of Christ.

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“And I protest before God, and our Saviour Christ, and all that believe in him, that I hold of the souls that are departed, as much as may be proved by manifest and open scripture; and I think the souls departed in the faith of Christ, and love of the law of God, are in no worse case than the soul of Christ was from the time that he delivered his spirit into the hands of his Father until the resurrection of his body in glory and immortality. Nevertheless, I confess openly, that I am not persuaded that they are already in the full glory that Christ is in, or the elect angels of God are in. Nor is it any article of my faith; for if it were so, I can but see that the preaching of the resurrection of the flesh would be in vain. Notwithstanding, I am ready to believe it, if it may be proved with open scripture.

“Moreover, I take God (who alone sees the heart) to record to my conscience, beseeching him that may my part not be in the blood of Christ, if I wrote, of all that I have written throughout my book, anything of an evil purpose, of envy or malice to any man, or to stir up any false doctrine or opinion in the church of Christ, or to be author of any sect, or to draw disciples after me, or that I would be esteemed or had in price above the least child that is born; save only of pity and compassion I had, and still have, on the blindness of my brethren, and to bring them to the knowledge of Christ, and to make every one of them, if it were possible, as perfect as an angel of heaven; and to weed out all that is not planted by our heavenly Father, and to bring down all that lifts itself up against the knowledge of the salvation that is in the blood of Christ. Also may my part not be in Christ, if my heart is not to follow and live as I teach; and also if my heart does not weep night and day for my own sin and other men’s indifferently, beseeching God to convert us all, and to take his wrath from us, and to be merciful as well to all other men as to my own soul; caring for the wealth of the realm I was born in, for the king and all that are of it, as a tender-hearted mother would do for her only son.

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“As concerning all I have translated or otherwise written, I beseech all men to read it for the purpose I wrote it, which is to bring them to the knowledge of the scripture; and as far as the scripture approves it, so far to allow it; and if in any place the word of God disallows it, there to refuse it, as I do before our Saviour Christ and his congregation. And where they find faults, let them show it me, if they are near, or write to me if they are far off; or write openly against it, and improve it; and I promise them, if I perceive what their reasons conclude, I will confess my ignorance openly.”

Nor was Tyndale lacking when it came to acknowledging with grateful respect, any countenance given by his earthly superiors to the circulation of God’s holy word. He must have heard with happy thankfulness, of the interference of Anne Boleyn¹ on behalf of an Antwerp merchant who

¹ Anne Boleyn (c. 1505-1536). Queen of England 1533-1536; second wife of Henry VIII. Anne was educated in the Netherlands and France. In 1526 Henry began to pursue Anne. He sought to annul his marriage to Queen Catherine so he would be free to marry Anne. Pope Clement VII would not annul the existing marriage. In 1533, Thomas Cranmer declared Henry and Catherine’s marriage null and void; five days later, he declared Henry and Anne’s

had suffered losses and imprisonment for helping to circulate his testaments. On the 14th of May, she had written as queen to secretary Cromwell, telling him that she was credibly informed that Richard Harman, merchant and citizen of Antwerp, was expelled from his freedom and fellowship in the English house there, for nothing more than helping to set forth the New Testament in English – like a good Christian man, with both his goods and policy, to his great hurt and hindrance in this world. “We therefore desire and instantly pray you, that with all speed and convenient favour, you will cause this good and honest merchant to be restored to his pristine freedom, liberty, and fellowship aforesaid; and the sooner at our request.”¹ The simple and becoming gift by which Tyndale acknowledged his respect for a queen of England, who could thus use her influence, was a unique copy of his New Testament, printed on vellum, and made handsome at a cost to which the grateful merchant doubtless contributed; it was not dedicated to her in words of flattery, but marked with her name and title on its margins, while his own was suppressed.²

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In 1535, Tyndale was doubtless employing himself on the continuance of his version of the Old Testament. Towards the close of that year, he was still at Antwerp, and hospitably lodged there in the house of Mr Thomas Poyntz, an English merchant, who had a brother in the king’s household, and was himself a lover of the gospel. It was from this merchant’s testimony, that Foxe gathered the account which we will now transcribe:

“About this time there came one out of England [to Antwerp], whose name was Henry Philips, his father being customer³ of Poole, a handsome fellow, as he had been a gentleman, having a servant with him; but he came from, or for what purpose he was sent there, no man could tell. Master Tyndale at various times was desired to come to dinner and supper among merchants. By this means, Henry Philips became acquainted with him; so that within a short time M. Tyndale had great confidence in him, and brought him to his lodging at the house of Thomas Poyntz, and also had him once or twice to dinner and supper, and further entered such friendship with him that, through his procurement, he stayed in the same house of Poyntz. Moreover he showed him his books and other secrets of his study; so little did Tyndale then mistrust this traitor.

“But Poyntz, having no great confidence in the fellow, asked Master Tyndale how he became acquainted with this Philips. Master Tyndale answered that he was an honest man, well-learned, and very conformable. Then Poyntz, perceiving that he bore such favour toward him, said no more; thinking he became acquainted with him by some friend of his. Philips, being in the town three or four days, one time desired Poyntz to walk with him around the town, to show him its commodities; and, in walking together about the town, he communicated about diverse things, and some of the king’s affairs. By this talk, Poyntz as yet suspected nothing; but afterward, by the sequel of the matter, he more perceived what [Philips] intended. In the meantime he well-perceived this: that he bore no great favour either to setting forth any good thing, nor to the proceedings of the king of England.

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marriage to be good and valid. The Pope excommunicated Henry and Cranmer. As a result, the Church of England broke with Rome and the Church of England was brought under the King’s control. Anne was crowned Queen of England on 1 June 1533. On 7 September she gave birth to the future Elizabeth I of England.

¹ And. Vol. I. p. 411. The original letter is in the Brit. Museum, Cleop. E. v. fol. 330.

² This relic is in the British Museum.

³ Collector of the customs.

But afterward, when the time was past, Poyntz perceived this to be his mind – to feel if he could perceive by him, whether he might break with him in the matter, for profit of money, to help him in his purpose; for he perceived before that he was monied, and would have Poyntz think no less; but by whom, it was unknown. For he had previously desired Poyntz to help him to various things; and what he named, he required to be the best. For, he said, I have money enough. But nothing came of this talk, except that men would think he had some things to do; for nothing else followed of his talk. From Antwerp, Philips went to the court of Brussels, the king having no ambassador there; for at that time the king of England and the emperor were in a controversy over the question between the king and Catharine,¹ who was aunt to the emperor; so that Philips, as a traitor against both God and the king, was all the better retained there, as also were other traitors besides him. After he had betrayed Master Tyndale into their hands, [Philips] showed himself against the king's own person, and set forth things against the king there. To make short, Philips did so much there, that he procured to bring with him, from there to Antwerp, the procuror general who is the emperor's attorney, with certain other officers. This was done with no small charges or expense, from whomever it came.

"Within a while after, Poyntz was sitting at his door. Philips' man came to him, and asked whether Master Tyndale was there; and said, his master would come to him; and so departed. But whether his master, Philips, was in the town or not, it was unknown. But at that time Poyntz heard no more, either of the master or of the man. Within three or four days afterward, Poyntz went to the town of Barrow, being eighteen English miles from Antwerp, where he had business to do for the space of a month or six weeks; and during the time of his absence, Henry Philips came again to Antwerp to the house of Poyntz, and coming in, spoke with his wife, asking her for Master Tyndale, and whether he could dine there with him; saying, 'What good meal shall we have?' she answered, 'Such as the market will give.' Then he went forth again (as it is thought) to provide and

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set the officers, which he brought with him from Brussels, in the street and around the door. Then about noon he came again, and went to Master Tyndale, and desired him to lend him forty shillings: 'For,' he said, 'I lost my purse this morning, coming over on the passage between here and Mechlin. So Master Tyndale gave him forty shillings, which was easily had by him, if he had it; for in the wily subtleties of this world he was simple and inexperienced.

"Then' said Philips, 'Master Tyndale, you shall be my guest here this day.' 'No,' said Master Tyndale, 'I go out this day to dinner; and you shall go with me, and be my guest, where you shall be welcome.' So when it was dinner-time, Master Tyndale went out with Philips; and at the exit from Poyntz' house was a long narrow entry, so that two could not go side by side. Master Tyndale would have put Philips before him, but Philips would have it no other way than to put Master Tyndale before; he pretended to show great humanity in that. So Master Tyndale, being a man of no great stature, went before; and Philips, a tall well-built person, followed behind him. He had set officers on either side of the door on two seats, which, being there, might see who came in the entry. And coming through the same entry, Philips pointed with his finger over Master Tyndale's head down to him, so that the officers which sat at the door, might see that it was he whom they should take, as the officers that took Master Tyndale afterward told Poyntz; they said to Poyntz, when they had laid [Tyndale] in prison, that they pitied to see [Tyndale's] simplicity when they took him. Then they brought him to the emperor's attorney, where he dined. Then the said attorney came to the house of Poyntz, and sent away all that was there of Master Tyndale's, his books as well

¹ That is, concerning Henry VIII's desire to divorce her.

as other things: and from there Tyndale was taken to the castle of Vilford,¹ eighteen English miles from Antwerp; and there he remained until he was put to death."

Foxe proceeds to say that, 'by the help of English merchants,' letters were immediately sent to the court of Brussels in favour of Tyndale. But the Cotton MSS. have been found to contain a letter from Poyntz to his brother John, dated from Antwerp, Aug. 25, 1535, in the postscript of which he says, "I think that if Walter Marsch, now being governor [of the English factory], had done his duty effectually here at this time, there would have been a remedy found for this man."

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In the same letter he says to his brother, the seizure of Tyndale "was done by procurement out of England, and, as I suppose, unknown to the king's grace till it was done." He also tells him,

"It was said here, the king had granted his gracious letters in favour of William Tyndale, to have been sent here; who is in prison, and likely to suffer death, except through his gracious help. But it is thought those letters were stopped. By means of this poor man, William Tyndale, having lain in my house three quarters of a year, I know that the king has never had a truer-hearted subject to his grace living this day; and that he knows he is bound by the law of God to obey his prince; I know well he would not do the contrary, to be made lord of the world, however the king's grace may be informed. The death of this man would be a great hindrance to the gospel; and it would be one of the highest pleasures to its enemies. But if it should please the king's highness to send for this man, so that he might dispute [the charges against] him at large, which they lay to him, it might by the means by which it would be so opened to the court and the council of this country, that they would be at another point with the bishop of Rome within a short space. And I think he will be shortly at a point be condemned; for there are two Englishmen at Louvaine that do and have applied it sorely, taking great pains to translate out of English into Latin those things that may make against him – so that the clergy here may understand it and condemn him, as they have done all others for keeping opinions contrary to their business, which they call *The order of holy church*. Brother, the knowledge that I have of this man causes me to write as my conscience binds me; for the king's grace should have by him, at this day, as high a treasure as of any one man living, that has been of no greater reputation.² Therefore I desire you that this matter may be solicited to his grace for this man, with as good effect as shall be in you or by your means to be done; for, on my conscience, there are not many perfecter living in this day, as knows God, who has you in keeping.

Your brother,

THOMAS POYNTZ."³

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¹ Vilvorden between Brussels and Mechlin.

² This last clause, having been misprinted in Anderson, has been corrected by an examination of the original.

³ The whole letter is given in Anderson, B. I. §. 12. Vol. I. p. 426, from the Cotton MSS. in the Brit. Mus. Galba X. fol. 6o. It is but justice to the character of some of Tyndale's adversaries to observe, that while the calamities which had befallen bishop Fisher and Sir Thomas More are sufficient to exempt them from any suspicion of being implicated in the treacherous design on Tyndale, the correspondence of Cromwell, and other contemporary documents in the British Museum, equally exonerate Henry VIII. Cromwell had sent one Thomas Tebold to the continent to gather information, and this man had several conversations with Philips; whose arrest the king was endeavouring to procure for his abuse of him, and whose co-adjutor Tebold discovered to have been a monk, named Gabriel Donne. Mr Anderson's researches have discovered a connection between this monk and bishop Gardiner; and that he was rewarded, at this very time, from the patronage of Vesey, bishop of Exeter, a bitter persecutor of the reformers. Anderson, *ibid.*

This letter was probably the means of inducing Cromwell to send his next dispatch in Tyndale's behalf, if indeed it was not his first, to a merchant named Flegge, rather than to Marsch. Flegge's reply announces that he received it on the 10th of September, along with a letter from the English secretary of state to the archbishop of Palermo, president of the princess regent's council, and another for the margrave of Bergen;¹ and that such steps were consequently taken by the English merchants as Foxe has described in the paragraphs immediately succeeding our last quotation from him; beginning as follows, from the account of Tyndale's removal to Vilvorden:

"Then at once,² by the help of English merchants, letters were sent in the favour of Tyndale to the court of Brussels. Also not long after, letters were directed out of England to the council at Brussels,³ and sent to the merchant

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venturers at Antwerp, commanding them to see that they should be delivered with speed. Then those of the primary merchants that were there at that time, being called together, required Poyntz to take in hand the delivery of those letters, with letters also from them in favour of Master Tyndale, to the lord of Barrowe and others; the lord of Barrowe (as it was told Poyntz by the way) at that time was departed from Brussels, as the primary conductor of the eldest daughter of the king of Denmark who was to be married to the palsgrave.⁴ After [Poyntz] heard of his departure, he rode after the next way, and overtook him at Akon,⁵ where he delivered his letters to him. When he had received and read them, he gave no direct answer [to Poyntz], but somewhat objecting said, 'Some of their countrymen were burned in England, not long before;' as indeed there were Anabaptists burned in Smithfield. And so Poyntz said to him. 'However,' he said, 'whatever the crime was, if his lordship or any other nobleman had written, requiring to have had them [delivered], he thought they would not have been denied.' 'Well,' he said, 'I have no leisure to write; for the princess is ready to ride.' Then said Poyntz, 'If it shall please your lordship, I will attend upon you to the next baiting-place'⁶ which was at Maastricht. 'If you so do,' said the lord, 'I will advise myself by the way, what to write.' So Poyntz followed him from Akon to Maastricht, which are fifteen English miles apart; and there he received letters from him – one to the council there, another to the company of the merchant venturers, and another also to the lord Cromwell. So Poyntz rode from there to Brussels; then and there he delivered to the council the letters out of England, along with the lord of Barrowe's letters. Soon after, he received letters in answer to the letters from England, which he brought to Antwerp to the English merchants, who required him to go with them into England.⁷ Being very desirous to have Master Tyndale out of prison, he took pains, with loss of time in his own business and occupation, he diligently followed with the letters, which he delivered to the council there. He was commanded by them to wait until he had other letters; he was not dispatched from there until a month after.

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¹ Mr Flegge's letter is copied by Anderson. B. I. §. 12. Vol. I. p. 429, from Cotton MSS. Galba, B. X. fol. 62.

² Originally 'incontinent.'

³ Foxe's margin says, 'By the lord Crumwell and others'; but his expression *not long after* comprehends an interval which could scarcely be less than six or seven months.

⁴ *Palsgrave: the lord of a palatinate (a count's territory) who exercised sovereign powers over his lands.*

⁵ Alkhen (or perhaps Alphen).

⁶ *Baiting-place: a place that provides refreshment on a journey; an inn or rest-stop.*

⁷ On the 22nd of September; as appears from Flegge's reply to Cromwell.

At length, the letters being delivered him, he returned again, and delivered them to the emperor's council at Brussels, and there waited for answer to the same.

"When Poyntz had waited three or four days, it was told him, by one that belonged to the chancery, that Master Tyndale should have been delivered to him according to the tenor of the letters; but Philips, being there, followed the suit against Master Tyndale, and hearing that he should be delivered to Poyntz, and fearing he would be put from his purpose, he knew no other remedy but to accuse Poyntz, saying, that he was a dweller in the town of Antwerp, and there had been a succourer of Tyndale, and was of the same opinion, and that all this was only his own labour and suit, to have Master Tyndale at liberty, and no one else's.

"Thus, upon his information and accusation, Poyntz was arrested by the procuror general, and delivered into the keeping of two serjeants of arms. The same evening, one of the chancery with the procuror general was sent to him. He administered an oath to [Poyntz] that he should truly answer all things inquired of him – Poyntz thinking they would have no other examination of him, but of his message. The next day likewise they came again, and had him examined; and did so five or six days, one after another, upon no fewer than a hundred articles, as well about the king's affairs, as about the message concerning Tyndale, and of his aiders, and of his religion. Out of these examinations, the procuror general drew twenty-three or twenty-four articles, and declared them against Poyntz. He delivered a copy of these to Poyntz to answer to, and permitted him to have an advocate and proctor. And it was ordered that eight days after he would deliver his answer to them; and from eight days to eight days to proceed, till the process would be ended; also that he should send no messenger to Antwerp, where his house was, nor to any other place except by the post of the town of Brussels; nor send any letters, nor have any delivered to him, unless written in Dutch; and the procuror general, who was party against him, was to read them before they were sent or delivered.

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Nor might any be allowed to speak or talk with Poyntz in any other tongue or language except the Dutch tongue, so that his keepers, who were Dutchmen, might understand what the contents of the letters or talk would be; saving that at one certain time the provincial of the white friars came to dinner where Poyntz was prisoner, and brought with him a young novice, being an Englishman; the provincial, after dinner, of his own accord bid to talk with Poyntz, and so he was licensed to talk with him. The purpose and great policy in this was easily perceived. After this,¹ Poyntz delivered his answer to the procuror general; and then after the appointed days, he proceeded with *replication duplique*² – with other answers, each to another in writing what they could. As the commissioners came to Poyntz, Philips the traitor accompanied them to the door, following the process against him; as he also did against Master Tyndale; for so those who had Poyntz in keeping showed him. Thus Poyntz was sorely troubled for Master Tyndale, and he was long kept in prison; but at length, when he saw no other remedy, he made his escape by night, and avoided their hands."

Meanwhile, Tyndale had been confined twelve months in Vilvorden castle: but the Lord was with him, and showed him his mercy, and gave him favour in the sight of the keeper of his prison; so that, according to Foxe, "he converted the keeper, and his daughter and others of his household. And the rest that were conversant with him in the castle, reported about him, that "if he were not a good Christian man, they could not tell whom to trust." But if it was given to him to be the means of turning some sinners within the walls of his prison from the error of their ways by his faithful words and holy example, the favour of the prison-keeper enabled him to

¹ That is, on Christmas Eve, 1535, as appears from the fuller narrative in the first edition of Foxe.

² Originally, *replication duplique* (Fr. *duplique*), a legal term for the formal answers to an interrogatory.

continue his labours, so that from those prison-walls “sounded out the word of the Lord” into all parts where the English tongue was spoken. Foxe says that after Tyndale’s seizure “certain things of his doing were found, which he had intended to have put forth to further God’s word, among which was the testament of M. Tracy, expounded by himself.” But Mr Anderson seems

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to have discovered, that Tyndale’s exposition of Tracy’s testament, in which he sets forth the dishonour done to the only Mediator between God and man by seeking the aid of departed saints for a departed sinner, was actually published this year along with Wycliffe’s *Wicket*, a tract on the words “This is my body,”¹ then printed for the first time. There was also a third edition of Tyndale’s *Obedience* printed this year at Strasburg; and three editions of his New Testament are believed to have been printed at Antwerp in 1535. It is probable that none of these editions of his works and translations were carried through the press without some communication with their author. One at least of them lays claim to having been prepared for publication under his special care; being entitled “The New Testament, diligently corrected and compared with the Greek, by Willyam Tyndale: and finished in the year of our Lord God 1535.” In this edition, his diligent and tender care for his poor country-men does indeed appear, in a very remarkable manner. We have seen that before he had begun the work of translation, he had pledged himself that if God spared his life, he would cause a boy that drives the plough to know more of the Scriptures than a popish priest. In 1535, he saw plainly that his life was not to be spared much longer. Laying aside therefore all that display of good writing in which a scholar would have prided himself, he prepared this edition for the instruction of the plough-boys in his native country, by printing it in what might properly be called the vulgar tongue, conforming the spelling to their rude pronunciation,² while to help their understanding of the subjects treated, he put headings to the chapters, for the first time.

The imprisoned reformer was at the same time defending the doctrines he had taught, in a series of replies to attacks made upon him by the theologians of Louvaine. But of these, whether conversations only, or written answers to written charges, no relic remains. But though suffering trouble as an evil-doer, even to his bonds, Tyndale might well say, as the apostle did,

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“The word of God is not bound;” for he too had his Timothy, his own son in the faith, who was carefully preserving, and probably already beginning to print, the fruits of Tyndale’s continued labours as a translator of the Hebrew scriptures. This person was John Rogers, who had been educated at Cambridge, and invited to Antwerp to fill the place of chaplain to the English factory. There he had read the scriptures with Tyndale, and in the scriptures he had found the way of salvation. It could scarcely have been without some English merchant’s pecuniary aid (and some have supposed that Thomas Matthew was the merchant’s name) that Rogers commenced in secret the printing of that noble English folio Bible, called Matthew’s Bible; which begins with a reprint of Tyndale’s Pentateuch, as it closes with a reprint of his New Testament, incorporating his instructive preface; and further contains what had never before been printed, a translation by Tyndale of all the historical Hebrew scriptures to the end of the second book of Chronicles.

And now this good and faithful servant William Tyndale had done his appointed work, except that it was also to be given to him to glorify God by his death.

¹ Anderson, B. I. §. 12. Vol. I. p. 433.

² In this edition, of which the Camb. Univ. Library contains a perfect copy, and Mr Offor’s collection another copy, father is spelled Faether; master maester; stone, stoene; once, oones; worse, whorsee, &c.

Foxe says that it was reported that while he was prisoner, there was much writing, and great disputation to and fro, “between him and the Romanists in the neighbouring university of Louvaine; and that the court, which sat in judgment upon him, observed its usual custom of offering him permission to have an advocate and a proctor, to answer the law. But he refused to have any such, saying, that he would answer for himself; and so he did.” Nor does his defence of himself seem to have been useless; for if it is true that the emperor’s attorney was constrained to acknowledge, that he was a learned, a good, and a godly man,” the answers and demeanour which extorted this confession from the official prosecutor, must have been well-fitted to speak to the consciences of all present, in testimony that the cause for which this holy man was ready to give up his life, was the cause of God.

“At last,” says Foxe, after much reasoning, when no reasoning would serve, although he deserved no death, he was condemned by virtue of the emperor’s decree, made in the assembly at Augsбург; and upon the same [decree] was brought to the place of execution. There he was tied to the stake, and then strangled first by the hangman, and afterward consumed with fire, on the morning [of October 6th],¹ at the town of Vilvorden, in the year 1536; crying thus at the stake with a fervent zeal and a loud voice, ‘Lord, open the king of England’s eyes.’”

lxxv [1536-1537]

The dying martyr’s prayer was thus far answered, that the king of England’s eyes were opened to the folly of continuing to fight against the circulation of Tyndale’s versions of the scriptures. Before the waning year had come to its close, the first volume of Holy Scripture ever printed on English ground, came forth from the press of the king’s own printer; and that volume was a folio Testament, Tyndale’s own version, with his prologues too, and with the long-proscribed name of William Tyndale openly set forth on its title page.² Nor was this all that Henry was to sanction towards fulfilling Tyndale’s fervent desires for his beloved country. The subsequently eminent English printers, Grafton and Whitchurch, undertook the cost of completing, though not at an English press, that bible which Rogers had begun. So much of the scriptures as Tyndale had not lived to translate, was filled up from Coverdale’s secondary translation of the whole bible, made in 1535; and the whole was completed with a dedication to the king, and a copy of it presented to archbishop Cranmer by Grafton, before the 4th of the following August. On that day we find the archbishop sending Grafton and his bible to Cromwell, and requesting him to show it to the king, and to obtain, if possible, his royal “licence that the same may be sold, and read by every person, without danger of any act, proclamation, or ordinance previously granted to the contrary.”³ That bible said, “The king’s heart is in the hands of the Lord; as the rivers of water, he turns it wherever he will;” [Prov 21.1](#) and the heart of this wayward king was now turned to sanction what he had pronounced detestable.

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On the 13th of August Cranmer wrote again to Cromwell,⁴ as follows: “Whereas I understand that your lordship, at my request, has not only exhibited the bible which I sent to you to the king’s majesty, but also has obtained from his grace that it shall be allowed, by his authority, to be bought and read within this realm. My lord, for your pains taken in this behalf, I give to you my most hearty thanks; assuring your lordship, for the contentment of my mind, you have showed me more pleasure in this than if you had given me a thousand pounds; and I do not

¹ Foxe gives this date in his calendar.

² See its description in Anderson B. I. § 13. Vol. I. p. 549. A copy of this edition is in the Bodleian.

³ Parker Soc. edition of *Cranmer’s Works*, Vol. II. p. 344, Lett. 194; or Jenkyns’s *Cranmer’s Remains*, Vol. I. p. 197, Lett. 188.

⁴ Ib. Lett. 197; or Jonkyns, Lett. 191.

doubt but that hereby such fruit of good knowledge shall ensue, that it shall well appear hereafter what high and acceptable service you have done to God and the king. As for me, you may reckon me your bondsman for this; and I dare be bold to say, so may you do my lord of Worcester.”¹

Tyndale had said to Vaughan, “If the king would grant only a bare text of the scripture to be put forth among his people, be it the translation of whatever person he shall please, I will promise never to write more, nor abide two days in these parts.” He was to write no more; and he no longer abode on this earth; but more than he had asked had been given to him by the King of kings. The scripture was licensed to be put forth; and his own translation was accepted; and his instructive prefaces were not to be expunged, but to be more than tacitly acknowledged to contain a godly and wholesome doctrine, necessary for those times.

And now, in old John Foxe’s words, “Thus much of William Tyndale, who, for his notable pains and travail, may be worthily called an apostle of England.”

¹ Bishop Latimer.