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BIBLE CLASS LECTURES.—No. 1.



# WILLIAM TYNDALE

AND THE

# ENGLISH BIBLE.

## A Lecture

DELIVERED IN CEMETERY ROAD CHAPEL, SHEFFIELD,  
SEP. 27TH, 1865, AT THE OPENING OF HIS BIBLE CLASS,

BY THE

REV. GILES HESTER,

*MINISTER OF THE CHAPEL.*

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“SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES.”—JESUS.

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“The history of the English translations of the Bible connects itself with many points of interest in that of the nation and the Church. The lives of the individual translators; the long struggle with the indifference or opposition of men in power; the religious condition of the people as calling for, or affected by, the appearance of the translation; the time and place and form of the successive editions by which the demand, when once created, was supplied;—each of these has furnished, and might again furnish, materials for a volume.”—DR. SMITH’S DICTIONARY OF THE BIBLE, ART. “VERSIONS.”

LONDON: W. KENT & CO., PATERNOSTER ROW;  
SHEFFIELD: D. T. INGHAM, 41, SOUTH STREET, MOOR;  
H. CATTERMOLLE, 369, STANTON STREET, GLOSSOP ROAD.

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"For more than a thousand years the Bible, collectively taken, has gone hand in hand with civilization, science, law,—in short, with the moral and intellectual cultivation of the species, always supporting, and often leading the way. Its very presence as a believed Book, has rendered the nations emphatically a chosen race, and this too in exact proportion as it is more or less generally known or studied. Good and holy men, and the best and wisest of mankind, the kingly spirits of history, enthroned in the hearts of mighty nations, have borne witness to its influences, have declared it to be beyond compare the most perfect instrument, the only adequate organ of humanity;—the organ and instrument of all the gifts, powers, tendencies, by which the individual is privileged to rise above himself."—**COLERIDGE.**

"It is not in a chain of dry sentences that God reveals to us His will and the principles of His government; it is essentially by facts. In the Book He has given us everything is history or everything is connected with history. It is sometimes said that this antique and oriental book refuses to assimilate itself with the modern forms of our thought. Oh! in this book of the human race the local and the temporary disappear in the universal! Will you not believe the testimony of a child? Without one aid of archæology he understands the Bible as he does the talk of his playfellows. This language of the childhood of nations seems made for human children. But the child does better than understand; these exquisite narratives are his delight. Much is said about improving and explaining solemn truths; this is the favourite task of writers for children. But the Author of the Bible is their master in that as in all besides. Who could have so well spread honey on the edges of this cup offered to all men, at the bottom of which childhood finds nothing bitter? What more glorious stores? What more dazzling marvel? Where was there ever gravity tempered with more grace or grace accompanied with more gravity? Where was morality ever better exemplified in action? This whole book is the history of an education, a vast and sublime education—that of the human race; and the child receives it without need of being told so, as its own education."—**VINET.**

"The Protestant Bible lives on the ear like a music that can never be forgotten, like the sound of church bells. Its felicities often seem to be almost things rather than mere words. It is part of the national mind, and the anchor of national seriousness. The memory of the dead passes into it. The potent traditions of childhood are stereotyped in its verses. The power of all the griefs and trials of a man is hidden beneath its words. It is the representation of his best moments, and all that there has been about him of soft and gentle and pure and penitent and good speaks to him for ever out of his English Bible. It is his sacred thing, which doubt has never dimmed, and controversy never soiled. In the length and breadth of the land there is not a Protestant with one spark of religiousness about him, whose spiritual biography is not in his Saxon Bible."—**QUOTED IN TRENCH'S ENGLISH PAST AND PRESENT.**

## William Tyndale and the English Bible.

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"THE sixteenth century, embracing one of the most eventful periods in the annals of Europe, is familiarly known to have produced in this country a number of conspicuous characters, and the lives of almost every one of them have been given to the world again and again. One however—and, in the proper sense of the term, as regards his influence on posterity—by far the most eminent has been hitherto all but overlooked. Often confounded or linked with other men of very inferior consequence, there has been no reader of English History who could possibly estimate the amount of his obligations to the modest and immortal William Tyndale. Independently of his ability as one of the most powerful writers of the age, when his name is connected with the Sacred Volume which he first translated from the original text into English, which he first put to the press and then sent into his native land, we have no other man to be compared with him at that time; and when to this is added, his unspotted personal christianity, his uncompromising spirit, and genuine patriotism, it is altogether unaccountable that every incident in his valuable life has not been gleaned and arranged into a distinct memoir, long before the present day. Such a work, including his noble convert, JOHN FRYTH, ought to have been a household book for many generations back."—ANDERSON'S ANNALS OF THE ENGLISH BIBLE.

"The work of Wycliffe stands by itself. Whatever power it exercised in preparing the way for the Reformation of the 16th century, it had no perceptible influence on the translations. By the reign of Henry VIII. its English was already obsolescent, and the revival of classical scholarship led men to feel dissatisfied with a version which had avowedly been made at second-hand, not from the original. With Tyndale on the other hand, we enter on a continuous succession. He is the patriarch in no remote ancestry, of the Authorized Version. With a consistent unswerving purpose, he devoted his whole life to this one work; and through dangers and difficulties, amid enemies and treacherous friends, in exile and loneliness, accomplished it. More than Cranmer or Ridley, he is the true hero of the Reformation. While they were slowly moving onwards, halting between two opinions, watching how the Court-winds blew, or at the best, making the most of opportunities, he set himself to the task without which, he felt sure, Reform would be impossible; which, once accomplished, would render it inevitable."—PROFESSOR PLUMPTRE IN SMITH'S DICTIONARY OF THE BIBLE.

IN the historical developement of the Church of God there have been many remarkable and memorable Revolutions, and the most striking and distinguished of these great historical

events have been closely and intimately associated with the impartation or restoration of the Word of God. Ample illustrations of this statement may be drawn from the Records of the Jewish Economy and from the History of the Christian Dispensation. That was a grand and never-to-be-forgotten event in the annals of the Hebrew race, when Moses at the command of Jehovah led the chosen and peculiar people from under the galling yoke of Egyptian bondage; conducted them by a miraculous passage through the Red Sea, and brought them to the towering rocks and craggy heights of Mount Sinai. Scenes of wonder broke upon the vision of the astonished people. Surrounded with those awful solitudes of nature; God revealed to them His glory, and spake unto them all the words of His Holy Law. The sight was one of solemn grandeur, and sublime magnificence. The people trembled under the Majesty of the Divine communications, "And they said unto Moses, Speak thou with us, and we will hear: but let not God speak with us, lest we die." Jehovah condescended not only to reveal His glory, and give utterance to His Righteous Law, but also to make His commandments fixed and permanent by putting them into a *written* form. Let it be noted in your memory that the first Bible the world had was written by the hand of God. It came direct from the Infinite Holiness of Heaven. "And the Lord said unto Moses, Come up to Me into the Mount, and be there, and I will give thee tables of stone and a law, and commandments *which I have written*; that thou mayest teach them. And He gave unto Moses, when He had made an end of communing with him upon Mount Sinai, two tables of testimony, tables of stone, *written with the finger of God.*" This whole scene marks one of the most notable epochs in the History of the Jewish Church.

Centuries rolled on. The Jews rose to be a great nation, and a mighty people in the earth. They conquered their foes, established their laws, and finally built their glorious and majestic Temple. They became the wonder of the world. Pride, however, came in with their great prosperity and hastened their downfall. The signal mercies of God, shewn in their past history, now sink into comparative oblivion. The name of Jehovah, once so powerful in its influence, is almost forgotten, or treated with contempt. False Gods are intro-

duced and worshipped. The Holy Law, once the ornament and glory of the people, fades away from the memory. The rebellion of the heart waxes greater and greater. The corruption of the nation is ripe for punishment. God's anger awakens. The cloud gathers. The storm bursts. The Temple is burnt to ashes. The enemy rushes in, and the chosen and once happy people are scattered in a foreign land. They become a valley of dry bones. The night of sorrow steals over them. The star of hope sinks and almost sets. The pulse of life beats low. Apparently all seems lost for ever. But God had not forgotten to be gracious. His mercies endure for ever. The light of a new era dawns upon them. They are commanded to arise from their captivity, and are led back to their own beloved land. The Law of God—which in their prosperity had been despised, treated with neglect and contempt—is now restored to its rightful supremacy, honoured and revered by all the people. The restoration of the Word of God is the distinguishing feature of the age. How touching, affecting, and instructive are the words descriptive of this memorable scene in the History of the Church of God. "And all the people gathered themselves together as one man into the street that was before the water gate; and they spake unto Ezra the scribe to bring the book of the law of Moses which the Lord had commanded to Israel. And Ezra the priest brought the law before the congregation both of men and women, and all that could hear with understanding..... And he read therein before the street that was before the water gate from the morning until mid-day, before the men and the women, and those that could understand; and the ears of all the people were attentive unto the book of the law. And Ezra the scribe stood upon a pulpit of wood which they had made for the purpose. And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people, and when he opened it all the people stood up. So they read in the book of the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading."

This was the age of Reformation and Reconstruction. Adversity had taught the Jews to value the word of God, and they now take it as the basis of their institutions, and the guide of their religious life.

We pass on to the greatest epoch in the History of the Jew-

ish church. Moral degeneracy is characteristic of the human race. When left to himself man sinks lower and lower into helpless corruption and hopeless ruin. The Jews in the midst of all their great and distinguished privileges ever manifested a tendency of apostasy from God. The spiritual life of the nation had sunk low when the greatest event in the history of the race, and in the history of the world transpired. The fulness of time, when infinite mercy was to break on the world, only served to manifest the faithlessness and depravity of man. The Lord of Light found a dark world. The Law of God was overlaid and covered up with the additions and traditions of men. Worldliness and selfishness like millstones were hanging on the neck of the church. "The light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not." It was an age of hollowness, formality and hypocrisy. The outward ceremonies of man's pride and vanity were substituted for the inward cleansings of God's grace. The Scribes and the Pharisees were the religious leaders of the time. They took from the people the "key of knowledge." They heaped ceremony upon ceremony, and piled tradition upon tradition till the burden was too grievous to be borne. They impeached the holiness of Christ. They accuse the Lord and His disciples of negligence to the ordinances of religion. "Why do Thy disciples transgress the traditions of the elders, for they wash not their hands when they eat bread." The Lord of Truth and Righteousness answers them by proposing another question. "Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition?" And after giving illustrations of His question He adds, "Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition. Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophecy of you, saying, 'This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me.' *But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.*"

Christ came to restore to it legitimate supremacy, to magnify and fulfil the law of God. He set aside the traditions and ceremonies of men, and enforced by His preaching, teaching, and life, the pure and immutable precepts of Eternal Truth. The Ministry of Christ among men is the beginning of a new era in the history of the church. The Holy Book is

rescued from the jumble and lumber of human traditions, and presented to the eager and famishing multitudes, surrounded with the halo of its own divine beauty, and unfading glory. How heart-touching, significant, and instructive to all ages are the words of the Evangelist Luke! "And He came to Nazareth where He had been brought up, and as His custom was, He went into the synagogue, and stood up for to read. And there was delivered unto Him the book of the prophet Esaias. And when He had opened the book He found the place where it was written, 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He hath anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He hath sent Me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised. To preach the acceptable year of the Lord.' And He closed the book, and He gave it to the minister and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on Him. And He began to say unto them, This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears. And all bore Him witness and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth."

It is impossible for us to say when the Bible was first introduced into our own beloved country. We know that in the first century Rome was illumined with the light of gospel truth, and possibly our relation to the Roman government was the medium through which the word of God and the gospel of peace were brought to our shores. Our Saxon ancestors had portions of the Bible. Alfred the Great translated parts of the historical books, and some of the Psalms into the mother-tongue. He is said to have taken four chapters in Exodus as the ground-work of his legislation. The wishes of the great king extended further. He desired that "all the free-born youth of his kingdom should be able to read the English Scriptures." A translation of the New Testament was executed by the venerable Bede, the Monk of Jarrow. Having completed his work, he died with the triumphant words on his lips, "It is finished; Glory be to the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost."

But the most noticeable period in the annals of our country previous to the Days of Tyndale, in connection with the translation of the word of God, and the diffusion of scriptural religion, is that in which Wycliffe is the centre and the great commanding figure. Wycliffe was the morning star of the Reformation. He was the first to translate the whole Bible into the mother-tongue of the English people. Wycliffe was in every sense of the word a great and notable man. His learning was solid and extensive; his piety was deep and catholic; his courage was firm and fearless; his industry was active and persevering. He stood before Princes, priests and peasants, and bore a noble testimony to the truth of God. Wycliffe's writings became very popular; they penetrated the heart of Europe. Huss of Bohemia, and Jerome of Prague, the proto-martyrs of the Reformation, were among the fruits of Wycliffe's labours.

The age of Wycliffe was one of considerable excitement, and mental agitation in all the continental nations of Europe. The pulse of a new life had begun to beat, and a more vital blood had begun to flow through the veins of society. Dante had vented his keen satire, and sung his soul-stirring songs, and had closed his eyes in death just before Wycliffe was born. Petrarch and Boccaccio had followed in the steps of Dante in the cultivation of song and the diffusion of letters. Greek had found its way into Italy. The Italian language was being moulded into the highest forms of beauty and sublimity. The literature which gave such distinction and glory to Italy found its way into our own country. Men great in letters arose in England. Our own famous Chaucer was a scholar, a statesman, and a poet. He was a few years younger than Wycliffe. Chaucer and Wycliffe were our greatest writers in early English. They gave a fixed form to the English tongue. During the greater part of their time Edward the third sat upon the English throne. He possessed remarkable talents and displayed them in warfare. We have therefore in this age three remarkable types of English greatness. A great King; a great Poet; and a great Divine. Edward displayed his genius on the field of battle; Chaucer unfolded his genius on the mount of song; Wycliffe revealed his genius in the pulpit, and perhaps still more, as he sat at that table which still stands in Lut-

terworth Church, translating the Bible into the language of the common people. These great minds moulded the age in which they lived. They shine like stars in the thick darkness which preceded and followed. The period we are considering "is marked by the highest culture, and the largest measure of freedom, known in our history until we come to the times of the Reformation. Mentally, ethically, and religiously, the reign of Edward III is the brightest portion of our middle age life. It gave us all the great principles and precedents of the English Constitution, and with these our Chaucer and our Wycliffe. On the whole, it is hardly too much to say, that England was more ripe for a Protestant Reformation in the last days of Edward III than in the last days of Henry VIII."\*

Wycliffe died in 1384, just one hundred years before Tyndale was born. The intervening century, so far as the history of the religious life of the nation is concerned, is enveloped in considerable obscurity. Mr. Froude thinks that the results of Wycliffe's labours had died out before the time of the second and greater Reformation. Speaking of the death of this great religious hero and leader in the van of spiritual freedom and progress, he says, "With him departed all which was best and purest in the movement which he had commenced. The zeal of his followers was not extinguished, but the wisdom was extinguished which had directed it. The sect which he organized, the special doctrine which he set himself to teach, after a blaze of success sank into darkness; and no trace remained of Lollardy except the black memory of contempt and hatred."† Other historians think this representation hardly correct. It is their opinion that the Lollards survived all through the succeeding century and reappeared in those religious circles which crowded around the cradle of the Reformation of the sixteenth century. Which of these opinions is the more correct one I am not able to say: probably however, the latter is the safer conclusion.

We now come to the true hero of our story. The life of William Tyndale is identified with the most important—the most striking and thrilling epoch of European History. The spiritual eyes of Europe, which for ages had been nearly closed,

\* Dr. Vaughan's *Revolutions in English History*.—Vol. I. Page 578.

† Froude's *History of England*.—Vol. II. Page 24.

and almost paralysed by the dense darkness lying on them, were now by a supernatural power opened, and nations as well as men began to discover the beauty, symmetry, and glory of Bible Truth. There was a general stir not only in this country, but throughout the foremost nations of the continent. There was a simultaneous expression of dissatisfaction with, and contempt for, the old forms of Religion, and a simultaneous cry for those great facts and doctrines of the Gospel which had been hidden for ages beneath the gorgeous mummeries, the sensuous ceremonies, and towering corruptions of the Church of Rome.

William Tyndale was descended from an ancient and respectable family. He was born either at, or in the neighbourhood of, North Nibley, a village in Gloucestershire. Foxe says he was born "about the borders of Wales." Gloucestershire adjoins Monmouthshire on the west. Both these counties are remarkable for their richly varied and picturesque scenery. The beautiful Wye and the noble Severn flow through landscapes celebrated for that which is delightful and enchanting in nature. On some of the hills of Gloucestershire you gain a magnificent prospect of the surrounding country. From a point near North Nibley "more than seven counties are visible and about thirty parish churches."\*

Tyndale was born about the year 1484. There is some obscurity hanging over the precise year of his birth; but assuming the date we have mentioned, he was one year younger than Luther, and about the same age as Latimer. We know next to nothing of his parents, childhood and early education. We follow him from his own native picturesque village to the University. Foxe says he was "brought up from a *child* in the University of Oxford." He became a student in Magdalen Hall. Oxford at this time was a place of great literary excitement and intellectual fermentation. A new day bright with hope was dawning on the University. A most remarkable revival of letters was taking place at several of the ancient seats of learning. This revival was connected with an influx of Greek Scholars into the west of Europe. In 1453 Constantinople was sacked by the Turks. The

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\* Anderson's Annals of the English Bible.—Vol. I. Page 16.

learned Greeks who dwelt in that city fled into Italy for protection and support. They met with a splendid reception at the superb and magnificent Court of the Medici. In Florence, and in other cities of the Peninsula they taught their own rich, flexible, and copious language. Many noble youths of England resorted to Italy with the view of studying the Greek Language and Philosophy. Among the most illustrious of our own early Greek Scholars who obtained their learning on the Continent, are the names of Grocyn, Linacre, William Latimer, Lily, and Colet, celebrated as the founder of St. Paul's School.

Some of these Scholars had returned from Italy with their treasures of knowledge, and had settled at Oxford as Teachers of the New Learning at the time Tyndale entered as a student. A man remarkable for his quick wit and general mental capacity had come over from Holland for the purpose of enlarging his stores of information. Erasmus landed in England in 1497. He was delighted with what he saw at Oxford, and describes his impression of the place, and the students assembled there, in the most glowing and emphatic language.

Other students were there at this time destined to figure most conspicuously on the theatre European of Politics. Thomas Wolsey, who became the proud and magnificent Cardinal, and Thomas More, who rose to be the Champion of the Roman Catholic Faith and the Lord Chancellor of England, were contemporary Students at Oxford with William Tyndale.

Tyndale was a plodding and earnest student, and made noticeable progress in his studies. That quaint old Writer, John Foxe, says, "he, by long continuance, grew and increased as well in the knowledge of tongues, and other liberal arts, as specially in the knowledge of the Scriptures, whereunto his mind was singularly addicted, insomuch that he lying then in Magdalen Hall, read privily to certain students and fellows of Magdalen College some parcel of Divinity, instructing them in the knowledge and truth of the Scriptures. Whose manner also and conversation being correspondent to the same, were such, that all they that knew him, respected and esteemed him to be a man of most virtuous disposition and life unspotted." How long Tyndale remained at Oxford we are not able to say. We know for a certainty that he left Oxford for Cambridge,

the sister University. The immediate cause of his removal can only be conjectured. Foxe says, "*spying* his time he removed to the University of Cambridge," but he gives no clue to the cause of his leaving one University for the other. "All that we can add therefore to Foxe's account of Tyndale's academic life," says his latest biographer, "is but that his removing to Cambridge was probably for the purpose of profiting by Erasmus' Lectures, who taught Greek, whereas there was no regular Greek lectureship founded in Oxford till about 1517."\*

The learned and satirical Erasmus was a profound student of the Scriptures in the original tongue, and he published his edition of the Greek Testament in the year 1516. This may be regarded as the most important event connected with the history of religion in this country. It sounded the death knell of monkish superstition. It struck at the very root of popish mummeries. Men now read with their own eyes the wonderful works of God. The open Gospel at once became the power of God unto salvation. Society began to move and heave in its deep foundations. Revolution in religious ideas was inevitable. "The true hero of the English Reformation was neither Henry, nor the better men who gave their bodies to be burned,—Cranmer, Ridley, Latimer,—but the real Reformer was that blessed book which England since has multiplied by at least a million copies, and which first found currency as the Greek Testament of Desiderius Erasmus."†

This lamp of heavenly truth burned brightly in Cambridge and kindled a holy flame in many minds. There was a pious and lovely group of young men, all of whom had been enlightened and brought to a knowledge of the truth by reading the New Greek Testament. These names lie at the foundation of our English Protestantism. Thomas Bilney, John Frith, and William Tyndale stand prominently forward in the earlier annals of the English Reformation. Bilney had been a student of the Law, with the view of following it as a profession; but he fell into great distress of mind, and suffered much in his conscience on account of his sins. He applied to the Priest but obtained no real consolation. He wore himself down with watchings and fastings. Having bought a

\* Tyndale's Works. Vol. I.—Park. Soc. Ed.

† Dr. Hamilton's Lecture on Erasmus.

copy of the Greek Testament of Erasmus, he happened at the first reading to light upon the well-known passage, "This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief." "This one sentence," he writes, "through God's instruction and inward teaching, which I did not then perceive, did so exhilarate my heart, being before wounded with the guilt of my sins, and being almost in despair, that immediately I felt a marvellous comfort and quietness, insomuch that *my bruised bones leapt for joy.*" Bilney became emphatically a saint. His preaching was blessed to the conversion of Latimer, who became in his turn the plain, pointed, and sturdy preacher of the Reformation. Latimer refers to Bilney in several of his sermons with the greatest affection. Bilney suffered martyrdom in witness of the truth he believed and preached.

John Frith was a young man of considerable mathematical attainments. He was deeply imbued with the truths and principles of the Gospel. These three, Bilney, Frith and Tyndale, formed a holy brotherhood in the University of Cambridge. They fostered and strengthened the spiritual life in one another. They walked together in love. They talked together of the truth. They read and prayed together, and thus mutually fortified each other for the work and suffering and martyrdom which lay before them. The mind fondly lingers over this illustrious group of young men. The great blessings of the Reformation lie in germ in this little circle of pious worthies. They are the immediate precursors of Cranmer, Latimer, and Ridley, the great historical lights of our national Protestantism. They present a noble example to the young men of the present day—an example of patient study of the Scriptures, of brotherly love, of active zeal in the service of Christ, of resolute fidelity to inward convictions. As the great trio who succeeded them, so they all glorified their Lord by remaining fixed and firm to His word, and sealing their dying testimony with their own blood.

We come now to another very interesting and important period in Tyndale's life. He left the University of Cambridge in 1519. Foxe says "he was ripened in the knowledge of God's word." A great spiritual change had taken place in

his understanding and in his affections. He was a new creature in Christ Jesus. God's word was a lamp unto his feet and a light unto his path. He returned to his native county. He was too good and active a man to remain long out of employment. He became tutor and chaplain to the family of Sir John Walsh, a country gentleman living at Little Sodbury. The old Manor House in which Tyndale lived as tutor is still in existence "with its two ancient yew trees before the door." It is about eight miles from Tyndale's birth place. Tyndale not only taught the children of Sir John Walsh, but often preached in the neighbouring villages. We are informed that about 1520, William Tyndale used often to preach at Bristol. This he did on the great Green, sometimes called the Sanctuary, or St. Austin's Green. Sir John Walsh was a bountiful man, and his mansion was noted for its hospitality. Many frequented his table, and warm and animated discussions took place around the festive board. Foxe, the historian, has given us a very graphic picture of the inside of the Manor House at Little Sodbury on these occasions. "This gentleman," he says, "as he kept a good ordinary commonly at his tables, there resorted to him many times, sundry Abbots, Deans, Arch-Deacons, with divers other doctors, and great beneficed men who there together with Master Tyndale sitting at the same table did use many times to enter communication and talk of learned men, as of Luther and of Erasmus; also of divers other controversies and questions upon Scripture."

The word of God, as the Sword of the Spirit, was already beginning to divide and separate them one from another. The social circle in the old family mansion was disturbed and finally broken up by the penetrating power of that light which comes from heaven to reveal and make manifest the things which are of God. Light and darkness—Righteousness and unrighteousness cannot commune together. Christ divides as well as unites. Truth and Tradition cannot sit together amicably at the same table. "Then Master Tyndale, as he was learned and well practised in God's matters, so he spared not to shew unto them simply and plainly his judgment; and when they at any time did vary from Tyndale in opinions and judgement, he would *shew them in the Book, and lay plainly before them the opened and manifest places of the Scriptures, to confute*

their errors, and confirm his sayings. And thus continued they for a certain season, reasoning and contending together divers and sundry times till at length they waxed weary and bare a secret grudge in their hearts against him."

You can easily imagine that Sir John Walsh and his excellent Lady were placed in a peculiar and unenviable position. The Deans and the Doctors sought to influence them on the one side, and Tyndale with his Greek Testament endeavoured to affect their hearts and understandings on the other. What were the host and hostess to do? Whom of these learned men ought they to believe? The Papists hit upon an expedient to gain their point. "Not long after this," says Foxe, "it happened that certain of these great Doctors had invited Master Walsh and his wife to a banquet, where they had talk at will and pleasure, uttering their blindness and ignorance without any resistance or gainsaying." This conversation seems to have made a great impression on the minds of Tyndale's employers. "Then Master Walsh coming home and calling for Tyndale, began to reason with him about those matters, whereof the Priests had talked before at their banquet. Master Tyndale answering by *Scriptures*, maintained the truth and reprov'd their false opinions." Lady Walsh appears to have grown very excited in the argument, and to have substituted a warm temper for sound logic. "Well," said Lady Walsh, "there was such a doctor there as may dispense a hundred pounds, and another two hundred, and another three hundred pounds, and what! were it reason think you that we should believe you before them?" Tyndale being a prudent man saw it would not be wise to continue the argument at this time, and afterwards he talked but little on these matters. He was engaged in translating a book called "The Christian Soldier's Handbook." When finished, he put it into the hands of Sir John Walsh and his Lady. It produced the desired result upon their minds. "The Doctorly Prelates were no more so often called to the house, neither had they cheer and countenance when they came, as before they had; which thing they marking and well perceiving, and supposing no less but it came by the means of Master Tyndale, refrained themselves, and at last utterly withdrew themselves

and came no more." The breach now made between Tyndale and the Priests grew wider and wider. Tyndale took his stand on the plain declarations of Scripture, and defended himself at all times by appealing directly to his Greek Testament. The Priests, many of whom were very ignorant, fell back upon the customs and traditions of Holy Church. Open hostility was now inevitable. "As this grew on," says Foxe, "the Priests of the country clustering together, began to grudge and storm against Tyndale, railing against him in alehouses and other places." Tyndale was now through their enmity cited before the Chancellor, who threatened him grievously, reviling him and rating him as though he had been a dog; but at this time he managed to escape from the hands of his accusers. He went now and opened his mind to a doctor not far off. Who this doctor was is not stated; he is supposed to have been William Latimer, the celebrated Greek Scholar, under whom Tyndale had studied at Oxford. They talked together as confidential friends. "Do you not know," says the doctor, "that the Pope is very Antichrist whom the Scripture speaketh of? But beware what you say, for if you shall be perceived to be of that opinion, it will cost you your life. I have been an officer of his; but I have given it up, and defy him and all his works." These little conversations shew the widespread dissatisfaction with the Church of Rome.

Tyndale was continually coming across, and getting into disputes with, these "blind and rude" Popish Priests. He spared them not. He thrust home his arguments with such force, that some of his antagonists were driven almost into a state of desperation. In the midst of one of these disputes a great doctor burst out in these blasphemous words, "We had better be without God's laws than the Pope's." This roused the indignation of the Reformer. "Master Tyndale," says Foxe, "full of Godly zeal, and not bearing that blasphemous saying, replied again, and said, *"I defy the Pope and all his laws; and if God spare my life, ere many years, I will cause a boy that driveth the plough to know more of the Scripture than you do."* This language, uttered in the excitement of the moment, became the prophecy of his future life. It was the sudden and abrupt disclosure of a determined

purpose which had been forming in his mind. Probably it had hitherto been concealed, but now, like the sun through the broken clouds, it had burst forth. The Plough-boy shall have the Bible! This is the benevolent and invincible determination of Tyndale's heart. A noble purpose this! Such a resolution the world cannot understand. Warriors have meditated schemes to dethrone Kings, and to tread the glories of Empire into dust, and they have been called great. Their names have been lifted into the realms of fame. Wreaths of a fading glory have been placed around their brows. But here is a purpose too great for the warriors of this world. Tyndale would lift the Plough-boy up from his ignorance and degradation, and conduct him into the realms of intelligence and religion, by means of the word of God. Let us then do honour to the purpose of William Tyndale; let us revere his name; let us seek to catch something of his spirit.; let us pity the ignorant and degraded; let us endeavour to diffuse sound scriptural principles; let us make the word of God the guide of our life, and the standard of our teaching.

You can plainly see by what I have already stated that matters must ultimately come to a crisis with these Gloucestershire Divines. The Greek Testament and the Church of Rome never could be made to harmonise. The Church said one thing, the Book another. Obedience to both was a moral impossibility. Things grew worse every day. The fire of contention became hotter and hotter. Open war was proclaimed. "The grudge of the Priests increasing still more and more and more against Tyndale. They never ceased barking and raving at him, and laid many sore things to his charge, saying, '*He was an heretic in sophistry, an heretic in logic, and an heretic in divinity.*'"

Controversies had now come to such a pitch that Tyndale resolved to leave this part of the country. His work could not be done here. He had formed a fixed purpose to translate the Scriptures into the vernacular of the common people, but this was not the place in which he could carry his purpose into performance. He made known his intention to his employer, and with the good wishes of Sir John and Lady Walsh, he left his native county to pursue his

future career in the world. He never returned. His path now appeared very uncertain. There was a great and divinely-formed purpose lodged in his heart, but how it was to be embodied in an outward fact was to him still a mystery. God moves in a mysterious way his wonders to perform. Tyndale went forth solitary, and uncertain what the future would reveal; but an unseen eye was upon him, and an unseen hand was guiding his steps. The determination of Tyndale's mind was wrought by the spirit and grace of God, and He who has began the good work will carry it on. He will so shape events that the hidden desires of the heart shall be fulfilled. God reigns over the world. His Providence touches on all the works of His hands. All things work together for good to them that love God and are the called according to his purpose. Life and death, things present and things to come, all the elements of being are held in subordination, and made to contribute, to the real well-being of the true-born sons of God.

Tyndale went from Gloucestershire to London. The Bishop of London at this time was Cuthbert Tonstall. He had the reputation of being a learned man, and the patron of learning. Erasmus had praised him exceedingly in his Annotations on the New Testament. Tyndale obtained an introduction to him, hoping he would grant him assistance in carrying out his desire of translating the Scriptures into the language of the people. The Bishop granted him no favour and gave him little encouragement to proceed with his design. The answer of the Bishop was "His house was full; he had more than he could well find, and advised him to seek in London abroad, where he said he could lack no service."

Tyndale remained in London nearly a year. He kept his eyes open, and made observations on the state of society; the conduct of the clergy especially attracted his attention, "how they boasted themselves, and set up their authority and kingdom, beholding also the pomp of the prelates, with other things which greatly misliked him: insomuch that he understood, not only there to be no room in the Bishop's house for him to translate the New Testament, *but also that there was no place to do it in all England.*"

While living in London Tyndale met with a real friend in the person of Sir Humphrey Monmouth. Monmouth heard him preach two or three sermons at St. Dunstan's, in the West of London, and was very much pleased with him. Tyndale lived under his roof for half a year. Four years after this time Monmouth was sent for by Sir Thomas More, and committed to the Tower. While a prisoner he wrote a letter to Cardinal Wolsey in which he refers to his former guest. "He came to me and besought me to help him. And so I took him into my house half a year, and there he lived like a good priest, as methought. He studied most part of the day, and of the night, at his book. And he would eat but sodden meat by his good will, nor drink but small single beer. I never saw him wear linen about him, in the space he was with me."

The Translator finding that it was impossible for him to do his work in his native country, came to the determination to cross over to the continent. Sir Humphrey Monmouth, his friend and patron—the only patron he ever had—gave him ten pounds to meet the expenses of the journey. Tyndale left London for Hamburg in 1524. All his property was comprised in his translations and a small stock of books. He arrived safely at his destination, and found friends who were very glad to see and welcome him.

Tyndale began now to breathe a freer air, and he went to work in downright earnest. His residence in London had convinced him that society was corrupt at the core. Superstition darkened and deluded the minds of the people. He felt that his country could never be enlightened and reformed until the word of God was freely circulated in the mother-tongue of the people.

Considerable obscurity hangs over Tyndale's history while living on the continent. Did Tyndale ever see and talk with Luther? Sir Thomas More, speaking of Tyndale on the continent, says, "But ye see that though he dissembled himself to be a Lutheran, or to bear any favour to his sect while he was here, *yet as soon as he got him hence, he gat him to Luther straight.*"

Mr. Anderson is doubtful as to whether the two great translators and Reformers ever met. He says, "That he

saw and conversed with Luther at some period, may be supposed, *though we have not a shadow of proof.*" Mr. Froude, in his eloquent history, speaks with decision on this subject. He says, "Tyndale saw Luther, and under his immediate direction translated the Gospels and Epistles at Wittenberg." Mr. Froude supports his assertion by a letter written to King Henry VIII. from Archbishop Lee, his almoner. Lee says, "Please your Highness to understand that I am certainly informed, as I passed in this country, that an Englishman, your subject, at the solicitation and instance of Luther, with whom he is, hath translated the New Testament into English; and within few days intendeth to return with the same imprinted into England. I need not advertise your Grace what infection and danger may ensue hereby, if it be not withstood. This is the real way to fulfil your realm with Lutherans. For all Luther's perverse opinions be grounded upon bare words of Scripture, not well taken nor understood, which your Grace hath opened in sundry places of your royal book. All our fore-fathers, governors of the Church of England, hath with all diligence forbid and eschewed publication of English Bibles, as appeareth in constitutions provincial of the Church of England. Now, sire, as God hath endued your Grace with Christian courage to set forth the standard against these Philistines and to vanquish them, so I doubt not but that he will assist your Grace to prosecute and perform the same—that is, to underread them that they shall not now lift up their heads, which they endeavour by means of English Bibles. They know what hurt such books hath done in your realm in times past."—Edward Lee to Henry VIII.\*

This letter is instructive—I have given it entire, because it sets forth the spirit of the age. It shews the feelings and prejudices with which Tyndale had to grapple. It presents to us a striking subject for reflection. Tyndale and Luther together! It is a subject worthy of a painter. What would we not give for their "table-talk"? The well-being of nations, and the immortal destiny of myriads of indivi-

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\* Froude's History of England. Vol. II.—Page 81.

duals centred in these two men as they sat together and talked together about the word of God. One shut up in prison, beset with the temptations of Satan, translated the Bible into German and gave the means of salvation to millions of his own countrymen. The other, in seclusion and poverty, an outcast from the land of his birth, translated it into English, and sent it across the water to the hungry multitude who were waiting and famishing for the bread of life. No two men did so much to fan the flame of spiritual light, and help forward the progress of the Reformation, as Martin Luther, the German, and William Tyndale, the Englishman.

Tyndale's New Testament was published entire in 1526. The only perfect copy known to exist at the present time is preserved at the Baptist College, Bristol.\* Tyndale's merits as a translator have been universally acknowledged. In fact, the substance of our present version is identical with Tyndale's rendering. Some of the most simple and beautiful expressions, and some of the most happy phrases are just as he left them. The alterations which have been made have not always improved the original translation. "It is no mean evidence," says a competent scholar, "of Tyndale's general worth, that his New Testament is the virtual ground-work of every subsequent version. Page after page of his Gospels, in language and phraseology, in the arrangement of the words, and turn of construction, bears so strong a resemblance to our common version as to be scarcely distinguishable from it."† We are all, therefore, under great obligations to this good and noble man. The grand Old English Bible, which is still a light in the palace and a lamp in the cottage, and which we read day by day to sooth our minds and solace our hearts, we owe in a very great measure to the inflexible patience, and indomitable perseverance of this man of God. Most of those touching and beautiful words which dwell in our memories, which strengthen us in weakness, enlighten us in darkness, and cheer us in sadness, were first written down with his untiring pen.‡

\* "It was reproduced in 1862 in fac-simile by Mr. Francis Fry, Bristol, the impression being limited to 177 copies."—SMITH'S DICTIONARY OF THE BIBLE.

† Rev. F. H. Scrivener.

‡ The following testimonies to Tyndale's ability as a translator and the gen-

After suffering many hindrances and reverses, Tyndale's New Testament was printed in large numbers and sent across the water into this country. Sometimes they came packed under the corn in a merchant-vessel. A number of spiritually-minded men had united together under the common name of the Christian Brotherhood. These persecuted brethren received the Bibles on their reaching the English shores, and secretly distributed them among their countrymen, especially in the cities of London, Oxford and Norwich. The movements of the Bible distributors were watched by the Priests, who acted as the religious police of the country. But the love of God in the minds of these noble and heroic men was greater than the fear of man. They counted not their lives dear unto them. Mr. Froude has spoken of these silent warriors in the most glowing terms. "It is well," he says, "to pause and look for a moment at this small band of heroes; for heroes they were if ever men deserved the name. Armed only with truth and fearless-

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eral accuracy and solid worth of his translations are interesting and worthy of notice.

"In point of perspicuity and noble simplicity, propriety of idiom and purity of style, no English version has yet surpassed it."—GEDDES.

"Tyndale was master of an admirable English style—easy, correct, and lucid, and at the same time full of idiomatic vigour and expressiveness; his translation of the New Testament, in particular, deserves to be ranked as one of the classic works of our own Literature, one of the finest samples we possess of the language in what may be described as the first stage of its maturity, when it had attained in all essential respects the form and character which it has ever since preserved, although it had not effloresced into the luxuriance, and full manifestation of its resources which it exhibits both in the poetry and prose of what has been called the Elizabethan age."—PENNY CYCLOPEDIA.

"Of the translation itself, though since that that time it has been many times revised and altered, we may say that it is substantially the Bible, with which we are all familiar. The peculiar genius—if such a word may be permitted—which breathes through it, the mingled tenderness and majesty, the Saxon simplicity, the preternatural grandeur, unequalled, unapproached, in the attempted improvements of modern scholars, all are here, and bear the impress of the mind, of one man, William Tyndale."—FROUDE.

"Tyndale's translation of the New Testament is the most important philological monument of the first half of the sixteenth century; perhaps I should say of the whole period between Chaucer and Shakspeare, both as a historical relic, and as having more than anything else contributed to shape and fix the sacred dialect, and establish the form which the Bible must permanently assume in an English dress. The best features of the translation of 1611 are derived from the version of Tyndale, and thus that remarkable work has exerted directly and indirectly a more powerful influence on the English language than any other single production between the ages of Richard II and Queen Elizabeth."—G. P. MARSH.

"To Tyndale belongs the honour of having given the first example of a translation based on true principles; and the excellence of later versions has been almost in exact proportion as they followed his. In this, as in other things Tyndale was in advance, not only of his own age, but of the ages that followed him."—SMITH'S DICTIONARY OF THE BIBLE.

ness; 'weak things of the world,' about to do battle in God's name; and it was to be seen whether God or the world were the stronger. They were armed, I say, with the truth. It was that alone which could have given them victory in so unequal a struggle. They had returned to the essential fountain of life; they re-asserted the principle which has lain at the root of all religion; the fundamental axiom of all real life, that the service which man owes to God is not the service of words or magic forms, or ceremonies or opinions; but the service of holiness, of purity, of obedience to the everlasting laws of duty. These Christian brothers were hunted like wild beasts from hiding-place to hiding-place; decimated by the stake, with the certainty that however many years they might be reprieved, their own lives would close at last in the same fiery trial; beset by informers, imprisoned, racked and scourged; worst of all, haunted by their own infirmities, the flesh shrinking before the dread of a death agony—thus it was that they struggled on; earning for *themselves*, martyrdom—for *us*, the free England in which we live and breathe."\*

The appearance of the English Bible created the greatest consternation, and awakened the bitterest enmity in the minds of the priests. Cardinal Wolsey gave strict orders that all the pernicious books, as they were then called, should be seized and destroyed. The houses of suspected individuals were examined in the most searching manner. A resolution was come to by the Cardinal and the Clergy, that these books should be publicly burnt. Arrangements were accordingly made to reduce the New Testament to ashes. Strange proceeding this, you say. You can hardly credit it. It makes you shudder to think of burning the Sacred Book in a public assembly. The spot chosen for this strange ceremony was an open place near St. Paul's Cathedral. Let us try and picture the scene. It was on a Sunday morning, in 1527. Early in the morning a procession was seen moving from Fleet Street to the Cathedral. The officials in their robes walked first, after them six men dressed in penitential garb, carrying lighted tapers

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\* History of England. Vol. II.—Page 82.

and small fagots of wood, denoting their crime and punishment. These men had been guilty of the foul crime of distributing the New Testament among the people. This is the only charge brought against them. At eight o'clock they arrive at the Cathedral. The grantees and dignitaries of the city are there, occupying the front seats, and thousands of spectators are present to witness the scene. A scaffold had been erected, and on it were seated Abbots and Priors and Mitred Bishops. Conspicuous among them all is Cardinal Wolsey in his official robes. Wolsey was naturally fond of magnificence and display. He was endowed with great natural capacities, and he employed his abilities to further his own self-aggrandisement. He rose from a position of obscurity to possess the highest ecclesiastical dignities of the realm. All his movements were attended with pomp and parade, and the glittering trappings of an aspiring ambition. His great aim through life was to sit in the chair of St. Peter as Pope and universal Lord of the Church. There he is sitting now in the great gathering at St. Paul's, as the Champion and Pillar of the Catholic Faith. He is clothed in robes of purple, with golden shoes, and scarlet gloves; over him stretches a canopy of cloth of gold. Near to St. Paul's was the celebrated national pulpit, called St. Paul's Cross. All the notable preachers of olden times were called to occupy this pulpit on great occasions. The great questions of Church and State were discussed here. The preacher chosen at this time was John Fisher, Bishop of Rochester. He was a very remarkable man. He was born in Yorkshire. He preached the funeral sermon of Henry VIII.'s grandmother. It is due to him to say that he died a martyr for conscience sake. Bishop Fisher, in the presence of the condemned New Testaments, descanted gravely on the sin of heresy, and the authority of Holy Church. When the sermon was ended the heretics had to walk three times round the fire, the fagots on their backs. They were then made to cast the books into the fire. The flames arose and soon consumed the whole to ashes. There was a mixed feeling in the audience. The Priests, and the Abbots, and the Great Cardinal at their head, gave expres-

sion to their feelings with a kind of ghastly laugh ; but the people manifested signs of deep disapprobation. This was the second Bible burning that there had been in England. But the Bible lives still. It is here to-night. "The bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed." Cardinal Wolsey was great in ability, and great in authority ; but there was one greater than he. The Prince of life was more powerful in evolving the grand purposes of his love, than the Church of Rome was crafty in carrying out the machinations of the Prince of Darkness. Rome "loves darkness rather than light because her deeds are evil." She may open her prisons, apply her tortures, light her fires, and pronounce her curses over a free and open Bible ; but above all the commotions of her weakness is heard a voice saying, "The Word of God liveth and abideth for ever."

But we must hasten on. Notwithstanding these Bible-burnings, the desire and demand for the Word of God increased. Tyndale had now taken up his residence at Antwerp. Some of his companions in tribulation joined him in his work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope. They printed off three editions of the New Testament.

In 1529, Tonstall, the Bishop of London, made a tour on the continent. There were with him Sir Thomas More and Dr. Knight, the King's Secretary. They had business to do with the Emperor of Germany. Sir Thos More was undoubtedly one of the most learned men of the time. He was reputed the ablest writer of the day. He was a staunch defender of the Catholic Faith. Erasmus, the wit and the scholar, was received as one of his personal friends, and has spoken of him in the highest terms of praise. The Bishop of London, while on the continent, paid a visit to Antwerp with the view of putting down the printing of the New Testament. There happened to be in Antwerp at this time, a merchant from London, of the name of Packington. This man was secretly favourable to Tyndale and his work, but he kept his personal feeling hidden from the Bishop. The Bishop makes known to Packington his intentions of putting a stop to the circulation of the New Testament. An old historian has preserved fragments of the conversation. The Bishop said, "Gentle Master Packington, do your diligence

and get them ; and with all my heart, I will pay for them whatsoever they cost you ; for the books are erroneous and nought, and I intend surely to destroy them all, and to burn them at Paul's Cross." Packington then came to Tyndale, and said, "William, I know thou art a poor man, and hast a heap of New Testaments and books by thee, for which thou hast both endangered thy friends and beggared thyself ; and I have now gotten thee a merchant, which with ready money, shall despatch thee of all that thou hast ; if you think it profitable for yourself." "Who is the merchant?" said Tyndale. "The Bishop of London," said Packington. "O, that is because he will burn them," said Tyndale. "Yes," quoth Packington. "I am the gladder," said Tyndale, "for then two benefits shall come thereof. I shall get money to bring myself out of debt and the whole world will cry out against the burning of God's word, and the overplus of the money that shall remain to me shall make me more studious to correct the New Testament, and so newly imprint the same over again, and I trust the second will much better like (please) you than ever did the first." So forward went the bargain. The Bishop had the *books* ; Packington had the *thanks* ; and Tyndale had the *money*."

The New Testaments were again brought in large numbers into England, and on the 4th May, 1530, there was another great Bible-burning at St. Paul's. Wolsey, the sumptuous and pompous Cardinal, was not at this gathering. He had fallen from his greatness. His glory, like a withered leaf, had faded away. The Bishop of London, the book-buyer, was the hero of the scene. The New Testaments were again committed to the flames. This was the third Bible-burning that had taken place on the same spot. It is a marvellous and noteworthy fact, that on this very spot of earth, where hundreds of New Testaments were committed to the flames and reduced to ashes, the Religious Tract Society now stands, and from its store-rooms go forth annually millions of Tracts and Bibles, also, to enlighten the dark places of the earth.

The Bishop, with all his craft and cunning, was outwitted and frustrated in his attempt to put a stop to the diffusion of the Word of Life. The New Testament, in the mother-

tongue of the people, would make its appearance in this country. "After this," says Foxe, "Tyndale corrected the New Testament again and caused them to be new imprinted so that they came thick and threefold into England." The Bishop was irritated and indignant at the failure of his plans. He sent an angry letter to Packington. 'Sir,' he wrote, 'you assured me you had bought up all, how is it then there are so many New Testaments abroad?' Packington replied, 'I bought up all they had then, but they have made more since, and it will never be better while they have the letters and stamps, and it would be better therefore, for your lordship to buy the stamps as well, and then you will be sure.'"

Tyndale and his companions threw all their energies into this holy work. John Frith, who was to Tyndale what Timothy was to Paul, was soon afterwards induced to return to his own native country. He was at once seized, put into the tower, and after suffering imprisonment, was led to the stake, where he died a martyr's death. He was a young man of eminent scholarship, and hopeful promise in the cause of the Reformation. While lying in the tower a prisoner, Tyndale, his father in the Gospel, addressed to him a letter full of rich consolation and encouragement. "Cleave fast," he says, "to the rock of the help of God, and commit the end of all things to Him."

We come now to the closing scene of the Life of this great reformer and eminent translator. John Frith, his son in the faith, had received his martyr's crown, and one equally glorious was waiting for the modest, gentle, courageous, and excellent William Tyndale. In 1535 Tyndale was residing with an English merchant, of the name of Thomas Poyntz, who was then living in Antwerp. A man of the name of Henry Phillips was sent out from England for the purpose of apprehending Tyndale. This Phillips was a deceiver and a betrayer. He was the Judas of the Reformation. When first he arrived at Antwerp he pretended to be a friend of Tyndale's. He sat with him at table and professed to be interested in his work. It was by a very wily and artful stratagem that he secured his person. Tyndale was seized as he was passing through a narrow passage in the house of Poyntz, his noble and disinterested friend. He was at

once placed in prison. His foes laid rude hands on his books and papers. Tyndale was first brought to the Emperor's attorney, and then he was taken to the Castle of Vilvode, about 18 miles from Antwerp. Many efforts were made by English merchants resident on the continent to effect his release from prison, but all were of no avail.

"At last," says Foxe, "after much reasoning, when no reason would serve, although he deserved no death, he was condemned by virtue of the Emperor's decree, and upon the same day brought forth to the place of execution, was there tied to the stake and then strangled by the hangman, and afterwards with fire consumed, in the morning, at the town of Vilvode, 1536, crying thus at the stake, with a fervent zeal and a loud voice, "*Lord, open the King of England's eyes.*"

And thus died William Tyndale, the apostle of England; "the father and founder of the authorised version of the Bible; the first person who translated the Scriptures from the inspired original into the English tongue." He was one of those of whom the world was not worthy. Tyndale was in every respect a most extraordinary man. He was animated throughout life by one noble purpose. He lived pre-eminently for the glory of God and the good of his fellow-men. Nothing could daunt his courage or damp his zeal. Nothing but death could put a stop to his work. His character stands out with remarkable clearness and completeness. His very enemies are obliged to acknowledge the innocence of his life. The Procurator-general, before whom he appeared, left this testimony of him, that he was "*homo doctus pius et bonus* : that is, a learned, a good, and a Godly man."

"He was a man," says Foxe, "very frugal and spare of body, a great student and earnest labourer; namely, in setting forth the Scriptures of God. He was without any spot or blemish of rancour or malice; full of mercy and compassion, so that no man living was able to reprove him of any kind of sin or crime; albeit his righteousness and justification depended not thereupon before God, *but only upon the blood of Christ* and his faith in the same; in the which faith constantly he died, and now resteth with the glorious company of Christ's martyrs blessedly in the Lord; who be blessed in all his saints." Amen.

Tyndale lived in the expectation of martyrdom. He looked at the burning of his book as the prelude and harbinger of the burning of himself. He met death with a calm confidence in God; with a holy courage and a placid joy. He died in defence of that cause which was more precious to him than life.

*His blood was shed*  
 In confirmation of the noblest claim—  
*Our* claim to feed upon immortal truth,  
 To walk with God, to be divinely free,  
 To soar and to anticipate the skies.  
 Yet few remember him. He lived unknown  
 Till persecution dragg'd him into fame,  
 And chased him up to heaven. His ashes flew—  
 No marble tells us whither. With his name  
 No bard embalms and sanctifies his song;  
 And history, so warm on meaner themes,  
 Is cold on this.

The name of Tyndale is now enrolled among the noble army of martyrs. The best of England's blood was shed in the holy cause for which he died. The Bible like its Great Master has had a baptism of blood. Nearly all those who took an early part in translating and defending the Scripture in the mother-tongue of the people paid the penalty of their fidelity and boldness by a martyr's death. Bilney, Frith, Tyndale, Rogers, Latimer, Cranmer, Ridley. These names are the crown and glory of England. These men rose to heaven like Elijah in a chariot of fire. The Church of Rome is answerable for the death of all. Their blood lies at her door. The only crime of which they were guilty was, they loved the truth and sought to diffuse it among the people. For ages, Rome has tried to crush the truth with her iron heel. Every nation in Europe is stained with the blood of the saints of God. This Holy blood cries to heaven for vengeance. God will not be deaf to the cry of the blood of His saints.

The heart of our great religious poet swelled with strong emotion as he thought of the martyrs' blood, and the martyrs' bones, as they lay bleached and broken on the mountain slope; and he has embodied his feelings and thoughts in one of his grand and sublime sonnets.

Avenge, O Lord, Thy slaughter'd saints, whose bones  
 Lie scatter'd on the Alpine mountains cold;  
 Even them who kept the truth so pure of old,  
 When all our fathers worshipp'd stocks and stones,  
 Forget not : in Thy book record their groans  
 Who were Thy sheep, and in their ancient fold  
 Slain by the bloody Piedmontese, that roll'd  
 Mother with infant down the rocks. Their moans  
 The vales redoubled to the hills, and they  
 To heaven. Their martyr'd blood, and ashes sow  
 O'er all the Italian fields, where still doth sway  
 The triple tyrant ; that from these may grow  
 A hundred fold, who having learn'd Thy way,  
 Early may fly the Babylonian woe.

We think of Tyndale now as among the ranks of those illustrious martyrs who encircle the eternal throne of light. The slaughtered saints of all ages have gathered around the Lamb that was slain ; and while *we* say "The noble army of martyrs praise Thee," *they* say "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive, power and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing."

The great lesson conveyed to our minds by this subject ; the lesson ever present in reading the life of Tyndale, and in studying his works is, *reverence for the pure word of God*. The supreme authority of Holy Scripture in all matters of faith and practice may be said to be the key note of all his teaching. The Bible and the Bible alone as an authoritative guide in religion. This is the great principle of Protestantism. It was struck out by Tyndale before it was argued and defended by Chillingworth. Tyndale everywhere maintains the all-sufficiency of Holy Scripture. It is on this all important principle that we shall have to take our stand in the present day. The Bible is the sword of the Spirit, with which we shall have to fight Romanism on the one hand, and Rationalism on the other. Romanism substitutes Tradition for the word of God. Rationalism substitutes Reason. Neither tradition nor reason is a safe guide in religion. The Church must submit to Christ, and not Christ to the Church. Reason must bow to the Bible and not the Bible to reason. The Church has no authority apart from the Scriptures. Reason has no light in religion separate from the word of God. The

Bible and the Bible alone is the only source of authority. All pretensions must be brought to the law and the testimony. The Bible is the only divine beacon-light in the darkness of this stormy world.

Tyndale clung tenaciously to the simple text of Scripture. He put his foot of scorn on the traditions, superstitions, and empty ceremonies of men. The word of God was his life, his hope, his all. It supported him in poverty, it succoured him in weakness, and threw its shield of protection around him in death.

I appeal to the young before me. Let us all cleave fast to the word of God. Let it be a light unto our feet, and a lamp unto our path. It is the only safe anchor of the soul. Let us manfully reject all ceremonies when they do not harmonize with the plain teaching of the Bible. Let us put Christ first; Man second. May this blessed book, with its marvellous truth, and its wonderful history, keep us in youth, support us in manhood, and comfort us in old age; and when the shadows of death gather about us, may we finish our course, surrounded with the glorious radiance and celestial beauty of that Gospel, which springs entirely from the Word of God and forms the only Way of Life to Man.



























































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