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## WILLIAM TYNDALE.

### THE MAN AND HIS ACHIEVEMENT.

*By Rev. Charles Flinn Arrowood, Ph. D., Professor of Religious Education, Davidson College, Davidson, N. C.*

We are this year celebrating the four hundredth anniversary of William Tyndale and the far-reaching influences of his work. Ministers and laymen who are planning addresses on Tyndale will find Dr. Arrowood's article of great value and suggestiveness.—Editor.

William Tyndale, translator of the New Testament into English, was born in the West of England about the year in which Columbus first sighted the shores of the New World. He lived in a stirring time. The national spirit, intellectual interests, and religious insight of Europeans were quickened and deepened during the hundred years following his birth as they have been during few other periods in history. Many factors were making for an awakening, for a broadening of

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the intellectual horizon, and for a change of the locus of authority in Church and State. Of these many forces we can mention but few.

An important factor making for change in Tyndale's time was the evident exhaustion of scholastic method. Scholasticism had made its contribution to human culture in fixing and refining the forms and terms of thought. In doing this work it had exhausted the possibilities of its method, and widespread dissatisfaction with its results had followed.

The rise of national states and the decay of feudalism furnished a second force influencing the development of the new social, political and ecclesiastical order. Everywhere in Western Europe during the 15th and 16th centuries there was a new consciousness of and pride in national traits, customs, language, and aspirations. As a result of the rise of national feeling Englishmen and Germans resented increasingly the domination of foreigners in church affairs.

Inventions and discoveries were profoundly modifying life. The invention of printing had broken the priestly monopoly of learning, and the application of gunpowder to war had put an end to the feudal monopoly of power. Improved methods in the conduct of trade, the opening of new trade routes, with the building of larger ships, had resulted in enormous extension of the wealth and power of the merchants. They came to form a third party asserting their "rights" over against the feudal and ecclesiastical lords. In the struggles which the guilds of merchants and artisans waged with their enemies they tended to align themselves with national princes. The growth of power of the English throne was tremendously accelerated by this factor.

There was, too, profound desire for moral and ecclesiastical reform. The avarice and exactions of the higher clergy, the luxury in which most of them lived, the actual corruption of many of the great princes of the Church, the ignorance of many clergymen furnished for story teller and troubadour occasion for irreverent jests and stories. To devout and spiritual men, and there were many such in all lands, these things were

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the sources of shame and sorrow. Another source of resentment with the higher clergy was the custom of filling ecclesiastical offices with foreigners, who scarcely ever visited their charges—drawing revenues from parish and bishopric in England while they idled in Southern France or in Italy. Englishmen resented, too, the conduct of their own clergy, and of Wolsey especially, who devoted themselves to politics to the neglect of their duties as clergymen.

The revival of classical scholarship was an additional force making for reform. Colet, Erasmus, Thomas More, Linacre, Wm. Latimer and others had aroused a new spirit at Oxford and Cambridge. These men were charged with desire for moral and ecclesiastical reform, and were confident of the importance of scholarship as a contribution to that reform. Colet had produced at Oxford a profound impression with his lectures on the New Testament. In these lectures he tossed aside the fanciful interpretations and involved and meaningless definitions of the school men, and took for his guide in interpretation the principle that words are to be understood in their plain historical sense. Crowds flocked to hear him in Oxford and later in London. Desiderius Erasmus exerted at Cambridge a tremendous influence tending to moral and religious reform. His lectures there on Theology and the New Testament fostered a zeal for a study of these subjects in the light of the new scholarship and spirit. What an effect must have been produced by his famous statement: "I totally dissent from those who are unwilling that the Sacred Scriptures translated into the vulgar tongue should be read by private individuals. . . . I wish that the husbandman may sing them at his plough, that the weaver may warble them at his shuttle, that the traveler may with them beguile the weariness of the way"! We can guess their effect from the words of Tyndale, translator of the *Enchiridion* of Erasmus and of the New Testament. Speaking to an opponent, a theologian, Tyndale declared, "If God spare my life, 'ere many years I will cause a boy that driveth a plough to know more of the Scripture than thou dost."

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New Testament scholarship, a religious reformation, and the translation of the Bible into English were at hand. As Fuller quaintly says, "Midnight being now past, some early risers were beginning to strike fire and to enlighten themselves from the holy Scriptures."

Among the "early risers" was William Tyndale. Foxe tells us that he was "brought up from his youth at Oxford, a student of Magdalen College." He was there an earnest student of the Bible. "At Oxford he, by long continuance, grew and increased as well in the knowledge of tongues and other liberal arts as specially in knowledge of the Scriptures, whereunto his mind was singularly addicted, insomuch that he, lying there in Magdalen hall, read privily to certain students the truth of the Scriptures." He was awarded his Master of Arts degree in 1515, and seems to have made a name for himself as a scholar. Thomas More testifies that he was "well learned in the Scriptures"; Wolsey's agents are said to have selected him as a member of Christchurch College at its founding.

In the year in which he took his degree Tyndale made his way to Cambridge. After some years there he took a post, probably in the year 1521, as tutor to the children to Sir John Walsh, who lived near Bristol. This change marked the close of the period of his preparation and his entrance upon the real work of his life. What that work was to be seems to have been already determined upon by the translator. He made no concealment of his zeal for the study of the Bible and for reform. This zeal and Tyndale's freedom in advocating a new order of things soon brought him into conflict with the Bristol clergy, who charged him with heresy. He was summoned before the local administrator of the diocese, Dr. Parker. He tells us of the encounter: Parker "threatened me grievously, and reviled me, and threatened me as though I had been a dog, and laid to my charge (things) whereof there could none accuser be brought forth." Tyndale came uninjured from this encounter and entirely unafraid. Opposition only confirmed him in his plan, evidently already

formed, to translate the New Testament out of the Greek into English.

In 1523 he resigned his post as tutor, and armed with a letter of introduction to Sir Harry Guildford, Master of Horse to Henry VIII, and a translation of Isocrates as a proof of his competence as a scholar, he made his way to London, in the hope of enlisting the sympathy and aid of Tunstall, Bishop of London. He secured an interview with Tunstall, but failed to induce him to become the patron of his work. He found, he tells us, that there was little likelihood of his obtaining permission to translate the New Testament either in the Lord Bishop's Palace or anywhere else in England.

To bring out an unauthorized translation of the Bible in England at the time was quite out of the question, but there were Lutheran lands where such a task would be encouraged. In London Tyndale won friends among London merchants who heard him preach and sympathized with him. Supplied by these friends with the sum of 10 pounds, Tyndale set out in 1524 for the Continent. He worked at Hamburg and Wittenburg, where, Foxe tells us, "he had conference with Luther and other learned men of those quarters." The work of translation, no doubt already well on the way, went on apace. Tyndale had before him the *Vulgate*, Luther's translation of the New Testament in German, and the Greek New Testament of Erasmus. Grammars and Greek dictionaries to the number of seven at least were available.

Four centuries ago this year the great translator was at Franfort with one Roye, his helper, seeing through the press the first translation of the Bible into English to be printed. His enemies learned of the enterprise and secured an injunction, thus halting the work. Tyndale and Roye "snatched away with them the quarto sheets printed" and fled to Worms. At Worms the printing of the quarto edition was completed and an octavo edition of 3,000 copies brought out; the whole task being finished in 1526.

Copies were quickly smuggled into England, where they were enthusiastically received. In spite of all the civil and

ecclesiastical authorities could do, they were circulated and read everywhere. Reliable tradition informs us that the prescribed books were read even in the palace of Henry VIII.

Meanwhile Tyndale had taken up his residence at Marburg, where he engaged in authorship. There he published in rapid succession some of the most important of his writings. *The Parable of the Wicked Mammon*, *The Obedience of A Christian Man* and *The Practise of Prelates* are works produced during his residence there. *The Obedience* sets forth the two great principles of the Anglican Reformation—the authority of the King in the State and of the Scripture in the Church. This book is said to have been warmly praised by Henry. It certainly is a very comfortable book for kings. In *The Practise of Prelates* the Catholic Church, Henry's divorce, and especially Cardinal Wolsey, are attacked. A more pliable man than Tyndale might have made himself popular and risen to power by espousing principles as popular as the first and third of these were in England just then. Tyndale's trenchant pen, his zeal for the English nation and for ecclesiastical reform would have made the fortune of a man who could have put fortune above duty. But Tyndale was of stern and austere conscience—one of the company who serve God rather than men. Almost from the time of the appearance of his translation he was engaged in a violent controversy with the English clerical party, the spokesman of which was Sir Thomas More. After Henry had broken with Rome, and More and Wolsey were out of favor, Tyndale was invited to make his peace with the authorities and return to England. This he would not do.

In 1533 Tyndale went to Antwerp, where he brought out the following year a revised edition of the translation of the New Testament. In May, 1535, he was betrayed into the hands of the officials of the Empire and imprisoned in the Castle of Vilvorde near Brussels. It is only fair to say that neither his enemies, the English clergy, nor Henry VIII had anything to do with his arrest. The English merchants made great efforts in his behalf, and Cromwell wrote urgently to the Emperor in his defense. These efforts were unavailing. After

a long imprisonment Tyndale was tried and found guilty of heresy. The specific heresy with which he was charged was teaching salvation by faith—a doctrine which he most certainly believed and taught. On the 6th of August, 1536, he was strangled at the stake and his body afterward burned.

What of Tyndale's scholarship and the value of his work? Sir Thomas More testifies that he knew Greek. Demaus believes that he knew Hebrew as few men in his time knew it. Wescott pays striking tributes to his scholarship. But the most important witness to his learning and spirit is found in his translation of the New Testament. Living before modern methods of literary investigation were developed, lacking geographical, ethnological and philological data readily available now to every student of Biblical literature, he produced one of the most remarkable pieces of work to the credit of a translator. It has been said repeatedly that the Scriptures actually *gained* in translation into English. The King James or Authorized Version of the Bible has long been hailed as a matchless example of English prose. The beauty of its rhythms, the majesty of its flow, the felicity of its diction and phrasing have been praised times without number. And a great modern authority, Bishop Wescott, gives Tyndale credit for the character of all the versions of the Bible in English. Wescott writes, "Before he (Tyndale) began he had prepared himself for a task of which he could apprehend the full difficulty. His later efforts were directed simply to the attainment of his ideal. . . . From first to last his style and interpretation are his own, and in the originality of Tyndale is included in a large measure the originality of our English Version. For not only did Tyndale contribute to it directly the substance of half the Old Testament (in all probability) and the whole of the New, but he established a standard of translation. It is even of far less moment that by far the greater portion of his translation remains intact in our present Bibles, than that his spirit animates the whole." (*History of the English Bible.*) *The Cambridge History of English Literature* declares that he "fixed the character of the English Bible

forever more." We add the opinion of Reverend Stopford Brooke: "William Tyndale's *Translation of the New Testament*, 1525, fixed our standard English once for all, and finally brought it into every English home."

But let us see something of the translation itself—here are brief extracts: "And he sayde: a certain man had two sonnes, and the yonger of them sayde to his father: father geve me my part of the goodes that to me belongeth. And he divided unto them his substance. . . . Then he came to him selfe and sayde: how may hyred servauntes at my father's have breed ynough, and I dye for honger. I will aryse and go to my father—" Again: "I beseeche you therefore brethren by the mercifulnes of God that ye make youre bodies a quicke sacrificise, holy and acceptable unto God which is your reasonable servynge of God. And fassion note youre selves lyke unto this worlde. But be ye chaunged in youre shapes by the renuynge of youre wittes,"— "Beholde I shewe you a mystery. We shall not all slepe; but we shall all be chaunged, and that in a moment, and in the twinglinge of an eye, at the sound of the last trompe. For the troupe shall blowe, and the deed shall ryse incorruptible, and we shall be chaunged." It's all like that! We see in almost every line of Tyndale's version the English Bible all of us love.

Such extracts will convince us of the truth of the statement made by Reverend Henry Barker that Tyndale's version "lingers among the best parts of the Authorized Version." It prepares us for his further statement that "it (Tyndale's translation) is so excellent that the Revised Version has returned to several of its renderings where the Authorized Version has abandoned them." What Father Faber wrote of the Authorized Version is true of the first English Version to be printed. "It lives," he said, "in the ear like music that can never be forgotten, like the sound of church bells which the convert scarcely knows how he can forego. . . . It is a part of the national mind and the anchor of the national seriousness. . . . In the length and breadth of the land there is not a Protestant



with a spark of religiousness about him whose spiritual biography is not in his Saxon Bible."

Tyndale's opponents charged him with error in his renderings. "Sir Thomas More adduces as unpardonable heresies the substitution of *congregation* for *church*, *seniors* (later *elders*, author's note) for *priests*, *love* for *charity*, *knowledge* for *confession*, *repentance* for *penance*, *troubled* for *contrite*." (Demaus, *William Tindale*, p. 319.) Tyndale's purpose and point of view is perfectly evident from these renderings. He was combatting the doctrine of the authority of the *visible* Church and the practices of the English clergy of his time. He tells us very plainly that it is his purpose to deprive the clergy of their "juggling terms wherewith they imposed upon and misled the people." *Confession*, *penance*, *charity* and *priest* were terms all of which had taken on ecclesiastical associations which, Tyndale believed, obscured the sense of the Scriptures. The *Church* had come to mean the *clergy*, "the multitude of the shaven, shorn, and oiled." Tyndale's point of view in his translation was fixed by his conviction of the truth of the great principles of the Reformation.

Tyndale's opponents charged him, also, with being a disciple of Luther; and Luther, without question, influenced his translation and his writings. On the other hand, an examination of the quarto fragment, printed first of his translations, and therefore soonest after his conferences with Luther, shows conclusively his independence as a translator. His claim, printed on the fly leaf of his revision, that his work was diligently compared with the original Greek, is supported by placing his translation side by side with translations current in his time. "If he used the Vulgate, or Erasmus, or Luther," Wescott declares, "it is with the judgment of a scholar." (*History of the English Bible*, p. 139.)

Tyndale's struggle in the cause of Biblical translation was won even in his life time. While his own writings were proscribed in England for many years an edition of the Bible in English was brought out by Coverdale the very year of Tyndale's imprisonment. Coverdale was a friend of Thomas Crou-

well, and in his work he had the encouragement, if not the aid, of Henry's great minister. The book was printed on the Continent, but its circulation in England was authorized by the King.

Of Tyndale's character it were impossible to say too much in praise. Monbert praises "his undaunted manliness, and his translucent purity and truthfulness." If he lacked something of the sweetness of the Book he knew so well, let us remember that his inflexibility was born of profound conviction, and that a less stern man could not have persevered in the face of the obstacles that Tyndale overcame. Let us remember, too, that he lived in the shadow of the scaffold, and that he attested his devotion to the cause in which he took up his pen by giving for it his very life. The Church at large and every reader of the English Bible join in greeting him as one of England's noblest sons. No tribute can be more just than that which Fuller pays him: "What he undertook was to be admired as glorious, what he performed to be commended as profitable, wherein he failed is to be excused as pardonable, and to be scored to the account of the age rather than of the author himself."

## THE GRACE OF PREACHING.

ILLUSTRATED IN THE PULPIT WORK OF THE LATE JOHN  
HENRY JOWETT, D. D.

*By the Rev. Andrew W. Blackwood, D. D., Professor of English Bible, Presbyterian Theological Seminary, Louisville, Ky.*

The late John Henry Jowett was the most acceptable preacher in the Christian Church since the days of Charles Haddon Spurgeon. On both sides of the water, in four exacting fields, widely different, Jowett devoted himself exclusively to the greatest work in the world. With his voice and by his pen he brought comfort and joy to countless hosts of the children of  
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