William Tindale

A Biography

Being a Contribution to the Early History

of the English Bible

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CHAPTER XIII

ARREST OF TINDALE: HIS IMPRISONMENT,
TRIAL, AND MARTYRDOM

A.D. 1535-1536.

EVER since the middle of 1534, Tindale had found a home at Antwerp in the house of Thomas Poyntz, one of the English Merchant Adventurers established in that great mart of commerce. Antwerp was then at the height of its prosperity, by far the most important commercial city in Europe: and merchants from all parts of the civilized world were welcomed to the great emporium of trade, and were generously allowed to share in most of the privileges of the citizens. As far back as the year 1474 the magistrates of the city, in order to encourage the presence of English merchants, had granted them the use of a spacious mansion which had been acquired from a person of rank; and it was under this roof, beyond a doubt, that Tindale had found, after so many wanderings, a happy and congenial home.

Time has wrought many changes on the wealthy mistress of the Scheldt; and the bombardments by the Spanish and by the French have destroyed much that the hand of Time might have spared; still, that quarter of the city in which the English House was situated, retains even in our own day not a little of the appear­ance which it must have presented in the sixteenth century; and the traveller can still recognize the house in which Tindale resided up to the moment of his arrest. In the labyrinth of streets that lie to the north of the Grande Place and the Cathedral, the tourist may easily discover the Rue de la Vieille Bourse; and it was in the block bounded by this street on the one side, and Rue Zirck on the other, that the house was situated where the English merchants were lodged from 1474 to 1558. The narrow street, overshadowed with lofty houses, which even yet bear traces of their former gran­deur, has been comparatively little altered by the lapse of three centuries; and favoured by the silence which now generally prevails, in what used to be a haunt of bustle, the imagination of the enthusiastic traveller may without difficulty picture the illustrious Translator issuing from the low gateway of the English factory, turning his eyes upwards to contemplate with wonder the matchless grace of the Cathedral tower which rises right in front, and which was then fresh from the hands of Waghemakere, or stopping to listen to the music which the silver chimes seemed to be raining down from heaven.[[1]](#footnote-1)

His residence with Poyntz not only provided Tindale with the comforts and the companionship of a home; it added considerably to his personal safety. It was amongst the privileges of the citizens of Antwerp that none could be arrested merely on suspicion, or could be imprisoned for more than three days without trial; and the same privilege was extended to the English merchants resident amongst them. Here, therefore, provided he exercised ordinary caution, Tindale might have been considered safe from every danger that could threaten. And, indeed, he may have begun to hope that the termination of his exile was at hand, and that he might soon be permitted or even invited to visit his native land without any fear of personal danger. The rigour of the laws against so-called heresy had been relaxed; men were still dying, it was true, for religion, but it was no longer the Reformers who were led to the stake, it was those who had hitherto been the most prominent defenders of the authority of the Church that were martyred for refusing to acknowledge the royal supremacy. Tindale’s great antagonist, Sir Thomas More, was disgraced, and imprisoned, and in peril of his life; Fisher, another resolute antagonist, shared the same misfortunes and the same dangers; the men who were highest in royal favour, Cranmer and Cromwell, were every day becoming more friendly to the prin­ciples of the Reformers; and that great work on which Tindale had so long laboured, instead of being regarded with bitter hostility, had come to be considered as ne­cessary and praiseworthy.

The Convocation which met at the close of 1534 petitioned the king ‘that the sacred Scriptures should be translated into the English tongue by certain honest and learned men named for that purpose by his Majesty, and should be delivered to the people according to their learning’; and for some time Tindale’s former associate, Miles Coverdale, had been busily preparing, unquestionably at the instigation of Cromwell, a trans­lation of the whole of Holy Scripture. Everything, therefore, seemed auspicious; the cause against which king and prelates had so long directed their fiercest opposition was visibly triumphant: and it seemed not a remote contingency that Tindale might be invited to return to his native land, and might even be promoted to some of those ecclesiastical dignities of which no one was more worthy. The sovereign who elevated the out-spoken Latimer to a bishopric could scarcely have failed to appreciate the boldness and honesty of Tindale.

If Tindale had begun to indulge in any pleasant dreams of returning to labour in peace in his native country, those cheering visions were rudely dispelled. In Antwerp under the shelter of Poyntz’s hospitable roof he was apparently safe; but he was surrounded by dangers, and treachery or carelessness might at any moment place him in the power of his enemies. In some respects England was now a safer place of refuge than the Low Countries. The Emperor Charles V, compelled to bow to the force of circumstances in Germany, and to tolerate the Protestants whom he was unable to repress, compounded for this reluctant weak­ness by treating the Protestants in his hereditary dominions with increased severity. According to one of the best and most recent historians of Belgium, it was Charles who inaugurated the policy which was subsequently matured under the ferocious rule of Philip and the Duke of Alva; and the reign of the great emperor is sullied by cruelties which almost rival the merciless régime of his son.[[2]](#footnote-2) Penal ordinances of Dra­conian rigour were enacted year after year, in order to check, if possible, the progress of Lutheran opinions. In October, 1529, it was publicly ordained that the ‘reading, purchasing, or possessing any proscribed books, or any New Testaments prohibited by the theologians of Louvain; attendance at any meeting of heretics, dis­puting about Holy Scripture, want of due respect to the images of God and the Saints,’ were to be treated as crimes for which ‘men were to be beheaded, women buried alive, and the relapsed burnt.’[[3]](#footnote-3)

In spite of these terrible measures, Lutheranism con­tinued to make rapid progress in the Netherlands; and the emperor, in revenge, issued fresh edicts more stringent than before. Informers were encouraged by the promise of a liberal reward, and a share in the con­fiscated goods of all convicted heretics; and, lest the government officials should be wanting in severity, it was ordered that all who were remiss should be reported and punished. The Inquisition, which had been estab­lished some years before, was armed with plenary authority to seize all suspected persons, to try, to torture, to confiscate, to execute, without any right of appeal from their sentence; and these tyrannical powers they exercised with relentless cruelty. Charles was not one whit less ferocious than his son, though English historians have usually painted him in more favourable colours; and every fresh visit to the Low Countries was signalized by additional edicts against the Reformers and a renewed outbreak of persecution.

From these sanguinary proceedings Tindale enjoyed, as we have said, a considerable amount of protection by the privileges which the city of Antwerp asserted for its own citizens, and accorded to the merchants who had taken up their residence there. In spite of the savage edict which declared that any printer who pre­sumed to print without a licence should be branded with a cross so deeply that it could not be effaced, and should also, at the discretion of the judge, lose an eye or a hand, the printers of Antwerp had successfully asserted their liberty to print the New Testament in any lan­guage without asking the permission of any imperial officer.[[4]](#footnote-4) And so long as he was within the shelter of the English House, Tindale was protected by the pri­vilege which exempted the citizens of Antwerp and strangers resident there from being arrested in their houses except for some great crime. Outside of the House, however, he walked in perpetual danger: he enjoyed no special protection; he had no house or hired chamber of his own, and might be arrested on mere suspicion at any hour of day or night.[[5]](#footnote-5) Hitherto he had led a charmed life, and he had in former years wonderfully escaped the hostility of Henry and Wolsey; but a more subtle plot was now devised against him by men whose plans were so skilfully laid that it was scarcely possible for them to fail of success.

The secrets of the plot which led to the arrest and the martyrdom of Tindale have never been, perhaps never will be, completely unravelled; but there is no difficulty in understanding the rationale of the opera­tions which were adopted against him. It was not in Belgium, but in England, that the plot was concocted. Some of those whom his writings had most bitterly offended, hopeless of any opportunity of wreaking their long-cherished vengeance, now that England had thrown off the papal supremacy and was manifestly gravitating towards Protestantism, determined to avail themselves of the bloody edicts of the emperor to accomplish their purpose. It was well known that Tindale was resident in Antwerp, and it was probably not difficult to be in­troduced to his acquaintance. Inside the English House, or even in the company of his friend Poyntz, he was safe; but it was easy to watch an opportunity when he was alone; it was possible to decoy him away from his refuge; and once seized, and subjected to the operation of the sanguinary laws against heresy, his escape was extremely improbable, his doom was practically settled. It was assumed that Henry would not actively inter­fere; and if he did, it was hardly likely that the em­peror, irritated by Henry’s recent proceedings, would pay much heed to the representations of an ‘apostate and adulterous sovereign,’ who had been solemnly excommunicated by the head of the Church. The plot was cunningly contrived, the work, evidently, of one who was no novice in craft; and agents were speedily found to put it in execution. How they pro­ceeded in their base and cruel treachery may best be read in the pages of Foxe, who received the narrative from the lips of Poyntz himself.

‘William Tyndale, being in the town of Antwerp, had been lodged about one whole year in the house of Thomas Poyntz, an Englishman, who kept there a house of English merchants [i.e. lived in the English House]. About which time came thither one out of England, whose name was Henry Philips, his father being *customer* [i.e.employed in the Custom-house] of Poole, a comely fellow, like as he had been *a gentleman,* having a *servant* [Gabriel Donne] with him; but wherefore he came, or for what purpose he was sent thither, no man could tell. Master Tyndale divers times was desired forth to dinner and supper among mer­chants: by the means whereof this Henry Philips be­came acquainted with him; so that within short space M. Tyndale had a great confidence in him, and brought him to his lodging to the house of Thomas Poyntz, and had him also once or twice with him to dinner and supper, and further entered such friendship with him that through his procurement he lay in the same house of the said Poyntz: to whom he showed moreover 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 came acquainted with this Philips. Master Tyndale answered, that he was an honest man, handsomely learned, and very conformable [i.e. favourable to Protestant views]. Then Poyntz, perceiving that he bare such favour unto him, said no more; thinking that he was brought acquainted with him by some friend of his. The said Philips, being in the town three or four days, upon a time desired Poyntz to walk with him forth of the town to show him the commodities thereof; and, in walking together about the town, had communication of divers things, and some of the king’s affairs. By the which talk Poyntz as yet suspected nothing; but after, by the sequel of the matter, he perceived more what he intended. In the mean time this he well perceived, that he bare no great favour either to the setting forth of any good thing, either to the proceedings of the King of England. But after, 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 lucre of money to help him to his purpose; for he perceived before that he was *moneyed [i.e.* well provided with money], and would that Poyntz should think no less; but *by whom [i.e.* who had provided the money], it was unknown. For he had desired Poyntz before to help him to divers things; and such things as he named, he required might be of the best “For,” said he, “I have money enough.” But of this talk came nothing, but that men should think he had some things to do; for nothing else followed of his talk. So it was to be suspected, that Philips was in doubt to move this matter [i.e. of arresting Tindale] to any of the rulers or officers of the town of Antwerp, for doubt it should come to the knowledge of some Englishmen, and by the means thereof Tyndale should have had warning.

‘From Antwerp Philips went to the Court of Brussels, which is from thence twenty-four English miles, the king having there no ambassador[[6]](#footnote-6); for at that time the King of England and the emperor were at a con­troversy for the question betwixt the King and Catherine, who was aunt to the emperor, and the discord grew so much that it was doubted lest there should have been war; so that Philips, as a traitor both against God and the King, was there the better retained, as also other traitors more besides him, who, after he had betrayed Master Tyndale into their hands, showed him­self likewise against the king’s own person, and there set forth things against the king. To make short, the said Philips did so much there, that he procured to bring from thence with him, to Antwerp, that Procureur­-General which is the Emperor’s attorney, with other certain officers as after followeth: the which was not done with small charges and expense, from whomsoever it came.

‘Within a while after, Poyntz sitting at his door, Philips’ *man* [i.e. the pretended servant] came unto him, and asked whether Master Tyndale was there; and said, his master would come to him; and so de­parted. But whether his master, Philips, were in the town or not, it was not known; but at that time Poyntz heard no more, neither of the master nor of the man. Within three or four days after, Poyntz went forth to the town of Barrow [Bergen-op-Zoom], being eighteen English miles from Antwerp, where he had business to do for the space of a month or six weeks; and in the time of his absence, Henry Philips came again to Antwerp to the house of Poyntz, and coming in, spake with his wife, asking her for Master Tyndale, and whether he could dine there with him; saying, “What good meat shall we have?” She answered, “Such as the market will give.” Then went he forth again (as it is thought) to provide and set the officers, which he brought with him from Brussels, in the street and about the door. Then about noon he came again, and went to Master Tyndale, and desired him to lend him forty shillings, “For,” said he, “I lost my purse this morning, coming over at the passage between this and Mechlin.” So Master Tyndale took him forty shillings; the which was easy to be had of him, if he had it; for in the wily subtitles of this world he was simple and unexpert.

‘Then said Philips, “Master Tyndale, you shall be my guest here this day.” “No,” said Master Tyndale, I go forth 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 forth with Philips; and at the going out of Poyntz’ house was a long narrow entry, so that two could not go in a front. Master Tyndale would have put Philips before him, but Philips would in no wise, but put Master Tyndale afore; for that he pretended to show great humanity [i.e. politeness]. So Master Tyndale, being a man of no great stature, went before; and Philips, a tall comely person, followed behind him, who had set officers on either side of the door upon two seats (which, being there, might see who came into the entry); and coming through the same entry Philips pointed with his finger over Master Tyndale’s head down to him, 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; and said to Poyntz, when they had laid him in prison, that they pitied to see his simplicity when they took him. Then they brought him to the emperor’s attorney, where he dined. Then came the said attorney to the house of Poyntz, and sent away all that was there of Master Tyndale’s, as well his books as other things: and from thence Tyndale was had to the Castle of Vilford, eighteen English miles from Antwerp; and there he remained until he was put to death.’

It seems scarcely possible to believe that a plan, so skilfully devised to meet the peculiar circumstances of the time, and carried out moreover at very considerable expense, had originated with this unknown *customer* of Poole,[[7]](#footnote-7) or even with his more crafty companion, Gabriel Donne, whom he declared to be his sole confidant in the plot. Some other conspirators, more astute, more profoundly versed in wiles, and more thoroughly ac­quainted with the secrets of courts, were doubtless behind the scenes to control the movements of the subordinate emissaries, and to supply the necessary funds: but so well has their secret been kept, that no researches amongst State Papers at home or abroad have raised the veil which conceals the prime movers from our view. It has been surmised that Gardiner was the deviser of the well-laid train; and in astuteness Gardiner was certainly without a rival in England; but it is, to say the least, premature to cast upon him the odium of a suspicion for which not the smallest tittle of evidence has ever yet been adduced, beyond the vague assertion of Hall that ‘Tyndale was betrayed and taken, as many said, not without the help and procurement of some *bishops* of this realm.’ That Tindale was a thorn in the side of many of the English prelates, we do not need to be told; that they would gladly avail them­selves of any means of terminating his career may be assumed without any breach of charity; they would have burned him in England, and they would have no scruples consequently about contributing to seize and burn him in Brabant; but if they were concerned in the plot, they have certainly shown wonderful skill in obliterating all traces of their participation in it.

It may possibly have occurred to the reader, who remembers Henry’s former efforts to get Tindale into his power, to suspect that this plot also may have been devised with the privity of the English monarch. On this point, however, there is fortunately no room for doubt. Philips was a member of that reactionary party in England who hated Henry as a tyrant and a sacri­legious apostate, and who were at that very time plotting in every corner of his kingdom against his royal au­thority. It is quite certain, therefore, that Henry was the very last man in England to act in concert with those who apprehended Tindale; and, indeed, the reader will presently see that, so far from having lent his countenance to the conspiracy against the Reformer, he co-operated with Cromwell in his efforts to procure the release of the illustrious captive.

Hitherto, the date of Tindale’s arrest has been merely roughly calculated by conjecture; we are now, however, able to fix it precisely on the authority of official docu­ments. There is preserved among the Archives at Brussels the formal entry of the payment to the Lieu­tenant of the Castle of Vilvorde, Adolph Van Wesele, of the expenses incurred during Tindale’s imprison­ment of *a year and a hundred and thirty-five days;* and as Tindale was martyred, according to Foxe, on October 6, 1536, it is not difficult to calculate that he must have been arrested on May 23 or 24, 1535.

The Castle of Vilvorde, to which Tindale was now removed to spend the last sixteen months of his life, was then the great State prison of the Low Countries. A small town, equidistant from Brussels, Malines, and Louvain, Vilvorde has never attained any great im­portance; yet it is one of the most ancient places in Belgium. Its history is associated with the conversion of the Franks to Christianity; it figures in the annals of Charlemagne and Lothair; English sovereigns have resided within its fortifications; and it was here that Edward III summoned what Froissart calls *a parliament* to decide upon his claims to the throne of France. In 1374, or the following year, Wenceslas, Duke of Brabant and Count of Louvain, anxious to provide himself with a place of security, erected on the banks of the Senne, at Vilvorde, a fortress constructed after the model of the Bastile, which had been recently completed in Paris. It consisted of seven massive towers, connected by lower erections; and the whole was surrounded by a huge moat, spanned by three drawbridges. Of this grim and, in those days, impregnable fortress, in which Tindale found a prison for so many months, and was at length to find a grave, scarce a vestige now remains: it was demolished at the end of last century, and its site is occupied by the huge white-washed penitentiary, so well known to all travellers between Antwerp and Brussels; and only a few traces of some of the ori­ginal dungeons still exist among the arches of the bridge which forms the sole approach to the modern prison.[[8]](#footnote-8)

The arrest had been contrived so skilfully, and executed so secretly[[9]](#footnote-9) and promptly, that any attempt at a rescue was hopeless. Probably, before the arrest was known to the English merchants in Antwerp, Tindale was safely immured behind the gloomy towers of the old fortress; and it is unlikely that even the household of Poyntz knew anything of what had occurred, till the Procureur-General, the terrible Pierre Dufief, returned to search Tindale’s chamber, and carry off his books and papers and other effects. Some days must have elapsed before Poyntz could be recalled from Bergen-op-Zoom; but on his return, the English merchants, who considered themselves aggrieved both by the loss of a friend whom they all esteemed, and by this encroachment upon their rights and privileges, wrote to the Queen Regent, Mary of Hungary, entreating her to release Tindale. Their remonstrance was of course unavailing; the arrest of Tindale, however treacherous, had been legally effected; the charges advanced against him were con­sidered to be of a grave nature, and required to be investigated according to law; and it was evident that the danger which threatened him, if he was to be tried by a Flemish court on a charge of heresy, was of the most serious character. The merchants of Antwerp felt that their intervention was not likely to be of much assistance; if Tindale was to be rescued from the fate which seemed to menace him, it was necessary to invoke the aid of the great authorities at home. The rigorous edicts of Charles V held out small prospect of escape, if the law was to have its due course; it was impossible to doubt that Tindale had rendered himself liable to the penalties of the bloody statutes on many counts; it was idle to ask mercy from the pitiless Dufief or the inflexible emperor; there was no hope except in some vigorous remon­strance from Henry or Cromwell. The intelligence was accordingly conveyed to England; and an attempt seems to have been made to interest Cromwell and the sovereign in the design of securing Tindale’s deliverance by exercising their influence upon the government of the emperor in the Low Countries.

The time was certainly inauspicious. Henry and his ministers were completely engrossed in their domestic affairs. The great crisis, so long anticipated, had come; the first great irrevocable step in the grand religious and political movement had been taken; and Henry and Cromwell were watching the results with intense anxiety. Royal authority had been substituted for papal supremacy by Act of Parliament; but it re­mained to be seen how this measure would be received by that large and influential part of the nation, which had been accustomed to regard the supremacy of the pope as one of the most solemn articles of their religion. It was felt by the king and his advisers that everything depended upon the result; and they awaited with breathless eagerness the operation of the mighty change. Violent opposition was anticipated; and Henry was prepared to meet violence with violence. Smithfield again blazed with the fires of martyrdom; and the headsman was again busy with his bloody work. The laws against heretics, which for a time had been per­mitted to slumber, were again awakened into fresh violence; for Henry, while rejecting the yoke of papal authority, was determined to exhibit, for the confusion of his enemies, unmistakable evidence that he had no intention of deviating into ‘heresy.’ Priests were executed for impugning the royal supremacy; laymen were burned for denying the Real Presence. At the very moment when the intelligence of Tindale’s arrest was conveyed to England, Cromwell was overwhelmed with the perplexity occasioned by the first great difficulty which he had been called upon to confront. Minor victims had been disposed of with little trouble; but there remained in prison two men whose disap­probation of Henry’s proceedings was as notorious as that of those who had been already sent to the stake, but whose high character and prominent position might well ‘give pause’ even to the most reckless statesman. That Cromwell was grievously perplexed how to act towards Sir Thomas More and Bishop Fisher, his own private memoranda, preserved in the British Museum, sufficiently show. To endure their conduct was impossible; to put the law in operation against them was to brave the censure of Europe, and to excite the inextinguishable hatred of their numerous friends and admirers in England.

From a minister thus surrounded on all sides by danger and perplexity, little active interest in Tindale’s misfortune was to be anticipated. Most inopportunely, therefore, everything seemed to conspire against him; a circumstance which had clearly not been overlooked by the astute enemies who had conspired to accomplish his arrest. Vaughan, who had shown himself so friendly to the Reformer, was absent in England; and Hackett, the representative in Brussels, had recently died, and was apparently not replaced by any successor. The head of the Company of English Merchants in Antwerp was indifferent. England was in bad odour with the emperor and the regent. Cromwell was busied with his own affairs, from which he scarcely dared to with­draw his attention. Henry was bent upon vindicating his orthodoxy, and was not likely, therefore, to intervene very heartily in behalf of one who was charged with heresy. Several subjects of the emperor had just been burned in Smithfield for heretical opinions; and the Imperial Government might consequently look upon the arrest and execution of Tindale as a sort of allowable reprisals. The prospects were as gloomy as could be conceived; and in no quarter could any ray of hope be descried; yet Tindale’s friends did not abandon their efforts to save him.

Some directions on the subject seem to have been given to the emissaries of Cromwell on the Continent; and it is from one of them that we have received what information we possess of the proceedings at this period. Thomas Tebold, a godson of Cromwell, and apparently on terms of cordial intimacy both with his patron and with Cranmer, had been dispatched to the Continent, presumably in the month of June, and seems to have been commissioned to make inquiries as to the arrest of Tindale. His letters form a most valuable supple­ment to the narrative which has been already quoted from Foxe.

On the last day of July he thus writes to Cromwell from Antwerp[[10]](#footnote-10):—­

‘News here, at this time, be none, but that here is most earnest communication that the French Queen [Leonora, sister of the Emperor Charles V] and her sister the Queen of Hungary [the Regent of the Low Countries] shall meet together at Cambray now afore Michaelmas. All these Low Countries here be most earnest with the Bishop of Rome and his traditions; and therefore he hath now sweetly rewarded them, sending them his deceitful blessing, with remission of all their sins, so [on the condition that] they fast three days together, and this is given *gratis* without any money. Here is an evil market [a bad bargain for the pope], that whereas he was wont to sell his pardons by great suit and money, now he is glad to offer them for nothing. And yet a great many make no haste to receive them where they be offered. I do hear of certain that the Bishop of Rome is contented, and doth desire to have a General Council, and that this matter is earnestly entreated of divers. I am sure, if this be truth, your lordship have heard of it or this time more at large.

‘*He that did take Tyndale is abiding at Louvain, with whom I did there speak, which doth not only there rejoice of that act, but goeth about to do many more Englishmen like displeasure; and did advance this, I being present, with most railing words against our King, his Highness, calling him “*Tyrannum ac expilatorem reipublicae” [*tyrant and robber of the commonwealth*]*.* He is appointed to go shortly from Louvain to Paris in France, and there to tarry, because he feareth that English merchants that be in Antwerp will hire some men privily to do him some displeasure unawares.’

The writer of the letter had been entrusted with some commissions from Cranmer, and in his communication with the archbishop he enters into greater detail con­cerning Tindale’s apprehension.

‘Pleaseth it your Grace that I have delivered your letters unto Mr. Thomas Leigh [a merchant held in much esteem by Cranmer and Vaughan], which, ac­cording to your writing, hath delivered unto me twenty crowns of the [same], which money, God willing, I will deliver where your Grace hath assigned. Within these sixteen days I take my journey from Antwerp about the last day of July [letter begun, therefore, July *15].* And because at my first arrivance to Antwerp I found company ready to go up withal to Cologne [on his way to Nuremberg], I went to see my old acquaintance at Louvain; whereas [where] I found Doctor Bock­enham, sometime prior in the Black Friars in Cam­bridge, and another of his brethren with him. I had no leisure to commune long with them; but he showed me that at his departing from England he went straight to Edinburgh in Scotland, there continuing unto [Easter] last past [March 28];and then came over to Louvain,[[11]](#footnote-11) where he and his companions doth continue in the house of the Black Friars there; having little acquain­tance [or] comfort but for their money; for they pay for their [meat] and drink a certain sum of money in the year. All succour that I can perceive them to have is only by *him which hath taken Tyndale,* called Harry Philips, with whom I had long and familiar communication, [ for] I made him believe that I was minded to tarry and study at Louvain. I could not perceive the contrary by his communication, *but that Tyndale shall die;* which he doth follow [i.e. urge on], and procureth with all diligent endeavour, rejoicing much therein; saying that he had a commission out also for to have taken Doctor Barnes and *George bye* with other. Then I showed him that it was conceived both in England and in Antwerp that George Joye should be [i.e. had been] of counsel with him in taking of Tyndale; and he answered that he never saw George Joye to his knowledge, much less he should know him. This I do write, because George Joye is greatly blamed and abused among merchants, and many other that were his friends, falsely and wrongfully.

But this foresaid Harry Phillips showed me that there was no man of his counsel but a monk of Stratford Abbey, beside London [Stratford-le-Bow], called Gabriel Donne, which at that time was student at Louvain, and in house with this foresaid Harry Philips. But now within these five or six weeks he is come to England, and, by the help of Mr. Secretary, hath obtained an abbey of a thousand marks by the year in the west country.

‘This said Philips is greatly afraid (in so much as I can perceive) that the English merchants that be in Antwerp will lay watch to do him some displeasure privily. Wherefore of truth he hath sold his books in Louvain, to the value of twenty marks’ worth sterling, intending to go hence to Paris; and doth tarry here upon nothing but of the return of his *servant, which he has long since sent to England with letters. And by cause of his long tarrying, he is marvellously afraid lest he be taken and come into Master Secretary’s handling, with his letters.* Either this Philips hath great friends in England to maintain him here; or else, as he showed me, he is well beneficed in the bishopric of Exeter. He raileth at Louvain and in the Queen of Hungary’s Court most shamefully against our King his Grace and others [Cranmer and Cromwell probably]. For, I being present, he called our King his Highness, *tyrannum, expilatorem republicae,* with many other railing words, rejoicing that he trusteth to see the em­peror to scourge his Highness with his Council and friends. Also he saith that Mr. Secretary hath privily gone about matters here in Flanders and Brabant, which are secretly come to the knowledge of the Queen of Hungary, the Governess here, which she reckoneth, one day, at her pleasure and time, to declare to his rebuke. What this meaneth I cannot tell, neither I could hear no farther; but if I had tarried there any time I should have heard more,’ &c.

‘Written at Antwerp the last day of July, by your bedeman and servant, ever to my small power,—Thomas Tebold.’[[12]](#footnote-12)

In spite of the express assertion of Philips that ‘there was no man of his counsel but Gabriel Donne,’ it is impossible to read Theobald’s letter without an in­creasing suspicion that the whole plot had been con­cocted in England; why else should the servant, who had been accessory to the arrest, be dispatched so promptly with letters to England? and why should Philips be so agitated by the fear that both servant and letters had fallen into the hands of Cromwell? It is also equally evident that the plot had been devised entirely without the privity either of Henry or of any of his advisers; that in fact it was the device of what may be termed the ‘opposition party,’ and that it had been all along most carefully concealed from Cromwell. It was certainly not a little strange that Cromwell should in any way have been accessory to the rewarding of the only person who had shared with Philips in the treacherous design; but it is quite evident from the letters that it was in total ignorance of Donne’s share,[[13]](#footnote-13) real or alleged in the plot, that the Secretary had pro­moted him to the ‘abbey in the west country.’ It was to the Abbey of Buckfastleigh, in Devonshire, that this traitorous friar was appointed; Cromwell, doubtless, merely acceding to the wish of Donne’s friends; and the mere fact of such a valuable preferment being be­ stowed seems to confirm the suspicion that the whole plot had originated with men of position and influence in England, who could substantially reward the services of their emissaries.

Poyntz and the other friendly Antwerp merchants were, of course, aware of Theobald’s communications with Cromwell and Cranmer, and hoped that this might lead to the effectual intervention of the English sove­reign in favour of the important captive. Indeed, it was reported in Antwerp that Henry had actually written in Tindale’s favour to the Government of the Low Countries; but in all probability the ‘wish was father to the thought.’ Poyntz waited in hope till his patience was completely exhausted; and then on August 25he wrote to his brother, John Poyntz, of Ockenden, in Essex, who had been long in the royal household, and was therefore likely to have access to the King; and his letter contains an interesting testimony of Tin­dale’s character from one who had unusual opportunities of judging.[[14]](#footnote-14)

‘Brother, the [cause] of my writing to you at this time is, as seems to me, for a great matter concerning to the King’s Grace. For though I am herein [in Antwerp] abiding, yet of very natural love to the country that I was born in, so also for the oath and obedience the which every true subject is bound by the law of God to have to his prince, compels me to write that thing [which I] know or perceive might be pre­judicial or hurtful to his most noble Grace; which may come through counsel of them that seek to bring their own appointments to pass, under colour of pretending the King’s honour, and yet be as the thorns under a goodly rose; I might say very traitors in their hearts, reckoning at length to bring their purpose to pass, as they have always done, through such means. Who they be, I name no man, but it is good to perceive it must be the Papists, which have always been the deceivers of the world, by their craft and juggling. For whereas it was said here the King had granted his gracious letters in the favour of one *William Tyndale,* for to have been sent hither; *the which is in prison and like to suffer death,* except it be through his gracious help; it is thought those letters be stopped. This man was lodged with me three quarters of a year, and was taken out of my house by a sergeant-of-arms, otherwise called a *dore-wardore,* and the Procureur-­General of Brabant; the *which was done by procure­ment out of England,* and, as I suppose, unknown to the King’s Grace till it was done. For I know well, if it had pleased his Grace to have sent him a command­ment to come into England, he would not have dis­obeyed it, to have put his life in jeopardy [i.e. even if obedience had exposed his life to danger]. But now these privy lurkers, perceiving that his Grace, of his entire will would have sent for him [so at least Poyntz imagined], by the means whereof, it is to be thought, they fear that if his Grace (as no doubt but his abundant goodness is such, he would) charitably hear him, then it might be the frowardest fate for their purpose they went about. Wherefore it is presupposed that they have solicited this to his Grace or to his Council; that the putting to death of this man here, in this country, might be to the King’s high honour, making greatly for his purpose in time to come, when his matter [i.e. the divorce] shall be disputed, if it come thereto.[[15]](#footnote-15) Where­fore, if it be their persuading, they know themselves it can stand in none effect to [their] purpose, but might be greatly against his Grace, in that and other things. Whether this be their device, or be what other mis­chievous mean [?] I cannot tell; but be whatsoever it be, if a poor man might and durst boldly reason with them, I think if they had either fear of God, their Prince, or shame of the world, they should be [ashamed] ever they did go about to procure such a thing. For they would that the King should highly favour them, because they can prevent such things for his Grace, and be the means whereof they may come to high promotions and stand fast in them; and so as they may bring that to pass they care not.... When these crafty fellows meet they do jest and pout at him that they have so cleanly deceived, and though afterward it be known, yet they care not, for it shall be reckoned, among such as they be, for great wisdom. Wherefore they be past shame, and the party past his remedy. But a poor man that has no promotion, nor looks for none, having no quality whereby he might obtain honour, but of a very natural zeal, and fear of God and his Prince had lever [rather] live a beggar all days of his life, and put himself in jeopardy to die, rather than to live and see those lying [leering?] counsellors to have their purpose; for some men perceive more than they can express by words, the which sorrow it inwardly till they see remedy.

‘And by the means that this poor man, *William Tyndale,* hath lain in my house three-quarters of a year, I know that the King has never a truer-hearted subject to his Grace this day living; and for that he does know that he is bound by the law of God to obey his Prince, I wot it well, he would not do the contrary, to be made lord of the world, howsoever the King’s Grace be informed. But what care these papists for that? For their pomps and high authority has always been holden up, by murder and shedding the blood of innocents, causing princes, by one mean or other, to consent with them to the same.

‘Brother, about eighteen or twenty years agone, they at Rome, to magnify the King’s Grace in his style [his titles], gave him the name “Defender of the Faith.” The which may be likened to the prophecy of Caiaphas when he said, “It is expedient for us that one man die for the people, that all do not perish.” That pro­phecy was true, but yet contrary to his meaning. So likewise, they thought by the mean thereof [i.e. of the title], he should be a great maintainer of their abomina­tions. Howbeit, God, the which sees all things, has entered his Grace with the right battle, according to that style, as never prince has done so nobly since Christ died; in the which I beseech God give him victory: and that his Grace be not persuaded to let be undone what might greatly prevail thereto [to victory], by the death of this man, [which] should be a great hindrance to the Gospel, and, to the enemies of it, one of the highest pleasures. But and it would please the King’s Highness to send for this man, so that he might dispute his articles with them at large, which they lay to him, it might by the mean thereof, 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 *[Tindale] shall be shortly at a point to be condemned;* for there are two Englishmen at Louvain that do and have applied it sore, 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 to condemn him, as they have done all others, for keeping opinions contrary to their business, the which they call “the order of Holy Church.”

‘Brother, the knowledge that I have of this man causes me to write as my conscience bids me: for the King’s Grace should have of him, at this day, as high a treasure as of any one man living that has been of no greater reputation. 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, in my conscience, there be not many [perfecter] men this day living, as knows God. Brother, I think if that Walter Marsch, now being governor [of the merchant adventurers in Antwerp], had done his duty effectually here at this time, there would have been a remedy found for this man. There be many men care not for a matter, so as they may do aught to make their own seem fair, in avoiding themselves that they be not spied.’

It is not impossible that it was this letter which at last compelled the English authorities to move. Crom­well, however, must have known that the matter was by no means so simple as it seemed to the sanguine judgement of Poyntz. From the ordinary course of law nothing could be hoped; the statutes were clear and inflexibly rigorous; it was not doubtful that Tindale’s writings contained many statements which the theologians of the day would condemn as heretical; it was difficult to see on what grounds the English sovereign could intervene; and it was only from the special favour of the authorities in the Low Countries that any possibility of escape could be derived. This only hope Cromwell was willing to try.

Within a few days of the dispatch of Poyntz’s letter, letters were prepared for two of the most influential members of the Imperial Government, Carondolet, Arch­bishop of Palermo, the President of the Council, and the Marquis of Bergen-op-Zoom. These letters before being dispatched were submitted to the judgement of the man in England best acquainted with the policy of the Low Countries, Stephen Vaughan, who, on Sep­tember 4, acknowledges the receipt of Cromwell’s ‘two letters devised for Tyndale,’ which he promised to send to Flanders with all speed; adding, with a true apprecia­tion of the gravity of the case, ‘it were good the King had one living in Flanders that were a man of reputa­tion.’[[16]](#footnote-16) Cromwell’s letters have not been preserved, or, at least, have not been recovered, but it is not very difficult to conjecture what must have been their tenor. The admirers of Tindale have inveighed against the coolness and indifference of Henry and his ministers; but, in truth, however much Henry and Cromwell may have sympathized with the Reformer in his misfortunes, they had positively no ground whatever on which to interfere in his behalf, and would only have precipitated his fate by the active interference which the Reformer’s biographers have counselled. Nothing could be de­manded as a matter of right except that Tindale should have a legal trial: the only hope of escape lay in propitiating the favour of the Marquis of Bergen and the Archbishop of Palermo. With both personages Cromwell had been associated in many friendly rela­tions: a few months before, the English Secretary and the Archbishop had been named joint executors of the ambassador Hackett;[[17]](#footnote-17) and from the friendship of two men of such influence in the Low Countries some effectual intervention might be hoped for.

The letters were sent to an English merchant in Antwerp, Robert Flegge, who was occasionally a cor­respondent of Cromwell[[18]](#footnote-18), and from him we have the following account of the manner in which they were forwarded to their destination:—Pleaseth it your Master­ship to understand that, the tenth day of this present month of September, was brought to me, by one George Collins, two letters sent by your Mastership as he reported, the one thereof directed to the Marquis of Barough [i.e. Bergen-op-Zoom], and the other to the Bishop [should be the Archbishop] of Palermo. And when I understood that the said letters came from your Mastership, I did my best diligence to make inquiry whether the said lords were in the Court or not. Then I was informed that the Marquis of Barough was de­parted two days before, towards Dutchland [Germany], as governor and ruler of the Princess of Denmark, to conduct her to her husband the Palsgrave. And as I understood that he was so departed, then I could do no less, supposing that the said letters were of im­portance; so have I sent one of our merchants [Poyntz, as will appear] after him with the said letters for the more surety to be delivered, and to bring the answer thereof. Also I have written to the said Lord Marquis a letter, desiring him that in case there were in your said letters any matter of charge that your Mastership required to be done by him, then I desired him right humbly that he would vouchsafe to write to such of his friends in the Court, the which should do for you as much in his absence as [if] he were there present in person, in all such causes as your Mastership should have to do before the Queen of Hungary and the Council.

‘Whereupon I have received a letter from the said Lord Marquis, wherein he writeth me that he is very sorry that it is his chance to be absent from the Court at this time, so that he cannot do for the King’s High­ness and for you such service as his good mind and will is to do; and according to the tenor of your said letter also, he wrote me in his said letter that, according to my desire, he had written to his great friend the Bishop of Palermo, concerning your causes, in every­thing that he should for his sake in his absence do therein like as the matter extended to his own person; for he is the man that may do most in this matter of any other resident in the Court at this present time. And so is come from my Lord the man that I sent the letters by, the bringer hereof, and brought with him both your letters and the Lord Marquis’s, and delivered them to the said Lord of Palermo; desiring him of [i.e. for] his loving answer and expedition of the same. Whereupon the Lord of Palermo spake with the Queen and the Council; and thereupon hath made you such answer by writing as this bringer shall deliver you; the which I pray God may be to the King’s pleasure and yours. . . . At Antwerp, the 22nd day of September, Anno 1535.’[[19]](#footnote-19)

Circumstances, it will be perceived, still seemed to conspire against Tindale. Of Cromwell’s friends only one was present on the spot to be of any service, and he the one who from education and profession was least likely to exercise his influence in the Reformer’s favour. Flegge’s letter, it is clear, was not written in any spirit of confidence; there was nothing, indeed, to encourage any sanguine anticipations of success; and the cautious merchant could venture no higher than *a hole* that the letters which he transmitted to Cromwell might be to *‘the King’s* pleasure and his,’ a plain indication, it may be remarked in passing, that Cromwell had not moved in the matter without Henry’s consent. Poyntz, inde­fatigable in his efforts to save the life of his friend, had been employed to carry Cromwell’s letters to the Marquis of Bergen, and his account, preserved in Foxe, is even more despondent in its tone than that of Flegge. It is needless to make any pretensions to originality where every detail must be borrowed from the Martyrologist; and the reader will doubtless prefer to peruse the nar­rative in the simple phraseology in which Foxe has related it from the information of Poyntz himself:­—

‘Not long after [the dispatch of letters from the Antwerp merchants soliciting the intervention of Henry], letters were directed out of England to the Council at Brussels [to two chief members of the Council], and sent to the Merchants Adventurers at Antwerp, com­manding them to see that with speed they should be delivered. Then such of the chiefest of the merchants as were there at that time, being called together, required the said Poyntz to take in hand the delivery of those letters, with letters also from them in the favour of Master Tyndale, to the Lord of Barrowe and others; the which Lord of Barrowe (as it was told Poyntz by the way) at that time was departed from Brussels, as the chiefest conductor of the eldest daughter of the King of Denmark to be married to the Palsgrave, whose mother was sister to the Emperor, she being chief Princess of Denmark; who, after he heard of his departure, did ride after, the next [nearest] way, and overtook him at Akon,[[20]](#footnote-20) where he delivered to him his letters; the which when he had received and read, he made no direct answer, but somewhat objecting said, There were of their countrymen that were burned in England, not long before [May 25];” as indeed there were Anabaptists burnt in Smithfield; and so Poyntz said to him, “Howbeit,” said he, “whatsoever the crime was, if his Lordship or any other nobleman had written, requiring to have had them, he thought they should not have been denied.” “Well,” said he, “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 unto the next baiting-­place”; which was at Maestricht. “If you so do,” said the Lord, “I will advise myself by the way what to write.” So Poyntz followed him from Akon [Alken] to Maestricht, the which are fifteen English miles asunder; and there he received letters of him, one to the Council there [i.e. in Brussels], another to the Company of the Merchants Adventurers, and another also to the Lord Cromwell. So Poyntz rode from thence to Brussels, and then and there delivered to the Council the letters out of England, with the Lord of Barrowe’s letters also; and received eftsoons answer into England of the same by letters, which he brought to Antwerp to the English merchants, who required him to go with them into England; and he, very desirous to have Master Tyndale out of prison, let not for to take pains, with loss of time in his own business and occupying; but diligently followed with the said letters, which he there delivered to the Council, and was commanded by them to tarry until he had other letters, of the which he was not dispatched thence in a month after [i.e. not till the end of October]. At length, the letters being delivered him, he returned again, and delivered them to the Emperor’s Council at Brussels, and there tarried for answer of the same.

‘When the said Poyntz had tarried three or four days, it was told him, of 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 doubting lest he should be put from his purpose, he knew none 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 one of the same opinion, and that all this was only his own labour and suit, to have Master Tyndale at liberty, and no man’s else.

‘Thus, upon his information and accusation, Poyntz was attached by the Procureur-General, and delivered to the keeping of two serjeants-of-arms; and the same evening was sent to him one of the chancery with the Procureur-General, who ministered unto him an oath, that he should truly make answer to all such things as should be inquired of him; thinking they would have had no other examinations of him, but of his message. The next day likewise they came again, and had him in examination, and so five or six days, one after another, upon not so few as an hundred articles, as well of the King’s affairs as of the message concerning Tyndale, of his aiders and of his religion. Out of the which examinations the Procureur-General drew twenty-three or twenty-four articles, and declared the same against the said Poyntz; the copy whereof he delivered to him to make answer thereunto, and permitted him to have an advocate and proctor. And order was taken, that eight days after he should deliver unto them his answer; and from eight days to eight days to proceed, till the process were ended; also that he should send no messenger to Antwerp, where his house was, nor to any other place but by the post of the town of Brussels; nor to send any letters, nor any to be de­livered to him, but written in Dutch [Flemish]; and the Procureur-General, who was party against him, to read them, to peruse, and examine them thoroughly, con­trary to all right and equity, before they were sent or delivered. Neither might any be suffered to speak or talk with Poyntz in any other tongue or language, except only in the Dutch tongue, so that his keepers, who were Dutchmen, might understand what the con­tents of the letters or talk should 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, whom the provincial, after dinner, of his own accord did bid to talk with the said Poyntz, and so with him he was licensed to talk. The purpose and great policy therein was easy to be perceived.

‘Between Poyntz and the novice was much pretty talk, as of Sir Thomas More, and of the Bishop of Rochester, and of their putting to death; whose death he [the novice] seemed greatly to lament, especially dying in such a quarrel, worthy, as he said, to be ac­counted for martyrs; with other noble doctrine, and deep learning in divinity, meet to feed swine withal [this is Foxe’s remark, not Poyntz’s]: such blindness then in those days reigned amongst them.

‘The eighth day, the commissioners that were appointed came to the house where Poyntz was kept, to have had his answer in writing. He, making no great haste in proceeding, answereth them with a dilatory, saying, he was there a prisoner, and might not go abroad, so as, although he have appointed and named who to be a counsel with him, they came not to him, nor he could not go to them; 11 nor none may come to give counsel in this matter, but such as be licensed and named by you.” Then they gave him a day to make answer against the next eighth day. And Poyntz drew his own mind [stated his own opinions], answering to the whole declaration gene­rally; the which, at the next coming, he delivered them: but that answer they would not take, saying he must answer to every article particularly: and so they took order that he should make it ready against the next coming, thus he trifled them off from Hallow­tide [November i] until Christmas-even, with dilatories from eighth day to eighth day. And upon Christmas-­even, in the morning, they came to him to have had answer, the which was not made, nor any counsel came to him in all that time; howbeit they would delay the time no longer, but said they, “Bring in your answer this day, or else ye shall be put from it.” So he perceived that if it were not brought in that night he should have been condemned without answer. So then, with much ado, he got the advocate to help him in ordering of his answer; but it was long or [ere] he came, so that it was past eight o’clock of Christmas-­even before his answer was delivered to the Procureur­-General. And then after, as the time served, at the days appointed, went forth with replication duplic [answers, and replies to answers], with other answers each to other, in writing what they could in answering to the Emperor’s ordinances. And at such time as the commissioners came to Poyntz, that traitor Philips accompanied them to the door in following the process against him, *as he also did against Master Tyndale,* as they who had Poyntz in keeping showed him.

‘The process being ended, as the order is there, either party delivered up to the commissioners a bag, with his process in writing, and took an inventory of every parcel [piece] of writing that was within the bag. So it rested in their hands: but upon sentence, Poyntz required in the time of process, that he might put in surety and to be at liberty: the which they granted him at the first time; but afterwards they denied to take surety for his body. And then [i.e. at the first time when they were willing to take security] he sent a post from the town of Brussels [where he was confined] to Antwerp to the English merchants, thinking they would not let him have stick for lack of their help in putting in sureties for him, considering the cause with the circumstance; and for that they put him thereto themselves [i.e. they had themselves set him to that work], although they had [i.e. as they declared] made him no promise for his charges and pains taken, as Poyntz reporteth of them that they did indeed, the which as yet he hath to make it appear [i.e. he can still show written proof that they had promised to defray his charges].

‘But, to pass over this and to make the matter short; if the foresaid merchants such as were of the town of Antwerp had, at the time, been surety for him, then the matter had been altered from crime to civil; but when Poyntz had delivered to them his answer, they demanded of him for his charges [expenses of keeping him], money or sureties. The charges was much to reckon for the two officers’ meat and drink and wages, besides his own charges; so as it was about five shillings every day. For all the while he was prisoner, he was not in a common prison, but in the keeping of two officers in one of their houses. So they de­manded sureties to be brought within eight days for the charges; but then they denied him to take surety for his body [i.e. declined to release him on bail] to make answer at liberty. Poyntz, considering that they altered in their purposes, as well by more [i.e. in other particulars] as in that; and perceiving by other things, as also it was told in secret, it would have cost him his life if he had tarried; yet Poyntz granted them to put in sureties, requiring of them to have a messenger to send: not for that he reckoned to have any, but to make dilatory, or else they would have sent him to a stronger prison. But Poyntz delayed them, thinking, if he could, to make escape; yet he did make a good face, as though he reckoned to have been in no danger, which if he had not so done, it was very unlike he should have escaped with his life out of their hands. And at the eighth day, the commissioners came again to Poyntz, and there received both their bags, with the process, one of the Procureur-­General and one of Poyntz, delivering either of them an inventory of such pieces of writing as were delivered in the bags; and demanded sureties of Poyntz, accord­ing to the order they took when they were last with him. Poyntz alleged that he had divers times required them which had him in keeping to get him a mes­senger; as he also had done, but made no great haste to have any,for he reckoned it should be a sufficient dilatory, whereby to have another day. And with such alleging of the impossibility for that he could get no messenger to send forth, at the last they put him apart and agreed to give him a day eight days after, and called him in again, and commanded the officer to get him one; as they did. And so Poyntz sent him with letters to the English merchants, the which at that time were at Barrow [at the fairs probably]. Howbeit he reckoned to prove [i.e. to try] to get away before the return again of the messenger, for he perceived his tarrying there should have been his death; and therefore, to put in a venture to get away, and so he might save himself; for if he had been taken [in his attempt to escape], it would have been but death, for he had been prisoner there in their hands at that time about twelve or thirteen weeks. So he tarried not the coming again of the messenger, but, in a night, by a mean, he conveyed himself, and so by God’s help, at the opening of the town gate in the morning got away. And when it was perceived that he was gone, there was horse sent out after him, but by the means that he knew well the country, he escaped and came into England.’[[21]](#footnote-21)

Such was the abortive termination of Poyntz’s deter­mined effort to save the life of Tindale. To rescue his friend from the danger that threatened him, he had spared no pains, and he had shrunk from no peril. Disregarding his own mercantile pursuits, he had been during the months of September and October completely engrossed in furthering the efforts of Crom­well to procure Tindale’s release. The whole labour of communicating with the Marquis of Bergen and the Council at Brussels had been devolved upon him, and he had cheerfully undertaken it. We are disposed to believe that he was misled by his own ardent wishes when he imagined that there was any real prospect of Tindale’s release; but it is clear that he was the soul of all the attempts that were made to procure the Reformer’s liberty. No other was willing to undergo labour or loss, or to incur personal dangers; and when he was imprisoned all active efforts to release Tindale seem to have been suspended if not abandoned. Everything, it will be seen, still combined to make the prospects of Tindale’s escape as gloomy as possible. The English sovereign, it must be repeated, had no legitimate ground for interfering; and his conduct in executing several of the Emperor’s subjects for heresy was, of course, a fatal obstacle to the success of his intervention in the present instance, however earnestly he might plead for mercy. The Regent of the Low Countries was evidently offended at Cromwell’s foreign policy; the Archbishop of Palermo and the Marquis of Barrow were too skilful courtiers to sacrifice the goodwill of the emperor by extending their patronage to a ‘heretic’; and the arrest of Poyntz completed the overthrow of Tyndale’s hopes by removing from the scene the most active and energetic of all his friends.

The narrative of Poyntz’s proceedings has been given at full length, notwithstanding the somewhat prolix and uninteresting style in which Foxe has related it, partly as a fitting tribute to the disinterested friend who so nobly adventured his own life to save that of Tindale, and partly because it contains numerous and authentic details of the customary process in trials for heresy, which are doubly interesting in the absence of any contemporary account of the trial of the illus­trious translator. Poyntz seems to have been imprisoned for nearly four months, from the middle of November 1535, to the middle of March 1536; and among the Archives of the Council of Brabant there is still preserved one interesting souvenir of his escape, in the shape of a fine of eighty pounds inflicted upon his jailer, John Baers, for having, through ‘carelessness and negligence,’ allowed him to break out and get away. On his escape he returned to England, and doubtless watched for any opportunity of again renew­ing his efforts for Tindale’s release; but all was vain. Cromwell had done what he could, without effect; and Henry was too busy in the pursuit of his matrimonial adventures to listen to any proposals for interesting himself once more in the Reformer’s favour. In the first year of the reign of Edward VI Poyntz succeeded his brother John in his Manor of North Ockenden, in Essex, and here he resided till 1562; but he never forgot his association with Tindale, and his epitaph records the dangers to which he had been exposed by his zeal for the cause of the Gospel, and gratefully recognizes the Divine Providence which saved him from imminent death.

To return to Tindale, thus left helpless in Vilvorde, it is evident that his trial had been considerably delayed by the difficulty of procuring evidence against him. Doubtless Dufief had seized among his books many of the prohibited works of the German Reformers, the possession of which would expose him to the penalties of the persecuting edicts of Charles V; but it was further deemed necessary to procure evidence of his heretical opinions from his own writings, and as these were exclusively in English, they were in­accessible to the theologians of the Low Countries. Some considerable time, therefore, must have been spent in translating Tindale’s works from English into Latin; but, this once accomplished, the Doctors of Louvain would not have much difficulty in selecting passages that were inconsistent with the doctrines and practices of the Church of Rome. *The Wicked Mammon, The Obedience, The Practice of Prelates, The Answer to Sir Thomas More,* abounded with doctrinal statements which the Church of Rome had frequently condemned as heresy, and still more with sharp and sweeping denunciations of rites and ordin­ances which the Church maintained to be laudable and edifying. It was an easy task, therefore, to draw up articles against him, such as would leave little doubt of the issue of a trial conducted by Romanists, bound to judge by the recognized standards of Romish teaching.

By the ordinances of the emperor the trial of cases of heresy was withdrawn from the jurisdiction of the ordinary local magistrates, and was assigned to special commissioners nominated by the emperor himself or his representative, and generally consisting of some of the members of the Council of Brabant, some local authorities, and a few theologians, to aid the laymen by their special knowledge of the subjects controverted.[[22]](#footnote-22) In the case of Tindale, the commission was nominated by the Regent, Mary of Hungary, and the names of its chief members, hitherto unsuspected in England, we are now fortunately able to give from official documents.[[23]](#footnote-23)

From the Council of Brabant, the customary number of four members was selected, Godefroid de Meyere, Charles T’Serraets, Theobald Cotereau, and Jacques Boonen; some local dignitaries, probably from Ant­werp, were added; and four theologians completed the list. These last were taken from the neighbouring University of Louvain, then, as now, the great head quarters and metropolis of the Catholicism of the Low Countries; and two of their number, the chief opponents of Tindale, were men of sufficient reputation to justify a short sketch of their history and character.

Foremost among the accusers of Tindale, and most unrelenting in his opposition to him, was Ruwart Tapper, Doctor of Theology, Chancellor of the Univer­sity of Louvain, and Dean of the chief church of the city, that noble Church of St. Peter whose unfinished and half-ruinous tower forms such a picturesque contrast to the exquisite beauty of the Hotel de Ville which lies at its base. Born at Enkhuisen, in Holland, about 1488, and therefore nearly of the same age as Tindale, he had distinguished himself at the University of Louvain by his devotion to the study of theology, and speedily acquired a great reputation for learning in this department. ‘His house,’ says an admirer, ‘was the oracle of the whole of Belgium’; and when he was subsequently sent to assist in the deliberation of the Council of Trent, he was, out of compliment to his learning, usually asked to deliver his opinions imme­diately after the pontifical theologians. But above everything he was conspicuous for his untiring and unsparing zeal in opposing and suppressing the en­croachments of Protestantism. This was the one great purpose of his life. The only reformation that was needed, in his opinion, was the strict and relentless enforcement of the discipline which the ancient canons of the Church had enacted. He hated all novelty; and he spared none who presumed to diverge, in doctrine or practice, from the narrow groove of the Church’s traditions. Even his panegyrists admit that he was commonly charged with extreme severity; and he is said to have openly avowed the maxim, ‘It is no great matter, whether they that die on account of religion be guilty or innocent, provided we terrify the people by such examples; which generally succeed best when persons eminent for learning, riches, nobility, or high station, are thus sacrificed.’ It was in the spirit of this abominable maxim that he acted; and from such a man Tindale had little mercy to expect. His portrait, arrayed in his robes as Chancellor of the University, still hangs on the walls of the entrance-hall of the Library at Louvain; and the narrow, intolerant face presents to the eye, even of an unpractised physio­gnomist, indisputable confirmation of the popular theory of his character. He looks the *beau ideal* of an in­quisitor; and, indeed, within a few months of Tin­dale’s death, and probably by way of reward for his prominent share in that transaction, he was ap­pointed by the pope Chief Inquisitor in the Low Countries; and the annals of his achievements in this capacity were written in terrible characters of blood and fire, which long secured for his memory an un­happy notoriety.[[24]](#footnote-24)

With Ruwart Tapper was associated one even more celebrated for his skill in theological dialectics, Jacques Masson or Lathomus. A native of Hainault, and some thirteen years older than Tapper, he had at first pro­secuted his studies at the University of Paris. He subsequently, however, removed to Louvain, where he took his degree of Doctor of Theology in 1519, with the greatest *eclat,* the whole of the expense being defrayed by the zeal of his scholars. I A pigmy in body, he was,’ says a modern enthusiastic student of Louvain, a giant in intellect.’ He was the very impersonation of scholasticism; a subtle, hard-headed doctor of the schools, whom no theological refinements could perplex, and no antagonist could silence. His grim and austere portrait impresses the beholder with the idea that he must have been a merciless enemy, and such is the character given of him by some of the contemporary Protestants of the Low Countries. It is only justice, however, to Lathomus, to admit that in his controversy with Tindale he exhibits none of that bitterness and ferocity then only too common in all theological debates. Possibly this may have been owing to the favourable impression which Tindale’s transparent simplicity and honesty seem to have made on all who came into per­sonal contact with him; indeed, if we may believe con­temporary authorities, Tindale’s words produced a deep and ineffaceable result on the mind of Lathomus; and in his last moments he was overwhelmed with regret at the recollection of the part which he had then under­taken to play.

Pierre Dufief, the Procureur-General, was almost officially bound to be rigorous and severe in the pro­secution of heretics; he was certainly doubly interested in procuring a conviction, for he thus at once secured the favour of the emperor, and obtained a share in the confiscated goods of the condemned. Contemporaries who suffered, themselves or their friends, from his rigour, have painted him in terrible colours; Ensinas, who had too good reason for knowing him, calls him ‘a bloody beast,’ ‘a man whose cruelty was equal to his wickedness’: and modern historians are inclined to believe that these charges, though probably exag­gerated, rest on a foundation of fact.[[25]](#footnote-25) It was he that was entrusted with the prosecution of Tindale, as it was he that had, by an unworthy stratagem, seized him at Antwerp; and it was not likely that in such hands the trial would be characterized by any excessive clemency to the unfortunate prisoner.

The records of the inquisitions for heresy in the Low Countries of that period have in general been preserved among the Archives of Belgium. The Court proceeded with the customary forms of law, and all its transactions were recorded with the ordinary copiousness of legal documents. Beyond any question, this practice was followed in the process against Tindale; but hitherto the most careful research has failed to discover this official contemporary account of his trial. It does not exist among the records of the Council of Brabant at Brussels;[[26]](#footnote-26) it may have been, for some special reasons, destroyed; or it may have been removed and lost in the confusion incident to a country which has had four changes of masters since Tindale’s time; but it does not seem absurd to hope that it may yet be by some happy accident recovered. Meantime, in the absence of this actual authentic record of the trial, as *it was,* we are compelled to describe it as it *may have been.* And for this purpose materials of unquestionable autho­rity fortunately exist in abundance. The narrative of Poyntz, as given by Foxe, makes sufficiently clear the general order that was observed; records of similar trials have been preserved; and, what is of special value, we possess authentic accounts by an eye-witness, of trials conducted by the same prosecutor, aided by the same theologians, before some of the same judges, for the same offence, only seven years after Tindale’s martyrdom, and therefore so closely corresponding in most of the essential circumstances, that they may be employed with confidence to fill up the meagre outline which alone has come down to us of the last scenes of the great Reformer’s life.[[27]](#footnote-27)

The following description, for example, of the trial of a priest for heresy, may with scarce a single variation be received as applicable to Tindale. ‘To inspire terror into the people, it was resolved to produce the accused in public. For this purpose a large hall in the castle was prepared, in the midst of which a platform of some elevation was erected, that the people might the more easily witness what was to be transacted. And as the judges were apprehensive of disturbance from the by­standers, who were somewhat inclined to the opinions of the Reformers, and were well aware that they were hated by the common people, they procured the assist­ance of the magistrates to protect them with an armed guard. When all preparations were finished, the un­fortunate accused was led on to the platform, accom­panied by a crowd of armed men: a man of diminutive stature, with a long beard, pale, thin, almost exhausted by distress and insufficient food, more like a dead body or a shadow than a living man.[[28]](#footnote-28) He was followed by the Rectors of the University, and by Jacques Lathomus and Ruwart Tapper. A crowd of spectators was pre­sent at the scene. The distinguished doctors and other judges took their seats on the platform; the rest sat around them; and the accused was placed in the midst. Silence was proclaimed; and then the president stated the cause of the Assembly, and recapitulated the offences with which the accused was charged. He had been arrested for many great heresies; his chamber had been searched, and prohibited books had been found in great numbers; and he had himself composed many treatises containing heretical opinions, which had been widely circulated. The articles alleged against him were then recited:—

‘*First*, he had maintained that faith alone justifies;

‘*Second,* he maintained that to believe in the forgive­ness of sins and to embrace the mercy offered in the Gospel, was enough for salvation;

*‘Third,* he averred that human traditions cannot bind the conscience, except where their neglect might occa­sion scandal;

‘*Fourth,* he denied the freedom of the will;

*‘Fifth,* he denied that there is any purgatory;

*‘Sixth,* he affirmed that neither the Virgin nor the Saints pray for us in their own person;

*‘Seventh,* he asserted that neither the Virgin nor the Saints should be invoked by us.’

That these and many more articles, judged heretical, could be selected from the writings of Tindale, no one who has read this biography can be ignorant; these formed a prominent part of the religious teaching which his countrymen had for some years been accustomed to associate with his name, and must of necessity have formed as prominent a part of any accusation of heresy brought against him. On this point, however, we do not need to rely upon inferences even from the best ­informed contemporaries; evidence of a more direct kind will speedily be produced.

According to the customary process of justice then followed, Tindale was offered the services of an ad­vocate and an attorney, that he might avail himself of every possibility of escape which legal ingenuity could discover during the course of the trial. He declined, however, to employ their services; the hour had come which he had so long anticipated, and he was prepared, with God’s help, to act in accordance with the counsel which, three years before, he had given to his ‘dearly beloved son in the faith,’ John Frith. He resolved, therefore, to defend himself; and as the whole process was conducted in writing, some months were occupied in paper warfare between him and the theologians of Louvain. ‘There was much writing,’ says Foxe, ‘and great disputation to and fro between him and them of the University of Louvain, in such sort that they all had enough to do, and more than they could well wield, to answer the authorities and testi­monies of the Scripture, whereupon he most pithily grounded his doctrine.’ Tindale’s part in this discus­sion has not been preserved, at least has not been recovered; but the reply of his chief antagonist, Lathomus, has been printed among his collected writings, and from this treatise, with the help of a little patience and ingenuity, we are able to give a brief summary of the disputation which issued in Tindale’s condemna­tion and martyrdom.

It was the old question of justification by faith which had formed the chief theme of discussion, and this was apparently the sole subject of the first treatise which Tindale wrote in his own defence.

*Faith alone justifies before God (Fides sola justificat apud Deum).* Such was the motto of Tindale’s treatise; and he treated this fundamental assertion as he had already done in his *Parable of the Wicked Mammon,* maintaining that it was the cardinal axiom of the New Testament, and applying it to the question of human merit with the most fearless and rigorous logic.

‘The key of the saving knowledge of Scripture,’ he asserts, ‘is this: God gives us all things freely through Christ without regard to our works; or in other words, faith in the mercy of God through Jesus Christ, by the grace and works of Christ, and without any regard to any merit or goodness of our works, alone justifies us in the sight of God.’

This assertion he perpetually repeated in his treatise as the foundation of all his religious system; he de­fended it with clear and cogent arguments; and he pushed it to its logical conclusions with a boldness from which many who hold the doctrine of justification by faith would, nowadays, be inclined to shrink. He denied any distinction between works which preceded justification and those which followed it, as regarded their power to merit anything from God *(vim et effica­ciam merendi)*;for works which followed justification did not increase the inward goodness of a man, but only manifested it openly.

‘The fruit that grows on a tree,’ he said, ‘does not make a tree good or bad, it only makes known whether the tree is a good or a bad tree; and works do not make a man good or bad, they only make it plain to other men whether the man who performs them is good or bad. There is an inward justification of a man before God which is by faith alone; works serve only to make his justification known before men’; and it was this distinction, Tindale maintained, which ex­plained the apparent discrepancy between the teaching of St. Paul and St. James; for the one spoke of inward justification before God, the other of outward justi­fication before men.

As to *human merit,* Tindale asserted that it was not only denied by Scripture, in express words, but that it was inconsistent with reason. ‘How could man merit anything from God?’ he asked. ‘God needs not our works; they confer no benefit upon Him; they are all His gifts, and it is we alone who derive any advantage from them. What claim, therefore, can we have to be rewarded by God for them? The ‘patient who drinks a bitter draught deserves nothing from the physician on that account; he has conferred no benefit upon the physician; it is the patient, in fact, that reaps all the good, how then can he establish any ground of merit with the physician? And if we perform some difficult and disagreeable duty which the Great Physician assigns to us, how can we thereby merit any reward from Him? He is not benefited thereby; it is He that has enabled us to perform the duty, and the per­formance of it redounds not to His advantage but to ours.’

Such were the main topics of Tindale’s defence of his opinions, as they can be gleaned from the refutation of his opponent. Lathomus, the champion of Louvain, replied, in a brief treatise, characterized by singular clearness and by a tone of moderation towards his antagonist which was as laudable as it was rare in those days of fierce debate. To a large extent—much larger than would be quite agreeable to his brother theologians at Louvain—he admitted that he agreed with Tindale on the subject debated; but he joined issue with him on the question of the merit of good works. Scripture, he maintained, repeatedly spoke of human actions as meriting *reward;* our Lord had taught that the labourers in His vineyard would at last receive their *hire,* and had promised *a reward* in heaven to those who were persecuted for Him on earth; St. Paul had declared that God would render to every man according to his deeds, he had animated the Galatians by the assurance that in due season they should *reap* if they fainted not, and he had encouraged the Hebrews to bear their trials with patience by having regard to the ‘great recompense of *reward.’* He denied as strongly as Tindale had done that any amount of good works could in any sense merit justification; but he maintained that in the passages he had quoted, Scripture was speaking of good works done after justification; and these, he asserted, merited the reward of heaven.[[29]](#footnote-29)

His reply to Tindale’s illustration of the tree and its fruit was unwontedly weak; but his treatment of the other illustration, the physician and his patient, is more creditable to his skill as a theological disputant. ‘If,’ says he, ‘the physician in your illustration be a king, and if he has solemnly promised that he will make any one who entrusts himself to be healed by his only son, coheir with that son, that he will treat him as a friend, that he will admit him to his table and will bestow other blessings upon him simply because it is his good pleasure so to do; in this case the sick man who obeys this law *deserves* the inheritance, and demands it *as of right;* not because, in submitting himself to be cured and in voluntarily taking the medi­cines to cure him, he does anything that benefits the king, but because he has complied with the express will of the king.’ ‘Moreover,’ he proceeded, ‘unless you admit the truth of this reasoning you will be unable to defend the merits of the man Christ Jesus, which you so properly preach and magnify; for He came into the world to fulfil the will of the Father, not to confer upon the Father any benefit, for nothing would have been wanting to the Father’s happiness if Christ had never become man, and He might have saved man in other ways.’ It was also derogatory to the justice of God, he objected, to assert that God renders nothing for *good* merits; for in this case God’s justice at the great day would be manifested only towards the *bad,* whom He would punish *justly* according to their deserts, whereas the good would be rewarded altogether without any regard to their works.

These are the main positions in Lathomus’s reply to Tindale; and they are enforced and illustrated chiefly by quotations from Scripture (interpreted, it is true, sometimes in a somewhat peculiar manner); for it is not unworthy of note that the Fathers are very rarely referred to or cited. Lathomus had commenced his reply by enumerating in detail the various points of the controversy on which he was perfectly agreed with Tindale; and the reader is probably of opinion that by the help of a little care in defining the terms em­ployed, even a still greater amount of unanimity might have been achieved. This, however, was but one of almost innumerable points of difference, practical as well as doctrinal, which separated Tindale from the Church of Rome.

In replying to Lathomus, accordingly, which he did at considerable length,[[30]](#footnote-30) Tindale not only restated his arguments on faith and good works with fresh illus­trations; but entered into the general controversy, and expressed his mind freely on all those great questions which for many years had occupied his thoughts. On the former subject of debate he repeated, in still more explicit terms than before, his fundamental proposition that God the Father gives us all things for Christ so freely, that He gives nothing from regard to any work of ours, whether internal or external.[[31]](#footnote-31)

Instead of conceding anything to Lathomus, or indi­cating any desire to draw nearer to him in his opinions, he repudiated more forcibly than ever the idea that man, whether before or after justification, could do anything that had merit before God. Such an opinion seemed to him absolutely incompatible with the relation of dependence subsisting between man and God; it seemed to imply that man could do something without the help of the grace of God, or could perform something more than he was bound to perform towards God. Putting his case in the strongest and boldest manner, he declared that, if God had bestowed upon St. Paul immediately after his conversion all the perfection which his soul now enjoys or will enjoy after the resurrection, and yet had determined that he should still continue in the world and do what he actually did in his career as a teacher, he would not by all his works have *merited* anything in the sight of God, any more than the angels in heaven *merit* anything by their ministering to us in our salvation. ‘It is the grace of God,’ he again and again repeated, ‘that does everything; without Him we can do nothing; it is God that works; we are but the instruments, we deserve no reward for what God does by us, and can claim no merit for it, any more than we should dream of ascribing any merit to the sling and stone and sword with which David slew Goliath.’ He had no wish, he protested, to wrangle about words; but when Scripture said so plainly that God bestowed upon men eternal life of His free grace; when it was so obviously true that we owed to God everything that we could do, and that He would be inflicting no injustice upon us in refusing to give us eternal life; how could it be with any conscience pre­tended that man, even after he was justified, could claim heaven as of right, or could suppose that anything he did had any *merit* in God’s sight? The word *merit,* as used by his antagonist, was employed, he averred, in a corrupted sense, different from that in which it was customarily used among men, and therefore he called upon Lathomus to define accurately what he meant *by merit,* that his language might no longer deceive his hearers.

Finally, he concludes this branch of his argument with the assertion, ‘*Works* are the very last things which the law requires of us, and they do not fulfil the law of God; in our work we are always sinning, and our thoughts are impure; that *charity* which should fulfil the law is colder in us than ice; it is only by *faith,* therefore, that we live whilst we are in the flesh; it is by faith we overcome the world; for this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith in God through Jesus Christ, that His love who overcame all the temptations of the devil shall be imputed to us: the promise, therefore, is of faith, that it may be sure to all believers, for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified before God.’

The other subjects disputed between Tindale and the theologians are very briefly indicated by Lathomus; the reader, if he has not entirely forgotten *The Obedience* and *The Practice of Prelates,* willscarcely need to be told what they were, or how Tindale had expressed himself upon them. *The power of the keys* had been debated; and Tindale, it seems, had given offence by declaring that those only who possessed charity and the graces of the Christian life could have the power of the keys; and he had even maintained that a layman who showed to a sinner the just sentence of condemnation, and thus made him flee to the grace of God, possessed the power of opening and shutting the kingdom of heaven as truly as any of the clergy. He had main­tained that a bishop who, instead of being blameless, was a drunkard, or a striker, or unchaste, either ceased to be a bishop, or at least ceased to have any claim upon the obedience of the laity. The subject of *vows* had been discussed, and fasting, and invocation of the saints, and reverencing the relics of saints, and images, and purgatory, and the supremacy of the pope; and we do not need to be told what opinions Tindale enter­tained on such subjects as these; it is superfluous to say that on such topics Tindale was irreconcilably at variance with those who were now sitting in judgement upon him, with full power of life and death.

The reply of Lathomus to this second defence was by no means equal to his previous production. It is, perhaps, slightly more bitter in its tone towards Tindale, though still most commendably free from the prevalent exasperation of theological controversy; but there is also an absence of that closeness of argumentation by which his former work had been distinguished. He does not grapple so closely as before with the question of *merit,* feeling probably that between him and Tindale there was an irreconcilable difference on this point which argument could not hope to reach; and on the other vast branch of the controversy he contents himself with repeating, in somewhat pompous but unimpressive language, the tenets of the ‘Catholic, orthodox, Roman Church.’ So long as the discussion was confined to doctrinal questions a skilful disputant was able to pro­long it indefinitely; one text of Scripture could be quoted against another; one system of interpretation could be set in array against another; objections could be started, weak points might be assaulted, difficulties could be evaded; but against such an antagonist as Tindale it was hopeless to think of defending the mani­fold practical abuses that had so long deformed the face of religion. Sir Thomas More had not ventured upon the task, and Lathomus was too wise to undertake it. These abuses could not be defended except by violence and force; nothing could be said in their favour except that the Church had sanctioned them, and that the State threatened the severest penalties against any one who presumed to call them in question.

These discussions must necessarily have occupied a considerable time. The process had not begun for some months after Tindale’s arrest, apparently not till after the seizure of Poyntz; and, making due allowance for the customary slow progress of the Council in such proceedings, it seems not improbable that this written discussion occupied the greater part of the commence­ment of the year 1536. In courts where everything was conducted in writing, the progress was of necessity slow; and no doubt Cromwell’s intervention had caused more deliberation than usual in Tindale’s case. Still, all this delay, it must have been evident, could only protract the sentence without in any way altering its character. It was certain and indisputable from the first that, according to their definition of heresy, Tindale was a heretic; they could scarcely expect from his antecedent career that he would retract his opinions; and it must, therefore, have been evident from the beginning that the trial could have no other issue than that to which, after long discussion, it was manifestly approaching.

Even if his judges had wished to save him there was no loophole of escape: acting as administrators of the law, the case was to them one of perfect simplicity; the sovereign, as the fountain of justice and mercy, might use his prerogative in Tindale’s favour, but sub­ordinate officers had no course open to them except to pronounce that Tindale had clearly broken the law, and had, in consequence, exposed himself to all its penalties. There was small probability that the emperor would relent; every year he was waxing more fierce and sanguinary in his treatment of all who differed from the Church: but, if we may judge from the narrative of Foxe, there seems to have been a reluctance on the part of some of those concerned in the trial to proceed to extremities; and but for the persistent instigation of Philips, who, ‘with constant diligence to and fro, and from Louvain to Brussels and to Vilvorde’ kept urging on the process, the prosecution might have been suspended, and the prisoner after some delay might have been released.

The reader will naturally inquire whether in the meantime England had entirely forgotten Tindale, and whether the authorities had during this long interval made no further effort to obtain his release. And, we fear, it must be replied, that those in England who alone could render him any assistance were so much engrossed in their own affairs, that they allowed matters in the Low Countries to take their own course. Any intervention, except that of Henry or of Cromwell, would have been hopelessly futile; and in those long weary months of the spring of 1536, when Tindale was painfully debating with the Louvain Doctors, Henry was flirting with Jane Seymour, and organizing schemes for detecting and punishing the real or alleged guilt of Anne Boleyn; and Cromwell, whose master, Wolsey, had been shipwrecked by Henry’s former matrimonial difficulties, was too painfully aware of the critical position in which he was placed, to have either leisure or in­clination to occupy himself seriously with Tindale’s misfortunes.

One party in England might, indeed, have done something to deliver the Reformer from the unrelenting persecution of Philips. The extreme Romish party, who had doubtless set this bloodhound on the track, and who supplied him with funds, might have with­drawn his resources, and so at once paralysed his efforts; but from them, of course, no such intervention was to be expected. Probably of all the schemes for aiding Tindale, this last was at once the simplest and the most likely to succeed. It was the malice of an individual that had set in motion the machinery of the law against the Reformer, and if that individual could be cut off from the necessary supply of money, the proceedings might possibly enough have dropped. Cromwell’s saga­city had not overlooked this probability. After his communications with the Marquis of Bergen and the Archbishop of Palermo had failed, he had in the close of 1535 dispatched a Cambridge scholar to Louvain to act as a spy upon Philips, and ascertain, if possible, from what sources he was supplied with funds. By means of this agent, Robert Farryngton, it was dis­covered that ‘Philips had two benefices and a prebend when he went over the sea’; and the friends whom he left behind doubtless took good care that the revenues of this pluralist were duly transmitted to him on the Continent. It was, therefore, the funds of the Church of England, those funds which the piety of previous generations had consecrated for the perpetual religious benefit of the community, which were employed in doing to death the man who has bestowed upon the people of England the greatest religious blessing that they enjoy. The same emissary offered to continue his services, but it does not appear that any further use was made of them. Another more effectual method of cutting short the career of Philips was next to be tried, though this also was of no avail to rescue Tindale.[[32]](#footnote-32)

Philips, it will be remembered, belonged to the party who hated Henry, and, according to Theobald, he had given vent to his feelings both at Louvain and in the Court of the Queen-Regent by denouncing his own sovereign in bitter and violent language as ‘a tyrant and a plunderer of the country.’ Such language was treasonable; and by the old arrangement subsisting between England and Germany since the days of Maxi­milian, Henry might demand the arrest and extradition of any traitor. Letters were, therefore, directed to the magistrates of some of the chief cities in Germany, through which he was likely to pass, describing him as ‘a most perfidious man, guilty of the most heinous crime of treason,’ and entreating them to apprehend him and his associates, and send them to the King of England, who would repay all expenses incurred, and liberally recompense them for their trouble[[33]](#footnote-33). Philips, however, had remained long enough at Louvain to accomplish his treacherous mission; and he contrived to elude the vigilance of the emissaries of his angry sovereign.

Vaughan, also, Tindale’s former friend and admirer, was again in Antwerp in the spring of 1536, and was anxious to do what seemed possible to release the illustrious prisoner. Writing to Cromwell from Antwerp, April 13, he says with great urgency, ‘*If now you send me but your letter to the Privy Council* [*of Brabant*]*, I could deliver Tyndale from the fire: see it come by time, for else it will be too late*.’[[34]](#footnote-34)The friendly envoy does not, however, state the grounds on which he entertained such pleasing hopes; and we are strongly inclined to believe that he was deluded by his own kindly feelings.

The truth is that a very considerable amount of mis­apprehension seems to prevail as to Tindale’s death, which it is desirable, if possible, to dispel. To some writers the imprisonment and martyrdom of Tindale seem to be a stupendous and unprecedented crime, surrounded by inscrutable mystery; and they have inveighed against Henry, and Cromwell, and Cranmer, and Englishmen in general, as guilty of an extreme dereliction of duty which was almost equivalent to being accessory to the great Translator’s death. Nothing could be farther from the truth than such a view of the transaction; and, indeed, to any one who will calmly attend to the various features of the occurrence, nothing could stand in less need of explanation than Tindale’s martyrdom.

The laws of the emperor against heretics were as precise as language could make them; and it was perfectly certain that Tindale had broken these laws, and was amenable to the penalty that had been enacted as their sanction. Once apprehended, therefore, and subjected to the ordinary course of justice, it is difficult to see what hope of escape was left for him. Henry could not *demand* that he should be delivered up to the English authorities, for his offence had been com­mitted against the laws of the emperor. Indeed, if Tindale had been sent to England to be tried, his fate would probably have been the same; for he was far in advance of the incipient Protestantism of Henry and his advisers, and he would probably have perished at Smithfield, as his former associate, John Lambert, did two years later for maintaining the same opinions. Cromwell and Cranmer may have felt some considerable sympathy for one who had so successfully laboured in that work of translating Scripture in which they were both so deeply interested; but they were far from sharing Tindale’s views, and far from entertaining for him that high esteem which we have learned to regard as due to his transcendent merits. Our reverence for Tindale, and our horror for the sanguinary laws which consigned a man to death for his religious opinions, invest his case with a profound interest, which his con­temporaries did not in general feel and could not have understood; to them it was simply the case of a good and learned man who had dared to condemn and oppose the teaching of the Church, and who, almost as a matter of course, fell a victim to the familiar rigour of the laws.

Of Tindale’s life during this long imprisonment, Foxe, our sole authority hitherto, has simply recorded that ‘such was the power of his doctrine and the sincerity of his life, that during the time of his imprisonment, which endured a year and a half [very nearly], it is said, he converted his keeper, the keeper’s daughter, and others of his household. Also the rest that were with Tindale conversant in the castle, reported of him that if he were not a good Christian man, they could not tell whom to trust.’

To many writers the amount of liberty thus implied seems so incredible, that they have rejected the story as intrinsically improbable: curiously enough, however, we have the means of establishing the probability of Foxe’s statement by evidence which no one will presume to dispute. Ensinas, who was imprisoned for heresy a few years later, makes the very singular complaint that he was somewhat interrupted in his labour of compiling prayers from the Book of Psalms, by the number of visitors who were permitted to see and talk with him. From the town of Brussels alone he had upwards of eighty visitors, who discussed with him matters of re­ligion, and who, as he quaintly remarks, were at more liberty to consider those matters in that place, because it was a prison, and therefore free from interruption.[[35]](#footnote-35) And the testimony of Ensinas as to the liberty enjoyed in prison is confirmed by the evidence of official papers preserved among the Archives of Belgium.[[36]](#footnote-36) All prisons were probably not so laxly superintended as the *Vrunte,* in Brussels, where Ensinas was confined; but there is, it is thus evident, nothing impossible in Foxe’s story, and we are at liberty to believe that the tedium of Tindale’s imprisonment was relieved by kindly Chris­tian intercourse with those around him, on the matters most deeply interesting to his heart.

To this meagre statement of the Martyrologist, how­ever, we are now able to add, for the first time in this country, information of the highest interest from the pen of Tindale himself. The admirers of the great Trans­lator have long regretted that not a single letter or document of any kind has been ascertained to be in existence, that was unquestionably written with Tindale’s own hand. The industry of a foreign investigator has at length been successful in discovering an original letter which was written by Tindale himself, and which at once invests the whole narrative of his imprisonment with that ‘touch of nature’ that appeals irresistibly to human sympathies[[37]](#footnote-37). It would be unfair to the reader to withhold from him Tindale’s own original Latin; and we therefore place it here in the text with a literal rendering subjoined. The letter, it may be premised, has neither date nor superscription, but there is not the slightest doubt that it was written at Vilvorde in the winter of 1535, and that it was addressed to the Governor of the castle, who was no other than that very Marquis of Bergen-op-Zoom with whom Cromwell had already interceded in Tindale’s favour.[[38]](#footnote-38)

‘Credo non latere te, vir praestantissime, quid de me statutum sit. Quam ob rem, tuam dominationem rogatum habeo, idque per Dominum Jesum,ut si mihi per hiemem hic manendum sit, solicites apud dominum commissarium, si forté di­gnari velit, de rebus meis quas habet, mittere cali­diorem birettum; frigus enim patior in capite ni­mium, oppressus perpetuo catarro qui sub testitudine *[sic]* nonnihil augetur. Ca­lidiorem quoque tunicam, nam, haec quam habeo ad­modum tenuis est. Item pannum ad caligas refi­ciendas. Duplois *[sic in* original by mistake for *diplois]* detrita est; cami­seae detritae sunt etiam. Camiseam laneam habet, si mittere velit. Habeo quoque apud eum caligas ex crassiori panno ad superius induendum; noc­turna biretta calidiora ha­bet etiam: utque vesperi lucernam habere liceat; tediosum quidem est per tenebras solitarie sedere. Maxim& autem omnium tuam clementiam rogo atque obsecro ut ex animo agere velit apud dominum commissarium quatenus dignari velit mihi conce­dere *Bibliam Hebraicam, Grammaticam Hebrai­cam, et Vocabularzum Hebraicam,* ut co studio tempus conteram. Sic tibi obtingat quod maxim& optas modo cum animae tuae salute fiat: Verum si aliud consilium de me ceptum *[sic]* est, ante hie­mem perficiendum, patiens ero, Dei expectans volun­tatem, ad gloriam gratiae Domini mei Jesu Christi, Cuius Spiritus tuum semper regat pectus. Amen. W. Tindalus.’[[39]](#footnote-39)

‘I believe, right wor­shipful, that you are not ignorant of what has been determined concerning me [by the Council of Bra­bant]; therefore I entreat your lordship and that by the Lord Jesus, that if I am to remain here [in Vilvorde] during the win­ter, you will request the Procureur to be kind enough to send me from my goods which he has in his possession, a warmer cap, for I suffer extremely from cold in the head, being afflicted with a per­petual catarrh, which is considerably increased in this cell. A warmer coat also, for that which I have is very thin: also a piece of cloth to patch my leg­gings: my overcoat is worn out; my shirts are also worn out. He has a woollen shirt of mine, if he will be kind enough to send it. I have also with him leggings of thicker cloth for putting on above; he also has warmer caps for wearing at night. I wish also his permission to have a lamp in the even­ing, for it is wearisome to sit alone in the dark. *But above all, I entreat and beseech your clemency to be urgent with the Pro­cureur that he may kindly permit me to have my Hebrew Bible, Hebrew Grammar, and Hebrew Dictionary, that I may spend my time with that study.* And in return, may you obtain your dearest wish, provided always it be consistent with the salva­tion of your soul. But if, before the end of the win­ter, a different decision be reached concerning me, I shall be patient, abiding the will of God to the glory of the grace of my Lord Jesus Christ, whose Spirit, I pray, may ever direct your heart. Amen.—W. Tindale.’

The picture presented in this letter, of the illustrious Martyr, sitting cold and dark and solitary in the damp cells of Vilvorde during the long cheerless nights of winter, and earnestly soliciting the favour of light, and warm clothing, and above all, of books to solace him, must surely have reminded the reader of the great Apostle of the Gentiles sending for his ‘cloke and his books, but especially the parchments,’ to defend him against the damp and the tedium of his gloomy Mamer­tine dungeon; and it appeals irresistibly to the sym­pathies of every man who is not utterly destitute of human feelings.

It adds not a little to the interest of this letter, that it silences for ever the idle objection so often repeated by writers who take no trouble to examine into facts, that Tindale was absolutely ignorant of Hebrew, and was incapable either of reading or of rendering the Old Testament in its original language. To scholars, indeed, that question had long ago been set at rest by the examination of Tindale’s Version of the Pentateuch; and the testimony of Hermann Buschius was scarcely needed to assure them, that Tindale was quite sufficiently versed in Hebrew for the work that he had undertaken. Surely, however, after this pathetic request in the Translator’s own words, the groundless calumny will disappear for ever from our literature.

We take for granted that the modest requests of Tindale were acceded to; this much, at least, the Mar­quis of Bergen could scarcely refuse to one for whom Cromwell had interceded; and until the actual business of the trial commenced and occupied all his energies, we may suppose that Tindale was engaged on what had been the labour of his life, the translation of Holy Scripture into the English language. The Venerable Bede, dictating his translation of St. John on his death­bed, has been deemed a subject worthy of the highest art, a theme for the highest flights of poetry; will no genius be fired to commemorate in verse or on canvas the only worthy pendant which our literary annals pre­sent, Tindale in the gloomy vaults at Vilvorde, toiling bravely to finish his great work? How much he was able to accomplish of his task in the dreary confinement of his prison we have no means of ascertaining with any very definite precision; but there seems no reason what­ever for disbelieving the uniform tradition which affirms, that before his death he had completed the translation of the Old Testament to the end of the Books of Chronicles. This part of his work, it is said, was trans­mitted to his former associate in Antwerp, John Rogers, and was printed by him along with the previous trans­lations by Tindale of the Pentateuch and the New Testament, in what is usually known as Matthews’s Bible.[[40]](#footnote-40) Of all this, direct proof cannot be given; but the presumption in its favour, from evidence both internal and external, is sufficiently strong to warrant its implicit reception.

The trial of Tindale was, we believe, not begun till the commencement of 1536, and it had been unusually protracted. The process of written attack and defence must of necessity have occupied a considerable time; and it may have been midsummer before the trial was concluded. The verdict had been foreseen by the judges from the commencement, and was inevitable; but before pronouncing it, we cannot doubt that the question was once again submitted to the supreme autho­rities; that not only the Regent Mary of Hungary, but the emperor also, were asked to decide whether in this instance the statutes against heretics were to be enforced with full rigour, or whether the prerogative of mercy was to be exercised. Charles and Mary were not ignorant of the interest which Henry and Cromwell felt in Tindale; and with them it rested to decide whether the prisoner was to be set free, or to die the death of a heretic. They weighed the case doubtless with care, and took into consideration the comparative advantages of the two courses of conduct that were open to them. To pardon a convicted heretic would offend the clergy, and would stultify the legislation of many years against heresy: to give him up to death was to run the risk of offending Henry, or at least of disobliging Henry’s potent minister. As a question of interest, the decision was only too likely to be unfavour­able to Tindale, and the consciences of the two supreme authorities would still further incline the verdict against him. No words of mercy came from those with whom the prerogative of mercy was lodged; and nothing remained for the Council of Brabant but to act as the law required.[[41]](#footnote-41)

Sentence of death would, therefore, be pronounced against Tindale at Vilvorde by the Procureur-General in the usual manner. The exact date of Tindale’s con­demnation we have been able to ascertain from the dispatch of John Hutton, one of Cromwell’s envoys in the Low Countries. Writing from Antwerp on August 12 he informs the Secretary, ‘So it is that on the tenth day of this present the Procureur-General, which is the Emperor’s attorney for these parts, dined with me here in the English House, who satisfied me that William Tyndale is degraded and condemned into the hands of the secular power, so that he is very like to suffer death this next week. As to the Articles upon which he is condemned, I cannot as yet obtain [them], albeit I have a grant [a promise], which, once obtained, shall be sent your Lordship by the first.’[[42]](#footnote-42)

According to Foxe, Tindale had a respite of nearly two months between his condemnation and his martyr­dom; and one hopes that, after the solemn mummeries of *degradation* were duly accomplished, the calm interval of preparation was not interrupted by the officious ministrations of the priests and confessors who were usually intruded; upon condemned heretics, to convince them, if possible, at the last moment, of their errors, and to induce them to recant. Tindale, it must have been manifest, was not likely to be influenced by such agents, and one would gladly believe, therefore, that he was spared this annoyance, and that he was permitted to prepare himself in peace for that dread ordeal of which he had before said to Frith, ‘Let not your body faint; he that endureth to the end shall be saved; if the pain be above your strength, remember, “Whatsoever ye shall ask in My name I will give it you,” and pray to your Father in that name, and He shall ease your pain or shorten it.’

The death which he had to face was not, however, quite so terrible as that of Frith; by the laws of the emperor Anabaptists alone were burned alive; and though Tindale’s body was to be consumed, it would not be till after he had been bereft of life by a mode of death much more speedy than the painful one of burning. He was to be strangled, and his dead body was then to be burned. Friday, October 6, was fixed as the day of his execution. The place was, doubtless, some spot on that side of the castle next the town, where it could easily be witnessed from the church­yard and from the walls that ran in front of what is now the *Rue des Moines Blancs.*

No record of the martyrdom has been given by any eye-witness; but the description given by Ensinas of an execution precisely similar may be here quoted, as probably in almost all its details applicable to the case of Tindale.

‘A space was enclosed with palisades, and all were excluded except those who had to play a part in the martyrdom. In the midst of the enclosure was erected a large piece of wood in the shape of a cross as high as a man, and firmly fixed in the ground to the same depth. On the top was an iron chain fixed to the wood, and a hole in which a rope of hemp was in­serted: and near the foot was piled an immense heap of brushwood. When all was ready the Procureur-­General and the rest of the judges were conducted to the place that was prepared for them in the immediate neighbourhood of the fatal spot. Finally, the prisoner was led out, and was permitted to engage for a few moments in prayer.’

‘He cried,’ says Foxe, in the sole detail he has given of Tindale’s death, ‘at the stake with a fervent zeal and a loud voice, “Lord, open the King of England’s eyes!”’

‘This prayer finished, he was immediately led by the executioner to the stake; his feet were bound to the stake; the iron chain which hung from the top was fastened round his neck, along with the hemp rope loosely tied in a noose. The faggots were piled around with quantities of straw, and heaped up till the victim almost seemed enclosed in a little hut. Then, at a signal from the Procureur, the executioner stepped behind and tightened the rope with great force, so as in a few moments to strangle the victim. When life was extinct, the Procureur seized a torch and kindled the pile, which blazed forth with fury, and in a very short space completely consumed the body.’[[43]](#footnote-43)

Such was the end of William Tindale.

‘If they shall burn me,’ he had said eight years before, ‘they shall do none other thing than that I look for.’ ‘There is none other way into the kingdom of life than through persecution and suffering of pain, and of very death, after the ensample of Christ.’[[44]](#footnote-44) And now after a long interval the death which he had so long before anticipated had overtaken him; the untiring malice of his enemies had at length succeeded in cutting short his life; but his work was beyond their power. The spot where his ashes rest is unknown; but that work for which he lived and died has, like the seed in the parable, grown up into the mightiest of trees. There is scarcely a corner of the habitable globe into which English energy has not penetrated; and wherever the English language is heard, there the words in which Tindale gave the Holy Scripture to his countrymen are repeated with heartfelt reverence as the holiest and yet the most familiar of all words. They are the first that the opening intellect of the child receives with wondering faith from the lips of its mother; they are the last that tremble on the tongue of the dying as he commends his soul to God. Assuredly it will not tend to diminish the reverence with which the universal English-speaking people regard their Bible, if they read a little more carefully the life of the heroic and simple-minded man to whose labour the English Bible was chiefly owing, and whose spirit still seems to reside in its grave, impressive sentences.

No laboured peroration is needed to set forth the character and virtues of Tindale. This biography must have been unsuccessful indeed, if it has not pre­sented a portrait which the reader has long ago recog­nized as that of a true Christian hero. *Heroic is,* in truth, the appropriate epithet for the character of Tindale; and *heroic* in the noblest and highest sense of that somewhat misused word. One feels instinctively that he was no ordinary commonplace man, no mere scholar, or active, energetic priest. He was no shrewd man of the world, but was ignorant as a child of the ordinary arts by which favour is propitiated and popu­larity so frequently won. His simplicity, his earnest­ness, his noble unselfishness, his love of truth, his independence, his clearness and force of mind, his invincible energy and power,—these mark him out as a true hero, one of those great men specially raised up and qualified for a noble work, whose lives always constitute a landmark in the annals of human history.

Of the excellence of his moral character, fortunately, no defence has ever been required. The Procureur­-General is reported to have described him as ‘a learned, good, and godly man’; and friends and enemies, in his own time and in subsequent ages, have with one unvarying consent repeated the same encomium. No voice of scandal has ever been raised against him; and there are no black spots in his life which it is the duty of a biographer to attempt to whitewash.

The extent of his influence upon the Reformation in England was more fully and more justly recognized by his contemporaries than it has in general been by subsequent writers. Sir Thomas More was too sagacious not to perceive that Tindale was the true pioneer in England of that movement which he regarded with so much aversion. Others had, indeed, anticipated Tindale in condemning the doctrines and practices of the Church as unscriptural and superstitious, but their voices were feeble and ineffectual; his was the first voice that was raised in accents loud and clear enough to penetrate the ears and touch the hearts of the nation. The violence with which his works were condemned, and the zeal with which they were sought after and burnt by the great ecclesiastical authorities, sufficiently attest the estimate they had formed of the importance of his writings. It would be difficult to name any more powerful attack upon all that was at the time most generally practised in the Church of Rome than is contained in *The Obedience, The Practice of Prelates,* and *The Answer to Sir Thomas More.* Never had the corruptions in doctrine, the abuses in worship, the ignorance and worldliness of the clergy, been exposed with such clearness of argument, such force of language, such vehemence of moral indignation; the impression made was deep, the result was memorable. And, as we have already noticed, his influence was not that of a mere hostile critic, holding up errors and abuses to reprobation and public scorn; a mere inarticulate protest against the sins and vices of the Church would not, however strong, have availed to produce a Reforma­tion in religion. Tindale not only pointed out with terrible clearness what was wrong, he indicated with equal plainness the only remedies that could meet the emergency. The supremacy of Holy Scripture in all matters of faith, the supremacy of the civil law in all matters of discipline, such were the remedies which Tindale recommended to his countrymen as the only effectual means of redressing the intolerable grievances under which they were groaning; and these are, in fact, the two pillars on which the Reformation in England was subsequently established.

This, however, was after all but a subordinate part of Tindale’s work; that with which his name will be for ever associated, and for which his memory will be for ever revered, is his translation of Holy Scripture. Of the merits of the English Bible and of its influence upon all English-speaking people, who is able adequately to treat? And this English Bible, it must once more be repeated, is the work of Tindale; is for the greater part exactly what he made it, and in every part speaks in that style which he infused into it. That exquisite felicity of language which has made it dear to the hearts of all classes, which has constituted it a true national treasure, it owes to Tindale. His translation was no dead piece of learned labour; it was instinct with the life of the man that produced it; it was the Word of God transmitted through the agency of one to whom that Word was not an outward letter, but the very life of his soul. It is on this account that the indi­viduality of Tindale is inseparably associated with the English Bible; its tone and spirit have, in a certain sense, come from him; no revision has ever presumed to touch what Tindale has stamped on it; no progress of scholarship is ever likely to efface from it that which makes it truly Tindale’s work.

It has been reserved for some of his own countrymen to impugn the scholarship of the great Translator. Perhaps, their discovery that a translation whose pre-eminent merit it is that it so closely represents the original, was made by a man incompetent to render from the original, may be esteemed the highest and most curious achievement of literary stupidity in our times. But to state such a preposterous objection is to refute it. Such calumnies can do no injury to the memory of Tindale: they prove nothing but the ignorance and the recklessness of those who make them. Truth alone can stand the test of time and of research; and the more thoroughly that the life of Tindale is examined, the more has he hitherto been found to be deserving of the love and veneration of his countrymen. The more that his character and work are investigated, the more conspicuous is his Christian heroism. There is nothing to alloy the admiration with which we regard him, no taint of weakness, no suspicion of selfishness, no parade of pride. Humble and irreproachable in his life, zealous and devoted in his work, beloved by his friends, respected by his enemies, faithful unto death, where among the army of martyrs shall we find a nobler than William Tindale?

1. For the identification of the English House I am indebted to the information of M. Genard, Archivist of Antwerp, who has pub­lished an excellent *Notice sur les Architectes Herman et Dominique de Waghemakere.* The statements in the *Memoirs of Sir Thomas Greshaan* are considerably in error on this point. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. A. Henné, *Histoire du Règne de Charles-Quint.* [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Henné, *ubi supra;* the words of the ordinance are significantly brief: ‘Les hommes par 1’épée, les femmes par la fosse, les relaps par le feu.’ [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. The point is of sufficient importance to justify the following corroborative quotation: ‘Rogo, utrum liceat sine auctoritate publicâ Novum Testamentum imprimere. Respondit [Etienne Meerdmann, the Antwerp printer] licere quidem omnino sacras literas imprimere sine ullius hominis concessu aut prohibitione. . . . Addebat quoque nullas unquam Imperatoris leges editionem sacrarum literarum prohibuisse [i.e. not in Antwerp]. Hanc sententiam confirmabat, et suis et aliorum exemplis, qui in eâdem civitate [Antverpiae] Novum Testamentum, in omnibus pene Europae linguis, typis im­pressum evulgâssent.’ The questioner here was Francisco d’Ensinas, who himself published the New Testament in Spanish at Antwerp. *Mémoires d’Ensinas,* vol. i.p. 177: published by the Historical Society of Belgium. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. See Guicciardini’s *Descriptio totius Belgii.* [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Anderson says this was a mistake, for that Vaughan was at Brussels; Foxe is right, however; Hackett, the ambassador at Brussels, was dead; and Vaughan was in England. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. A series of letters from this man Phyllypps, as he calls himself, written about this time to various friends, asking them to intercede on his behalf with his parents, whom his bad conduct had justly offended, are given in the *Publications of the Record Office,* 27Henry VIII, vol. ix. p. 389. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. See an admirable description *of* it in the *Histoire des Environs de Bruxelles, par Alphonse Wauters.* There isan excellent water-colour sketch ofthe old fortress by Witzthumb, preserved in the Royal Library at Brussels, which has been lithographed asthe frontispiece *of* M. Galesloot’s little brochure, *Madame Deshoulières.* [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. As an illustration of the *secrecy* it isnoticeable that no entry occurs, either amongst the accounts *of* the *Amman* ofBrussels, or the *Drossart of* Antwerp, of any sums expended in the arrest. Every possible source ofinformation on this point was placed at my disposal by M. Pinchart, and searched for me by M.Cuijpers, but not a single entry occurs. The expenses had, perhaps, been supplied from England, and were therefore not entered in any official reckoning. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. *Galba, B. x.* The letter is dated the *last* day of July, the day, we may suppose, when it was finished and sent off; but the greater part seems to have been written on July 15. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. I am able to give a more full account of Buckenhani’s move­ments than had come to the ears of Tebold. Buckenham, it may be premised, was the friar who attempted to reply to Latimer’s famous *Sermons on the Cards* at Cambridge, and who was extinguished by the wit and raillery of his antagonist. (See Demaus’s *Latimer.*)On his way from Scotland to Louvain he had resided for some time in London; and in the State Paper Office Ihave found the following letter to Cromwell, complaining ofBuckenham’s seditious language:—’I William Bull, friar, know­ledging myself as one ofhis Majesty’s faithful subjects, to the utter­most of my power doth [sic] certify your goodness of one Doctor Buckenham, which passed the reme [i.e. has gone out ofthe realm], fullundiscreetly to the continuance ofhis mind, and aid ofthe abused Bishop ofRome. He hath, since the time of his departing, sent certain letters which were received of one Doctor Ellis,some­time prior ofthe Black Friars at Cambridge,’ &c.; the writer in fact suggests that the letters might be as offensive as his conversa­tion had been, and hints that it was a matter which ought to be in­quired into ‘for fear of a farther inconvenience.’ There is no date to the letter, which was written from the Black Friars in London; but its exact place in the narrative can be assigned with almost perfect certainty. *Chapter House Papers.* [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Cotton MSS*., Galba,* B. x. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. In the *Register of the University of Oxford,* edited by the Rev. C. W. Boase, M.A., p. 121, there is a reference to Gabriel Donne, one of the men concerned in the plot that led to Tindale’s martyrdom. He was a Cistercian friar, and supplicated for the degree of Bachelor of Divinity, October 26, 1521. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Cotton MSS*., Galba,* B*.* x:a few words are destroyed. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. All this, it must again be repeated, *is* mere conjecture on Poyntz’s part: he was disappointed at what seemed the indifference ofthe English authorities, and he frames this theory to explain it. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. *Publications of the Record Office, 27* Henry VIII, p. 91. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. So it is stated in a letter of Thomas Leigh, Cotton MSS., *Galba, B. x.* [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. On September 5 he had written to Cromwell an account of a ‘slanderous sermon’ preached by a Black Friar in Antwerp, on the previous Sunday, August 29.The Sunday was the feast of the Decollation ofJohn the Baptist; and the preacher, in illustrating the Gospel for the day, had boldly compared Henry and Anne Boleyn to Herod and Herodias’s daughter. Flegge remonstrated with the prior ofthe monastery, and by dint ofdetermination and perseverance, he compelled the friar to appear again in the same pulpit the succeeding Sunday, and recant and apologize for the insults which he had offered to the King and Queen ofEngland. See Cotton *MSS., Galba,* B. *x.* Can this have been another escapade ofour oldacquaintance, Doctor Buckenham? [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Cotton *MSS., Galba,* B. *x.* The letter has been printed in a very mutilated form in Anderson’s *Annals,* vol. i. p.429. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Akon, that is, Alken, about fifteen miles from Maestricht. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. Foxe: first edition. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. In May, 1534, exactly a year before Tindale’s arrest, the sheriffs of Mons had addressed a remonstrance to the emperor against what they considered the extravagant assumptions ofthe special commissioners appointed to try heretics, who claimed the right ofjudging without the intervention ofthe local magistrates. Charles, however, wouldnot accede to the prayer oftheir letter, butreiterated his appointment that the commissioners should enjoy the powers which they claimed: he at the same time seems sofar to have modified his opinion as usually to join a few ofthe local magistrates with the commissioners. *Memoires d’Ensinas: Pieces Justificatives,* No.i. The ordinary form *of* an ordinance for nominating a com­mission for the trial of heretics isgiven in the same volume, in the original Flemish, with a translation, p. 290. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. The document *is* among the Archives in the Chambre des Comptes at Brussels; and isgiven in the Appendix, in the original, with a translation. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. I have thought it not undesirable, for the purpose of the bio­graphy, to insert this notice of the character of a man so intimately connected with Tindale’s trial and death, and who, though well known in the literature of the Low Countries, seems absolutely un­known in England. Materials for a life of him may be found in Foppens, Miraeus, Lindanus, and others; and a very readable, though of course extravagantly panegyrical *éloge,* was inserted in the *Annuaire de l’Université Catholique de Louvain* for 1854. Tapper died of chagrin, it is said, at the cavalier treatment he received from Philip II, and was buried in the choir of his church at Louvain: his monument has long since disappeared, and his epitaph exists only in the pages of Foppens. He bequeathed his library to the University, and I at one time hoped to find some of Tindale’s missing papers among his collection; but all has long since been carried off. I must not omit to express my gratitude for the courtesy of the Rev. Professor Ruesens, the librarian of the University. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. *Memoires d’Ensinas*, p.95. M. Campan, the editor, admits that there are good grounds for the accusation: and M. Galesloot believes that he was compelled to resign his office for extortion and peculation: *La Dame de Grand-Bigard*, p. 22. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. The Archives at Brussels have been carefully searched by M. Galesloot, whose article on Tindale in the *Revue Trimestrielle* might well put to shame the ignorant presumption of many of Tindale’s countrymen. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. I refer to the *Memoirs of Ensinas,* published by the Historical Society of Belgium, under the editorial care of M. Campan, and provided with an ample appendix of illustrative documents of great interest and unquestionable authority. I make no apology for referring so frequently to a work of so much value, especially as it is of extreme rarity. The work of Pantaloon in which it appeared in the sixteenth century is not to be found either in the British Museum or in the Bodleian. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. It was Paul de Roovere, one of the chaplains of St. Peter’s at Louvain, that Ensinas saw; but every word of the description applies literally to Tindale: I subjoin the original, ‘Homo, perpu­sillus, barbâ prominenti, exsanguis, macilentus, dolore atque media pene consumptus, quem tabefactum cadaver aut umbram hominis non hominem jure appellare potuisses.’ [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. He says, very concisely, *opera Praecedentia non merentur justificationem, opera vero sequentia merentur beatitudinem.* [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. *Prolixè,* says Lathomus in his answer. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. Tindale’s words had been, ‘Deus Pater omnia dat ita gratis per Christum, ut nullius operis respectu, sive propter nullum opus internum vel externum quicquam det.’ I have not thought it neces­sary to print all that I have gleaned as Tindale’s words from Lathomus, but I have in no case ascribed anything to Tindale without the fullest warrant. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. I give the part of the letter which refers to the subject: ‘Pleaseth it your very good mastership that I might be ascertained by this bearer, my Cousin Richmond, or else by some other at your pleasure, whether it may please you to command me any more service in the matter *that I did show your mastership when 1 came from Louvain;* and I shall be glad with all my heart to give all diligence to accom­plish your pleasure therein, or else that it may please your goodness that I might have licence to depart from Cambridge to my friends.’ He adds a postscript, by far the most important part of his com­munication: ‘Pleaseth it your mastership, as I am credibly in­formed, Philips had two benefices and a prebend, when he went over the sea; what order his friends have taken with them since his departing, your mastership may have soon knowledge.’ The letter was written from Cambridge, January 12; no year is given, but 1536 is clearly the date: it is preserved in the *Chapter House Papers.* The name of this agent has been hitherto unknown: there is much still to be learned in the State Paper Office, if only the documents were more easily accessible. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. Cotton MSS., *Vitellius,* B. xxi. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. *State Papers,* vol. vii. p. 665. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. *Memoires d’Ensinas,* vol. ii. pp. 81, 93, 121, &c. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. The *Régime de la orison de la Vrunte* is printed in the Appendix to the *Mémoires d’Ensinas, Pièces Justicatives,* Number 5: and taken from the State Papers in Brussels, *Office Fiscal de Brabant.* On the history of the Vrunte, the reader is referred to the admirable *Histoire de Bruxelles, by* Messrs. Henné and Wauters, a work which Englishmen may well envy. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. The letter has been found in the Archives of the Council of Brabant, by the learned and indefatigable M. Galesloot. With the kind permission of the ever-courteous M. Gachard, the precious document has been photographed at the expense of Mr. Fry, of Bristol, and a copy, an exact facsimile of the original, which no Englishman but myself has seen, lies before me as I write. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. Antoine de Berghes, Marquis of Bergen-op-Zoom, was appointed Governor in 1530. Adolphe Van Wesele was Lieutenant of the castle. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. As this biography has not been produced for philological pur­poses, I have given Tindale’s letter in the ordinary orthography I may mention, however, that the original presents scarce any deviation from that above, except in using the single e instead of the diphthong *æ*. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. See Westcott on the subject; I have not entered into the ex­amination of any of the alleged posthumous works of Tindale. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. I have searched in vain for the correspondence which *must* have passed between Mary and Charles, but it may yet be dis­covered and throw light upon this most interesting subject. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. *State Papers,* vol. vii. p. 665. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. *Mémoires d’Ensinas, vol.* i. p. 94. It is of the martyrs of Louvain that Ensinas is here speaking, and he adds (what I have omitted) the famous description of Dufief’s cruelty: ‘Videor mihi adhuc habere in conspectu distortum illud crudelissimi hominis os, ex quo flammas spirabat, quam ipsa fax incensa, horribiliores; faciem truculentam et prae furore ardentem, truces oculos, totum denique corporis habitum, qui latentes animi furias omni gestu et sermone sic representabat, ut vero credam, eo tempore a diabolo obsessum fuisse, cuius instinctu sine ulla dubitatione agebatur.’ [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. *Wicked Mammon* and *Obedience.* [↑](#footnote-ref-44)