

William Tindale

A Biography

Being a Contribution to the Early History of the
English Bible

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CHAPTER III

TINDALE'S LIFE IN LONDON

A.D. 1523–1524.

THE date of Tindale's arrival in London can be ascertained with tolerable accuracy. His friend Humphrey Monmouth, when arrested for assisting him, gave a full and interesting account of his whole intercourse with the Reformer, to which we shall presently advert, and from which it is not difficult to determine within very narrow limits the precise time when Tindale came to the metropolis. In his petition to Wolsey, written in May, 1528, Monmouth admits that 'four years before' he had given money to Tindale to help him to go abroad. The month of May, 1524, therefore, was the date of Tindale's leaving London; and as, according to his own confession, he 'abode in London almost a year,' we can hardly be mistaken in believing that he arrived there in the month of July or August, 1523.

It was at a most eventful period that Tindale came to London. The reign of Henry had hitherto been prosperous and popular; and the authority of his great minister Wolsey had lasted for ten years almost without a single murmur. Difficulties were now, however, beginning to make their appearance. The wars with France and Scotland, and the profuse extravagance of a young and pleasure-loving monarch, had emptied the exchequer, and had dissipated the enormous treasures accumulated by the penurious Henry VII. Wolsey disliked parliaments; but all other means of replenishing the royal coffers being exhausted, there was no resource but to summon one, and on the 15th of April, 1523, Parliament met for the first time since December, 1516. The parliaments of Henry have been censured for their extreme servility; and they did unquestionably, on many occasions, exhibit an obsequiousness that is scarcely intelligible in free Englishmen; but there were points on which the members were too deeply interested to be servile. They lent their assistance with perfect composure, while Henry sacrificed to his necessities or his vengeance some of the noblest blood in England; but they were touched to the quick by the extravagance of the monarch. Already, in addition to the burden of military service which weighed heavily on them, they had paid vast sums by way of forced *loans* or *benevolences*, and they were by no means disposed tamely to endure any farther exactions.

But Henry's necessities were urgent, and neither he nor his minister was inclined to submit to be thwarted. Wolsey came down to the House of Commons and demanded from them a subsidy of eight hundred thousand pounds; a small sum perhaps in the eyes of modern readers, accustomed to the prodigious estimates of the present day, but whose magnitude may be understood from the fact

that it was considered equivalent to a tax of four shillings in the pound on all the property in the kingdom, and was, indeed, supposed to exceed the entire currency then circulating in England. The demand was fiercely resisted; Sir Thomas More, who had been elected Speaker, attempted to calm the storm, and insinuated, in his bland and plausible manner, that 'of duty men ought not to deny to pay four shillings in the pound'; but the Commons were not to be persuaded by any eloquence to such an unpleasant exercise of self-denial. A discussion of unprecedented bitterness and length ensued, lasting for sixteen days; and, in spite of the efforts of Wolsey and the court to cajole and to overawe the members, it was finally agreed to grant the King only half of what had been demanded, and that to be payable not at once, but in two years. Sentiments of discontent were loudly expressed on all sides; whispers of resistance were muttered; and affairs wore such a menacing aspect, that Wolsey induced Henry to dissolve the recalcitrant assembly in August, and no parliament assembled again in England till the downfall of the arbitrary minister.

It was during the agitation of this famous debate that Tindale arrived in London, when the arrogance of Wolsey was the universal theme of conversation, and the faults of the Cardinal were not likely to be extenuated or defended by men who considered themselves pillaged by his exorbitant demands. So far as has been ascertained, it was Tindale's first introduction to the capital; he had hitherto known life only in the Universities and in the provinces; the pomp and splendour of courts, the intrigues and factions of statesmen, the pride and worldliness of the great rulers of the Church, these had been known to him only by report. This, therefore, was his first actual experience of the 'practice of prelates'; and the sight was not lost upon him. He had already been disenchanted of that almost divine reverence with which he had in childhood been taught to regard the spiritual fathers and bishops of the Church; and his keen observing eyes marked and noted the strange sights passing around him, as food for reflection, and materials for future use. 'I marked the course of the world,' says he, in subsequently recounting the experience of this period of his life, 'and heard our prelates (I would say our preachers), how they boasted themselves and their high authority; and beheld the pomp of our prelates, and how busy they were, as they yet are, to set peace and unity in the world [said ironically, as will be seen presently], and saw things whereof I defer to speak at this time¹'.

It was, as has been said, a time when public indignation was strongly excited against Wolsey, when his whole past procedure would be severely criticized, and every indication of pomp and extravagance on his part would be repeated with triumphant glee. Tindale would thus hear, on all hands, loud complaints against

¹ Preface to *The Pentateuch: Works*, vol. i. P. 396.

those endless intrigues by which Wolsey had engaged England in almost constant war ever since Henry's accession to the throne. The capricious declaration of war with France, the vast treasure supplied to the German emperor, the whimsical conclusion of peace, the ridiculous parade of 'The Field of the Cloth of Gold,' the secret treaties-everything, in fact, that had for years cost the nation so much blood and money, was popularly ascribed, and not without very good reason, to the machinations of Wolsey. It was he, men said, who misled the king; and the affairs of England, it was complained, were administered by him and his brother prelates, without any regard to the real interests of the nation, but solely for the promotion of the interests of the Papal See, and the gratification of Wolsey's private piques. And the magnificence of the cardinal was too obtrusive to escape the sharpest animadversion. His pomp, in truth, exceeded all bounds, throwing even royalty into the shade; and his love of parade seems to have been marked by several elements of childish weakness, of which many strange stories were circulated in London, and were treasured up by Tindale in a singularly retentive memory.

The reader may imagine, for example, the feeling of infinite scorn with which Tindale, who had already begun to believe that the Pope was antichrist, would listen to the story current in London as to the manner in which Wolsey had caused the cardinal's hat which was sent him from Rome to be solemnly received. Some commonplace messenger had originally brought it to Westminster under his cloak without any ceremony, so Tindale tells the story, but this unceremonious proceeding did not accord with the cardinal's ideas of propriety, so 'he clothed the messenger in rich array, and sent him back to Dover again, and appointed the Bishop of Canterbury to meet him², and then another company of lords and gentles, I wot not how oft, ere it came to Westminster, where it was set on a cupboard, and tapers about, so that the greatest duke in the land must make courtesy thereto, yea, and to his empty seat, he being away³.' Wolsey, doubtless, had several good points in his character, but at the time of Tindale's residence in London, nothing was heard but the strongest condemnation of his intrigues and extravagance; and Tindale, breathing this atmosphere for nearly a year, spoke and wrote of Wolsey at all times as 'the falsest and vainest Cardinal that ever was.'

If in such times of excitement any other topic could succeed in securing a share of public attention, it was what was considered the alarming spread of heretical opinions. The Reformation in Germany had grown into great dimensions; it was no longer a mere local dispute, but a great movement, the pulses of which were felt in every part of Western Europe. The works of Luther were widely circulated,

² Wolsey, though only Archbishop of York, was as legate *a latere* superior to the primate, and took this opportunity of humbling him.

³ Tindale's *Practice of Prelates*.

and found everywhere admiring and sympathizing readers. Two years before Tindale's arrival in London, it was discovered that Luther's books had been imported in such numbers, that Wolsey issued a proclamation peremptorily requiring all who possessed any copies of the writings of that arch-heretic to deliver them up to the custody of the ecclesiastical authorities; but in spite of his prohibition we know that the books continued to be imported by the merchants who traded with the Low Countries. Henry himself, who loved theological controversy, and who prided himself on his orthodoxy, had entered the lists against the German heresiarch, and had been rewarded for his zeal by the title of 'Defender of the Faith,' still fondly cherished as the most honourable of all the distinctions of our sovereigns. The example of the king was, of course, emulated by the clergy; the pulpits resounded with fierce denunciations of the 'detestable and damnable heresies' of that 'child of the devil,' who had ventured to resist the authority of the Pope, and to impugn the teaching of the Church; and the most learned of the prelates was busily occupied in composing an elaborate refutation of the doctrines of the German Reformer. Even in the midst of all the fierce excitement of the summer of 1523, the attention of Parliament was directed to the reported spread of Lutheranism in the University of Cambridge, and it was proposed to institute an episcopal visitation of the suspected colleges, which might have produced disastrous consequences, had not Wolsey unexpectedly intervened and forbidden the meditated inquisition.

Such, therefore, was the position of public affairs when Tindale came to London, expecting to find in the recently-appointed bishop of the diocese a sympathizing scholar who would appreciate his learning, and would generously befriend and protect him. For some time, however, Tunstal was unapproachable; the pressure of more important business probably rendering it impossible to obtain any interview with him. Meantime Tindale waited patiently for the opportunity which was, as he fondly imagined, to crown his hopes with success. He came to Sir Harry Guildford, the Master of the Horse, and presented the letter of introduction with which Sir John Walsh had furnished him; submitting to him at the same time that *Oration of Isocrates* which he had translated into English, and which Sir Harry, as a correspondent of Erasmus and a lover of learning, might be expected to appreciate at its true value as a credential of Tindale's scholarship. Sir Harry received him courteously, promised to speak in his favour to Tunstal, and recommended that he should write to the bishop and obtain, if possible, an interview with him. Tindale followed the advice thus given: he wrote his epistle, and took it to the episcopal residence,-old London House, in St. Paul's Churchyard, in all probability,-where he found in the bishop's employment a former acquaintance of his own, one William Hebilthwayte,' to whom he entrusted the letter on which so much depended.

Pending arrangements for his interview with Tunstal, Tindale naturally enough sought employment as a preacher in London, and was allowed, or perhaps engaged, to preach in St. Dunstan's-in-the-West. His religious opinions were evidently still so far in accordance with what was deemed orthodox, that he was not debarred from preaching; and yet not improbably it was some subtle flavour of heresy in his sermons that especially gratified one hearer, who was destined to be of essential service to Tindale, whom, indeed, we may justly regard as providentially raised up for his assistance in a critical emergency. Humphrey Monmouth, a wealthy cloth-merchant, who resided in the parish of All Hallows, Barking, at the extreme east of London, as St. Dunstan's was then in the extreme west, happened to be amongst the audience when Tindale was preaching. It is not impossible that he may have known something of Tindale's family, or may have had business connexions with them; for he probably came from the county of Monmouth, close to Tindale's birthplace; his brother was, we know, settled in Worcestershire, and Tindale's relatives were engaged in the cloth manufacture in Gloucestershire.

As this worthy citizen is intimately associated with the life of Tindale, the reader will be pleased to be introduced to him by no less a personage than Hugh Latimer, who was subsequently one of Monmouth's dearest friends. In one of his sermons on the Lord's Prayer, Latimer relates the following incident as characteristic of the generous merchant: I In expounding the Epistle to the Romans, Master Stafford, coming to that place where St. Paul saith that we shall " overcome our enemy with well-doing, and so heap up hot coals upon his head," brought in an example, saying that he knew in London a great merchant, which merchant had a very poor neighbour, yet for all his poverty he loved him very well, and lent him money at his need, and let him to come to his table whensoever he would. It was even at that time when Dr. Colet was in trouble, and should have been burnt if God had not turned the king's heart to the contrary. Now the rich man began to be a Scripture-man, he began to smell the Gospel; the poor man was a papist still. It chanced on a time when the rich man talked of the Gospel, sitting at his table, where he reprov'd Popery, and such kind of things, the poor man being then present took a great displeasure against the rich man; insomuch that he would come no more to his house, he would borrow no more money of him as he was wont to do beforetimes; yea, and conceived such hatred and malice against him that he went and accused him before the bishops. Now the rich man, not knowing any such displeasure, offered many times to talk with him and set him at quiet; but it would not be: the poor man had such a stomach that he would not vouchsafe to speak with him; if he met the rich man in the street he would go out of his way. One time it happened that he met him in so narrow a street that he could not avoid but come near him; yet for all that, this poor man had such a stomach against the rich man, I say, that he was minded to go forward and not to

speak with him. The rich man perceiving that, catcheth him by the hand, and asked him saying, "Neighbour, what is come into your heart to take such displeasure with me? What have I done against you? Tell me, and I will be ready at all times to make you amends." Finally, he spake so gently, so charitably, so lovingly and friendly, that it wrought in the poor man's heart, that by-and-by he fell down upon his knees, and asked him forgiveness. The rich man forgave him, and so took him again to his favour, and they loved as well as ever they did afore.'

It may have been by mere accident that Monmouth was present on the first occasion in St. Dunstan's-in-the-West; but it must surely have been some more powerful motive that induced him to return to that church from his own home in the other extremity of London. Poor, and savouring of Lutheranism, Tindale had probably excited the sympathy of the generous merchant who himself had begun 'to be a Scripture-man,' and whose special pleasure it was to assist needy scholars. But we shall allow him to tell the story in his own words.

Upon four years and a half past and more,' he writes to Wolsey, in May, 1528, 'I heard the foresaid Sir William⁴ preach two or three sermons at St. Dunstan's-in-the-West in London; and after that I chanced to meet with him, and with communication I examined him, what living he had. He said he had none at all; but he trusted to be with my lord of London in his service; and, therefore, I had the better fantasy to him. And afterwards he went to my lord, and spake to him as he told me, and my lord of London answered him that he had chaplains enough, and he said to him that he would have no more at that time.'

But the narrative of Tindale's abortive interview with Tunstal must not be dismissed thus briefly. For sometime Tindale had looked forward to it as the great hope of his life. It seemed to him that, under the protection of a prelate who loved learning, he might enjoy the peace and leisure without which it appeared impossible that his great design could ever be successfully accomplished. So Tindale thought; but God had ordained that not in the learned leisure of a palace, but amid the dangers and privation of exile should the English Bible be produced. Other qualifications were necessary to make him a worthy translator of Holy Scripture than mere grammatical scholarship; qualifications little likely to be acquired in palaces; to be learned rather in that stern school of injury and suffering through which the writers of the New Testament themselves had passed. These qualifications Tindale as yet wanted, and they were not to be acquired in the palace of the Bishop of London. 'God saw that I was beguiled,' he confesses, in subsequently looking back upon the transaction, 'and that that counsel was not the next [nearest] way to my purpose; and, therefore, He gat me no favour in my lord's sight.' At the time he bitterly felt what seemed to be the total disappointment of all his hopes; but he afterwards learnt to trace in what appeared a misfortune the fatherly

⁴ *Sir* was the common designation of a priest, just as *reverend* is now.

guidance of God; and this very disappointment, which compelled him to seek his whole comfort in the Word of God, tended to qualify him for the worthy performance of his great work.

At last the long-anticipated interview took place, with such results as any one but an enthusiast like Tindale might have foreseen. Tunstal, though an accomplished scholar, 'a man, doubtless, out of comparison,' according to Sir Thomas More, was at the same time a cautious and courtly prelate, little likely to sympathize with the noble enthusiasm of the scholar who stood before him. Tunstal was a man of the world, a man born to shine in courts, 'right meet, and convenient,' as Warham assured Wolsey, 'to entertain ambassadors and other noble strangers at that notable and honourable city [London], in the absence of the king's most noble grace.'

Upon this reserved and dignified prelate Tindale was almost certain to make an unfavourable impression. He was, according to his own confession, 'evil-favoured in this world, and without grace in the sight of men, speechless and rude, dull and slow-witted⁵.' It is evident that at the first glance the bishop and the scholar mutually distrusted each other. Tunstal felt that he might be compromised by the incaution of the youthful enthusiast; and Tindale was repelled by the cold and silent manner of the bishop, whom he describes as a 'still Saturn, that so seldom speaketh, but walketh up and down all day musing, a ducking hypocrite made to dissemble⁶.' Tunstal's courtesy was reserved for ambassadors and for scholars who had secured the patronage of kings; for the unknown scholar who stood disconcerted before him, with his translation of *Isocrates* in his hand, and proposals for an English Bible on his lips, he had nothing but that chilling official reserve, which, more even than opposition, crushes the generous enthusiasm of youth.

With difficulty Tindale explained the errand on which he had come; he produced what he had brought with him as a proof of his scholarship; he spoke of the greater design which he hoped to accomplish in London; he requested the bishop's patronage, that he might have the means of subsistence during the performance of his work. But Tunstal had no wish for any further connexion with Tindale. He acknowledged, indeed, the scholarship of the new candidate for his patronage; but he declined that personal protection which Tindale had solicited. 'My lord answered me,' says Tindale, 'his house was full; he had more than he could well find [provide for]; and advised me to seek in London, where, he said, I could not lack a service⁷.' And so they parted, never to meet again. Tunstal seems speedily to have lost all recollection of the interview; but Tindale never forgot the cold ungenerous reception which had well-nigh broken his heart.

⁵ See his letter to Frith, *infra*.

⁶ *Practice of Prelates: Tindale's Works*, vol. ii. p. 337.

⁷ Preface to *The Pentateuch: Works*, vol. i. p. 396.

It has been doubted whether at this interview Tindale made any allusion to his intention of translating the Holy Scriptures into English; and assuredly the mention of such a design would by no means tend to propitiate Tunstal's favour. But on the whole it seems probable that Tindale did communicate his intention to Tunstal. There was no reason for bringing his translation of *Isocrates* to London except as evidence of his ability to accomplish a similar work; and though the translation of any part of Holy Scripture into the English tongue had been forbidden to be undertaken by any man *of his own authority*, it was expressly provided that the 'ordinary of the place' might approve and sanction such a translation; and it was, therefore, not altogether absurd to hope that Tunstal might be induced to give this sanction. Tindale's own words, moreover, seem to make it quite clear that he spoke of this work to Tunstal, for he says he intended to have made his translation 'in the Bishop of London's house,' from which it seems natural to infer that he had mentioned his intention to Tunstal; for he could never have dreamed of accomplishing it without his consent and knowledge. Disappointed in his hopes of assistance from the Bishop of London, he had still one friend in the metropolis who was willing and ready to help him.

'The priest came to me again,' to resume Monmouth's interesting memoir, 'and besought me to help him; and so I took him into my house half a year; and there he lived like a good priest as methought. He studied most part of the day and of the night at his book; and he would eat but sodden meat by his good will, and drink but small single beer. I never saw him wear linen about him in the space he was with me [always 'odious in woollen']. I did promise him ten pounds sterling, to pray for my father and mother their souls, and all Christian souls. I did pay it him when he made his exchange to Hamburg; and afterwards he got of some other men ten pounds sterling more, the which he left with me. . . . The foresaid Sir William left me an English book called *Enchiridion*, the which book the Abbess of Denneye [in Cambridgeshire] desired it of me, and I lent it to her. Another book I had of the same copy⁸; a friar of Greenwich desired it of me, and I gave it him. I think my lord of Rochester hath it [i. e. that Fisher had seized it]. . . . I have showed the book called the *Enchiridion* to Mr. Doctor Watson [one of Henry's chaplains], and to Mr. Doctor Blockhouse, pastor of Lavenham in Suffolk, and to many other that never found fault in him to my knowledge, and to the father confessor of Sion [religious house on the Thames above Brentford], and to Mr. Martin, priest and parson of Totingbeke. . . . When I heard my lord of London preach at Paul's Cross that Sir William Tyndale had translated the New Testament in English, and [that it] was naughtily translated, that was the first time that ever I suspected or knew any evil by him. And shortly after, all the letters and treatises

⁸ This book is mentioned in such a way as to suggest that it was printed, but of this there is no proof; nor, indeed, all things considered, does it seem probable.

that he sent me, with divers copies of books that my servant did write, and the sermons that the priest did make at St. Dunstan's, I did burn them in my house. He that did write them did see it; I did burn them for fear of the translator more than for any ill that I knew by [of] them⁹.'

We have given at full length the parts of Monmouth's narrative that refer to Tindale and his proceedings during his residence in London; for after the conjectures and uncertainties which have constituted so large a portion of his biography up to this point, it is impossible to over-estimate the value of the information which the narrative contains. Monmouth's letter furnishes us with an authentic sketch of Tindale's habits and manner of life, drawn by the hand of the man who knew him best. And the picture thus sketched is that of a scholar of simple tastes and ardent love of learning, one who, unfettered by any vow, practised of his own accord that abnegation of the pleasures of life, which was, or at least was supposed to be, practised in the cloister as a wonderful attainment in religious perfection. The picture, moreover, though drawn by a loving hand, is not exaggerated through the influence of flattering affection; for Sir Thomas More, a bitter enemy, confirms it in all essential particulars; while inveighing fiercely against Tindale's doctrines, he admits that 'before he went over the sea he was well known for a man of right good living, studious and well learned in Scripture, and looked and preached holily.' His enemies never attempted to deny his great learning; and no imputation was ever made against the rectitude of his moral character.

It does not appear that Tindale procured that 'service' in London, which Tunstal had assured him a man of his ability would have no difficulty in finding; at least, there is no record of his officiating as a preacher elsewhere than in the church of St. Dunstan's. Probably, indeed, the 'praying for the souls of the father and mother of Humphrey Monmouth,' which formed the ostensible ground of connexion between him and his generous patron, was performed in the church of the parish where the worthy merchant resided: and it seems also to be implied in the words of Monmouth's narrative, that Tindale continued, at least for a time, to preach in St. Dunstan's, carefully writing out his sermons, with the anxiety of one who wished to discharge his duty well. These, however, seem to have been the whole of Tindale's official engagements in the metropolis. London needed the labours of so well qualified a teacher; but a stranger, on whom the bishop had looked with suspicion, was little likely to find encouragement there. Tindale was no adept in the arts of popularity, and London was not likely to recognize in the quiet austere-looking priest, hurrying along Fleet Street to St. Dunstan's, the man whose words were to be associated for centuries with all that is noblest in the spiritual life of England.

⁹ Petition of Humphrey Monmouth to Wolsey, Harleian MSS., p. 425; printed by Strype, with occasional errors, as usual.

Whatever discouragement he might meet with elsewhere, he was cordially welcomed under the hospitable roof of the wealthy cloth-merchant; and, indeed, all things considered, it may be doubted whether even Tunstal's palace would have afforded greater advantages than were to be enjoyed in the home of Humphrey Monmouth. For Monmouth was no ordinary man, no mere commonplace trafficker, whose ideas never rose beyond the state of the market. He occupied a position of high respectability, and was afterwards alderman and sheriff. He had travelled and seen the world to an extent quite unusual in those days; he had not only gone to Rome, then the ordinary limit even of the most adventurous travellers, but had also visited Jerusalem. His patronage of men of letters was marked by a generous liberality almost certainly unequalled in England at that time. His liberality to Tindale we have already seen: he provided him at once with ten pounds a year, equal, probably, to a hundred pounds in our day, besides receiving him to reside in his house. This, however, was only one out of many similar instances of generosity. 'I have given more exhibitions to scholars,' he declares in his petition, 'in my days than to that priest; Mr. Doctor Royston, chaplain to my lord of London, hath cost me more than forty or fifty pounds sterling [more than five hundred pounds of our money], and also Mr. Doctor Wooderall, Provincial of Friars Austines, hath cost me as much or more; Mr. Doctor Watson, chaplain to the king's good grace, hath cost me somewhat; and somewhat I have given to the scholars at his request, and to divers priests and friars.' Even this list, it may be assumed, by no means exhausts his benefactions to men of learning: for it must be remembered that when he wrote his petition, he was under arrest for assisting Tindale and others condemned as heretics, and he is, therefore, cautious not to mention any of his protégés who might be looked upon by the authorities as tainted with the infection of heresy.

At Monmouth's table Tindale would be sure to meet many of the most learned men in London; for priests of all grades, friars of all orders, priors and abbesses in numbers, were amongst the familiar friends of the worthy merchant. Perhaps Tindale may have had to fight over again some of the same battles which he had fought with the priests at the table of Sir John Walsh; more probably he would find the enlightened company that assembled around Monmouth's board ready to join with him in bewailing the lamentable corruptions that prevailed in the Church, and eagerly longing for some extensive reform of abuses that were becoming intolerable. It is quite certain that Monmouth himself was considerably influenced by the opinions of Luther. He still, apparently, believed in purgatory and prayers for the dead, as did also Tindale; but he bought and studied the works of Luther; and he was subsequently charged with eating flesh in Lent, with speaking disrespectfully of the pardons granted by the Pope and the bishops, and with denying the utility of pilgrimages and offerings before the images of the saints: all

the customary indications, in fact, of one who adhered to what was then styled the 'detestable sect of the Lutherans.'

It was in Monmouth's house, beyond a doubt, that Tindale heard most of that secret history of the transactions of Henry's reign, which he afterwards repeated in his *Practice of Prelates*; it was here, unquestionably, that he met with many of those men who were subsequently associated with him in his labours on the Continent; and it was here also that he would first have an opportunity of perusing those writings of Luther which had already withdrawn half of Germany from its obedience to the Papal See. The great work of Luther, and the wonderful progress of the Reformation in Germany, Switzerland, and France, had been but vaguely known to him as to most Englishmen before; but at the table of a merchant who traded with those countries, and where native merchants were frequently to be met, he would hear all the details narrated with the accuracy and impressiveness that belong only to eye-witnesses.

All this was not, of course, inoperative upon Tindale. Hitherto, he seems to have looked up to Erasmus as the great light and guide of the age, and the true reformer of religion; now he heard of a greater Reformer, whose words of more impressive eloquence, and, still more, whose conduct of more resolute determination, had achieved what Erasmus had rather recommended than attempted. Tindale was too independent to be the mere echo or imitator of any one, however illustrious; but there can be no question that from this time onwards Luther occupied the highest place in his esteem, and exercised very considerable influence over his opinions.

To this period of Tindale's life also may be, with little hesitation, referred his intercourse with one who was afterwards for some time the dearest of his earthly friends, John Frith. For the tradition which represents the two martyrs as having been in residence together in Cambridge, may be set aside as having neither evidence nor probability in its favour. Frith certainly did not enter Cambridge till the commencement of 1522, by which time it is agreed on all hands that Tindale must have left the University for Little Sodbury. It was in London, probably, therefore, that Frith met Tindale, and heard from him those words of persuasiveness and power which first implanted 'in his heart the seed of the Gospel and sincere godliness.' It must have been in London also that those conferences took place between them, in which they discoursed of the necessity for Scripture being 'turned into the vulgar speech, that the poor people might also read and see the simple, plain word of God.' Frith was considerably younger than Tindale, but there was something in his earnestness and love of learning which at once secured Tindale's affection; and to the close of Frith's brief career Tindale never wavered in his attachment to his dear son in the faith.'

Amid these various occupations in London, Tindale did not lose sight of the

great purpose for which he had come to the metropolis, and to which he felt impelled as the grand work of his life. No question would be more earnestly weighed in his own mind, or more eagerly discussed with the sympathizing visitors at Monmouth's table, than the question whether it was likely that the consent of the authorities of the Church could be obtained to the issuing of a translation of the Word of God in the English language. *Practically*, the use of the Word of God in their native tongue was forbidden to the people; although *theoretically*, and according to the strict letter of the law, what was forbidden was the reading of any translation of Holy Scripture 'until the said translation be approved by the ordinary of the place, or, if the case so require, by the council provincial¹⁰.' Men were not absolutely forbidden to translate Holy Scripture; they were forbidden to translate it of *their own authority*; and a hope was thus apparently held out of the possibility of some translation being produced under the sanction of the bishops. This was, however, only a vain delusive promise. More than a century had passed since the enactment of this Constitution at Oxford in 1408; the bishops had been unceasing and unrelenting in their severity towards all who dared to read the Word of God in the version of Wycliffe; but they had taken no steps whatever for supplying the imperfections of that version by the production of a better. The only existing version was rigorously prohibited under pain of 'the greater excommunication'; no version which men might freely read was as yet issued.

Tunstal had evidently given Tindale no encouragement to proceed in his work; and the momentous question was therefore to be decided, whether there was any hope or any possibility of his obtaining that episcopal approbation without which his translation could neither be printed nor read, without exposing all concerned to the penalties of the law. Such a question involved far too serious issues to be speedily or lightly determined. Long and earnestly, we may be sure, it was canvassed. The possibility of Tunstal's relenting; the hope of Convocation seriously addressing itself to the remedy of those abuses in the Church which it had so often bewailed; the likelihood of Wolsey putting into execution any of the reforms which he meditated, and overriding the opposition of the bishops by the exercise of his plenary authority as legate; the fond expectation that some prelate more liberal than Tunstal might be found who would grant the necessary approbation for his work; all these contingencies, we may be sure, were carefully weighed; but at the last Tindale sorrowfully 'understood not only that there was no room in my lord of London's palace to translate the New Testament, but, also, that there was no place to do it in all England¹¹.'

What then was to be done? Was he to abandon his cherished undertaking as

¹⁰ Wilkins, vol. iii. p. 317.

¹¹ Preface to *The Pentateuch: Works*, vol. i. P. 396.

impracticable, and patiently wait in hope of better times? Such might have been the solution of the difficulty that he would have adopted in Little Sodbury; but in Monmouth's house, surrounded by men to whom the state of the Continent was familiarly known, another solution was suggested to him. It was clearly impossible to translate the New Testament in England; but there was no difficulty in translating it abroad, in some of those countries where the Reformation had established itself. Printers abounded on the Continent, who would cheerfully undertake to print the work if there was any reasonable prospect of being reimbursed for their labour; and Monmouth would take a pleasure in pointing out the endless expedients, by which the energy of mercantile enterprise might be able to import the work into England with very little risk of its being discovered by the authorities. Money alone was wanting; but for this the liberality of Monmouth might be depended upon: and there were other friends, whose names unfortunately are unknown, who gave Tindale the considerable sum of ten pounds, almost enough in those days to defray the expense of printing an edition of the New Testament.

To Tindale, who was an intense patriot, the thought of thus exiling himself from his native land would bring a load of distress, which nothing but his fixed determination to accomplish the great purpose of his life could have enabled him to sustain. No other way, however, seemed open; if he was to accomplish that work to which he felt that God had called him, if by his instrumentality England was to receive what he believed to be the greatest blessing that could be bestowed upon it, he must be ready to sacrifice the endearments of home and native land, and to face the unknown dangers of exile in a foreign country. The trial was great; but Tindale was strengthened to bear it. He recognized the guidance of Providence, and though the way was rough, he prepared to follow it. Whatever information he required for the direction of his journey his host was well able to supply, for his trade lay chiefly with those very countries towards which Tindale was about to proceed. For a man of Tindale's simple habits few preparations were necessary. Most of his books he left with Monmouth; but his copy of Erasmus's New Testament, and possibly some crude sketches of his translation, he carried with him; and somewhere about the month of May, 1524, he sailed to Hamburg, never to set foot on his native land again.

Scarcely a year before, he had come up to London bright with anticipations of success, hoping to find in the patronage of a learned and liberal prelate that protection which had been denied him in a remote and less enlightened diocese. All his anticipations had been cruelly disappointed, and now in sorrow and sadness he was sailing forth on the untried dangers of solitude and exile. Still his faith sustained him, and even hope did not desert him, for it seems clear that he left his residence with Monmouth in the expectation of returning again in peace. Blessed was the Providence that concealed from him the future; hope seemed to him to

brighten the dark cloud that hovered over him.

Had he been able to read the future that awaited him, and which he subsequently so pathetically bewailed, the ‘poverty, the long exile from his own native land, the bitter absence from his friends, the hunger, the thirst, the cold, the great danger wherewith he was everywhere compassed, the innumerable other hard and sharp fightings which he had to endure’; had he been able to foresee all this, doubtless his gentle and loving soul would have been melted with the spectacle; and yet the stout heart would have gone forward, ‘hoping with his labours to do honour to God, true service to his Prince, and pleasure to his Commons^{12.}’

¹² Letter of Vaughan to Henry VIII: Cotton MSS., *Titus*.