

# William Tindale

## A Biography

Being a Contribution to the Early History of the  
English Bible

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## CHAPTER IV

### FROM TINDALE'S ARRIVAL IN HAMBURG TO THE PRINTING OF THE FIRST ENGLISH NEW TESTAMENT

A.D. 1524–1526.

HAMBURG was, in Tindale's time, as now, a bustling city, wholly immersed in trade, one of the chief commercial entrepôts of Germany. Even here, however, the influence of that mighty movement which Luther had inaugurated had made itself felt. The clergy were numerous, and had largely shared in the wealth of the city; the Church could reckon, in Hamburg, a hundred and twenty secular priests, besides a small army of members of the religious orders; and, with the customary insolence of the ecclesiastical corporations of that day, they had demanded that their property should be exempted from the heavy burdens which long wars had brought upon the city. The day of retribution, however, at length arrived; men would no longer endure the insolence and immorality of the clergy; the immunities of the Church were no longer respected; the traffic in indulgences was publicly denounced; and, in spite of the fierce opposition of the priests, liberty was accorded to the followers of Luther to preach their opinions. Thus Tindale would see around him in his new abode the actual operation of that great religious movement, for which long years of preparation were still needed in his native land.

But it was not merely to be a spectator of the progress of the Reformation in Germany that Tindale had crossed the sea: he had come to Hamburg for a specific purpose, and he doubtless lost no time in taking the necessary steps for the accomplishment of his great work. His movements, however, are for some time involved in obscurity; the details that have been preserved are few, and sometimes indefinite; and the uncertainty has been increased by the theorizing of modern writers who, in defence of their own hypotheses, have been led to discredit the contemporary sources of information that have come down to us.

It was, as we have seen from Monmouth's petition, about the month of May, 1524, that Tindale left London for Hamburg; 'and within a year,' the narrative continues, 'he sent for his ten pounds [which some friends in London had given him] to me *from Hamburg*; and thither I sent it to him by one Hans Collenbek, as I remember is his name, a merchant of the Stilyarde<sup>1</sup>.' Somewhat earlier therefore than May, and probably in April, 1525, Tindale was again in

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<sup>1</sup> Harleian MSS., as before.

Hamburg; and in the autumn of that year, as will subsequently be shown, he was in Cologne. These may be considered as fixed and indisputable points in Tindale's life at this period; how or where the intervening months were spent are questions on which considerable difference of opinion has hitherto prevailed.

Obviously, the first question that suggests itself to the attentive reader of Monmouth's narrative is this,—Did Tindale remain in Hamburg from May, 1524, to April, 1525, or did he spend the interval elsewhere? Monmouth's declaration is quite compatible with either alternative: and the question must be decided by other evidence. The contemporaries of Tindale, all, without one dissentient voice, assert that he did *not* remain at Hamburg; but the prevalent opinion among recent writers seems to lean to the contrary alternative. In such a conflict between the assertions of contemporary authorities and the inferences of modern historians, there can be little doubt on which side the truth is likely to be found. And in the present instance the contemporary evidence is so strong, that there need be no hesitation in rejecting the theories which have in recent times been advanced against it. One consideration alone may suffice to dissipate for ever the hypothesis that Tindale spent the whole of the first year of his exile in Hamburg. He had left England for the sole purpose of preparing for the press a translation of the New Testament; and, indeed, it is asserted by those who maintain that he remained in Hamburg, that he printed the Gospels of St. Matthew and St. Mark in that city before April, 1525. Now, though Hamburg was a wealthy and enterprising commercial town, *it did not as yet possess a single Printer*. Printing does not appear to have been introduced into that money-making community till after Tindale's martyrdom; and in these circumstances, the theory that he spent a whole year in a place where he could not possibly accomplish the work for which he had left his home, may be dismissed as untenable.

But if Tindale did not remain at Hamburg, where, it will be asked, did he go? His contemporaries, without a single exception, reply that he went to *Wittenberg* to see Luther; and as modern writers have denied this, it will not be superfluous briefly to exhibit some specimens of the concurrent testimony of the older authorities.

Among the articles of accusation against Monmouth in 1528 was the following: 'Thou wert privy and of counsel that the said Sir William Hutchin, otherwise called Tyndale, and friar Roye, or either of them, *went into Almayne* [Germany], *to Luther, there to study and learn his sect*'; and Monmouth in his defence does not deny the charge, as he certainly would have done had it been false; for it was no small fault in the eyes of his accusers.

Sir Thomas More, in his *Dialogue*, written chiefly against Tindale, asserts that ‘Tyndale as soon as he got him hence, got him to Luther straight<sup>2</sup>’; that at the time of his translation of the New Testament *Tyndale was with Luther at Wittemberg*, and the confederacy between him and Luther was well known<sup>3</sup>; and still further, Tindale having denied that he was *confederate* with Luther, Sir Thomas in his *Confutation* no longer accuses him of confederacy, but still repeats the assertion that he was with Luther, at the time when he was translating the New Testament<sup>4</sup>.

Cochloeus, whose hostility caused Tindale to suspend the printing of his translation at Cologne, speaks of Tindale and Roye as ‘two English apostates, who had been sometime at Wittemberg<sup>5</sup>’; and the truth of this assertion Cochloeus had abundant means of ascertaining from those who were printing Tindale’s work.

Finally, John Foxe concurs in asserting that ‘on his first departing out of the realm, Tyndale took his journey into the further parts of Germany, as into Saxony, where *he had conference with Luther* and other learned men in those quarters<sup>6</sup>.’

Such is the testimony of Tindale’s contemporaries. They had no theory to support; they merely repeated what they knew, or what was commonly believed at the time; and with one voice they maintain that Tindale went to Wittemberg to see Luther. No other theory has the slightest support from any contemporary writer: and evidence such as this cannot be set aside except on the clearest and most convincing demonstration of its falsehood. The objections alleged against it by modern writers are, however, extremely feeble, and scarcely merit any serious refutation.

In the main, two objections have been adduced against that journey to Wittemberg which all contemporaries have asserted. In the first place, it has been alleged that Tindale himself denies that he ever was with Luther; and this would certainly be conclusive, if only it could be proved. Tindale’s words have in this instance, however, been misunderstood, as a careful examination of the whole context will show. Sir Thomas More, in the passage already cited from his *Dialogue*, declares, ‘at the time of this translation, Hutchins was with Lu-

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<sup>2</sup> *Dialogue*, p. 283. Edition of 1557.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 221.

<sup>4</sup> Sir Thomas More’s *Confutation: Works*, pp. 419, &c.

<sup>5</sup> Cochloeus, *Commentarii de actis et scriptis M. Lutheri*, Mentz, 1549, p. 132: the passage is given in full subsequently. He repeats the statement in his treatise, *An expediat laicis legere Novum Testamentum*: A. 6.

<sup>6</sup> *Foxe: Works*, vol. v. p. 119.

ther in Wittemberg, and set certain glosses in the margin [of the first quarto New Testament], framed for the setting forth of the ungracious sect.' 'By St. John, quoth your friend, [the imaginary interlocutor in the *Dialogue*,] if that be true that Hutchins were at the time with Luther, it is a plain token that he wrought somewhat after his counsel, and was willing to help his matters forward.' Sir Thomas continues, 'As touching the *confederacy* between Luther and him [it] is a thing well known and plainly confessed by such as have been taken and convicted here of heresy.' To all this passage Tindale replies curtly and emphatically: 'When he saith Tyndale was *confederate* with Luther, that is not truth<sup>7</sup>.' Now, it seems sufficiently obvious that these words of Tindale do not at all imply a denial of the whole of More's statement. Tindale denies most emphatically that he was 'confederate with Luther,' or acting in common with him on a mutual understanding; but that he was at Wittemberg, or that he had seen and conversed with Luther, he does not deny, but rather seems implicitly to admit. That this is the true import of Tindale's assertion seems placed beyond doubt by the fact that Sir Thomas More in his subsequent *Confutation* again repeats his statement that Tindale was with Luther; and perhaps even more strongly by the fact that Foxe, who edited that very work in which the disputed words occur, maintains, notwithstanding, that Tindale on leaving England went to Luther.

In the argument just considered it may be admitted that there is some show of reason; but this can hardly be conceded to the other objection which has been in recent times alleged against the universal testimony of all Tindale's contemporaries. It has actually been asserted that during the debated period, Luther was so engrossed in his own labours that he could not have had a moment to spare for conversing with any stranger; and that, moreover, he was so excited on the great sacramental controversy which had just sprung up, that he would not have permitted the approach of any one who did not share his opinions. The great German Reformer was, indeed, busily occupied in what was one of the most eventful years of the Reformation; and having, as he himself used to say, 'a pope in his belly,' he may have been somewhat sharp in his treatment of opponents; but such arguments, besides involving a gross imputation upon so noble a soul, would not, even if true, prove that Tindale did not go to Wittemberg. Wittemberg was, in fact, the head quarters of the new movement that was agitating all Europe: it was, as Duke George of Saxony styled it, 'the common asylum of all apostates'; every man, in every country, who longed for some reformation of religion, and whose opinions rendered him ob-

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<sup>7</sup> *Answer to Sir Thomas More: Works*, vol. iii. p. 147.

noxious to the ecclesiastical authorities, flocked to Wittemberg; and for them all the German Reformer had a hearty welcome; after his marriage his house was open to their visits, and at all times he was easy enough of access. Moreover, there is no ground whatever for believing that at this period Tindale's views on the Sacrament differed from Luther's, or even that he had at all departed from the ordinary teaching of the Church on this point; indeed, Sir Thomas More repeatedly asserts-and no denial was ever offered of his assertions-that at first Tindale did adopt the Lutheran doctrine of the Sacrament.

The truth is, that the whole of this modern theory of Tindale's movements, constructed, as we have seen, in direct opposition to all contemporary authority, has sprung from a narrow and ill-grounded fear, that Tindale's reputation would be injured by the admission of his having been at Wittemberg with Luther. The admirers of our great English translator have been justly indignant at the ignorant misrepresentations which have sometimes treated him as a mere echo and parasite of his German contemporary; and, in their zeal to maintain their hero's originality, they have discarded ancient authority, and have denied that the two Reformers ever met. The motive for such a defence may be praiseworthy, but its wisdom is questionable. To maintain, in defiance of all contemporary evidence, that Tindale remained for a year in a bustling commercial town where there were no printers, where he would be disturbed by bitter quarrels, and deprived of all opportunities of consulting books or conferring with friends that might have aided him in his work,—this is surely a strange method of vindicating Tindale; this is an attempt to defend his originality at the cost of his good sense.

Rejecting, therefore, the theories of modern historians, we accept implicitly the testimony of contemporary authors, and believe that Tindale, shortly after his arrival in Hamburg, proceeded at once to Wittemberg. Of the details and incidents of the journey, and the impressions it made on Tindale's mind, we have no record, and it is useless to indulge in speculations. To a man like Tindale, with a keen eye, and a mind open to conviction, and capable of reflection, such a journey must, as a matter of course, have been an eventful one, contributing materially to form and develop his own religious opinions, and cheering his heart after his sad farewell to his native land. In England, he had prayed and longed for a Reformation which seemed distant, and perhaps impossible; but as he journeyed to Wittemberg he would see the Reformation in successful progress. Indulgences were no longer vended in places of public resort; convents were abandoned by their inmates, who had relinquished vows that secluded them in idleness, and had betaken themselves to pious and useful occupations; images were no more revered; the Mass, with its accompanying

rites, was giving place to the Lord's Supper; the people were freely permitted to read the Word of God in their native tongue, and exhibited the deepest interest in the theological questions that were debated around them; and even amongst those who were opposed to the doctrines of Luther there was a firm determination to obtain from the Roman See some redress of the intolerable grievances under which the German nation had for ages been groaning. In all this there was much to encourage Tindale in the prosecution of his great work; but most of all would he be encouraged by that intercourse with Luther, which, under whatever difficulties in that year of troubles, we still suppose, in accordance with the statements of contemporary authorities, that he in some measure enjoyed. For Tindale thus to come into contact with the strong, joyous faith of Luther, to hear his lion-voice echoing through the crowded University Church of Wittemberg, or to listen to his wonderful 'table-talk,' as he sipped his beer in friendly, social intercourse, would be to have his whole soul inspired with courage, bravely to do whatever duty God had called him to, and to learn to repose with implicit confidence in the protection of the Divine Master whom he served. Tindale would have too much good sense not to avail himself of any advice which Luther's experience could suggest for the successful accomplishment of his work; and safe at last from any danger of molestation, he settled down in Wittemberg to the steady prosecution of his long-contemplated task.

To the modern scholar, amply provided with an embarrassing riches of Greek scholastic apparatus, in the shape of grammars, lexicons, synopses, and collations, the undertaking of Tindale probably does not appear to be one of any superlative difficulty. But in Tindale's days the scholar had no such helps as those which three centuries of study have accumulated around us. Grammars and lexicons were as yet few and meagre, mainly the works of Italian scholars, and somewhat expensive and difficult to be procured. The question of *texts*, and *codices*, and *various readings*, so interesting to the Biblical student of the present day, had not then begun to attract attention. Tindale had, practically, no choice of a text; there is no reason to believe that he had access to any manuscripts; there is no trace in his first translation of any direct influence exerted by the Complutensian Polygot; no Greek Testament was in reality accessible to him, except that of Erasmus, which had been originally printed in 1516, and of which a second edition appeared in 1519, and a third in 1522. From this third edition of Erasmus it can be demonstrated that Tindale made his English version. For example, Tindale's translation contains the famous controverted passage about the three witnesses in the First Epistle of St. John. Now this did not occur in the Testament of Erasmus till the edition of 1522, when it was inserted from the Complutensian Polygot.

That he would diligently avail himself of any assistance which Luther or Melancthon could afford, may be taken for granted; in truth, however, he cannot have received any material assistance from such quarters. He was himself a good Greek scholar, quite as good, in all probability, as Luther. That he also knew German we have on the authority of Cochloeus, who speaks of Tindale and Roye as ‘two apostates from England, *who learned the German language at Wittemberg*<sup>8</sup>. Cochloeus resided in Cologne when Tindale was there in 1525, and he was a daily visitor in the printing-office where Tindale’s book was printing, and therefore could not well be mistaken in what he here alleges. But while Tindale understood German, none of the learned men of Wittemberg understood English, so their help must have been of very slight importance, and such as in no way to affect Tindale’s originality. He might, indeed, be able to consult them on the correct meaning of difficult or disputed passages; but in the actual translation of the New Testament into the English language he was thrown entirely upon his own resources; for, as he reminds his readers in the noble epistle subjoined to his first octavo New Testament, he ‘had no man to counterfeit [imitate], neither was helped with English of any that had interpreted the same, or such like thing in the Scripture beforetime.’ He was of course aware of the existence of Wycliffe’s version; but this, as a bald translation from the Vulgate into obsolete English, could not be of any assistance (even if he had possessed a copy) to one who was endeavouring ‘singly and faithfully, so far forth as God had given him the gift of knowledge and understanding,’ to render the New Testament from its original Greek into ‘proper English.’

Of the ability and learning with which his work was accomplished we shall subsequently have to treat; meantime, it must be remembered that the task was not performed without great labour, so that his residence in Wittemberg, from perhaps the end of May, 1524, probably to the commencement of April, 1525, must have been no period of pleasant holiday. Every available means of making his translation as perfect as his knowledge and his time could make it, was sedulously employed. He had before him in his work not only the New Testament of Erasmus, with its Latin version, but the Vulgate, the German translation of Luther, all of which it can be proved that he systematically consulted; some favourite expositors probably; and, without doubt, such grammars and lexicons of Lascaris, Craston, and others as could be procured. The mere mechanical drudgery thus entailed upon him was very considerable, and might have delayed the completion of his task; fortunately, however, he received the assistance of an amanuensis who, if he was somewhat unsuitable as a compan-

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<sup>8</sup> Cochloeus, *An expedit laicis legere Novum Testamentum*: signature A. 6.

ion, was at all events serviceable in a humbler capacity. This man, William Roye by name, is not altogether unknown to the student of our early literature; and was one of those restless beings whom the first stirrings of the Reformation impelled to forsake his monastery and betake himself to a wandering, unsatisfactory life, of little benefit to any one. The reader will, however, prefer to see Tindale's own account of his eccentric amanuensis.

While I abode [waited for] a faithful companion, which now hath taken another voyage upon him, to preach Christ, where, I suppose, He was never yet preached (God, which put in his heart thither to go, send His Spirit with him, comfort him, and bring his purpose to good effect)<sup>9</sup>, one William Roye, a man somewhat crafty, when he cometh unto new acquaintance, and before he be thorough known, and namely [especially] when all is spent, came unto me and offered his help [sent by Monmouth, as we have seen, who, no doubt, knew where Tindale was]. As long as he had no money, somewhat I could rule him; but as soon as he had gotten him money, he became like himself again. Nevertheless, I suffered all things till that was ended which I could not do alone without one, both to write: and to help me to compare the texts together. When that was ended, I took my leave, and bade him farewell for our two lives, and, as men say, a day longer. After we were departed [i.e. separated], he went and gat him new friends, which thing to do he passeth all that ever I yet knew. And then when he had stored him of money, he gat him to Argentine [Strasburg], where he professeth wonderful faculties, and maketh boast of no small things<sup>10</sup>.

Of this troublesome and ill-assorted companion, whose 'walking inordinately, and irrepressible propensity for foolish rhymes,' must have greatly vexed the soul of Tindale, we shall hear more anon; meantime, with his help the work of translation was probably brought nearly to a conclusion during the year's residence at Wittemberg. The assistance which Roye gave to Tindale was, however, evidently nothing more than that of an amanuensis; and though the New Testament, when it was first imported into England, was commonly spoken of as the work of 'William Hutchin and Friar Roye,' there is no reason

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<sup>9</sup> Who this faithful companion was, it is impossible to say. Tindale evidently had good reason for concealing his name, and it is now impossible even to conjecture it. The supposition that it was Frith is quite untenable; not a single particular of the description applies to him. Neither was it George Joy, who did not leave England till 1527. It has been suggested that it may have been William Hitton, of whom Tindale always speaks with great respect but of whom we know so little that it is impossible to decide as to the probability of this conjecture. I have searched all Warham's *Register* without finding any notice of Hitton.

<sup>10</sup> Preface to *Parable of Wicked Mammon: Works*, vol. i. p. 37.

to suppose that Roye's share in it was greater than that which Tindale assigns in the passage just cited.

In the spring of 1525, Tindale removed from Wittemberg to Hamburg, to receive the remittance of the ten pounds which he had left with Monmouth. We do not know why he did not again return to Wittemberg; but it is not difficult to conjecture many good reasons for declining to print his translation at a place so sure to be suspected as Wittemberg was. He knew that his translation would not be allowed in England, and that all books imported from Wittemberg were sure to be watched with the most jealous care, as proceeding from the great head quarters of heresy; and this alone would recommend the propriety of selecting some town less notorious for its Lutheranism than Wittemberg, and from which his book, once printed, might be introduced into England with less trouble and without raising suspicion. For this purpose no city could be better adapted than Cologne; it boasted of some famous printers who had extensive business connexions in England; it was, as it still is, entirely devoted to Rome; and from its position it offered far greater facilities than Wittemberg for transmitting the books cheaply and expeditiously to London. This was possibly the reason which induced Tindale and Roye to remove from Wittemberg to Cologne, taking Hamburg in their way, that they might receive from Monmouth the money without which they could not proceed in their work.

But before narrating their proceedings at Cologne, one point in their history deserves consideration. Monmouth states in his petition to Wolsey that he 'had a little treatise that the priest [Tindale] sent him when he sent for his money'; and it has been suggested that this was a treatise which had been printed by Tindale, and was the first offering of his pen to the great cause to which his life was now consecrated. If this were so, then it is evidently a matter of interest to ascertain if possible the nature of this 'little treatise.' Two opinions have been advanced on this point.

Some writers have imagined that it was a little work incorporated by Foxe in his *Acts and Monuments*, entitled, *The Story of the Examination of William Thorpe before Archbishop Arundel*. But it is quite evident to any one who reads Foxe with care, that Tindale did not print this book, but simply undertook to modernize its obsolete English; moreover, it was never associated with Tindale's name, but was assigned by Sir Thomas More to Constantine; and, what seems fatal to the theory, there is not a particle of evidence to show that it belongs to so early a date as 1525, but every reason to believe that it did not appear till some years later<sup>11</sup>.

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<sup>11</sup> See Foxe, vol. iii. p. 249, &c. Sir Thomas More, in his *Confutation*, mentions it in connex-

The second theory, far more interesting if it could be conclusively established, is, that the 'little treatise' was in reality the Gospels of St. Matthew and St. Mark, which he had printed probably at Wittemberg, as a first instalment of his great work. The evidence in favour of this theory is sufficiently strong to make it by no means improbable, though not so conclusive as to secure its adoption as an important addition to the somewhat meagre story of this part of Tindale's life. Foxe, it is true, had said in his account of Frith, that Tindale when 'he placed himself in Germany, did there *first* translate the Gospel of St. *Matthew* into English, and *after*, the whole of the New Testament'; but this occurs in a passage that literally swarms with errors, and has generally been considered to be merely one of many instances of the careless and rambling manner in which the Martyrologist, who was innocent of all literary skill, is in the habit of expressing himself. More recent investigations, however, have caused it to be surmised that Foxe did really intend to speak of a translation of St. Matthew as being finished, and possibly printed as a distinct work from the subsequent version of the whole of the New Testament. In confirmation of this interpretation various authorities have been cited. Robert Necton, one of the most enterprising of the colporteurs who distributed the prohibited books, when arrested and tried, confessed that for a time, till he succeeded in purchasing some copies of the New Testament of Tindale's version, he had no books 'except the *chapters of Matthew*<sup>12</sup>.' Similarly, John Tyball, of Steeple Bumpstead, acknowledged, when on his trial, April 28, 1528, that 'about two years ago he had possessed *the Gospel of Matthew and Mark in English*<sup>13</sup>.' And Robert Ridley, uncle of the martyr (but widely differing from him in his opinions), writing, probably in 1527, to Henry Golde, one of Warham's chaplains, in fiercest condemnation of 'the common and vulgar translation of the New Testament into English, done by Mr. William Hichyns, otherways called Mr. W. Tyndale, and Friar William Roye,' specifies distinctly 'their commentaries and annotations in *Matthew and Mark in the FIRST print*, as well as their *preface in the SECOND print*<sup>14</sup>.'

References so numerous would almost seem to substantiate beyond any doubt the existence of a translation of the two Gospels of Matthew and Mark, issued before the rest of the New Testament, and furnished with 'annotations,'

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ion with the *Exposition of the seventh chapter of First Corinthians*, and *Jonas*, both later than 1528. He does not, it is true, always adhere to strict chronological order, but in the present case we have no means of proving that he did not do so.

<sup>12</sup> Harleian MSS., 421.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> Cotton MSS., *Cleopatra*, E. v., p. 362.

that is, probably with marginal notes, as in Luther's German translation, and in Tindale's quarto version. In this there is nothing in any way improbable or inconsistent with what is known of Tindale's proceedings; and if we admit that this is the true meaning of the passages cited, and that the Gospels of Matthew and Mark were issued separately before the completion of the Testament, then we may with almost perfect certainty assume that they were printed, *not* at Hamburg, as has been hitherto said, for there were no printers there, but at Wittenberg, not later than March, 1525. This would be an interesting addition to the history of Tindale's life; but it must be confessed that there are still some difficulties which stand in need of explanation. Foxe is so inaccurate in his life of Frith that his assertion is of little value. Necton, in his evidence, does not specify the 'chapters of Matthew' as the work of Tindale, and they may have been manuscript fragments of Wycliffe's version. A careful examination of the sequel of Tyball's evidence, moreover, seems to make it probable that he also was speaking of a Wycliffite version.

As to Ridley's specific assertions, it is to be noted that he was merely writing from memory; and as his letter totally ignores the existence of the octavo Testament, which was certainly known to be circulating in England when he wrote, it is quite conceivable that in the confusion of indistinct recollection, he imagined that he had seen *a 'first print of Matthew and Mark with annotations,'* and *'a second print of the whole New Testament with a preface'* (but apparently without annotations); when what he really had seen was, a New Testament in *quarto* which had *both* annotations and preface, and an *octavo*, which had *neither*. In fact, there is no edition of the New Testament which, strictly speaking, answers to Ridley's description of the *second print*, so that we may justly suspect some confusion from an inattentive examination of the books, or a confused recollection of them. Moreover, it is difficult to believe that a work so important as this, and so certain, by its annotations, to give offence to the authorities, should never have been mentioned among the prohibited books. We have many lists, both from friends and enemies, of the works issued by the early Reformers, and clandestinely introduced into England, but in none of them does any notice of the two Gospels occur. Whatever probabilities, therefore, have been advanced in proof of the publication of the Gospels of Matthew and Mark by Tindale in the first year of his exile, this must still be regarded only as a probable supposition not sufficiently confirmed to be accepted as an ascertained fact.

To resume, therefore, the thread of the narrative, we believe that from Hamburg, after no longer delay than was necessary to receive the money which Monmouth had sent by Hans Collenbek, Tindale and Roye proceeded to Co-

logne, to commit to the printer the work which had been prosecuted so diligently at Wittenberg. The translation was, according to the only evidence we possess, practically finished before they arrived at Cologne, needing nothing probably but the care and revision which Tindale would naturally bestow upon it. Printers were not difficult to be found in that ancient Rhenish city; Peter Quentel and Arnold Byrckmann were renowned throughout Germany, and were not unknown in London. Cologne was, indeed, strongly opposed to the doctrines of Luther; but Tindale was provided with money to indemnify the printers against any serious loss; and, as Roman Catholic writers at the time complained, there was everywhere such a demand for books forbidden by the ecclesiastical authorities, that a ready sale was anticipated, so that the printers were easily persuaded to undertake the work.

Every precaution was used to ensure secrecy; and the condition of Germany, torn with intestine dissensions, and agitated by the insurrection of the peasants, was supposed to be favourable to the concealment which they courted. Roye's unsettled and obtrusive temper was doubtless a great source of anxiety to Tindale; but he knew how to restrain his tongue by keeping his pockets empty. All seemed to go well with them; they escaped the observation of the many hostile eyes around; their visits to the printing-office were so skilfully arranged that they excited no suspicion; the work was progressing favourably, and the heart of Tindale beat high with hope. Three thousand copies were to be put to press; and already the work, a quarto with prologue and marginal notes and references, had proceeded as far as the letter 'K' in the signature of the sheets, when suddenly the senate of the city issued orders that the printers should at once suspend their labours, and Tindale and Roye, to escape imprisonment or worse consequences, were compelled to snatch away what they could of the finished sheets, and sail up the Rhine to some more hospitable refuge.

Unknown to them, an enemy, keen-eyed and sharp-witted, had been for some time lurking in Cologne; and it was his unwearied and somewhat unscrupulous intervention that had thus arrested the work when all seemed to promise fair for a speedy completion. It was a heavy trial, doubtless, for that faithful heart of Tindale, which had been already so grievously tried; but if he owed no gratitude to the officious zeal of the man who thus interrupted him, we are at least indebted to him for a clear and graphic account of the whole proceedings, which the reader will peruse with interest. John Cochloeus is probably unknown, even by name, to ordinary readers; but to students of the history of the Reformation in Germany he is sufficiently familiar, as a ready and voluminous controversialist, who seemed to consider himself specially raised up by Provi-

dence to oppose and refute the opinions of Luther, and who was, indeed, generally spoken of by the Roman Catholics as ‘the scourge of Luther.’ He it was who so inopportunately discovered Tindale’s secret, and so summarily arrested his work; and as he never in his lifetime received any suitable recompense for what seemed to him a most invaluable service to the cause of the Church, he has taken care that posterity should not forget his merits, by recording the whole transaction in his *Commentary on the Acts and Writings of Luther*<sup>15</sup>. His narrative diverges so frequently into personal details foreign to our subject, that it cannot be presented entire; enough, however, will be selected to render the whole occurrence intelligible to the reader, and to fix with certainty the precise date of this interesting crisis in Tindale’s life.

In the year 1525 the disturbances connected with the insurrection of the peasants reached Frankfort-on-the-Maine; and during the Easter holidays, that is, in the week after April 16th, the people of the city rose and threatened violence to the clergy<sup>16</sup>. The deans of two of the chief churches, Martorff and John Cochloeus, apprehensive of the fury of the populace, on account of their well-known opposition to Luther, fled from Frankfort and took refuge in Mayence. The disturbances followed Cochloeus to his new asylum; on St. Mark’s Day, April 25th, the people rose, and for a time became masters of the city. Driven from Mayence, the unfortunate dean repaired to Cologne; but here the same evil fortune attended him. During the Whitsuntide holidays (June 5th) the commons of Cologne rebelled, and compelled the senate and the clergy to resign much of their authority. For fourteen days the rioters were in the ascendant, and Cochloeus was, doubtless, meditating flight to some quieter haven; when, in the end, the power of the Prince Archbishop prevailed, and order was restored. Cochloeus was then invited to return to his office at Frankfort; but he resolved to shake off the dust of his feet as a testimony against the ingratitude of the rebellious city, and for nine months he lived in exile at Cologne. He was thus at Cologne at the very time that Tindale came there to print his translation; and being an indefatigable man of letters, he naturally employed his leisure in literary pursuits, and was engaged at the time in superintending a work which was actually printed in the same establishment with the English New Testament. The preservation of Tindale’s secret thus became a matter of extreme difficulty; it was scarcely possible that it should not somehow leak out; after some time the indiscretion of one of the workmen disclosed the whole, and

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<sup>15</sup> Written in Latin and printed in folio at Mentz and elsewhere; my references are in all cases to the Mentz edition.

<sup>16</sup> Cochloeus, *Commentarii, &c.*, p. 114; *feriis Paschalibus*.

Tindale had to retreat baffled from the scene. But this part of the transaction may more appropriately be told in Cochloeus's own language<sup>17</sup>.

'Two English apostates, *who had been some time at Wittemberg*, not only sought to corrupt their own merchants, who encouraged and supported them in their exile, but also hoped that whether the king wished or not, the whole people of England would soon become Lutherans, by means of Luther's New Testament, which they had translated into the English language<sup>18</sup>. They had already [before Luther wrote his letter, September 1st, 1525] come to Cologne, that they might multiply by thousands through the press, the Testament which they had translated, and might then secretly convey it to England concealed under other goods. Indeed, so confident were they of success, that at the very outset they requested the printers to put to press six thousand copies. They, however, being somewhat apprehensive of suffering a serious loss, should any misfortune occur, put to press only three thousand copies; for if these were sold to advantage they could easily be printed afresh. Already Pomeranus [i.e. Bugenhagius, a well-known Reformer] had sent an epistle to the saints in England, and Luther himself had also written to the king. And as it was believed that the New Testament would speedily follow, the Lutherans were possessed of such great hope, and inflated with such vain confidence, that in the elation of their joy they disclosed the secret prematurely by their foolish boastings.

'At that time John Cochloeus, Dean of the Church of the Blessed Virgin at Frankfort, was living in exile in Cologne;' -but we need not repeat the personal details into which the dean here diverges; suffice it to say that Cochloeus was occupied at Cologne in searching for the works of Rupert, a former abbot of the monastery of Deutz, on the opposite side of the Rhine, and had undertaken to prepare an edition of them which Quentel and Byrckmann were to print. He then resumes his narrative of the discovery of Tindale's 'wicked design.' 'Becoming, in consequence of these engagements, better known to, and more familiar with, the Cologne printers, he sometimes heard them confidently boast over their cups that whether the king and cardinal would or not, all England would, in a short time, become Lutheran. He heard also that there were two Englishmen lurking there, *learned, skilful in languages*, eloquent, whom, however, he never could see or converse with. Inviting, therefore, some printers to his lodging, after they were excited with wine, one of them. in private conver-

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<sup>17</sup> What follows is given by Cochloeus under 1526, not because it happened in that year, but because the whole subject is connected with Luther's letter to Henry, which that sovereign received and answered in 1526.

<sup>18</sup> The meaning of this assertion will be explained subsequently.

sation disclosed to him the secret by which England was to be drawn over to the party of Luther, namely, that there were at that very time in the press three thousand copies of the Lutheran New Testament, translated into the English language, and that they had advanced as far as the letter “K” in the order of the sheets; that the expenses were abundantly supplied by English merchants, who, when the work was printed, were to convey it secretly and disperse it widely through all England, before the king or the cardinal could discover or prohibit it.

‘Cochloeus, though mentally distracted between fear and wonder, disguised his grief in a wonderful manner. But the next day, considering sadly with himself the magnitude of the danger, he deliberated how he might conveniently obstruct these very wicked attempts. He went accordingly in secret to Herman Rinck, a senator of Cologne and a knight, well known both to the Emperor and the King of England, and he made known to him the whole affair, as by the help of the wine he had learned it. Rinck, to make sure of everything, sent another into the house where the work was printing, according to the information given by Cochloeus; and when he was informed that the matter was as it had been described, and that there was an enormous supply of paper there, he went to the Senate of Cologne, and procured an order interdicting the printers from proceeding further with that work. The two English apostates fled, carrying away with them the sheets that were printed, and sailed up the Rhine to Worms, where the people were under the full influence of Lutheranism, in order that in that city they might complete by another printer the work that had been begun. Rinck and Cochloeus, however, immediately wrote to warn the king, the cardinal, and the Bishop of Rochester, to take the utmost precaution in all the seaports of England, lest that most pernicious article of merchandise should be introduced<sup>19</sup>.’

Nothing, apparently, could be more complete than the triumph of Cochloeus; he had not only interrupted the printing of the New Testament at Cologne, but he had disclosed the secret of Tindale’s intentions to those who were most able to take effectual steps to prevent the introduction of the work into England, if Tindale should ever succeed in getting it printed at all. Tindale himself was too magnanimous to make any allusion to the persevering animosity which had thus vastly added to the difficulties of his undertaking; but his companion Roye, when freed from the restraint of Tindale’s presence, gave vent in his *Rede me, and be not wrothe*, in sharp, satirical lines, to his indignation at the inveterate spite of ‘Cocclaye,’ whom he describes as

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<sup>19</sup> Cochloeus, *Commentarii, &c., as above, p. 132, &c.*

‘A little, praty, foolish poade,  
But although his stature be small,  
Yet men say he lacketh no gall,  
More venomous than any toad.’

The reader who sympathizes with Tindale in the heavy discouragement that so suddenly fell upon him, will probably not be sorry to learn that Cochloeus was completely disappointed of the reward which he anticipated for so brilliant a service; Henry and Wolsey recognized in words his superlative merit, but, as he himself subsequently lamented, he was left like Mordecai at the gate without any substantial recompense for his disclosure of a plot as dangerous as that against the life of Ahasuerus<sup>20</sup>.

Though grievously disappointed and seriously inconvenienced by this unexpected occurrence at Cologne, Tindale had no intention of abandoning the work, even when it seemed to be surrounded by endless difficulties. His retreat had been sudden and precipitate, yet his choice of Worms, as a new place of refuge, was not made without good reason. That ancient city, famous in those times for the recent heroic appearance of Luther before the Imperial Diet, had adopted the opinions of the Reformation, so that Tindale was secured against the possible interference of officious priests and hostile magistrates. Worms, moreover, was in those days superior in importance to Cologne; it enjoyed almost equal advantages of intercourse with England; and in Peter Schoeffer, son of the Schoeffer who had been associated with Fust at Mentz, Tindale would find a printer able to accomplish his wishes, and inclined, from his Lutheran sympathies, to embark with alacrity in his great undertaking. No time, therefore, would be lost in resuming, at Worms, the work which had been interrupted at Cologne. It was, as Cochloeus informs us, not long after the date of Luther’s letter to Henry, i.e. September 1, 1525, that the discovery took place which compelled Tindale and Roye to set out on what was then the tedious and even dangerous voyage up the Rhine to Worms. Their arrival in that city may be assigned, with every probability, to the month of October, and not many days probably would elapse before operations were actively recommenced; and the hearts of the exiles would once again beat high with the hope of accomplishing their long-meditated design.

An important modification, however, was introduced into their plans.

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<sup>20</sup> See his *Scopa*, signature B 2 (the work is not paged), and the letters of More at the end of the work.

Schoeffer may, not improbably, have objected to the somewhat troublesome and ungrateful task of merely completing what had been begun by his rival at Cologne; and there was quite certain to be considerable practical difficulty in procuring type and form that would exactly range with those employed in the sheets that Quentel had printed. Accordingly, the size and character of the book were materially changed ; and instead of a quarto, with prologue and copious doctrinal notes in the margin, Schoeffer went to press with an octavo, destitute of either prologue or glosses. The sheets which had been snatched from destruction at Cologne were not, however, lost: the New Testament with glosses, which Quentel had begun, was completed by some printer unknown, though not improbably by Schoeffer at Worms. Of this, indeed, no direct evidence has ever been produced ; and as not a fragment of the quarto, beyond what was printed at Cologne, is known to exist, we have no opportunity of ascertaining the printer by those indications of type, form, illustration, and watermark which, in the hands of an expert, would long ago have settled the question beyond dispute.

The fact, however, of the completion, nearly about the same time, of two editions of the New Testament, is placed beyond a doubt by the earliest official notice of Tindale's work—the prohibition of that bishop whose patronage had been solicited in vain—which distinctly specifies ' many books of the translation,' as being in circulation, 'some *with* glosses and some *without*.' Thus the hostility of Cochloeus, which at one time threatened to arrest the progress of the work, only delayed its completion for a time, and seems to have enabled Tindale to carry out his original design of printing not *three* but *six* thousand copies of his translation. There were friends in England, as Cochloeus admitted, willing to supply the necessary funds; Schoeffer was more friendly than Quentel had been ; and according to the testimony of an eminent German contemporary<sup>21</sup>, 'six thousand copies of the English Testament were printed at Worms.'

The few weeks intervening between the period of arrival at Worms and the close of 1525 would not, of course, suffice, even with all the energy of Tindale and Roye in correcting and revising, to complete what must have been in those times of imperfect mechanical appliances an undertaking of considerable magnitude. But early in the spring of 1526, as soon as the relaxing rigour of winter permitted navigation to be resumed, the English New Testament, in both forms, would be with all secrecy smuggled over into England. It is naturally impossible to say *when* the New Testaments were first brought to England. The

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<sup>21</sup> Spalatin's *Diary*. See subsequently the passage in full.

earliest notice of their presence in England which I have observed, occurs in the evidence of John Pykas, who, on March 7, 1528, confessed that '*about a two years last past he bought a New Testament*'; this plainly points to some date posterior to March, 1526, as the time of purchase. It is improbable that they were in England before April or May of that year.

The German merchants had for several years carried on an extensive trade in the importation of the prohibited books of Luther and the Continental Reformers ; and in England there existed a skilfully organized system of colportage by which the works thus introduced had been sold in London, in the country towns, and in the Universities, without attracting the notice of the ecclesiastical authorities. Henry and Wolsey had, indeed, been warned of this threatened invasion of England by the "Word of God in the native tongue"; and the warning of Cochloeus had been repeated by Lee, Henry's almoner, and subsequently Wolsey's successor in the See of York, who thus wrote from Bordeaux, on December 2nd:

'Please it your highness to understand that I am certainly informed as I passed in this country, that an Englishman, your subject, at the solicitation and instance of Luther, with whom he is, hath translated the New Testament into English, and within few days intendeth to arrive with the same imprinted, in England. I need not to advertise your grace what infection and danger may ensue hereby, if it be not withstended. This is the next [i.e. nearest] way to fulfil [i.e. to fill full] your realm with Lutherans. For all Luther's opinions be grounded upon bare words of Scripture, not well taken nor understood, which your grace hath opened [made clear] in sundry places of your royal book. All our forefathers, governors of the Church of England, hath with all diligence forbid, and eschewed publication of English Bibles, as appeareth in constitutions provincial of the Church of England. Now, sir, as God hath endued your grace with Christian courage to set forth the standard against these Philistines, and to vanquish them, so I doubt not but that He will assist your grace to prosecute and perform the same, that is, to undertread them that they shall not now again lift up their heads, which they endeavour now by means of English Bibles. They know what hurt such books hath done in your realm in times past. Hitherto, blessed be God, your realm is safe from infection of Luther's sect, as for so much that although any peradventure be secretly blotted within, yet for fear of your royal majesty, which hath drawn his sword in God's cause, they dare not openly avow. Wherefore, I cannot doubt but that your noble grace will valiantly maintain that you have so nobly begun. The realm of France hath been somewhat touched with this sect, in so much that it hath entered among the doctors [i. e. theologians] of Paris, whereof some be in

prison, some fled, some called *in judicium*. . . . And yet, blessed be God, your noble realm is yet unblotted. Wherefore, lest any danger might ensue, if these books secretly should be brought in, I thought my duty to advertise your grace thereof, considering that it toucheth your high honour, and the wealth [i. e. well-being] and integrity of the Christian faith within your realm; which cannot long endure if these books may come in<sup>22</sup>.’

All this vehement adjuration might have been dispensed with; Henry was not in the least inclined to tolerate the introduction of the English New Testament into his realm. Fortunately, however, for his subjects, the enterprise of the merchants was more than a match for the power of the sovereign and the hostility of the bishops; and, as we shall presently see, in spite of all warnings and all precautions, the work of Tindale was safely conveyed into England, and widely circulated there, to the inexpressible joy and comfort of many who had long walked in darkness.

Nearly two years had now passed over Tindale’s head since he left his native land. His life in exile had not been a smooth one, and he had had bitter experience of the vicissitudes to which his faith exposed him: but at last he had surmounted all difficulties and accomplished the work on which for years the whole energies of his mind had been concentrated. At length, by God’s mercy, his proud boast at Sodbury had been realized; and the very poorest of his countrymen, the very boy at the plough, if he could read, might know Holy Scripture as well as any doctor did. At length he might unbend from the labour which had so long taxed, and yet cheered, both body and soul; and as he watched the precious volumes passing, bound or in sheets, into the hands of the enterprising merchants who were to convey them to their destination, need we doubt that the heart of the patriotic translator swelled with fond thoughts of the home from which he was so far separated, and that with his voice of thanks for the grace which had enabled him to bring his work to a successful termination, there mingled an earnest prayer for abundant blessing on his countrymen for whom he had so faithfully laboured? No alloy of baser pride was associated with these pure emotions: the book was not intended to secure the fame of the translator; it was sent forth anonymously into the world, without anything to indicate the man to whom England was indebted for so great a treasure. Tindale had not laboured for money or for applause, and he was content ‘patiently to abide the reward of the Last Day<sup>23</sup>.’

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<sup>22</sup> Cotton MSS., *Vespasian*, C. iii. fol. 211; the letter has been printed in Sir Henry Ellis’s *Original Letters*, Series 3, vol. ii.

<sup>23</sup> Preface to *The Wicked Mammon*.