

# William Tindale

## A Biography

Being a Contribution to the Early History  
of the English Bible

By Robert Demaus, M.A.

Author of 'Hugh Latimer: A Biography'

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By Richard Lovett, M.A.

The Religious Tract Society

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## CHAPTER VIII

### MARBURG: ANTWERP: HAMBURG: PUBLICATION OF THE 'PENTATEUCH' AND 'THE PRACTICE OF PRELATES'

A.D. 1529-1530

GEORGE JOYE, in his ill-tempered reply to Tindale, has ventured to speak of the illustrious martyr as if he were idle and averse to work. 'All this long while,' says he, speaking of the period at which we have now arrived, 'Tyndale slept, for nothing came from him so far as I could perceive<sup>1</sup>.' Whether George Joye lived in such absolute unconsciousness of all the occurrences of the day as these words seem to imply; whether he simply used them to annoy Tindale; or whether he merely intended to assert that Tindale had taken no steps to fulfil the promise of revising his translation of the New Testament, which he had so solemnly made at the close of the Worms octavo, need not be here discussed; the reader, who has seen in the previous chapter something of the literary labours of Tindale during the year 1528, will scarcely feel disposed to acquiesce in the accuracy of Joye's insinuation that Tindale was 'asleep.' His life, since he left England, had been one of ceaseless exertion; and the first rest from his labour was that which came to him some few years later in prison.

*The Parable of the Wicked Mammon* and *The Obedience of a Christian Man* were not the sole occupation of Tindale during the year 1528; possibly he might even have been inclined to look upon them not as, properly speaking, his work, but rather as a species of relaxation from what was the real labour to which his whole energies were devoted. For he had resolved to complete the boon of which he had already bestowed upon his countrymen so precious an instalment, by adding to his translation of the New Testament a translation of the Old. Perhaps this had been included by him in that famous declaration of his at Sodbury, that if God spared him, he would cause the boy that driveth the plough to know more of Holy Scripture than the clergy of England did; at all events, he had been prosecuting his studies in Hebrew with great diligence ever since his arrival on the Continent, and this was beyond all question with the view of employing his knowledge in the translation of the Old Testament from the original.

Traces of his Hebrew studies have already appeared in some of the extracts selected from *The Wicked Mammon*; and in *The Obedience* there are several passages which give plain indication of the manner in which Tindale was then

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<sup>1</sup> Joye's Apology and Answer, Arber's reprint, p. 21.

engaged. The freedom from disturbance which he enjoyed at Marburg, and the assistance of his favourite disciple, Frith, who, as we believe, arrived before the close of 1528, were eminently favourable for the accomplishment of Tindale's design; and by the end of 1529 the Pentateuch was completed, and was ready for Hans Luft. It has been supposed by some that the books of Genesis and Deuteronomy were printed early in that year and sent to England; but of this, as will appear subsequently, there is no sufficient evidence. In 1530, however, it is certain the five books of Moses were printed and circulated very early in the year; and the completion and final revision of this important instalment of the Old Testament would certainly occupy Tindale during the greater part of the year 1529. The Pentateuch is not very much inferior in size to the whole of the New Testament; Tindale was doubtless not so familiar with Hebrew as with Greek; his translation was performed with most scrupulous care; and this work must therefore have been almost the chief employment of his energies since the completion of his New Testament. Of the character and merits of the translation of the Pentateuch we shall have to speak at a later period; at present some reference must be made to the other literary labours ascribed to Tindale during that year 1529, at which we have now arrived.

It would almost appear, if we may trust the vague rumours mentioned in contemporary documents, that Tindale published at this time two, or even three, works, all on the subject of marriage, viz. *An Exposition of the Seventh Chapter of the First Epistle to the Corinthians*, another treatise called *The Matrimony of Tyndale*, and possibly even a third, entitled, *The Christian State of Matrimony*<sup>1</sup>. All three, if they were really distinct treatises, have been entirely lost, except a few fragments preserved in Warham's proclamation; and it seems a legitimate conjecture that the three titles were simply different names for one and the same book, just as *The Parable of the Wicked Mammon* was sometimes called a treatise on *Justification by Faith*. The formal name of the work was doubtless that first given, *An Exposition of the Seventh Chapter of First Corinthians*, and from the subject of the book it was popularly known as *The Matrimony of Tyndale*. It is not, however, certain that Tindale was the author of this work. It was published anonymously, as we learn from the testimony of Sir Thomas More, and was by some persons supposed to be the work of Tindale's quondam amanuensis, William Roye. The mere fact of the work appearing anonymously, at a time when Tindale was especially careful to prefix his name to his writings, for the express purpose of not being made responsible for anything that proceeded from Roye,

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<sup>1</sup> See the three names in Warham's *Proclamation* in Wilkins, vol. iii. P. 728; the Preacher's Bill, which follows; and the *Proclamation against Heretics*, Foxe, vol. iv. p. 676.

seems to make it extremely doubtful whether his contemporaries were not mistaken in their conjecture as to the author of the book<sup>1</sup>.

If we may trust the extracts given by Warham, and stigmatized by him as ‘ungodly and erroneous,’ some of the opinions advocated in the lost book on Matrimony were somewhat peculiar, and such as would not be likely to meet with general acceptance at the present day in Protestant England, any more than they did in the Catholic England of Henry the Eighth. But the truth is, that on this subject Tindale did unquestionably hold some very strange opinions<sup>2</sup>; and no argument against the authenticity of the book can be founded on the fact that it enunciates views which we should not like to associate with the name of our great translator. Enough, however, has already been said of a work which no one has seen, which can only be criticized conjecturally, and which has an exceedingly doubtful claim to be regarded as the production of Tindale<sup>3</sup>.

Hitherto, we have had frequent occasion to remark the obscurity which seems to surround all Tindale’s personal history. Apart from his writings, we know scarcely anything of him; and the story of his life consequently wants that variety of incident which appeals so forcibly to human sympathy, and communicates to a biography its chief and deepest interest. Just at this precise crisis, however, of Tindale’s life, when the reader is almost wishing that some enemy, prying and communicative like Cochloeus, but without his power to give annoyance, had lived in the neighbourhood of Marburg, the old English chronicler Hall comes to our help, and affords us, if only we can perfectly trust his narrative, the first definite glimpse of Tindale since we saw him sailing up the Rhine to Worms.

To understand Hall’s narrative, it may be premised that in the summer of 1529 negotiations were carried on at Cambray to conclude, if possible, the long warfare that had been waged between Francis I and Charles V. At these negotiations Sir Thomas More and Tunstal were present to watch over the interests of England; and through their instrumentality a treaty was signed between England and the German Empire, one provision of which was especially directed against the

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<sup>1</sup> Preface to Sir Thomas More’s *Confutation*.

<sup>2</sup> For example, that the marriage of brothers and sisters is not so unnatural as some other alliances (e. g. a man with his uncle’s wife), and that in some cases it might be permitted. See his *Practice of Prelates*.

<sup>3</sup> Christopher Anderson gives a detailed description of the Exposition, as if he had seen and examined it. It had prefixed to it, he says, ‘An Exhortation to the diligent study of Scripture, made by Erasmus Roterodamus, and translated into English,’ and at the end was the colophon, ‘At Malborow, in the land of Hesse, 1529, xx day of June, by me, Hans Luft.’ But, notwithstanding this minute description, the book is lost, and Anderson never saw it. It is perhaps right to add that in the list of prohibited books in Bonner’s Register, and in the Lambeth MSS. 306, *The Matrimony*, and the *Exposition on Corinthians, Chapter VII*, are enumerated as distinct works.

printing of heretical books in either country for circulation in the other. The treaty of Cambray was concluded on the 5th of August; and the English representatives were then at liberty to return to their native land. Instead, however, of returning, as was natural, by the shortest route, which lay through the English seaport of Calais, Tunstal made a *detour* by Antwerp, in order to signalize himself by some extensive seizure of Tindale's New Testaments, just as Sir Thomas More had signalized himself by his famous *Dialogue* in refutation of the opinions of Luther and Tindale. It may have been about the middle of August when Tunstal arrived at Antwerp, full of his purpose; and by a singular coincidence Tindale also was there, and may perhaps have caught a last glimpse of that 'still Saturn,' whom lie certainly had small reason to love. What actually did occur cannot be better told than in the quaint words of the simple chronicler:—

'Here it is to be remembered that at this present time William Tyndale had newly translated and imprinted the New Testament in English; and the Bishop of London, not pleased with the translation thereof, debated with himself how he might compass and devise to destroy that false and erroneous translation (as he said); and so it happened that one Augustine Packington, a merchant and mercer of London, and of a great honesty, the same time was in Antwerp where the Bishop then was, and this Packington was a man that highly favoured Tyndale, but to the Bishop utterly showed himself to the contrary. The Bishop, desirous to have his purpose brought to pass, communed of the New Testaments, and how gladly he would buy them. Packington, then, hearing that [what] he wished for, said unto the Bishop, "My lord, if it be your pleasure, I can in this matter do more, I dare say, than most of the merchants of England that are here; for I know the Dutchmen and strangers that have bought them of Tyndale and have them here to sell; so that if it be your lordship's pleasure to pay for them (for otherwise I cannot come by them, but I must disburse money for them), I will then assure you to have every book of them that is imprinted and is here unsold." The Bishop, thinking he had God by the toe, when indeed he had, as after he thought, the Devil by the fist, said, "Gentle Mr. Packington, do your diligence and get them; and with all my heart I will pay for them whatsoever they cost you, for the books are erroneous and nought, and I intend surely to destroy them all, and to burn them at Paul's Cross." Augustine Packington *came to William Tyndale*, and said, "William, I know thou art a poor man, and hast a heap of New Testaments and books by thee, for the which thou hast both endangered thy friends and beggared thyself; and I have now gotten thee a merchant, which with ready money shall despatch thee of all that thou hast, if you think it so profitable for yourself." "Who is the merchant?" said Tyndale. "The Bishop of London," said Packington. "Oh, that is because he will burn them," said

Tyndale. “Yea, marry,” quoth Packington. “I am the gladder,” said Tyndale, “for these two benefits shall come thereof: I shall get money to bring myself out of debt, and the whole world will cry out against the burning of God’s Word; and the overplus of the money that shall remain to me shall make me more studious to correct the said New Testament, and so newly to imprint the same once again, and I trust the second will much better like you than ever did the first.” And so, forward went the bargain; the Bishop had the books; Packington had the thanks; and Tyndale had the money.’

The reader feels instinctively that this story has been somewhat embellished by old Hall, who loved a joke almost as much as a city feast or a royal progress; and it is probably inadvisable to place implicit confidence in all the details. There seems, however, no sufficient reason for rejecting the main facts of the story, which are in perfect keeping with all that is known of Tunstal’s character and proceedings; for he considered himself specially commissioned to condemn and destroy Tindale’s translation, and nothing is more probable than that he should avail himself of his proximity to Antwerp to achieve distinction for himself by an extensive seizure of the books which so much distressed his peace of mind. His friend and fellow Commissioner, Sir Thomas More, understood the principles of political economy better, and had remonstrated with Tunstal upon the folly of his contemplated purchase, but in vain; some time elapsed before the Bishop was convinced that he had effected nothing by his fruitless expenditure.

‘After this,’ the story continues, ‘Tyndale corrected the same New Testaments again, and caused them to be newly imprinted, so that they came thick and three-fold over into England. When the Bishop perceived that, he sent for Packington, and said to him, “How cometh this, that there are so many New Testaments abroad? You promised me that you would buy them all.” Then answered Packington, “Surely, I bought all that were to be had: but I perceive they have printed more since. I see it will never be better so long as they have letters and stamps [for printing with]: wherefore you were best to buy the stamps too, and so you shall be sure”: at which answer the Bishop smiled, and so the matter ended.

‘In short space after, it fortuned that George Constantine was apprehended by Sir Thomas More, who was then Chancellor of England [made Chancellor October 24, 1529], suspected of certain heresies. During the time that he was in the custody of Master More, after divers communications, amongst other things Master More asked of him, saying, “Constantine, I would have thee be plain with me in one thing that I will ask; and I promise thee I will show thee favour in all other things whereof thou art accused. There is beyond the sea, Tyndale, Joye, and a great many of you: I know they cannot live without help. There are some that help and succour them with money; and thou, being one of them, hadst

thy part thereof, and therefore knowest from whence it came. I pray thee, tell me, who be they that help them thus?" "My lord," quoth Constantine, "I will tell you truly it is the Bishop of London that hath holpen us, for he hath bestowed among us a great deal of money upon New Testaments to burn them; and that hath been, and yet is, our only succour and comfort." "Now, by my troth," quoth More, "I think even the same, for so much I told the Bishop before he went about it<sup>1</sup>."

All this, as has already been said, may be received as probably true in the main facts and incidents; but somewhat confused and considerably embellished in the minor details. Tunstal and More were undoubtedly in the Low Countries in August, as appears from official documents; and in May, 1530, there was, as had been threatened, a public burning of New Testaments on a large scale, at Paul's Cross, under the superintendence of Tunstal, who had then, indeed, been translated to Durham, but still continued to administer the diocese of London till the return of Stokesley from the Continent. We are scarcely inclined, however, to believe that Tindale had many New Testaments to sell in 1529. He himself had not reprinted the New Testament since the commencement of 1526; and the great majority of the six thousand copies of the octavo and quarto must, long before this period, have been sold and circulated in England, or seized and destroyed by the emissaries of the bishops. We believe, therefore, that Tunstal's purchase could not have included many of the Testaments which had been printed at Worms under Tindale's own superintendence; and, indeed, Tindale was hardly the man likely from the pressure of any temporary pecuniary want to dispose of the sacred volume to a purchaser who had no object in view but to burn it.

Such Testaments as were sold to Tunstal consisted chiefly, we should suppose, of copies of the various surreptitious editions which had already appeared at Antwerp; and if these were, as George Joye says, so disfigured by the blunders of ignorant Dutch printers, that 'the simple reader might oftentimes be tarried and stick,' then the loss to England was all the less serious. Tindale himself was much more likely to sell whatever superfluous copies he might still possess of his own writings. His other books would be scarcely less acceptable to Tunstal than the English New Testament; and if he really were in need of money, either for his own necessities, or to satisfy the demands of his printer, he might consider the episcopal merchant as sent by Providence to help him in his need.

That Tindale employed the money thus unexpectedly received in issuing a

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<sup>1</sup> *Hall's Chronicle: Foxe, vol. iv. pp. 670, &c.*

revised edition of his translation is extremely improbable: he had, indeed, promised to revise it, and the printers had repeatedly and most urgently requested him to undertake the work; but five years more were still to elapse before he found leisure for the task. It is possible, however, that he may have in some way suggested the publication of a new edition, with which the *Introduction to the Epistle to the Romans* was for the first time incorporated; for Bayfield, who was accused of bringing over Testaments from Antwerp in 1530, confessed to having introduced amongst many other books 'the New Testament in English, with an introduction to the Romans<sup>1</sup>.' There is no reason to believe that Tindale revised this reprint; but he may have contributed something towards providing the necessary funds for producing it, or may have given some directions in order to secure, if possible, greater accuracy and completeness in the work, and so in some measure may have justified Foxe's assertion that he 'corrected the New Testament once again.'

We are able, however, for the first time, to suggest a much more probable, and not less curious application of part of the money which Tunstal's shortsighted policy placed in the hands of Tindale. At the time of Tunstal's visit to Antwerp, the translation of the Pentateuch was just completed and ready for press; and it seems not unlikely that it was in order to make arrangements for its safe transmission into England, or perhaps even to procure the necessary type for printing it, that Tindale had journeyed from Marburg to what was then the chief centre of intercourse between England and the Continent. This new instalment of his great work, moreover, having been accomplished without any of the interruption which had driven him so precipitately from Cologne, and compelled him to change his plans, was furnished with all the appliances which Tindale deemed necessary for the English reader. It had marginal glosses, separate prologues to all the books, and tables expounding such words as might perplex the uninstructed. There were also eleven coarsely-cut illustrations of the Tabernacle and its furniture interspersed in the Book of Exodus; and it is in these that we see a strong proof of Tindale's journey to Antwerp in the autumn of 1529. For these illustrations are in every line and blot identically the same that had been used in 1528, in the Dutch Bible printed by Vorstermann in Antwerp. Four years later, however, when Vorstermann reprinted his Bible, the illustrations were changed; the blocks from which they were printed were evidently no longer in his possession; they had been taken to Marburg by Tindale, and were there used

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<sup>1</sup> Foxe, vol. iv. p. 685. In the Record Office (4320, 4327, 4328, 4396, &c.) there are papers referring to a suspected heretic, Dewham, who 'had bought in Paris the New Testament in English with an Introduction to the Epistle to the Romans.'

in the first English version of the Pentateuch. Whatever else, therefore, Tindale may have done with any money received from Tunstal, it seems highly probable that he purchased with it the blocks which were employed in the Book of Exodus; and the rude woodcuts of this rare work are thus invested with a curious interest, when we look at them as virtually the contribution of that prelate who prided himself on his zeal in condemning and burning the English Bible.

Accepting, therefore, the narrative of Hall as establishing the fact of Tindale's visit to Antwerp in August, and assuming it as highly probable that he went there to make arrangements for the circulation in England of that translation of the Pentateuch which was so soon to be issued, and also that he purchased from Vorstermann the blocks for illustrating his work, it seems only natural to conclude that he would return without loss of time to Marburg to superintend the printing of his translation. Against this, however, some of Tindale's biographers have protested, from the same mistaken reason which we have already repeatedly noticed, namely, a feeling of alarm lest they should detract from Tindale's originality, by admitting the possibility of an interview between the English Reformer and Luther. For in the commencement of October, 1529, Luther and the Swiss divines met at Marburg to discuss the basis of agreement, if agreement were still possible, on that perplexing question of the nature of the presence of Christ in the Sacrament, which threatened to split up the Continental Reformers into two fiercely hostile factions; and if Tindale returned from Antwerp soon after his negotiation with Packington, it seems indisputable that he must have been at Marburg during that stormy conference which proved the death-blow to peace and unanimity among the Churches of the Reformation.

To us who, without any preconceived theory, have simply followed the indication of facts, and who have seen how largely Tindale was influenced by Luther in his writings, and especially in his translation of the New Testament, it seems in no way improbable that he may, on this occasion, have once again, and for the last time, enjoyed the pleasure of conversing with his great German contemporary. Nor do we consider that we are detracting from Tindale's merit or originality, if we still further suppose that he was one of the favoured fifty who were admitted into the halls of the old castle, to be present at the gladiatorial contest in which Luther and Melanchthon measured swords with Zwingli and Oecolampadius; and the holy mysteries of the Christian faith were debated with an unhappy animosity which widened the breach between the German and Swiss Reformers<sup>1</sup>. There is not a tittle of positive evidence either in favour of, or against the supposition of Tindale's presence in Marburg at the conference; yet we

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<sup>1</sup> See D'Aubigné, vol. iv; Ranke, vol. iii.

cannot help thinking that the moderation with which he himself discusses the doctrine of the presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper, and the earnest advice which he gave to Frith, 'of the presence of Christ's body in the Sacrament meddle as little as you can, that there appear no division among us,' were inspired by melancholy recollections of that ill-omened contest between the angry dogmatism of Luther and the defiant sarcasm of Zwingle, which afforded too sure a presage of the impending disunion which has so seriously crippled the Reformation.

The real difficulty in fixing Tindale's residence and occupation for the last four months of 1529, arises from a statement of Foxe, which from its unwonted circumstantiality of detail, and its apparent chronological precision, cannot be dismissed without some careful consideration of its probability. Utterly oblivious of the transactions at Antwerp in August, which he had borrowed from Hall, Foxe, in his biography of Tindale<sup>1</sup>, says, 'At what time he had translated the fifth book of Moses, called Deuteronomy, minding to print the same at Hamburg, he sailed thitherward; where by the way, upon the coast of Holland, he suffered shipwreck, by which he lost all his books, writings, and copies, and so was compelled to begin all again anew, to his hindrance, and doubling of his labours. Thus, having lost by that ship both money, his copies, and his time, he came in another ship to Hamburg, where, at his appointment, Master Coverdale tarried for him, and helped him in the translating of the whole five books of Moses, from Easter till December, in the house of a worshipful widow, Mistress Margaret Van Emmerson, A.D. 1529; a great sweating sickness being at the same time in the town. So, having dispatched his business at Hamburg, he returned afterwards to Antwerp again.'

If this statement of Foxe is to be accepted in its integrity, it is of course absolutely incompatible not only with the supposition that Tindale spent the autumn of 1529 in Marburg, but also with what Foxe himself had narrated of the interview with Packington in Antwerp, in August. Foxe, indeed, is not proverbial for minute accuracy, and is exceedingly liable to confusion in the chronological arrangement of his materials; yet his authority cannot be entirely disregarded, especially in the total absence of any more authentic evidence to guide us. There are, however, several circumstances in his narrative which considerably detract from its value. It is suspicious, for example, that he represents Tindale as 'minding to print' the Pentateuch at Hamburg, a place where there is not the slightest reason to believe that there was as yet a single printer; and equally suspicious

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<sup>1</sup> Vol. v. pp. 120, &c.

that he speaks of him as assisted in his translation by Master Coverdale,' who at that time was hardly able to render Tindale much more effective aid than that which. Roze had formerly afforded as amanuensis.

It has been proposed, in order to bring the conflicting narratives into harmony, that Foxe should be considered as erroneously assigning Tindale's visit to Hamburg to 1529, instead of 1530. But, in the present instance, Foxe's narrative is confirmed by external evidence; it has been ascertained that in 1529 the sweating sickness was raging in Hamburg, and that there was then resident in the city the widow of a senator called Van Emmerson, who would be entitled in etiquette to the style of *Worshipful*<sup>1</sup>; and Foxe's narrative, thus confirmed, cannot be set aside on mere conjecture. If theory may be admitted on the question, it seems more allowable to suppose that Foxe was mistaken as to the duration of Tindale's visit to Hamburg; he may have returned from that city to Antwerp about the end of August, in time to allow of the interview with Packington, which has been quoted from the pages of Hall; or the interview may have taken place in that intermediate return to Antwerp which seems to have followed his shipwreck.

On January 17, 1530<sup>2</sup> (1531 new style), the Pentateuch was printed by Hans Luft at Marburg. This was Tindale's second great contribution towards that sacred work to which he had devoted his life; and deserves, therefore, more than a mere passing notice, especially as the book is a rare one<sup>3</sup>, not often seen, and has been imperfectly described even in collected editions of Tindale's writings. In addition to the text, the volume contains a general preface, from which we have already extracted many interesting autobiographical details. A separate preface is also prefixed to each book; lists are appended to Genesis, Exodus, and Deuteronomy, explaining the meaning of some unusual words that occur; and marginal glosses are added, generally strongly controversial in their tone.

What first strikes the reader on glancing at the volume, is the peculiarity of its typography. The Book of Genesis is printed in the customary Black letter of the

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<sup>1</sup> Preface to Bagster's English *Hexapla*. The inquiries were made by Offor, which is certainly not a very satisfactory recommendation.

<sup>2</sup> This is the date on the colophon of Genesis: the other books were either issued contemporaneously, or immediately afterwards.

<sup>3</sup> Only one *perfect* copy exists in the Grenville Library in the British Museum; but there are several others nearly perfect. The copy in Sion College, I may here say, does not want the Book of Numbers, as Mr. Anderson and others allege. In the Bodleian, there is a perfect copy of Genesis alone; with the same colophon as in the Pentateuch, viz. 'Emprented at Marlborow, in the land of Hesse, by me, Hans Luft, the yere of oure Lorde MCCCC.XXX., the XVII daye of Januarii.'

period; Exodus and Leviticus are in Roman letter; Numbers is in the same Black letter as Genesis; and in Deuteronomy we have once again the Roman letter as in Exodus. At the end of Genesis is the Colophon Printed at Marlborow in the year 1530'; but there is no other note of time, place, or printer throughout the volume. The Book of Numbers evidently proceeded from the same press as Genesis; but it has been suggested, as a possible explanation of the piebald appearance of the volume, that the other three books were printed somewhere else than Marburg. If future investigation shall succeed in clearing up the obscurity that hangs over Tindale's movements in 1529 and 1530, we shall probably be able to explain perfectly this patched typography of his Pentateuch; meantime, however, as the result of a very careful examination, we feel Convinced that all five books were printed by Hans Luft, at Marburg. The ornamental title-pages prefixed to the books are the same throughout, and are unquestionably Hans Luft's; what is technically called the 'forme' is the same; and in the books in Roman letter we observe the same watermarks, and the same wirelines, which are found in those in Black letter, which no one doubts to have been printed at Marburg.

Evidently the five books were intended for circulation separately as well as collectively; and some writers have supposed that Genesis and Deuteronomy were issued considerably earlier than the others, and probably some time before the close of 1529, but the evidence of this is extremely imperfect. If it be objected that the date, 'January 17, 1530,' must mean, according to the modern method of reckoning, 1531, it may be replied, that the practice of reckoning the commencement of the year from January 1, was by no means unknown among the Continental printers; that some part of the Pentateuch was undoubtedly in circulation in England before the month of May, 1530, when the translation of the Old Testament was denounced; and still further, that Tindale himself, in his *Practice of Prelates*, which was certainly written before the close of '530, refers his readers to Exodus and Deuteronomy in such a manner as to imply that these books were already accessible in English. It may be accepted, therefore, as proven by sufficient evidence, that the Pentateuch was printed at Marburg in the beginning of 1530; and we turn from these bibliographical details to the book itself.

That Tindale was a respectable Hebrew scholar, who had carefully studied the genius of that language, and was well able to render the books of Moses from the original, can be demonstrated by an overwhelming concurrence of evidence. The testimony of Buschius is given on p. 16q; some of Tindale's attempts at Hebrew verbal criticism we have also read; and in truth Tindale so frequently alludes to the subject, and so freely expresses his views on the grammatical and idiomatic peculiarities of the language, that it is mere folly to doubt his

competency to translate the Old Testament from the original Hebrew<sup>1</sup>. That in the prosecution of his work he should avail himself of all appliances within his reach, was what might have been expected from his procedure in translating the New Testament. It is no impeachment of his scholarship or his originality to suppose that he consulted Luther and the Vulgate; rather this is an indication of the pains and good sense with which he accomplished his task; and the English Bible is all the richer for the treasures thus gathered from other fields. There are indications in the Pentateuch that Tindale worked with Luther and the Vulgate open before him; while, for those who are jealous of his independence, there is unanswerable evidence on every page, that he never for a moment surrendered his own judgement, but that the work is throughout, in the strictest sense, his own. With what ability the translation was accomplished, and how truly his version of the Old Testament is still essentially in tone and even in language the version of the English Bible, will be manifest from the following specimens, selected simply on the ground of their universal familiarity. In this case the words within brackets show the changes in the Authorized Version.

#### GENESIS XXII. vv. 4-13

4 The third day (Then on the third day) Abraham lifted up his eyes, and saw the place afar off.

5 And said (Abraham said) unto his young men, Bide here (Abide ye here) with the ass; (and) I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again unto (to) you.

6 And Abraham took the wood of the sacrifice (burnt offering), and laid it upon Isaac his son; and took fire (he took the fire) in his hand, and a knife; and they went both of them together.

7 Then spake Isaac (And Isaac spake) unto Abraham his father, and said, My father: and he answered (said), Here am I, my son. And he said, See here is fire and wood (Behold the fire and the wood): but where is the sheep (lamb) for sacrifice (a burnt-offering)?

8 And Abraham said, My son, God will provide him a sheep for sacrifice (himself a lamb for a burnt offering): So went they both (they went both of them) together.

9 And when (omitted) they came unto (to) the place which God shewed him

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<sup>1</sup> See for example his Preface to St. Matthew in his revised translation, *Works*, vol. i. p. 468; also vol. iii. P. 75. For an able, but as we venture to think not conclusive, argument against Tindale's Hebrew scholarship, see the *Athenæum* for May 2, 1885.

(had told him of); (and)

Abraham made (built) an altar there, and dressed the wood (laid the wood in order), and bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar above (omitted) upon the wood.

10 And Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to have killed (to slay) his son.

11 Then (And) the angel of the LORD called unto him from (out of) heaven, saying (and said), Abraham, Abraham: and he answered (said), Here am I.

12 And he said, Lay not thine hands (hand) upon the child (lad), neither do (thou) any thing at all (omits *at all*) unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, in that (seeing) thou hast not kept thine only son (withheld thy son, thine only son) from me.

13 And Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked about (omits *about*), and behold there was (behold behind him) a ram caught by the horns in a thicket (in a thicket by his horns): and he (Abraham) went and took the ram, and offered him up for a sacrifice (burnt offering) in the stead of his son.

The following is Tindale's version of the Decalogue:

And God spake all these words and said: I am the Lord thy God which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt and out of the house of bondage.

Thou shalt have none other gods in my sight.

Thou shalt make thee no graven image, neither any similitude that is in heaven above, either in the earth beneath, or in the water that is beneath the earth: See that thou neither bow thyself unto them, neither serve them: for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, and visit the sin of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me, and yet shew mercy unto thousands among them that love me and keep my commandments.

Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.

Remember the Sabbath-day that thou sanctify it. Six days mayest thou labour and do all that thou hast to do: but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God, in it thou shalt do no manner work; neither thou nor thy son, nor thy daughter, neither thy manservant nor thy maidservant, neither thy cattle, neither yet the stranger that is within thy gates. For in six days the Lord made both heaven and earth and the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day; wherefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath-day and hallowed it.

Honour thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.

Thou shalt not kill.

Thou shalt not break wedlock.

Thou shalt not steal.

Thou shalt bear no false witness against thy neighbour.

Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house: neither shalt covet thy neighbour's wife, his manservant, his maid, his ox, his ass, or aught that is his.

Balaam's prophecy (Numbers xxiv) is thus rendered:—

And he took up his parable and said: Balaam the son of Beor hath said, and the man whose eye is open hath said: he hath said which heareth the words of God and seeth the visions of the Almighty, which falleth down and his eyes are opened.

How goodly are the tents of Jacob and thine habitations, Israel: even as the broad valleys and as gardens by the river-side: as the tents which the Lord hath pitched and as cypress-trees upon the water.

The water shall flow out of his bucket, and his seed shall be many waters, and his king shall be higher than Agag: and his kingdom shall be exalted.

God that brought him out of Egypt is as the strength of a unicorn unto him; and he shall eat the nations that are his enemies, and break their bones, and pierce them through with his arrows.

He coucheth himself and lay down as a lion, and as a lioness who shall stir him up? Blessed is he that blesseth them, and cursed is he that curseth them... .

I see him but not now. I behold him but not nigh.

There shall come a star of Jacob, and rise a sceptre of Israel which shall smite the coasts of Moab, and undermine all the children of Seth. And Edom shall be his possession, and the possession of Seir shall be their enemy's, and Israel shall do manfully. And out of Jacob shall come he that shall destroy the remnant of the cities.

In the last passage the reader will have observed that Tindale's version varies considerably, and certainly not for the better, from that now used in our churches. Curiously enough, however, even this inferiority affords another proof of his originality; for the translation of Luther, which he unquestionably had before him, approaches very much nearer to our Authorized Version; and it is thus evident that Tindale did not follow it with the slavish deference of a copyist, as he is sometimes said to have done.

Hitherto this question of Tindale's originality has unfortunately been discussed too much by theorists who have never taken the trouble to examine and compare the works of Tindale and Luther; and extravagant assertion on the one hand has been met by equally extravagant counter-assertion on the other. But to any scholar who sits down to collate with care the versions of the English and the German translators, two facts speedily become plain and indisputable, viz. that Tindale had Luther's work before him, and constantly consulted and

occasionally adopted it; and that he never implicitly follows Luther, but translates from the original with the freedom of a man who had perfect confidence in his own scholarship. Theories, however ingenious, and however obstinately maintained, must in the end yield to the inexorable logic of facts; and it is to be hoped that that species of criticism which has so long reigned in this department of literature, and which presumes to pronounce dogmatically on the merits of works which have not only not been studied, but in some cases have not even been seen, will not much longer continue to flourish.

The marginal glosses with which the translation is accompanied are extremely pungent and controversial in their tone. Not a single passage is overlooked from which any comment could be drawn against the doctrines and practices of the Pope and the clergy. In their force, their downright plainness, and their quaint satire, they remind a reader strongly of the writings of Luther. 'The spirit and even the style of Luther,' says Westcott, 'is distinctly visible in them'<sup>1</sup>; and one naturally expects, therefore, to find that they are still more largely borrowed from the German than were the glosses in the New Testament. This, however, is not the case. Strange as it may appear, it is actually the fact that in his notes on the Pentateuch, Tindale has taken nothing whatever from his German contemporary. Amongst upward of a hundred glosses, there is only one instance of similarity sufficiently strong to suggest that Tindale had borrowed from Luther; and the note is in that case so very obvious and commonplace, as to afford no ground for asserting that even this one solitary gloss has been translated from the German<sup>2</sup>.

Perhaps it would have been better if Tindale had in this matter more closely followed his German predecessor; for the greatest of Tindale's admirers must admit that his keen sarcasms are by no means so suitable an accompaniment to the sacred text as Luther's topographical and expository notes. It can hardly be doubted that Tindale must have had some motive for thus entirely discarding in the Old Testament what he had so liberally availed himself of in the New; and whatever other explanation may be suggested, it seems at all events a probable supposition that he intended thereby, as it were, to protest against the popular slander that he was nothing more than an English echo of the great German

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<sup>1</sup> *History of the English Bible*, p. 55.

<sup>2</sup> I refer to the note on Deuteronomy xviii. 15, 'The LORD thy God will raise up unto thee a prophet from the midst of thee,' &c., on which Tindale remarks, as Luther had done in similar words, 'Christ is here promised, a preacher of better tidings than Moses'; a remark so obvious that it is simply absurd to speak of its being borrowed. I have gone carefully over the whole Pentateuch in the English and the German, and out of about 108 glosses there are *Only three*, besides the one in the text, which have the very faintest resemblance to any of the notes in Luther's Pentateuch.

heresiarch.

Tindale could think and speak for himself, and that as sharply and as boldly as Luther ever did, as his enemies must have felt when they read such glosses as the following:

On Genesis xxiv. 60, 'They blessed Rebekah,' he remarks, 'To *bless* a man's neighbour is to pray for him and to wish him good, *and not to wag two fingers over him,*' a satirical allusion to episcopal benediction with two fingers outstretched.

On Genesis ix. 6, 'Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed,' he writes as he had done in *The Obedience*, 'This law and such like to execute, were kings and rulers ordained of God, wherefore they ought not to suffer the Pope's Cains thus to shed blood, their own not shed again, neither yet to set up their abominable sanctuaries, and neck-verses clean against the ordinance of<sup>f</sup> God, but unto their damnation.'

The exemption of the Egyptian priests from certain burdens (Genesis xlvi. 26) is thus criticized: 'The blind guides get privileges from [i. e. excusing from] bearing with their brethren, contrary to Christ's law of love. And of these priests of idols did our compassing ivy-trees learn to creep up by little and little, and to compass the great trees of the world with hypocrisy, and to thrust the roots of idolatrous superstition into them, and to suck out the juice of them with their poetry [inventions], till all be sere boughs and nothing green save their own common-wealth'; a criticism which was subsequently expanded into one of the most famous passages in his works.

On the command so oft repeated, to teach the children the meaning of the ceremonies of the Jews' religion, he remarks, 'Our signs be dumb: we know not the reason of our baptism; yea, and we must say our prayers and our Belief in a tongue not understood and yet if we answer not our prelates when they be angry, even as they would have it, we must to the fire without redemption, or forswear God.'

The greed of the clergy was specially satirized: on the words, 'None shall appear before me empty' (Exod. xxxiv. 20), he curtly remarks, 'That is a good text for the Pope'; and on the declaration that the people brought 'too much,' and were therefore restrained from offering (Exod. xxxvi. 6), he asks, with pointed satire, 'When will the Pope say, Hoo! [hold] and forbid to offer for the building of St. Peter's Church? and when will our spirituality say, Hoo! and forbid to give them more land and to make more foundations? Never, verily, until they have all.'

'How can I curse whom God hath not cursed?' asks Balaam: 'The Pope can tell how,' rejoins Tindale, with grim irony in the margin. 'Talk of the Lord's

words when thou sittest in thine house,' says Moses, in recapitulating the Law: 'Talk of Robin Hood, say our prelates,' is the cutting gloss which Tindale has appended.

In such comments as these, terribly plain and almost fierce in their hostility to the Pope and the clergy, we have the natural expression of that profound emotion which all that he had suffered, and all that he had witnessed, produced in the mind of Tindale. Decorous ecclesiastical historians, like Collier, would have been shocked by the 'irreverent language' which Tindale applies to clerical dignitaries and time-honoured ceremonies; those who have followed him during long dreary years of exile and persecution can understand the bitterness of heart which thus found vent in sharp and angry words, and can sympathize with him, even if they believe that his version of the five books of Moses would have been improved by the omission of this admixture of human resentment.

Of the various prefaces to the books we need not speak at length. The most noteworthy feature in them is the admirable good sense with which he insists upon the necessity of adhering to the literal meaning of Scripture, and eschewing all manner of allegorical interpretations. This was the characteristic of his prefaces which would make the deepest impression upon his contemporaries; for all true interpretations of Scripture had been lost, and the expositor perplexed his readers with whimsical allegorical conundrums. No greater service, therefore, could be rendered to sound theology than by thus recalling men to the only true system of exposition; and independently, therefore, of his pre-eminent merits as a translator, Tindale is entitled to be revered by all Englishmen, as the founder of all rational Scriptural interpretation in England. In the following extract from the Preface to Leviticus we have the enunciation of a revolution in theology, quite as important and as fundamental as the greatest of the changes effected at the Reformation<sup>1</sup>:—

'Because that few know the use of the Old Testament, and the most part think it nothing necessary but to make allegories, which they feign every man after his own brain at all wild adventure, without any certain rule; therefore, though I have spoken of them in another place [in *The Obedience*], yet, lest the book come not to all men's hands that shall read this, I will speak of them here also a word or twain.

We had need to take heed everywhere that we be not beguiled with false allegories, whether they be drawn out of the New Testament or the Old, either out

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<sup>1</sup> The whole Preface is well worth reading: I do not know any better exposition of the true meaning and purpose of the ceremonies of the Jewish economy.

of any other story, or of the creatures of the world, but namely [especially] in this book [the Pentateuch].

Here a man had need to put on all his spectacles, and to arm himself against invisible spirits.

‘First, allegories prove nothing; and by allegories understand examples or similitudes borrowed of strange matters, and of another thing than that thou entreatest of. As, though circumcision be a figure of baptism, yet thou canst not prove baptism by circumcision. For this argument were very feeble, The Israelites were circumcised, therefore we must be baptized. And in like manner, though the offering of Isaac were a figure or ensample of the resurrection, yet is this argument naught, Abraham would have offered Isaac, but God delivered him from death; therefore we shall rise again: and so forth in all other.

‘But the very use of allegories is to declare [illustrate] and open a text, that it may be the better perceived and understood. As, when I have a clear text of Christ and the apostles, that I must be baptized, then I may borrow an example of circumcision to express the nature, power, and fruit, or effect of baptism. For as circumcision was unto them a common badge, signifying that they were all soldiers of God, to war His war, and separating them from all other nations disobedient unto God; even so baptism is our common badge, and sure earnest, and perpetual memorial, that we pertain unto Christ, and are separated from all that are not Christ’s. And as circumcision was a token certifying them that they were received unto the favour of God, and their sins forgiven them; even so baptism certifieth us that we are washed in the blood of Christ, and received to favour for His sake: and as circumcision signified unto them the cutting away of their own lusts, and slaying of their free-will, as they call it, to follow the will of God; even so baptism signifieth unto us repentance, and the mortifying of our unruly members and body of sin, to walk in a new life, and so forth.

‘And likewise, though that the saving of Noe, and of them that were with him in the ship, through water, is a figure, that is to say, an example and likeness of baptism, as Peter maketh it (i Pet. iii), yet I cannot prove baptism therewith, save describe it only. For as the ship saved them in the water through faith, in that they believed God, and as the other that would not believe Noe perished; even so baptism saveth us through the word of faith which it preacheth, when all the world of the unbelieving perish. And Paul (i Cor. x) maketh the sea and the cloud a figure of baptism; by which, and a thousand more, I might declare it, but not prove it. Paul also in the said place maketh the rock, out of which Moses brought water unto the children of Israel, a figure or ensample of Christ; not to prove Christ (for that were impossible), but to describe Christ only; even as Christ Himself (John iii) borroweth a similitude or figure of the brasen serpent, to lead

Nicodemus from his earthly imagination into the spiritual understanding of Christ, saying: "As Moses lifted up a serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of man be lifted up, that none that believe in Him perish, but have everlasting life." By which similitude the virtue of Christ's death is better described than thou couldst declare it with a thousand words. For as those murmurers against God, as soon as they repented, were healed of their deadly wounds, through looking on the brasen serpent only, without medicine or any other help, yea, and without any other reason but that God hath said it should be so; and not to murmur again, but to leave their murmuring: even so all that repent, and believe in Christ, are saved from everlasting death, of pure grace, without, and before, their good works; and not to sin again, but to fight against sin, and henceforth to sin no more.

'Even so with the ceremonies of this book thou canst prove nothing, save describe and declare only the putting away of our sins through the death of Christ. For Christ is Aaron, and Aaron's sons, and all that offer the sacrifice to purge sin. And Christ is all manner offering that is offered: He is the ox, the sheep, the goat, the kid, and the lamb; He is the ox that is burnt without the host, and the scapegoat that carried all the sin of the people away into the wilderness: for as they purged the people from their worldly uncleannesses through blood of the sacrifices, even so doth Christ purge us from the uncleannesses of everlasting death with His own blood; and as their worldly sins could no otherwise be purged, than by blood of sacrifices, even so can our sins be no otherwise forgiven than through the blood of Christ. All the deeds in the world, save the blood of Christ, can purchase no forgiveness of sins; for our deeds do but help our neighbour, and mortify the flesh, and help that we sin no more: but and if we have sinned, it must be freely forgiven through the blood of Christ, or remain for ever.

'And in like manner of the lepers thou canst prove nothing: thou canst never conjure out confession thence, howbeit thou hast an handsome example there to open the binding and loosing of our priests with the key of God's Word; for as they made no man a leper, even so ours have no power to command any man to be in sin, or to go to purgatory or hell. And therefore (inasmuch as binding and loosing is one power), as those priests healed no man; even so ours cannot of their invisible and dumb power drive any man's sins away, or deliver him from hell or feigned purgatory. Howbeit if they preached God's Word purely, which is the authority that Christ gave them, then they should bind and loose, kill and make alive again, make unclean and clean again, and send to hell and fetch thence again; so mighty is God's Word. For if they preached the law of God, they should bind the consciences of sinners with the bonds of the pains of hell, and bring them unto repentance: and then if they preached unto them the mercy

that is in Christ, they should loose them and quiet their raging consciences, and certify them of the favour of God, and that their sins be forgiven.

‘Finally, beware of allegories; for there is not a more handsome or apt thing to beguile withal than an allegory; nor a more subtle and pestilent thing in the world to persuade a false matter, than an allegory. And contrariwise; there is not a better, vehementer, or mightier thing to make a man understand withal, than an allegory. For allegories make a man quickwitted, and print [imprint] wisdom in him, and make it to abide, where bare words go but in at the one ear, and out at the other. As this, with such like sayings: “Put salt to all your sacrifices,” instead of this sentence, “Do all your deeds with discretion,” greeteth and biteth (if it be understood) more than plain words. And when I say, instead of these words, “Boast not yourself of your good deeds,” “Eat not the blood nor the fat of your sacrifice”; there is as great difference between them as there is distance between heaven and earth. For the life and beauty of all good deeds is of God, and we are but the carrion-lean; we are only the instrument whereby God worketh only, but the power is His: as God created Paul anew, poured His wisdom into him, gave him might, and promised him that His grace should never fail him, &c., and all without deservings, except that murdering the saints, and making them curse and rail on Christ, be meritorious. Now, as it is death to eat the blood or fat of any sacrifice, is it not (think ye) damnable to rob God of His honour, and to glorify myself with His honour?’

Those best acquainted with the theology of the English Reformation will be the first to admit that we shall look in vain in Cranmer, Latimer, or Ridley for any such clearness of apprehension and precision of language as are here displayed by Tindale. Sometimes, indeed, his language is not only precise but exquisitely beautiful, and worthy of that master of English eloquence to whom we owe our New Testament. Would not the reader, for example, be inclined to believe that the following sentence from Tindale’s Preface to Exodus was one of the gems of Jeremy Taylor? ‘The ceremonies were not permitted only, but also commanded of God; *to lead the people in the shadows of Moses and night of the Old Testament; until the light of Christ and day of the New Testament were come.*’

The New Testament had been issued with an Epistle desiring the ‘learned to amend it aught were found amiss’: but those who had condemned the work as full of errors had taken no steps to provide the only proper remedy—a translation free from errors. The prelates, ‘those stubborn Nimrods which so mightily fight against God,’ instead of amending whatever needed correction, had, as Tindale indignantly protests, stirred up the civil authorities ‘to torment such as tell the truth, and to burn the Word of their souls’ health, and slay whosoever believe

thereon.’ In spite of their fierce declamations, however, he declined to be provoked into any dogmatic assertion of his own immunity from error in that work to which he had devoted his own best industry and learning. He had done his best; but if he had erred through lack of knowledge he was willing to be guided by those whose scholarship was greater than his own. He was willing that himself, and even his work, should perish, if by any other means the cause of God could be more successfully promoted. ‘I submit this book,’ such is the conclusion of his General Preface, ‘and all other that I have either made or translated, or shall in time to come, if it be God’s will that I shall further labour in His harvest, unto all them that submit themselves unto the Word of God, to be corrected of them; yea, and moreover to be disallowed and also burnt, if it seem worthy, when they have examined it with the Hebrew, so [provided] that they first put forth of their own translating another that is more correct.’

It was not the will of God that Tindale should labour much longer in His harvest; he still continued, indeed, to prosecute his translation of the Old Testament, but the publication of the Pentateuch may be considered as his last formal contribution on any large scale to the English Bible: and these noble words of his Preface will, perhaps, serve to explain to the thoughtful reader what still seems mysterious and incredible to some minds, the continued prevalence, namely, in our Authorized Version of the spirit and the language of the first translator, in spite of the vast advance in verbal knowledge since his days. No translation, the work of a mere verbal scholar, has ever attained a permanent existence in literature; if words are to live, they must come living from the heart of him that writes them; and it is because the words of Scripture had been so incorporated with the spiritual life of Tindale as to have become in a manner the very utterances of his own soul, that they have maintained their hold over the hearts of his countrymen, when the labours of later scholars more learned in the minutiae of grammatical lore have been consigned to oblivion.

We have assumed that at the close of 1529 Tindale had returned to Marburg to superintend the printing of his translation of the Pentateuch, that being a work of too much importance to be left to the care of printers ignorant of the English language<sup>1</sup>. Possibly he may have remained at Marburg during the whole of 1530, for he was still safe there from any personal danger; or not improbably he may have paid that long visit to Hamburg, lasting from Easter to December, which Foxe has assigned, erroneously as some think, to the previous year. In either city he would be exposed to the attacks of that mysterious disease which was looked

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<sup>1</sup> The peculiar typography of the volume has already been noticed: in other respects it is well printed, except that there is extreme irregularity in the numbering of the pages.

upon as the peculiar scourge of the English nation, but which was then for the first time desolating the cities of Germany<sup>1</sup>. In Marburg, Francis Lambert, the chief glory of the infant University, fell a victim to the plague, and his death must have deprived Tindale of a friend whose piety, zeal, and manifold experience may often have served to stimulate and comfort him in his work; and whose bold views on all questions of ecclesiastical order may have had more influence than has generally been imagined, on the opinions of our translator.

The death of Lambert would leave a very considerable blank in Marburg, which had not, in truth, much beyond its comparative security to attract Tindale; for with all its zeal for orthodoxy the town was by no means distinguished for the purity of its morals; already there were signs of that laxness which subsequently grew into open and scandalous immorality. Lambert, it is said, was broken-hearted with what he saw around him, and was contemplating removal from the place when death put an end to his grief; and probably Tindale, vexed with what was so uncongenial to his mind, was not sorry to take up his abode elsewhere.

But wherever Tindale's abode may have been during this year, we can with perfect certainty determine his occupation. Two great works must have fully engaged all his energies. In the summer of 1529, just before starting on his embassy to Cambray, Sir Thomas More had published an elaborate condemnation of Tindale's translation of the New Testament, and a refutation of the opinions advanced in *The Wicked Mammon* and *The Obedience*; and from the reputation of his antagonist and the ability of his work, it was absolutely indispensable that Tindale should prepare to defend himself, and not seem to retire vanquished from the conflict. This controversy, a most interesting episode in Tindale's career, we reserve for separate treatment in the next chapter, and we only allude to it now as explaining Tindale's occupation during the year 1530.

The other great work is the bitterest of all Tindale's controversial writings, his famous *Practice of Prelates*. Since Tindale had left his native country great changes had taken place; for it was an age of change and revolution, and events moved on with startling rapidity. The royal project for a divorce, originating, perhaps, in scruples of conscience on Henry's part, had been instigated and encouraged by Wolsey until it had grown beyond all control, and threatened a rebellion against the supremacy of Rome. Wolsey's 'angel wit' had at length failed him amidst the perplexities which surrounded him on all hands; he had forfeited

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<sup>1</sup> Cochloeus, in the work which has been already quoted, expressly states that this was the first outbreak in Germany of that '*testis quaedam quae sudor Anglicanus dicebatur*'; *Commentarii de actis et scriptis M. Lutheri*, p. 203.

the confidence of his sovereign, and had fallen from the meridian of his glory. Parliament had assembled, after a long interval of almost irresponsible government by the great Cardinal; a layman, Sir Thomas More, occupied that highest place of office which had come to be looked upon as the sacred prerogative of an ecclesiastic, and the House of Commons had dared to rise against the power of the Church, and had curtailed the exactions of the clergy. The two Universities had been compelled, by somewhat rough means, it is true, to pronounce a decision on the question of the royal divorce, which was tantamount to an infringement of the authority of the Pope. Wolsey was in retirement in his northern diocese; and the heart of the nation was stirring with the first impulses of that mighty movement which issued in spiritual freedom. Few even of those who shared most prominently in the movement had any true conception of the nature or tendency of the work in which they were engaged; and Tindale, looking on from a distance, imperfectly supplied with information, hearing only one side of the question from men who were themselves badly informed, and who were in general agents of a very humble class, was certainly by no means in a position to form any accurate judgement of the character or probable result of the mighty revolution which was in progress in England, or of the motives of the chief agents on either side.

This much it seemed desirable to premise by way of apology for Tindale; for, although his sagacity has been by some biographers lauded with the most extravagant panegyrics, the truth is that his view of the political situation in England is utterly baseless, and such as he would never have published had he been resident in his native land. He actually believed that the fall of Wolsey and the reformation of abuses in Parliament were mere tricks on the part of the Cardinal to tide over the difficulties of a 'jeopardous year'; that his disgrace was 'nothing save a cast of his old practice,' 'to bring the world into a fool's paradise' with what were merely 'faces of reformations'; and that all things would return to their former course as soon as that 'constellation was overrun whereof the prelates were afraid.' It is unnecessary to prove that this was an entire misapprehension of the nature of the crisis; Tindale in venturing into the region of politics had travelled somewhat out of his own sphere, and his opinions on subjects which he so imperfectly understood must be received with a certain amount of qualification and reserve.

The general value and importance of *The Practice of Prelates* are, however, altogether independent of Tindale's peculiar opinions as to the situation of affairs in England, and the character and motives of the chief movers there. The book is a sort of historical summary of the *practices* by which the Pope and the clergy gradually grew up from primaeval poverty and humility into that

universal supremacy which in Tindale's time they enjoyed; and the story is related with a boldness and bitterness which were not likely to conciliate the favour of the rulers of the Church. In treating of this theme, Tindale was perfectly at home; it had been the subject of his thoughts and of his observation for ten years; his exile and his persecution had deepened and embittered his convictions; in *The Practice of Prelates*, he gives full vent to the accumulated indignation of half a lifetime, and his words fall upon the reader with the terrible emphasis of the denunciations of the Hebrew prophets. There is probably nowhere in the English language any passage superior in force and graphic skill to the well-known description of the rise of the Pope, in which Tindale has expanded one of the marginal glosses on his Pentateuch into an elaborate parable. The passage is probably not unknown to some readers, but it is too characteristic a specimen of the style of *The Practice of Prelates* to be omitted from a Life of Tindale.

‘A proper similitude to describe our holy Father.

‘And to see how our holy father came up, mark the ensample of an ivy tree. First it springeth out of the earth, and then awhile creepeth along by the ground till it find a great tree. Then it joineth itself beneath alow [below] unto the body of the tree, and creepeth up a little and a little, fair and softly. And at the beginning, while it is yet thin and small, [so] that the burden is not perceived, it seemeth glorious to garnish the tree in the winter, and to bear off the tempests of the weather. But in the mean season it thrusteth roots into the bark of the tree, to hold fast withal: and ceaseth not to climb up, till it be at the top and above all. And then it sendeth his branches along by the branches of the tree, and overgroweth all, and waxeth great, heavy, and thick; and sucketh the moisture so sore out of the tree and his branches, that it choaketh and stiflenth them. And then the foul stinking ivy waxeth mighty in the stump of the tree, and becometh a seat and a nest for all unclean birds, and for blind owls, which hawk in the dark, and dare not come at the light.

‘Even so the Bishop of Rome, now called pope, at the beginning crope along upon the earth; and every man trod upon him in this world. But as soon as there came a Christian emperor, he joined himself unto his feet and kissed them, and crope up a little with begging now this privilege, now that; now this city, now that; to find poor people withal, and the necessary ministers of God's Word. And he entitled<sup>1</sup> the emperor with choosing the pope and other bishops; and promoted in the spirituality, not whom virtue and learning, but whom the favour of great

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<sup>1</sup> 19 i.e. bestowed upon him the title or claim to choose the popes and other bishops; which, says Tindale, in his marginal note, ‘pertained unto the emperor and kings once.’

men commended; to flatter, to get friends, and defenders withal. And the alms of the congregation which was the food and patrimony of the poor and necessary preachers, that he called St. Peter's patrimony, St. Peter's rent, St. Peter's lands, St. Peter's right; to cast a vain fear and a heathenish superstitiousness into the hearts of men, that no man should dare meddle with whatsoever came once into their hands for fear of St. Peter, though they ministered it never so evil; and that they which should think it none alms to give them any more, because they had too much already, should yet give St. Peter somewhat, as Nabuchodonesser gave his god Beel [Bel], to purchase an advocate and an intercessor of St. Peter, and that St. Peter should at the first knock let them in. And thus, with flattering and feigning, and vain superstition, under the name of St. Peter, he crept up and fastened his roots in the heart of the emperor, and with his sword clamb up above all his fellow-bishops, and brought them under his feet. And as he subdued them with the emperor's sword, even so by subtilty and help of them (after that they were sworn faithful) he clamb above the emperor, and subdued him also, and made him stoop unto his feet and kiss them another while. Yea, Pope Coelestinus crowned the Emperor Henry the Fifth [Sixth], holding the crown between his feet: and when he had put the crown on, he smote it off with his feet again, saying, that he had might to make emperors and to put them down again.

‘And as the pope played with the emperor, so did his branches and his members, the bishops, play in every kingdom, dukedom, and lordship; insomuch that the very heirs of them by whom they came up, hold now their lands of them, and take them for their chief lords. And as the emperor is sworn to the pope, even so every king is sworn to the bishops and prelates of his realm: and they are the chiefest in all parliaments; yea, they and their money, and they that be sworn to them, and come up by them, rule altogether.

‘And thus the pope, the father of all hypocrites, hath with falsehood and guile perverted the order of the world, and turned the roots of the trees upward, and

hath put down the kingdom of Christ, and set up the kingdom of the devil, whose vicar he is; and hath put down the ministers of Christ, and hath set up the ministers of Satan, disguised yet in names and garments like unto the angels of light and ministers of righteousness. For Christ's kingdom is not of the world (John xviii); and the pope's kingdom is all the world.

‘And Christ is neither judge nor divider in this world (Luke xii): but the pope judgeth and divideth all the world, and taketh the empire and all kingdoms, and giveth them to whom he lusteth.

‘Christ saith, “Blessed are the poor in spirit “: so that the first step in the kingdom of Christ is humbleness, or humility; that thou canst find in thine heart to do service unto all men, and to suffer that all men tread thee.

‘The pope saith, “Blessed be the proud and highminded, that can climb and subdue all under them, and maintain their right, and such as will suffer of no man”: so that he which was yesterday taken from the dunghill and promoted this day by his prince, shall to-morrow, for the pope’s pleasure, curse him, and ex-communicate him, and interdict his realm.

‘ Christ saith, “Blessed be the meek,” or soft, that be harmless as doves.

‘ The pope blesseth them that can set all the world together by the ears, and fight, and slay manfully for his sake, that he may come hot from blood-shedding to a bishoprick: as our cardinal did, and as St. Thomas of Canterbury did, which was made bishop in the field, in complete harness on his horseback, and his spear bloody in his hand<sup>1</sup>.

‘Christ hath neither holes for foxes, nor nests for birds, nor yet whereon to lay His head, nor promised aught in this world unto His disciples, nor took any to His disciple but him that had forsaken all.

‘The ivy-tree, the pope, hath under his roots throughout all Christendom, in every village, holes for foxes, and nests for unclean birds in all his branches, and promiseth unto his disciples all the promotions of the world.

‘The nearer unto Christ a man cometh, the lower he must descend, and the poorer he must wax. But the nearer unto the pope ye come, the higher ye must climb, and the more riches ye must gather, whencesoever ye can get them, to pay for your bulls, and to purchase a glorious name, and license to wear a mitre, and a cross, and a pall, and goodly ornaments.’

With the same clearness and boldness, and with a very considerable amount of historical learning, Tindale traces the various Practices by which this usurped supremacy was maintained and defended; the perversion of Scripture, the universal corruption of morals, the degradation of all religion into form, the commutation of all duty into the payment of money to the clergy. Tindale was a sharp critic; but the disease required a merciless knife. That which should have been the noblest principle in human nature had become the most corrupt; the depth of a man’s devotion was gauged by the amount of his offering before the shrine of a favourite saint; and amidst all the routine of worship, one plain fact alone, it has been truly said, was conspicuous to the understanding of the people at large, ‘that all evils which could touch either their spirits or their bodies might be escaped by means which resolved themselves, scarcely disguised, into the payment of moneys.’<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> It is not historically correct to say that Becket was made bishop in the field; but the language of his chaplain and biographer, William Fitz-Stephen, might seem to Tindale to imply that he was so.

<sup>2</sup> Froude’s *History of England*, vol. ii.

Against a system so degrading, Tindale's soul rose in abhorrence; and he uses accordingly language of unmeasured vituperation. Advocates of moderation in controversy, men who insist that religious revolutions should be carried on in a decorous, constitutional manner, will find small pleasure in perusing *The Practice of Prelates*. Tindale hated the system with his whole heart, and he condemns it with his whole strength. In his eyes the pope was Antichrist and the whore of Babylon; the clergy were his myrmidons employed to spy and rob the laity; the monks and friars were caterpillars, horse-leeches, drone-bees, draff. All this and more may be read in *The Practice of Prelates*; for Tindale's indignation, sharpened by years of exile and homesick longing, knew no bounds, and his words knew no moderation. Yet with all this violence of language, it must be noted that Tindale protested against using any physical violence; and carefully warned his readers 'not to resist the hypocrites with violence, which vengeance pertaineth unto God.' Let this fact be fairly borne in mind by those who condemn his violent language. His language, we have not concealed, is fierce and bitter, perhaps unduly fierce and bitter; but bitter words were not so hard to bear as exile, not so cruel as imprisonment, not so terrible as the fires of martyrdom.

The general summary of *The Practice of Prelates* was concluded by a special exposition of the misgovernment of England by Wolsey [*Wolfsee*, Tindale calls him, after the punning system of the time], and here Tindale's indignation culminates in a fierce attack upon the Cardinal. His description of Wolsey is in truth a terrible pendant to the softened portrait given by the 'gentle Griffiths<sup>1</sup>.'

'When the King's Grace came first to the right of the crown, and unto the governance of the realm, young and unexpert, Thomas Wolfsee, a man of lust and courage and bodily strength, to do and to suffer great things, and to endure in all manner of voluptuousness; expert and exercised in the course of the world, as he which had heard, read, and seen much policy, and had done many things himself, and had been of the secret counsel of weighty matters; as subtle as Sinon that betrayed Troy; utterly appointed to seemle and dissemble<sup>2</sup>, to have one thing in the heart and another in the mouth; being thereto as eloquent as subtle, and able to persuade what he lusted to them that were unexpert; so desirous and greedy of honour, that he cared not but for the next [nearest] and most compendious way thereto, whether godly or ungodly; this wily *wolf*, I say and raging *sea*, and shipwreck of all England (though he showed himself pleasant and calm at the first), came unto the King's Grace, and waited upon him, and was no man

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<sup>1</sup> Shakespeare, *Henry VIII*.

<sup>2</sup> To *semble* is to pretend to be what a man is not; to *dissemble*, is to pretend not to be what a man really is.

so obsequious and serviceable, and in all games and sports the first and next at hand, and as a captain to courage other, and a gay finder out of new pastimes, to obtain favour withal.

‘And ever as he grew in promotions and dignity, so gathered he unto him of the most subtle-witted, and of them that were drunk in the desire of honour, most like unto himself: and after they were sworn, he promoted them, and with great promises made them in falsehood faithful, and of them ever presented unto the King’s Grace, and put them into his service, saying, “This is a man meet for your Grace.” And by these spies, if aught were done or spoken in the court against the cardinal, of that he had word within an hour or two; and then came the cardinal to court with all his magic, to persuade the contrary. If any in the court had spoken against the cardinal, and the same not great in the king’s favour, the cardinal bade him walk a villain, and thrust him out of the court headlong. If he were in conceit with the King’s Grace, then he flattered, and persuaded, and corrupted some with gifts, and sent some ambassadors, and some he made captains at Calais, Hames, Guines, Jersey, and Guernsey, or sent them to Ireland, and into the north; and so occupied them, till the King had forgot them, and other were in their rooms, or till he had sped what he intended.

‘And, after the same example, he furnished the court with chaplains of his own sworn disciples, and children of his own bringing-up, to be alway present, and to dispute of vanities, and to water whatsoever the cardinal had planted. If among those cormorants any yet began to be too much in favour with the King, and to be somewhat busy in the court, and to draw any other way than as my lord cardinal had appointed that the plough should go, anon he was sent to Italy or to Spain; or some quarrel was picked against him, and so was thrust out of the court, as Stokesley was.

‘He promoted the Bishop of Lincoln that now is [Longland], his most faithful friend and old companion, and made him confessor: to whom of whatsoever the King’s Grace shrove himself, think ye not that he spake so loud that the cardinal heard it? And not unright; for as God’s creatures ought to obey God and serve His honour, so ought the pope’s creatures to obey the pope and serve his majesty.

‘Finally, Thomas Wolfsee became what he would, even porter of heaven, so that no man could enter into promotion but through him.’

The whole of Wolsey’s administration is criticized with the same unsparing severity; the wars with France and Scotland; the treachery, at one time, against Francis, at another against Charles; the lavish expenditure of money; the capricious changes of public policy; all had been directed by the Cardinal, all were intended to gratify his pleasure and to promote the interests of the pope; and to obtain these ends the well-being of the nation had been sacrificed.

Of the truth and justice of this political survey, on the part of Tindale, we need not again speak; much of it is admirably true and just; some of it was unfounded—the result of defective information, and of want of communication with the promoters of the Reformation movement in England. The most conspicuous instance of this is to be seen in Tindale’s singular opinions on the subject of the royal divorce. In England, those who were in favour of the Reformation were, almost to a man, advocates of the divorce, as a first step towards the curtailment of the monstrous assumptions of the Papal See. To Tindale, however, the whole proceeding bore quite a different aspect it was in his eyes simply one of the ‘old practices of the prelates,’ a trick which they had devised in order to promote their own ends, and to advance the interests of the Church. Nothing could, indeed, more effectually demonstrate Tindale’s perfect honesty and independence, than the maintenance of such an opinion; we do not need his own assurance to induce us to believe that, in thus writing, he ‘was discharging his conscience,’ and performing a duty which every person baptised in the heart with repentance of evil, and with faith of forgiveness in the blood of Christ,’ should with due deliberation undertake. At the same time it would be superfluous to prove that in this view Tindale was considerably mistaken; and probably the position which he thus assumed may have detracted from the influence of his work. For his theory on the subject of the divorce could not but be unacceptable to the English Reformers; whilst his opinions on the practices of prelates would certainly not commend him to the approbation of his old enemies. His opinions thus tended in some respects to alienate both the great parties in England; and some years later, when it was obvious to all that the prosecution of Henry’s divorce had most materially contributed to the overthrow of the Papal Supremacy, and when the daughter of Anne Boleyn wielded the sceptre of a Protestant nation, it was deemed necessary, in republishing *The Practice of Prelates*, to omit nearly everything that Tindale had written on the great question of the royal marriage.

The work concluded with words of noble, earnest appeal to all classes of Englishmen, from the King to the lowest of his subjects, urging them to repent and to follow that plain rule of life which God had laid down in Holy Scripture.

‘I beseech his Grace,’ says he, in words almost identical with those which Latimer was at that moment penning in England, ‘to have mercy of his own soul, and not to suffer Christ and His Holy Testament to be persecuted under his name any longer, that the sword of the wrath of God may be put up again, which, for that cause no doubt, is most chiefly drawn.

‘And as for them which for lucre, as Judas, betray the truth, and write against

their consciences<sup>1</sup>; and which, for honour, as Balaam, enforce to curse the people of God; I would fain, if their hearts were not too hard, that they did repent. And as fain I would that our prelates did repent, if it were possible for them to prefer God's honour before their own.

'And unto all subjects I say that they repent. For the cause of evil rulers is the sin of the subjects, [as] testifieth the Scripture. And the cause of false preachers is, that the people have no love unto the truth, [as] saith Paul, in the second chapter of the Second Epistle to the Thessalonians.

'And, finally, if the persecution of the King's Grace, and of other temporal persons conspiring with the spirituality, be of ignorance, I doubt not but that their eyes shall be opened shortly, and they shall see and repent, and God shall show them mercy. But and if it be of a set malice against the truth, and of a grounded hate against the law of God by the reason of a full consent they have to sin, and to walk in their old ways of ignorance, whereunto 'being now past all repentance,' they have utterly yielded themselves, to follow with full lust, without bridle or snaffle, which is the sin against the Holy Ghost; then ye shall see, even shortly, that God shall turn the point of the sword, wherewith they now shed Christ's blood, homeward to shed their own again, after all the examples of the Bible.

'And let them remember that I, well toward three years ago<sup>2</sup>, to prevent all occasions and all carnal beasts that seek fleshly liberty, sent forth *The True Obedience of a Christian Man*, which yet they condemned, but after they had condemned the New Testament, as right was, whence *The Obedience* had his authority. Now then, if when the light is come abroad, in which their wickedness cannot be hid, they find no such obedience in the people unto their old tyranny, whose fault is it? This is a sure conclusion none obedience, that is not of love, can long endure; and in your deeds can no man see any cause of love and the knowledge of Christ, for whose sake only a man would love you, though ye were

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<sup>1</sup> This is directed against Sir Thomas More, and is certainly written on imperfect information. Sir Thomas has much to answer for in his treatment of the English Reformers both in word and deed, but he was quite incapable of writing 'for lucre against his conscience.'

<sup>2</sup> These words of course afford a valuable clue to the chronological arrangement of Tindale's works; and had the colophon stated, as is usual in Hans Luft's books, the day of publication, we might have assigned all his early writings to a definite date. Unfortunately, however, in this case we have nothing more precise than the year 1530, and can only conjecture the period of the year to which the book may have belonged. It certainly was not issued earlier than May, or it would have been condemned in the Council which then met in London; and it was as certainly written before Wolsey's final arrest was known on the Continent. Anderson thinks it contains allusions to what was passing in England in August and September; and it seems to me extremely probable that it was written in those months, but not printed till the very end of the year.

never so evil, ye persecute. Now then, if any disobedience rise, are ye not the cause of it yourselves?

‘Say not but that ye be warned!’

With these words of solemn and prophetic warning, to which the almost contemporary death of Wolsey would give terrible emphasis, Tindale’s voice, as the public prophet of his country, was silenced; henceforward he devoted himself more exclusively to those labours as a translator and interpreter of Scripture to which he had at first consecrated his life, and which, after all that has been justly said in praise of his other writings, constitute his true claim upon the gratitude of his countrymen.

It was not to be expected that a work so bitter and so able should escape the condemnation with which Tindale’s previous works had been visited. It figures in all the lists of prohibited books; Sir Thomas More does not omit to censure it in his *Confutation*, though with less severity than usual, perhaps, because his criticism had considerable foundation in fact. ‘Then we have,’ says he, ‘*The Practice of Prelates*, wherein Tyndale had weened to have made a special show of his high worldly wit, and that men should have seen therein that there was nothing done among princes, but that he was fully advertised of all the secrets, and that so far forth, that he knew the privy practice made between the King’s Highness and the late Lord Cardinal, and the reverend Father Cuthbert, then Bishop of London, and me, that it was devised wilily that the Cardinal should leave the Chancellorship to me, and the Bishopric of Durham to my said Lord of London for a while, till he list himself to take them both again<sup>1</sup>.’

Tindale was, as we have admitted, probably misinformed as to the private policy of the King and the Cardinal, but, as Sir Thomas speedily discovered, he was not an enemy to be demolished by a sneer.

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<sup>1</sup> Preface to More’s *Confutation*.