

Sunday, January 12, 2020—Grace Life School of Theology—*From This Generation For Ever*
Lesson 105 The Life & Times of William Tyndale, Part 2 (1526-1536)

- To access the notes from Lesson 104 The Life & Times of William Tyndale, Part 1 (1494-1526) [click here](#).

The Life & Times of William Tyndale, Continued

1526

- The difficulties and dangers involved in getting Tyndale's New Testament into England were almost as great as those which lay in the way of their distribution. The clergy opposed the new translation with all their might. Sir Thomas More was one who wrote violently against it. (Broadbent, 248)
- Perhaps it was Tyndale's decision to alter his original plans by altering the size and contents of his Bible but Blackford Condit reports that the initial shipment of New Testaments for Germany avoided detection and arrived safely in London.
 - "The English merchants abroad who had to do with the introduction of this newly printed Testament into England, were aware that the public authorities had been warned by Cochlaeus, and of the consequent difficulties to be overcome. But notwithstanding the impending danger, five Hanseatic merchants took the precious books into their ships, and sailed for London. They expected to find the enemy on guard, but instead, the way was open and the books were landed and safely conveyed to the Merchant's warehouse in Thames Street. If the enemy slept, the friends of the bible were awake and expectant. Not only in London, but in Oxford and Cambridge, they anxiously awaited the coming of the newly printed English Testaments. . . Thus the way was fully prepared, and from the first the people received these newly printed Testaments joyfully, but, from necessity, secretly." (Condit, 104)
- Condit identifies Thomas Garret as the first distributor of the Tyndale New Testament in England.
 - "The first distributor of these testaments was Thomas Garret, curate of Honey Lane, London. He was a plain man, timid in disposition, but bold in faith, whose preaching was an offense to the hierarchy but a joy to the people. From the Merchants' warehouse these New Testaments were taken to the house of Garret. Other places of deposit were afterwards found, but the "dark corners" of Garret's house were the first hiding places of these lights, which must soon light up all England. So there were others who afterwards engaged, at the risk of personal liberty, in distributing, by sale, the precious volumes, yet as the story comes to us, Thomas Garret was the first to do so, and first to suffer. The books came into his possession, probably in the early part of the year 1526. He proceeds cautiously in his work, selling to priest and laymen alike, but in every case with a special

charge: “that they would keep it close.” How the good news must have spread . . . that a printed New Testament in English could be bought of Thomas Garret, in Honey Lane, near Cheapside. . .” (Condit, 104)

- Once introduced to the English people, it did not take the authorities long to figure out what was going on.
 - “While Thomas Garret, Father Hacker and others are diligent in distributing these Testaments in London, Cambridge, and other places, the hierarchy is on the alert. It has examined these books and has determined to condemn them, and all such persons as have to do with them. Bishop Tunstall, by advice of Cardinal Wolsey, sent forth an injunction to the archdeacons on his diocese, under the date of October 24, 1526, for the calling in of New Testament translated by Tyndale; enjoining, “that within XXX days space . . . under pain of excommunication and incurring the suspicion of heresy, they do bring in and really deliver unto our vicar general, all the singular such books as contain the translations of the New Testament into the English tongue.” (Condit, 105)
- Brake reports the following regarding the actions Bishop Tunstall engaged in to subdue Tyndale’s New Testament in October 1526. Around this time (October or November 1526) Bishop Tunstall preached a sermon at Paul’s Cross in which he told people that there were three thousand errors in Tyndale’s translation and during which it was officially denounced and publicly burnt. (Condit, 105)
 - “In October 1526, Bishop Tunstall, the champion defender of the *Constitutions* [the formal action of the English church taken against Wycliffe and the Lollards in the early 1400s], began confiscating the New Testaments as they were smuggled into England. Public burnings of the copies and punishment of all offenders blackened the spirits of the masses.” (Brake, 105)

1527-1528

- Public renunciations and burnings could not stop the juggernaut that was the Tyndale New Testament:
 - “But if now the New Testaments of Tyndale are burned, for every book thus destroyed hundreds of others will arise from its ashes. Already Dutch printers had taken up the work of printing English Testaments as a commercial enterprise. Christopher Endhoven printed an edition in 1527, at Antwerp; two other editions by Ruremond following in 1528, so that English Testaments became plentier and cheaper. The years 1527 and 1528 were remarkable for the large number of New Testaments imported into England. The authorities were perplexed. They decided to purchase all the books printed and thus stop their circulation.” (Condit, 106)

- The following passage from Brake indicates that lengths that Tunstall was willing to go to ensure that Tyndale's Bible was not available for sale and distribution within England.
 - "A popular story tells how Tunstall began using merchants to purchase copies on the Continent to slow down the supply. Augustine Pakington, a London businessman, was one such merchant. Pakington met with Tyndale to inform him of the plot, believing that the bishop had overstepped his prerogative. To his surprise, Tyndale met the news with enthusiasm. He encouraged Pakington to do as Tunstall commanded. Tyndale felt the burning of "God's Word" would gain popular condemnation, and the profits from the sale could enable him to relieve his debt and provide for future revisions.

Tunstall's plot for destruction utterly failed. New Testaments continued to pour into England, and the demand increased at an alarming rate. In fact, pirated copies were circulating and selling in England with very little fear of consequences. Tyndale had a "London Times" bestseller on his hands." (Brake, 100)

- Unable to stop the importation and sale of Tyndale's New Testament within England, the authorities turned their attention to the persecution of those possessing the word of God in English.
 - "In 1528, persecution began in earnest. Wolsey's agents abroad are instructed to search out and arrest Tyndale the chief doer of this mischievous work. At home the prisons are already filled to the full with those whose only crime is that of reading the New Testament in English." (Condit, 107)
- While in Germany, Tyndale was further exposed to the emerging doctrine of the Reformation. "Tyndale's movements for some years after 1526 are unrecorded, but that all his work from 1528 was published in Antwerp implies that he was living in or near that thriving port, which had strong trade connections with England and many good printers." (Daniell, 146) Such exposure to Reformation theology served to harden Tyndale's anti-Catholic position on matters of doctrine. Latourette and Daniell report the following:
 - "While on the continent Tyndale moved further over to the Protestant position. In 1528 he issued *The Parable of the Wicked Mammon* in which he came out flatly for justification by faith, and took over most of the text of a sermon by Luther on the unjust steward" (Latourette, 799)
 - "On 8 May 1528, Tyndale's *The Parable of the Wicked Mammon* was published, in his customary small octavo. It soon appeared in the records of the much-sharpened interrogations in England which it proved, and was officially banned as heretical on 24 May 1530. Following a sermon by Luther, Tyndale develops his exposition of the parable in Luke 16, known since as that of the Unjust Steward, to show that that New Testament thing that though good works are important, they come naturally only from

true faith, as fruit come from a tree. Over-emphasis on works leads only to superstition.” (Daniell, 146)

- Later in 1528, on October 2, Tyndale penned his most influential work outside of his Bible translations titled *The Obedience of a Christian Man*. In this work, Tyndale set forth for the first time the two fundamental principles of the English reformers: “the supreme authority of Scriptures in the Church, and the supreme authority of the king in the state.” (Daniell, 147)

- “The first sentence of his book (after a blessing) is ‘Let it not make thee despair neither yet discourage thee O reader, that it is forbidden thee in pain of life and good or that it is made breaking of the King’s peace or treason unto His Highness to read the word of thy souls’ health.’

... Tyndale was a master of English prose: his attacks make exhilarating reading, and his sympathy with the existential human condition can be moving. Like *Mammon*, the *Obedience* was widely read and immediately banned (the bishops found and published fifty-four articles of heresy in them) appears in the records of interrogation of humble people.” (Daniell, 146-147)

- Meanwhile, back in England, in his *Acts and Monuments*, John Foxe records the fate of many of these people who became enemies of the state for the sole crime of possessing God’s word in English. In order to stem the tide of heresy the Catholic Church moved against the fountainheads of the English Bible by seeking to stop the presses of the Dutch printer Christopher Endhoven. Residing at Antwerp, a free city, Endhoven enjoyed the protections of citizenship which prevented English authorities from arresting him without permission of the court. Once in court, the case against Endhoven was thrown out thereby thwarting English attempts to silence his press. (Condit, 111)
- Also, in 1528, Sir Tomas More, already a seasoned opponent of Luther in Latin, was permitted by Cuthbert Tunstall, Bishop of London, to read heretical books in English in order that they might attack Tyndale.
 - “In June 1529 appeared More’s *Dialogue Concerning Heresies*, in the third book of which Tyndale’s New Testament is demolished as heresy, and Tyndale himself vilified as worse than Luther. At bottom, More asserts that Tyndale’s offence has been to give the people Paul in English. . .” (Daniell, 149)
- Tyndale responded in his 1531 piece, *An Answer unto Sir Thomas More’s Dialogue*, in which he asserted the following:
 - “His authority is the New Testament. He condemns the Church, so absolutely defended by More, for having perverted Scripture, and for the many corruptions of his day (on which More, he notes, was silent). . . More answered Tyndale’s answer with his enormous *Confutation of Tyndale’s Answer*, almost two thousand pages, of which the

first three books were published in 1532, and a year later the remaining six: all but the fifth book (against Robert Barnes) attack Tyndale.” (Daniell, 149)

1529

- 1529 saw the employment of new strategy on the part the Catholic Church to stop the incursion of Tyndale’s Bible into England:
 - “Failing in their attempts to stop the work of printing and importing New Testaments by persecution, the English government sought the same end by treaty: which stipulate that there should be the continuation of traffic for merchants between the two counties, but there should be no printing or selling of Lutheran books on either side. This treaty was signed at Cambray in 1529. Bishop Tunstall, Sir Thomas More, and the agent Hacket were the commissioners. But after all they had more confidence in fire than in treaties; Tunstall, on his return to Cambray stopped in Antwerp for the purpose of buying New Testaments that he might burn them.” (Condit, 112)

1530

- The ascension of Sir Thomas More to the seat of Chancellorship in the English government in 1530 unleashed the most strident round of persecution to date against the English Bible.
 - “The year 1530 brought with it changes for the worse. Cardinal Wolsey, in which opinion “heresy was an error,” and who by his leniency made it possible for those thus charged to recant, was degraded from his authority; while Sir Thomas More, in which opinion “heresy was a crime,” was exalted to the high seat of the chancellorship. And Sir Thomas as chancellor used his authority in concert with the Romish bishop to blot out the very name of heresy. Also the effect of the kings fierce proclamation of December 24, 1529, for the abolishing of New Testaments, and other heretical books, and for the withstanding for all who taught or preached against the dignity and ordinances of the Catholic Church, began to be felt. “There ensued,” says Foxe, “great persecution and trouble against the poor and innocent flock of Christ.” Tunstall kindled a great fire of New Testaments in London on the 4th of May, 1530. But the people were indignant. They remonstrated to no effect; but denounced it as “a burning of the Word of God.”” (Condit, 113)
- Amidst the chaos at home in England, 1530 also saw Tyndale translate and publish the Pentateuch into English.
 - “The hierarchy is still on the alert for the apprehension of William Tyndale. Vaughan, the English envoy and successor of Hacket, has a special commission to watch Tyndale’s movements. In the meantime, Tyndale has been engaged in translating the Pentateuch, aided doubtless by his friend Fryth, who, at the persecution at Oxford, fled across the sea. These five books were printed separately [David Daniell adds that they could also be

bought together. (Daniell, 147)], with titles and prologues to each, but without dates, excepting that of Genesis. . . These books are quite rare, since there is but one complete set known, which is preserved in the Grenville Library, British Museum.” (Condit, 114-115)

- “The original Hebrew text of the Pentateuch (or of anything) was in English for the first time. Instead of *Fiat lux, et facta est lux*, Tyndale gave us ‘Let there be light, and there was light,’ and the name of God as Jehovah.” (Daniell, 148)
- According to David Daniell, 1530 also saw Tyndale publish the short work titled *The Practice of Prelates* which attacked the Roman hierarchy for its stranglehold on English society as well as argued against King Henry VIII’s divorce from Catherine of Aragon. The same year, *A Pathway to the Holy Scriptures* was also published.
 - “In about 1530, Tyndale expanded his Prologue to the 1525 Cologne Fragment to make a small, short, book, *A Pathway to the Holy Scriptures*, as a guide to the New Testament to be read alongside his unannotated 1526 Worms volume. Pathway expounds the central doctrines of Paul in Romans.” (Daniell, 150)

1531

- Blackford Condit calls 1531 a “fiery year” for the supporters of the English Bible.
 - “Fires are just now kindling in England for men as well as New Testaments. During this fiery year, 1531, Thomas Bilney, “the sainted Bilney” as he was justly called, was the first to burn at the stake. Among thirty-four questions which were put to him when on trial the fifteenth reads: “Whether they would have the Masses and Gospel openly to be read in Churches in the vulgare tongue, rather than in the Latin tongue.” This was a test question. It was death to answer in the affirmative. And how firmly and nobly Bilney answered it. In reply he said, “he would wish that the Gospels and Epistles should be read in English. For I would (saith Paul) rather have verses words, etc. that the church might be edified.” (Condit, 116)
- In September of 1531 Tyndale published *An Exposition Upon the First Epistle of John*:
 - “This is a section-by-section unfolding of John, with the decorum of a quieter tone, even in his demands for righteous love. Tyndale does, however, expound John’s ‘Little children, beware of images,’ with extended mockery of the worship of saints and their statues.” (Daniell, 150)

1533

- Two years later in 1533, Tyndale penned *Exposition upon V, VI, VII Chapters of Matthew* (the Sermon on the Mount passage) “in which Tyndale contrasts the words of Christ in restoring the

true meaning of God's commandments—works resulting from faith—with many corrupt practices of the Church.” (Daniell, 150)

1534

- In 1534, while residing in the home of Thomas Poyntz, an English merchant residing in Antwerp, Tyndale moved to revise his New Testament. This same Dutch printer moved to publish another edition when they were notified of Tyndale's pending revision. Undeterred, the Dutch moved forward with their edition publishing in August 1534 with certain “fanciful alterations” thereby creating confusion amongst the English as to which edition was the real revision of Tyndale when his was released in November 1534.
 - “In 1534, the widow of Christopher Van Endhoven (who had died in London, imprisoned for printing and shipping English Bibles) asked an English scholar living in Antwerp, George Joye, to oversee another addition, as the Flemish typesetters were not doing well. This he did. He also took the opportunity to make silent alterations to Tyndale's work. In particular, he altered Tyndale's English word ‘resurrection,’ to make it ‘the life after this life’ and variations. Not to put his name to the changes was bad enough, but in 1533 the Resurrection was the subject of debate among the English reformers.” (Daniell, 151)
- In an attempt to stave off confusion, Tyndale included the following title page on his revised November edition:
 - “The New Testament diligently corrected and compared with the Greek by William Tyndale and finished in the year of our Lord God a. M.D. & XXXIII in the month of November.” (Condit, 119)
 - “He wrote for it a long Prologue about translation, explaining among other things the importance of appreciating the Hebrew influence on New Testament Greek, something not widely understood before. He also wrote a second Prologue, ‘W.T. yet once more unto the Christian reader,’ in which he strongly attacked George Joye for his impertinence. Tyndale defends his own translation, and adds that Joye is free to come up with his own ideas, as long as he puts his own name on them.” (Daniell, 151)

1535

- 1535 saw Tyndale revise his translation of the New Testament for the second time. Like the previous year, there were once again two issues, thereby creating some confusion.
 - “One of these had the monogram G.H. (1535-1534 G.H.) attached to the second title. This is probably the genuine Tyndale, since its readings were adopted by Rogers in the Matthew's Bible. It was doubtless selected by him as Tyndale's last and best work. Through Matthew's Bible the readings of this edition of Tyndale passed into King James' Bible. The other issue of 1535 was doubtless a pirated edition, and is marked by a peculiar orthography. This peculiarity in spelling is explained by Mr. Offer and others as

having been adopted intentionally by Tyndale in his attempt to adapt the text to the common people, in the fulfillment of his pledge to give the New Testament to the uneducated their own tongue. But a more probable explanation is, that this false orthography was the result of Flemish pronunciation of the English language.” (Condit, 131-132)

- As noted earlier, in 1530 Tyndale translated and released the five books of Moses separately each with its own title page. In 1534 they were all bound together and reissued in a stand-alone volume. As far as the rest of the Old Testament is concerned, Condit reports:
 - “The book of Jonah was translated by Tyndale in 1531, but was not reprinted. There has been some doubt as to how much of the Old Testament Tyndale translated. Hall, the chronicler, claims that beside the New Testament and the Pentateuch, he completed the books of Joshua, Judges, Ruth, the four books of Kings, the two books of Chronicles, Nehemiah, and the first book of Esdras, and the Prophet Jonah. But whatever Tyndale may have left behind in manuscript, he only published besides the New Testament, the Pentateuch and the book of Jonah. That Tyndale translated directly from the Hebrew and that he was a master of that language, there is no longer any question.” (Condit, 132-133)
- With the help of a spy sent from England named Henry Philipps, Tyndale was captured in Belgium on the 21st of May, 1535.
 - “In the spring of 1535, however, a debauched and villainous young Englishman wanting money, Henry Philipps, insinuated himself into the English House and Tyndale’s trust, pretending interest in the work of Bible translation, and borrowing money from him. Philipps had gambled away money entrusted to him by his father to give to someone in London, and, full of self-pity, had fled abroad. He promised someone in authority, it is not known whom, that he could betray Tyndale, Barnes, and Joye, for cash. On the morning of 21 May 1535, having arranged for the imperial officers to be ready, Philipps tricked Tyndale into leaving the English House. In the alley he was seized. . . Tyndale was taken at once to the procurer-general, who immediately raided Poyntz’s house and took away all Tyndale’s property, including his books and papers. The Old Testament historical books in English were safely somewhere else, probably with Rogers. We cannot know what further translations were removed and destroyed. Tyndale was taken to the castle of Vilvoorde, outside of Brussels, where he was incarcerated for the next sixteen months.” (Daniell, 153)
 - “The English merchants of Antwerp made every possible effort for Tyndale’s release. They applied to the Brussels court, also to the English court, and received favorable answers, and when Poyntz, who was especially active, was about to obtain letters authoring the delivering up of Tyndale, the sly and wily Philipps frustrated all, by entering a complaint against Poyntz, “that he had been a succorer of Tyndale and was one of the same opinion.” And on this charge, he had him arrested.” (Condit, 135)

- This timing proved tragic as by 1534 the political situation within England was changing. King Henry VIII's dispute with the Pope over annulling his marriage to his first wife, Catherine of Aragon, came to a head in 1533/34 with Henry leaving the Catholic Church and moving to form the Church of England (Anglican Church). It was in 1534 that the Act of Supremacy was passed by the English Parliament thereby formalizing Henry's break from the Catholic Church.
 - "Involved as the prose was, no one, then or now, mistook the consequences: England's church had broken from the "catholic" church; England's church belonged to the English (or at least to the English king). For opposing this and similar moves, dedicated Catholics like Bishop John Fisher and Sir Thomas More would go to the block. For urging Henry on toward a more complete Reformation, dedicated Protestants like Robert Barnes and John Frith would join them." (Noll, 178)

1536

- From his cell in 1536 Tyndale petitioned his accuser(s), "that he may kindly permit me to have my Hebrew bible, Hebrew Grammar, and Hebrew Dictionary, that I may spend my time with that study." (Condit, 136) On the 10th of August 1536 after nearly eighteen months in prison, William Tyndale was sentenced to death.
 - "Tyndale's crime was heresy, being a Lutheran. To his enemies he was the greatest English catch, and his downfall, it was believed would remove heresy from England, and give glory to his captors." (Daniell, 154)
- Nearly two months later, on the 6th of October, he was executed.
 - "He was first chained to the stake, then strangled, and then burned. Just before his death, he cried out, "with a fervent zeal, and a loud voice: Lord open the King of England's eyes." (Condit, 137)
- In an ironic twist of fate, Blackford Condit reports that 1536 not only saw the death of William Tyndale but the first printing of his New Testament in England.
 - "This year 1536 is the most memorable in the history of Tyndale's life, also in the history of his translation of the New Testament; for while it witnessed the binding of the translator, it likewise witnessed the unfettering of the translation. At Antwerp the press was busy in printing edition after edition of his revised New Testament. But above all Tyndale's New Testament is this year printed in London, which constitutes an important epoch, in that it was the first printing of the English Scriptures on English ground. This London edition was a reprint of the revised edition of 1534. It was published by Godfray, who favored the evangelical party. . . The title of this volume reads: "The New Testament . . . corrected by W. Tyndale: And in many places amended, where it escaped before by negligence of the printer . . . Newly printed in the year of our Lord MDXXXVI." (Condit, 135-136)

- Eventually, in 1539 King Henry VIII would authorize the publication of the Great Bible, the first Bible produced under the auspices of the English crown. In the meantime, Myles Coverdale and John Rogers had remained loyal disciples of William Tyndale in the last six years of Tyndale's life and carried the English Bible project forward after his death. We will consider their contribution in future Lessons.

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Appendix A

Events in the Courageous Life of William Tyndale

Reproduced from Donald L Brake's book *A Visual History of the English Bible*

- 1494—Born in Stinchcombe, Gloucestershire
- 1509—Henry VIII ascended to the throne of England (1509-1547)
- 1512—Bachelor of Arts from Hertford College, where he honed his Latin skills.
- 1515—Master of Arts from Oxford University and introduction to Lollard theology.
- 1516—Cambridge—immersion in Lollard movement and continuing studies.
- 1521—Henry VIII given the title of Defender of the Faith by the People.
- 1522—Little Sodbury—tutor to the children of John Walsh and wife Anne (Poyntz) makes vow to translate Scripture into English for the “boye that dryveth the plough.”
- 1523—London—meets Cuthbert Tunstall seeking permission to translate Scripture into English (1408 *Constitutions* had forbidden translating the Bible into English without permission).
- 1524—Hamburg, Germany—seeks asylum and freedom to translate; begins life of exile.
- 1525—Cologne, Germany—learned German in Wittenberg, Luther country. Translated “Cologne Fragment” and paid Peter Quentell to print New Testament (only a portion of Matthew and perhaps some of Mark was completed). The translon of the following words brought condemnation from the Roman Catholics: church—congregation; priest—elder or senior; charity—love; do penance—repent. Printing in Cologne led to discovery and threats of confiscation of printed pages, forcing him to flee to Worms.
- 1526—New Testament printed at Worms (Lutheran stronghold) by Peter Schoeffer.
- 1526—Henry VIII declared his interest in Anne Boleyn.
- 1527—Marburg—city ruled by the Lutheran, Philip of Hesse, provided a brief safe-haven.
- 1528—Tunstall began six-month campaign to arrest Lollards, Lutherans, and those reading Tyndale Bibles.
- 1528—Tyndale writes *Parable of Wicked Mammon*.

- 1528—Tyndale writes *The Obedience of a Christian Man*.
- 1529—Hamburg—sanctuary where he spent most of the year translating the Pentateuch.
- 1529—Packington began to buy Tyndale New Testaments for Tunstall to burn in England.
- 1529—Wolsey surrendered his official office for not accepting Henry's marriage to Anne.
- 1529—Thomas More became Lord Chancellor England, the highest office in England.
- 1530—Antwerp—first verified address since Little Sodbury. Stayed with Thomas Poyntz, relative of Anne Poyntz Walsh. To protect his work and maintain his anonymity, van Hoochstraten published his translation of the Pentateuch rather than the stated Hans Luft of Marburg.
- 1530—Published *Practice of Prelates* (emphasis on kings over priests).
- 1530—Wolsey charged with treason and died as a sick man.
- 1530—Thomas Cromwell became Vicar General (a powerful position under Henry VIII).
- 1531—Henry VIII to be supreme head of church, both king and pope.
- 1533—January, Henry and Anne married; in April Anne was proclaimed queen.
- 1534—Tyndale revised his New Testament and published it in Antwerp.
- 1535—May 21 Tyndale betrayed by Henry Phillips and imprisoned in Vilvoorde, suburb of modern Brussels.
- 1536—Tyndale strangled and burned at the stake; Tyndale's "Blankstone" edition printed.
- 1536—May 19 Anne is executed, and eleven days later Henry married Jane Seymour. (Brake, 106-110)